

newsletter

No 57

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Jan 1980

A Hampstead Victorian— our January talk

Tues 15th Jan, 7.30pm
Swiss Cottage Library, N.W.3

Michael Robbins, distinguished historian and President of the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society, is our speaker in January. His subject is Dockray, designer of the Roundhouse in Camden Town which was, of course, a remarkable engine-shed. A combination of social and transport history and an excellent speaker are irresistible!

History of the British Museum

Wed 13th Feb 7.30pm
Holborn Central Library
Theobalds Road, W.C.1.

The British Museum is such a solid institution it seems remarkable that it has had such a chequered history. Edward Miller, of the BM, is giving an illustrated talk for us in February which will show how this famous museum has grown despite the indifferent and spasmodic help of successive governments.

THE HAMPSTEAD HEATHENS

I gather that when the first FA Cup was held in 1871/2 one of the 15 teams to enter was Hampstead Heathens. Is anything known about the team in those early days? I know that there is still an adult team of the same name, plus a junior side which has no connection with the former.

Alan Sillitoe
Sports Officer, London Borough of Camden

Sir James Brown

Sir James Brown, vice-president of the Society and previously its President, died just after Christmas, aged 87. Apart from the energy which he devoted to this Society he had also been for a number of years President and prominent member of the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution. He was well known in Highgate and did much historical research which he conscientiously left in the archives of the Institution for future historians to build on.

He was a modest and gentle man, very generous in his time and help, especially to young people, and for that last fact alone will be remembered for a long time. In this Society, which made his acquaintance in his later years, he was regarded with great affection and respect. He was always enthusiastic about our work and whereas most presidents would have made infrequent appearances he came very often, making the long and awkward journey from Highgate by public transport in defiance of age and inconvenience.

He will be much missed.

Advance Notice

Meetings of the Society which will be announced in greater detail in the next Newsletter are:

20th March: Dr. D.G. James 'Local Medical Personalities' at Swiss Cottage Library, 7.30pm

15th April: The History of Sainsbury's. Please note that this is a revised date (it was originally 14th April) and is still to be confirmed. The likely venue is the North London Polytechnic, Prince of Wales Road, N.W.5

FREDERICK MILDE

A correspondent in Japan asks for information on a Frederick Milde who lived at 85 Priory Road in 1900-1. Any one with information should contact the Editor of this Newsletter.

Recalling Redhill Street

The following essay by Jean Scott Rogers won second prize in our recent Essay Competition on the theme of 'My Street'.

There was no need for an alarm clock to rouse young Fred Summers, his parents and his three brothers. The two storey house in Redhill Street, where the family lived before the 1st World War backed onto the Regent's Park Barracks and they were awakened every morning, Sundays included, by the bugler sounding reveille.

In those days Redhill Street ran round three sides of an oblong area, as indeed it still does in the 1970s, with Albany Street on the fourth, westernmost side. It was cut from north to south by Little Edward Street, named after Prince Edward, one of King George III's fifteen children. Only the top and bottom ends of Little Edward Street now remain, the middle section is occupied by the post 2nd World War Christ Church Primary School buildings. There were no large blocks of Crown Estate flats on the north and east sides of Redhill Street in Fred's day. This was a working class area of small houses and shops, which had come into existence in the 1820s, as part of Nash's plan for the development of the Regent's Park Estate, and along with a number of other streets in the Borough was so named by the St Pancras Vestry in 1865 - names of no local significance and apparently chosen at random.

On some mornings Fred was up before the bugle call. This was on those mornings when he was privileged to go with his father, Charles, to Covent Garden Market to buy fruit and vegetables for the family green-grocery business. On these occasions they left Redhill Street at 3.30am, walking down to Camden Town to the stables behind Pugh's the drapers in the High Street, to get out the horse and cart. Part of the ritual was the stop at a cafe for a cup of tea and 'Tottenham Court cake', which Fred describes as a marvellous affair of sponge, jam and bright pink icing. Whether the cafe proprietor sold the cake under this name or whether it was christened by Fred's father he does not remember, only that it tasted as mouth-wateringly good as the Victoria plums which they brought back from the market to sell in Arlington Road. These plums were packed in wicker baskets, and the lids were not so securely skewered down that one could not slip a hand inside and ease out the odd plum on the ride back. The other fruit remembered from the days of his childhood were the apples which he and the other boys scumped from the orchard near the camp site in Suffolk where they went each summer with the Children's

Holiday Fund. One penny a week their parents subscribed to this, the only holiday of the year.

Fred's father delivered his fruit and vegetables over a wide area - as far afield as Cadogan Square - and he had many wealthy customers living in the Nash terraces on the Regent's Park side of the 'Great Divide' which was, and still is, Albany St. Here his transactions were strictly 'downstairs' with the cook. He seldom saw the occupants of 'upstairs'. Having started his working life as a coachman to a family in Chester Terrace he was on friendly terms with many of the staff employed by the gentry. Fred himself was to become a well-known and much respected figure in the terraces when, for over fifty years, he was employed as an electrician by Bucknells of Parkway.

He and his brother (he was the second eldest of the four) attended various schools in St Pancras, starting from Christ Church Primary School in Redhill Street. His favourite was the old St Mark's Boys School in Arlington Road which had been handed over to St Michael's, Camden Town in 1904. From the playground it was only a quick scramble over the wall and he was in the backyard of his father's shop. Here, in addition to fruit and vegetables, Charles Summers sold coal, which was weighed out on the scales at the back of the shop, bagged and delivered by his sons on barrows around the district.

Fred was often sent to stay with his maternal grandmother, Mrs Heath, who ran two lodging houses in the Euston Road. He slept in the basement kitchen and used to carry up the breakfast trays to the lodgers before going to Netley Street School. Mrs Heath was a widow and was no doubt glad to have an active boy about the place, while at the same time relieving Fred's mother of the pressures of running a home, bringing up four children and helping her husband in the shop.

There were no organised amusements or adventure playgrounds on the Cumberland Market Estate in those days. Children made their own. Perhaps the most popular pastime was jumping onto the barges moored in the Cumberland Basin, which lay where the Crown Estate allotments now flourish. These barges would be piled high with hay, brought here via a now extinct arm of the Regent's Canal which ran from Water Meeting Bridge in Prince Albert Road, through Park Village East to the basin. The offices of the dealers in hay and straw were alongside but it seems none of the men employed in them troubled to interfere with the lads' game. The canal was only a few feet deep and Uncle Lewis used

to give the smaller boys piggy-backs whilst he paddled in the water all the way to the bridge at Gloucester Gate and beyond. Tying up door knockers was another game, although was never attempted on the other side of Albany Street where the terrace dwellers were protected by a personage in uniform, wearing a top hat, and armed with a large stick, who patrolled the area to prevent any sort of 'aggro.' on the part of the lads from the Cumberland Market Estate. Fred, racking his brains, thinks his uniform was brown. In winter the muffin man was a target for mischief. One time when snow was lying thick on the cobbles of Redhill Street (which survive to this day) the boys bombarded him with snowballs. Perhaps they hoped he might lose his balance and drop the tray he carried on his head. The bell of the muffin man is no longer heard: its place has been taken by the chimes of the ice-cream seller.

But it was the Barracks behind their house which provided the Summers family with their chief interest. Not only had they a young bachelor Life Guard as a lodger, but the serices of Fred's father, who had gone into the cartage business, were much in demand when one contingent of Guards was due to go to Windsor Castle. There he would be with his horse and van to move the families and their chattels, and bring them back again when their spell of duty was over. He had no motor vans until after the 1st World War, when Fred recalls he bought a 'Y Type' Daimler lorry. The regimental band which played on the square on Sunday mornings was another source of delight, although not as big a thrill for the boys as the days when they followed the Guards going to Whitehall, through the gate leading off Albany Street between Chester Place and Cumberland Terrace Mews - a gate put there, Fred believes, for just that purpose. The boys would follow the troop to Horse Guards Parade and back on foot. With only a half-penny a week pocket-money one did not patronize the trams or horse-buses. Fred's most vivid memory of the Barracks is a grim one. One evening, walking home from the Bedford Theatre (which he thinks was then called 'The Bedford Palace of Varieties') he and his parents and the lodger noticed a red glow in the sky in the direction of Redhill Street. They were sure it was their house that was on fire, and their fears were confirmed when they saw the fire engine drawn up outside the house, their front door broken in and hose-pipes lying like snakes along the hall and up the stairs. But it was the Barracks stables that were

blazing, and the firemen were playing their hoses out of the Summer's back windows in an attempt to stop the fire spreading. A number of fine horses lost their lives in the fire, and even now that he is in his seventies Fred says the smell of charred wood still recalls that night.

In Fred's day there were two public houses in the northern section of Redhill Street, one on the corner of Little Edward Street almost opposite where he lived, and another, the 'Crown and Anchor' almost next door on the corner of Redhill Street and Albany Street, where Charles Summers went for his pint. For pints of another sort, Fred's mother would send him with a jug to the dairy in nearby Robert Street, where they kept a cow on the premises.

The 'Crown and Anchor' survived until the blitz of the 2nd World War, but in the early 1960s that corner of Redhill Street and several of the old houses, including Fred's, already badly damaged by bombs, were demolished to make way for Gardner House, the newest block of flats on the Cumberland Estate, where the writer now lives. On the site of the pub a number of bottles were dug up, along with a battered pewter tankard of the time of William IV and an enamel mug, a souvenir of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. These relics are now preserved behind glass in the Crown Estate Office at Gardner House, but there is nothing to show that the Summers family ever lived on this same spot in what I should call not 'My' by 'Our Street'.

NEW MEMBERS

New members include:

Mr and Mrs G. Benson, H. Bloch, Mr and Mrs M. Craddock, A.J. Farmer, D.J. Hanson, Mr and Mrs R. Hershey, M. Kodama, Ms Wendy Mantle, Ms Nicola Roche, R. Whytehead, R. Woolley

Two Hundred Years Ago

In 1780 a theatre was first erected in Tottenham Street, W.1 by Francis Pasqualis. It was known then as the King's Concert Rooms but later changed with a desperate addiction to royalty to The Queen's, The Royalty, The Regency, The Royal Fitzroy and then the Prince of Wales. On the site the much lamented Scala Theatre was built.

The Dig at Tottenham Court

The contractors have completed their excavation work on the site of Tottenham Court. It is now clear that the 18th and 19th century building development removed all trace of the standing medieval or Tudor buildings which may have been on that site. However, a deep 'garderobe' pit was revealed and rapidly recorded literally from under the teeth of the contractors' machines.

