



LEIGHWAY

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

ON WITH THE SHOW

As you will see we have a bit of a theatrical theme in this issue, which leads me very nicely on to this year's Comicals.

The theme is 'Schooldays'. That should give you plenty of scope. As ever any one who would like to take part in this annual tradition should get in touch with me either on the e-mail or via the Heritage Centre – come on dust off those gymslips and navy knickers. A flyer is enclosed for you to order your tickets – book early to avoid disappointment.

At last I have mastered the sending of Leighway as an attachment to an e-mail. It would be really useful for the Society to be able to send out Leighway in this way for those who would like to save it on screen (and save paper and postage – and improve their carbon footprint) so please send an e-mail to leighsociety@btinternet.com and let me know so I can create a mailing list. Make sure your e-mail has the capacity to take large attachments.

Carole

THE 2 PLUMBS YARD PROJECT OFFICIAL OPENING



What a great day it was for all involved when David Amess MP officially opened Plumbs Cottage as part of the Heritage Centre Museum. Representatives from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Cory Environmental Trust and the Borough Council all spoke about their involvement in the project for which we thank them.

We are very pleased to tell everyone that since the cottage has been opened the interest has been phenomenal and this has been matched by an increase in donations towards the upkeep of the Museum and Cottage.

There are as always loads of people to thank for their efforts. Plumbs as a project has had a long gestation period and we could not have done it without their dedicated help in whatever capacity. Thanks must go to Alan and Elaine Crystall and Dawn Purkiss for the interior fixtures and fittings which have made the whole cottage come alive. Thanks also are due to all members of the Society Committee who in a variety of ways have helped organizing events, working on the Lottery application and 101 other things that had to be done. Particular thanks to Donald Fraser for acting as treasurer and David Johnson as auditor of our accounts.

A big thank you has to go to the helpers in the Heritage Centre. Throughout the project they were instrumental in getting people interested and collecting donations. Now they are still instrumental in showing people around the Cottage and collection all the donations.

With the Cottage now open it is necessary to have 2 people working at a time in the Heritage Centre. So if there are any people out there who would be interested in helping please let Diana Sandal know on 01702 557526. You don't have to work on the shop counter but we do need people to just be in the Cottage and talk to people. It is very enjoyable – so give it a go.

SUBS

Sorry folks its that time again. As we have mentioned previously the subscriptions will be £10 from January. Please get your subs in promptly as it helps us immensely.

For those who pay by standing order you will find enclosed a new form. Sorry you have to go through filling this in again but it is necessary. There are very clear instructions on the form as to who gets what so please make sure you read it carefully. It would be helpful if you could do this before the new year.

As always thank you for your support.

DIARY DATES

All events will be held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m unless otherwise stated.

10 October – Mark Bridges - The Warden of Two Tree Island

14 November – Mike Culley – Southend Planetarium

8 December – Comicals (Schooldays) – 7.30 in the Den

PLANNING

The last few months have seen the publication of more sections of the Borough Council's local development framework which will shape development in the Borough for several years to come. There has been an Action Area Plan for the Seafront and a separate one for the Town Centre of Southend and the Society has reviewed these and made comment. The Seafront Plan obviously affected us the most and if members wish to see a our comments please get in touch with Carole.

The newly formed Southend-on-Sea Conservation Forum has met and discussed many issues surrounding conservation in the Borough and we are pleased to say that the Borough Council did reinstate its own Conservation Working Party on which the Society is represented, although only one meeting has been held so far.

The applications for the Bell Hotel to which many people objected are to be the subject of a public inquiry starting on 24 October, so if you want to make your views known to the Inspector get in touch with the Borough Council for details. Members will also know that the proposals for 33 Hadleigh Road were defeated at appeal.

The threat of flat development is ever present and the huge number of applications for extensions to properties continues.

We have also seen consultation papers by Renaissance Southend, and Government too is pouring out more and more paper and proposals for change. All of this consultation is very difficult to keep on top of and takes a lot of time to digest but we would urge members if they care about the future of the Borough to try and see any exhibitions or read any documents, most of which are on the web, to do so and make comment if they feel strongly about something.

