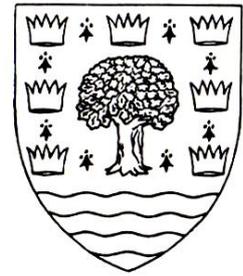


# Ilford Historical Society

## Newsletter No.135 April 2021



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

### At last we have some really good news!

At last we have some really good news! As of Wednesday 24 February, over 18,000,000 people in the UK have had the first dose of a vaccine and over 600,000 have had the second dose. Even in Redbridge, which had a high number of Covid cases, the R rate, as of 16 February, is 0.70, compared to a London-wide R rate of 0.93. (The R rate is the rate at which one infected person is likely to spread coronavirus.) We also have a cautious roadmap out of lockdown and, if all goes well, we should reach something like normality on 21 June, Midsummer's day, a time of celebration, which seems like a good omen, as long as we don't overdo it! It's not clear where meetings like ours feature in the roadmap but, fingers crossed, we will be on target to have our first meeting in September.



Valentines Mansion is closed at the moment but the café is open for takeaway drinks and the gardens are beautiful. (26 Feb 2021)

Before then, we do want to hold an AGM on 12 April. We missed last year's and if we wait until September, we will be too close to the April 2022 AGM date. This means that the AGM will have to be on Zoom. It will follow the same lines as a conventional AGM – President's report, Treasurer's report, voting for Committee members and motions. We are setting up voting on Zoom and we will send you the paperwork for the AGM electronically. I apologise again that those of you not on email will miss out on our meeting but the paperwork and a voting paper will be delivered to you. The only difference will be that you will have to vote and let us have any questions in advance. As usual, there will be an article on the AGM in the next newsletter.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at the AGM and look forward to meeting you in person in September. If you have any comments please contact our Secretary Janet Seward

[janetseward@aol.com](mailto:janetseward@aol.com)

*Jef Page President, 25 February 2020*

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## Renewing Ilford's station footbridge in 1978

From December 1974 I commuted by train from Ilford to work at Aldgate so I became familiar with the station. (A weekly season ticket to Liverpool Street cost me just £1.90 for the first week but in January 1975 it went up to £2.10!) In 1974 Ilford station had two bridges over the tracks as well as the bridge by the Cranbrook Road entrance. One at the west end of the station buildings was accessed by lifts on three platforms and was solely for Ilford's then considerable parcels traffic. Trolley loads of "Red Star" parcels could often be seen on platform 1 where the parcels office was, but there must have been pilferage as these were later enclosed within a fence.

Further west at the platform ends was a cast iron bridge with a curved corrugated iron roof. This was probably built when the Great Eastern Railway widened the railway through the station from two to four tracks in 1898. This transformation enabled stopping trains to be separated from main line expresses making a far more frequent commuter service possible.

Ilford's growing population needed more trains as developers were building houses rapidly near the line from Ilford to Chadwell Heath. Developer Cameron Corbett realised the importance of good public transport and contributed towards the cost of a new station entrance on York Road directly serving his Grange House Estate. This station entrance led on to the new footbridge. No doubt it was a good selling point.

The railway remained steam operated until 1949. Although the London and North Eastern Railway planned electrification pre war they lacked funds and the newly formed British Railways (BR) finally carried through overhead electrification from Liverpool Street to Southend Victoria in 1949 using 1,500 volts DC.

Following developments in France and extensive testing in the UK BR then carried out a conversion to 6.25Kv AC in 1960 though electrification at the more efficient 25Kv AC would have been better. It was thought that bridge and other clearances on the Liverpool Street to Southend line did not allow a higher voltage as current could "flash" across from overhead wires to nearby structures.

After technical investigations British Rail found voltage could be higher than previously thought. They increased voltage on tracks between Ilford and Liverpool Street to 25Kv AC between 1976 and 1980 though for a time the inner section was at 6.25Kv. This meant increasing some clearances so Ilford's west end cast iron footbridge (Bridge number 78) was removed to be replaced by the present concrete structure with stairs down to all platforms. When the parcels bridge was removed is not something I recorded.

Living in Ilford I took some pictures of the bridge removal though cannot recall all the details. My notebook says photos (colour slides, probably Fujichrome speed ASA125) were taken first on 8<sup>th</sup> October and then more on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1978, when Margaret and I went by train from Waterloo to Portsmouth Harbour Station to visit my brother in Gosport. The colour slides were scanned in 2019 and it seemed an opportunity to write about what they showed.

More detail comes from a book by William Peter Robinson. *From steam to Stratford* is the reminiscences of a Lancashire youth who joined British Rail at Carnforth Shed and later became foreman of the breakdown train at Stratford depot with a diesel crane, capable of lifting 75 tons, used for breakdowns and engineering works along the lines. On pages 191-192 he writes about replacing Ilford's footbridge in October 1978 adding detail to my brief notes of the photos. The scale of works with a three span bridge to be replaced meant work was done over three weekends of which I took pictures on the first and third.



**Picture 1** Crane in platform road 4 with old footbridge in foreground. Removal of the old footbridge has already begun.



**Picture 2-** Crane in platform road 4. Support for new concrete bridge in background. What would the blue station sign be worth now?



**Picture 3** Crane in platform road 2 removing old cast iron pillar.



**Picture 4** Crane in platform road 2 and new concrete pillar in place. Fashionistas please note onlookers wearing flairs!

**Picture 5** Looking west to Ilford flyover with support pillars for the new footbridge and staircase in place. The support coach is a former LNER Gresley teak bodied vehicle.



**Photographs all © 1978 Roger Backhouse**

He notes leaving Stratford depot at 20.00 hours on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October. At Ilford the crew had to wait until late trains had finished running. Then the overhead line men slewed electric wires across to allow the crane to operate. For the Sunday work he wrote “The old span was lifted down and loaded into a long engineer’s wagon with the low sides called a Trench. The cast-iron pillars that held up the bridge were next to come down and they were loaded up along with the stair treads. We had a long wait whilst the train with the old bridge on it was shunted away and the new one brought alongside us.” This is probably the bridge section nearest to York Road and what I photographed on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October shown in pictures 1 and 2. They show the crane working on platform road 4 (down slow) with wagons in front on platform road 3 (up slow), first removing the old bridge and then with one of the supports for the new bridge in place. Trains obviously ran from Ilford that day using platform roads 1 and 2.

