

BARNET HISTORY JOURNAL

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Volume 04 (2020)



BARNET & MUSEUM
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Barnet History Journal

Volume 04(2020)

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Thank you very much to all Barnet Museum volunteers who have helped in the production of this journal. Special thanks to all those who have contributed articles.

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Foreword

Welcome to the 2020 Barnet History Journal, the annual magazine of the Barnet Museum and Local History Society.

This year has been, to say the least, a very strange one. The Coronavirus pandemic has affected everyone. Sadly, many lives and livelihoods have been lost and relatives, friends and colleagues have suffered.

The Museum has been closed to the public from early March; many of our volunteers are in the vulnerable category and there is little scope for social distancing in the Museum itself. We shall review the situation regularly and open when it is safe. In the meantime we shall continue to maintain an online presence using our website and social media.

In this edition, we have a piece by Nikki Dias, a year 6 (10/11-year olds) teacher from St Theresa's School in East Finchley. She describes some of the work, thoughts and feelings of children in the lockdown.

We have an article from our patron, Martin Russell, the Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Barnet, commenting on the German V2 missile strike on Calton Road in 1945.

We also have a number of articles by our Research Team, which is ably led by our Chief Researcher, Jeff "The Ferret" Gale.

The cover illustrations are by John Sanders (1930-2020) who sadly died earlier this year; a friend of the Museum and a true gentleman.

Many thanks to all contributors and to Claire El Arifi, Hilary Harrison, Jeff Gale and Irene Nichols on the editorial team.

I hope you enjoy reading this Journal and, most of all, I hope that you and yours keep healthy, safe and happy.

Mike Noronha

Pandemic - The Experience of the Inexperienced

How Children Faced Coronavirus

By Nikki Dias

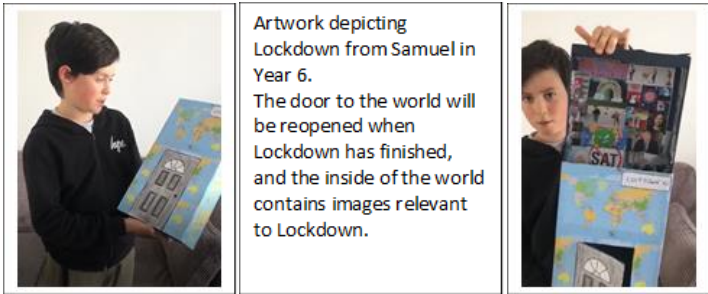
Year 6 Teacher

St Theresa's Primary School, Finchley

The arrival of a worldwide pandemic can be a frightening and uncertain time for anyone. Watching news reports of patients on ventilators or medical staff dressed head to toe in protective equipment is unsettling for us all. But for children, watching images on television or hearing snatched conversations at home can leave many questions unanswered. Sometimes there is a point of reference picked up at school; stories of the Great Plague, Spanish Flu Epidemic or even the Black Death, and the effects they had on ordinary people. Usually, when teaching about these in class, a child will ask, "Could that happen again?" and, with thirty anxious faces turned towards you as teacher, you tend to give the standard answer: "There is always a small possibility, but no, the chances of it happening are slim". They go to bed that night reassured. So, when an announcement was made that schools would go into lockdown, most children will have greeted the news with a mixture of excitement and happiness, confusion and fear.

Fairly early on, those of us fascinated by history realised we were in the process of making it ourselves. To a child, history involves a significant or tragic event from the past – it has no connection to the present. As a result, when I explained to my class (remotely of course) that we were "making history", I used examples we had used previously in the classroom, such as World War II where we had recently studied films and photographs of evacuees during the Blitz. We had heard children aged 10 or 11 explaining, first-hand, their own experiences of leaving home and settling into a new life with their host families. My class needed to understand how a child's perspective can help other children learn, and that their thoughts and feelings about lockdown were something that children of the future would

be interested in. In other words, their history was in the present, but it would be used in the future.



The class started by writing poems and diary-entries about how they felt. Many of them referred to a feeling of isolation whilst they were still adapting to the pressures of lockdown. Some poetry referred to the “lost year of 2020”, and how frustrating it was being so distant from friends and family, but as 10- and 11-year olds, they still understood that their situation was “for the best.” Moving on to diary writing gave a deeper insight into their emotions. One child explained how his birthday party had been cancelled but described how special it was to have the staff at the hospital where his mum worked sending him a personalised message. Others talked about how it felt as if the world had stood still as this unwelcome visitor had moved in and they were waiting for it to leave.

Having a background in the experiences of children during World War II was helpful because it enabled the class to compare their own experiences of lockdown to that of children in the Blitz – both difficult times but for different reasons. They noted the similarities of being scared for their families, food shortages and there was an interesting comparison between gas masks and face masks. However, of course, the glaring difference was the lack of opportunities for being outside compared with evacuee children, and how evacuees dealing with new surroundings may have found it difficult to adjust but also had the opportunity for a “new life” to keep them busy and distracted – something our children did not have. Overall, the availability of modern technology for communication, and a belief that there would have been long-term mental effects of living through the war, meant that our children were fully convinced that they had the better deal.

Additionally, they felt that lockdown would be contributing to benefits for the environment and felt that would be a suitable pay-off for the difficulties they were facing themselves.

I asked Hanna, one of the children in my class, what she thought we could learn from this situation. She talked about her awareness of being part of an event which had touched many citizens around the world in a way that has not been experienced before. She saw the importance of countries around the world sharing information to help humankind and the need to be able to trust in governments whose role should be to impart scientific advice to benefit their populations. She also saw it as an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate their understanding of the bigger picture and how this might require people to follow the rules for the good of the population as a whole – pretty perceptive really for an eleven-year-old.

The Making History project was originally created as a way of recording the experiences of our children during lockdown for future generations. It has also worked to educate our own children that history is not just a focus on the past, but that we are part of history ourselves. Finally, it has provided a permanent record of the children’s deeper feelings about isolation and lockdown.



Calton Road - V2 Missile Hits Barnet

By M H C Russell Esq

This article is based on the text of a speech given in January 2020 by Martin Russell, The Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Barnet. Martin is the Patron of Barnet Museum and Local History Society. The article was published in the St John the Baptist Parish Magazine in Spring 2020.

The tide of war had slowly turned and although victory (at least in Europe) was in sight, 1944 and 1945 were hard times for Londoners and for those in many other major British cities.

Overall, 1115 V2 (Vergeltungswaffe 2, "Retribution Weapon 2") rockets landed in the UK until the launch sites and ramps were destroyed by RAF bombs, or captured by the Army by the end of March 1945. These random and terrifying missiles killed 2855 people and very seriously injured 6268.

The Flying Bomb, the V1, however, accounted for three times as many, with 6139 deaths and 17239 very seriously injured recorded. Indeed just six days before the Calton Road V2 rocket, a Luftwaffe Heinkel 111 had air-launched the final V1, which landed in Yorkshire.

Were these the ultimate secret weapons referred to indiscreetly by tape-recorded senior German officers held at Trent Park intelligence gathering centre? No, probably not, because the SOE and military raids in Operations GROUSE, FRESHMAN and GUNNERSIDE (think 'Heroes of Telemark') on Norway during 1943 to demolish the heavy water factories indicate the Germans had the potential to develop a nuclear device... and subsequent stories that surfaced from South America post-war confirm that exiled Germans retained that knowledge. Indeed American use of captured German scientists in their own successful nuclear bomb design provides certainty.

Many will know that the winged V1 could be heard and seen. Its distinctive jet engine note, and very visible exhaust flames became feared as random harbingers of death and terror. As RAF experience grew, they could be shot down or even nudged off course by fighters. However, its successor, the V2 missile contained one ton of explosive and exceeded the speed of sound, reaching a height of 40 miles, way above the range and speed of any aircraft. It was broadly speaking unassailable and once launched, was inevitably destructive. Unlike the V1, it gave no warning.