Although not in our area we did make objections to proposals to demolish Crowstone House and replace it with, you guessed it, flats. Thankfully the Borough turned the application down but we do not know yet what else will come forward and the applicant may appeal. The Borough Council has also refused applications to convert Pricketts in the Broadway into a café/coffee shop following opposition from the Society and many others.

VOICES PROJECT

We have been trying to organise for sometime now a project to record the memories and stories of Leigh from local people. We are very pleased to say that this project is now underway and armed with a trusty camcorder and tripod Jane Lovell has made contact with several people who are willing to set down their memories for posterity. If there is anyone out there who would like to participate or knows someone with a tale to tell please get in touch with Jane on 01702 476707.

DO YOU REMEMBER

A few items we would like members to search their memories for photograph albums.

Mrs Marjorie Lisney, was born in 1918 and went to North Street Schools. Her mother ran a newsagent and sweetshop in East Street opposite the gates of North Street. Does anyone remember the shop or perhaps have a photo of it.

Sally Dickinson of Billericay asks what (if anything) used to be on the area between Grand Parade and the current railway line during the 60's and 70's, particularly the part towards the Chalkwell Station end. Does anyone know/have any photos?

On page 4 is an article about Frank Matcham a prolific architect with a Southend connection. In writing this piece I got in touch with the Matcham Society and they are now asking for our help.

Frank's granddaughter was a Peggy Brenda Huggins who was born on 14 November, 1920 in Westcliff-on-Sea. Her parents were Constance Amy Matcham and Ernest George Huggins, we believe he was a Surveyor. We think Peggy married to an Arthur B Cornwell at Hendon Registry District sometime between July – October 1941. Does anyone remember Peggy, if so the Matcham Society would like to get in touch with her. In November or December, date still has to be confirmed, they are to unveil an English Heritage Blue Plaque on one of Frank's old London houses, hence it would be great to have a member of the family present if possible. The procurement of the plaque through English Heritage took nearly seven years, but it is now made and in store in London ready to go up when the Society return from its International visit this year to Boston Theatres. It would be great if we could help. If you know anything get in touch with David Cooper David.Cooper@uk4.astrium.eads.net or let Carole know and she will pass it on.

THE ISLE OF WIGHT TRIP

The Isle of Wight trip was a rip roaring success yet again and thanks go to Ann Price for organising it all. Everyone had a great time. One maybe more than others. Can you spot the difference between our own Leigh Blonde Bombshell, Joan Fox, and the Hollywood version, Marilyn Monroe.



LEIGHWAY – JANUARY 2008

The next edition will be in January so can you start putting your thinking caps on for articles of interest. I will need these by the end of December at the latest. Please send contributions to Carole via the Heritage Centre or to 83 Southsea Avenue, SS9 2BH or via the internet at leighsociety@btinternet.com.

If you've been to an interesting place on holiday we could have a section of traveller's tales or places you would recommend to visit. If something interesting or controversial is happening in your neck of the woods let the Society know about it. We are the society for the whole of Leigh, not just the conservation areas.

THE THEATRE OF DREAMS

A couple of Leighways ago we had the story of two Partridge girls from Leigh who ran away to join the circus. Today we have the story of a Little girl whose son became a well known variety performer.

Christianna Little was born in Leigh in 1840, the daughter of John Little, a fisherman, and his wife Susannah Osborne. In 1863 in Camberwell Christianna married James Priest, a butcher from Birmingham, and the couple went on to have 4 children. It is the oldest of these, James William Priest who is the subject of this story.

James was born in 1864 and appears to have been disowned by his family when he joined the theatre. He took the stage name of Jim O'Marr and appears to have started his career in a double act of blackfaced comedians called Lisburn & O'Marr between 1886 and 1892. Then another act called Hartley & O'Marr. In 1894 in Chapeltown, South Yorkshire he married into one of the leading variety families of the period, the Hodsons.

Henrietta Hodson, James' wife, was the daughter of Joseph Charles Hodson and his wife Emma Taylor who owned and ran a portable theatre. Henrietta's father and mother were old stage hands and were still performing in a production of East Lynne when she was 90 and Joe was 84. Joe was known as England's Oldest Showman and was the son of another showman with a portable theatre who claimed to have written one of the earliest scripts for Maria Martin and the Red Barn which was on its third night when young Joe was born in Teignmouth in Devon.



