

# THEN AND NOW

BROMLEY BOROUGH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

OCTOBER 1991

20p

Mayor  
Councillor Philip Jones TD DL



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October 1991

As a resident of Bromley for the last 56 years, I have seen great changes in and around the Borough, but by far the most exciting is The Glades development which will make Bromley one of the premier shopping areas in the South East, marked by the opening of well known stores within the shopping precinct as well as many other trading outlets which will enhance Bromley's reputation.

I compliment The Bromley Borough Local History Society for producing this most interesting pamphlet to mark the opening of The Glades. The shops and buildings that have gone before on this site and have helped to make up the history of this area of Bromley, are well illustrated in the pamphlet while the Exhibition of photographs shows the many changes that have taken place over the last 150 years. Change is inevitable but with the help of the Society, who have accumulated such detailed descriptions and photographs of this area as it once was, the past and future can live happily side by side.

The Bromley Borough Local History Society is happy to support The Glades and as President of the Society I hope that Bromley residents who are interested in finding out more about the history of this area and of the Borough in which they live will support and join the Society.

With many thanks to Capital and Counties plc for sponsoring this Exhibition, I send best wishes to you all.

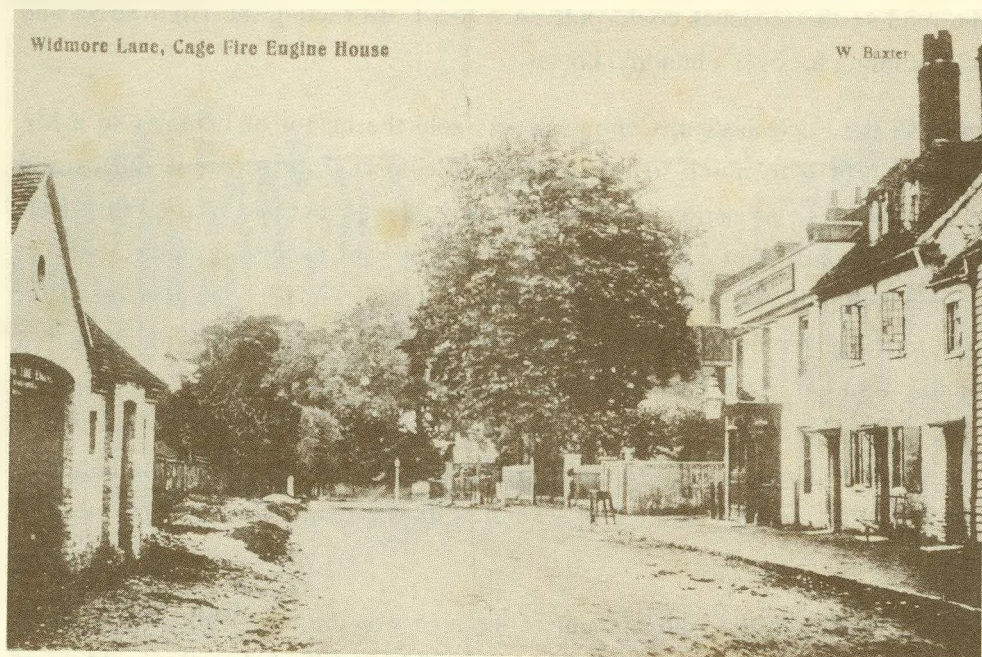
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Jones', written over a large, stylized flourish.

MAYOR  
Councillor Philip Jones





*Marks and Spencer Penny Bazaar, Market Place (1915-22).*



*Widmore Lane showing 'The Three Compasses', Cage and Fire Engine House in the 1860's.*

# THE GLADES, THEN AND NOW

At the beginning of the nineteenth century most of the site of 'The Glades' Shopping Centre was open farm land on the outskirts of the tiny Kentish market town of Bromley. The northern half was part of the Manor of Bromley and had for centuries belonged to the See of Rochester whilst the southern portion was part of the Bromley Lodge estate. One large field leased to the 'White Hart' coaching inn in the High Street was much used by the locals for cricket and football and was the scene of many a sporting contest.

By the time Victoria came to the throne, the pace of life had quickened, more coaches were rumbling through the High Street raising clouds of dust or sheets of mud according to the weather. The 'White Hart' and its rival 'The Bell' were hives of activity as horses were changed and passengers had a quick drink to fortify themselves for the run to the coast. In 1830 the mediaeval 'White Hart' was demolished and replaced by a more modern suite of buildings set back from the road so that coaches could pull up without obstructing the High Street and with stabling for over a hundred horses.

