



LEIGHWAY

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

HERE WE ARE AGAIN

Well there went summer, and here we are again heading for Christmas – a bit depressing really, But it has been a good year for the Society as a whole with Plumbs moving on apace.

As ever planning has been a major part of the Society's workload over the last few months with some important applications being considered by the Committee.

The next big thing is a trip to Bolougne on 23 September – if you want to go get in quick (see flyer) and of course the Comicals is coming. This year our theme is the railway which had such a devastating effect on Leigh whilst bringing other benefits.

After 18 months of battling with the housing market Declan and I are at last moving to Leigh – for me its coming home and I can say goodbye to all those driving hours spent between Chelmsford and Leigh.

So we'll see you around

Carole

LEIGHWAY – JANUARY 2007

The next edition of Leighway will be in January 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 need copy by mid December. 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
- 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.

DIARY DATES

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

23 September – day trip to Bolougne

11 October – The Salvation Army Colony – Derek Barber

15 November – Pier Museum Foundation – Peggy Dowie

9 December – Christmas Comicals - The Den

ANNUAL QUIZ

Once again the quiz was a resounding success raising several hundred pounds for the Plumbs funds. Our thanks as ever to Duncan for his cheeriness and even temper as quiz master and to Ann Price for her, as usual, great organisational work. And to all who attended for making it an enjoyable evening. A special thankyou to the Scouts for once again loaning us the Den.

MAGIC MAN

Two of the most delightful talks we have had over the last year have been from the Rev John Robinson. John's interest is magic lanterns and he has wowed us on both occasions not only with the wonderful scenes produced by this very Victorian/Edwardian phenomom but also with his wit and tales of his experiences over the years in collecting and showing his wonderful slides.



SUBSCRIPTIONS ETC

I thought we ought to get the bad news out of the way first.

I don't think there is any member of the Society who doesn't know how hard it is to keep an organisation like this going.

Over the course of the year we always get an influx of new members, some of whom join as a result of a visit to the Heritage Centre but unfortunately lose interest soon after. Whilst we are of course grateful for that one year's membership we need to be able to sustain a goodly number of members in order to keep the Society going and the Leighway being published.

The biggest problem is getting younger people involved. If we could find a way to tap into that resource it would bode well for the future. So if you have any ideas on that score please let us know. We are currently building a web site.

All this is a rather longwinded way of saying the subs are going to rise in January.

All subs are due as of 1 January and will be for the calendar year 2007.

We have tried many combinations of subscription but at the end of the day it is probably simplest and easiest for everyone if we have one straight payment of £10 whether that's for one person in the household or more.

We know any increase is unwelcome but compared with other societies and clubs we don't think £10 is an unreasonable amount (£15 overseas).

We also have the ongoing problem of the cost of hall hire for our talks and the increasing costs paid to speakers. Postage costs are also a big issue. We will be increasing the charges for attendance at these to £1 for members and £2 for non members as of the start of the new meeting round in March.

Just as an aside and to put this in perspective Dec and I went into Starbucks in Chelmsford not long ago and ordered 2 coffees and 2 cakes and it came to £10.20. When I sat down to eat and drink I suddenly realized we had just spent more than the wages I earned for my first week's employment in 1969. Now I know all things are relative but we nip into a coffee shop at the drop of a hat nowadays without thinking about the cost. So just giving up 2 cups of coffee and cakes will pay for your Leigh Society subs for next year.

Leigh needs you more than Starbucks

CHRISTMAS COMICALS

How quickly this comes round again – still we all need a bit of cheering up after the World Cup which didn't exactly make the summer go with a bang.

This year the Comicals will be held on 9 December and once again there will be a fish and chip supper. The theme this year will be the railways.

The railway came through Leigh in the 1850s and split the old town in half isolating it from the town as it gradually crept up the hill to the Broadway area. Many of the old town families made a nice little earner out of the railway when they sold their land and so it had a fundamental effect on Leigh and its inhabitants.

The census returns show a shift away from almost a total

population of fishermen and their families to include new jobs such as platelayers and porters and other railway staff.

