

# THE GRASSHOPPER PENSIONERS' CLUB



## MARTINS BANK



Website: [www.martinsbank.co.uk](http://www.martinsbank.co.uk)

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Summer 2021 Edition

## WE'RE FINALLY GETTING BACK TO LIFE AS NORMAL



Despite the number of our former branches reducing by the month our (ghostly) name lives on in Dartford.

I would like to thank Grace Lowndes for emailing this wonderful, evocative photograph of the former Martin & Company, Dartford branch, where, after more than 51 years our name once again lives on. I must admit that I have lost count of the number of branches where our name is clearly visible after all this time has elapsed.



Grace wrote: *Dear David, I am the widow of John Lowndes (formerly of 80 Gracechurch Street and 168 Fenchurch Street). I thought*

*you might be interested in these photos. The first is of Lowfield Street, Dartford branch which closed last year due to redevelopment. Business has transferred to a vacated Royal Bank of Scotland branch. I am hoping that the building won't be demolished as I'm sure you will agree it is a rather fine building.*

(Detail below)



And how it used to be (from Jonathan's website):



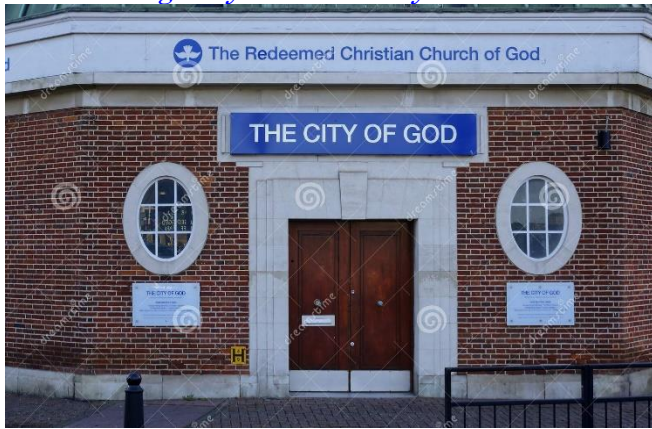
Jonathan writes:

*Dartford is one of Martins Bank's oldest Branches, opened by Martin and Company in 1891, and carried on serving customers for almost one hundred and thirty years. Dartford is never visited by Martins Bank Magazine, but we do have a good stock of staff portraits in our gallery below, along with more exterior and interior photos from our friends at Barclays. Still guarded by Gresham's grasshopper, and standing defiantly against the times, Dartford Branch continues to bear the name of Martins for some time AFTER the merger (Ed: and still does Jonathan) with Barclays. Dartford is one of the*



longest serving Martins Branches, clocking up 129 years by the time of its closure in September 2020.

*Grace continues:* The second is Crayford branch which closed several years ago and is now a church! This picture is taken from a flyer that came through my door recently:



and how it was in Martins' days below:



There are no banks between Bexleyheath and Dartford now.

*I enjoy reading all the news keep up the good work! My best wishes to all Grasshoppers and your families, keep well, Kind regards, Grace.*

### HAS ANYONE NOTICED THE DIFFERENCE?

I could be wrong, and most-likely am, but perhaps some of our members might be able to explain why the 'Gresham Grasshopper' used on the former Martin and Company has antennae which point forwards whilst the grasshopper used in the Coat of Arms, after the merger with The Bank of Liverpool, have their antennae resting on the back of their abdomen.

### THE BIRTH OF A BANKING CAREER

We are grateful to Bas Bush for sharing his memories of his early days with Martins.



Bas Bush writes: *September 1963, a letter dropped through the letterbox. Postmarked London EC3 I hesitatingly prised it open. Yes! I had an invitation to an interview with Mr. F. E. Gilham, Assistant Staff Manager, Martins Bank, 68*



*Lombard Street for a job with the Grasshopper Bank.*

*Within a few days (that's how desperate they were for staff) I was on the doorstep of 68 nervously approaching my first job interview. The only advice I had received had been given by a slightly older lad who had been a fellow pupil at St. Mary's Grammar School and had joined Lloyds Bank. He told me that if asked in interview why I wanted to join a bank I should include the comments that it was a secure job and that the pension arrangements on retirement were a very worthwhile bonus! I can't recall whether I did mention that, but whatever I did say was sufficient to receive a letter within a week informing me that a job was available if I would like to accept.*

*Encouraged by my father I replied immediately by way of acceptance. Within a matter of days another letter arrived, 'Report on Monday 21st October 1963 to the training school at 25 Soho Square'. 'Let me see the letter,' said my father;*



