

APRIL 2007

Avenue House, 17 East End Road, Finchley N3 3QE

www.finchleysociety.org.uk

President: Bill Tyler AADipl, ARIBA, IHBC

Founded 1971

APRIL MEETING: BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE FINCHLEY SOCIETY

The Society's April meeting will be held in the Drawing Room at Avenue House on Thursday 26 April at 8 pm when Robert Winton will give a talk entitled "Behind the scenes at The Finchley Society". Robert is a chartered Electrical Engineer who in 1975 retired from the Mullard Company, a subsidiary of the Philips Electrical Group, where his main responsibilities were technical administration, training and security. From 1940 to 1945 he was in charge of British army radar and electronic workshops in Egypt, Sicily and Italy, finishing as liaison officer with an Italian army workshop.

Robert has been the Society's Secretary and Press Officer since 1995. His 40 years' voluntary work for the sport of fencing earned him the MBE in 1986, and for 19 years he was Honorary Secretary of the Europe and Africa section of the IEEE, the world's largest engineering society.

THE ANNUAL DINNER, WEDNESDAY JULY 4 2007

We are fortunate to be invited to hold our Annual Dinner this year at the South Herts Golf Club in Totteridge and we thank Percy Reboul for making this possible. See the attached form for full details.

Our Guest of Honour will be Councillor Eva Greenspan who will be talking to us about her year as Mayor of the London Borough of Barnet. Is it just a bowl of cherries or are there some difficult moments as well? We shall find out!

Transport will not be a problem: you will see from the enclosed form that guests are being invited to ask for or to offer lifts from the Finchley area. If you live nearby, or don't mind a five-minute uphill walk from Totteridge and Whetstone Station, then there will be no need for a lift. There is ample car parking. If you have any queries, please contact David Smith.

Do not be put off by the change of venue: in fact, we already have several ideas about where the Dinner might be held in 2008!

David Smith 020-8883-4154.

THE FINCHLEY SOCIETY AND THE BOTHY

Our Trustees view with the greatest regret the dispute between the Avenue House Estate Trust and the Finchley Arts Centre Trust (FACT) which has led to FACT being evicted from the Bothy which stands in the grounds of the Estate. However, they agree that the Society has no role to play; it has members on both sides and will do nothing to support one side or the other.

Robert Winton, Finchley Society Honorary Secretary

PLANNING COMMITTEE

1. I report with great regret the resignation of Stephen Cooper as Chairman of the Planning Committee. Since his appointment on 2002 his hard work has led the Committee, among much else, through many complexities and problems in planning policy and regulations. He has also resigned as a Trustee. And here again his contribution to the work of the Executive committee will be greatly missed. On behalf of all our members I send him best thanks for the amount of time and hard work he has given to the Society.

Robert Winton

2. An important part of The Finchley Society's work is done by the Planning Committee. Keeping a check on how our Finchley is being changed and ensuring that its character is preserved with the ever increasing pressure of more housing and of a higher density, requires continual monitoring. Will any member of the society who is interested in working on the Planning Committee please contact Mike Dawson on 020-8346-4232.

Mike Dawson

MAYOR OF BARNET'S CIVIC AWARDS

Congratulations to our Vice President, David Smith who received an award from the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Eva Greenspan, at a ceremony at Hendon Town Hall on 28 February.

David was commended for his years of service as a school governor at Holy Trinity CE Primary School since 1976 and for his longstanding involvement with the Finchley Society. David was a founder member of the Society which began in 1971 and since that time has campaigned tirelessly to save buildings such as Hawthorn Dene. David told the Barnet Press: "I first became involved when I happened to see an advert in the paper looking for people to help set up the Finchley Society. I had always been interested in local history and old buildings. I think we are all most proud of the fact that we are still going. We started out as a small organisation and now we are approaching 500 members." David is also secretary of the Spike Milligan Statue Fund and he is currently campaigning to raise enough money for a statue to the memory of Spike, who was a Patron of the Society. (see below!)

Editor

SPIKE MILLIGAN STATUE FUND

Some time ago one of our members pushed seven greetings cards displaying a selection of Spike's cartoons, through my letter-box. I am afraid I did nothing about it until last week. I have, however, now ordered a supply of the same cards, which will soon be on sale at £2.

My abject apologies to the very generous member, whose name, I am ashamed to say, I have forgotten. If she would like to contact me I can thank her for her initiative and give her back the original seven cards.

Our sculptor, John Somerville, would find a headless shop window mannequin very helpful in the early stages of making the statue. Has any one got one in their attic or know of a shop closing down? Please let me know!

