

# Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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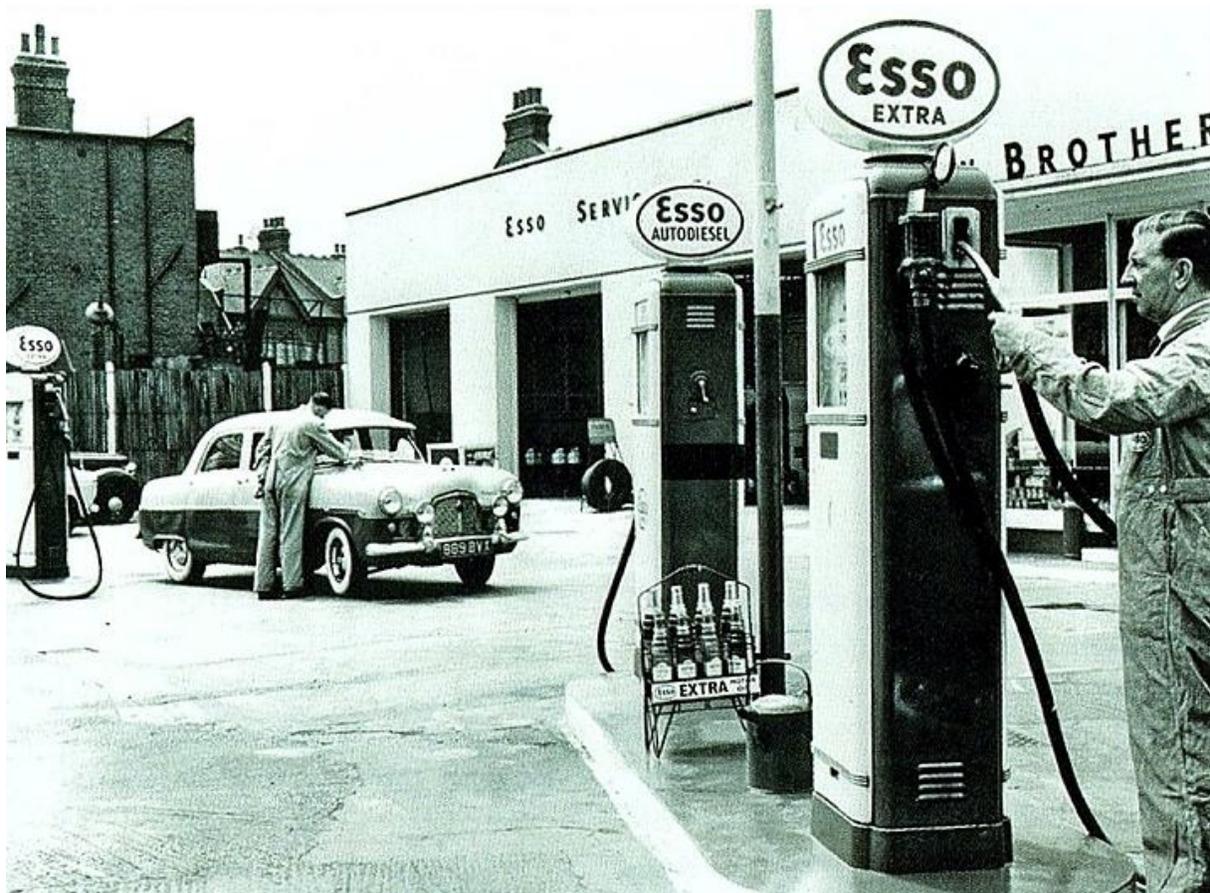
February 2020

## THE PRICE OF PETROL

Following on from our article in the September *Newsletter* about electric buses replacing diesel ones, this article appeared in the 1955 issue of *New Southgate and Friern Barnet Chamber of Commerce Directory*:

“Petrol today is about twice as good and basically half the price of what it was in 1920. “Can you say the same about many other things these days?” asks the writer in an article in the *Esso Magazine*.

Pointing out that the price of a gallon today is 2/6d more than it was in 1913, the article continues, “but then the tax on it today is 2/6d a gallon. In 1913 the tax was three pence per gallon. So, leaving out for the moment the amounts payable to the government, a gallon of regular grade petrol today is costing you three pence more than it did before the First World War, despite the fact that in quality and power it has been improved beyond recognition.



