

# THE BARNET SOCIETY

## BT's empty broadband promises

Promises for a high speed service have been abandoned despite assurances, from BT, writes **Nick Jones**

British Telecom's long-standing undertaking to complete its roll-out of high-speed broadband in High Barnet was in effect abandoned long before the highly publicised completion date of 30 September.

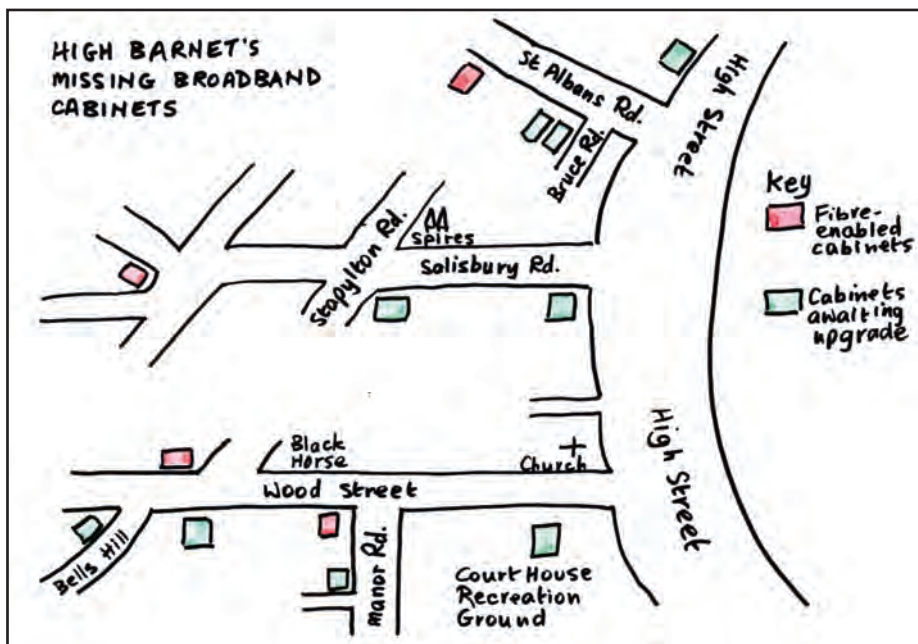
So far only one of the promised fibre-enabled cabinets has been installed, at the bus stop beside Hadley Highstone, at the junction of Kitts End Road and the Great North Road.

Customers who have complained about the failure to install the nine other additional cabinets that are needed are now being told by BT that locations cannot be found for them or that they are "no longer commercially viable".

As a result, High Barnet will be left with a patchwork of broadband delivery: there are streets where houses and commercial premises already have high-speed broadband but next to them are adjoining roads where customers have been left struggling with a third-world service and some of the slowest broadband speeds in the country.

In a number of streets, some homes do have access to a high-speed connection while the rest do not; often around the corner or across the road are high-usage BT customers that have never had a problem.

Aggrieved small businesses, IT professionals and other home owners and tenants who do require fast broadband for their work are met with a litany of excuses and BT



Missing links: what still needs to be done to upgrade the service

doublespeak whenever they seek an explanation.

Publicly, BT is still promising, via its broadband helpline, that High Barnet's roll-out for conversion to high-speed will be completed on 30 September, but correspondence with customers has confirmed that nine existing copper cabinets will not be upgraded by the installation of a fibre-enabled cabinet.

The installation at the end of July of a new fibre cabinet beside the existing copper cabinet at the bus stop near Hadley Highstone illustrates the apparent ease with which the network can be upgraded if it suits BT's commercial interests.

High Barnet's unhappy experience at the hands of BT has its roots in Barnet Council's refusal in 2012 to agree locations for a number of fibre-optic cabinets, including one on the High Street pavement and another in Wood Street, on the grounds that they would have "an adverse impact" on

the local conservation area.

In May 2013, the government amended the relevant permitted development legislation so that the "express permission" of the local planning authority was no longer required.

But in the intervening months, BT has continued to argue that it still cannot get agreement on locations.

Finally, letters from the chairman and chief executive's office have confirmed the worst fears of individual complainants. BT says that it is "unable to find a suitable location" for six new fibre broadband cabinets at:

**Bells Hill**, at its junction with Wood Street

**Wood Street**, opposite the Black Horse public house

**Wood Street**, outside the entrance to the Old Court House recreation ground

**High Street**, near Hadley Parade-  
**Salisbury Road**, near the junction with Scopylton Road.

*Turn to page 2*

# Why have we been misled by BT over high-speed broadband?

*Continued from page 1*

**Manor Road**, near the junction with Cedar Lawn Avenue.

Two new cabinets in Bruce Road, near its junction with St Albans Road, and another in Salisbury Road, near its junction with the High Street, are “no longer commercially viable”.

