

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



COURTESY HALS

On the final page of last month's Newsletter appeared an appeal for further details of any one of three houses which had been built at the north end of Beaumont Avenue, but were eventually replaced by St John's Court in the 1960s.

Bramhall was accessed via Sandpit Lane; *The Grange/ Stoodley / Lane End* (at various times) was the most northerly house; and *Avenue House/ St John's Lodge* was nearer to the northern arm of Salisbury Avenue.

There was not long to wait, for as part of the Beaumont Avenue project Carol had investigated documents in HALS archive and made a copy of an auction sale document for *St John's Lodge* from the 1920s. We'll explore the interior of the house on page two, but above is a photograph of the house as taken from the boundary. The drive sweeps around to the right from Beaumont Avenue towards the front door. Outbuildings were to the left of the photographer.

The windows on each floor facing the road have been treated differently by the architect; on the ground floor a semi-circular porch top and lines of small panes to the windows; on the first floor both windows have tiled hoods; while those on the second floor are set in timbered frame work, reminiscent of a later arts and craft style. The building is topped by a pair of bold chimney stacks showing heating was available to all main rooms.



Left: OS map 1922, with the current site of St John's Court bounded in red.

COURTESY NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND

FLEETVILLE IMPROVEMENTS

We are invited to respond to an HCC walking/cycling improvement proposal in Fleetville. Roads bounded by Hatfield Road, Beechwood Avenue, Sandpit Lane and the Midland railway are included. Proposals may include a 20mph zone, junction improvements to benefit cyclists and walkers, and changes to how vehicles access the **low traffic neighbourhood**.

We have until 16th March to respond.

Go to www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/activetravelfund to add your comments and find out how many people have responded so far.

So far the details are scant; photographic examples from other areas would have been useful, on which we could base some meaningful comments. Until then we will have to use our imaginations!

NEWLY PUBLISHED

Last month we reported the re-awakening recently of a local history group which had a previous life. This will be grand news for any reader with an interest in Colney Heath. In addition to the village and Sleapshyde, part of its declared area of interest is Oaklands and Smallford, Highfield, Hill End and Tyttenhanger Green.

We have now heard of a recently published book, **Colney Heath Chronicles, by Ruth Herman**

For further information on Colney Heath & District History Society contact John Clemow: jackclemow@gmail.com

07803 313 525 or 01727 823944

That's a great start for a newly resurrected group.

A SPY AT THE CAMP

A recently received email – the second on the same subject – refers to a house the correspondent's parents had purchased in Glenlyn Avenue in 1934. Within a short period Avril's parents answered a newspaper advertisement, inviting householders to take in paying guests from Germany for short holidays as a gesture of goodwill. Her father had service in the First World War and presumably thought in terms of letting bygones be bygones – and a little extra cash would also be useful.

During the first year they accommodated an elderly couple, Herr & Frau Kohl who were very pleasant and spent much time out and about exploring the district. The visit was deemed to have been a success and so the venture was repeated the following year.

The next guest was a young man who likewise spent much time riding around on his bicycle. As usual, much conversation about that day's forays probably took place during the course of the evening, which all appeared quite innocent initially. Then the man began asking more searching questions, such as what was made at the Ballito Hosiery Factory? *“Dad, who had knowledge of the wider value of synthetic fibres such as nylon, realised they were inadvertently harbouring a spy, and the man was thrown out ... Apparently, a large number of Hitler's spies came to Britain in the 1930s, posing as friendly tourists but with ulterior motives. My parents weren't the only ones to be fooled, but at least they cottoned on.”*



Glenlyn Avenue as it looks today.

A GENTLEMAN'S FREEHOLD RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY: St John's Lodge

Just imagine you have received a brochure for a property. There has been no opportunity to explore inside yet. So what might we find?

Main features: within a mile of the railway station [there were three of them in 1925, but it is inevitable the Midland is referred to]. We are to expect *“a pleasing elevation”* along a well wooded road, and with secluded grounds of 2.5 acres, approached by a long tree-lined carriage drive.

