



# LEIGHWAY

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

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Another year, another opportunity to thank you for your support during the year.

The committee has been very busy again, and I would like to mention, particularly, the Planning sub-committee. They are a dedicated and knowledgeable group, who work hard in scrutinizing, and making recommendations on, planning applications. I feel that they deserve our special thanks for this work.

Another important task this year has been our start on archiving. We hope to make a computer record of all our photos, documents and artefacts. The necessary equipment has been purchased and a start made, involving several members of the Society, under the guidance of Carole and Dec Mulroney. This will make access to photos etc. easier, as well as providing a backup should anything get damaged.

The museum has flourished with the much appreciated work of our many stewards.

Several of the stewards also help when we have visiting school groups. This is a demanding, but very rewarding activity, and the many letters received from the children prove how important it is. School visits are now enhanced by our Education Pack, provided free of charge to visiting groups. It has taken a long time to produce, but teachers are finding it very valuable. A copy is always available in the Museum if members would like to see it.

I will finish by saying that our members are great but we can always do with more, so do encourage your friends and neighbours to join the society.

I look forward to seeing you at the A.G.M.

Ann Price

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

Another very active year for the Society and I would like to say how much we appreciate the continued support and interest of our membership. We especially thank those members who are able to attend our meetings, go on Ann's outings, make up teams for Sally's quiz nights and respond to articles in the Leighway.

Apart from co-ordinating and communicating with the various activities, I have represented the Society on the

local amenity societies' conservation forum on the Southend Council's Conservation Working Party when we have the opportunity to raise issues and make a contribution to discussions with officers and councillors on matters concerning the Town's conservation areas etc.

I also attend, on the Society's behalf, the Town Council's newly formed Old Town Community Group, which is chaired by Carole. All of these groups endeavour to inform, protect and improve those areas of the Town which we most care about. A constant battle!!

We are affiliated to the River Thames Society and the Thames Estuary Partnership and CPRESsex which keep us informed about the wider issues that concern us.

Ann has thanked the many committee members and helpers but I would like to thank Ann for the amount of time that she gives to the Society and the Heritage Centre which encourages all of us.

Best Wishes, Margaret

## PLUMBS YARD REPORT

Despite best endeavours we have been so busy this year that we have not got round to closing down the Company and Charity. We are on the case though and this will be done shortly. The Cottage is still a major attraction in the Old Town with people visiting time and again and bringing their friends.

Carole Mulroney

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just a gentle reminder for those who still have not paid their Subs. For those of you who pay by standing order there is no need for you to do anything. Anyone who wants to pay that way please get in touch so we can get it set up for you. The next Leighway will carry an updated standing order form for those who already use this facility and for those that want to. We would ask as many members as possible to use this method as it does save quite a bit of time and costs for the Society. Subs are £10 UK and £15 overseas. We need your support so please don't let your membership lapse.

## LEIGH HILL

I am researching the history of Leigh Hill, through its buildings and the people who lived there from the its early development to the 1980's. If you have any information or personal photographs of your families time living on Leigh Hill and would be happy to allow me to use them in my book, please contact me: Carol Edwards, 28 Exford Avenue, Westcliff-on- Sea, Essex SSO OEF

## PLANNING

This year has been another busy one for planning, with probably the most momentous application being the airport. Obviously not a conservation area or within the town, but its profound effect on the amenity of Leigh and its residents caused us and others major concerns.

The other significant event was the arrival of Tesco in the Broadway. Not everyone's favourite event and some of their planning applications left a lot to be desired with regard to the effect on the Conservation Area. Thankfully the Borough Council took the same view and managed to get the proposals modified. However, Tesco are appealing against a refusal of an ATM in the frontage, something we objected to because of the narrowness of the pavement.

We have considered a total of 57 applications in the last year and we also take an interest in licensing applications which may affect the conservation areas and respond to Council consultations on planning issues.

Out thanks go to our planning panel comprising Alan, Elaine and Carole and especially to David Greenwood who advises us on architectural matters.

