

In the early morning of Bank Holiday Monday a group of Museum Members could be found setting up a stall at the now traditional Market on the Prom. Many hours later the Museum funds had swelled by a sum well in excess of £200, which will be put to good use in the annual refurbishment during the winter months. The successful outcome of this Bank Holiday venture was founded on teamwork under the guidance of Mike Bennett. A leaflet had been produced and circulated to our wider Membership and the response in the provision of material for sale was quite superb. Thank you everybody for your help with this.

This event outlined vividly the importance of teamwork in all aspects of our Museum. The efforts of the Display Team, with Judy Tullett, are there for all to see, whilst the occasional appearance of the Heavy Duty Team (Mike's 'Heavy Mob') has 'moved mountains' around our site when necessary. Less obvious but essential to the development of the Museum is the Accessions Team, working under Penny Cook, in the course of systematically revising and up-dating the records of all articles in our care. All these teams are outward looking and would be happy to include new recruits from willing volunteers, not of course forgetting our indispensable Stewards without whom the Museum could not even open.

Our major need at present is to strengthen our Secretarial Team. We are anxious that the post of Secretary, currently vacant, should not become a burden on any one individual; assistance with all aspects of the work is available and will be freely given to a newcomer. The same comment applies to the post of Stewarding Secretary which becomes vacant when this season ends in October; five months are then free in which to organise the 2001 season. This position could even suit a husband/wife or similar partnership. If you feel you can possibly help with any team or vacancy please let me know and I shall be delighted to discuss it and give full details.

Paddy

We regret that.....
we find it necessary to postpone the 4th instalment of Richard Poole's Reminiscences until Penny-Farthing No.23, the 'winter issue'.

Maldon 2000 - June 19th-24th

The Museum, in conjunction with the Maldon Society, contributed to the week of celebration by mounting a display of photographs, skilfully enlarged by John Prime from the Society's collection. To find space mid-season within the museum called for much ingenuity from the Display Team and this was appreciated by the many interested visitors to the 'Museum in the Park'.

The size of the prints produced an impact on the viewer who could 'get inside the picture' to concentrate on detail not at first noticed. Haddon Spurgeon, our own true Maldonian expert pointed at the tailor's shop just beyond the original Fire Brigade Station in London Road, where he remembers the tailor would be seen sitting cross-legged following his profession.

Haddon was also delighted to see that there were photographs illustrating the three different positions occupied by the Maldon Bandstand on the Promenade between the early 1930's and the mid-fifties. The illustrations of 'stackie' barges, both at the Hythe being loaded with hay and straw for the horses of London in 1903, and a photograph of a remarkable painting by Leslie Thomson of a 'stackie' off Goldhanger sea wall were much admired.

The choice of photographs and the range of subjects therein with many 'new' old photographs being shown produced a very worthwhile display which gave great pleasure to all who saw them. Our thanks should go to all involved, particularly to Bob Wallwork who co-ordinated the venture through the committees of the Museum and the Maldon Society.

One of the highlights of Maldon's Millenium celebrations was the presentation of 'Local Knowledge' written by David Hughes and marvellously performed by Stuart Rayner as 'Cocker Freeman', a ninety-year-old shipwright who had worked all his life on Maldon's shores and who had, in his time, courted young ladies at Beeleigh, and been a powerful centre-half for Maldon Town, giving his views on the past, present, and future of his town. It was magnificent and will surely be performed again. Do not miss it !

One point emphasised by 'Cocker', and which I had heard earlier in the week from Haddon Spurgeon, was how the modern use of the words 'Hythe Quay' and 'Promenade Park' grate on the ears of true Maldonians. What is wrong with 'The Hythe' and 'The Promenade' alone for that is what they have always been called? For that matter, The Promenade has more usually been 'The Prom'. Perhaps we should quietly drop the phrase of 'The Museum in the Park' and substitute 'The Museum on the Prom'?. At least all true local folk would find us.

Heard this one?.....

Our member was idling across this old stone bridge and hearing what he thought was the sound of chisel on stone which, in that situation, made no sense. From a distance he'd seen a horse-drawn barge approaching but knew that the horse could not have made that sound, that metallic ringing clip-dop clip-dop. So he looked over the parapet to see the stationary barge almost below with the horse alongside it and the bargeman just out of sight under the arch and still the sound of chisel on stone.

