



*The Hills Amenity Society*

*York Hill Conservation Area*

# *Discovery Trail*



Towards the end of the nineteenth century it would seem that Loughton became something of a retreat from the burgeoning metropolis for artists and wealthy merchants alike. The Hills area, because of its proximity to Epping Forest, appealed particularly to the more creative minds of artists and assorted intellectuals. A common theme of non-conformity in religion and outlook is apparent. Whilst individually these people are not generally remembered they were part of a wider revolution in popularising arts and crafts, showing concern for the working man.



and Places" d). A windmill was planned for this site in 1809 but never built. Here until 1914, locals gathered annually for the maypole festivities. The first house is the converted coach house of Loughton Lodge. There follows a surprisingly modern timber-clad building in colonial style (1964), recently renamed "Drummonds", but formerly "Drummer Maid". The imposing **Loughton Lodge** in part dates back to 1794 but is largely early 19th Century (see "People and Places" b). Finally, and in complete contrast is "Woodpeckers", a daring cedar-clad structure on steeply sloping ground, designed in the late fifties.

The road now deteriorates temporarily, leading down and turning into Forest Way. To the right is the **site of an old brick-field** (16), forming a natural amphitheatre and playground for local children. In **Forest Way** (17) two fine boarded cottages, rumoured to be former poachers cottages, are on the left. A charming variety of small dwellings accompany the trail back to "School Green" where you may care to rest before your journey home. "The Wheatsheaf" public house is downward towards the High Road.

*For those who have the energy, a worthwhile diversion is to follow **Baldwins Hill** along the forest edge, though initially you will have to retrace your steps up York Hill.*

After passing **Ash Green House** (9) on your left, the way becomes straight and leads quickly past modern housing on both sides. To the right, **Ashfields**, an estate built in the sixties, retains in its name a memory of the former house which occupied the whole site.

Suddenly, housing gives way to forest land, the open area on the right being known as **Ash Green**. Facing this clearing, on the left, **No. 2 Baldwins Hill** (18) was built at the beginning of this century. There follows a row of mixed housing, mainly semi-detached dwellings up to 150 years old, formerly occupied by local artisans, some still retaining the gardens and simple, uncluttered facades of the original buildings. The row ends with an attractive white-boarded house now converted into two cottages (19).

Within a few yards the forest recedes on the left to afford a view over the valley of **Baldwins Hill Pond** towards High Beech. On the right, and overlooking the forest, is a row of larger detached houses of varying design. Among these, **No. 9** (20) with its curvilinear outline, is an example of 1930's design, common enough in parts of suburban London, but one of only two examples in Loughton.

A turning on the right, **Stony Path**, leads downwards past mixed housing ranging from modest cottages to substantial houses. The cottage immediately next to the public house was, until 1939 a general stores. Further down on the left, **Walnut Cottage** (21) is "listed" and, though largely rebuilt, is of 17th Century origin. (See also "People and Places" c). **Baldwyn's Cottage** (22), on the right, was once the coach house to a large house which formerly occupied the corner site with Baldwins Hill.

Loughton Potato Grounds can next be seen on the left, allotments originally intended for the poorer residents of the area, and held in trust by St. John's Parish Church. In 1834, the land was divided into 48 gardens, each let at 2/6d. a year, the income being spent on fencing and on twelve prizes for good cultivation. Today, the occasional unkempt plot reminds us that growing vegetables is no longer a high priority in these affluent times.

Continue a little further down to the **Almshouses** (23) overlooking Arewater Green (see "People and Places" n). Built in 1847 and recently renovated by the Springboard Association, they still serve as retirement homes for senior citizens.

Returning up **Stony Path**, a right hand turn leads you into **Wroths Path**, again with a mixture of old and new dwellings (see "People and Places" p). Once within this "square" of residences ranging from the ancient to the very modern, look for the original narrow pedestrian path on the left which leads through to Baldwins Hill.

Alternatively, if you complete your return up **Stony Path**, you arrive again at Baldwins Hill where you turn right at **The Foresters Arms** (24). This public house was once the rallying point for charabanc parties mainly from East London; nowadays customers largely drive themselves as evidenced by the large numbers of cars parked nearby on summer evenings.

