LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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'Mr Dow with cows, near Smithy (Winter)', from *The Life and Art of Octavius Deacon* (see below)

We welcome back all current members and, perhaps, some new ones, and trust that everybody will enjoy the 2010/11 series of talks and presentations arranged by Richard Morris. We also hope you enjoy this, and subsequent Newsletters, for which we have received an excellent mix of contributions. Feel free to continue sending them in. Also, please note the new books reviewed in this edition.

So, let's forget the World Cup, Andy Murray's Wimbledon disappointment, even the economy, and look forward to the new L & DHS season

Octavius Deacon – a new book

The Society has just published its first, what might justly be termed, 'art' or 'illustrated' book. This project has occupied the thoughts and lives of the two authors, Chris Pond and Richard Morris, over the past year with the help of Tony O'Connor of the Epping Forest District Museum and Ted Martin on design and production.

Octavius Deacon was a newspaper advertising agent, publisher and artist who lived in Loughton for a large part of his life. In April 1998 one of the last members of the Deacon family, Doris, died at South Nutfield in Surrey aged 94. The family house and effects were left mostly to the National Trust to be sold for the Trust's funds. At an auction in June, several lots relating to Loughton included a fine album of watercolours of Loughton and other scenes painted by Octavius Deacon in the years between 1874 and the First World War, together with 15 sketch and note books. These sketch books included drawings and sketches from other villages in Essex, and further afield in Wales and on the Continent, places which were visited by the family during holidays.

The lots were sold to a Staffordshire dealer, but were subsequently acquired by the Epping Forest District Museum and now form part of their collections. They purchased them with the support of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council/Victoria & Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund. Six Deacon sketches are also in the possession of the Essex Record Office.

In order to publish the pictures, the first problem was to find out as much as possible about Octavius Deacon so as to present a biography of this singular – and rather cantankerous – artist. Chris and Richard researched Deacon fully and explored his writings and the first 23 pages of the book contain as detailed an account as possible of his life.

The next problem was how to present the paintings and sketches, given that they were mainly rectangular, having been sketched or painted in books that could be slipped into the artist's pocket. A traditional British publishing format was chosen (Crown 4to) which enabled the pictures to be arranged one, two or three to a page according to their original dimensions.

It was of course essential that, wherever possible, explanatory captions were provided to explain the pictures, especially in relation to Loughton. The Deacons had not stored the pictures in optimum conditions and some had deteriorated over time, however, modern technology was able to restore brightness to many and mainly successful efforts were made to restore those that had suffered grievously.

The next 24 pages of the book therefore present a selection of 47 Deacon paintings and sketches (many of which are in full colour with detailed explanatory captions), showing a charming, whimsical, and evocative picture of Loughton village and London life 120 and more years ago.

There is also a detailed three-page index linking the references in the biographical section and plates section.

This has been an expensive project for the Society to undertake, but was essential in order to provide a window into late nineteenth-century history and the life of one of Loughton's more colourful past residents. We expect at best for the sales to break even, but it has been financed by the sales of the 30 or so other books we have had a hand in, some of which have outsold all expectations. However, if you want a Christmas present for a former neighbour or relation, look no further!

The book will be available at meetings at £5 for members and from the Loughton bookshop at £7.50.

Some random recollections of Loughton in the 1890s

PERCY THOMPSON (1866–1953)
Transcribed by RICHARD MORRIS

This article has been transcribed from Percy Thompson's four-volume history of Loughton which is now held at the London Metropolitan Archives. The history is in manuscript but includes a volume of old photographs of Loughton. Percy spent many years writing the history of Loughton and this particular article was probably written in the early 1920s. For over 30 years Thompson was secretary of the Essex Field Club and editor of the Essex Naturalist. *In 1946 he wrote a history of St John's Church, Loughton, which was published. His grave in Loughton Cemetery has recently been restored.*

I came to Loughton in March 1893. At that date, the total population was only just 4,000: there were no street pavements, no kerbs, and the roads were in summer thick with choking dust. The sidewalks were badly repaired and often so muddy as to necessitate walking in the roadway itself; indeed, in those carefree days the inhabitants customarily walked in the roadway, innocent of all fear of being run down by motor-vehicles. Daily travellers to the City had great difficulty in reaching their offices with tidy footgear.

There was no street lighting. Visitors had to be conveyed, with linked arms, along the dark roads to the railway station at night, to avoid the risk of their tumbling into the roadside ditch. In the mid-length of Station Road, a quite large pool of rainwater, more or less permanent in wet weather, had to be carefully skirted by going out into the very middle of the road. Stray cattle or horses were frequent along the roads, sometimes coming from as far away as Theydon and Epping.

Of course there were no omnibuses or motors. The 'flies' at the railway station (one or two of them still persist as relics), dirty ramshackle conveyances drawn by miserable hacks which could only go at an amble and failed to get up the hills, and which were only tolerated by the railway company because the contractor, Sadler, was of long standing, were the sole means of conveyance in the village: in those days, the enquiry 'Drive up Sir?' of the cabmen was a familiar greeting to City men on returning to the station at night. On wet nights, these flies were in much demand, and wily passengers booked one in advance, by telephone, before leaving town, to meet a certain train on arrival.

The railway station itself in the nineties was a primitive structure, the greater length of the platforms being quite unprotected by any roof, and the waiting rooms were the tiniest: a compensating advantage existed in the low brick wall bounding the up platform, which permitted to waiting passengers an unobstructed view across the beautiful Roding meadows; nowadays in the attempt to glimpse these, one has to peep with difficulty through narrow interstices between the pales of the high fence which replaces the low wall.

The line to Epping had only been doubled in 1893 [authorised in 1885], it having previously been a single track. But notwithstanding these primitive conditions the journey to town was in some respects more comfortable in those days than it is today. The overcrowded conditions of today were unknown; the writer sometimes travelled all the way from Loughton all the way to Stepney alone in a second class compartment in one of the 'business trains' of the day. But the lighting of the carriages was very bad then, and reading at night was almost impossible; some passengers, first securing a seat next the window, stuck candle-ends to the frame and so were enabled to read their evening papers by the flickering light.

No local government controlled the affairs of the village, except the antiquated vestry, but the Local Government Act of 1894 instituted the 'parish council', which was soon to develop into the 'urban district council'.

The suburbanisation of the village had scarcely begun in the early nineties. The southern end possessed houses in their own grounds on Albion Hill, Nursery Road and Upper Park, much as they are today, but Lower Park and Algers Road were only half-built – they were only taken over by the parish in the year 1893, as also was the case with Ollards Grove, Connaught Avenue and High Beach Road. Meadow Road was pretty well filled with houses, but Station Road, on its eastern side, was open to the fields, except for a single house in its mid-length.

The High Road was unbuilt on between 'Rosebank', with its long tree-bordered garden, and 'Brook Villas', the brook, now diverted and in part culverted, meandered around a grass field tenanted by Mr Bosworth, butcher, in which sports were held on special occasions, where now Brooklyn Avenue and Priory Road are. On the other side of the road, the present Wesleyan Church was unbuilt and its site was occupied by a temporary structure; the two houses which adjoin northwards had not yet come into existence. Mr Peacock's confectionery shop was then, and until 1902, the 'Imperial Bank' (afterwards absorbed into the London Joint Stock Bank and later still by the Midland Bank Ltd), then the only bank in Loughton, where a clerk attended, for a few hours, on

two days each week, to transact the small amount of local banking business then necessary; the attached private house known as 'The Bower' has only recently been converted into two shops.

King's Green on its western side was bounded by an orchard, the only building between the Bank and Lewin's bakery in York Hill being Salter's, now Marvin Smith's, butcher's shop. York Hill itself, in its lower part, remains unchanged except that the 'Wheatsheaf' has been rebuilt and the 'King's Head' also. An old black-boarded shed belonging to the 'King's Head', which occupied the site of Salmon's tea rooms, was used, when occasion required, as a mortuary, there being then no mortuary in the Cemetery grounds, and children used to peep curiously through the holes in the dilapidated boards to get a glimpse of the silent occupant, when, as was then a frequent occurrence, a suicide found in the Forest was brought there to await an inquest.

The present 'York House Hotel' was then a hospital known as 'Oriolet Hospital', conducted on vegetarian principles, the separate 'Chalet' in the grounds being used as an open-air ward.

