

50p FREE TO MEMBERS JANUARY 1995 NO. 1/95

We wish all our members a very Happy New Year. Enclosed you will find our "new look" programme of the Society's activities. There is no need to point out that a great deal of time has been spent and correspondence entered into to produce a programme that is again very varied and marks the centenary of the National Trust in 1995. Many members are unable to attend our monthly meetings for various reasons but we do look for increased support at the meetings and for the outings we have planned. We hope the fuller details will whet your appetite to become more involved in the Society's activities. We are NOT dying on our feet, but expanding our horizons. Norman Burgess

JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING

There will be two talks at the January meeting to be held at Avenue House, East End Road, N3 starting at 7.45 p.m. ---

1. The Street Markets - Miss Maloney. London has had markets for centuries and many remain. Some evolved, others were created with express permission. Some sold a large and varied selection of items (e.g. Brick Lane), others specialised, e.g. in fish or meat or flowers or poultry or leather or pets. The names of some of the better known come readily to mind - Billingsgate, Leather Lane, Smithfield, Farringdon, Leadenhall, Spitalfields, Houndsditch, Petticoat Lane, Covent Garden, Nine Elms, Islington Cattle Market, the Cally - not to speak of the (perhaps) less familiar sites, for example, Swiss Cottage, Greenwich. And what about Barnet and North Finchley? The markets have played an important, even vital part in London life over the centuries. This should be a fascinating talk.

2. Cold Bath Fields Prison - Norman Bar. The late 18th and 19th century Coldbath Fields Prison was notorious. We hope to shed some light on what it was like to be incarcerated there, particularly if sentenced to hard labour. What was the "labour"? Sewing mailbags? Digging holes? Cutting wood? What was "hard about it"? Was visiting permitted? Were there any leisure hours? If so, what could prisoners do? What did they talk about while working together? How were they punished? We found the story an eye-opener. We hope you will too.

Please give the meeting your usual generous support.

ROSE TALK - in memory of two remarkable women

On 10th December 1994 the President, Bill Tyler, formally 'unveiled' the tablet on the magnificent rose bed as a memorial to Jean Scott, our Founder. This is a bed of 18 rose trees just to the right of the pathway leading down from the terrace of Avenue House. Jean loved Avenue House and the last committee meeting she attended just two months before she died was The Stephens Collection committee. We were delighted that Mr. Hartley Booth, M.P. and Cllr Frank Davis, a long-serving member of our Society and the last Mayor of the

old Borough of Finchley were able to attend. The total cost was covered by generous donations from our members.

Continuing the theme, to mark this National Trust Centenary Year there will be a rose-planting ceremony of the specially commissioned rose 'OCTAVIA HILL' on Sunday, 9 April at 10.30 a.m. at Avenue House. A party from Wisbech, led by the Chairman of the Octavia Hill Society, our good friend, Peter Clayton, is presenting one rose tree and our Finchley Society is adding three more of the Octavia Hill rose trees. We do hope that members will make a note in their diary for this event.

PLANNING

We are very sorry to announce that Ted Avery has had to give up monitoring Finchley Ward for the Planning Committee for personal reasons. We are pleased that he will remain a member of the Committee.

Ted has been a tower of strength at the Committee - his contributions have been greatly valued, his work on planning applications has been careful, conscientious and dedicated. If he was unable to attend a meeting you could be sure of at least two sides of carefully written notes about his area. We hope that he will feel able to take up monitoring again in the future and thank him most warmly for all his help over the years.

May we appeal for a volunteer to assist Barbara Walls and Beryl Ashworth in monitoring Finchley Ward. Offers to the Editor on 346 7321 please.

1. Studio Cole 1264 High Road Whetstone. Work continues on the building.
2. Agents' Boards. We are still pursuing the suggestion that agents be obliged to seek permission to put up "for sale" boards in Conservation Areas.
3. Friern Hospital site: Hearings dates: 24 - 27 Jan, 31 Jan - 3 Feb, 7 - 10 Feb. Members will recall the article about the Friern Hospital Site in the November Newsletter. Since then a preliminary hearing has taken place at which a number of members attended. The main hearing before an Inspector appointed by the Department of Environment will take place on the above dates at Hendon Town Hall, The Burroughs, Hendon, N.W.4.

