



At a recent Abbeyfield coffee morning: Norma Milner, Chief Inspector Carew, Leönie Stephen, Molly Trapp, John Marshall, Norma Blausten, resident Bertie Turrall, Eileen Whelan, Mike Milner and Dr Edith Rhodes.

The early history of the Suburb - Part II

My last article looked at the early history of the part of the Suburb acquired from Eton College, which had originally belonged to Westminster Abbey. This article looks at the history of the part acquired from the Church Commissioners, which originally belonged to the Bishops of London.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that in the year 604, Augustine consecrated Mellitus as Bishop of London 'to preach to the East Saxons'. Mellitus established a church dedicated to St Paul on a site close to an abandoned Roman temple. (The Saxons did not occupy the old Roman settlement, but built a new settlement known as Londonwic further East, probably near where Aldwych is today.) St Mellitus' church in London had the backing of Ethelbert, King of Kent and Sebert, King of the East Saxons, but following the death of Ethelbert in 616 and Sebert shortly afterwards, Mellitus was forced to retreat to Gaul by Sebert's pagan sons. After a period of instability, Erkenwald was appointed Bishop of London in 675 by St Theodore, and he established the church in London on a firmer footing.

St Erkenwald is generally credited as the founder of St Paul's. Legend has it that he also established a church in the middle of the forest in what is now Finchley, on the site of the present parish church of St Mary, for the benefit of men felling timber for his new minster church. No evidence to support this legend has yet come to light, although there was certainly an earlier church on the site of the present medieval church in Hendon Lane. The legend is not so far fetched, however, if one considers that Erkenwald did indeed rebuild St Paul's and that within a few years of his death his successor had acquired land in this area.

Erkenwald died in 693. In about 704 his successor Wealdheri was granted land in Fulham by Tyrhtel, Bishop of Hereford, with the consent of the Kings of the East Saxons and Mercia. The land granted by Tyrhtel to Wealdheri included what later became the manor of Finchley; later still the lands of the manor became comprised in the Borough of Finchley. Older residents will recall that parts of the Suburb fell within the Borough of Finchley (absorbed into Barnet in 1964), including Big Wood and Little Wood, both of which would once have formed part of the great forest covering the whole area. The edges of these woods mark the boundary of the land acquired by the Bishops nearly 1400 years ago and which remained in Church hands until this century.

A leap of 1400 years in a single bound might be thought to be taking time travel too far, so I will pause briefly to take in one or two notable events of the intervening years. At the Norman Conquest the Bishop's lands in Finchley were still included in his Fulham estates, which were listed in the Domesday Book as having woodland capable of supporting 1,000 pigs.

Much of this woodland was probably in the Finchley area. (Finchley continued to be treated as part of Fulham until it was transferred to the Bishop's lordship of Hornsey in 1491.) In 1434 the Bishop granted a lease of a part of the manor known as 'Bybwell' to 'Johel Sanney de Ffyncheley' for 40 years at an annual rent of £3 6s 8d (£3.33). Thomas Sanny was tenant in 1479; probably the same Thomas Sanny whose will of 1509 is set out on a brass in Finchley Parish Church. The rent went up to £5 6s 8d in 1538, and rose again to £7 6s 8d in 1570, where it stayed until the lease was surrendered in 1902. 'Bibwells', as it was later known, stretched from the boundary of the Bishop's land along the edge of Big Wood and Little Wood across Mutton Brook up towards East End Road. The farm house, known in later years as 'Park Farm', was situated near where East End Road meets Ossulton Way and survived until 1918.

After the Sanny family, later owners of Bibwells included John Juxon, who was granted a lease by his relative, Bishop William Juxon, in 1634. Bishop Juxon was also Lord High Treasurer of England and later, as Archbishop of Canterbury, accompanied Charles I on the scaffold at his execution in 1649. In 1791 a lease was granted to Henry Jerome de Salis, a Count of the Holy Roman Empire. De Salis seems to have got into financial difficulties because he entered into a series of complex mortgages with Alexander Murray, possibly a member of the Murray family who owned the neighbouring estate of Kenwood, and Murray became tenant in 1810.

The lease of 1810 for the first time reserved the timber from the estate to the Bishop. This may have been followed by (or immediately preceded by) a replanting of the woodland and may explain why all the oak trees in Big Wood and Little Wood are of a similar age: none is more than about 175 years old. The last lease was granted in 1821 to Lewis Loyd, a banker of Lothbury in the City of London, later Lord Overstone. In

1855 the Bishop's estates were vested in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (now the Church Commissioners).

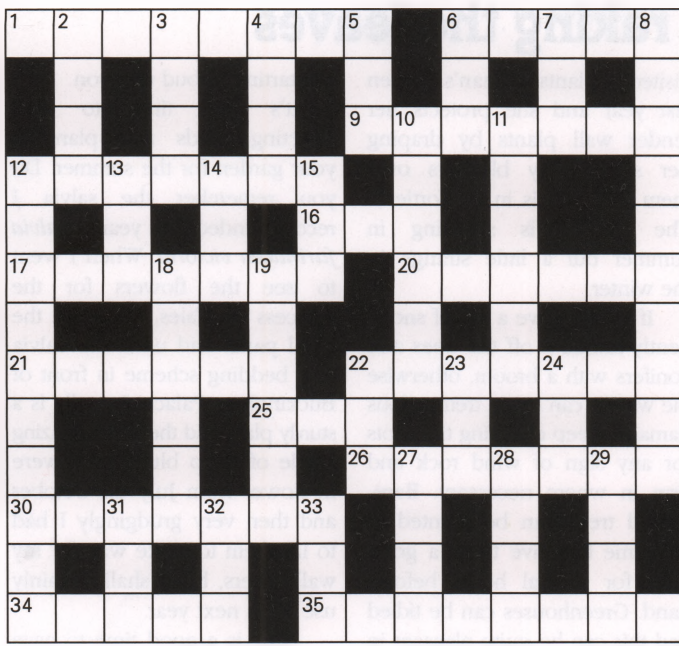
In 1902 the lease was held by trustees for Lord Overstone's daughter, Lady Wantage. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners could see that with the expansion of the railway the land had development potential and secured a surrender of the lease. Railway-type development was exactly what Henrietta Barnett had prevented on the Eton College estate, but the Commissioners' desire for speculative gain was realised in 1911 when they granted the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust a 999 year building lease. It included provision for open space and recreation areas and Finchley Urban District Council took over the freehold of Big Wood, Little Wood and the area around Mutton Brook in 1933 (Finchley became a Borough later that year).

