

THE PENNY



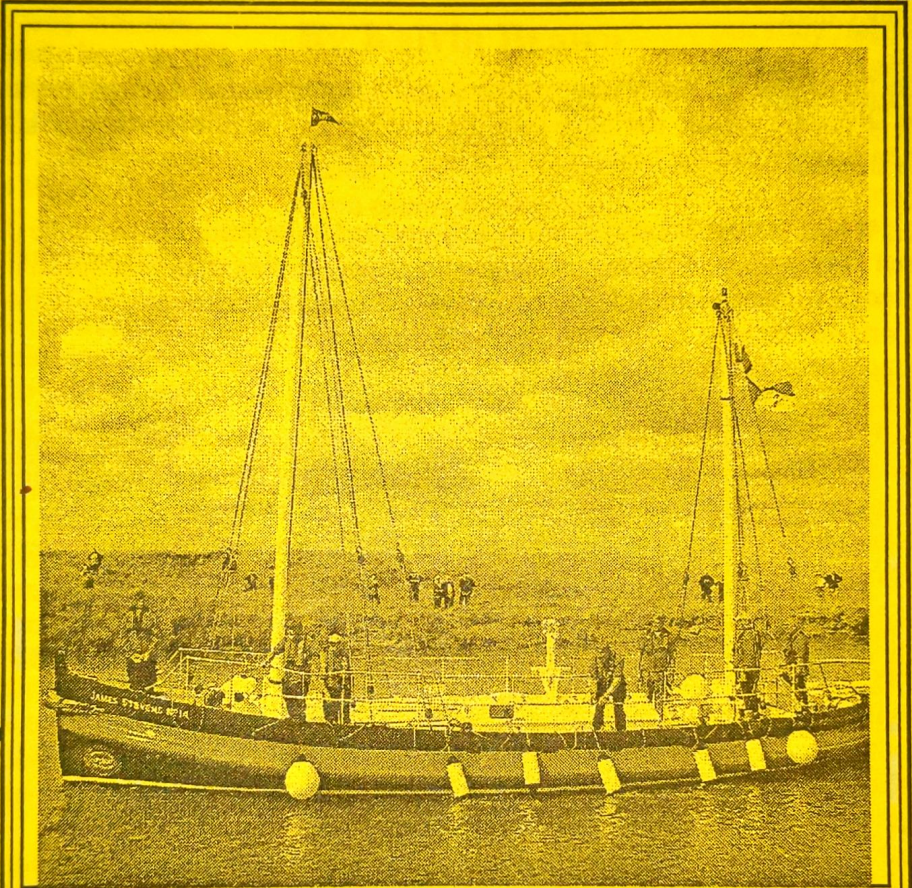
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The Maldon District Museum Association Newsletter



James Stevens to the rescue The story of an historic lifeboat - P13

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'Follow the mellow brick road' - a variation of the song from the Wizard of Oz could be used as a promotional aid for Maldon Museum, as the most remarkable alteration for 2010 is the approach to the Promenade Lodge with a new block paving path, smoothing the gradient to the entrance door.

This was the last of the many improvements to be implemented during the winter months by Maldon District Council, during which the exterior has been redecorated, key areas inside have been painted and the heating system improved.

The budget was almost exhausted when a choice had to be made between the path and a new front door. The path was chosen as the existing crazy paving path had become a trip hazard. A new door has been promised for next year together with improvements in the Long Room!

We are most grateful to the council for all this work.

My hope now is that the administration of the Museum can be freshened to match our smart surroundings. Help is needed on the financial side as our treasurer has to juggle a full time job with museum business, which has proved difficult at times. Are there any offers of a suitably qualified person to assist in the short term, with a view to taking over the duties at a suitable point?

The quality of our stewards has frequently been remarked upon by visitors. After many seasons some of our more senior stewards have asked to stand down from regular duty, The membership and stewarding secretary, Christine, would love to recruit some new stewards for a regular monthly slot on the rota to supplement her list of people. Do you know anybody who might be interested? Training will, of course, be given.

Finally, the Association does need, at least, two more committee members to share the running of the Museum from the 2010 AGM onwards, the agenda for which is included with this issue of the magazine. Please come forward, your help is needed.

Lastly, we hope that all members will visit the museum, once we have re-opened in April, to view what has been achieved and then publicise the delights to be found there to all interested in Maldon.

Paddy Lacey

Penny Farthing is dependent upon your contribution.

All articles, items, photos, comments and letters are welcome:
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Death came slowly as a brave man kept his faith

By Kelvin Brown

His death was hideous, his life hardly known, but just who was Stephen Knight, whose memorial stone is set into the wall of the old Maldon Iron-works building - now Cash Exchange - at Full-bridge?

He was not a local man, and it would seem that the unfortunate Knight was brought to Maldon in 1555 solely to meet a horrible and public death, one of around 300 Protestants across the country burned at the stake for committing heresy against the Catholic Church during the five-year reign of Queen Mary - 'Bloody Mary' - the elder daughter of Henry VIII.

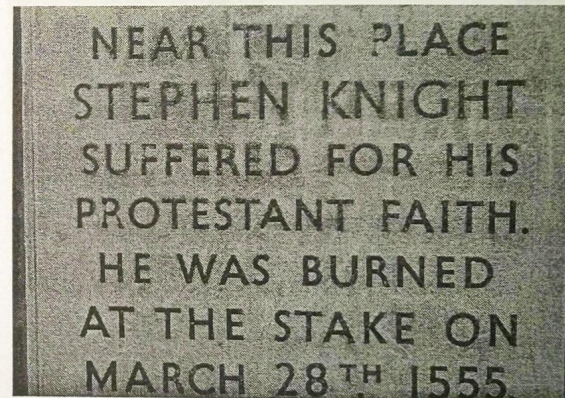
Stephen Knight, described variously as a barber and a butcher, was not tried for heresy in Maldon; he was examined in February 1555 by Edmund Bonner, the Bishop of London, who had been charged by the fanatical Mary to rid the country of so-called heretics.

