

The Penny Farthing

The Maldon District Museum Association Newsletter



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Museum

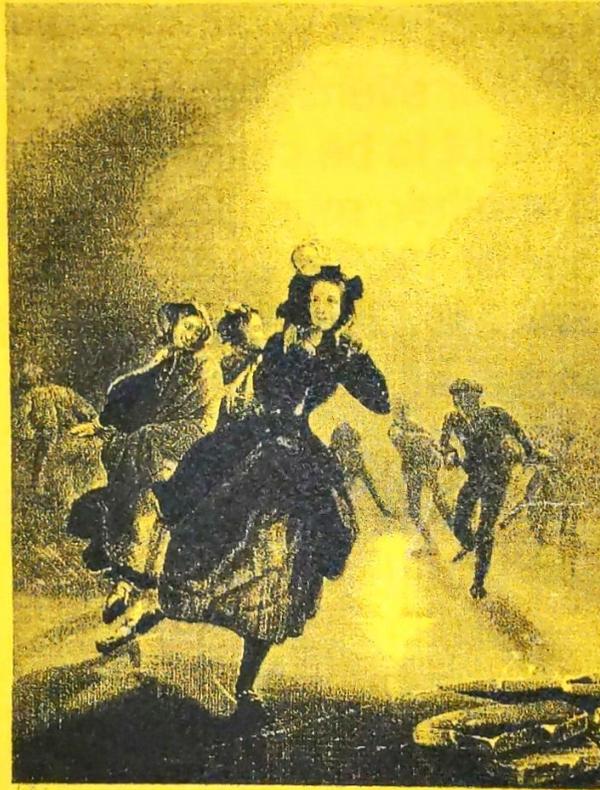


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Issue highlights

Remembering the Floods

What *not* to call the bailiff

Ices, Ices

Local Hero

Peculiar to Essex?

Issue 70

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Chairman's Chat

Welcome to the first edition of the Penny Farthing for 2013 and a belated happy new year to you all.

After the major events of 2012 we have to wonder what this year will bring. The museum did not have as many visitors but it seems that all public venues were affected by the Olympic Games and the Diamond Jubilee.

There will be another major event this year - the 60th anniversary of the Coronation, no doubt to be celebrated with many public events. There is also another, much less happy anniversary and that is the terrible floods of 1953. No doubt many of you will remember them and will have experienced hardship as a result. The editorial of this edition of the Penny Farthing features these sad events and residents' memories. My own memories do not cover this area but the Erith Marshes, which also caused much disruption and hardship.

Our new displays are beginning to take shape and the major change this year is to be a display of local artists and their work. We have acquired some very fine paintings and the team is working hard to make this another excellent display. We are also having some pictures put in the windows of the Victorian kitchen and parlour, which will make the outside of the building much more attractive. In addition, we are placing a banner over the main front door facing Mill Road which we hope will encourage more visitors.

The annual cleaning event is underway and by the opening date of 30 March everything should be gleaming. As we are unable to book the Octagon Centre for our Stewards Spring meeting we are having "open house" at the Museum on Thursday 21 March from 2-4pm. We hope that as many stewards as possible will come along to see the new displays and new instructions for this season. Needless to say, tea and biscuits will be available! As always, I cannot close without thanking all those who make this possible. The museum is growing in popularity and it is due to all the hard work of the display teams, stewards, committee and members without whom we would not function. Let us all hope that this is a successful season.

Christine Steel Chairman

From the Editor

Welcome to my second issue of The Penny Farthing Magazine – I hope that you all had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year. 2013 represents the 60th anniversary of the terrible floods that struck the county in 1953 so I felt that this would be a good starting place for this edition. If you have any memories of this time that you would like to share, please email them to me and I will be happy to include them in the next edition.

If you'd like to find out more, Patricia Rennoldson Smith will be talking about her book *The People's Story* which captures the horror of that night in January 1953, as part of the Essex Book Festival at Jaywick Martello Tower on Saturday 16th March at 2pm. For more information visit www.essexbookfestival.org or call the Box Office on 01206 573948.