Hettie Hodson and Jim O'Marr – the 2 O'Marrs

Their daughter Henrietta was born in 1876 and like her older sister Gertrude joined the family business performing as 'Miss Hettie Hodson' During her career Hettie was a male impersonator, played a Scottish soldier and a Lancashire Lass. The Company travelled as Hodson's Varieties.

Jim O'Marr wrote much of his own material and songs and he and Hettie toured for years as the 2 O'Marrs. Jim was an avid football fan and wherever he played the theatre he wore the colours of the local football team and made one particular song famous wherever he went.

And it is a connection to football which is why many of us should remember Jim O'Marr with the Mum from Leigh. The song he made famous (although he didn't write it) for years rang across the football terraces. It was 'Football Crazy'.

For he's football crazy, he's football mad,
Football it has taken away the little bit o' sense he had,
And it would take a dozen servants to wash his clothes
and scrub,
Since Paul became a member of that terrible football
club.

BROTHER (AND SISTERLY) LOVE

It has oft been remarked upon that in Leigh the old families are intermingled with each other so that you could not walk down the street without seeing an uncle, aunt or cousin.

It is also not uncommon to find brothers marrying sisters. But it must be much rarer for 3 siblings to marry three siblings.

In the Quilter family of Leigh and the Price family, whose head, Peter, was born in Eastwood, that is exactly what happened.

Peter married Maria Brand from Battlesbridge in 1849 and they had 10 children, moving around in the Woodham Walter,, Wickford and Downham areas and finally to settling in Battlesbridge.

The first connection to Leigh is in 1872 when their eldest daughter married Frederick Murrell, a fisherman, and they took up residence in Leigh. It seem likely that there was much toing and froing between the Price children and their elder sister for in 1881 Ellen Price married Alfred Quilter and she was followed in 1886 by her sister, Annie Maria who married Alfred's brother David Quilter and the following year by their brother William David Price who married Alfred and David's sister Sarah Ann Quilter.

Alfred and Ellen left Leigh and crossed the Thames to live in Northfleet and David and Annie followed suit. David found work in the cement works as first an engine stoker and then a railway (stationary) engine driver working on cranes and conveyor belts. In later times he ran his own pie shop and found work as a cooper. He and Annie had three children – and thanks goes to his great grandson Michael Quilter for putting me on the scent of such an interesting family.

And people wonder why we are all fascinated by Leigh !!!

IT'S AMAZING WHAT YOU LEARN IN THE HERITAGE CENTRE

Just chatting idly to a visitor one Saturday afternoon and he mentioned the old bridge at Havengore Island. Now I know nothing about bridges but I love to look at them and he described the bridge as a Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge. Never heard of it? Well neither had I but I had to find out.

William Scherzer, was an American engineer. The **Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge** is like a drawbridge. It has a bridge end and a weight end and a roller between them when the bridge is opened, to let boats through. Unlike a drawbridge like Tower Bridge, which goes up and forms an inverted V where only ships under a certain height can go through the Scherzer Bridge goes up and rolls back out of the way. Letting any size boat through. It combines the balanced counterweight of a conventional bascule bridge, with a unique rolling lift.

Our informant, who wouldn't give his name, remembered that you could only get the bridge opened by prior arrangement with the bridge keeper who lived on Havengore Island.

Scherzer bridges are all over the world – and Havengore of course!!!!



A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

Keeping with the theatrical theme and strangely enough, another Devon connection, how many of you have sat in the audience at the London Palladium or the Victoria Palace or even the Hackney Empire.

Well these and many other famous theatrical venues around the UK were designed by a man who ended his days in Southend. His name was Frank Matcham



Frank Matcham was born in Newton Abbot in Devon in 1854 the son of a brewery clerk and was brought up in Torquay, where he worked for a time before eventually moving to London and joining the practice of Jethro Robinson - one of the foremost theatre architects of the day and consulting theatre architect to the Lord Chamberlain's Office.

The Lord Chamberlain's Office is responsible for organizing royal ceremonial events. For instance managing the two inward State Visits by overseas Heads of State each year, Investitures, garden parties, the State Opening of Parliament and the ceremonial for the annual ceremony of the Garter. It also organises Royal weddings and funerals and is also responsible for dealing with Royal warrants which are granted to companies whose goods or services are used by some Royal households. It also used to have the task of censoring the theatre. All plays to be performed upon the British stage had to be approved by readers from this department. This function was abolished in 1966.

