



Issue 7 - September 2001

# LEIGHWAY

The Newsletter of the Leigh Society

An eye to the future and an ear to the past in the heart of Leigh

## FLAMING JUNE

June 2001 is a month that the Society will not forget in a hurry as fire swept through the Heritage Centre causing considerable damage. Our grateful thanks to the fire brigade for their magnificent efforts, without which the Heritage Centre would have been lost. The Society would also like to thank T Mann, builders for their prompt response and the speed with which they were able to undertake the repairs. Unfortunately the fire has meant that the Centre has not been open during the vital summer months but one positive result of the fire is that the Society has taken the opportunity to review the displays and information and improve the layout of the Centre. So when we eventually reopen you will see some changes but the old ambience will be preserved. Our aim has been to be open, though not in our final form, for the Regatta weekend. There will be a display stand either inside or outside the Centre, depending on the weather, telling people about the history and other information about the town and the usual sales table and treasure hunt. There will also be events for the kids upstairs and a kid's quiz. The Society would particularly like to thank the Leigh Town Council, who, realising our plight, and after receiving a presentation from the Committee, have made a grant of £2000 towards the restoration of the interior of the Centre. Finally, our grateful thanks go to Nick and Michele from the Customs House in the Old Town, without whose help and support we would not have been able to function over the weekend of the Folk Festival and also to Charlotte for helping us so enthusiastically. As a result of the fire we have forged a strong link with the Leigh Fire Brigade who invited us to participate in their open day which we hope will be an annual happening for us. We also took part in the Local History Fair at Prittlewell Priory in July and now have a very comprehensive exhibition stand for such events. So if any members know of any events, held on weekends, which would welcome our input please let me know through the usual channels. So its onward and upward from now on!

 Ed



Passersby can only stand in amazement as fire sweeps through the Heritage Centre. Thanks to the enormous effort of the fire brigade the Centre was saved from total destruction and the fire was arrested before it reached Plumbs Cottage

## DIDN'T WE HAVE A LOVELY TIME THE WEEK WE WENT TO SHANKLIN

This May a group of 34 Society members spent 5 days on the Isle of Wight staying at a very comfortable hotel in Shanklin.



The weather was not brilliant - one very wet day but generally it was fine and on a couple of days it was warm and sunny.



A must for visiting was Osborne House, 100 years since the death of Queen Victoria Osborne has been given a wash and brush-up and we had a lovely day.

Our visit to the Geological Museum at Sandown was short but very rewarding and the afternoon with the IOW Steam Railway was a great favourite.

On a coach tour of the Island we saw the Botanical Gardens, Alum Bay and Cowes - but often through the rain.



The food was very good with a full English breakfast and a really excellent 5 course dinner.



Well what else did we do? We weren't slack. The hotel had a large indoor swimming pool which was well used - a jacui which also found favour - a table tennis table - a tournament was organised with many taking part - and a pool table.

There was a bar, of course, and one evening we were given entertainment - which involved quite some effort from us - dancing and singing. On our last day - fine and sunny as last days always are - we went to Godshill. A very pretty village with a most picturesque church and a beautifully made model village. We had lunch there before setting off for the ferry and the journey home.



Our coach was comfortable and our driver, John, as helpful and charming as we could wish. We had a very enjoyable five days.

Ann Price

I am sure that everyone who went on the trip would like to thank Ann for all her hard work in organising the holiday and making sure it was such a success.

The Plumbs Cottage appeal would like to thank the trippers for their generous donation of £100 to its funds.

Members are reminded that the next Society trip is on 11 September to Buckingham Palace and the Bank of England Museum.

Ann's next holiday jaunt is proposed for September 2002 and details will be sent out in due course



## REV. S. JONES

June was really a very bad month as we learnt with deep regret of the sudden death of Rev. Jones. Father Jones had been a Vice President of the Society for a number of years and several of our members attended his funeral and memorial service.

We send our heartfelt condolences to Mrs Jones and her family with our thanks for their support over the years and our best wishes for the future.

## PURFLEET GARRISON

As an appetizer for our October talk by Alan Gosling of the Purfleet Garrison Museum which is entitled 'Purfleet's History is Explosive' I thought members would like to know a little bit of just why we should be interested in Purfleet and what connections it has to Leigh.

This is just one event, but a memorable one, in Purfleet's history.

### The downing of the L15

London suffered its first attack by airships on 31 May 1915 and in October that year a flight of airships, including the L15 under the command of Kapitän Leutnant Joachim Breithaupt, caused major damage in the Holborn and Strand areas gaining the infamous claim to fame of killing 28 and injuring 70, with one of its bombs killing 17 and injuring 21, the highest death toll from a single bomb from an airship.

By March 1916 the L15 was ready to return to cause more devastation but her previous 'success' was not to be repeated.

