



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

Winter 2025

CONTENTS

Happy New Year/Talk Dates/	
Jan Sutcliffe	1
Speakers' Profiles for 2025	2
Leigh and Hadleigh	3
A DNA Journey-as seen on TV	4
Remembrance/Purfleet Heritage & Military Centre	5
Heroic Efforts on Litter / Southend City Day	6/7
Diary Dates for 2025	7
Daring Do—Or Daring Didn't	8

TALK DATES FOR 2025

Get these dates in your diaries now so you won't miss out on our new programme of talks for 2025. All starting at 7.30pm at the community centre.

19 March—Battlefield Essex—
Andrew Summer

23 April—AGM and Buffalo Bill
in Essex—David Dunford

21 May—The History of
Gunpowder and the Royal
Purfleet Gunpowder

Magazine—Purfleet Heritage
and Military Centre

18 June—TBA

17 September—Animal Heroes
of WW1 and WW2— Purfleet
Heritage and Military Centre

LEIGHWAY 75

LEIGH

CONSERVATION AND

HERITAGE

HAPPY NEW YEAR

A very happy new year to all our members. We hope you had a great Christmas and are looking forward to 2025. We are!

With the new year, of course, comes the renewal of subscriptions. We are maintaining our membership fee of £12 for a household despite the increases we are all suffering from in energy and postal prices.

On the latter point many of you have changed to receiving Leighway by email which of course saves a fortune in postal costs. Those who still receive a printed copy can I politely ask if you would consider changing to email. Although we use 2nd class post our print circulation is still quite high and costs around £100 per issue in stamps and envelopes. If you want to change please send your email address to Carole. Of course we understand if you are not computerised this is not an option.

We are enclosing a Standing Order form for those who might like to use this facility in future—never forget to renew and no chasers from us. Renewals are due now but no later than the AGM on 23 April after which the membership lapses.

Attendance at our meetings was much improved in 2024 and we hope that will continue with our exciting and expanding series of talks.

Thank you all for your continued support and see you sometime in 2025.

Carole

JAN SUTCLIFFE

It is with great sadness that we start the New Year having to report the loss of one of our longest serving members, Jan Sutcliffe, after a long illness. Jan and her late husband, Dr Norman Sutcliffe, were stalwarts of the Society for many, many years and with her cheery disposition Jan was never far from breaking out into laughter.

We will miss her bubbly personality, her friendly help and encouragement and her depth of experience over a wide range of subjects.

SPEAKERS' PROFILES FOR 2025

19 March—Battlefield Essex, Andrew Summers

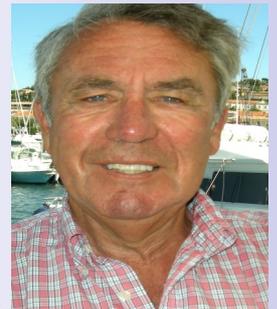
Although titled Battlefield Essex, its not all blood and gore! We explore conflicts on Essex soil over a 2,000 year timeframe. Some have been violent battles, but there have also been many that didn't involve a loss of life, yet nevertheless were fought with passion. In many cases such battles have been hyped in contemporary media as 'battles' and the term has stuck. The 'Essex' area includes the part of the County now absorbed into Greater London, in what is loosely termed 'Metropolitan Essex'.



Andrew's dad, a Polish national, spent two years in a Soviet Labour Camp before escaping to the UK on the return leg of an Arctic convoy. His mother worked at Bletchley Park, but never told him a thing about it. He was born within the sound of Bow Bells (on a quiet day) but now lives in Hadleigh. Andrew was a partner in a printing business, and after 10 years moved into sales and for 25 years travelled Europe organising international book fairs. He now runs a publishing business, Essex Hundred Publications, which specialises in local history books. Over time he has bought, sold and printed books and now writes and publishes them too. Andrew went to the same school as Alan Sugar and turned down a job with him. As Andrew says 'We are all young (and foolish)

23 April—Buffalo Bill in Essex—David Dunford

David Dunford was born in Chelmsford and attended the University of Essex, graduating with a degree in Government. He joined Essex County Newspapers in Colchester as a reporter and later became an assistant editor. In 1978 he moved to the BBC in London where he worked in the Radio Newsroom, writing and editing news bulletins. He also wrote for Yesterday and Today in Parliament as well as writing and broadcasting on finance for radio, television and the BBC World Service. He later became Editor of the BBC General News Service. After taking early retirement he became a visiting lecturer in radio journalism at the University of the Arts in London. In 2014 he returned to Essex University to study for an MA in History. He has written books on the history of horse racing in Chelmsford as well as the visit of Buffalo Bill's wild west show to Essex in the early 1900s. He has also written numerous newspaper and magazine articles on local history.



