

# Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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## WORKING IN NORTH FINCHLEY

by Richard Testar

I had a temporary job as a cleaner/driver at Halls of Finchley between 1963 and 1964 when I was 20. The main showroom was at 870-874 High Road and the drivers (about four of us) were based in a large shed behind the showroom on one side of the back yard. The shed housed old chairs where we had tea breaks and there was a coke boiler in the centre. On the other side of the yard there was a workshop where Fred used to give new cars their pre-delivery inspections. The yard is still there, although the sheds have long since gone. The showroom is now occupied by Julian Hurst Furnishings (number 870), Allmobility (872) and London Electrical Distributors (874).

The business had multi-franchises which was odd considering the other car dealers nearby (H A Saunders – Austin/Morris etc. and W Harold Perry – Ford). Halls' main showroom sold only Standard-Triumph cars – Heralds, Spitfires, Vitesses and the new Triumph 2000 which had just been announced when I started. The showroom had a parquet wooden floor which is still there (occupied by Allmobility). All the washing, valeting (i.e. de-waxing the protective body coating with a steam cleaner) and polishing took place in the back yard unless it was wet. I can remember cleaning a new Jaguar 3.4 in gold and hearing the foreman, Bert, complaining because although the car was shining, the windows were covered in smears.

STANDARD & TRIUMPH AREA DEALERS	<b>HALLS</b> (FINCHLEY) LTD	JAGUAR MAIN DEALERS
FOR THAT NEW CAR YOU HAVE IN MIND!		
STANDARD - TRIUMPH - JAGUAR - ROVER AUSTIN - MORRIS - RILEY - FORD		
PART EXCHANGE : : H.P. TERMS		
Showrooms :		
ODEON PARADE, HIGH ROAD, N. FINCHLEY, N.12 (Tel. : HILside 1044/9)		

There was a small office at the back of the main showroom where we made the number plates. These were silver letters riveted individually on to a black plate ('A' and 'B' suffixes. This was when the registration marks changed on 1 January each year). There were two other showrooms nearby. One was on the corner of Friern Watch Avenue where they sold BMC (Austin/Morris/Riley/Wolseley), Fords and Rovers. I remember the Austin 1100, Rover 100/105 and the newly introduced Rover 2000 being displayed proudly in the window.

The other showroom on the corner of Mayfield Avenue just sold Jaguars and Daimlers. The salesman's name was Bill Caney. The Triumph showroom had two salesmen and the smaller showrooms had one. These two smaller were at either end of Odeon Parade (where Furnitureland was until 2014). I think they had wrap-round corner windows to reflect the 1930's style.

Halls also sold second-hand cars from the showroom, but there was no outside site. I remember having trouble with the pre-selector gearbox of a Daimler Conquest which had been brought in as part-exchange and managed to block half of Friern Watch Avenue whilst I tried to sort it out! Halls were also a main agent for Seddon-Diesel commercial vehicles, but these were not kept on site – I think they delivered them direct to customers.

The best part was the driving of course. I managed to drive Jaguars, including the E-type, and all the other makes which the firm supplied. Generally we ferried the cars between the North Finchley showrooms and Halls' main workshop called Arcadia Works in Regents Park Road, N3, which was on the site of a former roller skating rink. I cannot remember this being a retail outlet, just repairs and servicing. We would often have to ferry Triumphs to and from Standard-Triumph's main depot in the Western Avenue at Park Royal. I have a feeling new cars were usually delivered to Halls on a transporter but I think a few were driven down from the factory. It wasn't unusual for a brand new car to have over 100 miles on the clock before the customer received it.

## **OF DOGS, LICENCES & MANSERVANTS**

*by Nick McKie*

*The Times* of 8 September 1927 was ever watchful:

“Unlicensed Manservant.

At the Highgate Police Court yesterday, Andrew Jamieson Blake of Yarrowdene, Oakleigh Park, Friern Barnet, was summonsed for keeping a dog without a licence and for keeping a manservant without a licence. The inspector said that when he called at the house about the dog he saw the defendant's chauffeur-gardener working in the garage. The magistrate was informed that the defendant had previously been summonsed in respect to the man and the dog. For keeping an unlicensed dog the defendant was fined the maximum penalty of 25s; for keeping a manservant who was not licensed he was fined 20s”

Yarrowdene was actually in Whetstone at number 10 Oakleigh Park North

Andrew was in illustrious company. Princess Sophia Duleep Singh, an active Suffragette campaigner and goddaughter of Queen Victoria, championed the Women's Tax Resistance League and in 1911 was fine £3 for refusing to pay for her 5 dogs,

carriage and manservant on the grounds that there should be 'no taxation without representation'.

