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# Barnet Society

CAMPAINING FOR A BETTER BARNET

AUTUMN  
2017



(Left) The original building that housed the paper and the final edition. (Bottom) Legendary sports commentator John Motson started his journalistic career at the Barnet Press in 1963 before going on to carve out his successful career. The clock outside the TSB branch is all that is left of the original Barnet Press premises on he High Street

## Barnet Press folds after 158 years

Established in 1859 by the Cowing family firm of printers, booksellers and stationers, the Barnet Press was published and printed for well over a century at the company's premises in Barnet High Street, **writes Nick Jones.**

All that remains of the halcyon days of the bustling Press office and printing works is the clock on the wall of what is now the Trustee Savings Bank, and just visible, on the side of the clock case, are the embossed initials "BP",

The last edition appeared on Thursday 27 July with a reminder to the local community from the deputy editor, Ciaran McGrath, that the newspaper's staff will miss serving the locality and hope that the residents themselves will go on holding to account those in authority.

The Barnet Press became a local institution, a great favourite with its readers, and it launched the careers of several famous journalists, including the former football commentator John Motson, a dominant voice on the BBC in the 1970s and 1980s.

For those who worked at the Press, from journalists to printers, from advertisement staff to shop assistants, there was "always the thrill of going into the machine room with the linotype machines clattering out the metal type to pass to the compositors", and there was "nothing that was more rewarding than watching the huge, noisy printing press at the back of the building, and then picking up a paper hot off the machine".

John James Cowing established his business at 118 High Street in the early 1800s after serving as an apprentice bookseller, printer and binder to G.W. Wetton,

His daughter Jane Cowing established a circulating library at the shop. His son, George Wetton Cowing founded the Barnet Press in 1859, and his son, Leslie John Cowing continued the business, handing over to his daughter, Gwyneth Cowing, who succeeded him and chaired the board of directors from 1951 to 1980.

Jenny Kobish, who worked at the Press from the 1960s until she left in the mid-1980s, remembers Miss Cowing with great affection. "She came in every week, was very friendly and spoke to us all. Sometimes she would work in the little garden, behind the office, where one of the original printing presses was kept.

"My first job was as a telephonist. In the 1960s, the switchboard had cords to plug into the extensions. We also had

to serve at the counter, where we sold stationery and there was a travel bureau."

In later years, Ms Kobish worked in the advertising department. "Each week we had to make a mock-up of the paper, and the number of pages was governed by how much advertising had been sold.

"Most of the in the big advertisers wanted to be on page 3 or 5. The trickiest pages were What's On, usually lots of little jumble sale adverts. Everything was done by hand; hell to pay if you left one out!

"The Press was a very friendly place to work. There were outings arranged each year, usually to the seaside. We went through lots of difficult times, strikes, changes in management, but the paper was published regardless."

Tindle Newspapers, a publishing group that has saved many ailing local papers, announced with regret the closing of the Barnet Press, together with two other weekly titles, the Enfield Advertiser and Gazette and the Haringey Advertiser.

A total of 16 employees are facing redundancy, including six editorial posts – news editor, sports editor, sub-editor, senior reporter, trainee reporter and photographer.

In his farewell, Mr McGrath admits that "economic reality has finally bitten" and the group has had to bow to the inevitable consequences of falling circulation, reduced advertising and the inexorable rise of the internet.

He hopes readers of the final edition will recognise the role played by local newspapers across the length and breadth of the country, not least in the area served by the Barnet and Enfield papers.

"We deal in the very essence of reality: the future of Chase Farm Hospital, the recent rash of knife attacks and the ongoing argument over cycle lanes – and these issues aren't going to go away just because we have.

UK Press Gazette, which monitors the newspaper industry, says that the closures will leave the London boroughs of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey with substantially reduced local newspaper coverage.

Newsquest continues to publish the Barnet Times.



'Motty' and the old BP clock

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:** Whalebones intervention, **PAGE 2** Ark bidders back, **PAGE 3** New look to Union Street, **PAGES 6&7** Campaign for teenage market, **PAGE 8** All aboard, **PAGE 9** Day centre opens, **PAGE 10** Battle of Barnet images, **PAGE 12**

## Whalebones: Survey seeks to find common ground



A survey has been launched to discover the extent of opposition to development on the Whalebones green space, between Barnet Hospital and Wood Street – and alternative uses of the land.

More than 50 neighbours and residents crowded into a drop-in meeting to fill up a questionnaire giving their views.

Hill, a Waltham Abbey housebuilder, is preparing plans for what it says will be “sensitive redevelopment” in the 11 acres of woods and farmland that are owned by the trustees of the Whalebones estate. It added that much of the existing green space would be retained, together with the mature trees; new parkland spaces would be opened up for use by the community and a home on the site would be retained for the Barnet Guild of Artists and Barnet Beekeepers Association.



Although not designated as green belt land, Whalebones is regarded as a significant green space within the Wood Street conservation area and local amenity groups have urged Barnet Council to recognise the importance of its woodland, farmland and biodiversity.

A research study has been initiated by Culainn Shanahan, son of Patrick Shanahan and Helena Boland, owners of Whalebones house.

He told a packed consultation session at Whalebones that he wanted to test local opinion so that the community can work out and agree counter proposals ready for when the developers submit their plans, possibly by October.



