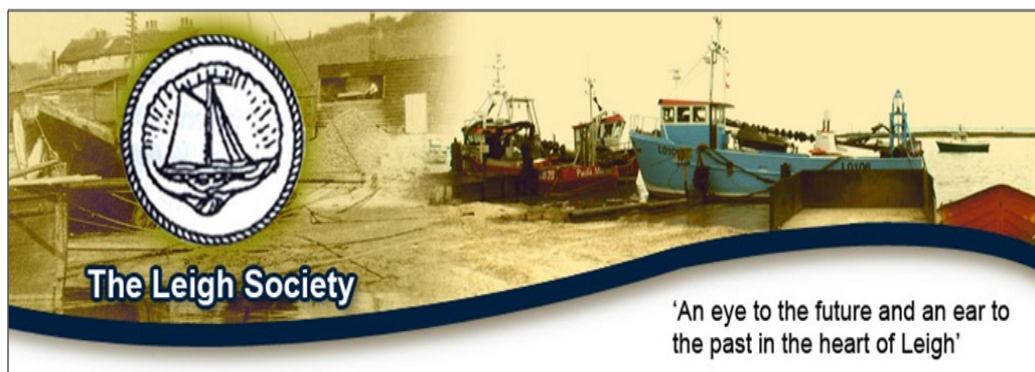


# LEIGHWAY

## ISSUE 54

## AUTUMN

## 2017



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Articles for Leighway are always welcome. Please email to Carole at [carole.mulroney@btinternet.com](mailto:carole.mulroney@btinternet.com) or send to Carole at 83 Southsea Avenue, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 2BH  
Deadline for next edition is 31 December 2017

### ANOTHER YEAR GOING

They really do seem to be flying past. It has been a busy one for the Society and the Heritage Centre and 2018 is set to be even busier with the donation to the Society of a massive archive of photos and information from the Evening Echo mainly from the 50s, 60s and 70s but with some older.

Working with the Town Council the Heritage Day on Strand Wharf in August was a great success and we hope to continue with such collaboration and events. In fact we hope to be working with the British Legion next year on a commemoration of the end of the Great War.

### BOB MORSE

It is with deep regret we record the passing of one of our most stalwart and long serving members, Bob Morse. Over the years Bob donated many pictures and bits of information to the Society's archives which have been displayed in the heritage centre and had a wealth of local knowledge. We send our sincere condolences to Bob's family.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

A reminder that after many years of keeping subs at the same level we are raising them from January 2018. The new subs will be £12 per household which is extremely good value and less than many other organisations. For those of you who pay by standing order, or if you would like to, please revise this with your bank and if you need a form please contact [carole.mulroney@btinternet.com](mailto:carole.mulroney@btinternet.com). This saves money which we can plough back into the Heritage Centre and Society. Also if you would like to receive your Leighway by email please email Carole at the same email address. Thank you for your help on this and enjoy your Leighway.

### 2017 DIARY DATES

**Leigh Society talks (marked with \*) at Wesley Methodist, Elm Road starting at 7.30pm. Entry £2 members £3 visitors**

**18 October - Thames Barges in the Blackwater—Stephen Nunn\***

**15 November—Tales from Hadleigh, Thundersley and Daws Heath History—Robert Hallmann\***

**24 November—Leigh Lights**

### 2018 CALENDAR

**Please note that the March 2018 meeting with Bishop Stephen Cotterell will be at Wesley Methodist, Elm Road at 7.30pm. The remaining meetings for 2018 will be at the Community Centre, Elm Road, Room 1 (ground floor) where there is ample parking at the rear. Starting at 7.30pm**

## BOTTLING IT!

The Big Bottle Count took place under clear skies and a falling tide on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2017. It involved 20 counts along the river Thames and promised to be the biggest survey yet of single-user plastic bottles found in the river. For me, it started at the Riverside Park, Rainham in the borough of Havering, an isolated patch of shoreline abutting Rainham Marshes and a Veolia landfill site. Known also as Concrete Barges, it consists of scrub and low lying semi aquatic vegetation and around 30 concrete barges built for the D Day landings, but probably only used to transport fuel. These barges were moored and abandoned after the war and have become nesting places for oyster catchers, pigeons and gulls. The sheltered nature of the shoreline and the barrier of barges has created an artificial harbour for the river's refuse. There are spots such as this all along the Thames where litter gathers but to my knowledge, none quite as bad.