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 30th April 2013. Thank you.

Remembering the Floods

Mention the disastrous 1953 Floods and most people will immediately think about the terrible impact on Canvey and Jaywick and the associated fatalities in those areas. Between the evening of the 31st January and the early hours of the 1st February 1953, the so called 'Great Tide' over-ran thousands of acres, broke down sea-walls, drowned islands and washed away complete buildings. Maldon and Heybridge might not have experienced the full force as in other places, but there was undoubtedly an impact on our home town. Local fishermen, steeped in the old lore and who knew the River Blackwater better than anybody else alive, predicated that something major was about to happen. Some of them were so convinced that they even decided to stay on their boats. And then it came - just after Midnight the Square at Heybridge flooded but water levels were then seen to drop at around 12.50. Between 1am and 2am the sluice at Decoy Point, opposite Osea Island, caused a flow down the length of Goldhanger Road and into the caravan camps at Mill Beach. At least one of the caravans was physically lifted up and floated over the top of the sea wall.

There was up to 2 feet of water left in the houses in Heybridge Square and Hall Road, but the emergency services were quickly on the scene. At 1.54am an Ambulance reported further flooding in Heybridge. At 3am the Anchor public house at Heybridge had to be pumped out by the Fire Brigade. At 4.30am firemen were also pumping out water from the cellar of the Queen's Head, in Heybridge. Hundreds of troops were deployed and the Royal Air Force also sent men to help in the Maldon area as a dedicated working party under the direction of a Squadron Leader.

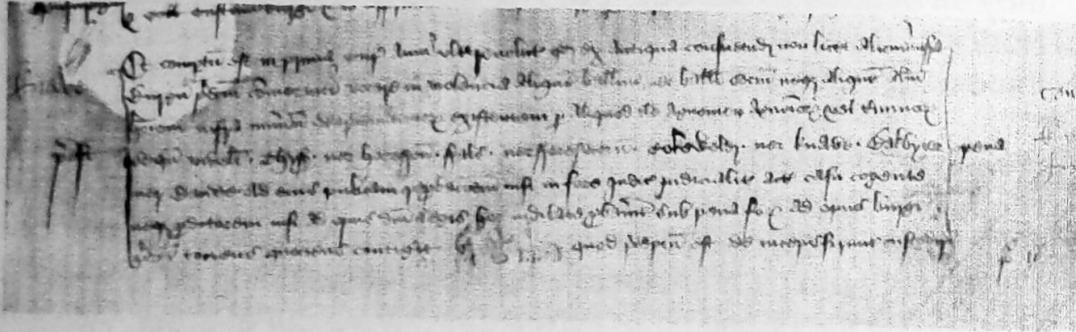
The WWS was active delivering parcels to Heybridge residents and using local school kitchens to produce hot food and drinks. The International Stores in Maldon sourced some of the produce that was used, whilst other shopkeepers provided much welcome rum supplies! The tide had breached the sea wall in a number of places, not least the section 100 yards east of Osea Road, and they all needed to be repaired. We came under part of the Northern Division of the Rivers Board and wall workers covered the extensive stretch from Harwich to Heybridge.

Meanwhile in Maldon itself Fullbridge went under and flooded houses in Station Road and Foundry Terrace. The river swept across the Promenade recreation ground and filled up the Swimming Lake, a houseboat was reported as being adrift and most of the telephone lines across town were out of order. At nearby Langford Water Works there were real concerns about pollution and the associated risks to health. The government responded to the disaster by establishing an ad-hoc cross-party group which included Maldon's then MP, Tom Driberg of Bradwell Lodge, and Maldon's Mayor administered an emergency relief fund. Building contractors were also busy supporting people to repair damage to their properties but thankfully only three people were made homeless in Maldon. The clear up campaign went on for many months afterwards and military and emergency services personnel were entertained at dances at Maldon's 'Parish Hall' in the evenings when their work was done.

To those who lived through it all, it probably doesn't feel like that long ago, but there is no doubt that it has left an indelible mark on their memories and is also an important chapter in the chequered story of our own local heritage.

