LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Blossom Time, Epping Forest, Essex, by William Brown Macdougall (1868–1936), Laing Art Gallery

William Brown Macdougall (1868–1936), was a British artist, engraver, etcher and illustrator. Macdougall and his wife, Margaret Armour, novelist, poet, playwright and illustrator, lived in The Uplands, then at Elm Cottage, Debden Green. They were noted artists, collaborators with AubreyBeardsley and members of the influential New English Art Club.

See Chris Pond, *The Buildings of Loughton and Notable Buildings of The Town* (2nd enlarged edition, 2010).

For those (Buckhurst Hillians) in peril on the sea . . .

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

Buckhurst Hill may seem a long way from the sea. These days we are able to travel wherever we like, for business or pleasure, by just turning up at the airport and catching a flight to just about anywhere we like. For our Victorian and Edwardian ancestors, however, things were not so easy. Sea travel was the only option, with long and often dangerous voyages.

Some of the families living in Buckhurst Hill were involved in shipping: Arnold Hills of Devon House (now replaced by Devon Close), and Samuel Linder of Oakfield (now replaced by houses in Ardmore Lane). Others had connections with shipping families – Charles Crofton Black of Hill House, Palmerston Road (now Braeside Junior School), travelled to New Zealand and most likely used the Shaw Savill Line, which specialised in travel to New Zealand, as his daughter had married into the Savill family.

I have left aside many who were lost at sea during times of war, such as Cyril Nicholls (killed in action 27 April 1941) or William Norman (his ship was torpedoed 18 October 1918), as others have written about them.[1]

There were many others who perished at sea on journeys to and from their work-places. In the heyday of the British Empire, young men often left England to make a life overseas; some sadly never made it, such as young Samuel Frederick Brand. He was born in 1850, the eldest son of Samuel Brand, a doctor living at the Chestnuts, High Road, Buckhurst Hill (roughly where Greenhill is now). He was well known as a gymnast, and a leading light in the Buckhurst Hill Gymnastic Society. He was a civil engineer, and on the night of 22 January 1873 he was on his way to Tasmania to take up a position as representative of a firm called Edwin Clark, Punchard and Co.[2] Sadly he never got there as his ship, the *Northfleet*, sank. The court proceedings revealed that he supported the captain in his attempts to maintain order in the panic:

'on a table near the body were the contents of his pockets, among them being a six-chamber revolver and a silver watch – the watch having stopped at 8 minutes past 11, thus indicating the precise moment the ship sank. Two letters . . . established the deceased's identity, one of them being addressed to his mother . . . Upon examining the revolver, it was found that two of the chambers had been discharged, this fact suggesting the very probable conclusion that it was to young Brand that Captain Knowles was indebted for the pistol with which he endeavoured to stem the tide of cowardice that gave the finishing stroke to the disaster in which the ship was involved. It appears probable that when Captain Knowles thundered out his threat to shoot the first man that pushed his way into the boat before the women

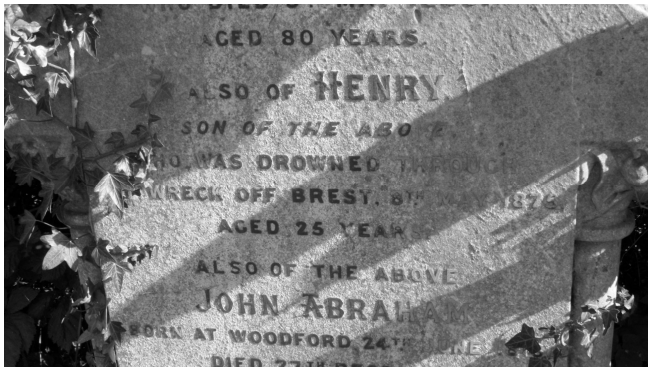
were provided for, Brand's ready pistol was placed in his hand, and returned when the two recorded shots were fired'.

This Buckhurst Hill hero was buried at New Romney, and his coffin, inscribed 'Samuel Frederick Brand died January 22 1873 aged 23' was laid in the corner of the churchyard surrounded by graves of shipwrecked mariners.

Those who made a life at sea sometimes survived shipwrecks. William Norman, mentioned above, who died in 1918, survived a shipwreck in his early days at sea, when he was an apprentice. This was the *Kapunda*, which was an emigrant ship on its way to Australia. It was hit by another ship, the *Ada Melmore*, on 20 January1887. A newspaper report at the time included this chilling item: 'the scene of terror which ensued was one of the most horrible which could be imagined.

'The shrieks of the women pierced the air, the men were bewildered, and all was confusion. All the single women were unable to get even so far as the deck as in accordance with a regulation now prevalent on emigrant ships, they had been locked in their compartment on retiring to rest for the night; but the freedom accorded to the married women availed them nothing, for not one female was rescued.'

Others involved in shipping disasters include Henry Abraham *(see photo below)*, the son of John Abraham, who kept a grocery business in Queens Road (now the perfume shop, next to Buckhurst Hill library). Young Henry was born in 1850, and was drowned in a shipwreck off the coast of Brest on 8 May 1875.



Henry Abraham's grave in St John's Churchyard, Buckhurst Hill

Later, another grocer of Queens Road, Thomas Banks, whose premises were to be found where Supadance is now, lost his second son, William James, in the Bay of Biscay, on his homeward voyage, on 12 January 1894. Presumably the lad was an apprentice sailor. His grave, in the churchyard of St John the Baptist, Buckhurst Hill, states that he was 'deeply mourned, but only gone before'.

Notes

1. The excellent book by Bill Oliver covers many such stories: Bill Oliver, *The Path of Duty* (Buckhurst Hill British Legion, 2009).

2. This company was a contractor for the construction of the main railway line in Tasmania, between Launceston and Hobart. Later William Henry Punchard and Edwin Clark went bankrupt, having been involved in the 'disastrous' Lisbon tramways.

References

Belfast Newsletter, Thursday, 30 January 1873, from British Library 19th century newspapers, courtesy of Essex Libraries.
Lloyds Weekly Newspaper, Sunday, 6 March 1887, from British Library 19th century newspapers, courtesy of Essex Libraries.
www.newspapers.nla.gov.au
www.nytimes.com

A visit to the loo

I was a year and one month old when the world went to war with itself, so I have no memory of the start of the mutual insanity, but I was seven years old by the time it finished. So I grew up believing uniforms, bomb-sites, air-raids, black-outs, sandbags at door-ways, and sticky-taped windows, were normal, and part of my world.

We lived on the edge of Epping Forest in Essex, in Chestnut Avenue, Buckhurst Hill. The houses then were big, old Edwardian, bay-window-fronted comfortable family homes. Uncle George and Dad had installed an Anderson shelter in our garden, to which my Grandmother (mother's Mum) would come, to sleep, if it looked as though Grandad, who was an air raid warden, was going to be out all night on duty. Mother's father had been a regular in the Army in India before the First World War and had fought all through that as well, with the Heavy Artillery, so was unstoppable when it came to 'doing his bit' for the Second World War.

We were getting quite a lot of raids during this period. Mother said it was thought that the reason was because the Germans had built their factories in their forests for camouflage, and naturally expected us to have done the same. I remember all the bomb craters in the forest when I was older.

Uncle George arrived one morning on our doorstep after a night's raid, to ask Dad if he would lend a hand with a problem with his outside loo, as it had unexpectedly started to lean sideways, and all the water had disappeared. The discussion concluded that excess rain had caused the subsidence. The repair party set off with tools and determination. Two grown men digging can soon achieve a fair sized hole, and when they encountered a round manhole cover, a certain amount of kicking and banging took place, before one of the interested spectators suggested that maybe 'that was the cause of the leaning loo'. Simultaneously my Uncle and Father looked at one another with horror, realising that what they were standing on was an unexploded bomb, which had dropped outside the garden wall at an angle and because of the softness of the soil, burrowed under the wall and hit the side of the loo, tipping it up and failing to go off.

The whole street was evacuated until the Bomb Squad came to get it out and cart it off to the forest, to be detonated. Mother laughed all evening after seeing the look on dad's face, when he came home to tell her. Laughter was a potent secret weapon, in those days, it kept people sane.

'Old Jenny Wren' wishes to remain anonymous

John Finlaison

TERRY CARTER

In *Newsletter 179*, Chris Pond 'unearthed' Robert Finlaison's poetic epitaph, inscribed in 1849 on his tomb in St Nicholas' churchyard, Loughton. In his brief accompanying comment Chris mentioned that Robert was the brother of John Finlaison, 1783–1860, founder of the actuarial profession, who lived at Algers House. With no disrespect to the memory of Robert, it is John, also buried in St Nicholas' churchyard, who is the subject of the following notes.

Current background

Most L & DHS members are, of course, aware of what actuaries do, but they will forgive the following brief outline, intended by way of background information, partly paraphrased from their Institute's information sheet for new entrants:

'Broadly speaking, actuaries use their mathematical skills to help measure the probability and risk of future events. This information is useful to many industries, including healthcare, pensions, insurance, banking and investments, where a single decision can have a major financial impact. Actuaries are problem solvers and strategic thinkers with a deep understanding of financial systems.'

An even more prosaic definition is that:

'Actuaries mathematically evaluate the likelihood of events and quantify the contingent outcomes in order to minimise losses, both emotional and financial, associated with uncertain undesirable events.'

The actuarial profession is very highly regarded, in the way that medicine and law are, due to the difficult qualifying examinations and the expertise required, so being an actuary carries much global distinction.

