

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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WAKE UP WHETSTONE!

On Sunday 24 April 2016, High Road, Whetstone was thronged with people all day. This was entirely down to our members in Chandos Avenue, Mike and Maria Jordan who managed to get the support of local shops, businesses and organisations (including ourselves) and Barnet Council and local councillors in supporting a festival to coincide with both the Queen's 90th birthday and St George's Day.

'Wake Up Whetstone' saw the High Street lined with over sixty stalls and there was a children's funfair and two stages where local bands, choirs and dancers performed. The police and the fire brigade had brought along their vehicles and were happy to allow children to clamber on board. The festival, which was sponsored by Martyn Gerard, The Haven Bistro, Emel's Cutting Edge and Orion Print and Design, can be considered a huge success and Mike and Maria are to be congratulated on helping to promote a real sense of community. Readers may recall that between 2002 and 2004 the High Road was the venue every Friday for a Farmers' Market. It is to be hoped that



Bright sunshine early on later turned to overcast skies, but everyone seemed to enjoy themselves

the success of the Community Celebration could see the return of this on a regular basis.

Readers can find out more about activities in Whetstone through the website: www.lovewhetstone.co.uk or by emailing: info@lovewhetstone.co.uk.

MATRIMONIAL TIFF

The 16 September 1916 issue of *Barnet Press* contained the following article:

“UNMASKED BY BROTHER. WIRE WHICH RECALLED BRIDE FROM HER HONEYMOON.

“There are circumstances of considerable aggravation in this case. I know of nothing to be urged on your behalf in mitigation, except the fact that you will forfeit your commission, and be dismissed from the Army with ignominy,” remarked Judge Atherley Jones at the Old Bailey in dealing with Frank Norman Cox, 24, a second lieutenant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment who was found guilty, after a two days’ trial, of bigamously marrying Lavinia Monica Courtney Dyer during the lifetime of his wife. Mr Travers Humphries (prosecuting) said prisoner left England for Australia in 1910, and in August 1912, he married a Miss Gertrude Jackson at St Paul’s Church, Sydney, NSW.

On the outbreak of the war he joined the Australian contingent, and, after serving at Gallipoli, returned to England. While staying with his brother in London he made the acquaintance of Miss Dyer, a young lady residing with her parents at New Southgate, and proposed to her, posing as a bachelor. When he obtained a commission in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment prisoner became formally engaged to her. His brother, who knew of his marriage in Australia, communicated with Miss Dyer’s father but when prisoner was questioned he said that he only lived with Miss Jackson and had stated that he was married in order to save his mother’s feelings. The brother, said counsel, took steps to obtain the marriage certificate from Australia, but before it reached England prisoner went through the form of marriage with Miss Dyer at St Paul’s Roman Catholic Church, Wood Green. When shown the certificate of his marriage in Australia, prisoner said that the ceremony was not legal, as he was not of age at the time – Mrs Cox, mother of the accused, said that after the marriage in Sydney she lived with her son and his wife, and they appeared to be on very happy terms. Soon after her arrival in Australia, said witness, she heard that Miss Jackson had gone for a trip on a vessel upon which her son was employed as a purser. Witness did not know whether any bans of marriage were put up at Sydney. She tried to prevent the marriage, as she thought her son was too young, and that he was not old enough to keep a wife – Mr Arnold Cox, brother of prisoner, deposed in an interview he had with Mr Dyer, when he informed him that his brother was already married. Witness subsequently received from accused a letter of remonstrance, saying that he had never been legally married, and challenging him to produce documentary proof. Witness wrote to his mother in Australia, and received in reply a certificate of marriage - Mr Dyer spoke of the marriage of his daughter to the prisoner at St Paul’s Catholic Church, and said that while the honeymoon was being spent he was shown the certificate of prisoner’s marriage in Australia, and had at once wired his daughter to return home. Prisoner was sentenced to eight months’ hard labour”.

TRIFE ON SUNDAYS

The following article appeared in the Summer 1960 edition of the *Quarterly Journal of Finchley and Whetstone Chamber of Commerce*:

“TRIFE ON SUNDAYS

No, we’re not talking about the Sunday newspapers but about the Shops Act. It is this Act which imposes compulsory closing times on shops, although it allows shops to sell some goods outside these hours. Compulsory closing is usually 8pm with 9pm once a week and 1pm on early closing day. The types of goods shops may sell outside these hours are anything but simple to remember, as the following examples show.

