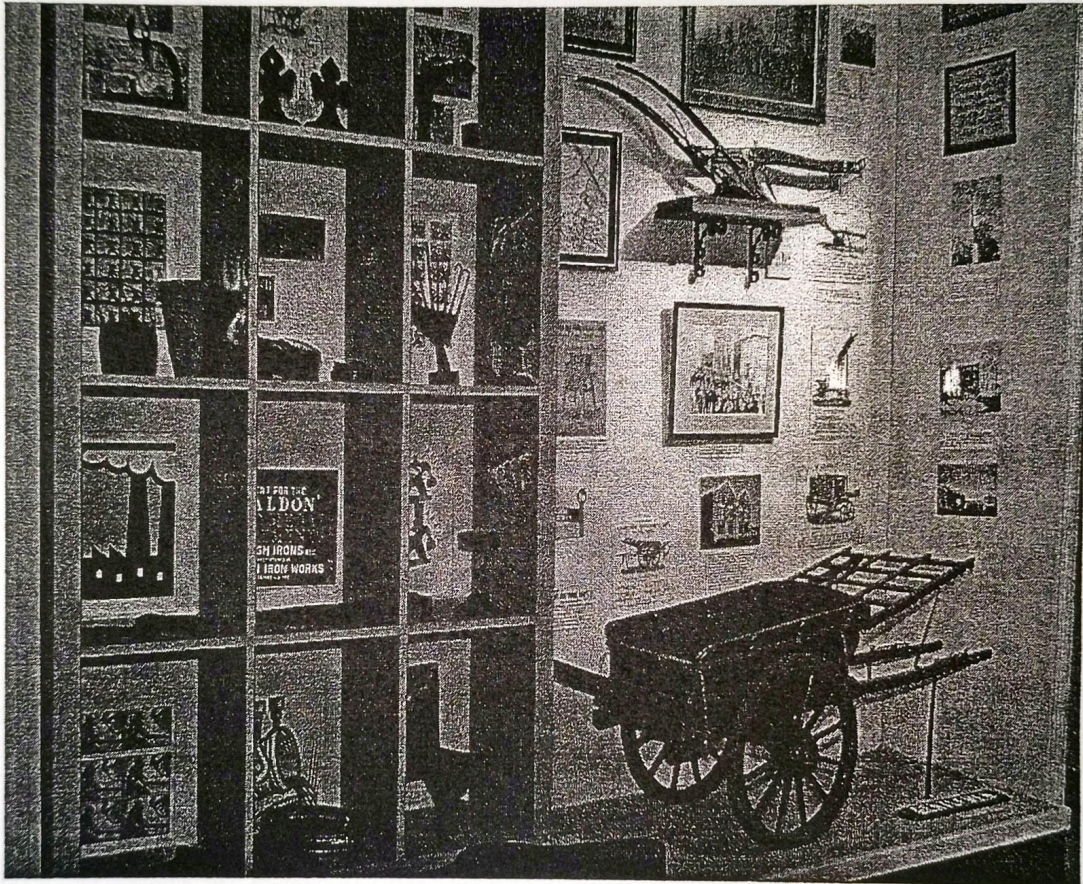
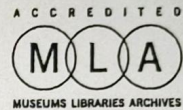


# THE PENNY



# FARTHING

The Maldon District Museum Association Newsletter



## Any old iron? New Museum display celebrates Maldon Ironworks

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## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

This is being written before the AGM whilst still waiting for the British Summer to commence. It is always difficult to assess how much the weather influences attendance at the Museum but there is no doubt that on the first May Bank Holiday the combination of a cold wet day and the proximity of the Bank Holiday Market, now being held on the Activity Field, that part of the Promenade Park closest to the Museum, produced a record number through our door; fortunately the stewards on duty coped superbly as always. Financial returns were pleasing but not supplemented, on this occasion, by our bric-a-brac stall mainly because of the weather. Last season this stall held on the later Bank Holiday Mondays and Heritage Open Days produced over £500 for funds. This amount is particularly useful as it can go towards the general running expenses whereas grants usually have to cover specific projects. I am certain that further sales will be organised during 2010 so if you have any suitable items to donate for the stall please could you let Liz Willsher or Judy Betteridge have details.

The main task of organising the stall has fallen on these two committee members and they have coped in admirable fashion but they are most anxious to recruit helpers to share what is a considerable but worthwhile venture both before and on the day of the sale. We also require books, preferably non-fiction, on subjects linked in some way to museum subjects for our secondhand bookstall that runs throughout the season. This, too, has proved a useful source of funds.

One grant received last year from the Maldon District Community Grant Fund has produced for us the very popular digital picture display situated in the Cinema area of the Museum where anyone unable to manage the stairs can view items on display in the rooms above.

We must thank Charlie Middleton and Peter Thorpe for providing the photographs and technical backup for this display. Unfortunately the Community Grant Fund has become a victim of general financial restraint and will no longer be available, making our own efforts regarding fund raising even more important.

All the signs suggest that despite all difficulties we shall have a successful season and I trust that you will all make use of your membership to pay the Museum a visit to see what is being achieved.

Very best wishes!

**Paddy Lacey**

*Penny Farthing* is dependent upon your contribution.

All articles, items, photos, comments and letters are welcome:  
Please send to: Kelvin Brown, 22 Granger Avenue, Maldon CM9 6AN.  
Tel: 01621 856528 or e-mail: kelvinbrown@tinyworld.co.uk

Last Date for copy for Autumn Issue 5 August 2010

# AGM hears of yet another good year for the Museum

Last year was the most successful yet for the Museum in terms of visitor numbers, membership secretary Christine Steel reported to the AGM in mid-May. Eight new stewards were recruited during the year, and thanks were due to all stewards for the work done, she said.

