

# LEIGHWAY

## ISSUE 68

## SUMMER

## 2022



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Please send items for next Leighway to  
 carole.mulroney@btinternet.com  
 By 31 August 2022

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### DEAR DIARY

Keep the following dates free in your diaries. For our restarted talks programme. As always the talks will be at the Community Centre starting at 7.30pm. Entry is £2 for members and £3 for non members.

14 September—TBA  
 20 September—visit to Rochester  
 12 October—TBA  
 9 November—Southend Brick-works —Emma Edmondson

Look out for the day trip to Rochester—application leaflet included with this Leighway.

If you have heard a particular speaker at another event that you think would be suitable given our interests please let Carole know at the usual email address.

### NORMAN SUTCLIFFE

It is with the greatest sadness that we report the passing of a stalwart of the Society, Norman Sutcliffe. For many years Norman has tended the Conduit in the Old Town on our behalf as well as helping the Town Council with planting at the community centre and on Strand Wharf. Those of us who remember the Christmas Comicals will never forget the sight of Norman in his gold lame jacket and his rather risqué jokes. Happy memories. But Norman was much more than a gardener and comic he was a local doctor for many years and will be known and remembered by many people.

We send our deepest condolences to Jan and the family.

### THE LEIGH SOCIETY/LEIGH HERITAGE CENTRE GOING FORWARD

At our recent AGM there was a clear majority in favour of amalgamating the Society and the Heritage Centre, as Leigh Conservation and Heritage. So we have started the process of winding up the Society. Thank you all for taking part. From now on all cheques should be payable to Leigh Heritage Centre Ltd.

We are looking into arrangements for direct debiting (as opposed to standing order) for subscriptions and so we hope from 1 January 2023 to have this facility in place and will be sending out DD forms in due course. This method of payment saves chasing and also makes it easier for everyone

With the changes to the organisation come changes to the Centre itself and we have commissioned a new website and will also be looking at our displays in order to make the heritage of Leigh available to more people worldwide and to enhance the information we are able to include and the interaction with our members and those with an interest in Leigh.

We are only a small organisation but we have big plans and as well as fulfilling all the remit of the former Society in terms of planning and conservation we are adding an environmental aspect to our work. We live in a prime location for water and rural life and nature and we want to celebrate that as part of our natural heritage.

We also want to get back into the swing of things in terms of meetings and events, so watch out for these in the coming editions of Leighway.

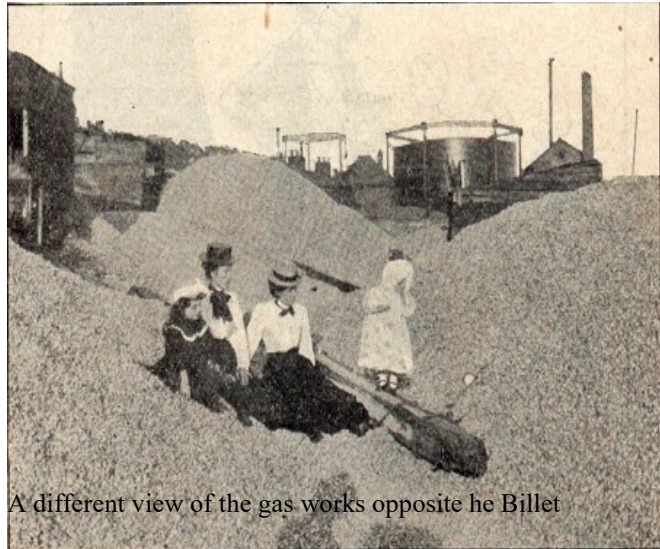
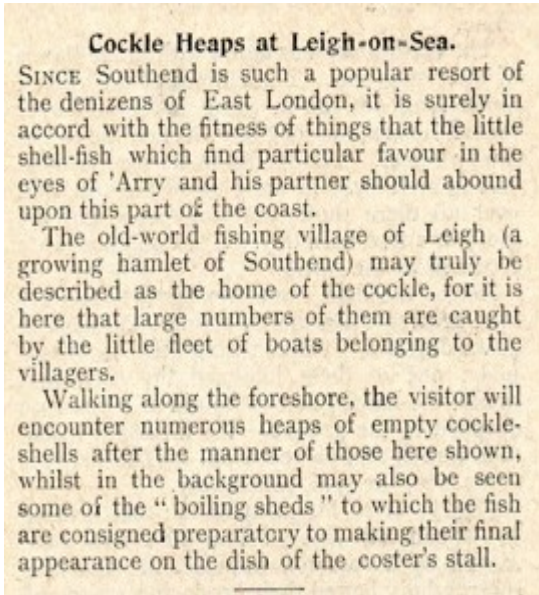
The Heritage Centre Ltd is run by a Board of Trustees, so we are reintroducing ourselves and the roles we play now at this start of a new phase in our history.