By 12.00, there were just four of us and, rather than wait in hope for others to arrive, we decided to press ahead, ( this is not in the coaching manual!). We focussed in on three main areas, where the litter concentration was at its highest. We then placed a large building sack centrally in each area. This meant we didn't have to bag individually but could simply throw any plastic bottles into the sacks. Once full, we would drag the sacks back to the car park, empty them and redeploy them further along the shoreline. Meanwhile another group would count them, analyse them by type and then bag them for later collection.

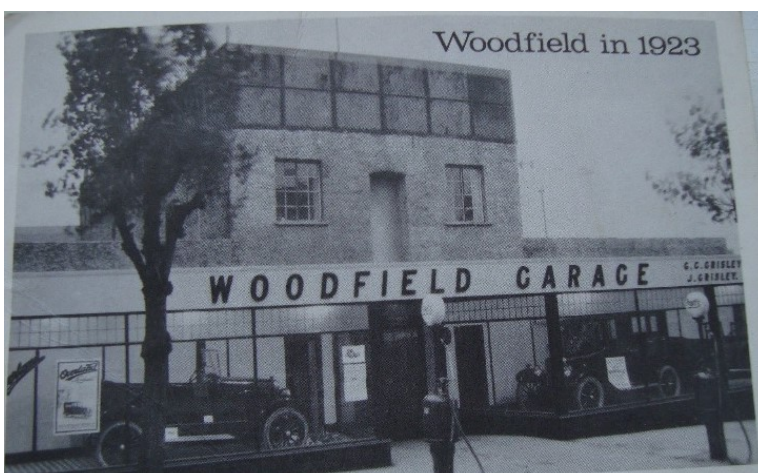
As we worked our way along the shoreline, the bottles crunched underfoot and it was necessary to extricate them from a matting of vegetation. Plastic is a wonderful invention but hideously unfriendly to the environment. Over time, due to the effects of weathering and sunlight, plastic will begin to break down into smaller pieces and become non recyclable. But it doesn't go away, instead it forms beads known as micro plastics that stay around for at least 400 years and slowly work their way into the aquatic food chain. By 2020 it is reckoned there will be more plastic in the sea than fish as we continue to add it at the rate of 250 kg every second.

As the count continued, people began to arrive from all directions and on various modes of transport; some walked 2 miles from the RSPB centre at Purfleet, some cycled from Rainham station while others pitched up in their cars, having missed the A13 turn off and ending up in Tilbury! By 1.30 we had collected as many bottles as we could by which time volunteer numbers had swelled considerably. They were soon asking what could be done next. So we switched our attention to other types of detritus. Soon we were dragging along hulking shower unit plastic trays, fuel canisters, electrical equipment, infant bikes, kiddies toys, clothing, clumps of crumbling polystyrene, chandlery, pipes ten feet long, bottle tops, cotton buds, food wrappers, bottles of shampoo and lots of coconuts (which could have come from literally anywhere but were more likely relics from Battersea Fun Fair in the Sixties rather than some sleepy desert island.)

\*The final count read 4,000 plastic bottles across 19 sites in riverside London. Concrete Barges yielded 1,600 bottles in 2.5 hours and 40 volunteers could congratulate themselves on a job well done. Clive Webster

## WOODFIELD GARAGE

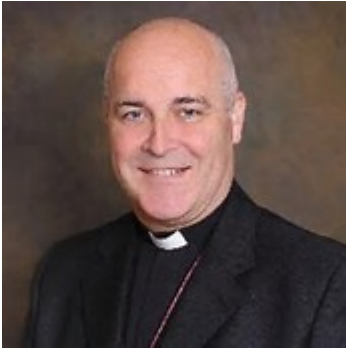
Any memories?