Significant dates in the life of John Finlaison

27 Aug 1783: John Finlaison is born in Thurso, Caithness.
1804: Studies for the Scottish Bar.
Sep 1804: Marries Elizabeth Glen (1773–1831) and moves to London to work as Clerk to the Naval Commission.
1806: Son, Alexander Glen Finlaison (1806–1892) born – later an actuary contributing greatly to the development of sickness rate tables.
1809–1822: Keeper of Admiralty Records and Librarian. Compiles first *Naval List*, 1814.
1812–1819: Calculates fund for Naval medical officers' widows, then consulted on other benefit schemes.
1822–1851: Actuary of the National Debt Office (in the Treasury) until retirement. Succeeded by his son, Alexander Glen, and grandson, Alexander John.
1829: produces first mortality tables distinguishing between male and female lives.
1840: Grandson Alexander John born – actuary and Institute President (1894–1896)
1843: Risks personal fortune by championing Alexander Bain (1810–1887) for his invention of the electric clock and Telegraph (see Ian Strugnell's excellent article in *Newsletter 131*, March 1996, 'The timely story of Loughton's first public clock').
14 Oct 1848: First President of the Institute of Actuaries 1848–1860.
29 Jan 1849: Inaugural Presidential Address to the Institute membership at the first ordinary general meeting.
1851: Marries Elizabeth Davies (1807–1896).
13 Apr 1860: Dies aged 76 and is buried in St Nicholas' churchyard, Loughton.

His main career achievements, 1804–1851

John Finlaison who, until 1804, was known as John Finlayson, was the first President of the Institute of Actuaries, serving from 1848 until his death in 1860. His reputation is as the first actuary in government widely consulted for his trusted revision of mortality calculations behind Treasury annuity sale schemes and for his valuations of benefit funds in the best interests of members.

Following valuation work for a fund for widows of Navy medical officers, he then served for nearly 30 years as Actuary of the National Debt Office and Government Calculator, in the Treasury – forerunner to the position of Government Actuary, officially created in 1917.

His career shows standards which he set in other disciplines that now enjoy separate status as professional skills. In an age of the Napoleonic wars his work highlighted the great advantage of full accessible information to naval strategy and the value of firm financial assumptions upon which to raise government revenue.

In 1848, Finlaison was the clear choice to be the first President of the new Institute of Actuaries. He used his position in 1853 to argue before a Commons Select Committee that the trusted skill of actuaries was imperative to life company solvency and a statutory role was recommended.

JOHN FINLAISON, ENGLAND

Formation of the Institute of Actuaries

As noted above, the first professional body representing actuaries, the Institute of Actuaries (not to be confused with the Faculty of Actuaries, founded in Scotland in 1856), was formed in 1848, and John Finlaison was elected as the first President on 14 October 1848, retaining that position until his death 12 years later.

On 29 January 1849, John gave the first inaugural presidential address to the Institute members at the first ordinary general meeting of the Institute of Actuaries.

Alexander John Finlaison, John's grandson, became a fellow of the Institute of Actuaries and was the Institute's President between 1894–1896.

Last years

Finlaison had probably left Loughton by 1848, if *White's Essex Directory* of that year can be taken as evidence, and he does not appear in the 1851 census for Loughton. By 1856 there is support for the fact that he had a house in Richmond, Surrey, prior to taking up residence in Notting Hill.

In 1851, John Finlaison married for a second time to Elizabeth Davies (1807–1896), daughter of Thomas Davies of Waltham Abbey. He occupied a country house, Alghers House [*sic*], now demolished, at Loughton, on the site of which a blue plaque was placed, in 2002, by the Loughton Town Council and the Institute of Actuaries.

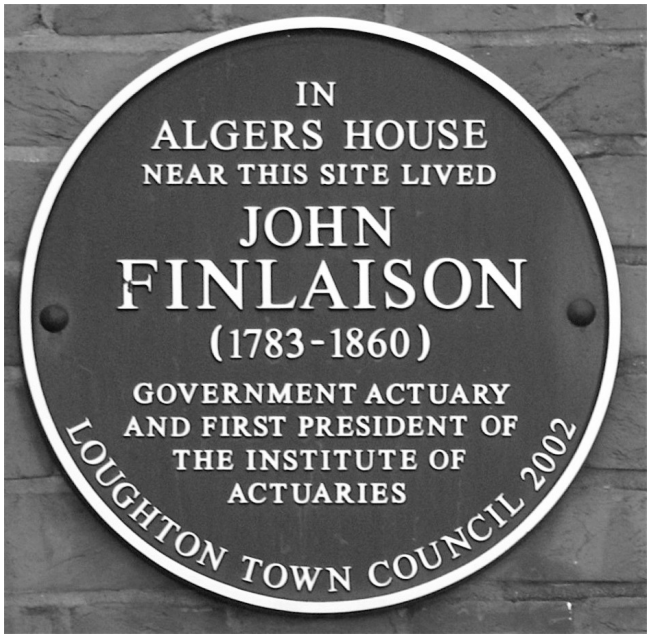
John Finlaison as an old man

He retired from public service in August 1851, after serving nearly 50 years working for successive governments, and employed his remaining days as Institute President and studying his favourite topics of scripture chronology and the universal relationship of ancient and modern weights and measures.

He was unexpectedly seized with congestion of the lungs in his 77th year, and, after a brief illness, died at his residence in Notting Hill, London, on 13 April 1860. He is buried in St Nicholas' churchyard, Loughton.

John Finlaison will always be remembered for his extraordinary abilities and for pioneering the way forward for the actuarial profession in the UK as it is now.

As mentioned, John Finlaison was commemorated in Loughton by the Blue Plaque on a house at the corner of Algers Road and High Road. It bears the inscription as seen on the photograph below. Furthermore, a previously unnamed path, which partly surrounds Loughton Station, is now called Finlaison Path.



The relatively small, exclusive, esoteric and, indeed, somewhat impenetrable nature of the actuarial profession, belies its powerful influence on all our lives. So. although perhaps not the most famous past Loughtonian, it would be very wrong to underestimate the achievements of John Finlaison.

Writing this article was perhaps rather appropriate as, in my business life, there were countless times when my firm's performance, and my own personal one, was measured by an actuary, employed by our clients for that purpose. Our relationship with them all was normally excellent, but there were times when we agreed to differ, and we, and actuaries in our own company, would engage them in sometimes rather testy and technical debates. One of my colleagues, in frustration, once turned to me and said: 'M reminds me of the old joke about actuaries: "An actuary is a professional who can solve a problem you didn't know you had in a way that you can't understand." ' I hasten to say, that that recollection is in no way intended to detract from John Finlaison's invaluable legacy to the financial and business world.

4 Kings Row Cottages, Epping Green

IAN WEST

The first view of my new house in Epping Green as I arrived in the lorry containing all of my worldly goods was slightly marred by the site of a very elderly, very thin and very inquisitive lady hovering around the front windows. The previous incumbents had left and all I now could detect was that 'Aunt Daisy' as the rest of the village affectionately knew her was checking

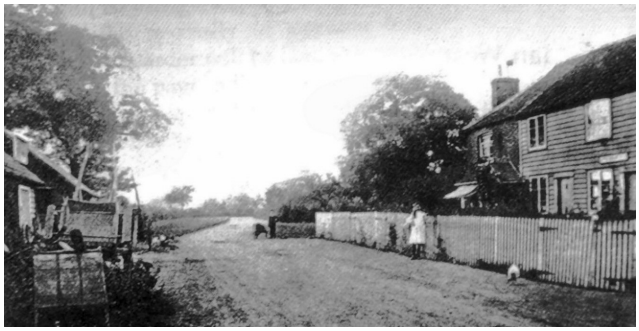
that everything was in order for the new owner . . . me.

Aunt Daisy was approaching her centenary and soon made herself known with her constant suggestions with regard to the state of my garden, how to prevent cattle from destroying my hedge, access to the open land behind and even what to do to the paths should it snow. To some this level of intrusion could be quite a challenge, but in return for such sage advice I could tap her vast memory relating to previous owners of my house and indeed the history of the village in general.

Aunt Daisy

I diligently took notes that I still have to this day. Some of the information had to be treated with caution, a fact that I had allowed for, given her poor hearing and the passing of countless decades.

My house, it would appear, belonged to the local wheelwright, his workshop standing on the green opposite, now occupied by the bus shelter. He died in 1934 and it subsequently became the village Post Office. In fact, it would appear that at some time or other, nearly all of the houses in Epping Green had served their time as the village Post Office!



Wheelwright's shop (left) and cottage (right)

Over the years I 'interviewed' other elderly members of the community, swapping tea and biscuits for insights into village life. I found it fascinating how their memories of my house varied with their ages. Some recalled it as a wartime Post Office, some went there as children to buy their sweets after school remembering older ladies, sitting outside the bay window, gossiping, catching the last of the summer sun.

Everyone was willing to loan me their photographs so that I could make copies. One elderly allotment holder said that when he was a boy he would play darts with his friends in my kitchen, which then was the Post Office's store room. He knew the address of a Reg Webb who carried out conversions during 1960. Would I be interested in seeing him?

A 200-mile round trip brought me face to face with the man who put in many of the alterations, but more importantly was able to describe in detail and draw a plan of how it looked before the conversions took place. He also owned numerous photos taken by the architect at the time of the work.