Only in 1958 did the Church's long interest in the area finally come to an end when the Commissioners' remaining freeholds in the Suburb were sold to Copartnership Tenants Limited. They were subsequently acquired by Ashdale Land and Property Company Limited and most were bought by the New Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Limited from Ashdale in 1989.

Before leaving this story, we should pay our respects to one of the last occupiers of Park Farm: the circus proprietor 'Lord' George Sanger, who retired there in 1904, and was notoriously murdered by a farm hand in 1911. The murderer's motive was never established and the case was something of a cause célèbre at the time. His descendants continued the circus in operation until the 1960s. It is said that when he owned Park Farm he allowed the circus animals to winter on his land. An elderly resident of Denman Drive - constructed in 1908 on what was once Westminster Abbey's land - used to recall 'elephants grazing' in the field between Big Wood and Little Wood, before Denman Drive North and Denman Drive South - constructed in 1912 on what was once the Bishop's land - were completed.

This bizarre postscript concludes a story that had begun all those centuries ago with the arrival of St Augustine on the shores of Kent and ended in the acquisition of Ashdale's interests by the Trust, uniting for the first time in centuries estates which formed part of the earliest endowments of Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral.

COLIN GREGORY



CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Flower growing out of fad I'd left behind (8)
- 6 Reduce height of fireplace to display centre (5)
- 9 Might punt? In the middle of the dancing? (7)
- 12 It's serious, with us leading in this direction (7)
- 16 Marker to drop out south (3)
- 17&34 Turn out for drill - enliven quiet street! (7,5)
- 20&29 The Spanish too wild to go dancing in the theatre here? Round lost (6,4)
- 21 Silly Daisy's first fumbling romances? (6)
- 22 Design readjusts church, dismissing painter (2,5)
- 25 Hydro offering juice cocktail (3)
- 26 Openings in computers (7)
- 30 He may advise on parliamentary procedure - an uphill struggle? (7)
- 34 (see 17)
- 35 Extra large red bus meandering along among the flowers (8)

DOWN

- 2 Another of 25's cocktails to be found east of 22 (4)
- 3 Boring accommodation (4)
- 4 Screen back of entrance (4)
- 5 Relief doctor abandons

connection with Oxford University for the sake of a mathematical concept (3)

- 6 Product of sunshine, advisedly (3)
- 7 Portion of ragoût from earlier on (3)
- 8 Home while jobs last - see details over (4,6)
- 10 Sloppy, drooping and Latin legwear (6)
- 11 Some escapist out to land in the soup (6)
- 12 This way to see Bill in the cricket match (10)
- 13 Star paper? (3)
- 14 She first came the night before (3)
- 15 Snail loses South African habitat - none left... (3)
- 18 ...but plenty here... (2,4)
- 19 ...minus nearly one - that'll teach us! (6)
- 22 Was over the rasper? (3)
- 23 Dutch chap's first month (3)
- 24 Two ways to say someone's in debt (3)
- 27 Lady protected by Sir Isambard? (4)
- 28 Dull, backward-looking poet (4)
- 29 (see 20)
- 31 The sport of yoghurts (3)
- 32 Fury of Paddy when his land's taken away (3)
- 33 Rear kick-start does the trick, you said? (3)

QUICK CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Vacations (8)
- 6 Wanderer (5)
- 9 Suitcases (7)
- 12 Delight (7)
- 16 Over there (3)
- 17 Type of battery (7)
- 20 Damage (6)
- 21 Chance (6)
- 22 Voyage (7)
- 25 G & S princess (3)
- 26 Omen (7)
- 30 Superimpose oneself (7)
- 34 Repose (5)
- 35 Accessing (8)

DOWN

- 2 Spoken (4)
- 3 I lay (1,3)
- 4&19 Year of Our Lord (4,6)
- 5 Tearful noise (3)
- 6 Tatter (3)
- 7 By way of (3)
- 8 Coming out again (10)
- 10 Old fashioned bruise remedy (6)
- 11 Fruit (6)
- 12 Outings (10)
- 13 Atmosphere (3)
- 14 Chemicals company (3)
- 15 _____ Bevan (3)
- 18 Would-be purchaser (6)
- 19 (see 4)
- 22 Mush (3)
- 23 Title of respect (3)
- 24 Period (3)
- 27 Leave out (4)
- 28 Excursion (4)
- 29 Gas (4)
- 31 Newt (3)
- 32 Drink (3)
- 33 Look at (3)

CROSSWORD WINNER

Bernard Marks from Brookland Hill carries off the prize for the cryptic crossword this time. Apologies are due for missing clues in the quick one and some misprints in the cryptic.

This cryptic has been made a little easier. Reactions, please? How hard do you want to have to work for your fun? Do let us know.

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