The Penny





The Maldon District Museum Association Newsletter



"I begin to thank I may as well on back

Image courtesy of www.ancestryimages.com

Issue highlights
Blackwater Bird Shoot
When the Cat's Away
Memories of Joyce
Maldon Worthies
Marsh Fever

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Chairman's Chat

Welcome back to the Penny Farthing. As you can see, much to everyone's relief, not least mine, we have at last found a new editor. Louisa Stringer is planning to bring a new look to the magazine which I am sure will be most stimulating and interesting. Louisa's skills are excellent for this role, as she is a Chartered Librarian and produces newsletters for Essex Libraries. She is very familiar with research and has spent much time looking into genealogy and local history. I am sure you will all join with me in wishing her much success in this venture.

We have also been fortunate in appointing a new Treasurer – Catherine Cooper. Catherine is well qualified to take on our accounts and we look forward to working with her. Our sincere thanks go to Tina Miller who has gamely carried on since the AGM and we are very grateful to her.

As you know this summer has been one of many events. However, these have had an impact on the visitor numbers to the museum. I also feel that the earlier bad weather did not help. However, we must take some comfort from the fact that other public venues have also recorded lower visitors.

The new colour photocopier is now up and running, thanks to the generosity of Len Wilkinson. It will make our publicity posters and leaflets so much easier to produce. Plans are now being made for the 2013 displays and although we are at the early stages the decisions have to be made in order to ensure we have sufficient artefacts.

We are open until the first weekend in November this year, and as last year it will be entrance by donation only.

Finally, and as always I must thank all the volunteers who give their time so willingly, without them the museum could not function. I also have a special thank you for Mags Simmonds who has taken over the rotas this year. It is not an easy task and I know Mags has worked very hard to ensure that there are stewards to cover all opening times. Thank you, Mags.

I hesitate to close by wishing you a Happy Christmas but that will be over before the next edition!

NB – Stewards' Meeting 15th November, 2-4 pm at the Octagon Centre.

Christine Steel

From the Editor

Thank you to Christine for the introduction and welcome to my first efforts as Editor! I have not had much time to produce this issue but plan to introduce some new features over the next few editions. I am still reliant on articles from all of you, so feel free to put pen to paper, or send me any ideas you may have.

I have worked for Essex Libraries for 18 years now, in a variety of roles – not least several years as Local Studies Librarian at Chelmsford Library. Roger Johnson, a library colleague of mine for many years has kindly contributed an article for this issue. These days, amongst other things, I work on much of the ecommunications for Essex Libraries, producing content for our digital channels – e-newsletters, Facebook and Twitter. Hopefully I can bring some of those skills to this role!

Without your contribution, *Penny Farthing* would not be possible. I welcome your articles, images, letters and comments. Please email them to: lhstringer@aol.com by 5th January 2013. Thank you.

The Heyday of the Blackwater Bird Shoot

The Blackwater - said to be the saltiest estuary in England - is a magnificent river, two miles wide at Bradwell and with ten miles of saltings, inlets and occasional secret beaches between there and Maldon.

It is the largest estuary in Essex north of the Thames and one of the largest estuarine complexes in East Anglia, supporting internationally important numbers of over-wintering water fowl. It is rich in wildfowl, with many areas now protected and maintained by the hard work of wildfowling clubs. But the resident and migrant bird population is a mere shadow of what was once found on the river.

Writing in 'Marsh-Country Rambles', published in 1904, H.W.Tompkins says: "The wild duck is diminishing in numbers year by year; the brent goose flies in companies rather than battalions; for every greenshank on the Essex marshes there were formerly twenty. The decoy is now largely disused; even at Goldhanger, Tollesbury, and Old Hall Marsh, they are only employed in a small way...

"A Mr Handley and party, as related by Mr Fitch in his interesting book 'Maldon and the River Blackwater', could gather in a morning as many eggs as would fill a bushel measure.

