LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 171

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Ted Martin

As the Chairman mentioned at the September meeting, Ted Martin and his wife have moved from Theydon Bois to Bedfordshire. We wish them all the very best for the future.

Ted has made an invaluable contribution to the Society over many years and the benefits to its literary output from his professionalism and vast experience in publishing are widely recognised and greatly appreciated.

Happily, Ted's move is not a farewell. He will still be coming to the monthly meetings when possible and will also continue to prepare future Loughton & District Historical Society books for publication. That, and his assistance with future editions of the *Newsletter*, continue an involvement that began in 1999.

We hope to confirm shortly that Ted will accept an appropriate acknowledgment of his wonderful services.

Victoria County History of Essex – progress and prospect

KENNETH NEALE

The Victoria History of the Counties of England was launched in 1899 and, with royal consent, named after the Queen who had just celebrated her Diamond Jubilee. Local history at county level may be seen as having its origin in the pioneering work of John Leland, who had been commissioned to carry out his studies by Victoria's prestigious ancestor Henry VIII. The Victoria History is the modern idiom of almost four centuries of work in this field. But never, before the inception of the VCH, had county history been researched in such depth or inspired to such consistently high standards of scholarship. It was, and is, a symbol of the aspirational confidence of Victorian Britain. Since the first volume, on Hampshire, several hundred have been completed and published.

The first of the Essex volumes was published in 1903. It covered the natural history and pre-history of the county, Anglo-Saxon and Domesday Essex. A second volume appeared in 1907 describing the economic, political and ecclesiastical history of the county. Unfortunately, financial problems and the disruption caused by the two world wars proved almost insuperable. Thus, it was not until 1956, with Volume IV (Ongar Hundred) that publication was resumed. Volume III (Roman Essex) was issued in 1963 and since then, under a succession of distinguished county editors, sequential volumes to Volume X (Lexden Hundred, part), including two bibliographies supplementary to the county bibliography of 1959, have appeared at reasonable intervals.

Now, appropriately based at the University of Essex and the Essex Record Office which along with the VCH represent the essential academic base for work in Essex history, the VCH is organised to continue at the level of excellence that has characterised its work from the beginning.

Under the direction of the present county editor. Dr Christopher Thornton, supported by assistant editor, Dr Herbert Eiden, and by Shirley Durgan, a recently retired but very experienced VCH author, work is in progress on Volume XI which is programmed to complete in 2008. The production timetable has inevitably lengthened because Drs Thornton and Eiden are now only employed part-time. This volume will cover the development of the seaside resorts of the north-east Essex coast and neighbouring parishes in the 19th and 20th centuries. Volume XII (the earlier history of the seaside resorts) could follow in 2012 or 2013: Volume XIII (probably Harwich) is at the planning stage. All this will still leave large and important areas of the county to be researched and published in a more distant future. However, what is being done, with limited resources, is dependent on assured sources of adequate finance and the retention of specialised academic resources.

It is not necessary to emphasise the current pressures on public funding, on which a large part of the VCH budget depends, that have led to the withdrawal of considerable grant funds on which the VCH has depended for survival. The VCH faces, and will do so for some time to come, serious financial problems and needs the continued support of those generous institutions and individuals who are making a vital contribution largely through the very successful Appeal Fund.

VCH, together with the University and the ERO has played a major part in raising the quality and diversity of Essex historiography and the valuable participation of local societies in this field, to what is probably the

highest level it has ever been. That, and the need to support the original objectives of this ambitious scholastic enterprise, demand that every effort is made to provide the financial security on which the future of VCH in Essex depends.

It was a request from Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress that this article should be published. We are happy to do this and hope that the VCH receives even more support for its worthy endeavours.

Hancock's early road locomotive in Loughton

CHRIS POND

The following is an extract from a narrative of 12 years' experiments by Walter Hancock, published in 1838. It shows that steam coming to Loughton, at any rate by road, pre-dates the town's first station by around 20 years :

'. . . After twelve years of incessant labour in steam-locomotion, . . .

