

Southgate District Civic Voice

Newsletter No.257
July 2021

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150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WOOD GREEN TO ENFIELD BRANCH LINE
(See page 2 for a report of the unveiling ceremonies)

COMING EVENTS

Tues. 14th Sept. **Local History Meeting** at the Friends' Meeting House, Church Hill, N21. 7.30pm **“Making Gas and Creating a Memorial”**
(See page 3 for details)

Sat. 30th Oct. **Open Meeting: “A Talk about Trent Park House”**
Venue and other details to be confirmed

See inside for: The Southgate Flich Trials (page 4)
A Memorial for the Gas Holder - an Update (page 8)

Contributions to the October newsletter should be sent by Friday 17th September
to the Editor: Colin Barratt, 48 Maplin Close, Winchmore Hill, London, N21 1NB
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Note:- Copies will be emailed, hand delivered or posted during week commencing 4th October

Southgate District Civic Voice ~ Established to conserve and enhance the environment in Southgate, New Southgate, Cockfosters, Palmers Green, Winchmore Hill and Hadley Wood.
(Registered as an amenity society with **Civic Voice**).

COMMEMORATING THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WOOD GREEN TO ENFIELD BRANCH LINE

As reported in the April newsletter, the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the Great Northern Railway branch line from Wood Green Station to Enfield, originally planned for 1st April, had to be postponed, due to Covid-19 restrictions. Instead, it took place on Saturday 10th July.



Andrew Chillingsworth

There were two ceremonies, one at Winchmore Hill station and the other at Enfield Chase station. Our contact at Great Northern, Andrew Chillingsworth, and Richard Purver had arranged for a plaque to be installed at Winchmore Hill. We were still limited with numbers, but a large



Richard Purver & Eileen Bostle



group were present to see the plaque unveiled. For the ceremony it was mounted temporarily on an easel, behind curtains, outside the station. Andrew spoke about the line and how important it had been, and still was, for commuting and leisure use. Richard Purver and Eileen Bostle read extracts from Henrietta Cresswell's book regarding her memories of the building of the railway through Winchmore Hill in 1869 to 1871.



David Paul & Joan Duparcq

The plaque was then unveiled by Peter Hodge's cousin Joan Duparcq and Peter's long time friend David Paul. Peter had been a valued member at St Paul's church in Church Hill and the vicar attended the ceremony. David mentioned Peter's book *The Hertford Loop*, which was originally printed in 1976, but has been recently reprinted by SDCV, (see order details in the April edition). Great Northern will be installing the plaque on a wall at the station, so it can be seen by passers by, as well as users of the station.

A number of the group then took the train to Enfield Chase station, for the ceremony there. This had been organised by The Enfield Society (TES) and two large mosaics had been created, which were attached to the wall of the parking area outside the station, next to the existing mosaic of the former Bycullah Athenaeum theatre. The mosaics were covered, ready for unveiling and TES had also arranged for a vintage vehicle from the Whitewebbs Museum of Transport to be there, to add to the occasion. The first mosaic was unveiled by transport writer Christian Wolmar and depicted the old Enfield Station, which used to be further up Windmill Hill, where Gladbeck Way is now.



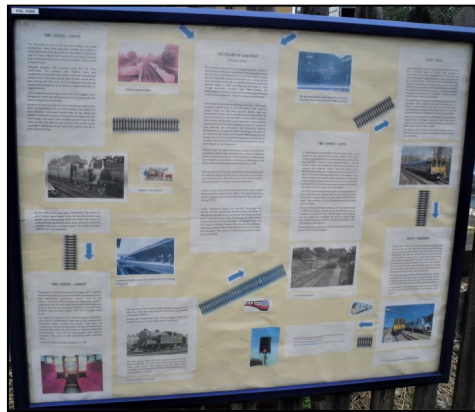
The second mosaic depicted the smock mill (windmill), which used to stand near the top of Windmill Hill. This was unveiled by Dr Michael Taylor, who had discovered through DNA analysis for family history purposes, that he was descended from the Robinson family, generations of whom ran the smock mill from the 1600s. The mill closed in 1896 and was demolished in 1904. The mosaic also featured St Mary Magdalene church, which is opposite the site of the former windmill and the vicar also attended the unveiling.