That sentiment was echoed by chairman Paddy Lacey, who had a particular word of praise for Maldon District Council's Steve Krolzig and for the council-appointed contractors who have done an excellent job both inside the Museum and outside. Paddy said particular thanks were due to the people who had worked 'week after week' to get the building ready for the first opening. Judy Betteridge reported that 169 articles had been recorded by the St Cedds team, including



Members at the AGM on 18 May

145 new donations; some large items had been turned down because they were too big to store. She reported that the London Borough of Newham had donated items including three copies of the Fitch book 'Maldon and the River Blackwater'. Other donations during the year included the beautifully-made model plough currently on display and a souvenir programme from the opening of the old Embassy cinema in March 1936.

The make-up of the Museum committee has changed slightly, with Margaret Simmonds standing down as both vice-chairman and committee member (but remaining as a Museum volunteer) to be replaced by Christine Steel (who also retains her membership secretary role), and Tina Miller replacing Ann Hamilton as treasurer after Ann stood down before the AGM through ill health. See page 23 for information on visitor numbers

# Up, up and away in Sir Claude's beautiful balloon

If you had walked along Downs Road, Maldon, on July 30, 1883, you might well have seen the start of an adventure that was to make aeronautical history.

Sir Claude Champion de Crespigny, who lived at Champion Lodge, Great Totham, (a lovely old house that Heybridge industrialist Edward Hammond Bentall had built for his son, which is now Totham Lodge nursing home), was preparing that morning to make an epic flight across the English Channel in a balloon piloted and owned by professional aviator Joseph Simmons.

Sir Claude had attempted the flight once before, on June 11, 1882, but that had ended in catastrophe, when he was forced to abandon the balloon after breaking his leg on take-off, leaving the intrepid Simmons to complete the journey alone. The take-off point was a paddock next to Maldon gas works at the top of the sloping land that rose from the river to the High

By  
**Kelvin Brown**

Street - a place chosen because 37,000 cubic feet of gas was needed to fill the balloon, called



'The Colonel', which was 75 feet tall when inflated. In his memoirs, former soldier and intrepid sportsman Sir Claude recalled: *"It was not until the year 1882, some time after I had finally settled down in my Essex home, that I first began to seriously turn my attention to ballooning, and resolved to engage in this most*

*fascinating and exciting pursuit.*

A compound fracture from the 1882 accident meant Sir Claude was not mobile again until September, but he was determined to reach the continent, so a year later again hired Simmons and his balloon, which it took more than six hours to fill with gas from Maldon gas works. Sir Claude wrote: *"Five hundred pounds of ballast in seven bags were stowed away in the car, and I made a small and useful addition in the shape of sandwiches and cold tea. We had already tried on our lifebelts for use in case we should fall into the North Sea, and nothing remained but to get in and get off as quickly as possible."*

At 12.30 Simmons and Sir Claude climbed aboard and the 20 or so men holding the balloon down by ropes were ordered to let go.

*"Greatly excited, and filled with admiration at the majestic manner in*

*which we took flight, the great crowd of spectators, who had been waiting patiently for several hours burst into loud cheers. The demonstration was kept up for some little while, and we acknowledged it by waving our hats."*

The flight of around six hours took them north-east to Holland and in doing so meant they were the first balloonists to cross the North Sea, although the English Channel had been crossed a number of times from England to France.

It earned Sir Claude the Balloon Society's gold medal for "indomitable

**"The balloon came down with a bump, shot up again and struck the tree. It burst with what was described as a terrific report"**

courage" and ensured his lifelong love of ballooning.

Joseph Simmons met an unfortunate end just a few miles from Sir Claude's Great Totham home; he and two others took off from the

Irish Exhibition at Olympia in August 1888 intending to cross to the continent. However, they decided for some reason to land at Ulting and threw out an anchor-like grapnel on a rope to catch a hedge or something else to slow the balloon.

Sir Claude was not involved in that flight, but recalled later: *"The grapnel caught in an elm tree, and Simmons seems to have made a premature attempt to reach the ground. The balloon came down with a bump, shot up again, and struck the tree. It burst with what was described as a terrific report, the car was dashed into fragments, and Simmons came by his end. So the dauntless aeronaut died in harness."*

Aside from his ballooning exploits, Sir Claude - who was born in 1847 and died in 1935 - was an amazing man: he inherited a baronetcy at the age of 21, served in both the Royal Navy and the Army, was a war correspondent on the Nile, volunteered for the South African War in 1900 at the age of 53, won the Indian Grand National, rode in the

English Grand National several times and would box anyone - once fighting for almost one and a half hours with a broken finger.

He was a daredevil sportsman, riding in steeplechases in England, Ireland and India for half a century, fox hunting whenever he could, as well as rowing, sailing and swimming. Champion Lodge had its own cricket ground and a racecourse where Sir Claude staged races each year until 1903. Twice bankrupt, a friend of royalty....and remembered locally as a gentleman.

---

## **Did you know?**

**Edward the Confessor was the first English monarch to be declared a saint.**

*England's shortest reigning monarch was Queen Jane (Lady Jane Grey) who reigned for just 9 days in 1554.*

**King Henry VIII weighed 21 stones in later life.**

# GREAT FIRE OF MALDON

## High Street disaster in 1892

Mr. A. Hyde Kirkham, a Londoner by birth, had just returned from his afternoon constitutional. It was a normal kind of day for the time of year and he hadn't noticed anything unusual as he made his way to his temporary "digs" at 'The Chequers' inn (on the site of Barclays Bank).

It was almost half-past five and he was looking forward to his tea, but he had barely touched it when he heard a commotion outside. A servant named Hitchcock had seen smoke coming from the closed premises of one of the shops. She ran up to the Fire Station in London Road and alerted the superintendent,

By Stephen P. Nunn

Mr. J.W. Hawkes. At about the same time the fire alarm bell at the Moot Hall was set off by duty Police Constable Barrow.

A desperate cry came from Mr. Kirkham's landlady, Mrs. Spurway (John Spurway was the landlord of 'The Chequers' from about 1890 to 1897): "Oh Mr. Kirkham, Mr. Orttewell's is on fire!"