Church Hill wore a very different aspect in those days from what it does today. The 'Uplands Estate' had not been thought of, and the large plain 18th century mansion known as 'Uplands', with its gardens and fields, extended along the whole side of the hill from the cricket field as far as 'Meads', only broken by the 'enclave' of the blacksmith's forge which has since been transformed into a sanitary laundry. The mansion itself was then occupied by the Misses Garrard and Lobb as a Children's Convalescent Home, and its gardens were let to a local greengrocer. A row of pollarded lime trees, behind a post and chain fence, gave a delightfully rural aspect to the road, while the house itself, glimpsed behind its two splendid Cedars of Lebanon (one of which still remains as a symbol of departed splendour!) had a dignified patrician appearance. Farther along, the road was bordered by a shrubbery containing some magnificent elms tenanted by jackdaws; and, where Meads Path now is, a stile gave access to the former footpath which traversed the same ground. In a field on the slope of Carroll Hill was a sunken brick reservoir, fed by a spring, from which a metal pipe conveyed water to the 'Uplands' mansion before a public water supply existed.

The western side of Church Hill was already being developed for building, but remnants of the original roadside elm-row and ditch remained here and there. There was no house between Pump Hill and St John's Road; the latter had not long been formed and notices emphasised the fact that it was a 'private road' and that 'the upper gate was locked'. Another newly made road, Queen's Road, then called 'Queen's Park Road', was still for the most part unbuilt on, and the road itself was a private road, not metalled, with deep ruts in its clayey surface which were for long a scandal to the village. Pump Hill was then a narrow lane innocent of houses, other than 'Ash Lodge' and the wooden cottages at its upper end

Half way along York Hill stood the derelict skin factory familiarly called 'the old factory', where now a row of cottages stands next 'Bachelor's Hall'. The semi-detached cottages between here and the 'Gardener's Arms' did not exist, nor did the road leading up to Loughton Lodge and the two houses at the lower end.

Returning to the central parts of the village, Smart's Lane and Forest Road were then practically as they are today, but more houses have since been built along Staples Road. 'The Drive' and 'Woodland Avenue' were then open fields, known as the 'Habgood Estate', awaiting development, but a few houses had already been erected in 'The Drive'; in one of these fields sports were held on the occasion of the Marriage of our present King and Queen, then Duke and Duchess of York, in 1893.

Alderton Hill Road was, in the nineties, unbuilt on throughout its entire length, except for one house, 'Beechlands', in its mid-length, and the Girl's High School was not yet in existence. Trapps Hill, also, was a wholly delightful elm-avenue, no houses existing between 'Priors' and 'Brooklyn' on its south side, while the north side remains today as it was then.

Changes in the northern parts of the village have happily not marred its rural character. With the noteworthy exceptions of the omnibus garage in the High Road and the mushroom growth of the new housing colony in and north of England's Lane, but few striking changes have occurred since the nineties. A sawpit existed in the High Road, by Howe's the wheelwrights; and a skittle-alley adjoining the 'Plume of Feathers' disturbed the nocturnal silence of the village.

In England's Lane, on the south side, was still standing a picturesque cottage with open latticed front, which had once been a butcher's shop. The drab 'Longfield Cottages' had not been built, and 'Marlcroft' stood alone with no near neighbours.

The old cottage at the corner of England's Lane and the Lower Road was then a bakery, kept by a family named Clark, who afterwards went to Canada. The extensive tomato houses at the further end of the Lane had not yet been constructed.

Farther afield, Debden Hall has only recently been demolished and its site is at present derelict. The two picturesque red-bricked cottages on the opposite side of the lane were not then in existence, otherwise Debden Green preserves an unchanged appearance.

There is also, happily, no change to note in either Clay Lane, Pyrles Lane (except for the later growth of glasshouses for tomato rearing), Chigwell Lane, or Border's Lane, which preserve their rural aspect unspoilt. For years after 1893 Loughton Hall Farm was tenanted by the North Metropolitan Tramways Company as a rest-farm for their horses, and was known familiarly as the 'Tramways Farm'.

On Ash Green, the large flint-faced residence built by Mr Clement Boardman replaces a picturesque cottage, with a beautiful burden of Wisteria, known as 'Ashfield Lodge', in which a succession of curates dwelt. At Baldwyn's Hill, the 'Forester's Arms' has recently been re-fronted and 'Deerhurst' has been enlarged; a large house fronts the Forest beyond Whitaker's Way which was not there in the nineties, and Dr Stoker's house, gardener's cottage and

beautiful garden take the place of an avenue of tall elms which were planted originally to give a vista to the inhabitants of the 'Manor House' across the main road. The neighbouring boarded 'Pottery Cottage', as it was called, has been demolished and has given place to a pair of cottages.

Returning to the extreme southern end of the village, we see remarkable changes since the nineties. Whole streets, with abundant houses, now stand where until perhaps a dozen years ago nothing but neat grass-fields existed. 'The Crescent', 'Spring Grove', 'Summerfield Road', 'Hillcrest Road', 'Mayfair Avenue', did not then exist even in the minds of the land developers; indeed, at one time, a project to convert all the rolling country hereabouts into a private golf-links was seriously entertained but had to be abandoned.

In 1893 the 'Club' was not, nor the 'Forest Hall', 'Lincoln Hall' nor the 'Lincoln Almshouses'. Until 1894, two old wooden cottages, with an outside stair to the upper storey, occupied the site where Hayward's, the fruiterer's, shop now stands in the High Road opposite the 'Crown'. The chief village post-office was then Miss Barton's stationery shop at the corner of the High Road and Forest Road; a second branch post-office was then, as now, at Leach's grocery shop at Golding's Hill, but Leach's present shop was then a beerhouse called the 'Bag o' Nails'.

Newnham House was, in the nineties, a Girl's Boarding School, kept by a Miss Pretious.

In the nineties the village was still a rural one and some of its older inhabitants were quite unsophisticated and untravelled. Jack Carter, a simple individual possessed of a musical ear, and whose delight it was to patrol the then quiet streets at night playing melodious solos on his whistle or ocarina, had never, although adult of years, been to London; on the first occasion of his so doing, in order to visit a sister who lived near the Blackfriars Road, he walked the entire distance, there and back.

A quaint character associated with Loughton at the close of the nineties was William Burke, the so-called 'Forest hermit', who lived for some considerable time near Great Monk Wood in a primitive shelter which he had contrived of tree-branches covered with dry bracken fronds. Burke was a harmless, likeable man, and the tale went that he had withdrawn himself from society on account of being crossed in love. Many visitors to the Forest made him an object of pilgrimage and brought him little gifts of tobacco, food and books; he told the present writer that he was provided with 'good reading'. A resident at Debden Green provided him regularly with breakfast. But exposure to inclement weather brought on pneumonia and he was found one day in his 'hut' in a state of collapse; he was removed to the Epping Infirmary, and there he died in June 1903 at the age of 72 years. He is buried at Loughton.

The only local newspaper in the nineties was Mr Hickman's *Loughton Advertiser*, then a very small four page sheet published at a halfpenny; it had been started in 1887 as a gratis monthly. *[See article on Page 14.]*

The last echoes of feudalism persisted in Loughton as late as the nineties. A Manor Court was held in 1891, after a lapse of twenty years, when a Court Baron was held at the 'Feather's inn'; presentments of the deaths of copyhold tenants who had deceased since the holding of the last Court were made, and two encroachments were 'presented' which the manor bailiff was charged to see abated. A year later, on October 29, 1892, at a manor court (the very last, I believe, to be held at Loughton) the Steward of the Manor formally enquired 'whether there were any felonies or evilly-disposed persons to be presented', in true ancient manner 'according to the custom of the manor' as the saying went.

The introduction of the gas-lamps along the bye-roads was not always welcomed. The late Mr W C Waller, for instance, objected that the lamp placed by his garden on Ash Green would drive away the brown owls which haunted his garden at night; to meet his objection, this particular street-lamp is even now blackened on the side next the garden. This lamp illuminates a particularly dark bend in the lane, where according to one old inhabitant, 'they jump out on you', who 'they' were being left unexplained.

The *Parish Magazine* for January 1901, called attention with regret to the signs of approaching suburbanisation of the village. It said, 'The lover of village life is somewhat loath to recognise the approach of Suburbanisation and the departure of rural simplicity, but the advent, in the first month of a new century, of a second weekly newspaper in Loughton, and roads lighted with gas, will probably dispel any fond delusions [that] be still cherished'.

One instance of this 'rural simplicity' may be referred to. The usual method of clearing cottage chimneys of an accumulation of soot was to set light periodically to the soot in the flue (this was called 'firing the chimney') and allowing it to burn itself out, a dangerous practice which is even today not unknown among some of the cottagers.

Tour to Dunkirk: 28 to 31 May 2010

PETER SPENCER

Seventy years is a lifetime so it is surprising that seven veterans from the Second World War were still able to join the tour which included two members of the Epping Forest U3A, and Eleanora Spencer. The tour was led by a member of the Royal British Legion, Buckhurst Hill, Janice Curd, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the evacuation of over 338,000 British and French troops from the harbour and beaches near Dunkirk. They had been surrounded by the German army following its blitzkrieg attack on France.

