

# FRIENDS OF BUSHEY MUSEUM

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Summer 2019



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The *Journal* is published by the Friends of Bushey Museum and is mailed to all friends and selected local organizations. Contributions on all aspects of Bushey's social and artistic history are welcome and should be sent direct to the editor at the Museum.

The Friends support the activities of Bushey Museum and can be contacted via The Secretary, 119 Aldenham Road Bushey, Herts WD23 2LU

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# THE JOURNAL OF THE

In Summer 2000, when Bryen Wood asked me to edit a new series of the *Journal of the Friends of Bushey Museum*, I never thought that I would be writing an introduction to issue number 16, the final one with me as editor. I am extremely grateful to the people over the years who have contributed articles on a great variety of subjects; inevitably Herkomer, the Art School and its students have featured regularly, but there have been articles on several of the big houses, schools and transport and local people.

Less expected were the articles on speedway, Jersey cows and Nelson's sword. I couldn't have managed without the technical support of Michael Pritchard and latterly Nick Overhead. The late Bryen Wood, Audrey Adams and Ian Read have found photographs for me. Thank you to you all.

It's rewarding to see the finished product and I hope someone else can be found to continue the task.

**Janet Murphy**

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# Early Motor Cars in Bushey and Their Owners

Ian Read

**T**he self-propelled automobile became increasingly available from the close of the 19th century with many makers, both British and foreign, vying for acceptance of their particular offerings. Although the left-hand 'rule of the road' was generally accepted by this time, hardly any other rules applied and drivers and pedestrians took many years to become fully adjusted to the speed and danger such vehicles presented. The difficulty in dealing with any driver who had been adjudged by the local constabulary as having been guilty of 'furious driving' led to the adoption of individual identification letters and numbers for motorised vehicles. Horse-drawn vehicles and bicycles were exempted from this process (and still are!).

The registration of motor vehicles, including motor cycles, was made compulsory under the *Motor Car Act* which received Royal Assent on 14 August 1903. This required proscribed letters and numbers, issued by the local authority, to be displayed on the front and rear of each vehicle. Herts CC issued registrations commencing with the letters AR which were followed later by NK, RO and UR.

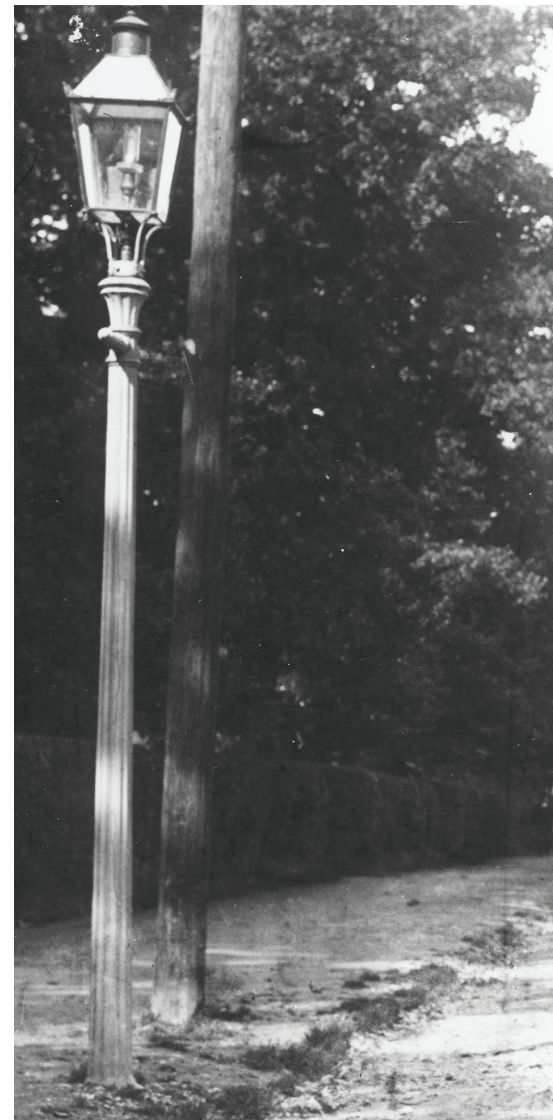
Driving licences were also introduced under this Act but an actual driving test was not introduced until 1935! Until then one simply applied for a licence, although the authorities were very strict on the need to advise the issuing council of any change of name and/or address.

Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies retains the first two volumes of its register covering the numbers from AR 1 to AR 1930 all in beautiful copperplate handwriting. Regrettably, subsequent volumes (and the separate volumes covering heavy motor cars i.e. buses and lorries) are missing and do not reappear until around 1936.

*The Motor Car Act* also introduced the crime of reckless driving; made it an offence not to display the allocated letters and numbers on both ends of the vehicle; required drivers to hold a driving licence from 1 January 1904; allowed lower speed limits to be introduced locally (Bushey village had a 10mph limit for many years); and required motor cars to have two separate braking systems of adequate ability to slow and halt the vehicle.

A motor car was an expensive acquisition both to buy and to maintain. As such, it was generally the preserve of the wealthy. Typically, ownership was limited to the local landowner or professional person such as the local doctor, although there were instances of motor car enthusiasts either buying complete vehicles or experimenting with their own constructions made from proprietary components. Learning to handle the new technology on the road was an art which some took to easily whilst others struggled. Many of the well-off car owners employed a chauffeur to drive them – this also increased their social status.

The first motor vehicle registered to a Bushey resident (not necessarily the first to be owned



by a local person since cars and motorcycles existed prior to the implementation of the Act but were not recorded by the authorities, and thus only anecdotal evidence exists of these) was a 10hp (horse power) Georges Richard light petrol car registered to Oscar Gray of The Callenders, Heathbourne Road, Bushey Heath. This was finished in Bordeaux red and black and the index number AR 27 is recorded as issued on 17 December 1903. This implies that Herts CC did not implement its own registration series until some three months after enactment of the act. Oscar Gray is recorded in the City of London Electoral Registers for 1905 and 1907 as resident at The Callenders but also holding a joint tenement at 1 King William Street, City of London.

**John Pierpont Morgan Junior LLD, DCL** of Aldenham Abbey (also known as Wall Hall) was a prolific motor car owner. In

An early motor car trundles along High Road, Bushey Heath c1905 approaching the junction with The Rutts, on the right, and George Kirby's cab hire business which is just out of shot to the left (Hoather).



John Pierpont Morgan Junior

accordance with the new Act he registered no fewer than four cars on 18 December 1903, all of which were in his livery of dark green lined out in black. They were:  
AR 35 – a 6hp Daimler Brake (which was sold in December 1909

to W E Pearkes & Sons, the Watford draper and furniture dealer, for trade use);

AR 36 – 22hp Daimler 6 seater tonneau;<sup>2</sup>

AR 37 – an electric brougham manufactured by the City & Suburban Company of London;<sup>3</sup> and

AR 38 – 10hp Lanchester tonneau which could be converted to a brougham.

John Pierpont "Jack" Morgan Jr. (1867-1943) was an American banker, finance executive and philanthropist. Morgan Jr. inherited the family fortune and took over the business interests including J.P. Morgan & Co. after his father, J. P. Morgan, died in 1913. A graduate of St. Paul's School and of Harvard, he trained as a finance executive in the business world, having worked for both his father and grandfather; which would serve him well as a banking financier and lending leader and he was a director of several companies. He supported the New York Lying-In Hospital, the Red Cross and the

Wikipedia

Episcopal Church, and provided an endowment for the creation of a rare books and manuscripts collection at the Morgan Library. Morgan brokered a deal that positioned his company as the sole munitions and supplies purchaser during WW I for the British and French governments. The Wall Hall estate was leased to John Pierpont Morgan Jr. in 1901, and was used for social functions, including many sporting parties. He bought it outright in 1910. Although often absent from the estate, he bought up a large amount of surrounding farmland and is thought to have created an Italian Garden. Upon Morgan's death Hertfordshire County Council acquired the property, which became the residence of the United States of America's Ambassador, Joseph Kennedy, for the duration of the Second World War.

### Professor Hubert von Herkomer CVC, RA

(1849-1914) was an early and avid supporter and enthusiast of the motor car despite his often vociferous pleading for Bushey to be left as the tranquil village it was when he first established his Art School there. Perhaps he didn't appreciate what wholesale adoption of the motor car would do to his beloved village!



Herkomer's first car – AR 51 – was a 10hp French Panhard registered on 19 December 1903 just a few days after Herts CC started to issue numbers to existing vehicles. This car weighed 19½ cwt and was painted dark blue. It appears to have been fitted with a rudimentary roof decorated with a fancy fringe. It was sold to a London man in

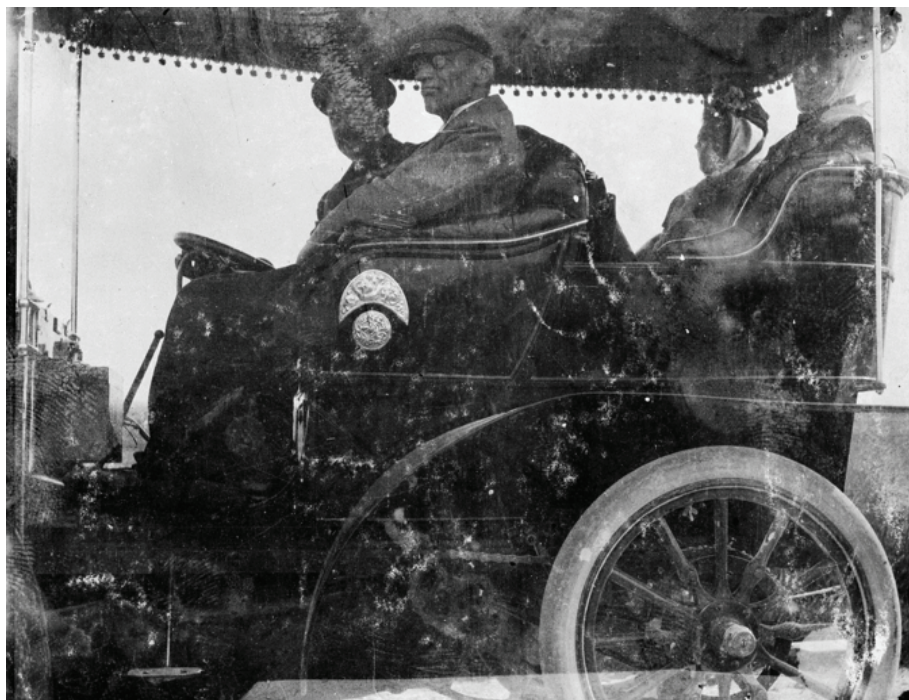
December 1904. Bushey Museum image records indicate that the car had been new in 1895. Although the car is shown in both photographs being driven by Herkomer's chauffeur it is well-documented that Herkomer was a keen automobilist and, presumably, often took the wheel himself.

