

NEWSLETTER 210

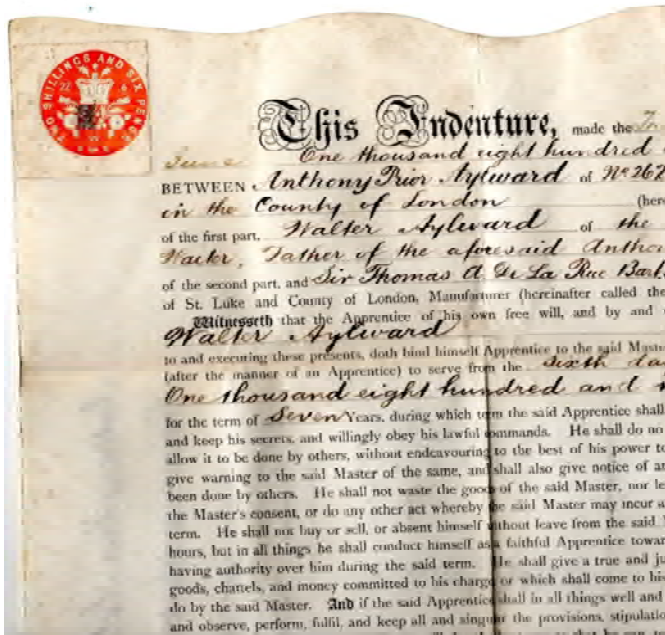
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54th Season

A splendid find



We were rather surprised, returning home one day, to find in the letterbox with the usual junk mail a thin vellum document about foolscap in size, folded into thirds, which turned out to be an apprenticeship indenture of 1899. Rather a change from the habitual holiday brochures and estate agents' bumph!

The indenture bound Anthony Prior Aylward (then aged 14) of 262 Ladbroke Grove, North Kensington, to the firm of Thomas de la Rue of Bunhill Row, Islington, as an engineering apprentice, for seven years. His wages were to be 7s 0d a week, rising to £1 1s in the last year. Sir Thomas Andros de la Rue (1849–1911 and awarded a baronetcy in 1898) ran the firm, which had started in Guernsey in 1813.

De la Rue were, of course, by 1899, a large firm of commercial printers and stationers, and although no longer owned by the family, remain a major printers today, specialising in security printing. Since 2003, they have run the Bank of England printing works at Debden.

Anthony Aylward did not become an engineer, nor did he stay with de la Rue's. In 1908, he married Mary Price at Streatham and, in the 1911 census, was living at the Lower Lodge, Cook's Folly, Sneyd Park, Bristol. This mansion still exists, and at that time belonged to the Derham family, but Aylward, who then had no children, was the domestic chauffeur. He was still a chauffeur in Surrey in 1928, when he was called as a witness at the Assizes.

The mystery of the vellum document in the letterbox was solved when a friend of ours phoned to say she had left it there. It had come to light whilst sorting through the papers of A P Aylward's son, Derek, of whom she was the legatee. A P Aylward himself died at Ash, Kent, in 1965.

If you ever find anything like this, do show it to me. Many interesting stories can emerge from such documents . . .

As for the indenture, I shall give it to the Islington archives.

CHRIS POND

The Chigwell UDC Ambulance Service, part 2

On being established as a local authority in 1933 Chigwell Urban District Council (CUDC) built its own offices in Old Station Road (where Sainsbury's is now) and these were completed in 1935. The main imposing office building was on the site frontage with a smaller fire and ambulance station also on the frontage to the west. Behind the fire station was the Engineer and Surveyor's Depot and to the west of them were four council houses (referred to as 'cottages' in the CUDC minutes). These 'cottages' had no road frontage. In 1974 Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) took over from CUDC.

In 1988 I started working for EFDC in the former CUDC offices. By this time EFDC's services were due to be centralised in Epping. The depot had by then moved to Rectory Lane (where Buckingham Court and Milliner's Court now stand) and its site had been laid out as a car park for the offices. The cottages still stood but were vacant. The cottages are significant in our story as three of the four were intended for ambulance staff.

Having set the scene we will 'meet' the two people appearing in the photo on page 2, described in the album from which the photo originally came as: 'Smith – Permanent driver' (left) and 'Cole – Foreman & part-time ambulance driver (right)' – I presume 'left' and 'right' are from the photographer's perspective. In writing about them I am also drawing on a list of the occupiers of the cottages taken from the 1939 Register supplied by Ian Strugnell and other information found by Ian in the CUDC minutes.

James Smith was born on 28 October 1894. He was married to Florence whose role was described in 1939 as 'unpaid domestic duties', obviously meaning housewife. He commenced work as an Ambulance Driver/Yardman on 27 January 1936 whilst living at

84 Princes Road, Buckhurst Hill. He and two other officers, presumably appointed at the same time, were given first-aid training by the Medical Officer of Health. In the minutes of 5 June 1938 he was described as 'Ambulance Driver' and it was noted his wages had been increased from £3 1s to £3 3s 6d per week. Because he had to cover calls outside normal working hours he was now living in one of the cottages at a rent of 10s per week. It was noted he had proved very satisfactory.



Smith, permanent driver (left) and Cole, foreman and part-time ambulance driver' (right). The ambulance was registered CVW 220 with Essex County Council in October 1935.

By 1 January 1945 he was earning £3 16s plus 'war increase' of £1 4s, making a total of £5. A restructuring proposed in a report considered on 3 February 1947 said: 'Smith could be senior man responsible for personnel and working.' When the council's ambulance functions were transferred to Essex County Council, it was reported that Mr Smith had to vacate his cottage. I do hope they found somewhere else for him to live!

George C Cole was born on 8 June 1900 and married to Edith May. Again Edith's role was described as 'unpaid domestic duties' in 1939. He was appointed General Working Foreman with Loughton Urban District Council at their meeting on 9 July 1929, from a short list of four prepared by the Highways Committee. His wages were to be '£4 a week, subject to his references proving satisfactory'.

The first reference to George Cole in the minutes relating to the ambulance service is dated 10 July 1935 when he was described as being a 'foreman'. He was to be the tenant of one of the cottages, but at this time he was living at 30 Woodland Road and, so that he could cover for night duties, a phone had to be installed in his house. He had to cycle to the depot when called out – such arrangements would clearly

not be tolerated now when ambulances have strict call-out targets!

On 2 February 1937 it was recommended that Mr Cole should be considered as a senior member of the ambulance staff because of his organising ability, and his retainer fee was to be increased from £6 to £10pa. In May 1942 CUDC applied to the Ministry of Labour and National Service for exemption from enrolment 'by reason of essential duties connected with the maintenance of Public Service and Civil Defence'. In August 1942 he was designated as an 'Officer' as he was now in administrative charge of outside (manual) staff and his job title was changed from 'Highways Superintendent' to 'Works and Highways Superintendent'. He remained working with CUDC until at least September 1949, but would obviously then have no longer been involved with the ambulance service.

Nowadays ambulances are at our beck and call by ringing 999 (the phone number for the Chigwell Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service was Loughton 100) or one can readily be obtained for discharge from hospital, if necessary.

Until the outbreak of the war, the Chigwell ambulance was only used for accidents and medical emergencies. Those being discharged from hospital or being taken there in a non-urgent situation had to be transported by a private ambulance. Though the local authority made arrangements for this, patients were recharged, though the minutes record that special consideration was given when they said they were unable to pay.

Details of a couple of situations where doctors tried to get ambulances used for non-approved purposes are recorded in the minutes and the authority seems to have taken a hard line about their use in these circumstances.

Quite a lot of the discussion recorded in the minutes relates to the negotiation of reciprocal arrangements for ambulance use with nearby local authorities, and arrangements for another authority's ambulance to attend if there were two emergencies at the same time. As these seem to have been difficult to negotiate, it is perhaps not surprising that, when the National Health Service was established, ambulance operation became a county function in 1948.

For the record, the occupiers of the other two cottages in 1939 were Albert Law ('pipe layer heavy worker') and Albert Crane ('labourer heavy worker'). Thus it would seem by 1939 only two of the cottages were occupied by ambulance workers. Both Alberts were married and their wives are again described as having the role of 'unpaid domestic duties'. Perhaps surprisingly, there is no record of any children living in any of the cottages – maybe for health and safety reasons this was not allowed.

I have one more tale to tell about the cottages. When I worked in the former CUDC offices we were used to hearing the sirens of the fire engines departing from the fire station opposite. The original CUDC fire station had been replaced by the current Essex one, of course. Normally the sound of the sirens would recede into the distance, but on one occasion they got louder and louder. I looked out of the window and saw one of them driving up the

accessway between the main offices and the former fire station into the car park! There was a fire in one of the cottages, presumably set by a vandal. It was a relatively small fire but it did provide us with a little bit of excitement!

JOHN HARRISON

Housing quality in the 1930s

Ian Strugnell, in the course of his immense job of calendaring the Chigwell Urban District Council (CUDC) minutes in the Essex Record Office, came across a draft return to a Ministry survey dated 31 August 1949 about the quality of houses built in the 1930s. There were six categories:

- A Minimum – 9-inch brick walls, asbestos cement tiles, no hot water system
- B Fair – 11-inch hollow [i.e. cavity] walls. Slate or clay interlocking tiles, small heating system for domestic hot water only
- C Very Fair – as B, but with the roof felted under the tiles
- D Good – as C, but with the roof boarded and two radiators
- E Very Good – as D but with best quality slates or handmade tiles, and with four radiators
- F Excellent – as E but with six radiators and two baths.