We are rather disappointed at this choice of venue: we had hoped for a more local venue but the Inspector took the view that Friern Barnet Town Hall was too small and inflexible in layout to provide satisfactory accommodation and did not provide adequate facilities for the disabled, and it appeared no other suitable venue in Friern Barnet was available.

The Inspector has been told that the Council will offer some form of transport to those who have difficulty in attending the Town Hall at Hendon. If sufficient people are interested, a 15 seater minibus will be provided leaving Friern Barnet Town Hall in the morning and returning in the afternoon - times to be arranged. Details and requests for places to Mrs. Slack, Programme Officer,

tel: 081 446 8511, extension 4672 between 9 a.m. and 5.15 p.m. There will also be an evening session which will take place at Friern Barnet Town Hall. The date will be decided on the first day of the Inquiry.

FinSoc is submitting a number of statements to the Inquiry, as are other voluntary organisations. We are opposing the applications in particular that proposing massive commercial development which it is feared will adversely, detrimentally and seriously affect the amenities in and character of the surrounding area, including, in particular, the shopping centre at North Finchley; it has already, albeit belatedly, been recognised by the Council that North Finchley shopping centre is in need of urgent regeneration and support and we believe that the current proposals will jeopardise this regeneration. The present Council is supporting the development (as did the previous administration) so opposition is largely coming from comparatively small voluntary organisations, apart from the London Borough of Haringey and Enfield. We are up against the well-financed "big guns" (as usual). We need your support by attendance at the Inquiry as often as you can. Please come and support us.

ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

The Environment Committee has been much concerned of late at the apparent loss of the iron street name signs. The "Advertiser" had a little fun with the picked off letters on the new reflective signs, but the greater issue is the loss of the old signs so distinctive to Finchley Has anyone some idea of the history of these signs? Please ring me (Barbara Warren, 346 5258) if you see an old sign in any danger. [Over the Christmas period some drunken reveller pulled up the old Etchingham Park Road sign at the junction with Ballards Lane. What senseless destruction. Ed.]

AVENUE HOUSE AND THE PROPOSED RELOCATION OF REGISTRY OF BIRTHS, DEATHS & MARRIAGES TO HERTFORD LODGE

The proposal by Barnet to close the Registry Offices at Burnt Oak and Barnet became public knowledge by the middle of December last. At very short notice a public meeting was called on December 12 which several members of the Finchley Society attended. Many of those present expressed their concern at the way this proposal had been handled. There had been no consultation with local residents and the public generally, and it appeared that neither the democratically elected representatives, our local Councillors, nor the Trustees of Avenue House had been aware that such plans had been formulated.

Major concerns included the parking facilities and the possibility of restricting public access to the Avenue House grounds. The new regulations will make it possible for marriage services as well as wedding receptions to take place in Avenue House and at such social functions guests may well encroach on the terrace and public access to the park may then become limited. As for parking, this has already reached saturation point along East End Road and

any further public services within this area would cause great inconvenience to visitors and local residents.

A committee has now been formed, the "Avenue House Action Group" to press for public consultation before any final decisions are reached. This group will examine the Stephens Will and the Trust Deeds to clarify the position vis-a-vis public rights of access to Avenue House and its grounds.

The relocation of the Registrars Offices was on the Agenda of the meeting of the Land & Buildings Committee on January 5th and the following points were fully discussed:

1. Relocation of functions of registration of births, deaths & marriages to Hertford Lodge using Avenue House as an optional venue for wedding ceremonies:
2. Relocation of the four voluntary organisations housed in Hertford Lodge into alternative accommodation on the Avenue House/Hertford Lodge site, by demolishing two obsolete buildings at the rear of Hertford Lodge and the erection of single-storey office block: and
3. Disposing of the Burnt Oak site and using the capital gained to finance the proposed relocations.

