



The Boys' Farm Home Church Farm East Barnet

By Dr Gillian Gear



The Boys' Farm Home, East Barnet

Near the old Norman parish church of St Mary the Virgin in East Barnet, are some unusual buildings referred to locally as 'Church Farm'. They formed part of a certified industrial school, run there from 1860 until 1937.

Church Farm was originally called 'the Boys Farm Home'. It was a residential school set up to 'save boys from falling into lives of crime and to instill Christian ideals and virtues', while teaching trade and agricultural skills. It followed the establishment of an earlier London home.

George Bell, the publisher, and a George William Bell (no relation and secretary of the Law Fire Union) had seen the number of boys living rough on London's streets and decided to take the boys from their 'wretched environment' and teach them trades and a new outlook on life.

In 1857 G.W. Bell had asked Ebenezer Rayment to run a home for 'innocent destitute boys'. Ebenezer Agreed and in February 1858 the Boys' Home was set up at 44 Euston Road, London. Initially only two boys were taken in but within a year another house had been added and 50 boys were at the home.



The old farmhouse c.1864

In 1865 when the site was needed by the Midland Railway the school moved to Regent's Park Road.

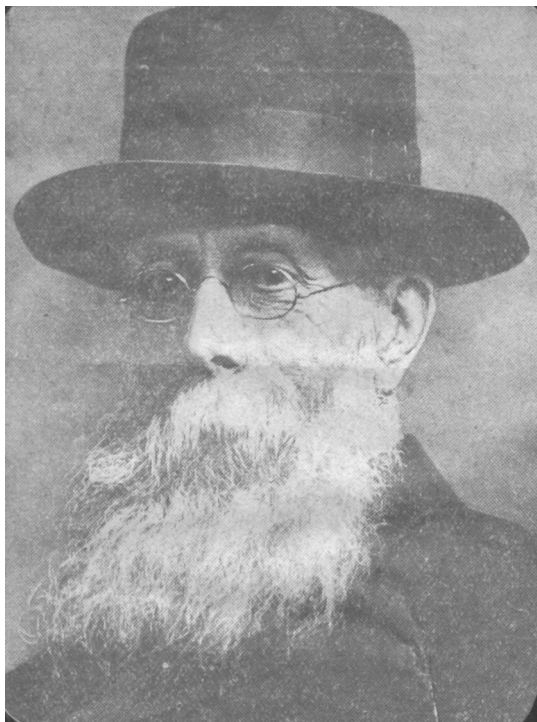
The London Boys' Home taught town skills and it was felt that a home in the country was needed. G.W. Bell's brother-in-law a Lt Col Gillum bought a farmhouse, a farm cottage and fifty acres of land at East Barnet, called Church Farm. He retained a small part of the land where he had his own house built designed by Philip Webb. It was called Church Hill House after an earlier one built in c.1611. After Colonel Gillum left East Barnet the house was renamed Trevor Hall. The lodge still stands in Church Hill Road.

A management committee was set up, headed by Colonel Gillum, and the land was rented to the Boys' Home at the nominal rate of £2 per acre. (It was later transferred to the ownership of the Home.) The Boys' Farm Home was opened in November, 1860.

Church Farm had been used during the Crimean War by a purveyor of mules for the army. The sheds previously used for mules were used for cows. A man and his wife were put in charge of four boys living in the farmhouse. Three of the boys had been transferred from other industrial schools and had been committed by the courts. They may well have come from the London Home. Colonel Gillum headed a sub-committee who dealt with the day to day running of the Home.

The annual cost of maintaining each of the boys was £21 15s 0d in 1864. The London home paid a fixed sum for every boy it sent to Church Farm. In 1868 the East Barnet home became independent from the London home.

The number of boys at the Home had increased to 24 by 1864. This figure included both voluntary and committed cases. Voluntary cases often came through the agency of the middle class who often contributed to the



Colonel Gillum

cost of the maintenance of the boys. Some boys were sent by Poor Law Unions that contributed towards the costs involved. In 1899 the Hitchin Union paid £3 14s 0d per quarter towards William Harradine's keep. He had been remanded to the workhouse on a magistrate's order. The London School Board [LSB] also sent boys through magistrates' courts. In 1876 of the 79 boys at the home, 31 had been sent by the LSB, six had been committed under the Industrial Schools Act and 42 were voluntary cases. Many London courts sent boys brought before them for being found wandering the streets and not properly supervised by their parents or guardians. These courts included Lambeth, Greenwich, Clerkenwell and the court at the Mansion House. An allowance was paid for these boys by the Treasury; in 1885 this was usually five shillings per week. (£13 per annum – about two thirds of the total cost of maintaining a boy at the Home.)

