

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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A VERY SPECIAL MAN

by David Berguer

In a debate in the House of Commons on 9 June 2004, Dr Julian Lewis, Conservative MP for New Forest East, was discussing the treatment of war veterans when he said the real heroes were the ones who did not come back. One of those heroes had been Minister of Christ Church Congregational Church in Friern Barnet Road and his story still brings a lump to the throat some 60 years after his death.

Herbert Cecil Pugh was born in Johannesburg, South Africa on 2 November 1898. He came to Britain to study at Oxford and received his BA in October 1924, followed by an MA in 1926. He was appointed Minister of Christ Church in November 1927 and initially lived at 26 Macdonald Road, later moving in to number 6 when the Church sold number 26. The Rev. Pugh was a popular figure who exuded an air of warmth and friendliness and he and his wife Amy operated an "open house" policy at their home where all were welcome.

In October 1939, a month after the outbreak of the Second World War, Cecil Pugh resigned from his post at Friern Barnet and joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve as a Chaplain. He was given the rank of Squadron Leader and was posted to No 4 Recruits Centre at Bridgnorth, Shropshire. He soon let it



be known that, as in Friern Barnet, his home was open to everyone with marital or spiritual problems. One long-serving airman said "That is a Christianity that I could understand." Cecil was invited by the BBC to broadcast some of the Sunday evening talks and his theme was "To rebuild this war-scarred world, listen to God for His plan – then start rebuilding with yourself."

In 1941 the RAF was in the process of equipping a base at Takoradi, a town south-west of Accra, on what was then the Gold Coast, from which supplies could be sent to the Western Desert Air Force who were fighting Rommel. Crated aircraft were being shipped there, along with personnel and one of the ships involved was the SS *Anselm*. Although the men from Bridgnorth were uneasy about travelling to the West Coast of Africa, which was known as "The White Man's Grave", Rev. Cecil Pugh, who had been posted to Takoradi as the Other Denominations chaplain, did his best to reassure them, but right from the start things started to go badly wrong.

The *Anselm* joined a large convoy leaving from Liverpool but mechanical problems forced her to return to port to effect repairs and she was some four days late in finally embarking. When she did leave she was accompanied by only five other vessels, the survey vessel *HMS Challenger*, the AMC *HMS Cathay* and three corvettes, *HMS Lavender*, *HMS Petunia* and *HMS Starwort*.

In the early morning of Saturday 5 July 1941 the small convoy was some 300 miles off the Azores when the German U-boat U-96 made contact with them and fired a salvo of four torpedoes, one of which hit the *Anselm* in the hold on C Deck. The crew were able to launch all but one of the lifeboats and 1,053 men were saved. Unfortunately, those on C Deck had taken the brunt of the explosion and men had been killed outright or were badly wounded.

Cecil Pugh had been in his cabin when the explosion took place and he climbed on deck still wearing his dressing gown and calmly proceeded to help men get away from the ship, even giving up his place in one of the lifeboats. When he learned that men were still trapped below deck he asked to be lowered to them on a rope. At first the crew refused, knowing that the hold was already below the water line and to go down was to risk certain death. Pugh said: "My faith in God is greater than my fear of death. I must be where the men are." He was reluctantly lowered into the hold which was already awash with water and the crew's last sight of him, before they abandoned ship, was of him standing up to his shoulders in water praying with his men. The death toll was 254.

It took some years for Cecil Pugh's story to come out but when the Air Ministry had fully investigated all the facts they made a recommendation that he be posthumously awarded the George Cross. King George VI made the award on 1 April 1947 and the citation ended with the words: "He had every opportunity of saving his own life but, without regard to his own safety and in the best traditions of the Service and of a Christian Minister, he gave up his life for others."

The RAF Memorial at Runnymede records the names of 20,455 men who lost their lives in the Second World War and who have no known graves, but only one man's story is told in full. That man was Herbert Cecil Pugh, a Minister at Friern Barnet and a true hero.

