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LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



A History of  
*Greenhill Gardens*

The tale of  
a Barnet Mansion and Country Park  
that became a Housing Estate,  
a Public Garden and a Wildlife Haven

By Jeff Gale

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## THE HISTORY OF GREENHILL GARDENS

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Many will travel between Barnet and Whetstone each day along the main road past the Everyman cinema and the junction with Lyonsdown Road, but how many notice - or have visited - the wildlife haven known as Greenhill Gardens on the left side of the road opposite Meadow Works and the 'Hole in the Wall' café?

Let us explore the long and interesting history of the site.

An internet search reveals the following brief - and as we shall learn, not entirely accurate - details about the garden:



*Greenhill Gardens is a 1.6 hectare [3.9 acre] public park in New Barnet in the London Borough of Barnet. Its main feature is an ornamental lake with a wooded island, which attracts many birds, and it also has a grassed area with scattered mature trees. It is a site of local importance for nature conservation. It was created from part of the former Greenhill estate, the rest of which was developed for housing in the twentieth century. In July 1926 East Barnet Council purchased the land which is now a public park for £20,000.*

Further searching amongst the writings of eminent local historians such as the Reverend Frederick Cass and S H Widdicombe, together with reference to other online sources reveal more details, with Widdicombe's 'A Chat about Barnet and its History' (1912) revealing that:

*'Greenhill Park was at one time known as 'Prittles' or 'Pricklers', for the origin of which name we must go back to a Subsidy List of Edward II (1317), which contains the name of one Gilbto Pritel'.*

The name of Pritel appears to have morphed across the years into first Prittle(s) then to Pricklers, perhaps due to everyday usage and possibly also subsequent misreading of the manuscript used in legal documents of the time such as wills etc. However, the use of one of the early names still survives today near to Greenhill Gardens, where the stretch of the A1000 that runs close to the mostly lost grounds of the once sizeable and landed Greenhill estate is still called 'Pricklers Hill'.

Another reference discovered in the online catalogue of The National Archives pushes the local association with the name Pritel back to 1305 via documents relating to the Records of the Petty Bag Office: Certificates of Statute Merchant and Statute Staple which reveals the following debts:

Debtors: John Pritel of Barnet {Bernet} [Herts.], John le Boor of Barnet, Thomas Jacob of Totteridge {Taterigge} [Herts.], John Aumound, of Barnet, William at the Cross {ad Crucem} of Barnet, and John in the Hall {enle hale}, of Barnet.

Creditor: Sir Hugh de Nottingham, clerk of the illustrious King of England.

(Dated August 1305: the reference records the debt only as being '23m').

TNA Reference : C 241/46/109

So, what further can we discover about the long and varied history of the ownership and occupation of 'Greenhill', once a fifty two acre estate, of which only the current lake and gardens remain? As well as the histories mentioned above, the Census and family tree records searchable on Ancestry UK will prove to be invaluable, as will reference to other online sources, many of the more recently published histories of the area - and of course the resources held by Barnet Museum.

The next clear reference to the estate - as recorded in and thus cross-confirmed across the local histories and online references mentioned above - can again be taken from Widdicombe:

*'We next hear of [Pricklers] in 1558, when it was sold by the Crown - at that time busy converting the old monastic lands into money - to John Marshe (sic), one of the original Governors of the Grammar School, from whom it came by descent and marriage to Sir John Wolfe [sic], who died in 1703'*

Using the resources of Ancestry UK I have been able to trace and record ownership by members of the Marsh family from 1558 to 1768 - and beyond, right up until the time that the, by then, forty acre Greenhill estate standing as a wooded park along the west side of the Great North Road between Station Road and Lyonsdown Road was sold for housing development after 1926.

But first, let us look at the estate as it was recorded in this extract from the map of the area surveyed by the Ordnance Survey between 1863 and 1866. Although the size and layout of the estate as shown here cannot be assumed to have been the same across the three centuries from 1558, it can be confirmed to be little changed from how it was recorded in 1818 by Thomas Denton in the maps he prepared for the Barnet Enclosure Awards.



This shows the roughly wedge shaped 'Greenhill' estate at left. Running diagonally, it is bordered to the south-east by what was then described as the 'North Road' and 'Pricklers Hill', to the east by the road that curved round the entrance to the grand house located at the east part of the estate (now realigned as part of Lyonsdown Road), and to the north-west by the curved row of trees (largely parallel to the already laid out Gloucester Road) towards Underhill at the top of Station Road.

As we shall see later, the adjacent 'Willenhall' house and estate shown at the bottom of the map, also once part of the Greenhill estate, would be developed for housing after 1890. Most of the land to the west - once part of the adjacent Lionsdown (sic) estate which had been sold to the Great Northern Railway Company and later purchased by the British Land Company - is already becoming the housing development that took place after the railway lines shown right were constructed.

(The new lines of the Great Northern Railway from London would not appear to the east of the North Road until later. High Barnet station opened on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1872).

In presenting this long and sometimes confusing history the details of the life and times of the owners of the estate across the years have been divided into three chronological chapters, followed by three final chapters relating to how the land was sold for the development of housing after 1926.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE PRICKLERS ESTATE : 1558 TO 1768**

Across this period, the ownership and occupancy of the Pricklers estate remained between members of the Marsh (sometimes Marshe) family and evolved as follows.

#### **1558 to 1589 : JOHN MARSH (c1505-1559)**

As mentioned, Widdicombe records that when John Marsh purchased the estate in 1558 the Crown was 'busy converting the old monastic lands into money' - part of the aftermath of the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII between 1536 and 1541.

An online source (incidentally linked to research into a member of the Marsh family who is believed to have been amongst the Pilgrims who travelled from England to the New World in 1620 aboard The Mayflower) provides information indicating that he was a wealthy yeoman and brewer of Chipping Barnet who, possibly together with his wife Joan and son, John Jnr, "bought two messuages there with garden and orchard" on 13 June 1553. This would certainly support the later references to his purchase of the Pricklers estate in 1558.

That source also records details extracted from John's will which, 'although it fails to state his occupation or social position, his bequests (and multiple servants) indicate a man of substance'. In it 'he bestowed houses and lands in the parish of Hendon; the house in which his brother William then dwelt' "pett felde" [i.e., peat fields]; a parcel of land and appurtenances called Myllys Crofte; and my house that I dwell in w[i]t[h] the lands belonginge and all my Freholde lands and houses w[i]t[h]in the lordship of Barnett'.

This, taken together with the earlier mentioned local histories, confirm with some certainty that we shall begin our further Marsh family research with the right John Marsh - but first the reference in his will to ownership of property in Hendon allows another peek back into the earlier days of the family - to the days of Edward VI in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Reference to 'The Environs of London: Volume 3, County of Middlesex', originally published by T Cadell and W Davies in 1795, via British History online reveals the following under Hendon:

*'In the [Hendon parish] churchyard are the tombs of Thomas Marsh of Whites\*, 1626; John Marsh, his great-grandson, citizen and haberdasher, 1728; William Marsh, 1784; Randall Niccoll, 1665; Randall Niccoll, 1767; John Niccoll, Esq. of the Middle Temple, 1782; Thomas Marsh, 1685; Thomas Marsh, of Brent-street, 1745, &c'.*

*\*A footnote linked to Thomas Marsh of Whites also records 'The representative of this ancient family, who have resided on their own property at Hendon since the reign of Edward IV is Mr. John Marsh, of Lawrence-street, Cart-taker to his present Majesty [King George III]'.*

John Marsh Snr died in 1559 soon after he purchased Pricklers, the estate passing down to his son.

#### **1559 to 1610 : JOHN MARSH Jnr (1545-1610)**

Also recorded as being a Yeoman of Chipping Barnet (by definition, 'a man holding and cultivating a small, landed estate; a freeholder') - although it appears that he may have been born and was living in Hitchin when he married in 1570 and where his first son Andrew was born in 1577. His subsequent seven children were born after 1580 in Chipping Barnet - presumably having by then taken up residence at Pricklers, perhaps after it had been occupied by other family members or by tenants.

One of the original Governors of Queen Elizabeth's School, in his will he asked to be buried in Chipping Barnet next to his father's grave. The burials would have been in the former churchyard of St John the Baptist's parish church, and there is also mention by Cass of memorials to the family in the nave of the church. It appears these were lost when the church was enlarged in 1875. With one exception - see later - all the graves once in the churchyard have also been swept away, some when the High Street was widened next to the church in about 1763, the majority when the churchyard became the Garden of Remembrance in 1939.

After the death of John Marsh Jnr in 1610 the estate was inherited by his son William Marsh.

#### **1610 to 1624 : WILLIAM MARSH (1590-1624)**

Married in about 1612, William had seven children between 1613 and 1625, all born in Chipping Barnet, the last being named William - who it is important to note appears to have been born after William Snr had died.

When William Snr died in 1624 the Pricklers estate passed to John, his eldest son then living.

