

Issue 1

December 1994

£1¼

# The Penny-Farthing

The Magazine of Maldon Museum Association



## Features on:

Who's Who on the MMA Committee  
Forthcoming Exhibitions  
Maldon's own Leper Hospital  
Museum Registration  
Christmas Ghost Story  
Mrs. Beeton on Household Management

Membership  
Application Form  
Enclosed in this  
Issue.

# From the Editor

by Terry Chapman

Welcome to Issue One of **The Penny-Farthing**. It is intended to publish it at least twice a year, quarterly if enough contributions and newsworthy events appear. Those of you who were invited to our garden party back in September (which included all MMA members) will have seen the new 'penny-farthing' logo. I wanted to give a name to the newsletter to emphasise its new status as a regular publication by the Maldon Museum Association, and nobody could think of any title better than 'The Penny-Farthing'! At the moment I have the dubious honour of being both the Association's Chairman and Newsletter Editor. This is by coincidence rather than intent - because I "do" newsletters and have the appropriate equipment to produce these pleasant little coloured booklets! It is not intended that these two posts should be permanently linked.

The present committee feels that members deserve more in return for their subscription than they have received in the past. The aim of this newsletter is to keep people informed of what the committee, in the name of the Maldon Museum Association, is doing - and why, and to allow all our members the chance to comment and make suggestions. This issue contains a "Who's Who" of the Committee, and contains articles by most of us! For future issues **WE NEED YOU!** Send your contributions to the address given on the back page. Hand-written or typed copy is perfectly acceptable; however if you have a wordprocessor, then a PC compatible disk (3½" or 5¼"), ASCII or just about anything else) would be most welcome. Photos or pictures, in colour or black and white make the newsletter more interesting - so include one if you can!

*"The best way to kill time  
is to work it to death"*

#### For the technical:

This newsletter is set in proportional 12 point Times, with headlines in Coliseo. It has been set on a 66 MHz Dan Technology 486 PC using AmiPro, Page Plus, and CorelDraw software, and printed on a Canon BJC 600 inkjet printer. The photos were entered using a Logitech Scanman Colour scanner.



## FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS

### We would like your ideas for future exhibitions!

Have you got suggestions, or a particular exhibition you would like to see arranged? Better still, have you a collection you would like to put on yourselves? We particularly need a really good idea for covering the Christmas period! As there is limited space in the display cases smaller items are more suitable.

Please phone Lina on Maldon 85253

The most recent displays have been:

- **Charles Tait's Views of Maldon**
- **Toy Soldiers**
- **Jugs and Mugs**
- **Goss China**
- **World War 2 items** (Many thanks to Jonathon Brown)

The following ideas are being mooted for the new year:

- **The Maldon Friary** (Arthur Simpson has kindly offered to
- **Clay Pipes** lend material for both of these)

And requiring more space than we currently occupy:

- **History of the Bicycle**
- **Hats** (from the collection of Gordon Oakley)
- **Rumanian Folk Dance Costumes**

(Ivy Romney of the English Folk Dance Society has indicated that she would be willing to lend us much display material, and possibly organize some dancing as well.)

Also, a new member, Ray Brewster of the Kings Life Guards (part of the Sealed Knot) says that he can arrange period soldiers and sundry peoples and merchants should the occasion arise - this could be part of an outdoor event when we open in new premises.

*"The shortest way to do many things is to do  
one thing at a time."*

# Who's Who?

## A introduction to the current committee

The current committee are:

Chairman & Newsletter Editor:	Terry Chapman, 772103
Vice Chairman:	Lina Pittman, 852 882
Secretary:	Ruth Knight, 772103
Treasurer & Mem. Secretary:	Len Barrell, 852749

Katherine Edgar, Paddy Lacey, Robert Long, Brian Mead,  
Elizabeth Vale (MTC representative),  
Merle Pipe (Co-opted, nonvoting)

### CHAIRMAN



Terry Chapman moved into the Maldon area in 1985 to work in Chelmsford as a software Engineer designing an advanced communication system for the Royal Navy. On one of his first Saturday trips to Maldon he visited the Museum, then in the High Street, and bought some raffle tickets, and also bought some at something being held in the Jubilee Hall. Strangely, though he doesn't remember winning any raffle before then, he won something in both these raffles: the museum raffle prize was a beautiful book on shrubs. He says he must admit it did cross his mind that perhaps the inhabitants of Maldon were being particularly clever in getting newcomers involved with their societies! He attended the first AGM in Spindles and joined the committee. He says his previous knowledge of museums was only as a visitor, but it was very interesting seeing how the Museum was run and helping where he could, including producing the posters that were used when we first opened. He says he was in two minds when asked to stand for the Chairmanship as he had just given up software and was busy training in his new career as a financial adviser.

### VICE-CHAIRMAN

Mrs Carolina (Lina) Pittman has lived in Maldon for the last thirty-five years, and been a Museum member for about eighteen years.



Lina took over as Treasurer from Frank Brown, then at the last AGM was voted in, much to her surprise, as Vice-Chairman. Her main interest has always been in the various 'moving' exhibitions as "I really enjoy arranging the various exhibits lent to us".

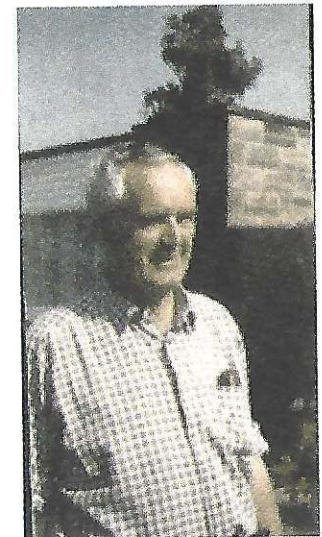
She is also keen to see that the Museum continues to carry on as an independent body, but with help and interest not only from the Town and District Councils, but from our own members and the general public.

