LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Loughton and District Historical Society Committee would like to wish all our members and readers a Happy New Year. 2008, for many of us, may have been a year that presented some difficulties, so let us hope that 2009 will be better. There are still some intriguing talks to come in the second half of our season so, whatever the background, we hope they will be as well attended as now seems normal for our gatherings.

Bleak March in Epping Forest

H G WELLS

from *Certain Personal Matters*, 1901 – with thanks to Lawrence Greenhall of Waltham Abbey Historical Society

[*It seems appropriate to open with this piece, as we are now approaching the time in the Forest that Wells describes*.]

All along the selvage of Epping Forest there was excitement. Before the swallows, before the violets, long before the cuckoo, with only untimely honeysuckle bushes showing a trace of green, two trippers had been seen traversing the district, making their way towards High Beach, and settling awhile near the Forest Hotel. Whether they were belated survivals from last season or exceptionally early hatchings of the coming year, was a question of considerable moment to the natives, and has since engaged the attention of the local Natural History Society. But we know that, as a matter of fact, they were of little omen, being indeed but insignificant people from Hampstead and not true trippers at all, who were curious to see this forest in raw winter.

For some have argued that there is no Epping Forest at all in the winter-time; that it is, in fact, taken up and put away, and that agriculture is pursued there. Others assert that the Forest is shrouded with wrappers, even as a literary man's study is shrouded by dusty women when they clean him out. Others, again, have supposed that it is a delightful place in winter, far more delightful than in summer, but that this is not published, because no writing man hath ever been there in the cold season. And much more of unreal speculation, but nothing which bore upon it the stamp of truth. So these two – and I am one of the two – went down to Epping Forest to see that it was still there, and how it fared in the dismal weather.

The sky was a greasy grey that guttered down to the horizon, and the wind smote damp and chill. There was a white fringe of ice in the cart-wheel ruts, but withal the frost was not so crisp as to prevent a thin and slippery glaze of softened clay upon the road. The decaying triumphal arch outside the station sadly lacked a coat of paint, and was indistinctly regretful of remote royal visits and processions gone for ever. Then we passed shuddering by many vacant booths that had once resounded with the revelry of ninepenny teas and the ginger beer cork's staccato, and their forms were piled together and their trestles overturned. And the wind ravened, and no human beings were to be seen. So up the hill to the left, and along the road leading by devious windings between the black hedges and through clay wallows to the hilly part round High Beach.

But upon the shoulder of a hill we turned to a gate to scrape off the mud that made our boots unwieldy. At that moment came a threadbare place in the cloudy curtain that was sweeping across the sun, and our shadows showed themselves for an instant to comfort us. The amber patch of sunlight presently slipped from us and travelled down the meadows towards the distant blue of the hills by Waltham Abbey, touching with miraculous healing a landscape erst dead and shrouded in grey. This transitory gleam of light gladdened us mightily at the time, but it made the after-sky seem all the darker.

So through the steep and tortuous village to High Beach, and then leaving the road we wandered in among big trees and down slopes ankle deep with rustling leaves towards Chingford again. Here was pleasanter walking than the thawing clay, but now and then one felt the threat of an infinite oozy softness beneath the stiff frozen leaves. Once again while we were here the drifting haze of the sky became thinner, and the smooth green-grey beech stems and rugged oak trunks were brightly illuminated. But only for a moment, and thereafter the sky became not simply unsympathetic but ominous. And the misery of the wind grew apace.

Presently we wandered into that sinister corner of the Forest where the beech trees have grown so closely together that they have had perforce to lift their branches vertically. Divested of leaves, the bare grey limbs of these seem strangely restless. These trees, reaching so eagerly upward, have an odd resemblance to the weird figures of horror in which William Blake delighted – arms, hands, hair, all stretch intensely to the zenith. They seem to be straining away from the spot to which they are rooted. It is a Laocoon[1] grouping, a wordless concentrated struggle for the sunlight, and disagreeably impressive. The trippers longed to talk and were tongue-tied; they looked now and then over their shoulders. They were glad when the eerie influence was passed, though they traversed a morass to get away from it.

