

LEIGHWAY ISSUE 66 AUTUMN 2021



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THE INNER WHEEL STOPS SPINNING

Following on from the article in the last Leighway—please come down to the Heritage Centre and see the very interesting display of the Inner Wheel's memorabilia and documentation which has been put together by Jenny and Ed Simpson.

BACK AGAIN

What a strange time that continues on and on. Pleased to say the Heritage Centre is back open again and people are making good use of it.

Everyone will have read about the issues we have had in the Old Town with anti-social behaviour and the need for repeated dispersal orders to calm down and ease the situation. We can now confirm that a Public Space Protection Order has been put in place which gives more power to the authorities and hopefully will aid the situation. We have already seen improvements. As part of our commitment to the community we opened up the Heritage Centre as a resting post for the Pier and Foreshore, Community Safety and Police Officers. They can have a break and a cuppa whilst remaining in the centre of the Old Town and available should they be called upon.

Obviously our programmes for this year have been shot to pieces but we are already planning for 2022 and we just need you, as our loyal members, to hang on in there. We will be back! Not being able to hold meetings in the flesh we have not had an AGM and we do need to do so, so you will find Information with Leighway of how we intend to do that in the near future.

As this Leighway is heralding the AGM and the accounts are included all members will receive this one by post.

PROFESSOR KENNETH MACKINNON

It is with regret we note the passing of member and Mayor of Southend. Ken MacKinnon. Ken was born in the London during the Blitz and evacuated to Cornwall. After the war the family settled in Leigh and Ken attended Westcliff High School for Boys. A great standard bearer for Scotland, Ken often wore his Kilt to school attracting some censure but still managed to become 'Head Boy'. His working life was as a teacher in Essex schools and Technical Colleges.

In 1957 aged 24 he became a Credited Methodist Local Preacher and in 1958 turned to politics, winning Prittlewell ward for the Liberals. He later he became an Alderman and in 1965-66 the youngest Mayor.

Ken started Leigh Annual Folk Carol Service and organised for the Southend Folk Festival. He continued to run the festival even after moving to Scotland. Ken was known as the father of Scottish Gaelic sociolinguistics studies. Although a self taught Gaelic speaker and During his life time he wrote many hymns mainly in the Gaelic tongue and wrote many hymns in the Gaelic tongue. In his last years he was working at a high level to promote the Cornish language. He was an honorary professor at Aberdeen University, a reader emeritus at the University of Hertfordshire and tutored for the Open University in social science, education and language studies till his passing.

THEN AND NOW—A SWEET TOOTH WITH A FIST OF IRON

From a report of March 1912

One of the most interesting holiday features at Leigh during this Easter will be the display of Mr H M Papprell, of the Broadway.

'Mr Papprell has the finest and most up to date stock of confectionary in the neighbourhood. Original and enterprising, at Christmas he arranged that all change was given in new money, and over £40 worth was disposed of in that way. For the forthcoming holiday he has in stock a large variety of fancy goods and a display of all makes of tobaccos, besides and easter display of confectionary which is absolutely unique.

For this purpose a large additional showroom has been specially adapted and an enormous selection of Easter eggs and the best articles of confectionery. These will include boxes of chocolates and also fresh made chocolate at 1shilling and 4pence and 2 shillings per pound, Easter eggs from a halfpenny up to 5 shillings. Baskets of eggs up to 5 shillings, assorted chocolates from 1 shilling to 5 shillings and boxes of chocolates from 3 pence to 14 shillings.

Mr Papprell's window display, wonderful as it is, gives but a small idea of the variegated nature of his stock and visitors are asked to inspect the spacious showroom. Shortly a tearoom will be added so as to add to the convenience of customers.

Almost anything in the confectionery and fancy lines can be obtained at his business house at metropolitan prices and no outrageous charges are made. There is no need for Leigh people to go to London or even to Southend, for any Easter presents which are required in the way of confectionery or fancy articles. Mr Papprell has decided on closing his premises on Sundays and intending customers are asked to do their shopping during the weekdays.

Every attention is given and all articles are perfectly clean and kept under the most hygienic conditions. Only the best articles are kept and satisfaction is guaranteed.'

