

NEWSLETTER 132

MAY 1996

Price 20p, free to members

Society calendar

The Society's 1995/96 meetings covered a wide range as we journeyed through The History of Hackney took in Fishing in Barking, walked through the Lee Valley Regional Park, went In Search of Brick, were-entertained by Victorian and Edwardian Music Hall, beguiled by a Medieval Menagerie, introduced to George Scharf's London and had the bonus of A Walk Round Loughton in December. All our speakers were rewarded by being able to speak to 'house full' audiences for whom there insufficient chairs on a couple of occasions!

For the programme which starts in September, we shall be vacating the Wesley Hall, and, thanks to the officers of the Church, transferring our meetings to the Methodist Church. To make that change to more comfortable surroundings (with no chair shifting!) it has been necessary to change our meeting nights Thursday – still at 8p.m. The Society's officers appreciate that it will be less convenient for some members, although more convenient for others, but overall they believe that the change will be a welcome one.

Made in Loughton: mousetraps to pianos

Loughton is not renowned as a manufacturing town. Yet of course it does hold the monopoly in England, for the present, of one vital commodity, the banknote – everyone in the country has a little bit (or a lot) of Loughton in his or her pocket or purse. But we have made a lot of things over the years, and very little record of them remains. The Epping Forest District Museum at Waltham Abbey, for instance, has few Loughton-made goods in its collection.

We have no mirror made by the Belvedere Glass Works in the converted feeding sheds of the Shaftesbury Retreat, nor a Dandridge's 'Click' all-metal mousetrap – these were made from 1950 to 1965 in Baldwins Hill, apparently mostly for export. Has anyone preserved a '60s 'Domextra' water softener (with 'Domextra – Loughton – Essex' prominently in gold on the filler) made at the old smithy in Church Hill until 1993, or one of Davis's tennis rackets, made at the old British School, 42 Smarts Lane, until the 1920s? Madderton's in Baldwins Hill made artists' colours and paintboxes. In the '30s the Loughton Bag Manufacturing Co took over the old Post Office in Forest Road and succeeded Davis's at the old school, too. Do you have an example of any of these products or know anyone who worked for any of the concerns, including that at 92 Forest Road, and in the adjacent premises where, from about 1907, Leonard Wilson ran with his 'sleeping' partner, Samuel Wilks, an automobile works? They had the sole concession for Essex for the then popular Panhard-Levassor make of car: the chassis was imported from France, and Wilson's firm built the bodies. He was still there by the '30s, by which time he dealt with Citroen cars, and his premises remain, Loughton's longest-surviving motor business, that of Clements & Moore. Are there still any Loughton-bodied Panhard-Levassors running down to Brighton each year?

The development of Loughton after 1945 gave a new impetus to manufacturing in the district. In addition to the production of banknotes by the Bank of England Printing

Works, for many years Hilger & Watts (later GEC Sensors) made scientific instruments and sights for a range of military equipment. Nearby, Weyers Brothers made engineering items, while Knight's Pianos produced cottage pianos which were widely in demand: they were even to be found on liners. Dutch-owned Océ (UK) Ltd, formerly Ozalids, produce office machinery, including paper-cutting equipment, and coat paper for photographic work. Sadly, some of the companies have declined, but demand for Clinton Cards obviously continues to grow as their presence on the site indicates.

CHRIS POND

Correspondence

The note in the March 1996 *Newsletter 131* about prices in 1891 compared with those current today, reminds me of a story told by my father of how he would have 'a night out with the lads' for 6d (sixpence) i.e., 2½p today.

The date would be just before the Great War, probably early 1914 when he was 15 years old and living in Turpins Lane, Chigwell. The great 'spend-up' went like this:

To Stratford; bus from 'Crooked Billet', Woodford Bridge	½d
Packet of 5 Wills' 'Woodbines' cigarettes	½d
Pint of ale	1d
Halfporth of fried chips	½d
Up in 'the Gods' at Stratford Empire Music Hall	3d
Bus home from Stratford to Woodford Bridge	½d
 Total	 6d

JOHN REDFERN
Chigwell

[Mr Redfern's letter reminds me that I recently told my seven-year-old great-granddaughter of something which had cost me 'tuppence'; incomprehensible to someone who knows only 'ps'. Will we be needing to explain those when we have 'Euros'? Editor.]