Professor Herkomer was obviously proud of his new motor acquisition and was determined that friends and acquaintances were made aware that he was now well-off enough to possess such a mechanical marvel. His 1903 Christmas greetings card shows Old Father Time enjoying a ride on the new machine accompanied by a chauffeur.

AR 51 was followed on 26 January 1904 by AR 272, a 5hp Eisenach three-seater in black and green.<sup>4</sup> This, in turn, was sold to a William Probert of Highgate, London in April 1905. The Eisenach factory was named after the town of its location in Thuringia, Germany. If Herkomer's Eisenach was one of the original models built between 1898 and 1903 it was one of only approximately 250 built.

It is assumed that Herkomer first saw the car on a visit to the area whilst on holiday in Bavaria. AR 488 was his next acquisition. It was a 28hp Daimler with a tonneau body painted red. It had a removable top and was registered on 6 May 1904. This was replaced on 16 June 1906 by AR 1119 which was a 35/45hp English Daimler with a limousine body. This was posed outside the entrance porch at Lululaund presumably when new. It was painted green and was registered as weighing two tons. It is interesting to note that the index number shown on the rear of the car appears to be AR 1118 although the Herts CC registration book lists it as AR 1119. List prices for early cars are difficult to ascertain because the chassis and body were usually ordered separately from different suppliers. It is likely that this car would have cost Herkomer around £2,500 (£300,000 2019).

The two surviving volumes of Hertfordshire registrations ends



**Herkomer in driving goggles with two appropriately dressed companions is seen here travelling in the 1895 Panhard, the outlines of which were used in the 'Compliments of the Season' card.**

around 1910 so it is not possible to determine if Herkomer acquired further cars up until his death in 1914. He was well-known as a keen supporter of early motor racing and trials. This included the Herkomer Trial in Germany which ran from 1905 to 1907 and he offered to donate a trophy and a portrait to the winner of a reliability trial run by the Bayerische Motor Club in his home region of Bavaria.

The commemorative Herkomer Ride is organised on a regular basis by the Herkomer-Konkurrenz organisation based at Landsberg.

motorimgat.info website



**A 1908 medal by Herkomer used as an award by the RAC**

**John Percy Somers** (1874-1942) of Sparrows Herne, Bushey registered two pre-existing motor cars on 19 December 1903. There are listed as AR 47, a green 8hp Wilson-Pilcher petrol tonneau



**Herkomer pictured with Edgar Ladenburg, the winner of the 1905 Herkomer-Konkurrenz prize**

and AR 48, a 6½hp Cadillac with a removable tonneau painted dark green and lined out in red. The Somers family came from Wandsworth, Surrey. His father was a 'trader', presumably in the City of London. John Percy Somers is recorded as owning property which he rented out in Earlsfield so seems to have kept his connection with that area. Somers was a barrister practising from chambers at 8 New Court, Lincolns Inn. His professional activities were sufficient for him to live in some style on Bushey Heath and to own several motor cars. He gave his name to Somers Way which runs between Catsey Lane and

britainbycar website

Ashfield Avenue.

AR 47 (at least) was sold in January 1909 but not before his motor car stable had been increased to three with the addition of AR 922 in September 1905. This was an 8hp Cadillac with a tonneau cover and side entrance. It was painted green as were the two original cars but with the interesting note that the 'underpart' was in Primrose. This car was sold in turn in August 1909. A fourth car was acquired in March 1907. This was AR 1284, a green 26/30hp Cadillac petrol, again with tonneau cover and side entrance.

John Somers retired to Hook Norton, Oxfordshire and died there in December 1942 leaving an estate valued at £70,931 (£3,500,000 in 2019).

**Charles Montague Lush KC** (1853-1930) was the owner of no fewer than six motor vehicles registered during the period under review. He lived at Tanglewood, Bushey Heath but also had property at 15 Sussex Square, Paddington, London W. The 1911 Census records that one Charles Gibbons was resident there as a chauffeur.

Lush was educated at Westminster and at Trinity Hall, Cambridge where he took a First in Classics. He was appointed to the High Court, Kings Bench Division in 1910 and retired in 1925 when he was made a Privy Councillor.

His motor car stock comprised: AR 160, a 10hp White steam car painted green which was first registered on 5 January 1904 and sold on in December 1905 to an owner in Woking, Surrey; AR 532, a 6½hp Cadillac with a tonneau body painted dark red. This also was sold in December 1905; AR 913, an 8½hp Cadillac painted dark green with cream wheels registered 4 September 1905 and sold in May 1909; AR 1102, a 16/20hp FIAT with side entrance tonneau body painted dark blue which was registered on 5 June 1906; AR 1479, a 30hp 6-cylinder Humber with landaulette body registered 16 March 1908; and AR 1699, a 20/30hp Cadillac landaulette in green

registered 25 March 1909.

Since very few details of onward transfer of ownership are shown in the surviving Hertfordshire registers, it is not possible to be precise as to how many cars Sir Charles Lush owned at any one time. It is probable that he kept at least one in Paddington and one at Bushey Heath.

**Charles Harling Comyns** (1863-1925) was a manufacturing silversmith who moved with his family from Friern Barnet to The Warren, Bushey Heath between 1891 and 1901.

William Comyns & Sons Ltd had a history of silversmithing dating back to the 1850s latterly based at Beak Street, off Regent Street, London. The company was sold on in 1930 but items of Comyns' silverware are keenly sought after today.

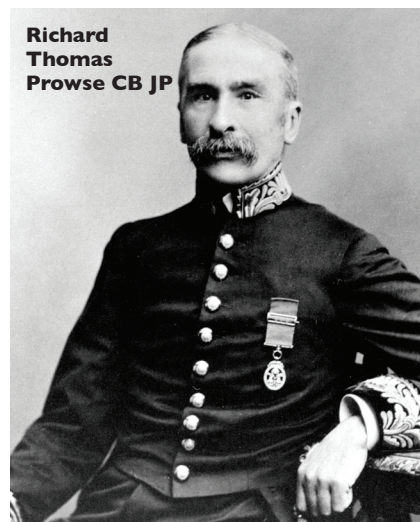
The Rosedale Estate was formed following the Enclosure Act of 1809 and became the Warren about 1870. It occupied the land on High Road, Bushey Heath behind the Three Crowns public house and comprised a large detached house in substantial grounds which included the fish pond which survives. Charles Comyns is recorded as registering two motor cars within the period covered by Herts CC documents. His first was AR 981, a 14/20hp Renault touring car painted dark green lined out in black and with green wheels. It was registered on the 2 February 1906 and the entry is annotated 'back of car can be taken down like a taxicab'. This implies that the rear passenger compartment had a folding hood as was the norm for the early motorised London taxicabs. In May 1909 the Renault was replaced by AR 1755, a 4-cylinder Renault open tonneau with hood, again in green.

Charles Harling Comyns died whilst occupying The Warren in December 1925 leaving £36,811 (£2,200,000 in 2019) to his widow Anne. From 1947 the house remained empty until acquired for development in 1956/7 from which the current Warren estate arose and which includes the road named The Comyns.



**Charles Comyns with the Reverend Barker (Vicar of St. Peter's 1916-1930) at a garden party in the grounds of The Warren.**

**Richard Thomas Prowse CB, JP** (1835-1921) held the house known as Howton which was situated on High Road, Bushey Heath. He is recorded as a visitor to the household of Thomas Stow in London Road, Bushey in 1851 and was in residence with the family there in 1871. He is recorded as Surveyor General of the Customs and, latterly, as Secretary to the Board of Customs. By 1891 he was in residence in his own right (presumably at Howton) with his household in charge of his sister Mary. By 1911 he had retired but



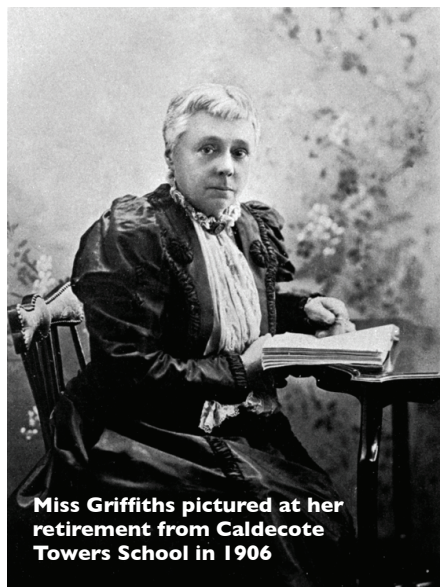
was still a single man living with his sister and three servants at Howton. He died in 1921 aged 86.