Your obedient servant,

W Hancock
Stratford, Sept 22, 1836'

'Mr. Hancock', remarks the Editor of the narrative, upon this letter,

'is now the only engineer with a steam-carriage on any road. Sir Charles Dance, Colonel Maceroni, Dr Church, Messrs Ogle, Summers, Squire, Russell, Redmund, Heaton, Maudsley, Frazer, and a host of others – where are they? Echo answers – "Where!" Strange to say, however, we see steam-carriage companies advertised, whose engineers have either never yet built a carriage, or whose carriages when built have never stirred out of the factory yard._

'During the last October the "Automaton" has taken several trips to Epping, by way of Hackney, Clapton, Woodford, Loughton, and the old road of Staple Hill.[1] The following account of the first of these trips, on the 21st of October, is from the *Morning Herald* of the 25th :

"STEAM-CARRIAGES ON COMMON ROADS

With the view of further testing the practicability ot steam conveyance on common roads, Mr Walter Hancock, accompanied by a party of gentlemen interested in mechanical inventions, started on Friday morning last in his steam-carriage the 'Automaton', from his station in the City-road, to Epping. This line of road was selected by Mr Hancock on account of its being, for the distance, the most hilly and uneven out of the metropolis, as well as satisfying his friends that, even with this disadvantage, from the late improvements which he has introduced, that the carriage would perform, at least, ten miles an hour, and the result proved that he more than under-rated its power. On arriving at Woodford, Mr Hancock stopped the carriage in front of the house of Mr Rounding, the sign of the Horse and Groom,[2] who kindly procured a fresh supply of water. After remaining nearly a quarter of an hour, Mr Hancock again started at a rapid pace, and having ascended Buckhurst-hill [*sic*] at the rate of, at least, seven and a half miles an hour, entered Epping, amidst the loud cheers of some thousands who were collected in the town, it being market day,[3] and created much astonishment among many of the country folk, who had never seen such a vehicle before, and who could not imagine how it was moved without horses. The party having remained for some time in Epping, returned to town, and the whole journey, notwithstanding the disadvantages before mentioned, was performed on the average of eleven and a half miles an hour. Among the party were two or three members of the Society of Friends, who, as well as Quakers, took a very warm interest in the success and general application of this humane mode of conveyance, and they, as well as other gentlemen, expressed themselves highly pleased with this trip. The crowds along the road and different villages to see the carriage were immense." '

Notes

1. 'The old road of Staple Hill' – I suggest this is an error for 'Goldings Hill'.
2. The Horse and Groom – The Horse and Well public-house.
3. Market day – Friday, at that time.

Memories of Chigwell Fire Brigade

VERNON NICHOLLS

In the 1920s and 1930s the fire engine was stationed in a corrugated iron hut next door but one to Kempton's butcher's shop in Chigwell High Road.* In between the engine shed and Kempton's was a shoe repairer's hut, the premises of Mr Burringham.

The fire engine was a Ford with solid rubber tyres. Mr Kempton, the butcher, was the captain; my father, C H Nicholls, was station officer and the crew were all local men. Some of the names may be familiar to you: Alf Humphreys, Ernie Beacon, Eric Kempton (son of the butcher), Ernie Gregory, Dick Manderson (the local newsagent), Fred Speller and Jack Tant.

If a fire broke out during the day a klaxon sounded and they had to get to the station in any way possible! Every crew member had an alarm bell fitted in their home so that, in the event of a fire at night, or during the day, if they were at home, they were aware of what to do.

Just prior to the outbreak of war in 1939 the Ford fire engine was written off and Loughton's secondhand Dennis was transferred to Chigwell.

Of course, when war broke out they were transferred into the National Fire Service (NFS) and when the London docks were fire-bombed we did not see our father for four days as nearly all local fire brigades were attending.

The Chigwell Brigade did excellent work during the air raids as far as local incidents were concerned, especially when gas mains were ruptured by bombs – one I particularly recall was in Grange Crescent.

After surviving all this mayhem, my father suffered an accident at Woodford Bridge when a shutter blew off a café and fractured his skull and several fingers, which enforced his being invalided out of the brigade.

*Now occupied by 213–217, High Road, Chigwell. We are grateful to John Redfern of Theydon Bois for passing this article on to us.

Duties of landowners at St Mary's, Chigwell

JOHN REDFERN

Some will have thought that the position of lord of the manor was a passport to certain 'rights' and privileges but it also brought with it costly responsibilities.

Before the days of parochial church councils, with their duty of looking after the fabric of the parish church and churchyard, the liability for maintaining the boundary walls and fences around church property seems to have fallen on the local landed gentry. As a result of recent refurbishment work in St Mary's Church, Chigwell, a long-hidden piece of social history has come into public view.

