

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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IT'S ALL PART OF BOOTS' SERVICE, SIR!

by Ron Kingdon

I took over the management of the photographic department in Boots the Chemist in High Street Barnet in 1956 (we had real photographic departments in those days) and, as I lived in North Mymms, I used to cycle to work every day. As well as an interest in photography, I was starting to become interested in hi-fi equipment and government surplus material and Tottenham Court Road was a Mecca for us enthusiasts, and I often made my way up there.

In those days we only had one half day a week off work (early closing day in Barnet was Thursday) although, of course, things improved later. Imagine the scene: at 1pm the shop closed and I cycled off to London and, passing through Whetstone, I noticed a café being taken down. I saw an enamel sign on the structure and stopped to ask a workman if I could have it. He said: "*If you can get it off, it's yours.*" The screws holding it were pretty rusty, with poor slots. With my Boys' Brigade training I always carried a few small tools in my saddle bag so after a struggle I managed to remove it. The question now was, how could I cart this 18 inch diameter heavy steel plate all the way to London and back? I managed to tie it to my bike (fortunately I had string and a strong carrier) and cycled along to the Boots shop in North Finchley. I knew the manager there, Geoff Dawes, and I asked the porter (warehouseman) if he would kindly pack it up for me and put it on the next day's delivery van which used to do the rounds of our shops dropping off medical supplies. Sure enough it arrived on the Friday at Barnet and at the close of business I tied it on my cycle and transported it to its new home in North Mymms.



CORRECTION

We had a telephone call from one of our members, Margaret Wilson, who had read the article by Joan Morrell in the April Newsletter. Margaret knows the Sweet family very well and she has pointed out that Trevor Sweet is happily still very much alive.

WORK IN THE ARCHIVES

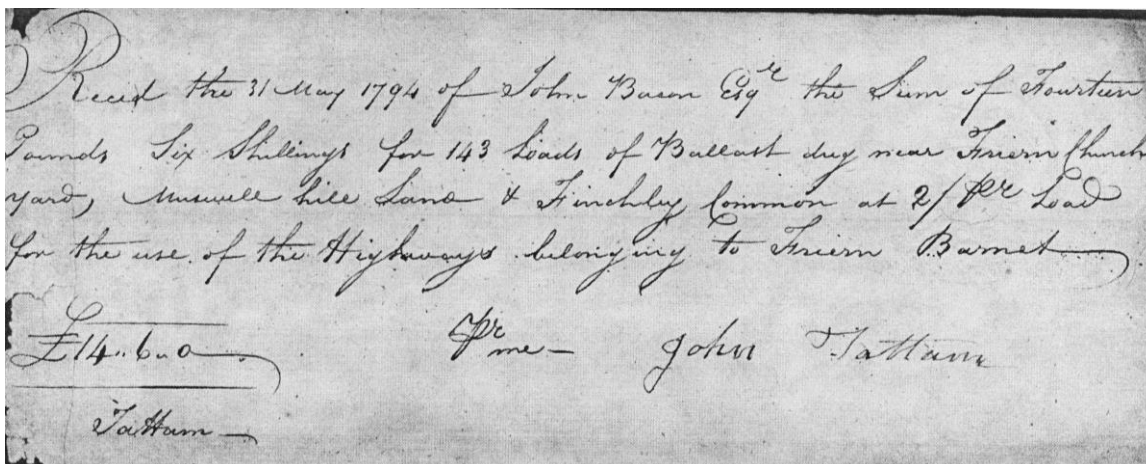
by David Berguer

When the reorganisation of local government took place in 1965, Friern Barnet Urban District ceased to exist as a separate entity and became part of the London Borough of Barnet. Unfortunately someone at the Town Hall decided that old records were worthless and decided to dump them, and it was only by chance that John Heathfield saw a skip full of old papers outside the Town Hall and managed to rescue as many as he could.

Some of the records relating to Friern Barnet are at the London Metropolitan Archives, some are at the National Archives at Kew and some are held at the Barnet Local Studies and Archives Centre at Mill Hill. Many of the documents at Mill Hill, which date back to the eighteenth century, are in a very fragile state and cannot be easily handled.

Initially the Society approached Yasmine Webb, the Barnet Archivist, and offered to fund the preservation of some of the more vulnerable ones, but the cost of doing so proved to be prohibitive so an alternative solution was devised. I offered to spend half a day a week at Mill Hill going through some ten boxes of documents and scanning them onto the Barnet Archives' computer. This would ensure that even if the original records deteriorated over time, at least a digital record would be kept for posterity. I estimate that the task will take over a year to complete, but it is a pleasure, not a chore.