His motor cars were recorded by Herts CC as:

AR 665 – a 12/14hp Beuford (sic) with a tonneau body painted green and first registered 7 November 1904;<sup>5</sup>

AR 1353 – a 15/20hp Panhard landaulet in blue registered 15 June 1907; and then a 16hp Vauxhall painted dark blue which was registered on 10 June 1909 using the number AR 665 from his first car which, presumably, was scrapped. This practice was not uncommon in the early days of motor vehicle registration.

### Miss Medina Sara Griffiths (1840-1927)



Miss Griffiths pictured at her retirement from Caldecote Towers School in 1906

Miss Griffiths was Head Mistress of Caldecot(e) Towers boarding school for young ladies when it opened in 1892. Prior to this she held a similar post at Burlington House School, Heston, Middlesex.

The 1901 Census records 71 female pupils and four assistant mistresses supported by no fewer than 26 domestic staff. Gardeners were employed to maintain the extensive grounds and these included Fred Streeter, later to become well-known on BBC radio as a gardening expert.

Miss Griffiths appears to have been a keen owner of early motor cars and registered her first car with Herts CC on 16 June 1904 at the age of 64. Since no employee is

shown in the census as a chauffeur it can be surmised that Miss Griffiths drove herself. This was unusual for a lady of her status and may well have been frowned upon by social acquaintances.

Her cars included:

AR 537 – a 12hp Standard tonneau by Brooke & Co in blue registered 16 June 1904;

AR 649 – a 14hp James & Brown landaulette in dark blue lined in gold and yellow, registered 27 September 1904;

AR 734 – an 18/20hp Standard tonneau in red and black, registered 15 March 1905;

AR 942 – an 8hp Alldays with detachable tonneau in green, registered 25 November 1905; and AR 1127 – a 16hp car with a Mutel engine and phaeton body with side entrance. It was finished in green with white lining. It was registered on 24 June 1906. Mutel engines were used by a variety of early car manufacturers and the Herts CC record has omitted the actual builder of this car.

Miss Griffiths had retired by 1911 and was living at Cecil Park, Pinner with a female companion and two servants.

In brief, other early owners of early motor cars resident in Bushey include the following:

**Barry Eric Odell Pain** (1864-1928) was a journalist and poet known principally as a writer of parody and lightly humorous stories. He was living at Hogarth House in High Street, Bushey (actually on Clay Hill between 'Cleveland' and the footpath to Little Bushey) when he acquired AR 282. It was a 5hp Oldsmobile dog cart in black with yellow wheels registered 23 January 1904. He died in Bushey (living latterly at 69 Bushey Grove Road) and is buried in St. James' churchyard.

**Cecil John Cockayne Maunsell** (1881-1948) came from a military family and registered his 7hp Panhard, AR 417, on 22 March 1904 at Sparrows Herne Hall, Watford (sic). However, Major C J C Maunsell of the Royal Field Artillery is shown in censuses as having residential

property at Rothwell Grange, near Kettering and at Thorpe Malson Hall, Kettering. A Mrs Cockayne is listed at Sparrows Herne in Kelly's Directory of 1890<sup>6</sup> so he presumably kept his car there for some reason.

**William Gilbert James** of The Woodbines, Caldecot Hill, Bushey Heath registered AR 498, a 12/14hp Dupressoir on 9 May 1904. He also had premises at 14 Mortimer Street, Marylebone, London and is assumed to have been a solicitor or broker. The Dupressoir was built in Mauberge, France between 1900 and 1914; it is likely that Mr James' car had either a 2¼CV (chevaux) De Dion engine or a larger 3CV one built by Aster.

**Colonel William John Orr** of 'The Hall, Bushey' (Bushey Hall?) registered AR 538, a 7hp 2-cylinder Panhard, on 19 June 1904. It had a tonneau body painted red. The Herts CC register shows that AR 546 was also issued in error for this car and then cancelled. Colonel Orr sold the car in October 1904. Did he become disillusioned with it or did he need the money badly?

**Edward Hedley Cuthbertson** (1888-1975) of Bushey House was born in Clapton, London, educated at Aldenham School and was a member of the Stock Exchange by 1908. He practised as Bourke, Cuthbertson & Co. at 30 Throgmorton Street, City.

By 1906 he was sufficiently well-off to buy a 30hp Charron limousine which was registered as AR 1209 on 19 October that year. It was finished in dark red but the record shows that it also had a '2-seater body in grey for testing'. This implies that Cuthbertson either was interested in trials or liked to transform the limousine into a 'fun' car in which he could indulge a taste for excitement. Whichever was the case, he sold AR 1209 on 11 December 1906 after just two months of ownership.

Perhaps a advertisement attracted Cuthbertson to the Charron as an exciting car? 'Light, fast, odourless and noiseless, it is of course a Charron'.

**Alfred John How** of Lincoln House, High Road, Bushey Heath was a cycle agent who owned AR 1409, a 9hp Napier tonneau painted black with yellow lining. It was registered by him with Herts CC on 16 September 1907.

**Harry Scott Bridgwater** of The Leasowes, Bushey Heath was an artist and mezzotint engraver who registered AR 827, an 8hp Cadillac, on 27 May 1905. By the time of the 1911 census he had moved to Notting Hill, London.

**Ricardo Palmer JP** lived at Claybury, 6 Sparrows Herne and owned a 20/28hp Spyker landaulette painted dark green. It was registered on 23 July 1905. A Spyker famously appeared in the 1953 film *Genevieve* driven by Kenneth Moore in competition with John Gregson's Darracq.

Palmer was a member of the Stock Exchange and was a benefactor of St. Peter's Church. His grandson, Bryan Barrington Palmer, was a Lieutenant in the RNAS and was killed in a flying accident in 1918. He is buried in St. James' churchyard.

**Dr. William Webb Shackleton BA MD (1868-1935)** was a physician and surgeon who resided at Grove House, Bushey High Street and served the local inhabitants for some 42 years. He was Medical Officer for the Royal Masonic School for Boys.

On 27 January 1910 he took delivery of AR 1928, an 8hp De Dion 2-seater phaeton in blue with light blue lining throughout. It was taxed, as required at the time, for both private and professional business use. Although undoubtedly he valued his car as a useful tool in

connection with his professional duties, the images from the BMT collection show him with a determined look on his face which may indicate a more enthusiastic approach to car ownership.

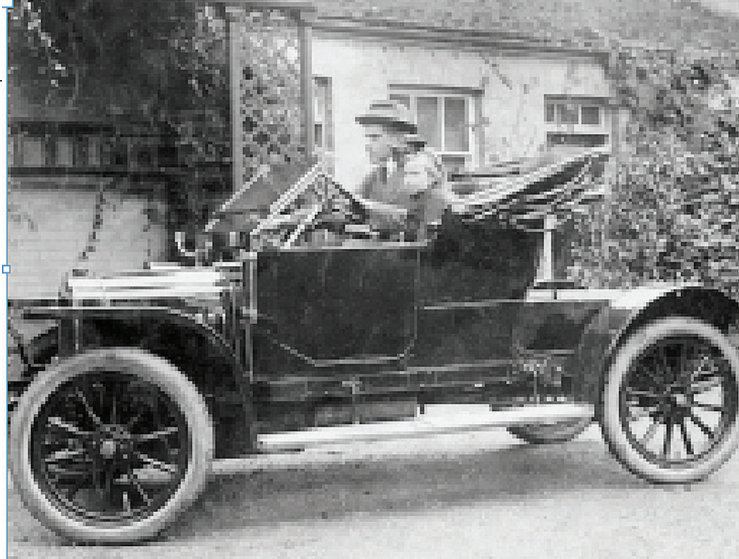
He is pictured with his daughter Peggy in the rear yard of Grove House. Peggy (Eileen Margaret) was born in May 1908 and appears to be about five-years-of-age in the pictures which date them to about 1913/14.

The car was therefore about four-years-old and seems to have been well looked after. Eileen Margaret Larken (nee Shackleton) died in 2009 aged 101.

The early 'automobilists' described herein undoubtedly learned by experience to handle the new technology, or employed those with more competence to drive them in style. The period of rapid growth in numbers of motor vehicles from 1910 was accompanied by a terrible litany of damage, injury and death occasioned by incompetence on the part of drivers and the inability of local inhabitants to appreciate the speed and danger of which these machines were capable.

The actions of the legislature to insist upon identities being placed upon motor vehicles i.e. registration number plates, was probably designed more to extract tax revenues than to promote safe operation. As noted above, it was necessary merely to apply for a driving licence under the 1903 Act but no demonstration of competence was required. This was highlighted in the January 1904 edition of *Motoring Illustrated* which applied for a driving licence on behalf of a blind beggar who habitually sought alms from passers-by on the bridle path alongside Watford Junction station.

**Dr Shackleton with Albert Andrews, of Alpine Bushey Garages, who was his chauffeur and gardener in later years.**



A fee of five shillings having been paid to Herts CC, this man was licensed thus 'to drive a motor-car through the roads of the United Kingdom at a speed not exceeding twenty miles an hour'. The fact was, however, that the beggar, Samuel Sharp, was blind!

The magazine pointed out that the Act had been 'rushed through Parliament by panic-stricken motor-phobists. They would have sold a licence in the name of a person with no legs and arms, to a homicidal maniac, or to anyone of any description over the age of seventeen'. It was pointed out that 'in France the permit to drive is only issued after proof that the candidate is competent to drive'.<sup>7</sup>

It does not seem that records of the issue of driving licences by Hertfordshire County Council have survived from the early years. They would have made interesting reading!

