LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 182

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Gould's Albion Granaries 1930 (site of Morrison's supermarket)

As we start the 2009/10 programme, the Chairman and Committee extend a warm welcome to all members, both current and new. Between now and next May, we hope you enjoy what promises to be an excellent menu of talks arranged by Richard Morris. We will try to ensure that those presentations and our regular *Newsletters* maintain the high standards the L&DHS has always tried to achieve. Even though the national and international news is sometimes rather sombre, we trust that it won't spoil your forthcoming season.

The welcome flow of excellent *Newsletter* material has continued for some time now but, as usual, to paraphrase Oliver Twist, 'Please, we want some more'. We do our best to use everything we receive, which is why some issues, including this one, have expanded in size. So keep them coming.

Essex Past

RICHARD MORRIS

The latest edition of *Essex Past*, the newsletter of the Victoria County History (VCH) Essex Appeal Fund, provides some more positive news about the future of the Essex VCH after some of the problems in recent years.

The Essex VCH is now settled in its new quarters in the Essex Record Office, and is moving towards the completion of Volume XI. This volume covers mainly the Clacton, Frinton and Walton areas, with texts now completed for Frinton to 1914; Walton to 1914; World War One (Clacton, Frinton and Walton); the Interwar Period (Clacton, Frinton and Walton); World War Two (Clacton, Frinton and Walton); Institutions – Churches and Chapels, Schools and Colleges, Hospitals and Convalescent Homes; and Buildings.

The remaining sections on Clacton to 1914, and the postwar period should be completed by March 2010, and publication of the volume is targeted for 2011. A start has also been made on Volume XII.

One further part of the Essex VCH future is also clearer and this concerns the development of links with expert volunteers to assist in the research and writing of future volumes. The Newport group is expected shortly to begin work on its 'mini-VCH' for the town, and discussions, similarly, are starting in the south-east of the County around Southend.

The LDHS makes an annual donation towards the work of the Essex VCH. We are also fortunate that several of the earlier volumes of the VCH cover south-west Essex. Begun in 1899, and named by her permission after Queen Victoria, the *Victoria History of the Counties of England* aims to give 'each Englishman a history of his native land'. The VCH is without doubt the greatest publishing project in English local history, and has become an institution, renowned for its scholarly integrity.

A weekend in Epping Forest: a delightful retreat in which to forget life's worries

This article, from *Autocycle Illustrated* of 4 June 1919, was found by JOHN HARRISON:

Just to the north-east of London, and almost within sound of its busy streets, there lies 6,000 acres of wonderful country free for the enjoyment of all. There are days in the lives of us

all when we feel no call of the distant road, when we have no desire to rush through the countryside intent only on the eating up of miles, and yet we want to go out on our wheel, out somewhere to enjoy God's pure air, and withal, we want these things with as little trouble to ourselves as possible.

In such circumstances there is nothing to compare with a lazy ramble a-wheel, not on the well-laid and surfaced road, but away deep in forest glades.

There is perhaps no single spot in this country that has been so written about and so photographed as this historical forest, yet it is an undoubted fact that very few Londoners know of its wonderful beauties. Perhaps this is because it happens to be so near our doors.

There are parts of the forest to be avoided. Certain portions, known as 'Retreats', are for the enjoyment of the kiddies. There, in the summertime, the poorer school children of London are taken for their one-day [*sic*] in the country, and we shall not begrudge them their noise and their sport, for we may very easily keep clear of them if we wish, for their school-treating spots are well known and within a circumscribed area.

Yet how close we may be to everyday life and yet how far removed.

There are few of us who do not know the road to Epping starting from Whipps Cross. The buses now run from London, on to the Rising Sun, the Warren Wood, and even to the town of Epping itself. These are on the main Cambridge road. Here we have buses and bustle and noise and the Londoner from the East End intent on beer and noisy gambols, yet just leave the road and penetrate into the forest but a quarter of a mile and you shall find the silent pool and the fallen tree with not a sound but the singing of the birds or the cooing of the woodpigeon to break the stillness.

Epping Forest is 'wild' in the beautiful sense. It has been said by a well-informed writer of the district that if this splendid retreat of sylvan loveliness were far removed from the Town, say in the middle of Scotland, people would journey there freely in order to enjoy the unrestricted freedom of movement and bracing air that it affords, but because it lies at our very doors, we hurry past and through on the wheels of speed, heedless of its calling.

It is difficult to imagine anything more refreshing to the tired senses, or more likely to awaken in the jaded city worker, those romantic imaginings that are merely dormant in us all, than to find a quiet spot near a trickling brook, surrounded by dense and delightful greenery, and there lie and dream daydreams of the long, long past, when the forest resounded to the trumpeting of the Royal hunters, the greensward thudded under the feet of their palfreys, and the red deer scudded to safety in the dense undergrowth.

There are those of us who are interested in botany, and we shall find in that portion of the forest called Warren Wood all that our hearts can desire. We have it from history that many years ago, probably somewhere about 1740, the then owner of Copt Hall had over 100 acres of semi-waste ground ploughed up and sown with seed of every conceivable variety capable of flourishing under our climatic conditions. The result may be seen and enjoyed to-day. There will be found the hawthorn, wild rose, and the common bramble, the primrose, bluebell, violet, trefoil, and heather, mallow, harebell, wild strawberry, and many varieties of the beautiful wild butterfly-orchids. Honeysuckle spreads its parasitical but sweet-smelling blossoms above, and the wild grasses and ferns are abundant.

It would not, perhaps, be too much to state that somewhere within this tract of loveliness, 10 miles by about 2 miles, every kind of wild flower and shrub and grass and fern known to English soil may be found.

Unfortunately the wild life of the forest in these days is not as it was hundreds of years ago, yet the fallow-deer still has its liberty in the depths, and may be observed watching the gorse with wonderful eyes of tender brown. The roe-deer is also a native, but the noble red-deer of the olden days is no more. Bird life is full, and every variety of English bird may be seen or heard within its boundaries, and in the evenings the cuckoo and the nightingale make sweet music with their voices. Beetles, moths, butterflies, and all the smaller insects are to be found.

During the Victorian era there sprang up the unfortunate custom or habit amongst a certain sect of Londoners to make Epping Forest a place of ribald day-parties and beanfeasts, and many quaint old inns came to attention in the money-getting business of supplying beer to the thirsty revellers. Thus they gradually changed from these delightful old inns of rest to modern beer palaces. And to-day, so far as the new restrictions on supplies will allow, they remain the haunt of the tipsy roysterers, yes, strange as it may appear (not so strange, perhaps, when we consider the object), these few keep well within the bounds of the particular form of enjoyment they desire, and one has but to penetrate a few hundred yards into the thicket near one of these haunts to find perfect stillness and rural surroundings.

Therefore do not get the idea that Epping Forest is the retreat of the roysterers only. One may very easily keep away from their places of call, and the rest of the forest is perfect in its quiet loveliness.

