

LEIGHWAY ISSUE 49 SPRING 2016



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DIARY DATES

19 April Trip to Audley End
20 April AGM and River Thames by Wendy York
18 May Thorpe Smith Collection at the Beecroft—Claire Hunt
21 May—Quiz Leigh Community Centre
4-11 June—Leigh Art Trail
23-26 June—Leigh Folk Festival
16 July—Open Day
18 August—Southwold trip
21 Aug—Maritime Festival
19 September—Regatta
19 October—Harwich and Dovercourt Holiday Resorts—David Whittle
16 November—Dorset Holiday—Ivan Starkey, Leigh Horticultural Society

WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK

The Leigh Society is keen to increase its membership and offer to members a well rounded and interesting programme of talks throughout the year. We currently hold 5 talk evenings a year in March, April, May, October and November. These are held at 7.30pm at Wesley Methodist Church in Elm Road.

We would be very grateful if you could complete the enclosed questionnaire to help us inform our programme and focus on what our members would like the Society to provide. Please return the questionnaire to Carole by 20 April by email at carole.mulroney@btinternet.com or leave it for her collection at either the Heritage Centre in the Old Town or Community Centre in Elm Road. Alternatively bring it to the AGM with you.

BARRIE PRICE

We are sad to report the passing of Barrie, husband of our Chairman, Ann.

Barrie was a delightful gentleman, full of humour, a joy to chat to and a great sport lover. Always supportive of the Society and its work and we will miss him as a great friend.

Only last year we reported how Barrie had been awarded a medal by the Russian Government in recognition of his involvement in convoys during the war.

We are sure you will all wish us to express your sincerest condolences to Ann and the family at this very sad time.

SUBSCRIPTIONS etc

Just to remind everyone that if you haven't paid your subs for 2016 yet you have until 20 April (the AGM) to do so. After that date your membership will lapse. So this could be your last Leighway. We hope not so please get those subs in now. Please send your subs to the Membership Secretary, c/o Leigh Heritage Centre, 13A High Street, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 2EN.

Have you got a problem finding a birthday present for someone—if they love Leigh why not give them a membership for just £10—a gift that gives all year. A membership form can be downloaded at www.leighsociety.com.

AGM PAPERS AND ACCOUNTS AND SOUTHWOLD THEATRE TRIP

If you receive your Leighway via email you will find also attached to the email some additional papers relating to the AGM and our annual accounts. These are important documents so make sure you don't miss them, especially if you are coming to the AGM. Also the details of this year's Southwold Theatre Trip—please print this off if you want to come as tickets go fast.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It is my pleasure, once again, to thank all members and especially your committee for their help and support throughout the year. It is wonderful that so many people care about preserving and promoting our special town. Recently we have been sad to lose the services of Donald Fraser who was a mainstay of the committee which set up Plumbs Cottage, and has not only been the treasurer of the Heritage Centre for many years but was a regular steward at the Centre. Donald remains a member of the Society, and we thank him for his years of valuable and dedicated service. We have a busy year of events ahead, with talks, visits, the quiz, and our Open Day at the Community Centre which always attracts a lot of interest and draws in many who have hitherto been unaware of the Society.

I look forward to seeing you at our meetings, during the year, and particularly at the AGM on 20th April.

Ann Price

SECRETARY'S REPORT

In a reflective mood, how well has Leigh and the Society done since the conservation areas were established, our Old Town fishing village saved from a seafront motorway and concern for Leigh's unique character and maritime history recognised.

The Society has made its views known on hundreds of planning matters in trying to stem the tide of 'market forces' and other pressures. However, perhaps our main achievement has been the Heritage Centre. The rebuilding of the Old Smithy and the pictorial and artefact presentation of Leigh's history continues to be a tremendous success. The rebuilt Plumbs Cottage has been a source of great delight to visitors young and old alike.

The Society has continued to keep a watchful eye on Leigh's natural environment, our cliffs, the seafront and cinder path areas coming under scrutiny for improvements. Two Tree Island too is a very important as a wildlife reserve and natural tidal marsh.

Up in the town, the shopping areas have changed the most. Like many older residents, I remember the number of grocers, butchers, bakers, greengrocers, ironmongers, shoe shops now replaced by cafes, bars and restaurants. Regarding these, we have been successful in keeping many of the arcaded shopfronts and tried to keep the fascias tasteful.

I remember the quieter roads. My sister and I used to cycle to school with gay abandon, free wheeling down the streets 'look no hands'.

