

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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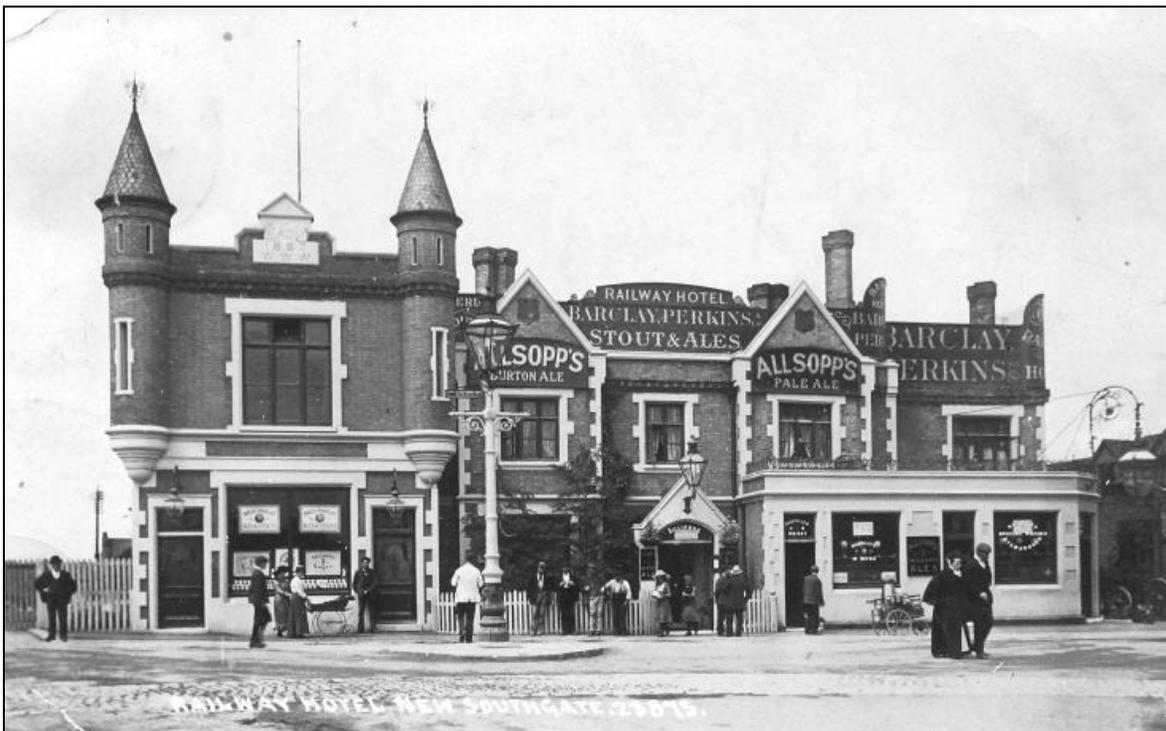
FAREWELL TO THE TURRETS

by David Berguer

Having been empty for eight years and gradually falling into a state of disrepair, the iconic building at the top of Station Road, New Southgate was demolished in February 2013. It started life around 1856 as *The Railway Hotel*, not long after the opening of the Great Northern Railway line from King's Cross to Peterborough. In 1887 a new wing was added to the west of the building featuring two fairytale-like turrets which from then on gave the building its nickname.

When it opened *The Railway Hotel* had extensive gardens to the rear covering some ten acres. An advertisement in *Southgate Messenger* of May 1859 described them as:

“beautifully situate on the top of a hill from whence, for the picturesque scenery, and the freshness and purity of the air, they are not to be surpassed. The gardens are tastefully laid out, and during the summer are open for daily Promenade and Refreshment. The play-grounds, annexed, comprise a newly-formed Bowling-green, and a field affording every facility for those recreative amusements so conducive to health, viz. Cricket, Trap-



The Turrets in its heyday in the early 1900s. The original Railway Hotel is on the right – the turrets addition on the left

ball, Quoits &c. The thousands who have already visited this delightful retreat unanimously agree that the beauty of the pleasure grounds, the extensive views of the surrounding country, and the ample accommodation afforded for Dinner and Tea parties &c., combine to render this resort for recreation, refreshment, and repose, unequalled by any other within such a short distance from London.”

The pleasure grounds were eventually sold off and St Paul's School was built there in 1893. One feature of the building was a stone plaque with “1887 WWW” inscribed on it. This may refer to the licensee at the time, a William Wooder, although a family named Ward held the license between 1870-1880.