BT’s refusal to upgrade cabinets in Bruce Road and Salisbury Road has produced an infuriating outcome for local residents. Chipping Barnet Library and the Spires shopping centre do have fast broadband but the two immediate adjoining side streets, Carnarvon Road and Strafford Road, do not.

Some shops and businesses in High Street are connected to the fibre cabinet in Park Road but others do not have a high-speed connection because they are served by a copper cabinet in Wood Street, outside the entrance to the Old Court House recreation ground.

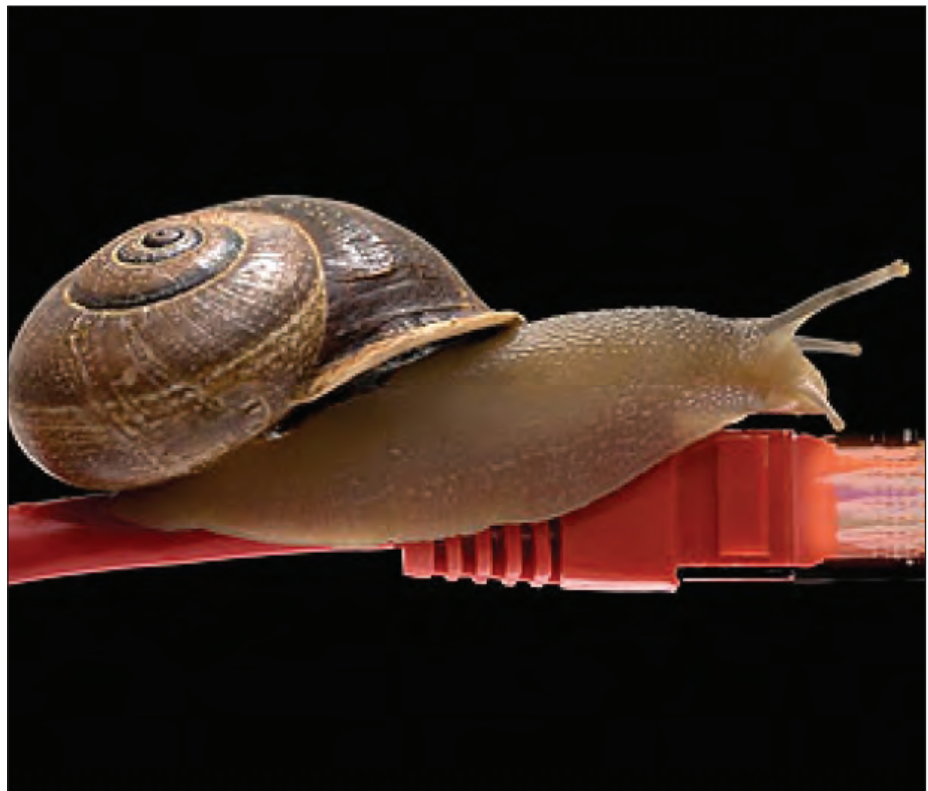
An IT professional from Hungary who works in the High Street says their building has to make do with 4-megabit download speed while across the road Barnet and Southgate College has fast broadband.

“This is ridiculous. Most countries have a 300-megabit target. If Barnet College has a high-speed service, why can’t I have one too? Even in rural Hungary we can get speeds of 20 to 30 megabits.”

Manor Road illustrates BT’s willingness to deny some of its customers an upgraded service.

Houses at the Wood Street end do have a high-speed connection but properties to the south of the existing copper cabinet at the junction with Cedar Lawn Avenue do not; houses in adjoining roads such as Underhill off Mays Lane are similarly affected.

Another frustrated BT customer living in Granville Road is denied high-speed broadband because of the failure to install a new cabinet



Snail’s pace - and they’re the lucky ones. Others stand no chance

at the top of Bells Hill. “I pay a fortune to BT but get a third-world service and we are now being told we have no prospect of receiving a fast broadband service.”

As a Granville Road resident myself, I too have made repeated requests for an upgrade, only to be told that a new cabinet cannot be installed at the top of Bells Hill because BT cannot find a suitable location. While Granville Road lacks a high-speed service, fast broadband is provided to Queen Elizabeth’s Boys’ School in adjoining Queens’ Road (the school is connected via a fibre-broadband cabinet at the junction of Marriott Road and The Avenue).

