



LEIGHWAY

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

A BIG CHEER FOR OUR NEW PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN

Frank Bentley, our long serving, (and suffering) Chairman is now President of the Society. Frank was a marvellous Chairman and we are sure he will be an equally marvellous and supportive President and we are delighted he has accepted the position.

Ann Price is our new Chairman. Many of you will know Ann for her organisation of the outings so many of you have enjoyed. In her 'spare time' Ann does all our printing and acts as front of house for all our ticketed events and not least does a turn at the Comicals. Talking of the Comicals this year the theme is the Swinging 60s – that should give you plenty of ideas to get your teeth into. Although of course, they say if you can remember the 60s you weren't there. I can't remember a thing!!!!!!!!!!!!

If you want to take part please email us on leighsociety@btinternet.com

STUART RETIRES

Stuart Brewer has been a helper in the Heritage Centre for many years and a former member of the Committee of the Society. Stuart has decided that it is time to take a well earned retirement. We would like to thank Stewart for all his support and help over the years and wish him a very long and happy retirement.

SHEILA PITT-STANLEY

Sheila's family very generously requested donations to the Society in lieu of flowers and we are most grateful to them and those who made contributions. We intend to put the money towards a new showcase in the Heritage Centre.

STAN BURDER

Sadly we have to report the passing of another son of an Old Leigh family, Stan Burder. The Burder family lived in Plumbs Cottage and during the restoration Stan was a stalwart supporter. He was the son of Bonker Burder. Throughout the works Stan took many photographs giving us a record of the restoration.

Stan passed away earlier in the year and our heartfelt condolences and thanks for all his efforts go to his wife Yvonne and son Daniel.

JOHN LEIGH PORTER



For those of you who don't already know, it is with great sadness that we report the death of John Porter.

For many years John was a member of the Society and served on the Committee. He was very active in the Society and gave talks to the school children who visit the Heritage Centre, wrote extremely amusing articles for the Leighway, performed at the Comicals and was a very kind, thoughtful and dear friend.

In recent years he had not been well enough to get down to the Heritage Centre but he still played his part in organising the hugely successful Leigh Map and giving encouragement where it was needed. We will all miss him terribly and send our sincere condolences to his family.

We are sure John would have been very pleased to see that his long dream of a 'kiddies' paddling pool has at last come about, thanks to his generosity and persistence.

NORA BARLEY

Another sad loss is the passing of Nora Barley, a long time member of the Society and supporter, who passed away recently. Our sincere condolences go to her family.

DEAR DIARY

All held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m unless otherwise stated. For the Society meetings there is an entry charge of £1 for members and £2 for visitors
8 October – Leigh History – Clare Harvey
19 Nov - **7.45pm Special General Meeting** and RNLI talk
6 December – Comicals at The Den

NEXT YEAR'S SPEAKERS

Each year it gets harder to find interesting speakers for our Society meetings. If you know of speakers you think would be suitable for our meetings please contact the Secretary who will be putting the programme together in January.

THE BRAMPTON CONNECTION

The village of Brampton is south of Huntingdon near to RAF Brampton. Surprisingly there is a Leigh connection to the village.

One of the historic buildings in the village is the Grange Hotel, which as the Grange was built around 1773. It was bought by our very own Lady Olivia Bernard Sparrow for use as a girls school. When she died it passed to the Duke of Manchester and reverted to a private house. At the outbreak of the World War II it was requisitioned by the RAF and subsequently became the headquarters of the American Eighth Air Force. After the war it became the headquarters of the RAF Technical Training Command and later, the Air training Corps.



In 1981 it was converted into a small Hotel.

Brampton's most famous resident was Samuel Pepys. Another person with links to Leigh (his sister in law lived here). He moved to Brampton from London because of his health and fears of the plague (from which several of his brothers died). Pepys lived at Brampton for part of his boyhood and attended the Huntingdon Free School. He inherited a house in Brampton from his uncle which still stands today.

Several of our members will have read Geoffrey Henderson's book 'All Love' about the life of Rev Ridley Haim Herschell, a former resident of Brampton and, of course, Leigh. Through the patronage of Lady Olivia Sparrow he also set up the school in Brampton.

CHANGES TO OUR CONSTITUTION

The Committee has been reviewing the Society's Constitution (which hasn't been touched since before the flood) and needs to make a few changes to bring it up to date. These are very minor but do nevertheless need member ratification.

To enable this to happen we will be holding a Special General Meeting at the start of our ordinary meeting on 19 November at Wesley Church Hall. Copies of the original and new Constitution will be available at the meeting and the changes will be explained, but if you want one in advance please let us know.

Apart from some minor wording changes, basically we are broadening the scope of our involvement in planning and conservation due to changes and additions to the conservation areas and the fact that we now make sure our voice is heard in development consultations outside the conservation areas.

The meeting on 19 November will therefore start at 7.45pm not 8p.m. so that we can then follow on with our speaker.

PHOTOSHOOT ON CHALKWELL BEACH

All of you who have been devoted lovers of Chalkwell Beach cast your minds back to the 50s if you will. Do any of you remember the Punch and Judy or magic show?

Well David Jamison recently visited the Heritage Centre after a gap of 50 years and remembers regularly walking to Leigh from Chalkwell in the evenings.

David has sent us this photo taken by the famous French photographer Robert Doisneau (remember the most famous post war photo of the sailor kissing a girl in white in Times Square ?).



David thinks he is the child sitting in the audience and the magician was Reg Jamison his grandfather.

David's grandparents were called the 'Jasons' and gave Punch and Judy, magic, clowning and ventriloquism shows during the 50s on Chalkwell beach. The theatre was on the beach level with the footbridge over the railway. The family lived in Edgware. Robert Doisneau was on contract with Esquire, Daily Mirror and Sunday Pictorial newspapers to take photographs in England. He took several shots of the theatre. The photographer's daughter has sent David more photos of shots taken the same day and has asked David to identify the subjects for her. Doisneau was one of France's greatest photographers during the 40s/50s and David believes he worked for Renault in the 30s before going freelance. The photo above was taken on 2 October 1950 so David would have been 4 at the time.

The enigma is how did Doisneau get to Chalkwell Beach? David thinks he was invited there as his granddad had contacts with the Magic Circle, it is a mystery though and Peter Hamilton the author of the book Robert Doisneau a Life, describes the picture as a marvellous image of a seaside theatre on the English south coast. Well he got that right!

If anyone remembers the theatre or has any other information which could help David and the Doisneau archive please get in touch with Carole through the usual channels and she will pass it on.



The Jasons circa 1955-60 – Sydney, Gladys, and Reg

PLANNING IS WITH US ALWAYS

As ever it has been a busy few months for planning and we have felt a bit Canute-like really in trying to hold back the tide of applications. It must seem that we are forever objecting but such is the nature of the constant battle to prevent the Leigh Conservation Areas being seriously affected by development.

Clements Arcade – this imposing building has stood in Leigh Broadway for over 100 years and has, it is true, undergone some changes, but recently there have been a whole string of applications to change the building, reduce the number of small shops, demolish and rebuild at the back and create initially an access from West Street, but more latterly one from North Street and fill in the gap in the street frontage with an extended façade. We have resisted these because of the devastating effect they would have on the architecture of the building and for other issues such as traffic, loss of trees, overdevelopment and traffic danger (school children attending North Street Infants).

