

The Museum in the Park Maldon



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The Penny Farthing

Issue 86 July 2018

President's Patter

At our recent AGM, our Chairperson was not re-elected, so it falls to me as the newly elected President to welcome you to the Summer edition of our Museum magazine.

I think, first of all, that it is appropriate for me to not only thank Peter and Jeanette Stilts for the support which they gave to the Museum, but also to thank David Williams, who decided to step down from his role as President in order to take up the Chair of the Maldon Pioneers, Stephen Watson – we wish him every success with his new job, Karl Davies who leaves us in order to commit more time to his other charitable volunteering, Bert Patient and Steve Gallant.

We are also very grateful to Keith Davis, our Treasurer, who planned to step down but has very kindly agreed to stay on with the Museum, until such time that we can recruit a replacement.

The other stalwarts on our management team, Jen Sjollema, Brigid Van Bruggen, Flo Shaughnessy, Harriet Crawford-Condle, Mike Bawden, Steve Gridley, Brian Hunter and Ian Linton are, as usual, beavering away behind the scenes to ensure that our Museum continues to maintain the very high standards that we have set ourselves.

The entrance to the Museum looks bright and appealing thanks once again to the efforts of Liz and Eric Willsher who have planted up the flower tubs for us again this year. These tubs, combined with our usual hanging basket, provide a warm and cheerful welcome to our visitors as they walk up the path.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Merle Pipe, who has kindly agreed to become our Vice-President. Merle has been a member of our association for many years, and continues to delight us with her compilation of the scrapbooks, which are on display at the Museum.

Since we opened with a flourish at Easter, what is normally a fairly quiet period for us has actually been very busy. Being officially designated as 'Working Towards Accreditation' within the Museum Accreditation scheme, we would have been engaged upon preparing our application.

However, the Arts Council, which polices the scheme, has decided to amend it, bringing out new and hopefully simplified requirements in the Autumn, so we have a bit of a breather on this one.

Free opening at Bank Holidays, participation in the 'Engage Kids' art project, the Escape Game and the arrival of the Maldon 'Apple Book' are reported on elsewhere in the magazine, but they have all served to get our 2018 Season off to a flying start. I feel sure that the remainder of the season will be no less exciting.

Judy Betteridge, Summer 2018

Museum Musing

Summer's here again and, as I set pen to paper or hands to keyboard, so again am I. Hello again from Maldon Museum; we've had some wonderful things very kindly donated to us since I last wrote one of these little pieces, and I'm excited to tell you all about them, so here we go.



I'll start off with the thing that's gotten the most press and interest - the 'Apple Book'. For those of you who have read my piece in 'Maldon Life,' I apologise for repeating myself but the 'Apple Book' really is worth talking about. As a social historian, this is the sort of artefact that I really enjoy getting my hands on. For those of you who don't know, here's a brief description of what I'm talking about.

In 1949, Britain was in the midst of numerous post-war shortages, one of which was fruit, so the Australian Maldonians sent over 250 crates of apples for the English Maldonians' children. All of this is to say that various schools in Maldon put together thank you scrap books to send back to Australia and the one that we know survived - albeit on the crumbly side - was the one from Maldon County Primary school in which all of the children put drawings and thank you letters along with passport-sized photos next to their names.

Our Museum counterpart in Maldon, Australia has done a wonderful job in creating a replica of the original 'Apple Book' so that we can safely handle it without fear of it disintegrating in our hands. Speaking of which, when I say the original was crumbly, I mean **crumbly!** Paper and glue have an irritating habit of drying up and falling apart, which unfortunately meant that a lot of the photos of the children have fallen off the page. However, with the help of the local community and our wonderful visitors, we are making decent headway in matching the names with the faces, but we are by no means done. So, if you think you can help us identify more of our displaced photos, please do pop into the Museum and have a look though our list.

As well as the 'Apple Book' we were very kindly sent a few copies of the 'Tarrengower Times' newspaper. For those of you not familiar with the geography of rural Victoria, Tarrengower is a town roughly 10 miles west of Maldon, which in Australian distance standards practically makes them on top of each other.