Lord North first taxed manservants in 1777 to help meet the cost of the war in America. The initial charge was one guinea per servant with no lesser charge for young boys; however in 1834 boys under 18 were exempted, after which it seemed many boys never grew old and were returned as under 18 'for decades'. Male servants were seen as a hallmark of social standing and most prominent families employed as many as they could afford to validate their place in society: so William Pitt in 1785 saw the opportunity to establish a progressive tax when the rich bore more of the burden. The annual charge was raised: for one servant 25s but where 11 or more were employed it became £3 each.

In 1796 dogs joined the manservants among these 'Assessed Taxes'. Duties varied over time, but the *British Almanac* of 1858 provides a snapshot:

Duties on male servants

For every servant 18 years of age or upwards	21s
For every servant under 18 years of age	10s 6d
Waiters in taverns	21s
Under Gardeners and Gamekeepers each	10s 6d

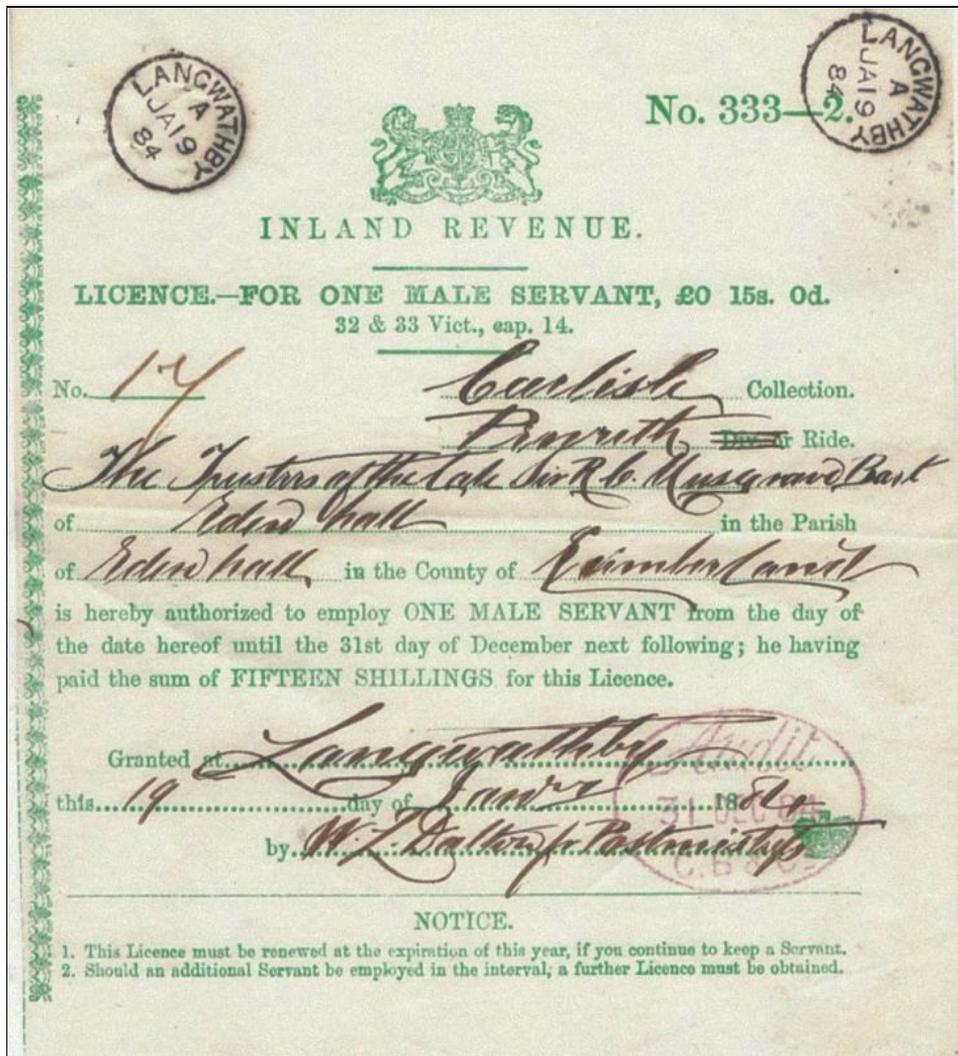
Duties on dogs

For every dog of whatever description	12s
Dogs wholly kept and used in the care of sheep and cattle exempt, if not a greyhound, hound, pointer, terrier, setting dog, spaniel or lurcher	
Hounds, where 66 or more are kept	£39 12s 0d
Greyhounds, where 15 or more are kept	£9

