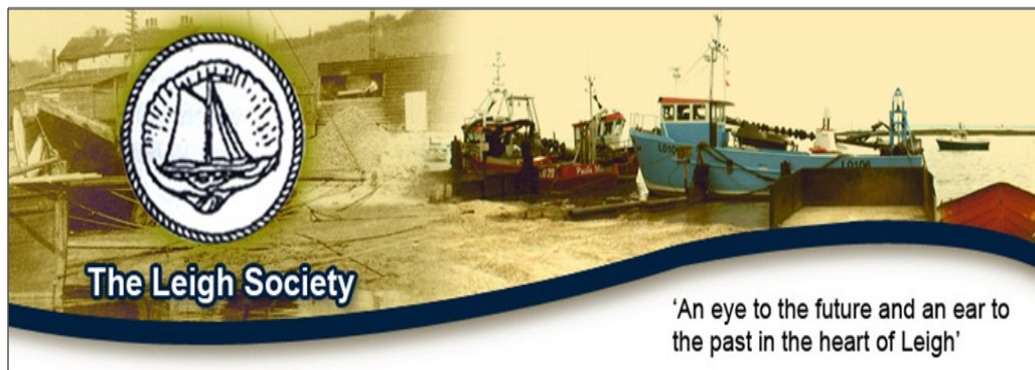


LEIGHWAY

ISSUE 56

SPRING

2018



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Articles for Leighway are always welcome. Please email to Carole at carole.mulroney@btinternet.com or send to Carole at 83 Southsea Avenue, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 2BH

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Members

My thanks to you all for your support throughout the year, and a warm welcome to those who have more recently joined the Society.

As always, the Committee has been well occupied considering local planning issues, attending meetings concerning conservation matters and generally promoting the wellbeing and improvement of Leigh. Clive Webster and Carole, together with a community group (TWIG), have been working to improve the environment on Two Tree Island, and we hope that those who enjoy this facility will support this.

We have been pleased to welcome new helpers at the Heritage Centre, joining those who do such valuable work, keeping the museum open, welcoming visitors and working with school groups.

Our social events have been well attended, including the Heritage Day, held in conjunction with the Leigh Town Council, in Old Leigh. We chose the best day of the Summer, and the exhibits and activities were widely enjoyed. The Thames sailing barge, Pudge, came round from Maldon to join us, and people were welcomed on board to look around.

A visit, quiz and talks are arranged for this year, details to be found in the Leighway and on your membership card, and I look forward to seeing you at these events.

Ann Price

2018 DIARY DATES

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PROPOSED VISIT TO HYDE HALL HAS BEEN CANCELLED

Our meetings are held at the **COMMUNITY CENTRE IN ELM ROAD - PARKING AT REAR.**
Entry £2 members £3 visitors, commencing at 7.30pm

11 April AGM — Elm Road—Some Moments in Time—Carole Mulroney

28 April—Annual Quiz, Leigh Community Centre NOTE 7PM START

12 May—Visit to Apsley House and Marble Arch

16 May— Lost Eastwood—Kiti Theobald

13 June—Palace Theatre and Cliffs Pavilion —Sophie Lander

12 September— Battlefield Essex—John Debenham and Andrew Summers

10 October—History of Canals—Bob Delgano

SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Society has continued to keep a watchful and sometimes anxious eye on developments in Leigh. Wider afield we are members of the River Thames Society, the Thames Estuary Partnership and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England. More recently we are represented on the Leigh Coastal Communities Team which is now nationally making funding (subject to successful bids) available for fishing and coastal areas.

To remind our newer members, the Old Town, its beaches and pathway to Chalkwell only exist as they do because of a long and hard fought campaign to stop a seafront road plan. This was abandoned in 1976. Hence we now have the Old Town, Leigh Society and our Heritage Centre.

Leigh now is as popular as ever with its tidal estuary location, pubs, cockle industry, fishing and boating. Always interesting and lovely at all states of the tide. However, Leigh up the hill is changing rapidly with a proliferation of flats, shop changes and wine bars and eateries taking over.