As the crane was a former steam crane recently converted to diesel power the foreman worried about risk of failure but it performed well. The gang returned to Stratford at 20.00 on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>. The following weekend much the same happened and he records that the job was uneventful, presumably removing the middle bridge section.

He says little about footbridge work on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October except to say it was uneventful noting that they returned to Stratford at 21.00 Sunday night [the 22<sup>nd</sup>]. This is probably the works seen in pictures 3, 4 and 5 with a cast iron column being removed and one of the new supports in place. The crane is on platform road 2 (down fast) and passenger trains must have run using platforms 3 and 4.

Looking at the pictures forty-two plus years later it is hard to understand why platforms were not closed to visitors with work going on. There was no protective temporary fencing and I could get close to take photos. It is doubtful whether such practice would be allowed now. Also note that not everyone at work wears a helmet! Definitely not something permitted today.

The “new” concrete bridge is still in place ready for Crossrail’s yet again delayed opening and another transformation of Ilford’s transport.

## References

For a wider account of Ilford development in the context of other London suburbs see:

Alan A. Jackson *Semi-detached London: suburban development, life and transport 1900-39*. Wild Swan Publications. 2nd edition. 1991.

There are interesting pictures of the west end of Ilford station (and other stations on the former Great Eastern line) in: Dave Brennan *Ilford to Shenfield* Middleton Press. 2002.

For bridge removal (and incidents in the Ilford area including derailments in Ilford car sheds) see William Peter Robinson (breakdown crane crew foreman at Stratford) *From steam to Stratford* Published by the author. 2005. ISBN 978-0-9551294-0-7

There is a great 1911 photograph of Ilford station showing the relatively new footbridge on page 173 of: Dave Brennan *London’s East End railways*. Part 1 Liverpool Street, Stratford, Ilford and Temple Mills Yard. Booklaw Publications. 2011.

There is a well illustrated account of the Ilford - Seven Kings widening by Peter Kay *The Ilford-Seven Kings widening, 1897-1899 and the opening of Seven Kings Station* in Connor and Butler *London Railway Record*. No 46 January 2006. pp2-18

© Roger Backhouse, 28 January 2021

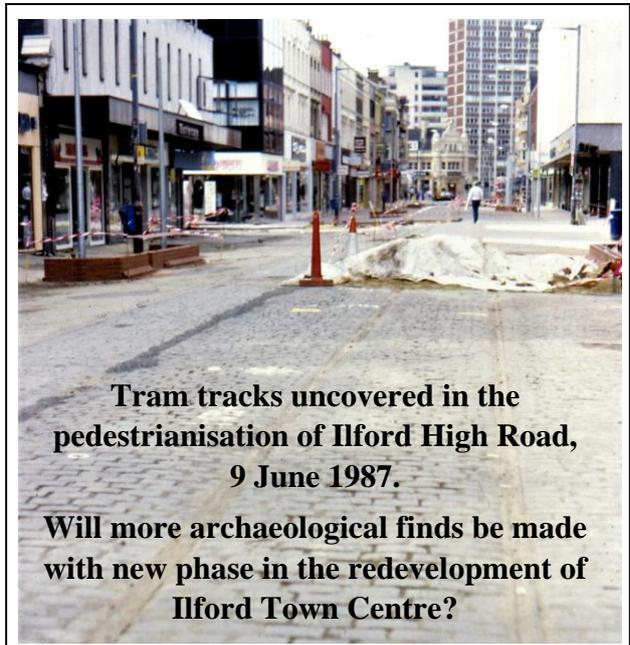
## History in the making – Ilford’s new station



The station entrance opposite the Exchange, late February 2021, photo Janet Seward

Network Rail, Crossrail and Transport for London are currently working on a major rebuild of Ilford Station to facilitate access to the new Elizabeth line. This will stretch more than 60 miles from Reading and Heathrow in the west through central tunnels across to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east, with Ilford station giving us access to these new rail links. The new station building includes an enhanced southern entrance that will serve customers alighting from buses on Ilford Hill. It will also provide a quick access to the Elizabeth line for residents of **over 1000 new homes being planned on development sites to the south of the station.**

The front page of our newsletter no. 131, December 2019, explained that Ilford Historical Society is not a campaigning society and we do not have the resources to be one. We see our contribution as documenting what we can while buildings exist and ensuring that the information is kept securely for future use. If anyone has any old photos of the area which will be bulldozed, or any more recent ones which show the area well, please get in touch with the editor.



