

The Finchley Society Newsletter

JUNE, 1990 NO.6/90 SUPPLEMENT

AGM REPORT

Vice President David Smith, chairing the AGM, expressed his delight at the very large attendance - a clear indication that members are noting that the current venue has more space and, surely, that Fin.Soc. monthly evenings (even the AGM) are extremely interesting!

Included among the apologies for absence were those from President Spike Milligan, due to his ever busy work schedule; Vice President Jean Scott, visiting abroad; Lucy Berry, Lynn Bresler, Pat Dunnill, Mary Hodgkinson, Joan Randall, Ena Thorne - and quite unexpectedly, from Sydney Chapman, MP who wrote

"I am writing to thank you for sending me regularly the Finchley Society newsletter which I always read with very great interest.

Unfortunately I shall be unable to come to your AGM on Thursday, 24th May as I have to be here on parliamentary duties.

I would be grateful if you would pass on my apologies; and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you all for the work you do on behalf of our community.

I send you all my very best wishes.

Yours sincerely
(Sgd) Sydney Chapman

David specially welcomed out-of-town member Leslie Martin, up from Sussex for the occasion, and he also took the opportunity to express grateful thanks on behalf of the Society to Hon.Sec. Eileen Cox who took up the post some time after the last AGM. Eds. It was also a pleasure to see Marina Pirota from the Hendon Times Group, among the AGM throng).

Speaking of the local press, David concluded his introductory remarks by mentioning the Bill Montgomery Notebook in that week's issue of the Finchley Times, in which Bill had deplored the absence of signposts or signboards to indicate when one was or was not in Finchley. David heartily concurred, having himself noticed on his daily journey home toward and across the Dollis Valley that a prominent sign announces one's arrival in Hendon but there follows no sign shortly after where the strip of Hendon is left behind and one enters Finchley. He therefore suggested a thought for the year - "Where IS Finchley?" Finchley Councillors and London Borough of Barnet please note!

The Society's Chairman Norman Burgess, to make personal his concise annual report, read it in full and stressed the value he placed on the core of members, particularly the officers and committees, who shoulder the bulk of the Society's workload.

Hon. Treasurer Joe Ingall clothed in a meaningful way the bare figures of his Financial Report. He laid particular emphasis on the "reality" of the excess of income over expenditure, in that most of it is represented by the insurance settlement for losses in the Avenue House fire and is therefore destined for eventual spending to replace and restore. Taking into account the fact that the insurance money contributed largely to the healthy bank interest, Joe suggested that the true figure could be as little as £5.00 surplus for the entire year.

Bill Williams presented the accounts for the Friends of College Farm and was given the opportunity by lively questions from the floor, to explain how the quite large sums 'that flow in and out of the account every First-Sunday or special farm event, are employed in the upkeep and improvement to the fabric of College Farm and for the maintenance of the livestock. There followed the election of officers and the executive committee -

* Returned unopposed and re-elected --
Chairman Norman Burgess
Vice Chairman Norman Bar
Hon. Secretary Eileen Cox
Hon. Treasurer Joe Ingall

* Nominated, proposed and elected were two new executive committee members --

Valerie Mindlin
Bill Williams

* Returned unopposed and re-elected were two existing members, completing the committee --

Lynn Bresler
Heather Winton

* The Honorary Auditor, Albert Jefferies was again appointed, by unanimous decision.

After the break for refreshments, Kurt Weinberg screened the film 'Mutiny on the Motorway', which catalogued the early efforts of conservationists in the Winchester area to combat the threats to their environment posed by the proposed M3 extension -- and particularly highlighting their campaign against the Public Inquiry system, in which they were pioneers of the belief that once underway the system is completely loaded against objectors and totally in favour of proposers - i.e. the Department of Transport. Thus the film illustrated the objectors in the process of preventing their Public Inquiry from being started.

