

# NEWSLETTER 143

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2000

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## Notes and News

### **The British School**

The Society opposed an application for outline planning permission to demolish the old British School in Smarts Lane and to replace it with houses.

The British School was the nonconformist primary school for Loughton, as opposed to the National School which was run by the Anglicans. It was sponsored by Loughton Baptists (the congregation that became the Union Church) and was built about 1844 in Smarts Lane, in the then traditional form of schoolroom and master's house adjoining and intercommunicating. In fact, the school was run by a mistress until 1865.

It was reported in 1867 that the average attendance was 69 and the school attracted the approval of inspectors. The last headmaster was Joseph Hawkins Hayward, a Devonshire man. Hayward, who was a Wesleyan, ceased to be master in 1888, when the school was transferred to the new Loughton School Board, which opened Staples Road Boys' School the same year. Hayward later became secretary to the Lopping Hall and the first clerk of the Loughton Urban District Council.

After 1888 the British School building was at first used as a Sunday school, latterly by St Mary's Church. But that use ceased when St Mary's got its own hall. The building then had a variety of industrial uses, including as the works of F A Davies & Co, manufacturers of tennis racquets and, from about 1935, the Loughton Bag Manufacturing Co. It has recently been used by Taylor's Shopfitters.

The Society opposed demolition of the old school because it is one of the town's oldest and historic buildings. There are plenty of examples of conversions of school buildings to residential use without wanton destruction of the original building. The Smarts Lane premises has for many years been disfigured by a lean-to shed built against the frontage, but behind this are the original apertures plus, I would guess, a foundation stone which British Schools generally had. We were joined in our objections by the Hills Amenity Society and the Town Council and the application was rejected. Unfortunately, appeals are always possible.

Does anyone have a photograph or any memorabilia (e.g. prize book) of the British School? Or, for that matter, a Davies tennis racquet or Loughton bag? If so, please let me know.

CHRIS POND

### **Likewise . . .**

The old village school in Coppice Row, Theydon Bois, for long used by the College of Preceptors (now Teachers) and dating from 1840, was also under threat of redevelopment for housing recently. However, a strong protest was mounted in the village and residents encouraged to write to EFDC Planning. These measures proved successful and the planning application was withdrawn. The grounds of objection were the same: that the building is one of the oldest in the village. Various suggestions have been mooted for another use not the least of which is that it might serve as a replacement vestry for St Mary's Church or that Wansfell College might use it as an annexe.

TED MARTIN

## More on Dr Uty [Utie]

*Mr Alan Smith kindly contributed the following information about Dr Uty as an addition to the material in Chris Pond's note in Newsletter 142, November/December 1999. This previously appeared at greater length in The King's Well (the Chigwell Parish Magazine) in September 1998.*

“. . .Dr Emanuel Utie . . . who from 1615 was Vicar of Chigwell and later Rector. In 1641 parishioners of Chigwell (though exactly how many is not clear) petitioned Parliament for Utie's dismissal. Specimen charges from a long list show the rector accused of erecting an altar where he 'doth use frequent and offensive bowing therunto', of advocating prayers to the saints and of asserting that any person in Holy Orders spoke by divine inspiration. Further he was accused of 'wearing a crucifix in his bosom', keeping one in his study and of threatening his wife for not bowing to it. He was also said to have been seen drunk. Whether or not this last was true, he was certainly verbally intemperate. Perhaps the historian of Chigwell School, of which he was Senior Governor, is over-generous in describing him as 'tactless'. His views of church government were confused. While he said he 'loved the Pope with all his heart', he also said that the commands of the Archbishop of Canterbury were to be obeyed 'as those of God'. 'Parliament men' he condemned as 'mechanicks and illiterate', a distinctly eccentric view of the party of John Milton and Andrew Marvell! Utie was not actually suspended as 'corrupt in his doctrine and vicious in his practice' until 1643 and even then he was no martyr. Part of the parish income was allowed for his maintenance and that of his wife. At the Restoration of 1660 Utie petitioned the King for the living of Stepney. He was given this but died in 1661 within three months of his institution."

## Reminiscences of a Loughton childhood

Perhaps my most vivid memories of Loughton and my life there before the War are of Staples Road Junior School in the 1930s. Do any other older Loughtonians remember the teachers: Miss Pride, Miss Jones (who, I think, married a missionary and left us for foreign parts); Miss Pasc (or was it Pask?), whose brother taught in the boys' school, and last, but most definitely not least, Miss Westall, the headmistress.

Miss Westall was about 4' 11" in height but 6' 11" in stature! She only had to walk through the door for a deep hush to descend over the whole class, and she ruled us all (teachers as well) with a rod of velvet. I still recall with a shudder the deep, deep indignity of her of her ultimate punishment – a 'smacking'. The miscreant had to go to the front of the assembled class, roll up a sleeve and receive, horror of horrors, a tap: just one, or two at the most, and hardly felt, but the shame lasted for days.

One day Miss Westall called out to the front of the class a girl who came bottom in all our lessons. Putting an arm round her she told us that, in talking to the girl's mother about her school work, the mother had said: 'but she can cook a dinner fit for a king'. 'Now girls', said Miss Westall, 'what finer tribute can be paid to any girl, that she can cook a good meal, for to be a good wife and mother is the finest vocation for any woman and . . . is an inspiration to us all'.

She also had a great fetish for fresh air – I recall with delight the whole school abandoning lessons on snowy days and being led by the teachers to Drummer Maids for snowball fights; and, on sunny days, taking chairs across the road for lessons under the trees. Happy, happy days!

