

Local History Link

Keeping you in touch during the coronavirus pandemic

No. 40

Welcome to edition No. 40 of *Local History Link*, the first of 2021, and we wish you all a very Happy New Year and hope it will not be too long before we can once again resume our monthly meetings.

In this issue, Jack recalls an amazing coincidence and John Doe writes about an early local injustice. Jim completes a history of Tilbury Dock, writes about an iconic Southend cinema, and delivers a January timeline. We thank all our contributors who enable us to publish an edition each week, but we need more items, so please keep sending your articles, photos, etc., by email to Jim at jsanctuary28@gmail.com or post to 28 Darlington Grove, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3LG. Keep safe and keep well! **Tony, Tricia and Jim**



AN AMAZING COINCIDENCE FROM THE SOMME



Back in the Sixties on a 1914-18 Battlefields trip with my father and three of his contemporaries, I took a short stroll to the bridge crossing the La Basse Canal (see image painted by Adrian Hill © IWM). Here I met a chap looking down from the bridge at some workmen who were busily digging at the side of the canal. I asked one of them what they were doing down there and he said “They are widening the canal: by your accent you are English so you’ll be interested to know that we have just recovered the remains of 14 English soldiers from the Great War”. I said I was interested because I was with four

survivors from the Great War. At the time, they were sleeping off a good lunch at the Cafe de la Musique nearby.

He said he would like them to meet his mother, who, as a child had lived 4 miles behind the Line (which remained fairly static at that point). I collected the boys and we followed the chap, on his bicycle, up a cart track to a dilapidated, impoverished little cottage. His mother, a little, frail and bent old lady, dressed in black was absolutely delighted to meet the old soldiers. She produced some tiny little glasses and a half bottle of Cognac. She kept replenishing the glasses and we talked for some time. She said that until recently she used to be visited every year by an English soldier, but sadly, the last time she had heard from him was the previous Christmas. She produced his Christmas card in its envelope which bore his name and a Southend postmark.

When we got home, we looked up his name in the telephone directory. A lady answered the ‘phone saying that sadly, her husband had died but had always kept in touch. As a Major, in the Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry, he had been billeted at the lady’s cottage at one time. The she added “but what did you say your name was? Rickard? That was my maiden name!”

“Plymouth or Drewsteignton?” my father asked. “Drewsteignton” she replied. “Then we must be cousins, two or three times removed!” And that all came about by a chance encounter on a bridge in the middle of the 1916 Battlefield of the Somme. **Jack Rickard**

AN EARLY INJUSTICE PUT TO RIGHTS

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Folly Farm Estate in Leigh was being broken up and roads were being laid out. To the west of Folly Farm, living in a redbrick double-fronted house was an Afrikaner who had been a Colonel in the Boer War. He was a haulier and had a business in London. By all accounts he thought more of his horses than he did of human beings. With him lived his wife and two daughters. He had a son in the Navy but he lived away. To one side of the house was a coach house with living accommodation above. There was a coachman with his wife, who was also the cook, and one black servant girl. The attitude of the man, his wife and the daughters were that the servant girl was little better than dirt, and they treated her in this way.

One has to remember that at this time, many big houses had servant girls and they had to obey their mistress or be whipped – this was commonplace. In many old houses, servant bells can still be seen. In November of 1905, one of the daughters had apparently accused this lass of frowning at her in a nasty way; she made out she was upset and the servant girl ran outside and hid in a nearby field. The wife pulled her back and tied her to a tree. When the master came home, he was very tired and grumpy as usual, but when he heard what had happened, he lashed the girl violently with a horse whip across her back. He did it so hard that the whip marks went through her clothing and flesh to the bone. When he had finished, they threw her into a nearby shed. About a week or so later, when the wounds had healed somewhat, she was sent to the Broadway to get some vegetables. While she was at the greengrocers on the corner of West Street, somebody brushed past her



back and she screamed. This puzzled the shopkeeper, a Mrs Palmer, who knew the reputation of the master and the girl was ushered into the back room. See photo © Carole Mulroney. One of the other customers was a nurse. The girl by this time was very frightened but when her coat was taken off, they saw the blood-soaked dress and told her she had to stay in the shop. She was very reluctant to stay there, but the nurse bathed her wounds and she remained at the greengrocers overnight.

