LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER 170

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## Odds and ends

**Lamb's Garage**
John Harrison is trying to find out more about Lamb's Garage, not only in Loughton, but also the branches in Woodford Green, Romford and Hornchurch. If anybody has photographs, information, etc, John can be contacted on 020 8508 8851 or harrison@unisonfree.net

**Appeal**
Were you a supermarket shopper in the 1950s and 1960s? Then we would like to hear from you. Researchers at the Universities of Exeter and Surrey are working on a new project on consumers and the coming of the supermarket. We are looking for respondents to fill in our questionnaire, and possibly to take part in oral history interviews. If you think you might be able to help us, please contact, Jane Hamlett at the University of Surrey. The contact details are as follows:

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## Post-War Loughton

CHRIS POND

At the first meeting of the new season copies of Terry Carter's new book on *Post-War Loughton* will be available. At 116 pages plus 12 pages of plates it is a very full account of the period from 1945 to 1970.

When I wrote the introduction to Gertrude Green's autobiography in 2004, I made the point that Loughton now possessed an almost complete library of reminiscences dating back some 125 years, but that this stopped short at about 1950. I was very pleased when, a few weeks later, Terry Carter contacted me and said he was willing to fill the gap.

Personal memories are very important to local history. In the early 20th century, local historians were mostly concerned with piecing together the religious, tenurial and genealogical records of their communities. They often did this with great assiduity and scholarship, but perforce they could illustrate very little of what life was actually like in their parishes in the past.

Loughton High Road 1938, much the same in 1950

From *Post-War Loughton*

I have been particularly pleased to have edited Terry Carter's narrative, which is such a full account of post-war Loughton. Where else have we an account of the privations of rationing and the practical steps Loughtonians took to remedy them? The Festival of Britain, aspects of the town's two carnivals, and the attitudes to the newcomers to the Debden LCC Estate are thoroughly rehearsed.

In the book Terry recounts how when Gertrude Green's book *My Life in Loughton* was published at the end of 2004, he and his wife bought a copy, which they both read with particular interest. He continues:

'It was reviewed in the local *Guardian*, under the headline "One historical society in search of an author". We found Mrs Green's memories fascinating but, apart from a few later recollections, they end well before the 1950s, so the Loughton and District Historical Society were seeking somebody to, as it was reported, "complete the story".

Mrs Green lived at 69 Smarts Lane. I was in No 73, but we were exact next-door neighbours, as there was no 71. Anyway, it seemed appropriate to offer myself to have a try.

Many of those who have penned their memories of Loughton were either born, or lived for a long time in Smarts Lane or Forest Road, by common consent the poorest roads in the old town. As mentioned, I am no exception, spending my first 23 years, from April 1941 to our marriage in March 1965, in "The Lane", although in the course of the book I have tried to include recollections and impressions of many other parts of the town . . .

Although the book deals mainly with the 1950s and 60s, I have gone back a little further, to the latter half of the 1940s. That is where my recollections really begin and, to set the scene for the emergent prosperity of the later decades, it seems logical to include the difficult earlier background, before Loughton's recovery from the War really gathered momentum. The book is not intended to be a critical comparison of Loughton past and present, and I hope readers will agree with my conclusion that both times have plusses and minuses and

that as well as a justification for nostalgia there is also a recognition that times change and that we have to move with them . . .'

# Harvey portrait on display at the Tate Gallery

RICHARD MORRIS

A family group portrait of the Harveys of Rolls Park, Chigwell, painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller has gone on display at Tate Britain. The picture is of William Harvey (1689–1742), his wife Mary, their sons William, Edward and Eliab, and William's mother-in-law Mrs Williamson.

Sir Godfrey Kneller (1676–1723) was the dominant portrait painter of late Stuart and early Georgian Britain. *The Harvey Family*, signed and dated 1721, is a confident and remarkably imposing full length family group, and is considered one of Kneller's best examples of his late work.

From *The Harveys of Rolls Park, Chigwell, Essex*

The picture hung in the Music Room at Rolls Park for over 200 years. The house at Chigwell was demolished in 1953, but the portrait remained in the ownership of Andrew Lloyd, a descendant of the Harvey family, until 1983 when it was purchased by the Passmore Edwards Museum at Stratford. With the closure of the Museum in the early 1990s the portrait remained in store at the London Borough of Newham until 2001 when it was purchased by the Trustees of the Tate Gallery.