Our leader sought out the captain of the P & O ferry and asked him to be present when veteran Kenneth Manterfield cast a wreath upon the sea in the English Channel in remembrance of Cyril Nichols of Powell Road, Buckhurst Hill, who lost his life as a

master of one of the little ships manned by volunteers who ferried soldiers from the shore to Royal Navy and French Navy ships further out to sea. Afterwards we were invited on the bridge where, after a while, the captain reminded Janice that he was in command!

Wreaths were laid by members of the party at the British Memorial at Routes de Furnes, Dunkerque, the Brays Dunes British Memorial and the Allied Monument in Malo-les-Bains, together with Prince Michael of Kent and delegates of British, French, Belgium and Czech war veterans. Unfortunately our leader, one of the youngest members, had a fall in the hotel bathroom on the first night and appeared at breakfast with a large lump on her head and bruises on her arms and legs. Undeterred she continued to lead the party and after the wreath laying ceremonies decided to take the veterans up to the front of a procession to the Town Hall of soldiers dressed in uniforms of the time, tanks and 1940s military cars and motor bikes. A veteran hitched a lift in one of the cars! Finding a lift, our leader pushed a veteran in a wheelchair out to confront Prince Michael of Kent who agreed to meet them the following day at the Dunkerque museum where he received an apology from one of the veterans who had previously mistaken him for Prince Charles!

The tour included attendance at a cultural soirée in St Eloi church, where the names of the little ships sunk in the evacuation were read out, and a visit to the harbour where many of the surviving little ships were moored together with the modern frigate HMS *Monmouth* whose chief engineer welcomed our party aboard to show us the £60million Merlin helicopter stowed at the stern. With us was veteran James White, 89, of Roding View, who spent nine days in 1940 on the deck of his uncle's little ship rescuing soldiers while under fire from German forces. When the twenty-nine-year-old chief engineer mentioned the ship's dentist one of the lady veterans said: 'He did a good job on your teeth.'

Representatives of the British Legion and Cllr Peter Spencer of Buckhurst Hill Parish Council also laid wreaths at a ceremony in homage to the dead of France attended by a French General and local Prefect in Leffrinckoucke, at the site near a fort where the remaining allied soldiers were either killed or captured by the Germans, together with local gendarmes. At the fort the Buckhurst Hill veterans were presented with an old Lee Enfield rifle encrusted with barnacles which had been salvaged from the beach.

The tour ended with a visit to the infamous Wormhoudt massacre site where around one hundred British soldiers who had surrendered were herded into a small cow shed and murdered by the SS. Two escaped to a nearby pond where one was shot and killed and the other wounded and later taken prisoner. After the war he returned to the farm and the pond was excavated and a large mound of earth was built as a memorial. We were delighted to meet the artist who had produced a sculpture for the site depicting three hands holding a Dove representing the British, French and Dutch soldiers involved in the rearguard action who protected the retreat to the coast and evacuation of their compatriots.

Stratford's bus industry

JOHN HARRISON

Society members may well be familiar with AEC who made buses and also lorries in Walthamstow, but recently I found out about a much smaller bus industry based in Stratford. Chris Pond e-mailed me this photo as he was puzzled about the number plates featured in it. I will return to the number plates shortly. He commented that the buses were GER omnibuses.

I had seen the photo before, but had had no idea what the make of the vehicles was, nor indeed had I heard of GER before. I therefore looked the company up in *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Trucks and Buses* by Denis Miller. This gave the date of manufacture of GER buses as 1905 to ca 1907 and had the following entry:

> 'To provide feeder bus services for its railway stations, the Great Eastern Railway Co Ltd built about a dozen open-topped double-deck buses at its Stratford Works. Called GERs, these had 30hp Panhard petrol engines hidden beneath a long bonnet, with chain drive to the rear wheels. Unfortunately, they were not satisfactory, and almost as soon as they entered service suspension modifications had to be made. Some had replacement charabanc bodies for summer use and a few ended their days as trucks.'

Had I noticed the 'Great Eastern Railway' signage on the side of the buses, perhaps I would have worked out what GER stood for!

At this point Ian Strugnell sent me a copy of an article from *Motor Traction* of 17 August 1905. This has a lot of technical information about the buses. Interestingly the article says, 'The tyres form really the only parts of any importance that have not been made by the railway company' and Ian said in the covering e-mail that, according to scrapbooks kept by F V Russell who was the chief draughtsman at the Great Eastern Railway works, only the tyres, magneto and carburettor were not built at the works. This would suggest that the *Encylopedia*'s reference to them having Panhard engines is incorrect. A possible explanation for the confusion is that the *Motor Traction* article said the buses had 'the Panhard style of transmission'. One wonders if building buses from scratch was too sophisticated a task for a works which was more used to the engineering involved in constructing steam locomotives and whether this was the reason for the buses' unreliability. The article indicates 'accommodation is provided for thirty-six passengers (sixteen inside and eighteen on the top, and two beside the driver)' – a modern double-decker would carry about twice that number.

Finally, the explanation of those number plates, AN-H1 and AN-H3. Chris reckoned the AN indicated West Ham as this was the code for that authority until it was merged into the Greater London Council in 1965. He was right. The plates are General Identification Marks, the pre-1921 format of trade plates. These are something I have been researching for a while (hence my familiarity with the photo), spending (wasting?) a lot of time in the Colindale Newspaper Library doing so. Each authority had its own format and colours, the only rule being that they should start with the authority's code letters, in this case 'AN' for West Ham. The *Motor Traction* article indicates the photo was taken when the buses were on a trial run between Lowestoft and Southwold – the buses would have been entitled to carry General Identification Marks for such a trial.

W W Jacobs, 1863–1943

PETER COOK

William Wymark Jacobs can probably be considered as one of the better-known authors to feature among the many literary names associated with Loughton and the surrounding district. Born in Wapping on 8 September 1863, he was the son of William Gage Jacobs and Sophia Wymark, his mother's maiden name being preserved as William's second. His father was for many years the Wharf Manager on the South Devon Wharf at Lower East Smithfield, and *Kelly's Directory* for 1902 shows that steam vessels loaded there on various weekdays for Ipswich, Kirkcaldy and Chatham, and sailing vessels to Penryn fortnightly and Whitstable every Friday evening. As his father remained in his job until the early 1900s it was there that young William and his siblings would spend much of their time, watching the cargo ships come and go, absorbing the life and language of the longshoremen and the sailors and the background of the coastal shipping trade, a factor that although unrecognised at the time was to stand him in good stead in his future career as an author.

William Sr and Sophia had married in 1861 but in 1870, at the age of 29, Sophia succumbed to a fever and died leaving him with a young family. The 1871 census shows he and his four children, William Wymark 7, Sophia 5, Francis 2 and Percy 1, living at 27 Grafton Street, Mile End Old Town with a housekeeper Ellen Florey, and Ellen Long a general servant. Later that same year he married Ellen Florey and together they had a further seven children. The Jacobs family, having grown in number were far from rich, but managed to provide for WW – as he was known to his friends – to attend a private school in London and thence to complete his education at Birkbeck College, now part of the University of London. During this time family holidays would be spent with relatives, of whom there were a number in East Anglia, or at a cottage near Sevenoaks in Kent. In 1879 the 3 October issue of the *London Gazette* records him as becoming a Post Office Boy Clerk, and in 1883 the 26 June issue shows him as number 66 out of 102 in the Order of Merit for the Civil Service Examination. From 1883 to 1899 he was employed in the Post Office Savings Bank, a regular income offering a welcome relief from the financial hardship of his childhood. The Post Office had been publishing its own in-house *Blackfriars Magazine* since 1850, which was a means of communicating forthcoming events to the staff as well as including stories, biographies, poetry and general items of interest. It also encouraged staff to offer sketches, stories or anything which they felt might interest their fellow workers, and it was in 1885 that Jacobs, writing as a relief from the tedium of his job, had his first short story published.

W W Jacobs

During the late eighties and early nineties there were many weekly literary magazines being published, and these afforded William the outlets for the short stories and articles he was now producing on a regular basis. In 1892 Jerome K Jerome – best known for *Three Men in a Boat* – along with fellow humorist Robert Barr, founded and co-edited *The Idler*, a

satirical magazine catering to those gentlemen of leisure with money and time on their hands. Jerome's connections in literary society enabled him to gain contributors of note including Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and it was alongside such esteemed company that Jacobs' stories were also being published. *The Idler,* with its broad spectrum of essays, cartoons, short stories and sports reports was a great success and many of Jacobs' contributions were to re-appear in later years in the collections published under titles such as *Many Cargoes, Light Freights* and *Sea Urchins.* He was also published in monthlies like *Harper's* and *Pearson's,* and in the *Strand* magazine with whom the arrangement lasted almost until his death. Among the notable writers of the time who remarked admiringly on the quality of his work were G K Chesterton, Henry James and Arnold Bennett.