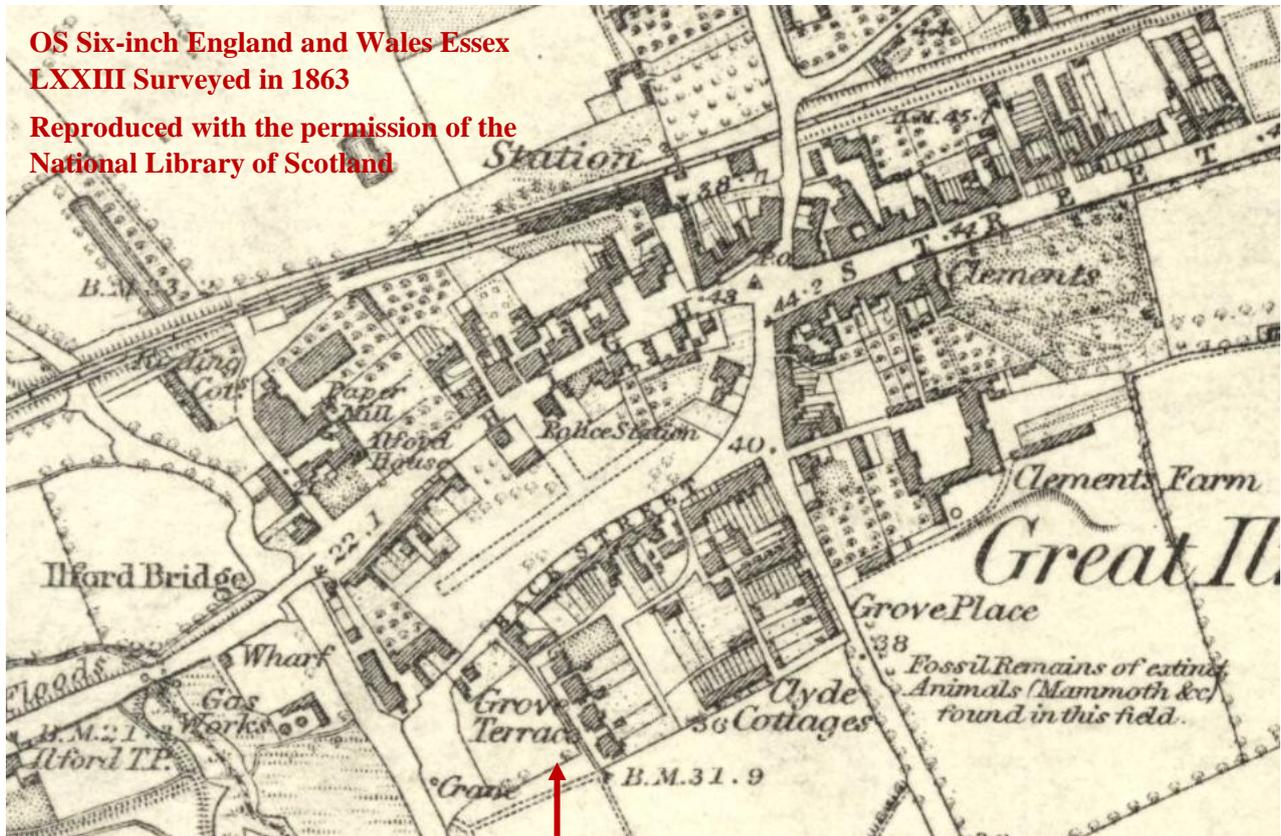
Photographs © Georgina Green



The Papermakers Arms (on the corner of Roden Street) and 1-3 Riverdene Road, Ilford, 4 December 1988

## What were the houses of Grove Terrace like?

As an exercise in local historical research, attempting to ascertain what the houses were like in a terrace that not only disappeared long ago but of which no picture seems to exist, might appear slightly pointless. But I have long since held a fascination for buildings and streets that are no longer there, so an attempt to find out as much as I could about Grove Terrace seemed entirely natural.



Firstly, let's set out what we know.

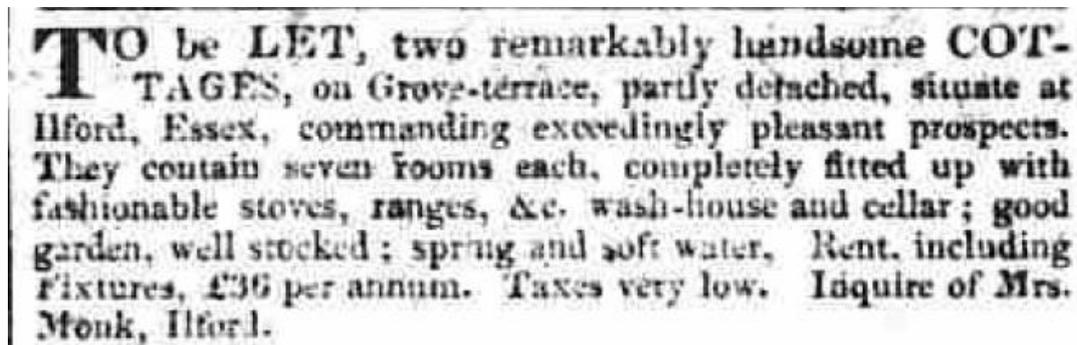
Grove Terrace would appear, without being able to confirm this, to have been built on the old estate of Rayhouse which included a mansion that was demolished in 1809 or shortly after.<sup>1</sup> They were located round the corner from Back Street (Roden Street) on a lane that we now know as Riverdene Road (previously Uphall Road) and faced the River Roding across what were at the time empty fields. Looking at the map from 1863 there appears, however, to have been a crane near the river – remember that it was a working river at the time. Although named as a terrace, it comprised one detached house and six semi-detached. It was numbered 1 to 7 although it is unclear as to which way round the numbering went i.e. whether the detached house closest to Back Street was 1 or 7. The book about Ilford Ltd, *Silver By The Ton* by R J Hercock and G A Jones, notes that Alfred Harman bought all seven in the early 1880s and occupation then dwindled until 1891 by which point two houses were occupied by Ilford Ltd employees. In 1895, 5 Grove Terrace was being used as a mess room, although that usage ended with the building of the Britannia Works Institute. Although there is a building plan from 1909 which has one cottage on it, it is not known when the last was finally demolished.

<sup>1</sup> See the section on Rayhouse in the Victoria County History <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol5/pp190-214>

So, what can we find out from Census returns, directories, and newspapers?

### To Let / To Buy Notices

The earliest reference I can find for Grove Terrace is a notice of two houses to let in the *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* of 11<sup>th</sup> March 1828 which I show below. I do not have any idea of building date but that there are two to let may indicate that they have been built recently.



**T**O be LET, two remarkably handsome COTTAGES, on Grove-terrace, partly detached, situate at Ilford, Essex, commanding exceedingly pleasant prospects. They contain seven rooms each, completely fitted up with fashionable stoves, ranges, &c. wash-house and cellar; good garden, well stocked; spring and soft water. Rent, including fixtures, £36 per annum. Taxes very low. Inquire of Mrs. Monk, Ilford.