In 1845 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners sold the manor of Bromley to a Mr. Coles Child who much to the relief of the townsfolk took his duties and responsibilities very seriously. In 1897 he gave the greater part of the White Hart Field to Bromley on condition it was laid out and used as a public park in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The remainder was later sold to the governors of the homeopathic hospital who included William Willett of daylight saving fame. The Phillips Memorial Hospital as it was known commemorated a Dr. R.E. Phillips who practiced in Bromley from 1876 to 1888. The hospital opened in 1900, was extended in 1907 but fell a victim to bombing in 1941 and after lying derelict for several years was demolished and the site used as a car park.

A major factor in the development of the area was the arrival of the Mid-Kent Railway at the bottom of the hill in 1858. This rapidly led to the building of houses and shops all the way down to the station and of streets of houses in the





*High Street showing the 'White Hart' Inn with Boots opposite in the 1950's.*



*Phillips Memorial Homeopathic Hospital from Queen's Garden at the beginning of the century.*

fields behind, on what had been until then, open country. Holwood and Elmfield Roads on the Bromley Lodge estate date from the 1870's whilst Lownds Avenue was built on the gardens at the back of the 'White Hart' which no longer needed its extensive stabling accommodation. It was named after William Lownds who was licensee of the 'White Hart' from 1858 to 1888. Two of the houses in Holwood Road were occupied by Quernmore School from 1881 to 1886 during which time E.L.S. Horsburgh, author of the well known history of Bromley, was a resident master and the Baddeley twins, later to become world tennis champions, were pupils.

As the town grew, more spacious premises gradually replaced the small shops and domestic premises on the High Street edge of the site. In 1865 Bromley's first bank, the London and County, now the National Westminster, replaced a couple of old wooden tenements. Redwood House, built in 1720 and used as a school from 1786 to 1859, stood where Marks and Spencers is now. Marks and Spencer's Penny Bazaar first opened in Bromley in 1912 in the Market Square where the 'Index' shop now stands and closed in 1922. It reopened in 1931 on its present site. Its incorporation into 'The Glades' is only the latest in a long series of extensions but it is interesting to note that its upper storey frontage design still faithfully matches that of the 'Wright Brothers' shop it replaced. The other three large department stores in 'The Glades' are not newcomers to Bromley. Boots has been here the longest, having opened round about 1904 in the Upper High Street roughly opposite the 'Bell'. It moved to its present site just before the last war, incorporated the adjacent Timothy White's store in 1968 and has been extensively modernised since then, re-opening in its present form in 1980. Debenhams opened as Nicholsons in what was previously the 1936-1961 Gaumont Cinema in July 1966 and assumed its present name in 1972. Littlewoods also opened in July 1966 on its present site which is essentially that of the 'White Hart'. The nineteenth century inn was demolished in 1964 but survived in name as a modest hostelry until 1980 in the part of the modern building occupied by 'Next'. This left the 'Three Compasses' in Widmore Road as the only surviving public house on what has become 'The Glades' site, though even this is much altered having been rebuilt in 1911.





*The 'White Hart' in 1902. Note notice of impending demolition for street widening in the shop window.*



*The Cooperative store on site now occupied by the United Reformed Church in the 1980's.*

The history of the two churches associated with the site is particularly interesting. The first to appear was a small Congregational chapel in Widmore Road in 1835. By 1880 the growth of the town made it totally inadequate and it, together with an adjoining house, was demolished to make way for a much grander building which opened in 1881, was enlarged in 1886 and 1894, before being destroyed by bombing in 1941. Its successor of very different modern design opened in 1958 only to close thirty two years later to make way for the Boots department store at the northern entrance to 'The Glades'. Its replacement, only a few yards to the east, stands on the site of a purpose built 1931-86 Co-operative Store which itself had been built where a row of Georgian houses had previously stood. The other, Methodist, church opened in the High Street in 1876 where the 'Richards' and 'Etam' shops now stand. It survived virtually unchanged, apart from the loss of its trees and forecourt for street widening, until 1965 when it was demolished and the congregation moved into a modern building with a striking plastic spire on the corner of Holwood and Elmfield Roads. In 1990 it was demolished and the church now occupies a site in College Road where the Parish School formerly stood.