What followed would be one of the worst disasters that the historic heart of Maldon has ever experienced. That account of the start of the mighty conflagration

of Sunday, 17 January, 1892, is based on a personal narrative written at the time.

"Mr. Orttewell's" was, in fact, Frank Orttewell and Son, 'Manufacturing, Furnishing and Builder's Ironmongers and General Merchants', whose commercial premises were located in the former 'Black Bull' inn at 53 High Street. The large, ancient wooden building fronted the main road but went back as far as Bull Lane and it was literally crammed with highly flammable stock – oils, barrels of gunpowder (some said 60cwt of it!), cartridges, matches, brooms, brushes and matting. The origin of the fire was beneath Orttewell's old staircase and, although the police forced open the shop door, the building was soon turned into an inferno. The whole house began to fall in as glass, tiles, slates and timber



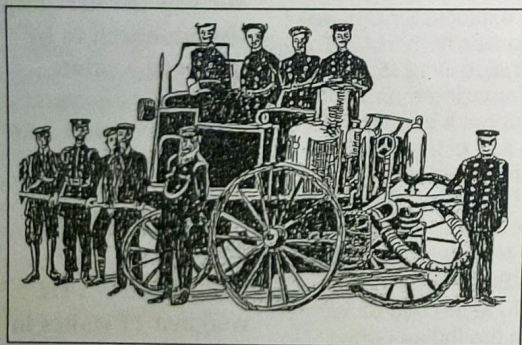
crashed down. The flames were fanned by a strong easterly to south-easterly wind and soon gained in area and intensity. They quickly spread one way heading for the Moot Hall and in the opposite direction towards the junction of Market Hill. Soon all of the shops around were engulfed. Up the High Street the premises of Mr John Marrison, bootmakers; Miss Thompson, dressmaker; and Mr Frederick George Green, tailor, were consumed. Similarly, down the town the businesses of Mrs Andrews, jewellers; Mr Edward Rudkin, tobacconist-cum-hairdresser and Mr James Fuller,

bootmaker (manager Mr Thorpe), also fell victim. Even the shops on Market Hill felt the effects - not least Mr Joseph Croft, the tailor and outfitter, and Mr Hayes, wine and spirit merchant. At the rear the storerooms in narrow Bull Lane also began to smoulder. Everything was on fire from ground floor to roof and burned with a devouring roar. The heat was so intense that it cracked the windows and scorched and blistered the businesses on the opposite side of High Street - the Post Office (number 52), Bentall and Sons (50) and Mr Elsey's, the chemist (54).

The smoke was thick

and blinding and at times the flames were as high as All Saints' Church steeple. The Maldon Fire Brigade (founded in 1874) equipped with both manual and steam fire engines, were turned out as soon as possible but were struggling to make any real impact. Their efforts were not helped by the fact that the mains were turned off and they had to obtain a water supply from the Friary pond, but they were soon assisted by a manual engine from the Essex and Suffolk (Equitable Insurance Co's) Brigade. Thousands of onlookers assembled and shop

Continued page 8



owners and residents hurriedly tried to remove valuables - legal papers were gathered up from the Beaumont and Bright's solicitors office; the mace and borough charters from the Moot Hall; and jewellery from Mrs Andrew's shop.

Some items mysteriously disappeared, looted during the confusion that followed - bales of cloth, hats from Mr Green's; tobacco from Mr Rudkin's; and 3/6 off the mantlepiece at Mr Bright's.

The excitement was so great that all evening church services were cancelled as people flocked to the scene, many of them in tears at the sad sight. Even the mayor, councillor Edward Arthur Fitch, was



A reminder of the fire



The High Street today

on site from 6.30pm to half-past midnight. Mr Kirkman finally retired at 1 o'clock and by the start of business on Monday morning a full 50 yards of shop front-ages had been completely razed to the ground. Six families had also been left homeless and many of those former residents had lost everything. To make matters worse, some of the victims were also suffering from a severe attack of influenza. The overall damage was estimated at £15,000 to £20,000. All around, smoke and steam hung in the air. There were blackened ruins, rubble and ashes. Miraculously, Mr Archer's, draper, on the corner of Market Hill, survived unscathed, as

did (but only just) the 1860 Public Hall at numbers 43 and 45. However, in just a few terrible hours the town had lost some very ancient timber-framed buildings. Enquiries followed and although someone pointed out that Orttewell's had a similar fire on a previous Sunday in January, nobody worked out exactly how it had happened. As the Rev Horwood, Vicar of All Saints', put it: "What the exact origin was we might never know." The whole town seemed demoralised but gangs of men started to clear away the debris. The manual fire engine stayed on site for days and the borough flag was set at half-mast.

**Continued page 16**

## Close encounters of a watery kind

Eric Willsher remembers the day he had to wear cousin Betty's clothes!

I am writing this, not so much from my own memory, but more the memory of hearing the story recounted at family gatherings in my early years.

The event took place 72 years ago, when I was three and a half years old, and one might speculate as to whether I would be psychologically scarred by the trauma!

My Uncle Bill (Easter) lived in Navigation Cottage on the canal bank near the Wave bridge at Heybridge, named after the pub that once traded nearby.

Our family frequently visited Uncle Bill and his family, as his wife Ivy was my father's sister. They had a daughter, Betty, a day older than me.

On this particular occasion we had a midday meal and afterwards the men took Uncle Bill's boat from its mooring outside the house, loaded myself and other family members in, including the dog, and set off for a trip along the canal.

They had only rowed a short distance from the house when the dog decided to jump into the water for a swim. This action must have prompted me to follow suit and I disappeared over the side and vanished into the murky waters



of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation.

Luckily for me a lone walker on the tow path called out "Oi, mate - you've lost one! Uncle Bill dived in and retrieved me from the bottom of the canal where I was lying face upwards. Resuscitation was obviously successful and I was taken indoors to be warmed up.

