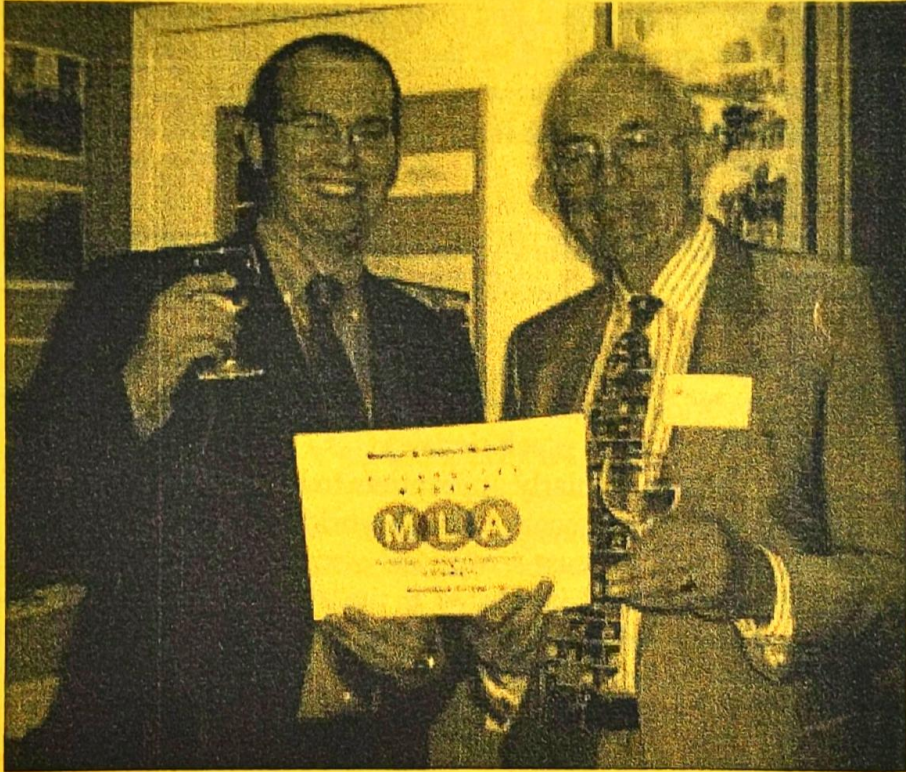


# THE PENNY



# FARTHING

The Maldon District Museum Association Newsletter



## We've Made It !

Sam Rowlands (left) from the East of England MLA presents Maldon Museum Chairman, Paddy Lacey, with the coveted Certificate of Accreditation.

*See story page 2*

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## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

It never ceases to amaze me how the Museum open season which appears to stretch for ever, suddenly comes to an end and work for the new season must begin. The 2007 season has been a very happy one with two successful events held in our courtyard and the gaining of accreditation. My thanks for this must first go to all the stewards, whose work is so much appreciated by our visitors as evidenced by the remarks in our visitors' book. Particular thanks must go to Christine Steel, who drew up and administered the stewards' rota, which is by no means an easy task as adjustments are bound to be necessary as the season progresses.

As Christine also stewards herself she is well aware of all the problems that can arise from only having notes in the cash float to hitches with the sometimes temperamental alarm.

My personal highlight, apart from our ten years in the park celebrations, was the visit over two evenings by the Heybridge cubs. Nearly 100 cubs and their leaders attended and seemed to enjoy their visit very much indeed. The remark in the visitors' book, "WICKED" says it all. It was particularly appropriate to host their visit in the year that the scout movement celebrated its centenary. The Heybridge packs had recently lost their regular meeting place and are, at least temporarily, moving to 'Prances' the Wickham Bishops scout camp. They were most interested in the story of Miss Edith Prance, featured in our Maldon Heroes display, as it was this remarkable woman who gave her bungalow and surrounding land to the scouts.

Now to appeals for help, with accreditation achieved we are in an excellent position to apply for substantial grants to improve our facilities and displays, but the procedures for application are time-consuming and extra help is needed both to process the application and lead the projects for which funds are sought. Can you help in any way? Betty Chittenden has soldiered on as our acting Treasurer but would really like to retire from the post. Is there anybody with financial skills that could come to our aid? Similarly one of our major achievements is the production of this magazine that has won many plaudits. Tony Mandara has produced the past 14 editions alone and now could do with some help. We should very much like to appoint an assistant editor or editors to help Tony (full training will be given). Finally a schools liaison officer is needed to promote the museum to local schools and arrange for them to visit the Museum.

Very best wishes to all members and stewards for 2008!

*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.

Tel: (01621) 840056

**Last Date for copy for Spring Issue 14 February**

# WE'VE MADE IT!

We are up there with the Big Boys

*See photo on front cover*

After rigorous inspection Maldon Museum has finally achieved the Certificate of Accreditation, which means that we have reached the national standards of museum quality. Presenting the award, Sam Rowlands of the East of England Museum, Libraries and Archives Association congratulated all concerned for their considerable hard work and dedication in achieving this national accolade for administration, care of visitors and for our collection.

Paddy Lacey, Maldon Museum's Chairman, replied that it was great to be up there with the British Museum and the V & A. He went on to thank all those who had worked so hard to achieve these standards, particularly Betty Chittenden our Acting Treasurer, Judy Betteridge our Accessions Officer and Tony King, a young History Graduate from Heybridge who is now working for a higher degree in Museum Studies.

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## A triple celebration

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The award was presented at the Museum's celebrations of its relocation to the Promenade Park in 1997. The event took place at the Museum on Saturday 8th September and was a very special one for the Maldon Museum Association, which as well as celebrating the Award of Accreditation and our 10th anniversary at Promenade Park, also marked the retirement of Derek Maldon Fitch as our President.

It was a most perfect evening for the event when 72 members and invited guests gathered in the courtyard which looked splendid. All of the weeds and excessive shrub growth had been removed during the previous week with the exception of a solitary sun flower that had been left viewing the scene.

Maldon District Council had once again loaned their protective tent and tables which had been decorated

with floral arrangements from the skilled hands of Liz Willsher. The food had been provided by Judy Betteridge, Molly Middleton, Christine Steel, Margaret Simmonds, Pam Lacey and Chris Brewster. It had been splendidly laid out and looked most attractive. A supply of wines and soft drinks was provided and the bar was expertly run by Rick Betteridge and Pam Lacey.

