

# NEWSLETTER 219

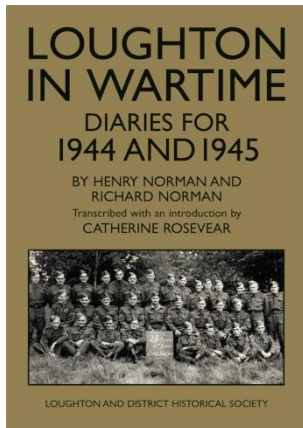
DECEMBER 2018/JANUARY 2019

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[www.loughtonhistoricalsociety.org.uk](http://www.loughtonhistoricalsociety.org.uk)

56th Season

## Wartime Loughton



In late 2016 Catherine Rosevear bought an original, handwritten diary, dated 1944, from an on-line auction. There was no name attached to it and the seller was unable to give her any information about the writer. Over Christmas 2016 she read it and found herself immediately drawn into war-time Loughton – constant air raids raining

down onto a stoic, practical and supportive community.

The diary described the wartime life of a wholesale fruit and vegetable merchant who worked in his family firm, later found to be H R Norman and Sons, of No 8 Stratford Market. He lived in Loughton, was a member of the Home Guard, shared his home with his sister, Lily, and had other family living in Loughton as well as in Essex and in Cottenham, Cambridgeshire, where both his parents had been born. In addition, he had many friends in Loughton.

It was fascinating reading and the unnamed writer proved to be very likeable. He was a dog-lover and aside from the Home Guard and running a successful business at Stratford Market with his brother, Robert, he had many other interests. He enjoyed nature, walking, fishing and gardening and also art, literature, the cinema and the theatre. He spent a lot of his free time researching and copying a diary written by a Victorian called Freeman Goode of Cottenham and Catherine thought that he might have been one of his ancestors. In January 2017, Catherine tried to find details from the diary that would give some clues as to his identity and then sent them off to Chris Pond. However, there wasn't enough information then to identify the diarist.

The original diary was very hard to read, so Catherine typed it out, deciphering unclear words. More clues fell into place. She sent them to Chris, in addition to sending them to the National Archives, and others.

Chris found that the date of the writer's mother's death was the key to the diarist's identity. He was Henry Bicheno Norman.

Catherine came to know Henry well and also, to a lesser extent, his family and friends. Relationships between the various family members and friends were not clear and as much information as it has been possible to find appears towards the end of the book. Chris also provides footnotes to many references to Loughton events, localities and people.

In October 2017, Chris and Catherine discussed the possibility of publishing. There was a worry about copyright and the legal right to publish, so all the living beneficiaries had to be found. Catherine found Gail Armstrong, joint owner of the copyright with her brother, Gary Churchill.

Gary mentioned that he had some war-time diaries written by Henry's brother, Richard. Would some of Richard's diary be suitable to include? Richard's 1945 diary was just as compelling as Henry's and Richard seemed to have had an equally interesting and full life. Extensive entries all through the momentous events of 1945 were there. The diary for July and August 1945 gave a real sense of change: people returning from war-time roles, moving house, changing jobs, trying to return to peace-time.

Richard worked in the City and lived with his wife, Elsie, and her parents, only a short walk from Henry and Lily in Loughton and they saw a lot of each other. Both were in the Home Guard, in different platoons, and were passionate gardeners. Extreme weather in 1945 also gives Richard's detailed gardening notes much of interest to a horticulturalist.

They decided that, with Gary and Gail's permission, they would like to include not only Henry's complete 1944 diary, but also Richard's 1945 diary up to and including VJ Day to provide a lot more detail, as well as taking things nicely up to the end of the war. Bringing both diaries together provides a compelling account of Loughton life in the last two years of the Second World War. The brothers describe the Little Blitz, the V1 and V2 missile attacks, VE and VJ day, and, finally, a return to a normality that many people had almost forgotten.

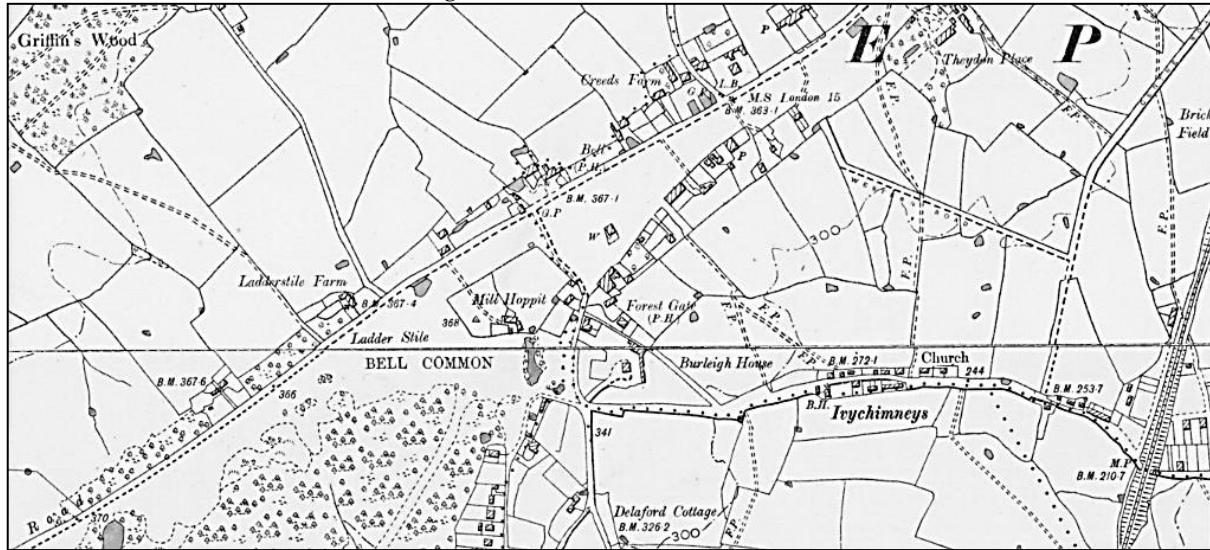
Henry and Richard's stories give a real sense of how a community pulled together, and how, through it all, two men in particular continued to live busy and fulfilling lives.

The book is a paperback in A5 format and contains 108 pages including 16 pages of photographs. It costs £5.50 for members at meetings and £6.50 from bookshops.

# Epping Mill

Epping Mill was located on the eastern side of Bell Common. By the time the second-edition Ordnance Survey six-inch map of the area (scale 1:10,560) was published in 1895, the windmill itself had gone, but

Mill Hoppit, the field in which it stood, is still clearly marked. The mill stood at the highest point, shown on the map as a triangulation mark with a spot height of 368 feet.



Mill Hoppit on the Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition Map of Epping

The earliest reference to the mill is in the folktale *Long Meg of Westminster*, in which Long Meg visited the miller of Epping<sup>1</sup> sometime during the reign of King Henry VIII.

Long Meg of Westminster was a legendary character in the mould of Robin Hood; she was reputedly a woman of enormous size and strength who went about the country righting wrongs, usually by administering severe beatings with her outsized laundry paddle. Her supposed tomb – a huge plain black marble slab of unknown purpose – was shown to visitors for centuries in the south cloister of Westminster Abbey. Links have been suggested between a number of 'Long Megs' through history, from Long Meg and Her Daughters, a prehistoric stone circle in Cumbria, to the naming of a number of unusually powerful medieval cannons 'Long Meg', and to a possibly genuine Long Meg, said to have been a notorious brothel-keeper in early Tudor London, through to the legendary Long Meg of Westminster. Supposedly these may all be manifestations of a forgotten pagan goddess of immense strength and with the power to right wrongs.<sup>2</sup>

The lost play *Long Meg of Westminster* was performed in the 1590s, based on an earlier prose piece.<sup>3</sup> This has also been lost, but a version of it, closely based on the original, does survive from 1635. Although Long Meg herself may have been a fable, the places referred in her adventures are real enough, so the lost play, the near-contemporary chapbooks and the 17th-century prose work based on a Tudor if not earlier original, are the earliest references to a windmill in Epping.

In the tale, Meg and a group of her female friends venture out of London on foot during a great frost 'to make merry', accompanied by a teenage boy. As they passed the Epping Mill (quite a walk from London!), the boy teased the miller, who then struck him with a

stick. Meg intervened, seized the stick and beat the miller in return. The miller was then tied up in one of his own flour sacks and hoisted halfway up the mill by rope and left dangling there.

Millers were about as popular in the Middle Ages as merchant bankers are in the 21st century, proverbially hated because of their habit of giving short weight in the flour they sold. So Meg's narrative fitted well into a widespread Tudor trope, and several of her adventures revolve around the meting out of just deserts to archetypally greedy stock characters,<sup>4</sup> including the aggressive miller of Epping.