We discovered a rectangular 'garderobe' pit (1.80m x 3.10m) incorporating on one side a vertical chimney with an angled chute at its base to carry refuse down from a building above. Although masonry walls survived to a depth of 2.75m these were encountered 90cm below modern ground level and no trace of the building to which they belonged survived. The walls were well built and squared limestone blocks lined the pit with chalk rubble packed behind. Some organic material had accumulated on the floor of the pit including some pieces of early 15th century leather.

The last deposit to be tipped down the 'chimney' spread out from about half way up the chute entrance and contained a large amount of oyster shells together with some fractured pots and one complete mid-16th c. Frechen (Rhine-land) drinking mug. The greatest part of the pit had been backfilled with tile and chalk rubble presumably from the demolition of whatever buildings lay above.

To the south-west of the 'garderobe' pit traces of a wall running north-south were exposed. The base of the wall lay slightly higher than that of the pit. It was of a similar build, chalk packing behind limestone facing blocks. The facing, judging from what little was left, appeared to curve upwards and outwards to the west. However, as it ran along the western boundary of the site it is uncertain what this wall could have arched over. Disturbed ground to the west of the 'garderobe' suggested a possible sloping off of the natural ground surface and this, together with the arched wall, might be taken as an indication of the moat running along the western boundary of the manor house and shown on Necton's map of 1591.

Robert Whytehead
Inner London Archaeological Unit

ST PANCRAS STATION

There is to be a local enquiry into British Rail's appeal against the refusal of its application to demolish the booking hall of St Pancras Station on 5th February 1980. The Society will be considering if it can usefully play any part in the opposition to the appeal.

Archaeology at St Giles

As members may know the land to the south of St Giles Church, Holborn, is being redeveloped. This area lies within the boundaries of the St Giles Leper Hospital although to the south of the probable site of the hospital buildings.

Observations of the test pits and contractors' excavation has shown the area to be extensively basemented. The development closest to the churchyard along the north side of New Compton Street is unlikely to disturb layers of archaeological interest.

Robert Whytehead
Inner London Archaeological Unit

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Members are reminded that we have two new major publications on sale. One is the Kentish Town Packet a collection which includes a short history of Kentish Town with details of each street, reproductions of a c1800 map and the central part of the drawings, made by King, of buildings in Kentish Town in the early part of the 19th century. The other is the Camden History Review No 7, which members would have received as part of their membership subscription, but spare copies are available to give to friends.

Prices: Kentish Town Packet £2.70 plus 25p postage. CHR7 £1 plus 18p postage. Obtainable from CHS Publications, 28 Willoughby Road, N.W.3

THE SOCIETY

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society and is edited by John Richardson, 32 Ellington St, N.7 to whom all contributions should be sent.

Officers of the Society:

Chairman - John Richardson

Secretary - Mrs Jane Ramsay, c/o Swiss Cottage Library, Avenue Road, N.W.3

Treasurer - Miss Helen Lefroy at Swiss Cottage Library

Editor of Publications - Christopher Wade, 28 Willoughby Road, N.W.3.

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No 58

Mar 1980

Local Medical Personalities

Thursday, March 20th 7.30pm
Swiss Cottage Library

Medical people, especially in the 19th century, had a prominence in the urban locality uncommon today. They were important not just for their medical role but in their encouragement, if they were so inclined, of better living conditions. Their work and their personalities are sure to provide a talk of great interest by Dr D.G. James on March 20th

The History of Sainsbury's

Tuesday, April 15th, 7.30pm
Polytechnic of North London, Prince of Wales Road, N.W.5

The firm of Sainsbury's has its origins in Camden - in Drury Lane and Kentish Town. It set standards of hygiene, freshness and shop design unheard of then and hardly surpassed now. The Camden links are important and form the basis of a talk by Harriet Geddes, the Sainsbury archivist.

The Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will take place in June, but the date and venue have yet to be fixed. Details will appear in the next Newsletter. In the meantime members are invited to make nominations for officers and Council members. The present office holders are:

President: Charles E. Lee
Vice Presidents: R. Michael Robbins, Prof. Valerie Pearl, Dr. Ann Saunders, W.R. Maidment, Lord Greenwood
Chairman: John Richardson
Vice-Chairman - Gillian Tindall
Secretary - Mrs Jane Ramsay
Treasurer - Miss Helen Lefroy
Editor of Publications - Christopher Wade
Archivist - Malcolm Holmes
Meetings Secretary - Horace Shooter
Council Members - E.G. Brassington, Anthony Cooper, Mrs C. Gee, P.D. Greenall, Coral

Howells, John Lawson, Cherry Lavell, Deirdre Le Faye, David Thomas, Rosemary Weinstein, Ann Winser

Nominations and notices of motion should be received by the Secretary by the end of March and should be seconded with the consent of the nominee.

Your Council are proposing the following minor changes to the Constitution:

a) Rule 4. Council. Amend the wording as follows:

The Council shall have power to co-opt one representative of each of the Special Project Groups approved by the Council, that members may be forming from time to time (see Rule 10). The Council may also co-opt other members as they think fit, but the total number of co-opted members shall not exceed 8.

(There is no change to the number of possible co-options but widens the choice).

b) Rule 9. Meetings. The Annual General Meeting shall be held during the month of May or June.

(This would regularise the position which has existed for several years and allow some flexibility).

THE TRANSPORT GROUP

A meeting of the Transport Group has been arranged for Friday, 28th March, 6pm at Swiss Cottage Library. The group has been dormant for a little while and this is an attempt to set it on to new paths. So, all those members who put down 'Transport' as one of their interests are very welcome!

Members are reminded that the closing date for entries to the CHS 3rd Essay Competition is the end of April. The subject is 'Working in Camden'. If you haven't a copy of the rules these can be obtained from Christopher Wade, 28 Willoughby Road, N.W.3

The Buildings of James Hartnoll

In the March 1979 edition of the Newsletter we published a request from Mrs Burns of the St Pancras Housing Association asking for information about James Hartnoll whose 'estate' the Association had just bought - old model buildings in the Holborn area.

Isabel Watson has been researching Mr Hartnoll:

The bare facts of James Hartnoll's career are remarkable. He was born on 13th February 1853 in Harper Street, St Mary Newington, Southwark, in a house which his father Thomas, a carpenter, and his mother Elizabeth Braund shared with several other families. At the age of 21, on his marriage to the daughter of a Chelsea cab-owner, he described himself as a grocer, the following year he was a joiner in Peckham. When he was 28 he was noted by a Select Committee of the House of Commons to be one of only two speculative builders building working-class housing in central London, by the age of 32 he was able to spend £16,400 in one year alone on the purchase of building land. On his death on 23 January 1900 he left some £440,000, having housed more than 4000 people in 'industrial dwellings' and built at least a dozen blocks of West End mansion flats. Yet of the man himself nothing is known, and the details of his transition from Peckham joiner to speculative builder on the grand scale remain a mystery.

The "large block in Liqueurpond Street" which the Select Committee noted to be under construction by Hartnoll in 1881 was Cavendish Buildings (now Mansions), built by Hartnoll for Samuel Toye of Mile End, who had bought the site after its clearance by the Metropolitan Board of Works for street improvements east of Theobald's Road, and who was later to carry out a similar development at Kentish Town. Both the design of "Toye's Buildings", as they were first called, and the notion of building on sites cleared by the Board under their statutory powers, were put to good effect by Hartnoll, who by 1885 was developing on his own account the Wells Street site in Poplar cleared as an unhealthy area under the Artizans and Labourers' Dwelling Acts. The statute required new working-class housing to be provided on the site, and Hartnoll exceeded his target by providing Grosvenor Buildings to house 1392 people in more than 500 flats. In the

same year he began the series of large blocks in Tooley Street, Southwark, now called Devon Mansions. Both developments bear a strong visual resemblance to Cavendish Buildings in Clerkenwell Road.

In 1887 Hartnoll made more purchases from the Board of Works, of sites in Southwark and Bermondsey, and the first of his West End sites, produced by the creation of Charing Cross Road. The former were developed as sites for more artisans' dwellings, and the latter as Halberstadt (now Sheldon) Mansions (nos 16-36), Trentishoe (86-88) Crediton (45-7) and Bude Mansions (nos 158-60). In the same year he bought plots in Shaftesbury Avenue (for Exeter and Seaton Mansions at nos 108 and 205-13) and in the year following in Gray's Inn Road, which the Board was widening. Here Clovelly (now Churston and Dawlish), Tiverton and Dulverton Mansions were built. The Hartnoll estate was completed with the purchase of land off Elm Street for Holsworthy Square, and the remaining blocks built in the newly-laid out Rosebery Avenue between 1890 and 1895.

All the land bought by Hartnoll for these developments was sold off by the Board of Works, or their successors the London County Council, as being surplus to requirements for street improvements, or for development under the Artizans and Labourers' Dwelling Acts. Both authorities frequently found such land difficult to sell, and had to sell it more cheaply than they would have wished. The statutory requirements for rehousing of the numbers displaced from the land lowered its commercial value, as the building of working-class housing was thought to be unremunerative and the authorities deterred the numerous agencies set up to provide such housing by the imposition of onerous conditions of sale, for example entitling them to require the alteration of buildings as they were put up.

A curious incident occurred over the Elm Street transaction between Hartnoll and the LCC. The Council's minutes record that two members of the Committee whose function it was to confirm Council auction sales tried to block the sale to Hartnoll of the site for Holsworthy Square, and that after some deliberation the Committee recommended that the sale was a "right and proper" one and should go ahead. However they discreetly omit to mention the grounds for the challenge.

Although in this prolific building period between 1885 and 1895 the main bulk of Hartnoll's business was the development

of these numerous sites, he does not seem to have been deterred from engaging in smaller-scale enterprises, as during this period he is to be found altering a shop-front in Regent Street, negotiating with the Board of Works for a small strip of land on behalf of owners of Cavendish Buildings, and attempting to launch a scheme for a row of shops in the Old Kent Road. He also engaged in a certain amount of land dealing, including the acquisition of one side of Orde Hall Street in Holborn, which he owned at his death.

Most of Hartnoll's buildings have survived. The reasons why the London Borough of Southwark decided to renovate, rather than demolish, Devon Mansions in Tooley Street are not untypical. The structure was found to be sound, and, like many sites produced by street improvement schemes, the site too awkwardly shaped to be easily redeveloped.

Bude Mansions and Seaton Mansions have disappeared under modern office developments, but the only block of Hartnoll "industrial dwellings" no longer standing (other than a portion of Devon Mansions which was sacrificed, ironically enough, to a further road-widening scheme), is the earliest, Grosvenor Mansions in Poplar. This proved to be the block which after his death gave Hartnoll's trustees the most trouble. From the beginning they proved difficult to let; in 1915 there was a rent-strike and the trustees began eviction proceedings, only to abandon them gracefully a few days before the introduction in Parliament of the first Increase of Rent and Mortgage Restriction Bill, which gave the tenants security of tenure.

