



LEIGHWAY

The newsletter of the Leigh Society

AGM

Just to remind everyone that our AGM is on Wednesday, 24 April at 8pm at Wesley Church Elm Road.

The usual business of the meeting will be followed by a talk by Peter Dolby of the Endeavour Trust, so do all try and get to that to find out what is happening with the Endeavour in the future.

We had an excellent slide show and talk in March by David Simpson of the White Bus Cinema. Many memories were revived of trips to the 'flicks' and some god insider knowledge was passed on to David for his records.

DEAR DIARY

All Society meetings are held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m - Members £1, visitors £2

- 24 April** – AGM/update on Endeavour by Peter Dolby
- 7 May** - visit to Polesden Lacey
- 8 May** – Talk on Visiting Local Gardens – Harry Brickwood
- 27 May - May Day on Strand Wharf
- 1 June** – Annual Quiz – The Den
- 15-22 June – Leigh Art Trail
- 27-30 June -Leigh Folk Festival
- August** Southwold Summer Theatre and Aldeburgh
- 21-22 September – Old Leigh Regatta
- 9 October** – Researching your house and old buildings – Jenny Butler of Essex Record Office
- 29 October** - Brick Lane Music Hall
- 6 November** - TBA

LOST FRIENDS

Sadly we again have to record in Leighway the loss of two great friends of the Society.

Sybil Williams

Sybil was a good friend to the Society in years past and did a regular stint at the Heritage Centre. We extend our deepest sympathy to Sybil's family.

Jean Hamilton 1925-2013



Jean Campbell Hamilton was another good friend to the Society and regularly attended our meetings. She also was very ready to help with local information.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Jean's family and thank them for the kind donations made to the Heritage Centre in Jean's memory.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

My sincere thanks to all members for your support throughout the year, and welcome to those who have recently joined us. It is heartening that, although, inevitably, we lose some older members, new people join us, bringing in fresh ideas.

2012 was a special year, in which we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Society. Many members were present at our gathering in the Heritage Centre in September to mark the occasion and we were joined by David Amess MP and Cllr. Sally Carr, Mayor of Southend.

We are fortunate that a number of the founder members are still with us. Elaine and Alan Crystall who were in at the beginning are still working hard on our behalf.

Although the weather was not kind to us in the Summer, our stewards at the Heritage Centre have continued their hard work, and a special word of thanks to those who work with the school parties who visit us. Lyn Austin does a great job co-ordinating the visits. These children, we hope, are our future members.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM on the 24th and hope that you will enjoy the visits and meetings that have been arranged for this year.

Ann Price

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Executive Committee of the Society met monthly throughout 2012 and considered a number of planning applications affecting Leigh Conservation Areas. The year's outings have been greatly enjoyed by everyone and thanks to Anne for her usual great organisation.

Our meetings at Wesley Church have been well attended with interesting topics to inform and entertain. We have managed to maintain membership numbers which is encouraging and new members have also been attending our talks and use the opportunity to meet and chat with friends. Thanks to Sally, Rosemary and Pat for refreshments.

I attend the quarterly meetings of the Old Town Community Group which is run by the Town Council and we also continue our membership of the River Thames Society, Thames Estuary Partnership and CPRE. We receive copies of the very interesting publications of these organisations which are available to members from me or at the Heritage Centre.

Our monthly committee meetings also deal with the running of the Heritage Centre by the Trustees.

A programme of archiving has been carried out with the great help of the local U3A under the leadership of Jenny and Ed Simpson and the U3A also put together our new exhibition in the Heritage on Canon King. Our thanks go to them for all their work.

Clive Webster has taken on the role of Company Secretary and has also been very busy in putting together our successful Heritage Trail which is for sale in the Centre.

Dec Mulroney and Clive are also working closely together on bringing us into the computer age and have brought broadband to the Centre which will be a real help in the research side of our work.

My thanks to Sally for doing the minutes of our meetings and lastly to Carole for compiling Leighway for which articles are always welcome.

Margaret Buckley

WE'RE GOING UP TOP

As was mentioned in the last Leighway we are going to make a particular effort this year to spread the word about the Society and try and attract some more members. It is the younger generation we need to come on board so that the work of the Society can continue into the future.

