LOUGHTON AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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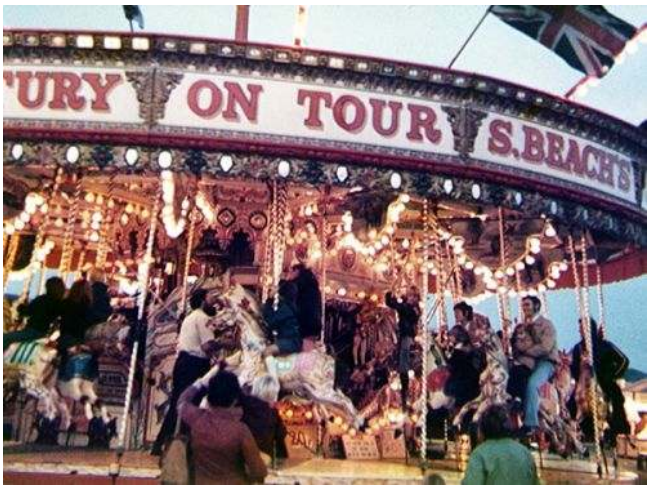
52nd Season

Funfairs



Modern Gallopers

As we have seen (*Newsletter 203*), when communications were minimal across the country, fairs were of great importance for trade and, in agricultural districts, for hiring labour for the coming year, but, with the advent of turnpike roads, canals, railways and later road transport, they gradually lost their importance and either ceased to exist or became livestock markets or funfairs. St Bartholomew's fair was last held in London in 1855.

Many places have dedicated fairgrounds others hold them in streets and town squares, or even in large private gardens, and they could be held in conjunction with the anniversary of a local historical event, a seasonal event such as harvest time or with a holiday such as Christmas.

Eighteenth century

By the 18th century in England, the entertainment portion of the chartered fair had become a funfair, which provided amusement by displaying unusual humans and wild animals, jugglers, acrobats, puppet shows, peep-shows and other acts which travelled around the country. The first fairground rides were brought in about this time.

Funfair inventions

An English agricultural engineer, Frederick Savage (1828–1897), is thought to have invented a steam engine to operate fairground rides, so that they no longer needed manpower. Many steam-powered rides, including roundabouts and swing boats followed.

In 1863, there was a steam-powered merry-go-round at the Midsummer Fair in Halifax. The 'Gallopers' ride was invented in 1891 and came to be known in Europe and the US as the 'Carousel'. The first Ferris wheel appeared at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, designed by George Washington Gale Ferris, a bridge architect.

Chair-o-Planes are still popular

Locomotives

The showman's steam road locomotive then greatly helped with the funfair's mobility and carried machines, carts, wagons and attractions from place to place. It also generated electricity, which provided lighting at the funfair during the evenings. They even had steam-driven mechanical organs to provide music to accompany the various rides. These rides changed the travelling funfair from game stalls, such as coconut shies, tests of strength and fortune tellers, into permanent amusement parks.

Amusement parks

Rides were the main attraction at the world's first amusement park, Paul Boyton's Water Chute in Chicago in 1894. After his success in Chicago, Boyton founded New York's Coney Island in 1895, probably the most famous American amusement park. Its Wonder Wheel (Ferris wheel) dates to 1920. The world's first Wooden Roller Coaster was built at Coney Island in 1929.

Popularity

The popularity of the funfair and amusement park waned in the US in the late 1920s, but they continue to be popular in Europe, despite the start of world-wide theme parks in the 1950s, such as those developed by Walt Disney. In England, the success of the travelling

funfair and amusement park can be seen at Blackpool Pleasure Beach.

Fairground rides

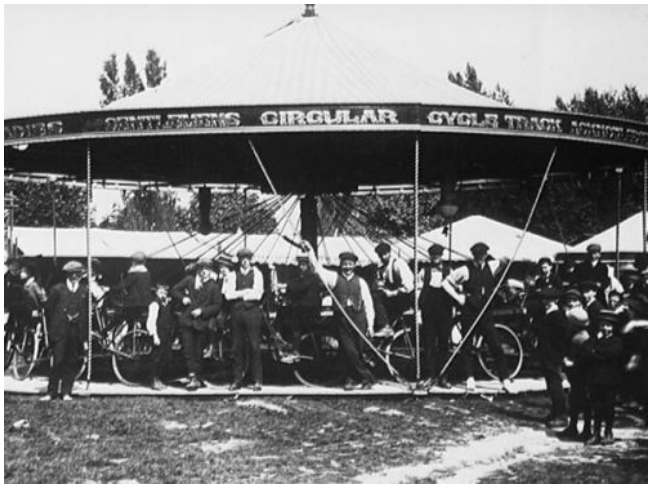
'Dobbies'

This term for roundabouts with, presumably, horses on them, seems to be unknown to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and *Chambers's Dictionary*, but probably comes from 'dobbin' a friendly name for a farm horse or work-horse rather than the dictionary definition of a loom attachment for weaving small figures!

There is practically no evidence in existence for the early development of the roundabout. Simple roundabouts were known in the early 19th century and Lord George Sanger in *Seventy Years a Showman* tells of his father making roundabouts early in his career. They were crude, with the horses mirroring the rough penny toys of that time, the legs being round sticks attached to bodies which were large pieces of wood rounded on the top. They made the heads from half-inch thick boards placed in a groove in the bodies. The tails and manes were made of strips of rabbit-skin.

Gaudy paintwork began to appear and, according to Sanger, horses were pushed round by children who could not afford to pay the halfpenny fare – as a reward they had a free ride. In the 1840s it was reported from Hull Fair that Johnson, a tough, foul-mouthed showman, 'whipped the young workers more frequently than he rewarded them'.

Roundabouts could be pulled by ponies but steam eventually replaced muscle power, but much later than in other countries. There was also a bicycle-powered roundabout: the Velocipede.



Bicycle-powered roundabout: Velocipede

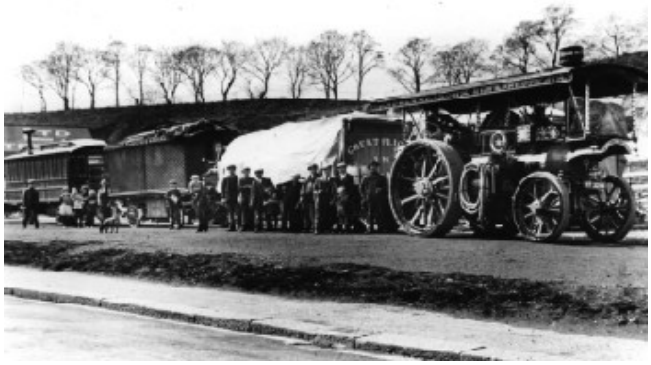
Steam-powered roundabouts

From 1861 there is evidence of a steam-driven merry-go-round. Thomas Hurst, a roundabout proprietor in Lancashire, said it was Thomas Bradshaw who first used it on the old Pot Market in Bolton on New Year's Day in 1861. The boiler was made at Pollit's Boiler Yard in Lever Street, Bolton, and the engine constructed by Rogerson and Brimelow of Deansgate. Bradshaw made the horses himself, and got his patent in 1863.

Bradshaw's machine may have visited the Midsummer Fair in Halifax in 1863. The machine's whistle caught the attention of a *Halifax Courier* reporter. He described a 'roundabout of huge proportions, driven by a steam engine which whirled around with such impetuosity, that the wonder is the daring riders are not shot off like cannon-balls, and driven half into the middle of next month'.

A local resident worried about the risk of explosion which might endanger the lives of scores of children, by the boiler pressure used. In 1865 Sidney Soames demonstrated a steam roundabout at Aylsham Fair. The same year the fairground engineer Frederick Savage of King's Lynn, constructed his first steam-driven ride.

In 1865 Uriah Cheeseman bought a set of steam velocipedes or bicycles from Savage and the *Lynn News* reported this ride was at King's Lynn in 1866, and it appeared at Oxford St Giles later that year. It took until 1868 for another steam roundabout to be built at King's Lynn. It was a set of steam dobby horses built for George Twigdon, an East Midland traveller who already operated a dobby set.



Steam Roundabout on the road

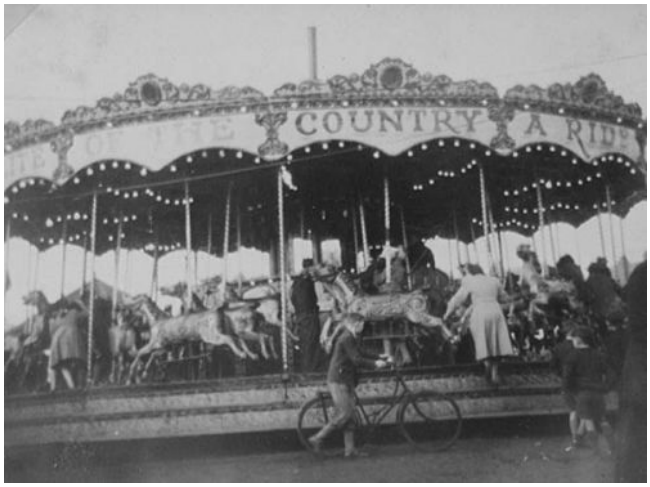
Ten years later Savages were regularly making velocopides and dobbies for travelling showmen. When William Sanger got involved the name 'Steam Circus' was adopted. Steam greatly impacted the development of fairground machines and at the end of the 19th century many patents were taken out for new ideas and designs. Roundabout proprietors also occasionally tried out new ideas: Abraham Waddington of Yorkshire was one of the early pioneers who thought that his idea needed a patent.

