



LEIGHWAY

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

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Here we are again at the start of another New Year, lets hope this will be a better one for all of us.

As always at New Year subscriptions are due. We know times are tough but we hope everyone will agree that the Society's work is still worth their support and will renew their subscriptions promptly. Remember if you don't renew you will not get any more Leighways.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Just to remind everyone that membership is £10 and covers the household. Membership will lapse if it is not renewed by the AGM on 22 April.

Martin Ayling has taken over the job of Membership Secretary. Elaine Crystal had done this job for many years and we thank Elaine for all her hard work.

Renewals can be sent to Martin via the Heritage Centre.

WALMER CASTLE

Our Chairman, Ann Price, is organizing a coach trip to Walmer Castle in Kent on 21 April. A form for tickets is enclosed. Originally built during the reign of Henry VIII as part of a chain of coastal artillery defences against Catholic attack from Europe, The Castle became the official residence of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in 1708.



DEAR DIARY

All our talks (in bold) are held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m. For the Society meetings there is an entry charge of £1 for members and £2 for visitors. For information we have also listed other events for your diary.

7 February - Good for Leigh Fair, Community Centre 11-4

7-14 February Good for Leigh Week

11 March – Hadleigh Salvation Army Farm – Gordon Parkhill and Graham Cook

21 April – visit to Walmer Castle

22 April – AGM and Paul Gilson will talk about the Thames Estuary and latest developments.

4 May – May Day on Strand Wharf

13 May – TBA

13-21 June – Leigh Art Trail

24-29 June – Leigh Folk Festival

23 August – Fishing Festival – Old Town

19-20 September – Leigh Regatta

14 October – Films of Southend and Leigh, Old and New - Westcliff Film and Video Club

18 November - The Saxon King – Ken Crow, Southend Museum

12 December – Carols on Strand Wharf

WWW.LEIGHSOCIETY.CO.UK

The Society's web site continues to receive great feedback and our links for people to get in touch are working well. One request received via the web is from Graeme Yetts who is researching his family.

Graeme's grandfather, Nelson Yetts was sent to Leigh and is believed to have lived with members of the Wilder family. Nelson married Olive 'Renee' Harvey. Nelson worked on the cockle boats and was known as 'Pop'. The family lived in Leighville Grove.

If anyone remembers the family and could help Graeme with his research please contact Carole via the Heritage Centre or at carole.mulrone@btinternet.com

MATTERS ARISING

PHOTOSHOOT ON CHALKWELL BEACH

Following on from the article in the last edition about the theatre on Chalkwell Beach, member Godfrey Hunt has provided us with more information about the theatre going back before the war. Godfrey remembers sitting and standing with a small bag of sherbet watching the show. He never saw the name of the entertainer but he says he lodged with his aunt Maud for the summer season in Undercliff Gardens, Leigh. The house is still standing and at the time was just beyond the end of the platform. When electrification took place in the 1950s the platforms were extended to take the new 12 coach trains and the house now overlooks the end. The entertainer's room was on the southeast side looking towards the sea and leading to a small front bay. The stage and platform were removed in 1940 when the seafront was fortified from Chalkwell to Shoebury because of the threat of invasion.

PADDLING POOL

Godfrey also reminds us that the original pools and 'hards' to the Ray were put in by Mayor Copeland before the Great War about 1910.

THE BRAMPTON CONNECTION

The article on Lady Olivia Sparrow's connections to Brampton sparked another memory for Godfrey Hunt. He regularly visited RAF Brampton and on one occasion went to the Officers' mess in Brampton Hall. Godfrey has kindly sent in a copy of an etching of the Hall in Lady Olivia's time. It just shows what an illustrious background she had.



LEIGH SCHOOLS

The Schools articles in the last edition sparked quite a bit of interest and Godfrey also wrote to say he attended Highfield College which joined up with Lindisfarne College in 1939. On the outbreak of war Highfield moved down to Taunton. Godfrey would be interested to hear from any other old Highfield boys.

Ian Hawks was also at Highfield College from Thundersley in the 1930s but came across this photo of Tower House school recently. Anyone ring a bell?

It is nice to see that articles in Leighway jog so many memories and that readers are happy to share these. The collective memory of the Leigh Society is vast so never think anything is too insignificant. Someone will be interested.



Tower House School

HMS MERSEY

HMS Mersey was a shore based Royal Naval facility in Liverpool during the Second World War. It is significant to Leigh because it is the unit under whose command the men of the Little Ships were placed.

The Liverpool Naval Memorial is situated on the Mersey River Front at the Pier Head, Liverpool, close to and behind the Liver Buildings.