Henry Morris Papprell had a varied career having been born in 1884 in Yorkshire, the family lived in Baxter Avenue in Southend in 1911 and he is listed as a Small Tools Manager in a Machinery Merchants. So within a year he changed to be an obviously go ahead confectioner.

By 1939 he is actually living at 117 Broadway but is then listed as an Ironmonger and Parts Dealer. So perhaps the confectionery trade did not work out too well for him despite his elaborate efforts.



NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVE

LOST LEIGH



H.W. King (1816- 1893) was the son of the Customs Officer of the port of Leigh and was Honorary Secretary and Editor of the Essex Archaeological Society for many years. He was a very learned man, known locally as 'Antiquary King' and researched widely into the history of Essex. The Leigh Society have in their archives a copy of his carefully hand-written notes on the buildings and history of Leigh.

Some years BC (Before Covid) a small team from the Leigh-on-Sea U3A set about transcribing these 300 or so pages. As a result of this work we have produced a power-point talk on those buildings, many of which dated from the time of the Tudors and which were demolished in the last century. These were large houses built by Merchants and Mariners including Admirals of the Navy. We are happy to give this talk to any interested parties and in due course will present it to the Leigh Society.

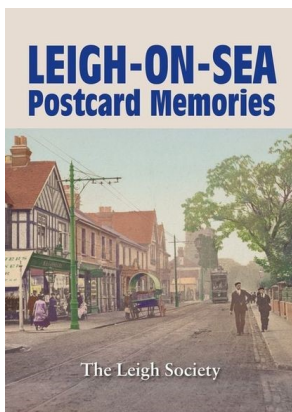
In the mean time we have produced a small leaflet giving a taste of Lost Leigh, which will be available in the Heritage Centre. We are often asked in the Heritage Centre what was old Leigh like? Here are some of the answers. I am sure this will interest and surprise many.

However this is not simply an exercise in heritage nostalgia. It is a warning that we should treasure what we have today and pass on the best for future generations. Change is inevitable but it should be sensitive to what has gone before.

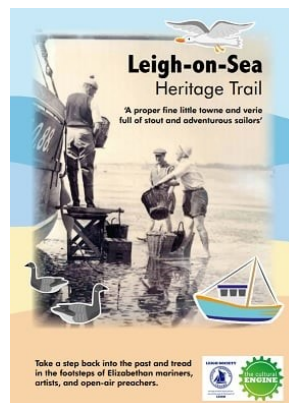
Jenny and Ed Simpson

HERITAGE CENTRE SALES

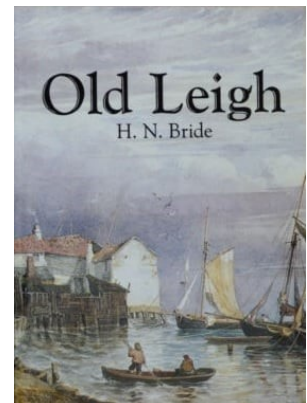
Like many businesses the Heritage Centre has suffered from the lockdowns and changes in rules that we have all been trying to cope with over the last year. The situation put pay to our Christmas trade like many others, and though we were able to sell a few things on line we are sure that many people missed out on that Leigh item which would have brightened someone's Christmas morning. Fear not—we are still in business and if you need something to cheer the day you can now obtain these publications from the Heritage Centre.



£10



£2



£5

LITERARY GEMS



Poets Dorothy Gibson and Douglas Gibson from Leigh-on-Sea

Dorothy Gibson was born in London in 1915 and Douglas Gibson was born in Surrey in 1910. They were both poets and they married during the Second World War. Douglas was a conscientious objector and they moved to Oxford where he worked as a hospital porter.

Douglas was widely published and his first collection of poems 'Song in Storm' was published in the early 1940's, after which three poetry books followed, 'Thirty-Three Poems', 'Winter Journey and Other Poems' and 'The Singing Earth'. After the war they moved with their two children to Islington, then to Thaxted and then to Leigh-on-Sea where they settled. The Gibsons were a family of creatives; their daughter Carol was an artist and Chris is a singer/songwriter musician.

Both Douglas and Dorothy continued to write and have poetry published, entering and often winning poetry competitions. They also joined the Southend Poetry Group where Dorothy became a founder member. After Douglas passed away in the early 1980's, Dorothy continued to be very active in the Group up until she passed away in 2000.

