



LEIGHWAY

The newsletter of the Leigh Society
An eye to the future with an ear to the past in the heart of Leigh

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Frank Bentley

Since our last AGM we have experienced a busy and momentous year.

The rebuilding of Plumbs Cottage had its demolition hiccups, but the necessary planning permission has now been gained, and work to rebuild has been arranged.

The Society contributed to the Trafalgar Year Anniversary and staged a very good exhibition. We had a visit to Portsmouth and the Comicals concert had a nautical theme. Carole led the way as M.C. and Admiral Ann Price wore full Nelson uniform.

Your committee has met monthly, and I thank them on your behalf for their efforts to keep things rolling.

The talks to school children have as usual been very successful, as have our evenings at Wesley Church, which have been well attended and popular.

The shop has also done well and our thanks go to our buyers, Joan Simpson and Shirley Stead and to our helpers at the Centre who have bravely turned out in all weathers and kept the centre open on most days.

We could do with a few more helpers and I should be glad if members would perhaps volunteer at the meeting.

Lastly, my vice Chair Elaine, and I thank all our members for supporting the Society for yet another year, and of course we look forward to a special year when the Centre will expand to include Plumbs Cottage - perhaps the most important milestone so far, in the Society's history.

Frank Bentley, Chairman

SECRETARY'S REPORT

As I think I told members at the last AGM, as Secretary of the Leigh Society (for more years than I care to add up), I see my role as a bit of a "gofer": I am at the end of the 'phone for messages, queries and information for all sorts of matters concerning both the Society and our Heritage Centre. I try to distribute them to all the right quarters and perhaps 'pass the buck'!

This has worked pretty well I think because, having spent many years at a desk with a typewriter, I am a bit of a Luddite and do not have a computer. However, many of our committee and members are very expert in this technology and I can assure you e-mails fly about between them (abroad too), much to the advantage of the Society. Yes, the Society is up with the times. We also have some very active members who, as our slogan

states, "have an eye to the future" as well as "an ear to the past" and alert us to the many problems and matters that crop up in Leigh. We do our best to act on them and make our views known. Many of these are brought to the attention of the Committee at our monthly meetings.

My thanks to everyone who works so hard to keep the flag flying and our efforts worthwhile. Do continue to support us when you can.

Oh, I now have a cordless 'phone so am moving a little with the times.

Margaret, Hon .Secretary

THE 2 PLUMBS YARD PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT

As most members will know this has been a traumatic year for the Plumbs project. Everything started well with the Lottery grant and we set out with high hopes only to be dashed by the poor condition of the building which we could do nothing about. However, we have managed to pull things together again and the work should soon restart. We are just waiting for the Borough Council to agree the final few outstanding requirements we have had to fulfill.

Fundraising is still important though as the setbacks have meant we have had to find additional professional fees for the work which had to be done in terms of applying for planning permission and conservation area consent.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Plumbs Committee and the Society Committee for their support over the last year and in particular, Alan Crystall who has been a tower of strength and Donald Fraser our Treasurer whose experience has meant that our funds are well looked after and gain the maximum benefits available to us as a charity.

We very much look forward to opening the cottage later in the year.

Carole Mulroneu

TAKE YOU AWAY INDIAN

Thanks to all our members who took part in this new venture. Particular thanks to Ann for selling the tickets and to John and Carol Tissington for organising the event. We are very grateful for their support.

IRIS WILLIAMS AND MARY WHITELAM

It is with great regret that we inform members of the passing of these two longstanding and very supportive members of the Society.

Iris many of you will know from her years working in the Heritage Centre side by side with Isabel Holland, always with a smile and a twinkle in her eye. She was also a member of the Society's committee for many years.

Mary, with her husband Peter, regularly attended meetings and functions, and was well known to us all.

We extend our deepest sympathy to their families.

DIARY DATES

All events will be held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m. There is a small entrance fee of 50p for members and £1 for non members to help cover the cost of the hall.

26 April/AGM/Restoration of the Endeavour- Rita Cocks

17 May – History of Shoebury Garrison – Tony Hill

20 May – 7.30 - Quiz – The Den £7 inc fish and chip supper

11 October – The Salvation Army Colony – Derek Barber

15 November – Pier Museum Foundation – Peggy Dowie

December – Christmas Lunch and Comicals to be arranged

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subs for the coming year are now due - £5 for individual members and £8 per couple. Subscriptions should be paid by the AGM on 26 April.