Word soon spread. The next day was a Saturday

and at about 7.50am some 50 men and women were seen coming up by the west side of Leigh Church and heading in an easterly direction. By the time they reached the Grand Hotel, there were over 100 people, all muttering as they hurried along, and looking very aggressive. Now the local constable had noticed the mood of the crowd earlier and had sent to Southend for reinforcements, who tried to stop the people near the Grand Hotel. At 9.30am trams from Southend were stopping by Chalkwell Park and scores of people were getting off and hurrying down the London Road. They turned up Folly Lane and some went up the track that is now Fernleigh Drive. By 11am, the bottom half of this track was full of people; an ugly crowd gathered outside the man's house and a noose had been slung over the bough of a nearby tree. Over 20 mounted police were used to quell the crowd and the military were present, too. The man with his wife and daughters were taken away for the own safety in a horse-drawn van. After being kept in the Police Station for a couple of days, the man was told he was no longer welcome in this country. He decided to put his business in the hands of an agent, left England and went back to his home in Africa. **John Doe**

TILBURY DOCKS – A BRIEF HISTORY (PART THREE)



Since 2007, P&O Ferries have operated a Roll-on/Roll-off (RORO) freight service for unaccompanied trailer traffic between Tilbury and Zeebrugge, offering two sailings a day from a terminal inside the enclosed dock. However, it was many years earlier that RORO services had been established in Tilbury Docks. Following the end of World War Two, an entrepreneur, Frank Bustard, acquired from the Admiralty three tank-landing ships which he modified to carry trucks that could be driven on

board through the bow door. Additional purpose-built vessels were introduced, including ‘Doric Ferry’ and ‘Cerdic Ferry’. The Transport Ferry Service, as it was known, operated between 35 Berth, Tilbury, and Rotterdam and Antwerp, until the service transferred to Felixstowe Dock in 1968. In 2020, a second RORO terminal opened on the riverside at Tilbury, see photo above, which reduced the passage time between UK and Continental terminals.

With the closure of Surrey Commercial Docks in 1970, the timber trades in which they had specialised were transferred to Tilbury Dock. Today, Tilbury is the main UK import location for a range of forest products customers. Newsprint is also imported into Tilbury (see photo below), being close to the printing presses of the national newspapers based in East London, and resources include the use of 50 acres of custom-designed facilities, complete with dedicated berths and the world’s first port-based automated warehouse for paper products.



Bulk cargoes are handled at the port through six bulk handling berths and 7.4 acres cater for the range of dry bulk services and operations, serviced by two harbour mobile and three Sennebogen hydraulic mobile cranes, making it a specialist in aggregates, cement, animal feed and recycled goods. The port handles 750,000 tonnes of bulk aggregates and 2 million tonnes of recycled products and facilitates these through its specialised warehousing, such as its 60,000 tonnes capacity animal feed shed in addition to the 10,000 tonnes of quay-side storage. All of this storage is coupled with mobile hoppers and conveyors for quick and efficient discharge, as well as a dedicated rail terminal with 5,600 tonnes of stock-piling space across eight separate concrete bays. A new development will be the building of a Construction Materials and Aggregates Terminal for handling and processing bulk construction material with a new deep water aggregate riverside berth.

One of the port’s biggest cargo exports, at over one million tonnes a year, is bulk scrap metal, shipped to South Korea and used in the manufacture of Hyundai cars. Over 100,000 Hyundai cars are then shipped back into Tilbury for delivery to dealerships throughout the UK.

With the opening of DP World’s London Gateway in 2013, Tilbury Docks lost some deep-sea container services to the new terminal which can handle the latest generation of deep-drafted container ships. The Port of Tilbury has therefore had to adapt its business to the loss of container tonnage by increasing its capacity in areas where it has the greatest commercial strengths, including handling forest products, bulk cargoes and European RORO and LOLO services. **Jim Sanctuary**

SOUTHEND'S MOST POPULAR PICTURE HOUSE



The *Astoria* opened in 1935 in a prime High Street position on the site of the old Luker's Brewery, becoming Southend's largest and most luxurious cinema. In the stalls and balcony, seating was provided for 2,750. It had a 56 feet wide proscenium, a fully equipped 40 feet deep stage with 14 dressing rooms and a Compton organ with a Melotone attachment and an illuminated console. All lighting in the pink and bronze auditorium was indirect and the decorative scheme was carried out to the plans of interior decorators Mollo & Egan. There was also a café and dance studio. The exterior of the building was finished in polished beige artificial stone with three large arched metal windows above the entrance, similar to the Whitehall Theatre in London.

The interior décor was admired for its graceful lines and tasteful colour schemes. Below right is a view of the auditorium.

A broadcast of George VI's Coronation was relayed to the cinema at



10am on 12th May 1937. In June 1940 ownership changed and the cinema was renamed the *Odeon*.