Copyright: British Newspaper Archive

The second was found in the *Morning Advertiser* of 27<sup>th</sup> January 1852 which had the following: “To be Let, a semi-detached cottage residence, Ilford, Essex, 6½ miles from London and within two minutes walk of the railway station – stands high and open to the meadows and surrounding country – contains two sitting and four excellent sleeping rooms, kitchen, washhouse, cellar, &c – good garden walled in, spring and soft water – rent, including fixtures, 35l [pounds] per annum. Apply to Mr Monk, Grove-terrace, Ilford”

Note that in both cases the name of Monk – Henry Monk is listed as the owner of all seven houses in the Tithe Index of 1847, and the land to the east behind Grove Terrace on which smaller cottages stood which I covered in a previous article.<sup>2</sup> The Tithe Index also shows that Mrs Monk owned all of Adelaide Terrace.

### Occupants

There were obviously many people who lived in Grove Terrace over the years so I took a snapshot of households in the 1861 Census.

The occupations of the head of the family were as follows: Clerk – Bank of England, Land Proprietor, No occupation, Physician, Cashier – Bank of England, Physician, Attorney and Solicitor. Incidentally, the second of the two physicians, Edward Sullivan, moved into Melcombe Lodge on Barking Lane by 1871. By coincidence, a later occupant of Grove Terrace, Frederick Allard, bought Melcombe Lodge when it came up for auction in 1879.

Four of the seven houses had spouses living there, all had children, and five had servants. The total numbers living there in each house at the time of the Census ranged from four to nine.

From the British Newspaper Archive I found several announcements that were from a period before the directories began to state precisely where people lived. The only one to mention an occupation was a marriage announcement in the *Banner of Ulster* of 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1848, where the bride was the “daughter of Samuel Perkins, Esq., of Grove Terrace, Ilford and Princes Square, London, shipowner.”

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<sup>2</sup> “Living Inside Ilford Ltd” in IHS Newsletter 130 (Aug 2019)

### Furnishings etc

The *Chelmsford Chronicle* of 12<sup>th</sup> Sept 1834 carried an advert for the sale at 1 Grove Terrace due to the proprietor moving to Ireland. It comprised the following:

*“All the excellent and modern furniture, pier and chimney glasses, mahogany chifffonier, card and loo tables, Grecian couch, grand piano forte, a set of mahogany dining tables, on telescope frames; rich pattern Brussels and Turkey carpets, rich-cut glass, plate, linen, foreign and ornamental china, minerals, shells, vases &c; two capital sportsman’s guns, set of dinner service, the usual kitchen requisites, and effects.”*

Catalogues were available from the premises and various Inns.

### Conclusion

From the maps that are available and show Grove Terrace, the houses appear to be larger than any others in the area south of Roden Street. They also have substantial gardens at the rear. Were the houses two or three-storied? The letting adverts are not clear on this although both state that the houses have a cellar. Given that servants were a common occurrence it is almost certain that the houses would have a bedroom for them that wasn’t part of the “*four excellent sleeping rooms*” listed in the advert above. This might have been an attic room which had a dormer window – fairly common in Georgian houses- or on the third storey. So, these houses could have been either two stories plus cellar and attic; or three stories plus cellar.

If 1 Grove Terrace was the detached house closest to Roden Street then this might account for the richness of the items being auctioned and shouldn’t necessarily be taken as the norm for the other houses. However, it does point to the occupants of these houses being very comfortably off in terms of their income/wealth – an assertion supported by the evidence of their occupations.

Further research is needed on the breakup of the Rayhouse Estate in 1809 relating to this area to ascertain, if possible, the purchasers and how they used their plots which would heavily influence the “look” of the area for over 180 years.

© *Dr Colin Runeckles, 4 November 2020*

## **History in the Making - Oaklands Hamlet, IG7 4QP**

Did you know a whole new community has been built on the east side of our borough? It is adjacent to Hainault Golf Course on the south side, where various properties make up a linear development off Five Oaks Lane. Building started on ‘Oaklands Hamlet’ 4½ years ago with the first phase opening in 2017. 425 homes have been constructed varying from shared



and privately owned flats to 5-bedroom houses, selling for over £700,000. No shops have been included in the development but there is plenty of parking space and the junction with Romford Road has been widened to take account of the traffic. Interestingly their website implies the development is in Chigwell and that primary education might be provided at Clockhouse Primary School, located 2 miles away, at Collier Row in Havering. But if you are thinking of moving – there is just one property left to be sold!

© *Georgina Green, 28 February 2021*

## When the (flying) circus came to town

Until the outbreak of the First World War, anyone could take to the skies for as long as the primitive aero engines of the time would keep him or her aloft. In fact, engines were the major hurdle – there were very few. Many aviation pioneers had to adapt motor-cycle engines or build from scratch. Soon after the start of the war, all non-military flying was prohibited, but with the rapid development of aircraft during the war, when peace returned the Government considered that flying would have to be controlled. After the war ended, civil flying was permitted to begin again, and the Air Navigation Act of 1920 enabled the new Air Ministry to issue licences, certify aircraft and regulate airfields. There were now many surplus wartime aircraft and surplus pilots who wanted to carry on flying. Some of these set up joy-riding companies and gave thousands of people their first taste of flight.

By the 1930s, when new types of aircraft were appearing in rapid succession, touring air displays or ‘flying circuses’ were a popular spectacle. As that decade opened, the newly formed Essex Gliding Club<sup>3</sup> had grand plans for an Essex Air Pageant to be held at Hainault Recreation Ground.

