

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS

by Peter Smedley

Seeing the article on trolleybuses in the last *Newsletter* (No 83 dated July 2020) reminded me of my short career as a trolleybus conductor in Derby.

Electric-powered trolleybuses were in service in Derby between the early thirties and the late sixties. Run by the Derby Corporation Omnibus Department, they were preceded by trams, and followed by diesel motor buses. In my opinion, although not perfect, they were superior to both, and in 1956 I was fortunate enough to have 'hands on' experience of the latter two. This came about when, as a student looking for holiday cash, I discovered that pay on the buses for temporary staff was just about the best a student could get.

I went to the main town depot for interview, passed, and spent a bewildering morning training; bewildering because the training embraced both fares collection procedures and, because I had been allocated to trolleybuses, duties specific to these. This came as a surprise as I had expected to work on the usually quieter motor bus routes. There was nothing about safety, neither mine nor passengers' – not unusual in those days, I suppose.



A Derby trolleybus

So, what were these 'specific' trolleybus duties? They were mainly around the 'trolley' part of the bus and anything which could go wrong with this. What gave these buses their designation 'trolley' were the twin metal poles mounted on the roof, which were massively spring-loaded in order to keep a close contact between the heavy copper alloy skid mounted on the end of each, and twin overhead power cables. Trolleybus routes covered most main roads around the town centre and up to about six miles out to the suburbs and industrial estates, in quite a comprehensive network. Some routes 'shared' cables until the point where they reached a road junction and there diverted across points onto a new set of cables in a new direction. The driver negotiated these by depressing his power pedal – or not. The effect of power on or off operated a switch on the points which moved the points one way or the other. Pretty clever, really.

These switched points were generally reliable – provided the driver remembered which route he was on and took turns slowly. If he got it wrong, the bus would go one way and the trolley poles another, the skids came off the cables and the poles would often flail around. At worst, the cables could be brought down.

The biggest part of trolley training was introducing me to the trolley pole, made from massive bamboo with a double sided 'widget' on the end, one side a large hook to pull the poles down, the other shaped to facilitate pushing the trolley poles back into place. This pole, over 30 feet (10 metres) long, lived in a tube which lived underneath the bus. When needed it had to be pulled out and heaved into a roughly upright position to allow the conductor to 'fish' for his overhead poles and pull/push the skates back into contact with the power cables. This performance was gone through at each terminus which didn't have a turning circle to turn the bus round.

Sounds easy? There could be problems: first the weight. It felt about a ton and if you couldn't balance it in the middle, which you usually couldn't, it was totally unwieldy. And then the length, almost a bus length. You had to pull it out of its tube, by backing along the road till it came clear. Fortunately, traffic was relatively light in those days, but there were as many cyclists as there are cars today. If you didn't poke the pole through a windscreen or a shop window, there was a much greater chance of swiping a cyclist off his bike. None of these things happened to me, but what did happen as we sped gaily down St Peter's Street in the town centre, lined with shops at ground level and offices above, my driver braked a bit too fiercely, and one trolley pole swung up through the cables in such a way that it wouldn't come down without reversing the bus and the other crashed the skate through a solicitors' open window. Trolleybuses in those days had a battery, but this only gave about five minutes running, after which it was a job for the tow truck or – if you were lucky - gravity. The driver couldn't be much help to the conductor at such times as he had to be in the cab, supposedly in control. I was on my own. I managed to get the bamboo pole out and was staggering around trying not to do more damage with it, while groups of (mainly) girl clerks leaned out of the office windows giggling and whistling. I was alarmed to see that the sash type window through which the skate had gone had been closed on the pole, making recovery impossible. I shouted rather helplessly "can I have my skate back, please", to more derision. I repeated the request several times and eventually an older woman appeared who shouted back that her boss would release the skate only after a statement accepting responsibility for all damage had been signed. I remember shouting back "What damage? I can't see any". Desperate, I decided it was time to break the first commandment and ask the driver what to do. As I went to the front of the bus I saw the driver was hunched over his wheel. My first thought was he'd had a heart attack but, fortunately, not; he was paralysed with laughter. Eventually, he

managed to shout to me, "Tell the old bat it's an offence against the bye laws to deliberately delay a public omnibus". I shouted this up and to my relief the window came slowly up – and I recognised a member of our local tennis club, who I knew was a newly qualified solicitor. I learned later, over a pint that he bought, that he'd recognised me through the window. The whole thing was a joke. I'm glad he thought so!