*A service station in the 1950s*

“Three pence a gallon more after forty years of devaluation of the buying power of the pound and a 300 per cent rise in the cost of living. There is some justification for describing it as a bargain. The article shows that a wage earner in this country had to work two hours in 1920 to buy a gallon of petrol. By 1938 this time had been reduced to one hour: now it is 59 minutes. If it were not for the tax on petrol, he could earn a gallon these days in 50 minutes.

It takes him about 18 minutes to earn his pint of beer. Beer and petrol a pint used to be about the same price. That was again in 1913 when beer cost twopence a pint and petrol twopence halfpenny a pint. Now the ordinary beer is 1/2d a pint or seven times as much and petrol is just over 6d. Without the tax a gallon of petrol in 1913 used to cost nearly the same as a pound of butter. In other words, in terms in everyday commodities like beer and butter, petrol is nothing like as expensive as it used to be. The object of these comparisons is to arrive at the *real* price of petrol related to the actual money available on average to be spent.

Taking 100 gallons of regular grade petrol as a reasonable yearly consumption the price of that amount of petrol shown as a percentage of the average per capita annual “take home” pay in Britain for the period in 1938-1955 demonstrates that the rise in the real price of petrol is due entirely to the incidence of taxation

Estimated figures for 1955 which have become available show a continued fall in the “real” price – with tax to 7.9 per cent, and without tax to 3.1 per cent. Why has petrol remained comparatively so cheap? The writer finds the answer in competition. “Competition within the oil industry. Competition which spurs oil companies to spend millions of pounds each year on technical research to improve products and methods, to rationalise distribution, to cut costs, so that petrol, and indeed all oil products, can remain within the reach of people everywhere. “Back in 1913 where we started this story, petrol itself was still not very much more than a nuisance in the distilling process. It has come a long way since then and uncounted sums of money have been spent in perfecting it. Measured on the octane scale alone, the petrol sold in 1913 and during the next ten years would have been rated between 40 and 60. Premium petrols today generally rate something over 90, aviation petrols often as high as 145. All in all, two gallons of petrol today will do the work of three a generation ago. Clearly much has been done to account for such an improvement.”

The article goes on to state that the petrol that you now put into your car, never existed in a raw state in nature. It is tailor made for its particular job. Part of the tailoring, the final part, is to add the finishing touches in the way of additives. Quality is the criterion of petrol, and the creation is all round quality not only octane number.”

Today 65p in every pound spent at the forecourt is tax and VAT, one of the highest rates of tax in the world. The government gets about £28 billion worth of revenue from tax on petrol and diesel sales and with the switch to electric vehicles this revenue will need to be replaced. One option being considered is road pricing, where drivers will be charged for every mile they drive. The writer of the above article could never have envisaged that petrol would one day disappear as a form of energy.

## **DISABLED SOLDIERS**

*by John Heathfield*

In the United Kingdom, the impact of the loss of life and injury to the soldiers who had fought in the war was mind-boggling. Scarcely a household was not affected by the slaughter and maiming.

For instance, in one Orkney Island, the eleven men who volunteered were all killed, taking with them the future of the fishing fleet. One man, who had both legs and an arm blown off, had a wife and two children to support. Another man had his jaw blown off - how do you feed man with no mouth? Nobody had any idea of how to cope with the aftermath of the First World War.

There was no previous experience to draw upon. After the Napoleonic or Crimean War, the few thousand discharged soldiers were the responsibility of the Parish and were usually reduced to begging.

In 1918 the size of the problem was simply overwhelming. There was enormous public sympathy for the survivors. There was no television then, and public opinion was expressed through the newspapers. The ten thousand or so wounded who survived were regarded with great benevolence. They were called 'our wounded heroes'.

### **Pensions**

In 1918 pensions was the responsibility of the newly created Ministry of Pensions, where the staff was increased to 527 men and 8,195 women to deal with the huge number of claimants. Preference was given to training and employing war widows. According to *Hansard*, there were between 15,000 and 20,000 new pension claimants each week. Pensions were paid through the Post Office where extra staff were also employed. Even the smallest community had a village shop/post office and this network was used to facilitate payment. Again, preference for the new jobs was given to war widows.