*Woodfield Garage has been serving the motorists of this area since 1919, the oldest established garage in Southend. We respectfully draw to your attention the services we offer and look forward to being of assistance in the future.*  
K. Grisley.  
J. Grisley.

On the reverse of this postcard

## 2018 GUEST SPEAKERS



### STEPHEN COTTERELL BISHOP OF CHELMSFORD

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018 we are delighted to be able to welcome as our guest speaker, Stephen Cotterell, who has been Bishop of Chelmsford since 2010. He will be speaking about his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. He is an inspirational speaker and we hope many of our members will attend this meeting to hear him and please bring your friends.

Bishop Stephen was born in Leigh-on-Sea, and was educated at Belfairs High School. He studied at the Polytechnic of Central London, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree. In 1981, he entered St Stephen's House, Oxford, to train for ordination. He is married with three children.

He was formerly Bishop of Reading, and has worked in parishes in London and Chichester, as Canon Pastor of Peterborough Cathedral, as Missioner in the Wakefield diocese, and as part of Springboard, the Archbishop of Canterbury's evangelism team.

He has written widely on evangelism, spirituality and discipleship. Among his most recent books are a series of Lent and Holy Week meditations, *The Things He Carried* (2008), a follow up of reflections for Easter Day, *The Things He Said* (2009), *The Nail: Being part of the Passion* (2011) and *Christ in the Wilderness: Reflecting on the paintings of Stanley Spencer* (2012). His best selling, *I Thirst* (Zondervan) was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book for 2004.

He has also written a book of children's stories, *The Adventures of Naughty Nora*.

### CAROLE MULRONEY



AT our AGM on iMany of you will know Carole from her various activities within the Leigh Society, not least the Leighway magazine. Carole has been a member of the Society for over 20 years and has been a volunteer in the heritage centre as well as writing many pamphlets and articles about Leigh and carrying out her detailed research into the Leigh families which she shares with other researchers around the world.

Carole runs her own website [leighlives.com](http://leighlives.com) which contains a wealth of information on people and places in Leigh and she also writes articles for the website [leigh-on-sea.com](http://leigh-on-sea.com) under the title *historicaleigh*.

Over the last couple of years Carole had been looking at Elm Road, one of the longest roads in Leigh and she picked for her reference point the 1911 census.

Her talk on Elm Road will give an insight into the development of Elm Road and the people who were living their in 1911, where they came from, where they went to and what they got up to.

**WHY NOT GIVE A LEIGH SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP AS A CHRISTMAS OR BIRTHDAY PRESENT  
AND INTRODUCE OTHERS TO THE WEALTH OF HISTORY AND INFORMATION ABOUT  
LEIGH**

## MEMORIES. A TRIBUTE.

The cobbles on the High Street,  
Are a remnant of their age,  
But Oh what stories they could tell ,  
If one could turn the page.

Old handcarts were pushed over them,  
Borne by wheels with wooden spokes,  
Carrying mussels and winkles and cockles,  
Transported by buckets and yokes.

For the cockles were carried from ship to  
shore,  
On shoulders broad and strong,  
And were cooked in the fishing bawleys,  
As the tide bore the boats along.

So whenever you sit by Osborne's  
Enjoying a cockle or two,  
Just think of all the seamanship,  
That's brought this treat to you.

And spare a thought for the fishermen,  
Who brave the treacherous sea,  
That we might enjoy the luxury,  
Of shellfish for our tea.

Look over your shoulder and see the boats,  
Endeavour is moored by the shore,  
And whisper a prayer for the fishermen,  
Who lost their lives in the war.

For Leigh has a very proud history,  
Of saving soldiers at Dunkirk,  
Ignoring their own safety,  
Men rallied and left their work.

Many lives were saved that day,  
As they travelled over the foam,  
All praise to Leigh's brave fishermen,  
Who brought our soldiers home.

