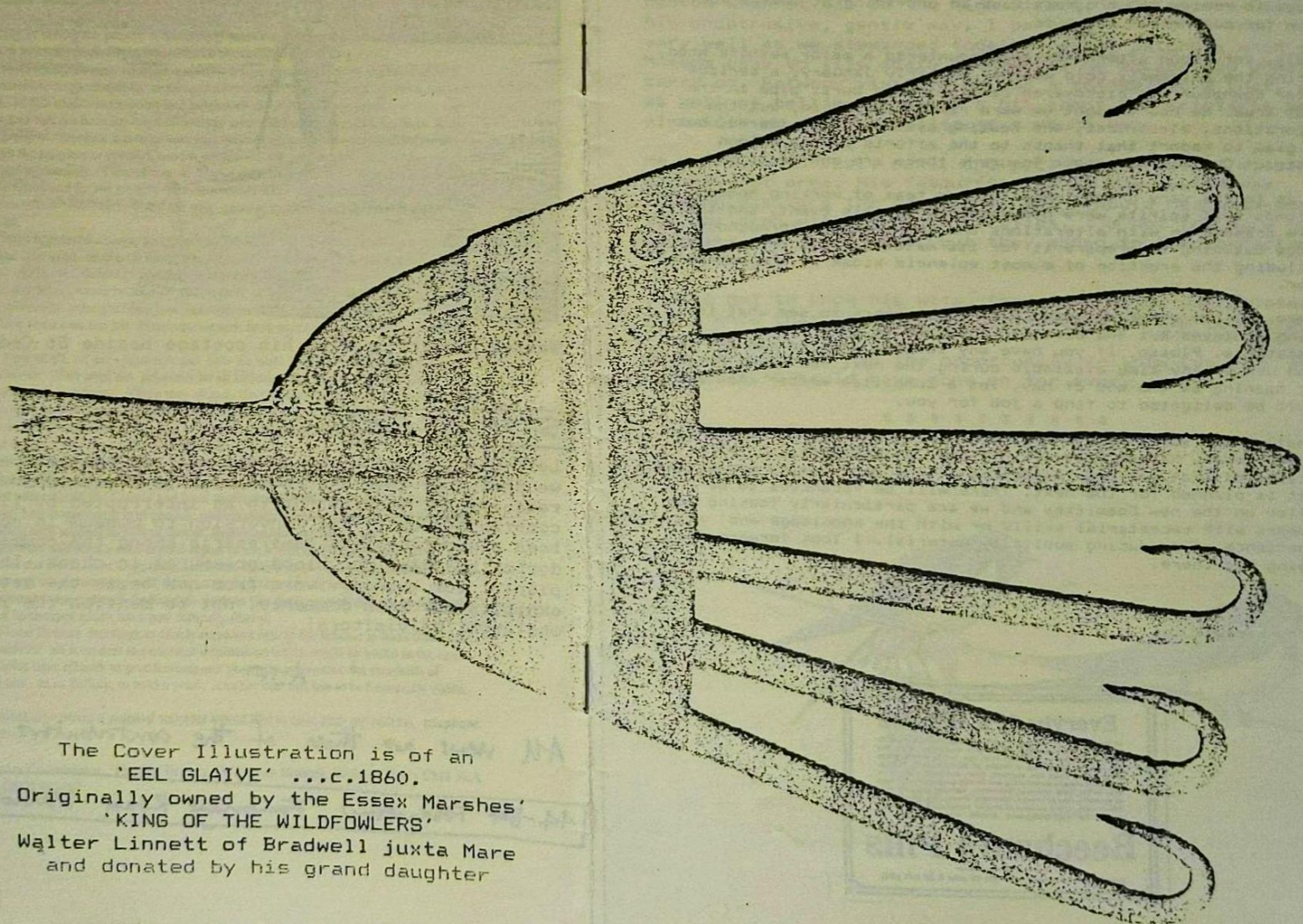


# The Penny-Farthing

The Magazine of Maldon District Museum Association



The Cover Illustration is of an  
'EEL GLAIVE' ...c.1860.  
Originally owned by the Essex Marshes'  
'KING OF THE WILDFOWLERS'  
Walter Linnett of Bradwell juxta Mare  
and donated by his grand daughter



- THOUGHTS OF THE CHAIRMAN -

It was a delight, and very great encouragement to your Committee and myself to see so many members at The December meetings at the Lodge to review the progress made in providing at last a suitable home for our Museum exhibits.