The Turrets was a venue for wedding receptions and parties and on Tuesday evenings in the 1960s The Steve Lane Stompers would regale audiences with their brand of traditional jazz. From 2001 until it closed in 2003 the name was changed to *The Grove*.

In the last few years the only thing at the back of the building was small car park with a mini cab office and a car wash operated by East Europeans who managed to plaster the front of the building with garish posters advertising their service.

Having turned down two planning applications for redevelopment in 2005 and 2007, Barnet Council finally agreed to plans for a part 3, part 4 and part 5 storey development comprising shops on the ground floor with 36 flats overhead and underground parking. Needless to say this will be nowhere as attractive as the building it replaces. We have a large number of photos of both *The Railway Hotel* and *The Turrets* on our photographic website,

HORSE POWER

Our member in Welham Green, Ron Kingdon, recalled a couple of incidents involving horses in the mid 1930s. When the developers were building houses in Gallants Farm Road and Russell Lane, Ron remembers heavy horses being used to haul the weighty kerbstones into place. On Barnet Hill, Warren's the coal merchants, who operated from premises at High Barnet Station, used an old Dennis lorry which they connected by chains to the shafts of their horse-drawn coal cart. The lorry then proceeded to pull it up the hill. This was not an uncommon practice on hills and so-called 'chain horses' would be stationed at the bottom of steep gradients and coupled up to horses and carts to assist them. Once the top of the hill was reached, and after payment by the carter, the chain horse would return to the bottom to await the next customer.

WHETSTONE MEMORIES

Back in 2005 our member Ros McKenny received a letter from a former Whetstone resident, Phyllis Horsler (née Adams) who now lives in Australia. Phyllis described some early memories:

“When my parents moved into the flat above number 11 Oakleigh Road North there were absolute mountains of rubbish down in the cellars which the Council eventually came and took away. The shop had been a tailors and the rubbish included many designs for men's wear as well as ladies capes and skirts. Once the rubbish had gone us kids cleaned the two rooms in the cellar so that we had somewhere to play in bad weather; the original ovens were still there – it had once been a bakery. A Mr Gibson

had the shop but it was seldom open – he did all his work in the back room and I often had to deliver his goods, all made-to-measure, mostly to addresses in Totteridge Lane, for which I received a few coppers from Mr Gibson and usually sixpence from the person receiving the package. As usual Mother had her hand out as soon as I got home!

I often used to run across about 7 o'clock in the morning to the bakery behind Harper's shop on the corner of Totteridge Lane and the High Road to fetch a loaf straight from the oven. Mr Harper was also our landlord and Mother hated him - she blamed him when the kitchen wall collapsed after she had removed the big old dresser!

I remember going to Dollis Brook Farm with my brother John and sister Daphne. We chased the cows and thought that good fun; I hate to think what would have happened if the cows had turned back on us. And there were the Totteridge Long Ponds where I later went fishing with my ex and just past the pond was an unmade track called The Warren. In our courting days we spent hours on that farm, sometimes we would wander for miles and come out in some unknown place, then spend more hours trying to find our way back. We never turned round and retraced our steps – that would have been too easy. There was a night when I had gone alone to the Gaumont at North Finchley and when I came out the smog had come down and I spent a very long time crossing and re-crossing the road, always ending up on the little island the buses went round. I was so frightened yet dared not ask for help.

My in-laws had the off license along the High Road up from the *Three Horseshoes*. Their name was Foyle and the eldest brother Arthur married Eileen Dennis, whose parents had the fruit and veg shop next door. There was much gossip about the Foyle family as mother-in-law was alcoholic and was often 'unwell' when the daughter came home from school and had to get Eileen to help. There was a miniature beer barrel on the counter into which customers would drop their loose change for the service men. The barrel was always empty as mother-in-law was always in debt. Along that stretch of shops was a general store and a paper shop which was owned by people called Fountain.