Frederick Savage and William Sanger produced another novelty ride in 1880 with 'Sea on Land'. Ship replicas, complete later with sails and rigging, were pitched and tossed by mechanisms beneath their hulls, and were often named after ocean liners of the day.

Sea-On-Land

The earliest versions also had another new idea: the traction centre-engine, which combined the haulage engine with the central drive of the ride. Savages built some, but John and Henry McLaren of Leeds also supplied them.

During the 1880s several manufacturers competed to try to make the 'still' dobby horses gallop. In 1885 Savages built their first platform 'Gallopers' for John Murphy of Tyneside. The same year Reynolds and King designed an overhead crank system which was improved upon the following year by Tidmans of Norwich. By the end of the century, crank-action Gallopers were being supplied by several British engineers, and as a ride they were to prove popular for decades to come.



Gallopers of the past

Other Rides

Steam Yachts

Swings were also mechanised and an 1888 patent by William Cartwright of Bromwich introduced Steam Yachts – being the first to build a set using upright cylinders.

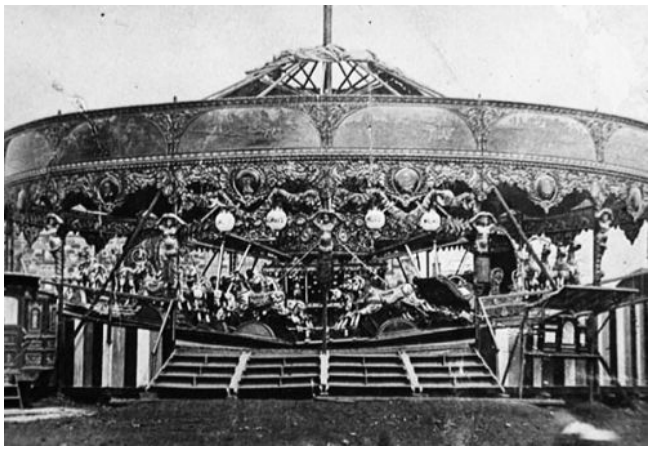
Steam yachts

Savages also began to build Steam Yachts, using Cartwright's 1894 patent. Their first set was built for John Collins. The yachts were often given the names of the latest liners: *Lusitania* and *Mauretania*, but *Olympia* and *Titanic* were short lived on John Collins' set.

Switchback rides

The first Switchback was designed and constructed by Savages in 1888, by adapting an older ride, and the first example was delivered to George Aspland of Boston. The idea was popular and several important travelling roundabout proprietors very quickly had similar machines. The early ones had only simple toast-rack cars, but these gave way to more imaginative and elaborate versions. The Venetian Gondola was introduced by Pat Collins of Walsall in 1894. These Switchback rides, along with the Scenic Railway, reached a summit of early fairground art and aesthetics, showing what could be done. Italian designers and craftsmen came to England at the showmen's expense, and a lavish centre organ became standard.

The Rodeo Switchback, which still survives



Switchback Gallopers

George Green helped to develop the Switchback Galloper in 1889 which was a cross between a Switchback and a Platform Galloper. Savages built it but not in large numbers. An example was toured in Scotland by Wilmots, and the ride was in fairs there until the 1930s.

Tunnel Railways

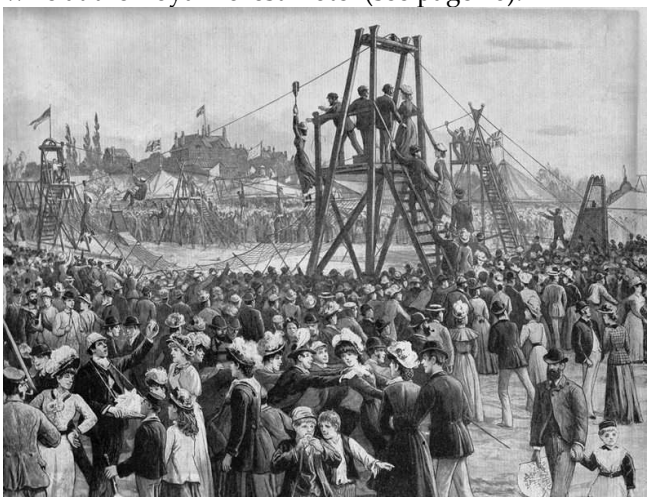
By 1895 three firms built these for roundabout owners: Savage built some for Collins of Walsall, Tuby of Doncaster and Davis of Stoke on Trent. John Fowler and Thomas Green, both from Leeds, also built such rides.

Tunnel Railway

Razzle Dazzle

'Razzle Dazzle' might just be a generic term for a ride. One version was where passengers sat on seats on a circular platform, which dipped from side to side as it rotated, as per the 1893 Savages patent (*below*), and also later ones by the Howcroft Carriage and Waggon Works, Hartlepool, which proved better.

But an engraving below of a 'Razzle Dazzle' in Epping Forest (dated 12 August 1893) by Charles Joseph Staniland, ARA (1838–1916), who lived in Chingford, shows a different concept using a high wire at the Royal Forest Hotel (see page 16).



Electric rides and scenic railways

Before the First World War the most important development was the Scenic Railway. Electricity was now used to drive the massive motor cars, not a steam centre-engine. Enoch Farrar of Yorkshire had the first in 1910. He claimed to be offering journeys in real motor cars at 60 mph over mountains and valleys through beautiful Alpine Scenery!

The Great War and after

Savages, Tidmans and Walkers supplied steam driven rides until the outbreak of the Great War and some old ideas were given new life but in slightly different ways.

Pat Collins took delivery of a Velocipede as late as 1896 and Reuben Holdsworths's 'Pigs and Balloons', built in 1908, was really a Platform Galloper of the 1885 patent, but it had a counter-rotating top.

Fairs were cancelled during the Great War, and few new rides built. Some fairs continued under blackout conditions, against the threat of a Zeppelin raid. In 1918, inflation took hold throughout Europe: which made new rides expensive. Fewer rides were being built by firms like Savages after the war. A few sets of Gallopers, Steam Yachts and Scenic Railways were ordered and Orton Sons and Spooner, of Burton-upon-Trent, built more Scenic Railways, featuring Dragons, Peacocks, Whales and Dolphins. Their final Scenic Railway was built in 1925 for William Davis of Stoke on Trent.

Pigs and Balloons

Germany and America were the sources of many new rides of the 1920s. A forerunner of modern rides was the 'The Whip' built in the US by W F Mangels Co of Coney Island. Some came to Britain, but much more numerous in the early days were Chair-o-Planes. Some were built here but most came from Germany.

Caterpillars

The Caterpillar was introduced into Britain in the early 1920s. It had a season in a permanent park, and then the first example was toured by the Green Brothers, who had four of these rides at one time or another.

The Caterpillar

Most came from Europe or America, but some were built in Britain. Today they are found mainly in parks: Green's original machine was broken up in Morecambe but Caterpillars were still being built in the 1980s.

Cake Walks

The Cake Walk was produced about 1909, named after a very fast dance. It was advertised as 'Captivating', 'Invigorating', 'Rejuvenating' and a 'Progressive British Sport' and was a series of undulating bridges and gangways driven by cranks. The belt drive was often connected to an organ so that an increase in the speed of the ride included a speed-

up of the music and thus a speed up of the 'dancing' of the riders. It was good viewing – and that sort of ride takes better money.

The Cake Walk

Big Wheels

This ride has been around for a long time, and is unchanged in its basic design. Wheels were built for early exhibitions at Earls Court (1894) (*right*) which were capable of carrying 1,200 passengers within 40 cars. Building of travelling Big Wheels started in the 1920s and 30s with initially 16-car machines, and later a more convenient twelve-car wheel.

Recently Giant Wheels have come back into favour, as with the London Eye. European manufacturers can now build travelling Giant Wheels for those who have the money to cover building, transport and the staff needed to erect and run them.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the previous article, travelling fairs have visited locations in our area at frequent intervals in the past (and still do). I remember taking my children to the fair on Chingford Plain which I had also visited on previous occasions, before they were born. Our local visiting fairs may not have had all the attractions related above but they were part of peoples' lives and of growing up and hold many memories for us and it is good to know something of their history.

The earliest fair I can recall is the one that was held at Easter at Alexandra Palace, in front of the Palace, when it seemed half of the population of North London queued for the single-deck LT Q-type bus to get to the Palace. It was best to bus up and walk home: downhill all the way! TED MARTIN

Note: Most of the material for this article was found on the internet whilst helping my granddaughter to research a school project. I am very grateful to and acknowledge all those who put it on the internet, and to Chris Pond, for the Chingford Razzle Dazzle.

The Buckhurst Hill Ball

Buckhurst Hill was known for its annual Ball, the first of which was held on 16 December 1869. It was held in a large room in the garden of the Roebuck Hotel and was in aid of the Village Hospital. Dancing was from 8pm and tickets were 5 shillings.

