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THE PENNY FARTHING

The Maldon District Museum Association Newsletter

Captain Basil Herbert Bright MC (1895-1971)
See story page 7

In this issue

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Thank you to all those members who attended our Annual General Meeting on May 15th held at St. Cedd's. You will see from the Committee listed on the back cover of *Penny Farthing* that there have been several changes. We said farewell to Colin Barrell who has been our membership Secretary for the past 4 years. Pressure at work, including frequent trans-Atlantic trips, has caused him to give up this important post - we thank him for all his work on our behalf and welcome Christine Steel as his successor.

Margaret Simmonds will fill the post of Vice-Chairman with Daphne Swanson joining the committee as a new member.

The most worrying aspect is the problem we have had in finding a new Treasurer. Some time ago Betty Chittenden had advised the Committee that she would be unable to continue in this post, which she has performed most conscientiously, as she has problems in attending evening committee meetings. Efforts to find a successor have not been successful at the time of writing. I would be most grateful to hear from anyone who can help as Betty wishes to hand over the books as soon as possible. Help could be made available with the collection of monies from the museum and banking the takings also with the preparation of the end-of-year accounts, but it is in all the other tasks with which the Treasurer is involved, especially advising the Committee on financial matters, that we so urgently require assistance.

I am most pleased to record that Betty will continue to have contact with the Association acting as a Vice-President, which is a most fitting tribute to all that she has done for us over many years, during which she has covered every aspect of the Museum's work.

On a completely different subject, now is the time to start planning the changes to the Museum for our displays in 2008. All suggestions will be carefully considered and either adopted or put into our store of ideas for future years. When we have received a suggestion, with the help of our Accession's Team we examine what we already hold that might be relevant. This year, being the centenary of the Boy Scouts' movement, we did just that and found that we held only one relevant photograph! However we discovered that we had plenty of material on the Girl Guides in Maldon, so it is very likely that they will feature in 2010 which is their centenary year.

I have just been handed the research papers of Mr and Mrs Benians of Billericay who have been studying the standing army that was stationed in and around Maldon in Napoleonic times, when the town flourished and during which time acquired many fashionable Georgian frontages, often applied to very much older buildings. This study could form the basis of a colourful future exhibition as this was the time of glamorous uniforms. More research would be required to discover details of the dress uniform of the Pembroke Militia, the Royal North British Dragoons, the Romney Marsh Regiment and many of the Regiments of Foot. Does anybody wish to take up this challenge, please let me know?

I wish you all a very enjoyable Summer!

Paddy Lacey

Penny Farthing is dependent upon your contribution.
All articles, items, photos, comments and letters are welcome:
Please send to Tony Mandara, 41 Abbotsmead, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex CM9 4PT.
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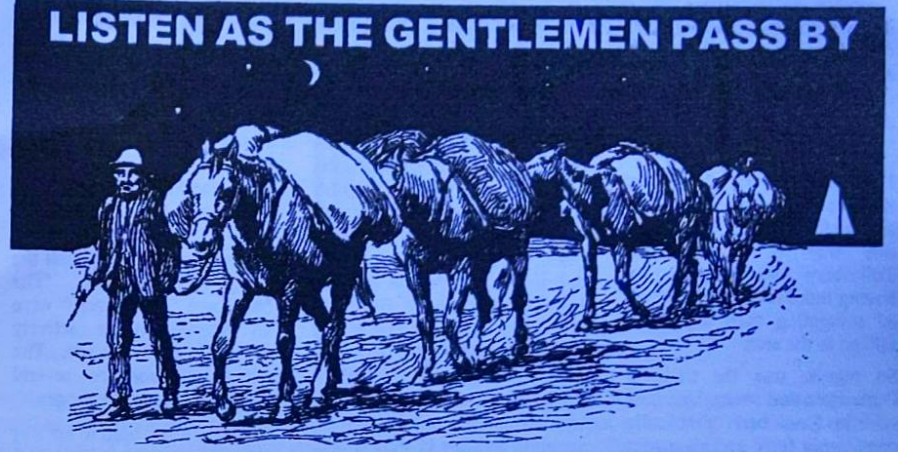
Copy deadline for the Autumn issue of *Penny Farthing* is 5 August

LISTEN AS THE GENTLEMEN PASS BY



The Essex coastline is approximately 350 miles long and even today much of it remains desolate and isolated, with few prying eyes to see what occurs during the hours of darkness. As such the area has been, and still is, an attractive location for smugglers.

The Dengie Hundred, that narrow isthmus of land between the Crouch and the Blackwater, with its ease of access to both Europe and London, proved a popular haunt for smugglers from the middle of the 17th century to well into the 18th century. Its vast tracts of low marshland and saltings with their intricate channels made ideal landing places for those choosing to keep their trade a secret.

Similarly between Mersea Island and the Blackwater there are several flat islands, between which winding waterways and ditches form a dangerous labyrinth, treacherous - especially at night - to all but those born and bred in the area. Local smugglers knew all of these safe channels enabling them to operate with impunity in defiance of the revenue officers sent to catch them.

Bradwell was notorious for illegal trade even before the importation of prohibited brandy and tobacco began. As early as 1361 local residents were accused of smuggling wool out of the country to Europe. Two centuries later five local men were named as "abettors and assisters of pirates and receivers or conveyors of pirate goods."

St Peter's Chapel, at that time a derelict barn, was frequently used to store contraband goods. In order to discourage inquisitive snoopers the smugglers used to play on the superstitions of local villagers by claiming that the place was haunted. They burnt coloured lights in the dead of night as evidence of their claim.

Another ingenious way of deterring attention was used by smugglers along the Crouch who spread rumours of a ghostly wagon haunting the local bye-roads. Then when transporting contraband they muffled their horses hooves and the wheels of the cart with rags so that it appeared to travel in complete silence - anyone who saw it fled in terror.

The small village of North Fambridge, once linked to the opposite bank of the Crouch by a ferry, afforded smugglers a short-cut, avoiding the nearest bridge up river and a greater likelihood of detection. Today the only reminder of those times is the "Ferryboat Inn" and a smuggler's tunnel reputed to run to Blue House Farm and Smugglers' cottage nearby.

The trade was so profitable that many locals, if not themselves actively involved, still condoned the traffic either by becoming customers or by lending their ships. Farmers too were known to leave horses, donkeys and wagons un-attended in convenient locations for clandestine

use and did not complain when they went missing, aware that the animals and wagons would mysteriously reappear a few days later, together with a little "present" by way of recompense.

In some Essex villages almost the entire population was alleged to have been involved in one way or another, but Tollesbury was notorious for having more recorded incidents of smuggling than any other village in the area.

So regular was the trade at Paglesham that smugglers were said to have been practically operating a ferry service across the English Channel.

Saltcott St Mary's church was frequently used to hide smuggled goods, and the congregation was said to include several smugglers who regularly attended services simply to keep an eye on their investments secreted in various parts of the church. The ruined Virley Church was also used to store illicit goods. From the church towers, signals could be flashed to Tiptree Heath and to Beacon Hill on the other side of the Blackwater estuary.

Public houses seem to have been the most favoured hiding places for contraband. The 'Spread Eagle' in Witham had a secret storage-shaft to the cellar only accessible through a passage in the roof. To make the shaft visible for modern day drinkers a small window has been installed in the bar.