*The Ilford Recorder*, 15 August 1930

### *FORTHCOMING AIR PAGEANT.*

*Essex Gliding Club to Stage Display at Fairlop.*

### *MINIATURE HENDON.*

*What is believed to be the first air pageant ever held in the county has been arranged by the Essex Gliding Club to take place at the old Fairlop Aerodrome<sup>4</sup>, near Ilford, on Sunday, August 31<sup>st</sup>. A most attractive programme will include demonstrations by various types of modern aircraft, and the public will have an opportunity of taking a “flip” and obtaining the view of the bird. There will be, in addition, free joy-rides for the purchasers of programmes bearing lucky numbers.*

*The main events will be: The Essex handicap for aeroplanes, the competitors in which will include many world-famous airmen and airwomen; aerobatics and stunting by some of the world’s best stunters; car-bombing by aeroplanes; a race between Buster Frogley on a motor cycle and Roger Frogley in his aeroplane (the famous dirt-track riders)<sup>5</sup>; a lesson in flying for everybody; a demonstration by an airship; demonstrations by many types of modern light aeroplanes; and, weather permitting, there will also be a demonstration of gliding by the members of the club in their “Zogling.”*

*This is by no means the complete programme, and it will be seen that visitors will have a feast of sights of progress of man in the air.*

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<sup>3</sup> Essex Gliding Club began life in May 1930 following the re-naming of the Chingford & District Gliding Club. The club initially flew from a site at Hog Hill, on land belonging to Hainault Farm (probably where Redbridge Cycling Centre is now), and then at Havering Park Farm, Collier Row.

<sup>4</sup> This is a curious use of the term ‘Fairlop Aerodrome’ for, in 1930, both of the First World War airfields in the vicinity had long closed and plans for the airport at Fairlop were still several years in the future. What is meant here is the location of the former Royal Naval Air Service airfield at Fairlop, encompassing Fairlop Oak Playing Field and Hainault Recreation Ground.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Robert ‘Buster’ Frogley (1904–1973) and Roger Frogley (1908–1974) were pioneering motorcycle speedway riders. In 1931, with Frank Darlow, they were founders of Herts & Essex Aero Club at Broxbourne aerodrome. Although taking the name Broxbourne from the nearest town, the aerodrome was located in the village of Nazeing on the Essex side of the River Lea. In 1954, the club transferred from Broxbourne to Stapleford aerodrome, near Abridge, where it was renamed Stapleford Flying Club.

*One of the 'planes to take part is considered to be practically the last word in safe flying. This aeroplane is guaranteed not to "spin," and is the ideal machine for learners. The pilot will take up this machine and will give a demonstration of the common errors of flying and slow flying generally.*

*Fairlop aerodrome is situated in ideal open surroundings, and the sight of the airship approaching and circling around the ground should be worth going a long way to see. The stunting planes will be perfect examples of the wonderful design in modern high-speed aircraft construction, and the aerobatics to be seen will include every known "stunt," old and new. The main excitement of the afternoon will probably centre around the Frogley brothers' race and the car-bombing.*

*Comprehensive arrangements are being made for the comfort of visitors to the aerodrome, a car park is being provided, and tickets, 2s. and 1s., can be obtained from any member of the club, or from the hon. organiser, Mr. F. E. Darlow, 17, Randolph-road, E.17.*

These plans for Fairlop were to remain unfulfilled, for in the following week's edition of *The Ilford Recorder* was this announcement:

#### *ESSEX AIR PAGEANT*

*Since the announcement appeared in the "Recorder" last week regarding the air pageant to be arranged by the Essex Gliding Club, it has been found necessary to alter the time and date of the pageant, which will take place at Chingford aerodrome (instead of Fairlop) on September 14<sup>th</sup> next <sup>6</sup>. Among the attractions will be free joy-rides by Sir Alan Cobham <sup>7</sup> in a de Havilland "Puss Moth."*

The largest of the decade's flying circus enterprises was that of Alan Cobham. At this time, Cobham was also busy with his campaign to promote British aviation through the development of municipal aerodromes. Cobham believed that the public was not air-minded at all. Most people had never seen an aircraft except as a distant speck in the sky; few had ever seen one at close quarters, and the proportion that had flown was minute – aviation meant nothing to most people, and so long as this remained the case, there would be little Parliamentary support for its development.

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<sup>6</sup> It would appear that the Chingford event did not take place either, for on 29 August, *The Essex Chronicle* carried a letter from Frank Darlow announcing: 'I am reluctantly compelled to inform you that in view of the many difficulties experienced by the Committee in connection with the organisation, particularly with regard to the use of the Aerodrome, we are compelled to abandon for the time being the prospect of holding the Essex Air Pageant this year. I am forming a Light Aeroplane Club for Essex, and have already made many provisional arrangements'.

<sup>7</sup> Alan John Cobham (1894–1973) learnt to fly while in the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War and he later went on to set many long-distance aviation records. These include becoming the first person to fly from London to Cape Town and back in 1926, for which he received the Air Force Cross, and in the same year being the first person to fly from London to Australia and back, for which he was knighted by King George V. With pioneering, route-proving flights to India, Burma, South Africa and Australia, Cobham captured the public's imagination. A gifted self-publicist and propagandist for the future of air travel, Cobham's flights were widely proclaimed as trail-blazing exercises for Imperial Airways, then already looking to spread its route structure beyond Europe. Cobham then started an extensive campaign promoting the development of municipal aerodromes and, in 1929, he assembled a team to support an intensive tour promoting his services as an aerodrome consultant. In 1932, as his enthusiasm turned towards providing a touring air show, he began the National Aviation Day displays. These went on for four years (and included a tour of South Africa during the British winter of 1932–1933). By September 1934, he was interested in in-flight refuelling and, in October, set up Flight Refuelling Ltd, to which he subsequently devoted the majority of his attention. The company survives today as Cobham plc, a defence manufacturer based in Wimborne Minster, Dorset.



Sir Alan Cobham, long-distance flyer and founder of the National Aviation Day displays.

Cobham's experience had convinced him that when people were brought into contact with practical flying, they then appreciated the need for landing facilities. He therefore came up with the idea of a National Aviation Day as a permanent institution for the whole country. As he could not be everywhere at once on a single day, he decided that every town and city would have its own Aviation Day as an annual fixture and featuring flying displays that would 'bring this lesson home to every man and woman in the country'. He saw National Aviation Day as a way of popularising flying with the public, hoping that if it became popular with the public it would be popular with the politicians too.