Various theories have been advanced about Hartnoll and his buildings. One is that he worked for a time in Germany, but there is no evidence for this beyond the fact of the German names he gave to three of his developments. The further theory that he had introduced a revolutionary type of building from Germany has even less to substantiate it. Hartnoll's dwellings were provided with sinks, dust chutes and internal water closets, but so had been the first block of artisans' dwellings built in London opposite old St Pancras Church.

Moreover his designs seem to owe much to Matthew Allen's designs such as Stanley Buildings at Kings Cross and Derby Buildings in Britannia Street.

It is noticeable that many of Hartnoll's buildings were named after places in Devon. No definite connection between Hartnoll's parents and Devon can be traced but the names Hartnoll and Braund were commonly found in the mid 19th century in the Barnstaple-Bideford-Holsworthy districts.

Of Hartnoll's family little is known. His only son, James, died of fever in 1917. His daughter, Elizabeth, married Thomas Vezey Strong, City paper merchant who became Lord Mayor of London in 1910 and they entertained at her father's country house at Ganwick, Potters Bar.

Hartnoll's will gives some indication of his character - he provided not only for his children but for the aunts whom he had maintained during his lifetime, and for three married sisters and numerous nephews and nieces and for a sizeable household of servants and employees. Yet for all his personal generosity no record of his personal qualities seems to have survived, other than the extraordinary testimony to his enterprise and energy afforded by the buildings themselves.

THE GOODALLS

On looking through old issues I came across the article on Charles Goodall & Sons. As I am Archivist to the Honourable Artillery Company I looked up the name in our index and found two, one of which I think may be one of the Goodalls mentioned in issue No 54.

Montague Goodall joined the Company in 1884 and had left by 1894. His address was Linden House, Highgate N.W. He was in No 6 Company which was renowned for its famous marksmen.

Joan Tsushima

BURGH HOUSE ACTIVITIES

Burgh House continue their extensive and interesting series of events. Some of interest to local history people are:

March 19th 8pm - North End (Hampstead) by David Sullivan
March 26th 8pm - Modern Times in Hampstead by Christopher Wade
April 20th 2.30 - Heath Walk
April 27th 2.30 - Heath Walk

GREATER LONDON RECORD OFFICE

The Greater London Record Office, after its reorganisation, has re-opened. Its opening times are Monday-Friday 9.30am to 4.45pm with a late evening opening on Tuesdays from 4.45 to 7.30 by appointment. The telephone number is 633 6851

REMINDER FROM THE TREASURER

Subscriptions for the year 1980-1 are due on March 1st. It is a great help to the Treasurer and the Secretary if these are paid promptly by those members who do not pay by banker's order.

Rates, which include a free copy of the Society's Annual Review, are as follows:
Individual member - £3.00

Joint membership - £3.50

Associates (schools, societies etc) £3.50

OAPs and full-time students £2.50

Cheques should be made payable to the Camden History Society and sent to the Treasurer, c/o Swiss Cottage Library, 88 Avenue Road, N.W.3

CENTENARY FOR THE HIGHGATE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION

In the autumn of 1980 the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution intend to celebrate in various ways the centenary of the reopening of the Institution in its present form, on March 9th, 1880, by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, then the owner of the Holly Lodge Estate. Further details will appear in later Newsletters.

THE SOCIETY

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The Secretary of the Society is Mrs Jane Ramsay, c/o Swiss Cottage Library, N.W.3. (278 4444 ext 3002)

THE HAMPSTEAD PLAQUE FUND

The Hampstead Plaque Fund was set up to mark the Hampstead home of Sir Edward Elgar. The organisers have now extended their operations to include other famous past residents and important local events. The plaques are specially designed and will create an awareness of the beauties of Hampstead and its remarkable history. The next appeal is to mark the home of John Gurney Hoare who was the prime mover in the battle to save Hampstead Heath from building development.

Those interested, (especially with donations!) should contact Ralph Wade, 24 Netherhall Gardens, N.W.3. Cheques should be made out to the Hampstead Plaque Fund.

PIANO-MAKING RESEARCH

Pauline Roenisch would very much like some assistance with her research into piano-making and associated manufacturers. This would mainly consist of checking through the Directories for the early 1900s, which are held at the Holborn Library. No previous experience is necessary, as instruction would be given. If you think you could help, even for a few hours, Pauline would be delighted to hear from you on 954 8296 (after 4pm)

NEW MEMBERS

New members include:

Miss H. Ash, Miss J. Chenhalls, Mr Paget Fulcher, Ms E. Hetherington, Mr M. Humby, Dr S. Jacobs, Mr and Mrs D. McLarty, Miss L. Marshall, Ms D. Moody, Ms J. Powell, Ms P. Sanderson, Mr and Mrs Sanham, Dr Michael Black, Miss M Cohen, Mrs P. Dale, Mr and Mrs Hunter-Jones, Ms E. Morgan, Mr J. Peach, Mrs K. Smith, Mr R. Stanwell, Dr Adrian States.



Kings Cross at the turn of the century - an old postcard featuring in the background the 'lighthouse' building which has been the subject of conjecture in The Times recently

newsletter

No 59

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

May 1980

The Annual General Meeting

Monday, June 2nd 7.30pm
Lauderdale House, Highgate Hill

It is apt that our 10th Annual Meeting should be at Lauderdale House. In the years since our formation local groups, especially those concerned with conservation, have mushroomed and become credible. It is doubtful if, ten years ago, buildings like Burgh and Lauderdale House would have been handed over to local societies without much to their bank balances except a great deal of enthusiasm. If local residents hadn't made their time available and their voices heard both of these houses would have been lost to public use.

Lauderdale House has associations with Nell Gwynn of course, but there is a lot more to its history than that. We are fortunate that apart from the business side of the meeting we are having a talk given by one of our members, Peter Barber, who apart from being in at the beginning of the fight to save the House for community use is also an expert on its history.

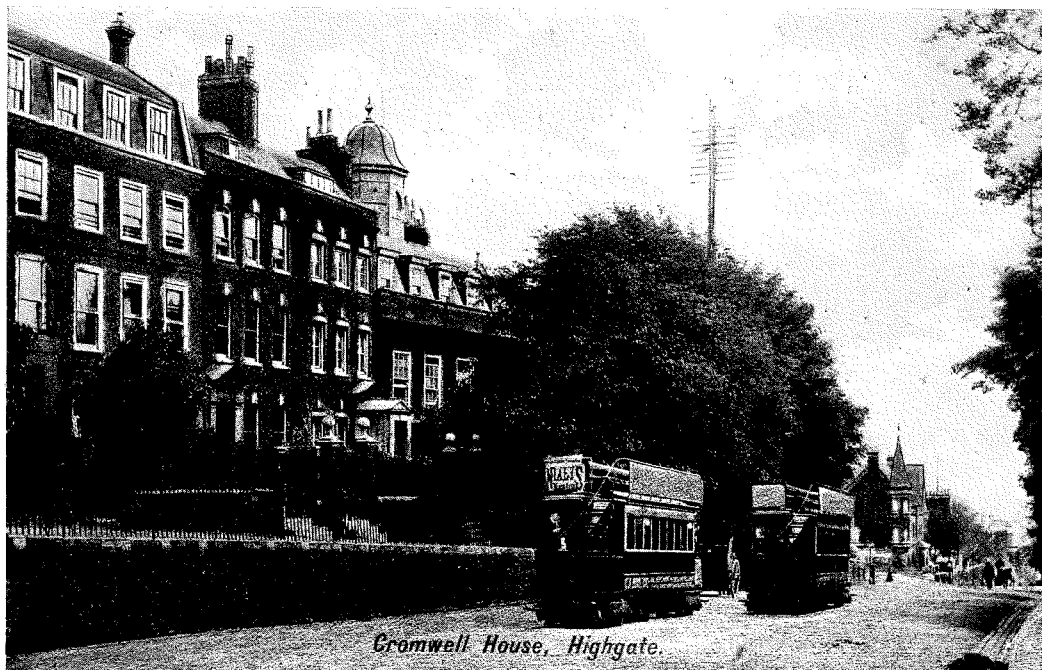
Great Ormond Street Hospital - our talk for May

Tues. 20th May, 7.30pm
Hospital Lecture Theatre, Great Ormond Street Hospital

The Great Ormond Street Hospital is known the world over but we do not know much about its history. To remedy this the Society has invited Dr Felix Besser to give a talk on this and the hospital has kindly allowed us to meet on their premises. It is now a very large hospital but it was founded in 1852 with only 10 beds.

THE SUMMER OUTING

For our summer outing this year we go westwards to Avebury, Devizes, Malmesbury and surrounding villages. We will have as our guide Mr Gregory who many members will remember as our former secretary. He lives now in Bradford-on-Avon and is getting to know the area well. The date is Saturday, August 9th. Details and an application form will be in our next Newsletter - but do put the date in your diary now.



Cromwell House, Highgate.
A 1906 postcard view of Cromwell House, Highgate - opposite to Lauderdale House, where our Annual General Meeting takes place on June 2nd

The Searchers of St. Pancras

In the 18th and 19th centuries, and probably before, St Pancras Vestry employed two Searchers. The origin of this post appears to be in 1603/4 when an Act was passed enabling authorities to appoint 'searchers, watchers, examiners, keepers and burriers' for plague victims. The Searcher appears to have been responsible for examining any dead body and notifying the authorities if the deceased had the plague.

The post long outlasted the social conditions and the plagues. The St Pancras Vestry minutes reveal that those appointed were always women with absolutely no medical qualifications at all. The first mention is not until 1774 although the Vestry minutes begin in 1718. That there is no record of them before 1774 is not significant as the record of parish business, in the hands of lowly-paid, part-time vestry clerks, was not an exact science in those days.

It was only in 1828 that the Vestry enquired into the usefulness of such people. It was reported that the Searchers claimed 8d for examining any dead body they had information of, in some instances, presumably when the deceased was a pauper, getting no fee at all, and at times 'from respectable people' receiving half a crown. Mrs Bono, one of the Searchers said that on average they examined 10 bodies a week and received £26 a year. The Sexton would not bury a body without a certificate from the Searcher.

St Pancras then made a survey of what was happening in nearby parishes. In St Anne's Soho the rate was 4d a body - the Searchers went in pairs to perform their morbid task - and 2d for each body in the workhouse. St Giles in the Fields and St George's Bloomsbury yielded 8d as so too did St Andrew and St George the Martyr in Holborn and St James and St John in Clerkenwell.

