

LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 169

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Price 20p, free to members

www.loughtonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Odds and ends

Loughton 150

In August 1856 the Eastern Counties Railway opened their branch line to Loughton in what was then very rural Essex. Celebrations of the 150th anniversary will take place this summer in Loughton when vintage tube trains are expected to run to and from Loughton and Epping.

The Society plans to publish a book to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Loughton Branch. The content has been finalised as follows:

A short general introduction by Ted Martin will give an overview of the branch during its 150-year history. Then 'Early Proposals for Railways in the Loughton Area' will be discussed by Ian Strugnell. After this, Chris Pond writes on 'The Railway and its Effect on Loughton' which will show how the development of Loughton was stimulated by the railway and how the decisions of the ECR/GER management determined the social make-up of the town.

Ian Strugnell then reviews complaints that were received in the early days and a passengers' rebellion followed by his brief history of Loughton's three stations, from the wooden ECR terminus on the site of the present Lopping Hall in Loughton High Road to the later station, built as a result of the extension to Epping and Ongar, and its 1940s LT replacement.

Harry Paar's seminal essay from his book on Loughton's first station is reprinted as is also his piece on the Recreation Ground for the use of excursionists to Epping Forest which was adjacent to the early station.

This is followed by 'Debates on Platforms' which is a reprint of an article by Harry Paar which appeared in this *Newsletter* in 1993, speculating on the arrangements for the staggered platforms and crossings on the branch in its early days, and the reply to this article by Chris Pond published at the time. Chris has also taken the opportunity to bring the information up to date by adding a note.

'Engines, Engineers and Rolling Stock' are tackled by Ted Martin to try to determine what was used on the railway from the early days to the present day and who was responsible for it. Also included are details of some incidents that occurred on the branch.

Ian Strugnell in the 'The Past in the Present' lists what can be seen from the window relating to the history of the railway on a journey undertaken today.

The final article by Ted Martin is a short biography of Edward Johnston, the designer of LT's typeface, Johnston Sans, and creator of the LT roundel or target logo.

The material will be supported by plans, maps and photographs.

The aim has been not to write a technical railway book but a general history including as much information about the personalities involved as can be obtained: the locomotive engineers involved on the line and Horatio Love, chairman of the ECR and GER, and others, have potted biographies in the notes at the end of some of the articles.

The book will be about 90 pages in A5 format and should publish in the late spring at about £5. Members will be able to buy a copy at our meetings and copies can also be reserved from the LDHS website www.loughtonhistoricalsociety.org.uk or by post to Loughton 150 Book, 34 Hornbeam Road, Theydon Bois, Epping, Essex CM16 7JX, giving your name, address, telephone number and/or e-mail address. Money should not be sent now, you will be contacted when copies are available with the price and, on receipt of your cheque, a copy will be sent.

Essex chapels

The legacy of the dissenting forefathers of 'Essex man'

JOHN HOWES

Following my recent David Wilkinson Memorial Lecture on 'Buildings of Dissent', members may find this reprint from the *Journal of the Chapels Society* of interest.

Writing to Bishop Bonner in 1557 one of his chaplains stated 'would to God the honourable Council saw the face of Essex as we do. We have such obstinate heretics, Anabaptists and unruly persons as never were heard of'; and in 1863, when writing the history of dissent in Essex T W Davids, a Congregational pastor, could fairly state that 'the prominence of Essex in the annals of Evangelical Non-Conformity is second to that of no other County in the kingdom'.¹ Later works such as Keith Wrighton and David Levine's study of the

village of Terling² and William Hunt's book on the Puritan movement in Essex³ confirm that from 'John Ball' onwards 'Essex man', that target of the modern media, certainly did not 'conform' in religious matters whatever else his standards!

The legacy of this strong dissenting attitude is twofold: first, the excellent collections of records of dissent in the Essex Record Office and the several hundred meeting houses and chapels still remaining in the county, albeit many in a sorry state. From the county records it is obvious that the county was influenced in religious matters by three main sources of dissent:

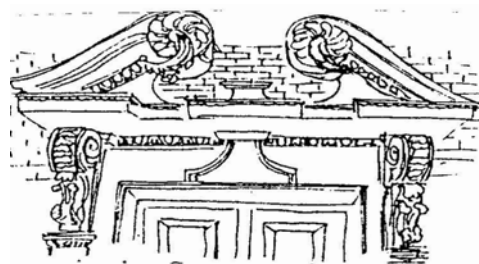
- (1) Contact with the Protestant ideals being expressed in the low countries reaching the county via the very active port of Harwich.
- (2) Views being expressed in the University of Cambridge just beyond the northern boundary of Essex.
- (3) Similar opinions freely stated in the City of London which adjoined the county in the south.

