

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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SINGING FOR A GOOD CAUSE

In September 1984 a group of local people including doctors, nurses, social workers and religious leaders got together with the idea of opening a new hospice in North London. This followed on from the closure of St Columba's hospice in Hampstead in 1981 which left a gap in palliative care in the area. An initial meeting was held on 20 September 1984 and the North London Hospice Group was formed.

In 1986 the residents in Oakleigh Gardens, Whetstone, already in the habit of holding coffee mornings for charity, read about the hospice project in the local press and decided to support it. When money from 'bring and buy' sales was added to their activities, a substantial sum was raised in the first year and the Oakleigh Gardens Support Group, under Chairman Carmel Smedley, was born and plans were made for future events. Prior to the setting up of the group, the residents of Oakleigh Gardens ran a 'charity shop come flea market' in a converted garage in Athenaeum Road, Whetstone. The market only operated for five weeks and culminated with a jumble sale in St Mary's Church Hall. Altogether over £6000 was raised. One resident, Ros McKenny, described the market as 'fast and furious and a wonderfully exhilarating experience which outweighed the huge physical effort'. Other events included an evening of music at Theobalds College, Enfield, courtesy of the Principal of the College, Peter Padwick, and a stall at Friern Barnet Summer Show in Friary Park. One of the suggestions was to hold a carol singing event at a local Underground station. London Regional Transport were approached by Carmel Smedley, and they



2018 - The final year of carol singing

agreed to allow this in the ticket hall at East Finchley Station. The first event took place on 18 December 1986 and a small group of singers raised £159.

This annual event continued at East Finchley but in December 1995 both East Finchley and Arnos Grove Stations were chosen, and the combined revenue that year amounted to £926.07.

In 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 carol singing took place at Angel Station as well as East Finchley. In 2001 King's Cross was added, but because of its much larger size it was difficult to be in the right place to approach travellers in a hurry. From 2007 only East Finchley was booked with Transport for London. The choice of the first Monday in December every year resulted in the group being the first carol singers to delight commuters' ears!

When male friends and husbands started to retire, the choir numbers increased which improved both the quality of singing and the volume. With these extra helpers, the presence of Father Christmas and more collecting buckets and tins, takings exceeded £1000 every year and in the last three years, 2016 to 2018, annual takings exceeded £2000.

Sadly, the advance in years of the volunteers led to the choir being disbanded in 2018. In the 32 years of standing in draughty ticket halls scanning the train indicators and waiting for the influx of passengers from both High Barnet and the City and West End, the amount of money raised had totalled £38,614. 87 which went some way to cover the Hospice's annual running costs of around £11 million, of which only £3 million is funded by the NHS.

Last year, our Committee member, Dorrell Dressekie wrote a 184-page history of the Hospice, *An Act of Faith*, which covers its first 35 years including the opening of the dedicated building in Woodside Avenue in 1992 and a Day Centre in Barrowell Green in 2010. Copies of the book are being sold at the Hospice's charity shops.

CHRISTMAS IN THE TRENCHES

by David Berguer

Soon after the outbreak of the First World War, the *Barnet Press* offered to send copies of the paper to troops serving abroad and it also encouraged people to send in letters received from their relatives in the forces. These letters were published in the paper in the early months of the war, however, as the descriptions of life for British troops in France and Belgium became more graphic and harrowing, they ceased publishing them.