Little is now known of those living in Calton Road on Saturday 20 January 1945. The weather was old-fashioned: snow and sharp frost which would have encouraged residents to be indoors; the rocket struck at lunchtime, around 1315hrs. Neighbours were stunned, probably quite literally, by the blast and the noise, breaking windows, falling slates and the dust storm that followed.

11 houses were demolished – chimney stacks sometimes left partially standing, ground floor rooms reduced to piles of rubble. Upper floors and roofing turned to matchwood. 135 were injured including 12 dead. There is a report of one man found buried in rubble up to his neck.

It triggered a huge and quick response from emergency services. 423 building tradesmen, 30 military and 300 civil defence workers were engaged on immediate housing repairs. A total 750 men, of whom a third were in action on the afternoon of the bombing. An alsatian search dog assisted with the location of casualties and bodies in the ruins of the houses. The poor weather must have hampered the recovery and rebuilding work, and made conditions additionally challenging and unpleasant.

Experienced ARP workers commented that this was the most damaging incident they had witnessed. The explosion caused a crater of 47 feet and severed a water main, which promptly flooded the hole.

Reconstruction and salvage demanded a monumental logistical effort. 60 yds of sewerage pipe had been destroyed. People still had to live, so other necessary arrangements were made.

Materials used included 11,000 yds of felt, 1200 yds of translucent material, 100,000ft of laths and 25cwt of nails, all at a time when so much was imported and industrial production was mainly directed at supplying the armed forces.

By mid February 1945, over 150,000 roof tiles had been relaid, 60 cold water tanks and hand basins were plumbed in, 25,000 sq feet of glass and 4 tons of putty had been used.

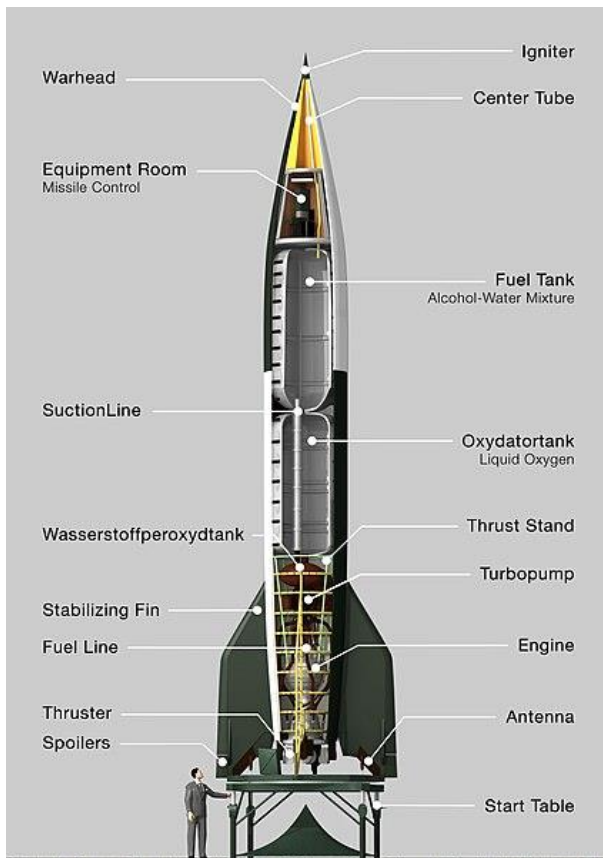
Interestingly the official statistics seem to reveal that sanitation was a high priority in this part at least, for I read that 1250 WCs had been supplied! How many lavatories do *you* have? That seems to be about sixty per house! Some error, surely. The damage took months to clear up. The care and social welfare of survivors was provided by Women's Voluntary Service who manned the Incident Inquiry Point, the Mobile Emergency Feeding Unit and Mobile Canteens sited at the incident. Subsequently they visited casualties in the four local receiving hospitals, helped rehouse families, provided furniture and curtains, and continued to sustain the reconstruction workers on site. Interestingly, the very mobile canteens had been funded by local donors.

Other V2s landed in the area: on the same day, another V2 rocket struck Potters Bar. Elsewhere, one hit the Prince Albert pub in Golders Green on a Sunday morning in the same month, but the pub was shut (at least it was, before the rocket landed!). Another V2 fell at New Southgate opposite the gasworks near the N Circular Road.

On a more positive note two days after the Calton Road rocket, four squadrons of Spitfires destroyed the factory that made the liquid oxygen propellant, so limiting production and launch of further rockets. Elsewhere, one week later, Auschwitz was liberated.

In Barnet War Memorials Association (BWMA), we adopted the motto used by King George V on the cards he sent to families of those killed in action in the Great War: *'Let those that come after see to it that their names be never forgotten.'*

A memorial planned for the Calton Road attack will be observing this motto and will be adding to Barnet's World War Two legacy and heritage, of which we are but temporary custodians.



Note: My thanks for Richard Lawson's generous provision of photocopied historical documents.

Development of the Drew Estate in Barnet from c1879

By Jeff Gale

I came across the following Barnet Press item whilst I was researching information for the Museum's 2019 book 'Chipping Barnet's Military History' published last November.



Although a reference to the court case was included in the book, as I had never heard of the Drew Estate myself I decided that it warranted further investigation.....

To my surprise, I discovered that knowledge of the Estate appeared to be somewhat lost in the mystery of time. Local enquiries, further research

with museum volunteers and searches via the internet revealed nothing. But I was determined to delve further, and I also wanted to discover the background leading up to the court case in July 1901. The test case mentioned in the above article was, intriguingly it seemed for the time, a confrontation between a lady property owner and the Solicitor-General himself as the chosen representative of the War Office.

My research was completely stalled - until I stumbled across the following in a publication that could well have lain undiscovered in the archives of the Museum if it had not been posted onto the 'Barnet - A Trip Down Memory Lane' website last December via the close (but often overlooked) association under which the Museum allows items of interest that they hold to occasionally be scanned and posted there.

The Recreation Ground is another grand improvement over its former condition and uselessness, and everybody may now share in its pleasures and enjoyment. The following estates have been opened up for building purposes:—Moxon Street and Union Street (nearly seventy years ago), the Drew Estate, Leathersellers', Croft, Ravenscroft Park, Park Road, and Manor Road. These last Estates have been opened up of late years. No doubt the Great Northern Railway conducted in a great measure to their being built upon so extensively.

*“Reminiscences of Chipping Barnet and Monken Hadley
from AD 1816 to 1891” by Samuel Byford*

Then another piece of luck came my way.....

I was introduced to Irene and Wilf Nichols who now live at No 18 Salisbury Road which, together with No 16, were the properties owned by the lady, Sarah Pope Glenn, who was named as leading in the case against the War Office in 1901.

Not only did this lead to my discovering that hidden away in a corner of their back garden rests another 'lost' remnant of the former Barnet Militia Barracks - boundary marker stone No 9, pictured here - but they were also kind enough to grant me access to the incredibly detailed history of the owners of No 18 since 29th September 1879 as revealed in the Abstracts of the property title deeds that they hold.



The first abstract revealed that the land (Plots 14 & 15) on which Nos 16 & 18 would be built had been purchased for the sum of £113 by a gentleman named Joseph Barber Glenn, an officer of a tramway development company, from an Elizabeth Drew of Streatham in South London.

This in turn enabled me to discover via Ancestry UK that Elizabeth was the widow of Beriah Drew, himself a significant name in the purchase and development of land in and around Streatham. He was possibly also associated with (or perhaps influenced by) the purchase of land in areas around London that were acquired by the Artizans (sic), Labourers and General Dwellings Company which they would later develop as the railways increasingly expanded into the suburbs.

The Artizans company focussed on building houses for the 'working classes' (in areas such as Battersea, Queens Park and, nearer to Barnet, the Noel Park Estate in Wood Green) and it appears that Elizabeth, who inherited the Drew Estate after Beriah's death in 1878, was as early as 1879 also conducting in Barnet what might now be referred to as a form of 'social engineering'.

However, her aims would be targeted here at the middle-class/professional cadre of society by stipulating that only residential housing developments of a value not less than £250 (for semi-detached)

and £300 (for detached) properties could be built on the former Drew estate land.

