

50p FREE TO MEMBERS FEBRUARY 1995 NO. 2/95

FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING

The meeting on Thursday, 23rd February at Avenue House will start at 7.45 p.m. and promises to be fascinating, with the bonus of a local dimension. The title of Tony Moss's talk is "Cinema Organs around the Finchley Area" but he will cover a wider field. Mr. Moss will be talking about the cinemas in an area bounded by Barnet, Southgate, Wood Green, Highgate, Hendon and Edgware, with Finchley bang in the middle and illustrating the talk with tape and CD recordings and a slide presentation. Mr. Moss is President of The Cinema Theatre Association and Vice President of The Cinema Organ Society.

The days are lengthening, the weather down south has improved - a perfect opportunity for you to get out and enjoy the monthly meeting. If there are transport problems please contact Eileen Cox on 445 8422.

There will also be the regular monthly raffle - January's was most successful - and if you have any offers of prizes please contact Eileen Cox.

JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING REPORT

Norman Bar reports --- We were delighted to hear a fascinating talk by Miss P. Maloney on London Markets. Miss Maloney spoke without notes, without hesitation, without deviation and without repetition. She was clearly thoroughly au fait with her subject and moved confidently and easily around London at breakneck speed, from Leadenhall to Hatton Garden, from Covent Garden to Cheapside, trying to fit a lifetime's knowledge into a paltry 45 minutes or so. She brought the past to life with words and anecdotes alone, not to speak of a certain sharpness of wit and comment, all without the aid of illustrations. The pictures in her mind were so vivid that she would tell us that we were leaving one market, ask us which market we'd like to visit next, describe a right turn here, a left turn there, down this lane, up that alley and lead us for all the world as though she were reading a map (which we suppose she was!). The time passed in a flash and Miss Maloney clearly felt that she hadn't even scratched the surface. It was thoroughly enjoyable and had that rare-ish quality of combining knowledge with fluency and an ability to communicate enthusiasm.

Eileen Cox reports --- Norman Bar started his talk by giving us the surprising news that where Mount Pleasant Post Office now stands there was once an infamous prison called Cold Bath Fields. The name itself makes one go cold. His talk was illustrated both with examples of the poor in 19th century London and engravings of inmates in prison, and his description of life - or the lack of it - for the inmates and the abject misery and dreadful conditions which the prisoners of all ages endured makes today's prisons appear places of luxury. Children were shut away with the mother and visits from friends or family were very restricted. There were graphic portrayals of the hard labour performed by many of the inmates (including children over 16) such as working the

treadmill, shifting heavy canonballs, crank drill (moving sand round and round for 8 hours a day) and picking oakum and the prisoners' self-inflicted injuries to try to avoid the back-breaking and cruel work.

We know that life for most of the inhabitants of the cities in times past was dangerous and sordid - hundreds living and dying on the streets: wretched hovels stuffed full of seething humanity and, as we know, those whose hunger made them steal bread were sentenced to the prison ships anchored on the Thames and when they were full to overflowing were shipped off and dumped on the shores of Australia. Thank goodness for the prison reformers such as Elizabeth Fry and the housing reformers such as Octavia Hill. Norman's pictures graphically showed us the hard times that most inhabitants of the cities endured.

HON.SEC.

Eileen Cox has been our Honorary Secretary since January 1990 but for personal reasons will step down after the next FinSoc A.G.M.

Eileen is and has been dedicated and unobtrusively efficient. She has been a great support, modest and unassuming, and is someone one could turn to for quiet and sensible advice. She has also contributed on many occasions to the Newsletter. Eileen has been one of those unsung heroines upon whom organisations such as ours rely. We shall be sorry to lose her services.

PLANNING

Friern and Halliwick Hospital sites: Public Inquiry. The Inquiry into the applications for commercial and residential development on these sites has been taking place over the three weeks starting 24th January, 1995. The applicants have had professional advisers - barristers (including one Q.C.) and solicitors; the commercial developer Friern Park Ltd. (FPL) has had 6 witnesses, including two who maintain that the vitality and viability of surrounding town centres will not be adversely affected to any major extent and one to say that the present application for a huge retail park will fit into the landscape better than the proposals for a smaller retail park which were given consent in September, 1993. Naturally FPL and the Health Authority (the latter is applying for permission for residential development) have been represented for every moment of every day of the Inquiry.

Barnet Council has made it clear that it supports the retail park though that support appears to be less than enthusiastic and in its draft Economic Development Strategy 1995-96 its first statement in relation to Building a Better Barnet is "Using Council's planning powers, wherever possible, to prevent green field site development and discourage retail parks". It has also been represented throughout.

The London Borough of Haringey has objected to the retail park and has been represented. We think it true to say that their emphasis has been on the effect

of the proposed retail park on Wood Green Shopping Centre which is on their patch; the Haringey Council has also been concerned about Metropolitan Open Land.