I started collecting Dorothy's poems a couple of years ago after I became a Gibson. Although Dorothy wasn't as widely published as Douglas she did have three poetry books published, 'Twenty-Six Poems', 'Thirty-Six Poems' and 'Selected Poems' and 40 of her poems had been published in Southend Poetry from 1985-2001.

In 2015 seven of Dorothy's poems were published by the Southend Poetry Group in their 'Gold' anthology. I was curious to find out more about Dorothy's poetry and to seek out the poems that we didn't have and so Chris and I began researching his mother's poetry.

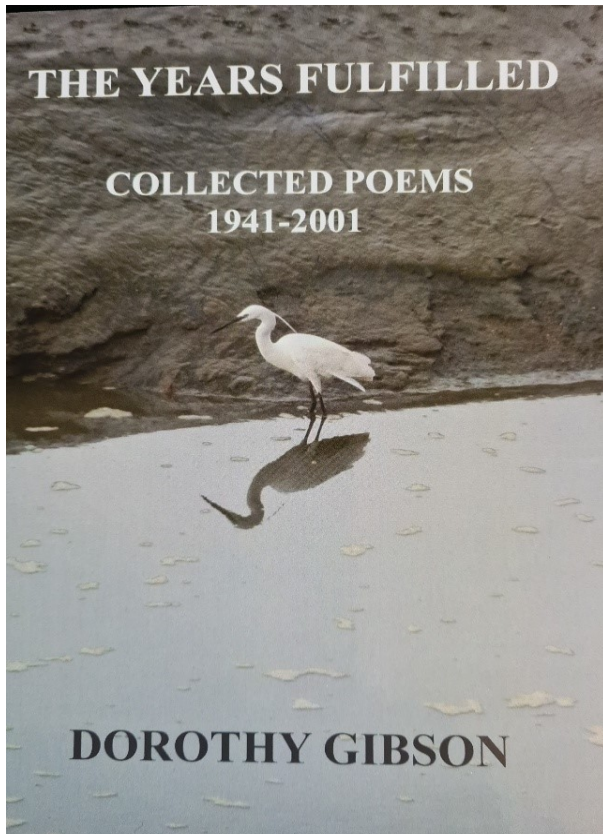
We contacted the Southend Poetry Group and they sent us copies of Dorothy's poems that we didn't already have that had been published in their poetry anthologies. In 2019 we visited the British Library and the Poetry Library and found more of Dorothy's poems written in the 1940's and published in Country Life and the Poetry Review. In August 2019 the Southend Poetry Group invited us to do a presentation of our research into Dorothy's poetry where Chris and I and many members of the group read Dorothy's poems that evening.

Chris and I have now collected together and edited Dorothy's poems and 'The Years Fulfilled Collected Poems 1941-2001' was published earlier this year by The Littoral Press. Many of Dorothy's poems were inspired by Leigh and the local area and more information about Dorothy and her poetry can be found on The Littoral Press website, under new publications. We thought we would end with a poem from Dorothy's collection called 'Fishing Boats at Leigh-on-Sea'.

The anthology has recently been reviewed by the Londongrip.co.uk which is an online magazine. D A Prince reviewed the collection and gave it a very good, thorough and appreciative review

Bernadette Gibson, March 2021

Song in Storm, by Douglas Gibson, Resurgam, Younger Poets, published by The Favil Press Ltd
 Thirty-Three Poems, by Douglas Gibson, published by King Littlewood & King Limited, London, 1943
 Winter Journey, by Douglas Gibson, published by Jonathan Cape, London, 1945
 The Singing Earth, by Douglas Gibson, published by William Heinemann Ltd, 1951
 Twenty-Six Poems, by Dorothy Gibson, published by The Trevor Press, Oxford, 1989
 Thirty-Six Poems, by Dorothy Gibson, Fenn Press, Essex
 Selected Poems, by Dorothy Gibson, published by Blackbird Books, Nottingham
 Gold 30 Years of Southend Poetry, selected by Pascale Petit, The Southend Poetry Group, 2015
 The Years Fulfilled Collected Poems 1941-2001, by Dorothy Gibson, published by The Littoral Press, 2021



Fishing Boats at Leigh-on-Sea

Ebony boats poised midway between
 apricot sea and sky,
 or squat and square under flyaway clouds
 on a running tide;
 post-impressionist boats on a smudgy dawn,
 or motionless on a frozen sea
 with a handful of stars:
 smoke grey in ebb tide mud and mist of rain.