I shall report on any particularly interesting documents that I come across, but of the 300 odd documents that I have processed so far, a couple are of interest. An invoice from 1812 showed that the cost of hiring a labourer for six days was 13/6d. The following receipt shows that John Bacon was responsible for the upkeep of the highways in Friern Barnet:



Recd the 31 May 1794 of John Bacon Esq the Sum of Fourteen Pounds Six Shillings for 143 Loads of Ballast dug near Friern Churchyard, Muswell Hill Lane & Finchley Common at 2/- per Load for the use of the Highways belonging to Friern Barnet

L. Bacon
John Tattam

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JOSEPH BAXENDALE

by John Heathfield

Joseph Baxendale was born in Lancaster in 1785, the son of Josiah who died in 1835 at the age of 73. Joseph worked in the calico business and soon made enough money to marry Mary, daughter of John Birley. They moved to London where Joseph bought up the ailing firm of Pickfords, whose main office was in Markyate near Dunstable.

Pickfords used horses and carts to carry goods all over the country and in those days the roads were so poor that they were almost impassable with mud in the winter months. Joseph invested in canal barges and devised a system of interlocking deliveries, whereby carts met his barges at timetabled points. He instructed his drivers to carry a loaded blunderbuss and made snap inspections during which he would fire the weapon. He saw the potential of railways which provided all weather transport, and he invested early in their stock. He was a principal shareholder in what became the South Eastern Railway, and the Folkestone Harbour branch, which he owned personally, was opened in 1849. He also had shares in the Paris/Nord railway and in 1852 he suggested building a tunnel from his Folkestone line to his French line but nothing came of it.

In 1824 he bought the Woodside estate from the Rev Kenneth Neate. The name reminds us that Finchley Common was heavily wooded at one time and the Common ended where the estate began and fields had names such as Woodside, Wood Corner and Wood End Corner. Baxendale cleared the old house and had a new one built which was one of the first in the district to be lit by gas, supplied from a holder at the foot of Totteridge Lane. He had St John the Apostle church built in one corner of his back garden in 1832.



Joseph Baxendale in what appears to be an invalid carriage drawn by a donkey

Baxendale was noted for his generosity to the local community. He put up money annually for the Charity school in Friern Barnet Lane and when the school was rebuilt in 1854 he and John Miles were the main subscribers. He also gave money for St Andrews School at Totteridge and for new churches throughout the district. He used his lawns for cricket matches between his

grooms and his gardeners and also between his estate teams and others like the Finchley Police and the Gentlemen of Whetstone. This eventually led to the formation of Finchley Cricket Club.

He was the last surviving member of the Whetstone and Highgate Turnpike Trust, which closed about 1863, and was chairman of the Barnet Bench and during that time he was particularly noted for his kindness to poor people.

His wife died in 1862 at the age of 72 and Joseph died 10 years later in 1872. The family servant, Jane Ashburner, is buried alongside them in the family vault, not unlike the ancient Egyptians, in order to serve them throughout eternity but also as a mark of friendship. Mary's family name is remembered in Birley Road and, of course, Baxendale, the road alongside Barnet House, recalls Joseph himself and his contribution to the Whetstone community.

A FORGOTTEN WHETSTONE SCHOOLMASTER

by John Heathfield

Like all schoolmasters I feel neglected and undervalued. So was Stephen Oliver.

The first St John's School in Whetstone was founded in 1833 at the suggestion of Joseph Baxendale. It was housed in a small building which had previously been the parish poor house, about 30 yards down the south side of Totteridge Lane where Ridgemont House now stands. The building was described as "very beamy and cobwebby."

The first teacher was the Rev Henry Ventris, Vicar of St John the Apostle, who was appointed in 1832. He lived in lodgings in the High Road near Ivy House. Henry and his wife had eight children, one of whom, Anne, died at the age of three and is buried in the chancel of St John's, possibly at the crossing. The little girl is the only person buried in the main body of the church.

Ventris was succeeded by Stephen Oliver who was born in 1808 at Leigh in Kent, the illegitimate son of Alice Oliver. He went to Tunbridge National School and stayed on as a monitor. In the 1841 Census Stephen was described as Master, with his wife Phoebe as Mistress. St John's School was a Sunday and Day school for 29 boys and 30 girls, supported by voluntary contributions, school pence and small grants from charity estates and the National Society. Boys attended from the age of 6 until 9 and girls until the age of 12. The Sunday classes were religious in the morning and in the afternoon there were adult literary classes as well.