After extensive discussions it was agreed that a decision on these proposals be postponed until more information was available. There is to be a feasibility study and full consultation with Barnet residents, both within the vicinity of Avenue House and Hertford Lodge and on a wider basis, as the relocations will affect all the people in the Borough. The question of parking is to be fully analysed. Additional facilities must be provided if more vehicular access to Avenue House or Hertford Lodge is envisaged and access by public transport to the registry office must be considered. An estimate of the cost of bringing the Burnt Oak Registry Office to an acceptable standard is to be provided.

The "Avenue House Action Group" are pleased to have more time in which to muster their arguments and prepare alternative schemes for the use of Avenue House that will in no way affect its use by the general public. If anyone is willing to help in any capacity, by assisting in researching documents or inspecting drawings or plans, or can supply any relevant information, please contact Rodger O'Connell at 349 9755 or Janet Durrant at 346 7316. Any offers would be most gratefully accepted.

On the same theme, Barbara Warren, Chair of the Environment Committee writes: Another issue which has been disturbing us greatly over Christmas involves more our new "sister" committee, The Friends of Avenue House Grounds, which is being processed as a FinSoc Committee along the lines of the Friends of College Farm. They and we have been overwhelmed by the need to group ourselves quickly in order to impede the rapid progress towards a seeming takeover of Avenue House by the Council. The Finchley Society and other groups responded vigorously to the proposals, in particular to the

"bridal party" being offered the downstairs room, a marquee and the lawns for the reception as a "package". An in-service catering department has been set up although it is considered that there was a noticeable lack of meaningful public consultation. Civic receptions and conferences may soon push out the people of Finchley, to whom this house belongs, who wish to entertain in this lovely old house of ours. Already the FinSoc party this year was pushed to another date because the Council wanted it for their own staff party. No longer will Shirley be allowed to organise our nibbles for future parties (she will perhaps be pleased to know this!!). The pantry has already been ripped out to make way for an industrial kitchen.

Where the responsibility (or should it be blame?) for the present situation lies has still to be ascertained but the situation is a very disturbing one. We are anxious to protect Avenue House for the benefit of the public, as Henry Stephens intended.

Please consult your Councillors on this as soon as you can, for the wheels of bureaucracy can turn amazingly fast when they want to! Councillor Leslie Sussman - 346 6775: Councillor Barbara Langstone - 445 5443: Councillor Eva Greenspan - 203 1598.

Meanwhile due to pressure from FinSoc and the Friends, the Grounds have received a massive amount of attention. We hope there is no long-term hitherto unpublicised plan to sell off Avenue House, thus depriving Finchley of it forever.

NOVEMBER MEETING REPORT

This year's Members' Evening took place last November when three of our members volunteered to speak on a subject which interested them. It can happen that one has a pretty mundane job, perhaps not of general interest. In contrast one can have a hobby which everyone would like to hear about or one can be fortunate enough to be blessed with an acute awareness of all changes that take place around one, combined with an ability to assimilate and impart that information in an erudite and informative way, clarifying arguments for and against. Robert Winton, our first speaker, had kept a watching brief on the work being carried out on the North Circular Road. He had spent considerable time and effort in photographing the site from all angles and we saw from his many slides the progress which has so far been made.

How fortunate we were to have a talk given by Marian Warner, Hon. Secretary of the Beatrix Potter Society. Also a gifted speaker, it was a pleasure to listen to her flow of absorbing information on Beatrix Potter. Marion had also brought along paintings which were set out for all to see together with an informative fact sheet.

Mari l'Anson concluded the evening for us by talking us through a recent holiday in Thailand, illustrated by slides and describing different aspects of the way of life there. As members will know Mari is a very accomplished artist and

while on a painting holiday secured a teaching post in art at a very good school. Her final slide of the evening was of a beautiful sunset - the sun glowing orange in contrast to the black silhouettes of the scenery. A very artistic shot which brought sighs of appreciation from the audience.

Thanks to all three speakers for entertaining us all.

THE FINSOC CHRISTMAS PARTY

Eileen Cox reports. How very nice it was for members to meet again at our Christmas Party. We owe many thanks as ever to Shirley Avery and her helpers for setting out a most appetising buffet and to Kurt Weinberg for supervising the bar - a rather restraining position as Kurt is obliged to stay put in the one place and so next year perhaps a relief helper may be a good idea.