He was however still working for the Post Office although this was not really necessary as by now he was a highly paid author, and in 1898 Arnold Bennett wrote of his amazement that Jacobs felt able to turn down the sum of £500 for six short stories. In 1899 he finally left the Post Office, as he was by now a thriving freelance writer with the previously mentioned *Many Cargoes* (1896) and *Sea Urchins* (1898), as well as a novella, *The Skipper's Wooing* (1897), all published with great success. A year later, on 6 January 1900 he married Agnes Eleanor Williams (Nell), a militant suffragette who apparently served a term in jail for breaking a Post Office window during a disturbance related to the cause. The 1901 census records them living in Kings Place Road, Buckhurst Hill, with three-month old daughter Barbara, Jacobs' sister Amy, sister-in-law Nancy and two servants, Gertrude and Annie Crouchman.

He had by now entered the most prolific writing period of his career with *A Master of Craft* (1900), *Light Freights* (1901), *At Sunwich Port* (1902) – one of five novels he was to write – and *The Lady of the Barge* (1902). At this time a W W Jacobs story could command £25 per thousand words, while by comparison Arnold Bennett was getting three guineas (£3.15). It was an indication of Jacobs' popularity and earning capability, which would equate today to hundreds of thousands of pounds. *The Lady of the Barge* included what is without doubt his most famous story 'The Monkey's Paw'. This is a classic of the horror genre into which he sometimes ventured and the adaptations have been many and varied. In 1907 it was produced as a play and in 2008 it was adapted as a Nepalese film. Between those dates there have been numerous film and TV versions, radio plays and stage presentations. The theme has even been used in a 1991 TV episode of *The Simpsons* – Homer had a monkey paw and four wishes – and more recently in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.* One wonders what WW would have made of those, although, since most of his stories were of a humorous nature they may well have received his approval.

It was however the tales of the sea and the characters who sailed it that were his favourite subjects, described in *Punch* magazine as 'men who go down to the sea in ships of moderate tonnage'. Many of his stories of sailors and longshoremen are recounted by Bill, the old night-watchman on the wharf, and often feature three of Jacobs' favourite, if slightly disreputable characters, Ginger Dick, Sam Small and Peter Russett. Arriving home from a voyage with money in their pockets and the East End taverns beckoning, you could rest assured that they would, by the end of the tale, have been relieved of their funds, usually on account of their own gullibility and often with a little help from the local inhabitants. These stories were related showing his great ability to portray the vernacular of the East End, its humour and its slang, whilst refraining from any coarseness which may have offended the readers of the day.

1903 saw the publication of *Odd Craft* which included the 'The Money Box', a short story which in 1936 was the basis of a Laurel and Hardy film entitled 'Our Relations'. *Dialstone Lane* (1904) was a novel involving a search for buried treasure and included 60 or so illustrations by Will Owen who provided the artwork for so many of his books. *Salthaven* (1908) and *The Castaways* (1916) completed his novels, while the collections of short stories were being produced less frequently, the last six being *Captains All* (1907); *Sailors' Knots* (1909), containing 'The Toll-House', a macabre tale of a night spent in a haunted house; *Ship's Company* (1911); *Night Watches* (1914), which includes another horror story 'The Three Sisters'; *Deep Waters* (1919); and *Sea Whispers* (1926).

The fictional village of Claybury, believed to be based on Loughton, appears in a number of his stories which often involve another of his characters, Bob Pretty, the local Jack-the-Lad of his day. As can be seen by the gaps between the publication dates, his short story output had begun to decline, and thereafter he worked mostly on adapting stories for the stage, although his first stage adaptation, 'The Ghost of Jerry Bundler', was performed in London back in 1899, the story 'Jerry Bundler' only subsequently appearing in *Light Freights* in 1901.

By the early 1900s the family had moved again, this time to Loughton where, in 1908, *Kelly's Directory* shows them living at The Outlook, Upper Park Road, but by 1910 they had moved to Feltham House, Goldings Hill. By now there were four additional children, Luned Marion, Hugh Wymark, Christopher Gage and Olwen Margaret. Unfortunately the marriage was not of the happiest. Jacobs was a shy and retiring man with a very conservative nature, whilst Nell, as previously mentioned, was full of new ideas and a dedicated follower of the most radical causes of the day. It would appear that a happy medium was never to be reached and when the children had gone they separated although they were never divorced.

His popularity never waned and his books continued to be reprinted, but an application for a blue plaque at his London home, 15a Gloucester Gate, was initially declined by English Heritage on the grounds that he was no longer sufficiently well known. Following a long campaign, and world-wide protest from his readers, they relented and the plaque was unveiled at a special event with the Prince of Wales among those attending. There is of course

another blue plaque at 96 Goldings Road, Loughton, the site of Feltham House. *Sea Whispers* was to be his final work and he spent the last 17 years of his life in comfortable retirement. Having lived through the London Blitz he died on 1 September 1943 at Hornsey Lane, Islington, just one week before his 80th birthday.

A schoolboy's war

NORMAN E WILLIS

[This article, by an Old Boy of Buckhurst Hill County High School, and also a member of the Epping Forest U3A, first appeared earlier this year in the national U3A magazine, which has a readership of over 250,000 members.]

Mr Chamberlain told the nation that we were at war with Germany as I arrived at the house in Cheltenham where I was to spend the whole of the 1939/40 academic year. I was there on a private evacuation, taken by my next-door neighbours from Buckhurst Hill, the Flack family – who had decided to go and stay with some newly married relatives 'until it was clear whether there was going to be a war'. Apart from missing my Mum and Dad, that year of the 'Phoney War' was a wonderful time for me. I played happily in the fields close to the house with a friend I made at school; I was well-fed and looked after by the Flack family and their relatives and above all else, Mr Dunn, the young husband, taught me to read music, to play the piano and to sing. The war had no effect at all on my life.

However, when I reached the end of my Primary education and the time came to take the Scholarship exam (this was before the 1944 Education Act, remember) a major problem arose. Although I passed the exam and was accepted for Cheltenham Grammar School, the local authority would not give me a scholarship because my parents didn't live in Cheltenham, so either my father would have to find the money to pay full fees – or I would have to go home. So it was that in July 1940 I came home to take up a place at the (then very new) Buckhurst Hill County High School for Boys. That school had been cleverly placed by a thoughtful local authority with a large RAF station (No 4 Balloon Centre) on its northern edge and an Anti-Aircraft Gun battery just across Roding Lane to the East – clever thinking!

Fortunately for us boys, the Head had a direct telephone connection with the gun site opposite, so he received warning of oncoming air raids about five minutes before the public warnings were sounded, so we all had good time to evacuate the school and proceed (without running, please!) into the underground shelters that had been prepared at the top of the school field. As the Battle of Britain raged overhead, and the teachers watched from the doorways to the shelters, we boys were safe and sound underground – except that we discovered that we could climb the escape ladders at the end, and if you quietly and carefully lifted the steel escape hatch, we could watch what was going on as well.

When the Blitz started that winter, things got much harder to cope with. My Dad and my elder brother, with help from the man who had moved into the Flack's house, had dug a very passable air-raid shelter at the end of our back garden (for some reason we didn't qualify for an Anderson shelter) – the only problem with it was that it collected a lot of water when it rained and spiders found it a very comfortable home. We went into it once – after which my mother said she would rather die in her own bed than of pneumonia from sharing a hole in the ground with all the spiders in creation. After that we had a three-tier set of bunks built, supported by 6 inch × 6 inch posts, in our sitting room, Mum and Dad on the floor, me in the middle and my elder brother at the top.

That year of the Blitz was difficult for all of us, though it affected us in different ways. My father worked for the PLA as a pay clerk in the Royal Albert Dock and was on the rota for the ARP Control Centre there. He was on duty the night of the great raid on the docks: his stress levels were greater than many others because he had been wounded in the Arras bombardment in 1917, when most of his platoon were killed, and when he finally got home mid-afternoon on the day after the dock raid, having seen the total destruction of the houses he knew so well in Tidal Basin, he was shaking with stress well into the next day. It says a lot for the PLA as employers that everyone on duty that night was given a full day off to recover. At the same time, my brother was working as a marine engineer apprentice in the Victoria Dock so my mother had two of them to worry about – that she managed to keep everyone on an even keel throughout the nightly stress of the air raids was a great credit to her.

In addition to the bombs and parachute mines that fell in Buckhurst Hill and kept us awake and (for me at least) frightened through the night, there was the added problem of frequent loss of electricity, gas and water as a result of the bombing. We became very adept at improvisation, cooking over the sitting room fire (which we kept supplied by scavenging for wood down by the Roding and even cutting boughs off the big oak tree in the garden) and sometimes using my brother's Scouting skills to cook a roast dinner in a 'biscuit-tin oven' he made in the back garden.