In January 1919 the numbers were: -

Disabled Officers	10,212
Disabled Men	525,862
Disabled Nurses	383
Widows of Officers	8,580
Widows of Men	179,273
Children of deceased Officers	9,213
Children of deceased Men	339,829
Children of Disabled Men	490,010
Officers' other dependents	3,481
Men's other dependents	214,004

The causes of disability were:

Eye cases	13,736
Amputated legs	15,447
Amputated arms	7,342

Wounds or injuries to legs	70,067
Wounds to arms	49,226
Wounds to hands	23,826
Wounds to head or face	20,805
Hernia	4,577
Miscellaneous wounds	25,846
Chest complaints (inc gassing)	57,858
Nerves (inc 'shell shock')	26,696
Insanity	4,423
Deafness	9,067
Frostbite	3,723
Miscellaneous	194,799
Total	524,715

Other cases included tuberculosis, rheumatism and gout.

# CARTERS

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*Hansard* noted that men recovered from injuries more quickly than from illnesses.

St Dunstan's trained blind soldiers and discharged 46 during the year 1918. 27,437 men and 1,174 officers were fitted with artificial limbs in the first 8 months of 1919 with a further 27,436 on the waiting lists. For limbless men 608 tricycles were supplied up to 31 Dec 1918. The number discharged from medical treatment up to December 1918 was 92,500. On Christmas Day 1918 42,428 men were under hospital treatment. The total number receiving training was 20,828.

### Prices

Between 1850 and 1910 there were hardly any price or wage rises. Indeed, in some cases prices actually fell e.g. coal or bread.

Between 1914 and 1918 prices doubled. In 1914 the average wage for farm workers was 16s 9d for 58-hour week. By 1918 it was £1.10.6d for 52-hour week and by 1920 £2 3s 0d for 48 hours.

## **A comparison with other countries**

Under the Royal warrant of 1918, the UK war disability pension was £71.10s 0d per year (£3,102 at today's prices) with £ 17.10s 0d for the first child and £10.10s 0d (£48) for any subsequent child. In June 1919 a further 20% was added.

In France under a law of 1831 the annual pension was £48. In Italy it was £30 with £12 for a wife. In the US a married man received £112. In Germany the pension was £36 to £65 depending on the nature of the disability.

In the UK the widows' pension was £35 rising to £39 at age 45.

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## **WARTIME MEMORIES OF BARNET – part four**

*by Philip O'Donoghue*

Only three other things about my generally happy and fruitful years at EBGS. One was the headmaster's policy of entering every pupil for the school leaving examination. In those days the exam, the General School Certificate, could only be gained if you passed in seven subjects at one sitting, including I think English Language, a modern foreign language, a science and elementary maths, while exemption from matriculation – highly regarded by employers and essential for those aiming at university – required pass to credit standard in at least five, including the specified subjects. At one sitting, if you flunked even one subject you had to do the whole lot again. This made the probability of passing rather low for the less academic, and some other schools used to weed their 16-year-olds assiduously, only entering those they considered fairly sure of success. This kept up their pass rate but was a bit hard on the rejects – something the present government might try to understand in its love for formal assessment and league tables. Mr Clayton would not do that. As he told me after I had left, he felt that even the greatest fool might be inspired on the days of the exams, making a difference to him or her for the rest of their lives.

The last school reminiscence is of a Dutch family that fled to England only just ahead of the Germans, settling in Wagon Road. The eldest boy was already adult while the youngest (my friend) and his slightly older sister had time to adapt to this foreign country. The trouble was the middle boy, fast approaching his examination time. Although his English was excellent it was not his native tongue, so that he was bound to be at a disadvantage. Mr Clayton saw that the solution was to put the boy in for a GSC Dutch exam. A pupil could only be entered for a subject that was taught regularly at school. But the regulations did not say who was to teach who, so every week until his examination the boy gave a lesson in Dutch to the headmaster. The boy passed his exams, getting the highest mark in Dutch ever given at this level by the University of London. I don't know whether Mr Clayton attempted the exam.