At Braxted the landlord of the local inn led a gang who smuggled their goods through Tollesbury using '*The Providence*', a Maldon-registered smack. For a long time the nearest custom house was at Maldon, so Tollesbury smugglers were able to come and go very much as they pleased. Later when the authorities became more vigilant, contraband was simply thrown overboard into one of the many creeks, to be collected once the coast was clear. In 1819, Daniel London was dredging for shellfish when he discovered a number of tubs of spirits in Old Hall Creek. He spent the rest of the night loading them onto his boat and delivered 152 tubs to Maldon custom house the next morning - but he failed to mention another 11 tubs which he had kept for his own use!

Unfortunately, when Daniel returned home the owners of the cargo were waiting and threatened to lynch him and his son. He took shelter in his house and was only saved by the arrival of the Maldon customs men, whereupon he confessed to having the other 11 tubs. He was promptly arrested for smuggling and thrown into Chelmsford Gaol where he was attacked by other prisoners. The authorities were convinced that he was in league with the smugglers, especially as he had a previous conviction for the offence.

Old Hall Creek, silted-up long ago, at one time had wharfs and a waterside pub with huge cellars for the storage of contraband - the sea wall conveniently hid the smugglers from view as they unloaded their goods.

At the 'Peldon Rose' near Mersea, storage was in a deep hole in the middle of a pond. Weighted tubs of spirits could be lowered into this hole by ropes until the revenue men had completed their searches. 'The Chequers Inn' at Goldhanger used an outside cellar for the purpose. A favourite trick of Goldhanger smugglers was to float rafts of tubs down the Blackwater and land them at Mill Beach, opposite Northey Island.

As for Mersea Island itself the 'Dog and Pheasant', 'The Ship' and 'The Victory' were all reputed to be actively involved in the trade. The island still contains several reputed smugglers' cottages.

Smugglers also used to meet at "The Green Man", Bradwell Quay, to plan their crossings to Holland. Even as late as 1930 there were still Bradwell people who could remember Hezekiah Staines, a local smuggler by night who was also a special constable by day!

Cargoes having been landed they were quickly moved inland. Some were taken to London via Danbury and some to Colchester via Tiptree. Both places provided heathland where the horses could be rested. The area around Tiptree soon became notorious, with gypsies and squatters often holding auctions of smuggled goods there. For storage they dug shallow holes in the sandy soil and covered the packages with turf and brushwood.

The best known smuggling family to use the Crouch were the Dowsetts who had a reputation for being untouchable. Brothers William and John Dowsett had a vessel called the '*Big Jane*', armed with six brass cannon, which was involved in several battles

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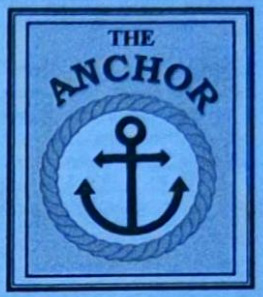
MALDON PUBS - PAST AND PRESENT

Based in part on "Essex Public House Signs" by Rev Keith Lovell and we are grateful for his permission to use his research.



With the Maldon's long maritime traditions, it comes as no surprise that many public houses chose nautical objects for their names, the anchor being among the most popular. In 1707 "The Blue Anchor" was opened at Fullbridge near the corner of Mill lane. It later became "The Swan", then "The Hoy" and then again as "The Victoria Inn". In the middle of the 18th century "The Rodney" which stood at the lower end of Maldon High Street became "The Ship and Anchor" and is still called that today. There are still "Anchor's" at The Square, Heybridge and at Burnham.

The very earliest ships' anchors were no more than heavy stone weights tied to a length of rope. In order to anchor them more efficiently to the sea-bed the Chinese developed spiked wooden frames around the stones. In about 2600 BC the Egyptians produced anchors from shaped stones with horizontal holes through them to take the ropes, such stones are still in use today by some Turkish fishermen.

The invention of wood and stone anchors is attributed to Yu, an engineering emperor of China from 2205-2197 BC. Anchors with arms are said to have been the brainchild of Anarchasis, a 6th century Greek.

Early lightweight iron anchors were often clamped with stone or lead to increase their weight, and later, according to Julius Caesar, iron chains secured anchors used in southern Britain. Iron for England's medieval anchors came from Sussex or northern Spain, the latter being brought back on returning pilgrimage ships. Statutes determined the number and type of anchors to be carried by naval vessels - sometimes as many as fifteen! Drawings from the 16th and 17th century detail a wide variety of anchors, from light 'kedgers' to 'sheet' anchors weighing well over a ton.

In the 18th century Admiralty 'Establishment' lists specified the anchor dimensions to be carried by all Royal Navy vessels. The familiar 'pickaxe' anchor was introduced in 1831 which led to the final development of the fixed anchor, the Admiralty pattern anchor of 1841. This easily recognisable anchor, of superior quality iron, continued in service well into the 20th century, when 'stockless' anchors were introduced.

Following our article about the origins of the pub name "Chequers" (last issue of *Penny Farthing)* an item appeared on the ITV programme "Tales From the Country" (22 February 2007) which gives an entirely different derivation for the name. According to the programme, the name comes from the Chequers tree, also known as the Wild Service tree, its berries being used to make a type of beer before the use of hops.

The programme went on to say that the Egyptian God Osiris was depicted by the sign of a chequer-board, which was later adopted by the Romans who used it to denote their taverns. Did the Chequer tree originate in Egypt, why was a chequer board chosen as the sign for Osiris, did the Romans drink ale and why did they use an Egyptian God's sign to show where it was sold? You pays your money and takes your choice. Personally I think that the name is far more likely to have derived from a common game, than from the berries of some obscure tree.

MEDIAEVAL MALDON

Concluding Part

In 1206 Brother Francis of Assissi founded a new order - an order which should own no property, but live by daily beggary - who should not be Fathers, but Brethren - who should not seclude themselves in a cloister - but live among the poorest of the poor, and preach once again to them the message of hope. In 1225 a little company of Franciscan Friars landed in England, and within a year their ranks were recruited by men of all classes anxious to join in their labours and privations.

Roman missionaries bringing the story of Christ to the Saxons

The effect of such a movement on the clergy can be imagined. In the towns where they had given up the fight in despair, these enthusiasts came to their help. A new zeal and a new hope sprang up among them. St Francis, it has been said, was the John Wesley of the XIII century - whom the church did not cast out. And as the Franciscans spread over Essex and East Anglia, you may be sure that one or more of them lived in Maldon, among the poorest, preaching to them in their own rude language, living like them in poverty, and making them feel that at any rate somebody cared for them.

What language did the old Maldonians talk? Someone like you or I would have found it very difficult to make ourselves understood or to understand them in the XIII century. By the end of the XIV we reach the language of Chaucer, which is nearly English as we know it. But earlier, it was different. It is pretty certain that at that time many people had three languages at their command. Remember that up to 1066, Early English, the so-called Anglo-Saxon, was the language of our country.

Then came a race of conquerors, spread throughout the land, refusing to learn our language, and talking Norman French. And everybody who had to do with them, even to obey orders, must have learned something of their language; not willingly, for the English distrust of foreigners, and dislike of talking anything but English was as strong then as it is now. So we find Abbot Samson of St Edmunds is gaining in popularity by preaching in English, and trusting a man's honesty the more, "because he could not speak French." But gradually the two languages became melted into one - the English had absorbed the French into itself, and there it remains to this day.

Very many people could speak and write Latin - of a sort. Every lawyer used Latin, and every priest; even the manor accounts between bailiff and lord were kept in Latin - presumably they would have refused to have this done for them by the clerk who wrote them out, in a language which they themselves could not understand.