Chair/Leighway/Family History— Carole Mulroney, Company Secretary Cathy Cottridge, Treasurer Ray Osborne, Centre Manager Pat Gaskell, Facilities and IT, Dec Mulroney, Outings, Ann Price, Publicity and Talks, Sally Hayes, Planning, Alan Crystall

Others who play a vital role in the organisation are Jenny and Ed Simpson (archives), Martin Ayling (membership), Stella Collins and Jenny Simpson (schools) and our wonderful stewards.

## A HAMLET OF SOUTHEND—WHAT A CHEEK!

Thanks to Paul Watson for this little snippet from a publication of 1902. How dare they refer to us as a hamlet of



A different view of the gas works opposite the Billet

## THEN AND NOW—7 BROADWAY



Sadly the fascia has changed over time but this great photo of No 7 taken in the early 20th Century is a reminder of how butchers' shops used to be.

Percival Charles Bowen was born in Maldon in 1889 and was the son of George Bowen who was landlord of the Bell in Leigh from the 1890s to at least 1933.

Percy as can be seen became a butcher in the Broadway and married Dorothy Woodroffe in 1915.



Percy and Dorothy had 2 children, Iris and Arnold and the family lived in Station Road.

Percy died in 1948



## WEST LEIGH MOTOR COACHES

Thanks to Heather and Fred Feather for this little gem.

As you can see in 1927 West Leigh Motor Coaches operated from Rectory Grove, opposite the post office (not the current defunct post office site).


The proprietor of West Leigh Coaches was L A Daniel and the company had a second outlet at 1268 London Road, on the corner of Burnham Road.

The company ran a series of tours throughout the week including a Forty Mile Surprise Tour and day trips to Clacton, Cambridge, Walton on the Naze, East Bergholt and Colchester. Clacton being the most expensive at 10 shillings.

1927

### THE West Leigh MOTOR COACH.

Phone:  
LEIGH  
427.



Proprietor:  
L. A.  
DANIEL.

**Rectory Grove Garage, LEIGH.**  
Opposite Post Office.  
AND  
1268, London Road (corner of Burnham Road).

JUNE			JULY			AUGUST		
S	1	8	S	1	8	S	1	8
M	2	9	M	2	9	M	2	9
Tu	3	10	Tu	3	10	Tu	3	10
W	4	11	W	4	11	W	4	11
Th	5	12	Th	5	12	Th	5	12
F	6	13	F	6	13	F	6	13
S	7	14	S	7	14	S	7	14
S	15	22	S	15	22	S	15	22
M	16	23	M	16	23	M	16	23
Tu	17	24	Tu	17	24	Tu	17	24
W	18	25	W	18	25	W	18	25
Th	19	26	Th	19	26	Th	19	26
F	20	27	F	20	27	F	20	27
S	21	28	S	21	28	S	21	28

Morning and Afternoon Trips.  
Private Parties and Special Day Trips can be arranged at Short Notice.