Now 'fast forward' 25 years, to the age of the computer and easy access to the census. By researching all of the village inhabitants from 1841 through to 1911, I was able to produce a time-line showing the movements in and out of the former wheelwright's cottage. In fact, surprisingly, there were very few. James Cook and his family arrived from nearby Waltham Abbey in about 1855 and his sons continued the business through to 1942. Trade directories reinforced the rumour that he diversified into coach building during the latter part of his career.

Later, Essex Records Office provided a copy of the Tithe Award map along with its schedule containing details of the various owners and occupiers for 1836 and I was able to 'plot' another period of its history.

I've even managed, using a graphics package on the computer to overlay all available maps from 1740 to a present-day aerial photo to show in true 'flicker book' style the various developments that have occurred.

But wait . . . what's this on the 1901 census? A niece, 'Dulcie', one year old, born in South Africa, living with the wheelwright and his wife. Fascinating stuff, I needed to know more. Back to the computer and a quick study of the passenger lists for any likely looking arrivals from that region and there they are. Beeche, her mother, Gwendolyn, her sister, and Dulcie, all arriving from Natal in 1899 on the *Tintagel Castle*. But why? Sadly no one in the village remembers them and even more intriguing is why Dulcie lived with the wheelwright's family whilst her mother and sister stayed on a farm 200 yards away, a situation that continued for a further 10 years.

Unknown to me, a lady not too far away has lived here all her life and she's nearly 90. Perhaps she can shed some light on the mystery of Dulcie, who apparently inherited my house from the wheelwright after he died in 1934. I've already asked a mutual friend if she can help . . . I see more tea and biscuits approaching.

I'm sure you are all aware of the famous quote that we don't actually own our house, but just look after it for a while.

I consider that I've been there some time. Why I'm practically no longer considered an outsider! Edwin Cook, however, was using that very same garden path for over 80 years and Mary Carter, the postmistress, for a further 30. Reg converted it and lived there for another 25 years with his family and that's 'only' from 1855.

What of its history from the early 18th century

when it was built? Why is there a weather-boarded gable end of a building, long gone behind the plasterboard of the front bedroom? What's the purpose of that original window only 12 inches square? Why is the brickwork at the back in English bond and the front in Flemish bond? What's the point of that funny hook fixed to the wall under the eaves?

I'm sure that to many of the previous owners it would have been obvious . . .

[This article, forwarded by Ted Martin, was previously published in Local History News, *No 94, Winter 2010, the magazine of the British Association for Local History, and appears here with the permission of the author and editor.]*

Our ancestors?

Saxon Cheapside saw 'herds of half-savage churls who plodded along with rough carts laden with timber from the Essex forests, or driving herds of swine from the glades of Epping. The churls we picture as grim but hearty folk, stolid, pugnacious, yet honest and promise-keeping, over-inclined to strong ale, and not disinclined for a brawl; men who had fought with Danes and wolves and who were ready to fight them again.'

Old and New London, Volume I, Walter Thornbury, 1878

SANDRA CARTER

A request, a response, and a pleasing outcome

In *Newsletter 190* we printed a photograph from the William Chapman Waller Collection, 'Arewater Green Almshouses and residents, 1895'**.** Following that, Richard Morris sent me this e-mail: 'As the new Newsletter contains a photo of residents of the Almshouses, you may be interested in the exchange of e-mails below and in particular the attachment giving details of one of the residents, Caroline Godfrey, in the photo.'

The sequence of e-mails is between Richard and David Godfrey. I feel they are worth reproducing more or less in full, as it illustrates another valuable facet of the L & DHS, namely, its capacity to help with queries into the background of people and places local to Loughton, and where such help brings a further satisfactory response, as printed in the article that follows below.

From David Godfrey, 15 March 2011

Dear Mr. Morris – This afternoon my wife and I were visiting Loughton to look at the areas in which my ancestors lived throughout most of the nineteenth century. We came across the almshouses just near the Foresters Arms on Baldwin's Hill. A resident introduced us to an old lady called Joyce (her surname sounded like Henna, but I'm not sure about this). She lives at No 3. Very kindly she invited us in to see the interior of the almshouses, which was of great interest to me because I know that my great great grandmother Caroline Godfrey lived there in 1891.

While we were chatting she produced a photograph of the residents which was taken in 1895, and on the back was a list of the seven people who lived there at that time. We were absolutely astonished to see that my 2 x great grandma is in the picture!!! Joyce, a very generous lady offered to let us take the picture away to copy it, but we didn't feel that we should do this as we had never met her before, and didn't think it right to borrow the picture. She mentioned a Mr Morris who had given it to her, and I am hoping that this is a reference to you.

I would very much like a copy of the photograph. Is this possible? I would be very happy to pay for the copying and postage.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely, David Godfrey

From Richard Morris, 15 March 2011

Dear David – I attach a copy of the photo of the residents at the Whitaker Almshouses in c1895, which Joyce Hennah showed you when you saw her recently. The names of the residents from l to r are:

Front: Lane, Bartrip, Harris, Foster, Godfrey.
Rear: Allis, Foster and Brown.

Regards, Richard Morris.

From David Godfrey, 16 March, 2011

Richard – Thank you very much for the picture – it takes me back four generations. I never expected to see pictures of my Victorian ancestors.

If your association is interested in the almshouses off Baldwin's Hill, I have a few biographical details about Caroline Godfrey and how she came to be living there. I would be glad to send them to you if they would be of any interest.

Thanks again for your help.

From Richard Morris, 16 March 2011

Yes, the Society would be interested in the biographical details of Caroline Godfrey. We have a member who is the expert on the Potato Ground allotments, and she also has an interest in the adjoining almshouses.

and, finally, from David Godfrey, 16 March, 2011

Please find attached some notes about Caroline Godfrey. These contain all I know about her life. I hope they will be of some use to you and your colleagues.

I did most of my research into my family history some years ago now, and I thought I had exhausted all the sources of information that I was likely to find, so perhaps you can imagine how pleased I was to find the almshouses were still there, to meet Mrs Hennah, and to see the photograph you

kindly sent me. You just never know what you are going to find if you persevere, do you?
Best wishes, David Godfrey

Caroline Godfrey, née Street (1821-1906)

DAVID GODFREY

Caroline Street was born in 1821 in Chigwell Row, and she lived most of her life in Loughton. Her parents were William and Mary Street. Their family business was chimney sweeping. I believe that the Street family was quite extensive in Loughton during the nineteenth century.

When she was 20 Caroline had a son called Robert Street. He was born in Bethnal Green, and was blind from birth. I do not know where he was brought up, but he reappears in Caroline's life later on.

On 20 August 1843 Caroline married William Godfrey in the parish church in Loughton. When they were first married they lived at Old Mead, and were still there in 1851. Their children were William Godfrey, born 9 May 1846, and James Godfrey, born 1850. At some time in the 1850s they moved to York Hill, where they rented a house from Mr Charles Shiers. The house was on the corner of York Hill and Pump Hill and is described on the Tithe Map of 1850 as 'house and garden, 1 rod 7 perch'. By 1871, they had moved to Woodberry Hill.

William Godfrey was an agricultural labourer, but the family must have been reasonably comfortable, because they were assessed to pay the Poor Rate in 1876, 1877, 1878 and 1880.

William Godfrey died on 17 December 1880. Caroline continued to live on Woodberry Hill, and from about 1881 she had her son Robert Street living with her. Being blind, Robert was unable to work, and although he was now 40, must have been supported by his mother.

The 1891 census shows that Caroline and Robert had moved to the almshouses at Baldwin's Hill. Caroline was 70 and Robert was 51. In 1895 Caroline appears in the photograph taken at the almshouses, but Robert does not.

Caroline Godfrey died on 2 February 1906 in the Union Infirmary at Epping. I think this means the workhouse, but very likely by 1906 this was more of a home for the elderly, who could not look after themselves, than the Dickensian model of hardship. I find it very strange that an old lady with an extensive family in the town should have been moved to the Union Infirmary to end her days, but I do not know any more of her circumstances. The death certificate gives the cause of death as 'senile decay'. She was buried in the churchyard at St John the Baptist church.

Sources.

Marriage and death certificates.
Loughton Parish Records: Baptism register 1837–1873; Marriage register 1837–1892; Overseers of the Poor Accounts.
Census Records, Loughton, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891.
Tithe map, 1850.
Burial register, St John the Baptist, Loughton.
D J Pohl, *Loughton 1851.*

Loughton at War

DENNIS BARNES

In 1939, at the age of 9 years, I was living at Loughton in Essex where my father, a stationmaster, had just taken charge of the brand new railway station there. The family consisted of my mother and my two sisters and my older brother, Ernest, who was serving with the 7th Hussars in Egypt.

Father had joined the LDV, later to become the Home Guard of course, and I remember him coming home wearing his LDV armband and an old WW1 Lea Enfield Rifle slung over his shoulder. Dad was a 1st class marksman and had many medals from his earlier days.

Things were very quiet until around the middle of 1940, when a bomb dropped fairly close by at about 9pm, with no alert having been sounded. It dropped just off the High Road, and demolished a house, killing one old lady and a fireman in the fire station opposite. It must have been one of the first bombs to drop in the London area. That was the first, but much more was to come.

Later that year a whole stick of bombs landed on Tycehurst Hill and demolished almost completely a row of houses; also a bomb landed on a bungalow that backed on to our long garden, killing the two lady occupants I believe. Fortunately, the blast from this bomb did not damage our house. We had no air raid shelter, so we used to get under the large oak dining table when things got rough.