The agricultural wages of this period are rather difficult to estimate as labourers were hired as a rule by the year, and paid chiefly by allowances, with very little cash. Where we have a record of day wages, in the XIII century, they work out at about 13d per week (*six and a half pence*) which was about 13/- of our money (*in 1911*). But even a day labourer probably had considerable privileges to add to this, such as leave to gather fuel in the forests and wood for building his house.

But free labour was the exception - most of the agricultural workers were what is known as villeins, attached to a manor. The land belonged to the Crown, and the Lord of the Manor occupied it in return for definite services which he owed to the King. In the same way the contribution of the Borough of Maldon to the Royal taxes consisted in furnishing him with one ship, and men to work it, for 40 days when required.

Similarly the villein held his parcel of the manor on condition of services to his lord. The manor was divided into great fields which were worked by the labour of the entire village, and each villein had his own portion of the land, curiously divided up, a furrow here and a furrow there. Every fifth furrow, for instance belonged to the Lord, every tenth furrow to the priest and the others to the villeins. The villeins had a right of grazing so many head of cattle on the common pasture, of cutting wood and of feeding swine in the common forests of the manor - a right which has in almost every case been stolen from the peasantry of this country - chiefly by the enclosure of the commons in the XVIII century.

The usual tenure on which land was held by the Lord from the Crown was the condition that he should be prepared to fight for the Crown and should bring a certain number of armed followers to support him, so that there was always the chance of service and adventure for any stout-hearted lad, and in the XIII century there was almost always a Crusade going on, or about to start for the East. The St Clairs of Danbury, whose tombs with their effigies you may see in the Church there, were doubtless followed by Maldonians whose names have been forgotten.

A terrible tragedy which overshadows the XIV century may serve to remind us of the dark side of Mediaeval life.

People often grumble at the way in which modern civilisation is legislated for, inspected and doctor-ridden. They often sigh for the happy-go-lucky days when a man could "do as he liked with his own " - even to keeping his back yard as filthy as he chose, with no Sanitary Authority to interfere with his liberty. For such liberty the Middle Ages had to pay the price.

In 1349, when England had reached a higher level of power and glory than ever before, Edward III wrote to the Bishop of Winchester to say that he had decided to put off the summoning of Parliament, because of "a sudden visitation of deadly pestilence" which had broken out at Westminster. Evidently it was hoped that this pestilence would be a merely local affair. But within the year it had spread throughout the country and wrought such havoc as we cannot picture to ourselves.

Statistics were not compiled in those days, and we have no full account of the horror of that year - men were too busy burying their dead to write of it. But dimly from the Court Rolls of the Manors, which record the tenancies that were succeeded to by the heirs of the dead, or that fell to the Lord of the Manor for want of any living heir, and from records of the new clergy inducted to livings to fill the places of those who had gone, we can gain some idea of an appalling calamity.

Estimates have varied greatly, but when we know that in that year, in the diocese of Norwich, upwards of 800 parishes lost their parsons, 83 of them twice and 10 of them three times - that Hadston, a hamlet with something under 400 inhabitants - to take but one instance - 54 men and women tenants were carried off in nine months, 24 of them without leaving a single heir to their property, we can well believe the computation that in rural England more than half the population was destroyed by the plague.

If these things were done in the green tree what of the brown? What of the closely packed inhabitants of the stinking alleys of the towns? ... We do not know - we can only guess.

Can such things happen again? We believe not. We hope not. Only a year ago (1910) this same Black Death appeared again in East Anglia, not so many miles from where we sit. And sanitary science and sanitary organisation were able to limit its spread and stamp it out. Think of this if you are inclined to sigh for the good old times, and be thankful that you live not in the XIII century but in the XX.

The above article first appeared in the "Maldon Advertiser" of November 1911, and is a transcript of a lecture delivered by Dr. H Reynolds Brown M.D. At a public meeting in connection with the Maldon Literary and Musical Society that same year.

THE BRIGHT BROTHERS

Part 1

Basil Herbert Bright (*photo front cover*) was born at Cromwell House, Maldon, 1 February 1895 and Christened in All Saints Church in Maldon High Street. A direct descendent of Edward Bright "The Fat Man of Maldon", Basil was the youngest son of Florence (nee Denne) and Frederick Henry Bright. His brothers were Gerald (1889-1962, solicitor) and Cecil Desborough Bright (1893-1916, killed in Mesopotamia during World War 1).

Basil's primary education was at St Lawrence College, Ramsgate, Kent (1905-1908). He then attended Haileybury College, Hertford Heath, Hertfordshire (1909-1912) where he became a Private in the Officers' Training Corps. On leaving school, he was articled to his father at F H Bright; Solicitor, West Square, Maldon (1912-1915).

Soon after the outbreak of the First World War, August 1914, the 1/7th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment was posted to Maldon to await transfer to France. Captain Tomkinson, who was billeted with the Bright family, suggested that Basil join the regiment, but he must have had some doubts about becoming a member of this regiment because on his application for commission he deleted 5th (Reserve) Battalion, Essex Regiment before naming the Worcestershire Regiment. Eventually, on 9th February 1915, he was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant and became Commander, No 3 Platoon, "A" Company. The Worcestershire Regiment was part of the 144th Infantry Brigade, British Expeditionary Force.

In March 1915, the regiment was ordered to France, but because it was over strength Basil continued training duties at Bicknacre until 1st July when he rejoined his regiment in northern France. For the next seven months he served on the Somme, about ten miles from Albert. Basil alternated between leading working parties and spending several days at a time fighting in the trenches.

When not in the line, he might dine with fellow officers at their billets and play poker afterwards. He attended concerts and church parades when he could and now and again went fishing. Occasionally he was able to get home on leave, a privilege not allowed to the ordinary soldiers.

The weather in July and August was warm and sunny, but in September it turned wet and cold with a biting wind. In October the men were issued with fur coats and gloves. These arrived just in time for in November the snow fell steadily. December brought rain and slush with the result that many men suffered from influenza and trench foot, (caused by constantly standing in water) and trench fever, (spread by lice).

In the autumn of 1915, Basil went on two bombing courses to become the reserve battalion officer, holding bombing classes for the battalion.

On 12th January 1916 he was seconded to command the Brigade's Trench Mortar Battery (TMB). Soon after Basil joined the Battery, it came in for a terrible pounding and many of his men were killed.

He was promoted to Lieutenant on 1st June 1916 and Temporary Captain two weeks later. At the same time the TMB was reformed as the 144th Light Trench Mortar Battery (LTMB), comprising 4 officers (Basil in command) and 48 men. They were equipped with eight 3-inch Stokes trench mortars which could fire 10-pound bombs up to 1500 yards at a rate of 20 per minute. Because of the mortar's limited range, crews had to advance with the first waves of men in any attack to establish positions in captured trenches or to meet counter attacks.

LTMBs were unpopular with infantry working parties because their high rate of fire demanded large amounts of ammunition, which had to be brought up to forward positions over near-impossible terrain, either in unwieldly boxes or "waistcoats" each holding three bombs. Added to which LTMB activities tended to attract heavy retaliatory fire from the enemy.

There may also have been a touch of envy because mortar crews had a reputation for independence. Indeed officers and men lived and fought together more closely than in the battalions. In Basil's case, most of his men were older than him and called him Basil rather than Sir.