Patrons were:

> J L Allen of Buckhurst Hill House; William Charles Barnes of Oak Hall; Edward North Buxton of Knighton; B Cotton, Esq, of Forest House, Chigwell Row; J Dyer of Roslin Villa, Queen's Road; A Fraser of Devon House; W R Hodge of Knighton Villas; E J Holwell of Queen's Villa, Queen's Road; S L Howard of Goldings, Loughton; A Johnson, MP, of Woodford; H S King of Manor House, Chigwell; C Livingstone of Knighton Villas; A C Murton Neale of Fernbank; Nathanael Powell of Luctons; J Richie of Grange Hill, Chigwell Row; C St Alphonse, Esq, of Beech House, Loughton; T Spreckley of The Grove, Woodford; W Snow of Princes Road; Major Suart of Chigwell Row; H Vigne of The Oaks, Woodford; T White of West Hatch, Chigwell; and H Williams of 4 St John's Villas.

The Powell scrapbooks contain a most interesting poem narrating the origin of the ball:

> Buckhurst Hill in the autumn of eighteen sixty-nine
> Was heard thus to murmur 'oh hard fate of mine'
> My people all leaving, the place is so dull
> Such lots of good houses and none of them full.
> There's no social intercourse, no tea or chat
> No dances, no flirting, no chances of mat-
> rimony, or settling, no nice little walks,
> No meetings by moonlight, no nice little talks.
> Mr A is too grand to be asked out to tea
> While E F G and H won't meet M N O P,
> Indeed they're so wrapped up in pride and conceit
> Y does not know Z when they pass in the street.
> Things arrived at this crisis, a lady arose
> And said I've a remedy now to propose
> We will have a grand ball, I own I've a passion
> For dancing, and hospital balls are the fashion
> In such a good cause all the folks must unite
> They must meet as friends though it's only one night
> I'm charmed with the plan, the idea is delightful
> A ball shall succeed in spite of the spiteful.

The poem goes on over three pages to describe the setting up of the room and the events of the night, when a window blew in and knocked a man over, and sent tea cups flying over ladies' dresses! It was all a great success and so it became an annual event for many years.

Not much had changed by the time the 24th ball was held on 16 January 1890, although the tickets were more expensive. It took place in the Large Room in the grounds of the Roebuck Hotel. The patrons were W C Barnes (Oak Hall), E N Buxton (Knighton), A H Clapham (Ormonde House), W Day, W R Hodge (now at Magdala), N Powell (Luctons), A Savill (Chigwell Hall), P Savill, F A Snow, W Tudor (Queensbury) and H Vigne. The stewards were F Barnes, G Buxton, J Conquest, W Day Junior, Dr

Dring, J Dietrichsen (Albright Leigh), H Fraser, A F Hills (Devon House), S W Hodge, Sir William Johnston (The Ranche), T Robinson, A Savill Junior, and W Sworder.

The Roebuck as it appears in Miller Christy's book *The Trade Signs of Essex* (Edmund Durrant and Co, 1887)

Dancing was from 8 o'clock until 1 o'clock, the orchestra being provided by Mr Graves of Leytonstone, and tickets for gentlemen and ladies were 7s 6d. Tickets were to be obtained from the patrons or the stewards, but they were restricted to their personal friends. The proceeds were to be devoted to the Village Hospital.

By 1896 the Ball was held at the Queen's Pavilion of the Royal Forest Hotel, Chingford (see page 16). Those who attended were described as '160 ladies and gentlemen comprising the elite of the neighbourhood'.

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

The oldest tree in Epping Forest[1]

Many an exciting boyhood ramble made over fifty years ago was started from the village of Loughton. To my London-bred cousins, who often joined the expeditions during school holidays, the trek was high adventure, and the ultimate thrill of seeing, and climbing, 'the oldest and biggest tree in Epping Forest' was an alluring prospect, something to boast about back in London.

In those pleasant days of childhood, I recollect, we walked by way of Smarts Lane or Forest Road to Nursery Road, crossing the Stubbles (a plain still furrowed from nineteenth century ploughing) and thence through the forest to Strawberry Hill pond, which served for many a year as a lido for the boys of Loughton.

Nature has clothed these worked-out gravel pits with gorse and broom, foxgloves and heather. The large expanse of deep, clear water made a perfect bathing pool. A tiny island, its tall silver birches reflected in the pool, was a challenge to the adventurous swimmer. Hundreds of local boys learned to swim in the 'gravels' and no-one was ever drowned.

Strawberry Hill pond, on its modest eminence, with the nearby chestnut plantation and the gorse and heather blooming in season, remains an attractive part of the forest.

The way ahead was by the marshy path down to the Epping New Road [then the A11], which we crossed and after plodding through boggy terrain, tripping over tussocks and brambles, reached the 'tiddler pond', where, with a long stick for a rod, a length of thread, a matchstick float and a wriggling worm as bait, we cast hopefully for silver sticklebacks and minnows.

Our simple lunch devoured, and with some whining from the London cousins, who suffered more than we natives from the hard going and the swarms of mosquitoes, the tramp continued, crossing the steep Fairmead Road on to Fairmead Bottom, where stood the ancient oak, majestic even in death.

Two of its huge lower limbs were propped up. The massive trunk was sound but hollow, and the thrill of clambering about the knarled limbs and being lowered unto its huge bole remains a treasured memory.

Buttressed and concreted, the grand old Fairmead Oak remained an object of pilgrimage for many a year until it was reduced to a charred pile by vandal hands.

The gracious Fairmead Lodge, once the home of the poet William Sotheby,[2] was demolished around 1908. With its background of stately beeches and hornbeams, where the brown squirrel gambolled and bright plumaged jays shrieked, and pleasant vistas of the ever beautiful forest glades towards Lippitt's Hill, it occupied an idyllic site. Parts of the foundation stones are still visible.

If you walk to Fairmead in springtime, when the sap rises in the giant beeches and hornbeams, you will see those chestnut trees (mere saplings in the old photograph, and now grown to glorious maturity) aflame with blossom candles, and perchance notice, quite near the remains of the old Fairmead oak, another oak tree, young and shapely, sturdy, straight as a gun barrel, and surely destined to live long and – who knows? – to become, with the passing of many generations, the 'oldest and the biggest'.

WILL FRANCIES

Essex Countryside, Vol 18, No 155, December 1969

Notes

1. The 11-stemmed coppard beech near the Lost Pond is appraised as the oldest beech in the UK at present by Chris Neilan, the EFDC (and international) arboricultural expert. He believes it to be 1000 years plus.

2. William Sotheby, FRS (9 November 1757–30 December 1833), poet and translator, was born into a wealthy London family and educated at Harrow School and the Military Academy, Angers, France. He joined the army at 17, and served in the Dragoons from 1774–80. A few of his dramas and poetry books had limited success. His reputation comes from his translations of the *Oberon* of Christoph Martin Wieland, the *Georgics* of Virgil (considered one of the best translations in the English language), and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer. The last two were begun when he was over 70, but he lived to complete them. The translation of Weiland's *Oberon* (1798) had several editions. He was a member of the Dilettante Society and a close friend of Sir Walter Scott. Elected FRS in November 1794, Sotheby died in London in 1833 and is buried in Hackney churchyard. Joanna Baillie, a close friend for nearly 30 years mourned him: 'A more generous, high-minded, amiable man never lived, and this, taken together with his great talents and acquirements, makes a Character which cannot be replaced.'

Loughton School and my family's part in its history

First let's be clear where we are talking about. There are many schools in Loughton but the only one to use the title of 'Loughton School' in the 20th century was situated for much of its existence in what turns out to be a purpose-built school (but not for Loughton School) built in grounds where the Salcombe Park estate is now.

The school which became Loughton School has an obscure origin but it is thought to have been started in 1876 in a little house on the corner of the High Road and Upper Park Road. It changed its ownership and location more than once in the next few years but, in the summer of 1889, Mr William Vincent took over the school (then known as Madras House) from a Mr Girling. It was then at 6 Park Villas. The single school-room was built of corrugated iron at the side of the house and would take 24 boys. Everything about the

school was antiquated but on Tuesday, 6 August 1889, according to Mr Vincent's diary, 'School opened. 10 boys present'. Among those 10 were two who became well known in Loughton village life, Horace White and Frank Foster. During the next few weeks more boys arrived to make a total of 17.

By September 1890 the number of boys had risen to 32 so the first master, a Mr S C Wynn McKenzie was engaged and for a year taught the juniors in the dining room. Then in 1891 the schoolroom was enlarged and improved. In June 1892 the adjoining house at No 5 Park Villas was taken over and the two houses were connected. No 5 was used for private accommodation allowing No 6 to be used purely for school purposes.

The year 1892 is also memorable for in that year Madras House School became Loughton School. Until then this name had been used by a small school based in a house called Hillside on Albion Hill but the name was relinquished and arrangements made for its transfer. The increase in accommodation allowed an increase from 39 in the Michaelmas term to 57 in the following year.

In direct competition to the school was St John's College which had opened in 1890 in a school which had been designed and built for the education of the daughters of middle-class families. Apparently not enough middle-class parents were keen on having their daughters educated and the school failed. And in 1895 St John's College followed it and Mr Vincent was able to acquire the premises which in the girls' days had been called Salcombe College and was designed by James Cubitt (1836–1912).