### THE HONORARY TREASURER.

Len Barrell can claim to be one of the comparatively few members of the Association who is a genuine, original home-grown Maldonian, born and bred in the town, educated at All Saints' and Maldon Grammar School, and "still learning". Still living nearby, married with an adult family, he might well be described as your traditional "stick in the mud".

With mixed studying and work experience including RAF radar, local government, agricultural engineering, costing and accountancy, motor trade accountancy and management, he is now retired, an ex-company secretary of an agricultural company with diverse interests.

Len is temporarily doubling as Membership Secretary being, as he submits, "more use with statistical facts than artefacts", but will be happy to hand over in due course given a keen volunteer.



## SECRETARY

Ruth left New Zealand to tour the world; spent several years travelling around Europe before settling in England. She taught in a London Comprehensive before moving out to Essex where she now works as a computer analyst for a large Chelmsford-based financial firm. Her interests which are many and varied include music - she plays the piano and violin - horse riding, dog agility, reading, languages, travelling and loves gardening.



### Katharine Edgar

Katharine is studying archaeology at Leicester University, she is involved with the Elm Farm dig.

### Paddy Lacey



Paddy came to Essex in 1962, and has helped with the Museum since 1972. He has served on the committee since 1975. Dr. Lacey lives in Purleigh and is a Family Practitioner. For more information see his article **The Museum & Me** on page 10.

### Judy Tullet

Judy was born in Yorkshire and spent her childhood in Africa, Kent and Cheshire, trained as a Dancing Teacher and ran a school in Kent.

Judy later trained as a Beauty Therapist, married, moved to Essex where for several years she ran her own business, and came to Maldon six years ago. Her several interests include interior design; ballet (watching, nowadays); Jazz dancing (she "still manages this"); cooking; walking, and travelling.

As far as the Museum is concerned Judy claims to be "a new girl with a lot yet to learn".



### Robert Long



Robert is a former student of the Darlington and Norwich schools of Art and the City of London College. He served in the RAF as Aide to the Wing Commander of Fighter Command. After working in Fleet Street in public relations and advertising, he entered local government in 1974, joining the MDC. Here he was responsible for Press and Public Relations, Information and Tourism. He now runs his own PR consultancy.

He has written, designed and illustrated many stories and articles on the history of the town and district of Maldon, and is published in the *Essex Chronicle* and *Essex Countryside* amongst others.

As a district and parish councillor he has always held a strong interest in the Maldon Town and the District and is a passionate defender of our rural environment and in particular its villages. An athlete since his teens, he represented the RAF at boxing and athletics, and has also won many cups and medals for football and skiing. He still runs regularly and has completed the London Marathon three times.

Robert and his wife live in an old Essex cottage at Tolleshunt Knights (constantly under renovation).

### Elizabeth Vale

Elizabeth has lived in Maldon since 1967. She is the Town Council member on the Museum Committee. She has worked at Maldon Library, and for ten years, in the Housing Department at Maldon District Council. She currently works for Age Concern Essex. Her husband is a local architect, and they have two sons in their twenties.



### Brian Mead

Like Len, Brian is a regular Maldonian, and needs no lengthy introduction. He has been a Maldon Town Councillor, and is currently a Maldon District Councillor.

## Merle Pipe

Merle was co-opted onto the committee as a nonvoting member as she had taken on responsibility for organizing the stewarding roster. Merle, a farmer's daughter from Great Totham, was educated at Colchester and worked for Barclays Bank in Maldon. At this time she became friendly with Maisie Woodward who lived at and ran her shop from 'Spindles', now the home of the Museum.



Merle married Roy Pipe, son of a local butcher, and lived in Writtle where her three children, now aged from 24-28, were born.

Eleven and a half years later the family returned to Maldon, Merle renewed the friendship with Maisie, and became a member of the Maldon Museum Association. For seventeen years she ran a full-time Nursery School, and formed the Maldon Hockey Club, supporting Roy as his Mayoress for his two terms of office 1980/81 and 1986/87. Very active, her hobbies include hockey, tennis, aerobics, gardening, reading, travelling, and stewarding for the Museum Association.

## Ten Years Ago

From the front page of the Maldon & Burnam Standard, Thursday, October 4, 1984 (price 16P)

### Maldon parking is winning shoppers

MALDON is winning cost-conscious shoppers because of its cheap parking prices, a council officer told the Standard.

Mr Michael Ecart, deputy treasurer for Maldon District Council said an extra 12,000 people have used Butt Lane car parks in the town, compared to last year.

"The parking here is very reasonable around 50P for four hours and I think shoppers, conscious of saving money are looking at Maldon", he said.

## From the Chairman



Whether we are taking national organization or small local museum I do not think that it is a Chairman's job to decide how to run things. Rather I see the Chairman has having three roles:

- To influence the 'management style' of the museum, and to accept responsibility for the public actions of the museum.
- To chair committee meetings, to allow each member their say and fair influence, and to bring about consensus.
- To represent the views and wishes of the Museum when dealing with other organisations.