From mid-February and during the Battle of the Somme (1st July to 18th November 1916) the brigade was constantly on the move and took part in the Battle of Ovillers where it lost many men. Basil was wounded on 3rd September when he received a gunshot either to the face or neck, but he remained on duty. In March 1917 he was admitted to hospital with a slight fever and discharged five days later.

In July 1917 the 144th Brigade left the Somme to fight in the bloody, muddy, rain-sodden Third Battle of Ypres, Belgium. In a week of intense fighting the allied troops advanced just two miles at the terrible cost of 32,000 casualties. Although there was a break in the weather for a few days in September, allowing them to make further small advances, by early October the rain had resumed and the mud became thicker than ever, often waist-deep or higher.

A couple of weeks later the brigade moved to Vimy Ridge before taking part in the drive towards Passchendaele in November, 1917. A veteran wrote "Of all our battle experience, that was the grimmest and most dreadful time." Basil was mentioned in despatches on 7 November for action in France.

On 24 November the 144th Brigade left for Italy to support the Italians against the Austrians. Arriving on the vast plain between Padua and Verona they experienced a three- month lull from constant fighting, and so occupied themselves in working parties, training and route marches. During this period, Basil was awarded the Military Cross, not for immediate gallantry but probably in recognition of his past horrific months on the Somme.

Their respite was not to last, at the beginning of March the 48th Division began a six-month campaign of march and counter-march, alternately fighting in the mountains or labouring in working parties. Here the cold and mud of Flanders was exchanged for a steep, rocky, pine-clad terrain. At first the men suffered from falling snow or freezing mist, later replaced by extreme heat. Hundreds of men became sick with mountain fever, a type of influenza.

The Austrians eventually surrendered on 3rd November 1918, but it was some months before the Allied soldiers returned home. Basil became sick on 3rd December with severe influenza and was delirious for several days followed by some memory and voice loss. After transfers via various hospitals in Italy and France he was finally admitted to Alexandra Hospital, Cosham, Hampshire on 6th January 1919. On 18th January he was again mentioned in despatches, this time for action in Italy.

In July 1919 Basil was released from hospital and returned to his parents' home in Maldon. The *London Gazette* of 26th August stated that he was to relinquish his commission due to ill-health and be granted the rank of captain.

In spite of those grim years of war, Basil would later only chuckle and say, "The only time I ever fired my revolver was to shoot a rat." In civilian life he qualified as a solicitor and practised in Maldon for the next 50 years, retiring as senior partner, though during the Second World War he served in the Home Guard as a Major in the 2nd Essex Battalion, Eastern Command, later being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

Appointed deputy town clerk in the late 1920s, he served as Clerk to the Justices 1946-65 in both Maldon and Dengie; was Secretary to the Maldon Probation Committee and a founder member of the Heybridge Branch of the British Legion. As a life-long member of All Saints Church, he was a sidesman and vicar's warden; sat on the Parochial Church Council; was president of the Maldon Constitutional Club; one time secretary of the Essex Game Guild; president of Maldon Rugby Club for ten years; vice president of the Maldon Bowling Club; and one time captain of Maldon Golf Club.

He suffered a stroke at his home 'Star House', Bicknacre, and died in Chelmsford & Essex Hospital on 22nd April 1971. He was 76 years old.

*

In the next issue of *Penny Farthing* the story of Basil's brother, Cecil Desborough Bright.

A WARTIME CHILDHOOD

Concluding Part

My parents did not purchase their first television set until 1953, just in time to watch Queen Elizabeth II's coronation. Before then our only other source of manufactured entertainment was the radio.

Radio was a magical medium which stimulated the imagination to a degree beyond anything television, with all its clever tricks, can manage. It appears strange now, but we used to draw our chairs around the wireless set and look at it intently while we listened, just as if there were pictures to watch. Very odd behaviour.

There were plenty of programmes for children including Children's Hour, Just William, Jennings, and serials such as Dick Barton Special Agent and Journey into Space.

We were among the first families in our street to own a television. It was a large wooden cabinet surrounding a very small screen, about 20 cm x 15.5 cm,. It was possible to purchase a large glass container filled with oil to hang in front of the screen to act as a sort of magnifying glass to enlarge the picture - although it did distort the image. If one wanted a "colour" television the oil would be tinted to make the picture appear orange or green instead of black and white - supposedly more restful on the eyes!

We also watched the screen in the dark, no doubt to emulate going to the cinema.

Television programmes in those early days were abysmal and picture quality worse, frequently suffering from "interference", caused by other electrical appliances in the neighbourhood or even passing cars, which made the programme look as if it was taking place in a snow-storm. If the horizontal hold slipped causing the picture to collapse, a fairly common occurrence, adjustment to the set's fine tuning was best achieved by giving it a hefty thump with the fist.

Only one channel was broadcast so there was no choice of programmes and even this often broke down leaving long gaps while the BBC tried to restore transmission. In those cases an interval film would be shown of a potter endlessly turning clay on a wheel or a horse ploughing a field. Neither ever completed their task in spite of being shown several times each night - breakdowns were that frequent.

There were no morning programmes and early evening programmes were stopped for an hour each day to allow school children to complete their homework without distraction.

Other pastimes we had to make for ourselves. We played board games and cards, did jigsaws and read books. I painted or made model aircraft out of balsa wood whilst listening to music on a wind-up gramophone.

On winter Saturday afternoons I would sit on the rug before the open fire playing with my Meccano construction kit, as I listened to the radio and waited for my Dad to return from watching his team play football. When the football results were announced I had to be absolutely silent while mum wrote them down for dad to check his Vernon's pools coupon when he came in.

Meccano was the forerunner of Lego. It was an engineering construction set which consisted of pre-drilled metal pieces together with cogs, pulleys and wheels which had to be connected together with small nuts and bolts to make a wide variety of projects. The funny thing was that no matter how many bits you had, there were never enough of the right parts to complete whatever you were trying to build.

At about ten years of age I became a keen cyclist, covering thousands of miles every year before finally giving up when my bike was stolen shortly before I married.

In those times of austerity there were few new bicycles on sale. The only way of obtaining one was either to beg an old pre-war bike or make one. Accordingly my mates and I spent many hours scouring ditches, hedges and waste ground looking for rusty frames, handlebars, front forks or any other usable parts which had been discarded. After much effort the majority of the bits could be gathered, all except wheels which, if they could be found, were always buckled beyond repair - these we had to save up for and buy out of our precious pocket money.

Part of the fun of cycling was having to build our own bikes and although they often lacked style (and often brakes), being decorated with the dregs of any old paint we could find in our fathers' sheds, we were as proud of our creations as if they were the most elegant machines ever made.

My first home-made bike had no gears but it was serviceable and with various modifications lasted until I was sixteen, though by then I had outgrown the frame (it was not a full size one) so I must have looked rather ridiculous riding it with my knees almost hitting my chin as I pedalled. Still I managed to undertake several long journeys of 100 miles or more on it.

Until the mid 1950's when the Clean Air Act was introduced, air pollution in towns and cities was appalling. The Midlands where I had spent my infancy was called the "Black Country" because all of the buildings were covered in a thick sooty deposit and the sky was always overcast. The only time the sun ever became clearly visible was during the industrial fortnight when the factories closed for the workers' annual holidays. For those two weeks the foundries and workshops ceased pumping their pernicious fumes into the atmosphere, allowing the heavy smoke clouds which hung over the city to clear and reveal the sun.

Thousands of men were employed in the mines digging coal to meet the energy needs of both homes and industry. There was no other viable source of heating, or for powering electricity and gas generating stations, even the railways ran on coal to fire the engines.