Not only was my school not significantly damaged by the air raids, neither was my home. This was in part due to our leaded windows, which buckled alarmingly but did not shatter in the blast from nearby bombs. One or two tiny panes cracked and were replaced with spares from the ruined windows of the empty house next door. Otherwise the only damage suffered by 94 Normandy Avenue was a chip off the stone step into the porch caused by a fragment of an anti-aircraft shell that exploded in the road a couple of doors down. In fact I do not think any high-explosive bombs fell in our road at all, only a few incendiaries onto the pavement outside 92 or 90 - my mother crept out at first light and collected a tailfin for me (I still have it) – and an oil bomb from the back garden of a house much further up the road. I never understood the purpose of

oil bombs, which having arrived with a rather entertaining chuff-chuff noise like a demented railway engine, in my (limited) experience they simply burst, throwing oil all over the place, damaging privet hedges and so on.

With great care I marked on 6-inch OS maps the location of every bomb known to me to have fallen on Chipping Barnet. On the whole Barnet escaped lightly, except for the bomb on the old people's home on Hadley Green and the disastrous Bells Hill landmine – a bomb dropped on a parachute so that, like many V1's it would not dig into the ground and waste energy excavating a huge crater, but would devastate as great a surface area as possible. I also marked with little ball-headed map tacks on coloured maps of the theatres of war, supplied by newspapers (ours was the *News Chronicle*), the ebb and eventual flow of the fortunes of the Allies (us) as opposed to the Axis (them). Careful study of the walls of the top back bedroom in 94 Normandy Avenue could be well worthwhile to a war historian who distrusts printed sources.

My good fortune unharmed, and through youthful ignorance largely unaware of the possibilities, war was rather fun for boys like me. We were able at a glance to identify virtually all aircraft from the biplanes, high-winged troop-carrying monoplanes and strange nose-down Whitley bombers of the early years (although we were not wholly unprepared – I broke my arm playing some sort of monoplane fighter, could it have been a Spitfire? In Queen's Road School playground long before moving to Barnet) to the umpteen marks of Spitfire, the various Mosquitos, and the Halifax and Lancaster bombers of the later ones. I never saw a German plane other than as a tiny gleam in a searchlight's beam, except for a three-engined Junkers 52 in full Luftwaffe paint, bearing RAF roundels hastily painted over the swastikas, which appeared from behind Cannon Street Station and flew over me as I walked beside the Thames one day. Nor did I see any crashed aircraft to match the olive green Fairey bomber seen plunked in a field near Swanage on a pre-war holiday – only a Blenheim bomber limping home low across the High Street with its wings in tatters – there was less metal used in planes in those days.

**To be continued....**

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## **ARE YOU AS CLEVER AS A TWELVE-YEAR OLD?**

*by John Heathfield*

The 1870 Education Act required all children to go to school. At the end of each school year they were set a standard examination based on the syllabus. Teachers were paid according to the number of passes pupils achieved.

Part of the exam for 12-year olds is given below. You might like to have a go.

### Geography

Explain the following words: height, vales, plains, ravines, peak, sea level.

Draw from memory a map of Cumberland, Westmoreland and Lancashire.

### Arithmetic

Find by practice the value of 1 pipe, 47 gallons, 1 quart of wine at £28 17s 6d per hogshead.

### English

There was no requirement to write continuous prose. The test was based on Latin grammar.

Question: Parse “The rich trees of the grove wept odorous gums and balm.”

(Answer: ‘The’ – definite article limiting ‘trees’

‘Rich’ – adjective describing trees

‘Trees’ – common noun, 3rd person, plural number, neuter gender, nominative case, governing ‘wept’

‘Of’ – preposition governing ‘grove’

‘The’ – definite article limiting ‘grove’

‘Grove’ – common noun, 3rd person singular number, neuter gender, objective case, governed by ‘of’

‘Wept’ – Verb, irregular, transitive, past tense, indicative mood, objective case, agreeing with its nominative ‘trees’ in number and person

‘Odorous’ – adjective, qualifying ‘gums, and ‘balm’

‘Gums’ – Common noun, 3rd person, plural number, neuter gender, nominative case, governed by the verb ‘kept’

‘And’ – conjunction joining ‘gums’ and ‘balm’

‘Balm’ – common noun, 3rd person, singular number, neuter gender, nominative case, governed by ‘wept’)

Girls were required to hem a seam and sew a patch with a fine neat hand.

