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A FUTURE HISTORY OF CROUCH END

CHAPTER ONE

A wind farm for Alexandra Palace

I looked forward to wind sails on Alexandra Park's Northern slopes but local kite flyers called a halt saying the turbulence could make their kites unstable. A trial tower was proposed but free excursions up the tower to the viewers gallery did not appease them saying that the "whoosh " of the sail passing their noses did not compensate for the exhilarating buzz of a kite in full flight.

As an alternative, the kite flyers suggested a nozzle to the clock tower where the South facing clock face could have a wind sail. A bazaar suggestion but W7 bus drivers when balloted agreed that the challenge when missing the sail would be fun and would have to gauge it just right in order to miss it. A Liberal Democrat spokesman said it was just what the area needed, " like a breath of fresh air," said one and maybe we could start a Crouch End lights committee with the new power.

A FUTURE HISTORY OF CROUCH END



BY
ROGER HAYMAN

The Crouch End Bakery objected saying it would undermine their festive lights for which they are famous but the local entrepreneur Darren Barclay-Holmes enthused and offered to fund the whole thing. As a major share holder in the bakery Darren got them to agree and so it was that for every trip up the clock tower wind farm you got a malt'n seedy loaf together with a Barclay-Holmes fridge magnet and a certificate signed by Sir Darren Barclay-Holmes himself.....!

With the attraction a market selling wind farmers products and those of Sir Darren and the bakery flourished around the base of the tower.

There will be few who will remember the original farmers market selling "organic produce" operating in the Southern slopes of Alexandra Park, now Priory Village and affectionately known then as Palace Gates. The market is well documented in W.C Horn's standard work "Before My very eyes - musings and reminiscences of bygone Crouch End", covering the period from the Karaoke era to the storming of the clock tower where locals revolted over it's proposed demolition.

Horn was news editor for the Journal and covered the clock tower incident with the headline "The clock tower strikes back".

What happened was that on the eve of the Crouch End festival water started spouting out in front of the North face of the clock tower. Its source was unknown as no water pipes could be found. An underground spring was believed the cause and damming impossible as the ground water would unstabalise the clock tower foundations causing it to topple. When demolition was announced protesters blockaded the area and occupied the tower. Undeterred the bulldozers moved in and many protesters were crushed to their death standing in their path. In the face of opposition the Council would have none of it and with the protesters facing exhaustion a vehicle carrying a mammoth ball and chain weighing some 20 tonnes advanced down the Broadway to unleash a fateful blow. As it approached a hush fell on the Broadway as the mighty boom swung back. The huge tracked vehicle rolled on, then strangely its progress slowed and arched back, slithering beneath the ground in a poll of mud.

Glossy tiles and the remains of an old urinal came to the surface. The "spring" was found to be due to a capped water main giving way, once serving old loos long since filled in. A reality reconstruction of the bloody scenes can be seen at the Henry Reader Museum in Crouch End Square.

As era's passed "Running the sail", on the W7 route became popular. However a bus driver named Gus, a kite flyer, misjudged the timing of the sail and careered into it shaking the towers foundations. It was suggested that the incident was planned by the kite flyers, to see off the wind farmers and the mini market that had grown around the tower, in the same way they had dealt a blow to earlier wind farm efforts at Alexandra Park, although nothing was proved. If this was the case, it was in vain as the wind farmers were tough competitors. With the installation of the wind sail the clock tower had been modified by Darren's son John, with flexible foundations and the sails were of light construction in case of accident.

The kite flyers contested that the whole thing was a ruse for a farmers market at the base of the tower as the sail could produce little power turning slowly as it did. After the accident the sail was reinstated, but sadly the W7 was axed being surpassed by the newly developed Fly Rail which was also John's inspiration. With the kite flyers apparently crushed, the wind farmers once again set their sights on Alexandra Park. However all efforts by the wind farmers to set sail were put on hold with the proposed Fly Rail development

Exciting and new it struck the right chord by giving the people what they wanted and so it went ahead at huge expense. The wind farmers closed ranks but quickly split into 2 sections, being those who could not see beyond cheap energy combined with fresh air and those who could see a possible alliance with the Fly Rail Company in providing cheap electricity for the transport system and better access to the lower slopes of the Palace for the kite flyers, which many kite flyers supported.

CHAPTER 2

The Fly Rail the Fly Bus and the power struggle

The Fly Rail at last provided the transport link between Alexandra Palace and Finsbury Park. The Victorians first saw the great value in the parklands to the South East of the Muswell Hills and sought to link it by rail to the City network so that there was transport for both commuters to work and for weekend leisure to the Palace slopes, maybe for a bit of kite flying.

The development of the Fly Rail led to the array of wind turbines you see today on the Palace slopes. By this time, Darren's son John had given up general engineering work to construct the first wind power network.

Very soon those kite flyers that aligned themselves with the Fly Rail gave up their fight to preserve the open space they had enjoyed. After the first quarter into the Fly Rail era there was an armistice with hundreds of kite flyers handing in their kites, never to fly again

Bribed, or brainwashed by the turning of the sails they could only look in awe as the huge sails of the wind turbines filled the horizon coupled with exhilarating rides on the new Fly Rail. A new local party called the Sail Alliance developed with many of the original kite flying activists gaining prominent seats in the local Council cabinet.