In January 1915 Rifleman W Ridden of 'B' Company, 1st Battalion, Queens' Westminster Rifles wrote to his parents in Bowes Park:

"It is very cold. The water in my bottle was a solid chunk yesterday. I had quite a decent Christmas on the whole. Stand to arms at 6.30 a.m., when we sang "God Save the King," and "Deutschland über Alles" in compliment to our enemies. They replied with cheers, etc. We then lit nightlights and candles arranged all along the top of the trenches for decoration, and sung carols. The Germans and ourselves then did as we liked, walked about on the top and in front of the trenches, and not a shot was fired all day. We exchanged cigarettes

and grub, shook hands, and some exchanged addresses to write to each other after the war. They sang some German carols, one of which I had heard just twelve months before played by a German band at Crouch End. We helped bury each other's dead in the afternoon, six men and one officer of each side going out to do it. Certainly, I shall remember this Christmas Day as long as I am spared to live, as the most extraordinary one possible. We came out of the trenches at 4.30 on Boxing morning. I had heaps more grub to eat than it was possible to manage. For breakfast I had cold ham and tongue, the latter provided by my hutch companion, bread, jam and hot café au lait. Dinner: Meat, potatoes, haricots, carrots and onions – all together in a tin, with the natural juice (fat and jelly). I soon heated it up and made a good stew. We had some more tongue, Christmas pudding, dates, figs, muscatels, and almonds, chocolates, and many other sweets. To finish up I had a piece of the wounded cake (a gift from home which received a bullet when the writer left it momentarily on top of the trench) for tea and some hot café au lait. On the whole quite a satisfactory day. It didn't rain, but froze like a brick, and the air was very still and everything coated thick with hoar frost. By the way, the Germans challenged us to a game of football, which our officers, however, did not see fit to allow. They came from a town which I know is keen on footer. Keep cheerful and well. You can't stop the shells and shot coming over, however anxious you get, so you must simply forget about all the risks. After all, I might have been scuppered by a motor-bus or bike accident before this, especially now all lights are prohibited in London."

The above is an extract from my book *All Over by Christmas: Life on the Home front around Barnet during the Great War* which was published in 2014.

HOUSING UPDATE

The number of new or converted properties in the area continues to increase. Since our last report in the November 2019 Newsletter the following planning applications have been submitted to Barnet Council:

	Houses	Flats	Total
<u>Friern Barnet</u>			
10 Alexandra Road	1		1
48 Beaconsfield Road		3	3
82 Beaconsfield Road		6	6
2 Bellevue Road	3		
(HMO – House in Multiple Occupation)	people		3
198 Colney Hatch Lane		2	2
231 Colney Hatch Lane		204	204
255 Colney Hatch Lane	5		
(HMO – House in Multiple Occupation)	people		5
1 Priory Villas, Colney Hatch Lane		1	1
2a Crescent Road	1		1
27 Queens Parade		7	7
4 The Broadway Friern Barnet Road		1	1
45-47 Friern Barnet Road		22	22
131 Friern Barnet Road		3	
74 Hollickwood Avenue	1		1
187 Woodhouse Road		1	1

New Southgate

115 Brunswick Park Road		1	1
24 Oakleigh Road South	2		2
Haslam Court, Waterfall Road		7	7

Whetstone

6 Balfour Grove (HMO – House in Multiple Occupation)	6 people		6
Friern Barnet Lane St John's Church Hall		9	9
1331 High Road		2	2
1346a High Road		3	3
Thatcham Court, High Road		3	3
1489 High Road		5	5
1511 High Road		8	8
1522 High Road		8	8
41 Oakleigh Road North		41	41
232-234 Oakleigh Road North		5	5
28 Oakleigh Road South		1	1
116 Oakleigh Road South		2	2
3 Raleigh Drive		2	2
St John's Church Hall		29	29
96a & 96b Weirdale Avenue		1	1

Total 393

The average household in England comprises 2.4 people, so we can assume that the population increase in the area will increase by some 943 so pressure on GPs, hospitals and schools will increase. There have been no moves so far to provide extra facilities.....

A POSTMAN'S STORY

In the 4 January 1980 issue of *Barnet Press* this appeared:

“It never gets any easier” by Paul Clabburn

It's amazing how quiet and still Longmore Avenue, New Barnet, looks at shortly before 5a.m. There are few cars and still fewer people to disturb the peace. The one oasis of sound was the Longmore Avenue sorting office, where every morning at 5a.m. postmen trudge in to begin preparing the mail. Two hours later, they start their rounds while most of us are still thinking of breakfast. The early shift ends at 12.30 p.m., and although they might get some sleep in the afternoon, the postmen still look like people who have to get up early. “They have a certain look after a while” said Mr Reeve. “After a holiday it's a total change – you can't recognise them.”