Then across an open place, dismal with the dun hulls of lost cows and the clatter of their bells, over a brook full of dead leaves and edged with rusty clay, through a briary thicket that would fain have detained us, and so to a pathway of succulent green, that oozed black under our feet. Here some poor lost wayfarer has blazed his way with rustic seats, now rheumatic and fungus-eaten. And here, too, the wind, which had sought us howling, found us at last, and stung us sharply with a shower of congealing raindrops. This grew to a steady downfall as the open towards Chingford station was approached at last, after devious winding in the Forest. Then, coming upon the edge of the wood and seeing the lone station against the grey sky, we broke into a shout and began running. But it is dismal running on imperfectly frozen clay, in rain and a gusty wind. We slipped and floundered, and one of us wept sore that she should never see her home again. And worse, the only train sleeping in the station was awakened by our cries, and, with an eldritch shriek at the unseasonable presence of trippers, fled incontinently Londonward.

Smeared with clay and dead leaves almost beyond human likeness, we staggered into the derelict station, and found from an outcast porter that perhaps another train

might after the lapse of two hours accumulate sufficiently to take us back to Gospel Oak and a warm world again. So we speered[2] if there were amusements to be got in this place, and he told us 'some very nice walks'. To refrain from homicide we left the station, and sought a vast red hotel that loomed through the drift on a steep hill, and in the side of this a door that had not been locked. Happily one had been forgotten, and, entering at last, we roused a hibernating waiter, and he exhumed us some of his winter victual. In this way we were presently to some degree comforted, and could play chess until a train had been sent for our relief. And this did at last happen, and towards the hour of dinner we rejoined our anxious friends, and all the evening time we boasted of a pleasant day and urged them to go even as we had gone.

[*A day for one of our greatest authors to forget - luckily he didn't, and showed the mastery of his craft in this short piece*.]

Notes

1. A Trojan priest, who, with his two sons, was crushed to death by two great sea-serpents, as a penalty for warning the Trojans against drawing the wooden horse of the Greeks into Troy.
2. Speer: OE, to make inquiries.

Arthur Morrison

CHRIS POND

In December the Society published Stan Newens' book on Arthur Morrison, the novelist who is sometimes styled the English Zola. He was a journalist and general-purpose writer who developed a genre quite unlike that of his contemporaries in Britain. His setting was as well depicted and finely drawn as Hardy's Wessex. But it was by no means so attractive, consisting of the dingy and poverty-ridden streets of inner East London, to which the contrast was the sylvan retreat of the Essex Forest, not a dozen miles away. The nearness of London was the reason that Morrison and many other figures, in business, the professions, and the arts, came to live in and around Loughton. The Forest guaranteed their escape from the city and the train ensured easy access to it. Morrison's descriptions of the Forest are as beautiful and elegiac as anything in literature, and offset and throw into focus the profound physical and mental destitution of east London.

In this fine study of Morrison, Stan Newens sets out a great deal of hitherto unknown information about Arthur Morrison, including the degree to which Morrison could go to disguise his origins in Poplar. Morrison was certainly somewhat reclusive. In Loughton Library, a MS letter by him exists, declining trenchantly to give an interview to a reviewer. One of some of the traits of character Stan Newens identifies is exemplified – secretiveness, a fear of revealing anything of himself – in the phrase: 'a man has only to make a very small success to make a great many enemies, and the less they know of him, the less harm they can do'. It was this obsessive belief that led Morrison twice to falsify his place of birth on official returns, and no doubt to the destruction of his papers after death.

Yet Morrison obviously made friends, both in literary and artistic circles in London, and in the West Essex area, for instance Leonard Erskine Hill, FRS (who was also interested in Oriental art), and Horace Newte, another novelist and playwright; and one wonders how he got on with W W Jacobs, whose house adjoined his.

Like Thomas Hardy, Morrison gave up writing novels. Hardy concentrated for the last thirty years of his life on poetry; Morrison devoted himself to the collection and study of oriental art, on which he became an acknowledged international authority. Though his other writings are less well known, they are not less interesting. It should not be forgotten that the young Morrison was writing non-fiction for the *Strand Magazine* with his by-line among such luminaries as Arthur Conan Doyle, Bret Harte and John Lubbock.

It is mainly as a detective writer that he is remembered in America. In Britain, East London and Essex, where he lived and worked, form the canvas for much of his writing. The blue plaque near the site of Salcombe House attests to his memory as does his grave, now unkempt and uncared for, in High Beach churchyard.

The book which has 48 pages (8 of which are plates) is available at £4 for members and £4.50 for the general public. Copies are available at our meetings or from the Chairman by post or from the Loughton Bookshop.