Commenting to our members after the film, Bill Tyler drew the very relevant parallels between Winchester and the Archway and Henly's Corner Inquiries which we have experienced. Bill gave his view that however unpalatable public protest and dissent may be to many of us, it is at present the only known way of breaking the certainty that, once in train, the roads public inquiry system is loaded in favour of the DoT. In Bill's opinion, the people of Finchley have so far been tough enough to succeed.

While that was a grim thought on which to conclude Fin.Soc's 1990 AGM, it did give useful weight to the value and role of our Society to fulfil its four-fold aims of INFORM, EDUCATE, CONSERVE and ENHANCE.

Reports on other Fin.Soc. events since the March Supplement now follow in their normal chronological sequence -

MARCH MEETING Kurt Weinberg

On Thursday, 29th March, an enraptured audience heard Fred Davis bring to life the history of three inns in Finchley -

The Queens Head
Ye Olde Kynge of Prussia
The Five Bells

Fred who is undoubtedly the leading historian of Finchley, first presented to us a display of old photographs of a number of inns in Finchley. (For instance the Green Man was shown as it was in 1850, 1912, 1950 and 1952). Of special interest was the display of the Finchley Society's painting by Henry B. Wimbush of Ye Olde Kynge of Prussia painted in 1895 and donated to us by Dorothy Davie in 1984.

So to Fred's main theme for the evening -

The Queens Head Inn was not originally where it is now at the corner of Regents Park Road and East End Road, but stood next to St. Mary's Church where the Church End library is now situated. Church House, belonging to The Finchley Charities and let by them, became known as the Queens Head by 1561. The rent, so Fred Davis informed us was 24/- in 1593 and £7 in 1682. The inn was a centre for many activities; an auction room, court and post office. By the nineteenth century it was the social centre of the village - used for weddings and dinners. In 1836 fire destroyed the Queens Head and sadly its ostler, James Arnold -generally known as 'Old Jim', perished in the flames.

A horse patrol first saw the flames and it is recorded that it took a fire engine from Soho only 30 minutes to reach Finchley. A screen of trees fortunately saved the church. Arson was suspected and Fred Davis showed us the actual poster which offered a reward of £200 for finding the culprits. Later two men were charged.

Mr. Brooks an architect living in Hendon Lane prepared the plans to rebuild the Queens Head on the same site and Legg and Ploughman built it for a total sum of £1,901. It was used solely as a public house until the rector, Thomas Reader White, objected. James Heal took over the lease and it then became a school. From 1902 until 1940 when a bomb fell on the east end of the church, Finchley U.D.C. rented the premises. The trustees of Finchley Charities sold the land in 1964, when the present Church End Library was erected. It was in 1868 that the Queens Head public house, as we know it now, was built on the site at the corner of East End Road and Regents Park Road.

King of Prussia : A pub has been on this site in Regents Park Road, formerly known as The Broadway, for more than 300 years (In 1665 it was known as the Red Lion). The well-known local Sanny family owned a house on this site. In 1728 the pub became the Kings Head and by 1765 as the King of Prussia's Head. Charles Dickens and Charles Lamb were among its well known customers.

Landlords were persons with respect and standing in the community. One of the landlords of the King of Prussia was John Voyce in 1815. In fact the Voyce family were its innkeepers for 80 years. In 1964 the King of Prussia was demolished and now Muswells occupies the site.

The Five Bells : On Finchley Common, on the road linking East Finchley with Church End, was a coaching inn dating back to the fifteenth century. Thomas Sanny was the landlord in 1485. It then stood a little to the south-east of the present Five Bells in East End Road. It, too, had many uses, for instance as a magistrates court. A coroner's inquest was held in the inn in 1825. It was the social centre for the people of the East End of Finchley. In 1900, skittle championships were held there and by 1912 it was the scene of concerts and auctions.

The Five Bells was also destroyed by fire - in 1868 -this time it was not arson.