It is the early start, worked on a rota system, which dominates a postman's life, and inevitably leads to staffing problems. “You can't hold youngsters here” said Mr Reeve. “You can't blame them, when they can work regular hours for the same money. The better conditions become in private industry, the worse it is for us.”

There is an element of pride in getting to work on time. A man who is late is not popular with workmates or employers. "Last winter was one of the worst I can remember." Said Mr Reeve. "But there was no-one missing. Some have to come from Potters Bar, and they don't all have cars – it's walk, bike or public transport. As an old-timer, I thought it was amazing. We were short-staffed as well. In all my time here we've always been between five and 15 short. This is only the second time in 30 years. I can remember us full. We've had a few in since the last pay rise."

It's certainly noisier in the sorting office on our return from the tea break, and there's a fair amount of horseplay. Mr Reeve says that everyone is on their best behaviour. "The amount of Government mail we carry has increased." Said Mr Reeve. "We virtually run the Welfare State on our backs. This sort of mail goes on the cheap. I think we could give the public a better service if Government departments paid their full whack."

Industry is favoured, with the Post Office trying to deliver business mail first. Does this mean the public get a raw deal? "On a local basis, the union have done more to serve the public than the Post Office." Claims Mr Reeve. "We still put the public first. It's public first, Post Office second and us last. That's a fact. The service might not be as good as it was, no-one disputes that, but we're still one of the best postal services in the world. People complain about delays, but much is due to staff shortages. Most of our mail comes from or goes to Mount Pleasant – one of the largest sorting offices in Europe – which is understaffed. If they can't cope, the mail has to be redistributed – and that's where the delays start. It all comes back to the hours. Many of us older postmen are ex-servicemen. They were used to discipline. It's not only training but getting up early and working six days a week. Some men have a couple of alarms, but still can't get up."

The preparation continues in an effort to beat the clock. If a misdirected letter is found, the postman will try and trace it. It is surprising the amount of time they lose doing this. More time is lost while they struggle to read poorly written addresses. By 7.05 a.m. the preparation was complete, the letters bundled up in order. If the sack weighs over 35lb, the postman must take a bicycle. He can then take up to 50lb. This morning Mr Reeve takes a bike. We're already 15 minutes late because of the large amount of mail. Outside, it is only just light. With mist swirling around, I find it freezing. Mr Reeve, casually pushing bike and sack up Cat Hill, East Barnet, said he rarely noticed it.

At 7.40 a.m. we were in Chestnut Grove, East Barnet, the start of the round. It's only on the round that you notice the amount of houses with steps leading up to the front door. "If you're not fit, this job will find you out," said Mr Reeve. That it's also not a job for bad back sufferers became evident when I saw the number of letter-boxes about two inches off the ground. It can also be monotonous. "Sometimes it can be a bit boring or a bit lonely, but you are on your own – you don't have someone breathing down your neck all day."

The feeling of independence, along with the responsibility, seem to be the main attractions of the job. There are checks, however. After completing Danelands, East Barnet, we are half-way down Lakeside Crescent when a Post Office van pulls up. Postal executive deputy Mr Colin Sargeant gets out to check on Mr Reeve's time, where he is and where he should be. "Some of the complaints

are incredible,” said Mr Sargeant. “You not only get moans when the mail is late, you also get them when it’s early. People say, they’ve been woken up.”