Olympic discoveries

The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) and the Museum of London have issued an invitation to all to attend events about the archaeological finds on the Olympic Park. A talk will be given on the historical discoveries: the remains of skeletons, houses and everyday life from prehistoric settlements to more recent times. Artefacts unearthed from the Park will also be on display. The first event is on Wednesday 21 January 2009, 7–8.30 pm, at Stratford Circus, Theatre Square, Stratford, London E15 1BX. Refreshments available from 6.15pm. Entry is free but places are limited. To confirm your place, call 0203 2012 235. Other events are planned for 17 February at Greenwich and 4 March at Hackney

More 'support' for the Russians

When she read John Redfern's fascinating memory,'Helping the "War Effort' in *Newsletter 178*, Audrey Amor remembered this handwritten note from Clementine Churchill, dated July 1942. It is self-explanatory, if a little difficult to read, so we have transcribed it to make it easier.

Audrey tells me she and her friend, Margaret, held a garden sale that raised a total of 3s. 6d. or 17½ pence, which may not sound a lot these days, but 66 years ago it was worth much more, especially to two little girls, whose generous response was recognised by such an illustrious lady.

July 1942
10, Downing Street,
Whitehall

Dear Margaret and Audrey

Thank you very much for your gift which I have just received.

I am most grateful to you for the trouble you have taken to help the brave Russians in their terrible struggle & defence of their country.

Your sincere friend

Clementine S Churchill

July 1942
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Your sincere friend
Clementine S. Churchill

Living in tents and caravans – my family c. 1871!

PETER COOK

[*This welcome contribution from Peter, one of our members, a well-remembered and skilful Forest Road football opponent, fellow Spurs supporter and ex-Staples Road pupil, provides a well researched and affectionate insight into the life, hardships and hopes of a local family nearly 140 years ago.*]

Earlier this year I logged onto the LDHS website with the intention of viewing the 2008/2009 programme, but was sidetracked by the information that more early *Newsletters* were now available to view.

Because these *Newsletters* preceded my wife and I joining the Society, I began scanning the index for items of interest and was suddenly halted by 'Family living in tent – Loughton 1871'. This appeared to relate to something I had found whilst engaged in family history research, and, sure enough, the article (*Newsletter* 131) concerned a Thomas Street and his family.

Thomas was born in 1844 and was one of the fourteen children of Thomas and Rachel (née Bacon) Street, and was my great granduncle, his older brother, George, being my great grandfather on my mother's maternal side. The 1871 census records Thomas – an agricultural labourer – as residing in a 'Tent on Forest' with his wife Hope (née Smith) and six children, ranging from Moses aged 9 to Annie aged 4 days. When you consider that the 1871 census was taken on Sunday 2 April, was little Annie born in that tent on 30 March and, if so, what was the weather like?

A search on the internet was rewarded with a report on weather during the 1870/1871 football season (is there any topic not to be found on the internet?) and this showed the pre-Christmas period with very heavy rain and high winds, while January had severe frost and some snow. However, during March, the sun was so bright, and the weather so hot, that playing football was apparently very uncomfortable! Still, even if Hope was given the opportunity to have her baby in the home of another Street family member, or even that of a friend, the fact remains that four days later she was back in the tent, in the forest, somewhere near the Wheatsheaf, when the enumerator arrived. What we do know is that Annie survived, for the 1881 census records her living, or staying, with her grandmother, Sarah Tongue, in the Almshouses on Arewater Green.

It was not until I began to delve into our family history that I recalled my mother telling about members of her family living in caravans, and the 'gipsy' element within her ancestors. Even so, I was still somewhat surprised to find that, in the census for 1881, the aforementioned Moses, as she had related, was indeed living in a caravan on Bell Common, Epping, with his wife and daughter, and his occupation shown as hawker. Living alongside, also in a caravan, was one Charity Smith – Hope's sister – and family, also a hawker.

So far I have found evidence of both these families included on a Romany website, albeit in lists taken from census returns, and there have also been postings by other researchers on family history sites, showing members of the Street family marrying into the well known Romany Lee family. From my point of view I remember that my grandmother, Emily Street, had the complexion and bright eyes, peering at you from under the black hat she permanently wore, which could well be construed as possible indications of her ancestry!

Born in Loughton in 1876, the daughter of George Street, she married William Oakman and raised six daughters, my mother Ella being the youngest. After William's death she remarried and moved to Epping, where, as confirmed to me by a cousin who lived with her, she would travel to various markets, including Caledonian Road, buying old clothes which were then 'hawked' door to door by a team of women. I also recall a lean-to shed in her garden holding small furniture items which, presumably, were also traded. She lived in the black boarded cottage – now greatly rebuilt – at the traffic lights opposite Theydon Road on Bell Common, and the garden became a roadside halt, where teas and snacks were dispensed for the many cyclists and pedestrians coming along the Epping Road, particularly at weekends. Her final

business venture, was to have a wooden hut built alongside the pavement, from which her husband, Percy, sold cigarettes and tobacco, sweets, chocolate and cold drinks, again to the many cyclists and passers-by. My visits to grandma would always yield some sweets or a bar of chocolate from the little green hut which was well known on the approach to Epping.

