

The Finchley Society Newsletter

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THE UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE LONDON BOROUGH OF
BARNET

Eva Weigelt 30/8/89

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Services

An item from The Finchley Society's AGM Report in June's Newsletter Supplement gave the impression that the preparation of Barnet's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is lagging behind that of other Boroughs. In fact, work has been progressing at great speed, and it is hoped that the Plan will be approved for public consultation before the end of this year. This is a major achievement when one considers that the Strategic Guidance for London, which the UDP must follow, was not issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment until the 28th July, 1989. Barnet Local Planning Authority would also like to take this opportunity to explain what the UDP will contain, and of the progress being made in its production.

It is anticipated that at the start of the next century, Barnet's townscape and land uses will be largely the same as they are now. However, the needs of the Borough and development pressure means that some changes will take place. It will be important to anticipate and direct that change in the interests of improving amenity, efficiency, and harmony. The UDP will take this role of guiding development patterns in Barnet over the next 10 to 15 years. It will cover the whole Borough and will provide an up to date planning framework for the development and use of land and describe its road and traffic management schemes.

The guiding principle of the Plan was agreed upon by the Town Planning and Research (TP & R) Committee at the end of June. It seeks to adopt policies to promote a balanced and multi-centred development pattern for the Borough. A major aim developed from this principle will be to maintain and improve the quality of the Borough's residential areas. Provision will be made for new houses, but careful attention will be given to sustain shopping, social and employment facilities, and combating congested traffic conditions in preference, if need be, to residential development.

The UDP has to consist of two parts. Part One, which will be submitted to the TP & R Committee in August for approval, forms a written statement of the Council's general policies on the development, and other use of land in the borough. It will have regard to current national and regional policies

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and to that Strategic Guidance for London issued by the Secretary of State in July 1989.

Part Two, which must conform to the general policies of Part One, will examine in greater detail the trends and prospects of land use matters, in the borough, and will put forward policies to deal with those matters. Also the Plan will contain a proposals map on an Ordnance Survey base which will show proposals and policies which relate to specific locations. In addition, the Plan will include measures for improving the physical environment and the management of traffic.

At the present time it is intended that Part Two will be approved for public consultation by the TP & R Committee in the Autumn.

Upon approval of the draft UDP there will be wide consultation of local societies, chambers of commerce, and other relevant community organisations in the borough and the general public. Their observations on the plan, and their comments will be fully considered.

Thus the public will play an important role in the development of the London Borough of Barnet up to the turn of the century.

WHAT'S BEEN ON (SINCE THE JUNE SUPPLEMENT)

LEEDS CASTLE VISIT

On Saturday, 24th June, a full coach load of members enjoyed a memorable outing into deepest Kent, with Leeds Castle and Tenterden as their places of principal interest.

The day was not without its surprises, chiefly at Leeds Castle, where the walking distances to and from the car park and the additional attractions of maze, grotto and aviary, were unexpected. All of this, together with extra diversions of Peacocks, Black Swans and Bewicks, plus ubiquitous Canada Geese strung along the walk to the Castle, was so absorbing that by 12.30 and with the Castle interior still to see, it almost became a case of "better come back another time for that!"

However, we did accomplish it all and after taking lunches under the trees back at the car park (a pity that judicious picnicking is ~not permitted in the actual castle grounds) our "caravan" moved off on time to Tenterden - leaving not a few of us curious about the amazing Hon. Lady Baillie, last live-in owner of Leeds who between 1926 and 1974 inspired, directed and funded the complete restoration to the state at which the Leeds Castle Foundation maintains it today, for the benefit of the nation.

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A telling passage in the guidebook reveals that when the Castle was up for sale in 1924, Randolph Hearst, the American newspaper owner, was interested but his English agent reported by telegram "Quite unique as antiquity but needs expenditure large sum to make it habitable - not a bath in place - only lighting oil lamps - servants quarters down dungeons". Hearst did not pursue it, but Lady Baillie, buying it in 1926 was clearly far-seeing and made of sterner stuff!!

Tenterden provided us with a tranquil contrast - time for tea and window shopping and all that - in an atmosphere rather like a village version of Tunbridge Wells. For those still seeking rather more "action", there was the added benefit of the Kent and East Sussex Steam Railway. Another "restoration" (curiously begun in 1974 just when Lady Baillie had completed her work at Leeds Castle and created the Foundation). The railway, operating full-size steam trains down the Rother Valley from Tenterden, is run by unpaid volunteer staff and has become a major tourist attraction.