The Society continues to comment on plans in the 4 conservation areas and after many months of disruption the Bell Hotel has finally been rebuilt and looks good. The surrounding flats although not welcomed are now finished.

The other important part of Leigh is our marsh and mudflats, a National Nature Reserve, and Two Tree Island. However, some years ago this area too was under threat from various activity demands and even a 'Port Grimaud' style maritime village—not quite the same climate!. Now it is under threat from flytipping and irresponsible dog walkers. We are actively involved in not only trying to control this but regular clean ups and litter picks take place from Leigh to Tilbury as you will have read in Clive Webster's recent article. Plastic pollution being the most worrying problem. Hopefully this area will continue to thrive for the enjoyment of everyone and its wildlife.

Archiving continues thanks to Carole, and Jenny and Ed Simpson with U3A involvement so that Leigh's history will be recorded and available to all in our museum, which thanks to Pat Gaskell and helpers is continuing to thrive.
Margaret Buckey

LEIGH SOCIETY QUIZ, 28 APRIL 7PM AT LEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE—£10— TEAMS OF 8 INC FISH AND CHIPS - BAR OPEN SO **NO** ALCOHOL PLEASE



THEN AND NOW

Over the next few weeks the Leigh Society will be conducting a survey of all the shops in the town area to find out what information is held about the history of the building and its usage. We hope to create an archive and perhaps an exhibition made up of that knowledge.

A recent find in the Southend and Westcliff Graphic of 2 January 1914 relates that in 1835 Lady Olivia Sparrow, Lady of the Manor, erected infant and junior schools in Leigh and engaged the Rev Ridley Herschell to run them. This first school it was said was almost on the site of Mr Bernhard's shop in the Broadway where in later years Dr Orme lived.

From checking Kelly's Directory for 1914 we find Mr Bernhard (Hermann Bernhard) ran a ham and beef shop at No 35 Broadway. He came from Germany and lived at the premises with his wife and 2 sons.

No 35 was later a greengrocers run by James Palmer, the son of Charles Palmer who ran the original greengrocers at what is now Clement's Arcade (family rivalry within a few yards of each other). Later it became Edes Electrical which has departed recently and we are told will soon be a Turkish Barber.

The newspaper relates that Lady Olivia would always put on her gloves before shaking hands with the Leigh people! See next edition of Leighway for the subsequent history of Leigh schooling.

THE CHESTER CUP



The Richard Chester Cup is made of silver gilt with a London hallmark of 1625-6 and a maker's mark of F Terry.

It bears an inscription around the lip 'Mr Richard Chester his gift being Mayor of Ye Corporation in Anno 1615'. The Corporation was Trinity House.

Captain Richard Chester commanded the Prudence of Leigh, a ship of 120 tons and a crew of 60, as part of the London defences against the Spanish Armada.

He died in 1632 and is buried in St Clement's where there is a brass to his memory. There is a clause in his will which states 'I give and bequeath to the Master and Assistants of Trinity House of Deptford Strand and their successors one gilten cupp to weigh twentie ounces to remain as my gift to the said house for ever'.

The cup was acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1924 for £1700 with the aid of contributions

from 8 London Livery companies.

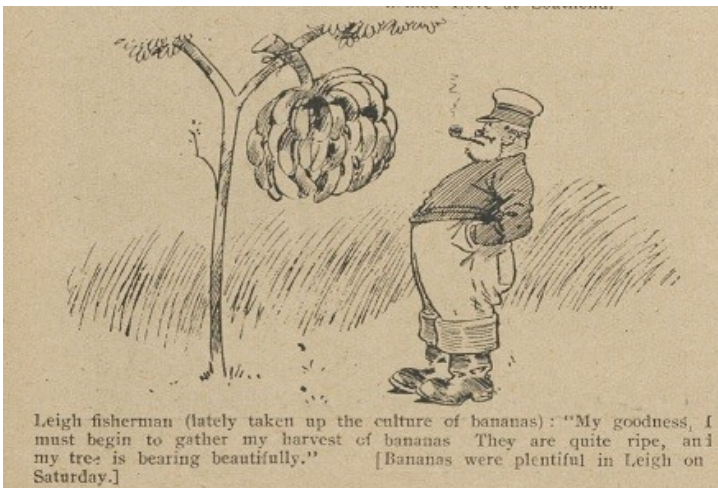


According to Genealogical memoirs of the extinct family of Chester of Chicheley, Richard Chester of Leigh was actually a native of Hartlepool, Co Durham. The family line in Leigh died out in 1653.



