



CONVALESCENT HOME AT EAST FINCHLEY OF THE NATIONAL HOSPITAL FOR THE PARALYSED AND EPILEPTIC.

The National Hospital

By Alison Stein
Part 2, 16 June 1897

Duchess opens 'Country Branch'

On a bright, rather chill afternoon, visitors assemble in the spacious central hall of the National Hospital's newly built 40-bed 'country branch'. Many have come from King's Cross by special train to this pretty village.

It is Diamond Jubilee Year, and the Duchess of Albany, Queen Victoria's widowed daughter-in-law, is to perform the opening ceremony.

Visitors admire the richly coloured interior of the building, and the watercolours of fruit and flowers, donated by well-wishers, which adorn the walls. The grounds have been laid out with wide lawns, herbaceous flower borders, shrubberies, a fruit and vegetable garden, and specimen trees - cypress, poplar, fir, holly, and pine. The trees are newly planted, and the visitors can only imagine how beautiful they will be in 100 years' time.

It looks more like an attractive country house than a branch of the National Hospital for the Paralyzed and Epileptic. Yet all this is purpose-built; designed, as the dedicatory plaque puts it, "for the benefit of a class of patients inadmissible to any other convalescent home in the kingdom". All the patients' accommodation is on

the ground floor, to be accessible by wheelchair, with no stairs to pose a hazard to epileptic patients.

Fresh air and flower gardens

In the years since it opened its first convalescent home in East Finchley, The Elms, the National Hospital had attained an international reputation in both the medical and surgical fields. It now needed a larger country branch, where patients who had been confined for months to the wards of the Queen Square Hospital might recover faster in fresh country air.

The Hospital had made many friends in East Finchley, and the village was easily accessible by train, essential as physicians from London were to make frequent visits.

It proved difficult to find a suitable site, but eventually the Ecclesiastical Commissioners released a 3-acre field adjoining East Finchley Station on a 999-year lease. Funds

were raised, building work began, and the grounds were laid out. A rubbish-filled pond turned out to be a deep spring, one of the sources of the River Brent, so it was drained and reshaped to become a feature of the landscape garden, with weeping willows, ferns, water-lilies and carp.

Trees were planted to screen the Home from the station. All was optimism and confidence. A new chapter in the history of East Finchley and the National Hospital was about to begin.

Glebelands' Endangered Wildlife

Territorial Take Over

By Erini Rodis

The Glebelands Nature Reserve in North Finchley is under serious threat due to a lack of funding, according to the Green Party. They accuse Mayor Ken Livingstone of failing to give adequate support to protect London's wildlife and green spaces.

This site, which lies just north of the North Circular Road opposite Strawberry Vale, is also a known breeding ground for slowworms, and a feeding area for a colony of pipistrelle bats. The ponds are also host to one of the largest colonies of great crested newts in the whole of London.

Complaints from organisations around London have led Darren Johnson, Leader of the Green Party Group in the London Assembly, to question the allocation of moneys in the Mayor's "Bio-diversity Strategy". It has been revealed that while £372,000 has been allocated for trips to London Zoo, only £51,000 is being spent on implementing the Mayor's other 71 proposals.

Mr Johnson commented, "The Glebelands Nature Reserve is home to the rare Red-Crested Newt, one of the Mayor's favourite creatures. As part of his legal responsibility for safeguarding green space and wildlife in Barnet and the whole of London, he should do

more to protect it."

In transpires that Barnet Council has given the go-ahead for Barratts to develop three nine-storey blocks of flats to replace the existing Territorial Army Centre building. Totaling over 100 flats, a third of these will be social housing.

The Coppetts Wood Conservationists, who in their twenty-year involvement have managed to register Glebelands as a legally protected site, are concerned by the effect that six hours of daily shade will have. Reptiles will be particularly sensitive to the change in temperature, and whole colonies might be forced to move.

Considering the site is being sold for a reported £3.5million, the Greens have got some negotiating to do.

Cllr. Darren Johnson is undeterred: "The Green Party wants children to be able to enjoy London's wildlife on a local and regular basis, rather than as just a one-off trip to the Zoo to find wildlife in captivity."

The Bald-Faced Stag Part II

By Hugh Petrie

I finished the last part with an error, and so I start with a correction. William Shaw rebuilt the Stag around 1886, including upstairs rooms for use as a Masonic lodge. By 1890 the publican was a Frank Price, whose wife, Margarita, was from Brussels. Simply put, Shaw was there for less time than I assumed.

Beer and skittles

From 1898 (and through the 1900s) William Russell was landlord. CO Banks, the antiquarian, wrote that Mrs Selina Russell, "was a popular hostess", and "made the house". It became known for its skittles alley and pleasure gardens. After Mr Russell died at 40, Selina continued in the house and, incidentally, married CO Banks.

In late 1913, Frank Bluett Jones held the house, by which time the house was described as a hotel. The Great War saw most

of his custom march away. In 1915, in the London Bankruptcy Court, Jones was described as a former landlord owing £2,130. In March of 1916 Jones challenged conscription, giving evidence before a tribunal that he had to care for his aged parents and invalid sister. He had been able to house them 'up stairs' at the Stag, but now worked in the city, sending 30 shillings to his family in Hampshire. He was granted a months exemption to sort out his affairs.

A poetic pint

After Jones came the

Masons, William and Florence that is, who ran the house until 1924, followed by various others. Interestingly my brother Gerard pointed out that the Bald Faced Stag has a place in poetry, thanks to Fleur Adcock. In the last verse of her poem Bogeyman (1974) Adcock considers where she will be in twenty years time with a selection of various fates including "sipping Guinness in the Bald-Faced Stag, in wrinkled stockings?" Has she been in the bar recently?

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Enquiries - 020 8805 2867

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Contact: The Revd. Laurence Hill Telephone: 020 8883 8720

Doyle's Boys

In response to the appeal to what has happened to John Doyle and his boys (February 2003), THE ARCHER has received an anonymous voicemail informing us that the gentleman on the far right of the photograph is Peter Norman, who is currently living in Australia as a builder.

Are there any more clues as to the whereabouts and identity of the rest of 'the boys'?



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