We were told that each mosaic took about 1500 hours to create and they are a fitting memorial for the heritage of Enfield..

A limited number of invited guests then went across to The Old Wheatsheaf pub for refreshments.

A board has also been put up on the northbound platform at Palmers Green Station with information about the 150 years of the railway by the Palmers Green Action Team.



Colin Barratt

AGM & TALK BY DR. HELEN FRY

At our AGM in May Dr Helen Fry gave a talk on M19 and the secret service for escape and evasion in WWII. It was a very informative and enjoyable talk and members were able to find out more about previously untold stories behind the establishment of MI9. It was an interactive talk and Dr Fry was able to share photos and visuals which we all found fascinating.



LOCAL HISTORY MEETING 14th SEPT. “Making Gas and Creating a Memorial”

This will be the first local history meeting we have held for two years. There will be some uncertainty about numbers attending so I will not be inviting an outside speaker this time. On page 8 of this newsletter you will see my report of the installation of a memorial for the gas holder in New Southgate. I will give a presentation about how domestic gas production began and how it developed locally with the New Southgate gas works. I will then show how the gas holder was dismantled, what I chose to include on the interpretation boards for the memorial and how the two finials came to be salvaged and restored. All members welcome.

Colin Barratt

NO REGRETS: THE SOUTHGATE FLITCH TRIALS OF 1933 AND 1949

Folk customs in our urban area survive here and there, for example the crowning of the May Queen and maypole dancing at the Christ Church Fair and the appearance sometimes of morris dancers at Winchmore Hill Green on May Day as well as in the activities at Winchmore Folk Dance Club, founded by the late Cyril Jones many years ago and still going today. But it may come as a surprise that Broomfield Park has been the venue of a local version of the ancient Dunmow Flitch Trials on at least two occasions, in 1933 and 1949.

The Dunmow Flitch

The Dunmow Flitch custom originated in Little Dunmow in Essex in medieval times and was revived by William Harrison Ainsworth in 1855 following the publication of his novel, *The Flitch of Bacon*. In the ceremony the couple who wished to claim the Flitch were required to state on oath that “having been married for at least a year and a day, they have never once, ‘sleeping or waking’, regretted their marriage or wished themselves single again”. In the modern version a trial takes place as “a sort of facetious parody of court proceedings, with a robed and bewigged judge taking the place of the old Manor Steward, counsel for the claimants, counsel ‘for the bacon’, witnesses, court officials, and a jury ... those who win the prize certainly deserve to do so, if only for the amusement they provide” [*A Dictionary of British Folk Customs*, Christina Hole (1976)].



The Dunmow Flitch Trials are held every four years at Great Dunmow, with the next scheduled for 9 July 2022 (postponed from 2020 and then 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic). They have attracted wider interest over the years, with radio broadcasts by the BBC from Dunmow and other locations which had adopted the custom between 1927 and 1938, 1949 and 1954, when Johnny Morris reported for the Light Programme. The trial of Basil and Julie Topham of 4 New Road Dunmow, as played by David Tomlinson and Petula Clark, forms the climax of the feature film *Made in Heaven* [1952], following on from various farcical shenanigans.

The Flitch in Palmers Green

Walking the Flitch Way in November 2015, which follows the disused railway line between Braintree and Bishops Stortford, my two (long-married) friends and I stopped at Great Dunmow and looked in at a book sale at Foakes Hall, where my eye was caught by a reference to the Flitch in Palmers Green in 1949 in *The History of the Dunmow Flitch* by Francis W Steer [1951] and in researching my article

Borough of Southgate Coat of Arms [Southgate District Civic Trust Newsletter 238, October 2016] I found that this occurrence had been preceded by a Flitch Trial which was featured in the Charter Day celebrations on Saturday 30 September 1933.