We have booked a room at the Community Centre on 27 July for this purpose. We aim to put together a video display as well as have the family history database available for searches. We would also like to invite people to bring in photos or memorabilia which they would be happy for us to copy for the archives and research. This must relate to Leigh or a Leigh family.

There will also be a range of books and items for sale and people will be able to join the Society on the spot and get a special edition of Leighway telling them about the Society. Please tell your friends and encourage them to come along - remember 27 July.

We hope it will be an interesting day for everyone, including all our loyal supporters who cannot get down to the Old Town.

ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD WAR ONE

Next year sees the 100th anniversary of the commencement of World War One. We would like to mount an exhibition relating to the conflict and based around the men (and women) of Leigh and their stories.

We have a database of as many as can be found of those who died during the war from Leigh but there must be equally as much information about those who came back that is locked up in family memories and attics.

If your family has an interesting story to tell about a Leigh family member or event connected to the war please get in touch with Carole at the Heritage Centre or carole.mulroney@btinternet.com or 01702 475117.

Before you bring in any memorabilia for either of the above events please think carefully about whether you are prepared to let the Society use pictures and information for publications or for people researching. We will be asking you to sign to give your consent for use so we are all clear on this.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Early one Saturday morning I set off along the A13 heading towards my destination in high spirits. The weather was dry, the road was clear - the Sadlers Farm complex had finally resolved itself - and I was looking forward to seeing the evidence of a successful year for breeding avocets (alas, the Two Tree Island site had yielded little success). I entered the gates of Wat Tyler Country Park at Pitsea and drove along a narrow road into the spacious car park. As I strode across the tarmac, I raised a faint smile. Wasn't this the ancestral home of that old hoary chestnut used down the years by comedians from Mel Brooks to Monty Python?

Courtier to the fourteen-year-old King Richard II: "Sire, come quick! The peasants are revolting!"

King Richard: "You're not kidding, I can smell them from here." (Wah, Wahhh!)

Well, not quite, because the seeds of the Peasant's Revolt actually originated in nearby Fobbing, Brentwood, and, most notably, Kent. But surely the eponymous hero was one of us, an Essex man? Maybe, but it's in dispute and even if he was born in Essex, at the time of the revolt he lived in Kent - apparently he preferred it there.

But at least old Wat has a nice park. The centrepiece is an ersatz village green, a large grassy square surrounded by several old buildings (Little Cooper's Cottage goes back to the 15th century), a duck pond and that popular double act of the time: pillory and stocks. The barns and cottages were rescued from the wrecking ball and have been reassembled brick-by-brick (or rather wattle-by-daub) into their new resting place - it's like a retirement home for geriatric houses.

I head for the marina to get my bearings and arrive at Vange Creek. Here the muddy creek meanders silently along the soft underbelly of Canvey, but the coastal view is blighted by nests of writhing oil pipes and monster pylons. I duck inland and head past a series of manmade dykes and culverts, until I detect the sound of reed warblers. Their liquid notes rise up from the reed beds and, as I continue past water meadows of purple orchids and hovering gossamer-winged dragonflies, I reach the lagoon. Here I find several adult avocets, their dainty black and white plumage shimmering in the heat as they rake their bills busily in the non-brackish waters. Close within their orbit, I count their chicks: six, seven eight. As they scurry and prod along the water's edge, their scruffy yellow feathers blend perfectly with the sandy scrape. It's a far cry from the stories of predation that beset the avocet breeding programme on Two Tree.

Yet amidst all this beauty and abundance of new life is a darker side, because, beneath the gently sloping hills and rolling meadows there lurks a beast; one that has lain dormant for over sixty years. Its footprints are everywhere: around every leafy corner and over every grassy hillock: those singular brick huts, roofed with slate tiles and overgrown with trailing ivy are not mere twee dwellings. Nor is the winding, narrow gauge track, which conveys children on the miniature railway around the park, quite what it seems. Moreover, those numerous mounds now overgrown with clumps of greenery are not

natural features. And those limpid ponds, where bees buzz drowsily over marsh marigolds, had once had an altogether shadier purpose.

Because, for over fifty years this whole site was a munitions factory. Built by Alfred Nobel, the man who gave us the Peace Prize, it was used to manufacture explosives. From its inception in 1891, it thrived and through Edwardian times provided explosives for mining and quarrying. By 1902 it began to manufacture cordite, a smokeless explosive used to propel missiles. Leading up to the First World War business boomed, quite literally, because in 1913 a fatal explosion of gun cotton killed several workers.

