

# 70 LEIGHWAY 70

## PLATINUM

# LEIGH

# CONSERVATION AND

# HERITAGE

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Please send items for Summer Leighway to  
 carole.mulroney@btinternet.com  
 by 14 July 2023.

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### DEAR DIARY 2023

**19 April**—AGM and The story of Southend Pier

**17 May**— Parks and Gardens— particularly Southend— Paul Rabbitts, SCC Head of Parks

Please keep the following dates free (speakers to be announced) starting at 7.30pm. 20 September, 18 October, 15 November.  
 Entry £2 for members and £3 for non members. .

### 70 GLORIOUS (I HOPE) EDITIONS

Little did I think 24 years ago when we started Leighway that it would still be going strong—but here we are with our platinum edition My thanks to all the contributors over this time, but most of my thanks to Leigh for all the wonderful stories it produces. Here's to the next 70.

Carole

### PETER JOLLY

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Peter Jolly.

Peter was a charming man, a long time member of the Leigh Society and a much valued treasurer for several years. Meticulous in all things and a great source of support. Peter retired from being treasurer a little while ago, but continued to give his support to our work.

We send our condolences to Barbara and the family.

**PLEASE NOTE THE DATE OF THE AGM MEETING IS NOW 19 APRIL 7.30PM AT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subs are due by the AGM, 19 April, so if you aren't on standing order and pay in cash or by cheque (payable to Leigh Heritage Centre Ltd) please don't forget as these funds help us continue with Leighway, outings, events, talks and running the heritage centre. At just £12 per household it's a steal.

## LETS TALK TALKS

I will come to the results of the survey on talks shortly, but just to say we had our first talk of the season on 8 March, where we welcomed the Lord Lieutenant.

Despite posters and notifications in Leighway and social media, it was very poorly attended, with only 4 members in addition to 3 committee members. To be fair it was a foul night.

Obviously from a financial viewpoint we cannot sustain this, taking only £14 against the cost of the room and the donation to the Lord Lieutenant's Charity.

Having said that the talk was incredibly interesting and although a small band, we had an enjoyable evening.

The survey we included with the last Leighway did not provide much clarity. There were only 9 responses with no clear way forward as to day of the week, but a majority in favour of afternoons. And a marginal majority for Wednesday afternoon. 9 is not a good pointer though given our extensive membership and the fact that we usually get about 20—25 to our meetings.

For the time being, as the next 2 sessions are already booked, we will leave it at Wednesday evening and hope that the lighter evenings and better weather will see an improvement.



### FUTURE SPEAKERS

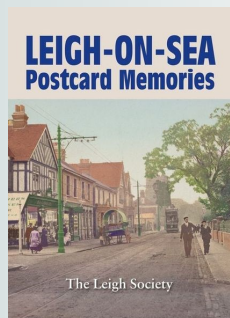
#### **Paul Rabbitts - BA(Hons), MLA, MPMA, FRHistS, FRSA**

For our May meeting we are delighted to welcome Paul Rabbitts, Head of Parks and Open Spaces at Southend City Council.

Paul is an award winning and nationally recognised expert on parks and gardens, as well as heritage, and national advocate for historic parks and green spaces recognised at the highest level. Paul is a qualified landscape architect, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, a Director and Trustee of The Gardens Trust and member of the Conservation Committee, with over 33 years of experience.

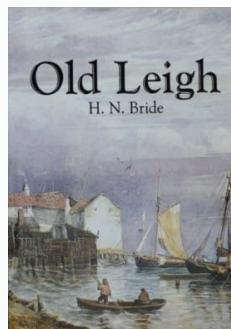
Paul is Chair of the Parks Management Association and a published author, lecturer, public speaker and noted parks and architectural historian, with national and international recognition as an authority on public parks and the Victorian and Edwardian bandstand, their social history and impact on public recreation.

Paul will speak on this subject with a special slant on Southend Parks.



£10

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### FREEBIES

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.

## **CAN YOU HELP US No 1**

One of the very important jobs as a community organisation is to monitor and comment on planning applications in the 4 Leigh conservation areas and any applications of interest in the wider town. The City Council makes the final determination.

