



# LEIGHWAY

The Newsletter of the Leigh Society  
An eye to the future and an ear to the past in the heart of Leigh

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US



Well Leighway made it to it's first birthday, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Society Committee and all our members for the tremendous support they have given me over the last year in getting Leighway off the ground. Keep the articles and information coming, and here's to the next 12 months.

You will find tucked into your Leighway flyers for the Isle of Wight trip which Ann Price is organising and also for the Leigh Christmas Comicals on 9 December. This is a revival of an old tradition in Leigh when the Comicals (an evening of song and laughter) were a regular feature of Leigh life in the last century held at the Peterboat.

There will be an extensive programme of artistes taking part in this event and we hope everyone will have a wonderful start to the Christmas festivities. Be warned however that we can only accommodate 100 people in the Den so get your tickets early.



## DEAR DIARY

- 16/17 September Old Leigh Regatta
- 18 October The History of the City of London  
Sue Sincock, City of London Guide
- 15 November Vic Ellis' Paintings by Bob Clark
- 9 December Leigh Christmas Comicals



## A CANTERBURY TALE

Many thanks to Ann Price for arranging such an enjoyable and interesting trip to Canterbury.



The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the committee and officers of the Society  
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## REGATTA WEEKEND

The Old Town will be buzzing again on Regatta weekend. Plenty for all the family to see and do.

The Great Treasure Hunt will take place outside the Heritage Centre and there is plenty for the kids too as once again they can be creative with cockles and learn about Leigh in our Old Town quiz.

You will also have the chance to sponsor a tile for the roof of Plumbs Cottage. Every donation of £1 or over will receive a certificate and an entry in the Friends of Plumbs Register.



## OH HAPPY DAY



The ladies are seen here with our Chairman, Frank Bentley.



It certainly was a happy day for all the relieved helpers at the Heritage Centre when Sheila Pitt-Stanley and Kim de Neumann our President and Vice President performed the opening ceremony for the new facilities at the Heritage Centre.

## SALE OF THE CENTURY

Those of you who take the Daily Mail will have received the facsimile of the newspaper for the day that the Queen Mum was born. Did you read it? If you did, did you spot this advertisement:-

Land at Leigh-on-Sea - Plots in excellent positions; bought six years ago when land was cheap; will now be sold at a sacrifice; cash wanted - Apply for particulars to Thomas Young, 2, Broadway, Barking, London

As a matter of interest does anyone know where these plots of land were or have any deeds or conveyances which may give a clue?

## THE EYES HAVE IT

The 18th Century produced many technical improvements, not least for the humble microscope. But the images it provided still remained blurred with colourful haloes around objects.

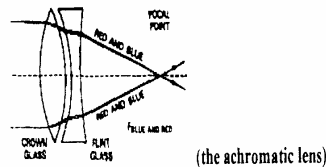
Any substance which can bend light (i.e., the glass in a lens) will bend light of different colours by slightly different amounts.

For example if an object is white (i.e. made up of all colours) the red component will focus in a different place than the blue one. As a result you get a blurry red or blue halo around the object when you focus on it.

Got that? Then lets go on.

The solution to this problem came in the 1730s when a barrister named Chester Moor Hall noticed that the newly created Flint Glass seemed to disperse the colours more than the normal Crown Glass did at the same magnification.

His decided that if he used a concave lens of Flint Glass right after the Crown Glass he could pull the different colours back into alignment without losing all of the magnification of the first lens. And so the achromatic lens was born.



Realising the importance of his discovery and to keep it under wraps he contracted with two different optical shops to make the two lens so they wouldn't catch on what he was up to. Unfortunately both shops sub contracted the work to the same lens maker who put two and two together. Chester never publicised his invention or took out a patent.

His secret lay dormant for 20 years until John Dolland (Dolland and Aitchison) on meeting the lens maker created the lens himself becoming a rich man through patenting the discovery.

This caused a stir amongst telescope makers who now had to pay royalties to Dolland. Knowing of Chester's earlier experiments they disputed Dolland's patent rights through the courts.