Not only so, but one may very conveniently make use of one's regrettable nearness to unwonted activities by using these houses of call for the storage of motors during a walk through the wilds, for most of them now have garage accommodation, and one is not bound to imbibe the noxious beverage supplied by a well-meaning but illusionised Government.

There are certain spots that call for a visit, as distinct and apart from those of our own finding, the latter always the best and most enjoyable. To mention but a few, there is Warren Wood, as before mentioned, with all its abundant wealth of flowers and grasses, Hawk Wood and Bury Wood, the High Beech district, and Loughton Earthworks.

Boadicea's Camp and Ambresbury Banks hold historical interest for those who dream of bygone days. There is Pole Hill, and the obelisk from which it is said a line could be laid (some have it 'a bullet fired') direct to the North Pole without touching tree or house or hill. However untrue this may be it is nevertheless interesting, as may be gathered from the number of people ever to be seen standing there gazing due North as though expecting to view the polar icebergs topping the distant horizon.

It is not intended here to give any historical detail of the forest, or even plot ramblings over given routes. Such as are interested in the cut-and-dried system of holiday making may be supplied from any one of the number of good books published for this purpose. It is hoped that, like the writer, there are those whose keen enjoyment it is to ramble freely in unknown glades. To set out without any definite idea of direction or destination; in short, to endeavour to get lost. This latter need not be seriously contemplated, for the forest, large as it is, is limited in area, and one must eventually come out somewhere, and that somewhere can never be more than a mile or so from a railway station with which the borders of the forest is [*sic*] well supplied.

Photographs with the article indicate that the author's 'rambling a-wheel' was carried out on a Clyno motorcycle and sidecar. Richard Morris has pointed out a couple of errors in the article. There are and were at this time only fallow-deer in the forest and it has now been verified that

there were no links between Queen Boadicea and Ambresbury Banks.

A tale of ten stations

IAN STRUGNELL found the following in a magazine the Great Eastern Railway published for its staff from 1911 to 1922. A regular page was 'From the Tea-Room Window' (The most interesting outlook in London) which by 1914 was over the *nom de plume* 'Autolycus'. In December 1914 this little item was tucked in at the end under a heading 'ROTTEN!' (with no other comment):

A TALE OF TEN STATIONS

George Lane, a lout on Buckhurst Hill,
Would-ford Snare's brook, when late, on stones,
In stepping once, when not on guard,
His foot north-wheeled—a plunge—some groans—
And Theydon boys fished up his bones.

A wartime memory of Loughton

BARBARA HARRISON

In her introductory letter with this article, Barbara, who is a family friend of Mike Alston, one of our regular contributors, writes:

Our house was No 39, The Drive: a child was killed at No 37 and we heard that there had been fatalities at No 35, but we didn't know the residents as they had just moved from inner London to escape the bombing. What irony!

It is interesting that the first bomb to fall in the outer London area was also in the Drive, on 27 July 1940. It fell further down the road towards the High Road. Later on the Methodist Church Hall was destroyed and, much later, a family in Habgood Road was wiped out in their Anderson shelter.

Epping Forest nearby was peppered with bomb craters. I don't know what the pilots were looking for in that particular area, but there was a suggestion that they were 'after' Brown's Engineering Works in Forest Road [*but, as Chris Pond points out, and others knew at the time, when lost, or simply not fancying the guns, some pilots simply jettisoned their bombs – Ed*]. We shall never know.

Prologue
In 1935, aged eight, I was taken by my parents and grandparents on a cruise in a banana boat to the Canary Islands. During the trip, an elderly gentleman, obviously fond of children, amused me with interesting stories and information, and promised me a present to take home. On the last day, as we steamed up the Mersey toward Liverpool Docks, he handed me an ebony elephant, asking me to keep it as a memento of our holiday and hoping it would bring me luck. I named it Andy, after the giver.

We had noted with curiosity the presence of the *Graf Spee*, anchored off Santa Cruz; a pointer to the future?

London Blitz – November 1940
By this time, sick of cold, sleepless nights in outdoor shelters, we were sleeping in an indoor shelter; my parents had a mattress on the floor while I slept in a bunk above. Every night, to their amusement, I placed on the bunk a small slipper-case, containing a torch, my glasses, a pair of pure silk stockings and the elephant.

The bomb dropped on 30 November at about 11.15 pm, flattening our house and two others. We were all fast asleep, but I was conscious of being lifted up and deposited, and hearing my father shout out that he was dead (he patently wasn't!). When I dared to open my eyes, I found myself flat on my back, with my head out of the shelter. I saw the broken rafters silhouetted against the moonlit sky, and the lavatory cistern hanging crazily above me.

Vaguely wondering if this attractive piece of cast-iron would dislodge itself and crash down on my head, I eased myself gingerly back into the shelter. By now we were exchanging a few words – 'You all right?', 'Yes, I think so' – before we started to cough and choke on the brick-dust. I then groped about for my case. What luck! It had blown down close to me, and once I had found my torch, my parents were able to find theirs, and we located our clothes and scrambled into them, trying to ignore the wobbly state of the shelter. Many of the six-inch nails had been either blasted out or bent into right angles.

The All Clear sounded and we waited patiently. Presently came shouts of 'Anybody there?' and 'Don't worry, we'll get you out all right'. At 1 am I was guided out through a tunnel of rubble by the wonderful ARP men, preceded by the case and elephant (which I refused to leave behind). We all emerged fully clad and shod, and totally unscathed, into the amazed embraces of friends from up the road, who took us back to their house for the rest of the night. We didn't sleep much, especially as they bedded us down in their sitting-room, where there was a clock with Westminster chimes!

Epilogue
Seventy years after receiving him, Andy is still with me. While not claiming that the elephant was as instrumental in saving our lives as was my father's foresight in providing a shelter which would sustain the weight of the collapsed house (just), I should like to think that Andy played some part in the way we surfaced with not so much as a scratch or a bruise. Sadly, there were fatalities around us. Be that as it may, the elephant is a symbol – a reminder not only of a kindly person, but also of the knowledge that there are things more important than the destruction of material possessions.

Mike Alston briefly mentions this tragic (for some more than others) bombing in his article elsewhere in this Newsletter.

The ‘dirt track’ in the Forest

PETER COOK

Sunday, 19 February 1928 is seemingly a date of no great significance in world history. True, it did mark the closing day of the 1928 Winter Olympics, but, on that day, behind the King’s Oak Hotel at High Beach, it heralded the birth of Speedway in the UK with the first organised meeting. The sport in its true form is generally accepted as having originated in Australia, although there have also been claims for earlier events on much bigger tracks in America and South Africa. A man named Johnnie Hoskins introduced racing on motorcycles, round a dirt track under lights, as an ‘added attraction’ at the 1923 West Maitland Agricultural Show of which he was then the Secretary. It quickly spread across Australia, with Hoskins as the entrepreneur at the helm, and before too long he was contemplating promoting the sport further afield and was casting his eyes towards England.

