LOUGHTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Victoria Tavern and its grounds

CHRIS POND

Mrs Bryant of Forest Road recently sent me a copy of the Abstract of Title to her house, No 122 Forest Road. This is one of a set of cottages built in Edwardian times, half fronting Forest Road, the others on the same plot facing Smarts Lane. The deeds give a valuable insight into the development of the Victoria Tavern and land to the east.

The whole of the area of the Dale Estate (the area between the High Road, the Triangle, Smarts Lane, and Forest Road) was an ancient freehold, which was bought in the mid-nineteenth century by Marmaduke Mathews. He was the first person ever to develop an estate in Loughton for housing or shops, and started in the late 1850s with the Royal Standard and Olive Branch (later Hollybush) pubs and the shops between them and the Police Station. This was a prime site, directly opposite what was then the Railway Station, on the site of Lopping Hall.

In 1865, George Durling of Loughton had bought part of this land – from the rear of what became the Victoria Tavern to the present eastern boundary of No 118 Forest Road – about 250 ft long and 168 ft wide, or just a fraction under an acre – with the aid of a loan of £1,500 from the Temperance Permanent Benefit Building Society. He then remortgaged it with some private lenders, Messrs. Miller, Carey and Grant. The Victoria was probably built about this time, as in the 1871 census, it is recorded as a pub. Then Durling defaulted on his payments, so the land reverted to Miller, etc. Quite what Durling had originally intended for the land we do not know, but it could not have been a pub, as the Temperance Building Society rules forbade this! There is a story that the Victoria was originally a tea garden: perhaps Durling's change of lender gives some credence to this story.

George Durling and his wife, Mary, were from Kent. He had been born at Northfleet in 1817, she at Bromley. In 1854, they were in Stepney, as that is where their daughter, Emma, was born. In 1871, the three of them lived at the Victoria with two bar staff (Walter George and James White) plus William Moye, a lodger, who, like many of the folk in Forest Road and in the area, worked on the railway. George Durling also owned a pair of cottages in Forest Road.

Miller and his associates in turn sold the whole plot, including the pub, to Thomas Palmer, a bottled beer merchant, of Ratcliff, Middlesex, near Stepney, for £940. Thomas Palmer leased the whole plot to the Commercial Brewery of Stepney for 28 years. Palmer died in 1900, and his executors sold the freehold to the Brewery Company.

In 1908, the brewery sold about two-thirds of the land to Joseph Lowrey, who lived in the Hermitage, a very large house in Upper Park. He agreed drainage details with the Loughton UDC, and erected the two terraces of cottages (later Nos 118 to 140 Forest Road and 137 to 161 Smarts Lane). Incidentally, the plans show the Victoria had two large barns or sheds on what is now the car park, which were probably the associated tea gardens buildings, which catered for the less alcoholically inclined day trippers to the Forest just as the pubs did for the imbibers. Mrs Bryant says that an old inhabitant of Forest Road when she moved there in 1963 told her the ground on which the cottages were built was used as a fairground, and bioscope in winter.

The cottages are rather similar to others put up in Loughton at the same era, for instance, in Forest Way, The Drive, King's Green. Some of these are known to have been designed by Horace White, who also ran a rent-collection service for landlords, and was an estate agent and the LUDC's surveyor as well.

If you have old deeds relating to your house, please do photocopy them, or show them to me. There's a tremendous amount of local history in these documents.

Cats Brains in Loughton

STEPHEN PEWSEY

In the 1739 Demesne Survey of the Parish of Loughton, Robert Stiles (1663–1739), a substantial landowner in the manor of Debden Hall, possessed a broad swathe of farmland surrounding the manor house. Old field-names were carefully recorded in these surveys, and Debden's fields included such straightforward descriptive titles as Goose Acres and Horse Leys. However, one of the fields had the extraordinary name of Cats Brains. This was a five-acre field which, together with a group of other fields in the vicinity had the collective name of Hassops. This was mentioned in a document of c1400 as Harshipps, which by 1585 had become a small roadside green, which was still in existence in the mid-nineteenth century. The name may be from Anglo-Saxon hros si, meaning horse path.

