



Enclosure of Finchley Common

By Tony Roberts

Barnet's Heritage Officer Hugh Petrie began the second of two talks about Finchley Common by admitting that a subject so large warranted at least one extra talk to do it justice. Equally, this account of his talk to the Finchley Society on 22 February has room for only some of the interesting facts and figures he related.

It was John Bacon, standing to benefit as a landowner and resident of Friern Barnet, who pushed for 'inclosure' of common land from 1805 onwards. But only when the threat of invasion by France had waned was Parliament willing to countenance enclosing land of strategic military importance.

In 1811, it passed the Act appointing three London solicitors as commissioners to draw up and manage the process of enclosure. The book of the Award was published in 1816 but some matters were still being sorted out as late as 1825 and 1828.

As well as Finchley Common itself, wastes of the Manor were included; wide roads were to be redefined with a width of 33 feet without exception, freeing strips and triangular areas at road junctions for enclosure. One such wedge on East End Road, known variously as Bells Green or Hunters Green, stretched from the present day junction of East End Road and Stanley Road to Church Lane (Bull Lane) near where Holy Trinity church is today.

The Act also included fixing the boundaries between Finchley, Friern Barnet and Hornsey, until now hidden within adjacent commons.

Finchley Parish was instructed to build new roads. Although the land was free, the Parish had to pay for construction, which they were reluctant to do. The Parish was awarded a gravel pit for materials, land that subsequently became Finchley sewage works.

Of the 900 acres of common, 139 acres were sold to defray the costs of enclosure, 120 going to the Regents Canal Company for

a reservoir at Strawberry Vale, subsequently abandoned in favour of the Welsh Harp site.

A large tract of land north of the reservoir was allocated to the Rector in lieu of tithes, and a glebe land (sometimes called the rough lots) to the north of the land currently called the glebe lands.

Obligations to the poor were tiny: an acre and a rod to be rented out to provide funds to compensate loss of rights and 15 acres to be rented out to buy fuel for the 'deserving poor'. The land, now allotments near Martin Schools, was governed by a trust called The Finchley Charity, a dubious, self-seeking organisation not to be confused with The Finchley Charities.

A full 476 acres, or 64% of the land remaining, went to just eight people, including John Bacon himself, the Marquess of Buckingham, and Alexander Murray.

For information about The Finchley Society visit www.finchleysociety.org.uk

A walk through the history of Fortis Green

Hornsey Historical Society hosted a guided walk around Fortis Green on 1 April led by David Frith and Keith Fawkes Underwood. Joy Nichol reports.

Fortis Green has a very long history. It became a popular route due to the fact that it was on a ridge left at the end of the Ice Age which drained well and, compared with the lower, very muddy roads, made travel much easier.

It was once adjoined by Coldfall Woods which came right down to the north side of Fortis Green until the beginning of the 20th Century. There was common land on both sides of the road until the enclosures of 1815.

From the traffic lights at Tetherdown, we looked at the neo-Georgian flats by William Collins, and imagined the run of St James' School, the fire station and the council depot where Spring House Retirement Home and the clinic now stand. We saw photos of these vanished buildings from the historical society's archives, to help us. Society member Hugh Garnsworthy was deputy headteacher at St James, so we had first-hand memories of his days there.

We looked across the road from the clinic to see the firemen's helmets on Leaside mansions, and tried to visualise the lake to Fortismere House, which was 160 yards long, and had rowing boats on it in the summer and skating parties in



Hornsey Historical Society take an historical walk round Fortis Green. Picture by Joy Nichol.

the winter.

We walked past the Manor Health Club, originally an electricity showroom, and the police station built in 1903. Opposite, behind the Alexandra Pub, are Hornsey's back-to-back cottages; only four of them, so we don't really rival the North in these!

About 50 people came on

the walk, and I think we all learned a lot and found interesting new bits of East Finchley and Muswell Hill.

Hornsey Historical Society will be leading more walks this spring and summer. For more details or to join the society, telephone 020 8348 8429 or visit the website www.hornseyhistorical.org.uk.

Show you care about animals

By Caroline Broome

If you care about the welfare of animals and want to help them, why not consider becoming a branch trustee for your local Finchley Hendon & Golders Green RSPCA?

The mainstay of the branch is the RSPCA Small Animal Clinic, which has been in Park Road, East Finchley, for more than 50 years and offers its services to local pets and wildlife alike.

The RSPCA has more than 170 branches throughout England and Wales. Each is a

separately registered charity responsible for the management and financial control of branch affairs and is advised and supported by the national society.

Becoming a branch trustee is a great way to meet like-minded people, gain new skills or develop existing ones, while making a real difference to animals. Although some trustee positions may require specific skills in finance or fundraising, many just need commitment, common sense and impartiality.

If you are over 18 and would like to find out more, visit www.rspca.org.uk/volunteer or telephone 020 8444 2329 or 020 8444 6096 for details of your local RSPCA branch.

In the case of an animal emergency ring RSPCA Harmsworth Hospital on 020 7272 6214.

Did you know?

Children's book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle has sold one copy every minute since it was printed in 1969.

Suburb celebrates centenary

TV and radio presenter Jonathan Ross, actor Sir Donald Sinden and politician Peter Mandelson are just a few of the present and former residents preparing to celebrate the 100th birthday of Hampstead Garden Suburb this summer.

The Centenary Celebrations are being co-ordinated by the Residents Association which, together with 25 other Suburb organisations, has put together an ambitious programme.

"I am happy to report that the Centenary Appeal has raised over £40,000 from residents and local organisations to fund these events and to pay for some permanent improvements to the infrastructure of the area. The generosity of residents has been most heartening," said Residents Association Chairman David Lewis.

Grand opening

The Celebrations kick off with a Grand Opening Ceremony on 2 May, starting in what is now Hampstead Way at the same location where Henrietta Barnett "cut the first sod". She was accompanied by the Lord Mayor of London and Bishop Winnington-Ingram, still remembered in the names of Ingram Avenue and Winnington Road. This will be followed by the unveiling of a Centenary Floral Display on Willifield Green and Maypole Dancing, which also featured in 1907.

Dozens of special events will take place including a Pag-

eant and Procession on 6-9 June and an Historic Exhibition at the Church Farm Museum from May to September.

The Big Birthday Party and Picnic will be an open air extravaganza in Central Square on Sunday 17 June. In the evening the Proms at St Judes will be performing Handel's Messiah.

Community spirit

Founded by social reformer Henrietta Barnett in 1907 as an experiment in providing housing for people of different social classes and incomes within one community, the Suburb retains a unique community spirit.

"The key to its character is the beauty of its gardens, hedges and public open spaces. The architecture, especially in the earlier parts of the Suburb, evokes a style of a much earlier era," added David Lewis. This was the intention of the founding supervising architect Sir Raymond Unwin.

Full details of events are available at www.hgs.org.uk/centenary. The main sponsors of the Centenary Celebrations are the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association and Glentree Estates.

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