"What's the problem skipper?"

"The horse is too tall so I'm making the arch high enough for him!"

"So wouldn't it be easier to scrape away the towpath for him?"

"It's not that his legs are too long; it's his ears!"

THE PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHERS OF MARKET HILL

The first photographer to be named in a directory of Maldon was James Edwards who, in 1866, was described as being a confectioner and photographer on Market Hill. By 1882 the 'confectioner' had been dropped and James Kevan continued the business as an 'Artist, Photographer, and Portrait Painter'. He was followed by Walter Wren Gladwin who preferred to be known as a 'Portrait and Landscape Photographer and Colorist'. Gladwin left Maldon in 1892 and the business, now described as 'Market Hill Studio' passed to John Rayne. Rayne changed the name to Glendale Studio, 8 Market Hill, and worked there for seventeen years. He was succeeded by W. Hazeltine Frost who continued there into the thirties (long enough to have photographed one of the Museum Committee Members on a rug in a state of undress).

~~~~~PJL010300

### MALDON PHOTOGRAPHERS

Apart from Edwards, Kevan, Gladwin, Rayne and Hazeltine Frost, names all associated with 'Glendale Studios', 8 Market Hill, there were other portrait photographers working in Maldon. In 1910 Frank Joseph Reynolds was working 164 High Street and by the 1920's A.H. De'ath was at 24 Market Hill. In more recent times Herbert Springett and Michael Seymour worked in the High Street.

~~~~~PJL010300

'NEWSICAL CHAIRS'.....?

*One of the chairs around the 'NewsLetter' editing table welcomes its new occupant, namely Ray B, replacing Tony F. Perhaps, as such things can be done electronically nowadays, it will be a "distance procedure" but Tony F reports fondly that it was always a congenial task at 44 as alongside the scissors and paste, came biscuits and coffee!
For fresh ideas, not to mention publishing expertise, the PennyFarthing can now expect a Ray B(rooster)?*

Best Wishes

A.J.F.