The quality of fittings rose with each class.

The draft reply indicated that A and B applied to cheaper houses in the CUDC area, such as in Buckhurst Way and most of the Station Estate, Loughton. C applied to the Harwater Estate, and Grange Crescent, Chigwell. D, to Ormonde Rise, Buckhurst Hill; Brook Road, Loughton; and Mount Pleasant Road, Chigwell. E, to Chigwell Rise and Chester Road nearby and Sparelease Hill, Loughton. Finally, F applied to Manor Road, Meadow Road and Forest Lane, Chigwell, and Alderton Hill Loughton.

An important qualification in each class was the very low use of cavity walls anywhere. This applied after the War, too, throughout the area – our first Loughton house (built 1955) in Spring Grove was category C. However, the 1935 house I lived in as a boy in Chingford was definitely of category B!

CHRIS POND

More on the Festival of Britain

Following the article on the Festival of Britain in Newsletter 206, Roger Gibbs writes:

In the summer of 1951 I was 12, coming up to 13 years of age. I visited the Festival with my parents in the summer. I do not remember any specifics apart from seeing the Skylon and the old shot-tower but I was impressed by the many exhibits about the future of our country and the world, many of which were technology-related. Looking back I think they were probably very serious and worthy, but at the time I just accepted them as they were, although as a child I know that I was keen to visit Battersea Park for the related fun-fair. We did eventually go there but I actually have no memory of that at all.

However, we visited the South Bank a second time on the final evening (30 September). We had been to visit my grandparents who lived at Wimbledon and as the train arrived at Waterloo station, on the spur of the moment my parents, to my pleasure, decided to make this second visit. My parents were not 'spur of the moment' types so that was quite an event in itself. But the memory I have retained is that of the sense that it was the end of a special moment in history, in which I was privileged to have participated. I think that it helped me to grow up that little bit by gaining a sense of the passing of time, which is part of the essence of life – a realisation that the moment (any moment) can never be recaptured.

ROGER GIBBS

Loughton in 1820

LOUGHTON – a village in Essex eleven miles ENE from London in the heart of the Forest on the road to Epping. Loughton Hall is the seat of Mrs Whitaker, and Golden Hill in the same parish of Bazire and Bryant Esqrs. Near it is the seat of Earl Cadogan. Here, also, is an ancient building called Queen Elizabeth's Lodge, said to have been a hunting seat of that princess. On a considerable hill, one mile and a half SW from Loughton, is the celebrated sign of the Bald Face Stag where annually, on Easter Monday, a stag is turned out before a multitude of huntsmen principally from London, which has occasioned this to be called the Cockney Hunt time immemorially. The whimsical appearance of the field after the first burst brings many spectators here solely to view the sport. Such a confused motley scene of mirth and misery, real humour and ludicrous misfortune will well repay the inquisitive stranger for the trouble of a visit.

From: London and its Environs or the General Ambulator and Pocket Companion by John Bew, 1820.

Coronation party



David Lawes kindly sent this photo of the Coronation party for the children of Cranleigh Gardens in 1953, which looks as if it was held on the cricket ground at the back of that road. The sign reads 'Modern detached residence to rent - 7/6 a week', but I think that refers to the dolls' house!

CHRIS POND

Essex House Kindergarten and Preparatory School

My first school was in a large detached Victorian house between the Methodist Church and Gould's (now Morrisons). It had a front garden and was set well back from the High Road.

The floor of the entrance hall was of coloured tiles with a wide staircase rising to the upper floor. The classroom I remember was on the left and had a large bay window beneath which was a wooden window seat which also acted as storage for the toys and games we used during wet playtimes. The classroom also contained shelves of story books for us to choose from.

Behind the house was a good sized garden with a rough lawn, old fruit trees and a climbing frame. We played there whenever the weather permitted and Miss Huntley sometimes joined us playing chase.

My first day at school was in autumn 1938. When my mother wanted to leave me I burst into tears. Miss Huntley emerged from the classroom and said she had some flowers that needed to be put in a jam jar and would I do that for her? Tears stopped and from then on I loved my time at that school where I stayed until the end of summer 1942.

Near the start of the war the school moved briefly to Bath. I stayed in Loughton and went to Staples Road Infants School then back to Essex House as soon as they returned.

The school had maybe 10 or 12 pupils of various ages but I only remember a few of them – the twins Honor and David Gould, Janet Jenner (very blonde), Jill Mapperley and two of Christine Truman's siblings, Humphrey and later Isabel.

The girls' uniform consisted of a grey pleated skirt and grey jumper. In the winter we wore a black velour hat with a yellow and black hat band.

In summer the girls wore yellow cotton dresses dotted with sprays of delicate white flowers. Our sun bonnets were of the same fabric with a wide brim and a flap at the back to protect the neck from sunburn.

The school was owned by two spinster sisters. The Woodford branch was run by the elder one, Janet, and the Loughton school by her younger sister, Mary. They had previously been living in Africa. Mary seemed to me to be tall and energetic when she joined us for games.

For a brief spell in 1941 a young woman came to teach us French but the teacher with the most impact on me was Miss Ann (Annie) Black who came once a week to give us music lessons. This involved learning to read music and playing a selection of percussion instruments.

My recollection of her is that she was slightly built, and had rather wild-looking white hair. It was only recently that I discovered that she was *the* pioneer of using percussion bands in school. She played the piano with us and I loved her lessons.

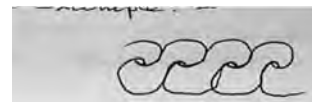
Once we gave a concert in the fine new hall behind the old Methodist church (the hall was later destroyed by a bomb) and I was immensely proud as I had a few bars on my own playing the solo triangle.

At the end of each term we had reports and more and more subjects were added the older I became. I have my father's report from Staples Road School when he was nine in 1913 and it is interesting to compare the subjects studied with mine at the same age. History appeared on my report from autumn 1940 onwards. I always found it interesting and

remember at the age of six drawing and colouring a Norman soldier with his distinctive nose shield.

We had 'number' as it was called, every day and I decided early on that I didn't like sums but that was the only thing I didn't enjoy at this school.

For handwriting we used the Marion Richardson series of booklets which showed you in which direction your pencil had to move in and then how to join your letters correctly. First we traced the line of letters and eventually made patterns of them on large sheets of grey sugar paper which we coloured with powder paint. Here is an example:



Reading was my main interest in childhood and I remember standing by Miss Huntley's chair and reading aloud to her. My enjoyment of Greek mythology was triggered by a fat book on the library shelves. It contained fine coloured illustrations and lots of good stories. Unfortunately I didn't manage to read all of it before I left for my next school. Now I'd love to know its title and author.

For handwork I remember decorating spill cans and making raffia mats by winding raffia round thick string. The best thing though was fretwork (for girls as well as boys). With my fretsaw I made a letter rack with the front formed by a lady in a wide crinoline, and also a coat hanger in the shape of a swan. Both of these were painted. My parents were still using these at the end of their lives. By summer 1939, 'art' had morphed into 'brushwork' and 'drawing'. My spring 1942 report for art said 'her ideas outrun her capability'.

Sometimes the usual routine lessons were interrupted by an outing. I remember pond dipping at Strawberry Hill pond. We used jam jars and home-made nets on canes. We found and learned about caddis fly larvae and the fearsome dragonfly larva as well as sticklebacks, pond snails and water boatmen.

Each summer we all trailed up Trapps Hill to have a hay picnic in one of the fields at the top belonging to Mr Gould. The hay was already cut and lying on the ground so we made mounds, burrowed into it and threw it over each other and played happily all afternoon. Our mothers provided a picnic tea.

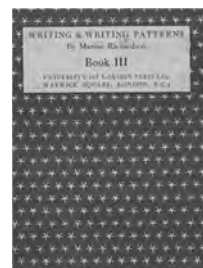
On one occasion the Huntleys took us to the theatre but I don't remember what the play was.

In summer I left Essex House School having passed an exam to enter the Preparatory Department of Loughton County High School for Girls.

JOAN FRANCES

Joan continues her article on her schooldays in the next *Newsletter*.

Your editor also learned handwriting using the Marion Richardson (1892–1946) method in Lancashire in the 1960s.



Clifford Bax – a writer's view of Essex

In 1939 Clifford Bax (1886–1962) journalist, critic and poet (and brother of the composer Arnold Bax) published a book called *Highways and Byways in Essex*



(Macmillan and Co). The book was illustrated by two well-known artists of the time, Frederick Landseer Maur Griggs (1876–1938), who did illustrations for other books in the *Highways and Byways* series, and Stanley Roy Badmin (1906–1989).

[Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.]

Here are some of Bax's impressions:

Nobody loves Liverpool Street Station, and the long-lasting unpopularity of Essex must have been partly due to this natural human failing. It may also be partly due to the ugliness of the district through which the train from London passes: the approach by car is, of course, very soon made glorious by the grandeur of Epping Forest; but, when all has been said, we cannot claim that Essex even at its best, has the luscious beauty of Dorset or the boweriness of Somerset or the green splendour of Buckinghamshire. Nevertheless, the countryside has a quiet charm and, seeing that it lies so near to London, has remained surprisingly rural. That, no doubt, is the factor which has given Essex its present vogue...

In the village of Arkesden he finds a tomb of interest:

It commemorates Richard Cutte and his wife Mary – she died in January 1594; and Richard was evidently proud of the match, for the inscription records that she was 'the daughter of Edward Elrington of Thoyden Bois in Essex, chiefe butler of England to the most renowned King Edward 6 Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth'.

