



# LEIGHWAY

## WELCOME

Welcome to this Special Edition of Leighway, the magazine of the Leigh Society. This is a Special Edition because it is issued to herald and coincide with the Leigh Society's 2015 Open Day at the Leigh Community Centre on 18 July 2015.

The commemorations of the events of the Great War continue to enthral us and 1915 was a momentous year with the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Gallipoli. We will be commemorating men from Leigh and Southend who were sent to that ill-fated campaign. It is also the centenary of the sinking of the Lusitania - and we have a Leigh connection to that event too.

It is the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo and there will be displays relating to the Napoleonic period and what was happening in Leigh and the local area at that time.

Dunkirk is never far from hearts and minds in Leigh and this year is the 75th anniversary of the evacuation. The Endeavour Trust will be on hand to tell their story and the Leigh Society will highlight other aspects of the event.

It is 70 years since the joyous events of VE and VJ Day - we will see how Leigh celebrated the end of 6 years of war.

There will be interesting information from local people about their remembrances of the war in Leigh, and their experiences of being evacuated. But it won't all be about War or anniversaries - local interest items about people of Leigh will also be included.

We have many guest organisations taking part and a full programme of talks and sales of items of interest related to Leigh and the area. You can also bring in any memorabilia for scanning into the archives and there will be the Leigh Family History Database if you want to find out about your Leigh roots.

**IT'LL BE A GREAT DAY**

**EACH DAY IS A LITTLE BIT OF  
HISTORY  
TOGETHER WE HAVE MADE IT  
HAPPEN**

### PROGRAMME FOR THE DAY

10am - Doors Open

10.30am Belfairs in Wartime—Steve Ayles

11.15am Canon King's Letters—Jenny and Ed Simpson

12.00 Searching for WW2 Memories in Southend —Brian Sandford

1.30pm The Thames—Peter Finch, River Thames Society

2.15pm London Wreck Project —Steve Ellis and Tim Joyce

3.00pm Gallipoli —Veterans' Recollections—John Baker

4pm - close

**THE EVENT IS ORGANISED AND  
SPONSORED BY THE LEIGH SOCIETY  
OTHER EXHIBITING ORGANISATIONS  
ARE**

**FRIENDS OF SOUTHEND MUSEUMS  
HADLEIGH & THUNDERSLEY ARCHIVE  
LEIGH HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY  
LEIGH UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
SOUTHEND MUSEUM  
THE ENDEAVOUR TRUST  
WESLEY METHODIST CHURCH  
WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION**

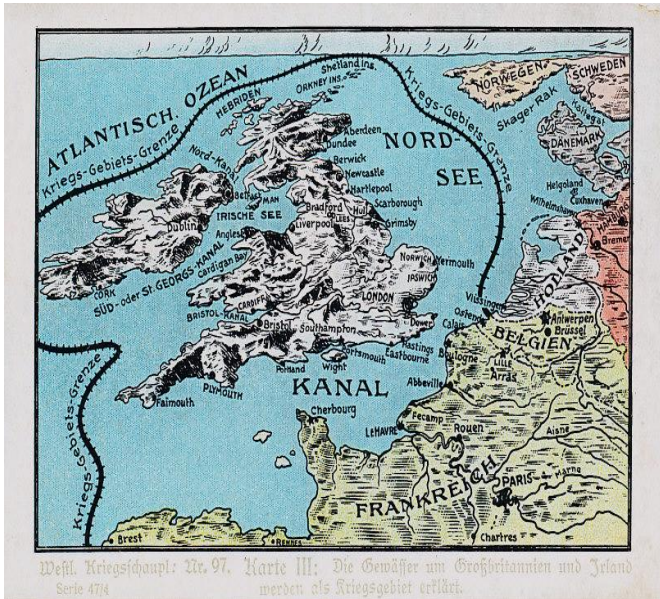
# THE SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA - 1915



RMS *Lusitania* was a British ocean liner, holder of the Blue Riband, and briefly the world's largest passenger ship. She was launched by the Cunard Line in 1906, at a time of fierce competition for the North Atlantic trade. On 7 May 1915, she was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat, causing the deaths of 1,198 passengers and crew.