At the end of his most interesting talk, the result of years of research, Fred Davis answered questions too numerous to report here, from an audience bursting for further local history.

APRIL MONTHLY MEETING - REPORT

Stephen Gleave, Deputy Head of Urban Design, LDDC, who spoke to us as substitute for colleague Barry Shaw, made clear his belief that no apologies were needed on behalf of his employers for the laissez-faire development of the London Docklands under the stewardship of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

He argued that in order to break the deadlock of dereliction and decay that followed the removal of shipping activity from inner London docks (an area bigger than Central London plus the City of London) down river to Tilbury and elsewhere, a radical approach was necessary to excite "business" into making high investment in an area that looked so unappealing!

While the common image of London Docklands today is a sort of Toy-Town-with-Water, Stephen was able to highlight for the audience some very distinct differences of approach that have characterised the rebirth in different districts, for example -

* Wapping and Southwark - retention and development of many "listed" wharf buildings has ensured that these two areas, facing across the river, outwardly look as they were.

* Surrey Docks - 80% of its water area has been filled in and the completed developments predominantly feature housing, schools and leisure facilities.

* The Isle of Dogs - dominated by its 'Enterprise Zone', the key to its attraction of investment, where any use is deemed to have planning consent and where of course architects and developers are totally uninhibited. This is the classic Toytown area.

* The Royal Docks area - furthest east ---- this contains the largest individual areas of water and is still in the very early stages of its redevelopment, which Stephen Gleave suggested might take a total of fifteen more years. Here is the City STOL Airport and in the future will be a Dome Exhibition Centre and a shopping colossus which Stephen predicted will attract shoppers from Kent to Cambridge and from continental Europe as well!

Along with all this excitement and bullish optimism, Stephen admitted to a "downside", in that the LDDC is an agency established solely to right dereliction - it is not a housing authority nor a social services agency. For those aspects of its area of responsibility it has to work closely with and rely upon, the Boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets, and Newham, and to a lesser extent, Lewisham and Greenwich.

Some of those relationships are frail, particularly where a borough still controls planning matters (as in the case of the City Airport where Newham is somewhat against the hoped for increase of services and the use of quiet jet aircraft). However, Stephen pointed with hope to the successful example of the Greenland Dock site on the Surrey side where excellent development in cohesion with Southwark has occurred.

Summing up, with the knowledge that many of his audience had already toured docklands and that another day's outing for Fin.Soc. was planned for Saturday, 12th May, our speaker hoped that as a result of his presentation the whole area might with greater understanding be seen from individual viewpoints, rather than from a collective, misrepresentative overview.

DOCKLANDS - 12 MAY 1990 - A 'STAND-BACK' OBSERVATION Norman Burgess

In 1926 Fritz Lang directed the famous German film 'Metropolis' that looked forward to the year 2000 where 2,000 workers live underground in a modernistic city. Those of us who remember its terrifying, dehumanising effect on the people, eradicated it from our minds as pure demonic fiction that could never happen.

Is what is being built at Canary Wharf a realisation of this nightmare in our time? Canary Wharf will have about 60,000 people working in it and the Docklands LR and the Jubilee line together will be able to move 100,000 people AN HOUR in and out. There will be parking for 6,500 cars as well as 5,000 shops, outlets(?), restaurants, pubs, wine bars and 'kiosks'.

This is what we went to see as part of John Neal's tour of Docklands. Tobacco Dock was interesting, but who buys anything there? The dress shop had a rail of frocks at £250 each. I liked the 12" model of 'The Victory' but I didn't have £1,500 to spare on that particular Saturday. The Sports shop had Raebok 'pumps' at a mere £129.99 a pair. One Fin.Soc. member saw an attractive drawing of gannets in flight - £900. Can emporiums like this really survive? At the Royal Docks for the first time in my life I visited a 'ghost' airport --- no planes took off, there were no passengers, - at London City Airport! The whole docklands scene strikes me as unreal. What an appalling 'shed' it is that goes under the name of London Arena" - but I suppose it could be pulled down in a few years time! (No threat to the magnificent hall along Kensington Gore!)

