

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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SHOP SURVEY

by David Berguer

A useful way to monitor changing habits is to analyse the shops in an area. This is something that we have been doing since 2001 and it consists of two separate activities: once a year we conduct a survey of all the shops in the area and this is supplemented by the work of our Recorder Groups who report changes to shops, houses, roads and street furniture on a monthly basis. These changes are recorded in our Streets files - we have a separate file for every street in the area (all 241 of them). The results from our annual shop surveys are added to our database, which currently goes back to 1938 and also contains data from local directories which were produced each year by various publishers, the chief one being Kelly's.

A good example of changing shopping habits can be found in High Road, Whetstone. In 1952, Kelly's reported that of the 108 shops, there were 3 bakers; 5 butchers; 2 fishmongers; 6 greengrocers; 7 grocers and only 7 restaurants. Fifty years later, in 2002, our own survey showed that they were no bakers, butchers, fishmongers, greengrocers or grocers but the number of restaurants had increased to 22. Obviously the coming of the supermarkets has had a lot to do with the decline of the small retailer, but the figures show that people can now afford to eat out more often.



Changing times: The Torrington pub, North Finchley, is now a coffee shop

Summaries of the 524 shops that we surveyed this year are shown below, with the figures for 2004 shown for comparison:

	2004	2005
Restaurants/Take aways	91	91
Food shops	29	30
Estate Agents	19	23
Ladies Hairdressers	19	21
CTNs *	20	19
Furnishing/Carpets	22	19
Ladies Wear	19	19
Pubs	20	18
Dry Cleaners/Launderettes	17	16
DIY/Hardware	13	13
Electrical	12	12
Banking/Insurance	12	11
Beauty Salons	10	11
Chemists	11	11
Bookmakers	9	10
Opticians	9	10
Garages/Car Accessories	9	8
Building Societies	7	7
Charity Shops	7	7
Jewellers	7	7
Men's Wear	11	7
Footwear	5	6
Gent's Hairdressers	8	6
Chain Stores/Discount stores	3	5
Children's Wear/Toys	4	5
Florists	5	5
Health Foods	4	5
Mobile Phones	4	5
Photography	5	5
Wines	5	5
Post Offices	4	4
Antiques	4	3
Books	3	3
Stationers	2	3
Travel Agents	4	3
Video Hire	3	3
Shops Vacant	39	39
Others	67	54
	542	529

* = Confectioners, Tobacconists, Newsagents

Changes are taking place all the time: since the completion of our 2005 survey, *The Duck* pub in Queen's Parade, Friern Barnet Road closed on 16 October and this was logged by one of our Recorder Groups.

The distribution of shops by area is:

	2004	2005
High Road North Finchley	157	157
High Road Whetstone	103	101
Woodhouse Road	65	63
Friern Barnet Road	63	59
Oakleigh Road North	45	45
Colney Hatch Lane	39	38
Ballards Lane (n. of Kingsway)	34	34
Friern Bridge Retail Park	11	11
Oakleigh Road South	11	10
Nether Street	3	4
Cromwell Road	3	3
Sydney Road	2	2
Wetherill Road	5	1
Wilton Road	1	1
	542	529

Since we started recording the shops in 1991 we have logged 193 changes (58 of them this year) which goes to prove how volatile the retail market is.

MURDER MOST FOUL

by David Berguer

One of the most bizarre murder cases of the twentieth century involved a Friern Barnet man, Alfred Arthur Rouse, who lived in Buxted Road. Rouse was born on 6 April 1894 in Herne Hill and in November 1914 he married Lily May Watkins. Shortly afterwards he was posted to France to serve in the Great War and it was while he was serving as a soldier that he received a wound to the leg and one to the temple, which later caused him to be excitable and may have accounted for his later history.

Rouse was described as a handsome man, with clear-cut features and hazel eyes. He had a small moustache and his black hair was brushed straight back from his forehead. After he left the army he became a commercial traveller which involved his travelling widely and during the 1920s he had apparently accumulated over 80 women lovers, several of whom had his illegitimate children; he even married one of them bigamously. His extravagant lifestyle led, not surprisingly, to his running into money problems, and a number of maintenance orders were issued against him. Rouse conceived a plan which would solve his problems: he would disappear.

