

The Finchley Society Newsletter

No. 1/85 Supplement

JANUARY 1985

CONTENTS, This supplement edition includes re-caps of no less than four monthly Fin.Soc. gatherings, four College Farm events, the 1984 coach outing, some serious environmental subjects and a number of brief items of general interest.

FESTIVE SUCCESS

Avenue House buzzed very suitably on 13th December when around 85 members attended the Christmas Party. The evening was a success by any standards and was notable for at least two "firsts":

Chairman Paddy Musgrove learned that very evening that he had become a grandfather for the first time - our congratulations to Paddy.

The Society actually recruited a new member at the party - Meg Davis of N.132, friend and colleague of Diana Tyler, attended, subscribed, joined and enjoyed! Welcome Meg.

"Behind the scenes" of the rest of us, who arrived and also "enjoyed", were the efforts of a core of members who managed the fabric of the evening -

Peter and Pat Marsh, creators of a fascinating 20 anagram puzzle of street, place and personality names of note in Finchley - (winner, your co-editor Carol, with 17 correct).

The raffle, organised by Mr. Jones, with 20 prizes donated by members which raised £45.00, neatly covering the outgoings, such as for food, for the evening.

That scrumptious food, organised by Shirley Avery, supported by no less than ten helpers and thanks to eight food contributors. They are regrettably too numerous to name in our limited space but special mention should be made of the help given by several young persons involved, to whom our special thanks are due.

The wine bar, presided over by Mr. Bolton and Kurt Weinberg which also broadly balanced its expenditure, thanks to members' donations.

The hall and tables decoration, provided and arranged by Joan and Alec Sturdy.

A tour of the Stephens laboratory conducted by Paddy Musgrove for 16 members who had missed the summer exhibition.

Our grateful thanks to all of them for their efforts on our behalf and we do all look forward to further such successful Society events.

Adventurers and Buccaneers Mary Hodgkinson

Each autumn begins for Fin.Soc. members with a well researched and well-organised coach outing. Last September our goal was Peterborough and district on a day of brief sunshine, strong winds and passing showers. Coach A ("The Adventurers") sped up the damp High Road to Whetstone, and beyond, in the care of Entertainments Manager, Denys Pegg. Concurrently Coach B ("The Buccaneers") was roadborne with Paddy Musgrove as courier. The success of our expedition owed everything to the rehearsal run earlier carried out by Paddy and Denys.

We were welcomed with coffee and biscuits in the Knight's Chamber, one of the Deanery buildings, before our tour of the very fine Cathedral. Set in delightful gardens and open spaces, there is much to enjoy. For me, the vista of the nave and the light, spacious chancel was a delight, unspoilt even by the ornate ciborium reminiscent of the

Albert Memorial. As for the glorious painted and decorated ceilings, they could be viewed in full detail without strain or dizziness as reflected in a long box with top and sides of mirror glass. According to legend, a monk who was trying in vain to light a fire became so annoyed that he called out "Devil take it" and at once Old Nick seemed to have his way, engulfing a great part of the Abbey in a fire which lasted for two days in the tower. Clearly, it pays to watch one's language in Peterborough!

Picnic lunch at Ferry Meadows Country Park, a recreation centre for all the family, was followed by another highlight of the tour - a run on the Nene Valley Railway under steam and a browse among superannuated locos in the marshalling yard at Wansford. Devotees drank it in - smoke and all - and almost had to be dragged away. I am told most of the rolling-stock was continental. The Nord, a new arrival from French Railways, was a splendid sight as the turntable spun round and two railmen fondly applied final touches with polishing rags.

Next stop Stamford, which, according to the leaflet handed out to us, has preserved "eight ancient monuments and over 600 properties of architectural or historic importance - a great wealth of stone-built dwellings." Some of us covered the town trail; others lingered among street scenes, market and tea shops. Stamford, by the way, was the first town in the U.K. to become designated as a Conservation Area under the Civic Amenities Act, 1967 and has been declared outstanding in architectural and historic importance.