Lego housing in the Science Museum has more character than the Docklands red-brick housing estates that just link together on reclaimed land. Do the people ever talk to each other and will a community spirit ever emerge?

A great outing though - lovely 'pub grub' at the City Pride and always one's mind was being jerked into historical recall as John Neal unfolded the history of this area. If he does another outing for the Society, don't miss it, it will make you think!

ENVIRONMENT FORUM, REVIEWED

On Tuesday, 24th April, significantly just before the start of Civic Trust Environment Week and a little in advance of the Borough Council Elections of 3rd May, the Society staged an "Environment Forum" in the hall of St. Philips Church, Gravel Hill.

Disappointingly the audience totalled just 27 but the chairman (David Smith, our Vice President) and the panel of four took that in their stride and gave forth as if to the whole population of Finchley!

The panel, Councillor Dennis Reed (Labour), Councillor Brian Stone (Liberal Democrat), Mary Phillips (Conservative) and John Colemans (Green Party) were seated on the platform in front of a banner (by our Chairman Norman Burgess) which read "The environment is not something we have inherited from our parents but something we have borrowed from our children". They were posed a succession of questions on the environment, collated by the chairman not just from the audience of the day but including those submitted in advance by other members.

As one might have expected, the four panellists were keen to express "me-too" sentiments about conserving (or even improving) Finchley's environment. Frankly, not one of them had anything truly original to propose on such matters as "traffic calming", pedestrian schemes, pavement parking problems, and local river/stream pollution.

However, all were clear on a number of issues, particularly those of -

* Recycling of waste - Barnet could so easily do better! Other boroughs, e.g. Richmond, were cited as good examples.

* Swimming and Recreation - They agreed that Barnet has too much emphasis on sport for prestige, i.e. Copthall, and not enough sport for people. Some useful suggestions included more residential and leisure emphasis on the Friern Hospital site, a tube line extension to Copthall and the increased usage of "school" leisure facilities out of school hours and during the holidays.

Disagreements broke out over --

* Attitudes to amenity groups (such as Fin.Soc?) when a question from Kurt Weinberg suggested that they be encouraged to meet in Council property, rent-free! Brian Stone was keen to allow groups such as Pensioners and Youth organisations that privilege, while Mary Phillips expressed the view that "Groups" are emotive. Dennis Reed disagreed and said "some local groups are heroes", and John Colemans cautioned that Schools "LMS" (Local management of schools) may lead to higher charges to local societies for the use of school halls. This was at least recognisable party-political stuff!

* Christ's College - Hotel or Community use? Further party political views prevailed, but perhaps the key answer of the evening emerged, attributable to Brian Stone, who declared that it is time to stop viewing public facilities in Barnet as "Earners" but as amenities. The audience decided that this put him in the anti-hotel lobby. On another matter, the same gentleman urged that Barnet Councillors and Officers alike must be more open to the public both to listen and to explain their actions!

**CUBE UNVEILING

On Saturday morning, 28th May, setting Environment Week off to an attractive start, Chris Ower was kind enough to unveil the two Finchley Society-inspired advertising panels on the "cube" beneath the Underground sign on Ballards Lane, beside the approach to Finchley Central Station.

Regrettably only 14 members attended the event (why is it always 14? - and usually the same 14?) but it nonetheless attracted sound press support and the appearance of the two panels (artwork by Leslie Hill and Anthony Gotlop) was immediately appealing. If you haven't already done so, please do go along to admire them - one to direct the public to College Farm and the other setting out the location and attractions of a walk beside nearby Dollis Brook.