Unfortunately for Chester they lost, the Judge, Lord Mansfield, stating that 'It is not the person who has locked up his invention in his scritoire that ought to profit by a patent for such an invention, but he who brought it forth for the benefit of the public'.

Why is this important to Leigh? Well Chester Moor Hall, was the only son of Jehu Hall and Martha Bittridge. The Halls originally came from Stepney but through marriage with the Chesters and the Moors of Leigh came to settle in Leigh where Chester was born in 1703 and died at New Hall, Sutton in 1771. His monument in Sutton Church says 'He was a judicious lawyer, an able mathematician, a polite scholar, a sincere friend and a magistrate of the strictest integrity'.

## LEIGH'S UTD MAN



Jimmy Axcell was born the 5th son of John Axcell and Margaretta Noakes in 1886.

On leaving school Jimmy joined Leigh Ramblers FC and then Leigh Town FC winning the Essex Junior Cup with them in 1905 against Braintree Works.

He also played in the last professional season of old Grays United.

In the summer of 1906 arrangements were set in hand to run Southend United as a professional club and a prospectus was printed in the Southend Standard listing those players who had signed up. One of them was Jimmy Axcell.

In his first season the Club lost only three matches in the Southern League and in the South Eastern League only one. They scored 85 goals and only 6 against. Jimmy scored 31.

Unfortunately the Club was having financial difficulties and after two seasons Jimmy and others were put on the transfer list.

Jimmy was signed by Manchester United.

Jimmy's United career was dogged with bad luck. He contracted flu at the outset and played his first match in the Reserves in torrential rain with the overpowering fumes of a nearby chemical plant making him sick. He was never quite able to get into the first team and the following season a foot injury ended his days at United. Jimmy came home but the Blues were reluctant to take him back because of his injury so he joined the London Fire Brigade and played for the City Station, Blackfriars captaining them to the Fire Brigade Cup two seasons running.


Eventually, Jimmy returned to Southend United in time to play against Chelsea in the Cup. Although Chelsea won 5-2 Jimmy is reported as having had a wonderful game.

The War put an end to football and Jimmy joined the Navy serving on mine sweeping duties at Yarmouth. Of course, he played for the Navy team beating the Army 3 - 0 and scoring the second goal.

The War changed everything and at 32 Jimmy found it hard to return to professional football but he captained Leigh Town in 1920-1 and the following season they won the Sid Roberts Cup.

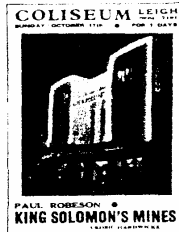
A year later with Leigh Ramblers he won the South East Charity Shield and went on to assist at Leigh Wednesday.

Financially, Jimmy's career was never in the same league, even relatively, as Beckham and Keane. When he signed for Southend in 1906 his weekly wage was £1 in the summer months and £2 during the playing season.

But of course then it was only a game!!!!!! !! !! 

**'While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand:  
when falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall: and  
when Rome falls — the world'**

**Lord Byron**



Do you remember the Coliseum in the old days, when you could see three different flicks a week? The Coliseum opened in 1914, the last word in luxury, with 600 seats. When the 'Talkies' came the cinema was enlarged to hold over 1000 people. Admission was 6d, 9d and a bob for the stalls. 1/4 and 1/9 in the circle.

Kids had to be accompanied by an adult for an 'A' movie so we hung around outside and begged complete strangers to, "Take us in Mister?". If we were lucky they did, on condition we sat by ourselves. Another way of getting in (so I'm told!) if money was tight was to club together and pay for one person who once inside, would wander to the front into the ladies, open the back door and let her friends in. Once inside we snuggled down in the warm darkness and were lost in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes (Basil Rathbone) in The Hound of the Baskervilles, we wept over Elizabeth Taylor in National Velvet and laughed with Laurel and Hardy.

Occasionally an usherette would patrol the outside aisle with a disinfectant spray. At the interval she would stand at the front with a tray of ice creams wrapped in paper and tasting like cardboard.

Many's the time I queued on the marble steps behind the wooden 1/9 board waiting for the liveried doorman to say "All right two upstairs."