In 1681 the responsibility for maintaining the boundary wall around the churchyard was divided up into sections among the residents of the larger properties in the parish and in 1779 the detail was painted on a large board in the church. At the time of the enlargement of the church in 1887 by the demolition of the old north aisle and its replacement by the construction of the present nave, various monuments and other wall mountings were removed to what is now the south aisle and the large painted board was fixed to the belfry wall, hidden behind the spiral staircase to the bell tower.

This board was removed in 2004 to make way for a new electric control board and has now, after about 120 years of obscurity, been re-erected in an open position between two of the bell tower king posts so that it can be easily read – and fascinating it is, especially some of the spelling!

Memories

JEAN ANDREWS

In 1956 I was living in digs in Epping with a Mr and Mrs Fowell of Lower Bury Road. He worked in the wool trade in London and she ran Dot's Wool Shop in Epping High Street now called the Euro Café. I went to work by the old steam train to Ongar until it was electrified, through North Weald and Blake Hall Stations. Uniformed RAF men were still stationed at the airfield. Out would come our snacks, knitting and embroidery, as we sped through the countryside, cowslips flowering on the embankment in springtime.

We were picked up by coach and driven up the Fyfield Road to May & Baker's Horticultural Research Station, first right after the Red Cow pub. They did a wonderful home-cooked lunch the day we went to A level evening classes at the South West Essex Tech, travelling in my girlfriend's Morris 8.

My job as a laboratory assistant in the herbicide department was to screen new compounds from the factory at Dagenham, by spraying solutions of them on to plants, to find new weedkillers. It had been a great breakthrough by discovering a chemical that killed broadleaved weeds in amongst cereal crops. All the compounds, even photographic chemicals were tested on a range of nuisance plants, insects and fungi spores.

We worked in laboratories, glasshouses and out in the field. Apple picking was best of all, in Kent. Some spraying was done on a small scale indoors, in a spray cabinet using a trolley on a railway track with an extractor fan but there was a permanent smell of chemicals in the lab. We ate our lunch here, before a canteen was built! We dealt with some evil smelling compounds, too. Safety glasses were issued later but were never popular. We swabbed the inoculation cabinet down with phenol which is banned from use now, but we were a happy band of young workers, more like a marriage bureau over the years.

In 1957 my family moved up from Westcliff-on-Sea to Epping, Buttercross Lane, down the side of Batchelor's Saddlery right next to the new council housing estate. That's how my father could afford to buy a house for £4,000. The beautiful view across the valley towards Epping Upland was being blocked out, so the owner had the selfsame house built for his wife, on Goldings Manor estate in Loughton. He worked for Jeyes Fluid. That shiny toilet paper was in all the holders!

The live animal market in the High Street was still evident, the squealing pigs were never to be forgotten. The Young Conservatives was the only thing to join whatever your political persuasion and the nearest coffee bar (The Calypso) with 'frothy coffee'and a juke box was at Woodford Wells.

During the war, and before, we lived in Abbotsford Gardens in Woodford, the nearest V1 rocket falling in Empress Avenue, just by the Cricketer's Pub. My future husband unbeknown to me (I was only four years old) was on the bus that stopped to help. All the passengers got off the bus and joined in pulling off the tiles and battens on the pile of rubble that had been a house. The woman rescued was below his feet, she was shouting 'I'm upstairs!' She happened to be the mother of George, the bass player in the Astoria Dance Band run by Mrs Mills. The following Saturday at the local dance held at the Roebuck Hotel, George asked him 'do you know what happened to her glasses?'

Our hall stained-glass window was blown in and boarded up for the duration of the war making the hall very dark and the curtains were in tatters from flying glass from the windows.

So, in the summer of 1945 our GP, Dr Barnardo, suggested we move away down to the coast for a sunnier, healthier clime! My father was headmaster at Davies Lane Junior School, Leytonstone (near Wanstead Flats), so he motor-biked in the summer on his Tiger Triumph 500 on the new A127, until he came off on a muddy patch. My brother was riding a Greaves 500 motor-bike to the Ford Motor Co at Dagenham, attending a four-year apprenticeship. He regrets selling it as it would be a collectors' piece by now. The designer also created the first invalid carriage called the 'Inva car' after the war.

The beaches were still out of bounds with barbed wire entanglements but we could still have some long walks by the seaside and along to the cockle sheds at Leigh-on-Sea. Our house at Westcliff had been occupied by troops, their hobnailed boots had left dents in the lino, and there was a rather ominous crack in the party-wall, my father got a bargain, it had been on the market for a long time.

