LOUGHTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 136

APRIL 1997 **Price 20p, free to members**

What's in a name?

In view of what has happened to the Wake Arms, the Bald faced Stag and, most recently to Chigwell's 'King Willy', members may be interested to hear of the Inn Sign Society. This exists to record, research and, if necessary, defend our traditional inn signs. The rescue of the Loughton 'Crown' from the fate of being redesignated 'Rat and Carrot' shows what concerned local protest can achieve. Traditional pub names, whether there is a sign or not, are also of interest to members. The Society produces a useful quarterly journal: *At the Sign of . . .* For further information contact the Secretary of the Inn Sign Society, Alan Wright, 18 Dunlin Avenue, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 9RF.

In memoriam

It is with regret that we record the death of JOHN HOMER, ACA, the Society's auditor since 1992. He had been a member of the Society for many years and his advice as auditor was greatly appreciated. John had a special interest in glass, was a member of the Glass Appreciation Society and had acted as Treasurer of Loughton Antiques Club. We offer condolences to his family. V R

Loughton – late 19th century to 1934

The red brick Edwardian house known as The Pollards, at the top and south of Albion Hill, may be remembered today for its large and unusual garden. An earlier house of the same name, and on the same site, is shown on a large-scale Ordnance Survey map dated 1881 when the property was bounded on the west by present day Nursery Road. A glass conservatory is shown, extending eastwards from the house, and in front of a separate stable block with living accommodation fifty yards or so down Albion Hill.

South of these buildings was an ornamental garden, approximately 150 yards wide, sloping down towards the middle of Warren Hill, with enclosed fields on each side. The cultivated garden area was on three terraces. Adjacent to the house were lawns, ornamental trees with a pond; and a separate walled orchard in front of the stable. On the next terrace down was a rose garden with a sunken pond. At the bottom was the largest area of wild grass, shrubs and finally forest trees alongside the border of present day Warren Hill. The terraces were supported by brick walls which lasted well, but stairways and elegant Italianate balustrades were made of artificial stone which did not endure. Under the Epping Forest Acts of the late 19th century, building was prohibited in the garden and adjacent fields.

Early in the 20th century the old Pollards had been a ruin and the garden derelict when purchased by James Mark Dietrichsen, a middle-aged wholesaler and businessman, commuting since 1880 to the City of London from Buckhurst Hill. After rebuilding, assisted by a legacy, on the old foundations, 'Jim' Dietrichsen – with wife Elizabeth ('Liz') and four children – moved in 1900 to the new Pollards, L-shaped now with a short north wing. Entrance through a substantial porch on the north led to a

vestibule for outdoor garments and then to a large hall with fireplace. Doors from the hall led to three south rooms; swing doors led to the north wing; and there was a rather grand staircase. In the south-east was the Drawing Room with a lounge area near an elegant white fireplace and then on to a semi-circular area of windows providing a panorama outside of garden and the wooded skyline topped by Claybury Tower. Underneath was a basement room opening on to the garden. Here was a Day Room for youngsters. Next at ground level was a small Morning Room used by Elizabeth and more of the family on the rare occasions when there were no visitors. From the south-west there was another splendid view above the garden and up over the forest to Buckhurst Hill. This was from the Dining Room where eight could dine in style, twelve in comfort and more if they were children with room to toddle, walk or run round the table. A door from the dining-room led to a pantry in the north wing.

The north wing was the realm of housekeeper Alice who was with the Dietrichsens at Buckhurst Hill and stayed till 1934. Other female servants also lived in and at least one was married from The Pollards. In this wing was the pantry, a large larder, staff sitting room, kitchen, scullery and outside doors. A staircase led down to the basement under the south block only, with the day nursery already mentioned, and a laundry with a copper for boiling. Operated by pulling ropes was a small lift for carrying goods between floors. In the attic, reached also by the stairs, were staff bedrooms – single for the middle-aged and one large room for juniors, all facing south. Between attic and ground floor was the first floor with bathroom, two spare rooms and a wash-room designed for soaking laundry in a wooden tub but more often used for washing down two or more standing grandchildren. Swing doors led to the south block with Main Bedroom and adjacent bathroom and four guest rooms known by colours. The Blue Room, under the pinnacled tower was large with the panoramic view enhanced by height, but often obscured by mirrors on a dressing table in the contemporary style. The landing covered the south side of the hall and banisters continued down stairs round internal walls. The more adventurous could slide down the shiny wooden handrail of the bottom straight run while young eyes could peer through the wrought iron uprights when evening guests arrived in the hall below.