The manservant tax was never popular with those liable to pay, and it proved hard to check how many were employed in any category at any moment. It was most unpopular in London where there was a concentration of servant-employing households. Added to this collection was centralised and administration expensive. Things changed in 1869: it ceased to be a tax and became an excise duty administered by the local authority. They were charged with issuing licences: they kept the proceeds and paid for its policing. A flat rate dog licence was introduced at the same time.

The male servant licence, costing 15 shillings, was required:

'...for every male servant employed either wholly or partially in any of the following capacities, viz:- Maître d'hôtel; house steward; master of the horse; groom of the chambers; valet de chamber; butler; under butler; clerk of the kitchen; confectioner; cook; house porter; footman; page; waiter; coachman; groom; postillion; stable boy or helper in the stables; gardener; under gardener; park keeper; gamekeeper; or game watcher; huntsman and whipper-in; or in any capacity involving the duties of any of the above descriptions of servants by whatever style the person acting in such capacity may be called'



A letter to *The Times* January 1925:

“Sir,

With others I have to take out certain licences for dogs and male servants. For each dog and servant Government send me a special form laboriously filled up with my name, address and additional details. Each dog has 200 or so words as to the symptoms of rabies. On the licence for a male servant words apparently fail to state what he is capable of. Why cannot one schedule form be issued to save this wasteful printing and stationery expense and why should not the humiliating tax on the male servant (double a dog tax) be abolished.

Mr D Wintringham Stable, Llanbrynmair.”

Licensing of servants was eventually abolished in 1937: local authorities must have breathed a joint sigh of relief to be rid of it – administration was costing more than monies received: in 1935 for instance 146 councils between them issued 127,000 licences for total receipts of £130,000 – something like £1000 each for the aggravation of pursuing reluctant citizens like our own Andrew Blake. Dog licensing followed suit in 1987: the licence then cost 37 new pence, rounded down from 37.5p when the half penny coin was withdrawn. This was a precise translation of the pre decimal 7/6d.

## **NOSTALGIA TRIP**

*by Pamela Ellis*

In June, on one of the few warm and sunny days of this summer, I set off from York to King's Cross, and on to New Southgate for a nostalgia trip to Friern Barnet, where I lived from the age of three to 19. I had previously contacted David Berguer and suggested we might meet, as I can never get to Society meetings and felt it would be nice to put a face to the name. Accordingly he and Patricia picked me up from New Southgate station and initially drove me to North Finchley.

On the way we passed what was in my day the psychiatric hospital (by then called Friern Hospital but always referred to locally as Colney Hatch – now of course home to luxury apartments) and the library (more on this later), before following my daily route to school up Woodhouse Road. I noticed that Woodhouse School had lost its magnificent covering of creeper and now looks rather stark. We parked at the artsdepot which occasioned some speculation as to why a superb example of Art Deco architecture such as the old Gaumont had been destroyed. A similar but much smaller cinema in York is a listed building.

The area of North Finchley is, or was, very familiar to me as I went to school at St Michael's Convent. Every day I got off the 521/621 trolleybus, and later the 221 Routemaster, alongside the Gaumont, and crossed the zebra crossing to Nether Street, reversing the journey in the afternoon. David, Patricia and I walked down the High Road with me remarking on various changes such as the fact the former Woolworth's is now a Poundland. Much of my Christmas shopping as a child was done in the late lamented Woolworth's.

