



Issue 6 - April 2001

LEIGHWAY

The Newsletter of the Leigh Society

An eye to the future and an ear to the past in the heart of Leigh

AGM

Well we all know what that stands for

ALL GOOD MEMBERS

Yes the AGM is the time when all good members come together. But we know that AGMs can be tedious, just a lot of paperwork and boring voting procedures -

WELL NOT OURS

The great incentive to come to the AGM is the talk after business has been transacted. This year you're in for a real treat. Lyn Davies will be showing and talking to slides from the Paget collection on Old Leigh.

We know we have your support but we would still like to see more of you at our meetings so make the AGM the starting point and come along and meet the committee.

We look forward to seeing you there.



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MEMBERSHIP

For those of you who have yet to renew your membership a helpful reminder slip is included with your Leighway.

All subscriptions are due by the end of April.

Members are reminded that membership is by calendar year.

As from next year we will be changing the system for renewal to help with our administration.

The January Leighway will include a renewal reminder for you to complete and return with your subscription. The Leighway will include details of the year's programme of events.

For those who renew, their membership card will be sent with their April Leighway. For those who have not renewed the April Leighway will include a reminder. If no renewal has been received by the September Leighway the membership will lapse. Remember the Society and Heritage Centre mainly depend on subscriptions, entry fees to meetings and raffles, Heritage Centre sales and sheer hard work.

We receive no grants or assistance from outside bodies and all the profits from Heritage Centre sales are ploughed back into the Centre. So please help us by renewing your subscription promptly. Whilst we try to organise a full programme of events and outings the real purpose of the Society is in its concern for the preservation and enhancement of the Leigh Conservation Areas and to maintain the museum and provide for the restoration of Plumbs Yard and that is why your subscriptions are so important to us.

Thank you for your support

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Another year well started, and as we emerge from winter I am pleased to let you know that your Committee has been very busy organising the programme for this year.

Looking back we have had a good year and the staff manning the Heritage Centre have, as always, kept the place open and running, come rain or shine. We have had some new assistants but could still do with a few more.

We have entertained many school parties from near and far, expertly managed by Lyn Davies and John Porter.

Carole Pavitt has led the way on the Plumbs Cottage project and the funds are gradually mounting for its long overdue restoration (have YOU bought a tile yet?)

Our new photocopier has arrived to meet our ever rising printing needs.

As to the adjacent Strand Wharf, this has been cleared and will become public open space, which together with the Centre, Customs House and Strand Cafe will provide the Old Town with a much needed centre. Plans for the laying out of the open space are now being considered.

Our 'speaker' evenings at Wesley Church have been a success, but we would still like to see more of you there. The programme for this year's speakers is set out elsewhere in this edition.

As to publicity, Carole Pavitt has kept us in the public eye via the local press and Leighway which continues to be a great success. Social trips have been organised by Ann Price and many members are looking forward to the trip to the Isle of Wight later this month.

We all took part in the 'Comicals' evening at the Den. A full house which we hope will be repeated this year.

As always our hard working Secretary, Margaret Buckey keeps the whole set-up ticking along nicely and Judith Coombs, our Treasurer keeps a watchful eye on the purse strings.

I hope to see you all at the forthcoming Race Meeting and Quiz - details of which are contained in this issue.

Finally, I must take this opportunity to thank my Committee and Deputy Chairman, Elaine Crystall for their guidance and support over the last year and thank you for supporting the Society. We look forward to your company for yet another year.

Frank Bentley



LOCAL HISTORY FAIR PRITTLEWELL PRIORY MUSEUM 28/29 JULY 2001

Carole and Lyn will be mounting a Society stand at this event, comprising a small display on the history of Leigh. Lyn will also be giving a talk on Old Leigh on each day. We will also have a wide variety of our leaflets and books for sale.

This should be a very enjoyable event with many local societies participating.

SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT

In writing this report I realised that it is now some 16 years since I took over from Grace Robson after her tragic death in 1985. A lot of tides have come and gone in that time and there have been as many planning issues, public debates and changes in Leigh's affairs since then - some good, some we're not so sure about. One thing has not changed though and that is people's passion for Leigh as a place to live in and care about. Leigh is as popular as ever - with its estuary location and views, its cliffs and gardens, the Old Town and history, its varied shops, cafes and restaurants, churches, library, clubs, Art Trails, Music Festivals - there is something for everyone.