On the ground floor: inside the entrance door is a vestibule and lounge hall with fitted fireplace. Gents cloakroom and separate WC.

An artistic drawing room (27' x 16'), with doors to a heated conservatory/winter garden (20' x 8')

A dining room (19' x 17') which also leads to the conservatory.

Domestic offices: kitchen (15' x 13') with fitted *Cooksjoy* range, dresser and large cupboards. Scullery, fitted sink, copper, larder, coal cellar, servants' WC.

First floor: 4 bedrooms, three of them heated and 20 feet long. A spacious landing, bathroom and separate WC. Heated linen cupboard and housemaid's cupboard.

Second floor: Two further bedrooms, both 20 feet long. Boxroom and boarded-in loft.

Company's electric light, gas and water, main drainage. Telephone.

Outbuildings: Large heated garage for two cars, stabling for two, harness room with loft over, and chauffeur's room.

Grounds: highly matured and exceptionally well maintained. Full sized tennis lawn in excellent condition, fine well-stocked rose garden, pergola walks, rockery with ornamental fish pond. Paddock. Very productive kitchen garden.

Now, I wonder how much that cost in 1925!

FEATURE STREET: BRAMPTON ROAD

Brampton Road was formed partly from the Crossfield path which began at Hatfield Road/ Beaumont Avenue and was routed directly to St Peter's Church. The track became the northernmost limit of the building estate created from St Peter's Farm, and was named in 1899 as the building estate got under way.

It is not certain who was responsible for the road's naming, but an event which took place at the beginning of that year was the retirement from the Bar of Henry Hawkins, the first and last Baron Brampton, born in Hitchin. During his extensive legal career he had participated as barrister in a number of key cases, which had been widely published.

Baron Brampton died in 1907. Although he appears to have had no direct connection with St Albans, he was born in the county and educated at Bedford School. At the end of an active and illustrious career it seemed to be the appropriate moment to commemorate his baronetcy for service to the legal profession. Whether the boundary of the building estate included the former track or not makes little difference. Earl Spencer was the owner of St Peter's Farm, and he also owned the land north of Brampton Road which would not be developed for another twenty years.

So, the Crossfield path was the boundary between two farming estates, but unlike today where the road extends in a straight line to Woodstock Road, you have to imagine the path crossing Woodstock Road south at the Alley, following the school boundary opposite and then diagonally across Burnham Road, now built on, and finally turning as it met what we now know as Brampton Road roughly halfway between Woodstock and Harlesden roads. For that diversion the company received the consent of the Council. The Slade Building estate, between Harlesden and Sandfield roads, was fully occupied by 1901 – no doubt the rents being enhanced by the "extensive views" across the Ninefields northwards towards Sandpit Lane. In fact, these views were available to all new occupiers on the south side until the 1930s, when development began on the Ninefields.

We may wonder about it today, with its end-to-end parking on both sides, but Brampton Road was on a bus route (eastbound only) with stops in Blandford Road, near Verulam School and near Hamilton Road, before turning left towards Sandpit Lane towards Marshalswick. An earlier form of the route had the bus turning right and terminating in Sutton Road, before the bridge!

We can also add Brampton to other places east of the city with persistent risks of flooding. The road near Hamilton Road lies in a shallow bowl, with surface water able to stream from both ends and along Hamilton Road. Major drainage improvements were carried out in the 1950s, since when children have been denied their paddling fun in wet weather.

Just two questions you might have wanted to ask about Brampton Road. Opposite Glenferrie Road are three quite modern houses with a single number, a, b and c. In the early years of the last century, apart from the Vicarage, was a large house, predating anything else on the north side. The house was demolished in favour of these three replacements. Then, have you noticed a post-WW2 house on the corner of Sandfield Road? We might wonder why this plot lay vacant for over fifty years. The site had been reserved for a corner shop in the early days. Instead, the shop went to the corner of Harlesden and Burnham roads and a house on the Sandfield land finally arrived c1960.



Looking towards Woodstock Road, beyond which the distant treeline is Beaumont Avenue before Salisbury Avenue was built; a muddy and unlit Brampton Road c1910.



