
LOUGHTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

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‘Odds and Ends’

In December last year our Secretary, Richard Morris, was contacted by the BBC who were looking for articles on local history to put on their ‘Legacies’ website. On this new site from BBC Nations and Regions BBC web teams from across the UK collaborate to supply local detail on a range of historical themes. Richard agreed to write three articles: ‘An ancient office of the kingdom, the Verderers of Epping Forest’; ‘Dick Turpin and Epping Forest’; and ‘The Bank of England Printing Works’ – these being related to the themes the BBC were promoting. These articles are now on the website and the BBC have made a reference to the Society. They can be found at www.bbc.co.uk/legacies. You then click on the UK index, select England, then Essex, and then click on ‘Your Stories’. The Bank of England article can be found later in this issue of the *Newsletter*.

Loughton’s early history – III

RICHARD MORRIS

On the death of the widow of John Wroth IV in 1738, a descendant of one of her sisters, William, Earl of Rochford, became possessor of the manor of Loughton and advowson, which in 1745 he sold to Alderman Whitaker of London.

Whitaker died in 1752 and the manor passed to his widow, Anne, and, on her death in 1770, to their daughter, Anne. In 1825 the estate passed to Mr John Maitland of Woodford Hall. He and his son William Whitaker Maitland, who succeeded him in 1831, carried out considerable alterations to Loughton Hall. However, in December 1836 a fire broke out at night owing to a beam in the library chimney having ignited. The story goes that the beam fell on a wire, which set a bell in the butler’s room ringing. He gave the alarm and all the residents of the house escaped. It was winter and a cold night: the ponds were frozen and little or no water was obtainable, so that the house, the pictures, and 10,000 printed books and MSS perished, but not before many valuable objects had been rescued.

For many years the ruins of the old Hall lay behind great iron gates, until in 1879 a new Hall was built, the same that exists today.

It was William Whitaker Maitland (d1861) who in 1860 purchased from the Crown the forestal rights of the manor (the right to hunt in the forest). His only justification for this was that the Crown had intimated that if he did not wish to buy the rights, they would be sold to someone else.

William Whitaker Maitland was succeeded by his son, John Whitaker Maitland, who was also Rector of St John’s Church, Loughton. In 1864 he enclosed over 1,000 acres of the forest waste within his manor, and started to drive roads through it and sold some plots for building and other purposes. Thanks to the subsequent protest and action by parliament and the Corporation of London, the Epping Forest Act of 1878 declared all enclosures made since 1851 to be illegal and they were thrown open. In fact in 1876 the Corporation of London had purchased from Maitland the soil and forestal rights in 992 acres of the open waste of the manor of Loughton. The Corporation also paid £7,000 for the extinction of the lopping rights and part of this money was used to build Lopping Hall.

Until the coming of the railway to Loughton in 1856, small copyhold and freehold estates in the village, remained in much the same condition as for centuries earlier. Then the speculator saw his chance. William Waller, Loughton’s Victorian historian, thought that the village would have been an ideal site for a ‘garden-city’, using as models for domestic architecture Algors House and the White House, alas both now gone. Waller argued that the plain, roomy, old-fashioned cottage was better art than a smart new villa. Waller paid tribute to Edmond Egan, the architect, who has left his mark strongly impressed on Loughton.

Writing in 1903, Waller lamented that: ‘each year now sees often undesired change, and one can almost foresee the time when long unlovely streets will have replaced almost wholly green meadows which have hitherto gladdened the eyes and hearts of us Forest-folk. The Forest we shall always have: but a Forest girdled with coal-smoke will not be the same Forest.’

I wonder what Waller would think of the changes that have taken place in Loughton in the last 100 years, and the current proposals contained in the Harlow Options Study and the London-Stansted/M11 Corridor Development Report, which, if implemented, will mean thousands of houses being built on land designated as ‘Green Belt’.

Blackweir Hill Pond

JIM CORDELL*

I can add a little bit of information to Chris and Caroline Pond's Walk No 3, Loughton Brook and Blackweir Hill Pond in *Walks in Loughton's Forest*. The description of Blackweir Hill Pond (where I learned to swim – and which we local lads called 'The Gravels') mentions '... the climbing tree – a hornbeam into whose straight trunk somebody had screwed iron rungs, which children could climb'.