Were they the days? Some local entertainment

Under the auspices of the Loughton Unionist Association a Bohemian evening was held on Wednesday at the Public Hall, which was filled with an enthusiastic audience. Colonel Lockwood, MP, member for the Epping Division, presided. The talented ladies known as the Bijou Mandoline Band performed an overture 'La Czarine', which was received with enthusiastic cheers, in response to which Miss M Plunkett gave a charming exposition of the song 'Swanee River' with mandoline accompaniment. The prince of reciters, Mr W Churcher, then demonstrated his remarkable powers as an elocutionist by giving a side-splitting interpretation of a piece entitled 'My haircutter', and in response to an undeniable encore gave 'The Well of St Keyne'.

Mr Frank Marten gave a fine rendering of Sullivan's 'Take a pair of sparkling eyes' and in reply to a vigorous re-demand obliged with the pretty song 'Sunshine above'. Mr Tom Taylor treated Pink's song 'The three individuals' with his usual felicity and in response to long and prolonged calls sang 'That's what I am weeping for', both songs being much relished by the audience.

Colonel Lockwood, who had only just recovered from an attack of influenza, said he did not feel equal to making a speech. He managed to do so, however, and 'Passing on, the gallant Colonel asked whether anybody could say that Walworth was inhabited by wicked Tories and scoundrelly landlords? No, it was inhabited by men to whom Liberal promises might be supposed to appeal.'

The remainder of the musical programme was then proceeded with, the performers acquitting themselves quite as well as in the first part. The items were as follows: Overture, 'Selection from coster songs' (encored), the Bijou Mandoline Band; humorous recitation, 'The cricket club' (encore), Mr W Churcher; song 'Honey, my honey' with mandoline accompaniment, Miss M Plunkett; song, 'My dreams' (encored), Mr Frank Marten; humorous song, 'The masquerade ball', Mr Tom Taylor. Mr G M Jenkins ably acted as accompanist.

(*Woodford Times*, 17 May 1895)

A visit to the cinema

Did you ever see a film featuring Bessie Barriscale? Never heard of her? In February 1921 she was featured in 'The Painted Soul' showing at the South Woodford cinema in George Lane. Episode 9 of 'The Black Secret' was also in the programme: seat prices 6d to 1s 3d. That was the programme for the first part of the week. The change of programme brought 'The Elusive Pimpernel' by Baroness Orczy and Episode 10 of 'The Lost City'. Additionally there were 'Marvels, Comedy, Pathé Gazettes etc'. Somehow it promotes a different view of cinema entertainment than is screened today.

Going 15 rounds in Loughton

But there was violent action to be seen in Loughton. On Tuesday, 3 February, 1921 there was an opportunity to buy a ticket for 'A great boxing tournament' at the Drill Hall which featured 'A great 15 round contest for £75' between Peter Jackson (Blackfriars) and H Mallett (St Georges). There was a '10 Round Special' and other fights, all for seat prices of 2s 4d to 5s 9d. The promoters were H Stradling of Stag Lane, Buckhurst Hill, and H Miller.

A fortnight later Jim Jefford of Buckhurst Hill, lost to Johnny Curley, but his backers matched him to a return with Curley for £20 a side at the Drill Hall in a fortnight's time; that resulted in a draw. Quite a different reward from those paid to the Brunos and Tysons today. Makes Loughton sound quite a sporting centre. But there weren't so many places in which to eat!

A sad end to 1896

Historians interested in social history tend to make good use of the files, or microfilmed copies, of local papers. They certainly help in providing items of interest (we hope!) like those above, to our readers. How disconcerting, then, to find that there is no microfilm for the *Woodford Times* for 1896 in Loughton library. The staff quickly moved into action and, after checking that a copy had not been mislaid, contacted the Newspaper Library at Colindale (part of the British Library) to learn that newspapers are filed in years and that a German bomb wiped out papers for 1896). So no items for that year for the Society's *Newsletter*!