Partly-cooked tripe, milk and cream may all be sold on Sundays. But, if the milk or cream is tinned (unless it is clotted cream), or the tripe is raw or fully-cooked, the Act does not permit you to buy it on Sunday – unless you are ill or in a sea-going ship or a holiday resort (the last on only eighteen Sundays a year). Again, though your local shop may stock both fresh and tinned meat, fruit and vegetables, after 1pm on early-closing day it may sell you only the fresh varieties. Nor may you then buy tea, coffee, soap, detergents, rice and other ‘non-perishable’ goods you see stacked on the shelves.

Clothing, textiles, household appliances and hardware are goods which must not be sold on Sundays or after early-closing time – unless they can be described as “aircraft, motor or cycle supplies or accessories.” (Even then, to buy them after weekday early closing you must be a traveller – but this is not necessary on Sundays).

Everyone knows that the Shops Act is persistently disregarded and needs amendment. But how should it be revised? The National Chamber of Trade is collecting retailers’ opinions. The shop workers trade union (USDAW) has its proposals ready; it would like to see earlier compulsory closing hours, on the grounds that late opening can cause hardship to shop staff. But the shoppers’ opinion of the Shops Act is so far unknown. Shopper’s Guide considers that, before any action is taken to amend the Shops Act, shoppers should be consulted. The last survey of shoppers’ views was done by the Central Office of Information 13 years ago – under virtually wartime conditions; in today’s changed circumstances another survey is needed.”

As well as the absurdities of the Shops Act, readers may also recall the activities of the Lords Day Observance Society which for many years was active in opposing any signs of people enjoying themselves on the Sabbath. The Shops Act was eventually repealed by the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 which was introduced to cut government expenditure and bureaucracy. Since then, of course, we have seen the introduction of supermarkets open 24 hours a day and extended opening and closing hours for smaller shops.

Members of the Chamber of Commerce back in 1960 would doubtless be amazed to see the situation today where they could have shopped at Waitrose or Sainsbury’s on a Sunday morning before going to see a football match in the afternoon and taking the family to a cinema in the evening.

MARGARET THATCHER

The following appeared in the *Quarterly Journal of Finchley & Whetstone Chamber of Commerce* in Spring 1962.

“The Government changes in October brought us a new Parliamentary Secretary in place of Dame Patricia Hornsby-Smith, who had resigned some weeks before. She was Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP who thus gained a place in Government after no more than two years as a backbencher.

Mrs Thatcher, who was born in Grantham, is the daughter of a former Mayor of that city. She was educated at Grantham Girls High School and Somerville College, Oxford, where she read Natural Science, specialising in Chemistry, and obtained BA and BSc degrees. On coming down from University she worked for four years as a research chemist. She was also reading law in her spare time, however, and in 1954 she was called to the Bar. She has since practised as a barrister, specialising in tax cases.

She entered Parliament in 1959 as the Member for Finchley, having previously contested two earlier elections unsuccessfully in Dartford and Erith.

Although this is her first ministerial office, Mrs Thatcher has already had some acquaintance with legislative work in the House of Commons. In her first Parliamentary session she was lucky in the ballot for leave to introduce a Private Member's Bill, and in fact made her maiden speech when she introduced the Second Reading of her bill to secure admission of the press and other members of the public to meetings of local authorities and other public bodies.

Mrs Thatcher's husband, Major Denis Thatcher, is Chairman and Managing Director of a Chemical and Paint Manufacturing Company, as well as being director of a number of other companies. They have twins, Mark and Carol, born in 1953 and they lived in Farnborough in Kent.”

A FLASH IN THE PAN

by John Heathfield

In the Middle Ages lavatory paper had not been invented. The rich used old rags or cloth and the poor used hay or dried grass, which was fine unless someone had accidentally left thistles or stinging nettles in the bundle, hence the saying “wipe that smile off your face.” The prime crop in our district was in fact dried grass. Back in Roman times sponges were used, which were then rinsed out in running water. One side effect of the spread of newspapers in the 1800s was that there was a use for them after they had been read; by 1900 special lavatory paper had been introduced.