Further investigation showed that in St Pancras the Searchers paid the Sexton 9d for accepting or countersigning the 'death certificate' and in turn charged the families of the deceased 1/-.

Sometimes the post passed from mother to daughter. In 1828 the Vestry received a petition from Mrs Henrietta Green, daughter of Mrs Stephenson Searcher for the South Division, praying to be appointed on the death of her mother.

In 1832 a committee of the Vestry set up to review the employees of the parish and their salaries, recommended that the post be discontinued as there was no legal necessity for it and this decision was ratified the following year. However, the decision was fought energetically. A month later a proposal that the office should be continued was carried 22-21 on a show of hands but lost on division 23-24. At the next meeting a proposal that the minute be rescinded was also lost.

However, a month later it was reported that the Searchers were still in business and they were threatened with legal action. It should be emphasised that in the absence of a local press the decisions of the Vestry were not well publicised and it was quite possible for the Searchers to claim their rights with impunity. In December 1833 the two ladies were summoned to appear before the Vestry. Elizabeth Bono said that she had been advised to continue as her discharge was illegal in that the post was a 'Common Law Office', and Sarah Halton said that she had been granted the post for life. On their part the Vestry ordered the Sexton (who had continued to accept certificates and undoubtedly had a financial interest in the custom) not to inform the Searchers of any deaths in the parish. The local undertakers were also advised.

Then in 1834 a Mr Bolton, who was burying a person from St Pancras at St George the Martyr, Holborn, was told by the 'sextoness' there that the certificate had been signed by one Searcher only in St Pancras. In November 1834 a Vestryman complained that Elizabeth Halton (presumably the daughter of Sarah Halton) had demanded from him certain fees as in right of her alleged office. The Vestry proclaimed that this was obtaining money under false pretences and punishable by law.

Thereafter the trail runs cold and the Searchers disappear from the Vestry records. It would be interesting to know how long the office continued in other parishes.

John Richardson

THE THIRTIES SOCIETY

History is getting nearer to us - the Thirties Society has recently been formed. Strictly speaking it covers the twenties as well, and is concerned with the great output of decorative art and buildings of that period. Two recent meetings have been at Barclays Bank in Piccadilly (the branch near the Ritz) which was built originally as a car-showroom for Wolsey with some marvellous interior fittings, and at Hartnell's salon in Bruton Street. The meetings are friendly and informal and include, in the future, one at Battersea Power Station. The Secretary is Clive Aslet, 42 Ingelow Road, S.W.8, and the subscription is £5 a year.

BELSIZE HOUSE

Mr R.F. Allen writes:

Clearing a plot for building has brought to public view a fragment of the wall which surrounded the gardens and park of Belsize House prior to demolition in 1853. This has long been known to exist but it was concealed by garden trees. It is about 20ft long and 15ft high and serves as part of the boundary between the back gardens of 16 Belsize Avenue and Avenue House, Belsize Park Gardens. The south face (the inside) is of red brick with diapering in dark headers; the north is plain and the brickwork is less impressive. The coping is round, apparently terracotta. There is a pillar at the east end with, at a lower level, what looks like the start of a new section - it seems that here the wall was stepped down to follow the slope.

No doubt this stretch of wall, which starts alongside the rear of 16 Belsize Avenue and has a convenient end in the pillar, was retained to ensure privacy near the house; the boundary cuts diagonally across the back garden, reflecting the street pattern.

This interesting relic may be glimpsed end-on from Belsize Avenue, between nos. 14 and 16, but temporarily there is a much better view from near 2 Belsize Park Gardens, looking north across the building site.

THE SOCIETY

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society and is edited by John Richardson, 32 Ellington St, N.7 to whom all contributions should be sent.

Officers of the Society:

Chairman - John Richardson

Secretary - Mrs Jane Ramsay, c/o Swiss Cottage Library, Avenue Road, N.W.3

Treasurer - Miss Helen Lefroy at Swiss Cottage Library

Editor of Publications - Christopher Wade, 28 Willoughby Road, N.W.3.

SUBSCRIPTIONS PLEASE!

Members are reminded that this year's subscription, which includes a free copy of the Camden History Review, is now due. A renewal form was enclosed in the previous Newsletter.

TRANSPORT GROUP

The Transport Group are concentrating their energies on assembling information on the buildings associated with the Midland Railway in the Kings Cross area, which include the Bass granary building gutted by fire last year. Their intention is to collate everything for the archives and possibly to publish a resume. They meet next on May 21st. Details of this meeting may be had from John Lawson (969 2529).

BURGH HOUSE ACTIVITIES

Some of the events in May and June are:

21 May 8pm: Talk on Woods on the Heath: the past - but what future? by Paul Moxey (Warden of Epping Forest Conservation Centre)

29 May 8pm: Talk by Rex Cowan on 'Wreck Hunting and Treasure Troves'

1 June 11.30am: Sydney Arrobus introducing and opening his new exhibition of Hampstead Watercolours (until 26th June)

Burgh House is also celebrating the 50th anniversary of the death of D.H. Lawrence. His only London home was in the Vale of Health, now marked with a Blue Plaque. Here he lived in the last half of 1915 and here, at the age of 30, he held literary court; his visitors included Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley and E.M. Forster. Here also he learned the fate of his fourth novel, *The Rainbow*, which was banned for obscenity and reputedly burned by the public hangman. Lawrence hated London, but he came happily to Hampstead on many occasions. Between 1915 and 1926, he and Frieda stayed with friends or took lodgings in Well Walk, Willoughby Road and the Heath Street area. Frieda Lawrence was already well acquainted with Well Walk, for her previous in-laws, the Weekleys, lived there (in Constable's house) and it was there she had deposited her small daughters before eloping to the Continent with Lawrence.

An exhibition covering this period of Lawrence's life has already opened at Burgh House and continues till June 29th.

NEW MEMBERS

New members include:

Miss H. Ash, Miss J. Chenhalls, Mr P Fulcher, Ms E. Hetherington, Mr M. Humby, Dr S. Jacobs, Mr and Mrs D McLarty, Miss L. Marshall, Ms D. Moody, Ms J. Powell, Ms P. Sanderson and Mr and Mrs C. Sanham.

New Publications

The Parish of St Andrew Holborn by Caroline Barron. Published by the Diamond Trading Co Ltd. 144pp

This book is not on sale to the public - and more's the pity. One section is devoted to the history of the publishers but the rest is one of the best short histories we are likely to have of this part of London, some of which is in Camden. The parish awaits a major history but in the meantime any member who wants to read a concise and lucid survey will find this book admirable. Special mention should be made of Brian Taylor, the book's designer - its layout, typography and general treatment are faultless. Camden libraries have two copies.

Keats House, Hampstead
London Borough of Camden, 50p

Camden has reissued in this handsome 16pp guide their introduction to Keats House. It is written by Tina Gee its Curator with a foreword by Edmund Blunden. It is well illustrated in colour and monotone.

The public ownership of Keats House was the result of private donation and it survived the years of local authority parsimony. Camden, to its credit, has spent a lot of money in renovation and refurbishing and it is fitting that this new guide (well-designed by Roger Dinsmore) should accompany its new look.

Highgate Village Walk
Hornsey Historical Society, 30p.
Obtainable from Margaret Joseph, 33 Cholmeley Crescent, N.6)

Highgate is a place of hills and you need to be as energetic as this Walk's composer, Dr Joan Schwitzer, to manage the whole way. It begins at Archway station and takes in the principal streets of both the Haringey and Camden sides of the Village. The information in the guide is succinct and yet expansive - one does not feel cheated of facts in the endeavour to be compact. Its illustrations, by Oliver Cox, are what the Ham and High called 'neat' but they match admirably the exactitude of the text and are themselves a source of information. This is not a walk just for those who are unfamiliar with the Village - it has more to offer than that. Anyone living there, whose eyes perhaps have stopped looking with curiosity at the surroundings will find much within this publication to notice and learn.

ST. GEORGE'S, BLOOMSBURY FESTIVAL

The quarter-millennium of St George's is being celebrated this year with a series of events from 23rd April to 13th September. A full brochure may be obtained from the Church. There are many concerts and talks. Those of particular interest to historians include one on The Bloomsbury Group by A.G. Berrisford on 20th May, Bloomsbury Now by Frank Dobson on the 27th May, and The Maintenance and Preservation of Historic Churches by Laurence King on the 13th September.



COBDEN STATUE, CAMDEN TOWN.

A 1906 postcard view of Cobden Statue in Camden High Street

newsletter

No 60

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

JUL 1980

The Summer Outing

Saturday, August 9th

This year's Summer Outing is being organised by our former Secretary, Mr Gregory, who now lives in Bradford-on-Avon, and we look forward to seeing him again as well as the west-country sights.

We have chosen a visit to Avebury as the first part of the outing. There is plenty of published material on Avebury and we strongly advise members to read a good account as a preparation for the excursion. The profusely illustrated recent book 'Prehistoric Avebury' by Aubrey Burl is most readable. Cherry Lavell of the Council for British Archaeology has also kindly agreed to write a brief account and provide a plan of the site - a copy of this will be sent to members with their tickets. She will also give a commentary on the coach as we approach Avebury.

Sir Nikolaus Pevsner says: 'The earthwork at Avebury is perhaps the most impressive prehistoric monument in Wiltshire, and in scale and conception ranks among the foremost works of prehistoric man in Europe.'

Included in the price of your ticket will be the admission charge to the Alexander Keiller Museum at Avebury (D of E) and to the Great Barn, a fine late 17th century timber-framed aisled barn, recently restored by the Wiltshire Folk Life Society, and now used to house the Society's collection of rural, agricultural and domestic items, with displays on various country crafts.

Members are asked to make their own arrangements for lunch. There is plenty of room for an outdoor picnic and there is also a cafe near the Great Barn and a pub (The Red Lion).

The coach will then take us on to Devizes where we will be guests of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. We hope first of all to spend an hour at the Society's famous Museum. Then John Duxbury, the Society's

secretary, has arranged for us to be taken on a guided tour of the town. Canal enthusiasts will doubtless make time to see the flight of 29 locks on the Kennet and Avon Canal.

We will then sit down to a cream tea and there should be a little free time in the town before we start back at 6pm.

Details are on the enclosed booking form which, in view of the timing, should be returned by the date stated.

Museums and Local History in London - our July talk

July 8th, 7.30pm

Swiss Cottage Library

London is rich in museums and we are fortunate that most have taken local history seriously. They form the subject of our July talk to be given by Ms Val Bott, herself a librarian. It will give us a chance to learn more about what we can see outside Camden!