Norman Sutcliffe



## ECHO ARCHIVES

Through our contact with Mike Davies of the Rayleigh Town Museum (great speaker at our last meeting) we are coming into possession of a massive archive of Evening Echo photos and ephemera from the 60s and 70s mainly.

Thousands of photographs were passed to Rayleigh by the Echo who can no longer store them and felt they should go to a safe haven.

Rayleigh in turn realised that the photos covered the whole of the area and it was appropriate for them to be distributed to the relevant societies.

There are about 14 large storage boxes to go through and Carole has arranged with Cllr Ann Holland, Portfolio Holder for Culture, amongst other things, at the Borough, for a room to be made available at Southend Museum until Christmas where we can go in and sort through the boxes and bring home to Leigh what we find.

Carole and Dec along with Jenny and Ed Simpson will be doing the sorting along with friends from Shoebury and Southend Societies.

Not only will we get a large influx of historical photography for our archives but it is a great exercise in collaborative working with other groups in the area which may lead to other joint efforts in the future.

So thanks to Mike Davies, Ann Holland, Grant Littler and Ian Yearsley Judith Williams and Southend Museum staff for helping us get this project off the ground.

And a big thank you to the Evening Echo.

## BERESFORD GARAGE, THE GRAND

Any memories?

A recent donation to the archives by Stuart Emery and his sister Jackie is this badge of Beresfords.

Leslie Beresford died in 1937 and it looks as if his garage was on the site of the Overton's Garage now the car park.

I know it's a long shot but does anyone remember Beresfords?



## THE ORIGINS OF LEIGH ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH

Leigh Road Baptist Church is without doubt one of the hubs of our community and its recent additions have enhanced the building which was erected in 1928 and offers a huge service to Leigh. But where did it all start – a recent addition to the Society’s archives is a little booklet celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of the Church in 1953 written by Ernest Walling which tells the story.



REV. ARTHUR C. SIDEY  
Founder and first Pastor  
1893-1898

In the summer of 1893 a 19 year old lad called Arthur Sidey was visiting an invalid sister in Leigh. This young Welsh lad went down to Bell Bay (Bell Wharf) full of faith and began preaching much to the annoyance of the owner of the Bell which had rights in the area.

This wouldn’t do and a couple on North Street offered Arthur the use of a room for Sunday meetings and on Tuesday evenings and a church of about a dozen people was formed.

They soon outgrew North Street it was a worry and Arthur was depressed but he went to meet the owner of some land in Seaview Road and was offered a plot of land as a gift. The man was William Beecroft, father of the Beecroft family of solicitors and later local philanthropists.

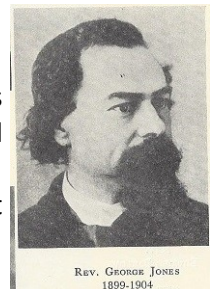
Before the end of 1893 a ‘tin tabernacle’ costing about £100 was dedicated.

There are no written records before 1896 and it seems Pastor Sidey was the sole executive alongside trustees for the property. He shouldered the building debt himself. The Trust was in the name of ‘The Leigh Particular and Calvinistic Baptist Chapel’ and the Pastor was allocated 7 shillings a week with permission to take a Sunday off if a substitute could be found.

Things did not go too well and after a series of issues Pastor Sidey resigned in 1898 of his own accord.

The Rev George Jones took over in 1899 and he outlined a plan to sell out and clear off the debts to purchase a more adequate site in Pall Mall. The Seaview Road church sold for £160 and closed in September 1899.

The congregation met in a tent, there were legal difficulties with the conveyance and the agent declined to refund the deposit.



REV. GEORGE JONES  
1899-1904

In April 1900 a corner site in Leigh Road was offered and a new Trust was formed and work began in a marquee and services began at Easter with a membership of less than 12.



THE TEMPORARY TABERNACLE ON LEIGH ROAD SITE  
Erected in 1900, demolished in 1929  
(No picture of the Sea View chapel can be traced)

The opening of the Baptist Tabernacle in Leigh took place in the November at a cost of £350. It took 6 years to settle the finances of the sale by which time there was just £32 in the kitty

In 1902 the little church was welcomed into the Baptist Union.



