

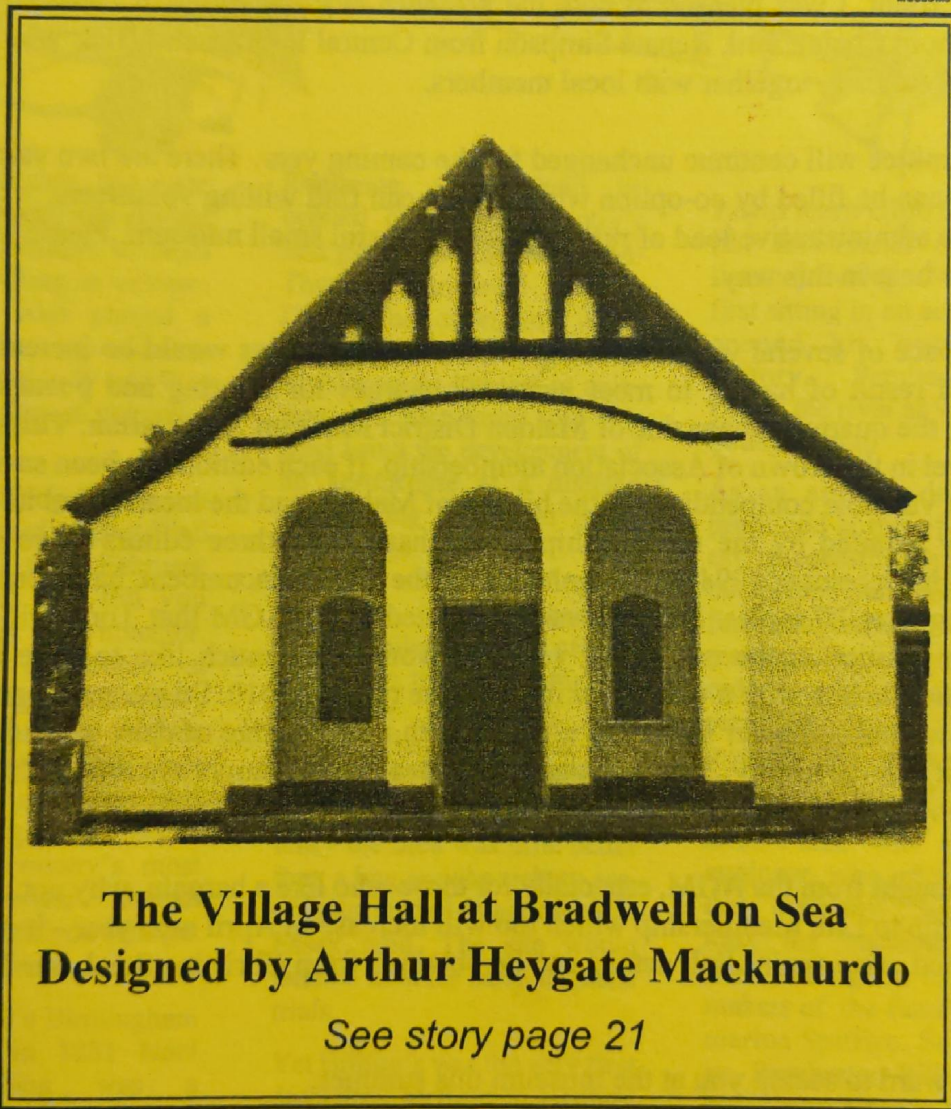


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The Maldon District Museum Association Newsletter



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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Hard on the heels of our AGM follows the summer version of the Chairman's Chat that must start with mention of this pleasant meeting held in the high-tec surroundings of the Swans' computer room. I was pleased to note the presence at the meeting of Dave Hedgecock, a member from Chelmsford, Renate Simpson from Central London and Nick Wickenden, our Curatorial Adviser, together with local members.

The Committee will continue unchanged for the coming year. There are two vacancies that, however, can be filled by co-option which, if we can find willing volunteers, would help to spread the administrative load of running our successful small museum. Please let me know if you can help in this way.

After a space of several years it was agreed that subscriptions would be increased as from 2010 as a result of having to meet increased charges for printing and postage of *Penny Farthing*, the quarterly magazine of Maldon District Museum Association. This publication is the jewel in the crown of Association membership. If each edition has been saved it makes up a most valuable compendium of the history of Maldon and the locality and its production is eagerly awaited by the membership. There have been three editors since it was first produced in December 1994 and Tony Mandara, the present incumbent, has been responsible for editing over 20 issues. Sadly it was announced at the AGM that Tony will be retiring from this position at the end of the year and would very much like to have a successor working beside him with a view to taking over the reins in 2010. So we are urgently seeking a person who is computer literate, preferably with a knowledge of desk-top publishing and an interest in local history. This is asking a great deal but it is important that the high standard set by Tony and his predecessors is maintained.

A final thought from the AGM, especially for those who like a bargain, why not convert your membership to Life Membership which too will increase in April next year - it will never be such a good price again! Full details can be obtained from Christine Steel, our Membership Secretary.

I look forward to seeing you at the museum this summer.

Very best wishes!

Paddy Lacey

Penny Farthing is dependent upon your contribution.

All articles, items, photos, comments and letters are welcome:

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SOUTH FAMBRIDGE'S AVIATION PIONEER

On 19th February this year (2009) a memorial was erected in South Fambridge to Noel Pemberton-Billing an extraordinary man who played a crucial role in early aviation and our survival in World War Two, yet is almost unknown today.

Pemberton-Billing I hear you ask? Never heard of him! Well neither had I until February this year, but if I tell you that he was an inventor, founded an aerodrome at South Fambridge, was an MP, organised a bombing raid on Zeppelin airship sheds, was involved in a notorious libel case and set up what was to become this country's most important pre-war aircraft company, I think you will get some idea of the man.

Born the son of a Birmingham iron founder in 1881 Noel Pemberton-Billing was a larger than life character. His varied career began at just 14 years of age when he ran away from home and worked his way aboard a sailing cargo boat to South Africa. There he had various jobs, bricklaying, tram-conductor and in the mounted police; becoming their boxing champion aged 16. He fought and was wounded in the Boer War.

Returning to England he opened one of the country's first garages at Kingston-upon-Thames, then went back to Durban for a short time. When he next returned to England he developed an interest in aviation, his first foray into this field being the development of an aerodrome at a disused engineering factory at South Fambridge in 1907. His thinking was so far ahead of his time that Pemberton-Billing failed to obtain official interest in the aerodrome and closed it after only nine months. Besides lack of official support the location of his airfield proved a major problem - the area was little better than a bog and the rickety aeroplanes tended to get mired in Essex mud. The site would later be used for early seaplane trials.

Yet Billing's was the very first dedicated airfield in Britain! An achievement which alone should have entitled him to a place in the history books.

After a brief spell selling property and passing his law exams, he next went into business buying and selling steam yachts. With the profits from this venture, plus his winnings of £500 from a wager that he would get his

Royal Aero Club Certificate (the fore-runner of a flying licence) within 24 hours of first sitting in an aeroplane, he opened his own aircraft factory, Pemberton-Billing Ltd on the river at Woolston in Southampton.

As an aircraft designer he produced some of the earliest successful flying boats, but the company soon ran into financial difficulties and he resigned from it in 1915 in order to pursue a political career. The company was taken over by the works manager Hubert Scott-Paine.

Scott-Paine was a talented engineer, who after renaming the company Supermarine, took the business forward, later selling it to Vickers, makers of the famous Supermarine Spitfire. So indirectly, Pemberton-Billing earned his second place in history for having helped save this country during the Battle of Britain.