#### **1624 to 1653 : JOHN MARSH (1621-1653)**

Identified in his will as John Marsh of Pricklers, Herts, John's life was short and he did not marry or have children. However it is recorded that shortly before his death in 1653 he appears to have been party to an agreement between the authorities of East Barnet and Chipping Barnet that the Pricklers estate was deemed to be in East Barnet.

(All previous family references clearly put the location of the estate in Chipping Barnet, and this *might* be presumed to have possibly been a family wish to be linked to the original parish church of St Mary's, or may possibly have been to achieve an objective somehow related to local taxation).

Also recorded on Ancestry, and confirmed in Cass's history of Queen Elizabeth's School from 1573 to 1665, is that John and his brother William were appointed Governors of the school in February 1645, thereby continuing the Marsh family link with the school.

John's will recorded his wish that his brother, Captain William Marsh, be granted administration and he also became the main legatee as he next inherited the Pricklers Estate.

#### **1653 to 1687 : CAPTAIN WILLIAM MARSH (1625-1687)**

Various sources serve to confirm that William was a Captain serving in Cromwell's Parliamentary Army during the Civil war of 1642 to 1647. His cousin, John Marsh (1606-1681), also served - having been first a Captain then a Lieutenant-Colonel in a militia-based regiment of foot in Hertfordshire.

Evidence for this is confirmed by the following extracts from a letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1655 as recorded by William Urlick in his book 'Nonconformity in Herts' published in 1884:

" May it please your Highness to accept this humble earnest of affection and a duty from us, who by virtue of particular letters received from Major Packer intimating your Highness' pleasure that wee meete at con-

*(Break - to conclusion/signatories):*

most humble servants. Hertford, this 3rd of March, 1655. JOHN MARSH, JOHN READE, WILL. PACKER, JOHN KING, JOHN BROGRAVE, FRANCIS WHITE, A. WASHINGTON, HENRY BLOUNT, ALEXANDER WELD, RI. COMBE, HALBAN COXE, WILL. DISHER, WILLIAM COXE, DANIEL NICOLL, ANTHO. SPINAGE, WM. HICKMANN, WILL. MARSH, JOHN KENSEY, JOHN GLADMAN, THO. EMPSON, WM. TURNER, JOHN EDLIN, RALPH GLADMAN, WILL. REEVE. To his Highness OLIVER, Lord Protector of ye Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Dominions and Territories hereunto belonging this humbly present."

In April 1654 William married Alice Fox in a ceremony conducted in Shenley by his cousin John Marsh, a Justice of the Peace.

During the Civil War church marriages were forbidden and authority was given to Justices of the Peace to conduct the ceremony. This was formalised under the Marriage Act of 1653, although it appears the Act was disregarded in some areas of the country. It is interesting to note that the Marsh family, clearly firm supporters of the War, were not only following the criteria but also actively participating in conducting the ceremonies in our part of Hertfordshire.

William and Alice had two sons and a daughter, Margaret Marsh, but both sons predeceased him and in his will he named his (now married) daughter Margaret Nicholl as heir, also expressing his wish that her daughter, also named Margaret, should be next in line after her. He died in 1687.

### **1687 to 1694 : MARGARET MARSH (1665-1713)**

Margaret Marsh inherited Pricklers in 1687. She was twice married, first in 1683 to John Nicholl of Knightsland, South Mimms, with whom she had a daughter Margaret Nicholl (1693-1716) - mentioned above as the next nominated heir to Pricklers estate in the will of Captain William Marsh.

Today, Knightsland Farm House is a Grade II\* listed farmhouse in St Albans Road, South Mimms. Dating back to the 16th century, with later additions, it is timber-framed with a brick casing. The associated barn is also Grade II\* listed. The house is known for its four c1590-1610 wall-paintings on the first floor, depicting the parable of the Prodigal Son.

In 1687, despite having by then become the wife of John Nicholl, Margaret would then have inherited the Pricklers estate in her own right under the terms of his will.

However, John Nicholl would die in 1694.

Her second marriage, in 1695, was to John Woolfe (1653-1703), a merchant haberdasher trading with Russia and The Levant (Turkey) and member of the Mercers Guild. He was knighted in 1696 and was one of two Sheriffs of London in 1697. On marrying him, Margaret became step-mother to his four children from his previous marriage, and would also become a Dame when he was knighted.

Most important to our chronology of the history of title to the Pricklers estate, upon her second marriage, the title to the estate would pass by law to John Woolfe, thus ending the Marsh family's *direct* dynastic ownership that had lasted for 137 years since John Marsh purchased Pricklers from the Crown in 1558 - but still leaving ownership with their relatives.

### **1695 to 1721 : SIR JOHN WOOLFE (1653-1703)**

Dame Margaret and Sir John Woolfe would go on to have three daughters and a son named Marsh Woolfe. (It is interesting to note that the Marsh name was thus perpetuated, albeit now as a Christian name).

After Sir John died in the City of London in 1703, Dame Margaret continued to live at Pricklers and, when she died there in 1713, like several of her forebears she was buried at St John the Baptist church in Chipping Barnet. She bequeathed the estate to her only son Marsh Woolfe - who at the time of her death was aged only thirteen.

Although her daughter Margaret Nicholl was never to inherit the Pricklers estate herself - as her grandfather Captain William Marsh had wished under the terms of his will - she did in the event, together with John Godden Woolfe, Sir John Woolfe's son by his previous marriage, undertake the administration of the estate until it passed to Marsh Woolfe when he reached the age of maturity.

## 1721 to 1765 : MARSH WOOLFE (1700-1748)

It is unclear whether Marsh Woolfe was born at Pricklers or, perhaps more likely, in the City of London where his parents Sir John and Dame Margaret Woolfe had a residence. He died unmarried and relatively young, having inherited not only the Woolfe and the Marsh estates, but also Carlton Manor in Cambridgeshire in 1742 from his half-brother John Godden Woolfe (1690-1742).

His will records his residence as being 'Pricklers Hill in the parish of Chipping Barnett' which serves to confirm that the former Marsh estate was still known by that name in the mid-1700s, and as with many of his former Marsh relatives, it also expresses his wish to be buried at the parish church in Chipping Barnet alongside John Godden Woolfe (see box below).

Also mentioned in his will, but without detail, are properties located in 'the City of London and the several counties of Middlesex, Hertford and Bedford' which he bequeaths to his loving sister Anne Woolfe, spinster, for her lifetime. Should she die without heirs he also records his wish for her estate to pass to his nephew Thomas Brand, the son of his widowed sister Margaret Brand.

(His Carlton Manor property was willed separately and directly to his nephew Thomas Brand).

The Pricklers estate would have therefore been included in his bequest to his sister Anne Woolfe, who died just seventeen years after Marsh Woolfe, and the estate would therefore become the property of Thomas Brand in 1765.

As recorded earlier, it may appear that any physical evidence of the Marsh family burials and memorials across the years have been lost as changes have been made to the fabric of the church churchyard.

However, a few of the headstones from there were laid as paving on the north and south sides of the church, and studying them I have ascertained that the headstone of Margaret Woolfe is amongst those lying between the church and the High Street.

Indistinct and only partly legible, it reads:

“... MARGARET WOOLFE Daughter  
and Heiress of WILLIAM MARSH  
of this Parish Esq Widow and  
Relict of Sir JOHN WOOLFE  
She departed this life the  
[??] March 1713 aged [??]”



## 1765 to 1768 : THOMAS BRAND MP (1717-1770)

Born in Kimpton, Hertfordshire, the son of Thomas Brand (1673-1718) and Margaret Brand (née Nicholl) (1693-1767) - she being the daughter of Margaret Marsh (1665-1713) and thus giving us a final, if by marriage, link back to the original purchase of Pricklers by John Marsh in 1558. (Thomas Brand Snr was the eldest of four brothers whose family owned extensive lands around the Rodings, Ingatestone and Fyfield in Essex, and in the City of London).

Thomas Jnr was Member of Parliament representing Shoreham in 1741, then Tavistock in 1747, Gatton in Surrey in 1754 and then Okehampton in 1768 until his death in 1770. He was a close friend of Prime Minister Horace Walpole.

In 1767 he inherited The Hoo, a manor house with and extensive grounds at Kimpton, about eight miles north of St Albans from his mother, who had purchased the estate from Sir Henry Hoo Keate in 1732. The house had been rebuilt during the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, and Thomas would go on employ the landscaper Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to landscape the garden between 1760-62, and the architect Sir William Chambers to design a bridge on a drive over the River Mimram in about 1764.

Perhaps with his attention focussed on those developments, Thomas Brand sold the Pricklers estate to John Pybus two years before his death in 1768.

For the first time since 1558 our research into the ownership of the estate now moves outside the realms of descent within and marriage into the Marsh family.



This impression of The Hoo at Kimpton, from the Capability Brown website, suggests that it was indeed a somewhat grander estate than that of Pricklers, With grounds designed by him, and a bridge over the River Mimram that ran through the estate designed by the eminent architect Sir William Chambers, comparison with the estate in East Barnet would be hard to justify.