The picture has recently been restored and a new frame is being made for it, based on that for Kneller's *Coningsby Family* at the Tower of London, a similar large and late work. Samples of the new carving and gilding techniques are explained and displayed alongside the picture.

During restoration of the Harvey family group portrait, the conservation staff at the Tate noticed small pin-head sized holes in the foreheads of some of the sitters. Rolls Park was requisitioned by the Army during the War and the conclusion is that the picture was used for dart-board practice by the troops!

The Harvey family lived at Rolls Park for three centuries from 1650. The first member to live at Chigwell was Eliab Harvey, brother of Dr William Harvey who published the correct theory for the circulation of the blood in 1628. The most famous member of the family to live at Rolls Park was Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey, who commanded the *Temeraire* at Trafalgar.

The Harvey family group portrait may be seen in Room No 3 at Tate Britain and is part of the new display 'Godfrey Kneller: The King's Painter'.

**Further reading**

Morris, Richard: *The Harveys of Rolls Park, Chigwell, Essex* (LDHS, 2005).

# The Crimean War 1854–56

RICHARD MORRIS

This year is the 150th anniversary of the end of the Crimean War. Most people remember the war for the heroic disaster of the Charge of the Light Brigade and the selfless devotion of Florence Nightingale. Myths such as the shipload of left boots, are still widely believed even though they never happened.

People may also be dimly aware of the war through pub and street names such as Alma and Inkerman and items of clothing such as balaklava, cardigan and raglan. In Loughton we still have Alma Cottage on the corner of York Hill and Steeds Way, which was owned by William Chapman Waller for some time, although I am not sure if he gave it the name.

The war has become a byword for inefficiency and incompetence and it has come to be seen as an historical irrelevance. The 'Crimean War' is a misnomer for a conflict that was fought from the Arctic to the Pacific. For some time after the war ended in 1856 it was known as the 'Russian War' or 'The Great War with Russia'.

Clive Ponting in his recent book (now in paperback), *The Crimean War – The Truth Behind the Myth*, re-evaluates the war and returns it to its place as the most important and devastating conflict fought in the century between 1815 and 1914.

The war of 1854–56 was rapidly considered to be a mistake that should never be repeated. Britain fought in an alliance with its traditional enemy France to support an infidel Islamic power (the Ottoman Empire) which was almost universally considered to be corrupt. The war was viewed as the outcome of poor diplomacy, and the unexpected escalation of a trivial dispute over the minutiae of Christian church politics in Palestine into a quarrel between the great powers of Europe. However, what began as a religious dispute, rapidly became a contest for power and influence in the Ottoman Empire.

The course of the war exhibited the soundness of the British regiments' drill and tradition, and the utter incompetence of the higher command, led by Lord

Raglan, the lack of organisation and staff work, and the deficiency of supply lines and medical provision. Half a dozen miles from the British fleet in Balaklava harbour, soldiers starved and died because supplies were not brought up to them.

The Crimean War is one of the first major wars for which a substantial number of first-hand accounts have survived. They provide vivid descriptions of the fighting and conditions in the Crimea and often a surprisingly blunt view of the army leadership. William Russell, of *The Times*, created the new profession of war correspondent and subjected the generals in the field to direct civilian criticism.

In the winter of 1854–55 more than one-third of the British army died of disease. Of the 11,000 who died, about half did so from cholera and dysentery. Florence Nightingale was seen as a ray of light in a dreadful war, a person who single-handedly took on the military establishment in order to establish decent hospitals and professional nursing staff. In fact she was given the credit for the work of many other people.

By the time that she arrived at Scutari in November 1854, many improvements had already been made. It was as a result of the improvements put in hand by the Sanitary Commission, led by Dr John Sutherland, which arrived in March 1855, that the death rate was reduced from 42 per 1,000 in March to two per 1,000 by June. However, Nightingale came to symbolise all the work done by nurses and she came to be beyond criticism. Her greater legacy was to influence the future of nursing care in Britain as a result of her experiences in the Crimea.