The Society is involved in the life of the community in many ways, through the Heritage Centre, providing as it does education for children and visitor alike on the town's history - thanks to all the helpers who keep it open. Particular thanks must go to Val Hulme who, until recently, has organised the rota of helpers. There is also of course our active participation in the Old Leigh Regatta.

As the amenity society for Leigh concerned with protecting Leigh's unique character and heritage, we have been invited to take part and make our views known in many local debates on planning matters and wider issues.

I represented the Society on the Southend Borough Conservation Working Party which recently looked at plans to redevelop the old Junipers site next to the Heritage Centre and the Boaryard Restaurant, a development, love it or hate it, which is now up and running. The Juniper's proposals, if agreed to, must be built to the highest standards worthy of its situation in the Conservation Area.

Some of the committee attended an Essex County Council Seminar on urban regeneration - a debate on how best to make our towns more attractive to live in in order to prevent 'urban sprawl' and traffic congestion. Our green belt and open spaces are under threat and although we have our estuary and seafront location, our countryside seems to be getting further filled with housing and roads; the one leading to the other.

On transport integration, we were asked to give our views on how best to cope with the increasing congestion and parking problems in the Borough. There is no easy solution here.

As a member of the River Thames Society, I attended a Conference on the future of the Estuary and Lower Tideway region at the Fishmongers Hall. The water is cleaner but the tides are getting higher. A new barrier may be needed but there are plans to improve the upper reaches, to protect wildlife and create a 'blue zone' to prevent over-development on its banks.

The latest consultative document to descend on us is Southend Borough's Policy for Culture: this to include all sport, art, theatre and museum and recreational provision and status in the town. Oh, and then there is the latest Borough Local Plan to 2011!

So that just about sums up our past year - anyone looking for a job?

Margaret Buckey

PS. I wish all those going to the Isle of Wight with Ann Price a really good time. Bring us back a stick of rock.

RACE NIGHT

7 APRIL 2001 - THE DEN

For those of you who have never been to one of these events we thought we should explain a little of what happens.

The races are actual races projected on a screen. You can purchase a horse for £1 and place bets of 25 pence and winnings will be paid out accordingly. Fuller details will be available on the night.

Tickets from the Heritage Centre or Mavis Sipple on 01702 555663 cost £5 which includes a ploughman's meal. Bring your own additional victuals. Please make cheques payable to The 2 Plumbs Yard Project. This promises to be a very enjoyable evening.

PLUMBS ANNUAL REPORT

This has been the first full year of the Plumbs Yard Project fund raising and a very eventful one it has been.

Sponsorships for tiles on the roof has been very well patronised. Children especially like to get a certificate for doing something worthwhile.

The Comicals were a great success at Christmas and our thanks go to all those who took part. We will be doing it again this year.

We have been helped immeasurably by Queenie Burder (Bonker's sister) who was born in the cottage and who has described its internal layout for us. Mr Ronald Cox has made some preliminary drawings for the works and following a comparative tender process we have accepted the tender submitted by T Mann Ltd for the restoration work.

We will be putting together an application for Lottery funding and will be applying for assistance to the Essex Heritage Trust. But the onus is on us to raise the funds. Even when we get the money to restore there will still be a need for funds for ongoing maintenance and kitting out.

There has been some criticism in the local press at the 'slowness' of the project, but those who choose not to join the Society or take part in the project must realise the enormity of the task and the effort it takes all of us to raise funds.

So its onward and upward with our slogan for 2001 being

PRESERVING PLUMBS

Carole Pavitt



DEAR DIARY

Please note the following dates in your diaries for Society and other local events in the coming year.

7 April	Race Night -The Den
25 April - AGM	and slide show on Old Leigh
12 May	Quiz - Leigh Sailing Club
16 May	A Merry Peal - Bellringing
	Margaret Arthur
28/29 July	Local History Weekend, Prittlewell Priory Museum
15/16 September	Leigh Regatta
September	Outing to be arranged
17 October	Purfleet's History is Explosive - Alan Gosling, Purfleet Garrison Museum
14 November	City Pubs Gardens and Churches - Sue Sincock
December	Xmas lunch to be arranged

The Race Night and Quiz are in aid of Plumbs Yard. Many members will recall Sue Sincock's interesting talks about the City of London. Well Sue also runs guided walks and it may be that some of our members would like to take part in one of these. We are considering organising such an event, probably in June on a Sunday. We would travel up to town by train and meet Sue there. The cost for the walk is £3.50 and you travel at your own expense. Obviously you need to be able to walk a fair distance. We have to be at least a group of 10. If anyone is interested could they please leave a message at the Heritage Centre with their details.