Although few pictures appear to exist of the mansion at Pricklers, during this research I discovered the painting below on the website of the Artnet Worldwide Corporation.

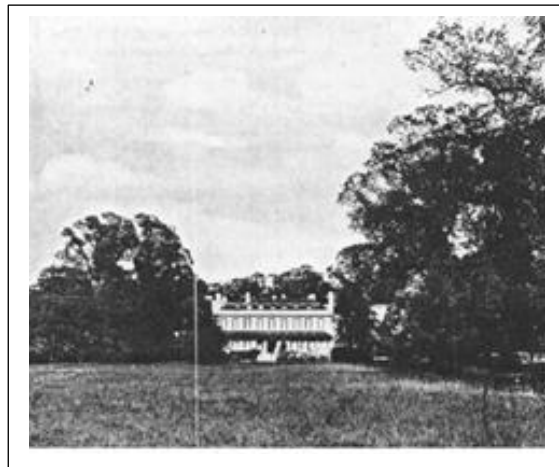
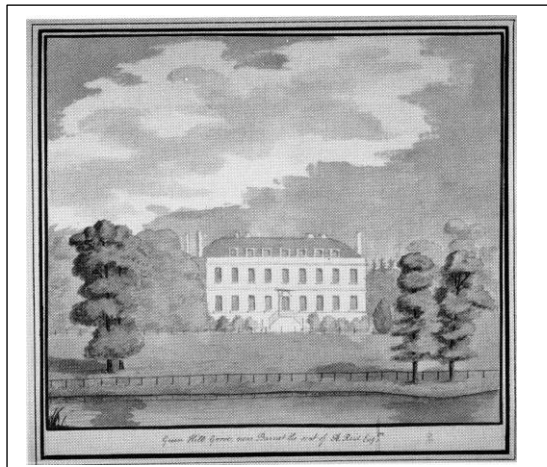


'View of Green Hill Grove, East Barnet' 11.5 x 17.5 in (29.2 x 44.4 cm) by John Preston Neale (c1780-1847)

Neale was an English architectural and landscape draughtsman and, although much of his work was drawn, he produced the occasional watercolour or oil painting, and this view of the mansion was produced in oil on Canvas. His works were published in 'The Views of the Seats, Mansions, Castles, etc. of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland' in 1819-23.

Although undated, given the works commenced by Thomas Brand Jnr to improve his estate at The Hoo in Kimpton (mentioned above), it seems possible that it may have been a commission painted by John Neale to record the outcome of changes he made at Pricklers when he also owned that estate between 1765 and 1767.

The pictures below are also useful references. At left is a copy of a watercolour dated c1800 when it was the property of Andrew Reid (Barnet & Hadley Past). On the right is a later but undated photograph of the house taken from the area by the lake (Ancestry).



## CHAPTER 2

### THE ESTATE AFTER THE MARSH ERA : SIX OWNERS FROM 1768 TO c1876

#### 1766 to 1781 : JOHN PYBUS (1727-1789)

Born in Burnaston, Yorkshire, he married at Fort St George in Madras India, and he died in Cheam Surrey.

After a varied and increasingly distinguished career from the age of fifteen with the East India Company in India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), with his wife and children born during his postings overseas, he retired to England a wealthy man, living initially near Berkeley Square in London, but moving in August 1766 to live at the Pricklers estate.

In keeping with the well-to-do families of the age he indulged in acquiring portraits of his family, three being commissioned from the artist Nathaniel Dance-Holland. One of these is reproduced below from which we are able to get a first impression of some of the occupants of the Pricklers estate. Whether the tree and the landscape in the background depicts the actual estate is by no means certain. The image is of a picture viewable, together with a detailed history of John Pybus, his life and family, on the website of the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia. ( [www.ngv.vic.gov.au](http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au) )



The Pybus family by Nathaniel Dance-Holland, ca.1769

John Pybus sold the estate to Augustine Prevost in 1781, after which he appears to have relocated to Cheam in Surrey where his death was recorded in the parish of St Dunstan in June 1789.

## 1781 to 1790 : MAJOR GENERAL AUGUSTINE PREVOST (1723-1786)

Born in Geneva, Augustine Prevost began his military career as a mercenary soldier in Sardinia, moving later to become an officer with the Dutch Army.

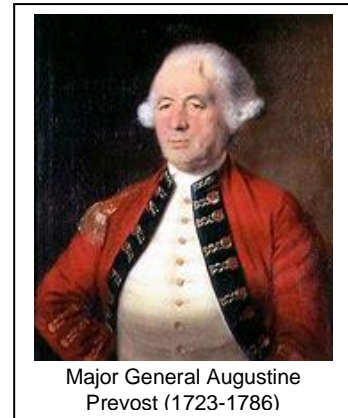
In 1756 he joined the British Army and in the 60th Regiment of Foot he served in the North America theatre of the French and Indian War, part of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) during which he was wounded. In 1763 he briefly acted as the interim military Governor of West Florida.

After the war, Prevost was posted to the West Indies serving as deputy inspector general at Kingston, Jamaica. He was promoted to colonel in 1774.

By 1776 he was commanding a contingent of the 60th Regiment during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) where he played a major part in achieving the British success fighting against the American and French in the Siege of Savanna, Georgia in 1779.

He retired to England in 1780 holding the rank of Major General, soon to become the latest owner of the Pricklers estate when he purchased it from John Pybus. He died on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1786 and is buried in a family vault in the churchyard of St. Mary the Virgin, East Barnet.

The Pricklers estate was sold by his heirs to Andrew Reid in 1790.



Major General Augustine  
Prevost (1723-1786)

Cass, in his history of East Barnet, records that in 1782 Augustine Prevost granted a portion of the Pricklers estate land lying to the south beyond Lyonsdown Road to his relative, John Benedic Durade, 'for his life', and Durade built a house there called 'Belle Vue'.

(Of note is that this did not include the land known as 'Millfields' on the corner of Lyonsdown Road and the Great North Road which was not part of the Pricklers estate. This believed to have once been the site of Agate Mill - the Manor windmill).

This arrangement appears to have continued after Andrew Reid purchased Pricklers, and when (as we shall see later) Reid moved to the adjacent Lyonsdown house and estate he appears to have continued his ownership of that part of the Pricklers estate.

Cass details a long list of those that later occupied 'Belle Vue' leading to its purchase in about 1820 by Thomas Wyatt, an east India Merchant, who demolished the house and built a mansion he named 'Willenhall' after the place in Warwickshire where he had lived and owned property.

Another series of changing ownership across the years would see the land known as 'Millfields' purchased into the Willenhall estate, which was finally sold for housing development in 1890 by its last owner, William Alpheus Higgs, a tea merchant who served as sheriff of London and Middlesex. The house was demolished, and only the brick gate posts that led to the estate from the Great North Road survive, standing at the western end of Willenhall Avenue.

## 1790 to 1810 : **ANDREW REID (1751-1841)**

Andrew Reid was born in Tain, Ross-shire in 1751, Scotland. Ancestry reveals that by 1782 he was living in Friern Barnet when he married Harriot Gildart at St Mary's Church, Finchley.

Having acquired the Pricklers estate from the heirs of Augustine Prevost in 1790, three years later he entered the field of brewing becoming a partner in the firm of Meux Reid & Co (see below) where he became renowned for his brewing of London stout.

Cass records that Andrew Reid sold Pricklers to Richard Nicholl in 1810 when he purchased the neighbouring Lyonsdown estate. However, ownership of the part of Pricklers estate land lying to the south of Lyonsdown Road granted by Augustine Prevost for the erection of 'Belle Vue' and later 'Willenhall' houses was not included in the sale thus remaining the property of Andrew Reid.



Andrew Reid (1751-1841)

Described as a wealthy merchant and distiller, in 1793 Andrew Reid became a partner in the brewing firm that had been established in 1757 when Richard Meux and Mungo Murray bought Jackson's brewery on Mercer Street in Covent Garden, London. Following a major fire Jackson's had built the Griffin Brewery in Clerkenwell in 1763. After he became a partner the firm began to trade as Meux Reid & Co. and the business grew rapidly, with over 100,000 barrels produced for the first time by 1795. He became renowned for his brewing of London stout.

By 1816 it was trading as Reid's Brewery and, although Andrew Reid had by then died, by 1853 it had become the fourth largest brewer in London measured by the amount of malt used.

In 1888 the firm became a listed company with a capital of £2 million and in 1898 it merged with a rival company becoming Watney Combe & Reid to become the largest brewing company in London. After various mergers and acquisitions it became Watney Mann in 1958 and was finally taken over in 1972 by Grand Metropolitan, a hotels and catering group. It closed in 1979.



## 1810 to c1845 : RICHARD NICHOLL (1766-1839)

Richard Nicholl purchased the Pricklers estate from Brewer Andrew Reid in 1810, and his ownership is recorded in the records of the Enclosure Awards of 1818. His place of birth and details of his parents are unclear from Ancestry records, and only vague details of his occupation have been discovered, but Ancestry does reveal that in 1802 he married Anne Charrington in the church of St Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney, London.