Meanwhile I had also stumbled across some legal documents from the period that are now held by the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) centre in Hertford, and further research there enabled me to obtain a copy of a sales plan of the Drew Estate dated 1882 (see Fig 1). This revealed the full area of the Estate that Elizabeth Drew began releasing for housing development from around 1879, and which by the early 1880s was becoming the residential area we know today comprising of Salisbury, Stapylton, Carnarvon, Strafford and (part of) Alston Roads.

This therefore became an area of comparatively substantial properties, certainly compared with most of the existing houses already built in the adjacent Union Street, and those then being erected in Sebright, Puller, Calvert and part of Alston Roads on land formerly owned by the Byng Estate.

[Note: For a history of the roads that were developed on this part of the Byng Estate from around 1872 see Dennis Bird's article 'Where Once There Were Fields' in the Museum's Autumn 2015 Newsletter.]



Salisbury Road 2019. The Fern Rooms (on the right) were demolished in 2020

Fig 1 (below) - The 1882 sales plan of the Drew Estate - plots marked in blue were already sold. A faint pencil annotation at centre records the (Militia) Barracks. Reproduced with the permission of Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies. (HALS Reference DE/Bz/E4)



In contrast, the *Barnet Press* of 7th February 1885 carried adjacent notices placed by local auctioneer Mr J Harland regarding the sale of land belonging to the Drew Estate and that of the Ravenscroft Park Estate at the Red Lion Hotel on the 18th February - the latter saying the land was most desirably situated, and suitable for the erection of villa residences of a superior class.

The 1896 OS map of Barnet and Hadley (Fig 2) clearly shows that the properties that had by then been built in Ravenscroft Park, Ravenscroft Park Road, Marriot Road and along the west side of The Avenue were indeed larger in size than those to the north-east erected on the land formerly owned by the Drew Estate.

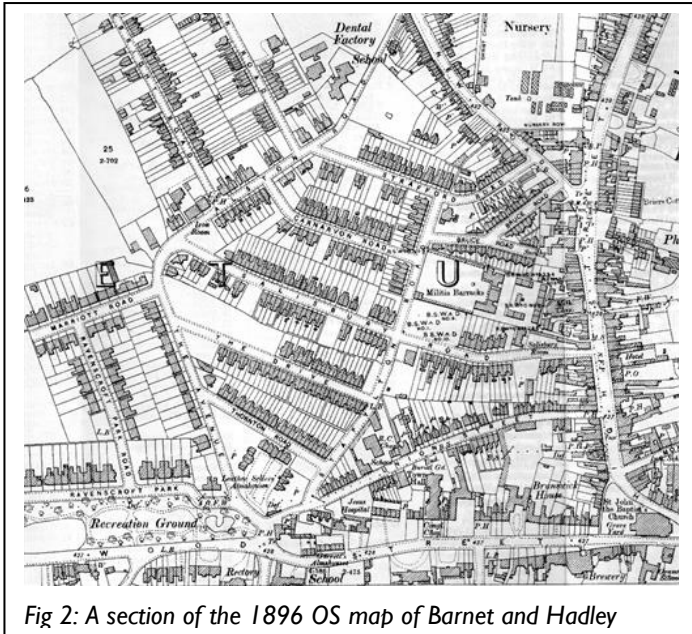


Fig 2: A section of the 1896 OS map of Barnet and Hadley

Returning to the 1901 court case, the title deed abstracts held by the Nichols also record that the land owned by Joseph Barber Glenn from 1879 and since developed as Nos 16 & 18 Salisbury Road was transferred to his wife Sarah Pope Glenn on 21st November 1900 for the sum of £600.

Although not proven, it might well be assumed from this that Joseph, a tramway lighting entrepreneur who would probably have had professional dealings with the Government as tramway systems were evolving in London and other provincial towns, had deemed it beneficial for Sarah, rather than himself, to be named as the owner of the properties as the case against the War Office was developed over the following eight months.

In the event, after leaving the Town Hall to inspect the Barracks site where the offending huts had been erected, the Solicitor-General appears to have finally realised that the War Office was clearly in the wrong and an agreement was reached out of court that Sarah Pope Glenn, together with another 22 property owners who had claimed the War Office had devalued their properties, should be paid compensation of up to £100 each - or that the huts should be demolished.

It appears that the latter course was followed. On the many local maps I have studied, the area of land at the corner of Salisbury & Stapylton Roads that formed part of the Militia Barracks, and which comprised Lots 16-20 of the Drew Estate as shown in the sales map at Fig 1, none have ever recorded any buildings being built on that part of the site whilst it remained under military ownership.

[Note: that area is now the site of a service road access and the multi-storey car park of The Spires shopping centre!]

The Glens were actually 'absentee landlords' before, during and after the 1901 trial. Kelly's Directories show that No 18 Salisbury Road was initially rented by Frederick John Giles who, together with his family, ran a business in Barnet as an Oil and Grease Agent. The rental paid, as recorded in a copy of an independent assessment for the trial and now held at HALS (Ref DE/Bz/E5), was £30 per-annum for No 18 and £32 for No 16, which the assessment shows was then being rented by a Mr W Gilbert.



No 18 remained occupied by the Giles family, with Agnes Eunice Archer Giles being first the tenant and then owner (who herself rented part of the house to lodgers) from 1924 until her death in 1956. Her son Edgar Stephen Farmer Giles then inherited the property. In 1957 it was sold to Albert George Burton, an upholsterer with a shop in the High Road Whetstone (see picture). He lived there with his wife Doris Lilian Burton until 1976. The property was then owned by Andrew and Pierrette Cull until 1978 - since when it has been the home of Irene and Wilf Nichols - to whom I am indebted for their help in enabling me to unravel the mysteries of the Drew Estate.

Footnote 1: The Drive and Thornton Road were built on land formerly owned by the Leathersellers Estate.

Footnote 2: The Electoral Register for 1897 records Birt Acres, the local photographic pioneer, was then living at 45 Salisbury Road.

Was Chipping Barnet affected by London's 1881 smallpox epidemic?

By the Research Team – “Eppy Demick”

Introduction

“Smallpox” was mentioned in Holinshead’s “Chronicle” in the 1570s, distinguishing it from “Great Pox” (syphilis). Epidemics since the 17th Century had led to the death of thousands of people in London by 1871-72. Highly contagious, the disease spread in ways not dissimilar to the 2020 Covid 19 pandemic, and although a vaccination, discovered by Edward Jenner, had existed since 1796 and people were both encouraged and facilitated to receive it by Government legislation in Britain since 1840, this was often refused or avoided. Thus, it did not prevent a further epidemic breaking out in the capital in 1881. Sufferers would therefore still need to be isolated to prevent further rapid spread of the deadly disease.

In 1871-72 an epidemic had soon overwhelmed the inner-London Smallpox and Fever Hospitals that had been set up by then by the Metropolitan Asylums Board (MAB) needing them to resort to using former naval ships moored on the Thames as ‘river isolation hospitals’. This was not without growing public concern that transporting sufferers for isolation into areas where the hospitals were located was likely to import and spread the disease locally - not to mention affecting the value of local properties in the more affluent and less crowded areas where they had been established. (Nimby-ism is nothing new!).

By 1881 the residents of Hampstead had succeeded in preventing any new cases of smallpox being admitted to the MAB hospital there, and in Fulham residents had also managed to prevent any cases from outside the local area being admitted to their MAB hospital.

Inner-London’s capacity to cope with the many sufferers in 1881 was fast becoming exhausted. The eyes of authorities in parishes around the capital

were also looking towards the outer suburbs as potential sites in which to satisfy their legal requirement to provide isolation facilities.

How would towns in the northern suburbs, including Chipping Barnet, be impacted by any such potential encroachment; and how was Barnet itself planning to cope with any local outbreak of smallpox cases that occurred in the town? Indeed, did the 1881 smallpox epidemic actually visit the town in any great numbers?

Let us see if the pages of the Barnet Press of the time reveal some of the answers....