In 1914 he was called up as a reserve officer in the Navy but maintained his interest in flying and helped organise a bombing raid on Zeppelin airships at their sheds near to Lake Constance.

CONT ➤

Winning a seat in Parliament on his second attempt in 1916 he became a controversial MP, and was famously tried for criminal libel in 1918. He was prosecuted as the result of an article he had published in his "Imperialist Magazine" (sometimes called the "Vigilante"), claiming the existence of a black book that listed the names of thousands of English men and women who were homosexuals and thus open to blackmail and a danger to national security.

The article also implied that Maude Allan, an American belly-dancer, who was due to appear in London in a production of Oscar Wilde's "Salome", was a lesbian. Pemberton-Billing inveigled against "Salome" as a play by a moral pervert (Wilde) consisting of degenerate sexual lust and unnatural passions. Seeing herself thus described Maud Allan brought a suit for criminal libel in what became known as the trial of the century.

The trial lasted for six days with Billing representing himself. Under cross examination he sprang a surprise attack against Maud, forcing her to admit that her brother had been executed in America for a series of sex murders likened to those of Jack the Ripper. He argued that this was evidence that sadism ran in her family.

Following long and confusing instructions from the judge, the jury returned a verdict in Billing's favour.

He retained his seat at East Hertfordshire until 1923 when he retired through ill-health. In spite of this he continued to design new aircraft throughout the 1930's, but none were ever

made a reality and he spent the following years trying out numerous schemes and ideas, but without gaining the success he craved.

One such idea was for a long playing record, his patent for it being bought by HMV, who promptly squashed it to prevent it being competition for their 78rpm records thus delaying the long playing record's entry into the market by 20 years. In all he lodged some 400 patents. It has been said that Pemberton-Billing was a visionary rather than an entrepreneur, lacking either the organisational or practical abilities to put his ideas into effect.

Noel Pemberton-Billing died at his home in Burnham on Crouch in 1948. His original factory building burnt down in the early 1960's and today Pemberton Field is a residential development, which you could pass without ever realising its significance, only the name giving any indication of its importance to aviation history.

For many years it was believed that Leysdown on the Isle of Sheppey was Britain's first airfield, but recent research has now established that South Farnbridge can fairly claim that honour and Pemberton-Billing was a true aviation pioneer.

Noel Pemberton Billing's obituary in the "Aeroplane" referred to him as "an adventurer of adventurers. The legitimate father of the Air Ministry and the RAF".

A LOCAL LAD WAS A MERRY OLD SOUL

We all know the nursery rhyme about Old King Cole with his pipe and his bowl and fiddlers three, but have you ever wondered what the story was behind the rhyme?

Because of the reference to his pipe, some believe that the rhyme must have been written after the introduction of tobacco to Europe in 1564. But it may in fact go back much further, to the early part of the first millennium and involve three local lads. At that time the pipe was much more likely to have been the double aulos, an ancient reed instrument, and the bowl was a type of drum. So could Old King Cole be the 'King of Music' the venerable leader of a quintet consisting of aulos, drum and fiddlers three? In addition the word 'coel' is the Gaelic word for music.

Or was Old King Cole a real person? We can find three candidates dating back to the Roman occupation who would fit the title, these were three rulers of Colchester known as the Kings of Cole - so perhaps King Cole was really the name of our area's earliest boy band?

TOLLESHUNT D'ARCY AN ESSEX VILLAGE OF OLD ENCHANTMENT

By James Wentworth Day
First published in Essex Countryside 1976
To whom all due acknowledgements are made

The Queen's Head, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, has kept its spirit and its soul unswayed. That is why it is my favourite pub. It is authentic to the last detail - a village pub as it ought to be. No fake horsebrasses. No Brummagem cheap-Jack gimmicks, no fairy lights or maddening juke-box. No recorded "music" for which you send a small thanksgiving. No gnomes or windmills and not even beer pumps. They draw the beer by hand from wooden barrels in a cellar at the back.

The bar, with wooden benches, tables and snug window seat is exactly as I remember it many years ago. The whole place has remained unaltered. For which you may thank God, Mr Gray and Mr and Mrs Appleton.

The only alteration in all that time has been the disappearance of the old skittle alley at the side of the bar. It had a sloping roof, and, if I remember rightly, a long wooden bench with a hole at one end. There you played pitch-penny - tossing your pennies so that they fell in the holes if you had the right eye and flick of the wrist. The legend was that cock-fights had been held in that secretive low-roofed place many years before.

Ernest Appleton first became landlord in 1940. Grays, the brewers, bought the house. It was always the meeting place of true villagers - farm labourers, horsemen, shepherds, marsh "Lookers", poachers, the grooms from the Hall, from Guisnes Court and from D'Arcy House; Bill Fell, the marsh keeper, perhaps the best of his kind in England looked in occasionally, tall, bony, rangy, hawk-eyed with a dry smile and infinite marsh wisdom. He, like others, had seen the terrifying vision of the village ghost - a Black Dog. The Black Dog, or "Black Shuck" as they call him in Norfolk, is the spectre of the Black Hound of the Vikings who came over here. They ravaged this countryside with fire and sword - and left the Black Dog behind.

Bill Fell was driving home from Wigborough to Guisnes Court one night with another man, when suddenly the Black Dog "as big as a calf with one big eye in its head as bright as a bike lamp", appeared behind the horse and cart and trotted silent malevolently, mile after mile until the two frightened men drove through the gates of Guisnes Court to stable the horse. That was the only time Fell was ever frightened.

Now the backcloth to this

unique village is the great prairie-like spread of the Old Hall Marshes. 1,200 acres of lonely, houseless cattlemarshes between the ploughlands and the sea. A long peninsula of sea-bleached loneliness with two duck decoy ponds and three large "fleets" or lagoons which thrust into the marshes like crooked swords - Pennyhole Fleet, Joyces Head Fleet and the Roach Hole, with lesser creeks and dykes where a man could lose himself on winter nights and drown without help.

The marshes form a long peninsula on the North Saltcott Creek which leads to the forgotten village of Saltcott-cum-Virley, where you may remember, Mehalah, the lovely girl of the marshes, was married in the church where the smugglers stored their barrels, to the sinister marsh bully Robow with whom she died at sea in a grim bridal suicide. The Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, that eminent Victorian divine and novelist (*see Penny Farthing Autumn 2007*), wrote her into a melodrama which reduced our grandmothers to tears and quivers. Mehalah's brutal bridegroom lived at the original Old Hall down on the marshes.

On the south side Old Hall

John Crosier, Maldon Miller, Diarist and Social Observer 1753 - 1796

"A sloop belonging to Mr Edwick of Maldon taken by the French in her passage to Sunderland with 100 sacks of Mr Robert Barnard's flour of Heybridge. She was ransom'd for £300." So wrote John Crosier in his diary of September 1779.

Anyone with an interest in Maldon's history soon comes across extracts from John Crosier's diary and his observations on the social life of the town in the 18th century. His diary gives a vivid picture of middle class life at that period and his substantial business interests enabled him to enjoy his appetite for travel without restraint. Indeed he seems to have spent so much time travelling and socialising it is a wonder there was time to keep a diary let alone tend to his business interests.

He had a ready wit and an ear for gossip and tittle-tattle making his diary a real treat for modern readers.

His father had come to Maldon from Felsted to become an apprentice to John Strutt of Beeleigh Mills, Maldon, before taking over Hoe Mill at Woodham Walter before eventually taking a lease on 'Beely' (Beeleigh?) Mill.

His father married Miss Sooley, the daughter of a surgeon and apothecary of Maldon. They had five surviving children, John the

eldest and author of the diary being born 26th February 1753, Eulalia, Jonathan, Ann and Elizabeth, plus several others who died in infancy. Their mother died age 39 in 1769 giving birth to Elizabeth.

