



LEIGHWAY

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

HAPPY AUTUMN

Here we are again at the tail end of another year, how they do fly. This is the last Leighway before Christmas – do I hear you groan that it is so close?

Please keep the articles and requests coming as the next Leighway will be in January.

We get a wide variety of requests and information via our website, which is a great success, so do take a look at it.

www.leighsociety.co.uk

JOAN FOYSTER

It is with great regret that we have to report on the passing of Joan Foyster, a Vice-President of the Society, at the age of 92.

Joan's association with the Society goes back to its foundations, when her late husband, Dick was instrumental in the reconstruction of the Smithy, which is now such an integral and successful part of the Society's activities. Our upper meeting room is named in his honour. (see Leighway 23 – January 2008)

Joan herself attended Southend High School for Girls from the age of 12 when her family moved to the Borough from Ilford. Joan was also a member of the Leigh Sailing Club for 55 years and spent many happy years sailing off Leigh, or in later life, walking through the Old Town with family and friends.

We would like to express our heartfelt sympathy to Joan's family at this very sad time.

OUR NEW MAYOR

Most of you will know that the new Mayor of Southend is our own very local man, David Norman. Although David represents Victoria Ward on the Borough Council he is a true Leighman and has served the Borough since 1965.

David has always been a great advocate for Leigh and we would very much like to congratulate him on his becoming Mayor.

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 –

17-18 September – Old Leigh Regatta

12 October – Thames Sailing Barges A Past and A Future – David Gibson

9 November – Southend Old and New – Simon Deacon

25 November – Christmas Lights Switch on

ISLE OF WIGHT

What better way to celebrate a truly glorious visit to the Isle of Wight, Royal Wedding and all, than a verse from our Chairman and outings organizer extraordinaire – well done Ann it was a great trip.

We journeyed forth, a brave and cheerful band
across the Solent to another land
where time stands still - well almost,
and the weather's fine.

Wall to wall sunshine, and the air's like wine.
Victoria loved it, and she was the Queen,
we saw her Osborne, Carisbrooke and 'Island Steam'.
So should you find you have some time to spare
hop on a ferry - you will soon be there!

SCHOOLS LOVE US

We thought it was about time we paid tribute to our gallant helpers and others who take the time out of their busy days to come down to the Heritage Centre when we entertain school groups. Especial thanks goes to Lyn Austin who co-ordinates these visits (not always an easy task). Lyn has managed this for several years now and does a cracking job and we get plenty of letters back from the children who are told about Leigh and its history. Teachers are given one of our excellent education packs which help them to focus on the various subjects relating to Leigh.

All in all everyone does a splendid job and this is borne out by the number of children who bring mum and dad back so they can show off what they have learnt about Leigh. The shop side does well too as every child needs that extra pencil or rubber or toy soldier. Well done all of you.

PLANNING UPDATE

St George's School, Hadleigh Road – the latest application on this site by Marden Homes has been refused.

Overton Garage site – it is proposed to use this site as a temporary car park until redevelopment is approved.

Snooker Hall – we await the outcome of the appeal against development for flats.

St Clement's Hall – the developers wish to provide 10 additional flats and to not provide the community hall. This has been strongly resisted by the Society and the Town Council.

The Bell – an application to provide the new flats before refurbishing the hotel was refused. A new application to convert the hotel into flats (with the other new development) is currently under consideration.

OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION ?

DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT

Following the request for information on St George's School, Hadleigh Road from Stephen Matthews in Vancouver, member, Stuart Brewer was able to shed some light on the initial's OGA which Stephen discovered on a document of his mother's, a pupil of St George's. Understandably the obvious conclusion was that OGA stood for Old Girls' Association but Stuart thinks this is not correct and, his mother having had the same initials after her name, suggests that this is actually the Order of Gregg's Artists, a shorthand qualification.

Never having heard of this – some investigation was needed.

John Robert Gregg was born in Ireland in 1867. His father, who worked for the railroad, had an inventive, inquiring mind and great things were expected of John, but on his second day at school, his teacher grew so angry with his whispering with a school-mate that he “crashed the children's heads together so violently that he severely damaged John's hearing.” Fearing his father's anger, John did not report the incident and his injury was not treated. With his hearing impaired, John had difficulty in school and was thereafter considered slow-witted.



When he was ten, the family was visited by a journalist friend, who John observed taking notes using the Pitman shorthand system. John's father was so impressed he decided that his children should learn the system – all except his youngest child, who was considered too “simple.” The experiment was not a success and one by one the Gregg children abandoned it. John, however, decided that he would learn another system of shorthand created in 1786 by Samuel Taylor. Although John excelled at it, he was still a poor scholar and left the village school after 6 years with no further education.

