



Builders of the Northern Line. Photo supplied by Audrey Cartwright.

Days of the Tram

By Robert Kent from an article printed in *The Archer* July 1998

My earliest recollections of trams are of poles supporting the overhead cable being moved from the centre of the road to the pavements. Since this was done at night, and my East Finchley bedroom overlooked the street, my schoolwork must have suffered!

Twin tracks ran down the main road from Barnet Church, through East Finchley to Archway, with branches from Tally Ho to Golders Green and Wood Green. They were operated by Metropolitan Electric Tramways, but from Archway onward the



A tram at the North Finchley terminus. Photo supplied by Audrey Cartwright.

system belonged to the London County Council.

Whereas the MET transmitted electricity to overhead cables by a trolley, the LCC had an underground system. The connection problem was overcome by a man at Archway with an implement like a wide-pronged fork. He guided the underground contact into place, while the conductor removed the overhead trolley with a long bamboo pole, also carried for emergencies.

There were plenty of those when a pea-souper fog

descended. At Tally Ho, conductors frantically trying to find the right connecting wires at the junction for Wood Green caused a fine display of sparks and flashes.

Drivers had no protection from the elements. No windscreen saved them from the wintry blast – only heavy overcoats, thick gloves and layers of scarves. They bent over two control handles – the brake and the motor controller regulating speed.

The conductor had his ticket board, punch and cash-bag. He

extracted a pre-printed ticket, inserted it in his pouch, and punched a hole against your alighting point. It was an old penny from Church Lane to Tally Ho corner.

Trams were not reversible, but at the end of his journey the driver locked his controls and driving compartment door at one end, and transferred to the other.

Passenger seats inside ran lengthways, so the occupants faced one another. Being made of polished wood, the seats were slippery, so that, – when descending a hill, – the passengers slid together to the front of the vehicle. We were very friendly people in those days!

The Whitsun Fun Fair

By Hugh Petrie

I found evidence for the fair three years ago in the *Barnet Press* of 1879. An established, annual, but previously unreported, event lasting from Thursday to Sunday, near The George in the fields where Stanley and Beresford Roads now stand. Attractions included an exhibition of curios and “wonders such as have never before been seen, and will not appear in this place again” (which proved popular with East Finchley’s youth), a shooting gallery, and acrobats. However The George had some genteel neighbours who were not enamoured by the sounds of the vulgar ‘broken drum and an unmelodious trumpet’ announcing each performance. Their complaints appeared in the same article and I assumed the fair had had to cease. But, as before, it had simply not been reported.

Two months ago I found a report in the *Finchley Free Press* of 1897. In fields behind the Five Bells, it came “unannounced and anticipated”. The reporter, Karl Penn, describes the Washington Post March being played on the “brazen trumpets of the organ”, as “young men who had brought their sweethearts grew reckless in their expenditure on swings and merry-go-rounds”, and rifles snapped at “cork balls that danced on their respective sprays of water, like nymphs of the fountain”.

I looked in the papers in May and June the following years.

The genteel neighbours of the Five Bells enjoyed the sound of the organ as much as their Market Place predecessors had enjoyed the trumpet and broken drum. The following years the fair was unreported, and I suspect really didn’t happen. “Considering the meagre opportunities for rational enjoyment, and the dullness of many lives, the last that condemns them shall be Karl Penn”, wrote our reporter, a sentiment with which I concur. At least the march can be heard at http://members.tripod.com/rescue_1/Patriotic/default.htm.

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Free the Ferrari 550

These are mean and vicious times for petrol heads everywhere and unless we want to be forced to drive detoxed, low fat, low alcohol, low salt, dolphin friendly electric shopping trolleys we are going to have to fight for our rights. Just look at how the best driving roads in the area have been ruined by speed bumps and speed cameras. Roads where you could reach 70 mph in third gear and blast round at serious speeds have suffered from the nimby, namby, not in my backwater, it might frighten the children/cats/dogs/pensioners brigade and been destroyed. For serious speed freaks this has gone too far and we must fight back or we will be forced to endure the strange world of motoring lite.

Let’s get serious, let’s talk examples. Back in the 70s there was a seriously good bit of road between Muswell Hill and East Barnet. In fact it was so serious that I did the four miles in four minutes in a three-litre Capri only for one of my mates to turn up in an E-type and do it in under three minutes. So what if he hit 120mph on the way, it was for real, it was racing in the streets. And now? Speed bumps every 50 yards, four mini roundabouts, two speed cameras and a road designed for granies in aged Nissans doing fifteen miles an hour. What next? Speed cameras in The Bishops Avenue to stop us trying to hit the magic ton on the run past chateau tasteless? The spoilsports have already stuck them up to stop us doing 90 through the suburb!

It is time for motorists to stand up and be counted, time to destroy speed cameras wherever we see them, time to use a stolen JCB to dig up the speed humps and time to start racing in the streets again. Yes, let’s free the Ferrari 550 and get back to doing 150 on the North Circ. It might not make sense to the eco lobby, but it’s a lot more fun than poncing along at thirty behind some dolphin-friendly lite car that’s pre-programmed to take all the fun out of driving. Like the man said, the only thing better than driving a Ferrari at 70 is driving it at 170 and I believe we should all have the chance to find this out.

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