John was educated at Felsted school for five years and then spent one year at Caldow's Academy at Witham before joining his father at Beeliegh to learn the family milling business.

On the death of his mother John received a third part of an estate lying in the parishes of Little Dunmow and Felsted, plus another small estate in Rayleigh.

Being of independent means and a lifelong bachelor without family ties to keep him at home, Crosier was now free to pursue his love of horse-racing, hunting, socialising and travelling.

He journeyed throughout East Anglia and southern England he also made several trips to the north of England and the Netherlands. Much of the diary covers these journeys and his observations on the places he visited. However, it is the gossip and scandals of Maldon which he recorded with evident relish and not a little wit that make the diary such a fascinating read.

For instance Crosier noted that in 1769 a clergyman who took over the curacy of All Saints' church on the death of its Rector, was unable to find lodgings in the town, stayed in a local inn. A Captain A..... took pity on him and offered him accommodation as a temporary boarder in his own home.

The clergyman, who claimed to be a bachelor, began to make approaches to the Captain's wife and took her riding around the countryside with her mounted behind him. "Sometimes they would lose themselves in the retirement of a wood or shady grove, and tying their horse to a gate would wander about this sequestered retreat absorbed in *platonc* love and friendship."

The amorous curate then took the wife to London where they exchanged miniature portraits. On their return, Captain A..... confronted the pair, but his wife refused to give up the clergyman and chose to elope to London with him, in spite of it being revealed that the clergyman was married with a large family in Norfolk. Her husband begged her to return, but she insisted that the Captain pay her "a maintenance, and that not a scanty one, according to the fortune she had brought as a dowry."

Her husband sent her money and clothes but she and the parson continued to threaten for separate maintenance. How the matter was resolved Crosier does not reveal.

On another occasion he writes, "An unfortunate affair happen'd to the daughter of a grocer in the town, who was a very singular character, secluding herself from the world and the society of the young people of the town. She married to a young decenting (*sic*) clergyman of Bocking, where he was exceedingly respected and esteem'd as an amiable, religious man. The pledge of their mutual love was a fine boy who came into the world too soon to save the conjugal credit of his parents. His infatuated congregation excommunicated him, and they were oblig'd to retire to some lonesome place for a considerable time to mourn the loss of the best of characters."

Crosier noted several instances of crime and punishment including; the house of John Conyers Esq (Copt Hall, near Epping) being robbed of £1,500 worth of valuables. The criminals, led by an old coachman who had previously lived in the family, were caught. The crime had been committed on Monday, they were apprehended on Tuesday, taken in on Wednesday, tried on Thursday and hanged at Chelmsford on Saturday.

Again in 1776 he recorded that a man called Padgett had been hanged at Chelmsford having confessed his intent to rob Mr Coe (leader of Maldon's Whig Party).

The Rev Henry Bate (*see Penny Farthing, Autumn 2007*) was convicted of libel against the Duke of Richmond in 1781 and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

During the American War of Independence a general fast was declared in Maldon for Thursday 13 December in support of the British cause.

Not every Maldonian was in favour. Mr Lawrence, a coal merchant of the town was a particular fan of George Washington and his cause, to the annoyance of the "loyal Party" to whom he would make the most unwarranted speeches. He named his pleasure boat "*Washington*" and was drowned in the Maldon River by a sudden squall which overturned the boat. "A man governed entirely by his passion and when cool, not particular as to his abilities." was Crosier's comment.

On more mundane matters he reported that in March 1776 there were two very hot days when people worked without their coats and two days later it snowed. August the following year his father caught a fine salmon (8 lb) at Beeleigh, and in 1782 a

whale 35 ft long was caught and brought up at Tollesbury.

All Saints' Church features several times in the diary; November 1785 the steeple was set on fire by a serpent (firework) being lodged in the shingles on gunpowder treason night, but the fire was quickly extinguished by the vigilance of the onlookers.

September 1774. "The weather cock and shingling of the top of All Saints', being out of repair, several vestries were held concerning the modes, means and methods. The wise men had committees. At length a drawing of a weather cock big enough for Salisbury Steeple was agreeable and fix'd on; and they all with one loud voice said "Yea, verily 'twill cut a dash upon All Saints'. Then other consultations were held about the colour of the steeple; some would have it all stone colour, others white, and others lead colour. But however, as they hoped to please all the gemmen, they would paint it about three quarters up lead colour, and the rest, white; which was the absurdest thing on earth; for the lead colour being the largest colour, at a considerable distance you could not see the top at all; and it appeared like a man in the dark with his nightcap on.

Now the grand weather-cock, loaded with a fine tulip, at top a crown and ball, were to be convey'd up. This was a serious business. They then examined the wood at the

top; then something must be done there by way of security for this bright ornament, but they said "Star, thou has shone long enough", and cast it from the air to the earth. Then up went the weather-cock, and down it tumbled, being too ponderous for its station. Then a meeting amongst the contrivers being call'd, they agreed Nem. Con. to lop off the crown and other things and up it went again; and there it stands, the wonder of all the country around".

Crosier attended many social events and balls. One in particular he noted was a subscription assembly (*ball*) at Maldon Town Hall cost 13s 6d apiece. "Very agreeable and extravagantly expensive" was his comment.

On a trip to Margate he "went into the sea in a machine. These are in number great and kept on purpose for Company's bathing. It's like a caravan cover'd with canvas; the hind part, when you are in the sea, falls down and forms a bath. Its drawn by one horse, the sand being hard and admits of your going out a considerable distance. There are guides to drive; and I must confess it is one of the greatest luxuries I ever experienced to bathe in salt water from one of these machines."

And at Dover he wrote "the ladies in a morning when they intend to bathe, put on a long flannel gown under their other clothes; walk down to

the beach; undress themselves to the flannel; then they walk in as deep as they please and lay hold of the guides' hands, three or four together sometimes. They then dop over head 20 times perhaps. Then they come to shore where there are women that attend with towels, cloaks, chairs etc. The flannel is stripped off, wiped dry, etc. Women hold cloaks round them. They dress themselves and go home".

Crosier seems to have had an interest in female habits and dress for he notes that, "In Mr Addison's time the Ladies wore so little to cover their necks that he gave them many letters in his daily paper and advis'd them to put on Modesty pieces. In the year 1778 the Ladies, growing tired of such thick coverings, went to an extreme highly improper; for some Ladies at Court appearing in thin gauze set all the looms to work and in a month every woman appear'd with a kind of covering but not in any degree to hide her charms. This caus'd such ogling amongst the men, and some writing appear'd in public, they threw off this thin stuff and put on a large quantity of thick covering; and in order to make the natural protuberance appear round and large, they sew'd withinside the handkerchief pieces of cane curving outwards. This whim had its day. Then they alter'd to a higher tucker, then added another which they term'd Fortifications. But these not

keeping the ramparts from ocular assaults, they added a third Tier, and this not proving sufficient, they employ'd the bulwark of a thick handkerchief over these. And thus I leave them bountifully defended in the year 1788."

That same December there "came into Maldon a building on Wheels, wherein a man, his wife and six children, liv'd. By the side there was another large building in the form of a Tea Kettle. This was shewn for a sight. You first was shewn into the house where every thing, tho useful was in miniature; thro' which you was usher'd into this Tea Kettle a complete little parlor hung with red baize, a fire place, table and complete seats; these being wholly the work and contrivance of this poor man. Great numbers went to see it and gave something, by which means, travelling from place to place, they procur'd a livelihood".