In 1877 Frank married the boss's daughter, Hannah Maria Robinson, known as Effie, and when her father died in 1878 he took over the business. After taking over his first job was to complete the designs for the Elephant and Castle Theatre which opened in 1879.

Matcham and two architects he helped to train, Bertie Crewe and W.G.R. Sprague, were together responsible for over 200 theatres and variety palaces of the great building boom which took place in Britain between about 1890 and 1915.

Matcham designed Blackpool Grand Theatre and the Wakefield Theatre Royal and Opera House in 1894, as well as Buxton Opera House and the Royal Hall (Kursaal), Harrogate in 1903, and the Liverpool Olympia (1905). He also designed the Hackney Empire (1901), the London Coliseum (1904), the London Palladium (1910), and the Victoria Palace (1911).

Frank Matcham pioneered the use of *cantilevered steel* in his designs, and took out patents to protect his work. This allowed balconies to be built out into the theatre without the use of pillars supporting each tier. Without pillars, there were improved sight lines and, popular with theatre owners, an increased audience capacity.

Frank was responsible for building or reconstructing/renovating over 80 theatres - many of which have subsequently disappeared. Towards the end of his life he was also involved in the designs for several cinemas. His designs were always different and he built both large and small venues.

Matcham also designed the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool.

Frank Matcham did not retire, He was working on redesigning the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane on the day before he died.

Frank had spent 47 years doing what he enjoyed best, designing magnificent theatres. A self taught, unqualified architect became unrivalled as the most prolific theatre architect of all time. Frank was buried in Highgate Cemetery, London.

CHURCH HILL ANNIVERSARY

Our much loved Church Hill is 160 years old this year and some of you may be surprised it is not older.

The 1847 Tithe Map clearly shows two main ways to get to the Church from the Old Town. Via Horse Hill and up Leigh Hill (Horse Hill is now the part of Leigh Hill from the Ship) or, Church Lane, which ran immediately north from the Ship to join Chess Lane at a T junction where to the left you walked along Chess Lane to the rear of the new rectory (built in 1838) and to the right up by the side of the Church, as now. Church Hill was only a track across a field.

According to Benton's History of the Rochford Hundred, there were four paths leading into Chess Lane from the Old Town - Workhouse Lane from the side of the Crooked Billet; two from Peterboat Lane and the Church Lane, mentioned above.

The Rector, the Rev Robert Eden had built the national schools and rectory (now the library) and laid out grounds at his own expense and had absorbed and enclosed Chess Lane into his land.

Leigh people were not happy about this as it deprived them of a well loved walk and was usual route to the Church for weddings and funerals.

Benton called Church Hill the 'little hill' and children's funerals now had to use that Hill which was fenced off and had formerly passed through Normans Field. Adult funerals now had to use Horse/Leigh Hill because Church Hill was too steep to take the greater weight. This was a much longer journey to the church.

Henry William 'Antiquary' King who wrote his Descent of the Manor of Leigh in the 1880s details the history of Normans Field (origin not known) or 'The Little Field' as it was known to the parishioners, from early wills and conveyances. He says that

'to gratify the intense selfishness of the wealthy Rector appointed in 1837 the public lane usually called Chess Lane was closed and laid into the Rectory grounds thus excluding the whole of the inhabitants from their immemorial highway and promenade overseeing the town and extending almost its entire length and commanding the Thames and the further shore of Kent for many miles. All engrossed to the gratification of the man and his neighbour. The Church Hill (Church Lane) forming the western boundary of Normans Field and the only ascent and descent from and to the town which took advantage of the best levels was abolished and laid into the property on the west of it and the steep and dangerous footpath through Normans Field was merely [?] and fenced off in substitution, four paths from the town were permanently closed and corpses were required to be borne thenceforth by the longer steeper and more circuitous main road.'

So that's how the present day Church Hill came about and by the time they were getting ready for the railway to come through Leigh the Map related to the London, Tilbury and Southend Extension Act of 1852 clearly shows its present position.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE IN A CONSERVATION AREA?