A few examples of how boys gained admission are detailed below:-

In 1884 Charles Edwin Adams of Drovers Cottages, Old Kent Road, aged 12, was found 'wandering and not being under proper guardianship'. He was brought to court by the LSB on 27 May and after checks on his health by a doctor was sent to Church Farm until he reached the age of sixteen.

Case no. 123 – James Hogg, whose parents had died was living with his grandmother. He had been absent from school and was missing from home



Boys' Farm Home farm

for weeks at a time. He was aged ten and was sent first to the workhouse and after a week admitted to the home.

Case no. 227 – A very respectable hard-working young woman, who had married a widower with one son, found herself in a few weeks a widow with the boy on her hands. He was now penniless and only twelve years old. She provided him with a temporary home and he earned a few pence by weeding gardens. She got a place in domestic service and application was made for his admission to the home. He was admitted in May 1875.

To qualify for voluntary admission the boys had to be 'destitute but not convicted of crime'. The Managers felt it was their duty to differentiate between destitution which was through no fault of the parents and that brought on vice. Therefore all boys whose parents were 'dissolute and drunken' were only admitted under special circumstances. It was the degree of 'destitution' which counted for most when the committee decided if a boy should be admitted.

At first the time the home was open to boys aged between six and sixteen from any part of England. As time progressed fewer younger children were admitted and in 1906 it was stated in the annual report that boys between the ages of ten and thirteen were usually admitted since the cost of admitting eight year-olds was double that of twelve year-olds.



Boys' Farm Home swimming pool

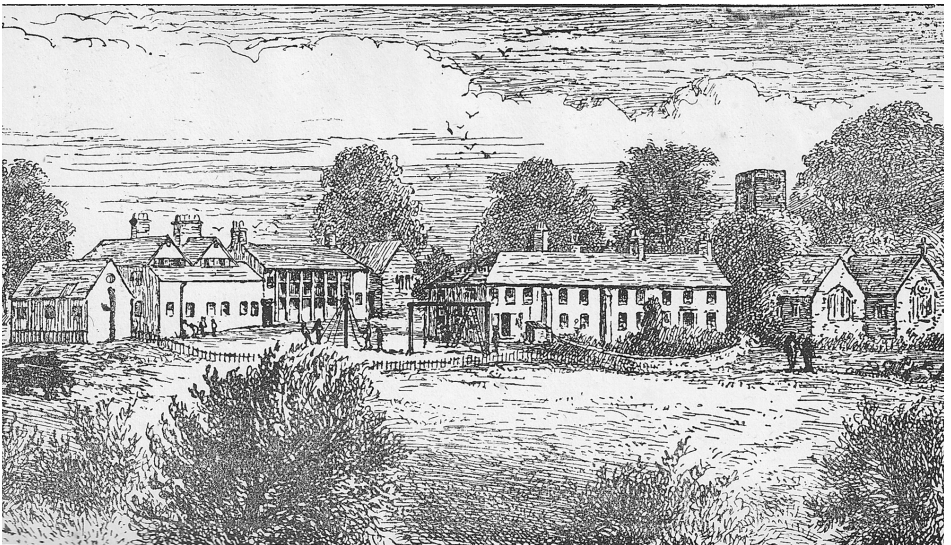
By 1876 the home held 79 boys. The numbers grew a little over the next few years but they did not exceed ninety until 1933, when the annual report stated that the licensed number was being increased from 90 to 105.

In 1878 it appears that an average of four hours were spent in school work and four hours in industrial work. In 1918 schooling became compulsory up to the age of fourteen. Although the new legislation did not apply to industrial schools, Church Farm came into line introducing full-time schooling for boys up to fourteen. By 1929 the 40 boys under 14 attended full-time school and the 44 over 14 years spent alternative days in school and in practical training.

The trades which the boys were taught included tailoring, shoemaking and sewing as well as farm work. They also chopped firewood for sale locally.

The farm consisted in 1897 of 48 acres, mostly pastureland but potatoes, hay and onions were also grown. In 1891 an additional 34 acres of land were rented. The boys did mainly simple agricultural work in the fields and the garden, as well as tending the livestock; pigs, poultry and dairy cows. The farm had watercress beds and bunches were sold locally by the boys. The herd of dairy cows produced milk which was sold by the boys from a cart. They had two or three rounds a day; the afternoon round being referred to locally as the 'pudding', or 'rice pudding' round.

Sport was strongly encouraged, with a sports day each Easter Monday and



The playroom built 1881, the schoolhouse 1868, the schoolroom 1876 and the old farmhouse with the laundry, workshops and dormitories and sick room

cricket and football matches played throughout the year. These were against other local teams including the annual matches played throughout the year. These were against other local teams including the annual matches against the Regent's Park Home, as well as matches against the Old Boys. The Boys did drill daily as well as gymnastics. Up to 1905 swimming took place in a swimming pond but in 1905 an open air swimming pool was built. On Saturday afternoons some of the boys acted as caddies at a local golf club (Oakleigh Park). Extra money was raised by the gathering and sale of acorns to feed local pigs. This money, with the carrying money financed the festivities on 5 November, that included in 1893, a guy and a bonfire which illuminated the whole district, fire balloons and fireworks.

