

The Great War Open Day Edition www.leighsociety.co.uk



LEIGHWAY

WELCOME

Welcome to this Special Edition of Leighway, the magazine of the Leigh Society. This is a Special Edition because it is issued to herald and coincide with the Leigh Society's Great War Open Day at the Leigh Community Centre on 2 August 2014.

No one can have escaped the fact that 2014 is the centenary of the commencement of the Great War, and the next 4 years, until the centenary of the Armistice, will be full of programmes, events and information about this tragic and historic period of our history.

Leigh, like every other town and village in the country, lost men in the various theatres of war, and indeed we must never forget the vital role that women played both in keeping the home fires burning and nursing, working on the land, ambulance driving and in many other different ways. Nor must we forget the men who came back and whose lives were fractured and changed beyond recognition, some of them through illness and the effects of the War and others through loss of comrades and family. How do you rebuild your life after such a catastrophic event?

The Leigh Society has put together displays from its archives and family history, some of which was donated at last year's Open Day, to tell you some of what we know about Leigh and our ancestors in the Great War and to join with other local societies and groups who have other stories to tell. Hopefully it will inspire you to look into your own Great War connections, wherever they may be, and to record for future generations, the Lost Generation, so that we never forget.

**FOUR YEARS TO REMEMBER
TO FORGET**

LEIGH'S GREAT WAR With guest speakers and organisations

PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

Where better to hold this event than in the Community Centre which also commemorates its 100th year in 2014.

Elsie's Place will be open throughout the day for refreshments

10 - Doors and Recruiting Office Open

10.45 – Zeppelins, Spies and Riots – Ken Crowe, retired curator of Southend Museums

11.30 – The Great War and Shoeburyness – Brian Sandford, The Shoebury Society

1.30 – In Their Own Words - Cathryn Corns

2.15 – Southend's Great War, the losses of the local Constabulary and the treatment of aliens and POWs – Fred Feather

3.00 – Shot in the Tower – Len Sellers

4 - CLOSE

WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

We are delighted to welcome the Western Front Association to the Open Day.



Ian Houghton aka 'Tommy 14/18', aged 53, is a local man residing in Undercliff Gardens, and classes himself as a Great War Living History Enthusiast. His hobby has become something of an obsession over the last couple of years. "I'm not an academic, teacher or historian and certainly don't claim to be an expert, but do try to get it right."

Ian says 'To my mind, it is important to keep the memory alive of the sacrifices made. It's not about 'glorification' more about making people realize about the horror and cost of war and commemorating the sacrifices made whilst straightening out a few 'facts from popular myths'. It's also about educating the younger set, people learn far more from seeing and feeling things for real rather than just reading about them. I'll be setting up a typical recruiting desk of the day where people will be invited to take the 'King's Shilling', sample 'Beef Tea', Trench Cake, Anzac Biscuits and feel the weight carried by the soldiers in the Great War and listen to popular tunes of the day.'

THE BAY MUSEUM, CANVEY



Another very welcome contributor to the Open Day is the Bay Museum from Canvey.

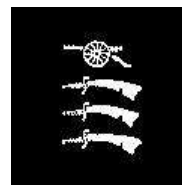
The Bay Museum opened on 17 June 2010 to remember the sacrifice of the people of Canvey Island, Benfleet and further afield in conflicts of the 19th, 20th and current century.

It is housed in a two storied former Admiralty Degaussing Monitoring Station which was built in the mid 1960s and is therefore a 'Cold War' building. The museum, in Western Esplanade, Canvey Island is open on Sundays from 10 a.m. to mid afternoon. It can be opened at other times by arrangement by calling 07899 674 630.

FRIENDS OF SOUTHEND MUSEUMS

FOSMS, as they are affectionately known, will be mounting a display of Great War memorabilia

THE SHOEURY SOCIETY SHOEURY GARRISON



One of the Shoebury Society's aims is to make residents more aware of the history of the area and to secure the preservation, protection, careful development and improvement of the features of historic and public interest in Shoeburyneess and the immediate surrounding area.

