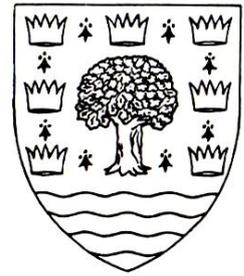


Iford Historical Society

Newsletter No.114 April 2014



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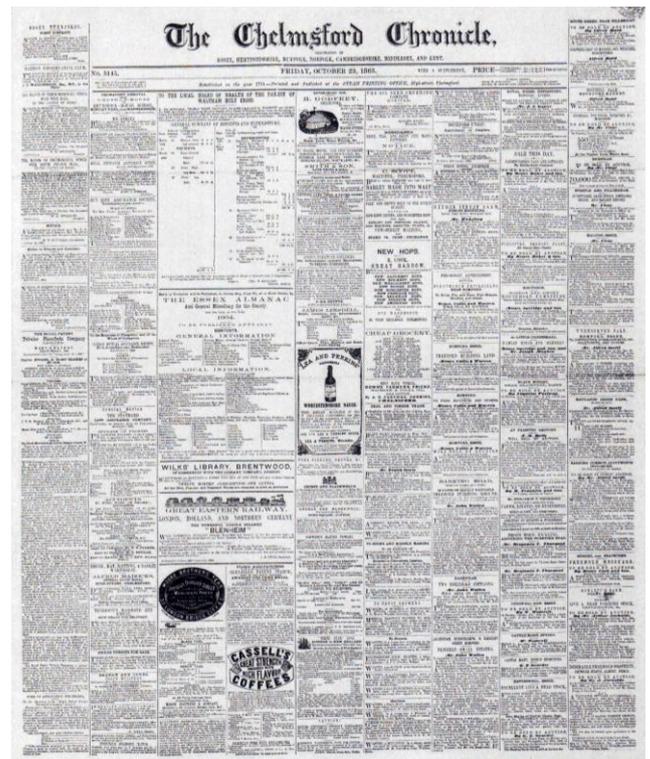
We have such a wealth of good material for this issue that the promised item about the Mammoth remains will appear in the August issue.

I am very grateful to Rev. John Brown for writing an article on the theme of his most interesting talk to us on 14th October last year, on *The Arrival of the Church in Iford and how local newspapers reported it*. To contrast with that, Roger Backhouse has written an article about Edwardian crime and Jef Page has continued the story of the ploughing match in 1909 which was featured in the last newsletter. It was unintentional, but this issue sets the peaceful scene for the catastrophe which was to start in August 1914. *Georgina Green*

Iford's Edwardian Church growth through its local papers.

The Christian of one hundred years ago was convinced that building churches was a necessity, demonstrating religious zeal, a vital mission tool, an indicator of progress and civilization and possibly a curb to rival denominations all too willing to claim the soul of Iford.

I will look at the arrival of these churches through the eyes of the local newspapers, which in tandem with the church were a growing phenomenon of town life. The earliest of these was the *Chelmsford Chronicle*. As its name suggests this was a county paper occasionally taking an interest in the life of the hamlet of Iford. It is with the arrival of the *Iford Guardian* and the *Iford Recorder* in the 1890s that there is a substantial growth of material relating to the arrival of new churches. These were hardly unbiased commentators; the *Chronicle* had the feel of an establishment journal that would support the Church of England. The *Guardian* and *Recorder* were more complex, reflecting the concerns of the burgeoning middle-class in Iford, made up of a growing Nonconformist community. The period that I am going to concentrate on is the height of church growth, from the 1890s to the eve of the Great War.



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The earliest Christian presence in Ilford was the Hospital Chapel on Ilford hill. This and a private chapel at Aldersbrook seemed to be the only Anglican churches in the area until the building of St Mary's in the 1830s. These historic sites have drawn a great deal of interest so I will sit lightly to their story, sufficed to say, that until the closing decade of the nineteenth century Ilford was not much more than a rural backwater. There seemed little need for a purpose built church. The exception to this was the establishment of a Baptist chapel in the area in the early 1800s.

The first significant mention of a Church in the *Chronicle* was not the creation of St Mary's but its expansion, as it sought to accommodate this ever growing population. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* for 9 March 1866 noted the reopening of the parish church after substantial alterations that added 175 more sittings to the building. A significant issue the Anglican Church was to face as it sought to meet the needs of the community was clergy stipends. In subdividing a parish effectively you also reduced the income of the priest. In the early nineteenth century there was a considerable incentive not to create new parishes because of the fear of clergy poverty. It was with the revision of Anglican governance and income in the latter half of the nineteenth century that they were able to respond to the population explosion of West Essex and East London.

The problem of oversized parishes was recorded in the pages of the local papers. The Vicar of St Mary's said; "I feel I could not do half I would in this big parish." A further concern was that inevitably with the creation of a new church the old would lose large numbers of people, money and volunteers. The Church Warden of St Mary's commenting on the opening of St John's, Seven Kings only half jokingly bemoaned the emptying of St Mary's pews.