The National Society for the Poor in the Principles and Practice of the Established Church had been founded in the early years of the nineteenth century. There was a rival Non-Conformist organisation, the British and Foreign Schools Society. The National Society laid emphasis on the facts of the Bible, the B & F emphasised understanding. This kind of split between knowledge and understanding has bedevilled education ever since.

The curriculum at that time was "the three Rs" plus religion and "good plain needlework". His wife taught sewing to the girls. The parish registers show:

Richard Oswald, son of Stephen and Phoebe Oliver, Master at the National School, born 11 May 1841.

Walter, son of Stephen and Phoebe Oliver, Master at the National School aged 30 was buried on 15 Nov 1845.

Stephen was also Parish Clerk and conducted the parish census in 1861 and 1871 and he was also the village constable. The entries about his wife's death are in his handwriting. Her death left him with three young children and in 1846 he married for a second time, to Anne Squibbs who had been a maid to Mrs Baxendale. Mrs Baxendale wrote a testimonial which has survived: *"Mrs Baxendale has much pleasure in testifying that as far as her own experience goes, Mrs Ann Oliver - formerly her maid - is quite competent to supervise the sewing taken in at the National School. About four years ago she left Mrs Baxendale's service to become the second wife of Mr Oliver and any work sent to the school had been promptly undertaken and well done. Woodside 1 Oct 1851."*

It is worth noting the existence of "work experience" for the girls, in that sewing was sent to the school. Garments thus mended were charged for, with the proceeds going to the school funds.

There was no school house at Whetstone and Stephen had a large and growing family. About 1851 Stephen was Master at Walkern, near Buntingford, Hertfordshire. In 1854 he moved again to Cutsdean in the Cotswolds and stayed there until his death in 1877. His wife Ann continued to run the school until her death in 1883. The School Inspectors wrote favourably about his *"original teaching methods and good discipline based on kindness."*

St John's moved to a new school building in Britannia Road in 1863 and then to another building near the church.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN.....?

by Sylvia Stilts

There were always sparrows in the garden and we used to cut the grass with a heavy cylinder lawn mower. Flower pots were made of terra cotta and heavy wooden deckchairs were kept in a cobwebby shed full of rusty old tins of paint. Dustbins mainly contained the ashes from the open fires which had to be raked out every morning. A sheet of newspaper would be held over the fireplace to encourage a draught and get the fire going.

Butter was cut and patted into shape from a large block and cheese was cut with a wire. A single egg could be purchased and all eggs were carried home in a paper bag. Bacon was sliced in a machine while you waited. Chicken was expensive and bought as a treat at Christmas. The Sunday joint of beef was so large that there was enough left over for shepherd's pie on Monday. There were no supermarkets or sell-by dates on foods and metrication was an unknown word. At the baker's a Hovis loaf cost 3d and fancy cakes were 7 for 6d or 5 for 6d if extra fancy.

Sugar, tea coffee and dried fruit were weighed out by the grocer on to thick blue paper which was folded into a tight packet. Biscuits were displayed in glass-topped boxes, weighed into paper bags and the top corners twisted.



The end of an era. In 1992 Dewhurst the butcher in Woodhouse Road has closed and people would be buying their meat at Tesco in future Photo John Donovan

Broken biscuits were sold cheaply. Game, still clad in fur and feathers, dripped blood as it hung outside the butcher's shop, which had sawdust on the floor.

Draper's assistants put your cash into a little box attached to an overhead wire and whizzed it off to the cashier who returned it with change and a receipt. Letters were written with a fountain pen in blue-black ink on a small pad that had a separate sheet with heavy black lines ruled on it and a sheet of blotting paper. Letters were delivered twice a day and local mail posted before 8am arrived the same day.

At the greengrocer's there were small red bananas from South Africa and strawberries were scooped up from a fragrant, juicy heap. Autumn brought plenty of russet apples, damsons, Victoria plums and greengages (as opposed to greengage plums). "Potherbs" were weighed out by the pound and included mixed carrots, onions, parsnips and turnips. A sprig of mint was always put into your new potatoes and all old potatoes came with mud on them.

