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Loughton High Road, 1910

Members and readers will notice that this issue of the *Newsletter* runs to 16 pages, the first time we have done this. It mainly reflects our good fortune in having a strong inflow of excellent material to choose from, something from which, we hope, will suit the varied tastes of our members and readers. Rather than store some of these pieces in the 'bank', we have decided to end the *Newsletter* season in this way, also including a colour photograph, and we hope you approve. This will not happen every time but, with the usual plea, if the articles come in, enlarged issues will appear from time to time.

Ted Martin has created CDs, on which he has stored some 50 previous *Newsletters*, from number 130 to the present. With this ability to look back, it has been a revelation how fresh and fascinating much of the past material has been. So, occasionally, some chosen pieces may reappear, no less absorbing for being read 'second time around'.

Leah Manning and the Basque children in Theydon Bois

TED MARTIN

Jim Watts, a neighbour in Theydon Bois before I moved to Bedfordshire, is the editor of the Theydon Bois website and also manages the L&DHS website for us, so though we are now 40 miles apart we still correspond regularly by e-mail. On 20 November 2008 I received a request from him for the Society's help to find further information for Covadonga Cienfuegos Jovellanos, a Spanish lady who lives in San Sebastian, a city in northern Spain.

Senora Jovellanos's father, Vicente Romero, who was 85 on 4 December 2008, and now lives in Gijon in Spain, had spent 10 months in Theydon Bois at the age of 13, with his brother, José, and his sister, Maria, and 18 other Spanish children. They were part of the nearly 4,000 Basque children, who were evacuated to England to escape from the Spanish Civil War, thanks to campaigners in England persuading the British Government to take them.

Covadonga, José, Vicente and Maria

When I received the e-mail from Jim I circulated it to the officers of the Society. Richard Morris pointed out that Stan Newens might know something about this. This proved to be the case and Stan very kindly sent me a copy of his biography of Leah Manning, which showed that she was very much involved with the evacuation of the children. I scanned the relevant pages and some photos and they were sent to Spain by e-mail.

Mrs Leah Manning, a teacher and social reformer who had been President of the National Union of Teachers and a Labour MP in 1931 (and would be again in 1945) was involved with Spanish Medical Aid. She was asked, in April 1937, by the Duchess of Atholl, President of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, and the Basque delegation in London

to go to Bilbao, which was threatened by Franco's forces, to try to arrange the evacuation of children from the war zone to Britain.

Leah Manning, by Ron Bill and Stan Newens,[1] tells the story. Leah with Edith Pye of the Society of Friends made the hazardous journey to northern Spain and arrived on 24 April. Two days later Guernica was destroyed. They visited the town after the bombing and saw the death and destruction. They met the British Consul, contacted the Basque Government, broadcast over the radio to reassure the families of those to be evacuated and personally supervised the embarkation of thousands of people. Leah was in some personal danger and was given permission to carry arms. When the British Government, which had agreed to accept some refugees, resisted the despatch of more, she sent telegrams to the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster, to Lloyd George and Sir Walter Citrine begging them to intercede.

Finally, at 6.40 am on Friday, 21 May 1937 the SS *Habana* left Bilbao. There were over 3,800 children on board, with 95 women teachers, 120 senoritas as helpers, 15 priests and Leah Manning. The ship was escorted by the destroyer HMS *Forester*.

On board SS *Habana*

Vicente, a retired engineer, remembers the crossing in the ship: 'we all slept on the deck. Everybody else was sick; but my brother, sister and I were not. We were also very lucky because they took everybody's luggage away and mixed them up, but nobody took ours.' Two days later, on 23 May 1937, after a terrible journey, the Basque children arrived at Southampton. They were welcomed by the Duchess of Atholl, Sir Walter and Lady Layton and Sir Walter and Lady Citrine.

Many famous names including Cadburys, Horlicks, Rowntrees, Marmite, Jaegers, Co-op, Woolworths, Standard Fireworks, Prudential Assurance, Sidney Bernstein, the RSPCA and Marks & Spencer donated goods or money to the relief agencies.

Next day, in the pouring rain, the first group of children were moved into a reception camp, at Stoneham, Eastleigh – their new temporary home – run by the Salvation Army. The purpose of the camp was to allow enough time for the English Basque Children's Committee to make arrangements for their transportation to the 94 designated 'colonies' around the country, including Theydon Bois. Vicente says 'In the camp at Eastleigh it was a mess. Nobody could find their luggage but we were really happy as we had ours.'

Stoneham Camp, Eastleigh

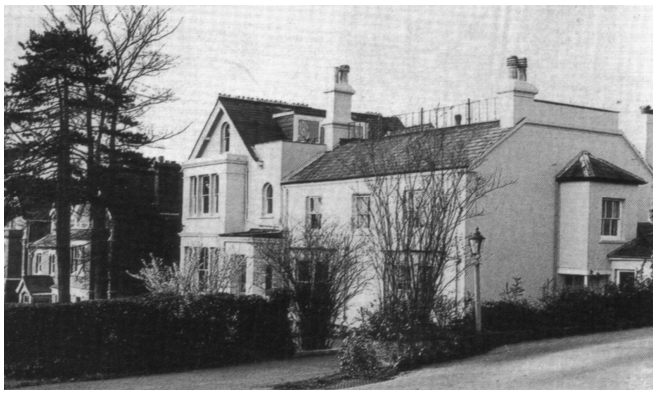
In Britain, Leah Manning helped to organise accommodation. A few days later the children were divided into groups and sent all over England. Vicente's group reached Theydon Bois by train, with some Spanish teachers who were in charge of them. The London Teachers' Association (NUT) was particularly helpful in finding accommodation and sent some of the evacuees to a house in Piercing Hill, which for a time was known as the Leah Manning Home. The property, Woodberry, later became part of Wansfell College which has since sadly closed. Vicente had looked after their things and happily they arrived with everything intact.

The Salvation Army also did sterling service in helping to house the children from Spain. An exhibition of pictures by Spanish children entitled 'Spain – The Child and The War' was held in Central London and Leah Manning wrote the preface to the exhibition guide. She said she had, by a miracle, become the 'accidental' mother to 4,000 of them – which gave her a mother's right to speak on their behalf. She described the 118 drawings as representing the children's work, play, joys and sorrows.

Vicente Romero remembers Theydon Bois and his stay in England very clearly. Once in the village, 'we stayed in a lovely residence in a long avenue with smart houses'. Next door to them lived a family with young daughters and the Basque children used to play with them. The neighbours' wife's family were part of the Cadbury chocolate family and next to them lived a family with a son who was an 'aviator'. 'One day the aviator threw a message from a plane and it fell down in the Spanish children's garden. The teachers gave it to the neighbours. It said he wasn't going to be on time for the tennis match.'

During their stay, an English teacher taught them English and lived with them. Vicente recalled that the children used to walk on the golf course in the afternoon and played football or visited Epping Forest. Some evenings they had activities in the Loreto Convent in Forest Side, to the west of the Golf Course, because all the children were Catholic. The convent closed in the 1970s and was at first converted to a large house called Theydon Towers and recently

to flats and houses. At the weekends volunteers from the Labour Party came from London and took the children for an outing to the capital by train.



Woodberry, Theydon Bois, where the children stayed (later Wansfell College)

They were often visited in Theydon Bois by Leah Manning. Vicente Romero remembers her as a 'nice lady who loved the children very much'. Leah Manning got angry on her last visit to Theydon Bois, when she found that the three Romero children had been sent back to Spain without her knowledge. Vicente stayed for 10 months in England and it seems that a further group came to Theydon Bois after his group had left.

In the group photo above, Leah Manning is right of centre with a child on her knee and Vicente Romero is at the top on the far right; José Romero is at the bottom right with his arms crossed and Maria Romero is on the knee of the woman on the right.

Leah was also given charge of a group of orphans of Socialist families who were accommodated in Cambridge. The following month a rally was held at the Albert Hall – supported by, amongst others, the Duchess of Atholl, Picasso, J B S Haldane, P M S Blackett, H G Wells, E M Forster, Virginia Woolf, Havelock Ellis, Sean O'Casey, Philip Noel-Baker and Dame Sybil Thorndike – with songs by Paul Robeson. It raised £11,000 for the emergency appeal.

But who was Leah Manning? She was undoubtedly a woman who achieved distinction despite the obstacles which barred the progress of women in public life during the early years of the last century and was also a powerful personality with immense compassion and drive. She always had a vision of a better society that inspired her throughout her life.

Elizabeth Leah Perrett was born in Droitwich, Worcestershire, in 1886. When she was 14 her parents, who were officers in the Salvation Army, moved to America so she went to live with her maternal grandparents in Stoke Newington, London. Her grandfather was a staunch Methodist and had a great influence on his granddaughter. Her life was comfortable and she enjoyed outings to Theydon Bois during the summers.