I am sure there is no shortage of railway stories and songs we can come up with. If anyone would like to take part (lets have some new volunteers) please let me know through the usual channels.

THE 2 PLUMBS YARD PROJECT

Those of you who walk in the Old Town will be aware of the progress made on the Plumbs Project. Hopefully by the time you get this Leighway the building work will be finished and we can make a start on the internals.

Inevitably over the last few months with all the problems we have had some of the costs have increased and so we are still actively fund raising – so if any one has a few thousand stashed away – you know where we are. Seriously we do need to continue to raise funds to finish the work and to keep it going so anyone with any bright fundraising ideas – now is the chance to make a name for yourself.

As members will know the Plumbs Project has been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund with additional grants from Southend Borough Council and Cory Environmental. We would particularly like to express our thanks to Corys who have recently increased the amount of grant to us from £15,000 to £30,000. Given all the problems we have had this has been a most welcome boost to our finances and we are very grateful to Corys for their continuing support.

Of course the other invaluable support we receive is from members and the people of Leigh and visitors to the Heritage Centre – without all of you we could not have made the project work. We hope you enjoy the Cottage when it is finished.

Carole

LEIGH'S POSTAL HEROES

Following the article in the last Leighway regarding the Leigh postmen lost in the First World War, member Keith Charnock, who has been carrying out a study of members of Leigh Wesley Church lost in the War, has been able to produce some additional information.

You will recall I mentioned that postman Thomas Lewis lived with another postman at 21 Cranleigh Drive. Well Keith has been able to confirm that this was Private Harry Walter Chinnery of the 1/6 Essex who was mobilised in August 1914 and died at Aylesbury Military Hospital on 11 March 1916 aged 21.

Our thanks to Keith for this information.

The Society has a comprehensive booklet entitled 'At The Going Down of the Sun' priced £3 which lists all those from Leigh lost in the War.



Harry Walter Chinnery

75 GLORIOUS YEARS 3RD CHALKWELL BAY SEA SCOUT GROUP

2006 sees the 75th anniversary of the formation of the 3rd Chalkwell Bay Sea Scouts who are resident in the Den in the Old Town. It has been a year of events to commemorate the anniversary.

The 3rd has not always, of course, been in the Den as we now know it.

They started their life with their first HQ on the downside platform and building of the Old Town railway station and stayed there between 1936 and 1950 paying the princely sum of £5 per annum. Gas and water were free and coal came from stopping locomotives, there was no electricity.

The Group is the largest Sea Scout Group in Essex and operates a fleet of 23 boats. It is also a teaching establishment under the Royal Yachting Association and is one of 100 Units recognised by the Royal Navy, being in the top ten.

The group includes a Ranger crew which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

There is a four year waiting list to get into the Group.

In 1951 the Group revived the ancient Old Leigh Regatta which is now a tremendous annual event raising thousands for charity and a great weekend out for all.

During the Second World War scouts over 16 years of age were trained as signallers in the River Emergency Service which was taken over by the Royal Navy in 1940.

As can be seen from the pictures below the Group has moved around the town a bit. After leaving the railway station they set up home at the bottom of Leigh Hill and eventually moved to Victoria Wharf where they have stayed ever since in a purpose built building.

Leigh Society members will know that it is through the generosity of the Group that we hold our quiz and annual Comicals concert in the Den.

They form a very important part of the Old Town and its life - so here's to the next 75.



Den Mark 1 - Old Leigh Railway Station.



Den Mark 2 - Bottom of Leigh Hill.



Den Mark 3 - Victoria Wharf, Old Town.



Den Mark 4 - Victoria Wharf

PLANE SAILING

Another trip down memory lane. Does anyone remember Taylor's Planing and Moulding Mill in Leigh. Here is a picture. Can anyone tell us where it was?



PLANNING REPORT

Your Planning Group has commented on a number of planning applications, the majority of which are not contentious, but there are always a few where we must raise objection. Since the last edition of Leighway the most significant of these were

Use of retail shop and workshop as restaurant/bar, side rear extension, alterations installation of deck and lay out of tables and chairs 42 Broadway - Pricketts - We objected in the strongest possible terms to the proposals due to loss of prime retail premises, gross overdevelopment of what is already a large plot closer to residential property in Victoria Road, traffic and parking conditions in the Broadway, too many such outlets already - the site should not be lost from retail use. The Council has refused permission.