My brother was sent to a Quaker boarding school under an assisted places scheme run by Southend Education Authority. It was co-ed and in Ackworth, near Pontefract, where he was fortunate to be involved with the rebuilding of a 1925 Silver Ghost Rolls-Royce. It had been used as an ambulance in the war. Two teachers and 10 pupils went on a school trip to Scotland but the brakes were not really adequate! So when it went on the Continent in the following year there were brakes on all four wheels but it unfortunately rolled over, but with no serious injury.

Years later the youth on that bus asked me to marry him, and it was only after many years of marriage, when you have time to reminisce, that we realised how close we had been to each other but so far.

The Venture – Part I

TED MARTIN

On 22 April 1941 the ladies of the Literary Circle of the Loughton Women's Institute launched *The Venture.* This was to be a quarterly magazine devoted to the activities of the Circle and obviously intended to help with morale at this difficult time.

Each issue was almost entirely handwritten and illustrated in colour by the various contributors. Later issues have occasional insertions that have been prepared on a typewriter. The handwriting varies from incredibly neat representations of type and script to ordinary round hand. Every contribution is readable and as one would expect at this period mostly correctly spelt and punctuated. The paper varies, lined exercise book at the start and inserts from other sources – the contributors to the first number were enjoined to contribute one penny to the magazine box, to be devoted to the general funds of the WI and also that the 'correct paper is obtainable from Mrs Brunsdon'.

There are in total 14 issues covering the period from 22 April 1941 to August 1946, a period of over five years, which shows that they were unable to keep to their stated intention of quarterly publication. Each issue has been bound in a paper hard cover which is hand-decorated, and wallpaper has been used for covers and endpapers. The whole is housed in a strong polished wooden box under the care of our Treasurer, Eve Lockington, who kindly showed me this archive.

In No 1 (April 1941, 50 pages), the contents range from Reports of the Tea Committee, concerned with supplies due to tea rationing and an open letter to Lord Woolton, about the mis-use of sugar meant for fruit preservation, to poems, a report on the performance of tableaux depicting historical and literary scenes, short stories and recollections of life on the Gold Coast.

No 2 (52 pages, July 1941) was much more literary in focus: somebody, probably the editor, had exercised more control and this issue was almost entirely devoted to poems, stories and plays. There was a parody of *Pride and Prejudice* later followed by a report of a reading of *Tobias and the Angel* by James Bridie (at 'Pemberley' (obviously the home of a Jane Austen devotee [82 Tycehurst Hill]), which raised £250 for the war effort.

In November 1941 No 3 (38 pages) was published announcing that the Circle would meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month in the small Lopping Hall at 2.30 pm. As before, there is a mixture of poems and stories and reports of play readings. One beautifully illustrated story concerns 'The Bisley Choir Boy', who was allegedly substituted for Princess Elizabeth and went on to become Good Queen Bess! A plea for 'Art for England's Sake' was followed by a piece on a wartime harvest, reporting that it had rained every day since mid-July. One day in August the author drove through the Essex countryside: 'everywhere was corn, oats, wheat and barley . . . never had we seen so much corn . . . Even in front of a great country mansion there stood sheaves of corn where formerly there was a vast green lawn.'

February 1942 saw the publication of No 4 (70 pages). Reports of afternoons with Elizabethan, Stuart, Romantic and Victorian poets are side by side with 'A Dickens Party', both beautifully illustrated. A debate on equality of educational opportunities for boys and girls had taken place and the motion that this should be so was, not surprisingly, carried. Poems and stories and 12 essays, the results of a competition with the title 'The Welcome Guest', were published.

Sir William Addison (then, of course, Mr Addison) is a contributor to No 5 (June 1942, 68 pages). He presents a 'Critic's Report' on the second essay competition which had as its subject: 'Town, Suburb or Country.' He says: 'It is good to find so many essayists well satisfied with Loughton, and with sound womanly instinct refusing to define it as town, suburb or country.' There is the usual mix of poems and stories and reports on a Dickens afternoon a report of three afternoons spent reading Shaw's *St Joan* and an afternoon at Rose Farm plus a section on books.