But how did Cats Brains come by its bizarre monicker? This was a problem which defeated William Chapman Waller, Loughton's best-known nineteenth-century historian. In his 10-part survey, Essex Field-Names, Waller struggles to find a logical meaning for the name:

> "The word 'cat' in this connexion seems generally to be derived from the surname, and the combination 'Cats Brains' is somewhat startling. At first glance it seems as though it must be a corruption of something quite different. By chance, however, I came on an early grant to the Abbot of Bordesley, co. Warwick, of lands 'between Catchesbrayn and Grosfurlong' . . . which indicates that the modern form is not so far removed from the ancient, whatever the meaning of that may be."

Waller later discovered a further example of a field called Cats Brains in Oxfordshire, and it is now known that there are in fact nine examples in that county, six in Gloucestershire, two in Wiltshire, two in Surrey, and one each in Dorset, Essex (our Loughton one), Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Shropshire, and Warwickshire.

In fact the name has a straightforward if slightly gruesome meaning. It derives from Middle English cattes-brayen, and is a medieval expression for soil

consisting of rough clay mixed with small pebbles, not unlike the consistency of – well, you get the picture.

Rather remarkably, Cats Brains still exists. The substantial hill slope on farmland immediately east of Willingale Road roughly between Audley Gardens and St Thomas More church is Cats Brains. A footpath from the Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall and Debden Park school leading to Theydon Park Road in Theydon Bois takes the wayfarer right past Cats Brains, which lies on the left. Like many medieval fields, Cats Brains has recently been amalgamated with others to form a larger 'prairie' field, but this broad shoulder of hillside remains a distinctive, and certainly the most strangely-named, Loughton landmark.

Sources:

Field, John , *English Field Names – A Dictionary* (1972)
Waller, William Chapman, *Essex Field-Names* [Part I – The Hundred of Ongar and the Half Hundreds of Harlow and Waltham] (1903)
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In tin tethera fethera fip: an ancient Essex counting rhyme

STEPHEN PEWSEY

In 1836, an old lady from Epping muttered this obscure chant to a language researcher:

in, tin, tethera, fethera, fip,
lethera, methera, co, debbera, dick,
in-dick, tin-dick, tethera-dick, lethera-dick, bumfit,
in-a-bumfit, tin-a-bumfit, lether-a-bumfit,
mether-a-bumfit, gigot

This apparent gibberish is actually a direct link back to the end of Roman Britain and the struggle between Saxons and Britons for mastery of the island.

There are versions of this chant – which is in reality a counting system – from various parts of England, but the fact that it was known in the Epping Forest area of Essex sheds some light on the early history of the county.

This counting system is known as the Score because, in various forms, it usually runs from one to twenty. The Score is normally explained as an ancient system for counting sheep, the shepherd counting them twenty at a time, making a notch in a stick, then counting the next twenty, and so on.

Systematic recording of surviving examples of the Score began in the late nineteenth century, with numerous versions noted from Cumbria and Yorkshire, a sprinkling from Durham and Northumberland, a few in the Scottish Lowlands, a couple from Lancashire, one or two in Wiltshire in the West Country, and solitary examples from Essex, East Anglia, Lincolnshire, and Sussex. Since then, further research has uncovered examples from Fenland, Wiltshire and one or two other spots.

So, for instance, a Wiltshire version runs:

ain, tain, tethera, methera, mimp,
aita, slayta, laura, dora, dik,
ain-a-dik, tain-a-dik, tethera-dik, methera-dik, mit,
ain-a-mit, tain-a-mit, tethera-mit, gethera-mit, ghet

All languages are of course related, and the Score is noticeably similar to modern Welsh:

un, dau, tri, pedwar, pump,
chwech, saith, wyth, naw, deg,
un ar ddeg, deuddeg, tri ar ddeg, pedwar ar ddeg, pymtheg,
un ar bymtheg, dau ar bymtheg, deunaw, pedwar ar bymtheg, ugain

Welsh, together with Irish Gaelic, Scots Gaelic, Breton, Cornish and Manx form part of the 'Celtic' group of languages, while English is more closely related to Frisian, Dutch and German in a 'Germanic' group. Both groups are further related to the family of languages derived from Latin, such as French and Spanish, as well as Greek. In fact almost every European language, and languages from a large swathe of western Asia (such as Persian and Kurdish) and northern India (such as Hindi), all come from a single bloc of similar languages, called Indo-European.