Controversy has always surrounded the sinking and it is now clear that the *Lusitania* was carrying more than just passengers, making her a target for German U-Boat activity.

Submarine warfare was intensifying in the Atlantic and Germany had declared the seas around Britain a war zone.



In the USA the Germans placed a newspaper advertisement warning people of the dangers of sailing on the *Lusitania*.

## CUNARD

Established 1840

### EUROPE VIA LIVERPOOL LUSITANIA

Fastest and Largest Steamer  
now in Atlantic Service Sails  
SATURDAY, MAY 1, 10 A.M.

Transylvania. . . Fri., May 7, 5 P.M.  
Orduna. . . . . Tues., May 18, 10 A.M.  
Tuscana. . . . . Fri., May 21, 5 P.M.  
LUSITANIA. . Sat., May 29, 10 A.M.  
Transylvania. . Fri., June 4, 5 P.M.

Gibraltar—Genoa—Naples—Piraeus  
S.S. Carpathia, Thur., May 13, Noon

ROUND THE WORLD TOURS  
Through bookings to all principal Ports  
of the World.  
COMPANY'S OFFICE, 21-24 State St., N. Y.

### NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

**IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY**  
WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 22, 1915.

## LEIGH'S LINK TO THE LUSITANIA

Peter Buswell was born in 1888 in Canning Town, then part of Essex, and by 1915 was living with his wife, Marion, and son at 75 Leigh Hall Road. Peter was a shipping agent for the Anchor Line based in Glasgow, later to be closely allied to the Cunard Line.

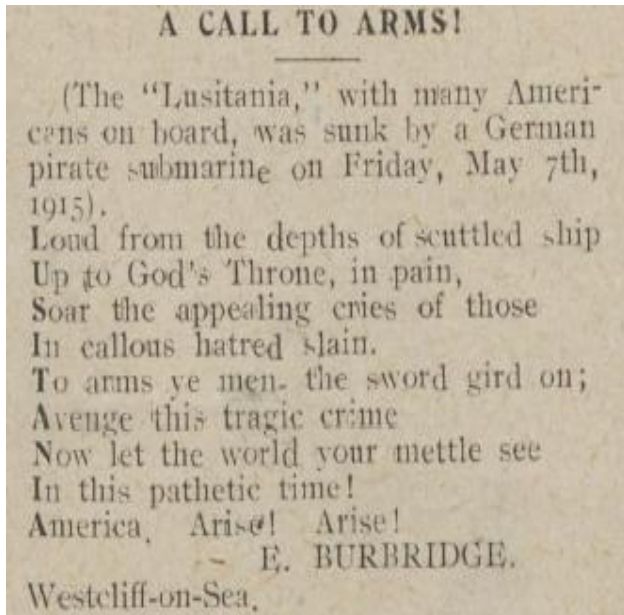
On 22 March 1915 he arrived in New York aboard the Cunard ship, *Tuscana* and was scheduled to return to Glasgow aboard the *Cameronia*. For reasons that are not clear the *Cameronia* was requisitioned on 1 May and so Peter, along with several others, was transferred to the ill-fated *Lusitania*.

On 7 May, *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German U-Boat, 11 miles off the southern coast of Ireland inside the declared "zone of war". She sank in just 18 minutes.

In firing on what was then held to be a non-military ship without warning, the Germans had breached international laws. The sinking caused huge protests in the US, as 128 Americans were among the dead, and helped shift public opinion there against Germany, influencing America's eventual declaration of war in 1917. It also invigorated the recruitment campaign nearer to home.



A local poet, whose verse is often to be found in local newspapers of the time, wrote the following on the sinking of the Lusitania.



Later history shows that the munitions on board made the ship a legitimate target for the U-Boat and although the blame was laid squarely on Germany for the loss of life, the British had been breaching the law themselves by shipping those munitions on a passenger liner.