Bax was clearly more impressed by the pretty villages of the more rural part of Essex – he did not have much time for what he called 'London Essex'. He wrote:

Sooner or later we shall have, perforce, to visit that part of Essex which has been digested and depersonalised by London; so let us go now to those characterless places. If Essex was, until lately, a Cinderella-county, we must acknowledge that although East Ham, Barking, Ilford and Romford are not tributaries to the Englishman's demand for architectural comeliness, they have at least, by their very hideousness, frightened away those millions who might otherwise have defaced the interior of the county.

And on Ilford he wrote:

Nor is it possible, in our time, to admire Ilford. We can but marvel that human beings could have so completely lost their natural pleasure in beauty as not to rise in rebellion against unlovely Ilford; but at one time, in 1839, there was at least an Ilford excitement... The *Essex Standard* on the 8th of March in that year pleasingly informs us that 'On Friday two new railway carriages said to be the most splendid ever built, appended to that elegant new engine 'The Ilford', made their appearance at Ilford, crowded with the directors and their friends. They were greeted with the acclamations of a great multitude of people assembled on the bridges and banks of the railway to witness so novel and welcome a

sight. The Ilford band added to the cheerfulness of the day. These carriages had run on the railway all the way from Mile End to Ilford – a distance of upwards of five miles. On Saturday the directors enlivened the village by making excursions to and fro on the railway *and amusing themselves by racing with their other engines*. It being Sessions day, the directors sent a polite invitation to the magistrates to take a trip. Their worships thanked them for the invitation, but said they would prefer waiting till the ground was more solid on the embankments before they ventured their persons on it. In the evening the directors dined at the Angel, and Ilford had the appearance of a fair more than a quiet village'. Ilford, -a quiet village!

Of our local area he has little to say, except this:

It is ironical to find a reference in the reign of Edward the Third to 'Bokhurstull in the parish of Chikewell', for Buckhurst Hill now dominates not only Chigwell but also Woodford (which, even today, is attractive) and Loughton. Buckhurst has a comfortable look – as though it could never give birth to a poet, a painter or any other eccentric person; and no doubt the inhabitants are self-respecting and happier than those who are more adventurous. Chigwell has still to win fame, but it is a pleasant enough place, and long-rooted; and to say as much for Loughton would be a kindness...

Perhaps it is fair to say that Bax may have been commissioned to write a book about Essex which he did not know well – he certainly missed a lot of things we here in our corner value a great deal!

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

Loughton's Railway

This is a rare item praising conditions on the Woodford and Loughton railway at its opening. The writer of a letter to *The Standard* on 8 April 1858 lauded the disappearance of 'airy third class carriages'. He says the carriages on our line, the Woodford and Loughton Branch, are now equivalent to second class on other lines, in that those coaches with German shutters had been withdrawn from service – we now have glass windows instead. 'These old coaches will soon disappear from the rest of the ECR, too.'



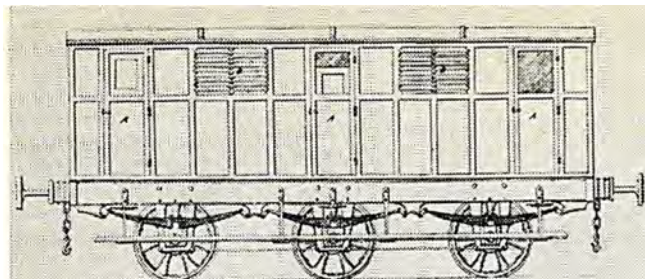
German shutter was a coaching term, which consisted of what we would think of as wooden louvres to cover a window aperture. The Regulation of Railways Act of 1844 had required third class carriages to be covered with a roof, but of course the railway companies provided the bare minimum. The Eastern Counties Railway (ECR) graciously equipped its third class cars with these louvred covers, but of course, no lamps to see in the dark when the louvres were closed.

From the letter it appears that the ECR trialled its new glass-windowed coaches on the Loughton branch first, but, for all that, it did not encourage third class passengers to use it.

Also, the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, on the very day the railway opened, 22 August 1856 stated: 'I am sorry to notice the events at Loughton opposite and adjacent to the railway station by enclosures of waste land, thus injuring the public road, and destroying that rural and picturesque view the village was noted for. The famous entrance to the railway station was also destroyed, leaving only a 48ft road.'

This must have referred to the illegal enclosure of what is now the Triangle, or Standard Green, which was fenced in (but in 1881 ordered to be returned to the Forest). The famous entrance to the station was the broad setting in open land off the High Road, later the subject of some agitation with the Epping and Ongar Turnpike Trust.

The sense of enclosure is underlined by an advert in the same paper in 1859: 'To let, two houses built for shops or dwellings, opposite Loughton Railway Station ECR; rent 7/6 per week. Also stables and building plots nearby . . .' And only a few years later, William White was speaking of Cockney refreshment houses and taverns on the Shoreditch model.



This is an Eastern Counties Railway third class coach dated 1846, taken from C H Ellis, *Railway Carriages in the British Isles 1830-1914* (1965). The German shutters (louvres) can be seen in four banks; the only glass was in the three doors. All the rest were plain panels. Again, this sort of coach was probably used on the Loughton branch in its early years and until the ECR had to obey the Board of Trade injunction to remove shutters.

CHRIS POND

IAN STRUGNELL adds: The newspaper mentioned above was at that time a morning publication, called just *The Standard*.

There follows an extract from 'about this publication' on the British Library website:

The Standard commenced as an evening publication on 21 May 1827 at a price of 7d, with Stanley Lees Giffard as editor and Charles Baldwin as proprietor. The first issue set its Conservative tone, with the paper to be devoted to English and protestant principles 'and inflexible integrity and resolution in maintaining them'. In the early years, normally four pages per issue were printed. James Johnstone acquired the paper in March 1857, and from 29 June 1857 published it as a morning paper, reducing its price from 4d to 2d. *The Standard* doubled in size to eight pages, and the price was reduced to 1d in February 1858. Its success brought it into direct competition with *The Times*. The evening edition was revived from 11 June 1860 as *The Evening Standard*.

The writer of the letter gave his address as Loughton, too, and was obviously impressed with some of Horatio Love's management of the ECR.

It would appear that the ECR didn't replace the shutters with glass entirely out of concern for passenger comfort: there is a Traffic Committee minute of 8 July 1857 where, under Superintendent's Report, it has (as summarised by Harry Jones): '3rd class carriages. Board of Trade requests glass windows for louvre boarding & approving of cheap trains if glass windows are fitted.'

CHRIS POND/IAN STRUGNELL

Strange death on a railway

Mr Charles C Lewis resumed yesterday at Snaresbrook the adjourned inquest as to the death of Mr H T Jones, 24, a corn-factor, of Snaresbrook Hall, Woodford Road, and 70, Thames Street.

Mr T P Jones, who identified the body, stated that the deceased was his son. He was a corn factor. On Wednesday, the 8th, he left home at nine, as usual, to go to 70, Lower Thames Street, and witness heard at twelve the same night that he had been found dead or dying in a carriage. He was very regular in his habits, getting home between six and seven each evening.

George Clarke, a signalman at Snaresbrook station, stated that he was on duty at the signal box when the 11.10pm Liverpool Street train came up, and as it passed his box he observed the deceased hanging almost at full length from the window of a first class carriage on the off side. Witness left his box and gave notice to the rear guard of the train.

Robert Hulbert, the guard, said that on receiving the information from last witness he searched the train and found that the deceased had been removed to the waiting room, but he discovered the hat and one glove of the deceased and a newspaper in the carriage from which he had been taken.

Alfred Hill, a porter at Snaresbrook station, said that the last witness told him that the deceased had struck his head against the girder bridge, and witness assisted to convey him to the waiting room.

Dr Argles stated that he saw the deceased in the waiting room at Snaresbrook at 11.50. He was quite unconscious, and apparently dying. At the back and left side of the head there were extensive cuts, extending though the skull, which was fractured. Death ensued in twenty minutes, and resulted from fracture of the skull, which might have been caused by coming in contact with the pillar of the bridge. Witness had known several cases of injury from contact with the bridge.

Mr T R Denman, of Mill Cottage, Woodford, a stockbroker, stated that he was in the same train as the deceased on the night of the 8th instant. Witness saw the deceased enter the train at Liverpool Street, in the same carriage as himself, but in the next compartment – that nearest the engine. He appeared to be perfectly sober, and witness had the impression that the compartment into which he got was quite empty then, and that the train started without any other person entering it. Witness sat at the off side of the carriage with the window down, and nether saw nor heard anything of the deceased until after they left Leytonstone, when he heard a bang, which seemed like the report of firearms, and at once jumped up and looked out of the window, when he saw the deceased apparently pushing himself through the window, and he gradually fell forward until he hung head downwards.

They had then just passed the girder bridge between Leytonstone and Snaresbrook, and witness came to the conclusion that the gentleman had struck his head against that bridge.

By the Coroner – He knew the bridge to be dangerous, and that accidents had happened there before, and when the train arrived at Snaresbrook he gave notice of the matter to the guard. He was not in a position to say that the deceased was actually injured by the bridge.

Francis Walliker said that he was fore-guard of the train. His attention was called to the deceased at Snaresbrook by the last witness, and he found him in the front compartment of the first class carriage, which was the third coach from the engine. Heard no report or other noise at the girder bridge.

After some further evidence the Jury returned a verdict 'That the deceased died from fracture of the skull, caused by his head coming into contact with an iron bridge on the Great Eastern Railway', and they added a rider expressing an opinion that the bridge was highly dangerous, and requested the Coroner to write to the Board of Trade and the Railway Directors on the subject.