Returning to Thomas, whom we left in his tent in 1871, he appears to have improved his lot as, by 1881, he and Hope, and seven of their ten children, were shown living on Bell Common, presumably now in a cottage as there was no mention of a tent, and he had aspired to becoming a general dealer. His eldest son Moses and his wife's sister Charity were, as mentioned previously, adjacent on the Common itself in their caravans.

Unfortunately no photographs of the caravans or their occupants appear to exist within the family, or in any of the other avenues I have explored, so the written word has to suffice to cover just one small facet in the history of a family.

Secondary Modern education in the 1950s – Part 1

TED MARTIN

[*This piece is very much local history in that it illustrates both differences and similarities between the Secondary Modern system in a relatively deprived area and one with more facilities. It is also a record of how it was possible, through hard work and determination, to 'beat the system'. .As we shall see, the 'dreaded 11-plus' did not have to be an insurmountable obstacle, as proved by the author and other Lordship Lane boys, and many from The Brook.*]

Secondary Modern Schools existed throughout the United Kingdom from 1944 until the early 1970s and were designed for the majority of pupils – all those other than the top 25% selected by the eleven-plus examination. The Comprehensive School system replaced them and Secondary Moderns now remain mainly in Northern Ireland, where they are usually referred to as 'Secondary Schools' (although the 11-plus exam was recently abolished there).

Rab Butler's Education Act 1944 created the system in which children were tested and streamed at the age of eleven. Children who were thought unsuitable for academic or technical education, went to the Secondary Modern to receive training in simple, practical skills, with education concentrated on basic subjects such as arithmetic, mechanical and domestic skills. The first Secondary Moderns were 3,000 converted Senior Elementary schools, which had previously continued primary education to the age of 14, with more built between 1945 and 1965, to provide universal secondary education.

Although the plan was that Secondary Moderns, Grammar Schools and Technical Schools should be different but equal, in practice Secondary Moderns came to be seen as the school for failures. Those who had 'failed' their eleven plus were sent there to learn rudimentary skills before advancing to manual jobs. Some Secondary Moderns prepared students for the CSE examination, rather than the more prestigious GCE O level, though my school offered GCE but only in 'technical' subjects. Not many children took advantage of it, because most of them would not be pursuing technical careers. Secondary Moderns did not offer training for A level, and no children went on to university.

It is said that Secondary Moderns were generally deprived of resources and good teachers, but that was not my experience. There were many good and dedicated teachers alongside a few bad ones. Some equipment was worn out but determined efforts were made to update and replace during the time I was there, which was a difficult time for the country as a whole.

The perceived poor performance of the 'submerged three-quarters' of schoolchildren led to calls for reform. In the 1950s, experiments began with Comprehensive Schools, hoping to provide an education which would offer greater opportunities for those who did not enter Grammar Schools. Several counties got rid of their Secondary Moderns completely and, by 1976, with the exception of a few regions,, Secondary Modern schools had been phased out.

In Loughton, Roding Road, later called The Brook School, was the local Secondary Modern. Although the following memories are not of Roding Road, because although I later lived in the L&DHS area, I went to school not many miles away, on the borders of Wood Green and Tottenham. Although a less favoured area than Loughton, it did its best, in the difficult post-war period, to give me an education considered second-class at the time but which proved good enough to provide a very sound basis for my adult life.

I grew up in Wood Green, London N22. After attending the local infants and junior schools, I sat the 11-plus exam in 1950 and failed. Two points I should mention are that I actually started school in the summer of 1944 in Burnley in Lancashire while evacuated to relatives. Thus my start at Noel Park infants was a year later than it otherwise would have been. The other point is that, in my final year at junior school, only two boys and two girls actually went to grammar school out of a class of 48 children. This indicates either that there was a very severe shortage of grammar school places, or that my primary school was performing very badly.

As a result of failing the 11-plus in September 1950 I went to Lordship Lane Secondary Modern School for Boys, just off the Noel Park Estate and almost in Tottenham. The school had a reputation as a very rough and tough school and my mother was very upset when the letter came. I know from various conversations that this was also the experience of many parents in Loughton and nearby. But I was to be lucky: 1950 was the first year of a new headmaster at Lordship Lane, Alan Kerswell, and my contemporaries and I owe a lot to him for the way he reorganised and ran the school.