Like most lads in those days, I had an interest in aircraft recognition, and had a perspex disc with the silhouettes of German warplanes on it. One afternoon, in the playground of our school next to Epping Forest, I was talking to a friend when we spotted a plane overhead circling and getting lower. I held my disc up to it, and saw to my surprise that it was a German Dornier 17 bomber. 'Get away', my friend said, it must be an RAF Blenheim. No alert had been sounded.

Just then all hell was let loose as the AA gunners realised what it was and started firing at it, and at the same time it jettisoned its bombs and made off into cloud. By this time my friend and I were moving rapidly to the surface shelters that were in the playground. There were no military targets in the area, so what the intentions of the pilot were is a matter of conjecture. It was not unknown for them to attack playgrounds and schools. There were a lot of AA guns in the area, some of which were mobile and roamed the streets at night making a great noise, but very good for morale. They caused shrapnel to fall like rain; we used to collect buckets of it. The old couple living next door usually never bothered to get up during a raid but on one extra bad night they did. Just as well, because a large brass shell nose cap came though the roof and landed right in the middle of the lady's

pillow – lucky escape. Their only son had been at Dunkirk, and it was a great day of rejoicing when he came back safe and sound.

At school, there were sad days when some of the desks would be empty, and you knew that the little friends who had occupied them were no longer with us. Later the Germans dropped anti-personnel bombs, known as butterfly bombs, because of the wings attached to them. Some were found in Epping Forest I understand but I never saw one. I think the greatest frustration about all this was just having to sit there and take it.

My friend Alan Eaton, was an ARP messenger but he was 13 and had a bicycle. On the afternoon of 7 September 1940 a great air battle was being fought above us and at just before 5pm a plane crashed not far away. Soon after we saw a parachutist who appeared to be landing in our long back garden. Thinking it must be a German, I went and got my father's 12-bore shotgun. Just then, much to my disappointment, or was it relief, a gust of wind caught the chute taking it over some houses and into a field. The pilot who had bailed out of his Hurricane after trying, typically, to steer it away from houses and into a field was, I later found out, Captain Marian Pisarek of the Polish 303 Squadron.

He almost succeeded in doing this, but unfortunately, the aircraft crashed in a garden of a house next to the field, killing three Civil Defence personnel in an air raid shelter. When Marian landed in that field he was given a rather rough handling by the LDV because they thought he was a German. He could speak little English at the time, but was able to remove part of his flying overall and show the Poland flashes on his uniform tunic. There were profuse apologies made then, and I understand that the pilots of 303 squadron from Northolt were invited to a dinner at the local Town Hall by the Mayor to make amends.

Marion Pisarek was later to become one of the most effective Aces of the Polish Squadrons. Sadly, he was killed in 1941 leading his squadron as their commanding officer in a sweep over France. His Spitfire was seen to come down in the Channel after being shot down by a Fokker-Wulf 190 that had jumped them.

From WW2 People's War: A BBC Archive of World War Two memories

A determined life reviewed – Ivy Alexander

EDDIE DARE

[Eddie Dare's obituary recently appeared in Newsletter 189 *and the two following, slightly adapted, linked pieces appeared in* Newsletter150.*]*

Members may recall reading articles in the *Newsletter* by Ivy Alexander. She wrote in November 1993 (No 121), 'Lousy Loughton and the Ragged School Union: an East End Girl's Story' (which was reprinted in part in *From Mean Streets to Epping Forest*) and in March 1994 (No 123) she told of her perilous cycle ride from Epping Forest to Canning Town on the first day of the Blitz in September 1940. Further, in November 1994 (No 126), she gave us some history of the 'Plotlands: Arcadia for All' which were developed in such places as Jaywick and Canvey Island, and, on a more personal note, her mother's plot at Hook End near Blackmore.

Now Ivy Alexander has brought together more experiences of her life in *Maid in West Ham: My Formative Years 1924–1948*. This is more than the story of her own life: it is an excellent example of how to write a family history placed in a social context.

She was born in 1924 to an ill-matched couple – her father had been a professional boxer who started his career in the boxing booths of the time and who later suffered from brain damage which caused him to have fits of aggression. Her mother had married him to get away from home.

Ivy's father's forebears were mostly agricultural workers in Essex: his paternal grandfather became a brickyard worker on Wanstead flats, a place where Ivy was to spend happy hours as a child. Her grandmother was said to have had 21 pregnancies of which, after miscarriages and still-births, only eight children survived to maturity.

Her mother, who was born in Poplar, came from generations of artisan Londoners. Ivy's maternal grandfather was a chef and her grandmother was born in Penge, south-east London. Broken families are not a new phenomenon: this grandmother left her family to live with a licensed victualler while, at a later stage, during the war, Ivy's mother left her husband and then, in 1952, emigrated to New Zealand. This was the last time Ivy saw her mother; her father lived on until 1970.

Ivy, the third child in a family of six, was born in Wharf Street, in that part of West Ham known as Old Canning Town. It is here that her story starts and enfolds the reader with concern for the members of her family, her friends and their circumstances.

The family home for father, mother, three sons and three daughters, was a two-bedroomed house where a constant battle had to be waged against the bugs which got into the bed springs, behind the wallpaper and even in the brickwork and plaster, in spite of the family's great efforts to wipe them out. She tells of the arm's length relations with neighbours which existed in pre-war East London: respect for people's privacy and no 'dropping-in', and the strict injunction to children to 'know nothing' if a stranger called and of an understandable coldness towards the relieving officer.

The book is an encouraging story of how a determined girl made a break from this background and from the problems of education in the Second World War years. The key to that break was what she describes as 'a love of, and indeed thirst for, education' which shaped her life.

After education at a central school, she got employment in a Tuberculosis Clinic in Plaistow where she began to question why, in those pre-NHS days, patients had to be income-assessed for extra

nourishment, and to wonder what was the treatment available to the rich. This led to the thought that 'something must be done' and then to political campaigning for socialist ideas.

Her thirst for education included five nights a week at evening classes to which were added cycling trips, rambles, dances, amateur dramatics, concert and theatre-going, immediate post-war visits to France, and university – all of which brought a wide circle of friends – an adventurous young woman!

Blitz – and a perilous cycle ride

IVY ALEXANDER

In 2001 Eddie Dare wrote: The following is taken from Ivy Alexander's diary of the time. She was almost 16 and had left the Russell Central School in Queen's Road, Upton Park, two weeks previously, starting work the next day as an invoice typist in Aldersgate. She and her friend Irene Green, who lived in Manor Road, always cycled to school together. As Ivy's account of her perilous cycle ride was first published some eight years ago, it was thought that readers might appreciate another chance to read an abridged version of it:

Saturday, 7 September 1940: As we have been kept in most of the week, owing to air raids, Irene and I decided to go out cycling in the country. We thought we would go to Epping Forest. This we were warned against as the Germans had said they would set Epping Forest alight, because our Air Force had recently dropped bombs in the Black Forest and set a good portion of it alight. However, we decided to take the risk and set off in good spirits. When we were in Epping Forest the air raid siren went. Nobody took much notice as the raids had not been very intense. From the Forest we could see hundreds of planes crossing to London. We thought these were British, but apparently they were Jerries. Many air battles were going on and there was plenty of gunfire. We saw five planes brought down and saw several airmen bale out. Irene and I chased off on our bikes to try to find them, but soldiers were on the scene before us. Shrapnel was falling everywhere, so we sheltered under trees for protection. When things seemed quieter we decided to go home and the 'All Clear' sounded when we reached Wanstead at 6pm. As we approached London we could see huge black smoke clouds and thought we were in for a storm. We later discovered it was smoke from the many fires started by bombs. Damage became more severe as we approached home and on arriving at Stratford everything seemed to be burning. To get home we had to go by the Leather Cloth factory but we could not get near it as it was on fire. We could not get near home at all as we were turned back by policemen. Eventually we made a detour and went along by a canal (the Cut) at the back of the factories. Most of these were on fire and we were both drenched with water from the firemen's hoses. (I was confused by this time as I had lost my bearings, but Irene knew her way about.)

From the Cut we arrived at the Sewer Bank and walked along this until we reached West Ham station, which was badly damaged. Nobody seemed to be about and as we went to get to Irene's house we were stopped and told by a Warden that a time-bomb was in her front garden. In fact, there were time-bombs all along the route we had taken from Stratford. After some time we found Irene's family in Gainsborough Road School with a lot of other families waiting for time-bombs to explode. I was not allowed to leave the school . . . Two hours later, after much persuasion, I was allowed to try to get home (if it was still there). Rene's brother, Eric, accompanied me and after making many detours I eventually arrived home. Mum had been very worried and practically bit my head off, giving me no time to explain. She said I was NOT to go out any more. I had been in about five minutes when another raid began and we all spent the night in the Anderson shelter. Bombs dropped all night and the sky was red for miles around with the glare of fires . . . Thousands of civilians were killed in the air raid.

Sunday, 8 September 1940: I called to see Irene but her home was destroyed when the time-bomb exploded. I went to Gainsborough Road School but she was not there. London was again heavily bombed and thousands killed.

Monday, 9 September 1940: Went to work as usual. (Actually I walked all the way to Aldersgate.) In the evening police cars toured the streets saying anyone who wished to be evacuated to the country could go to Hoy Street School and buses would take them immediately.