Came five o'clock and the threads of departure drew us together once more to return home. As with many another good day out, the feeling prevailed that there remained more to see - something to come back for "another day".

THE JUNE MEETING

As far back as 1570 there was official concern about the best means of supplying fresh water to the growing complex of London. In that year, an Act of Parliament was passed to put in hand a project for "a stream of fresh water from Middlesex/Herts within 10 years" -but nothing resulted. In the absence of the scheme developing, a 500 year lease was granted to a Peter Moris to pump water for London from the River Thames at London Bridge.

Then in 1600 an attempt to run fresh water from Hertfordshire (from the Chadwell and Amwell springs) was begun by Edward Colthurst, but the financing failed. Another attempt in 1611, employing 600 workers and at a gradient of 5.5 inches per mile reached Enfield, roughly half way to London, before funds again ran out. James I finally put up the balance - the work, terminating in a storage basin at Islington, was completed in 1613.

This fresh-water canal, which we still know today as the New River, was the subject upon which Dr. Michael Essex-Lopresti addressed the June meeting audience.

Filling out some of the technical details, our speaker described how distribution was arranged from Islington in elm wooden pipes - maximum diameter around 8 inches and several such laid side by side - but of course the

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distribution area did not extend into the area to the north of London Bridge already being served from the pump system of Mr. Peter Moris. Dr. Essex-Lopresti then revealed the dreadful irony of 1666, when at a very early stage of the Great Fire of London, the Moris pump-wheel and pump building were destroyed. Thus since no New River water reached into that area of London, the prospects for fire fighting were virtually non-existent.

The New River system prospered - already in 1660 (because sometimes the Chadwell spring ran dry) an ingenious feeder system from the River Lee was devised so that up to 22.5 million gallons per day could be "switched in". A second water basin was constructed at Islington, higher up than the original, and in 1720 the distribution pump was converted from "ind" to "horse" power. Steam eventually succeeded and of course there was an eventual conversion to electric pump power between 1935 and 1955.

Going back to the "historical", we learned that in a notable Hogarth painting, Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Hugh Middleton (the man who finally opened the New River) are depicted smoking together framed in a pub window beside the original Islington basin at Sadlers Wells.

Other early media-mentions of the New River were made by authors Lamb and Dickens and by playwrights Beaumont and Fletcher.

Over the years, thanks to modern civil engineering techniques, the New River has been much straightened leaving in our own area of North London some fascinating vestiges of the old waterway - at Whitewebbs (Enfield), Bowes Road and beside the Alexandra Palace Railway Station. The remains of the old Islington basin are still evident beside Thames Water's HQ in Rosebery Avenue. Incidentally, the stage of Sadlers Wells Theatre used to have a direct connection to the Islington water system, so as to facilitate water shows!

For today, 38 million gallons of water per day still reach the capital from the New River, though Thames Water are about to create a revolutionary "Ring-main Reservoir" around and under Greater London which will make the New River's contribution obsolete. However, as one door closes another will open, because a side extension is being tunnelled to the "Docklands", which will not be served by that ring-main.

Thus the New River continues to come up new and sparkling - long may it so be. Our grateful thanks too to Dr. Michael Essex-Lopresti for so vividly telling its story - what is the betting that many Fin.Soc. members will be doing some private exploring as a result?

SEPTEMBER MEETING

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Stepping in at very short notice as our speaker at the 28th September meeting, Dr. Cuillin Bantock very quickly riveted his audience's attention to the unique importance of urban green spaces in the pattern of modern ecology.

Dr. Bantock alluded to life on the planet earth as a "thin green smear" which, after the growth of life on the planet stabilised about 300 million years ago, has been a "cake" which has been shared by all forms of life.

Since homo sapiens appeared on the scene, the sharing of that cake has become exceedingly distorted in favour of our species thanks to

- * Destruction of habitat of other species.
- * Exploitation of other creatures and plants for food, skins and other "products" desired by man,
- * Pollution.

- and all this sadly set against the fact that man is a "thinking" creature, quite capable of understanding the destruction being caused.

The green movement, said our speaker, is evidence at last of that "thinking creature" beginning to make decisions that can reverse the accelerating trends of at least the last 200 years when man's energy race began in earnest.

And so to our urban green spaces and the importance, for example, of the Parkland Walk which Dr. Bantock went on to talk about in detail, and along which on 8th October (before this Supplement is published) he will have conducted members on a walk. The Parkland Walk is in fact the disused railway line that once connected Finsbury Park with Alexandra Palace, via Crouch Hill, Highgate and Muswell Hill.