The Standard, Thursday, 16 August 1888.

Mystery cottage and Loughton Station 1959

In *Newsletter 208* the two pictures on page 9 got me thinking. I don't know exactly where the Mystery Cottage picture is, but looking at the shape of the cottage leads me to wonder if it is one of the Forest Keeper's houses.

The other picture on the same page of the train at Loughton Station and dated 1959 leads me to tell you that I vividly remember in the summer of that year, the Brook Secondary School, which used to be in Roding Road, and which I attended, did a trip to Norwich from Loughton Station and I wondered if this is what the picture is. Incidentally, I did not go on the trip.

KEITH RANN

Reopening of the Epping Forest District Museum

Earlier this year, I was fortunate to be invited to the preview of the newly restored Museum a few days before its public reopening on 19 March. The museum, which had been closed for 10 months, has been completely redesigned, making much better use of the space available. As well as the original Tudor, Georgian and Victorian buildings, the museum has now expanded into the first floor above the library and has roughly four times as much floor-space as before. There is a lift to all floors.

I was pleased to see so much local material on display, including many works by local artist Walter Spradbery. In addition to local material there is also a wide range of activities and special events. By the time you are reading this *Newsletter*, it will be too late to see the opening exhibition *On The Move* which looked at the invention of the wheel and how it created the world of today.

The second exhibition, *Harold II, the Life, Legend and Legacy of England's Last Anglo-Saxon King* will mark the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, which

not only tells the story of his rise to the Crown, but also looks at the myths and legends surrounding his death. He was, of course, supposedly buried nearby at Waltham Abbey.

That exhibition runs from 17 September to 24 December 2016. Admission to the museum is free, although there may be a charge for some activities, talks, walks and tours.



The restoration work was funded by Epping Forest District Council, Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The museum's opening times are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 10am to 4pm, and on Saturdays from 10am to 5pm.

Epping Forest District Museum, 39–41 Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1EL, Tel 01992 716882 www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/museum. You can also contact them on Facebook and Twitter.

LYNN HASELDINE JONES

Local archaeology

You may be interested to know that the Spring 2016 edition of *London Archaeologist* (Vol 14, No 8) contains two articles of local interest, covering the excavations at the William Morris Gallery, Lloyd Park, Walthamstow, and the discovery of what may be part of a Roman road in Beaumont Road, Leyton. For more information visit www.londonarchaeologist.org.uk

THE EDITOR

To Southend by steamer, part 2

In this second part of my article I tell the stories of some of the ships which were involved in the Thames cruising trade in the 30s and the mid-20th century. They sailed to Southend, the Kent resorts of Margate or Ramsgate or cruised the Channel (to allow all-day drinking) and, later, went on day trips to France. They were: *Crested Eagle*, *Golden Eagle*, the two *Queens of the Channel*, the two *Royal Daffodils*, also, the *Royal Eagle* and two *Royal Sovereigns*. Some of them were involved in war service, most notably at Dunkirk, as related below, and some were sunk or damaged in that service. Then there was the first *Royal Daffodil* which was so named by Royal command after the Zeebrugge raid in 1918 in which she took part as HMS *Vindictive*. The *Golden Eagle* also served in the First World War.

Definitions

Gross registered tonnage (grt) is a ship's total internal volume expressed in 'register tons', each of which is equal to 100 cubic feet

(2.83 m³). Gross registered tonnage uses the total permanently enclosed capacity of the vessel as its basis for volume.

The **draught** (British) or **draft** (American) of a ship's hull is the vertical distance between the waterline and the bottom of the hull (keel), with the thickness of the hull included which determines where the ship might sail without running aground or 'grounding'.

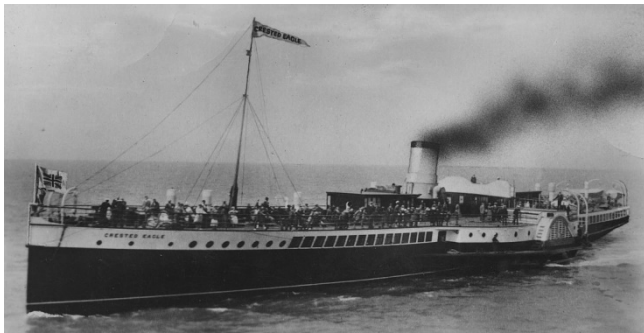
A **compound engine** is a steam engine which operates cylinders through more than one stage, i.e., at different pressure levels. Compound engines were a method of improving efficiency. Up until the development of compound engines, steam engines used the steam only once before it was recycled back to the boiler, but a compound engine recycles the steam into one or more larger, lower-pressure second cylinders before returning it to the boiler, in order to utilise more of its heat energy.

A **triple-expansion engine** is a compound engine that expands the steam in three stages, i.e. an engine which has three cylinders operating at three different pressures. The first successful commercial use was an engine built at Govan in Scotland by Alexander C Kirk for the SS *Aberdeen* in 1881.

Screws = propellers; **PS** = Paddle Steamer; **MV** = Motor Vessel.

The ships and their stories

PS Crested Eagle



Crested Eagle in 1932

PS Crested Eagle was built in 1925 by J Samuel White at Cowes. She had triple expansion engines, and was 299.7ft long x 34.6ft wide and of 1,110 gross registered tonnes (hereafter, grt). Her boilers were oil-fired and she was originally built with a telescopic funnel and hinged mast to allow her to access Old Swan Pier in London. She changed to the East Anglian coast service (London–Southend–Clacton–Felixstowe) in 1932. She went to Sheerness after first sailing to evacuate London children at the beginning of the Second World War. Shortly after leaving Dunkirk on 28 May 1940, sailing her first crossing to evacuate allied troops, she was bombed and sunk.

PS Golden Eagle

PS Golden Eagle was built in 1909 by John Brown & Co at Clydebank. She had triple expansion engines and was 275.7ft long x 32.1ft wide and her tonnage was 793 grt. She was the first paddle steamer powered by triple expansion engines to be used on the Thames. She was reboilered in 1934 and converted from coal to oil fuel.

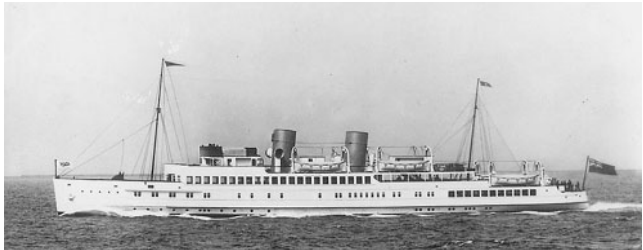


Golden Eagle was requisitioned by the Government in the First World War as a troop transport on the English Channel. Between February 1916 and November 1919 she steamed 52,140 miles and carried

513,101 troops without an attack of any sort. After the war she returned to her London to Margate and Ramsgate cruises.

Based at Sheerness at the beginning of the Second World War she made several crossings for the Dunkirk evacuations at the end of May 1940 and returned to civilian cruising in 1947, but only for three years. *Golden Eagle* was scrapped at Grays in 1951.

MV Queen of the Channel I: 1935–1940



MV Queen of the Channel I was built by William Denny & Brothers, Dumbarton, for the London & Southend Continental Shipping Company which was managed by the New Medway Steam Packet Company for the large pre-war passenger and tourist trade between ports on the Kent coast, the London area, East Anglia and for cross channel trips to French, Belgian and Dutch ports.

She was launched on 3 May 1935 and was the first British ship for cross-channel passenger excursions to have diesel-engines. She had two 1,500hp Sulzer Type TS diesel engines and twin screws. She was 255ft long and 34ft wide, her draught was 9ft 3in and her tonnage was 1,162 grt.

Queen of the Channel had her first day excursion on 14 June 1935 between the Thames and the Continent. It was hoped that greater profitability would result from using this larger vessel on cross-channel 'no passport' workings from the Thames and North Kent ports and also better use of the ship from this trade rather than sailings between London, Southend and Clacton.

On 21 May 1940 she was assisting troops at Boulogne. The Dunkirk evacuations which followed in May 1940 led at first to the use of Dunkirk Harbour for larger ships to embark troops. German bombing of the port made this dangerous. The *Queen of the Channel* was using the harbour's eastern breakwater to embark troops early on 28 May. About 950 troops were on board when she sailed at about 4am for Dover. She soon came under attack from German dive-bombers. The bombs fell behind the mainmast. They damaged the rudder, broke the starboard propeller shaft and the ship's back as she was lifted out of the water by the explosion.

A nearby coaster, *Dorrien Rose*, carrying military stores, went bow to bow and in 35 minutes took off the troops from the sinking ship and also took in tow four of the *Queen of the Channel's* lifeboats, though two later came adrift. The *Dorrien Rose* reached Dover at about 2pm. *Queen of the Channel* then sank.

MV Queen of the Channel II: 1949-1968

MV Queen of the Channel II was built by William Denny & Bros Ltd, Dumbarton, in 1949, for the New Medway Steam Packet Co Ltd, a subsidiary of the

General Steam Navigation Co (GSN). Her tonnage was 1,472 grt and she was 264ft long by 40ft wide and her draught was 9ft. She had 2 x 8-cylinder Denny SCSA diesel engines and twin screws with a speed of 18 knots.



She was built to replace the ship of the same name, above, lost in the Dunkirk evacuations. She was larger than the previous ship and was typical of the Denny-built motor-ships for the GSN and its subsidiary, the New Medway Steam Packet Co.