I titled this "Upstairs, Downstairs" with good reason. True there were two of us to do the whole bus business, but in our training it was impressed that fares had to be collected. There was no sitting waiting for passengers to pay up as they boarded; the conductor had to prowl the aisles, upstairs and downstairs often chanting "Fares please" loudly in the process. Most people were helpful and had their money handy and often knew the value ticket they needed. But at busy times you had to push your way past people (we were slimmer then!) to get at those without a ticket. At this time there were almost no bus passes, except for policemen and women and a few others: just about everybody paid, but usually only a few pence. This you had to drop into your fares shoulder bag. Paper money was a rarity. Having struggled to reach your target, your ticket machine, hanging over the other shoulder came into play. This was a middling weight silvery alloy job with about ten levers on the front which dispensed the appropriate tickets. Inside it had a crude calculator which added up the value of tickets sold. At the end of each shift the machine total had to be recorded and reconciled against the cash in the bag. A few shillings discrepancy only was allowed.

Shifts: I haven't mentioned these. At this time there were three rush hours in Derby – early morning, say 7am to 9am, 1200 to 2pm and 4pm to 7pm. Shifts were just a bit longer than these time spans. You could be asked to work one shift – known as a 'oncer' - any two shifts – known as a 'twicer' – or you worked from 5am to 1pm or 5pm to midnight. So, with about 100 buses on the road at most times, this rather complicated routine was worked around long days and early starts. Rarely, you could be asked to work a 'three-timer' covering all three rush hours, a killer but it paid well. Starting and finishing for me was by bike.

But I've digressed. Back to fares collection. As a rookie conductor, problems collecting fares might have been expected but, with a lifetime in the town and using buses regularly I was generally familiar with places and stops, and my ticket machine rarely played up. Passengers were possibly intrigued by a conductor wearing a sports jacket (no uniform for temps, not even a cap) rather awkwardly with bag and ticket machine, but they generally paid up cheerfully and at quiet moments might ask how I came to be 'on the buses'. There were only two exceptions. The first was a Saturday morning. Sat on one long seat by the entrance to the lower deck was a youth who I suspect was a bit younger than me (I was 20) who I noticed fidgeted. Opposite was an elderly man who had a long package in brown paper which looked like a spade, which he held handle down between his knees. He paid his fare and I turned to the youth. "Fares please." "B..... off!", came back. "Where are you going, you need a ticket". "B..... off, I'm not paying". At this point I should have stopped the bus and called the driver to deal with him but, to my amazement - and that of other passengers who were keenly observing the exchange – the old gent opposite leaned forward and raised the top of his package to the youth's throat. "Pay your b....y fare to the man", he bellowed, and to my horror I saw that the package wasn't a spade but a garden fork, with two of the prongs stuck through the brown paper into each side of the youth's throat. I thought he was going to kill him, but before I could do anything the youth yelled "Alright" and reached into his pocket and brought out a shilling, which I took and gave him a shilling

ticket. I've often wondered since if he expected change. Thinking of a similar situation today, either I or the old gent might have been knifed or shot, but then a garden fork at the throat is a formidable weapon.