In Proud Remembrance of
A SON OF MALDON
Driver BENJAMIN GEORGE COBEY
who gave his life for King and Country on the
26th August 1914
whilst 'Saving The Guns' at Le Cateau aged 19 years
Remembering also
Captain D.Reynolds V.C.
Driver F.Luke V.C.
Driver J.H.V.Drain V.C.
57th Battery. Royal Field Artillery

~~~~~  
The original plaque, of which this is a reduced copy, will be presented by the Western Front Association for exhibition in the Museum, at a modest ceremony before an invited audience on Saturday September 23rd at 11 a.m. Accomodation being limited, numbers were, of necessity, restricted. A report on the ceremony will appear in Issue 23 of the Penny-Farthing.  
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Benjamin George Cobey

Benjamin George Cobey was born on March 10th 1895 at No.39 Church Street, Maldon, opposite St. Mary's Church. The house no longer exists but the barges, fishing smacks, boat and sail yards, Jolly Sailor and St. Mary's Church were all part of his background. Not much is known of his early life; at some time in his childhood, his branch of the family moved to Walthamstow; other branches remained around Heybridge and district. After leaving school, Ben joined the Royal Artillery and became a 'Driver', a Gunner whose special duty was to care for and drive the horse teams which pulled the heavy guns into battle position. There had been a long period of peace after the Boer War while Ben was growing up and doing his training, so Ben was unlikely to have experienced being under fire before he embarked to France in August 1914. Perhaps he felt challenged and excited, going to war with older and experienced soldiers. He was, after all, only nineteen.

After the German army invaded Belgium at 8 a.m. on August 4th the British Government hesitated. Being under no treaty obligation to support France, the German atrocities and destruction of peaceful villages and towns in Belgium as they passed through, decided the issue; Great Britain would support France, and declared war late on August 4th 1914. An expeditionary force of about 80,000 men with guns, equipment, stores, and horses was mustered, and concentrated in great secrecy at Southampton & Portsmouth ready to embark for France. This took place also in great secrecy between August 6th and August 10th, beginning the embarkation on August 9th.

The British Expeditionary Force was a very small force compared with the huge Continental armies of the day, but it was composed of skilled and professional soldiers who had enlisted in the Regular Army from choice, and made a career of it.

When we think of the first World War, two things seem to come immediately to mind; - the dirt, squalor and stagnation of the trenches, and the Battle of the Somme with its ghastly casualties and loss of young life. Ben Cobey was to see nothing of this. War, as he saw it, and had trained for, was not like this. His war was more in common with the war experienced by the Maldon Volunteers in the South African Boer War, who returned to Maldon to be given the freedom of the town - a war of movement, marching, riding, and caring for horses for, in spite of railways and meticulously timed troop trains, wars could not be fought without horses in 1914. Ben saw nothing of the Western Front trench system that stretched from the Channel to the Swiss border. Nor the Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian troops pouring back to defend the mother country. He never knew that America would send

troops to help save England and Europe from domination by the Kaiser. He knew nothing of Naval battles, submarine warfare, tanks, dog-fights in the air between rival aeroplanes, nor of gas warfare, the shelling of Scarborough and other Eastern Coastal towns, the bombing of Southend and Maldon, and air raids over London. All this was in the future when war was declared late on August 4th and was unimaginable to the majority of the British public. "It would all be over by Christmas". Ben did not live to see the destruction of the old British Regular Army of which he was a part; by the spring of 1915 the old Contemptibles were nearly all gone. Ben died after less than two weeks in France, and no more than two or three days fighting. He was 19.

The Channel was regarded as safe, since the Royal Navy had patrolled the seaways, and the German High Seas fleet had not left their home base at Wilhelmshaven. The BEF crossing began overnight, and took several hours. Most of the troop ships pulled into Le Havre, where there were Rest Camps under canvas, and where the soldiers would stay until the whole BEF concentrated at Amiens, where Sir John French, the British Commander, arrived on August 14th. Over the next few days, from Amiens, the BEF moved up to support the French army on the Mons Conde Canal. They arrived at the town of Mons on Aug 22nd, with a hearty welcome from the villages on their way up.