Founder member Alan Crystall has been dealing with this for a number of years and we are so grateful to him for his time and expertise. But Alan has decided to step down and we are looking for 2 or 3 people with either planning or architectural expertise from among our members who would be willing to look at applications (there are not that many) and give a planning response from LCAH. to the City Council.

## **CAN YOU HELP US No 2**

One of the other very important jobs we do and one which is part of our original reason for coming into being, is run the heritage centre and to amass an archive of Leigh history.

With the retirement of our long time archivists, Jenny and Ed Simpson we now have a gap in our coverage. Carole will oversee any archival work but we need a small working party (3) people to work with her on archiving material which comes into the Centre. As part of our website update we will also be looking at digitising our archives (professionally) so it is important that we keep abreast of what we have and cataloguing.

Some of this will involve research into some of the articles we receive. It won't be too onerous perhaps every couple of months or if we receive a large donation of material. So if you are interested and, indeed, have archiving experience please let Carole know at the usual email.

## **A LONG AND HAPPY RETIREMENT ALAN**

After some 60 years of being involved in the many campaigns and planning issues affecting Leigh, Southend and the estuary, Alan Crystall has decided to stand down from the Executive Committee and as a Trustee of the Heritage Centre. Alan also represented the Leigh Society on planning matters for many years and was of course a Borough Councillor and May. We owe him a big thankyou and our appreciation for what he, together with Elaine and others, achieved when the flawed 'seafront Road to the West' (which would have destroyed the historic Old Town. with its fishing industry) was abandoned. The creation of the museum, restoration of the Conduit, the rebuilding of Plumbs Cottage and the establishment of the 4 Leigh Conservation Areas, all had Alan's stamp on them. As Alan and Elaine live in Leigh, we know they will continue to take an interest in matters affecting the town, which the Lord Lieutenant of Essex has recently said, is one of the happiest residential towns in Essex! And Alan has played no small part in achieving that.



Margaret Buckey

## THE BEES AND THE BIRDS (AND THE BUTTERFLIES)

By the time you read this, Spring will hopefully be getting close. Though these days one can never be quite sure -- the Council's wallflowers were coming into bloom in late January!

Two Tree Island has enjoyed the annual visitations of flocks of the smaller waders, Knot & Dunlin. Difficult for the inexperienced to tell apart (so don't ask me!) & leading to the frequently-heard exchange -- "Are those Dunlin?" -- "No, they're Knot" -- "Well what are they then?".

In January, small flocks of charming grey Sanderling & busy brown-backed Turnstone, eventually reappeared in Old Leigh, though I think they were in evidence on the eastern beaches earlier. Soon, they, & the Brent Geese, will fly north to breed, so enjoy them while you can.



Sanderling & Turnstone



Hairy-footed Flower bee, female (l), male (r)

March, albeit late-March, should herald the appearance of male Hairy-footed Flower Bees (*Anthophora plumipes*), the earliest 'solitary bee' to emerge in this country. By April, females will be around too. Confusingly, males & females look very different & the black ladies are often mistaken for bumbles. Males (of all bees & wasps) hatch first & then stooge around waiting for females & a (generally very temporary) mating opportunity. Both will frequent garden flowers (I often see them first on wallflowers & 'weeds' in Belton Gardens). Huge Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) queens will start to emerge from hibernation & buzz around near the ground looking for a nest site. They will soon be followed by other species.

And now a plea to gardeners (and the Council). Please tolerate some dandelions, at least until they set seed. Dandelions are exploited by many bee species (of which there are roughly 275 in UK) & other 'wee-beasties'; they have a long flowering season, so are available for much of the year. Many bees are also partial to red-dead-nettle, which will surely appear in your flower bed or vegetable patch. Also please don't forget 'No Mow May', the laziest way to help nature.