Members will know that a large part of the work of the Society is to look at, and comment on, planning applications within Leigh's four conservation areas. We see many during the course of the year. We have to judge them on the basis of what harm they will do.

The rules of what you can and can't do if you live in a conservation area are fairly clear but with all things in planning it is sometimes a matter of balance and judgment as to what harm would be caused by a development.

Leigh, as we know, is under great pressure for development of all kinds but house extensions and flats always rise to the top of the pile. But it is sometimes the little, seemingly innocuous developments which cause problems and if allowed to go unchecked can lead to harm to the conservation area.

So if you live in a conservation area what can't you do?

Leigh's four conservation areas are 'Old Town', 'Leigh Cliffs', Leigh (which covers a large area of the town) and Chapmanslord (which covers the area around Canvey Road).

Conservation Area consent is required for the demolition of a building in a conservation area (demolition of part of a building is more complicated and you should seek advice on this) and works to any tree within the area whether or not it is subject to a tree preservation order.

It is too complicated here to go into what requires planning permission as many minor changes do not, advice should be sought from the Borough Council's Planning Department.

If you live in a conservation area though the rules are more stringent and **you will need permission to do the following** –

- Enlarge your house by an addition or alteration to its roof
- Provide within the curtilage of your house any building or enclosure, swimming or other pool required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the house as such, or the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of such a building or enclosure if it would consist of the provision, alteration or improvement of a building with a cubic content of more than 10 cu m (the same rule applies to this type of development within the curtilage of a listed building).
- Install, alter or replace a microwave antenna (i.e. satellite dish) on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces on to and is visible from the highway or on a building which exceeds 15 m in height. (be aware that even if you are not in a conservation area there are also restrictions on the size of antenna you can install without planning permission)

There are certain types of development for which you do not normally need to apply for planning permission, these are called permitted development.

The Council has the power to withdraw rights for permitted development by making an Article 4 Direction. This does not mean necessarily that you can't have permission, but that you must apply for it so that the Council can control inappropriate development. In addition to the controls mentioned above the

Leigh Conservation Areas are subject to Article 4 Directions in respect of certain types of development and you will also need planning permission for the following (plans of the conservation area boundaries can be viewed on the Council's web site at www.southend.gov.uk.)

Leigh Old Town Conservation Area –

for dwelling houses -

1. Window alterations
2. Rendering of brickwork of any part of a dwelling house (note other forms of cladding already require you to obtain permission)
3. Re-roofing with different materials
4. Installing a roof light to any part of the roof

for all buildings

5. Painting over the facing brickwork on any part of a building
6. Erection, extension or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure to any part of a property.

for 19-24 High Street and 3-5 Theobalds Cottages

7. Erection of any extension to any part of the dwelling house
8. Erection of a balcony to any part of the dwelling house

Leigh Conservation Area

for dwelling houses -

9. As 1-3 above
10. Hardstanding for vehicles

for all buildings –

11. As 5 above

for 65-77 Leigh Hill (odd)

12. Constructing an access to a highway
13. Hardstandings for vehicles

Leigh Cliff Conservation Area –

For dwelling houses –

14. Alteration of a window that fronts on to a highway
15. Rendering of the brickwork of any part of a building which fronts on to a highway
16. As 3 and 10 above

for all buildings -

17. As 5 above

Chapmanslord Conservation Area – this is a very recent designation and the Council has made an Article 4 Direction requiring that permission is sought for the following in respect of all properties in the designation–

- The alteration of any window or door which fronts a highway.

- Re-roofing with different materials.
- The installation of hardstanding for vehicles at the front.
- The erection or construction of an extension, addition, porch or canopy to a flank wall.
- The erection, construction or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure fronting the highway.
- The demolition of the whole or part of a gate, wall, fence or other means of enclosure fronting the highway.

SO IF IN DOUBT – CHECK IT OUT

Of course the other type of special buildings we have in Leigh are listed buildings and these are subject to very stringent regulations. The planning rules are different when it comes to listed buildings.

Generally speak planning permission is not required for internal alterations to a property, although you may need Building Regulation approval, for instance if you want to knock down a load bearing wall – always check with the building inspector at the Council. Failure to get the necessary Building Regulation approval can lead to complications when you come to sell.