On the night of 31 March she was heading, once again, for London. At a height of 7200 feet she had passed over Ipswich and Chelmsford but was having trouble maintaining height. At 10.30p m she was at a height of 8500feet north east of London.



Kapitän Leutnant Joachim Breithaupt,

The blackout restrictions were much improved to what they had been the previous year but even so the River Thames was still a clear guide. Within minutes the search lights had picked the airship out in the night sky and the Purfleet Battery opened fire. The L15 was hit amidships and turned northwards to try and get out of range, unloading her bombs on the way. Also keeping a weather eye on her movements was the Royal Flying Corps, 2nd Lieutenant A de B Brandon gained altitude above the L15 and carried out his own bombing raid with a box full of explosive darts. Although the L15 returned fire Brandon continued his bombardment until the great airship was alone in the night sky, badly damaged and leaking.

Breithaupt realised he had to jettison everything to escape so he dumped bombs, fuel, machine guns, papers and even his radio room stool. It was not enough and finally at 12.15 a m at a height of only 500 feet the L15 buckled and fell to sea a mile from the Kentish Knock Lightship.

Survivors, of which there were 17, were picked up by the Destroyer Vulture and taken as prisoners to Chatham. The L15 was then slashed and left to break up and sink.

Some time previous to this the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Charles Wakefield, had offered a prize of £500 to whoever was instrumental in bringing down a zeppelin. Two days after the demise of the L15 the officer in charge of the Purfleet anti-aircraft defences, Capt. J. Harris, staked a claim to the prize.

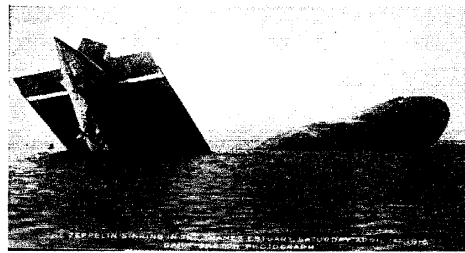
The War Office decided, however, that it would not be right for a cash prize to be given to men who were just doing their job and so instead the Lord Mayor ordered a special medal to be struck and issued to each man involved. 353 medals in 9 carat gold were struck by Mappin and Webb and 230 of these went to the artillery. Amongst the 3rd Company Essex and Suffolk Royal Garrison Artillery (TA) stationed at Purfleet were several men who either lived in Leigh or had enlisted there and these men are recorded in the Roll of Honour

### THE LEIGHMEN

Corporal G M Dorkins  
Gunner R L Dorkins  
Bombardier William Phillips  
Gunner Walter Dean Tubbs  
Gunner Walter Harold Nethercoate.

There may well have been more Leighmen involved as the list includes a Joscelyne and a Livermore, both Leigh names.

Gunner Nethercoate died of influenza at Awoingt in France and is buried at Awoingt Cemetery. Ironically he actually survived the war dying on November 17 1918, 6 days after the Armistice. He was aged 28 and his wife Marguerite lived at 7 Carlton Drive, Leigh-on-Sea



This article was written by Carole Pavitt based on information from various published works with additional local information by Stephen Ayles and is condensed from a booklet soon to be published by the Leigh Society and available from the Heritage Centre priced £1.50

### WHOSE NAME IS IT ANYWAY?

Whilst researching the Leigh families and in particular the history of Plumbs Cottage I have come across the family of Quilter. The daughter of William Ingram Plumb who built the cottage married Nathan Jackson Quilter in 1836 and Plumbs Yard became for a time Quilters Yard.

The Quilter family came from Rettendon and their first entry in the Leigh parish registers is in 1806 when Nathan's father, also Nathan, married Martha Guttree. Another of Nathan and Martha's children was Jabez Bunting Quilter whose wife was the sister of the Rev Michael Tomlin. But where did his Christian names come from? The obvious assumption was that it was a family name, but quite by chance I came across the name Jabez Bunting and that set me off on a trail to find out who this person was.

In 1798 a young man stood up in "Cross Lane," Manchester and delivered his first public "exhortation." In August, 1799, having been received as a candidate by the Methodist Conference, he set out on foot, with his saddle-bags across his shoulder, for his first circuit.

That young man was Jabez Bunting, born in Manchester in 1779.



He went on to become one of the great leaders of the Methodist movement and seen as Wesley's successor. We know John Wesley visited Leigh, but did Bunting also and is that why the Quilter family took his name? Carole Pavitt

**TOUCHING ON THE PERILS OF NAVIGATION OF THE MEDWAY RIVER**  
a salutary tale

My favourite wedding present was a large case of baked beans. My wife, her pretty little head filled with hints and tips from Mum, proud possessor of a brand new cookery book and a severely secondhand gas stove, was not so enthusiastic. Or really, to be truthful, you could say she was hopping mad. The beans were therefore relegated to the boat, to act as combination ballast and survival kit.