The earliest formal documentary records of Epping Mill, also known as Eagle's Mill, are in relation to the Copped Hall estate, which owned the mill and the land it stood on. From 1725 onwards, there are various legal records of leases and inventories in the estate files. Standing almost on the boundary between Epping and Epping Upland parishes, the mill was, as a significant landmark, one of the stopping points during the annual 'beating of the bounds' ceremony. Epping Mill made grisly headline news in 1752 when George Cary, a 'higgler' (what we would now call a market trader) was robbed and murdered beside the mill. Despite the hanging of Dick Turpin in 1739 and the breaking up of the Gregory Gang of highwaymen, the Forest could still be a dangerous place. In 1800, the mill was one of the sightlines used in the great scientific endeavour known as the Principal Triangulation of Great Britain, the Ordnance Survey's vast undertaking to accurately map the nation.<sup>5</sup> As it stood on the Epping ridge, the windmill was clearly visible from one of the survey's base points, Shooters Hill, across the Thames.

Epping Mill was of a relatively simple design<sup>6</sup> known as a post mill, in which the whole structure is rotated into the wind around a central pillar. These lightweight wooden edifices needed regular maintenance and replacement, and were often supplanted

by sturdier tower mills in the 19th century, brick buildings in which only the cap and sails are rotated. There are references to possible rebuilding in 1806, and extensive refurbishments in 1830–31.

The mill appeared on the Chapman & André map of Essex published in 1777, and again on the 1805 First Edition Ordnance Survey inch to the mile map, as well as the 1839 tithe map. However, *Kelly's Directory* does not record any millers for Epping after 1862, and the mill is missing from the 1873 first-edition Ordnance Survey six-inch map of the area. However,

it was evidently still standing in 1877, as it was mentioned in an account of the Epping Hunt of that year; 'The hounds, which were a portion of the pack of the Essex harriers, lent by Mr Vine, drove him straight on to Thoydon Bois, thence on to Ongar Park Hall, whence he came back to Epping Windmill, where out of a field of fifty horsemen only Messrs Burrell, F, Chilton, and Fidler, and a young lady were up at the finish.'<sup>7</sup> Thereafter, Epping Mill disappears from history.



Epping Mill on the 1805 First Edition Ordnance Survey map, bottom left-hand corner

## References

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5. Mudge, Captain William (1800): 'An Account of the Trigonometrical Survey, carried on in the Years 1797, 1798, and 1799', in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, Volume 90, at pp 529–738.
6. Farries, Kenneth G (1981), *Essex Windmills, Millers & Millwrights*, Volume 3, at pp 122–123.
7. *London Daily News*, 3 April 1877, p 3.

STEPHEN PEWSEY

## Epping – 'more mills than a lazy man would care to count . . . '

(With apologies to Dickens), there seems to have been a third mill at Epping, as a mill mound is marked on the current 1:10000 OS as an antiquity. It is to the

south of Stonards Hill close to the railway, and thus pre 1895 was probably in Theydon Garmon parish.

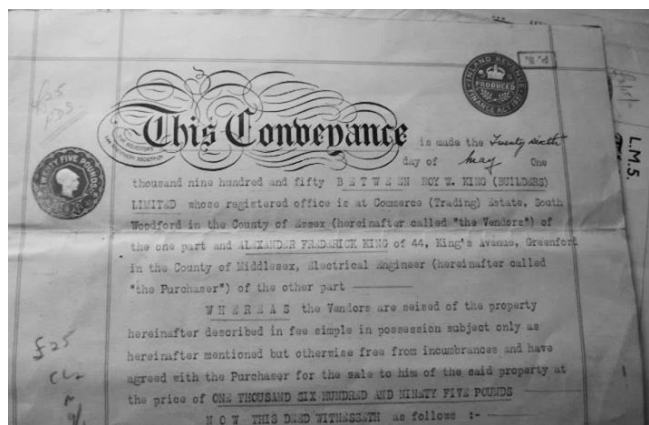
CHRIS POND

## The deeds of 10 Cherry Tree Rise, Buckhurst Hill

William John Rous died on 12 April 1914, a bachelor, at Worstead House in Norwich. By his will of 30 August 1913 he appointed trustees to ensure that land he owned in the area (at 'Chigwell, Buckhurst Hill, Loughton, Claybury, Hog Hill, Grange Hill and elsewhere in the county of Essex including the Manor of Chigwell and West Hatch') would be held on trust for the benefit of the Earl of Stradbroke. Rous, a 'Lieutenant-Colonel in her Late Majesty's Army' had inherited this land as a result of a will dated 7 April 1838 by Caroline Elizabeth Hatch.

The first trustees appointed were Francis Druce, solicitor, of 10 Billiter Square in the City of London, and Alfred Savill of 24 Great Winchester Street. Later trustees were John Christopher Druce and Robert Cecil Savill. Various legal documents are referred to in the deeds for 10 Cherry Tree Rise, such as a Vesting Deed of 8 March 1926 and a Deed of Declaration of 31

October 1928, which appear to confirm the position of the trustees and the Earl under the Settled Land Act of 1925.



The Earl of Stradbroke, George Edward John Mowbray Rous (1862–1947) chose to sell the land in 1934 and the purchaser on 28 June was Charles Samuel French (of 'Northlands, High Road, Loughton'), but he did not own it for long as he sold it on to James Alfred Scrivener on 4 September the same year.

Scrivener, who is described as a builder, of 4 Crescent Road, Brentwood, and later of 92 King's Road, Brentwood, bought a corner of land no doubt intending to build on it. Of interest are a number of legal notices in the deeds, which confirm that W J Rous had on three occasions, 27 February 1902, 7 February 1908 and 31 December 1913, made agreements with the Great Eastern Railway concerning possible payment of compensation if any land adjoining the railway were to be damaged by slipping of cuttings or embankments. Another stipulation was that any building put up had to be approved by the Trustees' preferred surveyors, Messrs Tooley and Foster.

J A Scrivener appears to have sold the land in 1938 to builder Roy William King of the Shrubberies, Aldborough Hatch, Ilford. R W King, based at the Commerce (Trading) Estate, South Woodford, built number 10 Cherry Tree Rise and sold it to Alexander Frederick King, electrical engineer, of 44 King's Avenue, Greenford, on 26 May 1950. He eventually sold the house to Keith Perkins and Annette Marie Bryan on 20 July 1983 and they erected an extension the following year. I bought the house in 1992. I

would like to thank Lynn H Jones for help with this article.  
KAREN MOORE

## Skateboarding and ferreting forbidden



I saw this in Austen Close, Loughton, April 2018. The sign bears the name of the estate's original owner, the Greater London Council, who built these houses and flats as an extension to the Debden Estate in 1969. The GLC housing stock was transferred to Epping Forest District Council in 1980, and the GLC itself abolished in 1986. So it's at least 38 years old. But it doesn't look as if it was the first sign on the site – it probably dates from when skateboarding became popular in the 1970s.

Similarly, I remember a London County Council (abolished 1965) sign giving notice of their open spaces regulations on Jessel Green as late as the mid-80s. I seem to remember ferreting was strictly forbidden.  
CHRIS POND

## Can anyone help? Powells in Australia

*The Powells in Essex and their London Ancestors* by Richard Morris (LDHS, 2002) makes mention of David Powell born in Little St Helens, London, in November 1764. He married Mary Townsend and they moved to Walthamstow where their first child Harry was baptised at St Mary's Church early in 1800. The family soon moved back to Bench House in Loughton and a further son and four daughters were born.

A daughter Caroline was born on 2 March 1804, married at Loughton on 29 September 1826 and died 17 December 1875. She was grandmother to Georgina Beatrice Crawley, having married George Abraham Crawley.

Beatrice Crawley married Cuthbert Morley Headlam in 1904 and during the 1930s became involved in philanthropic work in the north of England. She was given the CBE for her efforts.

Beatrice Headlam was my father's guardian. She got my father from somewhere when he was a baby and placed him in two orphanages in the south of England. It is believed she knew my grandmother, a 'Mrs Powell', who was a maid to her friend Countess Selborne of Blackmoor, Hampshire, at the time, 1919. My father was given the name Albert (Bertie) Powell, though his proof of birth has been difficult to confirm.

After researching for more than 35 years, I am still no closer to finding my father's identity.

Beatrice Headlam, granddaughter of Caroline Powell of Essex, authorised my father's emigration to Western Australia in 1927 under the Kingsley Fairbridge Scheme. He was only eight years old and placed in another institution here. He tried all his life to be reunited with his family, especially with his mother.