Most houses had a cesspit at the end of the garden. In Tudor land records this is variously called a necessary house or a back house. An earthenware receptacle kept in the chamber was called a chamber pot. Holes built near a stream could empty sewage and other rubbish straight into the brook, a habit shared by today's supermarket trolley vandals. The flushing toilet that we know today was developed in the 1870s and the Artisan Dwellings Act of 1875 required all new homes to have a water closet - Sherwood Road was the first in the area to benefit from this Act. The houses also had gas pipes built into the walls to provide lighting. Initially sewage pipes

were horseshoe shaped, with a flat bottom, but this could cause a build up of sewage gas which would leak into the atmosphere, causing bad smells or even explosions. The introduction of round pipes, which have a better scouring effect, was a response to this problem. Early sewers also coped with rainwater which could result in unpleasant back flooding. Today there are separate rainwater and foul water systems.

The architect responsible for designing the second Middlesex County Pauper Lunatic Asylum at Colney Hatch, William Daukes, had included a sewage treatment plant to the south of the building but it was unable to cope with the daily effluent created by over 1000 patients plus a similar number of staff, with the result that it overflowed into Bounds Green Brook and then ran eastwards into Pymmes Brook. Both Tottenham Local Board and Edmonton Local Board and their residents complained bitterly for some twenty years until in 1898 Friern Board Local Board built a sewage works at Cromwell Road which solved the problem and also dealt with all of Friern Barnet's sewage. There were other sewage farms at East Barnet, Mays Lane, Summers Lane and Finchley had its own works to the west of Colney Hatch Lane. Today sewage is treated either at Mogden near Isleworth or at Edmonton; both these works produce water that is actually purer than what comes out of the taps.

ALLEGED HORSE THIEF IN DOCK

A newspaper report from 1909:

‘The Mysterious “Patsy”’

At Highgate Police-court, on Friday, Richard Lill, 25, a greengrocer, of Archdale-road, East Dulwich, was charged with stealing from a field near Northmount, High Road, Whetstone, a bay mare, value £15, the property of Arthur Maxfield and Sons. He was further charged with stealing from the Manor Farm-fields, High Road, Whetstone, a brown horse, value £6, the property of the Manor-farm Dairy Company.

Arthur Collis, an employee of Messrs Maxfield, said the horse was put in the field on Saturday January 31st. He identified the horse in the Green-yard, Portland-town. A bailiff of the Manor-farm Dairy Company said he also missed a horse from the fields.

Police-constable S518 said he met prisoner riding a horse and leading another one in Wellington-road. He stopped prisoner, as the horses were footsore, and asked him where he got the horses. He said a man named “Patsy” had given him the horses at Barnet and told him to take them to the “Rockingham Arms”, near the “Elephant and Castle”.

A detective officer said prisoner had been on bail and had shown him the places where he had left the man and received the horses, which was all consistent with the story he had previously told.

Sir Francis Cory-Wright – I can't understand a man of your age being deceived in such a way. You must have known they had been stolen.

Prisoner – I have never been in such a case before, and I was earning a few shillings.

The detective said prisoner promised to try to find the man. He had made enquiries and could find nothing against the man.

He was remanded on bail.”

FRIARY PARK STATUE PLAQUE UNVEILED

On Saturday 18 June at 11am an unveiling ceremony commenced in front of the statue in Friary Park. David Smith, Chairman of The Finchley Society, opened the proceedings and described how the plaque was created - a joint effort between The Finchley Society, Friends of Friary Park and our Society, which provided the words for the plaque. Kate Salinger, Chairman of Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association then gave a brief history of the statue and then introduced David Longstaff, the Mayor of Barnet, who unveiled the plaque.



David Longstaff, Gillian Griffiths, the Lady Mayoress, and Kate Salinger listen to David Smith's introduction

NEEDLEWORK

by John Heathfield

I sewed a button on the other day (pause for applause and gasps of astonishment). I used my wife's sewing box and my mother's button jar. Both these things are absent from the modern housewife's armory. If things wear out we buy another (my local shops are selling 5 pairs of socks for £3).