We felt so strongly about this building that we, and the Town Council, asked the Borough Council to locally list the building to try and give it some protection against inappropriate development. We are pleased to report that the Borough has granted our request and the building is now locally listed.

The Borough has also locally listed **Grindley's** shop which we were concerned to keep from changes especially to the fine shop front. We have objected to an application to change it to an estate agents on the basis of the loss of a retail shop.

St Clement's Hall site – a further, and we have to say, different application for this very prominent site. However, it still gave cause for grave concern about the effects such a tall building would have on the surrounding area and views and the nature of the design which was totally out of keeping with the area and the adjacent conservation area. The application was refused by the Borough Council and an appeal was lodged. Again, Jane Lovell, spoke on our behalf at the inquiry and a decision is awaited.

Pricketts in the Broadway – continuing pressure for redevelopment as a restaurant. We objected strongly to all the proposals for a variety of reasons, not least the proliferation of such outlets in the Broadway and the detrimental effect it would have on Victoria Road residents. The Borough Council refused permission and an appeal was lodged. Committee member, Jane Lovell, spoke on our behalf at the inquiry along with several others. Sadly the Inspector granted permission subject to some restrictions.

The Chippy, Leigh Old Town – more applications for development at this site but encompassing the Rock Shop which has been refused for restaurant use. Also licensing applications which clearly showed a shift away from the traditional chippy to a more bar orientated use. Although we, the Town Council and the Sea Scouts objected to these proposals on both planning and licensing grounds, the licence alterations were granted. Planning is still outstanding.

Open space area opposite the Billet – the proposal was to extend the sitting out and service area of Osborne's to the open space with public seating on their west side. We objected to the loss of open space and seating and came in for quite a bit of criticism for doing so.

We would like to make it clear that we are not trying to 'fossilise' the Old Town or prevent the fishing fraternity from diversifying appropriately. But we have a different remit which should also be respected. Our concerns are the conservation areas and with preserving areas of public realm which are few and far between in the Old Town. As it turned out the application was approved by the Borough Council and that is democracy in action. We make no complaint about that and will

continue to try and protect what is left of Old Leigh. One result of the loss of that area to is the reduction in space available for participants in the Regatta and other major events.

Those of you living in the town will have noticed the closure of the newsagents in the Broadway – a sad loss of a shop and a valuable community asset. Application was made for the change of the shop to an adult amusement arcade. You will not be surprised to know we objected strongly on the grounds of the loss of the retail, effect on the Broadway, residents and issues of antisocial behaviour. Thankfully the Council have refused permission.

Another newsagents, Jack in Rectory Grove, was also subject of a change of use application to a restaurant. Again we had to object to the loss of the shop and a residential unit as well as other issues regarding amenity and traffic.

The Committee is also getting more and more involved in licensing applications and making our views known. We have recently objected to a licence for the Sandbar to hold weddings which we thought was a wholly inappropriate venue. We also objected to a licence for the fish and chip shop in Elm Road for on and off sales. We saw no issue with an on licence closely allied to the restaurant but were wholly against off sales, particularly due to the proximity of North Street schools and the considerable attraction of a fish and chip shop to children. As a result the applicants have agreed not to have off sales and so we withdrew our objection. The same applies to the seafood restaurant in the Old Town which has also agreed to no off sales.

THE BELL HOTEL

Members will be interested to learn that it is not only us who are concerned about this building. Save Britain's Heritage, known as SAVE, has decided to add the building to its list of Buildings at Risk. SAVE has been described as the most influential conservation group to have been established since William Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings over a century ago.

There has been a Bell Inn in the vicinity of the current Bell since at least 1826. At about that date a sloping landing place over which the sea normally flowed was constructed for Laurence Lazarus, who was a distiller and coal merchant. This landing place was built opposite the Bell public house. This wharf was regarded as an encroachment although it was used by the fishermen as well. Lazarus also constructed a tramway for bringing coal ashore. The property was subsequently bought by the Chelmsford Brewery Company. When that Bell was demolished to make way for the railway (mid 1850s) the Brewery Company used the rubble from the demolition to embank the landing place and this new wharf became known as Bell Wharf which it still is today. The railway ran across the site of the Bell.

Several well known local families have been in charge of the Bell. The Gilsons, Joscelynes and Choppins. Between at least 1895 and 1899 it is recorded that the St Clements Masonic Lodge held its meetings in the Bell. We also know that the Bell was used on occasions as a courthouse.

The Bell was built at a cost of £365 in 1854 and that it was the next staging post on from the Royal Hotel in Southend until just before World War II.

Despite defeat at appeal the applicant submitted a further set of applications for the Bell in April. Whilst changes had been made to try and overcome the planning inspector's comments, your planning committee and Leigh Town Council both objected very strongly to the application which was still very bulky, unsympathetic in design and destructive of views amongst many other things. Another proposal is on its way!!!!!!

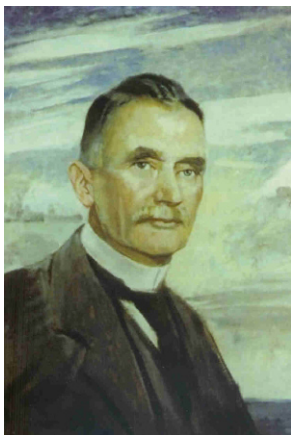
THE SCHOOLMASTER, THE CANON AND THE ARTIST

Researching family and local history is a surprising game at times, coincidences arise at the most opportune moments. I was recently investigating the life of a Leigh boy who rose to great heights in the Church of England. Out of the blue an article appeared in the magazine of the Essex Society for Family History on a Leigh schoolmaster where my lad was mentioned. A second coincidence occurred when I was asked if I had any information on a local artist by another researcher and this artist turned out to be closely related to the writer of the article on the schoolmaster. The following articles are a pooling of all the resources.

The first of these articles is reproduced here by kind permission of John Wilfred Cowan

THE SCHOOLMASTER

Extract from the autobiography of A. H. Thatcher (1861-1943), who was headmaster of the boys' department of Leigh Schools from 1889 to 1926.



Painted by Dorothy Cohen (see below)

I came to Leigh in January 1889. The Rector was the Rev. Canon King, brother of the Bishop of Lincoln, and he gave me the appointment of Headmaster of the Church Schools, on the hill just below the church. He told me that he chose me from amongst the applicants, because an old pupil of the school, to whom he gave the first lessons in Latin, had been a student at Culham (where A H Thatcher was trained) This student was known at Culham as "Johnny Fairchild". He obtained his degree, was ordained, and became principal of Bangor Training College, and eventually Canon Fairchild. His relations, of the name of Kerry, are still living at Leigh, one nephew being manager of Messrs. Schofield and Martin's shop in the Broadway.