Because the Score resembles modern Welsh, linguists suggest that it was the last remaining fragment in England of the language spoken by the 'Ancient Britons', known as British, from which Welsh and the other Celtic languages later derived. British was the language spoken in these islands from at least 500 BC to about AD 500, though of course many Britons would have spoken Latin too (or perhaps only Latin) during the period when Britain was part of the Roman Empire (AD 43–410). The Anglo-Saxons began colonising the island from about AD 400, and by about 600 had begun to isolate the Britons into what is now Wales, south-west England and Cumbria where, separated, the British language began to diverge into Welsh, Cornish and an extinct form, Cumbric.

If the Score is a surviving remnant of British, how could it have survived for a millennium and a half after the Saxon conquest, centuries after Anglo-Saxon replaced Celtic British, as the language we use today? The clue lies in the uses of the Score. It was mainly known as a method of counting sheep, and sheep-farming is a form of agriculture which changed little over generations and centuries. Sheep-farming also tends to take place in the remotest and most isolated areas, and the trade of shepherd is naturally a lonely one. The other users of the Score were old ladies, mainly for keeping count in knitting, and children, in counting-out games. These are also areas of language that hardly change over many generations.

To get back to the Epping example, how did a system of sheep-counting survive in this part of Essex? Several factors may have helped: Epping originally had a charter for two fairs, one at Whitsun (May), and one at Hallowmas (November). More importantly, these were among the very few sheep fairs in Essex (there was another at Romford). At the time of Domesday, sheep were by far the most important commodity produced by the three manors of Epping. The relative isolation of this upland, densely-forested corner of Essex could have helped the survival of the Score, unlike, say, Romford, which was more heavily populated, on a key highway and far more urbanised.

The distribution of the Score shows that its use was concentrated in areas not conquered by the Anglo-Saxons until some time after the initial wave of colonisation. The first Anglo-Saxon settlements were in Kent, Essex, Sussex, and East Anglia. In the north and west, important British kingdoms survived, in some cases for centuries. The distribution of the Score almost precisely matches those areas which remained British until at least AD 600, time enough perhaps

for the British language to survive and be transmitted to the Saxon settlers when they did arrive. In Cumbria, there was the kingdom of Rheged, in Yorkshire, Elmet, while in the West Country the kingdom of Dumnonia took centuries to overcome.

But surely Essex lay deep within the most Saxonised parts of Britain? As the Anglo-Saxon colonisation of Britain spread westwards from original bridgeheads on the east and south-east coasts, place-names contain steadily fewer Celtic elements the further east one travels, and the chances of the Score surviving ought also to decrease. However, the Saxon advance was not uniform – it was a patchy affair lasting many generations, and, in various places, British states survived, or did deals with Saxons to share power.

In Lincolnshire for instance, which was a separate kingdom for some centuries, the kings have alternate British and Saxon names, and there are documentary records of a continuing Roman-style 'Prefect' of the City of Lincoln. In the Weald of Sussex and in Fenland, there is a profound absence of Saxon burials and a suspicious silence about the area from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. And here in Essex, Saffron Walden means 'the valley of the Britons', and parish and field boundary evidence from the area indicates the survival of a distinctive Dark Age territory around the town. Between Saffron Walden and the Epping Forest area, there is a swathe of British place-names across what is an upland, fairly isolated tract with little evidence of early Saxon settlement.

Lincolnshire, Sussex, Fenland, and west Essex are thus areas where there are both isolated survivals of the Score, and survival of British 'Celtic' enclaves in a sea of Saxon colonisation and conquest. The fact that the Score was recorded at Epping is therefore important. It is additional evidence that Britons living in this neighbourhood were not all wiped out by rampaging Saxons in the early fifth century. On the contrary, they continued farming the rich soil in the west Essex valleys, tending their sheep in the uplands and bringing them to seasonal markets. Eventually, their 'Celtic' landlords would have been replaced by Saxon masters, who learnt their names for major rivers (Lea, Thames) and other places, as well as their age-old form of sheep-counting.