When Phoebe Oliver was appointed to St John's School in Whetstone in 1845 things were very different. It was essential that mothers could darn and sew patches on. You only had two frocks, your Sunday best and your other one, often handed down. If your frock got dirty you had nothing to wear while it was being washed. That's why you wore a "pinned afore" or an apron. There are photos of boys wearing their elder sister's handed down frock because they had nothing else to wear. It was rare to wear socks. The requirement for schoolmistresses was that they could teach the Catechism and "good plain needlework". When Stephen Oliver left St John's School Whetstone in 1851 to teach in Hertfordshire, Mrs Baxendale provided a reference for his wife Phoebe, who taught with him. It has survived and reads: "Mrs Baxendale has much pleasure in testifying that so far as personal experience goes Mrs Oliver formerly her maid, is quite competent to superintend the sewing taken into the National School. About four years ago she left Mrs B's service to become the second wife of Mr Oliver and any work sent to the school has been promptly and well done."

This is an early example of "learning by doing" as the school took in sewing and laundry, which the girls dealt with in their lessons. The small sums of money involved helped the school budget. As well as becoming good housewives and mothers the girls' ultimate ambition was to become a ladies' maid.

Incidentally the Oliver's later moved to Gloucester, where Phoebe succeeded her husband as head teacher and parish clerk. Under her rule the school inspectors rated the school as "outstanding". WWW,WWA! (What Wonderful Women, Whetstone Women Are!)

A CLASSIC HOAX

by David Berguer

I had never heard of Theodore Hook until I recently came across his name in a book that I bought in a charity shop, but he has now become one of my heroes. Here is his story:

Early one morning in November 1810 a chimney sweep knocked on the door of number 54 Berners Street, just north of Oxford Circus. He said he had been asked to come and sweep their chimney but the householder knew nothing about it and sent him away. Not long after more chimney sweeps arrived, all claiming they had been sent for. They were sent packing too but they were soon followed by fifteen large wagons laden with coal all of which had been ordered by a Mrs Tottenham at that address. Then fishmongers arrived, with the morning's catch which had also been ordered by Mrs Tottenham. Later pianos arrived by the dozen, then two thousand five hundred raspberry tarts from fifty pastry cooks. At two o'clock surgeons, physicians and apothecaries turned up, together with ten midwives, a hearse, drays laden with beer, fifty hampers of wine, to be followed by upholsterers and architects.

By now a large crowd had gathered and they were delighted to see the arrival of the Lord Mayor and the chairman of the East India Company and the Governor of the Bank of England, both of whom had been advised that frauds had been perpetrated on their companies. The Duke of Gloucester arrived to hear the deathbed confession of an aged retainer.

Some of the tradespeople, initially angry at being duped, stayed to see the next lot of arrivals who were accompanied by shouts of laughter. The Lord Mayor, however, was not amused and drove to Marlborough Street Police Office where he laid a complaint with the magistrates who ordered their officers to the scene to disperse the crowds which had by now been swelled by a large number of servants who had received letters offering them positions. Eventually peace was restored, but not before darkness had fallen.

The perpetrator was Theodore Hook, who had made a bet of one guinea that he could make the house in Berners Street the most famous in London. He then sent out hundreds, possibly thousands, of letters ordering the goods and services under the name of Mrs Tottenham. He had, it is claimed, hired a room opposite number 54 Berners Street and spent the day there with a group of friends being entertained by the goings on.

The hoax has been repeated on a smaller scale several times since, particularly by students ordering pizzas from several companies for their friends. So it may be worth checking before you open your front door when the bell rings. And don't forget – I know where you live!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

We were delighted to receive a beautifully hand written letter from our member in Orpington, Doug Smith:

“As a new recruit to the FB&DLHS I have been enjoying my first Newsletter which I found to be a very good read. In particular, I liked your item about ‘Things You Don't See Now’. Not only have they gone, I have to admit I had forgotten most of them. I don't know how you managed such a comprehensive list and I know I couldn't hope to compete. A few I would suggest: - turn-ups on men's trousers; football boots with nailed studs; bowlers (hats – not cricketers); Brylcreem and school caps for boys. The latter I had to wear at both Bowes Road and Bounds Green schools. Luckily there was no such requirement at Garfield.