One of the officers in the Crimean War who kept a diary of his part in the campaign was Lt-Col Harvey Tower of the Coldstream Guards. He was the son of Maria Harvey, one of the daughters of Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey of Rolls Park, Chigwell. Maria had married the Rev William Tower of South Weald, near Brentwood, and after the Admiral's death in 1830, she had inherited the Harvey estate at Braughing in Hertfordshire, where they went to live. In the churchyard at Braughing there is a monument to Maria and her son that includes an inscription to the memory of Col Harvey Tower who 'served with distinction through the whole of the Crimean campaign including the battles of Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman, and the siege and fall of Sevastapol'.

In his diary Harvey Tower records that at the battle of Inkerman:

> 'Our men were getting very few and far between, our poor company No 1, suffered terribly, but we yelled and screamed and fired at the columns we saw in our front. They were immensely superior to us in numbers, ten to one at least, and seemed now to stand their ground very well, and they pressed us hard. But determination and dogged courage kept them back, and not a yard would we yield.'

The Crimean War ended with the signature of the Treaty of Paris on 30 March 1856. Harvey Tower wrote in his diary on 8 April 1856, after hostilities had ceased, that he rode to Mackenzie Farm to visit the Russian camp. 'The Russian officers were extremely civil and showed us round their camp.' Five days later they were entertained to lunch by the Russians and a few days later the British and French armies returned the hospitality and the Russian General reviewed a parade of the allied troops.

The final contingent of British troops left the Crimea on 12 July 1856. In total probably 650,000 men died in the Crimea catastrophe, about three-quarters of whom were in the Russian army. On the allied side the French suffered by far the largest number of deaths – 95,000. British deaths were less than a quarter of the French figure, at 22,000, but of these just 4,000 men died in action or from wounds received in battle, the others died from cholera, dysentery, typhus, typhoid and other diseases.

So ended a war in which at the end of the day none of the major powers involved could claim an outright victory, although it did influence in the longer term the political map of Europe.

**Sources:**

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# Theydon Bois – a rail-road story

IAN STRUGNELL

The village around the green, situated at the crossing point of two roads, naturally enjoyed the benefits of communication with Abridge, Epping and Loughton that they provided.

The nineteenth century brought the practical application of mechanised transport in the form of railways, and in 1844 a line was proposed from London to Epping via Woodford, Loughton and Theydon Bois. This scheme failed to obtain Parliamentary sanction, but in 1846 the Eastern Counties Railway Company did obtain an Act to build a line that would have crossed the road from Abridge on the level, where a 'Station or Lodge' was required to be erected. This was one of many 'Railway Mania' schemes that were not built, but after the ECR had opened their line to Loughton in 1856 there was expectation that an extension to Epping would soon materialise. An Act to do so was passed in 1859, but it had been promoted by some directors of the ECR's reluctant associates (the Norfolk, and Eastern Union Railways) as part of a larger scheme to avoid much of the ECR-controlled approaches to London. The relationship between the three companies was at times antagonistic, but when an amalgamation was finally agreed in 1862 the powers of the 1859 Act were transferred to the ECR with a stipulation that the new company (the Great Eastern Railway) was to build the line before it could pay dividends on ordinary shares.

Thus construction was put in hand almost immediately and the company wrote to the Board of Trade on 29 March 1865 advising that the line was ready for opening, whereupon Captain Henry Whatley Tyler was appointed to inspect and report.

Tyler found the works incomplete on 10 April, and also pointed out that the level crossing at Theydon Bois had not been authorised by either the 1859 or 1862 Acts (although it was clearly shown on the deposited plans for the former). The company had already made arrangements to obtain the proper powers in their Additional Powers Bill then in Parliament (although how the oversight occurred remains unknown) and, upon their giving an undertaking that if such powers were not granted they would build a bridge, sanction to open was given. Thus Theydon Bois was added to the railway map on 24 April 1865 and the level crossing was made legal by the Act in June.

Although the station near the crossing was built on the same pattern as Epping, with two platforms, only one (on the west side of the line) was used at first. The second platform was officially brought into use in 1885, largely on account of the amount of excursion traffic then being handled. Very little comment was made regarding the level crossing in the inspection report by Major General Charles Scrope Hutchinson (Tyler had retired in 1877 at the age of 50 and was knighted; he joined the GER Board where his experience presumably helped to avoid some pitfalls). The second line through from Loughton to Epping was brought into full use in January 1893, and Theydon Bois enjoyed a relatively uneventful existence for the next forty years.

