LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 194

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2012 Price 40p, free to members

www.loughtonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Golden Jubilee: 50th Season

Warren Pond, Epping Forest – c1900
This is a large pond just south of the Hunting Lodge. Probably a gravel pit that has been in existence since at least 1878.

50 years, and still going strong

On 16 October, 1962, two significant events took place. The Cuban crisis began when John Fitzgerald Kennedy became aware of nuclear missiles in Cuba, and, at a historic meeting in Buckhurst Hill, the *Chigwell Local History Society* came into being – in this issue Ian Strugnell describes both those early days and the decades that followed.

Now, 50 years later, in our Golden Jubilee year, we can celebrate that the planet hasn't blown itself up, and that the now renamed history society thrives under the banner at the head of this *Newsletter*.

This first issue of the new season has been expanded by four pages, covers our first 50 years, and includes a few articles from past numbers.

We hope all members and other readers enjoy the 2012/13 season.

The L & DHS and its antecedents – 50 years

IAN STRUGNELL

This is not a detailed history, but rather a summary of the main events and some of the people involved.

Our Society came into being on Tuesday, 16 October 1962 at a meeting of a local history group (formed earlier) held at Bedford House, Westbury Road, Buckhurst Hill. After a talk by John G O'Leary, FSA, FLA (Chief Librarian at Dagenham), on 'The Study of Local History', it was agreed to form the 'Chigwell Local History Society', the name indicating that its range should cover the whole of the then Chigwell Urban District. The founding chairman, David Bowen, was Warden of Bedford House (Buckhurst Hill and Knighton Community Centre); Clive Osborne of Loughton was secretary. A treasurer (Henry Gower) and committee of six members were appointed, and at the third meeting (13 December) there was a 'Local History Quiz'; Arthur Robinson had produced the first '*News Letter*' in November.

By September 1963 the Society had 49 members, 9 meetings had been arranged up to April 1964, and in October it was agreed to publish the *News Letter* quarterly in November, February, May and August.

In March 1964 the Society arranged a conference of Essex historical societies which resulted in the formation of the Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress (publishers of *The Essex Journal*). Meetings were by then held in Loughton Library (in The Drive).

Membership had passed the 100 mark by April 1966, and the well-attended lectures given by invited speakers and members held in the ensuing years covered a wide range of subjects, not all specific to this

area. There were also group visits to places of interest, although support for these could be variable.

David Bowen retired as chairman at the May 1970 Annual General Meeting and was succeeded by David Wilkinson, who had been a committee member from the start and vice-chairman. Subsequent chairmen's terms of office tended to be only a few years for various reasons, but Chris Pond has held the post since 1994.

The Society's first printed publication was a 48-page A5 size booklet of 'Transactions', produced by the Kingfisher Press of Chingford in December 1970; a second similar booklet was published in 1974. Since then, publications have been more precisely titled and sold to the public through Loughton Bookshop and elsewhere.

1981 brought a change of name to the Chigwell & Loughton History Society, although the reasons for this remain unclear. It coincided with the success of the Society's stand at the Loughton Residents Association 4 July 'Loughton Day' in the Lopping Hall, which brought more members, and the start of a project to record the grave inscriptions in Chigwell (St Mary's) churchyard.

David Wilkinson became secretary during the Society's twenty-first year (1983–84) in succession to Clive Osborne; his reports to Annual General Meetings noted how few members engaged in sustained research, but he was rather modest about his own achievements. The Society was granted 'Charity Status' on 28 June 1983.

Henry Gower retired as treasurer in 1988, surely the longest serving holder of that important post.

The 1993–94 season saw the return after many years' gap of serving refreshments at meetings (by then settled in the Wesley Hall for two years), and with increasing numbers attending there was more work in setting out and putting away the chairs. The move to the Methodist Church in 1996 was a great relief in this and other matters; the Society adopted its present name in that year 'to better reflect the actual membership'.

Although John Howes had taken over as (acting) secretary at short notice in 1994 following David Wilkinson's serious road accident, he soon made his mark by introducing the programme leaflet in its present folded format (from 1998 incorporating the membership application/renewal form) which suited the leaflet racks then available in local libraries. It therefore also served as publicity and probably helped in maintaining membership numbers. John was able to hand over to Richard Morris in a more orderly way in 2002.

In late 2003 the Society acquired its own internet presence through an existing Theydon Bois website, with much technical assistance from there. It has greatly expanded the '& District' part of our name inasmuch as *Newsletter* contributions have come from as far away as Australia.

The Newsletter itself has also seen several changes (and editors) since it started as a stencil duplicated quarto sheet (both sides, soon increased to four sides on two sheets for most issues). In 1975, with David Wilkinson as editor, it changed to two foolscap sheets, folded to produce 8 smaller pages. Another change to a single A4 sheet produced on a word-processor and photocopied (double-sided) came in December 1978, lasting until May 1981. It then reverted to a folded format giving 4 pages photocopied onto a single A4 sheet. In November 1990 the then editor Vic Barham suffered a stroke, and Eddie Dare took over in 1991. The format eventually settled at four pages photocopied on a single A3 sheet folded, sometimes with another A4 sheet stapled inside to give 6 pages, and illustrations became more frequent.

Eddie decided in 1997 that he could no longer continue and the Committee kept it going until Ted Martin, with a lifetime of experience in the printing trade, produced the first 'properly printed' issue in 1999. By the time Ted moved away from this area in 2006 it had enlarged to eight pages, which has since become 16 in Terry Carter's hands. Printing technology has changed, making some colour illustrations economically possible for the small print run involved. The content has always been wide-ranging, reflecting members' interests, although the Forest is an almost perennial subject.

Although the Society has never had any official standing with local government, over the years members have made representations about, or brought public attention to, development proposals which would affect buildings or other aspects of this area. A notable success was Alderton Hall in the mid-1960s, but some other 'vandalism' could not be stopped. From its very beginnings, the Society's objects have included the promotion of interest in local history and it is gratifying when efforts in this direction are rewarded.

A nostalgic, even poignant, past item selected by Ian:

From Chigwell Local History Society *News Letter* No 15, May 1966

It is often said that the older one grows the more one tends to look back, comparing the present with the past, generally unfavourably. It is natural for memory to gloss over unpleasantries and recall only the pleasant things.

Perhaps therefore, I may be forgiven if, in this brief 'flash-back' to the days of my youth in Buckhurst Hill, I give the impression that everything was just fine.

Gradually the face of our locality is undergoing change. The fields, where once I delighted to roam, are now housing estates. Walking was one of my favourite pastimes, cycling coming a near second. From Buckhurst Hill I would trudge across country to Hainault Forest and Abridge and beyond. There were few buildings other than farmhouses. I was frequently guilty of trespass. Farmers would sometimes strongly object, but I soon found that a 'soft answer turneth away wrath'.

A long walk produces a healthy appetite and a visit to a wayside tea-shop would become a need. For a shilling I could regale myself on a pot of tea, an egg with plenty of new bread and butter, watercress, jam, and home-made

cakes. Truly, a meal in which even Lucullus would have rejoiced.

As now, I could wander at will in the Forest, but, unlike the present, it was a quiet place to be in. One's ears were not assailed by the ubiquitous cacophony of sounds produced by a seemingly endless stream of internal combustion engines. Over the years I have explored the Forest from end to end and have never tired of it, but it seems to have lost that sublime feeling of 'awayness' it once had.

This is still a beautiful district. For a place so near the Metropolis it must be unique. I am truly thankful that, in these days of cars and transistors, I can still recapture in some degree the pleasures of the countryside which I enjoyed in my youth. I can still walk across the fields to Chigwell and Abridge, but, alas, the beautiful walk from Buckhurst Hill to Loughton Station is no longer available. I can compensate for this loss by walking to Grange Farm and thence to Chigwell Row, or, in the opposite direction, to the 'Owl', via Connaught Waters, thence to High Beach and Epping. What better could one want?

Yes, I think present-day Chigwell Urban District has almost as much to offer as it had sixty years ago. The simple pleasures of life are, after all, the most satisfying, whether one is young or old, and we must be thankful they are still available to us, even in this scientific age of ugliness.

A W ROBINSON

The Imperial Bank – a local oddity

A N HARRISSON, AIB

[Continuing the 'Anniversary theme', this article appeared in the Chigwell Local History Society's publication Transactions *–Number Two, 1974.*]

The Bank of England, by its original charter of 1694, enjoyed a monopoly of joint-stock banking in England and Wales which was not breached until 1826. Even then, restrictions and formalities made the operation of a joint-stock bank difficult until the old cumbrous legislation was superseded by the Companies Act 1862. In the next few years some former private banks were incorporated under the new Act and a number of new joint-stock banks were set up.

One of the first newcomers was the Imperial Bank Limited, the history of which closely and somewhat mysteriously concerns this corner of Essex. Incorporated in 1862, this bank had its office in the City of London and then opened a handful of metropolitan branches in such places as Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea.

Later, like other banks started at this time, the Imperial spread to the country, opening 'agencies' at Waltham Abbey and Cheshunt in 1882. Further agencies appeared at Waltham Cross (1883), Woodford (1886) and Loughton (1887). The agencies appear to have been controlled direct from the Head Office at 6 Lothbury; G H Barnett was manager of them to 1887. Waltham Abbey was promoted on 16 April 1891 to be a full branch, with T P Trounce as manager, the other agencies and a new office at Enfield Highway becoming subordinate to it.

These six were the only county offices, but why the Imperial Bank selected this close-knit group of comparatively small places in the area where Essex, Hertfordshire and Middlesex meet, is not explained. There seems to have been no specialised industry or trade that linked the six places (except, perhaps, market gardening, but there were plenty of other places that supplied London with such produce). One at least of the early directors, Robert Diggles, lived in the area, at Cheshunt, but it is not easy to see this as a valid reason for opening branches. The Imperial were certainly breaking new ground, for every one of their country agencies was the first bank in its locality.

In 1893 the Imperial Bank Limited merged with the London Joint-Stock Bank Limited who up to then had had no offices in the district. They promoted Woodford to full branch status, with E Purkess as manager and with two sub-branches: Loughton, previously sub to Waltham Abbey, and a new office in Queens Road, Buckhurst Hill. The Woodford branch was in the High Road, Woodford Green, but the London Joint-Stock Bank later opened a second branch in Woodford, in the Broadway, by the railway station.

The great spate of bank amalgamations during and after the First World War saw the London Joint-Stock unite in 1918 with the London City and Midland to form the London Joint City and Midland Bank Limited. This unwieldy title was soon shortened, and all the offices named above are now (as at February, 1974) branches of the Midland Bank Limited.

[Midland Bank plc was one of the Big Four banking groups in the United Kingdom for most of the 20th century. It is now (since 1992) part of HSBC.]

