



Woodford Times

Woodford Historical Society
Founded 1932

Newsletter Autumn 2023

ALL ITEMS IN THE SOCIETY'S NEWSLETTERS ARE COPYRIGHT WOODFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY/THE AUTHOR/THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT WRITTEN CONSENT.

Editorial

Welcome to the 2023/24 season of Woodford Historical Society.

It was with much sadness that we heard at the beginning of August that Mike Ford, the former Treasurer and long serving Committee member had passed away. Mike's continued contribution to the Society will be greatly missed.

Sadly Nigel Pitt, our Web Manager died earlier this year and you will be aware that we have been looking for someone to take on this role. We have been very lucky to now have Daniel Burnham, the grandson of one of our members, who has volunteered to take this on. Daniel runs his own Website company, so we are very fortunate to have his expertise. Steve Fothergill, is arranging for our talks to be added to a Facebook site. To increase the profile of the Society, each month we will display posters of the Society's talks in the area.

I very much hope that you will enjoy the talks that we have arranged this season, our thanks to Judith Roberts who has spent a lot of time arranging them. Our programme for the 2023 – 2024 season is:

2023

September 14th

WW1 German Spies

Barry Kitchener

October 12th

Redbridge Museum

Gerard Greene

November 9th

Alfred Hitchcock

Gary Lewis.

December 14.

Related to a Matchgirl

Sam Johnson

2024

January 11th

The Life of Greer Garson from Manor Park to Hollywood

Janet Seward

February 8.

Kings Cross

Chris Foster

March 14th

Annual General Meeting +

Woodford – more digging into the archives Peter Lawrence, our President

April 11th

Rebuilding London after 1666

Pete Smith

You will probably recall that we have spent some time sorting the Society's archives. During this exercise we found a water colour of the corner of Salway Hill and Derby Road. The subject was the old weatherboarded shop on the corner of both roads. Rather than put it into a box and it never see the light of day, we looked to find somewhere where it could be displayed. South Woodford Library did not respond to us. In the event it is now on a permanent loan basis to Churchfields School, who have included it in their history timeline. Next year Churchfields celebrate their 150th anniversary. They will be having an Open Day on 8th June 2024. It will give ex pupils the opportunity to see the School as it now stands and for those who may be interested its history. If anyone has an interesting story of their years at Churchfields School please contact Admin.Churchfields-Jun@redbridge.gov.uk



As always if anyone would like to volunteer their services to the Committee, we will always welcome another pair of hands or you may like to write a short article for our Newsletters.

I look forward to seeing you at the September meeting.

With best wishes

Sue Ralph

Chair of Woodford Historical Society

POSTCARD FROM THE PRESIDENT – AUTUMN 2023

Dear Members

I hope you all enjoyed the TV coverage of the Coronation earlier in the year. The world has changed so much since the last one in 1953. It was interesting to note that the ancient ceremony of crowning our monarch is now unique amongst the industrial countries. I'm sure I wasn't alone when I began sorting through Wanstead & Woodford memorabilia of the late Queen's special day. Not only remembering the first TV coming into our home in Stanley Road, the single rod aerial fixed to the house wall outside my bedroom window and the grainy black and white pictures transmitted on the day, which I thought was, well, just about okay, but it did go on a bit. Luckily a short while later, from Churchfields School, having received our copy of "Royalty In Essex", we all trooped down to the Majestic Cinema to watch the Coronation again but this time in glorious colour, with the Conquest of Everest also being screened. Linda and I have our copies of "Royalty In Essex" but I also found, from my Mum and Dad's collection, the official Coronation programme, the



Wanstead & Woodford Borough Council programme that included a map of events on Woodford Green and a separate programme for the Stanley Road street party. I also uncovered a group photo of the Stanley Road folk that included me aged 10, my little sister Marion and so many faces from the past that were not just neighbours but also friends and supporters when necessary.