BT’s sales pitch is to go on promising a new completion date for the roll-out – and 30 September is only the latest – whereas in truth there is no prospect of an upgrade in Granville Road.

My latest approach as a BT Busi-

ness Broadband customer produced this classic example of doublespeak:

“Your date for conversion to high speed is September 30 . . . but do remember that dates can change . . . if it goes ahead, you would get a download speed of 55 megabits (currently 3.5) and an upload speed of 14.5 megabits (1 megabit at present).”

Don’t forget . . . if you are an aggrieved BT customer waiting in desperation for a high-speed internet connection do please sign the Barnet Society’s petition.

## Sign the BT petition

Please sign our online petition to demand that British Telecom honours undertakings dating back to 2011 to complete the roll-out of a fast broadband service to **all** of High Barnet.  
[www.barnetsociety.org.uk](http://www.barnetsociety.org.uk)



Hardly better: The amended so-called 'Swiss Chalet' is far from ideal, but at least we tried

Picture: Caelan Rafferty

# Not quite what we wanted

The façade of No.1 Church Passage has recently been re-faced – though not restored to its original appearance, as many want. The Society has not taken such a hard-line stance, because it has undergone various changes over the last century, and what is 'original' is debatable.

Our objections have been addressed except for the first-floor window treatment. However, a fresh possible concern is the design of the proposed ground-floor burger bar. We and the planners await an application, and we agree with them that, "It makes sense to defer any consideration of the alleyway cladding pending submission of the ground floor application as it will be the relationship between the two parts that will determine what the most appropriate finish will be."

Three other planning applications have caught our attention.

The first is for a private Hadley Wood Hospital at the bottom of Moxon Street. It is proposed to convert a two and three-storey building (the former Richmond Fellowship in the Hadley Manor industrial estate), and to add two floors. Our opinion is that in principle it is acceptable, subject to vehicular traffic not being excessive, since it is a secluded spot and two extra floors would hardly



**Robin Bishop,**  
our Planning and  
Environment officer,  
casts his eye over  
current issues

## Carluccio's update

Planning approval has been given to alter The Spires' High Street frontage, and Carluccio's will open in April 2015. The application has since been amended without a delicatessen, which is disappointing, but still an overall improvement.

exceed the height of the next-door building.

Views from the neighbouring residential block would be slightly affected, but offset by gain in local employment. A shame the extension is so dull: the existing building is banal but inconspicuous; doubling its height in the same style just emphasizes its mediocrity.

The second is to rebuild 70 High Street (formerly After Office Hours) with an extra floor, with flats over a new drinking establishment. It has been gutted and re-clad, but the core of the building is very old and there may be some archaeological traces. We share concerns about noise and disruption to its neighbour, the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School, and about its impact on the Conservation Area, and are minded to object.

We support the principle of accommodating students in the town centre, but share concerns about noise and disruption to its neighbour, the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School, and will comment on its design as soon as the drawings are published.

The third has been for 15 new flats in place of former garages in Brent Place, off Mays Lane. This is an appropriate and unobtrusive development.

*continued on page 4*



## Planning and environment

*Continued from page 3*

The Society wrote to the Council in June requesting a planning brief for the redundant Barnet FC site, now on the market. In principle, we would support reuse of the site for residential (including at least 40 per cent affordable housing), community and/or leisure purposes, designed appropriately and with respect for its location in a residential area on the edge of the Green Belt.

The Assistant Director of Strategic Planning at the Council has since replied that, "The Council is currently monitoring the situation... Given that the site is a sporting facility and sits within the green belt any redevelopment proposal must have regard to the Council's Local Plan... I am very grateful for your interest in this site and would welcome the Society's input in due course."

### ***Finally, a tour d'horizon of impending developments around our patch...***

To the south, some 10 per cent of London's 230 new towers will be sprouting in Brent Cross and West Hendon before long. Nearer home, Whetstone B&Q is being replaced by 130 new homes, including six-storey blocks lining High Road.

In the east, the former Albert Road gasworks site is being re-branded the 'Victoria Quarter'.

The supermarket threat has been averted in favour of around 325 homes. And from the north comes news that St. Alban's Council has committed to 9,000 new homes in the Green Belt. But alarming news comes from the west, where over a hundred small businesses and charities in Edgware have been given short notice to quit Premier House in Station Road.

Planners are powerless to prevent it, due to the government's recent removal of the requirement to obtain permission for change from office to residential use.



