

LEIGHWAY 69

THE MAGAZINE OF LEIGH CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

WINTER 2022

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NEVER FORGOTTEN

Please send items for next Leighway to
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by 28 February 2023

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DEAR DIARY 2022/23

17 December Festive Market 9-1 Leigh Community Centre—we'll be there

8 March Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, HM Lord Lieutenant of Essex—Roles and Responsibilities

26 April—AGM and The Long Story—the story of Southend Pier

17 May—All Hallows by the Tower AD671 – the oldest church in the City of London—Eddie Hardiman

Keep the dates free in your diaries. As always the talks will be at the Community Centre starting at 7.30pm. Entry is £2 for members and £3 for non members. Dates and speakers for September, October and November will be in the next edition.



A NEW ERA HAS BEGUN AFTER 70 YEARS OF UNFLINCHING SERVICE

THANK YOU MA'AM

This year of 2022 has been a truly momentous one, not always for the best reasons. We still have the lingering pandemic issues and like many families and organisations we too have lost some of our members over the pandemic and we are all the poorer for that.

But also this year we have lurched from the euphoria of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee to the tragedy of her passing only a few months later. Earlier in the year we had a visit from the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall when we became a City and here we are now celebrating them as a new King and Queen Consort. How quickly times change. 1

LETS TALK TALKS

With so many changes in our lifestyles over the last 3 years it is no surprise that small organisations like ours are struggling with membership and with keeping people interested. Leigh Conservation and Heritage is concerned that the numbers to our talks are dwindling and this could be for a variety of reasons.

We don't think it is the subjects which are putting people off because they have been very varied and interesting. It seems to be more likely a timing issue. Currently we meet at 7.30pm on (usually) the second Wednesday of the months of March, April, May, September, October and November at the Community Centre, which is convenient as it has free parking and the amenities we need for display of presentations.

So now to timing— the Trustees have been all round the houses on this—exactly what is best. Mid week? Weekends? Morning, afternoon or evening? We asked members for views on this a few years ago and there was no real consensus—but so much has changed since then, we are asking again.

Although the talks are not fundamental to the survival of the organisation, they are vital in meeting and greeting members, attracting new members and, above all, learning more about the culture and heritage of our area. We used to get between 20-30 people for talks which just about breaks even with the cost of room hire and speaker, recently it has dwindled to between 10-20.

So over to you. Inside your Leighway is a short matrix of the alternatives on offer, please tick those you would support and return them either by email to carole@btinternet.com, or by post to Leigh Heritage Centre, 13A High Street, Leigh-on-Sea SS92EN (but that costs the awful price of a stamp so we understand if you don't want to do that). We will then see if there is a majority in favour for a change.

You can also help by going on a go on a mini recruitment drive with your friends and families—if we want to keep the Heritage Centre—and I believe we all want that—and keep a really beneficial organisation going which supports Leigh. Let's see what we can do. How about a gift membership for Christmas.

The next Leighway will be out around March time so if you could let me have your replies by Valentines Day that would be really helpful.

Carole

On the same theme, but as a possible alternative—and this is in to the future— we might be able to stream talks on a pay per view basis. Members could watch the talk on their home TV after the event if they are not able to attend in person.

 <p>LEIGH-ON-SEA Postcard Memories</p> <p>The Leigh Society</p>	<p>CHRISTMAS IS COMING</p> <p>HERITAGE CENTRE BOOKS ARE GREAT GIFTS</p>	 <p>Old Leigh H. N. Bride</p>
£10		£5
See our stall at the Festive Market at Leigh Community Centre, 17 December, 9 til 1, and stock up on these lovely stocking fillers.		

<p>FREEBIES</p> <p>Due to a print overrun we have surplus stocks of the Heritage Trail and Memories of Old Leigh Port. We are happy to supply these to any groups who may find them of interest or to individuals free of charge. P & P may apply. Contact Carole at the usual address if you would like a supply.</p>

CUTTING THE MUSTARD

Think of mustard and many of you will immediately think Colmans and some will also own Norwich as the mustard capital of the UK. But an interesting snippet from the Essex Weekly News of 28 October 1932 will tell you differently.

