



LEIGHWAY

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

HAPPY 2012

Happy New Year everyone. This is a momentous year for the Society, it may be the Olympics and the Queen's Jubilee, but it is our 40th anniversary as well.

We are thinking about suitable ways of celebrating this great achievement but we could not let this pass at the beginning of the year without saying a big thank you to everyone who has been involved in the Society and the Heritage Centre over the last 40 years. Without you it would not be possible to keep things going.

So give yourselves a pat on the back for a job well done!

HONOURING OUR TEAM

Two of our Committee were honoured for all their work locally in 2011 and we should say well done and thank you to Margaret Buckey, our wonderful secretary, who received an award from the River Thames Society for her work with and for the Leigh Society. We doubt if it is possible to calculate the number of hours Margaret has given and continues to give to the Society each week.

Our Heritage Centre Treasurer Donald Fraser was invited to a Royal Garden Party in recognition of all the many things he has done for the charities he has helped over the years, his work locally and not forgetting his involvement with the Town Council from its inception, the only remaining member who has been there throughout.

Leigh is a much richer place for people like Margaret and Donald and we should be justly proud that we have them both in our ranks.

SUBSCRIPTION TIME

Annual subscriptions are now due and should be paid before the AGM on 18 April. The subscription is £10 per household, £15 for overseas members. Please remember to pay on time as you jeopardise getting future editions of Leighway – and we wouldn't want you to do that.

Apart from Leighway your subscription helps to ensure that the Society is able to take part in the life of Leigh to the fullest extent possible and to look after our heritage.

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

14 March - Living as Tudors, Kentwell Hall – Gordon Parkhill
18 April – AGM and film
21 April - Henley River and Rowing Museum.
9 May - Langdon Hills and surrounding area – Plotlands – Ken Porter
29 May – Greenwich – Royal River Pageant Exhibition
17 October - Thames Estuary Shipwrecks – Claire Hunt
7 November – The Southend I knew as a child - Jonathan Smart

Keep an eye out for dates for a Spring Quiz and other events

HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

After many years making sure that the Heritage Centre was well stocked with items for the discerning shopper and museum enthusiast one of our colleagues Joan Simpson has decided to pass on the reins. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Joan for her sterling work over the years which has helped to make the Heritage Centre such a success. Pat Gaskell will now join Shirley Stead to carry on this valuable work.

I STAND CORRECTED

Terry Pond has let me know that in the article in the last issue of Leighway on page 5, para 3 'Coastguards Continued' it was in fact his father who was choirboy/scout/married at St John's. Terry and Joan were married at Leigh Road Methodist Church, the "Fishermans Church" 25 years ago.

ARTICLES FOR LEIGHWAY

The next Leighway will be at the end of March and it would be great to get some more articles from our members. So if you want to put pen to paper or email please send them to Carole via the Heritage Centre on email to leighway@leighsociety.co.uk

MEMORIES OF MAPLE DURHAM

Several people got in touch with Carole and Terry Birdseye.

Mike Plummer wrote as follows –

My brother and I both attended this Nursery School. (it was actually called Maple Durham College), myself from April 1945 until July 1946, when I moved on to North Street School. My brother attended 1949/50, and then North Street. The school owned both 124 Leigh Hall Road and 129 Oakleigh Park Drive, the former being, from memory, the home of the owner and the office, and also where we collected our bottle of milk. The Oakleigh Park address was the classrooms. The two houses backed onto one another, separated by an alley, and the two gardens formed the playground. The owner was a Miss Emmerline Dodd and she was assisted by a Miss Gibb.

I attach copies of letters which may add to the interest. The letters concern my brother who was obviously better mannered than I!

Maple Durham College
129 Oakleigh Park Dr
19th December 1949

Antony is a good boy, and enjoys his lessons. He is a bright, intelligent pupil.

Term commences 11th January
Party 3.30 to 7.30 p.m. J. Dodd

Maple Durham College
124 Leigh Hall Rd
Leigh-on-Sea
13th May 1950.

Dear M. Plummer,

I thank you for your letter, with enclosed for of £0.50.

We are very sorry to lose little Antony.

He is such a good boy and we have certainly tried to make him happy.

I shall miss my little ~~Antony~~ ^{friend}.

Trusting you are all keeping well.

Yours very sincerely,
Emmeline Dodd.