## STAR OF STAGE AND SCREEN ANNIE SAKER



Many of us are fascinated by the stage and actors and actresses of a bygone era. Even though nowadays it is rivalled by TV and DVD going to the theatre or cinema is still a magical experience. How much so our ancestors in the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century must have looked forward to these adventures. There were literally thousands of theatres and picture palaces up and down the country where the masses flocked for their entertainment.

There is a fascination with the way Edwardian actors and actresses were referred to as 'Mr', 'Mrs' and 'Miss' giving them an air of respectability not often accorded those who trod the boards in Victorian times. Many theatre companies were still run under the auspices of their leader as the Chamberlain's Men had been in Shakespeare's time.

You may not have heard of Annie Saker, London stage actress who also travelled abroad in her profession. On the face of it Annie has no connection to Leigh until she died. She chose to see out her last days in Leigh in a nursing home. She was only 50 having had a career that spanned several decades.

She came from an acting family. Her great grandfather, William Saker, was a 'low' comedian in the mid-Victorian years. Out of several children, he and his wife Eliza (Hanbry) had two sons, Edward and Horatio who both took to the stage. The family had very strong connections to Edinburgh and Liverpool theatres. Annie's Great Uncle, Edward Sloman Saker, became a well respected actor and theatre manager in both cities and was described as a comedian with wonderful agility and a talent for grotesque dances and making striking caricatures (is this where Max Wall got his ideas?).

Her grandfather, Horatio, also worked in Edinburgh playing pantomime kings and in Shakespeare as one of the witches in Macbeth. But he also performed with Charles Keen's Company at the Prince's Theatre in London. But he never reached the dizzying heights of his brother and died of smallpox in 1861.

Horatio and his wife, Ann (Gamage) had several children, many of whom went on the stage including a daughter, Maria, born in Edinburgh in 1855. Maria in turn gave birth to Annie Saker who perhaps fulfilled all the potential the Saker family had been building up to over the years.

Annie began her career whilst still at school with a walk on part of the little slave girl in *Hypatia* at the Haymarket theatre and also appeared in *An Enemy of the People* and the *Tempest*. She played a small part in *Alan's Wife* at the Terry's theatre and then was 'signed up' by Wyndham's to play the maid in their revival of *The Headless Man*.

In 1916 she was the leading lady in *The Silver Crucifix* at the Prince of Wales' Theatre and went on to many leading roles and as she grew older she progressed to become a respected and celebrated actress travelling to New York where she appeared on Broadway in *The Story of the Rosary*, a role which she repeated many times, and also to Australia.

We can actually see her on film in a clip on YouTube of her meeting Stanley Baldwin among with many other celebrated actors, when he visited a home for elderly actors in the late 1920s/early 30s - take a look at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMmMQnJr784>

Annie's mother had also worked in the United States and had returned in 1902, a sick woman, and died shortly afterwards leaving Annie devastated as she was only 47.

Annie never married choosing the stage rather than domestic bliss and she was not to live a long life but she had graced the stages of three continents as part of a golden age of theatre.



Tribute to Annie Saker by Percy Hutchison, Actor, Manager and Friend



Her relations have lost a dear, sweet lovable woman. The stage has lost a great actress of outstanding ability: the world has lost a noble character, true to high ideals of womanhood; and I have lost my dearest friend and comrade. Farewell. Annie, we all loved you dearly.

## REGATTA DAY DISPLAY IN FOYSTER ROOM

Due to lack of space in the Heritage Centre we have quite a lot of items in the archives which are not seen by the public, so we put them on display for the Regatta and over 200 people came upstairs to look at them. Items on display were some beautiful christening gowns and other pieces of clothing. These are now stored in special archival tissue which we hope will give them some protection.

We have a large ledger from the Brewer family shop and some family bibles and prayer books which are either too large or too fragile to display for the time being. A little table top writing desk, presentation cups and other items recently received from the family of Canon Robert Stuart King were also on view for the first time.

