

SEPTEMBER 2007

Avenue House, 17 East End Road, Finchley N3 3QE www.finchleysociety.org.uk

President: Bill Tyler AADipl, ARIBA, IHBC

Founded 1971

BILL TYLER'S POSITION IN THE AHET/FACT DISPUTE

The following statement has been approved by the Executive committee, which urges all members to read it.

At the Annual General Meeting on June 28 there was a long discussion about the position of The Finchley Society in the AHET (Avenue House Estate Trust) and FACT (Finchley Arts Centre Trust) dispute which was started by the eviction of FACT from the Bothy. At the AGM the Society was called upon to play a positive role because of the amount of money and voluntary work which have been invested in the Bothy and the nature of the Society's Objects. Bill Tyler's two roles, as Chairman of AHET and President of The Finchley Society, were criticised as conflicting roles, and there was a suggestion that there should be a vote of no confidence in him as President of The Finchley Society.

To enable Bill Tyler to explain his position, and to answer questions, a **MEETING** will be held solely for this purpose at **AVENUE HOUSE** on **THURSDAY OCTOBER 11, starting at 8 pm**. Please note that only paid up Members of the Society or Honorary Life Members may attend.

If any further action by the Society is considered necessary following this meeting such further action can be considered at a Special General Meeting, called in accordance with Article 6 of the Society Constitution, which states: -

"Special General Meetings shall be held at the request of the Executive Committee or at the written request of 30 members whose subscriptions are fully paid up or who are Honorary Life Members. Members present shall form a quorum for a Special Meeting, and not less than seven days' notice shall be given to members of such a Meeting". *Robert Winton, Honorary Secretary*

SPIKE MILLIGAN STATUE FUND

Our next Quiz Evening is on Saturday 29th September, 7.30 for 8 pm, but this time in East Finchley. We will be in the East Finchley Constitutional Club, The Chestnuts, The Walks, N2 8DE and this is approached from Park Road by the Methodist Church in the High Road, opposite Creighton Avenue. There will be a map on the back of the tickets which are £5. There will be tables of 6 so make up a table if you can or just come and join in. There will be a licensed bar so you cannot bring your own drinks but you can bring a snack. There will be coffee available at the bar. For tickets contact 020 8346 5258 or 020 8346 9811

SEPTEMBER MEETING
RESEARCHING FAMILY HISTORY FROM A BEGINNER'S POINT OF VIEW

The September meeting will take place at 8 pm on Thursday 27 September in the Drawing Room at Avenue House. Ian Waller, a professional genealogist, will be giving a talk on researching family history from a beginner's point of view. The talk examines how to start family history research using records within the family, personal recollections of family members and then progressing to research both on line and within record offices. It also suggests the best way to keep records and provides pointers about how to construct a family pedigree. In fact everything to turn an interest into a compulsive hobby!

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

At our last meeting, Gordon Forbes, the chairman of the Highgate society, talked to us about the bus terminus at Highgate Village which has been there since the 1930s when it was at the border of the then London County Council. They however feel it should now be extended to terminate at East Finchley station, not only for the convenience of passengers but to alleviate the congestion at the village and also the danger of buses standing in a confined area, where in some cases they encroach on a pedestrian crossing.

Whilst our chairman, Harry Branchdale, and others, feel it would be a great advantage for the 271 to terminate at a station, other members are of the opinion that this will cause more problems to an already congested area.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? *Derek Warren. 020 8346 5258 derwar@waitrose.com*

WILDLIFE NOTES

Two siskins have been seen on a garden feeder by the Dollis Brook near Fursby Avenue, parakeets have nested by the Finchley golf course, a young fox jumped into the brook to try and catch a moorhen at Whetstone Stray, the count of great crested newts at the Glebelands pond was down this year, numerous butterflies have been on the wing between showers but the small tortoiseshell is scarce this year. Delicious blackberries were ready for eating in July at the Long Lane Pasture where the blackcap and whitethroat were singing throughout the summer. In June there were over 1,000 tadpoles swimming around the edge of the lake at Pentland in Squires Lane, a hedgehog visited a garden at Whetstone, a moorhen had young on the pond in Swan Lane Open Space, a family of seven Goldcrests were seen at West Finchley. A male sparrow hawk sat on my garden fence, a hobby flew across Brook Farm Open Space where a lovely bullfinch was also seen, and a little further away two young peregrines have been sitting on top of the Tate Modern. Way back in May the cuckoo was calling over the Totteridge Valley fields within the N12 postal district.