Use of ground floor tea/coffee shop as Estate Agent 93 Broadway. Again we objected strongly to the loss of retail floor space in the Broadway. There are already several estate agents in the Broadway and further such outlets are unnecessary, particularly when to the detriment of the primary shopping frontage.

That application was withdrawn but subsequently an application was made to change the property into an American Diner which we have also objected to on the grounds of too many such outlets, noise, parking, anti social behaviour, opening hours.

Use of workers tea/lunch facility building aboard vessel as café and layout of tables and chairs to deck, Jago Boatyard, High Street. The Council were already investigating infringements of planning law at this site. We objected strongly to this application as being wholly inappropriate as it would introduce an alien use (there is a great difference between a workmen's tea room and a café open to the general public) into this area of traditional marine activity contrary to the Policies of the Local Plan which seek to preserve the marine character of Old Leigh. There were also traffic objections and no need for the proposal. The Borough Council has refused the application.

Members will be interested to learn that applications to convert Oscars Restaurant into flats with the loss of the restaurant have been turned down on appeal. A reduced scheme retaining the restaurant was granted.

A LEIGHMAN'S LINK TO THE MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY

Member John Robinson's interest was piqued by the article in last Leighway about Lachlan Macquarie, the Governor of New South Wales and successor to Captain Bligh.

John wrote to tell us that for some years he worked in the London office of the Christmas Island Phosphate Company. Christmas Island lies in the Indian Ocean and had vast deposits of phosphate of lime which is a valuable fertilizer.

The Company was formed by Sir John Murray to extract the phosphate and market it around the world. Sir John had been deeply involved in the organisation of the Challenger Expedition to locate the deepest waters in the world's oceans. The expedition's name and success are perpetuated in what is known as the Challenger Deep (nearly 36,000 feet) in the Pacific Ocean.

In 1948 the British Government agreed to hand over Christmas Island to Australia and New Zealand and John Robinson went out with Sir John's grandson to assist in the transfer arrangements. There he met the representative of the Australian Government. His surname was Christian and he was a descendant of Fletcher Christian who was the leader of the mutiny on the Bounty and was put ashore with the other mutineers on the remote Pitcairn Island.

So there you have it a Leighman touching history.

THE CHALLENGER EXPEDITION

The *Challenger* Expedition claims the title of the world's first totally scientific oceanographic expedition. By the time the HMS *Challenger* left the dock on December 21, 1872 except for the poles, few places remained to be conquered by man. And in a time when knowledge began to be equated with power, the British government was amenable to schemes for acquiring knowledge.

Sir Charles Wyville Thomson, a natural history professor at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and his Canadian-born student, John Murray (later, Sir John Murray) hatched a scheme to explore the oceans in the grandest oceanographic mission ever conceived. They called their proposal "oceanography" and pleaded their case before the Royal Navy and the Royal Society to send a ship around the world to study the oceans.



The expedition's mission, by and large, was to gather detailed and consistent observations of various oceanographic phenomena across as much of the ocean as possible. The sampling plan devised by Thomson and Murray resembles the sampling plan of modern day oceanographic expeditions; an assortment of physical, chemical, geological and biological measurements stretched over the days at regular intervals across the sea. Samples that weren't analyzed on board were stored for

laboratory analysis at the end of the expedition, a task that required the labors of more than 100 scientists.

Between her departure in December 1872 and her return to Spithead on 24 May 1876, H.M.S. *Challenger* traversed 68,890 nautical miles, in the course of which she sampled in the North and South Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and travelled north of the limits of drift ice in the North Atlantic polar seas and south of the Antarctic Circle.

Wyville Thomson reported the *Challenger* to have made 362 sample/observation stations "at intervals as nearly uniform as possible". At each station, the following observations were made, as far as circumstances allowed:

The exact depth was determined.

A sample of the bottom averaging from 1 ounce to 1 pound in weight was recovered by means of the sounding instrument.

