

THE PENNY FARTHING

The Newsletter of Maldon District Museum Association

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Much hard work has been taking place at the Museum as the display team has swung into action once again. This year work has been concentrated in the erstwhile bird room, the kitchen and part of the long room. We shall be welcoming back the Margery Allingham Society to mount an exhibition to celebrate the centenary of Margery Allingham's birth. All will be revealed at the stewards' meeting on Wednesday 31st March at 2.30 pm in the Octagon at St Mary's Church. All present, past or would be stewards are welcome to attend.

It is sad to learn that in recent days illness has struck Haddon Spurgeon, one of our senior stewards, and also Floss Barrell. Both are hospitalised in St Peter's Hospital at the time of writing; we wish them well. Sadly we have had to accept the fact that after producing 29 editions of The Penny Farthing Len will be retiring from the post of editor. He has done a remarkable job and the little magazine is looked forward to by friends of the museum on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The hunt is on for a new editor and a team of helpers to produce future editions. Len will still be happy to act in an advisory role. Please let me know if you can help with this in any way.

Paddy Lacey



THE WAY THEY WERE: The Maldon fire crew line up for their picture on February 9, 1910. The caption says it was taken after a fire at Witham

More Fire-Fighting

News-Letter 35 included an article on the early Fire Chief Officer; in response we have received a copy of the East Anglian Daily Times dated 1996, copied here....

Great fire that could have been a disaster

With a new fire station due to open in Maldon next year, local resident George Ginn has looked back down memory lane and brought to life the early years of the town's fledgling fire-fighters...

The fire service is very much taken for granted now. In all conditions no matter what the emergency, the country's brigades provide an unswerving service.

But things were not always this good. As recently as Victorian times nobody had a statutory duty to provide fire cover.

If towns and villages were lucky, as was the case in Maldon, they had a small pump manned by a few volunteers. It was not until 1877 that Parliament passed an Act which put the onus of fire cover on the "Urban Sanitary Authorities".

Maldon's first effective fire pump was bought eleven years before Parliament acted. Operated by a crew of four it was known as a "four poster". Not only did the pump serve the town well but it survives to this day in the local Museum.

Following the 1877 Act a more efficient machine was bought with the aid of money from a local resident, Edward Smith. Mr. Smith was to play a prominent role in the early part of the town's fire service history.

This latest pump was kept in use until 1912 when, with the help of Mr. Smith, it was replaced by a Merryweather steam fire engine. The actual fire station had also been changed, and had by now moved to a new site on the London Road.

It is said that men of the brigade took a team of four horses to London to collect the Merryweather and ended up taking part in the Lord Mayor's procession before bringing it home, but long before Mr. Smith's benevolent involvement, the town was covered by the Essex and Suffolk Equitable Fire Insurance Company which maintained a fire engine in the High Street.

Unfortunately for some, this engine would only go on fires where the house displayed its Freemark, leaving others to burn down unless the borough's small volunteer pump could save them.

Around this time of 1874, both the borough's and the insurance company's pumps were housed in the High Street site, but by the turn of the century the fire brigade had moved to its new site, two cottages in London Road.

When local MP George Courtauld gave a clock and chimes to the town's Moot Hall the hour bell was used to sound the alert for the fire fighters.

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The Insurance Company moved out of the town in 1902 but not before Maldon saw its biggest blaze in 1892.

Fire had been a constant threat in the High Street where flames rose from open fires in timber-framed buildings. The great fire of Maldon, as it is known, started on January 17th, at the Orttewells hardware store in the High Street.

Hardware stores in those days carried various goods and Orttewells among its stock gun powder and cartridges. It was not long before the fire spread to neighbouring premises. In all, seven shops were destroyed that day, but contemporary accounts credit the volunteer fire fighters, led by a Captain Hawkes, with saving numerous other shops from burning down.

The accounts, however, fail to mention any role played by the Insurance Company's pump; one can only imagine the shops failed to display the famous Firemark.

The fire service continued to improve and in the 1930s its current station, on the original London Road site, was built.

Although it has served the town for more than sixty years, time has overtaken the London Road site.

A new station, costing £640,000, is due to open next May. Like its forebears this station will continue to serve Maldon and as before, it will be manned by a professionally trained volunteer crew.

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Did you know that.....?

The Marine Promenade and Recreation Ground (known to our older generation as *The Prom*) was opened on 26th June 1895. The Lake followed on the 21st June 1905. The original area comprised of 14 acres of land laid out with grass, trees, and shrubs. It cost between £4,000 and £5,000 to construct the Park, and for the opening, almost every house in the town was decorated. Mr Cyril Dodd Q.C. M.P., observed that if young Londoners knew what boating, fishing, and bracing air were to be enjoyed at Maldon, the town would soon become a London suburb.

The opening was performed by the Mayor and local Historian Mr Edward A. Fitch F.L.A., the well-known local farmer who donated some of his land to create "the Prom".

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and did you know that..... Open a book at random and select a word within the first ten lines and within the tenth word from the end of the line, then mark that word. Now double the number of the page and multiply the sum by five. Then add twenty. Then add the number of the line you have selected and add five. Multiply the sum by ten. Add the number of the word in the line. From this subtract two hundred and fifty and the remainder will indicate in the unit column the number of the word, in the ten column the number of the line, and the remaining figures the number of the page.

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"INVASION"

How many remember this, or was it just a reporter's vivid imagination?

In the "Daily Mail" dated December 7th 1908 we find an interesting article entitled -

*"Rehearsal of Invasion"
Surprise test in Essex;
Territorial Force called out;
Motor Mobilisation.*

A surprise test of the speed at which our Territorials can be mobilised to repel invasion was carried out in Essex yesterday morning. It proved a complete triumph for the men and for the use of motor vehicles in mobilisation.