I ponder on the reality of whether Beatrice really cared for this boy, knowing the nature of her work for the disadvantaged. Why did she send him away and where did he get the name POWELL from? Her explanation to the emigration authorities was that Mrs Powell had left her drunken husband and five children to live with and keep house for a sergeant in the army with whom she became pregnant with 'Bertie'. That's when Countess Selborne and Mrs Headlam became involved in rescuing the boy.

I have included a photograph of my father, aged 2,



1921, taken at the orphanage at South Farm, West Overton, near Lockeridge, Wiltshire.

My father passed away, leaving a message to his family 'now in heaven I hope to meet the mother I've never known'. I hope he has. As his daughter and searching for my heritage, I continue the journey. I believe I am

related to the Powells in Essex and plead with anyone who can help me.

I would particularly like to hear from any descendants of the above Powell family, namely, Caroline Powell and her siblings, the children of David and Mary Powell. I'd also like to hear from any descendants of Mabel Ethel Powell (a clothier's machinist) of 66 South Grove, Walthamstow, who gave birth to a boy Albert at the Forest Gate Sick Home on 9 June 1919. Grateful thanks,

BARBARA POWELL

22 Victoria Street, St James, Western Australia, 6102

barbspow@gmail.com

August 2018

## Can anyone help? Loughton Motor Cycle and Car Club



Have you any records please about the LOUGHTON MOTOR CYCLE AND CAR CLUB (when it was in existence and when it ceased to be, etc). I believe their motto was 'E'sprit De Corps' [sic]. I have looked on the

internet, but can't find any reference to them. It was when I was searching that I came across your Newsletter and details.

NICK ROBINSON

## War damage in Buckhurst Hill 1939-1945

**14 September 1940.** 23 *Forest Edge* was damaged by high explosives – '4 persons dishoused' – the owner/occupier was A E Ellis, whose temporary address was 49 Worcester Crescent, Woodford Green.

**23 September 1940.** At 05.30 a high explosive device caused severe damage to houses in *Farm Way*, including number 2, known as Friar's Crag, the property of Dr J J Voler. Also damaged were three new empty houses, the property of A E Sheppard and Sons.

**25 September 1940.** *Stradbroke Grove* was hit by so-called landmines (actually dropped by parachute) – Nos 75, 79, 81, and on the other side Nos 4 (Tudor Cottage), 48, 50, 52 and 54 – several people were 'dishoused'.

**4 October 1940.** 25 *Forest Edge*, the home of John Edwards, but owned by Quality Houses, of 2 Roding Lane, Ilford (Mr T A Clark), was severely damaged by high explosive. Also hit that night was *Walnut Way* – 62, 64, 66 and 68 were damaged severely.

**1 November 1940.** *Gladstone Road* was hit by high explosives – numbers 55 and 57, owned by D Ambrose, and 59 owned by T Heath, all had serious damage to ceilings, roof and walls.

**18 March 1941.** *Loughton Way* was hit by high explosives – at No 29, 1 male, 1 female and 2 children were 'dishoused' as the house was totally demolished; it was the same fate for 31 (1 female and two children 'dishoused'); 33 was also demolished but 35 and 37 were 'badly shaken' with severe damage. On the same night 13, 15, 17 and 19 *River Road* were all damaged by high explosives – 'whole building badly bumped, moved and damaged'. 'Dishoused' were 4 at No 15, 6 at No 17 and 3 at No 19.

**19 March 1941.** A high explosive device caused damage in *Alfred Road* – House and shop at No 12 (owner Mrs Boulton of 63 St Ann's Road, Willingdon, Eastbourne), occupied by H W Wild (who moved to 31 Alfred Road) – totally demolished. No 14 (also owned by Mrs Boulton), was severely damaged – the occupant was Mrs Street, who moved to No 38. No 22 was the Whitbread and Co *Prince Alfred* beer house and garden, damage was severe. The occupant, A E Lloyd, moved to the *General Havelock* in Ranelagh Grove, SW1. Nos 26, 28, 30 and 32 were also severely damaged, but fortunately they all appear to have been unoccupied on the night of the attack.

34 *Lower Queen's Road* was badly damaged and partly demolished; No 38 also had external walls partly demolished.

**19 April 1941.** *Palace Gardens* was hit by high explosives – No 37, which was unoccupied and used for furniture storage, was severely damaged, as was No 43. On the same night, 11 *Stradbroke Grove*, the home of Robert D Salter, was hit, causing severe damage to the front of the house. The house next door, No 13, was also damaged, but it was less severe.

The above appear to be the only instances of severe damage/demolition, but of course there were many other attacks, and the vast majority of houses in



Buckhurst Hill sustained some minor or 'slight' damage. Taking one road at random, the following incidents appear to have caused some damage to houses in *Russell Road*:

5 September 1940 – land mine  
20 September 1940 – land mine  
25 September 1940 – land mine  
17 October 1940 – high explosive  
29 October 1940 – high explosive  
1 November 1940 – high explosive  
17 November 1940 – land mine  
3 February 1941 – AA shell  
26 February 1941 – high explosive  
8 March 1941 – high explosive  
12 August 1942 – high explosive  
23 April 1943 – shrapnel from shell  
14 February 1944 – gunfire vibration  
14 March 1944 – shrapnel  
31 August 1944 – fire bomb  
27 October 1944 – long range rocket  
13 January 1945 – long range rocket  
19 January 1945 – long range rocket

Some houses were taken over by the military. Devon House, at one time the home of Arnold Francis Hills, and later of David Howard, was bought by the Good family, builders, of Walthamstow, and they demolished the house and proceeded to build *Devon Close*. By the outbreak of war, some houses had been sold, but others were awaiting a buyer. The records show the following:

No 1 Mr Bloomfield, owner/occupier  
3 owner A Good, then of 21 Douglas Road, E4 – army occupiers  
5 owner A Good, as above  
31 as above  
33 as above  
2 owner/occupier Sidney R Agambar  
4 owner A Good, occupier G Shillaker  
30 owner A Good, occupied by army  
34 as above, so the army was occupying 6 of the houses.

And in the part of Buckhurst Hill where I used to live, what is now *Ardmore Lane*, but was then considered as part of the High Road, there was the following:

**12 August 1942.** Mr Joseph W Davies of *Queensbury* – owner/occupier– explosion, causing slight damage to windows, roof, ceiling, walls and contents; he did his own repairs. And on 19 January 1945 there was a long-range rocket (LRR) which caused slight damage to windows and the ceiling of the stable house.

**1 October 1940.** *Ellerslie* (now Braeside Senior School) was occupied by A Boake Roberts & Co Ltd, with a rateable value (RV) of £122 – a high explosive caused slight damage to the garden fence.

**27 October 1944.** *Ardmore* Essex County Council Nursing Home (RV £97), 136 High Road – LRR caused very slight damage to windows, and on 13 January 1945 by a LRR the same thing happened. And behind what was to become *Ardmore Lane*, in The Wilderness, occupied by artist Walter E Spradbery on **7 October 1944** an explosion caused slight damage to windows, roof, ceilings and walls, which was repaired by Eaton on 1 November 1944; and on **13 January 1945** a LRR caused very slight damage to windows.

This article could not have been compiled without the loan of the most marvellous resource, that of the card index of war damage in Buckhurst Hill, Loughton and Chigwell, which belonged to the firm of White and Miles. I am most grateful to Mr Geoff Clarke for the opportunity to study the records.

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

## Eppingen, Germany

When I told a friend living in the London area that I was moving to a job with Epping Forest District Council in 1988 he told me that he sometimes had cause to drive through Epping and it was twinned with Eppingen, Germany as the sign at the town's entrance indicated.

Twenty-six years later I was travelling back from the Europlate Convention (there is a brief article in



*Newsletter 218* about the 2018 Europlate Convention held in Loughton) which on that occasion had been held in Thierhaupten, near Augsburg, with a Luxembourg

Europlate member from whom I had 'hitched' a lift. We were making good time and he said we were not far from Eppingen and, knowing I was from the Epping area, he suggested that we could divert and spend some time there.

With this background, the article in the April/May *Newsletter 217* about Epping, Australia, has inspired me to write about Eppingen, Germany. The twinning of the two towns dates back to 1981 after the Epping Forest Band visited Eppingen. If you want to know more about the twinning arrangements there is a website devoted to it, [www.epping-eppingen.co.uk](http://www.epping-eppingen.co.uk).

My friend's suggestion of going to Eppingen was not as daft as it might sound. Some German towns are very industrial and not very attractive, but this is not the case with Eppingen as its centre is very pretty with traditional old German buildings. We enjoyed a pleasant stroll around and I took several photos. There was one somewhat incongruous feature in the main square, a British red telephone box! Not surprisingly this was donated to the town by Epping and a bilingual plaque confirms this.