Official uses of village inns

In former days, sick strangers, or sick or lying-in indigent parishioners, were billeted upon one or other of the village innkeepers, who were paid by the parish for their trouble. Various entries in the Overseer's Accounts give evidence of this. For example: 1719–20: 'Paid Ben Green for a bed for Youngman when the family had Smallpox: 5 shillings.'

At this date, one Hugh Green kept the 'White Horse' inn, afterwards called the 'White Lyon', on Goldings Hill. The Youngman family was often receiving relief from the parish.

> 1744–45. 'Paid at neighbor [*sic*] Woolmans for eating & drinking & lodging for him [i.e. 'Edmund Baly' [*sic*]] & ye Constable from Friday to Monday: 10 shillings.'

For many years the Woolman family kept the old 'Plume of Feathers'. Edmund Baily seems to have been either a violent prisoner or a lunatic, requiring a keeper.

> 1748–49. 'March 19th. Payed [*sic*] to John Woolmar [Woolman] for a woman one night lodging: one shilling.'
>
> 1750–51. 'July 22nd. Goods sould [*sic*] for the use of the woman that was brought to bed att [*sic*] Richard Woolman's: 14 shillings and sixpence.'

This was a case of a woman tramp who had to be provided for urgently.

> 1751–52. 'Nov 7th. To Richard Woolman for nursing Mary Moull [*sic*] in lying inn [*sic*] by order of ye Church Warden: 2 shillings and six pence.'

Mary Mole was a parishioner who was confined of an illegitimate child.

1788–89. 'Dec 27th. Paid expenses of Adams boy from London at ye King's Head: 2 shillings.'

Adams kept the inn named at about this date.

1802–03. Oct 28th. 'Pd. Expenses at Epping for the Man that was at the Crown: 5 shillings and four pence.'

'Also to the Man: 2 shillings.'

'Pd. Howard for ye maintenance &c. of the Man that was at his House: One Pound 19 shillings and eight pence.'

'Pd. James Nichols for nursing of the Man: 10 shillings.'

Howard kept the 'Old Crown' inn at this date.'

1803–04. 'Paid Expense for Wm. Allen, his wife and Child at the Reindeer: 10 shillings and sixpence.'

The Allen family and their belongings had been fetched from Berkhampstead by the Overseer, Loughton being their place of settlement and consequently responsible for their maintenance. By a curious coincidence, one Allen held the 'Reindeer' inn at this date.

1810–11. 'March 23rd. Relieved Susan Armstrong & expenses at the 'Plume of Feathers': five shillings.'

The Overseer does not specify the nature of his 'expenses'. Such items are not infrequent in the Accounts, parish business being informally settled at the inn and 'expenses' incurred.

1835. 'July 25th. Mr Evered charge for keeping a man and his wife one night. Woman taken ill on the road: 5 shillings.'

I cannot trace Evered as being an innholder in Loughton; he may have kept the 'Plume of Feathers', but this is unlikely.

1832. 'Sept 17th. Paid Mr Davies at the King's Head for lodging and other attendance upon Wm. Claydon removed with orders to Rickling: 2 pounds eleven shillings.'

Esther Davies kept the King's Head inn at this time.

1833. 'May 18th. A Bill for attendance & refreshments of men at Mr Davies King's Head for a Poor Man who attempted his life: 10 shillings ten pence.'

Coroners' Inquests were then, as sometimes today [in the 1920s], frequently held at the local inns:

1832. 'Nov 19th. Inquest on Mary Coleman at the Crown: 11 shillings and six pence.'

1833. 'June. Witness on a former inquest at the Feathers. Part of Mr Fullers Charge for refreshments ordered to be paid: 3 shillings.'

Richard Fuller kept the 'Plume of Feathers' inn at this time.

1834. May 21st. Refreshments for the Jury upon the Inquest at the Crown.

Lastly, the Loughton Vestry annually celebrated Easter at one of the local hostelries, at the expense of the rates. Here is one entry: '1801, April 8. Paid Mr Howard for the Vestry Dinner £5:13: 0.' Howard kept the Crown inn then.

PERCY THOMPSON

(Transcribed by Richard Morris) Percy Thompson Notes 2

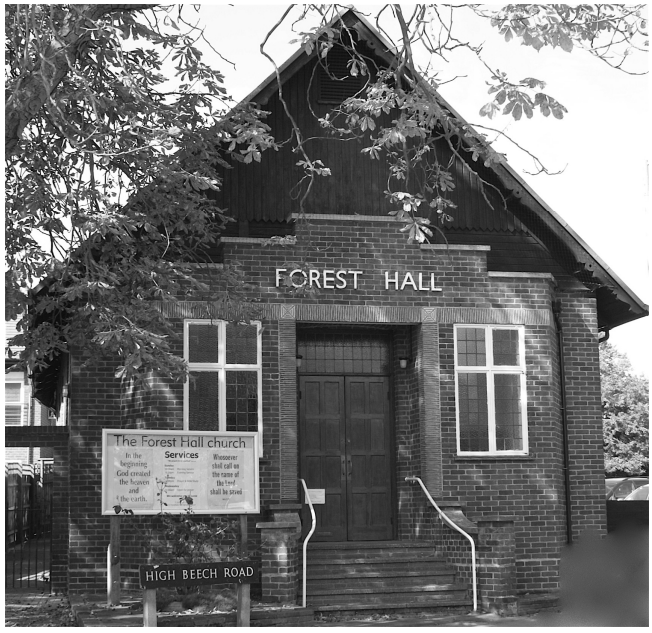
Forest Hall

Chris Pond kindly forwarded the first of the photographs, below, which dates from pre-First World War, from a series printed between 1908–1911. He adds the comment: 'Interesting that the chestnut tree Di Rhodes saved c 1999 (and is still there) is shown as a c-20-year-old specimen!'

This prompted me to include, in this edition, a few of my personal recollections of the Forest Hall, adapted from the L & DHS publication of 2006, *Post-War Loughton 1945–1970: How We Were and How Loughton Changed,* Ed

In the late 40s/early 50s, quite a number of children from Forest Road, Smarts Lane and other parts of town, all aged from about five to eight or nine, went to afternoon Sunday School at 3 o'clock in the Forest Hall, the small mission hall which, much renovated since then, still stands a few yards off the High Road at the bottom of High Beech Road. Although it had its origins in the Plymouth Brethren, in the three years or so I went there I can't recall ever hearing that name mentioned, nor do I recall the words 'evangelical church' which are currently displayed outside.

Sunday School meant spending a whole hour under the eagle eye of Ernie Street, a devout Christian, and the yard foreman at Eaton Brothers, where my father worked for well over half his life. Significantly, the Eaton boss at that time was Len Cranwell from Englands Lane, who was very prominent in the life of Forest Hall and who led the Sunday School services. As I used to visit Eaton's yard quite frequently I knew them both reasonably well so it was probably no surprise, especially as for a while my parents were part-time caretakers at the Forest Hall, that my father agreed I should attend their services.



Forest Hall Church, 16 September 2011

I remember enjoying them at first, but whether that was because of various inducements to attend, I'm not

sure. We were given highly-coloured Biblical picture cards, stickers and stamps for attendance and good behaviour. Prizes were handed out at the end of each year and all the children would get something, however small. Every week different children would stand on the steps at the end of the aisle to give readings or sing, and often one of them would be given a short baton. He or she would then 'conduct' the young congregation, although nobody took much notice of the enthusiastically waved stick. Ernie would watch proceedings very carefully, and if you misbehaved he invariably caught your eye and made sure you knew when he was writing your name down in his little book.

The ultimate threat, but one which I don't remember being carried out, was to be denied going on the Sunday School 'treat', invariably an outing to Clacton or Walton-on-the-Naze. Those trips were always fully subscribed, needing at least three coaches as parents were naturally included.

In those days Forest Hall services were occasionally too much for some of the children, as a few of the 'fire and brimstone' lay preachers of the time could be rather intimidating, so I was glad that when I joined the 41st Epping Forest Cub pack, based at the Loughton Union Church, I was able to leave. My father agreed that attending church parade each month was enough and, as he had, apart from the Forest Hall, rarely set foot inside any other religious building, that seemed very reasonable.

Thoughts on a visit to Loughton

MORRIS MYERS[1]

(from Newsletter 158 – October 2003)

Today, there are few children who go without annual holidays, and who have not travelled to other countries. But it has not always been like that. So poor were many working-class families, that when benefactors in Loughton offered their children a day's outing in the Essex countryside, they accepted with delight. (See page 16.)

The slums[2] these children came from had to be seen to be believed. They were vermin-ridden, unhygienic and prone to the diseases that filth and dirt bring in their wake.

The ordinary people of Loughton knew this and protested strongly, but to no avail. The school-children who descended upon them from the London slums appreciated their reception.

Loughtonians were well fed in comfortable surroundings. However, many of the children would perhaps have preferred to have had a day in the countryside with their impoverished families, but the authorities no doubt assumed that the lower working-classes would abuse and take advantage of any charitable disposition by the authorities.

Still, whatever beliefs and prejudices were held by all parties concerned, the children benefited, although few were unaware that they were unwanted by the Loughton community. In the minds of many of the more intelligent schoolchildren, there grew a sense of inferiority. After all, they were visitors to a people more 'civilised' than they were. More basically British[3] and intellectually[4] their superiors. In other words, the people who were their hosts were also the people who governed them and were for that reason their 'betters'.

Notes

1. Born 1913.

2. Mr Myers lived in Bethnal Green.

3. Many of the children, including Mr Myers, came from migrant families.

4. It was thought that the people of Loughton were intellectually superior to the East Enders because they and their children were better educated.