Little cockle boats with sturdy ribs
 and solid hulks with a haul of fish
 coming home through a rain of fire
 from the dropping sun,
 as they once came home from Dunkirk:
 little fleet with a haul of courage
 and of grief.

From sea and sky and boats
 on a stream of coloured days
 I have a haul of dreams,
 shining and strange and sharp
 as a heap of cockle shells.

By Dorothy Gibson

ONE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

When you research family history one of the joys is to come across something you never knew before. This happened to me recently when I was following the trail of my 2 x great uncle, John Henry Johnson of Leigh in 1827. John Henry had been a fisherman and a journeyman fish salesman but the role I had never heard of was as a Fellowship Porter. John Henry had married Mary Helen Emery in 1848 and they had 7 children before Mary died in 1874. By this time the family were living in Bermondsey and had been in that area for several years. John Henry remarried a year later to Eliza Field from Chiswick and there were still three young children for Eliza still at home for her to look after. And they were living in Peckham. So what was a Fellowship Porter?

Quite simply John Henry was a member of a fellowship or company of porters prominent in Billingsgate and licensed by the Corporation of London to measure and carry all dry and liquid goods brought into the port of London; also called Billingsgate porter, corn and salt porter. Fewer than a hundred men earned their living as a Fellowship Porter in the 1860s, though when a meeting was held to talk about dissolving the fellowship in 1892, more than 160 members turned up. An Act of Parliament finally dissolved the fellowship in 1894, giving each former porter compensation for the disappearance of his job. However, ex-porters continued to make claims on the City of London for some decades: there were still 16 former Fellowship Porters alive in 1932.

John Henry died 4 years after the dissolution of the Fellowship and having found his will before I knew about the compensation I wondered how a humble porter left over £4000. The equivalent today of £376,000+.



And as to Porter the drink, a Porter's main source of sustenance came from beer. It was thought that in the 18th Century, manual labourers would consume around 2,000 of their daily calories this way. Public houses in London were universally recognised as refuelling stations, with benches and tables outside to accommodate Porters and their loads. Beer-drinking was an intrinsic part of being a Porter, particularly as breweries frequently hired Porters to unload malt barges. After making a delivery, the Porter would be rewarded with a pint or two of beer. To see a picture of fish porters at Billingsgate go to [Photo of London, Fish Porters At Billingsgate Market c.1893 \(francisfrith.com\)](http://www.francisfrith.com)

