



# LEIGHWAY

## OPEN DAY 2014

This year our open day took place on 2 August at the Community Centre. The theme was the Great War and we were joined by groups from the surrounding area displaying their Great War histories.

The day was a roaring success and we had over 700 people through the doors, some with their own information and stories to impart, others just interested.

We concentrated more on the home front and local people than the War itself and this seemed to be of great interest to people.

Grateful thanks to all organizations who took part and to the army of helpers, who manned the stands, talked to people and worked so hard to make the day a success.

We are reprinting some of the interesting stories here for those of you who were unable to attend the event.

Here's to next year which is already in the planning.

## DEAR DIARY

Meetings at Wesley start at **7.30pm** not 8pm

15 October – The Essex Police Museum – Fred Feather  
19 November - Women and the Great War – Carole Mulroney

## WORLD WAR TWO

Whilst for the next four years the historical focus is going to be very much centred around the Great War, we must not forget that 2015 is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

All too soon memories fade and we lose those who took part in whatever capacity. So now is the time to make sure we record their stories and collect as much information as we can about Leigh and its people between 1939-45.

So please if you would like to contribute to our archives in this way get in touch with one of us and make sure that in 2039 when we commemorate the centenary of the start of the war we have the story of Leigh ready to show to future generations.

## WHAT A PICTURE

At our AGM in April, member John Smart, wondered if anyone was recording Leigh as it now is, before any more heritage or interesting buildings or features are lost.

This is something the committee has been thinking about for some time but has not had the resources to carry out. So what we are looking for is a dedicated small team of photographers who are willing to parcel of the town and go round taking pictures of shops – before they are lost – facades above ground which are often the most interesting, and really anything that should be recorded for the future.

Would anyone interested in this project please get in touch with Dec Mulroney at [declan.mulroney@btinternet.com](mailto:declan.mulroney@btinternet.com) or on 01702 475117.

## THE HEIGHT OF SARTORIAL ELEGANCE STARTED IN LEIGH

**THE  
TAPE-STAYED  
TIE  
CAN'T BREAK.**

The essentials of good neckwear are style and durability. It is in the latter respect that most ties fail. The Tape-stayed Ties have style—they are real poplins, and can be had in any shade—and are practically unbreakable.

An invisible Tape-stay runs the length of the ties, and the tape is further strengthened in the middle. You can tug at a Tape-stayed Tie without breaking it or ruining its shape.

It is a smart tie that retains its smartness.

State shade of colour required and enclose 1s. 6d., and a Tape-stayed tie will be sent post free.

**THE TAPE-STAYED  
TIE CO.,  
LONDON ROAD,  
LEIGH-ON-SEA.**

**The Latest  
In  
Neckwear.**

The Daily Herald - Friday 26 June 1914

Other advertisements carried the slogan 'In neckwear strength is needful'. Sadly no pictures could be found of this marvel of modern fashion.

## THE END OF THE DISTRICT LINE

In January's Leighway we carried an article about the District Line originally extending to Leigh.

Eagle eyed Committee member Sally Hayes spotted a recent letter in the Daily Mail on just this subject.

The questioner had a 1919 poster advertising the route and asked for more information. Answers came from correspondents in Exeter and Hayes End (what a coincidence Sally!).

Additional information given to that in January's Leighway is that the service was called the Corridor Express and typically ran three times a day. Also, while the original line closed in 1939 a through booking from a London Underground station to Southend was possible until the 1970s. It was possible to book a day return ticket from Kingsbury station to Southend for the princely sum of ten shillings (50p).

## THE CONDUIT



We locals call this the Cundit.

The area of the Conduit in the Old Town has just undergone a revamp by the Society following some disruption to its setting. This has greatly improved the area and thanks to Alan and Elaine Crystall for their work on this and to Norman Sutcliffe who has for many years, and will continue to, keep it looking great for our visitors and residents.

The water supply to the old village used to be provided by a conduit from a spring rising on the summit of the cliff, known as the Tickle, a corruption of Tile Kiln Meadow. At the fountain head for many years was a stone with the following inscription

*This stone is placed at ye Spring Head belonging to the cundit by desire of the parishioners of Leigh, 1712.*

In its descent to the village the water passed through several cisterns before reaching the reservoir in the Old Town High Street.