The simple reason for the growth of churches was the rise in population in Ilford. This was staggeringly high. The population of nearly four thousand at St Paul's Goodmayes arrived within four years. There was a very real sense that if you built a church people would come. Yet there was now growing evidence that by the late nineteenth century churches were looking empty. The Revd Vine was to raise this very problem with the Free Church Council in August 1914.



This duplication has led historians to assume this was a key factor in declining attendance. A large half empty church or a crowded high street containing a plethora of denominations all claiming the ultimate truth inevitably led to scepticism and non attendance. In more recent years an alternative reading suggests that Britain was unique in providing a wealth of religious traditions that could appeal to a wide variety of social groups meeting very specific needs. This was evident in the make up of denominations in Ilford.

The newspapers regularly advertised services of the local Christians providing a breakdown of many of the denominations. The *Recorder* for February 1901 listed nine Anglican churches at least thirteen Free Churches and one Roman Catholic congregation all serving the people of Ilford. The sheer variety was a testament to the vitality of religion at the time. The Christadelphians had set up a mission church by January 1903. The Spiritualist caused something of a stir at a meeting in August 1903. The Unitarians were established by 1913. This diversity drew comment from more established traditions. The Revd Vine, again writing to the *Recorder* in 1903 worried there were too many 'sects'. Despite this it seemed to have been the high water mark of church attendance, with churches like the Congregationalists attracting a male membership that was the envy of other churches.

Why build so many churches then? The simple reason that motivation was as always mixed and complex. Arrogance, optimism, competition and genuine need all played a part in driving church building in Ilford at this time. A very practical reason was simply distance. The community around the new church of St Paul's Goodmayes were relieved they need no longer trek to central Ilford at night or in winter now they had their own local Church.

Creating a new church was not haphazard or without thought. The process can be glimpsed in the pages of the local papers. Choosing a site was the first concern, but main roads were prime acreage that came at a price. Cheaper and more peaceful settings were side roads. When Goodmayes Congregational Church burnt down it offered them an opportunity to re-site the building south of the railway where the population was now clustering.

The Anglican's often subdivided a growing parish up into a mission district. This was then provided with a temporary chapel, often no more than a tin shed. Mass produced corrugated iron churches were cheap and easily constructed, some of which still survive as Scout huts and meeting halls. Then a more substantial building was erected that would later become the church hall. Thus

industry and economy were both key factors in supporting new churches. The temporary structure of the Presbyterian Church was expected to accommodate 230 people. These buildings could become permanent fixtures. It took twenty years for St Andrew's to move from its hall to the newly built church on the Drive.



The 'tin church' at Holy Trinity, Hermon Hill

For the Free Churches there was a sophisticated process of grading as to whether a district needed a new building. The local Presbyterians moved from a preaching station to a 'sanctional church', one that had a large enough congregation to warrant a new build and sufficient income to provide a minister's stipend.

Money was to be a key factor in these ventures. St Margaret's, Ilford cost £4,000 to build in 1914. St Clements' cost the sum of £10,000, the new Presbyterian Church at Oakwood Road cost £5,000. Not all were built on the grand scale. Goodmayes Congregational only cost £1,000 and the Salvation Army 'Young People's Hall' boasted no 'special architectural features'. Comparing prices in the past and now is difficult, it is true to say that a thousand pounds was a fortune in 1900; in comparison an average Anglican Priest was receiving £500 a year. However, there is every indication wages were low and labour cheap. Yet, raising funds must have dominated the activities of local Christians for much of this period.

We get a glimpse of how churches raised funds through the local papers. One of the principal means was through the generous donation of land and money by local worthies, as in the case of the Howard family that donated land for St Luke's. Sir George Bruce was the leading fundraiser for Oakfield Road Presbyterian Church. The less wealthy contributed time and money. St Laurence's had donations ranging from a few pence to a thousand pounds. Even the opening ceremonies of a church offered an opportunity to donate, as in the case of Cranbrook Wesleyan Church where each person who took part in the ground breaking gave a guinea. Inevitably poorer communities struggled to raise funds. St Paul's, Goodmayes had no great benefactors and much of their donations came from what they described as poor people. Subscription by new members or members of neighbouring churches were also a feature. Significantly a wide social spectrum were involved in these activities, not just the social elite.

Fundraising became a way of life for these communities. Bazaars were employed with one event in 1900 raising £48 1 s 9d, with the Wesleyans raising £800 at another event. There were grant awarding bodies that could help, like the Bishop of St Alban's Fund that gave £250 to St Luke's, and in 1923 gave £2,000 towards St Andrew's. There was more direct action with church members knocking on doors. This gives an indication of how important church life was felt to be for a community.

Some raised funds quickly as in the case of St Margaret's, stated it had almost achieved its goal of raising £4,000 by its opening in 1914. Others struggled, as in the case of St Alban's, who found the local populations response disappointing. As it said to the *Recorder*; "Those who asked for contributions for any funds are usually treated either as friends or pickpockets..." Moreover the old distinctions of established church and independent made no sense, with some Free Churches drawing on wealthy benefactors whilst some Anglicans struggled. This fundraising was to drift well into the new century, right up to the eve of the Second World War, as in the case of St Laurence's.



