

A treasure in North Square

The Northway, North Square corner is valued for its wildlife habitat and for the beauty of its oaks with their straight trunks and spreading healthy crowns that stand out against the sky. They are like old friends at the heart of the suburb. Now they are under threat, perhaps it is time to take a closer look at the significance of this pocket of wood and its history.

The sub-station plot was once part of the main area of Big Wood, before it was cut off, nearly 100 years ago, by the construction of the Tea House and the Free Church Hall. The garden of Friends Meeting House with its mature and young oaks, was also part of the main wood and both sites contain remnants of understorey and field layer, including hawthorn, holly, bluebell, and anemone. The sub-station oaks are almost 200 years old and the ash is well over a 100. As the oak root systems extend outwards roughly as far as the canopy, any new building is likely to damage the roots of adjacent trees. The loss of any of the trees would harm a place which is truly historic. The sub-station site and the garden of the Meeting House make up part of an ancient line and border area that has been in existence since medieval times. This historic line runs from Mutton Brook right across the Suburb to the edge of Sandy Heath. It divided the Wyldes estate in Hendon from the estate of Bibwell in Finchley, the areas on which the Suburb was built. Through the centuries it has been marked by generations of trees and by hedge and ditch, all of which have been maintained by people through the ages.

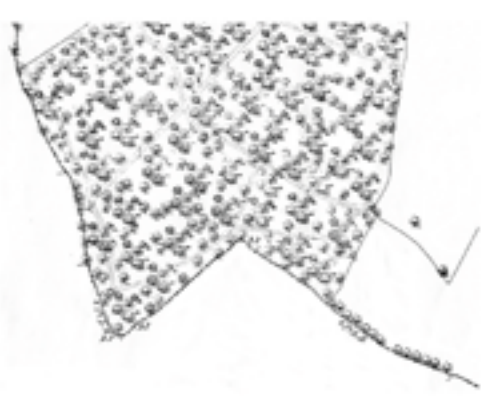
In 1574 (during the reign of Elizabeth 1) certain tenants of the lord of the manor of Hendon were called upon to confirm the outbounds of the parish. Our line forms a part of the boundary, and was recorded thus: "First Mordins Brooke leadeth unto Bibwell, the Weildes boundeth against Bibwell to Wildswoode by a ditch to Harnsey Park corner and so by Weildswoode against Hampstead heath and over the heathe to Hodford Wood corner..." Turners Wood is a remnant of Weildswoode.

This boundary line can be seen on the ground running along the edge of Little Wood, across the top of Denman Drive in the form of an old hedge line with trees, past the garages, along a bank with trees at the edge of Big Wood, to a very old pollarded oak. From here it begins to cross a garden in North Square, whence it is missing for a few yards until it reaches the large oaks on the pavement by the Manse. The sub-station site with its ash mark the last intact part, for after this it becomes much more obscure until it reaches Bunkers Hill. It's very edge on Northway and the old ash are markers of the line. This pocket of woodland and the Friends' garden actually attest to a very important angle of woodland which gave the boundary line great distinction and character. This can be picked out easily on 18th century maps, such as Crow's 1754 field survey of Hendon and on 19th century ordnance maps. This woodland is the last remnant of this angle.

There is a copy of the 1935 ordnance at Barnet Local archive which shows this. It also shows



ROQUE'S MAP 1746



ORDNANCE MAP 1870

how the old boundary line had needed to be changed to accommodate the new Suburb houses, the dashed line being its old path. Up until the beginning of the twentieth century it had probably existed in the same kind of shape since medieval times. Wyldes was held after 1449 by Eton College until it was sold to the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust.

Bibwell was held by the Bishop of London and then by the ecclesiastical commissioners, who leased the area for Suburb building, finally selling the freehold in

1958. Such long ownership would suggest a stable line, especially as the estates were tenanted areas of woods and farmsteads, with more fields developing over time. Bibwell is mentioned in an early indenture of 1434, arranging a rent adjustment. It confirms that the Bishop of London, Robert Fitzhugh, had granted a charter to John Sanney to hold "a certain close in Fyncheley called Bybwell" for 40 years.

However our line may well have been in existence as early as Anglo-Saxon times. The land making up Bibwell is thought by



FINCHLEY ENCLOSURE AWARD MAP 1816



ORDNANCE MAP 1935

some historians to have been part of the Fulham estates which were sold by Tyrhtil, the Bishop of Hereford to Wealdhere, the Bishop of London, in 704/709. There is a 17th century copy of the charter recording this sale. Historians compiling a Domesday map have shown our distinctive line and angle, suggesting it as part of the boundary between the Hundred of Gore and the Hundred of Ossulstone. It has certainly been used through the centuries as a boundary line for the manor, parish, and parliamentary divisions and in

19th and 20th centuries for urban divisions. English Heritage is keen to preserve ancient boundaries and in the future when funds allow, EH plans to include old parish and 'hundred' boundaries on the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record. They advise "that their intrinsic interest as a principle element in the historic and ancient landscape of the borough is such that they do merit protection within the planning process."