Now, you would have thought that my problems ended there, but worse was to come!

As my clothes were dripping wet I had to be dressed in Betty's clothes, whom you must have concluded was a girl. Had I been aware of this action I would probably have jumped back into the canal! Having recovered from the traumatic events of near-drowning and enforced cross-dressing, I became ill with

scarlet fever some time later. This illness, fairly common at the time, resulted in a stay at the Heybridge Isolation Hospital, which was situated at the Maldon end of Broad Street Green. Some of the buildings still remain there, although now private houses.

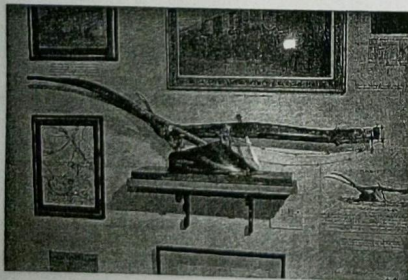
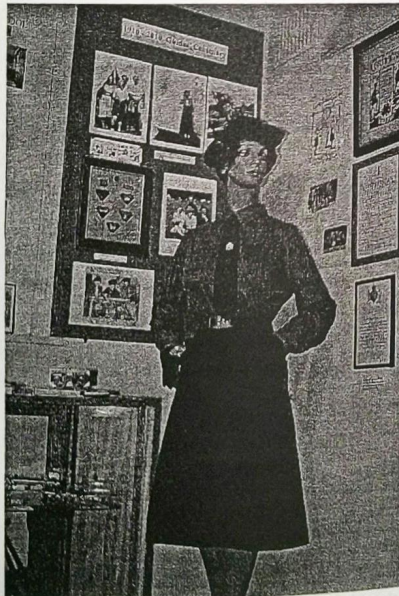
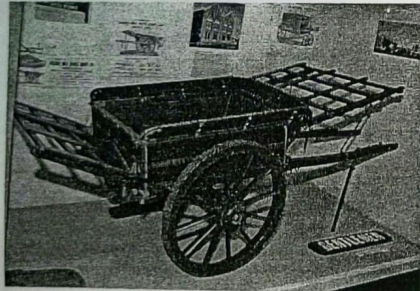
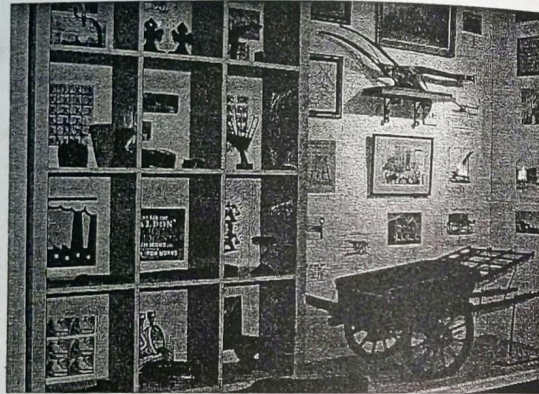
In addition to the hospital stay and, which must have been just as upsetting for me, was the fact that my clothes and all my soft toys had to be burnt to prevent the spread of the disease to others. These drastic measures were commonplace at the time.

I made a full recovery and the episode has certainly not left me with a fear of water. In fact, I have been a keen swimmer but not usually in the weed-infested canal waters.

I must reassure you also that I have never felt the urge to wear girl's clothes, either!

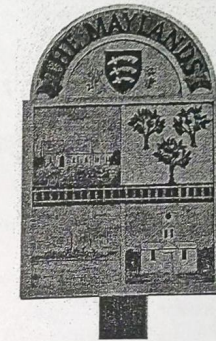
# Maldon Ironworks and Guiding -displays for 2010

TheMuseum's new displays for 2010 celebrate 100 years of Guiding and the engineering excellence of the old Maldon Ironworks, which produced everything from cast irons signs to agricultural equipment. Both displays are well worth a visit.



# Utopia in a Mayland market garden

Mayland owes much to one man's dream of Utopia. Manchester printer Thomas Smith read an account in *The Clarion* in 1895 of a family living off just three acres of land, and headed south to 11 acres at Mayland after advertising for 'socialist settlers' to join him. He arrived in 1896 and immediately set to work to establish a successful market garden, where he practised what was known then as French gardening, and where his visitors over the next few years included the Russian anarchist Prince Peter Kropotkin, labour leader and MP Keir Hardie and novelist Henry Rider Haggard. Smith's efforts so impressed American soap manufacturer Joseph Fels, who wanted to provide long-term opportunities for the unemployed by putting his money in to schemes which offered an agricultural alternative to urban occupations, that he bought the neighbouring 600-acre Nipsells Farm. Fels split it in to 21 holdings, each with house, outbuildings and fruit trees, and invited 'settlers' from London to enjoy the country life.



Smith was so taken with his new neighbour's enterprise that he became supervisor of Fels Small Holdings and manager of Fels Fruit Farm, Windmill Nurseries and French Garden. In fact, Smith became an acknowledged expert on market gardening and wrote an authoritative manual on the subject. But Fels' scheme was not as successful as Fels and Smith had anticipated, because the plots were too small and Mayland was too remote from a good rail link for easy access to markets. There were a number of other examples of the search for Utopia in Essex, including the Tolstoyan anarchist colony at Cock Clarks which survived for a few years just before the

end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As well as practising self-sufficiency, its members ran a printing press publishing translations of Leo Tolstoy's work, which included his ideas on non-violent resistance in such works as *'The Kingdom of God is Within You'*, and novels including *'War and Peace'* and *'Anna Karenina'*, and for a while sheltered members of a Christian dissenting sect called the Doukhobors who had fled Russia to avoid persecution. A Doukhobor and follower of Tolstoy called Vladimir Chertkov, had arrived in England in the 1890s and set up a publishing venture in Russian and English, of which the press at Cock Clarks was undoubtedly a part. The Doukhobors left Essex for a new life in Canada (where there are now 40,000 of them), and took some of the Cock Clarks colonists with them. A few other members of the Tolstoyan colony left in 1898 to help set up a colony in Gloucestershire. It appears that the Cock Clarks colony officially folded in 1904.