WHETSTONE & HIGHGATE TURNPIKE

by John Heathfield

One of the delights of our Society is following whither our recondite President and Chairman lead, particularly where both milestones and transport are concerned. This article looks at the old road from London to the North across Finchley Common. At that period roads were the financial responsibility of the parish, however the main road to the North was so important that it was paid for by the state and therefore called the King's (or Queen's) Highway.

There is no record of the term Great North Road before 1694 but in 1731 there is a reference to the road being privatised. The Whetstone and Highgate Turnpike Trust took over responsibility and the surface was improved and tolls were charged to pay for this. About 1815 the Government decided to improve the whole road from London to Ireland via Holyhead and this was to become the A6. Thomas Telford the great engineer was employed to survey the complete route. Local surveyors, including William Attfield from Hadley and his brother John from Whetstone, aided him.

The Appendix to the Second Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1817 gave the following information on the road:

Total length of road from the Gate House at Highgate to the 13th
Milestone near Ganwick Corner – 8½ miles

Amount of mortgage debt	£1,300 @ 0.65%
Annual produce of tolls	£3,700
Expense of repairing the road	
From Christmas 1818 to	
Christmas 1819	£3,114. 17s 5d
Number of loads of ballast	7,018
Labourers involved	22 in winter, 16 in summer exclusive of ballast diggers.

All gravel sifted over the fields, the second time in order to make it clean from sand and clay. The largest ballast upon the crown, the smallest upon the sides of the road. About 200 yards of road near Finchley Common, which was not above 4 inches thick in solid road, he has taken out one foot and a half of clay and maid (sic) it good with broken stones and good ballast. A cross drain every 4 yards and a good drain down the whole length.

Telford's Annual Report for 1818 gave the following:

	<i>From Barnet heading south:</i>
Descending.	General good form, surface loose.
Bottom of hill.	Harder, heaps of gravel left side.
10 miles.	General form good, surface area good, descending hill, sides cleaned out, gravel heaps left side, footpath and equipment.
9 miles	Sides repaired with gravel. Pass Toll Gate road
	Repaired with gravel. Many heaps right side.
8 miles	General form good. Surface good. Gravel right Side, footpath left side.

7 miles

General form good. 2 men riddling road.

Between Barnet and Whetstone a whole series of inconvenient hills and hollows exist, which could easily be remedied. The Trust has of late much improved its mode of executing repairs. Pits used:

3. Mr Dickson's – about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile below Whetstone on southern side of Road. (*Note by JH: about where Waitrose stands*)
4. Mr Wilkinson's – about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile above the ground and on the southern Side (*This is now Swan Lane Recreation Ground*)
5. Mr Taylor's – about $1\frac{3}{4}$ mile above the above on the south side (*South of Summers Lane*)

Scraping of the road is done at 1d to $1\frac{1}{2}$ d per pole of $5\frac{1}{2}$ yards. Wages vary at season from 10s 6d to 12s and in harvest 15s per week. They work from 6 in the morning till 3 in the afternoon without intermission, or 9 hours per day. There are 16 labourers in winter and 22 in summer.

The Trust commences at Obelisk north of Barnet and runs across Finchley Common to Highgate Gate House north of Highgate.

	<i>Tolls</i>
Chaise and two horses	8d
Chaise and four horses	16d
Coach and six	24d
Team or wagon, narrow wheel	$15\frac{1}{2}$ d
Team or wagon, wide wheel	9d
In winter narrow wheels to carry 3 tons	
In summer narrow wheels to carry $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons	
Saddle horse	$1\frac{1}{2}$ d
Cows per score	12d
Sheep, pigs, geese etc., per score	6d

A further note by Telford in 1826 states:

New piece of road at Pricklers Hill tolerably well consolidated. There is a want of good materials for making the road fit for the vast amount of traffic between London and Barnet. The middle sixteen feet should be paved with square stones set in a strong mortar bottom. This would reduce the horse labour in the proportion of four to three.