The other exception ended very differently. It was nine-ish on a quiet Friday night, round about closing time, when we stopped at the Cambridge Hotel, which had been a rather posh venue but was now looking very neglected. A few people got off and on and, as I was about to give the driver the bell, half a dozen men clattered onto the platform and rushed onto the top deck. I noticed that one of them was bleeding and being pushed up the stairs. I didn't ring the bell, but set off upstairs. "Don't go up there, son", shouted a passenger, "one's dying and the killer's still there". I hesitated, but knew my duty. At halfway I thought better of it and turned round, returning to the platform. By this time someone had told the driver and he appeared on the pavement. "I'm in charge now," he shouted. " I'll ring 999, you stay here in case he comes down." I saw him enter a nearby phone box. By the time the police arrived, about 10 minutes later, most of the lower deck passengers had drifted off, but no one had come down the stairs and there was intermittent shouting. "You did well to keep them on top," said a very large police sergeant, "We'll need a statement from you both, but it can wait till later." Shortly afterwards we were picked up by an Omnibus Dept van and driven back to the garage, where we had to report the happenings. I heard nothing more, except that the local newspaper reported there had been a man murdered in the pub. Did I have a murderer on board? To this day, I've no idea.

LADY OF THE LOO

The following article appeared under the above heading in *Advertiser Series* on 1 February 1996:



"This old lady is sheltering from a bitter winter in an automatic toilet. She is a common sight on Whetstone High Road with her dog, Victor. For weeks now she has been commandeering the toilet as her temporary home.

The automatic toilet is one of six in the borough installed by Barnet Council. They are supposed to self clean every time the user vacates them and to open automatically after a short time, but the old lady has found a way of jamming the mechanism so she can stay in there as long as she likes. Ironically, the council knows that she is staying there but states that it can only offer to house her if she asks for help. But the lady is so confused that she is unlikely to come forward of her own accord. Instead, she spends her time between the toilet and another toilet in Finchley.

This one example of the unorthodox uses the public have for the free toilets. Discarded syringes have reportedly been found in them, and other examples of misuse and vandalism are known to the council. A spokesman said in a statement: "Drug taking and vandalism are a problem common to any public toilets, and it would have to be decided whether having a small charge would necessarily change the situation." He stressed that the cleaning operation washed the syringes out of view, so they were not a danger to the public."

THE 1930s REMEMBERED

Among our archives was a handwritten twelve-page document from a lady who had written to John Heathfield with her memories of the 1930s in the area. Unfortunately, the covering letter has gone missing, so we are unable to tell you her name. However, it is a fascinating glimpse into the past:

FINCHLEY OPEN AIR POOL

What a thrill this was, as beforehand the old Victorian baths were the only ones available. The old rules and regulations still stood when men and women were not allowed to swim together, and each sex had a day and time set apart. The open-air pool certainly did get dreadfully crowded. About that time "road houses" were being built, all having a restaurant, dance floor and outdoor pool. We visited mostly the *Watersplash* at St Albans and also the *Green Parrot*.

NORTH FINCHLEY

Priors Drapers sold almost everything a woman could want and was a favourite shop of my mother who loved clothes and often made her own as well as mine. Jelks' furniture was high class, very much like Waring & Gillow of Oxford Street. I believe there was a removal business also. There was only one hairdressers – a ladies coiffeur and I remember the wax bust with billowing hair which always stood in the window. It was faded to a waxy pallour. I had my first haircut there and was scared when the assistant singed the ends "to keep them from splitting".

704-708 HIGH ROAD - GRAND HALL CINEMA

How many of the old films did I sit and marvel at? Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks, and most of all the weekly serial with Pearl White who always faced a fate worse than death each week. The manager always wore a dinner jacket. At the front of the stage was a red velvet curtain on a brass pole. Behind it was a lady pianist who varied her music to the story of the film. She nearly went berserk when Pearl White was being chased by bandits.