So far, £554,000 has been raised for the drop-in centre for the elderly but £1.8m will be

## New beginning for ex-scho

After raising half a million pounds, work has started to transform what was once Christ Church School into a drop-in facility for the elderly and a centre for the wider community, **writes Nick Jones.**

The flint-faced former school-house, erected in 1844, was originally used for religious services while Christ Church was being built and, together with the adjoining Pennefather Hall, the three buildings constitute a much-loved feature of the St Albans Road townscape.

Repairing and refurbishing the interior of the former school, while preserving the exterior, is being done in phases. A further £1 million will have to be raised to complete the project.

Christ Church School was under local authority ownership, and then used by the Red Cross, until it became surplus to their requirements ten years ago, when Christ Church launched its Open Door Appeal ([www.opendoorappeal@hotmail.co.uk](http://www.opendoorappeal@hotmail.co.uk)) to purchase the empty building for £330,000 and begin the conversion.

The Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Hugh Rayner; his wife Susan; the Leader of Barnet Council, Councillor Richard Cornelius; and Martin Russell, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, were among those

who attended an evening reception to publicise the project and help widen the appeal for funds.

Much of the former interior has been gutted, a new floor has been laid and the steelwork installed ready for the erection of a new second floor at a later date.

Ownership of the former school is now in the hands of the John Trotter Trust, whose trustees are all members of Christ Church. They took the name John Trotter in memory of the Victorian benefactor who lived at Dyrham Park and who founded Christ Church in 1845. ([www.ccbarnet.org.uk](http://www.ccbarnet.org.uk)).

The Mayor promised that he would do all he could to support the appeal and he hoped Barnet Council would be able to work with Christ Church to fulfil its far-reaching plans to help provide a new facility for the elderly.

Richard Cornelius stressed the importance of the voluntary sector in helping the elderly to continue living at home.

Barnet had the second highest number of centenarians of any London borough; more people over 90 than any other London borough; and more over 65 than any borough, apart from Bromley.

"We do have to save a lot of money from the council budget. We have had to take 30 per cent out of

# Have a butcher's at this survey



will be needed to complete the project

## ool house

the budget and we will need to take a further 20 per cent out.

“Therefore the longer we can keep people at home the better, and we have sought to do that in Barnet. As the state draws back, it will be voluntary organisations that will have to step up and meet the challenge.”

David Parry, chairman of the John Trotter Trust, recalled how Christ Church had purchased the school from the Red Cross in 2012 in the hope that the building could be used to extend the activities that the church offered for older people. The aim was to provide a daily drop-in centre for the elderly, together with rooms and facilities that could be used by local organisations.

Planning permission had been obtained for the entire project, including the installation of a second floor. “We have the vision, and if we had the money we would do all the work now, but we aim to do each phase of the work as the money becomes available.”

So far £554,000 had been raised since 2010, three-quarters of which had been raised from members of Christ Church.

The current estimate was that £1.8 million would be needed over the next five years to complete the project.

Just imagine the bustle and activity of 1898 when such was the competition in the High Street of Barnet that shoppers had the choice of eleven butchers, including one pork butcher and two poultry dealers! Today only one shop remains, the Butcher's Hook, **writes Nick Jones.**

A fascinating display illustrating the changing patterns of retail premises in the High Street was unveiled at Barnet Museum in June to coincide with the museum's annual garden party.

“Tea in the Park” in the Courthouse Gardens had music and refreshments and the High Street display was opened by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, Martin Russell.

Research for the project was carried out by a group of Barnet University of the Third Age members who surveyed the shops listed in Barnet High Street in 1898, 1914 and 2014.

The display features an 1896 map of the High Street drawn by Derek Sagar, a description of the various premises, their street numbers and wherever possible photographs of shops then and now.

Jenny Kobish said that their research showed that there were 11 butchers in the High Street in 1898 but this had fallen to nine by 1914

and only one remained in business today. “Barnet was once a stopping place for animals being driven to market in London. Thousands of animals went through the town and many slaughter houses, butchers and drinking houses grew up to serve the trade.

“In 1865 Barnet cattle market was forced to move from the front of Barnet Parish Church to St Albans Road, where it continued operating until 1959.”

The names of some of the butchers, for example George Bennett, H. J. Carter and William Shepherd, were listed in 1898 and 1914.

The survey shows how other businesses have fared in the High Street since the 1890s and presents a comprehensive picture of the changes that have taken place in the number of drapers, public houses, banks, churches and places to eat.

As part of the project, all the known data about premises in the High Street has been entered onto a database which the museum hopes to make available to the public wishing to carry out family research.