The school buildings dated from 1906 when the complex was created as the Lordship Lane Elementary Board School. When facing it from the other side of the road, on the left was the infants, the central section was the Boys Secondary Modern, and the right-hand section was the junior school. Not an ideal layout but, remarkably, the pupils of each school were hardly ever aware of those in the other schools.

Classroom accommodation was scarce: in the first year we had lessons in a room borrowed from the infants and in the second year in a nearby Baptist chapel. We entered class each day under a doom-laden sign reading: 'The wages of sin is death'! There was a metalwork room which, in 1950, was a converted classroom but was later (about 1952) replaced by a purpose-built building in the playground. Years 1 and 2 had woodwork tuition in a woodwork shop on the site, but years 3 and 4 had to attend another workshop about two miles away alongside Wood Green's swimming baths and the dust destructor.

The school was four-form entry, with the brightest in form 1A, then 1B, then 1C. I started in 1C and then went to 2C. While in 2C I started a school magazine and I think this and other general improvements in my performance (or perhaps I just woke up) resulted in my being promoted to 3A and, for my last year, 4A.

Most of the staff were middle-aged or elderly men. The story was that they had been recalled during the war and stayed on. Mr Kingsmill was very old and could only get around on two sticks usually whilst smoking a small cigar which he even smoked in class! Mr Mooring was the senior master and was a pleasant man but could be severe. Both these teachers retired after about two years. Mr Acland, who subsequently became senior master, was a local man who delighted in calling us 'silly arses'. Worse still, he had the allotment next to my grandfather's at Chitts Hill. They used to chat and on several occasions I would arrive on my bike to see them chatting. Granddad would say: 'I suppose you know the boy?' 'Oh yes', he would say, with a meaningful look, 'I *know* the boy'. However, when the school magazine expanded, as will be told in Part 2, he wrote a series of interesting articles for me on the Wood Green of his youth called 'Tales of an Old Fogey'.

Mr Drew was, we believed, ex Royal Marines and carried a chair leg under his arm like an RSM's baton. We had to form up in our classes on the playground when the bell rang, and then march to our rooms. If Mr Drew was in charge it was more like a parade ground than a playground.

The school woodwork master was Mr Miller, an easy going teacher who had taught my father at Noel Park in the 1920s. The metalwork master, Mr Ronalds, was unkindly nicknamed 'Hoppy' because he had a severe limp. All these teachers had cars in the 1950s and Mr Ronalds' was an unusual Lanchester to which he was always doing something. It would appear at school with panels in primer and undercoat.

Among the younger men was my 1C and 2C form master Brian Longthorne who was about 27 then and I think this was his first teaching post. He gave me great encouragement with writing and the school magazine. He was a skilled pianist and became a LRAM while at the school. He left to return to Leeds after about two years, and then pursued a distinguished career, culminating in becoming head of the music department of King Alfred's College, Winchester, which post he held until 1988. He died aged 77 in 2004. *[To be continued]*

Source

The background to Secondary Modern education was obtained from Wikipedia.

'A matter of interest'

[Thanks to John Redfern for the following snippet which appeared in the Chigwell Parish Magazine*, of October 1927.]*

Chigwell has many old houses; yet another has just been added, probably (with the exception of the 12th century part of the church) older than all our other buildings.

It is worthy to be recorded in the Parish Magazine as of interest to today's readers, but more so to those in future years, that at Bildeston, near Ipswich, stood till last year a unique and well preserved 14th century house. It was carefully dismantled, and each piece numbered, so that its re-erection was possible.

Chigwell is fortunate to have this house re-erected at Luxboro, near the site of the old mansion. The work has been so carefully done that is hard to realise that it has not been for centuries where it now stands, and may stand for another six hundred years.

[*John adds: Unfortunately, the old house did not last long on its new site – within a couple of years it was once more – 'each piece numbered' – taken apart and sold for re-erection in America.*]

Origins of the Loughton Masonic Hall

CHINGFORD AREA MASONIC GROUP

It is not known for certain who first had the idea of building a 'made for purpose' Masonic Hall in Loughton, but undoubtedly one of the main instigators, was a local builder, Charles Savin Foster, who was the principal of Messrs. Foster & Son. This company was responsible for building High Beech Road and Connaught Avenue, both High Beach and Connaught being adopted as names of Lodges, within the Province of Essex..