Sadly we lost Clements Hall to Eden Point and we continue to object to more blocks of flats intruding on our low scale residential areas. However, the small Victorian houses predominating off the Broadway and Rectory Grove have increasingly been lovingly refurbished in character with sash windows and traditional doors. The loss of front gardens to cars is to be regretted.

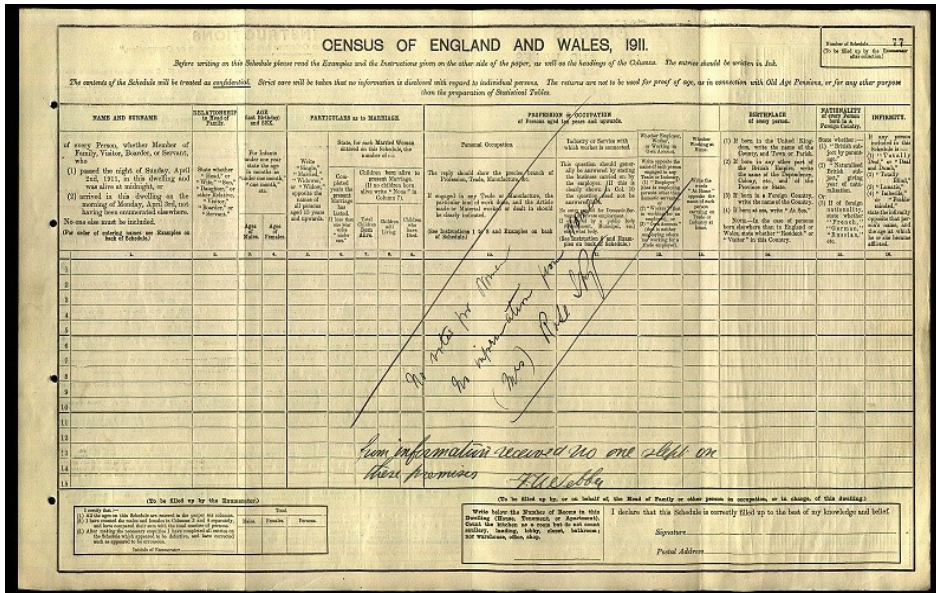
With the establishment of Leigh Town Council, after active support, we have regained our community centre now a hive of activity. Strand Wharf is now being landscaped to provide an attractive public open space. Lately, we understand the Bell Hotel is to be rebuilt and the Grand has a new owner. Hopefully this will be good for Leigh - and long awaited.

Our Open Day, successfully organised by Carole, at the community centre in order to promote the Society and Leigh's history involved many local groups.

With our lovely estuary location and good access to London, Leigh has become an even more popular place to live. Who can blame people? We need to recruit some of these new and younger residents to carry on our 'eye to the future and ear to the past'.

Thank you for your continued support and interest and we look forward to seeing you at our meetings etc.

Margaret



SKY HIGH

This interesting Census entry in 1911 is the face of Women's Suffrage defying authority.

It is the census for the home of Mrs Rose Sky, leading local suffragette, who clearly did not intend to tell the authorities who lived in her house, not only was she absent on the census night but she wrote across the form.

No votes for women. No information from women. (Mrs) R Sky.

Mrs Sky, along with another suffragette was in trouble in 1914 for failing to pay the King's Taxes. Her goods were seized from her residence in Westcliff and were auctioned in Leigh.

A gold and diamond ring went for £4.10s. And Mrs Kineton Parkes, a leading suffragette and representative of the Women's Tax Resistance League, spoke out from the auctioneer's podium

The Women's Tax Resistance League was from 1909 to 1918 a direct action group associated with the Women's Freedom League that used tax resistance to protest against the disenfranchisement of women during the British women's suffrage movement.

The League's activities peaked in the years before the Great War but were largely deflated in 1914 by the onset of that war, when the League membership passed a resolution to temporarily suspend their tax resistance.

More than 220 women, mostly middle-class, participated in tax resistance between 1906 and 1918.

LEIGH SOCIETY
A visit to
SOUTHWOLD SUMMER THEATRE
To see
THE 39 STEPS
Adapted by Patrick Barlow
18th August

We will go first to Aldeburgh, for coffee and then on to Southwold for lunch.
 The theatre is at 5pm giving time for shopping or a visit to the Pier, etc.