What *not* to call the bailiff!

Tom Johnson from Birkbeck College, University of London, recently came across this gem in the Essex Record Office. It is an entry in one of the Maldon Court Books from the 15th century. For those of you whose palaeography or Latin is a little rusty I have included Tom's translation!



Court Book, Maldon from 1457-1543 (D/B 3/1/2)

[margin: knave] Et comptus est in prima curia ann' ultima revolūt' quod ex antiqua consuetudinem non licet alicui' infra Burgum predictum comoranti vocare in violencia aliquem ballivem nec ballivi socij neque aliquem alium hominem infra murum wardemannorum existentem per aliquod tle? agnomen agnominorum vel terminorum sequ' videlicet Thyff . nec. horesson . ffals. nec foresworn . cokewold . nec knave Bakbyter nec Baude. Ad eius pub[li]cani rep[ro]bacionem nisi in fore iudic' iudcialit' act' casu' cogente neque p[ro]ditorem nisi ad opus domini regis hos iudilate p[ro]bauit' sub pena forum ad opus burgi predicti tenens quotiens contigat vjs viij d quod p[re]ceptum est de incepis firmit' custodir'

"And it is computed in the first court of the year last past that from ancient custom it is not allowed to anyone coming within the borough aforesaid to say violently to any bailiff, or bailiff's friends, or any other man inside the walls, or of the wardmen there living by any means[?], the names or [lit.] endings following, that is to say, thief, nor whoreson, false, nor forsworn, cuckold, nor knave, backbiter, nor bawd [pimp], to their public reprobation neither in judicial fora, acts, cases (nor [even] traitors, unless to the use of the lord king, these [words] judicially licensed) under the pain of the court, to the use of the borough aforesaid, as often as it [the court] is held, being 6 shillings 8 pence [half a mark]. This is made at the beginning [of the court], firmly guarded."

One wonders whether an epidemic of foul-mouthed insults against the Good Men of the town prompted this local law to be laid down!

If you'd like to discover more about some of the fascinating finds in the Essex Record Office why not subscribe to their blog at www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk

Thanks to the Tom Johnson, the Essex Record Office and Maldon Town Council for allowing the inclusion of this image and article.