This shows considerable enterprise by Mr Vincent but this success story was by no means over. A schoolroom was added on the north-west side of the house as large as the space would allow and 60 boys and three masters moved in during 1896. The school prospered and in 1905 a chemistry laboratory was built on the back of the school and a detached building that boys at the school called the Big School was built in 1906. By now the school had over 100 pupils.

Many of the parents that sent their boys to the school wished to have them board there so, by 1907, it was necessary to seek other premises for them. One of the then masters, Mr C W Bishop set up a house for boarders in a property called 'Atherstone' immediately opposite the school gates. His wife, who was a trained nurse, took charge of the domestic arrangements of the house.

In 1907 the school was inspected for the first time by the Board of Education. Their conclusion was that: 'This school is doing good and useful work, discipline is good and is maintained without effort and there is a healthy tone in the school and its corporate life.' Of Mr Vincent they said he had high powers of organisation and was a thoroughly good and efficient teacher.

On 2 May 1908, Loughton County High School for Girls was opened and in his speech that day the chairman of the Essex Education Committee made this reference to Loughton School: 'No doubt we shall have to provide more boys' schools, but that will not be the case here, because we have here Mr Vincent's admirable school to which we, as a county, owe a great deal.' Although it was a private school, the county regarded it as part of their secondary school provision.

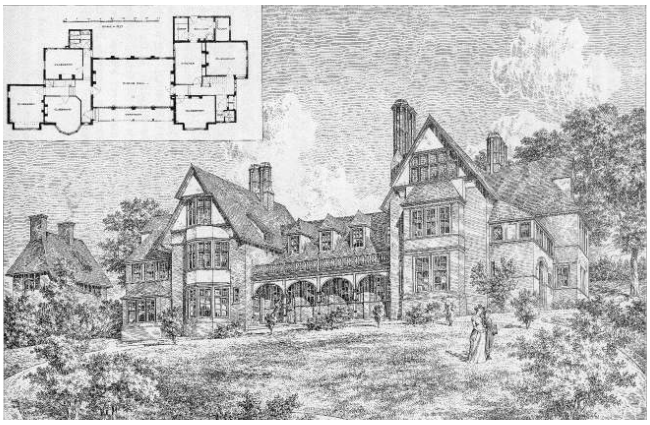
The school was inspected again in July 1913 when at that time there were 116 pupils. Once again the inspection was favourable and concluded: 'The conduct and bearing of the boys are a credit to the school' and 'in all essentials of organisation and discipline the school does well and is serving the neighbourhood and county efficiently.'

Mr Vincent was very keen on what he called 'Esprit de corps' and it is some indication of what he managed that at one time the Old Boys' Association was one of the strongest in the country in comparison with the size of the school. When I joined the school in 1946 there were about 160 boys there (or to be correct 160 pupils as Mr Johnson had taken in girls during the war and I think we still had four) and there were over 600 members of the Association.

In 1914 came the war to end all wars and in response to this, the school organised its own Cadet Corps in 1915. Mr L Bone was appointed Officer in Charge and was commissioned as Lieutenant Bone. The Corps formed part of what was then known as the Essex Secondary Schools' Cadet Corps and was attached to the Fourth Battalion of the Essex Regiment. Parades were held every Wednesday afternoon and all 'non-cadets' would assemble in the Big School for an informal lesson with a master. It was a splendid opportunity to get some homework done but now and again the master would try something interesting and I recall an afternoon with Mr Watkiss-Thomas ('Wocko') when we tried our hand at making a crossword puzzle and another with Mr Kane ('Pat') when I learnt a poem of the American Civil War named 'Barbara Fretchie'. There are about 20 verses and I can recite most of it today my brain was obviously far more receptive then than today, alas!

My father was born in 1911 and started at Woodford Green Council School about a month before his fifth birthday. If you want to know why he went to that school you will need to read his book *Woodford as I Knew It*. He was successful in obtaining an Essex County Council scholarship and was given the option of attending Loughton School or Bancroft's and chose Loughton for the wonderful academic reason that he would have to travel on the railway, one of his early loves which he kept all his life.

Mr Vincent had to retire due to ill-health and on the final day of school he stood at the top of the drive and shook hands with every boy, all of whom he knew by name, the Christian name in most cases. His place was taken by Mr Sly and Mr Johnson. Mr Sly was married but when Mr Johnson married in 1926, Mr Sly and his family moved to Croydon. Mr Johnson's initials were O G and he was always referred to in my time as 'Oggy', but I am assured that one did not come from the other. As I understand it, there was something called 'Oggy' that was popular just before the the Second World War but what it was I have never discovered. But the coincidence was too good to pass by, so O G became 'Oggy'.



Dining hall and class rooms, Salcombe College, Loughton

Oggy enjoyed sport and amongst other things played in goal for the hockey 2nd XI. He played in one match against the 1st XI and, following one attack, he held the ball on the ground with his hand over it. This is illegal but Oggy looked up to the opposing centre forward with a 'you dare' look. And the forward dared! He smacked Oggy over the knuckles with his stick and, when Oggy took his hand off the ball, hit it into the back of the net. I understand there was no recrimination of any sort as Oggy knew he was in the wrong.

By 1927 Dad had had enough and following a stormy interview with the Essex County Council representative he left the school and started in the motor trade as he relates in another book, *The Wood and Krailing Story*. However, despite everything, he felt that he had obtained a great deal from his time there which is why I and later my brother Ken were sent to the school. Ken was at the school in the early 60s but he did not appreciate his time there and never talked to me about it. He did, however, tell me once that he would have much preferred to go to Epping with his friends but that my Dad would not take 'no' for an answer. He died in a motor-cycle accident in 1991 so I am not in a position to ask him about his time at the school. He did impress Mr Houston who told my Dad, 'I think Ken was cleverer than Bob – and that's saying something!'

I started at Loughton in 1946 when I was eight and was put in the first form. This was (looking back) a bit of a surprise as the first form was year 5 in modern parlance and I could reasonably have expected to be in the lower first (year 4). However, not only did I survive but I actually excelled and during my second term was first in the form in nearly everything. This earned me promotion to the second form which was not a success, as I was coming in at the tail-end of a year's work, and was pleased when my friends from the first form joined me at the end of the year. I was then promoted each year with my friends but was always about a year and a half below the average age of the form and had to do two years in the sixth form before I could leave.

There were two members of staff that were still there in my day from when my father joined the school. The first of these you have already met in the shape of Mr Bone who was still running the cadets although by then he was a major. Mr Bone joined the school in 1906 and left in 1949 due to deafness and, if there was a pillar of the school, then it was him. He was also a visiting master at the Girls' School. The second member was Mr Pat Kane. As his initial was 'F', I don't think his name was actually 'Pat' but I never heard him referred to as anything else and he was only ever Mr Kane on ceremonial occasions! I recall one occasion when I was in the 5th form (upstairs) and I was making and throwing paper darts at him down below which he made every effort to catch.

Another master that was nearly there in my day was 'Toothy' Morrow. My dad could remember him joining the school in 1924 and asked me about him but he had left in 1945. (He obviously saw me coming and thought teaching one Farmer was enough. I jest of course.) He was a superb classics master and can be counted in the 'greats' of Loughton School. I will mention one more master who I personally got on very well with. He was Mr Watkiss-Thomas, a Welshman and he used to take us for, among other things, Maths. I can honestly say that 'Wocko' was the only Maths master I have met that actually understood the subject. He and I would have good natured tussles over the solving of problems but I could never get the better of him. He set us an exam paper that required us to prove that any two sides of a triangle are together greater than the third side. I wrote: 'Sir it's obvious, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.' I got the paper back with full marks for that question and with the comment: 'Well done. Don't try this in the GCE – the examiners won't appreciate it.'

Maths has never been a problem to me and on one occasion in the 5th form I suspected that some boys in the class were copying my homework. My Maths book was nearly full so I got a new one and did my homework, correctly in the new book, which I then copied into my old book with a few subtle mistakes. I left the old book on top of my books in my desk with the new one carefully hidden away. Three boys were later obliged to tell Wocko how they had managed to get identical but incorrect answers.

Due to Mrs Johnson's ill health, Oggy decided to give up the school and they retired to Eastbourne. His successor in 1952 was Mr D E Winkworth. Mr Houston joined the school staff in January 1954. The volume of office work increased and in 1957 he was offered a partnership. So the school had two heads once again, one in charge of the day-to-day running of the school and the other in charge of administration and finance. The Winkworths later moved to Hove with Mr Winkworth travelling up to do the administration and when the journey from Hove became too much he retired from the school.

Due to the demands of modern education, more space was needed. Two extra classrooms were built on the old tennis court and later the old laboratory was replaced. Form sizes had to be reduced and the old classrooms above the dining hall, which had accommodated boarders in my day, were rebuilt for use of the Geography Department and the old lab became a woodwork room. In 1972 the school became co-educational and various alterations were done to accommodate the girls' particular requirements.

Alterations and additions were made to the school to accommodate various initiatives but, finally, things got to an unsustainable level and the school closed in the summer of 1991.