'It is not generally known that for over 150 years Essex has been noted for the growing of mustard. This distinction is principally confined to south east Essex. For many years Foulness Island has been one of two centres. The General Review of the Agriculture of Essex of 1807 contains the following—

'1784 Foulness. Very profitable here. 3,4 and even 5 qtrs. At £4, but strains the land much.'

A further reference states

'It is a ticklish crop, for one frosty morn will kill it, and it is subject to be eaten by the black caterpillar.'

In 1932 Foulness was still recognised as a prolific mustard growing centre with at least 100 acres of it on the island. All the mustard grown in Essex in 1932 was of the 'white' variety and was grown by contract to a large firm of mustard manufacturers who provided the seed and guaranteed the price. The seed was sown in the first week of March and harvested in October. The mustard itself was in the form of pods each containing beans.

The straw was valueless and was burnt in the fields after threshing. In a field of 18 acres at Beauchamps Farm, Shopland the straw reached a height of 9ft.

Until the crop was threshed it was impossible to judge accurately its success. The more successful one year's crop was, the less was grown the next season. This is because the mustard factories would store a full year's supply and so at times had so much in hand that the contracts placed were small.'

Somehow Foulness Mustard doesn't have quite the ring to it!



FUTURE SPEAKERS

**8 March—Jennifer Tolhurst—
Lord Lieutenant of Essex**



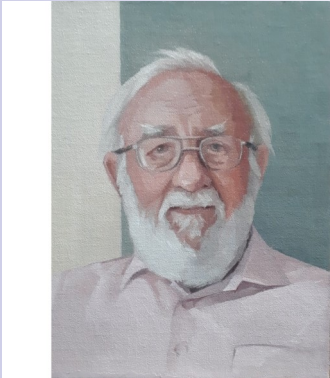
Eddie Hardiman

***ALL HALLOWS BY THE
TOWER CHURCH AD 671.***

The talk on '*The oldest Church in the City of London*' includes Romans, Saxons, Middle Ages, Great Fire of London, Spanish Armada, William Penn, Sir Thomas Moore, Samuel Pepys, WW1, Toc H. and the Queen Mother.

CHARLES PATERSON

You will have seen this wonderful gentleman at our meetings and events over many years. He was a true gentleman and we miss his cheery countenance and jovial spirit. Now, Charles' daughter, Harriet, gives us an insight into an amazing life. With some snapshots we have all seen many times in the last few months. Charles lived in Leigh for 29 years.



Cdr Charles Paterson of Somerville Gardens, who died aged 95, was one of very few men who could say he danced a conga with the Queen. "It was all so fun in those carefree days," she wrote to him 50 years later. This is the story of that letter, and the young naval officer who was caught up in two exceptional moments in history.

Charles, a gregarious and eccentric man, was a familiar figure in Old Leigh. He had saltwater in his veins, having served 32 years in the Royal Navy. He entered naval college at 13. It was 1939 and he longed to get into action; he had 28 relatives in uniform. At last he sailed off to war aged barely 17, in the mighty battleship Duke of York.

By the time they arrived off the coast of Japan, it was August 1945, just a few days before the Americans unleashed their atomic bombs. As Charles wrote: "We had no idea of the vastness of this weapon or its effects." He would soon find out for himself. But first he cadged an historic ringside seat on the American battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, where he witnessed the Japanese signing of the surrender.

A most extraordinary tourist trip followed. Charles boarded a train bound for Hiroshima, and later Nagasaki, quite unaware of the dangers of radiation. He paid his fare in cigarettes. "We had a good wander around the two atomised cities," he wrote. "Absolutely ghastly... flattened destruction as far as the eye could see." He saw shadows on the ground where human beings had once been.

In 1947, a very different journey took place, one that gave him happy memories for the rest of his life. He was a 21-year-old officer on HMS Vanguard during the Royal Tour of South Africa.



1. Charles is the one with a princess in either hand



2. Charles centre, just behind Elizabeth.

With acknowledgement to Pathe News



Onboard were King George VI and his Queen, with their beautiful daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret. "They're all so sweet – and so small," Charles wrote in his diary (he was 6'3"). The princesses needed royal entertainment, and Charles helped organise treasure hunts, gun-room tea parties and deck games. A news reel shows them playing Fox and Geese, with Elizabeth and Margaret dashing around Charles, handsome in his tropical whites.