A sample of bottom water was procured for chemical/physical examination.

The bottom temperature was recorded by a registering thermometer.

At most stations, a fair sample of the bottom fauna was procured by means of the dredge or trawl.

At most stations, the fauna of the surface and of intermediate depths was examined by the use of tow nets variously adjusted.

At most stations, a series of temperature observations was made at different depths from the surface to the bottom.

At many stations, samples of sea-water were obtained from different depths.

In all cases, atmospheric and other meteorological conditions were carefully observed and noted.

The direction and rate of the surface current was determined.

At a few stations, an attempt was made to ascertain the direction and rate of movement of the water at different depths.

The findings of the cruise were correctly described by John Murray in 1895 as "*the greatest advance in the knowledge of our planet since the celebrated discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries*".

The Challenger Society of today exists to advance the study of marine science through research and education; disseminate knowledge of marine science with a view to encouraging a wider interest in the study of the world's oceans and an awareness of the need for their proper management; and to contribute to public debate on the development of marine science.

For more details go to

http://www.oceansonline.com/challenger_ex.htm

POLICING THE NATION AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Many of you will have read the debate in the national press about the Government's desire to merge the county police forces. Thankfully this has fallen by the wayside.

On a more local scene public meetings continue to be held where the question of policing the Borough are discussed in open forum.

Margaret Buckey our Secretary attends these meetings and keeps us informed of the discussions.

A meeting held in April heralded the launch of Neighbourhood Policing Teams (now in place) comprised of the right people, in the right place, at the right time. Teams have named officers in each neighbourhood who will get to know the area on a daily basis and have his/her contact details available to all.

In introducing this scheme Chief Supt Steve Worrin asked the public to tell them if they felt that anything needed to be improved. They would only know if the system worked if the community noticed a difference – its up to us to let them know.

THE CLIFFS PAVILION

By Mavis Sipple

The original house 'Shorefields' was owned by a Mr Prevost who in 1895 sold it to Frederic Francis Ramuz.

Mr Ramuz, land agent and one time Mayor of Southend, lived there with his wife and ten children. It was a splendid property surrounded by lawns, an orchard and a rose garden. The garden ran right down to the sea wall, with just a narrow pathway between it and the River. It is thought that the seven arches, were also part of the property and possibly used for storage.

Shortly before World War I the house was sold and part of the land was split up into building plots. Mr Ramuz moved to a house in what is now San Remo Parade

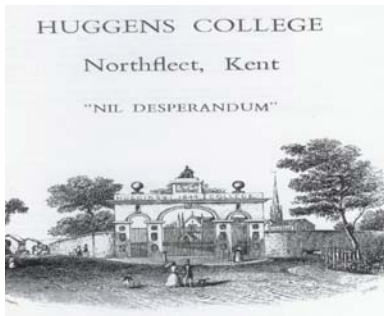
Shorefields became a social club. Shorefield Gardens entertainments were run by Mr Wallis Arthur. Huge audiences filled the hall. Even throughout the war the entertainments continued, often interrupted by air raid warnings. The audience was told to go to the shelter in St Helens Road. No one took any notice and the show would continue.

In the 30s there were great plans to build a new Pavilion on the site of the old Shorefields house. Castlethorpe, the house next door to Shorefields, was compulsorily purchased by the Corporation. but with the threat of war nothing was done.

The Southend Standard 1955 shows plans for the new cliffs pavilion. The cost was to be £125,000. The pavilion, with its first class restaurant seating 250, its conference hall with 1500 seats and 200 seats on the stage was set to open in 1957.

In 1964 The Cliffs Pavilion opened at last. The official VIP to open the Pavilion was actor Bernard Miles. The first performance was a presentation by Ballet Rambert.

A DISTRESSED GENTLEMAN OF LEIGH



John Osborne (one of the many) of Leigh was born in 1774 and baptised at St Clements. As with the majority of Leigh men his life was as a mariner and later a prosperous oyster merchant.

He married sometime around 1799 to Elizabeth (probably Pinder) and they had as far as can be seen 14 children between 1799 and 1819. Several of these died as infants.

In 1805 during the Napoleonic crisis John had been a Sea Fencible (the naval home guard).