CHRISTMAS COMICALS

Building on the success of last year's Comicals we intend to hold the event again in December (date to be finalised). So we are looking for more talented members and the return of our successful performers of 2000. Please get in touch with Carole via the Heritage Centre or your usual contact if you would like to take part. These type of events take a lot of planning so don't leave it to the last minute.

We need singers, musicians, sketches, monologues and comics so let's hear from you.

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE A DAME

This picture given to the Society recently shows a Dame School in Leigh which was in the back garden of a local property.



But what exactly was a Dame School? Dame School was a common term used to describe small private schools that provided an education for working class children before they were old enough to work. These schools were usually run by an elderly woman who taught the children to read and write and other useful skills such as sewing. Fees were about 3d. a week and the quality of education that the children received varied enormously. Some teachers provided a good basic education, whereas others were no more than child-minders.



THUS MAY WE GATHER HONEY FROM THE WEED

Henry V

During the post war years, starting around the 1950s, a score of fishing vessels was engaged in dragging the sand banks of the outer Estuary for what was christened locally as 'white weed'. The weed was colourless but had a dirtyish look about it and was a fern-like growth of up to a few inches which became limp once out of the water. The fern was dredged up by using a steel rake some six feet in length which was towed by the ship - sometimes two rakes were used. The bottom of the rake was saw-toothed in order to collect the fern.

Once on board the fern was removed from the rake along with any foreign bodies - flat fish very often became impaled on the rake. The fern was then washed and bagged and taken ashore to small local factories which processed it.

The processing involved using a solution which became absorbed in the fern and had the effect of turning the limp state of the plant into a firm frond-like decoration which could last for many years. It was also dyed in bright colours and displayed in restaurants and homes.

It was not affected by heat and was even exported to warmer climates. Additionally, some weed was processed and made into bunches for aquaria.

Many boats joined the fleet, mainly working out of Leigh, and in due course the sand banks became 'over-fished'.

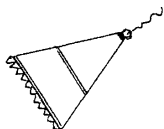
Incidentally, the weed, if left, would, like fish, go off. It needed to be processed as soon as possible.

Finally, due to the movement of the shifting sand banks, much of the weed disappeared and the trade died out. However, there are still rakes to be seen in the Old Town and perhaps a little of the industry lingers on.

White weed is quite rare but apparently it has been found off the coast of Japan.

Frank Bentley

(as a 'youngie' who has never see white weed can any member let me know what it's true name is - Ed)



THE FOURTH MAN



There can be none in Leigh that do not know the story of the Renown and the brave Leighman who lost their lives on her during the Dunkirk evacuation. But what do we know of the fourth man whose name appears on the memorial in St Clement's Churchyard? This is the story of Harold Graham Porter.



Harold, or Graham, as he was always known in the family, was born on 15 June 1921 in Handsworth, which was then in Staffordshire. He was the eldest child of Sidney and Mabel Porter. Sidney Porter was a jewelry manufacturer, a trade he followed from his father

Graham's grandfather had originally gone to Birmingham to work in the Royal Ordnance as a gunmaker.

Mabel's father and grandfather were wine merchants in Birmingham.

Graham attended Malvern College but was not a great scholar, enjoying more the practical subjects such as woodwork. He also liked outdoor pursuits and went walking, mountaineering and canoeing as well as swimming and tennis.

After he left school he worked for James Walker, the jewellers until December 1939 when he enlisted in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, and trained as a signalman.

It was thus that he came to be part of the detachment stationed at Southend Pier, once it had been requisitioned by the Navy.

Graham volunteered to go to Dunkirk and was ordered to serve on the Renown

We all know the story of the Renown but it is interesting to read the report of Graham's death in his local newspaper, the Birmingham Post, which gives a further insight into that fateful journey.

The manner of his death is recorded by the Captain of the Navy vessel on which he had served. The Captain said 'Mr Porter, with three other men, all volunteers for the job, were rowing between the Belgian coast and a destroyer in order to save BEF men. By their work they saved a thousand lives. They were making what was understood to be their last journey, because more men could not be taken on board, when the rowing boat was bombed out of the water and the men were never seen again.'

