



ARCHIVE UPDATE No 37

RIVER HOUSE



River House (south elevation) and New River Circa 1905
Courtesy of Bruce Castle Museum

River House, the family home of Samuel South(2) from 1917, has been described in earlier editions of the Update (Update No. 34). The photograph reproduced above is taken from an album, compiled by Fred Fisk, held in the archives at Bruce Castle Museum. It is the only photograph discovered to date which illustrates the section of the abandoned loop of the New River that flowed through the garden of the house. The river bed was filled in by Samuel(2) (Update No. 9).

Fred Fisk, of Tottenham High Road, was a printer and amateur local historian who also published postcards of the area. The album comprises photographs used for the postcards and the scenes depicted include Devonshire Hill Lane, River House and Devonshire Hill Farm.

SNELLS PARK



The Grove Tavern – Snells Park March 2003

The Grove Tavern, Snells Park, is now boarded up, presumably, in readiness for demolition and redevelopment. The building is the last remnant of the area that would have been known to Samuel(1) (no. 43 Snells Park C1900-1919) and Samuel(2) (no.39 Snells Park C1907-1917). However, because of the religious beliefs of the elder Samuel, it is most doubtful that members of his family would have been allowed to sample the delights of the tavern. The decorative window mouldings were repeated on the private houses (Update no. 21).

DID YOU KNOW ?

- that in the valuation of land carried out under the Finance (1909-1910) Act Samuel(1) is shown as either the owner or occupier of some 40 acres in the Devonshire Hill Lane and White Hart Lane areas (Wood Green administration).
- that in 1911 it was proposed to construct a Greater London radial railway that would pass close to the Potteries and River House. In a report to Tottenham Urban District Council, the Borough Engineer recommended that a station be built at Devonshire Hill.
- that the 1913 Rate Assessments for the Lower Ward of Tottenham record Samuel(1) as the owner of 34 acres of land at Clay Hill (Devonshire Hill Lane) and White Hart Lane, including River House and Pipers Court (Tottenham administration).
- that in 1915 Samuel(1) sold approximately 14 acres of land at Devonshire Hill to Tottenham Urban District Council at a cost of £555 per acre (total £8220) for the site of a proposed Isolation Hospital (which was never built).

All of the above information was discovered during recent researches at Bruce Castle and will be the subject of further enquiries.

EBENEZER CHAPEL

Samuel South(1) 1853-1919 adhered to the creed of the Strict Baptists and attended a chapel in Claremont Road, Upper Edmonton, close the boundary with Tottenham and not far from his home in Snells Park. Members of the church were forbidden alcohol and participation in such pastimes as cards.

Jim South recalls that the congregation included brickmakers and other local businessmen. "Our grandfather South went regularly to an Ebenezer chapel off Fore Street. I never went there but Hilda [sister] did I remember. It must have been quite an ordeal, hours of extempore prayer etc." - Gladys Short: "We (brother John as well) were taken to Chapel which was very "down to earth" that's why the hymns were started with a tuning fork." - Maud Hickson.

Amongst the papers of Hilda Beech there is a photocopy of an article, "Claremont Street Strict (Calvanistic) Baptist Church by H J Griffen, The source and date of the article is unknown. An edited version is reproduced below. The copy is of poor quality and words appearing between [] have been added where the original text is indecipherable.

"The little street leads to allotments and market gardens beyond. A little distance down on the right-hand side, the quiet monotony of the humble brick fronted cottages is relieved by a little low pedimented frontage, of about two or three cottages in width, of simple structure to the houses around. [and] at the entrance [a] stone tablet inscribed Ebenezer Chapel 1818. It [leads] to the pathway within iron railings, and its doorway opens into a shallow lobby, scarcely big enough for the exchange of civilities on the doormat

The building is most economically constructed, all superfluous space is used - the interior: a simple rectangular [design with] good height and proportions, - facing the pulpit on the opposite side some of the good old-fashioned [tile] pattern built between the sills of the large windows. A door communicates with minister's vestry and on the other side is the deacons' pew, where sit the elders and singingmen around a table. There is not a wasted inch anywhere; a row of crowded hat-pegs an old-fashioned inconvenient height affords a decorative string course to an otherwise bare interior; it is well lit, however, by ample sash windows in the upper part of the walls which give a cheerful and generous sky view. The height of these windows reminds us that when built, the time had not gone by when Dissenters' meetings could be held in safety. Eavesdropping and violent interruption had still to be guarded against. This quaint Chapel is in use by the Calvinistic Strict Baptists at the present time. Although the date of the erection of the chapel was 1818, and its name "Ebenezer", it was not built for nor owned by its present occupants. Nor was it built for Baptists, probably, for it lacks a very desirable adjunction use by the Strict Baptists, a pool; so that when this sacred function has to be performed, this little community has to seek the hospitality of the nearest chapel properly provided.

The story goes that this little chapel was built by the coach-building family residing in the adjacent premises; they themselves were church people, but were not narrow-minded, and being concerned for the religious views of their work people built this place of worship for those to whom it was necessary. In course of time its use seems to have slackened off in this respect, and about 50 or 60 years ago its use was secured with the help of a formerly well-known family in the district, as the Chapel of the Calvinistic Strict Baptists. This little church belongs to a very extreme group and although individually they may be inestimable in character, yet their creed is severe. Owing to appalling results of Calvinistic theories, this branch of the Particular Baptists takes no official notice of young people who are not baptized according to the views they hold of that sacred right. Yet these parents are just as human as the rest of us. Although the chapel will hold 150 persons, the congregation is not a large one; it probably does not receive many fresh members; those who form the mainstay of the community are long-established families in the district, descendants most likely of the original members. The Claremont Street Baptists do not indulge in instrumental music, they are still in the pipe-pitch and tuning-fork age, under the agreeable tyranny of the Bristol Tone Book. But what lusty singing – all long metre – the harmonies like that of a bell. John Bunyan was a Strict Baptist and his pilgrims sang upon every opportunity."