The time-table of the Chelmsford Regiment, the subject of the experiment, was:

- 9.15 a.m. - Alarm of invasion.
- 9.25 a.m. - First men at Drill Hall.
- 9.30 a.m. - Supply column on the move.
- 10.02 a.m. - Rest of men off in motor-omnibuses
- 11.09 a.m. - Arrival at Latchingdon, fourteen miles off, with full ammunition and commissariat.
- 12.15 p.m. - After junction with Maldon men and deploying over four miles, all sections in touch

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WITH THE DEFENDERS

STORY OF A SUNDAY MORNING ALARM

(From our Special Correspondent)

Chelmsford, Sunday Night

Just as the inhabitants of Chelmsford were drinking to-day their second Sunday morning cups of tea - that is to say, at 9.15 o'clock - there was heard through the pleasant little Essex town a most unusual Sunday morning sound. It was the corporation "hooter", which is used to call out the fire brigade. It hooted loud and long.

The inhabitants ran to their windows and doors, but there was no fire to be seen, nor any sign of galloping engines. Instead the watchers were in a few minutes rewarded by the sight of stalwart young men in khaki running with their rifles at the trail towards the drill hall.

"What's the matter?" called out a perturbed citizen from his doorway. "Invasion of England" was the cheerful reply.

For a moment that citizen became even more perturbed. Then he was reminded of some talk there had been about a surprise call-out of Territorials to repel an imaginary invader. He went back and finished his breakfast comfortably. "Sooner they than me" he chuckled, as he looked out at the driving December rain.

But the rain had no damping effect upon the military ardour of the 5th Essex. For several Saturday nights past many of them have slept in their uniforms, so as to be in readiness for a Sunday morning turn-out. Now that the call had come they were all eagerness to respond.

Exactly ten minutes after the hooter sounded the first man arrived at the rendezvous, panting but proud. Others followed quickly on his heels. By a quarter to ten there were 120 men on parade including a detachment from nearby Writtle, all stirred by the music of the hooter.

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MEANING OF THE TEST

Leaving them for a quarter of an hour to 'stand easy' before a start is made, let me explain the origin and scope of the very interesting and valuable experiment for which they were called out.

Some weeks ago Captain Wenley, of the 5th Essex, was playing a war game. The problem was to locate and contain an invading force, landed somewhere near Maldon, between the Rivers Blackwater and Crouch. Captain Wenley's solution depended upon an advance guard from Chelmsford reaching the district, where the enemy was supposed to have disembarked, in an hour and a half. The distance is fourteen miles. There is no railway available. The umpire said it could not be done. It was an impossibility for a body of troops to cover the distance in so short a time.

But "impossible" is a word for which the 5th Essex have no use. They set to work to think how it could be done. The solution they hit upon was "motors".

So far motors had never been used in this country for the purpose of military transport, though for hurrying forward small bodies to act as advance guards they must obviously be most useful. Arrangements were made with public-spirited Mt Clarkson, of the motor works at Chelmsford, to lend two steam omnibuses and a steam car. Four other cars were borrowed in the neighbourhood, and all was ready for proving Captain Wenley's theory to be correct.

Officers and men entered into the spirit of the thing with the keenest enthusiasm. A "general idea" was drawn up, setting forth that a power named X had seized the occasion of the absence in the Far East of "a large portion of the Fleet and practically the whole of the Expeditionary Army" to attempt a raid. Then it was made known that some Sunday morning there would be a sudden mobilisation, though the men were not told what it would be for. This morning the call came.

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KHAKI-LADEN MOTORS

The men "standing easy" at the drill-hall had not long to wait. Two big puffing omnibuses drew up and were immediately filled inside and out. The one I was in held forty-one passengers. Other cars were packed as well, and at two minutes past ten a start was made.

As we bowled through the villages with our load of khaki soldiers astonished faces could be seen at the windows. In Danbury, where a little while back a Territorial Association meeting drew no fewer than twenty five recruits, the people came to their doors and gave us a cheer. Up Danbury Hill we laboured - a long, wearing climb, with a steep bit at the top. Major Fred Taylor, the officer in command, looked at his watch rather anxiously. Several inside passengers got out and walked. But the omnibuses behaved bravely, and very soon we were rattling down towards Purleigh and Latchingdon, the latter village our destination.

At nine minutes past eleven we were there. The fourteen miles had been covered in just over an hour. The experiment had turned out a radiant success. Henceforth no scheme of home defence will be complete which does not take account of the possibilities of this form of rapid transport. We all felt as if we had assisted at the birth of a New Idea.

The next business was to form line of outposts right across the peninsula on which the invading force was supposed to be. By various roads detachments tramped on in the rain. A party from Maldon marched in cheerful, though exceedingly wet, for they had no overcoats.

I heard a subaltern later in the day explaining gaily how he had told his men to leave them behind because "you can't march in overcoats you know". I hope that subaltern will become wiser as he grows up.

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DINNER FROM MOTOR-WAGON

All the Chelmsford men were well protected against the weather, and they took up their positions in the shelter of hedges with a smartness and alacrity very pleasant to see. By noon the chain of outposts was complete. "Flag-waggers" signalled all along the line. Cyclist scouts from the Essex Imperial Yeomanry squelched along the muddy roads carrying messages and keeping the men of the different companies in touch. Officers whirled by in motor cars seeing that the dispositions were all correct.

If there had been an enemy in truth, it would have been warmer work. As it was, with the view blotted out by mist and a fine drizzle falling occasionally, the game of looking out for someone whom we knew not to be there soon palled.

Dinner was a wholesome interlude. Cooked food came round in a motor commissariat wagon and was heartily enjoyed. But very wisely Major Taylor decided not to keep the men out too long with nothing particular to do. So presently the word went along to return to Latchingdon.

Here a church parade was held, the battalion chaplain having arrived in the meantime. And then we returned as we had come.