Crime and justice in 1732

From *The Gentleman's Magazine*, January 1732, submitted by RICHARD MORRIS

Wednesday 19 January 1732.*

The Sessions which were held for five days ended at the Old Bailey, 61 Prisoners were tried, 37 of which were acquitted, 20 to be transported, 2 whipt [*sic*] and two received sentence of death, viz. George Scroggs for robbing Mr Bellinger, Minister of Tottenham, on Sunday 14th February last, as going to preach, of about 14s, and Peter Hallam, Waterman, for the murder of his wife, by beating her, and throwing her out of a Chamber Window, when big with child.

Peter Noakes was tried for the murder of William Turner, by shooting him in the head with a pistol, at the King's Arms Tavern in the Strand. They were by themselves in a room, a pistol went off, and the Prisoner ran away. It appeared the deceased had hired a pistol, and one Mrs Falkingham, with whom they kept company, and who had been with them just before the accident, swearing she saw him twice attempt to kill himself with a poker and sword, the Prisoner was acquitted.

Corbet Wesey of Mile-end, Stepney was tried for murdering his wife. A few days before her death she made Oath that he had confined her above a year in a Garret, without fire, candle or sufficient food. It appeared she was like a starved skeleton, but he pleaded that he locked her up because she robbed him, and proving he often sent her victuals, he was acquitted.

[*The spelling and grammar are as printed in the *Magazine*.]

Correction: Rue Jean Jaurès

In *Newsletter 193*, April/May 2012, we printed in error an early draft of Chris Pond's article on the Loughton connection of Raoul Villain, the assassin of Jean Jaurès.

Although Villain *had* been due to come to Loughton again in 1914, he did not in fact do so. He

was actually arrested in Paris shortly after the shooting. Mrs Francis's evidence was taken under the reciprocal admissibility of evidence rules in the Extradition Acts.

A fascist meeting in Buckhurst Hill

LYNN HASELDINE-JONES

I was recently asked to do some research into a meeting which took place in Buckhurst Hill in 1938. It turned out that the meeting concerned was that of the British Union of Fascists. I found this interesting article which appeared in our local newspaper in May of that year:

'BUCKHURST HILL FASCISTS' MEETING

A meeting of the British Union of Fascists, remarkable for its quietness and the orderly behaviour of the fair-sized audience, was held at the Buckhurst Hill Hall[1] on Wednesday.

The speaker was Mr W Risdon, from the Union headquarters, who outlined the policy of the British Fascists, led by Sir Oswald Mosley, dealing at length with their economic plans.

A national department of industry would be set up to deal with working conditions and standardisations of high wages, and when it had achieved a sufficiently high level in these respects would work for a gradual reduction in working hours. At the same time the people would be educated to use their leisure profitably, having sufficient means wherewith they could enjoy leisure.

He went on to declare that protection was vital to economic security. The Union did not confine itself to hatred of any particular countries, but they would keep out goods that were manufactured abroad at a low standard of wages when they were being produced at home at high rates.

WAGE CUTS

At the present time a decent employer who wanted to pay high wages was unable to do so, as another employer in the same industry would make wage cuts and be at an unfair advantage.

The Union recognised the need for Trade Unions in industry, but they should have one hundred per cent membership, and not the present twenty per cent, Mr Risdon continued. Only two out of every ten trade unionists struggled to bring up the strength of their unions, but all members took the benefits.

Dealing with class distinctions, he saw many big heads of industry, such as Lord Nuffield, had justified their ownership. But they would be against gamblers in business, who impoverished the community.

Mr Risdon declared the House of Lords, formerly a valuable part of the Government, was now full of profiteers – people with 'big noses and small consciences', who bought honours from corrupt governments with money corruptly gained. The Union would replace this with a second chamber of people who had made great contributions in art or industry.

FASCISM AND JEWS

It was only in answer to questions that the speaker dealt with the position between the British Union of Fascists and the Jewish race.

He declared the movement was definitely anti-Semitic, but it had not always been. For the first two years of its existence the members had refused to be drawn into any discussion on the subject.

But it became quite obvious that the Jews were going to smash the movement if it was within their power, not because the Fascists had attacked them, but because their policy was detrimental to their world domination.

In answer to further questions, he declared the Union had an unswerving loyalty to the Crown, which it recognised as the most vital link of the Empire. They were not out for international Fascism, but for Britain alone.

The meeting concluded with the singing of the National Anthem.'

The name of the speaker, Wilfred Risdon, may not be familiar. However, he was originally a miner, and progressed to politics through union work in South Wales. The speech reported here was very close to the time when he decided to leave the British Union of Fascists, because he felt that its potential for electoral victory had become virtually non-existent. Even though he was interned for three months in 1940, he was able to find work with the London & Provincial Anti-Vivisection Society, and when, after the war, it merged with the National Anti-Vivisection Society, he worked his way up to become General Secretary, and moved it from Victoria Street to an address in Harley Street, much to the consternation of the medical fraternity! He died in 1967.

Wilfred Risdon's grand-nephew is preparing a detailed biography of his grand-uncle; if anyone has any memories of him he would be grateful if you could get in touch with him through LDHS.

Note

1. Buckhurst Hill Hall later became Buckhurst Hill Library, on Queen's Road.

Reference

The Woodford Times, Friday, 6 May 1938, courtesy of Loughton Library. With grateful thanks to Jon Risdon.

John Strevens 1902–1990 – professional artist and amateur musician

PETER COOK

[Through close contact with the artist's daughter, Bridget, who unearthed new material from her archives in France, Peter, who owns a portrait of his father done by John Strevens, has, with this completely new article, added so much more to the facts we printed in Newsletter 192.*]*

Frederick John Lloyd Strevens, oldest son of Henry and Lilian Strevens, was born on 12 July 1902 in East London. His father, born in Shoreham, Sussex, was a merchant seaman, recorded in the 1891 census as a steward, whilst his mother, Lillian Moss, was the daughter of a Loughton veterinary surgeon. The Lloyd

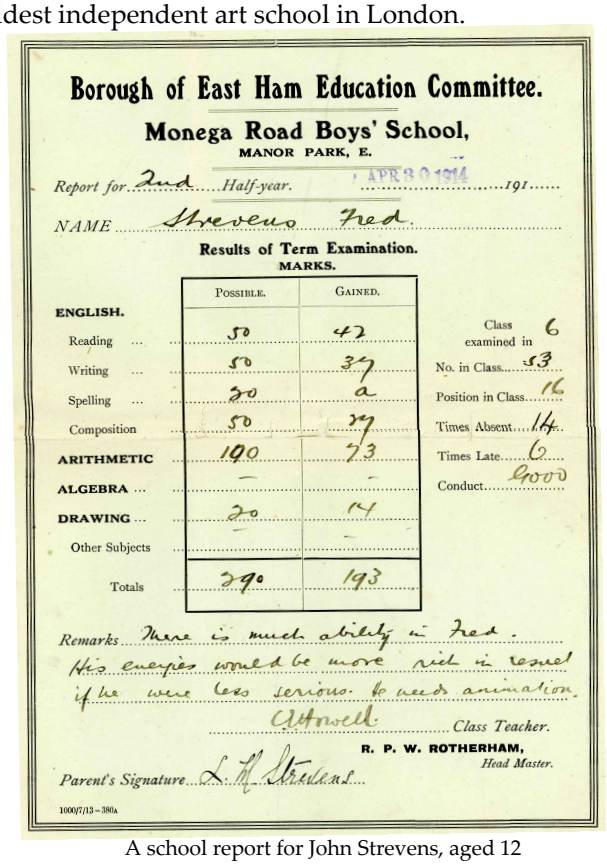
name would seem to have derived from his great-great grandmother, Mary Lloyd, who married a John Strevens, and a number of male descendants have carried the name through succeeding generations. During the 1800s the family were trading in Tower Hill and Bermondsey as Ships' Chandlers and Sailmakers, and John, being aware of this, would speculate on a deep connection between sail and the canvas he painted on, and the colours of boat paint and his oil paints. His father, by virtue of his lengthy absences at sea, played a lesser part in the children's early years, but this was countered by their mother, always there to provide the family with a loving, stable environment as they grew up. As a child his health became a cause for concern, and after missing weeks of school due to the kinds of serious infections common in the days before penicillin, he was sent to recuperate for a while with an aunt and cousins in Dorset. The beauty of the countryside made a deep impression on him, as did the discovery that apples grew on trees!

By 1911 the Strevens family had grown, and Frederick, or John as he later preferred to be known, now had three brothers and a sister, who, along with his parents and a relative, were residing in Forest Gate, his father having left the sea and was now employed in the London Docks. At the age of 14, too young to enlist for service in the First World War, and with only a basic education (see school report below) he left school to help support the growing family by seeking work in London's East End and the City. It was fortuitous that this move was to be the opening of the door into the world of art for John, as his then employer, with the advice and guidance of a French officer associated with the company, became somewhat of an art connoisseur, amassing a fine collection which included, amongst the works of other notable artists, a Rubens. It was being in the position to study this painting and others at his leisure that fired John's interest, prompting him to seek out the London galleries and other sites such as the Guildhall where he could study and copy the works of the world's great – and lesser known (John did not believe in hierarchies in art!) – artists, whilst beginning to develop his own talent. It was also at this time that another of his great loves, music, was to play a part in his life.

John writes in his memoirs:

'I taught myself to play a few tunes on the violin that my mother bought. The Maidstone Violin people used to send batches of them to the board schools. This opened out a new means of making money so I got busy learning some pieces . . . I played to theatre queues in London, without the knowledge of those at home. Eventually I had to give up this, to some, degrading way of making money, and for a short time I taught the violin to a small number of school children.'

It set him on the road to becoming an accomplished violinist, sufficiently skilled to form a quartet, and even providing what would probably, in today's parlance, be called 'backing tracks' for silent pictures. He also gave lessons, all of which helped to provide some income when he was between jobs, as well as paying for his first art classes at the Regent Street Polytechnic. Unfortunately, although making excellent progress, he was eventually forced to leave, being unable to meet the rising costs of tuition. However, by virtue of his natural ability (he was, to a great degree, self-taught), he returned to making copies in the London galleries, all the time adding to his proficiency. It was one of these copies, La Thangue's *Mowing Bracken*, which so impressed an aunt that she decided to help him by paying for further instruction which he proceeded to take through evening courses at Heatherleys, the oldest independent art school in London.



Borough of East Ham Education Committee.

Monega Road Boys' School,
MANOR PARK, E.

Report for 2nd Half-year. APR 30 1914 191....

NAME Strevens Fred

Results of Term Examination.
MARKS.

	Possible.	Gained.
ENGLISH.		
Reading ...	50	42
Writing ...	50	37
Spelling ...	20	8
Composition	50	27
ARITHMETIC	100	73
ALGEBRA ...	—	—
DRAWING ...	20	14
Other Subjects		
Totals	290	193

Class examined in 6
No. in Class 53
Position in Class 16
Times Absent 14
Times Late 6
Conduct Good

Remarks There is much ability in Fred. His energies would be more rich in result if he were less serious. He needs animation.

Attwell Class Teacher.