A number of private objectors have been present, some have given up their (so far as we are aware, voluntary) time for the whole or virtually the whole of the Inquiry. FinSoc has also managed to have a representative for a good deal of the time and we have cross-examined a number of the witnesses. It is heartening and very supportive to have other members present and thanks are due to members who have attended. Private objectors, some clearly unused to attending, let alone speaking, at Inquiries have visibly gained in confidence and a number have, if we may say so, made very valuable and important contributions. A camaraderie has grown up between the various objectors and, we believe, a mutual respect.

There were over a hundred original documents and these have been added to as the Inquiry progressed. It has not been possible to obtain copies of all the documents. A number of members of the Society have submitted statements. A number who would have liked to attend have been unable to, or unable to as often as they wished, because of unavoidable pressures of work - for example professional involvement in lengthy Public Inquiries elsewhere.

The Inquiry has been taking place at the Town Hall in Hendon, not in Friern Barnet, except the one evening hearing which was very well attended.

We cannot omit special reference to FinSoc member Dr. Oliver Natelson. Oliver prepared a mammoth proof of evidence on behalf of the Society. The work is in 8 parts with over 30 chapters and deals with Traffic, Retail Parks, Land Contamination of the ground proposed for the retail park, summary of and detailed wildlife surveys on the land proposed for housing and the retail park, the Applicants' proposals and various legal aspects relating broadly to wildlife. Oliver's enthusiasm and dedication are well-known both in and outside the Society and we would like to thank him most warmly for his tremendous contribution and the immense amount of work he has put in. We also thank all those connected with the FinSoc response to the applications, most of whom are from the Planning Committee. A word of thanks too is due to Mrs Slack of the London Borough of Barnet, the programme officer responsible for the day to day running and organisation of the Inquiry, for her courtesy and pleasant disposition when we have attended. She is in no way to blame for the Barnet's support for the retail park!

The Inquiry has again thrown into sharp relief the outrageous disparity in time and resources available on the one hand to commercial, government and other official bodies and on the other to individuals and voluntary organisations. The form Inquiries take is not calculated to make it easy for the latter, particularly those constrained by the requirements of work and other personal commitments.

If members are interested and there is sufficient feedback we would be pleased to consider providing further information about the Inquiry in a future Newsletter.

Note: See below under "Invitations" details of a proposed March against the Retail Park.

AVENUE HOUSE

Following the report last month, we are pleased to say that The Friends of Avenue House Grounds as a committee is now in existence. All the officers are members of The Finchley Society and they are :

Chairman	Tony McTeares	346 1268
Minute Secretary	Barbara Warren	346 5258
Events Secretary	Janett Durrant	346 7316
Treasurer	Helga Hatchett	349 9845

If you have any point you want to raise with them on any aspect on the grounds of Avenue House, they will be delighted to hear from you.

May we direct you to the consultation documents which are located at Post Offices and Libraries (also printed in The Finchley Times) concerning the proposed use of Hertford Lodge as a Registry Office linked with the use of Avenue House as a wedding and reception venue. If this proposal is accepted we fear that Avenue House and the grounds will increasingly become unavailable for the general public which we feel is contrary to Inky Stephens's will. So please complete a form and return it to the address indicated.

Separately, Avenue House Action Group are trying to gather funds to form a 'fighting fund'.

Any donations will be gratefully received by Janett Durrant or any offers of help. Contact her on 346 7316.

DATE TO REMEMBER

Visit to Mount Pleasant Sorting Office 15th March, 1995, 2.30 p.m. at SE door No.2. This is in the road called Mount Pleasant which runs between Grays Inn Road and the junction of Rosebery Avenue and Farringdon Road. The Post Office is on the site of the notorious 19th century Coldbath Fields prison about which Norman Bar spoke at the January meeting. The visit has been arranged for 20 persons - first come, first served! Robert Winton is your contact on 883 2633. We will be met by a guide and he will have the entrance ticket; no-one will be allowed entry without it, or him. The Royal Mail Security Services stress that we should be aware that we will be entering a busy working environment and that caution should be maintained at all times. Tea or coffee will be available free of charge in the Staff Restaurant following our visit. The tour should take about 2½ hours.

INVITATIONS FROM OTHER SOCIETIES

NORTH LONDON HOSPICE. 25 February, 1995, 8 - 12p.m. Barn Dance at St. Mary Magdalene Hall, Whetstone with the Red River Band. Full bar

service. Tickets £7 to include hot supper. Contact Carmel Smedley on 445 1393 for tickets.

25 February, 1995, 10 - 12 noon. Church House, Wood Street, Barnet Coffee Morning organised by Chipping Barnet Support Group. Cakes and home produce stalls. Contact Dorothy Frankline 440 4460 for more details.

11 March 1995, 7.30 p.m. Finchley Reform Synagogue, Fallowcourt Avenue, N12. Quiz Supper (with fish and chips) organised by Finchley Support Group. Contact Ronnie Lyons on 346 6818 for more information.