Although I am academically bright and can hold my own with ease with the average man in the street, where physical activity is concerned it's a horse of a quite different colour. I think I have exactly one sports medal to my name, by being part of the Rodney victorious tug of war team. We had four houses during my time: Anson (Blue), Hood (Red), Hawke (Yellow) and my house Rodney (Green) which as you will work out were named after famous admirals. But back to sport. Most schools have a sport that they are known for and ours was hockey, so I was pleased to find that I was a natural back and furthermore possessed a ferocious hit which could carry a hockey ball from one end of the pitch to the other. We played football and cricket, of course, but neither appealed to me. I eventually got my first XI hockey colours which enabled me to change my school tie of dark red with two black lines for a colours tie which had a 20mm band of a lighter red, another of black and a 5mm band of silver.

When I was in the 5th form, Mrs Winkworth decided to open a tuck shop. She approached our form for assistance but was turned down. She was more successful with the 4th, who agreed to help. The next year, when we had become the 6th, Mr Winkworth appointed new prefects and they were chosen from his wife's willing helpers who were now the 5th form.

As you can guess, we didn't think much of this, nor to our surprise did the rest of the school, who were willing to accept advice from the new 6th but ignored the new prefects, as we did. Discipline suffered and Mr Winkworth bowed to the obvious and appointed most of the 6th form as prefects, which included me. That allowed me to wear another tie similar to my colours one but with a gold band in place of the silver. If you had both you wore the colours tie!

As a prefect I could also have a white ring round the top of my cap. This was sent to my step-mother's father, who had been a master tailor, and, instead of sewing a ring round the top, he took the cap apart, sewed a piece of ring on each segment and then reassembled the hat with the ring as an integral part of the cap rather than just being sewn on the top.

In my day the school uniform was red (I would call it maroon). We wore a blazer with the school badge of an arm with a lopping axe and a cap of the same colour and the same badge. I left the school in 1954 and the school changed the uniform colour to black. (In mourning? I doubt it!)

Loughton School was not a school where you were pushed into academic achievement, at least as far as I was concerned. I know of boys who left Loughton simply because they had exams to pass and did not feel that they were being pushed enough. I managed to get my GCEs (NOT GCSE!) in Maths, English Language and General Science when they were far more rigorous than the exams set today, which seem to have been set to make life easy for the examiners, as a lot of exams are merely 'ticking boxes'. I do know what I am talking about as I helped a boy for two years in his Science classes in years 10 and 11 at a local school and I could do his Science work with ease. Furthermore, I was often the only person in the class who was able to answer the teacher's questions, although they now have new names for some things like ferrous or ferric oxide.

Although Loughton School did not push you academically it did have a 'je ne sais quoi'. (Excuse my French!). It is difficult to pin down but I honestly believe that although I did not come away with a sheaf of exams under my belt, I was a better person for having been there.

Mr Vincent's introduction of hockey to the school led directly to the formation of the Loughton Hockey Club. A photograph is in existence dated 1905 showing the first XI with no less than seven Old Loughtonians in the team. The war brought an end to this club but in 1918 efforts to revive it were not successful. This led many Old Loughtonians to suggest that a club based on former pupils of the school which came from a much larger area than Loughton might be successful and so it proved. So the Old Loughtonians' Hockey Club came into being. I won't go too far into its history, but suffice to say it now runs a lot of teams, is one of the foremost clubs in England and is the highest rated club in Essex and thanks to the Olympics has two all-weather pitches of international standard. I find it ironic that some clubs that gave us up in the 60s and 70s as we were not strong enough, are now far below us in the ratings. *C'est la vie*!

BOB FARMER

More on the Lusty family

In *Newsletter 203* Richard Morris referred to the Lusty family at Warren Hill House, and stated that they had a Buckhurst Hill connection. I have been looking at the family and have, I hope, been able to clarify who was who.

The origins of the family go back well into the early 19th century in East London. John Lusty was a mariner and dealer in ships' stores, based at Parnham Street, Limehouse. His wife was Mary Ann and they had several children, including the brothers John Dalby (born in 1835) and William (born in 1841).

Young John Dalby Lusty began work as a lighterman. He married on 6 August 1857 Nancy Ann (Laws) and they had at least four children, John in 1858, Mary Ann in 1859, Hannah Elizabeth in 1862 and Florence in 1865, before Nancy's death at the age of 32 in 1867. John Dalby Lusty later remarried and with his second wife, Sarah Charlotte, he had at least another two children, Dalby George in 1872 and William in 1874. Sarah Charlotte died aged 47 in 1899 and John Dalby Lusty died aged 67 in 1902.

It was John Dalby Lusty's son John, 1858–1947, who was the man known as the King of Turtle Soup.

He married in 1880 Sarah Maria (Penny) and it was their son William John who lived in Loughton.

John Dalby Lusty's brother William (1841–1920) is believed to have begun his career by selling driftwood fished from a canal, but later became a timber

merchant and packing case manufacturer. He married in 1875 Emma Letitia (Kennard) and they had a large family, two daughters, Emma and Blanche, and seven sons. Two died in their twenties, but the other five sons were all involved in the timber trade and it was they who took over the manufacture of Lloyd Loom furniture. One of these five sons, James Frederick Lusty, lived in Buckhurst Hill, in the house called Brimfield, now 64 High Road. James Lusty not only made furniture, but also briefly diverted in to aeroplane manufacture – he was involved for a time with Geoffrey Wickner and Jack Foster in the production of a prototype monoplane, which was built in East London and flew from Stapleford airfield in September 1937.

Brimfield, 64 High Road, Buckhurst Hill

Coincidentally I moved house last year from Buckhurst Hill to the Lodge at Snaresbrook House. I have since discovered that Snaresbrook House (which is a listed building dating from the 1810s) was the last home of John Lusty of turtle soup fame. When he died in 1947 the house was used for a number of purposes by the local authority. It was turned into flats in the 1990s. The Lodge is the original building, of approximately the same date as the big house, and would have been occupied by a lodge keeper who took in the post (the remains of the post box are visible on the main wall) and let in visitors to the House (see page 16).

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

Sunset over London

The tower of St John's Church, Leytonstone, is a landmark of East London. It is 23 metres high (75 feet) and provides a fine 360 degree view of the landscape for miles around. On a number of occasions in both summer and winter the tower is open to the public (you must book) and in the summer of 2014 your editor took the opportunity to climb the 96 steep steps to admire the view.

The evening began with a short but delightful musical recital – the church is well-known locally for a series of lunchtime concerts of high quality. Delicious refreshments followed until everyone was ready for the ascent. Hard hats, torches and binoculars were issued to the participants, who had all heeded the advice to wear sturdy shoes and clothes they did not mind getting dusty! The climb began – steep and winding. There was a chance to pause at the entrance to the bell-ringing chamber – the church is well-known for its bells, too. Only 20 people are allowed up the tower at a time to ensure safety and room at the top to walk round and savour the view from all sides.

The church provides a useful leaflet explaining what it is possible to see from the top of the tower. It is thought that approximately a quarter of central London is visible, along with many local buildings and areas of note. This includes Leytonstone House, one-time home of the Buxton family. Much of Wanstead Flats can be seen, together with the Olympic Park, and modern buildings including the Shard and the Gherkin. Alexandra Palace, from 1936 the headquarters of the first regular public television service, can be seen seven miles away. Many railway lines can also be followed.

On a good night the sunset over London can be spectacular. As it grew dark, visitors reluctantly made their way back down the steep staircase – taking care not to bang their heads, which is much more likely to happen on the way down than on the way up!

The church dates from 1833 and was designed by architect Edward Blore (1787–1879), who also worked on Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey (and, surprisingly, the Vorontsov Palace in Alupka, Crimea). It was enlarged in 1910. A detailed history of the church, its parish and activities, including how to book for the tower tour, can be seen on www.stjohns-leytonstone.org.uk.

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

Loughton High Road – the old stagers

If any of our members are aware of it, the website instantstreetview.com - is surely one of the most fascinating, taking one up and down and from side to side of virtually every street in the UK – and further afield.

I recently used it on Loughton High Road to check how many of the 1930s premises (of my boyhood memory) were still around. I found just four – Hutchins the chemist, the Hollybush pub, Frankland the jeweller and Boots (chemists, not optician).

It is interesting to consider that they have been in business for some 80 years: and what a change in the 'mix'! Gone are all the butchers and bakers (cannot recall any candlestick makers), to be replaced by an ever-increasing number of international take-aways.

MIKE ALSTON

What did we do in the 40s and 50s?

Younger Loughton residents probably find it hard to imagine life without the Internet, Playstations, hand-held computer games, mobile phones, i-Pads, multi-screen cinemas and countless TV cartoon channels – the list goes on. We had none of these – they were the stuff of science fiction, but I don't remember being bored in the 40s and 50s. So how did my generation fill its time?

The Loughton I remember in those years, despite the tough post-war times, offered many leisure opportunities and, whether teenagers or much younger, we had plenty of chances to join clubs or youth organisations, and many of us did so.

Although television after the war was starting its second decade, it was very limited compared with now. At that time London was one of the few UK cities able to receive TV broadcasts and, being so close to the capital, we in Loughton could benefit from the programmes. But not many did. Few in the town had TV sets, but nearly everybody had a radio, and it stayed that way until the Queen's Coronation ignited something of a television boom.

Before then, however, my father had been one of the first in Smarts Lane to buy a television and, remembering how it immediately attracted youngsters from the road like a magnet, what goes on these days hardly seems surprising. There weren't many daytime programmes, but there were children's broadcasts, and it was to gape at those that Smarts Lane children regularly gathered in the small back room of number 73, our house.