A smooth run home was interrupted only for a stroll on the banks of Grafham Water, a reservoir which contributes to Finchley's water supply. Again, Paddy, Denys, Shirley Avery (and doubtless a dozen others in the background) deserve a cordial "Thank you" for arranging such an excellent day out.

#### Resume Of Recent Monthly Meetings

Mary Hodgkinson

#### November

In Victorian times, walking in the Zoo on Sunday was the OK thing to do. So runs the refrain of a music hall hit song of 1867. That is how the abbreviation for "zoological gardens", first a slang term and now respectable, came into the language. Dr. Peter Olney, of Duke's Avenue, Finchley, doubtless surprised most of us with this anecdote during his talk at the November meeting. Curator of Birds and Reptiles at the London Zoo, and holder of several senior posts in conservation and wildlife, he was a fascinating guest speaker, who gave us a mini-history, illustrated with slides, of the Zoo's 150 years and offered glimpses into the future.

There will be a future, he assured us, for despite the popularity of television wildlife programmes, many people still enjoy seeing animals in real life, especially in the natural surroundings of an up-to-date zoo. In its early days, the Zoo founded (by Sir Stamford Raffles, who lived for a short time at Highwood House, NW7) public entertainment rather than scientific study and care of animals was the dominant theme

Early buildings were therefore designed with an eye to visitors, not inmates. Dr. Olney showed slides reflecting changing tastes in architecture which must have been of special interest to our Vice President, Bill Tyler, who, while a trainee architect, was involved in some design projects at the London Zoo.

A change in zoo management, based on greater insight into the affinities between species, came about largely as a consequence of Darwin's discoveries. Gradually the entertainment factor became less important. Not that modern zoos need be dull, "Hippomania", a state of mind prevalent in the early days, when the public went crazy about wild animals unfamiliar to them, is unlikely to recur. But in more sober fashion many of us will enjoy seeing family groups of living creatures scientifically and humanely managed. Some people will raise objections on humanitarian grounds. Dr. Olney responded fairly to criticism from a member of the audience as to conditions of creatures seen at the London Zoo some years ago. One reason for this, Dr. Olney explained, was that owing to greater longevity these days there are some older animals in a less than ideal state. He emphasised the part played by the Zoo in research,

conservation, education, ecology and other spheres, and assured us that no experiments involving vivisection were conducted in conjunction with the Zoo.

We shall remember with special pleasure his pictures of the mating ritual of flamingoes and other studies of behaviour, and equally the elegant Mongolian horse, almost certainly extinct in the wild. The final question of the evening was, Are the animals interested in us? It was gratifying to hear from the speaker that on the whole they are.

#### October

I regularly visit St. Pancras and Islington Cemetery to view the Pearly King monument one of my favourites - and to make sure that his hat is still in place. (Vandals have knocked it off on at least one occasion). Thus I speak as an addict of haunting burial places, especially the oddities.

The talk given in October by Mr. Brent Elliott, Chairman of the Victorian Society's committee on cemeteries, was of special interest to me and, I suspect, to others who had not realised how much one can learn from visiting cemeteries. The history of burial in this country was illustrated with slides and enlivened (if the term is appropriate here) with plenty of anecdotes and local colour. Body snatching, of course, came into it. How many of his audience knew that when graves were being raided on behalf of medical schools, cemeteries had to have stout, high walls and attendants on duty for long hours? When cadavers later became more available for research, low walls and easier access became the hallmarks for those later cemeteries.

One of the chapters in Mr. Elliott's narrative dealt with changing styles in cemetery architecture, from classical imitations with Greek and Roman motifs, through Sir Gilbert Scott's "Undertaker's Gothic" and Pugin's devotion to a recognisably Christian style and on to the "vernacular" with black and white timber such as erected at Hendon, in the early 20th century.