John Crosier's diary ends in 1788 and he died in 1796. The original manuscript was lost. Fortunately a complete transcript had been made which is deposited in Essex Records Office.

The information for the above article was obtained from "Essex People 1750 - 1900" by A F J Brown, published by the Essex Record Office Publications (No 59)

FEASTS, FESTIVALS and FOLK LAW



A generation ago everyone in Britain knew and honoured the major Christian festivals and Saints' Days. Today, apart from St Valentine's Day the only religious celebrations that the majority observe, or even know about, are Christmas and Easter and then usually only because they are bank holidays and involve presents and chocolate. Why bring religion into it?

We seem to have forgotten that the Saints' festivals shaped this country's long history and that the year was marked for the British people by dates rooted in the earth, the seasons and our rural past. So totally have we lost touch with the old calendar that, for instance, we no longer know when Michaelmas day falls or what it celebrates. St Michael should be remembered for being the Archangel who threw Lucifer from Heaven. He is also one of only two angels mentioned by name in the Bible, the other being Gabriel. Why should his Saint's Day, 29 September, have been important to our forefathers? Well it was taken to be the last day of harvest and the beginning of autumn. It was when rural folk would decide which of their beasts they could afford to feed over winter and which they would slaughter to preserve as salted, dried or pickled meat.

It was a time for selling surplus animals at livestock fairs and Michaelmas Day became a day of feasting before the long hard winter. Every child knew then that blackberries should never be picked after that date because the devil had spat on them after landing in a blackberry bush as he was thrown from Heaven.

Michaelmas day is celebrated as the last day of harvesting, but previous generations honoured the first day. Though now largely forgotten, Lammas Day (1st of August) marked the beginning of the harvest when people went to church to give thanks for the first corn to be cut. This celebration predates the Christian harvest festival. Farmers made loaves from the new wheat crop to give to the church to be used as Communion bread. The custom ended when Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic Church.

The old calendar was marked for by dozens of such dates - human beings are naturally seasonal creatures. For instance everyone would have associated the beginning of summer with Whitsun at the end of May.

In the darkness of winter people's spirits needed lifting with festivals of light and fire - St Lucy, the Patron Saint of the blind, on the darkest day of

the year 13 December and Christmas itself with its candles and high mass.

Summer too had its own festival days and appropriate rituals. June marks the beginning of Summer and takes its name from Juno, the Roman goddess of marriage. For this reason, June has always been looked upon as the best month to marry: *Married in the month of roses - June*
Life will be one long honeymoon.

It was also the month in many parts of the country for "well dressing" ceremonies. Springs and wells of clean fresh water have always been revered as magical things to be honoured with decorations of greenery and pictures made of flowers and moss.

How many today know that the 20th June is the Feast Day of Britain's first martyr, St Alban?

The longest day (21st of June) was a time associated with witches and magic. On Midsummer's Eve bonfires were burnt to strengthen the sun whose rays were getting weaker as the year progressed.

The 15th July is St Withwin's Day when country people watched the weather closely because they believed that whatever the weather was like on that day it would continue so for the next forty days:

*St Withwin's Day, if dost rain,
For forty days it will remain.
St Withwin's Day, if it be fair,
For forty days 'twill rain nae mair'*

Even today most people know about this old superstition, but how many now remember that ten days later is St James' Day which is also known as Grotto Day. It was the day for children to make grottoes and caves, decorated with sea shells because the scallop shell was supposed to be the emblem of St James.

The grottoes were placed outside the children's homes and they would sit beside them to recite:

*Please remember the Grotto.
It's only once a year.
Father's gone to sea.
Mother's gone to bring him back,
So please remember me.*

As for Valentine's Day, it has long lost any religious significance and is now simply a day for card shops and florists to make a killing. It is estimated that one billion cards are sent each year, making it the second largest card-selling holiday of the year behind Christmas.

The celebration of St Valentine is steeped in legend and mystery, the very motives behind the day's creation and even St Valentine being shrouded in controversy and doubt. In fact there were three priests martyred on the 14th February and no one is sure which one is being observed.

St Valentine's day embraces a time of year historically associated with love and fertility. It encompasses the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera in Ancient Athens and the Roman festival of Lupercus, the god of fertility.

The first official St Valentine's Day was declared by Pope Galasius in 496 AD, in memory of a third-century martyred priest in Rome. It is not known whether Pope Galasius was actually honouring this priest or whether it was one of two other martyrs associated with the same day, but it is the Roman priest who has become the most widely acclaimed of the three.

It is believed that the young priest rose to distinction for conducting wedding ceremonies in 270 AD in defiance of Emperor Claudius, who claimed that married men made poor soldiers and decreed that all marriages between younger citizens were outlawed. Bishop Valentine, however, maintained that marriage was part of God's plan and purpose for the world, and continued to conduct marriages in secret between young people - some of them as young as twelve!

His activities gained him notoriety causing him to be jailed and ultimately beheaded, but not before he fell in love with his jailer's daughter. It is said that on the eve of his execution he passed her a note which read "from your Valentine".

As for other British festivals which have lost their original meanings, one only has to look to All Saints' Day also known as All Hallows' Day or Halloween, celebrated on

1st November. This was traditionally the day to remember all saints and martyrs, known and unknown, who did not have their own Saint's Day and Christians were required to attend church and avoid all servile work.

Dedicating a specific day to saints and martyrs has been a tradition since the 4th century, but in 609 AD Pope Boniface IV decided to remember all martyrs, particularly those who had no specific day dedicated to them. Originally the 13th May was designated as the Feast of All Holy Martyrs. Later in 837, Pope Gregory IV extended the festival to include all the saints, changed its name to the Feast of All Saints and the date to 1st November.

This date may have been chosen in an effort to supplant the earlier Pagan or Celtic festival of Samhain or Summer's End. It marked a time of preparation for the coming winter.

The Orthodox Church celebrates All Saints' Day on the first Sunday after Passover - a date closer to the original 13th May.

All Hallows' Eve falls on 31st October the day before All Hallows Day (All Saints' Day) and the church traditionally held a vigil with prayers and fasting to prepare themselves for the feast day itself. The name derives from the word "hallowed" and is now usually contracted to Halloween. It used to be a time when children bobbed for apples and made lanterns but has now become 'Americanised' with ghosts and vampires and the anti-social custom of trick or treat.

As for Mothering Sunday, known as Mothers' Day in other countries, it is always observed on the fourth Sunday of Lent, and has been celebrated since at least 16th century.

Once known as 'Refreshment Sunday' or 'Mid-Lent Sunday', because the fasting rules for Lent were relaxed in honour of the Bible story of the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand', it was traditionally a time when children paid their respects to their mothers, usually by giving them a small gift and card.

These days the event is fast becoming hi-jacked by the floral and greetings card industries, but years ago many churches gave the children in the congregation a small posy of spring flowers to give to their mothers.

No one is absolutely certain how the idea of Mothering Sunday began. However, about four hundred years ago, people would make a point of visiting their nearest big church (the Mother Church) on that day, and people who visited the mother church would say they had gone "a-mothering".

Maids and servants were only allowed one day to visit their family each year, usually on Mothering Sunday. Often the housekeeper or cook would allow the maids to bake a cake for their mother, or a gift of eggs or flowers from the garden might be allowed. Flowers became the more traditional gift simply because even if the boys and girls had not been allowed to take a gift from the house where they

Worked, they could always gather a bunch of wild flowers on their way home.

Mothering Sunday is also sometimes known as Simnel Sunday because of the tradition of baking a Simnel cake for the day:

*I'll to thee a Simnel bring
Gainst thou go'st a mothering
So that, when she blesseth thee
Half that blessing thou'lt give to me*

(Robert Herrick 1648)

The Simnel Cake is a fruit cake with a layer of marzipan and should be decorated with 11 marzipan balls to represent the twelve apostles minus Judas, who betrayed Christ. Simnel cake is now more commonly made to be eaten on Easter Day.

