



HISTORY



Emily Sparrow in 1968 and great-grandson John Sparrow in 1995 (below)

Five Generations

by Paul Savill

The history of the family of John Sparrow, who lives in one of those c1830's houses in Fortis Green, stretches back 175 years into the history of East Finchley.

His connection with the area goes back five generations: two of his great, great grandfathers lived in East Finchley; one served ales to local residents and one built some of its houses.

John, now retired, lives in one of them. It was built by his great, great grandfather, Mark Plowman, who was born in Buckinghamshire in 1797 and came to live in East Finchley in the 1820's.

He had nine children. His eldest son, Thomas, made bricks in East Finchley's hog market, which is called Market Place today. Another son,

Charles, was also a builder and is believed to have built Avenue House in East End Road in 1858.

House of Sparrow

Their sister, Emily, married Joseph Sparrow on Christmas Day 1866 at St. James's Church, Muswell Hill. We show her here in all her Victorian finery on a day during November 1878. She was John's great grandmother. Her father-in-law, also called John Sparrow, born in 1812, was a licensed victualler and became the innkeeper at the Bald Faced Stag in 1851.

Editor's note: If your family has long connections with East Finchley, please contact us. Our readers love stories about the good, or the not so good, old days.



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Shadow of a drought

by Ros Daitshell

Rainfall this summer was the lowest since records began and it was also the hottest summer since 1976. This has affected all kinds of things in the Borough of Barnet but particularly the trees and the roads.

Mr. Jones the Tree Officer at Barnet Council has reported that trees all over London were affected. The Borough of Barnet has 35,000 trees, more than most of the other London boroughs. Every year an additional 1,000 trees are planted in the borough to replace old stock.

Drinking deep

It is the road trees that were most affected by the drought. The trees in the woods are in an environment that can withstand periods of drought as they generally are older trees that have deep roots, whereas the young saplings planted in roads have shallow roots and

cannot withstand prolonged periods without water.

The Council was watering them on a weekly basis but conditions were so dry that this was not always enough.

The weather has also affected the roads and services like water pipes. Everything expands and then contracts in extreme weather conditions and the extreme heat has caused roads and pipes to expand and then as the temperature dropped they have contracted causing cracking. This could become more of an issue as the cold weather descends on us.

New Recruits

Barnet Conservation Volunteers are seeking to recruit more members. The group undertakes practical conservation work throughout the borough and aims to protect and enhance the environment for the benefit of wildlife and the local community.

The group's tasks are usually on the first Sunday of the month and start at 10 am, ending at 4 pm. Transport is available to all sites. Future tasks include the clearing of two ponds which have become overgrown and badly littered, and the cutting back of invasive sycamore and rhododendron scrub in an ancient woodland.

Membership is free. For further details, call Jenny or Doug Friedman on 0181 444 1404.



PERMANENT RESIDENTS

The Natural History Man

by Bob Davenport

Few of those buried in East Finchley Cemetery in East End Road travelled further in their lives than Henry Walter Bates - from Leicester to the depths of the Amazon basin.

Born in 1825, at 13 he was apprenticed to a hosier, where his duties were to open and sweep out the warehouse. In his spare time he studied in the local Mechanics Institute or searched for insects in Charnwood Forest. In 1843 he had a short paper, "On Coleopterous Insects Frequenting Damp Places", published in the first issue of the *Zoologist* magazine.

Bitten by the bugs

Two years later he found a job as a clerk, but it didn't suit him. Meanwhile he had become friends with another keen entomologist, Alfred Russel Wallace, an English teacher. Inspired by the journal of Darwin's voyage around the world in HMS *Beagle* and by a book on an Amazon expedition by one William H. Edwards, they decided to visit the Amazon themselves, collecting facts and specimens to contribute to the debate on the origin of the species and selling duplicates to defray their expenses.

They left Liverpool on 26th April 1848 and reached Pará (now Belém) near the mouth of

the Amazon on 27th May.

Up the river

For the next 11 years Bates explored and collected around the Amazon and its tributaries, penetrating 1,400 miles upstream. (In March 1850 he and Wallace decided to split up, and the latter returned to England in 1852 before moving on to the Malay Archipelago in 1853.)

He described his travels *The Naturalist on the Amazons*, which Darwin called "The best book of natural history travels ever published."

Avid reader

During his four-and-a-half years based at Ega, in the Upper Amazons, he found that "The want of intellectual society...became almost insupportable. I was obliged, at last, to come to the conclusion that the contemplation of nature alone is not enough to fill the human heart and mind." Any periodicals he received, such as the *Athenæum*, were so precious that he went over them three times, "...the first time devouring the more interesting articles; the second, the whole of the remainder; and the third, reading all the advertisements from beginning to end."

By the time he left South America he had discovered over 8,000 species unknown

to science, had learned German and Portuguese, and had made a profit of £800.

Grim prospects

On his last night on the Pará river on his way home, 2nd June 1859, he noted, "Recollections of English climate, scenery and modes of life came to me with a vividness I had never before experienced during the eleven years of my absence. Pictures of startling clearness rose up of the gloomy winters, the long grey twilights, murky atmosphere, elongated shadows, chilly springs and sloppy summers; of factory chimneys and grimy operatives, rung to work in early morning by factory bells; of [Poor Law] union workhouses, confined rooms, artificial cares, and slavish conventionalities. To live again amidst these dull scenes I was quitting a land of perpetual summer..."

Home, sweet home

After three years back in England, though, he found "...how incomparably superior is civilised life, where feeling, tastes and intellect find abundant nourishment, to the spiritual sterility of half-savage existence, even though it be passed in the garden of Eden."

For 28 years, from 1864, he was assistant secretary of the Royal Geographical Society. He died of bronchitis in 1892.