



LETTERS - Memories of the squadron

The Spitfire
Dear Ms Chamberlain

I have just read your very interesting article regarding 393 Squadron ATC.

You mentioned that a Spitfire was outside Park House where the ATC met in 1940. In fact, this Squadron was 1825 not 393. They (393) were installed on the Rough Lots behind the old Finchley swimming pool, now the leisure centre.

You mentioned Mr R Pledge of Summerlee Avenue. He was my father, who later became Flight Lieutenant Pledge and was, for a while, Adjutant of the Squadron. The Spitfire was originally in front of the first home of 393 in Hendon Lane and later moved.

When my father was Adjutant I was part of a team of girls providing them with refreshments. I am the proud possessor of an ATC badge superimposed with a large W for Woman. I was actually 11 when the war started in 1939. My husband - Graham Waugh - was one of dad's cadets in Hendon Lane in 1940 and learnt radio communications and use of a Buzzer. I too learnt the Morse Code at an early age.

The Squadron was very competitive. I have fond memories of going to White City on a Sunday, when ordinary events weren't played, and the Squadron coming home with numerous prizes.

I well remember Mr Bryson who was a very important person in East Finchley and one officer called Marr and another called Trott. I did actually meet Mr Whitmore recently who moved down this way but has since died.

My brother, who lives in Summerlee Avenue, has lots of photos of the officers and cadets of the Squadron.

Many thanks
Joan Waugh
West Parley, Dorset

PS. Your picture of the *Bald Faced Stag* in 1910 shows East Finchley Congregational Church where I was married in June 1954.

Send your correspondence to:
"Letters Page", The Archer, PO
Box 3699, London N2 8JA.
(Letters may be edited for space)

393 Squadron
Dear Sir

I am always delighted to receive *THE ARCHER* and to be able to keep up to date with the latest topics of East Finchley. Our family lived in Church Lane from 1937 throughout the war years. In 1952 I moved to Gloucester.

I attended Martin School (my teacher in 1937 was Mrs Dolling), then moved on to the Alder School until the age of 14; the teachers at that time were Headmaster Mr Thomas; Deputy Head Mr Cowling; and teachers Russell, Palmer, Clarke, Harrison, Holt (woodwork teacher), Mrs Calvert, Mrs Druse. At the Alder most of the time was spent in the air raid shelters; spending the whole of the day awaiting the all-clear siren to return back home and await the all-night bombing. I would like to mention the names of some school friends - Peter Down (who I am in contact with), Bonna Kirk, Bob True, Donald Burgess, Bill Dwyer, David Norris, Betty Glass, Joan Hammond and Pat Kirby.

I notice in the November issue of *THE ARCHER* mention of the 393 Squadron ATC. I was a member during the early part of the war. On first joining the Squadron it was based in a house in The Bishops Avenue from where we moved to Park House. The OC at the time was Flight Lieutenant Piper, Adjutant FO Casey. Another officer was PO Edgar Cattle who was the proprietor of the undertakers, situated on the corner of Lincoln Road. Edgar was a very much respected local officer in the East Finchley Salvation Army. Also on the staff was a Mr James who was a teacher at Finchley High School and, as mentioned, Mr Bryson.

My best wishes and thanks to all the volunteers.

Yours sincerely
Bramwell Holland
Gloucester

"The Spitfire Was in my Garden"

By Daphne Chamberlain
A lot of you remember that Spitfire opposite the station (see November issue), but Maureen Betts told us it was actually in her front garden.

It was already in residence when Maureen and her family moved into Park House immediately after the Second World War, and she thinks it stayed there for a couple of years.

She remembers the Air Training Corps Squadron meeting in a very large wooden hut in the Park House grounds. "You went up to it along the footpath at the side of Cherry Tree Wood. Park House was divided into two flats. We had the upper one, with a view over the station platform, and our friends, the Bowmans, had the ground floor. A similar house, where Mr Puckey the dentist lived, was where GLH is now, and the gardens behind were massive. There were about four allotments there too."

Maureen Bowers, as she was then, was 11 or 12 when her family moved in, and not particularly interested in planes. "It's something to tell my grandchildren though." Does she have any memories of the Squadron? She giggles. "Let's say I don't remember them, if they don't remember me!"

In fact, Maureen knows a

lot about East Finchley, where she has spent all her life. During World War II the Bowers lived in Oak House, which used to stand in Oak Lane. In the basement of this home was the local ARP

centre, and in the garden, she remembers, was a hut. This one was used to test gas masks against the effect of various gases. An uncomfortably topical note on which to end.

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.



May I Have This Dance?

By Stephen Woolley
Except for the silly old fools who have yet to grow up, it remains a young culture - and difficult to comprehend.

I refer to the heavy metal, rock or whatever you call it, exploding in my eardrums as I entered the *Constitutional Club*. Apparently a young adult birthday party was on. Such primitive music - on at volume from a disc jockey playing to dancers, who jumped up and down without the aid of skipping-ropes. The one exception, a girl near me, was holding a wineglass and a burning cigarette, so obviously her knees could only gesture to the pandemonium on the maple floor.

I made for the nearest pub and, over a beer, the paradox brought me back to my teenage years and an RAF hangar, where a kindly WAAF called "One, two, three", as I attempted the basic steps of the waltz. I tried not to tread on her toes with my leather boots (rubber-soled on a concrete floor).

Golden days

"If you hope to have a good social life, you must learn to dance." I, for one, soon accepted this mature advice, being based near a big town with so many girls.

Therefore, taking lessons from wherever they came, most of us soon had some adroitness in circling round to pleasing music and singers with golden vocals, which made many fall in and out of love many, many times.

Today, it's presentation without substance, vocalised mediocrity made designer-melodious by electronic engineers. How nice it is sometimes to walk into the Windsor Castle on Karaoke Night and hear a singer from the Big Band era. And how many readers will remember with nostalgia the dance halls in and around Finchley: - the Finchley Dance Hall, the Arcadia, the Royalty, the Drill Hall and the Athenaeum.

And in the final analysis of romantic venues, how many residents of Finchley owe their very existence to a simple phrase; "May I have this dance?"

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