Maldon
Town Council

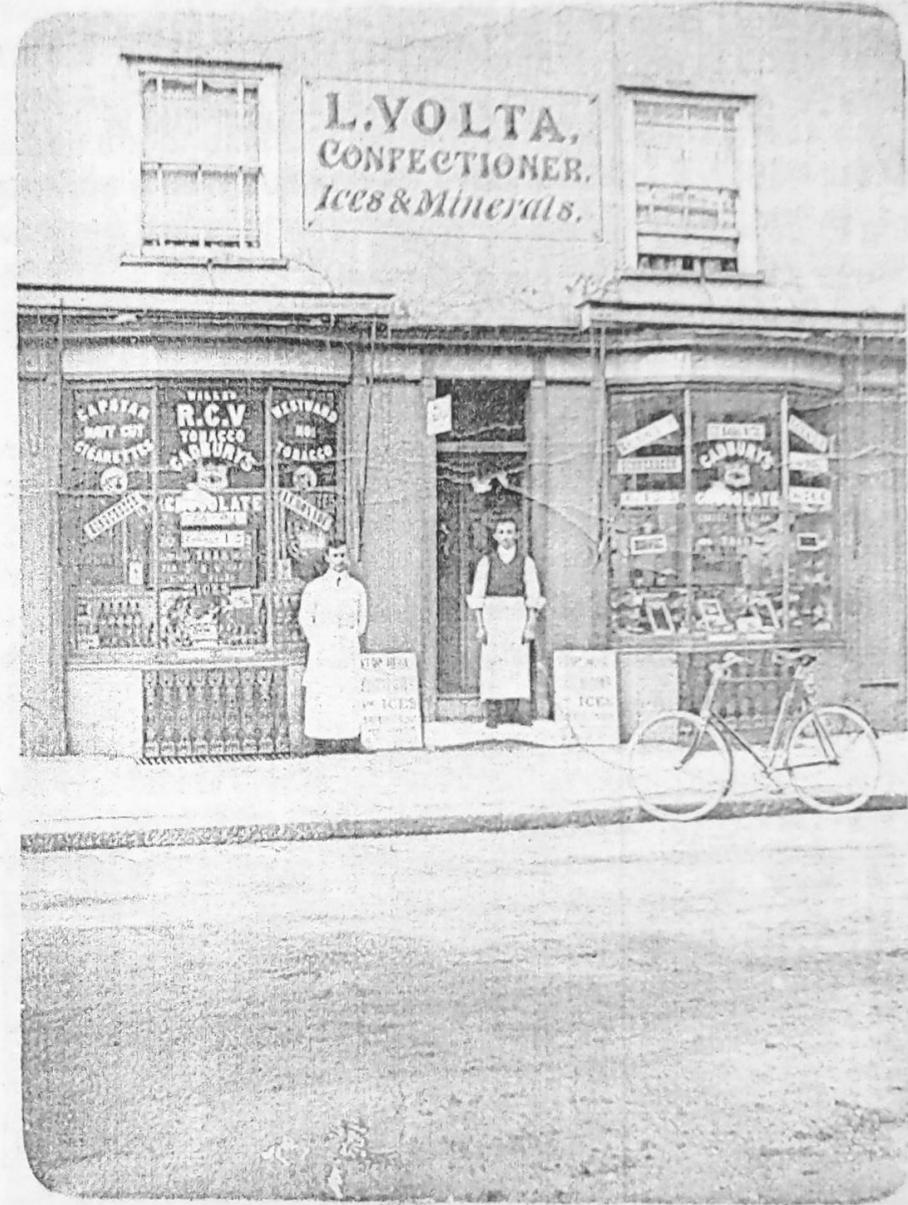
Ices, Ices!

With the popularity of family history research, the Museum receives its fair share of enquiries that often give rise to a sinking feeling when asked, for example, what we know of a Bill Smith whose father was also called Bill, whose mother was a Harris, living Maldon in the 1900's and who might, or might not, have had something to do with barges! Unless the person featured in the Burgess Rolls in the Museum's possession, the enquirer is often referred back to the internet or on to the Essex Record Office, but one recent enquiry was different...

"My family name is Volta, or more properly Consonni, but Volta is the name my great-grandfather adopted when he came to Maldon in 1890 to develop a confectionary business featuring ice creams".

The Volta family name is well known in Maldon, particularly when associated with their Tea Rooms and Cafés that are remembered with great affection, so this enquiry regarding properties occupied by the family was deserving of special attention.

On 14th June 1880 Pietro Luigi Consonni was born in Ponte San Pietro, Bergamo in Northern Italy to Luigi Pietro and Caroline. In 1890, when Pietro Luigi was 10 years old, the family moved to Maldon and took the surname Volta, with Pietro Luigi becoming known as Lewis.



They opened up shop premises at 29 High Street

moving to larger premises next door, 31 High Street, by the turn of the century. Both of these properties were in the row of buildings that stood in front of All Saints Church until their demolition in 1917, opening up the view of the church that is enjoyed today.

It is interesting to think why the family chose their new surname, possibly because it was thought that Maldonians would have difficulty with a polysyllabic foreign name. The choice of Volta, a famous Italian physicist is also intriguing. Was it because of his important research into electricity with its future connection with refrigeration and thus ice cream? We may never know.



With the demolition completed Lewis Volta moved to 48 High Street. Older Maldonians may remember the business and our own Accessions officer worked there later as a Saturday girl, albeit under different ownership. The building was demolished to provide a new building for Woolworth's. By 1924 the family had opened Refreshment Rooms at 44 Mill Road and for a time, also, at 35 Mill Road. Prior to owning these premises the family ran a stall in the Promenade Park which can be seen in our present 'Through the Lens' display.