By 1932 the London and North Eastern Railway Company (successors to the GER) were looking for economies in operation, and the arrangements at Theydon Bois came under scrutiny due to the signal box being about half-way along the platform and thus requiring the employment of a gate man (or lad) to open and close the level crossing gates once they had been released from the signal box. The solution adopted was to move the box to the Loughton side of the crossing and have the signalman operate the gates as required (he had to leave the box to do so – no thoughts of mechanical methods!). When there was no signalman on duty, bells were arranged to warn the station staff of the approach of trains so that one of them could unlock the gates from the box and close them across the road.

Shortly after this was arranged, the LNER and the recently formed London Passenger Transport Board came to an agreement by which the Loughton branch would be electrified and connected to the LPTB's Central London tube railway; Acts authorising the necessary finance and works were passed in 1936. However, there were five other level crossings on public roads between Buckhurst Hill and Leyton, and the Ministry of Transport had suggested to Essex County Council (as highways authority) that all six crossings should be eliminated in view of the intensified train services proposed.

At a conference in October 1935 between all the parties involved it had been agreed that the Ministry should instruct consulting engineers to prepare and submit schemes for the abolition of the level crossings, and during the passage of the relevant LNER Bill through Parliament a clause was inserted to prevent the operation of electric trains until the crossings were eliminated. The Ministry also offered a grant of 75% of the costs involved, subject to the railway company contributing 12.5%, and the County Council and other local authorities the remaining 12.5% between them. The County Surveyor saw this as 'a unique opportunity of getting rid of six level crossings which even now are imposing a considerable obstruction upon the free flow of traffic' and the Council approved the scheme in principle.

The road (B172) at Theydon Bois was directly maintained by the County Council, and at the suggestion of the Ministry of Transport the Council agreed to undertake the responsibility for the execution of the schemes for the elimination of the other level crossings as well. To this end three Aldermen (one of whom was Francis Dent of Loughton) and a Councillor were empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council in order to avoid delay. The first sign that matters might get complicated was that the initial idea of closing the crossings by Orders of Quarter Sessions ran into 'technical difficulties' and the Council asked the LNER to obtain Parliamentary authority to do so. Therefore a clause to clarify the matter was incorporated in the company's Act of 1938.

The scheme, prepared by the consulting engineers (Messrs. Rendel, Palmer & Tritton), to build a bridge over the railway south of the level crossing had been agreed but by June 1938, when detailed plans were made, the costs were found to have increased by about 20%. By March 1939 the tender of W & C French Ltd, thankfully lower than the consulting engineers' estimate, had been accepted – but the LPTB were proposing to build pedestrian exits from the station platforms to the viaduct and had requested that an 'embayment' be included (at the railway company's expense) to enable vehicles to wait off the line of traffic.

By April, French's had started work but found that access to the site was obstructed by three cottages occupied under controlled tenancies, and no alternative accommodation for the tenants was available within a reasonable distance. This meant that the Council would have to build new cottages; fortunately the County Education Committee had a piece of land on the corner of Loughton Lane and Oak Avenue which was surplus to their requirements. It was agreed that this would be used for the cottages, while the tenants agreed to move to temporary lodgings provided the Council bore any additional expenses involved (which the Council would recover by way of grant from the Ministry . . .). At this time it was expected that the railway works to enable electric trains to run would be completed by April 1940, and the LPTB were becoming anxious that the road works would not be ready in time. They accordingly

applied for Parliamentary powers in a Bill then in progress to close the crossings as soon as they were ready to run trains, which the Council were not very pleased with; negotiations led to the proposed pedestrian exits and 'embayment' being dropped from the Theydon Bois scheme.

In the event, the government's declaration of war on Germany threw everything into turmoil, but work was allowed to continue and French's had completed construction by 31 May 1940. The Ministry of Transport issued their certificate that the new bridge had been constructed in substitution for the level crossing on the 5 August and the Railway Company had stopped up and discontinued the use of the level crossing by 3 September.