To the Glory of God
This stone was laid by Ruth Mary Eisdell
From the Mother Church of St Margaret, Barking
March 28th 1914
St Margaret's church, Perth Road, Ilford

Who then attended these churches and in what numbers? Churches were still built on the grand scale. St Luke's was to be able to accommodate over seven hundred people. There are some tantalising hints in the papers. One Presbyterian Church in 1897 had begun with a congregation of 58 and grown by 1903 to over 230. It had to hire the local Board School to accommodate up to 1,300 Sunday school pupils. Children and women were to be the core group of Victorian and Edwardian church goers.

What then did they do? The Hospital Chapel was providing 8am Communion, Matins at 10.15, Choral Celebration at 11 and Evensong at 7pm. Of course these buildings were created for worship but this is only a fraction the activities taking place on their sites, Indeed to simply measure the impact of a church in terms of regular adherents would seriously underestimate their contribution to the life of Ilford at this time. Youth work soup kitchens, coal clubs, clothing clubs, fundraising to combat TB, reclamation of alcoholics, as well as cultural and recreational activities all drew in a wide variety of people into the life of a local church. In an age before Radio and Television churches were providing groups with lantern shows covering topics as varied as geology to monarchs of England.

What then did these buildings achieve? People's public aspirations for these sites have survived thanks to the meticulous recording of sermons at their dedications by the local press. Bishop Bloomfield of London preached a robust and confident sermon at the rededication of St Mary's in 1866. The Church was the external sign that God was with his people. In 1894 St Alban's was confident enough to state St Alban's would become "a centre of aggressive work for God's Church in Ilford." Churches were needed to civilise man, according to the Baptist minister T Philips in 1913. There was a growing sense that churches provided the spiritual centre of a community. Yet there was a developing anxiety that other mediums, from popular sports, to cinema and theatre were now drawing people away from religion. What one preacher feared was "innuendo on the stage, loose characters in the pit and drink in the bar." The churches seemed to feel they were struggling with a changing world.

Although the inter-war years were seen as a time of decline and loss of optimism there is a growing body of evidence that suggests despite public attitudes the church was still labouring to provide churches. Rex Walford's work on North London and the evidences of local papers here in Ilford show a continued energy from the churches to grow and develop right up to the eve of the war in 1939. What emerges is a dynamic variety of churches that were able to respond to need and draw on significant sums of money and local and national talent to achieve their goals. The legacy that they provided has, for good or ill, dominated the agenda of denomination in the post-war period, and the story of faith buildings in Ilford has hardly ended with their continued adaption to meet new needs and with new faiths arriving shaping once again the town's sky line.

© **John Brown, Vicar of St.Lukes, Great Ilford**

Photographs provided by the author unless otherwise stated

Reading List

The Chelmsford Chronicle; Ilford Guardian; The Ilford Recorder

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Green, S. J. D., *Religion in the Age of Decline: Organisation and experience in industrial Yorkshire, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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Morris, Jeremy, *Religion and Urban Change: Croydon 1840-1914* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992).
Wickham, Edward, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London: Lutterworth, 1957).
Walford, Rex, ‘‘As by magic’; the growth of ‘New London’ north of the Thames 1918-1945 and the response of the Church of England.’ Unpublished doctoral thesis, Anglia Polytechnic University. 2003.

Listed Buildings in Ilford: Churches

The Ilford Hospital Chapel (where we hold our meetings) had featured several times in society newsletters. It is by far the oldest building in the borough and it is listed Grade II*. The Children’s church at Barnardo’s, Barkingside, (1892-4 by Ebenezer Gregg) was included in the April 2013 newsletter (No.111) p.8. This and the other churches below are Grade II.

Holy Trinity, Mossford Green, Barkingside (1840)

St Peter’s, Aldborough Hatch (1862)

St Andrew’s, The Drive, Ilford (1924)

I may give full details of these three, with a photograph, another time.

This is the centenary year of All Saints church in Goodmayes Lane.



All Saints, Goodmayes Lane

Photograph Georgina Green

GOODMAYES LANE 1. 5027 Goodmayes Ilford Church of All Saints TQ 48 NE 6/1 II 2.

1914. Arts and Crafts Gothic. Dark red brown brick and white stone dressings. High steep pitched roof in graded slates over combined nave and chancel. Shingle flèche at west end and small gables at eaves. Two large projecting gables over middle of the aisles on both sides. Windows with free Perpendicular tracery. Interior with 5 bay arcades. Pointed arches of moulded brick springing without capitals from square stone piers. White plastered walls.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 22-Feb-1979

The Revd. and Hon. H.W. Bertie (1812 – 1895)

Henry William Bertie, Vicar of Ilford, was a son of the Earl of Abingdon and could trace his family back to the 10th century. He was related to the Hon. Robert Bertie who is shown paying the Hearth Tax in 1671 on both Beehive and Valentines, and for whom there is a memorial at St Margaret's Barking.

Highly educated, having been ordained a priest in 1837, Bertie was elected a Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford. In 1847 he also qualified in Civil Law but although offered a more lucrative living, he was content to serve as the Vicar of Ilford from 1844 – 1881. Surprisingly, Bertie was a great traveller and in his younger days he visited America, New Zealand and China as well as much of Europe. His travels were not just as a tourist but in a search for greater knowledge.