R. P. W. ROTHERHAM, Head Master.

Parent's Signature L. M. Strevens

1000/7/13—380a

A school report for John Strevens, aged 12

This post-First World War period in art schools was dominated by discussions about Cubism and Futurism. It's said that, during one such discussion, Strevens stood up saying 'I thought Art had something to do with Beauty' and walked out never to return. He was often heard to remark that copying 19th century paintings in the Guildhall, and the experience gleaned from working in illustration studios in the publishing industry, provided his real art education. In the 1930s, prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, he was making a living in Fleet Street studios as a commercial artist, taking on commissions for everything from book covers for cowboy and detective stories, to background scenes for advertisements, which sometimes ended virtually obscured by the product being advertised. Even cigarette cards, which often required extensive research, were given the same attention to detail which always marked his work.

In 1937 he married his first wife Evelyn Jones – who wrote as Jane Cooper Strevens – both having been members of a North London music circle centred around the Mann family, and once again music was playing a part in his life. John writes: 'It was while I freelanced and had a studio next to the *Daily Telegraph*, that I met my first wife Jane. She was a gifted

illustrator of children's stories and could write a good one too although she was dogged with ill luck.' In the late 1930s, just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, a commission for a Danish publisher took him to Copenhagen accompanied by Jane. A comment he made in a bar about the rise of Hitler: 'He's sown the wind and he'll reap the whirlwind . . . ' drew threatening looks from some Nazi customers, prompting him to comment later that he was lucky to survive the bar, never mind the bombing of London that followed. During the war he joined the local Air Raid Precautions unit in Loughton, their Operations HQ being in one of the large houses in Upper Park where, during quiet periods on shift, he would still find somewhere or someone to paint or sketch. The Epping Forest Museum has some paintings of this period in its collection.

During the late thirties and early forties he became a regular contributor to major exhibitions at the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, the Royal Society of British Artists and the Royal Academy. The year 1943 proved to be a turning point in his career with a one-man show at the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, received with glowing acclaim by both the press reviewers and the public. The following years saw more success and *Dressing Up* in 1947, *The Three Princesses* in 1948 – depicting his daughters Jo, Vicky and Ginny – and *The Little White Bride* in 1950 were just some of those hung at the Royal Academy.

In 1955, following Jane's death from cancer, John was in Oxford working on a portrait commission when the family mentioned that they knew a young Spanish girl who played the guitar. Being passionate about the classical guitar, and having helped found the Classical Guitar Society – where he counted among his friends Julian Bream and, much later, Robert Spencer – he was anxious to meet someone he imagined to be a genuine flamenco guitarist. When they met he realised she was barely a beginner, and he found the guitar had recently been bought on impulse with money she'd saved for a winter coat! The girl was Julia Marzo, and later that year they married, John being encouraged to do so by his first wife Jane's mother. Bridget remembers as a child meeting Granny Jones, who had been a nurse in the Crimean War, and that she and Julia got on well together. In 1957, with Bridget the latest addition, John, Julia and family set out by car for Catalonia and then Madrid, stopping first in France. He later commented: 'We must have looked like refugees or wandering musicians, especially as I often played my violin or guitar.' This trip was the first of several, and the places and people captured by John's brush provided for another one-man show at the Cooling Galleries in 1958.

By now his following extended beyond Europe and in 1961 he arrived in the United States at the invitation of Colonel and Mrs Paul Campbell of San Antonio, Texas. They had become acquainted when the colonel was serving at the American Embassy in London and John did a formal portrait of their daughter, Betsy, in front of Buckingham Palace. Whilst there he was able to spend some time visiting and painting in New York and Houston, and this was to be the beginning of his enduring association with America and American art lovers. This was also the period when the pictures that became best sellers on the British print market appeared, including *Harriet*, a little dark-haired girl holding a cat, and *Amanda* holding a dog, which were the best-selling prints in the UK in 1964. He signed these paintings 'Strev', saying – tongue-in-cheek – 'half his name, half his talent'.

Several years later, back in London, he met the art dealer and collector Kurt E Schon of New Orleans who, having seen the mysterious painting, *The Woman in Black* in the *International Directory of Art*, tracked John down, and so began a lifelong working relationship. Well into his 80s, he was still visiting America to meet collectors and paint portrait commissions from life, but he was happiest in his studio, his refuge at the end of the garden of his Loughton home, with his books and his music. 'It's all very well travelling around when you're young' he once said, 'But as you grow older you want somewhere you can dig roots'.

John died in 1990 and a Blue Plaque marks the home he loved at 8 Lower Park Road. In 1991 Epping Forest District Museum held an exhibition to celebrate his life and work. Having lent a pastel portrait he did of my father while they were together in the ARP, I was invited to the private view before the exhibition opened and was thus able to wander round and enjoy a collection of his original works and wonder at the colour and detail he managed to produce with what appeared to be – but probably wasn't – just a few brush strokes.

I am indebted to Bridget Strevens-Marzo for the additional information she supplied and for the photos which accompany this article. For those who may wish to see more of John's work go to www.johnstrevens.com, a site which proved useful in producing this article as did the book *John Strevens, The Man and his Works* by Dr T L Zamparelli (1982).

Inspiration: John Strevens painting his daughter Bridget

The Great Eastern Railway as an employer in Loughton

IAN STRUGNELL

Sir William Addison wrote that Loughton 'owes . . . everything to the railway'. There is little doubt that the Eastern Counties Company's decision to build a branch line in the 1850s changed the way Loughton developed, mainly by the activities of those with money.

As regards employment with the railway company, census returns give an idea of how many people were so engaged but from 1861 (a dozen identifiable) to 1901 (about 100) the surviving records are filtered through the enumerators' transcriptions from the householders' schedules. For 1911 the actual schedules in the householders' handwriting were kept as public records, and these must be deemed the most reliable source; by coincidence the GER re-wrote their staff records into new books in 1910, and started a magazine in 1911. None of these tell us details of day-to-day working hours and conditions at the time, but taken together they give a good idea as to who did what and where.

A fundamental part of any railway is its permanent way (so called to distinguish it from the temporary way used in construction) and there were just over three miles of double track line in Loughton parish, its maintenance depending entirely on manual labour. Thus we find two foreman platelayers and 17 platelayers (one describing himself as 'leading man'); a further 10 were labourers with the railway. Most of them occupied cottages near the Plume of Feathers, or in Baldwins Hill, Smarts Lane or Forest Road. The senior man was James Brown, who was an agricultural labourer in 1861, started as a platelayer in September 1864, became foreman about a year later and remained so until the end of March 1907, when 'on account of advancing years' (he was then 69) he took on duties as a general labourer 'on the approach roads and goods yards on the branch'. The others' ages ranged from 24 to 69, about half born in Loughton. They were employed in the Engineer's Department, for which no staff records survive. Signals also needed maintenance, and three signal fitters and an associated blacksmith appear in the census.

Station staff, signalmen and guards were employed in the Superintendent of the Line's department, for which there are several thousand staff records at The National Archives.

Chigwell Lane, as an example of a small (and quiet) station, had a station master, a lad clerk (described by his police sergeant father as a booking clerk), and two signalmen and two porters. The station master Thomas Frederick Kimm (a booking clerk at Liverpool Street until the end of 1907) lived in the station house, and his son had recently started as a lad clerk on trial at Loughton Station. The signalmen (both married) occupied two of the company's cottages built in 1896 near the bridge over the road, paying 2s 6d weekly rent out of their 19s wages; one of them had a porter as a boarder. The other two cottages were occupied by married platelayers, one with another porter as lodger. Station staff tended to move around in pursuit of promotion in their early years, sometimes boarding or lodging with other railway employees.

Loughton Station had more staff, and was also a base for 14 guards and a porter guard. At this time there was still a significant seasonal traffic of children for the Shaftesbury Retreat which needed certain skills from the station master. William Murfitt had retired at the end of January 1911, after 26 years in the post, due to continued ill-health; his successor, Harry Ernest Smith, had been station master at Ongar for about four and a half years but was due to move to Liverpool Street as chief parcels clerk. The planned date for this in the staff records was 26 March but there was obviously some delay as he was clearly occupying the station house on 2 April, while his replacement, Llewellyn Staples, was still at White Hart Lane. The company magazine commented that 'his experience at White Hart Lane with the crowds of followers of the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, will stand him in good stead at Loughton with the summer excursionists'. A goods clerk (Walter Jackson, a coal merchant's son and lad clerk at Ongar) was due to start on 2 April; this was apparently a new position here, which suggests the clerical work for the goods traffic was done by the station master.

A familiar sight to regular travellers would have been the two ticket takers, who were almost the same age (60) in 1911, and by then near neighbours in High Beech Road. John Pitcher, although born in Norfolk, spent his whole railway career at Loughton, starting as a porter in July 1877 and becoming a ticket taker in September 1879. John Payne, born in Dorset, had started as a probationary ticket collector at Manningtree in June 1882, then tried his hand as probationary signalman at two different boxes, but came to Loughton as ticket taker in January 1883. 'Career development' (to use a more recent term) seems to have been by station masters or other supervisors looking for potential aptitude in their staff; sometimes this paid off for the employees concerned with promotion to higher grades in quite a short time, others might stay within their general grade but move to a higher rated station (Liverpool Street being the ultimate in the London area).

Another familiar sight in those days were porters: Loughton had 11, including two foremen, one parcels and goods, and one supernumerary. Two of the porters lived outside the parish: one with his parents in Leytonstone; the other (married) in Buckhurst Hill (Lower Queens Road) who had misbehaved as goods foreman at Buntingford in 1907. The Company's general policy seems to have been to give such employees a chance to redeem themselves at another station; if the offence was deemed more serious they would be allowed to resign, but for cases such as theft dismissal was usually immediate. One of the foremen porters, John Snazell, owned his house in High Beech Road; his son was one of the two booking clerks,

having started at Loughton as a probationary clerk in December 1902, gaining promotion to booking clerk at Theydon Bois in 1905 and after 10 months at Leyton returning to Loughton in September 1910. The other booking clerk, Joseph Addison (son of the coachman at Loughton Hall) had started at Chigwell Lane in August 1896, served as booking or goods clerk at four other stations, and took up his post at Loughton in September 1902. He married shortly afterwards and, living in Clifton Road, had two children. Clerks usually started at age 14 on leaving school (often 'recommended' by their schoolmaster), but porters were more likely to be 16 or over and to have had previous employment elsewhere; at Loughton in 1911 their ages ranged from 23 to 31.

Loughton Station had its own parcels delivery van, a light two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle, with a parcels carman (married, living in Forest Road) and van lad (who lived with his uncle in Epping) to look after the traffic. It was photographed at least twice in different (but not precisely known) years.

There were two signal boxes, which needed four signalmen; they had all been working boxes in the local area for over 10 years and were destined to remain at Loughton for the next 10 at least. All were or had been married, although none was born anywhere near here.