I went to St John's School and at the back of it was the house where the teacher of Class 7 lived. It was general knowledge that he gave several of the boys pennies for going to visit him. Of course, we knew nothing about those things when we were young and it came as quite a shock when he left school quite suddenly. The other teachers were all women – Mrs Heckstall was in charge of Class 1, and Miss Write had Class 2. She always dressed in a navy blue skirt and jumper, never wore a coat, summer or winter, and had white powder on her hands. Miss or Mrs Slater had Class 3 and she also taught violin after school. She was very snappy and played the children into school after assembly in the playground to the thumping tune of *The Entry of the Gladiators*! After that was Miss Eulett (pronounced oo-let). She was a small lady and very quiet. I remember Miss Geffer (pronounced Gee-fer) who gave me a toothbrush because I didn't own one. I can't remember what she taught but I remember that she was the one who made the boys write with their right hands – regardless.

When I left St John's I went to All Saints but can't recall any of the teachers there, probably because the war came, but I clearly remember some of the girls left the convent and came to our school because they weren't learning school work. They didn't come to our church and on Ash Wednesday they came to school in old clothes and had ashes in their hair. Something that confused me for many years was that some of the nuns from the convent went to the Catholic Church in Athenaeum Road but many came to All Saints. I had a big row with an Irish man who called me a liar but I later asked a C of E minister about this strange behaviour and he told me that All Saints must have been the High Church which is almost the same as the Catholic.

I went to St John's School in Friern Barnet for maybe two months, just before the family moved to Torrington Park. I remember that my friend had a lot of money which she was spending on sweets. I asked her where she had got it and she told me her uncle had come home and given it to her. One day after we had been swimming she was called from class. She had given me her money as she didn't have a bag and I did. Anyway, she didn't come back to class so I had to take the money home with me. I didn't tell anyone because Mother would have taken it off me and it wasn't mine. Next day, being Saturday, I went to the girl's house and gave the money to her mother. A few questions was all I was asked and I never saw her again. It seemed that a teacher at St John's School left her handbag on the window ledge and the money had been taken from it."

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

by John Heathfield

A hundred years ago, the British really were "top dogs" and we ruled an Empire on which "the sun never sets". The 1914-18 war put paid to all that nonsense as the flower of British youth were slaughtered in their thousands and the British economy was bankrupted by having to pay for the war.

In particular, the role of women was changed forever as they proved that they could work on the kind of skilled or heavy work traditionally reserved for men, at the McCurd lorry works in North Finchley for example, or as munition workers, shop assistants, lorry drivers or agricultural workers. Some of the women had never worked before and others had come from domestic service with the result that there was a shortage of young girls to do domestic labour.

Around this time new inventions started to make women's traditional tasks a bit easier. In 1907, James Spangler, a janitor living in Ohio, decided that the cause of his cough was the dust kicked up by sweeping. He fixed an old fan motor to a soap box which was stapled to a broom handle and the dust collected was trapped in an old pillowcase. The device was patented in 1908 and led to the foundation of the Electric Suction Sweeper Company. His cousin's husband, W H Hoover, a salesman, was one of the first customers and his sales gimmick was to offer ten day's free home trial. Food, especially milk, went off rapidly and only the rich could afford an ice house to keep the food cool. In 1828, for example, Louisa Arrowsmith's servants carried 14 cart loads of ice from Totteridge Long Pond. By the mid nineteenth century the growth of towns meant that fresh food became rarer and food poisoning was common - stinking fish was widely sold on Saturday evenings to unsuspecting shoppers. Despite this, refrigerated ships were bringing meat from Australia and Argentina by 1850 and this led to a demand for small

refrigerators which could be used in the home. Refrigeration depends on removing heat by evaporation and the first practical machine was invented in 1834 by Jacob Perkins. The early fridges used toxic gases like sulphur dioxide or ammonia. In 1928 freon, a non-toxic gas, was invented and by 1930 it was being manufactured by a new company founded by General Motors and DuPont and called the Kinetic Chemical Company which used the trademark Frigidaire. One of the side effects of Freon is CFCs which deplete the ozone layer – a nice example of progress in one field leading to a regression in another. Its inventor Thomas Midgley also invented leaded petrol and actually died of lead poisoning as a result, a fact kept secret at the time.

The benefits of refrigeration are that salads, fresh fruit and vegetables are regularly available to families who do not have access to a garden or allotment. Clarence Birdseye invented and commercialised a method of quick freezing food in convenient packages and nowadays it would be difficult to imagine life without fish fingers!