*The cost of the visit is £25,
 which covers the coach and theatre
 but not lunch*

SEE SEPARATE FLYER

A GRAND OLD MAID

On a vault in the church-yard of Leigh, in Essex, is the following inscription:—"Here lies the body of Mary Ellis, daughter of Thomas Ellis and Lydia his wife, of this parish.—She was a virgin of virtuous courage and very promising hopes, and died the 3d of June, 1609, aged one hundred and nineteen."

There cannot be many of us who have passed the 'Cutlass Stone' in Leigh Churchyard and marvelled at the age of Mary Ellis, dying at 109.

But did you believe it? Sadly the parish registers do not survive for the early 17th Century.

Well here is the nearest to 1609 we can get, a small snippet in the London Chronicle of 15 May 1794. Even then it is 185 years after the event.

If its all true Mary was born in 1490 just 4 years after the Battle of Bosworth in the reign of Henry VII and it was the year that Perkin Warbeck claimed to be the son of Edward IV. She shared her year of death with Galileo demonstrating his first telescope and had lived through the reigns of every Tudor monarch.

After its inception in the 1970s the restoration of the brickwork of the Stone and a newly carved inscription was the first project of work in the Conservation Area undertaken by the Leigh Society.



Photograph of an old tombstone in Leigh Church yard, where tradition asserts that the pressgang sharpened their cutlasses in the good old days when Leigh was a port and was visited by ships of large tonnage of the hearts of oak type. It is more probable, however, that the stone was used by the labourers from the countryside on which to sharpen their scythes and bill hooks, when Leigh Church stood in the midst of fields. ("Graphic" photo.)

OPEN DAY—16 JULY 2016

Our annual Open Day will take place on 16 July at the Community Centre between 10 and 4 and its free. Our theme this year is 'Leigh—Town, Countryside and Coast', and will focus on our environment. We have a wonderful wealth of interesting buildings in Leigh and we will be highlighting these and their history but also looking at how some of our larger built up areas were developed and our coastal and country borders and wildlife.

Whilst our history is very important, the Leigh Society is an amenity society and we thought it was time that we spread our wings a bit in this field and broadened the scope of the Open Day. We already have speakers booked covering Belfairs, birdlife, Hadleigh Colony and other natural history themes and there will be a variety of stands for you to chat and enjoy learning and looking at the breadth of Leigh's environment.

We could not let the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme pass without commemorating that event and paying tribute to the men of Leigh who lost their lives in the Battle. So there will be a quiet corner to reflection them.

We are also hoping to have a display by a local amateur photographer of the town and estuary.

There will be the usual Society stands selling our books etc and scanning your memorabilia for the archives and researching your family tree

So put the date in your diaries and bring your friends and family for a fun and interesting time. The cafe will be open all day.

THE HERITAGE CENTRE NEEDS YOUR HELP

Do you have any spare time on a regular basis, or do you know someone who is looking for a part time volunteering role in a great job, working in the Heritage Centre. We need more helpers to keep the Heritage Centre open especially at weekends but also in the week. If you are interested please get in touch through the Heritage Centre. Its good fun and very interesting - full training given.

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES—LATEST ACQUISITIONS

Our thanks to Stuart Brewer who has kindly donated to the Heritage Centre a Kelly's Directory of 1900-1901 for Southend, Leigh and Neighbourhood and a train ticket .

The directory is in a very fragile condition but we have photocopied the entries for Leigh to make them accessible to researchers and genealogists. It contains a street by street list of the inhabitants. It then lists the Private Residents followed by a Commercial Directory. For instance Alfred Brewer runs the United Brethren Public House while Edric Brewer has a grocer's shop on the Broadway. Alfred Padgett lives in North Street and Thomas Turnidge is the Assistant Water Bailiff. Leigh Hall College for Boys is on Pall Mall while the Commercial Directory lists Miss Shippard and Miss Courtenay running the Young Women's Holiday Home at Beach House, Cliff Road, Sea View Estate.

The Directory reports that the Urban District Council of Leigh meets at the Board School in North Street on alternate Tuesdays at 8 pm and it says the manor house, Leigh Hall, was "formerly known as the Mansion House". It contains many advertisements of the period and photographs including one of a very youthful looking Rev. Robert Stuart King.

The date of this Directory is significant as being a snapshot of Leigh just before the large and rapid development to the north which began with the laying out of numerous new streets on what had been 300 acres of mainly farmland and the auction of building plots by the Land Company in 1902.