I remember so vividly the names of so many girls I went to school with. Where are you now Joan Marsh, Ada Reynolds, Gladys Hyde, Joan Slater, Eileen Hughes, Peggy Kidman, etc, etc? I would love to know.

Does anyone else remember the fêtes which took place in the grounds of Goldings Manor? We used to stay behind afterwards 'to help clear up' and the leftover goodies were cleared up most efficiently of all!

We walked to and from school. I lived in Harwater Drive (we were the first occupants of that estate) and had to make the journey four times a day (most of us went home to lunch), sometimes up Church Hill, sometimes dawdling through Epping Forest – which of course would not be allowed today. I remember being in disgrace with my mother for being late for lunch because we had stopped at Bosworth's on Church Hill to see Mr Bosworth's daughter leave the house as a bride.

Loughton has now changed almost beyond recognition, but sometimes, especially on York Hill and Baldwins Hill or in Staples Road and the Forest, one can, for a fleeting moment recapture it as it used to be. It is still a lovely place and will always be home to me, although I have not lived there for many a long day.

PAMELA SOUTHAM (née CRUIKS)

## The restoration of Copped Hall

*As an introduction to the talk due in April by Alan Cox, the Project Architect, Trevor Roberts, Chairman of the Friends of the Copped Hall Trust, here sets out the background to the project and the work of the Friends of the Copped Hall Trust.*

In early days when the Great Forest of Waltham covered most of this part of Essex, it is probable that primitive man established himself on a low hill to the south of Cobbin Brook between the River Lee and the high ridge of Epping: the access drive to the Copped Hall estate has been carbon dated at 2300 BC. A much later resident could have been Queen Boudicca of the Iceni who is reputed to have made her last stand against the Romans at nearby Ambresbury Banks and is thought to be buried a little to the west on the Copped Hall ridge. The earliest known reference to an actual dwelling is in 1150 when a Copped Hall was owned by the Fithaucher family. The name Copped Hall could be derived from the term 'cop' meaning a house with a cap, a top of a hill or from simple association with the nearby Cobbin Brook.

In 1537 the Hall passed into the hands of the last Abbot of Waltham who, in turn, surrendered the property to Henry VIII in a vain attempt to save the Priory of Waltham during the dissolution of the monasteries. Although never a resident, the King was reputed to be at the Hall during the execution of Anne Boleyn, and his son Edward VI passed the Hall to his sister Mary Tudor. While resident there, Mary was the centre of religious controversy in England by insisting on celebrating Catholic Mass in defiance of the Royal Command. Also resident was her sister who, after succeeding to the throne as Elizabeth I, granted the Hall in 1564 to Sir Thomas Heneage who rebuilt it as a large Elizabethan mansion with a courtyard in the centre.

John Conyers built a new hall in 1758, a short distance to the south, in the Palladian style and a later owner, Ernest Wythes, added an extensive wing and large conservatory from 1895. He also laid out the great formal gardens for which the Hall was renowned in its heyday (about 1900) when it was rumoured that the Royal Family were considering it as a country residence.

An electrical fault was thought to be the cause of the fire which gutted the Hall in 1917. During subsequent years the burnt-out shell was progressively vandalised, although the gardens were kept in good condition until 1952, after which they were asset-stripped. The building was used as a piggery and a mushroom farm before becoming a centre for undesirables who committed wanton damage to many areas.

In the 1980s and early 1990s development proposals were successfully rejected, for e.g. a golf course, hotel and extensive housing estate. In 1992 the Corporation of the City of London purchased part of the estate in the south to act as a buffer zone for Epping Forest and the bulk of the estate to the north was retained by the Talbot Trust. In 1993 a Copped Hall Trust was set up for the purpose of acquiring the Hall its outbuildings and

gardens, 785 acres in all, for the purpose of restoration. Acquisition was achieved in 1995.

Several outbuildings have been restored, converted into five apartments and sold on covenanted leaseholds as residences. Part of the stables has also been restored including the turrets, the clock faces of which have been regilded. A complete measures survey of the main building and Victorian wing has been carried out in anticipation of the restoration of the roof.

On 26 April 1998 an inaugural meeting of the Friends of the Copped Hall Trust (known as the 'Friends') was held at the Hall in the almost restored Racquets Court and a steering committee elected whose function is to support the Trust with fundraising and provide physical help in the actual restoration. An educational sub-committee of the Trust exists to arrange lectures and educational courses about the Hall generally.

A working party of Friends spends each Sunday at the Hall and to date has carried out extensive work including clearance of the gardens and the creation of new lawns and the restoration of the Priory Garden. On 22 November 1998, the main entrance of the Hall on the east side was once again in use, possibly for the first time since the fire, so that work could commence with clearing the adjacent rooms and the cellars.

Another milestone was achieved on 10 November 1998 when a lorry load of the original stonework from the gardens was returned from HM Prison at Bullwood Hall. This was directly due to the tireless efforts of the Project Architect, Alan Cox, who is tracking down the many items which have been 'lost' since the fire.

Other major milestones are the acquisition in early 1999 of the 4 acre Walled Garden, and the restoration of the Priory Garden at the end of that year. The latter now provides direct access to the grounds via two new, impressive iron gates.

Financial support stems mainly from the leasing of the apartments and other outbuildings, from grants given by various organisations including the Essex Historical Society and the Epping Society and the fundraising activities of the friends: some £4,300 was raised by them in 1999, mainly derived from membership fees, donations and open days. The current membership stands at 158 and is steadily increasing . . .

TREVOR ROBERTS

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