The Medway is a very fine river. From here it's downstream a bit and first right. The entrance is wide enough, but there have been errors of navigation caused by going a bit too far down before turning right, and others caused by going much too far down before turning right. This last error can be serious, and lead to circumnavigating the world, which is a bit much when all you wanted to do was to sit outside the 'Malta' with a quiet pint.

The Malta  
Inn - now a  
Beefeater



The 'Malta' is, of course, the only reason for the existence of the Medway, but the secret has been jealously guarded by generations of Men of Kent, not to mention thirsty, Kentish Men who could also swim. Naturally, they went to great lengths to keep out all foreigners in general, and Essex Men in particular, and combined to produce the most highly defended river in England. Great forts and a dockyard at Sheerness, forts along the river and a dockyard at Chatham were part of the scheme, though much of this was built too late to stop De Ruyter and his crew nearly getting to the 'Malta' before closing time. Some years later a spirited effort at closing the river was made by the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company and by the Rochester City Fathers, with their bridges at Rochester. These bridges remain to this day, necessitating lowering all but the most meagre masts, which is just as well, too, as a mile or so before the Gates of the Promised Land stands Aylesford Bridge, whose wheelhouse scarred arch got left behind by the Normans.

The aforementioned Allington Lock Gates are controlled by the Medway Lower Navigation Company, resident in delightful Victorian gothic stone houses by the Lock. These days even Essex Men are tolerated on payment of 2/9d for every vessel propelled by steam, electricity, or other mechanical power, which presumably covers the internal combustion engine, or even an atomic submarine, come to that.

The main duty of the Lock Keeper is to watch for Masters of a sailing boat, row boat, randan, canoe, punt, dinghy not propelled by mechanical power (1/6d) who use an outboard engine until within sight of the Lock, then take the outboard off and hide it under a sack whilst rowing into the Lock, thus saving 1/3d.

Masters of Vessels are also cautioned against drunkenness, abusive language, dumping hot ashes, swimming in the navigation immodestly clothed, not showing during the hours of darkness a white light in a lantern, the internal diameter of which is less than 7 1/2 inches, and entering the Lock without jib-boom hoisted and the yards braced, which would, of course, have effectively stopped De Ruyter and his ruffians.

Immediately through the Lock lies the 'Malta' where Masters of Vessels may, by kind permission from the Management, moor to the railings, alongside a peculiar notice which states 'Water for Visiting Yachts'. Here may be found every reason for not going further up the Medway, and it was here that we found ourselves one sunny day.

The weather was glorious, and expenses very moderate, and of the type that might be expected in such a locality. All good things must come to an end however, and tide time for the Lock being in the morning, a last wild fling ashore the night before sailing home filled the cup to the brim (and emptied it). I suppose if we hadn't bought that last bag of crisps we would have had 4d left between us, but then, you're only young once.

Back on board, the magic of night on the river was with us. The wind whispering in the poplars, the tinkle of glasses being cleared away, the distant roar of water over the weir, the lights going out one by one. It was during the last cigarette before turning in that my wife casually remarked 'I suppose you've got some money left for the lock in the morning.'

Condemned to a night of mad, Hornblower like dreams, what could I do ... shoot the rapids over the weir, cover the boat with bushes and drift out with other craft disguised as driftwood, sink the boat and tow her out underwater... The problem was as far from being solved as ever in the morning. Credit could no doubt be arranged with the proprietors of the Medway Lower Navigation Company, but this would obviously call for a full board meeting (with the attendant difficulty of establishing which of the proprietors were still alive), bankers' references, Letters of Credit, Bills of Lading, Letters of Marque and all the rest of the stuff that us Masters of Vessels are so well aware of.

What else could the future hold? Surely a fate worse than that of the Ancient Mariner... condemned to spend a lifetime tied to a pub railing, watching the happy, carefree folk with their foaming glasses, prevented from joining them by our dire financial straits, gradually growing weaker, until at last the dreaded end.... 'Water for Visiting Yachts'.



Allington  
Lock

My dismal reverie was disturbed by a visit from the Master of the next Vessel, who wished to borrow a primus stove pricker. As he was thanking me profusely for my assistance, the conversation happened to turn to High Finance, with particular reference to a case I had in mind, he immediately endeavoured to shower me with pound notes, on the theory that it was impossible to sail from Allington Lock to Leigh without money. I managed to reduce this sum to 2/9d by expounding my theory that there were no shops on the way. He then declined to give me his address for the return of this amount, in spite of my assertion that he would never make a fortune giving money away like this.

Ah! A sudden thought! Did he eat beans? Yes, right, a hurried opening of the bean tin/ballast locker, and all was solved. Which brings us back home, and me to where I started. As I was saying, never sail up the Medway without plenty of beans.

Of course, it's all recoiled on me now. The cookery book got eaten by the children, and our current collection of beans, one of the finest in the neighbourhood, is right handy for the kitchen stove.