Loughton Parish Council 1896

By the time this issue of the *Newsletter* appears, elections for parish councils for Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and Loughton will have taken place. The thought of a development which would take us back, in Loughton, to an administrative situation which last existed in 1900, sent me along to Loughton library to see what issues were agitating parish councillors a hundred years ago.

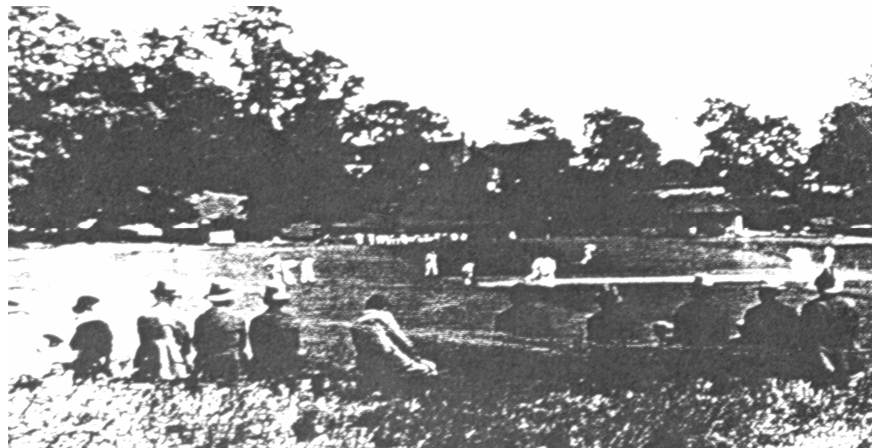
At the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 16 April 1896, the eleven members present re-elected the Revd J. W Maitland as chairman and Mr C S Foster as vice-chairman. Messrs Gussin and Skinner were re-appointed as Overseers of the Poor. Mr J W Hayward was appointed 'Assistant Overseer at a salary of £50 per annum . . . and that he find security to the amount of Fifty pounds, the provision for which to be added to his salary'. The office of Overseer of the Poor was established by the Poor Law Act 1597/8 and the job of the Overseers was to levy a poor rate and to supervise its distribution. In 1834 their duties were given to the Guardians of the Poor and the Overseers became just assessors and collectors until the office was abolished by the Rating and Valuation Act 1925.

Five committees were elected to deal with Sanitary, Finance, Allotments, Forest and Fire Brigade issues. The chairman was appointed ex-officio on committees, and a quorum for each committee was three members. The parish council agreed to meet on the first Monday of each month.

A discussion about uniforms for the fire brigade resulted in a decision 'That two pairs of boots to be provided for the Fire Brigade, and the question of uniforms to be referred to the Committee to report thereon'. Under an item headed 'Mode of Publications of names of beneficiaries of dole Charities' it was agreed that a list be prepared and left at the office of the Clerk for inspection for one month, and further 'That disposal of list be made in the Loughton and District Advertiser by advertisement'. One wonders what tongues were set wagging when the list was published.

The annual parish council meeting having agreed that there would be little business to discuss, there was no meeting in May 1896. At its June meeting the council discussed the 'Loughton Band Stand's position' when Mr Allen proposed and Mr Laurie seconded 'That having regard to the recent interview by the united Forest parishes with the Conservators as to management of plots of waste contiguous to the Highways, the Loughton Parish Council regret to find the Conservators have allowed the Band Stand to be erected on one such plot, without consulting the parish authorities'. The motion was lost, 3 members having voted for it with 5 against while 3 did not vote and 2 were absent from the division. Having dealt with the Band Stand the council turned to a subject which featured regularly in its considerations – Burial Board business. Will our successors in a local history society look back at the problems with which the new parish council will have to wrestle and think how simple they were in 1996?

E H D



The quotation from the *Woodford Times* of 18 April 1895, which we printed in the January 1996 *Newsletter 130* prompted our member, Mrs Homer, to search out from her album this photograph of spectators at Loughton Cricket Ground. It will revive memories of pleasant hours at the Cricket Ground and raise expectations of sunny days to come this season.

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