But by 1826 things were not going well. His business failed and a Sale Catalogue of John Osborne's Oyster Business reveals the extent of his losses.

Jonas Asplin, local doctor and gentlemen records in his diary for January 1826 that 'all the oysters on the shore are destroyed and Mr Osborn, a principle merchant, has failed at Leigh.'

There is definitely a link with Kent, as one of John's bargemasters was Alexander Ritchie of Leigh who had been born in Chatham. I have been struggling to know what

Alexander did between leaving the Navy in 1800 as a boy sailor and turning up in Leigh in 1816 to marry a local girl. I think the answer is that he returned to Chatham in 1800 and at some time thereafter started to work for John Osborne who traded along the Kent coast.

It is difficult to know what John did after the failure of his business as there are no further records until the census began in 1841. It seems from later information that he may well have been living in Kent and indeed there is a John Osborne of roughly the right age living in Gravesend and of independent means in 1841. There is no other family with him.

But in 1851 he is to be found on his own living at 29 College, Northfleet in Kent.

So what was 'the College'?

It was Huggens College (which still exists today). The College was founded by John Huggens expressly for the purpose of housing elderly ladies and gentlemen of distressed means.

For John Huggens the 'doors of my little charity' opened on 29 April 1847 when the College houses which had been built in Northfleet took in his first 8 Collegians and he introduced them to one another as 'brothers and sisters. And told them they should live together in 'such love and harmony as will make the sunny evening of your lives go down happily to that better home we are fast travelling to'. I bet that cheered them up no end!

John Huggens was born at Sittingbourne in 1776. Both his father and grandfather were corn dealers owning a vessel called 'The Phoenix' in which they traded round the Kent coast buying corn for the London market. Now you can see why John Osborne may very well have known John personally – they were of an age and had similar connections to the water. John followed the family business owning a number of barges. He was also a brickmaker and became a wealthy man.

Initially he intended to build some almshouses for his old bargemen for their retirement but during his business life he came in contact with people of all classes and he became aware of a great need among the middle and educated classes for a place for them to spend their declining years. So he decided to found a haven for aged gentlefolk to 'run their little bark into the smooth and tranquil waters of the summer evening of their life' – quite a poet was John.

Although John's idea of almshouses for his employees was not taken up he did not forget his old bargemasters and they were given pensions and some of them lived in the vicinity of the College.

John died in 1865 and had a very elaborate funeral where 25 of his Collegians attended and were provided with silk bands and scarves. John's coffin was made of Essex oak which had purchased and prepared 17 years before his death at the age of 90.

So it seems John Osborne after all his trials and tribulations ended his days very comfortably in Kent.



THE CLASS OF 2006

As members will know we entertain quite a lot of school groups during term time at the Heritage Centre. Several members of the Society give their time to explaining to the children about Leigh and the life of its inhabitants, with an interesting slide show.

We tend to think nowadays that the youngsters have no respect for many things but we have found that the vast majority of those who visit the Heritage Centre express a delight in what they find there and an interest in the information they are given. Many of them come back bringing Mum and Dad with them to show them where they've been.

Many of them also write to us following a class visit and we very often display their letters in the centre.

Recently we had a visit from Chalkwell Hall Junior School. Each child wrote to us afterwards with pictures and their thoughts on what they had seen – here is a few examples of their comments.

'it was very enjoyable and I like the way you make it education at the same time'

'I had a really good time, thank you for taking up your time for us'

'Thank you for teaching us all of those amazing facts about Old Leigh, we all learnt a lot'

'You were very patient when we were buying our toys'.

'It was a lovely day, thank you for letting us buy stuff in your shop. When we walked along we bought cockles and crabsticks, I loved it'.

'I really enjoyed the talk about the blacksmith and the kitchen'.

'I enjoyed looking at all the different pictures and the jobs in the Old Town.'

'When you showed us how to make the rug and how people lived in those days it was very interesting'.

And there were many more such comments. Grateful thanks must go to all those who give the talks and demonstrations and to the helpers in the Heritage Centre who man the counter and deal with the hordes of youngsters all eager to spend their pocket money.