By 9.40 a.m., Mr Reeve has completed Mansfield Avenue and Vernon Crescent, East Barnet, and his main round is over. He empties a post-box, and we return before breakfast at the sorting office. At least you can ride back! About half an hour later, he is preparing the second delivery, made up mostly of adverts and special-rate mail. I speak to Mr Ken Dowse, one of the head postmasters in the country. He has overall responsibility for a 75 square mile area, which includes four sorting offices, five Crown offices and 37 sub-post offices. He explains that Longmore Avenue deals with all the mail posted in Barnet and Potters Bar – about 350,000 letters and parcels a week. The 118 postmen deliver 250,000 items a week. I tell him that the men complain of not seeing the managers enough, especially early in the morning. “Firstly, it’s not really my job, but I’m still surprised. I’m often told I’m down there too much” he replied. What about staff buses for those who have to travel some distance without cars? “That would lead to problems,” said Mr Dowse. “Some people would be waiting much longer than others. Anyway, people who come here from Potters Bar, for example, will only usually be here until a position comes up nearer home, and positions come up all the time.”

By this time, Mr Reeve is ready for the second post, which only takes a fraction of the time of the first delivery. By about 12.30 p.m. he is ready to go home. It may seem pleasant leaving work at 12.30, but by then the postman has already completed a seven-and-a-half hour working day. Next time you complain about the service, or take for granted the letter which arrives, think of getting up at 4 a.m., six days a week for most of the year. It takes someone a bit special to do that.”

The article is interesting on a number of accounts. Firstly, the open criticism of his employers by the postman concerned, and the newspaper’s decision to allow it to be aired. Secondly, it highlights the importance of the Post Office’s role in the communications between people and businesses forty years ago; nowadays, of course, the digital revolution has led to a huge decline in letter writing and the production of printed advertising material. Thirdly, it shows that, even today, a postman’s job is arduous and probably something that we take for granted. Those of us who can recall having our milk delivered to our doorstep each day appreciated the bond between the milkman and his customers and, like the postman, they also performed an important social role in looking out for people – uncollected mail or milk was often the sign of someone in trouble.

Much as we appreciate the wonderful work of our NHS workers during the coronavirus crisis, we should not forget that our friendly postmen also carried on doing their work day-to-day. Perhaps we should remember them at Christmas time!

MORE ABOUT VIRUSES

by David Berguer

When the government allowed the pubs and restaurants to reopen in July, fears were raised about the spread of the coronavirus. Back in 1665 Samuel Pepys wrote this in his diary:

“The taverns are full of gadabouts making merry this eve. And though I may press my face against the window like an urchin at a confectioner’s, I am

tempted not by sweetmeats within. A dram in exchange for the pox is an ill bargain indeed!"

Back in the 1950s, a company making soft drinks advertised widely and I can remember my parents signing up to a scheme whereby weekly deliveries of Corona lemonade were made to our house, in much the same way as milk used to be delivered.



On 4 August 1900, The *Daily Mail* of 4 August 1900 carried the following:

"Plague came to London on July 3 on board the P&O steamship *Rome*. Since that date two of the Lascar crew have been struck down by plague. Of this the Local Government Board have no doubt.

A third crew member, named Mahomed Hyder, died prior to the other men's seizure. The authorities now suspect his death to have been due to the plague.

The rest of the crew, 111 in all, still remain in 'quarantine' at the Royal Albert Docks, and they will be kept under medical supervision for another week. In fact, thanks to the prompt measures taken by Dr Collingridge, the port sanitary authority, it is believed that the dreadful disease has been entirely stamped out.

A few days after the Lascar Hyder died, a man was taken from the *Rome* to the seaman's hospital. 'Plague' said the doctor, and Collingridge removed the patient to the special hospital at Gravesend. On July 26 a second man from the *Rome* was lying in the Gravesend hospital with plague. Both are now doing well.

The crew of the *Rome* had in the ordinary course of events exchanged places with the crew of the *Egypt*, which was still in dock and the authorities had the problem of a 'clean' crew on an infected ship and an infected crew on a 'clean' ship. The ex-crew of the *Rome* were bundled into quarters ashore, and the *Egypt* fumigated. She sailed in Thursday with a fresh crew. The *Rome* was fumigated at Gibraltar.