Advance Notice

September 16th: John Sell on current legislation on historic areas and buildings. Swiss Cottage Library, 7.30pm

October 7th: John Richardson on 19th century Highgate. Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, 8.15pm

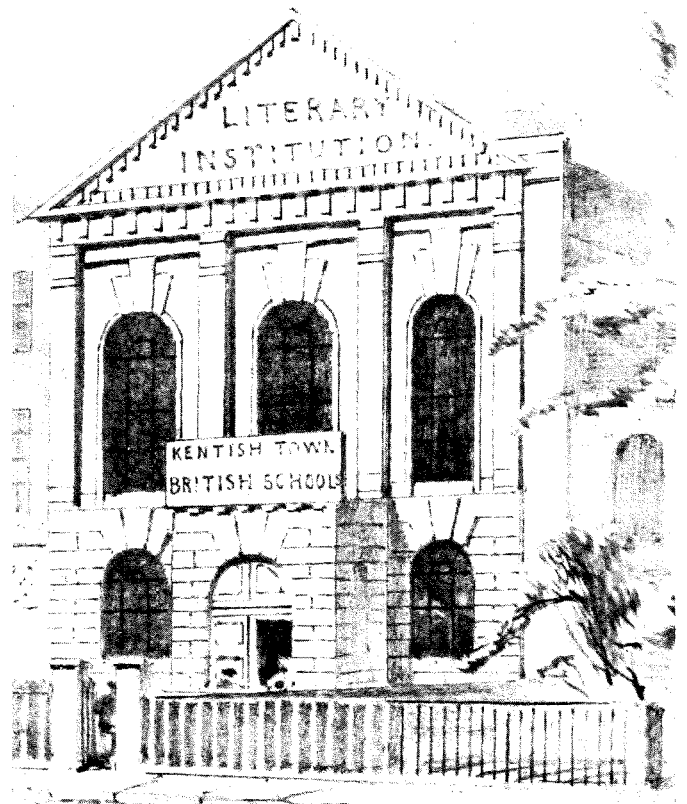
THE TRANSPORT GROUP

The Transport Group meet next on Monday 14th July at 6pm at the Meetings' Room, Swiss Cottage Library. They are concentrating at the moment on the many railway buildings around Kings Cross including the ill-fated 'granary', which was destroyed by fire. This building was originally built as a store for Bass beer in the mid 1860s but as traffic was less than planned it was used after as a store for grain and more recently by Woolworths. For details of the Transport Group contact John Lawson, 31 Earlsmead Road, NW10 (969 2529).

School Skeleton

The Mornington Permanent Building Society in Kentish Town Road (east side), opposite the junction with Prince of Wales Rd, is a determinedly modernist construction, viewed from the street, yet I learnt recently that within it lies concealed the skeleton of an early 19th century chapel-turned-school. A building listed as 'Independent chapel' appears on the 1834 parish map at that site, its front elevation on the same building line as Trafalgar Place alongside it; a remnant of Trafalgar Place still exists in a terrace of three brick house-fronts above the shops between the Mornington and the premises at present occupied by the National Westminster Bank, but I had supposed the chapel had long vanished. When preparing *The Fields Beneath* for its paperback edition (published last February) I included a picture of a building with a classical pediment lettered 'Literary Institution' and, on a more makeshift sign 'Kentish Town British Schools', simply because it typified a certain phase of development in the area. I remarked in the caption that I had been unable to identify its location and that I believed it had disappeared. I had a vague hope that someone might recall such a building and tell me where it had been, but I had hardly expected that within a few days of the book's publication I would receive a call from the Mornington telling me that the shell of the present building, central section, is the original brick structure of the chapel-cum-school.

Mr Tindale the Manager was able to tell me that he himself had seen the pillared facade of the original building, when it was briefly uncovered by workmen during alterations to the building when the Mornington moved in during the winter of 1970-1, and thought he remembered that the pediment was still in existence but was then dismantled. This facade, which was several yards to the rear of the present frontage, had previously been covered for decades by the work-shop windows above, and plate-glass below, of a long-established dress-making firm, Lennards. A tour round the premises, with careful attention to changes in external brickwork and so forth, confirmed all he said. The building still contains a fine loft, built with hammer-beams in the style of a traditional barn. The pillars and pediment were never more than a genteel front-dressing to a basically simple construction.



The Mornington's stake in the place however goes back far beyond our own era, for when the society was first founded in 1866 as a co-operative effort on the part of local tradesmen, it used to hold its meetings in the evenings in 'The British School Room'. Early minutes and brochures of the Society testify to this. We must assume that one of the Society's founder members was also a moving spirit behind the British School (a Non-conformist charity establishment), but they did not acquire the building at that time.

If any further confirmation was needed that buried here is indeed the building in the picture, I also received, in March, a letter from a Mr L.R. Dawe of Ifield, Sussex aged 80 this year. He too had recognised the picture and told me that he had attended the school himself for a while in 1909, before its pupils were transferred to 'the new elementary school at Torriano Avenue'. 'As regards the British School', he wrote 'I cannot be quite sure, but I think the facade was as shown in your book. I think there was only one floor with classrooms curtained off.'

The Museum of London possesses a manuscript diary kept by a teacher during a visit to Kentish Town in 1853, when he called at the British School among other places - and enjoyed rides on the new railway line from East London to Camden

Town, soon to be extended to Hampstead. He comments: 'The British School...is divided into three Divisions, Girls, Boys and Infants. Of course I should like different fittings nevertheless they have advantages which many Schools may long crave after without obtaining...The Girls School is conducted by Miss M- a very efficient teacher in my estimation, the girls very respectable, and the Teacher by the aid of a Sister will I feel certain do much to improve Intellectually and Morally the Children under their care. The Infant Department conducted by a Miss T. with an assistant is faulty, principally I think arising from confined room...'

I had always wondered just where that teacher paid his visit and now I know. Evidently between 1853 and 1909 there was no great change in the amenities.

Gillian Tindall

KINGS CROSS "LIGHTHOUSE"

Two members have written regarding the building at Kings Cross featured in Newsletter No 58 which has suggestions of a lighthouse about it.

Joan Schwitzer, Chairman of the Hornsey Historical Society writes: Could it be a fire tower? My son suggested this explanation. He tells me he saw such structures in Hungary last year and was told they were look-out points to guard against fires. There were chemical works in the Kings Cross area in Victorian times when the building was erected, and in view of the inadequacies of the fire service at that time, such a precaution seems likely.

Dr A. Obrist suggests that the 'lighthouse' part may be purely ornamental to emphasize the pivotal position of the triangular building on which it stands at the junction of three important roads. He also wonders if there might be an article on the actual 'Kings Cross' sometime. In fact there will be - in one of the next two editions.

BURGH HOUSE EXTENDS EXHIBITION

D.H. Lawrence and his Hampstead Circle has proved such a success at Burgh House that the exhibition is being extended until the end of August. The exhibition is attracting tourists from all all over the world. Have you been?

Christopher Wade

New Publications

Twelve Views of Camden 1733-1875

In 1971 Camden published a portfolio of 'Twelve Views of Camden 1733-1875'. It cost £1 and sold out in three months. They have just reissued this publication at £3 - still the excellent value that it was - and it can be bought at local libraries. Its illustrations are in black collotype.

Sir Hugh Myddelton by Patricia Braun

This is a 6pp monograph written by one of our members and published privately by her. It relates the career of the man who devised the scheme to bring fresh water from Amwell to Islington in the early 17th century - the Thames Water offices and Myddelton Square nearby mark this imaginative scheme. The pamphlet can be obtained from the author at Flat 2, 41 Myddelton Square EC1 for 75p.

Hampstead Garden Suburb Town Trail

The London Borough of Barnet has published the fourth of their excellent series of Town Trails - this time on Hampstead Garden Suburb. The building of the Suburb began in 1907 and was complete by the Second World War. The Trail includes Waterlow Court which was built as flats for 'working ladies' a feature to be copied on the Holly Lodge Estate in Highgate twenty years later.

The Annual General Meeting

A successful annual meeting, together with a fascinating talk by Peter Barber on Lauderdale House, was held in June. Officers and Council were elected as follows:

President: Charles Lee
Vice Presidents: R.M. Robbins, W.R. Maidment, Lord Greenwood, Dr Ann Saunders, Prof. Valerie Pearl
Chairman: John Richardson
Vice-Chairman: Gillian Tindall
Secretary: Mrs Jane Ramsay
Treasurer: Miss Helen Lefroy
Publications Editor: Christopher Wade
Meetings Secretary: Horace Shooter
Archivist: Malcolm Holmes

Council Members: E.G. Brassington, Anthony Cooper, Mrs C.M. Gee, Philip Greenall, Coral Howells, Cherry Lavell, Deirdre Le Faye, Rosemary Weinstein, Ann Winser
Co-opted members: John Lawson (Transport Group) David Thomas (Industrial Archaeology Group) Peter Barber

Auditor: P. Russell.

Cobden's Statue

I was interested to see the reproduction of the Cobden Statue in No 59 Newsletter. I wonder if any reader can tell me why the statue is in Camden? He never lived here as far as I know. He was born near Midhurst, Sussex, and died in Suffolk Street, Westminster. He was never a member of Parliament for the area. The Illustrated London News for 4th July 1868, which describes the unveiling of the statue, gives no hint of the reason - except that Mr Rose, on behalf of the committee of subscribers, presented the statue to the parish of St Pancras.

In his 'London's Open-Air Statuary' Lord Edward Gleichen (first published 1928) calls it "About the cheapest statue on record, and one of the worst." It cost about £320, paid for by "public subscription, to which Napoleon III was a principal contributor." Why? I am able to answer his question. Richard Cobden was the last private individual (he never accepted office in any Government - though offered it several times) to be empowered to negotiate a treaty on behalf of Britain. He concluded a Trade Treaty with France around 1861 and as a consequence became a personal friend of Napoleon III. The latter gave Cobden a very large porcelain vase which for many years was on display in the V&A, but was returned to Cobden's birthplace at the beginning of the war for safe keeping, where it is today.

'Dunford', the house where he was born, although enlarged in recent years, seems to retain much of its former atmosphere - and much of Cobden's furniture. In 1951 it was given by the ageing Cobden Trustees to the National Council of YMCAs - together with the estate of 270 acres.