Just a couple of items on your list can be found if one looks hard enough. For example you will have by now gathered that I am writing this letter with a fountain pen of which I have two. Also, I still have a tin of Wren's Dubbin (sad!) and Arriva buses in Leicestershire still sport Used Ticket boxes (though I believe they are about to be phased out). Slam doors and ‘Don't Lean Out’ notices can still be seen on preserved steam railways (Great Central, Bluebell, etc).

Although I am neither an enthusiast and certainly not an ‘anorak’, I do still have an interest in railways, particularly for the steam era, so the photograph of the *Flying Scotsman* loco travelling through New Southgate brought a gleam to my eyes. On leaving school I took a job with LNER and travelled to work in

Bishopsgate from New Southgate to Moorgate. Having spent (or misspent) many years 'spotting' engine numbers in the New Southgate area, you will no doubt understand my enthusiasm about the photo.

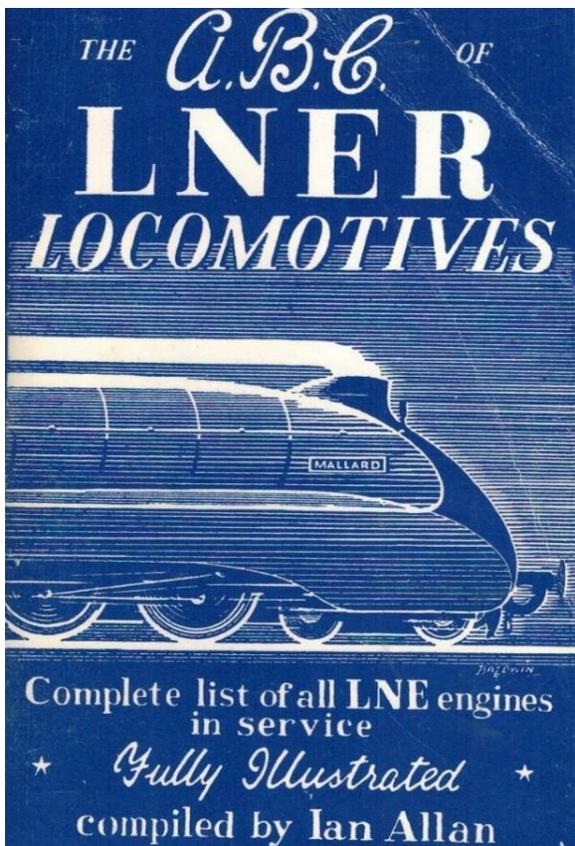
It is suggested that the train was on its way to King's Cross, but I think it may be on the northbound line. The building on the extreme left looks to me to be the signal box with the signal gantry next to it. Also, the bridge appears to be the wooden structure which joined Station Road with what we called 'the line path', and where I used to spend a great deal of time. I rather like the advertisement for Lux under the station nameplate. Another thing you don't see now, perhaps?

Your suggestion that the photo was taken sometime between 1940-1947 is as accurate as we can be. One minor point which might isolate the date still further is that the LNER renumbering scheme commenced on 1 January 1946 and by 1947, 4472 was renumbered as 103. My information comes from an Ian Allan ABC of LNER locos in service in 1947 (even sadder, I know!). Also the loco looks quite clean which suggests it might be nearer 1940 because as the war went on, the engines became scruffier through lack of attention.

My apologies if I have bored you to tears with all this nonsense. My best wishes to you all."

FOOTNOTE:

The Ian Allan books definitely come under the heading of 'Things You Don't See Now' and to jog your memory here is a copy of the 1943 edition, complete with the required underlining of the engines that had been 'copped', including, of course, number 4472!