At its best in spring, when hundreds of daffodils led eyes down from deteriorating stonework, the garden was open to anyone who who rang the front door bell and dropped a shilling (5p today) in the proffered charity tin. There was much grass, motor mowers had not arrived therefore larger mowers were pulled as well as pushed. Mr Brand was a young staff gardener in the 1920s who stayed for 40 years or so. Also well-remembered is Mr Gartland, ex-Royal Navy mechanic, in charge of the electricity generator in the basement of the stable block. On two or three afternoons in the week he turned the large flywheel until the diesel engine started, when bubbles would appear in jumbo-sized accumulators storing electricity for lighting only, until the mains electricity arrived approximately in 1930.

The Dietrichsens had four children. Two boys served later in World War One. Fred, a lawyer, was posted to Dublin and shot in 1916 in the Easter firing by Sinn Fein's army. Connell, in the 1920s, moved to Glasgow to run the family office there. The two girls were younger: Sibely married Dr Edward Shann who, after overseas service in the war, practised in north London; Marcia, the youngest, married Stuart Matthews, RAF officer, in 1918.

The stable block was converted into a house, Greengates, in 1928, when Bernard Howard, JP, with Mrs Janet Howard and their six children, took over The Pollards. James Dietrichsen died in 1929 and Elizabeth lived on in Greengates till her death in 1934. There were eleven grandchildren, of whom the present writer is one; and 22 great-grandchildren, many of whom are now parents themselves. R M

Problems of education

In its issue of 22 February 1895, the *Woodford Times* published a report that there were 239 children on the registers at Staples Road School and 236 on the books of York Hill. The former school had a 92% attendance record while York Hill achieved only 87%. Miss True, the headmistress, had reported that the low percentage was due to many children being ill and 'regretted that ringworm was prevalent in the school'. A week earlier, the meeting of Buckhurst Hill UDC, having heard the Medical Officer's report, announced that it had decided to close local schools for three weeks because measles was so prevalent in the district.

Miss True, who had been headmistress of Staples Road School, Loughton, for three years, had never had an increase in her pay of £110 a year. The chairman of the committee which considered the matter proposed a £5 increase. On the intervention of the Rector, the Revd J W Maitland, Miss True's salary was raised by £10 a year to £120.

Miss Taylor, headmistress at Buckhurst Hill Infants' School, was not so successful as Miss True in her claim for more pay. She had been in post for four years, was paid £90 a year and had received no increase for two years. No increase was forthcoming for her, although the previous headmistress had been paid £95 a year *(Woodford Times* 1 March 1895).

Wild, wild Buckhurst Hill – The *Woodford Times* reported in November 1895 that Mr Fuller called the attention of the Council to the want of additional police protection on Saturday evenings in the lower part of Queens Road and the necessity of keeping the footpaths clear. The Clerk was directed to write to the Inspector of Police on the subject and to request him in addition to put in force the provisions of the law in respect of bad language used in the street.

'Twittens' – the lanes of Loughton

Several towns are famous for their picturesque network of narrow alleys. York has its Shambles, Brighton its Lanes, Edinburgh its Wynds, which are often relics of medieval trading patterns. Part of the charm lies in the distinctive names given to these lanes, but Loughton too has its own particular word for the town's back alleys, which are known as 'Twittens'.[1] The continuing use of this word in Loughton is of great interest, not least because of its Anglo-Saxon origin, but because it may indicate the street-pattern is far older than expected, as well as the fact that it is a unique example in Essex of the use of this word.

The Loughton Twittens are the half-dozen or so narrow alleys leading off Forest Road, on both the Smarts Lane and the Loughton Brook sides of the road. Perhaps the best known is 'Cuthbert's Alley',[2] running between Forest Road and the High Road beside Davey's sports and toy shop. The track beside Loughton Brook joining Forest Road and Shaftesbury (formerly the western end of Staples Road) is known locally as The Widden, a variant of 'twitten'.

The word 'twitchel' is a widely-used dialect word describing 'a narrow footpath between hedges; a narrow passage; a blind alley; a short cut'.[3] According to the *English Dialect Dictionary,* the word occurs in Northumberland, Durham, Cumbria, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Sussex. In Lancashire and Yorkshire, a 'twitch' is 'a short, steep, twist or bend in the road'. The word is derived from Anglo-Saxon *twicen* or *twycene* (pronounced 'twitchen') meaning a forked road. Although Essex is not referred to in the *English Dialect Dictionary,* 'twitchel' is also Essex dialect for 'a narrow passage between houses', as noted by Revd Gepp in his *Essex Dialect Dictionary.* Gepp also notes that in Colchester such an alley is called a 'folly', while in south-west Essex it is a 'slipe'. But, in Essex, twitten seems unique to Loughton.