Dr. Bertie's genuine, kind and sympathetic heart won him both respect and affection from his congregation. He was greatly concerned by the plight of many of the poor of the parish and was generous to anyone who needed his charity. He took a particular interest in education and paid the salary of an assistant teacher at the National School from his own pocket. He also paid the expenses for several lads to go to college or serve apprenticeships and ensured they had a good start in life.

Although Bertie was of a quiet, retiring disposition he was a patron of all kinds of social amusements.

Once the Reading Room was open he regularly attended gatherings held there, especially the Penny Readings, in which he took a lively interest. He sometime read, convulsing the crowded audiences with his comic readings.

Bertie never married and first made his Ilford home at The Rookery (near the junction of Aldborough Road South and Benton Road) although he moved out to a smaller house so that he would have more to give to charity. His sister, Lady Emily Bathurst, re-took The Rookery for him and paid some of his expenses. In 1866 the Vicarage was built in the grounds of The Rookery and the 1871 census shows him living there with a housekeeper, housemaid, kitchen maid, butler and page.

In 1864 Dr Bertie launched an appeal for £1,650 to improve St Mary's church by building a tower at the west end and an apse at the east end, inserting new windows and providing seating for an additional 175 people. He countered those who suggested additional seating was not needed by saying if it's not needed now it soon will be. How right he was! By 1866 all the proposed work had been completed, and more. He was a classic example of the very best Victorian Vicar, devoted to doing good for his flock.

© *Georgina Green, 25 March 2014*

Information from several sources but mainly the obituary by Edward Tuck in the Parish Magazine



*The Revd. and Hon. Henry William Bertie
Reproduced courtesy of Redbridge Information
and Heritage Service*

Crime and anti social behaviour - Edwardian Ilford

Edwardian Ilford is sometimes seen as a placid, church going, middle class suburb in what is dreamed of as a law abiding age. A look through back issues of the *Ilford Recorder* suggests otherwise; crime and anti-social behaviour was subject of much comment on news and letters pages.

Ilford then had no Magistrates Court. Cases went for trial at Stratford, though this covered a wider area including East and West Ham as well as Ilford. The *Recorder* covered cases from other areas too, especially dramatic occurrences.

It's difficult to say whether crime rates were much different. Not all cases are reported even now. Some activities once classed as crimes are no longer considered criminal, or changes in society have meant their disappearance. But Edwardian Ilford was by no means crime free.

Growing for thieves?

The growing suburb's proximity to farmland and horticulture meant theft of crops. As Ilford's farmers pointed out at their Annual Dinner in 1906 most of Ilford's area remained farmland. It would remain so well into the 1920s.

Some theft was clearly opportunistic but reported in the papers. For example David Round, aged 12 of Plaistow was charged with stealing beetroots to the value of one shilling (5p) from Milton House Farm, Ilford, but was spotted by a constable in the field. The Bench heard the story that he'd lost his mother, and his father was no good to him so he was taking the beets to his granny. Although the bench said "They would like to order him a good thrashing", as they did not like to send one so young to prison the boy was bound over.¹

He was luckier than two 11 year old shop breakers at Manor Park who were each sentenced to 9 strokes of the birch.² Perhaps the Magistrates thought the punishment should fit the crime but birchings weren't recorded often.

John White aged 16 of Pembroke Road Seven Kings was charged with stealing apples, value 3d (1p) from George Ibbotson of Heath Farm, Little Heath. He'd been caught along with other boys by the farm foreman, Charles Weaver, but the other boys had been let go. Constable Brown (the *Recorder* noted his number 455K, a seemingly unnecessary detail) reported that the boy had been out of work and not at home for 3 or 4 nights. Despite this he was fined 5s and 4s costs (25p and 20p), which would have been much more than a week's wage for a boy.

Other cases include theft of carrots and of potatoes from farmland near Ilford Lane. Many working class household incomes were only about £1 a week and crops near housing put temptation in people's way. A survey of the time found less than 10% of the population adequately nourished in all respects. For some it was clearly thieving to live.

The Burglary Peril

The *Ilford Recorder* headlined the "burglary peril", perhaps worsened by dark nights and poor street lights.³ Gas street lighting was not very effective and old style sash windows easily

¹ Ilford Recorder 27th July 1906.

² Ilford Recorder 9th February 1906

³ Ilford Recorder 26th January 1911

forced. As a middle class suburb, maybe Ilford tempted criminals with a greater chance of takings. The *Recorder* noted several cases, including several in one night in Meath Road Ilford.⁴ Earlier it reported burglary attempts at a house in Windsor Road, and a stone thrown through the back window.

However, the police sometimes made arrests. Perhaps surprisingly, the constable was often reported to have been on patrol, or hidden observing the villain behaving suspiciously. Maybe sentimentality about the days of the “bobby on the beat” is not entirely misplaced, whatever modern policing thinks of it. Either that or the criminal fraternity were singularly unaware of being watched.