FINCHLEY DANCE HALL

This excellent hall was built about 1920-30. My mother became involved in raising money to build a scout hall in Whetstone - a Mr Shrimpton was the scoutmaster - so

she arranged a dance. It was so successful that more were organised. Eventually the Dilkusha dance club formed. At the end of the season they organised a dinner and dance at a hotel in the West End and during the season a fancy dress evening

OAKLEIGH PARK STATION

It was kept in perfect condition with flower beds down the centre of the platform. The Station Master was a very keen gardener and had quite a large piece of land and his house next to the station. Everywhere was always kept swept. I used to travel in from Oakleigh Park when I attended Holmewood School. "for young ladies". The Lord Chief Justice who lived in the village would be driven to the station each day by his chauffeur. When he got on to the platform, he would put his attache case down and walk the length of the platform until the train came in. It must have held important papers, but most people were honest in those days and nobody would touch it. All trains were, of course, steam. Like Oakleigh Park station there was a small "tuck" shop, the delight of local children. One penny bars of Nestle's milk chocolate, sherbet bags, two "gob stoppers" for a halfpenny, liquorice sticks etc.

1089 HIGH ROAD – BERRIMAN'S YARD

This was near Lawson's timber yard. Mr Berriman lived there with his family in several caravans, old gypsy ones. He had huge piles of every possible kind of metal, scrap and presumably made a living. My father George Sherwood sold all his bits of scrap cars to him. Mr Berriman was a very hard man, had a downtrodden wife and several children. Opposite was a large house with grounds which was a film studios and it was quite usual to see the company out and about with cameras and large white 'umbrellas' to reflect the light.

1263 HIGH ROAD – HARPER'S BAKERS

When Ernie Harper came back from the 1914-18 war, his old father retired. Ernie, wife Emmeline and two daughters Kathleen and Betty lived in the flat over the shop. The three of us attended Eldon Preparatory School in Totteridge Lane and Kathleen became my 'best friend'. At Easter I was permitted to stamp crosses on the hot cross buns. The bakehouse was at the back and beyond that the stables and cart delivery vans were stored – no hygiene laws in those days, but everything was kept spotless. The family later moved to 'Fernlea' in the High Road towards Finchley.

1264 HIGH ROAD – POST OFFICE

It was indeed true that the spinster Miss Gilmour read all postcards and knew everything that went on in the area.

1265 HIGH ROAD – JACKSON'S

Next to Harpers bakery was Jackson's drapery shop which stocked all kinds of material, ribbons, haberdashery etc. I was always fascinated by the airborne system for paying the cash. Above the counters were wires with a pulley which ran to a small glass fronted office. The monies were put in a small container which was placed in a shuttle, the handle of a chain was pulled and the shuttle sped to the cashier, the action repeated with change.

1267 HIGH ROAD - SALMONS

All our groceries were bought here and almost everything was loose and had to be weighed. Butter and lard came in large square lumps and were patted up and weighed. Dry goods were put in blue bags. Bacon sliced at the counter in a machine, as was ham. Salt was in bars and had to be broken up and put in a jar at home.

1275 HIGH ROAD – FRIDAY’S

Further along the parade was Bob Friday’s butchers. He slaughtered some of his meat at the back. He became quite wealthy. His sisters were Em Harper, another who married the founder of ‘Bishops’ removals, and Win, who never married.

1292 HIGH ROAD – BROMLEY’S CHEMIST

On the same parade as Barclays Bank and next to Miss Stonnell’s toy and fancy shop at number 1290. He made up all his own prescriptions and had a book in which every one was numbered. My father took number 10 for indigestion. Very old-fashioned shop and flat over. He had a car accident and had to go into Finchley Cottage hospital where he met Sister Clare Wilkinson and later married her.

1293 HIGH ROAD – APPLEYBY’S

One of the sons kept racing greyhounds and one named for my mother was ‘Sherwood Tiger’ which used to run at White City. I always understood the family originated as costers from the East End of London. Old Mrs Appleby worked very hard in the shop.

1316 HIGH ROAD – EDDIE COULON

His shop was indeed chaotic, but he was a great craftsman and could mend any bicycle bought to him.

1325 HIGH ROAD – ROSE’S OIL STORE

A wonderland of goods. The shop always had a very strong smell of oil, tar, etc.