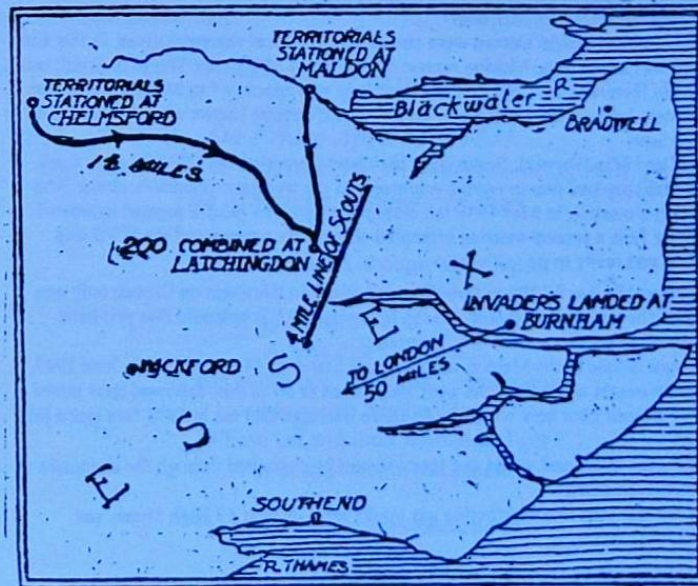
An integral part of the Territorial Army organisation should be (in certain parts of the country at any rate) an arrangement with as many motorists as possible to hold their cars at the disposal of local commanding officers in case of urgent need. They would be useless of course, for transporting large bodies of troops, but for pushing forward an advance guard at a crisis, when every minute was of value, they would come in very handy indeed. The 5th Essex have proved that beyond doubt.

H. Hamilton Fyfe.

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THE ESSEX COAST.



MAP OF INVASION REHEARSAL.

Member Molly Middleton observes....

...that two recent additions to the museum are linked -

The effects kindly donated by the family of the late Mrs Muriel Binder and a collection of memorabilia gathered by the Women's Royal Voluntary Service are connected through Mrs Binders sister, Mrs Cecil Mary Blind.

In 1998, at the time of the Diamond Jubilee of its foundation, the WRVS in Maldon decided on a series of celebratory events one of which was to mount an exhibition to be shown at the Burnham-on-Crouch and Maldon District Museums.

As a result I found myself delving through past records, talking to members and former members about their experiences and developing a keen interest in the local history of the organization with its impact on Maldon and the lives of its citizens.

In this task Mrs Binder together with members past and present gave generously of their time, photographs, letters and newspaper cuttings and memories. Without their help the collection might never have been.

It was in 1938 that Sir Samuel Hoare, the then Home Secretary, seeking to plan for a possible war with Germany contacted the Dowager Lady Reading about the possibility of recruiting women to help with the Air Raid Precautions Service. The resultant new organization was called the Women's Voluntary Service for ARP precautions and Lady Reading was appointed its chairman.

As war became inevitable women were contacted to be local representatives. In this area Mrs Blind was asked to be Maldon representative while Mrs Eloise Warwick-Smith was appointed in Burnham-on-Crouch and a third lady was appointed to Maldon Rural area. Unfortunately I do not have a name to give you so if anyone knows who she was I shall be glad to hear.

Mrs Blind and Mrs Warwick-Smith were both later to receive the BEM for their work. The first task they had was to recruit volunteers as the war drew inevitably closer. Mrs Blind called a meeting in May 1939 but disappointingly few people seemed interested. However by June a second meeting prompted about forty women and the WVS was established and ready to go.

A letter dated 15th April 1939 to Mrs Warwick-Smith in Burnham on Crouch only one month after the initial request contains the following:- "It is splendid that you have already enrolled another twelve WVS members".

A newspaper article in the Maldon and Burnham Standard 14 years later, in June 1947, details these events and tells of the work they began to do as they followed their motto 'Not why we can't but how we can'. As Olive Berridge told me in 1998 "we saw a job, we did it".

The tasks were many and varied and they can best be described through the memories of those WVS volunteers.

Early in the war jobs like distributing gas masks were done at 19 High Street, and

collections were made such as rose hips at Mrs Blind's house in London Road. Mrs Binder told me that the children who brought them watched with great concentration to make sure that the weighing was fair and they got their full payment. Scrap metal was collected for the war effort and taken to 8 King George's Place. There are two posters about these collections in the memorabilia.

Clothing was collected and recycled at the Catholic Hall in Victoria Road., the good being repaired and cleaned and the scrap sold to pay for the transport costs. Blankets were also collected and some were sent to London to help bombed out people.

Evacuees came to Maldon and one present day member of WRVS Joyce Bowyer was one of these looking after her little sister who was only 6yearsold. They came by bus and were billeted near the Bembridge Hotel. Olive Berridge told how one time they expected children and received bus loads of pregnant women. Mrs Bream helped with elderly evacuees at Saint Peters as social afternoons of games were provided for their entertainment. Many of these evacuees were home sick and went back to London after a short time.

A canteen was opened at the Congregational Hall and staffed by WVS ladies dispensing soap and toiletries, drinks and sandwiches to service men in the area. There were books and periodicals for them to read. Doris Watling remembered Ack-Ack gunners and Searchlight personnel coming in. Later in the war there were American troops who showed photos of their families and liked to talk about home. She told me that after the shift the 'girls' were escorted home by the local police.

Olive Berridge remembered one soldier weeping because one of the ladies reminded of his mother.

Many other jobs were undertaken as the women of Maldon did their bit for the war effort. The memories shared with me in 1998 were often happy ones despite the sometimes grave situations and, of course, the work of the WVS did not finish with the end of the war. But that is another story.

On Friday April 15th 1853....

The Rev. Malone married Mr W. Moon to Miss Ann Cooke.

The Marriage Record ran thus.....

He is not mad, though lunar light

His broth did overlook,

For he has gained, to his delight,

A wife that is a Cooke.

"His goose is cooked", and other maids

May envy her the boon,

Whose tall ambition wished and got

The bright man in the Moon.

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ST CEDD'S CHAT-LINE

More news from the St. Cedd's team – now back to full numbers, and having shaken off the post Christmas lethargy, returning to the old Monday afternoon routine.

As mentioned previously our premises are very small and, with the exception of Julia, none of us can be described as "petite" so we try to make the most of limited space, especially for storage.

Fortunately Mike Bennett and his helpers have created extra storage facilities at the museum in the upstairs kitchen so this will help a great deal when we can organise the transfer of some of our considerable collection of bygones and costume.

On one of our recent forays into the St Cedd's store Judy Betteridge and Liz Willsher discovered such diverse items as an Eskimo harpoon and an artificial limb. That would test the ingenuity of any display team we thought!