It was on Charter Day that Southgate Urban District Council became a municipal borough with the presentation of the Charter of Incorporation to the Charter Mayor John Thomas Barber by Prince George at Northmet House [now Beaumont Care Home] in Cannon Hill during his tour of the area. The Charter Town Clerk was A E Lauder. An extensive programme was devised to commemorate the occasion, as set out in the booklet published by the council (a copy of which is held in the SDCV archive). The ‘Time Table for the Day’ listed several events in Broomfield Park including at 4pm, ‘Southgate (Dunmow) Flitch Trial on the Concert Platform (Bandstand Lawn)’.

A notice on page 41 headed *The Southgate (Dunmow) Flitch: Who will win a Side of English Bacon?* refers to the Court at Dunmow and announces that “As part of the Charter festivities, Messrs. J. Sainsbury have offered such a Flitch to any married couple, resident in Southgate for a year and a day, who can prove to such a Court, that they have enjoyed for the whole of that period, complete conjugal happiness – unbroken by a single quarrel, unalloyed by a solitary tiff”. Entries were invited from “any married couples in Southgate. Particulars of names and address, with dates of marriage, should be sent to the Secretary, Entertainments Committee, Southgate Town Hall, N.13”. Admission to the Trial was sixpence.

There was full coverage of Charter Day in the *Palmer's Green and Southgate Gazette* of 6 October 1933. Under the general title on page 11 *Sixty Thousand People in Broomfield Park*, one of the articles was headed *Who Had the “Better Half” of the Flitch? / Division of Spoils in Southgate’s Great Marital Trial / The Tiff-less Lives of Two Couples*: “There was no silence in the Court at Broomfield Park on Saturday when a large crowd laughed, giggled, chuckled and roared at the proceedings of the ‘Dunmow Flitch’ Trial, which was one of the most amusing and, incidentally, one of the most successful features of Charter Day”. Two couples had come forward as claimants, Mr and Mrs W Bilton [William and Rosa] of [4] Hawthorne Terrace, Chase Side, Southgate, who had been married for 41 years, and Mr G[eorge] and Mrs Constance Keogh (aged 41) of [90] Trent Gardens, Southgate. The judge at the trial was Mr Andrew Home-Morton (President of Southgate Chamber of Commerce), with Councillor George Peverett as Counsel for the Claimants and Councillor G B Massa as Counsel for the Flitch; the jury was composed of the traditional six spinsters and six bachelors empanelled from the audience.



The detailed report was flagged up by two photographs on page 8 linked by the caption *On the command KISS! Two happy couples celebrating the sharing of the Flitch. Their counsel, Cr. Geo. Peverett, having won his “case,” has every reason to smile* and another of the large and happy crowd both in deck chairs and standing on the lawn with the bandstand behind them captioned *These folk did not compete for the Southgate “Dunmow” Flitch but they are getting a good laugh out the trial of those who did!* The genuine hilarity and sense of release shown in the reaction of the spectators seems to have been provoked by the potentially risky airing in public of glimpses of the claimants’ private lives, their willingness to take part in in the fun with pointed or saucy answers and the satirical observations of the ‘legal’ figures, all of whom “were marvels of wit, eloquence and insight”.

Among the issues raised in examination by Counsel for the claimants and the Flitch were love at first sight, who fetched the husband’s slippers and put the cat out (Mrs Bilton stating that her husband “had never been guilty of a ‘dereliction of duty’ in this important matter”), the potential bias of children as witnesses in their parents’ favour (Mr Massa: “And I suppose you’ve got [your daughter] nicely ‘squared’?”), allowing the husband to go out, was he hen-pecked, sharing (or not) child care responsibilities, and terms of endearment:

Mr Peverett: Your names are Constance Virginia, but what does your husband usually call you?
 Witness: He calls me “dear” and something nicer when we are by ourselves. (Laughter.)

