

The Finchley Society Newsletter
MARCH, 1987 No.3/87 (SUPPLEMENT)

NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD SCHEMES - AN UPDATE

* BLEAK NEWS emerged recently that Barnet Borough Council, despite protests from residents living adjacent to the North Circular Road, and calls from some Councillors for the scheme to be scrapped, voted not to object to the Department of Transport's Henly's Corner proposals. Recommendations from the Public Works Committee and the Development and Estates Committee, carried the day.

Our Vice-President, B~ Tyler, who listened to the debate, noted that Garden Suburb and Hendon South Ward Councillors spoke out against the scheme while Finchley Ward Councillors were strongly in favour of it.

THE INDEFATIGABLE BILL also reports his disappointment that the Prime Minister, as the local M.P., has taken six weeks to respond to the Society's request that the current 'East-of-Falldon Way' Enquiry should be called off and dealt with at the same time as the Henly's Corner proposals, since the Fin.Soc. believes that the two are inextricably linked.

In her reply, the P.M. states that such a decision rests entirely with the independent Inspector, but Bill comments that the Inspector has repeatedly said he is unable so to do because it is not within his terms of reference.

However, it is of course not impossible for the DoT to be 'instructed' by the Secretary of State to withdraw their case and ask the Inspector to close the East-of-Falldon Way Enquiry. Bill indicates that the Fin.Soc. will be replying to the Prime Minister in that vein.

Meantime the Society's objections to the Henly's Corner scheme, have been submitted to the Department of Transport, fully quoted in the following text

"The Finchley Society is objecting to the proposals for major alterations to the road layout at Henly's Corner on the following grounds

1. The proposals are premature; the opening of M25 has resulted in a dramatic drop in traffic using the junction (policies of restraint on traffic entering central London

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

could achieve further benefits and increase the usage of M25) and the findings of the North East London Assessment Study could have a profound effect on future traffic growth.

2. The scheme is out of scale; the increase in capacity at the junction is not matched by equivalent capacity in adjacent sections of road, viz. Falloden Way.

3. Facilities for pedestrians are totally unsatisfactory; the system of ramps, bridges and tunnel is dangerous, involves excessive travel distances and will be unusable for the elderly and lame.

4. Road closures will affect the amenities of local residents; there will be severe restriction in the movement of traffic on some side roads, leading to intensification of use of other roads and dangerous conditions at certain junctions.

5. There will be an unacceptable loss of local public open space; the proposed exchange land at Coppetts Wood is remote from the locality and is an unsatisfactory replacement for land to be taken from Brookside Walk.

6 There will be increased levels of pollution, additional traffic generation will lead to increasing levels of air pollution and noise.

7. The visual effects of the scheme are unacceptable the pedestrian bridges and ramps in particular will be detrimental to the appearance of the locality

B The construction process will be hugely disruptive~ local residents will be subject to intolerable conditions, there will be massive traffic problems throughout the area and landscaped space (Charter Gardens) will be destroyed during the 3-4 year construction period.

9. The proposals conflict with current Government policy; the scheme is contrary to the policy of RESTRAINT and contrary to the policy of IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT.

COPTHALL: GREEN BELT RELIEF Mary Hodgkinson

A variation on our usual pattern, the February meeting was a Members' Evening with something to celebrate - the rejection by the Department of the Environment of the

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

proposals for a large indoor sports complex at Copthall Playing Fields. Chairman Paddy Musgrove invited us to rejoice over "a very great victory indeed". He told us that we had persuaded the Inspector at the public enquiry that every point raised by our Society and allied amenity groups was valid, and that our recommendations about the interpretation of Green Belt regulations – a key issue – had been accepted. "This would certainly not have come about had it not been for the activities of people like us", Paddy said.

The rosy glow was dimmed when Paddy went on to explain the injustice faced by groups such as ours, even when they have been successful. Not only do we have to use our own funds, to the extent of some thousands of pounds in raising matters of substantial public interest, but also we have to meet, through the rates, the legal and other costs of the local authority. In a case like the Henly's Corner road traffic scheme, for example, we shall be required to pay through taxation, part of the Department of Transport's expenses. This means that we are paying our own costs and contributing in addition to those of both central and local government. "A no-win situation," in Paddy's view, and "a pernicious aspect of these public enquiries."

We devoted the rest of the evening to a discussion about future policy and activities. Although too subdued to be called a brain-storming session, the exchange of ideas gave us much to think about.

Expanding Mary's impression of the evening's discussions, here follow some notes of the speakers and the ideas they put forward from the floor.