Mr. Elliott's talk must have attracted many of us to visit or revisit the splendid private cemetery at Kensal Green, to view, for example, its remarkable monument in the form of an organ commemorating a musician at Hampstead. We might also be inspired again to roam round fabulous Highgate. One sad thought that many of us must have considered after the lecture was the modern trend towards what may be called the utilitarian cemetery. The growth of cremation since the 1930's and the heavier cost of maintaining park-like cemeteries with flower beds have led to greater formality in appearance and even restrictions such as banning flowers on graves. Burial places without flowers seem depressing, and it cannot be helpful to bereaved persons when even that simple observance is overhung with bureaucracy.

#### September

"The fun of the 'phone", the title of the talk by guest speaker Mr. Peter Young at the September meeting, may in itself raise a few eyebrows. Being a subscriber in 1984 is not always amusing. Several members raised problems such as obscene calls, "out of order" situations and bills which need to be challenged. We tend to overlook the romance of the telephone story which is, as Mr. Young made clear, part of the continuing drama of human communications. He outlined with wit, anecdotes and local colour, its development from the days of the messenger covering hundreds of miles with news of victory or defeat in battle, to drums, bonfires, heliographs and, with a leap of centuries, to the telegraph, the Morse Code and finally Alexander Graham Bell's application of electricity to the basic principle of "two cocoa tins connected by wire" to convey human speech.

We learned that the first transatlantic telephone call was a one-way, two-hour monologue made from the New Southgate installation, at the site occupied today by Standard Telephones and Cables.

Today we find the telephone system becoming more and more sophisticated and more widely applied. We shall soon see the first experimental telephone in a British Rail train as well as a great number of car telephones. But not everyone, as Mr. Young pointed out,

would wish to be constantly available to any caller. As for visual telephones, he said that the picture telephone in the U.S. had proved to be not altogether popular. There are obvious disadvantages in having to look attentive throughout every call.

Mr. Young, who is writing an international social history of the telephone, is collecting individual stories. Members contributed a few on the spot. A gem from the speaker concerned the Dial-a-Disc service in Leytonstone in 1972 - every time a caller got through he was offered the services of a local prostitute! A most entertaining talk, with the speaker, appropriately, relying entirely on his voice and with no films or other visual aids!

#### College Farm Reports

Carols            Barbara C. Warren

Now firmly established as a favourite occasion, the College Farm Carols evening has a flavour and sparkle all its own. This year I was early at the stables to watch Debbie and Chris attach collars to the eager white goats, anxious to get started on their contribution to the evening. What makes the evening so special, so loved, so anticipated? Is it the stark simplicity of it all - the cold air nipping noses and feet in spite of rugs and scarves? The bales of straw sturdily reminding us of our farming forebears and the high sweet voices of children raised in uncomplicated worship? Surely all of that and the simple dramatic story of a birth 2000 years ago, embroidered and cherished throughout the ages. Sceptics try to tell us that it never happened in this way but does it really matter how it happened exactly? Baa! say the goats. They are quivering with the excitement of it all - standing up to be petted and made a fuss of as the hot soup is passed around, watching the children running around in that excess of energy that animals understand. Listening to the quiet conversations of old friends, still slightly awed by the simple solemnity of the evening, so thoughtfully organised by the North District Guides, I look at those goats' strange devil eyes and wonder if they should be there! - and then up at the stars, to know that we should all be where we are.

Ed's note: Continuing Pressure on space at the farm may make it impossible next year to continue the "carols" evening - let us all hope that Chris Ower's ingenuity will resolve that happily in good time.

Christmas Fair    Timothy Johnson

We thank everyone who contributed in any way to the success of the College Farm Gallery Christmas Fair 1984. It was well patronised (upward of 1000 visitors) and many people helped in more direct ways. Some gave goods for the stalls or for prizes. Others "gave themselves" as voluntary helpers. Thank you all! The other charities taking part made it an event representative of the whole community and it is pleasant to know that the Fair helped causes other than our own. When people support events like this so generously it seems polite to tell them where the money goes.