Sadly, very soon afterwards we encountered a major setback when, during the extremely cold weather in early January, a serious water downpour was discovered coming from a burst pipe in the roof area. We had thought we were ready to move in, but the decorations, electrical, and heating systems all suffered, but I am glad to report that thanks to the efforts of the Maldon District Council and their Insurers these are now rectified.

It is to the very great credit of our team of working members and friends that spirits were not dampened by this event, and they have pressed on with alterations and improvements throughout the Lodge building to prepare it for its metamorphosis into a Museum, including the erection of a most splendid kiosk at the entrance door.

There will be other opportunities for members to see what is being achieved but the best way would be to offer your assistance. Please, if you have any talents that we can put to good use or any time available during the next few weeks prior to our opening at the end of May, let a Committee member know and we shall be delighted to find a job for you.

Finally, and most importantly, do come to our A.G.M. to be held at St. Cedds, Maldon District Offices, on May 20th, to learn details of what has been happening in the past twelve months and what is planned for the next. There will be vacancies to be filled on the new Committee and we are particularly looking for members with secretarial skills or with the knowledge and experience of producing publicity material. I look forward to seeing you there.

Paddy Lacey

**Everybody's Benefit**

Is considered in the composition of the World's Family Medicine. For one who is suffering to any degree from the many forms taken by indigestion, can fall to derive great and lasting good from a course of BEECHAM'S PILLS. Their effect upon the stomach, liver, and other digestive organs is always stimulating and health-promoting. Those who suffer from sickness, headache, nervous debility, loss of appetite, loss of energy, insomnia, depression, flatulency, biliousness, and a number of similar complaints will derive immediate and permanent benefit from a course of

**Beecham's Pills**

Sold everywhere in boxes, price 1/11 (6 pills) & 2/6 (166 pills).

A Tribute to Mr LES BELSEY by Merle Pipe

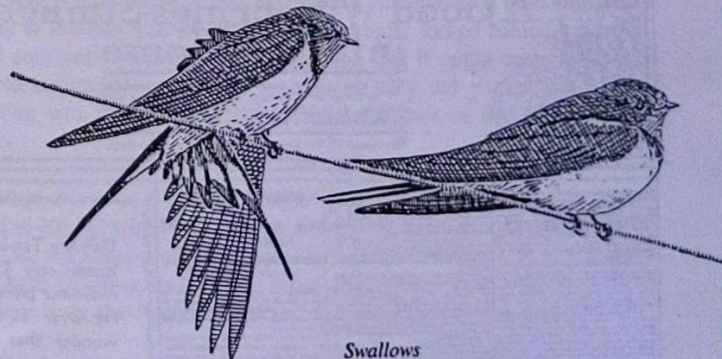
In January we lost one of our loyal members. Les Belsey, long before I came onto the scene, was a steward at the Museum when it was in the High Street, helping Mrs Backus in his unobtrusive, gentle way. I personally got to know him very well as we stewarded together every Saturday when the Museum came to life again, and until he became too unwell to carry on. Between visitors we had a coffee and a chat, and as well as telling me quite a bit about our artefacts he also told me about his life as a young man.

He was born in Deal, Kent, and cycled hundreds of miles around that area. His favourite job at the Museum was showing visitors the bird room, and I would hear him amusing the children with his bird whistles. I'm not too sure how accurate his calls were, but they added to the character of the Museum.

I also got to know his wife, Ann, to whom he was devoted, and I know that she took wonderful care of him to the end.

I am very glad I had the opportunity to know Les, and just wish that he could have gone on for ever.

\* \* \* \* \*



Swallows







fire. Originally the western end, today's bank entrance was a large cart entrance, and looking at it today it is easy to see that it was so.

The London & County Joint Stock Bank had been somewhere in Maldon High Street since 1840, where we don't know, but it seems that they moved to No. 36 in 1850. They operated under this name until about 1908 when the title was changed to the London & County & Westminster Bank Ltd. Today it has changed again to the National Westminster Bank - 'Natwest' to practically everybody. Without doubt it holds the record for continuity, being able to claim continuous and continuing connection with the very earliest days of banking in Maldon.

