



# LEIGHWAY

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

## FROM THE CHAIR

I am happy to have this opportunity to thank you all for your support for the Society throughout the year. It is encouraging to see so many members at our talks, and to have such enthusiasm for the outside visits.

My thanks to the Committee for all their hard work, and here I would like to mention particularly our treasurers, Peter Jolly for the Leigh Society, and Donald Fraser for the Heritage Centre. Their task is very exacting and we benefit greatly from the meticulous way in which they keep and present the accounts.

Good progress has been made in producing an accessible archive of all papers, photos and artefacts held by the Society. The invaluable help with this work, given by the History group of the Leigh U3A, is much appreciated.

With the continued support of our dedicated stewards, the Heritage Centre continues to flourish. During the year we have received visits from well over 1600 school children. This is probably the most important work we do at the Centre, reinforcing the magic of history in these children, and members who work with the groups deserve our heartfelt thanks. Hopefully some of these youngsters will be future members of the Leigh Society.

We have all been saddened by the death of David Atkinson, our President. David was a founder member of the Society and was very keen for us to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. To this end we have decided to have a 'Members Day' at the Heritage Centre on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 12 - 5, when we hope that as many members as possible will drop in to meet old friends and take light refreshments.

I look forward to seeing you then. Ann Price, Chairman

## FROM THE SECRETARY

Another very busy year for the Society with its many activities and involvement in local affairs.

Our Heritage Centre has informed and entertained hundreds of children and visitors from near and far. All this is only because we have a very committed number of people helping to keep things running successfully.

I would particularly like to thank our Chairman, Ann Price, who not only handles all our printing, but organises our enjoyable outings, chairs our monthly Committee meetings and keeps everything running smoothly. Thank you Ann.

We would welcome more offers of help, it is very rewarding but thank you to you, our members, for your continued support and interest. Margaret Buckley

## DAVID ATKINSON

Over 40 years ago, a young, enthusiastic Tory Councillor for St Clement's Ward, now West Leigh, interested in the history of Leigh and the new Leigh Hill Conservation Area, started a small steering group which met initially in his home to establish a Conservation Society to look after that area.

The conservation area was established mainly by the efforts of architect, Ron Cox and Cllr. Mrs Vera Smith, who both of Leigh Hill and the steering group became the core of the Leigh Society committee, which today runs a thriving Heritage Centre, shop and museum and

Records and researches the history and people of the "Old Town" and wider Leigh.

It restored Plumbs Cottage, which shows how the fishing families of Leigh lived and worked in the 1850's. It runs an education programme for schools and is presently archiving records and photographs with the latest digital technology, for the benefit of future generations and Old Town families who go there from all over the world.

David was a Vice President for many years, keeping in touch through the Leighway magazine, every edition of which was sent to him in Bournemouth, and two years ago he became President of the Society following the death of Frank Bentley.

He was looking forwards with his usual enthusiasm to the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society later this year, and had ideas for what we should do for that event, and it is a great regret of the Committee and members of the Leigh Society that he will not be there to share it with us.

David was always interested and hugely supportive of all the Society's ventures and his calm presence and enthusiasm will be sorely missed by the Society.

Alan Crystall

## DEAR DIARY

All Society meetings are held at Wesley Hall, Elm Road Methodist Church at 8 p.m - Members £1, visitors £2

18 April – AGM and film

21 April - Henley River and Rowing Museum.

9 May - Langdon Hills and surrounding area – Plotlands – Ken Porter

29 May – Greenwich – Royal River Pageant Exhibition

22 September – Members Day

17 October - Thames Estuary Shipwrecks – Claire Hunt

7 November – The Southend I knew as a child - John Smart

## THE ROSE GARDEN, CHALKWELL PARK



Chalkwell Park Rose Garden in the 1920s

A visit to Chalkwell Park in high summer would not be complete without a leisurely stroll through the delightful rose garden - an important element of this beautiful municipal park for over one hundred years - to enjoy the heady fragrance and varied colours of what is often said to be Britain's favourite flower.

Municipal parks have been popular leisure amenities since the mid 1800s, when various Acts of Parliament enabled local authorities, by raising funds for their upkeep, to maintain areas of land for the enjoyment and recreation of its citizens. By the early 1900s, almost every town had at least one park.