At 2 o'clock in the morning of 6 November 1930 in Hardingstone Lane, Northampton, two cousins, Alfred Brown and William Bailey, were returning home after a Guy Fawkes party when they came across a man walking towards them carrying a small suitcase. "It looks as though someone had a bonfire up there" he said, pointing back down the lane. The brothers continued on their way only to discover that a Morris car, registration

number MU 1468, was ablaze and there appeared to be a person trapped in the driver's seat. The police and fire brigade were summoned and subsequent investigation found that the dead man was face down on the driver's seat, with his left leg doubled up under his body. Some 14 yards away a wooden mallet was found on which there were traces of human hair.



Rouse's burned out car attracts curious onlookers

After receiving a tip off, the police soon tracked down the car's owner - 36 year old Alfred Arthur Rouse. On being questioned, Rouse claimed that his car had been stolen from outside a café but he later changed his story, saying that on leaving home on 5 November, he had come across a man about a mile north of Tally Ho Corner who asked him for a lift. The man looked quite respectable, although his breath smelled rather strongly of drink. They later stopped in a village and Rouse bought a can of petrol and he used the mallet to knock the cap off. Rouse maintained that he then stopped down the road "for a natural purpose" and he asked his passenger to fill the car with petrol from the can, which he placed on the driver's seat. The man asked Rouse for a smoke, so he threw him a cigar. Strangely enough, Rouse took his suitcase with him while attending to the call of nature and, after he had finished, he saw a light and realised that the car was on fire. He hurried back but was unable to do anything as the car was well ablaze. He claimed he panicked and ran off down the lane, where he met the two cousins. Rouse claimed that he got a lift in a lorry back to Tally Ho Corner, returned home briefly and later went to Wales.

Rouse was tried for murder at Northampton Assizes on 26 January 1931 and amongst those giving evidence was Sir Bernard Spilsbury, who said that the victim had died very quickly. Further evidence showed that the car's carburettor had been tampered with. The trial lasted six days and the jury took just 75 minutes to return a guilty verdict. Rouse was sentenced to be hanged and, despite an appeal which was heard by the Lord Chief Justice, and even a telephoned appeal to the Home Secretary's wife by Mrs Rouse, he was hanged at Bedford prison on 10 March by Tom Pierrepoint, the well

known public executioner.

The thing that makes this case unique was that the identity of the dead man was never established. It seems incredible that someone could disappear without being missed, but that was what happened in November 1930.

THE NUDIST COLONY: THE BARE FACTS

by David Berguer

Following my article on the Nudist Colony in the last issue of the Newsletter, I have had information from two of our members which will, hopefully, shed a lot more light on the subject.

Kenneth Brooks said that when he first moved to Friern Park in 1937, it wasn't long before he learned of the Nudist Colony at the end of the road, on the corner of Cardrew Avenue at Cardrew House, a very large house. The garden fence was very high and the entrance was in the Avenue. He never saw any of the residents, apart from a man about forty years old, who was standing one day on the steps of the entrance. When War broke out the house became empty and was later taken over by the Government for the housing of Belgian refugees. Ken did meet one refugee when he left a couple of old coats for them, but there was no conversation between them. Later, from 1945 onwards, there was a shirt factory there; Ken knew the Manager and his mother, Mary Brooks, worked for them as a needlewoman. The house was demolished and a block of flats, Park Court, was built on the site, stretching from the corner to The Lindens.

Sylvia Stilts tells us that she had a school friend whose sister lived at number 5 Torrington Park, and was a typist at the Friern Barnet Council offices. One of her duties was to type out the Rules and Regulations for members of the Nudist Colony. Sylvia wonders whether the Colony was actually run by the Council (which seems unlikely), or whether they just licensed it. Sylvia recalls that it was around 1941 or 1942 when she was told of this, but it could have referred to pre-war years.

Unfortunately, many of the records of Friern Barnet Urban District Council were destroyed when it became part of Barnet in 1965, so it is unlikely that a copy of the Rules and Regulations exists. I will, however, visit the Barnet Local Studies and Archives Centre in Mill Hill and see if there are any further mentions in the Council Minutes of what was undoubtedly one of the most interesting organisations in Friern Barnet.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

by Colin Barratt

This is the first in a series about weights, measures and money, from the earliest times to the present day, including some of the strange units of measurement and the little known origins of names of coins etc. on the way.