John Porter

Footnote : De Ruyter distinguished himself in the second Dutch War (1664-67) by the capture of English holdings on the Gold and Guinea coasts. He saved the Dutch fleet in a brilliant withdrawal after defeat at North Foreland and burned English ships in the Medway in 1667.

**WHICH COTGROVE**

Does anybody know the identity of the Cotgrove who used to tramp around Dagenham village on a Saturday dressed in a blue fisherman's jersey and round peak cap with a large tray of shellfish perched on his head to serve customers at their front doors?



### ERIC THE MECHANICAL MAN

Southend Kursaal in 1933. The occasion was the Southend Corporation Electricity Department's Exhibition and the star of the show was Eric the Robot. He could shake hands and answer all your questions politely and accurately. One reporter chatted with Eric asking him the time and receiving a swift correct reply.

However when he asked Eric if he liked little boys Eric replied rather testily in the negative.

"Do you like little girls?" was the next question.

"Oh yes," came the reply, "especially blonde ones."

If the question proved to be beyond him, Eric replied.

"I don't know, ask a policeman."

The aim of the exhibition was to explain to people that Electricity was 'a magician, constantly springing fresh surprises,' and to show new tricks that this fantastic magic could bring. Two 'gates of light' at the entrance showed how house lighting may be enhanced by illuminating pillars. In the ballroom and on the balcony the public could spend many hours. Longing eyes would be cast on the 'all electric flat' with a dining room, kitchen and bathroom where at the touch of a switch 'the willing servant electricity will light a glowing fire, cook a meal and provide hot water.' There were stands displaying vacuum cleaners, wash boilers, drying cabinets and tubular heating systems. This wonderful invention greatly added to gardening and horticultural success.

Messrs H. Garon installed a café in the balcony for refreshments.

A display of the 'Magic of Light' showed varying tones of colour giving beautiful effects which were enhanced by pupils of Miss Gertrude Yearsden's School of Dancing.

Chairman of Shoebury Council, Mr Farrow said that electricity was the wonder of the age and he was certain that it would play a great part in Shoebury's future. It was performing miracles in wireless, heating and hot water. In 1929 the Corporation had approved the changes from DC to AC system of distribution as the first step in domestic electrification.

The Mayor of Southend explained that the Corporation's earliest uses were at the pier, for lighting tramways and pumping seawater for the baths, he went on to say that Southend was the first Corporation in the country to take advantage of the Light Railways Act.

The Mayor finished his speech by wishing the exhibition even greater success than that enjoyed the previous year in the Pier Pavilion. The exhibition was an advertisement for the town as one of those that wanted to be the most up-to-date in the world.

### STREETS OF LONDON



A group of members taking part in a very interesting walk around some of the more unusual parts of the City of London in June. Our guide was Sue Sinecock who made the trip very enjoyable and illuminating. Sue is our November speaker and always provides a lively and knowledgeable talk. All members are urged to come a long.

### DAD'S NAVY - THE SEA FENCIBLES

We all know that Leigh furnished the Armada with ships, refitted Admiral Blake's fleet against the Dutch and more recently played a magnificent part in the Dunkirk evacuation. But its role in defending the nation has been much wider than these three episodes and when an invasion was threatened by Napoleon - Leigh was ready.

In 1798 George III authorised the enrolment of all 'such inhabitants of the Towns and Villages on the coast of Great Britain, as shall voluntarily offer themselves for the Defence of the Coast'. These volunteers who were regulated by Royal Navy officers became the Sea Fencibles. The requirements for entry into this gallant band were that the men had to live in the district and to be settled with families and were exempt from impressment into the navy proper.

We hear tales of the press gang and sometimes it seems that any loose male could be scooped up and whisked away but there was a long list of men who were exempt from the press and thus could enter the Sea Fencibles.

Broadly, the exemptions covered watermen, men over 55, boys under 18, masters of fishing vessels, masters of merchant vessels and their first mates, pilots, barge masters and seamen with over 5 children under the age of 15.

The Sea Fencibles for Essex drew men from all the coastal towns, with Leigh coming under the Southend contingent.

The records show that many Leighmen took part in this 'Dad's Navy'. Cotgroves, Emerys Noakes, Frosts and many other familiar Leigh names are listed for the 1805 contingent.

Their conditions of 'employment' were basically

to exercise one day a month for pay of a shilling (the same rate was paid if they were called to action)

There was no requirement to leave their own coast unless the enemy were expected to land elsewhere, in which case they were allowed the pay and provisions of an able seaman

they were protected from the press and expected to watch the beaches for enemy landings and perform services to aid the home army and hinder the enemy.

they could embark on any gunboat or other armed vessel for protection of merchant vessels when enemy armed vessels were in sight they were supplied with pikes which had to be returned at the end of the exercise

they were allowed to leave their district when employed in fishing on the neighbouring coast or conveying fish to market

The men carried out exercises on the days which did not interfere with their main occupations and if a cannon were available they were trained on that as well as with the pike. They were taught to charge the enemy, to receive a charge of the enemy either on foot or horse and to storm and defend batteries.