Of the 14 guards based at Loughton, 11 lived here: in Forest and Meadow Roads, Smarts Lane, Lower Park, The Drive and York Hill; the other three lived in Buckhurst Hill (Lower Queens Road, Alfred Road and Palace Gardens). All except one was married, including Jonathan Whybrow Ambrose who will be known to readers of his son Percy's *Reminiscences of a Loughton Life*. The only one born in Loughton was Atherton Edward Blissett in The Drive, whose deceased father lived in Smarts Lane and had been a signalman for over 20 years. The porter guard was George Galley, a single man aged 27 boarding with a widow in Smarts Lane; the grading indicated someone who had been a porter and trained as a guard, but was waiting for a vacancy as a full guard – which in his case came three years later at Ilford (A E Blissett above only had to wait about two years in all).

A fair number of carriages were, when not in traffic, held in Loughton sidings where they were cleaned and their gas (lighting) tanks replenished. In 1911 the carriage maintenance staff were in the locomotive department (run from Stratford) but 10 cleaners and a gasman lived in Loughton, most of them in Forest Road and Smarts Lane; another two were cleaners in 1901 but described themselves as railway servants in 1911. Their ages ranged from 27 to 46; all were or had been married, but some may have worked at Stratford. James Ellis in Forest Road was a carriage examiner, having first appeared in the census returns in 1881. Loughton only supplied coal and water to locomotives, but there was a small depot at Epping which functioned as an outpost of Stratford for light maintenance; one of the platelayers in the Chigwell Lane cottages had two sons who were engine cleaner and stoker, and may have worked at Epping.

Stratford was also the company's main works which built or repaired most of the equipment needed to operate a railway; there were three men in Loughton whose occupations indicated they worked in the carriage department, one who stated he was a 'worker, Stratford railway works', and a foreman and carpenter who didn't state their place of work.

A large business such as the GER needed a lot of clerks to deal with the paperwork at head office (Liverpool Street), the large goods depot at nearby Bishopsgate, and elsewhere. Some of these were in the Superintendent's department and I am grateful for the assistance of another Great Eastern Railway Society member who has taken on the task of indexing these staff records. Thus of 10 'railway clerks' in the census whose records are available, five were employed at Bishopsgate, another was at Stratford Market, and two in the Goods Manager's Office. The other two were actually lad clerks at Snaresbrook and Brimsdown. Two booking clerks worked at other stations (Buckhurst Hill and Stratford), while a 'canvasser' was attached to the Goods Manager's Office (to go round to existing or prospective customers and try to get more business). Two other employees were a guard who worked at a goods yard near Canning Town and a parcels van lad at Liverpool Street whose life came to a tragic end in September (he was found dead on the line at Loughton). There were another six 'railway clerks' and some other employees whose staff records have probably not survived, although the company magazine suggests that Harry Bearman in Englands Lane was a clerk in the Temple Mills wagon shops. Alfred H Fruin in The Drive can be definitely identified as the chief cashier at the Great Eastern Hotel, and William H Haslam in Algers Road as chief clerk in the Secretary's department Transfer Office dealing with the paperwork for holders of stocks and shares (his own description: Registrar, Great Eastern Railway). The only female worker found residing in Loughton at this time was Victoria Gabbitas in Forest Road, whose deceased father had been a guard; she gave her occupation as 'B. Tea Attendant (Railway Company)' but probably didn't work at the station. However, there was a female waiting room attendant who was taken on when her husband, a ticket taker at Bishopsgate Street, died in 1900 (long before coin-operated locks were introduced on ladies' lavatories); she apparently lived in a Company house until late March 1911 but her usual place of residence is unknown.

Of those who were 'railway' but certainly not GER employees, Robin C Verrall in Meadow Road was a Railway Clearing House clerk – this was an organisation which ensured that each company was paid its proper share of revenue for traffic that was carried on more than one company's lines. There was also a Canadian National Railway employee visiting Loughton.

The above were all as they described themselves on census day, 2 April 1911; another 30 can be identified in the company's records as future employees over the ensuing nine years. Inevitably the Great War would take its toll: of the 91 names on the Loughton War Memorial at its unveiling on 24 June 1920, six can be

definitely identified as GER employees with a seventh possibly so. The company erected their own memorial at Liverpool Street Station, where you will find T E Kimm, the Chigwell Lane station master's son (who enlisted while at Brimsdown, where his father was moved to in 1912).

Some general Census statistics

Loughton's total population in 1911 was officially 5,433, of which 1,629 were males aged between 15 and 74. The official analysis grouped males aged 10 and over by occupation, and from 1,580 so counted as occupied 109 were engaged in railways as a means of transport; by coincidence this was the same number as those engaged as 'merchants, agents, accountants' or in 'banking etc.' and 'insurance' (a fair number of whom probably travelled on the railway). These two groups each account for about 1 in 15 (6.9%) of the 1,580 above. To put this into further perspective, the highest number of occupied males were in 'food, tobacco, drink, and lodging' (185) followed closely by 'building, and works of construction' (171). Agriculture accounted for 144, road transport 124, and domestic outdoor service 117. Given Loughton's 'class' reputation, a figure of 96 in 'professional occupations and their subordinate services' is no surprise, nor 68 in 'general or local government'. There were 45 'general labourers; factory labourers (undefined)' and 54 'all other occupations', but none of the other 23 categories (covering the remaining 358 males) had over 31 males. The actual number in the schedules identified as having an occupation connected with a railway company comes out at about 120; the difference may be accounted for by not all being deemed to be directly involved in the transport aspect ('conveyance' in official terminology).

You can draw any number of conclusions from all of this, but I think it can be said that the railway contributed to and benefited from Loughton's prosperity at this time in more than a minor way.

Sarah Catherine Martin (1768-1826)

TERRY CARTER

Some L & DHS members, like myself, may not be aware that there is a Loughton connection with Sarah Catherine Martin, who wrote *Old Mother Hubbard.*

Some of the origins of the rhyme are slightly unclear, and the 'deeper' interpretations (mentioned below) ascribed to it, seem extremely tenuous.

What is certain is that Sarah popularised the now famous adventures of Old Mother Hubbard. The origins of the verse are the subject of varying theories, but it is likely that she took a traditional story, adapted it to verse, added illustrations, and thus immortalised it. *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog* was published in 1805 by John Harris, and became an immediate best seller. A print-run of 10,000 copies sold out quickly and new editions followed, as did a variety of editions from other publishers.

The first two verses are shown below - the dog isn't really 'dead' though, and the rhyme goes on for another seventeen verses before he finally breathes his last. The first verse is of six lines, the rest of four.

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard,
To give the poor dog a bone:
When she came there,
The cupboard was bare,
And so the poor dog had none.

She went to the baker's
To buy him some bread;
When she came back
The dog was dead!

What do we know about Sarah?

Sarah Catherine Martin was the sister of Judith Anne Martin. Their father, Sir Henry Martin MP (1733-1794), 1st Bart, was the eldest son of Samuel Martin, by his second wife, Sarah, daughter of Edward Wyke, lieutenant-governor of Montserrat. Sir Henry married Eliza Anne, daughter of Haring Parker of Hillbrook, Co Cork, the widow of Hayward Gillman, on 26 November 1761. Sir Henry's eight children included Eliza Anne Martin, Henry William Martin, Josiah Martin, Judith Anne Martin, Lydia Martin, Samuel Martin, Sarah Catherine Martin and (Admiral Sir)

Thomas Byam Martin (1773–1854),), who, in 1815, was made Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath.

Sarah, born in 1768, is sometimes described as the housekeeper of the Kitley estate, the Devonshire residence of Sir Henry Bastard, but whether she was the real housekeeper seems a little uncertain.

She was, after all, the daughter of the MP for Southampton; perhaps she required work following his death in 1794, although the association with the Bastard household appears to date back even further, at least to around 1785. Following her suggested retirement as housekeeper, Sarah, it is said, moved into a thatched cottage nearby and 'continued to live out her retirement in Mother Hubbard's cottage'.

There seem to have been some romantic episodes concerning Sarah. Sir Henry Bastard was the Resident Commissioner of the Navy in Portsmouth. He counted amongst his friends, Prince William Henry, later to become King William IV. Prince William was struck by the 17-year-old Sarah Catherine Martin and the Prince is known to have visited the estate and many legends abound in the area about Sarah and the Prince. One is that the Prince proposed marriage, but the marriage was not allowed because of Sarah's lowly background.

Sarah Catherine Martin (1768–1826)

Understandably, the idea of such a marriage horrified both William's royal parents and Sarah's humbler ones and Sarah was quickly removed from his orbit. As her father, Sir Henry Martin, was Comptroller of His Majesty's Navy, and an MP, it can hardly be described as a lowly background. Apparently 'She and her parents handled the affair very discreetly'.

It is this episode that concludes with, as mentioned above, Sarah's retiring to Old Mother Hubbard's cottage, where she writes the famous rhyme to express the frustration at never being able to marry the man she loved.

The Loughton connection?

Sarah Catherine Martin remained unmarried and died in 1826. She was buried beside her parents in the churchyard of St Nicholas, the parish church in Loughton. The Martin family had connections with Loughton through their relatives, the Powells,* who lived there. At least this is the information that can be gleaned from 'Loughton: Worthies and Social Life', pp. 117–118 of *A History of the County of Essex*, Vol. 4 (1956).

In her simple will, written on two slips of paper, she leaves everything to her unmarried sister, Lydia Maria, and her niece, Catherine Elizabeth, daughter of her brother, Henry William. It was one of Catherine's descendants, Mary Emily May, who would lend the manuscript of *Old Mother Hubbard* to the Bodleian Library for an exhibit in the 1930s. It was later sold to a collector in the United States.

Various sources mention uncertainties about some aspects of Sarah's life. For example, was she ever a housekeeper? Only some points of her life are undeniable: her birth in 1768; a proposal of marriage by Prince William when she was 17; whatever the original source, she wrote and illustrated *Old Mother Hubbard* in 1805; her death in 1826, aged 59, and her burial in Loughton.

Back to the rhyme

Many nursery rhymes have their origins in British history. Some were written to celebrate a particular local event, some to conceal real meanings, such as when someone wanted to express displeasure toward the government or the sovereign without being persecuted, or worse.

The *Old Mother Hubbard* rhyme allegedly refers to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and his unsuccessful attempt to get an annulment for King Henry VIII. Old Mother Hubbard is Cardinal Wolsey. The cupboard is the Catholic Church. The dog is Henry VIII. The bone is the annulment Henry wanted in order to end his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

I feel this seems very unlikely, and much prefer what is suggested earlier in this piece. It has also been suggested that the character of Mother Hubbard may have its origins in St Hubertus, because of his apparent care for dogs. I think she chose *Hubbard* because it rhymes with *cupboard*.

Note

*Refer to the L & DHS website for *The Powells in Essex and Their London Ancestors* by Richard Morris, (2003).