On show were some of the many lovely paintings of Leigh for which there is no space downstairs and some of the many photos and postcards in the archive. One of the football photos was of great interest to one group of visitors who recognized their family members in a team from the 1920s. We were later able to let them have a copy of the photo.

Our archives can be accessed by anyone who would like to do any research about Leigh. Just email [leighsociety@btinternet.com](mailto:leighsociety@btinternet.com) and arrangements can be made to show you what we have.

The Heritage Centre is often asked to receive items for our archives and we are very happy to look after them with one proviso: they must be related to Leigh and people who lived in Leigh. We have been offered many items for the Heritage Centre which are "old" but due to lack of space we must stick to Leigh items only and of course we also need the stories behind the them.

Jennifer and Ed Simpson

## CAN YOU HELP?

Greg in Australia's mother lived in St Clement's Avenue in 1939 and was evacuated along with many other Leigh children. Does anyone remember Patricia Allen?

Graham Arnold is researching the early life of his father, Leslie G. Arnold, who was a professional photographer and had a shop at 121/123 Rectory Grove, for nearly 40 years until he passed away in 1980. Graham wonders if anyone has a photograph or details of No. 55 Rectory Grove in the 1950's as it seems that his father either had a shop premises there just after the war or lived there and worked from home until he leased 121/123 Rectory Grove.



Leslie Arnold

## MEMORIES OF HIGHFIELD COLLEGE TONY WEBER

I was a day pupil at Highfield from about 1951 to around 1959. We lived nearby in Burnham Road, and I was able to walk home for lunch each day. The following ramblings are based on my recollections of around sixty years ago.

The owner and Headmaster of the school was a Mr. Steggles. He lived with his family in a house in Hadleigh Road, near to St. Michaels School.

The school was located on a site at the junction of Burnham and Hadleigh Roads and consisted of three buildings: the main two storey administration building (which was probably original); the rectangular two storey classroom block; and a single storey building, which served as the gymnasium. The main building also provided accommodation for about twenty borders.

Generally, the school catered for about 100 boys, ranging in age from about 4 to 18.

Almost the whole of the external areas were paved as playgrounds, although I seem to remember a small rockery type garden area near the entrance to the main building.

The subjects taught included English Grammar (taught by Mr. Steggles), Arithmetic, Geometry and Algebra (taught by Mr. West), Geography, History, Scripture, French, Latin and Music, all of which were taught in the classroom block. Science subjects (Physics and Chemistry) were taught in the main building, but these required additional fees, so I never participated in them.

At lunchtimes, there would be two separate constitutional walks escorted by a schoolmaster, one for the boarders and the other for the day boys who lunched at school. With bright red school blazers, the boys were rather conspicuous, and the butt of cat calls like: "Highfield College have no Knowledge, all they eat is Bread and Porridge" On Wednesday afternoons, each class would form a "crocodile" and walk, with a schoolmaster up to the London Road, and along Eastwood Road to the playing fields beyond Eastwood Road North, for cricket in the summer and football in the winter.

The school ran a Scout Troup (the Scoutmaster being Dougie West), and a Cub Pack, both being known as the Third Leigh on Sea. We had occasional weekend camps at Belchamps, and week long camps further afield.

The school was opened, I recall, in about 1857, as I remember the centenary celebration, presumably in 1957. It closed in the early 1960's. The buildings were then demolished, and some blocks of flats were constructed called "Highfield Cloisters", in a reference to the former use of the site. The only remnant of the school fabric still visible is the brick wall along the Burnham Road boundary, presumably originally the flank wall of the gymnasium building.

In hindsight, the school was not particularly academic, but it's aim was to produce future "Gentlemen". In my time, the teaching of English Grammar and Mathematics subjects was excellent, but other subjects tended to be less well taught, with numerous short term teachers, many of whom were probably unqualified.

### APOLOGIES

In the haste to tell you about the Listening Benches in the last edition I forgot to say they were on the Pier.

Apologies to Jenny and Ed.

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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