On the same day, August 22nd, unknown to the British, von Kluck moved his German army from Liege down to France to take part in driving back the French army from the River Sambre, near Charleroi, where fierce fighting had been going on for some days. Further along the French front, in the forest of Ardennes, fighting was also severe, and on both fronts the French resistance was failing. Sir John French did not like the situation but reluctantly agreed to hold his line for 24 hours to cover the anticipated withdrawal. On the 22nd a Cavalry skirmish alerted both sides to the presence of the other. Von Kluck in fact had only just accepted the fact that the British had landed, so well had the secret been kept, and had no idea the BEF was within miles of his army. A collision was inevitable and on the following morning battle commenced across the Conde Canal. By midday on the 23rd the fighting became very fierce. The French Commander, without consulting the British, gave orders for his troops to withdraw, leaving the BEF with a large gap to their right, which the German army could pass through. It was now the famous Battle of Mons, and the equally famous Retreat from Mons followed.

Ben Cobey, with his battery, the 37th, had been in the thick of it and firing non-stop for two whole days, covering the retreating Infantry as they fought their way back with only their rifles and a few machine guns to help them. They were the first British soldiers to fight a European enemy since the Crimea (1854) and the first to fight on European soil since Waterloo (1815).

During Tuesday 25th August the retreat went on, but on Wednesday 26th the BEF decided to make a stand and fight it out around the small town of Le Cateau.

For six hours seven gun batteries held von Kluck's VII Corps and then could hold on no longer. The casualties in both men and horses had been crippling. They had to fall back. The 37th Battery (Ben's battery) was the last to leave the field, and by 3 o'clock four of the six guns had been brought back to the rear. Two guns remained unmanned and within reach of the Germans. The leading officer, Captain Douglas Reynolds, called for volunteers to return and "save the guns" and at once, Drivers Fred Luke, Job Drain, and Benjamin Cobey stepped forward. They took a team of horses which had survived, and walked them with the empty gun limbers back along the road from which they had just retreated, and covered 300 yards. By now the Germans were only 100 yards away. Every gun was precious. They carried on, mounted, and making a frantic dash, got in, limbered up one gun, and made another dash for safety. It was then that Ben Cobey, riding the central horse, was sniped and fell from his horse. As may be seen in the Museum picture, Captain Reynolds, riding alongside on his charger, managed to catch Ben's whip and control the centre pair of riderless horses. The gun was saved. Ben Cobey's body was never found.

Fred Duke, Job Drain, and Captain Reynolds, all were awarded the V.C. Ben Cobey did not receive a posthumous V.C. nor was he Mentioned in Despatches. He may have been confused with another gunner's name in a similar incident at the same time. His name is often mentioned incorrectly in later accounts of the incident, but research has shown that there is no doubt of the identity of the driver from 37 Battery who died getting out his gun. He was Benjamin Cobey of Maldon and Walthamstow, Essex. Job Drain was a Barking man. He survived the war and proudly wore his V.C. on many a Remembrance Day parade, until he was an old man. The only memory of Ben Cobey is his name on the La Ferte-sons Jouarre Memorial which stands in a small park beside the River Marne, and commemorates 4000 Officers and Men of the BEF who died in August, September, and early October 1914.

The Western Front Association, has long wished to remember Ben Cobey in his birthplace. It is particularly good to know that with the cooperation of the Maldon and District Museum Association, this will take place a very short distance from the street in which he was born, in an area which he probably knew well, from when he visited his relatives and walked beside the river.

Framed copies of the Maldon Charters have been in the care of the Museum since about 1972 and selective Charters have been on display in the Museum from time to time; members were aware that it was impossible to show them all in the restricted space available.

The Charters were followed by the Maldon Town Banner, admittedly in a well-worn condition but nursed by the Museum until such time as keen volunteers could be found to undertake a major operation and restore it to a presentable condition. Unfortunately nowadays such stalwarts are becoming fewer and farther between, and the banner regrettably remained "tatty".

The responsibility has however now been passed back with the Charters and Banner as they have all quite properly been returned to the Moot Hall from whence they came, and can be viewed there pro tem on Saturdays. They were handed over by the Museum Chairman Dr. Paddy Lacey, to Town Mayor Peter Roberts and Moot Hall keeper Alex Boyle.

The charters date from 1171, the first being granted by Henry II. The originals are held by the Essex Records Office, Chelmsford.

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LOGGATTS

A game somewhat similar to Bowls but played with small logs, and one of the sports forbidden by the act of Henry VIII 1541. It was mainly a country pastime played on an ash-strewn pitch with a jack or jacks at which the loggats were aimed. It was said to be a favourite sport at sheep-shearing festivals and in Elizabeth's day a kind of loggat was played with bones, for in Shakespeare's Hamlet we get the following:

"Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with 'em?"

Quarrels often developed about measuring distances between the loggats and the jack, hence the well-known phrase: "To be at logger-heads with someone"



TO ALL AND SINGULAR