Bonner, the former rector of East Dereham in Norfolk, went about his task with great zeal, and is said to have been responsible for sending

around 200 people to a gruesome death at the stake.

Even under Bonner's undoubted pressure, Knight refused to renounce his faith, so was sent to the notorious Newgate prison

possibly have arrived in a cart then, if able to walk, he would probably have been led to the stake, but if torture had robbed him of the use of his legs he would have been dragged or carried, watched by a crowd eager to see the spectacle,



in London - which had stood since at least the 12th century on the site of today's Central Criminal Court, the Old Bailey - and brought to Maldon in March 1555 to be burned at the stake, at the top end of the town, somewhere near All Saints' Church, where the maximum number of townspeople would see.

It must have been a most horrific scene: he would

but kept away from the fire by guards.

Armfuls of wood would have been stacked around him and he would eventually have died from either carbon monoxide poisoning or the effects of the flames. If he was fortunate, death would have come fairly quickly, but sometimes the fire was purposely kept small, or green wood was used, and it

Memories of much-loved parents and days playing with go-cart on the Prom

Robert Good shares a brief history of his family

This story follows my visit to the museum in the summer of 2009 as part of an event organised by the Moulsham Lodge Camera Club.

I have visited the museum, but on this occasion I was surprised to see that the display concerning the demise of Woolworth's included a photograph of the sales girls taken in the early 1900s. One of those girls was my mother, Edna Wade.

Edna was born on 22 March, 1917. In her early days she lived with her parents and six siblings, William (Bill), Edward (Ted), Helen (Haddy), Gwen, Beatrice (Beat) and Albert in Southminster.

Her father, William Wade, worked on the local railway branch line, while her mother, Bessie, was busy at home looking after the children.

Apart from my mother, the family lived and worked in the Southminster area for almost all their lives.

Edna married my father, John Alfred Good, at Southminster parish church in 1939. John orig-



Edna Good

inated from Tollesbury and later moved to Heybridge with his parents Isaac and Amelia. My parents set up home in Mill Road, Maldon. John served in the Royal Air Force during World War II and worked on barrage balloons in defence of our major cities. He suffered burns and a significant loss of hearing when he was in an accident where a balloon exploded.

For his service he was awarded the Defence Medal, although this was not formally presented until he was in his 80s and living in retirement in South Woodham Ferrers.

Once hostilities ceased in 1945, John returned to his job as a bus driver for the Eastern National Omnibus Company from the Maldon depot, then situated towards the bottom end of the High Street. He finished his career, spanning 45 years, as the Inspector in Charge.

Edna also worked for Eastern National, initially as a bus conductress but after a period of illness and the gradual introduction of one-man operated buses (then known as OMOs), she transferred to the Maldon office where she continued until the end of her working life.

I was born at the Danbury Park Emergency Hospital (1939-46), known locally as Danbury Palace, on 30

March 1945 and promptly joined the family at our rented house in Mill Road, backing on to the secondary school where I was later to be a pupil.

I remember my mother as being devoted to looking after her home and family. She was also handy with her Singer sewing machine and often 'ran up' costumes for events at the local primary school.

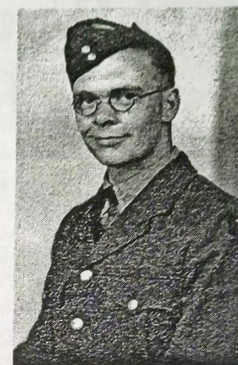
During my early years I spent many an hour on the Prom either swimming in the lake or riding my go-cart on the various slopes down towards the river. After a few years we moved to our final home together, in Volwycke Avenue.



Robert Good

Sadly Edna died prematurely in 1967, aged 50; John survived to the ripe old age of 90 and died in 2004. They are buried together in the London Road cemetery.

My first full-time job was also with Eastern National



John Good

at their head office in New Writtle Street, Chelmsford. After a couple of other employments I joined Essex County Constabulary (later the Essex & Southend-on-Sea Joint Constabulary and now Essex Police). There was a family connection as John's father, Isaac Good, had been a Special Constable during the 1914-18 war.

My first posting was to Brentwood, but I served in various locations throughout Essex and retired in 1999, after 30 years, with the rank of Superintendent. I went on to join the Gaming Board for Great Britain (now the Gaming Commission), where I specialised in regulating the casino industry.

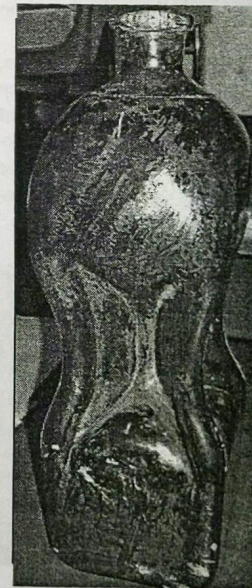
For most of my working life I have lived in Chelmsford, but always feel that Maldon is my home.

MUSEUM TO THE RESCUE

In October Dot Bedenham, head of social history at Chelmsford Museum, put a picture of this strange bottle on the 'Museums in Essex' website asking for any ideas on its origin.

Judy Betteridge, our accessions officer, replied that its shape is now much reproduced as 'hour glass decanters', sometimes with a silver collar.

The decanters would have been copied from the design of the illustrated bottle, which is clearly much older and usually described as a pinched waist bottle. It probably contained gin.



Up periscope! Would that be a trim or a shave today, sir?