You will need to get listed building consent if you want to demolish a listed building or any part of it, or alter it in any way which would affect its character, **inside or out**.

Get specialist advice.

In Leigh the following buildings are listed –

The Crooked Billet
Two properties in the High Street and four in Leigh Hill
St Clements
The Library

In addition the Borough Council has placed several buildings on its local list and apply special policies to them in the Local Plan – these are not listed buildings in the national sense but are buildings the Borough wants to take special care over. This type of listing may very well become more common and have official backing if the Government’s heritage proposals recently published are accepted. The Government wants to get people involved in these issues and consider their area and what is worthy of preserving.

Enforcement

The Council has the power to take enforcement action against any breaches of the planning and conservation controls. For planning there are time limits within which they can do this. However for Listed Buildings there are no such limits and a listed building enforcement notice can be served at any time even if the person who did the work is no longer in the property so if you buy a listed building always make sure that any works which have been done to it were done with the consent of the Council.

This leads us on to what you should be aware of when you are buying a property. Buying a property is probably for most of us

the most expensive thing we will ever do so it is amazing that we don’t always take the care we should in checking things out before we buy. The seller will have to provide a Home Information Pack which in theory provides all the necessary information. These have only just been introduced and it is feared that this will slow up the processes as some mortgage lenders are not accepting this information at face value and are insisting on further searches.

Although planning information is contained in searches it is always wise to check the planning register as well as an independent exercise. The Council is required to hold a register of planning/conservation area and listed building applications. It is open to the public so if you are unsure you can check yourself. Your solicitor should also obtain copies of any consents relating to the property – they may contain conditions which you will be required to abide by.

You are the buyer so if you are buying in a conservation area – check that the satellite antenna and roof alterations have permission. If you are moving into one of the Leigh conservation areas check that the new windows were permitted. Remember just because you are buying a 3 bedroom house with a fourth bedroom in the roof doesn’t mean it is officially a four bedroom house. If the necessary consents (including Building Regulation approval) have not been obtained even if you might be willing to overlook it your mortgage lender may not be and when you come to sell you could have problems.

CAVEAT EMPTOR

The Government has recently issued consultation papers on proposed changes to permitted development rules. There will still be safeguards for conservation areas and listed buildings. At present this is contained in a White Paper, if and when it becomes law we will update members.

THE BOROUGH PLAN

In addition to planning and conservation controls the Borough Local Plan contains policies which aim to protect conservation areas and heritage sites, for instance Policy C5 covers Old Leigh and states that the Council will require the retention of commercial, leisure and residential uses appropriate to its character as a working marine village and will seek to reduce vehicular access for non-essential traffic. Permission will normally be refused for the loss of marine industrial uses and associated facilities.

There are many other policies in the Local Plan which are relevant.

For our heritage it is not just the big applications that matter, so don’t ignore it when you get notice of a planning application near you – check it out.

Planning affects all our lives although we often don’t realise it until our next door neighbour wants to build an extension.

You can find out more about planning and comment on applications on the Council’s website at www.southend.gov.uk

CONNECTIONS - FROM LEIGH TO BOGNOR

What do you know about Bognor Regis? Nice seaside town on the south coast – favoured by royalty, hence its name.

Bognor Regis has quite a few similarities to Leigh. It was a Saxon village where the community fished and smuggled, as well as farmed. By the late 18th century sea bathing was popular in the belief it had medicinal properties. This is the time when other south coast resorts were rising in popularity, as, of course, was Southend.

Richard Hotham, who had set up a hatter's business in the town decided to create his own seaside resort at Bognor for the gentry and he bought land for the purpose. But despite all his efforts and a royal visit in 1796 the scheme did not prosper. After Hotham died the resort did still receive the rich and development began to take place. The population rose from 1,900 in 1851 to 5,067 in 1901. In 1893 it was described as 'a quiet little place of eminent respectability and unimpeachable sanitary record.

In 1911 a building called the Kursaal opened. This was described as an entertainment palace with roller skating rink, a theatre, shops and tearoom.

In 1929 George V stayed there after an illness and the council applied for permission to add Regis to the town's name. Permission was granted and the town obviously had a lasting impression on him.. "Bugger Bognor" are the last words he uttered after he was told by his doctor that he should go there to recuperate.