At the second school she attended she came under the influence of the Reverend Stewart Headlam from whom she derived the Christian Socialist principles which she held and followed throughout her life. Headlam advised her to try for a place at Homerton Teacher Training College at Cambridge. She passed the examination and gained her place.

Leah was at the College from 1906–1908 and while at Cambridge met Hugh Dalton, later a Labour Cabinet Minister, who became a lifelong friend. On leaving the College she was offered a teaching post at the College's practice School in New Street, Cambridge, where mainly poor and ragged children were taught. She campaigned for school meals and milk, denounced the death of an underfed child and organised the provision of an After School Play Centre.

In 1913 Leah married William Henry Manning who was an assistant at the University Physics Observatory. It was usual for women teachers to resign their posts on marriage but the outbreak of the First World War allowed her to carry on. During the war she was a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) nurse at The First Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge, even though as a member of the Independent Labour Party she was opposed to the war.

Heavily involved in war administrative work and political activities she lost her only child who died three weeks after birth in 1918.

She became head of a girls' school and then Vinery Road Open Air School and in 1918 was chairman of the Cambridge Trades Council and Cambridge Labour Party. She worked for Labour in the 1918 General Election and the 1922 Cambridge by-election and in 1920 became a JP. She was a member of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and was elected Secretary of the Cambridge Teachers' Association and had other education appointments in Cambridge.

She wrote a regular column in the *School Mistress* for some years and in 1924 was elected to the NUT executive. In April 1930, she was elected President at the NUT Diamond Jubilee Conference. Her Presidential Address advocated the raising of the school leaving age to 15.

As President of the NUT she travelled widely and determined that she would like to enter Parliament. After a false start in 1930 at Bristol East, where she was forced to give way to Sir Stafford Cripps, newly appointed as Solicitor-General but with no seat in the House, she was selected as the Labour candidate for Islington East in 1931 and elected with a majority of 2,277. However, seven months later in the General Election she lost her seat to the National Conservative candidate. She moved on to be Assistant Education

Officer for the NUT and unsuccessfully tried to get back into the House at Sunderland in 1935

Leah Manning campaigning in 1931

Leah Manning campaigned against Fascism in Europe and in England and during 1936–38, was deeply involved in supporting the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War as well as opposing the Munich agreement between Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler.

During the Second World War she was the evacuation liaison officer for the NUT and travelled to every evacuation area in the country and, later, head of organisation at the NUT's London office. When Russia entered the War she became an ardent supporter of their cause in the Aid to Russia and Second Front Now campaigns.

In 1945, in the Labour landslide General Election after the Second World War, Leah Manning was elected as the Labour MP for the new Epping constituency[2] and she served until 1950. She was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1966 and lived at Hatfield Broad Oak for many of her final years.

At the age of 84 – sixty years after graduating as a teacher in 1908 – she was still busy teaching girls and encouraging them to go to university. Leah died in 1977 at the age of 91. The Rt Hon Barbara Castle, Baroness Castle of Blackburn, said of her: 'Leah Manning was one of the most dynamic Labour women at a critical period in the party's history.'

After the Romero children returned to Spain, Vicente became an engineer. He was always a bright pupil and to help his parents to afford university for him he became a private teacher to other students, especially in the summer. He used to go to the Asturias region in northern Spain to teach during his holiday. When he became a doctor of engineering, he went back to the Asturias for his first job. There he married and then came back to the Basque country, where he worked for a large iron company until he retired, becoming the director responsible for organisation and security in the company.

José Romero became a member of the Catholic teaching order of St Jean Baptiste of La Salle. He was a teacher in their schools for many years. He now lives in a community with other brothers near San Sebastian.

Unfortunately, Maria died 25 years ago. She always wanted to become a doctor but in those difficult times her parents could not afford to pay for her training and so she finally became a nurse. She did not marry. When she died, she was the much loved director of a health centre near Bilbao.

Senora Jovellanos says that, after so long, Vicente has forgotten most of the English that he spoke perfectly when he came back to Spain, but what he has never forgotten was a country and especially a village, Theydon Bois, which offered love and shelter to him and his companions far away from the misfortunes of war.

Sources

I am very grateful to Stan Newens who kindly sent me a copy of *Leah Manning* by him and Ron Bill from which the biographical information in this article has been taken and to Jim Watts who informed us of this story in the first place, gave me further information as it developed and worked very hard to provide answers for Senora Jovellanos.

Notes

1. Harlow and Brentwood: The Leah Manning Trust and Square One Books, 1991.

2. Consisting of Chingford, Waltham Abbey, Epping and Harlow and some outlying parishes. Winston Churchill who had previously been the MP for Epping was re-elected as MP for Woodford.

Britain at war: preparing for air raids

MRS M D SPARKS

(From a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*)

As many of us remember sombre events vividly (as to where we were and what we were doing at a specific time) so I recall exactly what I was doing on 3 September 1939: walking around a flowerbed in our garden in Loughton while everyone else in the family was gathered by the wireless to hear the news.

Then came the first air raid warning I'd ever heard, quite frightening. I was eight years old. Such a thing had never happened before. I rushed inside to find out that was going on and heard that we were at war with Germany.

A few, not many, preparations were made. We had no air raid shelter but the kitchen windows were strengthened by putting against them the slatted floor of the greenhouse.

Other windows were eventually criss-crossed with brown sticky paper to guard against flying glass, and draped with black-out curtains. A high bed was brought downstairs to the kitchen and beneath it my two sisters and I slept when the first air raids occurred.

At one time the warning would sound at about 8 pm every night. What with the ack-ack guns (I think they were called) and the planes overhead the sound was deafening. I don't know if it were really so but our parents told us that if the plane had an uneven sound it was German but if a nice steady sound it was one of ours. That made us feel considerably better, at least when we heard the even sound and it kept us occupied. All this time I can't remember feeling really frightened possibly because our parents were always nearby, mother on top of the bed, we three beneath it, but father upstairs because he absolutely would not give in to the Germans and leave his nice comfortable bed. But I do remember lying between two sisters and seeing my hand against the pillow and wondering if it would be there very much longer as we heard the shriek of the bombs coming down. Even so, the importance of the family and togetherness cannot be too highly stressed in a time like that. I'll never forget coming outside after the All Clear sounded looking towards London and seeing the dawn sky a brilliant red – and not from a rising sun either.

We were measured for gas masks, my younger sister who was about five at the time had one in the shape of Mickey Mouse. There were posters asking us to dig for

victory; whether our journey was really necessary and the like. There was a collection for aluminium in the town. We had a half-life-size donkey on wheels that we called Dobbin, a much loved toy. However to help the war effort we removed his aluminium wheels to take and place along with a huge pile of saucepans, kettles and such like in the window of one of the shops in the town. Despite a poster warning us that walls had ears, the milkman told mother that another 80 guns were to be brought to the town. Our father decided to evacuate his family to the country, finding a lovely Tudor house in Stebbing, Essex, where we spent several months running wild and almost forgetting the war. My first night there was unforgettable: quietness that was yet so tangible. A good night's sleep without my ears being bombarded by sound.

Yet we were one of the lucky families. At least we could escape. And stay together. There were doodlebugs later in the war, and some direct hits on Braintree nearby, as well as my sister and a friend who were waiting for a bus being dive-bombed by a German plane. But there was no real hardship. The presence of Germans could be explained by the existence of the American base, Andrewsfield, not far from our house across the fields, after we moved from Stebbing to Panfield. The American bombers actually flew low right over our cottage, so low in fact that we could see men standing in the open doors and would wave to them as they left on bombing raids. Our Granny with tears in her eyes, would call out 'Come back safe you dear boys'. Mother kept chickens and when she had surplus eggs she hung out a sign by the road. A young American going by in a khaki truck with a white star on the door saw the sign and stopped. I well remember him vaulting over the front gate, telling us his name was Buddy. He came several times, arousing the motherly instinct of our parent who was an excellent cook. Despite rationing she asked him and a friend to tea, a wonderful concoction she managed to spread; how she did it I don't know as butter and sugar were so scarce, but cakes appeared on the table nevertheless. We had the meal displayed in the orchard but the boys never came. We heard later that there had been a vast bombing raid over Germany and wondered if Buddy had gone and never returned. Before the War, like many children, the seaside was a real draw for us. Shortly after the end of the war our father decided to make a trip again to the east coast, Frinton I believe it was. He must have been rather naïve to think the barbed wire barricades would be removed so soon. There it was all over the front. Our disappointment was intense.