Sue Slee, granddaughter of Lewis Volta, was pleased with the information provided by the Museum and kindly donated photographs of Lewis in the doorway of 31 High Street and some years later as a proud car owner with his wife, Gertrude, née Patten. The family was also very involved in the building of the Roman Catholic Church in Victoria Road but that is another story!

Mrs E. Bowers, who presented her memories to The Museum in 1985, recalls the shop in front of All Saints Church and the delightful ice cream. Her uncle farmed at South House Farm at the time and she remembers the large baskets of eggs and bowls of cream which would be delivered to Mr Volta each day. Sue would love to receive more memories like this of the family that brought ice cream to Maldon!

Paddy Lacey

Local Hero

Claude Alward Ridley was born on 15th November 1897 in Sunderland as the third child of wealthy parents Louis and Eleanor Ridley. His parents moved to London where they lived in the fashionable Royal Crescent, Notting Hill, enabling Claude to attend private schools in London and then Sandhurst College as a Cadet.

On the outbreak of the Great War, he received a temporary commission into the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), although this was short lived as he resigned when offered a full commission at RMC Sandhurst. After passing out he joined the Royal Fusiliers but continued his interest in flying by becoming attached to the RFC in 1915.

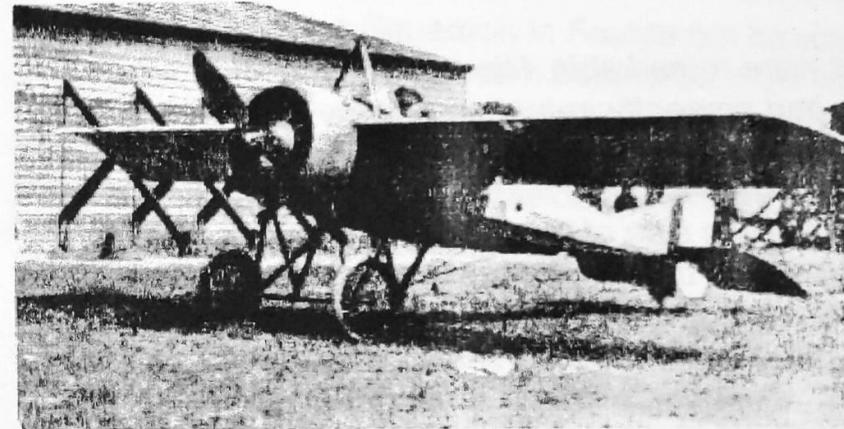
He joined 3 Squadron in France where he soon engaged in battles with the Germans and inevitably, in August 1915, during a fight with two German planes, he was wounded in the foot which meant that he was no longer able to fly and returned to the UK for convalescence.

Once fit to fly he was posted to one of the new London defence airfields at Joyce Green to deal with Zeppelin raids. On the night of 31st March 1916 seven Zeppelins crossed the Suffolk coast intent on bombing London. Then they split up causing havoc with sightings and bombs all over East Anglia. Zeppelin L15 continued towards London on a path that took it near to Joyce Green. Ridley scrambled his BE2c and then caught a glimpse of the Zeppelin in a searchlight. He started to fire his machine gun at the Zeppelin and closed the distance but as he did so the Zeppelin moved out of the searchlight and was lost.

A few minutes later, over Purfleet, the Zeppelin was again picked out by a searchlight and an anti-aircraft battery made a direct hit, splitting the fabric of the airship and allowing gas to escape.

Once again the Zeppelin was lost but badly damaged and it crashed into the sea off Margate.

The London Gazette on 16 May 1916 records the award to Claude, of a Military Medal for conspicuous gallantry and good work during the Zeppelin raids.



Ridley in his Morane Bullet with 60 Squadron in France

Ridley now moved back to France with the new 60 Squadron where he became the expert in the perilous job of flying spies into German occupied territory at night. This was a dangerous task as he had to reconnoitre the area in daylight before the landing and choose a suitable grassy field from the area. A night or so later he would take off with the spy and return to his selected field where he would land, drop off the spy and take off again.