Details of the monthly pay lists are held at the Public Record Office at Kew and list name, what days they exercised and for how many days, pay due, when it was paid and who received it.

Thus we know that Benjamin Cotgrove served for much of 1805 as did his son Benjamin, his brother Thomas and his nephew William.

The Sea Fencibles were eventually disbanded in 1810 by which time their numbers around the coasts had risen to 23,455.

They were complemented by the River Fencibles who protected the major ports and I daresay a few Leigh men were involved in this organisation defending London. Eventually they too were disbanded in 1813. The River Fencibles escorted the body of Lord Nelson up the Thames to his funeral and it is believed a member of the Vandervord family was of that contingent.

Carole Pavitt Sources: Instructions for the Sea Fencibles - Keith Raynor - The Age of Napoleon No 2 Sea Fencibles 1805 compiled by Jennifer Killick



## THE MAYORESS AND THE MUSICIAN Two Wilder Girls of Leigh

This is the story of two sisters from Leigh who lead very different but interesting lives.

Ethel and Mabel Wilder were the daughter's of a Leigh cockleman, my great grandfather. I believe the family lived at 'Clovelly' in Avenue Road.

Ethel married a William Hartman and they emigrated to Revelstoke, British Columbia, Canada. When there the family played a part in the building of the railways in the area. Walter and Ethel became the first Mayor and Mayoress of Revelstoke. A position they held for 25 years.

During that time they hosted two royal visits, the first in May 1939 when the then George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited and the other in July 1959 when the Queen and Prince Philip went to Canada.



Ethel and William with King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1939

Mabel played the piano and sang as a child and went on to teach the piano in Leigh. She married Bert Robinson, the nephew of Wap Robinson but sadly they divorced and Mabel then married Reginald Pickering.

Mabel turned her love of music into a professional career, taking engagements in London, Queens Hall, Gaumont theatres, BBC radio and television, as well as provincial concerts and cabarets.

Once during the war she appeared at the London Palladium As a child of eight or nine I can remember living with Mabel for three months. She could easily play the piano to an audience of one for three quarters of an hour without a music score and her voice was as good then as it had been in the thirties when she made some records.



Mabel Wilder

If anyone has any information about the Robinson, Wilder or Deal families I would be grateful if they could contact me as I would like to know more about my ancestry. My e-mail address is maxatleigh@onetell.net.uk or drop a letter into the Heritage Centre  
Max Robinson

Revelstoke is located on the Trans Canada Highway, resides along the Columbia River between the Selkirk and Monashee mountain ranges and has a population of 8047 currently

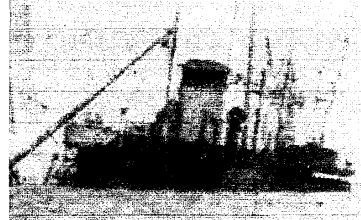
## THE WRECK OF THE MONTGOMERY

As most local people will know the Richard Montgomery was grounded on the Nore Sands on the 20 August 1944 and there she has sat ever since.

Last year the Maritime and Coastguard Agency carried out one of its periodic checks on the status of the vessel which is well known to have been carrying vast amounts of ammunition.

The Montgomery was a Liberty ship (a cargo ship) built in 1943 by the St Johns River Shipbuilding Company of Jacksonville, Florida.

The Richard Montgomery taken when she foundered in August 1944. Picture kindly donated by Mr L Martin.



The Liberty ships were built as part of an emergency ship construction programme as a result of the allies losing so many merchant ships to the German u-boats.

It appears the ships were not flawless and several of them developed cracks causing them to break in two and sink. However, they were vital to the war effort.

In 1944 the Montgomery which was 440 feet long and weighed 7176 tons with a crew of 50 and 30 gunners left Philadelphia with a cargo of 6000 tons of munitions bound for the US Air Force.

Her cargo included the following:

- 13,064 general purpose 250lb bombs
- 9,022 cases of fragmenting bombs
- 7739 semi armour-piercing bombs
- 1,522 cases of fuses
- 1,429 cases of phosphorous bombs
- 1,427 cases of 100lb demolition bombs
- 817 cases of small arms ammunition

The ship arrived in the Thames estuary en route to Cherbourg but during the night of 20 August she swung around at her moorings and ran aground on the Sheerness middle sand. The result of this was that her plates began to crack and buckle and the crew abandoned ship.

Hastily work began to remove her dangerous cargo until a storm blew up and she dragged anchor, broke her back and split in two. And that is how she still remains.

Although some of her cargo was removed there is no knowing how much still lies in and around her.

The view of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency that the wreck appears to be stable and the risk of a major explosion is remote is little comfort to those who live closest to the wreck. However, the Agency does continue to monitor the site.

