



# LEIGHWAY

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

## SHEILA PITT- STANLEY



Many of you will have heard of the sad passing of Sheila Pitt-Stanley, the President of the Society.

Sheila was our president for more years than we care to remember, She was appointed when the Leigh Hill conservation area and the Leigh Society were established in the 1970's and was on the steering group of interested residents organised by David Atkinson, later MP for Bournemouth East, following pressure by Ronald Cox, a local architect, to set up a conservation area in Leigh. She was a founding member and our first and only president to date.

Had she had the opportunity in her youth, she may well have become a historian, although her strong interest was very Leigh focussed, and she soaked up tales of the old days, the buildings and the characters.

Precious bits and relics of old buildings were collected from an early age, as were any maps or documents and photographs of the people and places in Leigh, especially Leigh Old Town, to be built up into the Pitt-Stanley collection. She insisted that Old Leigh had to be properly addressed as Leigh Old Town.

She lectured prolifically to schools and societies about the Old Town and historic Leigh, wrote tales of the Old Town, and also made a tape of these stories.

She was always very proud to be the President of the Leigh Society, and played an active part until her health would not allow her to continue.

She was one of those "larger than life" characters, like those Leigh Old Town characters she admired and talked about so much, Her family name was Brush but she was descended from several old Leigh families of which she was very proud.

She had a strong interest in conservation years before it became fashionable and was a trail blazer for those of us that strive to protect the conservation of the area.

She has truly earned her place as one of the characters of Leigh's history.

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

As I write this, the sun is shining but the fog-horns are sounding - a reminder of why we all love living here - Leigh's estuary location, its unique character and history. To protect and promote this is why the Leigh Society, its Heritage Centre and now Plumbs Cottage, came about.

2007 saw a major landmark in the life of the Society when on May 5th our local MP David Amess officially opened Plumbs Cottage. A triumph for the Society and I would say, a major success story for any voluntary group in the Borough.

We have come a long way since members voted to take on the old derelict Smithy and establish the Heritage Centre and Museum. Especial thanks are due to Carole, Alan, Elaine and Donald for their handling of the project. A lot of time and work went into it. We must also thank all the helpers who keep the museum open.

The Society has been consulted on all plans for the Conservation Areas and we have rigorously objected to many that would damage their character and scale. Developers still seem bent on turning Leigh into Manhattan.

Bell Hotel Inquiry. Jane Lovell spoke at the Inquiry on behalf of the Society when we joined many local residents and the Town Council in voicing our objections to the scheme. As local members will know, the Inspector turned the appeals much to everyone's relief. The site certainly needs something happening there but not high-rise flats. The battle continues on the St Clement's Hall site.

To assist in our efforts for conservation, local amenity societies have now joined forces and formed the Southend-on-Sea Conservation Forum which has met regularly to share concerns on local planning issues. We have successfully campaigned for the Council to reconstitute its Conservation Working Party and the Conservation Areas and Council Policy are to be reviewed.

We are affiliated to the River Thames Society which is actively campaigning to keep the Thames riverside locations open to views and public access.

School Visits Thanks to Lyn Austin for organising the large number of school groups who much appreciate the slide shows and talks on Old Leigh history. Thanks again to the helpers who make these visits enjoyable for the children.

Thanks to Ann Price Members enjoyed a lovely few days on the Isle of Wight and visit to the Houses of Parliament and the Geffrye Museum.

The Comicals goes from strength to strength. Thanks to all of you who take part each year and give us so much fun. Especial thanks to Jane Lovell and her gang who always turn up trumps with an entertaining playlet on our chosen theme. For everyone who takes part it is a huge effort and we are very grateful for the continued support.

Leigh Society Website. [www.leighsociety.co.uk](http://www.leighsociety.co.uk). As reported, thanks to Carole and Dec we have now joined the www. Revolution. This gives much information on the activities of the Society and local history.

Leigh Memoirs Many interesting accounts of life in Leigh are held by local residents and Jane Lovell is now interviewing and recording these for posterity. Please contact us if you are interested.