Derek Warren. 020 8346 5258 derwar@waitrose.com

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The next informal meeting of the Local History Group to discuss individual projects, will be on Thursday September 20th at 8 pm in Avenue House.

Members may be interested to read this excerpt from St Mary's Church Magazine of September 1902 about renaming the railway station. Those from East, North and West Finchley may be surprised to find their areas so firmly dismissed but I

think some will sympathise with the Rector's wish to retain the ancient name Church End in preference to the dull and inaccurate Finchley Central!

"Church End It is said that a movement is on foot to persuade the Great Northern Railway to change the name of our station to West Finchley. We feel sure that all who are members of the Mother Church will protest against the suggestion of such an alienation. We, at least, love and are proud of the ancient designation of Church End, and should deeply regret the loss of all its historical associations. Moreover Finchley *is* Finchley and has been from time immemorial; and there is no such place as West Finchley, although new outlying neighbourhoods may be called North and East Finchley. The matter is well put by a correspondent of the "Barnet Press," who rightly points out that the change would be as absurd as to call the old historic suburb in which the Queen was born East Kensington because certain modern districts are now known as West Kensington, South Kensington, and North Kensington." *Margaret Cullen*

AVENUE HOUSE 1918 - 1927

Henry Charles Stephens died in 1918 leaving the Avenue House Estate to the people of Finchley, subject to the condition that it be "open for the use and enjoyment of the public under reasonable regulations". The legacy was accepted by the Council in August 1918, but there was little chance of immediate acquisition as the house was commandeered by the Air Ministry as a military hospital. An Avenue House sub-committee was appointed and this soon had to prevent the removal of 'certain fixtures". The use as a hospital continued so that the Council requested at the end of 1922 that the Official Trustee take steps to end the occupation, but the Ministry of Health claimed retention under the Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of Land) Act 1916.

It appears that the Finchley Council had little idea of what to do with the bequest, for the subcommittee recommended (2/3/23) that "having considered various schemes for the use of house and grounds the sub-committee are of the opinion that the subject matter of the late Mr. H.C. Stephens' devise should, with the consent of the Charity Commissioners, be sold and the proceeds devoted to the carrying out of a scheme to be discussed further'. There was a move at the full Council Meeting to have this recommendation rejected but this was lost and a further resolution was passed requesting the Charity Commissioners to sell the property.

The Commissioners' reply to this was that correspondence to date had been based on the understanding that the gardens would be used by the Council and the house might be, though exactly for what purpose had not been decided. They further suggested that the Council take legal advice and reminded them of the condition of H.C. Stephens will. Meanwhile, a letter from the solicitors for the Stephens family requesting payment of estate duty on the property (valued at £10,000) was referred to the official Trustee of Charity Lands.

Finchley residents were not altogether happy with these decisions of their elected representatives. A meeting was held and a communication to the Council from the Finchley Church End Ratepayers' Association recorded the following resolution "This meeting of Finchley ratepayers records its conviction that Avenue House and grounds should be retained for the benefit of the Finchley of the future and that the Council be called upon to rescind the resolution to sell the same and take steps to place the grounds and if possible the house at the disposal of Finchley at the earliest possible moment and further that a copy of

this resolution be sent to the Trustee of Charity Lands". The Council took no action on this.

Later, a further letter from the Ratepayers' Association reminded the Council of various resolutions in favour of the retention of Avenue House (other people, too, had been active) and asked the Council to take "vigorous steps to ascertain public feeling by taking a plebiscite after informing the ratepayers of the approximate cost of upkeep". At the following Council Meeting (24/9/23) motions to rescind the decision to sell and to seek the views of Finchley citizens were both lost.

The Charity Commissioners wrote (12/10/23) stating their opinion that the "U.D.C. have constructively accepted this trust and have no power now to disclaim". They decided to certify the case to the Attorney General for him to act, so now, a series of court hearings began. Finchley ratepayers were unable to persuade the Council to inform the Courts of their (the ratepayers') desire to retain the estate.

Hearings took place in 1924 and 1925, when the council was directed by the Master to prepare an Affidavit. This Affidavit made three suggestions: (1) that Avenue House be used as Council offices; (2) that it be used for the sale of refreshments to the public; and (3) that it be demolished as useless and the materials sold the best advantage. It also gave details of the house, its 57 rooms and the dimensions of the largest of them.