Leigh was then a mere fishing village, devoted to shrimping, cockling, and spratting, and the inhabitants numbered about 900. There was no drainage system and no water supply, except by wells, and each year there had been a number of typhoid cases as a consequence. There were three more or less public wells - one called "Dobbins' Well" in a field to the north of the Council School (which then did not exist), and to which people went with buckets and pitchers. I, myself, used to go with two buckets slung to my shoulders, like a farm labourer. Another was what was locally called the "Cundock", (sic) in the High Street, which got its water supply from the hill by means of a conduit. A stone commemorating this was erected and is still standing at the western end of Rectory Grove. Still another well

was on the "Strand". Here was a public pump, with a man to deal out buckets of water at a penny a time.

Gas had just been introduced by a Mr. White, and the fishermen were grumbling at a penny rate imposed for street lighting. The village was included, for local administration, in the "Rochford Hundred", and the rates were assessed and collected by local overseers, two of them being Messrs. Theobald (a farmer) and "Ben." Barnard.

There were said to be three Kings of Leigh at this time - Canon King, Mr. "Antiquary" King, and "Ben." Barnard. Mr. "Antiquary" King was a retired official from the Heralds Office, and had carried his love for heraldry and antiquarian lore into his private life. He was known throughout Essex for his knowledge of its churches, brasses, windows, and monuments. He wrote several volumes recording his researches, and bequeathed them at his death to, I believe, the county museum at Colchester.

"Ben" Barnard was a predominating character in Leigh. He was a tradesman in the High Street, where he had a baker's shop, and possessed some property, notably the houses on the hill opposite the church, known as Carlton Villas and Carlton Terrace. Nothing was done in Leigh without "Ben", and he was regarded as a friend by everybody.

There were one or two other prominent residents of Leigh at the time, amongst them being Mr. Harvey Moore, an artist of repute, Captain Clarke, a retired army officer, Burgess-Smith, a stock broker, and a Mr. Murie, retired, who, it was reported, had travelled and known something of Dr. Livingstone in Africa.

There was only one doctor in practice at Leigh, one policeman (a Scotchman named Davison) and one postman. The doctor served the whole neighbourhood, including Hadleigh and Canvey Island, and did all his journeys on foot. His name was Orme, and, after a very arduous life, ended it with prussic acid. He it was who attended my wife with her first child. Subsequently, a Dr. Vernon came to Leigh, and then, as the place began to grow, a Dr. Kirton began a practice, and soon married one of the Rector's daughters.

Another resident I should mention was Mr. F.C.J. Miller, a Q.C., who lived with his family at Leigh House, a small mansion at the western end of what is now the Broadway, and which was subsequently demolished, to make way for "Broadway West". It was Mr. Miller who presented Leigh with the church clock, the "opening" ceremony of which I well remember.

Among the fisher population, there was a prominent man known as Mr. John Osborne. He had recently retired from the water, and, seeing possibilities, had bought up all the available land which now forms the Broadway, West Street, East Street, North Street, and Elm Road, as far as Rectory Grove. He sold Leigh House to Mr. Miller, and built a house for himself at the corner of Rectory Grove and Elm Road. Then he began building. Up to this time, the only houses along the "Broadway" were a few old, established houses and cottages, extending from the corner of West Street, westwards round Elm Road, as far as North Street. With Mr. Osborne's activities North Street and West Street were soon "developed", and then shops were built along the Broadway, which then began to assume some reason for its name. Until then, only one shop existed in the upper part of Leigh, that of Mr. Nash, the grocer, who built premises about 1888 at the corner of West Street.

Mr. John Osborne was a philanthropist and a strong supporter of Wesleyanism. There was an old Wesleyan Church in the Old Town, near the cockle sheds, which served the fisherfolk. But Leigh began to grow rapidly at the "top", and further church accommodation was required. So Mr. Osborne built the present

fine Wesleyan Church and Manse situated in the Elm Road, and presented it to the town.

Mr. Osborne was not an "educated" man, but had an instinct for business. He came of old fisher stock and was proud of it. His mother was **the** monthly nurse of Leigh, and, on one occasion, told me she was the "mother" of all the fisher children of the old town. Mr. Griffin, the solicitor, is a grandson of the late Mr. Osborne.

There were other fishermen of some importance in local affairs. Mr. "Necy" Harvey, Mr. Bob Johnson, and Mr. "Chaser" Cotgrove were foremost amongst these, while Mr. "Nat" Quilter (the shoe and boot maker for the fishermen) was the local politician and knew a thing or two about national as well as local politics.

An interesting resident, from old fisher stock, was Mr. Henry Thompson, a retired tradesman. He was organist at the church, and lived in a nice house, named Eden Lodge, situated on the slope of the hill, where Leigh Park Road now runs. He and his wife had a rather notable guest. No less than the widow of William Makepeace Thackeray, the novelist. I was once invited to tea there, and had the honour of shaking hands with Mrs. Thackeray.

Another important member of the Leigh community was Mr. Pendril Bentall, a farmer, who farmed most of the Leigh land and lived in a fine old farmhouse where the Grand Hotel now stands.

Canon King was a great friend to the fishermen, and did all he could for them in many ways. He was their father and friend and they all loved him. When a fisherman wanted to buy a new "bawley", he would advance him the money, depending upon his honesty to return it. He built a large room in the Elm Road, and made a full-sized billiard table himself for the entertainment of the shrimpers and cocklers. This building was always known as the Sailors' Rest, and here concerts were frequently given, and a weekly threepenny (just over 1p) dance was held.

When I came to Leigh, there were two schools - the church school, on the Church Hill, and "Herschell's" school, at the bottom of what was then known as the "big" hill. This school had been provided by the Herschell family, who were residents at one time of "Prospect" House, not far from the church.

There were three departments to the church school - Boys', Girls' and Infants. My predecessor was Mr. A.J. Ray, who had held the position as Head of the Boys' school for thirty years. Mrs. Ray was the mistress of the Girls' school, while a Miss Harvey was head of the Infants' department.

There were fifty boys when I took over the school, of varying ages, and there was no assistant to help me. So I chose four of the older boys as "monitors", and with this help, I managed to classify the children from Standard 0 to Standard VI and get them going. To make good with the four monitors, I gave them an hour's tuition before opening school every morning. I succeeded very well, but the work was hard.

Canon King had told me that at the end of six months he intended to close the church schools, as there were no voluntary subscribers, and he had to bear the cost of all the expenses. So I had to look around and see what was to be done. A School Board had to be formed, and after due legal procedure, this was done. The Chairman was Canon King, and the Vice-Chairman, Mr. "Ben" Barnard, while the Clerk was Mr. Fred Greggor. The Board met, decided to purchase a site, and engaged an architect to plan a new school.

In the meantime the Board engaged me and took over the church schools, temporarily, to be held while the new schools were being built. About twelve months afterwards, the new buildings were ready, and we moved in, much to my pleasure and the joy of the children. The new school was used for the

first time on Monday 29 September 1890. The Southend Standard of 2 October 1890 reported:

"The very handsome buildings just completed for the Leigh School Board were opened on Monday last. The schools are built for 200 boys and 200 girls, thus providing for the rapidly increasing population. The rooms are well fitted with every requirement for successful teaching and some of the latest improvements have been adopted to ensure perfect ventilation and sanitation. The floors are what is known as 'blocks'*; and around the walls of the rooms is dado of glazed bricks 4 1/2 feet high, the block floor securing quietness in movement and the dado cleanliness. A large playground is provided."