I cannot stress enough the extraordinary effect Winston Churchill's voice on the wireless had on us. One felt inspired and heartened to the extent that I could have found a pitchfork and held my own against the enemy had they dared to invade our shores.

Shalford, Essex
Daily Telegraph, 30 October 2008

Epping Forest and the military during the Great War

RON LAYTON

Introduction

The influence of the First World War on Britain was considerable. In some respects the use of airships and aeroplanes by Germany brought the war front to mainland Britain, especially London, which was a prime target. It is not surprising, therefore, that Epping Forest, situated on the north-east edge of London, became involved in the conflict. This paper briefly outlines the main military effects of the war on the Forest. Three aspects are considered, namely: the war defences that were placed on the Forest, the war damage and, finally, the demands that were made on the Forest.

War Defences

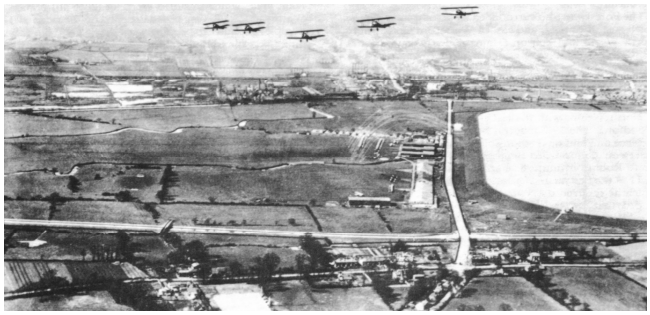
In August 1914 the War Office resources were utterly inadequate to provide any viable defence organisation.[1] However, as the war progressed, and unforeseen dangers became realised, a defence system for London emerged and, during what has been termed the First Battle of Britain, a complex network was installed around London, combining anti-aircraft guns, fighters, barrage balloons, observer and listening posts and a direct-line telephone communication network. This marvel of ingenuity and organisation finally prevailed against the German bombers in 1918 and, with the exception of some technological refinements, notably radar, was essentially the same air defence system which was to serve Britain in 1940.[2]

The north-east of London was defended by an outer circle of gun stations and searchlights and an inner circle of searchlights; inside this were aeroplane patrol lines. Epping Forest lay within these patrol lines in another area of gun stations and searchlights; some of these were placed on the Forest at Epping, Chingford and on Wanstead Flats. Other defences on the Forest included observation posts (as at Palmers Bridge), listening posts (as at Sewardstone Green) and numerous telegraphic lines; a balloon hangar was erected at High Beach and balloon aprons were erected at Snaresbrook and on Wanstead Flats. One problem of establishing such equipment on the Forest was public access. In 1918 the Royal Air Force complained that they were experiencing problems in keeping the public clear of the balloons. As well as a personal danger to the public, it was felt there was also the possibility that the balloons would be set on fire. As a temporary measure, therefore, before the sites were fenced the police were detailed to patrol the vicinity.[3]

Aerodromes

The Forest was also surrounded by aerodromes. To the north-east of Epping, and east of Woodford Green, were North Weald and Fairlop (Hainault Farm) aerodromes respectively. These were established to cover the east of London. At one time, together with Hornchurch (Sutton's Farm), these aerodromes housed the three wings of 39 Squadron, which was charged with the local protection of London.[4] Later in the war all three wings were stationed at North Weald, with the HQ based at Hounslow and Woodford. 39 Squadron became the 'crack' Home Defence unit and was responsible for a number of notable successes. On 2/3 September 1916, Lieutenant W Leefe Robinson (Sutton's Farm) shot down the airship SL11 – the first airship to be destroyed on British soil, for which he received the VC. Other successes achieved included that by 2nd Lieutenant W J Tempest (North Weald) who, on l/2 October 1916, destroyed the airship L31 at Potters Bar which was piloted by the highly experienced Commander, Kapitanleutnant Heinrich Mathy.[5] [See *Newsletter 179*.]

In addition there was Chingford aerodrome. It was listed as a second class landing ground and was the main training station for pilots of the Royal Naval Air Service. Chingford became No 207 Training Depot station with Hainault Farm as a sub-station.[6] The Chingford reservoir was used as a landmark for landing, although a number of young fliers plunged to their deaths in the King George reservoir after misjudging their landing approach.[7] Several aeroplanes were also found on the Forest by the Forest Keepers. Ivor Novello, composer of such songs as 'Keep the Home Fires Burning', was a lieutenant flying instructor at Chingford.



Chingford Aerodrome during the Great War

War Damage

During the war a number of enemy airships and aircraft crossed over the Forest and considerable damage was caused to the east end of London. However, the Forest Conservators' Minute Books record only two incidents of bombs being dropped specifically on the Forest; the first during an airship raid, the second during the later Gotha raids. The airship raid took place on the night of 2/3 April 1916, with two enemy attacks, one by the navy on the Forth area and one by the army (LZ88 and LZ90) on London.

LZ90 crossed the coast at the mouth of the River Colne and then moved inland, passing between Epping and Theydon Bois at 11.50 pm where it was picked up by the Chingford searchlight. At 11.54 pm it was engaged by the guns of Waltham Abbey Control and responded by dropping a total of 25 high explosives and 65 incendiary bombs between Woodredon Farm and Windmill Hill near Waltham Abbey. The airship then turned north, rose sharply and disappeared. There were no casualties, although a number of houses were slightly damaged.[8] In terms of the actual Forest the Conservators reported that the airships dropped two bombs near the neighbourhood of Woodridden Hill and towards Honey Lane, doing considerable damage to the trees and the surface of the ground.[9]

The second incident took place during the period of the Gotha bomber night-raids when, on the night of 4/5 September 1917, seven detachments, consisting of 26 aircraft, attacked the mouth of the Thames and London with feint attacks on the districts of Orfordness, Harwich, Thanet and Dover. Detachment D, consisting of probably two enemy machines, took a straight course for London although only one dropped bombs. These were dropped in the east end of London, in the Barking–Stratford–West Ham area, which included six 12 kg (26 ½ lb) bombs in Wanstead Park.[10] One bomb dropped on the ridge of The Temple roof and exploded between the tiles and the ceiling, doing considerable damage; four fell at the rear of the chalet and one fell close to the park boundary fence.[11]

Another incident worth recording occurred on the night of 7/8 March 1918. At 00.45 hours an aircraft was reported as falling in flames near Epping and although the Forest was thoroughly searched nothing was found. The search ended several days later when it was established that a British pilot, who had unwittingly lit his Holt flares, put down in a clearing, believing that his aircraft was on fire. The aircraft may have been one of 38 Squadron, Stamford, that was briefly reported overdue on a training flight.[12] The Conservators reported that the only damage was to an oak tree and some hollies.[13]

War Demands

The war effort placed considerable demands on the Forest from general drilling by troops to the use of buildings and natural resources. Some of the uses are commented on below:

On various occasions, following the 1878 Epping Forest Act, the Forest had been used by the military for certain activities; however, with the advent of the war this use increased dramatically, with many more battalions applying for and being given permission to drill on the Forest. In a number of areas of the Forest permission was even given to dig trenches to practise the new type of warfare being experienced in France. About one acre (0.4 ha) of trenches was dug behind the Jubilee Retreat.[14] Many battalions used the Forest and to list them all would be tedious and unnecessary. One, however, the 13th (Service) Battalion, Essex Regiment (West Ham) may be singled out. During the war many battalions were raised by individuals and institutions; the Mayor of West Ham was instrumental in raising this battalion.[15] It was formed on 8 December 1914, trained on the Forest and was distinguished in France before being disbanded in February 1918.

Apart from drilling, there was also a more permanent military presence on the Forest. As well as the gun stations and searchlights already mentioned, a number of buildings, including pubs and retreats, were commandeered for military purposes. The King's Oak, High Beach, for example, had a series of incumbents – the 3/28 Battalion London Regiment (Artists Rifles), the 26 Royal Fusiliers and the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Air Force. The No 7 Balloon Wing, Royal Air Force, had a training centre at the King's Oak, with the HQ at the Royal Forest Hotel, Chingford.

In certain instances these installations were enlarged, or the enterprise was expanded. At High Beach a YMCA hut was erected for the troops[16] while the Artists Rifles were given permission to use the Honey Lane rifle range,[17] although whether the latter was actually used is unclear. Later, when the Royal Air Force took over the King's Oak, a portable balloon shed was erected at High Beach. In addition several

installations applied for, and were granted, permission to use a piece of Forest land for a garden.

The natural resources of the Forest were also used. Brushwood and trees were requested by the War Office for uses such as entanglements.

