



Ilford Historical Society

Dear Members

I hope that you managed to have as good a Christmas as the restrictions allowed. The immediate future still looks bleak but let's hope that the rollout of the vaccines will mean that we can start to pick-up our normal pre-Covid life in the next few months.

All best wishes

Jef Page
President
January 2021

What happened to our Kugel ball?

In his book, *A Potted History of Ilford*, Norman Gunby spends almost a page describing the Kugel ball that was originally installed on the ground floor of the Exchange shopping centre when it opened in 1991. The ball and its socket were made of natural granite. It weighed about three tonnes (a metric tonne is slightly less than an imperial ton) and had a diameter of 1.2 metres. Water under great pressure was forced from below into a chamber situated



in the socket allowing the ball to rotate easily despite its immense weight. It cost £60,000 and with labour the total cost was £80,000. The ball was the second largest of its kind in the UK and was among the largest in Europe. It was certainly a magnificent thing and children loved rolling the ball around getting wet in the process and then - it was gone! It seems to have disappeared around 2017 during the refurbishment of the Exchange by its new owners, Capital & Regional. It was replaced with the *Wild Cubs Freeplay* comprising animal sculptures of giraffes, lions and elephants; they look fun but where did the Kugel ball go? Such a huge thing couldn't be easily hidden. I am only able to look at online information at present but I could find nothing about its removal and only one reasonably good photograph. So, I wonder where it is?



A Potted History of Ilford for sale

If anyone is interested, the society recently acquired *A Potted History of Ilford* by Norman Gunby. The asking price is £4 and proceeds will go to society funds. Please contact Janet Seward if you are interested 020 85991397 or 07762514238.

Proud to be an Ilfordian

Tiring of my local streets and parks, a few months ago, I met a friend at Stoke Newington station for a walk around Hackney. We started at Abney Park Cemetery about five minutes from the station. Abney Park is one of the Magnificent Seven, a ring of seven graveyards built around the capital in the early 19th century to contain the remains of a rapidly increasing population. (The others are Highgate, Kensal Green, Brompton, Nunhead, West Norwood and Tower Hamlets cemeteries). They were built as a result of legislation in 1832 to encourage the establishment of new private cemeteries as many of the existing small inner city burial grounds were ill-maintained and frankly insanitary. By the 1970s, the cemetery was in a very poor state and the London Borough Hackney took it over and it is now an interesting, if at times eerie, nature park. This long preamble is just to set the scene, for I had only walked a few yards into the grounds when I spotted the grave of the Friday family, the first name inscribed was Matilda Farmer Friday and the second was her married daughter described as follows:

*Also Gertrude Mary Ann,
the beloved daughter of the
above,
and loving wife of
Henry Pearson of **ILFORD**
who died November 25th 1909
aged 34 years*



Gertrude died at a young age and only eight years after her mother so burial at Abney Park may have been an obvious choice but I was intrigued by the Ilford reference. I found Henry and Gertrude living at 29 Courtland Avenue, off the Drive, in the 1901 census with a three-year-old daughter, Henry's widowed father, his sister and a servant – all financed by Henry a commercial clerk and his father a lithograph printer. By 1911, Henry was also a widower and he had a second daughter who was nine years old. Henry was still living at the same address in 1939. So, nothing more interesting than a man proud to have moved into an imposing double-fronted house off the Drive, probably when it was new. However, in establishing a link between Ilford and Abney Park, I found an even more intriguing fact. In the 1911 census return, the Pearson's maid is called Katherine Webber Maslin born in Romford who is 27 years old and married. In addition to Katherine, there is also listed as a 'visitor' (meaning that he didn't live there permanently) a two-year-old boy called Norman Russell Maslin born in America and his nationality is given as 'British Subject on parentage'. Perhaps another lockdown investigation?

Janet Seward



Cranbrook Park

When I was delivering the November newsletters, I cut through what was formerly Cranbrook Park and now known as the Queen Elizabeth II Field Barkingside Recreation Ground in Cranbrook Road opposite the Barkingside Tesco. I was surprised to see near the entrance a drinking fountain donated by Peter Griggs in 1906. Surprised, because Barkingside was not developed until between the World Wars and I failed to see why a rural area would need a park. That was until I found a small piece in George Tasker's *Ilford Past and Present* (1901). He writes:

For Barkingside, the Council in 1899 purchased 12 acres of Mossford Green at £350 per acre. The land was a portion of a large wheatfield attached to Gaysham Hall, between the National Schools and the Cranbrook Road, and it is undoubtedly an immense boon to the village. Dwellers in towns often think that those who live in the country, with fields all around, have no need for recreation grounds. This is a great mistake, and there are thousands of people throughout the land, who although they are in the country cannot leave the roads or footpaths without treading on forbidden ground. This was the condition of Barkingside. The Council therefore, are quite wise in providing a playground for the village, which young and old can enjoy with perfect freedom.

I think this demonstrates both the foresight of the late 19th century, early 20th century Council and the fact that bygone Ilford was no rural idyll!

Janet Seward

Renaming Barkingside

George Tasker also mentions the confusion that existed, and still exists, over the name, 'Barkingside' as it is nowhere near Barking. He says that the village, as it was then, was called Barkingside before 1841 because it was one of the boundaries of the civil parish of Barking. He goes on to say that 'in the two Jubilee years of her Majesty Queen Victoria' (1887 & 1897), there were attempts made to change the name to 'Hainault'. Of course, nothing came of the suggestion but the name did stick in someone's memory and was given to the LCC housing estate built between 1947 and 1953.

A Religious Coincidence

It is well-known that Cardinal John Heenan (1905 – 1975) was an Ilford boy who lived at 33 Ripley Road off Green Lane. What is less well-known, is that at 44 Ripley Road lived Brian Foley (1910-1999) who became the Roman Catholic Bishop of Lancaster in 1962. And it was John Heenan, then Archbishop of Liverpool, who consecrated his old neighbour Brian Foley to be his neighbour again as Bishop of Lancaster!

(St John's Church Seven Kings 1904-1979 – Frank Sainsbury)

Reasons to be Cheerful, even in Lockdown



Valentines Park looked lovely in the sunshine today (Wednesday). Unfortunately, while there, I was witness to a stand-off between a squirrel and a rat which both repelled and fascinated me. I was surprised that the rat backed down first as the squirrel sat on its haunches, like a cat, ready to spring. Perhaps it felt safety in numbers as many of its mates were cavorting around.



The new Ilford station seems to be coming along nicely. When we can travel, I'm sure it will be a much more pleasurable experience!



This is a new development in Seven Kings where the bingo hall/cinema used to be. I don't know what the building is like inside but the attention to detail on the front elevation, continuing the building line of the shops, is very pleasing and makes the façade look elegant.

11 January talk at 7.30pm Ilford Servants - Reverend Dr John Brown

Remember, if you do have access to a computer, you can see and hear our January talk on Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87147427166?pwd=TnpOQWtBUGhsSGRaVUtsVUU1dk9NUT09>

Meeting ID: 871 4742 7166

Passcode: 287014