In No 6 (October 1942, 62 pages) there is a chronicle of a cycle ride through Essex and some poems and stories plus reports of the Circle's activities. Plays were the thing. *Mary Rose*, was performed in a Forest garden, and *Androcles and the Lion* at Pollards [Albion Hill, now demolished] in aid of Barnardo's; *Twelfth Night* was read in another garden. Then from the sublime to . . . limericks! The first line proffered was: 'If you want to know how to make jam' (obviously inspired by Gilbert and Sullivan) and 'looking round the spectator might have seen the eyes of the audience go vague and glassy as their lips murmured – jam! – cram, lamb, ham, pram, DAMN!' Sixteen entries were received. The winning limerick was as follows:

> If you want to know how to make jam,
> Or pickles to eke out your spam,
> Mesdames Gould, Self and Day
> Will show you the way
> To make these and mint jelly for lamb.

'Books' appears for the third time. *Essex* by Arthur Mee and *The Last Enemy* by Richard Hillary are recommended.

At the beginning of Issue 7 (January 1943, 90 pages) they are contemplating the departure of their President and feeling bereft. There is a brief review of 1942 and an acerbic comment on the use of the King's English: 'Surely it is time that the women of the Institutes educated their masters' – but this paragon forgot the question mark for her question! A delightfully illustrated article on 'Weather Portents' follows. The next article 'The Education of a Schoolma'am' relates the trials of a retired teacher and throws an interesting light on the changes wrought by the war:

'In July 1939 I gave up my school, took a small house with a nice little garden and, "done for" by a good working housekeeper, prepared for a life of retirement and leisure . . . Things did not work out quite according to plan. War came. The "Sireens" caused my maid to bolt from Loughton and one morning I found myself faced with the task of cooking my first dinner . . . I had seldom, if ever, been in a house alone before and that felt rather funny; however, I seized the leg of lamb and advanced towards the oven . . . My first perplexity was to find something to put this particular joint in . . . At last I spied an iron tin and settled it safely in that, smothered it in dripping, covered it with greaseproof paper and popped it in the oven. All this had taken some time so I bustled upstairs to attend to matters there. Very soon the house was filled with smoke and smell and I had to open all the windows . . . I saw my husband coming down the road and told him the oven was not behaving well so he rushed in to see. He turned off the gas opened the oven door and saw therein not a leg of lamb but a flaming torch . . . He grabbed it and ran into the garden incidentally upsetting the oven dish on to the pretty green matting which was ruined . . . cleaned up all the mess, made no reference to the aching void below his belt and only said, "Better luck next time. You can't be expected to know how to do things without having been shown." I was colossally ignorant of all practical things but my education has been going steadily forward under the kindly auspices of the Women's Institute and the peremptory orders of the WVS.'

The issue continued with poems, again nicely illustrated, and a report of a talk on 'Sculpture'. There was a 'Shakespeare' afternoon when the bard was somewhat rewritten: 'Friends! ARP workers, full-time and voluntary, lend me your ears.' After 'Julius Caesar', the 'Taming of the Shrew' and 'The Merchant of Venice' received the same treatment, Shylock demanding a pound of steak and rejecting sausages and rabbit! A poetry competition was held and again William Addison was the judge and also contributed his own poem 'Winter'. An essay competition on 'Trees', with the entries set out, completed the issue along with another book page.

No 8 (September 1943) was delayed but was almost twice as big as usual (136 pages). The Editor draws attention to the fact that on 16 May 1943 'several of our members had their homes wrecked or damaged by enemy action'. The past President wrote to the members from Westerham and invited them to visit. This invitation was taken up and a report appears of the visit. In February they visited Epping to perform before the Epping WI – all by bus. Articles on Lisbon, Churchyards, Flowers and the Farewell Presentation to the President followed. A debate on the motion whether all children should spend some part of their school life at boarding school followed. The motion was defeated.

A Kipling afternoon and a reading of *Outward Bound* by Sutton Vane (1888–1963), whose only major work this was, are reported and the Circle had instruction on public speaking and stage deportment. 'Pemberley' was the venue for a Wings for Victory Garden Party on 22 June which raised over £50. A play *The Pie and the Tart* was performed at 3.15 and *The Pen and The Sword*, a literary pageant, at 4.30. The original programme is bound-in to the volume and illustrated verses from the Pageant are reproduced. One took my eye:

> A woman's weapon is her tongue.
> She finds it out when very young.
> She keeps it bright and good as new,
> And always gives it lots to do . . .

William Addison again judged the poetry competition on 'Spring' and his report is set out as are the poems and the report and contributions to the essay competition on 'Night'.

To be continued…..