## WHO WAS RICHARD MONTGOERY?

Richard Montgomery was born in 1738 in Ireland and was in the British Army from 1756 until 1772. In 1775 he was appointed brigadier general in the Continental Army and was second in command in the Montreal expedition. He was killed leading an assault on Quebec.



## KIWI CALLING

You know how we love to hear from old Leighman in far flung places. Well this edition we hear from Fred Osborne who left Leigh many years ago and now lives in Auckland, New Zealand although he has returned several times in the last few years. Here are some of Fred's remembrances.



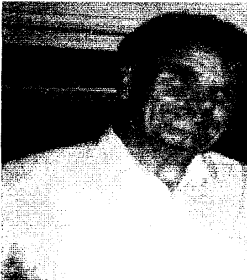
In the winter Fred's uncle Bert 'Ratsy' Osborne used to take a small pleasure craft owned by a retired property owner to Stangate Creek in the River Medway for the duck shooting season.

Ratsy played football for Leigh Wednesday Football Club in the early 1920s.

Bert 'Ratsy' Osborne

One boat the LO10 was owned and skippered by Fred Hall who at one time used to take his wife as mate. She would steer and work the engine controls while he used the winch. He would direct her with hand signals meaning "tiller this way" but of course she would keep it in position for too long (she knew very little about steering) so he would reverse his previous hand signal, and again she would keep the tiller in the new position for too long. We used to like being right next to their boat and watched his face closely as he had quite a low flashpoint and used to use very strong language on his previous male mates but with her he had to smile. But his face was a picture of mixed emotions. Torn between furious bad language and a sickly smile, very good entertainment we thought - waiting for Fred Hall to ignite.

The "Defender" was a cockie boat. She was once rammed by a tug and started to sink, the tug captain kept his cool and left his tug sticking into the Defender until they were over shallower water that would dry at low tide. He then backed his tug out and the Defender sank, to be patched up and bailed out at low tide and towed home. One crew member on the Defender who I knew, said he had absolutely no recollection of anything between being down in the cabin of the Defender and standing on the bow of the tug watching the Defender sinking. He said it was all a blur.



Fred Osborne  
Fred Lived at 32 New Road  
and then at 4 Norman Place  
and went to North Street  
School.

## A TIMELY REMINDER

If you have not paid your subscription for this year then you are reminded that this will be the last edition of Leighway you will receive. So if you want to keep receiving Leighway and learning about Leigh and keeping in touch with what's happening please send your £5 to the Membership Secretary now c/o the Heritage Centre.

**WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU**

## MOUNTAINOUS RAYLEIGH

'Et in hoc manerio fecit Suenue suum castellum - thus is Rayleigh Castle described in the Domesday Book of 1086.

Translated it says 'and in this manor Sweyn made his castle'. Sweyn was a tenant in chief, Sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire and possibly one of the commissioners of the Domesday Survey. But where was Rayleigh Castle?

Well it sat on the high ground which is now enclosed by Crown or London Hill and the High Street. Over 900 years ago this small spur of land was cut off to create a formidable fortress.

Sweyn made Rayleigh the centre of his Barony.

Sweyn's grandson, Henry of Essex, Constable of England, extended the castle area and reinforced its defences.

Unfortunately Henry was accused of cowardice at the Battle of Consyth in 1157. The accusation was made by Robert of Montford and after 6 years the dispute was settled by Trial by Combat between the two. This resulted in the defeat and disgrace of Henry and the families decline into obscurity.

His estates reverted to the King and over the years minor repairs were carried out.

Henry III, by Charter, confirmed the Manor of Rayleigh to Hubert de Burgh and it was Hubert's widow Margaret, Countess of Kent, who founded the market in Rayleigh in 1249. After the death of their son John the manor once again reverted to the King who gave it to his queen, Eleanor of Castile. It is believed the Castle site continued in use in association with the stud which Eleanor founded throughout this period.

There is no date known as to when the Castle was finally deserted. By the time of Richard II there was no interest in the site and Richard permitted 'his beloved tenants of Rayleigh to quarry any stones that may be in the certain old castle that used to be in that town'.

The final mention of the castle is in 1631 when it is referred to as 'ruined'.

At the end of the 19th century the site belonged to E B Francis, a retired Indian Civil Servant, who excavated various areas of the motte and bailey revealing the site's antiquity and finding medieval pottery, knives, horseshoes, crossbow bolts and other finds.

The central area of the castle site was gifted to the National Trust by Mr Francis.

Rayleigh Mount is open to the public between 1 Mar 2001 - 28 Feb 2002: Daily. Summer 7am-7.30pm; winter 7am-5pm and is free.