Sleep at night was quite difficult at times, not least when the mobile anti-aircraft gun (alleged to be a naval gun) mounted on a railway wagon stopped on the line behind Loughton Way to add its enormous noise to that of the guns in Roding Lane. Fortunately for me (and my colleagues at school) 'last night's raid, sir' was an acceptable excuse for not completing your homework. However we also had to get used to the Head coming into Assembly in the morning and informing us that one or two of our fellows had been killed the previous night. No-one had heard of the word 'counselling' – you just shut up and got on with it.

The normal school day was frequently enlivened by unexpected events. One day (probably in 1941) the

school was 'defended' by the RAF against a mock attack by the Scots Guards (who were billeted in the Old Rectory at St John's), so we had a machine-gun crew crouching outside our classroom window (you need to know the architecture of the school to understand how they did it) firing frequent bursts of (I hope) blanks as they spotted Guardsmen crossing the River Roding. How our Maths master managed to keep his lesson going, I shall never know. (The Scots Guards won, of course!)

On another occasion three Spitfires (with Polish pilots, I understand) flew up the school field, below roof-top height, in formation, and just at the last minute hopped over the roof – but one of them misjudged his height, clipped a tree and dived into the side of a Nissen hut on the gun site opposite and was killed outright. The noise was tremendous and the sight even more exciting for my class who happened to be in the Art Room, which has a part glass roof so we saw it all.

Two other events I recall from the early days of the war: the first was being machine-gunned by a German fighter plane as I cycled to school down Roding Lane. Actually I don't think he was wasting bullets on kids going to school – I think he just pressed the trigger a bit early in order to get full impact on the RAF station. Whatever was the case, I got off my bike and into the ditch faster than I've ever done anything else in my life. The second was during a school holiday when I was on my own at home (Mum by that time was doing 'war work', though whether it was still as a First Aider at the Clinic in Buckhurst Way, or working in the office of John Knight's in Whitehall Lane, I can't remember). I heard a low flying aeroplane and went out into the garden to see what it was. As I stood and looked up, I saw a string of little black things come from it – and still didn't have the sense to see that they were bombs aimed again at the RAF Station until they started to explode, by which time it was a bit late to run inside!

Although we lost ceilings and windows from blast damage at home, we escaped anything serious. Our nearest problem came when a string of phosphorous incendiary bombs were dropped – and fortunately didn't explode. One was outside the first house in Loughton Way, while another dropped through the roof of No 15 Hurst Road. It passed by the bed of Mrs Roper, who lived there at the time. She, dear lady was stone deaf and didn't know about it until she woke up next morning to find a large hole beside her bed and a bomb resting in the foundations! The joke about that event was that Eric Rowe, who lived in 2 Loughton Way, was a part-time Air Raid Warden, and rushed out of his house to warn everyone about unexploded bombs – only to discover he had run straight past the one outside his own front gate!

Total black-out made going out at night rare and sometimes hazardous. But my parents used occasionally to go for a beer in the Prince Alfred – a little pub in Alfred Road, known locally as the 'Tin-Tan'. Fortunately they were not there when it received a direct hit and was blown to pieces. I went out to Scouts regularly on Fridays walking up Palmerston Road to the 28th Group who met at the time in the Toc H hut behind the Congregational Church. When I got to 14, I was old enough to join the Youth Club that the churches had organised and met in the Old Rectory (which the Army had by then handed back to the Parish). I went there most nights of the week – having completed my homework before being allowed to go. We all went home in a group, for company in the dark streets, unless you happened to have a particular girl-friend. I remember quite a number of occasions when a 'good-night' clinch was rudely interrupted by anti-aircraft gunfire and you ran home as fast as you could while the shrapnel rained down around you. (I must have been fitter then than I am now!)

The worst part of the war, for me, was during the flying bomb raids in 1944. I was a fairly highly-strung teenager and the uncertainty of when their engine was going to stop and the bomb drop and explode had a serious effect on my nerves. Fortunately for all of us at BH High School, we had broken up (early) for the summer holiday the day before one of the V1s fell in Roding Lane and blew our caretaker's house apart and smashed all the windows in that end of the school. I was the first pupil to get there after the blast and Mr Taylor, the Head, asked me to help clear up and I shall remember for ever going into the Solarium, where the Biology 6th Form did their dissections, and seeing the pools of different coloured dyes mixed up on the floor with all the broken glass. I was sufficiently 'wound up' by then that my parents arranged for me to go back to the Cheltenham area, where the Flack family still lived, for the whole of the extended summer break. They had moved to a bungalow in a village called Swindon, and I worked there as a labourer on the village farm (not that I think I was much use!), but it was a great experience for me, because it was still a farm run as they had been years before. So I have worked with horse-drawn reaper-binders, stooked corn sheaves, used a pitch-fork to load farm carts, helped to build ricks in the farm yard, and worked on the baling machine when the steam driven threshing machine came. So many of the farming practices you see in museums and books of 'how things were in the country' are things I have done. It all seems a long time ago.

Two last things. When the V2 Rockets were falling, one exploded its tail section just above our school when we were out on the school field at break time. One (small) bit fell between Charlie Rush and I as we were talking together – a bit frightening. Teachers wasted nothing in those days and our Science master, Mr Scott, found the gears that were used to steer the vanes on the rocket at the bottom of the school field – and used them to explain to us the mechanics of gears. It was that same rocket that fell just behind the John Knights' office in Whitehall Lane and blew in the windows of the office my mother was working in. She is reputed to have dealt with the situation by shouting 'shut up screaming you silly women: get this lot cleared up, there's work to do!' Some girl was my Mum.

Lastly, there was VE Day: a little before my 16th birthday. There was a great street party in Albert Road. A huge bonfire was lit on the road at the junction with Lower Queen's Road, on which all sorts

of things were burnt, including some people's furniture (I vividly remember an armchair in flames) as well as (later in the night) several people's front fences. Most of us were too drunk or just too excited to notice – or frankly – to care. I danced in the street with everyone I could find, even including my Mum (that's a let-down for a teenage boy), drank beer that others bought for me from the Prince of Wales, and kissed every girl I could find who would let me. A great end to five never-to-be-forgotten years.

VJ day Party on York Hill, Loughton. Does anyone recognise anyone here?

W & C French 1968 to 1986: my perspective Part 1

STUART LOW

Prior to leaving Buckhurst Hill County High School in 1958 I didn't really know where my future lay. I had seven average 'O' levels and no 'A' levels. I knew I didn't want a 9 to 5 job in an office sitting behind a desk all day. I had thought of the Navy but was persuaded against it by my parents.

Through a contact of my father I knew that W & C French, as they were then, were looking to employ, on a trial basis, trainee Quantity Surveyors. There would be a probationary period of one year of evening classes for a general building certificate and if that was successful it would be followed by a day release course, at the South West Essex Technical College, leading to a qualification with the Institute of Quantity Surveyors.

I was duly interviewed and, along with two other trainees, was employed by the company.

At this time the head office of W & CF was on the Epping New Road at Buckhurst Hill, together with the joinery shop, scaffolding and formwork department. There was a plant yard at North Farm, where row after row of site sheds and plant equipment were stored between contracts. W & CF also had a branch office at Romford and another at Abridge, which was the former small builder, C J Smith. Here also was another joinery shop. When I started, the original timber-built office of Charlie French was still being used at Buckhurst Hill as an office for visiting site staff. Among the old papers in the store room were crumbling records of loads for excavation jobs in the early horse and cart days.

W & CF were, at one stage the largest, in terms of work in hand, motorway builders. Many of the contracts were done in conjunction with Kier Construction, who were subcontracted to do the bridge work. A logical conclusion to this association was to merge and the company French-Kier Construction was formed. The Buckhurst Hill office remained for some time but the Kier office at Tempsford became the main office. Incidentally Tempsford Hall was the base of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and it was from here that agents were flown to France and Germany during the last war. Sadly, out of about 470 agents sent overseas, 200 lost their lives with many being executed at the command of Hitler in late 1944 and early 1945.

Many of the W & CF employees were, I believe, ex Essex Regiment and of course the most famous of these being Colonel Gus Newman, who won the VC at St Nazaire, and Colonel Sir Arthur Noble.

Later, after I emigrated to Australia, there were a number of changes and buy-outs of the company which finally led to a staff buy-out and the reformation of Kier Construction, now one of the largest building companies in the UK with branches all over the country and overseas.

Every year the company provided two annual dinners. One for the weekly paid and one for the salaried staff. I went to a number of the weekly paid dinners and one salaried staff dinner before they were changed, due to the growth of the staff, to area functions.