There are of course other UK venues who have laid claim to holding the first meeting in England, including Camberley, where, on 7 May 1927, some races took place on sand – not cinders – and they rode clockwise, although anti-clockwise was the recognised Australian format. On 25 June 1927 a meeting took place at Droylsden near Manchester, this time on cinders courtesy of the local power station, but again it was, apparently, not deemed an ‘official’ event. On 9 November 1927 an attempt to hold a meeting at High Beach – on the old cinder running track behind the King’s Oak – was thwarted by the Auto-Cycle Union as it contravened Lord’s Day Observance Society regulations regarding meetings on a Sunday other than purely club events. However, an application by the Ilford Motor Cycle and Light Car Club to hold a meeting on 19 February 1928 finally met with the approval of the ACU.

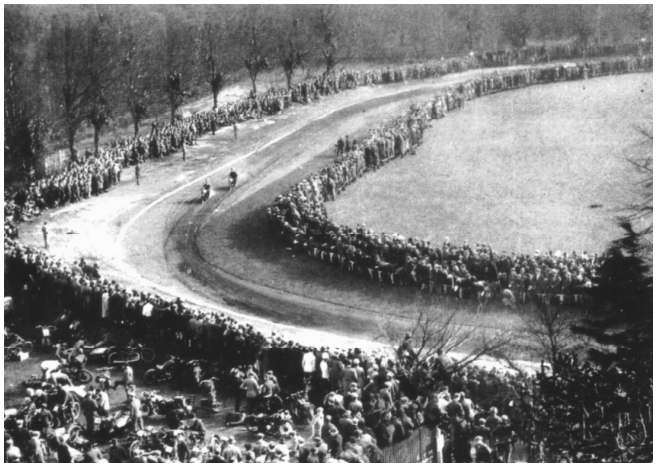
The event was widely advertised, both locally and in the motorcycling press, and riders from around the country were applying for club membership in order to take part. The promoter, Jack Hill-Bailey, along with his wife, brother and some willing helpers estimated that with luck they might get some 3,000 or so spectators on the day, and so the first officially organised and recognised speedway meeting in England was set to take place. Snow had been falling earlier in the month, but that morning ‘it could have been a July day’ as one account described it, and the roads into and around Epping Forest quickly became jammed with every conceivable form of transport, from cycles and motorcycles, to cars, coaches and even lorries. It soon became apparent that the organiser’s estimate of crowd numbers was woefully adrift. Two large wooden gates, adjacent to the King’s Oak, were to be the entry point with tickets being sold at 6d (2½p) and programmes at 2d. An hour before the start the tickets had gone, the programmes had gone, any further attempt to collect money had been abandoned, the gates had been pushed down, and the rest of the spectators – later estimated at 25 to 30,000 – entered for free.

Once inside, it had been instructed by the ruling body that spectators be kept behind a rope barrier inside the track, but it soon became apparent that there was no chance of this being observed. Thus the riders found themselves racing through an avenue of fans, cheered on not only from both sides, but also by those who had climbed to vantage points in the surrounding trees. What Health and Safety – had it existed then – would have made of all this can only be a matter of conjecture, but subsequently instructions for modifications and new safety regulations were issued, which were to be carried out before another meeting was to be allowed.

Speedway had arrived, and in no time leagues had been formed, with a ‘High Beech’ team riding in the Southern League in the early 30s. Most of the legends of the sport rode here during that time: Aussies like Vic Huxley, Billy Lamont, Ron Johnson, and from the USA the Milne brothers and ‘Sprouts’ Elder, and English stars such as Phil Bishop, ‘Tiger’ Stevenson, Jack Parker and Colin Watson. All this information and more is readily available through other sources, and I have used it only to set the scene of those early days, and that memorable first meeting, in order to take up the story of the postwar period and my personal memories.

Saturday, 18 September 1948 saw the reopening of ‘High Beech Speedway’ with a crowd of around 2,500 as reported by the local press, a far cry from the attendance at the first meeting. (I have used the ‘Beech’ spelling here as that is how it was recorded, both prewar and also on this first programme which was priced at 4d and was a single folded sheet advising the event as a Challenge Match between High Beech and Leicester.) Although age can often dim the memory, I seem to recall it was a fine day, and, as we lived at the top of Forest Road in Loughton, we set off, my father, a cousin and myself to walk to the track through the forest. Even as we walked we could hear the sound of engines being revved, and on entering the stadium I instantly wanted to go round to the pits where all the action was. We walked round the track outside the safety fence which was, as I remember, fairly solid, either wood or corrugated metal. Beyond the fence and surrounding the track was an earth bank, from which the spectators could view the action and – they discovered when racing started – be liberally sprayed with cinders! In 1949 the programme for the 2 July meeting celebrated the opening of the ‘new’ track, wherein two straights had been introduced into the oval, and the programme notes hoped it would ‘provide better racing and, at the same time, prevent spectators from collecting the cinders!’. However, it was from running round that bank I got my first view into the pits where the bikes were being prepared, and smelt for the first time what I later learned was methanol, the ‘racing dope’ that fuelled them. When the first race started, the sight, smell and noise of these machines – capable of up to 60mph – being broadsided around the track, seemingly steering right while travelling left, was, at that early age, one of the most exciting things I had seen.

The afternoon sped on – race after race – although not without a few false starts, mechanical breakdowns and spills. Autographs were collected on the programme and, in no time it seemed, I was walking back home, hooked on speedway and looking forward to the next meeting. I was unaware then that later, in the summer holidays with a few friends, we would have the chance to push start the bikes! We found out that during the week the riders would often practise and novice training would take place, so we would ride our bikes through the forest to the back of the stadium where the fence was in disrepair, and make our entry. Initially we would simply hang over the pit fence and watch until one day a rider wanting a start called out: 'Give us a push lads.' We needed no second bidding and became unpaid push starters. This happened on several occasions and once again what Health and Safety would have made of it Heaven knows, but the 'nanny state' was years in the future and we were boys loving our small part of the action.



King's Oak Speedway 1949

It was also easier to get autographs in this situation and, among others, I acquired those of the aforementioned 'Tiger' Stevenson and Phil Bishop which took pride of place in the collection. 1948 saw the release of *Once a Jolly Swagman*, one of the very few films to be made about speedway, with a cast that included Dirk Bogarde, Sid James, Bill Owen and Thora Hird. Bill's riding sequences were performed by a rider named Jack Cooley, and when he signed for me he added 'alias Lag Gibbon', the name of Bill's character. Sadly the autograph book disappeared long ago, but the memory of collecting the signatures still remains.