Geoffrey Palmer

LOCAL HISTORY STAFF

The Local History Library was reorganised as a separate section within Camden's Libraries and Arts Department in April 1974. The first quarter's statistics compared with Jan-Mar 1980 show a 423.8% increase in use with no increase in staffing. Fortunately, an additional member of staff has now been added to the establishment, Miss Lesley Marshall, who will join us in the latter half of July. This will lead to an improved service at Holborn library and will help us to eliminate the gaps in staff coverage at Swiss Cottage library and will help us to eliminate the will now be kept informed of interesting additions to stock

LAUDERDALE HOUSE

The Local History Society was successful in bidding for a painting of Lauderdale House at Sotheby's recently and it was acquired for £280. This was probably lower than it should have been for the catalogue described it merely as 'A Country House with a Terrace Walk'. Fortunately the photograph in the catalogue was recognised by John Jacob, Curator of Kenwood House and Christina Gee, Assistant Curator of Keat's House. The painting is undated but probably early 19th century and inscribed on the mount is 'Drawn by B.W. Cumberlege from a sketch by T.M. Baynes.

MALL STUDIOS

Lovers of local and/or art history will be interested to know that the Mall Studios, off Tasker Road, N.W.3, are having an Open Day on Sunday, 10th August, 11.30 - 6.30. Three artists are opening their studios to visitors, who can enjoy the ingenious architecture of Thomas Batterbury and the charming gardens behind. The studios were built in 1872 and have associations with Walter Sickert, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Read. An article about the studios' history will appear in our next Review.

ORAL HISTORY IN KENTISH TOWN

On Wednesday afternoons a group of retired people from Kentish Town have begun to tape reminiscences of childhood, schooldays, going to work and life in the 30s and 40s. The group, which is being led by a tutor supplied by the W.E.A., Joanna Bomat, hopes eventually to compile a document or collection of accounts which will be more generally available. For more information contact Jim Donovan at 267 9421

GATEWAY TO THE NORTH

Cherry Lavell has sent the front cover of an Occasional Paper issued by the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina. It is entitled 'Camden - A Frontier Town'. Well, we always thought that Camden was the gateway to the north, but alas it's about an American Camden.

NEW MEMBERS

New members include:

Mrs S. Audley, Ms C. Balazs, Miss R. Barr, Dr D. Bellenger, Mr and Mrs K. Gay, Mr G. Harris, Mr and Mrs A. Kean, Mr M Redley, Ms Wendy Rush, Miss A. Trojanowski, Miss A. Wallbank

newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 61

SEP 1980

Preserving Buildings

Tuesday, September 16th
Swiss Cottage Library, 7.30pm

The first legislation to preserve Ancient Monuments was in 1882. In 1944 the Town and Country Planning Act began the system we have today for the listing of buildings and in the last ten years more and more buildings, and indeed areas, have been listed in sometimes futile efforts to prevent old and significant landmarks being destroyed. The present recession and lack of money for development gives us a breathing space to assess the current position and we have asked John Sell to talk about the state of present-day legislation. It should prove to be stimulating and provoke a lot of discussion

EXHIBITIONS TO COME

Two interesting exhibitions are scheduled for October.

The first is at St Pancras Library entitled Katha Strenitz - An Industrial Record: drawings of the Kings Cross Railway Goods Yard, Regents Canal and other nearby industrial sites. Over many years the artist has drawn the architecture and landscape of this fast changing scene. Her drawings now form a remarkable archaeological record of industrial buildings and features which in some cases no longer exist. The exhibition will include plans and photographs from the Camden Local History Collection.
(8th-28th October)

the second is at Swiss Cottage Library and is an exhibition illustrating the history of the monuments, statues and contemporary sculpture to be seen throughout Camden from the squares and churches of Holborn to Hampstead and Highgate. A special feature is Camden's 1979-80 competition for a public sculpture in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Maquettes, photographs and drawings of the prize-winning entries will be on display.

19th Century Highgate

Tuesday, October 19th
Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, South Grove, N.6.

The Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution are celebrating this year 100 years since the major redevelopment of their building into roughly what we see today. As part of their programme there is to be a joint meeting of the Institution and this Society at which John Richardson, the Society's chairman, is to talk on an aspect of Highgate hardly touched by the history books. He is writing a detailed history of the Village with special emphasis on the 19th century. This is due to appear in the spring of 1981.

Publication News

The Camden History Review No 8 is well advanced and will be sent out with the November Newsletter.

For some time work has been progressing on the editing and arranging of the memoirs of an early 19th century schoolboy called Pocock who lived, principally, in the Kilburn area. This is shortly to be placed with the printers and will be published either at the end of this year or the beginning of next.

Final drafts are now being made of 'The Streets of Chalk Farm' the result of the group led by Anthony Cooper. This will be published next year.

NEW MEMBERS

New members include Miss C. Carr, Mr and Mrs C. Chilton, Miss Marion Hill, Ms Shelagh Hodson, Ms Patricia Newbery, Mrs M. Patterson, Patrick Scanlan, Miss M. Selve, Miss A. West, Mr D. Woolcombe

III-Fated Kings Cross

It is odd that one of the best known areas of London - Kings Cross - should be named after one of its shortest-lived monuments. The district, previously called Battle Bridge, was known firmly by its new name after the statue was removed and before the station was built in 1852, so it could not be suggested that the name stuck because of the railway terminus.

It is a peculiar story altogether. Why was it built and who owned it? Why was it pulled down so quickly?

The story began in 1830 when the St Pancras Vestry was approached by Mr Guinette of Liverpool Street off the New Road and Stephen Geary, an architect, to see if they had any objection to the monument being built on the site of the former toll house. Its position was in the centre of the road junction in front of what is now Kings Cross Station but what was then the Small Pox Hospital. They proposed that the monument was to honour St George and was to be called St George's Cross - a picture of the model is in the Heal Collection. It was to have an illuminated clock on two sides, space for fire ladders and the lower part was to be used as a police station. The money for its execution was to be raised by public subscription.

The promoters had the consent of the Metropolis Roads Commissioners and of the Home Secretary, Robert Peel. The Vestry had no objection and the project went ahead that year. But why was it proposed in the first place?

It is significant that the first proposal was for a monument to St George. In the event, with the fortuitous death of George IV that year, the dedication was speedily changed perhaps, to be kind, out of patriotism, but more likely that the public subscription would be greater in the wake of his death. So, the monument was not conceived in a flood of tears but more likely with a firm eye to something else. But what?

Well, Mr Guinette owned the Battle Bridge estate south of the New Road and west of the Grays Inn Road. It was, of all the inhabited areas of St Pancras one of the least salubrious and it would have been difficult for the speculative builders to get good prices for the new houses - the area had too bad a reputation. It seems reasonable to suggest that what Mr Guinette was doing

was to up-market the area. Furthermore he had the nerve to ask the public to pay for it.

According to a newspaper cutting in the Heal Collection the largest builder in the area, William Forrester Bray (he built Liverpool and Derby Streets and stretches of Grays Inn Road) insisted that in advertisements the area be referred to as Kings Cross and not Battle Bridge.

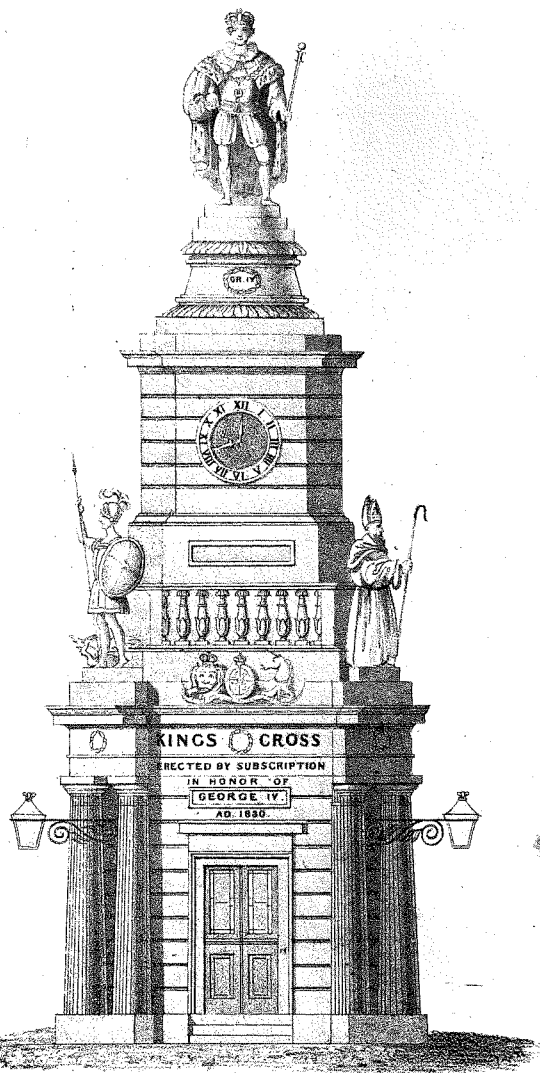
Guinette's partner was the ubiquitous Stephen Geary, architect of gin palaces, inventor of various things such as street paving and artificial fuel and, nine years later, the original designer and promoter of Highgate Cemetery. His position was that of architect to the Estate and probably its surveyor. He also designed some of the features in the Bagnigge Wells Pleasure Grounds.

The monument took five years to complete and some cuttings in the Heal Collection indicate that it was regarded with derision. Certainly it looks preposterous but no more so than many of its kind. In 1832, while they were still building it and short of funds, the assignees of Guinette's estate offered to sell it to the Vestry. They refused.

The police station was there by 1831. It was more a lock-up with space for twelve prisoners in cramped conditions. The promised clock was never made and there was no space for fire ladders. From 1833 the Vestry were receiving complaints that one or more of the lights on the monument were not working. With street gas lighting primitive or non-existent at this point the danger of this building in the centre of the road can be imagined. Eventually the statue was put on top in 1835.

In 1840 after yet more complaints about the lights Geary said that the proprietor, Mr Flower, would repair them. By 1842 the police station had become a beer shop and two years later the building was regarded as a serious nuisance by the Vestry. At the end of 1844 Geary stated that the proprietor would demolish it after Christmas but he didn't, whereupon Geary asked the Vestry if they wished to buy it. Once again the Vestry refused and in one of the earliest cases of the Vestry compulsorily demolishing someone else's property, they paid Cubitts to take it down.

John Richardson



13. The square below represents St. GEORGE of England & St. PATRICK of Ireland, on the opposite corners are St. ANDREW of Scotland & St. DAVID of Wales.

ELEVATION OF KINGS CROSS

NOW ERECTING BY PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION

STEPHEN GEARY ARCHITECT.

Kings Cross Monument (by kind permission of London Borough of Camden)

The St. Pancras Searchers

Ms Gloria Liddall writes re the article in the Newsletter No 59.