With broadcast distractions so limited, entertainment or hobbies had to be self-created and that is exactly what most of us did. We had many hours in the day to fill, but kids in Smarts Lane and the parallel Forest Road always seemed able to find plenty to do outside, especially in the spring and summer months. My recollection is that there always seemed to be more outdoor activities in those two roads than anywhere else in Loughton.

Now, in an age where even adolescent children are protected so closely, are driven to and from school and rarely play outside in Loughton streets, it is hard to imagine our parents allowing us, alone or in a group, with ages ranging from perhaps six to eleven, to run around Smarts Lane, or go into Epping Forest on our own to collect tadpoles or blackberries. The only warnings we were given would be the usual 'look both ways when you cross the road', and 'never to talk to strangers'. Sometimes, if we took sandwiches, we would be out for most of the day.

Even if we had as much snow in winter now as we seemed to get then, can you imagine children of eight or nine being allowed to spend hours on end on their own, sledging down Drummaids or the big slope at the very edge of town alongside Warren Hill or behind the Warren Wood pub on the Epping New Road?

There are some Loughton streets that, in the right conditions, would still be brilliant for roller skating or carting, and 50 or so years ago that is how we often used Ollards Grove, Connaught Hill, Queen's Road, The Uplands, Carroll Hill and various other steep inclines. We had some great races and spills were inevitable, but because cars were so few, traffic was rarely a problem. Most of the carts were home-made and Uncle Harry, my father's brother, made me a beauty from scrap wood and old pram wheels, with ropes for steering. That cart was one of the best around but like most others in the Lane, I was at a disadvantage when it came to roller skates. Those of us who had older and cheaper ones with metal wheels, useless shoe grips and no suspension were always outstripped by the lucky ones with the expensive latest styles from E G Hatch in the High Road, fitted with the new rubber wheels.

We normally gathered in front of the Carpenters' Arms to play all the conventional games such as hopscotch and skipping for the girls, cowboys, cops and robbers, conkers, marbles, fivestones (jacks), flicking cigarette cards, riding bikes and scooters, but there were also a few that were more out of the ordinary.

As an example, 'tipcat' was popular in Smarts Lane. A piece of wood tapered at both ends was hit in the air with a stick, then struck as hard as you could as it came down. The one who could whack it furthest was obviously the winner: very simple and very noisy.

Because there were fewer distractions, most kids I knew used to read a lot and as Loughton was well provided with libraries, both public and private, a good book always seemed available. As well as that, with money so tight in those days, I think Loughtonians of 60 or so years ago appreciated their libraries more than they do now. Libraries now seem to have become an endangered species.

The 40s and 50s were the era of *Just William*, Jennings, Biggles and the hugely popular Enid Blyton books which, although much maligned by many critics, are still big sellers. To find as many of these as I could, from the age of about six I started going to the Loughton Public Library on my own. Our main library was moved a few times before ending up where it is today. The first very modest one was tucked away at the back of the old Methodist Church, remaining there for some years until it was shifted to a long black-painted wooden building in Brook Road, parallel to the Brook itself, alongside what were then the grounds of Loughton High School for Girls. That particular library always seemed a very welcoming place, and perhaps because its budget was more generous in those days, there was always a superb choice on the shelves. To be honest, I much preferred it to the next one, which was in The Drive, on the site of Loughton Health Centre, before finally being located in Traps Hill.

For a while after the war, for only a few pennies, we could still borrow books from the subscription-only Forest Library, next to the International Stores near Lopping Hall, and I occasionally used it. My mother went there more than the public library, mainly because some of the books were rather more daring (although mild by current standards). The

newsagents in the High Road, opposite the mechanical loo in Brook Path, has since been through various incarnations, but for some years it housed another small private library, Rose's, although we never borrowed books from there.

As was expected in those days most Loughton kids I knew in the 50s, many in the vibrant 60s as well, had at least one hobby. Many children become TV addicted or computer-literate so fast these days that it is no surprise that they are into their PCs, Apple-Macs or X-Boxes much more than, for example, the slow-moving delights of collecting stamps. Some Staples Road classmates, although not me, would go train-spotting, now a word associated with 'anoraks'. I can remember one or two eight- or nine-year-olds who would buy a platform ticket and spend hours in Loughton Station, both in the days of steam and, after 1948, when the Tube reached the town, collecting engine and coach numbers.

The excellent Staples Road School staff encouraged us to collect many different things and catalogue them, whether it was stamps, coins, rocks or butterflies and moths, and also to build model planes and ships. The reward for our efforts would be the inevitable coloured star. Our teachers also urged us to join the I-Spy club, which meant going round looking for birds, animals, aeroplanes, cars and many other things, and marking them off in the little books sold by the long defunct *News Chronicle.*

In the post-war years into the early 50s, one result of the lack of TV and cars was the popularity of family walking in Epping Forest, particularly at weekends when it would be bustling. Like very many of our friends and neighbours, we would often go for picnics in the summer and the number of people of all ages simply getting out and about in the forest was unbelievable compared to now. Now, when we walk in the forest, there is probably a 50-50 chance of not seeing another human being, especially on weekdays.

Apart from those picnics, eating out in Loughton was extremely unusual, except for the occasional birthday tea in friends' houses, or family gatherings at Christmas or Easter. There were very few cafés and restaurants in the town, unlike 2014, when it is almost impossible to count the number of eating places. Recently, I did try to work it out, and I made it about 40 or so. Most of Loughton's pubs offered little other than packets of nuts or crisps, although Doris Smith in the Hollybush, where I worked for a while at weekends and in school holidays in the late 50s, would sometimes find time to rustle up a sandwich for regular customers. It was only about 1960 that eating out in Loughton became more common.

The two High Road cafés I remember much about only did a limited day-time trade. One, rather posh, was in Hubbards, the confectioner-cum-toy shop near the Loughton Cinema, later the Century, and the other, much less refined, was Don's Café, next to the Forest Hall. The latter had been Clayden's tea-room before the war but I only knew it as Don's, although it was actually owned, I believe, by Adrian Delarue who later, probably in the late 60s, used to run the rifle and pistol shooting club at the rear of Loughton Hall.

Around 1954 to 1956 I used to call in Don's for the occasional Pepsi-Cola as it had a juke box, which I am pretty sure was the first in Loughton, as well as what I also believe was the town's first pinball machine. Because the experts could make a sixpenny turn last for about 20 minutes, that machine never made much money and it was eventually taken away.

Later in the 50s and 60s more High Road eating places opened up and, as Don's Café was unable to compete, it was eventually converted into a small garden centre, but that didn't last very long and over the years the building deteriorated badly. It has since been demolished and the site is now a Higgins development of new flats, shops and offices.

There was another café run by Jesse Thomas at 108 High Road, next to what is now the dry cleaners at the end of Ollards Grove, and some of the local workmen used it but, apart from that, I know little else about it, or Jesse himself, except that he lived in Wanstead.

When it came to organised recreation, we had a lot of choice. I well remember the boys' club in St. Mary's church hall, run by Mr Warren, a stout, quite elderly man. I think his name was Bert, but to the boys he was always Mr Warren. I went there for a few years, probably from age nine to eleven, and I think we had to pay a few pence each time, which was excellent value, as we played billiards in the back room (Mr Warren did not approve of snooker, it wasn't a game fit for young gentlemen), table tennis in the main hall, board games, and could even box. In the St Mary's hall of that time there was a small stage and he would set up a simple ring and spar with the boys. He used to wear a top denture which he would take out before sparring with us. I particularly remember John Cook, a Staples Road boy, as being a good boxer, and John Wayne (yes!) from The Drive wasn't bad either. I wonder where they are now.

The Loughton Club in Station Road, was, by the 50s, perhaps earlier, no longer a boys' club, although when founded in 1901, as a Temperance club, it was intended for both men and boys. There were probably boys' clubs run by other Loughton churches, perhaps for girls, too, although, looking back, I don't recall girls being catered for as well as the boys.

Loughton had no shortage of the national organisations such as the Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Brownies, and my cub pack was the 41st Epping Forest, which met at Loughton Union Church. There were, of course, packs in other parts of the town, for example, at St Mary's, St John's and St Michael's. There were also branches of groups that seemed to be run on more militaristic lines, such as the Air Training Corps, Army Cadets, the Boys' Brigade and the Girls' Life Brigade, but the majority of those I knew, preferred to be organised in a rather more relaxed way.

From 1949 to the end of the 60s, Loughton's Scouts and Cubs would take part in national Bob-a-Job Week and I remember my reaction both to the excellent response of some Loughton residents and, in some cases, to the shameful way some really took advantage of the willing boys. The 41st Epping Forest's 'target' area included some of the wealthy roads such as Ollards Grove, Forest View Road, Connaught Hill and Nursery Road, as well as less well-off ones like

Meadow Road. It was all too clear at times that the generosity of some locals was inversely proportionate to their wealth or the size of their property. Most of the time though, it was an enjoyable week and there were very many generous Loughtonians of modest means who more than made up for the stinginess of the few. With some others, I left the 41st in 1954 or 1955, mainly because by then we were very involved in competitive school or club sport. Bob-a-Job Week continued until 1970, when it became Scout Job Week, partly because some still chose to interpret the 'bob' literally and also, because the shilling had declined in value over the years, more and more jobs were not being fairly rewarded.

