

THE GUINNESS EMMIGRATION TRAINING SCHOOL

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Country Life on the 8th February 1913 carried an article entitled 'Educating for the Colonies' about the Emigration Training Farm set up by Rupert Guinness at Woking Park Farm. I have a small brochure produced to advertise the farm which includes pictures of various activities such as ploughing, stacking hay with an elevator and even hitching up a 'Canadian Buggy'.

The Guinness family owned a farm in Eastern Canada, and Rupert Guinness (who was interested in agricultural improvements), realised that many of those who wanted to emigrate to the colonies to farm were often not properly prepared for the experience. Agricultural Colleges didn't (or couldn't) prepare their students properly and what was needed was a residential course where some of the tools and equipment could be handled - even if the harsh conditions could not be replicated!

A Canadian Style cowshed was erected, and in the kitchen, serving the new brick-built dormitory and dining room, a Canadian style range was installed; whilst hand-tools, carts and machinery were all provided to replicate, as much as possible, the type of equipment the students might expect to find once they had travelled abroad.

'The pupils must rise at 4.45 in the morning then do feeding, grooming, milking, harnessing and "mucking out". They have breakfast at 6.30 and then a spell of work from 7 to 12 with horses, cattle, or in the fields. They have an hour for dinner, "plenty but plain", working again from 1pm to 6pm, after which supper. Supper finished they go the rounds, and at 9.30 light are out.'

The idea was to see who thought they could start a new life on the land abroad and those 'who have a genuine taste for farm work'. One way of making certain that the students were serious about emigrating was to insist on a 'deposit' equal to the amount required to cover their passage to the country of their choice. There was also a charge of £2.10.0 to cover medical attendance and breakages and a charge of twenty-five shillings a week for board – although this was apparently reduced when they became more proficient and sometimes waived and a small weekly wage paid instead if the student was particularly good.

The course was supposed to last for at least six weeks, but this could be extended, and at the end, work was often found for the student in their desired country with Rupert Guinness using his influence with the various provincial Governments to find suitable vacancies mainly in Canada, but also apparently in Australia and New Zealand.

The Evening Post on the 5th October 1912 reported that 'Mr Guinness and his wife – better remembered in New Zealand as Lady



THE CANADIAN BUGGY.



HITCHING UP CANADIAN BUGGY.



OFF TO WORK WITH BUGGY AND WAGON.

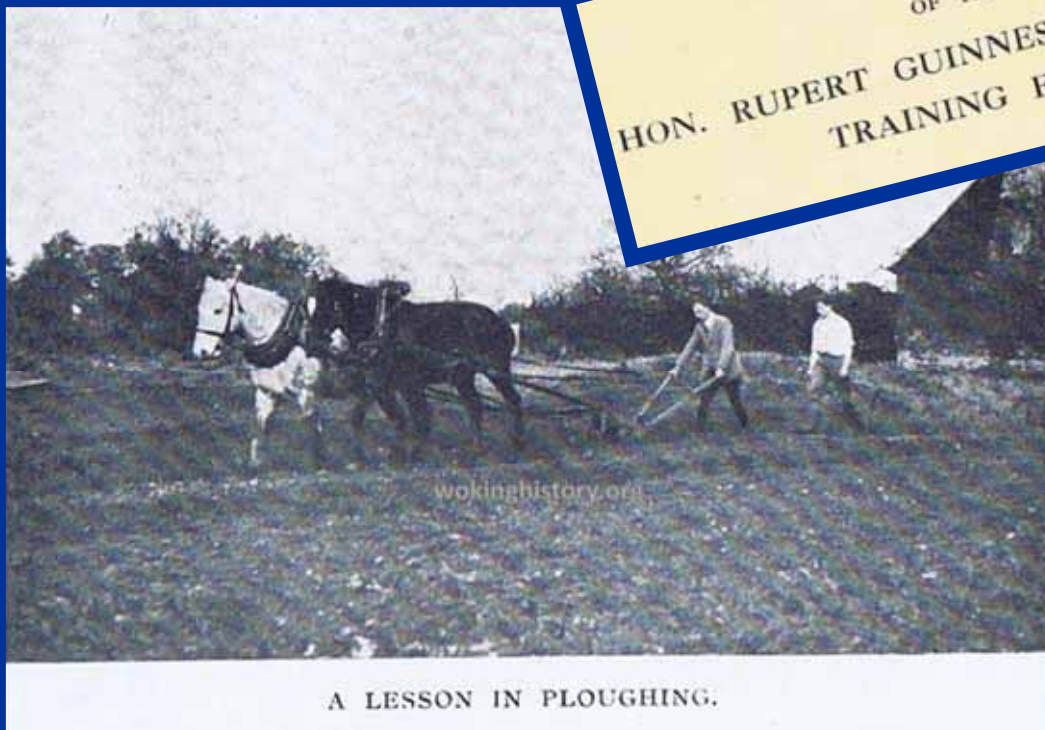


TRIMMING ROOTS.

