

# NEWSLETTER 133

SEPTEMBER 1996

Price 20p, free to members

---

## Society calendar

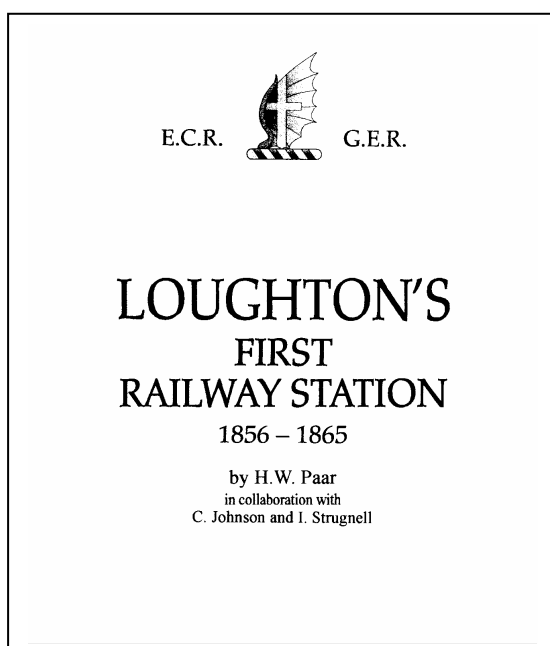
Edmund Burke – doubtless with acerbity – referred to ‘These gentle historians [who] dip their pens in nothing but the milk of human kindness’ and it is easy to imagine that our speakers in the new season of meetings which begins on Thursday, 12 September at 8pm in the Methodist Church, High Road, Loughton will be gentle while enabling us to learn more about our history. So much by way of reminder of our new meeting place and evening.

Some of our members have been busy furthering history projects in the summer and in this *Newsletter* we publish some extracts from interviews which Emelie Buckner has been conducting and which she is planning to produce along with earlier ones in booklet form. Harry Paar has been busy researching the history of Loughton station and we are pleased to draw your attention to his resulting publication:

### *Loughton's First Railway Station*

Loughton has been on the railway map for 140 years, long enough for several generations of inhabitants to regard it as always having been there and for folk memories of the opening of the line to have become distorted or lost.

The first station, a terminus, seems to have escaped the attention of any contemporary artist, photographer or descriptive writer and after a service life of less than a decade was demolished. Its presence was recorded on a few plans, and some other documents give clues as to what went on there during its brief life, giving rise to a number of questions. What did the building look like, what traffic was handled there, what effect did its presence have on the local people?



A challenge such as this could not go unanswered forever. Harry Paar has examined the surviving evidence and woven together the various strands to create an imaginative account of this elusive structure and its surroundings, not forgetting the people who found employment with the railway company or who came to Loughton because of it. Such is the fickle nature of human memory that by the 1920s the site of the original station was being ascribed to an erroneous location; an interesting example of the power of subtle suggestion.

As mentioned there are no sketches or photographs illustrating this aspect of Loughton's history, but to set the scene four photographs of the immediate surroundings are included, one dating from about fifteen years after the station ceased to exist. Maps and plates complement the text in a 36-page A5-size booklet which will be on general sale at £3.50; members of the Society will be able to purchase copies at the Society's meetings at the special price of £2.50.

## A matter of record says Stephen Pewsey: The first Loughton Historical Society (c 1965–c 1975)

The change of our Society's name to the Loughton & District Historical Society reminds me that there was once a similarly-named, though little-known, body active in the area. Our Society was founded as the Chigwell Local History Society in 1962 and covered the whole of the former Chigwell UDC area, but by the mid-1960s there was also a Loughton Historical Society active in that town.

The Loughton Historical Society does not seem to have kept any records, so dates and details of their activities are dependent on recollections of former members. However, the group met in Loughton Hall, with meetings convened by the former Local Studies Librarian, Chris Johnson. Attendance at meetings rarely exceeded a dozen, and the Society did not issue any newsletters or other publications, although Chris Johnson, both personally and in his official capacity, was responsible for producing several booklets about the area. The Society did not join the Essex Archaeological & Historical Congress.

Loughton Historical Society was active in several other fields, however. They undertook a number of excavations, including one inside a 13th century cottage in Little Laver, and at various Victorian rubbish dumps. Unfortunately, findings from these excavations were never published. They also campaigned (like the C & LHS) against the demolition of old buildings in Loughton, and were able to use one of their members, Norman Jacobs, a Chigwell UDC councillor from 1971–73, as a voice in high places. On the lighter side, they publicised the Society's activities at local fetes, etc., through demonstrations of the art of 'egg-swaffling', which, like 'welly-wanging', was an instant tradition stretching back no further than the antics of groups of students in the 1960s.