Member Margaret Dent (nee Benson) also remembers the School –

I remember Maple Durham School very well. Its full grandiose title was Maple Durham College. The uniform [for

girls] was a white blouse, red tie and grey gymslip in winter and cream dress with red piping in summer. The boys had white shirts, red ties and long or short trousers depending on the season. The blazer was originally blue with a red and blue badge, but one mother decided a red blazer would be better, many parents copied her and Miss Dodds was forced to announce that in future the school blazer would be red.

I started going to school there in 1949 and stayed until it closed in approx. 1952. There were three sisters running the school at that time, Miss Dodds who was the Headmistress and taught the senior pupils [she was a qualified teacher] her sister, known as Miss Gibbs, taught the small pupils and I believe she wasn't qualified. The third sister was called Sheila, she was never seen, she remained in the Leigh Hall Road house and cooked all the dinners.

When I started going to Maple Durham the senior pupils were taught upstairs, I remember one leaving aged fifteen, the little ones [a mixture of infants and juniors] were taught downstairs by Miss Gibbs. Eventually everyone was taught downstairs due to a falling roll and also due to Miss Gibbs being very ill for a while.

A large container of milk was delivered each day and the pupils had to bring in their own cups to drink from, quite a few students didn't like milk and brought in small cups, my friend Cynthia used to bring in an egg cup!, consequently there were pints of milk left over. I didn't stay to lunch myself but I know every day the pudding was milk pudding: rice, custard etc. I very well remember a little boy of four starting in approx. 1950, he could already count up to 100, was that little boy you? I also remember a handsome young man visiting the school wearing a R.A.F uniform, he was the son of one of the sisters.

Anyone else with such vivid memories?

CANON KING MEMORABILIA

Canon Robert Stuart King is one of the most revered personages in Leigh's history, a much loved clergyman for many years and a friend to all.

Some time ago the Heritage Centre was given, on permanent loan, a box of artefacts and memorabilia relating to the Canon.

Jenny and Ed Simpson, who have been at the forefront of an archiving project at the Heritage Centre with volunteers from the local U3A, have been cataloguing the contents of the box and it is hoped to mount an exhibition this year about the worthy Canon.

One interesting snippet from the box is a note from the young lad RS King's diary at the age of 10 in 1872 –

January 9th Concert for the enlargement of the Chancel
11th Papa bought 100 bushels of sprats to be put on the ground.
17th Dinah Cotgrove gave me a large rabbit
18th Sam was digging in the garden and found a spring.

February 13th We had a school feast and fishermen's supper
19th We were all fumigated.

The rest of the King archive material has still to be catalogued and hopefully will provide some more little gems like this.

BOOKED IN FOR A BAPTISM

Family research turns up some unlikely places for events – inquests in pubs to name but one. But the latest find is a baptism in a Library. True, not the normal lending library type but nonetheless an interesting venue.

Charles Sandford was a Coastguard working in Acol in Kent but according to the census he was born in Leigh. There is no record of his baptism, nor those of his sisters who were also said to be born in Leigh, in St Clement's church records.

Charles married an Esther Herne from Hurst in Berkshire. After Charles' death Esther remarried to George William Emery a Leigh smack owner.

Charles Sandford's baptism is actually found in the records of Dr William's Library in London. His father John was an agricultural labourer.

This Library was established by the will of Dr Daniel Williams, the leading London nonconformist minister of his day, who died in January 1715/6. He left instructions for his trustees to house his library and to make it available to his fellow nonconformist ministers in London, but his provisions were inadequate, and the opening of the Library in Red Cross Street, Cripplegate, in 1729 was largely due to the efforts of his trustees who raised the necessary funds for a library building. The collections were greatly enlarged over the years with many important gifts, and Williams' original benefaction of about 7600 books forms only a small part of the modern library. The Library remained in Red Cross Street until 1865, when the Metropolitan Railway Company bought the premises. The Library moved temporarily to 8 Queen Square, and in 1873 to a new building in Grafton Street. The Trustees acquired University Hall in Gordon Square, London, where the Library opened in 1890. The Library is still administered by an independent Trust, and receives no government or outside funding.

Dr Williams's Library is a major research library. Its collections include about 300,000 titles from the earliest years of printing to the present, and many thousands of manuscripts from the thirteenth to the twenty-first century. Although the Library's strengths are in Protestant nonconformity, its collections include printed works and manuscripts of national and even international significance. They include nine medieval manuscripts, including a Wycliffe New Testament, and a Psalter apparently made for Philippa of Hainault, consort of Edward III.