My overall view is that past events have led to museum to be too defensive and isolated. We need to work with many other local bodies, whether they be councils, local interest groups, or other museums. We had a very successful joint exhibition with the Maldon Society, Maldon Archaeological Group, and Elm Farm Dig, and hope to do some more joint activities with them. We are also in talking to several other local museums to see what we can do for each other. We rely on public money, both gathered in the museum and collected via council tax, so whilst retaining our identity, and acknowledging our personal history, we owe it to the people to provide the biggest service to the community that we can!

The exact future of the museum is still uncertain, we do not know if we will be moving in to the Plume Building, or perhaps some where else if Maldon District Council go ahead with their centre to house the Elm Farm exhibits. What we do need is more people to become involved with the museum.

**Here is a mission for every member:**

**In 1995, recruit a new member!**

"A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies."

Oscar Wilde



# The Museum & Me

By Paddy Lacey

I came to Essex in late 1962 to live in the corridor of overgrown villages, now dormitory towns, and have worked there very happily as a General Practitioner ever since. It was obvious that the heritage of these villages was swamped by development and from an early stage I sought refuge in Maldon on days out, becoming fascinated with the history and traditions.

One claim to fame is that I travelled on the last train from Maldon East in 1964. I had always been interested in railways and had acquired a collection of Railwayana which was spotted by the next door neighbour when I eventually came to live in Maldon in 1972. The neighbour was Cath Backus, then Chairman of the Museum Association who quite coincidentally was mounting an exhibition on 'The Railways of Maldon' in the old premises belonging to Matthews. I pointed out that nothing in my collection even vaguely related to Maldon, but apparently there were cases to be filled so it was placed on loan for the duration of the exhibition and my link with the MMA had begun.

I helped to steward during this and subsequent exhibitions but declined to be nominated to the Committee until about 1975. I have served ever since and become a trustee of the museum. I have been very pleased to be associated with the changing exhibitions as well as the permanent collection and have learned much. Particular favourites of mine were the carefully researched exhibitions on Dr. Salter of Tolleshunt D'Arcy and that on the Sadd family and their association with Maldon. The quality of this latter exhibition gained recognition by the Essex Record Office who carefully recorded the assembled collection.

At one time the museum would open on a Thursday morning and this was a delight as the many pensioners who visited the Post Office on that day would call in and give valuable reminiscences. It would be splendid if, with an increase in the number of stewards, this could be revived.

I believe that the future of the museum in Maldon is bright. I have always supported an eventual move to the Plume Building as being its rightful home. Many changes are bound to occur in our organisation with this move but I am certain the end result will be worthy of Maldon.

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Shortly after Sir Oliver Franks became British Ambassador in 1948, he was telephoned by a local radio station to ask what he wanted for Christmas. A few weeks later, the radio station duly broadcast what various ambassadors in the capital had requested.

"Peace throughout the World", the French Ambassador pronounced grandly. "Freedom for all people enslaved by imperialism", declared the Russian Ambassador. "Well it's very kind of you to ask", said the recorded voice of the new British Ambassador. "I'd quite like a box of crystallized fruit."

If you have a good diet for loosing weight after Christmas don't bore others with it - help it by keeping your mouth shut.



When the last corner site is covered with buildings we can still make a playground by tearing them down, but when the last reindeer goes by the board, not all the playground associations in Christendom can do aught to replace the loss.

Aldo Leopold

## Spindles

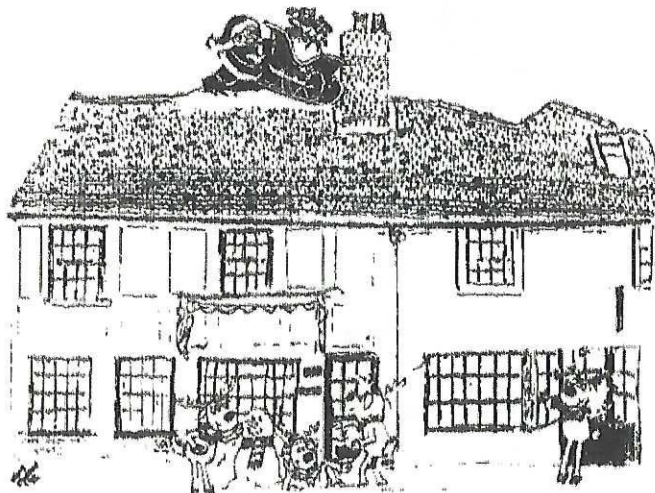
'SPINDLES' our Museum premises, is a timber framed building, probably built as two cottages by a Colchester carpenter in 1671.

This is indicated by the fact that there are lots of similar houses in Colchester but no others in Maldon. The kitchen and buildings on each side were built on about 200 years later.

It is possible that there were stairs leading from the position between the front windows up to the 'bird room'. There was a door leading to the garden and the frame can be seen next to the door leading to the kitchen.

The beams are original, whilst the windows were much smaller as can be seen by the beams in the bedrooms next to the existing windows.

The lovely shaped beam overhead as you go up the stairs had been covered by a straight piece of wood for many years and was uncovered when the Museum was being set up.



Don't forget to purchase your Spindles Christmas Cards  
(as above).

They are 20 P each or six for £1

They will be on sale on the two Victorian Evenings  
(December 8th & 15th).

## Len Barrell Writes...

In common with the majority of Registered Charities of which we are one, making financial ends meet would be quite impossible without the support of both the District and Town Councils. As caretakers of the museum artefacts which are themselves in the final count the property of the public, yes... you and me, the elected Committee is conscious of its responsibility in preserving and displaying as much as possible for the benefit of the majority who want a museum to be continued even though not all pay it a visit.