A connection to East Finchley existed but has largely been built over. The walk, owned now by Haringey, is 2.5 miles long in its main section but Queens and Highgate Woods link it to the smaller section at Muswell Hill and eventually through the covered walkway into Alexandra Place - 4 miles in total.

Apart from the uniqueness of its 'being" (a green walk of such length in an entirely urban setting is highly valuable), Dr. Bantock explained that any urban open space today is special because it will not have been recently ploughed, exposed to modern farming chemicals nor (hopefully) suffered the removal of hedgerows. Thus its character is nearer to the countryside of the past than that of today's bigger, farmed, countryside.

With that appreciation has also come the growth of local wildlife groups, e.g. The London Wildlife Trust, and even more localised organs such as the Haringey Wildlife Group who in fact do most of the green management along the Parkland Walk,

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Just what do they "manage"? Dr. Bantock illustrated many aspects of the walk with a series of attractive slides, but above all he stressed the exceptional character of its landscape in that being mostly aligned East/West and with typical railway embankments most of the way, the sun-warming on those banks creates a special ecology. He outlined the results -

- + 252 flowering plant varieties (of which about 20% are garden escapees)
- 52 species of birds (24 of them breed there)
- + 20 butterfly species (this is approximately one third of Britain's total types)

Of predators there are Tawny Owls, Kestrel and Fox - and to indicate that the Walk is ageing nicely, the Nuthatch, a bird which nests and breeds only in holes in "old" wood, is believed to be trying and is expected soon to succeed, in breeding there.

Dr. Bantock referred to recent proposals for the line of the Walk to be converted to a relief road. He cautioned the audience against believing that it has totally been rejected, but expressed his opinion that in the current mood both local and national in favour of giving due weight to "green" matters, this unique piece of the "thin green smear" will be seen for its true worth to the community.

TO WORCESTER ON THE LAST DAY IN SEPTEMBER Norman Burgess

One member awoke at 8.15 a.m. and she was due to be on the coach at 8.30! She made it — just! Fifty-one travellers were welcomed by Shirley Avery and Mr. Burton, our favourite coach driver and the morning looked doubtful.

After a quick dash along the M40 the coffee stop outside Oxford was a welcome break. The scenic route was chosen through those ageless villages and towns, Woodstock (quick view of Blenheim Palace), Chipping Norton (quick mention of the Rollright Stones), Moreton in the Marsh, Evesham, Pershore and the sun shone over the Vale of Evesham and on us as we alighted right outside the Cathedral.

Why. do these great cities have such a changeless 'feel' about them? Three guides awaited us - and the glorious architecture dating from the 13th and 14th centuries surmounted by that elegant tower that is always shown whenever there is a telecast of cricket from Worcester, began to be unfolded for us. To see the effigies of the Beauchamp Tomb where Sir John and Lady Beauchamp have lain since 1377, time is telescoped as 600 years have come and gone. Were we looking at the death mask of King John? — the marble lid of the original coffin (c.1240) is said to be the earliest royal effigy in England! Down to the crypt where

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the symmetrical ranks of unadorned columns give a most satisfying effect. But as we stood before the high altar with its reredos in elaborately carved marble, we were visually jerked into our own time by its modern altar front.

Out then into the warm, still, sunlight to have our picnic lunches by the River Severn and the afternoon to 'discover' Worcester. (One couple spent all their time just soaking up the lovely sights along the river bank). Some visited The Commandery, 1500, the headquarters for Charles II prior to the Battle of Worcester. Most of the party saw The Guildhall that has one of the finest baroque facades in existence. The attraction of buying items from the Royal Worcester Spode Ltd showrooms and seeing the incredible collection of porcelain in the Dyson Perrins Museum were other highlights of the visit. How good it was to see the centre of the city pedestrianised with many local people shopping and standing around in safety - another feature was Edward Elgar's bronze statue, reminding us of his birthplace just outside Worcester. He became England's greatest composer for 200 years past.

Choral Evensong at 5.30 p.m., with special anthems as a party from the Royal School of Church Music were present, was an unforgettable experience as the choir and organ linked the centuries of worship with us who were privileged to be there.

The coach returned via motorway links south of Birmingham on to the M1 and we were home safe and sound at 9 p.m. Wonderful day out without seeing Worcester sauce or apples! If you haven't been - do go there!