She was similar to *Royal Sovereign II*, and sailed from Ramsgate in her first season taking non-landing trips to the French coast or the Kent coast calling at Dover and then cruising off Dungeness. She carried 1,500 passengers and cruised at about 18 knots. Later *Queen of the Channel II* operated the London–Clacton service from Tower Pier, calling at Southend. She replaced PS *Royal Eagle*, which was laid up in 1950 because GSN had too many ships and there was not enough business for them all. Relaxation of restrictions on landing in France enabled sailings on ‘no passport’ trips from Ramsgate to Boulogne and Calais, in addition to Clacton. She added Deal to her ports of call, until Thames excursion services finished at the end of the 1966 season.

Queen of the Channel II was laid up at the end of the 1966 season and on 1 January 1968 sold to Aghia Papanti Cia Mar, Greece, and renamed *Oia*. On 12 September 1974 she ran aground near Seriphos Island and, although she refloated, most of her accommodation was flooded. Her passengers and part of her crew were transferred. In 1976 she was sold to Kriton Steamship Company, Greece, without a change of name. In 1978, renamed *Leto*, she was sold to Geo Kousouniades Shipping SA, Greece, and on 29 March 1984 she was broken up at Eleusis.

PS Royal Daffodil

Royal Daffodil was built as the Mersey ferry *Daffodil* in 1906, serving with Wallasey Corporation until the First World War. She took part in the raid on Zeebrugge in April 1918 as *HMS Vindictive*. Back in the Mersey, she was renamed *Royal Daffodil* by command of King George V to commemorate her service in that raid. She was bought by the New Medway Steam Packet Co in 1934 and ran between Strood and Sheerness. Shortly before withdrawal, she was chartered to the Port of London Authority for London Dock cruises (previously operated by GSN vessels). She was sold for scrap in 1938. Her name was passed on to a big GSN motor-ship, below. This annoyed Wallasey Corporation, who had to name their new ferry the *Royal Daffodil II*.

The Zeebrugge Raid

On 23 April 1918 the Royal Navy attempted to block the Belgian port of Zeebrugge. They planned to sink obsolete ships in the entrance to the Bruges Canal to prevent German ships leaving. Zeebrugge was used by the Imperial German Navy as a U-boat base and a port for light shipping. This threatened Allied shipping, especially in the Channel. Several attempts to close the Flanders ports had failed and a plan to advance up the coast in 1917 (Operation Hush) was aborted. As shipping losses to U-boats increased, they needed to find a way to close the port. The first attempt was made on 2 April 1918 but cancelled at the last moment when the wind direction changed, making it impossible to lay a smoke-screen. The second attempt was made on 23 April with an attack on Ostend at the same time. Two of the three blockships were scuttled in the narrowest part of the Bruges Canal and one of two submarines rammed the viaduct, which linked the shore and the mole, to isolate the German garrison. The blockships were sunk in the wrong place and the canal was open to submarines at high tide after a few days. British casualties were 583 men and German losses were 24 men; the raid was publicised around the world as a great victory and many medals were awarded.

MV Royal Daffodil (1939)



MV Royal Daffodil, built in 1938–39 by William Denny and Sons, Dumbarton, for GSN, was launched on 24 January 1939 and completed in May 1939. Her tonnage was 2,060 grt and she was 299ft 7in long and 50ft 1in wide. Her draught was 9ft 9in. She had two SCSA diesel engines, producing 841hp and twin screws.

In her first season she sailed from Tower Pier to Ostend, but was then requisitioned for war service and evacuated children from south-east England to East Anglia before, from 15 September 1939, carrying troops of the British Expeditionary Force to France, which she continued to do until October. On 21 May 1940 *Royal Daffodil* was put on standby for the Dunkirk evacuation and on 23 May, along with the steamer *Archangel*, took troops of the 30th Brigade to Calais.

She then took part in the Dunkirk evacuation and rescued 9,500 men in seven trips. A bomb passed straight through her and exploded under her on 2 June 1940 making a hole in the starboard side. The master ordered everyone to the port side, raising the hole out of the water, enabling mattresses and wood

to fill it. She got to Ramsgate and disembarked the troops. She later sailed to Deptford and was repaired. The *Royal Daffodil* also survived machine-gun and torpedo attacks.

She was refitted after the war and sailed from Gravesend or Tilbury to cruise the French coast. She also called at Southend and Margate after a few seasons on this route. She was able to land in France from 1954, with passports, and from 1955 without passports, and later had live musical entertainment provided by the top performers of the day. But these cruises were unprofitable and in 1966 *Royal Daffodil* was sold for scrapping in Ghent, Belgium. Her last journey to the breakers along the Terneuzen Canal under her own power was shown on BBC TV in 1967.

PS Royal Eagle

Royal Eagle was built for GSN in 1932 by Cammell Laird & Co Ltd at Birkenhead. Her tonnage was 1,539 grt, length 292.1ft and her width was 36.7ft. She also had triple-expansion steam engines and could carry 2,000 passengers on the Margate/Ramsgate service. *Royal Eagle* was launched on 24 February 1932 and completed on 14 May 1932. She ran daily trips in the summer from Tower Bridge to Southend, Ramsgate and Margate.



The Crested Eagle and the Royal Eagle at Southend Pier



HMS *Royal Eagle*. 1940

Royal Eagle was one of three steamers; the *Royal*, the *Crested*, and the *Golden Eagle*, which went into wartime service. In September 1939 she was involved in the evacuation of London children to Felixstowe, Lowestoft and Yarmouth. In 1940 she made three trips to Dunkirk and brought back some 3,000 soldiers and spent the rest of the War as an anti-aircraft vessel in the Thames estuary. The captain of the *Royal Eagle*, a lieutenant-commander, had previously been a marine superintendent and most of her officers were yachtsmen. The crew had been farmers, miners, mechanics and clerks.

In 1946 she was refitted for peacetime service at GSN's Deptford yard and on 8 June 1946 resumed her Kent coast service.

She was laid up in the Medway in August 1950 after the arrival of new GSN motor-ships. In December 1953 she was sold to the British Iron & Steel

Corporation for breaking-up and on 8 January 1954 went to Grays to be broken up by T W Ward & Co.

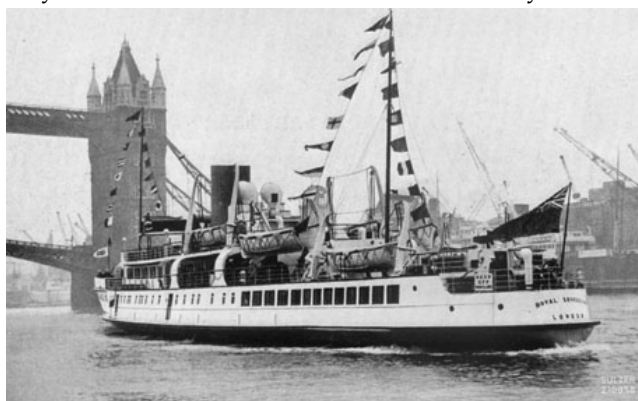
Earlier Royal Sovereigns

There seem to have been at least two previous *Royal Sovereigns*. On the paddle steamers index on the internet a *Royal Sovereign II* is noted with no mention of a previous *Royal Sovereign I*. This *Royal Sovereign II* was built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co Ltd in 1893 with a compound diagonal steam engine and owned successively by the London & East Coast Express Steamship Service Ltd, the Victoria Steamboat Association Ltd, New Palace Steamers Ltd, Mr A W Pickard, Royal Sovereign SS Co Ltd, RS Steamship Co Ltd, and then finally being sold to GSN at the end of her career for £5,540. She was in service from 1893–1929 and her tonnage was 891grt. She operated on the Kent coast service to Margate and Ramsgate from London. At one time she was said to be 'London's favourite steamer'. *Royal Sovereign's* funnels and mast were collapsible to enable her to pass under London Bridge and she had bathrooms, a barber's shop, book and confectionery stalls, and other facilities. She was not requisitioned for the First World War and was laid up at Tilbury for the duration. After purchase by Royal Sovereign Steamship Co (registered in the name of Mr A W Pickard) when the war was over, she was the only public pleasure steamer in excess of 100 grt sailing the Thames. She remained so until the GSN's *Golden Eagle* recommenced sailings in May 1920. She was eventually bought by GSN as a stop-gap to replace *Eagle* but sailed for only one season, in 1929, and in February 1930 was sold for scrapping in Holland. Her ornately carved paddle box was rescued by the Edwardian collector William E Groom and has survived.

The numbering in this article is for those ships owned for most of their careers by GSN though of course the ships never carried I, II, or III and were registered solely as, e.g., *Royal Sovereign*.

MV Royal Sovereign I: 1937–1940

New to GSN/New Medway Steam Packet Co the *MV Royal Sovereign I* was built by William Denny & Brothers, Dumbarton, and launched on 28 May 1937. She was 269ft 6in long and 47ft wide and her tonnage was 1,527grt. She had two Sulzer 2,250hp engines and twin screws. When the ship was delivered, New Medway Steam Packet Co had been taken over by GSN.



MV Royal Sovereign in peacetime on the Thames

MV *Royal Sovereign I* was used on sailings from London to Boulogne and Calais and on the 'no-passport' weekend services to Ostend for tourists costing £2 5s all-in. Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War she evacuated women and children from Essex and Kent ports to East Anglia. She was used as a troop transport between Southampton and Cherbourg and was hit by a torpedo off the Isle of Wight, but, even so, she played a significant part in the Dunkirk evacuation. She was later requisitioned by the Admiralty and became HMS *Royal Scot*.