Almost opposite the public house is an unusual building, a **wooden chalet** (25), which was imported from Switzerland in 1849. All the sites on that side of Baldwins Hill date back to a time when

occupation of the forest was a simple matter of claiming a patch. With the passing of the Forest Act of 1878, houses already established on illegally enclosed land were permitted to remain but no further erosion was allowed.

Beside the public house and stretching along that side of Baldwins Hill, is a terrace of small cottages typical of development at the end of the last century.

Facing these cottages, is a largely undeveloped area of land, formerly a garden nursery. Next to this is "**Deehurst**" (26) which, together with the adjoining house, was, between 1935 and 1956, the home of the sculptor Jacob Epstein. (See "People and Places" e). This house, and the group of **four cottages Nos. 29 - 35** (27) almost opposite it, are "listed" buildings.

Eventually, on the right, you will come to a factory site, soon to change to residential use. The original house on the site was adapted in 1903 for Madderton & Co., a reputable manufacturer of artists colours. (See "People and Places" j).

Beyond the factory, two cottages Nos. 47 and 49 (28), have notable associations with the past. **No. 47, Ashley Cottage**, enjoyed several illustrious visitors in former times when occupied by Muriel and Doris Lester. (See "People and Places" h). **No. 49, Albion Place**, had been Epstein's first home in Loughton in the late 1920's, prior to his move to "Deerhurst".

The Conservation Area ends at **Whitakers Way** on the right. Take a moment to walk down this leafy, unmade road which still retains an appearance much as a century ago. **Monkwood Cottage** (29) is said to have been designed by the Edwardian architect William Lethaby (see "People and Places" i). Some way down on the left is a house, now "**Woodcroft School**" (30), parts of which are 17th Century. The house was owned by the Willingale family in the nineteenth century, when Thomas Willingale had a wood yard on the site. (See "People and Places" o). With the closure of the nearby industrial site, more housing will replace the factory buildings, and a little more of Loughton's picturesque quaintness, here as elsewhere in the area, will have disappeared under the relentless pressure of developers.

This is a fitting place to end the trail or retrace your steps to York Hill.

## PEOPLE AND PLACES

- a. **The Britten family (formerly Bretagne)** first established themselves in the York Hill area in 1585 when they leased the cottages at the junction of York Hill and Pump Hill, today known as "Brittens Cottages". The area was ideal for the pottery industry they subsequently established, because of the plentiful supply of clay, wood from the forest for the firing, abundant springs and streams and, one presumes, a ready market for the wares in London. Several kilns were built, evidence of which has been discovered during excavation over recent years.
- b. **Mary Anne Clarke (1776-1852)**. Of lowly origins and born in Ball and Pin Alley, Chancery Lane, she was sent "to be educated at a school in Ham in Essex". Mary Anne became an actress, playing among other roles Portia at the Haymarket Theatre. But ambition took her into an older profession as mistress of Frederick, Duke of York. By 1805 she was entertaining sumptuously in Gloucester Place. Her extravagances included 10 horses, 20 servants and three male cooks. She ate off plates once owned by the Duc de Berri and drank from wine glasses costing two guineas each. She was promised £1,000 a year by the Duke, but this was irregularly paid. Her associations with the Duke may well account for York Hill and York House being so named. She was the great great grandmother of novelist Daphne du Maurier, whose famous novel "Mary Anne" tells her story and in which it is said she retreated from scandal to live at Loughton Lodge. She died in Boulogne in 1852.
- c. **Millican Dalton (1867-1947)**. Born in the Lake District, lived at "Walnut Cottage", Stony Path, earlier this century. Dalton, a keen cyclist and camper, became a pioneer in the development of light-weight camping equipment and later was instrumental in forming the Association of Cycle Campers and the Camping Club. After a brief spell as an insurance clerk, Dalton turned his back on the commercial world and devoted himself to a



life as a professional guide and tent maker. As he became older his eccentricities became more marked and "there were many who smiled at the tall, lean figure, dressed in an open-neck shirt, green or brown cord shorts, climbing boots or sandals and an Alpine hat".