Barbara C Warren 020 8346 5258 barwar@waitrose.com

DISCOVERING YOUR FINCHLEY

When I decided to research Sellers Hall my first port of call was The Finchley Society's archive in the basement of Avenue House. The archive group meets every Monday morning from 10.30am to about 1pm. If you fancy a chat over coffee followed by a browse through the archives come around 11.15am. Some members help with filing existing records to make researching so much easier, be it by members or visitors. Interesting documents continue to be given to the society. Recently a cloth map of Finchley and Hendon dated 1873 was donated. One of our members had 'retrieved' it some years earlier from a skip!

Having found some useful information on Sellers Hall in The Finchley Society's archive I wondered where else might help with my research. The immediate response was to call the Barnet Archive in Page Street (020-8959-6657). This is a gold mine of records, made all the more accessible by the knowledgeable staff. Yasmine Webb has been my contact there. On my first visit I was delighted to be presented with a hand written note book by Mr C.O.Banks on 'The Story of Sellers Hall'. Mr. Banks knew Mr. Arnell, the last person to live there before it was demolished in 1953. Earlier this year Yasmine found some other information on the Arnell family and their involvement with housing development in Finchley.

If you wish to research something about Finchley try these archives first. Meanwhile, should you have any information on Sellers Hall or anyone who lived or worked there, please call me on: 020-8346-4232.

Mike Dawson

NEWS FROM DEREK WARREN

Did you know that London still has the tallest isolated stone column in the world at 202 feet or just over 60 metres - The Monument.

Walking around Long Lane Pasture we had good views of two voles and at Rocklands Pond by the Dollis Brook there were over 300 clumps of frog spawn.

It has been a real treat to go down Torrington Park at North Finchley, especially on the sunny days that we have had, to see such a great splash of yellow on the grass verge from Glenhurst Road down to the side of Friary Park. The crocus and dwarf daffodils must be the best display in any road for miles around, or do you know of another good display? There is also a great cluster of the yellow lesser celandine around the base of a tree.

On Wednesday 25 April I will be going to Fishers Green in the Lea Valley to look for summer migrants, especially the nightingale that we will at least hear even if we don't see it. I will be in the car park at 10am and although we only walk about 2-3 miles it will take about 3 hours. Give me a ring if you would like further information.

For the early birds, meet me at the Brook Farm Open Space car park on Sunday 6 May at 5am, for the Dawn Chorus. The grass will be wet and we take between 1 and 2 hours walking alongside the brook and around the adjoining fields.

Derek Warren - 020 8346 5258

DID YOU RECOGNISE THE VIEW?

Further to the photo in last month's Newsletter, I had several suggestions for the year this photo might have been taken but Chris Dawson has e-mailed to say that his friend Richard Mott, an old school friend who used to live in Finchley but is now in Bishops Stortford, reports that the photo is in a book entitled 'Finchley and Friern Barnet' written by Gillies and Taylor, and the date given is 1933. Now we know!

Editor

FEBRUARY MEETING

At our February meeting, Hugh Petrie gave the second of his very interesting talks about the history of Finchley Common, dealing with the period from the enclosure of land – at which point about 200 acres of the total size were mysteriously “lost” – and covering the somewhat dubious transactions that went on when the area was divided up among only eight landowners. Hugh also mentioned that the LBB’s “Pocket History “ series of the Borough is now available on their website.

Maggie Ferguson

Following on from last month’s talk, John Heathfield has sent the following information:

COMMON SENSE ON ALL MANNER OF MANORS

After the withdrawal of the Romans, England lapsed in to a period of confusion and comparative lawlessness popularly known as the “Dark Ages”.

Gradually poor people gathered round a richer and more powerful neighbour seeking shelter. They had no money but exchanged their labour for land and protection. This is the beginning of the Manorial system.

Estate boundaries were sometimes based on Roman boundaries. The Manor became an administrative unit. The Lord of the Manor had certain duties for which he charged a fee. A Manor could indeed be a very valuable asset. The Lord kept records of land transactions and acted as a kind of local magistrate. The records of his manorial court were kept on rolls of parchment and so were known as the Court Rolls.

The Manor was a civil administrative unit. A Parish was an ecclesiastical unit. They were not always the same and their duties were quite separate. The boundaries of the Manor of Totteridge, for example, were always the same as those of the parish. Friern Barnet Parish, in contrast, had two manors within its boundaries, Halliwick and Whetstone.

To add to confusion, the Lord of the Manor was not always a lord nor even a single person. For instance Queen Elizabeth I was Lord of the Manor of Totteridge and some 37 other manors. The Dean and Chapter of St Paul’s Cathedral were Lord of the Manor of Whetstone in the Parish of Friern Barnet. Other multiple lords of the manor included various Oxford or Cambridge Colleges and Eton and Winchester schools.