Please turn over for List of Tours.

Seats may be booked and full particulars obtained at 1268, London Road (corner of Burnham Road), J. PEASE, 36, Broadway, Leigh, & C. M. MOWLE, 85, Leigh Road.

SEPTEMBER			OCTOBER			NOVEMBER		
S	1	8	S	1	8	S	1	8
M	2	9	M	2	9	M	2	9
Tu	3	10	Tu	3	10	Tu	3	10
W	4	11	W	4	11	W	4	11
Th	5	12	Th	5	12	Th	5	12
F	6	13	F	6	13	F	6	13
S	7	14	S	7	14	S	7	14
S	15	22	S	15	22	S	15	22
M	16	23	M	16	23	M	16	23
Tu	17	24	Tu	17	24	Tu	17	24
W	18	25	W	18	25	W	18	25
Th	19	26	Th	19	26	Th	19	26
F	20	27	F	20	27	F	20	27
S	21	28	S	21	28	S	21	28

There were all day and half day trips to London, Epping, Halstead, Braintree, Thaxted, Sudbury and many other old Essex Towns. And you could also go to such exotic places as Canewdon via Hullbridge and Rochford, Paglesham via Hullbridge and Hawkwell and Creeksea Ferry via Hockley and Stambridge.



Creeksea Ferry

The fleet comprised Fords, Chevrolets, Commers, Bedfords, Albions and Austins all of which had names. You could go for a trip in Laddie the Commer Invader, Percy the Chevrolet or Charlie the Austin. They also catered for private parties and you could book seats at the London Road office or at J Pease at 36 Broadway or C M Mowle at 85 Leigh Road.

Post Office changes at Leigh - The new building in Rectory Grove, which is to be opened on March 13th.  
Southend Pictorial Telegraph March 5th 1927



This building later became the BT Exchange Building still standing but a lot taller.

Post Office changes at Leigh - The old office which is to be closed on March 12th.  
Southend Pictorial Telegraph March 5th 1927



I am grateful to Mrs Tring of Benfleet for passing me a copy of this wonderful account of Leigh cockling written in 1966 by Gilbert Jamieson a lawyer based in London in the Temple.

## **A LAWYER ALL AT SEA**

I am a lawyer. I have been to sea. But those two facts do not conjoin to make me a lawyer at sea, still less a sea lawyer. The first suggests too inferior a sense of one's own competence as a lawyer; the second too superior a sense. But, I am going off on the wrong track – or should I have said tack? I do not want to write about my being a lawyer, that would be unprofessional anyhow. Even this much will necessitate my not signing the script with my professional name. I want to write about my being at sea.

At sea? Well I admit the at no time was there more than about one fathom under our keel. Anyhow let me tell the story. From London, where I live in the very centre, lawyers' territory indeed, I went 40 miles east to the north bank of the Thames estuary to Leigh-on-Sea in Essex, next to Southend-on-Sea, which is famous for many things including the longest Pier in the world, Leigh itself being famous for the most delicious cockles in the world. Often I would stand at my window, and through binoculars watch the cockle boats going out on the falling tide, coming in on the rising tide. And so I would stand with such a longing. Longing to go with them. How far, and where did they go? Where did cockles congregate? How are they gathered? Ask whom would I could find no answers to my questions. As for going with them...

Then came hope. At the church of our denomination at Southend I met Bert. Now Bert bore the name (I don't mean Bert), of one of the oldest and most respected families of fisher folk in the district. Could Bert? Yes, certainly. Delighted to. Any time. So, on the Friday before last August bank holiday I went for the first time. High water was at 0947. Bert called for me at my home, and we left at 10.30am and we walked, or should I say, in our heavy rubber boots, we plodded, down to the cockle sheds. By 11.15 we had weighed anchor and moved slowly down the creek. There were six of us: Herbert, not to be confused with Bert, the skipper and owner, better known as Herbie; Barry his nephew; Hike the paid hand; Hike's schoolboy son named Douglas, Bert, my Bert and I.