Eppingen is situated in the Baden-Württemberg region about 30 miles north-west of Stuttgart. Its main industry is the Dieffenbacher brewery which dominates the approach to the town. As well as Epping, Eppingen is twinned with Wassy in France and Szigetvár in Hungary. Epping's twinning allegiances are just with Eppingen, however. If you happen to be in the appropriate part of Germany, I would certainly recommend a visit to Eppingen.

Photo, courtesy of Wikipedia. JOHN HARRISON

## Home Guard shelter?

As children after the war, when exploring the forest, we used to go up Goldings Hill, where the car park is today some 300 yards from the forest keeper's cottage toward the Wake Arms. Just before the car park on the right-hand side some 75 yards in the forest was a demolished brick building which looked as if it had gone underground at one time. I think it is still there. I have always wondered if that was one of those special hideouts for the Home Guard. Have you heard of this?

I always enjoy reading the *Newsletter* and only wish I could attend your meetings. TOM GILBERT

## A tale of two Loughtons

In *Newsletter* 217 I read with interest Valerie Thame's article on our local town names being found elsewhere and John Harrison's reference to Loughton in Buckinghamshire. The later piece reminded me of a strange coincidence whilst walking near the 'other' Loughton. As keen ramblers my wife and I happened some years ago to be in the Milton Keynes area and we decided to follow a circular route in the rural fringes of the 'city'. Away from the built-up centre we rambled along quiet country paths and through one or two attractive villages. As some stage we had to reach Loughton (itself an old hamlet now part of the Milton Keynes district) but found the signposting somewhat confusing.

One of the unwritten rules of rambling is that, if in doubt of the way ahead, ask a local dog walker. That is, if you can find one! As luck would have it a man and a dog came into view and I asked if we were on the right track for Loughton. 'Yes', came the reassuring reply, 'it's only 10 minutes away'. Thanking him, we talked for a while and I noticed his east London accent. He told us, to our great surprise, that he was born in Hackney and moved to Loughton, Essex (our home town), living in Borders Lane for over 50 years. For family reasons he retired to Loughton, Bucks, and was happy to spend the rest of his life there. For a while we shared experiences of the Essex Loughton and then went on our separate ways, he with the passing comment 'Wait till I tell the wife!' We had some way to go, still feeling amazed at the chance meeting and a story of life in two Loughtons.

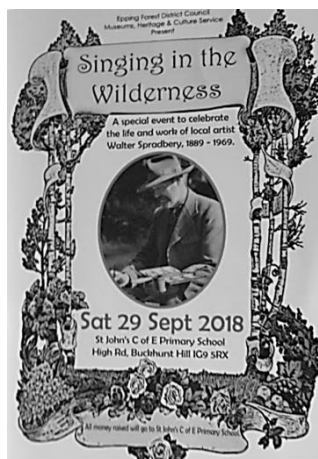
There is, of course, a third Loughton in England, a small community in Shropshire. We have yet to go there, but perusing a local Ordnance Survey map it would seem a good area for walking. If we do go there we might find another dog walker with a life history to tell.

JOHN JUCHAU

## Singing in the Wilderness

On 29 September a special event was held in the Wilderness and at St John's C of E Primary School in Buckhurst Hill to celebrate the life and work of local artist Walter Spradbery (1889–1969). The event was run by Epping Forest District Council's Museums Heritage and Culture Service, with the assistance of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The

Corporation of London had done a splendid job clearing the site of the Spradbery home, which had



become very overgrown since the house was demolished following Spradbery's death. A small display within the church told the story of Walter's life, and in particular his time in the Great War, when, as a pacifist, he signed up to serve in the Royal Army Medical Corps, helping to save life rather than take it.

The event was meant to re-create the Open Air Social of 1938, which Walter and his opera-singer wife Dorothy D'Orsay organised, and as Richard Bassett, Chairman of EFDC, said, it was intended to 'rekindle Spradbery's vision for art and music as a way of bringing families, friends and communities together'.

There were stalls, games, tours of the Wilderness and performances of dances by the Flux Dance Collective, representing *Acis and Galatea*, an opera which was performed at the Wilderness, and *Walter and Dorothy*, a dance duet exploring the life and love of the couple. The evening ended with dance performances by the school groups, and an improvised opera performance by 'Impropera'. The whole event was supported by Bedford House Community Association, which Walter helped to establish (as Buckhurst Hill Community Association) in 1946, and also Buckhurst Hill Residents' Society.

If you are reading this in early December, you just have time to see the special exhibition entitled *Walter Spradbery, Artist in War and Peace* which runs until 22 December 2018 at the Epping Forest District Museum, Sun Street, Waltham Abbey. Recommended.

THE EDITOR

## The first published work of Ruth Rendell

*'Form 1 on each other: Jenny'*

There was a young lady called Jenny  
Who bought some new shoes for a penny  
She soon wore them out  
For my story's about  
That careless young lady called Jenny.

Ruth Graseman

*Loughton County High School Magazine*, 18 March 1939, p 24

Ruth Graseman, born in 1930, after marrying Donald Rendell, became one of the most prolific and appreciated crime authors in Britain, and is now commemorated by a blue plaque in Millsmead Way.

Pre-1944 there was a preparatory department at Loughton County High School, attended by Ruth from the age of 8; 1944 was the last entry to the prep school; it closed in 1946–47.

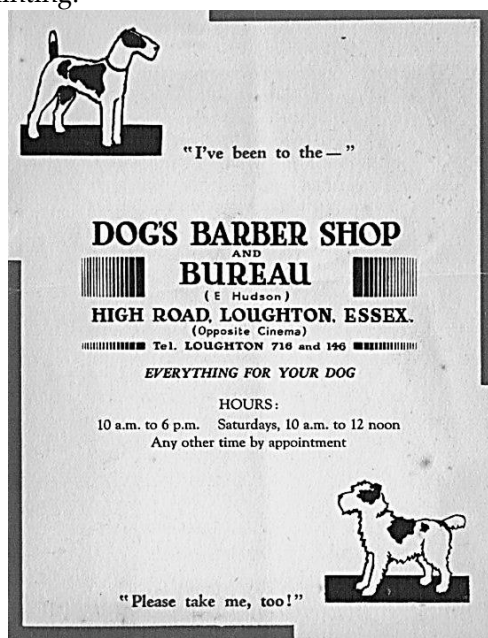
Hardly a masterpiece but certainly a local oddity!

CHRIS POND

## The Dog's Barber Shop



My girlfriend's mother Estelle Hudson (1910–2004), the little girl with the dog in the photo and painting, was destined to spend her life devoted to dogs, ending up a breeder of beagles. From 1934 up to her marriage in 1936, she lived with her mother in Red Lodge and ran a local beauty parlour for dogs: brochure below. See page 16 for a colour version of the painting.



MARTIN BATES

LDHS member Tessa Cochrane tells me cutting and shampooing of a medium dog in Loughton now costs about £34 instead of 5 shillings.

CHRIS POND

## Buckhurst Hill Medical Provident/Surgical Home

The Buckhurst Hill Medical Provident Home in Queen's Road was established 'to provide accommodation for those members of the Medical Provident, Foresters, Oddfellows and other clubs living within one mile of St John's, whose illnesses necessitate their removal from home'.

It was founded in the early 1890s and in 1896 the officers were President Mr C Wood, Hon Medical Officer Dr Ambrose, Hon Treasurer Mrs G Black, Hon

Secretary Mrs C Wood, of Fairlight, Palmerston Road, with the Lady Superintendent being Sister Grace.

In a directory of 1902 the Matron was listed as Miss Susette Deekes but the 1901 census shows her as Sarah Deekes, aged 37 (Sarah Jane Deekes, 1864–1959), assisted by Edith E Voller, a 21-year-old nurse (Edith Ellen Voller, 1882–1975). At that time they had several



resident patients, one being 7-year-old Elizabeth Drinkwater. (She was most likely the daughter of William and Elizabeth Drinkwater of Lower Road, Goldings Hill, he by 1911 was a police sergeant; Elizabeth obviously recovered from her illness as by 1911 she was resident housemaid for Spencer Harris Murch (see *Newsletter* 216 for

more about him)). Other patients were another 7-year-old girl; 16 and 17-year-old girls, one of whom was a general domestic servant; a 57 year old and a 25 year old, both housekeepers; a 52-year-old builder's labourer; a 69-year-old journeyman silk hatter and a 22-year-old housewife.

By 1908 it was known as the Medical Surgical Home. In 1909 the Matron was Miss Slater. There is no reference to the Home by 1914 and the premises that year were occupied by Charles W Woods, builder and decorator (perhaps its demise was related to the Forest Hospital opening in 1912).