We had coffee, and a delicious Portuguese custard tart in a new café on the High Road, then Patricia and David offered to take me on a tour of the old haunts. Returning to the car, we drove back down Woodhouse Road (so familiar I could 'walk' it in my sleep) to Friern Barnet. First stop was Hollyfield Avenue, where I grew up – not much change to the house externally, but I am sure they are mostly different inside. I noticed that there are now houses on Hillside Avenue on the site of the old factory. Then up to Friary Park, again very familiar, but I missed certain landmarks: the pond where my brothers sailed their boats, the outdoor stage where I entered my beloved mongrel Lucky in a pet show one year (he didn't win), and of course the old playground with its concrete surface and lethal equipment (does anyone remember the Witch's Hat, which the 'big boys' used to rock on its central pole until it threatened to leap off?). But much was still the same, the bowling green, the café and the statue at the entrance.

Our final stop was at the library, where I spent so many hours of my childhood. It was heart-warming to see it being kept open by dedicated volunteers – I have followed its ups and downs over the years and felt very proud of Friern Barnet! When I hear of libraries threatened with closure in other places I always cite Friern Barnet as an encouraging example of people power.

This brought our 'tour' to an end, but Patricia and David very kindly drove me to Nurseryman's Road where I had arranged to visit the mother of a friend of mine in Apthorp Lodge. It was altogether a very enjoyable few hours of nostalgia, and I am very grateful to Patricia and David for giving up their morning to make it possible.

## FALLEN WOMEN IN WHETSTONE

by John Heathfield

The St James's Penitentiary for Fallen Women was at Whetstone, in the High Road just south of what is now Woodside Avenue. It was founded in 1858 by Rev J Byrne, Rector of St James's in Piccadilly and had accommodation for 22 penitents. Byrne was assisted by Rev R R Hutton of Colney Hatch. The Lady Supervisor of Penitents was Anne Waltzer with help from a housekeeper and a needlework instructress. An advertisement described her work: "Wanted. A Christian woman to superintend the needlework department of our home for penitent females. She will be expected to take a deep interest in the spiritual and moral welfare of the penitents as well as be thoroughly proficient in the making and mending of babies' clothes and under clothes."

"The delay and difficulty which have to be encountered in reaching Whetstone were often found to be too great by the fitful resolution of those of feeble spirits. Our refuge is therefore designed for penitents of a somewhat superior grade and education, comparatively less experienced in vice." The home, which was part of the wider Female Aid Society was eventually deemed to be unsuitable and was moved to Hammersmith in December 1863.

In her book *A Few Words about the Union Workhouses*, Louisa Twining (see *Newsletter* number 47, page 2) says she believed that upper class women had a natural aptitude for helping the poor. However, the first lesson that was learned was that penitentiary work demanded special skills that not all upper class ladies possessed. Some penitents were utterly foreign to them – they were often alcoholics and fought with fists and knives. Some were described as "disagreeable, uninterested, evil tempered, low and repulsive." It was this reason that the Whetstone home was opened.

The idea that lower class girls were seduced by upper class men is largely a myth. A much more important factor was economic security. The Church Penitentiary Association commented: "And whose fault is it that the poor are so poor, that the severe toils of women who are so underpaid that all the wretched shirt makers and needlewomen drudging away their lives and often for the very bread, yield themselves to sin?"

In 1866 the penitents' former jobs were: general servants (59); housemaids (231); cooks (7); ladies' maids (3); barmaids (2); factory workers (2); nurses (3); dressmakers (3); needlewomen (2); milliner (1); shop girl (1) and field labourer (1).

The Whetstone house provided training in cleaning, washing and ironing, dairying, baking, housekeeping and plain needlework. Penitents were taught servants' manners as well as servants' skills and "a deferential and respectful demeanour, the installing of middle class values and the inculcation of religious belief" were the aims.

At Whetstone the timetable for those able to leave their babies was 7.00am Prayers, Breakfast; 8.00am Bible Readings, Work and Instruction; 12.30pm Lunch; 1.30pm Bible Readings, Work and Instruction; 4.30pm Tea, Recreation; 6.00pm Evening Prayers, Dinner; 7.00pm Bible Reading and Prayers; 9.00pm Evening Prayers; Bed. There was a small library of Improving Books.

The Female Aid Society employed three female missionaries who reported in 1857: "Female outcasts rescued from vice, restored to friends or placed in homes for penitent

females – 1069; Young females trained and placed in service from the Home for Friendless Young Females of Good Character – 1782 and Respectable servants trained and placed in situations by the Servants' Home and Registry – 7052.”

After the babies were born they were usually placed with the Church of England Children's Society at a few months old and were brought up in orphanages, often being told that their parents were dead.