The bridge, constructed in reinforced concrete, was expected to have a long life with little maintenance being required (compared with brick). The perhaps unforeseen weakness was that porosity of the concrete could lead to corrosion of the reinforcement and this has resulted in a weight restriction being placed on the structure despite quite extensive repairs in recent years.

# Percy Howes, 'Glascrete' tiles and Loughton Station

JULIE MACKAY

In delving into my family history I discovered that my grandfather had designed the glass and concrete entry concourse for Loughton Station. Percy William Howes was born on 3 May 1898, the third son of William and Eleanor Howes. The family lived in Leytonstone and Percy attended Sir George Monoux Grammar School in Walthamstow. He excelled in art and in 1913 was awarded a special prize for woodwork. Percy's love of woodwork never diminished and he designed and made many pieces of intricate furniture, including the Sanctuary Chair at St Paul's Church, Great Baddow. He even designed a house in Chelmsford for his parents and younger sister which still stands.

On leaving school in 1913, Percy was engaged as Assistant and Draughtsman with John Young, Son and Johnson, Architects and Surveyors. He remained there until 1916 when, during the First World War, and at age 18 he joined the Royal Navy. He trained as a rigger and engineer at RNAS Cranwell before serving on airships at RNAS Longside, Aberdeen, between 1917 and 1919.

In 1919 he applied for a position as draughtsman at J A King & Co, manufacturers of building slabs and blocks, and was employed at £4 a week. The firm introduced 'Glascrete' (a glass and concrete combination) into the UK in 1910 and pioneered its use for many years – the distinctive window and roof lights became their speciality.

Percy worked for King's for about 40 years as architect and as a director. He designed the roof of the Babylonian Gallery at the British Museum in 1937 and the glass and concrete entry concourse at Loughton Station in the early 1940s. He obviously loved working in this medium for, in 1952, he was granted a patent for 'improvements in or relating to glazed concrete structures'.

Percy married twice and was a keen amateur geologist travelling throughout the country studying rock formations. His other passions were photography, gardening and woodwork. He died aged 89 in 1988.

# 150th anniversary of the City of London Cemetery

RICHARD MORRIS

The City of London Cemetery first opened its gates on 24 July 1856. It is owned and administered by the City of London Corporation. Why do the City Fathers own a cemetery six miles east of the City of London?

During the 1830s the Churchyards of central London were expected to cope with in excess of 40,000 deaths each year. The City Churchyards were becoming dangerously full and it was not uncommon to find human remains scattered over the surface of burial grounds, with the bones gnawed by dogs.

The Commissioners of Sewers of the City of London, who were established in 1667 after the Great Fire, were responsible for, amongst other things, the welfare of the inhabitants of London. This included the health and hygiene of those living and dying within the boundaries of the City.

By 1852 the situation had become so serious that it was resolved to look for a site outside the City. The City Surveyor and Engineer and the Medical Officer of Health found what they considered to be an ideal site for a cemetery in Aldersbrook Farm in what was then called Little Ilford (now Aldersbrook Road, Manor Park).

The site was offered for sale for the sum of £25,000 and was purchased by the City in 1854. In the next two years the grounds were laid out much as you see them today. Seven miles of roads had to be laid, drainage installed and buildings erected. By the time the

cemetery opened the Main Entrance, with two houses either side, the Burial Church, Burial Chapel, Catacomb and Foreman's cottage had been constructed, all using the same Gothic building style.

In the latter years of the 19th century cremation was being offered as an alternative to burial and in 1904 a crematorium was opened at the City of London Cemetery. However, it was not an immediate success, with only nine cremations taking place during the first year.

The second half of the 19th century also saw much redevelopment in the City and the clearance of some Churchyards within the City. This resulted in the re-interment of the remains of many thousands of bodies in the cemetery at Aldersbrook.

With 150 years of history behind it, there is now a long list of the famous, and infamous, people who have been buried or cremated in the cemetery, including two recipients of the Victoria Cross, one awarded to John Sims at the Siege of Sevastapol in the Crimea, when he was aged only 19 years; and the other to George Drewry, a midshipman in the Royal Navy, who won his medal at Gallipoli in the First World War.