The front page of the 'Tarrengower Times' is an article on the arrival of the 'Apple Book' in Maldon, England, which is available to read in the new accessions display in the entrance of the Museum, should the fancy take you.

Now I've gushed over the 'Apple Book' for the umpteenth time, so here are some of the other interesting items we've taken on. Recently I accessioned four wonderful pieces of technological history, all of which filled the boot of my car, but whose modern equivalents fit nicely in the software on my phone - namely a record player, a reel-to-reel tape player, a cine-camera and a projector.

All of these items are from the 1950s and in incredibly good shape for their age, apart from the odd bit of perished rubber, which is unfortunately common on items from this time. Not to get too sciency, but, before the introduction of synthetic rubbers such as the ones we use today, natural rubber was used, which, when left unused for a decent amount of time, the molecular chains broke down due to heat fluctuations or oxidisation stopping them from being able to spring back. So, if you've ever found an old rubber band that just fell apart now you know why.

Anyway, all that aside, these are some truly stunning pieces of the technology that was becoming increasingly domestic in the 1950s and 60s. It must have been amazing for those whose entire experience of film had taken place in cinemas to be able to string up an old bed sheet against one wall and watch projections of not only movies, but films that dad had taken on the beach at Camber sands, to use a personal and also I should imagine 50s appropriate example.

These items sadly do not have an immediate display where they would fit as we really only have displays up to around 1945. I would dearly love to do a display on the domestic technological inroads of the 1950s but space is not something that we have in abundance. In fact, it's something we barely have at all, but one day I'll fit them in!

Well that's all from me again, I thought I'd finish with a line I read recently, "History has to be observed. Otherwise it's not history. It's just ... well, things happening one after another."

Harriet Crawford-Condie

Steam Tug 'Brent' sails into the Museum

If you come into the Prom car park by the Museum and look straight down to the water, over the rooftops of the green weather boarded buildings, you will see the top of the funnel of *Steam Tug Brent*, with its distinctive colours of buff, red and black. *Brent* is berthed alongside the footpath by the Lakeside Café.



If, when you are visiting the Museum, you go to the Sadd room on the top floor; amongst the interesting collection of tools and models, you will see to your right, on the top shelf, a delightful model of the *Brent*. Last spring the *Steam Tug Brent Trust* was contacted; the owner of a model of *Brent* wished to donate it to the Trust. A condition of the donation was that the model should be on display.



Unfortunately, the *Brent* does not have museum display space so we were unable to accommodate this wish. By the good fortune of a space being available, the Museum in the Park was able to offer a home to the model. The model is beautifully detailed and has faithfully replicated paint colours of the full-sized vessel.

Brent is one of three remaining TID-class tugs of the 182 which were commissioned by the Admiralty in World War II for the Ministry of War Transport. The angular lines and flat plates of her hull make her an ideal project for model boat builders.



TID tugs have this hull shape because of the innovative method of their construction. The hulls were built in eight sections at inland engineering works. The sections were transported by lorry to the shipyards where they were welded together.

Brent, built in 1945, was too late to see war service. She was sold instead to the Port of London Authority (PLA), who used her to help maintain the Thames as a navigable waterway and later to tow lighters and barges in the Royal Docks. In the 1960s the PLA sent all their steam-powered tugs for scrappage and replaced them with more efficient diesel tugs. By 1970, *Brent* was the only remaining steam tug of the fleet. *Brent* survived because, as the last PLA tug to be sent for scrap in 1970, she was saved from the cutting torch.



Delivering a vessel to Stour Salvage, Mistley, Essex, Ron Hall saw *Brent* awaiting disposal. Invited to look on board and hearing her story, he felt that she should be saved from her imminent fate. Scrapped with all her machinery in working order, she was easily returned to steam. Ron and Janet Hall with their crew on board, and *Brent*, with a full head of steam, left Mistley in June 1971 for *Brent's* new home in Maldon. Under the ownership of Ron and Janet Hall, *Brent* was kept on a berth at Maldon, not far from where she lies now.