Cobham set about organising such a celebration – a touring air show – with a combination of barn-storming and joy-riding put on by a team of up to 15 aircraft, ranging from single-seaters to multi-engine airliners, with many skilled pilots.

Cobham's team toured the country each summer for four years, from 1932 to 1935, visiting some 100 or more localities each year and providing displays of flying followed by pleasure flights for the public. The show was constantly varied with new aircraft and manoeuvres bringing it up to date, but the formula for success was always the same: a demonstration of various aircraft in flight, aerobatics by those who were capable of it, and brief joy-rides at low cost.

In September 1935, on one of its last tours, Cobham's circus was booked to display in Ilford:

*The Ilford Recorder*, 19 September 1935

*Free Flights for "Recorder" Readers*  
**SIR ALAN COBHAM TO VISIT ILFORD.**  
*Breath-Taking Aerobatics.*

**CHANCE TO FLY WITH ONLY GIRL PARACHUTIST**

*Sir Alan Cobham, the world-famous airman, will present his renowned display at Hainault Recreation Ground on Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup>.*

*The display comprises entirely new events and the squadron includes such famous airmen as Flight Lieut. Geoffrey Tyson, undoubtedly the finest British aerobatic pilot; Flight Lieut. H. C. Johnson, chief pilot of the display, who has taken up more people than any other aviator; Miss Naomi Heron-Maxwell<sup>8</sup>, the society girl parachutist; and Mr. T. Bullmore, the Autogiro<sup>9</sup> demonstration pilot.*

<sup>8</sup> Naomi Heron-Maxwell (1912–1984) was the second daughter of Sir Ivor Patrick Heron-Maxwell and Lady Heron-Maxwell. She learned to fly at Abridge aerodrome, Essex, gaining her Royal Aero Club aviator's certificate (no

*The new display forms the greatest array of modern aircraft and modern flying talent yet assembled in a civil organisation. Here are some of the remarkable exhibitions which Sir Alan has arranged.*

*Aerobatic gliding display. A demonstration of aeroplane-towed gliding and aerobatics in an engineless aircraft.*

*Parachute drop by Miss Naomi Heron-Maxwell. A free jump from the wing of a high speed aeroplane flying at 2,000 feet demonstrating the skill of Britain's only lady parachutist.*

*Aerobatics in formation. Daring new feats by three "Aces" flying the latest Avro "Cadet" light aeroplanes as used by instructors of the Central Flying School, Royal Air Force, for their famous Hendon displays.*

*The "Wingless" Autogiro. First appearance of the new "direct-control" Autogiro, which has no wings or control planes and is an extraordinary advance in aviation.*

#### **HOW TO WIN A FREE FLIGHT TICKET.**

*By special arrangement with Sir Alan, the "Recorder" is able to offer free flights to ten of our readers for thrilling air cruises in the giant "Astra" air liner<sup>10</sup>.*

*This giant aeroplane carries 22 passengers in a spacious cabin. Each passenger has an armchair and a separate side-window, affording a magnificent view of the countryside.*

*With its two powerful Bristol "Jupiter" engines developing 1,100 h.p., the "Astra" will carry our air guests on a memorable cruise at 100 miles an hour in perfect safety and comfort.*

*Their pilot will be Flight Lieutenant H. C. Johnson, the chief pilot of Sir Alan Cobham's display, who holds the amazing record of having taken up more than 140,000 people without mishap.*

*This is believed to be a record unparalleled by any other pilot in the world. It will be his object to show his passengers the most interesting features of the surrounding country.*

*The most nervous of passengers will forget their timidity in his capable hands.*

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12254) there on 5 September 1934, flying a de Havilland DH60G Gipsy Moth. She also earned her ground engineer's licence, and learnt to parachute – paying for her flying lessons by giving parachuting performances. On 27 August 1934, on the BBC Regional Programme (London), Naomi gave a talk entitled 'Learning to Leap: First Adventures of a Parachutist'. In 1935, she joined Alan Cobham's team as a 'society girl' parachutist and accumulated 104 parachute jumps in less than a year, sometimes jumping more than once a day. She also travelled to Germany and began glider training, achieving her silver badge for endurance flying there. During the Second World War, she was one of the longest-serving female ATA pilots. After the war, in search of work, Naomi moved to the USA. Unable to find work in aviation, she hit on hard times and, after dabbling in several unsuccessful ventures, entered the world of real estate business.

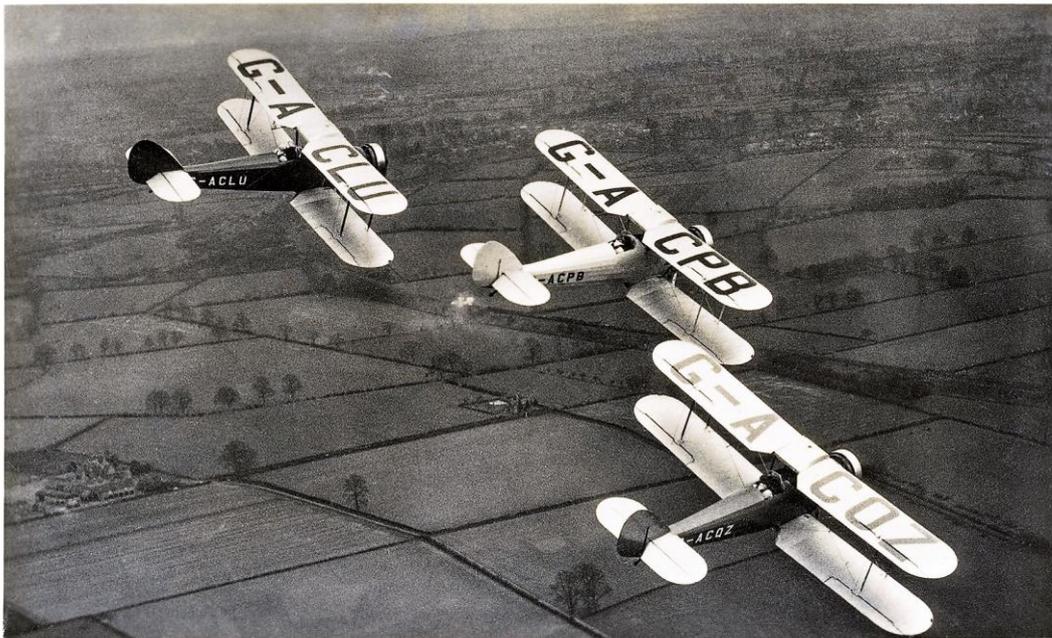
<sup>9</sup> In the United Kingdom, the main force behind the development and construction of gyroplanes – early helicopters – was a Spanish engineer and inventor, Juan de la Cierva (1895–1936). From his arrival in Britain in 1925, de la Cierva built a number of autogiros of ever-increasing sophistication and, by 1932, these had evolved sufficiently to allow cyclic movement of the rotor to provide directional control as well as lift.