'I may be wrong, but I believe that the name of one of the searchers was Sarah Hatton, not Halton. It is shown thus in the written Vestry minutes of Dec 1833 and also in printed material of August 1832. On being questioned by the Vestry one searcher admitted receiving as much as 5/- from some parishioners and that sometimes the undertaker paid her. I feel it is of interest that these women examined all classes of parishioners, including noblemen and that one looked at both cholera and typhus victims at a time when cholera was prevalent. Further, the St Pancras searchers seemed for the most part to work alone, as

one was designated to look at the cases in the northern part of the parish and the other in the more populous southern district.

Perhaps the reason that not much is heard of them after 1834 was related to the dominance of the Vestry by the Radicals after the Vestry elections of 1834. They tried, as in the case of the Beadles, to rid the Vestry and its officers and servants of any reminders of the old Select Vestry which had been predominantly Tory. Elizabeth Bono was strengthened in her effort to maintain the position of searcher by a prominent select vestryman.

Cobden's Statue

Hilda Pallan writes:

I was interested in the article by Geoffrey Palmer on Cobden's statue for two reasons; firstly, because as a child, living near Camden Road, I remember tram rides to Hampstead Road, and the stop by the Camden Hippodrome was always shouted out as "the Cobden", as one alighted by the statue. The second reason is that I have stayed several times at Dunford, and wonder whether the connection could be through Walter R. Sickert, a founder member of the Camden Town Group of painters, who did many of his paintings of the Bedford, a short distance from the statue?

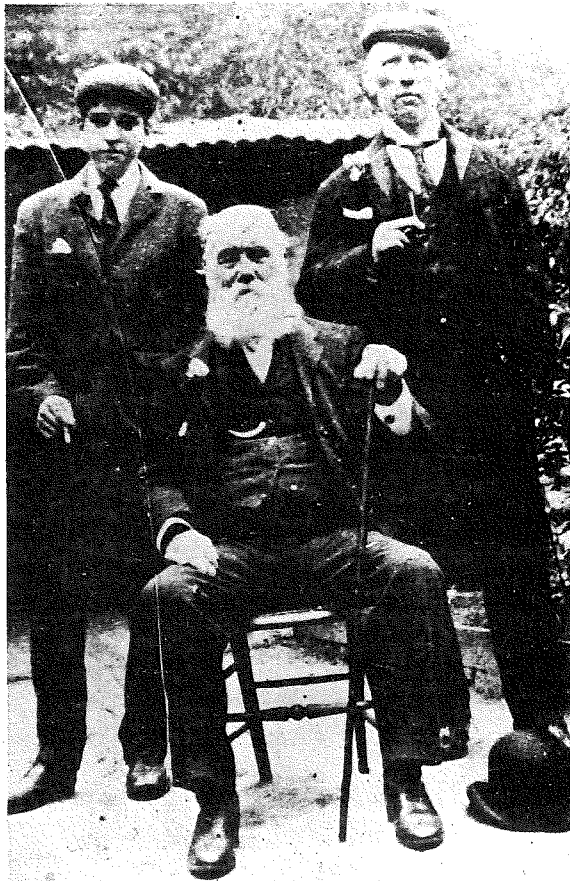
Cobden had been born in an old farmhouse in 1804, and after his grandfather died in 1809 the farm was sold. Cobden always had a great affection for the place and he bought back the Dunford estate with part of a public subscription of £80,000 given in recognition of his services to Free Trade, and built the present house around the old farmhouse. His friend, Joseph Paxton, designer of the Crystal Palace which housed the Great Exhibition (a product of Cobden's vision) planned the solarium, entered from the drawing-room, where stands the enormous Sevres Napoleon vase. The rooms are named for members of the family, or persons closely connected with Dunford. His second daughter, Ellen Melicent (1848-1914) married Sickert when she was 37 and was divorced in 1899. Upstairs at Dunford is a signed painting of Dunford by Sickert.

Jane, the third daughter, married Thomas Fisher Unwin, the publisher, and Anne the fourth daughter, married T.J. Sanderson, the book binder, printer and friend of William Morris. Anne became a suffragette when the women's suffrage movement turned militant and spent a month in Holloway Prison for demonstrating in the Central Hall of the Houses of Parliament.

Kentish Town Families

Two Kentish Town families are featured in old photographs in this edition. The first is the Taverner family. A picture of three generations has been sent in by Robin Kirby, a descendant. The picture shows grandfather, father and son who lived at a number of Kentish Town addresses and for many years at 177 Queens Crescent where this picture was probably taken c1900. It is not known when the grandfather died, but the father, Robert b c1862 was a housepainter who died in 1903. His son, Alec, became the breadwinner - there were 12 children born in the family. He died in 1955 aged 67.

The second is the Moody family who lived at 27 Marsden Street. Mrs Moody, born in Bayham Street in 1870 is seated on the right holding a young son. Her husband was a carter at Kings College Mews. The family spread over many addresses in Kentish Town between the wars. On the left is a Mrs Holton with her three children and her parents behind.



the Taverner family

THE TRANSPORT GROUP

The Group meets next at the Guildhall Library for research work on the 13th September. Details may be obtained from John Lawson on 969 2529.



The Holton and Moody families

CENTENARY OF LTS

The London Topographical Society celebrates 100 years in September with an exhibition of past and current publications at Paper point, 63 Poland Street W.1 from Sep 22 to Oct 10th. The Society's publications have always been outstanding for their scholarship and production and members interested in London history should not miss this.

Advance Notice

Nov 19th - Holborn Library, 7.30pm
Angela Taylor on the history of Holloway Road
Dec 11th - St Pancras Church Hall, Lancing Street, N.W.1 at 7.30pm
Isobel Watson on 'Model Homes for families: re-housing the Working classes of Victorian Camden

THE ESSAY COMPETITION

The winners of the Essay Competition No. 3 have been chosen. They will be announced, and the prizes given, at our October talk. Prize money has been donated by the Ham and High, the Camden Journal and the Owl Bookshop.

newsletter

No 62

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

NOV 1980

The Story of the Holloway Road

Wed. November 19th 7.30pm
Holborn Central Library, Theobalds Rd

Holloway Road has little charm today and seems an unpromising subject for research. However, Angela Taylor, who works at the Northern Polytechnic, has found much to interest us in this important highway. Some members may have seen her exhibition some time back and will want to hear her fascinating story of how the road was built up piece-meal to become, with Jones Bros. as its magnet, a major shopping centre to contrast with its subsequent decline.

Essay Competitions

Prizes for the last CHS Competition were presented at the meeting on October 7th. The winners, writing on the theme of 'Working in Camden' were:

Geoff Donald 'Working at a printers near Kings Cross'

Mrs Ella Lewis 'A grocer's in Kentish Town'
Mrs Ethel Lansdowne 'A typist in Camden Town'

Ernest Rashbrook 'Publishers Delivery Boy in Bloomsbury'

Details of the next Competition on 'Camden at War' are on the form enclosed with this Newsletter.

New Publications

The Society generally issues two publications a year - one is the Review and the latest edition of that is enclosed with this Newsletter. This year our special publication is 'The Diary of a London Schoolboy 1826-30 by John Thomas Pocock. This diary, set partly in Camden, was offered to the Society in 1973. Marjorie Holder made the first inroads in editing for publication, and Christina Gee (assisted by Gillian Tindall in the later stages) completed that task. It makes an excellent Christmas present and up to Dec 31st is available at a cheap rate for members. In fact all of our publications make good presents - choose from the enclosed order form and help the Society into the bargain.

Model Homes for Families-our December talk

Thur. 11th December, 7.30pm
St Pancras Church Hall, Lancing St, N.W.1

It is only comparatively recently that historians have taken notice of the humbler dwellings, many of which still stand. the Model Dwellings movement, which certainly affected Camden, was its most important feature before the beginning of municipal housing. Many reformers gave great thought and energy to the problem of placing the poor in dwellings which were sanitary, free from damp and contained. Their efforts resulted in one of the major improvements in the Victorian era and Isobel Watson has been researching their effect in Camden. Her contribution on this subject will be very welcome.

HIGHGATE CELEBRATIONS

In the March edition of the Newsletter it was announced that this autumn the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution would be celebrating the centenary of the reopening of the building in its present form by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts.

The programme planned for the celebration covers the period from October to December. It began with a Victorian Ball and will end with a Victorian Christmas Party on December 12th. Lectures have been arranged to correspond as far as possible in theme with those given in 1880. One exhibition on the history of the Institution has recently finished but another one will commence in January 1981 - this will be on the lecturers who have come to the Institution in the past 100 years.

STREET PIANOS

Mr A.G. Bird of 28 Partridge Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks wonders if any members share his interest in street pianos. In particular he is interested in Pasquale and Co, Phoenix Place, W.C.

Curiosities of the Edinburgh Castle

The Edinburgh Castle pub, sheer above the mainline tracks out of Euston, stands on the westward side of the junction between Mornington Terrace and Delancey Street. It is a fine, large, Regency building and inside retains some of the splendour of its original bar - a massive curving horse-shoe of polished oak, fine diamond glass, and still a little of the intimacy of a back-street pub. Two fine rooms connect from the rear, each lit by a high sky-light, otherwise windowless and today rather bare but for a billiard table, space invaders machine and juke box.

At the turn of the century the pub was under the proprietorship of Mr T.G. Middlebrook. It was the home of a free museum and cultivated in its grounds an ancient game known as lawn billiards. This was a Dutch game pursued, at the Castle, by a team who boasted themselves champions of all England. In 1838 the INWR sliced away much of the garden and it was the new proprietor in 1842, a naval officer named Wickelaw, who tried to improve the diminished amenities by displaying his natural history collection from the bar.

The Mr Middlebrook of 1900 won himself a curious reputation and was written of in a contemporary novel as 'Mr Brookmiddle' a little man in his shirt sleeves and slouch hat who stood behind the private bar, the walls of which were covered with oil paintings. In printed testimonials used to promote the museum the Westminster Budget remarks that at the pub "there sweeps the spirit of times departed and there appears at every turn the fact that the owner is a man of strong individuality and of the tastes of the impassioned collector". Mr Middlebrook had come to the pub from Surrey Row in Blackfriars Road where he had, beside his trade as a licensed victualler, assembled a collection of coins and medals. When he bought the pub in 1879 the recent owner of the Castle had sold the old museum made by Wickelaw and Middlebrook set out to re-acquire the curiosities of the collection and to expand it.

He became a familiar face at Stevens Auction Rooms in King Street, Covent Garden. The Rooms were themselves the butt of considerable merriment in the 1890s over the sale of a succession of eggs of the Great Auk, and was nicknamed the 'Great Auktion Rooms'. For many years their telegraphic address was 'Auks, London'. Middlebrook indulged his tastes freely there. He bought eggs in 1895 for 150gns, 1897 for 180gns and in 1899 for 315gns.