To make matters worse the nation was selling its best and cleanest coal abroad in order to repay the country's debts incurred during the Second World War. This meant the coal left for home use was of the poorest quality, creating the worst smoke and dust particles.

In winter, when every house needed heating, the air soon became even more polluted by smoke, soot and grit, which when combined with certain damp weather conditions, produced a thick enveloping murk called smog. Unlike fog which is mainly water vapour, smog was highly contaminated and deadly dangerous. It affected most major cities and industrial conurbations for several days each year.

Smog was so dense that it literally became impossible to see the end of one's hand when the arm was outstretched. Public transport ceased to run; schools, shops and factories closed; and an eerie quiet and stillness descended over the city and we sank into a world of near blindness. The yellow sulphurous fumes even seeped inside the houses to create an unpleasant gloomy atmosphere.

People were forced to wear face masks or tie handkerchiefs over their noses and mouths to try to filter the air that they breathed. Those with respiratory problems and the elderly suffered particularly badly with the result that many hundreds died each year.

I remember once being sent home from school early because smog suddenly descended. It was too thick to ride my bike so I wheeled it the three miles home, guessing where I was by trying to visualise the route in my mind and cautiously feeling for kerbs and obstructions with my feet.

Under such conditions the twenty minute journey took a couple of hours and at one point a car with its headlights on, emerged from the gloom and pulled up beside me. The driver asked where he was and I told him where I believed we were - and that more importantly he was on the wrong side of the road. Until that moment he had no idea that he was so widely off course. I led him back to his correct side of the road and it was only at that point that I discovered that there were another half-a-dozen cars behind him, all equally lost and simply following each other's tail lights.

Ah, the "Good Old Days" - were they so good I wonder? War and violent death on a daily basis, families split-up for years, food rationing, housing shortages, smog, poor and expensive health treatment (there was no NHS until 1946), queues for even the most basic items, hand-me-down clothes, etc. Having now got used to modern amenities and relative affluence, if truth be told I for one would not like to live through those times again.

——— * ———

The Railway Bell

A TALE OF TWO PUBS

By Paddy Iacey
Drawings by Charles Grigg Tate

The Railway Tavern

I have always admired the description of the author of the splendid little volume "Here's Good Luck to the Pint Pot" a brief history of Maldon's Inns, Alehouses and Breweries by Ken Stubbings, sadly no longer in print. It says Ken has never laid claim to being a Maldonian because his ancestor, William Stubbings, did not settle in the town until 1797. Personally I had thought that having known the town for 45 years and lived in or close to it for the past 35 years I was almost a Maldonian but by Ken's standards I have a long way to go!

This was brought home to me when, having spoken disparagingly of the "Railway Bell", the pub that stood opposite the entrance to Maldon East Station from the opening of the railway in 1848 until the 1950's, I was taken to task by a fellow committee member, a true Maldonian, who probably passes the 1797 test.

She asked, had I ever been in the "Railway Bell" because her mum worked there in the cafe for years so she knew it well? She went on to say that it was a cheerful place, well-run by a landlord, Tiny, who was one of the Woodcraft family from Heybridge Basin, along with his wife, Maud.

I muttered that I had only been into the "Railway Bell" after it had been taken over by Jewsons, the builders' merchants and I must have been thinking of the "Railway Tavern", a Gray's Pub situated on the Causeway. This was no better. The reply was that the "Tavern" did not have a bad reputation either. It was much smaller and most of its customers lived on the Causeway.

The "Tavern" was an alehouse that opened in 1874 and survived until June 1962. It had a tiny off-licence where she used to be sent on Sunday mornings to get an ice cream soda for herself and a beer for her Mum to go with Sunday lunch!

During the war the "Tavern" used to have a delivery of one tin of Smith's crisps packets (with the salt in a twist of blue paper) on a Thursday and if you did not get along there on a Thursday they would all be gone. A couple called Braybrook ran it for years.

A second genuine 1791 Maldonian then joined in the debate with the memory that her father spent much of his disposable income in the "Railway Tavern" during her formative years, and on Sundays she and Ma had a bottle of Vimto to go with their lunch. The landlord was Bill Durbin whose daughter, Mrs Dolly Braybrook, made the most wonderful quince jam.

No windows were ever opened at the "Tavern" and the whole place reeked permanently of stew. Dark brown paint was everywhere, bare floors and scrubbed wooden tables. Women were frowned upon in the Public Bar and had to sit in the back somewhere, a bit like Purdah in India.

She too remembered the Smith crisp supply but added that old Bill also had an old pot in which he kept all the discarded coloured bottle tops which he would hand out to his small girl customers to decorate their dresses. You took out the cork inside the cap and put it on the inside of your skirt, then placed the metal top on the outside and pushed them together. Hey Presto, a decorated skirt; Mother raised hell because the process made holes in the fabric.

Our informant then added an unsavoury memory concerning the gentlemen's urinal which was very smelly with green slime running down the walls, being an enquiring child she just had to sneak a look!

Perhaps we could have done without the last recollection, but what splendid accounts of times gone by. Please could we have some more memories from our 1797 pure-bred 100% true Maldonians? They are fantastic.

DID YOU KNOW?

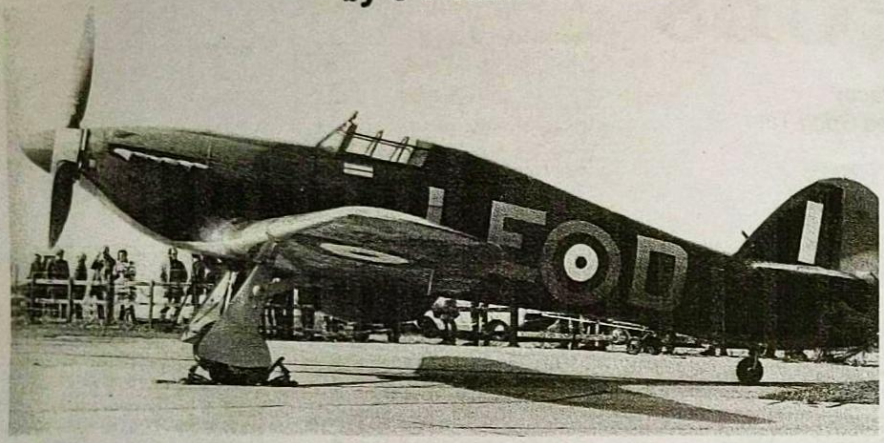
The Beerhouse Act of 1830 allowed anyone to open a beer house for a small fee, and to stay open for 24 hours a day! The intention was to make beer more readily accessible, so diverting the working classes from the gin shops with their more damaging strong spirits. Unfortunately the never-closing beer houses created as many problems as they solved. Poor and often homeless patrons now spent what few coppers they had in a warm, dry place where they could sit and drink all day and all night long.

Eventually, in 1864, the Public House Closing Act was brought in which required the premises to be closed between the hours of 1 am and 4 am, which was not much of a change but did force the patrons to cease drinking and go home for a few hours.

Today we appear to be going back to those "good old days" with new licensing laws designed to make both beer and spirits readily available around the clock - to the detriment of both the health and wealth of customers.