The railway ticket is dated Feb 1 1884 which was the day on which the first rail line from Southend to Shoeburyness was opened. The ticket from Leigh to Shoeburyness, numbered 00 has been punched and torn and then repaired and on the back in spidery old writing says "1st 3rd Class issued to Shoeburyness". This is therefore unique and the survival of this scrap of cardboard 58mm by 31mm issued by the L.T.S. Railway from over 130 years ago is remarkable and we hope to have it soon on display in the Heritage Centre

Ed and Jennifer Simpson

SPECIAL ADVICE TO SPECIAL CONSTABLES.

- The following amusing "advice to special constables" has been sent us:
- 1.—You are advised to practice running at full speed whilst blowing your whistle, thus you may out distance your pursuers and also obtain help. Fleetness of foot and soundness of wind should therefore be cultivated.
 - 2.—If you have to deal with a larger man than yourself, remember that you must not draw your truncheon; he might deprive you of it and use it to your confusion.
 - 3.—When charging in a body try and be the last man. Those in front will act as convenient buffers, and, should a retreat be deemed advisable, you will be able to lead in good order.
 - 4.—Heavy boots should not be worn, light running shoes are more convenient when evading or escaping from foes.
 - 5.—You are advised to carry eatables when on duty. One lunch in your own pocket is worth two in another's.
 - 6.—The special armlet should be LOOSELY buckled round the upper left arm. It can then be detached at a moment's notice, which instantly transforms you into a civilian, perhaps to your own safety.
 - 7.—If any gratuity is offered, you should turn your back on the person who offers the gratuity and hold out your hand behind as if standing at ease.

SPECIAL CONSTABLES

In these days of austerity and with impending cuts in police services, there is talk of enhancing the recruitment of Special Constables.

So in advance of their recruitment it might be interesting to anyone thinking of volunteering to take on board the advice given to would be recruits in 1917.

THE LEIGH SOCIETY - QUIZ NIGHT
LEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE, ELM ROAD,
LEIGH-ON-SEA
(Please note change from usual venue)

SATURDAY 21st MAY 2016

£8 including Fish & Chips
There will be a pay bar

For details and tickets contact Sally Hayes
01702 712894

ALARM OF CHOLERA AT LEIGH, ESSEX

The case of a poor boy, named Alexander Ritchie, 11 years of age, who was brought on shore from a fishing boat on Thursday last about 11 o'clock, in a very dangerous state, supposed to be contagious cholera. It appeared from the statement of William Cotgrove a fisherman, that he went out of Leigh harbour in a peterboat for the purpose of fishing, accompanied by the boy, about 2 o'clock of the morning of the 29th. That they were off the Grain Swatch, on the Kentish coast, and had only one haul there. Then came off the middle ground and had one haul there and then started home, going to the swatch the boy was steering, he said his belly ached and went into the cabin, and immediately became sick and vomited on the deck and seemed better. Afterwards assisted in flinging the net overboard, and did not then complain, but went into the cabin again. The morning was piercing cold. He was sick and vomited again and had several motions but did not again come out of the cabin until they got ashore. He still complained of the belly ache but not of severe pain. Cotgrove was then was driving off the middle ground working the net and boat himself. This was about half past 8. The boy looked white, but came to the colour again but being ill and the wind coming on to blow hard he steered her home, and landed about 11 o'clock. The boy got out of the cabin without much assistance and then not in much pain; but on landing from the punt, and, walking up the hard (about [three] rods, he was taken again but was assisted by two women. That he had heard and believed the boy had had several similar attacks when sailing with John Baxter.

Mary Partridge said she saw a little boy coming up the hardway reeling, and prevented his falling. He said he should die, and sat upon some timber lying near. She, with the assistance of Mrs Frost,, took him to Mrs Frost's house, and sent for his mother: he did not complain of any pain, but he said he should die; he was neither sick nor had any motion, but appeared very faint, he had no life in him; he could neither move nor stir. The father and mother carried him home in their arms.

Mary Wade said she was at the father's house a few minutes after he was brought home. He did not complain of any pain, and nodded assent to anything said to him, but could not speak.

A little brandy and water was given him, a hot tile was put to his stomach and a bottle of hot water to his feet; he was very cold. Mr Bradley, the surgeon at Leigh, said he was sent for, and found the boy in bed, very cold from head to foot - no pulse whatever; that he took a little blood from him; that it was very dark; a hot bath was immediately procured, which made little difference. The body became warmer, but the extremities still continued very cold, he was then wrapped up in blanket, and stimulants immediately had recourse to, and his son continued with him.