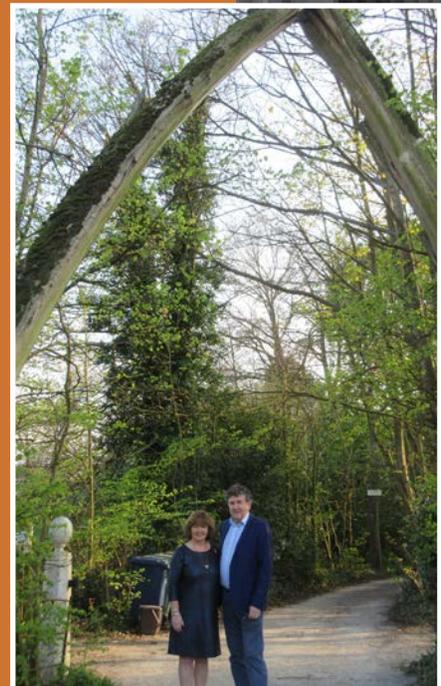
Before the meeting, he canvassed local householders within a half mile radius of Whalebones, collecting views on the importance to the locality of the Whalebones green space.

“The trustees have made it clear they intend to sell the land because they have run out of money to maintain the fields, woods and hedgerows, and because the agricultural tenant will be retiring soon. What I hope to do is work out with the community how best to conserve the area.

“We hope to liaise with local wildlife groups, amenity associations and other interested organisations to discover what they think and then assess alternative options.”

Mr Shanahan can be contacted at [culainn@hotmail.com](mailto:culainn@hotmail.com) or [www.culainn.com](http://www.culainn.com)

His parents’ house is at the centre of the Whalebones green space, but is not part of the estate. At the Wood Street entrance to the house are the historic whalebones after which the property is named.



Owners of Whalebones House, Paddy Shanahan and Helena Boland, want to protect the historic Barnet landmark, even though their property does not form part of the Whalebones estate

At a meeting with Mr Shanahan, Robin Bishop, chair of the Barnet Society, agreed that any attempt to pull together local thinking on the future of the Whalebone estate would be of value.

In July, members of the society met the site’s trustees and raised a number of concerns that we wanted addressed, including a call for more than one design proposal.

The society is annoyed that the trustees haven’t contacted Barnet College or other organisations about creating a base for horticultural or animal husbandry training on the site.

It said that another alternative might be a small school. A special school in Barnet is seeking a new site: with an outdoor curriculum and specialist facilities shared with the community, Whalebones would then benefit everyone.

(Top) Culainn Shanahan addresses an open meeting on the future of Whalebones. (Middle) Peter Mason, current tenant farmer on the estate, with some local residents who are concerned over the future of the site (Above) Robin Bishop, chair of the Barnet Society with Culainn Shanahan



(Above) The latest plan, which envisages a smaller school of 1,200. (Right) The internal courtyard in the original one

## If at first you don't succeed, then try again - especially during the summer holidays

**After failing its first planning application, Ark Pioneer Academy has used the cover of the holidays to apply for a new 1,200-place secondary school and 6th form. The Barnet Society is 'neutral' on the latest plans but councillor for the Underhill ward, Paul Edwards, is still strongly opposed to the latest bid**

Ark's original planning application for a 1,690-place all-age school on the former Barnet football ground was thrown out by the council in January.

However, since the Education & Skills Funding Agency, which sponsored the project, had spent £14.5m on the site, and since the council expects a shortage of secondary school places across the borough, it was never likely to go away. The latest application was submitted early in August. The deadline for public comments expired on 5 September. The Barnet Society is taking views on its draft response, so contact [robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk](mailto:robin.bishop@gmx.co.uk) Overall, the society is neutral about the latest proposal.

However, local councillor, Paul Edwards, who represents the Underhill ward, was strongly opposed to the original plan. He says the latest application is still deeply flawed.

He believes that it would have a "considerable detrimental impact" on congestion and levels of air pollution in the area. And he has challenged Ark's view that it meets a test of 'exceptional circumstances' so that it can build on green belt land.

"The applicants have argued that the general need for school places in the Borough – and the alleged lack of other suitable sites – constitute 'exceptional circumstances'," Cllr Edwards says.

"However, there is no shortage of secondary school places in this part of the borough. The Totteridge Academy in fact has a surplus of places. This means that the Ark proposal does not meet the 'exceptional circumstances' test, and to award planning permission would set a precedent for allowing green belt development even when an application does not meet the 'exceptional circumstances' requirement.

He says a surplus of places and the very limited forecast population growth in Underhill, Oakleigh, Totteridge and High Barnet wards, the Totteridge Academy and Ark Pioneer could lead to one of the two schools becoming unviable and having to close.

"The populations of Colindale and Golders Green wards are meanwhile set to grow by 17,000 and 20,000 respectively up to 2030. This is a colossal increase and it is in these wards that new schools should be built."

Cllr Edwards says that there was no guarantee that Ark Pioneer would offer a better quality of education than any of the other Barnet schools.

"Indeed, Barnet schools perform better than ARK chain schools in value-added measures at GCSE."

He says that Barnet's Conservative councillors have the power to commission new schools designed to a particular specification in a specific location, but have chosen not to. "They have decided that they would prefer to sit on their hands and wait for external applications, such as Ark Pioneer – however unsuitable these may be."

He added that any new school in Underhill would see funding diverted away from other local schools, such as Totteridge and QE Girls, leaving these at risk.

"We should give our local schools the support they need to go from strength to strength, rather than usher in an external provider with no intrinsic links to Barnet and which is offering our children a virtually untested model of education.

Meanwhile, the Barnet Society has acknowledged that the new plan envisages a significantly smaller school, in both pupil numbers and physical size.

"The main entrance is now obvious and more welcoming. The plan is less convoluted than before. And the proposed

community access to APA's outdoor and indoor PE, sport, fitness, drama, music, dance and other facilities would be welcome.

But against that, the society has a long list of objections. It says that the design is "ordinary", and fails to take advantage of its fine site on the edge of the Dollis Valley.