## OH WE DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE

B R I G H T O N B U R Y  
O E N O T S E K L O F A  
U V E L C W D F E E C R  
R O G O L A E D B W A M  
N D A O A L S N M O I O  
E G N E C T T E O T S U  
M B A C T O N H C S T T  
O L W S O N V T E X E H  
U D S C N Q V U R I R H  
T B L A C K P O O L E J  
H A S T I N G S M E N M  
L P L O W E S T O F T O

BRIGHTON DEAL BOURNEMOUTH WALTON  
HASTINGS CLACTON BLACKPOOL BACTON  
MORECOMBE DOVER FOLKESTONE LOOE POOLE  
FELIXSTOWE LOWESTOFT YARMOUTH CAISTER  
SWANAGE

## THE ELMS



The original building was a farm known as Elm Farm, named after the great elm tree that stood nearby. The farm had several names over the years, Adam's Elm, Allen's Elm, Ellen's Elm Farm. It belonged for many years to a well known farming family named Webb.

When William Webb died in 1793 the farm went to his young son John who in turn left it to his widow Elizabeth.

After the Webbs there were several owners. Eventually in 1881 it was bought for £2100 by Thomas Smith a wealthy coal merchant from Kent. He sold the house and part of the land and Leigh Hall to Frederic Ramuz, a property developer and speculator who later became Mayor of Southend.

Ramuz divided the land into small plots for building what was to be named the Leigh Hall Estate. A huge marquee was erected on the site from which the plots, advertised as 'the New Eldorado' were auctioned.

The farmhouse was bought by Henry King who leased it to George Mills of Leigh. Mills, acting on behalf of Ramuz, who wished to remain anonymous, obtained a licence to sell beers, wines and spirits. He turned the farmhouse into the Elms public house. Mills had agreed to act for Ramuz on the understanding that he would be employed as landlord and Ramuz would pay him a salary of £2 a week.

In the 1920s workmen found a bottle under the floorboards of the Elms containing an account written by Lawrence Davis who had farmed there for 20 years. He tells of his terribly hard life and how he could never make a profit. The farm was very inconvenient, the dairy facing east had the sun from early morning shining on the milk pans. He mentions that a 2 acre field was sold for £60 and was to be used as a cemetery on the road to Hadleigh. He kept 3 horses and 6 cows and built a cottage for his labourer who could neither read nor write and belonged to the Peculiar People. Later he mentions the labourer's wife had become a lady and would not do a thing. Her husband earned 15 shillings a week and house and wood free. At harvest he had £8 to £9 and a barrel of beer and supper.

Davis paid £120 a year rental and never made a shilling profit. The worse years were 1875 and 1880 when there was great competition from America. He mentions the harvest being ruined by constant rain and the dear Rev King returning 10% of the tithe money.

When his daughter was married the Rector would take no payment. The villagers put bunting from the Elm to the church. Davis was a trustee of the water supply and was active in advancing the penny readings and concerts at Leigh for the amusement of the people. He often helped Miss Annie King, the Rector's daughter, to get up concerts and entertainment. They made £50 to help towards the new church chancel.

The letter ends 'Adieu, should you read this within 100 years please bury it again in some dry part of the Elm building, faithfully yours, Lawrence Davis'

The bottle was replaced, wrapped in a copy of the local paper, waiting for some other workmen to find it in the future.

The Elms became a well known landmark in Leigh and at one time was a principal bus and coach stop. It was also well known as a stopping place for horses, the horse trough stood outside.

At one time the name changed to the 'Half Penny' but this caused such an uproar amongst the locals that it swiftly changed back to the Elms.

Mavis Sipple

## CHARACTERS OF OLD LEIGH JOSEPH CUNDY



Joseph Cundy was born in 1814 in South Shoebury, and although only a short period of his life was spent in Leigh he is nevertheless a very interesting character.

Joseph was the third of eleven children born to John and Mary Cundy.

By 1841 Joseph was living in Prittlewell but his two older brothers were already in Leigh.

In 1843 Joseph married Mary Ann Sharp in Holborn London. Mary Ann was the daughter of a marine sore dealer in Southend.

Joseph and Mary set up home in Leigh and began to raise their family. Joseph was a fisherman and the family appears to have lived next door to the Smack. Joseph's life in Leigh lasted only about 20 years and by 1871 the family had moved back to South Shoebury.

After Mary Ann died Joseph went to live with his daughter Jane in an upturned fishing boat with a crooked chimney. They lived in this ketch which had been converted into a cottage in 1870. It had originally been bought by Dale Knapping for storage of barge gear and tackle.

In 1881 Jane left home to marry and within 4 years Joseph had moved out of the boat house. By 1891 he was living in the Essex Paupers Lunatic Asylum in Brentwood and described as a 'lunatic' but probably suffering no more than from senile dementia and old age. The Victorians were a cruel lot! But I suppose anyone living in an upturned boat with a crooked chimney must be a little eccentric.

Joseph died at the Asylum in 1894 aged 79 and is buried in South Shoebury churchyard.



