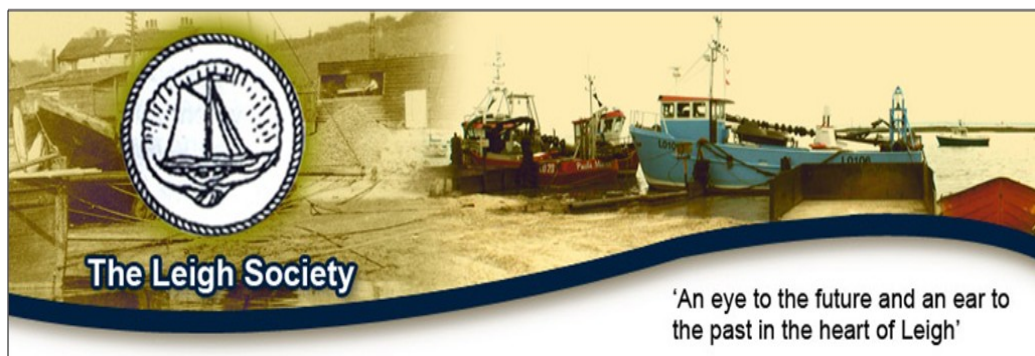


LEIGHWAY

ISSUE 48

NEW YEAR

2016



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DIARY DATES

23 March—Ancient Saxon Chapel of St Peter, Bradwell and environs—Kevin Bruce
20 April AGM—River Thames—Wendy York
 May—Annual Quiz
18 May—The Thorpe Smith Collection at the Beecroft—Claire Hunt
23-26 June Leigh Folk Festival
August—Trip to Souhwold—TBA
21 August—Leigh Maritime Festival
19 October— I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside— Harwich and Dovercourt Bay Holiday Resorts—David Whittle
16 November— Dorset Holiday—Ivan Starkey. Leigh Horticultural Society

NEW YEAR COMES IN COLOUR

2016 will mark the 50th edition of Leighway - I can't believe that we started this in 1999 and it is a testament to Leigh that it is such a rich fount of local, social and family history. To mark this momentous occasion—Leighway will in future be in colour. Not only will that make it more attractive to look at but it will enhance the quality of the pictures.

So Happy New Year to all Leighway readers and remember you can look at back issues on our website www.leighsociety.com.
 Carole

SUBSCRIPTIONS etc

Just to remind everyone that subs for 2016 are now due. If you pay by standing order this will have come out on 1 January. Subs remain at £10 per household (£15 for overseas members). Remember you can get your Leighway by email just let Carole know at carole.mulroney@btinternet.com. It does save the Society postage and stationary which means more of your subs go to keeping the Society and its events running.

Please encourage your friends to join us and spread the word around Leigh—it is an ever increasing challenge to attract members, especially younger people. We have moved forward so much in the last few years in terms of the Heritage Centre and Plumbs Cottage and we hope with the refurbishment of Strand Wharf that our patronage will increase.

We thank you all for your loyalty and support which comes from around the globe and proves that wherever Leigh people go they take fond memories with them.

TREVOR KIRBY

It is with deep regret that we have to record the passing of a long time member of the Society and great friend to the Heritage Centre. Trevor passed away on 27 December .

Over the years Trevor has made many contributions to the Centre in terms of artefacts and stories for Leighway.

We offer our sincere condolences to Trevor's family.

THE BELL

The loss of the Bell after all the years of fighting to save it was a tragedy for the town last November. The Society will be looking carefully at any proposals for the site to make sure the Conservation Area is protected and this important gateway into the Old Town is maintained in an appropriate way with a development of quality and reflecting its historic setting.

A VISIT TO THE ARCHIVES

The drizzle was unforgiving and we had planned a walk of discovery around Leigh Old Town beginning at the railway station. The sky was grey, the sea was grey, the clouds were low and they were grey.

5 hardy members of the Leigh U3A appeared out of the gloom and we adjourned to the Heritage Centre in the Old Town and delved into the archives. The oldest item was a description of Leigh written in Latin in 1589 by William Camden on an original page from a 1645 edition printed in Amsterdam.

There was a copy of an announcement of the mail service being inaugurated from London to Leigh in the London Gazette of 1689 "Mr John Wolley at the Crown at Leigh is the person appointed to receive, fend, and distribute all letters to and from Leigh" (the old fashioned 'f' for 's' of course).