In the last edition of Penny Farthing, the Muriel Binder collection was described by Judy, who has done magnificent work in getting the entire collection catalogued and conserved. A small number of items will be on display in the forthcoming season and hopefully more will be included in some future displays.

Julia Bames is flying through the accession database, so it will soon be up to date and Betty Chittenden is hot on her heels with the card index...What a team!

Now for news of some recent acquisitions:-

The gilded metal shop name letters from "GOWERS" (more recently Clarkes) and greatly missed, were kindly donated along with some useful storage racks, as mentioned above. The large letters will make an eye-catching display.

An interesting item was received last summer (2003) from a grand-daughter of a Mr Percy Edward Rollinson. The silver and leather hip flask was presented to Mr Rollinson by colleagues at Maldon Post Office on his departure to South Africa on March 16th 1901, at the time of the Boer War. The inscription on the flask records the event.

This is an interesting and busy time of the year as the display team are preparing for the new season and we liaise with them to provide items for displays

More news in the next edition.

Liz Willsher

H.M.S. Antrim and 'Uncle Frank'

By Member Judy Betteridge



My great-uncle Frank Borer of Lock Hill, Heybridge Basin, was born in 1879 and at the age of 17 joined the Royal Navy, in which he served for 24 years. Frank's son, my Uncle Percy, who lives still in Heybridge Basin, recently donated to the Museum some items relating to his father's naval service. During the first world war, Frank served aboard HMS Antrim, a Devonshire class cruiser, and for the first year of the war kept a daily diary of the activities of the 3rd Cruiser Squadron, which operated in the North Sea under the command of Admiral Pakenham. I have selected a few entries at random:

28.7.1914 *Heard rumours of strained relations between Germany and England.*

1.8.1914 *Censorship commenced on letters.*

3.9.1914 *Admiral Pakenham delivered a speech to the officers and ships company on the situation, reminding us of Nelson's famous signal.*

4.9.1914 *Heard war declared on Germany.*

15.8.1914 *4a.m. lowered seaboat for service correspondence brought out by destroyer "Oak". Opened out on a 90-mile search line to the German coast - not to get within 20 miles on account of mine fields. 7 pm. opened fire on what appeared to be a periscope, but was a spar floating end up. Lashed up hammocks and spent the rest of the night on deck.*

28.8.1914 *Heard that light cruiser squadron had a skirmish near Heligoland, few casualties. Shot a carrier pigeon on our yard arm and lowered cutter to pick it up.*

2.9.1914 *Rendezvous with 2nd Cruiser Squadron and 5th Flotilla. Then received orders to intercept German destroyer and submarine. "Natal" gave chase to destroyer - submarine dipped. Squadron passed several large patches of oil supposed to be petroleum from submarine.*

8.9.1914 *Left Cromarty at 13 knots for patrolling area. Searched several trawlers and got some fresh fish and proceeded on our way. 9pm boarded a Dutch trawler but nothing doing in the fish line.*

10.9.1914 *2 am. Altered course waiting for something to happen. Heard that "Argyll" had been in collision with trawler disabling three guns and killing one marine. 1.30 heard heavy firing off bow - something doing at last, gave chase. Sounded action. 10 minutes later found ourselves surrounded by the whole of the British Navy from the Dreadnought Agincourt to the old torpedo gunboat Jason. Eased down to 14 knots and picked up station 5 miles ahead of the fleet. Did not feel a bit frightened when we discovered we were just off Heligoland with a fleet like this round us..*

9.10.1914 *4.30. Lookout thought he saw a periscope about 200 yards away on starboard bow. Guns opened fire. We then saw the wake of two torpedoes, the second broke on the bow. The ship was undoubtedly saved by the promptness of Captain Webster, who ordered full speed ahead port and full speed astern starboard at the same time, putting the helm hard-a-port and made straight for the submarine which had to dive quickly to save herself. A second periscope was then seen off the starboard beam but by careful handling and steering the zig-zag course, we got clear and the subs were not seen any more (they may have got back or they may not have).*

The diary ends abruptly on 24th June 1915. It also contains a note of coaling operations and it is interesting to note that in the first seven months at sea, HMS Antrim consumed no less than 18,500 tons! Having survived the war, she was sold and broken up in 1922. However, another HMS Antrim, a County Class guided missile destroyer, launched in 1967, carried on the name in the Falklands war, distinguishing herself in the rescue of the special forces from the glacier on South Georgia. Uncle Frank also survived, and spent the last year of his naval service at HMS Osea in 1920, followed by a further year on Osea as a civilian pensioner.

HEYBRIDGE - THE TOWERS

1930 up to 1940

- Donated by Mr G.W. Gifford, once of the Towers -

The Towers in this time was owned by the "Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds", a society for promoting health and help very much like insurance societies of modern days, or BUPA; no NHS then!

It covered most of the United Kingdom and there were many places just like the Towers but much smaller, one I remember situated in Clacton, the Head Office being in Ely, Cambridgeshire.

My father WILLIAM GIFFORD was appointed Superintendent and my mother was the Matron; they had to ensure the running of the home in general, the staff consisting of twelve maids including one chef or cook, and assistant maid, the rest being domestics, mostly lived in. At one time three gardeners attended the twelve acres of gardens and kept animals and a very large kitchen garden that helped to keep the home self-sufficient; my father even generated the electricity supply.

The house was two stories high but the tower to the main house was three stories high giving views over the Blackwater estuary and surrounding land. A large area beneath the house was a cellar, and the ducting for the central heating to all floors. All windows were double-glazed to ensure an even temperature all over the house.

There were twelve bedrooms in the house; four of these were dormitories of ten beds, one situated at ground level for less able patients. The average time that patients stayed was two weeks and were provided for in all ways, diets and doctors' visits being handled by my mother. Father ensured the general running - i.e. supplies, staffing, collecting and returning to and from many railway stations of arriving and departing patients at the home.

The grounds of the home were kept immaculate by the gardeners and there was a very large lake full of fish and some water fowl, swans, duck and geese. Around the west end of the lake was an edifice referred to as the "whispering gallery", half-moon shaped and a big draw to the patients who liked to inscribe their names and many amusing comments in pencil on the walls for all to read. A small island adjacent to this had two quince trees growing upon it.