The High Street map, which will be updated from time to time as fresh information is obtained, will remain on permanent display in the museum.

**Last man standing: In 1898, there were 11 butcher shops in the High Street; now there is just one - John Bye, pictured, in his shop, Butcher's Hook**





# Centenary for Thomas Watson cottages

The former Barnet haulier built cottages for his 'Old and Loyal Employees' in a quiet cul-de-sac, off Wood Street, writes **Robin Bishop**



Tucked away down Leecroft Road, unseen by many locals, are the Thomas Watson Cottage Homes, which celebrated their centenary last month. I recently researched their history and architectural significance.

Thomas Watson, General Manager and later proprietor of Sutton & Co., Hauliers, died in 1910, and his daughters Annie and Florence commissioned the estate for "Old and Loyal Employees of Messrs Sutton & Co. Carriers" in his memory. It comprised eight single-storey dwellings, four individual and four semi-detached (for singles and couples plus manager) on three sides of an open-ended square, symmetrically composed about a central hall for dining and social activities.

The architect in charge was John Burmester of Bouchier, Burmester & Galsworthy. The cottages are in Home Counties vernacular and the hall in more formal Queen Anne style, both reminiscent of Lutyens around the turn of the 20th century.

They are unified by the same bricks and tiles, and linked by garden walls with ornamental gateways. It is all simply but beautifully

built. The central court is formally laid out as lawn with flower beds and a central sundial. The homes have individual and shared rear gardens, all well tended.

Since then, the square has been visually closed to the east by Colgate Court and Jubilee Cottages, in a style replicating Burmester's.

The ensemble is a little classic of Edwardian philanthropy and communitarianism.

Obvious precedents are earlier almshouses, in Barnet and elsewhere; but more immediate inspiration may have come from Baroness Burdett-Coutts' Holly Village, Highgate, by H.A. Derbyshire (1865) and Octavia Hill's Whitecross and Redcross Cottages and Garden, Southwark, by Elijah Hoole (1887-90).

Socially and stylistically, it may owe even more to the Drapers' Cottage Homes (1897) in nearby Mill Hill – two delightful estates for retired department store workers by George Hornblower for James Marshall (of Marshall & Snelgrove, a leading store of the day). The Watsons and their architect are also likely to have been aware of George Cadbury's garden village at



Descendants of Thomas Watson celebrating the centenary of the homes built in his name. (above) From left to right, Robert Colgate, Mrs Jenny Harrold, Mrs Sarah Housden and Ms Heather Colgate





Today's residents include former employees of the National Freight Consortium and the delivery company DHL

Bourneville (1879-1970s) and Lord Lever's garden city at Port Sunlight (1888-c.1914).

TWCH is the garden city vision in miniature. The key differences between that vision and traditional almshouses are that the patron was a modern business, not a squire or agricultural landlord; that residents lived in free-standing houses, not a terrace or court; and that the architecture was the modernism of its day – the gentle, democratic language of the Arts and Crafts rather than either the Gothic Revival or the Classicism of the Edwardian Grand Manner.

It is pity that most of the archives were lost in a wartime fire at Sutton & Co.'s offices, and that more is not known about the personalities and beliefs of Annie and Florence.

How did the two women set about their project in a male-dominated world? And were they inspired simply by filial piety, or also by the socialist and women's suffrage movements very active at that time? Either way it is a remarkable achievement, and a testimonial to Annie and Florence as well as their father.

Another milestone for the almshouses of High Barnet.

As part of the celebrations to mark the centenary, descendants of Thomas Watson have unveiled a commemorative stone.

Residents and guests filled a marquee on the lawn to mark the occasion. Three of Thomas Watson's great-great-grandchildren – Robert Colgate and his sisters Mrs Sarah Housden and Ms Heather Colgate – unveiled the commemorative stone.

Their cousin Mrs Jenny Harrold, chair of the trustees, who welcomed guests to the centenary tea party described the family's continuing connection with the homes

**'For our family, this is a very special place... Here today we have three direct descendants of Thomas Watson'**

and their care and interest in the welfare of the residents.

Mrs Harrold said aunts Annie and Flo, as they were known to residents, established the endowment for the purchase of the land and the construction of the original 12 cottages.

She felt honoured to be chairing the centenary event. "For our family this is a very special place where 100 years ago the two aunts declared the home open. Here today we have three direct descendants of Thomas Watson and ten relatives connected through marriage."

Today's residents include former employees of the National Freight Consortium and the delivery company DHL.

Mrs Harrold reminded them that, unlike their predecessors, they could now take the keys to their property when they went out and also stay out after 10.p.m!