The title map of 1847 which identified the owners and tenants of land and property just before the railway came and changed everything in the Old Town proved to be fascinating. And from 1897 came a Sales Catalogue of the Land Company selling 56 building plots in the town and Leigh was described as 'The New Eldorado' and the Land Co. were offering cheap tickets on a Special Train from Fenchurch St. for those attending the Sales at 1/6 return.

An enjoyable time on a grey day.

Ed Simpson

P.S. I recently discovered that the land on which the Leigh railway station is built was called 'Drudge Iron Field' but I don't know of its derivation.

CALLING ALL SOUTHEND BATHING BEAUTIES

1930s-1960s

Iona Farrell is a fashion history student at the University of Brighton (but hails from Leigh) and is currently writing a dissertation on female swimwear in Southend from the 1930s to the 1960s. Iona is eager to gain some oral history accounts of people's memories of Southend seafront



and the swimwear they wore.

If anybody has any memories and photos of Southend Seafront within this time period which they would like to share, please send them to

I.Farrell1@uni.brighton.ac.uk (copying in

museums@southend.gov.uk who will save these memories as social history). The subject of the email

should be costume collection-swimwear.

Iona is specifically interested in any swimsuits people wore, (what the swimsuits looked like, the fabric, the brands, colour etc) and where they wore and bought them. She also wants any memories of Westcliff Swimming Pool and especially any memories of the Miss Lovely competitions!

A copy of Iona's finished dissertation will be deposited with Leigh Heritage Centre, and Iona would love to come and talk to people about her project, so if you know anyone who can also help her, please encourage them to email their memories too.

Please note: At the end of your email, could write a short line stating you give your consent to Iona using your information and pictures in her dissertation.

WE NEED A TREASURER

The Heritage Centre is a registered charity and limited company and we need an enthusiastic volunteer to act as its treasurer following the retirement of Donald Fraser.

The work involves keeping the books, production of monthly accounts and payments. And once a week contact with the Heritage Centre plus occasional attendance at committee meetings.

The Heritage Centre is a thriving business and the Treasurer's role is vital to its smooth running.

If you have the necessary skills and are looking for a part time, worthwhile and interesting volunteer position within the community, please contact the Secretary, Leigh Heritage Centre Ltd, 13A High Street, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 2EN by 15 February 2016



FOR THOSE IN PERIL

In December 1845 the Chelmsford Chronicle reported on a double tragedy hitting the hardy fisher folk of Leigh.

On 2 December the Wave, having on board Capt Jabez Quilter and a lad, had taken in sprats below the Nore, and proceeded on its voyage to London, when a sudden squall caught the boat just below Tilbury Fort, and upset it: the boy immediately shed his boots and upper clothing, and prepared to swim to the shore, but at the entreaty of the captain he stayed with him as long as he could, whilst trying in vain to persuade him to strip and take two fir oars which happened to be on board, to assist him to shore.

On reaching the shore the lad was greatly exhausted with the cries of the captain who perished ringing in his ears for help. Next day he was found by some kindly folk who supplied him with clothes and sent him home to Leigh. The Wave was raised with loss of masts and spars, and taken to Leigh; but in the course of the operations two sailing boats were stove, and a small skiff broken to pieces and totally lost. Jabez Quilter, who was about 30 was not found and left a wife and 4 young children. Jabez was described as being about 5ft 4ins tall with a dark complexion and dark hair, with a white lock intermixed. He was dressed in an oil frock and petticoat trousers, water boots and a Guernsey frock.

Just three days after the Wave tragedy the second disaster occurred to the Hazard, with Captain Jacob Gilson and Joseph Cotgrove, both single men, which sank at the Shears, 6 miles below the Nore, while taking in sprats for London. The Hazard was only 2 years old and built John Gilson, baker, of Leigh for his son, the Captain, who was lost. Much sympathy was felt for Mr Gilson, who about ten years before had lost his eldest son, who perished in an oyster smack; and almost four months since another son had been lost by the boat in which he was shrimping being run down by a Portuguese brig, for which the pilot was tried for manslaughter. Both men were about 20 and both were about 5ft 5ins tall and were dressed in blue Guernseys, Cotgrove having on duck trousers and a dress frock and Gilson drab trousers and nearly new boots.