As many residents will know, the woods have been designated by English Nature as an ancient wood site, meaning there has been continuous woodland there at least since 1600. Since Barnet Council, with the support of English Nature, has made Big and Little Woods into a nature reserve, surely this pocket of associated ancient wood on the sub-station site should be preserved and enhanced. This would fit in well with the Trust's mandate to maintain the character of the Garden Suburb, preserving the open spaces and trees. Perhaps this could be one way of marking the Suburb's centenary. Surely the Trust should be valuing this woodland and the historic line and protecting it as an historical monument for future generations?

SUSAN OSBORN

N.B. Many thanks to Colin Gregory for originally unearthing many of the interesting documents, to Harry Cobb, HGS Archive Trust, for translating the indenture from Latin and to Barnet Local Studies and Archive for maps and information and permission to reproduce some.

Letters to the Editor and AGM questions answered

Willifield Way,
NW11 6YJ

Sir,
I was interested in your front page contribution in Suburb News to the discussions about building on the Northway/ North Square site. If there is to be a building on this site, I would suggest that provision of four to six modest flats would be in accordance with Suburb traditions and the Trust's responsibilities to 'maintain and preserve the present characteristics and amenities of the Suburb'. This would be a very modest but, at least certain, contribution to the

housing difficulties faced by many young couples and families in London. The alternative idea of a community centre would provide more doubtful benefits and probably, if successful, a few costs as well. How much of the precilous site would be taken up by car parking? The recent news of the sale of St Jude's Church Rooms seems to suggest that there is too little demand for renting rooms for community activities in this location.

The plans for a single house on the site seem to me to be the worst idea. I admit I have not seen the plans but,

given the size of the site and the Milner-Botterill comment that the 'envisaged house is too large for the site', the plan must be for a mansion (3 bathrooms, 3-car garage perhaps?) which is surely an unsuitable development, particularly given the current state of the housing market on the Suburb.

I would be glad to know if you think this suggestion of housing association flats is feasible and valuable.

Yours
Betty Scharf

Southway,
NW11

Sir,
I write to express my concern at the proposed sale by St Jude's, reported in the latest issue of Suburb News, of the Church Rooms site for development as a Sephardic Synagogue.

Surely it would be more appropriate to use the site, after proper consultation, as a new Community Centre as has been suggested. In this case it would be open to all legitimate users, including religious sects, while remaining an asset for the community as a whole.

I would be interested in other readers' views.

Yours
Alec Worster

Because the Special General Meeting before the AGM went on too long we were unable to take questions that had been handed in in advance. We have saved one or two to answer here:

Laura Mandell of Vivian Way asks: "Barnet Council have notified us of a further increase in the price of visitors vouchers for residents from £5 to £10 for a book 10, When I moved to Vivian Way two years ago, these were priced at £3.50 an increase of 280%. Why are there approx 15 free bays in Vivian Way which are occupied free by commuters or residents while I have to pay?"

Residents of the East Finchley CPZ were warned at the time of its creation that Barnet would use it as a source of uncapped revenue and that prices for permits were likely to rise far in excess of inflation. Many who voted for the Scheme benefit from substantial off-street parking and do not need permits. Their concern was to make sure that as few non-residents as possible parked in their roads even though they had no parking difficulties themselves. Those residents who have insufficient off-street parking cannot now opt out of this parking tax and really should look to their pro-CPZ neighbours when seeking someone to blame. As for the free spaces, these are a real necessity for Suburb residents who need their local station. The CPZ took away approximately 85% of the parking which was formerly available in roads to the west of the railway line. Such little free space as remains is not nearly sufficient for local people living outside

the Zone CPZs almost always cause more problems than they solve and it is not difficult to sympathise with Mrs Mandell who is finding this to her cost.

Gary Shaw, Roads and Traffic

Irene Dutton of Wordsworth Walk wanted to know: "How can we get all residents - especially new ones - to take full responsibility for the maintenance and preservation of hedges and that also applies to hedges which surround allotments."

Trees and Open Spaces
Chairman Leonie Stephen says "Barnet seem unable to cope with this problem these days. We on the committe are working

towards a solution. Meanwhile a reminder that consideration for one's neighbours and for the look of the Suburb means that hedges should be kept trimmed."

Joyce Dent of Raeburn Close had a suggestion:

It would be helpful if the H2 bus could slightly alter its route to turn into Temple Fortune and then back into the Suburb and on to Golders Green. This would only be a small deviation and would be appreciated by many residents.

This is not the first time that taking the H2 into the shopping centre has been suggested. The RA will try again to get the route changed and report back.

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