"Defoe tells us that such vast flights of duck, teal and widgeon abounded at certain seasons on 'Osey, Osyth or Oosey Island,' that the creek seemed covered with them, and he adds that men of pleasure journeyed from London to enjoy the sport, and often returned well laden."

Tompkins said: "Two centuries ago there was certainly no lack of birds; but the shooting of them was hardly a healthy pastime.

To loiter all day upon saltings and open, wind-swept marshes, or to sit for hours in a punt on misty shallows and creeks in the depth of winter, was to follow a precarious, perhaps a fatal, pleasure."

Fitch wrote that "the immense numbers of Brent geese, or black geese as they are termed locally, frequently still to be seen at the mouth of the Blackwater during winter, can hardly be credited without ocular demonstration."

Writing of wild geese, Fitch mentions that on one occasion 471 birds were killed at a single discharge from 14 guns; on another, 704 birds by 32 guns.



Back in the winter of 1860, Bradwell wildfowler William Linnett was one of 32 punt-gunners from the Blackwater villages who glided silently on a flood tide to form a semi-circle around a group of between 4,000 and 5,000 brent geese off Bradwell chapel. They fired together and went home with 704 dead geese; at least 250 more which floated away on the tide were recovered from the tide-line over the next few days.

It has been assumed that at least 1,000 geese must have been shot that day - a British record for Brent geese.

Tompkins recounted what may have been the same occasion. He said that one of the Musset family from West Mersea "remembered being with a party of punters that set out in 34 punts. They pulled cautiously to a spot near Brad'l Chapel where, on a well-known stretch of feeding ground, an immense number of geese had alighted.

"They succeeded in getting well within range without alarming the birds; the guns held three-quarter pound charges; the 34 punts returned with nearly 900 geese, the result of one shot from each gun."

At around the same time, and in the same place, 18 gunners firing together accounted for 360 geese, while on another moonlit night 300 were shot. Fitch also tells of a man named Stubbins from Maldon, punting at the mouth of Thurslet Creek, on the north side of the Blackwater, killing 50 with a single shot, and of W. Handley who killed 120 in three successive shots, and another 288 during the same week.

Fitch talks of 75 wigeon at one shot, and of two single shots at coots which killed 113 birds.

John Basham junior, from Maldon, is said to have killed 108 knots at one discharge on the flats near St Peter's Chapel, Bradwell; Harry Handley from Maldon, killed 432 dunlins in two successive shots at Stansgate Bay; and Charles Hipsey of Maldon killed 320 knots at one discharge!!

Kelvin Brown

When the cat's away....

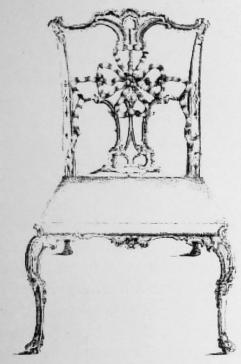
Does anyone remember the Beatrix Potter story 'The Tailor of Gloucester'? It is the tale of mice who, having being saved from the cat by the Tailor, creep in during the night and finish the Mayor's waistcoat ready for collection the next morning.

I often feel that we, the so called Chippendales, like the mice, are unseen by the public and the Stewards as we creep in during the winter closure finishing the waistcoat ready for the summer dawning. So who are we and what do we do? Our names are Graham, Peter and Charlie and between us we have a wide range of practical, engineering, carpentry and electrical skills.

After the display team have taken down the season's exhibits we creep in and our first job is to take off the blu-tak, fill the holes in the wall, make good any damage and then repaint. Many of the exhibits need repairs before the new season. Lighting and electrics are another of our tasks, replacing bulbs as need be and altering the lights to suit the forthcoming exhibitions. Floors often need to be re-varnished after the wear from season's visitors' feet. Then there are new sets to build and over the years we have always managed to utilise timber from previous displays at virtually a nil cost to the museum. Shelving needs to be altered and replaced. We also have to do all the heavy lifting when exhibits are changed around. Last year it was moving the cooker and replacing the butler sink. The fire engine always gets its annual clean. Surprisingly one of the most difficult jobs we ever had was to get the old paint off the cog wheel outside the Museum. It resisted our efforts to shift it for many weeks but we felt that the finished results were worth all our hard work.