When his turn came Mr Keogh, on being asked by Mr Peverett whether it was a case of love at first sight, revealed that on the occasion he met his future wife he had actually arranged to meet someone else. Fortunately perhaps for him when they got home later he maintained that he never regretted that the other girl didn't turn up.

In his summing up after the jury found both couples had justified their claims, Judge Home-Morton said, to laughter, "As a married man of considerable experience I don't think I have ever heard so many lies in so short a time than those I have heard today ... I am not going to suggest the claimants told lies deliberately, but when two people have been together so long they get so like one another that they don't know where the truth is!"

The side of bacon offered by Messrs J Sainsbury was cut in half "to satisfy both sets of claimants". A surprising note at the end of the article says that "The use of the words 'Dunmow Flitch' was by the permission of the Dunmow Flitch Bacon Co., Ltd., of Calne, Wiltshire".

The 1949 Flitch Trial

The link between the 1933 and 1949 Southgate Flitch Trials was now-Alderman George Peverett, who was present at both proceedings, this time taking the role of the judge. The location was Broomfield Park again and the occasion was the second day of the Southgate and District Horticultural Society Show and Fete on Saturday 27 August at 5pm.



Counsel for the Flitch was Councillor A E Lauder and Counsel for the Claimants author and writer of local history articles for the *Gazette*, Mr Tom Mason. They are shown in the photograph which accompanied the in-depth report on page 5 of the *Gazette* for 2 September with one of the three couples involved, Mr and Mrs Mullens, under the heading *A Year And A Day Without A Quarrel / "Dolly And Wally" and "Dad And Mary" Share Southgate Flitch / But A Couple of "Ducks" Get The Bacon*. The paper described the event as "all a grand piece of fun!"

The claimants were Maurice ("Dad") and Mary Mullens of 23 Beechdale, Winchmore Hill, Mr and Mrs W Corley ("Dolly and Wally" ie Dorothy and Walter) of 11 Madeira Road, Palmers Green and Mr and Mrs M Spurrier [listed as William and Lilian in the electoral register] of 116 High Road, New Southgate, "who always call each other 'Ducks'". They had probably seen the article in the *Gazette* for 12 August (opposite a feature about two local couples who were about to celebrate 50 years of marriage) which was headed *Flitch Trial: Have You Entered?* and appealed to the "happily married, young or old" with the plea "Surely there are several Southgate couples with an answer to the cynics who declare that marriage is a failure?"

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During the trial Alderman Peverett "interjected explosively from time to time with the traditional 'What is a - ' questions with which judges choose to indicate their colossal ignorance of the ordinary ways of man". Under questioning from Councillor Lauder, Mr Corley denied that billing and coing became monotonous after 38 years of marriage and claimed he and his wife shared household duties; Mrs Corley said that while she went shopping he went to the library "as he enjoyed meeting his lady friends there". Mr Spurrier insisted he and his wife never even had small tiffs or that "the pangs of quarrelling were compensated by the joys of reconciliation"; Mrs Spurrier described him as "sometimes a model husband" (faint praise?) and was happy with her resident mother-in-law. Mr Mullens "admitted gladly to his 75 years, 47 of which had been spent in a prolonged honeymoon of married bliss" and Mrs Mullens said that home "was like a second heaven" (bless).

The Flich in this case was made of cardboard and it was decided to tear it in half and share the £5 which was also part of the prize between the Corleys and the Mullenses. Actual meat was still involved though as the consolation prize for the Spurriers was “a piece of ham adhering to a bone – which is the closest the ‘Gazette’ can get to a description. So long has it been since Southgate people came into contact with anything like a joint of ham or bacon that inquiries elicited at least three different answers: that it was a shank, a knuckle bone and ‘a piece off the end of the gammon’”.