The large grassed lawn in front of the house had a circular fountain containing goldfish of some size in the centre. Nearer to the house was a tennis court and top the left of this was a miniature putting green, very difficult as it was partly on a slope; above this an extensive terrace for sitting, and many photos were taken here by the patients for memories of their stay.

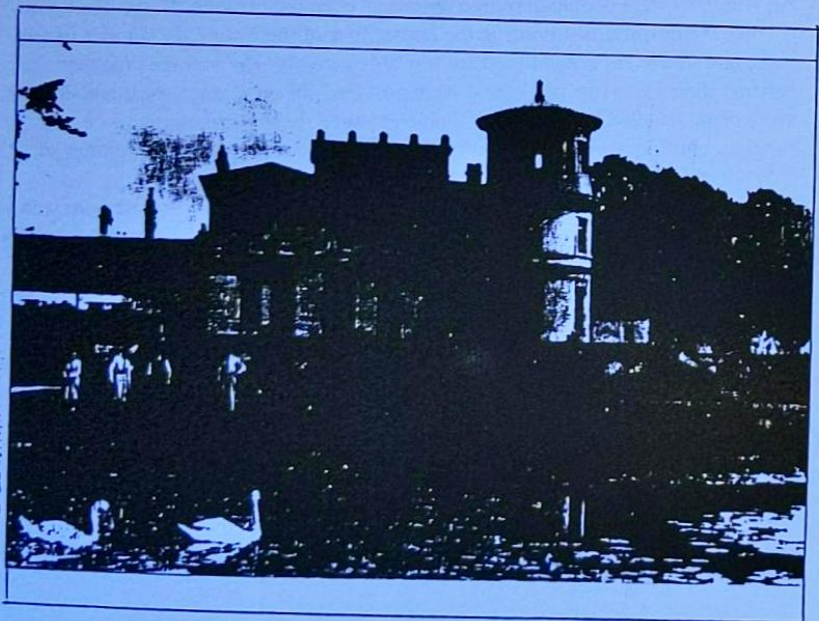
Evenings after supper twice a week, almost all retired to the large lounge for a concert donated by many of the talented people that came to the home; on other

evenings whist drives and other forms of entertainment were put on for the patients - there was no television in those days, but a piped radio into the lounge by my father was made available. Four meals a day so no-one went home underweight; in fact it was more like a holiday for many patients and many of them returned regularly.

I was the only child in the place so I was thoroughly spoilt by many of the patients and naturally I do remember many of them to this day. Alas in 1939 the war started and all the patients had to be sent home and the military descended on the place along with the local ARP in the shape of a base for the treatment of casualties in the event of invasion or air raids. After 1940 we had to leave and so I saw very little.

In a visit after the war, for interest, it was not pleasant to see the demise of such a wonderful house and the subsequent demolition. I wonder how much, in its prime condition, it would be worth these days, for when it was built, it cost £50,000 ?

Sincerely,
G. W. Gifford



MALDON DISTRICT MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
CALLING ALL MEMBERS AND FRIENDS YET AGAIN

WANTED

SCOUR YOUR ATTICS!!!

for

LOTS AND LOTS OF BRIC-A-BRAC

for our

TABLE SALE

at the

PROM MARKET

on

MONDAY 3rd MAY 2004

**FOR COLLECTION/DELIVERY CONTACT MIKE
BENNETT THROUGH MUSEUM OR A MEMBER
OR ON (01621) 854659**

>>>>>>>Proceeds to Museum Funds<<<<<<<<

A few volunteers welcomed to assist on stall

DIARY DATES 2004/5

DATES WHICH ARE WORTHWHILE RECORDING WITHOUT DELAY.....

STEWARDS ASSEMBLY..... Wednesday 31st March in St.
Mary's 'Octagon' @ 2.30 pm
(Committee Members 2 pm)

MUSEUM OPENS 2004..... Friday 2nd April at 2 p.m.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS..... All in St. Cedd's at 7.30 p.m.
(Unless otherwise advised)

Tuesdays 2004

13th April	11th May	8th June
13th July	10th August	14th September
12th October	9th November	14th December

2005

11th January	8th February	8th March
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ASSOCIATION TABLE SALE..... Prom Bank Holiday Market
Monday 3rd May.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING..... at St. Cedd's at 7.30 pm Tuesday
25th May

MUSEUM CLOSES..... Sunday 21st October

and in August 1829, recorded that...

Cotton K. Simpson married Miss Sarah Marble

An old calculation of gain and loss
Proves "a stone that is rolling will gather no moss"
A happy expedient has lately been thought on,
By which Marble may gather and cultivate Cotton

No. 1207 Air Training Corps - 1943 (Excerpts from the Maldon & Burnham Standard)

6th November 2003.....

WARTIME CADET TO BE HONOURED

An air cadet killed in a plane crash in the Second World War is to be remembered at a special plaque dedication service.

Colin Hull was one of three people aboard a plane that crashed near Hall Road in Asheldham but his name does not appear on the Bradwell War Memorial as he was just a cadet.

Kim Duncan, from Hall Road in Asheldham, who lives near the crash site, said Mr. Hull, who lived in Tiptree and was 17 years old when he died, was a member of 1207 (Maldon and District) Squadron, Air Training Corps, and was at the Bradwell air base for a training session.

On January 2, 1943, he was chosen to go for flying experience with Pilot Officer John Field and Flying Officer Peter White, in a Boston III, a twin engined fighter plane. During the flight the aircraft crashed, killing all on board.

Mr Hull was buried at his local chapel in Tiptree, and current members of 1207 squadron still attend the village's Remembrance Day Parade every November and lay a wreath at his grave.

They also plan to attend the ceremony, to be conducted by the Rev. Charlie Wells.

Mrs Duncan and her husband Adrian, who used to belong to an air cadet corps himself, decided to put a plaque in their garden to honour his memory.

After the dedication, there will be a short church service at St. James' Church in Dengie.

13th November 2003.....

Remembering a cadet's sacrifice

Air cadets gathered to remember one of their own killed in a plane crash in the Second World War. A plaque dedication service was held in Asheldham on Sunday to honour Colin Hull.