Part 1 - What's that in Old Money?

Most of us are old enough to remember pre-decimal coinage, with its variety of denominations and ancient names, plus their commonly used alternatives. The introduction in 1971 of decimal money filled many with horror, as they

thought the very fabric of British society was crumbling in their pockets, and that it was a sneaky way to put up prices without anyone noticing. The ease of multiplying or dividing everything by ten did little to appease the doubters.

Coinage in England has had a complex and varied history. LSD derived from Librae, Solidi, Denarii, meaning pounds, shillings and pence in Latin. Roman coins were the country's coinage until the 7th Century, when the first native coins, gold thrymsa, were introduced. These were replaced in the 8th Century by the silver (and later copper) sceatta which, at the end of the 8th Century was itself replaced by the silver penny, containing a denarius' worth of silver by weight. Halfpennies in silver were also minted.

A gold penny was issued in the 13th Century, at a value of 20 silver pennies. In the 14th Century other gold coinage was created: florences (or florins), worth 6/-, and half and quarter florins (called leopards and helms), which were soon all replaced by the gold noble (6/8). Soon after this, silver grouts (4d), pennies and halfpennies were also minted. In the 15th Century, new gold coins were issued: the ryal (10/-) and the angel (6/8). Later a double ryal (20/-) was minted and was known as the sovereign, because it depicted the King, Henry VII, in his sovereign's robes. A testoon (12d) was also minted, which later became a shilling. In the 16th Century, a gold crown (5/-) was issued, plus a half crown. These were soon changed to silver coins.

Queen Elizabeth I introduced the gold pound coin. Her successor, James I, authorised the first copper coin (farthing) in 1613, which was privately made, as it was thought undignified for the Royal Mint to produce copper coinage! In 1663 a new coin, the gold guinea, appeared, valued at 20/-, (named after African Guinea, where the gold was mined). Britannia first appeared on British coins in 1672. In 1718 Sir Isaac Newton, then Master of the Mint, fixed the value of the guinea at 21/-. During much of the 18th Century, small denomination coins were reserved solely for Maundy Money, so tradesmen often issued their own tokens to replace the small change. In 1789 shillings and sixpences were already being called bobs and tanners.

In 1849 a silver florin was minted as one-tenth of a pound, in an unsuccessful attempt to decimalise British currency. Bronze pennies, halfpennies and farthings issued after 1860 continued to be legal tender for over 100 years (remember the "Bun" pennies, so called because Queen Victoria was shown wearing her hair in a bun?). To conserve gold during World War II, paper pound and ten shilling notes were issued. "Silver" coins ceased to have any silver content at all in 1947.

In 1968, in advance of the changeover, decimal coins started to be circulated, in parallel with the old coins: 10p (2/-) and 5p (1/-). After Decimal Day, Monday 15 February 1971, some of the old coins continued to be used, until eventually they were replaced by their decimal equivalents. Until 1985, a decimal half-pence coin was included in the new currency, giving the odd appearance of a fraction added to decimal values. The pound, known as a quid since the 17th Century, returned to being a "gold" coin from 1983. Inflation gradually reduced the value of coins and, in the early 1990s, the 5p and 10p coins were replaced by smaller (and lighter) ones.

MOTORING MEMORIES - PART 2

by David Berguer

Following my article in the last Newsletter, I received a letter from our oldest, and most revered, member, Karl Ruge, which contained the following reminiscences:

"My wife owned a smart Mercedes drop-head, but, as enemy aliens, we had to dispose of that at the beginning of the war; so she gave it to our doctor on the understanding that he would return it at the end of hostilities; but, by then, it was a wreck. So, shortly after demobilisation, I searched for a replacement and eventually discovered a 1932 Wolseley Hornet in a garage in Hampstead, which looked good and sprang to life at the press of the starter button, after reputedly having slept in that garage for years. It had a sliding sunroof, a windscreen which one could tilt up and forwards to get all the fresh air, a spare wheel on one running board and no boot but a folding metal structure for a luggage carrier.