Kind of makes it all worth while really – doesn't it?

If you know a school who may be interested in a visit to the Heritage Centre then ask them to contact Diane Sandal

A WORD OF WARNING

Some members will have noticed that the parking for the Boatyard restaurant in the Old Town is now subject to wheel clamping. Be warned that if you park in this area, - **EVEN WHEN THE RESTAURANT IS CLOSED** – you will be clamped and the fee for release is £200 cash on the spot – if your vehicle gets towed away the fee goes up to £300.

I am sure you don't want to hear our comments on this, especially if you are of a nervous disposition.

TOP O' THE WORLD, MA

From a very proud Mum and Dad

I think you would consider the Sutcliffe family as "new Leigh" as we have only lived here, in some form or another, since 1956.

Rev. Tom Sutcliffe came first, to be the minister at Leigh Wesley and brought his wife and 2 sons with him. They both went on to become doctors and Norman came back and WE settled in Leigh in 1961. Alistair was born at Rochford in 1964, went to school at Alleyn Court and West Leigh, and then on to Westcliff High School for Boys. He gained a first class honours degree in genetics at Queen Mary's College, London, was admitted to the medical faculty at University of Aberdeen, and went on to gain another first class honours degree. He was accepted as a partner in a busy Whitby practice. One aim had been achieved.

The next was to run in marathons. He trained seriously and has now run 16 marathons all over the world.

At the end of 2002 he came home to Leigh to tell us that he had always wanted to climb Everest, and was hoping to start training for this. He climbed Aconcagua in South America in 2003, then the Vinson massif in Antarctica in 2004. Last year he went to Alaska to climb Denali (Mt. McKinley) and then told us he was set to climb Everest this Spring. He summited on 20th May in the early hours of the morning, phoning us half an hour later, quite euphoric - telling us he had seen the curvature of the earth, Tibet and Nepal all in one sweep and that it was quite breathtaking.

Is this the end? Of course not - the Chicago marathon calls in October, which he hopes to run with his wife Clare, and he informs

us there are 3 more summits to be climbed before he becomes one of the few people on earth to have climbed the 7 highest and most difficult mountains in the world.

As his dad and I say "That's ma boy" !!!!!

Jan Sutcliffe

To read more about Alastair's exploits on Everest a journal and pictures of the expedition can be seen on <http://www.alpineascents.com/everest>



Alastair (centre) at the summit of Mt Everest

DOROTHY DE NEUMANN (NEÉ KIMBER) (1918 – 2006)

Known to very many people simply as “Kim”

Many of our members will know of the recent passing of ‘Kim’ de Neumann, a Trustee and stalwart of the Society. Her son Bernard has kindly written a few words for us to remember Kim’s commitment to both the Society and Leigh.

Kim was born on 23 February 1918, in Victoria Road, Leigh-on-Sea, and was the youngest of four children: Sidney, Isabel, May, Dorothy (Kim). She was therefore a “Leighman”, and proud of it. Mum received her education at Westleigh School, and then Southend High School for Girls where she excelled and obtained distinctions in her School Certificate. She then prepared to enter the Civil Service by attending Clarks College for a year, and after successfully sitting for the civil service examination she joined Inland Revenue, and shortly after transferred to Customs and Excise.

On 13 February 1939 Mum became engaged to Peter de Neumann, also of Leigh, a young naval officer, and orphan son of Capt Bernard de Neumann (previously featured in Leighway). Little did she know what the future held in store for them both, and the trials and tribulations that were to come. Just over six months later her job in the head office of HM Customs and Excise was evacuated to Blackpool, just before the outbreak of war. Dad was at sea on a voyage to Argentina when war broke out, and he had an eventful and stressful war in which he was awarded a George Medal and a Lloyd’s Bravery Medal. Two ships were sunk from under him, and he made a long voyage in a lifeboat – all within the space of one month. Later he was imprisoned in a concentration camp at Timbuctoo after being convicted of piracy by a Vichy French naval court martial, and lost his health as a result, together with two years pay that the British Labour government of 1947 essentially stole. Thus their life together did not get off to an easy start despite outward appearances.