To Charles Dibben, the customer was king, and he went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that none was ever turned away from his barber's shop at 21 High Street, Maldon – even when he had gone to lunch and the shop was empty.

Charles was never a man to miss his lunch, and never one to lock up while he was at home eating it, and he didn't have to, because he lived literally under the shop and kept an eye on the door by using a periscope that emerged through the shop floor.

On hearing someone above, Charles would have a peep through his periscope, put his meal back on the cooking range and climb the stairs to deal with the customer.

By Kelvin Brown

The first Dibben to exercise his craft on Maldon's heads was William, Charles' father, who previously worked in Bond Street, London.

He was listed at 21 High Street in the 1878 Kelly's Directory after seemingly taking over the business from William Cook, who appeared in White's Directory of 1848 and was still in business in 1874, when Kelly's described the business as "hairdresser and fancy repository".

Charles Dibben appears to have taken over the business in 1882 after moving to Maldon probably from Middlesex, which is where his first four children were



born. His first Maldon-born child arrived in 1884. In his early years in Maldon, Charles also turned his hand to manufacturing and marketing an anti-dandruff ointment called 'Scurfgofus', which he produced in his cellar and sold in pots.

Among Charles' children born in Maldon was Norman, who had a hankering for a career in horticulture, but took over the hairdressing business when his father died, to become the third generation of Dibbens in the trade.

The fourth generation is Norman's son Alan, who still works in the town, at Heirkutz in Wenlock Way; Alan cut his first head of hair under the expert eye of

his father, then served an apprenticeship with a barber in Chelmsford before starting his own business in Witham where he worked for nearly 30 years before returning to Maldon six years ago.

Norman moved from 21 High Street in the late 1960s to Brown's former painting and decorating shop near the Moot Hall, where he worked for three or four years before ill health forced him to take a year off work. When his health eventually allowed it, he helped Alan out in Witham.

Alan, who is now 58, remembers strange requests for haircuts from the mods

and rockers era, when girls came in to have their heads shaved except for a fringe at the front and long strands at the back. "I used to do quite a lot of that," he says. "And I remember when I started that most people had a haircut every two or three weeks, but not today.

"Dad used to do a lot of cut-throat shaves. People used to come in every day for a shave, and kept their own razor and strop in the shop."

In those days, customers expected – and were given – hot towels after a shave, but in Maldon today no-one wants a barber shave.

A barber's apprentice 100 years ago would have start-



Alan Dibben

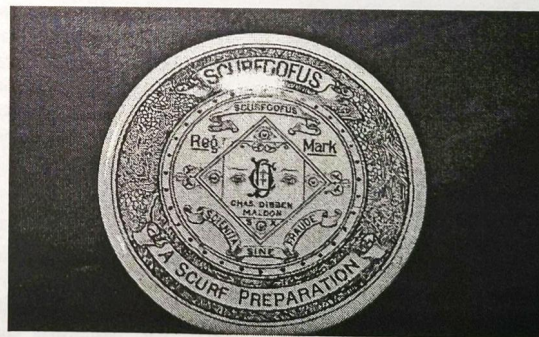
has been in the trade, and he knows he is the last generation of Dibben barbers, because his sons have no interest in following in their father, grandfather, great grandfather and great great grandfather's footsteps.

"It's very hard to get people to come into men's hairdressing," Alan says.

The hours are not so long today: in Norman Dibben's time a 9am to 7pm working day was normal, with a 6pm finish on a Saturday. But even if the hours are not so long, it still means being on your feet all day.

"My dad sometimes worked until 8pm, but he made sure he never missed his lunch break, just like my grandfather," Alan remembers fondly.

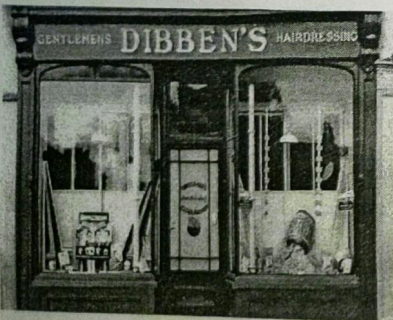
'Underground Maldon', produced by the Maldon Archaeological Group, says that the cellar at 21 High Street had a range, fireplaces and a butler sink.



Scurfgofus was sold in pots with Prattleware lids, which are now very collectable. A three-inch lid was sold on Ebay late last year for nearly £60

ed as a lather boy, and practised shaving on a balloon before being entrusted to wield a cut-throat razor across the face of a valued customer.

Alan has seen great changes in the nearly-40 years he



Top, Norman Dibben at work. Left, the shop at 21 High Street now a travel agency

A winter's tale from the museum

Some months ago, Steve Krolzig from Maldon District Council visited the museum to do a survey on maintenance work which needed to be carried out on the building.

Nothing more was heard on the subject, so imagine our surprise when, at the beginning of October, building contractors began to arrive, with a view to preparing quotations.

I managed to secure a copy of the proposed schedule of work, and initially momentary panic set in, as it was quite clear that in order to carry out the work, it would require an enormous effort on our part to prepare the Museum before work could commence.

In a nutshell, it was proposed to:

Completely redecorate the exterior of the building and carry out repairs to the roof, brickwork and lead flashing.

Internally, to repair and repaint the ceilings in Rooms 3 and 9, and to carry out repairs and completely redecorate the stairs area, and to drain

down the central heating system and to fit thermostat valves to all radiators.

With regard to this final item, I immediately put in a request for a new system timer, as the existing timer almost qualified as a possible exhibit in the museum and to use the modern parlance certainly was not "fit for purpose", and it was agreed that a new timer would be fitted.

Additionally, joy of joys, we might also have a new, larger, water heater in the loo and a new cistern.