Many of the riders who featured in those meetings of the late 1940s were regulars such as Harry Simms, Vic Butcher, George Flower, Ernie Steers, Ted Moore and Allen Briggs. Allen was the son of the then manager of Walthamstow Stadium and subsequently opened a motorcycle shop in Chingford in the 50s – from whence came my first Lambretta scooter – and cars are still sold today under the family name from the same premises. High Beech was an ideal track for riders to learn their trade before being taken up by teams like Rye House, Rayleigh, Yarmouth, etc., and even more senior teams such as West Ham and Harringay. Among those who graduated were Jimmy Grant, Johnny 'The Galloping Major' Fry, 'Cowboy' Vic Ridgeon and Stan Page, all of whom, along with many others gained rides with League teams. Incidentally, Johnny's nickname was acquired by the 'wheelies' he performed when the race ended, particularly if he'd won. Although High Beech were never to achieve the League status of the prewar team, they rode every fortnight in challenge matches against other nursery teams such as California, Eastbourne and Rainham. I recall that, as young lads, when we saw California listed, we thought an American team was coming to race, only to find to our dismay that it was another English nursery team from Surrey. Events for Individual Trophies and Best Pairs were also included during the season and were always popular.

Unfortunately, although the sport was enjoying huge popularity in the postwar 40s and 50s – a meeting at Wembley in 1948 against West Ham, saw 85,000 inside the stadium with apparently another 20,000 locked outside – the revival at High Beech was not destined to last. Crowds were always around the 2,500 mark, possibly due to the lack of public transport coupled with it being a somewhat remote site for a sporting venue. The end of the 1950 season saw the end of competitive racing, and although there was, I believe, some brief use as a practice track for novice riders, High Beech Stadium closed its gates to speedway for almost the last time. I say almost because on Sunday, 18 February 1968, an event marking the 40th Anniversary of British Speedway was held. At that time the track was still there, albeit with a few examples of the local flora growing through, but those were soon cleared to allow the advertised Grand Cavalcade to take place. Exhibition stalls and tents offered all sorts of speedway memorabilia and an Open-Air Service was conducted at noon by the Vicar of High Beach Church. The Cavalcade took place during the afternoon, with personalities from the past and present being introduced, some riding on bikes from the earliest to the latest models. The then current league teams from around the country were represented by their riders and fans who had arrived in all sorts of transport that had been decorated for the trip with flags and banners. They formed a fitting finale to the occasion with a colourful procession around the track to bring the 40th Anniversary to a successful conclusion.

A further celebration was held in 1988 – the 60th Anniversary – and later, during the 90s, it became the custom for a meeting to be held each year, on the nearest suitable Sunday to 19 February around the King's Oak forecourt and car park. These days were 'speedway family affairs' in that riders old and new gathered with the fans, the bikes were brought along, and although not ridden, were fired up to add to the atmosphere. There was no charge, it was a get-together for lovers of the sport and always well attended. However, whilst I was writing this article, a local newspaper carried the story that this year's meeting was to be held at the National Speedway Museum situated in the Paradise Wildlife Park at Broxbourne, thus seemingly severing the link to the original home. Having contacted the Park, the owner,

Pete Sampson, an ex-rider with Swindon and Hackney, assured me that the day would follow much the same format as those held at the King's Oak, and that it had been suggested that meetings could perhaps, in future, alternate between the two sites.

A little known fact is that during its history, prior to the arrival of speedway, the track was used by Loughton Athletic Club, and, as well as being an early running and cycling track, the stadium was used at various times by High Beach Football Club and Loughton Hockey Club. Both are known to have had pitches inside the oval during their history, and to have played League matches there. Today there is no longer anything to be seen of the track, but the bank that a young boy ran excitedly around on that day in 1948 still remains, a last reminder of the day that Speedway arrived in England, not in a big city, but at 'the dirt track in the Forest'.

The photograph accompanying this article is reproduced by kind permission of Mr John Chaplin. Anyone wishing to learn more of the prewar history of the track can obtain a copy of his well illustrated booklet *A Fistful of Twistgrip* available from the Epping Forest Conservation Centre, price £2.

British Raj

JOHN REDFERN

The fairly recent terrorist attacks in Bombay (Mumbai) caused me to think that, in this 150th year of the end of the Indian Mutiny (1857–1859), historically minded readers might be interested in one of our local links with the British Raj in Victorian times. I have, therefore, recently uncovered one of the 'gems' in Chigwell St Mary's churchyard by clearing ivy and brambles from the tomb of Major-General Christopher Hodgson, sometime Major-General of artillery in the Bombay Presidency. Like many other old monuments, the tomb lost its protective iron railings during the Second World War when they were cut down to be turned into tanks and other forms of armaments. Old records from 1844 show that the Major-General donated one guinea to the annual collection for Chigwell National School for Girls.

Sixty years of the Central Line to Epping

TED MARTIN

Sunday, 25 September 1949 was the day when the tube trains of the Central Line of London Transport were extended over the newly-electrified tracks from Loughton to Epping. It will thus be 60 years this month since that event added five miles, and three more stations to the Central Line – Debden (formerly Chigwell Lane), Theydon Bois, and Epping. The tube had reached Loughton less than a year before on 21 November 1948.

Eastern Region steam trains were then relegated to work only between Ongar and Epping.

The Loughton to Epping tracks were re-equipped throughout with London Transport automatic colour-light signalling, and points were converted to power operation. A new signal box with a 35-lever frame was built at Debden, and another, with a 47-lever frame, at Epping. Track circuiting and colour-light signalling were also installed on the section of track approaching Epping from Ongar, so that all movements at Epping, steam or electric, were controlled from the new box.

Conductor rails which had been laid before the Second World War were welded into half-mile lengths, and point heaters and current rail de-icing baths were installed.

Debden, Theydon Bois, and Epping saw the provision of new ticket offices and frontages, electric light and London Transport signs and station names. The platforms at all stations were rebuilt, and a new forecourt was built at Epping.

Chigwell Lane Station was renamed Debden, to be the station for the then new housing estate and to avoid confusion with Chigwell Station on the Hainault. loop.

At Epping, the electric service terminated at the London bound platform, and the steam trains terminated on the Ongar side. An electrified siding was provided on the north side as emergency stabling, or as an additional reversing facility. This meant that the cutting had to be widened and an embankment had to be built. Reversing facilities were also provided north of Debden Station by installing two electrified sidings between the running lines.

From Epping through trains left for the City and West End every 12 to 15 minutes in peak hours and every 40 minutes offpeak. The offpeak service was augmented by a 40-minute two-car shuttle service, operating to Loughton, and this gave a combined service interval of 20 minutes. Additional trains from Debden, serving the then new Debden housing estate provided a service interval of 6 minutes in peak hours, and 10–12 minutes at other times,. The journey from Epping took 43 minutes to the Bank, and 52 minutes to Oxford Circus.

At the time of electrification to Epping, the Eastern Region of British Railways resignalled the single line from Epping to Ongar, and provided a passing loop and second platform at North Weald. However, electrification to Ongar was not completed for another eight years and the tube did not get there until 18 November 1957.

Due to under-provision of electrical equipment it was never possible to run full through trains from Ongar to the City and a two-coach shuttle provided the service to and from Epping. As a consequence, usage was light and the line closed on 30 September 1994. There now seems a realistic prospect of its rebirth as a heritage railway after 15 years in limbo.

