

THE Barnet Society

AUTUMN 2021 | £1

INSIDE:

- Page 3 | **Police station up for sale**
- Pages 4&5 | **Festival round-up**
- Pages 6&7 | **Planning & Environment**
- Page 8 | **Mitre landlord calls time**
- Page 10 | **News round-up**
- Page 11 | **Growing for Barnet**
- Page 12 | **Slave trade street links**

Whalebones: An Inspector calls

Robin Bishop writes

The recent four-day inquiry to decide the future of the Whalebones woods and farmland was a tense affair. Presided over by Planning Inspector Jonathan Price, sometimes more than 30 officials and residents participated in the online proceedings, with others watching live on YouTube. It exposed sharply contrasting views as to whether the need for new housing should take precedence over protecting one of High Barnet's most historic green spaces in the Wood Street Conservation Area.

Regular readers will recall that last October Barnet Council's planning committee refused permission – on the casting vote of the chairman – to Hill Residential, on behalf of the Gwyneth Cowing Trustees (owners of the Whalebones estate), to build 152 houses and flats. Hill and the Trustees appealed, and the Planning Inspectorate deemed that the case was sufficiently significant to warrant a public hearing.

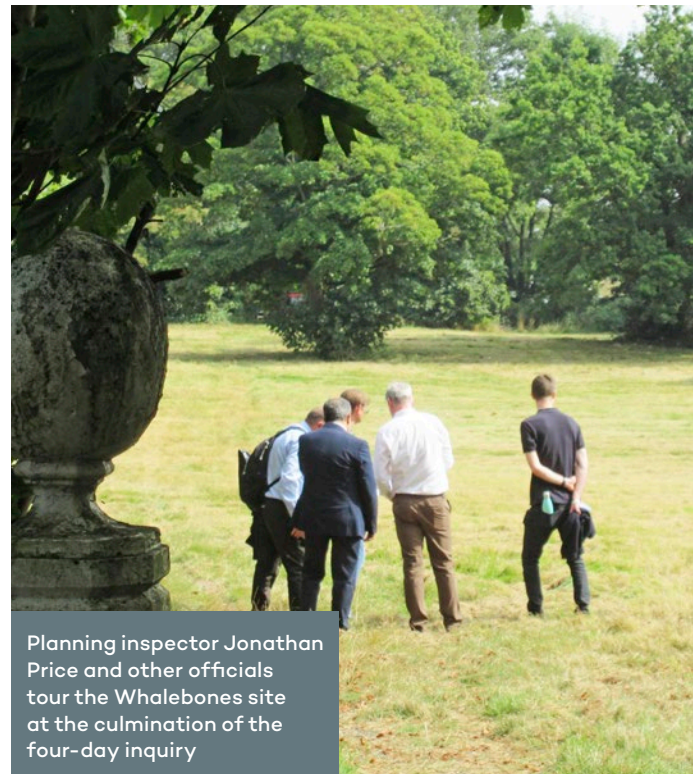
Shortly before the inquiry it

turned into something of a David v Goliath contest when Barnet Council performed a U-turn, unexpectedly withdrawing its defence of its refusal. The Council then confined itself to defending its record on housing supply and agreeing the small print of conditions that would be attached if the development went ahead.

The Society faced Hill's and the Trustees' large team of consultants headed by a QC, with only Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers and some other committed local experts and neighbours on our side.

Adding to the drama, we found ourselves in the opposite corner to Barnet Residents Association, whose spokesman Gordon Massey said it was a "very restrained and reasonable" proposal. The farmland's amenity value was "very, very low", and its loss would not be a "disaster" for the CA. The Society took the opposite view.

At the opening of the inquiry on 31 August, Edward Grant QC explained that the Council had resolved not to defend its



Planning inspector Jonathan Price and other officials tour the Whalebones site at the culmination of the four-day inquiry

decision because in July a new draft of Barnet's Local Plan had zoned the Whalebones site for residential use. He did not mention that Council planners had been discussing residential use with the applicants as long as five years ago.

The main issues at stake in the inquiry were how substantial would be the harm to the CA caused by the development, and whether it would be offset by the public benefits it would bring.

Guy Braithwaite, Nick Saul and I spoke on behalf of the Society. I said consultation with our membership of over 600 had shown almost unanimous

opposition to the over-development of Whalebones. Hill could easily have proposed a more modest, less harmful residential development which would have maintained income for the Whalebones trustees, and such an aim would have been closer to the heart of the late Gwyneth Cowing – whose home the estate had been – and of the majority of residents.

In our written representation we had pointed out that the Wood Street CA encapsulates 800 years of Barnet history. At one end is its church and original marketplace, chartered in 1199; **Continued, Page 2** ➡



◀ The eponymous Whalebones arch

sited, complained about the close proximity of four-storey blocks of flats.