So far we have dealt with the two survivors, each able to claim more than 150 years of service, but now we look at one which didn't survive - the one mentioned in Pigot in 1839, and which almost certainly was already then well established. This was "The Savings Bank", presumably a purely Maldon concern, which was run by George Dandridge Bridge, described in Kelly's Directory as a "printer, bookseller, stationer and newsagent".

The Savings Bank was certainly only a sideline, as we are told that "...deposits and payments are received and paid on the first and third Thursdays in every month from 12 till 2". George was succeeded by Edgar Jeremiah Bridge before 1859, and he also established "Bridge's Reading Room 10 a.m. to 10 p.m." and this latter was still open in the 1890s, 'though not at the same address. The last entry we have found for the Savings Bank is 1862. By 1866 reference to it had ceased, but Edgar, whilst continuing his other activities, had added "music & pianoforte seller".

Today we have as many banks and building societies in the High Street as grocers, bakers, etc. and all dispense cash with the aid of electronics - a far cry from the hand-written Day Book of Sparrow & Co.

## Monica Bayley

*continues her account of Thaxted/Maldon-related events in the first World War through 'The Frees' who for many years were at Jacob's Farm, Goldhanger Road.....*

January 1915 dawned as bleak and cold as 1914 had ended, but for the Yeomen the days passed in training, but training not expected while they were in England. What had happened to those men, all picked because they were 'good with horses'?. The Commander-in-Chief Sir John French, Sir Douglas Haig and other Generals were Cavalry men, and firmly believed that given the Commander in Chief and the Prince of Wales. The Prince was anxious to see everything... the C-in-C was desperate to keep the heir to the throne safe!. The visit was brief and the following day the Yeomanry moved up nearer to the battle zone east of Ypres; the horses were moved separately to horse lines 30 miles behind the trench lines; the men travelled in London buses commandeered in England and still bearing advertisements familiar to the English. When they were near to the town the men left the buses and marched along the Ypres/Menin road, some going straight to the trenches and some through the town to the Menin road where there was an orphanage which had been evacuated. Here 'C' Squadron was billeted and for a while the townspeople did a roaring trade with the Yeomen. There is no sign of this building today but on the site a garage and a fruit shop are still doing good business with the English!

On February 8th 'C' Squadron marched through Zillebeke to relieve the Yeomen in the trenches. Zillebeke had suffered great destruction in the fighting before Christmas and in this little town Martin Free must have experienced his first sight of the ravages of war at close hand. In the Belgian countryside the Yeomen had cast expert farming eyes over the Belgian crops and admired them and the fertility of the soil, but to see the devastation of war on a farming community must have been a shock. On the same day the Yeomen suffered their first casualties... a ration party was shelled and Private Roberts of Wickford was killed and nine others wounded. Private Roberts was buried with full military honours that night whilst shells burst in the vicinity.



Life went on in and out of the trenches all through the cold, bright, Flemish spring... a great relief to the Yeomen but also an ominous portent, for everybody knew that as soon as the ground dried out and movement again became possible, the enemy would attack again for now the Kaiser had ordered his troops to take the Ypres Salient and the town at all cost. In fact they never did take the town; it was left to Hitler twenty five years later to march into Ypres... but that is another story.

However, after a brief stop in Grand Sec Bois -to greet the villagers and the Cure- the Yeomen were on the move, backwards and forwards over the land behind Ypres where the trench battles continued. Late in 1914 the Belgians had sacrificed much of their low-lying countryside to the floods. As a defence the King, Albert, ordered the sluice gates to be opened so that the water table, never far below the surface, rose, and water and mud covered much of the lower land. It was thus that the Yeomen returned to their horses and rode night after night, often returning to their base asleep in the saddle. During this time too, the Yeomen saw the streams of pathetic refugees trying to escape from the advancing grey hordes... old men and women; children; cattle; overloaded farm wagons; all clogging the roads from the front, while the military tried frantically to push their way towards the fighting. Nothing like this had ever been seen in Essex. The Yeomen were appalled but quite unable to assist. Some nights the Yeomen slept in the open, usually wet above and damp below, there was constant shelling and many horses were lost. Worse was to come.