Norman Burgess set a delightful puzzle, giving clues to the names of some old, some not so old cars. It was a lot of fun and interestingly enough we discovered a number of alternative answers to Norman's.

Following on in the Drawing Room we were entertained at the piano by Mrs Sheila Baillie and James, her grandson, on the euphonium; finally our song sheets of Christmas Carols enabled everyone to join in with the singing. Some fortunate members also went home with some fine raffle prizes.

DATES TO REMEMBER

F.A.C.T. On Sunday, 29th January at 3 p.m., Susan Coombes, coloratura soprano, accompanied by Geoffrey Burford will present a recital of songs and operatic arias by Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini. Tickets are £7.50 each, (including light refreshment) and can be obtained from Finchley Arts Centre Trust, 17 Finchley Lodge, Gainsborough Road, N12 8AL, Tel 445 4175.

FINSOC PUBLICITY PANEL AT FINCHLEY CENTRAL STATION

In August 1994 London Transport offered Kurt Weinberg the main central panel on Finchley Central Station for the Society. Four months later on 3 December, 1994, the President, Chairman and Mr. Killius-Smith, LT Area controller, formally handed over the advertising panel proclaiming THE FINCHLEY SOCIETY, THE FRIENDS OF COLLEGE FARM, and THE STEPHENS COLLECTION, in the presence of 15 members of the Society. Peter Marsh was wholly responsible for its design and collaborated with Corporate Graffiti Co. of East Finchley on its professional production. It is a tremendous display for the Society and at the Christmas Party we welcomed a new member who had joined after seeing the new display panel. Until she saw it she did not know of our existence! Think about it! Do your friends and neighbours know all about The Finchley Society? It's up to you!

MR. GEORGE EDWARDS

We regret to announce the passing of Mr. George Edwards of 18 Friern Watch Avenue at the wonderful age of 92 years. He and his brother Leslie were born in the house now numbered 62 Friern Park and he was a lifelong member of the North Finchley Baptist Church, now combined with the old Congregational Church and known as Trinity. He and Leslie attended a small private school in 'Glencairn' in Woodhouse Road and then went to Finchley High School, now demolished, which stood in Alexandra Grove. George Edwards was a bank officer with the National Provincial Bank all his working life. We extend our sympathy to his widow, Gladys, and the whole family. Another Finchley 'lifer' resident has left us.

Norman Burgess

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II Percy Reboul

As the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II approaches, it occurs to me that we should be placing on record now, before it is too late, details of any sites, buildings or the like that were associated with those turbulent years and which still survive. Examples which come to mind are the basement of Avenue House (Control Centre for Civil Defence); British Restaurant locations; ARP posts; machine-gun nests and concrete tank traps; private and public air raid shelters - in fact anything with a wartime association. The intention is to produce an illustrated guide, possibly of the 'Borough Walks' variety.

I should be most grateful for any leads that FinSoc members can provide. If in any doubt about relevance, do please write to 13 Sunningfields Crescent, Hendon, NW4 4RD or telephone me on 081 203 3664.

INVITATIONS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

HENDON AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY (HADAS).
Tuesday, 7 February, 1995, Avenue House, at 8 p.m. Mesolithic Sites in London. Talk by John Lewis from MOLAS describing some of the other sites in the London area contemporary with West Heath.

Tuesday, 7 March, 1995. Avenue House, at 8 p.m. Landscape Archaeology in North Wiltshire. Andrew Reynolds from the Institute of Archaeology gives some recent results from the Compton Bassett Area Research Project.

NORTH LONDON HOSPICE. 29 January, 1995, 6-9p.m. Highgate Literary & Scientific Institute. Felix Aprahamian, celebrated music critic writer and broadcaster, entertains with anecdotes from his life. Tickets £10, to include cheese and wine, obtainable from the Hospice Office, 081 343 8841.