At one stage, the usual woodland thinning programme had to be abandoned to meet these demands.[18] At a more specialised level, hornbeam timber was requested to make wireless telegraphy terminals for aeroplanes. The Forest Superintendent was instructed by the Epping Forest Committee to select suitable trees for this purpose.[19] A number of 'agricultural' practices were also begun, or altered, as a number of Forest bye-laws were relaxed to assist the war effort. Over 100 acres (40.5 ha) of Forest land were converted into allotments, goats (uncommonable animals) were allowed on the Forest provided they were tethered and turf and bracken were cut for various purposes.

The whole infrastructure of the Forest also suffered with the increased demands being made. Roads suffered through an increased use by military traffic. Rangers Road, for example, deteriorated owing to heavy use by traffic going to the Ponders End aerodrome.[20] Earls Path, Forest Road and the Station Roads were also specifically mentioned for repairs, due to heavy military use.[21] The noise caused by the traffic was also a source of numerous complaints and was discussed at a local Highways Committee Meeting.[22] The stationing of troops on the Forest also put considerable pressure on the services. To take but one example: the disposal of sewage from the King's Oak. This proved a considerable problem with various attempts being made to solve it. This was finally solved when the sewer was connected to the Loughton system.

After the end of the war when Europe began to recover from the years of turmoil, a move was also made in Epping Forest towards restoring a semblance of normality. Reminders of the war occurred when requests were made for emergency landing sites for aircraft or for the use of a rifle range established at Leytonstone (both rejected). The clearing up took a considerable time – towards the end of 1920 the Conservators were still in communication with the War Office over the removal of the various temporary government buildings that had been erected on the Forest during the War.

Acknowledgement

I wish to thank the Joint School of Photography, Royal Air Force, Cosford, for supplying the photograph of Chingford Aerodrome.

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12. C Cole and E F Cheesman, *op cit,* note 1

13. EFCMB, April 1918.

14. EFCMB, 14 October 1918.

15. EFCMB, 18 January 1915.

16. EFCMB, 17 January 1916.

17. EFCMB, 19 July 1915.

18. EFCMB, 23 October 1915.

19. EFCMB, 8 May 1916.

20. EFCMB, 30 July 1917.

21. Loughton UDC Highways Committee, 8 January 1918. Loughton Library. Ref N9 4.

22. Loughton UDC, 9 October 1917.

This article is reprinted from the *Essex Journal*, April 1988, by kind permission of the author who at the time it was written was Assistant Warden at the Field Study Centre at High Beach.

Elevenacre Rise – a modest history

MIKE ALSTON

{By now Mike's contributions are familiar to many of our readers. Currently resident in Maidenhead, Berkshire, he lived in Traps Hill from the 1920s to the 1940s.]

Elevenacre Rise is just one of many new roads which appeared in Loughton during the 1930s, but its background is possibly a bit more interesting than most of them.

It is on the site of what was formerly a large field connected by others to a farm on the north side of Borders Lane. Because much of it was steeply sloped it was generally unsuitable for crops and was limited to cattle grazing. But this ended when Carroll Hill was extended, in the early 1930s, to link up with Church Lane, thus isolating the field.

Also at that time there were several winters with heavy falls of snow, and so the field became ideal for tobogganing. Indeed, the slope was so steep that many a sledge (and its crew) careered down, only to be stopped by the solid walls of gardens in The Uplands. Overlooking the field was a large house in Carroll Hill, with a bridge-like structure on the roof. This was the home of Captain Angus, and one likes to think that he used his telescope to keep a weather eye on these 'ships of the snow'. On just one occasion, around 1933, the field was the setting for Loughton's annual flower show and fair: but its destiny was inevitable – development.

In the mid-1930s two houses were built at the top end fronting Traps Hill. One was occupied by Mr and Mrs Eric Bass although, sadly, Lieutenant Bass was to die a few years later as a Japanese prisoner-of-war. The next house down was the residence of the Truelove family, several of whom became prominent members of the local amateur dramatic scene. Further building soon followed . . . and so to Elevenacre Rise. Fortunately this was before metrication, or it might today have been called 'Fourandahalfhectare Rise'!

While the site was mostly devoted to houses, the north-west flank became the home of the Loughton Lawn Tennis & Bowls Club, the tennis players having

relocated from their modest site in The Drive. The club really came into its own at the end of the Second World War, when the tennis section became the meeting place for many young ex-service Loughtonians of both sexes, most having left the town in the early war years as little more than kids and returning a few years later as veterans of many a bitter conflict.

The social side flourished and there were regular dances with music provided by the inimitable Mrs Mills and her band. The bar literally did a roaring trade – often to the annoyance of the older bowlers! Many 'tennis partnerships' blossomed into marriage – mine included. Perhaps one should more appropriately call them 'love matches'? Today (2008) it is sad to find that all the tennis courts have disappeared. But the bowling green is still there, and I wonder if any of its members were once part of the noisy tennis crowd who annoyed the older members they have now become!

[Any answers to that final question from our members? Observant members may have seen the more recent road sign, which proclaims: 'Eleven Acre Rise'. This is not my recollection of how it is spelt, as I have always known it as 'Elevenacre Rise' – Ed.]

The short life of John Rann, highwayman – 'Sixteen String Jack'

TERRY CARTER

Less than a mile from the centre of Theydon Bois is one of the quaintest named pubs in Essex, *Sixteen String Jack*. No doubt many of us know why it is so called, but this explanation is for the benefit of any of our readers who might be unfamiliar with the said ' Jack' . This unusual name refers to John Rann, who was a fairly minor league 'knight of the road', as highwaymen ironically used to be called. He operated not so much in Essex but mainly towards the west fringes of London. John Rann may have been less notorious than some highwaymen, especially local ones such as Dick Turpin and Stephen Bunce, but he cut an extravagant figure in other ways. Here is a little of his history.

Born near Bath in 1750, he was, as stated, an English criminal and highwayman who plied his 'trade' during the mid-18th century. He was a prominent and colourful local figure renowned for his wit and charm, and would later come to be known as 'Sixteen String Jack', by virtue of, among other eccentric costumes, the 16 various coloured strings he wore on the knees of his silk breeches.

Rann first served as a postillion to an upper class local woman. Then, during his teenage years he worked as coachman at Brooke's Mews, in London, where he was considered to be of good character. He later became the driver of a post-chaise, after which he was servant to an officer, and was highly regarded in both positions. Roughly four years before meeting his end, he was coachman to a gentleman of fortune near Portman Square, and it was during this period that he dressed in the manner which gave rise to the nickname 'Sixteen-string Jack', by wearing breeches with the eight strings at each knee.

He soon became accustomed to extravagant living, far and away beyond his means, including dressing in very expensive costumes in which to attend balls and galas of the city's high social circles, and was constantly in debt as a result. After living in the service of several noblemen, his indulgences had to be funded by desperate means, so he turned pickpocket, which cost him his good name and set him on a calamitous path.

Although he pursued his pickpocketing career with some success, he eventually graduated to armed hold-ups, stealing watches, jewellery and other valuables along Hounslow Road. He soon became a mounted highwayman and, although he was arrested several times on charges of highway robbery, six of his cases were dismissed due to lack of evidence, as witnesses were unable to identify the masked Rann.

After one trial at Bow Street, while wearing an unusually large number of flowers in his coat and his irons decorated with blue ribbons, he was again acquitted.

Rann was finally apprehended after robbing the chaplain of Princess Amelia Sophia, the second daughter of King George II, near Brentford in 1774. The noble lady claimed she recognised him and her evidence was undisputed. When Jack was brought up to face his trial he was dressed in a specially made new suit of pea-green cloth, his hat was bound round with silver strings and he wore an extravagant ruffled silk shirt.

Found guilty, totally against his expectation, and held in custody at Newgate Gaol, he supposedly entertained seven women at a farewell dinner before his execution on 30 November. Shortly before he was to be hanged, appearing in a flamboyant green suit adorned by a large nosegay, he enjoyed cheerful banter with both the hangman and the crowd, then danced a jig, before being publicly 'turned off' at Tyburn. He was only 24.

A novel based on his life, titled *Sixteen String Jack*, was published in 1841.

[Apologies to any members who first read my piece in the Epping Forest U3A newsletter, from which this one was adapted.]

Secondary Modern education in the 1950s – Part 2

TED MARTIN

S C Burden was an inspirational teacher who came to Lordship Lane from Oxford and taught history. He was only at the school for a year but in that time managed to give me a lifetime's interest in American history and made a great contribution to the development of the school magazine. From four pages of closely typed foolscap it became a publication of 32 pages once a term. The cover was printed on the

school's platen press, from real type. having the school's crest printed in bright yellow and then dusted with gold filings, and gently wiped off with cotton wool.