Maldon, The Dengie and Battles in the Skies [1939-1945]

by S P Nunn



Stephen Nunn, a long time friend of the Museum, is better known these days for his research and publications on St Roger of Beeleigh, but in his latest book he has returned to one of his early loves - aviation history. *Maldon, the Dengie and Battles in the Skies [1939-1945]* was published by the Maldon Archaeological and Historical Group Society in December 2006. In it he gives details of 106 episodes resulting in aircraft crashing locally during the Second World War. This seems a very large number but as Stephen points out that an average of 5 planes crashed somewhere in the UK on every day of WW2. It is timely to have such a list as there is a danger of myths growing up on the subject regardless of the facts.

This is a well-researched book containing all the available facts from official sources, first-hand accounts and from Stephen's own observations as a keen member of the Essex Aviation {Archaeology} Group. It can be thoroughly recommended to all interested in the history of the Maldon district during the Second World War.

PJL

A Closer Look at an Exhibit ...

THE FAT MAN OF MALDON

At the top of the stairs in our Museum is a replica of the coat worn by Edward Bright, "The Fat Man of Maldon", while in reception is a small statue of the famous tale about seven hundred men fitting into his coat. These items are a source of wonder and delight to visiting children and adults alike, and most Maldonians know the basic story, but how many of us know all the details of this "outstanding" man?

Edward was born 1st March 1721 in Maldon and became the Town's post-boy when he was only 11 years old, a job which involved him riding to Chelmsford every day to collect the mail, carrying with him a post horn and a whip. As he was already developing into a large young man (he weighed 10 stones at 12 years and by 19 years over 24 stones) one can only feel pity for the poor horse! By the time he was 23 years, Edward already weighed some 41 stones.

He became a candle maker and grocer and was a well-known businessman, admired and accepted around Maldon. However, when he travelled outside the town he attracted great attention and became something of a freak show. As well as huge quantities of food he also drank a gallon of beer plus half a pint of wine per day. In an attempt to curb his weight he eventually rationed himself to just four pints of beer per day plus wine with his meals, but in vain, because his weight continued to increase.

His extreme weight naturally affected his health, but instead of undertaking a strict diet, he relied upon the local apothecary to purge and bleed him on a fairly regular basis. In those days "bleeding" was considered a cure-all treatment for most ailments. During the bleeding two pints of blood were let at a time but to no avail. In 1748 Edward Bright weighed 42 stones 12 lbs.

Two years later, following a fortnight of coughing and choking, Edward died of typhus fever. He was only 29 years old and left a widow with five children and a sixth on the way. Some sources claim he died in 1756, but his tombstone and Parish Records clearly state his date of death as 12 November, 1750.

At the time of his death he weighed 44 stones 6lbs and he measured 5ft 9 ins tall, 66 inches around the chest, 83 inches around the waist; and his arms were 26 inches and legs 32 inches in circumference. To accommodate this enormous body a coffin 6ft 7ins long and 3ft deep had to be constructed and a wall of his house had to be demolished in order to get it out. Twelve strong men using rollers were employed to push the coffin from his home, Church House next to St Peter's Church (now the Maeldune Centre), up the hill to All Saints' Church where it was lowered by block and tackle into a vault.

Shortly before he died Edward's waistcoat had been sent to the tailors to be let out to allow for his increasing girth, but he died before the alterations were finished. The waistcoat then became the source for an unusual bet when Edward Codd wagered Mr Hance that seven hundred men could fit inside it. He won the bet when seven men from Dengie Hundred were buttoned inside with ease.

This event has since been commemorated in both paintings and sculpture, most recently by the relief sculpture by Catharni Stern installed in 2000 in the Kings Head Centre, Maldon. The Museum's small statuette, is also by Catharni Stern.

An obituary to Edward Bright reads "He was a very honest tradesman, a tender husband, a kind father, a fastidious companion, comely in temper, affable in person and a valued friend".

Edward's widow continued his grocery business and later married a tallow chandler (candle-maker and seller). She is described as having run the business with "economy, attention and vociferation of tongue". She outlived Edward Bright by 30 years, dying on the 25th of September, 1780.

IN MEMORIUM

Geoff Albury

As the *Penny Farthing* was going to press we learned of the sudden death of Geoff Albury. Geoff, together with Mike Bennett and Judy Tullett, for many years made up the highly skilled display team whose work in the Museum was widely admired. A year ago Geoff decided that having reached the age of 85, it was time to hang up his overalls and retire from display activities. The splendid model of Maldon East Station, which was amongst his many contributions, will be a lasting example of the fine work that Geoff, a retired aeronautical engineer, did for the Museum.

LISTEN AS THE GENTLEMEN PASS BY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

with Revenue cutters in the Crouch until it was eventually captured in 1780 after an eleven hour chase with the Revenue cutters *'Bee'* and *'Argus'*.

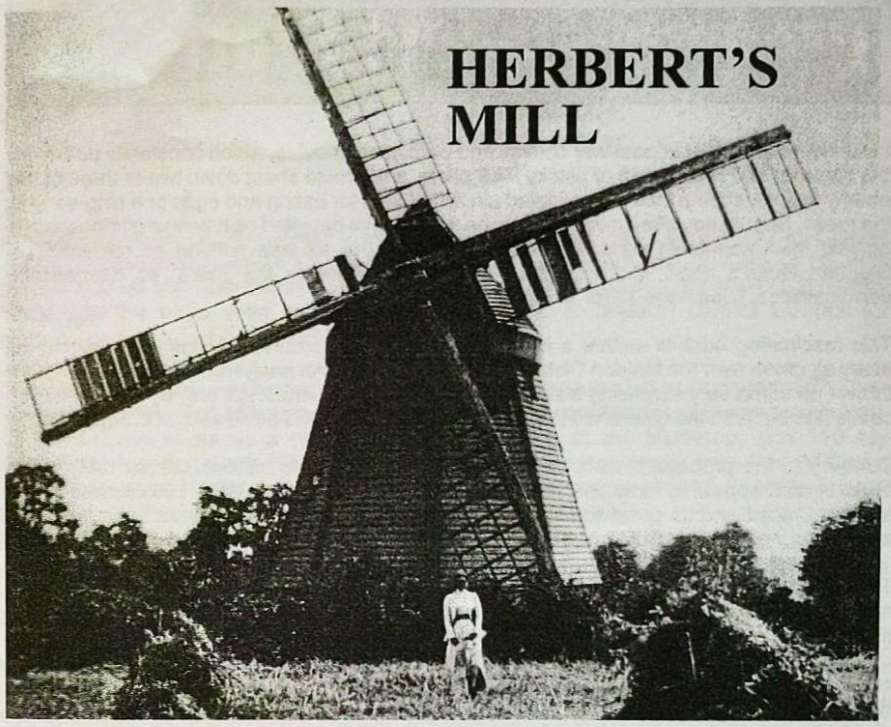
Two years previously another of William Dowsett's ships, the *'Neptune'*, was chased from the Crouch by the *'Bee'* until it grounded on the Barrow Sands and was subjected to gunfire. Eventually Dowsett's crew abandoned ship. Once captured the *'Neptune'* was found to contain 391 half ankers (each half anker equalled four gallons) of spirits, two whole ankers of brandy, rum and Geneva (gin), 8 cwt tea and 3 cwt of coffee. Two weeks later the *'Bee'* repeated her success when she captured another 40 ton cutter the *'Waggon'* also owned by Dowsett.

Naturally the government tried to prevent this flagrant evasion of revenue duties by sending customs officers to police the area. But it was an almost hopeless task because, by sheer force of numbers and local knowledge the smugglers easily evaded capture. At one time only a handful of excisemen based at the custom house in Maldon were intended to patrol the whole of the Dengie Hundred and along the Blackwater to Mersea! The only hope of capturing a smuggler was by accidentally bumping in to him in the act or by a tip-off from a competitor. Although even then a tip-off would often deliberately send the excisemen in the wrong direction, in order to afford the bootlegger a clear run.