Ted adds the following footnote: 'One is struck by the skill, education and depth of knowledge of these ladies and the author rather ruefully wishes that he had had such a reservoir of talent to draw on when he was editor of this *Newsletter*.'

Loughton 1940

30 October 1940: 'At 8.25pm on Oct 30, 1940, during an air-raid, a small high-explosion [*sic*] bomb fell on the lawn in front of the 'Old House' [formerly the Rectory] in Rectory Lane and blew out all doors and windows and displaced slates on the roofs. At [the] same time, a very large crater in [a] field by the Cottages opposite "Hatfields" was made by a heavy HE bomb; and a so-called "Molotoff's bread basket" scattered incendiary bombs all about Englands Lane and Rectory Lane but these did no damage.'

15 November 1940: At 10.15pm on Nov 15, 1940, landmines (two of them) destroyed the Goldings Manor House, injured Lord Stanmore and Miss Gordon, destroyed 5 or 6 houses in Goldings Road and damaging scores of others, killing 4 people; also another mine at Nursery Road did much damage and a third (not yet exploded) on 'New Loughton' caused evacuation of residents.

This the worst raid on Loughton yet!

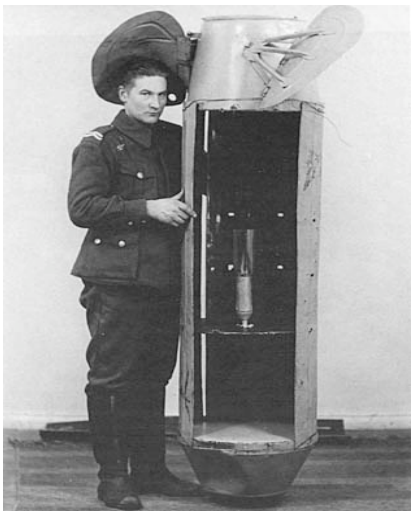
Source:
Percy Thompson's Notebooks, volume 4.

The Molotov Breadbasket

TERRY CARTER

I was intrigued in the previous article to see Percy Thompson's reference to a 'Molotoff's bread basket'. By coincidence a reference to part of a 'Molotov Breadbasket' occurs in an incident described in the L&DHS publication *Post-war Loughton 1945–1970*. An incendiary casing was retrieved by my cousin, then aged 12, after a German raid that took place later than the one referred to by Percy.

I thought it might be of interest to show the result of a brief research. It turns out that my original notion that the bomb was so-called because the Germans used it against Russia was mistaken. Molotov Breadbasket was an ironic label attached to the bomb because of its use by the Russians against the Finnish civilian population, a claim Molotov always refuted.



This is a Molotov Breadbasket. It has been dropped, as can be seen by the dent at the bottom. The bomb was basically a large cylinder with some 200 small 2.5 kg incendiary bomblets inside. The tailwings made the cylinder spin and the centrifugal force threw the bomblets out in a wide area. The soldier supporting it is a Finnish Lance-Corporal. When dropped, the winglets in the top folded out and made the 'basket' rotate and the centrifugal force scattered the incendiary 'loaves'. One sample 'loaf' is clearly visible inside.

It was the almost intact case of one of the 'loaves' that my late cousin Ronald Carter kept during and after the war, having retrieved it from Epping Forest.

It seems this weapon was not very effective when first used in Finland in the early days of the Second World War, since the small fires created by the bomblets were easy to put out by the civilians, and because of the snow covering the terrain. They were, however, much more effective in dense urban areas. As mentioned, Molotov's denials of Soviet bombings of the Finnish civilian population earned it the nickname 'Molotov's Breadbasket'.

Vyacheslav Molotov (1890–1986) was Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (the Russian Premier) from 1930–1941, and also Foreign Minister from 1939–1949.

Does anyone know?

[1940] '. . . for no obvious reason, as my mechanical ability has always been limited, I was made a transport officer, and sent to the newly formed 3rd Battalion [of the Scots Guards] stationed near Loughton in Essex. There we stayed throughout the London blitz, with bombs steadily falling around us without causing too much damage . . .'

William Whitelaw (later Deputy Prime Minister)
The Whitelaw Memoirs, 1989, pp 11–12

Does anyone know where the Scots Guards were stationed? Could they have been one of the units that did such damage to Rolls Park? Or were they the group at Tramway Farm? CCP

1930s/40s Loughton

In April this year Peter J Skilton who lived in Loughton from 1936 to 1948 wrote to Ted Martin as follows enclosing some verses which we hope our readers will enjoy. The second one really seems to be a 'freeze-frame' from a bygone time.