When sailing from the Gareloch to the south of England on 9 December 1940, *Royal Sovereign I* hit a mine whilst navigating the Bristol Channel and started to sink, but there was enough time for a tug to come alongside and take on the crew. The Chief Officer was killed and others sustained injuries.

The Dunkirk Evacuation

At the Dunkirk evacuation PS *Golden Eagle* saved 1,285; PS *Medway Queen*, sailed seven times and saved 7,000; PS *Queen of Thanet* sailed four times and saved 4,000; MV *Royal Daffodil* sailed seven times and saved 9,500; PS *Royal Eagle* saved 2,657; MV *Royal Sovereign I* saved 16,000. As noted above PS *Crested Eagle* sank with the loss of 300 and the MV *Queen of the Channel I* was bombed and sunk.

The Dunkirk evacuation, code-named Operation Dynamo, also known as the 'Miracle of Dunkirk', organised the evacuation of Allied soldiers from the beaches and harbour of Dunkirk, between 27 May and 4 June 1940. Large numbers of Belgian, British, and French troops were cut off and surrounded by the German army during the Battle of France and had to be rescued. In a speech in the House of Commons, Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the events in France 'a colossal military disaster', saying that 'the whole root and core and brain of the British Army had been stranded at Dunkirk and seemed about to perish or be captured'.

By the end of the eighth day, a total of 338,226 soldiers had been rescued by a hastily assembled fleet of over 800 vessels. Many of the troops were able to embark from the harbour's protective mole onto 39 British destroyers and other large ships, while others had to wade out from the beaches, waiting for hours in the shoulder-deep water. Some were ferried from the beaches to the larger ships by the famous little ships of Dunkirk, a flotilla of hundreds of merchant marine boats, fishing boats, pleasure craft, and lifeboats called into service for the emergency. The BEF lost 68,000 soldiers during the French campaign and had to abandon nearly all of their tanks, vehicles, and other equipment. The Admiralty chose pleasure steamers for this service because of their relatively shallow draught which enabled them to get alongside piers and moles which larger ships could not.

MV Royal Sovereign II: 1948–2008

After the Second World War, GSN ordered a replacement vessel for *Royal Sovereign I* from William Denny and *Royal Sovereign II* was launched on 7 May 1948 and completed her maiden voyage on 24 July

1948 on sailing from Tower Pier to Ramsgate with calls at Tilbury, Southend and Margate. She also sailed to the Continent. She was 285ft 0in long and 48ft 0in wide and her draught was 8ft 9in. Her tonnage was 1,850 grt and she had two Sulzer 12 cylinder 2,250hp engines with two screws. Her service speed: was 21 knots and she carried 1,783 passengers.



She was similar to *Royal Sovereign I* but had a covered observation lounge on the sun deck and a large lounge on the promenade deck. The main deck, fore and aft, had two dining rooms seating 96 and 140 passengers, respectively.

During 1966 *Royal Sovereign II* sailed the cross-Channel routes while based at Great Yarmouth for trips to Calais. These routes were additional to local coastal excursions but they did not last long, probably succumbing to roll-on/roll-off vehicle ferries.

In 1967 Townsend Brothers bought her and converted her to carry a maximum of 24 lorries between Dover and Zeebrugge. She was renamed *Autocarrier* for this service. *Autocarrier* was sold in 1973 to Societa Patenopea di Navigazione of Naples for a ferry service between Naples and Ischia. She was modified and renamed *Ischia* for this route. During 1975 she went to Navigazione Toscana, Livorno, for services to Portoferraio on Elba but in the 1980s she was back on the Naples–Ischia service for Traghetti Pozzuoli SrL. *Royal Sovereign II* was sold in late 2007 and broken up in Aliaga, Turkey.

Conclusion

It is a great shame that we can no longer at any time in the Summer go along to Tower Pier and cruise to Southend or further. The memory of cruising down the Thames will always stay with me and we must hope that PS *Waverley* will continue to arrive each Autumn to revive those memories, or, at least, *Kingswear Castle* can still take us from Chatham along the Medway.

TED MARTIN

Abridge aerodrome¹

Introduction

This article attempts to capture the brief, colourful history of Abridge aerodrome in the 1930s. The aerodrome lay about half a mile north-west of Abridge village and, like the nearby and contemporary civil airfields at Chigwell² and Maylands,³ had a short life before disappearing into obscurity. Its role in local aviation was taken by Stapleford, which remains in use today.

Flying clubs

Until the outbreak of the First World War anyone could take to the air for as long as the primitive aero engines of the time would keep him or her aloft. When peace came, the Government determined that private flying would have to be controlled, and the Air Navigation Act of 1919 enabled the new Air Ministry to issue licences, certify aircraft and regulate airfields.

The cost of aircraft ownership was comparatively high in relation to the use to which one could be put, so, as the nation became more 'air-minded', private flying developed as a recreational activity along club lines. From 1925, the Air Ministry began to give financial assistance to flying clubs equipped with aeroplanes produced in the United Kingdom and suitable for private flying. The effect was to reduce the cost of learning to fly – down to £25 in some cases – and to boost the production of affordable light aircraft.

The Abridge site

1932: Of the site that was eventually to become Abridge aerodrome, the first recorded mention I have found is on 12 November 1932, when Wilfred John Lewington of 'Branscombe', Gilbert Street, Waltham Cross, applied to the Air Ministry for a licence for an aerodrome at Abridge. On the application form, Lewington stated that the aerodrome was to be permanent and for both private and public use. With the application was a map annotated by Flight Lieutenant Walter Bannister⁴ showing the aerodrome site and adjacent land.

An Air Ministry inspection on 16 November reported that the site was about 600 yards from the Abridge–Theydon Bois road at Piggotts Farm. Approach was by a grass cart track, which was to be re-surfaced and made good enough to take motor vehicles. The site itself had a very good surface with a slight slope from north to south; the approaches generally were very good. The inspector noted that to the north were several trees which would be cut down, in addition to some along the northern boundary of the adjacent field on the eastern side. To the south were five more trees, and a further five were on the western boundary south of Longshore Copse, all of which would be felled. He reported that a small hangar and a clubhouse would be erected in the south-eastern corner; and that the field to the east would be included in the aerodrome as soon as negotiations were complete. The inspector considered the aerodrome safe for the instruction of pupils on light aircraft. The licence for a private airfield was issued on 29 November for one year and the aerodrome was to be known as 'Loughton aerodrome (Abridge)'.

1933: By February 1933, the field to the east had been incorporated into the aerodrome, and Wilfred Lewington was proposing to extend northwards in order to give a 600-yard run in all directions. He was keen for the aerodrome to be licensed for 'all types of aircraft', but the Air Ministry was reluctant to do so until the extension was completed, requiring some

trees to be felled on the western boundary and obstructions removed.

Lewington was also making progress on erecting a hangar and clubhouse; the Lewisham Timber Company had provided architectural drawings for these. A single-storey wooden clubhouse was to be on the southern boundary, containing a club room fronted by a veranda overlooking the landing ground, with a bar, a kitchen and men's and women's dressing rooms at the rear. To the north of the clubhouse, along the eastern boundary, was to be a steel hangar and, immediately to its north, initially one and later three steel lock-up sheds.

In March 1933, Commercial Airways (Essex) was registered as a limited company, with Lewington as managing director. He had acquired a seven-year lease on the aerodrome site from the landowners – Bertie Padfield of Home Farm, Chigwell, and the Whitbread Company. The activities of Commercial Airways were given as regular air services to several British cities, air taxi and charter work, flying tuition, joy-riding, stunt exhibitions, parachuting and wing-walking. From time to time, Commercial Airways later announced that services from Abridge would start shortly, including a daily schedule to Glasgow via Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh; it also aimed 'to work lines of aerial conveyances between Loughton aerodrome and all other parts of the world'. Nothing came of these proposals.

Commercial Airways assisted in forming the East Anglian Aero Club, also based at Abridge. Others in that operation were Walter Bannister (chief flying instructor) and P H Wellum (display secretary). The club's president was Claude Champion de Crespigny, and the chairman was Vernon Blanchard. Advertisements for flying training at Abridge started to appear from March 1933, and by late May the club had 30 members.

John Lockwood MP officially opened the aerodrome on 17 June 1933 before a crowd of 500 spectators. The press reported that several De Havilland Moth aircraft, a Bristol Fighter, a Fokker F VIIA high-wing monoplane (known as 'The Spider') and a Hillman's Airways' Dragon aircraft were present; and that 11-year-old John Lipton, Britain's youngest pilot, gave a flying display. David Kinnear, the chief flying instructor of the Broxbourne-based London General Omnibus Company (LGOC) Flying Club was there, too.

On 6 July 1933, Commercial Airways placed an advertisement in *Flight* magazine offering business and pleasure flights, air taxis and flying tuition, and promising transport 'to convey you to London's nearest aerodrome'. From the following week the advertisements appeared under the name of the East Anglian Aero Club, offering Central Flying School-trained instructors and advanced dual aerobatics.

On 23 July, more than 4,000 people attended an air display at Abridge given by the LGOC Flying Club at which 'aerial combat between Flight Lieutenant Bannister and Mr D Kinnear, chief instructor LGOC Flying Club, proved thrilling, as did the high speed aerobatics'. Another display was given at Abridge on

1 October 1933, when the British Hospitals Air Pageant⁵ arrived from Slough.

Although Walter Bannister was the East Anglian Aero Club's chief flying instructor, he failed to keep his licence endorsed for instruction and was soon before the Epping magistrate. In November 1933, *The Essex Chronicle* reported that the 'Defendant said he committed the offence through a misunderstanding of the regulations. He thought he was entitled to give instruction to members of the Flying Club'. Bannister was fined £10 with 21s costs.