One thing may upset Dr Collingridge's arrangements. The officials of the P&O line say the Lascars are under 'strict medical supervision and not allowed to wander about the docks'.

A *Daily Mail* reporter, however, yesterday saw several of these particular men in various parts of the docks, and furthermore, without let or hindrance, the reporter entered the shed where the suspects are living and talked for some time with them. Is this 'strict medical supervision'?

The Governor of Mauritius telegraphs to the Colonial Office that during the month ending August 2 there were ten cases of plague – all fatal.”

The term 'Lascar' is not used nowadays but originally it meant sailors from the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia or the Arab world.

In the 14th century when plagues were rife ships arriving in Venice were required to sit offshore for forty days - quaranta giorni – before being allowed to land. The practice eventually became known as 'quarantine'.

OLD FASHIONED LABOUR

by a local mother

My first two children were born in the USA where everything was for the comfort and wellbeing of the mother with advanced pain relief and freedom to move about. My third child was born in Victoria Maternity Hospital in Barnet. I arrived and was placed in a cot and the sides put up and put in a ward with others in labour – one yelling: "I've changed my mind." A nurse came past and said: "Carry on mother." I was given a gas and air machine but the cylinder seemed to be empty. In the delivery room I was ignored except for: "Push, mother" but at least it wasn't like my friend who was told: "Put your head down, this is nothing to do with you." I put my hand over my head in one contraction and pulled the pipes from the wall and luckily no water came spurting out .

The babies were kept in a nursery and you only got to see them at feeding time. I could hear mine crying in the night and would sneak in and give her a feed, skulking behind the door and scared I would be caught and reprimanded. The whole experience was negative and did not inspire confidence to help you cope at home, as one felt like a naughty child and only experts could deal with all this childbirth stuff. We had to stay in a week. My other children came into the car park at visiting time and I went into the bathroom, got into the bath and opened a window to shout at them. It was compulsory to learn how to bath a baby and their weight had to be recorded in a book each day. I was so keen to leave I falsified the gain. They never came to take her away for this crime and probably won't now!

A far cry from today's maternity ward where people are with you all the time and you are empowered to make your own choices.

WHETSTONE SCHOOLS IN THE 1800s

by John Heathfield

The following are mostly direct extracts from the head teachers' reports of various Whetstone schools.

1809 Friern Barnet School was in a large room in the Almshouses. The teacher was Mrs Earp, a widow, who lived in one of the houses. At first, she was paid £10 a year for teaching Reading and Needlework. This was later increased by £4 because she taught Arithmetic as well.