We work closely with our excellent display team and although we sometimes clash and need to explain why some projects are impossible or need refining, between us we usually find a satisfactory solution!

I have given you just a flavour of the many jobs that we do each year and although we never make a waistcoat for the mayor, we are an integral part



of the display team and take pleasure in our work, ensuring the museum is spick and span for each coming season's visitors.

We have a great museum and we the Chippendales are proud to be part of it.

Charles Middleton

The first in a new series of articles about some of the more notable people connected with the District begins with the Reverend Alexander Scott.

Alexander John Scott was born in 1768 at Rotherhithe to Lt Robert Scott, a retired Royal Navy Officer and his wife Jane.

Alexander was only two years old when his father visited a family estate in the West Indies only to find that the estate was worthless and even worse for the family he contracted a tropical disease from which he died.

An uncle provided some financial support allowing Scott to attend boarding school and then Cambridge University after which he was ordained.

The debts that he had accumulated at university were so great that he was forced to join the Navy, as chaplain on HMS Berwick in the Mediterranean fleet, to escape his creditors. It was on HMS Berwick that a dinner party led to a friendship with a young Captain called Horatio Nelson.

Scott next accepted an appointment as chaplain/secretary to Admiral Sir Hyde Parker who served as C in C of the West Indies and then the Baltic. The West Indies Squadron saw frequent action and the resultant prize money saw Rev Scott financially secure for the first time in his life.

On his retirement from naval service after a request from Nelson, the Governors of Charterhouse had granted him the Living of Southminster which included roles as vicar of Southminster and the Curate of Burnham on Crouch.

In May 1803 war was declared with France and Nelson was sent to the Mediterranean in HMS Victory with Scott re-enlisted as chaplain.



The Old Vicarage, Burnham on Crouch (Peter Layzell)

On 21 October 1805 the enemy fleet was sighted off Cape Trafalgar and Scott took up his battle position in the cockpit to comfort the injured and dying.

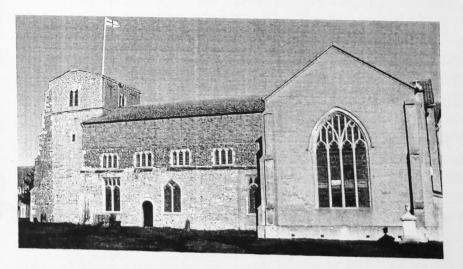
Admiral Nelson was hit and brought to the cockpit. He was in great pain but survived for a further three hours during which Scott tended him until Nelson grew weaker and died in Scott's arms. Scott took charge of Nelson's body on its journey to London and kept vigil every night for a week while the body lay in state before the funeral.

Whilst in London he met Mary Ryder who at 17 was 18 years his junior. Despite her parents objection the couple married on 9 July 1808 and took up residence in Burnham on Crouch Vicarage where the couple lived a happy but frugal life. Two daughters and a son were born although the son tragically died aged 4 months.

Mary died from complications of childbirth upon which a grieving Scott threw himself into activity within his parishes by building a boys and then a girl's school at Southminster. The school room was such a success that within a few weeks 124 boys attended the school. He then turned his attention to the existing school in Burnham and increased revenue, facilities and numbers of children attending.

Scott became a committed freemason and was instrumental in the formation of the Fortitude Lodge at Burnham on Crouch in 1809. He later held the office of Essex Deputy Provincial Grand Master. In 1816 he accepted a better living at Catterick where he remained until 1840 when he died at the age of 72 and a remarkable life ended.