- d. **Drummaids**, formerly Drummer's Maid Hill. The origin of this strange name is uncertain. Some say it is derived from Drummond May who ran a brickfield here. Others think it came from Drummer Maynard who endeavoured to enclose this part of the forest, but was unsuccessful in maintaining the enclosure for the necessary length of time to secure ownership. But the best known derivation is the local legend of Drummer (or a drummer boy?) who courted a local maid at this spot. When he did not return from the war, the distraught damsel committed suicide at this their trysting place.
- e. **Sir Jacob Epstein (1880-1959)**, sculptor, was born 10 November 1880 in Hester Street, New York City, in the Jewish quarter near the Bowery, the third son of Max and Mary Salomon Epstein, immigrants to America as a result of the persecutions and pogroms in Tsarist Russia and Poland. Epstein was interested in drawing as a boy and made many studies of life in the streets around his home, crowded by Russians, Poles, Italians, Greeks and Chinese. Attracted in time to the practice of sculpture, he learned bronze casting in a foundry and studied modelling at evening classes. Moving to Paris in 1902, he studied modelling from the nude at the Beaux-Arts School; subsequently transferring to the Julian Academy where he studied until he left Paris.

In 1905 he moved to London and took a studio in Camden Town. A visit as a steerage passenger to America failed to attract him to stay; he returned to London, settled in a studio at Fulham, and was naturalised in 1911.

In the mid-twenties, Epstein rented a house in Loughton, No 49 Baldwins Hill where, in a studio in the garden, he sculpted "Rima", a memorial to W.H. Hudson, which was commissioned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds for a site in Hyde Park where it was unveiled by Stanley Baldwin in 1925. In 1933, he moved to "Deehurst", No 50 Baldwins Hill, where he produced many paintings of flowers and the forest (an exhibition in 1933 was completely sold) as well as portrait bronzes of many notable sitters. In 1950 he finally left Loughton and moved to Hyde Park Gate which had long been his London home.

In 1938 he received an honorary LL.D. from Aberdeen and an honorary D.C.L. at Oxford in 1953; the following year he was appointed K.B.E. Epstein possessed a gracious and courteous manner, confirmed by many local residents who saw and chatted to him around Baldwins Hill and in the forest. His conversation was cultivated and, on the subject of art, very learned. He never lost his American accent. Despite his many frustrations and the attacks on his sculpture, he was of a kindly and compassionate disposition though impatient of anyone lacking humility concerning art.

On 19th August 1959, although he was ill, he worked at his studio at Hyde Park Gate, London, on the sculpture for Bowater House, discussing the casting of it with his bronze moulder, and died the same night. The National Portrait Gallery has a bronze of Epstein modelled by himself and drawings by Augustus John and Powys Evans.

- f. **Eliza Flower (1803-1846)**. Musical composer, daughter of Benjamin Flower, political writer and printer of Harlow. She wrote many hymns and anthems, some to the words of her sister. Although said to have composed a tune for "Nearer my God, to Thee", it is not the usually used "Norbury" composed by Rev. J.B. Dykes. Lived with her sister at "Sunnybank Cottage".
- g. **Sarah Flower-Adams (1805-1848)**. Poetess, wife of William Bridges Adams, friend of Robert Browning. Composed hymns set to music by her sister, including "Nearer my God, to Thee". Her principal work was "Viva Perpetua", a dramatic poem written in 1841. Lived at "Sunnybank Cottage".
- h. **Muriel Lester (1882-1968)**. Muriel, together with her sister Doris, daughters of a wealthy Loughton family, lived at 47 Baldwins Hill. Besides a lifetime of tireless and devoted social

work among the poor of East London, she travelled widely, befriending world statesmen and public figures as secretary of The Fellowship of Reconciliation. In 1915, as a memorial to their brother, the sisters funded Kingsley Hall in Bow as a meeting place for the local people. Champion of many pacifist causes, her work attracted the attention of sympathetic public figures and celebrities. She was a familiar figure at Speakers' Corner, a close friend of George Lansbury, Pandit Nehru and Eleanor Roosevelt, and undertook several world tours including Russia and China. Clement Attlee, Mahatma Gandhi and Dame Sybil Thorndike were among notable visitors to her Baldwins Hill home. In 1922 she was elected an alderman of Poplar Borough Council and gained the Freedom of Poplar in 1964.