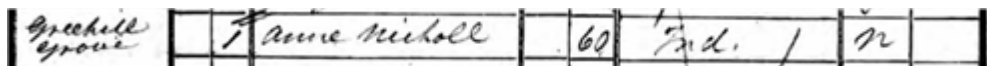
Anne was the daughter of John Charrington, a brewer with the firm of Hale brewers in Islington in 1766 who became a one-third partner in the brewing firm of Westfield, Moss & Charrington - then trading from the Anchor Brewery in Stepney. He became half owner of the firm in 1765, and by 1783 the Charrington family had become sole owners after John's brother Harry joined the firm.

By 1807/8, they were the second largest brewers in London, producing 20,252 barrels of beer per year. After a series of acquisitions and mergers across the years, Charrington's merged with the companies of Bass and Mitchell & Butlers to form Bass Charrington Limited in 1997.

Richard and Anne Nicholl's son, Charrington Nicholl, was born in 1816 after they had acquired Pricklers, and the 1841 Census records him living in Essex - his occupation shown as a brewer.

Richard Nicholl died in Brighton in 1839 and was buried in the churchyard of St Mary the Virgin in East Barnet, but his wife Anne was recorded in the 1841 Census still living on the estate.

Of importance, a manuscript note on the 1841 Census return clearly shows that the estate had by then become known as Greenhill Grove.



By the time of the 1851 Census Anne Nicholl is recorded living in Tunbridge Wells in Kent - whilst the Census returns for Chipping Barnet that year and in 1861 show that Greenhill Grove was now under the ownership of Samuel R Block.

Although the occupation of Richard Nicholl remains elusive, it can be deduced from information on the website of the Centre for the Study of Legacies of British Slavery that he and other family members were involved in what would probably have been the growing and importing of sugar from the Spring and the Mount Wynne Estates on St Vincent in the Caribbean Sea.

The website (at [www.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.ucl.ac.uk)) records details of the compensation paid to owners of slaves that were freed under the terms of The Slave Compensation Act 1837.

Richard Nicholl - Profile & Legacies Summary:

Awarded in his own right a half share of the compensation for Spring and Mt Wynne estates in St Vincent as owner-in-fee; he also was part of a group (possibly including his wife's cousin Nicholas Charrington) who were awarded the other half of the compensation for the two estates, apparently as devisees-in-trust of John Nicholl for unpaid purchase money. He was the same man as the Richard Nicholl the cousin, trustee and beneficiary of the 1795 will of Robert Wynne of St Vincent (q.v.). He directly funded the business of one of his sons as a brewer at Colchester (Charrington Nicholl & Co. Ltd) in the 1830s, and probably indirectly funded that of two other sons (H & V Nicholls Anchor Brewery in Lewisham) around the same time.

St Vincent 482 (Spring Estate)£4,552 7s 1d : St Vincent 640 (Mount Wynne)£6,124 7s 4d

(The narrative also included the information that Richard Nicholl's daughter Rose married Robert Blake Byass, a partner in Byass and Charrington and co-founder of the Gonzalez Byass sherry concern).



Sales plan of the estate c 1834-48 showing the mansion and surrounding buildings (Barnet Museum)



(NOTE: The 1841 Census recorded only minimal details about each household, but after 1851 each Census records more information and we will now discover more via Ancestry about the owners of Greenhill Grove and the estate itself at ten yearly intervals up until 1921.

**c1845 to c1865 : SAMUEL RICHARD BLOCK (1792-1864)**

From the 1851 Census return we can infer that Samuel Block had acquired Greenhill Grove after Anne, the widow of Richard Nicholl, had moved from the estate to Tunbridge Wells sometime after 1841. (The extract from the sales plan on the previous page probably relates to this sale.)

He and his wife Margaret were absent in 1851, but two of his sons - William, a silk Merchant, and James, a wine merchant - are recorded living at Greenhill Grove that year. For the first time we can also see from the return that there were also twenty five others residing on the estate, including a visiting stockbroker, a butler, four maids, a groom and a footman living in the main house.

Two other locations on the estate are listed where further servants such as a coachman, a gardener and their families were housed, some probably living at the entrance lodge which was located at the corner of the estate near the junction of Lyonsdown and the Great North Road (see picture below).

Another estate property is also recorded as being occupied by a horse dealer, his family, a visitor and a gardener.

The 1861 Census confirms that Samuel R Block (incorrectly recorded as James) and his wife Margaret were back in residence. Samuel's occupation is recorded as Magistrate for the counties of Hertfordshire and Middlesex. Fifteen other residents are recorded; Margaret's mother, their son-in-law - a Royal Navy Captain, and a niece are living in the main house, together with nine servants. A coachman and his family are living in The Lodge, and a gardener and his family in another location.

By 1863 Samuel would become High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, just a year before his death at Greenhill Grove on 11<sup>th</sup> Dec 1864. Buried in Camden, a plaque to his memory remains today on the north wall of the church of St John the Baptist in Chipping Barnet. Adjacent is another erected by Samuel to the memory of his son, Adam Henry G Block, a Deputy Commissioner of the East India Company, who died at the outbreak of the Sepoy Mutiny at Sultan Pore in India on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1857.



Portrait of Samuel Richard Block, of Greenhill, Barnet, later High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, and his third son, Adam Henry Block. William Barraud (1810–1850) oil on canvas, 1846 (artnet.com)

**c1865 to 1876 : ROBERT SMITH (1812-1890)**

The family of Samuel Block appear to have sold Greenhill Grove sometime after he died in 1864 - probably to Robert Smith as he and his family are in residence by 1871.

The 1861 Census records Robert Smith aged 49, an East India and China Merchant, living with his wife Margaret and their four daughters aged between 8 and 7 months living at Harrow Weald Park - described by visionofbritain.org.uk as being 'the seat of R Smith Esq'. A nephew and a niece are recorded, together with two visitors, and eight servants including a governess, a nurse and a butler.

By the time of the 1871 Census Robert Smith and his wife are noted as living at what is now recorded for the first time as Greenhill Park. Now with eight children - six daughters and two sons. They have nine servants and a Gardener and his wife are also recorded living at The Lodge.

By 1881 Robert has retired and the family, now with just four servants, are recorded living at Chesham House in Croydon. After a further move to a large property named 'Killcott' at Godalming in Surrey, Robert Smith died there in 1890.

He probably sold the estate sometime in or about 1876 to Frederick Hasluck, as evidenced by the latter having died on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1877 with his probate record confirming that he was then living at Greenhill Park. His widow Emma Hasluck and their family are thus recorded as the occupants of the estate in and after the 1881 Census - although by then she had already remarried.



The Lodge entrance to the Pricklers/Greenhill estate c1917  
The roadway to the right is the original entrance to Lyonsdown Road from the Great North Road (BM Archive)



## CHAPTER 3

### c1876 to 1926 : EMMA HASLUCK/TWENTYMAN (1837-1926)

At the time of the 1871 Census the Hasluck family were recorded living in Baker Street, Enfield. Frederick Hasluck's occupation is shown as being a Merchant (earlier Census returns record him being a Merchant and Goldsmith). Emma (née Pedley) was Frederick's second wife - having previously been married to Emma's sister Margaret who had died in 1857.

The Pedley family were successful lawyers in the City of London, and Emma's father Samuel had built a property empire in Stratford, where he lived, and in the City. Frederick's father, also Samuel, was born in Birmingham in 1785 and by 1819 he is recorded as being a gold chain maker in Holborn, and by 1837 is living at 104 Hatton Garden. After 1851 he also appears to have moved into property ownership, and in the 1861 Census is recorded as a 'Fund, House and Landowner'.

The parents of both Frederick and Emma were successful businessmen, each with knowledge and experience in the field of property acquisition and management, businesses that may well have also involved their sons. As will be explored later - and although I have no specific information to confirm this - I believe that whilst the family are recorded as the *occupants* of Greenhill Park after the mid-1880s, *ownership* of the property was probably held in some form of trust for the benefit of Emma and the Hasluck family rather than being owned directly by them after c1876.

Returning to details of the Hasluck family, after marrying Frederick, Emma became both aunt and stepmother to two of Frederick's children from his marriage to her sister (Frederick Pedley Hasluck and Percy Pedley Hasluck), also becoming mother to five children from her marriage to him (Margaret Emma, Frederick Reginald, Lancelot Gerald, Inez Eleanor and Mabel Christine Noemi Hasluck - who died in 1895). Frederick Reginald became an architect, Lancelot Gerald a surveyor.

**1881:** Frederick Hasluck died in February 1877 and the 1881 Census shows that by then Emma had remarried - in December 1878 - to the Reverend George Twentyman (1841-1912), the widely respected Congregational Minister of New Barnet, a strong supporter of Congregationalism across Hertfordshire and beyond and a man involved with many social organisations across the area.