On 22nd April the first official Gas attack was launched by the Germans north of Ypres on a sector manned by French Moroccan Colonial troops; they were totally unprepared. The line broke leaving a great gap through which the enemy began to pour. The situation was saved by Canadian troops who suffered heavy gas casualties. A friend of mine once described to me how as a little girl she, with other Belgian children, went to the Grand Place in Poperinghe to attempt to comfort the Canadian soldiers lying on stretchers there, and how they tried to wipe the soldiers' eyes. The Canadians were blinded by the toxic effect of the chloride gas. An interesting sideline to this is that Sir John French on the 19th April denied that he had used gas against the Germans. Whatever this may signify, on May 1st the Yeomen were issued with flannel to be worn over the nose and mouth as a protection against further attacks. This flannel had to be wet and since water had to be rationed and brought up by ration parties at night, readers may only guess how the Yeoman managed to carry out this order.

to be continued....Issue 9....

## MALDON - LIFE IN THE THIRTIES'

*by David Germain*

*continued from PennyFarthing No.7.....*

Something else recalled was of being taken to see a torchlight procession following a large model of a Viking boat, which I presume was to be burned to commemorate the Battle of Maldon. I think we watched from somewhere in London Road. The lady in the Information Office on my last visit had never heard of such an event but of this one I am quite confident.

Beeleigh Abbey, or rather the canal and the ponds nearby, was also a favourite playground. The pool beside the lock was a popular place for fishermen and I used to watch them when they landed their catches. We used to jump onto the barges which regularly plied the canal in those days, to be taken through the lock to jump off at the other end. It is quite amazing to think of the things which I as a young child used to get up to, and which we wouldn't dare let children do nowadays. I can recall a few occasions when my Dad had to go to the Police Station to report me missing, only to have me stroll home at a later hour than I should, without a care in the world. I suppose I must have caused my parents some real concern at times, knowing now the dangers that an estuary town has to offer the young and inexperienced.

There were things to see in the countryside that can only be seen in museums now. The fields of wheat were cut with either a hand scythe or a horse drawn machine, and then built up into stooks to dry off. The hay was still cut and left in the field to dry in the sunshine, being turned each day until ready to be gathered and built into haystacks. The road menders used steam-rollers which made a lovely noise and smelt beautiful and towed their huts with them wherever they went. Travel by bus and train was cheap and easy, although most journeys were made by shanks's pony. There was no T.V. to distract one and the place to be was out of doors.

My Mum always had the radio on when she was doing the housework, and she used to sing to me occasionally 'Little boy, you've had a busy day'. The music of those times brings back nostalgic memories whenever I hear any of it played now. I expect this is true of all generations, but I think the thirties era is remembered more because



the radio was still a novelty and the popular bands of the time were heard everywhere. People made their own entertainment and families were much closer units than what they are now. I recall the Christmases which we enjoyed at my Gran's house in Bow in the East End of London. The house would be packed with people sleeping on settees and makeshift beds. The shrieks and laughter when we all played 'Murder', and the Jazz Bands with my aunt on the piano, and everyone else with either a biscuit tin for a drum, or a wash board, harmonica, paper comb, glasses, and bottles part filled with water, and sometimes a xylophone, are memories which I will cherish always. Like the farm equipment and steam rollers, family entertainment such as these seem to have gone forever.

I remember the Christmas present I had from my uncles one year. It was a tin aeroplane which was battery powered and which ran along a string fixed across the room, and it had lights on the body and wingtips which would light up when it moved. I regret to say that I was too interested in how it worked, and bent all the metal tabs back and took it apart. It never again worked properly. I would think it was quite an expensive present and I feel a bit guilty now when I remember what I did to it.

One of my favourite toys was a box of wooden building bricks of various shapes and colours, and another was a wooden xylophone which had a lovely tone to it, but which my parents probably regretted buying for me. One Christmas Eve in Maldon I had gone to bed early so that Father Christmas would not be put off, but I couldn't sleep. Eventually I heard a lot of rustling and kept my eyes tight shut until things went quiet again. After a while I could no longer control my curiosity and opened my bedroom door and looked down the stairs. Attached to the stairs was an enormous Christmas Cracker which I began to inspect. I think my parents were waiting for something to happen because my mother said quietly from somewhere close by... 'What are you doing?'. I can't remember if I replied or just sneaked back to bed, but I know that I went back reassured and was soon fast asleep.