ROLLING INTO HISTORY

This old garden roller is an old cast iron two drum type with an internal counter weight that ensures the handle comes to rest at a nice height. The cast iron disc incorporated in the handle is around 6" diameter and cast into it is:

J F SWINDON LEIGH ESSEX

Does anyone know anything about that name.....were they local a 'garden supplies' firm, foundry or some other engineering set up? The age of the roller could be anytime from late 1800s to 1940s and is likely to have been made somewhere else with Swindon possibly being a local ironmongers. i.e. local firms 'badged' these rollers. The owner bought it about 35 years ago in Torquay in a junk shop. Now retired he intends to renovate it with new wooden handles ...etc...

Any information please contact carole.mulroney@btinternet.com.

CINDER PATH SHELTER AND STRAND WHARF

Members will be pleased to note that through co-operation between the Town and Borough Council's our last surviving wooden shelter on the Cinder Path has been restored to its former glory. The refurbishment of Strand Wharf by the Town Council is also well underway.



A PLEA FOR ESSEX ISLANDS

How do counties define themselves? Some promote their rolling countryside and rugged landscapes, others feature their illustrious sons and daughters and several point to their historic county towns and battlefields. Some even highlight their local cuisine.

And what of Essex?

What particular criterion does Essex employ to make it stand out from the rest? I don't honestly know but I would suggest it should come down to one notable feature: islands. Not very exciting possibly, but islands are highly significant in how they define an area. Essex has more coastline than any other English county, including Cornwall, and along this three hundred and fifty mile shoreline there are nineteen randomly-scattered islands* (Kent has three and Suffolk only one). Some are naturally occurring and others have been engineered and they are all constantly changing because islands are almost fluid; in a state of constant flux, occupying that geographical and spiritual margin between land and sea and evolving under their own set of rules. Some of our islands support urban populations, others farmland, while some have never been inhabited and are totally wild.

Islands have had a major influence on the people of Essex for centuries. They connect with our maritime past and offer a degree of romance and mystery all of their own. Mersea and Osea islands have causeways which flood under certain tidal conditions making the islands inaccessible. How exotic is that? And who hasn't stood on the shore and gazed wistfully across at Havengore Island and been intrigued?

Islands add character and definition to a county; relief and perspective to a shoreline while providing outlets for our salt-laced creeks and tidal streams to run into. Moreover, because islands are generally remote, self-contained, with a distinct identity and most important of all, away from the mainland, they have historically been places of refuge and solace. From the ne'er-do-wells escaping the customs men to the religious type craving silence, people escape to islands. Even today, for many living in towns and villages, escaping to an island for a few days or just a few hours is the ultimate form of retreat. However, no matter how much people go to islands to find themselves, or indeed lose themselves, it is a particular feature of an island that it is impossible to get lost - eventually you come back to where you started.

Some people consider the people of Essex to be forthright, with a kind of belligerence that might be termed 'bolshie'. So how much of that, I wonder, is island-based? According to legend it goes back a long way, as far back as 991, when following the defeat at Battle of Maldon, the Anglo-Saxons produced a defiant poem. In it they describe how the numerically superior Vikings misread the tide and were stranded on Northey Island (conveniently forgetting to mention that ultimately the Saxons were heavily defeated, though admittedly the end of the poem is missing).

Be that as it may, islands polarise opinion, their inhabitants become suspicious of outsiders and they engender a particular degree of fortitude to stick it out no matter how tough it is. Who hasn't strolled past a WW2 pillbox on a remote island overlooking the sea and realised how futile it would all have been against the might of the German war machine?

But islands aren't just refuges for a particular brand of bellicosity; they have enormous environmental significance too. In meteorological terms, islands act as massive buffers, absorbing all the weather the sea can throw at you. An island bears the brunt of storms, blizzards, rain, tides and erosion. An island fronts up and puts its shoulder to the wind. Islands protect inland towns and villages from inundations that would otherwise cause great loss of life, as well as being the most effective and least costly. No one can forget the floods of 1953. Islands are great sanctuaries of wildlife and flora. Many migratory birds like Brent geese and waders depart from Siberia and arrive in their thousands to places like Wallasea and Two Tree to feast on the rich mud flats. Salt marshes, mudflats and reed beds also provide vital breeding grounds for fish, crustaceans and birds. In fact, there's nothing to dislike about islands.

And so, in this rather circumlocutory way, this is a plea for our very own island: Two Tree. The island is a nature reserve and a site of special scientific interest but right now is at the mercy of fly tipping, dog fouling, littering, arson and other harmful human activities. The avocets have gone, the egrets have moved to Benfleet, the water voles are endangered, how much longer before the island becomes just another human playground?