Richard Chester's house on the Strand in Old Leigh in 1912

YES WE HAVE NO BANANAS— IN LEIGH WE DO



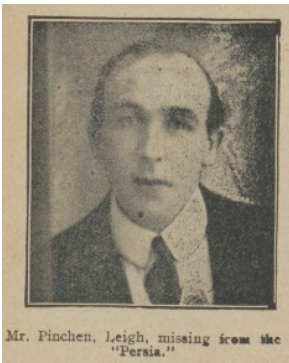
On Saturday, 14 August 1915 a number of crates of bananas were washed up on Westcliff front. They were part of a cargo of a British merchantman which had been mined and 3000 crates of bananas had been thrown overboard to lighten the load. Scores of bathers got hold of the fruit which was green and full and apparently no worse the wear for being in the water.

The local newspaper reported that bananas were cheaper in Leigh on Saturday than they were on

Monday. On Saturday you could get them for nothing but on Monday you had to pay for them.

THE LOSS OF P & O SHIP PERSIA

The P & O ship Persia was sunk off Crete while the passengers were having lunch on 30 December 1915, by a German U-Boat. The Persia sank in less than ten minutes, killing 343 of the 519 aboard. One reason for the large number of casualties was that only four of the lifeboats were successfully launched. The sinking was highly controversial, as it was argued that it broke naval international law that stated that merchant ships carrying a neutral flag could be stopped and searched for contraband but not sunk unless the passengers and crew were safe (lifeboats on the open sea were not sufficient). The U-Boat fired a torpedo and made no provision for any survivors. The survivors on the four lifeboats were picked up during the second night after the sinking by the minesweeper HMS Mallow, among the dead were two Leighmen—



PINCHEN, Gen. Serv. and Dk. Std. James. S.S. "Persia" (Greenock). Drowned, as a result of an attack by an enemy submarine, 30th Dec., 1915. Son of Robert and Sarah Pinchen; husband of Edith Pinchen (*née* Hills), of 31, Lymington Avenue, Leigh-on-Sea.



STEVENSON, Gen. Serv. and Smoke Attdt. Francis. S.S. "Persia" (Greenock). Drowned, as a result of an attack by an enemy submarine, 30th Dec., 1915. Age 36. Son of John Underwood Stevenson; husband of Ellen Sarah Stevenson, of The Briars, 131, Elm Rd., Leigh-on-Sea. Born in London.

Mr. F. Stevenson, Leigh, also missing from the "Persia."

Leigh Men and the "Persia."—A correspondent sends us some further particulars concerning Messrs. J. Pinchen and F. Stevenson, two of the Leigh men who lost their lives on the ill-fated s.s. Persia. Mr. Pinchen with his wife and child, aged five years, had apartments at Lymington Avenue. He left Leigh on December 17th with his friend, Mr. Stevenson, to go aboard, and sailed the next day. A few days before he left Mr. Pinchen trimmed his little girl's Christmas tree. Mr. Pinchen was chief deck-steward, and Mr. Stevenson was second smokeroom steward and the latter leaves a wife and five children.

At the time Persia was carrying a large quantity of gold and jewels belonging to the Maharaja Jagatjit Singh, though he himself had disembarked at Marseilles. Among the passengers to survive was the 2nd Baron Montague who had been travelling with his secretary and lover, Eleanor Thornton.

The wreck of Persia was located off Crete in 2003 at a depth of 10,000 feet, and an attempt was made to salvage the treasure located in the bullion room. The salvage attempt met with limited success, retrieving artefacts and portions of the ship, and some jewels .