*he couldn't believe that a bank had a training centre in Soho. So, on 21st October I set sail from home via a 229 bus, the Dartford Loop Line from Sidcup Station to Charing Cross and a walk to Soho*

*Square via Charing Cross Road ("don't go up Greek Street" said dad) to arrive by the appointed time of 9.30am.*

*Dressed in a hastily purchased grey suit with white shirt, collar and tie I arrived on time. It turned out that the training school was at the rear of the Soho Square branch premises and on ringing the doorbell I was directed to the training room to meet with about another half dozen or so new entrants. All of them had been allocated to a branch and some had already started; I was labelled as London District Relief Staff, whatever that meant.*





We all waited shyly and nervously, male and female (a novelty for someone who had attended a boys' only school for 6 years) waiting for something to happen. Just before 10.00am an elderly man appeared and introduced himself as **Mr. Geoffrey Headon**, a retired banker probably in his late 60's or early 70's who would guide us through the next 3 weeks of training. After introducing himself we each did likewise and he told us that we would start as we meant to go on for the next three weeks. "Follow me" he said as we marched back out of the front door of the branch, turned right into the Square, past a church and sharp right again towards Charing Cross Road. Left to the traffic lights at the Oxford Street/Tottenham Court Road junction, across and down Charing Cross Road until we reached our destination – J. Lyons Coffee Shop. For the first time in my life and on money borrowed from my parents until my first salary arrived, I indulged in a Danish Pastry with a cup of coffee.

The three weeks was spent learning the important basics of branch bookkeeping. The mystery of hand-posting and balancing the yellow journal, understanding pink and blue BPV's and whether they went on the right or left-hand side, remittances, credit transfers and standing orders, cheques and over the counter credits and where to post them all was assiduously digested. On the last day of the course, I was handed a letter; I was to report on



Monday to Oxford Circus Branch, 251 Regent Street Then (left) and Now – in 2014

(below)



On Remembrance Day, Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 1963 at the tender age of 17, I climbed the steps in Swallow Place at the rear of Martins Bank,

251 Regent Street (Oxford Circus Branch) and took the small lift to the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor. There I was introduced to **Mr John Brown** (pro-manager). He asked me what I had learnt on the training course. I proudly told him that I had hopefully mastered the identification and posting of documents correctly on the journal. "Excellent" he said "we don't do any of that here in a big branch, we have a proof machine".

Three weeks training that I never used in the whole of my banking career as I was posted to my first thrilling job: **'Recordak' Operator!** Bas Bush. (Oxford Circus Branch, 1963 -1970).



(Editor: Could the two photographs on the previous page be our former branch at 25 Soho Square Bas?)

### LIVERPOOL LUNCH JUNE 2021

Despite continuing to be affected by COVID-19 restrictions, an excellent **'Restaurant-Style'** Lunch, with pre-lunch drinks being served by their staff at designated tables in the bar, was still able to be provided for our intrepid members by The Racquet Club on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> June and we hope that **'Normal Service will be resumed as soon as possible'**, so that we all can, and will, meet again in the near future and in



**Liverpool on December 10<sup>th</sup>.** On behalf of the Club, I must thank everyone who attended for their continued support and (hopefully) that they enjoyed the Lunch and company of their former colleagues.

Photographs of those who attended yesterday's event follow (and I hope that I have added their correct names to the following photographs). Left to right in each photograph they are:



Sue Williamson, Sandra Barlow, Lesley Crombie, Myra Sutton.

Joan Jones, Ann Ashcroft, Lesley Crombie.







Bruce and Carol Allen, Peter Whitehead and Carole Taylor.

Sandra Jones, Barry Hopkins, Leonard Jones, Bryan and Wendy Browne.



Ken and Pam Quirk Alan and Linda Thomond

Eve and Dave Baldwin, Sue and Stuart Sutcliffe, Linda and Mike Cadwallader



## A PERRENIAL QUESTION

### What is happening to our building?

On the morning after the Liverpool Lunch we walked past 4, Water Street. Unfortunately, unlike the photograph below, it has seen better days but it is still an impressive building and I have discovered the following information about its future. If you have internet access then you can follow this link which was uploaded on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019, 11:02 to read the various comments, if not then they follow below:

[Place North West | PLANNING | Martins Bank heads packed Liverpool agenda](#)



*The redevelopment of the grade two star-listed Water Street landmark is among a host of projects recommended for approval when the council's planning committee meets next week. A previous application to convert the interwar*

