Bromleag

The journal of the Bromley Borough Local History Society

Issue 58, June 2021

Trouble at t'mill in St Paul's Cray

Bromley Register Office and nearby 'lost' houses

Trials and tribulations for Bromley North's early commuters

Biggin Hill's brave men and women of WWII

Why the trams never came to Farnborough

Who's Who on the BBLHS committee

www.bblhs.org.uk

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Contents

Bromleag is published four times a year. The editor welcomes articles along with illustrations and photographs. These can be emailed or a paper copy.

A full **INDEX** of articles in Bromleag 1974—2020 can be found at **www.bblhs.org.uk**

Next journal deadline — 15 July 2021

BBLHS meetings

Meetings will be at 7.30 pm on the first Tuesday of the month.

We will be continuing, for the foreseeable future, to hold our monthly meetings by Zoom and Mike Marriot is arranging a range of excellent speakers.

However, rather than have a "set in stone" programme for the whole of 2021, Mike is keeping the programme flexible so that he can adapt as and when we are able to return to normal meetings in an actual physical space.

The next two Zoom meetings

Tuesday 1 June 2021 7.30 pm

The Spanish Flu pandemic of 100 years ago— Pam Preedy

Tuesday 6 July 2021 7.30 pm

Building South Hill Park and its first residents: 1870-1920—Tudor Davies

An invitation to the talks will be sent out by email well in advance, with a reminder a few days before the meeting

Autumn and winter meetings

We do not know yet if these will be Zoom or "proper" meetings in a hall. We will let everyone know nearer the time, either by email or letter.

Tuesday 7 September 7.30pm

Members' Evening

Once again we will be holding our popular Members' Evening. We know that many of you have been researching and writing during lockdown, from the increased contributions to the website and this magazine.

If you have a project you are working on, or would like to get advice about, why not share it with us in a 10-minute slot at this September's meeting.

To find out more contact Mike Marriott at mike.marriott1@ntlworld.com. If you need any technical advice (especially if we are still on Zoom) Max Batten will be able to help you nearer the time.

Do we have your latest email address?

During lockdown we updated our membership list and hopefully we now have everyone's latest email addresses. We contact members by email at least once a month, so if you have not been hearing from us (and wish to do so!), please let us know. A quick note to **admin@bblhs.org.uk** will do the trick.

Chairman's annual report 2021

Tudor Davies

I first began preparing this report a few weeks ago. Since then two members of the committee have resigned, our secretary and, regrettably, myself.

Elaine Baker has been a member of the Society since its earliest years and held various committee roles for over 30 years, she served tea or coffee with nibbles at our traditional monthly talks for as long as anyone can remember and her home was always available for enjoyable committee meetings.

I'm sure members would wish to join the committee in thanking her for all the service she has given to the Society. Thank you Elaine.

My very sudden decision to resign, for which I have apologised to the committee, comes following a health scare. Over the last six years, when required to take decisive action, committee members have responded effectively and with speed, and I am pleased to announce existing committee members have volunteered for the two roles being vacated.

David Hanrahan has considerable experience acting as chairman to different organisations and has volunteered for a number of roles since joining BBLHS. You will have noticed we no longer have the role of secretary.

Over recent years virtually all communication has been conducted through our website, reducing the traditional role of secretary, and a part of the job, that of liaising with like societies, has been transferred to David Hanrahan. Ruth Bennett has agreed to become minutes secretary for committee meetings. She brings years of experience in this task in addition to her knowledge of and keen interest in local history. Both have the full support of the committee. David and Ruth were both voted in to their new roles during the Zoom AGM.

I have benefited from the support of a strong committee as evidenced over the last 12 months when every organisation in the country has confronted difficulties. In spring 2020 I did wonder how well the Society would cope when our traditional monthly talks and organised visits ceased and our journal could not be published because our printer was forced to shut down. I need not have worried. Our website and publicity manager, journal editor and programme organiser immediately created

practical solutions that avoided any interruption to our activities.

Within days of the first lock down Max had registered us with Zoom and Michael, our Programmes organiser, had recruited presenters willing to use the new electronic delivery to maintain our monthly talks. We were unable to print our June magazine and our editor, Christine, produced a PDF-only version of our magazine for most members and a shortened home-printed version that was then posted to all members and followed this with a 40-page bumper autumn edition when our printer reopened for business.

[*Tudor was the driving force behind ensuring that all our non-computer using members had special printed newsletters in the spring of 2020 — Ed]*

Our Zoom talks now regularly attract greater numbers than attended our traditional meetings. At our March committee meeting, one item we considered was future developments for the Society. It is clear that many members find joining Zoom talks preferable to attending monthly talks at Trinity Church, especially on cold, dark winter nights, while others value meeting people face-to-face.

One solution to these different views is for us to adopt both formats with physical meetings in summer and Zoomed meetings in winter. The current situation means any decision is unlikely before 2022 but we would appreciate your thoughts on such proposals and welcome any other suggestions you might offer.

Three initiatives have been suggested for this coming year.

1. Last year we agreed a digitisation project working with the Borough Archivist. That was postponed and is now scheduled to restart at the end of this month.

2. It has also been suggested that members might like to record unique experiences of Lockdown, either by keeping their diary or perhaps a photographic record, copies of which can be forwarded to the electronic archive already established at the library, where they will stored safely and also be accessible to everyone.

3. Much interest was raised following Kate Hollis's talk on Farnborough Workhouse and Hospital and we have established a group to liaise with Kate in preparation for publishing a book based on her MA research.

As a measure of our continued appeal, our membership secretary, Tony Allnutt, confirmed the current strength of the Society in March. We have 134 household subscribers and an estimated 181 members.

Despite many more months of restrictions still to come, recent experience gives me full confidence in the long-term future of the Society.

New Chairman for the Society

Having led the Society as chairman for the past six years, with great energy and enthusiasm, and steered BBLHS through what has been a surprisingly productive and successful Covid year, Tudor Davies is sadly stepping down from the role of Chairman. David Hanrahan, who is already on the committee and is a face many of you will know from pre-lockdown meetings, was voted in as Chairman at the AGM.

David Hanrahan

"It is with mixed emotions that I find myself writing this report. Firstly, I am sad that Tudor decided to stand down at the last Zoom AGM and on behalf of the committee and members, I thank him for all his hard work and quiet efficient management of the Society over many years. Secondly, I am deeply humbled that I was asked if I would consider the position of chairman — especially as the committee is made up of true historians, with a wealth of experience and knowledge. Having given the matter much thought, I decided that, maybe this would be the best role for me to be able to contribute to the future of the Society, and make up for my lack of history knowledge, compared with my fellow committee members.

I have spent my working career in the City and sat on a number of boards and committees, so hopefully this will help going forward. I know I will have the full support of the committee. My main historical interests include politics and architecture through the ages. I really enjoy the talks we have on local history and am looking forward to being able to take part in future outings again.

In addition to Tudor's retirement, our very long serving Secretary, Elaine Baker, has also retired. She too will be sorely missed by both the committee and members. I am pleased to say that both Tudor and Elaine are still continuing to be members of the Society and will take part in future meetings and events.

As regards future meetings, we are seeing the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel and, as such, I am looking around for a new venue for our group meetings. The previous hall has become less suitable for the size of our meetings and we hope to be able find something larger with, of course, parking.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee members for all their hard work behind the scenes over the winter and for the many new projects in progress.

Freelands and the Duchess of Kingston

Freelands Road, where the Society used to meet in the increasingly distant past, was named after the large red-brick house in Plaistow Lane on the site which later became the Holy Trinity Convent and then school, and is now a housing estate.

The history of the name and site can be found in Horsburgh's *Bromley* (page 198 — see our website). It had many distinguished tenants, some listed by Horsburgh including the surgeon-general, a deputy Governor of the Bank of England and the widow of an Archbishop of Canterbury. It was purchased by the nuns in 1888 and eventually, because of its age and condition, was completely rebuilt.

Although Horsburgh notes that it had various tenants, he does not include the lady mentioned in the newspaper cutting from the *Morning Post* of 7 June 1822— the Duchess of Kingston.

FREELANDS, near Bromley and Beckenham, Kent,
To Be LET,

For seven or fourteen years, a most desirable RESIDENCE, adjoining to Sundridge Park, and late in the occupation of the Duchess of Kingston. The house is replete with accommodation for a large family, stands upon a fine eminence, with beautiful pleasure grounds, large gardens, and grapery, offices of every description, and a rich paddock, altogether containing nearly 13 acres. More land may be had if required. May be viewed on application to Mr. Robertson, at Sundridge Park Farm, of whom terms may be had; and of Mr. Hoggart, 62 Old Broad-street.

Quite who the Duchess of Kingston was is not clear – the last Duchess of Kingston-Upon-Hull, was the somewhat notorious Elizabeth Chudleigh. She was a bigamist and was known by her contemporaries for her adventurous lifestyle. According to Wikipedia she died in Paris in 1788, which seems rather too long before.

However, the *Newgate Calendar* records her death as 26 August 1796. But in either case, her expensive and peripatetic lifestyle would also not seem to match living in a quiet country house and, one assumes, would not have been an attraction to a respectable buyer.

However, appealing to snobbery is clearly not a new advertising tactic!