THE BARNET SOCIETY. 3 p.m. Thursday, 23rd February in Church House, Wood Street, Barnet. "Beating the Bounds" by Peter Willcocks. This is a very ancient custom involving literally beating the boundaries of a parish, e.g. with rods. Readers may be familiar with the well-known ceremony in Highgate. According to an article in the Barnet and District Local Historical Society the ceremony in Barnet goes back to at least 1658 and this century has taken place on 5 occasions between 1911 and 1964. It will take place again on Saturday, 20th May, 1995.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST FRIERN RETAIL PARK. Saturday, 18th February, 1995, 1 p.m. Meet at North Finchley Library, Ravensdale Road, nr Sainsbury's, and March against the proposed Retail Park on the Friern Hospital site. The more people who join the march, the more impact it will have. For campaign details phone 343 9407.

DO YOU REMEMBER - FINCHLEY CIVIC RESTAURANTS

Andrew Forsyth

During the second world war and for a time afterwards many towns and cities in Britain had council-run restaurants, often called British Restaurants. In Finchley they were known as Civic Restaurants and they provided good nourishing mid-day meals at very reasonable prices. The beauty of them was that they helped to eke out our meagre wartime rations because ration coupons were not required for cafe and restaurant meals.

We patronised three Civic Restaurants in Finchley (I'm not sure whether there were any others). These were the Hamilton Civic Restaurant in Hamilton Hall, Hendon Lane, the Essex in Ballards Lane Methodist Church Hall in Essex Park, and the Park Civic Restaurant in East Finchley Methodist Church hall in Park Road. They were staffed by the good ladies of the Women's Voluntary Service, including my aunt Mrs Florence Jackson who worked at the Essex. They did all the cooking and washing up.

On arrival at the restaurant you went to the cashier who sold you different coloured plastic buttons which you exchanged for each course - soup, main course, sweet and coffee or tea. You queued up cafeteria style to collect your food. As far as I remember there was a choice of items for main course and sweet. These restaurants served a useful function and many people were sorry when they eventually closed.

GREETINGS FROM BANGKOK

We have received greetings from FinSoc member Mari l'Anson who is again visiting Bangkok. Members will recall Mari's delightful illustrated talk last November about her previous Thailand visit. Interested members can see Mari's letter by contacting Carol Halls (445 6172)

RESTORATION OF WAR MEMORIALS

Cyril Pentecost

Finchley has a number of war memorials at St. Kilda, Ballards Lane, North Finchley which are well kept and maintained.

If my memory serves me right, in the early 1920s The Finchley Council in its wisdom decided to spend the money granted by the Government on the Cottage Hospital, Bow Lane - now called the Finchley Memorial Hospital.

Ex-Service men of the First World War were so incensed that no visible memorial was forthcoming, they subscribed and built their own memorial at "St. Kilda", Ballards Lane which now includes "The Hendon Tram Depot" and "North Finchley Tram Depot" memorials.

In the early 1920s Finchley Councillors did not attend the Memorial Services at St. Kilda.

[Ed. Mr. Pentecost has furnished us with extracts from the Finchley Press in August 1922 when a lengthy interview was published with Mr. Edwin Fox and his brother. Their memories went back to the 1860s and we shall publish extracts in future Newsletters. The report provides a fascinating and historic picture of a past Finchley.]

NEWSLETTER

Thanks to all the correspondents who contributed to this month's Newsletter and to Carol Halls for typing it.

COVENANTS

If in the past you have covenanted your subscription to the Society, you will find enclosed with your newsletter a form which needs to be signed and returned to Charlotte Hume by the 1st March, 1995 please. If you have NOT covenanted your subscription and would like to do so, please contact Charlotte on 346 2722 and she will give you all the information you need to enable you to do so.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY - TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS

As mentioned last month, although June Saffer's address is shown on the back of the programme card and at the foot of the newsletter, for the time being, payments or queries regarding membership should continue to be sent to Joe Ingall at 61 Friern Watch Avenue, N12 9NY (445 4928). June will probably pick up the reins again in March.

NEW MEMBER

The Society is delighted to welcome Jannett Durrant as a new member.

DONATIONS

We are most grateful to Mr Barret-Newbery, John & Rosalind Batchelor, Peter Blayton, Mr. S. Fassett, Mr. A. J. Gorrett, Mr. & Mrs K. Jones, Mrs I. R. Laming, Mrs D. Pick, Dr. & Mrs Natelson, Ms G. M. Sturdy for their additional donations to Society's funds.

THE FINCHLEY SOCIETY

PATRON	Spike Milligan
PRESIDENT	Bill Tyler
VICE-PRESIDENTS	Carol Halls: David Smith
CHAIR	Norman Burgess, 28 Vines Avenue, Finchley, London, N3 2QD (346 6337)
VICE-CHAIR	Norman Bar, 48 Granville Road, Finchley, London, N12 0HJ (346 7321)
HON. SECRETARY	Eileen Cox, 56 Grove Road, London, N12 9DY (445 8422)
HON. TREASURER	P. J. Kelly, 57 Summers Lane, London, N12 0P8 (445 9054)
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	June Saffer, 2 Greenleaf Court, 17 Oakleigh Park North, N20 9AQ (445 1480)
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