I, their eldest son, was born on 15 December 1943, and my birth announced via BBC World Service by Doris Hare on “Shipmates Ahoy”. Dad was in the North Atlantic at the time, and did not hear it. My brother, John, was born in Danbury Palace on 3 March 1946. When we were old enough, Mum became a School Teacher from 1951-1974. In 1956 Dad’s TB, which he contracted whilst he was a prisoner became active, and he had to undergo an operation, and recuperate, taking two years off work. It was a very worrying time for Mum as she had to take full responsibility for her two sons, as well as travel long distances to visit Dad who was in Arlesley chest hospital, Bedfordshire.

Dad was killed in an accident in Tilbury Docks in September 1972, and Mum became a widow, however, because of the long spells apart that she and Dad had, it took a long time for her to really accept that this time he was not coming home.

Following extensive litigation over Dad’s death, Mum, in 1984 decided to return to Leigh, and was rapidly re-assimilated into the community as many of her old school friends still lived there. Not long after she found that the Leigh Heritage Centre required volunteers to help run it, and with her strong interest in all things to do with Leigh she volunteered her services. Quickly she was offered the opportunity to become manager which she took on with gusto as it was a new, for her, opportunity and challenge to discover how to run a small shop (see below). She soon commissioned tea-towels to her own design, and engaged a professional photographer at her own expense so that postcards of various Leigh scenes, with a LHC imprimatur could be produced. She also recruited other

volunteers to help run the centre, and in the end was able to keep the centre open seven days a week. She also proposed that the Leigh Society embarked upon running “member functions” and organised many interesting outings for Leigh Society members together with quiz nights and Christmas lunches. Whilst manager of LHC she felt that Leigh’s fishing heritage should take a more central role, and discussed aspects of fishing with many fishermen, and even learnt to make nets and repair them using a “net needle” specially made for her by one of her fisherman friends.

She was thrilled to become a great-grandmother when Dennis John Richard de Neumann was born in Zürich in January 2006. She was imbued with a cheerful optimism and a keen interest in her family and friends, and maintained her ready sense of humour, and sunny smile right to the end. In recent years Mum suffered from ill health, and after several spells in hospital, the last one extending over four-and-a-half months, she died on 13 May 2006.

Many people have remarked that they will miss her warm smile and dry humour. Mum was a highly intelligent woman with a sharp mind and a ready wit, who strove in everything she did to make a real difference. She was a powerful ally, but could be a resourceful and tough adversary should the need arise. She also felt very strongly that if someone could do something then she could do it also, and hence anybody could. What really interested her, I believe, were the subtle “tricks of the trade” – those nuggets of knowledge/technique that distinguish masters from amateurs - which she delighted in discovering and exploring for herself, and which she often developed to new heights. This attitude I think came from her father who took up many crafts, and it was clearly evident in Sidney, May and Mum, and probably in Isabel too. After the war, Mum’s father (an amateur carpenter amongst other things) made her a loom, and she learnt to spin and weave, which she publicly demonstrated at various shows, and even tailored a jacket for Dad from tweed she had woven. She inspired this attitude in Dad, and in my brother and myself, and it is true to say that by this means she inspired Dad and John and me to fly and soar. She personally participated in, and contributed intellectually to, many endeavours throughout her life, and it is a real privilege and honour to be her son. Being the fiancée/wife of Peter de Neumann, and mother of Bernard and John, was not an easy task to fulfil, but she nevertheless contributed greatly to their success by providing a rich and stable home environment, and oodles of encouragement.

Bernard de Neumann



Kim

THE PARTRIDGES WHO PACKED THEIR TRUNKS AND TRUNDLED OFF TO THE CIRCUS

In one of my regular forays into the census returns looking for Leigh people who wandered far and wide I recently came across two Leigh sisters who left the Old Town to follow the circus as equestrian riders. Ann and Charlotte Partridge were the daughters of Isaac Partridge, a Leigh fisherman and his wife, Elizabeth Bull.