Max Batten

Annie's box — a gift to Down House

A red leather box given by Charles and Emma Darwin to their eldest daughter Annie and known ever since as "Annie's red box" was recently presented to English Heritage and Down House. It contains mementos of the family, the handkerchief Darwin used when taking snuff, shells from the South Seas he collected while sailing around the world on the Beagle [1831-36] and locks of hair belonging to members of the family.

With the box comes a tragic story, Annie died of tuberculosis at 10 years-old, an event that was deeply felt by her parents. She and other brothers and sisters are buried in the graveyard of the family church in Downe. Their youngest daughter Henrietta [Etty] inherited the box and added to the contents, which she labelled using scraps of paper from Darwin's original manuscript. She helped edit his most famous book *The Descent of Man* [1871] in which he explained his theories of evolution.

The box was retained by family until 2021 when they returned it to Down House. It is a reminder of how closely interwoven was Darwin's work and his family life and a delightful gift to enhance the experience for all visitors to the emotive time capsule that is Down House.

Downing Street — make do and mend

The did-he-or-did-he-not row over whether Boris Johnson paid for the decoration of his Downing Street flat was rumbling on as we went to press. But Boris is not the first Prime Minister to have faced décor problems living at No 10 (or, as now, in No 11).

When Labour's Ramsay MacDonald came to power in January 1924, he and his daughter Ishbel found the state provided very little furniture for the large and rambling house, and none of the cutlery, crockery or silver necessary for official entertaining – not even bedsheets.

MacDonald had no luxury country home on which to call, and the provisions of his modest house were nowhere near sufficient. Ishbel was sent to the January sales to stock up, and would later recall having to help her father by funding more items from a small personal inheritance.

And our local PM, William Pitt the Younger, also set a precedent or two. It is well known that taking office aged 24 in 1783 he was the youngest Premier to date.

But he is also the only PM known to have had an operation carried out at No 10 with the removal of a facial cyst in 1786. He reportedly rebuked the surgeon for taking half-a-minute longer to perform the procedure than his estimate of six minutes.

Society event/feature

Light on the Biggin Hill brave of WWII

*This article by **Isobel Hood**, Learning and Access Officer at Biggin Hill Memorial Museum, complements the Zoom talk given to the Society in February by Aden Lane which explored the history of the airfield*

There's something about the light at Biggin Hill. Sharp, ethereal, eerie even, it sweeps across the airfield on clear mornings after sunrise. bathing you in its hopeful glow. It's at this quiet time of day when you can most imagine them, the fighter pilots of 80 years ago, waiting around the dispersal huts in the creeping light of dawn, the unforgettable sound of Merlin engines warming up in the background.

They were preparing themselves for the inevitable, these men – the sound of the scramble bell and the surge of adrenalin that would accompany their frantic dash to the waiting Spitfires and Hurricanes as they took to the skies not knowing where this latest sortie would lead them or if, indeed, they would even come back at all.

The courage and sacrifice of these young men – and young they were for some were only 18 – is still astonishing all these decades later. And it's their memory that the Biggin Hill Memorial Museum seeks to keep alive by sharing the personal experiences of those who served at Britain's most famous fighter station. Along with the stories of the men and women in the local community who supported the aerodrome and helped keep it operational during the dark days of war.

"Sailor" Malan

In his speech to the House of Commons on 20 August, 1940, Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously paid tribute to the RAF pilots of the Battle of Britain – raging in the skies above southern Britain at the time Churchill's words were delivered. The Prime Minister's immortal words were: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." At the museum we remember

"the Few". Not just the Biggin Hill pilots who became household names such as "Sailor" Malan, Brian Kingcome, Al Deere and Robert Stanford Tuck but the countless pilots who were stationed at "The Bump", some for just days, others for many months or years.

Among them was Flying Officer Geoffrey Wellum (92 Squadron). Wellum was only 19 when he flew in the Battle of Britain from Biggin Hill, so young that he was nicknamed "Boy" by the other pilots. A fibreglass replica of the Spitfire he flew at the time stands as a Gate Guardian at the front of the museum site.

Then there's Flying Officer Peter Pool, who was flying out of Biggin Hill with 72 Squadron when he was hit by a German Me109 in October 1940. He managed to deploy his parachute and land in a field in Sittingbourne, Kent. He later wrote to the Irvin Air Chute Company who manufactured the parachute to thank them for his "safe descent" and to apply to become a member of the Caterpillar Club – an unofficial but exclusive band of pilots whose lives had been saved by the company's parachutes.

Many pilots made long journeys to fly at Biggin Hill; Czech pilot Vilem Goth narrowly escaped Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia by hiding in a coal train, eventually making it to France then on to England by boat.

Nowhere is the courage and sacrifice of these men laid bare more starkly than in St George's RAF Chapel of Remembrance. Adjoining the museum building, this is a place of peace, grace and beauty. The chapel was built in 1951, after a fundraising campaign led by Sir Winston Churchill, as a memorial to the 454 aircrew who lost their lives flying from the Biggin Hill Sector during the Second World War. It is the beating heart of the museum site, serving as a focus for remembrance and contemplation as well as acting as a place of worship during chapel services on Sundays.

Immediately you step into the chapel building your eyes are drawn to the stained-glass windows which burst with colour and flank the north and south sides of the building. Designed by stained-glass artist Hugh Easton they depict six-winged figures representing the spirits of the pilots who fought and died. The next thing you notice is the Reredos at the back of the altar, a list of 453 names (one name is missing but included in the Book of Remembrance, also in the chapel), a sombre roll call of the pilots who lost their lives defending the country in a time of great need.

Outside the chapel building and immediately in front of it are the museum's Gate Guardians, the fibreglass replica mentioned earlier of Geoffrey Wellum's Spitfire along with a model of Flying Officer Peter Brothers' Hurricane, again, an exact copy of the plane he flew during the Battle of Britain with 32 Squadron.

Part of my job as Learning and Access Officer at the museum is to lead workshops for schoolchildren studying the Second World War. When we come to look at these planes at the front of the museum, almost without exception, every single group has

stood and marvelled for a while, astonished by the small size and seeming fragility of the aircraft in front of them. It took guts to fly these single-seater planes where it was just you against the enemy and the elements. They serve as a further reminder of the courage and bravery of the young men swept up in the all-encompassing demands of total war.

We honour the Few, but we also remember the many. As well as the pilots, the museum pays tribute to those working tirelessly behind the scenes — the WAAFs, the weather watchers, the engineers, the fitters, the mechanics, the emergency personnel and the local community. who all had important parts to play.

There was also the Army. Stationed on South Camp, the main barracks building there could house up to 3,000 men whose job it was to keep the airfield safe from attack. One of these men was my grandfather, Leonard Fox. A Sergeant in the RAF Regiment, Leonard was stationed at Biggin Hill for a period in the Second World War and, as the family stories go, he would cycle all the way from his home in Peckham to report for duty before moving to a closer rented cottage in nearby Leaves Green, where he lived with my grandmother and Aunty Carole, then just a toddler. His job mainly involved manning the "ack-ack guns", the huge anti-aircraft guns which were so heavy they had to be handled by up to 10 or 11 men. In later life, he was very hard of hearing, a fact often attributed by my grandmother to his stint on these colossal instruments of war.

Later in the war, Leonard was stationed elsewhere, but although he left Biggin Hill, Biggin never really ever left him. Like so many of his generation, my grandfather rarely talked about his experiences at war, of what he saw and what he did, but there was something about Biggin Hill that left a deep impression on him. Towards the end of his life, it was to Biggin he wanted to return time and time again, my father often accompanying him from his home in nearby Farnborough Village on trips to "the bump", where they'd stand and watch the planes fly by for hours.

My grandfather was just one of countless numbers of ordinary men and women who did extraordinary things under the dark shadow of war. A shining example of the uncomplaining stoicism and courage typified by so many of the war generation can be seen in the actions — and words — of Biggin Hill resident Olivia (Olive) Archard, *pictured right.* Olive refused to be cowed by the dangers and privations of war. While her sisters had been evacuated to

Cornwall for the duration, Olive refused to leave her home and, with her husband, James, away in the Army, she stayed with her young daughter, Penny, in the family home. She volunteered with the WRVS and became a Fire Watcher at Biggin Hill, spending endless nights responding to whistles and putting out fires caused by incendiary bombs, sometimes even collecting unexploded ones herself. "I had one in my cucumber plant," she wrote to her sisters, describing a "Molotov Breadbasket" that dropped on Biggin Hill during one particular raid. "Burnt the netting too, the wretch. It was awfully easy to put out. I just shovelled some earth on it and patted it down and then dug it up the next morning to adorn my sideboard."

Olive was a prolific writer and we are grateful to have her letters in our collection. They are full of warmth, wit and humour, despite the chaos and destruction that was going on all around her. They offer exceptional insight into the human experience of conflict and give vivid first-hand accounts of what it was like for ordinary civilians living during such dangerous and often brutal times.

Olive's determined resilience even seemed to have rubbed off on baby Penny. In another letter Olive described five bombs dropping in quick succession somewhere close by her home during an air raid. Leaving her sewing, she rushed upstairs to check on Penny, who was asleep in her cot. "She didn't bat an eyelid," Olive wrote to her sisters Le and Margot later that night. "Isn't it marvellous how much noise babies will sleep through? We've decided that he [Hitler] won't drop any more here tonight, so we haven't left our warm fires."