4 February, 1995, 7.30p.m. St. Judes-on-the-Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb. Haydn Chamber Orchestra conducted by Mark Elder with soloists Lesley Garrett and Imogen Cooper. Tickets available from the Hospice (081 343 8841) £15 and £10. (£5 - restricted view - at the door only).

FINCHLEY AND BARNET FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY. Monday, 20 February, 1995, 8p.m. Church End Library, 24 Hendon Lane, N3. Ms Carole Rosen will speak about the Goossens Family - Britain's most famous musical family. Members of the family lived in Finchley High Road from 1926-1958. Further information can be obtained from June D. Smith, 081 346 2935.

VISIT 19 & 20 DECEMBER 1994 TO BELGIAN BATTLEFIELDS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

John Olbrich

Like most Finchley Society members born after 1945, I suspect the First World War has seemed a powerful yet distant event, shaping our own era and yet belonging to another age when wars only killed soldiers and men fought against machine guns with rifles and bayonets. I was therefore fascinated to receive with the Finchley Society Newsletter an invitation to go with David Smith on a two-day tour of Belgian battlefields, based around Ypres, and quickly signed up.

So it was that at crack of dawn on 19 December, sixteen hardy members set off to Dover. We did not get far - an exhaust pipe (ours) falling off on to the motorway slowed our progress, with the result that arrival in Belgium on the first day was not until shortly before twilight. Flanders is low-lying, and naturally muddy; the drainage ditches are similar to those of East Anglia. It was easy to imagine the destructive effect that shelling would have had on the topography, destroying any man-made drainage and turning an already muddy terrain into a sea of mud in which soldiers frequently drowned. I had half expected that either everything would have disappeared, or that whatever trenches remained would form part of some vast "theme park". On the contrary - the brick-factory we visited was still digging up unexploded shells, and trenches in the small private museum we visited had been shored up but otherwise left alone. I was surprised how shallow the trenches were - man-height at most, to provide basic cover from what became a defenders' war. Passchendale, Ypres, Menin Ridge - huge loss of lives for a few fields of mud, of an area broadly similar to Tally Ho corner to Regents' Park Road. The shock of the First World War, where the bravest men were the first to be killed, and where England alone lost over 1 million soldiers, must have had a devastating effect on the country.

The cemeteries were a desolating experience: the Commonwealth ones, rows of white identical gravestones, many of them to a "soldier known only to God"; the German one at Langemark, where each flat, black gravestone commemorated twenty or more fallen soldiers. Possibly because the defeated Germans were only permitted a single cemetery (we did not pass any others), the German cemetery was carefully designed and was particularly moving with its statue of four mourners against the fading winter sun.

Despite our leader being the Head of French at Edgware School, and having myself very rusty A-level French, we were almost totally illiterate in Flanders - being border country, the Flemish inhabitants have the traditional dislike of the

French and Walloons (the Northern, French-speaking part of Belgium) and speak French with the greatest reluctance; and our Dutch was non-existent. A number of the party sampled the excellent Belgian beers - the framboise, a strawberry beer, is recommended as an acquired taste. We ended the trip on a more cheerful note - shopping at the huge French hypermarket near Boulogne - before returning well-laden on the Tuesday evening.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY - TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS

You will probably note June Saffer's address on the back of the programme card enclosed with this newsletter, but for the time being, and to avoid the possibility of subscription payments going astray, would members please continue to send their payments to Joe Ingall at 61 Friern Watch Avenue, N12 9NY (445 4928). June will probably pick up the reins again in March.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Gremlins crept in on the sheet listing the members of the various committees. Would you please add Mr. Robert Winton as a Co-opted member of the Executive Committee and please alter Pat Dunnill's telephone number to 349 9825.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society is delighted to welcome new members Mr. & Mrs E. H. Bailey, Dr. & Mars Gareth Beynon, Charles and Helen Coombes and Ms J.M.T. Soave.

DONATIONS

Thank you Dr. & Mrs Gareth Beynon, Mrs C. Leslie, Mr. J. H. Steadman, St. Mary's C.E. Primary School and A.E.J. & C. Toms for your additional donations to Society's funds.

THE FINCHLEY SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT	Bill Tyler
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