In recent times Mothering Sunday has taken on the name and character of the United States' Mothers' Day and the original meaning of Mothering Sunday in Britain is quickly being lost.

So much for Mothering Sunday and the least said about Fathers' Day the better. Suffice to say that it has no roots in Britain's traditional feast days, but is a wholly modern commercial exercise invented by the card and gift manufacturers to sell more.

These old festivals and Saints' days were a genuine link with our past and a celebration of something which many Britains were proud of and grateful for. These rituals reveal a real sense of the Christian calendar and our past. We are sadly the poorer for their loss.

For the Queen of Bohemia Only

Oysters have been harvested from the estuaries and creeks of Essex since Roman times and the Royal Charter of 1171 granted to the Burgesses of Maldon, the fishery from the town down to a little beyond Stansgate Abbey.

Throughout the centuries oyster fishing in Essex has been characterised by periods of abundance alternating with scarcity. It is reported that around 1630, after a period of plenty, with oysters selling at 1s 8d (10p) a bushel, an acute shortage resulted in the Admiralty forbidding the export of oysters "except to the Queen of Bohemia or the Prince of Orange".

Around 1860 some 5 million brood oysters from the Blackwater were being bought each year by the Whitstable Oyster Company and many were sold for relaying in the Colne.

Between 1876 and the early years of the 20th century over 100 sailing boats would be dredging the Blackwater during the season would reach 300 when oysters were particularly plentiful. Between the two World Wars the abundance of oysters in the river greatly decreased and oyster fishing is now on a relatively small scale.

THE TILBURY TEXAS RANGER

By Tony Mandara

The following article has no Maldon connections, but is the story of a real western hero, Robert Hamilton Williams, who once lived in Tilbury, Essex. He fought Comanche Indians, was a Captain in the Texas Rangers, drove cattle, witnessed gun-fights and lynchings, was a Confederate volunteer during the American Civil War and witnessed one of the worst atrocities of that war in Texas.

His memoirs "*With the Border Ruffians*" were published posthumously in 1904 by his brother, a vicar who indulged in a certain amount of censorship to appease Victorian sensibilities. I obtained further information from Robert's granddaughter, whom I met some years ago.

From my extensive collection of books on the American Civil War I have been able to verify almost every statement he made - even some facts not generally known. Allowing for the deliberate changing of some individual's names (either to protect their identities or Williams simply could not remember them), I am convinced that his memoirs were a pretty accurate record of his early life.

Robert Hamilton Williams was born in 1831, the eldest of nine sons and daughters of the priest of St Michael's, Buckland Dinham, Somerset and curate of Whately, then later Dean of Wells Cathedral.

His family hoped he too would enter the church, but Robert had an adventurous and somewhat rebellious spirit, so shortly before his 17th birthday he chose to go to sea as a midshipman aboard an East Indiaman. After that he shipped on a Liverpool barque bound to load guano, but the skipper was a brutal man and Williams deserted ship in Callao.

Hearing about the California Gold Rush he decided to try his luck but was unable to find a berth because so many prospectors were trying to get there too. Instead he sailed as an able-bodied seaman on a barque bound for Dundee, but it was a horrendous voyage which took nearly six months and when he was discharged at Cork he had a dislocated shoulder and scurvy. Recovering, he next served on the *Andromanche*, an emigrant ship to Adelaide. When he returned his family persuaded him to give up the sea - which was



Robert Hamilton Williams

Photo taken in San Antonio 1863

just as well as the *Andromanche* sank with all hands on its next voyage.

Williams next tried his hand at farming, becoming an apprentice to one of his father's vicarage tenants, but once again he could not settle. In February 1852, provided with £400 raised by his anxious father, he sailed from Liverpool to America.

He intended purchasing a farm so headed west to explore the area in the company of a group of emigrants he had met on his voyage from England. The party first travelled by canal barge where personal washing facilities were two pewter basins beside which hung some towels, brushes and combs, plus a communal toothbrush which everybody shared!

The emigrants had to walk through the mountains to

West Virginia and they completed the last 120 miles in just five days. However the land on offer was totally unsuitable for settlement being heavily timbered and impossible to farm. The few settlers who had already been duped into buying a plot were desperately struggling just to survive. (*Shades of Charles Dickens' "Martin Chuzzlewit"*. Ed).

Williams left the emigrant band and walked 40 miles back to Mercer County where he purchased a farm for \$1,500 (about £300), selling it a year later for \$2,000 and taking three slaves, 16 year old Ann and her two younger brothers, in part payment. In later years Williams came to realise the evil of slavery, but at that time and in that place slavery was accepted as perfectly normal so he saw no wrong in owning another human being.

In 1854 he moved himself and his human "property" to Kansas. Part of this journey had to be made by train where only two types of tickets were available - 1st for whites and 2nd for dogs and Blacks. As a young Englishman with three slaves, Williams was treated with some suspicion that he might be trying to help them escape to freedom.

He spent the winter at St Louis where the Mississippi River was frozen solid allowing wagons to cross from one side to the other. There were hundreds of

Mississippi steamboats stuck in the ice, and when it melted a wall of ice swept down destroying many vessels and causing \$3 million damage.

While at St Louis Williams met a "Colonel" Howard who, once every year, drove 1,000 turkeys on foot for 250 miles to market in the South.

Because of the big freeze, Williams made the journey to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, by horse, covering the 450 miles at the rate of 35 miles per day. At Independence he witnessed the shooting of a slave who was trying to escape - no action was taken against the killer because the action was considered to be perfectly legal as slaves had no rights.

Leavenworth "City" in 1855 was a frontier town built illegally on the Delaware Indians' reserve. The following year the Indians were thrown off their own land and it was opened up for settlement by white men.

Williams acquired several of these claims, hired out his slaves and established a wagon line to transport goods through the area. Not wishing to risk his money to possible bandit attack while on the trail, he entrusted his entire savings of over \$2,000 to the safe keeping of his slave Ann because there were no banks in the territory and she was the only honest person in the place!

This was a time of great unrest in Kansas as squatters tried to ensure that the

territory would become a slave state when it was adopted within the Union, while "Free Soilers" tried to keep the region free of slavery. The area became flooded with new settlers from both sides and large numbers of weapons were imported so that a state of anarchy prevailed.

When the situation boiled over into fighting Williams joined a company of Border Ruffians and was elected orderly sergeant. He later said that all those who were killed on both sides in this territorial war were murdered simply to pay off old scores or gratify private spite. He once discovered the bodies of two civilians who had been shot by members of his own unit. He made objections to his commanding officer saying he would prefer to quit the company rather than fight alongside murderers, but the officer made light of the affair being of the opinion that the other side did the same thing and he would not give quarter. Eventually Washington sent US cavalry to put an end to the lawlessness and the Border Ruffians were disbanded.

Williams next became, very briefly, a saloon owner which he took in payment for a debt. Although a very lucrative establishment he declared, "I had to admit the business had its drawbacks and wasn't quite one that a nervous man would choose; my customers were too ready with their six shooters for that". He sold the bar after just three weeks.

At about this time Williams was involved in a gun fight when he shot and wounded a man while helping a constable arrest a man named Cline for horse stealing.