A weighing engine at Whetstone tollgate was introduced in 1796 and was removed in 1833. There were tollgates at the Wellington pub at the bottom of Highgate Hill, at Whetstone cross roads and at Ganwick Corner, with a later gate at the foot of Barnet Hill. The Whetstone tollgate was removed in October 1863. The last surviving trustee was Joseph Baxendale. There are pictures of both in rather a good book called *Finchley & Whetstone Past* by a local author.

Editor's comment: It is worth pointing out that the "local author" is a certain noted historian by the name of John Heathfield.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?

by Richard Testar

One of the main assets of our Society is you, the members and I know you all have a wealth of local knowledge which we are now asking you to share with us.

We plan to choose a different topic in forthcoming issues of the Newsletter and we want you to give us your input. This hopefully will take the form of reminiscences, photographs, memorabilia etc which we can then assemble into a permanent record which will be of use to future generations.

This month we are concentrating on the Gaumont, North Finchley and we want to hear from everyone who ever went there, either to see films, eat in the restaurant or attend functions. Don't worry if your memories seem inconsequential: they will all help to build up a picture of the cinema, what it looked like, its layout, its importance as an entertainment venue and how it compared with other local cinemas.

The Gaumont opened on 19 July 1937 and was a replacement for the Grand Hall which had opened in 1911 and was situated at 690-700 High Road south of Castle Road, where the GKII restaurant now is. The Gaumont had 2000 seats and a café and restaurant and one of the features, in common with many other cinemas of the time, was a cinema organ (this one was a Compton which was removed in 1967). With the decline in cinema going, and the rise in the popularity of television, the Gaumont was closed in 1980 and was eventually demolished in 1987. The *artsdepot* now stands on the site.



The end of an era

Photo John Donovan

With this Newsletter you will find one of our Report Forms which we use for recording items of interest and, if you can remember anything at all about the Gaumont, please jot it down and return the form to us. If you prefer, you can email us your memories on: friernbarnethistory@hotmail.co.uk.

HOUSE NUMBERS

by David Berguer

When researching the history of an area old maps and street directories are a valuable source of information. However, one of the problems facing historians is the renumbering of streets, which became necessary as an area developed and new buildings were erected on what had formerly been vacant land. For example, in the 1937 *Kelly's Directory of Finchley and Friern Barnet* the building in High Road Whetstone, on the corner of Chandos Avenue, was numbered 14 Chandos Parade but by 1939 it had been renumbered 1370 High Road. In fact the whole of the High Road had been renumbered, so it was a one-off solution to the problem.

A more recent case was highlighted by Karl Ruge who sent us a copy of a letter he had received from Barnet Council in August 1966. This referred to the demolition of two large houses in Friern Barnet Lane between Park Way and The Ridgeway. The Borough Engineer and Surveyor explained the problem: "The numbering of new dwellings following the re-development of a site comprising more units than those which previously existed, does present some problems, particularly if re-numbering of other properties in the street is to be avoided. You may rest assured, however, that such a course is only adopted as a last resort, the usual method being to allocate a name to the new development, i.e. ".....Court" or ".....House", and to number the dwellings from No 1 onwards accordingly. This action, of course, cannot be taken until work has started, since it often occurs that there is more than one approval attached to a site involving varying numbers of units."

As it turned out, a simpler solution to this particular problem was found. Twenty houses were eventually built on the site and the houses were numbered thus: Park Way south side (from Friern Barnet Lane) numbers 2H, 2G, 2E, 2D, 2C, 2B, 2A, Friern Barnet Lane (from north) 77A, 77, 75A, 75, 73A, 73, 71A, 71. The Ridgeway north side (from Friern Barnet Lane) 1E, 1D, 1C, 1B, 1A.