Archives. We continue to receive many items of local interest and plans are in hand in order to display them.

As we move into the new technological age, we hope to put much of the activities and life in the Old Town on film and update our slide show presentations and show them at meetings. More help with this would be appreciated.

Finally, we appreciate your continued support. Our museum might not be a national museum but it is up there with the best for its local interest, exchange and gathering of archival material and information.

We look forward to seeing you at our programme of meetings and outings.

Margaret

## 2 PLUMBS YARD PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT

The first year of Plumbs opening is nearly over and what a great success it has been. The Cottage has been visited by many hundreds of people, all of whom have expressed their appreciation and encouragement.

Much thanks must go to Alan and Elaine Crystall and Dawn Purkiss for their expert furnishings and to the lively audio display that greets visitors on entering the Cottage.

We are currently in the throes of putting together an education pack for schools which was part of the work we undertook in order to receive Lottery funding.

The Cottage has been so successful that the donation level at the Heritage Centre has been much improved and we have been able to make some significant purchases of equipment for use in our 'Recording Memories' project.

Over the coming months we will formalize the winding up of the Plumbs Charity and Company as the project will become fully subsumed within the Heritage Centre umbrella.

As ever thanks to the other members of the Committee, especially Donald Fraser for so ably managing the accounts and to David Johnson as our auditor and to the helpers who man the exhibition on a daily basis.

Plumbs now looks forward to a second successful year.

Carole Mulrone - Company Secretary

## CAEDMON SCHOOL

We have had so many interesting snippets of information since the article in the last Leighway that we will be putting these together for the next edition in September which will have an educational theme.

## WILLIAM CARLYLE CROASDELL

This cartoon from the Westcliff and Southend Graphic, refers to a Town Clerk of the Leigh Urban District Council in the early 1900s. You can see from the cartoon that even then lawyers were seen as raking in the fees.



William's father was a steam engine fitter. William was born in Parton, Cumberland in 1879 although the 1891 census says he was born in Moresby in Cumberland. He married Clara Madeleine Stobie (Madge) in 1906 in Staffordshire (West Bromwich). William was a barrister and Town Clerk. He and Madge both died at Parkstone, Dorset in 1961 but are buried at Oldswinford, Stourbridge. As a barrister William wrote The law relating to private street works under the Act of 1892 and The Law of Copyright in relation to Cinematography in 1911



TOWN CLERK OF LEIGH

## DEAR DIARY

All held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m unless otherwise stated. For the five Society meetings there is an entry charge of £1 for members and £2 for visitors  
10 May Quiz – date TBA – The Den  
23 April (AGM) – Shoebury – Judith Williams  
14 May – River Thames – The Flow of History – David Williams  
8 October – Leigh History – Clare Harvey  
19 November - RNLI  
6 December – Comicals at The Den

## HURRICANE OFF SOUTHEND

The following article appeared in the Times on Wednesday, 16 March 1842

'On Wednesday night, between eight and nine o'clock, Southend was visited by a most tremendous storm of wind and rain, the severity of which has not been equalled for many years, and its effects have been most melancholy and disastrous. Windows were blown in, and slates, tiles, etc., were hurled in all directions. About half-past twelve o'clock the tempest began to subside, and day-break presented to the view, the wreck of no fewer than six boats which had been driven from their anchors, all of which had substantial serious damage, and many were completely destroyed, being driven by the violence of the wind against the wharfs and piles of the pier until they were not only complete wrecks, but had the appearance of chopped up for fire-wood; such destruction among the boats here was never before witnessed, and the most distressing circumstance is, they were mostly the property of poor hard-working men, who have no other means of subsistence.

A schooner was perceived early on the same morning, with signals of distress, just below the lighthouse. A Leigh boat went to her assistance, and put four of her hands on board her; they weighed anchor, and were running for the north shore, the wind blowing strong at the time. A few minutes would have brought her on the sand, but being water-logged, she unfortunately sunk, and every soul on board perished, together with the four men who were in a boat at the stem of the schooner, and it is supposed, from the sudden occurrence, had not time to detach from the ship.