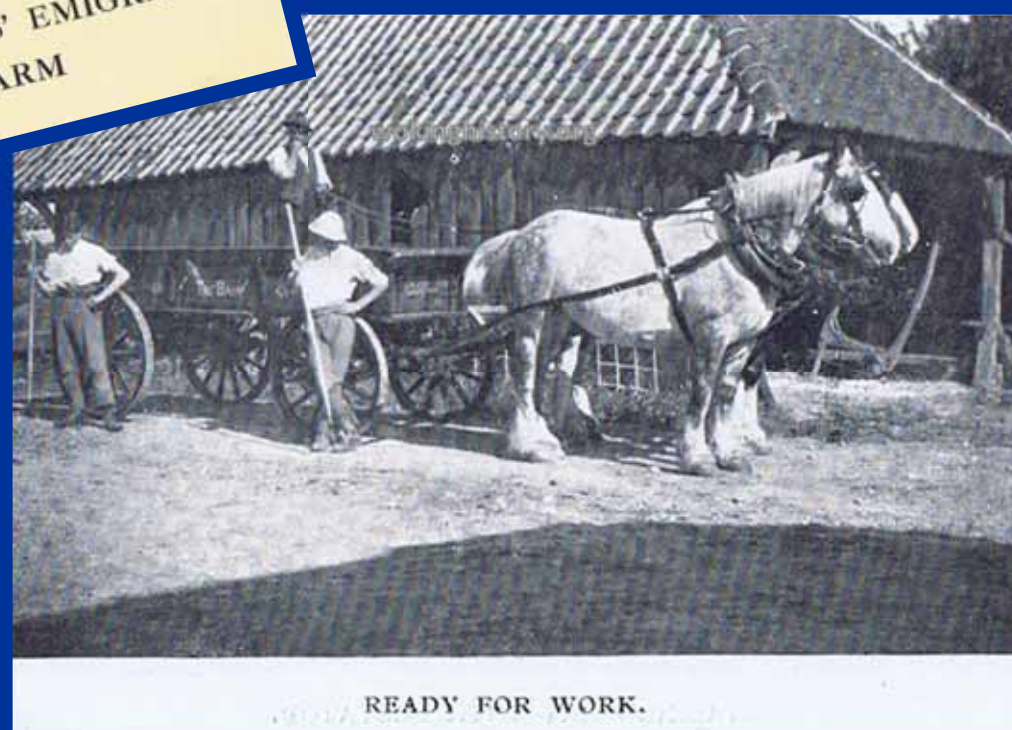


STACKING HAY WITH ELEVATOR.

VIEWS
OF THE
HON. RUPERT GUINNESS' EMIGRATION
TRAINING FARM



A LESSON IN PLOUGHING.



READY FOR WORK.

Gwendolen Onslow – are now in Canada, and it is the intention to start a similar farm on the Canadian side to work in conjunction with the farm at Woking, so that men will get longer training under actual Canadian conditions’.

The manager of the Woking Farm, a Mr Heurtley (who had trained in an agricultural college in Canada) went on to explain how the training worked. ‘So far as crops go, we are growing those which are grown more in Canada than in England, such as flax and linseed – crops which are generally grown after the first ploughing of virgin prairie. We have followed that practice here by breaking up a number of fields which have not been broken up for a hundred years or more. We are also growing maize, which is a staple crop on nearly every farm in Eastern Canada.’

‘The farm is completely stocked with every variety of Canadian agricultural implement, and as regards stock Mr Guinness is making a speciality of short-horns, to which end a very good pedigree bull was purchased last year as well as a number of pedigree cows and Tamworth pigs, all of which are specially popular in Eastern Canada.’

Later a separate school for ladies was also set up (overseen by Lady Gwendolen), ‘for the purpose of training Englishwomen for Canadian farm life’ with practice in all branches of housework ‘including canning and preserving of fruits, poultry and dairy work’.