Bobby Moore, the captain of the England Football team that won the World Cup in 1966, died in 1993 and following cremation his remains were placed in the Memorial Garden. The Thompson-Bywater murder case was one of the most notorious in local history, and one that continues to be controversial to this day. The body of Percy Thompson was exhumed from his grave so that forensic tests could be made.

One coincidental benefit from the purchase of Aldersbrook Farm by the City of London, and the spacious layout of the cemetery, is that we also have today a marvellous 'nature reserve' within the grounds, with hundreds of mature trees of many different species and a bird population of considerable interest.

**Sources:**

McCarthy, D, *The City of London Cemetery and Crematorium* (c2004).

# From Apley to Orsett: The Whitmore Family

RICHARD MORRIS

Shropshire and Essex are two counties, links with which do not readily spring to mind. In my researches into the Harvey family of Rolls Park, Chigwell, I had found that the first Sir Eliab Harvey had, in 1658, married Dorothy Whitmore, daughter of Sir Thomas Whitmore (1612–1653) of Apley near Bridgnorth in Shropshire. A recent visit to the Shropshire Record Office in Shrewsbury identified another two Harveys who married Whitmores, and also showed that the Whitmores were themselves closely linked with Essex.

Sir Eliab Harvey's brother, Matthew, had in 1686 married Lady Frances Whitmore, the widow of Sir Thomas Whitmore, Dorothy's brother. Lady Frances was described as a lady of great personal beauty and was one of the ten *Windsor Beauties* whose portraits were painted by Sir Peter Lely, which can be seen today in the Royal Collection at Hampton Court Palace. The third Harvey to marry a Whitmore was Mary, the sister of Eliab and Matthew, who in 1658 became the wife of Sir William Whitmore, another of Dorothy's brothers.

So who were the Whitmores and where did they originally come from? Burke's *Landed Gentry* states that they first lived in the manor of Claverley in Shropshire where they acquired considerable possessions. This was in about 1300 and several generations continued to live there throughout the next three centuries. However, in 1582 William Whitmore purchased the estate at Apley Park, near Bridgnorth and this was to become the family home until the middle of the nineteenth century.

This William was a merchant who acquired an immense fortune by trading with Spain and he was a freeman of the Haberdasher's Company of London. He married Anne Bond, daughter of another rich merchant, and one of their sons, George, was elected Lord Mayor of London in 1631. Sir George, as he became, lived at Balmes House in Hackney, where he entertained Charles I, but he also had a country estate at Lower Slaughter in Gloucestershire

The eldest sons of the Shropshire Whitmores continued to live at Apley Park, which by 1865 comprised an estate of 8,644 acres, and a large part of the town of Bridgnorth, which they represented in Parliament for many generations. The estate at Apley was estimated to be worth £551,371 and produced an income of £16,000 per annum. However, in 1867 Thomas Charles Douglas Whitmore sold the estate to a Black Country millionaire. Why he did this is not clear, but considerable expense had been incurred in building Apley Park, he was involved in a series of legal battles with the Severn Valley Railway Company and large sums of money had been spent on political campaigns in Bridgnorth.

Another reason given is that Thomas was not ideally cast in the role of agricultural landowner. He purchased a London house in Lowndes Square and a country house and small sporting estate near Market Harborough, Leicestershire, close to the family of Margaret Hartopp, his recent bride.

Thomas Whitmore bought a commission in the Royal Horseguards where he began his friendship with Digby Wingfield, the heir to the Orsett estate in south Essex. In a will made in 1873, Wingfield bequeathed £50,000 to Thomas Whitmore and in 1881 he nominated him as his sole executor and legatee. It is odd that the Orsett estate passed altogether outside the Wingfield family, which could have supplied any number of heirs.

When Digby Wingfield died in 1884 the choice facing Thomas Whitmore was whether to sell the estate, or to hang on and ride out the agricultural depression and hope for better times. At the time of his succession to the Orsett estate, Thomas and Margaret Whitmore had a 14 year old son, Francis. The story is told that

Francis was summoned from Eton and asked whether he wanted to be heir to an estate which, he was warned, offered no certain prospects and, if it failed, almost certain ruin. Francis, who had visited Orsett during school holidays, had become attached to it and acquired something of a taste for agriculture, replied emphatically – 'Yes'.