July 1880: Concerns on Enforcement of Vaccination Requirements

Referenced here to indicate the serious focus placed locally on smallpox issues, a leader in the Press edition as early as 31st July 1880 recorded lobbying at national level by the British Medical Association, supported by a letter from Sir William Jenner (no relation to Edward), a leading epidemiologist, arguing against a proposal to lessen the legal demands for ensuring the uptake of smallpox vaccination. The letter, as reported, included an observation that “vaccination, if properly performed, is harmless in itself, and is practically an absolute prophylactic against smallpox”. It would thus appear that the Editor was keen to ensure that issues regarding smallpox were being kept firmly in the public eye via the Press.

This continued, as can be observed via the following abstracted examples taken from Barnet Press reports that included reference to the disease as the 1881 epidemic grew in London.

February 1881: An early local case of smallpox - in Wood Street

The Press of 19th February 1881 carried an item recording the latest meeting of the Barnet Local Board. This included a report from their local Surveyor into the action he had taken at the direction of Dr C E Saunders, the Medical Officer for Hertfordshire and Middlesex, to remove a case of smallpox that had been discovered in Wood Street near the Workhouse. He confirmed that the bed, bedding and coat of the young pauper involved had been burnt and the house

The following letter from the medical officer, addressed to the clerk of the Board, was read :—
“ Dear Sir,—I have to report that a case of small-pox has occurred in Wood-street, Barnet. There is every reason to believe that the lad caught the disease out of Barnet; and as he was removed almost before the case was fully established, we may reasonably hope that no further mischief may arise from the case. The neighbours on either side have been advised to be re-vaccinated; the house will be immediately disinfected, and the bed destroyed. As this particular case was, if not actually, yet virtually in the condition of a pauper, there was no difficulty in getting it speedily removed to the workhouse; but should a case occur in the person of one in a higher grade of society, I would again remind the Board that they have made no provision for the isolation of such an one, and I shall be glad of any direction as to what course I am to pursue should cases of small-pox occur in persons other than paupers. Looking to the proportions which the present epidemic in London was threatening to assume, it is more than probable that other cases may occur in Barnet, and I think it very desirable that the attention of the inhabitants should be called to the necessity of re-vaccination. This the Sanitary Authority might do by a small poster, the directions of which I should be happy to furnish if the Board think well of my suggestion. It is very satisfactory to notice that the town has been very free for a length of time from any fatal infectious diseases.—I am, dear Sir, yours very truly, C. E. SAUNDERS, medical officer.”

disinfected and sought instructions from the Board regarding the funds to replace the items at a cost of £5. The Board were not convinced that the outlay should be so high and instructed the Surveyor to “obtain information as to the probable cost, and report thereon to the Board at their next meeting”.

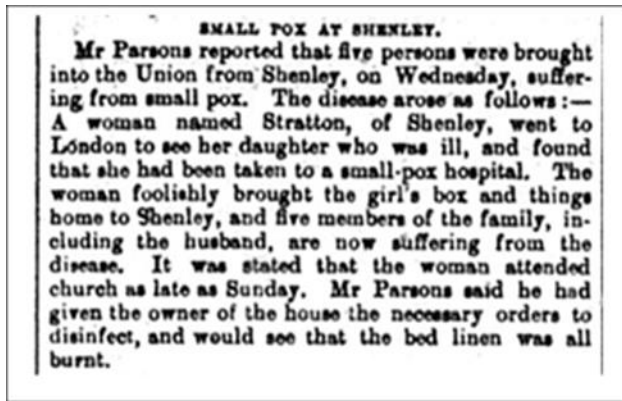
After they had quibbled over the estimate despite his action having been taken to help prevent the spread of the disease, the meeting went on to consider a letter regarding the case (see right) which the Board had received from Dr Saunders raising a number of associated issues, including seeking their advice on how he should proceed if any cases of smallpox arose affecting persons other than paupers.

No subsequent discussion was recorded, nor was it raised at their April meeting. A report of the Board’s August meeting suggests that the possibility of erecting ‘an infectious hospital’ jointly with other local Boards

had been considered meanwhile, but there was clearly no desire to take the consideration further with any urgency, and it seems they opted instead to pay a fee for local sufferers to be 'removed' to the MAB's Highgate Smallpox Hospital.

April 1881: Five smallpox cases at Shenley moved to Barnet Workhouse

Included here is a copy of a further Press item shedding light on the occurrence of the disease in the wider district; it appeared in a report of a meeting of the Barnet Board of Guardians and Sanitary Authority that appeared in the Press edition of 19th April 1881.



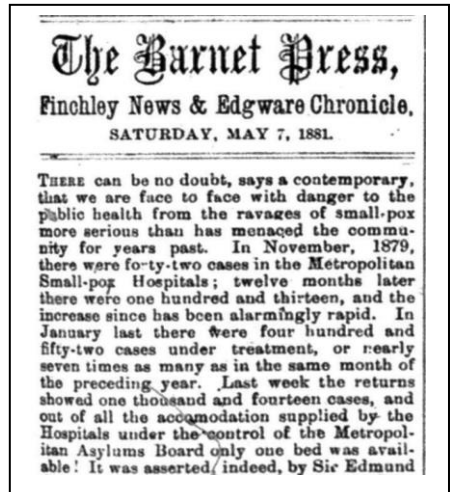
This reveals how the disease could be unwittingly brought into the wider area, and then potentially spread by transporting the sufferers further locally, in this case from Shenley to the Workhouse located in Wellhouse Lane.

However, judging by the absence of press reporting of any significant or frequent outbreaks of smallpox in the town during the first four months of the year, it would appear that the inner-London epidemic had not - so far at least - moved significantly north into the Chipping Barnet area.

May 1881: Another leading article and more cases of smallpox

At the end of the first week of May 1881 the Press went to great lengths to ensure that the severity and potential threat from the spread of smallpox in the capital should be fully recognised by their readers - see following extract.

It went on to argue the deficiencies in any policy that required sufferers to be treated in their homes due to insufficient hospital beds being available, pointing out that "...isolation - the only effectual method of preventing the spread of this frightful disease - is practically impossible [there], and even disinfection is not likely to be carried out skilfully and on scientific principles".



The number of deaths in the capital were given: "From the first of January to the 23rd April eight hundred and fifty deaths from smallpox were registered, of which two hundred and ninety-six occurred in private houses. A large addition must be made, it is feared, for the mortality of the week ending the 30th ult., for the returns of the Metropolitan Asylums Board show that the deaths in hospitals alone in the fortnight ending the 29th ult. were one hundred and fifty-three". There followed a lengthy argument calling for action by Parliament to encourage and if necessary enable local Boards of Guardians (of local Unions and therefore workhouses) to do more to assist. This included the view that "The parochial authorities have not, except in a few instances, made any separate provision for the treatment of smallpox patients; the hospitals under the control of the MAB are full to overflowing, and, as we have seen, numbers of infected patients are turned away daily, and sent back to their homes".

As we have seen in respect of the smallpox case in Wood Street in February, there is evidence that the Barnet Local Board were showing no enthusiasm for providing an isolation hospital, either by themselves or jointly with neighbouring Boards. Whether the Press leader was obliquely lobbying for them, or the Barnet Board of Guardians, to take urgent action, rather than commenting on the general situation viz-a-viz the need for the Government to keep local public informed, is perhaps unclear. As we shall see, the issues around whether to provide local facilities to isolate smallpox or other sufferers from other contagious fevers would long continue.

Whatever, a subsequent Press report on 14th May recorded a further outbreak of smallpox involving three members of the Verrinder family - who resided, and ran a pottery, in Arkley, and were therefore deemed not to be paupers - who had nevertheless been 'brought into the house' to avoid the threat of the disease spreading.

The same edition also carried an item referring to both the Shenley and Arkley sufferers "having been attended to in the Union", and which suggested that there now appeared to be "sufficient danger of an epidemic of smallpox in the neighbourhood to warrant the recommendation of re-vaccination far and wide".

June 1881: Fierce objection to a(nother) smallpox hospital in Finchley

The Barnet Press also covered news in respect of Finchley and Edgware, and a particularly long and detailed report appeared on 18th June 1881 under the strident heading:

**AGITATION AGAINST THE ERECTION
OF SMALL-POX HOSPITALS AT FINCHLEY.**

PUBLIC INDIGNATION.