Now if anything thrills me it is to sail in a little ship with the sea ahead. Oh yes, I must mention the little ship: Reliance II, registration number LO 476; 40 foot long; single screw; compression ignition engine (you will say diesel engine; but I have two long been Patents Advisor to the successors of Ackroyd Stewart to permit myself to give a German engineer's name to a British invention). But, as I was saying, I was thrilled from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. And when I was not admiring the sturdy little craft and her sweet running CI engine; my eyes were on the far horizon, looking beyond the 1 ¼ mile Southend Pier to the entrance to the River Medway, to the point of land beyond which lay Whitstable, Dover and the open sea.

Then, after so short run, with Southend Pier still a mile's to the seaward of us, with shore, and people on the shore still plainly visible, we turned hard to port, ran in a little way, and dropped anchor. Slowly in the next hour the waters flowed away from the beneath our keel, until without the slightest sensation or bump, that keel settled on the firm muddy sand, and being a solid square baulk, held us upright even when the seas had completely ebbed away and we could walk dry foot on the exposed ground with its little pools of water wherein darted baby shrimps in what to them must have been a strangely diminished world.

In that hour, we ate. Bert and I had brought sandwiches and cold drinks. But before our arrival Barry had lit a coal fire in the stove, and now had the top red hot. There, first Herbie, then Barry, then Hike, fried bacon and eggs, cold cooked potatoes and bread; and Barry made tea. Though the stove was hot, we were but comfortably warm. However now was the time to change. So, from rubber boots, long socks, trousers, shirt, windcheater, jacket, raincoat and cap, I changed into beach shoes, shorts and shirt. In the cabin the that sufficed; but climbing down into the morning sunshine and east wind, momentarily I felt distinctly cool although it was midday in August.

At some time, Barry had already erected a stand on the ground against the outside of the little boat. But where were the cockles? There was nothing immediately to be seen but sand. My friends of Reliance II were soon to show me.

Each took the rake about 18 inches long, like a garden rake, with a short handle and the net on the D shaped frame. Choosing a likely spot on the sand each would then dig the rake into the sand and draw it towards them. This action uncovered hundreds of cockles in their shells at a depth of 2 to 3 inches below the surface. A number of quick strokes brought the exposed cockles into a heap, from which they were collected into the net. A quick drop of a net into one of the pools of water dislodged some of the dirt and the contents of the net were then transferred to a basket.

That is where my function started. When two baskets were full, I put a wooden yoke on my shoulders, hitched its two hooks on to the rope handles of the two baskets, and walked, waded, trotted, staggered, to the boat, which then seemed suddenly to be such a long way away from where the raking being done. From the moment of his first carrying, until the return of the rising tide prevented further raking, I was beset by the problem was it easier to trot, hence reducing the time in which the yoke bore down on my shoulders, or to walk at a more easy pace? Although I've been out a couple of times since that first occasion the problem still remains unresolved. At the boat side I climbed on to the stand pulled up the baskets, and tipped the cockles into the hold of the boat.

My friends of Reliance II were very kind, and insisted I carried the cockles in half basketfuls, and not the whole basketfuls weighing one hundredweight! At last the merciful tide returned. But that was not the end of my labours. There are natural channels of water which fill up with the rising tide and as soon as these channels are negotiable the cockle boats are able to return. However, the engine is not being used: it is necessary to use a long pole to help the boat along the channels.