Neither preservation nor display is without cost and from time to time we are fortunate to receive an unexpected windfall which, together with membership subscriptions and small donations, helps to offset administrative and other smaller costs. The real expense however lies in the cost of premises, insuring and heating, which is where the Councils have been so helpful. To operate without their assistance we would need around one thousand five hundred paid-up members ... but meanwhile every single one helps.

This year we have been lucky enough to receive, additionally, £2,500 from the Foundation for Sport & the Arts as a one off grant towards rent.

We have also received a cheque for £514.43 from the Estate of the late Jane Benham.

Thank  
you!



Foundation  
for sport  
and the arts

Last Words... of Queen Victoria...

"Oh that peace may come. Bertie!"

# MRS BEETON'S HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT

## THE COOK.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### The Duties of the Cook, the Kitchen-Maid, and the Scullery-Maid.

THE cook and those who serve under her are so intimately associated that their duties can hardly be treated separately. The cook, however, is queen of the kitchen; if she be clean, orderly and quick, those who are under her will emulate those qualities. Upon her rests the whole responsibility of the kitchen; the duty of others to render her ready and willing assistance.

**Early Rising.** — If, as we have said, early rising is of so much importance to the mistress, what must it be to the servant! It is a thousand times tested truth that without early rising and punctual good work is almost impossible. A cook who loses an hour in the morning is likely to be toiling all day to overtake tasks that would otherwise have been easy. Six o'clock is a good hour to rise in the summer, seven in the winter.

**The Cook's First Duty** should be to prepare breakfast, full details for the selection, cooking and service of which will be found in the later chapter. She should then busy herself with those numerous little tasks associated with arranging and providing for the day. This will bring her to the breakfast hour of eight, after which preparation must be made for the other meals of the household.

**TWO VIEWS ON WHAT LIFE  
COULD BE LIKE FOR THE  
VICTORIAN HOUSE SERVANTS.**

## On Disciplining Housemaids

From the Memoirs of Major-General Hubert Reedy  
(1812 - 1886)

I have always trusted the care of my junior male staff to my butlers who in general have had an excellent training for this, being able to administer reward or admonishment as they saw fit. However my wife has always spoiled her personal and house maids, foolishly (I think) treating them like young daughters. The housekeeper (for we have never maintained a senior housemaid) would in most households have held similar responsibilities for our young ladies. We normally keep, in addition to my wife's personal maid, two housemaids, two cooks assistants, and on occasion a parlour maid, and always, it seems, one or two more besides who seem to do very little and rarely come above stairs.

Our Housekeeper, whom both my wife and I refer to as Mary, having been with us now for some twenty years, is excellent at the accounts (I rarely bother to check them now) and is the only one of us who can control the more outlandish whims of Cook. She is however no disciplinarian, tending to let the girls become far too impertinent to her which she ignores until her temper breaks when she will lash out at them spitefully.

Some years ago I saw that things would run far more smoothly if I relieved her of this aspect of her responsibilities, and we now have an understanding that whenever one of the maids performs badly or is insubordinate in some manner that she will be sent to me in the upper study. Here I admonish by use of the cane, slipper, and hand. I find this a most efficacious and also an enjoyable way of maintaining discipline. The girls mostly seem to prefer this to being on the sharp end of Mary's or Cook's sharp tempers, and after initial trepidation normally report for such discipline on a regular basis whenever instructed to do so by one of these senior servants. However sometimes it does not work so well as a corrective measure, for example Francine, a most cheerful young lady that my wife brought back from France last year, seems to be endlessly confused as to her duties, which I suppose may be different to those enjoyed in her native country, and normally contrives to be sent to me for punishment about four times weekly.

I have also found it unwise to interfere with respect to my wife's personal maids, who, by nature of their position, tend to be confidantes of my wife. Also it is best to have regard for the work load of Cook who becomes quite uppity if one of her girls is gone for more than an hour or so.



# NOTES



from the Secretary

## Dummies Join The Museum

Following a front page article in the Evening Echo which featured retired bobby Gordon Oakley and his search for some disused mannequins to model his three Canadian Mounty uniforms, we contacted Gordon to see if he ended up with any spares. We have several uniforms and costumes at the museum that we would like to display on mannequins. Gordon didn't have any spares himself, but he knew a man who did...

Our thanks to Detective Inspector Rod Clare of Chelmsford CID and his wife Jane who supplied us with two such young ladies (who previously worked in a window at Debenhams) and a selection of wigs, shows etc. We have had to work at making one of the young ladies look a little less feminine - to become a suitable figure for displaying the Mace Bearers uniform.

## Looking For A Home

The future continues to be uncertain for the museum. Plans to move into the ground floor of the Plume Building have been suspended until we find out what, if anything, will be offered by the Maldon District Council who have paid Prince Associates £29 000 to look into fund raising for continuance of the Elm Farm dig and an associated museum cum heritage centre.

It also has to be said that the committee continues to unhappy with the "Plume Building Management Committee" and the vague notions of the co-housing of the Maldon Museum, Millennium Embroidery, Riverside Association, Maldon Society, and Maldon Archaeological Group. As yet, the committee feels unable to give wholehearted enthusiasm to this project as the management committee, which is apparently to run the Plume Building exhibition centre, consists of thirteen people, of which only three are from the museum. This seems to us to threaten the stated intention of maintaining the Museum as an independent body. If we end up with a *choice* of location, all members will be consulted by post or by Extraordinary General Meeting.

## The Membership Secretary Writes

The formal Membership Year has become confused in the passage of time, so a recent Committee decision tidied it up:

The Membership Year is now from 1st April to 31st March, in line with the Financial Year.