No-one has heard shepherds calling 'in tin tethera fethera fip' on the hills around Epping for almost two centuries; the sheep market has gone, farming and the landscape have changed drastically since 1836, and this last linguistic link with our Dark Age past has vanished. Elsewhere, too, the Score has perished, hanging on in remote North Country spots until the outbreak of the war all but swept old lifestyles away for ever.

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An Addison archive

RICHARD MORRIS

Earlier this year I visited the Epping Forest District Museum to look at the Wicken Collection of photographs of old Loughton. While there, David Hodges, one of the Museum's staff mentioned to me that they had recently been given a collection of papers and other documents by the daughter of one of Sir William Addison's executors. The Museum had not had the chance to review the archive and I offered to do so.

The archive consists of some 20 items that originally belonged to William Addison. The principal one is a manuscript of what appears to have been a book on which Addison was working in the late 1980s. The book's title is *Essex Remembered* and consists of about 150 pages in manuscript and typewritten. Chapter headings include: The Saxon Settlement, The Norman Monastic Conquest, The Evolution of the Essex Farmhouse, Essex Highways and Byways, Small Inns and Villages, Great Houses and their Families, and The Coast.

Evidence of the fairly advanced stage in the writing of the book is that there is an index and a draft for the dust jacket blurb. There is also a list of other books by the author which includes all but one of Addison's 18 published books. I am at present transcribing the text on to a computer – not an easy task, as much of Addison's handwriting is not easy to read! When this is complete I will discuss with interested parties whether and, if so, in what form, the manuscript might be published.

Other items in the archive include a volume of poems by William Addison under the title: *Winter Forest and other Poems*. This is a typescript of about 30 pages with the poems dated between 1936 and 1954. Some of the poems were published in *Country Life*. This could also be considered for publication in booklet form.

There are two scrapbooks containing reviews of Addison's books that were published between 1945 and 1955. These include: *Epping Forest: Its Literary and Historical Associations*, *The English Country Parson*, *Suffolk*, *English Spas*, *English Fairs and Markets*, *Essex Heyday*, *Audley End*, *Thames Estuary*, and *In the Steps of Charles Dickens*. The reviews appeared in newspapers throughout England and demonstrate how highly regarded Addison was as a social and landscape historian. Also included in the scrapbooks are a few letters from such notables as Winston Churchill's Private Secretary, John Betjeman and Rose Macaulay.

Both William and his wife Phoebe regularly attended church and the archive contains their own Pocket Books of Common Prayer. Phoebe, whose maiden name was Dean, came from Clitheroe and a Holy Bible and Congregational Hymnal given to her in 1917 are included in the more personal items. The Warrant granting Addison the Freedom of the City of London is included.

Sir William Addison died in November 1992 at the age of 87 years. He was born at Mitton in the Ribble Valley. He and Phoebe moved south soon after their marriage, first to Buckhurst Hill and then Loughton. Apart from his work as an historian, he was a JP and became Chairman of the Magistrates Association of England. He was a Verderer of Epping Forest for 27 years. He chaired the editorial committee of the *Victoria County History of Essex* for many years and was of course President of the then Chigwell and District Historical Society from

1962–1988. Many members will remember him from the bookshop in Loughton that he owned.

Essex Heritage (Leopard's Head Press, 1992), a series of essays presented to Sir William Addison as a tribute to his life and work for Essex history and literature, contains an excellent biography of him by Kenneth Neale.

LOUGHTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Registered Charity No 287274
President: The Rt Hon The Lord Murray of Epping Forest, OBE
Chairman: Dr Chris Pond, Forest Villa, Staples Road, Loughton IG10 1HP (020 8508 2361)
Secretary: John Howes, 97 Staples Road, Loughton IG10 1HR (020 8508 0776)
Treasurer: Mrs Eve Lockington, 19 Spring Grove, Loughton IG10 4QB (020 8508 4995)
Membership Secretary: Ian Strugnell, 22 Hatfields, Loughton IG10 1TJ
Newsletter Editor: Ted Martin, 34 Hornbeam Road, Theydon Bois CM16 7JX (01992 814445)