- 1833 St John's School, Whetstone, was established "to clothe and educate the poor".
- 1863 Mary Scott aged 10 left school today to keep house for her uncle whose wife died lately.
 July. A thin school today owing to parents being out haymaking and fruit picking the children were required to mind the babies and take out dinners.
 The girls give very unintelligent answers to any questions that require thought. The Vicar came, he complained about restlessness, want of attention, talking, disorder and confusion in the classroom.
 The girls have one pinafore each, supplied by the school, which they take home on Friday and are supposed to bring back clean on Monday. This is seldom done because:
- i) this is an inconvenient time
 - ii) the parents are so poor that many mothers work on a Saturday
 - iii) during the winter months there is much illness
 - iv) Monday is the proper washing day and many mothers object to washing and ironing on a different day
- 1870 Very cold, deep snow lying on the ground. Many girls absent, particularly from the Colney Hatch end.
 September 7. Barnet Stock Fair, only 11 pupils present.
 Rebellion among the girls. 10 expelled for "persistent humming and insolence." Following a meeting between their parents and the Vicar, 8 girls readmitted.
- 1872 Mrs Morris presented a new frock to Lydia Sharp (aged 14), she having brought a note from her mistress to say that she had conducted herself well for over 12 months in her situation.
- 1873 Admitted H Lea from Ada Cottages aged eleven and a half. She cannot tell words of two letters and cannot count.
 Received a dozen new slates, the first since the school opened in 1854.
- 1878 School closed for seven weeks from September – scarlet fever in master's house.
 Girls School – Misses Green, Dearberg, Morris and Cressall (young ladies of the neighbourhood) take Reading and Needlework during the week.
- 1880 Susan Emmerton sent home because her school pence was owing, and her mother would not send it.
- 1884 Through the kindness of Mrs Miles, soup will be made in the kitchen next to the school twice a week during the winter months and the children can have a slice of bread as well, thus providing good nourishing meal for a penny.
 A Ladies Committee has been formed, several of whom take lessons in the school, hearing Reading and helping with Needlework. Many seven year olds do not know their letters.
 July. School broke up early for summer holidays – Scarlet fever.
 September Admitted Lewis X aged 13 – he does not know his letters.
 The Inspectors report - the children had vacant minds, the teacher is approaching idiocy.
- 1885 November. All the boys attended well, but the little girls stay away in the wet weather, only 9 today out of 64.
 Rev Miles to give weekly Religious Instruction.
- 1886 School prizes – nice frock for the girls, trousers, shirts and stockings for the boys.
 Her Majesty's Inspector Mr Willis has given to teach Geography, but only to Standard IV.
 July – poor attendance because the boys are all working in the fields.
 Three girls have left for service.

- 1887 Frances Gibson is to be excused needlework because of her bad eyesight, and her parents cannot afford spectacles.
A map of England has been supplied to help with the teaching of Geography.
December 24. The attendance this week is very low, many boys staying away to avoid paying their school pence.
- 1888 Report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate "I saw 18 boys and girls of school age in Whetstone today on my way from the station. They should have been in school".
A great number of girls went to Hatfield House for a Sunday School treat.
- 1889 St James average attendance 134 in 2 classes.
Head teacher wrote: "It is difficult to ascertain the merits of each individual boy."
Received a washstand and jug. The girls may bring their own knitting if they like.
- 1890 8 boys played truant in order to skate.
New Reading Books are required as 'The World' does not include the new British possessions in Africa.
On Monday afternoon, the circus almost emptied the school.
October 24 Florence H sent home in order to fetch her school money and has not returned yet.
- 1891 Received a new box of chalk and 12 slates.
March. Heavy snow, only 14 girls present.
All drawings are to be of uniform size, 11 inches by 7 inches and the boy's name always to be written in the top righthand corner.
Girls school 64 on roll, average attendance 33. "It is very difficult to teach when the girls are absent too often."
31 August. No school fees taken today as Free Education Act comes into force on September 1st.
- 1893 School holiday for Royal Wedding.
Infant School 103 on roll. Staff – Mrs Pitson (Cert teacher), Ellen Ryman (aged 14 pupil teacher), and Sarah Pitson (aged 12) monitor.
- 1894 April. Another wet morning, only 30 out of 138 came. So many have poor footwear.
School closed for 2 weeks by Order of Medical Officer of Health – measles. When we reopened 82 children were absent, so we closed again.
- 1895 Very little interest appears to be taken by the parents in Education. Their object appears to get the children to 13 years of age and leave school as soon as possible.
The children chose Letty Barlow as the best little girl in the school. She was given a Bible as a prize.
- 1896 Boys School. I am without a teacher, and that wretched partition makes the work very difficult as I am unable to be in two rooms at the same time.
I, George Collier, took charge of the school today (26 August). The discipline has been very unsatisfactory – stone throwing, disobedience, laughing, playing about and talking have been rife. Twice pistol caps have been fired in the classroom.
- 1897 School Curriculum (Girls School) Needlework, Reading, Handwriting, Composition (once a week), Arithmetic, Object lessons, History (Stds IV to VIII), Geography (Std IV), Recitation, Drill (10 mins daily). Weekly temperance lectures.
Composition teaching method – teacher reads a story twice, the children then reproduce it.
Mr Breed, gardener to Mr Ing of The Hollies, Oakleigh Park, will take weekly gardening lessons with the older boys.