There was no requirement to teach Algebra, Geometry or History.

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### THE HANDS OF TIME

This clock came up for auction at Tring Market Auctions on 19 January 2019. Laban Dovey was a watch and clock maker at 1256 High Road, Whetstone, next to the *Hand & Flower* pub, from around 1881 until 1985 when the premises were demolished to make way for Barclays Bank.



Leonard Dovey of Friary Road recalled in the *Barnet Times* that he used to go into the back of the shop to watch his elderly relative at work. “It was a very old-fashioned place. I can remember all the clocks ticking, the grandfather clocks and clocks on the walls. He also used to do clock winding up at Totteridge.”

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## EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Our committee member John Holtham came across this letter from 1943 which had been sent to his father who worked at Biggs, Wall & Co in Cromwell Road, N10. Apart from the wonderfully ornate letterhead, the contents give us an interesting insight into measures that had to be taken to protect the premises during the Second World War.

Telegrams—  
"RAGOUT,PHONE,LONDON."  
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N10

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Do beg to inform you that you are eligible for  
fire watching on these premises up to 48 hours per month.

The only grounds for exemption are:-

1. Health.
2. Home Guard.
3. Civil Defence other than local fire watching.
4. Hardship.

We enclose Form C 2 for your use if you have any  
grounds for appeal.

As soon as it can be arranged after the return of  
forms a meeting will be called for the purpose of  
arranging a rota.

Yours faithfully,  
BIGGS, WALL & CO LTD,  
*Edmund Biggs*

## **EARL AND COUNTESS OF GIFFORD**

*by John Philpott*

In Friern Barnet churchyard, to the right of the path as you approach the south door of the church from the direction of Friary Park, are two graves side-by-side with these inscriptions:

GEORGE Earl of Gifford  
Eldest son of the 8<sup>th</sup> Marquis of Tweeddale,  
Born 26<sup>th</sup> April 1822,  
Died 22 December 1862  
This Stone is placed here  
By his wife Helen  
in loving remembrance

HELEN, Baroness Dufferin and Clandboye  
Countess of Gifford,  
Died 13<sup>th</sup> of June, 1867  
This Stone is placed here by her Son,  
Frederick Temple, Earl of Dufferin

The grave also bears an inscription in Greek, which, translated, reads:

“She will now for ever be untouched by pain,  
and, known for her goodness, she will suffer never again.”  
*(Translation provided by Elizabeth Tucker)*

Nearby, is a small grave:

To the Memory of  
the Honble SYDNEY TEMPLE BLACKWOOD  
Born 20<sup>th</sup> May 1867  
Died the same day

Helen Selina Sheridan was born in 1807, eldest of the three daughters of Thomas and Caroline. When she was six, her father's work as a colonial administrator took the family to the Cape of Good Hope, where they lived until his death four years later. She inherited the talent of her grandfather, the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and of her mother, who was a novelist. Her writings were mainly verses and songs, but included a play, which had a successful run at the Haymarket Theatre, and a parody of a travel book, "Lispings from Low Latitudes, or, Extracts from the Journal of Hon. Impulsia Gushington".