Charles Foster was an ardent Freemason throughout his adult life, being initiated in 1889 at the age of 32 into the Bagshaw Lodge No.1457, with their Charter being granted in 1873. The Bagshaw Lodge still meets at the Loughton Masonic Hall. Charles Foster became a founder of three other Essex Lodges, Essex Masters Lodge No 3256, Lucton Lodge No 3353 and the Lambourne Lodge No 3945. He was the Chairman of the Loughton Masonic Hall in 1910, and

died at the age of 97 in 1954. In recognition of his services to Freemasonry, he was appointed a Grand Officer in1939, at the age of 82.

A large wooden plaque which has been recently refurbished was on display at the hall, and will be hung in a prominent place within the Loughton Hall to perpetuate his memory.

Whilst the name of the architect of the building is not certain, there are two possibilities, Rex Foster,* (Charles Foster's Son)and Horace White, a local noted architect and surveyor. According to the Epping Forest District, and their list of buildings of local architectural or historic interest in the Loughton Parish, the Loughton Masonic Hall is listed as a large red brick building with half timbering on upper floors, c. 1908, said to be have been designed by Horace White.

Horace White was born in Loughton, c.1875, and became an articled apprentice to the Loughton Architect Edmond Egan who died in 1898. Horace took over his practice at the very young age of 23. When the Loughton Urban District Council was formed in 1900, Horace White became its first surveyor and had close connections with Charles Foster. He married into the Foster family. The Loughton Masonic Hall is not typical of Horace White's style as shown in other buildings in the area. We have to consider that it was for a particular purpose and the type and style of roofing lends itself to the layout of the upper part as the Lodge room.

The 1930s saw a number of different styles in domestic architecture. If you think about the 'Tudorbethan' (a mock Tudor cottage), this style became very popular in housing in the area, and houses were often half-timbered with a mix of red brick, with this you could say that Horace White was certainly ahead of his time. Charles Foster is credited with having built the Loughton Masonic Hall, and in June 1910 when the Loughton Masonic Hall Company was formed, it was formally purchased from him by local Freemasons. In the first page of the original Memorandum of Association, he is prominently mentioned with regard to the setting up of the company. The initial share capital of the company was £1,600 (a substantial sum of money in those days), which was basically used to pay for the building. Charles Foster accepted £300 as a down payment and then the balance was paid over a period of time. The first subscribers to the new company were seven 'local' men who each took up 10 shares. Their professions ranged from a clerk in cotton manufacturing, jobber on the Stock Exchange, a musician and a mechanical engineer. The Loughton Masonic Hall was dedicated on 10th February 1910, by the Provincial Grand Master for Essex, Colonel The Rt.Hon. Mark Lockwood (later Lord Lambourne) to Freemasonry, Virtue and Benevolence.

In 2010 the Loughton Masonic Hall will celebrate its 100th birthday, and plans are already being prepared to celebrate its centenary.

[*Because of space constraints, this is a very brief extract from* The Chingford Area Masonic Social Group Newsletter No 19, *in particular from an article concerning the Loughton Masonic Hall Open Day held on Sunday, 9 September 2007. The full article, which describes the day's activities, also provides much more background on current developments and activities. It was written by Allan de Luca – Fiducial Lodge No 8753. The full article may be sent by e-mail, on request.*]

Note

* Chris Pond has established from Rex Foster's obituary in the *West Essex Gazette*, that he was the architect of the Hall.

Why people shake hands

Found in the *Woodford Times*, 15 November 1918:

'It is supposed that hand-shaking arose at a time when men carried swords. If you placed your sword-hand into that of the man you met, it was impossible for either of you to give each other a stab in the back. Handshaking has never gone out of fashion. It is said that the average man shakes hands three times a day.'

RICHARD MORRIS

Some memories of Loughton – Part 1

JOHN MARTIN

Meadow Road

We moved to Meadow Road in Loughton from Buckhurst Hill in 1934. I was five and soon found myself walking to and from Staples Road four times a day, since we came home for dinner, making four miles in all.

I walked to school with Meadow Road boys and played with them. We played in the road and before too long in the forest. There were also 'the allotments', railway allotments which lay between the backs of Meadow Road houses and Station Road. There was some waste land included and as the father of one boy was a railwayman with an allotment we felt this was a playground to which we had special rights.