This unfortunate catastrophe happened at about half-past nine o'clock in the morning, a short distance from shore, in the presence of hundreds of their fellow creatures, who could not render them any assistance; and after withstanding the fury of the gale during the whole of the previous night. On Saturday, boats from Leigh were in search of the bodies, and succeeded in picking up one of the men, and one of the crew of the schooner. Divers, also, descended to the wreck, and brought up the ship's boat, by which it was ascertained that the ill-fated vessel was the Brisk, of London, Captain Fossarn, laden with coals.

It is stated by one of the crew of the Leigh boat, that the crew consisted of seven persons, and that a woman and child were on board, making in whole thirteen souls, all hurried into eternity by this melancholy event.

The names of the Leigh men drowned were, Charles Brady, aged 30; Robert Noakes, aged 24; Henry Wade, 17; and Frederick Fairhead, aged 13.'

As an addendum to this story Charles Brady and Henry Wade were buried in St Clements on 17 March 1842 but there is no record of the burials of the other two Leigh men, presumably their bodies were not recovered. Charles Brady's wife had literally just given birth to their third child, Thomas who was baptized in St Clements on 24 April 1842.

## PLANNING

As ever in Leigh Planning plays an important part in the work of the Society. As Margaret has mentioned, Jane Lovell represented us at the Bell inquiry which had such a successful outcome. We only hope that after 3 applications and a Government Inspector's decision the owner will look far more sympathetically at this prominent site and come up with a more acceptable scheme.

Preparing for, and taking part in planning inquiries is a very strenuous and stressful procedure. Giving evidence means you lay yourself open to being cross examined by the other side's barrister – a daunting experience if ever there was one, so all credit to those who ran the gauntlet at the inquiry.

We have also battled long against proposals for Pricketts in the Broadway which has been the subject of several applications to turn it into a restaurant spreading into Victoria Road. This too has gone to appeal and we have resubmitted our objections to the loss of this valuable retail outlet and yet another proposal for an eating establishment in the Broadway.

St Clement's Hall site has also been up for development again with yet another alien design, which would not enhance this important approach site to the town and visually prominent area. Thankfully the Borough Council members turned development down yet again. So like the Bell we hope the developers will listen to local views and go back to the drawing board for a more appropriate scheme.

It must seem to members that we are continually objecting to developments. There are many applications which are not contentious and which cause no conservation issues and we express our views and indeed welcome some of these. But inevitably it is the high profile, highly commercial sites which hit the headlines.

The Leigh Society takes its planning role very seriously and will continue to battle against developments which harm the special character and townscape of Leigh and to support developments which enhance it.

We will shortly be distributing the Borough Council's conservation leaflets to properties in the 4 conservation areas in an effort to make home owners more aware of their responsibilities if they live in such an area.

## Walking Free

Sometimes we walk the country park  
crossing the creek from Two Tree Island  
as the tide allows

along the river, past the castle,  
open land and open skies,  
long views beyond the Thames.

Sometimes we walk in Belfairs Park  
past the cafe (where the poets meet)  
to Great Wood, Dodds Grove, Bramble Road  
and on beyond to Pound and Starve/ark Woods,  
through crowded trees that whisper where we go  
and change their costume as the seasons pass.

Sometimes we walk the tall sea walls  
when the tide is at it's highest  
water washes past our feet  
egrets, oyster catchers, avocets  
loiter along the banks, then fly  
as we disturb their privacy.

We walk because our lives are so confined,  
we walk away from our captivity'  
to freedom in the woods and fields and sea.

## FLUTTERBY MR BUTTERFLY

Some of you may have seen David Bellamy on TV recently and reports in the press about the setting up of a multi million pound facility 'Butterfly World' near St Albans. The project was officially launch by Sir David Attenborough in March.

Butterfly World will be the world's biggest walk-through butterfly experience, with more than 10,000 tropical butterflies in flight at any one time.

The project follows a report last year on the decline of British butterflies, 5 species having become extinct and many more at risk.