Clive Webster

For those of you who want to find out more, read *Islands of Essex* by Ian Yearsley available on Amazon.com.

ARTICLES WANTED

The next edition of Leighway will be in April. If you would like to submit an article please email Carole by 14 March 2016 carole.mulroney@btinternet.com

THE CUNDUIT

Down in Old Leigh behind the bars
A stone lies undisturbed,
It denotes the ancient conduit,
A very old fashioned word.

But do you know it's meaning
And what it signifies?
It means a duct or pipeline
Wherein my story lies.

"Waste Not Want Not" shouts the plaque
Fixed high upon the wall,
A very noble sentiment,
That's much approved by all !

For this old sign commemorates
When water was piped down
From the summit of the cliff above
To the Strand in Old Leigh town.

For in the Seventeen hundreds,
Old Leigh had no supply
of fresh and running water,
There was no spring nearby.

But Lady Sparrow gave a plot
In the middle of the Strand,
And a conduit from the higher ground
Fed the well as she had planned.

It sadly wasn't free for all,
And a farthing must be saved
To buy a brimming bucket full,
But eagerly they paid.

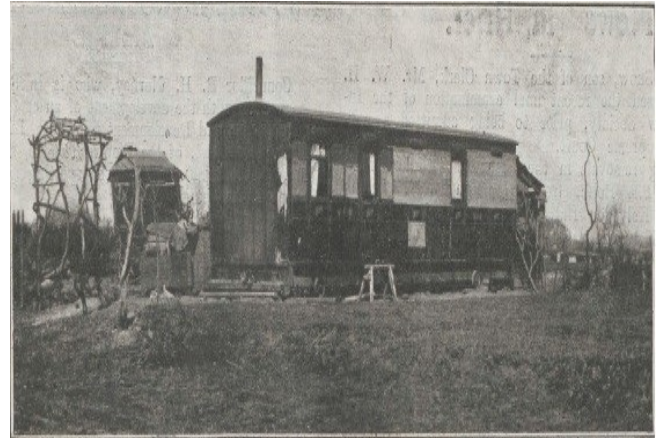
And now, in a recessed area
The stone is placed herein,
Which used to mark the fountain head
Of the water's origin.

It is not often noticed
By those who watch the tide,
But next time you are in Old Leigh
Have a glance, and look inside.

And give thanks to Lady Sparrow,
Whose bounty did provide
The folks of Leigh with water
And remember her with pride.

Norman Sutcliffe

Thanks to Norman for this delightful verse and for looking after the maintenance of the Conduit for many years for the Society



TRAINS IN ELM ROAD!

Not a building you expect to see in Elm Road but in 1908 this old railway carriage was right there inhabited by a family of 6.

An eviction notice had been served but William Hanvahan, an American/Irishman and his family stayed put.

The Town Surveyor, a local blacksmith and the police were there to evict the family but they had barricaded themselves in so the roof was removed and the family was taken away and housed by a neighbour. The carriage was to be removed the next day but Hanvahan was there armed with a pitchfork.

Eventually he was overpowered and the building disposed of.

A LEIGH UNION TRAIL BLAZER

Charles John Thorn was born on 14 July 1847 in Leigh the son of Hannah Hawkes and her second husband, Richard Thorn, a bricklayer. The family lived in Old Leigh High Street and Charles took up the trade of a carpenter in Leigh and in 1865 married on Boxing Day at St Mary's Church, Lewisham to Francis Edwards Perriam.

At the time of his marriage he was living at Brockley Rise, Lewisham and had become a trade unionist in joining the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, at a time which was seeing the introduction of arbitration as a way of settling industrial disputes in the building industry.

Two of Charles' older step brothers, had emigrated to Australia (both bricklayers) and Charles followed them 'down under' to New Zealand where with Francis and their 4 children they settled in Dunedin.

Charles quickly became established as a master builder and undertaker, and both he and Frances Thorn played an active role in the Primitive Methodist congregation. Charles also joined the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute and the Independent Order of Good Templars.

Unionism took up much of his time and he played a major role in the Dunedin branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, and in 1881 helped found the Otago Trades and Labour Council and was elected as its first president.

Charles believed that the working man needed representation in Parliament and in 1882 he led a deputation to Christchurch, where he met with the recently formed Working Men's Political Association.

As president of the Otago Trades and Labour Council he convened and presided over the first congress of unionists from throughout the colony, which met in Dunedin in January 1885.