I edited all the pieces which were then typed onto Gestetner skins by Mrs Wood, the school secretary, the only woman amongst all those boys and men. I then printed each side of every page by winding the handle of the Gestetner duplicator and then, with others, collated the pages and stapled them into the covers. This was done during metalwork sessions (which were whole mornings) causing Mr Ronalds to write laconically in my end of term report: 'Seems to prefer printing the school magazine.' On one memorable occasion I was even sent to Shaftesbury Avenue by bus to collect more paper for the cover. The magazine continued after I left and my younger brother became the editor.

A scandal took place when a new teacher, an Irishman, came and seemed to have some novel ideas about keeping order. He used one of the long poles which were used to open the very high windows. The pole was crashed down across the desks of offending boys and this, and the liberal use of the board rubber as a missile, gave rise to suspicion. The police came along one day and removed him and he subsequently appeared in court for forging a teaching certificate which had been his brother's.

My form master for the last two years at the school was Mr C L Scotter, who was middle-aged: a very precise man who extolled the virtues of fountain pens and Parker Quink and Sellotape. We wondered whether he had shares in these companies. He was also a devotee of cricket which made all the cricketers in the class his special favourites. I was no good at cricket. I was so short that when padded up I could barely walk, let alone run. I wasn't too fond of that hard ball, either.

Discipline was strict and two strokes of the cane from the form master were the usual reward for stepping out of line. Serious cases were sent to the headmaster for six strokes across the bottom and entry into the punishment book. A few masters seemed to delight in caning. It was used for the boy who could not solve the problem on the board when hauled to the front of the class. This happened to me fairly frequently and did absolutely nothing to improve my maths.

The school was organised into four houses: red, yellow, green and blue and prefects were appointed from the 3rd and 4th year boys. There was also a head boy, usually an outstanding sportsman, who was appointed from the fourth year. Prefects kept order on the stairs and in the corridors and were not above administering a punch or two to keep you in line.

There was an assembly every day, usually with hymns – some of the noises produced by the older boys singing descant had to be heard to be believed!

Each week we had a lesson on classical music, using a printed book related to a schools music broadcast, and a discussion afterwards. During these lessons I learned a lot about the classical composers and to appreciate their work. Anyone in the school who could play a musical instrument, though there were very few, was encouraged to perform for the whole school at assembly.

A speech day, or rather evening, occurred every year and a choir was organised from the first years whose voices had not yet broken. There were book prizes for the Essay Competition, which I won on at least two occasions; more books as form prizes for progress and various cups and shields for sport. There was also the Rayner Prize, presented by a local businessman for the boy who had made the most progress in the year, which I won when I went from the C stream to the A stream. The accommodation problem was so bad that even our speech day had to be held at another school in the area. However, we usually had someone well known to present the prizes and one year it was Derek McCulloch (Uncle Mac of BBC Children's Hour).

As I found out later, our Secondary Modern was being run very much on public school lines.

Sport and PT were very important but I was no good at either of these, apart from running. We marched to the other end of town for swimming lessons and marched in a crocodile to the sports field. Again facilities were a problem and for one term we used to play football at the Wood Green Town FC ground. A sports day was held each year and the school's houses competed against each other.

There were school outings every year and a school camp which, when I went, was to Dawlish in South Devon and was 'real' camping. The headmaster's daughter and a friend, who were older than us, came on that occasion, much to the delight of the older boys. Most of the class turned out for Brian Longthorne's wedding at Southgate and I remember climbing a tree to get a better view. Before the wedding I was selected to take notes to his fiancée, who was a teacher at Noel Park Senior Girls School, a task which I found most embarrassing, as a boy walking through a girls' school!

Lordship Lane was in the old County of Middlesex but in Essex secondary modern schools were (at least by 1960) reckoned to be above average. In the Walthamstow Excepted District, they almost all offered full GCE O level courses (the CSE did not begin till the early 60s) although of course not all pupils could be put in for them. There was also the '13-plus' for so-called late developers whereby some people from secondary moderns transferred to the grammar school in the third form. In theory some who passed the 11+ could be redirected to secondary moderns -- but it is thought that that didn't happen. If you went to the grammar school, your parents had to sign a legal agreement to keep you at school in the 5th form (in secondary moderns, you could leave at the end of the 4th year). More used than the 13+ was the system whereby pupils who had done well at secondary moderns could either join a grammar school sixth form, or if they needed better or more GCE O level passes, a grammar school 5th form. So far as I am aware none of these provisions applied in Middlesex.

About 1963 Lordship Lane became Wood Green School on a new site built on part of our old playing

fields. The old buildings reverted to junior and infants.

What did the school do for me? I left in 1954 for the printing industry with shaky maths, but I had come top in everything else in my last year. I joined a firm specialising in printing law and academic books. I obtained GCEs at evening classes (only technical subjects were available at the school) and attended a variety of courses at the London School (later College) of Printing. At 21 I qualified as a proofreader. I worked for my first employer for 29 years but had one year away from them when I was proofreading. When I was 25 they invited me to come back as an assistant manager and at 31 I was managing the firm's London operation. At 40 I became a director. Because of the technical changes in the printing industry, I left at 45 to become an editorial and production manager in publishing and held that job until early retirement at 59.

A spin off from the Secondary Modern system was that I have always felt comfortable using tools and, over the years, the advice from those woodwork and metalwork lessons has helped me with various household problems.

Form 4A of 1954 has kept in touch and has had several reunions over the years. At the 25th anniversary of leaving (1979) our old headmaster Mr Kerswell came up to London from retirement in Sussex. At age 79 he remembered the names of all of us and asked many personal questions, in my case about how my brother was getting on. He died shortly afterwards. We had our 50th anniversary reunion a little late in August 2006.

Back in the playground after 50 years!

In retrospect I am glad that I did not go to a grammar school. My secondary modern education, supplemented by technical and craft training, has served me well for a lifetime. I think Lordship Lane School did me proud. I might have ended up with a really boring job instead of having a career I loved, working in the world of books for the past half-century. My cousin went to the prestigious Latimer Grammar School in Edmonton and became a motor mechanic!

Perhaps what was achieved in those hard post-war days with minimum facilities was exceptional and perhaps some parts of that experience could prove useful for today's education scene. Of course there must be many similar stories, schools and experiences. For example, I know that many ex-pupils from Roding Road/The Brook did very well, giving the lie to any notion that Secondary Modern schools were for failures. Until it was demolished and redeveloped in the 1990s as the Hanbury Park Estate, it was not just a school, but an further learning centre with a wide choice of evening classes, and a Youth Centre where many lifelong relationships, even marriages, had their origins. Perhaps someone who was educated at Roding Road has reminiscences to share in a future *Newsletter*, maybe along the same lines as my own.

[*There is no doubt that the outstanding quality of the Loughton & District Historical Society's publications is a direct result of overcoming the obstacles created by an arbitrary selection process – Ed.*]

70 years ago

JOHN REDFERN

The following was written by J H 'Spud' Taylor, Headmaster of Buckhurst Hill County High School, in the first edition of *The Roding*, the annual school magazine, and related to Roding Lane before Chigwell Rise was opened a few months later.

IN THE BEGINNING

From any direction the first view of the school is striking. I first saw it in April, 1938, when, in complete ignorance of its situation, I was drawn by some intuition down Palmerston Road. As I passed over the railway bridge I gained my first glimpse. There, magnificently situated in open country, rose the extended front elevation, gleaming in the spring sun. It was an inspiring sight, for, in spite of the newness of the buildings, somehow the school seemed to harmonise with the natural background and its lines to be related to the natural contours of its terrain.

At that time the new road to Chigwell had not been made; Roding Lane was green with the foliage of hedge and tree, so that one felt that here indeed was the perfect setting for a school. It is well to record this at a time when the new road has been cut; when traffic lights and lamp posts have sprung up in Roding Lane; when the bright line of new houses creeps nearer to the school and when there is rumour of a bus route past its gates.

[*Alas, BHCHS, John's school, and mine, is no more, closing in 1989, although the building is still used as a school. Using editorial license, and to back up Mr Taylor's remarks, I have added the first verse of the School Song, composed in July 1940. Although considered by some as rather OTT, particularly in the later verses, it still conveys an evocative message*

'Firm set above the Roding Stream, by wide and grassy leas,
Our house stands firmly to the winds, twixt Essex lanes and trees.
While we within its walls are found, like loyal sons we rest,
Contriving how our varied gifts may serve the School the best.' *Ed.*]

Was I the youngest person in the RAF? From Stockwell to Chigwell

'STOCKWELL LAD': GEORGE BECKENHAM

We lived in Stockwell in London, at the start of the war. I was just two and a half. Like a lot of other kids, when the Battle of Britain started, my brother, sister and I were evacuated to Newton Abbot in Devon; I was just over three years old. My mum didn't come

with us and we were boarded with a family in the town. My dad was in the RAF.