So started the preservation of *Steam Tug Brent*, a pioneering maritime heritage project when little or no thought was being given to preservation of this type of vessel, especially those of the wartime era. With care taken to make no irreversible changes to her, *Brent* was kept in private use in Maldon for the next 40 years.



Until the mid-1990s she was in steam on the River Blackwater two or three times a year. She often ventured to the Thames and twice went further afield to Holland.

The Steam Tug Brent Trust took over the ownership of the vessel in 2011. The trustees recognised that *Brent* was a precious and unique historic relic of London's maritime history, and deserved to be restored. For nearly fifty years she has been an iconic presence on the waterfront at Maldon. It is planned that she will continue to be berthed where she is, on Maldon's Bath Wall.

Largely unchanged in appearance from her working days, it is hoped that she will be restored to operating condition as she was, complete with working steam engine and boiler. Once *Brent* is fully restored, the Trust plan to work with partners to provide heritage boat handling, steam and maritime experience for young people, students and specialist groups, as well as the general public.

Meanwhile, through open days, articles, talks and social media the Trust continue to raise *Brent's* profile. In her prominent position by the footpath, *Brent* is viewed by the thousands of passers by who visit the Prom.



On open days, the public are able to go aboard, walk round the deck, go into the wheelhouse, and down into the accommodation and engine room. At times there is opportunity to find out more information about *Brent* in our shore side tent.

Brent, as a much loved local landmark, features in numerous paintings, photographs, books and magazines.



Email: info@steamtugbrent.org
Website: www.steamtugbrent.org
Facebook: Steam Tug Brent of 1945
Twitter: Steam Tug Brent
@SteamTugBrent

Thanks to Janet Hall for contributing this article and photographs
Text and images copyright Janet Hall

‘The Park Keeper’s Child’ brings in the visitors

At Easter we introduced a new initiative designed to generate a new source of income for the Museum, as well as attract a different type of visitor. We have partnered with The Escape Network to bring a specially designed escape room game to the Museum.

Titled ‘The Park Keeper’s Child’, teams of 4-6 players are invited to discover the secret behind the disappearance of the Park Keeper’s Child. Players have one hour to solve puzzles, riddles and codes to escape the Museum before the secret comes to pass.

Now the story of the Park Keeper and his child is entirely fictional, but it enables the players to immerse themselves into the history of the building. The game is played across three rooms in the Museum. But, don’t worry, none of the artefacts and display items are involved.

The games are played in the evenings when the Museum would otherwise be closed. The Museum receives £10 for each game played, and it is interesting that most players have never visited the Museum before, but are all interested to return to see more of the Museum at a later date.

The Escape Network are very good at generating interest in the local press and social media, and this has a positive halo effect on the Museum too. Games are available to be played on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening throughout the year.

Jack Ellum, owner of The Escape Network is a good friend of the Museum. He has installed a new CCTV system in the Museum and Jack has many more ideas to help us enhance the visitor experience, as well as new ideas to increase visitors and income.

So, more visitors and increased income, thanks to The Escape Network.

Mike Bawden

Edward Bright, 'the fat man at Maldon', and his descendants

When Edward Bright died in 1750 he was 'supposed to be the biggest and weightiest Man in the World'. Dubbed 'the fat man at Maldon', his enormous size made him a local and national celebrity.



Edward Bright was born on 1st March, 1721 in Great Waltham. His father was William Bright and his mother Mary, née Davie. He was large as a child and 'was descended from families greatly inclined to corpulency, both on his father's and his mother's side'.

Aged 12½ and weighing 10 stones 4 pounds, Edward was apprenticed to Joseph Pattisson, a Maldon grocer. At the end of his apprenticeship, aged 19, he weighed 24 stones. In the early 1740s, he became a freeman of the borough of Maldon and married a woman named Mary.

About the same time, he became tenant of a High Street house and grocery shop. This was destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 1892; 57 & 59 High Street now occupy the site. He was also tenant of a candle workshop on Market Hill; Maldon Town Hall now stands on part of the site.