Although Charles Sandford was baptised as a non conformist his parents who were still living in Leigh in 1841 are both buried at St Clement's Church.

Nonconformists were usually buried in Anglican churchyards until the Nonconformist chapel obtained its own burial grounds or the civil cemeteries opened.

HADLEIGH AND THUNDERSLEY COMMUNITY ARCHIVE

Some of you may already know about this exciting new venture which can be found at www.hadleighhistory.org.uk. There is a wealth of local information which is easily accessible and interesting as well as allowing the public to contribute.

We are so close to Hadleigh that inevitably there is some cross over of residents and stories of mutual interest. One such is that of Private Stanley Haves whose memorial is in St James' Church at Hadleigh. (Thanks to Malcolm Brown of the Community Archive for this picture).



Stanley was not a Leigh born boy, he came from West Ham, but by 1911 his family was living in a house called Hawthorn in Sandleigh Road, Leigh. Stanley's father, Alfred, was a Civil Service Clerk in the GPO, starting as a boy messenger in London in 1886 (according to the British Postal Service Appointment Books) and in 1889 being a 'Learner' in the telegraphy school. By 1891 he was a GPO clerk and in 1901 a telegraphist.

The family came to Leigh between 1901 and 1911 and young Stanley grew up in the town.

In February 1917 he enlisted at East Ham into the Royal Sussex Regiment.

His army career was to be all too brief for on 26 September that same year he was killed at the Battle of Polygon Wood, part of the third Battle of Ypres. Stanley had, at first, been reported missing but finally the Red Cross confirmed his death. According to newspaper reports of the time Stanley was knocked over as his regiment 'went over the top'. He tried to get up but could not do so.

His life is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgium.

Stanley was reported missing from his unit's position at Tower Hamlets, Ypres. Stanley was actually killed on the day that the Australians took Polygon Wood and the British took Tower Hamlets. So he was in the thick of it.

In 1988 members of the choir of St James the Less went to Ypres and found Stanley Haves name on the rear Memorial wall of the gravesite at Passchendaele.

DEFENDING LEIGH

On the 23 June 1626 a letter was written to the Earle of Totnes, Master of the Ordinance from Chancellor of the Exchequer, Master of the Rolles, Chancellor of the Duchy (the spelling is the original)

'After our very hartie comendacions to your good Lordship. Whereas it is desired by our very good Lord, the Earle of Warwick, on the behalfe of the inhabitants of the towne of Leigh in the countie of Essex that they may be permitted for the defence of the towne to buy for their money ten peeces of cast iron ordinance as four demy culverins and six sakers, which suite is thought reasonable and his Majestie is well pleased to graunt; these are therefore to pray and require your Lordship to give order that they may be furnished with the said ten peeces of iron ordinance, they givinge such security as is usuallie accustomed by others his Majestie's subjectes in like cases.'

The demi-culverin was a medium cannon similar to but slightly larger than a saker and smaller than a regular culverin developed in the early 17th century. Barrels demi-culverins were typically about 11 feet long, had a calibre of 4 inches and could weigh up to 3,400 lb. It required 6 pounds of black

powder to fire an 8-lb round shot. The demi-culverin had an effective range of 1,800 feet.

Demi-culverins were valued by generals for their range, accuracy and effectiveness. They were often used in sieges for wall and building demolition.

The saker was a medium cannon slightly smaller than a culverin developed during the early 16th century and often used by the English.^[1] It was named after the Saker Falcon, a large falconry bird native to the Middle East.^[2]

A saker's barrel was approximately 9.5 feet long, had a calibre of 3.25 inches and weighed approximately 1900 lb. It could fire round shot weighing 5.25 lb approximately 7400 ft using 4 lb of black powder. The shot was designed not to explode but bounce along the ground to cause as much damage as possible.

Henry VIII amassed a large arsenal of sakers in the early 16th century as he expanded the Royal Navy and came into conflict with France. Henry's foundries used so much bronze that there was a world shortage of tin. Sakers were heavily used during the English Civil War, especially during sieges when they were used by both attackers and defenders of fortified towns.

Wonder what happened to the Leigh cannons?

CLOUDED VISION

In our September 2009 Leighway we brought you the story of Sir Edward Whitaker (Its not all Haddock and Salmon).