* These would have been blocks of pine embedded in pitch.

A H Thatcher also stood for Leigh Town Council as this contemporary cartoon shows. He became a local councillor and founder member of the Leigh Debating Society, which successfully ran from 31 January 1905 to 12 March 1951.



He did have a reputation as a disciplinarian as this school ditty shows

Mr. Thatcher is a very good man,
He tries to teach you all he can,
Reading, writing, arithmetic,
But he never forgets to give you the stick,
When he does he makes you dance,
Out of England, into France
Out of France, into Spain,
Over the hills and back again."

Despite this Arthur Joscelyne remembered Mr Thatcher thus –

"Mr. Thatcher was only a little man, grey, balding hair and mostly in a grey suit, with a gold watch chain across his waistcoat, and a white butterfly collar, but he stood no nonsense from either parents or teachers and was held in awe by his scholars, and respected as a strong disciplinarian, but generally well liked by all. He had been Headmaster for many years previously at the 'Old Schools' on Church Hill, and had probably taught many of our parents before us. Certainly he knew most of them, their characters, their families, and their livelihoods. Leigh was then generally speaking a close knit community living in the Old Town and few if any were strangers to him, and [he] was perhaps a 'Father Confessor' rather than a Headmaster if we ever did get into serious trouble, either in or out of school."

Reproduced by kind permission of Barbara Willshaw's booklet on the Centenary of North Street Schools.

THE CANON JOHNNY FAIRCHILD



I read with interest John Cowan's article, particularly as I had been researching the 'Johnny Fairchild' referred to.

It was interesting to note that Canon King had given his first Latin lessons to Johnny and this more or less confirmed what I had thought about this young man's education.

With the help of Johnny's granddaughter, Rosalind Fairchild, who has kindly helped with information and photographs I have pieced together the following information. There is still more research to do.

John Fairchild was born in Leigh in 1854, the son of John and Sophia Fairchild (nee Ham). Although John's father was a fisherman he seems to have owned his own boat and the family had connections to the licensed trade. John's father had been landlord of the Peterboat in 1828 and another Fairchild was landlord of the Ship between 1798 and 1813. Johnny was the only surviving son of a family of eight.

What puzzled me was how a humble fisherman/publican's son went to Oxford and became the Principal of a Theological College and a Canon of the Church. I toyed with the idea that Johnny had a patron who sponsored him and that could very well be true, for if the Canon thought him able enough for Latin no doubt he saw future promise in the lad.

John attended Queen's College, Oxford but there is no record of his sponsor or of his funding. He gained a BA (3rd Class in Theology) in 1879 and an MA in 1882. He was ordained deacon in 1880 and became a priest in 1881. On the census of that year he is found as Chaplain at the Training College at Culham in Oxfordshire (attended by A.H.Thatcher).

Culham College was a training school for schoolmasters which had been founded by Bishop Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, and son of the anti slavery campaigner William Wilberforce, in 1853. John was Chaplain there from 1880 to 1883.

He then moved on to be Vice-Principal of York Theological College between 1883-84 when he became the Principal of St Mary's College in Carnarvon. This new job coincided with his marriage in that year to Florence Louisa Chaffey, whose mother had been Elizabeth Sarah Murrell, a Leigh girl. Elizabeth Sarah later married George Sedgwick, a solicitor. In 1891 John is recorded as principal when the college was just called the training college but the building was destroyed by fire and was re-opened as St Mary's College, Bangor in 1892.

John was also Diocesan Inspector of Pupil Teachers 1885-99 and Honorary Secretary of Bangor Association of Church Schools in 1898 and Canon Treasurer of Bangor Cathedral 1902-42.

When he passed away in 1942 he was the oldest Principal in the country.

In his obituary it was said that the College of Bangor owed its existence to John Fairchild for he collected practically all the money to erect it on a magnificent site overlooking Bangor.

A memorial plaque was erected in St Mary's College and later moved to Bangor Cathedral 58 years after the Canon's death. In the words of Shakespeare his obituary in the local newspaper read 'He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again'.

In another newspaper report of wise sayings, the Canon is credited with having said 'The uncertainty of life is life's chiefest charm'.

Sons (and daughters) of Leigh travel far and wide. I once spent a very solitary week in Bangor attending a planning inquiry – oh how much more interesting it would have been had I known about Johnny Fairchild. - Carole

THE ARTIST – DOROTHY COHEN



Dorothy Cohen, who painted the picture of Headmaster Thatcher was a flower and portrait painter. John Jenkyn who has a painting of his mother in ATS uniform by Dorothy and was trying to find out what their connection was, had tracked Dorothy to Leigh and contacted Carole to ask if she could provide any further information.

Out of this research came contact with John Cowan, Dorothy's nephew. Both of these gentlemen have shared their research and knowledge, and the following is a short review of Dorothy's career and her connection with Leigh. Our thanks go to the two Johns for sharing this information.

Dorothy Cohen was born on 14 August 1887 in High Cross, Tottenham where her father, John Thomas Cohen, was the head master of the local grammar school. She was the third oldest of seven children; four boys and three girls.

Dorothy's school years brought her artistic talents to the fore and after leaving school, she became a student at the Royal Female School of Art where she received a number of prizes and awards. From there Dorothy moved on to the Royal Academy Schools where she also distinguished herself.

Dorothy shared a studio at Gunter Grove SW10 with her friend Miss W. E. B. Hardman ("Hardy"). Despite painting two large frescoes at the east end of St. Peter's Church, St. Peter's Square, Hammersmith, which were unveiled in 1932 the pair struggled to make a decent living and had to do more 'commercial' work, under the name "Harco Signs". Each of them had 13 paintings exhibited at Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions. Of these Dorothy bequeathed her painting 'The

Guitar Player' to the Beecroft Art Gallery.

Among the portraits that Dorothy' painted was one of Canon Stuart King (Rector of Leigh).

In October 1938 Dorothy enrolled in the ATS even though at 51 she was, strictly, too old but she falsified her age by 'knocking-off' 8 years. She was appointed to the 7th (County of London) Company, Auxiliary Territorial Service, as Volunteer Storekeeper, and was called-up for service on 25 August 1939. She was discharged on 16 October 1944 with the rank of Staff Sergeant.

It was during Dorothy's period of ATS service that she met and painted John Jenkyn's mother. Both women were stationed in the Marlow/Thame area.

After being discharged from the ATS, Dorothy moved to Leigh, where she lived for a time with her brother's family, including her nephew John. Her brother taught modern languages at Westcliff High School for Boys and had changed the family's name from Cohen to Cowan, for obvious reasons in 1937, the family having been Christians for generations. The family lived in Salisbury Road and one of our members, Jean Hamilton, was able to provide more information and reminiscences of Dorothy (or Aunt Dot as she knew her).

In due course, Dorothy moved with her sister, Ethel to their own house, which still exists in Southsea Avenue. She had a very warmhearted, friendly character and with her sister hosted 'cherry parties' for friends and families in her garden and to celebrate the harvest. John Cowan and Jean Hamilton remember the festivities well.

Dorothy used the cavernous warehouse next door as a studio and continued to paint until her death, leaving an unfinished painting on her easel. To add to her income she produced greetings cards – prints from line drawings, which she hand coloured. These were advertised in the personal column of The Times on 8 November 1947.

