



How we 'Dug for Victory'

By John Dearing

After nearly 60 years, a curious and remarkable record has come to light, of the efforts that some people in East Finchley made to respond to the famous wartime slogan "Dig for Victory".



The original document (above) and diagram (below) by John Dearing

Behind a block of flats in East Finchley, there lies a large lawn, some 100 to 150 yards long and about 20 yards wide in the middle, and somewhat wider at each end. Facing this, built into the back of the building is a row of garages. Written, apparently in pencil on painted wood on the door frame of one of these garages is a plan for cultivating this land. Though rather faded after all this time,

it is still mostly legible, albeit a little difficult to photograph.

From the diagram, it can be seen that cultivation of various vegetable crops was planned, and no doubt executed for the growing seasons of 1943 and 1944. The lawn was divided into three sections and each section into plots. The list of crops is diverse: runner beans, cabbages, peas, onions, lettuces, radishes, beetroot,

carrots, potatoes, shallots, and kohlrabi. It is also clear that the mind of the gardener changed during the process, with dates and crops crossed out and re-written, perhaps due to lack of seed availability?

It is interesting to speculate how much produce came of this work, but it would seem to have been considerable, feeding many people during the wartime shortages.

May Day

Traditional May Day celebrations were pre-Christian agricultural festivals. However the significance was lost and practices became popular festivals. These festivities became so lively and wild that the puritans were able to force the government to forbid them. This ban was short lived, so they sprang up again and still continue in many towns and villages today.

Maypole dancing

Dancing and singing around the maypole was one of the activities which was celebrated on the first day of May. A large pole tied with colourful streamers or ribbons was erected and the dancers twisted the streamers around the pole to make a pretty pattern. In the Middle Ages a pole, usually made from a birch tree, was

set up on the village green and decorated with bright field flowers. Dancers wearing bells on their colourful costumes also performed the Morris dance. Often the fairest maiden of the village was chosen as queen of the May and sometimes a May King as well. These two led the village dancing and ruled over the festivities.

A May Day song for dancing round the Maypole:

Come, lasses and lads and get leave of your dads,
And away to the Maypole hie,
For every fair has a sweetheart there,
And the fiddlers standing by.
For Willy shall dance with Jane,
And Johnny has got his Joan,
To trip it, trip it, trip it, trip it,
Trip it up and down,
To trip it, trip it, trip it, trip it,
Trip it up and down.

Historical Note

In 1889 a world congress of Socialist parties, held in Paris, voted to support the US labour movement's demand for an eight hour day. It chose 1 May 1890 as a day of demonstrations in favour of this.

As a consequence 1 May has become a holiday called Labour Day. This holiday is particularly important in Socialist and Communist countries, where political rallies are held. This day has subsequently been adopted in England on the Monday nearest to 1 May, as a public holiday.

May-Dew

By Daphne Chamberlain

On 4am on 1 May 1827, a huge crowd began moving through Edinburgh to Arthur's Seat. In the course of half an hour, the entire hill became "a moving mass of all sorts and sizes." It was the same every year. They were off to gather May-Dew, one of the original natural beauty aids.

Three hundred years earlier Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, visited an English heath for the same purpose.

From the Middle Ages to the 19th century, people believed - or hoped - that May Day morning dew "preserved the face from wrinkles, blotches and the traces of old age". In the days when freckles were unfashionable, you could make up a face-pack of May-Dew, bean-flower water or elder-flower water, mixed with oil of tartar, sometimes chanting, "Beauty come, freckles go, Dewdrops

make me white as snow".

Strong medicine

Washing in May-Dew was also said to strengthen joints and muscles. Its devotees believed that the dew took on the nature of the strongly growing spring herbs and grasses where it was found. In the 1850s in Cornwall, children with weaknesses of the back were pulled over early morning grass on the first three days in May, but whether the dew was a cold-cure as well I haven't found out.

Acknowledgements to "Forgotten English", by Jeffrey Kacirk, ISBN 0-688-166369.

East Finchley, the New Notting Hill

By Femke van Iperen

This time it was not a blue door in Notting Hill, but a local café in East Finchley that supplied for a bit of fame in London. And whilst shoppers and coffee drinkers were enjoying yet another sunny April Saturday afternoon, High Street strollers were asked to go elsewhere for their full English breakfast.

On Saturday 20 April, part of a film, also shot in the areas of Crouch End, Muswell Hill and Old Street, and starring Sophie Ward and Michelle Collins, was filmed on location at Finchley Café on 150 High Road. The movie, a 10-minute short *Bubblegum*, follows a 16-year old Serbian illegal immigrant and windscreen washer in his fantasy around London. Mesmerised, he pursues a piece of bubblegum left by two bubble-blowing girls in the café, as it gets stuck to a variety of quirky characters. Meeting swearing priests with

passions for gambling and other characteristic people, we follow an outsider's personal perception of London.

So why East Finchley? It was only last month that two commercials for Eurostar and the BBC2 comedy series *Big Train* were partly shot at three High Street businesses, as East Finchley is becoming an increasingly popular location for film shoots. But, with one of the film's Directors Lea Morement, a local from East Finchley herself, this comes as no surprise. The location was chosen particularly for

its community interest, said Producer Kate Penlington.

Shot by Wise Women Productions in association with Raging Goose London Ltd, the team comprised of two female Directors, Samantha Bakhurst and Lea Morement and a female Director of Photography, Faye Penlington, who explained that the film - for you film buffs: shot in *Black and White* on 35 mm - has already had some interest from prospective distributors and buyers, added: "We are hoping to show the film at film festivals like Sundance, Berlin or Cannes".

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