Mr Gandhi at Buckhurst Hill

Submitted by LYNN HASELDINE-JONES

This is the newspaper report of the visit of Gandhi to Buckhurst Hill in 1931. It was a 'private' visit and journalists were not invited. His hostess was Elizabeth Fox Howard, the daughter of Eliot Howard (who had died in 1927). She was a pacifist and was active in Quaker affairs. The family lived at Ardmore House, in what is now Ardmore Lane. The house was demolished in 1994.

VISIT TO ARDMORE

Mr Gandhi, the Indian Congress leader, paid a private visit to Buckhurst Hill last Sunday, when he was the guest of Miss Howard at Ardmore. The visit was arranged in order to give him a quiet day away from public affairs.

He arrived in the morning, accompanied by several of his retinue, including Miss Slade (Mirabai), his English disciple, who looks after his comforts.

It was a beautiful day, and the party took a walk through the forest over the top of Warren Hill, and for some distance along Fairmead Bottom.

Mr Gandhi, who despite his years is very active, walked at such a pace that the others found it difficult to keep up with him, although he had already walked several miles in Bow earlier that morning. He wore sandals and his loincloth, and was bareheaded. He was much interested in the historical associations of the forest, and in the animals found there, while he remarked on the increased number of men who walked bareheaded compared with the time when he was previously in England.

He was asked why so many of his Indian followers wore what is known as the 'Gandhi hat' (like a little white cap), and his reply was that it was so much more convenient and comfortable than the turban, which takes about eight yards of material.

During the walk an old man spoke to him by name, and offered him some blackberries, which he smilingly and pleasantly accepted.

Ardmore House - photograph kindly lent by Margaret Sinfield

They returned to Ardmore and Mr Gandhi had his meal of goat's milk and fruit, prepared by Miss Slade, sitting on the floor in the corner of the room by himself, and it was of great interest to him to find that he was eating in a room built by Dr Barnardo, for whom he has a great respect.

He has a great friendship and an intense admiration for Lord Irwin, the ex-Viceroy of India, and Miss Slade told how, while it took time for each to understand the other, when they eventually arrived at that understanding each had to hold his more impulsive followers back, and thus they were able to reach the Irwin-Gandhi Agreement.

In the afternoon a small group of Christian Pacifist leaders of the Society of Friends and other denominations, some of whom came from as far afield as Birmingham, visited the house and had a conference with Mr Gandhi, and for some time they freely discussed philosophical and religious questions.

They had a period of worship together, and those who were with him found him a man of great sincerity, simplicity and deep religious feeling, and although the eyes of the whole world are centred on him, yet he appeared to be thoroughly unselfconscious. He has a very deep sense of his responsibility to his poorer and more unfortunate countrymen, whom he is anxious to uplift. It is to show his oneness with the poorest of them that he keeps so rigidly to his simple life.

Miss Howard told our representative that in his cell at the Kingsley Hall he sleeps on a mattress on the floor. The room itself is very small, and possesses no other furniture. He rises at four o'clock every morning for prayer, and goes for a long walk afterwards.

While talking to people – he sits while talking – he wears a long white robe which reaches from the shoulders to the feet. Also while talking he gesticulates freely with fine, nervous hands, he has a pleasant smile which frequently flashes out, and he speaks excellent English with but the faintest trace of an accent. He has a soft and rather monotonous voice, but his transparent sincerity and earnestness lend conviction to anything he says.

On the same night that he arrived in England he was due to broadcast a talk to America, and beforehand several press representatives asked to see his notes. But he does not speak from notes. He spoke extemporaneously through the microphone in well-chosen terms and without the slightest hesitation.

He left Buckhurst Hill to return to Bow about 4.30pm and those who had been present were unanimous in their impressions that they had been in the presence of one who is one of the leaders of men.

Woodford Times, Friday, 25 September 1931 (Loughton Library)

Happy campers!

This photo came from Pauline Martin's (Ted's wife) family collection showing a group of Girl Guides at camp at Debden Green, probably about 1937. The interest in the picture is the Gould's milk horse and cart. The girl on the driver's seat nearest to us is Pauline's sister, then Vera King, sadly no longer with us.

Harlow and its Railway – Part 1

RICHARD BRADLEY

[This article is reproduced from The Great Eastern Journal, *April 2011, published by the Great Eastern Railway Society, with the kind permission of the author and the editors of that* Journal. *Some minor amendments have been made to help those not familiar with railway terminology and some of the more detailed changes to track layouts have been omitted. All changes have been reviewed by and approved by the author – Ed.]*

The town of Harlow lies in west Essex on the border with Hertfordshire about 24 miles from London. Today it has two stations on the Liverpool Street–Cambridge Main Line. Harlow Town is a large modern station which serves the town as a whole while Harlow Mill is a basic station which provides a service for the north-east part of town. Sixty years ago the situation was quite different. The site of Harlow Town was then occupied by Burnt Mill, a small wayside station in the middle of the countryside, while Harlow Mill was then plain Harlow, a modest station serving the old town of Harlow.

From its opening to just after the Second World War Harlow was a typical country station serving the needs of a small town and its locality. The railway and town were in a symbiotic relationship and the development of the station mirrored the leisurely pace with which Harlow moved from the Victorian era to the post-War period. All this was to change in 1947 with the designation of Harlow and the rural parishes to its west of Latton, Netteswell, Little Parndon and Great Parndon as the site of a New Town to take London overspill mainly from the north-eastern boroughs of Edmonton, Tottenham and Walthamstow. At once Harlow station became subject to the urgent pressures arising from the growing New Town and this, coupled with railway modernisation, changed its character and that of the local railway forever.

Harlow in history

The town of Harlow was founded in Saxon times. For hundreds of years it was a small market town which acted as a focal point for the surrounding countryside. The town began to change in the middle of the 18th century when improvements to the London to Cambridge and Newmarket road carried out by the Essex and Hertfordshire Turnpike Trust (the Hockerill Trust) brought increased trade from coaching traffic. Then in 1769 the Stort Navigation was opened providing an efficient means of sending malt and grain to London and bringing back coal, so encouraging the growth of the malting industry in Harlow and other towns in the Stort Valley.

On the eve of the railway's arrival in Harlow in 1841 the town was described by Pigot's *Directory* as a 'respectable and neat little town'. It had a population of 2,315 of which 125 were navvies employed building the railway. The town was growing steadily, stimulated by the flourishing coaching trade. Its main business was malting but its craftsmen and other traders served the farms, large houses and villages of the surrounding area.

The Northern and Eastern Railway

The Northern and Eastern Railway (N&ER) was originally conceived as a route linking London with York via Cambridge but by the time its Act was passed in 1836 the promoters were authorised to construct the line only as far as Cambridge. Difficulties over the siting of the railway's London terminus and the raising of capital then prevented a start being made on construction until 1838. To cut costs the N&ER had reached agreement with the Eastern Counties Railway (ECR) to use the latter's Shoreditch terminus so the line was built to the ECR's gauge of 5 feet. It opened in stages reaching Harlow on 9 August 1841.

After a pause at Spelbrook the line reached Bishop's Stortford on 16 May 1842 where it remained until 1843 when work began on an extension to Newport. In the meantime the N&ER was leased by the ECR and in June 1844 powers were granted for the extension of the line to Peterborough via Ely and March, and from Ely to Brandon where it was to meet up with the Norfolk Railway. At the same time the decision was made to convert the ECR and N&ER lines to standard gauge (4 feet 8½ inches), the work on the N&ER being carried out in September and October 1844. The construction of the newly authorised routes proceeded rapidly and the line between Bishop's Stortford and Norwich was opened in July 1845 providing the first railway link between London and Norwich.

The railway at Harlow

The N&ER followed the valleys of the rivers Lea and Stort on its course northwards. It reached the boundary of the present day Harlow about a mile east of Roydon and then passed swiftly through the northern fringes of Great and Little Parndon before arriving in Netteswell. Here, at Burnt Mill, a small station originally called 'Burnt Mill and Netteswell' was built to serve the local villages and hamlets. The line then continued through Latton to Harlow where a station was constructed about half a mile north of the town at the point where the line met the London to Cambridge and Newmarket turnpike road later to become the A11 trunk road.

The line hugged the south bank of the river all the way from Roydon to Harlow, undulating at first then rising gently from Burnt Mill to Harlow. In some places it cut through spurs of high ground running down to the river but, for the most part, it ran on a low embankment through water meadows and other grazing land crossed by streams and drainage ditches. At Harlow overline bridges (bridges over the line) were built for the turnpike road and the old main road which had been superseded by the turnpike 10 years earlier. At Burnt Mill, the road from Harlow to the Hertfordshire villages of Eastwick and Gilston crossed the line by level crossing but a bridge on the London side of the station carried the road from Little Parndon. The roads leading to the water mills at Little Parndon and Latton also bridged the line. A large number of underline bridges (bridges under the line) and surface occupation (private) crossings were constructed to allow farmers to move their stock to and from the fields between the railway and the river.

The station at Harlow was situated on the London side of the turnpike overbridge and consisted of little more than the station building and a pair of short sidings. The station building was a substantial structure of rendered brick with mock Jacobean features. It had a short platform for up (i.e., to London) trains but the plan of the station in Robert

Stephenson's 1843 drawings of the N&ER shows none for the down (to Cambridge) line, only a line in the six foot way which may indicate the edge of a hard standing for passengers using down trains. The down side siding was directly opposite the station building while the up siding terminated in a loading bay by the London end of the building. The main lines were connected by a trailing crossover under the road bridge. The only feature on the country side of the bridge was a short trailing siding leading from the down line into a ballast pit carved out of the north face of the cutting.

Harlow station building and up platform. This postcard of Harlow Station is possibly the earliest surviving view of the station building. The view dates from the late 1890s or early 1900s after extensions had been built at each end but the original central portion is largely unchanged.

The early effects of the railway on Harlow

In early 1842 when the line was open only as far as Spelbrook the train service at Harlow consisted of five up and six down trains on weekdays between the hours of 8am and 8pm, and three each way on Sundays. The fares to London were expensive ranging from 2s 6d for third class to 5s 6d for first class but people were now able to get to the capital in an hour and five minutes whereas the fastest coach took four hours. The coaching trade could not stand the competition and collapsed soon after the line reached Bishop's Stortford. Within five months the mails had also been transferred from coach to the railway. Over the next few years the Stort Navigation lost a large part of its traffic to the railway suffering a 50% cut in its revenues before they levelled out in 1848.

The inns in Harlow were badly affected by the disappearance of the coaching trade but the railway proved to be beneficial to the town in the long run. Although Harlow was not ripe for expansion, the improved communications provided by the railway contributed to the town's development and prosperity. Its population gradually rose over the remainder of the century despite the decline of agriculture which led to stagnation in many of the surrounding rural settlements.

Station improvements

When it was opened Harlow station had no goods facilities but it was not long before a goods yard was constructed on the up side of the line on the London side of the station. The yard was served by a single siding running from a trailing connection on the up main line which led to two wagon turntables. From the first turntable a siding ran at an oblique angle to serve the coal yard (the odd angle was needed to keep the siding within railway land) while from the second a siding ran at 90 degrees to the main line to serve the cattle pens and a large brick-built goods shed.