On a further table there was a display of raffle prizes, perhaps the most desirable of which was a fruit bowl made from many different woods turned by our expert, Charlie Middleton. The raffle was run with great charm by Betty Chittenden and Ena Phillips.

Paddy Lacey welcomed the guests who included Cllr

Mrs Young, Vice Chairman of the District Council, The Town Mayor and Mayoress, Cllr John and Mrs Lynn Almond, the Town Clerk Mrs Theresa Byles and Renate Simpson, wife of our first President Arthur Simpson.

Paddy thanked the District Council for allowing our use of Promenade Lodge as the local social history museum for the past decade. He greeted some of the original workers at the Museum, the "aborigines" who were present including Len Barrell, the principle administrator at the time, Brian Day who did much of the original carpentry and Merle Pipe, who arrived on cue to receive thanks for her special contribution which has continued throughout our time at the prom - the unique scrapbooks that give so much pleasure to many of our visitors, who tend to get lost in Room 8 devouring their contents.



## We've Made It

Continued from page 2

Paddy then mentioned two key members who have sadly died in recent times: Mike Bennett, whose contribution and amazing craftsmanship has shaped the museum, and Ray Brewster whose enthusiastic presence is much missed. Two other names of persons who had laid foundations that continue to govern the development of the museum were mentioned, Judy Tullett whose display skills had contributed to its unique style and Penny Cook, both for her help with display and for her record keeping behind the scenes. A toast to the continued health of the museum was drunk.

Finally Paddy made a presentation to our retiring President, Derek Maldon Fitch in appreciation of his continuing interest in all aspects of the museum's work.

The raffle was drawn and the prizes presented by Betty and Ena who had worked so hard, after which, Sam, Derek and Paddy were led away by representatives of the local press for interviews and photographs.

All who were able to attend enjoyed a remarkable and joyful evening - and now on to the next ten years!

\*

## Maldon schooner involved in worst ever Lifeboat disaster

Britain's worst lifeboat catastrophe occurred when its gallant crew tried to save a Maldon vessel. In Yorkshire on the morning of 9th February 1861 the Whitby lifeboat was launched in a fierce north-easterly gale to come to the aid of the schooner *Gamma* which was being driven ashore about 400 yards from the west pier. This was the age when the only propulsion for a small boat in such conditions was by oars and the lifeboat crew, under the command of John Storr, rowed valiantly through churning seas to rescue the *Gamma's* crew of four.

No sooner had she returned to base than the lifeboat was again launched to assist the barque *Clara*, which was being forced towards the beach. This time she succeeded in saving the crew of eleven.

At one o'clock in the afternoon the brig *Utility* and the schooner *Roe* were driven ashore. Again the lifeboat battled the fury of the waves to save both crews.

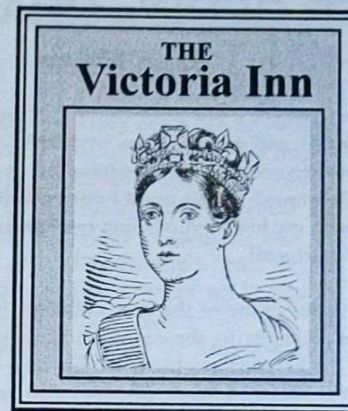
Soon after the lifeboat was launched a fourth time, this time to go to the aid of the coal-laden Maldon schooner *Merchant*, which with its bulwarks and boat smashed and her storm jib blown away, was swept ashore to the north of the harbour entrance. The crew took to the rigging as heavy seas made a complete breach over the vessel. Sadly this time tragedy struck, as the by now exhausted, lifeboat crew tried to reach the stricken ship. As they reached the end of the pier two waves broke under the lifeboat which caused it to capsize. Of the 13 lifeboat crew only one survived, Henry Freeman - and it was his very first day in the job! He was only saved because, unlike the rest of the crew, he was wearing a new type of cork lifebelt. Freeman was later awarded the R.N.L.I.'S silver medal for his gallantry that day and went on to serve as a lifeboat man for the next forty years.

After this tragedy the R.N.L.I. decided to replace the Whitby lifeboat with a self-righting vessel as all of the station's previous lifeboats had not been self-righting.

As to the fate of the ill-fortuned *Merchant* and her crew nothing more is known. She had been built at Monkwearmouth, Sunderland, in 1840 and owned there before becoming a Maldon ship in the 1850's.

## 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.



Queen Victoria did not ascend to the throne until 1837 when she was 18 years old. However because she was already so highly regarded by the British Public, "The Hoy" public house at Fullbridge had already changed its name to the "Victoria Inn" some five years before. The pub which was opened in 1707 was no stranger to name changes as it had already been called "The Blue Anchor" then "The Swan" before becoming "The Hoy".

Victoria, born Alexandrina Victoria at Kensington Palace on 24 May 1819 was fifth in line to the throne. Following her father's death when she was just eight months old, she was brought up by her mother and her governess, Baroness Lehzen. She also enjoyed a close relationship with her uncle Leopold, first king of the Belgians.

British people were delighted when she became queen, a graceful and youthful successor to some rather dubious kings. Meeting Leopold's nephew Albert in 1839 she fell in love with him and following their marriage he became her close political advisor.

She became mother to nine children between 1841 and 1857, but following Albert's death in 1861 she withdrew from London life almost entirely, preferring country houses, especially Balmoral and Osborne on the Isle of Wight, both of which they had designed together.

During the expansion of the British Empire, the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, declared her Empress of India in 1876. Great celebrations were held to mark her Golden and Diamond Jubilees (1887 and 1897). She died at Osborne House in January 1901, and was buried with her beloved Albert at Frogmore, near Windsor. A keen poet, Britain's longest reigning monarch also kept a diary almost all her life.





## ST. CEDD'S CHATLINE

By Liz Willsher

We are now thoroughly autumnal and enjoying the wonderful spectacle of leaf colour against a bright blue sky. Halloween and Guy Fawkes have left us relatively unscathed and we now turn our thoughts to Christmas! At this point I must admit that I will be absent for 6 weeks from 7th December, with my husband, visiting our family in Australia. Therefore my own "Seasonal Greetings" to you all.