60 Squadron were equipped with French built Morane Bullets. These were quite fast with a capability of 90mph but at that speed the machine gun would refuse to fire and at lower speed the plane was very unstable, liable to stall and spin on any manoeuvre other than blatant fast straight flying.

On 3rd August 1916, Ridley took off with his spy and landed in his chosen field near Douai. But his luck was against him as not only had the Germans taken over a nearby field as a temporary airfield that day, but also, his engine died and he was unable to take off again. The book 60 Squadron by Group Captain A. J.L. Scott written, just before Scott's death in 1922, tells the story of what happened next:

His adventures were remarkable. His spy got out, told Ridley to hide for a little, and presently, returning with civilian clothes and some money, told him that he must now shift for himself.

Ridley did so with such address that he eluded capture for three months on the German side of the line, and eventually worked his way via Brussels to the Dutch frontier and escaped.

This was a good performance, none the worse because he could speak neither French nor German. The method he adopted was a simple one he would go up to some likely-looking civilian and say, "I am a British officer trying to escape; will you help me?"

They always did. He had many interesting adventures. For example, he lay up near the Douai aerodrome and watched the young Huns learning to fly and crashing on the aerodrome where he saw one of our B.E.s brought down, and the pilot and observer marched past him into captivity; later the conductor of a tram in the environs of Brussels suspected him, but, knocking the man down, he jumped into a field of standing corn and contrived to elude pursuit.

Starting with the new aerodrome near to his crash, Ridley kept notes of all enemy activity and on his eventual escape via the neutral Netherlands he was able to supply good information.

On 14th November 1916, the London Gazette records the award of a Distinguished Service Order for conspicuous gallantry and judgment in the execution of a special mission. When his machine was wrecked he used great resource and obtained valuable information. It is rumoured that Ridley had a personal audience with the King to congratulate him on his escape.

Ridley returned to his Squadron in France but he was not allowed to fly as were he to crash behind German lines then he would be shot as a spy, given his actions while he was on the run. In view of that, he returned to the defence of London and was given command of 37 Squadron at its new base at Stow Maries.

He was just 19 years of age, and not only was he in charge of flying but he also had responsibility for the numerous service men and women as well as the civilian staff required to keep the base operational. Although he was no doubt frustrated not to return to his front line squadron, given the life expectancy of a front line pilot of about 6 weeks, the posting may well have helped him survive the war.

Despite leaving Stow Maries after just over a year Ridley maintained an attachment to the village. In 1925 he donated an illuminated cross to replace the weathervane on the steeple of the church where 3 of his men were buried. In June 1925 he married Lillias Elizabeth McAlpine at St Marks in Audley Street, London with a reception at Claridges Hotel. Such was his standing that no fewer than three air commodores were guests at the wedding.

In 1928, following postings at several stations he retired with the rank of Squadron Leader but in 1939 the new conflict saw him back in uniform although now with the rank of Wing Commander. Sadly he died from natural causes in 1942 whilst off duty in London.



Ridley's gravestone at Stow Maries Church

He always recalled happy times in Stow Maries and it was in respect of his wishes that he was buried in the Churchyard that could be seen from the southern end of his aerodrome. Many years later he was joined there by his wife Liliias.

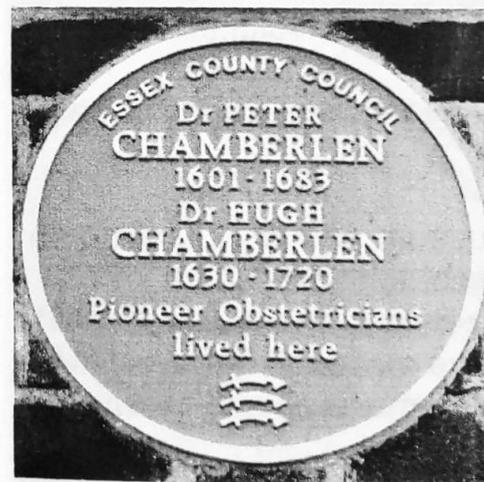
Peter Layzell

You can find out more about Claude Ridley and the Stow Maries Aerodrome at <http://www.stowmaries.com/>. Or contact the Curator on 01245 808744.