Guests included the Chipping Barnet MP Mrs Theresa Villiers and the Deputy Mayor of Barnet, Councillor David Longstaff.



# Following the trail of the

Excavations are needed to determine the exact site of the 1471 battle, writes **Nick Jones**

A Battle of Barnet heritage trail starting at Hadley Highstone is one of the ambitious plans for providing a lasting legacy if funding can be obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund for an archaeological excavation of the battlefield site.

Information boards, downloadable leaflets and an audio tour are just some of the ideas for helping visitors to learn more about one of the grisliest battles of the Wars of the Roses and then see for themselves the layout of the only battlefield site within Greater London.

Historians have failed to agree on the precise location of the battle that took place on 14 April 1471 in fields half a mile, or even up to a mile, to the north of the town.

Barnet was one of the decisive engagements of the Wars of the Roses, when England found itself with two kings, the Yorkist Edward IV and the Lancastrian Henry VI, but the site of the battle fails to get the recognition it deserves, largely because of uncertainty over the exact location and the lack of vantage points for visitors.

Currently the only visual reminder is Hadley Highstone, an obelisk commemorating the battle that was erected by Sir Jeremy Sambroke in 1740 at the junction of the Great North Road and Kitts End Road.

If lottery funding can be obtained the archaeological excavation would be carried out by Dr Glenn Foard, military archaeologist at Huddersfield University and the Battlefields Trust.

An earlier bid was rejected by the Lottery Fund on the grounds that simultaneous excavations at a number of the Wars of the Roses battlefield sites, including Barnet, would be too costly and that an app



would be more likely to succeed if it focused on a single site.

Barnet was chosen because of strong local interest and promises of support from organisations such as the Barnet Museum and the Barnet Society, and the absence of any accurate archaeological evidence.

Work is now underway preparing a detailed bid for funding. If an application was submitted to the Fund by October, a decision might be announced by the end of the year, ready for an excavation to start sometime in 2015.

In the meantime Dr Foard and the Battlefields Trust are anxious not to raise expectations for fear that the publicity might attract unwanted amateurs using metal detectors or encourage unauthorised digging in the surrounding area.

A bid for funding would have to cover work on the archaeological excavation itself; the recording, cleaning and storing of any finds (likely to take place at Barnet Museum); interpreting the dig for local residents and visitors; and providing a long-term legacy to explain what happened when the armies of the House of York and the House of Lancaster clashed on fields surrounding what is now Hadley Green and Monken Hadley.

A heritage trail and an exhibition at Barnet Museum could be the catalyst for wider support within the local community; banners could be painted by local volunteers showing the coats of arms of the main protagonists; a “battlefield day” might include a re-enactment.



# Battle of Barnet

## Pop in and have a look around

### Chair's report

Work has started on converting what was formerly a High Street branch of the bakery chain Greggs into a pop-up outlet for Love Barnet and its campaign to promote the attractions of High Barnet's shopping centre.

Contributions towards the cost of the refurbishment include an unspent donation of £500 from the Barnet Society towards a previously successful campaign to prevent an adult gaming centre being opened in High Barnet.

Gail Laser, who led the moves to establish Love Barnet, hopes that their pop-up shop, which is due to open in September, will provide a showcase for businesses and entrepreneurs and do more to encourage local talent.

Mrs Laser, vice-chair of the Barnet Society and the Town Team, said the latest donations would help with the cost of decorations, fitting out and repaying loans for security measures and other improvements.

"Do feel free to pop your heads around the door of the pop-up shop at 89 High Street whilst we are earnestly getting the premises ready for opening. I am sure that you will be pleasantly surprised.

A big "thank you" is due to everyone who turned out to support the Barnet Society's annual meeting in June to hear the presentation on the future of the Spires shopping centre by Charlotte Dunlop, asset manager for the William Pears property group.

We had an attendance of well over sixty, twice the number of previous years. Our format of opening the meeting with a drink and a chat followed by a talk seems to have worked well.

**Nick Jones**



Fields to the north of Camlet Way, above, are thought to form part of the as-yet unidentified site of the Battle of Barnet. The line of trees in the foreground follow the course of Monken Mead Brook and the rising land falls away to Dead Man's Bottom, which it is said was the site of a burial ground for many of the soldiers killed

Hadley Highstone, right, erected in 1740 by Sir Jeremy Sambroke, might become the start of a heritage trail showing the landmarks and layout of the Battle of Barnet





# Museum keeping history alive

**Nick Jones** pops in for a cuppa during the museum's annual Tea in the Park celebrations

Two local history projects connecting Barnet's past to the present have been officially unveiled at Barnet Museum as part of its annual Tea in the Park celebrations in Courthouse Gardens.