In 1878, the family moved to Glasgow where John worked as an office boy in a lawyer's office. He became a self-educated man, reading American history and attending debates and lectures, at which he took notes in shorthand. At 18 he won a gold medal in a shorthand competition. Eventually he mastered the Pitman system but disliked it and continued to investigate others.

Although shorthand became associated with secretarial positions, in John's youth it was a time-saving measure used by intellectuals, lawyers, preachers, politicians, and authors. Shorthand associations formed and members met to discuss and debate the artistry and science of shorthand and the pursuit of an ideal system. John came to be regarded as an authority, although he was only 19. One day a man named Malone, who ran his own shorthand school, asked John to become a teacher at his school. Malone confided that he was working on a new system of shorthand much like the one John was perfecting and the two men began to collaborate. In 1885 *Script Phonography* was published with Malone listed as sole author. John received no recompense for his rights in the project.

Disillusioned by Malone's betrayal but spurred into action, John continued to work on devising a new and better shorthand system. He moved to Liverpool and set up a shorthand school which flourished.

John resurrected his old notes and published 500 copies of *Light-Line Phonetic Hand-Writing*, describing the basic principles of his shorthand system. His students easily and quickly reaching a speed of 100 words a minute.

John had to defend himself in court against a suit brought by Malone, who claimed that Gregg's shorthand system infringed on his copyrighted system; the case was dismissed in 1890. Although the legal costs set John back in his efforts to publicise Light-Line shorthand, thanks to favourable reviews Gregg shorthand was becoming known in North America and by 1896 dozens of American public schools were teaching it.

By 1907 John was so successful that he opened an office in New York and moved there, becoming a patron of the fine and applied arts and a supporter of struggling young artists. Meanwhile, the popularity of his shorthand system grew and was admitted to two prestigious universities, Columbia (New York) and the University of California-Berkeley. In 1918 for the first time a Gregg student won the National Shorthand Reporters Association contest.

After World War I John travelled extensively throughout Great Britain, hoping to popularize his system here. He was not quite as successful as in America, but he saw it become popular in France, Germany, Poland, Spain and, especially, Latin America, where for years his birthday was a national holiday.

In the 1930s John began writing a history of shorthand and continued publishing *The Gregg Writer*.

For his voluntary work on behalf of Allied soldiers and British civilians during World War II he was awarded a medal for “Service in the Cause of Freedom” in 1947. In 1948, he suffered a heart attack and died in Cannondale, Connecticut at the age of eighty.

Are there any other readers who went to St George's and gained this qualification?

DO YOU REMEMBER MAPLE DURHAM SCHOOL?

Member Terry Birdseye wrote to say that when he was four years old, in 1950 he was sent, rather unwillingly to a prep school called Maple Durham.

A quick look at the Kelly's Directory for 1933 showed that the school was run by a Miss E Dodd and was called Maple Durham situated at 124 Leigh Hall and 129 Oakleigh Park Drive.

Terry is looking for anyone else who went to the school and has memories of it – although he admits his own are not that pleasant and he remembers being taught by ‘two very frightening old ladies.’

If anyone attended the school or has information about it please get in touch with Carole on carole.mulroney@btinternet.com or through the Heritage Centre.

DO YOU RECALL THE NAME DEPRADINES

Or indeed De Pradines. We have been asked if anyone remembers Ernest Depradines who it is believed had a chandlers in Leigh. Please get in touch with Carole if you can help.

HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

Deep in the heart of Brittany and the end of a lane off a lane – and it's my birthday. Where would I like to go for my birthday treat? I secretly yearn to mark my three score years and ten drunk on heady lungfuls of rotting cockles and Leigh mud, the best smell in the world. But failing that I haven't yet been to Josselin, famed for its chateau. So we set off in glorious sunshine along country roads delicately edged with all the colourful tracery of spring. Forty minutes later and we're winding down steep cobbled streets with a wealth of half timbered houses to the arched stone bridge over the river – and there it is, a fairy tale castle with its witch hat turrets reflected in the waters of the Oust.



Being out of season it's closed of course, but we settle ourselves in the splendid Hotel du Chateau on the opposite bank, at a window table with the castle framed in front of us. We lunch very well on good sound French cuisine. Sitting back replete over coffee nothing can dent my rosy world, not even being asked in a 'moment senior' if there's enough in the housekeeping... After lunch our digestif is a glorious walk along the river, and back home that evening, it's been a truly lovely day to store in the memory bank.