The trustees did not appear at the inquiry. In their evidence, their spokesman said for 30 years after her death they had implemented Miss Cowing's wish for the continued agricultural use of Whalebones if that was "practicable", but that was no longer sustainable because of land management costs, which recently included £20,000 for tree surgeons.

The appellants accepted there would be some harm to the CA, but said that it was outweighed by the public benefit. A new building would be provided for Barnet Guild of Artists and Barnet Beekeepers Association. The tenant farmer, Peter Mason and his wife Jill, would have rent-free accommodation and agricultural space for life. There would be two new public open spaces plus access from Wood Street to Barnet Hospital through the Whalebones estate via a new woodland walkway, and 61 of the 152 new homes were designated as "affordable". A further benefit would be the contribution towards Barnet's housing target.

After hearing evidence for four days, the planning inspector Jonathan Price visited the estate. We now have to wait for his decision. Given the backlog of appeals, it may be a while.

Continued from Page 1

at the other, open fields. Their juxtaposition is richly symbolic. Barnet's growth to national status derived chiefly from livestock: herds were driven from across the country to their final pastures on the fringe of the town, then sold at the market.

Guy argued that the rural and agricultural character of the Whalebones estate was a key feature of the Wood Street CA. The harm to the heritage assets of the Whalebones estate would be substantial. Instead of a green break and natural buffer between High Barnet and Arkley, there would be continuous urban development.

Nick Saul said Miss Cowing's Trustees should have ensured the continuation of Whalebones as an agricultural holding with a modern urban farm. He regretted

the lack of succession planning by the trustees, and disputed the conclusions of the appellants' agricultural viability report.

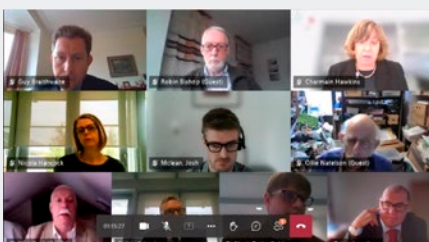
Theresa Villiers MP made a passionate plea for the preservation of the leafy, open nature of Whalebones. Seventy per cent of the site would be lost to new homes, roads and car parking, yet there were sound planning reasons for this green space – an important wildlife habitat – to be protected for future generations. The fact that there was currently no public access did not mean Whalebones was any less worthy of protection: if the same logic was applied nationally, small farms across the UK would be built over. She had knocked on hundreds of doors while canvassing, and "Saving Whalebones" frequently came up in neighbouring streets

and across the constituency. As for public benefit, Barnet was already delivering more new homes than any other London borough.

Councillor Julian Teare, whose ward includes Whalebones, agreed with Ms Villiers. When touring the area, he found residents "uniformly objected to the plan, without exception".

Other parties made strong objections to the scheme. Dr Ollie Natelson emphasised its threat to bats and other wildlife. Several medical professionals attested to the value of Whalebones' greenery to mental health and well-being. Dr Sundus Tewfik pointed out that the site could be developed as a care farm. And residents in the recently built Elmbank housing estate, which adjoins the large field where most new housing would be

Anxious wait for the result



▲ Some of the participants at the inquiry

The Barnet Society was founded 76 years ago – by Gwyneth Cowing among others – to protect green spaces such as Whalebones, writes Robin Bishop. What are our prospects of winning the inquiry? It was certainly conducted very fairly, the Inspector giving witnesses every chance to state their cases. Unfortunately planning and case law doesn't attach great weight to ecological matters and none to alternative uses (however good). If we do win, it would be a stunning victory for those who care about our green environment and our heritage in its broadest sense. Judging by the outcome of similar cases, we shouldn't raise our hopes. If nothing else, however, the Society has shown that, in the challenging arena of a public inquiry, it is willing to make the case for Chipping Barnet's heritage and natural environment.



Time's up for cop shop

After closing its doors to the public four years ago, High Barnet Police Station is to disappear altogether from the town centre, writes Nick Jones

Front counter services were withdrawn in December 2017 and now the building is up for sale.

Although it continued to provide a base for the neighbourhood police team and offices for the Police, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, has announced that the station is to close completely and be sold.

High Barnet is one of numerous police stations across London to which the public has lost access.

Many of these surplus buildings – said by the mayor's office to be “no longer needed nor fit for purpose” – are on the market.

In some London boroughs, rather than see redundant police stations turned into flats, several are being converted into schools or found other community uses.

High Barnet's police station is a modern three-storey block, in a prominent position in the High Street, and the option of

▲ Theresa Villiers, has launched a petition to save the police station from closure. (Above) older stations before the latest one was built in the 1970s

“It is appalling that the Mayor has not listened to local people in Barnet - Theresa Villiers

finding a community use for the building might well arise during consideration of the Barnet Local Plan and its proposals for regenerating the town centre and encouraging local employment.

Only one police station remains open to the public in each London Borough and in Barnet's case a 24-hour, seven-day a week front counter service continues to be available at Colindale police station in Graham Park Way.