**Kelvin Brown**

# Martha Chapman - England's only station mistress

By Irene Allen and Dr Patrick Chaplin

At the turn of the twentieth century it was unusual to find women in *any* senior position on the railways in Britain, but the tiny hamlet of Langford can boast a 'first' as far as the ladies are concerned.

In 1906 Mrs Martha Chapman became station mistress at Langford and this claim to fame was reinforced when a postcard of the station was produced in 1910 bearing the legend 'Langford Station - the only Station in England having a Station Mistress'. Mrs Chapman's appointment in 1906 was indeed a remarkable achievement, especially bearing in mind that women were not even allowed to vote until 1918. Although the station, station house and enamel signs advertising 'Hudson's Soap' and Sutton's Seeds' can be seen on the postcard, no image of the lady herself was included. Regrettably our research (thus far) has failed to produce a photograph of her.

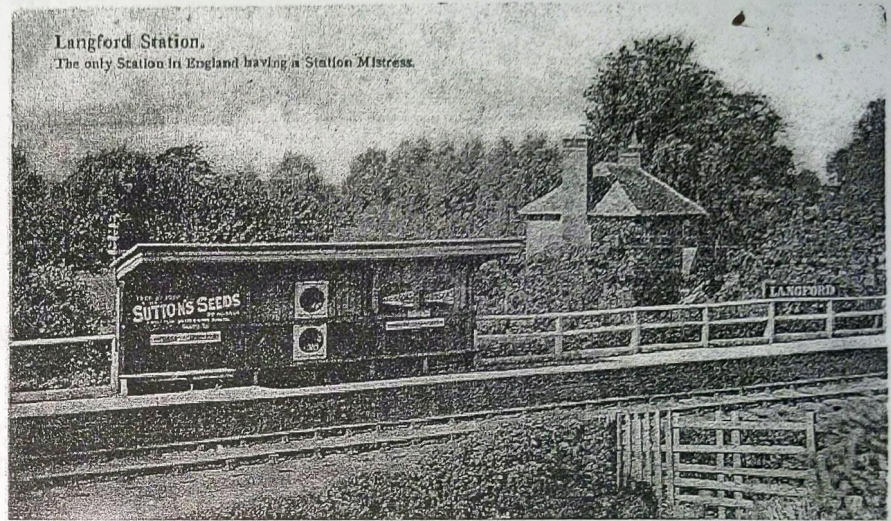
Our research has shown that there were station mistresses as far back as the 1870s, and over 70,000 women filled hundreds of different grades of post during the Great War. Among the first women employed on Britain's railways were those universally known as 'station mistresses' but who were, in fact, the female equivalent of a clerk-in-charge (or porter-in-charge), a railwayman who sold tickets and performed administrative work at a small station or halt.

As the sole member of staff, the clerk-in-charge also performed the duty of crossing keeper (where applicable) and of porter (weighing and handling parcels, attending to trains and passengers, lighting signal and station lamps etc). (Source: Helena Wojtczak: *Railwaywomen. Exploitation, Betrayal and Triumph in the Workplace* (Hastings: Hastings Press, 2005).

In the main, most women employed on the railways were engaged in telegraphy or clerical duties but as Ian Wallace revealed in his book *Single or Return - The Official History of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association* (London: TSSA, 1996) some worked in other capacities which included Ms Chapman in 1906, and o'er the border that same year Wallace found another female station mistress at Rosemount, Scotland, on the Caledonian Railway.

The red-brick house at Langford, which just happened to be in the vicinity of the station when the latter was built, was established as the Station House. However, its age preceded the line by at least 100 years. A footpath from the Maldon road passed the cottage gate en route to the platform.

The station (or more accurately the halt) served both Langford and Ulting, even though Ulting is more than a mile and a half down the road in a westerly direction! Valerie Ellis, who lived in Railway Cottage for more than 35 years during the second half of the twentieth century, told us that she spotted the classic Grade II cottage, with its triangular garden, while driving across the railway bridge and later



purchased the property.

More recently, Valerie featured in an article 'Railways Make Wonderful Homes' on the website [www.railfan.net](http://www.railfan.net) and told a reporter: "The former residents sold train tickets from the window of what became my bathroom (*and*) put the flag out to stop the train and worked the level crossing."

Long-time Langford resident Albert Chaplin (father of one of the authors of this article) who was born in 1920 and raised in a cottage across the road from Station House, can only ever remember purchasing tickets on the train from the guard.

Museum chairman Paddy Lacey recently commented: "In 1921 booking facilities re-continued at many smaller stations, including Maldon West, to be replaced by conductor-guards on the trains. This would be in accord with your father's memories."

In the same year as the aforementioned postcard was produced it is sad to relate that a serious illness befell Mrs Chapman's husband Charles. The *Wickham Bishops & Langford Parish Magazine* (Issue No 140 - February 1906) stated:

"One serious case of illness in the parish was that at Langford Railway Station. Mr Chapman, the husband of our station mistress struck down suddenly, and slowly became weaker. Most unfortunately, Mr Chapman became at the same time totally blind."

Continued on page 19

## Review: *Branch Lines to Southend and Southminster* by Vic Mitchell



The only known picture of Stow St Mary Halt, which was open for just 11 years - between 1928 and 1939

This book, the latest in a series well known to railway enthusiasts, is to be published in late May 2010 by Middleton Press at £15.99p. It will be of interest to all involved in our local history as it covers in detail the line from Woodham Ferrers through Maldon West to Maldon East and the line from Wickford to Southminster in addition to that from Shenfield to Southend. The Museum has contributed some illustrations that were donated to us by Vera Swindale on the death of her husband, Dennis, including the only known image of Stow St Mary Halt, whilst open between September 1928 and September 1939. The version of the name for the halt in Stow Maries was insisted on by the incumbent, the Rev Smythe, whose rectory was one of the closest dwellings it. The site of this station is now a linear 6 acre nature reserve belonging to the Essex Wildlife Trust, famed in the summer months for its display of glow worms! The book will be available from the Museum shop at £15 for members of MDMA, plus postage if this should be required.