#### NOTES

1. Doctorates in Law
2. Tonneau (French for cask or barrel) is/was an open rear passenger compartment. A tonneau cover is a hard or soft cover for unoccupied passenger seats or a luggage compartment.
3. Pronounced 'broom' or 'brohm'. Originally a light, four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage with an enclosed passenger compartment and a box seat in front for the driver. Adaptation of the style for motor vehicles was a natural progression especially for the owner who wished to be separated from the groom or driver
4. Heinrich Eisenach's car was named Wartburg and was produced under licence from the French Decauville concern. The Eisenach company was taken over by BMW in 1928.
5. No references to this make have been discovered.
6. Spelling varies with different reference sources.
7. A recent news item covered the release of data from the road safety organisation 'Prevention Routiere' that there are currently 680,000 unlicensed drivers on the French roads!



# Sanger's Circus

## Janet Murphy

**S**anger's circus had its origins in a peep show operated by James Sanger, who was also a conjurer. His children helped in the show and eventually two sons, John and George, set up together in business as conjurers performing at private parties. In 1848, George met Ellen Chapman whom he had known when they were children. She was a lion tamer, with Wombwell's menagerie, known professionally as Madame Pauline de Vere. She may have been the lady who accompanied Professor Sanger, the Magician Monarch, who amused the audiences by tricks of ledger main, the inexhaustible decanter etc., at a fair in Worksop, Nottinghamshire in November 1850, shortly before they were married at Sheffield. A year later the brothers decided to start a circus and their first purchase was a pony, which was taught to do fortune telling and card picking. In April 1854 Sanger's small equestrian circus appeared at Stamford and Sanger's gaudy exhibition was at the Tombland Fair in Norwich, where feats of horsemanship of unrivalled excellence could be seen. Their assistants were two nieces, a nephew and four apprentices. Expansion was rapid with the addition of lions and elephants in 1856.

George Sanger was the more flamboyant of the two brothers and eventually the partnership was dissolved. Although John Sanger died in 1881, the circus was continued by his sons.

The circus visited Watford in July 1864 when the *Watford Observer* described the procession round the town as being of an imposing and elegant character and of oriental magnitude. The reporter clearly enjoyed himself as he described the performance as the best he had ever seen. There were equestrian

performances from the ladies including Georgina Sanger, acrobats, a tightrope walker and an astonishing performance from Ajax the elephant.

By the 1870s the circus was performing for nine months a year, staying one day only in each locality, where there were two performances at 2:30 pm and 7:30 pm. The road train between sites was said to be two miles long and had (according to another proprietor, Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake) at least ten wagons to carry the tent and seating, a lamp wagon, eight or ten living carriages, a foal wagon, ten wild beast wagons full of lions, tigers, bears and others, a harness wagon, a portable blacksmith's forge, property wagons, wardrobe and dressing wagons, a band carriage and at least six great tableau cars for the parade.<sup>1</sup>

In 1897 George Sanger's circus returned to Watford for the first time for four years bringing with it ten elephants and ostriches. A year later the circus was offering six exhibitions; three circus rings, two menageries and a hippodrome. There was what the *Watford Observer* described as an exciting incident:

*The meadow to which the procession was returning was some distance from the main streets and approached by a narrow road with a ditch close to the entrance. It was here that one of the vans containing lions overturned into the ditch causing much consternation to those who were near. The horses were thrown violently down into close contact with the bars of the cage which at once sharpened the appetite of the lions who made every endeavour to get at the horses.*<sup>2</sup>

Disaster was avoided by forcing boards alongside the van to separate the animals which enabled the horses to be removed to safety, but there was no explanation as to how they got the van upright again.

Not all incidents were as dangerous. Earlier in the month the circus had been at Dartford. The night watchman was woken at 3:30 am by the sound of breaking glass. Five of the elephants had escaped from the tent where they were hobbled and broken the plate glass window of a baker's and were consuming the bread and cakes in the window. Charlie, Edgar, H.R.H. and Mary were escorted back to the circus but Minnie had disappeared. She was eventually found asleep in a market garden having consumed a considerable amount of vegetables.

**Lord George (THE ORIGINAL) Sanger,**  
THE WORLD'S GREATEST SHOWMAN.  
**CIRCUSES, HIPPODROMES, AND MENAGERIES.**

Four times patronised by the Queen.  
Two Royal Commands in 13 months:—Balmoral, June 17, 1888; Windsor Castle, July 17, 1889.

Will visit  
**WATER LANE MEADOW, WATFORD,**  
On Tuesday, September 19th.  
ONE DAY ONLY.

This is the First Visit of the whole Combined Establishments of Lord George Sanger, forming the Largest, Grandest, and Most Famous Exhibition in the World. The whole concerns being amalgamated into one huge Company (Capital £125,000). Extra seating accommodation, and preparations ensuring comfort will specially be made.

**TWENTY CARRIAGES OF WILD ANIMALS**  
of the most rare and valuable species.

**TWELVE MONSTER ELEPHANTS,**  
including H.R.H., the identical animal upon which the Prince of Wales made all his State journeys when in India.

**SOUTH AFRICAN OSTRICH FARMS**  
and aviary of rare and unique birds.

**TWO HERDS OF CAMELS.**

**THE SOUDANNESE WAR DROMEDARIES.**

**SUPERB STUD OF 400 HORSES AND PONIES.**

**ALL ON VIEW IN THE GROUNDS.**

**The Grand Street Pageant**  
Will leave the grounds at 12.30 p.m.

**Two Performances, at 2.30 and 7.30.**

**BEAUTIFUL LADY EQUESTRIANS.**

**GENERATIONAL LADY GYMNASTS.**

**DARING AND THRILLING MID-AIR PERFORMERS.**

**A HOST OF MERRY CLOWNS AND JESTERS.**

The same Programme as presented before Her Majesty, at Balmoral, in June last, by special command, the Queen remaining seated in the Royal Box for three hours and seven minutes.

At every performance,  
**THE GRAND NAVAL AND MILITARY SPECTACLE.**

**With Kitchener to Khartoum.**  
Performed on a scale of magnificence unparalleled.

**700 MEN, WOMEN, HORSES, ELEPHANTS, CAMELS, and DROMEDARIES,**  
take part in this most realistic Spectacle.

Prices of Admission within the reach of all classes:—  
10s 7s 5s 4s 3s 2s 1s  
and 5,000 seats at 6d.

Accommodation for 20,000 persons at each performance in the largest waterproof marquees ever erected.

No connection with JOHN SANGER & SONS.

The circus was back again in 1899 at Water Lane having travelled from Ealing. At 12:30 pm the Grand Street Pageant moved off consisting of twenty cages of wild animals; twelve monster elephants, including H.R.H., the elephant upon which the Prince of Wales made his state journeys in

India; South African ostrich farms; an aviary of rare and unique birds; two herds of camels; two Soudanese War Dromedaries and over 400 horses and ponies.<sup>3</sup>

The first performance started at 2:30 pm in the largest waterproof marquee ever erected, though it's doubtful there was the audience of 20,000 that the marquee was supposed to be able to hold. Highlight of the show was the Grand Naval and Military Spectacle 'A realistic production ... of a naval and military spectacle entitled "With Kitchener to Khartoum". An unique feature of the spectacle is the construction ... of twelve gunboats, representing the vessels of the Khalifa and the flotilla of the Sirdar, these being exact facsimiles on a reduced scale, of the boats used in the actual conflict. The whole of the vast arena is ... converted into a scene representing the neighbourhood of Omderman, and the banks of the Nile, where the action took place. Upwards of 500 persons are engaged in this striking representation, 460 horses and mules and a herd of elephants and camels.<sup>4</sup>

Local George Sanger's Great Spectacular Production at every Performance—  
**WITH KITCHENER TO KHARTOUM**  
 INTRODUCING  
**700 Men, Women, Horses, Elephants, Camels, and Dromedaries, and**  
**THE NILE GUN BOATS!**



Another great feature was the 100 horses performing in the ring at one time. A series of platforms were erected, rising tier upon tier, the apex reaching a height of twelve feet, upon which the horses trotted in opposite directions at the word of command. Also performing were 'Beautiful Lady Equestrians, Sensational Gymnasts, Daring and Thrilling Mid-air Performers and a host of Merry Clowns and Jesters.' Prices of admission ranged from 10/6 to 5,000 seats at 6d. Such enormous shows required immaculate organisation and the capability to deal rapidly with unex-

pected incidents. First into town was the man responsible for selecting the site which had to be near a centre of population, on adequate transport routes and of sufficient size. Then came various agents who made the arrangements for advertising, press coverage and provision of food and drink for both man and beast. When the smaller John Sanger circus visited St Albans in 1892 with 200 horses, the horses were said to have needed three tons of hay, 12 quarters of oats; two tons of straw; a ton of bran and, for the wild animals, 100lbs of meat and the 230 staff and performers consumed 250 loaves of bread.<sup>5</sup>

Once the audience had entered the marquee for the second performance, the side shows were closed and packing began and as each piece of apparatus was used they were packed away.

The last of the 'great spectacles' was performed in 1901. In 1903 much of the livestock was sold and finally at the end of the season, George Sanger sold off the rest of his zoo and circus effects.

John Sanger's circus continued throughout WWI, the animal 'stars' being elephants and sea lions and by the end of the war it was confined to the Tower Circus at Blackpool. Eventually in 1921 the rebuilt circus began touring again. One of the stars of the show was James Freeman, known as Pimpot a trapeze artist, high wire walker and clown. He married Victoria Sanger who was

**Elephant Queen by Lucy Kemp Welch**



Pictures Bushey Museum Archive

the granddaughter of both the original brothers, George and John.

This was the circus with which Lucy Kemp Welch toured. John died in 1919 and the circus was taken over by his brother George. After WWII, the circus was run by Victoria and her brother, another George, until 1962 when the circus was wound up after almost 120 years.

