



Bill Warman - Guinea Pig Airman

By Daphne Chamberlain

In November I wrote an article called "Tribute to a Pilot", which was inspired by my memory of a user of Church End Library, whose face had been badly burned during the Second World War.

I was surprised and delighted by your response. Thanks to you, I now know a lot more about the man himself - including the fact that he wasn't actually a pilot. We have also given coverage to the Guinea Pigs, the burned airmen who were operated on by the pioneering plastic surgeon Archibald McIndoe.

Some people may have wondered why I didn't contact the Guinea Pig Club straightaway, but I think you'll agree that different people's memories of Bill Warman have made more interesting reading. Thanks again to everyone who contacted us. *The Archer* is a community newspaper, and your involvement is what it's all about.

Boyhood Friend

I'm sure that the airman in the November article was Bill Warman, who ran a car-hire firm after the war.

He was a navigator or engineer in Bomber Command. He came down in France, and a farmer's wife saved his life by pulling him out of his burning plane.

I knew Bill when we were boys, and our families were near neighbours in Station Road, Church End. He was very handsome then, but his face after the war was completely different. (I was in the RAF too, and I remember saluting him when I passed him in the road, because that's what you had to do. Bill replied, "Don't do that! I'm only a Warrant Officer". It was only Pilot Officers and above who were saluted.)

After he was demobbed, he moved to 14, Willow Way, Church End, where he lived until about five years ago. The RAF Benevolent Fund supplied him with his first car (a 1946 Austin 12, I think), which he promptly crashed! They gave him another though - in fact, several more - which formed the basis of his car hire firm.

I was in the same line, and Bill and I and Cyril Wilds - who many of your readers will remember - used to help each other out. (As a matter of fact, I drove a German Jewish actor called Karl (Fox) During, who lived off Ossulton Way. He played the part of the German Air Force Commander in "The Battle of Britain".)

Bill and I were both members of the Finchley RAF Association Branch, which met in "The Grem-lins' Retreat", opposite East Finchley station.

After his wife died, Bill moved to the RAF Benevolent Home, near Lancing in Sussex, and I haven't heard anything of him since.

Bill Gilbert, of Sedgemere Avenue, was talking to Daphne Chamberlain

Guinea Pig

Dear Sir,

Having lived in East Finchley for 34 years, I still look forward to receiving a copy of *The Archer* every month. It was with particular interest that I read an article by Daphne Chamberlain in the November issue, entitled "Tribute to a Pilot".

Since it seems less than likely that there was more than one such resident of Church End

in the 1960s, the airman and "Guinea Pig" must have been Bill Warman.

Before the war, Bill worked in the Home and Colonial grocers opposite the Minstrel pub, and was a good friend to my grandfather, who owned the Supreme Cleaners tailor's shop at the top of Station Road.

Bill served in the RAF as a navigator, not a pilot, in Bomber Command. His plane was shot down, and Bill received extensive burns to his face and hands.

The "Guinea Pigs" wore a uniform of a blue suit and red tie, and a man wearing this uniform, with a badly disfigured face, was pointed out to my grandfather in the King of Prussia. My grandfather didn't recognize his old friend, but when someone told him it was Bill, he went over to talk to him without mentioning the burns Bill had suffered. Bill burst into tears, because he thought someone had recognized him. Re-telling this story has the same effect on my father to this day.

Bill's wife, who was Swedish, stuck by her husband throughout. The last time I met him was in 1983, at my grandfather's funeral, and he was still suffering from his wartime injuries then. Five years ago, the annual Christmas cards stopped coming.

On the times that I met Bill, he impressed me as a man with charm, sense of humour and character. Even as a child, I realised that a lesser man could not have endured the horrible injuries he suffered, for so many years, in the service of his country.

**Yours sincerely,
Barry Young,
Hallside Road, Enfield.**

From voicemail (name withheld)

Regarding the airman, you should telephone the Air Ministry, or probably the RAF Museum, or even Channel 4, regarding the address of the Guinea Pig Club.

I've a shrewd idea that this airman was Secretary at one time of the Guinea Pig Club.

I was only a teenager in Bomber Command at the end of the war, so that's as far as I know, but I think he was a Flight Engineer. I'm not sure. Bloody memory goes over the years.

I know I've spoken to him in the betting shop at Church End a couple of times, but that's as far as I can tell you. He was a very nice man, wasn't he?