John Sadd's used to have a Christmas Party for the children of their employees. It was held in one of the Church halls in the town, and the thing that I remember most was the paper bag full of goodies which was handed to each child on leaving. There would always be an

orange and an apple, with some nuts and sweets and small novelties. For a child in the thirties these were indeed treasures.

A regular event just before Christmas was the making of the paper chains. The paper came ready cut in the brightest colours, but they were not pre-glued so the joining together was a very sticky and satisfying task in which I was always involved. I think the adhesive was home-made with flour and water as it didn't seem to matter how much one spread on oneself. The mixing of the Christmas pudding was also an important event, as was plucking the bird on Christmas Eve. I would also be allowed to help with preparing the stuffing and pushing it inside the bird. Pleasures were much simpler then and seemed to add to the build-up of excitement before Christmas Day. The only thing I didn't like about Christmas Day was the serving of sprouts with the dinner, but I think I was allowed to leave most of them. I can't ever remember having to go without Christmas pudding, and that would not be the sort of thing I would forget, so I suspect that concessions were made to mark the occasion.

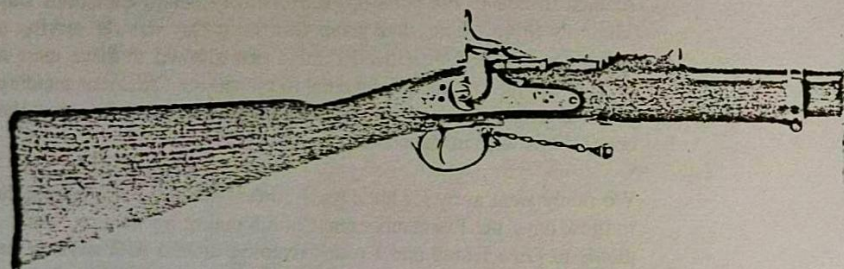
We rarely went away for holidays. I don't think that many people did in those days, but I remember one Church outing we went on. It was a picnic to Osea Island and I recall roaming around with some of my friends when we were startled to hear piano music coming from an empty building, which I think may have been an old barracks. Naturally the first thing we thought of was 'Ghosts', but eventually we plucked up enough courage to peep inside to find my Mum playing a piano which had been left behind. Once we had been reassured we carried on with our exploration of the island.

On another occasion I was taken, along with my parents, in somebody's motor car to see some oyster beds on the north side of the estuary. What a rare treat that was. I can remember the beds but not where they were. I can remember only that one occasion when I had such a trip, and hope that it wasn't my fault that no more were forthcoming. Then there were the bus rides to the little chapel at Broad Street Green, and to a small church by the canal at Heybridge. My parents used to sing together at the latter, and my father was a lay preacher there. On one occasion I had managed to escape, presumably to investigate the canal, and crossed the road by the canal bridge when I was knocked down by a car. My next recollection was of the back of my head being stitched at the doctor's and I still have the scar to prove it.



The thought has just occurred to me that the car which ran over me may have been the same car which took us to the oyster beds. This is only pure speculation although I can recall no relations nor friends of my parents who had such a thing as a motor car.

to be continued....Issue 9....



### THE SNIDER RIFLE

In the year 1866 the British Government paid prize money to the American inventor Jacob Snider for a system of altering the old muzzle loading Enfield rifles they had on hand, to permit breech loading.

The system Snider sold the British is practically identical with that originated by the armourers of Henry VIII's time except that the breechpiece hinges to the left instead of the right.

The Snider was successful because of the introduction of the brass cartridge case which would expand on firing and provide a breech seal against the gas.

*Downtreader.*

### THE 'ESSEX COUNTRYSIDE' MAGAZINE

Thanks to a generous donation from Mrs Quy of 'Essex Countrysides' covering the complete period of thirty four years from 1953 to 1986 inclusive, we are now well stocked and can dispose of single copies surplus to our needs. They are -

1952 - Autumn  
1957 - October/November  
1959 - April/May, June/July, September/October  
1961 - October  
1962 - January, April, July, November, December  
1964 - April, May, July, August, September, October, November, December  
1965 - January, September, October, November, December  
1966 - January, October, November, December  
1967 - March, April, May, June, October, November  
1968 - January, February, March, April, June, October, November  
1970 - January, March, April, May, June, July, August, October  
1973 - February, May, June  
1974 - January, February, March, November  
1975 - March, November, December  
1976 - March, April, May, July, September, December  
1977 - January, February, March, April, May  
1980 - January, February, April, May  
1984 - August