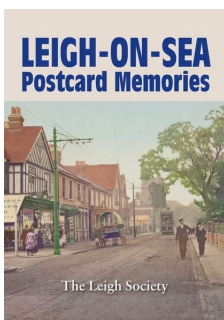
When we got back to the creek in Leigh, Herbie stood in the hold filling the baskets, and lifting them to the deck, when Barry and Hike, each with his yoke, carrying 2 full baskets, trotted down the narrow gangplank and up the sloping beach to the processing shed. And I, what was my part in these labours? No more than to drop a bucket into the stream and hoist it up; one bucketful of seawater thrown over each basketful washed away more of the mud. As described this may seem a small enough contribution to the labours of my friends in the trotings on gangplank and foreshore. But there were so many basketfuls. Besides the awkwardness of the bucket in sometimes not dropping right down into the sea so as to be immediately submerged and filled, but instead floating tantalisingly upright only half full of water.

It was not until 2100 hours that I got home.

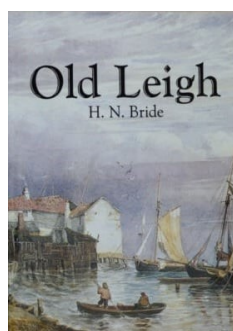
That was my first trip, a week or so later I went again. The second time, high water at 0400 hours demanded that I be out of bed at that time and down to the sheds by 0430 hours. This time, Hike had gone on holiday – to the seaside! And Bert too was unable to come, so the ship's company consisted of Herbie, Barry and me. I like to think that I was able to be of use to this smaller crew. Anyhow, it was wonderful to sail out, beyond the pier this time and see dawn break.

On this occasion I was home by 1300 hours, pleasantly tired. With the job finished for the day would my friends be going home to sleep? Not a bit, Herbie was decorating the kitchen in his home; and Barry was going to play golf. And I? I am glad to remain a lawyer.

### HERITAGE CENTRE SALES



£10



£5

### FREEBIES

Due to a print overrun we now have surplus stocks of the Heritage Trail and Memories of Old Leigh Port. We are happy to supply these to any groups who may find them of interest or to individuals free of charge. P & p may apply

Contact Carole at the usual address if you would like a supply.

## MORE KINGS FOR THE KING FAMILY TREE—PART 2

BY ANN BROOKER

Alfred, he who evidently was not in to cooking, the youngest of 6 children, was born around 849 at the royal palace at Wantage in Berkshire to Aethelwulf, King of Wessex and his wife Osburh. When he was quite young, his father took Alfred on a pilgrimage to Rome, returning in 856. Aethelwulf died in 858 and he was succeeded by his eldest son Aethelbald, followed by his 2 brothers in turn, Aethelbeht and Aethelred.

Alfred was 16 years old when Aethelred became king, which was around the time of the Great Heathen Army, a coalition of the Scandinavian countries – otherwise known as the Vikings, arrived with the view of taking over the whole country from the Saxons. Over the next 6 years Alfred and his brother fought constantly with mixed results but in April 871 Aethelred died and Alfred became king and decided pay the Vikings off, so they wouldn't take Wessex.

For the following 5 years peace was maintained, as the Vikings were otherwise occupied, but this was broken in 876 as all the other Saxon kingdoms had submitted and the Vikings could now turn their attention on Wessex. Much fighting ensued and Alfred eventually had to take refuge in the marshes, now known as the Somerset Levels at Athelney where he made a stronghold and conducted a resistance campaign. We got some idea what that area was like before being drained after the flooding in 2014

Throughout his reign the troubles with the Vikings continued. It forced him to make drastic changes in the way towns and villages were defended; how the army was organised and performed. He founded a Navy to fight the aggressors by sea. He, being able to read and write, was very keen on education and favoured using 'English' over Latin. He made changes in the laws of the country which had strong Christian principles. He was highly regarded in his time and beyond. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century he was given the name of 'Great' by writers and academics of the time. Several places of learning have been named in his honour. Even the USA has a town, University and College named after him. In 1775 they renamed a warship after him too.