21 May—The History of Gunpowder and the Royal Purfleet Gunpowder Magazine—Paul Hounsell, Dave Belcher and Ollie Mills from Purfleet Heritage and Military Centre

Paul and Dave were both project managers with HMRC and on retirement wanted to take up something related to history. Dave has been a volunteer at the Magazine for several years and is currently the Centre's chairman. Paul is a volunteer at the centre and is now their booking manager. Paul loves the variety of artefacts and historical links with the grade 1 listed gunpowder magazine and gives presentations and guided tours. Ollie fits in his volunteering around his current job with Ocado. Although only 20 Ollie has a real passion for history and loves to research links associated with not only the Magazine but Purfleet-on-Thames in general. Ollie has been a volunteer for over 2 years and is currently the centre's treasurer.



LEIGH AND HADLEIGH

Leigh Conservation and Heritage comments on planning applications from a heritage aspect so it is only right it should be a participant in the debate that is currently going on regarding proposals for development in Hadleigh. We are both historic areas, but distinctly different, adjacent but separate—separated by Green Belt land.

The banks of the Thames and its hinterland have been strategically important for centuries in acting as a safeguard for London. The Romans understood the importance of the area and installed fortifications and the Anglo Saxons fought the invading Vikings at Benfleet centuries before William the Conqueror. And after his invasion, as the importance of London grew, Hubert de Burgh's castle was built at Hadleigh and later enhanced to repel a French invasion. Tilbury was so important that Queen Elizabeth I rallied her troops there?

The mouth of the Estuary and the ribbon of the Thames acted as a beacon of light for Zeppelins and bombers over two world wars. Leigh and Hadleigh, with other waterside towns and villages were in the thick of it.

Leigh's juxtaposition with Hadleigh cannot be underestimated. With its historic boat building, its supply of men to fight the Spanish Armada and involvement in the Anglo Dutch wars and the Castle's strategic position, the two towns have a symbiotic relationship. This little corner of Essex have been ready to defend the nation for over 1000 years.



Hadleigh Castle, ruin though it may be, is a grade I listed building and the ONLY scheduled monument in south Essex. That means something.

But the Castle building was built surrounded by parkland and fittingly carrying on that tradition, is now a country park

It was immortalised by one of our greatest landscape painters, John Constable, who sketched it in 1814 and it is said he stayed in Leigh whilst doing so. Not proven, it is a passed down 'legend', but there was a Constable family in Leigh in the early 1800s, so who knows?

His painting shows the castle looking with the sweep of the estuary and Leigh as its backdrop, together with its rural setting. It sets the context of the land and the people and why we should protect their uniqueness and environs.

The Green Belt may be a planning concept, but that too is part of our national heritage. It is there for a reason. We fool with it at peril for our future wellbeing, pride of place and identity. We all understand the need for housing, but once the land is lost, there is no turning back and quality of life will be history

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the particular author and not necessarily those of the committee and officers of LCAH. **We hope you will like to keep your copy of Leighway or pass it on to friends and family, but if not please recycle it © Leigh Conservation and Heritage, Leigh Heritage Centre, 13A High Street, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 2EN**



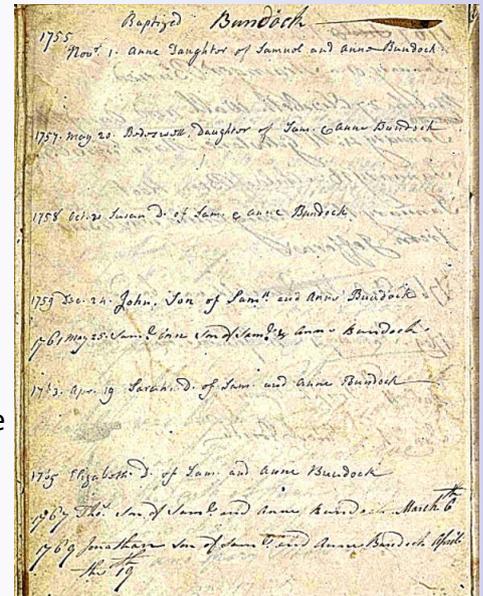
A DNA JOURNEY—AS SEEN ON TV

I am sure members will know that I will avidly watch all TV programmes about family history be it celebrities or ordinary people. I am amazed at how easy they make it look, but of course there is an army of people doing the research. Its different when you are doing it on your own.

Anyway I watched DNA Journey recently and imagine how delighted I was when two of our most well respected actors took their own journey. Philip Glenister and John Simm ended up in Maldon researching Philip's Bundock ancestry.