Martin Russell, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, who performed the opening ceremony, congratulated the volunteers who had recorded the lives of Barnet men killed in the First World War and researched the changing patterns of retail premises in Barnet High Street.

The two exhibitions drew a steady crowd of visitors, who were offered tea and cakes together with musical entertainment as part of the museum's annual garden party.

Mr Russell said it was an honour to open two such important exhibitions during the 76th anniversary year of the museum. He paid tribute to its archivist Dr Gillian



Dr Gillian Gear, museum archivist, Theresa Villiers, MP, Martin Russell, Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Greater London, and Mike Noronha, co-curator

Gear, whose work safeguarding the museum and supporting local history projects had been recognised with the award of the British Empire medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

As part of the project to commemorate the Great War, local historians compiled life histories of the 275 men listed on the war memorial in front of the main entrance to the Barnet parish church of St John the Baptist.

One of the exhibits that had caught Mr Russell's attention was a memorial tablet from the former Margaret Road Secondary School in New Barnet, which commemorates 120 pupils who fell in the Great War.

"The list of names of those who had been children at the school is staggering to see, just as are the

artefacts brought back from the trenches and relics from the German airship shot down over Cuffley in 1916."

Another exhibit tells the history of Cyril Smith, who served with the 3rd Army under General Julian Byng of Wrotham Park at the second Battle of the Somme in 1918.

Mr Smith's 84-year-old son, Geoffrey Smith, lives in Dury Road, Hadley Green.

He said that his father, who died 35 years ago, would have been amazed to have seen his life commemorated at the museum.

"Cyril lied to get into the Army. He was only 17 but said he was 18. A map of Barnet High Street in 1896, drawn by Derek Sagar, is the focal point of a display showing the changing nature of retail premises along the town's main shopping street.

Photographs of long-demolished shop frontages reflect the hustle and bustle of what was once a thriving market town. Other illustrations recall dramatic events such as fires in the High Street when shops were destroyed.

Research for the project was carried out by Barnet University of the Third Age members who surveyed shops listed in the High Street in 1898, 1914 and 2014.



One of the highlights of the afternoon was an old-fashioned Punch 'n' Judy show, enjoyed by young and old alike



# Inside Barnet's Aladdin's Cave

## Barnet people

Bargain Buys might look as if a bomb has hit it, but Julian Stewart knows where everything is, writes **Nick Jones**

“Bargain Buys is High Barnet’s answer to the decline of the High Street. Julian Stewart’s shop sells thousands of household items from screws to saucepans, shopping trolleys to garden seeds, and has become a much-loved institution with countless loyal customers.

In November, Julian will celebrate the 35th anniversary of the shop’s opening. At 66, he says he has no intention of retiring any time soon.

He believes that Bargain Buys’ longevity on the High Street is due to a combination of personal service, customer care and reliability.

“People coming into the shop see that I am enjoying myself. I really do like working and helping people and that is infectious.

“I don’t fear the competition because a shop this size can change to suit trading conditions of the time. Multiples won’t stock slow-moving lines but I do. I will keep an item at the back of the shop even if I have only one regular customer.”

Looking back on the differing patterns of trade, Julian says the biggest change has been in the sale of dustbins. “Because plastic bins are now provided by the council I sell less in a year than I used to sell in a week twenty-five years ago.

“Sales of crockery and fancy goods have also fallen off the side of a cliff. I used to sell so much china it paid me to go to Stoke-on-Trent in my Transit van and load up with stock. Now it all comes from China.”

Julian says the decline in the number of hardware and do-it-yourself shops has worked to his ad-



Are you being served? Julian Stewart sells over 60 types of battery

vantage. “I have always sold paints and varnishes but I’ve now made a point of increasing the range of products I sell and some of my most regular customers are builders and decorators.” His terms of trade with suppliers and wholesalers have changed dramatically over the years.

“I now get very few sales representatives calling at the shop. Twenty years ago there would be one rep in the shop, one just outside on the door step and another waiting in his car. Now I have to do all the work myself and order my

stock on the telephone or online at home.”

In the 15 minutes I spent interviewing Julian, he served three customers: one lady bought three saucepans; another wanted a sheet of sandpaper; but he couldn’t help the third customer. She asked for a seat to lift her out of the bath. “No,” said Julian, “that’s not something we stock.” His dog Sam looked on wistfully.