**Paddy Lacey**

## Maldon's Historic Churches



### St Michael the Archangel, Woodham Walter

Built in 1563, St Michael the Archangel is the only church built in Essex in the reign of Elizabeth I and one of only six in England. There was a previous church in the village but its exact location has never been established.

Much of the interior of the old church was incorporated into the new; part of the roof structure is from the late 14th or early 15th century, and writing on some pillars is from the late 15th century. The font, dated no later than 1400, is also from the old church.

The church's three bells include one cast by Giles Jordon or his son Henry in 1470, which is probably from the original trio of bells in the original church. The second bell is inscribed 'Miles Graye made me in 1676' and the third 'Tho. Gardiner Sudbury fecit 1713'. Miles Graye and his father - also Miles - had a bell foundry at Colchester and between them cast bells for more than 100 churches in Essex alone, including the single bell for St Mary and St Margaret at Stow Maries, which is dated 1686..

The building of the church is commemorated in a red-painted wooden tablet over the door into the vestry, inscribed '1563 JP'; although building obviously finished in 1563, the church was not actually consecrated until April 1564. Who JP is is a mystery, although it may have been the initials of the master builder brought in for the project by Thomas, Earl of Sussex, who commissioned the building of the church after obtaining a licence to do so from Elizabeth I in 1562.

St Michael the Archangel has been revised and upgraded several times over the years but still retains its Elizabethan charm and beauty.



## The Great Fire of Maldon

-from Page Eight

Life gradually began to return to normal and the majority of the rebuilding was quite speedy - most of the shops being reconstructed in either 1892 or 1893. However, two sites were left vacant for a further 15 years or so, until a 'new' post office filled the gap.

And what evidence is there of all this today? Amazingly, over 100 years later we can still explore the scene. The site of Orttewell's, where it all started, is now the 'Abbey' (number 53). Next door, at number 55, in the place of the jewellers' shop, is now a shoe repairer; 57, Mr Rudkin's, is now dedicated to home furnishings and at 59 we have a dress shop, formerly James Fuller the bootmaker.

Above 57 and 59, carved into the brickwork, is the date 1892 and there is a narrow alleyway between the two shops. And is it my imagination or is the upper brickwork at number 61 (formerly Archer's, now Coe's) still plackened? In the opposite direction. Dorothy

Perkins now occupies the 'gap' (at 49 and 51) that was later filled by the mock-Tudor post office of 1909.

Next door, at 47, Frederick Green's the tailors, is now the current post office (with a date of 1893 aloft). If there is a positive 'phoenix' that emerged from the ashes of that terrible January night, then it must be the architecture of the current block of buildings. For despite being, more or less, of one specific period of rebuild, the replacements are all quite different.

The Victorians loved to re-create a dreamy, older image, copying aspects of design from medieval (Gothic revival), ancient Greek (Greek revival), Roman, Egyptian, Tudor and other eras. If you look above the modern shop fronts you will see that many of these styles are wonderfully reflected in numbers 47 to 59. But what of the predecessor buildings? Well, believe it or not, some last vestiges of those old structures also survive. On the pavement you will notice earlier round iron coal-shoot

covers and beneath our feet are the (albeit partly filled-in) original cellars - the back wall to the one at 51 could even be as early as the 15th century. Can you just imagine what the historic buildings above it must have been like?

The Great Fire of Maldon certainly has a lot to answer for!

## Dengie100 marshes invaded by army of mice

Life on the marshes of the Dengie Hundred was far from easy in the Middle Ages.

In 'A Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World' published in 1631, John Speed writes: "The Year of Christ 1581, an Army of Mice so over-ran the Marshes in Dengey Hundred near unto South-minster in this Countie, that they shore the grass to the very roots, and so taunted the same with their venomous teeth, that a great Murraine fell upon the Cattle which grazed thereon, the great loss of their owners."

## When derby day meant Maldon and Heybridge turning out in force

There was a time when local football inflamed passions - and nowhere more than in Maldon and Heybridge.

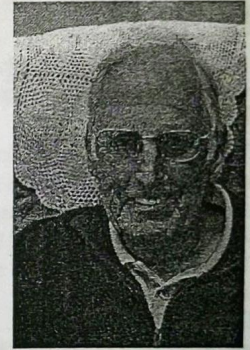
If you lived in Maldon you invariably supported Town in those early post-war days, and if you hailed from Heybridge you were a Swifts fan - at least, that was how it always seemed to be.

Malcolm Willis remembers those days well as he played for Swifts, after joining them in 1946 from the Heybridge youth side. "When Maldon and Heybridge played each other in the Boxing Day and Easter Monday derbies, we could have crowds of 2,000 to 3,000," said Malcolm, a native of Heybridge Basin. "I remember my dad telling me they had a gate of £80 at a derby, when people were paying 6d each to get in."

Malcolm, who is now 80, also remembers Maldon's MP, Tom Driberg, watching the derbies and then taking the players for a welcome drink afterwards in the Railway Bell in Station Road.

"We were all amateurs in those days. There was no payment, and we could only play if we paid a yearly sub," said Malcolm, who spent a couple of years in the RAF before coming home in 1949 and playing for the Swifts again, before playing for Crittalls in 1950/51, then returning again to the Swifts before doing what was almost unthinkable back in 1954 and signing for arch-rivals Maldon Town, where he played a couple of seasons before a cartilage injury stopped his playing career.