The Society has produced a number of publications charting the history of the Garrison and the area generally. Recently 'The Great War and Shoeburyneess' has been produced detailing the involvement of the people of Shoebury in the war and copies will be available at the Open Day.

The Society will be mounting a display and speaking on Shoebury's involvement in the Great War.

LEIGH HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

A display of contemporary garden tools, photographs, publications, etc. Members of the Horticultural Society will be on hand to tell you about war time efforts to feed the nation.

SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF UNDERCLIFF GARDENS

SPUG, as they are affectionately known, have been undertaking research into the population of Undercliff Gardens at the time of the War and there will be a display of their findings.

PALL MALL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Church has been researching members of its congregation who were lost in the War and seeking more information on them on the day.

WOMEN'S WAR HISTORY

Women played a huge part in the war effort both at home and abroad. Without them the country could not have functioned and it is right that we commemorate their war efforts.

On 19 November Carole Mulrone is giving a talk to the Leigh Society on the role of women in the Great War. So if any of you have ladies in your family who played a part in the war effort please get in touch with Carole with your stories, especially, but not essentially, related to Leigh.

carole.mulrone@btinternet.com

FOOD PRODUCTION ON LAND AND SEA

Towards the end of 1916 when Lloyd George became Prime Minister at the head of a coalition government, the Cultivation of Lands Order was passed whereby any unoccupied land could be secured by the Board of Agriculture.

"Allotmentitis" swept the country in early 1917 and membership of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society (VLCS) grew quickly to 8,000.

Model plots were set up in various places, such as Kensington Gardens, to help new gardeners. Railway land was used, and some incredibly unpromising land was cultivated.

In 1918, the final year of the war, it is estimated that there were 1.5m plots, and demand, fuelled by rises in vegetable prices, continued into 1919 with around 7,000 new applications per week.

Along with many other areas Leigh had a VLCS and on 7 September 1917 it was reported in the Chelmsford Chronicle that in giving out prizes for achievement Mr Elford said that the ploholders of Southend would be responsible for the production of something like a thousand tons of potatoes. The war had taught them it was a sin to let good land go idle.

Leigh was also having a bumper time on the water in November 1916. It was reported in the Chelmsford Chronicle that there was a record catch of shrimps, the fishermen bringing in 444 baskets weighing just over 10 tons.

MAKE YOUR OWN ANZAC BISCUITS

The word ANZAC was applied to all Australian and New Zealand soldiers in the Great War. ANZAC Day (25 April) commemorates the anniversary of the landing of the ANZAC troops at Gallipoli.

Ingredients for 35

cup rolled oats
1 cup plain flour
1 cup sugar
¾ cup coconut
4 oz butter
2 tablespoons golden syrup
½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
1 tablespoon boiling water

Method

Combine oats, sifted flour, sugar and coconut. Combine butter and golden syrup, stir over gentle heat until melted. Mix soda with boiling water, add to butter mixture and stir into dry ingredients. Take teaspoonfuls of mixture and place on lightly greased oven trays; allow room to spread. Cook (150°C or 300°F) for 20 minutes. Loosen while still warm, then cool on trays.

A TRIBUTE TO MY 2 UNCLES

On Monday, 10th July 1916, my father's brother Uncle Bertie, Sgt Herbert James Clarke, No 5 Platoon 'B' Coy 10th Battalion

Royal Fusiliers was blown up in a trench he was working in on the Somme. He was married to my mother's sister Dolly shortly before and she never really got over his death.

My father went 'over the top' but was wounded. He recovered and I and my family are all here because of that!

Thanks to Carole, our computer and family history whizz - I have a Certificate from the War Graves Commission which shows that my Uncle was buried, "Remembered with honour" at Becourt Military Cemetery, Becordel - Becourt, Somme, France.