OUR NEW WEBSITE

At long last we have got our own website! Pressure of work had prevented us from getting down to this before now, plus the fear that we would be inundated by enquiries from people researching their family histories. Hugh Petrie at Barnet Local Studies and Archives solved that problem for us. He said that a link to the Archives would be the answer and that although Yasmine Webb and Hugh would not undertake research on other people's behalf, they were more than willing to point them in the right direction.

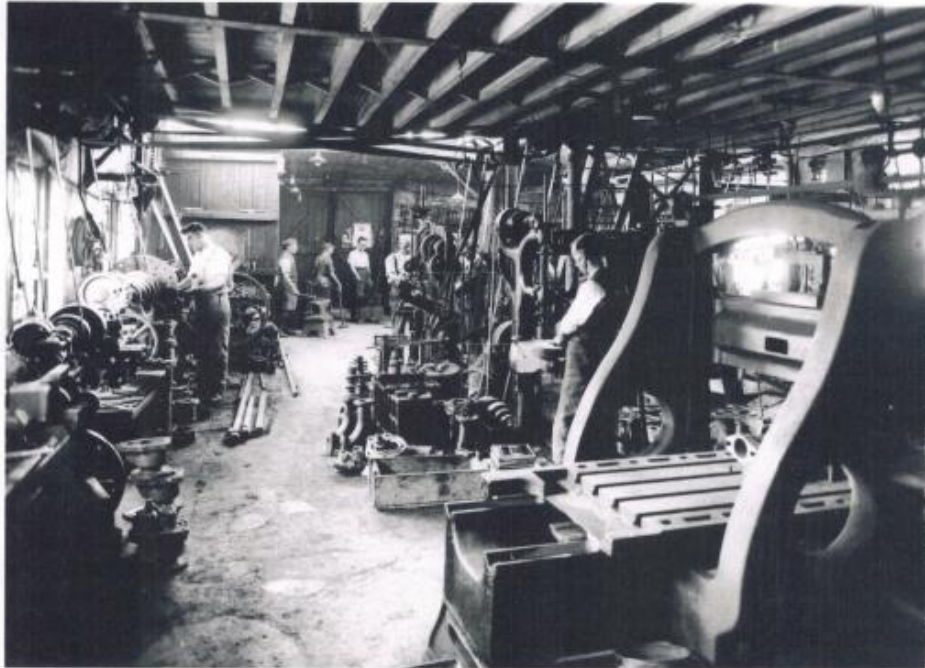
Our website, www.friernbarnethistory.org.uk, went live on 1 November 2006. Initially it is fairly basic but in the fullness of time we hope to expand on it considerably and include such things as a list of all the books in our library and the artefacts that we hold. If you have any comments on the content or the design we would welcome them.

OVER THE LINE

by Shirley Gardiner

My father, Charles Martin, was born in 1901 in Colney Villas, Cromwell Road, Friern Barnet, on The Freehold. He was one of nine children, plus one foster child. Cromwell Road then ran from Colney Hatch Lane to the railway path, commonly known as The Linepath. This followed the railway line up past Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum and on past the New Southgate bridge. Charlie's older siblings were born in Islington with the rest of the family born on The Freehold. He attended the local school through his younger years, joining the Boy's Brigade where he learned to play the bugle.

After leaving school Charlie worked at a Muswell Hill Broadway bakers and then at Biggs Wall in Pembroke Road, after which he joined the Great Northern Railway at their Hornsey Depot. Charlie was very strong and as a fireman on the engines he shovelled many tons of coal into the firebox to produce the steam which drove the engine. He eventually became a driver and spent World War II driving trains through London and up North. Charlie always rode his bike to and from the depot, but one day he arrived home late in an ambulance – a large lamp had fallen off the front of the engine onto his foot!



Inside Biggs Wall, circa 1930s. Unguarded machinery and debris on the floor would certainly not be acceptable to the Health & Safety inspectors today.