To compound the problem some of the excisemen were of poor quality, often being drawn from retired sailors too old or infirm for further service in the Royal Navy - hardly sprightly enough to catch determined men prepared to fight to protect their cargo.

It was not until 1822 that enforcement against smuggling became properly co-ordinated, when the Preventative Water Guard was formed under one command known as HM Coastguard. This unit was able to organise proper boat and foot patrols and set up coastguard stations around the coast, which eventually proved the death-knell for large scale smuggling, although of course it does still happen even today - but the trade now is usually in drugs or illegal immigrants.

HERBERT'S MILL



A typical Smock Mill of the 1800's, similar to the one which once stood in Mill Road

In the Middle Ages, Mill Road, Maldon, was called Keaton's (or Keton's) Lane. From about 1825 it was called Mill Lane until about 1855 when it changed to Mill Road. The name being chosen for the obvious reason that a Smock mill stood close to number 31 Mill Road, just north of the junction of St Mary's Lane with Mill Road.

The mill was originally built sometime around 1825 as it is first mentioned in the land-tax records from 1826 to 1832, which show that it was occupied at that time by a man called Jepp, although the land and probably the mill itself was owned by Thomas Herbert and it became known as Herbert's Mill.

In 1837 Mrs E Herbert, possibly Thomas Herbert's widow, was advertising it for let as an excellent grist mill. Four years later in August 1841 the mill, still under the same ownership, was advertised for sale by auction, but a week later it was withdrawn. Within a few months the mill and dwelling house were once again to be sold 'by order of the mortgage under the power of sale'. The property was stated to be near the church at the Hythe. It is probable that the mill had fallen on hard times due to fierce competition from the watermill at Beeleigh and had been repossessed by the mortgage company.

Herbert's Mill was purchased three months later by Mr Whitehead, a miller from Great Totham, who intended to have it transported to Stebbing for re-erection there. Unfortunately, while being hoisted onto a carriage, it was dropped suffering extensive damage which made it necessary to be taken to pieces. The author does not know what happened to the mill after that.

Propaganda and Statistics

I was raised on a diet of post-war comics and British war movies, which constantly portrayed the superior skill and aircraft of plucky RAF pilots, who would shoot down two or three of the enemy before landing their own crippled aircraft in time for bacon and eggs or a sing-song in the mess. Should any allied pilot be killed, he was always depicted as having a glorious death against insurmountable odds. In reality the war in the air was nothing so romantic, as Stephen Nunn's book "Maldon, The Dengie and Battles in the Skies" so dramatically demonstrates. (See page 13 for a review).

This fascinating book is neither a novel nor a narrative account, but simply a directory of every air crash over the Maldon District from 1939 to 1945. An analysis of the data it contains throws up some very surprising statistics. I was particularly struck not only by the number of casualties but also the difference in the numbers of enemy and allied aircraft brought down.

Contrary to the propaganda the comics and films had led me believe, considerably more allied aircraft appear to have been lost over Britain than German. Of the 106 crashes in the Maldon District and its coastal waters only 16 were definitely enemy aircraft plus possibly another four whose wreckage was not recovered and therefore unidentified.

The remaining 86 losses were all allied planes, British, American, Canadian, Czech, Australian etc. a ratio of more than 4:1 in the enemy's favour! Of course these figures may be distorted because many damaged German aircraft could have crashed into the sea on their way back to their bases in Europe. Furthermore after December 1942 German air offensives were considerably reduced so that there were far fewer opportunities to engage the enemy in British skies.

Surprisingly most of the crashes were due to mechanical/engine failure, lack of fuel, training-accidents or unidentified causes and explosions on take-off, also the fact that there was an airfield at Bradwell increased the possibility of accidents. Pilots risked being brought down more by mishap than as a result of combat, which must have been an unnerving thought every time they took off. Many of the 106 incidents were forced landings rather than smashes, but even so approximately 100 brave airmen, both allied and German, lost their lives over Maldon. Sadly not all of their bodies were recovered but a few of those who were are buried in Maldon Cemetery.

From the statistics it would seem that the allied aircraft most frequently brought down or crash-landed were the Hurricane (17), Spitfire (16) and Mosquito (15). These numbers are probably distorted because these were the most numerous aircraft in operation in the area during that time.

The remaining casualties included Mustangs, Thunderbolts, Tempests, Typhoons, and Flying Fortresses returning from raids, and even a glider whose tow rope had snapped - it landed safely at Spital Farm, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, with all six crew and passengers safe.

Penny Farthing would love to hear from any reader with their own memories and experiences of these momentous events.

ST. CEDD's CHATLINE

By Judy Betteridge
Accessions Officer

Double Yippee for us - Summer's on its way, and we have been told that we have use of the extra room at St. Cedd's for the foreseeable future. This is such a boon for us, as it means that we can now devote one room just for office space and expand our Bygones Store into the extra area available. Sincere thanks to Maldon District Council for responding to our "cri de coeur".

It is also the time of year for our AGM. Just to share some end of year figures with you - we have accessioned 216 items during the past twelve months. 21 of these are on loan, 85 have come about as a result of the big clear up at the Museum, and 110 are completely new donations. The latest of these new items is a trophy from Sadds' Social and Athletic Club Horticultural Society, covering the period from 1930 to 1962 - lots of well known Maldon names on this, including Mr H. Hutchinson.

It is always rather flattering to be sought out by one of the "big boys" in the museum world, and we have recently been approached by Colchester Museum, who are planning a "Disability" display later this year and would like to exhibit our basket-work spinal carriage. We have agreed and the carriage is now on its way to Ipswich, where it will be deep frozen for a month to kill off any woodworm infestation (how hurtful - to even suggest that we might be harbouring such beasties). They will also refurbish the carriage before display, so that the loan will definitely be to our advantage. For our part, we are hoping that the Post Office Archive will agree to lend us Edward Bright's post horn and whip (Edward was of course Maldon's famous weight-disadvantaged post-boy who carried the post between Maldon and Chelmsford).

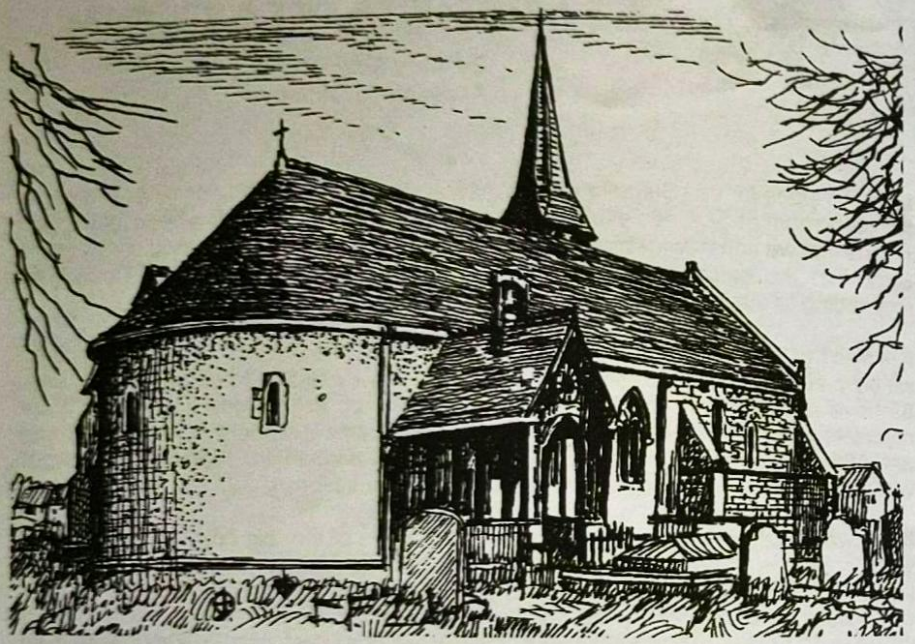
I always enjoy interaction with other museums, and have been wondering recently whether to contact our counterpart in Maldon, Australia, a very historic town by Oz standards, designated a "Notable Town" by their National Trust. Their Museum is described as an historic building, built as a marketplace in 1859 and now housing a collection of local domestic and mining memorabilia, (gold was discovered there in 1853). Many records of interest to those researching the history of the old Shire of Maldon and its early families are held in the archives, (it would be so interesting to do a "search" of their archives to discover if any of our old Maldon names are there).