1411 HIGH ROAD – A1 DAIRIES

While living at the Manse, we had daily deliveries. The open milk float drawn by a horse. The milk was in large metal churns, and a smaller one for cream. Along the side were metal measures in long handles and the milk was dispensed into the jugs. At a young age I delighted to have a lift up the road in the float. The De Rivas’s were very wealthy and had a beautiful house. When I was at Holmewood School, Kathleen was also a pupil and her twin brother Peter went to the boys’ school also at Woodside Park. We attended classes run by Mr Clayton at the end of each year he put on a show of little plays at the Scout hut in Athenaeum Road.

1446 HIGH ROAD -THE BLACK BULL

I well remember seeing the boxers jogging up the road in training before a big fight. Len Harvey and many others.

CHANDOS AVENUE

Barclays Bank stood on the corner, the manager in my time was Mr Dayer who had two sons, Freddie and Paul, who became a Roman Catholic priest and was aboard the *HMS Hood* when it was sunk during the last war. Freddie worked for the owners of the Direct Dry Cleaners and I believe eventually took over the business.

SOUTH HERTS GOLF CLUB

This club was made famous by the pro – Harry Vardon. Like his home, he was a most modest man, in fact he was never happier than shutting himself in his workshop shed at the bottom of the clubhouse. Every morning he walked up the lane to work always clad in hairy tweed plus fours and matching cap. His workshop was amazing and fascinating. He taught my father to play, who bought one of his hand made set of clubs carried in a very heavy leather bag. Each summer he would ask my mother if she could “put up” one of his “pupils” which she did. They came from all over the country.

TROLLEYBUSES

I well remember the arrival of trolleybuses, a great leap forward from the old tramcars. As the roads were almost devoid of motor traffic they were free to swerve about. There was a period of “pirate buses”, white Admiral, blue Admiral and others. These could be quite frightening as no special stops were made for them and they had to use the existing ones. As a result, the rivals would put on speed and jockey for a place. They did not last for very long. After the open top decks of the old trams with the hard wooden seats, the trolleybuses were utter luxury. After I left school and was studying advertising at St Martins School of Art in Charing Cross Road, I would catch the 284 LGOC red bus.

MEMORIES OF HOLDEN ROAD - continued

by Caroline Wright (née Cooper)

The first door on the left was the dining room (where Mrs Fairfax had lived) which had a large bay window and it was where we had our television in the early days. The windows were sash windows and I can clearly remember a bullet hole in one made from an air rifle. The plaster ceilings in this room and the lounge were very ornately patterned. Later on the open fire was replaced by a sort of bronze stove and we would all huddle round it in the winter burning the fronts of our legs while our backs were chilled by the cold air coming up from the cellar and lifting the carpets. This is the fireplace where we used the toasting fork to make toast and jam on a Sunday afternoon. We had our main meal at lunchtime so had a tea on Saturdays and Sundays. We used the dining room for many Christmas dinners and Boxing Day gatherings. We had our first fitted carpet here – orange foam backed! That room was so cold in winter that the fish tank used to freeze up with the fish embedded in the ice. When the original fire was lit it was quite a performance with paper and coal laid and lit with a gas poker that was attached to the gas supply on the hearth. Then newspaper was put across the chimney opening in order for it to draw. I can still remember there being a gas meter that had to be fed with shillings for some part of the room’s history. Mum used to do a lot of knitting and we had to help her make the wool ball from the skeins that she bought though sometimes she would use the back of the chair. This was the room where we had a clock that had to be topped up with coins in order for it to work and a man would come and collect the money regularly then at the end of a period of time there would be a lump sum due – a savings plan of sorts but as we rarely put money in the clock after the novelty wore off it wasn’t much of an incentive. There was a trapdoor down into the cellar in this room. We kept the family’s set of encyclopaedias here – *The Book of Knowledge*, 8 volumes which was vital for homework assignments and often used by the family at White Lodge as well. They also used to come round to ask dad to help them with their homework occasionally.