A couple of months later sees me back in England and paying my usual visit to the Heritage Centre. It's a pleasure to find Margaret and Ann free to chat while business is slack. Out of the blue Margaret asks if I live anywhere near Josselin. To my great surprise she tells me the Joscelyne family of Chalkwell's Joscelyne's Beach actually trace their ancestry there! So I was connecting with home on my birthday after all, if only I'd known.

Janet Fisher



HOMELAND 1912

Does anyone recognize this property, called Homeland? Does it still exist? Does anyone know who the 2 people in the picture maybe?

Unfortunately the house was built in 1912 so just missed the 1911 census to be able to know anything about it. It looks like a Leigh type house and has a typical Leigh front wall.

THE QUEST FOR THE WHITE WEED CONTINUED

Following Jennifer Simpson's interesting article "The Quest for the White Weed", I feel I can add a few details to her account.

Leigh's original fishing fleet, normally employed at shrimping, whitebaiting and cockling were the first to trawl for white weed, usually when their other employment was slack. In the early fifties demand for the weed increased considerably. All types of boat were brought in to rake the weed from the bottom. These included a former RNLI lifeboat called "Frogman's Miss", not much changed in appearance, whose owner had been a naval frogman and intended to use his skills as a diver to collect weed underwater. This was not successful and "Frogman's Miss" then trawled rakes like the other boats.

Other imported boats included ships' lifeboats, motor yachts, Colchester smacks, Rye beachboats and Zulus and Fifties, probably originally fishing under sail, from Scotland. Many of these boats were already in poor condition and badly equipped and, as a result, several were lost. Eventually there were approximately fifty boats gathering white weed from Leigh with others working from Southend

When the trawler "Radiant" went aground on the Maplin sands during a weeding voyage, an attempt was made to tow her off using wire rope as a towline. Unfortunately her mate stood in the middle of the coil of wire and as the tow began it tightened up round his legs, nearly severing them. He was picked up by ambulance at Southend Pier head and rushed to hospital where both legs were amputated. A memorable dance was held in St. Clement's Church Hall to raise money for him to have artificial legs. Near Klondike conditions existed in Old Leigh at the height of the white weed craze and the pubs did a roaring trade. It was not unknown for the buyers of the weed to wade out into the creek to meet the first boats home on the tide and bargain for their catch. It was common practice to add water to the sacks of weed just before they were weighed to increase their value. There were rumours of sabotage with sugar allegedly being added to rival boats' fuel tanks. Certainly there were a couple of unexplained fires that put the affected boats out of action for a while.

When Canvey Island was flooded in 1953, white weeding boats were able to assist. The large former excursion boat "New Pride of Essex", by then trawling for the weed, was taken to Benfleet to act as a floating bridge should the island flood on following tides. She was not needed. Other boats were involved in the delivery of sandbags to patch up seawalls in various parts of the Island.

The weeding industry went into decline, it is believed, after a badly dyed consignment was sent to America. Most of the brought-in boats were dispersed, some being broken-up on Leigh marshes. Probably the only people to benefit from the rush were Leigh's original fishermen, who had shrimping, etc. skills to fall back on and had been careful not to spend too much of the money earned from white weeding.

Graham Dent

Visit our web site at
www.leighsociety.co.uk

PITY THE POOR WORMS

One of Leigh's famous residents of the 1700s was Dr John Cook (1704 -77). He was the son and grandson of apothecaries in Leigh and lived in Old Leigh and is said to have entertained John Wesley there on his visits to the town. (See Leighway Issue 8 January 2002)

Dodsley's Annual Register - *The Annual Register* (originally subtitled "A View of the History, Politicks and Literature of the Year ...") is a long-established reference work, written and published each year, which records and analyses the year's major events, developments and trends throughout the world. The following article comes from 1775. I am not sure we would have been queuing up to see Dr Cook!

Recipe for an excellent Cosmetic, as well as Preventative and Remedy for those nauseous and stubborn Disorders, the Scald-Head and Itch ; and all other Disorders, both internal and external, proceeding from Worms, in Man or Beast ; •which Recipe, accordingly, was some time ago found very beneficial in a Mortality among the Calves ; by Doctor Cook of Leigh, in Essex.

"Leigh, Essex, Feb. 1, 1775.

Experientia Docet.[experience teaches]

As a lucky discovery of a proper medicine that could cure the infectious distemper of horned cattle, would certainly prove of universal utility to the public, I here humbly propose the following prescription, not indeed on certainty of success, at having no instance of its efficacy as yet, but hereafter to make trial of, as experience teaches knowledge.

The recipe is cheap, and its application easy. If that theory be true, that such infectious diseases originally proceed from animalcula [microscopic organism] preying upon the blood and juices, it is highly probable this safe mineral water, may not only cure the cattle after infection, but if previously applied to, may even prevent the catching the disease also.