Theresa Villiers, MP for Chipping Barnet, has launched a petition to keep the police station. www.theresavilliers.co.uk/save-barnet-police-station.

“It is appalling that the mayor has not listened to local people in Barnet.

“Loss of the counter service was bad enough, but if the mayor goes ahead and sells the building, then there will be no base in this part of Barnet from which our local police officers can operate.

“They will all have to come from miles away in Colindale and that will seriously reduce police presence and visibility in High Barnet.”

The police station has always had a highly visible location in the town. Photographs in Barnet Museum of

the town's earlier police buildings illustrate its commanding presence at the top of Barnet Hill, a strategic point on the early coaching route from London to the north.

For the last four years the modernised station has provided office space for the Metropolitan Police and has also been used as a base for the town's three dedicated ward officers and one police community support officer.

In justifying the withdrawal in 2017 of front counter services from 37 police stations across London, the Metropolitan Police argued that there had been a dramatic fall in the number of crimes being reported in person at police stations.

High Barnet had one of the lowest rates across London – in May 2017 less than one crime (0.8) was being reported each day compared with six or seven at Enfield, Edmonton, Redbridge, and Lambeth.

Six months after the withdrawal of public access to the station, the Police launched a initiative to encourage High Barnet residents to maintain contact with the local safer neighbourhood police team.

New contact procedures were introduced, and arrangements made for regular face-to-face meetings.



550th anniversary comes good despite year of uncertainty

It has been touch and go on a number of occasions but the Battle of Barnet festival organisers managed to pull it all together for a stupendous weekend, writes Nick Jones



(Top) Hundreds of people enjoyed the sunshine to watch displays of medieval fighting. (Centre) Hard at work in the kitchen: Vittoria Churchman (left) and Kathleen Kelly. All their utensils and pots were replicas from the 15th century (Above) In the firing line: re-enactors rise to the occasion

Barnet Medieval Festival might have been a year late, and it had to be put together in a rush, but a weekend of military re-enactments and medieval displays provided a magnificent in-character celebration of the 550th anniversary of the Battle of Barnet.

Such was the pent-up enthusiasm for a chance to recreate and relive life in and around a medieval battlefield that more than 300 re-enactors and medieval traders pitched their tents at the Byng Road playing fields – a record for the festival.

Judging by the delight of the thousands of residents and visitors who toured the campsite and watched the living history displays, the festival committee had every reason to take the credit for having gone ahead with the event so soon after the easing of post-pandemic restrictions.

Howard Simmons, chair of the Battlefields Trust, congratulated Barnet for having the foresight and courage to re-arrange the festival for a weekend in September and for having staged such a highly impressive re-enactment.

“After the stunning success of its festivals in 2018 and 2019, Barnet was already becoming a must-go event for medieval battlefield re-enactors.

“After this year’s record turnout, there is no doubt the commemoration of the Battle of Barnet is up there with Tewkesbury and Bosworth as one of the top half dozen Wars of the Roses celebrations.”

Martin Russell, representative deputy lieutenant for Barnet, welcomed the

opposing armies and accompanied by the Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers, he marched to the opening ceremony where he fired medieval cannon.

After the cancellation of last year’s festival because of Covid 19, Mr Russell, patron of the festival, told the re-enactors the local community had been so looking forward to their return.

In introducing Ms Villiers, he reminded the audience that the MP’s forebears were related to both sides of the conflict – and Ms Villiers expressed her delight at joining in.

The depth of the crowd for the re-enactment of the historic confrontation between the Yorkist and Lancastrian armies on 14 April 1471 was all the more rewarding for the troops because they had missed out on so many battlefield events during the last year and half.

Event co-ordinator Howard Giles said the Byng Road playing fields were ideal for a medieval encampment and as a site for the battlefield because the backdrop of mature trees and the surrounding Green Belt helped recreate the scene as it might have been in 1471.

“Visually the landscape really works and as the opposing armies approach each other the atmosphere is just right and that helps the re-enactors as they engage in combat.”

Walking round the campsite, when talking to the re-enactors in full costume, combat gear and armour, their thrill in being back in character and able once again to bear arms was all too evident.

When the Duchess of York (Marion Oakley) sent her eldest son Edward

The attention to detail by battle re-enactors is one of the things that marks out festivals such as Barnet's. Great pride is taken in making sure that the uniforms and clothes are an accurate depiction of the medieval times and pass muster with the expert historians



IV (Chris Farncombe) off to battle she couldn't hide her enthusiasm for the day's proceedings.

"We really do love it here at the Barnet Medieval Festival. The site and setting are great, and everyone is so friendly and welcoming."

Another group of returning re-enactors were camp followers cooking lunch for their household. Boiled ham, eggs and flatbread were on the menu.

Catherine Taylor said their display of medieval cooking over a wood fire was a great draw and they enjoyed explaining to children what the cooks had to do.

Ms Taylor, who assisted Howard Giles with the commentaries, said part of the thrill of camping at the festival was that the site was so authentic.

