



# LEIGHWAY

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

## HERE WE ARE AGAIN

This edition we cover old favourites like 'Characters of Old Leigh', and bring you up to date on local news and events.

In particular I would draw your attention to our Planning section which highlights some very important issues for Leigh which have been the subject of much local debate recently.

Once again members have turned up trumps with some cracking articles and I am very grateful to them for making the effort. Keep these coming, especially your reminiscences of places, shops etc in Leigh.

Articles for the next edition should be with me by 31 December and sent to the Heritage Centre or e-mail to [carole.pavitt@btopenworld.com](mailto:carole.pavitt@btopenworld.com)

Carole

## DIARY DATES

Unless otherwise stated, all events will be held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m. There is a small entrance fee of 50p for members and £1 for non members to help cover the cost of the hall.

11/12 Sept	Leigh Regatta
18 Sept	London Docklands Museum
9 October	Table Sale – St Clement's Hall
13 October	Romance of the River – Tony Farnham
17 November	Romany History – Paul Stevens
11 December	Christmas Comicals – Den
December	Christmas lunch – TBA

## CHRISTMAS COMICALS

The theme for the Comicals this year is EUROPE which gives everyone plenty of scope whether its Tulips from Amsterdam or the Can Can, whether you're a Eurosceptic or a Europhile there are plenty of countries to choose from. If you want to take part please contact Carole either through the Heritage Centre, on 07766 754073 or on [carole.pavitt@btopenworld.com](mailto:carole.pavitt@btopenworld.com)

## CHUCK OUT THE CHINTZ

To raise funds for Plumbs Cottage the Society is organising a TABLE SALE on Saturday, 9 October at St Clement's Hall between 10am and 3pm.

Tables will cost £10 and setting up will be from 9.30am onwards. Refreshments will be available and any donations in the way of cakes, biscuits etc would be greatly appreciated.

If you would like to book a table or help in another way please contact either Jan Sutcliffe on 01702 474724 or Margaret Buckley on 01702 473628 or any committee member.

## UPDATING YOU

Thanks to Binnie Mobsby for the interesting note that Lord Roberts who we featured in the last edition was in fact the model for Gilbert and Sullivan's modern major general in the Pirates of Penzance.

Thanks also to Richard Baker who is able to confirm that Fred Karno, who we also featured in the last edition, did not live in Leigh, but his wife and son, Leslie, did.

Richard tells us that Fred (real name Frederick John Westcott) was playing the Theatre Royal, Stockport, during the Christmas season of 1888 when he met 16 year old Edith Cuthbert. They married in Lambeth in 1889. Edith and Fred had 8 children but only 2 survived.

Apparently Fred often mistreated Edith to the extent that one doctor threatened to horsewhip him.

When Fred openly flaunted his mistress, Edith moved out and in 1913 settled at 70 Elm Road, Leigh. She died of a diabetic condition on 24 May 1927 and is buried in the London Road Cemetery.

## PLUMBS APPEAL

As part of the restoration of the Cottage we are going to need some authentic items of clothing to put on display inside. Such things that a fisherman's family would have in the house, such as waders, sou'westers, garnseys, caps etc. If you have any of these items left over from an ancestor, would you be willing to donate or loan them to the Society as part of the display? Although we don't anticipate anything as old as the Cottage we obviously need the oldest we can get. If you think you can help please get in touch with Carole

## HELPING HANDS

Further to articles in the last Leighway featuring the exploits of local lads during WW2, a shipmate on my last ship, a minesweeping trawler-HMT Walwyns Castle, was a well known Cockler, Jimmy Noakes. I believe he lived in Leighville Grove. He joined us in 1943 after a spell on a minesweeper in the Mediterranean at Tobruk and was very helpful to me, after I injured a hand badly whilst dismantling a gun.

This required going back to Barracks as the hand was to be in plaster for six months and needed to be kept dry. Jimmy promptly went to the Commanding Officer and in his best Leigh brogue said 'I'll look arter 'im Skip'... ..and he did! ... even to doing all my clothes washing. The story doesn't end there because a few months later he crushed a finger when coaling ship at Stornoway in the Hebrides. . . and guess who looked after Jimmy? To round off this yarn my brother Stan (also in minesweepers) was drafted to the Far East with a member of the Osborne family.

Frank Bentley

## THE BEEFEATER'S WIFE

Last edition we brought you the story of Kester Knight, a Yeoman of the Guard and Chelsea Pensioner, who lived and died in the Tower of London with his wife Elizabeth, and possible second wife Mary, both born in Leigh and of the same age. Well the mystery of the Beefeater's wife has been partly solved. But were Elizabeth and Mary one and the same woman? That mystery remains for no marriage certificates have come to light.

However, the birth certificate of his son Kester Thomas confirms that his mother's name was Mary Surridge. As she was 54 in 1881 she would have been born about 1826/7. But this poses another problem. He was born when Kester should have been married to Elizabeth – so it follows they were the same person!

On 1 October 1826 at St Clement's a Mary Ann Mitchell Surridge was baptised, the daughter of Henry and Elizabeth Surridge. Henry was the parish clerk.

Problem solved? Oh No! On 27 April 1828 Henry and Elizabeth baptised another daughter Elizabeth Mitchell Surridge.

So did Kester marry Elizabeth and then Mary – keeping it all in the family?