Edward Bright died upstairs in his house of a military fever on 10th November, 1750, aged 29. Two days later, 'a Way was cut thro' the wall and Stair-Case to let the corpse down into the Shop'. His coffin was taken to All Saints' church and lowered into a vault with the help of a triangle and pulleys. At the time of his death, he was 5' 9 ½" tall, measured 5' 6" round his chest and 6' 11" round his belly, and was estimated to weigh 44 stones.

On 1st December, 1750 a wager took place at the Black Bull, which was next door but one to Edward's house. The wager, soon to gain fame and become known as 'The Surpriseing Bett Decided', was that five men aged 21 and resident in Maldon could be buttoned into Edward's huge waistcoat.



In the event, 'not only five, but seven Men were, with the greatest Ease included in the Waistcoat'.

A second wager, 'The Surprizing WAGER Decided', took place on 28th January, 1751, this time at the King's Head, when 'nine Gentlemen were, without any Trouble, circumferenced within the aforesaid Mr. Bright's wastcoat'.

Mary Bright, Edward's widow, continued the grocery and candle business. On 25th November, 1751 she married Thomas Bayley at Ulting Church, and the High Street house became their home. In 1756, Thomas Bayley purchased both the High Street premises and the candle workshop.

Only two of Edward and Mary Bright's six children survived into adulthood, a daughter, Mary, and son, Edward, known locally as 'Ted'. In 1766, Edward 'Ted' Bright, now in his early 20s, bought a dilapidated house next to St Peter's Churchyard. The vendors included his stepfather, Thomas Bayley.



Edward 'Ted' Bright then, between 1766 and 1773, built a new house on the site; this by 1881 had become known as Church House.

As well as running the family grocery business at his new house, Edward 'Ted' Bright continued with the candle workshop on Market Hill. On 21st April, 1773 he married at All Saints' Church Mary Hance, daughter of Henry Hance, a wealthy Maldon merchant tailor.

Edward 'Ted' Bright died in 1790 after which the businesses were carried on by his widow, Mary, until her death in 1801. Church House then became the home of their son, Edward, who continued with the candle workshop until his death in 1852.

His son, also named Edward, then lived at Church House and continued with the candle workshop until the 1860s when he sold the house and workshop and moved away from Maldon.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Lynne Raymond for contributing this article and the photographs. Lynne's detailed research has helped correct earlier errors about the places where Edward Bright and his descendants lived and worked.



(left to right)

57 & 59 High Street - Site of house and shop of Edward Bright 'the fat man'

Maldon Town Hall - Site of Bright family candle workshop for four generations

Church House, 63 High Street – Home of Edward 'Ted' Bright (d.1790), Edward Bright (d.1852), Edward Bright until mid-1860s

All text and images copyright Lynne Raymond.

An Afternoon at the Museum

The doors had barely opened and there hadn't been time to put the kettle on before our first visitors came up the path to be welcomed by the stewards. It was soon apparent that they are long-time Maldonians and, within five minutes, had been able to identify a photograph that had been puzzling some of us - Bennett's taxi firm opposite the old Embassy Cinema. You could see a film and then walk across the road for your taxi home.

After they finished their tour of the Museum they chatted to our newest steward only to find that he had bought the house where one of the couple had been born in 1945 and where he had lived for many years. His wife remembered her time working for Sadds and recalled seeing the portraits in the Sadd room hanging in the boardroom.

Our next visitor was a remarkable, visually impaired gentleman who had travelled from Worcester on his own and was going on to visit Orford in Suffolk after staying in Maldon. He went all round the Museum on the arm of another steward while she explained the exhibits to him and told him some of the history of Maldon.

At the end of a busy afternoon, a group came in - father, mother and grown-up son. They spent a long time upstairs and came down very excited because the father had found a photograph of his father taking part in a play at the Maldon Grammar School, which he had never seen before.

We can't promise our stewards such a full and busy time always but we can assure you of an interesting afternoon, a chance to meet new people and make good friends. We need all sorts of volunteers - not just stewards - so whatever your skills and however little time you can spare, why not come and join us? We are open Wednesday, Friday and Saturday afternoons and Sundays from 11.00pm from Easter until the end of October. Come in and see us or leave a message on our phone (01621 842688) and we will get back to you.