Another extraordinary group of women were the Biggin Hill Women's Auxiliary Air Force

Elizabeth "Joan" Mortimer *of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force showed great courage on 18 August 1940. As bombs began to fall around the airfield during a raid, she continued her work manning the armoury switchboard communicating vital messages around the airfield, despite the fact that she was surrounded by tons of explosives. Mortimer's bravery did not end there. The raid had left the airfield littered with craters and unexploded bombs so, even before the "all-clear" sounded, she ran on to the airfield with a bunch of red flags and calmly placed them in the places where bombs had landed but not gone off to warn the returning 601 Squadron Hurricane pilots so that they could see where to land safely. She was awarded the military medal.*

(WAAF). WAAFs had an integral part to play in the war effort as mechanics, fitters, cooks, clerks, engineers, switchboard operators and plotters - to name just a few of their various roles.

Three Biggin Hill WAAFs, Elizabeth "Joan" Mortimer (*see panel Page 12)* Elspeth Henderson and Helen Turner went on to be awarded the Military Medal for the bravery they displayed during the Battle of Britain in summer 1940.

On the evening of 31 August 1940 Corporal Henderson and Sergeant Turner refused to leave their posts at the switchboard despite chaos raining down from the skies during a heavy bombing raid. They continuing to relay vital information to 11 Group headquarters at Uxbridge throughout the attack.

The roll call of heroes and acts of gallantry carried out by ordinary men and women at Biggin Hill does not stop there. Take Trixie, who worked for the NAAFI, the Navy, Army and Air Force Institute, which provided much-needed refreshments to all those serving at the airfield. She was carrying out her duties at the airfield when she was tragically killed during the bombing of the aerodrome on 30 August 30 1940.

On the same day, Weather Observer Norman Roberts made his last entry into the daily registry at the Met Office weather station at the airfield. Hours later he and two of his colleagues were killed after taking cover in an air raid shelter that received a direct hit from a Luftwaffe bomb. Then there was Squadron Leader Eric Moxey, a First World War veteran and bomb defusal specialist, who had been called to the airfield a few days earlier, on 27 August 1940, to deal with two unexploded bombs that had embedded themselves into a runway. Moxey successfully dealt with the first bomb but when he attempted to clear the second it exploded killing him instantly. He was posthumously awarded a George Cross for his bravery.

There are many more stories to tell; we wish we could do justice to them all at the museum. But even though they may not all be mentioned by name we do remember them — through our exhibitions, public programmes and events, we hope to preserve their memory, remembering the Few, honouring the Many and inspiring generations.

" … it's not about medals, it's not about thank yous, but it's nice to be remembered … that's all we ask, to be remembered."

Battle of Britain veteran Geoffrey Wellum (1921-2018)

It as an honour and very humbling to be able to work for an organisation that seeks to preserve such incredible heritage and to promote its legacy now and for those that follow in the years to come.

And so back to the light. The final words go to Wing Commander Charles Brian Kingcome DSO DFC, who was posted as a Flight Commander with 92 Squadron to

Biggin Hill in September 1940, at the height of the Battle of Britain. In the introduction to Bob Ogley's *Biggin on the Bump*, Kingcome describes Biggin Hill "with enormous affection", describing a day in the life of a fighter pilot, beginning in the "grey half-light" of dawn and the first sortie of the day along with the enormous relief that followed when it was over.

"For those of us safely back on the still darkened earth the sun would rise again. The day was only just beginning and already behind us a lifetime of action packed into an hour, death, the memory of two sunrises in one morning and thoughts quickly supressed of friends not yet accounted for. And ahead of us life, at least until the next telephone call. Electrifying adrenalin-filled life. One long sustained high … I walk with ghosts when I visit my old station, but they are friendly ones. I mourn them but they had counted the cost and they died with regret but without surprise … I salute them.'

Wing Commander Charles Brian Kingcome

Find out more about Biggin Hill Memorial Museum on their website at https://bhmm.org.uk or call us on 01959 422414. The museum is open 10am until 5pm Tuesdays to Sundays. Admission prices are £6 per adult with Gift Aid, £5 without, £3.50 for children with Gift Aid, £3 without. Family tickets are available and under–fives go free.

A gruesome historical-record site

Death On My Doorstep —is a very name-rich website. The sidebar will bring up the place you want to read about and you can view each London borough. Within each area it is word-searchable, but there are also many extracts from newspaper reports which won't be included in the results.

The deaths are not always very sympathetically reported. In the London boroughs, fires, poisoning and suicides are prevalent, the latter because of the desperately poor circumstances of many people. Deaths around the world are included.

http://deathonmydoorstep.com/index.php/homepage/posts/ **Stella Eames**

Kelsey Park over the centuries

Kelsey Park is one of the largest formal parks in the borough with a very active and large Friends group helping to keep it in good order. One of those Friends, Andy Callaghan, found his interest and research into the flora and fauna extending into the park's history when snippets of information appeared on the park's Facebook page.

At our March meeting he shared his research which took him back to 826AD when "Beckenham" first appears in the records with Saxon landowner Beohha. By Domesday in 1086 AD the name has become Bacheham but we have to wait for another 400 years before Kelsey begins to emerge.

It was London fishmonger William Kelshulle who in 1408 bought land in Beckenham and built himself a country house. Andy believed he may have had an interest in the river and the fishpond that was on the land.

Kelshulle left his legacy in his name and later in the century William Brograve, a London draper, built a small chapel on the site. His family were to live at Kelsey for another 200 years.

However, it was the next family, the Burrells who purchased the property in 1690, that begin to shape it into a really major estate. There were four generations of Peter Burrells. The first, a wine merchant, paid £3,500 for Kelsey and over the coming years the estate was extended towards Elmers End. The last, Peter Burrell IV, who founded Marylebone Cricket Club in 1797 [1], asked the great landscape gardener Humphry Repton to redesign the estate grounds and this is the time when the layout of the park we know today began to emerge. He created the main lake, the island and a waterfall and widened the river. Some of the large old trees in the park were planted at this time.

Following a wealthy marriage, Peter Burrell IV moved away from Beckenham and eventually, in 1820, Kelsey went up for auction, where it was described as having "beautiful scenery and ornamental timbers".

The next important owner was banker Peter Richard Hoare, who "updated" the house which had been re-built in 1800 in gothic revival style. The Hoares were a very religious family and Peter's son had an 80 seat chapel built on the estate for the family and estate worker. But a later Charles Hoare was involved in a scandal when he left his wife for his mistress, Beatrice Sumner [2]

Charles moved away but still owned the estate and in 1884 the mansion became a convent and by the turn o the century a school for "gentlemen's daughters". After Charles died in 1908 the estate did not sell any by 1913 locally there was concern that the park would be lost to housing. Local journalist and campaigner Tom Thornton took out an £8,000 loan to purchase 21 acres and the mansion to keep it as a park.

Shortly after at the beginning of the First World War the army took over the park and after the war the mansion, now long neglected and beyond repair, was demolished.

But the 21 acres that became Kelsey Park have thrived and although little concrete remains of the early estate — an ice well, steps into the boating house and some pillars in gardens in Manor Way – the gardens themselves are a reminder of the once-great estate.

Andy is continuing to research the park and is working with other Beckenham historians to develop a history of the park for the Friends group. **CH**

[1] *An account of ladies' cricket at Kelsey Park appeared in Bromleag, September 2020*
2 Pat Manning wrote about the Hoare family in Bromleag *March 2009 . This is available online on the BBLHS website*

Beckenham Cottage Hospital and its people

A new article on our web pages

When Linda Baldwin was a child, Beckenham Hospital loomed large in her family conversations as her mother and father met when they were working there in the 1950s.

"The hospital's ward names: George Stilwell, Douglas Lyndsey, Ruth Sutton, Harry Lyne, Percy Jones and Trapnell Wing, were as well known to me as those of my family. Some names disappeared over time as new extensions were built and rooms were remodelled as medical practices and technology advanced.

"The Lea Wilson ward opened in 1877 and the Fewster children's ward opened in the Diamond Jubilee Extension in 1899. For most of its history, matron ruled the hospital with determination, expecting, and achieving, the highest standards of care and order from her nurses, domestic staff – and doctors".

Linda has explored the history of the people who gave their names to the wards and how their ceaseless service and patronage provided the residents of Beckenham with access to medical treatment (and initially public baths and a public laundry) from the 1870s until the advent of the National Health Service some 75 years later.

Her article at **bblhs.org.uk** explores the lives of 21 people, including several of the matrons, along with pictures of the old hospital.

Where are the hospital boards?

In her researches, one thing has eluded Linda — the whereabouts of the memorial tablets and boards from hospital, which are believed to cover 1890 to 1946.

If you know where they are, contact the editor or Linda at:
linda.baldwin3@ntlworld.com

How the borough escaped the trams

The article about how Farnborough escaped the railway, reminded me of some work I had done on the proposed tram routes through Bromley to Farnborough and on to Chelsfield. Farnborough was a popular destination for weekend hikers and cyclists and a tramline was proposed.