Rather later than the top picture, viewed from Harlesden Road. Brampton Road in the late 1920s is now fully paved, but a decade earlier than the arrival of "the Boys' Modern School" which appear on the right.

MIGHT WE CALL IT WINCHES WATER?



COURTESY DAVID GAYLARD

In this district we knew where our water came from, gathered, and disappeared.

There are still largely permanent water courses, such as Ellenbrook. Others are places we are reminded of only in periods of torrential rain racing downwards along a road, only to gather in a hollow. Those of us who pass dry country ditches in the summer months are aware of trickling water occupying those same places in winter. Then there are suggestions of former stream beds now lost to history.

Our roving reporter, “Jack”, accompanied by his walking scribe, David, felt it worth mentioning a newly discovered flow of water close to the

former Winches Farm. Rather surprisingly, it is marked on the Google map, so this sounds very much like a bourne – a seasonal stream. It appears to have been upgraded to manage surface flow from Kingsbury Gardens, but the gentle gradient is still evident in the photo. It is a similar gradient to all of the water sources east of St Albans, rising as springs and flowing broadly southwards; sometimes in culverts, to join the Ver and then the Colne, or meeting the Colne directly.

ANOTHER D-DAY

For the second occasion in 25 years we were talking about it: D Day, and about the significance of the letter D (which was nothing more than Day).

In February 1971 we were in no doubt at all, as the notion of the new D Day had been rammed home for months; D Day this time around was Decimal Day, when elements of our currency would be changing. Just about the only value which did not change was the standard, one pound, although it took another 12 years to become a coin.

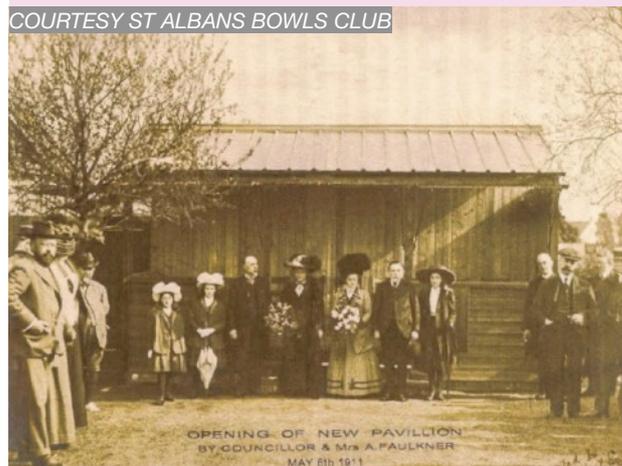
If you were around at the time you will recall the suspicion of D Day inflation, when it was supposed retailers would hide their costs as price rises, as most of us were unfamiliar with the conversions from d to p (old pence to new pence). It was probably the only reason why the new coin set included a half-pence “bit” (*tiddler*) which we inevitably lost all too easily.

In the end we got used to it, and often introduced an apparent sense of realism into conversations about the price of goods, by exclamatory phrases such as “...but that’s very nearly *ten bob* (ten shillings)”, “I think it’s twice the price for a coin half the size,” and “it’s the Chancellor’s daylight robbery!”

The Editor’s favourite was a *tanner*, a popular small silver coin of six old pence, equivalent to 2.5 pence today.

GOOD USE WAS MADE OF IT

COURTESY ST ALBANS BOWLS CLUB



When Clarence Park was laid out, the 1890 plan for lower Clarence Park Road, as then named, and York Road, were intended to be a road to nowhere, gently curving around the park’s boundary. By the time the Hatfield Road building estate was being planned, the western end of Brampton Road needed a connection, and so today we have our cross-roads junction.

A roughly triangular space was left inside the new park with no future use confirmed.

This became home for the Bowls Club, its pavilion formally opening in 1911, and which celebrates its 110th birthday this summer.

Ideas, comments, pictures – anything – contact Mike on mikeneighbour@mac.com

The FD website is www.fleetvillediarists.org