Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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OUR STATUE'S BACK!

by David Berguer

As you will have seen in our April Newsletter the statue of Queen Victoria was removed from Friary Park to be restored. On Wednesday 28 September she was returned and installed in her rightful place.

Whilst she was away, we took the opportunity, in conjunction with The Finchley Society, Friends of Friary Park and Friern Barnet Residents' Association, to update the plaque that describes the history of the statue. This is now more comprehensive and, whilst we were changing the wording, we took the opportunity in making the plaque larger so that it is no more readable from outside the perimeter railings around the statue.

A number of obvious changes to the statue have taken place since her removal – she has lost

She is gently lowered back onto her old home with help from a couple of people from Rupert Harris Conservation

her familiar green colour which had been caused by years of the copper oxidising and it is now how the statue would have appeared when it was first made in 1862.The broken staff has now been replaced by a full length one surmounted by an orb on which a beautiful silver dove sits.

The lovely silver dove is carefully put on top of the orb which is new, as is a full length staff

The official unveiling is due take place by the Mayor of Barnet on Tuesday 6 December at 11am.

NOT ALL WERE DEMOB HAPPY

by Percy Reboul and John Heathfield

As is well known, the First World War ended at 11a.m. on 11 November 1918, and much has been recorded about that historic event.

The end of the hostilities, however, marked another event. There was no need to continue making guns, tanks, munitions and all the paraphernalia of war. The transition to peace was now one of the problems and, perhaps the greatest of these was what was to become of the thousands who had been employed in the war effort, many of them women, some widows of the 750,000 men killed in the conflict.

The local newspapers of the time, a main source of local information, provide testimony to some of the problems in our own area. On 19 November 1918 an article headed 'After War Problems', said: "After a week of unrestrained rejoicing, the nation will have to settle down to deal with great problems – the demobilisation of the army and munitions workers and the

settling of them into civilian life. Where places have been kept open, the men returning from the front must have every consideration. Nevertheless, the munitions workers from the De Dion works at Finchley will need special consideration as most of them are women and many are war widows. Special unemployment pensions have been announced by the government: 24 shillings a week for men; ten shillings for women; with six shillings for the first child and three shillings for the next; 12 shillings for boys aged 15 to 18, and ten shillings for girls. Not more than 13 weeks will be paid."

The De Dion workers were not happy. A number of them demonstrated at the offices of the Board of Works, requesting equal treatment as that granted to other war workers. Six to seven hundred of them took a tram journey to Whitehall, singing 'We don't want charity', and were apparently listened to because it was decided to keep the factory open until January to ensure Christmas wages. A few years later De Dion became makers of very good back axles for vehicles.

As ever in such situations, there were some people who did well. The McCurd lorry factory in Finchley, which had been making army lorries, was closed. Shortly afterwards, H.A. Saunders bought the old chapel in Totteridge Lane, and from it sold surplus army lorries and spares. He started with one employee and did well enough to become the Austin main agent for the district and opened a large garage near to where Sainsbury's supermarket in North Finchley now stands. McCurd eventually became Carrymore Six Wheelers and then a police garage.

Another tragic legacy of the war was the large number of people who had been wounded, gassed or lost a limb. Although awarded a modest state pension it was soon recognised that not enough was being done to meet their needs, so the British Legion was formed. The first Poppy day was on 11 November 1921. The poppies were made by disabled servicemen. Public organisations also provided work for the disabled and many older readers will remember them employed as lift attendants, meter readers, receptionists, watchmen and railway ticket collectors.

WARTIME MEMORIES

by Barbara Vian (nee Eastmure)

Because of the rationing that was now a part of daily life and the scarcity of the symbols of prewar life people were not able to give their children even the treats they had experienced in their childhood, which, although not luxurious by any means had at least been full of many small items that could not be had in wartime London. The shops had sparsely covered shelves and there was no such thing as choosing where to buy your weekly rations.