There was always constant movement during the film, people came in at any time, seeing the end before the beginning and leaving when they reached the part where they came in. You could even stay and see the show round twice.

Sadly, after fifty years the Coliseum closed in 1965 due to lack of support. The last film shown was 'Send Me No Flowers' starring Rock Hudson and Doris Day. Like many a cinema before her the Old Girl became a Bingo Hall but now stands empty her fate still to be decided.

Mavis Sipple

**The Coliseum.**  
At Leigh's magnificent new picture palace next week's programme will include "Werner's Love Story," a most dramatic picture play, and "Nerth the Lion's Paw," a sensational animal drama, and a full array of Continental and Metropolitan novelties, including the latest of the world's happenings in news pictures. The performances are continuous from 2.30 to 10.30 daily, and a welcome feature of the entertainment is the provision of afternoon teas, which are daintily served free of charge to visitors from 4 to 4.30 each day. The ventilation, too, is on the most up-to-date lines, and the atmosphere is changed every few minutes.

**Southend and Westcliff Graphic 5 June 1914**

## THE MYSTERY OF AUNT CIS

Ann Chadwick, who most of you will know from her excellent series of articles in Leigh Times, is a descendant of the Ford family. Indeed she is the great granddaughter of 'Marrer' Ford whose picture hangs in the Heritage Centre. Ann's cousin Rita Watts has been researching the Ford family tree for some time and Ann writes to us now seeking help on a family mystery.

'We are descendants of the Ford family who lived in Juniper's Cottage at No 9 High Street, Old Leigh until the early 1950s when it was, sadly, demolished. It occupied the site next door to the Heritage Centre - until recently Mike's Boatyard and now the location for the new restaurant.

We are fascinated with our family's history and eager to find out all we can.

But there is one lady whose birth date Rita has been unable to trace.

She was quite a character, known to the family as 'Aunt Cis' and she lived in one of the small cottages behind Juniper's with her cousin Bill Polley. Even though she had married into the Turnidge family and her name was Emma she was always known as 'Cis'



Ford. (Her husband was Abraham Isaac Little Turnidge, known as 'Bully').

Her tiny cottage had an iron cooking range and was crammed full with Victorian crystal and porcelain treasures. There was no room to move and she shared a communal water pump in the yard. Some time in the 1950s she moved to a similar cottage further west along the High Street and continued with much the same lifestyle.

Despite her advancing years her hair never turned grey and the story is that she used the blacking for the range on it!

Our grandfather was Ambrose 'Windy' Ford and 'Aunt Cis' was his sister. She helped our grandmother Sarah to bring up her brood of 12 surviving children but never had any children of her own.

She died in 1960 and her death certificate gives her age as 71 - which we suspect was pure guesswork at the time by Rita's mother Grace because 'Aunt Cis' was always enigmatic on the subject of her birth.

According to the 1881 Census for Leigh she was then aged 1 but her birth does not appear to be in the Leigh parish records around 1880/1.

We would be delighted to hear from anybody who has any information on 'Aunt Cis' and when and where she came into the world.'

You can contact Ann Chadwick with any information on Aunt Cis on 01702 476294

## THE EMERYS OF EASINGTON

In 1832 Matthew Emery, the village shoemaker, married Eliza Robinson in St Clement's Church. Matthew and Eliza were to have 14 children between 1832 and 1853. A hard life for Eliza in child bed every 18 months and a tragic one, with the loss of 4 children before the age of 7 and their eldest son, William, by drowning at the age of 13.

Of their remaining offspring 3 were to fly the nest and travel far from Leigh. Their 6th child, Jonathan Shadrack settled in Anglesey marrying a local girl. It appears that their daughter Anne Catherine who was born in Carnarvon came to Leigh and married Frederick William Emery from another branch of the family.

But it is their sons Richard and Matthew who became the Emerys of Easington in Co. Durham.

The 1861 census records that Richard had by then become a rope repairer in a coal mine living at 52 Albion Street, Dawdon, with Margaret his wife, a Durham lass.