As well as the latest films and stage shows, music concerts were popular with local audiences. But one of the biggest events at the *Odeon* was the appearance in August 1952 of Laurel and Hardy, who performed twice nightly for a week.



They are pictured here at the Palace Hotel, where they resided during their stay in the town. Laurel and Hardy were very popular with local fans and cinema staff, happy to be photographed and to sign autographs.



Over many years, the *Odeon* hosted the crowning of Southend's Carnival Queen, a popular annual event. In the 1960s, the *Odeon* presented many pop concerts featuring top pop acts of the time, including Roy Orbison, The Everly Brothers, Dusty Springfield, The Rolling Stones...and, of course, The Beatles, in May and December 1963. They are shown in the photo with the *Odeon* manager, Arthur Levinson, standing between John and George.

In 1954, the *Odeon* had been equipped with CinemaScope and in 1960 a major refurbishment included reducing the seating to 2,286 in order to increase leg room for patrons.

The cinema closed on 7th January 1970 for a complete reconstruction involving creating *Odeon One* in the old cafe area, seating 500, and extending the former

balcony forward to create *Odeon Two* with 1,350 seats. The upshot of the new rebuild was a comfortable but rather bland auditoria which re-opened on 4th November 1970. A new entrance had been created at the side of the building in Elmer Approach which had originally been an exit. The original entrance and stalls area were converted to a Presto supermarket.

In 1996, the *Odeon Multiplex* opened at Victoria Circus and the High Street *Odeon* cinemas closed. It was demolished in 2004 and today part of the site is a department of the University of Essex. Below are some of the posters advertising films and shows that were staged over the sixty-one years of this iconic Southend cinema's history. **Jim Sanctuary**

SOUTHEND ASTORIA
PHONE 4434-7

SUNDAY NEXT, SEPTEMBER 22nd, FOR 7 DAYS

LIONEL BARRYMORE in
"THE THRILLER EXTRAORDINARY"
"MARK of the VAMPIRE" with
ELIZABETH ALLEN · BELA LUGOSI
LIONEL ATWILL · JEAN HERSHOLT
SCREENING AT 3.0 · 6.25 · 9.45 CERT. "A" ALSO

"THE RIGHT AGE TO MARRY" with
FRANK PETTINGELL · JOYCE BLAND
SCREENING AT 1.0 · 4.20 · 7.45 CERT. "U"

STAGE!
FOR SIX DAYS—MON. TO SAT.
The ASTORIA GRAND ORCHESTRA
Headed by the Celebrated Violinist Conductor—
MONS. JAN GODOWSKI
with **DRURY and RAMOND** Europe's Finest Exhibition Dancers.

BARGAIN HOURS
12.15 to 1 p.m.
3,000 SEATS
9d and 1/-
MON. to FRI.

RESTAURANT CAFE
Open daily 10 a.m. to 10.30 p.m.
Sunday 12.30 to 10 p.m.
Phone 4434
Car Park adjoining Theatre
Prices (including Tax) 9d, 1/-, 1/4, 2/-, 2/6

CONTINUOUS
12.30 to 11 p.m.
SUNDAY
8 p.m.

SOUTHEND STANDARD. THURSDAY. JULY 31. 1952. 3

ODEON SOUTHEND
Telephone 4434

SUNDAY, AUGUST 3, for 1 Day Only (Doors Open 8.30): **JANE AUSTIN**, **Clara de Haven**, **Van Johnson**, **Tom Drake**, **TWO GIRLS AND A SAILOR** (D) AND FULL SUPPORTING PROGRAMME

AUGUST 4th ONE WEEK ONLY

HERE IN PERSON

TWICE NIGHTLY 8.30 & 1.45
Matinee Mon. and Sat. at 1.30

BERNARD DELFONT presents Hollywood's Greatest Comedy Couple

STAN LAUREL  **OLIVER HARDY**

The Famous Comedians in an Unrepealable Sketch

LORRAINE Sings Carols!
THE RENEGADE AERIAL KENWAYS

LONGDALE SISTERS MODERN DANCERS
Mackenzie REID & DOROTHY ACE ADORNY GARDENIA

THE GREAT GINGALEE
The Silent Man of Mystery in Wonders of the East

JIMMIE ELLIOTT B.B.C. ANIMAL MIMICRY
ARCHIE ELRAY and Company in a Ventriloquial Scene

CIRCLE and STALLS, 5/-, 3/6 and 2/- (Inc. Tax). All Seats Bookable
Booking Office Now Open (Tel. 44435), 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily (Closed Sunday)