Under the Tramways Act of 1874, electric tram companies had the power to expand their services. However, companies found it less expensive and easier to obtain an order under the Light Railways Act of 1896. In May 1903, the British Electric Traction Company applied for an order of Parliament to extend the light railway, gauge 4 feet 8½ inches, from Lewisham and Downham south through Bromley to terminate at Farnborough and on to Chelsfield. The application was broken down into five or six different railways:

Railway No 1 was to start in London Road at the boundary between Bromley and Lewisham, terminating at a point 26 yards south-east of junction with Park End.

Railway No 2 was to start from the junction with Park End and pass along London Road, High Street, Bromley, and Masons Hill, terminating at the junction of Westmoreland Road with Masons Hill.

Railway No 2a starting in the High Street near the junction of the High Street and Church Road, terminating about 10 yards north-west from the White Hart Hotel.

Railway No 3 starting by the termination of Railway No 2, passed along Masons Hill and the road known as "Bromley Common", terminating at about the boundary between Bromley and the parish of Farnborough.

Railway No 4 started at the termination of Railway No 3, along the main road from Bromley to Sevenoaks to a point opposite the western corner of the "George and Dragon" in Farnborough.

Railway No 5 took the tram link along the main road from Farnborough to Green Street Green to about 40 yards in a southerly direction from the "Queen's Head".

The intended railways were designed to be constructed along the streets or roads, but a certain amount of land, a little over an acre, mainly strips of land, was identified for compulsory purchase to provide the tram stops and termini. A generating station and depot was to be built on a three-acre plot of land on the south-east side by Gladstone Road. It is interesting that the application does not specify a means of motivation, but stated that it would be animal, electrical or any mechanical power that the promoters decided upon.

Any objections were to be sent to the Secretary of the Light Railway Commission, 54, Parliamentary Street, Westminster, as soon after the 30 May as possible and a copy of the letter to their solicitor, Sydney Morce of Norfolk Street, Strand.

Another tram route was discussed at a conference of the South London boroughs

and caused strong opposition in Bromley. The London County Council (LCC) enquired how they might assist Woolwich, Greenwich and Deptford in dealing with the closure of insanitary properties and the rehousing of their inhabitants. Headlined in the Bromley local paper, *Trams for Chislehurst – a Startling Proposal* it was suggested that tram routes should connect north-east London with the south-east as far as Chislehurst, passing through Woolwich, and perhaps other lines connecting New Cross Gate with Kidbrooke and Eltham Road.

The minutes of Bromley Rural District Council provided more detail: the tramway was to run from Southend Village to Eltham via Grove Park Road in the Parish of Mottingham. The Mottingham Trades and Lewisham Borough Council provided an alternative proposal as they considered that a tramway along Grove Park Road would be detrimental to the district. After conferring with Parliamentary Agents, it was considered advisable for the protection of Bromley to engage an experienced surveyor. By January 1924, a report showed that the matter had been dropped.

All these tramline proposals into Bromley and Chislehurst came to nothing. Bromley was fearful of a bid for power over the borough from the LCC. Ultimately Thomas Tilling Ltd, the main competitor of the British Electric Traction Company, started operating a motor bus, number 47, from Shoreditch. Working with the London General Omnibus Company from 1908, route 47 was extended south to Farnborough in 1914.

Pam Preedy

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Tuning in to BBLHS on Zoom

I have just received the latest excellent *Bromleag,* which again is full of the most amazing articles, some of which make you realise how much our parents and grandparents had to endure while trying to raise a family and live as normal a life as possible. I find it helps to put what is happening today in a little more perspective.

Thanks for including the piece about Gadsden. Should I hear from anybody and it leads to a story which is worth telling I will put pen to paper and be in touch.

I shall tune in on Tuesday night for the meeting and have just about mastered Zoom etc although I am never quite sure whether people can hear me, so for the avoidance of doubt I keep my mouth shut, which my wife is all in favour of. It all seems very well-mannered and pleasant, unlike the famous Parish Council meeting featured on the telly recently. **David Hinton**

Old Bromley – before the Magistrates' Court

Bromley Magistrates' Court. built in 1990 on the corner of Beckenham Lane and London Road, is an attractive, low-rise modern building which the borough needed. But some interesting old buildings had to go in the redevelopment.

Park House — Bromley Register Office

The first was Park House and in *Bromleag (March 2021)* I asked if anyone had pictures of the building which ended its days as the Bromley Register Office. This uncovered not just pictures of the building but led on to information about other lost historic homes which were demolished for the Magistrates' Court complex.

Our great front-cover picture of Park House, possibly in the early 20th century, was sent in by Clare Andrews from her Facebook page "Shortlands Life" and the one here, *right,* by Tony Banfield of Bromley Civic Society. He took the picture shortly before the building was demolished around 1985. He also confirmed that David Bowie's wedding took place at Park House.

Tony said: "Demolition of Park House coined the phrase 'Bromley Clean and Green'. At the time, demolition was done in the name of road-widening which didn't take place for another 10 years because the Council had difficulty in acquiring the Britannic Assurance building next door [on the corner with London Road]. But as a temporary measure the Council created a nice public garden area under this new clean and green policy.

"Cynics said this temporary Clean and Green exercise was an excuse to get rid of buildings which locals were trying to save! Behind the scenes the Council's property services manager was negotiating with adjacent property owners and eventually acquired two more beautiful houses, St Winnows owned by the Frampton Family, and Lauriston, which had been the home of Sir Joseph Swan, British inventor of the electric light bulb. Both houses were demolished by the Council for the present

Magistrates' Court, Lauriston for the surface car park."

Lauriston and Sunnyside

Lauriston in its hey-day was a fairly grand house, as can be seen by the picture (*below).* Coincidently, just as the pictures of Park House emerged, the website received a query about Lauriston from John Ridley: "Sir Joseph Swan moved with his family to his home 'Lauriston' on London Road, Bromley, in 1883. As there was no room in his house for his laboratory, he soon bought the house next door, 'Sunnyside', and it was here that he refined his electric light bulb and made other scientific breakthroughs. Any help locating the property would be appreciated."

John was delighted that we could not only locate the house, which was opposite Bromley and Sheppard's Colleges, but also send him maps and a picture – though he was sorry that the house had disappeared under a car park.

'Lauriston', No 13 London Road, was set back and closer to Blyth Road than London Road. Although 'Sunnyside', No 11 London Road, was the next house, they were not next door in the traditional sense. 'Lauriston', being set back and closer to Blyth Road than London Road, 'Sunnyside' was really across the garden.

In 2010 Bromley Historic Collections put on an exhibition about Sir Joseph Swan and his houses in Bromley. The information below is drawn from that exhibition.

Lauriston at the time of Sir Joseph Swan, picture courtesy of Bromley Historic Collections

Swan arrived in early 1883 and was to stay for 11 years. His friend, the naturalist John Hancock, laid out the garden across which Swan had a view of Bromley and Sheppard's Colleges, while Swan enjoyed many a carriage ride with his family in the local countryside. In winter, part of the garden was transformed into a skating rink. Visitors to the house around this time included the artist William Holman Hunt and Beckenham author Diana Craik.

Sunnyside in London Road

Swan's main inventing days were behind him but, aged 55, he still wanted to work and so acquired another house, "Sunnyside" on the London Road, where he set up a laboratory to continue his experiments. The rest of the house became a school for his and other local children.

In 1894 Swan sold both "Lauriston" and "Sunnyside". The new owner was Harry Raglan Knott, the son of an oil merchant from Rusholme, near Manchester. Knott lived a quiet life on a private income but gave generously to local causes. "Sunnyside" became the home of John Thompson, a domestic coachman who, it is likely, worked for Knott.

Knott died in 1906 and his wife Mary in 1914. "Lauriston" continued as a private residence until 1925 when it was taken over by the Young Women's Christian Association as a hostel.

The YWCA remained at "Lauriston" until the mid-1960s and the owners, Frampton Properties, leased it to The New Life Foundation, which used it as a hostel for drug addicts. A hall in the grounds was used by the Rehobath Strict and Particular Baptist Chapel during this period.

"Sunnyside" remained a family home for much longer. Hairdresser Thompson Elmer G Filby, arrived in 1906 and Swan's laboratory, which was constructed mainly of glass, would have made an ideal location for his work. New residents followed and after the Second World War it was divided into two flats and finally demolished around 1960 to make way for offices. The site has since been redeveloped again and is now the left half of the offices of the North Star 2000 group, a property developer. **Christine Hellicar**

Health hazards before vaccination

Browsing through archives written by the schoolmaster of Keston National School at the turn of the 19th century will give the reader a stark reminder of hazards to health faced by everyone living at the time.

I'm sure the selection below will encourage us all to examine our response to the wondrous gift we receive from modern antibiotics and vaccinations.

The *Bromley and District Times* of September 1890 reported the death of Keston School Master, Mr Eusabius Sears, who had retired in the previous June due to ill health, almost certainly tuberculosis.