A rope repairman was also known as a wagonwayman which was a very responsible job. He installed and continuously checked all the ropes that pulled the haulage, including the men riding set, which took the men who were working miles out underground to their places of work.

The furry balls which formed on the rope, known as 'hedgehogs' had to be removed and the rope repairman would splice the rope repairing them as though knitting. It was a job which called for great skill. He also laid the rails down the pit for the wagons to run smoothly. In the mining hierarchy he was next to an official in status and was one of the highest paid men.

Matthew Emery was only 9 in 1861 and before he settled 'up north' he had been a fisherman, labourer and brickmaker.



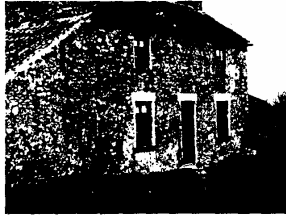
Matthew Emery

It seems likely that Matthew travelled to see his brother Richard probably by one of the Thames estuary - Seaham, Durham coal barges. Although his daughter Emma, aged 5 in 1888, recalled travelling by boat from Southend to Newcastle.

Whatever way he got there, or for whatever reason, Matthew met and married a local girl, Mary Cullen, on 6 June 1874 at Easington. He took Mary home to Leigh where their first 5 children were baptised, but they eventually settled in Easington and Matthew entered the mine as a stoneman.

After the hewers and cutters had taken the coal out it was Matthew's job to make the place bigger by firing shots into the stone roof. This was always done at night so as not to interrupt coal production.

Matthew worked at Tuthill Quarry, Haswell and he and Mary had 10 children. They lived at Moor House which was owned by the Dryden family and their daughter Emma married the son of that family, Hugh Dryden.



Moor House, Easington

Matthew and Mary's son Hugh continued the mining tradition and became under manager of Easington Colliery.

Easington Colliery may ring a bell with some of our more senior members for in 1951 it became the scene of one of the Country's most terrible mining disasters. An area of the mine known as 'the Duck Bills' because of the shape of the machinery had been the subject of some rumour that there would come a time when it would go up in a 'blue flash' because thick coal dust, which was easily ignited, was everywhere.

The machines drilling the coal regularly gave off sparks and electric cables criss-crossed the railway lines.

On 29 May 1951 tragedy struck at 4.35 a.m. When a mighty explosion shook the pit. The dust exploded and a wall of fire roared for 9 miles through the seam killing 81 men and boys. Two rescue workers died in their valiant attempts to save the men.

Hugh Emery gave evidence at the inquiry which followed the accident and which concluded that the cause was fire damp.

The Emery family's descendants still reside in Easington and Eileen Hopper, who with a colleague, Mary Bell, has provided much of the information and photographs for this article, is the great granddaughter-in-law of Matthew Emery.



Part of the Miners' Memorial in Easington Cemetery

## A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE OF LEIGH

We are fortunate to have in our Borough two nature reserves, one at Belton and the other at Two Tree Island which is administered by the Essex Wildlife Trust. So within walking distance they bring a wealth of wildlife, consisting of mainly flowers and insects. In addition, we have the sea shore which is also a Nature Reserve, where the mudflats are of national importance, with their multitude of waders, geese and many other kinds of birds.

The late Joyce McConnell was the expert on the wild flowers of the two reserves and I am fortunate in having been given her lists of all the species that she had found, amounting to 332 flowers and a further 53 grasses. This large number indicates how important these open spaces are in such a built up area, and what a capable naturalist Joyce was.

I am very much an amateur compared to Joyce having only found some 250 species but I have taken photographs of them all.

On the information boards that the Leigh Council have erected in the Belton Hills, a number of flowers are listed as being of special interest, namely;

Pink Family - Deptford Pink & Greater Stitchwort.  
Pea Family - Bythinian Vetch, Grass vetchling,  
Spiny Rest Harrow & Birds Foot Trefoil.  
Carrot Family - Alexanders.  
Rose Family - Agrimony  
Mallow Family - Common Mallow  
Teasel Family - Field Scabious.