Based on information researched by Graham's niece, Janet Bower



Graham with his father and brother and sisters in the garden of their home at Handsworth

OF HEARTH AND HOME



Well we always knew that the Government could tax anything. From 1662 to 1689 a tax was levied in England and Wales of two shillings a year on each fireplace, hearth or stove in a property worth more than 20 shillings.

The tax was payable in half yearly instalments on Lady Day (25 March) and Michaelmas (29 September) and was payable by the occupier of the property or the owner if it was unoccupied. Certain classes, for instance paupers, were exempt.

The assessments and returns were prepared by the parish constables and then enrolled in the Quarter Sessions.

The following is the record for Leigh for 1669:

The informations of Eustace Seymor, one of the collectors of the duty of Hearth Money for the County of Essex and of Richard Kinge one of the constables of Leigh, taken upon oath before me, Samuel Hare Esq, one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the County, the 19th August 1669.

The informants say that upon Wednesday the 18th instant they were to collect the duty of Hearth Money upon the several inhabitants of Leigh, who were then behind and liable to pay, and Elizabeth Motley of the town, widow, did not only deny to pay the duty for the house she is present occupier of, but kept her door shut against the said officers, violently opposing, so as they could not proceed in the execution of their office, herself standing against the said door, and Eustace Seymor forcing the door open got into the house before her, and found a spit, standing by the side of the door, which he secured in his hands, which spit, Elizabeth Motley declared, was set there ready to spit Eustace Seymor (in case he had not so prevented her); and she, being so disappointed of the spit, took a naked knife in her hand standing at the foot of the stairs which went into the chamber into which she had removed and placed her goods, saying if Eustace Seymor offered to go into the chamber, she would kill them all, insomuch that he was forced to desist.

And in the said moment many other persons were in the yard, who did side with her, and John Osbourne, brother of the said widow, who came from his own house a great distance from thence, menaced them with threatening language, saying if others were of his mind, Eustace should collect no chimney money; and if Eustace Seymor had done as much at his house or upon his ground, he would have made him come short home and the constables likewise.

The informants afterwards retired to Thomas Osbourne's house, another brother of the said widow, and John Osbourne followed them abusing the officers; saying Eustace Seymor durst not do at Thomas Osbourne's, as he had before at the widow Motley's.

TAKING THE WATERS



Know where this is? Of course you do - its the Conduit or as the locals pronounce it 'cundit'.

Over 150 years ago the Old Town's water supply depended on three wells situated in the High Street. The Gentleman's Magazine at the time recorded -

'The water that supplies the town is from a conduit and two artesian wells, and the pumps are known as the Lower Pump and the Strand Pump and East or Bay Pump which is on the King's Strand. The conduit has belonged to the parish from time immemorial, and the spring head that supplies it rises upon the summit of the cliff in 'Tile Kiln' meadow (pronounced by the Old Leigh fishermen as 'Tykle'). At the fountain there is a stone with the inscription defaced which once read 'This stone is placed at ye springhead belonging to the conduit by desire of the parishioners of Leigh, 1712 - William Hutton, Churchwarden'.

Glazed pipes are partly used to conduct the water, they were made at the adjacent Phoenix Pottery.

Lady Olivia Sparrow's well was given by her, as Lady of the Manor, to the people of Leigh, and formed one of the three sources of water supply which were available in the old days. There are many of the older generation in the Old Town who still recollect when they had to line up and pay for the privilege of drawing water at the well by Bay Wharf (Bell Wharf), that on the Strand or at the old conduit house on the south side of the High Street.

The conduit house has long been closed, but presumably belongs to the Lord of the Manor, for it bears an iron plate inscribed 'The works belonging to this spring having been destroyed, were reinstated in the year 1825 by subscription and were placed by the Vestry under the management of a committee -

ROBERT EDEN, Chairman. April 1846.
Waste not want not'

The Conduit still forms a focal point in the Old Town. The plaque has recently been renovated by the Chapter of Architects and the area is kept and cared for by Norman Sutcliffe.



TIME IMMEMORIAL

We all use this expression but what does it mean and where does it come from?

It literally means 'Time long past, beyond memory or record'.

In English law this means time predating legal records and is fixed at 1189 the end of the reign of Henry II when the English legal system became formalised.