Sir Edward Whitaker was not born in Leigh but on 27 September 1692 he married Ann Stephens (Stevens) of Leigh at St Clements. Ann was the daughter of Thomas Stevens, surgeon.

Sir Edward had an illustrious naval career having been flag-captain to Sir Cloudesley Shovell in the *Victory*.

Edward and Ann had had a son, Edward baptised in Leigh in 1697 and we postulated at the time that the Captain Samuel Whitaker living in Leigh at the same time may have been Sir Edward's brother – and indeed he was.

Samuel Whitaker also married a daughter of Thomas Stevens, surgeon – Mary. They had one son, Samuel, baptised in Leigh in 1697 and a daughter Mary. Mary Stevens died in 1698 and is buried in St Clement's aged 22.

Samuel may not have been knighted but he had a no less illustrious career than his brother, and again Sir Cloudesley Shovell plays a major part in his life, and death.

Whilst his brother Edward commanded the *Dorsetshire* in the Battle of Malaga (August 1704), Samuel was captain of the Nottingham, and another Leigh man, Captain Richard Haddock, captained the Swallow.

Nottingham with Samuel in command had also been at the capture of Gibraltar in 1704.

During the campaign season of 1707, Sir Cloudesley was once again in the Mediterranean with orders to engage the French and take Toulon which could provide a port for English ships. Although the campaign was partially successfully, Toulon was not taken, but the French fleet was crippled.

The bulk of the English fleet moved on to Gibraltar on its way back to England. The Bay of Biscay was a notorious danger to shipping but although latitude could be plotted, longitude could not. So a ship's position was difficult to pinpoint. With autumn closing in it was advisable to get back to England before the bad weather.

22 October 1707 was a day of very poor visibility, rain and squalls with a strong south westerly breeze. Ships stood little chance of changing course in the heavy swell to avoid hazards. For some unknown reason Sir Cloudesley kept going. About 8pm, the Association, with Samuel Whitaker as Captain, struck the Gilstone Ledge in the Scilly's Western Rocks and was holed. The ship was lost with all hands. Many another ship was lost that day.

Sir Cloudesley's body was washed up at Porth Hellick,. Samuel Whitaker's body was not found. At least 1340 men lost their lives (this did not include wives and children on board). Many of the bodies were buried on St Agnes near Periglis where in 2007 archaeological excavations began to locate the mass graves.

Sir Cloudesley was buried on the beach but eventually brought back to London where his tomb can be found in Westminster Abbey.

For Samuel Whitaker, resident of Leigh, there is perhaps a resting place in the Scilly Isles.

The National Maritime Museum has an 18 pounder bronze cannon from the Association which had been carrying considerable treasure when she foundered and in 1709 a salvage operation was mounted as the ship remained partly above water.

In the 19th century the wreck was again located but forgotten until in 1967 RN divers rediscovered it. Many cannon and large quantities of coin and artefacts were raised.

The tragic events of 22 October 1707 shocked the nation and led to an Act of Parliament - The Longitude Act of 1714. A prize of £20,000 was offered (an enormous sum at the time) for a solution to the navigational riddle that plagued maritime nations across the world.

The second outcome was that in 1967 marine heritage was in its infancy and the finding of the Association helped lead the way for the 1973 Act for the Protection of Historic Wrecks.

The Tercentary of the Naval disaster of 1707 was commemorated by a special series of events on the Isles of Scilly (and elsewhere) in October 2007.



Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovell

THE CURIOUS CORPSE

A wealth of information is soon to become available to all through the digitisation of the British Newspaper Archive.

I gained access through taking part in a trial of the system and was able to do a quick search for Leigh. I only had 2 days for the trial and it soon became clear that now it is fully up and running it will take many months to search through all the Leigh references. It is far more than just births, marriages and deaths which can be searched. The archive holds all national and provincial newspapers and internationals as well. It has a full search capability so you can type in a name. For those researching family or local history it is an absolute treasure trove. There is a cost to it of course.

What strikes you is the detail with which Victorian and early 20th century newspapers described events, and the language they used. Murders are reported in the most graphic detail and political correctness had never been heard of. There are all those great old advertisements for all kinds of remedies and some fascinating articles. Also it is interesting to note that local news went countrywide, it seems journalists poured over provincial newspapers and you can find articles about Leigh in papers all over the country, like this one in the Edinburgh Evening News of November 1878.

