



A family's life touched twice by tragedy

By Julia Lawrence

Back in September 2021, *The Archer* told the tragic but fascinating story behind the pedestrian underpass that runs below the Northern line, connecting Trinity Road and Manor Park Road, N2. We learned, thanks to the research of writer Roger Chapman, how it was dug to keep local children safe following the death of a nine-year-old boy on the line in 1878.

The boy's name was William Bowman, and at the time of the accident he was living at 16 Manor Cottages, a row of tiny, terraced dwellings on what is now Manor Cottages Approach, off Long Lane, just before the North Circular Road.

An inquest into his death was held at the Red Lion Tavern, on Red Lion Hill, N2, and a report published in the *Hendon* and *Finchley Times* in September 1878. Several witnesses described how William had been working with his

one train pass before stepping onto the tracks. The noise of the passing engine must have masked the approach of another train travelling in the opposite direction. He was killed immediately.

Family facts

Through looking at the electoral rolls, and registrar documents for the area in the 1800s, we are now able to tell you a little more about the Bowman family.

As for so many families



Tragic accident: A map of the Long Lane area of East Finchley in 1878 showing where William Bowman died crossing the railway line.

Arthur, four, and a one-year-old daughter, Elizabeth. Sarah was a laundress while her husband was a farmer's labourer.

Eight in one cottage

Ten years later, they'd moved to an address in Long Lane, and the family had grown. There were three more boys: Frederick, Harry and lastly William. That's six children to feed, clothe and keep warm on a laundress and labourer's wages, and there was more tragedy in store for this family.

While the eldest boy, Thomas, joined the Royal Navy, the other sons followed their father onto the land. One boy, at least, managed to fly the cramped family nest for there's a record of Frederick marrying a Mary Elizabeth Favell in Islington in 1884, when he would have been about 19.

Long before the discovery of antibiotics, Arthur, like so many others living in overcrowded conditions, succumbed to tuberculosis, then known as

consumption, in October 1886. His death certificate shows he died at 16 Manor Cottages, with his mother Sarah at his bedside.

Daily reminders

The last sighting of the Bowmans is on the 1911 census. By then, Sarah was a 78-year-old widow, living in Hertfordshire with her daughter Elizabeth, who, unusually for the age, never married. She gave her profession as a shop assistant in London and, presumably,

would have travelled along the Great Northern Railway into town every day to get to work, across William's tunnel, which the railway company was ordered to build following his inquest.

Millions of commuters obviously travel the line every year, but I doubt she ever forgot the little brother who died on that line, or the tunnel that is still keeping children and adults safe almost 150 years later.



Safer passage: The underpass built at the crossing point following William's death is still used today.

father, an agricultural labourer, at Park Farm, East End Road, on 7 August, when he was sent home to get some tea at around 4.15pm.

The direct route back to his home went via the Trinity Road crossing, then above the level of the surrounding fields. It appears William had watched

living in Finchley at the time – then a largely working-class, agricultural area – life must have been hard. William's parents were Sarah and William Snr and they first appear on the 1861 census living at '26 East End' when Sarah, then aged 22 and William, 24, already had three children: Thomas, six,

26] The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Parish (or Township) of *Finchley* City or Municipal Borough of *Finchley* Municipal Ward of *Finchley* Parliamentary Borough of *Finchley* Town of *Finchley*

ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOWARD No. of HOUSE	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON-DITION	AGE of Person	Sex
<i>Long Lane</i>		<i>Sarah Bowman</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>W</i>
		<i>Arthur Do</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>M</i>
		<i>Elizabeth Do</i>	<i>Daughter</i>		<i>11</i>	<i>F</i>
		<i>Frederick Do</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>8</i>	<i>M</i>
		<i>Harry Do</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>6</i>	<i>M</i>
		<i>William Do</i>	<i>Son</i>		<i>2</i>	<i>M</i>

Family snapshot: An extract from the Census of 1871 showing the entry for Sarah Bowman, 38, and her children Arthur, 14, Elizabeth, 11, Frederick, eight, Harry, six, and William, then aged two.

Plea for recycled crisp packets



Organisers of recycling project Bin There Donate That have thanked everyone who has donated empty crisp packets at the Cherry Tree Café in Cherry Tree Wood and issued a plea.

They've asked if all packets could first be prepared by being washed, dried and cut open down their back seam, as in the photo. This then makes them easy to recycle as warming blankets and useful bags which are given out to homeless people on the street.

Any unwashed packets collected at the café will not be used for this project but instead will go to one of the major supermarkets to their soft plastic recycling locations.

Opened up: How to dry out your crisp packets for recycling

Players fuel up at tennis tournament for Age UK

Earlier in the summer, Our Lady of Muswell Tennis Club, based in Rhodes Avenue, N22, hosted an American doubles tournament in support of Age UK Barnet. In conjunction with Barnet Tennis Club, 30 players enjoyed coffee and home-made cakes followed by three hours of strenuous competition on the courts, before finishing off with lunch. The day raised £600 for the work of Age UK.



Tennis trio: Members of Our Lady of Muswell Tennis Club enjoy their fundraising event.