"The landscape design lacks a clear educational or social rationale. The mounds would be up to 2m high along the west boundary and could oversee neighbours' gardens and create nooks for anti-social behaviour.

"The high fencing of the multi-use games area would be unsightly, and screen planting should be provided.

It adds that insufficient information is provided about the former cricket field and pavilion that lie adjacent to the site.

And in a draft response it says that a proposed one-way parking loop might work better in reverse.

"The proposal would exacerbate existing pressure on surrounding roads and pavements. Several mature trees would be lost at what is, the 'green gateway' to Chipping Barnet."

The Society says that the plan would require widening each arm of the A1000 / Underhill / Fairfield Way junction on a steep hillside.

And it is also concerned that pedestrian crossings are not shown on the application. These would be "essential" to cope with hundreds of pupils.

"Our preference would be for another kind of educational use, for example, a primary, special or 'studio' (small vocational) school – or some combination of these. But we would prefer a school with community facilities to residential or other alternative uses".



## Planning & Environment

Robin Bishop

The big issues over the summer have been the future of Whalebones, a new Ark Pioneer Academy proposal and debate over High Street improvements. Some of these are covered in separate articles.

We've also been busy submitting comments on two important consultations: The Mayor of London's draft transport strategy – Peter Bradburn and Andrew Hutchings have focused on issues that particularly affect Outer London boroughs such as ours. Also, Barnet Council's draft Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document – David Lee has done sterling work on this with me despite being hospitalised after a fall

### To summarise other cases:



#### Approved:

**14 Sunset View** – Sympathetic extensions instead of the bulky replacement previously proposed.

**108-112 High Street** – An acceptable rebuild.

**Totteridge Academy car park** – We objected to the loss of trees.

**3 Montague Court** – The owner has given up trying to get permission to convert this unauthorised building into a home, and it will now become offices.



#### Refused:

**133 High Street** – Seven flats piled above KFC.

**20 High Street** – Including a grim 'studio' flat with no view or sunlight.



#### Awaiting decisions:

**Moxon Street car wash and Royal British Legion sites** – A new, bigger, and in our view less satisfactory scheme has been submitted for the latter.

**Meadow Works, High Road** – We objected to its replacement with 78 flats.

**33 Lyonsdown Road** – We objected to 22 flats replacing an attractive Victorian villa.

**33 Park Road** – Now only one additional flat instead of the seven previously proposed.

**64-66 High Road** – Four flats above Tesco.

#### Other local issues:

**Brake Shear House** – Site investigations have revealed unforeseen remedial works and extra costs, threatening one of the few well-designed developments around the High Street

#### Cases elsewhere:

**Hasmonean School, Cophall** – Its proposed expansion onto Green Belt land has been rejected by the Mayor of London, but may yet be approved by the Secretary of State.

**North London Business Park, Southgate** – The Mayor of London has called in a proposal including five tower blocks.

**National Institute for Medical Research, Mill Hill** – The Mayor of London has called in the proposed residential redevelopment.

**Barnet House, Whetstone** – Its proposed conversion into micro-flats has thankfully been abandoned.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 15th JUNE 2017

The evening began with a presentation by Helen Giles, the newly appointed Project Co-ordinator of the Battle of Barnet project, supported by an impressive exhibition of images of the battle and its protagonists, amassed by Geoffrey Wheeler. (See Page 12) It was followed by an open Q&A session to discuss matters of concern to members and non-members.

Subjects included the proposed High Street improvements, the prospective Ark Pioneer Academy, the threat to Whalebones, housing over-development in New Barnet and Whetstone, and traffic-related issues.

After refreshments, the AGM opened for the 53 members who stayed on.

Nick Jones stood down as Chairman after four years in post. Robin Bishop, his elected successor, thanked him for his notable contributions, especially raising the Society's profile.

Nick thanked the Committee for their support, and paid tributes for their great efforts to his predecessor, Judith Clouston, and to Eamonn Rafferty, both of whom were leaving the Committee. However, Eamonn will still edit the newsletter and can be contacted at raffertye@gmail.com

The new Committee includes Mary Carroll, John Gardiner, John Hay, Andrew Hutchings, Nick Jones, Gail Laser, Jonathan Supran, Jessica Vamathevan and Frances Wilson.

The annual accounts were received at the AGM, but in the absence of the Treasurer it was unclear whether an Independent Examiner had scrutinised them (as required by the constitution). Subsequently, a member with experience as treasurer signed them off.

Minor changes to the constitution were approved in respect of clauses 6.1 & 6.2 (reduction of the minimum Committee size to ten) and 12.2 (allowing payment to members for certain services approved by the Committee).

For information or comments, contact Robin Bishop, 46 Fitzjohn Avenue, Barnet EN5 2HW, or voice@barnetsociety.org.uk'

# Brake Shear House still standing - just

**The historic complex of artisan workshops and studios, where Elton John among other, once recorded, and which was to be demolished, has gained a temporary reprieve as developers ponder their options. As a result, former tenants are being offered fresh short-term leases, writes Nick Jones**

Shanly Homes, which purchased the site last month from another developer, Wrenbridge, is now considering whether to proceed with the planning permission granted last year for the construction of 32 flats, eight semi-detached houses, and workspace for 40 or more employees.

One of the businesses considering whether to return is a recording studio – one of two within Brake Shear House – which in years gone by was used by Elton John, the Spice Girls and the punk rock band, the Buzzcocks.

Short-term leases of a year, with perhaps the option of a second year, are now being offered by Shanly Homes while it considers its options.