The weekly paid staff function was at the Abercorn Rooms at Liverpool Street Station and that for the monthly at Derry and Toms. At the former, lounge suits were worn and, at the latter, evening suits. The format was the same at both. Free drinks before the meal followed by a three-course meal with wine and entertainment in the form of a singer and another act either a juggler or comedian or the like, then dancing. I remember one member of staff, a good friend, who managed to 'hook' Mrs French during the Paul Jones and drunkenly asked her if her husband worked for the company. In a very haughty voice she replied: 'The Company works for my husband!'

1958. My first contract was the new *Daily Mirror* building in High Holborn in London. (From the article on printing in the *Newsletter 185* I realise that this building no longer stands and the presses are entombed in concrete.) On my first day, my boss, John Short the senior Quantity Surveyor for W & CF, arranged to take me in his car to the job and thereafter I was to make my own way on the Central Line. On days when I had evening classes he would drop me at Leyton and I would catch the bus to the Tech and trolleybus and bus home. On the first day after giving me some idea about my duties he asked after my mother. I was a bit shaken by this as I was a very junior employee and here was this important man asking about my mother. It turns out he was an established Buckhurst Hill resident from way back, and he and my uncle were great buddies in their

youth, hence he knew my mother when she was younger.

I, along with the two other new starters, completed our QS course and along with further trainees became Associates of the Institute of Quantity Surveyors. Two of these I still have contact with and both have been out to Australia a number of times to visit my wife and me in Wollongong. I became a Fellow of the Institute and, upon its merger with The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, became a Fellow of that organisation.

So this was my start in the building industry.

The *Daily Mirror* building under construction, 1960

The *Mirror* building was an 11-storey office block (four on the podium and 7 in the tower) with four basement floors housing the printing presses. It was quite an expensive building costing around £4.5 million. I was 'immortalised' in one edition of the paper. After the building was opened, I was doing some post-contract measurement when the then political cartoonist, Sagan, called me into his office and asked if I would sit on the floor and put my foot in my mouth. Apparently at the time an American politician was in the country and every time he opened his mouth he 'put his foot in it'. Sagan couldn't quite get the action right so the cartoon in the paper the next day had 'his head on my body'. I remained on the *Mirror* building, learning my trade. for about three years.

The *Daily Mirror* building in High Holborn, c 1960

After the *Mirror* building had been completed I was sent out to Harlow New Town which was then under the control of the Harlow Development Corporation where I worked on a number of projects. W & CF were then probably the biggest builder in the town with a large plant depot near the station. By this time I had purchased a scooter which had not only got me to London easily but also to College in the evenings thus avoiding waiting for public transport.

1961. My first contract in Harlow was the Cossor Electronics factory. This consisted of a standard Harlow Development Corporation production area and a small office block at the front. A number of these small factory units were being built at that time.

1962. On completion of the Cossor factory I went nearer the town centre where, for the next three or four years, I worked on the construction of Harlow Hospital, later to become the Princess Alexandra Hospital after the Princess had officially opened it.

The hospital contract was the construction of two six-storey ward blocks with a children's ward at one level, a two-storey therapy wing and two single-storey maternity wings. As the site was constructed on running sand, the excavation was a challenging experience. Interestingly, to me, whilst on this project I got engaged, married my first wife and my first son was born there.

Princess Alexandra Hospital Harlow – ward blocks and part of the therapy wing

My next major contract was as assistant surveyor on the construction of an electrical sub-station at Willesden in West London for the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB). I had qualified by this time and had been issued with a company van – no heating, no de-icers or cab lining and freezing cold in the winter – and I drove from Buckhurst Hill 20 miles each way to the job and back every day taking over two hours each journey round the North Circular. After a few months the Quantity Surveyor (QS) on the project resigned and I was asked to take over which I did with some trepidation. At the time the project was losing money but by the end it made a profit and to this day I have never been on a project that lost money. More by luck and good estimating than totally my efforts, I would hasten to add.

The CEGB provided its own quantity surveyor who was based and lived in Guildford. If he was working in the office he would leave home at 8.45am for a 9am start. When he worked on site he would

leave home at the same time, arriving half way through the morning. He would also leave the site at an hour that would get him home to Guildford at around 5.15pm. With an hour out for lunch, normally at the local Chinese, very little productive work was done. In order to keep up to date with the project he would rely on me feeding him the information which he would 'write up' during the week. This was my first introduction to the bureaucratic mentality and the reason state-owned businesses were costing so much money.

[To be continued]

Editor's Note: I knew many men, in W & CF's distinctive 'donkey' jackets, particularly from Smarts Lane and Forest Road, but also from other parts of Loughton, who, at some time or other, worked for Charlie French. These included some who had been with the company for very many years before Stuart started his career with them. My grandfather, uncle and more distant relatives were among these. The growth of the company, from a small cartage business, founded by Charlie's grandmother, to a huge, nationally known public company, had a beneficial effect on many local families.

It should not be overlooked that the firm built over £10m worth of aerodromes during the Second World War (at 1939–45 prices) and was also involved in the construction of the Mulberry Harbour for the D-Day invasion of Europe.

In later years the container depot built on French's old plant yard, as well as being a massive distribution hub, achieved much notoriety, as it was said to be an entrepôt for a significant amount of imported illegal merchandise, drugs included. A huge clean-up operation had to be mounted, largely to clear asbestos and other toxic waste, to render safe the land on which the Great Woodcote Park estate was built.

Perhaps there is an L & DHS member who knows enough about the changing roles of the site to contribute an article for our *Newsletter?*

Fleet Street 50 years ago

TED MARTIN

This is a very personal account of starting work in Fleet Street over 50 years ago and taking the first steps in a career that, so far, has lasted 56 years and, allowing for technological change, still uses many of the techniques I learned more than half a century ago.

On 28 August 1954, a Saturday, I was travelling back from Weymouth on the pillion seat of my Dad's motorcycle combination after a two-week caravan holiday which was to be my last as a schoolboy.

We had had an eventful two weeks as my Dad's 21-year-old 500cc Norton struggled to tow a family of five and an enormous double adult sidecar around the delights of Dorset.

When we breasted the summit of Portland Bill with an enormous roar, oil gushing out of the tappets, at all of 5 miles an hour, the AA man on the top saluted and said that if he hadn't seen it he wouldn't have believed it!

But now the holidays were over. A few weeks earlier the youth employment officer had sent me for an interview at Associated Newspapers, but it was for a job in the accounts department and they seemed distinctly unimpressed with my mathematical skills and in fact I'm still waiting to hear from them.

With a stroke of genius, for which I have thanked her ever after, the Youth Employment Officer, Miss Dollimore, then sent me to The Eastern Press for a job as a proofreader's assistant (called a copyholder in the printing trade) and a traineeship as a proofreader at 3 Chancery Lane, on the corner of Fleet Street and Chancery Lane.

Dad and I went for the interview and parked the motorbike at the back of Fetter Lane on what were still bombed sites from the blitz of 1940. I didn't know then that I would be working in new office block on that site just five years later.

No 3 Chancery Lane was then the main office of Sweet & Maxwell, the law publishers, and Eastern Press had its London Office and proofreading department on the third floor of this building – at the sign of the Judge's Head.

My interview went well and the manager offered me the position to start on Monday, 30 August 1954. I was to be given a foothold in two industries, printing *and* publishing, because, as was the custom in those days, Eastern worked very closely with Sweets and was practically a department of the publishers.

So the morning came. I was put on the trolleybus in Wood Green by Dad and told to get off at the end of the route at Holborn Circus. Why my parents didn't think I could manage the tube from Wood Green to Holborn, I can't imagine, but in those days you didn't argue. I stuck the bus for one week and then transferred my allegiance to the Piccadilly Line for the next 10 years.

That first morning at work was like going back to Victorian times. A very old building with mosaic floored entrance hall, a stone staircase with iron handrails and a steep climb up to the third floor. There was a bookshop on the ground floor and glass display panels advertising various books

On the third floor I found a dingy, cream-painted room lined with books with unlikely titles like *Chitty's Statutes of Practical Utility, Mew's Digest of English Case Law, Current Law Statutes,* annual volumes of *Current Law Year Book* and *The Weekly Law Reports.*

The reading room was really two rooms knocked into one and the larger of the two rooms had six desks, each seating two people. Screwed onto the front of each desk was a tall glazed panel to separate the desk from the one in front. The smaller room had only four desks but also the essential mini-kitchen for tea-making. Each desk had two lamps coming down on a pulley from the ceiling and lit by a 40-watt bulb. There were two gas fires to heat the rooms but only one toilet, on the landing next to the manager's office.

I reported to the head reader and the procedure was that he would train me for a week before I was assigned to work with a proofreader. Our first

morning was spent on abstracts of papers on tropical diseases which was one of only five publications printed by the firm which were not concerned with the law. I had to cope with words that I'd never even seen before, let alone read, but somehow I made it to lunchtime. I flew out of the building and across the road to the ABC in The Strand.