## THE PARISH CLERK

So what would Henry Surridge's duties have been as parish clerk? Writing in 'Heads of the People' in 1840 Paul Prendergast describes the parish clerk as follows.



'.... a sort of non-commissioned officer of the Church militant; and the ecclesiastical drilling of the charity children is generally one part of his business. Besides the responses and the catechism, he sometimes teaches them the art of singing.....in addition to the secular offices of taking care of the vestry, and keeping sundry books relating to the church and parish business, he acts as assistant to the clergyman during certain parts of the service, some of which he reads aloud alternately with him; and also as deputy to the congregation, on whose part he is delegated to say 'Amen'.

The office and work of the clerk is sweetened by a fair allowance – considered with respect to the occupant's station in life... He is usually at the time of his appointment, somewhat advanced in years; this at least is the case in the country.'

Not so Henry Surridge – he died aged 38.

## ELIZABETHAN LIFE IN LEIGH

In Elizabethan times church attendance on Sundays and holy days was compulsory, with a twelve pence fine to be collected if people did not attend, the money to be given to the poor. Living a long way from the parish church was not always an excuse for non attendance.

In 1580 John Blacke of Leigh was ordered to prove that 'he doth work with Mr Thomas Church of Runwell about 6 miles from this parish'. i.e. in order to prove that he could not get to church.

In 1578 a nonagenarian's wife from Leigh attended (court), saying that he was a 'very old man and so impotent and lame that he was not able to go so far up the hill to the church, being of the age of lxxxx or very near'.

Others fell foul of the law for more usual reasons –

In 1575 Jasper Brown a Hadleigh blacksmith raided the house of John Bonner a Leigh mariner. He stole £10. 2s, eight pieces of money called quarter dollars and royals of plate worth 6s 8d also a silver flute worth 33s 4d with which he may have wiled

away his calmer hours afloat. A royal of plate was a real de plata the eighth part of a Spanish dollar, and the English name for 'pieces of eight'. The accused was found not guilty.



A Spanish Piece of Eight

In 1587 Augustine Draper of Leigh had an action against him on the grounds that 'the common report (is) that he doth not acknowledge the immortality of the soul; and by his own speeches he hath offended the same'. The judge ordered him to have conference with Mr Beriman, Mr Negus and Mr Dent sundry times - meeting in Leigh church whereby he may be fully persuaded of the immortality of the soul, and to certify under their hands of his full persuasion at the next (court); and likewise (it was reputed that he said) that there is no transubstantiation in the sacrament, and God hath his lawful ministers and they ought not to have any salary or stipend, but to live of the altar.' John Berryman, William Negus and Arthur Dent were rectors of the parishes of Rochford, Leigh and South Shoebury.

Living apart – it was considered a sin for married couples not to cohabit. In 1590 Humphrey and Joan Bailey were before the court for living slanderously asunder. Joan declared that they had not been lawfully married and that 'by deceit he compelled her thereto, and now will not suffer her in his sight and beateth her, so that she is not able to abide him for fear of her life'. She further alledged 'He hath heretofore when they lived together brought home certain goods that she supposed he had stolen and would have compelled her to keep them close (i.e. secretly), or other vile things, which she denied to do, and therefore was glad to depart from him. The woman was discharged, while her husband was excommunicated.

Extracts from *Morals and the Church* by  
F G Emmison

## **2<sup>ND</sup> LEIGH WESLEY SCOUT TROOP**

**We are indebted to Trevor Kirby who now lives in Bournemouth for his reminiscences of what sounds like a happy youth in Leigh.**

'As you are probably aware the above Scouts and Cubs were based at Wesley Church, Elm Road. I do not recall seeing an article on them and we can't let Frank and his Sea Scouts have it all their own way. Although not exactly Old Leigh I think we can say they were part of 'Developing' Leigh. All the lads were local and went to North Street, Chalkwell Hall or Westleigh Schools.

In 1931 as a 7 or 8 year old I joined the Cub pack and my brother Victor followed 2 years later. We met in the new hall where the Leigh Society has its AGM. The Akela was Miss Kitteridge who lived in Western Road and special treats were teas at her bungalow: Afterwards I joined the Scouts who were in the corrugated roof hut next to the new hall. The Scoutmaster was Tom Parrinder, supported so well by his wife Rose.

The troop met at 6 pm every Thursday and there was great rivalry between the sixes which were named after birds (Swifts, Eagles etc.) and on wet evenings we played handball and other games in the hut while on dry occasions we participated in Indian Tag on the cliffs below Marine Parade; the idea was to capture the other side's scarves (scalps) and there were some right rough and tumbles.

We had a splendid drum and fife band and marched, flag flying, every year for the Renewal of the Promise all the way from Leigh to the Ritz Cinema on Pier Hill, Southend. And back again! Then there were the annual inter-troop sports and competitions in Chalkwell Park. At Easter camps were held (once in the snow) at a large hillside site on the south side of London Road, Hadlelgh, roughly opposite where the new Council Offices are situated. During summer holiday weekends we would pull the loaded trek cart across the fields from Leigh, via Bentalls Farm and Eastwood, to the newly acquired Belchamps at Hawkwell. It was I think in 1935 that Tom Parrinder organised a week's camp at St Catherine's Bay, Jersey, the highlight of which was a day trip to St Malo - excitingly foreign! I took lots of photographs of the French beaches and when in 1941 or 1942 in preparation for the then unknown D Day landings, HMG asked the public to send in photographs of French beaches I dutifully despatched mine, never to see them again. My last camp in 1936 was at Wrabness, near Manningtree overlooking the River Stour.