With a general election looming some of you may be interested in the Tory's proposals for radically altering the planning system – these include –

- a simple and consolidated national planning framework, with national economic and environmental priorities and a system to deliver them.
- abolishing regional planning and the Infrastructure Planning Commission;
- allowing use of land and buildings for any purpose allowed in the local plan;
- limiting appeals;
- giving local people the power to engage in local planning through a collaborative process;
- encouraging authorities to compile infrastructure plans;
- establishing a presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- ensuring that significant local projects have to be designed through a collaborative process involving the neighbourhood;
- faster approvals process where a significant majority of the immediate residential neighbours raise no objection.
- ensuring that all other major infrastructure is considered at planning inquiries which have binding timetables, and which are governed by the national planning framework.

Whether this will all work remains to be seen!!

## DEAR DIARY

All our talks are held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m entry charge of £1 for members and £2 for visitors. Our events and others for your enjoyment are as follows -

20 April – Society visit to Dover Castle  
21 April – Society AGM and slides of Leigh  
3 May – May Day on Strand Wharf  
12 May – Society talk on Paglesham – Ann Boulter  
12-20 June – Leigh Art Trail  
25-27 June – Folk Festival  
25 July – Fishing Festival  
11-12 September - Regatta  
13 October – Society talk on Leigh buildings – David Greenwood  
10 November – Society talk on the History of the Palace Theatre

Ann is hoping to arrange another theatre trip to Southwold in August

## BETTY GIRLING [NEE CHURCH] 1921 - 2010

Sad news from Richard Westlake –

It is with regret that I inform you of the death of my mother-in-law, Mrs Betty Girling, who was a subscriber to your magazine.

Betty was a leading light over many years at the Leigh Methodist Church and with the guiding movement. Following the death of her husband, John, and with increasing infirmity, she moved in 2005 to Fullands Court, an English Courtyard development of wardened apartments in Taunton, Somerset to be near her daughter, Elizabeth. Here she enjoyed a renewed life at both the Temple Methodist Church in Taunton and at the Fullands Court community. She enjoyed the surrounding countryside, lunches at village inns and cream teas. Unfortunately, on 5 February 2010 she died suddenly at Musgrove Park Hospital of pneumonia, at the age of 88. Our sincere condolences go to Betty's family.

## FAMILY HISTORY WEB SITES

Researching your family history is one of the most popular pastimes in this country and, indeed, around the world. The internet has played a huge part in this upsurge and it is now possible to search on a variety of sites.

For those of you who may be interested in Leigh family and social history here are some sites which may be helpful. If anyone knows of any more please contact Carole as we hope to draw up a leaflet for visitors to the Heritage Centre.

Emery -  
<http://www.daphnejohnson.btinternet.co.uk/Mason/Emery/emerygh.html>  
Osborne <http://www.osbornebros.co.uk/history.htm>  
Cotgrove  
<http://homepages.tesco.net/~nhholding/cotpagefive.htm>  
Joscelyne <http://www.peterjoslin.btinternet.co.uk/>

## PLACES FOR A DAY OUT

Seventy years ago the wartime government announced the introduction of food rationing – a control that was to remain in force for the next 14 years. To mark this event, the Imperial War Museum London is opening 'The Ministry of Food', a major new exhibition to show how the British public adapted to a world of food shortages.

The exhibition runs until January 2011 Adults £4.95, Concessions and Groups £3.95, Children £2.50, Family £13.00

## AND FOR NEXT YEAR

Carole and Dec recently visited the Who Do You Think You Are Fair at Olympia.

This is the third year of the Fair (previously run by the Society of Genealogists on a much smaller scale) and it served to show how researching your family and social history is more popular than ever.

There were many stands from different County family history societies, with their databases of information for people to search. Many archive organisations attended, including the Times Archive, and there were also military history and archaeology sections and many stands from around the world for people who may be researching their foreign ancestors. There are many workshops on specific subjects with celebrities from the TV show chatting to people.