With such pressures it is hardly unexpected that by 1643 the redoubtable John Hampden could also state that 'Essex is the most Protestant county in England'.

The actual 'buildings of dissent' still standing in the county are in truth not equal in quality to the records of dissent in the County Record Office, but if what is now 'London in Essex' is included in the historic county of Essex there remains plenty of interest. Certainly there are no buildings to equal the Old Meeting House or Octagon Chapel in Norwich and far too many, especially in the London suburbs which were once part of Essex, that now serve as carpet showrooms, small factories and car repair workshops. There are, however, several charming Friends' meeting houses, many well-designed (and some ugly!) Methodist chapels, and just one chapel still exhibiting the name of the 'Peculiar People', a sect which originated in the county.

The Friends' meeting houses include a recently restored red-brick building in the village of Stebbing, with a date of 1674 which Pevsner concluded must have been taken from a previous building. In far better condition is the simple meeting house in Great Bardfield, dated 1804, complete with a humble, secluded burial ground. Maldon has a delightful meeting house of red brick of five by three bays and a hipped roof of about 1800, again set in a small burial ground full of flowering shrubs and mature trees. A far larger and grander meeting house still exists in Chelmsford, built in 1826 in white brick, it boasts a timber roof spanning some 42 feet and is now part of a technical college.

Chapels and 'churches' of other denominations, as in other counties, are sited in almost every village and town but few can equal for sheer elegance the Baptist chapel dated 1756 in Potter Street, Harlow: a simple well-proportioned red-brick building with a quite exceptional doorway with scrolls and foliage as decoration. The interior has been enlarged and 'modernised'

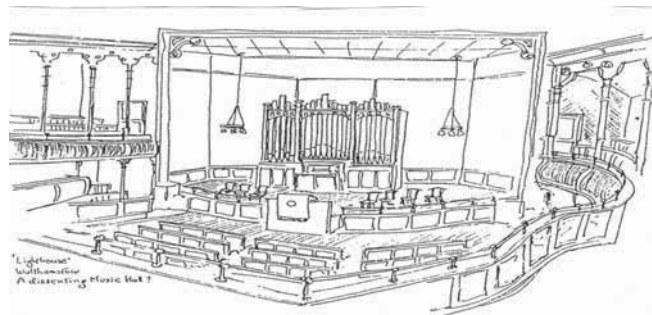


Detail of the doorway, Baptist Chapel, Potter Street, Harlow

but some of the original interior fittings have been saved and are now in the Harlow Museum.

Possibly the only outstanding chapel interior to be seen is the Congregational chapel in Maldon, built in 1801 and refronted in 1860. Inside, an elegant U-shaped gallery is supported on delicate cast-iron columns and the whole interior is bathed in light from the many clear glass windows. Other fine interiors may still exist in the county, but, as usual few chapels are open for inspection to confirm this.

One unusual chapel must be mentioned, 'The Lighthouse' in Walthamstow. It was built in 1893 for the 'United Methodist Free Churches' with financial help from a wealthy shipowner: the light in its tower still functions as it did in Victorian times, flashing (rather weakly) over the now largely indifferent suburban residents. The once splendid 'Music Hall' style interior, complete with balcony and a proscenium arch behind the pulpit has been unfortunately destroyed by the insertion of a mezzanine floor.



Interior of the Lighthouse, Walthamstow

Finally, no essay on dissent in Essex, however superficial, could ignore the 'Peculiar People', an Essex sect founded by James Banyard in 1852 and by 1920 able to muster over 1,300 to its annual harvest supper in Chelmsford. Although providing lurid 'copy' for the popular press of the period, the sect was, in practice, quiet and devout, only their opposition to medical treatment being worthy of comment. Legal action resulting from the deaths due to this objection to formal medical treatment eventually led to the decline of the sect which in 1956 became 'The Union of Evangelical Churches'. The author can only trace one chapel still proudly proclaiming that it was of the 'Peculiar People', and that is in the remote marshland village of Tillingham.⁴

Sadly, chapels are still being demolished or converted to secular use, but fortunately excellent

records of these unique buildings are now being issued. The Royal Commission of the Historical Monuments of England (RCHM) have issued a series of fine volumes recording chapels and meeting houses.⁵ Several local historical societies have recorded buildings of dissent in their area⁶ and dedicated individuals have published similar records.⁷ As a result details of this rather overlooked aspect of our architectural heritage will not be forgotten.

