



**Spring 2024**

# LEIGHWAY 73

## LEIGH

### CONSERVATION

### AND HERITAGE

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#### DEAR DIARY 2024

I know its early but looking ahead to next year and how difficult it is to get speakers if anyone hears a speaker (who hasn't already done the rounds) and thinks they would be suitable for our sessions please contact Carole. We want to broaden the subjects to create interest so you will see some changes in our programme content.

17 April—AGM and a talk on the environment by our Company Secretary , Cathy Cottridge

15 May—Women War Artists, Dr Mark Banting this is a brilliant talk

19 June—the return of very popular Paul Carver, City of London Guide – content—wait and see

18 September—River Thames Society , Peter Finch.

Talks are at Leigh Community Centre in Elm Road 7.30pm

Dear Member

With a spring in our step as well as the season, LCAH is moving forward in 2024 and we kick off with our AGM on 17 April where, after the usual business, Cathy Cottridge, our Company Secretary, will be speaking on the environment. Cathy has a huge amount of experience in this field and in her many roles, travelling the world, can share some great knowledge and tips for us all to 'Go Green'.

Thanks to all of you who responded to our GDPR letter. It is a very important matter for the protection of all our personal data so the response was really welcome.

Our talk in May is part of our spreading our wings into wider subjects. Dr Mark Banting is an art expert and has a very unique and entertaining presentation of Women War Artists. This talk is interesting to both arts and history buffs so I am sure you will enjoy.

Come June, Paul Carver returns after his triumphant talk on the City Livery Companies. He is keeping his topic secret but it will be an interesting one.

After the summer break we return in September with our dear friend Peter Finch, Chair of the River Thames Society. Peter is a lover of Leigh and of course our mighty capital river, so we seem set for an enjoyable evening.

At the end of this Leighway are details of a trip to Dover Castle on 2 July. Please come and join us and get in early. Dover has so many links to our maritime and war time history. I haven't been there since my school days so am really looking forward to it. I have left the back page without any articles so that you won't mind cutting it off to return the slip.

This edition of Leighway has been a truly collaborative one and I thank all the contributors.

That's all for now, look forward to seeing you on 17 April at the AGM.

Best wishes *Carole*

**YOUR AGM PAPERS HAVE BEEN SENT UNDER SEPARATE COVER**

## THREE LICENCES TO THRILL

I love history as you all know, and one of my favourite periods is the Wars of the Roses. I think I was entranced by Olivier's Richard III. But I actually liked this much maligned king, and over the years have read quite a few books and become a member of the Richard III Society, my interest reignited by the King in the car park story.

It was with great delight that I recently met local resident, Geoff Licence, and learnt of his family's great involvement in that period and much more besides. Geoff has very kindly written a short piece about his daughter, Amy, and son, Tom, who both grew up in Leigh and have gone on to do great work.

### OVER TO GEOFF

'Great oaks from little acorns grow. Childhood is that precious time in which early interests can become lifelong passions.

Fifty years ago, the Licence family moved to Grange Road in Leigh, which had a friendly village atmosphere. It was an ideal location for young Amy and Tom Licence. Leigh was by the seaside and the countryside, and they had their very own 13th-century castle. A quick train journey took the Licences to London's art galleries, museums, ancient monuments, etc.

Locally, there were antique shops and two Victorian dumps to explore. One was at the bottom of Billet Lane (the dump used by Leigh's old town residents), and one below Hadleigh Castle, where barges dumped London's rubbish. In the 1960s, bottle collectors explored this site. The children absorbed these historical influences and set up their museum in their garden shed.



Tom Licence was Head Boy at Westcliff High School and took his degrees at Magdalene College, Cambridge, graduating with a double-starred first. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through his postgraduate studies, he was elected to a Research Fellowship at Magdalene in 2006.

His publications include *England's Hermits and Recluses, 970-1220* (Oxford University Press, 2011), the edition and translation of the Latin *Miracles of St Edmund* (Oxford Medieval Texts, 2014), and a new biography of Edward the Confessor, commissioned for the acclaimed Yale English Monarchs series, 2020, 'Last of the Royal Blood.'