Peter Layzell



St Leonard's, Southminster (Peter Layzell)

Some memories of Joyce By Roger Johnson

One of the first things you'd see when you visited Joyce Allingham at The Studio in Tolleshunt D'Arcy was her portrait, painted by Michael Smee in 1987. It shows Joyce sitting in a high-backed armchair, relaxed but alert, her gaze concentrated on something over to her left. Sitting by her left foot and looking keenly in the same direction is her black and white collie, Brock. Joyce is wearing a faded red shirt, dark green trousers, and brown shoes; her face is framed by the brim of a straw sun-hat set back on her head. She looks as if she's thinking of attending to her roses. At any rate, you can see that she is thinking, and it's a rare portraitist who can depict thought so certainly but so subtly. You can also see just the hint of a smile on her face. Joyce was about seventy-four when she sat for the painting. I didn't really get to know her until nearly ten years later, but she didn't seem to have changed in that decade.

Actually, I had met Joyce before then. The first Society event that I attended was a visit to D'Arcy, some time in the late 1980s, and I brought three guests, my mother, her friend and the friend's nephew. The nephew was Guy Wilson, at that time Deputy Master of the Royal Armouries, whose late mother Molly, like his aunt Sylvia, had been a friend and teaching colleague of my mother's. More to the point, she had, for a few years in the early fifties, acted as Margery Allingham's amanuensis (she was a single mother, widowed before her son was born) and Guy was Pip Youngman Carter's godson.

My impressions of The Studio are inevitably coloured by clearer memories of later visits. Some of Pip's original artwork was on display, and, I think some first editions of Marge's books. Tea and cakes were provided, prepared by the invaluable Christina Carter, a member of the household since the early thirties. Joyce herself was polite and gracious – and she was evidently the *grande dame* of the village.

In the later years she was rarely without a sturdy walking-stick, but its use wasn't limited to the obvious. Some people will gesture with their hands to emphasise a point. Joyce, politely but firmly, would point at you with her stick. There was no doubting her authority. But there was nothing narrow-minded about Joyce. As Barry Pike has said, she had a robust sense of humour, and when she was amused, which was often, her chuckle was gloriously dirty.

By tradition the Allinghams were Grub Street hacks, but rather unusual ones. Joyce and Marge's father had a degree in theology from Cambridge University. Their brother Phil had decided early on that respectable middle class life wasn't for him, so he took to the road as a huckster and fortune-teller, and for some years Joyce accompanied him. Photographs show that she was a very attractive young woman; with her good looks and her nimble intelligence she must have been a considerable asset to Phil. When war came she joined the Wrens, serving as an officer in Africa and the Far East. After leaving the service, she embarked on a varied career that included dog-breeding, photography and publishing. Later she joined Marge at Tolleshunt D'Arcy in order to help care for their three demanding old ladies - their mother Em, Aunt Maud and Aunt Grace - and in time took over the running of the family company, P & M Youngman Carter Ltd. She was a faithful and scrupulous guardian of her sister's work and reputation - and her brother-in-law's too. Her assessment of him was generous but clear-eyed. He was, she said, lavishly gifted and appallingly selfish: a fine friend but a vitriolic enemy.

Ten years or so after Pip's death, Joyce moved from D'Arcy House to a bungalow that she'd had built on to the huge airy studio where both he and Marge had worked. The result was as unconventional and delightful as Joyce herself.

In the studio were antiques and curios, prints and paintings, old and comfortable furniture. It was a home, not a museum, but there were proud relics of Joyce's sister and brother-in-law.

Mighty bookcases in the entrance hall overflowed with copies of Margery's books and of Pip's smaller literary *oeuvre*, and his artwork was everywhere. Seeing his paintings, you got some idea, maybe, of what he might have achieved had he not limited himself to illustration and book jacket design. There were many other books, of course, including some that had belonged to Marge and Pip, and a handful from the library of Dr Salter, the remarkable man who had owned D'Arcy House before the Carters bought it.