Mustard cataplasms were applied to the stomach and feet and brandy was given to him. There was no vomiting or purging, except in a very small degree as to the latter. That Dr Asplin, of Prittlewell, was sent for who came about half past seven o'clock. He ordered blisters to the calves of the legs and a few grains of carbonate of ammonia to be taken every hour, as it could be got down in campher mixture; sinapisms were also applied to the armpits.

The poor boy died about half past three o'clock, and Dr Asplin attended to view the body, and apparently highly to the satisfaction of the principal inhabitants of Leigh, as well as the lower orders (most of whom are fishermen, and their wives), signed the following paper:-

'Jonas Asplin, of Prittlewell, MD, states that he was called to the boy yesterday evening; he found him quite insensible when spoken to, but rolled about. Pulse not to be felt, eyes getting dim and somewhat sunk in the head, but features not remarkably contracted, nor were the extremities; tongue whitish; he was sinking fast. Some additional stimulants were ordered; but without any hopes of success; that he received intelligence this morning of his death, and having seen the body, is of the opinion that this is a case of simple cholera, arising from the severe exposure of a delicate subject to intense cold, which his occupation necessarily exposed him to, added to the privations to which he was subject, these boats having no means of comfort about them. March 30, 1830.(sic)

As a matter of precaution the doctor directed the body to be interred immediately afterwards, with the perfect consent and approbation of the parents; and more particularly as Cotgrove had a short time before picked up afloat some bedding, which was brought ashore, but on landing was ordered to be burnt. A sailor's cap, however, had been kept by the man and worn by him, and it was supposed by the boy also.

SPRUCING UP THE HERITAGE CENTRE

If you go down to the Old Town you cannot be unaware of the refurbishment of Strand Wharf being undertaken by the Town Council. This is nearing completion and will provide a wonderful open area and focal point for the Old Town alongside the Heritage Centre and Plumbs Cottage.

Last year we undertook a complete external refurbishment of Plumbs Cottage so that it now presents a very attractive setting to the Wharf. In the next few months we hope to similarly be carrying out external works to the Heritage Centre itself.

LEIGH COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM

As part of the Society's involvement with the Leigh Coastal Community Team (a group made up of the fishing industry, heritage, environmental and tourism representatives as well as the local Councils) the Society has put together a forward looking project plan for enhancing and updating the Centre and the work of the Society. This will be worked up and promoted through the Coastal Community Team which has just submitted its Economic Plan for Leigh, the aim being to attract funding to carry out the schemes and ideas contained in the Plan.

The aim for the Coastal Community Team is to ensure the sustainability of Leigh-on-Sea as a fishing port through working with the industry, local and regional partners and Government. The industry forms an important economic sector that is interrelated with other sectors locally including hospitality, retail, creative/cultural and heritage.

The Society's element of the Economic Plan places a strong emphasis on recruitment and engagement of our younger population which is growing fast in Leigh. Many people move to Leigh because it is full of interest, history and many attractions and activities. We need to harness this enthusiasm and interest. We realise many people have busy working lives and it is not always possible for them to take a very active part in the Society, but they can support us in their interest and membership which in turn supports the Centre and the archival research and recording that we do.

LEIGH-ON-SEA COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM ECONOMIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Ensure the future sustainability of Old Leigh as an active Fishing Port

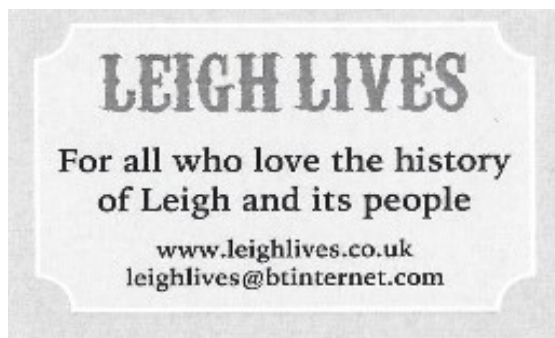
Objective 2: Enhance the cultural and heritage offer of Leigh-on-Sea

Objective 3: Local business initiatives and support the local economic resilience of Leigh

Objective 4: Ensure that Leigh has the highest quality open spaces and public realm and community facilities

Objective 5: Produce a Destination Management Plan and promotion of local offer to visitors

Objective 6: Work with partners to achieve a coherent approach to transport to support the local economy



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, but if not please recycle it**