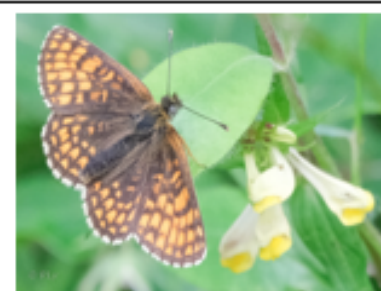
As summer approaches we can also look forward to butterflies. Many of you will have noticed increased coppicing in Belfairs NR. This is undertaken by Essex Wildlife Trust & Butterfly Conservation, whose efforts have facilitated increased levels of common cow-wheat, the larval plant of the endangered



Five-spot Burnet moth

Heath Fritillary Butterfly, which is now well-established in the area. Another beautiful local speciality is the day-flying Five-spot Burnet Moth. I've found this red-and-black beauty on the open slopes of Belton

Hills NR & on flowering Hebes in the gardens. It is unexpectedly clumsy in flight, its wings seem to struggle to support its seemingly huge body. Both should be visible in June. I wish you success.



Heath Fritillary on cow-wheat

**Rijel**

**ARE YOU A NATURE LOVER AND ENVIRONMENTALIST LIKE RIJEL—IF SO PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS ABOUT LEIGH AND ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.**

## THE TEETOTALLING MAN FROM THE PRU IOGT – WHAT IS THAT?

The IOGT is the International Order of Good Templars which originated in the USA as one of several organisations advocating temperance or total abstinence from alcohol. Modelled on Freemasonry and using similar rituals and regalia, it admitted men and women equally and also made no distinction by race. It was named after the Knights Templar legend that the original knights "drank sour milk, and also because they were fighting 'a great crusade' against 'this terrible vice' of alcohol." It was brought to the UK by returning native, Joseph Malins in 1868 who established a Birmingham lodge, from which IOGT spread to Europe and the rest of the world

The Order "campaigns for prohibition, strove to provide social facilities that served non-alcoholic beverages, promoted education and self-help, and supported decent working conditions for working people. Nowadays with less ritual it has become the International Organisation of Good Templars.

This is a picture of the Leigh Lodge in 1912. The W T(sic) M Bowley, Hon Sec, was William Sharp Melbourne



Southend and Westcliff Graphic  
12.4.12

Bowley, an insurance clerk working for the Prudential who lived at 69a Broadway in 1911, and came from Melton Mowbray. His wife, Florence May came from Colchester, where she had met William who was then a grocer (1901). In 1905 William went to Canada aboard the Laurentian, landing at Halifax, Nova Scotia. His wife and eldest son joined him at some stage and their second son, Melbourne Stanley Bowley was born in Springfield Mines, Nova Scotia in 1906 and they returned to the UK by 1908 as their next child was born in Leigh, as was one later child. In 1911 the family also had a boarder, Hugh Pearl, from Woodham Ferris (sic), ironically living in a Temperance household but having the job of a brewery clerk.

By 1914 the family were living in Glendale Gardens (Kelly's Directory) and William joined the Pay Corps in 1917 on Home Service. Immediately prior to joining up he had worked as a clerk at the Ministry of Munitions at Shoeburyness. He was, from his war records, always on Home service and a sickly man being discharged unfit in 1920 when they were living in Oakleigh Park Drive, although at some stage during his war career his wife at least lived in Grange Road. By 1920 they had 8 children.

That same year the family returned to Canada, on the ship Megantic. Travelling on to Saskatoon to William's Uncle, John Bowley and in the 1921 Canadian census, William is listed as a cannerer.

By 1940 William was living in Vancouver - he and Florence may have gotten divorced as she is not with him in 1940 and appears to have remarried. William died in Vancouver in 1956.

By Carole Mulroney with thanks to Chris Crone, a relative of the family

## JENNY AND ED SIMPSON

At the end of December we said farewell to Jenny and Ed as our archivists and stewards,, They have been magnificent. Jenny and Ed have been stalwarts of the Heritage Centre for many years and can be credited with sorting out our stored archives to a position where we can now get them digitised and available for people to search—a mammoth task and one which they have attacked with gusto finding all sorts of little treasures and cataloguing them. They have also been instrumental in many of the heritage centre displays over the years which have focused on a particular theme— raising people's awareness of the type of archive we hold and how broad our interests are. Alongside this their sterling work in the production of books and leaflets about Leigh and the joint working arrangements with the U3A which have been very fruitful for both organisations.

We wish them both well in their well earned retirement and we know we will still be seeing them at meetings and events in the future.