I was about ten when we got our first television which was built into a tall piece of wooden furniture and was very small and square. It would take time to warm up and then when you switched it off there would be a small dot in the centre of the screen as it cooled down. We would often be wandering round with the aerial trying to improve the picture quality. No remote controls, of course, but no arguments either as there was only one channel. My favourite TV programme was *Crackerjack* with Eamonn Andrews, Peter Glaze and Leslie Crowther. They played ‘double or drop’ for the competition section where they had to hold onto a present or cabbages as they answered or failed to answer questions and were out if they dropped anything. The winners won *Crackerjack* pencils too and everyone had to shout ‘Crackerjack’ whenever the word was mentioned. We used to switch on for *Watch with Mother*. On

Mondays it was *Picturebook*, Tuesdays was *Rag, Tag and Bobtail*, Wednesdays was, I think, *The Flowerpot Men* and Fridays was *The Woodentops* (my favourite). The twins used to go round chanting "Both together" which Chris and I would emulate from time to time. Spotty the Dog was also much admired – "the very biggest dog you ever did see". In the days before television we also listened to *Listen With Mother* ("Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin") at lunchtime while at Holmewood, but had to rush back to school by 2.00pm. Mum used to listen to *Mrs Dale's Diary* and *Woman's Hour*.

The second door was into the lounge where there was another even bigger bay window with a door leading down some wooden steps into the garden. This window was again made up of square leaded lights with stained glass patterns at the top. For many years this room was not used because the ceiling came down and we could not afford to repair it. However, we did have a grand piano in there that I used to play a bit, covered in a dust sheet. When we did use the lounge again the grand piano was in the window and we used to play *Racing Demon* on the top (with about ten people) and I also used it to draw my town plans on lining wallpaper. In the mid-60s we started to use the room more as a lounge and had the television in there in later years and this is where Dai, Chris and I watched the moon landing. We had Granny's old sideboard in this room at that time and I remember the vicar calling in unexpectedly and Mum quickly put the milk bottle that had been on the tea tray into one of the cupboards in the sideboard as she was embarrassed not to be using the jug. She forgot all about it and found it again some weeks later! This is the room we hosted Grandma and Grandpop's diamond wedding anniversary party and also the room I was in when, completing an essay for A level English, when Grandpop died in the flat upstairs. We had quite a lot of gatherings/parties with Mum and Dad's friends from the Rugby Club and then it was used for after show parties for the Woodside Park Club Dramatic Society. Pineapple and cheese on sticks stuck in a grapefruit were popular fare at the time along with homemade coleslaw. Beer was the most common drink along with shorts; no one drank wine at that time and there were no breathalysers. At one after-show party people were leaving at about 1 or 2 in the morning with suitcases containing costumes etc and the police pulled up outside and checked that they were not burgling us.

To be continued.....

GROWING UP IN NORTH FINCHLEY 1917-1932

by John Philpott

Eleanor Ethel Christine Williams (but always known to family and friends as "Pat", a nickname given to her in infancy by her father) was born in Canonbury, 21 December 1910, daughter of William Thomas and Eleanor ("Nell") Williams. Her sister Hilda was born there in January 1908.

William Williams had inherited the family's artificial florist business. This failed following embezzlement by a relative, exacerbated by the collapse in the sale of artificial flowers (used in the decoration of hats etc.) during the period of mourning following the death of Edward VII. The failure brought nervous breakdown and poverty. The family moved to Harlesden, where William was given the job of van driver in the grocery business of his brother-in-law Percy Boatfield. The children started school at Leopold Road School.

In 1916, William, too old for military service, was conscripted to work in the newly-built de Dion's munitions factory in High Road, North Finchley, near the junction with Woodside Lane; after various uses the building was demolished in the 1990's and a

Kwik-Fit centre now occupies the site. In 1917, the family moved to North Finchley, living briefly at 2 Regents Parade, Ballards Lane, in a flat above a furniture shop, then at 104, High Street (now 851, High Road), above a shop used as a domestic science centre for Finchley schools. The shop later became Harris's, shoe repairer. It remained in the ownership of the same family until the 1990's; and it is now Finchley Convenience Store.