The Fly Rail was unique for its day, being enclosed in a tough clear tube but travelled at high speeds and apparently frictionless and was so called as it felt close to flight. The technology as to how it achieved this was a secret but its principle was straightforward. The wind turbines created tremendous pneumatic pressure through pumps feeding large compressed air cylinders, far cheaper than wasteful power cells and could be converted to power by huge hydraulic valves, again powered by the wind turbines.

The Fly Rail had a rival called the Fly Bus. The difference was not in creating a feeling of flying but in a flywheel. The bus would start at the top of the Muswell Hills and developed huge power as its multiple flywheels were engaged by an ingenious frictionless hydraulic clutch system transferring power to successive flywheels. Its drawback was limited stops; being at Palace Gates, Crouch End,

The Heights of Crouch Hill, Its drawback was limited stops; being at Palace Gates, Crouch End, The Heights of Crouch Hill, Stroud Green and Finsbury Park. The peaks were important, allowing the flywheels to gather momentum in the downward slopes which were a slow decent. Also, it had its own bus lane avoiding the clock tower wind sail, which was little fun.

The Fly Bus was well powered on its return journey from Finsbury Park until reaching the bottom of the Muswell Hills when a track system was used, again powered by the Palace wind farm to reach the top.

Meanwhile, the Fly Rail whisked effortlessly on but was later found to be unreliable as the seemingly infallible gas system developed leaks. The elderly John Barclay-Holmes used the old station building at the Palace to carry out tests as could see nothing wrong with his system with correct power. He put the cause down to the Fly Bus using the energy to winch to the to the top of the Muwell Hills which made the seals on his system collapse. According to his son Timothy he worked tirelessly and demonstrated a solution which he tested in his workshop. However before he could publish his results a Fly Bus out of control at its terminus careered into the old station demolishing it, leaving

John and his papers in dust.,

John Barclay-Holmes perished in the distruction of his workshop, ending the Fly Rail era and never to reveal all his secrets. When the Fly Rail structure was eventually demolished engineers looked at the simple components in the debris and were astonished how it ever worked.

The Fly Bus continued for a while but was little compensation for the demise of the Fly Rail and future generations in the Sail Alliance spoke of how the kite flyers gave up their passion to make way for the exhilaration of the Fly Rail. Shortly, the Fly Bus gave way to traditional buses, powered by the wind farm and the composter. Once again the W7 could "Run the sail"!

CHAPTER THREE

A great storm and party rivalry

The great storm started at about 4 am and continued unabated for 3 hours. In the morning utter devastation greeted the early commuters waiting in vain for the W7 as council workers cleared a path removing fallen roof tiles and broken masonry. Many centenarians likened the storm to the great storm of their youth some 4 eras earlier (A current era would be about 20 old years). The Broadway lights suffered irreparable damage and had to be removed but worst of all the clock tower wind sail had completely disappeared. It was later recovered a mile away in the wind farm on the palace slopes, and with only superficial damage was easily repaired and speedily reinstated with a replacement nozzle cone.

Some said that the sail was ill placed on the clock tower and that the storm was an ill omen indicating the sail should remain at the wind farm. This sparked a revolt with banner waving and kite flying activists demanding a change in the way things were run and it was time to create a new image. The local administration under the Sail Alliance would not bend and said that the sail was now characteristic of the area featuring as it did on the Crouch End crest.

The Sail Alliance was backed by organic growers, health food providers, wind farmers, composters and fitness trainers which were in the majority at the time. They all supported the reinstatement of the clock tower sail.

The Kite Party was backed by the wealthy landowners and landlords who owned most of the coffee shops, restaurants and fast food take-aways. They saw their opportunity, labelling The Sail Alliance as old fashioned and out of touch with the needs of the community. They scrapped their old name and formed the Kite Flyers Congress or KFC. As part of their manifesto they pledged to reinstate some of the lost kite flying grounds currently occupied by the wind farms and build bigger wind turbines on the remaining grounds. Also it would be cleverly screened in such a way that the winds would be more effectively channelled and in fact increase the output.

The KFC held their meetings in the old bank building (formerly a take-away) on the corner of Weston Park and the Broadway. The drop in centre was very popular and locals could see a scale model of the new development on the palace slopes. Central to the scheme was a large underground composter generating heat and natural gas for 20,000 local homes.

In taking over the building the KFC retained the deep fat fryers and hot shelves so providing chicken meals, something which the Sail Alliance could not match.

At the local elections the KFC romped home ending an era of Sail Alliance rule.

Work began immediately to reclaim lost kite flying slopes and relocate the wind turbines. Tall pines trees were imported from Norway and planted in the lower slopes to screen the turbines.

There followed a period of relative calm and profits from the KFC take-away were channelled into the Broadway lights committee fund and soon the Broadway was illuminated as before. The locals forgot the devastation brought about by the storm and life was returned to its former prosperity. The difference was that the kite flyers once beaten had returned in force.

From the Crouch Hill Heights views of kite flyers with the partially hidden wind turbines seemed to many older generations an unlikely mix and the purists accused the current generation as selling out by giving up their cherished slopes. Sure enough there were murmurings of unrest amongst the KFC and a splinter group calling themselves the Original Kite Party were set to rock the KFC's hold.

The Party split was dangerous and was sure to allow the Sail Alliance back in at the next elections. Baring them from the drop in centre quickly cut their strength by half with the prospect of losing their cut-price take away. With numbers reduced they failed to reach a critical mass sufficient to disrupt the party.

Support intact, the KFC could go on with their projects but their advancement was held. It is still unclear today what exactly took place. All we can say it was very strange indeed!