Health and welfare in Victorian and Edwardian Buckhurst Hill

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

Health care as we know it began with Buckhurst Hill Village Hospital, which opened in November 1866,[1] situated in what was then called Hospital Lane (later Knighton Lane). The building still exists as a private house. Its purpose was 'for the accommodation of persons not suffering from contagious or incurable disorders, residing in Buckhurst Hill and the adjacent parishes'.

The hospital was started by Dr Charles Livingstone, FRCS, but by the 1890s the Honorary Medical Officer was Dr Dring,[2] the Honorary Secretary was Nathanael Powell, (following his death in 1906 the position was taken over by one of his daughters, Miss A L Powell) and the Honorary Treasurer was Mrs Edward North Buxton.

The original Village Hospital

The Annual Report of 1908 gives an indication as to how the hospital worked. It had at that time a President, Edward North Buxton, and six Vice-Presidents, supported by a committee of 16 men and a ladies committee of 19. The executive committee, which met weekly, consisted of five persons. The full committee, elected each January, was made up of individuals who had given a donation of at least £2 or had a subscription of at least 10s per annum. Each subscriber giving one guinea could nominate one in-patient and three out-patients. Any applicant for admission had to provide a letter from a subscriber, and would then, if admitted, pay 5s per week. No

patient was allowed to stay more than 12 weeks, and no children under two years of age were admitted.

The patients came from various local areas – in 1908 they were from Buckhurst Hill 54, Loughton 23, Woodford 12, Chingford 7, Woodford Bridge 4, Chigwell 3, Epping 3, Chigwell Row 2, Abridge 1 and Theydon Bois 1. They also dealt with 20 accidents, 10 of which happened to visitors to the forest.

The hospital also relied on fundraising and held Pound Weeks, when supporters provided pounds of goods which helped to lessen the household expenses. The Cyclists' Meet donated £30 in 1908 and the League of Mercy sent £5. The report of 1908 also thanked Mrs Stirling for remitting half of the rent, Mr John Conquest (of Granville Lodge, Palmerston Road) for auditing the accounts and also expressed the hope of recruiting new subscribers in place of those who had died, in that year being William Tudor (of Queensbury) and Mr Siffkin (probably Bernard Ernest Siffkin of Forest Side, Epping New Road).

The list of subscribers for 1908 includes the following citizens of Buckhurst Hill – E H Baily, various members of the Buxton family, J Conquest, Sir Stafford Crossman, Mrs Dietrichsen, Mrs Dring, members of the Howard family, W Hudson, the Kemballs, Mr Ketts, the Linningtons, the Pellys, Miss Powell, members of the Savill family, Mrs Shorter, and Mrs Tudor. The report also gives a list of patients treated during the year, showing by whom they were recommended, and also the result – cured, relieved or died (6 people)!

The Medical Provident Home, founded 1873, opened premises in Queen's Road in 1889 (formerly Barclays Bank and the jewellers Went, Ashford and Davis, now in 2011 occupied by the Queen's Road Pre-School). Its function was to 'provide accommodation for those members of the Medical Provident, Forester, Oddfellows, and other clubs living within one mile of St John's whose illnesses necessitate their removal from home'. The President was C Wood, the Honorary Medical Officer was Dr Alexander Ambrose,[3] the Treasurer was Mrs G Black and the Honorary Secretary was the President's wife, Mrs C Wood, of Fairlight, Palmerston Road. The Lady Superintendent was Sister Grace.

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge 6642, founded in 1885, met at the Three Colts in Prince's Road. The trustees in 1896 were C Bennell Cutchey, E Richardson and Thomas Lowe, the Secretary was J C Atkin of Knighton Lodge and the Medical Officer was Dr Adams of West Lodge, Palmerston Road. Dr Adams was also the Medical Officer for the Juvenile Oddfellows and the Druids. The Juvenile Oddfellows met at St Stephen's Room and their objects were to 'raise a fund to provide relief and medical attendance to its members during sickness and for interment at death' – the Secretary was F C Green of Albert Villa, Albert Road South.

Also meeting at the Three Colts was the United Ancient Order of Druids (Epping Forest Mistletoe Lodge 556). The Treasurer was W Bailey (Stanstead Cottage, Prince's Road) and the Secretary was T Warriner.

The local Foresters branch was established in 1875. They met in their own Foresters Hall in Queen's Road. Their Medical Officer was Dr Ambrose and the other officials were John Bolland of 2 Prince's Terrace, Prince's Road and J Seabrook also of Prince's Road.

The Forest Hospital opened on 20 June 1912, when it was one of the most up to date in the country. It was opened by the local MP, Colonel Lockwood. It cost £4,250 collected from public subscriptions. The idea for the hospital came from the doctors of the time from the Village Hospital, B F Pendred, Butler Harris, C R Dykes and P W Moore. They obtained the land from Colonel Rous and the building was designed by Tooley and Foster, supervised by Sir Frank Foster, CBE. The foundation stone was laid by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir T Vezey Strong. When it opened it had one sister, two trained and two probationer nurses and two domestic staff to look after up to 21 patients.

Forest Hospital, Buckhurst Hill

References

W G Ramsey, R L Fowkes, *Epping Forest Then and Now* (Battle of Britain, 1986).

The Powell Scrapbooks, Vestry House Museum, Walthamstow.

Essex Who and Where, 1909.

The 42nd Annual Report of the Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Chingford, Loughton and Woodford Village Hospital, 1908, held in Loughton Library.

Notes

1. According to a cutting in the Powell scrapbooks.

2. William Ernest Dring, LRCP, MRSS, was born in 1852, the elder son of William Dring of Wickhambrook, Suffolk, and Emma, younger daughter of J W George. He married Catherine, from Devon, in 1878 and they had three daughters. Dr Dring was educated at Guys and Edinburgh. He was the Divisional Surgeon for the Metropolitan Police in 1898. In the 1890s they were living at a house called Willesden on the Epping New Road.

3. Alexander Ambrose, BA, MB, BCh, LLB, MD, DPh, was born 19/11/1858 the son of Joseph and M Ambrose (née Carleton). He married Grace Emma Margaret Cooke and they had one daughter. The doctor was educated at Felsted School and Dublin and Cambridge Universities. He was HM Coroner for Essex in 1898 and was the author of several medical works. In the 1890s his address was Tramore, High Road, Buckhurst Hill, but he later moved to The Croft, Loughton.

Enclosure of Epping Forest

'At the Waltham Abbey Petty Sessions, on March 6th, Alfred Willingale, Samuel Willingale, and William Higgins, labourers of Loughton, were charged with doing damage to

the amount of 1s 6d each, by cutting some hornbeam and beech trees, on recently enclosed land, in the Manor of Loughton, the property of the Lord of the Manor. The men were committed for seven days hard labour, and were sent to prison in irons.' These poor men believe they had a right to the wood they were cutting, a right which appears to have been undisputed and exercised from time immemorial by their ancestors; and they believe also that their imprisonment was a violation of the law: they are therefore determined to try the case in the Court of Queen's Bench. A few Englishmen, who are in like manner deprived of what they believe their birthright,— the right to wander free in Epping Forest and collect plants and insects, — propose to raise a subscription to assist these labourers, feeling not only sympathy with them on the ground of supposed oppression, but also feeling a desire to protect their own rights. Subscriptions will be thankfully received by *John Maynard, Tax-collector, Theydon Bois, Epping,* or *Edward Newman,* 9, *Devonshire Street, Bishopsgate Street, London.*

The Entomologist, 1866 – submitted by CHRIS POND.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

The following is an edited version of an article that first appeared in The Essex Review *in October 1897* – RICHARD MORRIS

In the extremely interesting *Life of Lord Tennyson*, by his son, which everyone seems to be reading just now [October 1897], the fact of his residence in Essex for a short time in his early manhood has been brought to light. Alfred's father died in 1831, and in 1837 the family or such of them as remained with their mother, left Somersby, their Lincolnshire home, and settled at High Beach. The house they inhabited was then called Beech Hill; it stood in a park boasting a small piece of water upon which in winter the poet was to be seen skating in his long blue cloak. In one of his letters to Miss Emily Sellwood, who afterwards became his wife, he wrote: 'I have been at this place High Beach, in Epping Forest, all the year, with nothing but that muddy pond in prospect, and those two little sharp-barking dogs.' It was convenient for visits to town, and as he journeyed up and down the poet watched 'the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn'. In another letter he writes an account of one of the heavy storms for which it seems Essex had even then a reputation.

> '1839, July 10th. – High Beach. What a thunderstorm we had the other night. I wonder whether it was so bad at H___. It lasted the whole night, and part of the previous afternoon. Lewis Fytche, who was with us then, was looking out of my window about half-past eleven o'clock, and saw a large fireball come up the valley from Waltham, till it seemed to come quite over our pond. It then, according to his account, grew on a sudden amazingly large. How large, I asked him? He said, "like a great balloon, and burst with an explosion like fifty batteries of cannon". I was so sorry not to have seen it, for it was a thing to remember; but I had just gone to my mother's room. She was grovelling on the floor in an extremity of fear when the clap came, upon which she cried out, "Oh, I will leave this house! The storms are very bad here"; and F___, who is here, burst out weeping. Such a scene, almost ludicrous in its extremes. My mother is afraid if I go to town even for a night; how could they get on without me for months.'