**Footnote:** The Victorian propensity to scatter Capital Letters like confetti never ceases to impress me. I can't work out the rules, if any!”

## **FRIERN BARNET CHURCH BOYS' CLUB**

*by Percy Reboul*

The closing years of World War Two gave rise, in Friern Barnet and elsewhere, to thoughts about the possible long-term effects of the war on teenagers. St James's Church in Friern Barnet Lane, through its Rector McCloud and curate Rev. Peter Bradey felt strongly about the need for a boys' social club to complement the existing and well-established organisations such as Scouts, Guides and Cadet Forces. Such a club, McCloud argued should encourage boys to work out for themselves what they wanted to do rather than take part in organised programmes. It could, moreover, be open to teenage boys irrespective of their religion, colour or any other background.

In 1943 such a club was opened in the Scout hut on the path between Goldsmith Road and Glenthorne Road. It was a modest start with about twenty members meeting on a Monday evening and activities centred around a supply of tea, coffee and cake. McCloud, however, had greater ambitions for his project and, thanks to a sympathetic member of his parish, new premises were found – a disused shop at 107 Friern Barnet Road opposite the gates of Colney Hatch. The building had been badly damaged in an air raid with its windows blown out and boarded up the interior was in terrible condition. The repair team who made it habitable included several members of the club and on 1 January 1945, Friern Barnet Church Boys' Club was opened by the Bishop of Willesden and the club affiliated to both the London and National Federation of Boys' Clubs.

The club comprised a front room with a snooker table and an upstairs room with a woodwork bench, table tennis table and a piano which had come from the Scout hut. A small kitchen at the back included a catering counter (built by member George Guy) and the leader's office. A fund raising dance at the Town Hall provided money for cups and saucers and a gas stove came from a bombed house. It was against such a modest background that the Club survived and prospered. Its football team was popular in its strip of blue and white shirts which had to be handed in after each game because clothes rationing made them impossible to replace. Other activities included talks from a local doctor, live music evenings, camping holidays, sports days and LFBC activities. The Club had friendly relations with the Girls' club run by Elsie Chamberlain.

At the heart of this story, however, is the achievement of one of Friern Barnet's unsung heroes, Hubert Matthews, who became leader of the Club and had an enormous influence on so many of its young people in the immediate post-war years. He was born in Muswell Hill in 1918 and before being involved in youth work was employed in the Book Department of Harrods. In a recorded interview in 1988 he described how he had originally been a volunteer helper in youth work with people such as Rector McCloud and Eric Bassett, the Scoutmaster of 199 North London Troop. The Rector



*The football team*

obtained a grant from the Ministry of Education which provided a salary for a fulltime youth leader running a 5-day a week club. He took the post.

The old Club, like the war years in which it took shape, is now part of history. Even the ancient parish church which founded it has changed profoundly, probably reflecting the huge ethnic changes to Friern Barnet. What has survived, however, is the memory of inspirational people such as Hubert Matthews and Pastor McCleod who dedicated their lives to making Friern Barnet a better place in which to live

### **CAN YOU HELP?**

The Battle of Barnet took place on the foggy morning of 14 April 1471 between the House of York and the House of Lancaster. It lasted some two to three hours and by the time the mist had cleared the King Edward IV had beaten the Lancastrians under the Earl of Warwick.

The exact site of the battle has been open to conjecture, with Hadley Highstone being the most likely contender, hence the monument there. In recent years however other sites have been proposed, including one further north. A two year project has now been instigated under the auspices of the University of Huddersfield which had successfully discovered the actual site of the Battle of Bosworth, where Richard III was killed.

The project will consist of a proper archaeological Battlefield Survey with the fieldwork due to commence later this year. This will be supported by a number of Community

Activities over the next two years. Volunteers are welcome and people with the following skills are welcome: Painting/Drawing; Sewing/Embroidery; Costume making; Children's activities; Actors for audio recording; Web design, Filming/recording; Research; Field Walking (with archaeologists); guided tours and the cleaning, registering and conserving of finds.

This sounds like a fascinating project and if you have any of the above skills and would like to help, please contact Barnet Museum, 31 Wood Street, Barnet EN5 4BE phone 020 8440 8066 or email enquiries@barnetmuseum.co.uk.