It was in 1903 that Southend Corporation purchased, for twenty thousand pounds, 26 acres of pleasure grounds, together with a large house, Chalkwell Hall, built about 1830, for development as a municipal park. The Park was once part of Chalkwell Hall Estate, farmland extending from Crowstone Road in the east, to Lord Roberts Avenue in the west. The parcel of land, situated south of London Road and north of King's Road, on the border between Leigh-on-Sea and Westcliff-on-Sea, was mainly heavy clay, conditions especially suited to the cultivation of roses. The rose garden, sited on the southern boundary of the park, was a popular early development, and work commenced in 1908.

One of the rose garden's many supporters was local town councillor and keen rose grower, Alderman Martin. His advice was of great value when the rose garden was first proposed, and he is still remembered today by the Leigh-on-Sea Horticultural Society, with a special award for roses, the Alderman Martin Cup. Another early sponsor of the rose garden was local rosarian, Walter Easlea, whose Danecroft Rose Nursery at Eastwood Road North, was one of the major rose breeders in Britain. He supplied many plants to Southend Corporation's new garden, including *Madame Abel Chatenay*, *Betty* and *Irish Elegance*. To improve the soil, Walter advocated the application of burnt earth and hydrated lime, with such remarkable success that Chalkwell Park Rose Garden was acclaimed to be 'probably the finest public rose garden in England'. The widely-travelled Walter professed that he had 'never seen roses make such growth as in those gardens'.

With over 2,000 plants, ranging from bushes, hedges, standards, tall pillars and rambles, each clearly named with an Acme metal label, the popularity of the rose garden grew rapidly. Visitors crowded the pathways, especially on Sundays in June, July and August, many bearing 'note books as plentiful as at Vincent Square', a reference to the popular London flower shows held by the RHS. In the 1930s, practical demonstrations of spring pruning assisted residents interested in achieving the best and biggest blooms in their own gardens.

Over the years, the rose garden kept its collection up-to-date, with major rose nurseries, including Samuel McCredy and Sons, Cants of Colchester and Wheatcroft Brothers, supplying their latest introductions for the enjoyment of visitors. Walter

Easlea was also a generous benefactor, donating plants of *American Pillar* when it was first introduced in the UK.

Today, Chalkwell Park Rose Garden is as beautiful and well-cared-for as ever, with large circular beds set off by well-kept lawns, and bordered by wide beds and pathways. Many of the best roses of the second half of the last century can be found, including *King's Ransom*, *Silver Jubilee*, *Blessings*, *Mister Lincoln*, *Arthur Bell* and *Wendy Cussons*, together with many other superb varieties. This wonderful garden is well worth a visit, not just by the rose enthusiast, but by all who enjoy the beauty of our municipal gardens.

Jim Sanctuary

## THE COAL FIRE COOKING RANGE

One of the highlights of the Heritage Centre display is Granny's Kitchen, centre piece of which is the cooking range. John Smart who will be speaking at our November meeting about his memories of Southend as a child has contributed this interesting article about the evolution of the cooking range.

Until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century all cooking was done on an open fire, with items needing baking in a separate brick built oven; heated by lighting a fire inside it and sweeping out the embers before putting in items to be baked. When cheap cast iron became available iron foundries began to make cast iron boxes with a flue round them and these would often be built into the fireplace next to the ordinary firegrate. Round about 1770 they took the logical step of uniting the oven and firegrate, the earliest patent for a combined fire and oven was taken out by Thos. Robinson in 1780. Three years later Joseph Langmead patented the addition of a small water boiler on the opposite side of the fire: it had to be filled by hand from the top.

With the fire only on one side uneven heating of the oven was a problem, eventually solved by building a flue round it controlled by sliding dampers to give a measure of temperature control. A cheaper method is shown in the small stove exhibited at the Science Museum which incorporates a turntable in the oven shelf. In Yorkshire and the North the ovens were placed to one side above the level of the firegrate and the design became known as a Yorkshire range.

The open fire of these ranges used a lot of coal and in 1892 George Bodey patented the "closed range" where an iron plate covered the fire preventing much of the heat from escaping up the chimney.