Wrenbridge, which consulted the Barnet Society and other groups about its plans to redevelop the site, announced last month that it had decided to sell the site rather than build out the scheme as planned.

One reason cited locally for Wrenbridge pulling out – and for the delay in redeveloping the site – is that it failed soil tests which showed that the site was contaminated with chemicals and heavy metals.

Brake Shear House and the surrounding workshops date back to the Victorian era and early uses of the site were for a gas works, photo-engravers and more recently car repair workshops.

A spokesman for Shanly Homes denied that the site was contaminated, but acknowledged that remedial action was necessary, and that some of the soil on the site contained residues such as oil and other matter, and would have to be removed.

“It is very rare not to find that sites that housed historic industrial processes do require remedial action. We have acquired the site in the full knowledge of the soil tests.

“We intend now to carry out further investigations into the site and assess the existing planning consent. We will be considering whether we want to seek to revise the scheme that currently has approval.

“We have noted that the current plan does include workshop and commercial space, and that will be another issue to be taken into consideration.

“Shanly Home is an award-winning residential developer and it is our intention to develop the site in the long term.”

Barnet Council approved Wrenbridge’s plan to build 40 new homes on the Brake Shear House site in July last year.

The approved scheme includes eight semi-detached family homes with gardens,

32 apartments in a three-story block of flats, together with 656 square metres of workspace providing room for more than 40 employees. Some of the workshops were to be provided at affordable rents for start-ups and charities.

The original aim had been to start demolition of the site in January this year – but as the weeks went by it became clear that the redevelopment had stalled and that Wrenbridge were looking for a buyer.

There was an outcry in September 2015 when the 30 or so small firms with premises in Brake Shear House and its outhouses first learned that their leases were being terminated.

They complained about the lack of affordable workspace and that jobs were being lost to make way for flats – a plea that is being repeated at Meadow Works, on the A1000, midway between High Barnet and Whetsone, where plans to build two blocks containing 78 flats could displace businesses employing up to 40 people in another well-known group of workshops and light industrial premises.



All in a spin: Elton John was one of many musicians who recorded at the threatened Brake Shear House,

# Union Street in a much better state

**Union Street, one of High Barnet's historic thoroughfares, has undergone a slow but steady transformation in recent months, and its appearance has been much enhanced by a series of new constructions and restorations, writes Nick Jones**

Over the summer, finishing touches were added to a 100-seat extension to the front of St Greg's Catholic church, ahead of its re-consecration by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster.

Nearer the High Street, the innovative New Ground co-housing scheme for older women, which was officially opened in May, has been declared overall winner of the prestigious 2017 Housing Design Awards.

Union Street, part of the Wood Street conservation area, was originally the road that led from the High Street to the Barnet Union Workhouse, which was said to have given Charles Dickens the inspiration for *Oliver Twist*, and which was demolished in

2002 to provide space for a car park for Barnet Hospital.

In recent years, Union Street has lost many of its former businesses, including the Albion public house and Yadav's grocery shop, both now converted into homes.

Opposite the Catholic church, the former Barnet Town Hall, in use between 1889 and 1912, has been given a facelift following its conversion into flats.

Opposite New Ground co-housing, which was built on what was previously the site of St Martha's Convent, a touch of class has been added with the opening of Room 89, a shop selling household fashions, gifts and accessories.

Higher attendance at mass and other services necessitated construction of a two-storey extension at the front St Greg's and the church's seating capacity has been increased from 240 to 340.

The church was rebuilt in the mid-1970s after being almost destroyed in a fire in 1973 in an infamous local case of arson.

Although many parishioners have

appreciated the light and airy interior of the current church building, consecrated in 1977, it has been a struggle in recent years to accommodate all those attending the Saturday evening mass and the four Sunday masses.

Often on holy days there has been quite a crush and some parishioners were left crowding around the entrance.

The extension has created a new front door with an additional seating area and gallery above.

Meanwhile, glasses of champagne and canapes all round helped celebrate the official opening of New Ground, the UK's first co-housing project for seniors. The 25 flats have broken new ground in the delivery of homes for older women by providing a mix of privately owned and rented accommodation.

Completion of the project was the culmination of an 18-year struggle by a group of "ageing, stubborn but steadfast" women.

Shirley Meredeen, the last remaining founder member of Barnet's Older Women's Cohousing Community, told guests that the official opening was a tribute to their perseverance in pursuing their dream to create a space for older women that balanced their needs for privacy with a sense of community.

Guests at the opening included Sister Christina O'Dwyer, headmistress for over 20 years at the former St Martha's Convent school that had previously occupied the site.

Pioneers of the Older Women's Cohousing Community celebrate the opening of their Union Street complex. From left to right, Maria Brenton, consultant, Sister Christina O'Dwyer, Shirley Meredeen, founder member, and Angela Ratcliffe, convenor



Barnet's former Town Hall – in use between 1889 and 1912 – has now been converted into flats



New Ground co-housing flats for older women were "sensitively" designed to meet the needs of its residents and to blend into Union Street, making it the overall winner in the 2017 Housing Design Awards

## ... except for this unsightly 'blot on the landscape'

The citation for the 2017 Housing Design Awards says that New Ground – overall winner and winner of the custom-build award – was “an exemplar commune of spacious dual aspect-flats arranged around a sizeable garden, built within a conservation area, and serving a galvanised and empowered community.”

There was also a “human story” behind the awards because it was the “triumphant culmination of a heroic struggle” by a group of older women.

The Barnet Society hopes that the New Ground development is nominated for recognition in Barnet Council’s newly launched 2017 Architecture Awards for projects in the borough completed between September 2014 and 15 September 2017, the closing date for nominations.