THEY WOULDN'T GIVE A XXX THE PAGLESHAM SMUGGLERS

According to the diary of John Loten, the customs officer at Leigh, in 1786 there were 10 vessels actively smuggling in the district. Philip Benton writing his History of the Rochford Hundred 70 years later says that 'smuggling was carried out in this parish to a great extent towards the close of the last century (1700s) and commencement of the present (1800s), and the whole population seems to have been implicated, more or less, in this pursuit'.

The most famous of the smugglers at the time was William Blyth, known as Hard-Apple. He was born about 1756 and many stories are told of his smuggling exploits.

He was the son-in-law of another infamous smuggler, William Dowsett, who owned a smuggling cutter.

The tales of Blyth's exploits may well have been embellished with time but they still make interesting reading and are part of the folklore of Paglesham.

According to this folklore Blyth was a fearless man who could have drunk for England with little effect and in the process outwit the customs officers by getting them drunk. He is reputed to have swallowed two wine glasses (literally).

Once when he was boarded by a King's revenue cutter in the River Crouch, he invited the officer aboard for a drink while his crew transferred his illicit cargo from his ship to the cutter. By the time the officer was well and truly drunk Blyth ordered his men to bring the cargo back. The officer was so drunk he had to be taken to his cutter by Blyth's men and Blyth set sail for Paglesham with a much larger cargo having taken from the cutter goods which it had already confiscated from other vessels before it had encountered Blyth.

On one occasion Blyth and his crew were playing cricket in the Church field at Paglesham when a bull which had been terrorising the villagers suddenly charged. Blyth, if legend be true, stood his ground while all others fled and grabbed the bull by the tail and like John Wayne hanging on to the back of the stagecoach, was dragged across the countryside, beating the animal with a stock until it dropped down dead.

Folklore may very well just be that, but there was a William Blyth who died in 1830 aged 74 described in the parish register as a 'former oyster merchant'. There is no record of Blyth ever being charged with smuggling, to the contrary he was a fine upstanding citizen of Paglesham, being a member of the parish council and at one time Parish Overseer. But I think the smuggling tales are best.

There was a very prominent family in Paglesham at the time, the Wisemans, and the following is a poem written by James Wiseman in 1888 which says it all really.

In the parish there stood at the time of my lay,
Three mighty elm pollards, and do to this day -
Gnarled, knotted and knagy, as anyone may
Observe at this moment - a view 'twill repay;
They're enormous in bulk, hollowed out by decay.
Here smugglers in times past used oft to convey
Their goods and conceal 'em until such a day
Or night was convenient to get 'em away;
(I've often been down 'em myself, by the way)
Four may sit in the largest, if they make essay,
They're at a relict, called by some want-way;
Where the parish pound stood once, but now swept away;
Here when cattle went straying were locked up, and lay
Such time till their owner consented to pay
A fine for animals wandering astray,
And which no excuse of pretence would gainsay.

The moral of this tale is

If ever you should chance to stay at Southend,
Hire a cab or a horse, or a donkey, which 'ere
You fancy - drive to Paglesham, where
The three pollard elms are still standing - When there
Climb up one, and look down its cavernous trunk,
Or descend if a man of good mettle and spunk,
You may - mind, I don't say you will - chance to find
Some Schnapps or cigars, left by smugglers behind,
If you don't, 'tis no matter - go then without fail
Some half a mile on, to the Pub - Plough and Sail,
At East End you'll find it - when there don't forget,
Order oysters, bread butter with stout (heavy wet).
As often 'tis called there by both of the sexes -
'Tis Courage's brewing, and marked with XXX's;
When before you - the stout, bread and butter - they set 'em,
Then ask for the oysters - I wish you may get 'em!

The majority of the information for this article came from Paglesham by Rosemary Roberts. This is a fascinating little book with lots more information about Paglesham, available from the library.



The Smuggler's Elms at Paglesham



The Plough and Sail, East End, Paglesham

Did you know that Charles Darwin's famous ship the Beagle ended her days at Paglesham lying in the middle of the river till the oyster company and local merchants petitioned in 1850 to have her laid ashore.

A MURRELL ISSUE

The Parish Registers of St Clement's record the baptisms in 1871 and 1875 of William James and Frederick Albert Murrell, the sons of James and Lucy Ann Murrell.