Meadow Road contained a surprisingly large number of houses but eventually, certainly by the time of the war, I could have named almost every inhabitant. More than this, I knew the occupations of very many and to a child most of the men had jobs of very obvious utility. There were three bus drivers and

two bus conductors and an assortment of railwaymen, a platelayer, a guard and a clerk and at least two men retired from the railways. There was a dairy's and a baker's roundsman. There were also at least four policemen including our own neighbour, Sergeant Thorpe, and I was always pleased when he was the one seeing us children across the road at the bottom of The Drive.

Meadow Road was a cuI-de-sac with not too much traffic then, just horses and carts and some vans of delivery men and the lorries and cars going to Eaton's Yard. Hardly anyone in the road owned a car. It was good for play. There was also social cohesion although a few 'kept themselves to themselves'. When fire-watching was introduced, it was highly organised in Meadow Road, as was the VE day street party.

In 1940 I passed the 11-plus and went to Buckhurst Hill County High. From then until 1945 I saw far less of my Meadow Road contemporaries who all went on to the school in Roding Road. I had homework and there were air raids. At Loughton Youth Centre in 1945–46 I mixed with those I had known at Staples Road and at Buckhurst Hill County High.

1937: the Coronation year

1937 must have been the year that the new parade of shops opened. Woolworth were on the end closest to the brook, United Dairies on the corner of the Drive. In between were Dewhurst, Williams Bros and Boots the Chemist. Woolworths was quite unlike any store Loughton had had before, fascinating to a nine year old. There was to be a carnival procession for the Coronation with a carnival queen and I remember that both the winner and the runner-up were assistants from the new Woolworths. United Dairies were delivering free samples, trying to drum up custom for their milk round and I recall a conversation at the back door between my parents and a very worried Mr Street, our milkman, in which he said 'you've got children, you don't want to have that pasteurised milk'. We stayed with Street's until the wartime rationalisation of the dairy rounds.

1943: Hutchins the Chemist

In the summer holidays of 1943 my parents arranged for me to help in Hutchins' shop, I was 14. Mr Wickens and Mr Richardson were, I suppose, co-proprietors. Mr Wickens spent the whole time in the front shop. He had been badly gassed in the First World War and had a terrible cough. Occasionally a lady would whisper to him a request for advice on some medical problem and he would lean across the counter, straining to hear. Mr Gill was the pharmacist and had his own dispensary. Mr Richardson was sometimes in the front shop, sometimes in the back where I helped. Using the British Pharmacopoeia, he made up Hutchins' own label cough mixture in a huge bowl and I helped in various ways including labelling. He also made their own talcum powder and I had to grind talc to a powder to which various additives were put, again following the Pharmacopoeia. On occasion, Mrs Wickens and Mrs Richardson called in at the back room carrying well-filled shopping baskets. This was a relief from the tedium in which one heard the Lopping Hall clock strike very loudly at intervals. On Friday I carried the shop takings with a paying-in book to the nearby bank, either Midland or Barclays, I don't recall which. Nor do I recall whether I worked one week or two. They paid me 10 shillings for a week. I doubt my help was worth it.

1945: Churchill on Kings Green

In the 1945 election Winston Churchill was Conservative candidate for Woodford, a constituency carved from his old Epping division. He came to speak on Kings Green in Loughton. There were large houses that stood back on the High Road with shops fronting them at ground floor level, on the left as one walked towards Kings Green. On one of those houses that day was a large, obviously home-made, poster which read: 'Hitlers come and Hitlers go, there'll always be a Churchill.'

There was a big crowd on Kings Green where Churchill stood in front of the King's Head. My father and I were at the back of the Green on the apex and had only a distant view of the man but could hear him clearly. All I remember of his speech is his saying: 'We shall defend our vested interests overseas.'

There is a cine film of the occasion which I have seen twice at widely separated times. Interestingly, at the end the camera swings round to focus for a second on the crowd. If a still could be obtained of this, the Loughton crowd might form an interesting picture.

1945–46: A Year in Loughton Youth Centre

I left Buckhurst Hill County High in 1945 at the age of 16. It had always been assumed I should leave at this age. After some hesitation I opted to work as a trainee draughtsman at the Ordnance Survey. As I had loved maps and atlases from a very young age, it seemed logical. The office was in South Kensington near Gloucester Road and meant long-distance commuting. This was hard at first and the job disappointing. In fact it was probably the hardest year of my life. However, I joined Loughton Youth Centre and in the evenings and weekends I followed dancing lessons, took part in amateur dramatics, joined discussion groups and committees and played table tennis. Some of us started a magazine with the ideal editor in Denis Pilgrim who was a reporter for the *West Essex Gazette*. He went on to work for the *News Chronicle* and later the *Daily Mail*. The last time I met him was on Loughton Station in the 50s or early 60s when he told me he now lived at High Beach.