Newcomers to the festival were a medieval music group A Merrie Noyse who entertained the crowds and led medieval dancing.

String player Barry Tudor from Tamworth – who was supported by drummer Rod Pomery and bagpipe player Sue Pope both from Lostwithiel in Cornwall – was equally impressed by the setting of the battlefield and the

smooth running of the campsite.

"We were at the Battle of Evesham festival last month and everyone said you must do Barnet. So here we are.

"Acoustically this site is so good, surrounded by other countryside. We musicians would have been at a battle like Barnet, and you can imagine the music carrying across the fields."

Festival director Susan Skedd was delighted there had been such a positive response from the many re-enactors and medieval traders and was especially pleased by the support of their partners the House of Bayard.

After having had to cancel the festival twice in 2020 and again in the summer of 2021, the committee had faced a real challenge in having such a short time to organise the event, but they'd been so encouraged by the response of Barnet people.

Her hope is that next year there can be even more fundraising and if possible, the weekend festival might start on a Friday which would allow the re-enactors time to engage with local school children and widen still further support and interest in the history of the Battle of Barnet.



Let battle commence: in the thick of things, as one soldier takes some time out

(Top) A Merrie Noyse, medieval music group: String player Barry Tudor (left), pipe player Sue Pope and drummer Rod Pomery. (centre) Martha, Leah and Lexi check out the sweet store. (right) Zec Levitan (6) arrived dressed and fully armed for the occasion





Chipping Barnet

The future of planning will soon become clear

Robin Bishop writes

Over the next few months, the appearance of Barnet and adjoining countryside will be shaped for decades to come. The Local Plans of Barnet, Enfield and Hertsmerere will be finalised, determining which green and brownfield sites can be developed – and how densely. And the government’s planning reforms will be announced, so we’ll find out how much say we’ll be allowed over our physical surroundings in the future.



We’ve had some influence over Barnet’s Local Plan. The Council agreed with about 40 per cent of our comments on its March 2020 draft – not a bad result. We’ve been working with the Federation of Residents Associations in Barnet to secure improvements to the final version.

Both Enfield’s and Hertsmerere’s Local Plans propose extensive developments on Green Belt land close to Barnet. We’ll be commenting on them. **Below, left, is a map of Enfield’s sites.**

We’ve been busy with the London Green Belt Council publicising such threats, and recently showed its photographer Mark Griffiths some of our own patch.

The recent Chesham & Amersham by-election result showed how much the public cares about the green environment, and our own MP (and Society member) Theresa Villiers has done sterling work highlighting flaws in the government’s proposed planning reforms.

The town centre is in a state of uncertainty.

Changes to The Spires are being planned. In June the Council adopted the Chipping Barnet

Community Plan and announced five projects for further study. And in July Gail Laser, the Town Team and the organisation Save the High Street successfully bid to the Mayor of London’s High Streets for All fund for innovative employment incubator spaces in vacant premises. They’ve been allocated £20,000, subject to certain conditions and further work. These should be positive developments – but all depend in part on the Council, and progress seems painfully slow.

On the negative side, the two zombie telecom hubs in the High Street that we thought we’d killed off last year have returned to haunt us. JC Decaux have gone to appeal – and have applied for a third outside the police station. The public phones are entirely superfluous, and their advertising would add visual clutter of a kind that we have been trying for years to remove from the street scene. We’ve submitted a strong representation against them.

In New Barnet, the developers have revised aspects of their designs for Victoria Quarter. They’ve listened to at least some of our objections to the scheme that was refused by the planning committee last year: the number of homes has been reduced by 15% to 554, and the height of some blocks has been lowered. But the type of housing and its monolithic design are still worse than the plans approved four years ago, so we will object.



Four nominations to join Local List

The Society recently submitted four nominations for the Local List of houses of architectural and historical interest. They range in style from the exuberant late Victorian of 163 Victoria Road to the picturesque 1890s Arts & Crafts of Holmside (145 Barnet Road) & Rowley Lodge (Rowley Lane). The last two were commissioned by notable Arkley personalities, respectively Archibald Famer, a successful clerk, captain and top scorer of Arkley Cricket Club, and Arthur Mudie of Mudie's Circulating Libraries.

Our last nomination, Ravenscroft Cottages (Grasvenor Avenue) is a sensitive late (1934) example of the same style, also notable for being designed by Joyce E Townsend, one of few female qualified architects in the interwar years. The Council's decision on their listing is expected shortly – but probably too late to save Holmside (see case, right).



A selection of other recent cases:

APPROVED

13 Sunset View – The owner took our advice on the design of a replacement porch suitable for the Monken Hadley CA, though we were less happy with some of his other changes.

16 Sunset View – We supported this sympathetic back extension to a locally listed building.

Hyde Institute, Church Passage – We supported the proposed nursery.