When you visited Joyce as a friend, you were likely to be entertained in the kitchen, where cooking was done on the most iconic of country stoves, an AGA (though if you were staying for lunch she would probably take you to the pub next door, the Queen's Head). Most of our conversations, I think, took place around the kitchen table, with Jean to ask the sensible questions, and Gloria Greci to help Joyce with some of the facts and figures.

Jean and I really came to know these two wonderful ladies as a result of a fortunate coincidence. In 1996 the Margery Allingham Society was becoming active again after a period of dormancy, and so, we discovered, was the Maldon & District Museum. The Museum Association's offer of a room in their new premises was eagerly accepted, and we volunteered to co-ordinate what became the Margery Allingham Room. Joyce and Gloria gave the project their whole-hearted support, and between us Jean, Barry Pike and I put together an exhibition that did justice, as far as possible, to the writer, her work, and her extraordinary family.

Joyce's enthusiasm (and, I'm sure, her generous financial contribution) didn't go unnoticed. An invitation to become Patron of the Museum Association was accepted with great pleasure, and she took to the post as naturally as to her many activities in the village. Her interests were wide. She kept up with national and international events, as well as local ones, and even a casual chat with her was likely to evoke mention of some obscure and curious topic that she seemed to have made her special study. She was an "angel", backing plays in the West End. The financial return was rarely better than adequate, but that wasn't really the point: she loved

the theatre and wanted to champion good new work. On the land behind D'Arcy House, in support of the Woodland Trust and her sister's reputation, she planted Mr Campion's Wood. She was aware, of course, that the trees would not mature in her lifetime, but she was content to know that the wood will be enjoyed by generations to come.

I hardly need to say that Joyce loved the Margery Allingham Society. You'll find records of her affection and her beneficence in many issues of *The Bottle Street Gazette* and the newsletters that preceded it. The society's obvious appeal was that it helped to maintain public awareness of Marge's writings, but I think that Joyce also enjoyed the many friendships that the society brought her.

My friendship with Joyce encompassed less than five years, but I treasure the memories. There was, for example, the Centenary Birthday Lunch at the University Women's Club in 2000 (that's Albert Campion's centenary, not Margery Allingham's), where Joyce got on famously with the crime-writer June Thomson and the actor Francis Matthews, both of whom were plainly honoured to meet her. There was the unveiling of the blue plaque at D'Arcy House, commemorating Margery's long residence. There was the open day at Maldon Museum, at which an actress from the Royal Armouries Museum captivated us by reading passages from *The Oaken Heart*.

There were the many calls that Jean and I made at The Studio – and there was our last visit to Joyce, at Colchester General Hospital. Her long illness had robbed her of her strength, and she looked, for the first time since we'd known her, old and frail, but her mind was active, and her spirit as warm as ever. Did we know, as we drove away, that we wouldn't see her again? Probably not, but the news of her death not long after was not a surprise.

In her way – less public than her sister's, less ostentatious than her brother-in-law's – Joyce Allingham was as remarkable an individual as they were. Pip Youngman Carter might have tolerated Jean and me. We might have felt that we intruded too much on Margery Allingham's privacy. I don't know – but I do know that Joyce was our friend, and we miss her very much.

St Cedd's Chatline

The St Cedd's team have been plodding along throughout the "summer" months, carrying out our usual duties, consisting of keeping the paperwork and conservation up to date, and the ongoing voyage of discovery that is turning out and tidying the storeroom.

At this time of the year discussions arise on the new displays for the forthcoming year. A consensus has been largely reached so now, and throughout the winter months, it will be a case of putting the flesh on the bones - No, definitely no skulls or skeletons!....more details in our next edition (as they say).

Over the past few months a few rather varied and interesting donations have come our way, ably catalogued and documented by Judy and Betty.

A Maldon Rowing Club minute book records the comings and goings of the association and can be seen on display at the museum. Stewards Rosemary and Harry Bacon brought along a Victorian christening gown and a baby's dress, and following some careful laundry procedures, these can now be seen in the laundry/scullery with similar garments.