They were happy times in the early/mid 1930s and I shall be ever grateful to those above named devoted people who gave so much of their time to youngsters who otherwise had little to look forward to in those hard times.'

Were you in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Leigh Wesley Troop or any other local youth organisation. If so lets hear from you too. What about you girls??

## CHARACTERS OF OLD LEIGH ALBERT CHARLES ROBINSON 1864 – 1942



Albert Charles Robinson was the caretaker of St Clement's Hall.

It was rather strange that he should be the caretaker of this particular hall, a building where once were grounds which he tended as the gardener.

The Rectory of Leigh (now the library) was set in 5 acres of grounds commanding a fine view over the estuary. When these grounds were enclosed and private they included Chess Lane. Benton's History of the Rochford Hundred records that the loss of this Lane was of great grief to the inhabitants for it was the usual path to the church for those who were marrying and those who were being buried.

Albert's father was a fisherman, but like others of his day, he could see that the industry was declining so he steered his son to a career on land and Albert went to work for Canon King's as gardener.

Albert worked in the Rectory Gardens for 50 years and could recall many events in Leigh when he looked back over his long career. In particular, he could remember a time when all the drinking water in Leigh was obtained from wells and everyday householders or their children had to queue for water.

In 1890 Albert married Elizabeth Jane Frost and the couple lived in Elm Road which it seems was named after a great Elm tree which grew near Elm Farm and was reputed to have measured 30 feet around.

Like many Leigh men, Albert had a nickname, not unsurprisingly 'Robbie'.

### THE CHURCHYARD WELL

In 1932 a deep hole was discovered in Leigh churchyard which at first was thought to be the entrance to an old vault and some even thought might lead to an underground passage used by smugglers.

However, neither suggestion was true, it was in fact the old well that in days gone by had been the

ordinary water supply for the folks of Leigh. There was a time when that particular part of the churchyard was the site of the parish pound and the stocks, and the well was there to water cattle.

The well used to be about 20 feet deep but eventually became filled up. When it became disused it was covered with a stone top but this had disappeared when the hole was found.

After the discovery of the hole it was covered again so as not to present a hazard.

## ARTHUR WILLIAM (SONNY) JOSCELYNE OF JOSCELYNE'S BEACH

By his daughter, Clare Harvey



*'In 1909 – when Arthur Joscelyne was six – his father emptied the family savings from the jug on the mantelpiece to buy 200 yards of beach on the north shore of the River Thames. Arthur helped run 'Joscelyne's Beach' for 20 years. His boyhood reminiscences vividly bring to life a world long disappeared. The tides, the gulls, and the dinghies set the scene for a cast of characters that will never be forgotten'.*

'My father was born in March 1903 - the eldest son of the six children produced by Arthur William Joscelyne Snr. of Leigh and Ellen Elizabeth (Minnie) Setterfield of Margate.

He became Arthur Snr.'s constant companion - out on boats from the time he was 3 months old. Fishing, watching his father plying his trade of builder and often in his Uncle Fred Joscelyne's Blacksmith's shop on Leigh Hill. He mentioned standing with his father at the age of around seven, in the Churchyard of St. Clements by the big square Joscelyne Vault, waiting to see Halley's comet. "This is where your Great Aunt Charlotte is buried" he said "She did away with her first husband". *Later research shows that she remarried a young fisherman some 16 years her junior soon after the loss of her first husband!*

In 1909 his father purchased the lease on Joscelyne's Beach but disaster struck in the First World War when in 1917 his father died. Overnight at 14 Sonny had to become a man and help Minnie run the Beach, which was their only source of

income, and bring up the other five children. He vowed that he would stay with her until the youngest was off hand.

A fair scholar at school, he loved reading but most of all nature and art. At 12 he produced a beautifully illustrated schoolbook of birds eggs and all he knew about each species. He won a scholarship to evening classes at Southend Technical College where once again he produced some wonderful enamel workboxes and took both gold and silversmithing courses. At 14 he left school and was apprenticed at Leigh Engineering in Old Leigh High Street.

Ever inventive, Sonny became one of the first locally, I believe, to construct a kind of water ski and get himself towed along off shore - making the local papers. Eventually all the siblings got jobs and it was decided that Vincent should help Minnie (by now known to locals as Ma Joscelyne).

Sonny got a job boat building at Shuttlewoods near Paglesham. Then he had the opportunity to be in charge of chartering luxury yachts at Wallasea. Finally, younger brother Harold suggested they go into the building trade like their father and grandfather.

In 1935 - 8 years after first meeting, my parents married. All too soon the Second World War struck and in 1940 he and his brothers were off to Dunkirk with the little ships. After this the brothers left to seek work and safety for their families inland. They ended up working on Hullavington Airfield in Wiltshire as aircraft engineers.

After the war things remained very dour and difficult - everything rationed still etc. and like many families, in 1949, we emigrated - our chosen destination being South

Africa. Then my maternal grandmother became ill and we decided to come home just for a visit and somehow settled back into life in England.

My father was determined to retire from the building trade on his 60th birthday. There was never a dull moment. He was a breeder of rare birds and keen gardener who grew most of his own vegetables. We still continued fishing and boating together and he also started pursuing his interest in genealogy and writing. He spent much time with his two grandsons who called him "Doc Fixit" because they believed he could mend anything. He even revisited watercolour painting at the age of 89!