James was a waterman, who later worked in the pottery, and the family were living in Ferguson's Cottage at the foot of Leigh Hill in 1886 when tragedy struck.

The story goes that an aunt came to visit the family one day in January 1886 and, as visiting relatives do, she gave the boys a gift each. A large shut knife and sixpence.

Whilst their parents were away from home and during the course of their play Frederick got shut in a cupboard. Not surprisingly Fred became very angry and when he was eventually released from the cupboard he stabbed his brother William.

Poor William managed to get to a neighbour's house but the thigh wound that he had sustained caused such great blood loss that the doctor could do nothing and later that night the boy died. There was no dispute as to who had stabbed William and Frederick was arrested and taken to Southend Police Station where he was charged with wilful murder.

It was obvious that the boy had not meant to kill his brother and the coroner took the sensible view that this was not a premeditated crime and therefore could not be wilful murder.

Frederick appeared at the Assizes charged with manslaughter when the case against him was duly dismissed.

Source: Crime and Criminals in Victorian Essex by Adrian Gray



A PUB CRAWL

Take a stroll around our local hosteleries, find the pubs and find the missing letter

C A R L T O N E G R A B
R C A N G E L E T A E O
O O A N C H O R B E L L
* * C I S T E L L I B T S
S K A R O Y A L U B S M
H G R A N D E S O R A L
I S M A C K P A L A C E
P E T E R B O A T T A S
S R E T T U C D O O * * I
B B L U E B O A R O B A
S A R A H M O O R E P N
S A L L * * O B H C N U P

ANCHOR ANGEL BARGE BEAR

BELL BILLET BLUE BOAR

CARLTON CASTLE COCK ELMS

GRAND PALACE PETERBOAT

PUNCHBOWL ROYAL SHIP SMACK

SARAH MOORE WOODCUTTERS



PLANNING

Over the last couple of months the Committee has considered the following planning applications:

124 Grand Parade - renewal of permission for the demolition of bungalow and erection of a house - no objection

26 Cliff Parade - dormer window replacing door - no objection

87 Leigh Hill - lopping of trees - no objection

95 Broadway - new shop front - we realised that the existing shop front is not the original but nevertheless commented that the new proposal was not in keeping with the Broadway in conservation terms.

121 Broadway - Installation of roller shutters - we raised no objection in this instance but have expressed the hope that the Borough Council will discourage the use of roller shutters in the Conservation Area.

Junipers - from the Old Town's point of view a very important proposal - there has been much local discussion. We considered that the new development could not recreate the original Junipers nor should it be a pastiche of it. We felt that the roof line shown should be varied to emphasise the two buildings. There is an extant outline permission for shops on the site.

Margaret Buckey represents the Society on the Local Conservation Working Party and regularly attends meetings. At a recent meeting the refurbishment of Carlton Bakery was discussed. This had been achieved by the reuse of the existing timbers. It was an impressive scheme on which the architect was to be congratulated and the principles of which could well be of benefit elsewhere in the conservation areas.

We are also consulted in respect of the Borough Council's Transport Plan and our Chairman regularly attends meetings on this subject.

We have been approached by a local campaign to eradicate the menace of chewing gum from the town - we all know how ghastly it is to get a piece stuck to a shoe or to find some delightful person has left it stuck to the chair or carpet. Whilst we are unable to commit our stretched resources to the campaign we do give it our whole hearted support and will in future be advising all school parties that chewing gum is banned from the Heritage Centre and the children should be discouraged from bringing it with them when they visit the Old Town.



LOOK OUT FOR

The new Leigh Town Guide is shortly to be published. The Society has a full entry telling visitors who, where and what we are and do.

We are advised that, at long last, H N Bride's book Old Leigh is to be republished by Easter. This is an invaluable and very reasonably priced book for anyone wanting to read about the history of Leigh and of great benefit for those using the national curriculum.

View our web pages at www.genealogy.com/p/a/v/Carole-Pavitt

CHARACTERS OF OLD LEIGH



**BONKER
BURDER**

Stanley Bertram 'Bonker' Burder was born on 26 March 1920 in 2 Plumbs Cottages, High Street, Old Town. (yes, that's our 2 Plumbs Yard). 'Bonker' was the son of Bertram and Mary Ann Burder (nee Thorpe). The Burder family was a large one, with 8 girls and 4 boys.