HONOURED BY THE DUKE

A PROPER REWARD.—In the month of August last a paragraph appeared in our journal describing the miraculous escape of seven soldiers, who had gone from Sheerness in a small boat, which was driven by the wind on to the sands of Poulness Island, and on which sands, where the soldiers landed, they must all have perished in less than half an hour had they not been rescued by two Leigh fishermen, who, on hearing their cries of distress, made towards them, and received them into their boat. The men belonged to the 3d Buffs. We are happy to learn that the service thus rendered by these two fishermen, Henry Colgrove and Abraham Partridge, having been represented to his Grace the Duke of Wellington, he caused inquiry to be made into the circumstances, and then submitted them for the consideration of the Secretary of War, with a view to the two fishermen being granted some reward. The Secretary of War has since written to the Rev. Robert Eden, the rector of the parish, requesting to know the names of the two fishermen, and informing him that a grant of £2. each had been made to them for their attention and loss of time. It must be gratifying to these two men to find that their kindness to these poor fellows has been duly appreciated by the Duke of Wellington and Sir Thomas Fremantle, the Secretary-at-War.—*Essex Herald.*

Evening Mail - Wednesday 15 January
1845

The congress resolved to work for 'better organisation of the working classes' to advance their interests and secure 'proper representation'. In his opening speech Charles spoke about free public libraries and an eight-hour working day, on which he thought parliamentary candidates should be tested.

About 600 unionists marched through the city to the Garrison Hall, where Charles moved a resolution encouraging working men to form trade unions.



Charles believed passionately in self-improvement, and thought that well-organised trade unions could assist working men to uplift themselves. But after going bankrupt in 1887 he played little part in the dramatic events which transformed the labour movement over the next few years.

During the 1890s he concentrated on re-establishing his business, and by the turn of the century he was a prosperous man and father of 10, devoting himself to community affairs, especially Caversham School and the ratepayers' association.

After Frances' death on 1 March 1913 Charles one of his stepbrothers in Melbourne and called at several trades halls; being welcomed at each as one of the founders of the labour movement.

He represented Caversham ward on the Dunedin City Council from 1915 to 1917 and 1919 to 1921.

At the age of 76 Charles travelled to Canada with the stated purpose of 'seeing the Dominion'. In later life he turned his energies to achieving a better supply of water for the city.

He died at his home in Caversham on 10 March 1935.

Source— Erik Olssen. 'Thorn, Charles John', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 12-Mar-2014 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2t41/thorn-charles-john>. The photograph is reproduced by kind permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library Reference: PAColl-6585-23

MEMORIES OF CAEDMON HOUSE SCHOOL 1945 – 51

(With apologies for misrememberings)

My mother and I lived in Flat 16, St. Clements' Court, my father, a Hurricane pilot, having been shot down and killed in the Battle of Britain over Sittingbourne.

My first actual memory of Caedmon House is being taken through the gate by my mother and screaming that I didn't want to stay. I was about four years old. I was given to Miss (Alice) Morris, who I remember as always being so very kind to me. I also remember being taken to see Miss Helen (Morris), in her wheelchair, who I thought had the most beautiful face I had ever seen.

Now heading, far too rapidly for my liking, towards my mid-seventies, I am sure that people who were at Caedmon House at the same time as I was, Wendy Scott, Carol Brown, John MacLaren, Barbara Schonberg (with long, blonde plaits, I think) and many others whose names I am afraid I am now unable to remember, will be able to correct my rambling memories.

Miss Wilkins, who seemed to me to be a very, very large lady, began my love of English literature when I was so very small and to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. I can remember reading 'Hereward the Wake', sitting on a very small bouncy chair in a classroom with, I think, French windows which faced towards the Hall. Miss Wilkins also made me eat semolina. It came either with jam or in its chocolate version. To this day, I simply cannot abide milk puddings!

We used to have Morning Prayers in the Hall and I remember we used to have the same hymns on the same day each week. I am unable to sing hymn 398 without being immediately transported back to the Hall, dressed in my grey blazer with, I am pretty sure, purple piping. I think we used to have lavender coloured dresses in the Summer Term.

I do remember the lukewarm milk in small milk bottles with cardboard tops which we were made to drink – in the Summer it was quite disgusting as it had been sitting in the sun until given to us to drink. It put me off milk for years, until I was having our first baby! We then had to make woollen fluffy balls with the cardboard milk bottle tops. I never did discover why. We were also encouraged to collect silver paper and make it into silver balls as large as we could. Again, I am unable to remember why. I imagine it was possibly needed somewhere, with rationing still being in operation.