The Old Council

I can barely have begun going to the Youth Centre when a party of us went to listen to a meeting of Chigwell Urban District Council. This was the old council shortly to face the polls for the first time since 1939.

I was soon disabused of any idea that the debate would split along party lines. Instead it seemed to be rather between 'old world' councillors and some rather more 'with the times' councillors. There was a long debate whether they should borrow money from the Public Works Loan Board for capital investment,

perhaps in new dust carts, I'm not certain. Councillor James Austin, a very articulate speaker, argued in favour and given Dalton's cheap money policy he must surely have been right. Councillor Frank Foster from the chair, said, if I remember rightly, he had 'always thought we should pay our way as we go'. There was a long discussion followed by another interminable debate on whether they should open the minutes of Committee meetings (or possibly the meetings) to the public. There were votes but I don't remember how they went, only that there seemed nothing party political about them.

[*John Martin attended Buckhurst Hill County High School from 1940–1945. These notes, the second part of which will appear next time, were, he says, inspired by the L&DHS publication*, Post-War Loughton 1945–1970. *John writes*: '*I have now written down "Some Memories of Loughton" – I hope it will prove of some interest.*']

First call box

TERRY CARTER

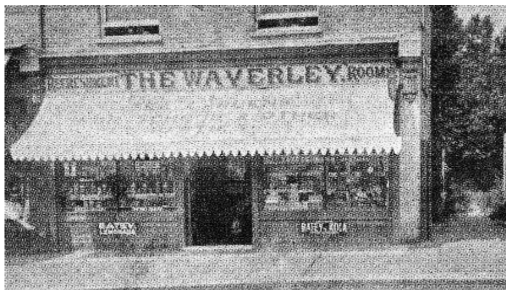
Among the package of old cuttings and photos mentioned in the last *Newsletter*, are several from a series in the G*azette* of over 30 years ago called 'Before Your Time'. Apart from their interest simply as a record of long gone places and people, each one is significant for its little piece of local history.

The caption reads:

'It is 70 years since the Waverley Rooms, Church Hill, pictured below, made history in Loughton. The first public call box was installed into the refreshment rooms in 1907. It appeared in the first telephone directory as Loughton 1.

The Waverley Rooms was a popular meeting place for locals, and a tourist attraction, for not only did Mr and Mrs Duff serve Batey's Lemonade and Kola, but also produced a collection of postcards called the *Waverley Series.* The cards depicted local scenes of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and forest beauty spots.

The Waverley Room site is now [approx 1977] an employment and duplicating bureau at 38 Church Hill (near Warriners).'



Stephen Bunce – Essex highwayman

TERRY CARTER

Highwaymen may have been villains but, however reluctantly, some individuals consider them daring, brave and entertaining. Stephen Bunce, if his reported exploits are to be believed, was also a master con-man.

Bunce's antics include the time he was walking to Romford and, on seeing a gentleman riding towards him, quickly laid down with his ear pressed to the ground:

'What are you lying there like that for?' asked the gentleman coming up to him.

'Ssh'! whispered Bunce, putting his finger to his lips.

'But what on earth are you listening to?' said the gentleman.

'Oh!' replied Stephen Bunce, 'I never expected to hear fairies. This is the most lovely music I have ever heard, and I don't expect to hear such music again.'

Intrigued, the gentleman dismounted from his horse and passed the reins to Bunce for him to hold. As soon as the gentleman was on the ground, with his ear pressed to it listening for the fairies, Bunce rode off on the horse.

On another occasion, it is claimed Bunce was out walking with a friend when, slightly ahead of them, they saw an old farmer leading a donkey. The farmer stopped, loosely tied the animal to a tree, and stepped behind a bush. Bunce clearly had a better use for the beast. Creeping up behind it, he slipped the bridle off its head and placed it on his own, while his friend led the donkey away. When the farmer returned and saw Bunce instead of his donkey, Bunce claimed that he had been transformed into a donkey for committing a grievous sin and, having now having atoned for it, he had changed back into a man. The wide-eyed, ingenuous farmer released Bunce.

Although Stephen Bunce is reputed to have been one of the most imaginative and amusing of all Essex highwaymen, and his antics may read like fairy stories, his career was real enough for him to end up on the gallows, being hanged in December 1707.

[*Loosely adapted from* Essex Eccentrics-*by Alison Barnes.*]

Tailpiece

We end *Newsletter 180* in the same way as we started – A Happy New Year to us all!

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