As in 1933 the successful claimants seem to have been spared being chaired in procession behind the Flich by costumed attendants, as still happens at Great Dunmow.

The Tigers of Bottle Green

Perhaps as a divorced vegetarian I am not best placed to comment on the motives or sincerity of those who enter the Flich Trials, but I like Christina Hole’s judicious verdict that “in spite of the general atmosphere of merriment, serious claims are still sometimes made, and probably few who were not completely callous or insensitive would care to come forward if their married lives were not in fact peaceful and happy”. However the last word on the complexities of married life in Bottle [Palmer’s] Green goes to local resident Stevie Smith in her 1938 novel *Over the Frontier*:

Now, at home where my aunt and I live, the wives are so often delighted to tell you how splendidly bullying their husbands are, and how they put the foot down here and there, and no, they will not let them play bridge in the afternoon and they will not let them smoke, ‘My dear husband does not like to see me smoke’, there is a great deal of pride in their voices when they say this, I have often noticed it, it is as if they would say, You may not think it but I am married to a tiger. No I did not think it, for certainly I cannot penetrate this excellent disguise that this tiger has adopted, for certainly no better disguise for a tiger exists anywhere than the disguise of a Bottle Green husband. ‘My dear,’ say the jungle tiger-bucks, ‘I shall go to the tiger reunion festival as a Bottle Green husband, you won’t know me’.

Images: piggy coat hook (courtesy of The Flich of Bacon Inn, Little Dunmow); Petula Clark starring in “Made in Heaven” A & BC Chewing Gum Card [1952] found at www.petulaclark.net; scenes from the Southgate Flich Trial, Palmer’s Green and Southgate Gazette 6 October 1933 (courtesy of the British Library); Counsel for the Flich (Cr A E Lauder) cross-examining Mr M J Mullens, Palmer’s Green and Southgate Gazette 2 September 1949 (courtesy of the British Library).

Richard Purver

SOUTHGATE OFFICE VILLAGE

This proposed development is for new residential and office buildings including a tower 17 storeys high on the site at 286 Chase Road, N14. This proposed development was previously unanimously rejected by the planning committee of Enfield Council; however, the developer has appealed against the decision. Members who attended our AGM on 8 May voted in favour of SDCV applying to the Planning Inspectorate for status as a participant in the planning inquiry. Our request has been granted and we will be full participants at the inquiry which is scheduled to last from 21 September to 1 October 2021.

There is a considerable amount of work involved in preparing for the inquiry. A small team of SDCV members is preparing for the next stage, which requires the submission of detailed evidence by 24 August.

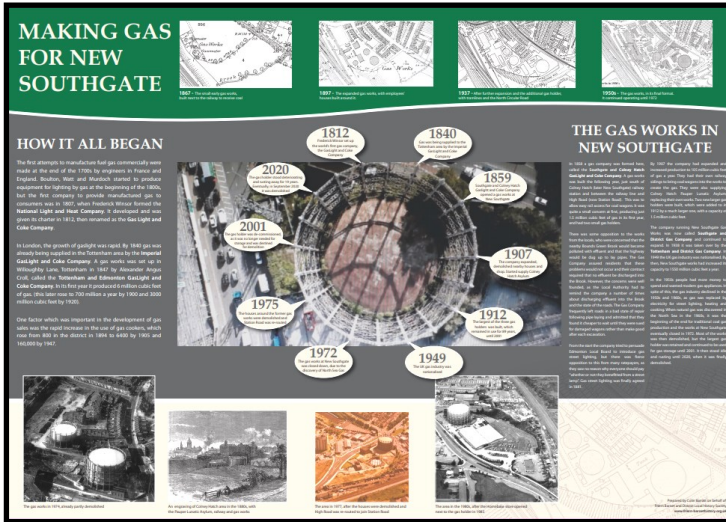
We should like to mount a publicity campaign to inform Southgate residents about the inquiry. The Inspector has said that he may allow local people to speak at the inquiry. We should like to assemble a list of local residents who would be adversely affected by the proposed development.