As soon as we closed at the end of October, feverish activity began on stripping down the stair area, and where possible to cover all displays with plastic sheeting, as clearly there would be considerable dust raised as a result of the work.

It was with some trepidation that we handed over our precious museum to the building contractors, one of our major concerns being access to the building.

Once again, Steve Krolzig came to the rescue and

arranged for his park rangers to provide the contractors with access each day.

By the end of November, the work was completed and, in addition, since the existing front path was causing some health and safety concerns, a beautiful new path was constructed. Repairs to the stair treads were completed and it is planned to have all carpets cleaned before we open at Easter.

We have also had some discussions with Steve on possible improvements to be carried out during our next closed season. We are hoping that these will include a new front door, and repairs and re-decoration of Reception and the Long Room.

This has certainly not been our "winter of discontent!" - quite the reverse in fact. By the time you read this, we hope to have the Museum displays reconstructed, cleaned and ready for opening. Well, that's the plan, anyway.....

Judy Betteridge

When raining cats and dogs meant just that....

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, or you moan about having to finish yesterday's roast, think about how things used to be in the 1500s.

Hiding the bridal pong

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Help! Where's the baby?

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all

the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, 'Don't throw baby out with the bath water'.

Raining cats and dogs

Houses had thatched roofs, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. That's where we get 'It's raining cats and dogs'.

Fighting off the bed bugs

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. A bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection, which is how canopy beds came into existence.

...in the pot 9 days old

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big pot that hung over the fire. Vegetables and the occasional morsel of meat were thrown into the pot every day. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme, 'Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old'.

Bringing home the bacon

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could bring home the bacon. They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and chew the fat.

A hidden gem giving an amazing insight into local history say our visitors

Visitors are very impressed with the Museum and its wealth of interesting exhibits.

How do we know? Well, there is always a good 'buzz' when visitors are going round, which is an excellent sign, but we can also share some of the comments in the visitors' book.

Judy Betteridge has trawled the 2009 book for facts, figures and those all-important comments. A total of 1,076 people signed the book, including 52 overseas visitors from France, South Africa, Romania, Australia, Italy, Holland, U.S.A., Germany, Poland, Hungary, Canada, New Zealand, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Sweden, Sri Lanka, Spain, Singapore and Ireland.

There were 353 names from Maldon and surrounds, 425 from outer Essex and 246 from elsewhere in the UK.

"There was an encouraging jump in visitors from Maldon and outer Essex in August, which one would like to think was due to the issue of our new publicity three-fold, but might also be attributed to school summer holiday and the fact that more people have spent holidays in the UK last year," said Judy.

Visitors' book comments

- "Vibrant insight into local social history – but what about the alligator?"
- "An excellent Museum, hope you grow and grow"
- "Super – tres agreable a voir – bravo"
- "An amazing insight to local history – truly wonderful – keep up the good work"
- "Lovely little museum – rich history"
- "What took me so long to get here! Fantastic – many more visits to come"
- "A well-spent £1"
- "Wonder what will be here in 100 years?"
- "Excellent – a little bit of everything"
- "Beautifully put together – most enjoyable"
- "A hidden gem"
- "Wonderful – could look around for hours"
- "An excellent surprise of portrayal of Maldon's past"
- "Amazing display in such a small building"
- "Like a Tardis – larger inside and lots to see"
- "Charming – I would have been happy in the 40s"
- "It's far beyond the dreams of those of us who reformed the Museum Committee in the 60s"

- "Beautiful – interesting things and very helpful staff"
- "Loved the museum – will recommend it to my friends"
- "Very interesting – lived in Maldon for 9 years, and my first visit – thank you"
- "Excellent – very good value for money"
- "Really lovely – pictures are so good – a blast from the past"
- "Oh. Dear memories"
- "Grew up here – so happy to see a record of the history of my home town"
- "Very interesting – done with lots of love and care"
- "Above expectations"
- "Delightful collection – love the way you keep up to date"
- "Very interesting and the children enjoyed filling in the Child Guide as well"
- "Very interesting – answered my questions about the composition of sails"
- "At last I made it and it was worth coming"
- "Very interesting – saw my Grandad's swimming medals"
- "Delightful museum – thanks to all involved"
- "Lovely ladies – very interesting Museum"
- "Great exhibits and welcoming staff"
- "Very enjoyable – made me feel old!"
- "Past Carnival Queen 1950 – very interesting Museum"
- "Staff wonderful – museum very interesting"
- "2nd Visit – really enjoyed it very much"
- "Thorough enjoyable – we even got a guided tour"
- "Very interesting – nice ladies to talk to"
- "A credit to Maldon volunteers"
- "Best local Museum"
- "One of the best exhibitions we have seen for a long while"
- "A real treasure – an asset for Maldon – thank you"
- "Had a lovely time – staff were brilliant and very friendly"
- "I like the sords (sic) – they look soo sharp"
- "Lovely museum – really liked the attention to detail"
- "Excellent – found a picture of my Mum in the Woolies display"
- "Very friendly – and we liked the authentic smell of mothballs"
- "Good to see that obesity is not just a 21st Century problem"
- "One of the best local museums I have seen"
- "Well done to you all – fantastic museum"
- "Lovely to go into an artefact-rich Museum"
- "A brilliant little museum – better than a lot of bigger museums"
- "Best £1 I have ever spent"
- "Very funny and fun, and wasn't that man's coat big!"
- "Very interesting – I'm ex-Bentalls"
- "Very interesting – from Durban South Africa, I sent half my pocket money for food parcels in the war"
- "My fourth visit – a wonderful museum – Chelmsford should take note"

Blessed were the Dengie cheesemakers!

By Stephen P. Nunn

Throughout Maldon's history, harnessing the resources of the fields has been just as important as the better known heritage of fishing and fowling the River Blackwater.