Having lived through many changes - a time when the first aircraft flew and the first motor car entered Leigh, he died in 1993 at the great age of 90.'

Joscelyne's Beach is £7.99 from the Heritage Centre and local book shops.

## HE WAS A GOODLAD

From Arthur Joscelyne's memoirs it appears that the Joscelyne Vault in Leigh churchyard collapsed in about 1910.

Thirteen years later in 1923 another St Clement's memorial collapsed.

One Friday in November 1923 the crown of a brick vault in the churchyard close to the Calvary, gave way and resulted in a heavy tomb falling into the cavity.



The tomb was that of Admiral Goodlad who had died several hundred years earlier. It was thought that the vault gave way on account of subsidence following recent rain.

Exactly 300 years earlier, in 1623 the Greenland whale fleet was captained by Captain William Goodlad of Leigh. Writing on one of his voyages he recorded that he was asleep and all the boats were out fishing. His brother Peter lay by the ship's side. He spied a whale, followed him and struck him. The rope being new, it ran out of kinks, which overthrew the boat and Peter and a boy named Bredcake (another ancient Leigh name) were drowned.

William commanded the fleet for 20 years. At this time there was great rivalry between the Thames men and a rival company from Yarmouth. They met in Greenland and from a wrathful argument proceeded to blows. Goodlad had a musket presented at him 5 times but it misfired on every occasion. He did not long survive this experience dying in 1638 after having served as a Master of Trinity House.

As well as William, Leigh also boasts Captain Richard Goodlad who was also a Brother of Trinity House and died in 1693.

## WILLINGALE'S RESTAURANT

Willingales Restaurant 72-74 the Broadway, Leigh in Sea was started by my parents some time early in the 1930's; I don't have the exact date as I have no documents relating to that time. My father, Walter Willingale; who's own father, Sidney Walter, Willingale ran the Spread Eagle in Prittlewell, ran away to sea as a young man of 16 to serve as a cabin boy on a P&O liner: luxury liners being the main mode of long distance travel at that time, 1917. Eventually he worked his way up to be a first class cabin steward.

As was the practice at the time, if one had a large family, it was important to ensure that all the children had a 'trade'. So it was with my mother's family. My mother, always known as Bubbles, was apprenticed to be a cook. Her sisters, Gwen and Dolly Matthews were put to millinery and floristry respectively. One boy, Barnard, was to be a delivery boy at Achilles Serres Dry Cleaning Co in Hamlet Court Road, and the other, Cyril, a carpenter with his father.

My father would send money home to my mother to be saved for their future venture. They were married in January 1930 and soon after opened a small cake/tea shop in the Broadway, Leigh in the section of the road as it bends round the Grand Hotel. By this time my mother was a fully trained professional cook and one of her last posts was in Boot's the Chemist's Restaurant in Southend High Street. Some of the older readers may remember Boot's also having a lending library there too. (I think the site is now Top Shop or Top Man).

The first shop was obviously successful, and during the time they had it my mother also had time to teach my father to be a pastry cook.

With the money they made in their first shop they moved to a larger property further west in the Broadway. The two premises were amalgamated to



make one large restaurant. The building and design work being carried out by my grandfather, Bill Matthews. He installed full length mirrors to give an illusion of even more space and the restaurant was decorated throughout in cream and green. Lloyd Loom and bentwood chairs, starched white table-

cloths, with smart green and black tiles at the front below the windows completed the picture. The ordinary domestic kitchen at the rear of No72 was converted to cope with catering requirements and lined in embossed tin! Difficult to describe as I've never seen or heard of it since, this was also painted in cream. The kitchen had a large Aga, a Stills Boiler, a marble pastry slab that ran the length of the room with flour bins under, and, a large wooden table in the middle and 'Eppy' in the corner. 'Eppy' was a very large automatic mixing machine so called because the two large arms reached round a big stainless steel mixing bowl and reminded mother of Epstein's mother and Child. In the alcove, where the fire place would have been, we had the radio, which was switched on first thing in the morning and not switched off 'til late evening. In the scullery, a sink with duck board, wooden drying racks for the dishes; two larders, one for dry goods and one for wet. Also in the scullery there was a huge monster of a gas steamer on 4 legs. It was used daily for turning out large quantities of jam roly poly puddings, syrup, sultana, and a variety of other delicious steamed puddings. Outside we had the ice box with ice delivered once a week. My parents and I lived in the flat above. At the rear of No.74 (74a) lived my grandparents, my mother's sister, Gwen, and her husband, (my father's brother) and one of my mother's brothers.

My mother did the 'plain cooking,' my father did the fancy cakes and pastries, my aunt Gwenny did the waitressing., and while, she was able my grandmother helped with vegetable preparation.

The Restaurant was open for morning coffee, lunch and afternoon teas. It was extremely popular at lunch time with, among others, the business men in the area. Shilling (10p) to 1/6d (12 1/2p) for a three course lunch. After lunches and a short break, preparation for teas would begin. Tomatoes, roes, or sardines on toast, toasted cheese and other light savouries and a selection of pastries and buns. To me the cakes always seemed to be such wonderful creations; miniature 'cauliflowers' with green marzipan leaves and a swirl of white cream in the middle, father's version of 'Kunzle. Cakes', Battenburg slices and cream horns.