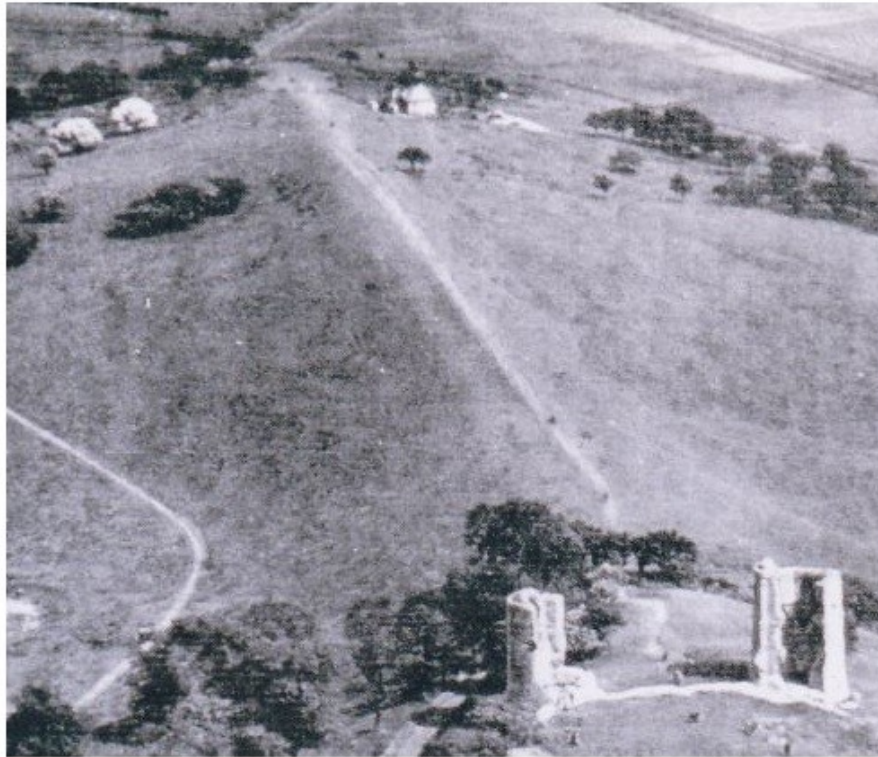
HADLEIGH AND LEIGH DURING D DAY

This article is printed by kind permission of the Hadleigh and Thundersley Archive.

The shepherd's cottage used for D Day training is seen to the right of the path leading from Hadleigh Castle in this 1930s photo

A few years ago, Julius Stafford-Baker 4th provided a lot of information regarding his time on the Leigh Hadleigh borders, especially during World War II. The following local picture of about 1944 is formed around his direct experiences and most is from his direct quotes.

Julius recalls that as a small boy from years 5 to 10, his area of knowledge



The shepherd's cottage used for D Day training i...



only stretched from "New" Leigh Station and the cockle sheds, the two towers of Hadleigh Castle, (but not Hadleigh itself) and up to the London Road. Down and over the railway to the sea wall and a bit over that. (He only got to Two Tree once, right at the last years).

His ancestors had previously lived in Marine Avenue from about 1903. 77 Thames Drive was the first house built on that Leigh estate and was the show house, sold at once to the Editor of the Southend and Westcliff Graphic, his grandfather, also named Julius Stafford-Baker.

"My Father started by being trained by Grandpa in the apprentice manner as a black and white man, some would call them commercial artists. Dad worked for the same firm pre-WW2 but meanwhile had been training himself as a fine art painter, never attending any Art School or anything like that. He was a War Artist for the R.A.F. in WW2, effectively replacing the sadly missed genius Nash. He painted for the RAF in over 60 countries and also worked for RAF Intelligence. (Previously RAFVR, he became a regular after WW2 and as a S/Ldr served with the British part of the Occupation Force in Japan. Only there did he have any sort of painting tuition)."

77 Thames Drive had the area Air Raid Warden's Post in the back garden, and still did in about 1970, gone now perhaps.

Julius referred to the troops from many countries who trained locally. "There were Poles on the assault course down by the railway line, but based in his part of Leigh." A US bridge building regiment had black soldiers from the deep south. Two volunteered to dig Grandma's allotment for her. They were not living in his part of Leigh.

Right before D-Day, the Highland Division were based around Thames Drive, (many many houses were empty) with their HQ, barracks office and guard room all in Thames Close. They went off to D Day down Thames Drive with a piper in front, watched by a small group of locals at the top of Belton Way, including Julius. Their cap badge was a wonderful large deer's head with antlers in silver. (One cap badge he didn't get).

Soldiers had taken up floor boards to light fires in the houses.

The shepherd's house at the end (east of Hadleigh Castle) was used for house-to-house fighting training. Many thunderflashes were used.

Prior to D Day, the vehicles had their radiators and various gaps filled with a temporary water proofer, a sort of plasticine, sticky green stuff, which, of course, he got in his hair. "Very cross Grandparents, took petrol to remove! Also a simply vast fleet of ships in the Estuary, all moored in neat rows. hundreds and hundreds of ships."

Almost the last plot along Western Road had never been built on, and was the home of the tower for the air raid siren.

"We found an unexploded incendiary, and threw stones at it until it went pop and started to burn. A good fire developed in the bushes and the fire brigade came, of course we ran away and hid!! Then aged maybe 6 or 7!" A policeman visited St Bernard's Convent (the only school remaining open at one stage) to give a talk about dangerous butterfly bombs. "Odd contrast his uniform against the nuns. I was terrified of the Mother Superior, and there was one nun who was German!"

"Grandfather, Father and I all have the same name. So three ration books. One day a policeman arrived and started asking questions of Grandmother, who called us all to stand on the doorstep in a row, he went away after a bit."