Unfortunately subscriptions not paid by that date will mean that membership lapses and you will no longer receive Leighway. We hope you agree that in this day and age the subscriptions are reasonable and you are of course helping to maintain the Society and all the work it does.

We look forward to seeing you all at the programmed events and thank you for your support in the coming year.

There is sometimes some confusion over the period your subs cover. Subs paid now are for 2006 January to December.

ANNUAL QUIZ

Inside your Leighway you will find a flyer for our quiz which this year will be held on 20 May at the Den. The teams should be of 6 members and the cost will be £7 each which will, of course, include fish and chips.

Please get your tickets as quickly as possible so Ann can sort the numbers.

Duncan our resident quiz master and Ann on front of house put in a lot of hard work on the quiz which is always well supported and we look forward to seeing you all there, pencils sharpened, on the night.

DON'T DELAY - GET YOUR TICKETS NOW

A CIRCUS LIFE

Look forward to your next Leighway when we tell you the story of 2 Leigh sisters who left the little fishing village for a life as part of the most famous travelling circuses of 19th century England.

WHATEVER DID WE DO BEFORE TESCO?

One of the beauties of Leigh is that it has managed to retain a shopping centre which has not been invaded by the multiples and there is still a butcher and a baker, although the candlestick maker has long gone from every town.

The big chains have had, some would say, a devastating effect on our towns and villages, especially the supermarkets. In Chelmsford, the County town, there is no butcher, baker, fishmonger or greengrocer in the town centre. When I grew up in the 50s in Stock there was a range of village shops in the main village and up the other end my Dad's garage which sold not only petrol but laid claim to selling everything from a bicycle tube to a lobster (and that is no exaggeration). Open all hours of course. Now Stock has one general store and almost nothing else – it still has its 5 pubs though.

Essex is very often a maligned county, except to those of us that spring from it, but I'm not sure I want to lay claim to Maldon's singular honour of being home to the first Tesco self service supermarket in 1956.

So how did our shopping habits evolve to become as they are now for a lot of people – a leisure activity?

In Saxon times, towns, such as they were, had market places. Our word 'cheap' comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'ceap' meaning fair trade or a bargain. At the time of the Domesday Book the population of England was about 1 ¼ million but by the time of the Black Death in 1349 it had trebled and new towns were springing up all over each with a market place. Every town and village was, to a large degree, self supporting. Ordinary villagers travelled to the market town but probably not much further. Merchants and craftsmen usually traded from their own homes with suitable symbols outside (like the barber's pole) for the illiterate inhabitants. These sort of shops and markets continued into the nineteenth century but interestingly the signs had been virtually stopped by law in 1762 because they caused accidents. The only exemptions to this were pubs, barbers' poles and pawnbrokers. This is when signs started to be fixed flat over shop doorways and glass was beginning to appear in shop windows. Shops were still small with their owners' living over them until in 1815 the new Regent Street project started a fashion for larger shops and stores in London. From then up to World War 1 many of the most famous names came to prominence, like Fortnum and Masons. Marks and Spencer started as separate stalls in Sheffield Market and then teamed up to for the Penny Bazaar.

Perhaps one of the best descriptions of the shop world of the early 1900s is in H G Wells' Kipps. It is a world where lady customers were treated as ladies especially if they arrived in a carriage. Shop walkers dressed in morning suits and acted like commissionaires to see the lady into the store. She never carried a parcel and her purchases were delivered. Oh how different things are now when I struggle with my 20 carrier bags from Tescos.

Jack Cohen, the son of a Jewish tailor, fought in the First World War in the Royal Air Force. In 1919 he invested in some army surplus rations - including fish paste and golden syrup - and sold them on a market stall. On his first day of trading he sold £4 worth of goods and made a profit of one pound.



A TOLL ORDER



This is Turnpike Cottage, Leigh which was situated in London Road opposite the site of Westleigh Schools on the corner of London Road and Eastwood Road. Part at least of London Road was a toll road and the cottage was inhabited by the toll keeper. In 1851 Maria Hymas of Turnpike House was the Toll Collector. She was a widow and no doubt her husband had been the tollkeeper before he died. The children in this picture are members of the Nay family. Benton's History of the Rochford Hundred mentions that tolls were collected at Turner's Corner where this cottage stood.