**‘SHOVER’ – AN UPDATE**

In our last *Newsletter* John Heathfield mentioned that Laura Shore (‘Shover’) lived at 66 Molesworth Street, Rochdale. Our member Hugh Garnsworthy has a friend in Rochdale and when Hugh mentioned Molesworth Street to him his response was “That’s the street where Gracie Fields was born”.

Derek Spurgeon recalled an incident when he was a pupil at Woodhouse.

“To get to the refectory at Woodhouse, one had to cross the playground. One day we were playing football with a tennis ball when staff were crossing. I did not see them and I struck the ball hoping for a spectacular goal, only to see it disappear into the generous folds of Shover’s stomach. Calling me over she enquired of my name and sent me to report to the staff office for detention. When I arrived the master on duty was ‘Bunny’ Martin, the senior master and when I told him what had happened he quietly closed the door. Five seconds later the whole staff room exploded with laughter. When it had subsided he opened the door and said: “Room three, four o’clock”, the traditional words for detention. In spite of this Shover and I got on very well. I agree with the two Johns – she was an excellent teacher and had the interest of her pupils at heart. It was mainly due to her, Mr Smale and Miss Hughes that the school had, and maintained, such an excellent reputation.”

**RUNNING TO WHETSTONE**

*by Nick McKie*

The 11 April 1818 issue of *The Morning Chronicle* reported the following:

“GREAT PEDESTRIAN PERFORMANCE. Blundel the Painter undertook at three o’clock yesterday afternoon, to run from the *Black Horse* in Tottenham-court-road, to the nine mile stone at Whetstone within an hour, Highgate-hill being part of the ground. The pedestrian is the same who was backed by Captain Barclay against Old Tom, on Finchley-common, last summer, when he broke down; and the man who more recently ran a wheel 30 miles in six hours. Notwithstanding the rain fell heavily, the street was in an uproar, and all vehicles were stationary for many minutes previous to the start. The pedestrian pursued his course down the eastern pavement, and the following is the time each mile was done in. Betting even.

Mile	Min	Sec	Mile	Min	Sec
1	5	35	5	6	50
2	5	36	6	6	20
3	5	34	7	5	50
4	7	10	8	8	10

The remainder of the ground, about three quarters of a mile, was done in less than five minutes easy, the whole ground being done in four minutes less than the given time.”

The ‘remainder of the ground, about three quarters of a mile’ would have brought the finish line to the toll gate outside *The Griffin*, the nine-mile milepost being situated further north, about level to where St Margaret’s Avenue now is.

To give an idea of this feat, back in 1981, when the 134 bus used to run all the way from Tottenham Court Road to Potters Bar Station, the journey time between Tottenham Court Road and *The Griffin* at Whetstone was 49 minutes, this being achieved under diesel power and on smooth roads. So the time of around 54 minutes was quite an achievement, particularly as it included the steep and long Highgate Hill and the hill up to the *Bald Faced Stag* at East Finchley.

## **WARTIME LESSONS**

*by Percy Reboul*

To people of my age, the years of World War Two were spent in the school classroom: some of them lively years housed in air raid shelters and all of them spent in the face of shortages of just about everything that makes for a comfortable existence. In thinking about such things during the recent VE Day anniversary celebrations, my mind turned to the lot of our teachers in those times. How did they cope with the extra burdens of war?

At my school, Woodhouse in North Finchley, although we were living in times of extreme violence, it is surprising that there seemed to be no special problems with some of today’s major offences such as bullying, vandalism and violence towards teachers. Most of the schoolmasters had been called up for wartime service. They had been replaced by elderly lady teachers called out of retirement from who knows when, and young lady teachers just qualified and taking up their first appointment. Four elderly male teachers made up the complement of 18 staff.

Wilfrid Smale was one of the latter group. He was the Handicraft Teacher (as it is called today), responsible for teaching woodwork and metalwork. His wife and two children had been evacuated to Cornwall and he lived alone in a local house. Being too old for the armed forces, in addition to his job he ‘did his bit’ as an Air Raid Warden covering, among other things, the destruction caused by the landmine which dropped opposite his own house. The death and destruction caused by such incidents would have been familiar to him – in WWI he had served in the Royal Army Medical Corps throughout the terrible battles of the Somme with its scores of thousands killed and wounded.