I was pretty ignorant of cars, so did not realise that it needed a live battery for starting. Most of the time I therefore resorted to a starting handle inserted under the radiator. When that didn't do the trick any longer, we appreciated the fact that Woodside Park Road, where we then lived, had a sound slope towards the station. So, when we wanted to use the car, we gave it a push and slipped it into gear; and when that was insufficient, the local youths enjoyed pushing us around the tobacco kiosk in front of the station entrance, until the engine sprang into life.

One special feature of the splendid vehicle was that it managed to develop woodworm. It transpired that the whole bodywork was in timber, around which metal sheets were folded. So, when the disease became serious, I spent a weekend with a carpenter friend of mine in Croydon, where we dismantled the faulty upright, unwrapped it, took exact measurements of the slightly curved timber and its various incisions, made a full replica, wrapped the lead sheeting around it and, after having inserted this new limb, I drove delightedly back to North Finchley.

The car, like its owner, was very upright and in strong headwinds on our way to holidays on the Norfolk coast, it managed a bare 40mph with luck, partly because the excess luggage was piled on to the roof carriers. At least that bit of our luggage stayed there, but on more than one occasion, the rear carrier gave up the ghost and I was lucky in having a rear-mirror in which to spot our cases in a line along the road behind us. Traffic was light in those days and we managed to reverse and pick up the cases without trouble with other vehicles.

Of course, in those days, motorcars were "for life" like cookers, vacuum cleaners and marriages. So I parted company with this life-companion with a heavy heart when the family decided that we needed something a bit more sprightly for the first post-war motoring holiday on the Continent. That led to the acquisition of our first Citroen, a DS (which is "Goddess" in French) and we have driven that make ever since, although it has now sunk to the level of normal cars, whereas the first two were of the exciting swivel-headlamp

streamline types which made people stop and stare. Only the eccentric and inefficient suspension is a reminder in my present one that it stems from such an illustrious breed. In the older days of the first two DSs I used to change cars every ten years, but the present Xantia has looked after me for more than that now, and only her annual mileage has shrunk substantially.

But the old "Lady Woolie", as the Wolseley was known in the family, has a specially warm place in all our memories and at the time of its construction it was undoubtedly very modern. Many models then had not only the spare wheel on the running board but made it complete with the gear lever which was also outside the cab. What, however, I never managed to work out was, how the woodworm got inside the solid lead cladding of the post that kept the roof up. It must have been a highly intelligent kind of insect, and I am not even quite sure whether it is indeed an insect; I'll look it up tomorrow."

GOOD OLD RUSSELL ROAD

by John Heathfield

The land now occupied by the Russell Road estate is made up of London Clay, deposited in the Eocene period, about half a million years ago. It was probably heavily wooded, like most of north London, and had been steadily cleared since Roman times.

Russell Lane gets its name from Russell's Farm, which stood just past the railway on the east side of the lane, roughly opposite where the *Cavalier* pub now stands. Russell Road and Russell Gardens get their names from the lane and were built in the early 1920s. The plot seems originally to have been the property of the Lord of the Manor, that is at the time of the Norman invasion, then the Abbot of St Albans, and then eventually the Dean and Chapter of St Pauls.

The first detailed mention occurs in the survey carried out by James Ellis of Coldharbour for John Bacon, when Bacon bought the Manor in 1787; what is now Russell Road is shown as Five Acre field. W.P. Attfield's revision of that survey carried out in 1817, shows three fields viz, Four Acre, Five Acre and Nine Acre, all owned and occupied by J.W. Bacon. The Inclosure award of 1814 gives the same information for fields nos. 872, 873 and 874. These same fields are shown on the Tithe map of 1844 as fields nos. 147, 148 and 149, owned by Sir S. Haughton-Clarke and occupied by Benjamin Matthews, a local farmer. On a map of Haughton-Clarke's estate, made in 1857, they are shown as occupied by a Mr Johnson. The land continued to be used for farming until the end of 1914-18 War, when it was rented by Robert Floyd, a local dairy farmer.

A letter from the Local Government Board dated 18 March 1918 spurred Friern Barnet Urban District Council into action. On 17 July 1920, a compulsory purchase order was made for Leicester Holman Esq to sell the land for £72,000. On 5 March 1920, F. H. Shearley of Hampstead was appointed architect to the project, and Messrs Leonard and Clarke were Quantity Surveyors. On 6 August 1920, £88,819 was borrowed at 6% for 80 years to pay for the project.



