

Bignell's Corner the first South Mimms Services?

Now possibly the most famous (or is it infamous) junction in the UK?

Until the 1920s a sleepy little area where a Mr Cutbush originally had his nursey becoming in the 1930s Bignell and Cutbush.

In the 1920s the Barnet Bypass was built to ease traffic flow from North London to the Midlands and beyond, the Bypass cut through the Telford road, constructed 1826 – 1830, which up to then had been one of the major routes out of North London to St. Albans, The Telford Road had itself cut across the old established route at Greyhound/ Wash Lane and further on at Blanche Lane/Blackhorse Lane.

Looking to seize business opportunities this new road and junction created, businessmen developed the area around the junction with services for the motorists, petrol, repairs for the vehicle, food, drink, and accommodation for the drivers.

The junction became an accident black spot, poor lighting, braking and excessive speed for the vehicle & conditions caused numerous accidents many fatal, remember this was the time before roundabouts or the installation of traffic lights. In the 1930's the St. John Ambulance even opened a first aid hut near the Middlesex Arms to help the injured so frequent were the collisions.

A warning Beacon was erected in the centre of the junction to warn drivers of the danger, but it proved to be of little help in winter or foggy conditions and was often not seen, found smashed overnight by lorries not seeing it and running into it.

This situation was eased by the installation of traffic lights and better road layout, but the junction continued much as it had done until the advent in the 1970's & 80's of the A1M and M25 Motorways, these effectively smashed through the area. the A1M in a cutting and the M25 elevated above. The old Bypass becoming Swanland Road, if you study maps of the area you can still see vestiges of the old layout with some names surviving, namely **Beacon Lorry Services, Lantern Recovery Services,** and the name **Bignell's.**

The 1935 map opposite shows. The **San Marina** also called **San Martin** restaurant with an outdoor swimming pool, The **Middlesex Arms** public house, hotel and restaurant, **Bignell's Corner Service Station.** petrol and repairs, **The Beacon Café** transport café, **Lantern Garage** petrol and repairs **The Rest** transport café, **The Five Bells** restaurant and finally **WM Bignell and Son nurserymen.**



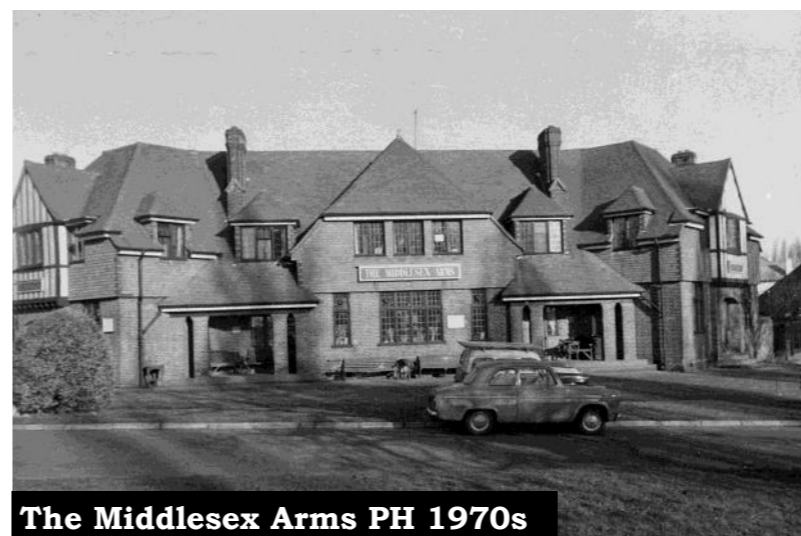
Opening of the St. John First Aid hut 1936



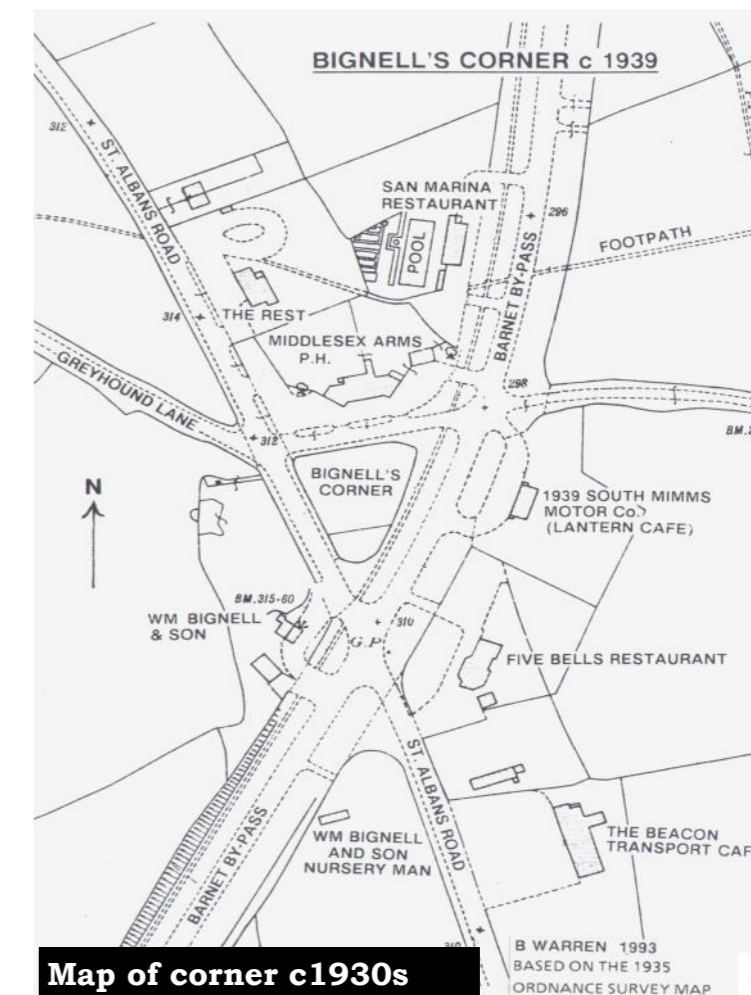
The Lantern Garage and Service Station 1930s



Bignell's Corner Service Station 1930s



The Middlesex Arms PH 1970s



Map of corner c1930s



One of many crashes. 1930s



The San Martin Restaurant 1930s