One of three aboard a plane that crashed near Hall Road in the village, his name does not appear on the Bradwell war memorial because he was just a cadet.

Mr Hull was 17 when he died and a member of 1207 (Maldon & District) Squadron, Air Training Corps.

Kim Duncan, of Hall Road, and her husband Adrian - who used to belong to an air cadet corps, decided to put the plaque in their garden and were pleased with the service conducted by the Rev Charlie Wells.

Mrs Wells said: "It was brilliant, really good. There was quite a high turn-out because a lot of the people going to the service in the Dengie came here first".

"The stone was blessed and prayers were said".

Current members of the 1207 squadron also attended the special ceremony.

Mr Hull had been training at the Bradwell air base and on January 2, 1943, was sent to get flying experience with two officers in a Boston III.

The plane crashed, killing all on board and Mr Hull was buried at his local chapel in Tiptree.

27th November 2003.....

Memories of war in the Dengie skies

I read with interest an article in the Maldon & Burnham Standard about an Air Cadet, Colin Hull, who was killed in an air crash on January 7th 1943.

It is admirable of the owners of New Hall, Asheldham, to erect a memorial to him and I don't suppose the actual position of it makes much difference.

I was born and brought up in Dengie, and my father Bill Sams and I happened to be watching the Boston aircraft that day, saw it bank around and nose-dive into the ground.

We were at the scene within a few minutes, but could do nothing because only the back end of the plane was visible.

Colin was dead in the upper turret. With ammunition exploding, we had to leave the scene.

The plane actually crashed on the Dengie side of the brook, not far from the road.

There used to be a line of high trees behind New Hall Farm, and one foggy night a Blenheim bomber crashed into the trees.

The crew were killed. Perhaps someone can find out from RAF records who the crew were and put up a memorial to them.

John Sams, 9, Chetnole Close, Carforth Heath, Poole, Dorset.

4th December 2003...

Heroes who died above the marshes

I have enjoyed following the recent correspondence in your newspaper about the history associated with the crash of a Boston aircraft on the Dengie marshes in 1943.

Mr Sams (Postbag November 27) requests further information about this and another wartime incident involving a further allied aircraft.

Since the 1970s I have been compiling a record of all the wartime air incidents in the Maldon and district area. As you can imagine, the archive is now a considerable one and contains both contemporary, official and unofficial source material, as well as some secondary information.

My record for the Boston incident indicates that it occurred on January 2, 1943, and was first reported at 15.55 hours. The aircraft was a Mark 3 (serial number W 8292) and was attached to 418 RCAF Squadron, RAF Bradwell Bay.

The pilot was Pilot-Officer Peter White (170316) and the Navigator/Gunner was Sgt John Field (71650). Also on board was Tiptree resident, Cpl Colin Ablett Hull (aged 17) of 1207 ATC Squadron, Maldon.

All three were killed and their remains were taken to Maldon mortuary.

It was reported that the aircraft "blew up" whilst at an altitude of just 20 feet. The official crash location was recorded as Robin Hood Marshes, 1.25 miles east of Asheldham, at Manor Farm.

An investigation was conducted on the 4/1/43 by Wng/Cdr E. Stammers, of HQ Fighter Command. Cpl Hull's name is included on Tiptree's war memorial.

Turning to the other case mentioned by Mr Sams. This happened on December 4, 1940 and

involved an RAF Bristol Blenheim, Mark 4 (serial number N3578). It was from 114 Squadron, RAF Hornchurch, was returning from a raid and was reported down at 5.55 (am/pm?) hours.

All of the crew were killed and three bodies were again taken to Maldon mortuary.

When I interviewed an eyewitness (Mr Dick Cowell) some years ago, he indicated that the local searchlight station tried to light the aircraft and fields up, in an attempt to assist a landing.

However, the Blenheim finally crashed into some trees just in the front area of New Hall Farm, Asheldham.

Two sad incidents listed within a catalogue of almost 200 for this area during the traumatic days of the Second World War.

I hope these details are of further help.

Stephen P Nunn, Fambridge Road, Maldon.

To conclude these accounts we should add that our own Vice-President was the ATC NCO i/c of the small party to visit Bradwell that week-end, that he drove them there in a garage pick-up, courtesy of "Jimmy" Gozzett, and on that fatal day when all but two were left to fly the last trip of the day, Colin and Len tossed; Len lost; Colin won, and went. Such is fate?

We would like to record, and Len would like to meet again the members of that Bradwell party, or even just hear news of them; his own memory will not oblige but he does recall that they were sent home when news of the crash came in; it was a very subdued return to Maldon.

Correspondence please, to the Museum - see back cover for address. Thank you!

Ed.



Village memorial - the Colin Hull plaque.

31586-1

Book Review

Readers might be interested in this review that appeared in the Autumn 2003 edition of the Essex Archaeology and History News.....

Patrick Lacey, Images of England: Maldon & the Dengie Hundred (2002), pp128 Tempus. £10.99.....

Of the making of books of old photographs there is no end, but this is not a problem when a knowledgeable author has carefully assembled, with the help of the Maldon District Museum Association, 200 images to add to his earlier compilation on Maldon & Heybridge. In consequence we can see civic Maldon, commercial Maldon, seaside Maldon, lots of early motor cars, sailing boats galore, weatherboard houses aplenty, gravel road devoid of traffic, Emmett steam trains and the familiar Home Front pictures of the 1939-45 War. Cultural attitudes radiate from the body language, as dwellers in another land smile modestly at the cameraman. The world looks a lot less hectic, but cameras, as we know, can lie.