Two smallpox hospitals had already been erected in the north-east end of the town by the parishes of St Pancras and Islington (who had each already established the large adjacent cemeteries there that remain today), and public opinion was now saying ‘enough was enough’ following news that the Marylebone vestry had now secured an agreement with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to lease a field there in order to establish a third.

Legal action to prevent it was discussed at length at a well-attended public meeting, and subscriptions to fund it were offered. Numerous specific objections were tabled, including the proximity of the proposed site to existing and expanding residential developments, that two existing schools were also nearby, and that the existing sewerage facilities in the area were poor and without the scope readily to improve it given the topography of the site.

The spectre of the disease spreading from the increased volume of infected traffic and people along the local section of the Great North Road, including from the station, was also raised, particularly in respect of the potential impact it may have on the shops, inns and residences already established there. Another concern was that travellers along the road from the metropolis who “habitually put up for rest” in the numerous inns there could also become infected and thus further spread the disease travelling on to the north and south.

The emotion of the opposition is illustrated by this statement recorded verbatim in the article: “...the Marylebone vestry were going out of their district and practically taking the sick from their own parish and foisting them on the parish of Finchley”.

Elements of the Nimby-ism referred to in the introduction were also aired: “At present Finchley was one of the healthiest places around London, and now their health would probably be taken away. Owners of property were more interested than members of the general public, but it

was the duty of every inhabitant of the parish to get rid of the abominable nuisance, if possible”.

There was also a suggestion that, whilst Marylebone’s need to find a solution to their difficulties was recognised, they would be better to consider locating their smallpox hospital “a few more miles into the country, to the pastures and deer parks”.....

Readers in Chipping Barnet that June might well have had their own thoughts regarding this particular suggestion, but fears that Marylebone might move their sights further northwards in view of the strength of feeling in Finchley against the proposed smallpox hospital being located there would seem to have been unnecessary. Surprisingly perhaps, no further mention of the issue appears to have been recorded in the Press, and no trace of such a hospital ever being built outside the parish of Marylebone is evident from online research.

August 1881: Workhouse admissions and the isolation hospital

On 20th August the Press carried a report of the discussions at a recent meeting of the Barnet Board of Guardians at which a letter from the Local Government Board instructing that no more non-pauper cases must be taken into the infectious wards at the workhouse was considered - and the question of the need to ‘erect an infectious hospital in the neighbourhood for the use of the inhabitants generally’ was again raised. Once again this appeared to be discussed without enthusiasm; the record of the discussions concluded with reference to a statement by one of the guardians, Mr Thomas Parsloe, that he “reckoned the matter would fall through”.

The meeting also considered at some length an issue arising from matters concerning the admission of a member of the Militia based at the Barracks in Barnet, noted here primarily in order to illustrate a further possible means of diseases being brought into the town.

September 1881: Admission of militiamen and the isolation hospital

A 24th September report recorded that Barnet Local Board had received confirmation that the War Office “will now be prepared to provide the necessary accommodation for the isolation of cases of smallpox among militiamen in the event of the disease breaking out during the period of training”. The Board expressed the opinion that “the letter should not be lost sight of” and it is assumed that ‘accommodation’ in this context means that the War Office would pay the Union to exceptionally admit non-pauper militiamen.

The report also recorded that the Chairman reported that he “understood that the proposal to erect a joint smallpox hospital had fallen through, and there was no necessity for further considering the matter”.

Summary: No obvious local epidemic; not erecting a hospital justified?

No further references to new smallpox cases appeared after September and it might therefore appear that Chipping Barnet escaped the possibility of the London epidemic spreading here, at least based on the evidence of reports in the Barnet Press during 1881.

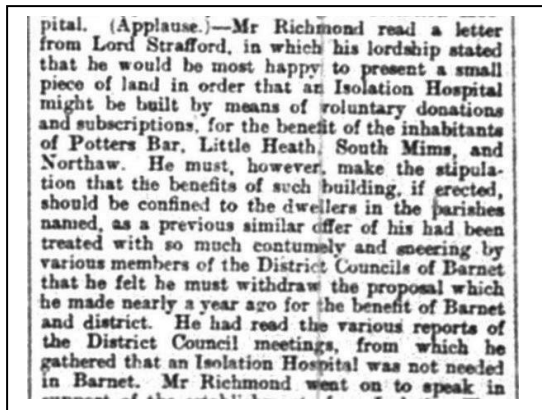
However, matters could have been much worse. In his annual report for the year the County Medical Officer, Dr Saunders, commented that ‘An outbreak of smallpox occurred which at one time threatened to assume alarming proportions; such means of isolation, however, which were at the command of the Authority were used, and the disease was stamped out, after having attacked twenty persons and resulting in five deaths in the district’. Eight people had been ‘removed’ to the Highgate Hospital (where two died), seven to the Workhouse Infirmary (two died) and five were treated at home (one died).

But even then he still lobbied for a local isolation hospital ‘to provide for future wants’....

Issues regarding the resistance of the Barnet Local Board and the Board of Guardians to endorse the construction of an isolation hospital, either themselves or jointly with adjacent Boards, rumbled on, but it would appear to have been a gamble that was well taken in 1881.

But it was clearly not an issue that would go away easily!

As late as 13th March 1897 the Press reported on a meeting held in Potters Bar to plan celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. It shows that the reluctance of the Barnet authorities to accept an



pital. (Applause.)—Mr Richmond read a letter from Lord Strafford, in which his lordship stated that he would be most happy to present a small piece of land in order that an Isolation Hospital might be built by means of voluntary donations and subscriptions, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Potters Bar, Little Heath, South Mims, and Northaw. He must, however, make the stipulation that the benefits of such building, if erected, should be confined to the dwellers in the parishes named, as a previous similar offer of his had been treated with so much contumely and sneering by various members of the District Councils of Barnet that he felt he must withdraw the proposal which he made nearly a year ago for the benefit of Barnet and district. He had read the various reports of the District Council meetings, from which he gathered that an Isolation Hospital was not needed in Barnet. Mr Richmond went on to speak in

offer made the previous year by Lord Strafford of Wrotham Park to make two acres of land in Waggon Road available on which an isolation hospital might be constructed was still rankling him severely!

However, perhaps by good fortune for Barnet, another development was taking place.....

As mentioned earlier, the Barnet Local Board had opted to pay for non-pauper smallpox sufferers to be 'removed' for treatment at the Metropolitan Asylums Board's isolation hospital in Highgate - by inference the gentry who could afford to do so paid for private medical treatment in the days long before the introduction of the National Health Service. Known as the Highgate Smallpox and Vaccination Hospital - and always intended to take in paying patients - it had moved to Highgate Hill in 1848 from its previous location in London when the land there was being developed as St Pancras Station. It operated at the Highgate site until 1896 when the site was sold to the Islington Board of Guardians who then used it as their workhouse infirmary. (The site is now part of the Whittington Hospital).

When it closed the patients were transferred to a new isolation hospital that was being established to the north of London at St Monica's Priory, a former Roman Catholic Nunnery. Located in Blanche Lane, South Mimms - it became Clare Hall Hospital. Initially it specialised in the treatment of smallpox, then from 1912 tuberculosis, and in WW2 it became part of the Emergency Medical Service providing treatment for casualties evacuated from London during the Blitz. After a series of changing uses under various administrative authorities across the years, it closed in 1974.

More locally, provision for isolation and treatment of sufferers from infectious diseases would finally be provided in 1907 when the Barnet Urban, Rural and East Barnet Valley District Councils finally agreed to co-operate to establish The Barnet Infectious Diseases Hospital, known as St Stephen's Hospital, in Mays Lane. However, by then the threat from smallpox had receded and it was initially used for cases of diphtheria and scarlet fever. It survived numerous organisational changes over the years, and finally closed in 1989.