One of Loughton's most impressive sights was the annual parade through the town on Remembrance Sunday which was held in the post-war years, probably into the early 50s. This was before the town's commemoration of the dead of both wars, naturally enough, as the horrors of the two great conflicts became less vivid, became an event on rather a smaller scale. In those years when the Second World War was still very fresh in Loughton memories, the parade would be made up of marching groups from all the youth movements, the three Services, the British Legion and various local adult organisations, all carrying large flags. A loud band, probably the Boys' Brigade, would lead the parade through the town to the War Memorial on King's Green for the commemorative service, and I remember very impressive numbers of applauding spectators, and some would join the end of the parade and follow it to the memorial. It was a unifying experience and I think Loughton folk felt very close as a result. Many people, from all 'levels' had relatives who were killed or wounded.

In the mid-50s many of us teenagers joined the mixed Loughton Youth Centre in Roding Road, and as well as offering many sports and other activities the LYC broadened our horizons in different ways. That was the time we were becoming more aware of trends in fashion, and taking a serious interest in our appearance. The Youth Centre became something of a watershed, a rite of passage, making us see ourselves, or so we thought, through the eyes of others, especially those of the opposite sex.

This brings my Loughton leisure time recollections into the mid- to late 50s. From then into the 60s, increasing amounts of our time seemed to be spent trying to make much more social headway by setting out to make a better impression on those around us. Many people, old enough to remember, I believe recall the 1960s as among the best years of their lives.

TERRY CARTER

Changes at English Heritage

It has been confirmed that English Heritage will be divided into two separate organisations.

A new charity, retaining the name English Heritage, will run what is known as the National Heritage Collection of historic properties – castles, abbeys, stately homes and so on. A newly named non-departmental public body, Historic England, will take on the job, which used to be done by English Heritage, of offering expert advice, and championing the wider historic environment. The changes will come into effect on 1 April 2015. The Government will provide additional funding of £88.5m to invest in the National Heritage Collection. It has been confirmed that members of English Heritage will continue to have free admission to sites in the care of the new organisation.

The English Heritage Charity will be responsible, under an operating licence from Historic England, for the care of the National Heritage Collection. Whilst all of its properties will remain in public ownership, it will now be able to make the most of commercial and philanthropic opportunities. The additional Government investment will deal with urgent conservation defects and enable the upgrading of visitor facilities including the renewal of outdated displays.

It was apparently clear from the responses to the Government's consultation that a great deal of support for Historic England was expressed, and that it should continue to champion England's heritage, providing expert advice, promoting constructive conservation and providing support with research, guidance and grants. ENGLISH HERITAGE

Loughton Old Church, Essex

Few persons visiting Woodford a few years ago, could have failed to remark with admiration the picturesque appearance of the twin spires of Chigwell and Loughton, rising from among the surrounding foliage which concealed the lower portion of each building. They were not far distant from each other; and, being the only churches visible in that part of the landscape, would have attracted attention even had they not possessed beauty sufficient to induce a closer inspection, nor would the explorer be disappointed who directed his steps to Loughton church . . . It was situated at some distance from the village, with only a farm house and two or three cottages in the immediate vicinity; indeed, the site was within half a mile of the boundary of the parish. You approached it by two beautifully-wooded lanes, which met at the church, and, then uniting, continued to Loughton-bridge, Abridge and round to Chigwell. I remember enjoying a stroll there, with my sister, several years since; and we fancied few scenes more lovely. In one of the lanes the trees meet overhead, forming a natural vista, through which you occasionally saw

'Faint streaks of pale blue heaven,
Calm and pure, look through the trees'

and the view opposite the church itself was quite English in its garden-like beauty. It was, in truth, a scene of such quiet peacefulness and serenity, as to induce the gazer involuntarily to exclaim that it must, indeed, be peculiar happiness to attend the service of God amid such loveliness; and would, perhaps, bring to his mind the words of Keble, when, after describing sunrise on the buildings of a populous city, he continues:

'And O, if even on Babel shine
Such gleams of paradise,
Should not their peace be peace divine
Who day by day arise
To look on clearer heavens, and scan
The work of God, untouched by man?
Shame on us, who about us Babel bear,
And live in paradise, as if God was not there.'

But, for some time previous to the year 1846, the distance from the most populous part of the parish was found a serious inconvenience; and the present cathedral-like church was consecrated on the 4th of November in that year. Early in the following [year], the old building, greatly dilapidated, was partly pulled down, leaving the chancel standing for the performance of the funeral service when required there. It was dedicated to St Nicholas, but there is no memorial of the date of its erection; which is, however, supposed to have taken place during the sixteenth century. It was composed partly of old materials. Some brass effigies have been removed from their original positions, and are now inserted in the pavement of the chancel of the new building: they consist of the effigies of a gentleman and his two wives, one on either side, in the curious pointed headdress of the sixteenth century, in which Catherine of Aragon is often depicted. The following inscription in German text is placed near – 'Of your charity pray for the soules of Jon Howard, gentleman: Johan and Katherine, his wives: the which John deceased the VIIth day of June, in the year of our Lord God 1541: of whose soules, and all Christian soules, Jesu have mercy. Amen.'

Another represents a gentleman and his wife, kneeling at a sloping table, with books placed on it; on either side their six sons and four daughters are kneeling in order: this is without an inscription. Nearer the altar lie two other brasses, one representing a gentleman standing with his hands joined, and over and distinct from him that of his eight sons, also standing with joined hands, and their names in scrolls over their several heads. The accompanying inscription is written in Roman letters: 'Here lyeth byred the bodye of William Nodes, gentleman, who departed this present lyfe the XXIth day of Febrarie, Anno Dni 1594, in the 37 yere of the raigne of our soveraigne ladie queen Elizabeth. He had to wife Elizabeth Wollsey, by whome he had issue VIII sones and VI daughters.'

The view from the present church is very lovely. A pretty little Sunday-school adjoins the churchyard, receiving about 200 children. A respectable woman, residing in comfortable rooms on the ground-floor, civilly showed myself and friends over the church.

The living and rectory are in the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rochester; patron, William Whittaker Maitland, Esq. The present rector is the Rev T T Storks. The parish of Loughton is in the hundred of Ongar, Essex, fourteen miles (NE by N) from London. Population 1237. Loughton-hall, a handsome building adjacent to the old church, the residence of the Whittaker family, was destroyed by fire about Christmas 1836. It has not been rebuilt.

Signed EEW in *The Church of England Magazine*,
6 May 1854
Submitted by CHRIS POND

Destruction of Loughton Hall, Essex, by fire

An earlier newspaper covered the fire mentioned in the description of Loughton, above.

We regret to state that Loughton-hall, the seat of William Whitaker Maitland Esq, the high Sherriff for the county of Essex, has, with the exception of a portion of the eastern wing, been totally destroyed by fire, and property to the amount of between £20,000 and £30,000 has been consumed. From what we have been able to collect, it appears that about five o'clock on Sunday morning, one of the female domestics observed a dense body of smoke in the west wing of the building, and, knowing there was no fire in any part of the mansion, she became alarmed, and immediately communicated her suspicions to the family. Some of the servants proceeded to the library, and on opening the door, discovered it to be in flames. In a few seconds, the whole of the wing was one body of fire. Some of the household went for the Loughton engine, which was speedily on the spot, as also were the neighbours who, rendered every assistance in their power; but, although there was a plentiful supply of water, obtained from the ponds in the vicinity, it was ineffectual. Two of the servants went up to London on horseback, and reached the head station of the London Fire Establishment, Watling-street, at 8 o'clock, when Henderson and six men with an engine, to which were attached four post-horses, and Crookland and six men with the engine from Jeffrey's Square, also with four horses, left their respective stations, and reached Loughton about ten o'clock, but too late to save any portion of the west wing. Finding it useless to attempt to stop the progress of the flames in the above quarter, they directed their attention to the eastern part of the building, but, although they used every exertion, we are sorry to say they succeeded in saving but a small portion.

The extent of the building may be imagined when we state that 50 rooms were destroyed and damaged. Amongst the property burnt were upwards of 10,000 volumes of valuable books, comprising a quantity of scarce works, many of them unique, and with a few exceptions the whole of the valuable furniture was also destroyed. In the cellars are between 700 and 800 dozens of bottles of wine, which are supposed to be destroyed. During the whole of Sunday the various engines were kept in play without intermission, and a great number of persons from the neighbourhood were engaged to work them. We are happy to state that the whole of the property is insured in the Imperial Fire-office, of which Mr Maitland is a director. The fire, which was *purely accidental*, appears to have commenced in the flue of the library chimney, which is supposed to contain some wood-work, and to have been burning for some days past. No lives were lost. Great praise is due to the countrymen who assisted at the engines for the extraordinary exertions which they made in saving what little of the property escaped the devouring element. On Sunday night a reinforcement of the men belonging to the London Fire Establishment was sent off to assist those who went down with the engines, as the fire was still burning and further damage apprehended. The property saved was carried on to the lawn, and placed under the care of some of the principal inhabitants. The family and the servants were accommodated at the houses of persons residing in the vicinity of the place.