Loughton Historical Society seems to have disappeared by the mid-1970s, though there was a shadowy later incarnation, also led by Chris Johnson and known as the Old Loughton Society. Under this soubriquet Chris wrote numerous letters to the local papers on conservation and local history matters in the 1970s, but I have been unable to establish any further details.

On a point of fact, however, the change of name of our own Society from Chigwell Local History Society to Chigwell & Loughton History Society did not occur in 1974 to reflect the creation of the new Epping Forest District, as suggested by Chris Pond at the AGM. In fact it took place much later, at the 1981 AGM, though the relevant issues of the Society's *Newsletter* for that period are curiously silent on the matter.

Thanks to Norman Jacobs for information—SP.

[CP says he meant to imply the name was changed sometime *after*, not *in* 1974.]

## . . . and a note on our former name by David Wilkinson

At the inaugural meeting of the Society in 1962, the founder, David Bowen, suggested that it should be entitled Buckhurst Hill Local History Society. It was founded from Buckhurst Hill Community Association and the nucleus of the first committee was drawn from Buckhurst Hill residents. However, I proposed that the Society should have a wider range and should cover the whole of what was then the Chigwell Urban District. The name Chigwell Local History Society was accepted without opposition.

However, by 1980 the Chigwell Urban District had ceased to exist, and the Society's name had become a little misleading, especially since a majority of members were by then Loughton residents. Again on my proposal, the Society was renamed Chigwell and Loughton History Society. The change seemed at the time to have the incidental advantage of retaining the initials CLHS.

## A reminder

*Essex: 'full of profitable thinges'* – a collection of essays presented as a tribute to Colonel Sir John Ruggles-Brise, Bt, OBE, TD, JP – is to be published on 25 September 1996. It will be available at a pre-publication price of £12.50 (plus £4.50 p&p). The publication price will be £14.50 plus p&p. Cash with order to Essex Archaeological and History Congress, Lower Mill House, Stratford St Mary, Colchester, Essex CO7 6JX.

## On moving to Loughton

*Mrs May Dyer was born in the village of Timberscombe five miles from Minehead. When she was six her family moved to Wheddon Cross, a village near Exmoor. Her father, who was injured in the Great War, died as a result of it, and her mother had to find work which meant leaving the care of May to her grandparents. In the mid-1930s she went into domestic service in Minehead until the Second World War in which she served in the NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) and the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service). She married after the War and she and her husband first lived in Bromley, Kent, until they moved to Debden Estate, in Loughton, in 1951. Now 76 years of age, she helps to run the Mannock Drive Day Care Centre with Lady Murray. This is part of an interview by Emelie Buckner in May 1995.*

My first impression on moving to Debden was – I think I would have turned round and gone home the next day because we had ordered coal, it hadn't been delivered, it was very cold, it was very wet, and we learnt a couple of days after that my neighbour had coal, they had lit the fire and the boiler had blown up so they couldn't have a fire! If we had known each other then they could have come in. That was one thing. We had no pavements – it was all cinder tracks and we used to go out and pick up bits of coke out of the cinder track to make a fire and wood. The builders had left a lot of rubbish, so we got a fire in the end. That was the only way of getting hot water in those days; there was no immersion heater. In the middle of summer you had to light a fire to get a bath.

I was thirty two and I had two girls, the youngest was born here she's thirty six now. There were no schools when we came here. Marion went to Hatfields [now part of the East 15 Acting School], and Loughton Hall, which were used as schools. When she had to go to junior school she went to a classroom in Lucton Girls, until Willingale was built. Wendy went to Willingale until she was eleven and then to the Brook School, in Roding Road, and then to West Hatch. Marion went on to West Hatch at eleven years.

Marion is a teacher and Wendy is a Sainsbury's Department Manager. Wendy was very interested in the Girl Guides until she was married. Marion used to go to Sunday School. I have been going to the Methodist church for a long time. In the Women's Fellowship we had a meeting every Thursday, Young Wives on Tuesday nights and we had a table tennis club.

Life on the estate was very quiet. There was not much going on. There was no youth club for the youngsters; there were no pubs for the men. Loughton Hall had a community centre where they had classes. I did go to dressmaking classes for a while. I did outdoor work – dressmaking – to earn a few coppers. I think the main thing, when I first came here, was getting used to the people. They seemed totally different to what I was used to. They were nearly all East-Enders: a lot of them went back. My neighbours are both East-Enders but I have always got along with them. It was just something I couldn't get used to at first. In Bromley we were on the Downham Estate and that was all built up – here it wasn't. The college wasn't here. It used to be an Italian prisoner of war camp there. Then they moved out and there was just a field. When we first came here there were no houses between here and Ibbetson Path and the Broadway, the Letting Office was a hut there. Where Parsonage Court is now there used to be the Rectory and Saint Nicholas' Church Hall; practically all the entertainment used to go on in the hall – the youth organisations, dances, that sort of thing.