The system was that you had to register with a particular grocer and butcher and then go only to that one for your allowances. Kingham's was the name of the grocer that we chose, it was not the nearest but still managed to give a prewar feeling inside. It was a double fronted shop with shuttered windows either side, once inside the bare wooden floor was a herring bone design and I would play a sort of hopscotch while my mother queued with the other women at the various counters. Long wooden topped counters ran down either side of the shop and each side represented two different sections. As you walked into the shop the first things you saw on the right was the boxed and packaged goods whereas on the left was a section for bacon and cheese. This had an old style marble counter top with a glass barrier to

stop customers coming into contact with the bacon. A little way down was the slicing machine, a huge red piece of equipment where Mr Kingham would place his tiny allotment of bacon to cut off the thin slice or two for each person's ration. There was also a huge board for cutting the cheese, it had a wire to pull across the cheese to make a portion. Nearer to the back of the shop past the boxed goods were rows and rows of boxes and tins. I found the boxes lining the front of the counter the most interesting as these were the home of the biscuits, The age of packet biscuits had not arrived and the system was to look through the glass top of the boxes and make your choice. You would be allowed maybe a half a pound a week so you had to be very careful. Once this was done Mrs Kingham would walk around to the front, lift the lid and count out what she thought was the right quantity into the scoop from the scales. If there were too many they would be carefully returned to the box. Then came the making of the packing, there would be a pile of rough-cut dark blue paper squares, she would take one of these and fold it to make a cone into which the biscuits were placed and the top folded over. When it got to Christmas and people were hopefully trying to buy dried fruit this would be packaged in the same way. Over on the other side of the shop would be butter if available but more likely margarine. This would be cut into quarter or half pound portions and wrapped in a greaseproof paper.

Each time a rationed item was chosen the ration book had to be handed over and out would come the scissors and the little squares would be carefully cut out, An alternative for some items was for the little box to be cancelled with an indelible pencil. Perhaps I should explain that each person was entitled to their own ration book the colour of which varied as and when an issuing period changed. People would try and go without and save up their coupons if they had a special event coming up although how they managed in the intervening time was a mystery. The same system applied for clothes as well although you could at least shop at any shop which had an item you wanted. Women would give younger sisters their clothing coupons instead of birthday presents or if there was a wedding planned, and they really were like gold dust.

It was the age of Utility goods and the utility mark was something that became very well known. It was supposed to represent goods that had been manufactured at a minimum cost and to registered standards. Previously unknown foods began to appear on the shelves, - dried egg, snook and whale meat to name but three and many people who were of my era and had known of no other took to them quite happily and in later years when better quality goods became available found it quite difficult to adjust.

COMPUTER PROBLEMS

by David Berguer

Those of you with a computer will doubtless have experienced frustrating problems which occur without warning. Back in 2003 Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, defended the computer industry by comparing it with the motor industry:

> "If General Motors kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving cars costing $25 that got 1,000 miles to the gallon."

This elicited the following response from General Motors:

"If General Motors developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics:

1. For no reason whatever, your car would crash twice a day
2. Every time they repainted the lines in the road, you would have to buy a new car
3. Occasionally your car would die on the motorway for no reason. You would have to pull over to the side of the road, close all the window, shut off the car, restart it and reopen the windows before you could continue. For some reason you would simply accept this
4. Occasionally executing a manoeuvre such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart, in which case you would have to reinstall the engine
5. Macintosh would make a car that was powered by the sun, was reliable, five times as fast and twice as easy to drive, but would run on only five percent of the roads
6. The oil, water temperature and alternator warning lights would all be replaced by a single "This Car Has Performed an Illegal Operation" warning light
7. The airbag system would ask: "Are You Sure?" before deploying
8. Occasionally, for no reason whatever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed hold of the radio antenna
9. Every time a new car was introduced car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car
10. You would have to press the "Start" button to turn the engine off

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WHAT'S THAT IN OLD MONEY?

by Colin Barratt

Most of us are old enough to remember pre-decimal coinage, with its variety of denominations and ancient names, plus their commonly used alternatives. The introduction of decimal money on 15 February 1971 filled many with horror, as they thought the very fabric of British society was crumbling in their pockets, and that it was a sneaky way to put up prices without anyone noticing. The ease of multiplying or dividing everything by ten did little to appease the doubters.