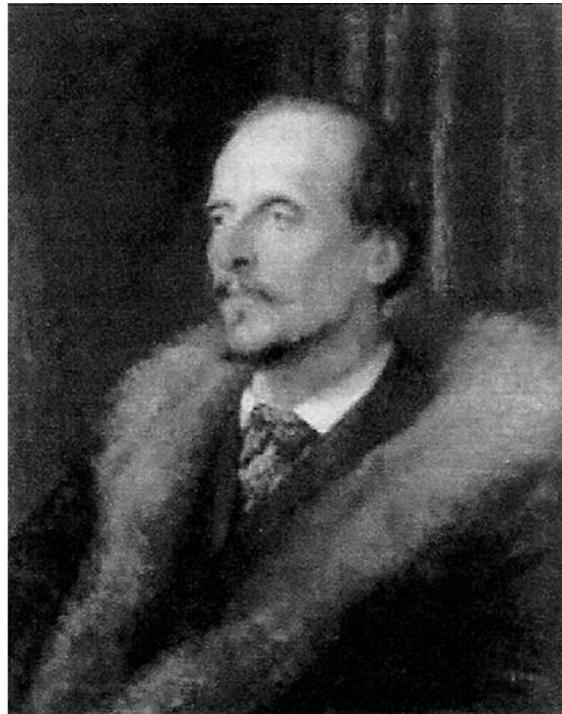
At the age of seventeen, Helen married Captain Price Blackwood, R.N., third son of Hans Blackwood, Baron Dufferin and Clandeboye. A year later, their only child, Frederick was born. Lord Dufferin's eldest son was killed at Waterloo and the second died of fever in Naples, so, on the death of his father in 1839, Captain Blackwood inherited the title and estate. Two years later, he himself died on board ship off Belfast from an accidental overdose of morphine, caused by the error of a pharmacist, and, at the age of fifteen, Price and Helen's son Frederick became Baron Dufferin and Clandboye.

Twenty-one years after the death of her first husband, Helen was married a second time to George Hay, Earl of Gifford, son of the Marquess of Tweeddale. They had been friends for many years when, in 1862, George was critically injured in an accident while protecting his own employees by bearing on his back the weight of a fallen tree to prevent its crushing the two men below him. Helen married him in October of that year as it would give her “the right to devote every hour and every day God spares him to his comfort and relief”. In December he died, aged 40, and was buried in Friern Barnet churchyard. He had been elected in 1855 Member of Parliament as a Liberal to represent Totnes in Devon, in which office he served until his death.

Helen’s son, Frederick, was also married in October 1862, to Hariot Rowan-Hamilton. That year he changed his surname to Hamilton-Blackwood, and later to Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, to include the maiden names of his grandmother and his wife. Frederick and Hariot had six sons and three daughters. Their third son, Sydney, born in May 1867, died after just four and a half hours. He, too, was buried in Friern Barnet. The following month, Helen herself died of breast cancer, aged 50, and was buried beside her second husband and close to her infant grandson.



*Countess of Gifford*



*Lord Dufferin*

We may wonder why their graves are in our churchyard when their home was in Highgate at Dufferin Lodge (now long demolished). Perhaps the churchyard beside the school chapel (which had served village as well as school before St Michael’s was built in 1832) was closed and St Michael’s has no churchyard – Friern Barnet parish burial register of the time contains other Highgate residents. Relationship to the Temple family, dukes of Buckingham and Chandos, who owned extensive estates in Friern Barnet parish, may also have been a reason. Sydney’s funeral was conducted by the vicar of St Michael’s.

Frederick, Helen’s son, Sydney’s father, had a distinguished career. After ministerial appointments in the governments of Palmerston and Gladstone, in 1872 (now Earl of Dufferin) he became governor-general of Canada. Appointments as ambassador to

Russia and to Turkey followed. From 1884 to 1888 he was viceroy of India. During his viceroyalty he annexed Burma – unwillingly, to forestall the French. He was now made marquess, the first Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, Ava being the ancient capital of Burma. After his four years governing India, Lord Dufferin served as ambassador in Rome and then in Paris.

Lord and Lady Dufferin showed practical concern for the poor of India, as he had for the people of his estates in Ireland. He introduced measures to protect the peasants from exploitation; she founded a fund to support medical aid for the women of India. He also took steps to increase Indian participation in government. The couple followed in the family's literary tradition, each writing books on their travels.

Frederick died in 1902 and is buried, as was his father, Helen's first husband, on the family estate at Clandeboye in Ireland. His eldest son had died in 1900 of wounds received at Ladysmith and his fourth son was killed in action in 1917. The title passed first to his second son Terence and then to his fifth son Captain Frederick Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, D.S.O.

Frederick, senior, is remembered in a long poem "One Viceroy Resigns", in which Rudyard Kipling imagines him sitting to the early hours reminiscing and advising his successor, Lord Landsdowne –

“... The North safeguarded – nearly, ... A country twice the size of France annexed....”.