For the St Cedd's team this is a busy time of the year although the Museum is closed for the winter. New displays and changes to the souvenir shop layout are passing from discussion stage to reality and the practical problem solving now begins. At St Cedd's we are checking and storing items returned from display, also researching and locating suitable items for new displays. It is an exciting time, but quite physically demanding as a bit of clambering and balancing on one leg is required in our rather cramped store. (Not a pretty sight!)

We at St Cedd's like to think that we have a range of skills (even acrobatic skills - see above!) combining together to make an effective team in which we all play a useful role. One member who deserves particular mention is Julia, who has worked consistently with the computer system to bring it into the 21st Century and make it a really useful tool. We now have the capability of searching on the system for specific items by individual identity or category. This facility now covers a large part of the collection and will eventually include everything we have. It will help to avoid the situation of wondering whether to accept, for example, another mincer or gas mask. A check will reveal the items we already have and a polite refusal can be made if appropriate. It goes without saying that Julia is our youngest team member and is therefore from the generation that regards the computer with less trepidation than the rest of us here.

Most of the Museum Association members will be familiar with the beautiful Maldon East Railway station layout in the museum, expertly made by the late Geoff Albury. His family have been in touch and generously expressed a wish to donate the model, plus some extra pieces, to the Museum. There are also two model sailing barges made by Geoff, which they wish to donate. We are very grateful for the offer and pleased also that Mr Albury's son Chris recently visited the museum, and saw for the first time, the model railway layout.

You will be reading this some time in December, or maybe later for the overseas members, so the following greeting is from us all at St Cedd's.

Best wishes for a Peaceful and Happy Christmas from Judy, Betty, Julia, Margaret and myself (Liz).

## SECRET ARMY RE-VISITED

In the Spring 2006 edition of *Penny Farthing* we told the remarkable story of Britain's Secret Army during the early days of the Second World War. Fresh information has now come to light about Maldon's own role in this "army", thanks to Terry Broome whose uncle was once a member.

Known as 202 Battalion, this secret army was created in the Summer of 1940 when an invasion of these shores was fully imminent. Comprising 20 auxiliary units, composed of volunteers from the Local Defence Volunteers (later to become the Home Guard), they were intended to be our last line of defence in the event of a German invasion.

Each auxiliary unit was organised into dozens of small cells each of five to eight men, and there were 70 such cells from Southend to Cromer.

They were not expected to hold off the full might of the German Wehrmacht, but instead to wage a guerilla war in the enemy's rear. At the first sign of an invasion they were to go to ground in secret hide-outs (one such hidden lair was concealed in the ruins of Beeleigh Mill, Maldon), until after the first wave of the enemy had overrun the area, then to emerge and commit acts of sabotage and kill lone German troops, sowing panic and confusion.

Specially trained, these men were essentially volunteering to commit suicide as their life expectancy once they emerged from hiding was less than three weeks!

Thanks to Terry Broome, *Penny Farthing* is now able to reveal the names of the seven brave heroes from Maldon who were prepared to fight to their

last breath to defend our country. Terry tells us that his uncle, William Robert Broome, now aged 91, was one of the Beeleigh Mill cell. William who was a farm labourer at Marsh Farm, Beeleigh, during the war knew the area intimately - an essential attribute for anyone intending to operate undercover.

Day-to-day leader of the Beeleigh group was Sergeant J. A. Smith who worked as the canteen supervisor at Bentalls during the war. He had previously been a butcher on Market Hill (now the cobbler's shop) and his father had been known as the "Sausage King of Maldon". During the war the empty premises were used to store weapons and ammunition.

Corporal of the cell was Philip H. Markham of Markham's minerals and drinks company in Spital Road. The rest of



the would-be guerillas were H. W. Nightingale who is thought to have lived in Heybridge, G. F. Rose, E. F. Varley and T. Quilter from Cromwell Lane, reputed to be something of a local poacher (a very useful skill for living off the land). Beeleigh was one of several cells under the overall charge of the Group Commander, Lieutenant Tucker, from Danbury.

Like all volunteers for 202 Battalion, these men had to be capable of fending for themselves, with an intimate knowledge of the district and an ability to keep their mouths shut.

Security was of such paramount importance that members of a cell did not even know the identity or location of other groups in the same district. This is shown by the fact that William Broome and his younger brother, Frederick George (who once lived at Falls Cottage, Beeleigh) did not know that they were both members of the secret army and the same auxiliary unit until after the war.

Orders were passed covertly by use of dead-letter drops to be picked up by unknown couriers. Frederick, who was a member of the Latchingdon cell, was one such courier with an excellent 'cover' for being out and about. As a lorry driver he was ostensibly making bona fide deliveries.

At the end of the war the Beeleigh hideout was filled in and has only recently been rediscovered. It is now the subject of a preservation order and has yet to be fully excavated.

Only about 400 out of several thousand members of 202 Battalion are still alive and many, if not most, of its members remain unknown. No doubt the names of heroes of the Beeleigh Mill cell would have stayed a secret for ever had it not been William Broome's nephew telling us of his uncle's courage.

**Maldon Museum**  
**will open for the 2008 season on**  
**Easter Saturday March 22**  
**and close on Sunday 26 October**

## THE SECRET HEROES OF MALDON

William R Broome  
Frederick G Broome  
J A Smith  
Philip Markham  
H W Nightingale  
G F Rose  
T Quilter  
E F Varley  
Lt. Tucker

If readers have any additional knowledge about any of the above members of the Secret Army or are able to provide more information about the Beeleigh Mill Cell itself, *Penny Farthing* would be delighted to hear from you. It is only right that their names be preserved and honoured for posterity.



## MALDON'S ASTRONOMIC BENEFACTOR

*From an article by Frederic Vanson, published in Essex Countryside in 1979*

Cambridge, regarded as one of the world's leading centres in astronomical research, owes much of this reputation to a 17th century amateur astrologer from Maldon - Thomas Plume.

The history of astronomy is full of the names of men who, while they were in no sense professional observers of the heavens, contributed to the science as intelligent amateurs. In these days of giant optical and radio telescopes, the amateur can play little part in advancing the frontiers of science or contributing anything significant to the problems of cosmology. Nevertheless the amateur can play a useful role in making observations upon which the professional astronomer cannot spend time and money.