Brigid Van Bruggen

The Story of James Morrill

While carrying out some research recently on our connections with Maldon Australia, I came across a fascinating booklet, telling the story of James Morrill.

Having been in contact with the Bowen Historical Society in Queensland, I have been given permission by them to reprint an extract from the booklet. In a nutshell, the following is a brief description of James' life – and the following paragraphs from the booklet provide more detail.

James Morrill (sometimes Morrell), seaman, of Maldon, Essex, who was shipwrecked in the ship 'Peruvian' on the Barrier Reef in 1846, washed ashore at Cape Cleveland after 42 days adrift on a raft, and lived 17 years with the Aborigines in the area between Townsville and Bowen until recovered by settlers in 1863. He died at Bowen on 30th October 1865 and is buried in Bowen Cemetery.

"I was born in 1824 in the parish of Abridge (presumably Heybridge) near Maldon. My father was a millwright and engineer and carried on his business in Swan Yard. When old enough I was sent to the National School in the village, and when I was about 13 or 14, I went with my brother to work in my father's workshop.

Being of a restless disposition, I was always glad to escape to get amongst the shipping in Maldon. Many small craft used to come up the River Blackwater close to where I lived. A friend of my father's was Mr. Firman, a pilot who used to pilot craft down the Blackwater, and I frequently accompanied him.

During one such trip, I was asked by the Captain if I would like to go to sea and, on the promise of a new set of clothes in Shields where the vessel was bound for, I readily agreed and without consulting my parents, I went on my first voyage in the 'Royal Sailor', which belonged to the Maldon Shipping Company. I went on several voyages in her and became an apprentice with the company at the age of 16.

On completion of my apprenticeship, I yearned to join a larger ship and Mr. May, an agent to the company, gave me a present for good conduct and three letters of recommendation – one to the Sailors' Home in London and two to large shipowners.

With these, I made for London by rail. I gave a man five shillings to direct me to the Sailor's Home, where I saw advertised a need for a carpenter on the 'Ramilles', and said I would take it, but having no intention of doing so. However, in the morning I was persuaded to do so and made for home to collect my clothing and tools. Everybody was very angry with me for acting so hastily, saying that, as it was a troop ship, I should be anything but comfortable in her.

All being ready, I left home and joined the ship at Deptford and the following day we dropped down the stream and anchored at Gravesend. The next day we shipped the 11th Regiment of Foot for Hobart Town, whither we were bound and a detachment of the Royal Artillery for Sydney, which was intended for New Zealand, war having broken out in the Bay of Islands.

We started on our voyage during the week, which we were six months in accomplishing. All troop ships were forced to carry a double compliment of hands, so when we arrived in Sydney, one half of us were not wanted. I obtained permission to leave the ship for I had not been long enough from home yet, and I was anxious to see and gain as much experience as possible.

I then shipped on board a little schooner lying in the cove, called the 'Terror' bound for Auckland. We made a successful trip and brought back with us copper ore, but, as it was not easy in those days to get a cargo, on our return some of us were discharged.

There were several vessels in the harbour laid on for home, but I thought I would not go home yet, so I shipped on board the ill-fated ship 'Peruvian' bound for China with a cargo of hardwood, with what result my readers will see

Judy Betteridge

(See the next issue of this magazine, for part two of James' story)

Children's Art Afternoon is picture perfect



On Saturday 16th June, we held a Children's Art Afternoon in order to promote ENGAGE, a charity that encourages families to visit museums and art galleries. Sheila, Sue and Sylvia from The Arts Society Blackwater established themselves in the courtyard where youngsters were provided with materials to make colourful representations of either Edward Bright or a Thames Barge. Many families visited and most wandered around the Museum too, making very favourable remarks. A very worthwhile exercise!

Cllr Flo Shaughnessy, Vice Chairman

Our data protection policy

You will see that Members of Maldon Museum Association now have a new, and we hope more attractive, title - Friends of Maldon Museum in the Park. This was officially accepted at the 2018 AGM on May 31st.