From Plumbs the family moved to Norman Terrace and 'Bonker' grew up to be a cockle man in his early years with white weeding and shrimping thrown in. He was also a lorry driver and at one time worked at Southend Airport.

But his true love was Old Leigh and he eventually became Foreshore Officer until he retired.

Bonker's other love was football and at one time he played for the Leigh Ramblers. He also played darts for the Smack.

In his younger days he was a keen competitor for the greasy pole competition and the mud football at the regatta.

Bonker was a mine of information on the Old Town and its inhabitants and was always ready to talk on the subject.

And as for the nickname - let's just say Bonker knew how to look after himself.



**Bonker in his
role as
Foreshore
Inspector**



ACQUISITIONS

The Society has received many donations of items, photographs, papers and other memorabilia. However, space is limited and in future we will have to be more selective in the items we accept for the archive. Items which have a direct bearing on Leigh, its families and history will always be welcome (space permitting) but donors should be aware that it may not be possible for them to be on display in the Heritage Centre due to lack of space. We quite understand if potential donors therefore wish to retain the original items. If it is written material or photographs we would hope to be able to take copies for the archive and to photograph artefacts. Any items which we do accept will be kept in the archive and may be made available to view by prior arrangement for the purposes of research.

Obviously, when Plumbs Yard is renovated there will be a need for relevant artefacts, but at present we have nowhere to store these. By all means tell us about them so that we can come back to you at that time.

I remember I remember.....



Who remembers the Broadway in the 'olden days?' The days of Mence Smith and Maisie Modes, the Lincoln Pie Shop at the top of Church Hill, with those delicious, succulent pork pies and hot meat patties, David Sands the hairdresser, was next door, very exclusive! And what about Cramphorns, the long thin shop that sold everything to do with hardware, there was always that distinctive smell of paraffin, sunlight soap and bird seed which was kept in big sacks on the floor. Those were the days, when Saunders the grocers sold loose biscuits and dried fruit from big tins with glass lids ranged in front of the counter and sugar was scooped from a sack and transferred to a paper cone twisted at the bottom and neatly folded on the top. There was always a bent wood chair with a round seat with a pattern of little holes, where ladies sat and chatted, seemingly for hours while they got their breath back enough to continue on their way.

The more you think, the more the names come flooding back, Liptons, The Maypole, Schofield and Martins, the Home and Colonial, Beaudec the decorators' merchants, the yellow shops. In those days wallpaper had a plain white stripe down each side. For a small fee they would trim it for you in a kind of roller, they turned the handle and the white boarder would be cut away in long curly strips. Then there was Hawken, high class men's and boys outfitters, and the Lonsdale Stationers. Caulkett the optician and Paperills and Creeds the ironmongers. Remember the young Mr Creed dashing around in his wheelchair? What ever was his Christian name? The Co op had a chemist, grocer, butcher and a greengrocers. I still remember my mum's Co op number 797908. But I can't remember why we had it. Grindleys was there even then and Boots and Wade Pollard. At the corner where Richardsons is now there was a shop that sold toys - if I was lucky I'd get a farm animal there. Lead turkeys, sheep, little milk carts, fences, trees and fat farmers. The Ideal Sweetshop was another favourite with its great jars full of sherbert lemons and gobstoppers. We always called it the High Pavement Shop because the pavement was on two levels there.

Broadway West had the exclusive ladies shop Joan Tinner, Garons, the Home Made Bakery and Broadway Grill and best of all Lasts, the 'in and out shop.' One shop sold genteel ladies clothes and the other side opened onto the road and had two alleyways with rough wooden floors where everything hung higgledy piggledy along the walls. Here you could buy shirts, jackets, and boots and socks and all things masculine. Holmes and the Popular Restaurant were there then, and the long gone Irish linen shop. Further along in Rectory Grove was Janot House with the expensive but exquisite ladies undies and stylish suits and dresses and further along Leslie Arnold the photographer, was he the first to see the elegant beauty of the Thames barges, Leigh bawleys and fabulous sunsets?

Gradually most of the old favourites have disappeared, but The Broadway is still one of the nicest places to shop if only for the glimpses of the river.

by Mavis Sipple



**Palmer's
Greengrocers
and Fruiterers
now
Clement's
Arcade**

A BARGEMASTER'S TALE

The Jack-knifing of Carriage No 5 – 16 April 1985
Another tale of Thames Watermen

The following tale, (and I use the word advisedly) supplied by our own John Porter, gives an interesting insight into other duties of the Thames Watermen and how the Royal Bargemaster strangely has charge of a coach and four but cannot discard his nautical training.