Andrew Phillips

*Royalties from the sales of the two volumes mentioned have been a regular feature on the income side of the Association's accounts for the past five years since **Maldon & Heybridge** was first published in 1996. The book is now out of print but it is good to learn that Temple Publishing has it listed as one of a number of old favourites to be included in their New Edition programme for 2004; quite a compliment for a photographic book of its type!*

*The bookstall still has a limited supply of both volumes and these are available post free to readers at a cost of £9.99p for **Maldon & Heybridge** and £10.99p for **Maldon & the Dengie Hundred**. Please make cheques payable to 'MDMA' and post your order to the bookstall at Maldon District Museum.*

James Murrells, a Heybridge Boy in Oz

*In June 2003 there arrived at the Museum this letter from Mrs Sheena Culling in Australia enclosing a booklet entitled **James Morrill, His Life and Adventure** that was first produced as a pamphlet in 1863. The first chapter of the booklet is reproduced here as a taster. If you wish to read more please contact the Editor who can let you have copies of the full document for £1.50p to cover photocopying expenses.....*

3 Tormor Road,
Boronia, VIC 3155
Australia

28th June 2003

Museum/Historical Society,
MALDON
Essex,
England

Dear Sir/Madam,

In the 1840s a Maldon lad - James Morrill, sailed to Australia, taking 6 months to do so.

Arriving in Sydney he later joined the "PERUVIAN" - destination China. This ship hit a rock on Australia's Barrier Reef; James and the others survived on a raft and, when some died, they were lowered into the sea. After 42 days they landed on the Queensland coast, where James lived for 17 years with the Aborigines.

The east coast of that area in 1846 was virtually uninhabited by Europeans, and there weren't even tracks laid down, which is why he was unable to find civilisation". When he did find white people in 1863 he had forgotten how to speak English, his native language! People were impressed by his experiences and some of them were written down. He added a great deal of information to the scant European knowledge of local Aboriginal tribes.

The small township of Bowen claims him as the first white person to live in the area. To honour him their Historical Society erected a memorial tombstone in 1963. Last year, 2002, they published the enclosed book, which is an updated version of an earlier printing.

On page 18 of the Tourist Guide to the "Burdekin Country" (referring to the river Burdekin, flowing in hundreds of miles of sugar-cane country) there is a photograph of the plaque on top of one of the wooden bollards. It's one of about fifty such "posts" honouring early pioneers, in the smaller township of Home Hill, and refers to James Morrill's life.

Unfortunately, the description alongside the photograph, page 18 of that guide, says he was a seaman on the "Maldon", but that is an error.

My husband and I are "into things historical" and, as he was born and brought up in Chelmsford, Essex, finding information about a Maldon man, while on holiday recently in Bowen - added to our pleasure, as we trawled the cemetery and the museum for further information, and then finding the book on Morrill.

It's a great story, one less well known in the State of Victoria, 1500 miles south of Bowen, where we live. We'll try to spread the news!

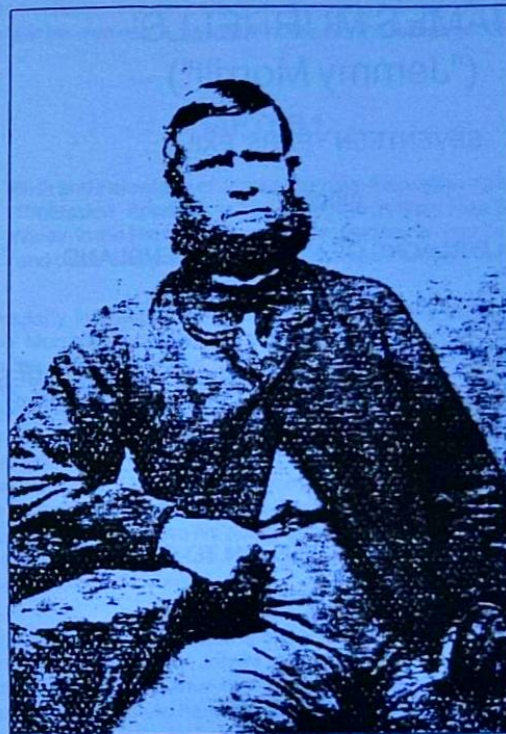
Meantime, we felt that Maldon should know how one of its sons conducted himself during a period of great hardship 150 years ago.

Sincerely,
(signed)

Sheena Culling

SHEENA CULLING

Encls: Book - James Morrill, His Life and Adventures
Booklet on Queensland tourist spots - page 18: James Morrill.
Photograph of Morrill's memorial bollard.
Photograph of Bowen, 2003.



James Morrill

20 May, 1824 ~ 30 October, 1865

Narrative

of

JAMES MURRELLS'
("Jemmy Morrill")

SEVENTEEN YEARS' EXILE

among

THE WILD BLACKS OF NORTH QUEENSLAND

and

HIS LIFE AND SHIPWRECK AND TERRIBLE ADVENTURES
AMONG SAVAGE TRIBES; THEIR MANNERS, CUSTOMS,
LANGUAGES, AND SUPERSTITIONS;

also

MURRELLS' RESCUE AND RETURN TO CIVILIZATION

by

EDMUND GREGORY

PRINTED BY EDMUND GREGORY, BRISBANE

1896

Retyped by Bowen Historical Society & Museum Inc
2002

NOTE TO THE FIFTH EDITION.

The substance of this pamphlet was published in 1863, but it has long since been out of print, and believing that the narrative of the sufferings and strange incidents here recorded will be read with interest as long as Queensland is in existence, I have determined to reissue it. It has, however, been necessary to rewrite it. Under the circumstances it was to be expected that time would have made it necessary to correct some parts, hastily called to memory after lying dormant so long; but in this very little had to be done: substantially no corrections were necessary, thus proving the strength of our hero's memory. The most notable correction is in his own name, as will be noticed in the first page. - E.G. - 1896

CHAPTER 1.

Birth and Parentage of James Murrells - Education - Choice of Profession - Apprenticeship - Voyage to Sydney, New South Wales, in the Ramilles - Voyage from Sydney to New Zealand and back - Shipped on board the barque "Peruvian" for China.

The subject of this singularly interesting narrative, who gave as his name James Morrill, but which ultimately proved to be Murrells, was born on the 20th May 1824, in the parish of Heybridge, a considerable village on the north side of the River Blackwater, and a northern suburb of Maldon. On referring to "The History, Gazetteer, and Directory of the County of Essex," edited by William White, published in 1848, among the names in the directory is that of Edward Murrells, a hawker, a brother of James Murrells. It will not be considered anything very extraordinary, after reading this narrative of suffering and hardship resulting from seventeen years' isolation in the bush among the aboriginals, with a blotting out of civilization, that there had been taken from him the power accurately to recall his own name to memory, although he said - that he might not forget - he sometimes sat for hours together in the solitudes of his temporary home, as well as to amuse his dusky companions, and traced the outline of his name in writing on his knee, also with a pointed stick on the sands, and then reading to them what he had written, of which they never seemed to tire and wonder.