Hilda and Pat both attended Christchurch School, Stanford Road. In 1922, aged 11, Pat was awarded a place at the Central School, the year in which it moved from Great North Road (now High Road), East Finchley to Woodhouse Road. The following year it was renamed Woodhouse School. They were members of Christ Church, North Finchley, where they were confirmed. Pat would sometimes go with her mother to a service at St James-the-Great, Friern Barnet.



Hilda and Pat



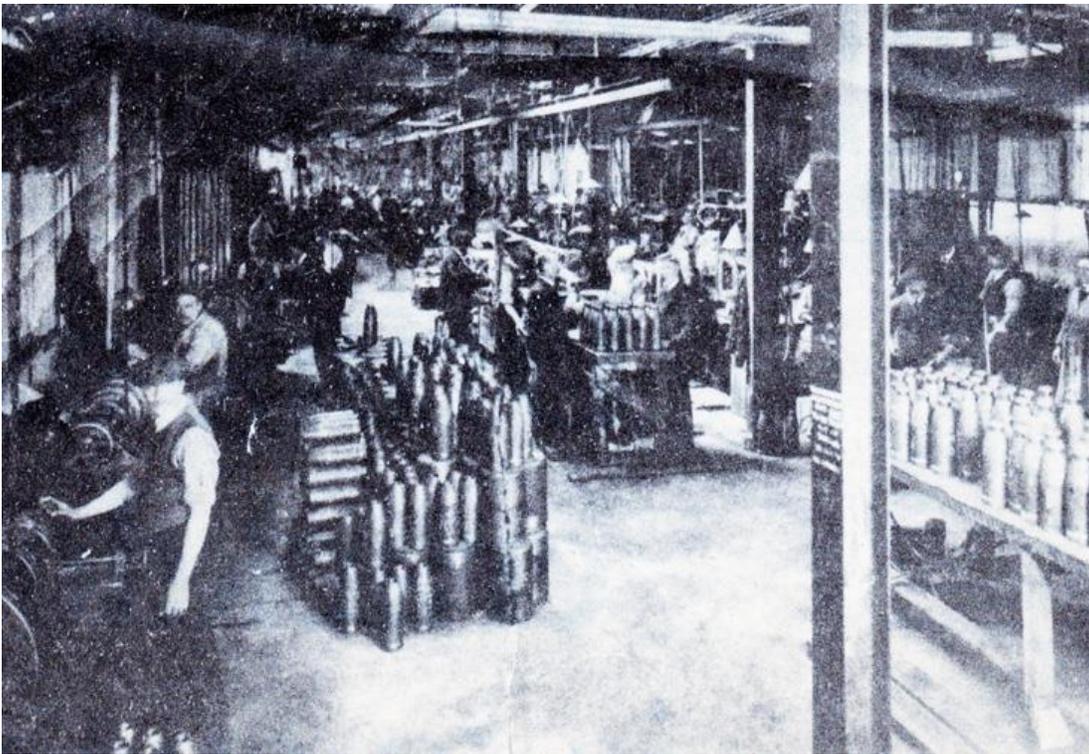
Infants' class, Christchurch School 1917

At end of First World War, the de Dion's factory reverted to vehicle production and William's job there ended. He worked at the North British Rubber Co, Acton, until sacked, then for a time at the Sunrise Preserving Co, Borough High Street – he became unemployed again after Sunrise was acquired by new owners who extracted his knowledge of the business before sacking him. His age and the recession were obstacles to finding work. There was no unemployment benefit. For a time, he worked at the cash desk at Harris's in the shop below their flat, until a Harris relative took over. By then, he was over 70 and receiving the old-age pension (10 shillings per week), and Hilda and Pat were working.