Information in this article is taken, with permission, from the Website of Andrew Barham. Joseph's great great grand-son

## DEAR DIARY

Please note the following dates in your diaries for Society and other local events for the rest of the year

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 15/16 September | Leigh Regatta   |
| 11 September    | Buckingham Palace and Bank of England                                     |
| 17 October      | Purfleet 's History is Explosive - Alan Gosling, Purfleet Garrison Museum |
| 14 November     | City Pubs, Gardens and Churches - Sue Sincock                             |
| 8 December      | Christmas Comicals  |
| 12 December     | Xmas lunch at Oscars  |



## RACE NIGHT AND QUIZ

Members will be pleased to know that both of these events were very successful and raised nearly £900 towards the restoration of Plumbs Cottage.



### CHRISTMAS COMICALS

The Comicals will be held on 8 December in the Den. We have a number of acts but would still like some more so please get in touch with Carole as quickly as possible. A meeting of all those who wish to participate will take place at the Heritage Centre at 2.30p.m. On Sunday, 7 October. Please come along if you wish to take part. If you can't manage to make it let Carole know through the Heritage Centre what part you would like to play in the proceedings.

The theme this year is the 'Roaring 20s' so girls dust off those beads and practice your Black Bottoms.

There will of course be community and Carol singing for everyone to join in.

Once again the refreshments will consist of, what else, but plum pudding and mince pies and sherry. Bring your own other eats and drinks.

We are restricted in numbers to 100 so its first come first served. The tickets are £5 each and you will find a leaflet with all the information tucked inside your Leighway.



### PRESERVING PLUMBS

The fire at the Heritage Centre has curtailed our activities a bit over the summer and we have not been able to sell sponsorship certificates. However, the Plumb's recipe book is still being compiled so if you have any favourite plum recipes let Carole know.

The Comicals is of course in aid of Plumbs and we will be putting together a programme of events for the coming year.



### YOU GOT E-MAIL??

More and more of you now have access to e-mail facilities through your home computers. E-mail is quicker and cheaper and for many people, more convenient.

So why not have your Leighway come to you through the ether.

As from the January edition we hope to be e-mailing Leighway to all those members who have given us their e-mail addresses. We will also be e-mailing our notices of events.

We appreciate that there will still be many members who do not have this facility and so their Leighway and other information will continue to be sent through the post at the same time.

So if you want to receive your Leighway through this medium just e-mail Carole at [carole.pavitt@bopenworld.com](mailto:carole.pavitt@bopenworld.com) and your e-mail address will be added to the circulation list.



## PLANNING

Over the last few months the Society has been consulted on a number of planning applications affecting the Leigh Conservation Areas we have also made a detailed response to the first round of consultations on the new Southend Borough Plan. Basically we were concerned that the Plan did not respect the unique circumstances of Leigh sufficiently and we have urged the Borough Council to take a number of suggestions on board when they produce the First Deposit Draft of the Plan in due course.

For those members who find the planning system confusing and particularly the local plan process which seems, and does, drag on for years, the following is a short explanation of the procedures.

The Borough Council published an Issues Report in March and this is what the Society has responded to. This was not a detailed plan for the Borough but a series of issues which the Borough Council saw as important and requiring consideration in their Replacement Borough Plan.

The next step will be for the Borough to issue a First Deposit Draft Local Plan where once again the public will have the opportunity to respond. This will be a detailed plan for the area with specific policies for consideration.

The Borough Council will then consider the representations made to the First Deposit and may make changes to the Plan.

This revised plan will then form the Second Deposit Draft Plan which will again be the subject of consultation. This Second stage is restricted however, to the changes and is not an opportunity to introduce objections which were not made at the First stage.

There will then be a local plan inquiry before an Inspector who will hear those objections made to the First Deposit Draft which have not been withdrawn and to those made at the Second stage.

The Inspector then writes his report of the inquiry and makes recommendations to the Borough on how the Plan should or should not be amended. The final say on whether these recommendations are carried forward lies with the Borough Council.

It is a long and complicated procedure but the Society will be following it all the way through with the hope that the end result will benefit the Town and its inhabitants.

### Applications

Over the last couple of months the Committee has been consulted on a number of planning applications and in some cases has raised objection to them in whole or in part.

Of particular interest were proposals for the Customs House where we had a number of concerns, some of which have been addressed and the Council has granted permission with some amendments.

Also of interest were the optional applications for the Coliseum where we favoured the scheme that did not include parking for cars.

We have also opposed the lighting and telemast scheme for Belton Way. We have continued to keep a watchful eye on proposals in the Boradway and have alerted the Council to ur concerns regarding changes to shop fronts and the need to retain the character of the street frontage.

Articles for the next edition of Leighway should be with Carole by 30 November. Send them either to the Heritage Centre, e-mail [carole.pavitt@bopenworld.com](mailto:carole.pavitt@bopenworld.com) or post to 27 North Dell, Chelmsford, CMI 6UP

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The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the committee or officers of the Society

We rather hope you will keep your Leighway but if not please recycle it



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