Coinage in England has had a complex and varied history. LSD derived from Librae, Solidi, Denarii, meaning pounds, shillings and pence in Latin. In fact, Roman coins were the country's coinage until the 7th century, when the first native coins, gold thrymsa, were introduced. These were replaced in the 8th century by the silver (and later copper) sceatta, which at the end of the 8th century was itself replaced by the silver penny, containing a denarius' worth of silver by weight. Halfpennies in silver were also minted.

A gold penny was issued in the 13th century, at a value of 20 silver pennies. In the 14th century other gold coinage was created: florences (or florins) worth 6/- and half and quarter florins (called leopards and helms), which were soon all replaced by the gold noble (6/8d). Soon after this, silver groats (4d), pennies and halfpennies were also minted. In the 15th century, new gold coins were issue: the ryal (10/-) and the angel (6/8d). Later a double ryal was minted (20/), (known as a sovereign, because it depicted the King, Henry VII, in his sovereign's robes). A testoon (12d) was also minted, which later became a shilling. In the 16th century, a gold crown (5/-) was issued, plus a half-crown. These were soon chaned to silver coins.

Queen Elizabeth I introduced the gold pound coin. Her successor, James I, authorised the first copper coin, (the farthing) in 1613, which were privately made, as it was thought undignified for the Royal Mint to produce copper coinage! In 1663, a new coin, the gold guinea, appeared, valued at 20/- and named after African Guinea, where the gold was mined.

In 1662 Charles II introduced coins with a milled edge including an inscription – DECVS ET TVTAMEN (meaning an ornament or safeguard). This ended the practice of the old hammered coins made from precious metals being clipped by unscrupulous consumers. Britannia first appeared on British coins in 1672. In 1718 Sir Isaac Newton, then Master of the Mint, fixed the value of the guinea at 21/-. During much of the 18th century, small denomination coins were reserved solely for Maunday Money, so tradesmen often issued their own tokens to replace the small change.

In 1789 shillings and sixpences were already being called 'bob' and 'tanners'. In 1849 a silver florin was minted as one tenth of a pound, an unsuccessful early attempt to decimalise British currency. Bronze pennies, halfpennies and farthings issued after 1860 continued to be legal tender for over 100 years (remember the 'bun' pennies? So called because Queen Victoria was shown wearing her hair in a bun. To conserve gold during World War I, paper one pound and ten shilling notes were issued. 'Silver' coins ceased to have any silver content at all in 1947.

In 1968, in advance of the changeover, decimal coins started to be circulated, in parallel with the old coins 10p (2/-) and 5p (1/-). After Decimal Day, some of the old coins continued to be used until eventually replaced by their decimal equivalents. Until 1985, a decimal half pence coin was included in the new currency, giving the odd appearance of a fraction added to the decimal values. The pound, known as a quid since the 17th century, returned to being a 'gold' coin from 1983. Inflation gradually reduced the value of coins and the 5p and 10p coins were eventually replaced by smaller (and lighter) ones

LENNY THE LION

by David Berguer

On our website we have a list of famous people who, at one time or another, lived in the area. These include Winifred Attwell, Stephanie Beacham, The Beverley Sisters, Claire Bloom, Bernard Bresslaw, Max Bygraves, Kenneth Connor, Cyril Fletcher, Gerald Harper, Alex James, David Jason, Jerome K Jerome, Joe Kinnear, Vic Lewis. Alfred Marks, Eric Morecambe, Robert Paul, Peter Sellers, John Slater, Terry-Thomas, The Western Brothers, Mike & Bernie Winters, Billy Wright, Lena Zavaroni, Ann Ziegler & Webster Booth.