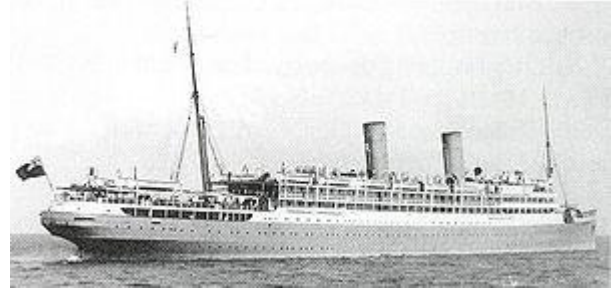
Peter Buswell survived the sinking of the Lusitania and continued to travel back and forth across the Atlantic, sometimes taking Marion with him. His career was to be one of crossing the Atlantic in some of the greatest passenger liners of the day, such as the Aquitania and the Berengaria.

He lived in Leigh Hall Road until his death in 1945.

Did he ever pass the story of his experiences on to anyone in Leigh?



## THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL EDWARD



The Royal Edward, along with the Saxonia and Invernia, had been used to house German prisoners of war and had been anchored off the pier in Southend.

On 28 July 1915, Royal Edward embarked 1,367 officers and men, mainly reinforcements for the British 29th Infantry, with members of the Royal Army Medical Corps. All were destined for Gallipoli. On 10 August, she sailed for Lemnos, a staging point for the Dardanelles.

On the morning of 13 August Oberleutnant zur See Heino von Heimburg in the German submarine UB-14 was off the island of Kandeloussa and saw the Royal Edward and the Soudan. He let Soudan pass and homed in on the unescorted Royal Edward, launching a torpedo from about 2 km away and hitting Royal Edward in the stern. She sank within six minutes.

The stricken ship was able to get off an SOS before losing power, and Soudan returned and rescued 440 men in six hours. Two French destroyers and some trawlers rescued another 221. The death toll was high because Royal Edward had just completed a boat drill and the majority of the men were below decks re-stowing their equipment.



### Survivor

Frederick James Riches was the son of Frederick and Jesse Riches of 49 Leighville Grove.

## LETTERS FROM LEIGH RECTORY – A U3A SHARED LEARNING PROJECT



In July 2014 our team, all members of U3As in the Southend Network, met for the first time, having been invited by the Leigh Heritage Centre to carry out a piece of work for them.

A cache of 80 letters written by Juliana Stuart King, wife of Canon Walker King of Leigh, had been placed with the Heritage Centre some years ago. They had been written to her son Robert Stuart King, the youngest of her 8 children, firstly when he was at school at Felsted during 1874/5 and then later when he was a curate in Great Grimsby during 1886 to 1889.

Robert later became the second Canon King at Leigh, from his father's death in 1892 until his own death in 1950. Both of these Rectors were much loved by the Leigh community.

Transcribing closely written letters was quite difficult, but team members saw it as detective work and finally managed to understand all the words that were used. One of the team members took an interest in the style of writing, the shorthand and unusual words. It was a fascinating task working out where all the people referred to lived and who they were.

Once the letters had been transcribed the team chose particular topics that interested them and each prepared a short presentation given to the Leigh Society in March.

Juliana came from an illustrious family and one of the team was skilled in family history research, so she found many facts about her ancestors and siblings. Another team member became interested in the connection with Bishop Edward King of Lincoln, who was Walker King's brother.

There are references to Cotgroves, Kirbys, Emerys, Brewers, Boyntons describing the very hard lives of the people in the old town and some of the tragedies and illnesses they experienced. So these letters provide a picture of life in Leigh at that time.

The Rev. Walker King was on the schools committee and Juliana taught girls in the Sunday school. They led a busy social life and had many visitors and one of the team wrote about her domestic life as the Canon's wife and her numerous duties. She described all this in her letters, as well as reports on the lives of her other children.