There was an even greater railway event the day after electrification to Epping when, on 26 September, the Liverpool Street to Shenfield electrification was inaugurated by the Minister of Transport. These electrifications were all part of the 1935 new works programme which had been delayed by the War.

Sources

The Railway Magazine, November and December 1949, Vol 95, No 584, p. 405.

The Loughton Railway 150 Years On (LDHS: 2006).

Amenities of the road in Epping Forest

The following was found by JOHN HARRISON in the *Royal Automobile Club Journal*, 5 September 1907:

The way in which the horse-propelled *char-a-bancs* are drawn on Saturdays and holidays along the Epping Forest road is the subject of a protest we have received from Mr J S Evans, a member of the MOTOR UNION. Driving from the top of Forest-road through Woodford to Epping, he has met wagonettes that were being driven in the middle of the road – some even on the wrong side of the road. Attempts by means of the horn to persuade drivers to keep to the right side were received with jeers. One evening many drivers were, he says, apparently intoxicated. Mr Evans's complaint would seem to point to the necessity of some steps being taken to secure reasonable safety for those who motor from London to enjoy the natural beauties of the Forest.

John Clare (1793–1864): a biography*

TED MARTIN

On July 10 this year members of the John Clare Trust started to retrace the 80-mile walk made in 1841 by the 19th century poet John Clare from Dr Allen's Lunatic Asylum at High Beach to the Cambridgeshire cottage at Helpston where he once lived (and which opened to the public on 14 July).

Just before this, I happened to find Jonathan Bate's biography, *John Clare*, in a London bookshop. It seems that John Clare is the only major English poet never to have received a worthy biography until now and Jonathan Bate has indeed produced an excellent work.

Clare was born into an impoverished and barely literate Northamptonshire peasant family and had little formal education, supporting himself by working on the land. He did however have a thirst for knowledge and would set himself courses from any books that came to hand.

Jonathan Bate points out that 'our knowledge of Clare's early years, from his birth in 1793 to the beginning of his literary career in 1819, is dependent on his own autobiographical prose'. He says that Clare's memory cannot be trusted and that it was impossible 'to piece together a precise chronology of his passage from schoolboy to casual labourer to soldiering and back to work in the fields'. Clare did write a brief autobiography for his publisher, *Sketches in the Life of John Clare,* in 1821, and in 1824 wrote a more extensive version, but it was never published. Bate says that these documents are not always consistent with each other or with other external evidence. There is also Frederick Martin's 1865 biography which Bate says is also not accurate.

Part One of the book, covering Clare's first 25 years, contains chapters on heredity and childhood which are followed by a general account of Clare's geographical and social environment. Then there is a chapter on his life as a labourer and one on his friendships, emotional entanglements and his writing. In the autumn of 1818 Clare is 'discovered' as a poet (narrated in the final chapter of Part One), and then there are facts available from dated correspondence.

This is the most fully documented part of his life and covers his start as a writer and his move in 1832, from his home village of Helpston to nearby Northborough. In these years he achieved and then lost fame and wrote most of his poems, his journal and much of his correspondence that has survived. Clare kept all his letters and made them into hand-made books.

After moving to Northborough, Clare became increasingly unstable and his writing suffered. He was confined to Dr Allen's Asylum at High Beach from 1837–1841 and continued to write his poetry. Disgusted with the conditions at the Asylum, he absconded in July 1841 and began his 80-mile walk home via Enfield Town and the Great York Road (it later became the Great North Road), Stevenage, Baldock, a diversion to Potton, Buckden, Stilton and on to Northborough. Clare's account of his walk from Essex to Northborough is 'one of the most remarkable autobiographical fragments in the English language'.

His freedom was brief, for he was committed to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum in December 1841 and remained there until his death 23 years later, but there is no journal and only a few letters from these years.

Clare was among the most prolific of all English poets, and left nearly 10,000 pages of manuscript much of which was unpublished until the late twentieth century and some has never been printed. Four collections of Clare's poems, less than a quarter of his output, appeared in print during his life: *Poems, Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (1820), *The Village Minstrel, and Other Poems* (1821), *The Shepherd's Calendar; with Village Stories, and Other Poems* (1827) and *The Rural Muse* (1835).

Jonathan Bate has produced an absorbing biography of a labouring class poet who had his fifteen minutes of fame but left a lasting legacy and perhaps had a greater feeling for and knowledge of the countryside of England than other poets from more privileged backgrounds. The book is in paperback and has many illustrations including Fair Mead House and Leopards Hill Lodge at High Beach.

Note

* Jonathan Bate, *John Clare* (Picador, 2004, ISBN 0–330–37112–6).

Loughton goes to war – some personal memories

MIKE ALSTON

In 1937, when not quite 13, I was taken to an RAF air display at Hendon. At the end of the show our attention was directed towards the north where there was a line of five barrage balloons, connected by cable from which were hung further cables. We were told that, in the event of conflict, London, and other cities, would be surrounded by a curtain of such balloons, thus preventing the enemy getting through to drop their bombs. This demonstration gave no great cause for comfort as it simply meant that bombers would fly higher and drop their loads more indiscriminately. What it did confirm was that a further war with Germany was considered probable. Chamberlain's claim to 'peace in our time' after his return from the meeting with Hitler in September 1938 was certainly treated with scepticism.

From then on everything became ever more sinister. We collected our gas masks from Staples Road School and the ARP organisation was firmly established. In fact this gave a school chum, Kenneth Nickol, and me a bright idea. We would volunteer our services as bicycle dispatch riders. But our proposal at a local ARP centre was turned down – perhaps because, at just 14, we were thought too young. In the event I had to wait until 1942 before again offering my services – this time to the Royal Navy, which willingly accepted me!

On 1 September 1939 my mother and I were delivering St John's Church magazines on the Harwater Estate when one of the recipients told us the radio had just announced Germany's invasion of Poland. And so to Sunday 3 September which found the Alston family – mother, father, sister and me – entering St John's for Matins at 10.30am, knowing that the British ultimatum to Germany would expire at 11. We left the church at 11.15 and, as we walked past the verger's nearby cottage, his wife was standing at her door. My mother simply looked at her and raised her eyebrows. The verger's wife nodded . . . and so we knew we had entered our place of worship in peacetime and left it at war.

No sooner had we got back to our house in Traps Hill than the air raid sirens sounded. Our immediate reaction was that Germany had been waiting for this moment and was now sending over masses of bombers. But the 'all clear' went a few minutes later and we sighed with relief that it was a false alarm. It was to be the first of many; and so we settled into that brief period known as the 'phoney war', confident that the conflict would be brief. After all, the French Maginot Line was impregnable, Belgium and Holland were neutral and therefore untouchable, and we possessed the world's greatest fleet. With fine warships like *Ark Royal*, *Hood*, *Prince of Wales*, *Repulse* and *Royal Oak* how could we possibly lose? Little did we imagine that the war would be prolonged and all these ships, and many others, would be sunk.