When the public conduit was in disrepair and the inhabitants were almost perishing for water, the parish officers, who were farmers, abstracted all records concerning it from the parish record fearing a tax would be levied on the parish for the repairs. All the documentary evidence was destroyed.

As the population increased the spring became insufficient and in 1832, Lady Olivia Sparrow, Lady of the Manor, gave a piece of ground in the middle of the Strand for a well to be sunk. This was still not enough and a further well was sunk on King's Strand four years later.

Unfortunately there was no income to provide for maintenance so money had to be raised. A charge of a farthing per 3 gallons did not meet with general approval and the Court had to intervene and a new scheme was put in place overseen by Trustees.

## SEA TO SEA OR HOW OTHER

### SEAFARERS LIVED

The forecast for the South Coast predicted torrential downpours but, resistant as ever, we hardy folk from Leigh boarded the coach on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April and set out to find what Portsmouth had to offer.

We passed through rain on the journey down and disembarked to be greeted by a light shower. Ann had assured us that she had ordered fine weather for the trip but we suspect that she hadn't put the order in early enough. It took 10 minutes before the sun came out.

Many of us had gone on the trip primarily to view the 'Mary Rose' and the exhibition certainly didn't disappoint. Not only was the old ship, or should I say half ship, fully open to view but the accompanying exhibits can only be described as amazing.

The ship itself was much larger than we had expected and there were so many artefacts on show that, although some of us spent nearly 2 hours going round the 'Mary Rose' and its exhibits, we could easily have spent longer and we left some exhibits unexplored. The items on show ranged from cooks found beside cooking utensils in the galley to archers with their bows and arrows. They had even found the skeleton of the ship's dog.

There were lifelike reconstructions of many of the crew members who had been discovered beside the tools of their trades and, for example, the ship's master carpenter's face had been recreated from his skeletal remains and his identity had been established from the chest of tools found beside him. Armourers' toolkits, sail makers' needles, and personal items such as combs were all on show and even the physical deformities of crewmen, caused by moving heavy loads or crouching as they moved below decks had been identified. The ingenuity and determination of the archaeologists who had pieced together the whole story from the items recovered was outstanding.

For some of us, a late lunch was followed by a visit to the 'Victory', Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar, a short look through the Nelson Museum, and then a tour of the 'Warrior'. This steam/sail hybrid was of particular interest to the mechanically minded with a propeller that could be lifted to reduce drag while under sail and its large bore, short stroke steam engine with pistons operating horizontally across the ship.

Others took advantage of an hour long boat trip round the harbour but, whatever parts of the Portsmouth complex were chosen to visit, our 5 hour stay was not enough to see everything and, sadly, after a cup of tea, it was time to board the coach for the journey home.

Many thanks to Ann Price for organising such an enjoyable outing.

Bernard Hetherington

## NEW LIFE IN NEW ROAD



One of the dearest treasurers of Old Leigh is New Road Methodist Church.

Regarded as the 'Mother Church' for Leigh Methodism its origins spring from the visits of John Wesley and the preachers from Leigh who spread the word to Rayleigh, Rochford, Hadleigh, Canvey Island and sometimes, as far as Maldon.

Rev Brian Tolhurst writes in his 'Story of New Road Methodist Church, Leigh-on-Sea' that when the present building was erected the Trustees were made up of 7 fishermen, 2 butchers, a baker, a boat builder, a decorator, a printer, a civil engineer and a roundsman. The church has always been known as the Fishermen's Chapel.

The story goes that Leigh fisherman overnighing in Shoreham due to a storm woke to the sound of an open air service being conducted by John Wesley himself. So impressed were they that they invited him to Leigh, which started with his first of nine visits in November 1748. The first real chapel was built in 1811 at the bottom of Hadleigh Road but was moved on by the coming of the railway in 1854 and with the compensation received a new chapel was built south of the railway facing the High Street in 1861.

In 1880 it became clear that the railway was causing structural damage to the chapel which was too expensive to repair and so a new chapel was built in New Road. By 1929 this too was suffering structural problems and in 1932 had to be rebuilt at a cost of £3000. And there it stands to this day.