In accordance with new European legislation, we have to tell you what information we hold about you and what we do with it. This information amounts only to your name, postal address, telephone numbers and email address, where applicable. It is stored in a password-protected database unconnected to the Internet.

We use these details to send out this thrice yearly newsletter, 'The Penny Farthing,' and to keep you informed about the Annual General Meeting of the Association and any events at the Museum that might be of interest to you.

We never sell any of the information to, or share any of it with, third parties who will use it for marketing. Your information belongs to you, not to the Museum. You have a right of access to any information we hold about you. If you wish to be removed from our database at any time please email Brigidwvbruggen@gmail.com

Publicising the Museum

Hello folks, it's Harriet again. I've been asked to write a little bit about what's going on with the relatively newly formed Publicity sub-committee. Exciting right? No really, stick with me we've been doing some good stuff. Before I dive in, on behalf of the members of the sub-committee, I'd like to give a big thank you to Brigid for letting us invade her dining room once a month and to Aart for making the coffee.

Between us, we organised the pleasingly popular 'Odd One Out' game we ran over the Easter holidays and we are in the process of planning its return for the Summer holidays. We've also started organising our regular appearances in various local papers and magazines to keep the Museum in the public eye, which has, in part, led to the Museum gaining a few more wonderful volunteers. We're always looking for more, so we'll do our best to keep it up!

We also organise the Museum's involvement in national events like the Heritage Weekends, as well as updating our pamphlets and posters, the art work of which is being donated very kindly by local artist Hugo. I hope some of you spotted our little Downton Abbey reference in our Odd One Out poster. We meet once a month to scheme new schemes to make sure everyone hears how wonderful we know the Museum to be.



Would you like to be involved with the Museum?

We are always looking for new volunteers to help us run our Museum. You might like to be a Steward, or to be involved behind the scenes working on displays, conservation of our collection or carrying out maintenance work and cleaning during our closed period. Perhaps you may be interested in joining our management team - currently we are seeking a new Chairman, Treasurer and Volunteers Coordinator.

To find out more please contact enquiries@maldonmuseum.org.uk

News roundup

Free Bank Holiday weekend openings

This year for the first time, the Museum is open on everyday of the Bank Holiday weekends for free – a total of 13 days. The purpose of this measure, agreed by the committee, is to increase visitor numbers.

At Easter, we had 176 visitors despite the cold weather. The early May Bank Holiday was disappointing because of steward problems, but the late May Bank Holiday was a resounding success with 231 visitors from the Saturday to the Monday.

Let's hope we repeat this in August. If you are in Maldon over a Bank Holiday, this is a good time to take relatives and friends and impress them with the museum's contents. Incidentally, entry for children is free all the time now as long as they are accompanied by an adult.
Keith Davis, Temporary Hon Treasurer

Arrange a visit

The Museum is now open for the season, and it's never too early to plan a visit. We welcome group visits to the Museum at times and dates that can be arranged to suit.

For adults, the charge is £2 per head. For schools, the charge is £35 per class, which includes teachers and adult helpers.

We can also offer a school's outreach service when a member of the Museum will visit the school and take a number of artifacts for children to see and talk about.

To book a visit, or for more information, please email enquiries@maldonmuseum.org.uk

Maldon District Museum Association
The Museum in the Park
Registered Charity 301362
Patron – Rt Hon. John Whittingdale, OBE MP

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The Museum in the Park magazine is the official newsletter of the Maldon District Museum Association and is published three times a year.

For £10 annually, or a single lifetime fee of £90, you can become a Friend of Maldon Museum. You'll be entitled to free entry to the Museum during normal opening hours and will also receive a copy of the Museum in the Park magazine three times a year.

For more information, or to join, simply email enquiries@maldonmuseum.org.uk, contact the Friends' Secretary on 01621 854298 or visit the Museum.

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

Come and visit us

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You'll find us by the main gates
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Contributions for the newsletter

We welcome your contributions to this magazine and would be happy to receive articles, images, letters and comments. If you have something you would like to submit, however small, please email it to enquiries@maldonmuseum.org.uk