The Alston preparations for war were relatively modest but, like everyone else, we made black-out frames and curtains for all our windows so that not a speck of light could be spotted by ever-prowling air raid wardens: 'put out that —— light!' While we didn't dig an air-raid shelter in the garden my father filled sacks with earth and stacked them against the dining room windows. When the sacks were removed a few years later their main protective contribution was found to be the rotting of the wooden window frames.

January 1940 saw the introduction of food rationing and also, for me, an odd personal incident. On the morning of 18 January I was at the top of Traps Hill on an errand for my mother when I heard an incredibly loud bang. Assuming this was a bomb and that more would follow, I rushed to the door of the nearest house and asked whether I could take shelter. The lady looked at me in amazement as she had heard nothing; and so I walked sheepishly home and found that my mother, also, hadn't heard a sound. But there was a clue – a spiral of smoke from the direction of Waltham Abbey where there was an ammunition factory. Later that day I returned to my school at Felsted, some 30 miles away. They had indeed heard the explosion – and so I was vindicated. It later transpired that it had been at the factory, with several men killed.

From April 1940 things moved fast, with Germany sweeping through Europe and the BEF returning home. My father was in the Ministry of Food, and this was evacuated to North Wales 'for the duration' while, at the same time, Felsted School's premises were commandeered by the Army and we were evacuated from rural Essex to Herefordshire. Our house did not however remain unoccupied for long. On 30 November 1940 friends in The Drive, Mr and Mrs David Harrison and their daughter Barbara, were in their house when it was completely demolished by a bomb. Luckily, and astonishingly, they escaped unscathed. Fortunately we were able to offer them 'alternative accommodation' in the shape of 'Motts Croft', in which they lived until after the end of the war.

In the ensuing years I was able to return to Loughton several times, the first occasion being in August 1942 on my way back to Colwyn Bay from a farm camp at Felsted. During my overnight stop with the Harrisons there was an air raid. At the beginning we stood at the front door to watch the flares and AA fire, but as things warmed up we all retired to the Morrison shelter in the dining room. What amazed me was that my hosts, who had had the shocking experience of being dug out of a demolished house, took it all utterly calmly. During early 1943 I paid one or two short visits while on a course at Greenwich Naval College but, later that year, the Royal Navy required my services in the Mediterranean until 1946.

The Alston family finally returned to 'Motts Croft' in 1947. The house was in good shape – thanks mainly to our unexpected guests – and suffered very little war damage. The nearest it came to disaster was when what was believed to be an airborne mine exploded in the air behind the house opposite. That house, together with our row of protective elm trees (now sadly lost to elm disease), took most of the blast and

'Motts Croft' merely had shattered window glass. In due course I retrieved pieces of bomb and shell from our garden, one of which was still embedded in a wall.

Over 60 years on we are more or less at peace but I sometimes wonder whether we are living in a 'preparatory period' similar to the 1930s . . . [*Not a happy thought – Ed*.]

Boots . . . at 1s 6d – before your time

TERRY CARTER

This photo appeared in the *Gazette* of 9 September 1977. The caption, slightly adapted, read:

'Jubilee mania may have spread like wild fire across the country this year, but we would be so wrong to believe it is only a feature of life in 1977. Don't forget that Britain celebrated the Jubilee of Queen Victoria 80 years ago. And there were all the house and shop decorations in the streets which we have organised in Elizabeth II's Jubilee year.

Today's younger generation may not believe their eyes when they look at this photograph taken during the Jubilee celebrations in June 1897. They will recognise the bunting and flags, but how about the price of those shoes? W H Ellis of High Road, Loughton, took great pride in his shoe stores. For example, those genuine leather children's shoes hanging up in the front window for only 1s 6d (7½p). Even a serviceable pair of lady's shoes cost 2s 11d (under 15p).

But Mr Ellis did cater for the more affluent of Loughton's society, too. Some of those smart white lace-ups hanging in the window would set customers back 6s 11d (less than 35p).

It would seem the Ellis family prospered from their High Road boot business. They are pictured outside the family store dressed in the smartest fashions of the day.

The site of the old boot business is now occupied *[in 1977]* by *Photomarkets* and *The Bookshop* in Loughton High Road.'

The Scots Guards

MAURICE DAY

In Newsletter 171 *(November 2006), Chris Pond wondered if any member had further ideas as to where Willie Whitelaw and the Scots Guards were stationed. Rolls Park and Tramway Farm were suggested. The following is an extract from Maurice's recent letter:*

'Towards the end of the War I discovered a very large Army issue, dark green Nissen hut, near the location of the Clydesdale public-house [Westall Road, Loughton]. It was empty, except for one or two stoves. At first I thought it was for the Land Army, but then I remembered that they were lorried in. Could this have been Willie Whitelaw's residence?'

A fair question – any answers?

Two 'doodle-bugs'

MAURICE DAY

Maurice also writes . . .

'I was wondering if you could put this in your *Newsletter*. I'm after location as much as anything.

In the later part of the war I had two near identical experiences with "doodle-bugs" – V1s. Both were flying in a north-westerly direction, and both cut out more or less above me. I can't remember which came first, but one was late Autumn and I was a couple of hundred yards from my back gate in Rectory Lane on this occasion. They used to make a strange tinny drone, then have a nasty habit of cutting out. The plan was to run home to the shelter, only there was this quite large pile of conkers (possibly destined for Goulds). Although my legs felt like they had reached the magical 100mph, all to no avail. This one would have come down somewhere between Pyrles Lane to Goldings Hill.

The other event happened on the way to Staples Road School. I had just reached the railings when Hitler had another go. This one was a bit closer, possibly falling in the Drummaids area. I remember half falling against the school railings through the shock of the explosion.'

Does anybody remember these two flying bombs?

Agriculture in Epping Forest during the Great War – Part 1

R L LAYTON

Introduction

When war broke out in 1914 it came as a fiercer shock to civilised Europe than any war before or since. For the first time for centuries enemy action was felt on British soil; from 1915–1918 there were 52 raids by airships and 59 by aircraft, most of them over London, Essex and Kent, killing 1,600 people. The influence of the war was felt throughout the country in many ways and Epping Forest was not exempt. This paper briefly outlines the effect of the war on 'agriculture' in

Epping Forest. Here agriculture is used as an umbrella term to encompass allotments, cattle, deer and other miscellaneous aspects of the Forest.

Allotments

On the domestic front, a major concern was food production and distribution. In 1914 Britain was extremely vulnerable, relying heavily upon overseas trade – a problem later accentuated by the German blockade campaign and a disappointing harvest in 1916. This problem was understood by Lloyd George when he took office as Prime Minister on 7 December 1916; of the five new Departments of State he set up, two included Food and Food Production – the others were Shipping, Labour and National Service. Many steps were taken in an attempt to solve the food crisis, such as voluntary economy at home and compulsory demands on farmers. Moreover the Board of Agriculture was empowered to commandeer and cultivate unoccupied or common land, with a view to maintaining the food supply of the country. This policy assisted the phenomenal growth in allotments from 130,528 in 1914 to 1,330,000 in 1920.