We had a few shops at Pyrles Lane and Borders Lane. Bosworth's butcher used to deliver once a week; he'd take an order from one week to the next of what you wanted. A greengrocer used to come round and the milkman brought your groceries. Any main shopping you went to Loughton. I went to the cinema in Loughton once every two or three weeks. If there was a children's film on I used to take Marion. I think the cinema had gone before I had Wendy. [The cinema closed in 1963.]

I know quite a few people now because working with Heather [Lady Murray] has introduced me to everybody. When we first came here they [Loughton village people] just didn't want to know us. I was in Home Help for fifteen years, and once when I went to an old lady who was an old Loughtonite, she asked me where I lived, I told her, 'Oh,' she said, 'I prefer my home helps from Loughton!'

## A fruitful year

The start of a new season of talks is a good point at which to remember those which were heard in the 95–96 programme of meetings which attracted record attendances. In September, Norman Jacobs entertained us by recalling the performers of the heyday of the music halls which lasted for almost 100 years from around the 1850s. Norman had recorded many of the 'stars' from old recordings but members were reluctant to join in the choruses of the old songs. Maybe this was an occasion when something stronger than tea or coffee would have got the audience singing!

The 'History of Hackney' was the subject chosen for Hallowe'en and some dark spirits set out to disrupt the proceedings of our meeting. There was no screen on which to project the speaker's slides; the projector malfunctioned and the battery for the torch needed by David Mander, Hackney borough archivist, for reading his notes, was powerless! The subject of the meeting had attracted a very large audience who, among other things, learned about the market gardens and great houses which had once flourished in Hackney and, in spite of the technical problems, David Mander won an enthusiastic response from the audience many of whom gained new insights into what had once been their 'home territory'.

The committee had chosen well in selecting speakers for the Society's meetings and Mark Watson, deputy curator of Dagenham's Valence House museum (visit it if you haven't been there!), maintained the high level of our speakers when he spoke about 'Fishing in Barking' – some may think a difficult subject for a speaker who dislikes fish in all its forms. That didn't deter him, though, from giving a talk that was enthusiastically applauded and which led to many questions. Then, in December, there was an extra meeting to mark the publication of Chris Pond's *A Walk Round Loughton*.

January 30th was to be the evening when we were to hear about the Royal Wanstead Foundation at Snarebrook. Unfortunately, the speaker-to-be had emigrated after arranging to speak at our meeting; the two events are not thought to be connected! Fortunately, however, our Secretary, John Howes, is a man of many parts and he, and

Daphne, went through his collection of slides to produce a talk entitled 'A Mediaeval Menagerie' which introduced us to some bizarre ideas as portrayed by our Middle Ages ancestors.

Peter Warren, would have arrived home very late indeed if the Chairman, Chris Pond, had allowed questions to continue 'after closing time' for, in his talk about 'The Lea Valley Regional Park', Peter Warren generated a most lively lot of questions. It seems that many of our members have been stimulated into exploring this important area for its historical interest and for relaxation.

Many art lovers knew little or nothing about the work of George Scharf until the enthusiastic Jeffrey Page spoke at the March meeting. Scharf drew and painted scenes of London life in the 1820s and 30s. Although much of his work was concentrated in the Trafalgar Square area he also portrayed working life in other areas of London and Jeffrey Page's talk held out the possibility that there is still more to be learned from him.

'In Search of Brick' may not be thought to be the most inviting title to attract people to a meeting, but John Jackson enthused the April meeting which had attracted another large number of visitors to join 'the regulars'. Apart from describing the history of brickmaking John Jackson was able to talk at first hand because, as his slides gave evidence, he had found a brickmaker who had demonstrated how bricks were made by hand. As at all our meetings questioners besieged the speaker during the break.

The 1995-96 season ended with a subject of very local interest when the Chairman and Secretary jointly gave a talk in 'radio reporter's style' about Queen Victoria's visit to Epping Forest in 1882. And that, with visits to Peterborough and Oxfordshire, some to London (sadly not well supported) and a visit to the Warren as guests of our President, concluded a year of achievement for the Society.

---

**LOUGHTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY** Registered Charity No 287274

*President:* J I Besent, OBE, FRICS, MRAC

*Chairman:* Dr Chris Pond, Forest Villa, Staples Road, Loughton IG10 1HP (0181-508 2361)

*Secretary:* John Howes, 97 Staples Road, Loughton IG10 1HR (0181-508 0776)

*Treasurer:* Dr Donald Pohl, 32 Queens Road, Loughton IG10 1RS (0181-281 1534)

*Membership Secretary:* Mrs Emelie Buckner, 88 Alderton Hall Lane, Loughton IG10 3HD (0181-508 0427)

*Editor:* Edwin Dare, 21 Ibbetson Path, Loughton IG10 2AS (0181-508 6250)

All rights reserved. © 1996 Loughton & District Historical Society

---