A carriage is pulled by four horses but it is navigated by postillions not the coachman. The postillions sit astride the horses. The steps at the stern of the carriage are traditionally occupied by HM Watermen. The following is the report of HM Bargemaster on an incident involving a horse called Freddie.

Windsor castle – Lat 51°27'N Long 0°36'W
Wind: Light and variable. High Water London Bridge 11.42 GMT

Delay in the arrival of the President of Malawi on his state visit caused Freddie, the horse lying second rank starboard, to attempt to sit down. At one stage he crossed his legs and listed to port.

Getting underway from Home Park calmed him, and we had no further trouble until we had the Guildhall on our port quarter and half a cable of High Street remained. For no apparent reason, the horse ahead of Freddie reared suddenly and attempted to shake hands with the postillion on his port beam. The result was an uncontrollable rounding to port, without sound signals. Citizens of Windsor, and others, scattered as the lead horses left the fairway and turned inshore and over the pavement. One horse put a foot through a pushchair which was fortunately unladen. Remarkably, the postillions were able to bring the team to a halt, and a capsiz was averted. Never without a compass, I noted that the carriage had a heading of 135°, while the horses were 320°. I knew that this was not right. We have an arrangement that disasters of this kind oblige the starboard Waterman to see to passengers while the port man sees to horses. Nick Silvester, lying starboard, lay second-bottom to the brake so he applied it to stop us going ahead or astern then leaped to the aid of our passengers, who had escaped injury. I looked at the horses - they looked very big, but they were held so that the carriage could be careened over to allow traces to be pulled clear before Crown Equerry arrived to take command. With him was Arthur, Head Coachman; bravely hiding his despair at having to rely on two ex-boatboys to disengage horses from a broken carriage, he declined our offers of assistance and wisely did the job himself. I am now reading a book on "Harness". A quick survey showed that the carriage had a broken mainshaft and a broken quadrant, and was certain to be C3 at Lloyds. There were no apparent injuries to those on the pavement, our passengers were safe on their way to the Castle in a Rolls Royce, and my inadequacies left me unable to look Crown Equerry in the eye. When the horses were de-rigged, the postillions dismounted and led their horses to a berth ashore at the Mews. A police officer then asked Arthur what he should do with the carriage. He paused momentarily, and as I remember it, suggested that the carriage was now a main-channel problem, and it would be appreciated if lots of policemen would tow it out of the fairway and back to its home port. Arthur's next suggestion was that we three should go to lunch. As we left the scene I allowed myself one glance astern at those now dealing with the problem. At St. George's Gate, Nick and I met Superintendent Royal Mews and his Comptroller, both anxious to learn the reason for the convoy arriving one short. Asked if Freddie had caused the trouble I was able to declare Freddie as innocent, and added that the culprit had been "the horse in the starboard towrope". I will remember always the look of horror which my reply generated on the Blues and Royals' countenance, and the Comptroller's glance heavenwards, which was clearly a silent plea for strength. At lunch I learned that the starboard towrope horse was one 'Rideau', and I resolved never to share a duty with him again.

Edwin Hunt. Bargemaster to Her Majesty

The Royal Watermen are known to have been around at the time of the Magna Carta as they carried King John to Runnymede in 1215 so it's safe to say that they were here before that but no one actually knows. They are, and were, a kind of Royal water taxi service. Traditionally they carried the royal crown from Hampton Court (then the royal palace) to the State opening of Parliament and even today 'Her Majesty's Bargemaster' carries the crown, in the royal coach, from the Tower of London to Buckingham Palace.



PRESERVING PLUMBS

Do you have a favourite plum recipe? Would you be willing to part with your culinary secrets for a good cause?

We are hoping to produce a recipe book in aid of Plumbs Yard and of course all the recipes have to feature plums.

So be it plum pickle, plum cake or plum wine Carole would like to hear from you with your recipes.

A little word of warning we cannot copy recipes from recipe books without permission as we would be infringing copyright so make sure the recipe can be freely used.

Articles for the next edition of Leighway should be with Carole by the end of July

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The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the committee
We rather hope you will keep your Leighway but if not please recycle it

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