Going out for an evening meal didn't seem to be the thing in Leigh at the time and so they never opened in the evenings though whist drives were held there regularly on Mondays.

Soon after the war began in 1939 my grandfather built a 'lean to' air raid shelter in the hall; large beams leant at an angle against the main supporting wall of the house. There may have been essential supplies in there but as far as I was concerned it was a wonderful play house and I would persuade anyone who wasn't busy to come and play with me. I certainly remember the gas man telling me stories, and the milk man's horse dragging the float over the pavement to poke his

head in through the open door way while the milk man was in the kitchen having a cup of tea.

German bombers were using the Thames as a guiding path on their way to Gravesend, London and the midlands to bomb the munitions factories and the docks. Any munitions left over were dropped in the estuary on the way back, several falling in Leigh.

A family decision was made to evacuate all 8 of us to somewhere safer. The enormity of the decision can only be appreciated now that I am nearly as old as my grandparents would have been at the time. Five adults would have no work and their two elderly parents, one with a heart condition, would be uprooted from familiar surroundings.

The family went to Wallingford, where my grandmother had been brought up as a girl. The men all volunteered to go to the munitions factories in Coventry. (Safer! They were bombed out of their lodgings at least twice.) My grandparents and Gwen found lodgings in Brightwell cum Sotwell,. My mother and I went to a small flat over a jewellery shop in Wallingford. Mother joined the WRVS and ran the British Restaurant in the Corn Exchange in Wallingford, helped by grandma on the till. Gwen joined the Land Army, and grandpa took up an allotment and bred chickens. We were away for 5 years; grandfather, sadly died and my twin sisters were born in Oxford .

On our return we found that Mr Dossett had kindly boarded up the big plate glass windows against bomb damage. Dossett's Bakery, on the opposite side of the road, made the best Vienna rolls and pork pies, ever. In the past 50 years I have found none to replicate them. However, vandals had got in and done a bit of damage but the restaurant was soon cleaned up, restored, and reopened for business.

Despite the rationing that restricted many things on the menu the place was soon full of customers and doing a roaring trade once again. At Christmas time there was always a huge Christmas tree and the whole Restaurant would be elaborately decorated. For a few years they were even open on Christmas day for lunch.



Walter and Hilda Willingale on their wedding day

Sometime around 1955 the rent was put up to an uneconomic level and the Restaurant had to be given up. It was a sad and traumatic time. Once again the family was to be split up. Gwen, Reg and Barnard to a flat in Southend. Father and mother became stewards at the Orsett Golf Club and my sisters and I went with them. And that was the end of Willingale's Restaurant, a landmark in Leigh Broadway for nearly 25 years.

Many thanks to Ann Carter for this wonderfully detailed insight not just to her family's business but also the effects of the war on local business.

## A BUDDING POET LAUREATE

During the course of the year, particularly in the summer term, many schools send classes to visit the Heritage Centre.

Sometimes up to 90 children are entertained to a slide talk of the history of the town and its industries and then an explanation of the smithy's craft by use of the artefacts in the Heritage Centre.

After each visit the Society regularly receives letters from the children thanking us for the experience and letting us have their views on the Centre.

Sometimes they go a bit further, as did Leon Harbron aged 9, who wrote this poem following his recent visit.

### THE LEIGH HERITAGE CENTRE

The Heritage Centre in Leigh  
Is full of the town's history  
The gentlemen are full of knowledge  
And talk about Leigh with homage.

The cockle industry  
I now find no mystery  
My love of boats is vast  
How I would have enjoyed cockling in the past.

On Mary Ellis' tomb in St Clement's Church  
The gentlemen told us how press gangs perched  
Waiting for the young men of the town  
Sharpening of their cutlasses abound.

The canon ball I held  
Leigh's enemies they repelled  
Keeping the town's folk safe  
In metal balls they must have held such faith.

We hope you agree this is a fine effort by Leon. We thank all the children for their letters which are a great encouragement to continue with our education programme.

## DID YOU PLAY 'TIN CAN TOMMY'?

Brian Ford recalls childhood memories of when his family lived in Uttons Avenue.

'When we lived in Uttons Avenue before it was made up, at the top of the road where there was a clearing that had trees and dense scrubland we used to play 'Tin Can Tommy'. This was a tin with a few stones in it and the top flattened to form a rattle. This was placed on a tree and the object was that you would go and hide and the person who was 'IT' would have to come and find you, in the meantime you would double back and shout 'Tin Can Tommy, 1, 2, 3' and bang the tin on the tree stump.

Then you were IT next time.

Brian reckons there would be loads of kids playing but sadly he can't recall their names.

Were you one of them? Let us know – perhaps we could have a Tin Can Tommy reunion.

## EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION

Near Church Hill there was once a free school which Sir Samuel Moyer, one of Leigh's famous mariners, founded in 1716 'for instructing children in the principles of the Christian religion.' The school disappeared later that century and the buildings were sold. It had been situated at the foot of Leigh Hill on what was known as Norman's Hill.

In 1801 when the first census had been taken (nothing like we know nowadays, this was a return by the village priest in answer to various questions – very rarely were individuals mentioned) Leigh had a population of 570. There was no organised system of education for the ordinary people although there were small private schools and dame schools run by untrained elderly ladies, but these schools charged fees and for the vast majority of the poorer children there were no schools at all.