They, plus Margaret, Frederick Reginald and Lancelot are living in the main house, together with nine domestic servants including a butler, a groom and a coachman. A gardener and his family are also recorded separately, presumably living in The Lodge.

**1891:** George Twentyman was absent when the Census was taken - he is recorded living as a lodger with a farmer at New Farm, Willian, Hertfordshire. Emma is therefore listed as the head, together with Frederick, Lancelot, Inez and Mabel.

Eight domestic servants are also listed living in the main house, and there are now two lodges recorded, one housing a coachman and his wife, an office boy, a groom and an under-gardener, the second lodge another gardener and his wife together with a visiting Dressmaker.

Lancelot Hasluck (1863-1937) devoted forty years to public service. He never married and is remembered locally through the housing charity that he set up in 1931 with funds from property investments begun by his grandfather, Samuel, in Stratford. Almshouses in several locations in East Barnet bear his name, and the name of his family also lives on through Hasluck Gardens, one of several new residential roads which - as we shall see later - would come to be built when the Greenhill Park estate was sold for development after 1926. ([www.lancelothaslucktrust.co.uk/](http://www.lancelothaslucktrust.co.uk/))

**1901:** George Twentyman is now back at Greenhill Park, together with Emma, Frederick, Inez and Lancelot. The occupation of Lancelot is again shown as being a surveyor - with an annotation in different handwriting recording the added qualification 'Land and Estate'. The number of domestic servants living in the main house is again nine, including a groom.

It appears that there may have been alterations or additions to the properties. A coachman and his wife are now shown living in Greenhill Park Stables, a gardener and his wife are living in The Lodge and a further gardener is living in what is only described as 'The Gardens'.

**1911:** This year the Census returns were completed for the first time by the householder, and the distinctive hand of the Rev George Twentyman, aged 70, declares his occupation to be Retired Congregational Minister. Emma, aged 74, is there along with Lancelot (aged 49) and Inez (aged 47). Nine servants are again recorded - a housekeeper, butler, lady's maid, cook, parlourmaid, housemaid, under-housemaid, kitchenmaid and a groom. (Frederick Reginald Hasluck has now married and is living nearby with his wife and two daughters, a visitor, and four servants at Gloucester House in Gloucester Road).

Separate returns for The Lodge record a gardener and his wife, that for the Stables a coachman, his wife and son (see box below) and that for 'The Garden' another gardener.

In 1911 the coachman living in the Stables at Greenhill Park was Albert Linford. His wife Elizabeth and son James Linford, age 21, a cycle manufacturer, are also recorded living with him.

Further research into the life of James (Edward) Linford reveals some interesting details - both directly related to Greenhill Park and also in respect of James in his later life.

The record of his marriage to Florence Kate Webb in the church of St Mary the Virgin, Monken Hadley on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1915 shows that he had by then become the chauffeur at Greenhill Park, whilst his father is still recorded as being the coachman on the estate.

The family were clearly moving with the times in respect of the changing modes of transport.

James, who was born in St Paul's Warden, Hertfordshire, went on to serve in WWI as a gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery. He survived the war and is next recorded in the 1939 Register living with Florence in East Barnet, listed as being incapacitated by illness.

James died in 1943 still living in Barnet. Florence died in 1958 living at 77 Hadley Highstone.

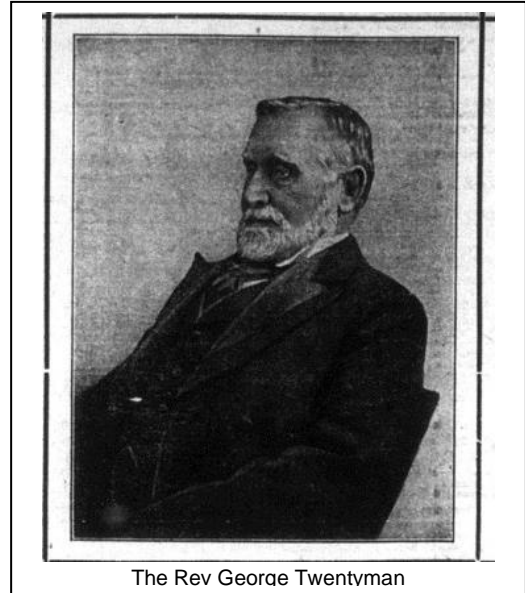
There would however soon be change at Greenhill Park.

The Reverend Twentyman had been suffering from bad health, and on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1912 the Barnet Press reported that he and Emma had left 'by motor' the previous Wednesday to travel to Harrogate - where it might be assumed they were heading for him to 'take the waters' at the spa or perhaps receive hydrotherapy treatment at the 'luxurious Royal Baths' that had opened in 1897.

As planned, they were to stay overnight at the Station Hotel in Peterborough, and on arrival Emma despatched a letter home to Greenhill Park with some domestic instructions which were received the following day. However, soon after the letter arrived a telegram followed advising the family that The Reverend had sadly passed away.

On 17<sup>th</sup> August 1912 the Barnet Press carried a lengthy report of his funeral service in New Barnet and interment at the Great Northern Cemetery in Southgate which filled over three columns of the paper.

It listed the details of the many family representatives and others that arrived in no less than five carriages, together with the names of many others who attended from across the district and beyond. Fulsome praise was given for his life and service from New Barnet and Barnet Congregational churches, the Wesleyan, Baptist and Presbyterian churches, and the New Barnet PSA (Pleasant Sunday Afternoon) meeting group that he often attended.



#### The 1921 Census

First released in January 2022, The National Archives (TNA) awarded the contract to digitise and market the 1921 data to Findmypast and so, regrettably, it is not available on Ancestry and is thus not readily co-searchable. Available online via subscription to Findmypast, free access is only available to researchers by visiting either the National Archives in Kew, Manchester Central Library, or the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

**1921:** This, the final year that we can gain a detailed glimpse into the lives of those living at Greenhill Park, we find just Emma Twentyman age 84, her son Lancelot Gerald Hasluck (59) and her daughter Inez Eleanor Hasluck (57) in residence. The entry for Lancelot records his occupation as architect and surveyor and he is an employer. The Census now also includes the address of the place of work for individuals, and we now learn his office was located at 28a Basinghall Street, London, W.C.

Given that we are now twenty-one years into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, nine years have passed since the Reverend Twentyman passed away, and it is now three years after the impact that World War One would have had on the lives of many, the Census reveals that little had changed at Greenhill Park in respect of the number of servants still employed. Also living at the mansion are a housekeeper, a lady's maid, a cook, a parlourmaid, an upper housemaid, a housemaid, a kitchenmaid, a gentleman's servant and a gardener. An adjacent record reveals that the head gardener is living at The Lodge.

The groom and coachman have gone, perhaps surprisingly not to be replaced by a chauffeur, but the relative luxury of retaining broadly the same number of living-in servants evident for the family at Greenhill Park and mansion since 1881 is thus continued.

The 1921 Census was taken on 19<sup>th</sup> June and, as we shall see, just five years later another major family event occurs that has dramatic consequences on the long history of the Greenhill Estate.

**1926:** On 8<sup>th</sup> March the death of Emma Hasluck/Twentyman at the age of 90 having lived together with her family at Greenhill Park for over fifty years will precipitate the sale of the estate.

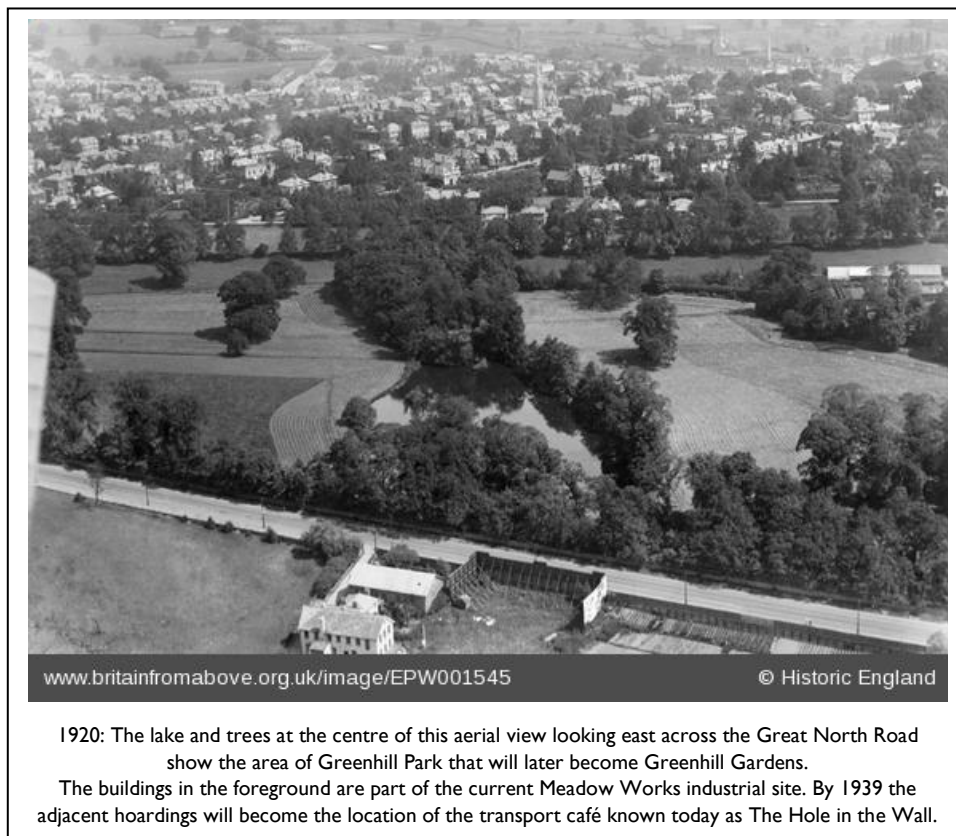
The death of Emma Twentyman was reported in the Barnet Press of 13<sup>th</sup> March 1926 - see right.