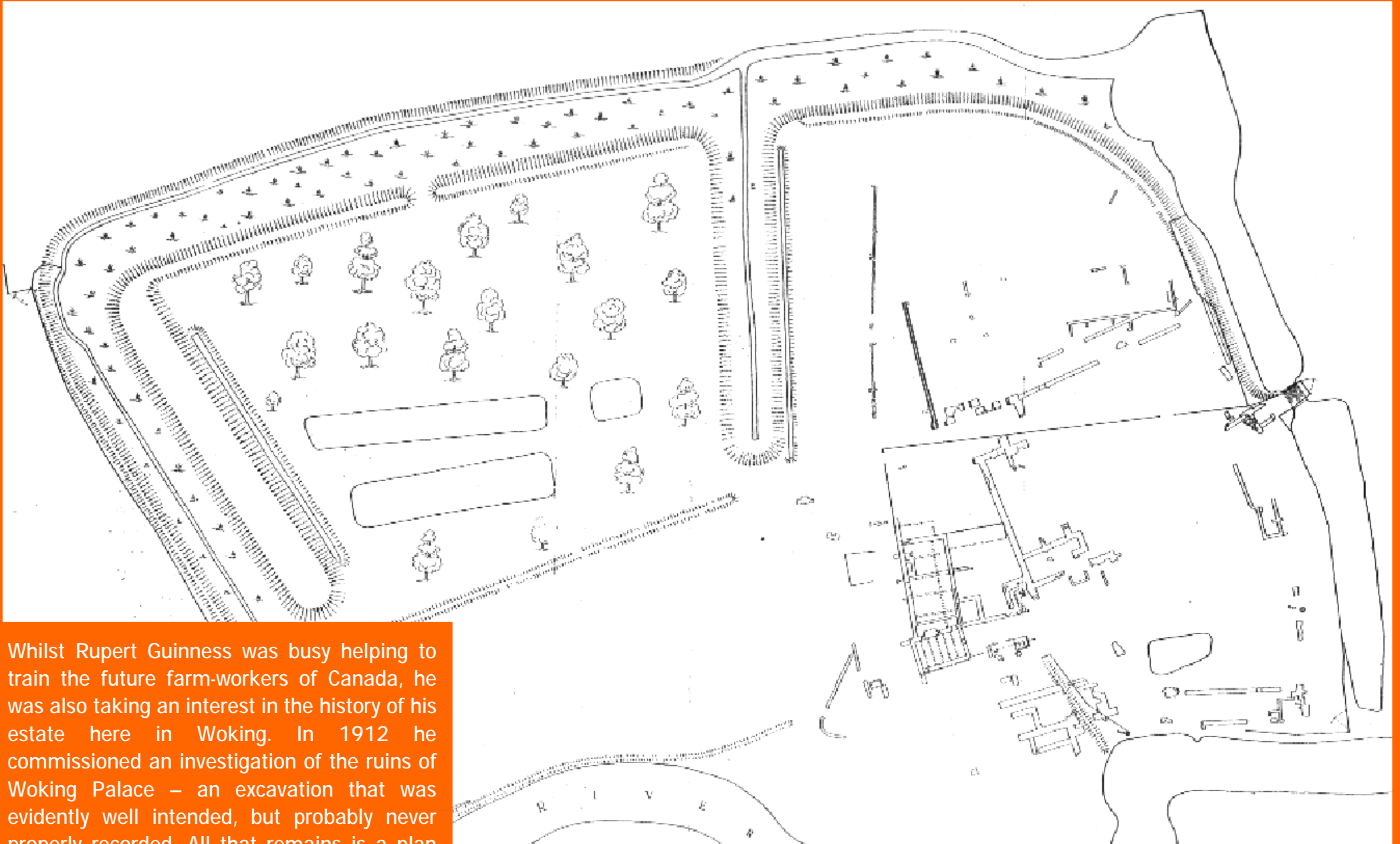
It would be interesting to know how many Canadian (and Antipodeans’) farms owe their existence to the men and women who once trained for their new life in the colonies at Old Woking.

Above (and on first page), scenes from the Emigration Training Farm brochure.

Below: Gwendolene Guinness watches as the ladies at the training school learn how to bottle fruit and make jam.



THE 1912 EXCAVATIONS OF WOKING PALACE



Whilst Rupert Guinness was busy helping to train the future farm-workers of Canada, he was also taking an interest in the history of his estate here in Woking. In 1912 he commissioned an investigation of the ruins of Woking Palace – an excavation that was evidently well intended, but probably never properly recorded. All that remains is a plan (reproduced here) drawn by Charles E Lovell, ARIBA, of Gravesend and dated April 1912, but what finds (if any) were discovered and where, remains a mystery – although a small ‘museum’ of exhibits was set up in the small vaulted room on the site.

Sadly that was later vandalised with presumably some of the exhibits thrown into the River Wey, where a few years ago divers rediscovered some glued-together pottery - evidently the work of one of Guinness’ excavators rather than some medieval mender!

Remains of some of the trenches dug in 1912 were also discovered during the more recent archaeological investigations (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund), the archaeological report of which will hopefully soon be published.



WOKING PALACE THEATRE IN 1913



The Palace Theatre was later converted into the Astoria Cinema before becoming the Odeon (seen here during its demolition in the 1980's)

If you had mentioned 'Woking Palace' to anyone in the town in 1913 the chances are that they would not have thought of the ruins of Henry VIII's former residence in the fields to the east of Old Woking, but the 'Woking Palace Theatre' on the corner of Duke Street and The Broadway that was built in that year!

It was constructed for the Woking Palace Company by 'Messrs Caesar Brothers of Hale from designs prepared by a leading London architect who designed some of the best known theatres in the Metropolis'. At the time it was largest hall of its kind in the town capable of seating 1,000 people – 750 in the

hall and 250 in the balcony - all of the 'plush tip-up variety' 20" wide.

In later years it was known as the Astoria, before being converted into the Odeon – finally closing in the 1980's and redeveloped with offices.