Carole

An Incredulous Jury

At an inquest at Leigh, near Southend, a doubt was raised by the jury as to whether the subject of the inquiry was really dead, and a brief adjournment had to be made for a post mortem examination. The deceased was James William Osborne, 58, fisherman. He was shrimping aboard a smack on the Thames, off Grays, when he appeared to become giddy, and fell down twice, the first time into the hold of the vessel. After the second fall he didn't move again, and two or three surgeons who saw him declared him to be dead. His usual medical attendant, Mr Jones of Leigh, gave evidence at the inquest. The foreman of the jury, Mr W Foster, said that he and other members of the jury were not at all certain that Osborne was dead, and they thought Mr Jones had better ascertain definitely. Mr Jones went and examined the body and on returning into the room, said that as far as he could see, life was extinct. There was but one other way of proving that the man was dead, and that was by post mortem examination. The foreman, and other members of the jury said they would like to be certain. The inquest was then adjourned for an hour, and in the meantime Mr Jones made a post mortem examination. He stated, as a result, that he found the man to be quite dead, and the probable cause of death was congestion and inflammation of the brain. A verdict was returned in accordance with this evidence.

ALL ABOARD THE CHERRY BOUNCE

The English language is a marvelous thing with words borrowed from all around the world coming together to form a medium which allows wonderful double entendres, puns and bon mots.

It is sad then when words go out of fashion and even sadder when we hear that they are being dropped from everyday dictionary use.

One such word is 'charabanc' recently dropped from the Collins Dictionary.

A charabanc is, or was, of course, a passenger carrying vehicle and the word derives from the French meaning a wagon with seats.

This has now transformed into the luxury coach and the 'chara' is a thing of the past.

Whilst our archiving helpers were rummaging through the cupboards in the Heritage Centre recently we came across this wonderful poster –



We are not sure what Felix was but K M Davies was actually Kate Mary Davies (61 High Street is now the Leigh Art Studio).

Kate Mary Dorkins from Burnham-on-Crouch/Maldon had married David Gambia Ernest Davies from Kensington (what a grand name) in 1902 at St Clements.

By 1911 they were at No 61 where David was a marine meter manufacturer. David died in 1919 and although the date of the poster is not known, Kate seems to have been able to turn her hand to a variety of jobs. In the 1933 Kelly's Directory she is listed at No 61 as an 'outfitter', whether this was clothes or machinery is not known. As can be seen from the poster she went into the transport and sightseeing business.

It would be great to know if anyone has any memories of either the outfitters or the charabanc Felix.

And the 'cherry bounce' comes from Little Women when Amy March used this pronunciation of charabanc. I suspect the bounce part was well suited to a charabanc of 1868 when Little Women was written.

U3A SHARED LEARNING PROJECT AT LEIGH HERITAGE CENTRE

For those of you that don't know, U3A stands for the University of the Third Age, which is a self-help organisation for people no longer in full time employment, providing educational, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment. It consists of local U3As all over the UK, which are charities in their own right and are run entirely by volunteers. Local U3As are learning cooperatives which draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills of their own members to organise and provide interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership.

The U3A approach to learning is – learning for pleasure. A Shared Learning Project involves a team of U3A members, usually from different U3As, exploring a specific topic, proposed by a U3A or by an institution (such as a museum, art gallery, or library).

Last year the Leigh Society asked for help with archiving the material held in the Heritage Centre and as leader of the Local History Group of the Leigh U3A I co-ordinated local U3A groups to work with the Society on the project.

The work so far has mainly consisted of going through the printed ephemera, records and papers, photographs, books,

pamphlets and artefacts stored in the cupboards at the Heritage Centre. One member of the group has been noting all the items already on display in the museum.

Accurate descriptions of the materials had to be made as the long term aim is that the documents can be used for reference. A meeting has been arranged where some decisions will be taken about the best way to index all the material under subject headings. This is necessary before the written lists can be transferred to computerised records.

Over the next six months members of the group will be learning how to scan photographs and other printed materials ready for transfer to the "Catalist" archiving system. The end result of the project will be to enable researchers to interrogate the archive of historical material held by the Leigh Society.

It has also been suggested that the U3A volunteers could assist with a special exhibition relating to Canon R S King based on documents and information which has been given on permanent loan to the Society by the \Canon's family. We are also keen to help with compiling new information pamphlets on subjects such as the Leigh Pottery this year.

The U3A volunteers are all people who are interested in the history of Leigh and the surrounding area and it is hoped that a presentation can be given at the end of the project and that this endeavour will encourage interest in the history of the town.