Reasons for children's absences and occasions when the entire school was closed as recorded by the master:

May 1896	Two week school closure for an epidemic of measles
Oct 1896	62 pupils absent during an outbreak of mumps
May 1900	Diphtheria in Fox Lane all children to remain at home by order of the medical officer
Dec 1900	Diphtheria in Leaves Green all children confined to home by order of the medical officer
Nov 1901	School closed for one week due to scarlet fever epidemic
June 1903	School closed for three weeks and disinfected during a measles epidemic
April 1903	All Apps [family] absent with chicken pox
Feb 1905	Lily Allen, pupil teacher for infant class, was absent from school and had to postpone her evening studies at Bromley Pupil Teacher Centre because she had contracted ringworm. Her fellow pupil teacher Alice Purdy suffered the same illness a few months later.
May 1907	Edgar Cowland absent, required to help nurse his family. A few months later he was again absent because his sister "was in the last stages of consumption" [dying of tuberculosis]

This story can be replicated in every parish in England. **Tudor Davies**

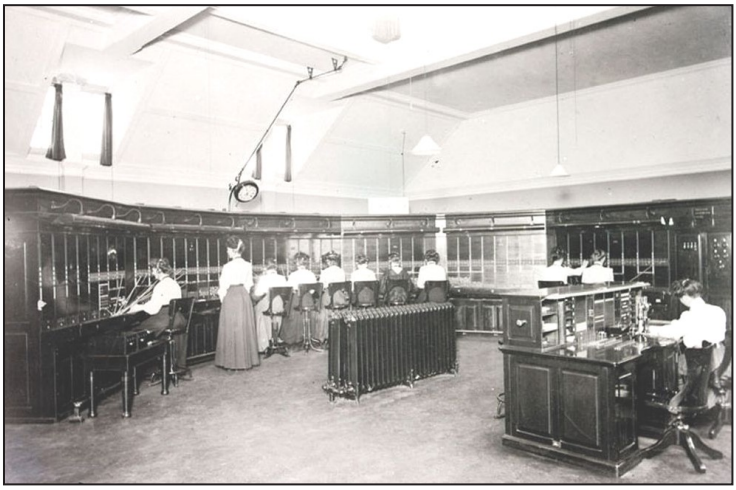
Researching history in Bromley — BBLHS online resources

This should be your first online stop — www.bblhs.org.uk.
We have one of the most extensive websites of any local history society with many excellent local history resources

Bromley's early telephone exchanges

Tim Hobbs asked, via the website, if we could locate Bromley's first telephone exchange. "I worked for BT in Bromley on the early Seventies so I'm familiar with the current one, but have never found out where the original (manual) exchange was. The current exchange still has an abandoned Cold War bunker underneath the later extension that I'm familiar with, if anyone is interested".

Simon Finch at Bromley Historic Collections tracked down various Bromley telephone offices. "The first mention of a telephone service in Bromley was 1891 when an office of the National Telephone Company was operating at 13 East Street. It seems you had to visit the office to make a call.



By 1896 you could also call from Bromley (North, I think) Station. "Gradually other call offices opened and by 1905 the office had moved to 33 East Street and again before 1910 to 15 Church Road. Around 1912 the service was taken over by the Post Office.

"By 1914, 15 Church Road is described as an Exchange, so assuming the earlier offices were just that, this seems to have been the site of the first exchange. Pretty much the same site as was used for the later exchange. The picture *above* is the inside of the exchange."

Did you down a pint at Hennekys?

Tim would also like to find out more about Hennekys Public House, which was on the site of the Next clothes store in the High Street. Earlier in the century it was called "The Rising Sun". It had an unusual fireplace of three open-fronted hearths in a triangle in the middle of the lounge with no visible chimney stack.

Tim Hobbs: **tim.hobbs@btinternet.com**

Misery, mischief and a national scandal at Farnborough Workhouse

Kate Hollis

Bromley's workhouse which stood on the site of Princess Royal University Hospital at Farnborough, opened on Thursday 13 March 1845. Like all workhouses, Farnborough was designed as a deterrent to stop the poor treating it as a hotel.

Inside, parents were separated from their children and married couples prevented from seeing each other. Daily tasks of cleaning, oakum-picking, stone-breaking and building-maintaining forced the inmates to work long hours without pay. Food portions were so small that in December 1845 a concerned local doctor named Thomas H Smith raised the alarm. Dr Smith proposed a diet alteration, arguing that the existing portions, which included bread, cheese and water, to be given three times a week, caused starvation and suffering.

Whereas some Guardians across England had no problem with hungry paupers, members of the Bromley Union were concerned about the inhuman treatment of the poorest in the Farnborough walls. After pleading unsuccessfully with governing bodies based in Somerset House, they decided to publish the full correspondence in *The Morning Post* on 10 August 1846.

What followed was a public outcry and strong criticism of Chadwick's New Poor Law policies. In heated parliamentary debates, William Walkley (MP for Finchley and a founding member of *The Lancet* magazine) called Bromley Workhouse "a place of misery and torture" and argued passionately that Bromley's case "is worse than Andover".

The public scandal over starvation reports resulted in a victory for workhouse reformers and Guardians. On 8 March 1847 Mr Nottingham, a Bromley Union clerk, placed an advert in the *South Eastern Gazette* for tender to supply "good quality bread, beef, oatmeal, rice, Irish butter as well as best yellow soap, clothing, shoes, hats and candles".

In the years to come, Farnborough battled outbreaks of typhus, cholera, measles and smallpox but, overall, it had a reputation as a clean, healthy and well-looked-after workhouse, never to experience a scandal of starvation again. When in February 1868 Emily Emery complained to the Guardians that her daughter's hair "is in the most filthy way", the Board reprimanded nurse Miss Harris for lack of care.

Management

One of the reasons why Farnborough continued to receive positive inspection reports was a compassionate management of two very powerful men. The Chairman,

Viscount Sidney, served also as Lord Chamberlain of the Household under Prime Ministers Lord Palmerston and William Gladstone. The Vice Chairman, George Warde Norman, who complained that Bromley Workhouse was "unfit for the proper accommodation of inmates", was also a Director of the Bank of England.

For over 40 years Sidney and Norman worked together to improve the workhouse by replacing oakum-picking with essential facilities. Girls were taught to cook, men learned a new trade in the shoe-mending workshop and children went to school. Other improvements are also worth mentioning: in February 1861 the Board ordered one gallon of cod liver oil for use by the Workhouse Medical Officer and from 1857 the clerk noted vaccinations against smallpox.

The workhouse inmates

The majority of inmates were unmarried mothers, prostitutes, abandoned wives, elderly, seasonal farmworkers, widowed or sick, and they could not hold a full-time job to support themselves and their children.

Among many, in 1860 the Board admitted Elizabeth Mumford and her four children deserted by Charles Mumford. The 1881 census shows that Julia Champion, a 34 year-old widow resided in Farnborough with her children George, 14, William, 11, Margaret, 7 and James, 3. Poverty often affected whole families. In June 1877, when colorado beetles destroyed all crops of potatoes, the clerk noted that "it caused a wave of poverty among the locals". Paupers who could not rely on family support found themselves in a desperate situation, which the Guardians called "one which occurs in many Unions, but for which unhappily there is no direct remedy".

Perhaps the most upsetting stories found in the *Minutes Books* come from mothers breaking the workhouse rules by sharing their food. Sarah Swindle and Elizabeth Bell were brought in the front of the Board for giving bread to their children. Both women were told that if they did it again they would be severely punished.

Reports of removals to asylums are equally distressing. Sixteen year-old Emily Sparks was transferred to an asylum for using a "bad language", while Mary O'Connell joined her because she was found to be diseased with syphilis. To pay for Ann Barlett s place in the asylum, the Board sold all her belongings.

It is also sad to look at workhouse baptism records, which show the extent of the problem of female abandonment. Names of missing fathers are replaced with a few dots and children of unmarried mothers are branded "base-born".

Despite a serious threat of being locked up without food, left homeless or being sent to the asylum, workhouse inmates were not submissive. Among them was 17 year-old Elizabeth Gregory, who resisted by "breaking up 29 square glasses, hitting the Master Mr Higham in his face and refusing to do any work".

Women also rebelled by wearing their hair contrary to the regulations, stealing

peas from the garden, attempting a riot and escaping via windows. Feisty Charlotte Mills was regularly locked up without food for refusing to work and swearing.

Despite evidence of misery, not all Farnborough history is sad and miserable. *Minutes Books* mention the Workhouse Visiting Society, which organised tea parties, cakes, summer picnics and gifts for the children. In 1864 the Guardians had granted permission to Lady Cramworth to hang up few colour prints, deliver books, set up a Christmas tree "where the old people live" and give "a little present to each of the boys and girls".

Campaigners also continued to look for jobs for the inmates. While some inmates went abroad or worked on local farms, girls were offered positions as domestic servants.

Annie Hardy went to work for Mrs Smith, who wrote to the Guardians that "she is not over bright, but honest". However, it didn't work out for everyone. Emily Cromwell left her employer, Mrs CM Clarke, after she was branded "untruthful, disobedient and troublesome girl". In another case, a gentleman called Mr Edlmann displeased the Guardians after leaving his servant homeless and pregnant.

Built to house around 80 inmates, Farnborough Workhouse survived until 1907. At this point it was overcrowded, housing more than 660 paupers. In 1906 the government offered free school meals for the poorest children, from 1908 pensions for those over 70-years-old, and from 1911 a state sickness and employment insurance scheme.

In 1907, after relocating the healthy inmates, Farnborough Workhouse was transformed into a hospital and finally brought its troubled, yet fascinating workhouse history to an end.