So Health and Safety got involved. Hills were created out of earth to form revetments, protection against the blasts. Storage huts for magazines and nitro glycerine were built with loose roofs so that any blasts would go upwards not outwards and ponds were dug to neutralise the highly volatile explosives. Meanwhile a railway track was constructed to ferry nitro-glycerine and munitions in carriages from one part of the site to another, without bumps. By 1929 the factory closed due to lack of business. However, it reopened at the start of World War Two when the Ministry of War bought it. Eventually, in 1969, it was acquired by Basildon District Council from MOD.

As I drove home, I caught glimpses of the glinting Thames to my right as it snaked its way towards the mighty sea. It struck me that wherever one goes for a walk along the Essex coastline, one always bumps into reminders of our warlike past: weapons testing on Foulness, castle ruins at Hadleigh, military barracks at Shoeburyness, concrete pillboxes dotted beside seawalls and between marshland and creeks and now a munitions factory. Yet as an island race this is all part of our history, and the fabric of Essex and its people would be infinitely poorer without it. I'm sure even Wat Tyler would agree to that.

To visit the Wat Tyler Country Park follow the signs along the A13, heading westwards. It is open between 9 and 6 during the summer and admission and parking are free. To find out more access their website www.wattylercountrypark.org.uk

Clive Webster

AVOCET WATCH ON TWO TREE ISLAND

Essex Wildlife Trust has led a 24-hour watch on the island for 2 months each year and is coordinating the Watch again this year from 8 April to 16 June (depending on the weather and how nesting has progressed). Volunteers can choose from one of four time slots to attend the watch: 6am to 12pm; 12pm to 6pm; 6pm to 12am or 2am to 6am. Evening and night time volunteers must not be alone. If you are interested in taking part call or an email Louise Morris on 01702 215602 or 07595 203164 louisemorris@southend.gov.uk

BEST FOOT FORWARD

The following advert appeared in several papers in 1944. The picture is not very clear but the ringing endorsement at the end is by Mrs M S of Leigh, Essex. Who was she?

I sent a copy of the advert to the current producers, Rose & Co. Apothecary who had never seen the advert before. They were able to advise that at the time when this advert would have been used Zam-Buk was owned and produced by Fisons in Leeds. It was the closing of this company that prompted Patricia & Caroline Rose to buy the manufacturing licence as they knew what a marvellous product Zam-Buk was and still is today.

The following information is from their website www.rose-apothecary.co.uk and is reproduced with their permission.

The Zam-Buk Company was formed in the early 1900s by CE Fulford in Leeds. The name suggests an African origin and it was used in Australia and New Zealand to describe the first-aid officers present on the rugby pitch who administered antiseptic ointment to wounds and injuries.

In the UK, Zam-Buk first appeared in 1903. and was an essential item for the home, but it fell prey to the introduction of antibiotics and was discontinued in 1994 when the then owner, Fisons, was taken over by Fisher Scientific. The brand was taken on and revived by Rose & Co.



WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO WEMBLEY

Good Luck to Southend United, who on 7 April meet Crewe in the Johnstone's Paint Trophy.

Southend have never played in a final at Wembley before and some of us will be watching in the arena – let's hope the weather improves by then.

Come on you Blues

**Rely Upon ZAM-BUK
TO KEEP FEET
IN GOOD TRIM**

Whilst you're thinking of Summer holidays, and how to get the best out of them, don't overlook the importance of happy, healthy feet. Start this easy Zam-Buk treatment to-night. It brings glorious comfort and keeps feet in splendid condition.

First, bathe feet in warm water and dry thoroughly. Then rub them over with Zam-Buk. This famous herbal ointment brings wonderful relief to tired, aching feet and swollen ankles. It soothes and heals soreness, blisters, and chafed skin and prevents and removes corns. Never be without Zam-Buk for the feet and for skin troubles and injuries.

"Each night on holiday or at home, I rub my feet with Zam-Buk to keep them cool, fresh and free from soreness and swelling. It is also splendid for preventing callouses."
—Mrs. M. S., Leigh, Essex.

Zam-Buk
GET A BOX TO-DAY

AND FINALLY

Any opinions expressed in Leighway 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