

Literal TRANSCRIPT from type-written extract (ex Lady Bawden's archive) of entry in the HARPENDEN PARISH MAGAZINE for September 1890 :

THE DRINKING FOUNTAIN

On Friday July 18th, in the presence of a large concourse of people, the Rector, Canon Vaughan, opened the Drinking Fountain given by Sir J.B.Lawes, Bart., under the Common Improvement Scheme.

Proceedings were commenced by Col. Durnford, who, as chairman, referred to the formation some two or three years ago of the Common Improvement Committee which Sir J.B.Lawes represented there that day. After announcing amid general applause that the Water Company had kindly consented to give a free and constant supply of water, he invited the Rector to open the fountain.

Canon Vaughan thereupon unveiled the fountain and said : If there was one place of which it might be said that its beauty was its fortune, that place was Harpenden, and of the beauty of their village the crown was its Common. All who had hitherto watched the Common with an observant eye would agree with him, that up to within two or three years ago it was rapidly going to ruin through indiscriminate traffic cutting it up in all directions ; and if this had been permitted to go on for a few years longer its beauty would have existed only in the memories of the older inhabitants. The general feeling of the parish had found expression in the Vestry, two or three years since, that some steps were necessary to preserve the Common.

The one person to whom they could appeal, and who alone as Lord of the Manor had any legal right as the protector of the Common, was their dear, kind benefactor Sir John Lawes. He at once, with his usual consideration for the rights and feelings of every parishioner, had taken into his counsel a committee of gentlemen who had assisted him in the work of protecting the Common as a heritage for the future. They accepted with gratitude the results of the past two years' arduous labour of the committee, and he desired all present to show, by a proper use of Sir John's gifts, that they were worthy of the confidence he had placed in them as his fellow parishioners.

The Rector impressed upon all the residents, and particularly the rising generation, the necessity of remembering that everyone had a share in taking proper care of the Common and the fountain. He hoped that his elder friends and parishioners would recollect in their future use of the Common how much might be done by them to maintain the Common in its present excellent state by sensible, careful and honourable use, and what destruction could be wrought by carelessly driving over the prohibited portions of the Common. And as time went on, and their population and traffic increased -- which it seemed destined to do -- he trusted that the traffic would be restricted to its proper limits on the Common.

(Interpolated note : The Rector was speaking at a time when Harpenden's population was about 3,900. The 'traffic' complained of was all horse-drawn.)

The Rector concluded with an affectionate and appropriate homily. The rev. gentleman then filled one of the cups and drank some of the water amidst general cheering. The National Anthem was played by the Band of the Harpenden Instrumental Society, who also played a selection of music during the evening.

Eighty-five years later the present Parish Council are hoping to acquire the last of the Manorial Rights, thus becoming sole 'Protector of the Common' where Sir John's word was once law. With the skilled help of the District Council's Arborist and foresters, the experience and advice of the Herts & Middlesex Trust for Nature Conservation and the co-operation of the parishioners suggested by Canon Vaughan, the good management of the Common seems to be assured for the foreseeable future.

Yours faithfully,

E.P. Wilson.

1975

(Note by Transcriber, October 1990 : All the above was typed together : whether E.P. Wilson added the 'Interpolated note' and added the final paragraph, all as a letter to some journal or magazine, is not definite but seems likely. K.K-B.)