'Twitchen' is mentioned in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a variant of 'twitchel', with particular reference to Sussex.[4] The *OED* notes that 'twitchen', a more direct descendant of Anglo-Saxon *twicen*, may also have been influenced by the Low German *twiete*, 'a narrow path or passage between two walls or hedges'. Twitchen seems to have had a more restricted geography however. As well as rural Sussex lanes, the back alleys in medieval Oxford were known as 'twychens', and the word was also used in medieval Nottingham. More recent usage is verified by reference to 'twitchens' in 19th-century Leicester and Bedford.

The Loughton Twittens/Widden are clearly from the same word; there are numerous examples of the -ch- sound becoming -d- in Essex dialect. However, this is the only known Essex usage of 'twitchen' as opposed to 'twitchel'. This could indicate that the origin of these alleys is far older than previously thought. In other urban contexts, such back lanes often follow property boundaries. Boundary lines are notoriously long-lasting; in Maldon property boundaries which were thought to be medieval, were found by excavation to date back to the 10th century, while in West Ham, the external boundaries and internal divisions of several estates developed on Plaistow Marsh in the 19th century respect earlier, medieval, field boundaries.[5] Forest Road was developed from 1857 onwards[6] but before that date the area was 'forest waste' and comprised a maze of small fields, the boundaries of which may well have influenced the position of these twittens.

These local names for places enrich our language, and mark out places we know as distinctive and special. It seems only right to record Loughton's particular contribution to the county's heritage of speech. STEPHEN PEWSEY

References

1. I am grateful to the officers of the Society for first drawing my attention to the survival of Twittens place-names in Loughton.
2. Johnson, p. 2.
3. Wright, Vol VI, p. 290.
4. *OED*, Vol XVIII, pp. 768–769.
5. Pewsey, forthcoming.
6. Waller, p. 140.

Bibliography

Gepp, Revd E, *An Essex Dialect Dictionary* (Routledge, 1923).
Johnson, C, *Loughton Street-Names* (Chigwell Urban District Council, 1973).
Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition (OUP, 1989).
Pewsey, S, *Ancient Newham* (Newham History Society, Occasional Paper No XXX, forthcoming.
Waller, W C, *Loughton~in-Essex*, (Alfred B.Davis, 1900).
Wright, Joseph (Ed), *The English Dialect Dictionary*, (OUP, 1905).

Beating the bounds

How well do you know your parish boundary? Today, you can find it on a large scale Ordnance Survey map, of course, but in our local area such maps were only produced from about 1870 and recorded the existing boundaries. Before then, knowledge of the location of the boundary was largely passed on by word of mouth from one generation to the next, assisted by the ritual ceremony of 'beating of the bounds'. This was traditionally carried out in Rogation Week – between the fifth Sunday after Easter and Ascension Day – and involved local officials such as the parson perambulating the boundary accompanied by a number of local inhabitants. To impress the occasion upon the memory of young lads in the party, it was the custom to 'bump' them at particular points along the way.

No doubt there are written records of many such occasions tucked away in various places and for Loughton at least one has come to rest in the Essex Record Office at Chelmsford (ref. *D/DMe E6/9).* It is dated Monday, 29 May, 1854 and in rather difficult to read handwriting describes the route taken. Among those present were the Reverend

Thomas Trundle Storkes (Rector); Frederick Luffman (Keeper); Mr Metcalf (Steward); Mr Barton (Postmaster) and his son; Mr Grout (Parish Clerk); Messrs Chilton, Higgins, Maynard and Rogers; and a number of boys. It starts with the words 'We walked the Bounds of Loughton Manor . . .' and the party set off at 9 o'clock from Loughton Bridge, following the River Roding at first as the main natural boundary.

This document, although full of detail as to the actual boundary, doesn't tell us much about how the participants felt about the ceremony. Fortunately another account has survived (not in the ERO) in rather lighter vein. It was apparently intended to be sung, as it bears a note '(Tune) National Anthem', and runs as follows:

The cheerful day

The twenty-ninth of May
Upon that very day
    Year fifty-four,
Loughton Manor Parish
Was trodden field and ditch
By young old poor and rich
    Like years before.

Although the day prov'd wet,
The folks together met
    Cheerful and gay,
Near Loughton's Bridge the post
Stands where the bumps were most
That when twas o'er to boast
    Of bumping-day.

The heavy rains in morn,
Besprinkled every one,
    And soaked them through,
But when they'd once begun,
They would not leave the fun,
Or cowards homeward run,
    As some would do.

Thus onward through the day
The bounds quite o'er they stray
    With cheerful fun,
The talk, they laugh they shout,
Though clothes are wet throughout
Resolved to keep out,
    Till all was done.