The date of the yard's construction does not seem to be known but as it is not shown on the 1843 plan of the station it is likely that it was built by the ECR soon after it took control of the N&ER. A clue is that the coal yard was equipped with coal drops. Harlow is thought to be one of a number of ECR stations which were provided with coal drops to suit the hopper wagons which were used from 1846 to carry coal shipped from the North East and unloaded at Thames Wharf. There is no certainty that the yard was opened when this traffic began but it seems likely that it was constructed in the late 1840s and that the coal drops were there from the start.

At about the same time as the goods yard was created a down platform with a timber waiting room was constructed on the country side of the road bridge creating a staggered platform arrangement. A flight of steps from the bridge provided access to the platform for passengers but there was probably a boarded crossing under the road bridge for staff use. The exact date of the platform's construction is not known but it was certainly in existence by September 1857 as it was then agreed that the waiting room should be oak-papered and varnished, and that six chairs and a small table should be provided.

Passenger travel

The passenger timetable changed very little in the 20 years following the opening of the railway apart from the introduction of an early morning up mail train. The service may appear sparse by modern standards but it was probably adequate for the time. Most people in the Harlow area would have worked near their homes so train journeys (for those who could afford to travel) would generally have been confined to trips to London or neighbouring towns for business or to visit relatives and friends. Excursions to special events were popular and Burnt Mill station was opened on 9 and 10 September 1841, two months before its official opening, for visitors to the Harlow Bush Fair, an annual horse and cattle fair which drew people from a wide area. Ten years later excursions were run from Harlow to the Great Exhibition of 1851 held in Hyde Park.

With the formation of the Great Eastern Railway (GER) in 1862 services at Harlow gradually improved until by the late 1880s the station was being served by 10 up trains and 11 down each weekday (but still only three trains each way on Sundays). These offered a service, mail train excluded, between the hours of about 7am and 10pm. Fares in 1862 had hardly changed from 1841 although there was now a Parliamentary Fare to London of 2s 2d. People's real income was beginning to rise and this led to increased mobility for all classes of society shown by an increase in people moving to or marrying people from other towns and villages on or nearby the line.

London was a magnet for those wanting to go where work was more plentiful and better paid and the railway made it readily accessible. The censuses show increasing migration from the Harlow area to London and its environs from the 1850s onwards beginning with young women seeking jobs in service and progressing to agricultural workers escaping the agricultural depression of the last quarter of the century. As the century progressed, many people settled at places in the Lea Valley within easy reach of the railway, Edmonton and Tottenham being especially popular. *(To be continued.)*

'Babes in the Wood' murders

The Babes in the Wood murders is a name which has been used in the media to refer to a child murder case in which the bodies of multiple victims were found concealed in woodland. There are many instances in other English speaking countries of child murders that were so called. Sadly, the following events occurred in our district. The following chronology of events is taken from www.murderuk.com – Ed

31 March 1970, Susan Blatchford aged 11, and her 12-year-old friend Gary Hanlon vanished from their homes in North London after going out to play. They were last seen about 4:30pm. When they didn't return home anxious parents called the police.

At least 600 police officers interviewed more than 15,000 people, and searched nearly 4,500 homes. One of the local residents interviewed was a convicted paedophile, Ronald Jebson.* He spoke to police on two occasions but he had an alibi for the evening, and the police never followed it up.

April 1970, Jebson entices an 11-year-old boy into his car, he takes him to a secluded area and assaults him. He was caught and sentenced to five years, being eventually released in 1973.

17 June 1970, The bodies of the two missing children were found by a dog walker in a copse in Lippitts Hill, close to Epping Forest, and six miles from their homes. The newspapers at the time nicknamed the case 'Babes in the wood'.

Post-mortem examinations were inconclusive, the bodies being so badly decomposed. The coroner was unable to ascertain a cause of death.

At the inquest an open verdict was recorded, no suspect was identified despite the high profile of the case. Police and the families still maintained that the children were murdered.

1974. Jebson, with 11 previous convictions, including three for sexual offences against children, had been staying with Rosemary' Papper's parents but when they told him he was no longer welcome, he swore revenge. Neighbours recall the phrase: 'I will do something you will regret.'

9 June 1974 he strangled Rosemary.

1974. At St Albans Crown Court Mr Justice Kenneth Jones recommended he serve at least 20 years for the murder of Rosemary Papper.

1996. The 'Babes in the wood' case was reopened, attention focused on Jebson, after he gave police a list of suspects for the murders.

1998. Jebson confessed to the murders.

1999. The body of Susan Blatchford was exhumed, although forensic tests could not take place, police were interested in other tests.

Tuesday, 8 May 2000 Jebson was given two further life sentences at the Old Bailey, after pleading guilty to the murders of Susan and Gary 30 years previously.

Note

*Born in 1939, Ronald Jebson, aka Ronald Harper, was discharged from the army in 1958 on medical grounds, he was separated from his wife and had a daughter. He was an illegitimate child who had been brought up by foster parents.

From tithe barn to tea house

JUDY ADAMS

The newly refurbished Butler's Retreat is now open, serving delicious food from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday.

Butler's Retreat at Chingford began its life as a tithe barn, owned by the Lord of the Manor, latterly the Rev Robert Boothby Heathcote. The Corporation of London purchased the old enclosures around the adjoining Hunting Lodge and the Hunting Lodge itself with the passing of the Epping Forest Act 1878. Teas were served at the Hunting Lodge. By 1888, so many visitors were coming to the Lodge that the provision of teas there by Mrs Watkins was transferred to the nearby tithe barn.

In 1891, John Butler (who had been serving teas near the then newly created Connaught Water) took over the Barn and the name dates from that time. It is one of the last remaining Victorian Retreats within Epping Forest. The Retreats originally served refreshments and were associated with the Temperance movement. They were extremely popular with the many thousands of visitors from the East End of London, who would take day trips out to Epping Forest at the weekend and on Bank Holidays.

Butler's Retreat

In 2010, the restoration of Butler's Retreat began again, thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

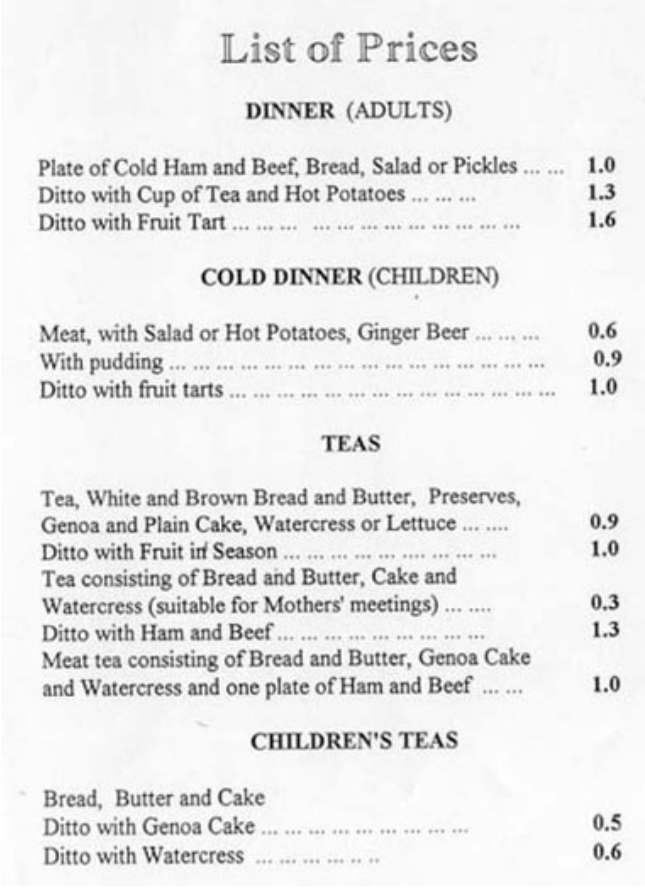
Butler's Retreat will form part of the developing 'Epping Forest visitor hub' at Chingford, with Queen

Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge and a new Epping Forest Visitor Centre being developed in the Coach House buildings adjacent to the Hunting Lodge.

The ethos of the new Butler's Retreat is to provide real food – local, artisan and organic where possible and to cater for vegetarians or those with dietary requirements. Breakfast will include the 'Forest Fry' (full English breakfast), or blueberry pancakes with yogurt and maple syrup. Lunch will include various sandwich combinations, cooked food including homemade pies or handmade lamb burgers. Sharing platters will also be on offer including 'The Forester'. A great children's menu is also available.

Later in the year *[see below – Ed]* Butler's Retreat plan to offer a restaurant in the upstairs of the building in the evenings, whilst keeping the downstairs area open as a bar serving a mezze and tapa type menu. Look out for special events in the summer including hog/lamb roasts. The much-loved serving hatch will still be in operation for those wishing to stop for a quick tea or coffee, or some homemade ice-cream.

Superintendent of Epping Forest, Paul Thomson, said: 'We are delighted that we can now welcome Epping Forest visitors to the beautifully restored Butler's Retreat to enjoy a diverse and tempting menu.'



List of Prices

DINNER (ADULTS)

Plate of Cold Ham and Beef, Bread, Salad or Pickles	1.0
Ditto with Cup of Tea and Hot Potatoes	1.3
Ditto with Fruit Tart	1.6

COLD DINNER (CHILDREN)

Meat, with Salad or Hot Potatoes, Ginger Beer	0.6
With pudding	0.9
Ditto with fruit tarts	1.0

TEAS

Tea, White and Brown Bread and Butter, Preserves, Genoa and Plain Cake, Watercress or Lettuce	0.9
Ditto with Fruit in Season	1.0
Tea consisting of Bread and Butter, Cake and Watercress (suitable for Mothers' meetings)	0.3
Ditto with Ham and Beef	1.3
Meat tea consisting of Bread and Butter, Genoa Cake and Watercress and one plate of Ham and Beef	1.0

CHILDREN'S TEAS

Bread, Butter and Cake	
Ditto with Genoa Cake	0.5
Ditto with Watercress	0.6

Victorian Menu from Butler's Retreat

The new proprietor of Butler's Retreat, James Ward, said: 'Like most other local people we have always had a soft spot for Butler's Retreat. It's really exciting that we are in a position to develop the next chapter in the story of this landmark site.'

For further information on Butler's Retreat, visit www.worldslarder.co.uk.

With thanks for assistance with this article from the Corporation of London.

Reprinted, with their kind permission, from *Friends of Epping Forest*, Spring Edition 2012.

[PS –Judging by the numbers there when I drive down Rangers Road, the revival seems to be going well – Ed]

The Lisbon Steam Tramways Company

TERRY CARTER

In this year's January/March *Newsletter 192*, we printed an article, 'Test Tracks through the woods, 1873 style'. This concerned the laying of a track through Knighton Woods, on which a steam tram/train was tested. As the piece provided only basic details of the event, we asked if any member(s) 'may be able to flesh it out more'.

