

LONGMOOR VALLEY, SUTTON PARK

**Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group
Field Meeting**

Sunday, 20th June 1999



**Birmingham Rifle Volunteers beside the
Bell Tents, 1879**

([www.sclhr.org.uk/research/proceedings/
Volume 7, Article 5/Great Grandad's Army](http://www.sclhr.org.uk/research/proceedings/Volume%207,%20Article%205/Great%20Grandad's%20Army))



**Galloway Highland Cattle in
Westwood Coppice, 1992**

(Keith Jordan's Collection)



**Birmingham 'PALS' in Coppice Wood,
trench digging 1915**

([www.sclhr.org.uk/research/proceedings/
Volume.10/Article 3/Great Grandad's Army](http://www.sclhr.org.uk/research/proceedings/Volume.10/Article%203/Great%20Grandad's%20Army))

**Walk
led by
Mike Hinson**

**Plan
by
Dennis Hurley**

(both Members of the Group)

SUTTON COLDFIELD LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP FIELD MEETING

Longmoor Valley, Sutton Park

Sunday 20th June 1999

Meet in the Car Park at Banners Gate, 09.45 am

CAR PARK:

Shooting Range (1881) — 1200 yard shooting point is at the far edge of the car park in line with free-standing gate.

Track — across the valley to the Butts, Rowton Well and Rowton Cottage, also access to east side of race course.

WESTWOOD COPPICE:

From the Cinder Track - note the well-preserved bank and ditch for keeping stock out of the Coppice.

Two exits from the coppice used for forestry maintenance can be still be distinguished.

This track gave access to the Race Course Stand.

SUTTON RACE COURSE: 1868 - 1881

Extract from Willey's Penny Guides: History and Guide to Sutton Park by A Peers, published by William Willey in 1896:

'The course has been formed at very great expense. In form, it is an elongated oval of about one mile and a quarter in extent. A capital run in of seven furlongs, nearly straight, is obtained by adding a 'tongue'. The whole course thus presents the appearance of a figure 6. From the top of the same, the distance is one mile and three quarters. The Stand, though a temporary erection is substantially built, under the superintendence of the Corporation Surveyor, and will hold about 800 persons'.

The visitors' entrance to the course was at Royal Oak Gate.

CAMP SITE:

Note the series of circular drainage channels (about 13 ft in diameter) which can be found among the grass, heather and gorse. These were dug around army bell tents in order to take rainwater which dripped from the flysheets. They are reputed to be part of a camp site used by the Rifle Volunteers (probably from Birmingham) in the 1880s. Upwards of 20 have been identified, also the trench around a marquee possibly used as a mess tent.

FAR EDGE OF WESTWOOD COPPICE:

There is a well preserved bank and ditch. Note the storm drain contractor's access road.

WARDEN'S BELT:

Some evidence of a bank and ditch, External storm drains from Chester Road discharge into the Park.

ROMAN ROAD (opposite 'Parson and Clerk' car park):

To the left of the path is the spot where Ryknield Street enters the park.

ROYAL OAK GATE/LORD DONEGAL'S RIDE:

Lord Donegal lived at Fisherwick Hall, near Lichfield. In the 18th century, he had permission to 'draw the Park coverts' (i e hunt). This track is the route by which he entered the Park with his hounds twice a year (according to Sutton Park: Its Wild Life and History, D. V. Jones, 1982)

Here, the Roman road emerges from the gorse and crosses the Park towards Streetly.

Restoration of storm drain trench near this ride shows some burnt stones.

The sweet chestnut trees are all that remains of Herringshaw Avenue, planted by the Sutton Corporation in 1970.

THE BUTTS:

Constructed in 1881 by the Sutton Corporation for the use of the Sutton Volunteers ('F' Company, First Staffordshire Rifle Volunteers, formed in 1880).

According to the District Inspector of Musketry's Report, July 1894, the dimensions were: height 20 ft. , length at top 42 ft; length at base 87 ft; depth 40 ft. In accordance with Musketry Regulations 1894, para 222, the Butts should have been 45 ft high with a clear space of 1300 yards behind and 250 yards either side to prevent accidents whilst shooting was in progress.

Since these conditions could not be met, The Butts were condemned in 1894 and levelled in 1895. All traces of the marker points were also removed.

ROWTON COTTAGE SITE:

According to the Minutes of Sutton Corporation, the cottage that once stood on this site was built in about 1825. It was built for occupation by an assistant park keeper.

There was a 70 ft deep well in the garden, sunk in 1921.

In the far corner of the former garden is a shrub rose. It is Rosa alba, Maiden's Blush (the small-flowered form). A specimen taken from the bush was identified using The Old Shrub Roses by Graham Stuart Thomas (Phoenix House, 4th edition, 1963). There is an illustration, Plate III, page 89.

The cottage was used by the Civil Defence for training purposes during World War II and demolished shortly afterwards.

OBSERVATION TRENCH — near Rowton Well, possibly constructed by the Rifle Volunteers.

ROWTON WELL:

The stonework of this ancient well dates back to 1813 (A Royal Town and Its Park, Moss, 1973). There used to be a tall flag- pole, the flag being raised on the days when ladies were bathing.

The water from the Well was reputed to have curative properties for eye troubles. A horse-drawn tank was supposed to have visited the well each day to draw water for Birmingham's Eye Hospital.

QUEEN'S COPPICE:

Planted in 1953 to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

Agnes Bracken (1860) mentions that an excavation of the tumulus (supposedly Bronze Age) on this site was carried out in July 1859. No ancient remains were discovered but it was noted that the soil had previously been disturbed to a depth of 3 ft.

FAR CROFT/NEAR CROFT:

Total area of this site is 5.4 acres. Its enclosure dates back to the time of the construction of Longmoor Pool in 1733.

Plan 10 of Survey, Plans and Valuation of the Charity Estates of the Warden and Society of Sutton Coldfield, 1811 show that Far Croft and Near Croft were leased by Samuel Reynolds, together with: house, corn mill, stable, gardens, with use of the water from the pool; land below with stews, and the stream from the mill.

Figure 32 in Sutton Park: A History of its Land Use, Barlow suggests that this land was cultivated for the war effort, 1943-45. Ridges and headlands are clearly visible near the Pool. It was also used as a car park during the Scouts' Jamboree in 1957.

LONGMOOR POOL/SITE OF WATER MILL:

The Corporation allowed John Riland to make a dam and pool across Longmoor Brook in 1733 and to hold it for 21 years for a yearly rent of one shilling.

In 1754, Richard Reynolds erected a house and corn mill , with a lease for 63 years at 40 shillings per year. It was first used as a corn mill, then for dressing leather and, in 1762, as a button mill. A map dated 1779 shows the button mill, refers to the pool as Button Mill Pool and to the adjoining land as Button Mill Piece, all leased to Mr Powell. The mill was demolished in 1938.

Now, please return to Car Park.

The Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group hopes that you have enjoyed the walk.

I wish to acknowledge the significant contribution made by Dennis Hurley when this field visit was first planned in 1995.

Mike Hinson
June 1999

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Issue

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