By the 1880s Charles and Edward King were in North America running farms and sawmills. Her eldest daughter Annie was married to a West Country land owner and Henry was also following in his fathers' footsteps and had the living of Tatworth near his sister at Chard in Somerset.

There is a description of a member of the family being given "laughing gas" when she had a tooth out in London. Another went to a major exhibition in Westminster called "Niagara" where moving photographic panoramas were displayed. They also made a visit to the Italian Exhibition at the newly opened Earls Court centre.

All the team greatly enjoyed the challenge of transcribing and researching the contents of the letters and we hope the transcripts will provide many details for researchers in the future. Here is an extract from one of the letters:-

*1<sup>st</sup> November 1887*

*By your being vaccinated I suppose you must have small pox in your district. I expect you were afraid to tell me before, lest I should be nervous about it - but, strange to say, I really am not!! They say there is a special Providence over little children & I also think there most truly is also over all those whose duty calls them into dangers of this kind. Even when we had cholera in Leigh & Papa was with all the worst cases, I somehow felt that he would be kept safe - at least I knew it was his duty to go amongst them & I never felt actually nervous & would never had said a word against his going. We have had cases of smallpox too, both at Stone & in Leigh & very bad ones. Papa said the smell used often make him retch. Of course he took all proper precautions, changing his clothes when he came home & smoking is they say a good preventative - (you won't object to that!) also, & do remember this, never to go into an infected place with an empty stomach! Just after meals is the best time to go.*

Jennifer Simpson May 2015

### LEIGH'S DAD'S ARMY - CAN YOU HELP?

In 1940 Jack Thomas lived with his wife and baby in Grange Road. Jack was a boat builder and worked at the Johnson and Jago boatyard close to Leigh Station. boatbuilding was a reserved occupation so he wasn't called up for military service. Johnson and Jago were building Fairmile Motor Launches for the Royal Navy.

Jack joined the Home Guard and was made a corporal. They did all their parades and drills in Leigh, and didn't have rifles at the start, but eventually they were issued with obsolete Canadian Ross rifles from the Great War.

Jack's son is searching for a photograph of his father in uniform and of the Home Guard from Leigh. Does anyone have anything that could help in the search? Was your dad in the Leigh Home Guard?

If you can help please get in touch at [carole.mulroney@btinternet.com](mailto:carole.mulroney@btinternet.com)

**VE/VJ DAY - SOMETHING TO  
CELEBRATE  
WERE YOU THERE?**

This series of pictures from our archives show how the people of Leigh celebrated the end of the War.



Lymington Avenue - VE Day



Leighville Grove - VJ Day

**VE DAY ON BILLET WHARF**



George & Wyn Goldsworthy, Ellen & Dorothy Theobald, Nell Landon, Charlle Goldsworthy, Bett Lawson

## VJ KIDS IN THE OLD TOWN

The following pictures were taken by Jack Grisley of Woodfield Garage, Woodfield Road on 14 August 1945, the day before VJ Day and show groups of Leigh kids down in the Old Town on Strand Wharf.

The Grisley family emigrated to Canada and the photos have been donated by Jack's son, Ken, who is in the pictures. He is able to name some of the kids but hopes others will be recognised locally - so if you do recognise anyone in the photos let Carole know on [carole.mulroney@btinternet.com](mailto:carole.mulroney@btinternet.com). In Canada the Grisley family started up a business which Ken now runs, called Leigh Industries Ltd - so Leigh is never far away from the thoughts of her sons and daughters.



Bottom Picture

Back Row - ?, ?, ?, Ken Sayers, Jack Johnson, Ron Osborne, Jack Grisley, Jim Grisley Jnr, Tony Ford

Front Row - Ken Grisley, ?, Fred Osborne, ?