17 Park Road – Over the last two years the owner has submitted 13 applications to cram up to 36 flats into this Victorian villa. We opposed them all. He's finally got permission for 25.

Shell services, Stirling Corner – Six new electric charging points.

REFUSED

52-54 High Street (CA; GII) – We objected to the grafting of a branded shop front onto this Grade II Listed building, contrary to CA guidelines.

204 High Street (former Statons) – This would have dramatically upped building height in the CA to 3 storeys and was unsympathetically detailed, so we objected.

33 Park Road – Two applications for extra storeys on this block of flats. Although in theory Permitted Development, we objected anyway and the Council refused both.

1-9 Richard Court, Alston Road (PD) – Applications for an extra storey on two blocks of flats. Again Permitted Development, but we objected anyway.

46 Prospect Road – We objected to this 3-storey front, side and back extension.

29 advertising banners on lamp-posts, E Barnet Road & Cat Hill.

Land adjacent to Chesterfield Farm, Mays Lane – We were neutral about this proposal for stables on a Green Belt site, but demanded strict conditions.

WITHDRAWN

54A Bulwer Road – We initially objected to a proposed nursery in this former shop on the grounds of insufficient and unsuitable indoor and outdoor facilities and safety. In response the proposed number of children was substantially reduced, so we went neutral.

PLANNING DECISIONS AWAITED

54A High Street – A modified scheme has been submitted for this rare medieval survival. The planners have been inexplicably slow to process it.

Brake Shear House, 164 High Street – We objected to gates to this housing, which are contrary to promises Shanly Homes made at the start of the project.

2 Clyde Villas, Hadley Green Road (CA; LL) – This proposal for 16 flats for people with special needs would cram too many into the building and garden. We objected.

The Totteridge Academy city farm (GB) – We supported a classroom, accessible WCs and a small barn on this former field because they would assist revival of agricultural use.

Gaelic football pavilion, King George's playing field – A replacement for a previous building, not to be confused with the sports/leisure hub proposed for Barnet Playing Fields.

2 St Albans Road – Two new floors above the former Scrummagars shop.

Holmside, 145 Barnet Road – We opposed replacement of this Arts & Crafts house (which we nominated for the Local List) by a larger and inappropriate modernist one.

GONE TO APPEAL

Arkley Riding School, Hedgerow Lane – We objected to four new houses in the Green Belt.

APPEAL DISMISSED

Land off Langley Row – The Council is attempting to enforce removal of artefacts littering this Green Belt site.

APPEAL UPHELD

28 Prospect Road – We objected to replacement of this Arts & Crafts house by a block of six flats, but the Inspector allowed it.

APPEAL DECISION AWAITED

1 Sunset View & 70 High Street – Inspectors have yet to decide these test cases of CA planning law, nine months and one year on respectively.

FARTHER AFIELD

Hendon Hub – We submitted a detailed critique of plans for expansion of Middlesex University and relocation of the Central Library. The Council has decided to proceed regardless.

Barnet House, 1255 High Street – The latest application is for 260 homes in, on top of and behind this prominent slab in Whetstone. We have objected.

Douglas Bader Estate, Colindale – The Council has refused permission for 753 new homes in towers up to nine storeys high.

North London Business Park, Brunswick Park – Following intervention by Secretary of State for Housing Robert Jenrick, Comer Homes propose to increase the number of homes from 1,150 (in its scheme previously refused by Barnet) to 2,428 in blocks of up to 12 storeys.

Cockfosters Station – Just outside Barnet's boundary, this proposed development of 652 flats on the station car park foreshadows TfL's plans for High Barnet Station. We strongly objected to Enfield about the adverse impact of its four towers up to 13 storeys high.



Bitter blow for Gary

National cheerleader for publicans hands back the lease of historic High Street real ale hostelry to brewer, writes Nick Jones

Gary Murphy, High Barnet's most celebrated licensee of recent times, has given up his lease after having spent the last 13 years establishing The Mitre as a public house recognised across North London for its real ales and craft beers.

His final 18 months at the pub, struggling with financial difficulties resulting from lockdown and ever-changing restrictions on social distancing, proved too much.

His departure from the High Street will mean the loss of a powerful voice for publicans across the country, who have admired his determination to take on the brewers, as well as the government.

In recent months, Mr Murphy became a frequent and vocal critic of the way lockdown and then social distancing rules have damaged the pub trade and he is not hopeful of

▲ Time's up: Gary Murphy spent the last 13 years turning the Mitre into a real ale beacon, only to be worn down by the Covid restrictions

“Because of the punitive pub closures...I did not make any profit in the last 18 months

a rapid bounce back for licensed houses.

“Because of punitive pub closures and nonsensical restrictions, I didn't make any profit in the last 18 months, and I didn't relish the prospect of rebuilding the business when pubs are still 20 per cent or more down on our usual trade.

“Given the re-sale value of the remainder of my lease it was more profitable for me to hand it back and less risky than running the pub for the next five years.