A few years ago I went with friends on a coach tour to the Great War Cemeteries and Memorials ending at the Menin Gate Ceremony at Ypres. Thanks to the courier, we found the small cemetery at Becourt and Uncle Bertie's grave - I was probably the first member of the family to do so. The cemetery was very quiet and peaceful, surrounded by poplars - and a blackbird sang.

I have memorabilia of my Uncle's including his canvas army issue diary neatly written in pencil up until his death. He seemed to be enjoying the experience until then. Also a moving letter from the mother of one 16 year old boy who was blown up at the same time but ended up in hospital.

My mother worked in London as a typist at the Ministry of War Pensions before she married my father in 1922. She told us she had typed out the certificates of those injured and how many had suffered terrible shell - shock.

My father's Company Commander was **K.O. Peppiat** who became the Chief Cashier of the Bank of England and signed the Bank Notes.

Although from Leytonstone, not Leigh, another Uncle did live in Madeira Avenue before WW2 - a frequent visitor to the Old Leigh pubs and cockle sheds for shrimps, cockles and winkles as we do now!

My mother too, lost a brother, Corp William Reginald Leathley, likewise of the 10th **Bn.** Royal Fusiliers. He died on Tuesday, 10th April 1917 and is "Remembered with Honour" on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France.

Salutations, Margaret Buckey



Arras Memorial

KNIT A POPPY FOR ARMISTICE DAY

We want everyone to support and contribute to the British Legion's annual Poppy Appeal in November which does such wonderful work, but we thought it might also be a nice idea if we all knitted our own Leigh Poppy to wear AS WELL. It doesn't take much knitting skill (so guys you could have a go too) and very little in the way of equipment so why not give it a go? You could join together (a ball of wool will make loads of poppies) and form a poppy knitting group or coffee morning. You can raise money for the British Legion by selling the poppies to your friends and families.

To help you here is the pattern using medium sized needles and double knitting wool, plus a safety pin – it takes about 30 minutes to knit a poppy.



Petals(4) Red - cast on 5 stitches.

Row 1: (RS) K
 Row 2: KFB, (knit forward and back into next stitch), K to last 2 stitches, KFB, K1 (7stitches)
 Row 3: As second row (9 stitches)
 Row 4: As second row (11 stitches)
 Row 5-8: Knit
 Row 9: Sl1, K2tog, psso (pass slip stitch over), K to last 4 stitches, K2 tog twice (7 st)
 Row 10- 12: Knit
 Row 13: As 9th row (3 stitches)
 Row 14: Cast off

Centre - Black - cast on 16 stitches. Cast off

Leaf (1) Green - cast on 4 stitches.

Row 1: K
 Row 2: KFB, K to last st, KFB (6 stitches)
 Row 3: K
 Row 4: As second row (8 stitches)
 Row 5-8: K
 Row 9: K2 tog, K to last 2 stitches, K2tog (6 stitches)
 Row 10: K
 Row 11: As 9th row (4 stitches)
 Row 12: K
 Row 13: As 9th row (2 stitches)
 Row 14: Cast off.

Weave in the ends of the petals, assemble the petals into a circle and use the ends to sew them together. Coil the black into circle and sew in the centre of the petal. Weave in the ends of the leaf and sew onto the back of the petals. Sew on the safety pin.

GREAT UNCLE ALEX IS ON THE NET

Perhaps the most poignant database of all on the 'net is that of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This wonderful organisation looks after the war cemeteries and memorials to British and Colonial dead all over the world.

The register can be searched free on line at www.cwgc.org and carries information on all who served and died in both wars, searchable by name. You will find information on where and who they served with and their registration number. You may even find a citation of their conduct and courage. This will all help you move further on to researching service records, war diaries, regimental histories and a wealth of other available information and the local Roll of Honour.

From an old photograph and a couple of the beautiful silk cards the soldiers used to send home from the front ALEX RITCHIE BRIDGE of Leigh became a real person.