Of course, like Leigh, Bognor has a rich history which is well worth a delve but where is the direct connection to Leigh?

Most people in Leigh have heard of Michael Tomlin, many of us pass his grave in St Clement's Churchyard as we go down Church Hill to the Old Town. Michael was a local giant of a man in stature as well as how he conducted his life as a lay preacher. He had married a local Leigh girl, Elizabeth Turnidge and they had several children. Their youngest daughter, Jemima was born in 1850 and she married George Cornelius Young who came from Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight.

George was Leigh postmaster and the family lived in Coastguard Cottages. Jemima remained as postmistress after George's death. Their son, Augustus, married Gertrude Donovan, born in Leigh the daughter of a travelling salesman.

Augustus and Gertrude had three children, with Gerard being born in 1912 and it is he that provides the connection between Leigh and Bognor Regis.

Gerard was an historian, poet, artist and journalist, who did much to preserve Bognor's past. He was educated at a preparatory school in Worthing. On leaving school he took a management course at London's Embassy Theatre. He eventually became a publicity officer with Gaumont British Film Company, where he was involved in the publicity for Gaumont films. Eventually Gerard moved to Bognor which he had been visiting for years and developed a love of local history as well as being involved in local theatre productions.

For years Gerard collected all sorts of local information and ephemera about Bognor making sure that the area's local history was widely available to all.

After the War a large garden became available as a local park and Gerard researched the area until it was officially confirmed that it would be known as Hotham Park. The hatter finally getting his memorial.

Gerard had the ability to combine much of the historical information of the town and people would supply him with information, and their memories of the area and the period back

to 1900. These memories were then transformed into the very readable style of the Gerard Young column in the Bognor Post. Gerard threw himself into the district and wrote a number of books that are still sought after today, 'Down Hoe Lane' the 'Chronicle of a Country Cottage', 'Meadow Cottage' and 'The Cottage in the Fields' became very popular and he was regularly published in the national press

When Gerard died in 1972 he was writing a major history of the town. Gerard's cottage now has a Blue Plaque attached to the garden wall.



Its nice to think another seaside town has benefited in such an enriching way from a son of Leigh.

AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME

Another chance conversation in the Heritage Centre to a member of the Harvey family revealed a tale that an ancestor had built what was commonly known as 'a one-night house' in Leigh. This particular building will be the subject of further investigation.

There was at one time a commonly held view among peasants that if you could in one night erect a 'Mushroom Hall' or a 'now-or-never' without hindrance from the officials of the manor you obtained copyhold right of land.

This belief is actually not just an English phenomenon and the same type of folklore is known in Latin America, Europe and several other places. There appears to be no legislative or case law basis for the belief.

In Wales there is the concept of Ty Unnos, literally, 'one night house'. People believed that if you built a house overnight on common land, not used by the landlord, and if smoke rose from its roof at dawn, you could claim the house and surrounding land to the distance of a stones throw.

These structures were flimsy, made of turf and soil, but if the house was allowed to remain, a more permanent building would be erected later, on the same site and a piece of untamed land would become a smallholding.

The idea that Common Land belongs to everyone is in fact a fallacy. All common land is private land but an interesting theory was put forward by Gerrard Winstanley (1609 - 1676) an English Protestant religious reformer and political activist during the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. He said that it was the Norman Conquest which had deprived the people of their land and that with the deposition of Charles I, the ultimate heir of William the Conqueror, the people had won back the land by the same right of conquest.

Now there's a thought!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

A MYSTERY SOLVED

One morning some months ago a man came into the Leigh Heritage Centre where I work as a volunteer on Wednesday mornings. He brought with him a number of papers referring to members of his family. He was Rodney Choppin now living in Paglesham. His family included Henry Choppin who had been licensee of the Bell, Henry George Choppin, licensee of the Smack and another relative who had been the first licensee of the Grand Hotel when it opened in 1899.

With these papers was another one entitled 'The New Eldorado.' This was a promotional brochure for Leigh-on-Sea published in June 1897. Amongst other things it stated that four railways now run to Leigh: the North London, the Midland, the Great Eastern and the London, Tilbury and Southend. Its main purpose however, was to offer for sale

'fifty-six valuable plots of ripe freehold building land at Leigh-on-Sea. This new seaside watering place is the nearest (without exception) by direct rail to London, situated on an eminence facing the sea.' It goes on to claim that 'Leigh-on-Sea is the most rapidly improving seaside town in the Kingdom. There is no Suburb, Town or Village that has made such rapid strides towards success as this old world fishing village.'