Robin Bishop, chair of the Society, said New Ground was “a radical experiment in communal living” that had been designed “sensitively” by architects Pollard Thomas Edwards to meet the needs of its residents and to fit into Union Street. “New Ground co-housing would be a worthier winner than the flashy and domineering buildings that usually grab media attention. Make sure you vote for it,” said Mr Bishop.

**Further details: <https://barnet.gov.uk/citizen-home/planning-conservation-and-building-control/design-awards.html>**



The derelict shop that Roger Newell wants demolished. It has been vacant for the past 12 years and is likely to deteriorate further

Roger Newell had hoped to get planning permission to demolish a semi-derelict lock-up that has blighted Union Street for many years.



**To the dismay of its owner, Barnet Council has refused planning permission for a semi-derelict shop in Union Street, to be demolished and replaced with either a two-bedroom house or two one-bedroom flats.**

Fifty-five letters of support were registered with the council, but in view of what was said to be “a handful of objections” the application was rejected by the planning committee.

Roger Newell, owner of the vacant, lock-up shop beside Coe’s Alley, is dismayed that the council decided his “eyesore” in Union Street should be preserved.

“If this shop is left empty for another decade, its appearance will not improve, and the dereliction will get worse. I find it unbelievable that the local planners rejected my plan to remove this blot from the local landscape.”

Mr Newell’s disappointment is shared by many nearby residents who were hoping that the demolition of the shop and a tidying up of the approach to Coe’s Alley would finish off what in recent years has been quite a make-over for Union Street.

Mr Newell said he was not “going to beat” himself up over the planning committee’s refusal. The scheme had represented his best shot at a balanced compromise.

“I don’t intend to make a decision until I have recovered from planning

fatigue, coupled with dismay at the Luddites who had no empathy or concern for the views of the overwhelming majority of residents.”

Mr Newell’s application to demolish the vacant shop and replace it with a house, or two flats, in keeping with the scale and brickwork of adjoining Victorian terraced houses did command widespread local support.

He said backers of the plan included the Chipping Barnet MP, Theresa Villiers, the Barnet Society and the Barnet Residents Association, which said it was disappointed at the council’s failure to deal with an unsightly commercial building that should not be left in its current state of decay.

If approval can be obtained at some future date, Mr Newell says he would like to live in the newly-constructed house, as his grandparents on one side of the family lived in Union Street, and the other nearby in Lee Croft.

The shop has been vacant for the last 12 years, after Mr Newell finally closed what had been a greengrocery and florist. “Unfortunately, the lock-up shop was broken into so many times, insurance became prohibitive.”

The lock-up shop was built in the 1930s by Bunny Rees, who then lived next door at 63 Union Street, and had an entrance in his hall to his greengrocer’s shop.



Finishing touches were added during the summer to a 100-seat extension to St Greg’s, increasing seating capacity to 340

# Teenage market crowd-funding campaign close to £56,000 target

A £10,000 pledge of support from the Spires shopping centre and £5,000 apiece from Barnet College and the council mean that the campaign to raise £56,000 to set up a monthly teenage market in Barnet from Easter is nearing the finishing line

Together with the £30,000 already pledged by the Mayor of London, appeal organiser Bob Burstow, secretary of the Barnet Town Team, hopes he can close the gap by securing extra pledges between now and the appeal deadline of 25 September.

If the target can be reached – and and less than £2,000 is now needed in individual donations – the market would be held for a trial period of 12 months, and would be staged in the bandstand area outside Waitrose.

The teenage market - offering local students and teenagers the chance to run their own stalls, stage events and promote their own music - would follow on after the end of Barnet's traditional Saturday market, running for three hours, possibly from 4pm to 7pm.

Mr Burstow launched the crowd-funding campaign on the back of a promise by the Mayor, Sadiq Khan, to kick start a range of projects across the capital.

The £10,000 pledge by Hunter Asset management, which operates the Spires, would provide a year's funding for staffing costs, as well as stall hire charges.

"The Spires' pledge is tremendous news, and with £5,000 promised by both Barnet Council and Barnet and Southgate College, we are now within touching distance of reaching the £56,000 target for pledges by the 25 September deadline.

"As a Town Team, we can now go out with confidence and approach High Street shops, traders and other businesses to ask for their support. Top of the list are local estate agents, banks and other multiples and we hope they'll do their bit.

"Teenage markets are a big hit, with 50 to 60 being held regularly across the country, but there's currently only one in



Rev Eugene Hanshaw and Bob Burstow study plans for the market at the Spires Bandstand

London, in Well Lane, Hackney, and this would give the youngsters of Barnet a show case to promote their interests, present their kind of music and give them a taste of entrepreneurship."

The University of Hatfield has also expressed "growing enthusiasm" for the idea, and there is strong support from the Reverend Eugene Hanshaw, curate at St John's church, who is youth worker for the Barnet parish.

**"The importance of a project like this for young people in Barnet is that it would be an opportunity for to showcase their skills and taste"**

"In the year that I've been in Barnet, I've realised we do need to do more to encourage teenagers to take a pride in where they live. Giving them a stake, by creating what would be their own space, would help develop that sense of community," he said.

Mr Burstow said that the £56,000 start-up for the first year's operation of the teenage market would allow the purchase of stalls, lighting, staging, café tables and chairs, and meet the other running costs. Local schools, including QE Girls' School and Totteridge Academy, have promised support, along with Barnet College, and the long-term aim would be to create events that could be organised around the market.

"A teenage market would give local youngsters a regular outlet so that they could develop skills in retail and the music business," he added.