Notes

1. T W Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Non-Conformity in the County of Essex* (1863).
2. K Wrighton and D Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village, 1525–1700* (London: Academic Press, 1979).
3. W Hunt, *The Puritan Movement – The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Harvard, 1983).
4. M Sorrell, *The Peculiar People* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1979).
5. C Stell (Ed), *Non-conformist Chapels and Meeting Houses: East Anglia* (London: RCHM, 2005).
6. E Batsford, *Nonconformity in Walthamstow* (2 Vols: Walthamstow Historical Society, 1977 and 1979).
7. R Kaye, *Chapels in Essex* (Colchester: Chellow Dean Press, 1999).

Catholics in Loughton

SUE TAYLOR

In 1926 there were 90 Catholics in Loughton, but no Catholic Church. Members of the local Catholic community called a meeting on 20 February that year to discuss the situation. A fund-raising committee was formed and a site at the bottom of Traps Hill was identified. It cost £650, but the money was quickly raised thanks to generous donations from Mr Diamond (the editor of the *Catholic Herald*), the Bishop, who gave £100 towards the fund, and individual fund-raising efforts by members of the Catholic community, which raised a further £225. The Claretian Fathers also contributed. Their order was a relatively new one, started by Antonio Claret in 1849 (he was later canonised in 1950). In 1926 his missionaries were extremely supportive of the Loughton Catholic community.

St Edmund's Church in Traps Hill was made of corrugated iron and wood and seated 120 people. The congregation settled in nicely, but on 24 September 1934 disaster struck. Someone – it is thought a thief – broke in to the building. While rifling through the collection boxes he somehow set fire to it. At the time it was thought that the fire was deliberate, but whether or not it was, he died in the flames.

The Church and its contents were totally destroyed by the fire. They included a much-valued bust of St Nicholas, the patron saint of Loughton, but it was not long before the congregation set to and started to raise funds again. On 17 February 1935 a brand new St Edmunds opened. During the war, Belgium refugees

(including a Mr Vermeer, who had previously been the organist of Malines Cathedral) increased the congregation's numbers. In 1948 a new sacristy was built, extending the facilities available to the congregation.

By this time, the Debden Estate was in the process of being built and it soon became clear that something had to be organised for Catholic families living there. A Mass Centre was organised at Loughton Hall in 1949 and in 1950, a new school opened in Chingford under the direction of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. 210 children enrolled there on its very first day and children from Loughton travelled to the school by bus. 1951 was an important year for Catholics in Loughton. Not only was the Youth Club opened in Traps Hill, but also Father Burgess of Epping brought the statue of Our Lady of Fatima in a procession to Loughton, where it remained for three days. Two years later, Fathers Ethrington and Allan of the Catholic Missionary Society held a second mission in a marquee in Debden. The event lasted for two weeks and was extremely popular.

The Church prioritised the spiritual and welfare needs of the new Debden residents. However, not everything went as smoothly as they hoped. The *West Essex Gazette* (6 January 1952) reported that the Catholic community's 'ambitious plans for a hall to hold several hundred' were being held up by the County Council, who were allowing the planning application to 'drag on'. Despite the delays, the Thomas More Church Hall, Willingale Road, Debden, eventually opened on 23 July 1953. A booklet was produced to commemorate that occasion, which is where I found some of the information for this article. It sold for 2s. (10p) and contained advertising from local supporters. It also included a message from Winston Churchill, the local MP, who wrote in that booklet that he hoped the new hall would 'be of increasing value in bringing you together on many joyful occasions in Debden'.

Intriguingly, while looking through Winston Churchill's papers in Cambridge, I came across Churchill's constituency papers. It appears that the letter published in the souvenir brochure was actually written by Miss L M Marston on 22 May 1953. It was shown to Mr Barlow-Wheeler (Hon Secretary and Agent of the Woodford Conservative Association), and was finally agreed by Churchill some days later.

A letter, which was part of this correspondence, dated 21 May 1953 from Mr Barlow-Wheeler to Miss Marston recommended that Mr Churchill's letter of congratulations should be published in the souvenir booklet because, he said, 'Debden is of course our weakest spot and as Roman Catholics are very much swayed by what their Priest tells them to do, I think it is a good thing to have the Priest of the Catholic Church in Debden on our side'. Might this be why the Conservatives romped home in the Woodford constituency in the General Election in 1955 with 73.2 per cent of the overall votes cast?

A 'dissenting' love story

JOHN HOWES

After my talk to the Society on 'Buildings of Dissent' I was kindly given a book by Jean Andrews entitled *The History of Fish Street Church, Hull*, by Rev C E Darwent, MA, published in 1898. The book had associations with Mrs Andrews' family so that she was reluctant just to hand it to Oxfam!