To avoid any aggravation, and as a once only exercise, all subscriptions received in the six months to 31st March 1994 will be treated as having paid for the year to 31st March 1995.

Any subscription received after the 31st March 1994 will obviously be for the year to 31st March 1995, after which the year starts anew and subscriptions again become due, but if anyone feels that he/she prefers to pay the renewal in (say) September because that was when they joined or because that has always been their date, then that will be respected.

New Member subscriptions paid in the second half of the membership year (after 30th Sept.) will be 50% of the full rate, and will of course be renewable on 1st April, full rate.

Membership must be lapsed if a renewal is not paid by the 31st December in any year.

At the time of writing we actually have sixty seven paid-up members on record, and thanks are due to them as they help to pay for the administration expenses of the Association, other costs apart.

There are many more names on record who, we suspect, may regard themselves as members but haven't bothered to renew for some reason, possibly even through some omission on the part of the Association. Others just 'dropped out' but whatever the cause, if you are a lapsed name we shall be pleased to revive your membership and a renewal form is enclosed in this magazine..

The Association is in need of more members of whom some may be able to offer the active and/or intelligent support which will undoubtedly be needed if present plans come to fruition.

No doubt we shall be moving in to new premises somewhere sooner or later; we shall need plenty of workable ideas and suggestions from some, and from others so inclined, assistance on occasions with (e.g) organising and stewarding. The future looks promising and interesting.

# REGISTRATION

The Museums & Galleries Commission (MGC) provides a registration scheme for museums. Registration enables museums to:

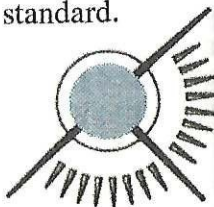
- demonstrate that they are meeting or striving towards minimum standards of operation in key areas;
- foster confidence amongst funding agencies that they are worthy of grant aid;
- safeguard collections by putting protection procedures in place;
- raise standards in key areas of museum activity;
- foster confidence with the public that the museum is a suitable repository for material;
- gain access to a wide range of professional help and support;
- be judged by peers on merits and achievements, not on resources

The registration scheme was originally launched in 1988, Maldon Museum applied, but out registration was deferred in 1990 for two reasons - the lack of suitable (or any) premises at the time, and the incomplete state of the collection documentation and procedures.

Since then the registration has been on hold, and unfortunately, for one reason and another no progress has been made on the documentation side of things.

We have now agreed a course of action with the S.E. Museums Service Registration Advisor, Leigh Lampard:

- Produce an Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and adopt it.
- Adopt a Curatorial Advisor,  
(Namely Arthur Wright of Southend Museum )
- Produce a Documentation Plan  
(which will state what we are going to do, and by when)
- Produce a Acquisition Register to the required standard.
- Relabel the items in the collection.



The current state of the museum collection is that we have acquisition records, but many of the items have lost their identifying label. Putting this right will require a lot of time and effort - especially as special labelling techniques are required for objects where the acquisition number is to be written directly onto the object - we have been given some guidance notes for this, basically fade proof inks have to be covered with a long-life varnish. At least one of us will attend a day training course to learn to do this properly. We will assign new numbers to all the objects, taking stock and regenerating the register as we go. Although not essential for registration, it is a good idea to maintain an additional record that gives further information on each item; recording for example any personal history or interesting information concerning the artefact told to us by the donor or known by a member of the museum.

Because of the large amount of work that Registration will involve - we are forming a subcommittee to deal with the various issues outside of the normal Committee meetings. If any member feels that they would like to help with the practical work please contact Lina. In particular, as recommended by Leigh, we would like to appoint an Acquisitions Officer - this need not be a committee member and will not be an AGM elected post.

It is not necessary that everything is put in order before we will move to full registration, only that we demonstrate that we have a plan to fulfil all the outstanding requirements and can be seen to be working towards it. We therefore hope to achieve registration in the second half of 1995.

## Famous Last Words... of Oscar Wilde...

Staring at a rather hideous floral wallpaper::

*"One of us must go."*



The Leper Hospital of St. Giles, as it is now, and as it might have been.  
(See article by Robert Long on page 26.)

## Recipe

An Old English Cure (1850)  
For A Feverish Cold

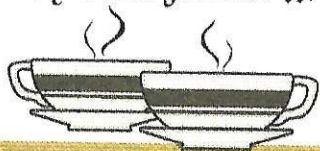
### Brown Caudle

Warm two quarts of gruel (thin porridge) made from oatmeal or groats, with two blades of mace and piece of lemon peel.

Strain it and stir until cold.

When to be used add a pint of good ale that is not bitter to each quart of gruel, a gill of wine, sugar to the palate, and warm together.

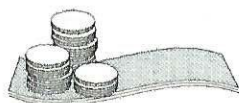
Believe me, you soon get better !!.



The trouble with what melts in the mouth is the way it bulges in front of the mirror.

Too many square meals make too many round people.

## Saving Money



Since the museum doesn't have a lot of money to spare it has been decided to reduce the travelling expenses from the previous 28P per mile to a more affordable 12P per mile to cover petrol on car journey made solely for the benefit of the museum. It is also felt that when attending conferences that the cost of lunch should be borne by the recipient, not the Museum Association as was previously the case. We hope that these changes meet with your approval.