All in all it is a very fun and informative day out – but beware take your own refreshments (there is plenty of room to sit and eat them) the in-show catering is very expensive.

Keep a look out at the end of the year for adverts for next year's show as you can usually buy tickets at 2 for the price of 1 if you get them in advance.

## STILL SEARCHING

Member Tony Carr is still searching for information on some 'Old Towners' – can you help?

'In recent times the Leigh end of the town is forgotten and Eastwood also, despite the recent airport furore!

I recently met up with an old school pal (ex Westleigh and Belfairs) in Elm Road, who tells me that his family also lived in the cottages (creekside) rear of the Peterboat. What a small world it is. I am still trying to identify members of the Old Towners on the photo outside the pub entrance which includes my grandfather Thomas Noakes and his niece Nellie'

We Are repeating the photo again from an earlier Leighway in case a memory is stirred – please contact Carole if you can help.

Third from left is Thomas Noakes, fifth from left is his niece Nellie.



## DEAR OLD PUDGE

For many years our Chairman, Ann Price, and husband Barry have organised a week or 5 day charter on Thames barges, 'Pudge' or Centaur and for the last 7 or 8 years our secretary, Margaret Buckey has enjoyed the trips too, with member, Pat Gaskell, a new addition to the crew in recent years – it sounds like a jolly time is had by all.

Sailing mostly out of Maldon and latterly from Ipswich on Centaur, as Pudge still needs a lot of money to complete a refit.

It is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dunkirk this year and as the barges are so much a part of the Estuary's maritime history Margaret thought our readers would like to know a bit about one of these grand old vessels.



'Pudge' was built in Rochester and launched in 1922 and was one of 30 spritsail barges that went to Dunkirk as part of Operation Dynamo. Approaching the beaches the tug hit a mine and sank along with the two other barges. Pudge and her crew were able to rescue the tug boat skipper the cabin boy John Atkins, aged 14 and the crew of the barges were lost. John had written to his mother to tell her he was going to Dover on the Friday the next day and had been told they might never come back - he signed the letter 'Don't worry, John'.

Some of the barges were abandoned on the beach, others were relaunched by soldiers and sailed back home.

Pudge was towed back to Ramsgate by the tug Tanga. Eddie Fry, the 15 year old 'boy' on the Tanga told how they 'were told to round up anything that floated and take them from England to Dunkirk Harbour. On the return we took Pudge in tow. I looked into the hold which was full of French soldiers. The Stukkas dive bombed us, screaming. You thought they were coming straight at you it was horror. We towed her through it all back to England.'

Pudge is one of only four of the Dunkirk Spritsail barges that survive. The Thames Sailing Barge Trust is resolved to save her for posterity.

Pudge is member of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships and is entitled to fly the flag of St George.

The Trust is run entirely by volunteers and exists to preserve Thames Barges and pass on the traditions and skills of maintaining and sailing them. Any member of the public can come sailing on the Barges, volunteer to help with ongoing preservation projects or with running the Trust, or become a member.

If you would like to help in preserving this magnificent vessel you can contact the Trust at <http://www.bargetrust.org> where you can also find out more about their work.

## THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE DUNDONALD AVENUE

Dundonald Avenue , next to Lord Roberts Avenue,  
and like its neighbor, celebrating a great military  
leader.



Admiral Thomas Cochrane, 10th Earl of Dundonald, Marquess do Maranhão, GCB, ODM (Chile) (1775 - 1860) was a senior British naval flag officer and radical politician. He was a daring and successful captain in the Napoleonic Wars, when the French nicknamed him 'Le Loup des Mers' ('The Sea Wolf'). His life and exploits inspired the naval fiction of nineteenth and twentieth-century novelists, particularly C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower and Patrick O'Brian's, Jack Aubrey.

Cochrane first served in the Baltic Sea and then the Americas. In the Mediterranean in 1798 he was court martialled for showing disrespect to his first lieutenant, and reprimanded for flippancy.