The most interesting of these is the delightful Deptford Pink with its delicately spotted pink petals. This is a nationally rare flower in danger of extinction which I would not have found but for the help of Betty Goddard. I understand it also grows in the Hadleigh Castle Nature Reserve.

The other rare flower listed is Bythinian Vetch, a typical pea with white and blue petals. Unlike the Deptford Pink which is rare here, the vetch is very common throughout the Belton Hills.

It is in a way strange that Alexanders is listed for over the last twenty years it has become so abundant that it is choking out the other flowers. So much so that the Council is cutting the area at such a time to reduce its dominance. I have seen little difference so far!

Mistletoe is to be found but it is rare. I found some on a Hawthorn tree, but two Christmas's ago someone cut off the branch. Luckily I have found a further plant on another Hawthorn nearby. Strangely when friends moved into a house in Herschell Road some years ago the garden had several apple trees and they were absolutely loaded down with mistletoe.

The late Stanley Jermyn of the Essex Wildlife Trust wrote the Flora of Essex, which lists all the wild flowers throughout the County, identifying in which of the 57 10 kilometre squares they can be found. Technically it is very interesting but there are few pictures and it is not for general reading. I find it very useful, however, for checking whether my identifications are reasonable. Now and then it is surprising that he gives very local references.

For instance, in Billet Lane, I have found a plant with the unpleasant name of Bastard Cabbage, which is different from other members of the family by having pods shaped like a little chianti bottle. Looking it up in the Essex Flora it says 'to be found in Billet Lane, Leigh'. Another flower which is a real nuisance in our garden is Yellow Oxalis, a small brown leaved plant with bright yellow flowers, whose pods throw out the seeds all over the grass. Jermyn mentions it is to be found in Marine Parade, Leigh.

The Duke of Argyll's Tea Plant is a very vigorous shrub of the Nightshade family which is to be found in Billet Lane, in the shrubberies along Marine Parade and on Two Tree. When a plantsman found the plant abroad for the Duke he wrongly told him it was a Tea Plant and unkindly the name has stuck. I could go on but I think these notes are sufficient to show how much of interest is to be found in the Flora of our reserves.

Peter T. Whitclam.

Unfortunately a black and white publication does not do justice to these wonderful wildflowers, so to remedy the situation the Heritage Centre will be producing a leaflet of Peter's Nature Notes with colour pictures.



## WE'LL GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

As most of you will know we aim to keep the Heritage Centre open for some part of each day all year round. Much depends on the weather, but more depends on the volunteers who man the centre.

There is a hard core of regular helpers, but we could always do with some extra pairs of hands. So if you can spare a few hours a week on a regular basis then pop into the Heritage Centre and fill in an application form.

All volunteer stewards must be members of the Leigh Society and make themselves aware of the exhibits and information within the Museum and the range of information contained in the many publications on sale. Based on this awareness they will from time to time have to respond to queries from members of the public and it is vital that they do so from an informed position.

## HERITAGE CENTRE SALES

The Heritage Centre continues to carry a wide range of interesting booklets and items connected to Leigh. We now have a very attractive new tea towel showing five scenes of Leigh. At £2.99 an ideal little Christmas gift.

Lyn Davies has been hard at work producing our 2001 calendar. A number of copies have already been sold during the summer for the visitors who wish to take home a memento of Old Leigh. The calendar is on sale in the Heritage Centre at £3.50.

We will be producing our own Christmas cards this year and have a wide range of local views and artistic reproductions in the form of notelets with envelopes on sale.

So if you're looking for something special to send pay the Heritage Centre a visit.

## MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

Readers will remember from an earlier Leighway that we were paid a visit last year by Brian Axcell, who emigrated to Western Australia where he taught boat building. Brian was born in the thirties, the son of 'Stakey' Axcell and lived with his sister June, who still lives in Leigh, at 3 Cliff Cottages, Billet Lane.

From Australia a son of Leigh writes to tell us his memories.