Annual holidays at the seaside were made to Ramsgate for many years, to the estate of Lady Rose and Mr Weigall. (Thanks were expressed in 1896 for the loan of their 'iron house' at St Lawrence, Kent.) Later holidays were taken at Dymchurch and Ingham Old Hall Camp, Norwich.

Music played an important part in the life of the Home. Annual concerts were held which involved the local community. Boys entered a local 'Eisteddford' held at New Barnet and frequently took prizes.

The Home had its own scout troop and cub pack and in 1929 the scout troop was run by the headmaster, assisted by local ladies. The troop seems to have been quite active and boys went to local rallies in the area.

At Church Farm it was the managers' policy to find employment for the boys when they left. Of 954 boys who had passed through the home in its first 54 years, 665 were found jobs through the committee, 149 found places through their friends or relatives, 33 were sent to other schools, 14 died at the home and 90 were still at the home in 1914.

The boys seemed to want to keep in touch with the home themselves and often revisited it. During 1906 112 old boys returned to visit the home. Much correspondence took place between the boys and the home and many of the boys' letters are included in the annual magazine published by the home to keep in touch with old boys. It was called the *Flying Leaf* and was sent out at Christmas to all old boys when their addresses were known. Early copies included the last known address of former boys so that as well as keeping in touch with the home they could keep in touch with each other.

Many of the boys who left entered the services and letters in the magazine include many sent from all over the world. During the First World War 27 old boys were killed, over 100 were wounded and 8 were prisoners of war. Over 250 old boys served throughout the War.

From when the home opened in 1860, there was a great deal of organised

emigration. The boys went mainly to farm work. In the first four years that the home ran one boy was sent to the Cape, one to New Zealand. In the Spring of 1865 three of the oldest boys were fitted out and sent to S. Australia.

The Home was supported financially in three main ways:-

1. Voluntary contributions from individuals and organisations, including legacies
2. Allowances from the government, school boards, City of London and other public bodies.
3. The profits from the farm and other industrial work.

The home was established purely with voluntary contributions and during the early years these played the largest part in its finance. In 1879 it was stated that there were always 40 boys who were kept entirely by voluntary contributions. The proportion of boys supported by the State increased steadily.

In 1876 the farm was said generally to cover its own expenses and the wages of the labour master and his assistants even though it did not bring a profit to the Home. It was however considered to give healthy and instructive employment for the boys.



Boys' Farm Home post-1926

The supply of food and goods to the home played an important role in its finances. In 1899 in the Flying Leaf the managers proudly wrote that the home was 'self-supporting invites no tradesmen, unless dire necessity compels, within its gates'.

In the early days of the home it was run by two married couples. A master and matron lived at the farmhouse and a labour master and dairy woman (or assistant matron) lived at the cottage. Each couple looked after the welfare of the boys who lived in their house. This was to make each unit as much like a family as possible. This principle carried on as the home grew. By 1929 there were four houses, with three teachers and the headmaster acting as house masters. Each housemaster was helped by two prefects.

In 1864 the master was Thomas Moran and his wife was the matron. The labour master was George Brown and the dairy woman was his wife Louisa. They did not stay long and over the next five years there were fairly frequent changes of staff. In 1864 there was also an assistant labour master. In 1865 there was an assistant matron and a dairy woman.

In 1869 the wage of the master was increased to £100 per annum and this was followed by the employment of a master who was to stay at the home for over 40 years – John Bowden. He had been born in Devon but brought up to London by a patron and trained at St Mark's College, Chelsea (a



Buildings from Boys' Farm Home as they are today

teachers' training college) in 1863/4, where he had obtained a parchment certificate. This is the first mention of a qualified teacher being the master. He was aged 26 when appointed. The role of master at the home was usually filled by a married man and the wife filled the role of matron. In this case Bowden's mother acted as matron until his wife took over. He had married the daughter of Ebenezer Rayment, the master of the London home in 1868 and after the birth of their first child she took over as matron in 1870 and continued until her death at the home in 1885.

John Bowden was to remain master at the home until June 1901. He and Colonel Gillum ran the home together for over 40 years but not always total in agreement. John Bowden had a strong paternalistic attitude to the boys and liked, whenever possible to place them in employment within reach of the home. He liked to recruit staff from amongst his old boys. However it was also his policy to employ couples together at the home, who would live in and enhance the family atmosphere.

Colonel Gillum resigned as honorary treasurer in 1894 although he stayed on the committee. A special meeting was held on 22 November 1894 'to consider and decide upon the future management of the home consequent upon the resignation of Col. Gillum. His role as superintendent seems to have been added to John Bowden's duties as master.