Persons shall come Sir Alexander Colin Cole, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order upon whom has been conferred the Territorial Decoration, Quarter Principal King of Arms and Sir Anthony Richard Warner, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Clarenceux King of Arms, Lord Chamberlain WHEREAS DEREK MALDON FITCH of London County, Sutton in the County of Surrey, Gentleman, hath represented unto His Most Noble Miles Francis Stapleton Duke of Norfolk, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, upon whom has been conferred the Decoration of the Military Cross, Earl Marshal and Hereditary Marshal of England that he is desirous of having a Device or Badge established under lawful authority and recorded for him in Her Majesty's College of Arms and hath requested the favour of His Grace's Warrant for the granting and assigning such Device or Badge as will deem proper to him and used by him and his descendants according to the Law of Arms and to be made in the said Earl Marshal did by Warrant under his hand and Seal bearing date the Twenty-third day of April 1955 authorize and direct us to grant and assign such Device or Badge accordingly, Know Ye therefore that We the said Quarter and Chamberlain in pursuance of His Grace's Warrant and by virtue of the Letters Patent of Our several Offices granted by His Majesty's Most Excellent Majesty to each of Us respectively do by these Presents grant and assign unto the said DEREK MALDON FITCH the following Device or Badge due to us to say A Mountain, Barrow, Peninsula (Barrenness) Fitchian, borne on two branches of Dunbarrow Fitchian in Ark proper as the same is in the margin hereof more plainly depicted to be borne and used for ever hereafter by the said DEREK MALDON FITCH and by his descendants according to the Law of Arms in witness whereof We the said Quarter and Chamberlain have to these Presents subscribed Our names and affixed the Seal of our several Offices this Second day of September in the Twenty-fourth year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth the Second by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith, and in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty Five.

of Stratford - *Lacey*

of Stratford - *for Chamberlain*



Derek Maldon Fitch



It is not generally known that although our E.A.Fitch, author of 'Maldon and the River Blackwater', has been dead for nearly one hundred years, his descendants are not only numerous and still with us, but occasionally visit the town. Derek Maldon Fitch, a grandson, does so frequently and spent nearly all of last June in the town, staying at the Blue Boar. During that time he met a number of members of the Association and we now have a colour reproduction of the 'Device or Badge' (Coat of Arms) granted to him by the College of Arms in consideration of his military service on the Indian frontier during the 1939-45 war with Japan, and this we reproduce above. The Battle Standard, bears a 'cross crosslet fitchy' which is described in a letter from the Richmond Herald as having a double allusion - firstly to the surname Fitch and secondly to Maldon - or Maeldune - 'the hill with a mael or monument or cross'.

The unusual christian name 'Maldon' also borne by both Derek's father Thomas, and Derek's brother who died five years before Derek was born has its own story and we hope to tell it in a future issue of the Penny Farthing.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF MALDON

It is a little difficult to remember Maldon exactly as it was one hundred years ago, but, subject to the possibility (and even certainty) of errors and omissions, the heavy black lines as drawn below represent the town as it was in about 1890. The road names have deliberately been obliterated as (a) it was easier to obliterate them than to dodge them and (b) it makes for possibly a more interesting plan for those who think they do not need names anyway.

The 'storm clouds' depicted at the foot of the page do, in fact, represent current developments not yet completed, whilst the areas between our 1890 roads, now filled almost entirely by twentieth century building, yet above the storm clouds, are clearly identified by names.



You knew of course that as Maldon developed, some names changed; but why? There must be a story behind each one; any ideas?.....For example.....

BEELEIGH FOOTPATH was Constitutional Hill.

BUTT LANE was Rose & Crown Lane, formerly Whang Poo Street (It contained Shanghai Cottages with a Chinese Laundry).

COACH LANE was Princes Street.

CROMWELL LANE was Union Lane, formerly Maypole Lane.

CROSS ROAD was Purleigh Road.

FAMBRIDGE ROAD (to Cross Road) was Pinchgut Hall Road, and below Cross Road was Ferry Road.

MILL ROAD was Keton's Lane.

NORTH STREET (lower) was North Hill.

QUEEN STREET was Essex Place.

THE CHASE was Alsop's Chase.

WANTZ ROAD was Rankstiles - Runsell Lane - Hundred Lane.

MALDON - A POST TOWN - PRE-1905

(From an elderly reference book)

MALDON A Post Town under Chelmsford. 37 miles from London.

Obliterator number 494 (1844)

Main Office : 51 High Street

T.S.Os: Farnbridge Road, Heybridge and Mill Road.

Thomas Witherings, Postmaster General 1635-37, listed a bye post from Witham to Maldon. In 1682 a Mr. Brown was postmaster, Mr Hanson held the post in 1686 at a salary of £2 per annum. The post office was listed as a sub post office in 1754. Delivery of mail was irregular up to 1795 when it was decided that Maldon should be a post town. A ride to Bradwell was also established.