Was it for no more than its many well known virtues in venereal cases; in curing scald heads; opening obstructions; washing ulcers; killing worms; and all other vermin, whether internally or externally subsisting, by drinking it freely in the first case, and washing the skin often therewith, in the last; it is well worth recommending as a general, neat, safe, cheap, and easy preparation of simple mercury, an excellent medicine of many virtues, fit for all ages, climates, and seasons, much to be wished for, and greatly wanted, and is no more at last than simple rain water impregnated with the most minute smooth particles of pure mercury, or quicksilver ; as safe to use, both internally and externally, as mother's milk, and yet as insipid as water itself was before put thereto.

Boil two gallons of soft water on one pound of purified quick-silver till half the water is wasted, or a lesser, or greater quantity at a time, and that proportionately, as needed; after which pour both into a bottle, to be ready for use ; shake them well first every time when about to use it; give to either man, or beast, as much and often, as they can well drink, to kill worms in the stomach, intestines, bowels, and blood, either by itself, or dashed with milk, or white wine, both for change and stomach's sake; and for cutaneous seculencies [skin discharges is the nearest definition I can find for this] , to wash the skin of both with the same mercurial decoction, warmed every day, as freely as with plain water, which wipe not off, but let dry in.

It was of service once in preserving the farmers' calves, when there was some time ago a mortality among them, occasioned (as was discovered by opening them for examination) from

worms found in their bowels: from a recipe of this kind, published by me in the Gentleman's Magazine.

This simple and safe preparation, makes a very neat cure for the itch, scab, scurf, and all other foulness of the skin, and is likewise a safe, clean, and excellent cosmetic lotion for ladies faces. For such uses make it thus.

Boil two quarts of water on four ounces of quick-silver till half the water is wasted; put both in a bottle for use. The same quicksilver will serve to boil again the same way as often as fresh mercurial water is needed.

But not to take my single word for it. To be better credited in what I write, I will quote two good authorities therefore, one no less than the late excellent philosopher, the honourable Robert Boyle, Esq; from page 392 of his Sceptical Chemist, as it should be spelt, (and not chymist, as it most commonly is) who, near the end of his treatise, writes thus thereon :

" Quicksilver itself also, though the corpuscles it consists of be so very small as to get into the pores of that closest, and compactest of bodies, gold, is yet (you know) altogether tasteless and as Helmont several times tells us, that fair water wherein a little quantity of quicksilver has lain for some time, tho' it acquire no certain taste, or other sensible quality from the quicksilver, yet it has a power to destroy worms in human bodies, which he does much, but not causelessly extol. I remember a great lady that had been eminent for beauty in diverse courts, confessed to me, that this insipid liquor was of all innocent washes for the face, the best that she ever met with."

Next, Helmont, in Vol. II, of his *Ortus Medicinæ*, p. 576, writes thus : If quick-silver be steeped in a large quantity of common water; for this water, although it doth not sip up any of the quick-silver into itself, or is not able to convert it into its own nature, yet it borrows a property, not likewise a substance from the quick-silver, so as that such water being drank, doth kill all kinds of worms, and ascarides [worms], also those which exist where that drink never comes, because it is that which is soon wholly snatched into urine. And that water becomes stronger against worms, if it shall once boil with the quick-silver : so one single ounce of quick-silver shall be able a thousand times to infect a measure of water, and yet remain in its ancient weight and property,

I quote this passage only for the fact, and not the theory, which is both fantastical and false; for the wheyish colour the quick-silver communicates to the water, proves the solution of some of its particles among those of the water that is boiled thereon ; and it is known to decrease in weight and waste also by many repeated boilings ; so that it is strange so eminent a chemist: should teach such erroneous doctrine, and substitute an unintelligible, and metaphysical philosophy, which not only betrays the chemical, but also chimerical enthusiast, as he, his son, and even Paracelsus, all three certainly were."

I think I'll stick to Max factor!!!!

CAN YOU HELP?

A visitor to our website recently bought a rectangular wooden box divided into 2 sections with a bar which acts as a handle which has printed on its side Albert Cox, Shrimp Merchant, Leigh on Sea, Essex. She found it in an antique market in Oxfordshire. The lady came from Leigh and now lives in Stow Maries. If anyone can help with some information on Albert Cox please get in touch with Carole.

Does anyone have any information on Keys Cottages, Billet Lane? Please get in touch with Carole.