He went on to manage the reserve side and then to coach the youth team. "Great days," said Malcolm. "I enjoyed them all."



Malcolm Willis



Heybridge Swifts about 1948. Malcolm is centre front



## to the editor...

Letters are part of the essential lifeblood of any publication; they help us communicate those 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

### Some more memories of 1940s Mount Pleasant

I regret I must draw your attention to an error in Penny Farthing No 60 (Winter 2009).

On page 17, regarding Mount Pleasant, items numbered 65, 67, 69, 71

and 73, should read: 65 Mrs Mead (Snr); 67 Mr and Mrs Mynard; 69 Mr and Mrs Firmin; 71 Mrs Atkinson, Colleen, Shirley and Jill; 73 Mrs Cuthbe, Tom Thorpe.

An interesting bonus, at least to our older members, might well be a list of fire watchers drawn from the Mount Pleasant residents in 1943 or there-

abouts: Fred and Mrs Cooper, Roger Atherton and Ivy, Fred Mead, George Mead Snr, George Mead Jnr, Edward Eary, Louis and Mrs Emma Firmin, Jack and Mrs Lucy Vince, Frank and Mrs Emily Barrell, Donald Barrell, Leslie and Mrs Alice Mynard, Walter and Mrs Florence Clarke, Jack Bunting, Mrs Dorothy Little, Miss Bertha Bourne.

Len Barrell



A hundred years ago there was time to stand and be photographed in Maldon High Street without the intrusion of traffic. Left to right are Askews at 108, Cooks at 106, the Assembly Room at 104 and Dolphin pub at 102

## New guide to 'a great oddity'

A new guide has been published about a unique local church. The 17-page 'A Guide to St. Giles' Church, Langford' has been written by churchwarden Irene Allen, and forms part of her on-going research into the history of the village. Local company CML Microsystems PLC sponsored the printing of the guide.

Irene said: "A small guide to Langford which takes visitors on a short tour of the village which, of course, includes St. Giles', was produced in 1999 but I wanted to produce something more detailed because St Giles' Church has such a fascinating history."

St. Giles' was once described by travel writer Norman Scarfe in his book 'Essex: A Shell Guide' as 'a great oddity'. Irene said, "That is because our church is unique. As far as my research has shown St. Giles' is the only remaining church in Britain to have an apsidal west end. It might even be unique in Europe." Yet authors of books on Essex churches have tended to overlook this gem.

Dr. Patrick Chaplin, Local Historical Recorder for Langford, said: "For so many years our beautiful church has been ignored by each and every author of books on Essex churches. It seems to have been invisible; that is up until now."

'A Guide to St. Giles' Church, Langford' costs £1.50 (Plus 50p postage and packing to UK addresses) and is available either from the church, or from Irene Allen on 01621 855447. All proceeds go to the upkeep of the church.

### England's only station mistress - from page 13

In July 1906 the Langford church magazine recorded Charles' death at the age of 81 who is commemorated by a kerbstone and Calvary Cross in St Giles' churchyard to 'Charles Chapman of Langford Station.' In later 1909 Martha Chapman was taken ill. She died on 18 January 1910 aged 78 and was buried with her husband on 22 January. Once again our research of Langford village (a place of little more than 200 souls) has produced a unique piece of local and indeed national history.

If anyone has any information at all about Mr and Mrs Chapman we would be grateful if they could contact the authors via [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com) or by ringing either 01621 856040 or 07808 000736.

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### Make a note - a date for your diary

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

# TIMES PAST



The Great War was still four years away in 1910, a year in which the Liberals won the General Election and former US president Theodore Roosevelt became the first senior statesman to fly in a plane....

## 1910

Edward VII died, to be succeeded by his second son, who was crowned George V the following year. The year also saw the deaths of Florence Nightingale, aged 90, American writer Mark Twain and Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. It was also the year that Mother Teresa was born.

**The Union of South Africa was established, with Louis Botha its first premier, and Portugal became a republic.**

The most important event of the year for subsequent generations of boys who spent their pocket money on the Saturday morning pictures, was the first appearance in print of Clarence Mulford's cowboy hero Hopalong Cassidy, who went on to star in 27 more adventure novels and was later portrayed by William Boyd in 66 films. It was also the year that Hollywood produced its first film 'In Old California'.

**There were two mining tragedies in the year, claiming 244 lives at Hulton, Lancs, and 136 at Wellington colliery in Cumbria.**

Hawley Harvey Crippen - later universally referred to as Dr Crippen although that was an American qualification and he was not allowed to practise as a doctor in Britain - became the first person to be arrested thanks to the use of the new-fangled Marconi wireless from a ship at sea. Crippen murdered his wife Cora at their home in Camden Town and fled to Canada on the SS Montrose with girlfriend Ethel le Neve. He was arrested after Captain Henry Kendall wired his suspicions to Scotland Yard. Crippen was arrested when he arrived at Quebec, and later hanged for murder at Pentonville Prison. He was unlucky in choosing the SS Montrose as it was one of very few ships fitted with Marconi wireless at the time.

**Halley's comet was observed, the Bristol biplane - better known as the Boxkite - made its maiden flight and the first British labour exchange opened.**

Inventions included safety glass and infra-red photography, and cosmic rays were discovered by a Swiss scientist called Gockel.



# ST. CEDD'S CHATLINE

By Liz Willsher

The Museum has now re-opened for the 2010 season with encouraging results. Visitor numbers are good on the whole and, due to a re-located Bank Holiday market on May 3, around 100 visitors came through the doors in the course of the day.

This kind of news cheers the committee, and especially the St Cedd's team and all the helpers who worked so hard through the winter months to prepare displays and make everything sparkle again. The St Cedd's team are concentrating their efforts on maintaining the records and ensuring our collection, both on display and in store, is correctly documented and kept in the best condition possible, given the facilities we have available.