His school wartime activities included organising the school’s large walled garden to produce vegetables, fruit and herbs for consumption in school dinners and the care of six dozen chickens in an old guinea-pig shelter. With others he installed lighting and heating in the school air raid shelters. These were merely very long 8ft diameter concrete pipes sunk into the ground, covered with earth and with a sandbagged entrance at each end. They were extraordinarily cold and uncomfortable and the bucket sanitation surely remains in the memory of all who used and heard it!

One pupil, in an outstanding book on Woodhouse (now alas out of print) by two distinguished local authors, touched upon an interesting aspect of Wilfred Smale’s

character. It is a story of replacing traditional punishments such as caning and lines with a positive and useful deterrent:

“Major transgressions brought forth ‘Wilf’s Treadmill’. This was a hand driven whetstone on which chisels and plane irons were hollow ground. The tools were clamped in a frame and set against the whetstone. Wilf then applied his weight to the handles of the frame and the hapless transgressor had to turn the handle connected to the stone. Ten minutes or so of this brought you to your knees, resolving never again to step out of line”.

As a final thought, on the 70th anniversary – how much did the war shape our beliefs and standards? The ‘make do and mend’ philosophy of those years could not be more different to the current appalling trends in food wastage brought about by nonsensical ‘sell by’ dates and similar commercial devices. Things that are easily repairable being thrown away to be replaced by something new is another example. The war years still have an influence on me – I hate wastage!

### ***Editorial Footnote***

The ‘two distinguished local authors’ Percy referred to are a certain Mr Percy Reboul and a Mr John Heathfield. The book is *Word & Deed: A Chronicle of Woodhouse 1922-49* which they published in 1994. The Society has a copy in our archives. If you would like to borrow it, please let us know.

### **POPULATION IN 1801**

The first National Census was conducted in 1801 and one has taken place every ten years ever since, apart from 1941 where the Second World War intervened.

It is interesting to look at some summary results from the first Census in 1801 for both Finchley and Friern Barnet:

	<u>Finchley</u>	<u>Fryern Barnet</u>
Inhabited houses	256	83
Number of families	264	110
Uninhabited houses	25	6
Number of men	782	203
Number of women	721	229
Employed in Agriculture	183	58
Employed in Trade or Manufacturing	56	51
All others	1264	323
Total population	1503	432

The population of Friern Barnet remained under 1000 until 1861 when the Census showed a figure of 3344, due largely to the opening of Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum in 1851. By the time of the last Census for which records are available (1911) it had grown to 14,924. In the same year Finchley’s population had reached 39,419.

## REMEMBER THE FARTHING?

by David Berguer

Some of our older members will remember the small brown coin with a lovely picture of a wren on the reverse side. The farthing, a quarter of an old penny, was first minted as a silver coin in the 13th century but ever since the reign of James I it was only produced in copper. Unfortunately, with the increase in the cost of living in the middle of the 20th century there was virtually nothing that the farthing would buy and it ceased to be legal tender in 1960. The following article from the *Manchester Guardian* in 1956 gives an idea of how it was viewed towards the end of its life:

“The Royal Mint recently reported that there are 24 million farthings still in circulation, or nearly five for every man, woman and child in the country. Where have they all gone? A farthing is almost as rare these days as a gold sovereign, and not as well known.

It can be fun trying to spend a farthing in the shops, writes a correspondent. I went into a bank to change a shilling, and received a very odd look from the cashier who said there was no demand for farthings and he would be delighted I would take about five shillings' worth. The bank manager told me farthings were in steady demand a few years ago, as the price of bread, for instance, included a farthing. Could he explain the mystery of their disappearance? “Perhaps people hoard them as souvenirs,” he thought.

With 48 farthings, I went on a miniature shopping spree. In a store, I offered the assistant some coppers and six farthings for a pencil. She was quite definite: “We can't take them.” I had to insist, and it was only after she had consulted an overseer that she accepted the farthings. It was much the same at the other shops where I offered farthings, and assistants even said that in the very rare occasions they received them, they usually threw the farthings away. In a chemist's, however, there was no difficulty whatsoever. The assistant took twelve farthings calmly. When I asked her, she said they accepted them but could not remember the last customer who had tendered any.”

With the forthcoming introduction of plastic bank notes and the ever increasing spread of credit and debit cards and contactless payment, will it be long before all our coins disappear completely, like the poor old farthing?

## NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMME

With this Newsletter, you will find a flyer containing details of our lecture programme for 2016. We hope that we have prepared an interesting and varied list and we look forward to seeing you at some, if not all, of the dates!

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