The small range in the Heritage Centre is a typical example of a small cooker from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and would have cost about £5 to £10.

Few working class people had the benefit of an oven until late in Victorian times; at best they had a pot suspended over an open fire. In towns and villages items to be baked had to be taken to the local Baker's shop. A row of 1855 iron-workers cottages preserved at St Fagans open-air museum in Wales was originally built with a communal bake oven in a separate building at the end of the row. Later small box ovens were fitted to the fireplaces. Landlords seldom fitted cooking ranges in working class dwellings and tenants, even if they could afford it, were reluctant to buy a range for if they moved it would have to be left being regarded as a "Landlord's fixture and fitting". It was only after the 1851 exhibition when a set of workmen's cottages, designed by Prince Albert were shown and the coming of charitable Housing Associations that proper cooking facilities began to be put into working class houses.

John Smart

## THE CHILDREN'S PASTOR



This small stone in the wall at Chalkwell beach says 'In memory of the Rev. Alfred Waller who for 30 years held children's services on this beach and passed to glory 9<sup>th</sup> November 1917.' has always intrigued me. I've often wondered who he was. I finally found a cutting in the local paper recording his death. He was vicar of St. Paul's Church in Summercourt Road.

Mr Waller's family came to England with William the Conqueror, Waller himself was born in Yorkshire. He worked in the mercantile engineering industry but was deeply interested in evangelical work and undertook missionary work with the sailors on the east coast, while preparing for his ordination.

Rev. Waller came to Southend in 1888 as curate of Trinity Reformed Church by Victoria Circus. After several altercations with the church wardens, who once locked him in the vestry for not handing over the key to the safe, and eventually being forcibly removed from a meeting in the church, he was escorted to the police station wearing his tatty surplice, with a Bible in one hand and his hat in the other, reading out text from the Bible. After several appearances in court over the offertory and the keys of the church he became known as 'the Stormy Petrel of Southend.'

Rev. Waller left Trinity and in 1892 began to preach in a small iron church in North Meadow on the site of the present St. Paul's Church, Summercourt Road. He had built the church himself acting as architect, clerk of the works and builder.

For all his many run ins with the church authorities his good works outclassed his behaviour. In 1895 he superintended the homing of 100 poor London children in Southend.

In 1890 he was fined for preaching on the foreshore., but he went on to conduct services for children and holiday makers on Chalkwell Beach for 30 years.

Mavis Sipple

## INFORMATION REQUEST

The following request comes from local author and member, Carol Edwards who is also a volunteer in the Heritage Centre.

*'I am currently researching material on Leigh old town, or the High Street as it was also known , for my next book, covering the years 1800-1980's. Although the Old Town is usually associated with the fishing fraternity, there were many other families and business connected with this area. Perhaps one of your relatives wasa dressmaker or boormaker, landlord of one the public houses, or were you a member of the Wednesday Art Group?*

*The second aspect of the book will cover the lost rows of cottages that were demolished in the cause of redevelopment, such as Belton Cottages in 1970, or any properties purchased by Southend Council, when they were planning to redevelopment the area. Were you part of the group fighting to save the High Street? If you have any photographs or memories that you would be prepared to share with me please could you contact me in the first instance by email or post.'*

Carol Edwards [edwards28@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:edwards28@tiscali.co.uk) or 28 Exford Avenue, Westcliff-on-sea SSO OEF

## LEIGH IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

The parish burial registers of St Clement's Church date from 1685 but the cause of death was not recorded until 1832.

The first cause of death from cholera was Alexander Ritchie, aged 11, who died in 1832 and was buried 30 March 1832.

The register entry states that " he was supposed to have died from English Cholera Morbus by Dr. Asplin. Mr. Bradby and Mr.J Bradley in consequence of taking up cloathes which were tied up in a hammock and sunk – soon after he had put on a hat he was seiz'd with a diarrhoea and died in a few hours". (morbus is an obsolete word meaning "causing disease"). The parents of young Alexander must have been overwhelmed with grief when their previously health young son suddenly developed severe diarrhoea and rapidly became exhausted and died.