Smith's cottages, c1870, home of the Smith sisters who owned the farm

On 7 July 1921, Messrs Walter Jones, builders, were awarded the contract to build 45 houses at Oakleigh Park for £30,805. The architect's fee was £1,644, the Quantity Surveyor got £990, Clerk of Works £350 and Mortgage and Stamp Duty cost £204. On 3 March 1922 Barnet Gas and Water Company connected up mains services and the first tenants moved in during 1922. Miles Way commemorates John Miles, the well known local benefactor, and Barfield Way and Simmons Way were named after two prominent local Councillors of the 1920s.

WERE YOU AN EVACUEE?

The London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (LAMAS), of which we are members, is undertaking a project in conjunction with the Museum of London to collect Londoners' reminiscences of being evacuated during the Second World War. A copy of their questionnaire can be obtained by visiting their website www.lamas.org.uk

THE COMPTON ORGAN

by John Donovan

No doubt many of our members recall the opulence and sheer escapism of the old Gaumont, North Finchley and the wonderful music of its famous organ.

An article in the *Finchley Press* of 23 July 1937, headed "Opening of the New Gaumont" gives first mention of our Compton organ. As part of the magnificent opening ceremony, Mr Frederic Bayco (BBC organist from the Dominion Theatre) gave a recital. We were told that Mr Bayco, whose aunt was in the audience, used to stay with relatives in Finchley and, at the age of eleven, he practised on the organ at St Mary in Finchley. The Compton organ was the first of its kind in Finchley, thanks to Gaumont-British and it provided an unequalled range of tone colours, giving every kind of music from the

thrilling peal of a cathedral organ to the majestic grandeur of a full symphony orchestra and the rhythmic verve of a modern dance band. Eventually the glory days came to an end, and the Gaumont was demolished in October 1980, but the organ had been bought in 1967 by an enthusiast who took it to his pub, *The Plough*, in the hamlet of Great Munden, Hertfordshire. He actually added a wing to the pub in order to house all the pipe-work, because the Compton is not electronic; it works in the same way as a church organ. Here the Compton started its second career, and coaches would bring customers out to the pub for an evening meal and an organ recital. I know that several of our members have enjoyed such an outing.

A couple of years ago Janet Liversidge, our Events Secretary, suggested that we ought to arrange a 'meal and music' outing to *The Plough* for some of our members, and to that end I went off to find it. Great Munden is hardly even a hamlet, just a few houses on a long straight road, but *The Plough*, a small country pub, looks out onto wide views of green fields. In the car park opposite the pub was a waist high notice board advertising the Compton organ, so I went in and looked around, and there was the organ at the end of the room. Sadly, they were not playing that day, and I was too early for lunch, so I ordered a sandwich and a cuppa. While waiting for the food I wandered around the room, looking at the organ (smaller than I'd expected) and examining all the photos showing various people playing the organ. There were also a couple of nice photos of The Gaumont. I even bought a postcard picture of the pub, and a tape of the organ itself being played. The room also housed a piano and another, smaller organ. Then I sat eating, drinking and admiring the beautiful scenery.

Sometime later I paid another visit and had a meal (still without music). I waited quite a while for the food (which was nothing special), but from the kitchen I could hear the strains of a Cup Final crowd and excited yells from the staff, so perhaps their minds were elsewhere. Some months later, quite by chance, I was reading a 'keyboard' magazine (*Organfax News*), and there was a tiny snippet on the back page: "The Compton organ at *The Plough* is in need of repair and has been bought by a couple of enthusiasts." That's all. In January of this year I drove out to Great Munden to ask what had happened to the Compton, only to find the entire pub closed down and boarded up.