"A Leigh cockle boat is not the same as a Bawley, which was much larger and of very different build. Leigh men were specially skilled as fishermen, as they went for different types of fish at different times of the year with different kit on board. Other places just go for one kind of thing all the time and only have the one skill. Two Leigh boats, Renown and Vanguard, were lost at Dunkirk, and our house took two women civilian refugees in after Dunkirk. Language incomprehensible, save one or two words of French. In fact, they were Flemish speakers from Belgium still shaking with shock. The Red Cross took them away after a day or two. "

"A V2 landed just outside the Two Tree Island sea wall, the biggest bang you ever heard. At low tide, a large pool of water in the mud, surrounded by metal bits. We kids got there first, but a policeman arrived and made us give up our souvenirs. Subsequently he fell over in the mud, a joyful moment that!"

"The council decided to remove the house boat dwellers, and tow away their houseboats. The Tower Bridge tug came with a vast wire rope and chain. Several house boats simply pulled to pieces. People on the sea wall distraught. Police in attendance, eventually chased us kids away. I never forgot that event, and it has coloured my attitudes to this day."

Johnson and Jago's yard built MTBs in the war, floating them down the creek for the Bell Wharf crane to load in the engines. They used a special building technique (from the USA): veneers laid diagonally, glued and stapled to frames.

"The Cinder Path and Chalkwell Beach were, of course, all closed off, barbed wire, soldiers, passes to be shown and all the rest."

"Prior to D Day no-one could go anywhere. Buses stopped at the Borough Boundary, near the hanging post on the London Road, (Is that still there, with its little iron railing round?)"

"PS field beyond the end of Western Road downhill was an orchard right until war's end."

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 or pass it on to friends and family, but if not please recycle it**
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IN MEMORIAM

Sadly over the last few months, AS WELL AS Prof. MacKinnon, we have lost some dear friends and supporters .

Reta Cox—a true Old Leigh lady, instrumental in the return of the Endeavour, Town Councillor and well known in Leigh.

Dot Rickard—a lovely lady who enjoyed being part of the Leigh Society meetings and trips out.

Howard Robinson, local artist and a great supporter of the Heritage Centre and who helped us many a time with artistic work over the years.

We send our sincere condolences to all their families.

LEIGH HERITAGE CENTRE ANNUAL REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF TRUSTEES

Well it has been an incredible and unpleasant 18 months or so for everyone. We hope very much that things have been ok for you all but we know from our own experience that this period has been very traumatic for some and totally understand misgivings about getting back into the swing. again.

However, as an organisation we do have to follow our own rules and although missing an AGM last year was inevitable, this year we feel we can start to move forward and pick up the pieces to get the Society moving again, There is no Society report this year because of the circumstances.

As far as the Heritage Centre is concerned we have been fully open and functioning since the end of the lockdown in July and I have to say things are picking up nicely. We did suffer a huge loss of earnings of course but we were eligible for the Government grants and that has helped us with the day to day issues of maintaining the Centre and moving forward into a new era. Many thanks to Pat Gaskell and Ray Osborne for their diligence in these areas.

In the background there has been a lot going on and I must here congratulate Jenny and Ed Simpson who have battled on throughout in a Covid secure way to continue archiving our holdings. They have done a sterling job recording and investigating and I know are chomping at the bit to do new exhibitions and projects.

The archives are in such a good state that Dec is now commencing on the project of digitising them to make it easier for researching—this will be a long job but it is the way of the future for us.

As part of the Lottery and the FLAG funding we obtained 2 years ago the projects supported have been going on in the background and we now have a super duper new education pack for our schools and young visitors who we need to encourage if the Centre and us as a group is to survive into the future.

The postcard book has sold well throughout but please bear it in mind as a great Christmas present. With all the new publications has come some real problems of storage. So if anyone locally has a spare shed or empty garage please think of us with many cases of books to store, and get in touch.

So here is looking forward to a much better 2022 and the Heritage Centre continuing to thrive and if you can make the AGM (papers included with your Leighway) we really look forward to seeing you.

The AGM is at 7pm on 2 November at Leigh Community Centre and there will be teas, coffees and cake and the bar will be open for those who would like a drink.

Carole Mulrone, Chair of Trustees of Leigh Heritage Centre