Coal fires and cooking ranges created ashes which seemed to fly everywhere, particularly into curtains. 1930s saw the introduction of gas and electric cookers which were both clean to use and easy to clean. Finchley Council, which had its

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EASTERN ELECTRICITY SERVICE

23a-55

Local advertisements extolling the wonders of gas airing cupboards (1935) and electric water heaters (1955)

own generating station in Squires Lane, even offered free electric cookers to its customers so as to encourage the use of electricity. Gas was used not merely for lighting and cooking but for heating water and the slogan “Hot water on tap” was used for various kinds of water heater.

FROM HERE TO MATERNITY

by Patricia Berguer

The latest initiative from the NHS is the proposal that double beds may be introduced into maternity wards so that fathers can remain close to their partner and baby immediately after childbirth. *Double beds in maternity wards? That's what got us here in the first place!* This contrasts sharply with conditions when I was giving birth to my three boys in the 1970s.

Like most mothers in the area we had our children in the Victoria Maternity Hospital in Wood Street, Barnet. The Vic started life in 1766 as Cedar Lawn and was the home of local botanist William Cattley (1788-1835). It was converted into a hospital in 1924.

It was the custom to stay for ten days after the first birth to allow the mother to recover and to start a satisfactory feeding programme with the baby. However, with subsequent births the mother was allowed to leave after 48 hours. I was lying on the delivery table immediately after the birth of my first child when I raised my head as I was curious to see the baby and to see what was happening. I was told by the midwife: “Put your head down, mother, it's got nothing to do with you!” Needless to say there was no question of the father being present at the birth.

There was a very efficient nurse, Sister Hoare, who ruled her ward with a rod of iron and during her morning round she included an item called ‘breast inspection’. This involved a visual examination which I thought was a bit unnecessary until one day it showed up the source of a slight infection which was causing a rise in temperature. This would have delayed my departure home; after ten days I was desperate to leave the hospital. We were encouraged to express surplus milk as there was a need to feed premature babies and I believe there was an item called a breast pump but fortunately I was never introduced to it.

During my stay one of the midwives confided to me that one of her colleagues had herself just given birth and she said: “Her attitude will be more sympathetic in future!”

The visiting hours were very strictly enforced – the fathers were only allowed in for one hour every evening and the grandmothers could only visit for one hour on one afternoon a week. Only the father was allowed in, no children or other relatives. Men were to be found queuing in the corridor with their chocolates, grapes and bunches of flowers. After an hour they were forcibly removed.

The day I left I was escorted through the front door and down the steps by a nurse carrying the baby which was handed to me as I sat in the car. I felt a little like a member of the Royal Family.

Although the Vic had 48 beds and 48 cots, the demand for maternity beds was so high that an additional 20 beds had to be opened at Wellhouse Hospital in 1950. By 1958 the hospital had opened a Special Care Baby Unit with 11 cots for

premature babies and in 1974 the hospital had grown to 64 beds. The Vic closed in 1987 and was converted into flats under the name of Cattley Close.

Today on the front of this very attractive building there are two blue plaques commemorating William Cattley and Cedar Lawn. There is no memorial to me or any of the other Friern Barnet mothers who gave birth and started so much new life in Barnet.



The former hospital has now been converted into flats

THE POSTAL SERVICE

Following on from Pamela Ellis's article in the November 2012 *Newsletter* on the postal service, here is an article which appeared in *Muswell Record* in 1907 to coincide with the retirement of Mr George Hoddy who had completed 40 years service as a postman in Hornsey. Mr Hoddy came from a family of postmen – his father had done 29 years and his two brothers had completed 24 years and 34 years respectively:

“Mr Hoddy was delivering letters in the hamlet of Muswell Hill when there was neither parcel nor half-penny post and before there was any gas, sewers or water laid on in Hornsey or Muswell Hill. He had seen the old Overseers of Hornsey Parish give way in turn to the Local Board, the District Council and the Borough Council. Mr Hoddy said that he used to fetch two pails of water on a yoke from a well in Priory grounds, half way up Muswell Hill, to his house in St James's Lane. That was the only water which a handful of cottagers in Muswell Hill could obtain within a

reasonable distance, and as the well was in private grounds they had to draw their water before 8 o'clock in the morning. Otherwise they had to go to the only other source of supply, one of the ancient wells near Colney Hatch Lane, which gave Muswell Hill its name.