The 'fifty-six valuable plots' were part of the Leigh Hall and Park estates. The land include several sites for villas in the 'New Leigh Main Road.' The brochure also has a picture of Main Avenue, now Elm Road, looking south from the **New Public Hall** on the corner of Station Road and near Glendale Gardens.

This public hall had been erected by the vendor, Mr. F.F. Ramuz of the Land Company in order to facilitate the land sales. When I was researching local Salvation Army history for the book 'Spirit of the Sea' I discovered that this was the building that the 'Army' had leased as their place of worship from 1903 to 1920 before they built their first hall in Glendale Gardens. Early-day Salvationists always referred to this building as 'the Town Hall', although I could find no evidence of Leigh ever having had a town hall at this time. The local Urban District Council never seemed to make use of it for their meetings.

Looking at this building today which is now used as a pre-school, it doesn't look like a purpose built church or chapel. It was however, used as such not only by the Salvation Army, but before them by the Primitive Methodists prior to their own building being erected in nearby Cranleigh Drive, now the Moose Hall. After the Salvation Army moved to its own building it was used by the Peculiar People and later became known as Mr. Wiggin's chapel, the local builder who supported it financially for many years.

So Leigh's 'Town Hall' turns out to be Mr. Ramuz' sales office, used to sell off the Leigh Hall estate, described in another part of the brochure as being 'magnificently situated on high ground and within easy distance of Leigh-on-Sea station.' This was of course, the former station, now the headquarters of the Leigh-on-Sea yacht club.

A recent visit to the Essex Record Office unearthed Frederick Francis Ramuz' title to the Leigh Hall estate, comprising Leigh Hall Farm and Ellen Elm Farm. An earlier document for the same land included the names of Charles, Earl of Tankerville and William Drogo, the Duke of Manchester. The 1893 document also stated that Mr. Ramuz had asked Emma Lucy Flemming of Thornton Heath in Surrey for a loan of ten thousand pounds; money I am sure was recouped with interest when you remember that the estate included Leigh Main Road

(now the Broadway), Victoria Drive, Pall Mall, Torquay Drive, Dawlish Drive, Blenheim Chase, Woodleigh Avenue, Rayleigh Drive and Flemming Crescent.

A chance encounter with a fascinating document had at last enabled me to resolve a mystery of the origin of a building whose early history had previously been so difficult to trace.

Gordon Parkhill



The 'Town Hall'

As an addendum to Gordon's article it is interesting to note that the previous landowners are remembered in Leigh in Tankerville and Manchester Drives and Flemming Crescent. It seems Leigh fisherfolk are not the only ones here to intermarry.

Charles Augustus Bennet, 6th Earl of Tankerville, (1810-1899) was a British peer and Conservative politician, known from 1822-1876 as Lord Ossulston.

He was educated at Harrow and Christ Church, Oxford and in 1832 entered Parliament as MP for North Northumberland. He held this seat until 1859, when a writ of acceleration was created to call up Bennet to the House of Lords in his father's barony of Ossulston.

Lord Ossulston then served as Captain of the Gentlemen-at-Arms from 1866-67 and Lord Steward from 1867-68. On 29 January 1850, he had married Lady Olivia Montagu, the eldest daughter of the 6th Duke of Manchester.

Never heard of Ossulston - nor had I - According to British History Online, Ossulston Hundred takes its name from Oswald's Stone which may well have been the Roman geometric stone standing at the point where Watling Street (Edgware Road) joined the road (Oxford Street) running westward out of Essex. After Marble Arch had been erected upon approximately the same site in 1851, the stone leant for a while against that edifice but it has not been seen since 1869. Between 1285 and 1312 there are references to a field called Ossulstone and by 1341 Ossulstone seems to have been a settlement. In 1484-5 it possessed 'pits', where the county court met in 1554. On a map of 1614 Ossulstone was spot-marked as lying at the western end of South Street, Mayfair, where that street joins Park Lane.

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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