Kurt Weinberg had masterminded the whole affair - from conception, through liaison with London Underground and right through to repainting the cube himself, prior to the mounting of the panels. Chairman Norman Burgess, addressing public onlookers, the press and members present, thanked Kurt for that dedicated work, along with the skill and labour of the two artists. He also paid tribute to Jane and Chris Ower, tenant farmers of College Farm, for their unstinting devotion to the cause of "Finchley's greatest amenity".

****ST. MARY-AT-FINCHLEY** Kurt Weinberg

On the first day of Environment Week, about 20 Finchley Society members were given a treat when FRED DAVIS gave a guided tour of St. Mary's Church in Hendon Lane, Finchley.

Fred started with a mystery: When was the first church built on this site? The theory was that it was built in AD 675 for the workmen who were felling timber in the forest of Finchley for the building of St. Paul's Cathedral - but St. Paul's was built in AD 604.

Although there is no documentary proof of the date of the building of the first Finchley church, it probably had been a place of worship in Roman and Saxon times. Certainly there is evidence of a church in this position in Norman times and fragments of the Norman church are still in the west wall of the north aisle. Who built the Norman church is also not clear. Was it Richard de Belmeis, Bishop of London and Overlord of the Manor of Finchley from 1108 - 1128 or was it Ricardus de Finchley, Canon and later Dean of St. Paul's?

Fred vividly brought the past to our attention when he described the design of churches in those days, churches without glass or windows, churches without seats to sit on. Hence the origin of the saying: 'the weakest go to the wall'. Of course, the occupants of Finchley Manor had great privileges. They alone used the Chantry Chapel. Other privileges were for those who endowed the church with generous funds. Evidence of these benefactors could be seen in the many memorials on the walls. Mr. Hamilton of Brent Lodge was probably Finchley's best known philanthropist. Other Finchley families remembered by memorials were the Aliens, the Whites and the Sannys.

Before the reformation, St. Mary's was ornate with paintings and sculptures. These, as well as the organ, were then removed. During the Civil War more damage occurred. As the population of Finchley grew, so more and more space had to be found for the worshippers and from 1781 onwards one addition followed another until in 1940 a bomb demolished the east end and part of the chapel. Only in 1953 was the church fully restored as we know it today.

****APRIL SUNSHINE IN FINCHLEY'S ANCIENT COUNTRYSIDE** Oliver Natelson

On Sunday, 29th, we started with about forty good souls and finished with six. It may have had something to do with the assault course in which visitors were required to clamber over fallen tree trunks and slither out of control down muddy slopes - in which case I suspect that there may be over thirty residents of Finchley still wandering in circles in the Glebelands Wood! Who said that Oliver's walks lacked adventure

At the corner of Summers Lane and High Road and after a brief geological and historical introduction, the story of Finchley's

historical countryside unfolded, with fine views down the High Road and Summers Lane of the Hawthorn hedges planted some 179 summers ago around the Glebelands, indeed some bushes of this hedge still bore the unmistakable signs of the ancient art of hedge-laying.

Further down Summers Lane we captured the sounds and odours emanating from the main sewer inspection cover (ca 1880) - these were (discretely) noted from a safe distance followed by a retreat into the cool greenery of the Glebelands Wood. Oh what a delightful spot is this wood - a tiny fragment of that famous and vast Finchley Common which for centuries was the playground for tens of thousands of Londoners, gathering in crowds to watch highwaymen hung from gibbets (a bit more exciting than "Neighbours"), attended fairs, races, boxing matches and other games or even religious meetings. Now all is quiet here and preserved for wildlife. But wait - this narrow strip of precious wildlife, of ancient woodland, of fascinating history is to be attacked by the Department of Transport and a strip removed to build the Finchley section of the widened A406.

In the 1930s, it was revealed to us by one of the walkers, a young man would bring pigs over the North Circular Road to forage in the Glebelands Wood. So you may ask, "How does one take a crowd of hogs across the road?" "Ah," explained he, 'the young man just picked up their tails which made them scurry across.'" So now you know how it's done.