COASTGUARDS CONTINUED

Following the mention of Coastguards, member Terry Pond (who was a Coastguard officer for 14 years) wrote to tell us that in St John's Church, behind the Palace Hotel in Southend is a tablet with the following inscription

"The Officers and men of the Coastguard Service have erected this tablet in grateful remembrance of Commander Arthur rant RN sometime inspecting Cmdr of their district who was killed by a fall from his horse on the 6th day of April 1850."

St John's Church is the lifeboat church and was used by Thames Naval Control for many years for their reunion/thanksgiving service. It was also Terry's family church where his was christened, a choir boy, a scout and married. Terry has sent us 2 pictures relating to the Coastguard Service in the area. The first is of the Old Coastguard Station at Shoebury, this closed in 1844 when the service moved to Leigh and the building was taken over by the Board of Ordnance, it is now the site of Thorpe Bay Yacht Club on Thorpe Esplanade.



The second picture is of our own Leigh Coastguard Station which was demolished in 1897.



DOES THE SURNAME BEVERLEY RING A BELL? A REAL LONG SHOT

Particularly if you lived at anytime in Lansdowne Avenue, Leigh and remember a house called Herbert Dean or Dene.

Via our website I have received a request for any information about this family, particularly their son Sydney.

Robert McLaren in Victoria, Australia is writing a local history of two small villages called Ballangeich and Ellerslie in Victoria and including work on men who enlisted at Ellerslie – Sydney was one of these and his name is on the local war memorial.

The family originally came from Norfolk and moved to Leigh sometime between 1901 and 1911.

Mum and Dad were Ernest and Lizzie (nee Coe). Ernest was an insurance agent (the man from the Pru) and young Sydney was

a printer's apprentice in 1911. Sydney's siblings were Beryl, Derek, Guy and Harold.

Sydney's army record says he attended Leigh Road School and served a 5 year apprenticeship with the Reliance Printing Company. Sometime after this around 1912/13 Sydney decided to emigrate to Australia and the Company presented him with a watch and chain on his leaving.

On arriving in Australia Sydney got work as a farm labourer but soon joined the 14th Battalion, Australian Imperial Force. The Battalion was sent to France.

The Battle of Arras took place between 9 April and 16 May 1917 when, British, Canadian, New Zealand, Newfoundland and Australian troops attacked German trenches near Arras on the Western Front. Sydney would have been part of this force.

The following year in May the Battalion was stationed at Allonville and on the morning of 31 May Private Beverley was killed in action during heavy enemy shelling of the billet. He was buried at Allonville Cemetery where 39 other Australian comrades are also laid to rest.

If you have any knowledge of this family or contacts please get in touch with Carole at carole.mulroney@leighsociety.co.uk



The Ellerslie and Ballangeich memorial with Sydney's name on it. The transcript of his obituary from the Southend Standard 11 July 1918 reads.

We regret to have to record the death of Sydney Ernest Beverley of the Australian Force, son of Mr Ernest Wm Beverley of Woodfield Park Drive. Pte Beverley was an old Leigh Road schoolboy under Mr Cherry, and after leaving school was apprentice to the printing business. Finding this not to his liking he went to Australia and began farming. Before joining the army he was doing well and looked forward to seeing his parents coming out to settle down in the new country. He was killed by a shell falling on his billet on May 31st. The parents have received some nice letters from the Chaplain who speaks of Pte Beverley as a son to be proud of and a brave boy who had done his bit for his country.



Private Sydney Beverley

Do any members have knowledge of other Leighmen commemorated on memorials elsewhere – it would be nice to have a record of where they are remembered.

FRED YULE – RADIO CELEBRITY AND POPULAR LHS PRESIDENT



Over the past 86 years, Leigh-on-Sea Horticultural Society has enjoyed the wisdom and support of many fine Presidents, including civic dignitaries and JPs, yet none have been quite so ‘celebrity’ as Fred Yule, the LHS’s popular President from 1970 to 1981.

In the 1930s, 40s and 50s, Fred Yule was a well-known character actor, singer and comedian, frequently to be heard on the radio, and perhaps best known to listeners as Bigga Banga and Norman the Doorman in *I.T.M.A.*, the much-loved WW2 radio show, which ran from 1939 until the sudden death of the star of the show, Tommy Handley, in 1949.

Frederick Robert Yull - he later changed his surname to Yule - was born on 7th October 1893 at Hemsby, Norfolk. His early career was in horticulture, working at the renowned orchid nursery owned by Frederick Sander, known as the Orchid King, at St. Albans in Hertfordshire. It was here that his lifelong love of plants and gardens was first awakened. The young Fred was also keen on amateur dramatics and soon joined a group of local players, appearing in many of their productions. However, the First World War was to see the closure of the orchid nursery and Fred joined the Royal Garrison Artillery, in the rank of Gunner. Unlike many of his comrades, Fred survived the terrible hostilities, and after the war found work on the music halls, becoming famous for his fine and powerful baritone voice.