Villains and Reprobates

One of the benefits of working for Essex Libraries is getting a glimpse of just some of the new books that are published each month. I recently picked up a copy of *Essex villains, rogues, rascals and reprobates* by Paul Wreyford. It's a great collection to read cover to cover or just dip into and features a cast of highwaymen, murderers, fraudsters, witches and bigamists – amongst others!

In the *Hero or Villain?* chapter, there is a mention of Woodham Mortimer resident Dr Peter Chamberlen – inventor of the obstetric forceps. You may think him a hero of course, but did you know that the Chamberlen family kept their invention a secret and only made it available to those who could afford it?



After his death in 1683, the invention was hidden away in his Woodham Mortimer home until its discovery under the floorboards in 1813! To be fair, Chamberlen had been prepared to share his secret – under his terms. Later, his son Hugh travelled across Europe and spread the word on his father's behalf. Peter's 18 children and 65 grandchildren are surely testament to the effectiveness of his invention.

If you want to hear more about the county's villains, you can hear Paul Wreyford talk as part of the Essex Book Festival at South Woodham Ferrers Library on Wednesday 29th March. See www.essexbookfestival.org.uk for more information.

St Cedd's Chatline

By way of a change, for this newsletter, I will explain in more detail what steps are taken by the St Cedd's team when a donation for the museum collection is received. These procedures are laid down by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, an organisation which oversees the standards in museums, and similar collections of all shapes and sizes, and who awards Accreditation and Registration, both of which our museum has achieved.

This is the story...introducing:

Judy Betteridge , Accessions Officer and Museum volunteer
Betty Chittenden Vice-President and Museum volunteer
Liz Willsher Museum steward and volunteer

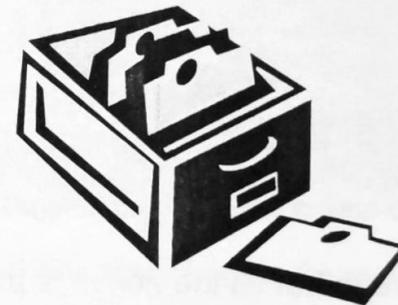
We are sometimes joined by other volunteers when specific help or expertise is required.

Imagine that a visitor arrives at the museum, proudly clutching an object which they believe will be an asset to the museum collection. The steward will take all the details on a Museum Object Entry form, or in the diary, or on a message form and in due course this will be collected from the museum and taken to St Cedd's for the next stage.

Hopefully, with all the details to hand, Judy is in a position to decide whether to accept or decline the item, unless she was contacted at the time of the offer and has already made her decision. At this stage, full details of the donor and the item are essential. Identification is made if appropriate and sometimes a letter or call is required, especially with photos.

If accepted, Betty goes ahead with the registration, allocating an accession number from the register listed in chronological order, and makes a hand written entry with full details, description etc. The item is then categorised for the record card system and a hand written card with all the details is completed for the file.

Back to Judy, who then completes a triplicate accession form which is posted or handed to the donor with a personal letter of thanks or request for further information. The donor is asked to agree to the terms and complete the form with a signature and return two parts to the museum for our records. All the details recorded in the previous stages by Betty and Judy are also entered onto the Accessions file on the computer.



I will then assist with the following stages- the item is cleaned or repaired, if necessary, marked or labelled with its new ID number, wrapped in appropriate conservation packaging or tissue or placed in special acid-free files and folders. It will then be allocated a place in the store, filing cabinet or shelf. If a larger item of clothing is received it will be photographed to aid identification, recorded in the location file, and placed in a conservation-grade costume box in the store. Everything in the bygones store and on the bookshelves is listed by shelf and box number in an inventory, which Judy updates when changes are made.

Still awake?