Lynn Haseldine-Jones duly produced some very revealing press cuttings, and Ian Strugnell some excellent references to the event. It appears that this was not the first time our society was asked to help solve this 'mystery.

It's a small world

In the *West Essex Gazette* of 5 June, 1964, a piece 'The mystery trams of Buckhurst Hill', found by Lynn, concluded with 'Chigwell Local History Society . . . was asked by the Industrial Locomotive Society to solve the mystery of the trams'.

The *West Essex Gazette*'s follow-up came on 12th June:

THE TRAM MYSTERY IS SOLVED

Chigwell Local History Society has come to the end of the line in its quest for information about the testing of steam trains in Buckhurst Hill 92 years ago. For two months the Society has been trying to find out exactly where and how the trams were tested.

This week *Gazette* reader Mrs Mary Bird, of 78a Albert Road, Buckhurst Hill, solved the mystery.

Her late father travelled on a trial run of the train in Lord's Bushes, Buckhurst Hill, and she has given the Society a copy of *The Graphic* containing a picture and story of the test.

The steam trains were built for the Lisbon Steam Railways Company to run on two routes in Portugal – Lisbon to Cintra,17 miles, and Lisbon to Torres, about 60 miles:

> 'In order to test the system a strip of land has been obtained in Epping Forest, at Buckhurst Hill, where a piece of tramway road, 1710 feet long, has been laid'. This is now known to be at Lord's Bushes . . . The power of each of the engines already made has been tested up to 300 tons, which has been drawn by them on the level . . . The carriages are of three classes; the passengers enter from the sides, and are seated back to back.'

Then, on 10 July, 1964, this article, also found by Lynn, appeared in the *Chigwell Times:*

OLD NEWSPAPER SETTLES THE TRAM MYSTERY

Chigwell Local History Society have been presented with a newspaper cutting, dated January 1873, which clears up the mystery of the Buckhurst Hill Steam Trains.

The article *[partly reproduced below – Ed*] gives a complete account of the tram's first appearance, together with an excellent engraving of the vehicle. The late Mr George Bird, father of the lady who has given the information to the society, was one of the passengers on this local occasion.

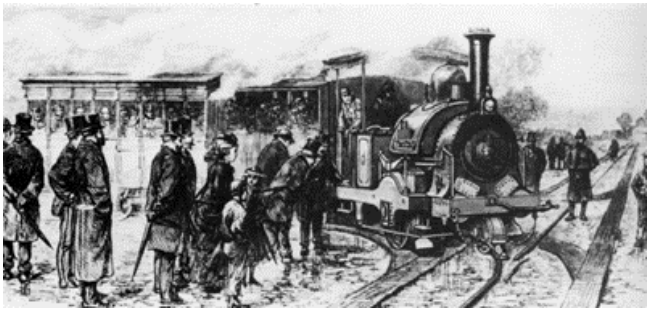
The 'tramway' appears to be more like a train, with two carriages and a goods wagon, pulled by an engine, and it all ran on longitudinal wooden sleepers with a central metal rail as its directional aid.

Passengers entered from the side and sat back to back.

The tramway was constructed for the Lisbon Steam Tramways and was destined to run over many curves and gradients, so that a suitable site had to be found for preliminary testing.

Eventually a track was laid in Lord's Bushes, probably on what is now the Central path. This had a variable mile-long run, which was made at a speed of 20 m.p.h., including a number of stops.

This print was enhanced from *Graphic* piece below, and we also print part of the article:



THE GRAPHIC, 18 JANUARY 1873

A visitor to Buckhurst Hill in the winter of 1872/73 might have been just lucky enough to witness one of the most bizarre events ever to take place in the town — the trial run of a steam tram through a sylvan glade in Lord's Bushes. An experimental line some 600 yards long was laid down in December of '72 by the newly-formed Lisbon Steam Tramways Company on a roughly NW to SE alignment from a point near the keeper's lodge on Knighton Lane down to the entrance of the old Monkhams Farm. The Company considered that this area of Epping Forest came nearest to simulating conditions in Portugal where they hoped to open the tramway. The track consisted of a single rail, flanked on either side at a distance of 20 inches with longitudinal timber sleepers. Only the bogie wheels of the locomotive ran on the centre rail - the flangeless driving wheels, which had a tread of 1ft 2ins, ran on the timber baulks which were 9 ins wide.

These articles make no mention of the suggestion, in *Newletter 192*, that the engine used in that test was being transported to Portugal on a steamship that sank in the Thames, thus delaying its emigration. Chris Johnson surmised that this was something of a myth.*

There are also differences in these accounts as regards the length of the track. We, as in *The Graphic*, originally reported 600 yards – above it is given as 1710 feet (570 yards, nearly the same). I have also seen 700 yards but, the *Chigwell Times* report gives a 'variable' mile-long run.

Having walked the route with my wife, I plump for the 600 yards!

After the above was written, Ian Strugnell discovered an article in issue No 8 of the then Chigwell Local History Society News Letter. This confirms the press articles, and also goes into much technical and financial detail which we can send by e-mail to readers who might be further interested.

The Lisbon Steam Tramways Company was not a success and appears to have closed on 8 April 1875.

Note

*See also *Victorian Buckhurst Hill – A Miscellany* by C. Johnson (Epping Forest District Council Museum Service, Monograph No 3, revised edition 1980, ISBN 0–903930–07–2), pp. 8 and 9

Elliott Seabrooke – artist of Buckhurst Hill

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

Many people have heard of the famous painter of Buckhurst Hill, Walter Spradbery, but there was another artist of international note who spent much of his boyhood and beyond in Buckhurst Hill.

Elliott Seabrooke was born in Upton Park, West Ham, on 31 May 1886. His father was Robert Elliott Seabrooke, who had been born in Cambridge around 1858. His mother was Harriet Elizabeth Seabrooke (née Ransom). His father was the Superintendent of the King George V Docks.

The young boy was actually called Ransom Elliott Seabrooke, but he appears to have dropped the first name. He had a sister, Winifred Elliott Seabrooke, who was born in Upton Park around 1889.

The Seabrooke family were living in Buckhurst Hill by the time of the 1901 census, and young Elliott was there in the records of both 1901 and 1911, by which time he was 24 years old. His parents and his sister, who never married, stayed at the family home, Brimfield, until at least 1923. Brimfield still exists, a fine late Victorian villa along the High Road, now numbered 64.

Brimfield

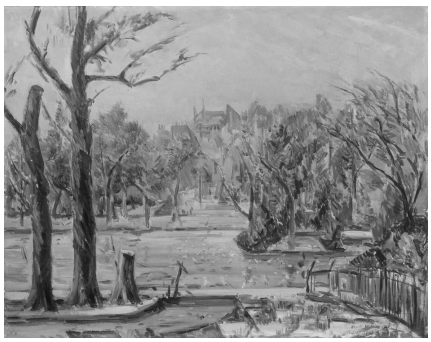
Elliott Seabrooke became a painter, having been educated at the City of London School and the Slade. He served with the British Red Cross during the 1914–

1918 conflict and was an official war artist on the Italian front. His early works were painted in Epping Forest and the Lake District and he was later influenced by the French School, in particular Cézanne and later the pointillism of Seurat. His paintings are in the Tate Gallery, the Dublin Art Gallery and the collections of various provincial galleries and private collectors.

The Tate Gallery has five of his works, *Near Pourville* of 1920, which was bequeathed to the gallery by his sister Miss Winifred Seabrooke in 1975; *Old Shipping in Heybridge Basin* of 1947, which the gallery purchased in 1950 from the artist's widow; *Evening at Zandvoort*, 1949, and two works on paper, *Water and Trees*, and *Landscape with Castle under a Stormy Sky*. The paintings are in store but the drawing *Water and Trees,* which looks remarkably like Knighton Woods, and the watercolour *Landscape with Castle under a Stormy Sky*, which looks remarkably like Hadleigh Castle, can be viewed by prior arrangement in the Prints and Drawing Room at Tate Britain. The two works on paper arrived at the Tate in 1996 as part of the Oppé collection. In 2011 the BBC showed a series of television programmes about 'hidden paintings', those which belong to the nation but are not on display: 18 of Elliott Seabrooke's paintings came to light, in the collections of Hampshire Museum Service, Southampton City Art Gallery and the University of Hull, amongst others.

Elliott Seabrooke was based in Paris for some time, and was an associate of Nancy Cunard, who ran the Hours Press. He prepared the design for the cover of one of the books she published, a volume of poems by Harold Acton, *This Chaos*, of 1931.

Another of Seabrooke's works is a drawing called '*South Porch, Dashwood House, West Wycombe*', which is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. This work is from the 'Recording Britain' collection of topographical watercolours and drawings made in the early 1940s during the Second World War. Elliott Seabrooke married Adolphine Christiana, daughter of Herbert Joosten of Amsterdam in 1930, and died in Nice on 6 March 1950. In *Who's Who* he gave his recreations as 'kite flying coupled with the study of cloud forms', and his address as 44 Baker St.



'Regent's Park, London, Winter'. Oil on canvas, painted 1940. In the care of Doncaster Museum Service

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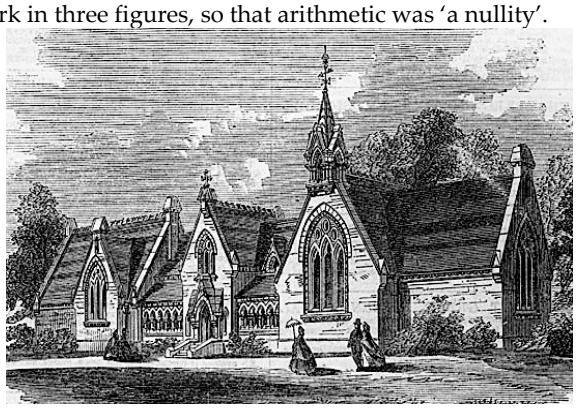
www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings
www.collections.vam.ac.uk
wwwww.whowaswho.com courtesy of Essex w.tate.org.uk

Loughton Schools c1751–1956 (Part 1)

Extracted from *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 4: Ongar Hundred* (1956) (Sponsor: Victoria County History).

There is said to have been a school in Loughton in about 1751, which had existed for many years. In 1761 the curate, Pierce Dod, obtained subscriptions from local persons and opened a school. Subscriptions soon decreased, however, so that pupils remained few, only 13 in 1766, and teachers were poorly paid. Gradually, with the aid of an annual sermon, the school's position was improved, and in 1807 it had 20 pupils. These were all taught reading and writing and the girls were also learning housecraft, in accordance with the original rules of 1761. By this time local interest in the school was increasing. In 1810 James Powell gave £10 to introduce the monitorial system, and a few years later two new schoolrooms and two teachers' houses were built at a total cost of £500. In 1817 the school was united with the National Society, and the number of pupils increased rapidly to about 100.