The Chairman referred to a letter received from Jean Snelling recommending a money raising idea with which she is familiar. Known as a "Mini-Mart" (Paddy has the details), the event's most interesting feature, says Miss Snelling, is that besides functioning well as a fundraiser, it involves more members than would a conventional Bring-and-Buy or a Jumble Sale.

Eds. Quite coincidentally in the following week a relative in Scotland mentioned to us a 'Slave Market' which raised considerable funds for her village playschool. The basis of slave markets is that personal skills are "sold" to any number of interested buyers, all proceeds to the charity.

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

Both Margaret and Eric Erber voiced opinions that the Fin.Soc., its aims and activities, are not well enough known among the general population of Finchley. Let us better publicise the Society, they urged, suggesting posters as a possible method. After some discussion, Libraries, Churches, Building Society windows and Ratepayers Noticeboards were mooted as suitable venues. The idea seemed to appeal!

Eileen Pentecost suggested a recruiting idea - why not link free new membership to the winning of bright "environmental" competitions in the local press.

David Smith recommended that the 'experts' among the membership should be better known - and consulted. He urged that at regular intervals the newsletters should carry listings of our 'experts' (as is done for committee members or Society officers) who are willing to be consulted (or recruited) - for Society response to local problems. We already have architects Bill Tyler and Bill Ungless, designer Peter Marsh, educationalists Barbara Warren, Pat Marsh and David Smith, wildlife consultant Derek Warren, archaeologist Paddy Musgrove, town-planner Rosalind Batchelor, artist Timothy Johnson and financial consultant Bill Williams - come in everyone else!

Please write to, or call the editors to record your speciality, and how the Society might use it.

Norman Bar called for even more vigilance and activity by the Finchley Society in challenging planning applications that potentially affect the 'style' of our neighbourhood. Norman's plea, though totally accepted, exposed the biggest problem which faces the Society in tackling the most technical subject in its portfolio - 'people' and 'time'. Bill Tyler responded with an outline of how he in particular has been in the forefront of the Fin.Soc. 'planning' examinations, and just how much of his private and professional time it has demanded. His words were echoed by Rosalind Batchelor who urged the 'lay' membership to play a bigger part by undertaking D.I.Y. planning activity for the Society on smaller domestic issues.

Clearly there is a great need for more support for our 'experts' - or for more to be recruited/identified!

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

Playing devil's advocate(?) Kurt Weinberg questioned whether, - for all the planning work that the Society's specialists put in, there have been significant commensurate successes? In turn, Paddy Musgrove, Rosalind Batchelor and David Smith cited examples of how, if not 'preventing' planning aberrations, the Society has at least achieved satisfactory 'modification' of them. Finally, Paddy pointed to Fin.Soc.'s considerable contribution to the continuing existence and, indeed, revitalisation of College Farm. His message to us all - stick in there!!

LETTER FROM EPSOM

Member Mr. W. S. Inwards has written from Epsom sending his best wishes to the Society and, being unable to attend the February meeting, commenting by letter on the "whither" and the "how".

He has experience (12 years) of organising winter lectures and other events for a society in the Epsom area and it is interesting to note that their apparent greatest problem exactly mirrors one of the themes that emerged at our February meeting - the need to make the society better known and understood by the local populace at large. Mr. Inwards asks if "more and expensive publicity may be the only answer - or more members willing to push information leaflets through streets of houses."

Now there's an idea that would be complementary to that raised by Margaret Erber for the use of posters - at five handbills per local member, for instance, the Fin.Soc. message could instantly reach 3000 Finchley homes!

OTHER RECENT SOCIETY EVENTS

COLLEGE FARM, FEBRUARY FIRST SUNDAY

A bright, if cold, day saw the farm off to a good start for the year's First Sundays. 500 visitors had plenty of interesting diversions to occupy their afternoon, including

- The year's first College Farm lamb, a "Portland"
- Eight shining white and busily-greedy piglets newly born to Betty the Berkshire Sow.
- Donkey-rides -for the younger visitors

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

- Charity stalls
- College Farm Gallery, with a full display of talent including that of another new exhibitor, Hannah Piper.
- Plus the other animals and birds, as always, there to be admired, patted and/or studied.

Incidentally – TV-AM viewers of the Widewake programme on Saturday 8th March will have seen the above-mentioned Portland Ewe and lamb featured in that programme: an early morning studio visit for Chris Ower and daughter Kathryn who was interviewed.

JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING Mary Hodgkinson

An expert in local history, Fred Davis, who is also happily a Fin.Soc. member, was the first speaker in the new era of Avenue House meetings on the last Thursdays of the month. At our January meeting, he spoke on "The development of education in Finchley" – a delightful anecdotal talk -from a retired teacher's viewpoint (he was on the staff of St. Mary's and headmaster of All Saints')

His first verbal snapshot was dated 1682, when Finchley consisted of three widely spaced hamlets, and when Austin Swift unlawfully set up a school for adolescents without the necessary licence from the Archbishop. At that period the Church through various institutions had control of education, and individual enterprise, it seemed, was discouraged. As the story continued, the tables were turned, and a long-term conflict developed between Church and State. Mr. Davis took us through the 18th century when schools were founded by acts of private benevolence and Charity Schools appeared throughout the country. One of these was a school in Finchley, known to exist in 1716, with 16 pupils, and perhaps endowed by an organisation such as the S.P.C.K. Towards the end of the century Dame Schools appeared, much more modest than the name suggests, usually a form of baby-minding plus some reading in simple surroundings.

The forerunner of the modern school system was an establishment in a house in Hendon Lane belonging to the Finchley Charities, on the site of the present shops at the top of Gravel Hill. A committee of contributors was formed which required pupils to be supplied with suitable clothing and Sunday dinner! The total cost for school

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

attendance was twopence a week! In 1853 the school, St. Mary's National School, was moved to the site where St. Mary's School still is today. Private and religious establishments were being set up locally and nationally at this period, for boarders as well as day pupils. For example, the Lord of the Manor of Finchley opened a school for young gentlemen at the Manor House. Nonconformists (such as Congregationalists) were also involved in Finchley's local education, witness the East Finchley Congregational Chapel's "British School". The chapel was destroyed by fire but the school survived as the "Chapel School." A short-lived experiment in the middle of the 19th Century was the National and Industrial School in East End Road, which catered for children and adults from the labouring classes and included in its curriculum, cultivation, chopping wood (for boys), knitting, washing, ironing (for girls).

The 1870 Education Act, which aimed to fill the gaps in voluntary efforts, allowed the Church to provide schools where none existed, but, towards the end of the century, there was no shortage of State schooling and the Church had difficulty in keeping up the numbers of pupils and satisfying the various requirements of the authorities.

Mr. Davis gave an amusing account of a "riotous episode" in North Finchley when schoolchildren climbed on to the roof of the Congregational Chapel and the police had to be called to restore order. Misbehaviour is not, it seems, only a 20th century problem!

COLLEGE FARM: "NEW-SPEAK" Timothy Johnson

College Farm Gallery's winter season of 'First Sundays' has kept the 'box-office' busy with far bigger attendances than anyone could have hoped for, even on days when bad weather put a stop to donkey rides.

As the days lengthen, we now move on to what have always been known as the SUMMER OPEN DAYS - and what do we find? We find that fast-moving events have rendered this terminology totally inaccurate. The Open Day season now runs from February to December - delete SUMMER. The farm is open every day of the week - delete OPEN DAY - so what are we left with? This is what - We shall have a monthly COUNTRY FAIR, starting with the "Spring Fair" on Sunday 5th April, followed by the "May Fair" in May - and so on -

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

all taking place, as before, on the FIRST SUNDAY AFTERNOON OF THE MONTH. Write the dates in your diary -now!

MANOR HOUSE: CONTINUING RESISTANCE Paddy Musgrove

A planning application to build a four-storey block of flats with car parking spaces and vehicular access through the garden wall at the rear of the Manor House in East End Road has been withdrawn. It was strongly opposed by the Finchley Society. Not only would it have disfigured the house's elegant grounds but it would have been in the garden of a Grade 2 listed building and in the area of a scheduled ancient monument, namely the Finchley moat!

Although the withdrawal of the application will be welcomed, we have reason to think that a revised scheme may be put forward. If so, that also will be carefully studied!

In recent months the Finchley Society has been consulted by two different bodies concerning proposals for "improvements" to the grounds, involving the alarming word 'landscaping'. While it is true that a certain amount of clearance work would be desirable, we have emphasised to all concerned that this should only be done under archaeological supervision and with the expressed permission of English Heritage.

PARISH BOUNDARY POSTS

Our Environmental Officer, Rosalind Batchelor recently received the following letter from Barnet's Controller of Engineering Services. Its contents clearly reveal the background to the story and the sharp observation of member Cyril Pentecost.

"I am writing to inform you that the two boundary posts whose locations are shown on the attached plan, were uprooted by the developers of the Old Owen Sports Ground.

As a result of a phone call from one of your members, Mr. Pentecost of 1450 High Road, one of my assistants, Miss Wilson, was able to be on site to oversee the work and ensure that these historically important markers were not irretrievably lost or damaged.

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

I intend to have both markers, which are in a poor state at present, fully restored and they will be re-erected at cost to the developer once the site has been completed.

I have written to Mr. Pentecost to express my appreciation of his concern over this matter."