Essentially the upkeep of the roads was the business of the Parish, and the turnpikes allowed them to take tolls from users of the roads. As the roads were generally very bad the tolls were imposed to improve them. Turnpike Trusts were empowered by Parliament to: raise loans for road repairs, build tollhouses, erect gates and milestones and each trust consisted usually of a local lawyer (as clerk), a treasurer and a surveyor, together with many of the landowners through whose land the road passed.

From the first in 1663, and with a great expansion in the 1750s-70s, there were thousands of trusts and companies established by Acts of Parliament with rights to collect tolls in return for providing and maintaining roads

Tolls were originally based on the size of a vehicle (and number of horses pulling it) or the number of animals in a drove. However, it soon became obvious the weight of the load caused damage and occasionally weighing machines would be built by certain gates. This allowed a ticket to be provided indicating the weight of the vehicle which could then be produced each time a vehicle passed through a gate.

However toll roads were not universally popular and in some areas there were riots against toll tax in 1726.

At first there were no permanent tollhouses and the gates were closed at night, but later tollhouses were built at road junctions with a clear view of the gates and roads. In the 1770's the operation of the turnpikes was "farmed" out to the highest bidder at auction which meant that the "farmer" paid annual rent to the turnpike trust, but kept the tolls collected. He would either run the toll gate himself or appoint a gate-keeper.

The road between Shenfield and Ingatestone, now the A1023 and B1002, was one of the first, if not the first, turnpike in Essex, being adopted by the Essex Trust in 1695.

PLANNING UPDATE

The hot topic in the last few months has been the proposed development of 33 Hadleigh Road. As a Society, we joined with the Leigh Town Council and many local residents, in objecting most strongly to this proposal which would have such an awful effect on the Conservation Area, traffic and safety, amenity and many other issues.

Hopefully the Borough Council will follow our line and roundly refuse the application. But we must not be complacent, this is a major proposal and the applicant may appeal against the refusal.

All those who objected will be notified if an appeal is lodged and be given the opportunity to write in with their views. If the issue goes to a public inquiry then it may be that all the groups and residents involved should look to present a case to the inquiry and give the Inspector the full force of Leigh's views about the proposal.

Hopefully, the applicant will not pursue this line.

We are pleased to be able to report to members that the appeal against the refusal to convert the Rock Shop in the Old Town to a restaurant has been turned down.

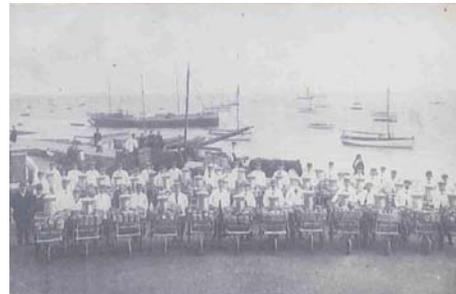
Unfortunately the Inspector did not see the loss of the last shop in the Old Town as a valid reason for refusal but he did refuse it on the grounds of the loss of amenity to the occupiers of the flats above and very importantly the traffic generation issues in the Old Town. At last a recognition of the problems the Old Town faces in terms of traffic to various establishments.

Over the last year we have responded to several applications to convert Oscars restaurant into flats and have objected consistently to what we feel is overdevelopment of the site, loss of the restaurant and lack of parking and amenity. The applicants have appealed against the refusals of permission and we have reiterated our objections to the Planning Inspectorate and an Inspector will now decide on the proposals.

Casinos – an inflammatory word in Southend – just to update members, the Government has now amended legislation so that operators will require planning permission to change the use of assembly and leisure venues such as bingo halls to casinos. Previously there was a deemed approval for such changes of use within what is termed as the same use class. New developments for casinos would always have required planning permission.

Whoever said life was dull in Leigh!!!!!!!

MILKO



Remember Abbotts Bros Dairy in the Broadway – well here they are in all their glory – looks like deliveries started from the Old Town.

THE VICAR OF LEIGH

Perhaps the most famous incumbent of St Clements, known to most Leigh residents through books and family connections, was Canon King. But of course before him there were many others.

Roger Price

Roger Price was born in England about 1696 and died in Leigh on 8 December 1762 and was buried at St Clements a week later. He had been the resident Vicar for 9 years.