## THEN AND NOW 36/44 ELM ROAD

The sign recently discovered in the new Osborne's Fishmongers in Elm Road bears the name G Fuller, fishmonger and poulterer. G Fuller was George and the local Kelly's Directories show him listed at 44 Elm Road in 1955, 1961 and 63. By 1967 he is only listed at a shop on 1743 London Road near Thames Drive, now Gallagher's Smoke House. It has proved very difficult to find anything out about him so if anyone knows please get in touch.



These premises have been a fish shop for a lot longer.

The development of Elm Road as a shopping street started sometime in the 1900s. In 1901 there are very few properties, all at the town end. Intriguingly there was an uninhabited property in that block under the name of Robinson. So was it a shop? The next listed property was under the name Cotgrove – also uninhabited.



The original number of this shop was 36 Elm Road and in 1906 it was local fishmonger, Alfred Robinson, known by the nickname Wap. Alfred was living at 6 Leigh Hill in 1901 and listed as a fishmonger so he may have had a shop on Leigh Hill but also at 36 Elm Road.

By 1911 Elm Road had expanded considerably and individual numbers of properties were given in the census. And here we find Alfred Robinson, Fishmonger at No 36 and at No 42 Arthur Cotgrove, so we can make a reasonable assumption that the Robinson of 1901 was Alfred and that he had a fishmongers at No 36. This picture of 1907 shows Robinsons (the name can be seen under the awning) with a red arrow.

Elm Road underwent dramatic change in the 1920s when Broadway West was created by the demolition of Leigh House and the properties were renumbered. 36 became 44, as it is today.

Like the Osbornes, the Robinson family in Leigh was huge. It can be traced back to 1737 when Thomas Robinson married Sarah Wells at St Clement's Church. Wap's father, Charles, had been a fisherman and the family lived in the Old Town High Street. Wap married Julia Philips, also from Leigh, and they had several children, their eldest son, Charles, was killed in action in 1916.

In 1937 years Robinson's also had fishmongers at 423 London Road and 99 Broadway, but by 1939 Wap had retired and was living in Southsea Avenue. He died in 1951. But the shop had continued through the years as Robinson and Sons and in 1950 was A J Robinson. This was Arthur Jack Robinson, known as Young Wap. The family no longer lived at the shop though but were in Scarborough Drive.

So through Robinsons to Fullers to Mattacks, we come to Osbornes – one of the oldest families in Leigh, still plying their trade as fishermen and fishmongers. Still loyal to the Leigh fishing industry and now in new premises extending the 120+ years of history this shop has as a fishmongers.

By Carole Mulroney and Jenny Simpson



## THE GOOD OLD/BAD OLD DAYS

I like nothing better than following through a Leigh family story, even when really there is not a great connection to the town. It is fascinating to see where a humble beginning leads a family. Such is the story of the Gisby and Balls families of Leigh.

The first Gisby appearance in Leigh is in 1740 when Edward Gisby married Sarah Main at St Clement's. But it was their great granddaughter, Hepzibah Gisby who married Isaac Balls in 1845 also at St Clement's who started the ball rolling (if you'll pardon the pun). Isaac like his father was a basket maker and had come to Leigh from Burnham on Crouch. Hepzibah's father, Edward Gisby was a fisherman and general dealer.



This pic found on Ancestry—poster did not reply so if you are out there

Isaac died in 1849 and 2 years later Hepzibah and her daughter, Phillis Hepzibah, were living with brother/uncle David Gisby in Hadleigh.

By 1861 Phillis was a nurse in Toxteth, Liverpool, the story of how she came there is for more research but she married in Liverpool in 1868 to William J Warren a merchant seaman from Falmouth. Liverpool was of course a great seafaring centre. And there the story might have ended but William and Phillis had 4 children, the eldest being Emma, and it is with her the story takes another turn. In 1894 Emma married Samuel Fraser, son of a dentist of Scottish descent.

Although Samuel was also supposed to be a dentist he became an actor and singer who performed under the name of Sydney Grant. Clearly the Frasers were a talented family as two brothers of Samuel, namely Frank, a baritone known as Thomas Fraser, and Edward, for many years the juvenile lead at the Gaiety theatre, also turned to the stage.

