Issue 1

PIER REVIEW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE

SOUTHEND PIER MUSEUM FOUNDATION TRUST LTD

Registered Charity No 802105 Registered Company No 02400655

THE PIER COMES INTO VIEW

Welcome to this inaugural edition of the new newsletter of the Southend Museum Foundation Trust. Southend Pier Museum celebrates its 30th anniversary this year and it is time to look back on that magnificent achievement and look forward to where the Museum will be in another 30 years. Hopefully better housed, better displayed, more interactive and a credit to the Longest Pleasure Pier in the World.

PEGGY DOWIE

The Pier is moving forward to take its rightful place and the Museum will be moving forward with it. But it would not have got where it is today without the dedication of one person, Peggy Dowie. As Chairman and Trustee of the Pier Peggy has been at the forefront of fighting for the Museum, keeping it going, looking after its precious artefacts and being the face of the Pier Museum outside its own confines in spreading the history at talks and events and through school visits. Sadly, Peggy has had to step down from those roles due to continuing poor health.

Peggy was first involved, as a member of the organising committee for the Pier Festival in 1980. In November 1985, the "Friends of Southend Pier Museum" was founded, to assist with a project for a pier museum, and to restore the old pier trains. The aims of this group were not only to ensure the preservation of the pier, but also to preserve items associated with it and its long history, for future generations.

Peggy was among the founder members, who spent many hours, weeks and months, converting three redundant pier workshops, for use as a museum. It took three years to make it useable.

The Friends group changed its name to the "Southend Pier Museum Foundation", in 1989, and on July 8th, of that year the museum was opened, one hundred years to the day, that the iron pier was first opened.

Peggy has worked tirelessly, over the years, to research and collect items for display in the museum, and has also jointly compiled two books on the history of the pier and has been Chairman of the Friends of Southend Pier Museum, and latterly of the Southend Pier Museum Foundation since 1989. A huge debt is owed to Peggy for her tireless work, to keep the museum open, and the current Trustees thank her, for all of her dedicated support over the years. We hope to work with her in the future, to ensure the museum collection is maintained and enhanced for future generations.

COME AND JOIN US

To support the Icon of Southend go to our website and join us at www.southendpiermuseum.co.uk

MAINTAINING SOUTHEND PIER

Maintaining the world's longest pleasure pier, a Victorian structure extending a mile and a third into the river Thames, is both a challenge and an experience. This responsibility lies with the Council's Property and Estate Management Group. The team is part way through a major £18 million investment programme to refurbish the 130 year old, Grade 2 Listed structure, part of which is constructed of iron, part in timber and part in reinforced concrete.

The substructure (the important part that keeps the pier in place!) has been showing its age and work has been taking place to replace key structural components along the pier stem providing greater structural stability whilst also reintroducing movement joints, which have seized up over the decades.

This work entails removing structural beams over 9m in length over water and in variable weather conditions. Workers are secured by rope to the pier with a safety boat waiting below should it be required. Work has also been taking place to repair the concrete Prince George Extension, whilst work is also in planning stage for major repair and reinstatement works to the timber outer pier head. However, work is not just about maintenance of the structure.

The Council has recently completed the new Pier Entrance Extension, designed in house and built by A W Hardy. This has reintroduced the western entrance to the pier whilst also providing a much enhanced visitor experience including a teas, snacks and ices counter and public toilets. The team has also been undertaking a complete refurbishment of the four pier shelters and progressively renewing the pier decking.

Mark Murphy, Southend Borough Council

WAR STORY

In 2020 we will be commemorating the momentous part the Pier played as HMS Leigh in the Second World War Here is just a taster.

From the Admiralty, 5 September 1945

When our country mobilised for war in September 1939, Southend and its famous Pier gave up their pleasant peacetime role of receiving and entertaining visitors seeking relaxation and with equal alacrity welcomed those whose war posts sent them to the town.

Instead of pleasure steamers landing happy families, there came alongside the Pier vessels carrying men who were fighting the grimmest sea battle ever. To the Naval Control Service Station came Commodores of convoys, Masters of merchant ships, Naval officers-in-Charge of escorts and all kinds of craft, Trinity House Pilots and representatives of all the seafaring activities to receive the latest information of the enemy's devilish work and to be briefed about safe channels for the valuable ships and crews upon which the security of this country depended.

Southend, its Pier and Old Father Thames are now resuming peacetime avocations with increased prestige earned by a job well done. May they long remain undisturbed in playing their part in the reconstruction and recreation of our country.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Running the Pier Museum is a great way to meet, greet and enthral people in its history and the memories it invokes. You can be part of this by volunteering in the Museum—not just on front of house but helping to maintain the exhibits, prepare new ones and see us into the future. Interested?
Contact:
chairman@southendpiermuseum.co.uk

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

With such a long history there are many good, bad and ugly tales to tell of Southend Pier. These are your memories — and we want them. We want to create a memory book that befits the longest peoples' Pier in the world.

Did you witness the 1976 fire? Did you see the new pavilion come down river? Were you there on VE Day? You can send your memories to cllrmulroney@southend.gov.uk