At the outbreak of the Second World War, it was evident that the Royal Navy would not be able to man all the auxiliary vessels that would serve with it. To deal with the shortfall in manpower, a number of officers and men of the Merchant Navy agreed to serve with the Royal Navy under the terms of a T.124 agreement, which made them subject to Naval discipline while generally retaining their Merchant Navy rates of pay and other conditions. The manning port established to administer these men was at Liverpool. More than 13,000 seamen served under these conditions in various types of auxiliary vessels, at first mainly in armed merchant cruisers, but also in armed boarding vessels, cable ships, rescue tugs, and others on special service. The Liverpool Naval Memorial commemorates 1,400 of these officers and men, who died on active service aboard more than 120 ships, and who have no grave but the sea.

The names of Frank William Archer Osborne, Leslie Verdun Dench Osborne and William Henry Noakes are among them.

I am grateful to member Tony Carr for bringing this information to my attention.

PLANNING AND LICENSING

The credit crunch has also hit the planning industry and the number of planning applications has tailed off considerably with an increase in extensions rather than new builds as people decide not to move but to extend instead.

Not unsurprisingly no work has started as yet on the Clements Hall or Bell sites. But work on the conversion of Pricketts store in the Broadway has gone ahead.

We have had some complaints from residents about noise in the Broadway from the various eating and drinking establishments so we thought we would remind everyone that if there is unacceptable noise late at night you can ring the Southend BC out of hours response line on 01702 466550.

Members are asked to note that there is an inquiry to be held on 26 February at 10am. at the Civic Centre into the application to convert the Swanleys Newsagents in the Broadway to an amusement arcade. The Society, Town Council and many others objected very strongly to this proposal so if you feel strongly about it too you can go along to the inquiry and ask to make your objections to the Inspector.

The last few months have been traumatic for all in the retail trade, who would have thought we would have lost Woolies? This is a big unit in the Broadway and we will watch carefully what is proposed for the site and for others which still remain vacant. We cannot afford to lose anymore shops in the Broadway and other shopping streets be it to the credit crunch or non retail applications.

Sadly we have to report that an Inspector has again gone against the views of the Borough and Town Councils, the Leigh Society and many residents and traders and has granted permission for the alterations and development of Clements Arcade in the Broadway, despite the fact that the building has been locally listed by the council. A fact the inspector never even mentioned.

A PHILANTHROPIC ANCESTRY

Local Leigh Man Bob Banner shares his illustrious ancestry

My great great great great great grandfather was Thomas Marriott, a master baker (1720-1775) who came from Northampton to London. Thomas was a baker of Norton Folgate, London and with his wife Webster (d.1772) were among the earliest members of the Foundry Society and he was on the first list of select members in 1744.

Thomas had three sons and a daughter. William (1753-1815) my four times great grandfather was also a master baker. He was educated at Wesley's school at the Foundry and married Elizabeth Featherstonehaugh. Elizabeth's family objected to William, being a man in trade, so he entered the Stock Exchange and soon his business affairs flourished and he made a very good living. He made a large fortune as a stock broker and proved a generous benefactor to worthy causes, especially the Stranger's Friend Society. Being a man of religion William

had decided to share his good fortune with those less fortunate so after making provisions for his family he distributed his surplus funds for the good of mankind. Over a period of 27 years he anonymously relieved about 9000 cases of distress amongst the poor and needy and employed many almoners to distribute his wealth. His family knew nothing of this until after his death.

William was a great friend of John Wesley and was an executor of his will.

William's brother, Thomas, was a well respected City man and was appointed to meet Nelson's funeral at Temple Bar with the Lord Mayor as a representative of the city of London. An account of this is told in Thomas Allen's History of London published in 1826.

William's son, Thomas, born in Hoxton Square, London, said one of his early memories was of seeing Wesley in his coffin. At the age of fourteen he was apprenticed to David Bruce, cabinetmaker and upholsterer of Aldersgate. Upon coming of age, he was given £3000 by his father to enter the cabinetmaking business in Camomile Street. The business did not prosper and when his father died in 1815, he left the trade. After his retirement, Thomas lived in Windsor Terrace where he built up an excellent library and collection of Methodist memorabilia. He lost a considerable amount of money in 1818 and retired into private life thereafter apart from some successful dealings on the Stock Exchange.

Thomas was a devout Methodist all his life. He died in November 1852, leaving £10,000 to the Wesleyan Missionary Society and the residue of his estate to the Worn-out Preachers' Fund.

LONDON ROAD, TEMPERENCE BAR

This photo shows shops in London Road Leigh, with W.J Edmunds Carriage Builders and next door London Road Temperance Bar and Tea rooms.