Alfred, throughout most of his life suffered badly with a stomach complaint, which by contemporary descriptions, modern doctors diagnosed as the possibility of Crohn's disease. He died on 26<sup>th</sup> October 899 around 50 years of age. He was buried at the Old Minster at Winchester and later reinterred at nearby Hyde Abbey. Having fallen into sad times after the Dissolution, the Abbey site was desecrated in 1788 by building of the City Jail and any bones were scattered.

### THREE OUT OF FOUR AIN'T BAD

St Clement's Church is the focal point of Leigh – there is no doubt about that, it is also our 'Big Ben' but that wasn't always the case. In 1913 the Church tower had clock faces on its south and east sides as the town was orientated that way. The main town was the Old Town then and so a walk along the cliffs focussed the eye on St Clement's Tower for the time of day. The local newspaper thought it was time for a change - the Broadway was growing but had no clock to mark its progress.

The paper felt the cost would be small and asked 'Is there not some resident who has sufficient local patriotism and money to benefit the town in this manner?' I have yet to find out who did.

Today St Clement's tower has a clockface facing east, south and north (to recognise the growth of Elm Road). Nothing to the west though. The clock itself was a gift in 1889 from the owner of Leigh House (standing where Broadway West now runs from the triangle), F C J Millar QC. Canon Walker King, the then Rector, held a ceremony and a rope from the churchyard went up to the clock and a piece of blue ribbon was tied to the lower end. Exactly at 12 noon the Rector cut the blue ribbon and released the mechanism and the clock struck 12.

The two pieces of blue ribbon were handed to two small girls standing nearby, one of whom was the mother of the Rev John Bundock later to become the Vicar of St Margaret's in Leigh and who kept the piece of ribbon in the family. As Rev Bundock later wrote 'The west side still makes pretend that nobody lives to the west of the church'.

## CHURCHYARD

The pennant of Saint George flutters on the flagpole above the belltower of Saint Clement's church. This hagiographic anomaly is lost on the starlings perching on the top, chattering on the crenellations, nudging each other, vying for the best spot on this potential roost. A pair of crows wheel above them, deciding whether to be a nuisance, but soon veer off into the public gardens next door, 'cawing' their disdain. Glancing up, I notice that the church clock on the south wall shows a different time to the one facing east. I am vaguely tempted to go round and check the north face as well. Is this intentional - an ecclesiastical hint, or merely an horological fault? The light will be fading soon, so instead of fretting about time I should put it to good use.

I walk between the wildflowers to the privet and ivy hedge at the graveyard's boundary. Here the land drops sharply away. Bands of colour comprise my view, like a Jonathan Trim painting; blue sky and cloud above the hazy grey/brown of the Kent coast, the grey/green/blue/brown shiny water of the Thames Estuary, and the multi-green of the hedgerow. Low tide will reveal extensive mudflats with outgrowths of *Zostera*, or eelgrass, a major food source for Dark-bellied Brent geese. The first cohort has already arrived from Siberia and is bobbing around on the ebbing tide, anxious to feed, noisily signalling their impatience and excitement. I cannot resist the urge to count them – starting in tens, then in hundreds. I estimate between one and one and a half thousand. Between four and five thousand flock here in an average year, gorging on the *Zostera* before dispersing around the coast and onto the fields. They arrive in family groups and communicate with each other vocally, with a decibel range loud enough to keep some locals awake at night. Squabbles abound but fights are few. There are smaller, brownish ducks on the fringes of the geese, probably wigeon, but too far away for me to distinguish the one from the other. Suzie always asks me 'Have you brought your binoculars?' but I rarely do, which seems a bit rude since she bought them for me. As I watch, the flock lifts off lazily to find better grazing, rising from the back as though attached to an invisible cord pulling them from above.