The project is expected to be fully operational in 2011 – so Ann there's one for the outings diary.

Here in South Essex we have Hadleigh Great Wood and Dodd's Grove Site of Special Scientific Interest which is home to a wide variety of butterfly species.

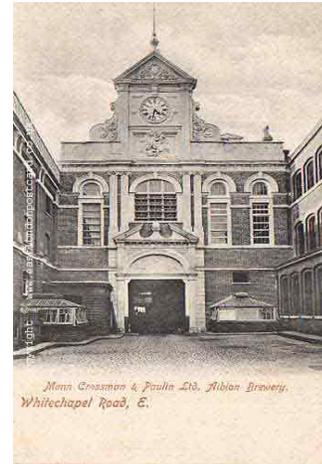
Click <http://www.essexwt.org.uk/thumbs/butterflies.htm> which will take you to the Essex Wildlife Trust's web site where pictures of butterflies found in Essex can be found. Next time you are out for a ramble see if you can spot any.

## FROM WHITECHAPEL TO BURTON-ON-TRENT VIA LEIGH

Take a look in the Old Town next time you go down and especially at the windows of the Peterboat. Probably best seen from the outside (but nothing to stop you going in afterwards) is an engraved window to brewers Mann, Crossman & Paulin - London & Burton-upon-Trent. The brewery no longer exists having merged with Watneys in 1958.

Burton had a long and illustrious history as a brewing town and in 1888 this particular brewery employed 365 men and boys. Several breweries with headquarters outside Burton opened breweries in the town, in the hope of sharing in the success the Bass company was enjoying there. Albion brewery was opened in 1874 by Mann, Crossman, & Paulin Ltd.

Manns had started out in 1808 when an Albion Brewery was built in the Whitechapel Road in London by Richard Ivory, landlord of the Blind Beggar. I suspect most of our members will remember the notoriety of the Blind Beggar s in the 1960s.



In the 1860s, the London drinker started to move away from porter and acquired a taste for "light sparkling ales", brewed at Burton-on-Trent. The Company decided to follow fashion and built a new brewery, another "Albion Brewery", at Burton. However, when they discovered that East End water could be used to brew these "light sparkling ales", they sold that brewery and moved production to London in 1897. By 1880, Mann, Crossman & Paulin and Company was the ninth largest brewer in the country. Another fashion, in the latter half of the nineteenth, was the growing demand for bottle beers. To meet this demand the Company purchased the old Whitechapel Workhouse in Ravens Row, on the southside of Whitechapel Road, near the **Brewery**, and built a bottling plant. By the turn of the century, beer production had reached nearly 500,000 barrels.

In 1901 Mann, Crossman & Paulin become a public company. The Company had its moment of history during the "[Siege of Sidney Street](#)" in 1911, when the brewery became front page news throughout the country. After the killing of three policemen in the City of London, one of the perpetrators had been traced to a flat at 100 Sidney Street, opposite the Company's bottle plant in Ravens Row. A policeman, shot in the early stage of the siege, was carried into the bottling plant. Here his wounds were dressed before being taken to the London Hospital. Sharpshooters of the Scots Guards, placed in the high water tower of the bottling plant, were able to get a clear shot into the house. The house eventually caught alight and the criminals perished. One of the most famous pictures in English photographic history is of Winston Churchill at the siege.

During the Second World War the **Albion Brewery** found itself in the front line again when the **Brewery** had its own Home Guard contingent and fire fighting unit. Like much of the East End, the **Brewery** suffered bomb damage. The stables had a direct hit killing and injuring many of their famous shire horses. Information and photograph reproduced by kind permission of The East London Postcard Site. Go to <http://www.eastlondonpostcard.co.uk> for more great East London pictures.

## SAVE OUR SHOP FRONTS

As part of our panning remit we have raised the issue of preserving the traditional Broadway shopfronts with the Borough Council. An example would be Grindleys, but there are others. These are an important part of the streetscene and we will be doing a survey and advising the Council which of the shopfronts they should seek to preserve should the premises come up for changes.

**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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