



The Alexandra, Church Lane

By John Larimer

In the early 1800s, William Pryor left Great Horstead, a small village in Hertfordshire, to come to London and obtained a position as coachman at Netherwood House, near Church Lane, East Finchley.

William was the son of the publican in his native village and he eventually took a lease on a small coffee house at No. 1 Church Lane. This was one of a terrace of houses converted to shops and known as Tarring Terrace, Bulls Lane.

It is not surprising that William began to think that a Beer House might be a better proposition than a Coffee House. Full licences, in those days, were difficult and expensive to obtain, so in 1869 he applied for, and was granted, a beer licence. The House was opened under the sign of "The Alexandra", a popular sign at this time because of the recent birth of Princess Alexandra. William Pryor, however, was not alone in choosing this name and, not far away, two other Houses were named "The Alexandra". To distinguish between the premises, customers referred to them by the names of the publican. No. 1 Church Lane was usually known as "Pryors".

For over 25 years William Pryor built up his pub. During this time he married and brought up a family of nine children. He died in 1896 and his second son, Joseph James, took over the licence.

In due course, Joe Pryor applied for a full licence, but it was opposed by other fully licensed houses in the neighbourhood and he did not apply again. (The Alex did not acquire a full licence until 1962.) For the next 50 years, with his younger brother Walter and Walter's wife, they ran the "Alex" which became known as "Joe Pryors" — the little house with the guns".



The Alex at the end of WWII. L-R: Mrs Pryor, family friend, Pryors' daughter Marie, Mr Luck undertaker from next door. Photo courtesy Elsie Bolding.

This collection of guns, swords and spears started right at the beginning of the pub when William Pryor's boss from Netherwood House gave him some armour gauntlets to decorate the walls of the bar. From Australia and India, and from the Zulu and South African wars the local heroes brought in their souvenirs to hang up in the bar of their pub, reminding themselves and others of their experiences in the British forces.

Joe remained a bachelor until a few months before his death in 1945 when he married Elizabeth, his bereaved sister-in-law, for Walter had died in 1944. Great changes had occurred in the world during the 50 years that Joe had held the licence of the "Alex". Finchley, no longer a village, had become a part of sprawling London, although the atmosphere in

little bars such as "Pryors" still served to remind us that vestiges of the village remained.

Great changes had occurred, too, in the trade. Pubs were no longer open 18 hours a day and a stop was put to the serving of beer to children. Bottled beer was introduced and the second war brought in its wake one of the most difficult times for Joe and other publicans - the shortages of beer and spirits.

Mrs. Pryor carried on as licensee until her death in 1952 when her sons Alec and Arthur took over. A legal point in Joe Pryor's will made it necessary for his estate to be sold. The House was sold to Truman, Hanbury and Buxton in 1958 and so came to an end the last free house in Finchley except one. (The last, The Swan with Two Necks, was pulled down in 1960.) The foregoing was taken from an article by A.J. Pryor on the occasion of the 100th birthday (1869-1969) of "The Alexandra".

The guns and swords are now gone, sold at auction when the threat to their security increased due to rise in burglaries more than two decades ago. The welcoming atmosphere and interesting conversation remain.

Today you will be welcomed to The Alexandra by John and Margaret Murphy, publicans since 1973. Most weekday afternoons you will find the lovely Mary behind the bar. Having undergone extensive renovation last summer, "The Alex" offers a comfortable lounge area off the bar and a garden with several shaded tables. There are three televisions suspended from the ceiling for your viewing pleasure and an excellent selection of music on the machine. Cheers!



Today's publicans - John & Margaret Murphy of The Alexandra. Photo: John Larimer

CASA PEPE
RESTAURANT & TAKEAWAY

Fully licensed restaurant
a la carte menu
Daily specials

Italian & Spanish dishes a speciality

89 High Road, East Finchley, London N2 8AG.
Tel: 020 8444 9098.

Nouveau Décor

Antique Furniture

Sales • Repairs • Reupholstery
Soft Furnishing Service
Curtains • Bedspreads • Blinds

Telephone 020 8883 0755

EAST FINCHLEY PEOPLE



Snap happy: Erini Rodis photo by Samuel Crabbe

Have camera, will travel

By Paul Savill

It was the death of her father when she was 13 that determined Erini Rodis to become a photographer. "He was suddenly gone," she recalls, "and I had no good pictures of him".

Since then life's fragility has been her passion. "Landscapes change, kids grow up, traditions disappear, flora and fauna become extinct. And people die."

She adds: "I do everything to preserve the image before it is gone".

Exposure

ARCHER photographer and former Greenpeace employee Erini, now 30, is holding the first solo exhibition of her work at Chorak's patisserie in the High Road for the whole of August.

It is costing her £1,000 in materials alone. Then there are the hours spent in developing, framing and organising.

Some 40 photographs taken on a recent world trip will be on display. They are for sale from £50 each. Average size is 16 x 12ins for a framed colour print.

Focus

Landscapes, seascapes and people form the subjects of her work. There are volcanoes, geysers, glaciers, food dishes and a bus in Bombay. Even a shot or two of East Finchley where she lives.

Presently "temping" in accounts administration, Erini, the daughter of Greek Cypriots who settled in Bedford Road in the sixties, wants to earn a living from her camera.

Her first camera was a Kodak Instamatic which she "stole" from her brother when she was eight.

She schooled at St Martin's and Christ Church, and spent five years as a darkroom technician, while she completed a photographic degree at Westminster University.

A new Music and Movement class is to start in September.

Fridays 2-2.30pm for 0-2 year olds & 2.30-3pm for 2-5 year olds at the Old Barn, Tarring Road, N2.

Contact Jennifer on 020 8444 7732

That's It Dry Cleaners

Est. 20 years

- ♦ laundry ♦ shirt service
- ♦ leather & suede
- ♦ repairs & alterations

44 High Road, N2, Tel: 020 8883 8924

LEVERTON & SONS LTD

Independent Family Funeral Directors since 1789

Owned and Managed by our Family for Eight Generations

1 Denmark Terrace, Fortis Green, Muswell Hill, N2 9HG.

020 8444 5753

Peter Byers, M.B.I.F.D & Mrs Jean Leverton
Muswell Hill's Only Independent Funeral Director.

We are pleased to recommend Golden Charter Pre-Paid Funeral Plans

SEEDS SOIL

Mike, Tricia & Jimmy welcome you to flowers by

Josephine's

58/60 High Road, East Finchley
London N2

Tel: 020 8883 3598 & 020 8444 9569

EST 35 Years

GARDEN SUNDRIES PLANTS