Follow the link to support  
"Teenage markets come to Barnet"

[www.spacehive.com/  
barnetteenagemarket](http://www.spacehive.com/barnetteenagemarket)

# A trip on the miniature train is just what the doctor ordered

Generations of Barnet children have enjoyed rides on the miniature railway that circles the Wood Street garden of Ian Johnson, a well-known retired doctor and skilled model engineer, who is famed for his collection of model steam engines, **writes Nick Jones**



Each summer he opens his garden to the public – to raise funds for the Jubilee Sailing Trust – but on safety grounds, now uses an electric engine for rides round the garden on his five-inch gauge track.

“Firing up a model steam engine needs a lot of care and attention because it obviously gets very hot, so when children are taken round the garden, the electric engine is safer.”

On display inside Mr Johnson’s house are his pride and joy: scale model railways engines that he built himself, together with his prized miniature engine, Collingwood, a scale model of an LMS Jubilee class steam engine that he purchased at a Christie’s auction for £5,500.

“I’m 81 now, and getting a little too old to move Collingwood around. She weighs two hundredweight, so perhaps she’ll have to go. After all, I do have five miniature team engines altogether.”

Other rooms in the house hold more of his collection of miniature steam engines that he built himself: Bridget, for a seven-and-a-quarter-inch track; Polly, for a five-inch track; and Masie, for a three-and-a-half-inch track.

“They are all named after barmaids – and I like to think they keep each other company.”

Dr Johnson, chairman of the North London Society of Model Engineers, was well known as a general practitioner at the Old Court House surgery, but he only became a doctor in later life.

“I started out in the Merchant Navy, and became a ship’s mate. Then I trained as a lecturer in navigation, before training to be a doctor and becoming a general practitioner at the Old Court House surgery.

“I retired from full-time work 12 years ago, but continued as a locum, so you could say quite a few Barnet residents have been my patients over the years, and their children have probably had a ride on one of my trains.”

Dr Johnson’s most recent achievement has been to complete a degree in maritime history at the Greenwich Maritime Institute.

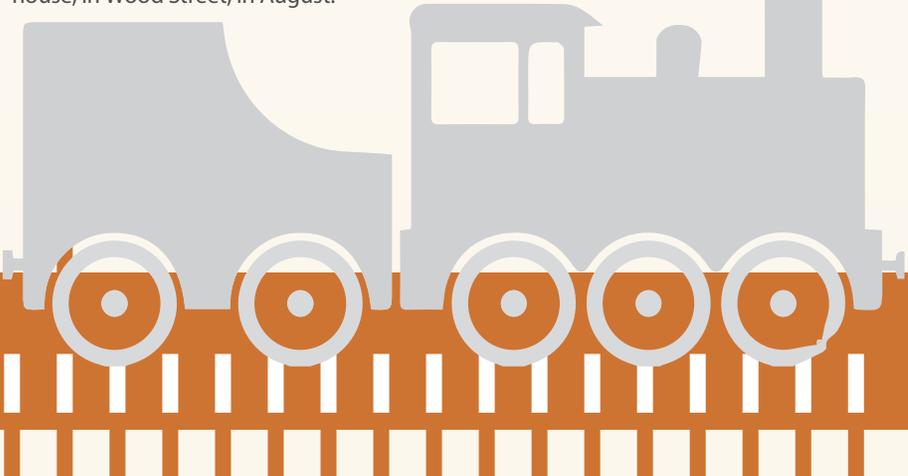
Dr Johnson began holding garden parties at his house because he liked local people to come and enjoy his garden and see the miniature railway.

“Only the other day at the polling station, a lady told me that she remembers her son riding on one of my trains when he was three, and he is 27 now, so you can understand the pleasure this has given me over the years.”

Dr Johnson is also President of Barnet Museum, which held its annual garden party at his house, in Wood Street, in August.



(Top) Ian Johnson (right) astride the trailer of his electric engine, on his miniature railway line at his home in Wood Street, Barnet. With him at the controls is Derek Smith, a fellow member of the North London Society of Model Engineers. (Above) ‘Bridget’, one of the three model engines that Ian has built



# Door finally opens at drop-in centre after nearly a decade of hard graft

After almost a decade spent planning, campaigning and fund-raising, the Bishop of Stepney, the Right Reverend Adrian Newman, led the celebrations to mark the completion of a £1.3 million drop-in and activity centre at Christ Church, in St Albans Road



The Bishop of Stepney, the Right Reverend Adrian Newman, together with then Mayor of Barnet, Councillor David Longstaff, prepares to cut the ribbon at the new Open Door Centre.

(Top) Two former Christ Church School pupils – Pat Barnham (left) and Nora Thorburn – cut the cake to celebrate the re-opening of the schoolhouse as the Open Door Centre

Although up and running for only a few months, the new Open Door Centre – created inside what was once Christ Church School – is already proving highly popular with the elderly and the wider community, **writes Nick Jones.**

The prospect of buying back the flint-faced former schoolhouse, last used by the Red Cross, and re-opening it as a drop-in facility for the elderly and resource centre for the community, has been a long-cherished ambition, dating back to 2008.

Since then, Christ Church raised £800,000 in individual donations, obtained £230,000 in grants and secured the remainder through a bank loan – an achievement that Bishop Newman said was an exemplary example of the determination to make the life and work of the church open and inclusive.

At a packed service to celebrate the dedication of the new centre, David Parry, chair of the John Trotter trustees, thanked

all those who had made donations, organised fund-raising event, and the 18 trusts and charities that had made contributions.

Christ Church's decision to invest so much effort into establishing the Open Door Centre reflected the needs of a rapidly ageing population.

More people aged over 65 lived in Barnet than any other the London borough bar Bromley. Barnet had more residents over 95 than any other London borough, and High Barnet had more older residents than the rest of the borough.