Eleanor Thornton was the model for the Rolls Royce Spirit of Ecstasy designed by Charles Robinson Sykes, and carries with it a story about secret passion between her and the Baron. Their secret love was hidden from all but a few for more than a decade because of Eleanor's impoverished social and economic status and Montagu's long standing marriage to Lady Cecil Victoria Constance Kerr.

Montague asked Sykes to produce a mascot which would adorn all future Rolls-Royce cars with the specifications that it should convey "the spirit of the Rolls-Royce, namely, speed with silence, absence of vibration, the mysterious harnessing of great energy and a beautiful living organism of superb grace..."

Sykes had Miss Thornton in mind. He called this first model The Spirit of Speed and later called it "A graceful little goddess, the Spirit of Ecstasy, who has selected road travel as her supreme delight and alighted on the prow of a Rolls-Royce motor car to revel in the freshness of the air and the musical sound of her fluttering draperies."

Whilst Eleanor died on the [SS Persia](#) Lord Montagu, who was thought to have been killed too, survived and was saved after several days adrift in a life raft.



SPEAKERS

CAROLE MULRONEY— ELM ROAD

At our AGM on 11 April at the **COMMUNITY CENTRE** Carole will talk on Elm Road and the people who were living there in 1911, where they came from, where they went to and what they got up to.

KITI THEOBALD— LOST EASTWOOD

Our speaker on 16 May at the **COMMUNITY CENTRE** will be Kiti Theobald, local writer and folk singer who describes herself as a bit of a jack-of-all-trades! Her illustrated talk "Lost Eastwood".

SOPHIE LANDER—THE PALACE THEATRE AND CLIFFS PAVILION

On 13 June at the **COMMUNITY CENTRE**, we welcome Sophie Lander who will give us an insight into the history and work of the Palace Theatre and Cliffs Pavilion.

JOHN DEBENHAM AND ANDREW SUMMERS BATTLEFIELD ESSEX

12 September at the **COMMUNITY CENTRE**. The writing collaboration of John and Andrew began about 14 years ago and the brand "Essex Hundred" was born. Since then they have written seven books concerning various aspects of the history of our county.



ROGER PICKETT—ESSEX FIRE SERVICE AND THE ESSEX FIRE MUSEUM

On 14 November at the **COMMUNITY CENTRE** we are pleased to welcome Roger Pickett as our speaker, who will give a talk on the **Essex Fire Service and the Essex Fire Museum**.

Roger lived just around the corner from Grays Fire Station and, from a very young age, wanted to be a Fireman and in March 1976 after seeing 4 'old' fire engines racing to a fire in the City of London he decided that driving ordinary lorries was not much fun whereas being at the wheel of a Dennis fire engine would prove more exciting! After passing all of the relevant training, Roger was posted to Red Watch Grays, and spent the next 30 years being operational there.

Having a long standing passion for local history and heritage, Roger decided back in the mid 1980s to research into the old Grays Fire Brigade. This expanded into the history of our County Brigade. The natural progression to this research was to create a living memorial to personnel, past and present; having created the Essex Fire Museum, which was opened in June 2007, Roger now works part time at the museum which has full accreditation with Arts Council England and is regarded as one of the finest such collections in the UK. The museum is situated in the operational fire station in Hogg Lane, Grays, and is open for group visits by prior arrangement, and has various 'family fun days' throughout the summer school holidays. It also runs a very successful fire safety programme for children and, at every opportunity gives the '*play safe, learn safe, be safe*' message to all.

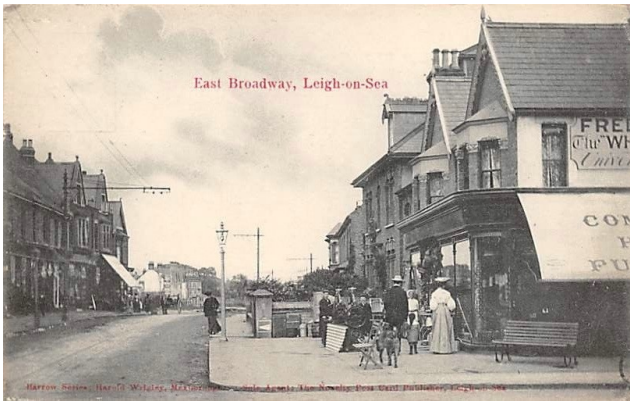
Just a footnote to all of the above. When Roger was 17 months old, his father Frank took him and his older brother Colin to the official opening of Grays Fire Stationso you could say that he has a strong connection with the place!