Anyway, as usual our Museum activities are always prefaced by "if time permits" and also as usual I am late with this Chatline, so must wrap it up and "electronic" it off to Tony Mandara.

Enjoy your Summer - and don't neglect your Factor 15.

Judy Betteridge

Maldon's Historic Churches



Drawing by Charles Grigg Tait

St Giles, Langford

Unique in Essex, and possibly in England, because its Norman apse is at the wrong end, St Giles church has been described as "a great oddity". It is probable that the present building is of early Norman construction although Roman tiles and brick have been found in its fabric, indicating the possible presence of an earlier building on the site or nearby.

The nave and chancel are of the late XIth or early XIIth century and originally had apses at both ends! But in the XIV century the eastern apse was demolished to make way for a square extension to be added to the chancel. Evidence of the original apse can still be seen in the floor tile arrangement which shows the line of the original wall. The font is 15th century.

The character of the church was considerably altered in 1881 when restoration saw an entirely rebuilt chancel, the wooden shingled spire was demolished, and the north aisle, south porch and north-east bell-tower added.

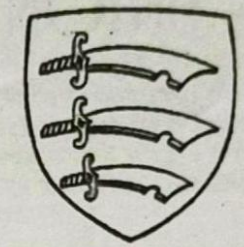
SEAXES NOT SCIMITARS

There has recently been correspondence concerning the Essex County crest and its origins, between our Chairman and Alan Lucas, a member of the 'Engliscas Gesith' an historical society interested in the Saxon period.

The Essex County Arms consist of a red shield on which three curved short silver sword-knives with gold hilts terminating in knobs, are placed one above the other, cutting-edge up, with the sword points facing to the right. The weapons depicted are called seaxes, not scimitars with which they are often confused. They evolved from an ancient Saxon short-sword which varied from eight to eighteen inches in length and was about two inches wide.

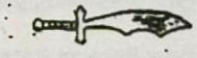
Essex County's current armorial bearings were granted by the College of Arms on 15 July 1932, although the three seaxes were in use long before then. Indeed the earliest reference describing the arms of the East-Saxons was by the historian Verstegan in *"A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence"*, published in Antwerp in 1605. He wrote "Erkenwyne King of the East-Saxons did beare for his armes, three hand-seaxes argent, in a field gules".

It is possible that seaxes were originally chosen because of the obvious pun on the county name, which was "Eastseaxe" in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Puns were beloved of the



Present Essex County arms

Speed's Historie of Great Britaine 1623



Peter Muilman's History of Essex 1770

mediaeval heralds so this would have been quite normal. Though by the 12th / 13th century, no-one could remember what a seax looked like, so when being illustrated it developed into a scimitar-like blade, because these were regarded as foreign and exotic. The semi-circular notch hollowed out of the back of the blade was introduced to prevent it being confused with a scimitar.

It is an error to regard Essex as part of East Anglia, because the kings of the East Angles and of the East Saxons were always distinct. Middlesex and part of Hertfordshire did, however, belong to the East Saxon kingdom and that fact probably governed the choice of the arms of Middlesex, which are those of the parent county with the addition of a Saxon crown above the seaxes. Essex was if anything, more closely associated with Kent than with its northern neighbours and there is little doubt that Middlesex became dependent on Essex in the sixth or early seventh century.

In 1770, Peter Muilman, writing under the pseudonym "A Gentleman", published the first volume of his History of Essex, the frontispiece of which shows a female figure unrolling a map of the county. By her side is a shield on which the three seaxes look remarkably like fish-knives!

Another early representation of the Essex arms is found on the the fire plate of the Essex Equitable Insurance Society, established in Colchester in 1802. On the well preserved flag of the Third Regiment of the Essex Local Militia, is a shield with three curved swords, but without the notches. Above the shield is an eastern crown obviously intended for a Saxon one. This regiment was formed in 1809 and survived until 1817, when for all practical purposes the local militia ceased to exist. A print of Braintree market (1826) shows seaxes shaped like cutlasses. Similar weapons, though less graceful in design, are seen in the sheriff's official stamp used from about 1850 to the present day.

CORONATION DAY AT MALDON UNION HOUSE

George V's Coronation Day, 22 June 1911, was celebrated throughout the country, no more so than in Maldon where there were great festivities, parades, speeches, decorated carnival floats, sporting events and a special edition of the "*Maldon Advertiser*" complete with a free picture of the Mayor and Mayoress, Corporation and Officials.

According to the local newspaper, even the local workhouse (now St Peter's Hospital) was not omitted from the celebrations :

"The inmates were well cared for, the Guardians having made provision for extra fare etc. For breakfast ham and eggs were provided. In the interval between breakfast and dinner each adult received a pint of ale or mineral waters. Every man received an ounce of tobacco, and every woman two ounces of tea and half a pound of sugar. Sweets and mineral water were dispensed to the children who also joined with the school children in the day's festivities. For dinner, roast lamb or beef with green peas and new potatoes were served, followed by rhubarb, jam tarts or rice pudding.

"The peas (six sacks) were kindly sent by Samuel Ratcliff, one of the Guardians: the "shelling" of the peas took twenty men a whole day. Cake and jam were the extras for tea. At the conclusion of the meal, "God save the King" was sung.

"In the afternoon all (except the able-bodied (sic) and sick) had the opportunity of going out to see the decorations, amusements, etc. In the infirmaries, artificial flowers of red, white and blue were displayed in the wards. From the turret above the clock floated the Union Jack, subscribed for by the officers. The entrance gates and dining hall were also suitably decorated for the occasion.

"Another pint of ale or mineral waters, was allowed each adult on the following day.

"The whole house staff cheerfully seconded the Master and Matron, Mr and Mrs W H White, in making the day one to be marked "red" in the inmates' calendar."

If this "largesse" was considered to be so magnificent that it should be marked as a "red-letter day" for the inmates, what were their normal diet and conditions like? And if neither the "able-bodied nor the sick" were permitted the opportunity of going out to see the celebrations, just who was allowed out? Ed.

Maldon District Museum Association

Registered Charity 301362

President - Mr Derek Maldon Fitch
Vice Presidents - Mr L. F. Barrell
- Mrs B. Chittenden

Committee - to A. G. M. 2008

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Hon. Secretary	*Jenny Sjollema*	[redacted]
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Please note that the opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors, and not necessarily agreed by the Association.

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