Williams next became a wagon master for Major & Russell, the company which operated all freighting west of the Missouri River to the forts in Indian territory. He was responsible for a train of 75 wagons, each drawn by eight oxen, which extended almost two miles. This was a very dangerous occupation because journeys could take several weeks - every man of a previous freight train had been killed in an Indian ambush. His train experienced a tornado when two wagons were scattered in pieces over three miles. On another occasion their camp was almost engulfed by tens of thousands of buffalo and they only survived by shooting and yelling so that the herd passed on either side of the corral. It took several hours to pass and by morning his men had killed several dozen of the beasts.

Travelling by riverboat along the Missouri River, Williams saw just how easily a free black person could be kidnapped and made a slave. A man had come aboard the boat with a black woman and her two children who he entered on the ship's ledger as his slaves. The woman told one of the passengers that she was a free woman and the man had tricked her and was taking her to New Orleans to sell into slavery and she begged for help.

Luckily she was believed and the boat's captain called an impromptu court where the supposed slave owner was made to confess his guilt. Of all the crimes in the Southern States, stealing slaves along with stealing horses was the worst and the verdict was death. The captain would not agree to a lynching, instead the culprit was left standing on a sandbank in the middle of the river. Williams had no idea whether the man managed to swim ashore or if he was drowned.

Together with a partner, Williams chose to move to Texas where they began to search for a ranch. One morning they found their horses had strayed during the night, and while searching for them, found two men hanging from a tree. Walking back to San Antonio they learned that the dead men were horse thieves who had been caught by the Vigilance Committee the week before. The partners employed the services of a tracker who managed to recover their missing mounts. Eventually they purchased a 1,000 acre ranch at Medio Creek for the sum of \$1 per acre.

In San Antonio before the outbreak of the American Civil War, Williams met Robert E Lee destined to be the greatest of all the Confederate Generals. He also had dinner and played cards on several occasions with John Bell Hood, another soon to be famous

When the Civil War began Williams volunteered to serve as a mounted rifleman for Texas State Service supporting the Confederacy. He took part in the bloodless capture of the United States fort at San Antonio and later the US Cavalry base at Val Verde where, among other war materials, they captured eighty camels and two Egyptian drivers.

With the war, the United States army posts which had been protecting the frontier from Indian attack were abandoned and the troops withdrawn. The Comanches, always troublesome, took the opportunity to increase their depredations on unprotected ranches, killing men women and children. Williams spent much of the war chasing Indian bands and was involved in numerous fights with them.

His three-month state service at an end, Williams enlisted for the duration of the war as a Partisan Ranger and his unit was sent to Fredericksburg, Texas, when it was reported that "Bushwhackers" (Union sympathisers) were attacking the ranches of Southern loyalists.

Reaching the area they found all was quiet although some 60 to 100 Germans, loyal to the Union, had taken to the mountains en-route via Mexico to join the Federal Army. The Rangers were sent to find and attack the Germans. They were led

to the enemy camp by a German prisoner who was forced to betray his friends in order to save his own life. The Germans were outnumbered and poorly armed, as a result two thirds of their number were killed or wounded while the rest fled over the Rio Grande.

There now occurred one of the worst atrocities of the war in Texas. The following morning the wounded prisoners were shot in cold blood. Williams had been assisting in rounding up the German's horses and when he returned he was appalled at the killings and accused his commander of being a coward and murderer and tried, without success, to get transferred from the unit.

In April 1863, Williams was a member of an expedition sent to cross into Mexico and attack a group being recruited there to serve in the Union Army. This attack was highly irregular because Mexico was a neutral country friendly to the Confederacy. It was in effect an invasion of a foreign country! The unsuspecting camp was raided and a number of men killed with five prisoners taken.

Crossing back to their own side of the Rio Grande three of the prisoners were lynched by the Partisan Raiders. Williams as sergeant was placed in charge of twelve reliable men to protect the two remaining prisoners and escort them to safety.

The Mexican Governor was outraged at this insult to his country, demanding and receiving a full apology and the release of the remaining prisoners.

In October 1863 Williams was given a commission as Captain in the Texas Rangers and made Civil Magistrate of the area of the Rio Grande. He was in effect the sole authority, civil or military, for a very wide area. He spent most of his time fighting Comanches, Mexican bandits and protecting the area from threatened attacks by Union troops.



Monument to the German Texas martyrs
Erected 10 August 1866 at Comfort, fifty miles north
west of San Antonio

When the Confederacy surrendered in April 1865, Williams was almost bankrupt because he had now only worthless Confederate money and his ranch had been badly neglected. He therefore drove two hundred cattle (half of them his own) on a 700 mile cattle drive to

New Orleans. In spite of suffering a stampede he only lost thirty head and sold the remainder at a good profit. Unfortunately, he then invested the money in a venture to buy and sell hogs but lost most of it. So that once his debts had been settled, he was no better off than when he started after five months of back-breaking work.

He later took a smaller herd to Mexico where he made enough profit to enable him to return home. He sold his ranch and came back to England in June 1866 and married his childhood sweetheart.

They settled in East Tilbury where he became a substantial land and property owner. He died on 3 August 1904 age 73 and is buried in St Catherine's Churchyard next to Colehouse Fort. He remained a proud Confederate "Rebel" to the end.

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Saint Giles Leper Hospital

By Charlie Middleton

The ruins of St Giles, Maldon's former leper hospital, can be found in Spital Road although many people pass them by without even noticing them. The gates are usually open to the public each year on Heritage weekends. For some years John Came and I have regularly stewarded on those weekends so I was very interested when a painting, completed some 100 or so years ago, came into Maldon Museum's collection. It shows the building with a roof and is enclosed on all four sides being used as a barn. As with St Peters-on-the-Wall at Bradwell if St Giles had not been used as a barn the remains would not still be standing today.

Although records show dates of appointments and ownership, very little is known about the actual building itself or the site upon which it stands. We do know that it was a leper hospital and was recorded as being there in 1164, but little is known about its original size or shape although it is claimed to have been cruciform in shape.

There are some suggestions that there were possibly other buildings on this site previously because of the diversity of materials used in its construction. Most builders at this time used materials found on the site including the remains of old buildings. The site on which St Giles was built obviously offered a commanding view of the estuary and surrounding areas and so would have been an ideal encampment for both Saxons and Romans and Roman remains do form some of the materials in the Hospital's construction. However some visitors to the site are convinced that the diversity of materials used were as the result of ships coming into the port in ballast which was readily available at the quay and this may be another likely explanation.

The size of the building is also debatable. A dowsing survey published by the Maldon Archaeological Group some years ago suggests that it extended much further to both north and east than the present remains might suggest.

There must also have been water available to the site and there are suggestions of a stream that finished in a pond between Norfolk Road and Washington Court. A couple of years ago I took photos of ducks on this pond. There must also have been graves nearby as it was a leper hospital and I doubt if their bodies would have been allowed in other burial grounds. There may well also have been huts around the building which have long since disappeared without trace.

Whilst stewarding John and I are asked many questions and are constantly having to answer "We don't know" to visitors. Maybe one of these years an excavation in the style of "Time Team" will investigate and John and I will have some answers to such questions as :-

- Was the site a previous encampment?
- Where did the building materials come from?
- Are there any human remains?
- Were there huts or other buildings?
- Was there water on the site?

However John and I may well still be at St Giles again this year still answering that "We don't know".

An Ancestral Quandary

By Tony Mandara

Do you ever wonder what, if any, part your ancestors played in the great events of history? For have no doubt about it, your ancestors certainly were around for every single moment since life first crawled out of the primeval soup - had they not have been then you would not exist!

It would be nice to say with certainty that one of our forefathers was called so-and-so and that he served with Nelson or she was a nurse in the Crimean War, but unfortunately few, if any of us, can trace our ancestors very far back. Like thousands of others I have tried to explore my own family tree only to be beset with the numerous problems which face anyone who attempts to do so, plus one great conundrum which hopefully one of our readers may be able to solve.