Doctors left labelled bottles and pill boxes on their dispensary window sill for patients to collect, and chemists would fill customers' own bottles with so many pennyworth of cough mixture, liniment or liquid paraffin as requested.

Barbers gave every man a short-back-and-sides haircut and only old men sported a beard (if you saw one, you yelled "beaver!"). Opticians who tested your eyesight put drops in your eyes to dilate the pupils and everything was hazy for hours.

People did not eat in the street and families ate every meal together. People queued at bus stops and children stood up to give their seat to ladies, the elderly or pregnant women. Christian names were used only by family and

friends. Home helps were called charwomen. 78rpm records were played on wind-up gramophones or a large radiogram and there were no TVs, CDs or mobile phones.

Children were banished to their rooms as a punishment and were reprimanded for reading too much. Policemen would give you a clip round the ear and tell you to go off home and you would get a telling-off from your parents when you arrived.

Wages were paid in cash every Friday (Wednesday for the police) and many people did not have a bank account. Professional footballers were paid £8 a week. Bus fares were paid to a conductor who issued tickets from a rack and which were then punched in a machine that went "ting". The minimum fare was one penny and the adult fare from Friary Park to Wilton Road was tuppence.

Winters were severe and householders were frequently "frozen out" and had to deal with burst pipes when the thaw came. Jack Frost would paint wonderful feathery designs on the inside of your bedroom windows overnight. There was skating on the lake at Alexandra Palace and sliding on the Friary Park pond. Thick fogs known as "pea soupers" were frequent, halting traffic and causing misery to people with respiratory problems.

Oh well, back to my television, chicken dinner with frozen vegetables and strawberries out of season.

BRING BACK THE BIRCH!

by David Berguer

There is much talk of the lack of discipline and respect from some today's youngsters and those of us of a certain age recall the time when teachers were able to chastise pupils without fear of reprisal. I must admit that I was unaware that there were any rules involved in this process but the following document may be as surprising to you as was to me:

LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS

1. The Headmaster or Headmistress of the School is responsible to the Council for all forms of punishment, including corporal punishment, which are used in the School.
2. Corporal punishment should never be severe and should be used only if it appears that other disciplinary measures are inappropriate and after due regard has been had to the emotional and psychological effects of the punishment on the individual child. In the case of persistent offenders, the desirability of reference to the Educational Psychologist should be considered.
3. Any forms of correction which would be likely to affect adversely the mental or physical development of the child, e.g. boxing the ears, striking the head, rapping the knuckles, are strictly prohibited.

4. No corporal punishment should be inflicted except by the Headmaster or the Headmistress or by such Assistant Teachers as may be especially authorised by him or her for valid reasons.
5. Headmasters and Headmistresses who give to, or withdraw from, any Assistant Teachers the right to inflict corporal punishment should note the facts at the time in the school record or annals.
6. Corporal punishment should not be inflicted in the presence of other pupils.
7. Corporal punishment should only be inflicted with a cane. In the case of boys it should be inflicted on the hand or the buttocks. In the case of girls, corporal punishment should not be inflicted save in exceptional circumstances and then only by the Headmistress or an Assistant Headmistress, and on the hands only.
8. The cane should on each occasion be obtained from the Headmaster or Headmistress, and returned to him/her after use.
9. A record of every case of corporal punishment must be entered in the punishment book by the person inflicting it, and be initialled by the Headmaster or Headmistress immediately after the punishment inflicted.
10. The Head Teacher must ensure that the punishment book is available for inspection at the request of, or on behalf of, the Council, the Governors or Managers as appropriate.

Infant Schools

While the general principles set out above should be applied in schools for children of all ages, Headmistresses of infant schools will doubtless concur in the view that corporal punishment in the case of infant pupils will rarely be necessary. Where, in the exceptional case, it appears to be the only remedy, the use of the open hand on forearm or thigh will be sufficient.

7th February, 1966

One of our local primary schools recorded the following misdemeanours and subsequent punishments:

Bullying	1 hand
Stone throwing	4 slaps on the legs
Sticking compass points into another child's back	1 on rear
Going out of school premises at playtime	1 on each hand
Swearing at teacher	3 on each hand
Continual disobedience	2 on seat

These six punishments were the only ones recorded in a seventeen year period, so it is clear that they were only given as a last resort. One wonders if any of the children suffered any long term harm and whether their behaviour was better as a result.