In 1801 in Malta an argument with a French Royalist officer led to a duel where he wounded the Frenchman with a pistol shot.

In August 1806, he took command of HMS Imperieuse, where one of his midshipmen was Frederick Marryat, who later wrote fictionalized accounts of his adventures with Cochrane.

In June that year he had stood for Parliament for the potwalloper borough of Honiton (**Potwalloper borough**: all male householders and lodgers could vote. The term refers to anyone who had a hearth on which to boil (wallop) a cauldron (pot)). Votes were mostly sold to the highest bidder. Cochrane offered nothing and lost the election. The following October he ran again and won and years later revealed that he had paid ten guineas per voter through the local headman and banker.

In 1812, he eloped with a beautiful orphan more than twenty years his junior and his wealthy uncle, Basil Cochrane, disinherited him. When his father died he became the 10th Earl of Dundonald.

He was certainly no stranger to controversy. In 1814, claims of Napoleon's death were seemingly confirmed by a man in a red staff officer's uniform posing as a Colonel de Bourg. Share prices rocketed, particularly in a government stock called Omnium. The claims were a hoax and the Stock Exchange discovered that several men had sold substantial amounts of Omnium stock during the boom, and, it was assumed, were responsible for both the hoax and subsequent fraud. Cochrane had disposed of his entire holding and was one of the six. It was claimed that Colonel de Bourg was an impostor called de Berenger who had been seen entering Cochrane's house on the day of the hoax.

The evidence against Cochrane hinged on the colour of De Berenger's uniform. Cochrane admitted the visit but that De Berenger was wearing a green sharpshooter's

uniform and had called to request passage to America aboard Cochrane's new command. Cochrane's servants confirmed this, but a hackney carriage driver swore that De Berenger was wearing a scarlet uniform when he left him at Cochrane's house. Cochrane said that he had given standing instructions to his broker that his Omnium shares were to be sold if the price rose by 1 per cent, and he would have made much more if he had waited until it reached its peak price.

He was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment, fined £1,000 (about £50,000 today) and ordered to stand in the pillory opposite the Royal Exchange for one hour. He was also dismissed from the Royal Navy, expelled from Parliament and, on the orders of the Prince Regent, lost his knighthood in a degradation ceremony at Westminster Abbey when his banner was taken down and kicked out of the chapel and down the steps outside. Within a month he was re-elected as MP for Westminster and following a public outcry, his sentence to the pillory was rescinded for fears it would lead to a riot.

For the rest of his life he campaigned tirelessly to restore his damaged reputation and clear his name.

In May 1817, at the request of Chilean leader, Bernardo O'Higgins, he took command of the Chilean Navy in Chile's war of independence against Spain and in 1823 he commanded the Brazilian Navy and blockaded the Portuguese in Bahia, forcing them to evacuate to Maranhão where again they surrendered. In 1824 he resigned after Brazil had achieved its independence.

He became Governor of the Province of Maranhão and Emperor Pedro I of Brazil created him the Marquess do Maranhão, but, he left Brazil in November 1825 and returned to Europe, where between March 1827 and December 1828 he took an active role in the campaign to secure Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire.

In 1832 he was granted a pardon and restored to the Navy List with a promotion to rear-admiral and 25 years later, with the personal intervention of Queen Victoria, his knighthood was restored and he was created a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. In 1860 his banner returned to Westminster Abbey; the day before his funeral.

In 1876, his grandson received a payment of £40,000 from the British government in compensation for his conviction which was believed to be unjust. This equates to nearly £2.75M in today's money.

Cochrane was also an inventor and scientist and In 1805 entered a Royal Navy competition for a superior convoy lamp. Believing that the judges would be biased against him, a friend entered for him. His invention won and he revealed his identity but the Royal Navy never purchased any of the lamps.

In 1818, Cochrane patented, together with Brunel, the tunneling shield that Brunel used in the building of the Thames Tunnel in 1825-43.

## 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.

© Leigh Society, Leigh Heritage Centre, 13A High Street, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 2EN