The population of Loughton was growing rapidly at this time and new private schools were being established for children of all classes. The National School also expanded. The number of boys attending it increased from 48 in 1833 to 75 in 1846-47, and of girls from 58 to 85. This was made possible by the enlargement of the building soon after 1834, and again in 1842. At this time the children paid no fees and were sometimes given clothes. In 1838–39 the school received £85 from subscriptions and possibly also part of the £52 paid annually from Anne Whitaker's legacy to the Sunday school, which was administered jointly with the National School. In 1846–47 the master was receiving £50 a year and the mistress £30. Between 1851 and 1856 the school received grants from the government for training pupil teachers, but an inspection in 1850 or 1851 revealed a depressing situation. The master, though a decent man, was untrained and in very poor health. The mistress could not work in three figures, so that arithmetic was 'a nullity'.



New National Schools, Loughton, from *The Illustrated London News*, 1863.

In 1863 the school was enlarged at a cost of £1,485. The diocesan board contributed £30, the National Society £75, and local supporters the remainder. The government refused help on the ground that the additional accommodation was unnecessary. National Society officials suspected that its real motive in refusing aid was to protect the position of the local nonconformist school. The school committee was not able to provide as much new accommodation as they had hoped, but the rapid increase in the number of children attending the school, from 100 in 1862 to 150 in 1864, encouraged the committee to appeal for funds for another classroom. The diocesan board gave £10, the National Society £15, and subscribers some £200. The building was finished in 1866. At this time the committee, with the rector as chairman, was

very active. In 1868 it introduced gas-lighting, defraying the cost by entertainments, and in the same year set up an infants' department. In 1871 the school garden was enlarged by a grant of land from the rector. A cricket club was started in 1866, a night school in 1868, and a scholars' bank in 1872. By 1875 the average attendance was 193. By 1865 the school was receiving an annual government grant. Additional income came from school fees, local contributions, and, in 1876, the levy of a voluntary rate. Teachers' salaries had been improved. The headmaster, after long service at the school, was in 1879 receiving £155 a year, with a house allowance of £20. In 1883 the mistress and the assistant master each received £40 a year. The educational standard also improved.

As a result of the Education Act of 1870 a survey was made of the accommodation in Loughton schools. The National School was found to have places for 134 boys, 104 girls, and 42 infants, which, with the 104 places at the British School were declared by the government to be sufficient for local needs. The continued increase of population, however, soon made further accommodation necessary, and in 1878–79 the government required the National School to provide this, failing which a school board would be set up. This led to a fierce controversy between Anglicans and nonconformists. In March 1879 the Anglicans convened a parish meeting to authorize a voluntary rate for the National School. The meeting does not appear to have been widely publicized except among the Anglicans. The nonconformists, suspecting that this had been deliberately contrived in order to prevent their attendance and probable opposition to the rate, arrived at the meeting in full force, led by C H Vivian, the Baptist minister. After a heated debate the voluntary rate was abandoned. During 1879 £300 was raised by subscription and by 1882 the school enlargement fund stood at £400 out of an estimated £500 required. By 1886 the school had been extended to provide 342 places. Even this, however, was insufficient for the growing town, and in 1887 the government insisted on the formation of a school board. In the same year the managers of the National School transferred their building to the board. When the Board School was opened in 1888 the former National School was used for girls and infants, the boys being accommodated in the new school. In 1891 the infants were moved to a new building in Staples Road, the girls remaining at the old school. In 1904 there were 240 girls, though the accommodation was then estimated at only 210 places. In 1907 the board resolved to build a new girls' school in Staples Road. When this was completed in 1911 the former National School was apparently no longer used for educational purposes. About 1938–39 it was demolished to provide a site for Ashley Grove flats, which stand on the corner of York Hill and Staples Road.

[This material was published in 1956. Part 2 will follow in November in Newsletter 195 *– Ed.]*

The Askew family – can you help?

Earlier in the year I received the following e-mail from Andrew Askew. Along with many others I can remember the Askew family's hay lorries, and their yards in Smarts Lane, Loughton, and High Road, Buckhurst Hill – Ed.

'I am researching my family tree and during the period 1870–1970 many of my ancestors lived and worked in Loughton. My great-grandfather was George Henry Askew, who ran and owned George Askew Transport (Buckhurst Hill). He also lived at and ran the Victoria Tavern in Smart's Lane, Loughton, which had previously been run by his father-in-law Francis Heather.

My grandfather was born in the pub (his picture as a child is just inside the door) and married Marie Green.

I would very much like to know if there is any information you could pass on in relation to the Askew family.

I am also researching my grandmother's side, the Greens. Her parents are buried in Buckhurst Hill in the churchyard.'

I passed the e-mail to Chris Pond, who replied:

'Terry Carter has passed me your email.

There are various references to the Askews in local records, as they were for years the dustcart providers and general cartage contractors to the Loughton UDC, and of course when Lucy Askew died in 1998(?) aged 114, she was the oldest woman in England – I was mayor at the time and had to do a BBC radio interview about Loughton healthfulness and longevity.

If there is anything specific you want to know I can check it for you.

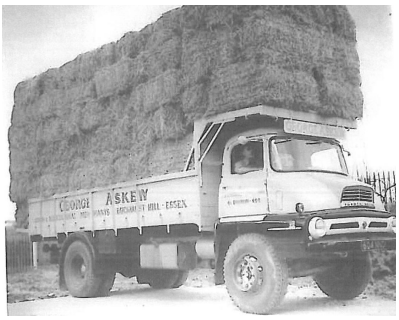
If your family records include any photos, I'd be very interested in seeing them.'

Andrew replied:

'Thanks for the quick reply

I have attached a couple of photos that may be of interest.

The first is of an Askew group shot in about 1936. The young boy at the front is my father (Fredrick George Askew). On his right is his grandmother (Elizabeth Kate Askew née Heather). On his left his sister Joyce (still alive). The lady to the right of Elizabeth Kate is my grandmother (Marie Askew née Green). The lady to the left we believe is Emily Kate Marion Johnson (my first cousin 2 x removed). The man between Elizabeth Kate and Marie Askew is Frederick Heather Askew, my grandfather. It would be great if anyone could identify any more. The second photo is of a George Askew truck:



It would be great to know of any Askews still living in Loughton area, so I could contact them to try to find out more.'

Vicente Romero returns to Theydon Bois

TERRY CARTER

Readers may recall Ted Martin's article, 'Leah Manning and the Basque Children in Theydon Bois', that we printed in *Newsletter 181*, in which Ted wrote:

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

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

The full article, which is both detailed and moving can be found on our website, and I recommend a re-reading to members. Among many things, it reveals the lasting impact that Theydon Bois made on Vicente who, happily, is a fit and youthful 88. So much so, that Vicente, accompanied by Senora Consuelo Romero, his wife, and Covadonga, came back to England, both for the 75th reunion of the Basque children's arrival in this country and to take the opportunity to return to Theydon Bois.

Jim Watts hosted a meeting on Thursday, 10 May, attended by his three Spanish guests, plus Peter Newton of Roding Valley U3A, Theydon Bois Rural Preservation Society and also the L & DHS, Trevor Roberts, Theydon Bois Local History Recorder and myself. Ted was, of course, invited to attend but, much to his regret, he was urgently needed elsewhere.

That morning, Jim Watts picked up the visitors from The Bell Hotel, and gave them a guided tour of Epping, a walk in Epping Forest and over Theydon Bois Golf Course.

Covadonga, a distinguished lawyer, proved to be a charming and memorable lady, as well as an excellent translator, which was just as well, as my Spanish is limited to a few words and phrases, and Senora Romero spoke no English. The English that Vicente learned here in 1937/38 had deserted him, so Codavonga relayed his thoughts to us.

From *Newsletter 181*:

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

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

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

Through Codavonga, Vicente recalled that the children were dispersed all over England, and that his group, 21, as he related, were sent to Theydon Bois. They were sent to Woodberry, a house in Piercing Hill, which for a time was known as the Leah Manning Home (for her extensive involvement with the rescue of the children, and their subsequent aftercare, please refer to *Newsletter 181*). Woodberry later became part of the sorely missed Wansfell College.

Vicente delighted in pointing out to us, in a very old photograph of Woodberry, the very window of the room in which he stayed for all his time in Theydon.

Vicente, although only 13, seems to have been a leader in the group, looking after their luggage and possessions. He spoke of staying in

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

During their stay, an English teacher taught them English and lived with them. Vicente recalled that the children used to walk on the golf course in the afternoon and played football or visited Epping Forest. Through Covadonga, Vicente related how 'the man in charge' of Theydon Bois Golf Club, gave the children permission to use part of one of the fairways for their group exercises and fitness routines.

He spoke of a house in Piercing Hill which was lived in 'by a famous admiral' and another in the road by 'a wonderful doctor' who often attended the children.

Some evenings they had activities in the Loreto Convent in Forest Side, to the west of the Golf Course, because all the children were Catholic. The convent closed in the 1970s and was at first converted to a large house called Theydon Towers and recently to flats and houses. At the weekends volunteers from the Labour Party came from London and took the children for an outing to the capital by train.

They were often visited in Theydon Bois by Leah Manning. Vicente Romero remembers her as a 'nice lady who loved the children very much'. Their parting was tinged with sadness. Leah Manning got angry on her last visit to Theydon Bois, when she found that the

three Romero children had been sent back to Spain without her knowledge. Vicente stayed for 10 months in England and it seems that a further group came to Theydon Bois after his group had left.

The Romero family in Theydon Bois

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

She spoke movingly of the pleasure it gave them to be shown the places by Jim Watts, that clearly still meant so much to Vicente. That made it so very much worth while, and I hope the three of them have many more years to be able to speak fondly of Vicente Romero's return to Theydon Bois.

Vicente Romero on Theydon Bois Golf Course

There is more to say about the children, about Leah Manning and others, but space determines that, for this, as said earlier, you will need to turn to Ted's article. However, from it I will add:

'After the Romero children returned to Spain, Vicente became an engineer . . . He became a doctor of engineering, he went back to the Asturias region in Northern Spain for his first job. There he married and then came back to the Basque country, where he worked for a large iron company until he retired, becoming the director responsible for organisation and security in the company.

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

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

Tailpiece

On the first page of this Golden Jubilee edition, Ian referred to the early Transactions *booklets of the Chigwell Local History Society. This is the Editorial from the second issue, published in 1974. Our apologies to those who may have seen this before.*

The functions of an historical society are not simply to hold monthly meetings, interesting and necessary though such meetings may be. To survive, a society must undertake research into local history and having done so should publish the results of such work periodically.

The welcome extended to our first book of transactions has encouraged us to issue the second book. In it will be found articles of local interest by local authors who have a thorough knowledge of the subject.

We are profoundly grateful to them for putting their knowledge at our disposal so generously.

This little book is launched in the hope and belief that it will be of much interest, not only to present-day readers, but also may prove of value to historians in the future.

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