I have to say that, although I was an exemplary pupil at my grammar school

(I only ever received one detention!), the few of my friends who were forced to wait outside the Headmaster's door to be called in for a brief taste of the cane never seemed to suffer any ill effects and, in fact, one of them turned out to be a bank manager!

A POSTMAN RECALLS

In the 1980s Percy Reboul conducted a series of taped interviews with local residents one of whom was Edward Heathfield, father of our own John Heathfield. Percy has very kindly given us permission to reproduce Edward's memories here, which first appeared in a booklet entitled *Those Were the Days* which was published by HADAS in 1980:

"I was born at Finchley in 1903 and went to various local schools, including St Mary's at Finchley. I joined the Post Office in November 1930 and left in 1968 with 38 years service including war service.

In those days most recruitment was through ex-servicemen and every postman had served in the 1914-18 war. I applied for a job while I was in the Army and was put on a register. Two and a half years later a vacancy occurred. Coming from the services, the 2nd Class Certificate of Education was sufficient, and I was posted to High Street, Barnet.

I remember my first day well. I was in civilian clothes and had to be at Barnet at 6am, where I was given an arm band. It was pouring with rain and I was given a large sack to drape around my shoulders. Looking a bit of a freak, I was assigned to a senior postman called George Abbott, who told me what to do. He was friendly, but discipline was very strict in those days.

I hadn't a clue about the job. I had to learn about sorting. Some mail came in by motor and some by rail from Barnet. The mail was brought into the Postmen's Office, tipped out onto a table and the letters spread around. It was all for the Barnet area and had to be sorted into "walks" – we don't call it a round. You had to learn which roads were in each walk and the mail was sorted into streets and numbers in the proper order.

All deliveries were on foot but Barnet had two sorts of postmen – the town men and the rural men, who delivered in areas like South Mimms. The latter had heavy bicycles which I believe are still used today. There were 3 deliveries. One set out at 7am, another at 11am and the third at 3pm. Barnet Post Office was in Outer London. Adjacent was Whetstone in the Inner London area, where they did 4 deliveries a day. Conditions were quite different in the two areas.

We were inspected every morning before work. Buttons had to be bright and shoes properly cleaned. A black tie and white shirt had to be worn. This was part of the discipline and there was no resentment. My uniform came after one month: navy blue coarse serge trousers, waistcoat and jacket and an odd-shaped hat called a "shako" with a peak front and rear. The peak at the back was to stop water stop water running down your neck. You bought your own shoes and wore your own shirt and tie. An interesting accessory was an oil-lamp which fitted into your buttonhole. It was convenient in winter because you could warm your hands on it – you can't wear gloves when you're delivering mail.

The pay was £2. 7s. a week. This was quite good money for those days and conditions were good, as it was an established civil service job. However, after 6 months the economic crisis came and everyone took a cut in wages – mine went down to £2. 3s. 6d. We protested, marched down Whitehall and got mixed up with militant communists. You must remember that we were civil servants under the Treasury and were not supposed to protest against the State or to strike. All we could do was feebly demonstrate and write to our MP – but nothing could be done.

We worked a 48-hour week, split duty, from 6am to 11am and 3pm to 6pm. There was a fortnight's holiday, regulated by seniority. You were told when you could take your holiday. My first leave was the first two weeks in March. It snowed all the time. Other benefits were a non-contributory pension scheme and generous sick leave. Incremental increases had to be qualified for. I lost my first increment because I was late 16 times during the first year (a total time in 12 months of 1¾ hours) when the maximum time allowed was 15 times. I lost 3s 6d a week for 6 months – and that was a lot of money. Again, it was part of the discipline.

After 4½ years I was fortunate to get a transfer to Whetstone – the sorting office at Oakleigh Road. Being Inner London, we got an extra 7s a week and I worked “on the motors”, which was another 7s a week. You were engaged, among other things, on Primary Sorting, which means, briefly, sorting the mail collected from the Barnet area into towns and regions all over the country. I went to a special training school in Islington for one month to learn this job.

I used to pick up the Barnet mails from Market Place, East Finchley, at 5.30am in the motor and drop them off at North Finchley and Whetstone. So my work embraced driving, vehicle maintenance, delivery, sorting, franking and collection from the post boxes. All local letters had to be delivered by 8am, and if they were not, people would ring up to ask where their letter was. At this time – around 1935 – Lord Hewitt (who was, I believe, Lord Chief Justice) lived in Totteridge. We had to guarantee that he got his mail by 7.30am and a special van delivery was made to his house opposite Totteridge Church.