This little chapel has played its part in the life of the town through many traumatic times and has housed children not evacuated during World War 2 and rescued flood victims in 1953. Long may it continue at the heart of Leigh life.

And it will, for it is spreading its wings and making great use of its facilities and relaunching itself once again as the 'Fishermen's Chapel' a home for music, arts and a community based mission. The objectives of the new scheme are manifold and will provide for the arts and live music, nurturing local talent whilst forming community relationships through events and activities and forming faith communities.

This is a wonderful new phase in the life of the chapel and its congregation and we wish them well in all their new endeavours.

For more information go to their super new website at <http://fishermenschapel.org.uk/> and [The Fishermen's Chapel](#) on facebook

## WAR HORSES



The Animals in War Memorial Brook Gate, Park Lane.

When war began in 1914 the British army had 25,000 horses and the War Office was given the urgent task of sourcing half a million more to go into battle.

The horses were essential to pull heavy guns, to transport weapons and supplies, to carry the wounded and dying to hospital and to mount cavalry charges. In the first year of war the countryside was emptied of shire horses and riding ponies, a heartbreaking prospect for farming families who saw their finest and most beloved horses requisitioned.

Transported to the ports, the horses were hoisted onto ships crossing the Channel before being initiated into the horrors of the front line either as beasts of burden or as cavalry horses. Some men formed close relationships with the horses, but they could do little to prevent the appallingly high death rate due to exhaustion, shelling and front-line charges.

The supply of horses needed to be constantly replenished and the main source was the United States, with the British government arranging for half a million horses to be transported across the Atlantic in horse convoys. Between 1914 and 1917 around 1,000 horses were sent from the United States by ship every day. They were a constant target for German naval attack, with some lost en route. The horses were so vital to the continuation of the war effort that German saboteurs also attempted to poison them before they embarked on the journey.

The tragic fate that befell most of the horses was not lost on the British public, who petitioned the government to improve animal welfare during the war. The RSPCA and the Royal Army Veterinary Corps were both active in treating injured horses and trying to prevent unnecessary suffering. But the horses were so vulnerable to artillery and machine gun fire, and to harsh winter conditions in the front line, that the losses remained appallingly high. Indeed, the loss of horses greatly exceeds the loss of human life at the Somme and Passchendaele.

At the end of the war some of the surviving horses were sold as meat to Belgian butchers, being regarded as unfit for any other purpose. But for the few that returned home there was a joyous welcome and reunion. It would be the last time the horse would be used on a mass scale in modern warfare.

## WILLIAM G COTGROVE



William In the Royal Field Artillery.

Before the war William had been in the Territorial Army. He worked for the Port of London Authority and his mother worked in the jam factory at Silvertown. His father worked a tug on the Thames

On the outbreak of war William was called up. Although the picture shows him in the Royal Field Artillery, his own self told story was one of the inspirations for Michael Morpurgo to write War Horse.

Bill died in 2002, but before his death at the age of 105, he recalled his wartime companion. 'I was the one who named my horse Alfie,' he said. 'I remember washing him down when he got muddy. I used to make sure he wouldn't get loose to roll around in the mud. But he used to try to undo his head collar.'

Teams of six horses, working in pairs, were needed to pull the heavy guns. Bill was a lead driver, sitting on Alfie's back as shells exploded and men lay dying around them.

'I used to take care of him properly. I looked after a mare, too. I always made sure they were fed and watered and had their hay before I packed down for the night.

William was awarded the Military Medal for bravery and you can listen to a wonderful interview he gave at a great age (he lived to be 105) on

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgbYLFf2Ffw>

## THE VICTORY MEDAL

To qualify for the Victory Medal one had to be mobilised in any service and have entered a theatre of war between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918. Women qualified for this for service in nursing homes and other auxiliary forces. 6,334,522 of these medals were issued. It was also awarded to members of the British Naval mission to Russia 1919 - 1920 and for mine clearance in the North Sea between 11 November 1918 and 30 November 1919 as was the British War Medal.

- The obverse shows the winged, full-length, full-front, figure of 'Victory' (or 'Victoria'), with her left arm extended and holding a palm branch in her right hand.
- The reverse has the words 'THE GREAT / WAR FOR / CIVILISATION / 1914-1919' in four lines, all surrounded by a laurel wreath.