The building is now part of the Queens Pre-School Nursery at 172 Queen's Road.

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

## Percy Walter Griggs and the Unknown Warrior

Percy Walter Griggs was born in Buckhurst Hill in 1888, the son of stone sawyer/builder's labourer Walter William Griggs (1864–1937) and his wife Sarah Maud (1869–1907). In 1891 they were in Kings Place Road, with two children, Percy W and Herbert W. In 1901 Walter William was at the same location, with children Walter P and George W [sic] and also Edith, aged 2. However poor Sarah Maud was a pauper inmate in Epping at this time.



Percy was the nephew of Matilda Griggs, the victim of the 'Buckhurst Hill Outrage' of 1867/8. (See *Newsletter* 192).

By 1911 Percy was in Yorkshire, where he married late in that year. His wife was Frances A Fortes and their children were Walter W (1912), Harry E (1914), Percy G (1918), Constance P (1920), Raymond V (1921) and Pauline B (1928).

Percy became Company Quartermaster-Sergeant 8586 in the first battalion East Yorkshire Regiment, and was awarded the Military Medal and the DCM.

*Woodford Times* 12 November 1920 – A Mr J H Hood of Roberts Cottages wrote the following letter. (Actually John Herbert Hodd (1865–1939). Roberts Cottages were and are still in Princes Road. They are named after John Roberts, the landlord of the Three Colts.)

Sir – While gossiping with a neighbour yesterday I learnt that a sometime resident of Buckhurst Hill was visiting the village, in the person of Company Quartermaster-Sergeant P W Griggs, who has been selected by his regiment, the East Yorks, to represent them at the unique and solemn ceremonies connected with the interment of the 'Unknown Warrior'.

We rightly rejoice in, and mourn for the memory of our glorious dead; but are sometimes a little apt to ignore our indebtedness to those who have gone through rough times for us without being called upon to make the supreme sacrifice. This particular soldier returned with five years' service in France with the DCM and MM to his credit. Many of your readers who are younger than I, and have consequently been nearer the front than the top of the Congregational Church tower,\* will readily, and from experience, understand what this denotes.

At all events I think it will gratify not only those residents who have known him in the past, but other of your readers, that this well-known Yorkshire Regiment should have selected a Buckhurst Hill man out of all others as their representative on this occasion; and it seems to me worthy of being placed on record.

Percy died in Hull in 1929, aged 40.

#### Note

\*This is a reference to the use of the tower as an observation post. '... Buckhurst Hill ... where there was a useful observation post in the tower of St James' Congregational church in Palmerston Road. At the outset there was only an evening watch, but after the first daylight raid by aircraft, on 13 June 1917, the post was manned continuously. During raids the six men on the open top took their chance of being hit by shrapnel, which repeatedly fell upon and damaged the church roof – the watchers there were amongst the most ardent in welcoming the issue of steel helmets.'

#### References

Oliver, Bill: *The Path of Duty* (Buckhurst Hill Branch, Royal British Legion, 2009).

Simpson, Alan: *Air Raids on South-West Essex in the Great War – Looking for Zeppelins at Leyton* (Pen and Sword, 2015).

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

## Follow-up from *Newsletter* 218...

Josiah Oldfield: The blue plaque has just been erected, on the site of the old ward block in Staples Road.

William Girling of the Metropolitan Water Board has a connection with latter day Loughton, as his

great grandson, Leon, was town and district councillor for Broadway ward, 2012–2018.

CHRIS POND

## If ever you are in Wimbledon . . .

A fascinating place to visit would be Southside House. Dating to the 17th century, the house has been in the Pennington Mellor Munthe family since the 1930s. It contains a collection of art, furniture, and family memorabilia, and has connections with, amongst others, the Swedish and Serbian Royal Families, Nelson and the Duke of Wharton. The garden is well worth seeing too. An eccentric house for an eccentric family, it is open from Easter Sunday to the first weekend in October on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday and Bank Holidays for guided tours at 2pm and 3.30pm. There are also some special events such as concerts and open garden days. Southside House, 3 Woodhayes Road, London SW19 4RJ, 020 8946 7643, [www.southsidehouse.com](http://www.southsidehouse.com)

EDITOR

## Ice cream queen

Who was the 'Queen of Ices'? Agnes Bertha Marshall. Born in Walthamstow in 1855, she was in many ways one of the forerunners of today's celebrity cooks. As well as giving public lectures on cooking and setting up a cookery school, she wrote extensively on ices, patented an ice cream-making machine and even suggested the use of liquid nitrogen in the freezing process. Her 1888 *Book of Cookery* included what was possibly the first ever published recipe for an edible ice cream cone.

*BBC History Magazine*, September 2018

submitted by TED MARTIN

## The Russians are coming

Fake news, fake news. I now plan my escape to a sanctuary close by, a peaceful place where I can renew my flagging emotional energies, and commune with my beloved nature. My chosen therapeutic stroll takes me along Lady Wroth's path which is bordered by a wild spinney which retains a rich flora and fauna. Nightingales serenaded the evenings last year. I then turned into the landscaped grounds of the neighbouring Corbett Theatre where over decades I've seen so many well produced plays. A small landscaped pond resides opposite the old farm building and is inhabited by our largest newt, the Great Crested.

I then retreated into Rectory Lane, which was an ancient track used by the Belgic tribe who lived on the uplands along with their flocks – on the Epping Forest ridge including Loughton Camp some 2000 years ago. They gained access to and across the River Roding via this track.

Then fourteen centuries ago the pagan Saxons settled and successfully farmed the area. The Normans followed and conquered all. The Church of St Nicholas was then built adjacent to the ancient track (now known as Rectory Lane). The church was named after St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra and Metropolitan of Lycia in Asia Minor. What is

interesting is the respect and affection he was held in, especially in Russia. Interesting!

This church was a pretty little one and served the scattered population of this rural district for many a century. This small church remained as *the* church of England church serving Loughton village and outlying area for seven hundred years until 1846 when the new, larger and more centralised St John's was built in Loughton. The end of an era.

However, a chapel was built on the old site – still today known as St Nicholas, smaller than the original church and erected by Anne Maitland in memory of her husband – the former Lord of the Manor – in 1877.

And so here I am taking sanctuary in this peaceful plot with its fascinating and tiny chapel. It was used by Anne Maitland and successors as their private family place of worship with stalls for servants and others to attend as well. In 1947 St Nicholas church was again put into use as a functioning publicly attended church for many years, to cater for the residents of the new Debden Estate.

Today the churchyard is still much as it's appeared for decades – the imposing gothic tomb attracts attention and I always admire the design of the building with its flint-built flank wall, flint being a locally available building material. The nearby Corbett Theatre also has its share of flint to glamorise its Tudor structure.

The grounds appear tidier than usual – perhaps too tidy. Quite bare in parts and the skirts of foliage that embraced the trunks of the two ancient yew trees have been removed. The yews seem bare and forlorn without them.

However, Spring's a-coming, and nature will no doubt soon clothe these bare patches with floral delights. Thankfully, the rare polypody fern that graces the high wall that separates Loughton Hall from this churchyard is still flourishing in the lime mortar used by builders in the past. Hopefully, this part of the wall that's disintegrating will be rebuilt with matching bricks and lime mortar to safeguard the future of our precious polypody.

And so on to the church. The door is open and there are sounds of human activity emanating from within. I enter and I'm unexpectedly surprised. Large imposing icons greet me, of Christ and of St Nicholas! I didn't have time to closely inspect – next visit perhaps. A burly man with a woman helping were hovering and standing above them another well-built male, dressed in full ceremonial regalia who dramatically monopolised the scene.

Yes! The Russians and the Russian Orthodox Church have arrived and are in charge of their beloved St Nicholas. And yes, I've been invited to attend their church – 10.30am every Sunday.

The Russians are now here and part of our local community – welcome brothers and sisters to Debden.

I duly attended two weeks later, accompanied by a Russian woman who lives in Loughton. We agreed to meet in the graveyard outside the church at 10.15 so that we could join the congregation promptly at 10.30. Olesya was wearing a long ankle length dress. I didn't know, but she did – that Orthodox women are expected to dress in modest fashion for church. Mini-

skirts and cleavages are not welcome. As we were about to enter Olesya produced a headscarf and covered her hair – 'the crowning glory of a woman'.

This small church hasn't seen such days for many a year – it was jammed packed, all standing throughout, as the preacher addressed his congregation. He, interestingly, introduced chanting at intervals that made his contribution more spectacular. But it seemed a long missive to me – as I don't understand a word. In the meantime the audience joined the chanting and regularly crossed themselves. Then men arrived through a rear door and gathered behind the speaker on the dais. I wondered – what's up? Meanwhile the bank of candles flickered en masse and the faces on the main icons looked down upon us – St Nicholas and John the Baptist. So they were the all-male choir, very professional and well-versed and a joy to listen to. It was really great. They must regularly practise their skills to create such excellence in performance. A really theatrical experience!