One night the King gave a cocktail party and the young people danced madly, culminating in a conga through the state apartments. "Damn good fun," as Charles wrote.

He was devoted to Queen Elizabeth ever afterwards. Fifty years later he wrote to her for her 80th birthday, signing himself "an old shipmate". The Queen perfectly remembered him, and sent a beautiful handwritten reply. "It was strange going back to Cape Town last year," she wrote, "and thinking of all the excitement and fun we had all those years ago – just after the war and my very first journey abroad."

Born seven months after the Queen in 1926, Charles died seven months before her. It is a mercy he didn't live to see her go. Her most loyal servant would have been absolutely heartbroken.

LEIGH SHOPS THROUGH TIME PROJECT

Over 500 visitors came to see the exhibition at Leigh Community Centre between 22 and 24 September.

This was the fourth time Leigh Heritage Centre and local u3a groups have got together to work on a project. Three of the Heritage Centre Stewards were involved, Bernard Hetherington, Jennifer, and Ed Simpson.



Many of the photos from the archives were on display and there was a table where other objects could be seen, such as Brewer's 1902-3 shop ledger, 1920s record sleeves, milk bottles, printed items, in-

cluding a plan for the refurbishment of Pollards shop in the 1930s, a metal car badge from a local garage, a clothes brush from a men's outfitters and pieces of crested china sold as souvenirs of Leigh in local shops.

Kelly's Street Directories and local maps were consulted to show the changing use of many of the shops, from the first shop on the Broadway in 1888 through to the 1980s and showing photos of the shops today. Leigh has many architectural gems, and these are locally listed by Southend City Council.



Interviews with local people with memories of the shops were recorded and these have been added to the Sound Archive at Essex Record Office in Chelmsford. Other photos and written memoirs will be kept in the Heritage Centre Archives.

Nine local businesses had display boards in their windows or inside their shops and restaurants showing the changing history of their premises.

The exhibition was made possible through a bursary given for the use of the room at Leigh Community Centre and grants for materials from local and regional u3as.

The exhibition was intended to celebrate the 40th year of the national u3a movement, an organization for all who are retired from paid work, and gives learning opportunities and provides social activities for older people.

Jenny Simpson

LEIGH ENVIRONMENTAL

Having morphed the Society into Leigh Conservation and Heritage we now also have a focus on our environment. We are delighted that member, Rijel, a very keen environmentalist and photographer, has agreed to be our roving correspondent on these issues (but do also join in if you have an interesting point or article/pics) In the first of his articles he looks at the Birds and the Bees of Leigh.

THE BEES AND THE BIRDS

Whenever I mention my interest in 'bees' many people ask if I like honey. Well, I do, but of the approximately 275 species of bee that have been recorded in the UK, only one produces that golden elixir—the Western Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*) and that has been dev eloped and bred by generations of human bee-keepers. While it is the bee that we probably see most often, it is a farmed species and my interest lies in its 'wild' cousins—bumble and solitary bees.

Sadly many of our wild species are under threat from habitat loss and pesticide use, while the number of honey bees is generally believed to be in creasing as bee-keeping grows in popularity.

Wild bees can be split into 'solitary' and 'eusocial', a category that also includes the honey bee. I think we would all recognise at least one type of bumble bee; large, furry and black & yellow. Round here I most frequently see Buff-Tailed Bumble Bees and they definitely fit that description. This is one of the most commonly encountered in the UK and exists in social colonies of up to four hundred (female) workers (in the bee world females do all the work) in a nest in the ground or maybe a compost heap. For reference, a honey bee hive may contain fifty thousand workers or more.



There are twenty four species of bumble bee in the UK and we are lucky to have two of the rarer varieties locally. The Shrill Carder Bee (*Bombus sylvarum*) is probably our most endangered species nationally but has strongholds on both sides of the Thames Estuary. It has been sighted on and around Two Tree Island and in Hadleigh Country Park and there are good colonies in nearby Canvey Wick. Experts from the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust recently visited Belton Hills Nature Reserve and have advised Southend Council how it might improve the site to encourage this iconic species. I was very pleased that meadows across the site have just been mowed and raked this autumn so I'm living in hope.

The other rare species is the Brown Banded Carder (bumble) Bee (*Bombus humilis*). This bee obviously likes it around here and can be seen in many locations.