In an advertisement sheet of 1895 Mr Middlebrook stated his intention to extend his building backwards to provide for his museum and at the same time he modestly hoped to commission a scholar to write him a catalogue. By now his collection was indeed worthy of a catalogue and contemporary reports spoke of "wonderful mummies, of lambs with five legs and Siamese twins, of pigs and dogs born with their heads where their tails should be" as well as of a huge variety of colonial weaponry and battlefield relics. Ambrose Heal spoke kindly but modestly of "an interesting museum of miscellaneous curiosities and pictures". The collection was certainly curious: the Brookmiddle novel calls it "a sort of disordered dream of many museums - a pocket edition of an American of mature years would have said, of Barnum's erst famous establishment in New York: the trivial side by side with the super - excellent". But it was also meant to be serious. Middlebrook often sought authentication for his objects and probably, for instance, bought his collection of Nelsoniana in the promising context of a long-service medal given to the quartermaster on board Victory. He required a letter of authentication before he bought a bugle that sounded at Balaclava in 1898 and another with 'the spear that slew Gordon' - although to be sure he claims this as a gift from Gordon's sister. Neither was he at all credulous when it came to his sea serpent: it was accurately described as "not the sort that grows a million feet long".

He was moreover a collector with a sense of mission. He promised, for example, to pass the Balaclava bugle to the 17th Lancers on his death and indeed lent it and allowed it to be used at a naval and military concert held at Crystal Palace in 1901.

His souvenir leaflet of 1904 stated that "The proceeds derived from the sale of this souvenir will be devoted to the Girls' Orphanage, Hampstead Road, NW, and the University College Hospital, Gower St, NW".

On Middlebrook's death in August 1907 the museum was sold by his executor at Debenham Storr salerooms. Camden Libraries have a copy of the sale catalogue partly annotated by bidders for Henry Wellcome's museum now in the Euston Road. Wellcome bought 'Dr Johnson's spectacles', the Gordon spear, a stuffed vampire bat, Stanley's Topee, a book of Common prayer that Livingstone had carried, and Nelsoniana including a tourniquet used when his arm was amputated. Some of these objects are now in the care of the Wellcome dept. at the Science Museum. Other exhibits however fared less well. The Observer on 5th January 1908 pictured Middlebrook's collection of "80,000 butterflies valued at

£60,000" but they sold for a paltry fiver on the day. The American flag hoisted in 1813 during a dog fight with the British in Chesapeake Bay, went for £850 to Part-ridge's of St James' St who later told a reporter for the Hampstead Record that it would almost certainly be sold in America. Middlebrook was faithful to his promise and among the more usual local bequests in his will (the Girls' Orphanage, UCH, the licensed victuallers' school and the Metropolitan Police Orphanage), there stands out the Balaclava bugle to be given separately to the 17th Lancers.

Richard de Peyer

The Transport Group

John Lawson writes:

We have done more work on the reports of the Insurance Surveyors stored in the Guildhall Library. The building on which we are at present concentrating, the Bass Ale and Porter Store on the corner of Pancras Way and Camley Street, finally burnt down while almost empty (the last of the rubble is now being cleared).

Most of the reports we read give good descriptions of the buildings and their uses and, perhaps, being written by Insurance Surveyors, they are unduly alarmist. For example a 1935 report of the main building of the St Pancras Goods Station, refers to it as one large risk of about 9 million sq. ft with all buildings freely communicating. There were 200 tons of wood wool (used for packing wine bottles), 2000 tons of rubber and a company putting sealing wax on wine bottles with a naked gas jet near the wood wool. All this was in the basement where only wooden partitions separated all parts. The only instruction in case of fire was to evacuate the building and attempt to flood with water from the nearby canal.

We have now had a reply from the Bass Museum in Burton saying that they are building a library in 1981 but their records are not available until then. It should then be possible to find out more about the operation of the beer trade. It appears that most barrels were stored at St Pancras and bottling was done by a large number of independent companies in London, so we are left with the problem of what the ale and porter store was used for. One possible clue is its alternative title of 'granary'.

I have been following the records of the Great Northern Railway for its Kings Cross Depot and the activities of the local coal merchants. I would be interested to

know about a firm called Herbert Clarke and about a coal strike in 1868. The records show a gradual decline of transfer of coal to the canals - the last load being delivered there in 1921.

Our next meeting will be on December 1st, 6pm at Swiss Cottage Library when we will be working on old maps rescued from the now demolished GNR Engineer's Office. Members interested should contact me on 969 529 (home) or 603 4622 x259 (off).

Lord Mansfield of Kenwood

Dr Joan Schwitzer writes:

I should like to draw your readers' attention to the following: Lord Mansfield by Edmund Heward (Barry Rose, 1979, £14), 198pp, index, bibliography and table of cases in which Mansfield took part.

Although this new biography is hardly 'local history', anyone interested in the development of Kenwood must surely be curious about its most famous owner, William Murray, the 1st Earl Mansfield (1705-1793), who was Lord Chief Justice for 32 years. The Mansfields moved to Kenwood in 1754 from Lincoln's Inn Fields, and in the 1760s the Adam brothers made their alterations and in 1791 the sham bridge was installed.

The author, who is a member of the Supreme Court, Chancery Division, deals mainly with Murray's legal contribution to national history, which was, he maintains, to establish principle as the basis of common law. Despite his famous judgement in the test case of James Somerset (1772), which upheld Habeas Corpus and effected the freeing of 14,000 slaves in England, Mansfield was not a reforming lawyer in the usual sense and in fact had been anxious for the campaign for the abolition of slavery not to come to a head, "for I would have all the masters think them free, and all negroes think they were not, because then they would both behave better". "My great ambition", he once wrote, "is to go through life with the character of an honest man."

Amongst several major collections of documents, the sources include a ledger of household accounts kept by the Misses Murray, Mansfield's nieces, at Kenwood, and 56 Judge's Notebooks discovered in the attic of Scone Palace near Perth (the seat of the present Earl) in 1967. There is disappointingly little about the incident during the Gordon Riots when after the sacking of Lord Mansfield's Bloomsbury house the rioters marched to Hampstead with the intention of attacking Kenwood. But a few tantalising glimpses of life on the Caen Wood estate are given in this lively chronicle of the 18th century legal and political world.

WAR SHRINES IN WEST HAMPSTEAD

Miss J. Tucker who is researching a history of Emmanuel Church in Lyncroft Gardens, N.W.6 wonders if any member can throw any light on two War Shrines, both dedicated in 1917. One was placed against the railings of the parish hall in Broomsleigh Street, the other in Sumatra Road. Why were they erected and placed where they were? When did they disappear? Were they only temporary until the end of the War?

The Gibsons in Hampstead

On Monday 4th November 1793, the following paragraph appeared in the Morning Post:

'Last week died at Hampstead Miss Gibson, a maiden lady. On Wednesday last she was interred at Sutton in Essex (sic). This lady's will is of a most singular nature:- Two female relatives, full of grief, and next of kin, attended the funeral ceremony, not without hopes that the Will would dispel grief and render their future life joyful, yet sad to tell, the expected legacy terminated in - one solitary shilling each; to her servants, man and wife, her bounty has been munificent, to the woman she bequeathes ten thousand pounds but deprives the husband from reaping any benefit from it; to their son she has left one thousand pounds with the principal of his mother's legacy after her death; to the husband who acted in the double capacity of coachman and footman £1000, with her furniture etc. on condition only that with her two favourite coach-horses he drives her remains to the place of interment; then with the greatest care and tenderness, bring them back again to Hampstead, but after this journey and allowing them a day of rest (Thursday) his whole legacy to become null and void, if he does not personally see them both shot next day and burned in a hole dug on purpose. This last part of the will was punctually executed on Friday morning at five o'clock adjoining Miss Gibson's late residence at Hampstead.

'Miss Gibson's late residence' was probably part of the property made famous by the occupancy of William Pitt, the Great Commoner, Lord Chatham. King George III himself suggested to Pitt - suffering from an indisposition which today might be called psychosomatic - that he retire to his friend Charles Dingley's house by the Heath 'where would be the facility for equestrian exercise.' Here in 1767 Pitt spent his time in isolation, in one room, meals being served through a hatch - and developed a mania for building multiple rooms, adding 34 to the house with the permission of Dingley, and buying up neighbouring buildings to preserve his isolation.

There is no mention in Hampstead Rate Books of Miss Mary Gibson but her younger sister Elizabeth apparently acquired property 'at a place formerly called Wildwood Comer, now called North End in Hampstead...of Robert Dingley and late of Charles deceased...and a piece with ye Coachhouses and Stables.' Elizabeth died aged 46 in 1787 and was buried at Sutton.

According to Barratt, (Annals of Hampstead 1912), a later occupant of North End House was Francis (later Sir) Willes. However, Mr David Sullivan in a deeply researched article in the Ham and High 25 May 1979 states that Willes's house, built as a cottage before 1737, bought and enlarged by him in 1777, was later known as Heathlands. The 'Powerful But Mysterious' Willes was evidently a Decipherer, a cipher expert and translator of despatches and other documents for the state, an important confidential state position, paid for out of secret service funds, which he and other members of his family almost monopolised for over 125 years.

The Gibsons were members of the Willes family circle, which may account for Mary and Elizabeth settling in Hampstead when their parents died. Perhaps their mother Martha was a Willes? Both Elizabeth and Mary left legacies to a cousin, Thomas Willes of Burford, Oxon (possibly the same Thomas Willes who had chambers in the Inner Temple at that period). An Elizabeth Willes of North End Hampstead who died in the same year, 1787, as Elizabeth Gibson lies beneath an upright tombstone near the Gibson family tomb at Sutton.

The 12ft square Portland stone tomb in the corner of St Nicholas churchyard at Sutton, Surrey, is opened every 12th August 'for ever' for inspection in accordance with the Will of Mary Gibson. There are five coffins - James and Martha Gibson, their only son Matthew who died young, Mary and Elizabeth. Only the name of James appears on the tomb - 'Merchant and Citizen of London' and the date of erection, 1777. James and Matthew his brother were wine merchants near the Tower for over 30 years. James was rated at Walthamstow but all trace of his residence there has vanished, while the reason the Gibsons are buried in Sutton remains a mystery, as there is no record of them ever having lived there.

Mrs M.J. Hamilton-Bradbury

NEW MEMBERS

New members include:

Miss M. Chalmers, John Durn, Miss B. Fletcher, M. Hamsher, Ms C. Hobeys-Hamsher, Francis Serjeant, Miss R. Walters, Mrs M. Winter