The first thing to say is that it does not go into the general running of the Art Gallery. In one way or another, all the proceeds of Christmas Fairs go into the Farm, where considerable sums have been invested in the improvement of indoor facilities. It is sad to think that some of this money has to be used to make good the depredations of vandalism while the Farm was untenanted, but this general transformation has opened the way for increased community use which must certainly be of ultimate benefit to the Farm.

Tree Planting    Denys Pegg

Last spring, with the co-operation of Chris Ower, the tenant farmer, Lombardy Poplars supplied by The Friends of College Farm were planted either side of the central road leading to the farm. In November, those poplar trees were interplanted with 'pencil' oaks (*Quercus robur fastigiata*) from funds lodged with The Finchley Society on the

closure of the Finchley Church End Trust. The poplar trees should be felled in 20 or 30 years and by then the slower growing oak trees will form an impressive approach to the 100 year old farm buildings whilst not impairing the pasture in the two adjoining fields.

Explanation - The Finchley Church End Trust was established to coordinate the activity of amenity societies involved in the area covered by the N3 postal district. It originally took an active part in opposing a municipal centre in Regents Park Road and in promoting Finchley Day Garden Parties in the grounds of Finchley Manor.

October Open Days Peter Marsh

In 1983 the October open days coincided with the Hindu Festival of Dussehra. Not to be outdone this year, they coincided with the Jewish day of atonement 'Yom Kippur'. This resulted in very small attendances on the Saturday but there was plenty of space to wander around the animals and buildings and to enjoy a quiet cup of tea without queuing.

Sunday was very definitely a family day. The Hosier and Dickenson band provided a very pleasant sound, contrasting with the excited shouts of energetic youngsters bouncing in the inflatable castle. A Children's Art Competition with very colourful entries and perhaps the improved 'natural' lighting in the art gallery, created great interest in all the pictures.

Faculty Books, who provided new books at bargain prices, were new contributors, as were the London Cycling Campaign and The Family Holiday Association. It was also very encouraging to see the appearance of new faces amongst the regular helpers.

Isn't it interesting to conjecture that the earliest cherished memory of some of the children who attended will be of spending that pleasant afternoon at College Farm!

P.S. Next year can we find an October Saturday that is free of "competition" and will match Sunday's attendance?!

A Rose by any Other Name            Paddy Musgrove

Perhaps it is a pity that the Metropolitan Green Belt was ever so christened. "Green Belt summons up images of idyllic verdant countryside and areas of natural beauty.

Truth is of course that though much of the green belt is indeed beautiful, any plot of land within its area, no matter how tatty - can be serving a basic green belt function merely by being there and so blocking urban sprawl.

Developers with their eyes on the green belt are quick to dismiss areas of high ecological value as "scrub" as if that word in itself were some disparagement. One group who recently applied cobuild on 21 acres of green belt at Arkley complained that the site was merely wasteland. Presumably it was "wasted" because there were no buildings on it. Mr. Patrick Jenkin, despite his recent assurances that green belt land is "sacrosanct", last September declared that land, previously preserved, could in fact be used for development if it was of "no great amenity value". When green belt land is of low amenity value, the aim, of course, should be to improve it, not put bricks on it!

Eighteen months ago we pointed to the danger of green belt erosion along the route of the M25. Already The Finchley Society has registered objections to a plan to develop no less than 2,400 acres of the Wrotham Park Estate along the M25 near Potters Bar. (The inspector's inquiry report on this is still awaited.) The latest major threat is the declared expansionist policy of the superstores. A Tesco Stores spokesman has pointed out that, because so many people have cars today, "they like to shop on one surface and load their goods into their cars". Tescos consequently aim from now on to build "edge of the town" shopping centres of about 40,000 sq.ft. with petrol stations and surface parking for 1,000 cars. This would involve just under 7 acres of green land for parking

alone. Tesco's have admitted that even this is not the end of it. Marks and Spencer intend to team up with them in establishing joint "edge of the town" sites. Could the motive for this odd scheme be the belief that a single planning permission would be easier to obtain than two? We learn that a Marks-Tesco development of this type might even offer shop space to a number of other smaller units - an umbrella planning job?