Thefts from shops and commercial premises occurred. William Ayling of 57 Harvey Road, Ilford, was charged with stealing a woman’s skirt and bodice and a child’s jacket, valued at 6s (30p), from Ilford Lane, property of Emma Sholl, a wardrobe dealer. [Presumably this meant a dealer in second hand clothes.] Again, he was stopped by a Constable Carpenter, who acting on information received, went to Roding Street where he found the prisoner in conversation with a woman, attempting to sell the clothes for 1s 6d (7½p). Although the prisoner pleaded guilty he claimed he’d been attempting to sell the clothes to have money to live on until he could get a job. However, it was pointed out that he’d been bound over for theft in July, the Bench then having taken account of the fact he was a pensioner from the docks. He had subsequently been convicted of drunkenness several times. Despite his promise to “reform from today” and “sign the pledge” this time the chairman of the bench offered twenty one days hard labour.

Drink and disorder

Cases of public drunkenness and disorder were all too commonly reported. As in the previous example drink was a factor in many crimes. Arthur Power, a barman refusing to give his address, was charged at Stratford Magistrates with damaging a plate glass window at the Angel Hotel, High Road. The paper records “Shortly after midnight on Saturday the prisoner was seen by a constable in the High Road, Ilford. He was the worse for liquor and picking up several stones he threw them at the window....”

The prisoner said he “wanted to be locked up” and was then taken to the police station and charged. When charged he said “All right, good luck”. Magistrates fined him £2 with costs and damages of £6 14s (70p). If unpaid the alternative was 6 weeks hard labour.⁵

Drink was all too often a factor in domestic violence, usually men assaulting their wives or common law wives, but occasionally there was a twist. A case in the *Recorder* headlined “A disgraceful state of affairs” was heard at Stratford Magistrates and reported on 24th August 1906. Charles William Dowsett of 175 Ley Street was charged with assaulting his partner of 13 years, Mrs Essam, while drunk. She claimed that it had been “13 years of misery” and that in all that time she “had never been free of bruises”.

However, Mrs Essam had been arrested earlier for an assault on a friend of Charles Dowsett, Mrs Richardson. She had later set about him in the face and bit his arm. The magistrates dismissed both summonses and ordered each to pay 2s (10p) costs, with Mr J. T. East saying it was all attributable to drink.

⁴ Ilford Recorder 24th August 1906

⁵ Ilford Recorder 27th July 1906

Violence met with rough justice on at least one occasion. In what the Recorder headlined “The Ley Street Sensation - an exciting sequel”⁶ “the man Redmond” of Ivy Terrace Ley Street was alleged to have injured his wife and then absconded. Her injuries resulted in admission to the London Hospital though she later claimed that the affair was an accident and the police withdrew from the case.

Redmond returned home and threatened to “do for all the women along there” creating what one woman described as a “reign of terror” in the stretch between the Council depot and the Horns. He then threatened a man with a bottle and “half a dozen fellows promptly took up the quarrel, with the result that Redmond received a thrashing such as few men have experienced.” And when the men had finished with him the women also had their “go”. A policeman visiting the house next morning found the man almost unrecognisable. There were no reports of any arrests.

Theft from employers

If press reports are a guide theft from employers was very common with several cases reported in a short period. The *Recorder* reported a laundry boy charged with embezzling employer’s money and another stole milk money.⁷ Beatrice Johnson, aged 58, of Westwood Road Seven Kings, described as a monthly nurse, was charged with stealing an embroidered collar and a pair of knickers valued at 2s 6d (12½p), property of Douglas Wiseman, a solicitors clerk of Grove Road, Chadwell Heath. Unfortunately his wife had seen the collar on Johnson’s son in the street. Magistrates allowed her bail.



*Chadwell Heath Police Station, 1911. This is now the ‘Eva Hart’ pub.
Reproduced courtesy of David Swinden*

Anti social behaviour and assaults

Hooliganism was quite common. Early in 1906 the *Ilford Recorder* carried reports of the light bulbs being removed from shop fronts along Cranbrook Road and laid on the pavement. At the same time a Doctor’s brass plate had been bent in half. The paper implied that a known group of youths from the Cranbrook Park area were responsible, presumably middle class yobbery.

⁶ Ilford Recorder 20th July 1906

⁷ Ilford Recorder 22nd July 1906

A letter complained of hooliganism in Ilford Lane ⁸ and the paper noted the theft of door knockers, whether stolen for brass or as a prank remains unknown. Another report told of damage to a door by boys throwing stones at a shop in Aldborough Road, Seven Kings. ⁹

There were assaults too. William Faulkner, a traveller [presumably a commercial traveller] of Ingleby Road, Ilford, was charged with insulting behaviour and assaulting Ernest Hankin, a porter at Ilford Railway Station. The accused and about twelve other young men had got hold of a barrow and begun to push it along the platform as a train was due. The porter warned of risks to trains and tried to stop them but was set about by the prisoner and punched in the face. A constable was called in and Faulkner arrested to be later fined 20s and 4s (£1 and 20p) costs. ¹⁰

Police treated incidents of alleged misbehaviour with some discretion, though not to the liking of some locals. One “Disgusted Ratepayer” wrote to the Recorder complaining that the part of High Road near the Seven Kings brook “had left a good deal to be desired, there generally being several knots of ‘undesirables’ loitering and skylarking about”. One Sunday evening “... our attention was drawn to a crowd of persons who had congregated around some budding pugilists...” “However, a policeman was found at the top of Westwood Road and his attention was directed to the above incident. What was our surprise to find, after he had muttered something about it only being a couple of youngsters ‘scrapping’ that he had turned on his heel and gone in the opposite direction.”¹¹

Other letters complained of police inaction in cases of misbehaviour in Ilford Lane.