**NOTES**

1. <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/collections/sangercircus>
2. *Watford Observer* 24 September 1898
3. *Watford Observer* 9 September 1899
4. *Derbyshire Courier* 14 Oct 1899
5. *Hertfordshire Advertiser* 19 March 1892

# Lucy Kemp-Welch

Dr Geri Parlby

This a shortened version of a talk given by Dr Gilby at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter in November 2018.

**L**ucy Kemp-Welch was probably one of England's finest equestrian artists and yet most of us will have only heard of her as one of the illustrators of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*.

Who was Lucy Kemp-Welch? She was born in 1869 into a middle-class family in Bournemouth, and even as a young girl her favourite pastime was rambling in the New Forest with her younger sister Edith, and her amateur naturalist father. There she would sketch all the different plants, insects and animals discovered on these expeditions and it was here that her passion for horses was first ignited along with her love of art.

Whenever the girls returned home from the forays in the forest their mother, who was a keen artist, would ask the girls to draw from memory what they had seen on their adventures and, as Lucy would admit later, even this early: drawing came as naturally to me as song to a bird.

The sisters were schooled at home until the age of ten. When they finally attended the local school their talent for drawing was discouraged as it was said to interfere with their academic work. However, outside school, Lucy continued to draw specimen beetles for her father so by the time she was 14 she had become a highly skilled artist with her work being publicly exhibited.

But even then drawing horses was her great love. She said that

painting horses was the breath of life to her. She didn't need to keep returning to the New Forest to see them as she was born in Victorian England which was of course dependent upon horse power, not just for public and private transport, but also in the army, commerce, industry, agriculture, mining and forestry too.

For her 15th birthday Lucy's mother arranged for her to visit the veterinary surgeon at the Christchurch Hospital for Sick Horses so she could learn the anatomy and physiology of horses. That moment was a turning point in the young Lucy's life and horses became her biggest artistic inspiration.

After their father died in 1888, Lucy and Edith, by now both talented artists, applied to the prestigious Herkomer School of Art at Bushey in Hertfordshire. It was an extraordinary place founded by an equally extraordinary man. Hubert von Herkomer was born in Bavaria, but brought to England by his parents at the age of eight. His father, a joiner, encouraged the young Hubert to study art and he became very successful, exhibiting a large number of portraits and landscapes, as well as working as an illustrator and mezzotint engraver. One of his most successful works was of the Chelsea Pensioners: *The Last Muster: Sunday in the Royal Hospital, Chelsea*.

When one of his neighbours in Bushey, Mr Gibb, asked Herkomer to coach a young ward of his, he refused. However, he changed his mind when Gibb offered to build an art school big enough to accommodate 60 pupils if Herkomer would run it.

Herkomer's ideas about art teaching were revolutionary for his day and were a reaction against his own experiences. He believed the principal objective was a search for the personality of each student. By

the 1890s, nearly 200 students had made their homes around his school in Bushey, and the village and its inhabitants featured regularly on the walls of the Royal Academy. Initially Herkomer turned away Lucy and Edith, advising them to spend more time practising at home. Three years later after attending classes at the Bournemouth School of Art, they had improved enough for him to accept them. Studying with Herkomer was hard work. From 9 am until 3 pm it was painting five days a week often in the open air. Then from 7 pm until 9 pm it was life drawing in charcoal and pencil, then on Saturday, head painting only.

On Friday afternoons, Herkomer would review and critique his students work and he was apparently a very harsh critic. It was not unheard of for him to strike right through a student's attempt with a brush loaded in paint and at the end of term the students were told to make a bonfire of their worst sketches.

However, it wasn't all art and hard graft, Herkomer also encouraged other pastimes such as plays, musical evenings and the creation of a student magazine.

One evening when Lucy saw some gypsies driving ponies through Bushey to the Barnet Fair, she rushed out to make some sketches. She ordered a canvas eight-feet long and began work on a huge painting of the gypsy horses being driven to the fair. When she showed the unfinished work to Herkomer he was amazed at her talent. The painting entitled *Gypsy Horse Drivers* was sold for £60 before it left the easel and was hung at the Royal Academy in 1895. It is now in the collection of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery in Bournemouth.

Lucy wanted to create the impression with her huge canvases that the near-full-sized horses were actually galloping out towards the viewer. To work on this idea she travelled to Parkstone Beach near Bournemouth where, in 1896, she started work on *Foam Horses*, in which white horses literally crested the waves. The composition allowed



Lucy to explore tentatively the structure of having horses leap out of the frame towards the viewer but without having to focus on the finer details. Once again the painting won a place at the RA and it has been suggested that on seeing the work at the Academy exhibition, Rudyard Kipling was inspired to write his 1897 poem *White Horses*.

Having begun to master her technique for portraying full-sized horses in motion, Lucy then went deep into the New Forest to start work creating what would be her Herkomer School graduation painting. It was called *Colt Hunting in the New Forest* and showed the rounding up of young ponies.

To reproduce the drama of the moment Lucy decided she needed to ride with the drovers. At first they refused to let her join them, fearing the chase would be too

rough and fierce for a woman. But Lucy was determined and they soon realised they had met their match when she not only kept up with them, but even led them over the rising ground, through the trees and thick heather, and over the lush, green grass.

Lucy always insisted that photography was an anathema to the artist and rarely worked from photographs, preferring to sketch movement from life and to use these sketches as her only 'notes'. But on the occasion of the *Colt Hunt* there was no time even for these brief jottings; she had to observe and memorise the kaleidoscopic scenes instantaneously and later re-create the chase on canvas, from her recollected impressions.

This process was as she said herself 'a sort of mental photography'. She never forgot

anything that interested her and claimed that animals she had seen and noted as a child remained visually fresh to her mind even beyond middle age.

She had a 10ft x 5ft canvas transported into the forest, because, like her avant-garde contemporaries in France, she believed in capturing her impression on the spot. The canvas was kept inside a big wooden case with barn-like doors opening out on which she could prop up her sketches when she was working. For three months she went there daily in all weathers until she had the picture finished satisfactorily.

Having practised her technique with *Foam Horses*, Lucy was able to capture the impression that the horses appeared to be rushing headlong out of the picture directly at the viewer. It was a cinematic idea in the days before technicolour or Panavision and the impact on the picture viewing public was tremendous.

The white horse was the key to the picture and Lucy used her cousin's New Forest pony, Frisk, as the model. When the work was hung at the Royal Academy in 1897, people stared in disbelief at the enormous canvas with its life-sized horses galloping towards them. Lucy became a celebrity overnight, fêted because she was a young woman painting an apparently masculine subject.

The Victorian sculptor Sir Francis Chantrey had left a sum of money to be administered by the Royal Academy to buy the work of the very best artists of the day. The National Gallery of British Art better known as the Tate Gallery after its benefactor Sir Henry Tate, was opened in 1897, the same year that Lucy finished *Colt Hunting in the New Forest*. The Chantrey bequest was allocated to support Tate acquisitions and *Colt Hunting in the New Forest* was selected for the award and acquired for £525, making it one of the first works to be given to the Tate.

Lucy's focus had always been on equality in art. She hated being

relegated to the women's section in art exhibitions and was once quoted as saying: "I think it is really bad that in Art men and women should be separated. Surely Art should be considered sexless".

Despite having 61 different paintings hung at the Royal Academy and being regularly nominated as a member, The Royal Academy itself refused to admit Lucy as a member solely because she was a woman and thus a threat to the all-male sovereignty. This slight to his favourite pupil never ceased to rankle with Herkomer who rated Lucy as his most successful student amongst the 700 or so who had attended his school. Lucy refused to be cowed by this rejection and continued to paint her epic portrayals of horses caught in motion.

Despite her slight frame, and standing just 5ft 3in tall, Lucy was not easily daunted by extreme conditions when she painted in the open air. Painting outdoors helped to inspire Lucy's use of bold colours to model form. She did not use pencil or charcoal for drawing and was confident enough to make constant and fairly radical changes to her work during the actual painting process. It has been found that tiny particles of sand were trapped in the paint on the surface of the painting when she used the beach as a setting.

The painting *In Sight! Lord Dundonald's Dash on Ladysmith*, which was recently restored for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter, was not without its controversy. A vast canvas measuring 10ft x 5ft, it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1901 and shows Lt.-Gen. Douglas Cochrane, the 12th Earl of Dundonald leading the first relief column to reach the besieged town of Ladysmith, Natal in the Second Boer War.

In the painting are Capt. William Birdwood, Winston Churchill, who was a war correspondent for the *Morning Post* during the Boer War, Lord Dundonald and Lieut. Cleaves flanked by troopers. Lord Dundonald had met with Lucy

several times so she could sketch him and he also lent her pieces of uniform; an artist friend who had lived in the Cape advised her on colour and topography.

When a London dealer heard about the painting he offered to buy it before it was even finished on the condition that it wouldn't be shown at the Royal Academy first. Lucy refused believing that a showing at the Royal Academy would enhance the prestige of the painting. It did indeed enhance the painting's reputation, but at the same time brought some unwelcome publicity.

In July 1901 a letter appeared in *The Times* accusing Lucy of gross historical inaccuracy in depicting Winston Churchill at the Relief of Ladysmith. But the charge was refuted the next day when Winston Churchill himself wrote to the paper confirming that Lucy had been correct and had had the story and details from Lord Dundonald himself.

The painting was bought by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in 1908 with a grant from the bequest of Kent Kingdon, an Exeter cabinet maker. Lack of space led the work to being lent to a nearby army barracks. Unfortunately, in the intervening years both the painting and the frame became in dire need of conservation. Thanks to the generosity of the supporters of Royal Albert Memorial Museum enough money was raised for conservation.

The distress of war can be seen clearly in another painting by Lucy inspired by the Boer War.

