



The timber that built the homes we live in

By Mike Coles

What is now East Finchley was a largely rural area until the massive expansion of London in the late Victorian period. The release of common land and the demand for housing by a burgeoning population saw as much as 75% of the houses we see today being built between 1875 and 1910.

New streets were laid out and individual builders bought plots of land and built on them, often in small blocks. The differences block to block can be seen today. The main resources they needed were bricks, slates and wood.

End Finchley railway station.

Original yards

Why there? Timber at the time was imported from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia and arrived at London Docks. The new railway linked



Going strong: PO Joyce as it is today, off Church Lane

Finsbury Park with Kings Cross and farther south, so the new freight services were ideal for supplying a timber yard. Benjamin delivered the timber to his customers by horse and cart. Hand carts were

Bricks

Bricks came from Uxbridge and Enfield and most slate from North Wales but what about the wood? Well, interestingly, East Finchley had its own supply.

also available, but it was uphill in both directions so must have been hard work.

By the end of the 19th century Edwin Joyce had taken over the company and over-

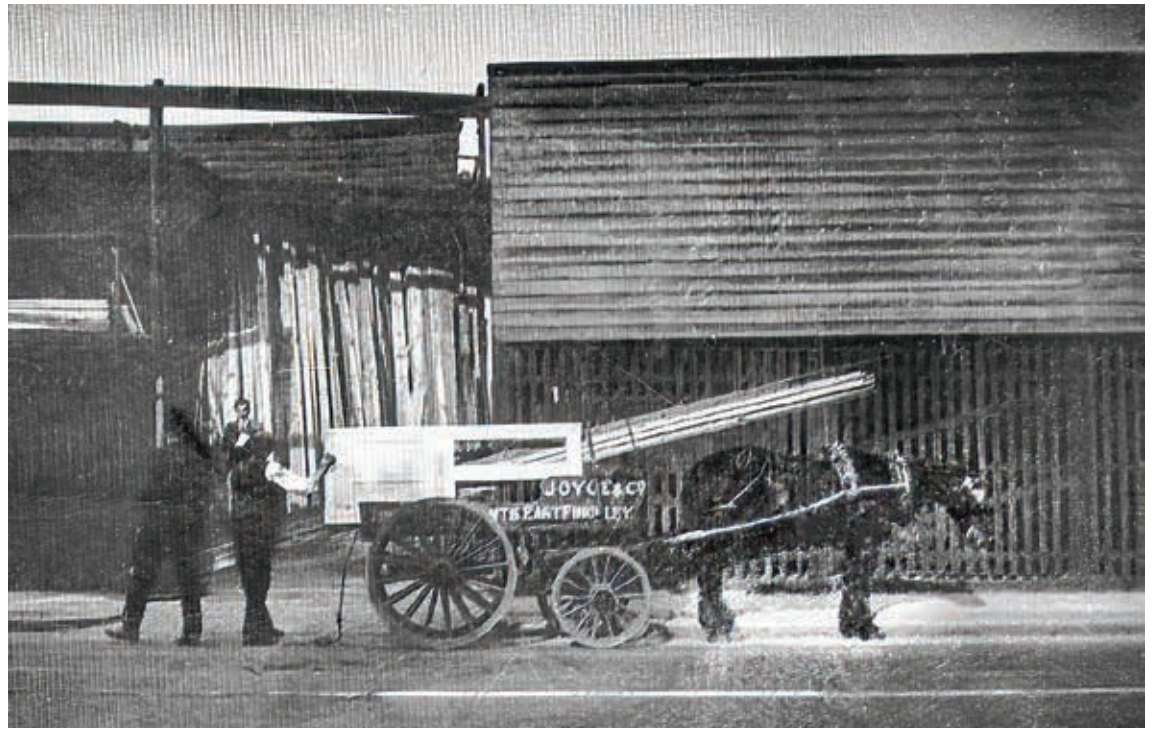


Original site: The red box shows where Joyce's yard was located in 1873, on land behind what was then East End Station and is now part of the tube station car park

In 1863, Benjamin Joyce, an enterprising young man, left Ireland for a better life, a new challenge and to seek his fortune. After a couple of years working in a joinery business in central London he opened a small timber yard near what was then the recently opened East

saw the massive expansion of building in the area. Demand grew and the Joyce company flourished.