History is not confined to what happened tens or even hundreds of years ago. It also includes the recent past and thus the choice of 'The Glades' as the name for Bromley's new Shopping Centre is itself now a matter of history. It is an interpretation of the 'ley' part of the name 'Bromley' and was suggested by a Mr. Ronald Perkin from Orpington, the prizewinner in a public competition which attracted over 260 entries.

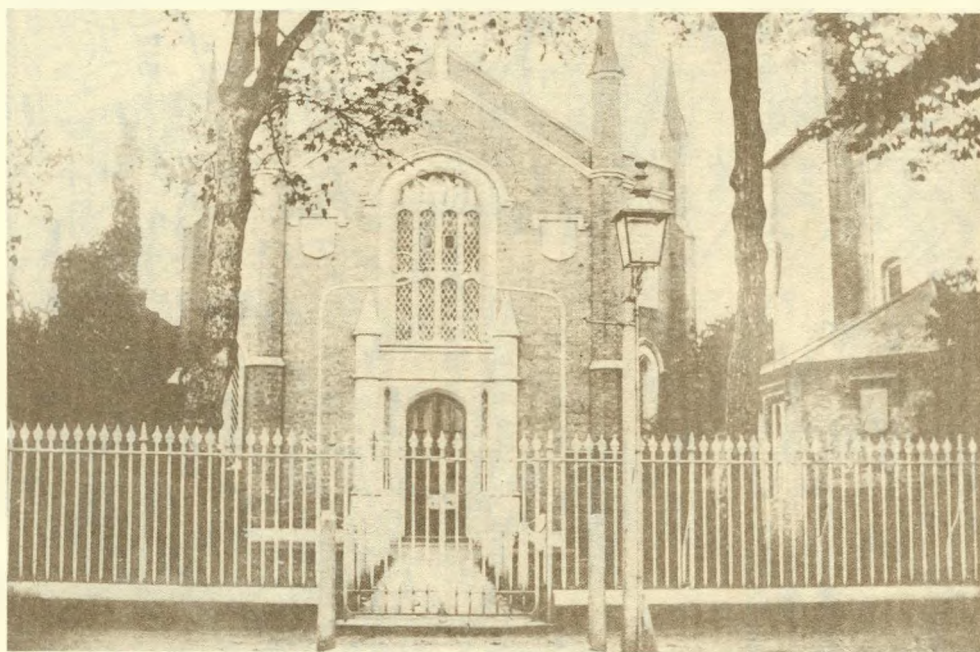
The buildings of 'The Glades' can now be seen as the latest of a long series of developments, some large and controversial, many small and virtually un-noticed which have changed Bromley in less than two hundred years from a tiny Kentish market town to the administrative and shopping centre of a large London Borough.

*(Researched and written by Eric Inman for the Bromley Borough Local History Society)*





*The Congregational Church in Widmore Road destroyed by bombing in 1941.*



*The original (1835-1880) Congregational Chapel in Widmore Road on the site now occupied by Boots.*









Bromley: 1910.

# SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Bromley Borough Local History Society was founded in 1974 and is a registered charity (No 2733963) devoted to researching, recording and encouraging interest in the history of the area now administered by the London Borough of Bromley. It works closely with the Local Studies Library and relies entirely on subscriptions, donations, income from the sale of publications and the voluntary efforts of its officers and members to carry on its work.

If you have enjoyed looking at our display of old photographs illustrating the previous history of the site on which 'The Glades' Shopping Centre now stands why not do something to make it possible for us to give more frequent displays, hold more meetings and give you an even greater opportunity to learn more of the fascinating history of the place in which you live.

For a modest annual subscription, reduced if you are a Senior Citizen or are joining in the second half of the year, you can not only feel you are supporting a valuable activity, but can also come along to our monthly meetings and summer outings, keep in touch through our quarterly newsletter, and purchase our publications at specially reduced rate. Our latest booklet devoted to the entrepreneurs of the Borough, has just appeared and costs £2.85 but only £1.90 if you are a member!

There is a membership application form enclosed in this souvenir pamphlet but if there is anything more you would like to know, drop a line to our Hon. Secretary Mr. L. Sanders, 14 Highland Road, Bromley, BR1 4AD (s.a.e. appreciated) or phone our 24 hour Local History Hotline on 081-650 8342.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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