Of note is the recognition that, as with her late husband the Reverend Twentyman, she had until eight years previously taken a prominent part in the public life of New Barnet - including the entertainment of large parties who were engaged in the social and religious work of the district. No doubt many of these would have been hosted in the house and the grounds of Greenhill Park.

Her funeral took place at the City of London Cemetery in Ilford, perhaps closer to those of her Pedley ancestors, and it did not therefore receive a similar lengthy or detailed eulogy as was afforded to her husband in 1912.



After the three hundred and sixty eight years of occupation detailed above - the last fifty by Emma Hasluck/Twentyman and her family - the existence of Greenhill Park was finally coming to an end.....



After looking back at the occupancy of Greenhill Park for over three centuries let us consider some of the major events those living there would have observed around them across the years before we explore the sale and subsequent development of the once fifty acre estate after 1926.

First we must remember that for much of the time between 1558 and into the 1800s the estate would have sat amid open country with views to the west across the North Road and the Dollis Valley towards Totteridge and Arkley, and to the east across a valley facing towards rising ground and the current areas of Cockfosters and Arnos Grove.

In 1660 might they have seen Samuel Pepys travelling past on one of his several visits to take the waters at the Physic Well? He described the adjacent unmade and at times nigh impassable North Road as being “only one path and torne, plowed, and digged up, owing to the waggons carrying excessive weights” after one such journey. Also, would the occupants have known that in 1665 passing travellers were unwittingly carrying the Plague from London to Chipping Barnet?

They too would have travelled the unkempt North Road until an Act of Parliament in 1712 ordered the road should be turnpiked from Highgate to Underhill and beyond, thus placing a toll on all those using the road to fund the necessary improvements to it, and not until the 1820s would the Greenhill residents have benefited from the major works that would see the boggy downward sloping stretch past the estate known as Pricklers Hill raised and levelled.

That work required a stream running westwards from the estate towards the Dollis Brook valley to be placed in a culvert under the road, which may have caused them some disruption as it was probably also the source of the water for the two fishponds that once existed on the estate.

From the 1850s they would also have witnessed the sale of the neighbouring Lyonsdown estate, the railway arriving across that land to the east, and the beginning of the residential growth of New and East Barnet approaching them gradually after the station at New Barnet had arrived. To the south, the Willenhall estate - itself once part of Greenhill - would follow in the 1890s to become the new residential housing we see today.

The residents may have felt further isolated after the railway to High Barnet opened in 1872 crossing west of the North Road on open land then owned by the Leathersellers charity, and to the north as Station Road grew to allow easier road travel between High and New Barnet.

The coming of the railways also accelerated other changes near to the estate, including the death of the transport that once would have seen up to 150 stagecoaches pass the estate each day, the arrival of the tram service that reached High Barnet in 1907, and the increasingly rapid housing developments that were already springing up all around it by the 1920s.

By using the Census records we have been privileged to be able to take a glimpse into the seemingly comfortable life that would have been experienced by Emma Hasluck/Twentyman and her family across fifty years living on the comparatively minor landed estate that began in 1558 with what the late Gillian Gear of Barnet Museum summarised in the book ‘Historic Barnet’ as:

“... the next period in our history [*which*] saw our area being used by the new rich merchant class for country estates”.

For Greenhill Park - the ‘Pricklers’ of yore - that period ended rapidly after Emma’s death in March 1926. In the following chapters we explore what happened next as the estate is sold and the houses and apartments - and of course the public garden - that we see today begin to appear on the former parkland.

## CHAPTER 4

### 1926: THE SALE AND DEVELOPMENT OF GREENHILL PARK ESTATE BEGINS

Full details regarding the sale and subsequent purchase of the estate have understandably proved difficult to ascertain - they were of course of a private and/or commercial nature. However, a copy of the prospectus detailing the property when it was scheduled for auction in London by Knight, Frank and Rutley on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1926 are held in Barnet Museum (see extract below). It contains full and informative details of not just 'A Moderate Sized Residence', but also eight further lots comprising five plots of 'Valuable Building Land and three 'Desirable/Valuable Residences'....

Included was a plan indicating the various plots which shows frontages onto the Great North Road, Station Road, Lyonsdown Road, and - interestingly - the south side of Gloucester Road. The latter border (to the north-west) appears to differ from that indicated on earlier maps and plans. I surmise that this area of land *might* at some time have been acquired by the Greenhill Park estate from the adjoining Lyonsdown estate - possibly in 1810 when Andrew Reid sold Greenhill to move to Lyonsdown - but retained that part of the estate that had been granted by Augustine Prevost to his relative John Benedic Durade in 1782 (later to become the Willenhall estate).

Also of interest is the heading which announces that the sale is 'By direction of the Trustees of the late Mrs Twentyman, and Another'. I believe this confirms my earlier assumption that Greenhill may not have been owned directly by the Hasluck family after they moved there in c1876 but was held to their benefit in a trust or trusts. A further point to note is that the solicitors mentioned in connection with the sale are Pedley, May and Fletcher - Pedley was Emma Twentyman's maiden name, her father being a prominent lawyer in the City of London - another family connection.

By direction of the Trustees of the late Mrs. Twentyman, and Another.

**BARNET, HERTFORDSHIRE.**

About half a mile from New Barnet and High Barnet Stations (L. & N.E. Rly.)  
with frequent services to King's Cross, Broad Street and Moorgate Street.  
About 9½ miles from London.

---

*Particulars, Plan and Conditions of Sale*  
of

**GREENHILL PARK**  
NEW BARNET.

COMPRISING:

*A Moderate Sized Residence*

containing Lounge Hall, Four Reception Rooms, Billiard Room,  
Fifteen Bed and Dressing Rooms, Bathroom and Domestic  
Offices. Conservatory, Heated Greenhouses, delightfully planned  
Pleasure Gardens, with Lawns, Timbered Parkland and  
Ornamental Waters. Entrance Lodge, Gardener's Bungalow,  
Capital Garage, Stabling and Farm Buildings;

**THREE PRIVATE RESIDENCES**  
also

*Valuable Building Land*

having frontages to four thoroughfares totalling nearly 5,000 ft., the  
whole being FREEHOLD, and having a total area of about

**43 ACRES.**

With the exception of one Property

**VACANT POSSESSION will be given on Completion of the Purchase.**

To be offered for Sale by Auction, in Five or Nine Lots, by Messrs.

---

**KNIGHT, FRANK & RUTLEY**

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In the Estate Sale Room, 20, Hanover Square, W.1.  
On WEDNESDAY, 22nd SEPTEMBER, 1926,  
At 1.30 p.m. (unless previously sold privately).

Solicitors: Messrs. PEDLEY, MAY & FLETCHER,  
23, Bush Lane, Cannon Street, E.C.4.

Auctioneers' Offices: 20, Hanover Square, W.1.  
And at Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ashford, Kent.



Further aspects of the sale can nevertheless be discovered from the reporting of them by the Barnet Press. (The minutes of the East Barnet Valley Urban District Council for the years 1926-30 would also have proved helpful in charting this part of the Greenhill Park history but appear to be lost).

What I have discovered there is of interest. An 'unofficial' move to encourage the Council to acquire the whole estate in order to preserve the park for use as a public amenity was underway as early as July 1926. It was led by a group of local representatives some of whom, I venture to suggest, may not have been altogether without personal advantage in mind. I also surmise from the reporting of this in the Press also indicates that 'the vendors', who were able to react immediately in response to the proposals, serves to support my earlier view that the estate was probably being sold by property professionals out of a family trust rather than privately by the heirs of Emma Hasluck.

In summary, the Press of 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1926 reported on a proposal tabled for discussion at an informal meeting - called and chaired by Alderman Amos Ford JP but 'acting in a private capacity'. Held in the offices of the Council, it was attended by numerous public dignitaries including the Chairman of the Council, a County Councillor, several current and past East Barnet Council members, and various local residents representing the quite substantial private houses that were already appearing in the area near the estate. Letters of apology were received from other residents who were unable to attend, and a petition of support signed by thirty residents who were also unable to attend was tabled. A name recognisable as an established local estate agent was also recorded as being present.