When the Battle of Britain receded, we were allowed to come back to London, this must have been early in 1941. I remember the air raid sirens wailing every day; and we would rush to the Anderson shelter in our back garden for safety, although we would stand at the entrance looking up into the sky to see the 'action'.

The worst thing that I recall was the 'doodlebugs', they would come across the sky, then the engine would stop . . . silence, then a weird noise, just like a slate falling down a roof, then the enormous explosion.

We stayed on in London throughout the bombings and the 'V bombs', until early in 1944. At this time my mum was expecting my younger brother; due to our house being bombed we had to live in the shelter most of the time. The doctor said that my mum should be in a safer place and contacted my dad, who was at that time stationed at RAF Chigwell in Essex. He immediately obtained compassionate leave and came home to sort things out. My mum and sister were sent to a nursing home somewhere in Barnet. There was nowhere for my brother and I to go, other than to stay in the shelter. My dad packed a few of our things together and took us back to RAF Chigwell with him!

I remember arriving in a building which turned out to be the airmen's mess. We were left there by dad who had to 'check-in' before a certain time. A man asked us who we were and what we were doing there; my brother told him that my dad had left us there. Upon his return shortly after, I remember voices being raised and arguments going on for a long time. I remember dad saying 'You've got me here so you will have to look after my boys as well'.

Amazingly, we were taken to a bedroom and 'set up home'. We stayed there for I believe over a week and were given various jobs to do; such as filling sand bags and other little tasks that kids could do. (To enable us to stay there and be fed we were given 'numbers' which were on our bedroom door, just like the airmen.)

Early evening we would have our tea. Sometimes the airmen would get me to play darts; if I managed to hit the bullseye they would give me a threepenny bit! (I saved all my winnings in an 'OXO' tin.)

Finally, we were taken back home to meet up with my mum and sister. Shortly after we were all evacuated to Cornwall; to a little village called St Agnes. My younger brother was born in the hospital at Redruth in September 1944. We were given accommodation in a house on the cliff top at St Agnes beach (which is now an Hotel) where we stayed until the end of the war in Europe.

Our life in Cornwall was very good, but that is another story!

[*Not sure about a 3-year-old hitting a bullseye at darts without a lot of help.*]

The Times Digital Archive

JOHN HARRISON

Quite some time ago Chris Pond mentioned *The Times* Digital Archive at a Society meeting. This is a facility whereby you can effectively 'Google search' *The Times* from 1785 to 1985. For instance, if you were researching the history of Loughton, you could input the name and see what came up. I realised that it would be of assistance in my researches into vehicle registrations as I could input terms like 'number plate' and 'trade plate' and see what appeared.

I did not immediately take up this facility. I believed I could only access it at the Colindale Newspaper Library and I was pursuing other researches there, so did not have opportunity to use it on my occasional visits to Colindale. I then learnt it was available in the British Library and that made it a lot easier to access, as I could use it when I could fit in an hour or two in central London between other activities. I started using it and made some most interesting discoveries.

On one visit to London when I hoped to do such researches, I coincidentally met Richard Morris at Loughton Station (it is not unusual for Richard and I to meet up on the first train after 9.30 am – we are obviously both economy minded and want to take advantage of the reduced fares!). On the train we had a wide-ranging conversation about various issues. Amongst the things we discussed was why we were travelling into London and I said I hoped to use *The Times* Digital Archive among other things. He replied, 'Don't you know, if you're a member of Essex Libraries you can use it at home by inputting your ticket number on their website'. Needless to say I renewed my lapsed membership and benefited from much easier access.

Most of my discoveries have been of a fairly technical nature and would bore the pants off most *Newsletter* readers. Some, however, have been fascinating insights into world affairs, e.g., at one point buses travelling on a regular route between China and Macao had to carry two number plates to satisfy the honour of the two countries. Below, however, are a couple of stories compiled from information found which might be of more general interest to readers.

'Star in Court after Paparazzi follow Celebrity Plate Car'

This might have been the headline for a newspaper article I came across. The article, however, was published on 26 August 1935 and the term 'paparazzi' was not in use then and anyway they were actually two journalists rather than photographers. Furthermore, *The Times* would not use that sort of headline – the actual heading was 'Counsel and Examination of Motorist – Question of Doctor's Right'. Nevertheless, the report does suggest that there is indeed nothing new under the sun.

The defendant was Ronald MacDonald Hutchinson of King's Court, King's Road, London, better known as the music hall comedian, Harry Tate. These days, it is not unusual for celebrities to have cherished numbers, but Harry Tate is believed to be the first to have one, his number having been T 8.

The article reports that the journalists had followed Mr Tate's car from Stratford Broadway to Clapham, 'where they signalled a police patrol-car'. His car had apparently been swerving all over the road. He was charged with driving under the influence of drink and dangerous driving. Under cross-examination the journalists denied that they had recognised the 'peculiar' (the actual word used in the article!) number plates of the car and had followed it 'out for a story'. The case also involved detailed cross-examination of the doctor who had considered that Harry Tate had been driving under the influence of alcohol.

The verdict was reported a few days later, on 9 September 1935. The magistrate was not satisfied with the evidence of drink-driving and acquitted him on this count – maybe Harry Tate's solicitor, a Mr Laurence Vine, was the then equivalent of 'Mr. Loophole'. He was, however, found guilty of dangerous driving and fined £12 plus 12 guineas costs (£12 12s or £12.60).

After Harry Tate's death the T 8 mark passed to Johnny Tate of the Tate and Lyle Sugar Company. According to the latest edition of Noel Woodall and Brian Heaton's *Car Numbers* book, it is now owned by Mrs Penelope Proudlock of Fleet, Hampshire.

An unhappy discovery

A vehicle's registration normally gives away information. On the current British system, the first letter indicates the region in which the car was registered, the second letter the particular office it was registered at and the following two figures indicate when it was registered, 58 being the current number in use. A cherished number usually gives away other information, most commonly the owner's initials. Other countries' plates reveal other facts.

A cutting from *The Times* of 5 December 1938 was headed 'Nazis and Jews – The New Ghetto' and was written by the paper's Berlin correspondent. To set the context, this was written within a month of *Kristallnacht*, which took place on 9–10 November 1938. The article reported that to mark 'The Day of National Solidarity' Germany had published two decrees. One decree was to prevent Jews from entering certain parts of Berlin and going into public buildings and places of entertainment. The paper indicated that it was a precursor to the establishment of a ghetto for Jews in Berlin and other places. The other decree was to prevent Jews from driving. The article included the following statement: 'It will . . . be easy for the police to detect offenders since Jewish motorists have for some time been alone in the possession of number plates numbered from 35,000 upwards.'

At the beginning of this article I talked about information that a number plate can give away, but can you imagine how it must feel to drive a car which indicates from its plate that you are of a despised status. Furthermore, that despised status is entirely the result of something that you have no control over, the circumstances of your birth, and in any event it is totally irrational, something whipped up by propaganda.

Normally, especially in papers such as *The Times*, correspondents report the news rather than comment on it, but tellingly this story commenced:

'The relentless campaign which is being carried on by the rulers of Germany with the object of making life in the Reich utterly intolerable for the Jews, thus driving them to leave Germany on any terms which the Government may choose to dictate and compelling other countries to accept them on the same terms, has been carried two long steps farther during the week-end. The Day of National Solidarity was celebrated by the publication of two decrees which make the position of the German Jew, already hopeless enough, more hopeless still.'

I expect readers who carry out some form of research, whether it is local history, family history or whatever, get a little buzz of excitement when they make a discovery that furthers their researches. In finding this article, I had made an interesting discovery about the use of registrations in pre-war Germany. Sadly, however, in this instance any thrill of making a new discovery was far outweighed by the sense of injustice at how Jews were treated during this period.

I hope this article has encouraged society members to make use of *The Times* Digital Archive. Furthermore, thanks to my groundwork, you now know how easy it is to access it and you do not have to make trips to London to use it. If you are not on line at home, you can of course access the Archive in any Essex library. If in using the Archive you come across anything you think might be of interest to Society members, do write a bit about it for this *Newsletter*. Best of luck!

Some Memories of Loughton – Part 2

JOHN MARTIN

[*John Martin, clearly a man of strong views, attended Buckhurst Hill County High School from 1940–1945. These notes, were, he says, inspired by reading the L&DHS publication,* Post-War Loughton 1945–1970. *This second part of his reminiscences covers the period 1945–56)*

1945–46: A Year in Loughton Youth Centre (cont)

The West Essex Rep

Mr Ripley taught English at the Roding Road School. He wrote to the *West Essex Gazette* saying he felt there was a need for a local repertory company. A reply appeared in the paper saying that such already existed in the Loughton Amateur Dramatic Society. This was from one of the Truelove family who in fact virtually were the LADS {see 'Eleven Acre Rise', above].