It is a typical early Victorian volume. Dark brown cloth covers, gilded edge on top and gold lettering on the spine; at first sight a dull tome. However, once I began to read it I wished I had studied it before my talk. It begins with a delightful description of an early 'tin chapel' where this particular Church and congregation began. Then follows a history of the Church and all the problems such dissenting congregations had to overcome from the 18th century onwards. Problems that hundreds of other congregations also had to deal with all over the country. The book, however, had a most unexpected story hidden in the text, which related to one of the two sisters of the locally well known 'Taylors of Ongar'.

A Rev Joseph Gilbert, who eventually became a much admired Minister of the Fish Street Church, was in 1812 an impoverished widowed curate preaching in Rotherham, his wife having died when he was only 33. The Rev Darwent writes 'he set about repairing the breach in his home life with the boldness that only the timid possess'. The Rev Gilbert must have known about the nursery poems and books written by Ann and Jane Taylor but what attracted him were the more serious writings by Ann in a periodical of the time, the *Eclectic Review*.

We are told he wrote to Ann, who was staying in Ilfracombe, as follows: 'I wish to know whether any peremptory reasons exist which might lead him to conclude that a journey undertaken with the purpose of soliciting her heart and hand could possibly be successful?'

Jane was against any reply being sent. What did Ann know about him or he about her? Their mother, however, could see no reason why a favourable reply should not be sent. Ann, possibly reluctantly, therefore sent a reply inviting the Rev Gilbert to Devon.

In no time at all, the 'shy handsome curate', we are informed, made the over 200-mile journey to Devon. We do not know what Ann's or his reactions were at the first meeting, but they must have been favourable to both of them as well as to Ann's mother and sister, for in the following December they married. Was this 'love at first sight'; we shall never know, but it seems the marriage was a success. Ann helped her husband in his missionary work in Hull, even finding time to write hymns and raise a family. In 1825 the Rev Gilbert left Hull to take a post in Nottingham and Rev Darwent's story ends.

Obviously there is far more about the Rev Gilbert and Ann in archives and books.¹ and from these we find that Rev Gilbert first visited Ann's parents in Ongar before setting out for Ilfracombe. He must have made a very favourable impression on Ann's mother as she wrote to her daughter 'he was one of the favoured few with whom I could immediately assimilate and could freely converse'. She continued: 'I like him and he grows upon me most rapidly'. Accordingly she suggested that her daughter should at least meet him, writing 'having travelled so far on your account you should show him every hospitality', then adding as a precaution 'he will more deserve it if you reject him'.

With such seemingly fulsome approval, Ann invited her would-be suitor to Ilfracombe. In no time at all he set out from Ongar, in such haste that Mrs Taylor writes: 'Poor fellow. There was no place inside, and he had to travel on the roof in this bitter weather, and was so absorbed in love and learning that he has left behind his warm travelling cap and, but for your father would have gone away again without his overalls [travelling coat].'

Ann must have agreed with her parents' opinion of the 'shy handsome curate' and married him the next December in St Martin's Church, Ongar. Their lives in Rotherham and Nottingham are mainly of interest to local historians of both places, but whilst living there Ann and her husband from time to time still returned to Ongar, which Ann loved, often with some of their children. He died in 1852 a highly respected nonconformist minister, Ann in 1866, still taking an active interest in local and national affairs. Their story perhaps needs to be written by a Jane Austen, more able to bring it alive than just relating these bare facts.

The unlikely story of a Victorian romance, however, is only a small part of Rev Darwent's book which gives a unique contemporary insight into the history of dissent and buildings of dissent from the late 18th century onwards. As such I shall treasure it and certainly not give it to Oxfam or any other charity shop!

Note

1. D M Armitage, *The Taylors of Ongar* (1939); R T Gilbert, 'The Taylor Family of Ongar and Their Houses There', in M Leach (Ed), *Aspects of the History of Ongar* (1999); C E Darwent, *The Story of Fish Street Chapel, Hull* (1898).

Loughton Hymns

CHRIS POND

A number of hymns and hymn tunes are associated with Loughton:

1. Sarah Flower Adams (1805–1848)

Nearer, My God, to Thee, possibly the most famous hymn in English, was written in the 1840s by Sarah Flower, who was of Baptist stock and came from Harlow. She lived with her husband, William, in the old Sunnybank

Cottage, Woodbury Hill (where there is a blue plaque to them both). Sarah was a poet and hymnodist, a prolific writer of poems on social, political and religious subjects; William was a railway engineer and pamphleteer. Anyone who travels on the Central Line (for instance) should know that the clackety-clack of the wheels over the rails is a result of William Bridges Adams' invention, the fishplate, which links together the rails to provide a continuous surface.