I continue to help my local Mr Barclay, a descendent of Henry Ford Barclay of Monkham, with his already very comprehensive family archive. This time focusing on the Fowlers of Glebelands, South Woodford. In 1853 Ann Ford Barclay married Henry Fowler. Ann's father, Robert Barclay of Barclay Hall, Leyton, the estate behind Whipps Cross Hospital, bought Glebelands as a wedding present. The family lived in Glebelands for over sixty years, during which their son, Gurney Fowler, as Chairman of Woodford Urban District Council, at his own expense had a section of the High Road dressed with tar and chippings (Tarmac) to assist the Council in making up its mind as to the future of Woodford's roads. The Fowlers also presented Woodford with a public drinking fountain which was positioned on the flower beds that divide George Lane and the Shrubberies, as seen in the accompanying postcard. The outstanding question in my mind is when was the fountain removed? It has completely slipped my mind. Is there any help there? Glebelands House occupied the area of Cleveland Road and was demolished for housing development in 1915. The former stable building survives at the top of Glebelands Avenue. It was extensively altered into a residence. I can remember it as a residential home for the elderly. I believe it is now apartments.



'Bye for now.....

Very best wishes Peter

Coronation memories and mementos from 1902, 1912, 1937, 1953 and 2023



A school memento for the students



A money box memento from a street party

1953



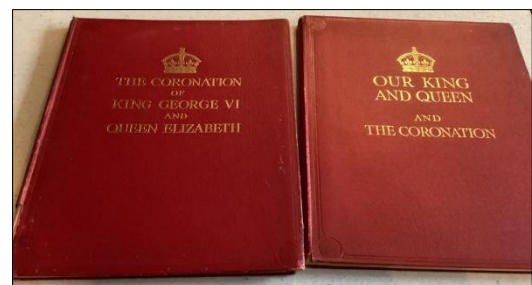
A Cadbury box of biscuits



A souvenir cup



In 1953 every schoolchild in Essex was given a copy of this book



Coronation 12th May 1937

The frontispiece of a book given to my grandmother, Beatrice Hewson in 1902 to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII. Zoom in and you'll see that the coronation was postponed because of the King's illness. The covering letter states that all head boys and girls are to receive this award.

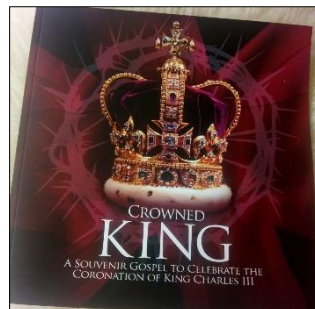


Coronation 9th August 1902
 (Moved from 26th June as King Edward VII had appendicitis a few days beforehand and developed peritonitis)

In 1953 some people collected Coronation Stamps



Very few got a personal invitation!
 (Though more in 1953 than 2023.)



2023 -This book about the Coronation regalia and the Gospel of St Matthew was given/sold to people in Carlisle



Unlike 1953 when I camped out with two friends to see the Coronation Procession, this time I confined myself to seeing it on television. However, I was asked to lead a



service celebrating our present King's Coronation for the residents of Churchfields Nursing home. It was a happy occasion and I am sharing two photos, one of myself with two parishioners, Peter and Stephanie, the other of two members of staff involved, Tess and Karen.
 Rowena

Thank you to members and friends who searched their cupboards and shared their memories: –

J.Roberts; T.Howl; C&G.Harris; L.Hodges; R.Rudkin; E. Thomas; F.Banks

Visit to the Museum of the Order of St John

Felicity Banks

May 17th 2023

The Order of St John's motto is Faith – Care - Valour



We entered by the Gate House and gathered in the Museum entrance gallery, where we met our excellent guide for the tour.

The Order of St John was one of the Chivalric orders begun in mediaeval times. It had centres throughout Europe and especially in Rome and Malta.

They pledged to do good works and care for the sick. Later members trained as knights and became known as the Knights Hospitaller.