The survival of these delicate fabrics never ceases to amaze, and the skilful needlecraft is there to be admired.

As an addition to the "Maldon through the Lens" display we have a group photograph of the renowned Barber Brothers' Tug-of-War team from the 1950s and early 1960s. Many familiar faces are there but unfortunately some of the names remain firmly on the tip of the tongue! Visitors are welcome to add an identification if they can. This applies to all our photos- please let the stewards know if you spot someone familiar.

Some interesting documents have come our way including a poster from 1911 showing the sale particulars of a building on the Promenade Park. Later known as Promenade Tea Rooms, the building is near the play area adjacent to the maze. Sadly it is no longer a commercial property, although it saw service for many years. During WWII it was one of the government run "British Restaurants," supplying subsidised meals for the exchange of a token, and manned by volunteers and members of the WVS (as it was then).

Betty Chittenden has come up with something old and something new, now both on display: A Marmite jar, the label of which is cleverly redesigned to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, (exclusive to Sainsburys!) Also a pack of playing cards produced as a promotional item for timber and joinery company, John Sadd and Sons. The cover shows a picture of tree-fellers with hand tools. Staying in the Sadd room, we have added a portrait photograph, donated by Miss Finch of Maldon, of her grandfather Samuel, whose jewellery and watch and clock-making business was well known in the town.

The large barometer which once hung in Sadd's boardroom was supplied by Samuel Finch. The wooden case was made by another craftsman.

A mystery donor left us a set of WWII headphones in a plastic bag deposited in the hopper of a grinding machine at the front of the museum. I muttered about "litter louts" when I saw the bag, only to discover that it was not a discarded kebab but an interesting object which will fit very well into our war related display.

We hope that any members and friends who have not visited the museum this season will be able to do so before the closure of the season at the end of October.

Liz Willsher - September 2012

Serving the people of the Maldon District

Charles Middleton, Maldon CAB Adviser, gives a potted history of the local advice service.

One of the gems of Maldon that is often overlooked is its Citizens Advice Bureau which provides a free advice service to anyone in the District who needs it. Whilst many other CAB's have closed Maldon has gone from strength to strength and has a bureau that we can be justly proud of.

Currently located in St Cedd's House which is situated in the Council Office car park, it has been running in Maldon since its early beginnings in September 1985. At that time a group of likeminded people opened it in a three roomed portakabin in the Butt Lane car park. In 1990 the addition of two further rooms meant that there was a waiting room for up to four people, but some clients still had to be turned away because of lack of space. A novel solution to the problem of thin walls was partially overcome by the playing of a radio in the waiting room, masking the confidential conversations in the adjacent rooms.

When I first joined the Bureau in 1995, following my retirement, it was already situated in St Cedd's, using space vacated by the Social Services Department who were re-housed over the new library building. There we had the use of three interview rooms and a shared waiting area. At that time there would be three advisers on duty manning the telephones as well as answering the door and conducting interviews. The advice we gave came from a vast paper filing system that needed to be constantly updated.

Volunteers come from all walks of life and many are retired. The thorough training given usually takes about 6 months to complete but personal satisfaction is a reward in itself when you eventually become an adviser. There are constant courses to keep advisers up to date with current new and changing legislation.

The bureau itself is audited nationally by its parent organisation and has to maintain stringent high standards if it is to remain a part of the CAB network, although it is an independent CAB.

Whatever help you need, it's a good place to start as advisers will know the right place to go to get help. There is advice on benefits, debt, employment, relationships, consumer rights and legal issues. If you are seeking debt or Payment Protection Insurance claims advice and help, remember, that unlike some other organisations, it's all free at the CAB. The Maldon CAB is however a registered charity, and although its major funds come from Maldon District Council it always needs donations to retain and develop its services.