- i. **William R. Lethaby (1857-1931)**. A founder of the Art Workers' Guild, and a leading ideologist of Arts and Crafts movement architecture, he worked for the great Victorian architect Norman Shaw before starting his own practice in 1891. From 1902 he devoted himself to teaching and writing on architecture, becoming Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art.
- j. **Madderton & Co. Ltd.** The manufactory of artists' colours was established in 1891 in the cottages Nos. 37-39 Baldwins Hill. The firm was named after one of the pigments - madder - and not after the owner. Its products, known as "Cambridge" colours, had a high worldwide reputation. Brushes and other accessories were later added to their products list. The factory was gradually extended, though the original cottages can still be identified in the composite structure now existing. It ceased to operate during the Second World War when the managing director retired and the building was taken over for light engineering.
- k. **Thomas Southwood Smith (1788-1861)**. A Unitarian, encouraged in the ministry by the poet William Blake. Preached among evangelical dissenters in the West of England. Turned to medicine in 1812 and qualified at Edinburgh 1817. Subsequently worked on numerous committees and boards of enquiry concerned, for example, with factory conditions for children (1825-32) and the prevention of sickness and mortality among the poor (1835-38). Helped found the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrial Classes, builders of the first model workers' dwellings. His evidence to a Royal Commission on Urban Sanitation led to the enactment in 1855 of the Metropolitan Management Act, the precursor of the London County Council. Public Health today is chiefly indebted to Dr. Smith's zeal. He lived at "Sunnybank Cottage".
- l. **M. Hugh Baillie-Scott (1865-1945)**. Architect of "Woodbury Hollow". Born near Ramsgate, one of fourteen children of a wealthy Scotsman. He was closely associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement. Much of his architecture is in the Isle of Man, but notable examples are flats and houses in Hampstead and the Garden Suburb. It is possible that other houses in Loughton were designed by him. A characteristic of his design is an accented gable and soaring chimneys, features which are seen in "Woodbury Hollow". The house was built for the original owner, Zimmerman, his initials being incorporated in a motif on the front.
- m. **Dr. Oswald Silberrad (1878-1960)**. A former resident of Dryads Hall who discovered the means whereby TNT could be detonated in 1903. He was, at the time, Superintendent of the Research Department at the Royal Arsenal, which he designed, equipped and organised. At Dryads Hall, however, his experiments were of a more peaceful nature.
- n. **Anne Whitaker (1744-1825)**. Unmarried daughter of William Whitaker, inherited Loughton Hall and estate on her mother's death, and described as "a very formall lady of the old school or court and reconned very rich, living in good style". In her own will of 1825, Anne left £2,200 to build the almshouses on Arewater Green. Later part of the gardens was joined with Loughton Potato Grounds to provide allotments. Whitakers Way commemorates the family name.
- o. **Thomas Willingale (1793-1870)**. In 1865 the Lord of the Manor, the Rev. William Whitaker Maitland, fenced off 1,350 acres of forest land to develop it for building, thus effectively preventing residents of Loughton from exercising their age-old right to lop wood for fuel. Tom, who together with others of his family and



associates faced frequent prosecution for continuing to lop, filed a Bill in Chancery for the preservation of lopping rights for the labouring poor. The law suit remained in abeyance after Tom's death and the matter was finally resolved by the Epping Forest Acts. 280 householders of Loughton were eventually compensated for loss of lopping rights and a further sum was used to build Lopping Hall for the benefit of all Loughton inhabitants.

- p. **Wroth family.** Five generations of Wroths owned Loughton Hall between 1579 and 1745, when succeeded by the Whitakers. Their name is remembered in Wroths Path.



**The Discovery Trail has been produced  
to commemorate  
Essex Heritage Year 1989**

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We gratefully acknowledge the help given by members of the Hills Amenity Society and local residents in the production of the Discovery Trail.

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**The Hills Amenity Society** was formed in 1972 to stimulate interest in the area, to promote high standards of planning and architecture; and to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area.

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**Parking in the Conservation Area is difficult. Drivers are advised to leave cars in the public car park in Traps Hill. Do not attempt to follow the trail in vehicles.**

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