Roger was educated at Oxford and admitted to orders in the Church of England in 1720. From 1725 onward he held several livings in England but on the death of the Reverend Samuel Nyles, in 1728, he was sent, the year following, by the bishop of London, to succeed Mr. Myles in the rectorship of King's Chapel, Boston, Massachusetts. The next year he was appointed the bishop's commissary.

In April, 1734, he laid the corner-stone of Trinity Church, Boston and in August 1735 he delivered the first sermon in it. Although an able preacher, he appears to have had various difficulties and disputes with his parishioners and became quite dissatisfied with the state of affairs in general. About 1744 he purchased a tract of land in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, did missionary duty for two or three years, built a church at his own expense, and devised it, with a glebe of 180 acres of land, to the Society for Propagating the Gospel, in trust for supporting a minister of the Church of England.

In 1753 he returned to England, where he spent the rest of his life as "incumbent of the parish of Leigh, in the deanery of Broughing, and archdeaconry of St. Albans."

Roger published two sermons, delivered on special occasions in Boston, one on the death of John Jekyll, Esq., collector of customs (1733), the other on the death of the Queen, wife of George II (1738).

IT'S A SMALL WORLD

Reading the history of Roger Price reminded me that I had come across information on King's Chapel, Boston before in connection with the Vassall family.



This is King's Chapel in Boston, Massachusetts. Inside there is a monument to Samuel Vassall. I doubt that it is a true likeness as it was put up over 100 years after he died. The member of the Vassall family who had it erected even got his own relationship to Samuel wrong. Despite this grand memorial Samuel never actually set foot in America. He was an MP and held office during the reign of Charles I but his main activities were as an entrepreneur and merchant venturer.

The patriarch of this family, John Vassall lived at Cockethurst

at Eastwood and many believe was part owner of the Mayflower. However, the Boston connection comes through his descendants.

John was a merchant adventurer and a member of the Virginia Company and is recorded in its second charter of 1609 as a gentleman, and elsewhere as a colonial pioneer.

Under the Company Charter the Company formed settlements in America. The merchant adventurers provided the cash and in 1610 John subscribed £25, the equivalent of £3000 today.

Amongst all his other entrepreneurial activities John's son Samuel and his younger brother William were two of the incorporators of the Massachusetts Bay Company and had acquired between them 1/10th of all Massachusetts.

William Vassall was a much more influential person in early Massachusetts. He had emigrated there with his family in 1635 (his daughter Judith married one of the original Mayflower Pilgrims).

William became one of the richest settlers in Plymouth Colony but in 1646 he returned to England because of religious differences. He never returned to America but in 1650 moved to Barbados where he amassed a considerable fortune and owned a great deal of property. He died in 1655 having founded a long line of influential planters and island politicians. Several of his descendants went to Harvard University and it is here we pick up the Boston connection.

Harvard is the premier University in the United States. Lewis Vassall of the Class of 1728. was born in Jamaica and by all accounts was a bit of a hellraiser at College and never completed his degree.

His father's will makes it clear what he thought of his son stipulating that Lewis should not meddle, make or interfere with the management of the plantation nor hinder or molest his father's executor or the Overseer.

Lewis' younger brother John was in the Class of 1732 and here again was a rebellious Vassall. His chief undergraduate distinction was being fined 10 shillings for playing cards.

John's son John followed in his father's footsteps in the Class of 1757. He was twice fined for rude, profane, indecent and contemptuous behaviour while at public worship in the college chapel.

In later years he extended his father's land holdings in Cambridge, Massachusetts and built a magnificent mansion. On 2 July 1775 General George Washington passed by the Vassall house and liked it so much he requisitioned it for his head quarters.

A later resident was the poet Longfellow who was a professor at Harvard.

William, the younger brother of Lewis and John, graduated in 1733. Billy as he was known lived all his life off the proceeds of his Jamaican plantations without engaging in any business.

When the British occupied Boston he fled with his family to their estates in Rhode Island pelted on the way by an angry mob. He eventually moved to England and lived at Battersea Rise.

One last reference to Harvard is to Henry Vassall. In 1759 he was a member of the building committee for the erection of Christ Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In 1861 on the 100th anniversary of the Church his tomb under the church was opened for the last time for the burial of Darby Vassall a slave aged 92.

As was the custom the slave had taken his master's name.

The Vassall family continued to contribute to our history through Lady Holland, nee Elizabeth Vassall a great Regency hostess and in the 1960s John Vassall the spy.