My partner nudged me, we were standing close to the exit and able to slide away to sit and enjoy the peace of the graveyard. I'm now a little bewildered. My Russian friend thinks some of the language used wasn't Russian, more to research!



Problem soon solved. I revisited the church and their leader explained the congregation is composed of Romanians, Moldavians and Russians. He also allowed me to photograph the icons of St Nicholas and John the Baptist. Thanks.

PETE RELPH

## Local intelligence: Extraordinary case of *felo de se*\*

PAUL BARTON has been researching his Loughton family history for some years (see *Newsletter* 179) and he now submits a further story of the seamier side of Loughton history:

On 14th inst an inquest was held before C C Lewis, Esq, Coroner, on the body of Eliza Bacon, who destroyed herself under the following singular circumstances:

Thomas Willingale, of Loughton, deposed. On Friday night, a girl told me [the] deceased had drowned herself in the new pond. I went to the pond and assisted in getting her out with a hook; she was quite cold. Did not observe any

marks about her. Have known her from her infancy but never heard that her intellects were impaired.

Matilda Thompson, of Loughton stated. On Friday afternoon, as I was returning from school, I saw a girl who I believe to have been [the] deceased going towards the new pond. James Grout, who had been fetching water, called out to me that someone was in the pond, and he thought it was Eliza Bacon. He was there about 30 or 40 yards from the pond. The girl had told him that day, he said, she would drown herself. I looked towards the pond, where a number of persons were then collected.

James Grout deposed. I have known [the] deceased some time. On Thursday afternoon about half-past five, I was returning home from the pond with my pails, when she called me at a distance of a hundred yards, and asked me if anyone else was coming down. I said I did not see anybody, on which she turned back into the forest opposite the sluice. I went on a good bit and then stopped to rest, when, on looking round I saw her walking on the rushes below the causeway. On seeing me she stopped. I then went on and saw no more of her. When I got home I went to William Godfrey and told him I had seen her down in the rushes, and we both went to the pond. Finding her apron by the side we gave an alarm, when several persons came to the spot, and she was taken out in about a quarter of an hour. About half an hour before this I had seen her go by my mother's house. She said she had not had any victuals all day, and a potato and a half only the night before; her mother, she said, had been using her very ill and had turned her out of doors and she would go and drown herself.

At the same time she wished me and her little brother, who was with me, goodbye. I told her not to speak so foolishly and she said 'I will'. She appeared greatly distressed and I could see she had been crying. She was a very passionate girl, but never talked as if she were deranged. Godfrey had been courting [the] deceased but had given up her acquaintance a few nights before. Missing her all at once made me call to Matilda Thornton that I thought she had drowned herself.

Sarah, wife of Henry Bacon, of Loughton, stated – deceased was my daughter; she was sixteen years old; she left home on Sunday morning, about seven, through my punishing her. I struck her three times across her back or neck with a stick. On Thursday night she dressed up in boy's clothes, and went round the village and I was punishing her for it. She had some potatoes for supper. I did not see her again on Friday till she was taken out of the pond; she never hinted to me, nor did I ever hear her say, that she would drown herself; she had never been out of her mind.

Samuel Free, of Loughton. I saw deceased on Friday evening, about a quarter before six, below the new pond; she called to me as I was dipping my load of water, and said, 'It is all very fine'. She was standing against the Scrubs, and I went to her. Then she told me she should make a hand of herself, for her mother had turned her out of doors. I did not believe her, and went home. I did not take any great notice of her, but she did not appear as if she had been crying.

Sarah Wilson, of Loughton. I was with deceased on Friday last, from about twelve till half past five, when I left her to go home with the wood I had picked up. About two, we laid down and went to sleep. After I had been with her some time, she said her mother had turned her out of doors, and she should have no home there. If she could get her things out, she could go to London; there was a fish pond, she said, against the Eagle, where we could drown ourselves, and nobody would be none the wiser. She had asked me to drown myself with her, and I agreed to do it. We were talking about it an hour before I went home. She

asked me to go to her again, and if I was not back in a quarter of an hour I should find her in the pond. She would lay her apron on the pond, where she would jump in.

She did not appear at all out of her mind, and did not cry or appear distressed. I agreed to take a piece of paper and pencil, or a pen and ink to her, to write down about her mother turning her out of doors. She would give her love, she said, to Godfrey, and wished him above all to see her when she was dead.



The Eagle Pond at Snarebrook by James Paul Andre, 1839 (Epping Forest District Museum)

Philip Harding, of Loughton, Surgeon, stated that he had examined the body and head of the deceased externally. He found a mark on the forehead, occasioned when she plunged into the water. There was no other mark about her of any consequence.

The jury, without hesitation, returned a verdict of *Felo-de-se*, and the Coroner immediately issued his warrant for the interment of the body, between the hours of 9 and 12 at night, without the rites of Christian burial, pursuant to the statute.

*The Essex Herald*, Tuesday, 22 May 1838

\* *Felo de se*, Latin for 'felon of himself', is an archaic legal term that denotes an illegal act of suicide (Wikipedia).

## Employees' summer treat to Loughton

Frank Muir (the well-known scriptwriter and performer, 1920–1998) grew up from about the age of 12 in Leyton. His father, and later he, worked for the Caribonum company, owned by Charles Frederick Clark:

... once a year, we were all invited to CF's house in the country [Ripley Grange], where he held a kind of open day. We were greeted in the Great Hall by church music coming from a huge pipe organ played by CF himself, bent over the keys in a scene later to become familiar in Hammer Horror films starring Vincent Price ...

From *A Kentish Lad*, the autobiography of Frank Muir, (1997), p 59 (which also contains a good deal of information about life at Leyton County High School for boys, etc). For more on Frank Muir see 'Take it from Him' in *Newsletter* 198.

CHRIS POND

## Transport and the Francies family

The photo below shows my great grandfather Robert Edward Francies (1816–1892). He lived in a small cottage at North End, Buckhurst Hill, with his wife and four children. He is listed in the parish records as horse-keeper, labourer, ostler and horse-breaker (or broker, the writing is unclear).



Henry Robert Salisbury Francies (1858–1915), my grandfather.

For a while father and son seem to have worked in the livery stables of William Ketts in the High Road, Buckhurst Hill. In *Kelly's Directory* of 1890 Robert Francis [sic] is described as a livery stable keeper. The next photo of 1875 shows Robert Edward and his son



In winter they worked on the cab rank by Loughton station, renting their cab from Sadler's. The cabs were pulled by single horses and were open in summer and closed in winter – they smelled of chaff. Horse cabs remained at Loughton station until about 1929.

In about 1901 my grandfather went to work for Askew's and Son of Forest Road, Loughton. Askew's were advertised as cartage contractors and horse brake proprietors for over 50 years. They owned large yards and stables in Smarts Lane and Forest Road.

By now my grandfather had married and was living in Smarts Lane. He became Askew's foreman and was known to all as 'Bob'. My aunt Kitty told me that her father Bob was the only local driver who could manage four horses. He organised trips by brake to race meetings and various fairs within 50 miles of Loughton. There were outings such as the 'Long Drive' 25 miles to Rye House, Windsor Castle and others. On festive occasions the brakes were decorated with paper chains and ribbons. They worked all summer. The regular run from Whipps Cross to High Beech cost 1s (5p) and on Thursdays Bob did a circular 25-mile drive for local shopkeepers.

The brakes had names, such as *Morning Star*, *The Rover* and *The Skylark* and some were elaborately painted. In 1910 at the age of six my father Henry Francies was paid one penny to sweep out the brakes at the end of each day with a little handbrush. This was done in the yard, across the road from his childhood home in Smarts Lane.

At one time my grandfather was the captain of the Buckhurst Hill Fire Brigade which served Loughton too. (This must have been when he still lived at North End.) The Fire Station was at the top of Stag Lane. One night there was a fire in a girls' school in the

Uplands and he galloped his horses at such a speed down Buckhurst Hill that the wheels of the fire engine collapsed.

The following story may or may not relate to my grandfather . . . on one occasion the engine got half way down Buckhurst Hill on its way to a Loughton fire when the captain realised that he'd left his tobacco pouch behind so he turned the engine round and went back up the hill. By the time the engine and men reached Loughton the fire was already out.



When driving the brakes Bob wore a smart morning suit and cravat, a flower in his buttonhole and an elegant grey-rimmed bowler and he often smoked cigars (given to him by customers).