NAMED ENGINES	
A1 Class "Pacific"	
<u>2543 Melton</u>	<u>2567 Sir Visto</u>
<u>2546 Donovan</u>	<u>2569 Gladiateur</u>
<u>2547 Doncaster</u>	<u>2570 Tranquil</u>
<u>2548 Galtee More</u>	<u>2572 St. Gatien</u>
<u>2549 Persimmon</u>	<u>2576 The White Knight*</u>
<u>2550 Blink Bonny</u>	<u>2577 Night Hawk</u>
<u>2552 Sansovino</u>	<u>2581 Neil Gow*</u>
<u>2553 Prince of Wales</u>	<u>4470 Great Northern</u>
<u>2555 Centenary</u>	<u>4472 Flying Scotsman</u>
<u>2556 Ormonde</u>	<u>4475 Flying Fox</u>
<u>2557 Blair Atholl</u>	<u>4476 Royal Lancer</u>
<u>2560 Pretty Polly</u>	<u>4477 Gay Crusader*</u>
<u>2561 Minoru</u>	<u>4478 Hermit</u>
<u>2562 Isinglass</u>	<u>4479 Robert the Devil</u>
<u>2564 Knight of the Thistle</u>	<u>4481 St. Simon</u>
<u>2565 Merry Hampton</u>	
A3 Class "Pacific"	
<u>2500 Windsor Lad</u>	<u>2580 Shotover</u>
<u>2501 Colombo</u>	<u>2582 Sir Hugo</u>
<u>2502 Hyperion</u>	<u>2595 Trigo</u>
<u>2503 Firdaussi</u>	<u>2596 Manna</u>
<u>2504 Sandwich</u>	<u>2597 Gainsborough</u>
<u>2505 Cameronian</u>	<u>2598 Blenheim</u>
<u>2506 Salmon Trout</u>	<u>2599 Book Law</u>
<u>2507 Singapore</u>	<u>2743 Felstead</u>
<u>2508 Brown Jack</u>	<u>2744 Grand Parade</u>
<u>2544 Lemberg</u>	<u>2745 Captain Cuttle</u>
<u>2545 Diamond Jubilee</u>	<u>2746 Fairway</u>
<u>2551 Prince Palatine</u>	<u>2747 Coronach</u>
<u>2554 Woolwinder</u>	<u>2748 Colorado</u>
<u>2558 Tracery</u>	<u>2749 Flamingo</u>
<u>2559 The Tetrarch</u>	<u>2750 Papyrus</u>
<u>2563 Tagalie</u>	<u>2751 Humorist</u>
<u>2566 Ladass</u>	<u>2752 Spion Kop</u>
<u>2568 Sceptre</u>	<u>2795 Call Boy</u>
<u>2571 Sunstar</u>	<u>2796 Spearmint</u>
<u>2573 Harvester</u>	<u>2797 Cicero</u>
<u>2574 St. Frusquin</u>	<u>4471 Sir Frederick Banbury</u>
<u>2575 Galopin</u>	<u>4473 Solario</u>
<u>2578 Bayardo</u>	<u>4474 Victor Wild</u>
<u>2579 Dick Turpin</u>	<u>4480 Enterprise</u>

* Now Class A 3
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OLDEST ACTIVE CYCLIST

This letter appeared in a local paper in 1937:

“To the Editor

Sir,

It would be very interesting to know who now is, or claims to be, the oldest active pedal cyclist. I am 73 years of age (not old) but considered by some a mere youngster.

My records show that not long ago there was a lady, a Mrs Whittaker, living near Hull who at the age of 99 rode a pedal tricycle through the thickest traffic. Another lady, Mrs Burton, living near Wakefield, a few years ago, rode a pedal bicycle in her 87th year. Also the ex-Kaiser’s engine driver, Heinrich Werner, aged 90, cycled 185 miles to see the Crown Princess Juliana and her mother, calling in to see the ex-Kaiser, at Doorn, on the way.

I belong to a cycling organisation 1000 strong, the youngest member being 65 and the oldest 90 years of age. The life and vivacity of these men is remarkable to behold, and I venture to assert no other sport has its equal.

It was thought that the late Reverend Frederick Hastings, of Eastbourne, was before his death, the oldest active cyclist, cycling about the streets until a short time before his death at the age of 99 and who at the age of 95 stated: “I’m certain that there’s nothing to beat cycling as a health-giving exercise and as a means of getting about. I have had a joyous life, and in Australia, Russia, America, Africa and India. I have been able to see all the wonders of the world on my bicycle.” When over 90 years of age he cycled to the Italian Riviera, carrying his bicycle to the mountain tops.