*Herbert J Rowse-designed building into a hotel having lapsed, the Principal Hotel Group submitted plans for a 215-bedroom hotel in March, with Brock Carmichael as architect and Savills advising. The building has been empty since Barclays moved out in the late 2000s.*

### **RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL**

**Developer:** Principal Hotel Group

**Architect:** Brock Carmichael

**Planner:** Savills

**Hotel beds:** 215

**Scheme:** The proposal differs from the 2015 application with changes including using the entire ground floor as a guest area, featuring a lounge, bar, restaurant, function rooms, reception and lobby. A new entrance is proposed on the Exchange Street West elevation. Kitchen, offices, and ancillary space are all also to be moved to the basement. The banking hall's existing mezzanine will be used to provide 12 guest rooms. The former boardroom and directors' dining rooms are to be retained as conferencing spaces, while a gym will be added. New rooftop extensions will provide enclosed spaces between the existing stone rooftop colonnades on the east and west of the building to form a sky bar on its west elevation, and a spa along its east elevation facing the town hall.



(Above) The bronze doors of the main entrance to our building.



(Left) The part-hidden acknowledgement to Herbert Rowse behind the handrail on the

right-hand side of the steps (ascending).

(Right) In the absence of an English Heritage blue plaque, we must thank the City of Liverpool for theirs, despite its current condition.



## JUST A TICK

How did I manage to acquire the “Martins



Bank” clock? This sizeable timepiece had sat on the wall to the left as one pushed through the heavy swing doors to enter the hallowed Ground Floor Banking Parlour at 68 Lombard Street in the City of London. But you could not enter unless you knocked on one of the square glass panels set in the top half of both

swing doors. Having looked, you were then ushered in with a beckoning hand from the imposing desk in the right-hand corner. This meant, somehow, pushing one of the heavy doors whilst carrying an armful of manila files and then walking across a highly-polished floor. I managed to negotiate the approach successfully apart from the time I had a higher pile than usual, and went sliding on the thin rug and ended up on the floor surrounded by sheets of paper. The Manager, believed to have been the youngest Major in the British Army, whilst serving with the Chindits in Burma during the War, did ask if I was alright, and having assured him I was, I then proceeded to gather up ALL the papers.

This little episode took place at the start of what was known as Morning Prayers. This occurred precisely at 9.30a.m., by which time I was expected to have digested the financial section of “The Times” so that I could draw attention to any item mentioning our customers as we had a number of large household names. Which is why my forty-minute journey in on the Northern Line flashed by, as each trip was completely taken up with trying to spot any familiar names hidden somewhere in all the print.

Headlines and headed columns were obvious, so they were the customer files you presented to the manager, certain I had spotted every possible reference to any of our customers. My main function was to try to talk knowledgeably about that particular client. However, there wasn't just one Manager, there were two (they later became Branch Directors). The pair of them sat side by side listening to me, and up to

now the one, who had remained silent, suddenly piped up in his best cross-examination delivery: “But what about XYZ Company mentioned at the bottom of the third column on page forty-one?”

Well, there was no answer to that, apart from a stifled incomprehensible splutter!

A few years later, both of these gentlemen retired, and the branch that had some interesting links (Lawrence of Arabia was a customer) duly closed. This meant the transfer to elsewhere for some of the interesting artefacts, such as the mounted guns that had been acquired for defence during the Gordon Riots (June 1780).

The branch and most of its staff moved to the old Hong Kong & Shanghai building in Gracechurch Street, and the “clock” went there. It occupied a slot on the wall of the Administration Manager's office. When I retired, I asked if it would be possible for me to have it as a retirement gift. Property Division was approached for permission to do this but the response was a firm “No”. That was that, then. Except, that six months after I had retired, I received a ‘phone call from the Administration Manager asking if I was still interested and, if so, would I like to make an offer as he was fed up with the fact that it was just not working properly, and made life somewhat difficult for him on more than one occasion. Property Division conceded that it was no longer viable and it could be offered to me subject to my making a reasonable bid. I made said bid, that was accepted and a receipt issued. So, a satisfactory conclusion all round. Although it still doesn't work! At some stage, it had been an electric mechanism and then converted to battery, but the batteries were not powerful enough to keep the hands moving for long. At least it is right twice a day!

Now one floor up was yet another clock. This was twice the size of the item to which I have alluded thus far. It was perched above two shiny green leather chairs that were against a wood-panelled wall outside the District General Manager's office. No prospective new entrant awaiting a London Staff Manager's interview will ever forget the loud tick as they waited to be called.