'Before the war looking out across the river at the ships going up and down wishing that I could go on a trip with them (little did I know). Listening to the hymn singing from New Road Methodist Church in on Sunday evenings. Going into Juniper's fish and chip shop in the High Street, stepping down off the pavement into the shop. The only thing I remember was a John Dory fish that had been dried and varnished and hung from the ceiling. The first mobile? Of all the fish I have caught, not one was a John Dory and that was always my dream.

Seeing the fishing boats coming in and out with the tide. Meeting the fisherman (Dad being one) always being called "young Stakey Axcell". On the "Renown" (the one that was lost at Dunkirk) in a bad thunderstorm, my sister and I sheltering in the hold under the hatches.

Brian and June on the Renown



The four room cottage we lived in (two up, two down). One cold water tap outside. Washing of clothes done in a copper (the same as the shrimpers had on their boats for cooking shrimps in a shed). Heating of water with wood or coal. Toilet down the garden. Very cold in winter. Often froze up. Feeding the cows from Theobald's Farm when they looked over the back fence. One we called "Betty Blue".

First hair cut by Harry Threadgold's Barber Shop next to the Ship Inn. Mum had bought me a train with sparks coming out of the funnel. I cried because I didn't want my hair cut. Harry took the train away saying come back tomorrow, hair cut, train back. I got my train.

Chips in a long low bag from the fish and chip shop on the Strand. Ice cream from a shop on Bell Wharf and of course the steam crane. Wooden tug boat from the Old Post Office in the High Street. Some years later it became Clark's Beach Cafe. Frank Bridge had the Bridge Stores next door opposite railway crossing. Moving to 4 Uttons Avenue, New Road just before the war started.

### Leigh in the War

Most houses empty, people had moved away to escape the bombing. Soldiers, guns and barb wire. Empty houses on the Strand in which we played finding a door that had been wallpapered over (upstairs bedroom) which led into next house and another hidden door into the attic of the next and on to the last in the row. This row overlooked the Custom House.

A very bad air raid one night when an unexploded anti-aircraft shell went into the back of a row of cottages in New Road killing Bertha Deal and her Grandmother.

Going down to Theobald's Farm for a jug of milk costing six pence. Sometimes finding a hen's egg in the hay. This was a bonus as eggs were on ration. Grass growing up through the pavements in the Broadway only a few stores still open. North Street School taken over by the Army. Didn't have a lot of schooling for two years. Sometimes two hours in the morning in the old Methodist Chapel in New Road. But we still had our school milk every day, sometimes going up the hill to North Street School to collect it.

Convoys of ships in the River. Concrete bunker on Bell Wharf. Anti tank concrete blocks along the beach front. Wigwams along the shore in the mud criss-cross steel pipes to stop enemy landing barges. These looked like Red Indian tents. Submarine boom across the river from Shoebury to the mouth of the Medway.

Barrage balloons all around. Some on ships or anchored to the bottom. Thunder storms. The lightning would sometimes strike the balloons (that were painted silver). They would catch fire and rush around the sky like a mad thing. This to me was very exciting. Gales of wind. Some of the balloons would break away and drift off on their own. I wonder how far they went?

Dog fights in the sky. An exciting time watching them and cheering when one of the German planes was shot down. Collecting bullet cases and shrapnel after air raids. Lots of sunken ships in the river. Fishermen not allowed out beyond the pier.

All went hoop netting for dabs, flounder, whiting, pouting, cod from 14ft and 16ft skiffs. In the low way hole or off on the edge of Marshend (Mushend). The catch sorted into size and sent up by rail to Billingsgate. We lived on fish.

Soldiers living in the houses in the High Street always fighting each other (you'd think there was a war on). Barbed wire everywhere. Assault course down in the fields passed the Railway Station. Us kids used to play on them. Great fun. Watching American Boeing B17 flying fortress coming back from a raid. Two collided right over head. One crashed into the river after the crew bailed out. The other one caught fire. The crew also got out. The pilot stayed on board. By this time the plane was heading for Leigh. It turned away at the last minute and crashed on Canvey Point. The pilot was a brave man. He could have got out. The town would have been a mess if he had. He died when the plane crashed.

V1 and V2 rockets.