In fact, the lower branches of this tree were removed and the rungs installed by the army during the Second World War. They had a steel cable strung across the pond on which there was a triangular bar. As part of their training, the soldiers had to hold on to this bar and slide across the pond while their instructors threw thunderflashes into the pond to simulate enemy action. We used to watch this training, which, to our delight, often resulted in soldiers falling in, and once we were offered a shilling (a lot of money then) if we could go over (without the thunderflashes!). I cannot remember whether any of us did this, but we all climbed the tree (which was a considerable height) until the lower rungs were removed, presumably for safety's sake – and spoiled the fun!

I think the soldiers marched to and from a small unit (I am pretty sure they were the Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers – REME), based behind a large garage which stood on the corner of Rectory Lane and Goldings Hill.

Incidentally, we once found a stone-age axehead in one of the rabbit-holes around this pond.

*Jim Cordell, used to live at Baldwins Hill and now lives in Cirencester.

The Bank of England Printing Works, Debden, Loughton, Essex

RICHARD MORRIS

In 1694 the Bank of England was established in order to raise money for King William III's war against the French. Almost immediately the Bank started to issue notes in return for deposits. The crucial feature that made the Bank of England notes a means of exchange was the promise to pay the bearer the sum of the note on demand. The notes were initially handwritten on Bank paper and signed by one of the Bank's cashiers.

The first fully printed notes were issued in 1855, an event which brought relief to the bank's team of cashiers, who no longer had to sign each note individually. In 1916 the Bank purchased the St Luke's Hospital for poor lunatics in Old Street, which had closed, and converted the building into the St Luke's Printing Works. Production of bank notes remained there for 40

years, until a decision was taken in the early 1950s to develop a new site on the banks of the River Roding at Debden, Loughton, in Essex, some 14 miles from the City of London.

The new factory, designed by Easton & Robertson and built by Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons Ltd, opened in October 1956. The building is about 800ft long, with the main printing hall 125ft wide and vaulted by an irregular, very effective curve. The whole vault is of concrete and glass and conveys a sense of the grandest spaciousness (Pevsner).

The notes are now produced at Loughton by Debden Security Printing Ltd, a subsidiary of De La Rue Plc, and are a product of a highly developed form of mass production combining state-of-the-art technology and quality craftsmanship. The aim at every stage of production is to ensure that the note is as difficult as possible to counterfeit. Each note takes a great deal of research with the design team combining traditional and modern methods. Portraits and other illustrations begin as pencil and ink drawings. The background is developed with intricate geometric patterns using Computer Aided Design (CAD). The portrait of HM The Queen is engraved by hand. When finished, the design is duplicated many times onto printing plates ready for the presses. The specialised inks used to produce the notes number approximately 85 for the four denominations.

The paper for Bank of England notes is made specially for the Bank by Portals. It is manufactured from cotton, which gives it its crisp, distinctive feel and increases its toughness and durability. The watermark and security thread, are incorporated into the paper as it is made.

The finished parcels of notes are held in store at the Bank's Cash Centres in Debden and Leeds. They are then collected by the commercial banks for distribution to their branches. When notes that have been in the hands of the public are too dirty or damaged for further circulation they are returned to the Bank for destruction. Until 1990, these unfit banknotes were incinerated at Debden and the heat generated was used to supplement the heating at the site. However, it was decided that it would be more cost-effective and environmentally friendly if notes were shredded on site rather than burnt.

Information in this article is in part from a Bank of England Fact Sheet, use of which is gratefully acknowledged.

Nature Study in Epping Forest

EVE LOCKINGTON

When my eldest son Robin was very young we sent him to Oaklands for his early schooling. At that time the school was run by Miss Lord and Miss Read. My husband, Tony, was an amateur entomologist and, I sup-

pose because of this, Robin had learnt from an early age to look closely at the various living creatures, both plants and animals, that he came across. This was encouraged by Miss Read who told me later that Robin would come into class clutching some little creature or plant which she would examine with him. I had a great respect for Miss Read who, when very elderly and infirm, could be found wandering in the forest she loved.