On 1 December, a site inspection showed that further work was still required before an 'all types' licence could be issued: thistles and weeds needed to be removed, boundary markers moved further north, and the whole site required further rolling. The existing licence was renewed, but only for three months and use was restricted to three aircraft.

1934: In February 1934, the East Anglian Aero Club held its first dinner and dance (probably not in the Abridge clubhouse). During the speeches, Wilfred Lewington expressed the hope that the club would soon receive a government subsidy. That same month, the Air Ministry reported that Lewington had not felled the trees to make the aerodrome suitable for an 'all types' licence; he would have to be content with a 'private use' licence. The Ministry also confirmed that the site's official name would now be 'Abridge aerodrome'. In May, the East Anglian Aero Club became a limited company and its first directors were Lewington, Herbert Linwood, Bertie Padfield and Norman Kilian. From then on the club began to receive Air Ministry subsidies.

Flight magazine advertised an air display at Abridge for 24 May: the East Anglian Aero Club's grounds would be open to the public and flying demonstrations were to be given by the Sky Devils Air Circus. A large Armstrong Whitworth Argosy airliner was present at the display and took passengers on short flights.

June saw the opening of nearby Stapleford aerodrome⁶ a mile and a half east of Abridge village and used by Hillman Airways (having moved there from Maylands). The opening of Stapleford combined with neglect at Abridge ultimately sealed the fate of Abridge aerodrome.



This is the only photograph of Abridge aerodrome that has come to light, from September 1934, showing preparations for a three-way race between a De Havilland DH80A Puss Moth, an MG T-series car and a motorbike. The hangar's slightly damaged roof may be the result of Neville Browning's accident there earlier that month.

Following a minor crash at the aerodrome in September, the pilot, Neville Browning of Stanford Rivers, with Lewington and Leonard Snelling (club secretary), appeared at Epping Petty Sessions. Browning was summoned for piloting an aircraft without a licence; Lewington for failing to enter aircraft flights in the log book; and Snelling for aiding that offence. Found guilty, Browning was fined £3, and Lewington and Snelling 20s each.

1935: The East Anglian Aero Club was not a long-term success and its fortunes reached their nadir in June 1935 when two of its aircraft were damaged in a fire at the aerodrome. By the end of the year, the club was moribund and flying had temporarily ceased at Abridge.

1936: In April 1936, Lieutenant-Colonel Amos Hudson Ronan, of Ealing, applied for a private use licence for Abridge aerodrome in connection with the work of Atlas Air Services (of which Ronan was a director). He stated that he had agreement from Wilfred Lewington to take over the lease of the site, and the application anticipated training pupils, giving pleasure flights and providing private charters. An Air Ministry inspection that month reported that the aerodrome was derelict, with the surface of the landing ground so rough that it was considered unsafe for the instruction of pupils, to such an extent that it warranted withdrawal of the aerodrome's existing licence.

Lewington surrendered the licence on 16 June and, the following day, the aerodrome was declared unfit for use. Commercial Airways and the East Anglian Aero Club subsequently went into liquidation. On 18 June, the Air Ministry received a request from Atlas not to cancel the aerodrome's licence until after 28 June as it intended to hold a flying display at the aerodrome on that date. The Ministry agreed to consider a temporary licence to cover the display. This British Empire Air Display took place at Abridge on Sunday 28 June, when it attracted over 5,000 spectators.

The demise of Commercial Airways and the East Anglian Aero Club did not lead to the immediate end of Abridge aerodrome, and other operations continued there. The London Transport Sports Association Flying Club (LTSAFC) held a five-year lease on the buildings and about one-third of the site, that portion being the property of Whitbread. The aerodrome's training operations were taken over by Atlas, which operated on the other two-thirds of the site, that is, the land owned by Bertie Padfield. When LTSAFC approached Atlas with a view to collaborating and putting the whole site to one use, Atlas refused. This led to a letter of complaint from the LTSAFC to the Air Ministry.

Atlas subsequently undertook improvements to the flying surface and built a workshop. An inspection in August reported that the surface had been considerably improved, boundary markers set up, and safety equipment provided. The inspector considered the aerodrome now safe for instruction, but he also required further rolling to be undertaken and five trees in the south-west corner removed. Subject to the above, a licence was granted for one

year from 5 September. The 23 September edition of *The Aeroplane* magazine confirmed that operations from the aerodrome had restarted.

Atlas also formed the Abridge Flying Club which, by late October, had nearly 60 members. The club was registered as a limited company in November and its directors were all from Atlas.

1937: In April 1937, John 'Paddy' Flynn (an Abridge Flying Club director) attempted to smuggle an alien⁷ from France into Britain through Abridge aerodrome. Considering the case against Flynn as 'strong', the Board of Customs & Excise began an investigation and prosecution, culminating in court later in the year, at which time *The Evening News* reported:

John J Flynn, of Abridge Flying Club, Abridge, appeared on a summons alleging that he started on a voyage to a place outside Great Britain and Northern Ireland from a place other than a Customs aerodrome contrary to the Air Navigation Consolidation Order, 1923, landed at a place other than a Customs aerodrome contrary to the order, and failed to report his arrival forthwith to an officer of Customs and Excise or a police constable.

Flynn was found guilty, fined £5 and ordered to pay £5 costs.

Also in April, Coronation Air Displays performed at Abridge before visiting 32 other towns in England.

In May, two young fliers lost their lives after setting out from Abridge. They were 26-year-old Arthur Campling and his passenger, 23-year-old Peter Scott. Campling was a Pilot Officer with RAF No 151 Squadron at North Weald; Scott was a medical student at the London Hospital. The aircraft was a De Havilland Moth, which belonged to the Abridge Flying Club and crashed while performing aerobatics over the fields between Loughton and Theydon Bois (see also *Newsletter 208* – Editor).

I can find little record of much subsequent activity at Abridge, and the aerodrome went into another decline. That summer, an Air Ministry inspector reported that 'the aerodrome in its present neglected state may be regarded as a source of danger' and recommended that its licence be withdrawn or suspended. In the meantime, the Ministry had noted that Stapleford was to be used for RAF Volunteer Reserve purposes and, at the end of July, concluded that it would be preferable, in the interests of flying safety, for all flying activity at Abridge aerodrome to cease. Consequently, on 17 August, Abridge aerodrome's licence was suspended and, on 1 September, it was revoked.

No further commercial or instructional flying was allowed at Abridge, but over the following months and into the next year a succession of flying clubs and individuals enquired about using the site, all of which the Air Ministry turned down.

1938: In January 1938, an inspector assessed the state of the disused Abridge aerodrome and reported:

A deserted club-house, with its windows smashed, and a hangar, apparently used as a cow-shed, still stand in the SE corner . . . Abridge was originally licensed as long ago as 1932, when our licensing requirements demanded a very much lower safety factor than that which we now advocate. It is therefore recommended that no licence to use the

Abridge site for instructional purposes should now be issued.

The Ministry subsequently noted 'in view of the pronounced slope and the inadequacy of the effective dimensions of this site, we are unable to recommend the issue of an instructional licence'. Internal Ministry correspondence continued:

We are open to the challenge that we previously permitted instructional work to be carried out at Abridge, but it should be remembered that this site has already passed through many hands who have taken little, if any, action to keep it in good condition. The position of Abridge was however compromised when Stapleford was developed and the fact that Stapleford has now been taken over by the RAF renders it really essential that one of these aerodromes should be discontinued.

1939 and later: Despite having closed, Abridge aerodrome is marked on a Luftwaffe aerial reconnaissance photograph, probably taken in May 1939.



Despite having closed, Abridge aerodrome is identified with a large letter 'A' on this Luftwaffe reconnaissance photograph, probably taken in May 1939.

The clubhouse appears on the Ordnance Survey 6-inch and 25-inch maps surveyed in 1938–40; the hangar and a lock-up appear on the 1938 survey, too. The clubhouse survived for maybe a decade or more after the aerodrome closed and is visible on Google Earth's historic imagery, dated 31 December 1945 (which date I believe is incorrect because most trees seem to be in full leaf). The site has long since returned to agricultural use and was bisected by the construction of the M11 motorway in 1974.

Appeal for information

This article is a summary of a more detailed history that I am researching. If anyone has any information about Abridge aerodrome, in particular photographs as these seem particularly scarce, or about Walter Bannister's life, I should be most pleased to hear from you.

Notes

1. The terms 'aerodrome' and 'airfield' are often used interchangeably. In its strictest sense, 'aerodrome' describes a large airfield with more than basic facilities. The site at Abridge was really no more than a small airfield with few facilities, but I have used 'aerodrome' throughout since that term is used in most of the records and contemporary reports about the location.

2. This was on the northern side of Forest Road, Hainault, on the Ilford/Dagenham border – see the author's article 'Chigwell Airfield' in *Ilford Historical Society Newsletter*, No 118, August 2015. See also *Newsletter 189*.

3. This was west of the A12, between Romford and Brentwood – see Anthony Philpot, *Maylands Aerodrome 1928–1940: The Story of a Small Independent Airfield* (Ian Henry Publications, 2003).