We could play football on the old Gas Works. Fine until the ball was kicked over the railing into the mud. Whoever had kicked it had to go and retrieve it. If the tide was in, had to borrow a dinghy and scull after it (this happened quite often).

As the war moved over to France and Europe people moved back into town. And at last when it was all over we had VE and VJ Day bonfires and parties on Billet Wharf.

*Brian*

## PUTTING ESSEX ON THE MAP

This is the first in a series of short articles by Gordon Davies explaining the cartographic history of Essex.

Essex is fortunate in its collection of old maps which may be studied at the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford, who have reproduced several of them at very reasonable prices.

The 16th, 17th and 18th centuries are well represented. It will be noticed that the Country seats of the nobility and gentry 'are given great prominence' partly because they were of more importance than nearby towns and villages and in fact contained a greater number of people. In some cases later coast erosion resulted in the disappearance of coastal villages such as Walton.

Christopher Saxton was the first person to publish an accurate map of Essex in 1576 which became the prototype for all the later maps.

Saxton was a Yorkshireman, who after being educated at Cambridge joined the household of Sir Thomas Sockford of Woodbridge in Suffolk. Sir Thomas, a wealthy court official, obtained the authority of Queen

Elizabeth I, and commissioned Saxton to make a thorough survey of the counties of England and Wales. To assist him the Queen gave him a letter ordering the local justices of the peace to help him wherever possible and to guide him 'to any Towne, Castle or Hill to view the country'

It was from such a bird's eye view or panorama that modern maps finally developed.

Saxton travelled round the countryside on horseback making compass sketches and plane tabling where possible. The scale of his map of Essex was about 2 miles to the inch. His atlas was completed in 1579 and contained a general map of the British Isles and 34 detailed county maps. The first issues were a blaze of colour and highly ornamented and artistically decorated with the most fantastic designs.

The Queen rewarded him with the grant of his own coat of arms.



An extract from Caxton's Map of Essex

## CAST YOUR MINDS BACK

Amanda Lewis is researching her partner, Michael Jopson's Leigh history, Michael was born in 1946 in one of the old cottages in Leigh old town (now demolished but originally next to Lyn Tait's shop).

Amanda thinks his mother's maiden name may have been Dawson. She is very interested in any photographs of the old cottage.

Michael's grandparents also lived in Leigh old town, and had the shop at the end of Billet Lane where the Beehive pub was.

His Father had a railway accident at Leigh, where he lost his arm and leg. (about 1952) Any information on any of the above would be much appreciated. You can either pass the information to Carole Pavitt via the Heritage Centre or e-mail Amanda direct on Amandamadmum@aol.com

## DEAD BUT HE WON'T LIE DOWN

George 'Lumpy' Cotgrove was a tough old bird and no one knew this better than Canon King.

According to the Canon George was not the most industrious of Leigh's inhabitants and was happy to do nothing all day. But like all of us he could not avoid the call of the Grim Reaper.



George was duly buried with Canon King officiating. Two weeks went by and the Canon was out one day in the town and who should he meet but George 'Lumpy'.

The Canon accosted George saying 'George this won't do, I buried you a fortnight ago.'

George admitted that he had been ill but he was sure he had not died and knew nothing about being buried.

Time passed on and the Grim Reaper called George home for seemingly the second time. Again the Canon officiated at the burial. And that was that — or was it? Two or three months later the Canon met George in the street. 'This is jolly fine' he said 'but I'm certainly not going to bury you a third time'.

Inevitably there was a third time. But the Canon had grown older and wiser and this time a large stone was placed on the coffin.

One can only hope that this time George 'Lumpy' really was a goner.

To the end the Canon was sure he had buried Lumpy on all three occasions, but he was equally as sure that he had met him after the first two funerals!

Based on the notes of Canon King recorded in the Southend Pictorial 24 July 1943.

There is even more mystery attaching to this story. Lumpy's obituary appeared in the Southend Standard on 1 April 1937 and clearly states that he was to be buried in Leigh Cemetery following a service at Elm Road Methodist Church.