This was an age when houses were smaller and more overcrowded and much more social life was conducted in the street, particularly for young people. There was none of the indoor entertainment now available. It’s likely that many quarrels that now would be behind closed doors were then played out in the streets of Ilford.

Vanished crimes

A number of crimes have either been abolished or are not taken seriously now.

With no social security and no unemployment benefit some resorted to begging in Ilford’s residential areas. This was especially true in winter months when many building workers were unemployed. This generated letters to the *Ilford Recorder* complaining about begging processions of the unemployed usually accompanied by a man with a drum.

Sometimes this attracted police attention who in January 1906 brought a prosecution before Stratford Magistrates; a case of blaming the victims if ever there was one. The *Recorder* noted “but for the sympathy of the magistrates with the men they would have been undoubtedly convicted and fined”. ¹²

Bona fide travellers

British licensing law has often seemed peculiar. One oddity allowed public houses to serve alcohol out of hours but only to “bona fide travellers” which meant those who had journeyed

⁸ Ilford Recorder 2nd February 1906

⁹ Ilford Recorder 1st September 1906

¹⁰ Ilford Recorder 24th August 1906

¹¹ Ilford Recorder 6th April 1906

¹² Ilford Recorder 5th January 1906

more than three miles. (In *Diary of a Nobody* Charles Pooter was denied a drink when he was truthful about where he'd come from. His friends Cuming and Gowing lied and were served.)¹³

There doesn't seem to have been much flexibility. Three miles was what the law said. So George Page and John Smith of Chadwell Heath were fined 5s and 4s costs (25p and 20p) for drinking out of hours at the Harrow beerhouse, Forest Road, Chadwell Heath. They'd claimed that they slept the previous night under some bushes at Chigwell Row Recreation Ground but according to Acting Sergeant Dalton that was 176 yards short of three miles to the Harrow Beerhouse. Smith observed "a dear pint, that".¹⁴

Attempting suicide

Suicide remained illegal in England until 1961, one of the last European countries to retain penalties for attempting suicide though it was not illegal in Scotland. Cases came before magistrates locally such as Charles Leftly of Nelson Street Barking, described as a "very old man", who was charged with attempting suicide by drowning. He was remanded for medical reports.¹⁵

Passing betting slips

One common offence was street bookmaking and passing betting slips. Until changes allowing betting shops in the 1960s cash bookmaking was only allowed on racetracks, otherwise betting was by credit with "turf accountants". But cash bookmaking went on, illegally, as few workers could set up a credit account for betting. So the police had a field day arresting street bookies and those taking betting slips to them.

Some sources¹⁶ suggest that the police used street bookmaking to make up numbers if they appeared to be inactive, finding a "percher" or sacrificial victim to boost arrests. However, cases regularly appear in the *Recorder*, though most from neighbouring areas rather than Ilford. George Robinson and George Wood, both of East Ham, were each fined £10 and 8s (40p) costs for "frequenting the streets for the purposes of betting". For the same offence John Sampson of Plaistow was fined £15 and 12s (60p) costs and George Osborn, of Woodford, was fined £5 and 4s (20p) costs.¹⁷ These were substantial sums but presumably magistrates assessed the likely profitability of the business in setting fines.

Crime remains a constant topic in local newspapers. It retains a capacity to shock and frighten and there is always a temptation to nostalgically say that things were better in the "good old days". Patterns of crime can alter, detection improves, and police practice changes. Treatment of offenders has altered and much crime is not now reported. Certainly Edwardian Ilford was by no means crime free but only a much more detailed statistical analysis, assuming records still exist, will tell us whether it really was better.

© *Roger Backhouse* 29 October 2013

¹³ George and Weedon Grossmith - *Diary of a Nobody*

¹⁴ *Ilford Recorder* 24th August 1906

¹⁵ *Ilford Recorder* 14th September 1906

¹⁶ *The Oldie* - undated

¹⁷ *Ilford Recorder* 25th May 1906

God Speed the Plough : Ilford's 1909 Ploughing Match

It was reading Peter Wright's 1970 article on "Ilford's annual ploughing contest" (reprinted by Ilford HS Newsletter, December 2013) that set me off on this article. I had done a lot of research for a talk on Barkingside's history using the 1909 Ilford Recorder report of the ploughing match that took place on Forest Farm. I never saw Peter's original article so I didn't know that he'd covered the same ground as me 35 years earlier.