Image courtesy of www.ancestryimages.com

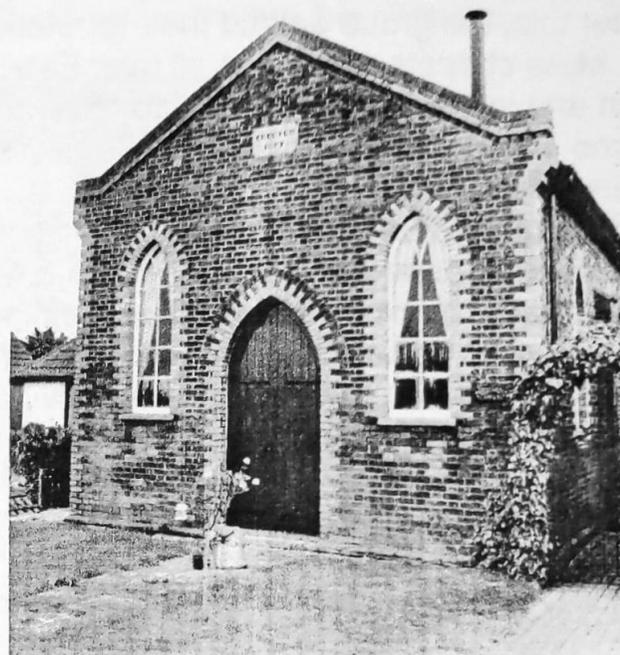
I must, of course, point out that all the above is punctuated by a catch up on local gossip, a mug of coffee and a chocolate biscuit or two!

However, what is done in the office on a Monday morning, and at home afterwards, in addition to the work generated by the Museum's display process, will hopefully keep the collection in good shape for future generations. All the Museum committee, officers and volunteers carry out an invaluable job and the St Cedd's team is simply part of the bigger picture.

We all look forward to seeing you and your families and friends visiting the Museum in the forthcoming season.

Liz Willsher

Peculiar to Essex?



The former Peculiar People Chapel in Steeple

You may have driven past this former chapel or the one in Tillingham and wondered about the Peculiar People. I became interested in finding out more about them when I heard an interview with Sharpe creator, author Bernard Cornwell, who was adopted by a 'Peculiar' couple from Essex.

The Church was founded by James Banyard (b.1800), the son of a ploughman from Rochford who, in his thirties, had a change of heart, attended a local Wesleyan church and soon became a zealous, teetotal preacher himself. After hearing the Northern preacher, Robert Aitken, at a meeting in London, Banyard

underwent a spiritual rebirth and returned to Rochford where he acquired the old workhouse for his first Banyardite chapel. During the 1840s, Banyard 'healed' a man who was suffering from TB and, after this, the group gained their reputation for healing powers. More chapels sprang up all over Essex, Kent and East London and in 1852 the group approved a constitution and took the name The Peculiar People from Peter 2:9. At their height, there were 43 chapels in all.

The Peculiar People had a particular emphasis on fundamental Bible teaching, personal testimonies and divine healing – with no medical intervention – and it was this last belief that often brought the Peculiar People to the attention of the wider world. A search of the British Newspaper Archive reveals a number of prosecutions of Peculiar People who were charged with the neglect of their sick children to whom they denied medical treatment, although in most cases, the good character and clean living of the couple prompted a decision in their favour.

Drawing their congregation from the farming and labouring communities, The Peculiar People continued to meet, often coming together in large groups in central venues such as Chelmsford. In 1956, the name was changed from the Peculiar People to the Union of Evangelical Churches and this continues to the present day in the 16 remaining churches, although there are no longer any active in the Maldon District. There is less emphasis on spiritual healing now, but Biblical fundamentalism remains the main teaching of the church.

If you would like to find out more about the Church and its history, have a look at <http://www.uec-churches.net/>

Louisa Stringer

Where in the District?

Did you guess the location of the two images in the last issue of The Penny Farthing? Here are the answers:



These two cats peeking out from behind a bush are just two of many to be found in and around The Cats Public House in Woodham Walter.



This 'happy' fish is to be found on the wall of The Contented Sole Restaurant, well known for its seafood, in Burnham on Crouch.

Maldon District Museum Association

Registered Charity 301362

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

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