It depicts a dead soldier with his faithful horse standing guard

over his body. Twenty thousand soldiers died during the South African campaign and the toll on the horses was even worse; of almost half a million horses sent out, two-thirds perished mainly due to poor horse management rather than battle. Regular cavalry horses were being replaced with all sorts of different breeds from across the Empire. The long-suffering re-mounts provided Lucy with her final Boer War subject.

Lucy's first personal exhibition of sketches and studies was held at the Fine Art Society, Bond Street in May and June 1905. By this time, Lucy was living in Bushey in a house, now called Kingsley, facing the church and pond at the very heart of the village. In 1905, in an attempt to relieve a chronically ill Herkomer of some worry and pressure she took over Bushey Art School. She wasn't particularly interested in running the school, however, and employed two senior scholars to teach the students while she focused on painting.

She continued to exhibit her work annually at the Royal Academy and other exhibitions in London. Every year before her exhibition at the Academy, she would invite her friends in Bushey to her studio to preview the pictures she was



showing that year.

Lucy never courted publicity but thanks to some rare interviews and her own notebooks we have one or two insights into her painting techniques.

She told one interviewer that you can't understand the colour of a horse unless you get the reflection from the green grass below it. She showed another the journalist an ingenious device which she had invented to help her in painting the head of a horse reflected in a dark pool. A piece of glass lay on a dark cloth and the model of a horse head was tilted over until the lips touched the surface.

Figure painting didn't come naturally to Lucy and Herkomer continued to encourage her to focus her energy almost entirely on horses using very little figure work in her painting; advice that Lucy seems to have heeded in much of her later works and for a while she also started to concentrate more and more on work horses. Often asked why she didn't paint thoroughbreds, which would have been a more saleable subject, she replied that she simply wasn't interested in them. She believed they left nothing for the artist to discover. They were too refined, too perfect and to paint them would reduce her to little more than a documentarian. Instead, she found work horses fascinating, because their forms and movements were predicated by the ungovernable: the elements, the landscape, and other animals.

*Timber-Hauling in the New Forest* was exhibited at London's Royal Academy in 1904. In order to recreate such a powerful scene she worked alongside the haulage teams dragging timber. The dynamic curve into the foreground conveys the strenuous demands made upon horsepower by this activity.

Lucy never entirely abandoned



her love of wild horses. In 1906, she painted one of her largest canvases *For Life* which was shown at the Royal Academy.

It was about this time that Lucy became a good friend of Robert Baden-Powell, hero of Mafeking and founder of the Boy Scouts. General Baden Powell had met Lucy during a private view at the Royal Academy and they became firm friends. In 1906 he first lent her his horse Black Prince to use as a model. The horse had been presented to him by the Australians after Mafeking and was intended for ceremonial parades. However the 17.5 hand stallion loathed soldiers, and was terrified by the sound of gunfire and drums. After several 'incidents' on the parade ground, his future was in doubt. But Lucy was not only able to calm him but, much to Baden-Powell's surprise, she could also ride him. Whilst she looked after Black Prince Lucy used him as a model in many of her paintings.

A wonderful work called *The Riders* is now in the Graves Art Gallery in Sheffield. Measuring a monumental 8ft x 7ft, it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1911. It was painted on the Yorkshire Moors near Carperby during August and September 1910 with Mrs Colpitts and Arthur Curwen as the models, and Black Prince as the model for the

maverick horse. The scene was inspired by Robert Browning's poem, *The Last Ride Together* (1855): 'What if we still ride on we two, with love forever old - forever new'. It is a striking composition, and Lucy makes a bold feminist statement: the girl self-sufficient, perceptive and free, her male companion suppliant. It is probably one of the most feminist of all Lucy's paintings.

In 1912 Lucy held another exhibition of her work at the Dudley Galleries. She followed this up with another exhibition in 1914 at the Leicester Galleries, where the first exhibition of the newly formed Society of Animal Painters was held. Members included such well-known names as Briton Riviere, Frank Calderon, Herbert Dicksee, Alfred Munnings, H.W.B. Davies and Lionel Edwards. Lucy was elected as the first President; this was a huge, but much deserved accolade and went some way to assuage both her and Herkomer's disappointment that the Royal Academy refused to admit her.

Not long after the exhibition in 1914 Herkomer died at Budleigh Salterton - his death was a huge blow to Lucy.

Lucy always had a very clear idea about her private life. "I don't think any woman who is an artist should marry," she told *Black & White Magazine* back in 1901 "I find my

work takes up all my time and I have to risk the reputation of rudeness by never paying calls." Her two closest male friends, who had also studied with Herkomer, Frank Richmond Kimborough, better known as Kim, and Arthur Potts, known as Traddles, had died within two years of each other in 1902 and 1904 and this was probably the closest she had ever come to reconsidering her views on marriage.

In the early part of 1915 Lucy was working on a series of illustrations for a new edition of *Black Beauty*, Anna Sewell's classic which was to be published by J.M. Dent & Sons. The plan was for 24 colour plates and numerous line drawings. At the same time, a limited larger paper edition with 30 colour plates was to be brought out. J.M. Dent's daughter, Muriel, was the model for the girl on the frontispiece and another plate and, of course, Black Prince modelled for *Black Beauty*. The shorter edition of *Black Beauty* has often been reprinted since, but only six hundred full-sized books were ever printed. In 2015 her art was again used in a new edition of the book.

Lucy asked the famous book illustrator, Arthur Rackham, for his advice on how to set about her work and how to handle the contract she was under with J.M. Dent; he was able to help her with his own experience.

Early in the Great War, Lucy was commissioned by a parliamentary committee to produce a recruiting picture. They provided her with a sketch made by a young serving officer which she turned into an extraordinary image of a charging officer with sword at the ready racing towards the enemy. The artist, and fellow Herkomer student, Rowland Wheelwright, posed as the rider and the horse is of course Black Prince, rather ironic as he hated gunfire. The War Office provided Lucy with all the relevant photographs of uniforms and equipment. The finished poster was known as *FORWARD! Forward to Victory ENLIST NOW* and proved to be so popular that after the war all

the remaining stock was sold off. An original copy of the poster would set you back around £1,000 today.

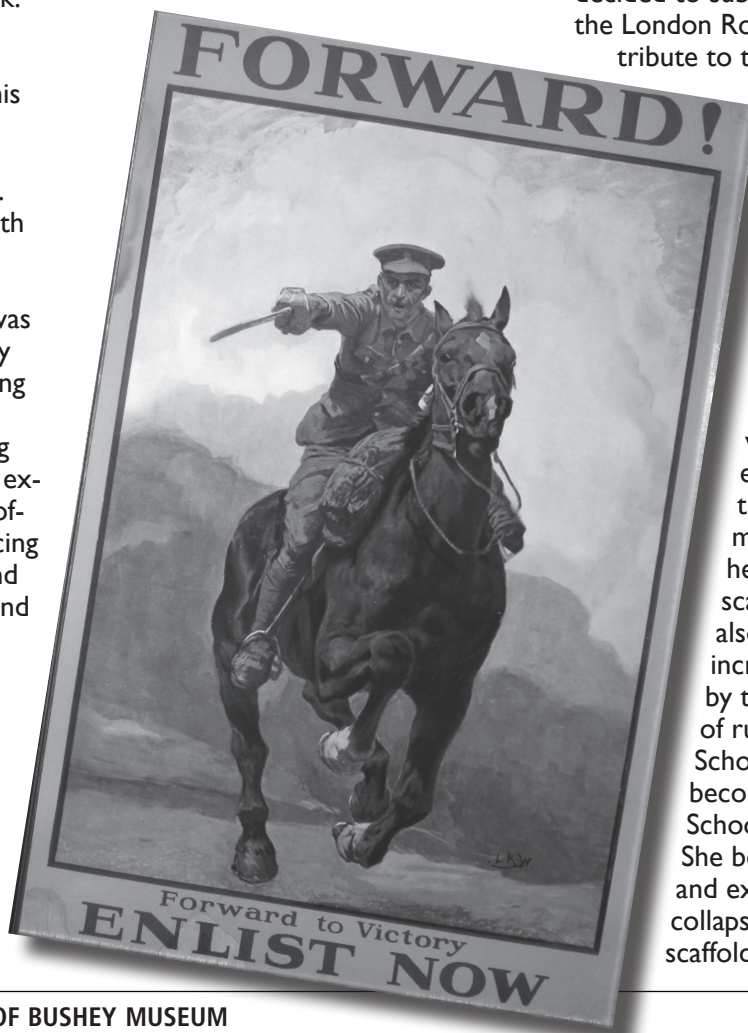
Although Lucy wished to go to the Front to capture the war horse in battle, she was constantly thwarted. She offered her services at Whitehall, contacted *The Graphic Magazine* to become their war artist, even enrolled on a first-aid course, all in an effort to be allowed to work in the front line, but she was constantly refused. To her frustration, Alfred Munnings and Algernon Talmage were recruited as Official War Artists while she had to make do with painting the Royal Horse Artillery in training on Salisbury Plain. Here she had the enthusiastic help of the commanding officer, Colonel Yorke – a 'treasure' as she described him. The colonel organized his troops to gallop right up as close as they dared to Lucy and then to repeat the manoeuvre several times. After that she spent many days painting the uniforms, the insignia and the individual horses to produce a work which enshrines for ever the dash, bravery and discipline of the gun horses of the Great War. She even joined the men for meals

in the officers' mess. The painting was titled *Forward the Guns* and was a vast panorama showing the men and horses of the Royal Horse Artillery hurtling out of the canvas at full pelt. It was an image that impressed the might of the gun horses on the imagination beyond any words and it became the most lauded work at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1917. It was the second of Lucy's works to be bought by the Chantrey bequest for the Tate. After the end of the War, the Imperial War Museum approached Lucy with a commission for a painting to be made of the Russley Park Remount Depot in Wiltshire to commemorate the work of the women who had run it during the War.