Our walk continued to Henly's Corner where we examined the hedges of one of Finchley's early settlements, these hedges are considered to be 800 to 1000 years old and are threatened with total eradication by the Department of Transport. It is most important to keep pressing the Government to re-think its road schemes and persuade the DoT to cancel its plans to widen the North Circular Road, which in Finchley, would mean the loss of
2,500 trees
some enclosure hedges on the Glebelands
early Norman hedges at Henly's Corner
Rare plants not known in any other site in Barnet
The breeding and feeding sites of birds, frogs, stoats and bats

We must continue to write letters to our councillors and members of Parliament to protest against this proposed holocaust of living creatures merely to enable more vehicles to travel faster through Finchley, (With all that that would mean in terms of emissions of global-warming and toxic gases).

****DOLLIS BROOK WALK - FRIDAY, 4TH MAY**

The members who attended were blessed with a marvellous Spring evening for the walk which started from Totteridge with the setting sun and culminated in the twilight. A pity only six folk were present to enjoy the walk!

We were accompanied by the evening song of the many birds that frequent the brook corridor including resident blackbirds, song thrushes, robins and wrens, augmented by chaffinches, greenfinches

and visiting willow warblers. Later we saw an old nest hole of a greater spotted woodpecker, replastered by a nesting nuthatch.

May blossom on the many hawthorn hedges was in great profusion together with a thick carpet of cow parsley amidst which were other spring flowers, including shepherd's purse. In other areas it was reassuring to see many young elm saplings recovering from the fungus attack of earlier years. All the trees were in full leaf, particularly oak, ash, field maple and willow.

At Totteridge the brook was rather shallow, reflecting the recent dry spell, and even on our arrival at Rocklands Pond in Finchley, the water was not much deeper. On several occasions, sticklebacks were in evidence darting below the water surface (food for the kingfisher which was n~ on show this evening).

At Rocklands an ancient willow had been partly uprooted by previous storms and now forms a 'bridge' for animals to reach the little island.

Our warm appreciation to Derek for a most enjoyable and instructive evening.

Eds. Derek has himself added a postscript expressing his own pleasure at the event, dampened a little by the observation that there is still much debris and litter in the Brook. He also mentioned that the party stopped by the Paddy Musgrove memorial seat where a consensus emerged of dismay at the height of the concrete base above ground level - a thought for any such future enterprise?

**ARCHITECTURAL WALK

On Saturday afternoon, 5th May, Bill Tyler led a party of members and friends totalling eighteen, along Friern Barnet Road from the Town Hall to Friern Hospital and in a style many have already come to now, he "opened their eyes".

The secret is clearly "look up and be intrigued, amused and/or enlightened" -- and so the walkers were, by gems of information such as the small gauge bricks of the Town Hall which make the building appear larger, the buttresses on St. John the Evangelist Church which might just not be buttressing, the amazingly decorative hinges virtually covering the doors of same church and the deft rural timber touches which the Edwardian architect of Friern Barnet library introduced.

Special thanks for assistance to Bill are due to Laura Battersby who gave the party a fine introduction to the interior of St. John's and to Frank Gill who revealed the contrasting style of Christ Church. United Reform (opposite Friern Hospital). That contrast, incidentally, could hardly be more fascinating, between the conventional reverence of nave, main altar, choir stalls, two side chapels, etc. at St. John's and the seat-of-learning style of Christ Church, galleried and with the pews uniquely set in semicircles rippling out from the pulpit/podium, exceptionally light and airy for a solid Edwardian (building).

**SATURDAY, 5TH MAY, 1990 - FINAL DAY OF ENVIRONMENT WEEK Eileen Cox

During our foray into the shops of North Finchley in March delivering the Finchley Society environment letter with which we hoped to encourage 'green displays' for Environment Week, we called on Owen Owen and in addition to handing over the letter, we sought permission from the Store Manager for the Society to put a publicity stall outside the shop on 5th May, to which he most kindly agreed.