On the Freehold Charlie was known as "Wag" and his friend, who also lived in Cromwell Road, was called "Skimmy". Three of Charlie's sisters were particularly tall and were known as "The Lifeguards". Nicknames were very common in those days. Charlie's father William was a fishmonger whose round covered Muswell Hill as well as The Freehold. At one time he had two horses but in his later years he used a handcart and wore a striped apron. Each morning, except

Sunday, Charlie and his sister would meet their father at the station to help with the fish load from Billingsgate. The children received 2d for the school bank and 1d to spend.

During the First World War, father William served as a corporal with the Army Service Corps. He went to France in 1915. It was said that he dyed his hair and lied about his age to be sure that he could enlist; he was over 50 by then. When William the Fishmonger died in 1936 he laid in St Peter-le-Poer overnight and was buried "over the line" in the Great Northern Cemetery. I should explain here that the term "over the line" was used by Freeholders to describe anywhere north of what is now the North Circular Road. Charlie's mother Charlotte assisted the doctors in delivering babies. One of these babies, I was told, she delivered and then brought straight home. He stayed with the family until he was an adult. His name was Bertie Manlow.

Over the line in New Southgate, near the gasworks, lived four Gould brothers and one sister with their families. William Gould the greengrocer was my grandfather. William and his wife Adelaide had 8 children and they lived in various houses in Palmers Road, moving down slowly towards the gasworks. Finally they had a greengrocery shop next door to the *Sir John Lawrence* pub. Adelaide ran the shop, William having a greengrocery round which took him as far as East Barnet where every Friday he would meet with other traders in one of the local hostelrys. His horse used to bring him home! The family kept rabbits in the smelly sideways backing on to the *Sir John Lawrence* and they also kept a pig down the yard where they stabled the horse. William dropped dead in the room behind the shop and he was buried in the Great Northern Cemetery. A benefit concert was held and the funds raised were used to pay for a large gravestone.

Adelaide, who ran the shop, sold vinegar from a large barrel which she kept in the back room. She was also, apparently, a local moneylender. She was quite a spitfire of a woman who must have used a cane because my mother said the canes used to disappear down the cellar steps! To wake her three daughters, all in one bed, she would whack them with her rolled up corsets. Adelaide loved her Guinness from the local off licence in Station Road and she used to save me a small glass when I was old enough to travel on the Underground to visit her.

My mother Winnie, the third daughter was born not at home but surprisingly further up Palmers Road at the address of *The Beehive*; we don't know why. My mother and her older brother had to clean the scullery every day before school. When the family sat round the black-leaded range they would rest their toes on the frozen rabbits thawing ready for their father's round the next day. Up Palmers Road was Jackson's Field where a fair was sometimes held. Adelaide got friendly with the lady who ran the hoopla stall. Winnie used to sit in the caravan each night to look after the baby while the parents ran their hoopla stall, and sometime she was rewarded with a box of sweets.

One day, Winnie, then about 16, noticed a group of boys on the corner. One was particularly good looking; that was the first time she saw Charlie Martin. Charlie said that he first met Winnie in Oram's Fields on her way home from work at Bobby Paul's on The Freehold. Her mother said she had to work there because the wages were higher but Winnie found that the higher rate didn't apply to her as she was under 18.

At the end of the First World War Winnie was coming down the High Road when up the High Road marched the Boys Brigade, with Charlie blowing his bugle. Winnie hid her head in a young girl's embarrassment. When courting, the young couple used to go to the Coronation Cinema, known as The Fleapit. Winnie was by now working at the Railway Clearing House in Somers Town, where the boss's son gave her chocolates. She and Charlie would eat them when they were in the cinema. Charlie often fell asleep there probably due to his shift work.

Winnie Gould married Charlie Martin at St Peter-le-Poer when they were both 21 and Charlie earned £2 18s 10d a week on the railway. At the wedding Charlie was found sound asleep on a pile of guests' clothes. Winnie's father didn't give her away; he said he wasn't giving one of his girls away. Charlie insisted that Winnie stopped working because she was now a married woman. Over the years Charlie iced many cakes using the knowledge he had gained at the baker's when he was a young boy. He even iced his daughter's 4 tier wedding cake.