Agriculture has played a major part in the evolution of our district and we know that sheep farming in particular was very lucrative here from the earliest of times.

You only have to study the story of the wool dealer John Fenn who, in the 15th century acted as a kind of middle man between the farmers on the Dengie and merchants of the (English) Staple of Calais.

John died on 15/8/1486 and lies buried not far from the entrance to the Rood Loft staircase in St. Mary's church - an all but forgotten character who was once a key player in the local wool industry.

His grave slab is not the only clue to the wool business in town - we also still have a Dyer's Road and, of course, a Tenterfield Road - the site where the 'tenters', or hooks, were erected to stretch and dry fleeces and cloths evenly in the sun.

However, Maldon's story pre-dates those medieval days by many centuries. Mention the place today and most people will talk about our famous battle with the Danes.

From that very same Saxon, 10th century, era we also have documentary evidence that the shepherds in this area were not just responsible for stopping the sheep from straying, they also had to "milk the ewes twice daily for the maketh of butter and cheese".



Historian William Camden

Nowadays Maldon is as famous for its salt as it is its Dark Age encounter of 991, but who has ever heard of Dengie ewe's cheese? Unfortunately it has gone the same way as Berkley, Reading Yellow, Banbury, Cottenham, Newmarket and Suffolk - nowhere, because all those cheeses are now extinct.



The cheese counter at Buntings

But from the time of the East Saxons right through to the 18th century, Dengie cheese was very big business indeed. The first cheeses were sharp and acidic. It is that acidity that converts milk into cheese naturally, a process that the Romans knew well.

Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 B.C.) mentions in his 'De Agricultura' it being used a great deal in cooking and one can imagine that being the case in the Romano-British homesteads in the small town of Heybridge.

Even those later Viking invaders liked cheese, but their preference was for a sweet, simple and delicately flavoured variety to balance their diet of salted fish.

The Premonstratensian Canons, located at Beeleigh Abbey from 1180, brewed their own ale and made their own cheese and that traditional mouth watering combination can still be experienced when

visiting Trappist abbeys, like St. Sixtus, Westvleteren, Belgium.

In this country cheese made from cow's milk was established in localities such as Cheddar, in Somerset, by Tudor times, but here in the wilds of Essex the ewe remained the main source.

An inventory dated 1301 and relating to an estate in Heybridge, refers to a building for making cheese. Those small huts were called 'wicks', a word that has survived as a place name - not least in Maldon.

Dengie cheese was still being produced in this area a couple of hundred years later when John Norden (1548-c.1625) in his 1594 'Description of Essex' comments on "the men who milked ewes on islands near the mouth of the Thames".

Just slightly earlier, William Camden (1551-1623) goes into a bit more local detail in his 'Britannia'.

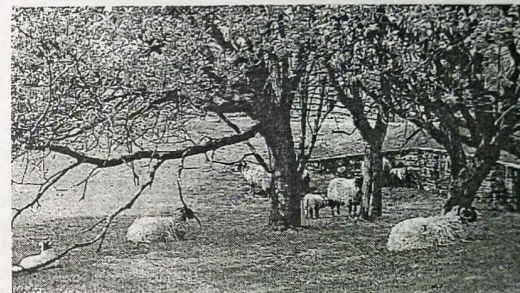
His important work (of 1586) is a nationwide survey of historical material and this is what he says about the Dengie: "...the grass here is excellent good and it is well stocked with cattle, but the air none of the healthiest.

"The only trade, almost, that is driven here is in cheese and men milk the ewes like women in other places.

"Here are made those cheeses of an extraordinary bigness which are used as well in foreign parts as in England to satisfy the coarse stomachs of husbandmen and labourers".

Another commentary (of about 1690) describes the cheeses as "massy and ponderous". Hardly what you would call an effective marketing campaign! Little wonder then that by 1720 Thomas Cox tells us in his 'Complete History of Essex' that: "...farmers used to milk their ewes and make

We have some great outlets in town - not least traditional businesses like the butchers at number 89 - Albert Bunting (founded 1882). As well as selling succulent cuts of meat, they also have an excellent range of cheeses. Amongst the selection of Cheddar, Cheshire, Gloucester, Stilton



Dengie ewes

cheese of milk but now the custom is disused because their milk makes the cheese strong". Clearly tastes had changed

Strong or mild, hard or soft, I don't know about you but I just love cheese and can't understand people who dislike it. It is such a shame that, as well as Maldon Salt and Tiptree Jam, we can't still experience Dengie cheese - or can we? Rather than shop in one of those huge, impersonal supermarkets, whenever we have the time we like to patronise our local shops.

and Wensleydale you will find a ewe's cheese.

In the name of history, although I am neither a husbandman nor a labourer, I tried some and what a fantastic flavour!

Suddenly the taste of the Dengie was alive again and since then, in common with Robert Louis Stevenson's Ben Gunn; "many's the long night I've dreamed of cheese - toasted mainly" (Treasure Island 1883)!



Cadbury came too!

The launch of James Stevens No 14

During the course of any year the Museum receives many queries that we try to answer as best we can but, more often than not, nothing further is heard once a reply has been given.

I was therefore surprised and delighted to receive from the Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust an invitation to the launch of James Stevens No 14, the world's oldest motor lifeboat, by Griff Rhys Jones, on Saturday 5 September, at Titchmarsh Marina, Walton-on-the-Naze.