If this is the case why was Canon King officiating at a Methodist service?

Does anyone know the answer?



## MARATHON MAN



A few months ago now but congratulations to Andrew Lawrence of Osborne's who ran the London Marathon in 3hrs 45 mins and raised over £2000 for Little Havens Children's Hospice.

Andrew is the grandson of Florrie Osborne.

## CHARACTERS OF OLD LEIGH

### PONTO BOYTON



'Ponto' Boyton was a larger than life Leigh character who was immortalised in the books of A.E.Copping, 'Gotty and the Gov'nor' and 'Gotty in Furr'n Parts'.

He was born Alfred John Brazier Boyton in 1855 the son of Alfred Boyton and Mary Ann Amelia Shaw. Ponto was a big, strong man, sometimes a little eccentric. He could be argumentative when in his cups but had a more endearing side to his character.

H.N. Bride records that once out fishing Ponto fell overboard and no trace could be found of him. All the boats gathered around and hauled in their nets to find Ponto unconscious in the last net having been in the water for some time.

Ponto once took a wager that he could single handedly fully load a barge with sand over four tides — a job usually undertaken by the skipper and 2 hands over two tides. He won his £1 wager.

Bride also records that once at church attending a wedding Ponto suddenly hurled a hassock at a group of fisherman and hit 'Chunky' Brady on the head. The service was disrupted for some time.

Leigh Regatta provided Ponto with his moments of glory when he came away with the prizes for climbing the greasy pole and walking the greasy bowsprit.

From the parish records it seems that Ponto was one of 9 children, the only boy amongst 8 girls. One of his sister's also had a nickname 'Big Arsy' now I wonder what her particular attribute was!!!!

The next character of Old Leigh will be the much loved and missed 'Brubs' Bridge.



## CREATIVE COCKLERS



Christopher Ball and his brother returned to the Heritage Centre to show us just how creative they could be with a plate of cockle shells.

## LEIGH LINES

Y B F R A H W L L E B S  
A C A N V E Y Y T T O S  
W O I M U D A F H E L T  
N C U N G W K A E H L C  
O K M D D Z M I D L I L  
T L M A R E X C E I H E  
L E O I S B R Q N B H M  
B R X S A N D P O E C E  
B T H E S H I P A H R N  
H I G H S T R E E T U T  
A Y H T I M S E H T S  
U T S R T H E S M A C K

CINDER PATH HIGH STREET  
BROADWAY ST CLEMENTS  
BELTON WAY THAMES  
CHURCH HILL THE BILLET  
THE SMACK BELL WHARF  
THE SMITHY THE DEN  
COCKLE THE SHIP  
MUD SAND CANVEY

Calling all puzzlers — would anyone like to submit a puzzle for the next edition?



## GOOSEY, GOOSEY, GANDER, WHERE SHALL I WANDER - TO LEIGH OF COURSE

From notes by John Cotgrove



Branta Bernicla, or the Brent Goose as it is commonly known, is a regular and spectacular visitor to our shores and can be seen, and heard, on the mud-flats off Leigh in flocks of thousands in late autumn and early winter. Although there are several races of the geese, those that come to Leigh are of the dark bellied variety, with sooty black heads and necks, brownish-grey bellies and backs, and a prominent white sterns. They are much smaller than a farmyard goose, being about the size of a large duck, although their wingspan is over three feet. The sexes are indistinguishable to the untrained eye. They are the most maritime of all our wild geese and swim as well as fly in large flocks.

Every year they fly long distances between their main breeding grounds on the coast and islands of Arctic Siberia and their winter quarters. The population varies from year to year because of the harsh conditions sometimes occurring during the short summer months of their breeding area. 12,000 birds were recorded at Leigh in 1993. Later in the winter the big flocks disperse, some going as far as the estuaries of South west England.

The Brent Goose was a favoured quarry species for professional shore and punt-gunners in the early 1900s. A bird fetched a few shillings at Leadenhall Market. Due to a disease affecting their staple food (the marine grass *Zostera Marina*) numbers dropped by 75% in the 1930s and the bird was given legal protection in 1954.