- 1898 Hilda Bartram and Bertie Matthews are both absent with diphtheria. (Later) Hilda Bartram has died. Many parents will not send their children to school because of the diphtheria.
Infant School hours – 9 till 12, 1.30 till 4.30.
The Managers supplied the girls with new slates, the first since the school opened in 1884.
- 1899 Records showing the progress of each pupil should be kept.
School closed for the annual Whetstone Fete.
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MEMORIES OF HOLDEN ROAD - continued

by Caroline Wright (née Cooper)

The third room was to the right of the front door looking out to the front. This had various uses over the year but one of my first memories was of having a birthday tea there when I was three. I was wearing a brown silky smocked dress and was being held by Dad as I cried. It was often known at that time as the Christmas Dinner Room as it was used so rarely. In fact, Mum went in there one day to find that there was a well established nest of wasps in the armchair. Later on it was used as Anthony's bedroom and then Christopher's. It had a rather ornate wooden fireplace across the corner.

Going up the stairs there was a wooden banister that was actually long enough to slide down. The pillar at the bottom was carved in a coil and you could run your fingers along the grooves. We used to play on the stairs a lot and jump from the lower steps into the hall but Mum was always worried that we would go through the floorboards in the hall.

Up the stairs there was the small landing with the toilet. This was a tiny room where your knees were practically touching the door when closed. I locked myself in there when I was about 4 or 5 – the sliding lock had a screw in knob that fell out. Dad had to get a ladder up to the outside but then had to persuade me to climb onto the toilet seat to open the window to let him in. I was terrified of falling into the toilet. Grandma took it upon herself to be the toilet cleaner but in those days there was not toilet cleaner or bleach, just hot soapy water. The toilet paper was shiny medicated paper by Izal. She might have used Vim later although as I can remember having to clean the bath with its very hard scratchy granules.

The stairs then turned up to where the entrance to the flat was before going up on to the main landing and other bedrooms. The flat had a short corridor with the bathroom on the right with a bath and basin but no toilet so whoever lived in the flat had to share our toilet. Grandma's cat got stuck behind the bath when it was a kitten. Then straight ahead was the kitchen with a bay window overlooking the garden. The same cat fell out of the window one day but survived OK. The kitchen had an open coal fire in it and a table and chairs in the bay of the window. Opposite the bathroom was the bedroom which had two single beds when Grandma and Grandpop lived there. There was a living room when the Retys and Hastings lived there. Tony had a large radiogram with a red wickerwork finish and wooden surround. This was the room where Grandpop died in the 1960s.

When the Retys lived in the flat they had one of the main bedrooms that would later become mine. Grandma and Grandpop had one of the other bedrooms – the largest – as a sitting room – overlooking the back garden. Turning right out of the flat there were three or four more stairs up onto the main landing. The linen cupboard was on the right

of the landing with double doors. When we were young that is where our liberty bodices were kept along with all the sheets etc. Mum used to send sheets to the local laundry and when they came back they had been starched and ironed/pressed but they were always creased along the edges and you could run your fingers along to release the fold.

At that time I slept in the smallest bedroom which was just off the landing behind double glazed doors and it had a little wooden balcony to the front but we weren't allowed on it as the wood was rotten. I used to draw houses all over the wallpaper but when I promised to desist from this my bedroom was decorated with pink wallpaper and my bedspread was dyed pink. Because they ran out of wallpaper I had the wall with the fireplace as a feature wall with dark red paper that had been used in the big bedroom that Anthony and Chris were sharing. When I think of Father Christmas coming that was the room where we left the stocking and I was always nervous about having this old man coming into my room but clearly remember that weight on the bottom of the bed that meant that he had been. I loved the stained-glass pattern on the front window but it did remind me of a wheelchair for some reason. I have a clear memory of using a windup record player here to play *The Teddy Bears' Picnic*.