WHO WAS GEORGE ARTHUR FRIPP?



George Arthur Fripp was a leading watercolourist of the Bristol School, and was a grandson of marine artist, Nicholas Pocock, (a founder member of The Old Watercolour Society, formed in 1804). His early paintings were mainly portraits but he found his niche in landscapes during a seven month tour of Europe, in 1834.

He exhibited with the Society of Painters in Watercolours in 1837 and was elected an Associate of the Society in 1841. He became full member in 1845. His work was respected by his contemporaries who considered him one of the most promising landscape watercolourists of the 1840s.

During the 1850s and 60s, he toured the mountainous regions of North Wales and Scotland and produced some of his finest work. In 1864 he stayed at Balmoral to produce a series of local views for Queen Victoria, who was a great admirer of his work. An art critic for The Spectator wrote of him: "We have no greater landscape painter ... possessed of many of the traditions of the best school of landscape that the world has seen ... Breadth, in the artistic sense, is one great characteristic of Mr. Fripp's painting ..."



A Fripp painting of Leigh dated 1855
Reproduced by kind permission of the Beecroft Gallery.

You will recall that in the last edition of Leighway, Fred Osborne in New Zealand raised the issue of the high watermark and how it has changed from Fripp's painting to the present day.

MINE HOSTS

The Osborne family of Leigh has a long and illustrious history and like many other Leigh families they are interlinked through marriages with all the other old Leigh families. They also have a fine tradition as landlords of the local hostleries. But they didn't just confine their roles as 'Mine Host' to Leigh. They moved around the County and we are able to track them down through the records of licensed victuallers held at Essex Record Office.

The Peterboat

According to H W King's Manor of Leigh (Essex Record Office) John Osborne was admitted to the property in 1695 and his grandson took over in 1739. The Osbornes held the property until at least 1771.

Crooked Billet

William Osborne, known as Dosh, was landlord from 1906 to 1932 and then moved into Billet Cottage. He passed it on to his son, Walter Henry, whose daughter, Irene married Cliff Reeve and this couple were mine hosts until 1972.

King's Head (Leigh Sailing Club)

Daniel Osborne was publican in 1881, and was still publican there in 1895 at the age of 70. For the next 4 years he was the landlord of the Woodcutters Arms at Eastwood and his wife Caroline continued as landlady until at least 1910, when she would have been 77.

Ferry Boat, North Fambridge

Robert and Caroline's son, George Barnard Osborne, was named in the 1906 edition of Kelly's Directory as the landlord of the Ferry Boat and remained so until around 1917.

Army and Navy, East Parade, Southend

Robert Osborne took over the Army and Navy in about 1880 and is registered as landlord until 1890. His wife Caroline died during this period and he remarried to widow Louisa Housom. Her late husband had been the landlord of the Minerva on East Parade.

The Minerva, East Parade, Southend

Robert Osborne was for a short time the landlord of the original Minerva between 1891 and 1894 but in 1894 his wife Louisa took over reverting to her widowed name of Housom.

Cross Keys, Moulsham Street, Chelmsford

Joseph Osborne was born about 1816 in Leigh and started off his working life as a butcher in Leigh. The fumes of the barrels obviously got to him and by 1871 he was the landlord of the Cross Keys and stayed there until his death in 1879.

Paviours Arms, Westminster

In 1881 Joseph's sister, Eliza Burrells was the landlady of the Paviours Arms, in Johnson Street, now gone, having taken over the licence from her late husband William. William came from Southwark and the couple had no doubt met when William was working for Crisp Harridge the former landlord of the Sun at Billericay and in 1841 landlord of the Lobster Smack at Haven on Canvey.

POSTMEN OF LEIGH PLAY THEIR PART

I can remember as a child in the 1950s the village postman in Stock where I grew up. Maurice Palmer was his name and as my surname was also Palmer we had a sort of affinity with him. Twice a day he called on his push bike and I always remember him as a happy person, chatting to everyone.

Things are different now, how many of us know our postman I wonder and when did we last have a second post?

So who were the postmen of Leigh?

I recently came across a short piece about a Leigh postman who had been killed in World War One and this piqued my interest.