In its earlier days, the science owed an incalculable debt to the many amateurs who worked for its advancement. Thomas Plume falls into this category. It was he who founded the Plumian

Chair of Astronomy at Cambridge University and whose benefactions provided that ancient seat of learning with its now famous observatory. Incumbents of the Chair have included Sir George Biddell Airy who was responsible for the first public observatory in Cambridge, James Challis, Sir George Darwin (son of Charles Darwin), Sir Fred Hoyle and Sir Martin Rees.

Thomas Plume was born in Maldon in 1630 and baptised at All Saints on 18 August of that year. He was the second son of Thomas Plume, an alderman of the town, and was educated at Chelmsford Grammar School. He later went to Christ's College, Cambridge, matriculating in 1646. Thomas graduated as a BA in 1649 and an MA a little later. He was also to become a Bachelor of Divinity and Doctor of Divinity of the University.

On coming down, Plume entered the Church and was granted the living of

Greenwich in 1658. His patron was no less a person than Richard Cromwell, son of the Lord Protector. At Greenwich Thomas entertained the diarists Pepys and Evelyn. Pepys wrote in warm terms of "Dr. Plume's excellent sermons".

During his incumbency at Greenwich he came to know John Flamsteed, the first Astronomer Royal (known in the quaint terms of the day as Astronomical Observator to the King). This meeting marked the beginning of Plume's lifelong interest in astronomy.

Meanwhile he advanced further in the Church. By 1679 he was Archdeacon of Rochester, a post which he retained until his death in November 1704 in his seventy-fifth year. It was Flamsteed who introduced him to the famous *Cosmotheoros* of Huyghens, a work which fired his ardour for the science. Incidentally it is worthy of note how many men of the cloth

cont



have been enthusiastic astronomers, probably because for them, as for the psalmist:

*The heavens declare the glory of God  
And the firmament sheweth His handiwork ...*

Be that as it may, the reading of this book had profound consequences for the future of astronomy in this country and it led Plume to bequeath to his old university a sum sufficient to found a chair and to set up an observatory.

It may be worth detailing here that it was Christian Huyghens who first used a compound eyepiece in the telescope, while in theoretical astronomy he discovered a method to estimate the force needed to keep a body moving in a circle, a discovery which was to have profound results in the growth of planetary theory.

But to return to Plume. We do not have reason to suppose that he ever married, and at his death, his very considerable estate was divided between various charities and benefactions, including £200 to purchase tenements for the poor which later became the foundation of Maldon's workhouse, and his li-

of over 7,000 books was left to the town. He had previously financed a building on the site of St Peter's Church Nave (which had collapsed in 1665) to house this library, thus creating the second oldest lending library in England.

So far as astronomy is concerned it was greatly advanced by his bequest to Cambridge University for he directed that his money was to be employed in installing a new professor. A Chair of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy was established in 1707.

The observatory was at first rather inappropriately placed on the King's gate of Trinity College. Gradually during the ensuing century it fell into disuse and certain of the Plumian professors did very little work. However, in due course amends were made.

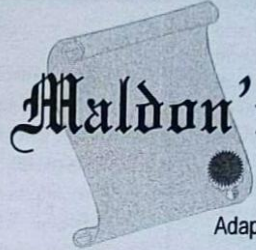
In 1882 a new observatory was built and equipped. Ever since then Cambridge has been a notable, indeed a famous centre of astronomical inquiry. None of this would have been possible without the benefactions of Thomas Plume.

## WELL WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

The three golden globes which denote a pawnbroker's premises date back to the 12th Century Italian money-lending family of the Medicis. Legend has it that a Medici killed a dragon using three sacks of rocks - symbolised by the three golden balls.

The nursery rhyme "Pop Goes the Weasel" refers to the practice of pawning one's possessions; a weasel being a shoemaker's tool and to "pop" is to pawn - That's the way the money goes ... pop goes the weasel.

Though not as common as years ago, there are a number of pawnbrokers still in business, though less than one per cent of British householders now use pawn shops to borrow an estimated £100 million a year. About 85 per cent of these customers pay back their loans and reclaim their goods. A third of these customers do not have bank accounts and half borrow money for day to day essentials such as food.



# Maldon's Royal Charter

Adapted from Maldon Octocentenary Souvenir Programme 1971

Anyone with a passing interest in the history of Maldon is aware that the town has a Royal Charter and that it is very old. Few however know much more than that about one of the town's most important historical documents.

On 7 October 1171, Henry II granted Maldon a Royal Charter, bestowing upon the town and its people particular rights and privileges, in exchange for which certain duties and obligations were owed to the Crown. It confirmed concessions which Maldon had enjoyed since before the Norman Conquest - the town's entry in the Domesday Survey of 1086 shows the town was already a place of some substance and importance.

Maldon's 1171 Charter is one of the earliest in Norman times and the first given to any Essex town. Colchester did not receive its first charter from an English King until 1189, while St Albans, Hertford and Bury St Edmunds among other ancient towns had no royal charter until the 16th and 17th centuries.

To appreciate the significance of the granting of a Charter it is necessary to go back more than a thousand years.

Maldon is a pre-Conquest royal borough which even then was claiming its status by prescriptive right. It enjoyed a high degree of independence, and within the following framework which was common to all medieval boroughs, it evolved its own customs. The townsmen governed through the Borough Court (headed by the town bailiffs or reeves), an institution to which considerable importance was attached, for no inhabitants might be impleaded (prosecuted) outside the Borough boundaries, thus freeing them from the obligation of attending Hundred courts, from the unwelcome and unpopular attentions of the Sheriff (the shire reeve), and even, in large measure from the jurisdiction of the royal courts. Originally the court comprised all the burgesses, but membership later became restricted to the leading, 'chieftest' or 'head' burgesses.

The inhabitants held their homes, tenement shops, etc, by 'burge' tenure, that is, by payment of a small fixed annual rent, and they could sell, divide or otherwise alienate their property as they wished, although in Maldon they were subject to the custom of Landcheap. This meant that anyone buying property within the borough had to pay a tax of one-sixteenth of the purchase price to the Borough Chamberlains (treasurers). Because they had the Crown as their overlord they paid their dues (mainly the annual fee farm rent) and taxes through the Borough reeve or bailiff direct to the Exchequer.