So came the last day of Environment Week and soon after 9 a.m., Norman and Betty Burgess and I joined forces outside the store with the super table supplied by Norman with an upright frame-back which he had constructed to accommodate David Smith's discs which state the aims and achievements, etc. of the Society. Various notices were also supplied by Timothy and Esther Johnson and the whole effort combined to make a succinct and informative picture of the Society and its aims.

We gained two new fully paid up members during the day and handed out a number of membership forms which we hope will bear fruit. Several persons congratulated us on what we concern ourselves with. In speaking with passers-by we were impressed how earnestly people feel about the change that has come about in the area regarding the quality of some of the shops and regret for those that have disappeared. One young man offered his services in discussing CFCs in refrigerators, another lady had the walking elderly in mind with a request for more seats in areas which are inclined to be hilly The children passing by were pleased to receive our Environment Week lapel stickers and most said that they were learning about the environment at school.

Then came an awakening as to how the left hand does not always know what the right hand is doing. A manageress came from inside the store and demanded to know what we were doing outside their expensive window display - and despite the fact that we said it had been agreed for us to be outside the store, we were bundled off out of sight round into Castle Road. But, just to show how God works in his mysterious way for our own good, where deep disappointment existed, relief rapidly took its place when it became obvious that had we continued to spend the afternoon in front of the store we would have wilted in the heat which beat down that day, whereas the chilly wind of the side road turned into a warm breeze as the sun moved round and all was well!

Thank goodness that Andrew Forsythe was also in attendance when we had to move our table display - as it was, the manageress had to help catch our papers which took off on the pavement of Castle Road. Thanks also to Mary Hodgkinson and Valerie Mindlin who joined in with helping to man(woman) the stand. Altogether a very worthwhile exercise in reminding local residents that the Finchley Society is a presence in the area, with its well-being very much in mind.

OF MAGIC AND MIRACLES

The editor had been watching a group of children at play. He turned his head to speak. One knew with awful certainty what he was about to say. "We've remarked on this before," he began, "and it seems to be College Farm's most compelling current attraction, yet you never report on it for the Newsletter". This was true. He had certainly spoken of it before; so had many others. It had been a prime talking point ever since the phenomenon had begun to occur. The "attraction", although not remarkable in itself, could collect children as easily as a magnet picks up pins. Once under its spell they became physically and vocally energetic, and were somewhat difficult to dislodge. Perhaps it was highly addictive. "Well," said the editor, "what about it?" "I don't know," said I very slowly, "I shall have to take advice". Farmer Christopher was in the office. "It's hardly the sort of thing one would want to publicise", I began..."but the children...". "Not only children," cut in Chris darkly, "grown-ups too. Look!" and he pointed an accusing finger at the window. Outside in the sunshine three adult persons and an indeterminate number of assorted children were all leaping and squealing happily on a heap of asphalt and stone chippings. Is it not interesting that even in these sophisticated times people can still find simple pleasures in unexpected places? But if you have a yen to leap and squeal, hasten to the enchanted heap before its magic is exorcised. It will soon be spread out to serve its proper purpose - and you can't play king of the castle on a flat surface - or can you?

Now to matters of more moment --- 1990 is the tenth anniversary of the first Farm Open Days. To see the significance of this we must cast our minds back to 1980. Almost all the visitors were local people. The older ones seemed to be on a kind of pilgrimage inspired by a mixture of nostalgia and curiosity. Some, in effect, were there to view the scene of a disaster. Despite much patching up, signs of recent neglect and vandalism were all too evident. The odds were known to be stacked heavily against ultimate survival. For as long as anyone could remember College Farm had been an important feature of Finchley. Its history went back over centuries. Now perhaps only a miracle could save it. The one ray of hope lay in the fact that it was at least tenanted again, if only temporarily.