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 1808, Mr Hodge, the Curate of Leigh wrote

*'There are in this place 4 day schools of which three are under the direction of females, and have for their object reading and needlework: the fourth is superintended by a man and his wife and extends its instruction to writing and cyphering. In the first of the three former schools there are 14 scholars, in the second, 20, in the third 7; in the last school 15. The adjoining parish of Hadleigh, of which I am also curate, contains one day school in which, upon an*

*average about 15 scholars are instructed in reading and needlework only'*

Lady Olivia Sparrow founded a school on the north side of what is now the Broadway roughly behind where Woolworths stands. Unfortunately the school was not secured legally and when Lady Sparrow died in 1863 the school was sold with the rest of the estate.

The Herschell School was the result of Lady Olivia appointing the Rev Ridley Herschell as a missionary to the village in 21835.

Lady Olivia had always been willing to use her own money to help pay for the schools, however the Church of England was the greatest sponsor of popular education and most of its schools were founded under the auspices of the National Society. At the same time the non-conformist religion founded schools under the direction of the British Schools Society.

All was not sweetness and light in Leigh though. Lady Sparrow and the then Rector, Robert Eden who was a great supporter of the National Society, clashed over school policy and the Rector founded a national school in 1847 on Church Hill.

Because the school on the Hill was built on a slope there was considerable settlement and the church found it difficult to pay for repairs and the staffing. In 1884 the Inspector of Schools repeatedly found fault with the state of the floors and the desks and was urging the need for additional classrooms and more help for the teachers.

There was no state education until the Education Act of 1870 and eventually due to the state of the school on the Hill a state school was needed under the National Board.

Thus North Street school came into being and the school on the Hill closed and was eventually converted into a house. North Street was planned as boys and girls schools with an intake of 186 of each sex.

In 1889 it was reported in the Southend Standard that 98% of the boys passed the examinations (as opposed to only 48% the year before)

At the meeting of the school board in the same year Mr W Brown presented the Board with the return of the census he had taken which showed there were 392 children over the age of 6 and under the age of 14 and altogether the children amounted to 557.

Philanthropic the Board may have been but there was still some self interest involved. Although the siting of the school proposed to be in Dobbin's Field caused some members concern about how far the old town children would have to walk up the hill to school, Mr Millar QC of Leigh House was more concerned that the couple of hundred children would be passing his conservatory and drawing room window 4 times a day and would no doubt damage his property. He didn't win and the school building went ahead.

## THE DAY WAR BROKE OUT

Working in the Heritage Centre on a Saturday you get to meet lots of interesting people and hear interesting conversation about Old Leigh and what people remember of it from their younger days.

Recently Mrs Lillian Taylor came in to the Centre with her family and was overheard to say that she had been in Leigh when the announcement of the Second World War was made.

This was too good an opportunity so we asked her to give us her reminiscences of that momentous occasion.

Lillian and her 19 year old sister, Beatrice, who was courting a local lad whose parents had a fish shop in the High Street, had come down to Leigh for the day from their home in Pitsea/Tilbury.

The two girls were walking through the cockle sheds where a radio was on and everyone stopped dead to hear the declaration of war.

Their first thought was 'what is going to happen to us all' they had brothers who both served and luckily survived. Beatrice went into munitions in Staffordshire, whilst Lillian did the same, but closer to home at North Weald where she did nightwork. But they used to go out to watch the doodlebugs going up the river to London and saw Shellhaven get bombed and dogfights in Grays.

Where were you the day war broke out? – Let us have your remembrances of that fateful day for the next Leighway.

## SEND 'EM DOWN

As part of the programme of opening up records you can now view the proceedings of the Old Bailey in respect of trials between 1674 and 1834. These are the actual transcripts word for word.

So how lawless was Leigh during that period, did any of its inhabitants end up before the Beak in the greatest court in the land?

You'll be pleased to hear that none of the old fishing families feature in the proceedings, in fact Leigh was not producing prolific major criminals during the period. It only appears 2 times in the records over the period of 150 years and none of the perpetrators appear to be long-term Leigh residents.

### **Case 1 – 1743 Christian Mackenzie – theft – simple grand larceny**

Christian, who was then living in St Botolph with Aldgate in London was indicted for stealing a silk gown worth 10 shillings (50p), a cotton gown worth 5 shillings (25p), a suit of cambric (sic) headcloths laced worth 10 shillings and 2 pairs of silk shoes and one pair of silk stockings all of which belonged to John Campbell.

Christian was Mr Campbell's servant and the goods were stolen from his children's room on 14 July 1743. Christian did not bother to cover her tracks, the door was found open and she had fled.

John's wife knew that Christian had lived in Leigh and so he got a warrant and Christian was arrested in Leigh and brought back to London. She was wearing some of the stolen clothes and confessed that she had taken them and 'made a great deal of whindling and crying'.

She had been picked up 5 miles from Leigh with a young fellow and at first denied knowing Mr Campbell but in the end all was lost and she was brought back to London and found guilty and sentenced to transportation.

### **Case 2 – 1749 John Collison, George Altridge – theft – animal theft**

These men were indicted for stealing one bay gelding valued at seven guineas (£7 35p) and one black mare worth 10 shillings which belonged to Ann Hersel, a widow.

Ann lived in Chatham in Kent and the two men were servants on her farm. They were apprehended in Smithfield and incarcerated in Newgate where Ann visited them and they pleaded with her not to prosecute them.