Many of Sarah's hymns were originally set to tunes by her sister, Eliza. *Nearer, My God, to Thee*, was apparently written in November 1840 at Loughton, and is based partly on Genesis 28: 10–22, Jacob's dream at Bethel. It is the expression of her mind and faith, and represents her feelings during the ravages of consumption. It was published in *Hymns and Anthems* (1841), compiled by William Fox, the minister of the Unitarian church at South Place, Finsbury, where the author attended. It is said to have been played by the band as the *Titanic* sank, and it was the favourite hymn of US president Kinsey, and of King Edward VII.

Few hymns have so attracted musicians as *Nearer, my God, to Thee*. Altogether, there are eight well-known tunes, the best known perhaps that by Dykes. The favourite tune in America, and one which has been arranged for orchestras, is that by Mason, *Bethany*. This is played by bands the world over. I think perhaps the best tune is *Propior Deo*, by Sir Arthur Sullivan.

Another beautiful hymn by Sarah is *He sendeth sun, he sendeth shower*, which is sung generally to the tune, *He Leadeth me*.^{*} Another is *Part in Peace: is day before us?* – *Praise His Name for life and light*, which can be sung to the tune *Lucerne*.

2. Edward Pope (1836-1917)

Edward Pope was the founder of the Loughton Wesleyan chapel, and of most of the Wesleyan chapels in south-west Essex. He was a keen Wesleyan Methodist, whose brother (Henry) became president of conference, and was for many years the secretary of the chapels committee. Edward, born in Hull, was a local preacher, as well as hymnodist and translator. He lived at Clynder, Albion Hill, 1872–93. In politics, he was a Liberal/radical activist. By profession, he was an Australia merchant, and his wife, Caroline, was an Australian. They emigrated to Geraldton, Western Australia in 1893.

He had worked among the German community of Hackney and his hymns were often translations from the German. Most were published in periodicals, and not collected, but one, *Jesus, still lead on*, became No 622 in the *Wesleyan Methodist Hymn Book* of 1906. It is a translation of a hymn by Nikolaus Zinzendorf (*Jesu, geh voran*), and is sung to the tune, *Spire*. No doubt as more and more nineteenth-century periodicals are digitised, these uncollected hymns will become accessible again.

3. Emily Chisholm (1910-1991)

Emily was a longstanding member of Loughton Methodist Church (LMC). She taught French and

German at Loughton County High School for Girls, and lived in Lower Park Road, in the maisonette now occupied by one of our members. She was associated with the ecumenical community at Taize, and translated much of their liturgy chants and music. She took part in numerous groups concerned with Methodist and ecumenical prayer and music, and attended the Hymn Society. Her hymns are in the modern idiom: *John came a-preaching by the Jordan River* – 'People! You've just got time! and the Advent carol, *The holly and the ivy are dancing in a ring*.

The Holly and the Ivy supplanted the older traditional form of this carol in *Hymns and Psalms*. I have to say, speaking personally, I prefer the traditional form. Emily also composed a hymn (Easter Eve) in 1987 for the opening of the new church. This had a somewhat obscure first verse!

4. Geoffrey Ainger (1925–)

Geoffrey Ainger is an Essex man, born at Mistley. He was educated at Brackendale School, Norwich; Richmond College, London and Union Theological Seminary, New York. He has held various posts as a Methodist minister and lecturer, including four years as minister here at Loughton (1958–62). It was at Loughton in 1959 that he wrote *Born in the night, Mary's Child*. The author, interviewed as part of Radio Essex's carol service from the LMC in 1995, explained that the carol had been written incidentally to a church play for teenagers, which sought to set the nativity in a modern context. Accordingly, Joe and Mary, an unmarried couple who have arrived from London late at night one Christmas Eve at Loughton Station, being unable to find accommodation in Loughton, use a room in Brown's Garage, where she gives birth. The shepherds are bus conductresses and the Three Wise Men, off-duty east-end social workers. The carol was one of two composed for the play, the other being *Men from the East came to Mary*, which were originally performed by teenagers with very loud guitar accompaniment.

From 1962 to 1971, Geoffrey Ainger was a member of a group ministry at Notting Hill, where the carol was first published (in *Songs from Notting Hill* (1964), a collection of songs by the Notting Hill Music Group (based at the Methodist Church there).

5. The hymn-tune *Loughton*

I do not know if this tune is named from our Loughton, or Loughton, Salop, or Loughton, Bucks. It appears to have been written by Benjamin Milgrove, a draper and toy and fancy goods seller, who lived at Bath in the 1780s. Milgrove was a member of the Countess of Huntingdon's connection – associated in the early days with the Methodists, but I have not been able to trace anything that links him to any of the Loughtons!

It is not much used nowadays, but was published in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (editions between 1875 and 1924) as a tune for No 299, Isaac Watts' great hymn,

Come, let us join our cheerful songs
With angels round the throne.

Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.

The tune was rather supplanted in later hymn collections by *Nativity*, which is the one we sing this hymn to today. It is in common measure, so any four lined common measure hymn could be sung to it. The tune, *Loughton*, can be found on the Internet on cyberhymnal.org, and at

http://www.sfu.ca/~eddie/Bhb/bhb26_50.html

So you will see that Loughton has made a respectable contribution to British hymnody. I am pleased to point out that all these contributions are of nonconformist origin, and two of the five are from the LMC.

Note

* For this tune, see:
<http://www.lccs.edu/library/hymnals/midi.php3?midi=ch7016heleadethme.mid&tune=He%20Leadeth%20Me>

Humphry Repton (1752–1818) and the Warren House

RICHARD MORRIS

Humphry Repton set out to be the leading landscape gardener of his time, following in the footsteps of Capability Brown. He embarked on his career in 1788, aged 36, after a series of unsuccessful ventures: as a textile merchant, a country gentleman and a transport entrepreneur.

Repton was born at Bury St Edmunds in May 1752, however, his family moved to Norwich in 1762, where Humphry continued his education at the grammar school. He spent a year in the Netherlands, with the intention that he should learn to speak Dutch to assist him in his proposed commercial career. Repton returned to England and set up a business, but this soon failed and he 'retired' to Sustead, near Aylsham, where he became a country gentleman.

Attempts at other careers failed, and in 1783 he moved, with his wife, Mary, and large family, to a small cottage at Hare Street, Romford, but it was not until 1788 that he began his career as a landscape gardener. He probably chose Hare Street as it was situated on a main road to London and was ideally placed for a man who was to spend so much time travelling between commissions.

Between his arrival at Hare Street and the start of his new career, Repton wrote a play *Odd Whims; or Two at a Time*, the first scene of which is set in Epping Forest. The plot of the comedy, in five acts, concerns the attempted kidnap of a lady by a 'wicked' Lord. We know that Humphry Repton had travelled through Epping Forest as he recorded one visit in a small watercolour showing himself and his companion, Samuel Knight, carving their initials on an oak tree (c. 1789).

Repton quickly established his name as a landscape gardener. In a career that spanned nearly 30 years he carried out more than 400 commissions. He worked for a range of clients: aristocrats, country squires, merchants and professionals, and undertook commissions in a variety of places throughout England and Wales. Much of his work was at estates and houses in or near cities, and in particular the environs of London.

For his major commissions Repton often prepared *Red Books* detailing his proposals and including delightful watercolours showing the landscape as it existed and the effect of his proposals. There are seven *Red Books* surviving for commissions undertaken by Repton in Essex: Claybury, Stansted Hall, Hill Hall, Highams, Stubbers, Wanstead and Woodford Hall. Another seven are presumed to have been made, but are now missing.

Repton provided reports for his smaller commissions and these were often reproduced later in his published works on the art of landscaping. In 1811 he suffered a carriage accident as a result of which he became severely disabled. This restricted his ability to visit the sites of his commissions, but one new commission, between 1812 and 1815, was to improve the old Reindeer Inn at Loughton, which had become a private house, known as The Warren.

In his report on The Warren, which was subsequently published as part of *Fragments on The Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816), Repton described the Reindeer Inn as being:

'In a sequestered part of the forest, with summer access by green lanes, or broad glades, and appropriate to the Sunday visits of those who made holiday, fancying they enjoyed solitude in a forest, amidst the crowd of 'felicity hunters' who came here to forget the cares of London. It was not uncommon to see fifty horses in the yards and stables, and twice as many guests filling the large rooms.'

Repton goes on to comment that the house faces north, which he thought a disadvantage, and notes that it was surrounded by a rabbit warren. He concluded that the grounds were subdivided by unsightly palings and the place altogether 'a scene of slovenliness'.

The first recommendation in his report was that the grounds be fenced with a paling and ha-ha beyond the main garden. He suggested that:

'This garden may be decorated with neat gravel walks and bed of flowers and shrubs, with terrace views into the forest; and including the house and yards, will be about two acres, there will then remain about two acres and a half to the north, which is too much to be all pleasure-ground, and either the whole may be fed with cattle as a lawn, or the part near the house, including the gravel roads, may be fenced with a wire or trellis fence, which will give neatness and comfort, without waste of land.'

As far as the house was concerned, Repton suggested 'the idea of opening windows to the south in the great room, although they may only look into a conservatory or green-house, which may also be a grapery'. Today the house retains its fine regency

appearance and is an unaltered example of Repton's architecture. Embodied in the centre of the house are elements of earlier phases of the building's development, including a small Tudor Hunt Standing.