Mr Ripley no doubt wanted an independent new company and he set up the West Essex Repertory

Company which thrived for many years. His wife and principal actress was Betty Ripley, whom he had met when she was a counter assistant in Loughton Post Office.

Some time in 1946, I should guess, José Collins, the wife of Dr Kirkland, was persuaded by Mr Ripley to appear in one of his productions. Mrs Pearl Newman, the Warden of Loughton Youth Centre, had been a colleague of Mr Ripley at the Roding Road School and was able to arrange for a party of us from the Centre to attend the dress rehearsal. Perhaps the actual performance was a success but at the dress rehearsal José Collins behaved as a prima donna, constantly stopping and saying 'No, no I can't go on'. Poor Mr Ripley as producer muttered to Mrs Newman: 'Never again.'

Mr Straw

Mrs Newman was asked for a youth representative to be sent to the local Road Safety Council and she asked me to go.

I felt quite out of my element sitting in the green leather chairs in the Council Chamber among numerous local councillors. At the end of the meeting the man sitting in the adjacent chair spoke to me in a most friendly manner. He was a man of at most 25 I should think, representing the Buckhurst Hill Parents' Association and his name was Mr Straw. I also ran into him sometimes commuting on the steam trains to and from Liverpool Street and found him most friendly. He was, however, a very bitter man who had been a conscientious objector and now found himself unable to get into a university, whether for lack of a place or a grant or perhaps both, was not clear to me. He tried to persuade me not to do my military service but my mind was made up that I should. After 1947 I never saw him again though I sometimes saw letters in the local paper from Mrs Joan Straw criticising governments and councillors.

I forgot all about him for 40 years. It was only in recent years in conversation with Martin Seabrook that I realised he was the father of Jack Straw and had at some point left his wife and family. (Martin Seabrook was a schoolboy growing up opposite us in The Greens Close when my wife and I were living there. He was later a Professor in the Agriculture Department at Nottingham University.)

Clarence House

While in Loughton Youth Centre, I joined a weekend party visiting the County Residential Youth Centre in Thaxted. I found it a most civilised and fascinating place under its Wardens, Mr Aneurin and Mrs Marjorie Jones. After I had left the army in 1949 and became a student I was resolved to go there again, independently. I went to Know East Anglia Week, Know Essex Week, Passion Sunday music weekends and New Year's Weekends. The place had a profound influence on me and it was there I met my wife. Had I not gone to Loughton Youth Centre, I might never have found it.

1946–47: **End of the Youth Centre Year**

My friend David Chopping was studying full time at the South West Essex Tech for the Intermediate B Sc (Econ) and this seemed an attractive course to me. In the autumn of 1946 I signed up for evening classes three nights a week at the Tech. By now I was hardened to my journey to and from work and on Tech nights left the train at Leyton to bus to Walthamstow. I more or less gave up at the Youth Centre.

The Greens Close

In 1955 I married and my wife and I moved into The Greens Close. One reason we chose to live there was that my father had said: 'That Reader builds a good house.' We were fortunate to have No 8. This was a house with enviable views. We looked towards Baldwins Hill and if we turned slightly in our garden also towards Goldings Hill.

The view from Stony Path back towards our house is not likely to have been so uplifting. My parents were friendly with Mr George Shuttle, a gardener and a real old Loughtonian who must have been born before 1870. He came to our house once when in his nineties, driven by his nephew. He remembered that the slope on which our house stood had been a favourite toboggan run on snowy days when he was young. Looking across to Goldings Hill, he remembered when the traffic for Epping went by Lower Road.

We lived at The Greens Close from 1955 until 1968 except for the academic year 1961–62 when I was teaching in the USA and we went over with two children.

1956: The Suez Crisis

The Anglo-French invasion of Suez in 1956 provoked intense controversy, within families, churches and Common Rooms. A poster appeared outside almost every Protestant church and chapel in Loughton, signed by all their ministers, curates and pastors. As I recall, it read: 'As Ministers of the Gospel of Christ, we condemn this act of aggression.' I went to the Reverend Dennis Wright, our Vicar at St Mary's Church, and asked if he would let me have a copy to display outside our house and he agreed. I fixed it to the wooden panels fronting our garage at 8 The Greens Close.

I went through the porch of St Mary's the next Sunday morning just behind Mr William Addison and I heard him whisper to Mr Percy Coomber, 'There's been a row about the poster'. This may well have been so, as the poster on the St Mary's board, but no other, had been taken down during the week. St Mary's numbered some prominent local Conservatives among its congregation.

On the Sunday evening a meeting convened by the Loughton UNA in the Methodist Church Hall drew quite a large number to condemn the invasion.

The crisis ended swiftly and suddenly: some were pleased, some angered, very many relieved. (I kept a copy of the poster for some years but doubt I have it now.)

Before your time – the Monster Bonfire

TERRY CARTER

This is another photograph from a faded newspaper cutting, probably early 60s, of a spectacular Loughton event, part of a nationwide celebration.

The caption reads:

'The town celebrated the coronation of King George V on June 11, 1911, by building this mammoth bonfire on the highest point around London, at High Beach. Some of the builders are pictured with their masterpiece just a few hours before it was to glow in the night sky for miles around.'

Despite the fading, the words, 'Coronation Night' and 'The Monster Bonfire' are visible. Assuming the gentleman in the boater, to the left of the board, is about 5′ 6″ tall, the huge fire would be roughly 35 feet high and 28 feet wide.

'Two "Ps" or not two "Ps"?' – that is the question

MIKE ALSTON (*with apologies to the Bard*)

In 1926, when my parents and I moved into our newly built house (No 33) in TRA**PP**S Hill the road name was spelled with two Ps. So far as I know, that had always been the spelling and confirmed by many documents – e.g, the 1935 Police *Instructions on the Working of Beats and Patrols.*

But, in 1936, new signs were erected at the top and bottom of the road with the spelling 'TRA**P**S'. Residents were annoyed and suggested that the council were saving money by shortening the name! No-one apparently pursued the matter and the single 'P' has remained ever since.

Do we have a historian who can find out whether there is any record of a single 'P' being used earlier than 1936? What could be useful would be a check on the origin of the name. Perhaps some local dignitary called TRAPP (or TRAP)?

Can anyone HELP? . . . or HELPP? [*Ouch! – Ed.*]

The murder of PC George Gutteridge – the darker side of Essex

GEORGINA HOLMES

[*'Ina', a friend for many years, enjoys creative writing in various genres. This is a well-crafted, concise summary of a notorious Essex murder that took place over 80 years ago. The tragic, local killing is famous for a bizarre superstition but, more importantly, for being one of the very first cases solved by the use of what is now known as ballistics.*]

I'm sure many of us have driven around the Essex countryside enjoying the views unaware that on some roads there lurks a dark secret.

One particular event relates to an incident that took place on 26 September 1927 and concerns the murder of PC George Gutteridge. His death caused an outcry throughout the country and the *Essex Chronicle* reported as follows:

'One of the most remarkable of crimes of recent years, claiming as its victim a popular Essex policeman, murdered in the actual performance of his duties, sent a wave of consternation over the county on Tuesday. While the countryside was still enshrouded in heavy morning fog, PC Gutteridge, aged 38, married with two young children, was found foully done to death at Passingford Bridge, within 400 yards of his home at Townley Cottages, Stapleford Abbots. At first there was a suggestion that an accident had happened – that a passing motor car had knocked down the policeman, but examination soon revealed that a dastardly crime had been committed. Someone using a heavy revolver of army pattern had fired at Constable Gutteridge from close range. Four shots were fired in all, aimed at the head, which was terribly injured. Not a single definite clue was left behind, but the dead man's colleagues of the Essex Constabulary started in grim earnest to unravel the mystery. Later in the day Scotland Yard experts were called in to co-operate.'

So, the hunt for PC Gutteridge's killers began.

From information gained, the popular policeman was seen that evening by several people in the Stapleford Abbots area cycling around his regular patrol which carried on throughout the night. He met up with PC Taylor who worked the Lambourne End beat at around 3.15 am where the two men exchanged news of happenings in the area before ending their beats and returning home for a welcome cup of tea. PC Taylor was the last person to see his colleague alive. Cycling away from the scene he was completely unaware of the danger that was to befall his friend.