Sources

Hansard, Commons Sitting, 13 July 1846, Vol 92 p8 and 21 May 1847, Vol 87 p2
Farnborough Workhouse Minutes Books, 1876-78 p.269; 1871-74 p113;1967-1871, p338, Bromley Archives

'Great Unrest' in the early 20th century

The decade leading up to the First World War was a time of labour discontent, often referred to as "The Great Unrest".

Pam Preedy looks at how strikes before and after the war played out in Bromley.

Three and a half million days were lost to strikes every year in the UK between 1900 and 1909 and this escalated to 38 million days by 1912, with all the major trade unions involved at one time or another — dockers, seamen and transport workers but not railwaymen — and the strikes affected every port, coalfield and railway.

Between 1911 and 1913 there was a 60% increase in union membership and as 1914 began the number of people on strike doubled and new strikes were marked by increasing violence.

The First World War saw a reduction of action as men turned their attention to winning the war, either through munitions manufacturing or fighting, but it began to rise again as the end of the war seemed to be in sight.

This is the first of three articles looking at the strikes that affected the Borough of Bromley; the strike at the Nash paper mill at St Paul's Cray in 1914, the strike at Biggin Hill, and the soldiers' strike at Shortlands, both in 1919.

The articles covering the post-war strikes will be published in September's Bromleag

St Paul's Cray and the Nash Paper Mill dispute

Bromley had little heavy industry typical of the more-militant strikers and union membership. That is not to say there was no industry in the borough. In 1920 it was shown that some 275 premises were registered under the *Factory and Workshops Act,* but they were small factories and workshops.

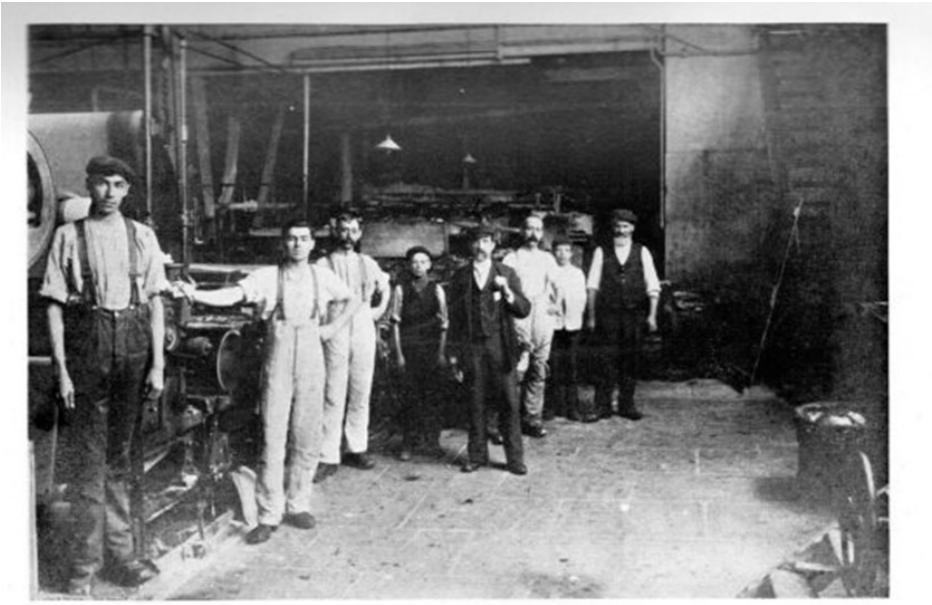
In the Cray Valley, within the Bromley Rural District, there were a number of paper mills, including the rag-paper mill, the Nash Paper Mill at St Paul's Cray. In 1914 the labour force went on strike over pay and union membership. This action provides an example of how the unions involved themselves in local strikes.

Pay in the Nash works was low for everyone. The highest paid was Robert Marsden, Head Papermaker and actual Manager of the mill, at £500 per year; the Sales and Purchasing Clerks earned only two or three pounds a week, as did the owner's son, 21 year-old William Nash, who was to inherit the company after his father's death. labourers received 4d per hour and skilled workers 6d per hour, making weekly

earnings of 22 shillings (£1.10p) and 33 shillings (£1. 65p). It is difficult to find a comparison of wages within the paper industry, but Bromley Council workers were earning a minimum of 26 shillings a week with the possibility of overtime while for skilled workers such as foremen, wages were in the region of 30 shillings and more. The discontent caused by such unfavourable pay provided an opening for the National Union of Printing, Bookbinding and Paper Works to become involved and push for strike action.

In 1914, demands were received for increased wages and the unionisation of the mill. Unionisation would not only give the union power to deduct union dues from the pay but also give control over the engagement and dismissal of labour, thus keeping out non-union workers. A strike was threatened. Neighbouring mills had already capitulated to union demands, but William's father was very sick and the Nash Mill gained a temporary reprieve.

At the end of June, just three weeks after his father's demise (7 June 1914), a rise of two shillings a week was agreed, but the demand to become a "union mill" was refused. A few days later, the majority of the workers gave a week's notice of a strike,



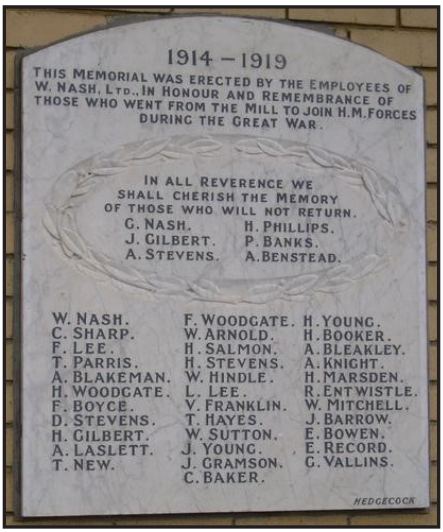
VIII. The Old No. 1 Papermaking Machine, *c.* 1910
Left to right, T. Parris, G. Wood, J. Batsford, boy unknown, Mr. Wiles, J. Waller, boy unknown, Mr. Parsons.

but agreed to a meeting with William, unaccompanied by union officials. Despite the agreement, the union officials, unhappy at being excluded from negotiations, marched a large contingent of trade unionists down to the Nash Mills and persuaded the majority to down tools and strike then and there.

By the end of July 1914, *The Bromley & District Times* reported, the strike was already three weeks old and police were guarding the premises. The presence of police may have been precautionary; equally trouble from the unions may have been expected. Some level of production did continue. One press was kept running by a few foremen, friends and other workers loyal to the company, but only for a few days as the job was impossible with so few people. Apparently there was little or no personal ill-will in the dispute. A cricket match was organised — strikers versus non-strikers!

The dispute was finally overtaken by the declaration of war. When, on 5 August 1914 William Nash, the new mill owner, re-joined the 4th (Territorial) Royal West Kent Regiment heading for Jubbulpore, India, he told his workforce that they must wait for his return before a decision about union membership could be agreed. In support of the war effort, the strike ended. The wage increase was paid and the question of union membership was left open.

While William was away, by 1918 in Persia, he had time to contemplate the problems of the paper mill. It was here that he conceived the idea of a profit-sharing scheme for all the mill employees. He wanted a fresh start after the war. By the time he returned he had acquired, at the age of 26, a new maturity with a generous nature and a sense of responsibility. Back in charge of the mill, he put into practice new financial arrangements and on 5 August 1919 William Nash Ltd. was incorporated with £100,000 in Ordinary Shares and at the same time the Profit Sharing Scheme was adopted involving all employees who had worked at the mill for at least six months. Thus the unions were excluded and it satisfied all parties.



The Nash mill men who served in the First World War were commemorated on a plaque at the mill. Forty men served and six gave their lives, including William's brother Gordon Nash.

When the mill was demolished it was replaced by the Crayfields Business Park and the plaque is still displayed there.

Bromley North Railway Line – the first 50 years (Part 1)

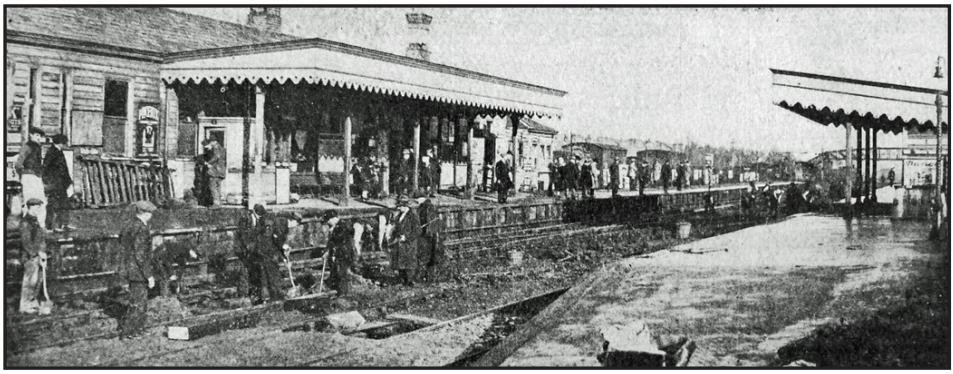
Max Batten

This article is intended to stand alone but many of the characters and related events referred to were more fully described in ***Bromley North railway (finally!) opens*** *in Bromleag December 2017*

The Bromley North line opened on 1 January 1878. The original plans for the Bromley terminus were for a station of "reasonable quality". But in the event the station was erected at modest cost, mainly with the use of wood.