They all worked in the Victorian Music Hall travelling around at breakneck speed to perform a lot in Liverpool but also other places.

Trying to track the movements of musical actors and performers can be difficult – another suitcase, another town. But in 1901 Samuel listed as Sidney Grant (a married man) was boarding in Royal Leamington Spa. Interestingly the next person boarding in the house was Gracie Grant stated as married aged 23 and an actor. At this time Emma, the long suffering wife, was living with her mother.



The following year 1902 tragedy struck when Grace Housely, aka Gracie Grant, dropped dead on stage, whilst singing 'Goodbye Dolly I must leave you'. She had a long standing heart issue and the doctors said she could have dropped down dead at any time. Samuel admitted at the inquest to having lived with her for about 14 months as his wife.

He obviously went back to Emma for in 1904 she gave birth to a daughter who sadly died 8 weeks later. Still with Emma in 1911, both they and the children, taking the name Grant, were living in Liverpool.

In 1915 Samuel was cited in a divorce case of two fellow actors.

Grace Housely

How long Emma stayed with Samuel I don't know but in 1923 she and her youngest daughter Violet left for America on the SS Baltic from Liverpool and passed through Ellis Island.

Although Samuel died in Gorey, Jersey in 1828 Emma did not remarry and in 1950 aged 80 she was living with her eldest daughter's family in Richmond County, New York, having lived with them for at least 20 years. She died aged 93 in 1963 and is buried on Staten Island.

## A LEIGH HOT HEAD – MAYBE?

Recollections of Rev T J Watson—These were printed in a local paper in the 1920s or 30s. Sadly no date is on the extracts. Rev Watson was a Free Methodist Minister. One story may raise a smile.....

Tobacco in Church? (in the words of Rev Watson).

Those who knew my mother will agree, I think, that she was a good woman, and her fidelity to her religion puts her son to shame. If you went to her shop for a new hat whilst you were hesitating between a 6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> and 6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> you were likely to get a question on the subject of religion that you found it difficult to parry.

You would also receive an invitation to attend the services at the chapel on the following Sunday. For we were Methodists, and, since the religious life of Leigh has often been referred to so far as the Church of England is concerned, perhaps the con-conformist section may here be mentioned. To appreciate our services you must not be finicky or easily disconcerted.

One Sunday morning old Johnny Preear (I have slightly disguised the name as his great grandchildren may still be living) came to service, as indeed he often did after receiving my mother's invitation. He was spotlessly clean with a nice blue and white neckerchief on and with his bald head he looked quite a venerable figure. He took up his position in the front seat with William the singer. Not in the choir but very near it, as near as possible. As we sang the opening hymn my attention was caught by something lying upon the top of Johnny's bald pate, not unlike a fig spread out. I was fascinated by it, and when the prayers began, when as a good boy my eyes ought to have been tightly closed, I still found myself steadfastly gazing at the same spot and as I gazed I saw a trembling hand reach up and remove the object to place it somewhere else, I knew not where.

The worst of it is that I am unable to enlighten readers as to what the offending substance was. All I may write is that although I cannot say that Johnny was a smoker – he probably was – yet I do know that he was a user of tobacco and an economical one.

It was quite the custom to smoke to the Chapel door and sometimes the pipe must have been imperfectly extinguished, for I have often smelt the smouldering during the singing of the opening hymn.

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The inference from Rev Watson is that Johnny was 'storing' his tobacco at the chapel door before entering, but why it should be on his bald head is a mystery – can I imagine an old boy getting to the Chapel door to be greeted by someone just and before shaking hands the only place he could put the tobacco was aloft?

Thomas James Watson was Leigh born and bred (1868) and his father was a grocer and his mother a draper in the Old Town High Street. He married Emma Rebecca Emery in 1894.

By Carole Mulroney

## BURIALS IN LEIGH

According to the Parish registers of St Clements on 1 January 1882 the churchyard was closed for funerals with the exception of funerals in brick built graves and vaults. The registers thereafter record the names of those buried in the Cemetery (London Road) with the service of the Church of England in St Clement's.

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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