Apart from this, Dorothy became very much involved in the local art scene and was a founder member of the Friends of the Beecroft Art Gallery and a regular contributor to their exhibitions.

Dorothy died at her home in Leigh-on-Sea on 17 May 1960 aged 72 years. Her funeral service was held at St. Clement's Church, Leigh. Dorothy's life was sometimes precarious, among her many awards she won the King George V Gold Medal but sadly sold this in less well-off times. We feel sure though that Dorothy would very much approve of Leigh's status in the art world and its annual Art Trail.

CHURCH HILL REFURBISHMENT

Those of you who struggle up and down Leigh Hill on a daily basis will no doubt be pleased at the refurbishment which has taken place to the railings and the cutting back of the hedges.

Leigh Town Council took a lead in this through its Chairman, Hilary Davison, and with added pressure from the Society through the Southend Conservation Working Party the Borough got on quickly with the job. There are still some works to be done in terms of the lighting and further foliage cutting as well as some drainage issues but the old girl is well on the way to recovery and has had quite a happy 160th birthday.

HERE'S TO THE NEXT 160 YEARS

Following the article about Caedmon School in the last issue we have been inundated with memories of school life in Leigh. So this edition is almost a school mag. We hope it brings back some happy memories for you.

We are sure that there are others of you who have memories of the local schools. Unfortunately we cannot print all of them in Leighway, but we do want to hear from you with your memories of school life in Leigh so write in and we will be keeping a school archive.

CAEDMON SCHOOL

The picture of Caedmon School in the last issue of Leighway managed to spark a few memories which we are now able to share as an insight and interesting reminiscence of a Leigh School.

Trevor Kirby

Remembers that the school was on the estuary side of Pall Mall between Leighton Avenue and Oakleigh Park Drive. The main entrance and notice board were in Pall Mall. Although Trevor did not recognize the photograph he remembers that the to the west was a hall and this can plainly be seen in Judith Williams' book on Leigh on the map of 1939 under the right hand 'L' of Mall.

Trevor can recall that as a child living in Leighton Avenue and going to North Street School and later going to Leigh Wesley Cubs/Scouts in Leigh Road, he passed the building many times. It catered for 30-40 boys and girls aged 7-12/13 and Trevor thinks the uniform was light grey with blue or yellow piping.

The school was evacuated in about 1939/40 to a large house in the village of Temple Guiting in Gloucestershire about 6 miles from Stow on the Wold.

Betty Girling (nee Church)

Was thrilled to see the picture as she and her brother, John were pupils.

Betty with her parents and brother aged 11 months moved to Leigham Court Drive in February 1926. That June Betty was 5 and she assumes she joined the school in the September. Her brother would have joined in 1930 at the age of 5.

At that time Mrs Watts was the headmistress and the tuition gave a child a very good background education in every subject, particularly the 3R's. Betty was introduced to Dickens with "The Pickwick Papers". Looking back she feels that it could have been replaced by one of the novels which she read afterwards and enjoyed. They had an excellent grounding in Christianity and Betty has never forgotten Mrs Watts' definition of true repentance, which was to be sorry, say you are sorry and make up your mind never to do it again.

Many of the pupils passed the examinations into the local high schools for boys and girls. Ron Salter became a dentist whose practice began in Hillside Crescent and finally Kings Road, where there was still a dentist there when Betty moved to Taunton. Another family was the Sheffields whose father was the manager of the then Westminster Bank.

Miss Alice Morris joined the school as deputy headmistress during Betty's brother's stay and, when Mrs Watts died, took over as headmistress.

Betty recalls the building was very spacious and the front door opened onto a large entrance hall with a wide, sweeping staircase up to the first floor. Caedmon Hall was the school hall where concerts, prize givings, country dancing etc took place.

Betty learnt to swim in the school's swimming pool and sports day was held on the ground of Blenheim Crescent by the brook where later allotments were developed. Most roads north of the London Road were unmade whilst the new developments were taking place.

Miss Morris allowed Betty to hold her wedding reception in Caedmon Hall in July 1949, when she married John Girling. Friends might be interested to know that Miss White, the PE teacher at Westcliff High School for Girls, lived in the once beautiful house diagonally across from Caedmon House in Pall Mall/Leighton Avenue. Dr Nichol, the family doctor, lived on the corner of Leigham Court Drive and Pall Mall, also in a lovely house and Nancy Mount, the pianist and sister to Peggy Mount lived in a flat further along that road at a later date.

Betty's mother in law and aunt cooked school lunches during the 1950's. Sometime after Miss Morris died the house was turned into one bedroom flats and Caedmon Hall was taken over by a judo club.

Rowland Joiner (pupil) 1937-1941

Both my parents were determined that my brother and I should have a grammar school education. Father was well known in Leigh, trading as Savoury's in the Leigh Road. My mother, born in Prospect Place, was a Kirby. and grandmother, Louise, had taught in the church school on Leigh Hill below St Clements. My maternal grandparents had laid foundation stones in the 1932 Old Leigh Methodist Chapel.

So it was that I was enrolled in Caedmon House School after a year or two attending Highfield College, followed by my brother, David, two years later. I can clearly recall the mauve caps we had to wear and the gray blazers bordered with a mauve braid. The school occupied a house at the corner of Pall Mall and Leighton Avenue, all black and white, and the adjacent hall.

Classes took place in both buildings, but the house was also the home of the formidable, yet friendly head, Miss Alice Morris, M.A. Alice Morris, daughter of an Anglican priest, had been engaged at the outbreak of the First World War, but her fiancée was killed. She never married but always wore her engagement ring.

The school not only taught the basics of English and Mathematics but it also encouraged us in acting, sport and, above all for me, reading.

Then the drama of war arrived. In the compulsory evacuation of Leigh, Miss Morris consulted parents and found that there were a sufficient number who would gladly allow the school to become a boarding institution. She then used her family connections, in particular with the Gloucestershire Haywards (it was my introduction to the landed gentry), and secured the country home of Colonel Martineau as a site. All this was a sign of her dedication to the children in her care, both for safety and for our educational well being.

One May 10th, the day after my tenth birthday, we were packed into a coach. I was seated next to my five-year-old brother with instructions to take care of him. Somehow a lorry must have been requisitioned, for the double bed my brother and I had shared in our family home was transported and ready for us when we arrived. For us young children I guess it was something of an adventure. We knew nothing of the horrors and dangers of war. The Battle of Britain and German planes flying nightly overhead had not yet started, and we were going with friends and our teachers for a ride to the country!

So began a new phase of our education. We were greatly reduced in size; my recollection is that we were less than twenty five children, but even so we had to be squeezed into

this house called Upper Coscombe near Temple Guiting in the Cotswolds. Miss Claridge taught us Maths. From her I learned what had to happen to decimal points and how to cope with fractions. It must have been Miss Morris for English for I cannot remember any other teachers. We had a matron eventually, a tiny sweet Irish nun who not only measured with a ruler the depth of our weekly bathwater (the government had decreed that we must not use more than three inches), but also poured cod liver oil and orange juice down our throats to ensure our good health.