In 1851 I found Ann Ginette of Leigh aged 48, the wife of the leader and participant in an equestrian troupe at that time in Derby at the White Swan. Ann's husband John was French and one other member of the troupe was Charlotte Partridge, Ann's niece aged 17. It is believed this Charlotte later married Henry Newbold a musician from Derbyshire.

Going back to 1841 I found Ann and her husband listed as Showman in Birmingham.

In 1851 I also found Ann's sister Charlotte, (christened Rebecca Charlotte) clearly lying about her aged (26 when she was actually 31) married to John Samwell, another equestrian, and living in Lambeth.

Ten years later Charlotte and John were described as equestrian actors recorded as being in Newcastle. In 1871 they were in Bury St Edmonds, in Derby in 1881 and in 1891 in Lambeth again.

Circus history is a fascinating subject and so I started to delve a bit deeper.

The Circus Ginnett still exists today but its origins stem from the Napoleonic period. According to circus history the first Ginnetts came to England from France when Jean Pierre Ginnett (or Jinnett) and his brother, who had been in Napoleon's cavalry, were captured at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and became POW's. They were released and Jean Pierre trained some canaries and they performed at Ludgate Circus, London.

Obviously at sometime Jean Pierre and the circus came to Leigh or somewhere nearby and he met Ann Partridge and she left the little fishing village for what must have seemed a very glamorous life in the circus.

Jean Pierre died in 1861 and is buried in Kensall Green Cemetery, but the circus continued and prospered through his and Ann's son Frederick who expanded it considerably.



Circus Ginnett in later years

The Samwells were another famous circus family going back into the 18th Century. Charlotte Partridge was Ann's younger sister. From the records it is clear that the attractions of the circus grabbed Charlotte too and she married John Samwell in 1849 in Gloucester. John was the son of a circus family and was billed early on as 'the infant equestrian' appearing from the 1830s onwards. He travelled with various circuses as can be seen from the census returns, including Ginnett's circus between 1856 to 1860. In later years he was billed as 'John Samwell, the Great Scene Act Rider' and travelled with his own

circus, but after a serious accident during his act he finally gave up in 1868 and began a famous act with a dog troupe which was the talk of London in the 1870s. He died in 1883 but Charlotte lived on until 1907.

John and Charlotte had 3 children: 1) Emily Amy [known as Amy] who became a well-known slack wire artiste and equestrian (Amy married John Walker, an equestrian); 2) Roland who became a ring master and artist and married Mary Ann Bowen, a circus performer known as Miss Elvira (whose parents were famous clowns); and 3) Josephine Adelaide who died in infancy.

What I find interesting is how did 2 girls from Leigh fisher folk become accomplished equestrians and what did their families think of them running away to the circus.

CASINO ROYALE

No not the new James Bond movie but Southend Borough Council's newly published final consultation on its Gambling and Licensing policy.

Whilst the draft policy indicates that the Council can pass a resolution to the effect that it will not grant licences for casinos in its area, it is stated that the Borough Council has not done so nor is such a resolution proposed.

The Casino issue is of course a whole story in itself. However, for the more run of the mill licensing proposals the consultation sets out the criteria and rules which the Council will apply in considering applications for all forms of gambling establishments (bingo, family entertainment centres, betting premises etc).

Interested parties is defined in the Act as a person living sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the activities or has a business interest affected or represents either one of these types of parties.

The Council further defines interested parties as including democratically elected Councillors (including Leigh Town Councillors) and MPs. However, trade associations and unions and residents' and tenants' associations are not interested parties unless they can show they represent such a person or business. So the Leigh Society, for instance, will not be classed as a valid objector, although interestingly we have been consulted on the policy.

The criteria the Council will use to determine if someone or a business is affected are size and nature of the premises; distance from the affected person; potential impact (number of customers, routes taken to visit premises; the interests of the complainant which may be relevant to the distance from the premises; and business interests affected.

Demand for premises is stated to be a commercial consideration and not a matter for the Licensing Authority.

The Council can impose conditions on licences including, proof of age schemes, CCTV surveillance, door supervisors, location of entry and hours of opening

If you want to read the whole document go to the Council's website

<http://www.southend.gov.uk/resources/GamblingActdraftconsultationdoc.pdf>. Comments are required by 22 September.

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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