Jennifer Simpson

A TIP IN TIME

A happy case of serendipity brought the two pictures below to our door.

Tony Millatt of West Mersea Museum got in touch through the web site to ask if the pictures, which had been found on Mersea tip, were connected to Leigh.

Happily they are and the West Mersea Museum have given us the originals for our archive.

The first picture shows the houseboats in the background and the second shows the old gas works at the entrance to the Old Town.

What we really want to know is does anyone recognize the men in the picture (particularly the gentleman in the hat – perhaps a potential purchaser as the boat appears to be for sale) or the boat. We have blown up his picture so you may recognize him. Please let Carole know if you have any information on either.



TUCKER'S LUCK (OR NOT)

Living to the ripe old age of 96 is an achievement, even in this day and age, but in 1804 it was even more of an amazing event. On 20 October 1804 St Clement's saw the burial of John Tucker aged 96.

According to the Ipswich Journal of 27 October John was born in 1710 in Uplyme in Dorset (sic). How he ended up in Leigh is probably due to a maritime connection although John was ostensibly a gardener. Uplyme was 'a large scattered village, pleasantly situated at the most eastern extremity of Devon, only about a mile north west of the town and sea-port of Lyme-Regis, in Dorsetshire.'

John first appears in the Leigh records in April 1757 when his illegitimate son, John Tucker Miller by Hannah Miller was baptised. It is possible that Hannah was already married because she and John did not marry, (in Leigh at any rate) but a Mrs Miller was buried in 1760, by which time John had already married Martha Timson or Stimson at St Clement's.

It appears John may have 'done a bunk' after the birth of his child as in 1757 (when he was already 47) he entered on board a privateer called the Terrible whose captain was Captain Death. This ship took part in a memorable engagement at the end of that year with a French ship of war called the Vengeance. Although outgunned and fighting also the French ship the Grand Alexander, the Terrible 'with the utmost obstinate and perhaps unexampled bravery, maintained the unequal contest till all her officers were killed, and 10 only of her crew remained effective, the rest being either killed or desperately wounded.'

John was one of the crew who came out of the battle unscathed and returned to Leigh where he married Martha, had 2 children, buried Martha and married Elizabeth Abdy in South Benfleet and hired a cottage with a garden in Leigh and thereafter maintained a comfortable livelihood. Elizabeth died in 1803 at the age of 72. They appear to have had only one child who died young.

But the idyll was not to last for in 1804 at the age of 96 widower John gained a new landlord and was compelled to quit his beloved cottage on 7 October of that year. Just 5 days later John took to his bed and died, as he emphatically said 'of a broken heart'.

The battle that John had taken part in was in the first year of the Seven Years War. Other reports say that John was not the only man from Leigh who left to join the Terrible.

Thomas Paine – he of the Rights of Man – could so nearly have been part of the lost crew as he writes 'At an early period – little more than sixteen years of age, raw and adventurous, and heated with the false heroism of a master who had served in a man-of-war – I began the carver of my own fortune, and entered on board the Terrible Privateer, Captain Death. From this adventure I was happily prevented by the affectionate and moral remonstrance of a good father.'

PLANNING

As most people will know the proposals for St Clement's Hall site are in a state of uncertainty because of the requirements for affordable housing. The same issue applies to the Bell where there is an outstanding application to remove the requirement for affordable housing. The application to remove the requirement to refurbish the hotel first was withdrawn in the face of opposition from the Borough Council.

JUST A BEAUTIFUL BOAT

In January 1881 a devastating storm hit Leigh. Despite all efforts the fishing fleet was decimated, three of them being completely broken up. These were Mr H Kirby's 'Wisdom', Mr R Cotgrove's 'Queen of the May' and Mr James Palmer's 'Colleen Bawn'.

It is the last of these whose name is interesting. Why would James Palmer, an old Leigh fisherman born in 1831, son of a Cotgrove, married to a Johnson and father of nine, call his vessel by such an obviously Irish name? The answer is probably in the story behind the name.

In the Autumn of 1819, at Moneypoint, Kilrush, County Clare the remains of 15 year old Ellen Hanley were found washed ashore six weeks after her marriage.

