Issue 4 —Winter 2021

Pier Review

SOUTHEND PIER MUSEUM FOUNDATION TRUST LTD

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THE PIER MUSEUM—WHAT A START TO A YEAR

Sadly the ongoing nature of the pandemic means that there may still be some doubt about our reopening. All we can do is monitor the situation and plan for added precautions once we are able to welcome visitors once more.

The Pier itself has opened and closed several times and is understandably shut once again in this third lockdown. Our only access to the museum at the moment is for maintenance and security checks. But we have not been idle.

We have been continuing the mammoth task of cataloguing the museum inventory - including our many items in store. Chris Hebden has been doing a stirling job in going though the records and the artefacts to make sure everything is recorded and accessible. We have been keeping busy, regardless, and held our AGM "virtually" with great success. It was lovely to see members joining the board to talk through the previous year. We also formally appointed three new trustees/directors (previously co-opted) to the board – Derek Jarvis, Chris Taylor and Richard Brown. We are now undertaking some valuable online training organised by Museums Essex and SHARE. Detailed plans for the train carriage moves is now underway.

Thank you for all the continued support from our members, our continuing aim is to care for and protect your heritage.

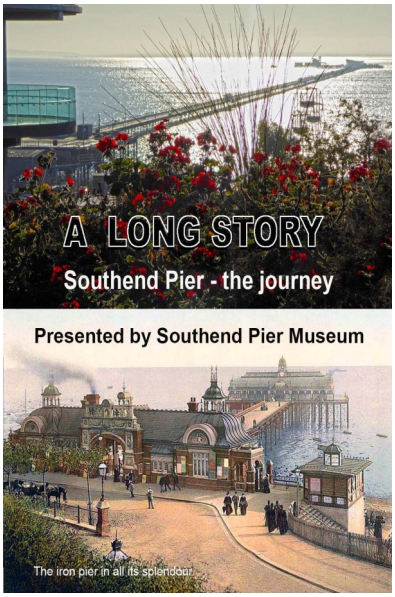
THE PIER—ITS BEEN A LONG STORY

Thanks to Board member, Chris Taylor, who is a wizz with all things photographic and technical, the Museum's new DVD has been completed and will be showing at the museum when we eventually reopen.

'A Long Story' tells the history of Southend Pier from its beginnings in 1829 until the days of the new millennium with the delivery of the 'Culture Centre', aka Royal Pavilion, and beyond.

Along the way are the many ups and downs in the Pier's fate, with the fires and the fun. We can share glorious days on the pier in the heyday of the 40s and 50s and the special one-offs with the visits of the tall ships, and Princess Anne at the opening of the new trains, to say nothing of the risqué chuckles from 'Alf Garnet' –Warren Mitchell when he visited the museum.

As a special offer to members the DVD (in sleeve) can be purchased for £6.50 inc p+p by contacting sales@southendpiermuseum.co.uk.



WINTER PROJECT – THE MUSEUM RE-VAMP

All aboard the new pier trains (due to come into service this year) will be liveried in the traditional cream and green colours and as part of our continuing dialogue with the pier managers, we have reached agreement that one of the current train cars will be donated to the museum. This will enable us to retain a continuous history of all powered trains on the pier back to 1890. The museum is a bit like Clapham Junction, crowded with trains, so this is the ideal opportunity for us to make some changes.

We currently display one 1890 train - the "toast rack" and three carriages from the 1949 model – in various states of renovation. We are working with the Canvey Transport Museum and with Southend Council to re-house two of those carriages (using Museums Association guidelines) – one on Canvey and one on public display on the Pier itself. This will give us enough space to add one of the 1986 model carriages when they are with-drawn fully at the end of this year. It should also offer us a larger display area for new exhibitions so we can raid the collection current-ly hidden from public view.

The carriage move will require the temporary removal of one of the walls (not straight forward in a listed building, you will appreciate). After we have manoeuvred them out, all we then need to do is to move them several hundred metres through an amusement park packed with obstacles, put them on a low loader and off they go! Its all achievable but takes a lot of planning. We are really looking forward to the space this will create and both carriages are going to good homes that will expand awareness of the Pier's history.

POLICE UPDATE

Nothing to worry about but we were contacted by a police sergeant who was the lead officer on scene during the Bowling Alley fire on the Pier, back in 1995. He has donated to us a redacted copy of his police report. It makes interesting reading and we may be able to use it as part of a revised "Pier disasters" display.

THE PIER ON THE SILVER SCREEN (WELL TV)

The Pier is expected to be included in an episode of the current Channel 5 series "**The Secret Life of the Thames with Tony Robinson**" - showing on Wednesdays at 9pm. It will definitely be appearing in the new series of "**The Architecture the Railways Built**" which airs on the Yesterday channel. Our episode will be shown at 8pm on Tuesday, 9 March. Our intrepid chairman, Tim Watts, spent several hours on a cold, rainy day filming with them on the Pier and in the museum so look out for him.