His grandson Basil, fourth Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, who served in the Royal Horse Guards in the Second World War, is also the subject of a poem, written in his memory by his close friend John Betjeman, –

“... Stop, oh many bells stop ... Your unremembering peal this hollow, unhallowed V.E. day, - I am deaf to your notes and dead by a soldier's body in Burma.”

With the death in 1988 of Basil's son Sheridan, 5th Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, 9th Baron Dufferin and Clandeboye, the marquessate became extinct. The barony continues through another branch of the family descended from Hans Blackwood, Helen's father-in-law. The present baron lives in Australia.

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## **1979 - A YEAR TO REMEMBER**

*by David Berguer*

Most of you will have been around in 1979 but do you recall what was going on then? The country was in crisis as inflation under the Labour government had risen to 17.24% and Prime Minister Jim Callaghan had introduced a limit on pay increases to try and cure this. The trade unions reacted by inflicting a series of strikes on the public – a strike by lorry drivers led to shortages of heating oil and fresh food, and some 1000 schools had to close; railway workers went on strike and in January tens of thousands of public workers withdrew their labour; uncollected rubbish piled up in the streets and even dead bodies remained unburied as gravediggers struck. Jim Callaghan had been abroad and on his return he said "Crisis? What crisis?" The time became known as the Winter of Discontent and it led to a general election in May at which the Conservatives, led by Margaret Thatcher, were returned with a 43-seat majority. It took several years of harsh remedies but eventually the economy was brought under control.

In those days, houses cost an average of £22,670 and the average wage was £5,720. On the sporting front Trevor Francis became the first £1 million pound footballer, Martina Navratilova beat Chris Evert Lloyd to win Wimbledon, Arsenal beat Manchester United 3-2 to win the FA Cup, Liverpool became First Division champions and Seve Ballesteros won the British Open.

Pink Floyd released *The Wall* which sold six million copies in two weeks, Sid Vicious died of a heroin overdose aged 21, John Wayne died aged 72 and Monty Python made the controversial film *The Life of Brian*. On television popular shows included *Are you Being Served?*, *Last of the Summer Wine* and David Attenborough's *Life on Earth* was the first of a series of memorable nature programmes.

On the local front, a pub at 87-89 Colney Hatch Lane, *Marler's*, was visited by a Tim Martin who was studying to be a lawyer. He got to know the owner, Andrew Marler who had bought a bookmaker's shop, Hector Macdonald, and turned it into a pub serving real ale (this was the time when the keg beer Watney's Red Barrel was being dispensed at many pubs, to the horror of regular beer drinkers). Martin bought the pub, opened it on 9 December 1979 and renamed it *Martin's Free House* and then *Wetherspoons*. He said: "Looking back, I'm very lucky the customers put up with me, because if they hadn't, a promising career could have ended very prematurely. I was also lucky that there was a huge resurgence in demand for real ale, at a time when most London pubs were owned by big brewers. All in all, I look back on my time as a Muswell Hillbilly with nostalgia and think how lucky I am to have been at the right place at the right time." Tim Martin renamed his company J D Wetherspoon: the chain is actually named after one of his teachers in New Zealand who in his school report said that Martin would never amount to anything. The JD part came from the Dukes of Hazard character JD "Boss" Hogg – apparently one of Mr Martin's favourite shows. Tim went on to acquire unfashionable pubs in north London and transform them. The pub in Colney Hatch Lane was later sold and it went on to be run by various owners and under various names – *The Spoons* until 2007, *Keenan's* from 2008 and *The Furlong* from 2017.

Today J D Wetherspoon has 879 pubs, many of them in iconic old buildings such as old cinemas, banks, churches, post offices, theatres and even a former public swimming pool; it also owns 34 hotels. Tim Martin has been a strong promoter of Brexit and even went as far as replacing champagne with British sparkling wine. So, forty years ago who could have foreseen that in the depths of a recession a local pub would grow into a hugely successful business?

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## SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Your subscription runs out on 31 March 2020. If you wish to renew for a further year, from 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021, please complete the enclosed form and return it with your cheque. The new rates are - £10 for a single person and £16 for a couple or group.

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