Generally the Crown showed itself to be an easy master, content to let the townsmen manage their own business provided they pay their dues with regularity. Nevertheless, all these privileges were at the pleasure of the Crown and at the death of a King, ancient boroughs naturally sought confirmation of such privileges from his successor.



The two original copies of Maldon's Charter, the town's and the one which would have been retained in the King's Chancery, are now lost. However, the text is known as it was reproduced when the Charter was re-issued at the beginning of Edward III's reign in 1290.

The Charter was granted at a time when mounting tensions and the political pressures bearing on his government in the middle years of his reign had caused Henry to re-arm. It was sealed when he was at Pembroke on his way to join his army in Ireland. Held up by adverse weather conditions Henry spent the time dealing with other state business, including Maldon's Charter with members of his entourage acting as witnesses.

Henry II, who had ascended to the throne on the death of King Stephen in 1154 was thirty-eight in 1171. Concerned about potential insurrection against his rule in Norfolk and Suffolk and the danger of invasion from the Continent, Henry had already embarked on a re-armament programme and a strengthening of defences in the south east. These included reinforcing the motte-and-bailey at Rayleigh Mount, at Ongar to guard the approaches to London and at Orford to prevent invasion from the sea.

Maldon was also a defensive strongpoint against sea attack. Its Saxon burgh (an earth work

of an earlier design to motte-and-bailey), was manned and ready to face an insurgent army march into Essex from the north or attempt to land on the coast. It is this circumstance that may explain why Maldon secured its Charter, for the King bestowed his charters sparingly. Maldon, a town performing military as well as naval services for the Crown, was in fact one of only three towns to be favoured in this way in this part of eastern England throughout Henry II's reign. Maldon too was a king's town; Domesday Book records that all the houses of the burgesses, some 180 of them, were owned by the King.

William de Mandeville, at whose request the Charter was granted, was the owner of the great stronghold of Pleshey in the centre of Essex, one of the largest of all Norman motte-and-bailey earthworks and still to be seen today. He was a grandson of Geoffrey de Mandeville who, after the Conquest, acquired some 12,000 acres in Essex, and was to be a lifelong friend of King Henry.

The principal benefits accruing to the burgesses of Maldon under the Royal Charter were exemption, when trading outside the borough, from payment of certain charges that would normally be demanded by other authorities; sac and soc, or the right to administer their own justice. They were exempt from toll

Be it known all Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Earls, Barons, Justices, Sheriffs, Foresters, and all Ministers and Judges, Saluting you that I, Henry, by the Grace of God, King of England, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine and Count of Anjou, On the petition of William de Mandeville, Earl of Essex, have granted, and by this my present Charter do confirm to the Burgesses of Maldon and their successors all their lands and possessions, and their tenements which they hold for me within and without the Borough, to the extent of the boundaries of the said Borough, namely Hylespet, Morisbroc, Limburne, Willinebroc, Duherne, Duherne, Cravenha, Flincroft. To hold and to have for ever free and quiet with sac and soc, tol and team, nam and infangthef, graff, hamsoc and blodwyte, fyhtwote, and grethbreg, ordell and orestall and flemenestret, with all their liberties and free customs, for their own benefit, and in peace, freely, quietly, fully and honourably in lands, in waters, in houses, in messuages, in rents, in marshes, in pastures, in high-and-byeways, and in all places and in all things, to the aforesaid tenements, belonging to the service of free burgage. Wherefore I will and formerly command that the aforesaid burgesses and their successors may be free and quit of the counties and forests and of the lets (actions) and suits of counties and forests and of the espleafing of summonses of aids and pleads and plaints and americiaments of foresters, sheriffs, and all their bailiffs and ministers and of all exactions which to them or to their bailiwick belong. Also I grant that they shall be quit of murder, of danegelt, of hidage, of carriage, of summage, of scutage, of fallage, of stallage, of lastage and of all toll in every market and in all fairs, and in every passing both of bridges and ways both by sea and throughout our whole realm, of works of castles and pits of parks, bridges and causeways, and of all other works And every kind of foreign service except one ship, which when necessary that I should personally have, or send to the army for the affairs of the state, they shall provide for my service, being summoned by my letters at a certain day and place, for 40 days, at their own proper expense, as they did in the time of King Henry, my grandfather. And therefore I prohibit anyone in any wise causing any molestation, or contumely, or grievance or vexation, or any disturbance to them, against the liberty of my Charter, upon pain of forfeiture of £10.

These Being Witnesses

Reginald Earl of Cornwall, (Roger) Earl of Clare, Roger Wigod, William son of Adelin, Aliveredus of St Martin, Hugo of Gunderiche, Robert son of Berward, William Rufus

Dated at Pembroke on the 7th Day of October



by sea and throughout the realm, and along all highways and over all bridges. Similarly they were free of stallage (the charge for selling from stalls outside fairs and markets) and of lastage (a port duty based on quantity for the loading of a ship).

Maldon's burgesses, with those of certain other towns, were a very select group whose carts and pack horses might attend inland markets and pass through market towns, and whose shipmasters might enter other ports and

buy and sell, free of toll. Not only the wealthier burgesses directly concerned, but those engaged in subsidiary businesses or employment enjoyed advantages.

In return for his mark of favour the King required Maldon to provide at its own expense, a ship at his command.

A Royal Charter was something that might promote mercantile prosperity and means of livelihood and provided safety and defence.