The War placed many strains on the postal service mainly brought on by the recruitment of postmen into the services, the use of temporary staff and the reliance on overtime to get the job done. At the end of 1914 a consistent policy was formulated. Where there were normally fewer than 4 (YES 4) deliveries, the service should be maintained; where there were 4 or more deliveries the service should be reduced in proportion to the fall in correspondence, with a maximum of 6 deliveries.. This standard was conditional upon obtaining temporary staff at 'approximately the normal rates of pay' and further restrictions were to be made were replacements were not available.

The level of deliveries reached in 1914 was the peak of the British letter post.



With alternative labour being found at home the postmen of Leigh joined up to serve King and Country. By 1917 four of Leigh's postmen had been lost in the war. This is the record of two of them.

Thomas Lewis

Corporal T Lewis of the Rifle Brigade as born in Leeds and his parents lived in Ipswich. He was a reservist and was called up immediately the war began and enlisted at Colchester. He managed to get through all the fighting without injury and had won the Distinguished Conduct Medal. However, Corporal Lewis was among others killed aged 30 in a troop train disaster at Massy-Palaiseau in France. He is buried at Les Gonards Cemetery, Versailles. He had previously been wounded and gassed.

When working in Leigh Corporal Lewis lived with another postman at 21 Cranleigh Drive.

Thomas was wounded and gassed and awarded the Mons Star. He received his DCM on 6 July 1915 for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty at Pilkem. The Rifle Brigade had to charge the Germans out of their position which they did. The Germans attempted to take it from the village again but the defenders hung on and beat them back. Rifleman Lewis was a bomb thrower and had to stop in the trenches after his regiment was relieved. And a few of them were at it for 2 days. He was the last one left of the battalion bomb throwers. Then a 'Jack Johnson' hit the trench and buried him under 4ft of earth but he escaped with a nasty shaking and several comrades helping him to get out.

A 'Jack Johnson' was the British nickname used to describe the impact of a heavy, black German 15-cm artillery shell.

Jack Johnson (1878-1946) was the name of the popular U.S. (born in Texas) world heavyweight boxing champion who held the title from 1908-15.

Frederick James Cable

Private Frederick James Cable of the 2nd Battalion, Essex Regiment, was born at Rayleigh in about 1888 the son of Frederick (born in Prittlewell) and Sarah Ann Abbott (born Canvey Island). Frederick was a farm labourer.

Frederick James was married and lived in Thundersley but became a postman at Leigh and was called up with the reserve in August 1914. He was awarded the Mons Star and was killed in action at La Gheer, Ypres on 21st October 1914, aged 26. His name was displayed on the Post Office Roll of Honour displayed in Southend Post Office in 1915. The two other World War One postmen casualties were a Mr Chinnery and a Mr Thompson.

SEARCH FOR A BRAVE AIRMAN

Coming forward in time to the Second World War I recently received this request for information from Patrick Otter and aviation historian. It is a very interesting but sad story. If anyone has any information which they think could help Patrick please let Carole know through the usual channels.

Patrick is currently researching material for a book on the exploits of a number of men in Bomber Command during the Second World War. The man in question is Wing Commander David Holford who, in the autumn of 1943 when he was still only 22, was the youngest wing commander and commander of a heavy bomber squadron in the RAF. He had already been awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross and a Distinguished Service Order.

On the night of December 16/17 1943 he led 18 Lancaster bombers from RAF Grimsby in a raid on Berlin, during which his aircraft was badly damaged by a German night fighter. He managed to get the aircraft back to Lincolnshire only to find his home airfield shrouded in fog. He tried at RAF Kelstern some 10 miles away on top of the Lincolnshire Wolds where the visibility was slightly better. As he did so the wing tip of the aircraft hit a tree and it somersaulted into the ground. David Holford was one of 3 of the 7 men on board who survived the crash but, in doing so, he was thrown through the cockpit window breaking both ankles before landing in a snow drift. By the time he was found at first light he had died of hypothermia, a dreadful death for an incredibly brave and resourceful young officer.

Patrick is trying to trace some family background to David Holford. He was the son of William and Henrietta Holford and the husband of Joan Audrey Holford (nee Munro) of Leigh-on-Sea. Patrick knows that Joan was in the WRAF on the staff at RAF Elsham Wolds in Lincolnshire where David Holford served earlier in the war. They married in 1942. Joan had a child when her husband died and is believed to have remarried, again to a senior RAF officer.