We also put the world to rights over a coffee and chocolate biscuit....we could easily become a testing panel as, thanks to Betty, we seem to be sampling a different M&S variety every week. Of the relatively small number of items donated to the Museum recently, those of interest include the following:

A package was received containing documents, booklets and photographs, mostly referring to local people and events, whose donor was not immediately identifiable. Thanks to our sleuth Judy 'Inspector' Betteridge, the donor was eventually traced and acknowledged.

The package included a photograph of some local firemen proudly seated in a handsome motor-driven fire engine (about 1920). We would very much like to identify those in the photo and would invite anyone to take a look at it, now framed and standing on our beautiful 1877 fire engine in the museum.

The Museum is now the proud owner of a lid from a pot of Chares Dibben (the barber) 'Scurfgofus', as featured in the last Penny Farthing. I wonder if the contents were more enticing than the brand name. It was obviously a best-seller.

The new Maldon Ironworks display in the Museum now includes a piece of ploughshare, clearly marked with the logo, and a photograph of a sign acknowledging an accolade the company received. I believe there is also another piece of machinery on its way. These items were kindly donated by Mick Wheeler from Southminster, who obviously has a great interest in the area's industrial past.

One of our stewards, Joan Wilson has donated photos of her friends and family taking part in some of the Maldon carnivals during the 1960s and 1970s. Apart from being a great record of the popularity of the carnival in those years, the topical subjects are a reminder of the events of the time. One float refers to the oil spill from the 'Torrey Canyon' disaster in 1967 - very relevant to current events in the Gulf of Mexico. Will we never learn?....Off my soapbox to more practical matters.

Through a scheme called 'Share' we are able to engage the help of an expert in the museum service to give technical help. In June we are to have a 'teach-in' on how best to use our computer programme, onto which our accessions are recorded. We all need to be educated on that subject, so it should be very useful.

**Looking forward to a busy summer season....Please do come and visit the Museum**

# Calling wartime Observers!

Are there any former members of the Royal Observer Corps out there with wartime tales from the Maldon area?

A fascinating notebook has arrived at the Museum via Len Barrell, from Mrs Avril Askew, the reader at All Saints' Church.

She takes up the story: "The little book was given to me by Mrs Pat Cooper, more years ago than I can remember. She told me that her husband, who was a Maldon man, belonged to the Royal Observer Corps, which apparently operated through the war years.

"They had an observatory at the Grammar School, I believe on the playing field. There was another base up London Road, just past the cemetery on the right in the field at the top of Cut a Thwart Lane (Cut Throat to us locals!)." Mr Cooper's records in his notebook were for aircraft spotted over Maldon, and also farther afield into neighbouring counties.

For instance, on October 22, 1944, he recorded a Flying Fortress and Liberator over Chelmsford, and three Spitfires, a Dakota, a Thunderbolt, a Mustang and a Mosquito over Maldon.

Most of the aircraft spotted were friendly - until July 1945, when German Fockers, Focke Wulfes, Junkers and Messerschmitts start appearing in Mr Cooper's fascinating records.

## TAILPIECE BY THE EDITOR

If your name is Joslin or Linge, there is a man with a mission to track you down!

Derek Joslin, who lives in West Mersea, is intent on tracing every one of his relatives - and he reckons there are 25,000 of them. He has already proved genetic links to more

than 4,000, and is adding more every week.

"About 25 years ago I started going to the library and looking through old books for references to the family name," said Derek, who now has a provable link going back 35 generations to Egidius de Josselin, born in

Britanny in 1005, and he has also found a family saint, St Gilbert of Semperingham, born in 1050, who founded the Gilbertine Order and lived to 101. Derek now wants to hear from anyone called Joslin or Linge, in the Maldon area. He can be contacted at [djioslin1@ford.com](mailto:djoslin1@ford.com)

# Museum visitor numbers up by more than 10%

We had considerably more visitors in the year April 2009 to March 2010 than between April 2008 and March 2009.

The number of ticketed visitors during advertised opening hours were as follows:

Adults 1915 (vs 1683 in the previous 12 months)

Children 384 (257)

Total 2299 (1940)

These figures were obtained by review of numbered tickets.

These numbers included 209 adults and 22 children admitted without payment during the Heritage Open Days in September. During the year there were 590 visits by members of the museum association and volunteer stewards - up 39 visits on the previous year. These figures were obtained from diary entries.

The total number of visits by members of the public was 2299 + 590, a total of 2889 (2491).

Enquiries to the museum increased overall by just one:

By telephone 36 (35)

By email 25 (24)

By post 3 (4)

Total 64 (63)

However, e-enquiries to the museum website increased by eight,

from 12 to 20. It is worth remembering that the website is an instant source of basic information on the museum.

Encouragingly, the number of school children attending in organised groups outside advertised hours increased considerably - from 107 to 146. But the number of adults attending in organised groups outside advertised hours dropped from 132 to 93.

Museum workers made presentations off-site to audiences totaling 69 adults, down slightly from 76 in the previous 12 months. Finally, the number of volunteers involved in running the museum dropped from 44 to 40.

## Did you know?

The equals sign (=) in mathematics was invented in 1577 by Robert Recorde, a London doctor who studied at both Oxford and Cambridge.

*British monarchs wear an 'imperial' style of crown consisting of a circlet surmounted by arches. This style was introduced by King Henry IV in 1399.*

# Maldon District Museum Association

Registered Charity 301362

**President - Mrs Julia Peel**  
**Vice Presidents - Mr L.F. Barrell**  
**Mrs B Chittenden**

## Committee - to A. G. M. 2011

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<i>Vice-Chairman</i> .....	<i>Christine Steel</i> .....	
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<i>Hon. Treasurer</i> .....	<i>Tina Miller</i> .....	
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<i>Committee</i> .....	<i>Molly Middleton</i> .....	
<i>Committee</i> .....	<i>Liz Willsher</i> .....	

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*Curatorial Adviser* ..... *Nick Wickenden Esq*

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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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