Bob died in 1915 of cancer of the tongue, leaving a widow and three children, Will, Henry and Kitty. Askew's made my grandmother an allowance of three shillings' worth of groceries per week but there was of course no pension, and she had to apply for Parish Relief at 45 Church Hill. This was administered by the Poor Law Officer Mr Samuel Wilkes.

**Sources:** *My Loughton* (3), William Francies, 1953.

Recorded recollections by Henry Francies, 1975.

JOAN FRANCIES

## Christmas at Devon House, 1913

I think in every year the most important family event was the Christmas party at Devon House. This was a gaunt, inconvenient large house in Buckhurst Hill, only about a mile away from us, where the Howard grandparents lived. Grandfather David and Grandmother Dora were a solid, kind, comfortably established couple, to us children incredibly old and somewhat awe-inspiring. As both our parents were the youngest by many years in their families, all grown up relatives seemed ancient to us. Grannie was a lovely person, very kind and gentle, calling me 'little puss', while Grandfather was more remote, but I do remember that he took a fancy to me when I was little and sat me on his knee, pressed up against the large watch and chain stretching across his waistcoat.

There were seven Howard children and they were a very devout C of E family, including a country parson, a missionary couple out in Zanzibar, an Anglican nun and finally Auntie Meg, the unmarried daughter at home who was very active doing good works in the parish. In these large families there was nearly always such a daughter who was expected to look after her mother as she became old and infirm. However, there may have been a more sinister reason



why Auntie Meg never married. It was said that a perfectly suitable curate sought her hand in marriage but was turned down by the parents. Not good enough prospects?

So Devon House was where the annual family Christmas party was held and where all the descendants of David and Dora foregathered unless they were far away doing missionary work. Of my generation, for example, there was Hugh, the eldest grandchild and an only child. Uncle Hugh was a splendid rugby player shaped rather like a rugger ball, small and nippy, who captained England for several years. Then the Crossman family, six of them including Dick, later to become a prominent MP, and seven of us. When I recall that group of grandparents, uncles and aunts, they seem immensely tall and solid, yes solid, with not much humour. They were extremely kind and gentle but in no way intimate and you couldn't imagine having a heart to heart talk with them or playing the fool together. Yet I think I do them an injustice and I'm sure amongst themselves they play-acted, hunted, played charades and were even light-hearted together.



David and Dora celebrated their Golden Wedding in 1913. They are in the centre of the picture. Dora is holding the arm of the young Dick Crossman, later to become MP and diarist. The author of the article, Jean, is in the middle row with the hair ribbon, between her mother Janet Elizabeth (Fox) and her grandfather. Behind Dora is her son-in-law, Sir Stafford Crossman.

To describe the scene I think I will choose the year of the grandparents' Golden Wedding which was 1913, still in prosperous, rigid 'Edwardian' times, and still undisturbed by the approaching world war and an overwhelming social revolution. We children would get terribly excited while changing into our party clothes. This was quite an undertaking as clothes were then awkward, uncomfortable and far too numerous. Under our highly starched broderie anglaise dresses, with a wide ribbon and sash, Deborah's mauve, Mary's yellow and mine pink, we had to wear a petticoat, liberty bodice, knickers with linings and under it all, combinations. The combination sleeves were rolled up and sewn in place so as not to show under the dress. White socks and dancing shoes completed the outfit. I dare say the end result was very pretty but everything was done to prevent us thinking so. I can't remember the parents, Lishy or any other adult saying, 'How pretty you look, Jean'. The worst thing was to be vain.

At last we were all ready on that particular Christmas Eve and set off for Buckhurst Hill. There was of course no public transport. Our local smutty train was too far away, so the lucky ones, including

Mother, pregnant with Tom, and Lishy with the baby, went in the grandparents' Victoria, with Charlie the coachman in his liveries up top. We used to get quite a lot of rides in that carriage, feeling very grand, but on this occasion we were probably confined to the pony trap, although anyone who could walk might have done so. Charlie, incidentally, was a great favourite of ours, and he looked so splendid, sitting up on the box with his top hat and cockade and great beaver cape. Sometimes he would allow us to sit up beside him and take the reins. In at the front door we went to join the noisy gathering, through the dark hall with slippery polished floor, smelling strongly of furniture polish, and on into the drawing room.

There were the grown-ups chattering away with loud voices unlike us, being 'seen and not heard', already on our best behaviour. In the corner of the room sat Granny in black with a little lace cap (perhaps earlier on it was grey or even white, but in any case it was always old ladies' clothes). But as a child I did wonder why she was always sitting and why in black, for she didn't seem all that old. She would present us each with an envelope containing our age in shillings, which seemed like real wealth, as our pocket money was only one penny a week, out of which we had also to give birthday and Christmas presents and contribute to charity. We each had a Barnardo box which had to be filled somehow, to avoid acute embarrassment at the annual box opening party.

Having been scrutinised by everyone, told how we had grown and made to kiss all the aunts and uncles, who with their prickly moustaches and beards made it quite an ordeal, we were set free and allowed to enter the dazzling dining room. The poor adults were given a dainty tea in the drawing room, not even sitting down, but we grandchildren were given a proper tea and sat round gazing at the magnificent spread while determining to stuff ourselves as full as possible, finishing up with a sugar mouse and a tangerine each. Auntie Meg now gathered together the older grandsons and led them to the library where they were given the privileged task of lighting up the Christmas tree. It was real candles in those days, so beautiful and so dangerous. So now the climax of the day was approaching when everyone including the nannies upstairs in the nursery with the latest babies and all the servants were summoned to the library. This room was normally extremely dark and quite frightening but not today. There stood the huge Christmas tree covered with lighted candles and ornaments, surrounded by exciting-looking parcels.

The servants filed in, led by Charlie and his wife. The whole range down to the scullery maid stood respectfully in a line. We grandchildren were allowed to distribute the presents which we considered frightfully boring, for instance a roll of cloth out of which to make a winter costume. The whole scene was outrageously feudal and class-ridden but that was the way it was and certainly these servants were treated with great kindness and care. So at last to our own presents. I'm afraid we categorised our uncles and aunts according to the kind of presents they chose for us and always bottom of the list were Uncle Rob

and Aunt Kathleen with their missionary offerings, whereas you could always rely on Aunt Meg for a decent pencil box with a roll top or a paint box for instance. In those far off days, presents were far more valued than nowadays. One received few of them but they were made to last and were treasured. I would always hoard my little pile and hold off the edible ones so that I could gloat over them. And then the party was over. So, with much embracing and pecking all round we begun to make our departures, tired and probably rather cross, but carefully hugging our precious bundle of presents. There was lots still to come, Father Christmas and my anxiety that I shall not be able to fall asleep before he comes because he doesn't like to be seen filling our stockings. And then comes Christmas morning when the whole family gathers round the parents' great brass bedstead to greet each other and exchange presents.

JEAN MIDDLETON KUHN (*née* HOWARD)

The above was kindly submitted by Jean's son, Martin Kuhn. Jean was one of the daughters of Bernard Farmborough Howard (1880–1960) of the Pollards, Loughton. He also adds – 'only one small thing. The uncle Hugh mentioned is in fact a cousin, as her own description implies, and he was not, I'm sure, the rugby player. This was her mother's brother Francis Fox who won his English cap as a half-back playing against Wales in 1890.'

CHRIS POND adds the following about Pollards:



Above is the LDHS's picture, 'Workmen on alterations at Pollards'. It is marked 1898 but we are not 100 per cent sure that is the date. Also below is 'Pollards ready for demolition', not dated but around 1961; this was part of a collection acquired from Robert Edwards, engineer to the Chigwell Urban District Council.



The alterations, if they were 1898, would probably have been done under Edmond Egan, the architect, who died that year. H H Francis might be another candidate, or even James Cubitt. They were to update a house which by then was old-fashioned. I'm pretty

sure the workmen are finishing off the new Pollards, not really adapting the old one, though of course they may have reused the footings and cellars. The date 1898 or 99 is probably right. The porch looks very typical Egan. If he had died, the job would probably have been finished off by Horace White, his junior partner. I believe Pollards was a flat fronted stuccoed house when first built, with a large semi-circular ballroom facing towards the Forest, which would have been before 1875; it was entered from Warren Hill near the GPO post box, on the site that later became Fairmeadside, not from Albion Hill.

I have long suspected, but cannot prove, that the nucleus of Greengates was originally the stable and service block of the 1860s–70s house, adapted and added to, to form a dwelling-house (hence the blocked off windows fronting Albion Hill).

## Staples Road School in the 1940s



Here is a photo of a year of Staples Road School taken in the late 1940s. The photo was supplied by Valerie Eagles who reckons she is the one in the 3rd row up on the extreme right. I have been unable to identify myself although I know I should be on the photo. I wonder if it would be possible to distribute this to a wider audience so that some of the children can be identified and the year can be determined.