MEMOIRS OF AN EXHIBITIONIST Esther Johnson

CHAPTER I - CARNIVAL

A navy-blue T-shirt (Finchley Society, size XL) strode purposefully down the Exhibition Room at College Farm, Casting anchor by our boo-stall, it said menacingly to me 'You will, of course, write your memoirs on the subject of Finchley Carnival 1989". I realised that inside the shirt was the Newsletter Editor. Looking the garment straight in the logo, I remarked that I was only present at the Carnival stand for a very short time each day, and did not really know very much about it. This was ignored. 'You will," it continued, "kindly add your memoirs of Friern Barnet Summer Show" - and left, heading for the picture gallery. I sighed.

Well, there were no Grand Events when I was in the marquee in Victoria Park! An enormous ladybird sauntered over "Mill Hill as it was" - and several very small spiders appeared in my sandwich box.

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Someone started picking over our precious burnt exhibits from the laboratory in Avenue House, under the impression that they were jumble for sale. We hastily covered them with a piece of plastic seconded from the plant table. Though busy at times, of course, a great calm set in at one period when the sale of a pen caused intense interest.

As this is hardly the stuff of dramatic narrative, I will turn to appreciation of the workers.

No fewer than ten useful members were involved in setting up the exhibition stand, and fifteen came at various times to act as sales persons. I must mention the names of four members who came every day: Shirley Avery (one of whose talents is the ability to stow five exhibition boards behind the front seats of her car) shared the job of "matron" or boss-lady with Heather Winton; Ivy Holmes (whose many fine fuchsia plants sold out rapidly each day) and Andrea Cushing. Many thanks to all staff, and of course, to those who provided plants.

CHAPTER II - FRIERN BARNET SUMMER SHOW

The longed for rain came just before the Summer Show but kindly ceased when the gates of Friary Park were opened to the public. We had quite a roomy stand - if that is an acceptable adjective in a tent, but set on a slope which made us tend to tumble over backwards! Some of the lighter books constantly slid downhill on the table.

From the kind members who contributed plants for sale I must single out Joe Ingall, who trudged to and fro bearing many trays full - or trayfulls?; and Joan and Alec Sturdy, who responded gallantly to emergency signals when our original stock ran out. This show must be noted as being the first occasion when we had garden gnomes presiding over the nursery counter. They were introduced by Angela Graham, whose knowledge of gardening is a great asset to us, and who did a five hour shift on Saturday without a break. Other notable performances came from Andrea (again), who seemed to be here, there and everywhere - and Joan Butcher, who helped to set up and demolish the stand, as well as being on duty for three hours each day.

I must not forget to record the annual appearance of the Pegg lavender. On Friday it was sold to a single buyer almost before Denys unwrapped it.

In other parts of the park, College Farm was showing the flag. When I called at their stand in the open, a small goat started eating my skirt. I prised myself free from its teeth, then its friend had a go.

(Thank you, Christopher, for allowing our cumbersome bits of luggage to travel in a corner of your horsebox). The farm

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provided donkeys, and sponsorship of the Pet Show; College Farm Gallery members were again busy in the art marquee.

These events need a great deal of effort on the part of a very large number of people. Our thanks go out to all Finchley Society members who helped us and survived!

CARNIVAL PROCESSION

Members will be pleased to know that The Finchley Society's efforts, along with those of the Herbert Wilmot Youth Club, in taking part in the Finchley Carnival procession this year, raised £103.58 for the Finchley Centre Appeal for the Finchley Old People's Welfare Committee.

Special thanks in that connection must of course go to Michael Gerson Ltd who loaned their truck, to Leslie Hill of College Farm Gallery who designed the float, to Timothy Johnson who contributed artwork, and to all the others whose muscle, legs and enthusiasm made it all possible.

P.S. The efforts of the "sales staff" on our Finchley Carnival Stall also raised money - a valuable £38 surplus over expenditure, for the Society's general funds.

As a result of similar efforts at the Friern Barnet Summer Show, a further £38.50 was added.

Very many thanks to everyone concerned who gave their time and hard work at both of these events.

DOLLIS BROOK Derek Warren

At the end of June with 25 willing helpers, I was able to have 6 miles of the Dollis Brook surveyed from a point well along Mays Lane (being less than a mile from its source) right through to Brent Park by the North Circular Road. We also included a section of the Folly Brook running behind Chanctonbury Way.

In spite of the debris in the water course, there was still much wildlife including many Sticklebacks and Grey Squirrels. As well as numerous species of insects, we listed 57 plants, many of the wildflowers being in full bloom, 26 trees, 36 birds and 6 butterflies. The not so common Grey Wagtail was seen near the North Circular, a Greater Spotted Woodpecker nest was discovered only about 6 feet above the ground and very close to the path, and several nesting holes of the Kingfisher were noticed in the banks. It is possible that two or three pairs of Kingfisher breed along the Brook.