The Bishop praised Christ Church's initiative in recognising the need to create greater opportunities for the elderly within the London area.

"The massive population increase across London has come from younger people, and there are not many boroughs like Barnet that are seeing an increase in older people.

"The urban church must organise itself to meet these challenges, and we are in danger of neglecting the needs of the elderly, especially when London is being driven by a younger demographic. Your very name, Open Door, creates something that is inter-generational."

In his opening remarks, the Bishop paid tribute to Christ Church for installing glass doors at its entrances.

"Sometimes people find it difficult to enter church buildings. People find it hard to cross our threshold for the first time. Churches are not always welcoming and our entrances need to say come in, not keep out."

During the restoration of the schoolhouse, builders uncovered the original 1844 foundation stone for Christ Church School.

After the Bishop had cut the ribbon to the entrance to the Open Door Centre, he unveiled a plaque commemorating his visit.



Left: Betty Fanning on the steps of her house in Potters Road, looking across the Meadway towards King George's Fields. She lives close to St Mark's Church, where Betty's parents were married, she was christened, got married herself, and where her two sons were also christened.

Below: Betty beside her very special oak tree at the junction of the Meadway and Potters Road.

## Trip down Memory Lane for 91-year-old Betty

**Roads running between High Barnet and New Barnet merge together almost seamlessly today, but in the 1930s, when farmland still separated the two towns, the footpath up to the shops in the High Street was through fields filled with cows,** writes Nick Jones.

Betty Fanning, soon to be 91, has vivid memories of her childhood walking up to High Barnet in the years before the Meadway was built, and post-war houses later filled the fields running south from Hadley Common.

After an enjoyable and happy lifetime in New Barnet, Betty is keen to preserve the greenery and wooded landscape that remains to this day, and says she might even be ready to lie down in the road if any attempt is made to fell a magnificent oak tree directly opposite her home.

Since her father and his brother bought the family's Victorian semi-detached on the brow of the hill at the junction of Meadway and Potters Road in 1925, the family has enjoyed the view from the house.

As a child she remembers looking across the fields that led up to what is now King George's Fields, and then after the Meadway was built in 1931, seeing the houses being built alongside the new road, and then after the Second World War, on the surrounding farmland.

"Despite the fact that all the fields have been developed for housing, we still have such a lovely view, looking up towards King George's Fields and Hadley Common, and we see some fabulous sunsets.

"Right on top of the skyline, standing up straight, is a row of six poplars, and they always seem to be swaying in the breeze.

"The oak tree opposite, at the junction of Meadway and Potters Road, is so special to me, because when I was a child there was a lychgate there, beside St Mark's Church, and that led to a footpath that went up through the fields and came out at the back of the High Street, just where the Salisbury Hotel used to be.

"We got used to seeing the cattle in the fields, and then in the autumn one of

the farmers would bring along his pigs and they would eat acorns that had fallen from the oak trees.

"I know that some people think the oak beside St Mark's Church isn't in the best of health, and branches do fall off in stormy weather, but it's been part of my life since I was a child, and I probably would lie down in front of it, if there was ever an attempt to cut it down."

Betty's father and brother, Charles and William Roberts, started out life singing in a barber's shop quartet that toured music halls across Europe. After service in the First World War -- Charles served in the King's Rifles and William was in a tank regiment -- they clubbed together and took out a joint mortgage to purchase their house in Potters Road.

"I think after the First War, they wanted to live as near to the country as possible. My father trained as an optician in Wigmore Street, where his sister worked, and he married my mother, who was the receptionist."

The couple were married at St Mark's, beginning a long family association with the church across the road.

Betty was born in 1926. "I was christened

at St Marks, and in 1948 that was where I got married, like my parents, and it was also the church where my two sons, Michael and Neil, were christened,"

"In the 1920s, when I was a child, there were seven of us in the house -- my grandparents, my mother and father, my uncle Bill, and me and my brother William."

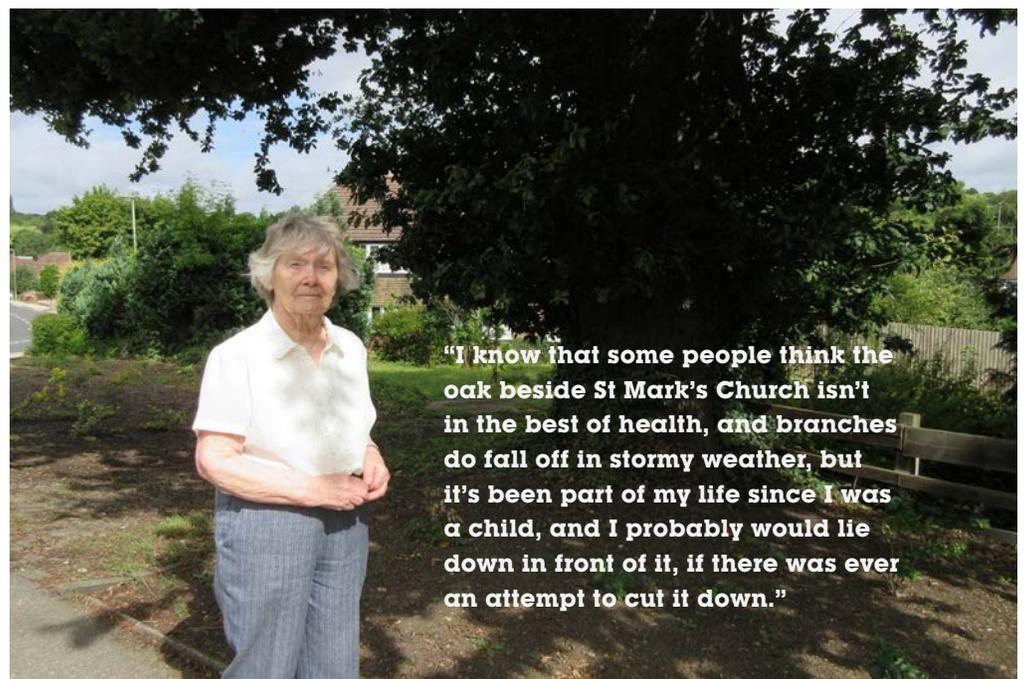
Betty's family moved to Hadley Road, but later she brought up her own family in Potters Road and inherited the house. Her husband, Herbert Fanning, was in the oil industry.