<sup>10</sup> In the 1930s, any aircraft with windows in its sides became an 'airliner', and if it had a fair few windows it was a 'giant airliner'. The residents of many a small town or village would be eager to see, and perhaps equally eager to sample, the visit of such a large aeroplane, which was clearly intended to prove that their settlement was a likely hub for all future air transport within the British Isles. Cobham's 'Astra' airliner was a Handley Page HP35 Clive I (registered as G-ABYX), built in 1928 and which commenced its circus career in 1932. Originally named 'Youth of Australia', the re-named 'Astra' had wickerwork passenger seats with safety belts and, in four joy-riding seasons, it carried 120,000 passengers without incident, averaging 11 take-offs and landings each operating day.

*To win one of these free flight tickets, state on a postcard, in not more than 50 words, why you would like an air trip.*

*Address your postcard to Flight, Editor, "Ilford Recorder," High-road, Ilford, and send it to reach this office not later than first post on Monday.*

On the day of the display, like all those of the 1935 season, the programme began with a fly-past over the local area (the aerial equivalent of the circus parade) to attract the crowd. This was followed by 'The Pilot's "Paper Chase"', described in the programme as 'an amusing and instructive display of quick thinking and quick control'. Next came formation looping by three aircraft tied together with ribbons – Cobham's 'Three Aces'. A demonstration of the 'wingless' Autogiro followed, the programme noting that the police had found a new use for this 'sky "traffic cop"' in connection with the control of road traffic; this aircraft carried a radio and the public could hear the instructions being given to the pilot over the loudspeaker.



THE "THREE ACES" IN THE AVRO CADET FORMATION.

Then came high-speed aerobatics by Geoffrey Tyson. Tyson's performance at Dagenham in April of the previous year had brought the following comments from *Flight* magazine. No doubt the crowd at Hainault was treated to a similar spectacle:

*Mr. Tyson's displays on the "Lincock" and "Tiger Moth" were clean, but we cannot help deprecating the spirit which leads him to fly so low and close to the crowd, particularly when inverted. An error of judgment or an untoward occurrence under those conditions would produce an accident, doing incalculable harm to aviation as a whole ...*

*Mr. Tyson is the "stunt merchant" of the Display and he performs not only normal, though studiously spectacular aerobatics, but also in special "stunts" like flying beneath a string stretched between two posts and looping over it, and also picking up a handkerchief from the ground by a sprung spike on his wing tip. He is also the pilot who "bombs" those who take part in the humorous event. He is very accurate indeed in this latter, but here again takes, we feel, undue risks in his desire to give the public a good show. Many times he had his aeroplane in such a position that an accident would have been more than likely had his engine failed. The handling of his machine, however, leaves no doubt about his ability as a pilot.*

Tyson's performance was followed by a display of advertising banners towed behind various aircraft; a competition for the public to win a free flight by correctly judging the speed of an aeroplane as it flew by; some 'crazy flying'; a demonstration of formation flying exercises used by the RAF; an obstacle air race for three teams; more from Geoffrey Tyson, now flying upside-down at a height of only 20 feet; another competition for a free flight, this time judging the height of a passing aircraft.

The next event was a humorous one entitled 'Say it with Flour', where a bride and groom 'going away' in the back of an open car would see the chauffeur fall out to leave them in a runaway vehicle 'flour-bombed' by Geoffrey Tyson. Then came a gliding demonstration and more aerobatics from Tyson. Next was a 'surprise item' – a demonstration of *The Ilford Recorder's* Flying Flea<sup>11</sup>. Finally the climax of the display took place – parachute drops by Naomi Heron-Maxwell. Throughout the display, aircraft large and small continued to give joy-rides to large numbers of people who wished to see their homes from the air.

The visit of Cobham's 'circus' was a great success, as reported in *The Ilford Recorder* a few days later:

*The Ilford Recorder*, 3 October 1935

*FLYING FLEA'S FINE FLIGHT.*

*Crowds at the Ilford Air Display.*

*Flying like a giant bat over the heads of large crowds at Sir Alan Cobham's air display at Hainault Recreation ground on Thursday, the "Ilford Recorder" "Flying Flea" demonstrated both its air-worthiness and the fact that it is indeed the aeroplane of the future for the ordinary man in the street.*

*The "Flea" at first provoked amusement, as it lay on the ground and even when it taxied for the take-off, but as it rose high in the air with zooming sound, and circled to show itself off, it was evident that it was a 'plane anyone would be proud to possess.*

*Emblazoned with the inscription "Ilford Recorder," the midget aeroplane had been brought by Sir Alan, by special arrangement with the clever inventor, Monsieur Mignet, from France. It was an improved model of the baby 'plane which has been exciting the interest of amateurs all over the country, since the memorable cross-channel flight was made recently<sup>12</sup>.*

SIR ALAN COBHAM'S AIR DISPLAY.