Cholera was unknown at this time in the UK although it had been present for many centuries in India and the countries of South East Asia. The British settled in India In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and it is thought that it was the soldiers of the British Raj returning from India that brought the disease to the UK. The first cases of Cholera were reported in October 1831 and by 1832 there was an epidemic in London leading to thousands of deaths. This was the occasion of young Alexander's death which may well have been related in some way to the epidemic in London.

People were terrified of the Cholera as there was no cure. The disease presented suddenly with severe and persistent diarrhoea .There was also vomiting, fever and dehydration. The skin turned a bluish grey colour and Cholera was often called the "Blue Disease".

In the terminal stage of the illness the body becomes yellow "like Bile". It was thought that the disease was somehow related to Bile. Hence the name Cholera. (We still use the prefix chole- e.g. in cholecystitis for gall bladder disease.)

Inevitably people in 1832 began to suspect the water supply. Lady Olivia Sparrow was a great benefactor to Leigh over many years especially with regard to financing improvements to the water supply. In 1832 a petition was sent to her from the people of Leigh at the time of this first epidemic and as a result at this time she arranged for a new well to be sunk on Strand wharf.

There was a another widespread epidemic throughout 1849 and about 60,000 people died in England. There were 17 deaths in Leigh out of a total population of about 1400 persons. Thid advertisement enclosed comes from the Chelmsford Chronicle of 21 September 1849

<b>THE NEW CHOLERAIC ANTIDOTE,</b> By THOMAS BRADLEY, Surgeon. LEIGH, ESSEX.	
REFERENCES.	
Rev. ROBERT EDEN,	} Rector.
Rev. HERBERT S. HAWKINS,	} Rector.
Since the Diarrhoeal Epidemic, upwards of One Thousand of the Inhabitants indiscriminately.	
PRICE.	
FOR 12 oz. Bottle of MIXTURE and	7s. 6d.
12 oz. ditto of LINIMENT .....	
For the convenience of every person the mixture and liniment will be sold in any quantity by Messrs. Baker and Son, Chemists, Chelmsford, and C. E. Hitchcock, Colchester, MERCHANTS, CAPTAINS, UNIONS, and others supplied wholesale.	
The directions apply solely to those who may be taking a mild course of the preventative.	
Prospect House.	

Medicine as a bottle of mixture or as a "liniment" was supplied for cholera by Dr.Thomas Bradley who was a surgeon at Leigh at this time.

The 17 deaths from cholera at Leigh were between July and September 1849 and so the advertisement came soon after these deaths.

The medicine was recommended by the Rev Robert Eden and Rev Herbert Hawkins. The Rev Robert Eden was Rector at Leigh from 1837 until 1851. I presume that Rev Herbert Hawkins was his assistant at the rectory at Leigh. It is said that the Rev Robert Eden "took a very prominent part in nursing the sufferers" Presumably this was why the Rev Eden felt that he could recommend this medication. With the advantage of modern medical knowledge it is clear that it is very unlikely that the medication had any real therapeutic effect on people suffering severely from Cholera.

A further epidemic was reported in 1866 when 11 people died in Leigh and again in 1866 with six deaths. In this last epidemic it was noted that all the deaths occurred in the houses between the High Street and the waterside. Drains were hurriedly constructed in this area.

The coming of the railway through Leigh in 1854 caused much damage to the town but one good effect was that many houses with poor sanitation were demolished to make a path for the railway and this did help in reducing the risk of further epidemics.

It was suspected for many years that the disease was caused by drinking polluted water but difficult to prove. Science and especially bacteriology was not very advanced at this time. Eventually a physician, Dr John Snow, in London in 1854 was able to prove that the disease was water-borne. He was working as a doctor in Soho and during the epidemic in London in 1854 he was able to plot the incident of deaths due to cholera in Soho. He showed that the deaths in this area were in clusters around the Broad Street pump in Soho and he proved from this that Cholera was due to contaminated drinking water. Almost all the persons with Cholera had been getting water from this pump

In 1883 Robert Koch a bacteriologist was able to identify the bacteria causing the disease which was named *Vibrio Cholerae*.