For a while the trail went cold and in June I went back, and this time knocked on the door of a neighbour's house. A very kind lady told me that, although three of the pub's owners had been organ "buffs", the last owner was not, and he had been unable to make the pub pay. Furthermore, the coach company closed down, and eventually the pub closed (some two years ago). The lady also gave me a phone number of another contact, Len Rawle, who told me that the Compton is now at *The Burtey Fen Collection*, in Spalding, Lincs., which has a miniature theatre where they give regular concerts on their own Compton and Wurlitzer organs. *Our* Compton is stored in a separate building in the grounds, while the new owners (David Shepherd and a friend) look for a new home for it. Apparently, one doesn't just plug it in and start it up; it needs a large space for the organ and pipes, and has to be re-built from the collection of parts that are in store. However, *Organfax* were wrong in their assumption that the organ had been in need of repair; apparently it was being played right up to the time the pub closed.

The message is, "watch this space", but the sound of the organ lives on, because we still have the tape recording of a recital from the pub. The tape is now stored in our archives as AUD8. Although The Plough has closed, its website is still on the internet, and offers some interesting information on the pub and the organ (angelfire.com/on2/theplough/organ.html)

Footnote by David Berguer

If you can't make it to Spalding, I highly recommend a visit to the St Albans Organ Museum where for two and a half hours on a Sunday afternoon you can thrill to the sounds of two theatre organs (a Wurlitzer and a Rutt), four café organs worked by punch cards, music boxes and even a self-playing violin! Prices are £5 per person and you can contact them on 01727 768652 or look on their website: stalbansorganmuseum.org.uk

NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMME

Janet Liversidge has yet again come up with an exciting and varied programme of public meetings for 2006. Five of the subjects cover local subjects and four are of general interest.

Hugh Garnsworthy will be showing some of his large collection of postcards on **25 Jan**, and his chosen subject is a topical one : Horatio Nelson. On **22 Feb** a representative from Waitrose will be telling us about their history and on **22 Mar** Hugh Petrie, the London Borough of Barnet Heritage Officer will tell us about the history of Christ's College, Finchley Central, which is his old school.

The local interest continues on **26 Apr** when Gerard Roots, the Curator of Church Farm Museum will give the history of Church Farm itself and on **24 May** John Dyke from the North Middlesex Golf Club will tell us about their first hundred years; this talk will follow our Annual General Meeting. The first half of the year ends on **28 Jun** with our own John Donovan giving a talk on one of his many interests, Milestones.

After the summer break, we resume with a talk on **27 Sep** from Brian Charles, who was Managing Director of Michael Gerson for many years. On **25 Oct**

Yasmine Webb, who is Manager at the Barnet Local Studies and Archives Centre in Mill Hill, will be telling us about the London Borough of Barnet Archives. Our last meeting should be a fascinating one: on **22 Nov** Mike Hazeldine will be telling us about the history of Music Hall. Our annual Christmas party will follow on **13 Dec**.

SEVENTY YEARS YOUNG

Thursday 27 October was a memorable day for the Society - it was John Donovan's seventieth birthday and the occasion was marked at our meeting the previous evening by a tuneful rendition by "*Happy Birthday to You*" by the assembled company. After the meeting everyone enjoyed a birthday cake which had been beautifully iced by Janet Liversidge.

Without John, of course, there would be no Friern Barnet & District Local History Society. It was his idea, back in 1999, to form a small group to investigate the history of the area. John was advised that, if he was lucky, he might get around 30 or 40 people interested after about five years. It is thanks to John's enthusiasm and infectious good humour that the Society has been a great success; our membership now stands at 153.

John's choice of "*Past, Present, Future*" as a motto for the Society aptly describes our work to date; as well as investigating the history of the area, we are recording present day events so that future historians will have a record of life in the latter part of the twentieth and the early part of the 21st centuries.

Above all, John's inspired leadership has led to our unofficial motto: *Local History can be Fun*. Here's to the future, John!

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our Christmas Party will be held on at 8.00pm on Wednesday 14 December at our usual venue, St John's Church Hall in Friern Barnet Lane, next to Whetstone Police Station. If we say so ourselves, last year's party was a huge success and everyone enjoyed themselves and got into the Christmas spirit. We hope that this year's event will be just as good, if not better! In order for us to arrange the catering we need to know in advance how many people will be coming so tickets, price £3, will be on sale at our meeting on Wednesday 23 November. If you were unable to attend the meeting and wish to come to the party, don't worry, just call David Berguer on 020 8444 3089 and you can pay on the night, but please do telephone first!

A happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year to everyone

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