I think I was probably pretty insufferable as Miss Morris seemed always to be 'looking after' me, and I was often winning prizes for reading and writing – I still have these books. For some reason I was also given a weaver bird's nest for what, I have no idea, but about which I was very proud, only to be terribly sad when my mother immediately threw it away when I got home.

I was one of the 'younger children' who danced as one of the fairies, in a lavender-coloured organdie dress, in 'Midsummer Night's Dream'! I think it was just simply all who were learning ballet. I also remember 'Hiawatha' and I *think* Carol Brown was Titania, and that she was also in 'Hiawatha'.

I used to walk home to St. Clement's Court by myself each day and play in the Library Gardens. I remember being very envious of Wendy Scott who, I seem to remember, had a doll's pram, and I believe her parents had a car which, in those days was totally wonderful. I think the Scotts lived opposite St. Clement's Court.

Oh dear, yes, Sports Days in the Hall. I have always dreaded these and still dislike intensely anything at all to do with sports (the legacy of Mrs. Emmit, perchance, but more probably due to there being no competitive genes in my make up!), though the exceptions were riding and scuba diving in my younger days. I am afraid I utterly shamed my mother, a sports fanatic until the day she died, on one of these dreaded occasions at Caedmon House during the egg-and-spoon race, and about which she never tired of reminding me, and anyone else who would listen. I can remember it so clearly, someone wanted to overtake me and I, surely as one would, politely stepped aside and let those who wanted to, overtake. Now, why wouldn't I? I must have 'had the hairbrush' when I got home on that occasion for the incident was never, ever, to be forgotten and is still as clear to me as if it had happened yesterday!

Regarding Leigh itself, there was a man who used to frighten me considerably, bearing in mind it was the 1940s. He used to wear an old long brown coat together with some sort of headgear. He used to shuffle along, past the Library and the Church. I remember my mother telling me 'he had been buried alive'. To a child of my age, I imagined he had died but had been buried, while still alive, in St. Clement's Churchyard, and had somehow been 'dug up' again – a thought which both terrified and perplexed me, at that age. It was only while researching my Great-uncle who was killed at the Battle of Messines in 1917, and reading 'Birdsong', that I realised this poor man might have been one of the claykickers (tunnellers) in the First World War, the tunnel collapsing and burying him, and he being dragged out. His brown clothing could have been his WW1 Army greatcoat.

Then, of course, it maybe that something had happened to him in WW2. I was very small and he did look so very old. I do so wish I knew who he was. He has haunted me for years and I do wish I could tell him how sorry I was, and still am. I see him so often in my mind's eye. If anyone locally knows his story, I should so love to know. I can be contacted by email, my address being dogplus632@hotmail.co.uk. However, Carole Mulroney has very kindly sent me an article about George 'Lumpy' Cotgrove. His description seems very similar to the man I still see in my head, however Canon King's recorded dates seem just a little too early to fit in with the time I could have been walking around (just post-war) Leigh but, there again, perhaps George is *still* wandering around, refusing to be finally interred as his war time experiences were so terrible he was unable to be anywhere that enclosed him. Did he have a family, I wonder? I am sure there must be more to be discovered about him. An interesting story indeed. Perhaps it is still not ended...

Many are the cockles and winkles I used to consume when going down to Old Town Leigh. We used to sit in sheds, rather like squashed up railway carriages which, I seem to remember, were painted green – but in the 1940s, most things in my mind seemed to have been painted green. It must have been the easiest colour to obtain at that time. I passed the 11+ and went to Southend High School, which I hated, for a year, after which I was sent, as a boarder, to St. Monica's School, Clacton-on-Sea, which I loved.

These are only remembrances, looking back over nearly 70 years. I am sure there are many things I have misremembered and I know there is so much I have forgotten. I should be so grateful for any corrections and/or additions.

I would love to hear from Wendy Scott in particular, should she ever read this.

Carol Ventura (nee Marchand), Devon



TOBACCO ROAD

At a Leigh garden fete in 1911 the evils of tobacco were not known and obviously the sale was not regulated in any way.

Although this looks open to all, sale of tobacco to children under 16 had been banned in 1908.

Smoking became more prevalent in the Great War as tobacco was included in soldiers' rations, as it was in World War II.

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 hope you will like to keep your copy of Leighway, but if not please recycle it**
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