The chair began by pointing out that two years ago the District Council had scheduled the estate as an open space, and because it was now coming onto the market it would be necessary for them to make up their minds whether to purchase it or not.

The fact that neighbouring Barnet Urban District Council were already in the process of purchasing seventy acres of land owned by the Leathersellers Charity just the other side of the railway parallel to the North Road for public use was mentioned, but the relevance of it was firmly rejected as an issue when the chair said "Whatever Barnet Council do has nothing to do with me. I shall in no way be influenced by Barnet. I should be ashamed of East Barnet Council if they allowed Barnet to provide playing fields for East Barnet Valley".

The case made for encouraging the Council to formally make an offer to purchase the estate included the view that it would provide a valuable amenity for the residents of East Barnet, including allowing the newly married couples coming into the district easy access to a park ("At present, where could a mother wheel her perambulator?" was asked); another reason tabled was a suggestion that it would provide a resource for visitors from London. Counter arguments centred around how much purchasing the estate would add to the rates of everyone living in the East Barnet district - with up to an additional six pence in the pound being suggested as a maximum, a view that drew the comment that even the addition of two pence would not be acceptable to residents and so would militate against the scheme.

The idea of introducing a swimming pool and holding outdoor 'high class concerts' was introduced, together with the possibility that the establishment of kiosks for the sale of refreshments would encourage visitors and could make the park a paying concern.

The generally positive (if perhaps biased) line of discussion that was emerging was punctured by a contribution (possibly from Mr J Harris Brown of Hadley Brewery) to the effect that "whilst the gentlemen present may well not find the addition of three or even six pence to the rates much of a worry, they must not forget there were people in the district not so well favoured with the world's goods, in whom the imposition of even an additional rate of one penny in the pound was a serious matter. If the people of Lyonsdown were to benefit from the increase in value to their property that the retention of the estate would bring they should open a public subscription list".

The meeting concluded with a vote narrowly endorsing the proposal that the Council should be “urged to take every step necessary to secure Greenhill Park for the benefit of the inhabitants of the East Barnet Valley district”.

Of note is that no reference was made at the meeting as to the likely cost of purchasing the park.

A week later the Press carried three letters to the editor expressing various concerns with the plan to purchase the estate as had been reported earlier. The absence of any indicated cost of purchase was raised in one letter signed by five who had attended the meeting and who had opposed the decision to progress it with the Council and “which had been reached by a bare majority”. Another expressed the view that the wider opinion of the ratepayers should be taken “to provide an all-round view of the position as it actually is”. The third included the observations that it was time to cry “Halt! and nip this plague or disease of squandermania in the bud” and the observation that “A fool and his money are soon parted - but it takes a wise man to save”.

However, the leader in the same edition noted that a special meeting of the East Barnet Council had already “By a majority of one, on a division in which three members, by reason of absence, did not vote, now resolved to make an offer of £20,000 for the park, subject, of course, to the usual conditions in such cases”. In sound editorial style the leader also noted and commented on the range of concerns and objections that were being aired more widely in respect of any such purchase.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> July, under the heading ‘THE FATE OF GREENHILL PARK’, the Press leader delivered the news that “The Greenhill Park public purchase scheme has been killed, not so much by the rejection of East Barnet Council’s offer, as by the force of public opinion. The public park proposal raised a veritable tornado of protest and, with the Council divided against itself, the scheme was strangled almost as soon as it was born”.

Continuing, it also included the information that “even an invitation by the Park’s estate agent for the Council to offer £18,000 for the property exclusive of the frontages to Gloucester Road and Station Road” had met with no sign of a response from the Council.

The leader ended by tabling the question as to whether a local authority which had town planned a given property as an open space could acquire that property for the purposes of a recreation ground and then sell part of it for building developments. Elsewhere in the edition their report of the actual Council meeting included the words of County Alderman Amos Ford, the main protagonist of the scheme, as saying “the Council will never possess the estate”.

Here I return to the query raised earlier - whether the online information regarding Greenhill Gardens may not be entirely accurate where it indicates that:

*“In July 1926 East Barnet Council purchased the land which is now a public park for £20,000”.*

That is clearly not accurate - although parts of the debate recorded above may well explain how a partial but incorrect reading of the considerations at the time may have led to it.

However, Greenhill Gardens, part of the former estate, does still exist and is in public ownership. In the following chapters we shall discover how this was finally achieved....



## CHAPTER 5

### THE SALE AND DEVELOPMENT OF GREENHILL PARK 1927 - 1936

Looking back across the years to 1558 has actually proved easier and more productive than delving into the period of the sale and development of the estate after 1926. What I have managed to discover is that a London based company, Park Estates (London) Ltd, appears to have purchased at least the largest part of the former estate. The 'For Sale' boards erected around the area and shown in contemporary pictures held by Barnet Museum indicate they went on to market smaller plots for residential development acting with estate agents Taylor & Melhuish of New Barnet (an established local firm, a member of which I note was represented at the informal meeting held in 1926 to discuss the purchase by the Council) and Ernest Owers, a firm based in Golders Green.

Further research into the archives of the Barnet Press through 1927-28 reveals interesting information - albeit through the informal but informative 'local observation' column contributed at the time by "Philanderer". On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1927: "Building on Greenhill Park is to be restricted to six houses per acre. Even so, it is estimated that the increase in population will be 1,200, a tidy sized village". On 13<sup>th</sup> August: "After consideration of the provision of seats for public use for over 20 years.... EBDC have decided to put a few here and there across the district..... One of the seats will be placed at the top of Long Street [*now Longmore Avenue*] where one can watch the houses [*on the former Greenhill estate*] grow....."

On 5<sup>th</sup> May 1928 it notes, with a degree of inciteful if cutting sarcasm, 'If you want to have a last peep at Greenhill Park you'd better hurry, for the builders are coming along. The report that a Cabinet Minister has taken the mansion is all moonshine. I never believed the story myself. There are too many active journalists about Barnet to suit Cabinet Ministers'. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October he noted that a Council meeting had given approval for "an office at Greenhill Park for Taylor & Melhuish".

From personal memory the estate agent's office was in what would eventually become the row of shops now known as Greenhill Parade. I also know from my own family records that the firm also handled the rental and subsequent sale to my parents of our house on the Playing Fields estate - built in the 1930s on thirty of the seventy acres of land purchased by Barnet Council from the Leathersellers Charity - ostensibly for public recreation but then sold for housing!

My understanding, based on sight of the house deeds of a fellow volunteer at the Museum living in Dinsdale Gardens - one of the four roads that were built on the former estate - is that by 1929 Park Estates (London) Ltd, having either acquired the whole of the former estate or possibly having been formed by the trust owning it, was selling plots as individual building sites to local builders.

In the case of Dinsdale Gardens the documentation clearly sets out the purchase price of the overall plot, together with a schedule specifying things such as the size of the properties that must be constructed and numerous other requirements relating to walls and fences etc. A stipulation requires that "a house built on any plot shall be used as a private dwelling house only or as a residence for professional purposes only and not for any trade business or manufacture".

A form of 'upward' 'social engineering' was thus in evidence, containing an echo of Philanderer's note in February 1927 recording the Council's edict that building would be restricted to six houses per acre. If the existing residents of the large villas that had been constructed in the Lyonsdown area had failed to see the park survive as a buffer against the 'intrusions' of the Great North Road and the railway that the purchase of Greenhill Park by the Council would have afforded, the scene was being set for the new developments to at least be of a type where selling prices would militate towards purchasers of the new properties being of a similar middle-to-upper class nature.

However, a long-time resident of Hasluck Gardens that I met during this research mentioned that another of his neighbours, also long living there, once told him that after the properties in the area were completed the price even then was proving to be beyond the purse of many prospective purchasers. (A brochure of the time advertises 'Delightful Freehold Homes' in Lyonsdown Road with three to four bedrooms and all modern conveniences at prices starting from £1,250).

The resulting changes to the estate and the immediate surrounding area are illustrated in this extract from the OS map (revised to 1935). Comparison with the 1866 map included earlier demonstrates just how much development had taken place over the seventy years between them. Of note is that only the larger fish pond and a row of trees from the former estate - leading to a new road, appropriately named Greenhill Park - are still shown. Several houses are still to be constructed there, along Hasluck Gardens and in Gloucester Road. Dinsdale Court, the curved block of flats next to the pond have been constructed, but the property that stands today where the group of trees remain on the corner of the main road and Lyonsdown Road have yet to be built - also appropriately named - as The Coppice.



This photograph of the area shows a relatively quiet main road looking towards Pricklers Hill in about 1936. A few years later it would become much busier with the upheaval occasioned by the Second World War.

Just visible on the right and about to be passed by the approaching bus is the location of the Hole in the Wall café that will play an important part in our final chapter - which will finally answer the question of how and when Greenhill Gardens finally came into public ownership.