It is a very different scene in 1990. Occasional Summer Open Days have been replaced by a regular fair held on the First Sunday of every month from February to December. Visitors come to it from all over the London area to enjoy a totally different experience.

Under the careful management of tenant farmers Chris and Jane Ower, the place has been restored to vibrant life. Although forced by circumstances to act within painfully restricted limits while fighting a conservation battle at the same time, they have made College Farm an asset to Finchley, an asset that gives more to the community than it gets back by way of public support. So is the future now assured? NO! it is not. The Crown Landlords have still not announced their long-awaited decision on the disposal of the property and the future is still a question mark. Several small miracles have happened already. Perhaps we now need a big one.

Meanwhile, quite apart from the monthly fund-raising fair, the Farm itself is open every day (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and has become an all-the-year-round venue for family parties. Weekends - Sundays in particular - are the most popular times. The Picture Gallery is open every Sunday afternoon (1 - 5 p.m.), so is the Farm Shop and so is the Pavilion Tea House. A stream of tea trays and ice cream flows from the Aviary tea room while families enjoy their 'day in the country'.

Admission to First-Sunday Fairs -
£1.50 O.A.P. £1 Child 75p
Admission to Farm on other days -
75p O.A.P. or Child 50p

FINCHLEY COMMUNITY FORUM: MARCH 17TH MEETING

Representatives from twelve local amenity, religious, social and environmental groups, plus four from professional organisations met together with five councillors for the March meeting and discussed a wide range of current Finchley issues.

Of particular interest to Finchley Society members are those issues - and they are several, to say the least - on which the Forum consensus view matches that already formulated by Fin.Soc. These include

* Criticism of the short six-week period (including Christmas '89) during which the Barnet Draft Unitary Plan was out for comment. (Incidentally, now that replies to the Draft UDP have been processed, a second "formal" draft has been circulated and studied by our committees. A meeting between council officers and Fin.Soc. representatives has recently been agreed, at which our constructive objections will be heard).

* Grave concern over the way that the Borough of Barnet appears to be handling the question of the future of Christ's College - particularly over the "hotel use" issue.

* Anxiety over the steady deterioration of Ballards Lane, Church End as a normal mixed-shopping area and a belief that the relevant section in the Draft UDP which sets out the control of use "mix" of shops in key shopping areas is not strong enough to reverse the current slide toward domination by Estate Agents, Property and Finance shops, Video retailers and Fast-food outlets.

* Concern over Council inaction regarding the creation of more public car-parking particularly in Central Finchley.

* Dismay over conflicting reports that emerge successively from the Council as to future use of the King Edward Hall.

* Suspicion about Council intentions regarding "improvements" to Public Lavatories - will there eventually be an adequate disposition?

It is to be hoped that the Councillors took all this away with good faith, to advise and inform their colleagues.

The Forum is due to convene again in September. We look forward to receiving further notes then from Richard Tayler, official "correspondent", Church End Librarian and Finchley Society member! Thank you Richard.

RECYCLED PAPER

The Executive Committee recently accepted a resolution that the Society's publications, promotional material, letterhead and general notices should in future be produced on recycled paper.

However, this manifestation of the desire to be "green" is proving more difficult than was envisaged, since the paper types so far examined or tried have been generally of disappointing quality.

Vice President Bill Tyler reports that he uses a high quality recycled paper for business requirements, but that it is actually more expensive than that which it replaces!

At present Hon. Sec. Eileen Cox is examining a further selection of papers - perhaps if members have personal (probably business) experience of "green" papers of good quality at an acceptable price, they would contact Eileen with recommendations.

This is how the tower of the Middlesex Guildhall in Parliament Square looked on May 16th when the Middlesex County flag was flown in honour of Middlesex Day.

We are indebted to Richard Michelmore for this fine sketch which he made from a viewpoint in the churchyard of St. Margaret's Westminster.

For The Finchley Society
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