In September we received the following email from a Paul Lee who pointed out that one person was missing from the list:

> "The person concerned is Terry Hall (Lenny the Lion). He died some years ago and the newspapers covered this at the time. You can find them on-line.
>
> I mentioned that I delivered his newspapers.....after I had pushed his papers through the letterbox I went to the property next door, put on my blazer and walked to school.

Terry Hall and Lenny

Our address was 91, Oakleigh Road North so his must have been 93. Number 91 was a very large property which presumably at one stage had been converted into 3 flats. We had the ground floor and half of the garden.

Terry Hall was usually absent during the week....touring round the country and then he would usually be back at the weekend.

I only ever spoke to him once. My cousin and I were in the back garden and he was burning some garden rubbish. My cousin got his autograph and we chatted for a short while. His daughter (Beverly) went to the local convent school as did my sister. There was another child born while we were living in Whetstone and according to his obituary this was another daughter.

I went back to Whetstone several years after we left to live in Essex. By then our place had been demolished along with Terry Hall's property and the next one along. All 3 properties had very large gardens...ideal for re-development!

On Sunday I was looking on the internet to see if there were any pictures of our old building for a family history project (couldn't find anything) and that is when I came across your website."

We took Paul's advice and consulted Wikipedia to discover that Terry Hall was born in Chadderton, Lancashire in November 1926. His parents ran a working men's club and he initially worked as a ventriloquist and after visiting Blackpool zoo he created Lenny the Lion which was originally made from an old fox fur and paper-machė. He first appeared on BBC television four years later and had his own show - *The Lenny the Lion Show* which ran from 1957 to 1960. Apparently, The Beatles made one of their early TV appearances on his show singing *Please Please Me*. He even appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in America.

Terry carried on working in variety during the 1970s and 1980s and after a long illness he died on 3 April 2007, aged 80. We have now added his name to our website.

In his original email Paul mentioned that he had looked on the internet to see if there were any pictures of his old building for a family history project but he couldn't find anything. I told him that we had three photographs of numbers 91 and 93 Oakleigh Road North on our photographic website www.friern-barnet.com and this elicited the following response from him:

"ABSOLUTELY AMAZING!!!!
Brings back so many memories.... can't thank you (and John Donovan) enough for this. Made my day.

It's strange how your perception of a place can change over time...I always thought that we had a much larger parking area in front of the property. That van suggests that in reality it was actually quite modest.

Interesting that Terry Hall's place was demolished several years before the flats experienced the wrath of the wrecking ball. I think I had presumed (wrongly) that both buildings were demolished at the same time. The other house next door to TH's place

must also have been demolished in 1973 or very soon after because looking on Google Maps those new flats took up a significant amount of space. TH and his other neighbour must have decided that it was very attractive from a financial viewpoint to approach a developer and see what sort of deal they could get if they both sold up.

I will leave you with a final memory of Oakleigh Road North and from my days as a paperboy.....the chap living next door to TH (I think he was a dentist) had a regular delivery of a magazine called *Health & Efficiency*. It was a "naturist" magazine. Clearly this dentist had an interest in more than just teeth. I used to get up earlier when it was *Health & Efficiency* day so that I could sit on his doorstep and have a good look through the magazine before it found its way into his letterbox. Happy days. All the best and keep up the really good work with your organisation and the excellent photo archive."

PASS DOWN THE BUS, PLEASE

by David Berguer

After the First World War there was a severe shortage of buses in London, a reduction from 4000 to 950, largely because about a third of the 'B' type buses had been commandeered by the British army for use in France and Belgium to ferry troops to the front lines. Lack of effective maintenance during the War also accounted for losses.