Three witnesses appeared against the men. Thomas Baker said they had offered the animals to him for sale but when he questioned them as to how they came by them they confessed that they were stolen. Thomas and the constable sent Ann a letter which brought her to London and where she swore the animals were hers.

The Constable, John Burchet corroborated his evidence saying he had questioned the men as to where they had had the horses from and they said from Lee in Essex. Thomas Bennett, an old soldier, testified that they had given him 18 pence to say they had come by the animals lawfully and he took their money but laughed at them saying that he in his ragged coat he looked more likely to steal a horse than to vouch for them.

Both men were found guilty and sentenced to death. If you are interest in any trials during the period and even if you're not they make fascinating reading, you can find them at [www.oldbaileyonline.org.uk](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org.uk)

## PLUMB'S PROGRESS KEEP EVERYTHING CROSSED

After an awful lot of hard work by Alan Crystall and Carole Pavitt the Lottery application has now been submitted. We know to a lot of people it has seemed to have taken an age to get this far but we have not been idle and the ease with which some institutions seem to get grant belies the amount of effort which has to go into it.

It is always very difficult with voluntary associations – people lead busy lives and finding the time is always difficult, but we have done it.

The next round of considerations is in December so lets hope we get a great New Year present.

Alan had a very useful pre-application meeting with the Lottery officer whose job it is to give guidance on applications and what came across was that she was clearly astounded that all our work is self supporting and we receive no subsidy or income other than through subscriptions and the Heritage Centre.

Of course, we must acknowledge that we do get a little help from our friends. The Town Council's grant after the fire helped us get back on our feet again and we are most grateful for the money pledged towards Plumbs by the Borough Council and Cory Environmental.

The officer was also very impressed and urged us to emphasise the tremendous work done in terms of educational talks and slides. Each year we entertain several hundred school children from all over Essex and beyond and much thanks has to go to all who assist in this programme for making it such a success.

It has brought home to us all how much we have to thank the Committee and helpers in the Heritage Centre without whom it would not keep open and Plumbs would have been lost.

Our own fund raising efforts have risen to £10,000 and we thank you all for your support. We now probably have enough tiles pledged to roof Buckingham Palace but that campaign will continue and has been very successful once again due to the 'gift of the gab' of the Heritage Centre volunteers. So its everything crossed for the next few months and lets hope our numbers come up.



## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BARD



Visiting Anne Hathaway's Cottage

In May thirty four members of the Society enjoyed a busy four day visit to Stratford-upon-Avon. We stopped at Henley-in-Arden for lunch before going on to Anne Hathaway's Cottage. We had the cottage almost to ourselves, the sun shone and the gardens were beautiful.

Our hotel, right by the river and opposite the theatre, was delightful with a dining room overlooking the water.

Saturday afternoon , for most the highlight of the visit, saw us at the Stratford Memorial Theatre enjoying 'Romeo and Juliet' and on Sunday we spent the day at Warwick Castle. Lots to see and being early in the year, not too crowded.

Monday morning gave us time to spend our money in the town before our return journey to Leigh.



Outside Warwick Castle

Ann Price

I am sure all members who took part in the trip would like to say a big thankyou to Ann for all her hard work in organising such a splendid break.

## PLANNING ISSUES

Over the last few months the Society has been consulted on a number of planning applications affecting the Leigh Conservation Areas.

There are always a number of applications regarding shops in the Broadway and we have striven to maintain a consistent approach to applications for new shop fronts and fascias to ensure they do not detract from the Conservation Area.

One issue which has more recently been exercising people's minds is the question of flat developments in Leigh, highlighted by the Overton Garage site, and others.

The Society looked at this issue very seriously and passed the following resolution which has been notified to the Borough Council.

*That the Leigh Society view with concern the increasing trend for flat development in the Town which it considers to be alien to the general character of the Town.*

*The Society's particular concerns can be detailed as follows: -*

- *The loss of existing traditional housing stock and business premises, often of considerable merit within their settings.*
- *The increase in density consequent upon the granting of permission for flat development and the consequent impact on local services.*
- *The increase in traffic generated by flat development.*
- *The overbearing nature of flat developments in terms of surrounding development*
- *The effect on the skyline of the town by flats which are taller than surrounding housing and other development.*

*In the light of these concerns the Society will be urging the Southend Borough Council to consider very carefully any proposals for further flat developments in Leigh and to include a criteria based policy against which all future applications for flat development will be judged in its Local Development Framework document.*

*Suggested criteria for such a policy should, it is considered, include consideration of the following issues for which standards should be set within the Framework*

*Density  
Traffic generation  
Height in keeping with surroundings  
Bulk and mass of development*

Many of you will have attended a very lively and well attended public meeting at the Grand when a committee was formed to spearhead the campaign against inappropriate developments in Leigh. We wish them well.

## A HOY THERE ME HEARTIES

No I am not going into Long John Silver mode but my curious nature wondered where such a strange word as AHOY came from.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the word 'ahoy' is an nautical exclamation – a call for attention. Well we all knew that but where does it come from?