The family moved to Orsett Hall in 1890 but even before that Thomas had sought ways in which the expenditure of Orsett Hall might be reduced. In Wingfield's time there had been five or six persons employed in the gardens, a gamekeeper and two assistants in the woods, four persons in the stables and five persons in the house.

In 1892 Margaret Whitmore died. Thomas seemed never to recover from this tragedy, and in 1899 he surrendered to his son Francis, his life interest in the estate, retaining title only to some furniture, one carriage and a set of harness. The London house was also made over on the condition that he had use of it for the rest of his lifetime. Thomas Whitmore died in February 1907, aged 67, and was remembered as a 'kind and generous' landlord.

His son and heir, Francis Henry Douglas Charlton Whitmore, had been born in 1872. On leaving Eton he spent several years on Lord Hampton's estate in Worcestershire and later in Yorkshire, learning about estate management. Returning to Orsett he attached himself to the agent, and soon learned the elements of practical agriculture. When his father had come to Orsett, the estate covered 8,500 acres, but by 1910 this had been reduced to about 5,800 acres. The strategy was to dispose of most of the outlying farms, many of which were heavy clay or marsh, and were a liability even in the 'Golden Age' of agriculture.

The demise of the old established farming families, led the estate to look elsewhere, to south-west England and Scotland for new tenants. This of course was not unique to south Essex, with the Padfields from the west country and the Davies from Scotland coming to the Loughton and Epping areas at a similar time. In 1896 Francis Whitmore set up a home farm and new model dairy in partnership with a previous tenant and established a pedigree herd of dairy shorthorns. The 'Orsett Park Dairy' supplied direct to London, and delivered to any address hampers of fresh dairy produce.

As his finances improved so Francis Whitmore was able to gradually improve the amenities of the estate. In 1887 Orsett Hall was 'but an uninhabitable shell, without light, water or sanitation'. It was therefore modernised, and various extensions including a porch, billiard room, harness room, and in 1909, a motor house specially designed by Rolls-Royce of Derby, were added.

Francis Whitmore was extremely active in public affairs. He was at one time or another president of the Essex Farmers Union and president of the Essex Agricultural Society. His other great interest was the Army and he formed the Orsett troop of the Essex Yeomanry composed almost entirely of tenants and workmen from the estate. He served throughout the First World War and was Mentioned in Despatches on four occasions and wounded twice. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 1917.

In 1899 Whitmore had been appointed a Justice of the Peace, and a Deputy Lieutenancy of the county followed in 1907. He served on the Essex County Council from 1918–1926, and was High Sheriff from 1922–1923. He was appointed His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for the County of Essex in 1936 and served in that office until he retired in 1958, at the age of 86. He was created a Baronet in 1954.

Sir Francis married twice; in 1900 he wed Violet Houldsworth, but she suffered from poor health and died in 1927. In 1931 he married Froken Ellis Johnsen of Bergen and by this marriage a daughter and a son and heir were born. Sir Francis Whitmore died in 1962 and was succeeded by his son, Sir John Whitmore, the 2nd Baronet. Sir John lived a very different life to his father and became a prominent racing driver for the Ford Motor Company. He decided, initially, to carry on with the estate farming tradition of his father but, although successful, his heart was not in agriculture and he sold the Orsett estate in 1968.

Orsett Hall was also sold and is now an hotel and venue for conferences and wedding receptions. Sir Francis had inherited, and added to, a marvellous collection of portraits of members of the Whitmore family going back to the seventeenth century. Most of these portraits have since been sold to museums, galleries, institutions and private collectors, although a few remain at the Orsett Hall Hotel.

Sir Francis Whitmore is remembered throughout Essex from his days as Lord Lieutenant. He was a man of great kindness and humility and his impact on agriculture in south Essex and on the Orsett estate in particular was profound. He maintained his links with the Essex Yeomanry Association throughout his life and is still remembered with affection.

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# The Churchill Papers

SUE TAYLOR

The Churchill papers in Cambridge reveal an enormous postbag of correspondence. Some asked for Churchill's used Christmas cards or other mementos that might be sold for charity. Some organisations reported the

success of their fundraising activities: The Chigwell Urban District National Savings Committee wrote to Mr Churchill from Alderton Hill in 1943 about its 'Wings for Victory' Week (19.6.43-26.6.43). Its target of £150,000 had been met, of which £115,475 was 'small savings' from individuals.

