



Back in June, as part of our feature on East Finchley's open spaces, Hugh Petrie brought us part one of the history of the Fuel Lands Allotments. Here, a little later than planned, follows the second and final instalment of his story.

The allotments can be found behind Martin School and Chandos Gardens.

Finchley's Secret Gardens

Part Two

The allotment act of 1882 stipulated that fuel lands had to be converted into allotment gardens. Between 1851 and 1891 the population of Finchley rose from 4,120 to 16,647. There was insufficient land set aside for allotments (6 acres) for the "deserving poor". The 15 acres of the fuel lands was still being leased to Mr Field. In 1886 William Wightman, of 4 Trinity Road, on the advice of Jessie Collins of the Birmingham Allotment League, decided to campaign for the conversion of the fuel lands into allotments.



The Fuel Lands Allotments. Photo by John Dearing

Much of Finchley was run as a civil parish, with a Vestry meeting held every year at Easter so that ratepayers could ratify the parish accounts and chose new wardens and overseers. The rector chaired the meetings, so the four members fuel land trust were also the local government. Those who owned property got extra votes, so it required a great number of working men to effect change. Wightman demanded the trust comply with the 1882 act, but the trust argued that there was no need. At the vestry of 1887, there were more than 70 applicants for allotments. Some, like Mr Bachelor, remembered their father's plots on the fuel lands in the 1850s. Wightman was no longer a lone voice and a fuel land committee of seven met to consider the suitability of the fuel lands. The trust, which was made up of four committee members, continued to put

up objections.

The East Finchley Allotment League was formed in November 1887 at the Bald Faced Stag. Supporters included the churchwardens at Holy Trinity and Henry Stevens MP. At the Vestry meeting of Easter 1888 (with cheers from the crowd and the call "working men do your duty"), the league managed to block the re-election of one of the wardens and the ratification of parish accounts. In order to ratify the accounts a motion was passed in favour of fuel land allotments. Eventually the stubborn Mr Field quit the land. The very next day, 26 March 1890, the allotments were opened, not only a turning point in history of green spaces of East Finchley, but also for local democracy.

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The film crew in Cherry Tree Wood. Photo by John Dearing

Featherboy Settles on Cherry Tree Wood

By John Dearing

Several locations in East Finchley were recently chosen for filming a new drama for the BBC. The production team, the actors and all the associated equipment were to be seen at the Holywood Bowl, Cherry Tree Wood and Park House, on Friday 1 August. They were filming *Featherboy*, adapted from an award-winning book by Nicky Singer. The production company, Childsplay Television, is based in Neasden, and the producer, Peter Tabern, said they needed a bowling alley, and having decided on the Finchley Lido complex, it was sensible to use further locations in the district on the same day. After filming in Cherry Tree Wood, they then used the outside of Park House to represent an anti-natal clinic!

Peter Tabern previously adapted the Clive King book *Stig of the Dump* for television, also produced by Childsplay, and Thomas Sanger, who was seen performing in Cherry Tree Woods, is the child star of both productions.

Featherboy is the story of Robert Nobel - a boy who is the

butt of classroom jokes and victim of Niker, the class bully.

When Robert visits a local home for the elderly as part of a school project and meets Edith Sorrell, an old lady with a tragic past, he embarks on a series of events that will change their lives forever.

According to the BBC Press

Office web site, the adaptation will star Sheila Hancock, Lindsey Coulson, Ronald Pickup, Aaron Johnson and Thomas Sangster.

70 Years since Finchley became a Borough

On 4 October, Finchley will celebrate the 70th anniversary of becoming a borough. Surviving members of Finchley Borough Council will join present councillors and the Mayor and Deputy Lieutenant of Barnet to celebrate at Avenue House.

The Finchley Cinevideo Society is showing a 1933 archive film of the ceremonial procession, to which Norman Burgess, who watched it all as a child, will provide the commentary. Nicholas Pike, grandson of Alderman Pike, Deputy Mayor in 1933, will bring along the casket in which the charter was presented. Also on display will be the charter itself, and Finchley's chain and mace. This exhibition, arranged by the

Finchley Society, will be open to the public from 4 to 7pm.

Information on the Finchley Society can be found at www.finchleysociety.org.uk or call 020 8883 2633.

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