What better place to look than the Internet and a website called Straight Dope – no not that sort of dope – but a site dedicated to almost anything that you could ask a question about. Their explanation is as follows

The term "ahoy" is obviously nautical, although the exact origin is unknown. Some authorities think it dates back to an ancient Viking battle cry. The meaning is the same as "hail!", a salute or greeting. It has been traced back to the interjection "hoy!" and the early Dutch "hui!" and perhaps the French "ohé!", all from the Middle Dutch "hoey" or "hode" and possibly derived from Old High German "huota" meaning protection (whence the word "heed"). For what it's worth, a 'hoy' is a small coasting freighter. "Hoy" does not seem to be related to "hail" which comes from the Old Norse "heil" to the Middle English "hail!" used in greeting.

In English, the first written usage cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is from the 1750s, quoting Tobias Smollet's *Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, a contemporary of Fielding's famous *Tom Jones*: "Ho! The house ahoy! What cheer!" "Ahoy!" was obviously well enough known at the time that Smollet could make a joke of hailing a house rather than a ship.

So the term, although nautical, was used as a hail or call in a broader sense. By the late 1880s, it could also be used as a verb, meaning "to call out 'ahoy!'" The *OED* cites, "She ahoy's the schooner." Alexander Graham Bell suggested "ahoy!" as the standard telephone greeting, but it didn't catch on. Brooklyn College professor Allen Koenigsberg, author of *The Patent History of the Phonograph*, argues that the word that did catch on, "hello," was previously unknown and may have been invented by the man who proposed it, Thomas Edison.

Seems to me a natural call to a skipper of a hoy, just to shout across the water 'ahoy there'!

One of the older families of Leigh and Southend were the Vandervords. They are among the earliest to be found in the Leigh parish registers in the early 1700s and over the years expanded into a major barge owning family. The website [www.mmhistory.org.uk/cce/Elaine/Vandervord1/family](http://www.mmhistory.org.uk/cce/Elaine/Vandervord1/family) is full of fascinating information about the family – listing full details of all their vessels.

Abraham Vandervord, born in Leigh in 1759, was by profession a hoyman. On 17 June 1777 he was appointed master of the barge Pitsea of 40 tons. He was aged only 18. The Pitsea was employed in carrying corn, chalk, lime and faggots between London and Harwich.

The Vandervords possibly came over with the Dutch and there is a record in Naturalisation Papers for 27 February 1634 at the National Archives for Abraham and John Vandervoort natives of Lower Germany. Lower Germany extended over the Rhineland, Belgium and the Netherlands.

The Vandervord's were illustrious folk – how about this for a pedigree?

Abraham Vandervord's great grandson Emanuel married Eliza Peters whose 2 x great uncle John Peters married Sarah Netherwood the daughter of Edmund Netherwood and Elizabeth Vassall. Elizabeth's 3 x great grandfather was John Vassall by his second wife. John's 3 x great granddaughter by his third wife was another Elizabeth Vassall, Lady Holland whose son married the illegitimate daughter of King William IV and the actress Dorothy Jordan. William IV was the present Queen's 4 x great uncle.

## ITS NOT IN THE GENES

Family history is the fastest growing pastime in the country, (you only have to see the plethora of magazines, TV programmes and books now available) and it is the second highest use of the internet after pornography!!

For years now, Norman Holding has been researching the Cotgrove family from which he is descended.

Cotgrove is a name that seems only to be found in Leigh and surname studies show that even Cotgroves around the country and world originate from Leigh.

However, the accepted surname dictionaries link the name to Cotgrave and Cotgreave and indicate that it comes from a village of that name in Nottinghamshire.

Norman's research has shown that all Cotgroves stem from Benjamin and Mary who lived in Leigh in 1685. Their grandson, another Benjamin, had 2 sons and a daughter and it is through these three that all present day Cotgroves descend.

The local theory is that the family was connected to the Dutch drainage workers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Through his researches Norman made contact with Bill Cotgreave in New York who researches his family. Bill organised a DNA test to ascertain whether there is a link between the two families.

Volunteers from the families took part recently in this testing which has proven conclusively that the two

families are NOT linked. The differences between them indicate that they come from widely separate areas.

It is possible to compare a 'Cotgrove' DNA with DNA from different parts of the world and although the test is not detailed enough to be absolutely definite it looks as if the Cotgroves stem from Holland, North Germany or maybe Scandinavia rather than the UK. So the Holland theory is looking good.

## THE FULL NELSON

Next year is the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar and museums and organisations with a connection to the sea and Navy are planning a full programme of events all over the country.

The Leigh Society will be mounting a special display, not just on the Nelson connection, but also life in the Royal Navy through the eyes of a Leigh family that served at the time.

But we wanted to do more than just a display and to involve more people in the community. So we are considering how we can involve schools and the Sea Scouts and other organisations – so watch this space.

## ENGLAND EXPECTS



## A MURRELL DILEMMA

ELIZA ANN EMERY (nee MURRELL)

I am seeking any information on my paternal great grandmother Eliza Ann Emery (nee Murrell) born at Leigh (2 May 1852), married George Henry Emery at Leigh (1 August 1869) and died at Leigh (17 Sept 1892).

Also seeking any photographs of Eliza Ann and any research connecting her to James "Cunning" Murrell.

Please contact: Les Emery, 4 Gamblen Way, Winthrop, Western Australia, 6150, Australia (fax 618 9310 3447 email: [lsee@bigpond.com](mailto:lsee@bigpond.com))

## AND FINALLY

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the particular author and not necessarily those of the committee and officers of the Society.

We rather hope you will like to keep your copy of Leighway but if not please recycle it.

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