Historically, bumble bees have had one or two generations from spring through autumn, but climate change has allowed the common Buff-tailed species to maintain some active nests through the winter months.

I've seen a worker on mahonia on Christmas Day and even photos of them in the snow. Not so surprising, perhaps, when one realises that they emanated from the foothills of the Himalayas.



The small Sainsbury store in West Leigh has a large stand of mahonia and these bees can usually be seen when it is in flower in late autumn and early winter.

Most local residents welcome the annual influx of Brent Geese. Indeed it is hard to miss the sight—and especially the sound—of thousands of these iconic visitors. But how many non-birders are aware of the truly rich abundance of other ducks and waders that live in or visit our stretch of coast.

Leigh-on-Sea doesn't generally figure in BBC Spring or Autumn Watch programmes but I am often struck by how many of the featured birds can be seen around here.

My favourite local location is Two Tree Island—a brownfield site that is now managed as a nature reserve by Essex Wildlife Trust. Visitors usually come with either a dog—or three— or a pair of binoculars and a camera. Most of the latter head for the Saline Lagoon at the west end of the Island. In autumn and winter months they may be rewarded by sightings of some of the UK's finest, and rarest wading birds. Recently I have enjoyed watching Avocet, Black-Tailed Godwit, Lapwing, Redshank and Ringed Plover—and the list goes on.



As the winter progresses, large flocks of Knot and Dunlin should also shelter on the lagoon at high water, when roosts elsewhere become flooded. The sight of these large flocks weaving and turning in the winter sunshine is thrilling, as is the sound of a thousand beating wings. And I defy anyone who watches Lapwing in flight not to conclude, as I have, that they just enjoy aerobatics.

Monty's lookout provides some brightly coloured and, hopefully, fireproof shelter from the rain, if not the wind.

The eastern end of the Island offers great views of Leigh and the Old Town, especially photogenic in the light of a setting sun. Little Egret which are now part of Leigh's standard fauna, are often seen on the saltmarsh, usually accompanied by the odd Grey Heron; the old sewage works is a major roosting site. Curlew, with their distinctive downward-curved bills and haunting call, are also seen on the saltmarsh. Around the end of the Island. Sometimes in quite large numbers.



Mr Packham would get quite excited, I suspect. But Curlew, as so many others, are red listed so please keep your dogs off this area.

Two Tree Island is indeed a jewel; well, maybe a rough diamond, for it can be described as beautiful, but is definitely worth a walk. You need a bit of luck and some patience but will eventually be rewarded. After rain, I definitely recommend sturdy footwear, especially at the

eastern end where the last fifty metres becomes treacherously muddy. So does the south eastern wall, where the path runs, almost literally, between the devil-and-the (not so)-deep-blue-sea. Wet enough of both side, at least, and I am very cautious here after almost losing my footing in the past! I may be waterproof but my camera is not.

RESTORATION PIECE

Two members of the King family were Rectors of Leigh for a period of 90 years, until Canon Robert Stuart King died in 1950. In 2017 when the book "Letters from Leigh" was published we had the pleasure of meeting several of his descendants. David King, the grandson of the Canon, donated several items to the Leigh Heritage Centre archives.



Canon Walker King



One of these was a seascape of the Thames Estuary, off Leigh, by the artist Harvey Moore, painted in his studio, behind Ivy Cottage on Leigh Hill in 1889 and dedicated to his friend Canon Walker King on his birthday.

We raised some money from a sale of our collection of Coronation bits and pieces and other printed items earlier this year to meet half the costs of the restoration of the oil painting which had some bad scratches and was generally quite dirty.

The Trustees of the Heritage Centre matched the money we had raised and this summer Karl Swinyard-Alston BA(Hons) MFA, Slade School of Art Picture Restoration and Gilding Service, in London carried out the work of cleaning off the soot and grease and attaching the painting to an acid free backing to protect the original board, and glazing it with UV glass. He also cleaned the gilded frame and inner mount.



This lovely painting with its historic connection to Leigh can now be seen in the Heritage Centre.

Jennifer and Ed Simpson

THEN AND NOW



STILL GROWING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

The scene is Chalkwell Park, where in 1988 Margaret Buckey planted this tree on behalf of the Leigh Society after the Great Storm the previous year. Margaret revisited the tree earlier this month and we are delighted to say it is doing well.



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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