In the G.P.O. archives are the original post horn and whip used by a famous Essex post boy in the reign of George II. The post horn is a natural cow horn straightened out, eighteen inches long with a metal mouthpiece engraved "Pro bono publico". The whip, a fine specimen of craftsmanship, is eighteen inches long with an embossed silver handle and two silver bands interlaced with basketwork. Edward Bright, the fat man of Maldon, would have been eleven years of age when he was the Maldon post boy, weighing about about ten stone. He died in 1750 at the age of 29 and weighed 44 stone 6 pounds.

In 1793 there was complaint of constant delay of the Maldon letters at Chelmsford. On enquiry it was discovered that the post boy's horse had died and he was carrying the letters on foot from Chelmsford.

John Polly in the High Street was postmaster in 1823 and also in 1848, receiving letters by mail cart from Chelmsford.

There was a telegraph service at the station in 1868, taken over by the post office by 1873.

In 1894 the post office was at 52 High Street where Anne Everard was postmistress and there was a sub office at 192 Wantz Road.

The Post Office opened a telephone exchange at Maldon in 1905.

Did you know that?.....

A fatal Railway accident in 1841 caused an Act of Parliament requiring all passengers to be carried in enclosed carriages and not in open wagons.

Queen Victoria insisted on a 40 mph limit on her rail travels. In 1886 she caused a scene at Carlisle because she had "too rapidly travelled there from Edinburgh".

Until a railway engineer named Matthew Kirtley designed a firebox suitable for coal, all railway engines ran on coke.

A Royal Commission in 1900 found that fatal accidents for workers was worst for seamen, followed by Railway shunters. Coal miners came third.

A Baltic Diary - 1919 - Part 4

My Seven Months in the Baltic (cont'd)

During the latter part of August our food was terrible, nothing but bread & jam or rank margarine for every meal, nothing now was obtainable from shore & we anxiously awaited the arrival of a store carrier with food & warm clothing, the weather now being rather cold. On August 27th the "Delhi" sailed for Reval & then to Helsingfors to give a few days well well deserved leave & if possible to buy some food from shore; the food question was causing a great deal of discontent among the men as ships laden with materials for cleaning the guns could be sent to us but the much needed food ships had not left England.

While on leave at Helsingfors a girl Bolshevik thrust a printed paper down my jumper headed in English "British Bluejackets"

On our return to Biorke Aug 28th an attempt by Bolshevik spys was made on our aerodrome, the spy however getting away. This was the second attempt which had been made on the aerodrome. Later two girls were discovered in possession of plans & photos of the ships present. Small bombardments were carried out by our destroyers during the latter part of Aug, their fire always being returned. On Sept 1st the destroyer "Vittoria" was torpedoed & blown up while on patrol & in view of the "Delhi". Terrible loss of life was the result of this & a graveyard at Stirs Pt was started. An enemy observation balloon over Krasnia Goroka was sighted one day but as soon as our airmen left to attack it it was hauled down. An air raid on Krasnia Goroka damaged one of their 12" Gun batteries but one of our airmen failed to return. The month of Sept proved very unlucky for us, 3 airmen being killed & 2 missing in one week, also the weather was bitterly cold & no warm clothing to cope with it, the

men still living on bread & jam there being no signs of the food ship arriving. On Sept 17th the destroyer "Verulam" struck a mine & sank while on patrol, the losses being very heavy indeed & the very rough weather lately experienced in the Baltic making rescue work impossible. On Sept 27th owing to the rough weather HMS "Phaetons" whaler capsized, one man losing his life. At the beginning of Oct the food question was getting serious, only bread & jam & suet being obtainable; butter however could be bought onshore at 7/- a lb & as the men only got £1 to 30/- a month it was quite a luxury to have butter & quite common to have suet. On Oct 4th the Red Cross ship "Borbice" arrived, also the fortress of Krasnia Gorka started firing on our minesweepers with their 12" long range guns. Our airmen started a series of bombing raids on Kronstadt in Oct, generally twice to three times a day they visited the fortress. On Oct 6th our airmen reported a large cruiser & two destroyers leaving Kronstadt so we immediately put to sea just in time to see them disappear beyond their minefields. Our airmen however managed to give them a few bombs. On Oct 8th a small food ship arrived; however we have got just enough to last a week. On Oct 12th a fresh supply of bombs & 20 aeroplanes & seaplanes arrived. On Oct 13th 3 air raids were made on Kronstadt causing much damage to the dockyard, our only mishap being a Camel landed upside down on the water, the pilot however escaping except for bruises & shock. Another raid was made on Kronstadt on the night of the 13th, 8 machines taking part in the raid but only 7 returning. On the 14th a signal was received from the Finnish authorities at Terrioki to the effect that the airman's dead body had been found there; however later in the day a signal arrived from the supposed dead airman saying that he would arrive at Biorbo the following day & that he had had a forced landing.