Mum and Dad's room also faced the front and had a built-in wardrobe with the same leaded light feature on the top and a painted set of drawers. This is where the Christmas presents would be kept! There was a single element gas fire in their bedroom in the fireplace which I think once had a coal fire. Her dressing table was across the far corner of the room. I think the button box was kept in this bedroom. It was a large box full of different buttons that Mum had accumulated over the years and that kept me amused for many hours. She used to have strings of plastic beads that would pop together to make necklaces and bracelets which were very fashionable at the time. There was also a beautiful but rather fragile dark wood rocking chair in their room.

When I moved into the front bedroom I had a similar or even the same gas fire in the fireplace and in the winter this would be lit when Mum came in to wake me up in the morning. Often the windows in the winter would be iced up on the inside. When I first had the bedroom I had a three quarter bed but it was old and gave me backache. I used to pile up all my dolls in bed with me to try and keep them warm – they always had such cold skin, apart from the rubber ones. I actually won a consolation prize in a competition to name the Sugar Puff bear with the name Kerfuffle, it was a 3D viewer of some sort. I got the name Kerfuffle from a character in one of Anthony's magazines but it was also a word Dad used a lot. The Sugar Puffs bear ended up as Jeremy.

To be continued.....

We wish all our members a very Happy and safe Christmas and let's hope that 2021 will be a whole lot better than 2020.

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

Chairman: David Berguer
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John Heathfield
11 September 1928 – 27 March 2020



John was born in Finchley to parents Ted and Helen and he had a younger brother, Brian. They lived in the Whetsone area where he met his lifelong friend, Percy Reboul, aged 5.

John was awarded a scholarship at Woodhouse Boys' Grammar School. He left at age 16 to do teacher training followed by National Service. During this time he and Percy became passionate about opera and ballet and they went to many theatrical performances together.

John had a long career in Education – as a teacher, a Deputy Head, Head Teacher and Primary adviser for Brent Council. John prided himself on knowing every child in his school. He had a natural, kind but fair manner that children responded really well to.

John met his wife, Janet, on a Youth Hostelling holiday in Austria. Their daughters Anne and Catherine enjoyed a happy, child focussed childhood and Janet and John always had endless time for their children. They were married for 44 years until her death in 2000.

John had great enthusiasm for other interests – he had a music degree in singing, and ran Ealing Opera Group from 1968 for 25 years. He continued to give singing lessons from home until he was in his eighties. John was a volunteer steward at the Earnest Read Children's Concerts, held monthly at the Royal Festival Hall.

John was a member of the Barnet & District Local History Society for a number of years and in 2010, following the death of our Founder and President, John Donovan, John kindly agreed to become President of our Society.

John and his friend Percy were passionate about local history and they wrote a regular series of articles on local history in *Barnet Times*. They also authored a number of books together including *Around Whetstone & North Finchley*, *Finchley & Whetstone Past* and *Days of Darkness: The London Borough of Barnet at War*. In 2016 John combined with our Chairman, David Berguer, to write and publish *Whetstone Revealed*.

John spent many years after his retirement in investigating the history of our area and he has left a large amount of original research as well as writing many articles for our Newsletter. John's favourite phrase was: 'Knowledge is for Sharing' and it has been one of the reasons why when we launched our website www.friern-barnethistory.org.uk we decided to include on it as much of our archives as possible, including research conducted by John over the years.

John had a great sense of humour and when asked how he was he would invariably reply "Old, tired and crotchety but happy".

John spent the last 18 months at the Cremona Care Home in Watford where he had moved to be near his daughter, Catherine. As well as his two daughters, John left 5 grandchildren – Sam, Sarah, Robert, Claire and James and one great grandchild – Ellie.