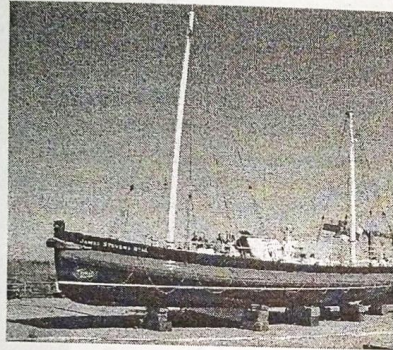
It was a breezy but lovely September day and the organisation of the event was of the highest order, with the families of the Walton lifeboatmen, past and present, being invited together with all those who had helped in any way with the restoration or research concerning the James Stevens No 14. My contribution had been a very brief description of the firm May and Butcher of Heybridge Basin.

The vessel, built in 1900, was the second RNLI lifeboat to be stationed at Walton and was originally powered by sail and oar. She was one of 20 vessels paid for out of a legacy to the RNLI by James Stevens, a successful Birmingham businessman.

She was fitted with a 40hp petrol engine in 1905, but with sail and oars retained. In her service career she was launched 126 times, saving 227 people, including 92 passengers and crew, together with two cats, on 29/30 December 1907 when the SS Peregrine of London ran aground during a Force 9 gale. The coxswain and his second-in-command were awarded medals for their part in the rescue.

She was sold out of service in 1928 to May and Butcher, who used her to tranship timber from vessels anchored in Colliers Reach to the Basin. In 1942 she was requisitioned as a fireboat on the Thames, at this stage named 'Mardee'.

After the war she passed into private hands and sailed extensively in the Colne and Blackwater estuaries. In 1961 she had a major refit in Cardnell's Yard at Maylandsea, then from 1963 to 1976 she was kept at Heybridge Basin, eventually being stripped of her engine and used as a houseboat



She was discovered there in the mid 1990s in a mud berth by a member of the Lifeboat Enthusiasts Society. Despite the ungainly superstructure that she had acquired the vessel was recognisable as a lifeboat, principally because of her wide fender. Much investigation and detective work established her identity and the Frinton and Walton Heritage Trust were notified of her existence. With the aid of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, supplemented by further grants from Essex County Council, Essex Heritage Fund and the Esme Fairburn Foundation and much local fundraising she has been beautifully restored and gained the status of being a Designated Vessel in the National Historic Fleet.

She was duly launched by Griff Rhys Jones, ably assisted by his chocolate brown Labrador Cadbury, which starred with Griff in the recent TV series on rivers.

Next year the James Stevens will be running pleasure trips around the Walton Backwaters, the setting for Arthur Ransome's *Secret Waters*. Shall we organise such a trip for our Museum workers? Let me know if you are interested.

Paddy Lacey

Maldon's Historic Churches



United Reformed

The first religious building on the United Reformed Church's site at the top of Market Hill seems to have been a meeting house built in 1696 on land acquired by the Rev Joseph Billio, who became its first minister.

The meeting house, which could accommodate 400 Protestant dissenters, was to see some fervent 'hellfire and damnation' preaching from Billio, and such was his reputation for launching into non-stop rhetoric, that he is said to be the source of the phrase "Like Billio". There are, however, other less likely contenders for the source of the phrase, including the *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette* in the US, which in 1882 used the expression in print for the first time in a story about someone "roaring like billy-hoo".

By 1800, Billio's original building was found to be unsafe and was demolished, to be replaced by the present church, which was enlarged as the church continued to flourish, acquiring its present appearance in 1878 with the addition of the pillared portico. By this time it was known as the Congregational Church.

In front of the church is the old British Schools building which dates from 1843 and provided education until 1911. If you look at the brickwork on either side of the front door you will see deep grooves caused by the pupils sharpening their slate pencils.

Today it is known as the United Reformed Church, a result of the uniting in 1972 of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches in England and Wales. It is an attractive building, enhanced by a decision in 1999 to refurbish the interior by removing the Victorian pulpit and downstairs pews, and adding a kitchen, toilet and enlarged entrance area.

The new heating, carpeted floor and sophisticated sound and video systems added at that time provide a comfortable and welcoming building which is much in demand for concerts as well as regular worship. And if you venture into the vestry you will see a portrait of Billio.

The hideous death of Stephen Knight (from page 3)

Could take as long as one and a half hours for the victim to die in the most terrible agony.

As the flames licked around him, Knight said his last prayers and recited part of Psalm 92, which begins: "It is good to give thanks unto the Lord." It is almost certain that Knight, who was honoured with a mention in Foxe's Book of Martyrs, published in 1563, was brought to Maldon to be burned so that other heretics in the town would take it as a warning of what they could expect if they persisted with their Protestant faith.

Not only would they risk a dreadful death, but their families would become outcasts in their communities. Possibly even worse to the mediaeval mind was the thought that their body would not be buried after death. In 'A History of Essex', A.C. Edwards says 73 martyrs in Essex died at the stake, whose "courage and cheerful steadfastness strengthened the Protestant cause".



Bloody Mary and the Essex connection

Mary, while still a princess in 1550, stayed at Woodham Walter with the Fitzwalter family, from whom the village gets its name. She was in very real fear for her life - so grave was her fear that she was about to be murdered that a boat was kept in readiness at Maldon to take her across the Channel to safety if needed. The Fitzwalters lived in a fortified mansion in a 900-acre park, but the house was demolished some time after the family moved to Beaulieu Palace at Boreham, which had been built by Henry VIII soon after 1516, the year that Henry bought New Hall, the house standing on the site, from Thomas Boleyn. Henry rebuilt New Hall in brick and renamed it

Beaulieu, and stayed there on at least one occasion, spending a month there in 1527. Beaulieu was said to have been one of Henry's favourites residences, and the young Princess Mary spent a great deal of time there in 1532 and 1533.

The house and its estate were gifted to Sir Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex and Baron Fitzwalter, by Queen Elizabeth I in about 1572, when he became her Lord Chamberlain. Radcliffe largely rebuilt the north wing - today's New Hall.