## EMINENCE GRISE

An historical ghost story for Christmas

by Emerald Shahan

"I don't want to lose you, but I think you ought to go." Helen sang as they danced in the New Year of 1915. The silvery grey dress she had sown so lovingly brought out the colour of her ash blonde hair and contrasted sharply with Peter's dress uniform. He would so soon wear the drab khaki of the Western front and her smiling face belied the sadness of his impending departure. So many of the young men in her circle of friends were returning hideously maimed or not returning at all. She hated the song and its implications of emotional blackmail, but tonight they were together.

"She's been again", he said with a rueful smile, "she still loves me."

I perched on the arm of his chair and hugged the broad shoulders. "Well that's all right then, isn't it?" I smiled. "I was beginning to think she didn't fancy you any more. "Don't joke" he pleaded quietly, "she worries me when she looks so sad."

This had been going on ever since we moved into the flat several months previously. My husband insisted he had seen a lady in a grey dress standing at the top of the stairs on the day we moved in. He had put it down to tiredness on that occasion, but she had greeted him several times since, saying, "I love you" before she disappeared. The first two or three times I had made light of it, but she was beginning to have an odd effect on my normally taciturn partner - a softening of moods and a sad solemnity. After her visits he would lie awake in the darkness, at first irritated that he was the only one who saw her, which later turned to puzzlement and eventually to worry at her obvious distress. The building was quite old, but of little historic interest, having been a seed merchant's shop for many years and we had converted the hayloft into two bedrooms. The grey lady became part of the family - no cold draughts, no aura of evil, no bumps in the night and my gossips with older members of the small town had not revealed any legends. Peter began to wait for her and try to engage her in conversation, but she only ever said "I love you still." With a man's usual vagueness he found it hard to describe the style of her dress, just a sort of long frock with a hood pushed back to the shoulders, soft drapery, an feeling of warm gentleness. "She's very friendly" he insisted, "not creepy or anything, and she makes me feel good, happy and comfortable and sort of welcome." For days afterwards instead of the glib wisecracks and male chauvinist piggery I had learned to live with, I had a gentle, patient and rather wistful person who was genuinely worried at another's unhappiness.

Waterloo Station was crowded that frosty morning - families and friends saying goodbye to loved ones loaded with knapsacks and greatcoats and the weapons of war. Helen wore grey again, it suited her mood and Peter was proud of the pretty girl on his arm. Like the others, he had little fear that anything was going to happen to him.

Woomph! Woomph! - Woomph! Woomph! The artillery maintained a constant barrage against the enemy holding out in the hills beyond. Peter leaned against the side of the trench. "To the next trench!" the voice was a new one - sounded like the big guy from Red Platoon - old Crofters must have copped it. They ran like hell, zigzagging so as not to make an easy target for the Jaeger rifles. The new sergeant stood by the trench waving them on, till an accurate rifle shot took half his face off. Pete dived into the trench, landing in the water. "Oh God, was there no end to this?" (Habitually he clutched for the photo -jockey that hung round his neck with the dog-tag. A coldness soaked up from his boots as he realized he had felt it slip down as he ran for the trench. "Helen!" - Peter leapt out of the muddy water and ran back. Yes, there it was, he could see it gleaming on the mud - the only clean thing for miles around. As he bent to retrieve it the rifleman squinted through his sights.

"Don't give up Helen", said Julie, her eyes full of tears, "he hasn't been listed dead - only missing."

Poor Helen, her cousin had taken it very badly. Every evening she would climb to the hayloft, where the pulley hatch gave a view of the road winding up the hill from the station. Every afternoon she waited, watching till the cold grey December light faded into darkness. "You should put a coat on up there Helen", Julie admonished. "You will catch your death of cold, and then where will Peter be when he gets back? Tell me that then!" Helen replied in her now usual sad voice: "I do love him so Julie - I can't bear him being away, how can there be Christmas without him?"

\* \* \*

The doctor closed his bag; clicking down the brass locks; "I'll call in to see her Friday. In the meantime make sure she's kept warm. Helen started coughing again, Julie turned to give her medicine. Helen's long ash blonde hair was straggly and dry. "Here, let me brush your hair", she said, you want to stay looking good for Peter don't you?"

\* \* \*

The doctor had been again that morning; he had called regularly ever since the pneumonia had developed into T.B. Helen had been in some pain. He had increased the dose of morphine. Julie spent most of the day with her now; but on occasion when she left her alone Helen would wake, and finding herself alone cry out: "Where's Peter? Haven't you told him I'm ill? Hasn't he come yet?" They had wanted to send her to Abbotsworth to the T.B. sanatorium; Helen wouldn't go. She insisted on waiting for Peter. Perhaps they should have insisted, but Dr. Morrison had said that in her case it probably wouldn't do any good.

Now Helen was taking deep, noisy breaths; her face, recently, so young and bright, was now hollowed. You look so old, thought Julie. The last lot of medicine had left Helen very quiet. Three doses a day now. Suddenly Helen reached out and spiny fingers dug into Julie's arm, she rasped "I'm going to wait for him - I still love him you know." The fingers tightened, and slowly relaxed. Helen's eyes remained open, but the light had left them for ever.

Julie sat a while before going out for the Doctor. She took the photo of Peter and Helen of the mantelpiece - taken that New Year in 1915. Peter looked very smart in his new uniform. He looked so young compared to Helen now. Poor Helen, why couldn't she accept you were dead? After a few minutes she placed the photo in Helen's wasted hand and put on her coat.