The house came equipped with an older married couple who lived in the lodge at the end of the drive. Mrs. Wilkes became our school cook and Mr. Wilkes was the handyman who looked after the premises and the grounds, and chopped logs for the kitchen range. All these adults were very kind to us evacuees and I cannot remember any really negative or harmful experiences.

We all took turns at washing up (I learned about bone handled knives) as well as making beds and keeping our rooms clean. Our bed was on a landing at the top of the stairs in the old servants' quarter of the house. Days began with morning prayers and a hymn. I still remember two of the prayers from the Book of Common Prayer that were used. We had lessons all morning, a rest and then our afternoon walk. We were always paired off and had to walk crocodile fashion up the drive and onto the road. Once into the fields or wooded tracks we were allowed to run around and climb trees. When it was time to return, we all collected a bundle of wood for the fires, formed our crocodile once more and marched back to the house.

Sundays followed a different routine. We put on our best clothes and blazers, marched across fields in crocodile fashion the one and a half miles to Cutsdean, our nearest Parish Church which we had to reach through a farmyard, for afternoon Evensong. And only on the way back were we allowed any freedom to run around. The afternoons were taken up with letter writing to our parents; that was a most important ritual. Then Sunday evening, by the light of a rather super paraffin lamp, which had a special mantle, we were allowed into the Head's study and seated ourselves as comfortably as we could on the floor. Hardly daring to breathe, (I said Miss Morris was a somewhat formidable figure for ten year olds !) to listen to a story being read to us. It was actually a very special moment, and we were introduced to a range of classic English stories.

My mother joined the school for a while, getting away from Leigh and leaving my father to attend to potential bombs as a member of the ARP. She helped out in a variety of ways. We saw our father at Christmas with grandma, Louise Kirby. They stayed, I remember, in a guest house (again something entirely new to us; we had never been away on holiday in our life) at Toddington, near the railway station. It was only long afterwards that I began to think what an ordeal and what a sacrifice, not least financial, my father had made all the time we were at Caedmon House School.

I got my special coaching; there were only two of us of age to take the Eleven Plus. I had to go alone to a schoolhouse three miles away in Toddington for a couple of mornings to take the tests set by the Gloucestershire Education Authority. It was rumoured they were easier than in other counties; I am certain they were harder! My parents' commitment and my teachers' patience were rewarded. In September I was off to Belper, Derbyshire to join Westcliff High School and to join up with several of my old friends from North Street School whom I had met in the Cub Pack and Leigh Wesley Church. How I transferred from Upper Coscombe to Belper I have no recollection. I was a little eleven year old wandering around the countryside on my own, I believe, but I made it safely.

Others remember the momentous homecoming back to Leigh

when we were spared immediate danger from invasion. My brother continued going to Caedmon House and he too joined me at Westcliff later.

From time to time I did encounter Miss Morris, but it was always with a bit of trepidation. She shopped from Savoury's. I do not mean she went herself to the shop but she would place an order with my father over the phone. So sometimes I was the errand boy who had to deliver the order on the bike. I was never quite certain which door I should knock at, and was relieved when I did not encounter my former headmistress. I had just one further meeting. I was feeling a bit more grown-up and had the cocksureness of an undergraduate. I knocked on the front door of the schoolhouse where I had been nurtured, was warmly welcomed and sat down with a civil cup of tea for a casual conversation with Alice (no, with Miss Morris I mean). I am sincerely indebted not just to the teaching the school offered me and my brother, but to the dedication Miss Morris displayed, to teaching me much about etiquette when we were her boarders and to the care she took of every individual child.

E.W.Clark

I was born in 1916 and joined Mrs Watts School in 1921. Mrs Watts was a stern headmistress and feared by most of her pupils. However, from time to time she would refer to her distant link by birth with the Caedmon family.

About 1930 Mr Watts died and Mrs Watts took the opportunity to alter the name of the school to Caedmon House School. She then planned to build a hall immediately to the west of the school to be used as a gymnasium, with a stage built at one end for school meetings, plays etc. This was completed in due course.

Margaret Dent (nee Benson)

Margaret was a pupil at the school from 1952 until 1955. When she left it was still operating as a very small school with the following teachers –

Miss Alice Morris MA (head)
Mrs Emmitt (sports)
Peggy Batchelor (dance)
Miss Language (art)
Miss Roley (pupil teacher)

Miss Morris taught the juniors, supervised the netball games and conducted the choir. The school was divided into houses and Margaret was in school house and very much enjoyed interhouse matches.

Mrs Emmitt (during the course of the year, depending on the time of year) taught tennis, badminton, gym and swimming.

The highlight of the school year was sports day when prizes were awarded and parents entertained by the end of term play. New pupils were told appearing in the play was voluntary but soon discovered that this was considered to be (a) character building; (b) confidence building; and c) compulsory.

Margaret remembers appearing in, Elizabeth I and II, Hiawatha, Midsummer Nights Dream (which contained a most delightful dance scene with younger children playing the part of the fairies).

Margaret would love to meet up with any past pupils. She particularly remembers Rosemary Rowe, Bobby and Frances Banner, Pat and Margaret Dearmer, Charles and Roberta Pearl, Lee Tillier and Michael and Joanna Head (children of Father Head from St Clements). So if any of you are out there get in touch with the Leigh Society at leighsociety@btinternet.com and we will pass your details on.

Brenda Cartwright

Seeing the picture of Caedmon School got me casting my mind back to the 1930s. There seemed to be a school of some sort on nearly every corner! That seemed to my child's mind at that time.

During those years our family lived in Westcliff. My interest in the schools started then as my father (Cyril Cartwright) was a physiotherapist and combined it with taking keep fit classes for all ages. As a result he was employed by several local schools as the PE master as most of them were too small to employ a full time person.

The schools he was associated with in Leigh were –

Tower House School – at the junction of Salisbury Road and Hadleigh Road and run by Miss Thatcher. It was a girl's school. (see Joan Simpson's account of her school days at Tower House below).

Nearby at the present health clinic in Burnham Road was Beverley College, a boys day and boarding school. I believe the head was Mr Haughton. During this time the school split and another school was opened called Leigh Hall College whose head was a Mr Settles. This was first at Leigh Cliff Road at the junction of Maple Avenue and later moved to Chalkwell Avenue corner with Imperial Avenue.

My father also visited several schools in Westcliff.

I have also called to mind several schools in Leigh and Westcliff some of which may be of interest –

Highfield College, Hadleigh Road (nicknamed the 'scarlet and blacks' because of their uniform. This was a boy's day and boarding school. St George's School for girls at the junction of Hadleigh Road and Leigh Park Road.(now sadly burned out), St Marys High School for girls in London Road (near today's Tesco) run by the Miss Sargeants who were earlier in West Road, Westcliff. Queenswood School for girls at the corner of Oakleigh Park Drive and London Road. I remember their uniform as grey but with a bright orange beret with a green Q as a badge.

The of course there was Caedmon House School in Pall Mall.

Two other schools in Leigh come to mind – Thirsk Girls School at the junction of Leigh Road and Kings Road (now I believe is an Abbeyfield House); St Andrews School, Leigh Road, now the Conservative HQ.