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the particular author and not necessarily those of the committee and officers of the Trust. We hope you will like to keep your copy of Pier Review, or please pass it on to friends and family. When all have seen it please recycle it. © Southend Pier Museum Foundation Trust Ltd

REMEMBERING THE DAFFODIL

Royal Daffodil was launched in 1939, the third ship to bear the name, her immediate predecessor having been requisitioned by the Royal Navy in the Great War. She was given the *Royal* prefix by King George V for her war service. She was sold in October 1933 to the New Medway Steam Packet Co. Ltd, where she was used on the Rochester-Strood-Sheerness-Southend route, but scrapped in 1938.

Another ship, another war, and in 1939 the new Royal Daffodil was quickly requisitioned by the Sea Transport Department of the Board of Trade. Initially was used for the evacuation of some 4000 women and children from London and Thames Estuary to East Anglia, she then carried troops of the British Expeditionary Force to France and eventually took part in the evacuation of Dunkirk, rescuing 9500 men..

Having been bombed, after repairs she ran between Stranraer and Larne, carrying military personnel and after the war she continued to work on military assignments and after a refit used on sailings from Gravesend or Tilbury to view the French coast, calling at Southend .

In the age of Rock n Roll she became an entertainment venue, with the likes of Gene Vincent and Jerry Lee Lewis. This all came to an end in 1966 and she was sold for scrap in Ghent, making her last journey to the breakers along the Terneuzen Canal under her own power in 1967.

Now our own Chris Taylor has produced a model of the Royal Daffodil which we hope to display in the museum.

Did you take a trip on the Royal Daffodil, did you see Jerry Lee Lewis or Gene Vincent—tell us your memories at memories@southendpiermuseum.co.uk

BYE—LAW

In 1902 the Local Board for the District of Southend made byelaws in relation to the Pier - there were of course rules for vessels but what exactly was Joe Public allowed to do on the Pier—or not as the case may be.

All walkers must pay and you must not obstruct free passage along the Pier or loiter on any steps or landing place. Don't obstruct any officers of the Board and no touting for carriage or hotel business. No prostitution or selling of goods.

You must not place bait or fish on any seats and not wilfully or improperly soil or defile any part of the Pier. You must not take down any notices put up by the Board or erect your own or advertisements without permission.

You cannot bathe from any part of the Pier or play a musical instrument , sing, dance, preach or address a crowd or lecture or give a performance unless permission has been granted. You must not ride a bicycle or a velocipede or wheel any other carriage except a pram or invalid chair drawn by hand with India rubber tyres.

No dogs unless carried or with a 6ft leash, but not allowed on the trams. No throwing of stones and do nothing which might cause injury. Keep off the tram tracks, don't soil the trams and don't lean out of the tram and don't interfere with the comfort of others. Don't stand up or try to jump on and off (toast rack days of course) and no smoking or playing of musical instruments. And please don't be drunk or infectious on the Pier.

Any misdemeanours were punishable with a £5 fine

HMS LEIGH, VE76 EVENT—UPDATE FROM ORGANISERS

Be happy the War is over! Unfortunately, the pandemic is not…

With the help of our project partners HMS Leigh has all the framework in place for the VE76 Event on 6th-9th May 2021 and offers us all the opportunity to be a part of the joy of knowing that WW2 has just ended, to interact with performers who will bring VE Day to life, dressed as though it is May 1945 on Southend Pier.

However, due to recent events, the Project Team are having to look again at the viability of bringing a lot of people to the same place on the same day – even if they are in their own bubbles – as the very last thing we want to do is endanger any of our guests or participants lives. So, we are back to the drawing board and we would love to know what you would like to see us do. Last year we had a very successful online event where over 140,000 people got involved.

With the agreement of the project funder, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, HMS Leigh is at present having to split its attention and plan for both a live event and an online VE76 Celebration. All the work that has been done will be evaluated for its online potential and hopefully HMS Leigh will be able to bring together all of the aspects of the live event into the online event – and maybe more!

Circumstances and tides permitting we will still be holding VE76 in May 2021 on Southend Pier and will look forward to working with Southend Council, Pier and Pier Museum to bring alive the history of our wonderful town during WW2. If not, then we hope that you will be able to join us online.

Thank you to our team, volunteers, partners and contributors. We couldn't do it without your support.

Images:
HMS Leigh Logo © Blade Education,
VE-Day Party, Leigh-on-Sea (Courtesy of Carole Mulroney)