Having returned from the latest bout of Christmas shopping we decided to spend the afternoon tidying the back dining room, in preparation for Christmas, but had become distracted when I came across the folders of our holiday snaps that still hadn't been put into an album. There was a good one of Pete sitting on the bonnet of the car looking hungry and wistful as he waited for me to come out of the quaint little antique shop in that village in France. Pete had had a quick look round and soon got bored, but I had spent ages in there - and hadn't bought a thing! When I came out he had presented me with this old locket which had caught his eye in the shop. It was a silver heart. Inside were the faded sepia faces of a couple. He said she had a nice smile and I said, "He looks like you Pete!" I was going to clean it up and put a new photo in, but once we got back to England this seemed silly and I didn't like the idea of despoiling it. So I had put it away somewhere and had never worn it. "What happened to the locket?" said Pete. After a bit of searching I rescued the locket from the sidepocket on one of the holiday carryalls and took it into the kitchen to find some silver polish - now I came to think of it I was sure I had bought some for the purpose. Trouble was this meant just about emptying the cupboard under the sink - I have never been tidy and as soon as I opened the door old dusters and forgotten polished tumbled out - but I found the silver polish and gave the locket a quick shine. "Look Pete", I called, "it's come up quite well."

I must have left Peter looking at the photos for about twenty minutes. When I returned with the locket he pained. "She's been again", he said, "she doesn't want you to wear it." This was my first unpleasant experience with our ghost. After this incident I felt watched - she had obviously waited for me to leave the room, which meant she was watching, was here all the time. I've never believed in ghosts before; somehow although I didn't disbelieve Pete about his Grey Lady, it never seemed serious. Now I felt haunted.

Then Pete and I had our first real argument. It had brewed silently all week. Over that damn locket. For some reason although he had bought it for me he insisted on wearing it; and he was equally insistent that he didn't. Under threat of having it torn off my throat I said I had mislaid it. I knew Pete didn't believe this, but he knew I was no longer wearing it. I hid it behind the cooker (Pete would never look there in a thousand years). For the first time in our marriage we stared to lie to one another. I think Pete's Grey Lady came again - I don't know what she said I don't know if she knew I had been wearing it. Pete and I lived most of that week in a silent row, I've never been the jealous type, but this ghostly competition was too much. She seemed to have so much power over Peter.

The only thing that we did together that week was to ransack the spare room for the box of Christmas decorations. I used to love that room. Peter had put a window where the old pulley hatch used to be. You can see all the way down the road to the bottom of the hill. It was then that we rediscovered the old trunk. We had found it in the hayloft when we had first moved in. It was fairly small, leather with steel bands. It was locked. Peter had been going to open it, but it had been buried under the boxes of old files and books we had dumped in that room. Peter had oiled the lock, and we were going to try and find a key, but it had been forgotten - and neither of us had given it another thought. At least we had thought it was locked, but the lock must have been just stiff because when we tried it this time it opened easily. "Look at this then", Peter said, the most talkative he had been for days. "Books; an old photo. It's a couple, a young soldier and his sweetheart; and some curtains."

He shook the grey velvet out; but it wasn't curtains, it was a beautiful velvet gown with a hood.

Leaving Pete to find the Christmas decorations I took the framed photo down to the kitchen and extracted the locket from behind the cooker. Opening the locket I held it out over the photo. It was the same picture. The inset in the locket had been formed by cutting out just the faces of the couple in the shape of a heart. The photo from the trunk had been preserved better - the resemblance of the young man to Peter was even more striking, but most remarkable of all was the inscription at the bottom. Happy Birthday Helen don't we look smart! Love Peter. It gave me a very strange feeling. I now longer felt comfortable with the idea of Pete and his Grey Lady. I tolerated this though - it seemed silly to be jealous of a ghost. For a while Pete didn't mention her, although I could tell he was still "seeing" her.

What I shall never forgive Peter for is laying out that gown and calling her; trying to invoke her, calling her by name: "Helen, Helen", he said. His voice soft and excited, "Come to me, I love you too." However she's only a ghost, so I decided to wait her out, get an exorcist or something.

And so here we sit, the three of us. I can see her too now. The turkey is on the table. She doesn't eat, but she's sitting at the table with us. Watching; smiling shyly at me. They are holding hands. When I looked in the mirror this morning I saw her standing behind me - so ghosts do show a reflection after all! I thought. Then I realized. I looked at my tired eyes, and the beginnings of crows feet. I was growing old; and over my shoulder Pete's grey lady, was nineteen, and going to stay that way.

# CHRISTMAS STOCKING

We have been looking at increasing the range of items in the Museum Shop and are pleased to say that, in time for the Victorian Evenings, we will be stocking several new items that we think will have wide appeal. These include some high quality replica coins, reproduction historic bracelets, and miniatures of Roman pottery, from a company called **Westair**. The latter should prove very popular because of the interest that the Elms Farm dig



has aroused. We may also be able to sell small pieces of genuine roman pot shards if these become available. We are looking at creating our own Museum Tea Towels, bearing the Maldon Museum name and logo, and illustrating, for example, Edward Bright "The Fat Man of Maldon". Other ideas suggested include tile mug/teapot stands showing the Maldon coat of arms or the skull of William James Seymour.



William Seymour

We will also be producing Museum Badges, they should prove popular with school parties.



A silver denier of the reign of Richard the Lionheart



The new Museum Badge

If any of our readers have suggestions for items we could stock then please contact any committee member with your idea.