SCHOOL VISITS

On 8 and 9 March we had visits from children from Chalkwell Hall School. On each day 60 children were treated to a power point presentation by Carole looking around Leigh's history. Ann Price, Margaret Buckey, Gordon Parkhill and Christine Sewell gave the children a guided tour and explanation around the museum and Plumbs Cottage, while the sales counter was manned by Ann Swinburne and Dec Mulroney and everyone else mucking in.

It was a real team effort and we know from feedback from the teachers that the children thoroughly enjoyed it.

Hopefully this will lead to them trying to find out a bit more about the town they live in and coming to visit with mum and dad.



THE HISTORY OF THE BUSINESSES IN LEIGH THROUGH THEIR OWNERSHIP AND USE

As mentioned on page 2 this Leigh Society project is to find out as much as possible about the business properties in Leigh through their ownership and uses over the last century or so and to build up an historical map of how our town has changed in terms of its growth in popularity and type of offer it has given to residents and visitors over those years.

Primarily this will concentrate on Broadway West, Elm Road, Rectory Grove, The Broadway and Leigh Road, but any other information on current or previous individual shops in roads, including the London Road will add to the database.

If anyone has, or is able to access any historical information about any particular premises or business or has photographs or other documents they are willing to share please get in touch with me.

As an example I know through the ownership of my own house that its first owner was a tailor from Russia who had a shop in the Broadway which is now Manoly's restaurant. Through the records I know a lot about him and his family and have even made contact with his great granddaughter which has added to the information.

All of the shops in these roads have received a survey form and we hope many of them will respond, but we also want the residents' memories to enhance the archive.

We hope to build a sizeable business archive of our town's history so please contact carole.mulroney@btinternet.com with any information.

RETIREMENT OF LYN AUSTIN

For many years Lyn has worked in the Heritage Centre as a volunteer and latterly as our schools co-ordinator.

This is quite a difficult role to fill for not only has Lyn co-ordinated school visits but she has also had to co-ordinate the helpers and committee members who come to speak to the children, and give them a slide show on their visit.

This system has worked incredibly well and this is due to Lyn's diligence, persuasive manner and cheerful disposition.

Good luck and best wishes in your retirement Lyn.

Pat Gaskell will be taking over this role in future as well as running the Heritage Centre shop.

APSLEY HOUSE AND WELLINGTON ARCH VISIT 12 MAY

There are still a few places left on the coach for this visit. If you would like to go here are the details. To book please call Ann Price on 01702 710324 or write to Ann at 15 Henry Drive, LOS SS9 3QQ. Cost is £28 (£16.50 for English Heritage members) and send an SAE.

Cheques made payable to the Leigh Society and please state your chosen pick up point together with your name address and contact details.

Joining Points

- 8.15 Old Leigh PO Rectory Grove
- 8.20 High Cliff
- 8.30 Chalkwell Schools
- 8.35 The Elms
- 8.40 West Leigh
- 8.45 Thames Drive

A guided tour of Apsley House then coach to Kensington High Street to find lunch independently followed by a coach to Wellington Arch for you to tour as you wish.



THE GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN

Plastic pollution in our rivers and seas has become the single biggest threat to our marine environment this century so what better antidote than Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean? Only it wasn't. A series of co-ordinated litter picks scheduled to take place along the North Thames Estuary on the first weekend of March were reduced to nothing: Storm Emma and the Beast from the East saw to that.

All nine events were cancelled. In fact, for some of us, we didn't have much choice. As billowing snow blew in from deepest Russia with a fearful vengeance, transport was curtailed, driveways were blocked and roads became impassable, except on skis.