By the time the Fitzwalter family moved there Mary, of course, was long gone: she became queen in July 1553, forced England to return to Catholicism in 1554 and reigned until her death in November 1558. New Hall passed through various ownership, including Oliver Cromwell who paid five shillings for the estate in 1640, and George Monck, the first Duke of Albermarle, who frequently entertained Charles II's court there.

The house eventually passed into the ownership of the nuns of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, who opened a school there in 1799, and it remains one today.

Bridgemarsh - an island left to the waves

Bridgemarsh island, a pleasant stroll upriver from Burnham, was enclosed by a sea wall in the mid-18th century and was inhabited full-time until 1928, when floods swept across it, killing the livestock and forcing farmer Stan Clarke to move to the mainland. It was used for grazing, with occasional occupation by farmhands, for several more years, until the badly-neglected seawalls gave in to the force of the river. It was completely inundated by the east coast floods of 1953, when the clay that had formerly been used to make bricks was dug out by soldiers hastily drafted in to repair a breach in the mainland sea wall - and Bridgemarsh was left to the waves.

The lower part of an old chimney stack - once home to peregrine falcons - is all that remains of the brick and tile works that used Bridgemarsh clay to make its products, which were then taken on a tramway to a quay for loading on to sailing barges. It has since reverted to salt marsh, and today it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and important haven for wildfowl and salt marsh flowers.

A time to remember 248 brave young men



Stephen Nunn's latest book was released for sale appropriately on Remembrance Sunday at a time when young men giving the ultimate sacrifice for their country in a faraway country is much in the public mind.

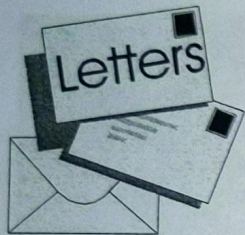
This book records in considerable detail the story of the 248 local men who gave their lives over 90 years ago during the First World War and gives some explanation as to why only 146 appear on the Town Memorial in Maldon. The figures are analysed in a masterful way but saying this may give the impression that the book is a dry academic tome - far from it. Stephen gives too the background of the social history of Maldon in 1914. He describes developments by the Royal Flying Corps at Goldhanger, the Navy at HMS Osea, gives an account of the Zeppelin raids on the locality and much more.

It is interesting to follow the events in the lives of three of the men, perhaps, best known to Museum visitors, Oxley Askew, the youngest in the area to die at 17 years, Ben Cobey, who richly deserved a VC for his action during the battle of Mons, and Sidney Wiggins, whose details are on display, but these are just a small selection of the stories that emerge from the text.

It is marvellous to learn that Stephen is involved in accompanying parties of students from Plume School to the Battlefields of France and imparting to them the sadness and horrors of trench warfare by researching the stories of local men.

This book is an excellent starting point for all seeking information and deserves a place on the bookshelf of everybody interested in our local history. It is available at the remarkably low price of £8.95p from the Museum Shop and from other outlets in the town.

Paddy Lacey



to the editor...

Letters are part of the essential lifeblood of any publication; they help us communicate thoughts and opinions we feel we ought to share with everyone, and sometimes they help us let off a little steam....so please get writing, we want to hear from every one of you

Remembering Ray Brewster

In October a new school welcomed its first 20 students. The school is called the Jenny-Ray Catholic Primary School and is located in a semi-rural part of the Ivory Coast.

Named for my late husband, Ray, who was for a time the museum's education officer, and for a good friend who was also taken by cancer, the school seemed a positive way of remembering their lives.

Education in French-speaking Ivory Coast is never free and often beyond the reach of families whose children may spend the day working in the fields.

The school has started small, with only first year students. A second classroom will be added this year, and another in each successive year.

It is situated on sufficient land so that gardening will be part of the studies, giving

a practical understanding as well as academic studies. This project started in 2005 when Ray and I became friends with a visiting priest from the Ivory Coast. Father Clement has

provided the experience and local knowledge and has also been able to affiliate the school with an existing, successful, Catholic school to help gain accredited status.

Chris Brewster

In Memoriam

Florence Barrell, always known to us as Floss, died aged 86 on 17 December, after a long illness that had involved her needing to be in a care home for the past three years where she was visited daily by her husband, Len, one of our vice presidents.

Long-time members of the museum association will remember that in early days at the Promenade Lodge, Floss would attend social functions where her sunny presence was most welcome. She had often contributed generously to the appeal for refreshments, being particularly noted for her delicious cheese straws!

Floss had worked at Bentalls and, later, as a supervisor at Woolworths. She was proud of Maldon and her family, the Dudeneys, and provided the museum with several photographs of her forebears for the collection.

Our thoughts are with Len, Colin, Lynda and the rest of the Barrell family at this time of loss.

PJL



A turn-of-the century photograph of the old Maldon Fire Station in London Road, complete with look-out tower. The building is long gone, and there is now a very fine pair of houses on the site. The weatherboarded cottages next door are still there, although looking very different today, and the town's former grammar school in the far distance is still an imposing property.

Make a note - dates for your diary

Wednesday 31 March 2.30pm - All stewards and would-be stewards invited to the Octagon at St Mary's to learn details of new season exhibits, followed by a private view of the museum

Saturday 3 April - Museum opens to public for the 2010 season

Friday 14 and Saturday 15 May - Museum taking part in national 'Museums at Night' campaign with courtyard event

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 September - Museum taking part in Heritage Open Days

TIMES PAST



Fifty years ago probably seems like yesterday to some of us, but who can remember much about these events from the start of the Swinging 60s?

1960

The Shadows had their first instrumental UK number one record, with 'Apache', Rolf Harris asked us to 'Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport' and Chubby Checker started a new dance craze with The Twist.