He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (2011), a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (2011) and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Professor Tom Licence was elected as a Senior Research Fellow at Magdalene College Cambridge.

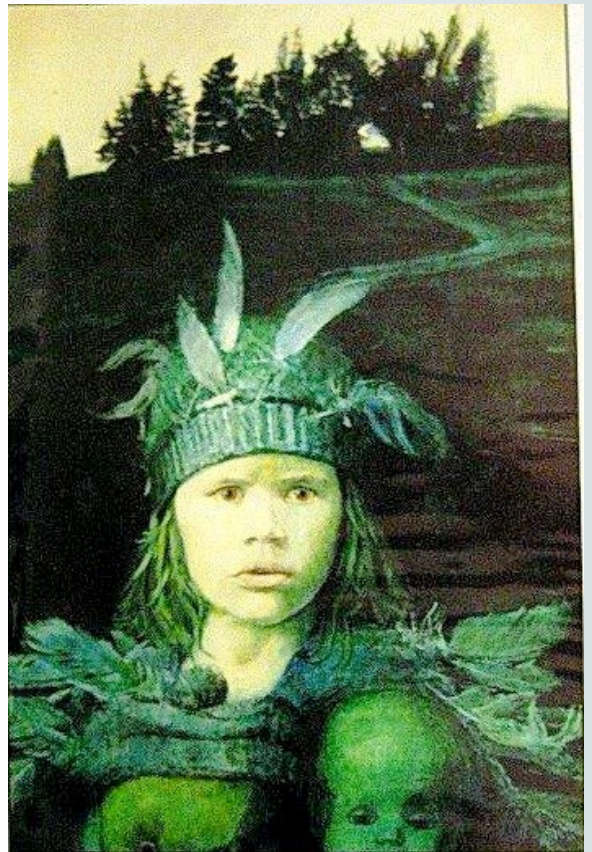
In 2021, Tom was awarded a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship, which buys him out of teaching for three years to write the Yale English Monarchs biography of Harold Godwinson (d. 1066).



Amy Licence is a journalist, author, historian, and teacher, living in Canterbury. She has published 35 books, fiction, and non-fiction. Her particular interest lies in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in gender relations, queenship and identity, rites of passage, sex, pilgrimage, female orthodoxy and rebellion, superstition, magic, fertility and childbirth.

Other interests include the Bloomsbury Group and Modernism, specifically the Post-Impressionists and Cubism. Amy's favourite authors are Woolf, Plath, Zola, T.S. Eliot, Nabokov and Dostoevsky. She admires Mozart, Picasso, the Renaissance, and the Baroque.

Amy has written for the Guardian, the TLS, the New Statesman, BBC History, the English Review, the London Magazine, the Huffington Post and others. She is interviewed regularly for BBC radio, including Woman's Hour, and appeared in BBC2's "The Real White Queen and Her Rivals" documentary (2013) and Yesterday Channel's "The Private Lives of the Tudors" (2016).



Her first book, "In Bed with the Tudors," was nominated for the 2015 People's Book Prize. Her debut novel, "Son of York" came out in 2017.'

How proud should Leigh be of these two eminent scholars and authors.

I am currently reading Amy's book on Anne Neville, the little known Queen of Richard III. Most people only know her as played by Claire Bloom in Olivier's film but the book is fascinating and I have already stocked up on other historical books written by Amy.

*Carole*

But there is even more to this remarkable Leigh family. Geoff is a keen photographer and an excellent artist. The picture of Amy in this article was painted in oil about 40 years ago and is called 'The Bird Girl of Belton Hills.' Southend Borough Council bought the picture to add to their collection and used the painting in their advert for the Essex Open Exhibition, held at the Beecroft.

This annual exhibition was open to all Essex artists. On several occasions Geoff won best picture and best portrait. "This picture depicts the time when we placed feathers in Amy's woolly hat and pullover and she flew around Belton Hills like a bird. She is protecting her mother's childhood dolls, Teddy and Rosebud."