His father, it appears, was by profession a millwright and engineer, and carried on business in Swan Yard, in connection with James Hayes, James Murrells' uncle. From information, however, received through Henry May, Esq., of Maldon, Government Emigration Agent, in 1865, it was ascertained that Murrells' father lived just long enough to hear of his long-lost son's restoration to civilized life, and that immediately before his death he greatly desired to see him once more, a wish which unfortunately could not be gratified. At the date of the publication of the before-mentioned directory, Murrells' uncle was still carrying on the business in his own name.

James Murrells at the time he finally left home had a brother older than himself, and three sisters, his juniors. When old enough he was sent to the village national school. The schoolmaster was the same as in 1848, according to the directory, Mr George D. Bridge by name; he had been a soldier, consequently was a strict disciplinarian, and he added to the usual course of study at that time the manual exercise, and frequently put the boys through their facings, to their no small amusement. His schoolboy days, however, do not appear to have been marked by anything worth remembering or calling particular attention to.

When he was about 13 or 14 years of age, and had acquired an ordinary education, such as was generally given in those days, and old enough to be of use, he went with his brother to work in his father's shop. But the confinement of a workshop was evidently not congenial to his somewhat restless disposition, as he was always glad of an opportunity to get away from it, if only for a day, particularly if he could get amongst the shipping. Among the friends who used to visit at his father's house was a pilot

named James Firman (whose name also appears in the Gazetteer before referred to), who piloted craft down the river Blackwater, and who would sometimes take the lad with, and bring him back, in the pilot boat. This was, of course, only in fine weather; the novelty of these trips, the songs of the sailors, the beautiful smooth sea, and no doubt the yarns of the sailors, made a powerful impression on his youthful mind, and he was constantly expressing his desire to become a sailor. His parents frequently told him of the troubles of a sea life, and that he would soon wish himself at home again, but he was nothing daunted.

On one occasion when he was going on one of these excursions, the captain asked the pilot if the lad would like a sea life; if so, and all were agreeable, he would take him there and then, and when he arrived at Shields, the place of his destination, he could supply him with the few things he would need. James was consulted, and readily agreed to go on those terms; the pilot on his part offered no resistance, and thus, without further consulting his parents, he went away on his first voyage in the brig "Royal Sailor," belonging to the Maldon Shipping Company. The captain was a very good man - a Wesleyan - and a local preacher of that body. Every night at eight o'clock, weather permitting, he used to call all hands together, to read the Bible to them, and conduct religious service.

Everything went on right that voyage, and his ardour was not in the least abated to be a sailor. He went several voyages in her, and when he was 16 years old he was bound apprentice to the Company for four years. He served part of his time in the "Royal Sailor," and part in another of the Company's vessels called the "Duchess of Kent," a schooner. Nothing happened while serving his time except the usual incidents attending a sea life - hairbreadth escapes from the violence of storms, the worst he remembered being, when once they were driven in bad weather to leeward of their port and went into the Firth of Forth for shelter.

After he finished his apprenticeship he re-joined his old skipper, Mr Harlin, and went four voyages with him. But at this period of his history his ideas began to enlarge, and he became dissatisfied with small colliers and short voyages; he thought he would like to go long voyages in larger ships. He made known his wish and determination to Mr. Henry May, who was at that time agent to the Company, and afterwards a Government Emigration Agent in the same place; and sought his advice and assistance. Mr. May took great interest in Murrells at that time, and had continued to do so since his return to civilized life. He gave him his discharge, a present for good conduct, and three letters of recommendation - one to the Sailors' Home, London, and two to large shipowners. With these he started by rail to the metropolis to seek his fortune, where he arrived late in the afternoon. The next morning, without much thought and without using the letters of recommendation, he shipped on board a troopship, the "Ramilles," as carpenter's mate. He had only time to hurry home and prepare for his voyage, which being accomplished left for the last time and joined his ship at Deptford, on a Friday. The following day they dropped down the stream and anchored at Gravesend. The next day (Sunday) they shipped the XI. Regiment of Foot for Hobart Town, whither she was bound; also a detachment of Royal Artillery, for Sydney, which was intended for New Zealand, a war having broken out in the Bay of Islands with the Maories. They finally started on their voyage some time during that week, and were six months on the voyage.

All troop-ships were obliged to carry a double complement of hands, so that when they arrived in Sydney one half the hands were not wanted; he thus obtained permission to leave the ship. As he had not then been long enough from home he soon shipped again, this time on board a little schooner called the "Terror," bound for Auckland, New Zealand. He made a successful trip in her to Auckland and back, but it not being easy to obtain a cargo in those days some of them were discharged, himself among the number.

There were several vessels in the harbour laid on for the mother-country, but still having no desire to turn home-wards he shipped on board the ill-fated ship "Peruvian," bound to China with a cargo of hardwood. The following pages will disclose the result.

Maldon District Museum Association

—Registered Charity 301362—

President - Mr. Derek Maldon Fitch

Vice President - Mr L.F. Barrell

Committee - to A.G.M. 2004

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

Vice-ChairmanTony Tullett.....

Hon. Secretary..... to be advised

Hon. Treasurer.....Tony Tullett.....

Membership Sec:.....Colin Barrell.....

Committee.....Lynda Barrell.....

Committee.....Mike Bennett.....

Committee.....Ray Brewster.....

Committee.....Molly Middleton.....

Committee.....Elizabeth Willsher.....

Curatorial Adviser....Nick Wickenden Esq

Museum Reception Telephone No..(01621) 842688

(Answerphone when museum unattended)

www.maldonmuseum.fsnet.co.uk

e mail bygonas@maldonmuseum.fsnet.co.uk

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the individual contributors, and not necessarily agreed by the Association

Correspondence to:

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'The Museum in the Park'

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