Labour politician Anthony Wedgwood Benn, whose family home is beside the River Blackwater at Stansgate Abbey near Steeple, resigned his Parliamentary seat on inheriting the title Lord Stansgate. He later renounced the title to return to the Commons.

More than 60 people died when 300 police officers fired on a crowd of 5,000 protesting about the hated pass laws in the South African Sharpeville township.

Gilbert Harding, of 'What's My Line?' fame and often described as the rudest man on television, died.

France exploded a nuclear test in the Sahara Desert, becoming the fourth country known to have nuclear weapons.

John F. Kennedy beat Richard Nixon by a narrow margin to become the youngest US President, at the age of 43, and the first Roman Catholic. He was sworn in the following January.

More than 20million TV viewers tuned in to the first televised royal wedding, when Princess Margaret married Anthony Armstrong-Jones at Westminster Abbey.

Bookshops sold out of the 200,000 first run of D.H.Lawrence's 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' on the first day of publication.

U2 spy plane pilot Gary Powers was jailed for 10 years in Moscow after being shot down at 68,000 feet 850 miles east of Moscow, then admitting spying for the CIA. Powers was swapped for a US-held Soviet agent two years later.

The contraceptive pill for women became available in the USA and tests began in Britain.



ST. CEDD'S CHATLINE

By Judy Betteridge

Yep folks! It's me - back again. Have you all survived the winter? That shiftless Liz Willsher cleared off to Oz to enjoy a visit to her family. I note that temperatures in Adelaide have reached 40 degrees recently, so I guess that Liz and Eric are perspiring gently while we freeze our b***s off here in the mother country.

By the time you read this, no doubt the daffodils will be in bloom, daylight hours lengthening and we will have forgotten all about the terrible weather we have experienced recently.

One of the worst aspects of it has been the impact which it has on our work, both at St Cedd's and the Museum. Betty and I have managed to get into St Cedd's for some sessions, keeping the accessions up to date. These have included a number of items, not previously accessed, which have been taken off display, so that's been a useful exercise.

Before Liz left for Oz, we also had a couple of sessions in our Bygones Store, tidying up and cleaning items where required. This resulted in the discovery of two large inkwells, which we originally acquired from the Moot Hall, so I thought it would be a kind gesture to offer one of them back to them (not entirely a charitable offer, I have to confess, as they are very large inkwells and take up a lot of space in our store!) Anyway, the offer was gratefully accepted, so a happy outcome all round.

We have already received some gifts from the London Borough of Newham, who kindly loaned us a selection of Maldon-related books and booklets. Some of these, including two copies of 'Maldon & the River Blackwater' by E.A.Fitch and signed by the author, have been processed into our collection and, with permission from the donors, the remainder will be offered for sale in our shop next season.

In case you haven't heard, 2010 marks the centenary of the Girl Guide organisation. (Remind me to tell you some time, of the dreadful goings-on which led me to being dishonourably discharged from that very organisation!).

ANYWAY, we are really hoping to find the time to set up a small display relating to Guiding in Maldon, and one of our stewards, Jean Wade, has provided us with photographs of her own experience as a Guide. If all goes to plan, have a look for the display in the Childhood Room.

That's about all the news for now - we have been at the Museum all morning, cleaning and restoring the displays, so it's afternoon tea for me now, snuggled into my wing armchair in front of a roaring fire - why is it always my crumplet which drops off the fork and gets incinerated?

Happy Easter to you all - the Cadbury cream eggs are on the shelves as we speak. Can summer be far behind?

TAILPIECE BY THE EDITOR

How well do you remember your childhood in or around Maldon? Margaret Mirza remembers hers very well, and wants to share her memories.

She also wants the rest of us to share our memories of those distant days when a child's life generally seemed more carefree (and more car-free, of course!).

Margaret is writing a feature for Penny Farthing which she plans to call 'Beyond the Playground' and which will doubtless give us an insight into what Maldon's youngsters were doing in the post-war years - and hopefully some of you will contribute your own memories of life in wartime and post-war Maldon.

Margaret would love to hear from you at mpmirza@hotmail.com

Everyone has got a story to tell - it's just that sometimes they don't know it! Putting words on paper can be extremely daunting. Where do I start? What bits should I put in? What should I leave out? As a journalist I guess I have mulled those questions over many thousands of times in a 40-year career that has included newspa-

pers, magazines and corporate television.

I could tell you that writing is really quite easy, but you probably wouldn't believe me unless you have discovered for yourself that writing can be fun.

If you would like to write something for Penny Farthing, don't be put off by that blank sheet of paper in front of you. Give me a call or drop me an email to talk about your idea, and I will try to help get you started and - if you want - work with you until you have produced something to share with everyone.

I am delighted that Stephen Nunn has written such an excellent and very knowledgeable feature for Penny Farthing this month, and I look forward to his future contributions.

I am equally delighted that Robert Good has committed memories of his parents to paper, and shared it with us. His parents were very well known in Maldon, just like many of our parents and grandparents were. It is important to document them before those memories are lost forever.

In the late 60s and early 70s I was a young reporter on the Maldon and Burnham Standard and, because I was the only member of the editorial staff who was actually a Maldonian, I became the museum reporter, which meant that I was sent down to the front office every time the late Cath-Backus came in with museum news, which was often.

In those days the museum was above Matthews' shop, next to the Swan pub, and I soon became familiar with the weird and sometimes wonderful exhibits that Mrs Backus knew and loved so well. Thinking back, I owe much to her for my interest in local history.

As the new boy feeling his way, I need to say thank you to a couple of people; former Penny Farthing editor Tony Mandara has been extremely helpful, and so too has another former editor, Len Barrell, who has provided me with a wealth of information for future issues.

Kelvin Brown

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

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