## BRITISH WAR MEDAL

The **British War Medal** was issued to officers and men of British and Imperial forces who had rendered service between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918.

Some 6,500,000 medals were awarded in total.

- The obverse shows a King George V bareheaded effigy, facing left, with the legend: GEORGIVS V BRITT : OMN : REX ET IND : IMP : (*George V, King of all the British Isles and Emperor of India*)
- The reverse shows St. George naked on horseback, armed with a short sword.



British War Medal 1914-15 Star

## EVERYMAN REMEMBERED

The Royal British Legion is working with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to ensure that every single man and woman from across the Commonwealth who fell in the Great War is individually commemorated by those alive today.

You can either commemorate someone in your family or someone selected to ensure that those with no relatives are also remembered. So far over 60,000 people have been commemorated and over £1M has been raised, but there are still over a million people waiting to be remembered. All the money raised goes towards the British Legion's welfare services. You can find out more at

[www.everymanremembered.org](http://www.everymanremembered.org)

## THE KIDS WERE ALRIGHT

The young were not exempt from the war effort, indeed they wanted to help. They did many jobs around the home to help mum like looking after the younger children, helping with housework, carrying water and chopping firewood. and inevitably queuing for food in the shops.

The German U-boat campaign made food scarce. 'Growing your own' became very important and children helped dig and weed vegetable patches and worked in the fields at harvest time.

Raising money for the war effort was another way they could help. On flag days children would sell little flags or badges that people could pin to their coats. This raised money to build warships or to help wounded soldiers. There was even a Blue Cross fund to help horses hurt in battle.

All children collect things, now their attention was turned to things that would be useful for the war effort, such as blankets, books and magazines which were sent to the soldiers at the front.



West Leigh Schools does its bit for the war effort

## A COCKNEY LEIGHMAN'S TALE

The following story appears in *The Best 500 Cockney War Stories*.

### Pill-Box Crown and Anchor

*In the fighting around Westhoek in August 1917 the 56th Division were engaged in a series of attacks on the Nonne Boschen Wood, and owing to the boggy nature of the ground the position was rather obscure.*

*A platoon of one of the London battalions was holding a pill-box which had been taken from the Germans during the day. In the night a counterattack was made in the immediate vicinity of the pill-box, which left some doubt as to whether it had again fallen to the enemy.*

*A patrol was sent out to investigate. After cautiously approaching the position and being challenged in a Cockney tongue, they entered the pill-box, and were astonished to see the occupants playing crown and anchor.*

*The isolated and dangerous position was explained to the sergeant in charge, but he nonchalantly replied, "Yes, I know all abahnt that; but, yer see, wet's the use of frightenin' the boys any more? There's been enough row rahnd 'ere all night as it is."*

***N. Butcher (late 3rd Londons), 43 Tankerville Drive, Leigh-on-Sea***

**Crown and Anchor** is an English dice gambling game dating back to the early 18th century. Three six-sided dice—each having the symbols crown, anchor, spade, heart, diamond, and club—are used with a layout (a board or a cloth) containing those symbols. The players place their bets on the layout symbols and the banker throws the dice from a cup. The payoffs are usually 1 to 1 on singles, 2 to 1 on pairs, and 3 to 1 on triples. Although officially not tolerated the game was widespread whenever troops were off duty and many pay packets were short lived !



*It looks as if Crown & Anchor was a little more than frowned upon by the authorities as, from what W.H.A. Groom wrote in *Poor Bloody Infantry: a memoir of the First World War*, it appears that it was strictly against regulations:*

*'The main pastime in the evening was 'housey housey', .... the only public gambling allowed in the Army; all others such as the notorious 'Crown and Anchor' meant severe trouble for those caught.'*

## THE BAND OF HOPE

Thanks to member George Savill for his donation to the archives of some Osborne family memorabilia. Among the papers and photographs was this one of the Band of Hope of New Road Methodist Church taken in 1906/7.