The search for profitable locations is already on. In an article in the financial section of The Times, Judith Runtley states that, aided by the imminence of Sunday trading, "the pressure is on to find plum out of town sites for ever larger stores ... with generous surface car parking" (such as Tesco's 12000 sq. ft. store at Bristol, next to the M32). North of London there can be no more desirable target for developers than the Green Belt along the M25. As a member of the Green Belt Council, of which we are delighted to report, Mr. Sydney Chapman, MP, has recently become President, The Finchley Society will be quick to respond to any threat.

#### Future of The Bald Faced Stag

Vice President Bill Tyler on behalf of the Society and in his own capacity as an architect in private practice, recently made a detailed statement at the public enquiry into redevelopment schemes for the Bald Faced Stag, High Road, N2. We are pleased to reproduce here extracts from that statement so as to inform members of the drift of the Society's argument.

"The Bald Faced Stag is not an outstanding building architecturally, but it is an example of solid Victorian architecture and is very significant indeed in the townscape of East Finchley. It dominates the historic intersection of the Great North Road and Fortis Green / East End Road, on which site an inn has stood probably for several centuries. Its position is such that it forms a physical restriction at the intersection. Its removal and the setting back of a new building will facilitate major changes in the traffic capacity of the junction with consequent potential increases in traffic on Fortis Green. It will also encourage those transport planners who view the High Road as an alternative A1 route linking with an 'improved' Archway Road, to which our organisation is vehemently opposed. Whilst that is an issue beyond the scope of this Enquiry~ it is one of very great concern to the local community and if such schemes come to pass they will deal a terrible blow to those aspirations we have for our neighbourhood.

When we first objected to these Proposals, our concern was that an important building should be put to good economic use and a plan was submitted to the Council showing a new building as a rear 'wing' with the public house then being renovated to provide further commercial accommodation. We were gratified that the Council felt this proposal of sufficient merit to give as one of their reasons of 'deemed' refusal' ... of course there is no reason why a residential content and a wine bar/ restaurant should not be retained in an office scheme, though the need for that combination is very suspect. On land adjoining the station there is an existing permission for a large development for offices and the fact that it has not been implemented, since it was first granted some eight years ago, indicates perhaps the lack of real demand for offices in East Finchley. ,

It may be said that offices would be readily let, but that might be equally so of an office block erected on, say, a prime residential site. That, naturally, would never be permitted and we no more favourably view an office development on this site. Since our own initial response to the Council - and we are realistic enough to appreciate that not everything can, or should, remain exactly as it was - a scheme for using the building for community use has received planning consent and that is something which we wholeheartedly support and welcome as entirely appropriate. This shows that there is no over-riding reason to compel the replacement of the public house and that East Finchley is not designated as an office location centre.

We are of the opinion that schemes such as those under enquiry will create serious traffic problems. There are frequent tailbacks of eastbound traffic in East End Road held up by the traffic lights at the High Road and Vehicles leaving this site to travel east, or turning north into the High Road, would block the westbound carriage-way while

waiting to enter the queue. A 'no left turn' exit from the site seems impractical because it would be unenforceable.

Architecturally both schemes are ordinary in the extreme. Because one particular applicant has not the imagination to renovate the existing structure, with or without some new addition, it does not mean others cannot achieve a viable and attractive scheme that will respect the wishes of the community and provide a worthwhile contribution to the locality. We can see no compelling reasons for the granting of consent for either of these schemes and we trust that the appeals will be dismissed."

GLC Aircraft Noiseline Rosalind Batchelor

The GLC have opened a special telephone 'noiseline' to provide the public with a simple means of complaining about aviation noise in London. Complaints will be passed on to the appropriate authorities. The GLC Scientific Services branch monitors the problem of noisy aircraft and assesses the geographical distribution of the problem, identifies sensitive times of day and the most offensive types of aircraft.