One of Betty's few complaints about the Barnet of today, is that she regrets the decline of the High Street.

"We used to have a wonderful High Street. You could buy anything there, even a piano if you wanted one.

"But we mustn't grumble. We have good schools here, and very good transport. We didn't get a bus up the Meadway until 1951, but it's a great way now to go to the shops.

"I can hardly believe it now, but the new houses around the Meadway went for £400, and the Meadway used to be such a pretty road in the spring. There were flowering cherry trees all the way up, and pink petals everywhere. But they've all gone now."



**"I know that some people think the oak beside St Mark's Church isn't in the best of health, and branches do fall off in stormy weather, but it's been part of my life since I was a child, and I probably would lie down in front of it, if there was ever an attempt to cut it down."**

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# Captivating images of the Battle of Barnet

An unrivalled display of images of Richard III, from his role in the 1471 Battle of Barnet until his death in 1485 at the Battle of Bosworth Field, has been amassed by photographer Geoffrey Wheeler.

His collection of photographs, drawings and illustrations featuring the dukes, barons and noblemen who fought at Barnet, was unveiled for the first time at the annual meeting of the Barnet Society,

It provided a vivid backdrop for Helen Giles, recently appointed co-ordinator, when she gave a presentation on the aims and objectives of the Lottery-funded Battle of Barnet project.

Mr Wheeler's interest in Richard III and the Wars of Roses dates from the 1960s when he was captivated by the famous, ground-breaking BBC television series, *An Age of Kings*, which featured eight of Shakespeare's sequential history plays from Richard II to Richard III.

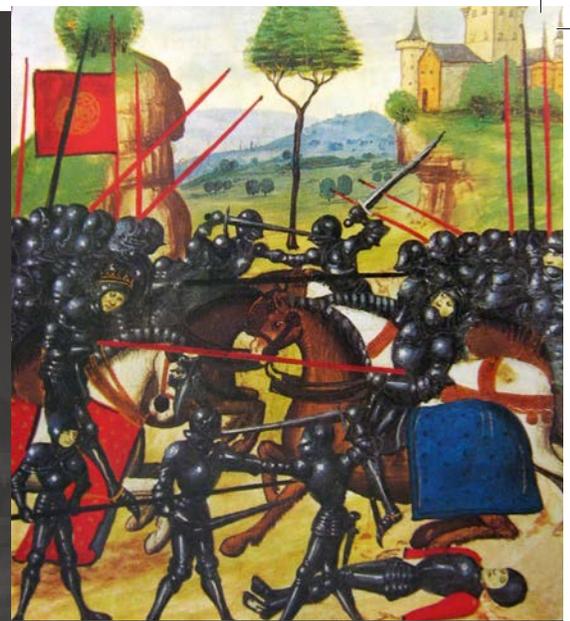
His early photographs include images from 1960s productions at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford Upon Avon, including the stage production of *The Wars of the Roses* that also became an acclaimed television series.

"The character of Richard III has always fascinated me: was he a villain, or wasn't he? Who can forget his portrayal by Sir Laurence Olivier in his 1955 film *Richard III*?

"In *Henry VI, part III*, we get the Battle of Barnet taking place in fog and Warwick the Kingmaker is killed, but we don't know what Warwick looked like. In one portrayal, he is dressed as an Elizabethan, so clearly no one has any real idea how he appeared."

Mr Wheeler is no stranger to celebrations of the Battle of Barnet. His collection of images includes his own photographs of the opposing armies and battlefield that was laid out for an exhibition to mark the Battle's 500th anniversary in 1971.

The exhibition was held in the council chamber of what was then Barnet Town Hall in Wood Street, now the offices of the North London coroner.



Geoffrey Wheeler with some of his many drawings, photographs of reproductions of events and characters involved in the Wars of the Roses and the 1471 Battle of Barnet.

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:



**Welcome to all our new members** listed here who've joined since May. It's been a very busy time doing the bulk of the renewals and updating the database. There are over 50 subscriptions that are overdue, and letters have been sent to those members. Please respond if you receive a letter so that your subscription can be renewed promptly. There are 16 Standing Orders that have not renewed automatically and we even have members who pay twice using different methods. If you think you have a problem or a query with your membership, please do get in touch with me by email, post or phone and they can easily be resolved.

**John Hay**  
Membership Secretary

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| Ms P Macleod | Ms L Perry   |
| Mr N Bove    | Mr P Harding |
| Ms M Hewitt  | Ms J Ross    |
| Mr T Leffman | Mr P Waters  |
| Ms L Osman   | Mr S Cohen   |
| Ms O Portnik | Ms N Sikka   |
| Mrs T A      | Ms M Gillies |
| Hayward      |              |

Email: [membership@barnetsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@barnetsociety.org.uk)  
Phone: 07717 195662

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The Barnet Society has been at the forefront of many campaigns since its inception in 1947. Over the years, we have campaigned on health, environment, transport, education and other issues. Help us keep up that work.

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