The West Country had always been a draw for Lucy and, not long after the end of the war, she travelled to Cornwall to produce a series of paintings of rural life on the Lizard; capturing on canvas the rapidly disappearing agricultural methods of the post war era.

The committee of the Empress Ladies Club in Dover Street decided to subscribe for a panel in the London Royal Exchange as a tribute to the work done by

women during the Great War and they commissioned Lucy to paint it. The work took several years as the Club also wanted a copy made for themselves. Unfortunately, Lucy was suffering from ear problems at the time and dizziness was making it difficult for her to work on the scaffolding. She was also becoming increasingly oppressed by the responsibility of running Herkomer's School which had now become the Kemp-Welch School of Animal Painting. She became so stressed and exhausted that she collapsed while on the scaffolding and her doctor



sent her to Devon to recuperate. The rest, and the news that a former pupil Marguerite Frobisher had offered to step into the breach to help run the school, was the tonic that Lucy needed to get back to work. Marguerite also helped with the painting itself, modelling for several of the figures in it. The panel was finally unveiled by Princess Mary in 1924, completing the series of twenty-four epic paintings by distinguished artists at the Royal Exchange. Lucy's mural is an extraordinary work of art representing all the chief types of women's war work. In the background we see the men march, fly and sail into battle, leaving the women to run the country. On the left, a woman in khaki shifts boxes of munitions while two women clerical workers in yellow and red consult a ledger. Behind them, a woman in nurse's uniform gazes out to sea and, at the highest point of the composition, stands a woman in the blue uniform of the Voluntary Aid Detachment with her hands poised upon a box of munitions which is being filled by her colleague. In front of them, another woman, seated upon a pile of chains, works a mechanical drill and an agricultural worker reaches for a spade and a pickaxe. To the far right, a widow sits isolated in grief with her two children.

In the summer of 1926, Lucy now in her 50s, closed down the Kemp-Welch School of Animal Painting and embarked on a completely new adventure. She ran away and joined the Lord John Sanger circus, one of the biggest inter-war circuses in the 1920s and 1930s. Here Lucy led a nomadic life living in caravans, meeting jugglers, acrobats, trapeze artists as well as elephants, tigers and such creatures. She travelled with the circus for several seasons and expanded her painting repertoire to include lions, seals and elephants. Most of the paintings from this period are much smaller in size, partly because it was difficult to transport massive canvases around in her caravan, but also because this type of painting was becoming too physically demanding.

In a complete break from tradition in 1935 Lucy won a local



**Launching the Lifeboat arrives at Bushey Museum. It measures an impressive 8ft x 5ft 6in.**

competition in Bushey with her design for a triumphal arch and float to celebrate George V's Silver Jubilee. The arch was erected at the entrance to the village across the High Street and a parade was held in the King's honour. When war broke out in 1939, Lucy carried on painting, but travelling from her house in Bushey became harder as by now she had become her sister Edith's carer.



She returned one last time to her epic panoramas in the extraordinary *Launching the Lifeboat* exhibited at the RA in 1939. It was a subject suggested to Lucy by the artist Edward Seago and it depicts the launching of the Isle of Wight lifeboat in September 1937.

When Edith died in 1941 Lucy found herself living alone for the first time in her life. For decades

Edith had taken care of all the domestic arrangements so Lucy could have time to paint. Living alone wasn't an option and so she decided to invite Margaret Frobisher to live with her. The two women carried on happily in a state of organised chaos.

At the age of 80, Lucy was still able to exhibit one painting at the Royal Academy in 1949, though her eyesight was failing.

During the 1950s she became something of a recluse, and died in hospital in Watford in 1958. She left the bulk of her property to Margaret Frobisher, who was determined to keep the legacy of her friend alive. With the Parochial Church Council she endowed the Lucy Kemp-Welch Gallery to Bushey in 1967. Lucy Kemp-Welch paintings in the Gallery were put in store for safe keeping until Bushey Museum was able to house them in the Lucy Kemp-Welch Gallery in 2007. A truly fitting memorial to the woman who captured the true spirit of the horse.

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# World's Champion Road

Ian Read

The discovery of an image in Bushey Museum's photographic archive and the chance discovery, whilst researching other topics, of the following extract from the *Watford Observer* dated 11 October 1924 led Ian Read to bring the two together. It describes and illustrates the haulage of a monster load of, for that time, the heaviest piece of machinery ever transported on the roads. It traversed both Watford and Bushey High Streets and made the perilous ascent of Chalk Hill and Clay Hill using steam traction.

**W**hat is believed to be the heaviest load that has ever been carried along any road in the world passed through Watford (and Bushey) on Tuesday (6 October 1924). It consisted of a specially designed truck, loaded with a piece of electrical machinery, which alone weighed 65 tons, the truck and the machinery together reaching a total weight of 75 tons. The load was tugged along by two powerful traction engines, but a third engine was always at hand to render auxiliary assistance in climbing steep hills.

The iron mammoth is a 15,000-kilowatt electrical generator, constructed by the General Electric Company at Witton, near Birmingham, for the Marylebone Council's Richmond street generating station. It could not be carried by rail because it was 12 feet wide, and the problem of its conveyance by road had to be solved. Selection of the route was no easy matter, on account of the bridges on many roads being inadequate to accept the strain of the load, while overhead bridges in many instances were also found to be constructed too low to allow the truck and its load to pass under. The selected route included part of Hertfordshire

from the Aylesbury road to Tring, Watford, and Bushey Heath. The task of bringing the generator to London was entrusted to Messrs. Bentley (Bradford) Ltd., whose slogan is 'Any Distance, Any Weight'.

## At Two Miles per Hour

The monster machine left Witton, Birmingham, at midnight, on Friday September 26th, and after a slow journey at a speed of two miles per hour, it left Aylesbury on Monday morning for its progress through Hertfordshire. Drawn by two of the engines it reached Tring about 11.30, and it was hoped that Watford would be sighted before nightfall. This was not accomplished, and Monday night was spent at Berkhamsted. On Tuesday morning the convoy was astir at an early hour, and everything went well until it arrived at Boxmoor. Here a good deal of time was spent getting under a railway arch. The top packing had to be removed, and the lorry was at last got under with not more than an inch or so to spare. Kings Langley was reached at 10.30, and then there was some speculation as to how Hunton Bridge, constructed last year by the Herts County Council, would stand the strain of such a heavy weight passing over it. Any anxiety, however, was removed when the load rode safely over it without causing the slightest noticeable vibration, and Mr Fred Bentley intimated to the County Council and other officials that the authorities could now post up a notice on the bridge that 'Not over one hundred tons' should pass over the structure. Slowly the giant column of transport moved towards Watford.

## Arrival at Watford

At 1.30 the Borough was entered, and through the lines of spectators on either side of the High-street, and by the market, which was in full swing, the monster slowly wended its way. In the narrow part of the High-street, between the entrance to the Parish Church and the High-Street Station, a stoppage had

to be made midway to enable the motor traffic which had been held up to be cleared away. In this matter the police did exceptionally fine work. Then a move was made down the hill to the bridge over the River Colne. Here again any anxiety as to whether this structure would withstand the extraordinary strain was removed. Near the Bushey Arches, auxiliary brakes were attached to the truck containing the generator by means of heavy slip blocks, this operation being in readiness for the climb up Chalk-hill and Clay-hill. The third engine was also brought into service.

## Climbing Clay-hill

The surface of the road had been well covered with sand, and there were thrilling moments for the men in charge and the large crowd of spectators as the three heavy traction engines began to tug at their respective independent cables, and the trailing procession of machinery commenced to toil slowly up the hill, the engines belching forth their volumes of smoke, the wire cables groaning under the strain, the engines throbbing and cuffing, the heavy wood slip blocks clattering on the roadway, the wheels rumbling and grating as they found purchase in the sand bestrewn roadway. Most of the spectators expected at any moment to see the ropes snap, but at length the summit of Chalk-hill was reached in triumph. It was expected that a halt would now be made, but this was not so. Continuing its slow but regular movement, the mechanical procession proceeded on to negotiate the steeper gradient of Clay-hill, and this was accomplished without a stoppage, and not until Bushey Heath Church was reached was a halt called. When the load came to a standstill there were rays of satisfaction and contentment upon the faces of the engine drivers and the crew, for they had successfully accomplished what had been considered the heaviest task of the whole journey. One of the traction

# Haul



**Sixty-Two ton (sic)  
Generator passes  
through Watford  
Too Big To Travel By Rail**

engines then returned to Bushey Arches to bring up the truck containing fuel and the mens' mess room.

## **Good Roads in Hertfordshire**

Before the return of the third engine, Mr Fred Bentley, one of the principals of the firm entrusted with the transportation, and who had made the journey all the way from Witton, had a chat with an 'Observer' representative about the progress they had made. He was very enthusiastic about the Hertfordshire roads over which they had travelled, and mentioned that they were the best encountered during the whole journey. He paid a compliment to the officials of the county and other public authorities, and also to the police for the great assistance they had rendered. His greatest anxiety had been with regard to Clay-hill. The excellent way in which the hills had been negotiated was a triple compliment to those responsible for the roads, the splendid work of

the men, and the reliability of the machinery. The total weight of the three machines and the load which ascended Chalk-hill and Clay-hill would be round about 140 tons. Whether the public authorities welcomed it or not, they had had an exacting test to their road and bridges, and they had come out with success.

Mr Bentley and his crew are to be rewarded by the General Electric Company with a day's outing at Wembley before they return to Bradford. Their next jobs are to take a 40-ton load from Birmingham to Bradford, and after that a 50-ton load from Birmingham to Manchester.