That was it. I couldn't stand it: sitting still with a 40-watt bulb just above your forehead, wrestling with mumbo-jumbo which didn't make any sense, and practically in the dark. I'd put my notice in at the end of the week. I'd have to find something else.

Luckily, my parents prevailed upon me to think again and to give it time and I stayed with Eastern for 30 years.

As I suppose with many professions there were a number of 'characters' about in those times. The head reader himself could be a bit eccentric and irascible.

We had one chap who, when things were quiet in the afternoon and the head reader had left the room, used to stand up, bow to everyone, and do a little dance accompanied by a little song which could not be repeated in polite company. When he'd finished, he'd make another bow, sit down and carry on working.

Then there was Taffy who had a disabled son and spent most of his nights up with him. So in the afternoon Taffy would drop off to sleep over his proofs and either his assistant or someone else would try to wake him before he was spotted by the head reader.

One or two old-timers who took snuff would always generously offer you a pinch. I only accepted once: that was enough!

Pressure on space was great so there was another little office on the other side of Chancery Lane where the press-reader worked all on his own, reading everything through once more before printing. He was Joe Chapman, a very knowledgeable man from whom I learned a lot. Joe's neighbour in this building was the man who edited the *Law List* and was notable for a booming voice. Being a bit of a mimic, Joe got this voice off to a tee. Unfortunately when he was demonstrating it to me one day on the landing, the subject of it was coming up the stairs, so we beat a swift retreat.

After my week with the head reader I was assigned to work with a reader who was at that time 27 and an East End jack-the-lad. But he was determined to knock sense into me—literally, by aiming a blow every time I made a mistake. I became very good at ducking! He also made me research the meanings of most of the Latin phrases that came up in the work and translate them into English as I read to him. 50 years later this training is still useful and the definitions still pop up in my mind as I work.

The boys had to take turns in making the tea and washing up the cups and also had to deliver proofs round the Temple, the Royal Courts of Justice and Lincoln's Inn. Eastern printed the official *Law Reports* so this round would include a call at the Editor's chambers in Essex Court, then I would cross The Strand into the Royal Courts, a walk through the main hall to the reporters' room and then out of the back door into Carey Street and across to Lincoln's Inn.

Sometimes we had also to deliver and collect proofs from trade typesetters. These were firms which set type on behalf of Eastern so that the demands on the composing department could be kept under control and work could be accepted that you didn't have the capacity to set in-house: law books usually have many pages: they take a long time to set but a short time to print because usually no more than 1000 copies were required. We also had occasionally to collect special type which was set to order for headings for which we didn't keep the type.

In my first year I worked a 44 hour week for the princely sum of £2 9s 9d. This broke down quite simply into £1 a week for Mum, 10 shillings for tube fares, 10 shillings for lunches, and 9s 9d for me. But at the end of my first year my weekly wage went up to £3 10s and, having reached 16, I could work overtime. This meant a stop-on of one and a half hours each on Mondays and Thursdays (but paid for two hours) and overtime occasionally at other times.

We obtained the order for Jowitt's *Dictionary of English Law*, a very large book which could not be fitted into the normal working day so we had a period of Saturday morning overtime, commencing at 8am and finishing at 12 and then later what was called a half-night. This meant you started work on a Friday at 8am, had your normal day, then a break for 'supper' for half an hour at 5pm and worked on till 8.30 pm. All this was fitted in with evening classes and, later, evening courses at the London School of Printing just over Blackfriars Bridge at Stamford Street. I was also a member of the ATC and had a pretty large circle of friends.

The publishers occupied that part of the building fronting Chancery Lane, with the editorial department on the floor below us and marketing, accounts and the bookshop on the ground floor. There were some very attractive young ladies on the editorial floor but we were forbidden to talk to them and could only go on that floor on business.

The chief publisher and managing director had kept Sweets going through the War and invented their most profitable service: *Current Law*. This was a monthly which we had to produce in less than a week from scratch and which was collated into Year Books. It covered everything in the law from cases to legislation and administrative and tribunal decisions all arranged in alphabetical order and paragraph numbered for ease of reference. It is still published today but the worst part of it in our day was that it was all handwritten and by many different hands on standard slips that were sorted into alphabetical order. Quite a training!

Odhams Press seemed to have the rest of the building fronting on to Fleet Street, though we were never sure what they did there. On Thursdays at lunch time the Odhams Press Brass Band practised in one of the rooms, so we would take our sandwiches and sit on the stairs to listen.

One day the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh passed down Fleet Street to St Paul's and we all

crowded onto the Fleet Street staircase to get a very good view of a very young Queen.

Fleet Street in those days was a very exciting place to work. There was always something to see. You had printing firms around every corner and the newspapers actually producing down the street. The big articulated lorries coming up from Kent stacked with reels of newsprint used to swing across the road and reverse down Whitefriars Street to deliver to the *News of the World*. The road was so narrow that, when the lorries were delivering there was barely room to get by. (*To be continued*.)

The Goulds and Albion Granaries

CHRIS POND

The following is in reply to a query to Richard Morris, from David Ellison, a collector of old dairy ceramics, as follows:

'I am a collector of old dairy ceramics and recently acquired an interesting cream jug . . . which originates from the firm of G Gould and Sons of Loughton. Although not marked with a pottery stamp its general style and characteristics suggest Doulton of Lambeth circa 1910–20.

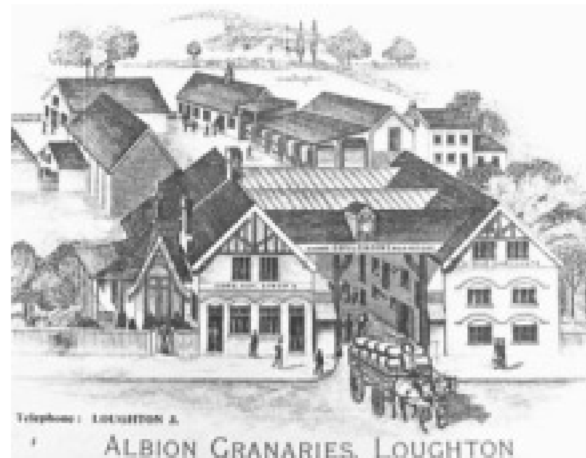
I have searched your society's website for information on the Gould dairy but could find just one reference – a copy of an advertisement for a limited company circa 1926–46. It seems likely that the incorporated company succeeded to the partnership of G Gould & Sons sometime before 1926.'

The Goulds were a family of Baptist farmers from Harlow (where there are numerous family graves in the Potter Street chapel). They came to Loughton about 1870, and made a great deal of money as corn factors, where they took over the business of James Habgood.

They had built in 1884 the Albion Granaries in Loughton High Road, and a huge provender and corn store at Bow Bridge, principally to serve the needs of horse owners in London. George Gould built himself a mansion in Traps Hill, Loughton, 'Brooklyn', on the proceeds. In all these, he used the nonconformist Loughton architect, Edmond Egan. They took the tenancy of Borders and Traps Hill Farms in Loughton, and ran at the former the model dairy, as a subsidiary business to the corn factoring. Milk and cream were sold in Loughton by roundsmen with handcarts, and were sent to London from Loughton Station GER.

The business lasted until just after the Second World War.

A copy of a trade card showing Albion Granaries with the dairy office and shop to the left of the drawing is attached. We also have a photo of the same, with a 1930s shop front to act as the dairy.



Borders Lane Farm was built over after 1945, and its demise is chronicled in D W Gillingham's *Unto the Fields*. The Albion Granaries were demolished amidst great public protest in 1982; the site is now Morrison's supermarket. George Gould's house was sold to the Council and its site is now Loughton Library.

German rowdyism in Epping Forest

Unearthed and submitted by
RICHARD MORRIS

[This article, from The Loughton and District Advertiser *of September, 1889 (a paper, proclaiming: '4000 COPIES PRINTED AND CIRCULATED BY RESPONSIBLE AGENTS, MONTHLY' is interesting in itself, but I think the extra information that preceded the piece is also worthy of note — Ed.]*

'*The Loughton and District Advertiser* can be seen *gratis*, at any of the following places:

LOUGHTON PUBLIC HALL READING ROOM;
WORKMAN'S CLUB, BUCKHURST HILL;
WORKMAN'S CLUB, EPPING;
'WILFRED LAWSON', COFFEE TAVERN, WOODFORD;

ABRIDGE AND THEYDON BOIS COFFEE PALACES;
LIBERAL AND RADICAL CLUB, GEORGE LANE;
CLUB HOUSE, BUCKHURST HILL, & OTHER PLACES'

'GERMAN ROWDYISM IN EPPING FOREST

In a recent evening newspaper, there appeared a very ably written leading article on the above matter, and, subsequently, and as the outcome of that article, a very important letter published therein, by a local gentleman, Mr Percy Lindley, of Loughton. In noticing the subject, we cannot do better than to hear what Mr Lindley says.