In 1839 the Tennysons left Essex, on the advice of a London physician, for Tunbridge Wells, which, the physician said, was the only place in England for the Tennyson constitution. 'The sequel', writes Tennyson, 'is that they are half killed by the tenuity of the atmosphere, and the presence of steel, more or less, in earth, air, and water'. His description of their departure from High Beach shows that they made many friends in their Essex home.

> 'So much to do and feel in parting from the house. Such a scene of sobbing and weeping was there on Monday morning among the servants at Beech Hill and cottagers' daughters as that Cockney residence has seldom witnessed, perhaps never since its stones were cemented and trowelled. There were poor Milnes wringing her hands and howling, Ann Green swallowing her own tears with exclamations of such pathos as would have moved the heart of a whinstone, and other villagers all joining in the chorus, as if for some great public calamity. Finding we had human hearts, though we lived in a big house, they thought it all the harder that they were to lose us so soon.'

To Tennyson, fresh from the Wolds of Lincolnshire, it may have seemed 'Cockney', but High Beach must then have been a rural village, compared to today.

Did you, or a relative, go hop-picking?

TERRY CARTER

Hop-picking was mainly in Kent, but many 'pickers' were from East London, later to move to Debden or Hainault. Some may even have travelled from the Loughton area down to Kent, hence the justification for including this article.

The female flower clusters, the seed cones, of the hop plant, we all know, give beer bitterness and flavour, and are renowned for their preservative qualities as a stabilising agent. Hops are also used in herbal medicine as a treatment for anxiety, restlessness and insomnia. A pillow filled with hops is still a popular folk remedy for sleeplessness.

Hops are a climbing plant, trained up strings or wires, which support the plants and allow them freedom to grow. Once picked, the hops are dried out in oast houses and sold to the breweries.

Hops have been grown in Kent since the 16th century. In Victorian times it was the biggest industry in the county. Every September the plants were ready to be picked and casual workers from Kent, London, particularly hard-up East Enders, Sussex and East Anglia would come to Kent to work in the hop gardens for six weeks.

Many in my mother's family, along with huge numbers from Bethnal Green, Hackney, Poplar, Homerton and elsewhere in the East End, were among them. It had been like that for generations – a tradition born of hard times, deprivation, and the chance to make a few extra pounds each Autumn.

When they got to the farm the pickers were given wooden huts in a barracks, sometimes the very ones that growers used to store their stuff in through the winter. The hut itself was about fourteen feet square.

A third of it was living area and the rest was a white-washed wooden slatted bed like a big bench coming out from the wall. It had a chalk floor, hard trodden down, chalk on earth. They had no cupboards, no nothing. The bed itself was made out of faggots – they were twigs from trees tied in bundles that were brought round and delivered at your door. You cut the cord and laid the faggots out. Then the farmers gave them a mattress-cover and straw. The pickers filled this mattress-cover with the straw and put that on top of the faggots, and that was the communal bed.

Typical hop pickers in the 1930s

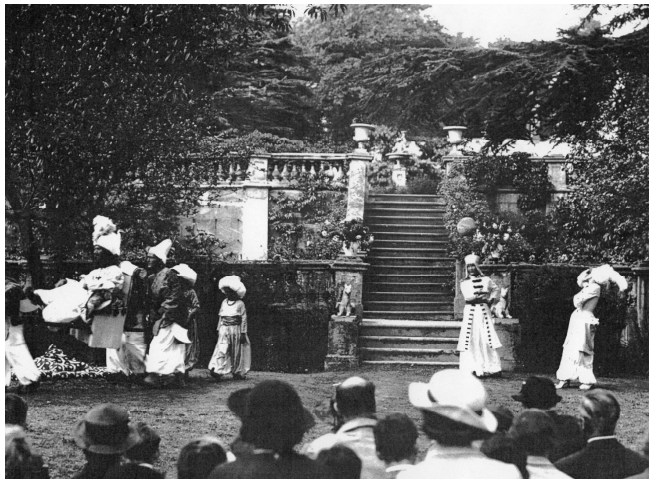
There were young babies in their prams on the field. They'd tuck those children in and push them down the far end of the field where it was all quiet and leave them. They knew that nothing would happen to those babies. If someone started singing on the field, everyone joined in. My aunt used to say something like, 'It was wonderful to hear all these people singing. The evenings were terrific. It was lovely getting together round the fire with the piano accordion going. Everyone sang, *My Old Man said Follow the Van,* all the old songs. People used to make up their own words. There was a tiny little pub down the road, and we used to sit there on a little seat, give the children some lemonade, and then come back and cook the dinner.'

There wasn't much money in it. Stretching up the wires was hard and sweaty, tough on the hands. Normally, there were no baths and only primitive communal sanitation. Sometimes the tally-men, the 'measurers' would cheat, and diddle the pickers, with no comeback. The measurer was always right! My aunt said, 'We never got rich hop picking. We used to have a loan out of it through the week to buy the food, until our men folk came down. If my mother came home with a £5 note after three weeks work, she'd made a lot of money. She always went and bought something for the home, which we couldn't do otherwise. That was lovely.'

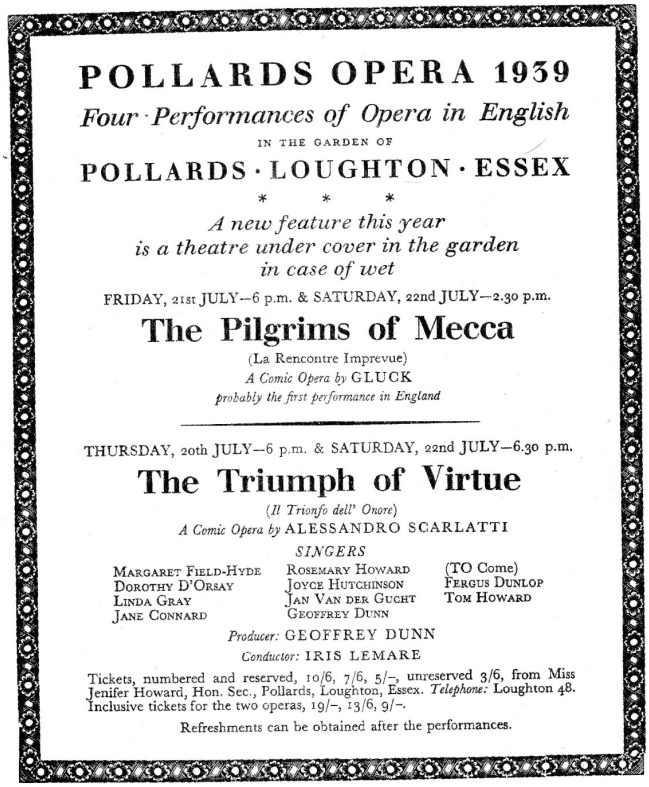
There is much more to tell, but space precludes it. Suffice to say that after the Second World War, mechanisation saw the end of manual hop-picking, and by the 1960s machines had completely taken over. By the law of averages, most hop-pickers, like nearly all my East End relatives, have passed on, but those few who are still with us remember those tough times well. But they also speak fondly of the comradeship and closeness of those annual trips to the Garden of England.

Pollards

CHRIS POND



Stephen Pewsey (*Newsletter 173*, Spring 2007) described the operatic performances that took place in the gardens of Pollards, Albion Hill, in the latter half of the 1930s. This was one of the first venues at which opera was performed in the open air, and as such it attracted national attention. I was recently given, by Frankie de Freitas (daughter of the late Sir Geoffrey deFreitas, MP, who lived at Greengates, Albion Hill, in the grounds of Pollards, after the War) a handbill and photograph of the opera in action. These few notes supplement what Stephen wrote in 2007.



POLLARDS OPERA 1939

Four Performances of Opera in English

IN THE GARDEN OF

POLLARDS · LOUGHTON · ESSEX

* * *

A new feature this year
is a theatre under cover in the garden
in case of wet

FRIDAY, 21st JULY—6 p.m. & SATURDAY, 22nd JULY—2.30 p.m.

The Pilgrims of Mecca

(La Rencontre Imprevue)
A Comic Opera by GLUCK
probably the first performance in England

THURSDAY, 20th JULY—6 p.m. & SATURDAY, 22nd JULY—6.30 p.m.

The Triumph of Virtue

(*Il Trionfo dell' Onore*)
A Comic Opera by ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI

SINGERS

MARGARET FIELD-HYDE, DOROTHY D'ORSAY, LINDA GRAY, JANE CONNARD
ROSEMARY HOWARD, JOYCE HUTCHINSON, JAN VAN DER GUCHT, GEOFFREY DUNN
(TO Come) FERGUS DUNLOP, TOM HOWARD

Producer: GEOFFREY DUNN
Conductor: IRIS LEMARE

Tickets, numbered and reserved, 10/6, 7/6, 5/–, unreserved 3/6, from Miss Jenifer Howard, Hon. Sec., Pollards, Loughton, Essex. *Telephone:* Loughton 48. Inclusive tickets for the two operas, 19/–, 13/6, 9/–.

Refreshments can be obtained after the performances.

Performances started in 1935. Glyndebourne had opened in 1934, but that, of course, was held *indoors*. Mrs Janet Elizabeth Fox Howard, the wife of Bernard Farmborough Howard, the owner of Pollards, was the organiser of the events, and his daughter, Jenifer, later its secretary. Many others of and connected with the family assisted. If the weather was wet, performances transferred (according to press advertisements) either

to the Lopping Hall, or the ballroom of the Wilfrid Lawson Temperance Hotel at Woodford. By 1939, however, a semi-permanent theatre marquee had been substituted as the alternative venue. In the first season, tickets cost 3s 6d (4s 6d including refreshments) but, later on, a range, of up to half a guinea, was substituted. Two performances each of two operas were given a year, in the period of a week towards the end of July.