Discounting the lack of, or inaccuracies in official records, it is impossible to prove with certainty that any particular person other than our mother really is related to us. In spite of an entry in a parish record or a birth certificate indicating that such-and-such male is an ancestor it does not mean that they really are! Without a DNA test there must always be room for doubt about the identity of the father named on a birth certificate, although rarely, if ever, about the mother. Just one act of infidelity by any of the wives on a family tree would destroy its accuracy and make it utterly bogus. In spite of what the official records show, great-great-grandfather may not have been the biological parent of a particular child - the squire's son or the gamekeeper, or the proverbial milkman might well be the real father. Only great-great-grandmother would know, and even she might not be sure! "It's a wise man who knows his own father".

So that's one problem, but there is another far greater conundrum which has occurred to me. While compiling my own family tree I found that in 1820 I had 32 great-great-great grandparents. Somewhat surprised at this large number I decided to see just how many direct ancestors I might have had 900 years ago. A simple figure to establish you might think, after all there are roughly three generations to each 100 years, therefore times nine would equal 27 generations. Now as each generation doubles the number of direct great-great-etc grandparents (i.e. two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents and so on), I came to the astounding result that I would have had 134,217,728 ancestors in the year 1109! Lets call it 134 million for the sake of convenience. You don't believe me? Well do the maths for yourself and you will be surprised to find you too had that number of ancestors. I must admit to being somewhat humbled with the thought that 134 million people put so much effort into creating me - I hope they would think it was worth it!

Now this raises another problem, the population of Britain in 1109 was approximately two million, yes just 2 million, so where have the other 132 million come from or gone to? I've heard of migration but this is just ridiculous. It also means that you, I and almost every other inhabitant of Britain, if not the world, must be directly related - perhaps we should organise a great family party, although where we will find a hall in Maldon big enough to accommodate 60 plus million guests might be a bit of a problem.

Now I would be the first to admit that "sums" was not my best subject at school (I was at the dentists that day), and am prepared to accept that I may have made a mistake, but for the life of me I cannot see where. Perhaps a more numerate reader might like to explain this anomaly? Go on please put me out of my misery and be a party-pooper so that I can cancel that hall before the invites go out!

MYSTERIES OF MOUNT PLEASANT

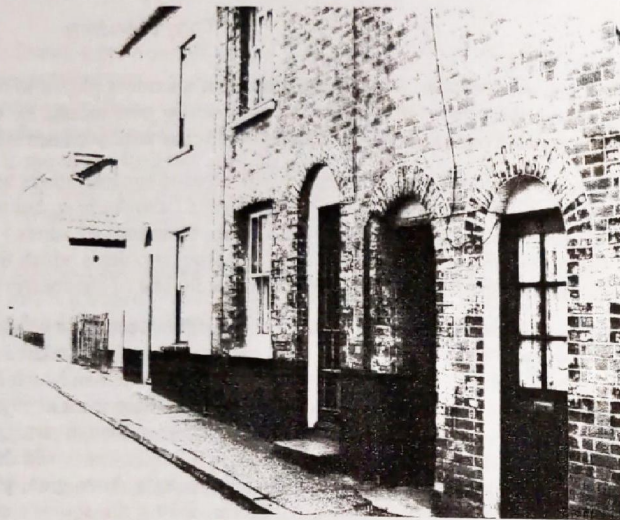
I have been attempting for some months to research the history of the house in Mount Pleasant that my brother and his family lived in. Despite best efforts, and having employed the services of a wonderful researcher, I am now well and truly stuck. Matters are not assisted by the fact that I live in Dorset, hence I have spent many frustrating hours trawling the Internet!

The information gathered so far is as follows:

My brother's home is one of 4 'cottages' that we believe were the first premises to be built in the road that is now known as Mount Pleasant (between Farnbridge Road and Spital Road). The Tithe Map of 1838 shows field number 242 completely devoid of cottages, and cross-referencing with the Essex Place Names Register confirmed that field 242 was owned by the May family as were a considerable number of other fields in the area.

The first mystery and really the basic one is when were the cottages actually built? We know it was after 1838 and for reasons set out below before 1871. They are certainly completely different and older than the other properties.

The second mystery that we are presented with is that the cottages were built the other way round. Or to put it another way what is now the back was originally the front. If you look at aerial shots on Google Map you can see quite clearly that the other houses in the road were



built facing the other way, and this is born out by the Ordnance Survey Maps of 1873 and 1895. Why was the rest of the street built facing the other way? Why were the cottages built facing the way they were?

Mystery number three, is that the 4 cottages have some sort of Right of Way running along the back of the gardens. Remember, this would originally have been the front. The fences must have gates in them so that the occupiers can walk across the gardens. Why is there a Right of Way? When was it imposed? Is it linked with the fact that the cottages were built the other way round?

Mystery number four appeared as a result of looking at the old Ordnance Survey Maps and Census Records of 1881. In the 1873 Map although the houses are shown, the road is not

named. The 1895 Ordnance Survey shows that the road has now been named Mount Pleasant and there also seems to be more houses built at the bottom end. An enquiry at the Essex Records Office established that the road had been given its name just before the Census of 1881. Why was this not done before? Given the number of properties in the street in 1873, I would have thought it would have been named then. Why also was Mount Pleasant chosen as a name?

Mystery number five really continues on from mystery four and came to light from the study of the Census Records. The 1881 Census has both odd and even numbers given for the properties. However, in the 1891 Census the "even numbers" have disappeared and only odd numbers are given. The evens have been taken out.

All the houses are still there and I have been able to cross-reference occupiers in 1881 and 1891 to prove that it was the numbering that changed, not properties that were removed. When was the numbering changed? And more importantly why?

The lack of a road name prior to 1881 has meant that I cannot find the four cottages in any Census before that date. I am convinced that they are there but trying to pick them out of hundreds of entries has proved impossible. The change in numbering has also made life difficult and depending on when the properties were built on either side this could make a difference as well.

My brother was very fortunate in receiving completely out of the blue, some of the original deeds for the property from his bank. From these we gleaned that in September 1889 the then owner of the cottage was Thomas Worraker (who I discovered was "Big in Maldon Salt"). He sold the property to Frederick Sewell.

The final Mystery, number six, is who did Thomas Worraker buy the cottage from and when?

If anyone has any answers, suggestions or possible leads to any of these mysteries I would be eternally grateful.

Regards - Frances Underhill

Note Please send any information to our Chairman Paddy Lacey at the Museum. Address on the back of this magazine

MUD SKI RUNNING



The following item appeared in the Maldon Advertiser of February 9, 1912 under the title of "A New Sport - Ski-Running on the Mud".

Mr C Flemming of the Mill House, Mill Beach, contributed to *Pearson's Magazine* for January, an interesting illustrated article on Ski-Running on the mud, showing how marshes and mud-flats can be explored with speed and comfort by the use of Skis. The illustration is of Mr Williams practising on the flats of the Blackwater and from a photograph by Mr Douglas Wilson, Maldon, whose 'snaps' were used for the illustration of the article referred to.

Perhaps we should re-introduce Ski-Running as another way of using Maldon's mud similar to our famous Annual Mud Race. Who knows, it might even make a new competition in time for the 2012 Olympic Games. Ed.

DID YOU KNOW? That the River Blackwater was once called Aestuarium Idmanium or Fluius Idumanus by the Romans and was known as the Panta by the Saxons. The word Pant meant a valley and the Blackwater, meaning brack (salty) water, is still called the River Pant above Braintree.

TIMES PAST

Here are a few local and world-wide news items from one hundred years ago, which you may have missed the first time around!