To distinguish it from the London Chatham and Dover Railway (LCDR) station at the other end of town, it was named Bromley SER. A pair of brick-built platforms directly opposite each other were separated by three lines which joined together at the southern end and terminated in a turntable, there to reverse engines before starting their return journey.

The main building was positioned on the departure (western) platform: it was an elongated single-storey affair, fabricated from tongue-and-groove timber, with three brick-built chimneystacks sticking through its pyramid-shaped slated roof. Attached to its front, over the doorway, was a small porch while the platform was protected by a sloping canopy with the trademark South Eastern Railway (SER) clover-patterned valance. On the opposite, arrivals, platform was a timber waiting shelter, roughly half

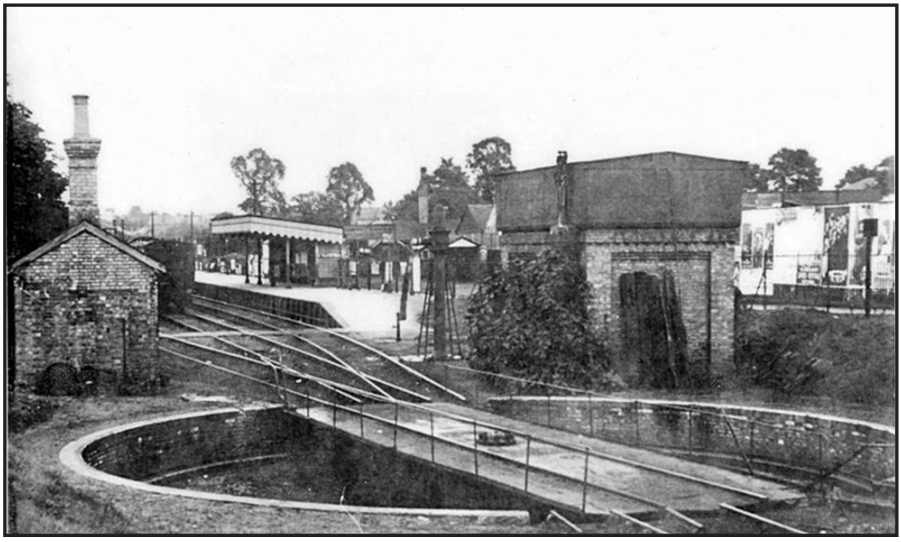


A view of Bromley North station as rebuilding work started in 1925 but it could equally have been the station under construction, the arrival platform on the right and the main, departure platform on the left.

the length of the main building, but with the same design of canopy, albeit with a more severe slant. No footbridge was provided, and passengers crossed the track by a foot crossing at the southern end of the station. Relatively unusually, no engine shed was provided to stable locomotives overnight, Bricklayers Arms [Southwark] and Cannon Street engine sheds providing all that was necessary.

A water tower and a water column, just beyond the end of the arrival platform, was installed, *see picture below*. Goods traffic was eventually accommodated with five sidings to the west of the platforms. The Council used a sixth siding, at the western edge of the site, this being gated off from the rest of the yard; a seventh track was eventually installed behind the eastern platform. The station did boast a single-storey goods office next to the main building, and its design was again typically SER, incorporating trademark sash windows. Trains were controlled by a three-storey high all-timber signal cabin, located to the north east of the station, again with sash windows and a pyramid-shaped roof.

Following the formal takeover of the line by the SER on 21 July 1879, a former four-wheel coach body appeared beside the station approach road to provide additional covered office space. On 1 July 1899, when the SER and the LCDR formed a working partnership, the "SER" was replaced with "North" – the ex-LCDR station acquiring a "South" suffix.



Bromley North station taken in the early 1920s showing the down/arrivals platform, water tower and turntable. The current ticket hall is roughly where the water tower is situated.

Sorting out the money and station access

The new service took some time to bed in. Early-on the *Bromley Record* was prepared to concede "tolerable success", but delays at Grove Park recalled "the worst features of travel via Beckenham or Herne Hill", clearly a reference to the number of trains that attached and detached coaches at Grove Park to trains running to and from Orpington and Sevenoaks**.**

Some adjustments were made a month later which, by spreading out some other services, reduced the number of Up trains from 23 to 21 (20 on Saturday) and in the Down direction, from 26 to 22 (21 on Saturday).

There were still many unresolved issues and the Bromley Direct Railway Company (BDRC) board, a subset of the SER board, continued to meet regularly. On 3 January 1878, Company Secretary John Shaw reported he had received a proposal from the trustees of the late Coles Child to buy six (which may have been a gate). It currently stopped vehicles from passing the station from the north end of East Street.

Shaw had approached Bromley Local Board the previous month to see if they wished to buy the land. While supportive, the Local Board had no power to do anything. Shaw recommended BDRC should seek £200 with £100 nominally allocated to the removal of the "Barrier". A further sale was agreed for over three acres of land not needed by the Company at Grove Park to the SER at cost plus 10% commission, amounting to £1,829-1s-1d.

Three weeks later, the Company followed its solicitor's request to transfer out of Court the sum of £1,253 3% Consolidated Annuities with interest in the names of the late William Starling and William Russell. Local property developer William Starling had been a driving force in the development of the Bromley North line. This appears to have been money deposited with Parliament at the time of the original 1874 Bill. Mr Soutter, who had worked so hard to purchase the railway land and whose reports the previous year had filled many meeting minutes, was recommended to be paid £100.

Despite the length of time the railway had been planned, on 7 February Chief Engineer Brady requested that the excavated soil from the Goods Shed at Bromley should be used for embankments at Grove Park on land to be purchased from Lord Northbrook. This is likely to have been the triangle between the main line and the branch on which some short sidings were erected.

In addition he wanted £1,000 to be allocated to providing sidings, roads and general goods accommodation at Bromley, in addition to the Goods Shed. This was agreed, provided the SER paid for the haulage of the earth. By August £400 had been spent on the work but when it was finally completed is not clear.

During January — as the station opened — the Bromley Local Board had become concerned (finally) about linking the western end of Palace Grove to the east side of the station and it was agreed that the chairman, Archibald Hamilton, should meet with BDRC Chairman Alexander Beattie to discuss the matter. The Bromley Local Board wanted the partly-finished road across Sherman's Field to be completed, after which they would take over maintenance. It was confirmed at the third half-yearly General Meeting on Thursday 28 February 1878 that this was acceptable to the BDRC and the cost would be £425.

Because of the delays, the plan to issue new shares had been deferred until the opening of the line so that shareholders could take advantage of the guaranteed 4% dividends from the SER plus any profits remaining after the SER deducted its 50% share of gross receipts. New shares would be offered pro-rata to existing shareholders

The end of year accounts showed that the Company had loans of £18,300, having spent a further £38,000 since the last meeting report, almost all of it on construction work, with another £7,000 anticipated.

The arrangements for access to the station continued to cause concern and on 14 March the trustees of Bromley College sought permission to make an entrance from a new road — it is not clear which road this is — into the station, which was agreed. A month later more land was purchased from Thomas Lansbury, a road contractor based on Masons Hill, for £340. During June and July financial tidying-up continued with final payments made to the Starling estate and the mysterious William Russell (via solicitors Latter and Willett). An area of four acres three rods seven poles was apparently finally purchased from Starling's estate.

In May 1878, at one of the fortnightly meetings of the Bromley Local Board and following the usual discussions on finance, water supply, sewerage and smells from the gas works, the "danger of a level crossing near (Plaistow) on the Bromley Direct Railway" was raised. It was agreed a letter should be sent to the Company requesting they consider what could be done. And ,of course, they responded in typical SER fashion by building a bridge nearly 20 years later! However, in the interim, swing gates were installed on either side of the track to provide a modicum of safety. In any event, no incidents appear to have been recorded, unlike the all-too-many fatal accidents that occurred near Bromley South.[1]

By the start of July, only 1,905 of the new shares had been issued and at the Board meeting on the 1 August it was decided to place 500 with brokers to be sold at par. The directors' report, dated 25 July, revealed that in the first six months of operation, traffic earning on the line came to £798-4s-8d but, under the working arrangement with the SER, a further £1322-10s-5d had been received so that after payment of loan interest and expenses, it would be possible to pay the 4% dividend on the Saturday

following the meeting. No meetings were held between 1 August and 3 October, by which time only 525 shares remained to be sold. As the details of the formal transfer of the Company's assets to the SER were drafted in November, the figure had fallen to 475.

On 12 February 1879 a dispute broke out with contractors Lucas and Aird over the first year's maintenance costs. The company wanted £693-19s-11d recompense for their costs. These were supposed to have been included in the construction contract finally signed rather late in the day and the Board declined to make any payment. This rumbled on until 1 May when John Aird, from his office at 37 Great George Street, wrote at length on the matter, noting that the maintenance item had been deleted in their draft copy of the contract. The Secretary was consequently instructed to write to him saying that although maintenance had been included with all the other competing bids, had it been added in by Lucas and Aird they would not have been the cheapest and so would not have got the contract. Not unexpectedly, this somewhat specious reasoning did not resolve the argument. In June, after further consideration and on their Solicitor's advice that, maybe, there was fault on both sides, the Company was prepared to offer £347 — ie half the money. This was also based on the Company "not having to construct as many bridges as were contemplated by the original tender", whatever that meant. After all this, however, when the Engineer finalised the cost of the work carried out, including the £347, it was found that the Company actually owed Lucas and Aird £1,350-8s-3d, including interest, which it was finally agreed the SER would pay!