'Loughton has a great deal to recommend it and top of the list is Epping Forest. Some years ago I wrote a verse praising its 6,000 acres:

Green Canopied Classroom

We lived by a forest when I was a lad.
For me it was heaven but my Mum and Dad
Had fears that I'd slip and fall in a stream,
And come home all muddy, when they'd sent me out clean.
I knew that forest like I knew my face.
I knew every path, every ride, every place.
'The Warren', the 'Furze ground', and Strawberry Hill.
I learned about nature and how to stand still,
Observing the wild-life without being seen,
Fox, rabbit and bull-frog, yellow and green.
Grass snakes and newts and shy fallow deer.
I learned how to move without causing them fear.

Oak, birch, beech and hawthorn, holly of course.
I knew where to find bracken, heather and gorse.
It wasn't like learning. The names of those trees
Just seemed to come easy with dirt on my knees.
The fresh open air and clear forest pool,
Green canopied classroom, far better than school.
My memories of childhood most cherished and clear
Are of you Epping Forest, a place I hold dear.

Of the many shops I recall my mother using, Harrison's grocery was one I remember very well and penned a verse about. Alas that most friendly and evocative store is no longer part of Loughton, it is gone but not forgotten.

Harrison the Grocer, 1939

A whisp of blue smoke from Harrison's store.
The aroma of coffee wafts through the door.
Inside on the right are biscuits and teas,
On the left there is bacon, butter and cheese.
Cool marble, butter-pats, a stand for the hams.
At the back of the shop there are dry goods and jams.
White aproned assistant with black cotton cuff
Serves cocoa by Rowntree and custard – Pearce Duff.
Glass-topped tins of biscuits, a basket of eggs.
A chair for tired patrons to rest weary legs.
To a child it seemed, one could buy anything
To be wrapped in blue paper and tied up with string.
And Mother was talking of "impending war"
With Miss Jones and haughty Mrs Warrington-Blore.
I try to bend down as she pats my head.
Pretending that I have an "itchy" right leg.
My memories are numerous, a hundred or more.
"Good day to you madam from Harrison's store".'

Medieval Pottery in York Hill

TERRY CARTER

In August this year our friends, Robin and Sheila Ronan, moved, after over 25 years, from Walnut Cottage, 67 York Hill, Loughton. When they took up residence there, the previous owner had passed on this cutting from the local paper, presumably the *West Essex Gazette*. Although a date, 1970, had been written on it, the piece could have been earlier. No doubt some Society members may recall this article, and are aware of the find described in it. It came to light when alterations were being made to the frontage between numbers 67 and 69. Perhaps there is an L&DHS member who can provide more details in a follow-up.

"PIECE OF HISTORY IS UNEARTHED AT YORK HILL

'West Essex Archaeological Group members excavating in York Hill, Loughton, have made a major historical find.

After pieces of pottery were found in York Hill they excavated and located a 17th century kiln with a clay base, believed to be about 70 feet long with brick sides and a curved brick roof.

Among the more interesting finds on the site were a complete pot, now in the Passmore Edwards Museum, and a baker's halfpenny inscribed with the words "to lessen the slavery of Sunday baking". It was dated 1795.

Leading about eight diggers were Mr Frank Clark, Mr Terry Betts and Mr Fred Harvey. Mr Harvey said "This is a very rare find indeed. The kiln is thought to be dated about 1650."

The team started excavating at Whitsun although finds of pottery were first made in 1965. There is also a considerable amount of pottery "scatter" in the Goldings Hill area of Loughton. The York Hill dig was filled in on Saturday.

There are records of potters working in Loughton as far back as 1450.'

Members of the West Essex Archaeological Group work on the newly discovered medieval pottery kiln in the front garden of 69 York Hill, Loughton. A section of path will have to be removed before the oval kiln can be fully uncovered.

With apologies for the quality of the photo – it was a very faded cutting.

William Penn

ALAN W SMITH

William Penn the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania went to school in Chigwell and it was also the scene of the personal religious revelation that changed his whole life.