If there is any help you can give Patrick in this matter, no matter how small, it would be very greatly appreciated.

Carole has since found out that David was born in Surrey in the Kingston area.

There must be any number of reasons why people ended up in Leigh and like most 'seaside' places the attraction is strong for people trying to get away from hectic city life. All of this has added to the diversity of Leigh's inhabitants over the years.

THE UNDERWOODS DOWN UNDER



Picture reproduced by kind permission of the Leigh Times

This picture may look familiar and is reprinted with the kind permission of the Leigh Times.

It is members of the Underwood family who were reunited last October at Clements to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the marriage at the Church of their common ancestor John Underwood and Rebecca Howard.

Just after this I received an e-mail from a descendant of the family from Tasmania not realising that they were in fact featured in the picture.

Christine Bevilacqua, a direct descendant, is second from the left front row and her husband Peter is first on the left back row.

Christine was able to fill me in on some of the family background.

‘Cousin Tom’s family and my family lived in Kilworth Avenue in the late forties/early fifties. I had not heard from or seen him from 1951 till February 2005 when I received an email from him, as he had heard I was interested in the family history. Our friendship began again! When we realised that a significant anniversary was due we decided to try and meet at St Clement’s on that date.

My family emigrated from Southend in 1951, for Australia. I remember I definitely did not want to leave Southend I was very happy there and loved the carnival atmosphere in the summer and the peaceful walks along the sea front in the winter. But in 1951, 17 year old girls did as their parents wished. I had attended Westcliff High School for Girls and during holidays worked as a waitress in my uncle John Cremer Leslie Underwood’s Restaurant which had been the old family granary in Southchurch Avenue, opposite The Kursaal. I wasn’t happy for quite some time, trained as a Primary School teacher and on my first appointment in rural Victoria met Peter, my husband to be, also on his first posting as a teacher. Peter is an Italian born Australian who migrated with his family in 1939. We married in 1957, despite the resistance from both sets of parent’s on racial and religious grounds!

My mother and sister Marion made several trips back to UK over the years but I had not returned until Tom and I had realised that the 200th Anniversary was imminent. I thought " It was now or never ", and so Peter, Marion and I planned our trip to the UK.

Being in the beautiful St Clement’s Church on that day was very special and moving to the few of us who were there!

Cousin Tom, who lives in Leigh, was wonderful and organised a magnificent lunch at Ancora an Italian Restaurant at Hadleigh, including a spectacular Anniversary cake which also doubled as a birthday cake for my sister Marion.

We spent a fortnight in Southend and walked everywhere - we sought out old family homes, Alma House, Kilworth Avenue, Pleasant Street, visited St John’s churchyard and Sutton Road Cemetery to see family graves. We walked the length of the pier, a fortnight before it burned down, along the Esplanade to Leigh where we feasted on cockles shrimps etc (I had been craving cockles for 54 years !). We were blessed with wonderful weather whilst we were there.

Although Southend had changed so much I still felt very much at home !’

Christine Bevilacqua

WHERE DID ALL THE COCKLE SHELLS GO?

Wilfred Dench is an old Leigh name. Wilfred used to have a business in Rayleigh called Weir Shell and Grit Co. Mr Dench would collect cockle shells on a daily basis from Leigh sheds and grind them for chicken food which would then be sold to various Norfolk farms.

All the grinding was via belt drive and pulleys, powered by a gas powered engine - a museum piece on its own! Wickes DIY store now occupies this site in Claydons Lane, which was sold sometime around 1960.

Mr Dench used to live in Leighville Grove and some Leigh people may still remember him.

Information supplied by Dave Wilkinson

THE KANGEROOS’ ARRIVAL

This cartoon appeared in the Westcliff and Leigh Graphic of 14 October 1910 to record the attendance at the Leigh Debating Society of Nellie Martel, an Englishwoman from Down Under leading the debate.

Martel was one of the first four women to stand for election to the Australian federal parliament in 1903. and she was one of the first members of the Womanhood Suffrage League in Sydney in 1891. In London from 1905 she worked with the Women’s Social and Political Union, becoming a paid organiser around May 1906, and one of the British votes for women campaign’ most prominent speakers.



CONVICT TRANSPORTATION TO AUSTRALIA

The article in the last Leighway about convict transportation to Australia, prompted member Mike Lycett, to send us this very interesting article about his own researches in this area.