ABOVE:

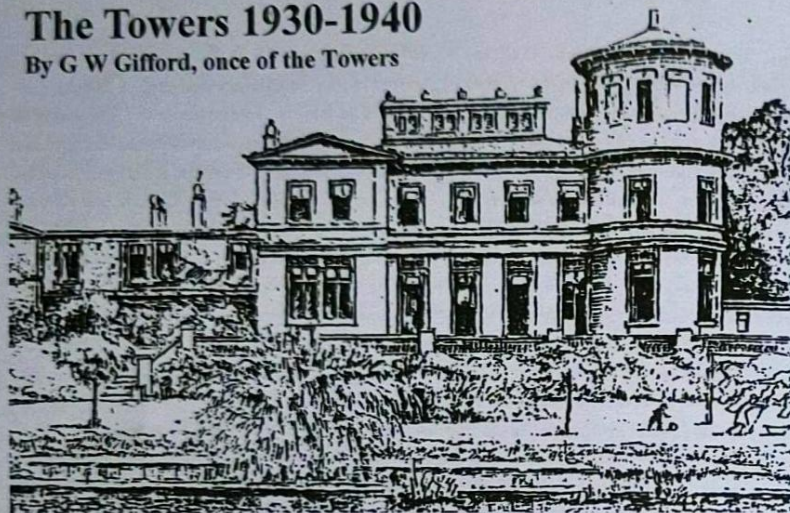
Henry II's original Royal Charter of 1171 was in Latin. The translation above was published at the turn of the 20th century by the late Alderman E A Fitch, a distinguished Mayor of Maldon and a noted historian who produced the highly regarded history book "Maldon and the River Blackwater".

Some of the strange terms following 'sac and soc' in the second paragraph of the translation perhaps need some clarification. For instance, 'blodwyte and fyhtwote' means 'shedding of blood and fighting'; 'grethbreg' is 'breaches of the peace'; 'flemenestret' is harbouring a person sentenced to banishment.



# The Towers 1930-1940

By G W Gifford, once of the Towers



The Towers from 1930 up to 1940 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 Ely, Cambridgeshire.

My father William Gifford was appointed Superintendent and my mother was the Matron; they had to ensure the smooth running of the home in general, the staff consisting of twelve maids including one chef or cook, an assistant maid, the rest being

domestics, mostly living in. At one time three gardeners attended the twelve acres of gardens and kept animals, plus a very large kitchen garden to help keep the home self-sufficient. My father even generated the electricity supply.

The house was two storeys high but the tower to the main house was three storeys 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 the 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 they 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, ducks 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 to top-left of this was a miniature putting green, very difficult as it was partly on a slope; above this was 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 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

## THE TOWERS

"The Towers", a magnificent mansion which once stood in Colchester Road, Heybridge, opposite the Plantation Hall Community Centre, was built in 1873 by Edward Hammond Bentall (1814-1898). It was designed by the Chelmsford Architect Charles Pertwee, but it incorporated many of Bentall's own ideas, notably heating by hot air ducts and vents. The house, in an Italianate style, was built with large reinforced concrete blocks and was supposed to have been the first concrete house in Europe. It cost £65,000, a considerable sum in those days.

Artistic decorators and craftsmen were shipped over from Italy to authenticate the interior decor. Set in a beautiful landscaped garden, complete with lake and a large cylindrical bird tower built amongst fir trees, the whole estate, approximately 10 acres, had its own entrance gate house and was surrounded by a 12ft high boundary wall.

It was converted into 16 flats in 1950 and in the late fifties the whole estate was obliterated to make room for the present housing development. The gate-house is all that now remains of this once imposing edifice.

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 its subsequent demolition. I wonder how much, in its prime condition, it would be worth these days, for when it was built it cost more than £50,000?

———— \* ————



# Maldon's Historic Churches



## St. James', Dengie

Just south of Tillingham, in the rural remoteness of the Dengie peninsula, lies St James' Church serving a thinly populated parish of approximately 150 inhabitants. It is surrounded by fields leading to marshes and beyond them the North Sea, which at high tide, can just be seen in the far distance. From the church porch the River Crouch may also be seen, as can Kent on a clear day.

St. James is a Grade 2 listed building. Its walls, with angled buttresses on the east and south sides, are built from pebble rubble, septoria flint and 14th century yellow brick. There are also traces of Roman brick, probably salvaged from the Roman Fort of Orthona at Bradwell some five miles away. The dressings are of limestone and the roof is red tile.

The earliest record of the church is 1194 when Walter Decane Di Dansega is believed to have become its first incumbent. Some think that his name was the origin of the place name Dengie. However the area was already known as the Island of Dene's People when it was given by William the Conqueror to the Bishop of Bayeux for his support during the Norman Conquest in 1066.

Substantially rebuilt in the 14th century, although some part of the walls of the nave may be of a much earlier date, the church became very dilapidated during the 1800's and was not restored until the late 19th century, when the bellcote was rebuilt and the vestry and porch added.

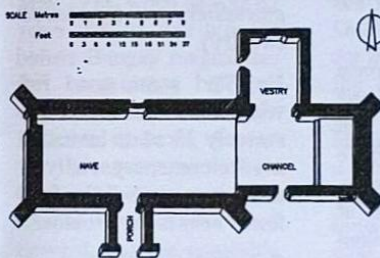
The scissor-braced roof of the chancel is 19th century with head stops to the north and

south windows. It was badly damaged in the 1987 hurricane when a tree was blown down onto it. As the church was uninsured for storm damage, it was only with the help of many organisations, together with a legacy and local fundraising, that it was completely restored using tiles replicating the original roof pattern.

The chancel's east window is 19th century, except for 14th century rear splays and re-set rear arch of three cusped lights with quatrefoils (four-lobed decorative openings), over two centre-arched windows. In the north wall is what was once a large window, now blocked with re-used 14th century material and a smaller 19th century window set into it with a similarly aged archway to the side.

In the south wall are two windows. The western one, which is set low in the wall, is 19th century, except for the splays and arch which are possibly 14th century. Between the windows is a 19th century doorway that incorporates older stones in the joints and rear arch.

The chancel contains an ornately carved stone reredos (carved screen behind the altar), designed by the Rev. E Warminton M.A., who was rector from 1874 - 1920. The three central panels with trefoiled side panels contain illuminated panels, painted by Miss Warmington.



Incorporated in the reredos are a piscina (stone basin for washing sacred vessels) and a canopied sedilia (seats for the clergy) to the north and south walls.

The south wall of the nave, which has a 19th century cant roof, is buttressed at right angles. In the north wall are two 14th century windows partly restored, each of two trefoiled lights with tracery.

Between them is a much restored doorway of the same period (now blocked).

The pulpit is 19th century with an octagonal stem and traceried panels, while the pew ends are carved with poppy heads. The flooring throughout is polygonal brick.