Sometimes letters, which were often written on tiny scraps of paper or in pencil on postcards were sent to the Prime Minister urging him to take action on international matters. Two, for example, came from an address in Hillcrest on 4 July 1943. The cards pleaded with him to 'do all you can to help the starving children of Belgium'. As there were many Belgian refugees staying in Loughton, their fears for their families at home presumably prompted such appeals.

A lot of Mr Churchill's constituency correspondence both during and after the war referred to housing. There were many letters from boroughs such as Dagenham, asking for permission to send their homeless to Essex – by which they meant Chigwell, Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Chingford. In 1940, there were 3,000 evacuees in Chingford alone, many living (according to a letter from the Mayor of Chingford) in schools and church halls that were clearly inadequate. That same year another letter records a deputation from Wanstead and Woodford, Chigwell and Chingford visiting the Ministry of Health to talk about the problem of London's homeless. Their reception appears to have been entirely unsympathetic to their concerns. A report to No 10 Downing Street records: 'There was a lengthy exchange of views and it was clear that the local authorities there did not fully appreciate that the Prime Minister's "We are all in it together" may mean heavy responsibility for them . . .'

After the war the nature of the correspondence changed. Housing was still a burning issue, especially with regard to the development of the Debden Estate. There were objections to the Estate being built, although less than one might have expected and often coming from respondents living outside of the designated area of construction, such as those from Theydon Bois. Many of the new Debden residents wrote in 1948 and 1949 to say they were delighted with their new homes, but wished there were shops or schools closer by. One local trade union representative eventually asked that no more families should be moved into Loughton until the existing ones were more suitably housed. Some homes were overcrowded on account of the postwar baby boom; other families were forced to live with parents or relatives because they had not lived in the area long enough to qualify for rehousing by the local authority. The LCC refused to rehouse the children of Loughton's tenants.

Some correspondence was extremely angry. One of the last roads on the Estate to be developed was Wellfields and the new houses were connected to phone lines even before they had been occupied, whereas residents in other roads had to wait a little longer. This led to a flurry of correspondence from addresses in Grosvenor Drive. One letter said: 'There has just been completed in Wellfields on this estate, some higher income group houses . . . the builders who built the houses are only just completing the taking down of their huts. The telephones are being connected for these houses . . .' A letter from the GPO headquarters dated 7 June 1952 and sent in response to one from Mr Churchill's office, explained that phones were indeed being connected to homes in Grosvenor Drive. The letter concluded: 'I need scarcely say there is no question whatever of any favouritism being shown . . .' One can only wonder if the Grosvenor Road phones would have been connected quite so quickly had Mr Churchill's office not intervened when it did.

Mr Churchill's postbag reveals many complaints: about unruly neighbours, 'snobs' who were unwelcoming, widows' benefit and one letter from an address in Barrington Road complained about receiving *only* £2 14s 6d Sickness Benefit. Other letters to Mr Churchill showed various concerns about maintenance orders not being paid or of magistrates who decided maintenance cases in less than 10 minutes. As this was prior to the Child Support Agency, it is not clear what Mr Churchill was supposed to do about such issues. Nor is it entirely obvious what Mr Churchill could do about the complaints of Mr Verrall, from Elmhurst Way, who wrote that he had been awoken on 23 June 1953 by the sound of explosions. He saw several men carrying rifles with their faces blackened creeping along the road. The war being over he assumed they were soldiers, but just to make certain, he contacted the police who knew nothing of the matter. He was later told he had witnessed an RAF exercise.

Loughton folk were also determined their MP would know how they felt about the issues of the day. Mr Churchill was urged in 1953 to vote against the Toy Weapons Bill, which would ban replica and toy guns, and the intended Judges Remuneration Bill (to pay High Court Judges an additional £1,000 a year free of tax) also seemed to exercise the minds and pens of Loughton residents. He regularly received petitions and usually his private secretaries dealt with them, but one letter clearly demanded his personal attention. In 1956, the Stag Brewery wrote to ask if they might name a public house after him. He was clearly delighted with the idea and happily gave his permission. That pub now stands on the Broadway although there is no record in his papers that Mr Churchill ever drank there.

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