The end of the BDRC

A year after the line opened, the SER advised that another Bill would go before Parliament to "confer upon the SER Company further powers with reference to their own undertakings, and those of other Companies, and for other purposes". In other words, which would allow it to take over the BDRC completely.

This became law on 21 July 1879 and the final meeting of the BDRC took place on 7 August when accounts for the half-year to end of June were considered. As usual, the 4% dividend was approved, together with a small amount of interest up to 21 July vesting when all stock was converted to preferential SER shares, giving £4-10s per annum. Such was the relaxed nature of this meeting, the chairman never actually signed the minutes. The final accounts were completed on 8 November 1879 and the quasi-independence of the Bromley North branch was consigned to history

The branch line service

During his time in charge at Sundridge Park mansion, from 1880, Sir Edward Scott had, among other things, introduced pheasant-rearing on the estate and organised shooting parties. One guest was the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, who

arrived by special train to Sundridge Park (then still called Plaistow) on Monday 18 December 1882, there to be met by carriages to convey him and his distinguished party the 200 metres to the Park entrance (and the kilometre from there to the mansion).

After some 550 rabbits and pheasants had met their end, he set off home again around 5.30 pm. No other such visits were reported, although the early death in 1883 of Sir Edward — and with the new baronet Sir Samuel Edward Scott being only 10 years old — limited such occasions. But his widow continued to hold occasional shoots.

Whatever service was provided for the Prince, that for the regular passenger continued to be less than perfect, as a letter to the *Bromley Record* in January 1880 suggests:

> *"Take the 9.15 morning train from Bromley for instance; for, being an express train very many season, and not a few day-ticket holders avail themselves of a train which professes to get to Cannon Street, and sometimes really does do it, in twenty minutes. Now, Sir, in that train there is only one complete second-class carriage of three compartments seating 24 persons, and eight of them smokers, there is also a nondescript carriage consisting of smoking-compartment, non-ditto and a guard's van and brake which on certain occasions makes travelling very uncomfortable… again in the evening, the one solitary carriage which the return trains have is usually very small and stuffy, and so low that even a short man, with due regard to his twelve-and six penny, dare not stand up in."*

The service even became the butt of jokes (although this was probably adapted to various lines) and the local paper gleefully, if lengthily, reproduced the article that appears on the opposite page.

Services were improved at the end of 1883, up to which time waits of up to 30 minutes at Grove Park for a connection was a continual cause of complaint. On Sundays, the 09.40 departure from Bromley North to Grove Park had such a poor connection it took 71 minutes to reach Charing Cross. Initially, there was no special provision for branch line trains terminating at Grove Park; the engine "ran round" the coaches and then pushed them on to the main line, but this was rectified with the introduction of a bay platform to allow shuttle trains to turn round clear of the main line.

On the evening of 19 August 1883, the 20.10 train from Bromley North failed to stop short of the station to shunt its coaches on to the main line and instead collided with empty carriages in the bay platform. Happily, no-one was injured and only 10

ROUGH ON THE SOUTH EASTERN

The following story is said to be applicable to the South Eastern Railway. A gentleman was travelling from New Cross to Bromley, and had taken his dog into the carriage with him. Just before starting the guard informed that he could not allow the animal to travel in that way, but would take care of him in the van. To this the owner of the dog refused to agree and after a lengthy argument exclaimed: "If you can't let the poor beast travel quietly here under the seat, she shall certainly not be fastened up in the van, but shall have a little fresh air and exercise."

He accordingly hitched a piece of string around the dog's collar, and to the intense astonishment of the officials, attached him to the coupling chains of the last vehicle.

"Simple murder!" said the guard.

"Not a bit of it," answered the passenger. "If my dog could not keep up with the trains on this line, I'd sell him to the first fat old lady I met."

The guard felt that the credit of his line was at stake, so he went to the driver and stoker, told them of the occurrence, and begged that they would get as much pace out of the old wheezy engine as possible.

A start was made immediately afterwards, and the guard went to his van to enjoy the sight of the mangled dog. But whenever he looked out of the window, there was the animal, tail on high, trotting contentedly behind, not even deigning to put his tongue out. So matters continued as far as St. John's, when the guard went to the engine and heaped abuse on the stoker who said he could do no more until the engine got warm.

The run to Grove Park is down a somewhat steep gradient (actually mostly 1:140 or 1:120 up!), and by dint of excessive firing and skilful manipulation, the row of hearses got up quite a festive pace.

"Oh," said our friend in the van, "this is something like. I wonder how much is left of that brute behind?"

To his joy, when he looked out, he could see nothing but the string hanging loosely from the chains. "Poor beast! It was cruel after all!" murmured he, as he drew his head in at the door; but his pity was soon turned into unmitigated disgust when he came to Plaistow station and saw the intelligent and faithful animal sitting on the platform waiting for his master to come in by the train.

minutes delay incurred! Six years later, on Monday 24 June 1889, an almost identical collision occurred when the 08.32 from Bromley North arriving outside Grove Park, failed to stop in time and smashed into empty coaches already there. One lady required the attention of a doctor but most were able to continue their journeys later. As before, the cause appeared to be the failure of the engine's hand brake to operate on wet rails and a lack of appreciation of the loss of adhesion, although given it was summer, as in the previous case, that the conditions were so bad is surprising (an inquest was held at the end of the month into a workman who had died of sunstroke!).

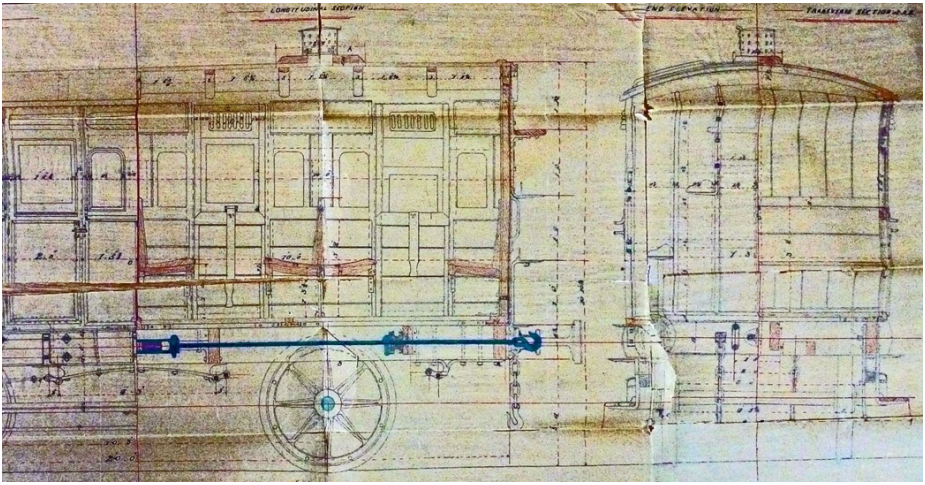
Previously, in late November 1887, there had been much excitement at the other end of the line, although not involving any trains. The SER Board having decided to install a new siding on the down (Sherman Road) side at Bromley North, residents from Sundridge and Plaistow making their way into Bromley via the foot crossing were suddenly confronted with a fence across the footpath they normally used. Behind it, workmen were starting to clear the ground for a new siding. After the fence was torn down, it is alleged that a full-scale *mêlée* ensued and the matter progressed to a heated exchange of letters between the Bromley Board and the SER. Ultimately the path was re-routed and remains on much the same route today (see *Bromleag* June 2011).

On 1 July 1894, Plaistow station became Sundridge Park and was rebuilt in 1896 with toilets and a waiting room provided on the Up platform. It remains essentially unaltered since, apart from the loss of the Down side canopies. The open fire and later gas fire in the waiting room have gone, replaced by movement-activated lighting and heating and the Gents toilet has even acquired a roof.

The layout of Grove Park station at this time can be seen in the 1896 diagram (*on the opposite page*) which was produced in connection with some alterations to the sidings. Note that there are only two main lines and a bay platform for the branch. The layout allowed Bromley trains to be shunted on to the back of trains to London and, on trains from London, once the front portion had puffed off to Chislehurst, to be hauled up the branch.

[1] *Bromleag* December 2014, March 2015 and June 2015

The second part of Max's article taking the story into the 20th century will appear in September's Bromleag



Original plan of a carriage constructed for the Bromley North line. Drawn on flimsy tracing paper at a one inch-to-one foot scale, it is in many ways a relatively primitive vehicle until you note that the windows set into the doors have leather adjusting straps which could be commonly found on British railway trains up to 1960! Although 3rd class, the seats were padded, the coach was only 20 feet long, excluding the buffers, and each of the 32 seated passengers would have 24.67 cubic feet of space, about the same as an economy class airline passenger today

This pre-widening diagram shows, in addition to the signal interlocking (which makes sure signals and points are synchronised), the various points and crossings necessary to allow branch line trains both to run to and from the main line as well as to shunt coaches (and passengers) on and off main line services. It can be seen that the sidings, which later ran off the Down branch line back towards the signal box, have not yet been installed.

Bromley Local History Society

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The brave men and women who kept the planes flying at Biggin Hill in WWII

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