"A system of unlicensed Sunday drinking and unchecked rowdyism is permitted to disgrace the beautiful woods of Epping Forest. Sunday is a day when thousands of quiet Londoners visit our woods, and a day when many residents formerly joined them. We are unable to enjoy a Sunday ramble any longer. The woods are handed over to so-called 'clubs,' who make the Forest, Sunday after Sunday, the scene of drunken and riotous debauches.

Early on Sunday morning, the summer through, brewers' vans piled with barrels of beer drive into the heart of the lovely Beech woods. Drinking bars are set up, the 'clubs' arrive with their discordant bands, and for the rest of the day the woods are the sanctuary for drinking, dancing, fighting, shouting and singing. Knives are sometimes drawn and the night closes on scenes indescribably scandalous.

But the scandal does not end here. Local people are supplied with beer, in utter disregard of the licensing laws, of course, and the idlers and young from the skirts of the Forest are attracted to these unsavoury centres. A noticeable falling off in the Sunday School attendances, for instance, at Loughton is one of the first signs of our woodland orgies.

The season began in June. It has gone on, in spite of complaints and protests, ever since. Last year when the rector of this parish laid the facts before the Conservators, and the London papers published reports of policemen and others being stabbed in the drunken fighting which closed the pleasant Sunday's outing, it was hoped that official action would be taken. But nothing has been done. The Forest bye-laws are rigidly enforced against poor local people for allowing their cattle to stray, or for cutting some sticks of wood in the winter. But in the case of so-called 'German' clubs no attempt is made to enforce the bye-laws. For instance, under these regulations no political demonstrations are permitted in the Forest. But, on Sunday, July 14, political socialistic 'clubs' were permitted to hold a fête, to march in and out of the Forest with revolutionary banners, and to make Socialistic demonstrations in the heart of High Beech [*sic*] Woods. On this occasion over 900 gallons of beer were sold over the Forest bars, which ran with beer. At night, these 'clubs', after the day's dancing, drinking, and shouting, were escorted out of the Forest by mounted patrols, and the 'clubs' showed their gratitude by stopping in front of our village police station and groaning.

On the previous Sunday, in Monk Wood, some women of the party were photographed in a state of semi-nudity, while others were seen fighting, and falling to the ground as they fought.

On June 27 a police-constable, in attempting to stop a quarrel between members of the 'club' was severely bitten in the hand."

"These facts" says Mr Lindley, "are open to easy proof, and I shall be pleased to help in a goodly crusade against this outrage on the people's peaceable Sunday enjoyment of their woodland".'

[The paper's Editor evidently, in the headline, had a 'dig' against Germans, even though Mr Lindley seems to make no suggestion that the revellers were from Germany.]

Book review

The Man who Ran London during the Great War: The Diaries and Letters of Lieutenant General Sir Francis Lloyd, GCVO, KCB, DSO, 1853–1926, by Richard Morris. (Pen and Sword Military, 47 Church Street, Barnsley S70 2AS. ISBN 978–1–84884–164–2, 208pp + 16pp plates, hardback, £19.99.)

This is Richard's second book featuring a military hero and the books are connected, for General Sir Francis Lloyd was the great grandson of Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey of the *Temeraire* at Trafalgar whose story was told in *Merchants, Medicine and Trafalgar* (published by the Society in 2007). The parallels do not end there, for both men took part in the major engagements of their time and then no further military action thereafter, but while the Admiral spent the rest of his life without another command for insulting a senior officer, General Lloyd's talents were put to work in administration.

Francis Lloyd was also descended from an ancient North Welsh family with a military background and lands and a county seat, Aston Hall in Shropshire. He joined the Army in 1874 at age 21 and served for 44 years mostly in the Grenadier Guards. His first taste of action was in the Sudan in 1885 when he was Mentioned in Dispatches after the battle of Hashin. In 1898 he was back in the Sudan and at the Battle of Omdurman. Then in 1899 the Boer War began and Lieutenant-Colonel Lloyd was in command of the 2nd battalion Grenadier Guards and was wounded at Senekal but went back into action after recovering from his wounds.

He had a long and successful marriage, albeit with many enforced separations, to Mary Gunnis of Leckie, Stirlingshire, but there were no children.

After the war he returned to England and pursued his army career until on 3 September 1913 he was appointed to command the London District, but, in less than a year, the First World War had begun and Lloyd was involved at the top level in administering the defence of London and had wide powers concerning hospitals and railway termini and constructing defensive trenches round London. He also visited areas bombed by Zeppelins and Gothas. General Lloyd was a good speaker and noted for his immaculate dress. He was always in demand to speak to boost civilian morale and assist in recruitment.

In 1915 the King commanded that a Welsh regiment of footguards should be formed and Lord Kitchener gave the job to Francis Lloyd who selected Welsh volunteers from other regiments to be the core of the new Welsh Guards.

His duties were multifarious but he was unflagging in their performance, though he must have been disappointed that he did not get a field command during the War.

After the War he became Food Commissioner, retired from the Army and became a member of the LCC for a while and was instrumental in saving the Welsh Guards from abolition. While serving in London he lived at his great-grandfather's house, Rolls Park at Chigwell, where he entertained Winston Churchill at election times. He died at Rolls Park on 26 February 1926.

Richard has written a very good and absorbing account of the life of this soldier/administrator, quoting extensively from his letters and diaries and contemporary sources. There is also family history and much on the two great houses owned by Lloyd: Aston Hall and Rolls Park. The book is well produced and has 16 pages of monochrome plates and a good index which, unfortunately, is set in a very small size of type and three columns to a page.

TED MARTIN

A quiet village called Loughton has grown up

[More from Will Francies' April 1969 feature in the Gazette and Guardian*. Will, no doubt remembered by many L & DHS members, was a noted local historian and prolific contributor to many local publications.]*

Youth was served by Loughton Club in Station Road, built, equipped and handsomely endowed by the late Reverend William Dawson, MA, a bachelor, in 1901. The Club's fine billiards room, gymnasium, baths, massage and changing rooms, library, lounge, reading and refreshment rooms, were a mecca for the youth of the village – athletic and lethargic.

Club Cricket, hockey and tennis were 'upper class' activities, but football clubs flourished for the 'others' – with Loughton Ferndale 'top of the League', playing on the sports ground now used by the British Railways Sports Club near the station.

The parish church of St John's (two members of the Maitland family were rectors during this period) and the daughter church of St Mary's contributed to the well-being of Loughton's folk.

The boys' clubs of both the churches flourished under the leadership of a young Irish curate. The Reverend Alexander Colvin not only preached a fiery sermon, but played football, hockey and cricket, and boxed like a professional. His boys loved him and attended church with great regularity!

Public-houses had their skittle alleys and horse charabanc outings. Revelry on Bank Holiday nights was uninhibited when the locals were joined by Cockney trippers. Every pub retained its own loyal patrons, they were never empty or dull ('bona fide' travellers could be served outside licensing hours).

The proud captain of Loughton's first eleven, who 'belonged' to The King's Head, perhaps re-living a fighting second innings, would, with his team, look on their glorious field from the saloon bar of that pleasant hostelry.

Many of their names are inscribed on the war memorial on Kings Green, but their 'glorious field' (and the King's Head!) survive them.

Part-timers

During the period of which I write the urban district of Loughton was wholly administered by part-time officials, who, except for the surveyor, worked from odd rooms in the Lopping Hall, adjacent to the council chamber.

Until 1921 a fire service turn-out was reminiscent of a Keystone comedy film. Members of that very keen and efficient force, volunteers to a man, did their best with a horse-drawn appliance housed beside Lopping Hall – a quarter of a mile from the source of its motive power – a pair of horses snatched from the station cab rank. Fortunately, fires were few.

The London General Omnibus Company's double-deck, solid-tyred buses, plied from The Crown Hotel to The Elephant and Castle from 1915, and extended the service through High Road, Loughton, to Epping Town in 1920, harassed for several years by the cut and thrust of the 'pirate' bus companies.

Well into the 1920s the police used a three-wheeled trolley to remove the bodies of suicides from the forest to their mortuary.

[On that grisly note, we leave Will for now – next time we continue with some local memories of the First World War – Ed.]

Appropriately named councillor!!

[The following small article appeared in the same April, 1969 edition of the Gazette and Guardian *as Will Francies' memories – Ed.]*

'QUIZ TEAM PRAISED

Chigwell Council is to write to West Hatch School, Chigwell, to congratulate its road safety quiz team on winning the *Clear-Way Trophy* organised by the Metropolitan Police.

At last week's council meeting the school was complimented by Cllr. Tony **Skidmore,** a member of the **Highways Committee.'**

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