Other schools I remember in Westcliff are Glendale College for boys, Storrington School (girls day and boarding), St Hilda's (girls day and boarding) and Alleyn Court (pre day and boarding). were in Imperial Avenue.

Glendale moved into Crowstone Road and Leigh Hall College moved into their premises.

Alexandra College a girls day and boarding school in Crowstone Road.

On the other side of London Road there were several others –

Alma House School in St George's Park Avenue, Westminster College boys school and Netherfield School both in Westminster Drive. Conway House School at the corner of Beedall Avenue and Westborough Road, Kendrick School in West Road, Lindisfarne College boys day and boarding school in Valkyrie Road. Downing House boys day and boarding Prep school in Crowstone Avenue next to the railway line. Holmwood Girls School, Crowstone Avenue. Both these schools now house Chaltonholme Care Home.

I have no doubt there might have been others in this area and someone will know of them. All this information has come from memory as I have no written records but I have thoroughly enjoyed going back down 'memory lane'.

has sent a very interesting article about other Leigh Schools which she remembers

A G Hunt – pupil of Highfield College – has sent in a list of all the schools in the area listed in Kelly's Directory of 1938. We share the surprise at finding so many. Those in Leigh not mentioned previously are -

Corpus Christi Hall (boarding and day) – 16 Leigh Road
Misses Green's School – 39 Cliffsea Grove
Highfield College – Hadleigh Road
Leonard House (now St Pierre) – 16 Leigh Road
Maple Durham – Leigh Hall Road
St Michael's School for Girls – 198 Hadleigh Road
St Mary's (post War) – Walker Drive
St Andrew's College – 59 Leigh Road
St Edith's Convent School – Hillside Crescent
St Paul's – 6 Salisbury Road
St George's – Hadleigh Road

TOWER HOUSE SCHOOL, SALISBURY ROAD

Joan Simpson recalls her schooldays at Tower House School –

I wonder if there are any other members who remember Tower House School at the bottom of Salisbury Road? I believe it became a Council day nursery in the 1950s, but before the war it was a thriving private school with pupils from 4 to 11. It was run by Miss Helen Thatcher BSc and her father on modern up to date lines and I spent my early school years there.

We had a purpose built building of hall and classrooms, including gym apparatus and stage and a playground, grassed area, tennis courts to play on.

You could also take music lessons, elocution and we always put on a play every year. One of my earliest memories is of sitting cross legged being a dwarf hammering away making shoes to the Cobblers Song! I was also cast as Grumpy later on and have a photo to prove it. I was also a prince in a cape and feathered cap.

My friend Mary and her sister Betty were boarders into the Tower House and I learned to ride a bike after school on Mary's bike round and round the school buildings.

School hours then were 9-12 and 2-4 (my poor mother did the journey eight times a day until we moved to Percy Road) and holidays were 4 weeks at Easter and Christmas and 8 weeks in the summer (no half terms).

When the war came we were evacuated on coaches to Malvern to a large house on the side of the Beacon. We took our own bedding, but in my letter home I record that we didn't sort it out the first night – just grabbed the first pack to hand.

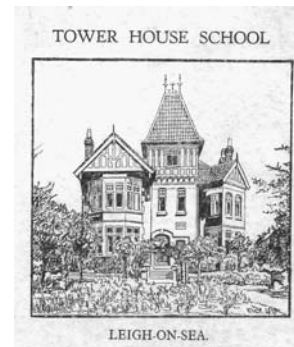
We older girls had to bathe the little ones and put them to bed – an eye-opener for an only child like me. The gardens were vast to our eyes and led to many an exciting game. We had lessons there, but not many.

Unfortunately Miss Thatcher's health deteriorated and the school did not reopen after the war.

I have many happy memories of my time there and the friends I had and am grateful for the good grounding it gave me.

Joan Simpson (nee Aubury)

Joan has kept a copy of the Tower House School prospectus which makes interesting reading.



Leigh is described as the nearest seaside town to London and especially recommended for its invigorating air.

The aim of the school was to provide a sound, modern education. The teaching was individual and backward and delicate children received special help. Girls were prepared for the Oxford Local Examinations and for the London Matriculation, for the examinations in music and elocution of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and for those of the Royal Drawing Society. Day scholars were prepared for the entrance examinations of the Southend and Westcliff High Schools.

On the first day of each term pupils were required to bring a certificate signed by their parents that they had not suffered from any infectious disease or been exposed to any kind of infection during the vacation.

The children were taught the usual range of subjects and also nature study, class singing, percussion band, verse speaking, speech training, country dancing, singing games, drawing and painting, needlework, cookery, handwork, type writing, shorthand and physical exercises.

School games were netball and tennis for the girls and football and cricket for the boys and there was also swimming and horseriding by arrangement.

What a well educated lot they should all have been.

LLOYDS OF LEIGH

The Murray brothers are not the only UK siblings to fly high in the tennis world. Long before them we had the Lloyds of Leigh, brothers David and John.

David and John became two of the most successful British tennis players throughout the 1970s and 1980s. David captained the Davis Cup team and founded the David Lloyd Tennis Clubs and David Lloyd Leisure and coached Tim Henman for a period.

John, who was once married to Chris Evert, appeared in 5 Grand Slam finals and was a Wimbledon Champion with Wendy Turnbull in the mixed doubles. He now commentates for the BBC and following in his brother's footsteps was appointed captain of the Davis Cup Team in 2006.

ANYONE FOR TENNIS/

ALL GREEK AT LEIGH ON SEA

Member Carol Edwards has kindly sent in this transcript of an interview she had with Spyros Sariyannis who first arrived in this country in 1962 with his father, to join an uncle and aunt already settled here.

'Just 12 years old he had taken the opportunity to come to England to learn the language 2 years ahead of his contemporaries back in his home country of Cyprus. This had come about only because an older brother had decided he didn't want to travel. Home to Sav, as he became known, was in the mountain village of Khartcha, in the district of Kyrenia. The town situated on the northern coast of Cyprus offered shops, cafes and markets along cobbled streets, with a promenade around the small harbour. Its entrance is dominated by a Castle built around 1191 AD. It was here Richard the Lionheart defeated Isaac Comnenus on his way to the crusades.

Although modern day Kyrenia had all the amenities you would expect from a large resort, the same could not be said for the surrounding villages. The Sariyannis family in the '60's had no running water or electricity, they kept goats and their only mode of transport was the donkey.

Coming from this environment to the city of London where the pace of life was fast and uncompromising was a huge shock for this young Greek Cypriot. "I was nervous of escalators, having never seen one before and when a friend suggested sitting on top of a double decker bus I was terrified" he told me.

"Why?" I asked puzzled. Sav laughed then pointed out to me that all buses at home were single deckers and sitting on the roof was common practice. I then understood why the prospect of sitting on the roof of a London bus was so daunting.

His lack of English at that time made it difficult for him to get around on his own and he was finding the noise, pollution and crowded streets hard to cope with, but everything changed for the better when after 9 months in the city his relatives told him they were all moving to a place called Leigh on sea.

"I fell in love with the area the moment we arrived" he enthused "cleaner air, a slower and more comfortable way of life.

They all moved into a flat above the café "Valentes" in Leigh Broadway (where Manoly's restaurant is now) the business belonged to the Valente family.