Amongst the public officials who proceeded along the roads of Hertfordshire traversed by the engines and their load, watching the progress over the bridges and the effect upon the various surfaces of the highway were Mr D. Waterhouse (Surveyor to the Watford

Corporation), Mr. W. Rankin (Surveyor to the County Council for the Berkhamsted district), and Mr. W. J. Baker (Surveyor to the County Council for the Watford district).

The passing of the world's champion road haul over Hunton Bridge and the Colne Bridge at Watford, without any noticeable vibration, is regarded as a great tribute to the skill and workmanship of those responsible for their designs and construction.

The engines and their load passed over the Herts and Middlesex boundary about 6 o'clock in the evening, and the Marylebone Generating Station was reached in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

## **NOTES**

1 The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley ran from April 1924 to October 1925.

2 There is no record of the equally perilous descent of Stanmore Hill which presumably passed without incident!

# 'God's Shrine'

## Landsberg and Bushey

Hartfrid Neunzert, Founder of the Herkomer Museum in Landsberg am Lech.

English version by Allison Fritsche, Cologne.  
She is granddaughter from two Herkomer Art School members: H. Scott Bridgwater and Hester May Prall.



This describes how the powerful painting *God's Shrine* came to Landsberg. The *Mutterturm* stands in Landsberg and was completed in 1888. To mark the occasion a hundred years later this gave rise to the first major international Herkomer Exhibition in Landsberg's Town Hall. The exhibition was then to be seen in similar form in Bushey. One important exhibit was *God's Shrine*. During the exhibition in Landsberg the painting was offered on loan by private collectors from Haan. Hartfrid Neunzert, director of the new municipal museum at the time, and Georg Epple manager of the Tourist Office seized the opportunity to view the painting, pack it up, and bring it to Landsberg in a van. As it turned out the measurements previously given by phone only applied to the actual painting. While this did indeed fit into the vehicle's lockable storage space, the frame had to be fastened onto the roof. The long drive took a day and a night, but it was still possible to integrate the painting into the on-going exhibition.

It shows a landscape in the Berchtesgaden countryside with the magnificent Watzmann mountain range seen from Ramsau. The picture depicts a 'Memento mori' and is dedicated as a memorial to Hubert Herkomer's mother, Josephine, so that it represents a first testimony of the artist's deep reverence for his mother who had died in Landsberg on Christmas Eve 1879. Five years later, the artist decided to build an atelier tower in Landsberg and call it the *Mutterturm* in lasting memory. The painting represents neither Landsberg nor an English landscape,

but a part of the Bavarian Alps. Its importance was due to it being a memorial painting for Josephine Herkomer who lies buried in the Landsberg cemetery. The then owners of the painting had decided to collect only Düsseldorf painters as from 1988 and were open to negotiation. An appropriate price was agreed and the help of various institutions made it possible to purchase the exhibit.

Hubert Herkomer, the painter, later to become so famous and celebrated through his portraits, gave us a landscape picture without people. A *Marterl*, a little hut for prayer and remembrance as was common in Bavaria, dominates the foreground and gives the painting its name. In front of this Shrine of God lies a cut-to-size board with carved signs which have not as yet been considered or mentioned in any research. One of the boards is in the form of *Totenbretter* – an old type of bier – which poor people put up on their last resting places instead of a tombstone. The scratched marks "J.H./Dec. 24/1879" stand for: Josephine Herkomer, died on Christmas Eve of the year 1879". The artist himself mentioned the painting in his memoirs.<sup>2</sup>

One can interpret the empty path which leads upwards but into the unknown as also symbolic for the artist's way which he had to travel alone. The broken down willow fence to the left and already rotting boards in front of the little shrine give an indication of transience. The last light of the day appears on the mountain top. Known as *Alpenglow*, this is one of nature's rare and highly impressive spectacles.

The painting gets its tension and dynamic through the triangular surfaces and diagonals. Colours are rendered close to nature and reality. Notable are the red tones on the *Marterl* corresponding to those on the mountain peak. All in all the picture represents one of the rare examples of symbolic painting in Herkomer's works and, despite the *Last Muster* picture which became famous in 1875, can be seen as an early work. Herkomer had in fact monogrammed and dated with "HH 79" right at the bottom and we believe we also know the restorer. With brush and dark colour he wrote in addition; "Hbrt [sic!] von Herkomer painted considerably 1879, WHCE". This can only have been William Holt Yates Titcombe, a student of the Herkomer Art School who in the period after 1899, possibly only after 1914, touched up the picture.<sup>3</sup> We do not know how it came to Germany. In Bushey there is a very fine water colour to this picture which shows how closely the artist dedicated himself to this subject. The *Marterl* corresponds more with Bavarian objects of comparison and thereby remains nearer to the conditions one can still meet today in the mountain region there. It was only in the oil painting which was certainly painted later that the idea – perhaps due to the experience of the alpine glow – comes of putting *God's Shrine* in the picture in memory of the mother.

Personally I am glad that, in addition to the large format oil painting which at the moment can be seen in Landsberg town hall,<sup>4</sup> Bushey also owns a picture that in masterly aquarelle technique shows almost the same motive which most certainly captures the original concept.

#### NOTES

1. Georg Epple is mayor of Apfeldorf, a village 20 km south of Landsberg am Lech (at the time of writing)
2. Herkomer, Hubert: *The Herkomers*, London 1910, vol. I, p.220
3. Poole, Stephen: *Stand to your work. Hubert Herkomer and his students*, Watford, 1983, p. 43 ff.
4. The Herkomer premises formerly housed Landsberg municipality's local heritage museum. In 1990 Neunzert installed the first Herkomer Museum there following the opening of the New Stadt Museum in 1987.

It is all so different now. A few evenings ago I sat in the garden with my knitting and, although there are many families living in the neighbourhood, there was a sound that was missing, the sound of children playing together, laughing, squabbling, and obviously enjoying themselves. There was the distant hum of traffic, perhaps a lawn mower, even an occasional plane overhead, maybe a burst of smoky laughter from a barbecue: that is all we can expect to hear.

Schools had been closed for some days, but whereas once this would have meant cheerful noise, certainly the joyful sound of bells as a steady stream of bicycles chased up and down the lane, but nothing! Where were they all and what were they doing?

For us in the 1930s, once school set us free, homework was done, and tea things washed up and put away, we couldn't wait to get out to play, even in the winter, even in the snow and our parents took this for granted. We didn't have to wait for a knock on the door – free time was play time, the other part of our lives, and the games we played together were seasonal. I suppose we were lucky living on the Heath, for there was little traffic after dark, and only the odd car as not many people had them in those days. We depended on public transport.

A lamp-post stood at the end of our lane, where Orchard Close met The Rutts, and once the lamplighter had been round with his ladder and lit the yellowing gas mantle, we were ready to play. No doubt the old man would have been horrified to see how we tied our skipping ropes to the lamp: it made a marvellous if risky maypole.

We didn't have watches, so had to wait for the appearance of a parent to signal the end of fun for the evening: not even a verbal summons to come indoors because it was bedtime. A nod of the head or a beckoning hand was enough.

The games we played were invented and adjusted by ourselves.

# Out to Play

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Mollie Thomas

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They were accepted as long as they were seen as 'fair', and certainly had no resemblance to the team games played at school and regulated by the teacher's whistle. We didn't even have a whistle!

If Farmer Gregory wasn't around and the cows had gone to be milked we would sneak through the hedge into the field in The Rutts beside the Infants School, and the big boys might let us join in their game. They called it Tens, and it had some resemblance to baseball. If the farmer appeared or the cows returned we all beat a hasty retreat, feigning innocence and ignorance.

Funnily enough, Christmas and Easter were regarded as off-season, and there was none of the usual playing. Possibly it would have been regarded as naughty and disrespectful.

On summer evenings many of us had to go and help parents on the allotments in Windmill Lane, which most families had in those days, and where some excellent fruit and vegetables were produced, (and judged at the Bushey Flower Show on August Bank Holiday). After you had done your share of jobs, you were allowed to go off and play in the neighbouring wood in Clay Lane with the others – all the children you knew at school and in village life. Strangely enough we didn't ever play our wood-games in the school playground. School was school and summer evenings were another matter altogether; not that there was any animosity – just a tacit decision to keep out two worlds apart.

Very few of us had bicycles, or even access to one. I learned to ride on a very old two-wheeler belonging to a neighbour. It had no gears, no real brakes, no pneumatic tyres, just a matter of peddling hard and balancing on an uncomfortable saddle. My pride took a painful knock when the lack of brakes sent me hurtling into the back of Hooper's grocery delivery lorry – sprouts, potatoes, cooking apples, firewood everywhere, and me in trouble with the elderly driver. "Just wait till I see your mother," he threatened.

We were lucky in having two commons, Stanmore and Wealdstone, and we spent many hours on them, inventing adventures and getting to know nature. Funnily enough, I can't remember ever being frightened, except when we tried to scare each other. The important factor was that we told our parents where we were going.

Overwhelmed as we now are with sport on television, radio, online, and in the press, I suppose we were lucky to be spared such an overdose of professionalism. In winter, my Father would sometimes take my sister and me to watch Watford play at Vicarage Road, but for us the big excitement was going on the train from High Street Station to Bushey Station and watching the steam expresses thunder through. In the summer we would watch cricket being played on Stanmore Common: the big excitement here was the possibility of getting a penny ice-cream from the little hut on the ground.

Now I am a great-granny, and I wonder what the future holds for those little ones. Will they enjoy the same freedom we had, playing with our friends, or will they feel deprived if they haven't a screen of some sort to watch or interact with? I look back on those long ago days and realise that even my own children, now in their sixties, didn't have the freedom to play which we had at Bushey Heath before the Second World War. How lucky we were.

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