Parish Boundary posts, to be found in roads where the parish meets its old 'neighbours' such as Barnet, Friern Barnet, Hornsey, Hendon and St. Pancras.

Please report to Rosalind (349-0407) the location and condition of any such historic markers you may observe around Finchley.

FINCHLEY'S COUNTRY DIARY Sandra Quigley

At a quick glance, there isn't an awful lot stirring yet. But take a closer look. Lilacs, elder and flowering cherries are coming to life and by the time you read this, golden forsythia will be gently flowering. Japonica, honeysuckle and roses too are putting forth buds and shoots, while primulas and wallflowers are already in bud with a few flowers showing. In some lucky gardens snowdrops and crocuses are already in full bloom.

In the woods the ramson weed are looking fresh and green and when crushed give off their characteristic 'garlicky' smell; the arum has pushed up its first single leaf spike which will be followed by the spike un-folding to display dark green arrow shaped leaves held on long stems, deeply veined and sometimes with attractive dark brown or white spots. The lesser celandine has yet to show its heart shaped leaves; these bright yellow flowers are one of Britain's earliest flowering wild flowers.

Have you noticed that yellow is a dominant Spring colour? For example take winter jasmine, forsythia, daffodils, wallflowers, celandine, primroses. The gentle pinks and 0 whites seem to come on later. Graceful willows are wearing their soft grey pussy-willow gloves which will change colour to become fluffy yellow. Horse chestnuts will soon be growing sticky leaf shoots which the squirrels love to eat after their winter diet of stored food. Hedges of sloe or blackthorn will be covered in frothy, white bride's blossom.

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

Birds are beginning their courtship rituals - I have heard woodpeckers 'drumming' - establishing their territory - quantities of wood chippings below a tree will show where they are going to nest this year. Squirrels are chasing each other up and down trees - courting or defending territory, I don't know which. If you see horse chestnut branches newly stripped of long stretches of bark you'll know that squirrels are lining their nests or their untidy drays in the tops of trees.

MARY "THE DAIRY"?

Amongst recent items relating to the Finchley Society which the various local press organs have been kind enough to print, was an amusing one featuring and picturing Press and Publicity Officer Mary Hodgkinson and the "mystery of the golden calf" (the model calf which stands in a small public garden near Friern Barnet Town Hall).

This has inspired some wild and waggy suggestions (no names, no pack-drill) for further publicity, including

- Ask Chris Ower to bring along from College Farm a real calf to be photographed contemplating the model.
- Start a Fin.Soc. model farm "collection" at Friern Barnet.

Understandably, Mary is not in the 'mood' (say it very slowly to get the effect!) for further personal farmyard appearances but seriously does remind members that she welcomes information suitable for the press, on Finchley Society events which she has been unable to attend.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN (PAST AND PRESENT) Paddy Musgrove

Although it is more than ten years since Mrs Patricia Sharland was Chairman of the Finchley Society and despite a busy life which prevents her participating in current Society activities, she maintains a keen interest in the Finchley Society and its affairs. We were delighted recently to receive a letter of good wishes together with comments on the discussion paper distributed in advance of our February meeting. (Pat incidentally puts in a word for more social events, including work parties and even "the dreaded coffee morning").

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley

Her other reason for writing was to record and invite due appreciation of the work of Carol and John Halls in the production of the Society's Newsletter and quarterly supplements, which she finds clear and lucid, and representing a very considerable amount of work - sentiments which all newsletter readers will fully agree.

Feeling that Carol and John might be reluctant to print their own accolade, Pat sent her remarks to the Chairman, rather than to the Editors direct, and has suggested that they be required to print her tribute!

Eds. We are very grateful for Pat's comments which will inspire us to keep up the hard work.

ALEXANDRA COLLEGE

Joyce Green, who has lived at 129 Nether Street for many years, gives us more information about Alexandra Ladies College (see Jan'87 and Oct. '86 Supplements).

The school was closed due to an outbreak of diphtheria which it was thought had been the result of bad drains. The building was then occupied by the Wright-Kingsford (spelling uncertain) Home as an orphanage which was later moved to a site near the Finchley Memorial Hall, now demolished.

The former college building was then requisitioned by the Council and converted into flats to provide homes for people whose houses had been destroyed by bombing.

One at least of the residents was of somewhat dubious character, on one occasion greeting Dr. Green (Mrs. Green's husband) when he called to give away surplus pears from his garden with the words "Come on in dearie, don't be shy ..."

Mrs. Green was unable to give the exact date of demolition, but it was certainly after the Quaker Meeting House was built in 1967.

** * * * *

For The Finchley Society: John and Carol Halls
Finchley Park, N12 9JT

Rosalind now asks us all to be conscious of other Finchley