In 1921, he married a fellow music hall artist, Laura Montgomery, professionally known under her stage-name, Doreen Monte, at St. George’s Hanover Square, Mayfair. By 1926, Fred had joined Catlin’s Royal Pierrots, a touring music hall troupe which, that summer, played at the Floral Pavilion, Wallasey. For the next ten years, he and Laura continued the itinerant life-style common to entertainers, playing music halls throughout the country and living out of a suitcase.

Fred’s first big break came in 1937, when he appeared in an early television production of *The Beggar’s Opera*, broadcast from the BBC studios at Alexandra Palace. His name was now becoming known in broadcasting circles and, in the spring of 1941, his fine voice could be heard playing the part of Bill Bobstay in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. But it was to be a role in radio comedy that made Fred Yule a familiar voice to the listening public.

In 1939, the entertainment show ‘*It’s That Man Again*’ - better known under the acronym ‘*I.T.M.A.*’ - was first broadcast, and quickly became one of the BBC Light Programme’s most popular comedy shows, running until 1949, when the star of the show, Tommy Handley, died from a sudden stroke. Fred joined *I.T.M.A.* in the early 1940s and was soon established as a regular member of the cast.

Further radio work beckoned, with regular appearances in the domestic comedy show, *Ray’s a Laugh*, starring Ted Ray. The show ran from 1949 until 1961, with Fred playing the star’s brother-in-law. In November 1947, to celebrate the BBC’s

Silver Jubilee, a special edition of the popular musical review programme, *Bandwagon*, was broadcast, with Fred sharing the billing with Richard Murdoch and Arthur Askey.

In fact, so popular was Fred Yule at this time that he was included in a set of ‘Radio Celebrities’ cigarette cards issued in 1950 by Carreras.

Dramatic roles also came his way. Fred was cast in the popular science fiction serial, *Journey into Space*, the last BBC radio drama to enjoy higher ratings than television. And an occasional role in *The Archers* featured Fred playing the part of Admiral Bellamy, until the character’s demise in 1964.

Following the end of the Second World War, Fred and Laura moved to Leigh-on-Sea, buying a large detached property in Park Road. His local celebrity status saw Fred opening the Ideal Home Exhibition, held at the Kursaal Exhibition Hall, in February 1949. But, by the end of the 1950s, with Fred now in his mid 60s, his career as an entertainer was gradually fading. And despite the many comedic and dramatic roles he had played over the previous twenty-five years, in radio, and occasionally television, offers of work were drying up.

Shortly after moving to Leigh-on-Sea, Fred’s love of plants and gardening had led him to join the flourishing Leigh Horticultural Society, where his jocular and outward-going personality made him a popular and much loved member. Now, with more time on his hands, he became a regular exhibitor at the Society’s flower shows, showing some of the magnificent chrysanthemum and dahlia blooms grown in his beautiful Park Road garden, and winning many awards.

The ebullient Fred, in smart suit and tie, with his trilby hat sitting jauntily on his head, was always an early visitor to the flower shows, arriving as soon as the doors opened to the public. But this was not just to learn whether his blooms had secured awards; he would make straight for the tea room, where he could be found consuming vast quantities of cream cakes and cups of tea! In 1971, Fred enthusiastically accepted the position of President of Leigh Horticultural Society, an office he executed with great professional skill and wit, until ill-health forced him to stand down in 1981.

Sadly, Fred’s health continued to decline, and he passed away, at the grand old age of 89, on 11 December 1982. Laura, his supportive and loving wife for over sixty years, survived him for another nine years, until her death in May 1991.

Although Fred Yule never achieved the fame and celebrity of many of today’s radio and television performers, he had been a most popular entertainer, and a mainstay of many successful BBC radio programmes. His memory lives on in the BBC’s archive of popular shows of the mid 20th century, a fitting tribute to the LHS’s ‘celebrity’ President!

© Jim Sanctuary

With grateful thanks to Jim Sanctuary of the LHS for this interesting article



Fred Yule (left) with Tommy Handley and Hattie Jacques

HEAVEN FOREFEND – A WOMAN ON THE TOWN COUNCIL



This year has seen re-elections to Leigh-on-Sea Town Council which was revived in 1996, Leigh having been swallowed up by Southend in 1913.

Nowadays we do not bat an eyelid at women on the Council, in fact at present 5 out of the 16 Councillors are woman including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. However, even before woman got the vote themselves there were lady councillors.