At that time, as Mr Hoddy can remember distinctly, there were only three shops in Muswell Hill, the Post Office, which was also a little general store and stood next to *The Green Man*, in the premises now occupied by Mr Lines; a butchers directly opposite and a bakers almost next door. Three old brick houses stood on the side of the station; Mr Mudie, the founder of the famous library lived on the site of Queens Avenue at the top of the hill (on the site of Muswell Hill Library) and from his house right along the grass-fringed lane to Fortis Green there were only two houses on one side and one on the other. Only one house was passed in a walk from the top of the hill to the Asylum wall. Muswell Road was a footpath through the fields, and Mr Hoddy had gathered primroses growing wild just inside the fence bordering Muswell Hill.

A single-horse van brought the mails from Islington to Hornsey and then proceeded to Enfield. At that time only six postmen were required to undertake all the deliveries for Hornsey, which embraced both Crouch End and Muswell Hill. Now there are about sixty postmen at Hornsey and Muswell Hill, which is now an independent postal district and has thirty postmen for its own needs.

When Mr Hoddy started to deliver letters in Muswell Hill, a postman starting from Hornsey would seldom have more than 20 or 30 letters to deliver, and often that small number would suffice for all the houses right up to Muswell Hill and on to the lower end of Colney Hatch Lane. Now Muswell Hill postmen on a light duty would have as many as 300 letters for one day. Our esteemed fellow townsman says modestly that he has had a rather uneventful life. He takes no count of the many times he has had to trudge along up to the knees in snow, or over the boots in the torrents of surface water which in wet weather ran down the hill's roads before drains were thought of."

A QUEER CASE FROM NORTH FINCHLEY

by David Berger

Nowadays in the age of sexual equality and tolerance our attitudes to homosexuality are a lot different from past times. An extraordinary and sad court case from ninety-seven years ago was reported in *Barnet Press* of 17 June 1916:

"Man in Women's Clothes: Queer Case from North Finchley.

Smartly attired in a long navy blue coat and veil, and white kid gloves, Frederick Wright, aged 22, a valet, was charged with being an idle and disorderly person found in female attire in Percy-road, North Finchley, also with giving a false description when registering as a lodger; and also with being a deserter.

Evidence was given to the effect that he lodged in the house of a Belgian lady, and gave the name of Kathleen Woodhouse. When arrested, he said: "I dislike soldiers and soldiering, and everything manly. I wish I had

been a woman, as I love wearing beautiful clothes, and all my tastes are effeminate.”

At the request of the chairman of the Bench, prisoner removed his veil, cap and wig; and disclosed his short-cropped hair.

Remanded.

The Court was crowded when the case came up for hearing on Wednesday.

A detective stated that he saw Wright in Percy-road. He was dressed as a woman. In reply to a question, he gave his name as “Kathleen Woodhouse.” He added “I have no occupation; my husband keeps me. He is now in a convalescent home.” On the way to the police station he said: “I will give you £5 to let me go. I don’t want any fuss.” In Wright’s possession were found two sovereigns and one £1 Treasury note, which were tied up in a handkerchief, tucked away in his breast, as he had no pocket.

When questioned by the Bench, Wright took off his cap, veil and wig. He was certainly remarkably well “made up.” In order to make his chest appear womanly, he had stuffed some underclothing under his dress.

Detective Inspector Ferrier said that the Belgian lady with whom the prisoner lodged was in Court. Wright was her first lodger, and she said he would be the last. (Laughter.) He told her that he was anxious to obtain a position as lady’s companion.

Wright pleaded guilty.

Inspector Farrier said that three months ago Wright was bound over at Marlborough-street Police Court on a charge of attempting to commit suicide. One of the conditions was that he should join the Army. In his possession was a pass for leave of absence from June 1st to June 5th. He had a father, who was in a convalescent home. His sisters refused to have anything to do with him because of his effeminate manners.

Mr Walter Reynolds, chairman of the Bench, announced that the prisoner would be handed over to a military escort, though he did not suppose he would do much in the Army. He thought he should be put into his proper attire before being handed over.”

One can only speculate what happened to Frederick Wright on his return to the Army and to other men like him. It was not until 1967 that the Sexual Offences Act ended the total ban on sex between men which had existed since 1885, although procuring homosexual acts remains illegal in this country.

SHOP SURVEY

Our annual survey of the shops in the area was conducted over the summer of 2012.