With thanks in anticipation of a reply to my inquiry.

Yours faithfully

H C Couzens
(56 years a pedal cyclist)
Milton Grove, New Southgate,
London N11.”

Back in Britain in 1937 there were about 2.5 million vehicles on the roads (about half of them private cars) and there were 7343 deaths and 231,603 injuries. Today with 32 million vehicles road deaths amount to around 2600 with casualties of around 228,400. So, despite the current apparent spate of cyclist deaths it would appear that cycling is actually safer today.

BASIL McKENNY: A PERSONAL REMINISCENCE

by John Heathfield

As a boy at Woodhouse School I was obsessed with football (I still am). The problem came in 1941 when I was selected to play for the second eleven because I did not have a school shirt and clothes were rationed. Basil came to the rescue. I took over

his spare shirt because he had grown out of it. It would just tuck it into my waistband. I continued to wear it when I played for the Old Woods in the 1950s. He played a distinguished part at school, where he was Head Boy and was featured on the school honours board

I met Basil again in the 1990s in connection with The Whetstone Society, which he was instrumental in founding. He spent hours and hours on planning applications. When I mentioned in one of my talks that Richard Atfield had planted trees along the High Road he seized upon the idea with alacrity and arranged for the Society to donate money to Barnet Council to get trees planted along the High Road in 1994. He also organised the Christmas lights. In many ways he was Mr Whetstone. I think what I remember most was his kindness to and consideration for others. Good old Basil!

AGM RESULTS AND FINANCIAL REPORT

For those of you who were unable to attend our AGM on 25 May we are enclosing a copy of the Report and Accounts for 2015-2016. You will see that our balance has been significantly reduced because of the redesign of our website, www.friern-barnet.org.uk. Despite this, and barring any unforeseen circumstances, there will be no increase in our subscription rates for 2017-2018 which have remained unchanged since April 2013.

DO YOU REMEMBER THIS?



We came across this undated photograph and wondered if anyone remembers this Club and when it was in operation. If you can fill in any details, please let us know.

A BLEAK MIDWINTER

Some of our older members may recall the winter of 1947. On the morning of 24 January the inhabitants of south-east England awoke to find that overnight the area had been covered in a blanket of snow. What they did not know was that this was just the start of the worst winter of the twentieth century, with snow falling every day until 16 March. The Thames froze over and many roads and railways were at a standstill. Ships were icebound in the northern ports which led to the interruption of coal supplies and a subsequent interruption of electricity supplies.

The Barnet Press of 15 February 1947 reported:

“Five thousand workers at Standard Telephones & Cables Ltd, New Southgate, thrown out of work by the power cuts, are receiving a guaranteed 54-hour week’s wages until further notice. An official estimated this will cost the company £18,000 a week. The 2000 office staff are working. Simms Motor Units, Finchley, also are paying their 1000 factory workers until further notice. One hundred and eighty employees of Elliott and Sons, photographic manufacturers of Park Road, Barnet, were sent home on Monday with a weeks’ provisional notice. S Maw and Sons, surgical manufacturers and suppliers of New Barnet, are one of the essential industries “but every effort is being made to save electricity, said Mr F Bourne, personnel manager. None of the six hundred employees – not even the manager and directors – is allowed to use any lights. I am signing cheques by candlelight. Electric fires in the manager’s and director’s offices have been disconnected.” One thousand employees of John Dale Ltd, Brunswick Park, are under a week’s notice. “We have been finding them odd jobs in the factory this week”, said a company official. “All machinery is at a standstill.”

When the thaw eventually came it led to overflowing rivers and floods in thirty-one counties. All this when there was still rationing, and queues for such items as horse flesh (‘No Coupons Required’) and tins of snoek, a kind of mackerel that was imported from South Africa. Coal for domestic fires was in short supply (this was in the days before gas central heating) and bomb sites were still to be seen throughout London

If you have any memories of this hard winter, or of the one in 1962, please let us have them.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

If you would prefer to receive your copy of the Newsletter by email rather than through the post, please let us know and we will arrange for you to get a PDF copy. Please email us at: friernbarnethistory@hotmail.co.uk

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