The English centre had beginnings at St John's Gate and dates back to 1144 to an Abbey built there. The original Priory church had a circular nave and the shape of this could be seen, marked out in the paving stones.

The Crypt is the only surviving part of the Church. There is an effigy of Prior William Weston, who was Prior at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII. The Abbey was seized by the Crown on 7th May 1540 and William Weston died on the same day from grief, so it is said.



The modern Priory Church was rebuilt in the 1950s after the parish church built in 1723 was bombed in 1941. The church was set out ready for an investiture after our visit.

We left through a door that led to the Cloister Gardens.

Our guide then led us back to the Gate House and up the spiral staircase to the Council Chamber above St John's Gate.

Although Mary Tudor had tried to restore the Order it came to nothing on her death. When Elizabeth I became Queen the Order was closed. The buildings that remained were occupied by many different people or used for various businesses. William Cecil, 3rd Lord Burghley (grandson of Elizabeth I's advisor) and a Lord Mayor of London lived there. Samuel Johnson lived there for a time on a second floor that no longer exists.



The buildings were also used as a coffee house, a gin distillery, a printing press and several public houses. In 1874 the building was bought and a new Order was set up that connected to its mediaeval beginnings. In 1877 the St John Ambulance Association was launched and now operates world – wide.



Above the arch of St John's Gate is the Council Chamber. Several members of the Order were enjoying a cup of coffee before the Investiture ceremony.

Next onto the Chapter Hall which is used for meetings and other functions. The walls are covered with the coats of arms of some of its prominent members.



Down the main staircase to the entrance gallery where we could see the doors where the St John ambulances used to come into the building. We were then able to look round the exhibitions and do some shopping. Thank you to our guide who was so interesting and made our visit most enjoyable.

The Woodford Brickfields Grievance 1890 – 91

Alison McBrayne

The late Victorian age was a time of transition when the old village of Woodford containing merchants' houses with spacious grounds began to evolve into a suburb of streets of terraced houses occupied by City commuters and their families. When dipping into the microfilms of the weekly Woodford Times for 1890 at the Redbridge Heritage Centre, I came across one of the more obscure chapters of this story – a tale of nimbyism, class warfare, public nuisance, legal caselaw, local democracy and bad poetry.

In an article headed "The Brickfields Grievance", the newspaper records that on 3rd October 1890, a deputation of local residents presented the Woodford Local Board meeting with a petition of 90 signatures to express their concern at the smells, noise and smoke caused by a new brickfield opened by Mr William Cornish near Chelmsford Road East (now known as Gordon Road) in South Woodford; the site is now primarily occupied by allotments, accessed from St Barnabas Road and Chigwell Road. Complaints were made that smoke from the brick-kilns was "smothering the neighbourhood" and that the machinery was "clanking from 6 am"; others described the smelly heaps of rubbish that stood on the site before use in the production process. The Local Board, the predecessor of Woodford Urban District Council, had limited powers but they did have an enforcement role in public health

and environmental issues and the deputation asked them to take action to abate the nuisance caused by the new brickfield.

However, by 1890 brickmaking was a well-established and accepted local industry. The Gale family had been excavating clay, and moulding and firing bricks, on Chigwell Road (in the area now occupied by Charlie Brown's roundabout and the Raven Road industrial estate) since at least the 1870s. There were also two smaller brickfields nearby and others in Woodford Bridge and Buckhurst Hill.

According to the Woodford Times, some members of the Board expressed sympathy with the deputation: one Board member said that he lived quite near enough to the brickfields to have evidence of the smoke, and others confirmed that they were familiar with the smells. However, objections were also raised against the idea of the Board taking Mr Cornish to court, primarily because the cost of this would fall to the ratepayers. Perhaps surprisingly, the Board's officers saw no reason to take action; Dr Groves, a local doctor who acted as the Medical Officer of Health for Woodford, said that he had visited the brickfields and found that the smoke was "uncomfortable but not injurious to health".