~~~~~ to be continued

VIC HAMMETT

When the Embassy first opened the organist of "The Mighty Wurlitzer" was Leslie James, succeeded pre-WWII by (Cecil) 'Vic' Hammett, a colourful character around whom some colourful tales were spun, including his internment in Germany during the war. We would be pleased to relate some of these if any reader can oblige, but with facts! Meanwhile, herewith a picture of Vic, from a record sleeve, together with, overleaf, a narrative as recalled by ex-Embassy usherette Edwina (nee) Jefferies, and related by daughter Rosemary .....



SOPHIA / FORGOTTEN DREAMS + BLOW THE WIND SOUTHERLY / BRAZIL / IF I HAD YOU / SWEET GEORGIA BROWN / SAMBALINA JUST FOR A WHILE / POOR BUTTERFLY / BIRTH OF THE BLUES / YE BANKS AND BRAES / YEA ALWAYS BE IN LOVE WITH YOU



In the Spring Penny Farthing Issue 16 re-The Embassy Cinema (LFB. Feb 99), the museum sought information and items re- 'Embassy Relics' towards museums collections.

My mother Edwina Barbara (maiden name Jefferies) a Maldonian died last year (74yrs), and in her possessions was a record by (Cecil) Vic Hammett. I have narrated a short piece on her 'Embassy Cinema' recollections that may be of interest to your readers.

### **Wurlitzer Memories of Maldon**

When Edwina was a young girl Maldon still had two cinemas. The Hippodrome which she only visited once, but had vivid recollections of the lady who played the piano music that accompanied the films, and the second the Embassy Cinema, a larger and more prominent cinema noted for the vibrant Wurlitzer organ music played by (Cecil) Vic Hammett.

Upon leaving what is now the Plume School at the age of 14 years old and like many young girls seeking work, Edwina followed her sister Esme and obtained work as an usherette in the Embassy Cinema and stayed three for years. Shipman and King owned the cinema at that time, with Mr Smith who lived in Oak House before moving to Spital Road as the cinema manager.

A feared but a respected man by staff in the days when one had more respect for people and employers. The sharpness and strictness of 'the man in charge' was taken in good heart by staff who learned to 'know their place' and 'how' to behave in a place of work.

'Inspections of staff before performance' was one of many orders of the day, so before opening time staff were lined up in regimented fashion for the managers fearful but hopefully approving eye.

'All tidy and ready for action' for each performance which started early afternoon and finished at ten o'clock. God Save the Queen then swiftly followed before the audience had time to dash from their seats to avoid standing to attention. For those not quick enough to escape, stood to attention in respectful silence until the music had finished.

The films shown then, were only interrupted by short intervals during which movie time news, adverts and county news featured. Once the interval time arrived, 'ice cream girls' (Edwina being one of them) stood proudly laden with a heavy tray that also contained a selection of chocolate boxes as well as ice creams.

It was during the interval time at the Embassy, that Cecil Hammett the Wurlitzer organist came into it's own. When the powerful organ emerged from the ground beneath the front of the stalls, alighting like the power of a space ship ready to take off, but did so with graceful mystique.

As it stood before the stage, it's prominent position ensured a glorious view of this magnificent organ that appeared to glisten like it was made of expensive pearls. When fully in sight, it appeared to sparkle even more as it's music vibrated the ground beneath as the skill of the organists fingers gave life to this large 'space' like object as it pounded out the popular music of it's time.

Sadly when war was declared in 1939, war news became one of the more regular features as did 'March of Time'. But it was business as usual as people attended ready for war action with gas masks at the ready and at the outbreak of war, it was Mr Smith the manager who made the announcement and did so by flashing it upon the screen for all to see and when war was declared, the cinema closed for a week.

\*Please note, that the recollections of Edwina's time at the Embassy narrated here by daughter Rosemary, are seen as 'true' to her as if it was yesterday. It must therefore noted, that as perceptions of occurrences and events alter in one's life time the information has been written as it was recalled

# THE MARGERY ALLINGHAM SOCIETY

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31st May 2000

Dr Patrick Lacey  
Chairman  
Maldon District Museum Association  
47, Mill Road  
Maldon  
Essex. CM9 5HX

Dear Paddy,

Many thanks for sending a copy of your letter to Joyce. We're delighted that she's accepted the post of President of the Association for the year.

Joyce and Gloria are intending to visit the Museum on Sunday the 11th June, when Jean and I will be on duty. Unfortunately they weren't able to get to Maldon over the Bank Holiday weekend to see the charming floral displays, but we took a few photographs to show them.

We're very pleased to have the copy to display of Margery's *Take Two at Bedtime*, and we have thanked Kevin at All Books for his kindness in donating it.

The Margery Allingham Society's celebration of Albert Champion's 100th birthday was a great success. I enclose a brief report which you may like to share with the Committee.

With all good wishes,

PTO  
→

## One Essex Crime Writer Salutes Another

Saturday 20th May 2000 was a very special day for admirers of the Essex novelist and detective-story writer Margery Allingham. Not only was it the author's own birthday, but it also marked the centenary of her famous sleuth Albert Campion, hero of some thirty novels from *The Crime at Black Dudley* in 1929 to *Cargo of Eagles*, completed by her husband after Miss Allingham's early death and published in 1968.