# Forthcoming Events

## Visit to Waltham Abbey Museum

Waltham Abbey itself is reputed to be the last resting place of King Harold. The town centre of Waltham Abbey has a charming medieval feel, consisting mostly of a single pedestrian street of small shops and pubs. The two timber-beamed houses at the far end of the street house the museum, which is run by Epping District Council. The museum is well worth a visit, and is a good example of what can be achieved with a small museum, and a fair bit of money. It is staffed by three full-time and ten part-time staff who are assisted by volunteers. It is currently running a First World War exhibition - complete with trench hut and sound-effects. We are arranging to visit some time in January while the WW1 exhibition is still on. The visit will be on a day that the museum is not open to the public, and we will have an opportunity to talk to the staff about museum matters. We are intending to take most of the Committee and some town and district councillors if they are interested. Anyone else who is interested should contact Ruth or Lina as soon as possible. We intend to travel down by cars.

## Social Evening

Following the success of our Garden party in September we plan to have another social evening in the first quarter of next year. The format has not been decided - perhaps you would like to suggest something - please contact Lina or Merle.



# Maldon's Own Leper Hospital

by Robert Long

Our historians and school teachers have always given us the impression that the Medieval period of our English history was a cruel time when life was very cheap and expendable. Therefore, when we look at the ruin of St. Giles Leper Hospital in Spital Road, it is hard to associate the liberal mind that would provide such a sanctuary with that of a society that probably would have put to the sword anyone who was lefthanded. Leprosy was first introduced into Europe in 326 BC by the soldiers of Alexander the Great returning from Asia. It reached its peak between 1000 AD and 1400 AD in this country after which it slowly declined with the last unfortunate catching it in these isles in 1798 (in the Shetlands to be precise). In medieval times sailors carried it into our ports, and Maldon, being a principle port in Saxon and Norman times, would have had its fair share of lepers in the vicinity. Leprosy was the dreaded disease of the biblical and medieval age. It would appear that its pre publicity in those superstitious days made it far more contagious than it actually was. Our modern medical knowledge now tells us that the disease is only slightly contagious and most people are slightly immune - but try telling that to some Maldon resident in 1160 AD.

The hospital, one of ten such built in Essex, was erected on the command of King Henry II, around 1164 A.D. for "the relief of such burgesses of this Town as should have the leprosy" also "providing a chaplain to say divine service daily in the chapel". So, this sanctuary was not for everyone, only those gentry who had the position and presumably the money! A sort of medieval BUPA! It may be that Thomas a Beckett who was the boon companion of Henry at this time, being made Chancellor in 1155 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162 influenced him in the provision of such sanctuaries.

All lepers had to wear a distinctive black hood and cloak for men and a veil for women. Also they were made to carry a bell to ring as they approached. Presumably this was done to make sure that you didn't bump into one by accident. No wonder the word 'leper' has come down to us today to mean someone completely ostracized.

I wonder what they thought of it all - well we will never know for they were also forbidden to converse with ordinary people. When the hospital was constructed a large amount of Roman brick was used (clearly visible today). Over the years, various additions were made to the building hence the three remaining lancet windows which are early English circa 1200. Many wardens were appointed during the hospital's lifetime. By the late 1300s leprosy was beginning to fade in England and by 1400 it was found that the warden had not done his job correctly- he had not supplied a chaplain or admitted any lepers for three years! It is not recorded what he had done with the money provided.

In 1481, St. Giles was passed to the nearby Beeleigh Abbey along with 90 acres of land. The Abbot, one Thomas Scarlet, agreed to take over all the costs of the Hospital and to say mass once a week in the chapel. In 1538 Beeleigh Abbey itself was dissolved by Henry VIII who gave St. Giles hospital to a Thomas Dyer and his wife.

Great gaps now appear in any recorded history of this former leper hospital until 1768 when it was converted into a barn by Lieutenant General Montolieu (the same fate as St. Peters on the Wall at Bradwell). At the turn of the century the famous Mayor of Maldon and historian, E.A. Fitch commented in his history of Maldon and the Blackwater that, "*the barn at spital farm is somewhat ruinous and dilapidated but is still picturesque and certainly interesting.*"

Today, only the ruins of this symbol of medieval care for he lepers of Maldon remain in Spital Road, but they are visited by many interested scholars. In fact the site is considered an ancient monument and is visited from time to time by an official from the department for the Environment. The present grounds surrounding the ruins are cared for by the Maldon Town Council. I was was asked, when talking to some visitors at the ruins, if there were any ghosts, considering the suffering that must have taken place there? Ghostly apparitions in black and spectral bells ringing at night? Alas no. The only chimes I have heard are those of the ice cream man playing Greensleeves in his van.

To be serious though, when you stand inside the remains of this 12th century hospital, the feeling is of being in a sanctuary. There is a definite air of quiet peace about the place which even the traffic on nearby Spital Road fails to disrupt.

**Note:** The word 'Spital' or 'Spittle' meant: *A house specially for foul diseases; a spital house or as we know it today, a hospital.*

# The Back Page

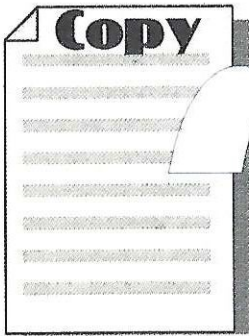
## Stewarding



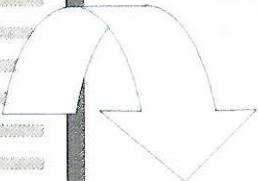
**Maldon  
Museum  
Needs  
You!**

Stewarding is an interesting, and also a very rewarding way to spend a couple of hours on a Saturday. We have a small band of happy helpers, but on occasions are slightly "stretched". If you can assist in any way it would be greatly appreciated.

Please phone Merle on (0621) 858333.



**Don't forget to  
submit your ideas  
and articles for the  
next issue!**



*The Editor,  
The Penny-Farthing,  
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