Robin also grew up with a great interest in the forest. A walk with Robin would take much longer than with other people. There was so much that he would find interesting, either plant or animal. I wonder how many people have watched the lizards on hot days in the summer, sunning themselves on the branches of the hawthorn bushes on the Warren. Many times on summer days, he and I would watch these creatures. It required a great deal of patience. We would stay quietly with our eyes glued to the branches and then one would appear and then perhaps another, but any movement could make them disappear very quickly.

On one occasion Robin caught a pregnant female lizard and brought her home. We made her happy in a vivarium, fed her on insects and, in due course, she gave birth to four baby lizards. Lizards are viviparous and the babies were fully formed in every respect but very small. We returned the mother to the forest where we had originally found her and reared the babies who, in time, were also returned to their mother's bush.

It is very peculiar, but since Robin has left home, I have never since seen a lizard in the forest. Robin now lives in South Australia in a eucalyptus forest. Koalas rest their weary limbs on the eucalyptus branches whilst cramming leaves into their mouths, brightly coloured parrots sit amongst the leaves, Australian magpies, like ours to look at, make pleasant bell-like sounds and, on hot days, lizards are plentiful. However, Robin still remembers Epping Forest with pleasure. The trees he knew there are totally different from those amongst which he is living today and, of course, it must be said that some of the creatures in Australia are not as kind as ours. The snakes are more poisonous as, of course, are the spiders but for Robin the worst are the ants which bite and spring at any creature that comes near their nest. Robin has become allergic to their venom. At least our Epping Forest is a gentle place in comparison.

The Epping New Road

RICHARD MORRIS

The Highways Department of Essex County Council is currently considering ways of reducing the speed of traffic and the number of accidents along the Epping New Road, from the County boundary at the junction of Tuttlebee Lane, north to the Wake Arms.

When the M11 was constructed we all hoped that this would result in a reduction of traffic volumes on the old

A11. However, the increase in overall traffic volumes during the last 30 years has far exceeded any transfer of traffic from the A11 to the M11.

Some of us would argue that the problem goes back to 1830 when the Epping Highway Trust was given permission to build a new road straight through the centre of the Forest. One wonders whether a proposal to build a new road through the middle of Epping Forest today, would ever receive the approval of the Planning Authorities – I hope not.

The Epping Highway Trust was created by an Act of Parliament in 1768, when it took over responsibility for maintenance of the turnpike roads in this area, from the local and county Justices of the Peace. The Act, which came into force in May 1769, referred to the repairing, widening and keeping in repair of the road from the north part of Harlow Bush Common to Woodford. The road already had turnpikes and toll-houses erected upon it and tolls continued to be charged. The route at this time took the road through Epping, Loughton and Buckhurst Hill to Woodford.

The Act also gave the Trustees the power to divert, shorten, vary or alter any parts of the road through private lands, subject to agreed compensation. The roads were to be measured and milestones erected.

The first meeting of the Trust was held at Epping Place on 2 May 1769, and was attended by 49 Trustees, most of whom were well known local landowners. John Conyers, Esq, of Copped Hall, was appointed Treasurer, William Dare and Thomas Smith, joint clerks, and William Hatchman the (senior) surveyor.

Golden's (Goldings) Hill and Buckhurst Hill, two of the hills surrounding Loughton, were serious difficulties in the way of traffic into the eastern counties through Epping. In whichever direction a waggon or cart was travelling, it had to descend or ascend very steep hills. The road through Loughton had existed since the early part of the seventeenth century, but no steps had been taken to lessen the gradients. However, in 1770 the Trustees instructed that a survey should be made of Golden's Hill, and an estimate provided of the cost of making the ascent more easy. A committee was established to examine the results of the survey, and we find that Richard Lomax Clay (the family after whom Clays Lane is named) and William Hamilton, both residents of Loughton, were appointed members.

The estimated cost of lowering the hill was £360. A contractor was appointed to carry out the work, but there appear to have been problems and delays, which resulted in a new contractor being brought in to complete the work. Golden's Hill was not again brought to the notice of the Trustees, except for occasional repairs to the railings by the side of the road, until October 1825, when the necessity for a drain at the bottom of the hill to carry off water from the road, was taken into consideration, resulting in an order that a brick drain of 18 inches in diameter, should be made.