In 1902 following John Bowden's retirement, the role of the master seems to have been changed a little. A new head schoolmaster and matron were appointed, a Mr and Mrs Whitmore. The role of honorary superintendent was linked with that of chaplain and the Revd. J.K. Wood was appointed.

The members of the management committee were mainly divided between friends of Colonel Gillum

REPORT
OF
THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT
OF
The Boys' Farm Home,
FOUNDED 1860,
FOR THE
TRAINING, MAINTENANCE, AND EDUCATION OF BOYS,
Church Farm, East Barnet, Herts.
(Certified under the Industrial Schools Act.)

"ALL THEY THAT PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DESTITUTE."—PSA. XXXIV 22.
1933.

President: THE LORD BISHOP OF ST ALBANS.
Committee of Management:
COL. W. C. HALE, O.B.E., M.C., T.D. (Chairman), 19, Moorgate, E.C.
E. H. F. REEVES, Esq. (Corresponding Manager), Cable Research House, Silver Street, W.C.
G. C. ALEXANDER, Esq., Manor House, Winterbourne Stoke, Salisbury.
THE REV. G. T. MAW, Holmwood, Maynards Green, Horeham Road, Sussex.
SIR W. B. PEAT, Wykeham Rise, Totteridge, Herts.
COL. C. B. THACKERAY, 6, Fernshaw Road, London, S.W.10.
MRS. D. LAYTON BENNETT, Hadley Lodge, Hadley Common, Barnet.
MRS. W. C. HALE, Laines, Plumpton, Sussex.
MRS. E. H. F. REEVES, Everton, The Knoll, Orpington.
MISS M. SANDFORD, 42, Woodside Park Road, London, N.12.
MRS. E. WHEATLEY, 18, Torrington Park, London, N.12.

Medical Officer:
A. S. BURNS, Esq., M.B., Ch.B. (Edin.), Ashcroft, High St., N.14.
hon. Ophthalmic Surgeon:
COL. W. T. LISTER, C.M.G., M.B., F.R.C.S., 24, Devonshire Place, W.
Dental Surgeon:
W. W. GABELL, Esq., L.D.S.Eng., Chiltern Villa, Station Road, New Barnet.

Honorary Treasurer:
COL. W. C. HALE, O.B.E., M.C., 19, Moorgate, E.C.
Honorary Solicitor:
T. H. E. POORD, Esq., 16, Philpot Lane, E.C.

Bankers:
MESSRS. BARCLAY & CO., Ltd., New Barnet.
Headmaster and Matron:
MR. AND MRS. J. VAUGHAN CARTWRIGHT.

Front page of a Boys' Farm Home report in
1933

and the more affluent residents of East Barnet. The rector of St Mary's Church was also often included and representatives of bodies such as the London County Council.

There seem to have been considerable changes in 1923/1924. Due to a Home Office requirement the shoe shop and tailors' shop were closed in 1924. The cook was dismissed in 1923 and Mr & Mrs Gowdridge, Mr Hathaway (he had been at the home since 1890) and Mr Pearson were all dismissed the following year.

On Wednesday 17 March 1926 Sir William Joynson-Hicks Secretary of State for the Home Office opened the large new additions. These buildings contained dormitories, a large schoolroom, a large dining-hall and a kitchen.

Church Farm Boys' Home survived the re-organisation of the 1933 Approved Schools Act and became a senior approved school. In 1937 the East Barnet site was sold and the home moved to premises at Court Lees, South Godstone, Surrey. In 1978 a joint visit by the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Education and Science advised on the long-term viability of Hays Bridge. The social Services Committee decided to close the home by 30 September, 1980.

Thus the home finally closed after 120 years of caring for boys. The charitable funds which remained were transferred to the Hale Trust which was administered by the Hale family who had been closely connected with Church Farm Boys' Home.



Boys' Farm Home Memorial



Farmhouse (after 1926)

This bulletin is a summary of a more detailed work on industrial schools with particular reference to Church Farm, which is available at Barnet Museum.



Barnet Museum & Local History Society

email: enquiries@barnetmuseum.co.uk www.barnetmuseum.co.uk
020 8440 8066 31 Wood Street, Barnet. EN5 4BE

Barnet Museum's collection covers many aspects of life in Barnet, from ancient times to modern day, including objects relating to The Battle of Barnet, both World Wars, domestic life, shops, pubs, sport, leisure, costume and health, as well as temporary exhibitions. The museum has an extensive archive, and is a centre for family and local history research. Founded in 1938, the museum is a charity run by volunteers. Group visits are available by appointment. Admission free.

The Local History Society organises talks and outings.

Barnet Museum & Local History Society (charity no. 295950)

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Front page image: Boys' Farm Home playground, post-1926

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