Bundock is of course a well known name in Leigh—boat builders - and I knew they came originally from the Maldon area. So there must be a connection. And there was. The family came from Mundon.

Working from the fairly scant information given in the programme I was able to track back on Philip's ancestors to Samuel Bundock and Ann Sewell who married in Mayland in 1752 (Ann came from Mayland). The couple had numerous children, in fact I found more than the programme had, but then I think they were just looking for the direct line.



Bundock baptisms in Mundon.

Although I think this led the team along a false premise. Philip was descended from Samuel's son Jonathan, which the programme took to be John, and expressed surprise that as an executor of Samuel's will he was not a beneficiary. However, there was also a son John as well as Jonathan—two different people.

They had a daughter, known as Biddy, whose real name was resplendently, Bodeswell.

Samuel was Philip's 5 x Great Grandfather and appears to be the son of Thomas Bundock of Birch. However this Thomas' will is not as clear, as on first glance he seems to be referring to 2 Samuels' one his brother, the other Samuel Bundock of Mundon. Are they one and the same if so why did he distinguish them differently in his will.

I don't know, and probably won't know the answer to that, but I believe that Thomas the son of Samuel, the brother, is the Thomas whose descendants came to Leigh and turned from farmers into boat builders.



And so actor Philip Glenister has a cousinage, true of some distance, to the Bundocks of Leigh.

Carole

Philip Glenister who thought his only connection to Essex was the fact that his wife is from Colchester.

REMEMBRANCE

Having recently gone through our annual period of remembrance for those who were lost during conflicts, it was interesting to find this picture of 11 November 1921. Although the horse is named as Bess and the seller (on EBAY) indicated it was the Broadway, Leigh-on-Sea, there is no indication of this on the picture itself. I think it may have been a picture in a photo album so is the lady anyone's Granny?

Looking at the building in the background I noticed the grills of course and that the steps seemed to be curved. Also what looked like a poster on the right hand side and what looked like a counter behind the grill and Bess.

The only curved building I can think of in Leigh was the old Coliseum Cinema in Elm Road, so I rummaged through my archives and BINGO.



PURFLEET HRITAGE AND MILITARY CENTRE

The Centre is located in Magazine No 5, built between 1761 and 1773 and is the last remaining Magazine of 5 that once made up the Purfleet Royal Magazines for Gunpowder on the banks of the Thames.

It is a Grade 1 Listed Building and houses a wide range of artefacts and exhibitions covering local history, WW1, WW2, Trafalgar, RAF, Royal and Merchant Navy, the way we lived, vintage toys and games and much more. There are also strong links to the Gurkha Regiment and celebrates their history.

Visitors will find a tea bar with ice cream and snacks and a gift shop, free parking and wheelchair access.

The Centre is open on Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and Bank Holiday Mondays between 1am and 3pm and offers a discount for groups and a guided tour with tea/coffee and biscuits.

This would be a great visit for a smallish group of members, where we could either go individually and meet up there or hire a minibus.

Let Carole know what you think.



HEROIC EFFORTS ON LITTER

From member Clive Webster - This will be Clive's final report but he wishes to thank those of you, who have been heroic at times, for all your sterling efforts. And from us to Clive - thank you for your dedication and hard work over many years and everything you have done to help keep our riverside environment as litter free as you possibly could.

The North Thames Estuary litter picking database was set up in 2015 to record volunteer litter picking events taking place along a 35-mile stretch of Thames shoreline; from Rainham in the west to Shoeburyness in the east. The first recorded event took place in October 2015 between Tilbury Fort and the once operable Tilbury power station. Organised by Thames21, it attracted 30 volunteers who picked 91 sacks of litter. Over the next few years, we visited the area 33 times and filled 735 sacks including 6,108 plastic bottles! But even this failed to make our top five most littered sites which came out as follows;

Site	Sum of Total Sacks
Grays-Beach	1,896
Concrete Barges	1,845
Two Tree Island and Leigh Marshes	1,627
Chalkwell Beach	1,077
Grays-Graffiti Wall	1,050

In overall terms, a grand total of 14,147 volunteers have taken part in over 2,434 events over the last ten years and collected 20,244 sacks. This is the equivalent of removing 1,012,202 litter items from the coastal environment. Of course, picking the items is only part of the exercise. Before a pick takes place, an area has to be surveyed, checked for hazards like tides and areas off limits, adverse weather and parking. Then it needs promoting through social media. On the day, first aid should be on hand and local knowledge will be required and instructions given out. Only then can the physical effort of picking begin. Each item has to be bagged and taken to a suitable spot where it can be taken to the nearest recycling plant.