There is a gabled porch with angled buttresses and a moulded pointed segment arched doorway sidelights of three ogee lights.

During the 19th century a bellcote was added to the western end of the nave at its gable apex. It has a chamfered base of three carved corbels (blocks of stone projecting from below the roof eaves), two lions and a man supporting the two moulded arches. There are two bells, one dating from 1500.

In 1994 the bells and their supports were restored by local craftsmen and they are now rung before every service. At the same time as the bells were repaired a spike was discovered which must once have held a weather vane so a new gold-plated one was added.

Directly opposite the main

door, on the north side of the nave, is a floor slab with indentures for brasses which are now framed on a wall board. These date from about 1520 and comprise five kneeling boys, two girls and a woman. There is no clue as to their identities.

St James' organ was probably built during the later part of the 19th century and, although it is in need of restoration, it is still in use.

A full list of the rectors of the parish, together with those of St Lawrence and Asheldham (now closed), are displayed inside the church at the west end. One of the most interesting was Nicholas Ashwell (1659-1661) appointed Rector by Richard Cromwell (Oliver Cromwell's son). He was described as:

*"This Ashwell who writes himself Rector of Dengie was an impudent intruder. He was a watchmaker by trade in Fleet Street. He comes with Dick's (Richard Cromwell's) broad seal for this place in May 1659 under a pretence for his loyalty to his Majestee..."* During his term of office *"There was a great neglect of registers"*.

It would appear that Ashwell was being rewarded for helping Cromwell's rebellion. On the restoration of Charles II he quickly lost his office by Act of Parliament.



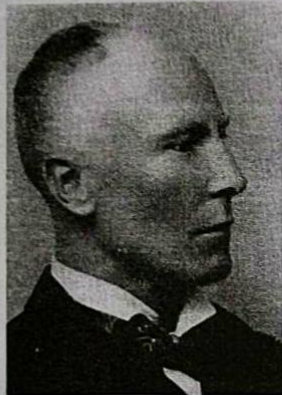
# A Very Dangerous Man to Know

Born in 1847 at Champion Lodge, Great Totham, Sir Claude Champion de Crespigny was, as an old man, described as "one of the pluckiest and hardest men in England, who could box, ride, walk, run, shoot, fence, sail, swim, and beat any man over 50."

Regarded as a courageous but dangerous man to know, he was a military adventurer, African explorer, boxer, steeple-chaser, bull fighter, big game hunter, all-round sportsman, a founder member of Maldon Golf Club and most notoriously - the public hangman's assistant! It is even claimed by some that Margery Allingham's fictional detective Albert Campion is loosely based on him.

The de Crespigny family was of Norman/Huguenot descent, but the title was fairly recent, having been awarded to Sir Claude's great-grandfather in 1805 by the Prince Regent, after he had spent a pleasant weekend at Champion Lodge. Sir Claude was therefore only the 4th Baronet.

He started his adult life as a sailor, before switching to soldiering and eventually



Sir Claude  
Champion de Crespigny  
1847 - 1935

becoming an early pioneer of aviation, cruising the skies in a balloon.

He is reputed to have once swum 250 yards in the ice-cold Blackwater in pursuit of a fox. His fame as a steeplechase jockey was country-wide, and at an advanced age, he walked forty-five miles from Champion Lodge to the Grand Hotel in London for a two-and-sixpenny bet. Furthermore he was an audacious sailor, thinking nothing of sailing across the Channel with his son in a small boat.

At the age of 15 he became a sailor aboard Britain's first ironclad battleship, *H.M.S. Warrior*, now preserved at Portsmouth.

From 1865 to 1870 he held a commission in the 60th Rifles, later the Hussars (yeoman cavalry) and later held a militia command.

Crespigny loved a fight or a war, and he never much minded whose war it was.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 seemed to him "a capital opportunity to see a little service abroad". So he went to France, calmly walked through the lines and attached himself to a German regiment of cuirassiers (armoured cavalry).

He "had some good fun with the Prussians, but scarcely liked to overstay my welcome, especially as there was very little food for so very many mouths."

So he left the Prussian army the same way as he had walked in, although he had trouble persuading the French that he was not German.

In 1905 he travelled to East Africa for a little big-game shooting. He arrived, as he later wrote "just in time to join the Sotik punitive expedition," so combining "a certain amount of fighting with some excellent sport.

When he could not find a war the noble old sport was quite prepared to make do with a bout of fisticuffs. He once went one and a half hours with a Thames waterman, breaking a finger in the first ten minutes of the fight. Yet the odds were three and four to one on Sir Claude when the police stopped the fight.

On the down side he was often too quick with his fists and "up before the beak" (magistrate) on a number of occasions, for assault. Other injured parties were bought off.

Neither did age improve the baronet's temper, for in May 1914, when he was 67 years old, he was brought before Bungay magistrates for assaulting Police Constable Frederick Caxton. Both had been on duty at the local races when Caxton tried to prevent Sir Claude (who was a race steward, but the constable did not know that) crossing the course after the race had commenced. He laid a hand on the baronet's arm and was promptly rewarded with several sharp blows to the face, some very strong language, then several more blows in the face. Sir Claude pleaded "Not Guilty" but was convicted and fined £20 or two months in prison plus £5 costs, a not inconsiderable fine at that time.

There is no doubt that had Sir Claude not been a baronet then his punishment would have been far more severe.

Sir Claude shot tigers in India, rhinos in Africa, wild turkeys in Florida and wild boar in Spain. In fact there was little wildlife he was not prepared to shoot, but his favourite occupation was hunting the fox in the east Essex countryside. It was here, close to his home at Great Totham, that he made his first celebrated solo kill.

On 19th February 1881, there was a bitterly cold east wind and it was misty and damp. The fox ran for Goldhanger Creek where the hounds were checked at the water's edge. The fox was spotted about three hundred yards out sitting on a little grassy island. Without further ado the bold baronet threw off his coat and plunged into the icy water, followed by a half a dozen of the hounds.

On reaching the island there was a scuffle and all fell off. The hounds managed to get back on, but Sir Claude and the fox were engaged in combat. A few moments later Sir Claude surfaced, holding a very dead fox triumphantly aloft.