In the Spring I would like to organise a clean-up along the Brook to try to improve the condition for wildlife. As well as the usual rubbish, we found during the survey two motor

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bikes, two car doors, numerous wheels of various sizes, 6 supermarket trollies and were surprised to find that some residents who back on to the Brook throw their garden rubbish over their fence!!

The Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust are seeking volunteers to monitor areas such as the Brook, so if you would like to help, please ring me on 346 5258,

We are arranging a meeting to discuss the conservation of the open areas throughout the Borough of Barnet. That will be on Monday, 6th November at College Farm at 8 p.m. You are all welcome.

WHAT WILL THE HARVEST BE? Timothy Johnson

It is now almost ten years since The Finchley Society collaborated with the tenants of College Farm, Christopher and Jane Ower, to hold the first experimental open days. So let us glance back and remind ourselves of the story to date.

The first visitors in 1980 all seemed to know one another. The people of Old Finchley were coming back with memories and reminiscences of the good old days. For as long as any of them could remember the place had been open to the public as The Express Dairy's development centre, a showplace of the dairy industry from whence had come such convenient inventions as the daily pint of hygienically bottled milk on the nation's doorsteps. In times past it had also been something of a social centre, the scene of all kinds of local festivities and celebrations. It was one of the first tourist traps too, ranking as "one of the sights of London", and if Tower Bridge and the dome of St Paul's seemed to symbolise London, then College Farm and its dairy herds had long been a symbol to identify Finchley.

But set against these rosy pictures of the past, the present and future looked bleak indeed. The dairy company, by then under new management, had made its exit from the scene in 1974. Then had come two years of neglect and vandalism, reducing the fields to weed strewn wastelands and some of the buildings to ruins.

The new landlords, The Ministry of Transport, had earmarked the property for use in connection with future roadworks. Twenty years of local campaigns to save College Farm had come to a halt. There seemed nothing left to save.

A spark of hope was kindled in 1976 by the arrival of the present tenant farmers. They made essential repairs, and animals were seen in the fields again, but their tenancy was provisional; they had no lease; their stay seemed destined to be brief.

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Against all odds the incredible Owers are still there, the uncertain nature of their tenure still preventing capital investment, still putting a brake on development. For years now they have been negotiating a battlecourse strewn with obstacles, pitfalls, sudden perils and crises too numerous to detail while, through an ability to make pennies do the work of pounds, they have been setting the scene for the resurrection of a famous local landmark.

With the farm now open to the public every day, the occasional summer open days have given way to a regular Country Fair held on the first Sunday of every month from February to December. It is largely through the fair that our own members of The Finchley Society and its Friends of College Farm section play a part. In 1981, Chris Ower invited local artists to form the Gallery Association, bringing new ideas and new energy to bear. Members of all three organisations now jointly form the Events Committee, meeting regularly with the farmer to pool ideas for planning, organising and running the fair, and also to find the army of volunteers needed to staff it.

The first declared purpose of the Save College Farm project was to provide a place where town dwellers and their children could experience traditional farm animals and countryside activities at first hand, but we now see that it also makes a splendid centre for all kinds of community interests. People converge on the First Sunday Fair from all over North London and beyond, because, as they say, there is nothing else quite like it. To all the permanent features are added seasonal attractions giving each month a special character. There is, for instance, the splendid procession of horse-drawn vehicles in September, and the now-renowned December Christmas Fair. Remarkably, despite the farm's own pressing needs, the fair also provides a forum for the work of other local, national and world-wide charities.

Along with growing popular support for the project has come designation of College Farm as a conservation area, the threat of exchange for roadworks land has receded and the farm is now properly recognised as a valuable public amenity. The product of all the work of recent years, achieved at no expense to the public purse, now makes it possible for a priceless part of our local heritage to be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

But will it be preserved? – and if so, how? There is vital missing link in the continued "audible" silence of the Crown Landlords. What are their intentions concerning the future of the property? We don't know, but we must all continue resolutely to campaign for a secure future for College Farm, not just because of all the hard work and commitment already given, but principally for the enjoyment of future generations of Finchley and North London people.

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Schools are an important part of local history, and it was 60 years ago that I was first a pupil at Finchley High School, where I spent many enjoyable years. It was a small school - compared with today's educational establishments - and was situated in Ballards Lane at the junction of Etchingham Park Road.