Whilst drawing together the foregoing evidence, research has also discovered that in most, but regrettably not all, of the years between 1879 and 1889 the Press carried detailed items recording reports from the Medical Officer for Hertfordshire and Middlesex regarding the 'Health of the District' - not just in the area of the Barnet Urban Sanitary Authority but also that of the Barnet Rural and the East Barnet Valley Urban Authorities. The areas of responsibility of each authority are a little confused at headline level, each having several parishes split between them, and the Barnet Rural Authority's area changed in 1884 (losing a number of parishes as far north as Elstree and Borehamwood and south as far as Friern Barnet and Muswell Hill) but the data they contain is informative - see table below.

This reveals that the total number of deaths from smallpox actually registered across all the local Urban Districts over these nine years was just thirteen - eleven of them concentrated in the Urban area which included Chipping Barnet during 1881 (7) and 1882 (4). Not exactly

epidemic proportions, but the number of smallpox deaths recorded locally may well have been reduced by the policy of ‘removing’ non-pauper sufferers to the Highgate hospital.

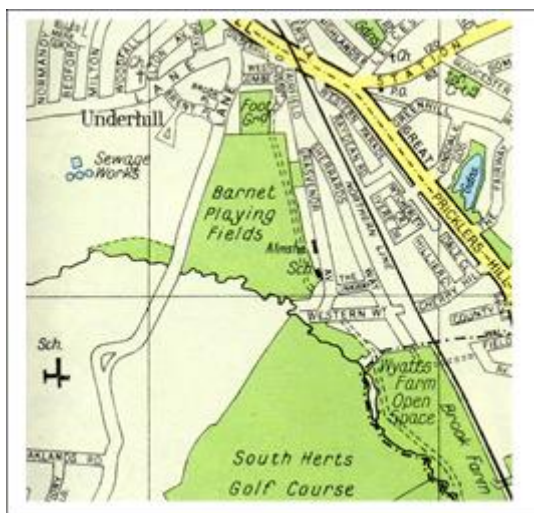
Year	Pop. Urban	Total Deaths	Infectious deaths	Smallpox deaths	Pop. Rural	Total Deaths	Infectious Deaths	Smallpox Deaths	Pop. E B Valley	Total Deaths	Infectious deaths	Smallpox deaths
1879	4083	106	8	0	9787	133	15	1	5180	69	3	0
1880	4117	101	2	0	9999	122	7	0	5240	63	7	0
1881	4095	92	9	7	10864	128	6	1	5788	67	4	0
1882	4132	103	10	4	11309	125	10	0	5818	87	18	0
1883	4163	89	2	0	11201	142	13	0	6054	70	5	0
1884	4202	89	4	0	6816	112	26	0	6176	83	6	0
1885	4241	105	11	0	6904	88	8	0	6298	81	1	0
1886/87	Not found	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not found	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not found	N/A	N/A	N/A
1888	4358	97	5	0	7163	103	3	0	6664	77	10	0
1889	4397	106	8	0	7256	91	4	0	6786	75	2	0

A little comfort to the many concerned about Covid 19 and its seeming omnipotence: smallpox, once a scourge of continents, was eradicated in 1980. Two samples exist in secure laboratories in the USA and in Russia, to combat bioterrorism threats.

Can we tell when Chipping Barnet really began to ‘Go Down The Pan’?

By The Research Team - “Barnet Boy”

As a child living in Sherrards Way I spent many happy hours in the late 1950s playing in on and around the fields adjacent to the stretch of the Dollis Brook that meandered gently south-east past Barnet Playing Fields, South Herts Golf Course and Wyatts and Brook Farm Open Spaces towards Totteridge and on to join the River Brent near to the North Circular Road. Others who did so might also remember the fun of seeing the heavy earthmoving equipment that was used to lay huge concrete pipes along its length - to link Barnet to the Middlesex main drainage scheme’s Mogden Sewage Treatment Works located at Isleworth.



I never really stopped to wonder then just where at least some of the water in the brook might have come from, or quite why in the later 1960s so many large trailer lorries would be seen carrying huge pre-formed concrete building panels turning from Barnet Hill into Mays Lane. I later realised the answer to the first might, at least in part, be from the sewage works that operated from 1874 until 1957 providing the Town’s sanitation. The second was to construct the new housing being built on

the site of the former sewage works - Dollis Valley Housing Estate (itself now being redeveloped just 50 or so years later).

Another article in this edition of the Journal reviews how the town of Chipping Barnet fared during the London smallpox epidemic of 1881; another looks at how one of several post-Enclosure land-owning estates around the town was being sold for the development of housing in the late 1880s. Both issues would have an impact on how the civic leaders of the time, those serving on the Local Boards that were first set up in 1858 - the precursors of elected Councillors on the Urban District Council from 1894 - would have been required to progress continually a response to develop safe sanitation for the ever growing town.

Treating the (mercifully few) cases of smallpox that arose in and after 1881 and preventing the spread of the disease, required the isolation of sufferers, destroying their bedding and clothing by burning, and fully disinfecting their house or living accommodation. This would be done under the instruction of a local Sanitation Board Officer appointed by the Local Board and overseen and monitored by the County Medical Officer (CMO) as part of his responsibilities under the Notifiable Diseases Acts. It is clear from the reports made annually by the CMO to the Board that other factors, notably the need to raise the living standard of the property involved, together with any adjacent properties, would frequently also be included in the monitoring process and, if not fully actioned, also noted in his annual reports. An example is shown in the following extract from the report made in respect of the Barnet Urban Sanitary Authority by Dr C E Saunders MD in respect of 1882:-

“...The smallpox showed a special predilection for one locality, and in this are to be found some of the worst houses in the town. Unless some very decided improvements are made in the houses in Wellington Row and in their immediate surroundings, it will be necessary to apply for an order of a magistrate to declare them unfit for human habitation.”...

Reference to local press reports during 1874 show that demands - no doubt increased by the rise in population that would have followed the opening of the railway to High Barnet in April 1872 - were already growing for the many open ditches around the town that were still being used for the disposal of sewage and surface drainage to be enclosed. Some could be incorporated into the underground drainage systems that had already been installed, but the need was for them to now be connected to treatment plants.

An arrangement was eventually reached for properties to the east of the High Street to be linked into the existing sewage works of the neighbouring East Barnet Sanitation Board; to the west an offer by the Rev R R Hutton of St John's Church to allow 14¾ acres of Glebe Land [*land owned by the church from which the profits were available to support him as Parish priest*] to be used was accepted and the land then used to construct a new sewage farm.

Not all properties would be quickly or easily connected, and by 1882 reports from the CMO would often comment that leakage or overspill from cesspits - too frequently still the usual way of disposing of household sewage, especially in the less central or developed parts of the area - was often contaminating the water from wells that were the only source of drinking water thus causing disease; that even if houses were connected to sewers the absence of a running water supply would prevent adequate flushing to carry away the waste; and thus the waste would often build-up in the sewers leading to offensive smells emanating that were also potentially harmful to health.

There were debates about the advantages of installing stench- or vent-pipes; many were opposed to having them near to existing or planned properties, and the members of the Boards always needed to balance how the continuing desire to attract new residents into the town would be affected - a healthy environment v the downside of having a few unsightly and unpopular vent-pipes? The ministrations of the CMO would usually hold sway!

Press reports show the local Boards would consider how sewer and drainage requirements were to be met as the new housing estates were being constructed, and record discussions on whether existing, often limited but possibly enlarged, sewers could be used as opposed to the need to construct new ones.

Mentioned above, Wellington Row* was located adjacent to the Union Workhouse (later Wellhouse, now Barnet, Hospital) and surprisingly in 1874 plans were agreed for the sewage from the Bells Hill district to be channelled to an outlet in a field adjacent to the Workhouse!

Clearly this was a far from satisfactory arrangement bearing in mind its proximity to many of the less fortunate of the town who were perforce located there by the Board of Guardians and those living in what the CMO had deemed to be 'the worst' houses in the town.