The London General Omnibus Company, LGOC or 'the General,' as it was known, even resorted to using 100 ex-army lorries to supplement their fleet, which did not meet with approval from passengers accustomed to more comfortable means of transport. Despite these emergency measures, travelling conditions in London became intolerable and queues became longer. In 1912 The LGOC, together with Metropolitan Electric Tramways (MET), London United Tramways (LUT) and some bus operators, became part of the Underground Electric Railways Group (UERL), which became more commonly known as 'The Combine.' The constituent companies of the Combine had an agreement between themselves that, in order to protect the viability of the trams, they would keep the operation of buses on tram routes to a minimum. Strange as it may seem, there was actually nothing preventing other operators of buses setting up in competition to the General. Providing that a bus passed the strict Metropolitan Police tests for roadworthiness, they would have no objection to such services being run.

By the 1920s, public disquiet became more vocal and the Combine became looked upon as an uncaring, inefficient monopoly, although it did not have monopoly powers. A taxi driver, Arthur George Partridge, had often seen long queues for buses as he drove around London and he decided to explore the possibility of starting his own bus service. Having got financial backing from two colleagues, he approached Leyland who were more than willing to give him favourable terms for the purchase of one of their LB models. The bus was passed by the Met Police and at noon on Saturday 5 August 1922, the vehicle, with natty white sidewall tyres and in handsome brown and cream livery that distinguished it from the red General buses and MET trams, entered service in route 11. The General had got wind of this new service and had made plans accordingly. They had four of their own buses shadowing the *Chocolate Express*, as it came to be called, and did everything they could to prevent customers from using it. The

situation continued for some days until an article in the *Daily Herald* roused public anger that the efforts of a small entrepreneur were being sabotaged by an organisation that had failed to deliver acceptable services themselves. The Combine backed down and the stage was set for a fascinating period in London's transport history.

Before long other independent operators, most of them one-man outfits, and often ex-servicemen with gratuities, were able to offer competition to the Combine on the busiest routes and then only at peak hours. In March 1923 a group of ex-servicemen started a motor bus service between Tally Ho and Golders Green and appropriately named it the X Service. Whilst the arrival of competition was welcomed by the public, the haphazard operation of many of the services caused considerable consternation to the services authorities. The habit of some small operators of cherry picking the most profitable routes to operate led to unsafe practices like exceeding speed limits and vehicles cutting each other up. There were even reports of buses offloading passengers short of their destination so that the vehicle could turn round and go the other way, where crowds were greater and more fares could be gathered. It was these practices that resulted in them earning the nickname of 'pirates'.

A local man, Alf Matthews, described what things were like:

The Chocolate Express has been preserved and now resides in the London Transport Museum

> "A 14-seater Fiat held the record for accommodation. Many was the time when we were jammed in like "sardines-in-a-tin" – the last few passengers actually travelling on the two back steps with a sturdy man grasping both handrails for dear life to hold us all in! As the passengers alighted, the conductor always managed to get the money in his bag faster than he could clip tickets (I learned from my old friend on the 29 that Mr Durnford was satisfied with £10 a day – the rest was kept as a bonus or "perks" and divided equally between the conductor and driver.)

> After several years of such usage the floor fell out. Fortunately, a man standing on the portion that gave way had a firm hold on one of the upright rails. He was rescued from "being like a monkey-up-the-stick." Mr Durnford and his men with their magnificent little brown buses performed a valiant, safe and very necessary local service for grateful folk in these parts for over five years."

Barnet Motor Services was operated by Charles William Durnford who was the proprietor of the Parkbridge Nurseries in Park Road, New Barnet and had been an established charabanc operator for some time. His first bus, the 14-seater Fiat mentioned above, had a brown and yellow livery with maroon linings. It started operation on 8 March 1923 between Hadley Highstone and the *Prince of Wales* in East Barnet. On 2 June 1924 he introduced a second service between Hadley Highstone and Lymington Avenue, Wood Green via Barnet, Whetstone, Oakleigh Road, New Southgate Station and Bounds Green Road. From 24 November 1924 the serviced was curtailed to run from the *Bull & Butcher* at Whetstone to Wood Green and in 1925 it was extended to Hadley Wood Station. At the end of 1925 Durnford sold the business to Admiral, another private operator, who continued to run the services until 1926. Eventually the LGOC began buying up private bus operators and on 1 July 1933 the London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB) was formed and became responsible for operating all buses and trams in London, as well as Underground trains, so the colourful days

of pirate bus operators came to an end. In 1948 the LPTB was nationalised and became London Transport, and then Transport for London in 2000.