1909

H G Wells wrote "Tono-Bungay".

The Hippodrome Theatre, which could seat 450 people was opened for drama and variety shows in Maldon High Street. These premises were later replaced by Peacocks' store.

A mock-Tudor building was erected next to the old post office in Maldon High Street.

William H Taft was inaugurated as the 27th President of the United States.

Geronimo the legendary Apache Indian warrior chief died, he was 80 years old.

Cubism style of painting pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque launched in Paris.

Frederick Remington, the great artist of the American West died. (Born 1861).

Gustav Mahler composed Symphony No. 9.

Britain's very first dedicated aerodrome opened at South Farnbridge. (*See story page 2*)

Franz Lehár composed the operetta "The Count of Luxembourg".

US Navy Commander Robert Perry became the first man to reach the North Pole (his third attempt).

Ralph Vaughan Williams composed "Fantasia on a Theme of Tallis".

Victor Borge the Danish pianist and humorous entertainer was born.

Victoria & Albert Museum opened in south-west London.

Ernest Shackleton's polar expedition forced to turn back 11 miles short of the South Pole.

First commercial manufacture of Bakelite marked the beginning of the Plastic Age.

Marconi was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics.

The English aviator Henri Farman achieved the first 100 mile flight.

July 25th. Louis Bleriot made the first flight across the English Channel from Calais to Dover in 37 minutes flying in a Bleriot XI.

The Girl Guides was established in Britain.

American businessman H G Selfridge opened his department store in London's Oxford Street.

ACCESSIONS REPORT 2008/2009



During the past year, Maldon Museum's Accessions Team has accessed into our collection 343 items. Of these 317 were new donations and 26 were items taken off display which had not been accessed before. This total is about a third up on last year. It is appropriate to mention at this point that our storage facilities are virtually full although some space remains for paper ephemera, but donations of larger items are proving increasingly difficult to store. It is hoped to have some sessions in the museum store and garage in the hope of freeing up a little more space in those locations.

Items of special interest accessed during the year include:

A framed political "squib" (a witty lampoon) donated by Plume Library, originally presented to Maldon & Heybridge Liberal Club in 1880.

A beer bottle (sadly empty) donated by Liz and Eric Willsher, which once contained a Special Brew to mark the 400th Anniversary of Maldon Grammar School. As a young visitor recently noted that this bottle was poking out of the pocket of the schoolboy figure in the Childhood Room, it has been removed as it was felt that perhaps we were setting a bad example to our younger visitors!

From Ian Haste we have acquired his M.G.S. School cap from the late 1940's. Ian and his wife now live in Canada.

We have been fortunate in obtaining many Maldon Carnival photographs and artefacts which have been put on display and have been much admired by visitors this season.

Mrs Y Chetland of Heybridge Basin donated a collection of items, including a fancy dress Carnival costume in remarkably good condition which was worn by her mother in 1935, a number of St Mary's Parish Magazines from 1918 and a baby doll by Armand Marseilles which is now on display in the Childhood Room.

The Museum also received a number of items on loan, some of which related to Ida Moss who nursed with the Red Cross at Rivercourt during WWI. Also Chelmsford Museum loaned us a nurse's uniform which is currently adorning our lovely new mannequin given to us by Ciara Canning from Colchester Museum and stars in our "Maldon for Health & Happiness" display.

Now that the new season has begun we are working on the backlog of Accessions and have made a start on tidying and revamping the Bygones Store at St Cedd's. Judging by recent experience, this is going to take considerably longer than first anticipated, and is a voyage of discovery - just this week we found, amongst a collection of sea shells, a pot of Cadbury's Chocolate Spread, probably about 20 years old, with the original contents intact, but sadly inedible! We dare not speculate on how this came to be included with the shell collection!

Generally speaking it has been a very satisfactory year for the Accessions Team of; Judy Betteridge, Betty Chittenden, Julia Cottam, Margaret Simmonds and Liz Willsher.

The Lost World of Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo

Reprinted from Maldon District Council's "the Maldon District Courier" Autumn 2004

Internationally acknowledged, but under-recognised at home, architect, designer and socio-economic theorist, Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, lived for some time in Wickham Bishops.

See photo front page

Believing the area to be the healthiest place in Britain, Mackmurdo moved to the Maldon District in his late forties where he planned to build an estate. Many of the buildings known to be his were originally designed for himself within the boundaries of the land he purchased. Other than the buildings he designed for his estate, he also built three village halls and a post office within the locality. He was deeply involved in the community and founded the Rural Community Council of Essex.

He was a strong influence in the establishment of the Arts and Crafts movement: a small group of architects, designers and philosophers reacting to what they felt were the "dehumanising" effects of the industrial revolution.

The group were intent on preserving medieval standards of care and craftsmanship through the design and commission of buildings and fittings using traditional methods and materials. They were also concerned that production line manufacture sacrificed individuality and creativity, creating repetitive jobs and poor working conditions.

This small English movement later formed the beginnings of the larger and more famous Art Nouveau movement which spread across the continent. Mackmurdo's most famous influence within the Arts and Crafts movement was his establishment of the Century Guild of Artists (1882) one of the first organisations which catered for all elements of interior design, including furniture, wallpaper, enamelling and textiles, metal work and stained glass.

As a social pioneer and a man who was undoubtedly impressed and proud of the Maldon District, it is sad that he is relatively unknown locally. There is no accurate record of exactly how many of his buildings were built or how many still exist. He is a part of the history of the District and deserves recognition for his contribution to art, decor, architecture and the community.

Tolleshunt D'Arcy

Continued from page 4

Creek and Tollesbury Channel cut off the marshes from the mainland while eastward lies the bare, glittering North Sea.

More than 1,300 wild duck have been shot on the marshes in one season. In winter wild geese in thousands darken the sky. Almost every rare bird on the British list has been seen there, from the golden eagle and white storks to harriers, bitterns, ruffs and reeves, avocets and every rare duck and wader you can think of. Tolleshunt D'Arcy is proud of its unique marshland wilderness.

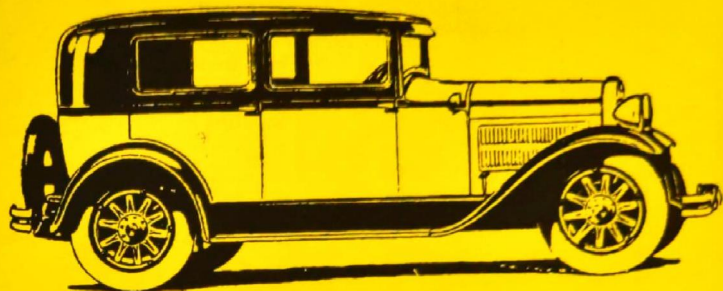
There Mr Appleton set up what is probably an English record. When the village doctor, to whom we shall come, held the shooting on the marshes, Appleton held the rabbiting. He could use snares, long-nets, purse-nets, ferrets and spades - but he could not use a gun. Nonetheless in one year he took

6,000 rabbits without firing a shot. His little daughter, Pearl, whom I remember as a bouncing child was his "ferret-girl". She carried them in a bag or box. She fed them, petted them, slipped them down the burrows and picked them up when they came out, their noses questing in the wind, sometimes dripping with blood. They swarmed over her neck and shoulders like an animated fur-cape - savage, murderous little creatures. "Our little Pearl" charmed them - just as she charms customers today.

For 67 years the noted physician, sportsman and writer Dr John Henry Salter, lived in Tolleshunt D'Arcy. His diary covering 30,000 days and extending into eighty volumes together with his natural history collection, was presented to the Chelmsford Museum.

Ads from the past

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