Despite the unavoidable absence of both creator and created, the Margery Allingham Society celebrated in style, with a special luncheon at the University Womens' Club in Mayfair, thanks to Marianne van Hoeven, who is a member of both the club and the Society. Albert Campion was represented by two newly commissioned paintings, a clever cartoon by Jeff Decker of Pennsylvania, U.S.A., and a salon portrait by the Australian artist Philip Cornell. Margery Allingham was represented by her sister Joyce and her secretary, Gloria Greci, both of whom still live in the pretty village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy near Maldon, which was home to Margery and her husband Philip Youngman Carter for most of their adult lives.

Twenty five years ago Joyce Allingham prepared Margery's early serial *The White Cottage Mystery* for book publication. Mrs Greci typed up nearly all the post-war books for the publishers. They are a living and lively link with Mr. Campion's creator.

The distinguished guests also included the actor Francis Matthews and one of today's most successful writers of crime and detective fiction, June Thomson. Like Margery Allingham, June Thomson was raised and educated in Essex. Though she now lives in St. Albans she maintains her connection with our county through her novels about Detective Inspector Finch of the Essex C.I.D.

Over pre-prandial drinks, members of the Society examined cards of congratulation to Mr Campion on his hundredth birthday, and admired the new portraits. Copies were available of the newly published collection *The Albert Memorial: a 100th Birthday Tribute to Mr Albert Campion*, as well as founder-member Barry Pike's indispensable book *Campion's Career: a Study of the Novels of Margery Allingham*.

Luncheon, served in the club's elegant library, comprised an appropriate series of courses: 'Terrine of summer vegetables Allingham', 'Salmon Albert' and 'Apricot and almond mousse Amanda' - that last named after Mr Campion's wife. Over coffee, Chelmsfordian Roger Johnson introduced the Guests of Honour.

Francis Matthews is perhaps best known for his role as Paul Temple in the 1970's television series, but in his distinguished career he has played both Sherlock Holmes and Albert Campion. He has also recorded nearly all the Campion novels as talking books, and last year won a well-deserved Excellence Award from the audio-book publishers of America. Lightly and wittily he described some of the pleasures and the difficulties of recording a novel, and expressed his thanks for being invited to join so many admirers of Margery Allingham. In particular, he said, it was a delight to meet Joyce Allingham and Gloria Greci.

After a spell in journalism, beginning on the *Essex Chronicle*, June Thomson turned to writing crime fiction. She was encouraged in this direction, she said, by reading Margery Allingham's chronicles of Albert Campion. June's first Inspector Finch novel, *Not One of Us*, has been followed by more than a dozen others, all enthusiastically received by readers and critics. (Over the last decade she has also written four collections of Sherlock Holmes stories, which capture the flavour of the originals as few have managed to do.) Her affection for the writings of Margery Allingham is clearly matched by the knowledge of them that was so evident in her brief tribute.

The celebrations concluded with tea and a magnificent 100th birthday cake, made by Marianne van Hoeven and ceremonially cut by Joyce Allingham. For those who insisted on authenticity, there were also the 'little pink cakes' memorably featured in the Campion novel *Look to the Lady*.

To round off this special year, the Margery Allingham Society is planning a week-end visit in the autumn to Cambridge, setting for the novel *Police at the Funeral*. Roger Johnson hopes to identify the important Cambridge locations, including Albert Campion's *almer mater*, 'St Ignatius College'.

\*END\*

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE MARGERY ALLINGHAM SOCIETY, *The Albert Memorial* and the Margery Allingham Collection at Maldon District Museum, please contact Roger Johnson, Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford, CM2 6DE. (phone 01245 284006)

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# Maldon District Museum Association

---Registered Charity 301362 ---

President - Miss Joyce Allingham

Vice President - Mr L.F. Barrell

## Committee - to A.G.M. 2001

Chairman.....Paddy Lacey.....

Vice-Chairman .....Tony Tullett.....

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Committee.....Judy Tullett.....

Committee.....Bob Wallwork.....

Co-opted.....Colin Barbrook.....

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Curatorial Adviser....Nick Wickenden Esq
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Museum Reception Telephone No.. (01621) 842688  
(Answerphone when museum unattended)

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