	2011	2012
Restaurants/ Take Aways	108	111
Food shops	33	34

Estate Agents	27	25
Ladies Hairdressers	24	25
Beauty Salons	17	19
Ladies Wear	19	16
Furnishing/Carpets	18	15
DIY/Hardware	14	15
CTNs *	14	14
Dry Cleaners/Laundrettes	14	14
Electrical	13	13
Pubs	15	13
Bookmakers	13	12
Chemists	11	11
Garages/Car Accessories	10	10
Charities	8	10
Opticians	9	8
Gents Hairdressers	8	8
Banking/Insurance	8	7
Mens Wear	7	6
Footwear	6	6
Printers	6	6
Jewellers	5	5
Building Societies	5	5
Children's Wear/Toys	5	5
Wines	4	5
Chain Stores/Discount Stores	5	5
Pets/Vets	2	5
Florists	4	4
Post Offices	4	4
Books	3	3
Health Foods	5	3
Photography	4	3
Travel Agents	2	3
Mobile Phones	4	2
Others	106	113
Total	558	563

*= Confectioners, Tobacconists, Newsagents

The breakdown by area is as follows:

	2011	2012
Ballards Lane	33	34
Colney Hatch Lane	41	42
Cromwell Road	1	1
Friern Barnet Road	66	65
Friern Bridge Retail Park	11	11
Nether Street	3	5
North Finchley	158	150
Oakleigh Road North	45	45
Oakleigh Road South	10	10
Russell Lane	19	19
Sydney Road	2	2

Whetstone	104	107
Wilton Road	1	1
Woodhouse Road	64	72

Fortunately the number of businesses has not diminished, although new shops opening are invariably in the restaurant/fast food sector so the more traditional type of shop is on the decline. The future of our High Streets remains uncertain however. Increased rents, draconian car parking charges, the growth of out-of-town shopping malls and, most importantly, the rise of the internet (it is estimated that 50% of all Christmas sales were done online) makes one wonder what the shops will look like in twenty or more years in time. Indeed, apart from restaurants, will there be any shops left at all? The answer is clear - use them or lose them!



Boarded up shops and graffiti – the future of the High Street?

AN AMAZING DISCOVERY

by David Berguer

In the early part of the twentieth century the Wall family were living at number 33 Parkhurst Road, off Friern Barnet Road. Cromwell Wall and his wife Minnie had nine children. Cromwell's father, William, had in 1884 co-founded engineering firm, Biggs Wall & Co, which was situated in Cromwell Road, N10 and which may have explained Cromwell's forename.

At the former home in Huntingdon, Cambs. of Cromwell's grandson, David Brown, a remarkable discovery was made. A phonograph together with twenty four wax cylinders came to light and these were initially donated to the St Neots Museum. After listening to them the curators realised that the recordings had been made in London so they contacted the Museum of London who then restored the recordings and then digitised them.

The recordings were made on a Columbia Grand Graphophone and most of them were made at various family Christmases, the earliest being in 1902 and some were made during the 1914-18 War when three of the sons were away fighting. At one point Cromwell even wheeled the machine along the streets in his children's pram so that he could record the bells of Old Southgate Church pealing out the New Year.

Oliver Wall, one of Cromwell's grandchildren, recalled the Christmases: "It was a wonderful atmosphere. I remember the occasions at Christmas and we always had big parties and singing round the piano with grandpa playing and he used to take us marching upstairs and all over the big house they had."

The existence of these recordings is truly amazing for wax cylinders are by their very nature quite fragile and with the coming of shellac records many would have then been destroyed by their owners. It is quite possible that these are unique examples from the period. Fortunately all the recordings are available to hear on the Museum of London website: www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Collections-Research/Collections-online.

P.S. HORSEMEAT IS GOOD FOR YOU!

by David Berguer

Those of you who have stopped buying your beef lasagne and steak pies from Tesco will be interested in the following letter that appeared in the 23 January 1915 issue of *Barnet Press*:

HORSEFLESH AS FOOD

Sir,-I have just seen the letters in the London Press advocating the use of horseflesh for Belgian refugees. I hope this suggestion will be strongly supported. It would be an object-lesson to our own people, who seem to have a quite fanatical objection to this excellent and much neglected food. Just now, when beef is rising in price, the time is opportune for introducing a new food supply, and the objections to it are purely sentimental and not quite scientific.

E. WARD

Cobden Hill-cottage, Radlett, Herts

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

A reminder that your subscription expires on 31 March 2012. If you wish to renew for another year (April 2013 - March 2014), and we sincerely hope that you do, please complete the Membership Form with this Newsletter. The subscription rates are £8 for a single person and £14 for a couple.

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