The discovery of the cause of Cholera and the realisation that it was spread by drinking water contaminated by sewage led the Victorians to embark on a massive programme of building. A vast new sewage system for London ensured that raw sewage no longer entered the River Thames. The building of the new sewage system was mainly from 1859 to 1865 under the famous engineer, Joseph Bazalgette. The result was that the river Thames flowing past Leigh which had been a foul smelling sewer, gradually became cleaner.

There have been no cases of Cholera in the UK since about 1890. Cholera however did spread further after reaching the UK. Travellers from the UK went to most of the world including North and South America and the disease spread with them

There are still about 100,000 deaths each year from Cholera in poor countries with bad sanitation. This is in spite of new medical treatment such as antibiotics, vaccines and efficient intravenous fluids. For us in Leigh, Cholera is no longer the great horror it was for our ancestors living in Leigh some 180 years ago.

Tony Bullock

## A MERRY DANCE

In the last issue of Leighway we brought you the story of the Colleen Bawn (page 7).

Through a Heritage Centre query Carole was asked to research a property in Cliff Parade called The Collegians. In 1911 (and 1901) the residents were William Rowe (died 1905) and his wife, Elizabeth Ann. The query was about Elizabeth Ann, whose maiden name was Terry. Family connections to this lady

were certain that she was the sister of Ellen Terry the great Victorian actress.

Sadly this does not appear to be the case as Ellen Terry the actress was the daughter of Benjamin and Sarah Terry, born in Coventry in 1847, whereas Elizabeth Ann Terry was born in Torquay, the daughter of Thomas Terry and Sophia Elizabeth Braid Popham.

There is a theatrical link, of sorts, as William Rowe seems to have led a double life as a builder and a dancing master. In 1891 William and Elizabeth were living at 133 Seven Sisters Road, Islington which was also a dancing academy and William was a dancing instructor. But in 1871 and 1881 and again in 1901 he was listed as a builder in a family business in the Seven Sisters Road.

When he died William left Elizabeth and the family well provided for with a fortune of £5506.5s.4. (not much short of £2m today based on average earnings).

The house in Cliff Parade, 'The Collegians' must have been quite grand for when Elizabeth died in 1912 she left £1595.9s.9d (about half a million pounds today). The money was left to 3 of her children, Thomas Wallis Rowe being a dancing professor. In 1911 Thomas was still operating a dancing academy out of 133 Seven Sisters Road.

**But where did the name, The Collegians, come from?**

Starting with the family story of Ellen Terry. For many years she worked with the great Victorian actor Sir Henry Irving who appeared in plays in Ireland adapted from books by Irish author, Gerald Griffin. One of Griffin's most famous books was called 'The Collegians' and guess what? This novel was based on the story of the Colleen Bawn and was converted into the play of that name.

Sadly Leigh cannot claim a connection to Ellen Terry but you would be forgiven for believing that in a strange way her own connections led to a Leigh resident.

However, the clue to the house name is nothing to do with Ellen Terry or Sir Henry Irving or the Colleen Bawn. The following extract from the Bibliography of Dancing lists a publication by W W Rowe of 133 Seven Sisters Road, Islington and contains the steps for several quadrilles – one of which is called 'The Collegians' – so it is dancing, not acting that named the house.

If anyone knows which house (if it is still standing) on Cliff Parade was called the Collegians, Carole would love to know. Apparently there were stained glass windows of the names Terry and Rowe in the doorway and it appears to be close to the junction with Avenue Road.

**ROWE (W. W.) DANCING | AS IT IS. |** Describing the | Fashionable Method of Performing | all the Square, and briefly referring | to the Round Dances now in general use, | by W. W. Rowe, P.N.L.P.A.D., | And Taught by him at the | North London Private Academy of Dancing, | "Devonshire Villa," | 133, Seven Sisters' Road, | Holloway, N. | Entered at Stationers' Hall, 1/- | [1890] (Ref. 7908.a.88.)  
Post 32mo (4.5x3 ins.). 22 pp. Publisher's dark blue cloth, g.

Describes the figures of the following Quadrilles: First Set (p. 6), Lancers (p. 7), Caledonians (p. 9), Alberts (p. 11), Le Prince Imperial (p. 12), The Parisian Quadrille (p. 13), Circassian Circle (p. 14), The Collegians (p. 15).

## 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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