



Local History

by Edna Hobbs

"STRANGE and bloody news of a most Horrible Murder committed on the 26th of this instant October at Finchley near Browns Well in Middlesex".

Thus runs the headline of a folio news sheet published in October 1684.

It tells the tale of Thomas Cover, a young farmer, who fell in love with a beautiful, virtuous and educated farmer's daughter, Elizabeth

trustees (Feoffees) of the Charities. The fact that only one was maintained may explain prevalence of both singular and plural forms of the name.

In 1710, according to another local historian, C.O. Banks, a red bridge was built across the ford of the brook and later the road was made up to its present level.

ABANDONED BOY

Banks also notes that on 27 November 1807 a boy of about 15 months was found abandoned at Browns Well and baptised at Finchley Church by Rev. Ralph Worsley. He was named Thomas Finchley. There is no evidence of any descendants

Murder most foul

Draper. "The Ceremonious (sic) part of their courtship being over, Thomas Cover asked her when they should be married, she answered she could not tell..."

It transpired that she had changed her mind about marrying him. "Upon this, Thomas Cover appeared very melancholy, and went to bed (his lodgings being in the same house) and after he had walked an hour or two in his chamber, pondering upon the matter, he went down stairs and fetched up a Bason (sic) of water and a great butcher's knife they used to kill hogs with..." At 12 o'clock, he took off his shoes and stole into the room where Elizabeth slept.

THE BLOODY DEED

He then went to Elizabeth's bedside and feeling her throat endeavoured to cut it. But she had on a calico hood which was tied with a knot under her chin. "As he intended the fatal stroke, the knot sav'd it from her flesh, though on one side there was a great gash".

She awoke, cried out and Thomas fled to an adjacent close and "immediately with the same knife cut his own throat, from ear to ear."

His body was found the following morning and "a Jury of the Neighbours" found him guilty of "his own Murder".

Apparently, it was a hermit named Brown who, about a hundred years or so before this murder, had lived on the site where the soon-to-be-demolished Green Man pub now stands. He collected stones or bricks and made two wells on either side of the track to collect water from two springs which fed Strawberry Vale Brook.

The water from the wells was sweet and fresh, and of great importance to travellers from the City of London. Unfortunately these wells, from which the area took its name, no longer exist and their exact location is unknown.

Local historian Fred Davis, records that for centuries one of these wells was kept in repair by the

locally, but it would be interesting to know what happened to him.

In his booklet "Finchley's Countryside", Oliver Natelson writes: "The site now called Browns Wells Common refers to a vacant plot of land situated at the south-west quadrant of the junction of the High Road and the North Circular Road. Here fronting the High Road in the 1890s stood a row of four houses with large gardens having farmland to the rear."

Arthur Hall remembers that these houses were referred to as "the Brownsells".

"One house was used by a film company, and they made films locally," recalls Arthur. This was the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company, founded by A.H. Bloomfield and J.M. McDowel. It had its first studio at Newstead House, the third of these villas from the north side.

The company made a series of adventure films, including Three-fingered Kate (released October 1909), Dick Turpin (released May 1912) and Don Q (released November 1912), all produced by Charles Raymond.

"One day I was in the Rough Lots' second field, where there was a fairly large pond," recounts Arthur. "When I got to this pond I found the film company making a shot for a Wild West film. There was a canoe on the pond and some of the men were dressed as Red Indians. I watched for a time. When several "Red Indians" clambered into the canoe, it capsized and the men were in the muddy pond with only newts for company."

It was an innovative company, the first to venture into foreign location work when it went to the West Indies in 1913 to make several films. In the Charles Weston film, Battle of Waterloo, released July 1913, a squadron of lancers from a nearby barracks was actually hired for the battle scene. Eventually the company moved to a larger studio, formerly a skating rink, at Hoe Street in Walthamstow.

I thank both Stewart Gillies of the Hendon Archive Library and Arthur Hall who were extremely helpful in making material available for my research.

The Archer thanks readers for their historical letters. We hope to publish some of them next month.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE ARCHER, 45, MIDHURST AVE, LONDON N10 3EP.

The Editor reserves the right to abbreviate correspondence where necessary.

Cycling in East Finchley

Dear Sir,

I would appreciate if you would inform Margaret McLachlan that cycling is not allowed in the lane leading from The Causeway to the tube station [The Archer August issue].

There is a sign on the left hand side of the path to signify this.

Unfortunately, this notice is ignored - usually by adults, thus causing danger to elderly folk, especially those who are not expecting the cyclists and cannot hear them coming down the path.

Also, some parents of young children think it is quite safe for the small children to toddle down there.

Mrs. P. Kennedy
The Causeway.

A call to haberdashery!

Dear Sir,

The needs of our community are well served by the shops along the High Road. However, there is one type of commodity which cannot be obtained in East Finchley.

In the past if an item of haberdashery was required one could take a bus ride to Owen & Owen's department store at North Finchley but since this store has recently closed,

the merchandise in question is not on sale anywhere else.

Would it not be possible for one of our local shops to stock such goods in the future?

A. Walters
Creighton Avenue.

Flattery and Phoenix

Dear Sir,

Congratulations on your absolutely first-class August number. Printing format and balance of articles & ads - excellent.

I much appreciate your bringing to the fore the really important local issues, together with other news and articles all of a most interesting nature.

The adverts are not at all offensive: on the contrary you have managed to present them very nicely and I find them v. useful and informative.

May I suggest that you regularly include news of the programmes etc. at our local cinema, the "Phoenix".

I enclose cheque £20.00 to the 'Friends of the Archer'.

Best wishes for your continued success.

Dr. J. Halford
Western Road.

Editor's note:

Well, thank you, Sir, for your money and your praise!

It may surprise some of our readers, but a bit of praise for our efforts - all voluntarily given - goes a long way.

MONEY MATTERS

How independent is your adviser? by Ian Hart

IT IS essential that financial advice is both competent and independent.

Many people have some sort of money problems. This may be a question of insurance, a pension worry, a matter of tax, an investment query or a need to borrow money to buy goods or property. There is always something that needs consideration.

Money problems have become more complicated because of the explosion in the number of financial products, policies and services available over the last few years. Never before has it been so essential to get the right advice.

Since the Financial Services Act took effect from April 1988, a bona-fide financial adviser should make it clear to an investor right from the start whether he or she is independent or not. If totally independent, they should advise on the products of all the life assurance and pension companies in the markets.

If not, they may belong to one

particular insurance company, and therefore only recommend that company's products.

The significant difference to remember is that if your adviser is independent he must not only give you the best advice, but must also look at the policies of many companies before identifying the best deal for you.

Independent advisers are authorised by FIMBRA (Financial Intermediaries' Managers' and Brokers' Regulatory Association) and by law must display the FIMBRA logo on any advertisements and stationery. Look out for this as a guide for your protection.

Check out your adviser carefully.

To be on the safe side, ask your adviser if he is authorized by FIMBRA and also ask for his authorization number. If you are not happy with any advice given, you can always get a second opinion from another adviser.

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Most banks and building societies offer financial advice but again, many only represent one insurance company and can only recommend you that company's products.

Bank and building society managers and branches may be given sales targets of policies to sell to their holders by the insurance companies that they are tied to. It is important to realize that bank, building society and insurance company representatives earn a commission even though they do not have to tell you this.

Some accountants and solicitors can also offer financial advice but their levels of competence can vary enormously. Some are well trained as independent financial advisers, but the majority are best suited to providing accountancy or legal advice only.

As a member of this community and as an independent financial adviser, my message is **be careful** where you get your advice.

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