New housing on the former Greenhill Park estate is just visible behind the trees on the left and, despite the image of the motor bus in the distance, tram lines and their overhead wires are still in evidence - soon to be replaced ready for the arrival of trolleybus services in 1938.



The only substantial extant remains of the Greenhill Park estate are visible in the gardens and lake, but there is another surviving remnant - one of the pair of brick archways which once adorned the main entrance to the estate from Lyonsdown Road. It was saved from demolition by developers in 1981 following a campaign led by local residents Mrs Beryl Kemp and Mrs Hazel Hughes, pictured here (from a report of their action published in the local paper of the day).

It stands - almost hidden today by a substantial growth of ivy! - on the corner of Greenhill Park and Lyonsdown Road.

## CHAPTER 6

### GREENHILL GARDENS ARE BORN AND FINALLY BECOME A PUBLIC PARK

By 1949 the amazingly quiet Great North Road pictured above had become increasingly busy, and despite the hope that much of the heavy goods traffic travelling in and out of London would move onto the Barnet by-pass after it opened in 1928 the planners had failed to recognise that many lorry drivers would opt to use their usual more direct route through Barnet in order to call at the only transport café readily available - Arthur's Snack Bar (now the Hole in the Wall café) on Pricklers Hill.

Mr Francis, the café owner was keen to sell more than the many meals he was already selling daily, needed to expand his premises, but had found no suitable solution. Meanwhile the increasing number of lorries parking there were causing traffic problems that were spilling from the main road into the residential roads on the 'new' Greenhill estate, much to the annoyance of the residents.

Also, despite the residential developments that had taken place on the lands of the former estate, the area around the lake between the main road and the housing developments in Greenhill Park, Dinsdale Gardens and The Fairway had remained untouched. Whilst the Council appear to have still held the lake area back from development as a small part of their 1924 scheduling of the original parkland for social use they had clearly done little or nothing to actually develop it as such.

On 15<sup>th</sup> January 1949 the Press carried a report detailing discussions of a development proposed by Mr Francis which he claimed would solve his wish to expand *and* would also relieve the problems of lorry parking which had become the subject of increasing controversy. It envisaged the construction of a new cafe on the east of the main road opposite his existing site, to be constructed on stilts over a proposed new car park and built out into the low lying part of the former estate that included the lake. It was noted that the site had been neglected by the council, although they had still not acquired it, and was now described as being "an eyesore and a breeding ground for pests".

I found no further mention of the plan in the Press until 17<sup>th</sup> December 1949 when a lengthy report on the proceedings of a seven-hour long public enquiry into the proposals appeared. Held in a packed Council chamber and chaired by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, it was clear that many residents of the new Greenhill housing estate were totally opposed to the plans.

It considered an appeal against the rejection by the Council of a formal application received from the café owner in June seeking planning permission for "the construction of a café with parking facilities for lorries, lakeside gardens and a boating lake on the site of the Greenhill Park lake".

A lengthy list of reasons why the Council had rejected the application were listed, including concern that the project "contravenes a provision likely to be included in the county development plan with respect to the designation of the land for public open space purposes".

The appeal presented an equally long list of reasons for it to be approved, including the fact that the site "appeared to have been used largely as a dumping ground for all kinds of rubbish that was particularly noticeable in the recent summer when the water was very low". It also stated that the Council had been entirely negative and, after threatening compulsory purchase of the site, they had done nothing about it.

Here it might be reasonable to infer that the controversy evident when the Council failed to acquire the whole of the Estate in 1926 had rumbled on behind the scenes for years, but things suddenly became a little clearer when a statement from the Council revealed that they "had made two or three attempts to buy the site, but on each occasion agreement could not be reached on price".

Another point of note is that one of those attending to support the rejection of the proposal was a representative of Park Estates (London) Ltd - now identified as owners of Dinsdale Court - who stated that “the proposal would be injurious to the amenities of those flats” and “the company had laid out the whole of the estate in 1928 and had always understood the site of the lake would be preserved as an open space”.

Called as a witness, Council Engineer and Surveyor Mr C M Barnes revealed that “The decision to compulsorily purchase the site had been agreed but would not be proceeded with until the result of the present appeal is known”. Asked about the Council’s plans for making use of the site of the lake he replied that, in his opinion, “the best use to which it could be put was for it to be retained as an open space with walks around the lake, one or two seats, and so on”.

Asked what he himself thought would happen to it “after the Council have only had twenty-one years to consider this”, Mr Barnes replied “I think we shall compulsorily acquire it, and that it will be laid out as a lakeside garden”. A site inspection by the Ministry’s representative was agreed.

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 1950 the Press reported that the Ministry had endorsed the Council’s decision to refuse planning permission for the Café development, commenting that “the site would be a valuable addition to the meagre area of public open space available in the neighbourhood”.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May 1950 a brief mention amongst Press reporting of other Council business revealed that acquisition of the Greenhill Park lake and surrounding land - “some three acres in all” - had been approved, subject to Ministerial approval and the raising of the necessary loan. The cost of purchase was not disclosed as it was the subject of a confidential report from the district valuer.

On 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 1950 they reported that consent to borrow £550 to purchase the land had received Ministerial approval - but “as the cost of raising the money by loan would bring the total payments to £1,199, it was decided to meet cost from revenue”.

Finding further Press references as to how the Council were progressing the acquisition and moving towards opening the site for public use was to prove a lengthy hunt.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1951 the Press noted that the Council had approved the sum of £1000 for new fencing and improving the lake, and on 21<sup>st</sup> July a lead headline announced ‘Greenhill Park Lake - Work to Begin on Lakeside Walks’. The improvement scheme would ‘provide for entrances from the Great North Road and Greenhill Park road, linked by paths which circuit the lake. To obtain paths of sufficient width and curvature, and to leave where possible a screen for adjacent property, it will be necessary to fill in the margin of the lake to an average of 15 feet on the east side and part of the west side and have corners of the lake rounded off’ The report also noted that the objective was for the provision of seats, shelters, and a small public convenience to be included in the plans.

It would not be until six months later that a brief footnote in the paper of 26<sup>th</sup> January 1952 reported that “After preliminary clearing, grading and ploughing of the Greenhill Park open space the contractors will, in the spring, seed the area near the Greenhill Park entrances to the site”.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1952 the Press revealed that the new name for ‘Greenhill Park Lake’ would be ‘Greenhill Gardens’ - as it remains today. The Council meeting that week had heard that the contractors had made good progress with the removal of rushes, tins and rubbish from the site, and hope to begin harrowing and seeding shortly. It also appears that over the years that the site had remained undeveloped some of the residents of the surrounding houses had been gaining access through their back gardens as the report also recorded that the owners had been asked to permanently close all openings in their boundary fences abutting the open space - although by April the Council agreed that entry to the open space from their properties could be maintained on payment of a licence fee set at £1 1 shilling pa, with six months’ notice of termination.

As we see from the Press item from May 1953 recorded below, it appears that progress towards completion of the work continued slowly for over a year as I discovered no further Press reports on the work, or indeed evidence of any formal opening of the gardens, until then.

Whether this is evidence of continuing behind the scenes reluctance by the Council to finally achieve the creation of the public amenity after they had so publicly failed to purchase the entire Greenhill Park estate in 1926 is unclear, and it is only fair to note that after purchase of the lake area in September 1950 the winter weather over subsequent years may have caused delays, and many other issues of community importance were discussed at each of their monthly meetings.

These included the shortage of housing - at one time over a thousand families were on the Council's waiting list for social accommodation - causing constant concern, not helped by central government's allocation of quotas limiting new development because of post-war material shortages. The problem of lorries parking in the area of the café also continued, with frequent discussion of potential ways to alleviate it, all failing to reach any positive conclusion or agreement after discussion with the various neighbouring Councils.

Major projects - the Festival of Britain in May 1951 and the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953 - might have provided the opportunity to include a launch of the park as part of the plans for local engagement with celebrations, but they came and went without any evidence of a formal opening being included in the long list of events that were discussed and approved.

After March 1952 I discovered no further reports regarding Greenhill Gardens in the pages of the Barnet Press until a picture appeared at top-centre of their front page on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1953 featuring a view of the lake under the headline "A Secluded Spot Off Pricklers Hill".

The archived picture is too unclear to reproduce here, but the caption read:

*THE atmosphere of peace and tranquillity which can be enjoyed in Greenhill Park, within a stone's throw of traffic-congested Pricklers Hill, near the Barnet-Whetstone boundary, was captured this week by cameraman Oliver R. Gorrod.*

*Recent improvements to this quiet oasis so close to the Great North Road have been carried out by East Barnet Council, who not long ago successfully resisted a private-enterprise scheme for the construction of a café-restaurant with gardens, and parking bays for lorries and cars.*

Whether it was formally opened or not, Greenhill Park as we know it today was finally on the map!

**For the record, Greenhill Gardens was purchased by East Barnet Urban District Council for £550 in 1950 - and not for £20,000 in 1926 as several sources searchable via the internet erroneously record!**