As someone who has tried with difficulty to complain about the antics of police helicopters in our area, it is a most welcome initiative. If you have a complaint about aircraft or helicopter noise in London, the number to ring is 633-3001 (24 hr. service with ansaphone, or write to Scientific Services - Aircraft Noiseline, County Hall, London, SE1 7PB.

Crash, Bang, Wallop!

Continuing the theme of noise, Arthur Hall has conducted some research into "A Finchley Meteorite" which was found in the mid 1880's by a gravedigger at the St. Marylebone Cemetery, 11 ft. below the surface in the usual Finchley clay. This object, almost 2.75 inches in diameter and weighing 2 lbs ½ oz was at the time (and seemingly not since disputed) associated with a "fireball" that had been "witnessed" falling into the cemetery during a violent storm in 1883.

Arthur communicated this story to The Tornado Research Association, which advertises from time to time in local newspapers. Their representative, Mike Rowe responded with some fascinating data about 1883 which, leaving aside the question of whether the so called meteorite did or did not arrive in that year, reads as follows

"Thunderstorms occurred in North London in the summer of '83 on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> , 15<sup>th,21st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July, 8<sup>th</sup> August and 17<sup>th</sup> September. Additionally a tornado cloud was seen from Tottenham on 19<sup>th</sup> June."

What a violent summer? One appropriate for legend, indeed!

The Chairman in Print David Smith

Books on London usually, rather grudgingly it seems, list 'Finchley' as being in the northern suburbs, part of the London Borough of Barnet, and having a church of Saxon origin. How pleasant it is therefore to pick up a copy of "The London Encyclopaedia" (Macmillan) and read a superbly written entry on Finchley which, for once, really does the old place some justice. Its topography, geology, roads, houses, transport, listed buildings and conservation areas all receive a mention. Avenue House appears as a separate entry and includes a mention of The Finchley Society.

It is no great surprise to find, amongst the names of the many contributors, that of our Chairman, Paddy Musgrove!

News in Brief

Did you know: "Spare time Poet" Mary Hodgkinson, (not undiscovered but currently a little neglected, she says) has recently won two Regional Poetry Competition first prizes! Her winning poems, respectively on Scotland and on Shropshire, have been published in Envoi and the Salop Poet's Journal. In addition, Mary recently gained an acceptance from Poetry Nottingham. She comments, "My best New Year gift would be more time for writing - and of course masses of stamps!"

'Stephens' Relations: Recent visitors to Avenue House were Mr. & Mrs. Ward-Thomas and daughter. Formerly Evelyn Stephens, a granddaughter of Henry C. Stephens's brother Julian, Mrs Ward-Thomas once lived with her family in the Manor House, Cholderton. They now live at Thaxted, Essex.

Julian, who married Minna Pelissier, once lived in Redbourn Cottage, which stood in Ballards Lane where we now we find the National Westminster Bank. By 1892 he was living at Highcroft, Etchingam Park Rd; and in 1898 he was at Grove House, Ballards Lane.

Our active Chairman: Paddy Musgrove addressed no less than three groups in November, each time on different subjects, but each pertinent to Fin.Soc. activities.

Ladies of Trinity Church, Nether Street - "Finchley, past and present"  
Barnet Branch of National Council of Women of Great Britain - "Discovering Finchley"  
Trefoil Group (North Finchley) - "The Stephens family in Finchley"

Our thanks to Paddy and to his audiences who, in each case, were kind enough to make donations to the Society.

Historical Association - an invitation: Hampstead and N.W. London branch secretary Joyce Wheatley writes to say how much she and her husband enjoyed one of the College Farm Open days last year. In return, she sent a programme for spring '85 which includes one meeting which could be of interest to our members -

Feb.21st, subject - Roman St. Albans, Speaker D. Gareth Davies, BA, FSA; venue Westfield College, Kidderpore Avenue, NW3 at 8 p.m.

For The Finchley Society: Carol and John Halls (Joint Editors)  
1 Finchley Villas, Finchley Park, N12 9JT