A high wooden barrier separated the candidate from rows of impressive desks housing the District Office Inspectors. It was all hushed tones broken only by the occasional ringing telephone. The main function of the Inspectors was to scrutinise applications submitted by Branch Managers that exceeded their particular discretion. This meant Managers



could lend to customers up to a certain level without reference to a higher authority (not THAT higher authority, although one or two may have felt they had equivalent power). It may appear to have been a very cumbersome system, but it contributed to a highly-qualified Inspectorate and knowledgeable teams down the line.

**Cor Blimey!** How on earth did they manage without a computer?

*John Peters*

## DO YOU REMEMBER THIS (FROM THE EASTER NEWSLETTER)?

### MEMORIES OF DECEMBER 1969

Please don't strain your eyes attempting to read this little gem as it will be published in its entirety in the next Newsletter. So, 'What is it?' you might ask. Well, I will tell you: it is a lament to the demise of our Bank, but is/was it the only one? Does anyone know of any others? Please let me know if you do and forward me a copy so that I can publish it in the next Newsletter.

Well, it was rather small wasn't it, but did anyone guess what it was? No need now, as it can be

revealed below:

### TO THE TUNE OF 'GOODBYE DOLLY GREY'.

Goodbye Martins we must leave you  
Though it breaks our hearts to go,  
Goodbye Martins we must leave you  
And to Barclays we must go,  
We don't want to leave you Martins  
Can't you hear us ruck,  
We don't want to join you Barclays  
It's just our bloody luck.

We've been sold right down the river  
At a meeting held a year ago,  
We've been sold right down that river  
By Judas Clegg and Co.,  
He said sell your Bank to Barclays,  
What a blooming laugh,  
All the shareholders are happy  
And sod the bloody staff.

Norman Butler must be seething,  
Buxton's turning in his grave,  
Billie Holmes he too is grieving  
For the Bank their lives they gave,  
Why don't they come down from Heaven  
And stop this shocking plot,  
Let's line the board up in Change Alley  
And shoot the bloody lot.

It is anonymous and was discovered by a Manchester member whilst clearing a drawer but illustrates the strength of feeling about our takeover by Barclays in 1969.

## MEMORIES, MEMORIES!

I launched my career at **Higher Tranmere** but I had report to **Rock Ferry (Right)**



first because **Higher Tranmere** was a sub-branch (but similar size, and with its own manager). It was there that I 'enjoyed' my first (and last) 23.30 finish on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1966. We just got to the pub in time to drink in the New Year. The next year, I forgot to put the return (to Head Office) label on the 'envopack' containing our year-end figures. As Martins always prided itself on publishing results first, I had to jump in the car when our envelope was delivered back on the next morning and make a 'special delivery' over to Water Street! Back then, we still opened on Saturday mornings, and I remember the hoo-ha over trying to bag the first Saturday of the holiday so as to have a full week off.

I then ascended to **St Hilary (right)**, a sub-branch to **Liscard**. A 3-person outfit where I was (1<sup>st</sup> and only) cashier and dog's body. Others were the



Manager and a machinist who used to lock herself in the 'bog' when asked to do relief at **Liscard**. I think it was one of the 'Constables' doing **Relief Manager** when we closed the door **ON THE WAY OUT at 3.00** because there was a rugby match about to start on telly or somewhere on the Wirral! The tobacconist over the road used to order American "**Lark**" cigarettes specially for me. Imagine that in this day and age!

**Bromborough** was next (**right**), as First Cashier. Again, oddly, I was sent to **Lower Bebington**, where the Manager said "**We've already got a first cashier. We don't need you!**". Phone call to LHO Staff Dept, and I was back on the road to **Bromborough**. The take-over of Barclays warmed-up while I was there, and we



had outright war with the Barclays branch over the road! Introducing them to Salmon slices was a triumph! I think we marched over the road en-masse on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1969, just to emphasise who won!! Our alarm system rang in the butcher/baker shop next door. Once, after a *'falsie'*, he rushed in shouting that he was "too busy to ring the police". Those were the days, eh?



Brian Woods was a great Manager; my favourite Manager. I think we all enjoyed our happiest working years at **Bromborough** branch. I think I then moved on to

### Ellesmere

**Port** before the actual Takeover date. No! The move was in January 1970. So, my Martins Bank career ended just after the **Takeover**, although **Ellesmere Port** was still Martins to all intents and purposes, until the *'O'Reilly Men'* came to chisel the



Grasshoppers off our walls. Thankfully, they couldn't touch the Martins mosaic inside the main entrance!!