All this effort is required for every event and at no cost to the taxpayer. An event could be anything from a single volunteer picking a local area, a small group of like-minded individuals meeting regularly or a corporate event involving up to 50 people.

Findings

The trend this year is generally downward with the lowest number of recorded events since 2018 (194 down 27% from 2023, volunteers 1,355 (down 14%) and sacks of litter removed 1,973 (up 3%) see Chart.

North Thames Estuary volunteer litter picks

Summary data	Total	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Picks:											
Date litter picking began						22/10/2015					
Number of recorded picks	2,434	194	266	378	888	282	218	158	41	7	2
Change on previous year		-27.07%	-25.63%	-57.43%	233%	29%	38%	285%	486%	250%	
Number of pickers involved	14,147	1,355	1,569	1,732	2,954	1,508	2,540	1,635	696	125	33
Change on previous year		9	-14%	-9%	-41%	96%	-41%	55%	135%	457%	279%
Ave pickers per pick	6	7	6	5	3	5	12	10	17	18	17
Sacks:											
Total sacks picked	20,244	1,973	1,924	2,221	3,946	2,848	2,910	2,599	1,308	404	111
Change on previous year		3%	-13%	-44%	39%	-2%	12%	99%	224%	264%	
Ave sacks per picker	1.80	1.68	1.42	1.45	1.62	2.27	2.13	2.84	2.57	4.56	3.33
Total litter items, mostly plastic, removed (ave 50 per sack)	1,012,202	98,650	96,200	111,050	197,302	142,400	145,500	125,950	65,400	20,200	5,550

But it would be too simplistic to say that the amount of litter in the estuary is declining because:

1. Traditionally highly-littered areas, such as Thurrock and Havering, have not submitted data since 2021
2. Major storms, which bring up large quantities of litter have been relatively few and far between; and
3. Fewer volunteers means lower hauls of litter.

Conclusions

What is unequivocal is that litter is still unacceptably high in all estuary towns and shows no sign of decreasing. Each year that passes is another lost opportunity to do something about it. People in authority who can do something about are sadly few and far between and plastic pollution as a cause celebre, has lost its appeal.

Clive Webster

SOUTHEND CITY DAY—1 MARCH

Southend High Street will come alive for a vibrant celebration of our city's heritage, culture, and community spirit! The event will feature live performances, walkabout entertainment, community activities, and a tempting array of food concessions. There's something for everyone to enjoy as we come together to celebrate all that makes Southend special.

See the City Stage at the top of the High Street, for performances from local acts and DJs throughout the day and evening. The Southend City Song-Writers Stage at Royal Square with performances from talented local songwriters and their original music. The [Royals](#) and [The Victoria Centre](#) will host live performances and information stalls throughout the day. Check VisitSouthend.co.uk for updates nearer the time. Carole and helpers will be manning a stand in the Victoria Centre representing Leigh Conservation and Heritage/Pier Museum/Essex Society for Family History, Leigh Town Council and Leigh British Legion.

DARING DO—OR WAS IT?



A little while ago I was sent pictures of this impressive testimonial, which commemorates men of Leigh, three brothers, the O'Brien's from Glendale Gardens, who took part in a life saving event in May 1910 involving a brave rescue.

The pictures were accompanied by an excerpt from the local paper of 3 June 1910 which explained that the yacht Janet had got into difficulties during a terrible gale on 28 May. The three brothers had saved the lives of the 3 people on board, one being a young girl of 12, all from Westcliff.

The report—which was said to come from the survivors stated that two men on the Janet had been thrown in the water and were seen by the brothers on their boat, Galatea.

It was known that the daughter of one of the sailors was still on board the Janet and Mr P O'Brien (seated in the picture) swam to her and brought the child away safely.

The inscription on the testimonial recounts their exploits and was presented to Mr William O'Brien by the residents of Leigh and others in recognition of their brave act.

However, a week later in 1910 a letter appeared in the Southend Standard from W A Lockhart, one of the survivors, referring to the idea for the testimonial and pouring cold water on the exploits of the 3 brothers.

Mr Lockhart's letter denounced much of the detail in the original report and categorically stated that he hadn't written it.

The following week a response to Mr Lockhart was made by the newspaper which stuck to its guns as to the origin of the original report.

The spat continued in the next few weeks, with the O'Brien's keeping their own counsel. The Rector of Leigh, Canon King, also got involved.

By August there appeared a piece basically trashing Mr Lockhart's contentions and of course we have the evidence of the testimonial, so however the rescue was effected, the O'Brien's were praised for their actions.

Regardless of his damning letter the testimonial was presented to the brothers.

My thanks to Gill Stevenson who sent me the pic of the plaque and press cuttings—although I don't think she was aware of the controversy surrounding the event.