But as he never mentioned any of the winners I thought I'd go back over my notes and record them - a roll call of farming locals, some with published photos in local history books, for example Eric Coe. There were also ploughing matches in 1911 and 1912 and in Ian Dowling's book of *Old Photographs* vol 1 p.56, the Short Horn Dairy is photographed with a poster advertising the 1887 Essex Agricultural Society, their only meeting ever held in Ilford.

Another source Peter couldn't refer to was George Caunt's book *Ilford's Yesterdays* which wasn't written till 1980 so possibly Caunt used Peter's article as much as the *Recorder* as a source. Caunt's book is suitably dramatic and descriptive of the match and is worth reading.

The event took place, organized by the Ilford Farmers Association, on Tuesday 12th October 1909 and the *Ilford Recorder's* report came out three days later. The report stretches into three columns mentions "glorious weather" though the land was heavy with overnight rain.

"God speed the Plough" was the motto on the welcoming arch as 69 ploughs and 149 horses took part; 60 of the ploughs were from Ilford parish, the rest from outside. It was the largest match in southern England and the prize fund, never to be sneezed at was worthy of the large entrance, totalled £125.

The match started at 8am on a marked site 40 rods long, two rods wide, on Forest Farm (now Fairlop Waters) run by Mr Chalmers. Included among the many competitors was a boy of 14 and a man of 70, both unnamed but the elder may have been John French. Each competitor received a jersey and a lunch ticket and there were thousands of spectators, no doubt comprising many friends and family from the local farms though it's strange that the event was held on a mid-week working day rather than a Saturday or Sunday. It wasn't really noted who the 'outsiders' were.

The event took a lot of organizing. Councilor Robert and Mrs Stroud welcomed the visitors along with the Bishop of Barking presiding. Councilor Ben Bailey (Mayor of Ilford 1901-02), Edmund J Beal (Mayor 1895-98), W M Patterson, J R Roberts, Rupert Brown, and W A Lee were all part of the organizing committee and Charles E Reynolds was the Hon Secretary. Mr Hooper of the Angel provided the welcome refreshments. Brown farmed at Goodmayes Farm before moving to Clayhall Farm. Stroud ran a business developing and building Ilford's new estates and houses: turning corn crops into concrete.

The Ploughing Match Committee comprised: John Stringer, David Edwards, John Fountain of Aldborough Hatch, J Hawkins, I Lake, F Lamb, G M W Gott, H Little, E Perkins, R Stroud, A Sayer, G W Torrance, R Brown, and Cobbett Mighell.

Bailey and Beal have long biographies in Norman Gunby's book.

The Stringers farmed Middlefield Farm along Perth Road. John, and his brother George, had four sons: Laurence, Clifford, Gordon and Kenneth.

George Gott (1850-1913) was Mayor Ilford 1902-03. Born in Mossford Green he was a local councilor for 22 years and farmed at Fencepiece Farm. He "could remember the Essex

Agricultural Show held in Cranbrook Road in 1887” whilst Fairlop Fair used to be held in a meadow on his farm. Like many at the ploughing match he travelled everywhere in his pony and trap and there are generous biographies of him in Caunt’s and Gunby’s books.

There were ploughing matches, competitions for root crops, vegetables and corn, best turned out horses and harness, straw tying and special prizes.

Three Horse Teams: There were 11 entries. 1st G Bemment ploughman won £2 (a week’s wages?), D Bemment ploughboy, their employer was S Sayer; 2nd James Wiseman and Ned Sayer employed by C H & A Goodman; 3rd William Miles and Fred Tredget employed by C E Reynolds.

Two Horse Teams: 1st Eric Coe £2, employer George Coe his father; 2nd Ernest Bennet employed by Rupert Brown; 3rd William Downham employed by the Misses I & M Chalmers.

I’m not sure which were more common around Ilford: two or three horse teams. On lighter soil and ground a two horse team followed by one ploughman was generally considered to be more efficient and clearly saved one wage.



Eric Coe is featured sitting on his tractor in 1920 at Shackman’s Farm in Ian Dowling’s book vol 1 p.106, (*see illustration*) whilst the farm is shown in vol 2, p.67. The farm, demolished 1926, was midway down Redbridge Lane, now Grangeway Gardens. Five generations of the Coe family were connected to the farm, Eric being the last.

Best Under 21 Ploughman was George Hare, 2nd R Wood, 3rd Arthur Ridgewell.

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Harry Chalmers won the Robert Stroud Silver Challenge Cup for Best Ploughing in the Membership Classes- though Caunt said that Chambers was Champion Ploughman.

Veteran George Nunn won the prize tankard for Best Ploughman over 55.

Prizes included a clock, a silver watch won by George Balls, a pair of boots valued at 10/6d (53p - very expensive); ½ a guinea (53p), bushels of flour, and a hat (top or cloth?). These prizes were offered by local and Essex traders and local worthies.

Best White Wheat: 1st Rupert Brown, 2nd Isaac Lake.

Best Red Wheat: 1st James Perkins, 2nd F Lamb.

Black or Grey Winter Oats: 1st Joseph Perkins, 2nd F Lamb.

The Special Prize for the Best Sample of Threshed Wheat was won by G W Townsend’s machine, whilst the Straw Tying judge was William Pye of Little Heath. Each competitor had 1 hour to tie nine trusses each weighing 36lbs. Heavy work. There were 14 entries: 1st John Cooper won £1, employer James Hunt; 2nd John Fryatt employed G M Gott.