Epping Forest, as an open space, was not exempt from this latter demand and early in 1917 the Conservators received applications from the Corporation of West Ham and Leyton Urban District Council to cultivate parts of Wanstead Flats. The applications were considered by the Conservators and expert advice was taken. A report, summarised below, was made on four areas of the Forest.

1. Wanstead Park (40 acres (16 ha) of Grass)

Turf poor but 15–18 inches (38.45 cm) of topsoil with gravel subsoil. Land suitable for allotments and could be made to grow any kind of vegetables after being thoroughly cultivated, although a liberal allowance of manure would always be required.

2. Wanstead Flats

Turf poor and patchy with 10–12 inches (25–30 cm) of topsoil of light peat loam. Could be made suitable for allotments after thorough cultivation but a crop could not be expected under at least a couple of years and would be an expensive operation to bring into cropping.

3. 50 Acres (20 ha) West of the Centre Road

Soil very poor and thin; only 1 inch (2.5 cm) of soil. Useless for allotments.

4. Chingford Plain and Golf Course

Although topsoil shallow in places, subsoil good class and could be made to grow anything. Land could be brought into cultivation quickly.

The Superintendent in a separate report stressed that a number of other aspects had to be considered. First, it was considered absolutely necessary to fence the land from commoners' cattle and the Forest deer. Secondly, the Forest was undrained. Thirdly, there would be need for security, especially in the most populous districts. Finally, the cost of manures and restoration had to be considered. The Superintendent stated that there was more suitable land away from the Forest. However, he did indicate that an area of about 16–20 acres (6½–8 ha) between the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge and Connaught Waters was very suitable for steam cultivation and growing oats and wheat and that there was more land near Hawkwood of a similar nature. The overall conclusion reached, however, was that land was unsuitable for cultivation.

Despite this the local authorities persisted, emphasising the need for land for allotments. As a result the whole question was submitted to the Food Production Department of the Board of Agriculture, which indicated that the most convenient course of action would be to authorise the cultivation of the most suitable land. The Conservators, who had agreed to abide by the decision, subsequently arranged for the Corporation of West Ham and Leyton UDC to enclose and cultivate about 40 acres (16 ha) of land (later extended) on Wanstead Flats near to the Lake House Estate. Other local authorities subsequently applied for, and were granted, land for allotments in 1917 and 1918. In general the allotment policy of the Conservators was to deal with local authorities to which applications by individuals were generally referred – with a number of military exceptions. In one case, as part of the defence of London, an anti-aircraft station consisting of gun, searchlight and huts for the crew was erected on Wanstead Flats; it was subsequently arranged for the men at the station to take a plot of land practically adjoining their enclosure to cultivate vegetables.

In October 1918 West Ham Corporation again applied for additional land. The Conservators however did not consider the emergency sufficiently great to justify use of more Forest land for allotments. They also pointed out that a large portion of the Flats was in possession of the military authorities while other parts were being used for recreation. In November similar requests from East Ham and Leyton UDC were also rejected. Then in December the case for more land was taken up by the Food Production Department. The Inspector who attended before the Committee stated that both East Ham and Leyton had many applications for allotments which they could not grant. He also stressed that it was still imperative to increase food production in the country. By way of concession he stated that if the Committee complied, a date would be fixed for termination of occupation and that he would also be prepared to withdraw the East Ham application. Pleas were also made by the Leyton War Gardens Committee. The Epping Forest Committee, however, decided not to grant any further land for allotments. In fact, in April 1919 the Conservators, due to increasing demands for space for recreation, decided to implement an earlier decision of land restoration. (Initially a proviso to the granting of allotments had been introduced to restore the land to its original condition by 1 January 1919. Later the date had been extended to two years after the end of the war.) Local authorities were given formal notice and asked to notify individual allotment holders. This demand aroused considerable controversy. While the authorities agreed that the two-year agreement did not apply to common land

they argued that this had not been made apparent at the time, but the Committee considered the matter closed. The local authorities appealed to their Members of Parliament and in May 1919 questions were asked in the House of Commons and the Government was urged to pressurise the Conservators for an extension of tenure to the allotment holders. The Board of Agriculture, however, agreed with the Conservators. Shortly after this, Lord Dee of Pareham succeeded Lord Ernle as President of the Board of Agriculture. This, the Committee argued, appeared to have caused a change of view as the Food Production Department took up the case of the allotment holders. Despite this, and a deputation from the allotment holders, the Conservators remained adamant. The case was then taken up by the Parliamentary Allotments Committee of the House of Commons and a deputation was heard by the Conservators. Significantly, the Conservators also received a deputation from local residents and school teachers representing school children, protesting against an extension of tenure. The Secretary of the County Borough of West Ham Juvenile Organisation Committee also wrote, stating that if tenure of the allotments was extended it would involve hardship to football players. The Conservators were still unmoved but the opposition persisted. The Woodford Allotments Association stated that the decision was harsh and unfair and contrary to the public interest in view of the need for food production, that the allotment holders were assisting to combat profiteering in vegetables and that allotment work was also a recreation.

The matter was again raised in the House of Commons on 18 December when an appeal was made

Corporation of London.

EPPING FOREST.

ALLOTMENTS.

PUBLIC NOTICE.

The Conservators of Epping Forest HEREBY GIVE NOTICE to all Allotment-holders holding parts of Epping Forest and Wanstead Flats as Allotments under The Leyton Urban District Council that the Licences granted by the said Conservators to cultivate such Allotments have all been revoked as on and from the 28th day of February, 1920, and that legal proceedings have this day been commenced in the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice by the said Conservators against the said Council to recover possession of all the aforesaid parts of Epping Forest and Wanstead Flats.

The said Conservators HEREBY ALSO GIVE NOTICE that they require from all such Allotment-holders possession forthwith of each and every of the said Allotments, and the said holders are required forthwith to remove from such Allotments all produce grown or planted by them, and all tools and sheds, and to abstain from further cultivation of the said Allotments. The said Conservators will, if any attempt to further cultivate the said Allotments is made, in defiance of this Notice, apply to the High Court of Justice for an injunction restraining such further cultivation.

Any person desirous of contesting the right of the said Conservators to possession of the said Allotments may, on making application in proper form at the Central Office of The Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, be made a party to and permitted to defend the said Action at his own risk as to costs.

Dated this 1st day of March, 1920.

HOMEWOOD CRAWFORD,
Solicitor for the said Conservators.