The Southend and Westcliff Graphic of February 1908 reports the amazing rumour that a lady was intending to stand for the Town Council. Earlier editions had shown that the Town Council was not exactly the calmest of places and there had been some bitter words between councillors across the committee table.

Whether Mary Spencer Warren was galvanized by this and thought that a woman could do better was what an intrepid journalist set out to find out.

Mary Spencer Warren lived in Avenue Road, but had been born in Northampton in about 1873. On the 1911 census she is a single lady sharing the house with another single woman Ellen Murrell Hammond a teacher of shorthand from Fulham.

At the time of the article Miss Spencer Warren was the founder and Secretary of the local branch of the Primrose League (see separate article).

The reporter first asked Miss Spencer Warren if the rumours were true. She was rather coy about this but confirmed that the suggestion had been put to her that she should stand and that given the recent reports in the press about the male contingent's behaviour in Council she felt a woman's opinion would be of value and a woman's presence would have a calming effect with the men curbing their behavior in front of a lady. How times have changed!!!

She believed very strongly that women should take their full share in the constitutional privileges of the country (although she did not expand on what she thought these were given they did not have the vote). She supported the aims of the Suffragettes but not their methods.

Mary had travelled widely and had studied the local government in many countries, including the United States. She was well known and respected in Leigh and the author of the article felt that should she enter the race for the Town Council she would no doubt add interest to the proceedings.

Away from any political ambitions, Mary was a reasonably prolific and well respected author of a number of articles which appeared both in national press and the Strand Magazine as well as the international press. These are some examples of her articles –

- How Ireland Is Governed *The Harmsworth London Magazine* Apr 1903
- Memories of Holyrood, *The Harmsworth London Magazine* Mar 1903
- Queen Alexandra. Her Jubilee Amongst Us, *Pearson's Magazine* Mar 1913
- The Queen of England and Her Sandringham Cottages *Pearson's Magazine (US)* May 1902

- The Vatican's Prisoner – How the Pope spends his days – New York Times, originally in the Daily Mail

An article entitled the Queen of Holland gave Mary access to hitherto unseen palaces of the Dutch Royal family and can be viewed at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10020/10020-h/s37s2.html>. At the moment it is not known whether Mary did stand for election to the Town Council – that's for another day in the library.

THE PRIMROSE LEAGUE

The Primrose League, of which Miss Spencer Warren was a high ranking official in Leigh has its origins in Parliament.

The primrose was the favourite flower of Benjamin Disraeli, and Queen Victoria sent a wreath of primroses to his funeral with the handwritten message: "His favourite flowers: from Osborne: a tribute of affectionate regard from Queen Victoria." On the day of the unveiling of Disraeli's statue all Conservative members of the House of Commons were decorated with the primrose.

A small group had for some time discussed the means for obtaining the support of the people for Conservative principles and it was decided to found a 'primrose league', membership of which included Lord Randolph Churchill

The motto was *Imperium et libertas*; the seal, three primroses; and the badge, a monogram containing the letters PL, surrounded by primroses. Ladies were generally included in the first organization of the League, but subsequently a separate Ladies Branch and Grand Council were formed.

Sir Winston Churchill stated that, at its peak, the Primrose League had one million paid up members "determined to promote the cause of Toryism". Membership of the League was "well over a million by the early 1890s" and at that time enjoyed more support than the British trade union movement. However by 1912 the League's membership had fallen to just over 650,000 prior to World War II, the League was still able to pack the Royal Albert Hall for its annual Grand Habitation. It continued its activities after the war and celebrated its Centenary in 1983 The League's *Gazette* carried articles by leading politicians of the day - Margaret Thatcher included - but it began to decline and the *Daily Telegraph* reported on 16 December 2004: "this week saw a significant event for any observers of political history: after 121 years, the Primrose League was finally wound up.

THE BROADWAY IN 1911

Here's a new project giving you all a chance to rummage in those attics. The 1911 census which was released this year allows us for the first time to look at the Broadway at a fixed point and see just what type of shopping centre it had become since the 1901 census. I have list of all the premises in the Broadway and their occupiers from the census and am now looking for photographs of these. For instance Palmer and Sons at 11-13 were my own family (now Clements Arcade).

There are other well known names like Johnsons and Dossetts and many more.

This would make a very valuable contribution to the Society's archives and to our displays in the Heritage Centre for the many school children who come to visit us. So please dig deep and see if you have any old photos of Broadway shops. If anyone would like a list of the 1911 shops to search through their photos with please get in touch with Carole at 01702 475117 or Carole.mulrone@btinternet.com

ALL ABOARD THE ROYAL TRAIN

In 1823 Abraham Partridge, a Leigh fisherman, married Mary Egeltine, also from an old Leigh family (the name is sometimes recorded as Eagleton).