After leaving school, Hilda worked at Burnside's bookshop, North Finchley, then at Foyle's in Charing Cross Road. Pat worked for a time at an insurance office, then at Islington Central Library until her marriage. Hilda met her future husband, Gerald Woods, at Christ Church. Pat met hers, Albert ("Bert") Philpott, whose home was in East Finchley, at Old Woodhousian meetings.

William died, aged 70, on 20 July 1932, in North Middlesex Hospital. After his death Nell rented a flat in Lee Road, Highbury, into which she and the girls moved. Bert's father died, aged 49, the following year in Manchester as the result of an accident.

Bert's mother, anxious not to be left alone, bought a house in Highbury Hill big enough to accommodate many family members. Hilda and Gerald married in December 1932, Pat and Bert in January 1934, both weddings at Christ Church, Highbury. All moved into the Highbury Hill house, so the time at North Finchley came to an end.



The DeDion munitions factory

Some of Pat's memories of the North Finchley years

- Air raids in the 1914-18 War. Warnings were given by a policeman cycling sounding a rattle, the "All clear" by a whistle. He would also have a sandwich board with "Air raid" or "All clear" – once seen with "Air raid" on the front, "All clear" on the back
- The horror of her mother and aunt when a baker's shop near her aunt's home in Harlesden owned by Germans was smashed up by a mob
- War seemed to be the norm – with the promise of things "after the war is over" No memory of food shortages – their mother always managed
- When news of the Armistice came, the children marching down Woodside Park Road waving Union Jacks and singing "God Save the King"
- Returning home from Christchurch School, rushing up to the flat, calling "Mum, Mum, where are you?" "Here, of course, where do you think I'd be?" She didn't admit that she feared that the Second Coming might have taken place, when her mother would be taken to Heaven, while she, so naughty, would be left
- Water heating in the flat was always inadequate. Nobody had a bath every day then. As a small child, she was washed down in front of the fire, with a cup of cocoa afterwards. Coal was carried by coalmen up to the flat in 1 cwt sacks (which were dearer)
- The back entrance to the flat was through the Manor Dairy yard, entered by the archway from the High Road (still there, next-door-but-one north of Finchley Convenience Store). By the evening, the yard had been washed down, the workers gone and the gates in the archway closed, giving the children a secure private playground

- Picnics in the fields beyond Holden Road, walking there down Woodside Park Road, her mother carrying a large jug of lemonade. Standing with her friends on the footbridge at Woodside Park Station to let themselves be enveloped in smoke from the steam trains
- The young teacher who ran the domestic science centre in the shop below the flat would often call upon Mrs Williams in the flat above for advice. In the centre there was a gas-heated dryer, in which damp items were hung above the flame. On one occasion it caught fire and the fire brigade was summoned. Two appliances attended: the Whetstone pump was first to arrive, drawn by two part-time firemen, one large, the other small, who in their haste had swapped jackets; the regular brigade from Church End followed. They were too late: the teacher, in her panic, had also called upstairs to Mrs Williams, who had quickly extinguished the fire by closing the dryer door and turning off the gas. Meanwhile, Pat had returned home from Woodhouse for lunch, which, in the circumstances, was delayed. When she got back to school, news of the fire had preceded her, together with the rumour that she had died in the blaze
- 1926 General Strike. For children, an exciting time. Woodhouse girls used to go to North Road School (now Martin School) for domestic science lessons. During the strike they would thumb a lift (saving 1d bus fare) – until her mother found out
- Coal was in short supply. A Valor oil stove was used instead of kitchen range. Gas was not affected; there was no electricity anyway

DAMNING WITH FAINT PRAISE

It's always nice when we receive compliments and we were delighted to see the following comment which someone posted on our photographic website www.friern-barnet.com on 28 November 2019:

“Thanks for sharing superior informations. Your website is very modify. I am impressed by the details that you have on this blog. It reveals how nicely you translate this substance. Bookmarked this website author, testament become sustain for much articles. You, my pal, Pitch! I saved upright the substance. I already searched everyplace and just could not amount across. What a great website.

Jess19992en@gmail.com”

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

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