**DO YOU KNOW ANYONE ELSE - ESPECIALLY ANY OF THE GIRLS IN THE TOP PICTURE?**

## DUNKIRK

### HAROLD GRAHAM PORTER THE FOURTH MAN

Harold Graham Porter, known in the family as Graham, was born on 15 June 1921 in Handsworth. His father, Sydney, was a manufacturing jeweller in Birmingham and his mother, Mabel's forebears were wine merchants there.

Graham attended Malvern College but he did not excel in his studies. He enjoyed practical subjects such as woodwork and outdoor pursuits like walking mountaineering and canoeing, as well as swimming and tennis.

After leaving school Graham worked at James Walker, jeweller, possibly in preparation for taking on his father's business. He was there until December 1939 when he enlisted in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, training as a signalman. He was part of the detachment stationed on Southend Pier and volunteered to go to Dunkirk. He was ordered to go on the Renown.

The story of how the Renown met her end is well known in Leigh but the report of Graham's death in the Birmingham Post of 5 June 1940 carries a report by the captain of the ship to which Graham was attached which gives a different version of events "Mr Porter, with three other men, all volunteers for the job, were rowing between the Belgian coast and a destroyer in order to save the BEF men. By their work they saved a thousand lives. They were making what was understood would be their last journey, because more men could not be taken on board, when the rowing boat was bombed out of the water and the men were never seen again."



## SAMUEL BACON, THE MAN WHO SAVED

### RATTY AND TOAD FOR THE NATION

At around 11 o'clock on 24 November, 1903, a man called George Robinson, who would later be referred to as 'a Socialist Lunatic', arrived at the Bank of England. He asked to speak to the former governor, Sir Augustus Prevost, failing there he was asked if he would like to see the Bank Secretary instead.

When the Secretary appeared, Robinson walked towards him, holding out a rolled up manuscript. It was tied at one end with a white ribbon and at the other, with a black one. He asked the Secretary to choose which end to take. With hesitation the Secretary chose the black ribboned end, whereupon Robinson pulled out a gun and fired three or four shots at the Secretary, all of them missed.

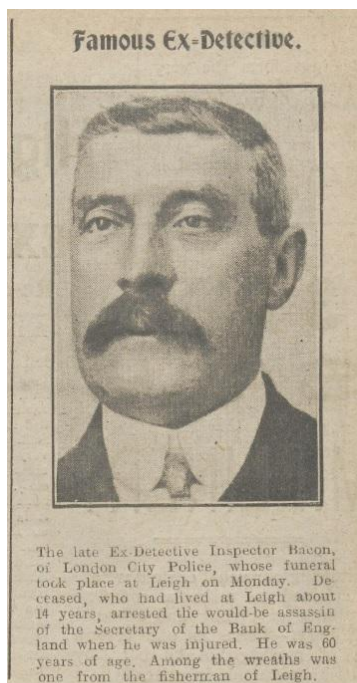
Several bank employees managed to wrestle Robinson to the ground, aided by the Fire Brigade who turned a hose on him. Strapped into a straitjacket, he was bundled away and subsequently committed to Broadmoor.

On duty at the Bank during the incident was Inspector Samuel Bacon and Detective Rigby and it was they who overpowered Robinson.

Sadly the incident caused severe heart strain to Inspector Bacon and he soon after retired - to live in Leigh in Rectory Grove where he died 14 years later.

The Bank Secretary who could have been killed in the incident was one Kenneth Grahame. Very soon after the incident, clearly affected by it, he retired from the Bank and a year later started to write and to become one of our great literary talents - the author of

#### Wind in the Willows



slwg 6.7.1917

## THE LEIGH SOCIETY

The Leigh Society is dedicated to enhancing and improving Leigh in all aspects be they in planning and conservation terms or in a social and cultural way.

Our motto is -

**An eye to the future** – because we look at all planning applications in the 4 conservation areas and comment on them and on other things that are proposed for the Town

**An ear to the past** – because we are passionate about Leigh's history and making sure it is passed on to future generations

**In the heart of Leigh** – because we are based in the heart of Old Leigh, BUT we care about the whole town.

Come and join us and help us to keep Leigh a great place to live, work and visit.