BOB ARDEN ENTERPRISES LIMITED presents

ODEON - SOUTHEND
Thursday, 3rd October, at 6.45 & 9.00

ON THE STAGE

RETURN BOYS OF THE RENEGADES
EVERLY BROS

BO DIDDLEY
"WITH THE DUCKS AND GEARS"

ROLLING STONES
"COME ON"

BOB BAIN **THE FLINTSTONES**

JULIE GRANT **MICKIE MOST**

SEATS:
STALLS 15/- 12/6 10/- 7/6 CIRCLE 12/6 10/- 7/6

PRESENTED TO YOU BY THE SOUTHERN RECORDS

ODEON, SOUTHEND
Friday 31st May 1963 6:45pm

ON THE STAGE

ONE DAY ONLY


THE BEATLES

GERRY AND THE PACEMAKERS

HELEN SHAPIRO

BO DIDDLEY

BILLY FURY

ROY ORBISON

SEATS 10/6 8/6 7/6 6/6 5/6

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TIMELINE FOR JANUARY

- Jan 1st 2002:** Euro-denominated coins and notes went into circulation in 12 of the 15 countries then members of the EU.
- Jan 2nd 1971:** Sixty-one football supporters were killed at Ibrox Park, Glasgow, following a clash between Celtic and Rangers.
- Jan 3rd 1946:** William Joyce (Lord Haw Haw), broadcaster of Nazi propaganda to Britain during World War II, was hanged for treason in London.
- Jan 4th 1960:** The European Free Trade Association was inaugurated in Stockholm.
- Jan 5th 1968:** Alexander Dubček came to power in Czechoslovakia, beginning the "Prague Spring".
- Jan 6th 1066:** Harold Godwinson, or Harold II, the last Saxon King of England, was crowned. It was the first coronation to be held at Westminster Abbey.
- Jan 7th 1558:** England's possession in France, Calais, was captured by the French.
- Jan 8th 1959:** Charles de Gaulle was inaugurated as President of France's 5th Republic.
- Jan 9th 1799:** Income tax was introduced in UK.
- Jan 10th 49 BC:** Julius Cesar crossed the Rubicon to invade Italy.
- Jan 11th 1973:** The Open University awarded its first graduate degrees.
- Jan 12th 1895:** The National Trust was founded in the UK.
- Jan 13th 1888:** The National Geographic Society was founded in Washington DC, USA.
- Jan 14th 1539:** Spain annexed Cuba.
- Jan 15th 1559:** Elizabeth I was crowned queen of England at Westminster Abbey.
- Jan 16th 1991:** Operation Desert Storm began in the first Iraq war.
- Jan 17th 1942:** Birth of the boxer Cassius Clay who later became Muhammad Ali.
- Jan 18th 1486:** King Henry VII of England married Elizabeth of York, uniting the Lancashire and Tudor dynasties.
- Jan 19th 1915:** German Zeppelins bombed Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn, the first major aerial bombardment of civilian targets in World War I.
- Jan 20th 1981:** US hostages were released from Iran after being held for 444 days.
- Jan 21st 1924:** Death of Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin, aged 54.
- Jan 22nd 1901:** Edward VII was proclaimed King of England after the death of Queen Victoria.
- Jan 23rd 1973:** US President Nixon announced that a peace accord has been reached in Vietnam.
- Jan 24th 1679:** King Charles II of England disbanded Parliament.
- Jan 25th 1533:** Henry VIII secretly married Anne Boleyn, his second wife.
- Jan 26th 1926:** The first demonstration of the television by John Logie Baird.
- Jan 27th 1973:** The trial of Guy Fawkes and other Gunpowder Plot conspirators began, ending with their execution on January 31.
- Jan 28th 1986:** US space shuttle Challenger exploded killing all seven astronauts.
- Jan 29th 1886:** Karl Benz patented the first petrol-driven car.
- Jan 30th 1972:** The British Army shot dead 13 demonstrators in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, in what later became known as Bloody Sunday.
- January 31st 2020:** After 47 years of being a member state, the United Kingdom's membership within the European Union ceased in accordance with Article 50. **Jim Sanctuary**



And finally, a plea from your editor! If we are to continue publishing a weekly edition of *Local History Link*, I urgently need more contributions from members. Judging from the feedback I receive, most of you enjoy reading the bulletin each week, so please put on your thinking hats, put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard) and send me an article (or two). The subject doesn't necessarily need to be too cerebral! Over the last nine months we've all enjoyed a wide range of topics, especially member's memories of times past, and I'm very grateful to all who have contributed. So do please give it go – you'll be pleased when you see your article appear in a future issue! **Jim Sanctuary**