As most of you will know a temperance bar did not serve alcoholic. In the late 1800s, a number of bars were established in conjunction with the Temperance Society. Originally, these advocated a moderate approach to life, especially in regard to alcohol; later, they moved toward abstinence. Temperance bars with full temperance licenses (allowing them to serve on Sundays despite English trading laws at the time) were once common, especially in the north. The movement had a massive following and the bars quite often asked their patrons to sign a pledge of Temperance, meaning that they would abstain from intoxicating liquors.

Temperance Bars were the first outlet for the drink Vimto. Did you know that Vimto was created in Manchester, by a wholesaler of spices and medicines, John Noel Nichols. He saw the market opening for soft drinks due to the temperance

movement and the passage of the 1908 Licensing Act. It was originally sold under the name **Vim Tonic**, which was shortened to Vimto in 1912. Vimto was originally registered as a health tonic or medicine, which was then re-registered in 1913 as a cordial.

TIM BOWLER - LOCAL AUTHOR

In the spirit of celebrating our home grown talent, this edition we feature the author, Tim Bowler, who writes teenage fiction. Tim has kindly allowed us to use information from his website, where you can also find details of all his books if you are looking for an interesting birthday or Christmas present for that awkward to buy for teenager.

Tim was born in Leigh-which he describes as a very atmospheric place, especially Old Leigh with its cobbled streets and cockle sheds and fishing boats. The house he grew up in overlooked the estuary and like all of us who live here much of his childhood was spent in or on or just looking at the water. He attended Westcliff High School for Boys and later the University of East Anglia studying Swedish and Scandinavian Studies. After graduating Tim worked in (among other things) forestry, timber, teaching, translating and various other jobs before going full-time as a writer.

Tim says he has always loved Old Leigh and the environment of Bell Wharf, the cockle sheds, Cinder Path, Two Tree Island and the estuary as a whole. As a boy he belonged to the Leigh Sailing Club. His first boat was a Walker dinghy, followed by a GP 14, which his father bought for me when I was 16. Tim visits his parents regularly and still finds Leigh a magical place. In 1998 Tim's novel, *River Boy*, won the Carnegie Medal which is awarded annually to a writer of an outstanding book for children. The judges chose *River Boy* over two acclaimed prize-winning books on the shortlist of seven titles stating "This extremely fine novel was a clear winner. It was not at all a compromise choice. *River Boy* has all the hallmarks of a classic - it deepens with re-reading, and takes the reader on a journey. You are not the same person at the end of this book".

For more details about Tim's books go to <http://www.timbowler.co.uk/home.html>.

Tim's first book *Midget* a psychic and psychological thriller is set in Leigh-on-Sea. Having lived and sailed in the area throughout his early life and known the magical beauty of the estuary, Tim had always wanted to use the setting for a novel.



What the papers say –

Master of the psychological thriller – Sunday Telegraph

One of the truly individual voices in British teenage fiction - Independent

The first Carnegie Medal was awarded to Arthur Ransome in 1936 and other winners include Eric Linklater, Elizabeth Goudge, Walter de la Mare and C S Lewis. So Tim is in good company.

GOOD FOR LEIGH

Hopefully by now many of you will have heard about the Good for Leigh Campaign which is being led by Leigh Town Council. The idea is to make Leigh and our environment more pleasant to live, work and play in. To this end many of the traders in Leigh have signed up to a charter setting out what they will do to improve their immediate environment. Look out for the charters in shop windows.

Also there are other elements of the campaign with a Bag for Leigh to encourage people to ditch the carriers and use reusable bags. The proceeds from the bags will go towards the planting of trees in Leigh.

Leigh Town Council held a competition with local schools to create a logo for the campaign and householders will be encouraged to take part in the week of 7-14 February by improving their living environment, shopping in Leigh, where many traders will have special offers, look out for the brochure which will be coming through your door in the next week or so. The Good for Leigh Fair will be held on 7 February in the Community Centre in Elm Road 11-4, where you can sign up to the residents charter or go to <http://www.goodforleigh.co.uk>. Maybe you would like to organise an event for the Good for Leigh week for your favourite charity – the idea is to get the community together.

The Leigh Society has signed up to the Campaign and will soon be giving the Heritage Centre a facelift.

We hope you will all support the campaign and spread the word.

Here's the logo – look out for it - its in purple and green.



LEIGHWAY

The next edition of *Leighway* will be coming out at the end of March beginning of April so if you have any articles please send them to Carole either by email at carole.mulroney@btinternet.com or via the Heritage Centre.

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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