I often wonder how many times Winnie and Charlie walked across the bridge and down the line path

Apparently, in times long past, two brothers Martin came from France to England. Now in 2007 our Martin descendants are scattered as far away as Australia. The last two Martin daughters from The Freehold died in the 1990's in the Oakleigh Road area, one having to move in the 1970s due to The Freehold's development. The Gould family is vastly reduced and well spread, two babies even living half their lives in Thailand from where their mother hails.

Such are some of the tales I have been told about living "Over the Line".

SHOP SURVEY

by David Berquer

Our annual survey of 530 shops was completed in October 2006 with the breakdown by type as follows, the figures for 2005 shown for comparison:

	2005	2006
Restaurants/Take aways	91	99
Food shops	30	29
Estate Agents	23	23
Ladies Hairdressers	21	21
CTNs *	19	17
Furnishing/Carpets	19	21
Ladies Wear	19	18
Pubs	18	18
Dry Cleaners/Laundrettes	16	17
DIY/Hardware	13	13
Electrical	12	11
Banking/Insurance	11	10
Beauty Salons	11	12
Chemists	11	10
Bookmakers	10	10
Opticians	10	9
Charity Shops	7	8

Jewellers	7	8
Men's Wear	7	8
Building Societies	7	7
Gent's Hairdressers	6	7
Garages/Car Accessories	8	6
Footwear	6	6
Chain Stores/Discount Stores	5	5
Florists	5	5
Health Foods	5	5
Photography	5	5
Wines	5	5
Post Offices	4	4
Books	3	3
Mobile Phones	5	3
Children's Wear/Toys	5	2
Travel Agents	3	3
Video Hire	3	3
Antiques	3	2
Shops Vacant	39	28
Others	54	69
	529	530

* = Confectioners, Tobacconists, Newsagents

The distribution of shops by area is:

	2005	2006
High Road North Finchley	157	154
High Road Whetstone	101	104
Woodhouse Road	63	64
Friern Barnet Road	59	62
Oakleigh Road North	45	42
Colney Hatch Lane	38	39
Ballards Lane (n of Kingsway)	34	34
Cromwell Road	2	2
Friern Bridge Retail Park	11	11
Oakleigh Road South	10	10
Nether Street	4	4
Sydney Road	2	2
Kingsway	0	1
Wetherill Road	1	1
Wilton Road	1	1
	529	530

In Barnet Council's latest Unitary Development Plan (UDP), published in December 2006, specific reference is made to North Finchley Town Centre. The Council is keen to encourage the regeneration of the area, particularly Nether Street and that part of Ballards Lane between Kingsway and the High Road. The emphasis will be on "evening economy and leisure uses" which would include restaurants and takeaways and drinking establishments. The idea is presumably to improve usage of the *artsdepot* and make that particular area a centre for leisure. The North Finchley Bus Station, which was closed in March 2006

following a fatal accident, would have helped in that respect but Transport for London are still considering what to do with it.

LAMAS LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE 2006 – LOST LONDON

by Colin Barratt

This annual local history conference, organised by LAMAS (London & Middlesex Archaeological Society) at the Museum of London, was a particularly popular event this year, with all the tickets sold out months beforehand for the 270 seat theatre. As in previous years, we had booked a table in the display rooms, among other local history societies of the London area, and we had a lot of visitors in the periods between the lectures. Unfortunately, we were rationed to just two tickets for the conference itself, for the table holders only, so many who wanted to attend were disappointed. The conference was preceded by the awarding of the LAMAS Annual Award for local history publications. This year it was won by Camden History Society, with *The Streets of Kentish Town*.