By the 1880s this and the growing need for proper disposal of the increasing amounts of waste from the estates that were growing along Wood Street, Bells Hill and on the former Ravenscroft, Leathersellers and Drew estates would be answered following the building of housing and new sewers down the steeply sloping Manor Road. This enabled the outfall to reach Mays Lane where it could then be routed eastwards to connect with the sewage 'farm' - so called because the treated waste was then used as fertiliser to grow and sell vegetables, oats and fodder for the many cattle and horses that were then housed in the fields around the town. As they say 'up North' - "where there's muck there's brass"!

** Wellington Row is recorded on the 1851 Census and is shown on the 1868 OS map with the name appearing to refer to a row of houses built at a right angle to an un-named road leading from Bells Hill towards the workhouse; by the time of the 1896 OS map Wellington Row is renamed Gladstone Place, and the un-named road is recorded as West End Lane. Both names are still in use today.*

So, does the foregoing provide an answer to the question posed at the head of this article?

Probably not with any degree of accuracy. The legendary Thomas Crapper is recorded to have refined and developed improvements to existing plumbing and sanitary fittings by the 1800s, and to have provided thirty lavatories (with seats and enclosures) to the order of Prince Edward for installation at Sandringham House in Norfolk in the same decade. There were already some substantial homes in our area - Wrotham and Dyrham Parks for example - but it may be assumed that even if the majority of the older houses in Chipping Barnet had, or even shared, purpose built 'privies' they would probably have been fairly rudimentary, often sited some distance from the main house - and possibly even still as a basic 'long drop', as the provision of a plank with a hole positioned over a deep pit dug into the ground was known!

What does appear to be the position in the town by the time of the 1800s is that the existing facilities were under improvement with new or better sewer connections, the new estates were being constructed with sewer connections stipulated in the planning requirements, and that there was a growing desire - underscored by the County sanitation officers - to ensure that the town was seen to be 'healthy', not just for its existing inhabitants but also to foster a desire for newcomers to purchase the many new houses that would be constructed on into the 1890s and beyond.

1881 - a Barnet Petty Sessions case - was justice done?

By the Research Team – “Judge E. Nott”



During research using the annals of the Barnet Press, the research team came across a certain case brought before Barnet Petty Sessions in December 1881, as described below.

At that time, Barnet was changing rapidly. Social benefits, following the arrival of the railway at High Barnet station in 1872, were being reaped, led by enthusiastic groups of public-spirited men serving on the Local Boards. New roads were appearing as developers built the new housing estates, improvements to the drainage and sewage systems were underway helping to reduce disease, and new utilities - gas, electricity and piped water - were being installed.

Following the granting of a 999-year lease to the Barnet Local Board by the Lord of the Manor in August 1880, the fields on the former Barnet Common were increasingly being swallowed up by these improvements. A development of special note to us here was the new Recreation Ground in Wood Street, now known as Ravenscroft Park.

The 1896 OS map shows that, by then, the park was adorned with pleasant walkways wending amongst an array of trees, shrubs and flowers (many supplied by the nursery of William Cutbush) and that it contained two ponds - the one nearest to the Black Horse public house once being freely used by carters and others to water and cool their horses before it was incorporated into the park.

It is not totally clear whether the pond (or ponds) had actually been so enclosed by December 1881, but at least one of them on the newly leased ex-Common featured in the legal case that this article is concerned with.

Picture the scene at Barnet Petty Sessions on Monday 5th December 1881 as two local likely lads, George Demar aged 20, a labourer of Kiff's Cottages, Bells Hill and George Filkins aged 21, of Wellington Row, Bells Hill, surrendered to their bail, charged before the magistrates with 'having, on the 28th ult., unlawfully taken a quantity of fish, value 10 shillings, from a pond on Barnet Common'.

Much legal wrangling ensued. An Act of 1815 was cited on many points including the following three. Firstly, the Lord of the Manor did indeed have title to that portion of land known as Barnet Common 'for the purpose of holding fairs and watering cattle'; secondly, the said Lord was the absolute owner and, subject to the right of the fair being held, could demise the land to others; and thirdly, the lease now granted empowered the Barnet Local Board to lay out such land for the purposes of public recreation.

PC Brittain was called and deposed that on the 29th ult., he had, as a result of information received, visited the residence of George Filkins 'where he saw the two fish now produced lying on the table'. Six live fish of the same kind were then found in the back kitchen. Outside the kitchen he found a drag net and a quantity of rope. These were wet and Filkins' mother admitted that the net belonged to her son, although the defence objected, saying that this was not admissible.

PC Brittain continued his evidence. He had then visited the residence of George Demar where he saw a quantity of fish scales, but no fish. Making further enquiries he 'heard that Demar had disposed of a quantity of fish'. The defence objected again, saying the PC had 'made himself too busy in this case', to which the constable replied that he was 'in the habit of stating all he knew about a case'. Continuing with his evidence, he then revealed that when first remanded for the alleged offence Demar had told the magistrate that he had 'dragged the pond many times before, and he thought there was no harm in doing so again'.

Now it was the turn of PC Thorne, to give his evidence. He had arrested George Demar on 2nd December in Bells Hill, taken him to Barnet Police Station, and then proceeded to the house of Filkins accompanied by Detective-Sergeant Newby. Here he was confronted by Demar's mother, who locked the doors thus preventing them from immediately arresting Filkins. This was achieved after half an hour, but only after he had threatened them with a hammer. When being remanded his comment to the magistrate was to admit to taking the fish, but said he thought he had a right to take them.

Detective-Sergeant Newby was then called - but the bench considered it unnecessary to hear his evidence, circumstances already looking bleak for Filkins and Demar.

Consideration now turned to what had happened to the part of their 'catch' that they had disposed of. Might a charge of 'receiving' now be about to emerge? John Doughty, gardener to Mr James Rider Brooks of Garthlands, Barnet Common, a retired stationer, now gave evidence; 'the prisoners had come to his master's house, each carrying a bucket containing together about 45 fish. The fish were carp, and Mr Brooks, having purchased them for 2 shillings had them placed in his fish-pond'. Mr Brooks was called and having been cautioned by the Chairman that he need not answer any question which he thought might incriminate himself, then deposed that he had indeed bought the fish for 2 shillings and had them placed in his pond!

Evidence was then taken from William Henry Parsons, Surveyor to the Barnet Local Board and superintendent of the works. He had not given permission for anyone to fish there, and learning that a quantity of fish had been taken, it was he who had reported it to the police.

Defence then called Mr William Lewis, a veterinary surgeon, who said he had placed the fish in the pond a few years before - and had fished there himself at times. The prosecution declined to cross examine – ‘the complaint was taking from, not putting fish into, the pond’.



Legal arguments continued, the verdict being that Filkins and Demar were each fined 5 shillings, with 22 shillings costs between them - or 14 days hard labour. Mr Brooks stepped forward to pay the fines and costs, saying he did not think the prisoners had any idea they were committing an illegal act! The Prosecution then applied for the fish to be returned, the Bench acceded, and the Surveyor was authorised to take them from Mr Brooks's pond.

Was justice done? Were the punishments given to Filkins and Demar reasonable? And what of the roles of Brooks and Lewis who were not challenged legally at all? An interesting case indeed.

“Happy Valle” A Spanish Mystery

By the Research Team – “Hester Lavister”

Although the museum has been closed to visitors due to Coronavirus since 16th March we have nevertheless continued to respond to enquiries for information received over the internet using the knowledge and expertise of a number of volunteers working at home.

As well as all the normal administrative and housekeeping functions that have perforce needed to continue, albeit at reduced levels, and maintaining our visibility online via posting items of interest on our Facebook page, we have also managed to research and respond to queries received, such as those relating to the ‘Holidays at Home’ events that took place in the Barnets in the 1940s. In addition, we have fielded numerous questions such as those raised about the history of particular houses and properties in the town etc.

One enquiry that perhaps stands out for special mention was that received in late May from the **Fundación Museo Evaristo Valle** based in Somio-Gijon in the Principality of Asturias, North-Western Spain. Dedicated to the life and works of local Spanish artist Evaristo Valle, the museum was seeking information regarding the writer of a letter and a photograph held by them which was sent to the artist in 1909 by a fellow countryman from an address in Barnet during a period when he was working in Paris.