Ellen was the daughter of a small farmer and said to be of outstanding beauty and of a bright and friendly disposition. Soon after she met John Scanlan he proposed. He was in his twenties and of a higher social status than Ellen but despite her fears about this difference the couple eloped. But Scanlan soon tired of his young bride, and with his servant, Stephan Sullivan, planned her murder. Using Scanlan's boat Sullivan took her for a trip on the river. In mid-stream Sullivan murdered her with a musket. He removed her garments and ring which he kept in the boat. She was tied with a rope which was attached to a stone and dumped in the Shannon. Six weeks later the body was washed ashore at Moneypoint.

Both men had disappeared but Scanlan was found, arrested and tried. Owing to the high social position of his family, the trial created a big sensation. He was defended by the famous lawyer, Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator, and it was assumed he would be acquitted because of his social status and Ellen having been only a commoner. However, he was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was taken to Gallows Green, the place of execution on the Clare side of the Shannon, and duly hanged.

Sullivan was found shortly afterwards and he was also found guilty and sentenced to death. On the gallows he confessed his guilt and admitted that his master was the proposer and that he was the agent of the murder.

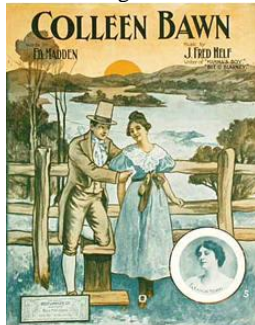
Ellen Hanley is buried in Burrane cemetery, between Kildysart and Kilrush. A Celtic cross at the head of the grave bore the following inscription:-

"Here lies the Colleen Bawn,
Murdered on the Shannon,
July 14th 1819. R.I.P."

There is no longer any trace of this cross. It was chipped off, bit by bit by souvenir hunters.

The tragedy of Ellen Hanley has since been commemorated in books, plays and an opera and there is now a Colleen Bawn Trail in the local area.

And James Palmer of Leigh - perhaps it was just that he felt his boat was as beautiful as the original Colleen Bawn.



THE CIRCUS PARTRIDGES (part 3)

Remember a while ago the Leighway brought you more information about Ann Partridge's family, the Ginnett's of circus fame. Well as a well known comic once said 'There's more'.

Ann Partridge married a Frenchman called Jean Pierre Ginnett in 1825 in Lambeth. Their son John Frederick Ginnett went on to run the Ginnett Circus with his father and after his father's death in 1861.

The National Archives has just gone on line with the British Newspaper Library and so is revealed even more about the Ginnett family.

When John Frederick died in 1892 he left a fortune (based on average earnings) which equated to £17.5M. So no wonder the family was able to afford a magnificent memorial to him in Brighton.



The Ginnett monument - A statue of a circus pony, its head lowered in sorrow, dominates the structure.(courtesy of The Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton & Hove)

The memorial has brought to light an even closer connection of the Ginnett Circus to Leigh because the monument states that John Frederick Ginnett was born in Lea (sic) Essex.

There is no baptism in St Clement's registers and it is too early for a birth certificate. John Frederick was actually baptised in Lambeth. One other Ginnett child was baptised in Leigh, Mary Elizabeth in 1827.

Another interesting story about the Ginnetts concerns a later generation. Ann Ginnett (Partridge)'s grandson Emile Frederick Ginnett and his wife Laura Isabel. Laura, or Isabel, as she was known was the Chairwoman of the Ladies Music Hall Guild, to which lady circus performers belonged. The Treasurer of the Guild was one Belle Elmore, the wife of Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen.

It was Isabel Ginnett who raised concerns about Belle's disappearance which led to the apprehension of Crippen following his transatlantic flight with Miss LeNeve.

Isabel and her husband and daughter went to New York in October 1909 aboard the Mauretania. They may have been frequent transatlantic travelers for in the following July Mrs Ginnett was in New York assisting the NYPD in meeting cruise liners and eventually identifying Crippen to them. She also identified jewelry which had belonged to Mrs Crippen which he was carrying.

Crippen as we know was found guilty of the murder of Belle and duly executed.

Despite the great wealth left by his father Frederick Ginnett left a mere £70 (today £13,300) in his will to his daughter Florence, known as Poppy, another generation of the Ginnett family who spent her life in the circus ring with her horses.

THE GRAND CONTROVERSIAL AS EVER

The Grand in Leigh Broadway is rarely out of the papers these days, be it to discuss its condition, new proposals or its new owners.

To tell you how it all began we relate a press article on a licensing application before the Magistrates in 1896.