BARBARA WILCOX

Why were the children taken against the backdrop of the Ashley Grove houses?  
CHRIS POND

## William Cole, FLS (1844–1922) (Secretary of the Essex Field Club) and Alfred Russel Wallace

In 2009 I wrote a monograph about Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913), the naturalist who lived in the shadow of Charles Darwin, and who Sir David Attenborough considers suffered from the lack of credit for his own researches on evolution which rivalled Darwin's.

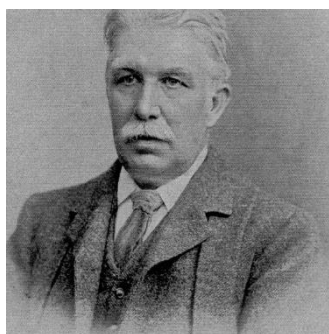
Wallace had a number of links with Essex including an unsuccessful attempt to be appointed Superintendent of Epping Forest in 1878, and who in the same year published a paper with some far-reaching ideas on how Epping Forest should be managed.

Earlier this year I was contacted by George Beccaloni, the Director of the Alfred Russel Wallace

Correspondence Project. The objective of the project is to catalogue all the known letters to and from Wallace and his colleagues (estimated to be about 5,000). Preparation of the catalogue has made significant progress and can be found on-line.

Beccaloni wished to know what information I had on Wallace's local links, including his contact with the Essex Field Club and its secretary William Cole (1844–1922).

The Essex Field Club owed its inception to a chance meeting in Epping Forest, in the summer of 1869, of Raphael Meldola and W J Argent with William Cole, when each of them were collecting lepidoptera.



William Cole, FLS

In the autumn of 1879, William Cole and his brothers, Ben and Harry, arranged a display of their collection of butterflies and moths at a meeting held in a church at Buckhurst Hill. Henry Vigne, Master of the Woodford Harriers, was one of the visitors to the exhibition, who was very impressed, and suggested to William Cole that there should to be a Naturalists' Society for Essex.

Cole promptly wrote to Meldola, Argent and others to enlist their support with the result that the Society was formed with its inaugural meeting held in Buckhurst Hill on 10 January 1880. Professor Meldola was elected the first President, William Cole the honorary secretary, and Argent the librarian; and within two months the Club boasted more than 140 members. Four honorary members were also elected at the meeting: Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, Charles Brown and William Whitaker.

In 1877, William Cole, his mother, brothers and sisters had moved from Stoke Newington to Laurel Cottage, in Westbury Lane, Buckhurst Hill. (William's father had died in 1865). The 1881 Census lists William, his mother Frances, his brothers Benjamin and Henry, and sisters Frances and Jane Eliza, as living in the cottage which was near the bottom of Westbury Lane, on the right hand side, and the census shows it next to Dorset Villa, which still exists. (See page 16).

The Essex Field Club held a series of lectures in the winter months. On 4 January 1881 Alfred Russel Wallace gave a lecture on 'The Natural History of Islands'. The lecture took place at Woodford Hall, and a report of the lecture appeared in the Club's *Journal of Proceedings*.

In October 1886, Alfred Russel Wallace delivered a lecture to the 69th Ordinary Meeting of the Club. The subject was: 'The Darwinian Theory: What it is, and how it is Demonstrated'. The Meeting was held at the Loughton Public Hall (Lopping Hall), and was reported in the Club's *Journal of Proceedings*.

Although Alfred Russel Wallace appears to have attended only a few of the Club's Field Meetings, he showed a continuing interest in its activities, and the

'Correspondence Project' has located a considerable number of letters between Wallace and Professor Raphael Meldola, the first President of the Essex Field Club.

By 1884, William Cole had moved to 7 Knighton Villas, High Road, Woodford Wells (see page 16). His brother, Henry had also taken a lease on No 8 Knighton Villas. The Census of 1891 shows the residents jointly for Nos 7 and 8 Knighton Villas: William, his sisters Frances and Jane Eliza, and brothers, Benjamin and Henry. It should be noted that Knighton Villas were just over the border in the parish of Woodford Wells, and the census and street directories show this, but with a note that they received their letters through the Buckhurst Hill Sorting Office (see map on page 16).

The 1890 *Kelly's Directory for Essex*, in addition to listing the private residents, also shows under the commercial listings:

Epping Forest School of the Science and Art Department, South Kensington, 8 Knighton Villas.

Essex Field Club, Headquarters, (William Cole sec), 8 Knighton Villas.

The 1898 *Kelly's Directory for Essex* repeats the above entries in the commercial section with the addition, after South Kensington: '(Woodford and Buckhurst Hill District)', and states that 'Henry Cole was 'Headmaster'.

It is possible that 'Springfield' was situated almost opposite Knighton Villas but with the entrance from the Epping New Road. The 1880 OS map shows two substantial houses whose gardens ran down to the Epping New Road.

In December 1894 the Essex Field Club entered into an agreement with the City of London Corporation to establish a museum at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, and the 'little' museum was opened in November 1895, and William Cole acted as curator.

The Club had for some years cherished the idea of a County Museum and there were several false starts. However, in 1897 West Ham Corporation indicated their support for a museum in rooms forming part of the new Technical Institute in the Romford Road at Stratford, but the requisite space was hard to spare. The philanthropist, Mr Passmore Edwards was approached and he agreed to fund over half the cost of a new building, and the museum, 'The Essex Museum for Natural History', was formally opened to the public in October 1900. William Cole was appointed Curator, and the headquarters of the Club was transferred to the Museum.

The 1911 Census shows that William and Jane Eliza had retired from the Epping Forest School of the Science and Art, and were now living with their sister Frances at 29 The Broadway, Woodford Green. William's occupation is described as Curator of the Museums at West Ham and the Essex Field Club (at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge).

In 1916 William Cole gave up all his duties with the Essex Field Club due to ill-health, and moved to St Osyth. However, he formally retained the title of Hon

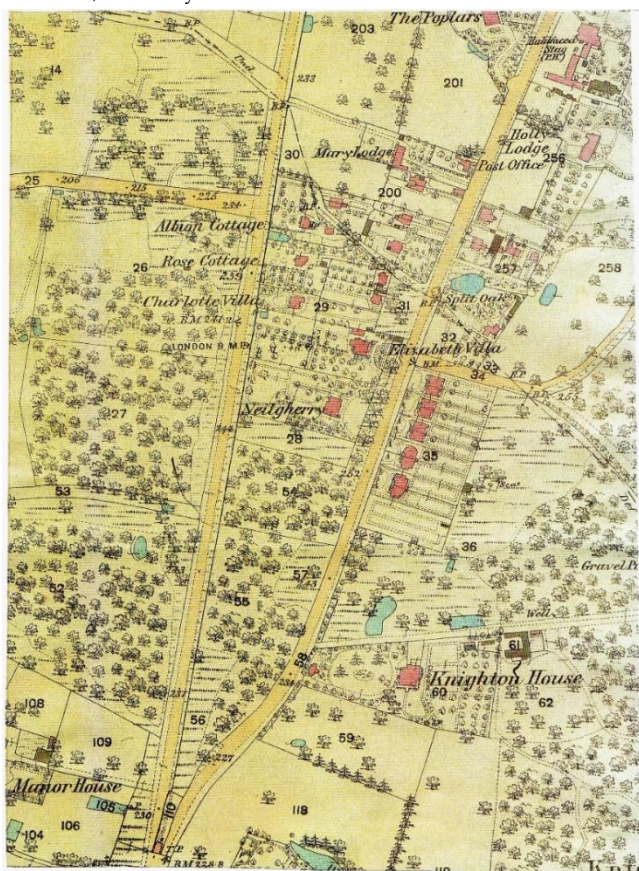


Secretary until his death in June 1922. (Percy Thompson effectively became Hon Secretary in 1916.)

Today the Essex Field Club is still a thriving society, with its headquarters at The Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea, Basildon, Essex.



Dorset Villa, Westbury Lane



Extract from 1880 OS map showing High Road, Buckhurst Hill – Knighton Villas are ten semi-detached houses, shown in red in centre of map.

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No 7 Knighton Villas, the house occupied by William Cole from c1884–1901

RICHARD MORRIS

For more on Knighton Villas see the *Woodford Times*, newsletter of Woodford Historical Society, spring 2018, and for more about 7 Knighton Villas in particular, see the autumn edition 2018. THE EDITOR

## Editor's Note

On the back page of *Newsletter 216* is a photograph of the Low's Estate sign in Roding Road. This has now been painted over – another small loss of local history.

Painting from the Dog's Barber Shop article, page 8.



## LOUGHTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY (Registered Charity 287274)

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