



Up and Down the High Road

By Daphne Chamberlain

Over the next few months we shall be seeing how the High Road has evolved during the last hundred years.

In 1902 it was already a busy shopping street, with several names established which will still be familiar to many people today. Sometimes, though, it's like looking at a game of musical chairs, with names sitting in different places from where they settled later.

Several local landmarks are not here at all. There was no cinema until 1912, and Martin School and the library had not yet appeared. (Look for East Finchley Grammar School instead, not to mention a ladies' school run by a Miss Jane Hooper.) The site of the Phoenix was a grassy open space adjoining the long gardens running down to Cherry Tree Wood. Its side-kick, Fairlawn Avenue, as well as Creighton Avenue, Chandos Road, Kitchener Road, Leslie Road, Leopold Road, and Chambers Gardens, Lewis Gardens and Lankaster Gardens were not in existence either.

Chapel Street, on the other hand, did exist but has now disappeared - wiped out by a World War 2 landmine, but leaving its

name with Chapel Court.

Bustling

Shops and businesses extended much further along the western side than they do today, spreading along and beyond what is now the Grange. Willow Walk, which leads into the Grange today, predates it and was already marked as a road.

There were more monumental masons (and much less cremation), more butchers (fewer vegetarians), more bakers (no supermarkets or bread machines), and a lot of drapers and confectioners.

Incidentally, I was intrigued by the number of shops run by women. I get the impression of a bustling little centre, where you could pop out to get all the necessities of life - with some fancy goods as well. Robert Kent, a local man born in 1905, wrote a few years ago of the East Finchley of his childhood, "I would like to see East Finchley as busy as this again".

Finally, you might like to count the number of estate agents and eating-places!

Ship Shape Tube

By David Tupman

Opened two months before the outbreak of the Second World War, East Finchley's tube station was the latest in architecture.

Resembling the bridge of a ship, its curved glass windows enclosed circular winding stairs to the staff's offices. Standing guard over the station is a ten-foot high archer statue by Eric Aumonier.

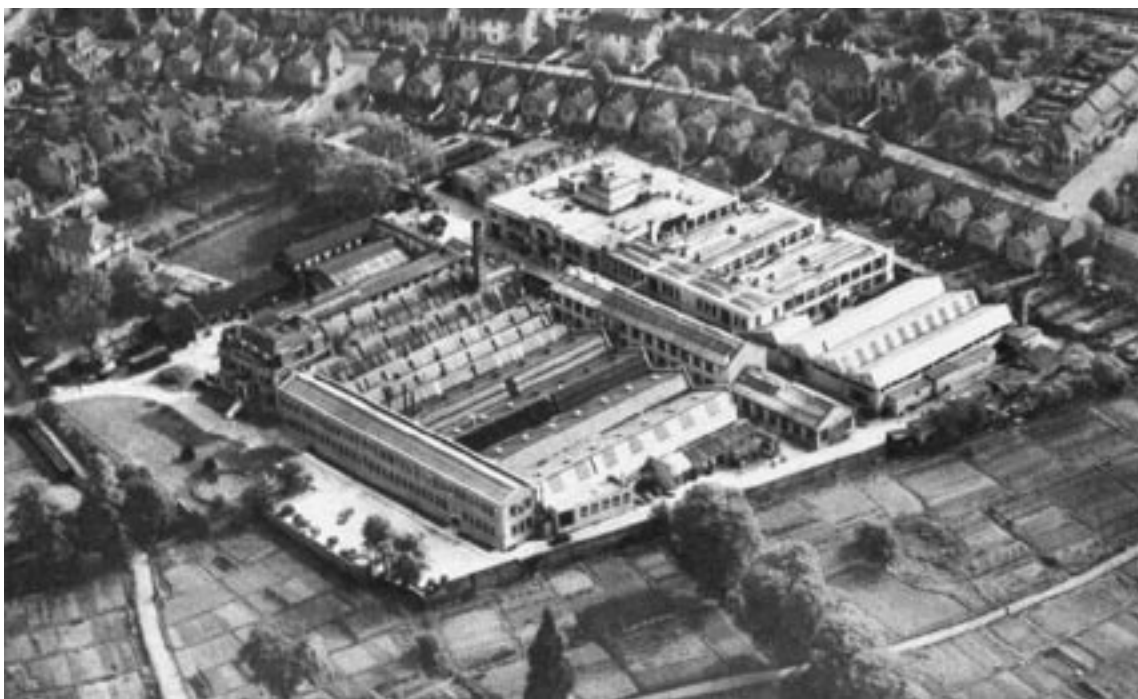
He is pointing his bow towards London and the start of the tube tunnel. This tunnel runs under the whole of London and emerges near Morden, Surrey.

Until the building of the Channel Tunnel, it was the longest tunnel in Europe. Local architect, Miranda Newton, has researched the station and writes about its architect, Charles Holden:

"Holden's work is said to be amongst the finest English architecture of the 20th Century and was said to have revitalised English railway station design.

His most famous station is the new headquarters of the Underground network at 55 Broadway, near St James' Park. He was the principal designer of all the stations north of Highgate. He used a rational style of architecture, stripped of historical details but using classical proportions."

"Holden is admired for his skills in composition and practical detailing, and his simple but elegant designs have worn well."



The Lucas Factory - photo reproduced courtesy of the Archives of the London Borough of Barnet

The Lucas Factory

By John Dearing

If you live in Simms or Lucas Gardens, you may have wondered where the names came from. Well, until eleven years ago, East Finchley was the location of a large factory manufacturing a variety of products for the automotive industry. It occupied an area of some six acres, bounded by Long Lane, Oak Lane, Tarling Road, Wilmot Close and Font Hills.

Simms

Originally built in 1863 as a mansion called The Grange, it was converted and extended in 1919 (briefly becoming a piano factory), before Simms Motor Units took over the 30,000 square foot facility in 1920. But the sharp post-war downturn in business meant that it remained closed until 1926. Frederick Richard Simms (who was born coincidentally in 1863) was a designer, engineer and entrepreneur of great vision. In association with Robert Bosch he designed the first practical magneto; forming a company in 1901 to build engines, pumps, and generators in factories located in various parts of London. In the Great War, his company became

the principal supplier of magnetos to the armed forces. During the 1930s, anticipating that coil ignition would take over from magnetos for petrol-engined vehicles, the factory developed and produced an advanced range of Diesel fuel injectors. In the Second World War, the company again became the principal supplier of magnetos for aircraft and tanks, producing 50,000 units in total, plus dynamos, starter motors, lights, pumps, nozzles, spark plugs, and coils for cars, trucks, buses and ships.

Lucas

The expansion of the factory continued unabated during the 1950s, eventually reaching 300,000 square feet, the limit for the site. Besides manufacturing there were drawing offices, development shops, a social club and the

central instruction school for the whole company, which took over about a dozen other companies during this period.

The rationalisation in the automotive industry of the 1960s led to a similar effect on the major suppliers, and Simms was taken over by Lucas CAV in 1968. Manufacturing in East Finchley was steadily run down as UK manufacturers lost market share. This, along with the well-publicised problems with quality (which caused a major dispute with Jaguar cars), led to the closure of the factory in 1991.

The site was taken over by Fairview Homes, who built houses and flats on a number of new streets, including Taunton Drive, Blackdown Close, Brendon Grove, Vanderville Gardens and, of course, Lucas Gardens and Simms Gardens.

Call for Memories

Hugh Petrie is currently interested in any memories of anyone who had a plot in the fuel lands for future article. He would also welcome any memories about the Bald Faced Stag and the Five Bells. If you can help please contact *THE ARCHER*.

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