He is assured that the incoming Greene King tenant, who took over in August, wants to keep The Mitre very much as it is at present - “an historic, old-style drinking house.”

In his 13 years at The Mitre, Mr Murphy enlarged the floor area by expanding into the former stables at the rear of the pub and by enlarging the garden.

“I tried to broaden the appeal of the pub and it has become quite a community asset for High Barnet.

“The Mitre is known across North London, and in much of the country, as an original pub offering a wide range of real ales and craft beers.”

He acknowledged that buying out the remainder of the lease made commercial sense for Greene King as subsequent tenants would be on less favourable terms than he had managed to secure.

Mr Murphy gained national prominence for the campaigns he has waged. At the start of lockdown in April 2020 - when The Mitre had to close its doors - he gained widespread publicity for his campaign to force pub owners to agree a rent holiday.

After attracting over 400,000 views for his tweet, “No Pub, No Rent”, he was interviewed extensively in the press and on radio and television.

In the first five weeks he clocked up a debt of almost £10,000. Real ale and other beers worth £6,000 went to waste in The Mitre's cellars.

With the gradual easing of lockdown, he was forced like other licensees to battle on amid continuing confusion over the restrictions.

Initially High Barnet's nine public houses faced a 10pm curfew and no socialising inside.

Yamama Falafel's proprietor Yara Allahseh (left) with her daughter and assistant, Ranad Abuinsair in their pop-up food truck at the Stapylton Road entrance to The Spires.



Spires street food Fancy a falafel?



Perseverance has paid off for Palestinian chef Yara Allahseh who prepares and sells a range of Middle Eastern fresh food and snacks from her pitch Yamama Falafel in the marketplace at the Stapylton Road entrance to The Spires shopping centre.

After starting out initially with a stall she has now invested in a purpose-built food truck which is open for business seven days a week, from 11am to 7pm.

Falafel, halloumi and spicy potato are just some of her specialities, available in wraps or boxes.

Yara, who is assisted by her daughter Ranad Abuinsair (19), has been a UK resident for the last 22 years and after working in the catering trade and training as a chef, she

decided to start her own business.

Her first stall outside The Spires became a casualty of the Covid-19 pandemic when the twice-weekly stalls market was suspended during lockdown.

She returned in May this year when social restrictions were eased and is now firmly established with her mobile kitchen and a growing band of loyal customers.

"It has been hard work and trade was quiet to begin with. But now we get loads of repeat customers who really appreciate our freshly prepared food and snacks and especially the falafel and halloumi.

"What I find so welcoming about High Barnet – and so does my daughter – is that our customers are coming not just for the food but want to chat and are really

interested in what is on the menu.

"They seem to like us as a family and that support really makes us happy."

Yara's success has delighted Chris Nightingale, founder of Friends of Barnet Market, who work tirelessly to encourage the widest possible range of stalls – and especially the increasing number selling street food.

"Yara has now built up her business and the rest of the market traders have made sure she is welcome and part of the market family," said Mr Nightingale.

For more about Yara's stall, see Yamama Falafel on Facebook. Deliveries are by Deliveroo or Uber Eats.



Pulling power of pop-up pub

The Friends of Barnet Market want to do all they can to build up the area as a place to eat and drink.

This trend has been given added impetus by local brewers Urban Alchemy, who have been setting out a seating area at weekends and are building another loyal band of customers. The brewery was set up by ex-students who had been experimenting with the craft as a cheap means of slaking their thirst on a tight budget. Fast forward a few years and Dave, Si and Matt went into business in a serious way, their vegan-friendly craft beers winning a loyal following in the Barnet area.

FOND FAREWELLS FROM RESIDENTS TO RETIRING CLERK WHO MANAGED CHARITABLE ALMSHOUSES

Simon Smith who spent the last 16 years managing over 60 of High Barnet's historic almshouses has taken early retirement from his role as clerk to the trustees of the Jesus Hospital Charity.

He has been busy saying goodbye to the many residents he has known so well over the years.

The completion two years ago of seven new almshouses – at Ravenscroft Cottages in Potters Lane – was one of the most satisfying accomplishments of Mr Smith's tenure as the charity's clerk.



He is standing at a plaque that was erected to mark the achievement. "We are so proud at Jesus Hospital Charity, which was established in the 17th century, that we have been able to add to High Barnet's much-admired stock of almshouses, some of which are historic local landmarks.

"With our expansion programme, we have been able to demonstrate the continuing importance and relevance of providing housing for the elderly and needy."

There are well over 170 almshouses within a mile of Barnet Parish Church and almost 1,000 within the London Borough of Barnet – a concentration of charitable almshouses that is perhaps exceeded only by the scale of the retirement housing provided by the Durham miners.

Locations like High Barnet were popular with early benefactors because elderly impoverished women in need of housing could be provided with homes in healthy surroundings, on a high ground, yet close to London.