Towards the end of 1925 the Air Ministry vacated the house and the Stephens executors took over responsibility. Surveyors were appointed to assess the dilapidations. Stephens' family and executors also prepared an Affidavit in which they listed numerous uses to which the house might be put. The Finchley Church End Ratepayers Association also presented ideas and asked for a round table conference with council members to discuss these. But as the matter was sub judice the council was unable to do anything. The Council's legal advisors warned them that if it were found impossible to put the house to good use then the whole trust might fall and the property pass to the Stephens' family. However, councillors stuck to their previous resolutions.

Further hearings took place in March 1926 and the Chancery Master visited Avenue House alone to see it for himself. The Councils reply to the suggestions put forward by Stephens' family rejected them one by one; they did not have powers to run dances, lectures, theatrical performances and indoor games - anyway, two local halls (the King Edward and the Arcadia) provided facilities for these; there was no demand for either a museum or a library; there was already adequate provision for teaching science and woodwork (Stephens had installed a laboratory in the house which was still intact); there would be no use for a gymnasium, rifle range or skittle alley; the Council had already provided public baths; they now stated that the house was unsuitable for Council Offices unless a large sum was spent. In short, it should be demolished.

A long discussion took place at another hearing on June 11th, 1926 and finally the Master indicated that he would certify that the relevant trusts of the Stephens' will could be carried out and that the Treasury Solicitor would draw up the certificate, as the council now withdrew their disclaimer. At a further hearing in December 1926 counsel for the Stephens family said that he would insist that the council either took the property in total or reject it altogether.

Another resolution from the Church End Ratepayers in February 1927 requested the council to take steps to: (1) protect the ratepayers from more needless expense; (2) save the premises from further dilapidations and (3) fit them for the enjoyment of the public.

The Council was obliged to take on some responsibility for the house when in May 1927 the Executors gave the caretaker a week's notice. The council took over his employment. It proved impossible to obtain any rent from the War Ministry for their occupancy of the house but an agreed sum was paid for dilapidations. The grounds were in quite good condition.

The transfer to the Finchley District Council was completed on October 6th 1927 and plans were made for a formal opening on May 3rd 1928. So, at last, almost ten years after his death the people of Finchley were able to enjoy Henry Charles Stephens' bequest. For this we have to thank his family, the Attorney General, the Charity Commissioners and the vigilant ratepayers of Finchley.

Incidentally, the Estate duty amounted to £1,300 and the legal fees for the long wrangle were not much less. *Pat Dunnill*

FINCHLEY SOCIETY'S ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner took place on 4 July at South Hertfordshire Golf Club where around 44 members and guests enjoyed an extremely pleasant meal. This was followed by a talk given by the Guest of Honour, Councillor Eva Greenspan, Mayor of the London Borough of Barnet 2006/7. Councillor Greenspan talked about her mayoral year during which she had undertaken an amazing 730 engagements! Most of these were in the Borough but she has also visited Ramat Gan in Israel, one of the Borough's Twin Towns.

One of the highlights of her year was meeting the Queen twice; at a Buckingham Palace Garden Party and at a Reception at St. James' Palace. She also met the Duke of Gloucester twice and the Princess Royal.

During the year she had visited most of the schools in Barnet and had also invited many schoolchildren to Hendon Town Hall to explain the role of Mayor and to show them the mayoral regalia. She also explained the role of Mayor within the Council which included chairing Council meetings.

Councillor Greenspan was thanked for her most entertaining talk and presented with a bouquet of flowers from the Society. *Rosemary Coates*

OBITUARIES

JOANNA SMITH

It is with very deepest regret that I record the death of Joanna Smith, wife of our Vice President and Chairman, David Smith, on 12 August. I am sure that all our members will join me in sending David our very deepest sympathy.

Joanna gave great service to the Finchley Society in her support of the tremendous effort that David puts into the Society (he was a founder member), in particular her support when David was Society Secretary. She was one of those whose contribution is little known but nevertheless of great value. Everyone who had the pleasure of knowing her will miss a lovely lady. *Robert Winton, Honorary Secretary*

ANDREW FORSYTH

Sadly Andrew died on 20th July at the age of 83. He was a long-standing member of the Society joining in 1975. He attended many events and was one of our postmen until his health prevented him from taking part. When he moved into a nursing home he gave us his wonderful collection of post cards for the archives, and these have been valued at £15,000. He was a great photographer and took part in our Millennium photo survey, walking around two large areas in Whetstone as he did not have a car. However he was deeply immersed in transport, especially trains, and as well as photographing them he had a fine collection of memorabilia. He has left us a number of his books for our archives, which include the Kelly's Directory for 1929, 1930, 1934, 1935 & 1939. *Derek Warren*

GLADYS WILSON

We are sorry to report that Gladys Wilson died on 12 August. Gladys was a another long-standing member of the Finchley Society and she and her late husband, Ronald, were very active within the Society, undertaking a lot of work behind the scenes including delivering the Newsletters. We send our sympathy to her family.