4. Walter Robert Bannister (1892–1934), a resident of Winns Avenue, Walthamstow and then Blackacre Road, Theydon Bois, was later an ill-fated pilot with Hillman's Airways. On 2 October 1934, when piloting a De Havilland DH89 Dragon VI from Stapleford aerodrome to Paris, his aircraft crashed into the sea off Folkestone. Walter and his six passengers were all killed. See also *Newsletter* 189.

5. The British Hospitals Air Pageant was one of several display and joy-riding concerns set up by Henry Barker and James McEwen King. They traded as British Hospitals Air Pageants in 1933 and under various names in each year thereafter – Sky Devils Air Circus (1934), Jubilee Air Displays (1935), British Empire Air Displays (1936) and Coronation Air Displays (1937).

6. Stapleford was grandly named 'Essex Airport', but it was also sometimes confusingly referred to as 'Abridge aerodrome'. See also *Newsletter* 189.

7. This was Louis Edouard Rosenthal, who had been refused admission to Britain by the immigration authorities.

ALAN D SIMPSON

Mystery solved!



In *Newsletter* 195 of November–December 2012 we published this mystery photograph, thought then to be of the Buckhurst Hill Bowls Club.

Whilst the text remains correct that the house Ingersley in Palmerston Road was the base of the Buckhurst Hill Hard Courts Tennis Club, it has now been established that the photograph actually related to the house named The Bowls, in Chigwell. It is believed that the house was built in 1915 but it was not the first building of that name on the site.

Chris Pond has acquired from Loughton Library these other views of The Bowls, shortly before its demolition in the 1960s. The development which replaced it was built by local builder T A Clark (who also built the first houses in Ardmore Lane, Buckhurst Hill, in the late 1950s, and many other houses in Chigwell) and the show flat, having three bedrooms and two bathrooms, was for sale at £18,250 in 1969 (nowadays £450,000 to £750,000!).



According to the *Victoria County History of Essex*, The Bowles was already in existence by 1671. One of the early occupants of house (the spelling varied between Bowles and Bowls) may have been the Shippey family, passing through the Hodgsons and then on to the Suarts.

William Hodgson, a merchant, of Coleman Street, was born in 1728 (according to Bouyssi) the son of John Hodgson of Bradford, and his wife Ann Leach of Keighley. He married at St Stephen Coleman Street on 18 October 1768 Mary Shippey of Chigwell.

He was governor of the General Dispensary for the Relief of the Poor, Aldersgate Street and in 1777 he was on the committee for the relief of American prisoners.

William Hodgson died on 20 October 1784 and was buried on 23 October 1784 at St Bartholomew the Great in the City of London. His will left everything to his wife Mary, who later ordered the sale of the leasehold premises at 17 Coleman Street. Mary died on 6 November 1837 at Chigwell and her will mentioned her late father Philip Shippey and his wife Mary, and her children by William Hodgson who were:

- (1) Ann (1769–1843), who married the wine merchant and cricketer Benjamin Aislabie (1774–1842), see below, in Chigwell on 13 March 1798.
- (2) Mary, born in 1770, who married John Wilkins at Chigwell on 1 May 1790; their daughter Caroline married John William Schneider (1798–1853) in 1820 and many of their children were born in Italy, see below.
- (3) William, born in either 1771 or 1773, who died in 1796, unmarried at St Vincent.
- (4) John (possibly baptised as Philip in 1774) who was listed in a local directory as occupying the Bowles in 1848 and 1855, and was the occupier at the time of the 1851 census when he was described as unmarried, and a landed proprietor and fund-holder (he died in 1858).
- (5) Harriet, born in 1777, who occupied the Bowles at the time of the 1841 census (she died in 1847).
- (6) Henry, born in 1778, who died in 1822 in Madras.
- (7) Charles, born in 1779, who died in 1824 at sea in the East Indies.
- (8) Emma, born in 1781, see below.
- (9) Christopher, born in 1783.

Emma became the wife of Edward Suart – they had married on 28 August 1811 in Chigwell which was Emma's home. Edward senior was from Lancaster.

They had three children, the eldest being another Edward (middle name Montague) who was born in Liverpool on 2 March 1813 (he married Catherine Mary Harriet Schneider in 1845. She had been born in Cremona in 1821, the daughter of John William Schneider and Caroline Wilkins, the daughter of John Wilkins and Mary (Hodgson, as above)). Alfred Suart was Edward and Emma's third son, born in 1819 in Chigwell, where presumably his parents had moved to from Lancashire. He died in Tunbridge Wells in 1882, the same year as his brother William.

Their second son was William Swainson Suart, born on 30 July 1814, also in Liverpool. His obituary was as follows:

Major William Swainson Suart, RE . . . in 1832 he entered the Military College of the East India Company at Addiscombe, and passed out at the end of the following year as Senior Cadet. In the final examination he took, with one exception, all the prizes, including the sword for good conduct. After leaving the Military College he passed a year at Chatham in the School of Military Engineering. On proceeding to India in 1836 he became Assistant to the Civil Engineer and Architect in charge of all the Government public buildings in the Fort Town and Island of Bombay . . . From 1839 to 1843 Lieutenant Suart was Engineer to the Municipality of Bombay, during which time he had charge of the roads, drains, buildings, and of the town and island,

and designed and erected new sluices for the drainage . . . He also laid out new streets and roads, with the necessary bridges . . . He also built the Bombay Theatre and the Byculla Club . . . in December 1848 he was transferred to Aden as Executive Engineer, being promoted to Commanding Engineer in 1851. He remained there for six years, erecting forts. He retired from the East India Company's service, with the rank of Major, in November 1857.

On his return to England, Major Suart settled at Chigwell, in Essex, when he became a JP, and took an active part in local affairs. He was Chairman of the Governors of the Chigwell Grammar School, and was mainly instrumental in raising it from a school of under twenty boys to one of upwards of a hundred and fifty. He was also churchwarden of Chigwell for twenty three years, Chairman of the Sewer Authority of the Commission of Dagenham Level, of the visiting justices of Ilford Gaol, and served on the committee of the Essex Lunatic Asylum, as well as many other local institutions. He was most regular in his attendance to all magisterial duties, and his clear perception and strictly fair construction of all matters, gained him the respect and esteem of all with whom he came in contact. In addition to his heavy local work, he was engaged in the direction and management of several public companies. His somewhat premature death on 23 May 1882 was the result of overwork from his multifarious duties, public and private.

His first child Emma Elizabeth was born in Aden (she married Henry James Powell, glass manufacturer, son of Nathanael Powell of Luctons, Buckhurst Hill¹). Major Suart is listed as occupying The Bowles in the censuses of 1861, 1871 and 1881. He was the best known occupant of The Bowles with his wife Elizabeth Murray Suart, their five children and six servants. Elizabeth died aged 56 in 1883.

The later Bowls, illustrated on page 15, was the home of Alan Chancellor Nesbitt (1874–1949), a barrister, in the 1920s.

In the 1930s the occupant was Clarence Breeze, the son of Stratford herbalist and well-known anti-vaccinator Louis Breeze (1824–1897). Clarence was born in 1888 and married in 1912 Ruby Mary Bates (1892–1960). They had four children, Clarence dying in 1966.

At a recent auction in the USA, the two paintings below were sold. They were family portraits belonging to the Suart family; sadly they were sold to different buyers and so are now separated

Benjamin Aislabie

Benjamin Aislabie's cricket career began in 1795 with the once famous Homerton Club, and his last match was in 1841 (Cambridge *v* MCC) when he was 67. He was a popular player although not good at the wicket and not good in the field. He weighed 19 or 20 stones and in the latter part of his life always had a man to run for him.²

Notes

1. For the Powell family see Richard Morris, *The Powells in Essex and their London Ancestors* (LDHS, 2002),

2. From the article 'A Famous Essex Cricket Match' by George Caunt, in *Woodford Times*, the Newsletter of Woodford Historical Society, Autumn 2015, originally published in *Essex Countryside*, Vol 23, No 219, April 1975.

Acknowledgments

With thanks to François Bouyssi of Villemomble, France and websites: www.mprobb.wordpress.com; www.icevirtuallibrary.com;

www.chrisrroughan.webs.com/huntersandboddies.htm;
www.edpopehistory.co.uk



Portrait of William Hodgson, his wife Mary, and their children, attributed to Hugh Barron: Inscribed on the letter in Mr. Hodgson's hand: To the Committee for Relief of American Prisoners. Oil on canvas 42¾ x 55¼ inches (108.5 x 145.1 cm [sic]). Said to have been painted at the family seat at Bowles, Chigwell, Essex, 1779. Provenance: Mrs Smart* (from a label on the reverse). William Hodgson (1725–1784), a London merchant, was an unsung hero of the American Revolution, collecting and dispensing money for the relief of American prisoners of war. On 26 December 1783, in recognition of his work on the prisoners' behalf, Benjamin Franklin wrote to the Continental Congress from Paris to suggest Hodgson as a possible American consul to Great Britain.

(From www.doylenewyork.com).

*In the description of the painting, the reference to 'Mrs Smart' may well be a mis-reading of Mrs Suart.



'Benjamin Aislabie with his Hunter'. John Nost Sartorius, British, 1759–1828, Signed J N Sartorius pinxit and dated 1797. Oil on canvas, 39 ¾ x 49 ¾ inches (101 x 126.5 cm).

(From www.doylenewyork.com).

LYNN HASELDINE JONES/CHRIS POND

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Newsletter Editor: Lynn Haseldine Jones, The Lodge, Snaresbrook House, Woodford Road, London E18 2UB (020 8530 3409)
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