CLASSIC CAR CLUB SHOW GETS READY FOR THE OFF AFTER PANDEMIC LAY-OFF

After missing out last year, members of the Barnet Classic Car Club are raring to go – ready to parade up Barnet Hill and along the High Street to the annual classic car show which has grown from strength to strength in recent years.

Fifty cars have already been entered for the event on Sunday 26 September and as many as 70 are expected to take part.

Weather permitting, vintage cars and motorcycles will line up in a display that will fill the vast top deck of the NCP car park at The Spires shopping centre (from 11.30am to 2pm).

Vehicles will assemble in the Underhill playing fields car park and then parade along the High Street at thirty-second intervals from 11am. Organisers, Chris and Diane Nightingale, hope the 2021 show will give a boost to the post-pandemic revival of local cultural and social events

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION...THE HOUSE THAT FRED BUILT BECOMES A SET FOR TV THRILLER FILMED IN BARNET



A 1960s self-built house, described by the Barnet Society as being "uncompromisingly modern" for its period, became one of the sets for shooting scenes for a six-part tv thriller Ragdoll from the producers of Killing Eve.

Camera crews, technicians and support staff lined up outside the house in Granville Road for the three-day shoot.

Round the corner, in a vacant warehouse in the nearby Queens Road industrial estate, off Wood Street, Sid Gentle Films created a temporary studio during filming. Ragdoll is billed as being a gruesome drama which revolves around the murder of six people whose bodies have been dismembered and sewn into the shape of one grotesque body nicknamed "The Ragdoll".

Sitting right in the middle of a typical Barnet street of Edwardian homes, the eye-catching 1960s house, built by Fred Hobart, was added to Barnet Council's local list of buildings of architectural interest or historic interest on the recommendation of the Barnet Society.

TRIBUTES TO INSPIRATION OF FITZJOHN AVENUE RESIDENT WHO ENCOURAGED INSTALLATION OF SWIFT NESTING BOXES



Swifts which migrate to High Barnet for the summer months have lost one of their greatest admirers and staunchest guardians: Tim Friend (left), who encouraged fellow householders to follow his example by installing swift nesting boxes, has died at the age of 71. Fellow enthusiasts paid tribute to Tim's pioneering work with the swifts, dubbed "squealers".

His death in mid-July coincided with the annual count by Barnet swift enthusiasts who monitor their arrival and departure and who try to identify and protect their nesting sites.

Last year, Mr Friend added three more boxes under the eaves of his house in Fitzjohn Avenue. He set his first one up in 2018.

Grow-ing interest in the land

Pioneering community farm at Totteridge Academy has ambitious plans for future expansion, writes Nick Jones

An open day at the Grow Farm at Totteridge Academy was a chance to see the transformation of an empty field into a community farm where children are taught the practicalities of food cultivation and have an opportunity to build up agricultural skills.

Educational charity Grow and Totteridge Academy hope to build up awareness of their work and strengthen community support for their plans to expand. About a third of a six-acre field next to the academy is under cultivation.

Approval for additional buildings is in the balance because Barnet Council is opposed to new construction within the Green Belt – and an earlier application was refused.

Despite its commitment to protect the Green Belt, the Barnet Society supports the plan for a classroom and barn because it will allow all-weather teaching and the farm's produce to be properly stored.

Barnet councillor Paul Edwards, who supports the application, has

called for a decision to be taken at a meeting of the full planning committee, so that it can be considered in public and Totteridge Academy's representatives have the right to speak.

Grow has had increasing success in reaching out to local schools. In the coming academic year 200 pupils a week from Totteridge Academy will have outdoor classes as well as Learning from the Land sessions for children from four nearby primary schools.

For the second year running, Grow has been taking part in the government's Kickstart programme, which funds job placements for people aged between 16 and 24.

Scarlet Cook and Tanya Sahin are both enjoying their training at Grow. "This is the first time I have tried agricultural work and I am enjoying working outside." said Scarlet.

Chris Haigh, the farm's senior grower, has welcomed the latest addition – a second beehive for what Grow hopes will become a self-sustaining colony of 20,000 bees.

Planning permission has been granted for a hard standing for an

“This is the first time I have tried agricultural work and I am enjoying working outside”
Scarlet Cook

▼ Two trainees from the government's Kickstart scheme, Scarlet Cook (left) and Tanya Sahin, inspect the beetroot crop with senior grower Chris Haigh

animal shelter, which will be built once the farm is ready to expand. So far chickens are the only livestock.