1935 XERXES

BY HANDEL

1937 THE TRIUMPH OF VIRTUE

BY SCARLATTI

* * *

SOME PRESS OPINIONS:

'A charming production . . . provoked real laughter. Costumes . . . enchantingly pretty. . . .

'This is a real garden, not just an open space. Cedars frame the stage, and for "backcloth" there is a balustrade behind which the ground dips so that only the sky and tree tops are visible.' *TIMES*

'Certain moments of surpassing beauty . . . a positive success . . . a marvellously vivacious text.' *OBSERVER*

'Freshness, spontaneity, and inexhaustible vein of invention.' *NEW YORK TIMES*

'The rich vein of melody which vivifies every aria made Alessandro Scarlatti's *The Triumph of Virtue* well worth the labour the performance entailed. . . .

'A capital entertainment.' *F. Bonavia in the TELEGRAPH*

'The garden was so beautiful that it positively enhanced the freshness that is one of Scarlatti's special charms in his one comic opera. . . .

'It would be difficult to exaggerate the gratitude we owe to these enterprising people. . . .

'The production was beyond praise, ingenious advantage being taken of all the architectural and natural features of the garden.' *Francis Toye in the MORNING POST*

'The music was presented in a wholly favourable light.' *MUSICAL TIMES*

Notices of these performances in the national press (as cited by Stephen) were almost always favourable, and the setting, with its natural stage formed by a balustrade with urns, and massive cedar trees, specially commended. The 1939 season ran at a considerable loss (£268 – a reasonable annual salary before WW2), mainly because of the fees payable to the orchestra.

Pollards Opera came to an end, like so many good things, with the outbreak of war in September 1939. Pollards, having been used to house refugees – as a private arrangement by the Howards, not as a government venture, was sold to the East Ham Hospital Board as a nurse training establishment, and the Howards had moved to a new house, Little Pollards, in Nursery Road. Pollards was demolished in the sixties and the houses in Pollards Close and Albion Hill built in its stead. Greengates is still there, but its gardener's cottage has been replaced by a large and somewhat ostentatious dwelling, that seems to combine postmodern sleek with references to the Victorian villas nearby.

Mrs Howard was most unfortunately killed in a bicycle accident in Nursery Road in 1940.

The Times – 11 October 1804

A very shocking accident took place a short time ago: – A Mr Mellish was driving to Newmarket his coach and four, he came up with a higgler [an itinerant dealer], driving a chaise-cart, near Loughton, in Essex. The man was obstinate, and would not suffer for Mr Mellish to pass him; and, on driving his cart across the road to prevent him, forced a heifer that was on the road to run between the coach-horses, and threw all the four animals down.

On Mr Mellish pursuing his journey, he overtook the man about half a mile further on the road, he evinced the same obstinacy as before, in driving across the road at a very fast rate; the wheel of the chaise caught a post, and threw the driver out of the cart. Mr Mellish sent for a surgeon, and desired that the man be taken care of, but he died the next day.

Memories of Loughton

DON WORACKER

The following, from a letter, is Don Woracker's response to Tom Gilbert's articles in Newsletters 187 to 189

As one born in Buckhurst Hill at North End, near the then Roebuck in 1933, I have found your articles, particularly in *Newsletters 188/9*, most interesting. These were passed to me by my cousin Barbara Wilcox.

The pieces about the war period bring back so many memories: from Mother storing vital supplies beneath the floorboards under the stairs, a useful emergency supposed place of safety in the raids, after we stopped using the (it has to be said) dry, well-appointed power-supplied garden shelter, from the V1s and V2s. (Who can forget the uncertain minutes or seconds after the V1's spluttering engine died out, and, on their first viewing, our parents and neighbours speculating on planes being, it appeared, on fire!?)

However, what drives me to make contact is the story of the *Curaçao* and its loss in 1942, as my wife's uncle was, as a Royal Marine, on board and was one of the few who survived this awful event. As you say, perhaps understandably in those times, not made public.

We are uncertain for sure how Uncle Henry came to be in the US, to be aboard the destroyer in the first place, but we know that the Marines were on board one of the ships that took Winston Churchill over there earlier on, and, although it must remain supposition, it is reasonable to assume that it was to get them back to the UK.

However, before he died he gave us brief details of his oil-covered escape, rescue and return to the UK via Ireland. We were never certain which of the two '*Queens*' were involved, so, thank you for the details your article has made clear, and for all the other interesting tales of school choirs and so on.

I too failed my 11-plus but chose to go to St Barnabas Secondary Modern at Woodford. My older

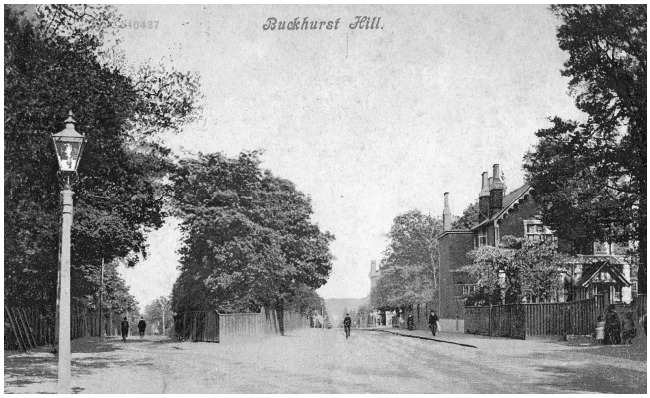
brother did attend Roding Road School, but due to the wartime interruptions his education was all hit and miss.

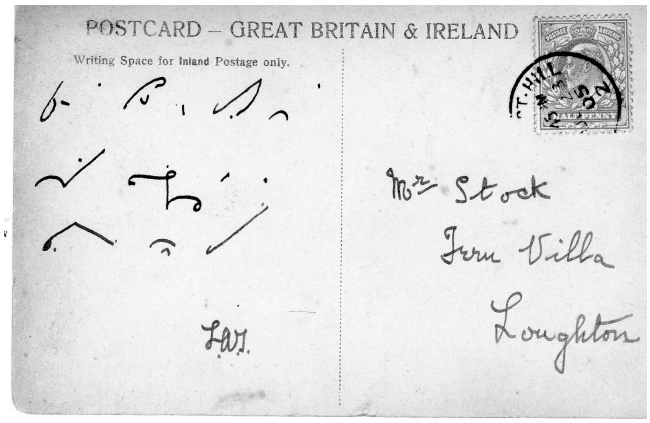
Our family were all on the railways in one form or another. But that's another story!

It would be nice to hear from you, perhaps by e-mail. *(The two gentlemen are now in contact – Ed.)*

The mysterious postcard!

Shown below are the front and back of a postcard lent me by Peter Cook, sent from Buckhurst Hill to Mr Stock of Fern Villa, Loughton (now 164 Forest Road – how did he expect the postie to know where it was? CHRIS POND





PS – from the Editor: No doubt some L & DHS members know the location, but the shorthand probably confuses most of us. However, my wife was on hand to decipher the symbols, and I replied to Chris:

'Re the Peter Cook photo, Sandra has "translated" the shorthand and, clearly, what the writer meant to say was: "Just a line to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." It seems the writer's shorthand was a little wayward as, translated as per the notation, it reads: "Just a line to wishing you a Merry Christmas and a happy new worry." '

But the real message no doubt got home.

You probably know the location of the picture. I think it's of the apex corner of Queen's Road and Westbury Lane, looking downhill towards Buckhurst Hill station, probably around 1910 or so. Anyway, it should make a pleasant little NL piece.'

An outing of little Londoners

From *The Car Illustrated* – 16 August 1905 *[This article, submitted by* JOHN HARRISON, *first appeared 10 years ago, in* Newsletter 150, *December 2001.]*

'Last Wednesday, fortunately for hundreds of the poor children of London, remained bright and sunny, and was put to good use by the organisers of that excellent charity the Fresh Air Fund. The Shaftesbury Retreat,* Mr Pearson's headquarters at Loughton for the Fresh Air Fund, was an exceedingly busy, one might almost say congested, spot with the running to and fro of its 800 little visitors. On several previous occasions kind and thoughtful motorists have lent their cars, to assist these little children in having a "really good time" and this year was no exception. On Wednesday cars were kindly lent by Captain Banbury of the Mors Company, Messrs H H P Deasy and Co, the Ford Motor Company, and H M Hobson, Ld. Motor lorries were also lent by the Beaufort Motor Company and the Germain Company, and they proved extremely useful.

The cars arrived at Loughton station about midday and were kept busy during the whole afternoon, a fact which can be vouchsafed for when we learn that the whole of the party, consisting of 800 little children, each received a ride in Epping Forest. *The Car* next season hopes to be able to collect motor-cars on different occasions to assist Mr Pearson in the entertainment of these little guests at Loughton, and meanwhile we thank the owners who lent the cars and the drivers who worked so indefatigably and cheerfully for the amusement of the Fresh Air Fund children.'

*The Shaftesbury Retreat was, of course, the subject of David Wilkinson's book, *From Mean Streets to Epping Forest*, published by the Society in 2000 and soon to be reprinted.

Children in the Retreat Yard

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