The picture of Tom is called "Tom at the Court of King Charles in Peter Pan's Playground" and also was awarded best picture and sold to a private collector. Tom's hero was Charles, so Geoff painted him with a Charles beard. He wears an image of Charles I around his neck. The Ghost Train has ghosts riding and there are other symbols in the air. As Geoff mentioned Tom was a keen bottle collector from Victorian dumps, so Geoff attached bottles around his hat like an Australian hat has corks hanging from it.

## THE JOHN YSTUMLLYN ROSE



In the lower garden of Leigh Library Gardens there is a rose bed planted with roses donated by Harkness Roses and dedicated to the late Sir David Amess.

In this bed are two yellow rose bushes of a variety released in October 2021, the first rose in the UK to be named after a person of colour, John Ystumllyn.

One of these roses was planted in Buckingham Palace's rose garden in May 2022 with a welcoming statement from Queen Elizabeth II:

"The rose has been bred as a mark of friendship and community, and I hope guests and visitors to the garden will have the opportunity to reflect on what this rose represents for many years to come"

John Ystumllyn, also known as Jac Du or Jack Black, is likely to have been a victim of the Atlantic Slave Trade and was taken as a child to the Wynn family's Ystumllyn Estate in Criccieth, North Wales. Here he was christened, given his Welsh name, and taught English and Welsh.

It became apparent he had a natural skill for horticulture and craftsmanship while being trained in the estate garden. He later began a romance and finally eloped and married a local maid, Margaret Gruffydd.

They worked on estates around the area before returning to the Wynn Estate where they were given a cottage and garden in recognition of service. They had 7 children, 2 of whom died in infancy. Ystumllyn died of jaundice at around the age of 46 and was buried in St Cynhaern's churchyard on 2nd July 1786 where there is a simple sandstone memorial.

The memorial is Grade 11 listed being of special interest in commemoration of a slave in service in Wales in the later years of the 18th century. It bears this bleak inscription in Welsh -



'Born in India, to Wales I came To be baptised, See this spot, a grey slate marks My cold resting place'

It's thought the reference to India means the West Indies. Do visit Library Gardens in the summer to see this special rose.

Valerie Morgan, Chair of the Friends of Leigh Library Gardens



John as a teenager painted in 1754 and his grave



## COMMUNITY—WHAT LEIGH IS ALL ABOUT

Valerie Morgan Chair of Friends of Leigh Library Gardens

Back in 2022 Friends of Leigh Library Gardens decided the beds at the front of the library needed a revamp, they were looking old and tired. We talked to the Parks Dept who eventually agreed we could clear most of the shrubs in the west bed and create a new planting plan.

This also coincided with reports of ASB in the area to the west behind the railings. By removing the shrubs there was a clear vista from Broadway West through to the estuary view and to date this has largely cured the ASB problem. The Friends also used money raised by Leigh Constitutional Club to replace the very tatty chain link fence with lovely new railings and work commenced with the new planting in 2023.

The clearance exposed a large area of unsightly concrete too deep to break out with our limited resources (muscle power) and we debated how to deal with the problem. A mosaic was suggested and the idea grew into a Leigh themed mosaic with a competition for local children. I knew a local company, The Mosaic Studio, had created mosaics around the city and further afield so I contacted them and they explained how they had worked with children on similar projects very much involving the children throughout. See the examples below of a couple of these projects they have worked on.

The competition was publicised asking for drawings based on the child's concept of "Leigh" and beautiful drawings were submitted from children of all ages. A meeting was held with the Mosaic Studio, the Arts Group of Leigh Town Council and some of the Friends to view the drawings and the suggestion was to design a compilation mosaic incorporating as many themes from the drawings as possible so no one was left out.

This was subsequently commissioned by Southend City Council. Workshops were then to be held to teach the children about mosaics before actually starting work at the library where again the children would be involved in the placing of the tessera.

Of course all this costs money and some funding was promised by Leigh Town Council from the Community Infrastructure Levy funds (paid by developers) it holds, which we could then have match funded from grants.



Unfortunately that offer has since been rescinded so we are back to looking at ways to raise the quite substantial sum needed for such a prestigious project. If you like the idea please do look out for further updates on the project( Friends of Leigh Library Gardens have a FaceBook page) .