The Essex Standard and Colchester, Chelmsford, Maldon, Harwich and General County Advertiser,
Friday, 16 December 1836

Dragons – a house and its genius

In *The Buildings of Loughton* by Chris Pond, published by the Society in 2010, and still available, there is the following entry on Dragons of Nursery Road:

> Mansion, with Gothic and some domestic revival features, including prominent gables and chimneys, carved, pierced and worked bargeboards, etc; fine iron gates . . . from Munich. Superb interior. By Egan for HM Fletcher, shipbuilder . . . Nativity scene in ceramics in hall. Plans and sections by Egan in ERO – D/DU 1077/1. Remarkable 28 page specification and contract in Egan's own hand in Loughton Library showing quality of work to be executed. Also a fine portfolio of photographs by Vic Barham (1980). Fletcher played Pugin to Egan's Barry; much of the detail work is his own.
>
> It is a Loughton tradition for children to feed the iron dragons on the gate with grass and foliage. A later inhabitant after the Fletchers was Sir Wilson Hungerford (d 1969), senator and minister of Northern Ireland, who came to inhabit the house through his wife being the Fletcher's niece and heiress.

There is also a reference to an article about the house in the *Essex Countryside* magazine, which describes the house as follows:

Dragons stands high and splendid on the hill above Loughton, with a view from its upper rooms stretching over miles of forest roof to the High Beech steeple-tip in the north and the distant rise of Sewardstonebury in the south-east. Here is well-to-do Victorian architecture at its best, an amalgam of all the virtues most prized by the age: craftsmanship, decorative sense, romanticism, and above all individualism.

Dragons is the creation of one man alone, and bears his mark from gable to cellar (often, quite literally, his monogram or coat). His name was Henry Marshall Fletcher, a fierce and brilliant young ship-builder; the house was completed in 1883 as his bachelor residence. When his fiancée, whom he met in his early forties, first visited Dragons with her father she noted in her diary that it was 'redolent with his personality'. Her niece, that is to say the present occupant of the house, Lady Hungerford, admits to Henry Fletcher's lingering dominance: 'You don't do what you like with Dragons. It has a personality of its own.'

Fletcher was himself an ideal man of his age, as talented as he was versatile. The family firm had been building ships at Wapping Old Stairs since 1600 (its pride was to have repaired the Cutty Sark), so he inherited both prosperity and practical skills. As a boy he ran away to sea in a self-built boat and sailed the Channel. Later in life his restless energies were continually set to counterpoise the duties of a routine job; he read Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon and mediaeval French, and travelled all over the world. He met his future wife while hiking in Norway. Typically, their engagement letters were all in French, and they flouted social conventions to the extent of marrying at 8am in 'travelling dress'. At Dragons the new Mrs Fletcher was swept with equal energy into his various activities; 'my whole shoulder aching after carving' she confessed one evening to her diary.

Henry Fletcher first learnt woodcarving from a curé whom he found working on his choir-stalls while on his runaway visit to France. Thereafter he carved or modelled every possible substance he could work; his craftsmanship decorates Dragons at every corner: terracotta plaques of plants and monsters set as a frieze beneath the window sills, ornamented oak chests and cupboards, a great Gothic screen to one side of the hall, gargoyles on the upstairs landing, and crawling sea-beasts in the bathroom plaster. On a smaller scale, Lady Hungerford possesses a delicate vignette of Bacchus and nymphs carved in olive wood, and his umbrella with a silver poodle sitting solidly on the fob. The same dog waits for his mistress at the gates of Valhalla in a plaque outside the front door, surrounded by Icelandic inscriptions.

Fletcher was fond of animals. He kept two monkeys, bees (which once swarmed in his study), and poodles in the days when these were still large hairy hunting dogs; he also encouraged toads in the garden, and hankered after pet alligators. But the dragon was his favourite beast. Dragons he chose as both the name and the *leitmotif* of his house (he was, incidentally, an ardent Wagnerian). Dragons couchant and rampant crown the gables, and dragons of beaten copper swarm over his letter-rack.

Fletcher's metalwork is seen at its best in the fierce dragon-knocker on the front door and the dragon-bracket in the study from whose jaws spurted light and flame in the days of gas, though now a flex droops unhappily through its teeth. Besides his own dragons he and those after him have collected others from all over the world. The iron dragon-gate of the house was wrought to his design by a celebrated Munich smith. Around the house are Persian dragon tiles, a Chinese dragon incense burner which belches smoke, dragon stained glass, a dragon toilet set…

When Fletcher had been married for some years a grim accident suddenly overturned the fanciful idyll. Dining with his wife and guests on board a newly refitted ship, he was called from the table in mid-course, and while away he slipped off a catwalk into the engine and mangled his right arm. It was amputated above the elbow at the London Hospital. As soon as he could sit up in bed he called for pen and paper and began to practise writing with his left hand. But all the determination in the world could not restore his former skills, though he bravely completed carving an oak cupboard in the hall at Dragons, with his wife holding the tools.

Until his death in 1923 he settled quietly in Loughton, travelling between October and springtime, and tending his organ, his car and his garden for the rest of the year. All his energies were now fed into Dragons. The great beauty of the garden still speaks for his care, though the rare alpines that he laboriously reared in the Loughton clay have all died and been pulled up or been eaten by cows. When he himself died Fletcher took elaborate precautions that the house and the grounds should remain intact and well-tended.

Almost half a century later his memory still holds speculative builders at bay.

Dragons remains above all the house of Henry Fletcher. He will not be noticed by histories of the period, nor the house by architectural studies. It is the private fancy of a late-Victorian Liverpool Street commuter, well educated in the best thinking of his period. He owned all Ruskin's works and later took great interest in Shaw, but the name that comes foremost to mind is that of William Morris, who spent his boyhood in Epping Forest just as did Fletcher, and with whom Fletcher shared his interest in Icelandic sagas, his love of amateur craftsmanship, his domestic romanticism, and (perhaps) a certain bourgeois idealism. Morris's daisy pattern Lincrusta paper can still be discerned beneath the dining-room paint at Dragons; and it was said of the home-carved furniture there (as at Kelmscott) that there was not a comfortable chair or a comfortable bed in the house, though all looked splendid. Dragons as a whole never fails to please the eye; but Fletcher built it to live comfortably in, and exotic decoration is never carried farther than may set off living space to the best advantage. In an age of harsh concrete and glass we are well able to appreciate the warm domesticity which the timbers of Fletcher's boat-yard lend this house: Oregon pine, pitch pine, white pine, oak and Archangel deal on ceiling and panel, door and floor. With the beeches and hornbeams of Epping Forest stretching to the horizon, and conifers shrouding it from its meagre neighbours in Loughton, Dragons preserves more of Henry Fletcher's romantic imaginings than suburban sprawl would be expected to allow. On seeing the house one appreciates his dream, but still more envies his ability to realize it.

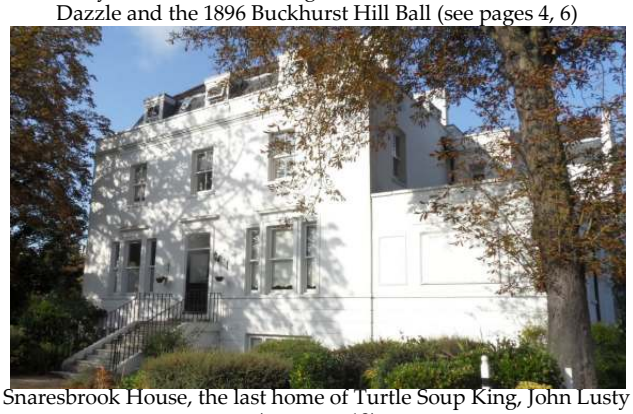
MICHAEL HEBBERT

From *The Best of Essex Countryside* (County Guide Publications, 1976)

The Naked Beauty

One (mostly) fine weekend in October 2014 saw local people flocking to visit the gardens of a house they have admired for many years. As part of the Woodford Festival 2014, and to celebrate its 300th anniversary, the owners of Hurst House, otherwise known as 'The Naked Beauty', opened their garden to the public. The house is in Broomhill Walk, Woodford Green, near the Winston Churchill statue, and is Grade II listed. The house is thought to have been built originally in 1714, for the brewer Henry Raine, and may have been designed by Hawksmoor. It has a distinctive white frontage, but the back of the house is of red brick, the front having been rendered later. The building was damaged by fire in 1936, but many original features remain. It is possible that the garden may be open on other occasions, but in the meantime if you missed the opportunity, there is an excellent website showing views of the house and gardens, maps and plans, and the history of the building. For more information see: www.hursthousewoodford.com.

The Royal Forest Hotel, Chingford, the location of the Razzle Dazzle and the 1896 Buckhurst Hill Ball (see pages 4, 6)



Snaresbrook House, the last home of Turtle Soup King, John Lusty (see page 10)

The Lodge, Snaresbrook House (see page 10)

Change to AGM talk

The AGM on Thursday 14 May will be now be followed by a talk by DR SETH KOVEN (Rutgers University USA) on 'The Match Girl and the Heiress' – the remarkable story of the friendship between one of Loughton's most famous citizens, Muriel Lester, and the match factory girl, Nellie Dowell, who together inaugurated a Christian revolution in the slums of early 20th century London. This is **not** as advertised.

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