After school Sav would help serve customers with sandwiches, cooked meals and in his opinion the best ice cream, made on the premises.

In his spare time he loved walking along the seafront, taking the train along the pier and like many young people enjoyed visiting Peter Pan's (now Adventure Island) "when I became an adult drinking in the pubs and taking in the nightlife of the many clubs on offer provided me with all I needed as a teenager".

It was on one of his nights out that he was to meet his future wife, Jackie.

In 1964 his father returned home, leaving Sav in the care of his uncle and aunt, to enable him to complete his education. Determined to fit into the "English" way of life without forgetting his Greek roots and traditions, he concentrated on his education at Belfairs High school. Lessons proved difficult expect for maths because in Cyprus this subject was 2 years ahead of our system. English Literature was a real struggle, but the extra help and attention given by his teacher helped him master the subject.

On completing his time at school, having developed a flair for art he went to college in Southend. Having to work weekends at the Gallo Dora restaurant in Hadleigh

to earn some money. After a few months it all proved to be to much and he gave up his course to work there full time, soon discovering however that it was not what he wanted from life. So he re-applied for the art course this time completing it and finding himself a job in London... His career as a graphic artist was and still is providing him with a living. Although he now works locally.

When the Turks invaded his home country in the 1970's his family were forced to flee their house with nothing more than the clothes they stood up in. Sav, newly married was able to offer 4 members of his family (including his parents) a refuge in his small terraced house in Westcliff. Living there with their son and daughter in law for over a year, they lived in hope that they might return to their own home. When it became clear that the political situation in Cyprus was not going to resolve the loss of all they possessed, they finally moved into their own accommodation in Leigh. Where Sav and his wife were to join them sometime later when they brought a bigger house to accommodate their own expanding family.

Over the years the extended Sariyannis family have gathered together at Leigh on sea to celebrate Easter, weddings, christenings and at Christmas you will find up to 18 guests seated around the table in Jackie and Sav's home.

Questioning whether his love for the area had diminished over the last 40 years, his answer was unwavering in his support of this seaside town. Clean air, good schools, a theatre or two, cinema complex a good night life for my now adult children. But he expressed disappointed with the way Southend High street was being developed and the many problems with the pier which he so enjoyed visiting when first he came to live in Essex. Ever the optimist he felt sure that in time the changes to the high street would be finished and the problems with the pier resolved.

Spyros Sariyannis having left the mountains of Cyprus had found another way of life in England and when it became possible to return to his country of origin, brought a small holiday home there. Allowing him to share with his wife and children the land of his ancestors.'

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ADDENDUM FROM CAROLE MULRONEY

Another odd coincidence. When I moved into my house in Southsea Avenue the previous owner passed a complete set of the deeds and conveyances to me. Not only did I find that family connections (Fords) had built my house but another connection (Emery) had lived in it. However I also found that one of the first owners was a Mr Israel Minsky, a naturalized Russian, whose tailoring business in the 1930s was in the shop which is now Manoly's restaurant. More investigation is underway on this connection so watch this space.

THE NET, THE MINE AND THE LOBSTER... by Paul Gilson

What do you do when you catch an unexploded mine in your nets?

Grab its resident lobster before Bomb Disposal gets to it, says Paul Gilson.

This February, on one of a few trips between bouts of bad weather we were fishing an area south of the Gun Fleet sands. Our first haul was not up to much but the second was much better, with sole and skate making up most of the catch plus a handful of cod thrown in. Lovely. We shot again, hoping to put together a good trip. But after only a few minutes I noticed a flaring on the sea bed on the fish finder. Instead of a nice red bottom I could see marks like flames on the sea bed, spelling trouble. I tried to turn away from it but it was too late. A few jerking movements and we had caught whatever was on the sea bed. We hauled quickly with no apparent problem; the first two nets were clear and already had a good few fish in them. The middle net, however, was a little more reluctant to come to the surface. It was hanging down but not too much.

What is it, asked Shane my crewman as I looked over the stern of the boat.

A mine or bomb possibly, I suggested.

He did not see the funny side of my joke at all, the cod end was bumping against the side of the boat but there was nothing I could actually see that said it was anything other than mud.

Pull it up a little more, I asked. Up it came, skate, sole and cod bobbed about the top of what looked like an oversized beer keg. Could it perhaps be a navigation buoy Or a racing mark more likely? Not that heavy. OK, pull it up let's get rid of it and concentrate on fishing. Over the rail it came without much trouble... at which point I cried stop.

It was a mine. The point gave it away, probably a small German magnetic mine. Poor Shane was not impressed as we watched 500 pounds of high explosive swing about the after deck.

We had a problem, as everything on a fishing boat is designed to pull things inboard not out. I was not keen on trying to swing it out board and dropping it quickly over the side. Shane was not at all happy. He said that this was not in the script, what would we do now?

I replied that we should make it fast for the time being and he should make me a cup of tea. It was like the X factor but we could not be runner up. I contacted the Coastguard and gave them my position and details of the mine and my intentions. They then contacted the bomb and mine disposal people from Portsmouth and within a few minutes my phone rang. Hello Paul, mine disposal here. What have you got?

I described the size and position of covers, fuses and general shape. I thought it was the one in the middle of their poster on mine identification. Yes, he replied. Sounds about right. I explained my problem and asked about risks, dos and don'ts. I said that if I remembered correctly these were battery operated and the battery should be dead after all this time. Yes, he replied.

Good.

I then pointed out that my crew was less than pleased with the situation. The officer said that I should reassure him by explaining that the battery was flat but not to hit it with a hammer, and if it were to go off then we would not see, hear or feel a thing. I found these words less than reassuring but in good old fashion gallows humour passed it on. It is quite a job to describe Shane's reaction to these words but with a little imagination I am sure you can work it out.

We managed to lift the mine higher and build a table with fish boxes and planks of wood from the fish room floor, slowly edging the mine to the rail and gently letting it down over the side. With the drag of the rest of the net starting to help us we succeeded in getting it back in the water, secured a line with buoys to mark it. Just as we were about to cut it free I spotted a little bonus positioned on top of the mine, a nice lobster about 21lbs in weight, crawling' out of the parachute cover. I quickly picked it out, sad to be destroying his home, but excited about how good he would taste with a nice fresh salad.

The mine was blown up two days later, and the lobster was

delicious.



This article appeared in the Talk of the Thames and is reproduced here by kind permission of Paul Gilson

JOIN UP, JOIN UP

All local societies work mainly by word of mouth, not least us, so please spread the word wherever you can and help us get more members, and younger ones. We should all try to support local organisations so that these are not lost. So we thought it might be interesting for our members to know what other societies and subjects of interest are available to them in Leigh and the area. So here is a list of web site contacts – take a look .

LOS Striders – running club – www.losstriders.co.uk

Leigh Horticultural Soc – www.leighgardening.org.uk

Leigh Camera Club – www.leighcameraclub.co.uk

Leigh Travel Club – www.leightravelclub.com

Ramblers – www.seeramblers.bulldoghome.com

We are sure with our wide membership that some of you belong to other local clubs, so let us have their details for a future Leighway.

In return several local organizations have provided links to our website on their web entries, so we are all working together to make sure everyone knows what a great place Leigh is.

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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