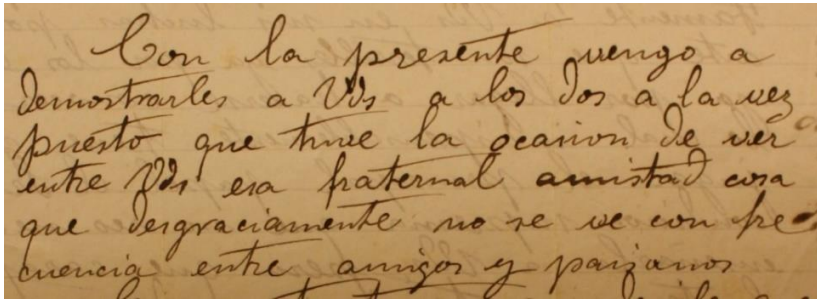
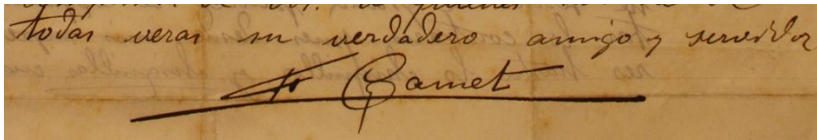
The sender's address was clear - 'Barham', New Road, High Barnet, England, but the signature was perhaps less easy to read accurately. The enquirer, Gretel Piquer Viniegra, Doctora en Historia del Arte, suggested it appeared to be 'F Camet' or possibly 'F Gamet' and either interpretation seemed valid. The body of the letter was also difficult to read clearly: the handwriting was stylised and although the language was clearly Spanish it proved to be in the form of 'Old Spanish' and thus difficult to translate accurately into English (by either museum!).

Several other clues had nevertheless been discerned from it by Dr Viniegra, viz: 'the writer was a close friend of Evaristo Valle, and according to the letter, he was Spanish too, and he was 48 years old. He writes that it is the second time he lives in High Barnet and his superiors and the children (boys and girls) are very pleased to see him again, so we can guess he was a teacher at a school or something similar'.

The hunt began.... Searches using the records - notably the Census records for 1901 and 1911 - available via Ancestry UK were the main potential source of information – but nothing could be found using the surname of either Camet or Gamet. Neither his age, nationality, assumed occupation nor his address on 23rd April 1909, the date of his letter, would be of help in finding him in the records – although they might of course be invaluable in confirming the relevance of the information if any could be found.

It was time to stand back and to take a lateral look at the information available from scrutiny of the 111-year-old letter. It had survived the years well and it remained in good condition, with the handwriting clear and legible (if hard to translate easily).

As can be seen from the extract copied below, we then observed that a noticeable feature of the handwriting is the way in which the writer crosses the 't's with a lengthy flourish. By comparison, the assumed 't' in Camet or Gamet in the signature is much less florid....

A photograph of a handwritten letter on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script. The visible portion reads: "Con la presente vengo a demostrarles a Vds. a los Dos a la vez puesto que tiene la ocasion de ver entre Vos era paternal amistad cosa que desgraciadamente no se ve con frecuencia entre amigos y parjanos".A photograph of the bottom portion of the handwritten letter, showing the signature "Francis Camel" and the closing "todas veces su verdadero amigo y servidor". The signature is written in a cursive script and is underlined with a thick black line.

Using this logic – and an admitted leap of faith! – could the surname be re-interpreted – perhaps being either Camel or Game!?

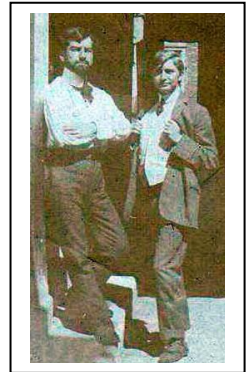
This did indeed prove to provide the answer. Using the surname ‘Camel’ revealed that the 1911 Census data held a record of a Francis Camel aged 49, a widower, who was then boarding with the family of William Henry Earle at 9 Stapylton Road, High Barnet. The birthplace of Francis Camel was recorded as being Barcelona and his nationality as Spanish.

Although the earlier interpretation of the letter indicated that his occupation might be a schoolteacher, here it was given as ‘Colour Etcher’ and the Industry or Service in which he worked is recorded as ‘Photo Engraver’. With Dr Viniegra we therefore returned to the earlier attempts to interpret the ‘Old Spanish’ as used in the letter and realised that the wording had initially been misinterpreted, and that it actually read something more like:

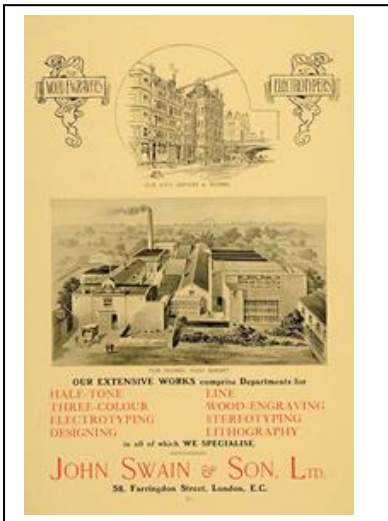
“Instead of being indifferently received this second time among my neighbours, I have experienced the opposite with pleasure: from my superiors to the boys and girls when they meet me on the street, they greet me satisfied to see me around here again. This is certainly a satisfaction as a foreigner”.

The circle was thus squared, and we were able to provide Dr Viniegra with pretty certain identification of the author of the letter. His occupation as an etcher also chimed with her advice that Evaristo Valle was also a lithographer in Paris, working in the famous Imprimerie Camis, revealing a probable common creative and artistic interest between the two men.

Regrettably we were unable to determine whether the second of the two men depicted in the photograph she sent us, shown standing to the right of Evaristo, was actually Francis Camel, although it does seem probable that it would indeed be him.



In our final reply to Dr Viniegra we were able to include an advertisement for the local lithographers where Camel may have worked (Swains), and the house known as “Barham” in New Road, now St. Albans Road.



It is gratifying to know that, despite the restrictions imposed on us all because of Covid 19, Barnet Museum has been able to continue to answer questions received from anywhere in the world.

The Blitz hits Barnet

By the Research Team

We remember here that it was eighty years ago that the bombing campaign known as 'The Blitz' – “lightning” in German – began. Starting in September 1940 it would continue until May 1941.

London and the south-east of England, as well as other major cities, were targeted, and Barnet did not escape the death and destruction that the attacks from the air would bring.

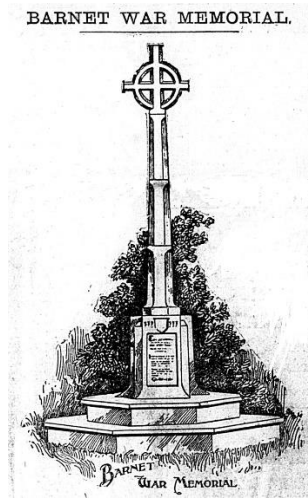
The names of twenty-nine civilian casualties of the bombing raids are recorded on the Chipping Barnet war memorial – seventeen being victims of a single event, the parachute mine that exploded in Bells Hill on 15th November 1940.

Maps showing the location where bombs fell across the town are on display in the Museum – which itself suffered damage during an air-raid on 18th October 1940. A picture of the damage caused is shown below.



And so to 2021

2021 will be a special year for Barnet. April 3rd marks the 100th anniversary of the unveiling of the Chipping Barnet War Memorial which now graces the garden of St John the Baptist Church (Barnet Church). Here is the artist's impression which featured in the Barnet Press when the intention to build the memorial was announced.



April 14th marks the 550th anniversary of the Battle of Barnet. Local artist Agnes Allen painted this battle scene (which is now in Barnet Museum) to commemorate the 500th anniversary in 1971.



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All images are from Barnet Museum's collection, unless stated.

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Evaristo Valle (see article on page 39) played chess with Lenin in Montmartre in the early 1900s. ("Lenin against Valle" Maria Jose Acosta Collection)

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John Saunders