Having reached something of an impasse, the Board adjourned the matter and over the next six months they prevaricated in various ways. They sought legal advice as to whether the local situation was the same as that which had arisen in Chiswick, where the Local Board had won a High Court action for nuisance against a brickmaker. They requested Essex County Council to introduce county-wide byelaws to control brickmaking. They wrote to Mr Cornish and the other local brickmakers.

In the meantime, members of the public joined the debate via the letters column of the Woodford Times and the majority of the correspondence opposed any action being taken against Mr Cornish. Much was made in the letters (and poems) of the hardship that would be caused to the labourers and their families if the brickmaking industry was restricted.

Members of the original deputation were accused of acting only in their own financial interests: some were house builders and landlords who had admitted that their income was being affected by difficulties attracting tenants for houses close to the brickfield. Claims were also made that this was part of a wider campaign to close down all the local brickfields with the result that hundreds of men would be thrown out of work. A letter in

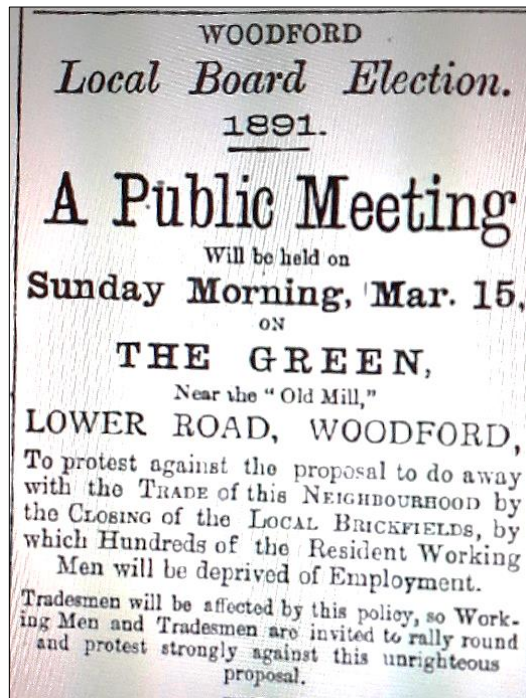
response argued that brickmakers "can follow their work wherever it leads them. But a man who brings a few thousands into Woodford and locks the money up in houses is entitled to quite as much consideration as the man who only brings a shovel into the parish."

The temperature of the debate continued to rise and the April local elections, when five of the nine Woodford Board seats were to be contested, became the focus of attention in the local paper.

***A Brickmaker's Lament at
Woodford by "N"***

*There's a wail in the parish,
there's a cry from the poor,
From the men who make bricks,
from the cottager's door,
From the hardworking man,
wanting only to live,
By the work of his hands his
children to give
Their bread.*

*(Followed by five more verses
on the same lines)*



The high point of the protestors' campaign was a public meeting held on 15th March 1891 on "the Green near the Old Mill, Lower Road" – near to Charlie Brown's roundabout in modern terms. This was advertised in the Woodford Times on 13th March and the following week's edition reported that over 500 people had attended the "working men's meeting". All the usual arguments against interference by the Board in the activities of the brickmakers had been rehearsed (and exaggerated) and the meeting passed a detailed resolution, protesting against any interference whatever with the local brickmaking industry. The meeting also expressed support for five specific candidates for the Local Board election who could be expected to "do their utmost to avoid legal proceedings".

to report on 10th April that the electorate had delivered a "verdict in favour of Peace, Retrenchment and Reform." The five candidates recommended at the meeting were all voted onto the Board. The threat of legal action against Mr Cornish had been seen off. And for at least the next few months, the pages of the Woodford Times didn't mention the subject of nuisance from the brickfields again.

Congratulations!



Congratulations to Dick Walker who celebrated his 90th birthday in July.

Dick has been a Committee Member for nearly 30 years and continues to support the Society and contribute to the Newsletters from his vast knowledge of the history of Woodford.