**First come, first served. Say 25p each or £15 the lot, or open to sensible offers.**

=====Phone Penny on 852511=====or  
Len on 852749=====



## ESSEX LOCAL HISTORY RECORDERS SCHEME

The first local history Recorder Scheme was initiated by the Suffolk Local History Council, an organisation which is run voluntarily by a group of local historians. It realised in the 1950s during a major re-building of Ipswich how much was changing so that the very recent past was in danger of soon being forgotten. The Local History Council therefore decided to organise a Local History Recorder scheme which would provide a network of people across the County to ensure the survival of valuable historical material, mainly by seeing the present is adequately recorded at local level and by being alert to record items of historical interest which might otherwise be overlooked and lost for ever.

Later, Hertfordshire Local History Council adopted a similar scheme and in 1981, Mr. Donald Jarvis, a well respected Essex historian, single-handedly organised a recorder scheme in Essex. In 1994, because of age and failing sight, he felt unable to continue and handed its co-ordination on to me.

The names of the Recorders had not been up-dated effectively since 1986 so my first task has been to see that we have an active group of recorders and to be sure that they are aware of their terms of reference. I started to do this through the auspices of Parish Councils so that the Recorder would clearly have the support of his or her local community. This, of course, limited the area covered by the scheme to the administrative county of Essex and for the present does not include what was historically metropolitan Essex, though I hope this will be possible. There are now another ten new recently created Parish Councils to add to the list.

Some parish councils have appointed a single recorder who works on their own. Others have divided the area of their influence into areas, each with a separate recorder. Another alternative has been for an established historical society to take on being recorders of a parish as a group and very encouragingly, new historical societies have been formed because of the interest in local history the Recorder scheme has generated. On the down side, some parishes have not replied to my letter and others have not been able to find anyone willing to take on the job. However, we now have over two hundred active recorders in the County of Essex.

What is a Recorder? First of all, we are volunteers and how we work is to a considerable extent our choice, as is how much we do. One need not primarily be an historian but most usually are, often already working on local or family history. Often they already have or had another role in the community and we have churchwardens, parish clerks and councillors, local newspaper correspondents, schoolteachers as well as newcomers with other past or present occupations which all bring a wealth of experience, interest and contacts into their work as a recorder.

All recorders are supplied initially with an information pack which gives suggestions on ways of working, such as keeping a village diary. There is a list of guidelines on a variety of relevant subjects together with names and addresses of the County and local professional bodies to whom they can turn for advice. It is emphasised how important it is to consult professionals when any doubt or problem arises and we are lucky in having such support as well as that of local museum and library staff.

It is hoped that each Recorder will send a brief annual report to me which the Essex Record Office will store as a yearly record of our work. The Department of Local History at the University of Essex is very interested in our scheme and we are working with them on an individual basis in a County-wide oral history project. Some recorders have already undertaken work in this field as well making photographic records of buildings and landscapes which have now radically altered.

We have begun to hold local District meetings to enable recorders new to the scheme to learn from those more experienced and also for all recorders to exchange information which might be useful in the future. Speakers in specialist fields have offered to give lectures and thus help to improve the standards of recording. We should like, as in Suffolk, to hold a yearly seminar but this has to be financially viable.

I would be happy to discuss any points a potential recorder would like to raise and my address, telephone and fax number follows:-

Jean Aberdour, Honorary Co-ordinator, The Old Rectory, Wickham Bishops, Witham, Essex CM8 3LA  
Tel: 01621 891597 Fax 01621 893697



Walter Linnett leaving his cottage beside St Cedd's Chapel

## STOP PRESS

Left-Right-Dissembling-Muddle and not only the election! Even as we photocopy this the Prom Lodge is scaffolded with part of the roof off but work is not to be interrupted by financial constraints until the conversion to museum is complete. There has been a war-time like camaraderie among the committee and the good doctor has kept our blood pressures in check. It should be 'a picnic' for the survivors from now on as the setting up of exhibits may soon commence, not to mention the impending onslaught of visitors!

AJF

All views are those of the contributors

44-84 Productions Farnbridge Road Maldon April 1997