Youngest son of William 'Fidler' Bridge of Hadleigh Road, a fisherman, Alex was born in 1899 in Hadleigh Road. Alex enlisted in March 1917 when he was 18 years old joining the East Kent Regiment (the Buffs).

On Saturday, 7 September 1918, just 2 months before the war ended, Alex was killed in action as the Buffs were on the Menin Road. He has no known grave but is commemorated on the Vis en Artois Memorial and on his parents' grave in London Road Cemetery.

His commanding officer said he was 'Well respected, a great favourite with his comrades'. One of millions for whom the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month came too late.

Alex was not the only Bridge family casualty. 3 of his first cousins were also lost.

**THE BARBERS OF LEIGH GO TO WAR –
OR DO THEY?**

The following preamble and poem appeared in the Essex Newsman on 20 January 1917.

Leigh-on-Sea is rejoicing in the fact that one of the town's hairdressers has been exempted. The fact seems to be of such high importance that the local poet has been induced to voice the feeling of relief Leigh is experiencing –

*The barbers in the district have now been called away
to serve their mother country and take the soldier's pay.
For things like this you know must be If we're to win the
victory.*

*Before the war we boasted six barbers here in Leigh,
but one by one they had to go with what results you
see.*

*Although my hair is long I know I cry 'Are we downhearted –
No'*

*Spry was the first to leave us and after followed fast, Banks,
Emery, Marshall, Teddy Read and Mason is the last.*

*The last of all his kind said he to barb the burgesses of Leigh.
Now Mason struggles gamely and works both night and day,
while loyally and tamely in this long line we stay.*

We like to show our British grit that we can also do our bit.

Mr A R Peggs, the author, was President of the Southend Shakespeare Company, a shipping broker and lived on Grand Parade. His son, Wireless Operator Arthur Sydney Clifford Peggs, of the Mercantile Marine, drowned when SS Greatham was attacked by an enemy submarine on 22 January 1918. He was 28. The SS Greatham was steaming in convoy, on passage from Grimsby to Blaye, Bordeaux, France, with a cargo of coal when she was spotted by the UB-31 approximately 3 miles south east of Dartmouth. UB-31 promptly torpedoed the Greatham and she sank with the loss of 7 crew. Wireless Operator Peggs is remembered on the Mercantile Marine Memorial at Tower Hill. He was on his first voyage.

As to the barbers of Leigh, there is no information for Marshall but for the others -

Lewis Spry was a tobacconist in the Broadway in 1914. He died in 1940 when he was living in Flemming Avenue, Leigh

Banks Brothers, hairdressers. Alfred Edward Banks was born in Islington living with his wife Alice and daughter Doris in 1911 at 38 Elm Road, roughly where Kit and Kaboodle and Hatton Jewellers now stand.

Mark Emery, tailor, 8 Elm Road in 1914. In 1911 he was living in Lymington Avenue and had a 15 year old son called Horace who was a hairdresser.

Edward Read was a tobacconist in the Broadway

John William Mason was born in Gravesend and in 1911 was living with his wife, Ellen (nee Turnidge) and daughter (also Ellen) at 3 Leigh Hill.

This poem appeared in the Chelmsford Chronicle on 16 February 1917 and plagiarises 'If' by Rudyard Kipling, who lost his son, Jack, in the Great War.

*If, when you see your comrades past you marching,
If, when you hear their bugles shrilly call,
If, when you see the wounded all around you,
You heed them not at all.*

*If you go on with all your games a-playing
And fail to answer to your country's call,
If you turn your back upon the struggle
Which grips your country in a fearful pall.
If, when your nation sorely needs you
You then go on with life of careless fun
Headless of the welfare of your nation,
You're not a man my son.*

*If, when the shells are round thee bursting,
If, when the cannons round thee roar,
If, when you hear the rifles cracking,
You stand your ground with face as bold as yore.
If you go forward swiftly dashing,
Cleaving your path through very hell,
If, when the guns you've taken,
You fall struck down by shell.
If, when your life is swiftly ebbing,
When the brief course is almost run,
You give a cheery word to some poor comrade
THEN, you'll be a man my son.*

Malcolm Plommer

Malcolm Plommer came from Kent and was a Lieutenant in the Royal Army Service Corps. He survived the war and returned to being a poultry farmer.