The City of London acquired the house in 1876 from the lord of the manor of Loughton, and it became the official residence of the Superintendent of Epping Forest. However, with the retirement of John Besent in 2001, it was decided that the Superintendent would no longer live in the house. A programme of restoration to this Grade II* listed building has been undertaken, and it is hoped that later this year the house will start to be used by the Conservators for meetings, exhibitions and displays on the history of Epping Forest, and will also be available for use by the local community. In the long term it is hoped to establish a library and resource centre for research.

[Richard Morris and Tricia Moxey are researching a book on the history of the Warren House and its occupants, which it is hoped will be published later this year.]

Sources:

H Repton, *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816).

H Repton, *Odd Whims and Miscellanies* (1804).

S Daniels, *Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England* (1999).

F Cowell & G Green (Eds.), *A Gazetteer of Sites in Essex associated with Humphry Repton* (2000).

Dictionary of National Biography.

Leave, 1915, or arrested as a spy

Chris Pond found this account by Sir Sydney Stadler (1893–1976), who was then a sergeant in the 1/18 London Regiment, which was quoted in P Warner, *The Battle of Loos* (2000). Sir Sydney was later a diplomat working in El Salvador, where he had extensive business interests.

'I took St Albans in my stride and also Epping Forest, where I intended to visit two families near High Beech. My late brother's fiancée was a member of one of those families.

From Loughton Station I engaged a fly and proceeded to the King's Oak Hotel. I remember wearing mufti, bowler hat, Malacca cane, raincoat and German binoculars. My uniform was being deloused. On entering the King's Oak and approaching the bar where I had quenched many a thirst, I found no response. Within seconds, an officer, a Captain of the Artists Rifles appeared. He explained that the hotel had been requisitioned by his regiment; apparently, it was a defensive centre, forming part of London Anti-aircraft Artillery net. I was cross-examined – I mentioned that I was on leave and was about to visit two families in Honey Lane, twenty minutes away. He replied that the people in question did not reside there, although I knew they had for fifteen years. (I have often wondered why these scattered houses and homes of owners and tenants were not recorded, there not being more than twenty-five.) Finally I departed and made my visits, remaining half an hour with each family. The coachman whom I had left at the hotel, although requested to wait had departed. It was a question of walking through the Forest by short cuts. On reaching Loughton I met an Artist Captain with a Ford car. He stopped me to make further enquiries. I produced my paybook and pass mentioned my

late officer chief, an old Artist Volunteer and an Ulsterman. I proceeded to the station, the train was waiting, found a coach and as I began to enjoy the comforts of an easy cushion, the officer appeared once again.

"Step out a moment." So I did. He then said that I was under arrest.

The time was 12.50; I pleaded that I had a date with two ladies from St Albans for the 2pm matinee at the Coliseum, and to substantiate my claim produced the tickets. Unfortunately, it did not work, so I slipped from his grasp and jumped into the compartment and the train moved off.

On reaching Fenchurch Street Station, where I must have been an easy target – blue suit, Burberry on arm, Malacca cane, cropped hair, bowler hat – two heavy city cops met me at the barrier. One said, "'Don't make a scene, and come quietly.'" I was conducted to a room on the station premises, produced my paybook, pass, undid my shirt and produced identity disc, and, finally, the Coliseum tickets. The cops said, "You win", and off I went.'

Schools in Loughton

SUE TAYLOR

The first school in Loughton appears to have been established around 1751 by a local curate named Pierce Dod, who raised money from local subscriptions. Pupils, who were few in number, learnt reading and writing and girls also learnt housecraft. Dod's school continued until 1817, when it was taken over by the National Society. *The History of the County of Essex* (1946) tells us that the number of pupils increased rapidly to 100, thereafter. There were other private educational establishments in Loughton, too. *The Times* (Monday, 23 March 1846) carried this advertisement:

'Education – In a healthy and delightful situation, a short distance from town. YOUNG LADIES are liberally BOARDED and carefully INSTRUCTED in English, in all its branches, French, music, drawing and dancing, for 18 guineas per annum, washing included. Health, morals and domestic comforts particularly attended to. Address to X.Y.Z., post-office, Loughton, Essex.'

The Education Act of 1870 led to a survey of educational provision in Loughton. The National School, which stood at the corner of York Hill and Staples Road, had over 200 places for local children. This was sufficient for the needs of the local community at that time, but as the population of Loughton increased, it became clear that more school places would be needed. The opportunity for expansion came in 1887, when the government proposed that school boards should be established. This led to the National School transferring its school building in York Hill to the board, which in 1891 opened Staples Road School. There were a series of proposals to reopen the school in York Hill, in addition to Staples Road, but it was too small for the number of children that would need to be accommodated and was demolished in 1938

More about Ashley Laminates

JOHN HARRISON

Isn't the internet wonderful? Through its website, I understand that the Society has had contacts with people as far away as America and Australia. I managed to get a contact from someone living at the top of York Hill, however! Vic McDonald used to work for Ashley Laminates, a company I wrote about in *Newsletter 163* (November/December 2004). He had put 'Ashley Laminates' into a Google search and found my article. He sent me the following e-mail.