The Long Service Prize of a hat was given by hatters A G Horsey to James Wiseman with 42 years service to C H & A Goodman of Chadwell Heath. LCC Claybury Asylum's oldest competitor won a bushel of flour: John French, 70 years old, employed by Brown of Goodmayes.

The Ploughman with the largest family, also winning a bushel of flour, went to (a very busy) James Allen, with 14 children.

There was a horse show and Mr Hooper presented the prize for the Best kept Harness which was won by David Staines employed by H Warren of Ley Street.

Best Collection of veg' grown by a cottage gardener in Ilford parish was won by Charles Wren of 3 Railway Cottages, Barkingside, whilst Ernest Perkins of Aldborough Hatch was Best Amateur Cottage Gardener. Best veg' grown by a professional gardener was George Clark of Gads Hill Cottages, Barkingside.

Many prizes for root crops were won, as you might expect, by many of those listed above. Collards (a variety of cabbage): R Brown, Turnips: A & G Stringer, Carrots: Goodman, Parsnips: Coe, Cabbages: Gunary, Potatoes: Perkins etc are just a sample.

The evening finished with three cheers for the Bishop of Barking and Secretary and organizer Charles Reynolds.

The 1911 ploughing match was a record: 76 ploughs took part of which 63 came from Ilford. Ploughing of a different kind took place in October 1914.

Agricultural shows had started after the 1840s and were an answer by local worthies to counter the worst of the rural distress that had broken out with the Captain Swing riots of the 1830s - the rural equivalent of the Luddite riots. Wages had fallen during the 1820s, work became very seasonal and casual, whilst parish relief to poverty stricken families had also fallen. Many elderly families had only hunger and the workhouse to look forward to and so country shows were developed after 'the hungry forties' (the 1840s) as a way of bringing the farmer and farm labourer closer together, and small family allotments were created. Ilford had avoided the worst of the riots and attacks on farms as wages were just that little bit higher and work more available as farms and market gardens produced crops for the massive London markets. The Riot Act was read twice in the High Street to disperse crowds who were seeking work or beer money. The earlier part of the 19th century was a sad, raw time for the farm labourer and his family but by the 1909 ploughing match those troubles were a bad memory and history.

Bibliography

George Caunt, OBE *Ilford's Yesterdays- The village that became a town* (The Ilford Ploughing Match p.64), Gaunt Publishing, 1980

Ian Dowling and Nick Harris *Ilford: The Old Photographs Series*, Alan Sutton Limited, 1994; *Ilford A Second Selection*, The Chalford Publishing Co, 1995.

Norman Gunby *A Potted History of Ilford*, published by the author, 1997.

Ilford Recorder newspaper, 15th October 1909.

Peter Wright *Remember Ilford's annual ploughing contest?* Ilford Historical Society Newsletter, No.113, December 2013- first written & published 1970.

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From the Museum: Lamplighters cart, about 1905.

This cart was used by Ilford Borough Council to repair gas or electric street lamps. Ilford Council created its own electricity company to supply local houses, businesses and trams. This was a very modern development for its time.

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Our 2014 Programme

Ilford Historical Society meetings are held 7.30 – 9.30 pm on the 2nd Monday of the month, at Ilford Hospital Chapel, The Broadway, Ilford Hill, Ilford, IG1 2AT

Limited parking is available at the rear of the chapel and many buses stop at nearby Ilford Station.

Visitors welcome, £2 per meeting Free refreshments

12th May *From the City to the Abbey* A “virtual” walk from London to Barking.
by Martin Fairhurst

Please note the Society now has funding to hold talks in June at the Chapel and September at Valentines Mansion, details to be announced.

Thursday 4th September 2014, 2pm at Fullwell Cross Library, High Street, Barkingside.

Organised by Vision-Leisure & Libraries

Paintings of World War I by Jef Page, IHS Chairman.

8th September *Ilford in the Great War- Over Here & Over There.*
by John Barfoot, author of “Essex Airmen 1910-1918”

Saturday 4th October, 2pm at Wanstead Library, Spratt Hall Rd, E.11.

Organised by Vision-Leisure & Libraries

Edith Cavell (1865-1915) made the ultimate sacrifice. ‘Isn’t Patriotism Enough?’

by Jef Page, IHS Chairman.

13th October ‘*Bloody Foreigners’ or Welcome Visitors?: migrants to Ilford.*
by Roger Backhouse.

10th November *When Minahan met Mary- sex, sleaze & scandal in 1880s London.*

Author Bridget O’Donnell talks about her excellent book “Inspector Minahan Makes a Stand- the missing girls of England”.

8th December *The Story of Harrison Gibson: Ilford’s famous High Road furniture store.*
by Janet Plimmer, followed by our Christmas Social evening with Mince Pies & Quiz.

Our website can be found at: <http://ilfordhistoricalsociety.weebly.com/>

The next newsletter will be posted out to members early in August.

or can be obtained from the editor (details on page 1) after 15th August.