Rarely have I seen weather in this country arrive with such ferocity and drama, turning Leigh, for a time, into a Winter Wonderland (see right) and when my boiler packed up, it felt like Ice Station Zebra, inside as well as outside.

Fortunately, as we know too well, most of the extreme weather in England is short-lived and this proved to be the case as the wind finally switched and began to blow in from a more benign south westerly direction. The thermometer gauge in my hallway climbed a notch or two, a frog scrambled excitedly into one of my ponds, blackthorn began to push out tiny white buds, soon to be transformed into a foaming blanket of blossom and daffodils resumed their upright stance. And perceptively, the wind that had had such a cutting edge now carried that unmistakable sweet tang of spring.



Slowly we began to reorganise ourselves. First up was an area known as Graffiti Wall. It has been in our crosshairs for some time now but when DP World came to us and asked us to organise a corporate day of volunteering it was an opportunity too good to miss. Graffiti Wall extends for over a mile and a half from Fiddlers Reach to the QE2 Bridge and is one of the bleakest spots along the river. Some time ago, some councillors, with the best will in the world, thought the area needed cheering up so made it known that the wall would be available to artists from all over the UK to come and show their wares. This they duly did but forgot to take away their food wrappers, plastic drinks bottles and noxious tools of the trade: aerosol sprays, paint trays and large plastic tins of paint. The result is a toxic soup that nobody wants to clear up.

The original group of 15 had by now dwindled to a paltry 4 but we decided to go ahead. So wearing face masks, sturdy boots and industrial gloves, we set off across the forbidding landscape like escapees from a 1950's sci fi movie. By mid afternoon, as the rains came, we had dragged over a thousand plastic bottles, two thousand spray cans and 103 sacks of other plastic along the path through the small nature reserve to the road a mile away.



Work resumed two days later in Grays, this time with volunteers from the general public. There were two picks arranged, each two hours of duration, on either side of the yacht club with pickers split across two beaches. Again the results were prodigious; nearly 60 sacks and 250 bottles, bringing our grand bottle count in the last six months to a whopping 12,391 bottles! A councillor joined us and arranged for free bacon butties to be made available at the local cafe. It was well received and now the GBSC roadshow moves to Tilbury, 17th March, Concrete Barges, 24th March and Chalkwell Beach 25th March. We'd love to see you there!

Clive Webster

LEIGH PICKETTS PUMPING STATION

You may recall a recent article in Leigh about memories of Leigh Pumping Station - this picture turned up recently.



MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Society has stayed pretty steady over the last year and we now have a complement of 241 households.

We need to maintain that momentum and attract new members to ensure that the work of the Society continues into the future and that we keep the Heritage Centre alive and kicking.

So it is very important that members subs are received as soon as possible after the start of the new year.

So you know what's coming next. If you have not paid your subs of £12 by the time of the AGM on 11 April we are afraid we will have to delete you from the list of members.

This means of course you will miss out on Leighway magazine and membership benefits of reduced entry to talks.

So please if it has slipped your mind, send your £12 made payable to the Leigh Society to the Membership Secretary, The Leigh Society, 13A High Street, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 2EN

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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WE STILL NEED A TREASURER

Ever since Donald Fraser retired we have been without an official treasurer for the Heritage Centre. Margaret Buckey, our Secretary, ably assisted by Clive Webster, has been keeping the books for us but with all her other duties it is an onerous task.

So is there anyone out there who has a head for figures and some spare time, willing to step into the role. The Heritage Centre is of course a business and a charity, but it is a small concern so would not take up too much of your time. You may also need to attend committee meetings occasionally. Please get in touch with Carole at the usual email address if you think you can help.

2018 ANNUAL COMMUNITY MEETING

FRIDAY APRIL 20TH
7PM - 8PM

OPEN FROM 6PM FOR REFRESHMENTS & DISPLAYS

COMMUNITY GROUP DISPLAYS	MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS	PRESENTATION OF COUNCIL YEAR
GOOD FOR LEIGH AWARDS	Q & A SESSION	ANNUAL REPORT

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