A list of the routes operated by independent bus operators in our area can be found as an appendix in my book *Under the Wires at Tally Ho; Trams and Trolleybuses of North London 1905-1962* (ISBN 978 0 7524 5875 5).

LOOKING BACK 2 – GOLDSMITH ROAD

by Elsie Lawrence Mudd

From the *Orange Tree* pub, opposite the Town Hall at Friern Barnet, you walked left down Friern Barnet Lane and onto Goldsmith Road, which is first on the right. Walking down that road on the right is Kennard Road, followed by Hartland Road, Ramsden Road then Macdonald Road. Continuing along Goldsmith Road, number 3 is the last but one house on the right before Stanford Road. Number 1 Goldsmith Road, the last house, was where Mum's sister Maisie was to live later on during the war. Number 3 was a Victorian bay windowed house with a small front garden surrounded by a privet hedge. Two large steps - the top inlaid with red and blue tiles – led to an imposing front door with stained glass panels. Similar stained glass panels were to the side of the door, which were all inside a porch and set off the appearance of the house.

The door had a large brass bell on the side panel, a brass knocker and a large-handled brass letterbox. When rubbed with Bluebell polish, these would sparkle and shine - a job I was to enjoy doing. However, the hall inside was dark and unwelcoming, the walls still having old brown Victorian varnish paper that had been there for years. The only bright thing was the blue lino floor coverings, and these were frequently polished until they shone using Mansion

wax polish. There were two slip mats which Mum had made, one outside the bedroom door and the other outside the living room.

The bathroom at the end of the hall downstairs had a pink frosted glass window. There was a toilet with a polished wooden seat and a bath standing on its own four legs, because in those days it had no surround, it looked very stark compared to today's fitted suites. There was a paper shortage too, so there was no soft toilet tissue, just very hard shiny squared sheets which did not seem to do the job properly. If mum ran out, then to make do she would cut out squares of newspaper which were suspended from the toilet cistern on a piece of string. God knows what our rear ends would have been like using today's newspapers? The ink comes off so easily, so we would have been permanently black.

During the dark winter months lives were spent in the living room. I always recollected it as being painted green, the walls coated in cream-coloured distemper stippled with pale green. Uncle Pete, despite his poor disabled leg, had decorated the room while Dad was away in the army, but a few months later, after a bad frost, the water tank in the loft burst and flooded everywhere, leaving a stain on the newly-painted ceiling.

There was an Ideal boiler in the chimney cavity, which heated the hot water tank in a cupboard next to it. Our clothes were always warmed and well aired in the cupboard, including our wincyette nightdresses that were worn at bedtime. Mum saw to it that after we had a good scrub, we went to bed with a hot water bottle each. The bedroom was always freezing cold so it was just as well that she did.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

In common with almost all societies, organisations, businesses, industries and shops we are faced with increasing costs over which we have no control.

In order to maintain our level of commitment, the committee have decided that with effect from April 2023 our membership costs will have to be increased. The new rates will be:

Single person £20 Couples £30

We hope you will continue to support us in our work. As you will have seen, we also work closely with other societies to ensure that the history of the area is recorded so that future generations will be aware not only of the history of Friern Barnet, New Southgate, North Finchley and Whetstone but will also be aware of changes that are taking place on an almost daily basis. With our February Newsletter we will be including new membership forms for you to complete.

Friern Barnet & District
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