Standing amid the piles and piles of goods reaching up to the ceiling, I felt I couldn’t ask when he last did a stock-take.

## Question Time

### Do you ever get a “Four Candles” moment, as in *The Two Ronnies*?

“I get asked either for four candles or fork handles every other week. I have to pretend it’s the first time I have heard the joke.”

### What was silliest request you’ve ever had?

“One bloke asked if he could buy the kitchen sink. I thought he was joking but I kept a straight face and just looked around the shop while thinking what to say.”

### What request stumps you every time?

“A customer will ask for a plug. I then have to reply, ‘Do you mean an electric plug, a sink plug, a wall plug . . .?’”

### What is the most popular item you get asked for?

“Sorry, it’s batteries, something really boring. But I do have over 60 different types of battery in stock.”

### Is it difficult to remember where everything is stocked?

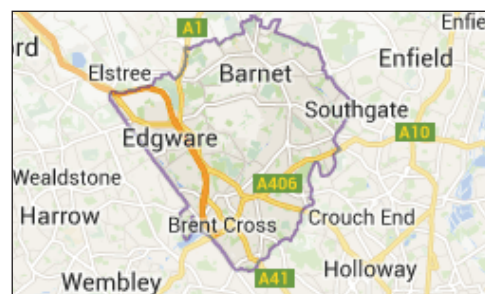
“No, I can find well over 99 per cent of my stock almost straight away.”

What’s the longest it has taken you to locate an item?

“Well yes, it did once take me a couple of days to find something.”

# Meet Mary, our new treasurer

Mary Carroll has lived in Barnet since 2006 and is keen to play a part in the community



Originally born in Ireland, I moved to London as a child, moving to Barnet in 2006.

I spent 16 years working for the BBC in studio and outside broadcast operations, and more recently for the London Business School. Having had enough of daily commuting and the corporate life I qualified and started out as a self-employed bookkeeper in October 2013 with the aim of working with small local businesses around Barnet, and so my business became The Barnet Bookkeeper.

I also wanted to work locally so that I could meet more people closer to home. I'm quite passionate about some of the local issues; the high street for one and also build-

ing a better community through local events and awareness initiatives. So, I'm really looking forward to being part of the Barnet Society and to meeting lots of the people involved with some of these issues.

For fun, I like anything sporty and outdoors really; running, skiing, sailing. I love the mix of town and countryside that Barnet has to offer which makes it an interesting and scenic place to run.

I also love reading, gardening and I'm a regular theatre goer.

Love Barnet was started in 2012 to create a community forum to tackle what needed improving.

So far we have managed to de-clutter much of the High Street pavement furniture, update the church garden, improve some local shop-fronts, champion new businesses and the new market.

Our vision is to make Chipping Barnet a vibrant market town and boutique shopping area with a unique history and heritage.

With its stunning architecture surrounded by pretty English countryside, it is the perfect backdrop for families, quality shops, destination events and festivals:

**Opening a pop-up shop** to showcase local talent in association with The Eleanor Palmer Trust, Barnet College and 1 to 1 flooring called Number 89 (8 September)

**Fundraising £10,000** to employ a Town Team Manager to take the work of Love Barnet forward.

In 2015, Love Barnet will:

Open a **second pop up shop** and gallery sponsored by a local business to launch emerging entrepreneurs from Barnet College.

Roll out the family friendly zone, with The Spires, to find a home for a **Soft Play Area** to accompany the Family Friendly Zone.

Work with Barnet Council to support and encourage new businesses.

To join Love Barnet's mailing list please send your details to **friends@lovebarnet.co.uk**

## New members

**Since the last report we welcome to Barnet Society the following members:**

Ms J Eve, Mr N Saul, Ms Calfe, Ms Kluger, Mr and Mrs Poser, Mr and Mrs Condron, Ms Williams, Ms Kelleher, Ms Shire, Ms Carroll and Mr Hall.

**Andy Clark, joined the society recently**

'I've lived in Chipping Barnet for about seven years now and am very glad I moved here. Although the High St could do with an upgrade, I think this area has massive untapped potential. I particularly like the 'behind the spires' housing,

being five minutes from countryside, on the tube & the history of the area.

'I joined the society because I do care about my area, what impacts upon people's enjoyment and how things can be improved.

'I'm a chartered surveyor by profession and so am particularly interested in the Spires redevelopment and the retail tenant mix on the High Street. It's so important to get the local services and shops reflecting the quality of the people and area.'

If you are happy to have electronic delivery of future newsletters, email [membership@barnetsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@barnetsociety.org.uk)