Happily, the names of the majority of the people in the picture have been recorded. Flanking the banner are (L-R) Jessie Thompson, Kitchener Ritchie, Reg Oliver and Doris Thompson. The first adult on the left is unknown but sitting next to him is Japheth Cotgrove with Miss Bridges standing. Standing on the right is Bessie Egleton and seated are Mr Kemp the Post officer and Wal Bridge. Starting from the back the seated children are (L-R) – ?, Doris?, Eva Johnson, ?, ?, Grace Cotgrove Milly?, Doris Cotgrove, Nellie?, Victoria Waugh, Milly Johnson Madge? Rosie Axcell, Billy Osborne, Flossie Axcell, Dora Axcell. (if you know any of the missing names please get in touch).

Kitchener Ritchie's full name was Hilyard Kitchener Ritchie born in 1901. Obviously named after Lord Kitchener who had just been fighting in the Boer War. He was the son of Harry and Emma Ritchie and lived at 30 New Road.

In 1925 he was a 24 year old First Assistant Storekeeper on the vessel Oronsay travelling between London and New York. The SS Oronsay was a brand new ocean liner and it looks as if Hilyard was working on her maiden voyage which then went on to Australia and New Zealand. During World War 2 she was a troopship and was torpedoed and sunk off Liberia in 1942.

Hilyard died in 1973.

The **Band of Hope** was set up by a Baptist Minister in Leeds, following the death in June 1847 of a young man whose life was cut short by alcohol. Rev Tunnicliff had become an advocate for total abstinence from alcohol. In the autumn of 1847, with the help of other temperance workers, the Band of Hope was founded. Its objective was to teach children the importance and principles of sobriety and teetotalism. Meetings were held in churches throughout the UK and included Christian teaching.

"Signing the pledge" was one of the features. The pledge was a promise not to drink alcohol and millions of people signed up. In the Great War, King George VI signed the pledge and commended it to everyone.

## WHOSE PIC IS IT ANYWAY?



I know it will be difficult to pinpoint some faces on this photo but we have been asked to try – so this is a Leigh Womens Royal British Legion function during WW2 at the Oakleigh Hall. The known names are Mrs Saunders and her daughter Vera at front.

Other names are the Mesdames Jeffries, Player, Major, Roberts and Redfern. If you think you know the names of any ladies who may well have attended or can spot someone you know in the picture please contact [wendyrose10@yahoo.com](mailto:wendyrose10@yahoo.com)

## GALLIPOLI STONES IN OUR LADY OF LOURDES

In January 1925 when the church on Leigh Road was being built, some stones from the holds of boats sent to Gallipoli in the Great War were inserted into the walls as a memorial to those killed.

The stones were originally quarried near Glasgow and used as ballast in the holds of lighters sent to Gallipoli in 1915. It had originally been intended that troops would replace the ballast and come home on the boats, but they were never used and ended up in Malta.

The strange story of how they came to be in is told in a booklet by the Rev. Dr. Stewart Foster to mark the centenary of the church in 2012. It seems that the ballast was bought by a builder from Grays and brought down the Estuary. He intended to use them as ballast in ferrying building materials across the channel from Belgium, to build the new estates at Becontree and Dagenham.

However, he heard that Father Gilbert needed stones to build the new church and donated them to him. They were brought by boat to Old Leigh on October 10<sup>th</sup> 1924 and loaded into a wagon which was then towed up Leigh Hill by a steam traction engine.

Jenny Simpson

## 500 YEARS OF WATERMEN

In 1514 the earliest Act of Parliament for regulating watermen, wherryemen and bargemen on the Thames received Royal Assent from King Henry VIII.

The Act provided for regulation of fees and apprenticeships for those wanting to work on the river and by 1700 the Lightermen (carriers of goods/cargo) joined the Watermen's Company. The Company is still a working guild and actively involved with the life of the River and those that work on it.

The present Watermen's Hall was built in 1780.

The Hall is the only original Georgian Hall in the City of London. The Company's original home in Cold Harbour on the north bank was destroyed in the Great Fire of London and sadly many of the Company's records were lost in the fire.

Guided tours of the Hall can be arranged for a Monday morning (subject to availability) and normally commence at 10.30. at a cost of £12 per person (including tea/coffee). Tour groups must be over 10 people and must be booked in advance.



The "Doggett's Coat and Badge" is the oldest continuously run single sculling race in the world and the Company runs it in conjunction with the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers.