In 1837 they had a daughter Sarah who in 1870 married Samuel Bellamy (from Norfolk) in Whitechapel. They too had a daughter Sarah (Matilda) born in Bethnal Green in 1873.

It is this young Sarah Matilda Bellamy, granddaughter of a Leighman, who is of interest. In Bethnal Green in 1895 she married Jean Jacques Fehr, a Swiss national.

In the 1911 census, Jean Jacques is boarding at 35 St James' Place, Westminster. Although he states he is married, Sarah is living with her widowed mother at Streatham Hill on private means. Jean Jacques is here described as Director of Continental Journeys to his Majesty.

The Royal Archives at Windsor (how could I resist writing to them?) say that Jacques entered the Royal service on 1 October 1899 working as a courier for the Prince of Wales (Edward VII). Unfortunately the archives have no details of his background or how he came to get this appointment.

When Edward became king in 1901 Jacques was appointed Director of Continental Journeys to 'Their Majesties The King, and Queen Alexandra, at a Salary of £250 a year, payable Quarterly'. On census night in 1901 the King and Queen were at Sandringham and Sarah Matilda was with her parents in Hackney. There is no sign of Jean in 1901 so perhaps he was already on one of his 'special missions' for the King.

According to his employment record, a copy of which has been supplied by the Royal Archives, he was required to

'attend His Majesty, or Queen Alexandra and Princess Victoria, on their Continental or Home Journeys, and also to travel with any Member of the Royal Family, or other persons with whom The King or Queen may direct, as well as on any Special Mission that their Majesties may be pleased to send him, at home or abroad.

When not required by The King or Queen Alexandra, he may by special permission, undertake private employment on short journeys, but, only under condition of immediate return if required to do so.

When ordered away (and not otherwise provided for) his expenses of Board and Lodging at the rate of 12/- a day will be allowed him, in addition to travelling expenses.

Mr Fehr must keep a 'small disbursement' book, in which he should enter all necessary out of pocket expenses in the discharge of his duties, and this book should be sent in at the end of each quarter, to the Secretary of the Privy Purse for examination and payment.

It will be his duty to keep accurate accounts of expenses of all journeys abroad, or at home, that he may be called upon to undertake, and vouchers must as far as possible be provided for all payments.

The Accounts must be rendered in detail, as may be considered necessary by the Secretary of the Privy Purse, and as soon as possible after the conclusion of each journey.'



King Edward being greeted by the French President Loubet, at the Gare de Lyon in 1905 – maybe Jean is in the background

This of course is the era before the First World War where Edward, up until then a somewhat dissolute personage, came into his own and he was able to foster good relations between the UK and other European countries, especially France, for which he was popularly called "Peacemaker", but his relationship with his nephew, the Kaiser, whom he suspected was looking for war, was not good. Four years after Edward's death he was proved right.

All of this fostering of good relations required Edward to travel extensively on the Continent so it can be imagined that Jacques Fehr was a busy man – and who knows what the 'special missions' involved !!

After Edward's death in 1910 Jacques continued in Queen Alexandra's household until March 1914 when he resigned and was granted a pension by George V.

Searches in the London Gazette of the time (one of the official journals of record of the British government. The *London Gazette* claims to be the oldest surviving English newspaper and the oldest continuously published newspaper in the UK, having been first published on 7 November 1665 as the *Oxford Gazette*) reveal that in 1903 Jacques was appointed to the Royal Victorian Order as an Honorary Member of the Fifth Class. In 1907 he became a British Citizen. At the time Jacques was living at Herne Hill.

Prior to his coming to London in the 1890s Jean appears to have spent some time in New York as a Jean Fehr of the right age and background travelled to that city on the St Laurent in 1880.

So a well travelled man became an even better travelled man in the service of the King.

Jean Jacques died in 1920 in Maida Vale and it is not clear if he and Sarah were still together at that time as probate was not granted to her nor is she mentioned in the will abstract. Jean left £3071.4s.3d.

Sarah herself died a year later in Finchley, a relatively wealthy widow leaving £3448. 5s.

The couple appear not to have had any children.

The Royal Victorian Order is given by the Monarch to people who have served them or the Monarchy in a personal way. These may include officials of the Royal Household. The Order was founded in April 1896 by Queen Victoria as a way of rewarding personal service to her, on her own initiative rather than by ministerial recommendation. The Order was, and is, entirely within the Sovereign's personal gift. Jean's insignia as an MVO –



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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