The wood needed for house building was mainly pine, often called deal, as either 'whitewood' but usually the better quality 'redwood'. Even



Wagons roll: In the late 1800s, Benjamin Joyce would deliver timber around East Finchley by horse and cart

today most houses in N2 still have these original joists and floorboards.

After Edwin, Percy Oswald Joyce formally registered the company and saw the introduction of mechanised transport and the retirement of the horses in the mid-1920s. But massive disruption followed. Up till the early 1930s trains had run overland from central London to East Finchley but by 1935 the 'Northern Heights' project for suburban railways had begun.

Forced to move

New underground tunnels were built from the Northern Line terminus at Archway giving the now 'East Finchley' station access to London, both overland and underground. A significant effect of the project was the demolition of the old station and the building of the one we know today. Joyce's timber sheds were subject to a compulsory purchase order, and the company had to move.

Fortunately, they were able to acquire land in Church Lane, N2, where they remain to this day.

The company has stayed in the same family throughout and is now in its sixth generation. This year is its 160th anniversary.

BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

- Help young people learn new skills and make friends at **224 North London Air Scouts**, who offer rewarding volunteer and life skills. Whether you're a young adult aged 14-18 looking to volunteer for your Duke of Edinburgh or over 18 and eager to make new friends, they have a spot for you. Do more, be more, and share more by joining 224northlondonscouts.org.uk. Email gsl@224northlondonscouts.org.uk or call Scout Leader Del on 07707 763344.

- Helpers are welcome to contribute towards the life of **The Archer Academy** secondary school in Eagans Close, N2. There is a beautiful school garden and a lovely team of garden volunteers who are always looking for new members. If you are interested in helping in the garden, please contact Rachael Harvey: greenarrows@thearcheracademy.org.uk. There is also a team of volunteers who come into the school library during the week to read with students who need support. If you would like to volunteer in the library, please contact Allison Appelquist, School Librarian: aappelquist@thearcheracademy.org.uk

- **Finchley Foodbank** is supporting a growing number of people who rely on this outstanding organisation to manage through the week. Help clients with choosing their food, toiletries and baby goods, or come in when the food bank is preparing stocks on the days before opening. There's a number of roles and food bank manager Anna Maughan and the volunteer team will welcome you with open arms to find your niche. New recruits are urgently needed to carry out this valuable work. Email finchleyfoodbank@gmail.com to find out more.

- **Driving Aid to Ukraine** is a non-profit organisation based in N2 started by local resident Michael Byrne, who delivers lorries of humanitarian aid across Europe to the Ukrainian conflict zones, via border transfer points. They require all kinds of volunteers: to help scale up in building and sustaining a social media campaign, fundraising and grant writing and to organise collections of warm clothes and other vital humanitarian aid items, and people who would like to drive locally to pick up the collections. A fantastic opportunity whatever your skill sets to bring vital aid to an utterly devastated people and learn about the international aid sector at a grassroots level. Find out more at Drivingaidtoukraine.org or get in touch with Michael on 07791 912389.

- Become a Proms volunteer! Could you give a few hours a month to help make next year's **Proms at St Jude's Festival** a success? The skills or experience we need include admin; IT; organisation and logistics; fundraising; and education. It's a great opportunity to get involved in a local community project, gain experience and meet new people. Find out more at www.promsatstjudes.org.uk/volunteering

If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column please send details (max 80 words please) to news@the-archer.co.uk or complete the form at www.ILoveN2.co.uk/be-part-of-it.



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Choir goes Dutch

Alyth Choral Society is welcoming the Poly Hymnia Choir from Zeist in the Netherlands for a joint concert on Saturday 25 November.

The programme, in which the choirs will perform separately and together, comprises some well-known opera choruses as well as compositions by Ethel Smyth and Nicola Le Fanu. The venue is the North Western Reform Synagogue, Temple Fortune, NW11 7EN. Tickets cost £20 (under 16s free) with free refreshments. Book at alythchoralsociety.org