The richest or most important person in a district was often awarded the courtesy title of Squire. The term has no meaning in ancient property law. So the Lord of the Manor may or may not be a squire and the squire may or may not be the Lord of the Manor. Confusing isn’t it?

The Lord kept some land for his own use. This was the “Demesne lands” which gives us our word “domain”. He would also allow others to have separate estates, sometimes bigger than his own. Frith Manor and Bibsworth Manor and the Friern Watch estate are examples in Finchley. Land not specifically granted in such ways was the lord’s “waste”. This was granted to certain inhabitants in exchange for rent or for duties if they had no money. They shared this land and so it was held “in common” just as the drains in my block of flats are held in common.

The Rights of Common were intended to provide subsistence for the inhabitants and were nearly always concerted with grazing and fuel. Finchley did not have common fields and the associated crop rotation, probably because the soil was so poor. Sometimes the rights were laid out in the title to the property, hence the term “entitled to”. For example, Mathew Duck had the right to dig six carts of gravel annually from Barnet Common. One of the Hadley Commoners had the right to graze 20 sheep. More often the rights were not written down but assumed according to “custom and practice”. The landholder was then described as being a “customary tenant of the manor”.

Sometimes the rights were simply assumed because they had always been there. The phrase "beyond the memory of man" was often used in such cases.

In order to help him decide such matters the Lord could call on the help of local landholders. They were a kind of jury called the Homage.

Service on the Homage was compulsory and you could be fined for not serving.

It is a myth that "anyone can go on common land". Rights of common were jealously guarded. Finchley Commoners even had a common keeper to prevent encroachment. Hadley Commoners erected gates to prevent naughty Barnet cows from eating Hadley grass. Both commons had a pound where improper beasts could be reclaimed on payment of a fine.

The pound at Friern Barnet was opposite the parish church.

Spike Milligan of blessed memory paid for the restoration of the Hadley pound, which stood outside his house.

John Heathfield

INTERESTING BUILDINGS

In 1972 the Society published a list of buildings, groups of buildings and areas of local importance which be afforded some degree of protection and consideration by the local authority. We are re-examining this list marking up the locations on a map of the borough with photographs (taken by Tony Roberts).

If any member would like to add a building, or buildings or area to the list, please could they send their suggestions – giving their reasons for doing so and with any information they know about them – to Maggie Ferguson, 36 Oakfield Road, London, N3 2HT who, with Tony Roberts will co-ordinate the list.

Maggie Ferguson

INSURANCE

Following a number of appeals I am very pleased to report that a new member, Jonathan Jewell, has taken over responsibility for our insurance.

Jonathan will be looking after our three policies: contents and public liability; trustees' indemnity and the collection of 15,000 postcards donated by Andrew Forsyth.

Robert Winton

'EAST AND WEST' ART EXHIBITION

Marie I'Anson has an exhibition in the First Floor Foyer of the Arts Depot, North Finchley from 25 March to 2 June. Marie visited Mexico earlier this year and the Exhibition will include work painted during that time

Further details from the Arts Depot – telephone 020 8369 5454. All Finchley Society members welcome to attend.

MEMBERSHIP

New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new member Miss B McClane N20

Receipts

A recent straw poll suggests that many of our members do not require a receipt when renewing their membership subscription. So, in an effort to keep our administration costs to a minimum, when the renewal forms are next reprinted they will include a box for you to tick to if you require a receipt. Until the revised forms are used, we'll continue to issue receipts to all.

Donations

We are supported entirely by subscription and without our membership and their generosity the aims of the society could not be met. Some donations are quite substantial and on a regular basis. We would like to thank the following members for their recent donations:

Mr L.H. Beltran GU27

Miss G.M. Costello N12

T.J Carter (address unknown)

Mrs J.H. Hodges N12

Mrs J. Mitchell N2

Mr K.E. Ruge N20

Mr Donald Sawyer TN39

Mr Martin Summers N3

Gardi Vaswani N12

Tony Roberts – 020 8883 5954

Mr C. R. Coombs BH2

Miss V.M. Costello N12

Mr Ian Dunbar N3

Mrs Sakina Jetha N3

Miss Margaret Pacey N2

John Sparrow N2

Mrs O. Stevens EN5

S Underwood/J.Szablowski N12

Miss B. Walls N3

CONTACTS

Please add to the list of contacts circulated with the last Newsletter

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Visit our website!
www.finchleysociety.org.uk