But first a little about his background. Our William (b 1644) was the son of Sir William Penn, a serving Admiral from the time of Charles I, through the Cromwellian Commonwealth and into the reign of Charles II. Sir William had houses at Wanstead and Walthamstow (and possibly Chigwell, too) but the boy most probably rode to school daily or boarded at the house of Mr Cotton the Latin master. The old Admiral did not take kindly to what he thought of as his son's religious vagaries and extravagances. As John Aubrey, the seventeenth century biographer and 'gossip columnist' tells us, young William was 'much given to reading and meditating of the Scriptures and at fourteen had marked over the Bible. Often times at

thirteen or fourteen in his meditations ravisht with joy and dissolved into tears.' It was, however, much earlier, in 1665 (just 100 years after the martyrdom of John Rogers, another 'man of Chigwell') that the boy Penn had his personal revelation. Aubrey describes it thus:

'The first Sense he had of God was when he was eleven years old at Chigwell, being retired in a chambers alone; he was so suddenly surprised with an inward comfort and (as he thought) an external glory in the roome that he has many times said that from thence he had the Seale of divinity and immortality, that there was a God and that the Soule of man was capable of enjoying his divine communications. His schoolmaster was not of his Persuasion.'

Some 12 years later, in 1667, William Penn joined the Quakers and took their distinctive message through England and Ireland, to Germany and to America where he established Pennsylvania. He was imprisoned three times, and, happily reconciled to his father, died in 1718.

Today the Quakers are a widely respected body and perhaps an admiral would be rather less distressed should his son become one. The peculiarity of the Quakers (or Religious Society of Friends) is that while their basic theology is undoubtedly traditional, they have totally dispensed with all the outward forms and rituals of 'official' Christianity. They neither baptise nor confirm nor administer Holy Communion. Now it is well known that the mark of an Anglican is a willingness to conform to the custom and usages of the Church 'by law established' (hence the name Nonconformists for those who don't). What did Penn, in the light of his new understanding have to say about this? He wrote:

'It is not . . . the subscription of articles or propositions, tho' never so soundly worded, that makes a man a true Christian but it is conformity of mind and practice to the will of God . . . according to the dictates of the Divine principle of light and life in the soul which denotes a person truly a child of God.'

As a modern writer has put it, (Quakers) 'placed their emphasis on an immediate awareness of God in the depths of their inner life'. How do we respond to the challenge of Penn's story more particularly if we ourselves have not yet had a personal experience of 'inward comfort' and 'external glory' on which to build? Do we believe that young children can and do have genuine spiritual insights? Is any church or community justified in seeking to regulate or condemn sincerely held convictions? (One answers, I suppose, 'Yes, when they go too far!' The Adamites believed public nudity to be the badge of salvation and Antinomians held that, once saved, *nothing* they did could be sinful.)

Had Penn been within the fold of the Roman Catholic Church and officially approved, Chigwell might have become a cult centre, its earth packaged and water bottled for sale to pilgrims. Things did not run out like that nor would Penn have wished them to, but Penn's life was changed and it happened in Chigwell.

Newspaper snippets

Sent seven sons to the war: death of mother who had King's thanks

A message from King George saying how proud a mother she must be to have seven sons fighting in the Great War was the most prized possession of Mrs Ellen Jackson, of [57] Forest Road, Loughton, Essex, whose death has occurred. Mrs Jackson, who was 70, fell back dead in her husband's arms while drinking a cup of tea in bed, Her youngest son was killed in action, and two others died from wounds after the war. *The Scotsman*, 16 March 1936

Car reported stolen

Police-Constable Alfred James stated that at 8am on July 11 he saw a stationary motor car on the borders of Epping Forest at Loughton, and recognised it as having been reported stolen from Leicester Square on the previous night.

Covell was standing by the car with a wheel in his hand. He said that the car belonged to his father.

When told that he would be arrested he took a revolver from the front of the car and pushed it against the officer, saying, 'I'll shoot you if you touch me'.

The Constable immediately closed with him, and there was a violent struggle. Ultimately, however, accused was overpowered and arrested. *The Scotsman*, 19 July 1930

A few words of thanks

I should like to thank Chris Pond and the L&DHS Committee for inviting me to take over the *Newsletter* editorship. Thanks also to Ted Martin for remaining involved with it as his production and literary expertise would have been sorely missed. It certainly helped the decision to step into his shoes. Our readers will therefore continue to benefit from Ted's advice and assistance, as well as his considerable writing skills.

On the question of articles for inclusion, in another local organisation, once some of the members overcame a natural initial diffidence, their newsletter editor received much excellent material from new contributors.

I am certain that, through our excellent regular contributors and some 'first-timers', the high quality of our newsletter will be maintained. TERRY CARTER

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