

**The following is a transcript of a document believed to have been written by E.M.M.Carrad. nee Willingale, Great-Grand-daughter of Tom Willingale.**

**We have subsequently discovered that E.M.M. Carrad is not the a direct descendant of the Thomas Willingale of Lopping fame, but is more closely related to Keith Willingale our Chairman. We are currently trying to confirm the providence of this article. Other sources state that no one actually died in prison and that the prison term was only 7 days long. The book referred to in this article appears to be long out of print.**

“The Romance of English Forests”

Written by T.Morewood-Dowsett and published by  
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Records that Epping Forest, comprising of 8000 acres, was originally known as the Forest of Waltham, consisting of 62,000 acres and contained Waltham Abbey.

Queen Elizabeth I decreed that the inhabitants of the forest could obtain their winter fuel by lopping the trees between St. Martin’s day 11th November and 24th April yearly.

Seventeen Lords of the Manor controlled the Forest area, one of whom was Rev Maitland, Vicar of Loughton, who decided to enclose 1,100 acres of the forest as his property and forbid the inhabitants the right of entry thereto. Several other Lords of the manor followed suit.

Tom Willingale and his two sons claimed their right to lop the trees and broke the fences to do so.

They were arrested and sentenced to 2 months hard labour. The two sons contracted pneumonia through being in damp cells. Both died in prison.

Tom Willingale after completing his sentence returned to Loughton. The Vicar, on behalf of the Lords of the Manor, offered him £500 to leave the district. Willingale refused and instead he commenced legal action against the Lords of the Manor to maintain the ‘Lopping-rights’ assigned by Royal Decree.

The Lords of the Manor having conspired to force him to leave the forest by refusing him employment.

The Law Suit after 3 years became too expensive for the Foresters so they decided that as the corporation of the City of London owned 200 acres of the Forest as the City’s Cemetery they could claim to be Foresters also.

The City Corporation agreed so as to protect their own land. The Aldermen continued the proceedings and after 7 years litigation and employing 18 Queen’s counsels at a cost of £25,000. The Master of the Rolls decided in favour of the Foresters and awarded them £7,000 for loss of their lopping rights, as Queen Victoria rescinded the

decree of Elizabeth I and declared that the 8,000 acres that remained should become Public Property, known as Epping Forest.

The foresters decided to build a Parish Hall at Loughton with the money awarded them to commemorate the memory of the Willingales who died in prison

The Hall was opened by the Lord Mayor of London after the Vicar Maitland had blessed it and in his speech said he hoped the past would soon be forgotten.

The case commenced 1863 and ended 1874. My father George Willingale was born 23rd. June 1853. Illegitimate. His mother Elizabeth Willingale was the daughter of Tom Willingale and sister of the 2 sons who died.

Besides, the Parish Hall at Loughton, Essex, known as Loppers Hall built to commemorate the actions of Tom Willingale and sons, they also built a school at Loughton known as Thomas Willingale Primary School which was burnt badly early in 1970, supposed caused by sabotage and arson.

The ironical fact is that Father couldn't read and write and Syd and I never went to school because we could not afford the 2d payment on every Monday- as admittance for that week. Father could not pay as he only received 11/6d. a week to keep a family of Wife and 6 children.

Early in 1870 a boy, Nigel Stradwick, aged 10yrs. wrote to the Queen and asked her to prevent his Grandfather being ejected from Torrels Hall Cottages at Willingale, near Chelmsford. The Queen's Secretary passed it on to the appropriate Government Dept., the paper did not say what was the result. The facts were brought to light during the first Labour Government when -the great Anaurien Bevan, Minister of Housing wanted to take part of the forest to build houses at Walthamstow he was informed then of Tom Willingale and the law of the Common Land Act 1874 which was passed by Parliament after Queen Victoria, decreed that any person fencing in land which is Common Property, the Commoners have the right to destroy fences.

That stopped him building much to his annoyance. Every Newspaper and John Bull published their accounts. Harry sent it to me and asked me to get the facts. What I have written is what I gathered with the help of a Schoolmaster at Southampton who lent me the Book "The romance of English Forests".

E.M.M.Carrad. nee Willingale,  
Great-Grand-daughter of Tom Willingale