It had originally been known as Saxonhurst College, catering for both boys and girls, but except for the kindergarten, boys and girls were segregated, with separate teachers. (I still consider this a preferable system, it was so much more exciting when we did meet!)

Apart from the usual school curriculum we took our gym and dancing lessons at a nearby hall. We were not transported there in motor coaches, but walked, in crocodile file resplendent in school uniform and velour or panama hats. Our route took us along the main road where trolley buses later replaced the trams. Across Victoria Park we marched to St. Paul's Hall in Long Lane. When we took part each week in various sports, hockey, football, etc. according to one's sex - we hiked down to Summers Lane to the grounds at the Gun Station (Finchley Football Club).

Opposite our school at the top of Essex Park was Clarks College, and occasionally we played matches against their teams. On Armistice Day each year we attended Church Service, walking to either St. Paul's or St. Mary's. Incidentally, the choir master and organist of St. Mary's, Mr. Ivor Richards, also used to teach us singing at school.

Another event was the annual Pound Day at the Finchley Memorial Hospital. We each took our contribution of grocery - and I remember that, as we went down Granville Road, we always paused to wave to the tiny orphans on the balcony of the Wright Kingsford Home. Each year our prize giving day was held at King Edward Hall, and this was followed by a school concert. Our talented headmaster, Mr. R. Ellis Roberts, composed most of the plays and music himself. It was great fun to take part in those shows.

I also recollect the occasional nature walks, taken in lieu of a botany lesson. In more informal style we explored the countryside along Brookside Walk and studied the flora and fauna in the area.

Yes, I have affectionate memories of my schooldays, particularly of the many excursions through the neighbourhood. My school pals who accompanied me then are still my dearest friends today.

This event raised £213 for the Society's general fund. Quite a useful sum, you might say - much more than the casual sales at a Carnival stall or the Friern Barnet Show

However, informed opinion says that this would be an over casual view. The facts are that there were only 50 paid admissions - a poor turnout, which prompted our Chairman to voice his disappointment at the June monthly meeting some days later - and it is known, for example, that at their similar annual event, HADAS would expect to raise £1,000 or so.

Not all is gloom of course - the £213 a useful sum and the unsold items went to deserving homes, "things" to the OXFAM shop at Tally Ho and "plants" to Ivy Holmes for her safe care and nurturing, to reappear on our Carnival stall. Furthermore, to judge from the volume and quality of the items put up for sale, we, too, could have approached £1,000 sales if only the event had attracted sufficient buyers.

It could therefore be worth repeating next year but meantime, if you have suggestions that might contribute to a greater success, please talk to David Smith and/or to Lynn Bresler at any forthcoming Fin.Soc. event or call them with your views, respectively on 883 4154 and 349 9742.

LETTER FROM ERIC LEIGH

Dear Editors, Greener, Cleaner, Safer

In her contribution to the June Supplement No. 6/89, Mary Hodgkinson quite rightly bemoans the damage done to grass verges by vehicles parked or running on them; and she asks what steps could be taken to prevent this and the possible consequence of permanent hardstanding displacing the grass.

What I have found quite effective is a note placed under the windscreen wiper of the vehicle, politely pointing out the damage it is causing and, for added effect, the offence being committed; one generally incurring a penalty of £20 but having a maximum of £200.

Yours, etc.

PILLAR BOXES Irene Shuttle

When I pass a pillar box, I always glance at the royal initials embossed on its front, recording which monarch reigned when it was installed. In most cases this relates closely to the age of the properties in the surrounding area.

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In Finchley, the majority of boxes are ERII or GR and there are a few dating back to Edward VII. But it is the VR boxes that I look for most keenly.

The first Victorian postboxes varied in shape, were very ornamental in design and they are still to be found in London and other parts of the country. However, the red pillar-shaped boxes, as we know them, were first erected circa 1850, so my particular search in Finchley is for those bearing the VR motif. I have only discovered two - so far. One is in Hendon Lane at the top of Gravel Hill, and another in Woodside Avenue, N12 - Are there more?

Ed: Only guessing; but regular correspondent Mary Hodgkinson, our other pillar box enthusiast, may well respond with further "sightings" of this rare species!

TAILPIECE: "Lifted" from the Autumn Newsletter of the "Middlesex Society, to whom we make our acknowledgment

'An acre in Middlesex is better than a Principality in Utopia". Macaulay.

For The Finchley Society
John and Carol Halls (Editors) Finchley Park, N12