## The Bees and the Birds....and the Butterflies

As I write this, in the week before Easter, I really do believe that Spring is, at last, springing. Over-wintered butterflies are fluttering and large queen bumble bees are emerging from hibernation and hunting for nest sites. But flying requires a lot of energy and these creatures need plentiful supplies of fodder. And, while garden flowers are very helpful, our native fauna is very dependent upon indigenous flora. So, please, don't over-manicure your lawns and beds – and be especially tolerant of the humble Dandelion, which is one of the very best!



Female Tawny Mining Bee

I walked the Belton slopes above Leigh-on-Sea station today and was delighted to see several species of solitary bee. The most striking was a Tawny Mining Bee (*Andrena fulva*). As you might imagine, this particular family of bee nests in the ground. Eggs were laid last summer and a new generation is now, or soon, emerging -- first the generally less-spectacular males and then females. After mating, each female will start a new nest by digging a hole (sometimes in seemingly impenetrable ground!). And so the cycle continues.

Mining bees are predated by equally photogenic cuckoo (or nomad) bees and I spotted a couple of examples of those too, including this tri-coloured example. As the name suggests, these operate like their avian counterparts (except the invader larva kills the host larva and eats its foodstore!). Tough world out there! There are around 250 species of solitary bee in UK and many are under threat from severe decline in wild habitat and pesticide use. We are very lucky to have several wild(ish) spaces in and around Leigh. Let's try to ensure that these are maintained and preserved.



Early Bumble Bee on a Dandelion



Male Nomad Bee



White-letter Hairstreak Butterfly

Butterflies are also awakening. Lots Peacock and other over-wintering species. Visit Castle Drive in June and you may be lucky enough to see White-letter Hairstreak. Last year, the flowering bramble was awash with this striking small butterfly. Initially hard to see – but be patient and let your eyes acclimatise and you may be lucky to see these beauties. Lots of butterfly opportunities around here – Belfairs NR, Belton Hills and Hadleigh Park all offer a good chance to see Orange Tip, Small Blue, Marbled White and Ringlet (to mention just a few). Belfairs, of course, has a rejuvenated population of Heath Fritillary. Just ask Greg in the EWT Discovery Centre.

And lastly, to keep faith with the title of this piece, I'm very happy to report a first-time-for-me sighting of a Goldcrest, on the brook in Belfairs Golf Course. A good sighting of UK's smallest bird (with its rare Firecrest cousin) was a real bonus for me. This bird was not singing but they have a very distinctive call which you can hear on the RSPB website or the free Merlin app. Listen out in Belfairs and other local woods. Happy Hunting.



Goldcrest

## Leigh Conservation and Heritage

**A visit to Dover Castle has been arranged**

**Tues. 2<sup>nd</sup> July**

The castle is the oldest in England and has a wealth of interesting things to see including - The Medieval Court of Henry II, battlement walk and views across the Channel, secret tunnels – the headquarters for the planning of the evacuation of Dunkirk.

Refreshments are available in the restaurant and café.

The cost of the visit is £40 per person which covers coach travel and entry to the castle.

We will leave for the return journey by 4.30.

If you would like to take part in the visit please complete the form below and return to Mrs. Ann Price, 15 Henry Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, SS93QQ

01702 710324

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Name.....Tel.....Email.....

Please reserve \_\_\_\_ places for the Dover Castle visit. I enclose  
\_\_\_\_ (£40 per person) picking up at .....

Please make cheques payable to **Leigh Heritage Centre Ltd.**

(cheques will not be cashed until the trip is confirmed)

### **Pick up points**

8.15 Rectory Grove bus shelter 8.20 Highcliff Drive (Grand Parade)

8.30 Chalkwell Schools 8.35 The Elms 8.40 West Leigh Sch.

8.45 Thames Drive

(please make a note of the place and time you choose, for your future reference)





An eye to the future and an  
ear to the past in the heart of  
**LEIGH**

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### LEIGH LIVES

For all who love the history  
of Leigh and its people

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