GUILDHALL, LONDON, E.C. 2.

to the Prime Minister to receive a deputation. In fact, Lloyd George promised to consider a statement in writing. On 19 December he subsequently wrote to the Chairman of the Conservators urging an extension of tenure; but apparently prior to receipt of the letter the Conservators had informed the local authorities that if formal possession of the land was handed over on 1 January 1920, the time for vacant possession would be extended to 28 February to enable winter produce to be harvested. All the local authorities, except Leyton UDC, agreed to this. As all else failed, proceedings were commenced in the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice by the Conservators. A writ was issued on 1 March 1920 calling for immediate possession of the land by the Conservators and for the defendants to be liable to restore the land. It was also deemed advisable to place notices on the plots of land so that the allotment holders might be informed of the proceedings (see previous column). A settlement was eventually negotiated, vacant possession was duly given on 11 November 1920 and the land was subsequently restored.

To be concluded in Newsletter 183.

References

A full list of the extensive references that accompanied the original article is available from the Editor.

This article is reprinted from the *Essex Journal*, by kind permission of the EJ and the author, who at the time it was written, was Senior Tutor/Warden's Deputy at the Field Study Centre at High Beach.

On moving to Loughton

This is part of an interview by EMELIE BUCKNER in May 1995. (Reprinted from *Newsletter 133*, September 1996.)

Mrs May Dyer was born in the village of Timberscombe five miles from Minehead. When she was six her family moved to Wheddon Cross, a village near Exmoor. Her father, who was injured in the Great War, died as a result of it, and her mother had to find work which meant leaving the care of May to her grandparents. In the mid-1930s she went into domestic service in Minehead until the Second World War in which she served in the NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) and the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service). She married after the War and she and her husband first lived in Bromley, Kent, until they moved to the Debden Estate, in Loughton, in 1951. Now [in 1995] 76 years of age, she helps to run the Mannock Drive Day Care Centre with Lady Murray.

My first impression on moving to Debden was – I think I would have turned round and gone home the next day because we had ordered coal, it hadn't been delivered, it was very cold, it was very wet, and we learnt a couple of days after that my neighbour had coal, they had lit the fire and the boiler had blown up so they couldn't have a fire! If we had known each other then they could have come in. That was one thing. We had no pavements – it was all cinder tracks and we used to go out and pick up bits of coke out of the cinder track to make a fire and wood. The builders had left a lot of rubbish, so we got a fire in the end. That was the only way of getting hot water in those days;

there was no immersion heater. In the middle of summer you had to light a fire to get a bath.

I was thirty-two and I had two girls, the youngest was born here she's thirty-six now. There were no schools when we came here. Marion went to Hatfields [now part of the East 15 Acting School], and Loughton Hall, which were used as schools. When she had to go to junior school she went to a classroom in Lucton Girls, until Willingale was built. Wendy went to Willingale until she was eleven and then to the Brook School, in Roding Road, and then to West Hatch. Marion went on to West Hatch at eleven years.

Marion is a teacher and Wendy is a Sainsbury's Department Manager. Wendy was very interested in the Girl Guides until she was married. Marion used to go to Sunday School. I have been going to the Methodist Church for a long time. In the Women's Fellowship we had a meeting every Thursday, Young Wives on Tuesday nights and we had a table tennis club.

Life on the estate was very quiet. There was not much going on. There was no youth club for the youngsters; there were no pubs for the men. Loughton Hall had a community centre where they had classes. I did go to dressmaking classes for a while. I did outdoor work – dressmaking – to earn a few coppers. I think the main thing, when I first came here, was getting used to the people. They seemed totally different to what I was used to. They were nearly all East-Enders: a lot of them went back. My neighbours are both East-Enders but I have always got along with them. It was just something I couldn't get used to at first. In Bromley we were on the Downham Estate and that was all built up – here it wasn't. The college wasn't here. It used to be an Italian prisoner of war camp there. Then they moved out and there was just a field. When we first came here there were no houses between here and Ibbetson Path and the Broadway, the Letting Office was a hut there. Where Parsonage Court is now there used to be the Rectory and Saint Nicholas' Church Hall; practically all the entertainment used to go on in the hall – the youth organisations, dances, that sort of thing.

We had a few shops at Pyrles Lane and Borders Lane. Bosworth's butcher used to deliver once a week; he'd take an order from one week to the next of what you wanted. A greengrocer used to come round and the milkman brought your groceries. Any main shopping you went to Loughton. I went to the cinema in Loughton once every two or three weeks. If there was a children's film on I used to take Marion. I think the cinema had gone before I had Wendy. [The cinema closed in 1963.]

I know quite a few people now because working with Heather [Lady Murray] has introduced me to everybody. When we first came here they [Loughton village people] just didn't want to know us. I was in Home Help for fifteen years, and once when I went to an old lady who was an old Loughtonite [*sic*], she asked me where I lived, I told her: 'Oh,' she said, 'I prefer my home helps from Loughton!'

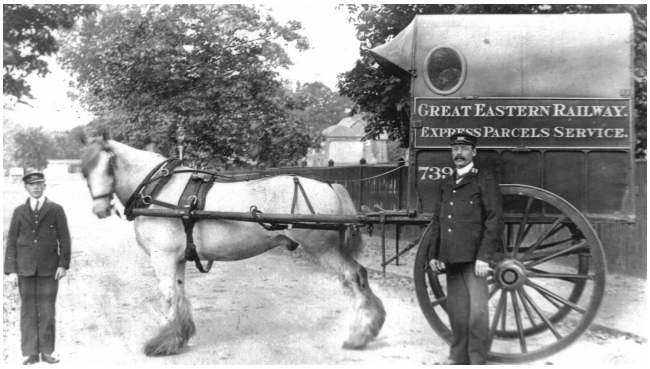
A local celebration of the 1902 Coronation of Edward VII. The procession is shown nearing the bottom of Church Hill.

Loughton, the surname

CHRIS POND

A '*second time round' piece from* Newsletter 138 – *December 1997)*

Loughton is a fairly uncommon, but not unknown, surname. According to the telephone book, there are two in Romford! Mr Michael Loughton was elected to the House of Commons on 1 May for the constituency of Worthing East and Shoreham, and on 2 May we received a letter from a Miss Loughton – a 91-year-old – of Morecambe, Lancs, enquiring of the name's origin. There are of course three Loughtons in the country (the others in Buckinghamshire and Shropshire) and it is not easy to discover which one the first bearer of a name came from. Miss Loughton, who seems to have an excellent memory, remembers an article in *The Quiver* about 1913 showing a picture of Loughton Railway Station, in connection with the visits of poor children to the Staples Road Retreat. If we can trace this, we will print it in the *Newsletter.* Incidentally, Miss Loughton says in her whole life she has never met another person with the name! Nevertheless, Loughton seems more common than Chingford, Waltham, Theydon or Abridge . . .



Great Eastern Railway parcels van in Alderton Hill in 1903

And so to . . . Epping

'[27 Feb] . . . So we took leave, the road pretty good, but the weather rainy, to Epping. [28 Feb] Up in the morning. Then to London through the Forest, where we found the way good, but only in one path which we kept as if we had rode through a kennel all the way.'

Pepys's Diary, 27/28 February 1659/60

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