If you made a mistake in sorting – for example, put a Birmingham letter into a Brighton sorting box, or if a postman delivered a letter for number 23 to number 25 and someone complained, you were officially handed a P18 form. This required you at once to furnish an explanation. Often there was no answer except that you had made a mistake – and for that there was no excuse. The form was sent to Head Office and you were reprimanded. It was even possible to have your increment stopped for 12 months.

As civil servants we were limited in trade union matters. The Annual Conference was held all over the country; if you attended, you had to pay your own upkeep – the Union paid only the rail fare. On one occasion the Barnet representative and I pooled our financial resources; by sharing a room and even a bed we kept our expenses down and both managed to attend the conference in the Isle of Man. On the lighter side, I well remember a resolution at Conference on the quality of the dye used in postmen's uniforms. It used to come through if you got wet. Moving the resolution, one

member recounted his fear of meeting with an accident and how ashamed he would be to be found with blue streaks on his underwear!

Just before the last war the area was growing considerably, especially on the south side of Totteridge Lane and Totteridge Green. This meant that men had more work and could not do it in the time allowed. In such cases the Union secretary applied for a “test”. An inspector would come and walk round with the postman to see how long it took. Perhaps I shouldn’t tell this story – but I will. We would be tipped off that someone was coming to do a test, and we had a system of buying lots of postcards and addressing them to all the outlandish places to make sure that the postman went there during the test. We would write anything on the card – Buy Typhoo Tea, or something like that – so that the bloke being tested did the maximum journey.”

BEATING THE BOUNDS

by Sylvia Stilts

This tradition dates back to the 17th century and takes place in many rural parishes on Rogation Sunday, the fifth Sunday after Easter. The object is to teach boys (not girls!) where the church boundaries are.

The Rev. Adrian Benjamin revived the tradition in Whetstone in 1975, a few months after he arrived as the new vicar at All Saints. In those days Whetstone had its own copper-on-the-beat, an affable man who toured round the area on a bicycle. In reply to my questions, Adrian wrote in October 2000:

“PC Leuw accompanied us on his bike and we stopped to pray at St Mary Magdalene’s. There was a photo of us singing *The Church’s One Foundation* but the most dramatic shot was of the procession going over the railway tunnel by Coleswood. A few years ago there was a good mock-up photo taken by the *Barnet Times* of me beating the whetstone. The colour version of that is displayed in the school. The two traditions that I follow, having heard that Mr Miles used to do them 100 years ago is to sing *Oh, God Our Help in Ages Past* in the Oakleigh Road, reaching the verse “*before the rising sun*” at the appropriate moment (except that it is now *The Harvester*) and to lift a small child (a chorister originally) on someone’s shoulders so that they could touch *The Griffin’s* inn sign because, Mr Miles said it swung into the parish of St John’s, Whetstone. The new sign is higher but we managed to beat it.”

In the early days, boys were bumped on boundary stones or thrown into briars and ditches or in the pond to ensure that they never forgot the boundaries. The Victorians introduced beating objects rather than people. I wonder if Mr Miles used to duck boys in the horse trough which used to stand outside *The Griffin*?

Rogation Sunday this year is 27 April and the procession will leave All Saints after the 10am service, Rev. Adrian would be pleased to see members of the Society, so maybe we’ll see you there!



Photo from Percy Reboul Collection

The above sign was erected in Friern Barnet Lane, nearly opposite Myddelton Park in 1938. According to the *Barnet Press* of 15 October 1938 it was erected.....

“.....for the purpose of notifying strangers that they are in the historic neighbourhood of Friern Barnet. The sign, heraldic in design, probably foreshadows the time when Friern Barnet will possess its own coat of arms, thus following the example of its neighbours, Finchley, Southgate and Barnet.

The sign, designed and constructed by members of Friern Barnet Council’s staff, shows a stag’s head surmounted by a crutched cross of the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem. The association of Queen Elizabeth with the district is recorded by the stag’s head, depicting hunting, and the Fleur de Lys of Queen Elizabeth. The white vertical stripe at the base of the sign represents the Great North-road, which at one time followed the course of Friern Barnet-lane. On each side of the white the sign is painted green, representing the forests which at one time existed on both sides of Friern Barnet-lane.”

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Just a reminder that your subscriptions expired on 31 March 2008 so, if you haven’t done so already please return your renewal forms with your cheque made payable to Friern Barnet & District Local History Society.

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

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