In December 1774 the Trustees' attention was drawn to the state of Buckhurst Hill and the Surveyor was

directed to fill up several holes, but it was not until 1777 that a survey and estimate for the reduction of the gradient was requested. Little was done immediately, although the road was widened in 1778. In 1780 action was taken to reduce the gradient. Following a meeting at the Roebuck, at which the estimated cost of £976 was discussed, it was proposed to make a cutting through the top of the hill, instead of following the route through North End and along the front of the Roebuck. A short road would be made at the bottom of the hill, where there was a sudden turn to the right.

Work started, but increased costs led to an order to stop. Later the clerk to the Trustees was instructed to advertise in the Chelmsford papers for tenders to complete the work, but it was 1784 before this was done. However, landslips resulted in a new survey in 1789 and work continued until 1794.

In 1787 the responsibilities of the Trust were extended to include a turnpike road from Epping, through Ongar, to Chelmsford, and thus the Trust became known as the Epping and Ongar Highway Trust.

Vehicles travelling through Loughton had not only to contend with the gradients of Golden's Hill and Buckhurst Hill, but also with both sides of Church Hill. Complaints by stage coachmen and others led, in 1824, to a lowering of the hill on the King's Head side, at a cost of a little over £120.

At the meeting of the Trust in April 1830 a new surveyor was appointed – Mr James McAdam, son of the celebrated maker of roads. At a meeting on 14 June 1830, McAdam reported that a great improvement might be made in the road between Epping and Woodford, by adopting an entire new line between the Wake Arms and Woodford Wells. He was instructed to prepare a survey and identify the best line. A plan of the new route was produced very quickly, and the Trust agreed that £7,000 should be borrowed towards the expense of construction. A tender from Messrs Bough and Smith was accepted at a price of £5,417. This included a small deviation, made at the suggestion of General Grosvenor, which took the road slightly further away from his house – 'The Warren'.

Construction of the new road started before the end of 1830, continued throughout 1831 and into 1832. An extensive landslip occurred in 1832 and counsel's opinion was sought as to who was liable. It appears that it was not the contractor, as he was paid an additional £540 to repair the road. However, in January 1833 the clerk to the Trust was ordered to write to the contractor to state the dissatisfaction of the Trustees at the contractor 'having left the works of the new road in their

present unfinished state, and unless they satisfied the Trustees as to their intentions with reference to completion of the work, the Trustees would commence proceedings against them and their sureties.'

Following discussions it was decided, in May 1833, that the Trustees would take into their own hands the completion of the work, and deduct from the (alleged) balance due to the contractor, the estimated cost of completing the unfinished work. In fact another contractor was brought in and the work was finished in 1834.

The lord of the manor of Loughton was paid £28 for trees used in the construction of the new road, but no money appears to have been paid in compensation for the manorial rights over the land taken from the Forest, for making the road.

In June 1835, Sir James McAdam, as he had now become, reported that the brick arch, underfilling at Long Valley, had broken in and become useless. A new drain was ordered to be made (drainage problems on this stretch of the road have continued, and major remedial works took place about four years ago, when the road was temporarily closed from the Robin Hood to the Wake Arms).

As there was no tollgate at the southern end of the new road, it was thought advisable to remove the turnpike by the Baldfaced Stag (called the Stag Gate) to a spot near the junction of the old and new lines of the road into Woodford. A new toll-house and gate were built, near to where today is Bancroft's School, and old photographs showing this have survived. Other improvements to the road were carried out in 1837 and 1838, but thereafter the minutes of meetings of the Trust make no reference to the road until the 1860s.

The Trust continued to be responsible for turnpike roads until 1870, but in the last 20 years revenue from the tolls was falling, interest on loan capital still had to be paid, and railways had come to Loughton in 1856, and later to Epping and Ongar, causing competition for traffic. It was not surprising that a letter from the Secretary of State was received in February 1870 about the course to be adopted in winding up the Trust. Tolls were to be abolished and responsibility for roads was taken over by Highway Boards appointed under an Act of 1862. The County Quarter Sessions became a Highway Authority in 1878, and was responsible for bearing half the cost of the 'main roads' of the County. In 1889 the newly-formed County Council took over the whole cost of these roads, but it was not until 1909 that money grants from central government were available to finance the cost of maintaining the roads, and in 1919 the Ministry of Transport was set up.

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