'I worked for Ashley 1960-61 at Woodgreen Road [the Potteries] and Harlow. The "750" bodyshell for the Austin 7 was already virtually obsolete; I only saw one or two made. The "1172" was the breadwinner. As you noted it was made to fit 7'6" and 7'10" wheelbase Ford chassis with side-valve engines and three-speed gearbox.

This body was supplied in two parts; the main body with doors and firewall, and the front section of bonnet and wings designed to hinge forwards (like the Austin Healey Sprite and Jaguar E-type). Because of the limitations of pigments/resins in those days it was quite possible for the car to end up with slightly different front and back colours! The open version really was, as there was no hood available! If you wanted a "GT" or covered version, we fitted a hardtop, but this was definitely a permanent fixture, being fixed on with what seemed to be an endless number of bolts. Even with this configuration, there were no side windows so it was still cold inside. There were side windows available, but these were diabolical to install and most owners who bought them eventually brought the car back to have them fitted. By the way, one advanced feature of the body was the double-skinned doors. Some buyers who came to collect their bodies were a little surprised at the absence of floor! [As part of building his special the customer had to fit a plywood floor.] I would agree that probably several hundred of these were sold.

The Sportiva was the same body with the top moulded on to form a "GT" but still didn't have side windows as standard. It had a small opening boot lid which bore an unmistakable likeness to that used on the Alfa Romeo saloon which Keith Waddington drove. It also had a restyled nose to the separate front section. By the way, it was launched at a do-it-yourself exhibition. Very few Sportivas were produced.

Ashley claimed that the 1172 body could be fitted directly to the Ford chassis with only one modification (the radiator was too tall so had to be repositioned and a header tank was offered to assist this).' [My inserts in square brackets.]

Needless to say, I contacted Vic and we met and had a couple of hours' pleasant chat in the Plume of Feathers. I learnt a lot more about Ashley and hopefully now have enough material for an article in a classic car magazine. If you want to see my amended article on Ashley including information supplied by Vic, please e-mail me on harrison@unisonfree.net.

Newspaper Miscellany

The Times, Monday, on 15 May 1843 reported on 'Wholesale Sheep Stealing'. Charles Croucher, a master drover from Loughton and his three sons Charles,

William and George were arrested for sheep stealing and taken to the Ilford House of Correction, and then appeared before Waltham Abbey Sessions. The magistrates sat for 8 hours, hearing 20 witnesses. The men were accused of stealing 123 sheep from a farm in Hampshire. One witness said that Charles Croucher had stopped at a beer shop near Windsor with a drove of sheep, which he said had been bought from a man called Mr Stubs. 20 witnesses testified to the men's guilt, including those who had later purchased sheep from them. One witness said he knew each of the sheep by their faces and could identify them as his master's flock. The magistrates, presumably convinced by this, later remanded the men for trial. I could find no further reference to what happened to them after, but they were probably convicted given the weight of the evidence.

Complaints about overcrowding on the tube are not new. They regularly appeared in *The Express & Independent* newspaper, especially around 1946-48, when many people complained of overcrowded carriages. Headlines on 17 January 1948 suggested 'Positively Murderous Conditions on the Tube'. However, other forms of public transport in Loughton appeared equally problematic. For example, the newspaper carried several stories in 1946 about a 'campaign to make busmen and public less hostile'. There was even a competition for bus users to nominate a favourite conductor. More bus routes, particularly on the Debden Estate, were clearly needed. Many Debden children had to travel to Loughton for school. However, it was not until September 1948, when the Debden Residents Association threatened to run its own bus route via Traps Hill, Borders Lane, Rectory Lane, Pyrles Lane and Willingale Road that the London Transport Executive authorised the No 20 bus route to run over a very similar route.

Under 'Loughton Battle Over Fish Frying', on 20 November 1948 *The Express & Independent* newspaper reported that Loughton residents objected to a mobile fish and chip van that was sited near to the Loughton bus garage (close to Homebase). A petition of 19 names was sent to the Chigwell Urban District Council demanding its removal, followed shortly afterwards by another petition of 177 names that wished the van to continue trading. Not surprisingly, the Council decided to let it stay, much to the annoyance of the original petitioners.

SUE TAYLOR

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