The first lecture featured *The Tower of London – A Lost Palace*, and discussed the various buildings originally within its walls, and other early features of the Tower complex. Drawings exist which help to show the layout, and archaeology research has been carried out to discover how the buildings were used, which were many and varied. An ordnance building, erected in the 18th century, destroyed many of the remains of a 13th century palace, but some parts still exist. The Royal lodgings were not used much by Royalty over the centuries, but uses were always found for the buildings there, although often not for the purposes for which they were designed,

The next subject was *Lost Churches and Convents of Medieval London*. Medieval London had a host of palaces and convents, and more than 100 parish churches before the Reformation. It was explained why monasticism had developed in London, and the various orders which were founded. There were three orders of friar (Grey, Black and White), and two crusading orders: the Knights Templar (who guarded the Christian sites in Palestine) and the Knights Hospitalers (who looked after pilgrims). There were many orders of monks and nuns which flourished for hundreds of years until most were abolished during the Reformation, with only street names now surviving to record their existence.

A late change in the programme was *Lost London Revisited*, by Hermione Hobhouse, whose book on the subject was published in 1970. She discussed the photographic record made in the late 19th century of threatened buildings, to record them before they were lost forever. The Ancient Monuments Act was passed in 1882, but this only related to structures such as Stonehenge. The LCC Committee succeeded in preserving many buildings, but many others were demolished. Some still exist, but with changed use, or with only the facades kept, and the interiors destroyed. The "villages" of London are being lost and it is hard work fighting powerful developers.

The afternoon session started with *The Lost Rivers of London*. By using early maps and Ordnance Surveys, the routes of the major rivers and tributaries running through the heart of London had been investigated and mapped. These were often used to mark boundaries, but over the centuries many of these once famous waterways had become open sewers so were diverted underground, and are now mainly lost to view in tunnels and culverts. The Walbrook Stream once

fed the moat around the Tower of London, rivers such as the Westbourne, Tyburn and Fleet all rose in Hampstead, and the Wandall, Stamford Brook and Efre ran from the hills in the south of London. However, these were still used as sewers until the late 19th century, when Joseph Bazalagette created the sewer system we have today.

A fascinating talk followed, on *London's Disused Underground Stations*. The speaker, Jim Connor, had been allowed access to many of these former stations, and had made a photographic record of the features remaining, including the decorative tiling. The first ever electric tube terminus was Great William Street, which was closed in 1900, as its alignment did not allow for extension. Other stations, such as York Road (north of King's Cross) and British Museum (between Chancery Lane and Tottenham Court Road), were closed in the 1920s and 1930s because they were underused, mainly as they were too near more convenient stations.

The final lecture was entitled *The Abercrombie Plan for London – A Lost Opportunity*. In 1941, during the darkest days of the WW2, Sir Patrick Abercrombie was commissioned to prepare a plan for the future of London. The plan was published in two parts: County of London (1943) and Greater London (1944). Abercrombie was trained as an architect, and was employed as a planner. The plan pointed out the defects of London – overcrowding, the jumble of houses and industry, traffic congestion and the inadequate distribution of open spaces. He proposed four rings: an inner urban ring (overspill from the LCC area), suburban ring (static zone), green belt (permanently safeguarded) and an outer country ring (for new towns and roads). It was a bold plan, and attempted to preserve communities in a green London, with low density housing, gardens and pedestrianised areas. After the War, the plan was not implemented. Ideas had changed. High density housing, in tower blocks, was in favour, and industry was not encouraged. However, many of the proposals did eventually come about. The Green Belt was extended, eight New Towns and the M25 outer ring road were built, Crossrail is due to be built and there is a return to lower density estates.

Next year the Museum of London will be undergoing extensive rebuilding, so is unlikely to be available for this conference. An alternative venue is yet to be decided.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just a reminder that your annual subscription runs out on 31 March. We hope that you will want to renew for a further year and a renewal form is enclosed. We are glad to say that the rates remain the same - £6 for a single person. £10 for a couple.

**Friern Barnet & District
Local History Society ©**

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