The **Ellesmere Port** Barclays was down the road, so the jousting continued unabated. We had plate glass front windows with views of the shopping centre.... until a customer turned from the counter and walked straight into the

window. He was more damaged than the window, and we had to install curtains!! It was also at Ellesmere Port that the frosted glass screen behind the counter was removed –

security or something – and for the first few days all our coffee cups and fag ends were revealed to the world! Oops!! But then *"Courtesy, Accuracy and Speed"* became *"Speed and Accuracy"*.....

but we Martians will never forget;

**Courtesy**

*Mike Cadwallader*

## DEATH NOTICES

**Dewhirst** Robert Tolson, aged 90 on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021

**Williams** Harry, aged 89 on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021

We hope to be able to publish obituaries for Robert and Harry in our Autumn Newsletter so please let me have your memories of both of our former colleagues before the end of August.

## LUNCHES

As previously mentioned, our **Liverpool Lunch** went ahead as planned and was enjoyed by all who attended. In the absence of a designated speaker, a 'Powerpoint' presentation of the branches at which they worked during Martins' days was watched and repeated on a continuous loop). After lunch, on a socially-distanced basis, those present were able to meet their former colleagues and friends. We must also thank the staff of the Racquet Club for their attention not forgetting the excellent food and drink that we all enjoyed.

Ken Quirk must also be thanked for not only organising the recent Liverpool Lunch and the forthcoming London Lunches but also for organizing all of the lunches in recent years.

Unfortunately, COVID has struck again which has resulted in only a limited response to the September London Lunch which has resulted in us having a rethink. No, not about the Lunch itself but the function room. As opposed to the Gascoigne Suite, and, to conserve our funds, we have opted for a more cost-effective smaller room. This has meant that the event is now fully subscribed.

## FUTURE LUNCHES

We, your Committee, work for you and are constantly looking at how we can make our Club be more inclusive for all of our members.

## THE SEARCH IS ON!

For what? You might ask. Well, it is not **WHAT** but **WHO**!

We all know that we are getting older by the second, minute, hour, day, week month, year. Although we are aware that we have some members who are over 90 but what we would like to know is:



## WHO IS THE OLDEST GRASSHOPPER?

I regularly speak with our members and also receive emails from others (aka 'Silver Surfers') who are also nonagenarians. So what? Well, we thought that it would be a good idea if we could find our oldest member. What do you think? Obviously, all information provided will be treated in total confidence by myself and divulged to no-one, with the exception of your name. So, please don't hold back as we like to be accurate in everything we publish. As always, my contact details are contained on the front page.

*I imagine that the next question is:*

## DO WE HAVE ANY CENTENARIANS IN OUR RANKS?

### ANOTHER MEMORY TEST

As the song goes: *'A picture paints a thousand words'...*



But a photograph is better! Which is clearly evident from this newly-discovered photograph languishing in the Barclays' Archives filing system, which means that we now have the original view of a long-lost branch.

Jonathan Snowden has now updated the website

and the new page can be viewed by searching:

*182 Euston Road,  
London.*



### WOOLER BRANCH

As John Robertshaw first recorded some years ago, so has Michael Mawdsley's son recently! The **ghost** of Martins continues to haunt our streets and long may it do so!



With having a national membership, does anyone know of similar locations as these in the current Newsletter and another John Robertshaw discovery at Hebden Bridge? If you do then please take a photograph and forward it to me for future issues.



### BELFORD



Nor must we forget **Belford**, where our coat of arms are literally '*etched in stone*' and our grasshopper and Liver bird maintain their watchful eyes over the Market Place.

### FUTURE LUNCHESES (continued)

So, it's over to you to let us know your preference for locations.

Our much postponed 'Spring Lunch' will finally take place at The Union Jack Club on 9<sup>th</sup> September followed by the November Lunch at the same location. A second 'Northern Powerhouse' Lunch is also being planned for later in the year whilst a second Liverpool Lunch is being arranged for 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021. If there is sufficient support future lunches will be arranged in Bournemouth, Exeter, and Birmingham in order to make them more accessible to members. Additionally, George Hamilton is arranging his annual Manchester Lunch.

### THE GRESHAM SHIP

Did anyone watch the recent Channel 5 documentary: '*Draining the Thames?*' It was an interesting documentary which included a section on '*The Cherabin*' an armed Elizabethan merchantman which sank in the Thames estuary. More in the next issue .....