In 1882 Sir Claude took to the air. In this, as in all else

he undertook, he was contemptuous of danger. "So great," he wrote, "is the dread entertained by some people of exposing themselves to the slightest danger of accident - though the same persons often think nothing of leading the most unhealthy lives, or destroying their digestion and shattering the whole nervous system by almost every means in their power - that it is easy to understand the abhorrence with which ballooning is regarded in some quarters."

However it was Sir Claude's ambition to fly the Channel. He persuaded a friend called Simmons to bring his balloon to Maldon and here, on 10th June 1882, in a field behind the gasworks at the bottom of the High Street, they inflated it. Though warned by Simmons of a dangerous crosswind, de Crespigny insisted on taking off, having first jettisoned his sister Agnes, in favour of her weight in ballast which Simmons much preferred.

Disaster came almost at once. Some of the rope handlers forgot to let go and the basket hit a nearby wall, breaking Sir Claude's leg and crushing another man. While de Crespigny lay flat on his back in the field, having been thrown from the basket, Simmons shot skywards towards France.



arriving ninety minutes later at Arras, 170 miles away.

A year later, having recovered from his broken leg, Sir Claude made another attempt to become airborne. This time he was more successful, and on 1st August 1883, he and Simmons left Maldon in a rubber balloon, arriving in Holland sometime later.

For this exploit de Crespigny was awarded a medal, but again he'd had to urge Simmons into the air. "He had a laudable desire to live a little longer ... The threatening course of our pilot balloon seemed to indicate that there would be every probability of his desire in this respect being unaccomplished," de Crespigny wrote.

Sir Claude's prophesy was to be sadly fulfilled, when in 1888, Joseph Simmons was killed as his balloon crashed into trees at Ulting.

In addition to these exploits Sir Claude de Crespigny swam the Nile Rapids, rode the winner in the Indian Grand National and is reputed to have saved several people from drowning. A friend even suggested that he had once offered to cross Niagara Falls on a tightrope!

In 1871 he was made bankrupt and brought an unsuccessful action against his

father's estate, in an effort to get the money to buy a commission in the army.

1886 saw perhaps Sir Claude's most notorious escapade. Under the pseudonym of Charles Maldon he became an assistant to the public hangman and was present at a triple hanging at Carlisle prison. This led to an outcry, with Sir J Pease M.P. (later the member for Saffron Walden), quizzing the Home Secretary as to whether the Home Office approved of "amateur hangmen." He was told that the conduct of executions was not within the government remit, but were the responsibility of the High Sheriff of the County concerned.

Magazines such as "Punch", "France" and "Truth" had great fun with such characters as Lord Fitz-throttle. A reporter who asked Sir Claude if he was not stepping out of his social class by becoming a hangman was told "I have a great dislike of ordering people to do things I might have to do myself. It is within the bounds of possibility that I might be a High Sheriff within a number of years". Sir Claude also described the necessity for him to have the ability to supervise the way the sentence of the law

was carried out. "If I had muffed it and we had only half-hanged the fellows at Carlisle they might have kicked up a row, (whether he meant the condemned or the public is not clear) I did not do it out of any mercenary motive."

Sir Claude had served as a magistrate, and Deputy Lieutenant of the County before his death at the age of 88 years in 1935. To many people de Crespigny seemed foolhardy rather than courageous. Yet there was nothing bogus about him. He really did live dangerously and court death. In 1910 he wrote "indifference to danger in a good cause is absolutely essential. Could our ancestors, the makers of England, had they not been actuated by some principal such as this, have ever put together this great empire? For myself I declare it is necessary, unless we are to perish like the Romans in the lap of peace and luxury, that some of us should strive to keep alive the reputation which Englishmen have always had of great daring and suffering all things ..."

*This article has been compiled from the Essex Police Website and an article by Reginald Clarke in the April 1959, Essex Countryside Magazine, to whom acknowledgement is made.*

## Nostalgia for our Lady Readers of a Certain Age



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*From "The Best of Times"- Growing up in Britain in the 1950's by Alison Pressley published by Michael O'Mara Books Limited to whom due acknowledgement is made.*



# THE HIGGLERS COME TO MARKET

A "higgler" was an itinerant dealer or peddler. Over a hundred years ago most English market towns had higgler - middlemen who went round the farms buying up produce such as poultry, rabbits, eggs and cheese to sell in the market. They relieved the farmer of surplus produce so saving him having to attend the market himself, in return higgler supplied goods the household needed.

Some of the trade was done by barter rather than by money changing hands, but all of it involved haggling, which is where the name came from. Higgler is simply a variant spelling of haggler.

In 'The Surgeon's Daughter' (1827), Sir Walter Scott spoke of: "The labours of a higgler, who travels scores of miles to barter pins, ribbons, snuff and tobacco, against the housewife's private stock of eggs, mort-skins and tallow." (Mort-skins were the skins of a sheep or lamb that had died a natural death.)

In some places higgler had a bad reputation because they were thought to manipulate prices for their own benefit. *The Times* of 10 June 1800, reported a small scale revolt against them: 'A meeting was held at Poole, on Friday last, to take into consideration the propriety of the Inhabitants in general from refraining from the use of Butter, till the price is reduced to One Shilling a pound: when it was unanimously resolved by all present, not to purchase any till the price shall be so reduced, and even then to use it in their families with great economy and moderation ... and proper people are appointed to keep a constant watch on the Higgler on Market-day, who are the principal cause of the great prices of many of the necessaries of life'.

The word higgler still survives in the West Indies in the sense of a market trader, but appears to have died out everywhere else.

So if your surname is Higgler or Haggler there is a good probability that one of your ancestors was once a 'Higgler'. Similarly the surname Chapman is derived from that of itinerant traders who were known as cheapmen, so if your name is Chapman it is almost certain that one of your forebears was a peddler of cheap knick-knacks and baubles.

An Advertisement from the early 1900's



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### THE POWER OF ADVERTISING

In the last edition of *Penny Farthing* I asked if anyone had by any remote chance, a back copy of *Essex Country-side* for May 2001. As ebay had already been searched without success I really did not have much hope of obtaining the relevant magazine, but the day after my appeal appeared I received a call from *Penny Farthing's* previous editor, Len Barrell, who had just what I was looking for. Thanks Len.



# Maldon District Museum Association

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