‘One of my distant Great Uncles was transported to Australia for forging Bank of England currency notes. When I started I only knew that there was an uncle in my father’s side of the family who was refused employment because of a ‘con’ in the family. After 20 years of research and working with the late Dr John Turner, a copy of ‘Joseph Lycett, Governor McQuarie’s Convict’ (see below) appeared, a copy of which I have deposited in Southend Library.

The early prisoners were housed in hulks until Millbank prison was opened. Convicts from the hulks were sent to help build the Arsenal at Woolwich guarded by the local police. The chief hulk was the York. The whole transportation episode lasted 75 years during which time there were only three ships lost.

The notion that convicts were all ill treated is totally fallacious – the convict transports were no more than 1000 tons, the General Hewitt being the biggest.

The fittings were carried out at Deptford and the convicts were marched and embarked by where the Thames Barrier is now. Transports in the early days were armed since there had been clashes with the French off the African coast.

The sailings went twice a year since, with the arrival in Australia, the dangerous D’Entrecasteaux Channel posed a risk of being holed.

The journey took 11 months and departures were usually in November and possibly April.

The convicts were examined for their health at Plymouth by a Government doctor before the ship sailed. The biggest tragedy was on the first main journey out. Three ships, Surrey, Three Bees and General Hewitt picked up scurvy and a fifth of the 300 on board died. On arrival in Australia fire broke out on the Surrey and the Three Bees and sadly they sank. More convicts suffered from burns than anything else due to tar between the deck planking melting and causing weals on their backs.

The sentences served by the convicts were given in 7 year lots, 7, 14 and 21 years. One record is of a clerk in the Lord Mayor’s office who removed the lead flashing from the roof to sell and pay for food for his family.

Mike Lycett



Lachlan Macquarie (1761-1824)

Macquarie was installed as governor of New South Wales in 1810 and many institutions, structures and places bear testimony to the claim that Macquarie was "Father of the Nation"

He was born on the island of Ulva in the Inner Hebrides in 1761 where his father was a

carpenter who leased 75 acres from the Duke of Argyll.

His uncle Murdoch paid for his education and in 1776 aged 15, Lachlan volunteered for the British Army. In 1777 Lachlan became an ensign in the 2nd battalion of the 84th Regiment, known as the Royal Highland Emigrants, and served in Canada at Halifax and other parts of Nova Scotia. He performed garrison duty in New York and Charleston at the closing stages of the American War of Independence and in June 1783 transferred to Jamaica. Various other career moves followed until in 1810 he took over as Governor of New South Wales taking over from William Bligh (of the mutiny on the Bounty fame).

From the outset, he saw the colony of New South Wales (including its daughter colony Van Diemens Land) as a settled community as well as a penal settlement. However, his term of office also coincided with an increase in the number of convicts and his solution was an ambitious programme of public works (new buildings, towns, roads) to help absorb these numbers. He encouraged well-behaved convicts into the wider community through tickets-of-leave.

This policy brought him into conflict with an influential, conservative, section of the local society, many of whom had influential friends in English political circles, but when he left office in 1821 he could list 265 works carried out during his term.

He finally returned to his estate on Mull in 1824, but had to travel to London in April to secure the pension that he had been promised. While there he suffered a kidney inflammation, which rapidly became worse and he died in London on 1 July 1824.

The National Trust of Australia administers his grave on Mull.

LEIGHWAY – SEPTEMBER 2006

The next edition of Leighway will be in September so can you start putting your thinking caps on for articles of interest. There are so many people in Leigh who have an interesting story to tell and it would be great if some of you were to put pen to paper. I needs copy by mid August.

I look forward to all the articles coming flooding in. Remember you can send them to me via the Heritage Centre or e-mail to carole.mulroney@btinternet.com

It would be nice to be able to intersperse the more historical articles with a broader range of interest. Some suggestions might be

- Unusual hobbies
- Holiday adventures
- Interesting places in England
- Natural history
- Family stories

Also remember we need articles about shops and businesses in Leigh that you may have worked in or remember. Does anyone remember Byes (I think that’s how it was spelt) wallpaper shop, I have a picture of my father, Charlie Palmer, who worked in the shop but I don’t know where it was.

AND FINALLY

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the particular author and not necessarily those of the committee and officers of the Society.

We rather hope you will like to keep your copy of Leighway but if not please recycle it.

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