THE LEIGH SOCIETY

The Leigh Society is dedicated to enhancing and improving Leigh in all aspects be they in planning and conservation terms or in a social and cultural way.

Our motto is -

An eye to the future – because we look at all planning applications in the 4 conservation areas and comment on them and on other things that are proposed for the Town

An ear to the past – because we are passionate about Leigh's history and making sure it is passed on to future generations

In the heart of Leigh – because we are based in the heart of Old Leigh, BUT we care about the whole town.

Come and join us and help us to keep Leigh a great place to live, work and visit.

A RECRUITING POEM

WHO, WHY, WHAT AND WHERE?

The **Leigh Society** was founded in 1972 and after restoring the Smithy in the **Old Town** to form the Heritage Centre we have been open ever since as a museum of Leigh. The Society has grown from strength to strength and manages the Heritage Centre and the restored Plumbs Cottage.

The Heritage Centre is a registered charity.

The aims of the Society are –

to promote high standards of planning and architecture in the Leigh Conservation Areas and to secure the preservation of features of historic and public interest;

to provide and maintain a museum in the Old Leigh Conservation Area for the advancement of the education of the public and for the exhibition to the public of objects, documents, photographs and any other item whatsoever connected with the history of the town of Leigh-on-Sea; and

to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of public architectural and historical interest in the Conservation Areas of Leigh.

BE A HELPER

In the first five months of this year visitors from France, Belgium, Holland, Finland, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Albania, Greece, Malaysia, Singapore, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Panama, Brazil, Uruguay, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the USA have all enjoyed a look around the Leigh Heritage Centre.

Our Volunteer Stewards don't have to know all about the history (although some do and it's an ideal place to learn), they just have to be welcoming and friendly, encourage visitors to explore the Heritage Centre and Plumbs Cottage, and take money for postcards, books and gifts.

If this sounds like something you could help with please consider giving a few hours a month of your time. You will not be left on your own; we always try to work in pairs.

Someone will show you what needs to be done and it's all written down for you so that you don't forget. Sometimes we need help with school visits and adult groups as well.

Volunteering at the Heritage Centre is a really enjoyable experience and your help to keep the memories of Old Leigh alive is always very much appreciated.

Please ring Jennifer on 01702 712922 to find out how you can help.

THE LEIGH SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please enrol me as a member of the Leigh Society (UK Subscription - £10 per household; overseas subscription - £15)

Members will receive a copy of the Society's magazine, Leighway, at least 3 times a year and will be able to join our many events and excursions. The Society meets regularly in March, April, May, October and November for talks on various subjects of interest. These are held at Elm Road Methodist Church (members are charged £1 entry, non members £2 to cover costs). Our website (www.leighsociety.com) will carry full details about the Society.

Getting Leighway and other information by email saves the Society money in postage etc. If you can please use this method

Name.....
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Address.....
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I enclose my cheque for £ / or would like to pay my subscription by Standing Order *
Send to the Martin Ayling, Membership Secretary, 21 Henry Drive, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 3QQ, or hand in at the Heritage Centre

I would like to receive my Leighway by e-mail – YES / NO
I am interested in being a volunteer helper at the Heritage Centre – YES / NO *

(* Please delete as applicable – if you wish to pay by standing order a form will be sent to you)

Please pass to a friend who may be interested in joining

**TO ALL CURRENT AND FUTURE MEMBERS
WE ARE MOVING TOWARDS EMAIL CIRCULATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO SAVE COSTS - SO PLEASE LET CAROLE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS IF YOU HAVE ONE EMAIL HER WITH THE DETAILS AT carole.mulroney@btinternet.com**