Byways to Hampstead

By Tony Roberts

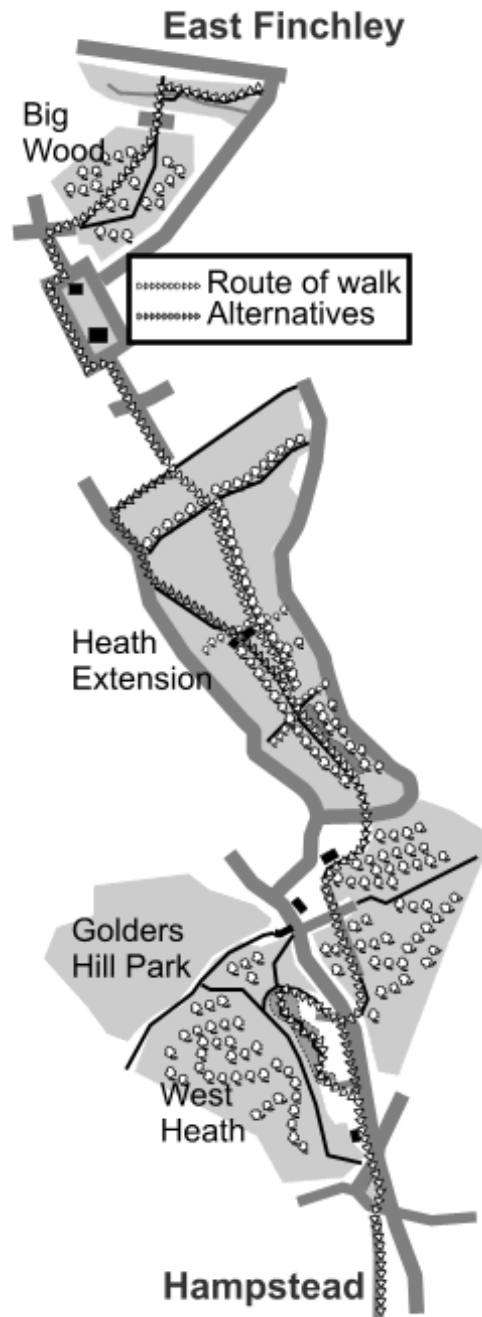
While East Finchley may be densely populated, you are never far from green spaces. What better way to enjoy peace and quiet and see wild life than the walk to Hampstead. Depending on time of year, look out for kestrels, woodpeckers, comma butterflies and cowslips.

The walk starts outside the 'two loos' café near the junction of North Way and Market Place. Enter the gardens on its left and follow the Mutton Brook past tennis courts and magnificent willow trees, then take the track left to enter Big Wood. The right fork gives the shortest way up to Temple Fortune Hill. Emerging from the wood across the old Finchley boundary, turn left up to North Square, where the buildings result from a stormy compromise between Edwin Lutyens and Henrietta Barnett. Skirt the right side of both churches then down to the steps of Heath Gate.

From here you can cross fields originally belonging to Eton College (if muddy, take detour shown) to gain the mediaeval track-way which will take you upward past the ponds and over the road to steps leading around the back of Wyldes Farm, the oldest building in the area. The path bends leftward to North End cross. Continue the incline forward through the trees.

The track leads up and round to the right, emerging at a traffic island. Take Inverforth Close until a sign for the Hill Garden indicates right. Inside the garden meander through to the Pergola opposite (built from Northern Line excavations and paid for with soap flakes) and follow the top all the way to the spiral steps at the end. Left at the exit rejoins the road. Continue past Jack Straw's Castle (if still there) to Whitestone Ponds. Opposite is Hampstead Grove, which leads

peacefully to Hampstead and the Tube, past Fenton House and Holly Hill.



From The Guinea Pig Club:
The Guinea Pig who lived in Finchley was Bill Warman, a Flight Engineer, who flew on Sterlings in Bomber Command. He died some years ago.

Thirty-five Battle of Britain pilots ended up as Guinea Pigs. The remainder were mainly Bomber Command.

Our UK number of Guinea Pigs is now 95, from roughly 330, who formed practically half the club. The remainder were worldwide, covering 16 different nationalities. The next largest number to the UK was the Canadians - 180, now reduced to 45.

Thanks to everyone who responded to my article about Bill Warman. Your replies have been really interesting and helpful.

For those who wondered why I didn't contact the Guinea Pig Club at the beginning, we want *The Archer* to be an inter-active paper. Although I would always have checked the identity in the end, we have got a much more complete picture of the man this way. Thanks again.

(One final question: - Did Bill work in Sainsbury's or The Home and Colonial? Or both?)

Daphne Chamberlain

Cheaper Mortgages

Barnet residents who have bought their Council homes under the "Right to Buy Scheme" with a council mortgage can now transfer to a cheaper scheme.

It will affect up to 430 mortgagees, who will be able to change to LBS Mortgages Ltd, and make smaller monthly repayments.

Barnet's Resources Executive Committee has approved a recommendation to transfer Council mortgages to LBS, subject to completion of necessary documentation.

As current regulations mean that Council mortgage rates are higher than most others, Councillor Danish Chopra said that those people taking up the offer would pay lower interest rates. In addition, they could add extra loans to their mortgage for extensions and home improvements, which they cannot do with a Council mortgage.

This, in turn, said Cllr Chopra, would benefit all residents of Barnet. The Council will raise up to £2m from LBS in immediate repayments of the total outstanding mortgages, and £250,000 of this would be available to spend on Council services immediately."

Wine Waffle!

No, this is not an exotic new breakfast delight, but a chance to cut through the mystique of wine.

There are endless column inches that wax lyrical about the aroma and flavour of this fascinating liquid. From blackcurrants leaping out of the glass to cats' pee on a gooseberry bush and even diesel fumes, there's many a fanciful description.

Is any of it true? You can find out for yourself and enhance your enjoyment of buying and drinking wine at a one-day workshop at The Institute, Hampstead Garden Suburb.

The workshops are relaxed, informative and fun! You will taste and discuss 12 wines and learn how to identify their key characteristics. The workshops are conducted by Valerie Cowan (formerly of Marks and Spencer Wine Department), a partner in the 'Aspects of Wine' education service.

Valerie has a Wine and Spirit Education Trust Diploma and is a member of the Association of Wine Educators. The next workshop, Old World vs. New World, takes place on 13 May from 10am - 4pm and costs £29 plus £8 for Wine.

For those who wish to use their wine skills for work, the Wine and Spirit Education Trust Certificate will also be running at The Institute from 26 April.