To celebrate the accession of the House of Hanover to the throne of England in 1715 Thomas Doggett, an Irish born actor on the London stage founded the race, now known as the Doggett's Coat and Badge. Since 1722 the Fishmongers' Company have organised the race in accordance with Doggett's instructions.

## LEIGH AND THE GREAT WAR

British fishermen are among the unsung heroes of the Great War. The conflict with Germany had an immediate and enduring impact on their lives and livelihood as they were immediately caught up in the sea war against the Kaiser's navy, confronting the threats presented by the submarines, minelayers, gunboats and capital ships of the High Seas Fleet.

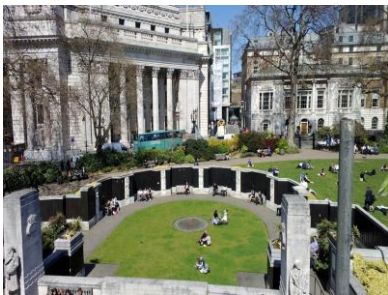
Often they found themselves thrust into strange, dangerous situations, which put their lives at risk and tested to the limit their bravery and skill as seamen. From minesweeping and submarine detection to patrol, escort and counter-attack duties. The areas of action were not limited to the home waters of the Channel, the North Sea and the Western Approaches but ranged as far as the Arctic and the Mediterranean's Aegean and Adriatic seas.

Of course Leigh fishermen joined up and served in all of these various activities.

Edward Kerry from an old Leigh fishing family was in the Royal Naval Reserve on HM Drifter Forward III (a minesweeper). On 31 March 1917 the ship was mined off Harwich he was 24 and had only joined up a matter of a few days before.

Almost a year to the day on 13 March 1918 his older brother George a deck hand on HM Drifter Nexus (trawler section), lost his life when she was blown up in the Straits of Dover.

The Tower Hill Memorial in London commemorates the lives of 25,767 men and women of the Merchant Navy and fishing fleets who have no known grave.



During the War the civilian navy's duty was to be the service supply to the Royal Navy. It transported troops and supplies to the armies, raw materials to overseas munitions factories and munitions as well. It also had the job of keeping supplies of food getting through and, to provide men and ships to supplement the Navy.

The losses were very high, and had been from the start, but with the onset of the German decision in 1917 to adopt 'unrestricted submarine warfare' it peaked. The navy introduced the convoy system where warships escorted Merchant Navy ships and this reduced the losses.

Even so by the end of the War 3,305 merchant ships had been lost and 17,000 lives. 12,000 with no grave at sea are commemorated on Tower Hill including the Kerry brothers of Leigh.

The names on the memorial include

Philip Bolt of Station Road  
Harold John Gunn of Hadleigh Road  
James Findley Herd of Uttons Avenue  
John Andrew McDonald of London Road  
Arthur Clifford Sydney Peggs of Grand Parade  
James Pinchon of Lymington Avenue  
Francis Stevenson of Elm Road

Wireless Operator Arthur Sydney Clifford Peggs, of the Mercantile Marine, drowned when SS Greatham was attacked by an enemy submarine on 22 January 1918. He was 28. The SS Greatham was steaming in convoy, on passage from Grimsby to Blaye, Bordeaux, France, with a cargo of coal when she was spotted by the UB-31 approximately 3 miles south east of Dartmouth. UB-31 promptly torpedoed the Greatham and she sank with the loss of 7 crew. He was on his first voyage.

## THE SURGERY FOR SOLDIERS' BOOTS

One of the most remarkable institutions which the war produced was the Government workshop in the Old Kent Road for the repair of soldiers' boots. The boots were made good as new and sent back to the war. The factory was run by the Royal Army Clothing Department.

More than 300 girls were employed by the factory who in former employment had been tailors' hands, pickle makers, domestic servants and in a range of other employment.



There were only 5 male employees not of military age, and nearly the whole process from cutting the sole leather to packing the finished boots, was done by the women.

The boots arrived thickly caked in Flanders mud with worn through soles and turned up toes. They were scrubbed in warm water, dressed with castor oil, stripped, rebuilt, retained and polished all in the space of 40 minutes.

### 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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