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Corner where a row of cottages once stood

By Janet Maitland

It's hard to believe that six cottages used to perch on the tiny triangle of land on the corner of East End Road and Church Lane in East Finchley. They were demolished in 1962 to make room for a road widening scheme that never happened.

It's not known when Causeway Cottages were built, but 29 people lived there by 1861, including eight dressmakers (three retired), two gardeners, two house painters, a milliner, a coachman, and nine children.

The old photograph we are printing was taken sometime between 1905, when the houses in the distance towards the Five Bells pub were built, and 1913, when the postcard it is on was posted.

At the 1911 census the number of tenants had dropped

to 18, some of whom may be in the picture. Tenants included two gardeners, a cowman, a servant and seven children. The elderly lady in the wheelchair is probably 80-year-old Jane Crooks who lived at number 4.

One of the cottages, advertised as 'a valuable building site' and 'let @ £140 p.a.', was sold at auction at the Five Bells on 12 November 1924.

Road schemes and demolition

Finchley Council was thinking of widening East End Road as far back as the 1920s. The owner of the cottages, J H Lermite, refused to sell them for less than £1,750 in 1929 and his executors objected to the Finchley Planning Scheme in 1930.



Then: Causeway Cottages and some local residents on a postcard from between 1905 and 1913

The plan to widen East End Road in the early 1960s, driven by the Department of Transport, intended to straighten it out as well by constructing a new section of road that would bypass the swooping curve that dips down to Deansway.

In preparation for this, the five remaining cottages were recommended for site clearance in 1961 and demolished the following year. The council

did consider buying the site for a 'wayside garden' but nothing came of it. The site suffered from fly tipping, which may explain the hummock in the middle, and travellers sometimes parked their caravans

on it. The land eventually passed into the hands of the London Borough of Barnet, who planted a few nondescript shrubs and two beautiful white cherry trees.



Now: Green space on the corner

Who lived in the county roads?

By Peter Cox

On 29 September 1939, less than a month after the Second World War began, the government ran a total census of the country, two years early, to gain information for the introduction of identity and ration cards.

That data became unexpectedly available online five years ago, and when we had a street party soon afterwards I listed the inhabitants of my road, Hertford Road. With East Finchley in lockdown, and street WhatsApp groups springing up, it seemed a good moment to revive it, and a friend in Huntingdon Road asked me to do it for them too.

Henry and Mabel

The data is handwritten and a typical household looks like this:

Address: No 91. Name: Bent, Henry. Date of birth: 11-03-82. Age: 57. Occupation: Professional fireman (cinema). Name: Bent, Mabel. Date of birth: 25-03-83. Age: 56. Occupation: UDD.

This is my house, and it's unusual because only a single couple were living in it. His occupation is an odd one, suggesting that cinemas, and possibly The Rex as it was, now the Phoenix, employed their own firemen. Many more of the county road houses were split then than now: roughly half of them contained two households.

Her occupation, like two-thirds of the women, was given as UDD or Unpaid Domestic Duties, in other words a stay-at-home housewife. Few married women went out to work, and hardly any did once they'd had children. In the Hertford and Huntingdon Roads combined, 198 women stayed at home and only 111 worked, and of those 80% were single. The school leaving age for most was still 14, and many teenage girls were sent out to work to augment the family income.

Social class

In contrast to today, the streets were overwhelmingly working class. Fewer than 5%

of the men were managerial or professional, and 4% were foremen. I doubt if any had been to university. The highest classification was the 25% for skilled labour. The GPO employed 16 men (and no women). 14% of men were clerks, 12% in the building trade, and 10% in transport. Of the employed women, 40% were clerical, 30% in retail, often in dress shops, or in food production.

The population make-up of the county roads was clearly very different then, and it would be fascinating to see what the profile of the typical county roader is now. Watch this space...

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