MISS NAOMI HERON-MAXWELL

<sup>11</sup> The HM14 Flying Flea was a basic aircraft designed by Frenchman Henri Mignet (1893–1965) in 1933. Mignet wished to create a Ford Model T (nicknamed 'pou de la route' in French) of the air, an aeroplane for the common man, hence 'pou du ciel' – in English translation 'Flying Flea'. The result was an aircraft that was simpler to build and easier to fly than a conventional machine; it had two wings and a rudder, with no ailerons or other control surfaces, and only a control stick, no rudder pedals at all. Although 119 Fleas were registered in Britain, only 76 received authorisations to fly. Following a series of fatal accidents, restrictions were placed on the use of Flying Fleas in Britain. Changes were subsequently made to the aircraft's design, but it never completely overcame its dangerous and unreliable reputation.

<sup>12</sup> The craze for the Flying Flea in Britain prompted *The Daily Express* to invite Henri Mignet to show off his machine. On 13 August 1935, Mignet flew across the English Channel in his Flea, leaving from Saint-Inglevert, near Calais and landing at Lympne aerodrome, in Kent.

*The display provided many hair-raising thrills for a large crowd of spectators. Formation flying, stunts, passenger flights and parachute descents were included in the programme. "Recorder" readers who won free flights in a competition have written enthusiastically of their experiences though a heavy ground mist to a great extent obscured the wonderful views that Ilford and the surrounding country normally present from the air.*

*Parachute drops were made by Miss Naomi Heron-Maxwell, the accomplished Scottish society girl, and others who took part in the events included many well-known pilots – Flight Lieut. Geoffrey Tyson, the aerobatic expert, T. Bullmore, Flight Lieut. H. Johnson and others.*

Alan Cobham was not the last to seek to use Hainault Recreation Ground for flying. In late March 1936, C W A Scott's Flying Display requested permission from Ilford Borough Council to use the site for a one-day flying display in April. The council agreed to the request, subject to a donation of 10 per cent of the receipts to King George Hospital (or a nominal five guineas in the event of bad weather causing the cancellation of the display). However, Scott was unable to fix an April date and, when he came back requesting to use the site at the end of August or September instead, the council turned him down, replying that the use of the facilities at Hainault Recreation Ground had already been granted to others during those two months.

© Alan Simpson, 16 October 2017

## **Dr Albert Mansbridge (1876-1952)**

No 198 Windsor Road, Ilford is a terraced house, built around 1900 and it is locally listed as it has a blue commemorative plaque to Dr Albert Mansbridge, Founder of the Workers' Educational Association. (See page 16)



Albert was brought up in a working-class home and at the age of fourteen he became an office boy. He continued his education in the evenings, at university extension lectures, co-operative courses, and other classes. In 1901 he eventually found suitable employment, as cashier of the Co-operative Permanent Building Society. By this time he had a wife who shared his enthusiasm for access to all for life-long-learning.

Together with friends, they planned the conference at Oxford, in August 1903, at which the Workers' Educational Association was formally constituted. With the blessing of leading co-operators, university extensionists, and churchmen, Mansbridge became honorary secretary.

By 1914 the WEA had 179 branches with over 2,500 affiliated societies, mainly co-operatives, trade unions, and religious societies. Enthusiasts in each region spread the gospel, but Mansbridge took on an immense burden of speaking and writing articles, as well as administration. He had the power to inspire audiences and attract disciples, his voice and personality breathing life into his simple ideas about life and learning. His message in later years was that 'education is emancipation'.

*The information above is taken from Mansbridge's much longer entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography which is available on line. © Georgina Green, 20 February 2021*

## Blue Plaques in Redbridge



Although there are over 950 English Heritage Blue Plaques in London, only two are in Redbridge. One is for Prime Minister Clement Attlee who lived at 17 Monkams Avenue in Woodford Green (*left*) which is not listed. The other is on 198 Windsor Road, Ilford, a terraced house (*right*), which is locally listed by Redbridge. The blue commemorative plaque is to Dr Albert Mansbridge, (see page 15)

It is interesting that both houses were built around 1903-5, both near stations, but intended for different families. Houses near Ilford station were expected to

become a home for a clerical worker, the houses near Woodford station “above the line” were for a wealthier clientele. No.198 is more impressive than the other houses in Windsor Road and Dr Mansbridge took up residence in 1903.



## IHS Programme for Spring 2021

While we are all under Covid-19 restrictions we will present our talks by ZOOM, a free computer programme. Please contact the society’s secretary, [janetseward@aol.com](mailto:janetseward@aol.com) for further information. We are happy to help you install Zoom if you do not already have it.

**12 April 2021 AGM at 7.15pm (see front page)**, followed by *1930s East End Artists*  
The East End Group of London artists portrayed a part of the capital often overlooked by Jef Page, President, Ilford HS

**10 May 2021 *Barkingside: Postcards and Photographs from my Collection***  
by Alan Simpson, author and member

**Please check our website: <http://ilfordhistoricalsociety.weebly.com/> for updates.**

Under normal circumstances, our regular monthly meetings are held in the Gloucester Room, Ilford Central Library, Clements Road, Ilford IG1 1EA on the second Monday of each month, September – May. There are often walks for members in the summer.

Refreshments are served from 7pm and we start our talks at 7.30pm, finishing at 9pm. Visitors welcome, £3 per meeting, with free refreshments.

Membership of the society costs £10 this year which includes 3 newsletters.

We would like to express our grateful thanks to Janet Seward for producing and delivering a series of mini-newsletters for those of our members who are not on email and cannot join us by Zoom. These may be seen on our website which also includes all our newsletters since 2011. (click on ‘Membership’ and then ‘Newsletters & Reports’.)

The next newsletter will be posted out in August.



Follow us on twitter  
Ilford Historical Society@IlfordHistory  
You can follow us on Facebook too.