They'll quite fatigu'd repair
And tell upon the chair
    What fun they had,
And eat, and drink, and sing,
'As merry as a king.'
With toasts the room will ring
    If not 'tis bad.

At Feather's Inn they come,
The hard day's work is done,
    They feast away,
Bid gloominess begone
As pleasure now has come,
And call it every one
    A cheerful day.

It is signed at the end 'D M': quite possibly Daniel Maynard who was the National (Church of England) School Master at this time. IAN STRUGNELL

Remembering Sylvia – a memoir

I was unable to be at the October meeting when Sylvia Pankhurst's life as a suffragette was the topic for the evening. Had I been there I would have been interested to see whether there were any others present who had known her as a person rather than as a figure from history and would perhaps have told the meeting of the occasion, perhaps the only occasion, when Sylvia found herself lost for words! It was at the height of her campaign for Ethiopia and shortly before she left England forever. Some of the audience she attracted that night were, no doubt, there because she was a famous name, others because they went regularly to that venue. There was also present at least one ghost from the past. At the end of Sylvia's impassioned plea for the Ethiopian cause the chairman called for questions. A little blind man (his name was McCartney, once a well-known union activist in the catering trade) stood up and almost uttered a wail:

'O, Sylvia, what's happened to you, gel? Was you the one that nearly ran away with George Lansbury? [I think this should have been Keir Hardie, AWS.] Was you the one who told Lenin where he got off? [Lenin believed Sylvia to be of sufficient influence for him to devote a pamphlet refuting her views, AWS.] And now you've come here campaigning for some bloody black Emperor!'

This evoked roars of applause from the audience, sensing perhaps that this would be a moment to be long remembered, and no one took much notice of the rest of the meeting. Sylvia was visibly moved. Perhaps there was even a tear.

It was, I think, a bolt fairly fired. Others of the Pankhurst family ended up supporting bizarre causes. Perhaps Sylvia's was the least absurd but it was a strange ending for the radical heroine.

In the early fifties I was a regular visitor at Lalibela House in Charteris Road where Sylvia lived with her son Richard, now a respected academic, and Richard's father, her lifelong partner, Silvio Erasmus Corio, who had come to this country many years before as a political refugee from Italy. Silvio and Sylvia are names with an air of Arcadian romance, but whenever third parties were present they always called each other Miss Pankhurst, Mr Corio. Richard's life was then devoted to his studies and Miss Pankhurst allowed no casual droppers-in to distract him so I would go round to the back-door to be admitted by Mr Corio and spend informative evenings with him.

Mr Corio was Sylvia's one-man back up team. He devoted his life to her leaving his own considerable abilities unknown and unappreciated. 'Damn marvellous woman, Smith', he would say to me. He was a great character in his own right, unorthodox on principle, even eccentric. Well aware that I knew next to no Italian he insisted on reading me long extracts from the Italian anti-clerical paper *Don Basilio*, chuckling with private glee. He offered to teach my newly married wife Italian, but the first phase was to be long hours listening to him reading Dante 'to absorb the spirit of the language'. The course got no further.

For all her faults, and she had many (Sylvia's imperious manner towards perceived underlings like myself was often hard to take), Mr Corio's verdict will be seen as no more than the plain truth: 'Damn marvellous woman'. ALAN W SMITH

We welcome this contribution from a long-standing member who, in 1978, spoke on the subject of 'Some folklore of Industry'; in 1984 expressed 'A New View of the Civil War' and subsequently entertained members with talks on a Christmas theme, and on our Saxon forebears.

1936 recalled

In January Miss Eleanor M Verini was appointed headmistress of Loughton County High School for Girls. Formerly headmistress of Ely High School for Girls, she was selected from a shortlist of seven applicants, of whom there had been a total of 87.

In February Roding Valley Halt was opened for the development of Hillside Estate, and glamour came to Loughton when Pauline opened 'the most delightful and up-to-date hairdressing salon for ladies in the district at 100 High Road'. *The Woodford Times*

LOUGHTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Registered Charity No 287274
President: J I Besent, OBE, FRICS, MRAC
Chairman: Dr Chris Pond, Forest Villa, Staples Road, Loughton IG10 1HP (0181-508 2361)
Secretary: John Howes, 97 Staples Road, Loughton IG10 1HR (0181-508 0776)
Treasurer: Dr Donald Pohl, 32 Queens Road, Loughton IG10 1RS (0181-281 1534)
Membership Secretary: Mrs Emelie Buckner, 88 Alderton Hall Lane, Loughton IG10 3HD (0181-508 0427)
Editor: Edwin Dare, 21 Ibbetson Path, Loughton IG10 2AS (0181-508 6250)