Today, like most agencies, it is fully computerised with a designated password protected information site. Each adviser has their own computer and telephone. All the interview rooms are similarly equipped which speeds up the helping process.

The bureau is staffed by 40 plus volunteers who each agree to do 2 sessions per week, and by 6 part-time paid staff. It also has outreach sessions in Burnham, Mayland, Southminster and Tollesbury as well as providing a home visit service for clients who are unable to make contact in any other way.

On average over 12,000 people are helped each year. Its aim is and always has been to provide, free of charge, the advice and assistance that the people of Maldon need for whatever problems they face in life. The advice it provides is independent, confidential and impartial. So if you need any advice you heard it from me that Maldon CAB is a jewel in Maldon's crown. But maybe I am biased!

You can contact Maldon Citizens Advice Bureau in the following ways:

Phone: 01621 841105

Email: bureau@maldoncab.cabnet.org.uk

Web: www.maldoncab.org.uk

Harvest time



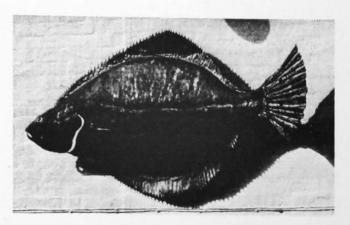
Straw plaiting was an activity undertaken by many farmers to supplement their income. Traditionally the last crop from the harvest was kept and plaited into a design. These corn dollies were kept until the next harvest and reflected the Pagan

tradition of appealing to the gods for a successful harvest the following year.

Where in the district?

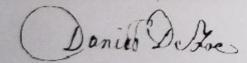
Do you recognise where in the district these photos were taken? I'll reveal the answers in the next issue of Penny Farthing, but if you have any unusual images of Maldon or the surrounding areas that you'd like to share, please email them to me at lhstringer@aol.com and I'll feature one or two in the next edition.





Here are Daniel Defoe's now infamous comments about his visit to the Dengie on his tour of Eastern England.

I have one remark before I leave this damp part of the world. and which I cannot omit on the women's account, namely, that I took notice of a strange decay of the sex here; insomuch that all along this country it was very frequent to meet with men that had had from five or six to fourteen or fifteen wives; nay, and some more, And I was informed that in the marshes on the other side of the river over against Candy Island there was a farmer who was then living with his five-and-twentieth wife, and that his son who was about thirty five years old, had already had about fourteen....The reason, as a merry fellow told me, ... That they being bred in the marshes themselves and seasoned to the place, did pretty well with it; but that they always went up into the hilly country, or, to speak their own language, into the uplands for a wife. That when they took the young lasses out of the wholesome and fresh air they were healthy, fresh, and clear, and well; but when they came out of their native air into the marshes among the fogs and damps, they presently changed their complexion, got an ague or two, and seldom held it above half a year, or a year at most; "And then" said he, "we go to the uplands again and fetch another".



Taken from Daniel Defoe's 'Tour through the Eastern Counties, 1722'

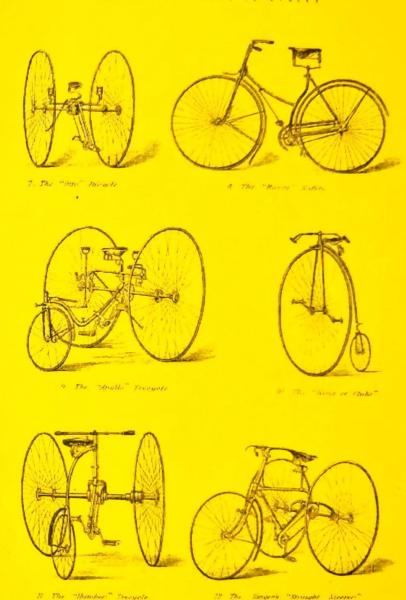


Image courtesy of www.ancestryimages.com

Maldon District Museum Association

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Vice Presidents – Mr L. F. Barrell, Mrs B. Chittenden

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