“NEW HOTEL FOR LEIGH-ON-SEA WHAT ARE LICENSED PREMISES?”

Mr W J Grubbe, Barrister at law, applied for Henry Choppen for the confirmation of a provisional licence for a new hotel to be erected at Leigh-on-Sea – a large residential hotel to be built facing the cliff and to be called the Leigh-on-Sea Hotel. Mr Grubbe urged that there was a great need for such a building and quoted in proof of the growth of Leigh, that during the last three years some 4,000 plots of land had been sold, representing a capital of £66,000. He laid special emphasis on the fact that there would be no drinking bar in the hotel, which was mainly intended for the accommodation of visitors to the resort.

Mr Kemble (viewing the plans) : Where is the church?

Mr Grubbe: Oh the church is a long way off. (Laughter)

Mr Round: What is the population of Leigh?

Mr Grubbe: About 3,000 and in the summer about double.

The Chairman: You are a great prophet Mr Grubbe, and I would as soon take your prophecies as those of any man I now but what guarantee have we that there will not be a drinking bar next year?

Mr Grubbe: We have a complete bond.

The Chairman: (pointing to the plans) Are we supposed to licence the whole of these 2 acres?

Mr Grubbe: No

The Chairman: This is important. There has been very great laxity about this matter, and great differences have arisen in connection with it. No one knows now with the old houses what is part of the licensed premises and what is not.

Mr Grubbe: There is a case upon the subject which shows that the licence extends only to the buildings.

The Chairman: There might be a summer house in the corner of the grounds, and you might contend that was licensed premises because it is a building.

Mr Grubbe: The yards would not be buildings. In this case, however, I am willing to extend the bond as you please, and make the licence refer to the hotel building only, nothing else. Quiet people prefer Leigh to noisy Southend, and at present there is no sleeping accommodation in Leigh. Our hotel will supply between thirty and forty bedrooms.

The Chairman: There is great objection in the County Council to Leigh “on Sea” (Laughter). Are you prepared to call it Leigh “on Thames”

Mr Grubbe: Yes sir certainly

Mr Kemble: Leigh “on Mud” (Laughter)

Mr Grubbe: After all, I visited Leigh the other day and there was a distinct smell of brine and shrimps (laughter) which the scientific people call ozone, and a very healthy smell.

Mr Kemble: Where is the population of Leigh? I went the other day and could not find it. There were a quantity of straggling

houses, it is true. But won't the pottery near by interfere with this hotel?

The Chairman: There would be a pottery here and a pottery nearby then, only these would be pewter pots? (laughter)

Mr Grubbe replied that there would be no inconvenience from the pottery, and he added that nearly every resident in Leigh was in favour of his application. He handed in the name of a licence it was proposed to surrender.

The Chairman: Are you prepared to take this for 12 months, because we are of the opinion that these provisional licences cannot in future be granted for an indeterminate time?

Mr Grubbe said he was quite willing. Although the money for building the new hotel was already in hand.

Mr Lloyd Wise: What is the hotel to cost?

Mr Grubbe: Over £12,000.

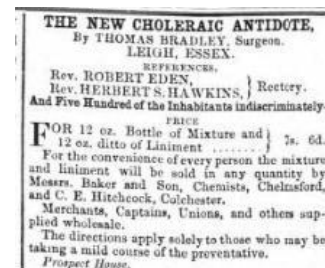
The confirmation was then agreed to, the order to last for 18 months, this alteration from the 12 months suggested by the Chairman being resolved upon at the instance of Mr Lloyd Wise, who thought that when the expenditure on a building exceed £10,000 a little more time than a year should be allowed.”

Henry Choppen was the first owner of the Grand and went on to be landlord of the Smack in the Old Town.

So the Grand has been controversial right from the start – let's hope the controversy soon ends and the Old Girl is fully restored to her former glory and once again a credit to Leigh, whose ‘quiet people prefer Leigh to noisy Southend’ and, despite the County Council, is still Leigh–ON–SEA.

THE LEIGH GUINEA PIGS

In Leigh in September 1849 the village doctor, Dr Bradley, came up with and marketed a preventative medicine for cholera. The advert below boasts that the Rector and Curate of St Clement's as well as 500 inhabitants had tested the medicine which was now on sale for 7s 6d.



Having checked the death registers for the period the new medicine seems to have been a response to an outbreak of Asiatic Cholera in the town in August of that year when 17 people died, some families being affected more than once.

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