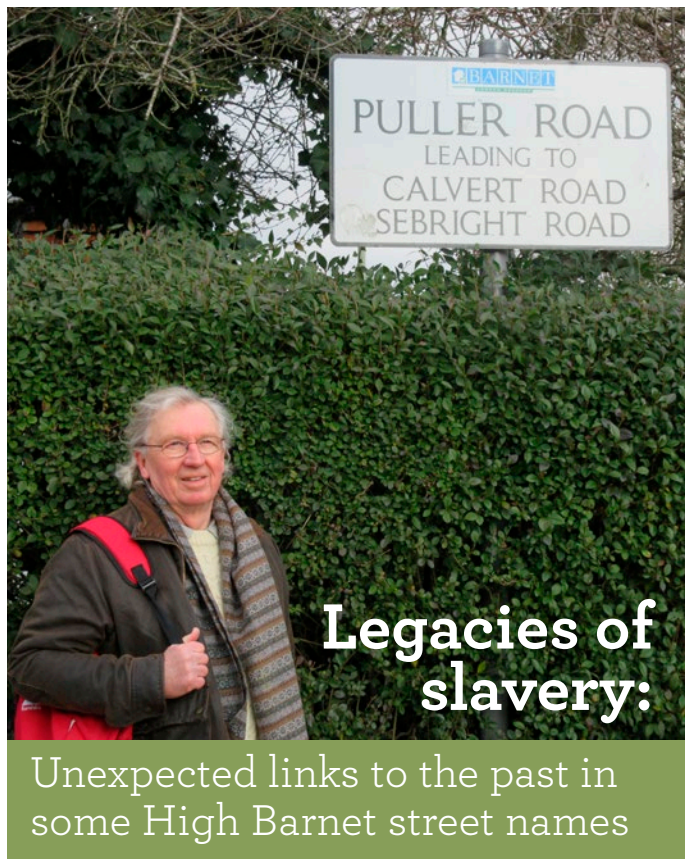
Lucy Gray, fund raising director, said that with the combined efforts of growers and volunteers and pupils, the farm has had great success. Every Thursday afternoon there is a stall at the farm gate selling produce, which this year has included courgettes, tomatoes, fennel, beetroot, cucumbers, and a range of salads.

“We have been so encouraged by the community engagement we have been experiencing and the recognition that the farm is an asset, an open and welcome space, and one which we hope Barnet Council will support.”

Robin Bishop, of the Barnet Society, says that an outdoor classroom and barn proposed by Grow are akin to traditional farm structures and inconspicuously sited.

“They would have minimal impact on the rural scene. On the contrary, by enabling a wider range of plants and animals to be cultivated, they would enhance the Green Belt's environmental diversity.”





Legacies of slavery:

Unexpected links to the past in some High Barnet street names

A research study at University College London into the role of slavery in shaping British history has highlighted unlooked for – almost accidental – reminders of the slave trade in some of the historic street names of High Barnet, *writes Nick Jones*.

Alston Road, Trafford Road, Byng Road...just some of the roads named after prominent politicians whose families had connections with plantations in

Jamaica and the ownership of slaves.

When Barnet expanded rapidly in the late 19th century after the arrival of the railway, a common practice then – as now – was to name new streets to commemorate local politicians, well-known statesmen or other famous individuals.

Alston Road was named after Rowland Alston, Whig MP for Hertfordshire from 1835 to 1841, who became an owner of slaves through marriage and



◀ Barnet historian Dennis Bird seen here at the junction of Puller Road and Alston Road

who went on to support the abolition of slavery, standing as a candidate for the Anti-Slavery Society in 1832.

Currently there is considerable debate about the possible repercussions of listing historic associations to slavery.

Barnet historian Dennis Bird believes the data published by UCL has highlighted unexpected local links to slavery and would provide the basis for a research project for a local school or perhaps a university student.

“UCL have produced a fascinating website and it does provide a wealth of information about British involvement in slavery.” (Study of Legacies of British Slavery, University College London, www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/)

When slavery was abolished in 1833, the British government used 40 per cent of its national budget in 1837 to buy freedom for slaves in the empire – a sum that the Treasury says was only finally paid off in 2015.

Much of the compensation paid to slave owners went to landed families in Britain and some it financed a spate of electioneering in the wake of the Great Reform Act of 1832 and the reforms to electoral system.

UCL’s records show that a compensation claim for £2,505 for 122 slaves in Jamaica, owned by his late wife, passed to Rowland Alston in 1836.

George Stevens Byng, son of John Byng, first Earl of Trafford – of Wrotham Park House – was another prominent Whig politician who shared Alston’s support for electoral reform.

UCL’s website lists George Byng as having made a counter claim for a third of the compensation of £3,018 for 159 enslaved people at the Harmony Hall estate in Jamaica – a claim that was unsuccessful.

Byng, an MP between 1831 and 1852, became the second Earl of Trafford on the death of his father.

Help the Barnet Society carry on its work by joining.

Annual subscriptions are £8 for an individual or £12 for a family. Additional donations are greatly appreciated.

Website – www.barnetsociety.org.uk

Rotating Chair – Eamonn Rafferty
raffertye@gmail.com 07956 469646

Membership Secretary – Kim Ambridge
Kimbarnet6@gmail.com 07974 225950

Correspondence – The Secretary, 4 Hillary Rise,
Barnet EN5 5AZ