We need your help if we are to run a successful campaign. If you are willing to help us to stop this intrusive development please contact us at info@southgatedistrictcivicvoice.org

Graham Davis

A MEMORIAL FOR THE GAS HOLDER - AN UPDATE

In my article in the January 2021 newsletter I reported that I was waiting to hear from National Grid whether I had been successful with my application for the funding of memorials for the recently demolished gas holder in New Southgate. The decision was delayed, but I'm pleased to say that it was accepted. The major part of the budget of around £4000 was for three interpretation boards. These are now being prepared, for installing on New Southgate Millennium Green by the end of July.



One will give some history of how gas production began and the New Southgate gas works. Another will explain how the former gas holder worked and was dismantled. These will be located next to one of the main paths through the Millennium Green, so I hope that many locals will stop and look at them, as well as class visits from nearby Garfield Primary School.

A third smaller board will be located next to the two salvaged finials from the gas holder, to explain what they are. National Grid have restored, repainted and delivered these to the Millennium Green. A group of us from Friern Barnet & District Local History Society had previously prepared platforms for the finials and when they arrived we bolted them into place. They now make a striking feature on the Millennium Green. National Grid were so pleased with them that they arranged for a press release and photoshoot to publicise them.



The purpose of this memorial is to ensure that the history of the gas works and gas holder is recorded and remembered for years to come and if, as is hoped, it's eventually re-located to a new development on the other side of Station Road it will be on the original site and a legacy of our local industrial heritage. It will be just yards away from where I was born and will hopefully be there long after I'm gone.

Colin Barratt

MOBILE EXHIBITION: FROM ENFIELD TO FORK - EXPLORING ENFIELD'S FOOD HERITAGE

MUSEUM OF ENFIELD

EN FIELD TO FORK

GROVELANDS PARK
SATURDAY 03 JULY - FRIDAY 09 JULY

BROOMFIELD PARK
SATURDAY 10 JULY - FRIDAY 16 JULY

TRENT PARK
SATURDAY 17 JULY - FRIDAY 23 JULY

ENFIELD TOWN LIBRARY GREEN
SATURDAY 24 JULY - FRIDAY 06 AUGUST

FORTY HALL COURTYARD
SATURDAY 07 AUGUST - SUNDAY 22 AUGUST

EDMONTON GREEN SHOPPING CENTRE
MONDAY 23 AUGUST - FRIDAY 10 SEPTEMBER

PYMMES PARK
SATURDAY 11 SEPTEMBER - SUNDAY 19 SEPTEMBER

ENFIELD ISLAND VILLAGE
MONDAY 20 SEPTEMBER - FRIDAY 01 OCTOBER

Museum of Enfield @museumofenfield @MuseumofEnfield

ENFIELD COUNCIL

Between 3rd July and 1st October the Museum of Enfield will be bringing its 2021 exhibition to you. It will travel to 8 outdoor locations across the borough, bringing with it a range of activities and foodie facts.

Visit :

www.dugdalecentre.co.uk/page/2021-museum-exhibition for information about linked art workshop activities on 27th and 28th July and a jam-packed day of events at Forty Hall on Sunday 8th August.



The exhibition in Grovelands Park

OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND 2021

For one weekend in September each year many venues across Enfield open their doors to the public for free, as part of Open House, the capital's biggest architectural festival.

This year the week falls on 17 / 18 September, and will celebrate all that is best about the borough's buildings, places and neighbourhoods. It gives a unique opportunity to get out and under the skin of our amazing architecture, and in Enfield a variety of buildings both old and new will open their doors including:

The Dugdale Centre
Forty Hall
Millfield Arts Centre
King George V pumping station

Myddleton House
The Priory Hospital
The Royal Small Arms Factory

There will also be a special 'Meridian Water' tour showing the early stages of the development, which is the biggest live regeneration project currently in London.