### WHO, WHY, WHAT AND WHERE?

The **Leigh Society** was founded in 1972 and after restoring the Smithy in the **Old Town** to form the Heritage Centre we have been open ever since as a museum of Leigh. The Society has grown from strength to strength and manages the Heritage Centre and the restored Plumbs Cottage.

The Heritage Centre is a registered charity.

The aims of the Society are –

to promote high standards of planning and architecture in the Leigh Conservation Areas and to secure the preservation of features of historic and public interest;

to provide and maintain a museum in the Old Leigh Conservation Area for the advancement of the education of the public and for the exhibition to the public of objects, documents, photographs and any other item whatsoever connected with the history of the town of Leigh-on-Sea; and

to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of public architectural and historical interest in the Conservation Areas of Leigh.

## BE A HELPER

Our Volunteer Stewards don't have to know all about the history (although some do and it's an ideal place to learn), they just have to be welcoming and friendly, encourage visitors to explore the Heritage Centre and Plumbs Cottage, and take money for postcards, books and gifts.

If this sounds like something you could help with please consider giving a few hours a month of your time. You will not be left on your own; we always try to work in pairs.

Someone will show you what needs to be done and it's all written down for you so that you don't forget. Sometimes we need help with school visits and adult groups as well.

Volunteering at the Heritage Centre is a really enjoyable experience and your help to keep the memories of Old Leigh alive is always very much appreciated.

Please contact our Secretary, Margaret Buckey, 01702 473628 to find out how you can help.

## CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE

Along with many other small organisations, the Leigh Society struggles to engage the younger generation.

At the Heritage Centre we regularly welcome school groups, usually under 11s, from local schools and further afield. They all thoroughly enjoy the experience and the chance to see first hand how our ancestors lived and worked.

Many local children come with their schools and then bring back mum and dad at the weekend to show them what they have seen and learned.

So the interest is there, but we need to nurture it to ensure that both the Leigh Society and Heritage Centre continue into the future and that none of Leigh's wonderful history is lost.

So if your child has paid us a visit and talked to you about it, why not join up and get our regular Leighway magazine - come to our talks and events - and make sure you pass it all on to your friends and family.

This is our time and it is time to make a difference and keep what is precious for all of us to enjoy in the future.

With enough support and interest we can try and create a youth wing and organise projects to engage those enquiring minds and give us all sense of pride in the place we live in.

## LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN!

## THE LEIGH SOCIETY

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please enrol me as a member of the Leigh Society (UK Subscription - £10 per household; overseas subscription - £15)

Members will receive a copy of the Society's magazine, Leighway, at least 3 times a year and will be able to join our many events and excursions. The Society meets regularly in March, April, May, October and November for talks on various subjects of interest. These are held at Elm Road Methodist Church (members are charged £1 entry, non members £2 to cover costs). Our website ([www.leighsociety.com](http://www.leighsociety.com)) will carry full details about the Society.

Getting Leighway and other information by email saves the Society money in postage etc. If you can please use this method

Name.....  
.....

Address.....  
.....

.....Postcode.  
.....

Tel.....Email.....  
.....

I enclose my cheque for £ ..... / or would like to pay my subscription by Standing Order \*  
Send to the Martin Ayling, Membership Secretary, 21 Henry Drive, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 3QQ, or hand in at the Heritage Centre

I would like to receive my Leighway by e-mail – YES/NO  
I am interested in being a volunteer helper at the Heritage Centre –  
YES / NO \*

(\* Please delete as applicable – if you wish to pay by standing order a form will be sent to you)

Please pass to a friend who may be interested in joining

**TO ALL CURRENT AND FUTURE MEMBERS WE ARE MOVING TOWARDS EMAIL CIRCULATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO SAVE COSTS - SO PLEASE LET CAROLE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS IF YOU HAVE ONE EMAIL HER WITH THE DETAILS AT [carole.mulroney@btinternet.com](mailto:carole.mulroney@btinternet.com)**