The first man to discover the body was Alec Ward who early every day would deliver mail from Romford to all the local Post Offices out to Abridge and back. By 6 am he was just a mile from Stapleford Tawney Post Office. It was still dark as he made his way towards Passingford Bridge but his headlights picked out a bundle lying in the road. Investigating, he was appalled to find that it was the body of a policeman lying on his back in a pool of blood. He called out but there was no reply. Coming closer he was horrified to see the dreadfully mutilated face, which had the eyes gouged out. A notebook and

pencil were nearby. His whistle was out of his pocket and his helmet lying a few feet away.

A passing cyclist was sent off to get help while Alec Ward went to Stapleford Tawney where he phoned the police from the Post Office. Chief Inspector Berrett and Sergeant Harris of the CID were assigned to the case. Evidence at the scene revealed that four shots had been fired, two at very close range – sufficient to cause death in seconds – with two more shots being aimed at each eye even as the man lay dying.

Very soon an important clue came into the police's hands. A car had been stolen on that same Tuesday morning from a doctor's garage in Billericay. The doctor always kept his car topped up with petrol in case of emergencies and early on the following morning the car was found abandoned in Brixton. Examination of the vehicle found a cartridge case of a bullet that would have been used in an army issue revolver. Bloodstains were also found on the running board. Chief Constable Wensley, one of Scotland Yard's top men, said it could be assumed that this was the car that PC Gutteridge had stopped on the road. Fingerprint experts were called to examine the abandoned car. A large number of prints were found and these were photographed and taken to Scotland Yard for comparison with other prints in the Criminal Records Office. The police were also able to verify that since being stolen the car had travelled 43 miles that tallied exactly with a journey from Billericay, over Passingford Bridge, through Abridge and on to the road in Brixton were it was abandoned.

Police activity was intense and a reward was offered for any information that might lead to an arrest. An ex-convict came forward saying he had met a Frederick Guy Browne when they were both serving time in Dartmoor Prison. After release the ex-convict went to see Browne at his garage and noticed a Webley revolver hanging on the office wall. During a heated conversation Browne had shouted: 'They're [the police] not so fond of pulling up a car at night after what we did to Gutteridge.' This was interesting but the police needed more evidence. Following further information gained, the police were then able to take Browne to the station and search him. The search was very revealing, 12 cartridge cases being found of the same calibre of those that killed PC Gutteridge.

Whilst Browne was being held for car theft, the police heightened their search for his accomplice, one William Kennedy, who was shortly traced to Liverpool. A plain-clothes policeman who had been shadowing him said, 'Come on Bill'. Kennedy swivelled round to face him pulled out a gun and fired. There was no bang, he had forgotten to take the safety catch off and the sergeant was amazed to find that he was still alive.

Intense questioning followed, each man implicating the other. Finally both men were held in custody for trial at the Central Criminal Court on 23 April 1928. The outcome hinged on a complicated ballistic explanation and for five days the jury listened to the evidence. At the end of the judge's summing up they took 2 hours 18 minutes to return a verdict of Guilty. On 31 May, Browne and Kennedy were executed at Pentonville and Wandsworth prisons, respectively.

That last revolting shooting through the eyes was put down to Browne's mistaken belief in the old superstition that dead men's eyes retain an image of the last face to have looked into them. Medical knowledge has since moved on.

Vast crowds lined the route for the funeral of PC Gutteridge. His body was laid to rest in Warley cemetery and it took an hour for the procession of mourners to pass by the grave. The Bishop of Barking in his address said: 'The whole country has been stirred to its depths by this tragic affair and it is in the deepest sorrow that we join with the mourners in showing our admiration for a brave man and our respect for a force of men to whom we owe so much.'

So the next time you drive over Passingford Bridge please give a thought to PC Gutteridge and his part in the appalling events that took place on 26 September 1927.

Marching Off to War: the Events Surrounding the Men of Chigwell Killed in the Great War, 1914–1918

By Marc Alexander

(Peterborough: Book Printing UK, 2008). 243pp. ISBN 978–0–9560032–0–1. £14-99.

DAVID STEVENSON

Marc Alexander starts and ends with the monument that inspired him. Unveiled in 1921, it stands outside St Mary's Church and commemorates 39 men of Chigwell who lost their lives in the Great War. These men's histories – with those of three others who were not listed – lie at the heart of this book.

This has been a labour of love, and the author constructs his own memorial to the fallen by interleaving their individual biographies with larger military and political events. He draws on eight years of research, based on the parish magazine, the service records at the National Archives, the multi-volume roll of *Soldiers Died in the Great War,* medal index cards, and unit war diaries. The Chigwell of this period was still a hamlet, with only 2,742 inhabitants in 1911, but its experience was a microcosm of Britain's as a whole. By late 1915 more than a 100 of its population had already registered for military service. They came from all walks of life and many had families. Of the 42 who did not come back, the oldest was 41 and the youngest 18. Some were conscripts but most were volunteers. Two died at sea, one in a cruiser that a U-boat torpedo sent to the bottom in four minutes. One was lost at Gallipoli and another in Palestine. But all the rest fell on the Western Front, where their graves remain. Several served as artillerymen and one was in the Tank Corps (though none were aviators), but most were in the infantry. They fought and died in many of the great British engagements: the retreat from Mons and the First

Battle of Ypres in 1914; Aubers Ridge and Loos in 1915; the Somme in 1916; Arras and Passchendaele in 1917; and the desperate defensive struggle against the German offensives of spring 1918 before the final advance to victory.

Despite the author's best endeavours, he has frequently been unable to determine exactly how his subjects perished, beyond establishing the approximate date and location. Like so many thousands of others, they joined the ranks of the missing, often obliterated by shells. Nor, as many were of obscure origin, can he always tell us much about their peacetime lives. Yet a few examples stand out more sharply, and this book contains much pathos. Sergeant Sydney Hayter, whose parents lived in Loughton, was a shop assistant who had won the Military Medal by the age of 22. He was killed in a patrol on the Somme. Lieutenant Maurice Austin Murray fitted the classic profile of the junior officer: son of the vicar of St Mary's, head of house and football captain at Major Clement Attlee's public school, Haileybury College, and winner of an open scholarship to Cambridge, which he never took up. (Many such officers must have attended Chigwell School, which lost 79 of its former pupils.) After attending to a wounded fellow officer, Lieutenant Murray was hit in the head by machine gun bullets when leading his men at Loos – the battle that also claimed the life of Rudyard Kipling's son, Jack. In contrast George Pleasance, the son of a Hampstead Congregational Minister, survived for barely a month in the icy winter of 1916–17 before succumbing to pneumonia, and Denham George King, a factory hand who became a private in the Essex Regiment, contracted dysentery weeks after arriving at Gallipoli, dying miserably in an Alexandria hospital. Yet every one of these cases was a tragedy for those left behind, and the author also records what he can about their relatives.

One of many stories that linger in the memory is the parish magazine's account of Henry and Charlotte Bailey of Turpin's Lane, who learned in June 1918 that 'their youngest son Frederick, well known to many of us in the parish, who was in the Grenadier Guards, has been killed. This is a particularly hard case as Mr and Mrs Bailey had already given two sons who had laid down their life for their country. By the death of this, their last remaining son, they have given their all and may God comfort and support them in their irreparable bereavement.'

[*Our thanks go to David, Professor of International History at the London School of Economics, University of London, and the author of several books on the First World War. Marc Alexander's book is available from The Loughton Bookshop, or direct from the author, Marc Alexander at:* marc.alexander@ntl.com]

Another note from Clementine

Following Audrey Amor's piece on the July 1942 note from Clementine Churchill which appeared in *Newsletter 180*, here is an even older one from the esteemed lady, which for reasons of space we have had to transcribe. It is was sent to Lieutenant-General Sir Francis Lloyd in October 1924, thanking him and Lady Lloyd for their help during the General Election campaign when Winston stood for the first time for the Epping constituency.

During the campaign Winston often stayed at Rolls Park, Chigwell, and Lloyd accompanied him on his speaking engagements in the constituency.

CHARTWELL MANOR
WESTERHAM
KENT

WESTERHAM 93

Sunday Nov: 30th 1924

My Dear Sir Francis

How nice of you to want photographs of Winston & me.

We have not any left, but we soon shall have some more & then we will send them.

This has been a wonderful month beginning with our Epping Campaign in which you and Lady Lloyd helped so much both by your influence & speeches & by your great personal kindness to us, and ending in Winston's appointment which I hope and trust may be for the good of the Country.

Yours very sincerely
Clementine S Churchill

We thank all our contributors to the 2008/09 *Newsletters*, and look forward to those of 2009/10. Editing them is an enjoyable task, largely for being able to draw on the production (and literary) skills of Ted Martin, whose endless patience I have witnessed so many times, and whose advice and experience can always be depended upon.

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