LAVENDER WILSON, KNOWN AS NANCY

News has also reached us of the death of another member of the Society, Lavender Wilson known as Nancy Wilson. Although not an active member, Nancy had several friends in the Society. *Peter Pickering*

OCTAVIA HILL COACH OUTING – 12 AUGUST 2007

Two years have rolled by and once again I was boarding the coach for Wisbech for another memorable day meeting a few old friends and many new ones. This year the party visited the Harkness Roses, Hitchin to hear from Philip Harkness about the 'Our Place' rose which will be planted next year in St. Peter's School, Wisbech as part of the centenary project to commemorate Octavia Hill's death in 1912. The 'Our Place' Centenary Project based at Octavia Hill's birthplace House, encourages schools to teach children an awareness of their responsibility for their local environment. The pilot 'Our Place project' was undertaken by Orchard Primary School, Wisbech, and by 2012 it is expected that 100 schools nationwide will be participating in the project.

The coach left South Mimms Service Station at 11.20 am for The Old King's Head, Southwark for a good lunch. A few minutes walk took us to Red Cross Cottages where the new gardens looked bright and well established after two years growth and made such a difference for the occupants of the cottages. Here the local Army Cadets were on parade for the unveiling of a memorial plaque to Octavia Hill, on the Red Cross Hall for her work in The Cadet Movement, by the Vice President of the Octavia Hill Society – Gillian Darley, who is also the biographer of Octavia Hill. Short speeches were made by Brigadier Wharby, OBE, Head of Army Cadets UK; The Mayor of Southwark; and Peter Clayton of Octavia Hill Birthplace Museum among others from local libraries and Trusts. Octavia Hill formed the first Independent Battalion, the first self-administered cadet battalion was first formed on Manchester in 1884. Other units were formed before Octavia came onto the scene in 1889 but she had a profound effect on the Cadet Movement in that she gave it an additional and important social aim: something which remains with the cadet Movement today.

On to Westerham for the Octavia Hill Six mile Challenge Run. Fenland and the National Trust Teams ran from Westerham Green to Larksfield, Octavia's home at Crackham Hill. Eleven ramblers started at the same time for a 2 mile ramble. Runners took 1½ hours and the ramblers 1 hour to complete the courses. Fenland runners won the Challenge Shield and the coach party sponsored the teams and the money raised was donated to the Octavia Hill Birthplace Museum.

Many very welcome cups of tea and delicious homemade cake were served to us by the Dickinson and the Cash families at Larksfield where Octavia lived for many years. There was no time left to go to the grave of Octavia so all the flowers from Wisbech and a posy from my garden for the Finchley Society were placed on the grave by a member of the family.

After a very interesting and memorable day we left Larksfield and arrived at South Mimms at 8.15 pm. Grateful thanks must go to Peter Clayton for organizing another unforgettable day and for all the hours of research and devoted service to the Museum. *Betty Burgess*

FRIERN BARNET LIBRARY

Entertainment on your Doorstep: Come and find out what the Arts Depot has to offer you. 10.30 am to 11.30 am on Wednesday 12 September at Friern Barnet Library. All welcome – coffee/tea 35p.

LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES VISIT

Don't forget! Anyone wishing to go on the visit to the London Metropolitan Archives in Islington, on Wednesday 3 October should contact Shirley Avery (telephone No. 020 8346 8484) before Monday 24 September 2007. Full details of the visit were given in the last Newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP

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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:

Mrs Hilda Clark	BS25	Mrs B. Coffey	N20
Mrs Grace Cowie	NW11	Mr R.R. Fantoni	N2
Ms L. K. Farmer	N3	Mrs J.M. Hewson	N3
Mr Robert Hogan	SW5	Mr F & Mrs D Kelsall	N3
Ruth Jane Lea	N3	Mr E. Morgan	NW2
Mrs C. Schmitt	N3		

Tony Roberts

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If there are any changes to your membership or contact details please let Tony know

ARTICLES FOR THE OCTOBER NEWSLETTER TO THE EDITOR BY 15 SEPTEMBER 2007

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www.finchleysociety.org.uk