A loud buzzing breaks my concentration. A large bee attempts to barge me out the way – I must be standing between it and a prospective food source, or nest perhaps. Wildflowers grow here in profusion; tight-flowered, yellow lesser hawkbit, bright white ox-eyed daisy, the gently bowed, orange-yellow heads of the fiddleneck, magenta corncockle and sky-blue common flax, all flourish between the ancient graves. Many of the headstones lie cracked or keeling over, their inscriptions long faded. A few are readable but only fleetingly when the light catches them in a certain way. The one most visited is a flat topped, brick-built tomb, bearing this charming but rather dubious inscription, apparently added sometime after internment: -

*"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 hope and died on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. of June 1609 aged one hundred and nineteen years"*

The starlings decide to move on. Walking round the back of the church, I check the time shown by the clock on the north side. On the way out, I observe that the west wall is the only side without a clock face. It houses the main entrance and here, on the church door, a notice announces the times of events and dedications of services for the coming week, the 'names of those whose year's mind occurs at this time' and advice regarding the wearing of masks and the sanitising of hands.

©Tony Baws 2022



With many thanks to Member Tony Baws for this lovely piece of observational writing on our beautiful churchyard.





**National Coastwatch - Southend**  
VHF Channel 65

National Coastwatch Institution

Working with HM Coastguard and the RNLI to protect and preserve lives on our coast and foreshore.

**KEEPING YOU SAFE ON THE COAST**

Based at Shoebury East Beach, we keep a visual watch on the entrance to the Thames and Medway, looking out for the safety of leisure and commercial users of the Estuary and the foreshore.

**HELP US TO HELP YOU**

Volunteers are needed  
Full training is given to suitable applicants and VHF licence obtained following course and exam.

**WHERE TO FIND US:**

Our watchstation is situated at the eastern end of Shoebury East Beach on the MoD site, administered by QinetiQ. You can see our 2-storey building just the other side of the fence.

Call 07815 945210  
or visit [www.nci.org.uk/southend](http://www.nci.org.uk/southend)  
National Coastwatch Southend

Lat: 51° 32' 0 N - Long: 000° 48' 2 E  
OS: TQ947853  
What3Words: Removable.Mysteries.Overture

**National Coastwatch Institution**  
"Eyes Along the Coast"

Registered Charity Number 1159975

## NATIONAL COASTWATCH SOUTHEND

A RECENT VISIT TO Coastwatch Southend at East Bach, Shoebury revealed what a vital job they do keeping us safe on the coast as well as those at sea.

The local organisation is in need of more volunteers to supplement their small group. So if this sort of volunteering interests you please get in touch with them. There is full training and the opportunity to become really involved in a vital service.

They are a very friendly bunch and the visit was enlightening with the array of modern technology they use as well as watching the world go by out to sea.

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the particular author and not necessarily those of the committee and officers of the Society. **We hope you will like to keep your copy of Leighway or pass it on to friends and family, but if not please recycle it**  
© Leigh Society, Leigh Heritage Centre, 13A High Street, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 2EN

## PIER UPDATE

Some of you may have been to the Pier recently and been disappointed that The new train was not running. This is really regrettable but can't be helped as the train has had some teething problems. The Council is working hard with the manufacturers to get these sorted out.

Meanwhile the second new train has arrived. Still under going trials at the moment but on 14 July the train was named 'William Bradley'. William was the first Pier Head Man and lived on the Pier and went on to become a councillor and alderman. His story is retold in the Pier Museum.

On the same day a very special presentation took place.

Many of you will remember the great Pier fire of 1976. Devastation and it looked like the Pier was lost to the nation. However, Peggie and Ron Dowie took up the fight and through sheer force of will and hard work managed to work with others to save the Pier for posterity and opened the Pier Museum, now below the platform to the right of the platform entrance. In recent months the museum has been 'modernised' and is well worth a visit.

To celebrate all the Dowie's hard work a plaque was unveiled in the Pier foyer by the Mayor of Southend.



**LEIGH LIVES**

For all who love the history of Leigh and its people

[www.leighlives.co.uk](http://www.leighlives.co.uk)  
[leighlives@btinternet.com](mailto:leighlives@btinternet.com)