Issue 5 —Summer 2021

Pier Review

SOUTHEND PIER MUSEUM FOUNDATION TRUST LTD

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 802105

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Hello all and welcome to the latest edition of our Pier Review newsletter. The rollercoaster times have continued since we last reported and its great to have the Pier itself open again, with one particularly successful week welcoming 25,000 visitors!

When the four stages for lockdown restrictions easing were announced, we started to gear up for the museum to re-open. An early decision was taken not to try to open whilst specific Covid secure precautions were required. The added cost, need for additional stewards and our restricted access to and within the museum meant that it was not sensible to try. Therefore, we were aiming to re-open at the end of June once the country moved into stage 4 and all restrictions were lifted. The recent deferral of easements until 19 July has delayed those plans but, all being well, the **museum will re-open on Saturday, 24 July**.

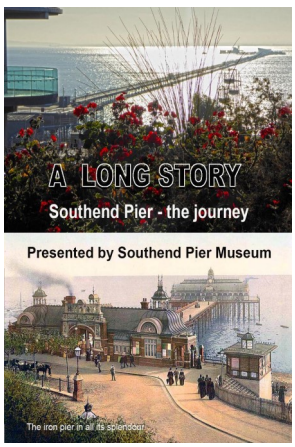
When you visit you will see some changes from the last time you were there. Several displays have relocated and changed and we have a new WW2 exhibition of documents, photos and artifacts featuring the good old pier, or HMS Leigh as she was then known.

We await the imminent arrival of the new pier trains and have taken the opportunity to get some images and videos of their construction. We will be doing the same thing as we monitor the installation of the new trains on the pier - no small feat in itself.

Whilst we hope to open the museums on weekends (and maybe more) throughout the summer, we are fully dependent on the support of volunteers. Thus if you are in a position to help out, please do get in touch, either by emailing chairman@southendpiermuseum.co.uk or by calling the museum on 01702 611630 (leave a message if we aren't there that day)

Tim Watts

THE PIER—ITS BEEN A LONG STORY



'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 but we can share glorious days in the heyday of the 40s and 50s and the special one-off visits of tall ships, Princess Anne, to say nothing of 'Alf Garnet' –Warren Mitchell .

As a special offer to members the boxed DVD can be purchased for £12 inc p+p by contacting sales@southendpiermuseum.co.uk. For those not on email please make cheques payable to Southend Pier Museum Foundation Trust and send to the Trust at Western Esplanade Southend-on-Sea Essex SS1 1EE .

ODE TO WILLIAM BRADLEY.

Each star has its own work, the Moon, the Sun,
Have each their own appointed course to run.
Each man is placed in his ordained sphere,
In which he works; 'tis not by chance we're here.

And that brave man, who is on Southend Pier,
Has he not done appointed work while there?
For he alone, did nineteen persons save,
And rescued them from out a watery grave.

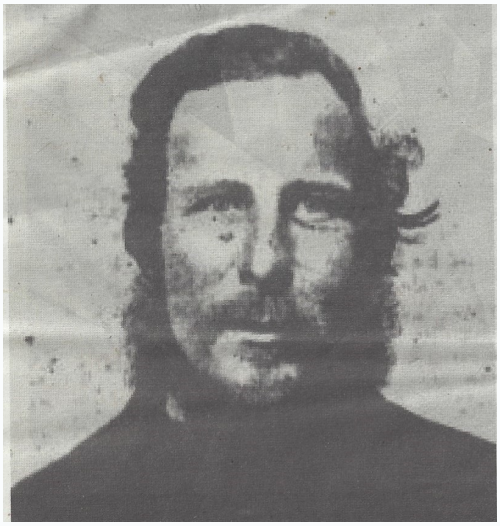
For they, their Master's work had not them done,
There was work to do, yes work for every one,
And he who saved them, did a noble part,
His valiant acts but show how good his heart.

His name in Southend Town, is held most dear,
And all would give to him good words of cheer ;
God's choicest blessings rest on him we pray,
And may he prosper in his work each day.

E. Cooper.

WILLIAM BRADLEY

In the mid-1880s the Local Board decided that a new Pier had to be built because the wooden one was becoming unstable under the weight of the horse drawn tram that travelled up and down. The Light Keeper and the pier head man, William Bradley, had saved so many people from drowning at the end of the Pier that he had been awarded medals from the Royal Humane Society and a Silver Medal from the RNLI.



William lived in a small cottage at the end of the pier, which as well as being his home, also served as a light house. He was in charge of a toll gate that was erected at the entrance with a small harbour on the east side. In 1895 a brick toll house had been built but four years later a new iron and steel pier would be completed.

On 2 November 1887, William Bradley was asleep in his bed in the small cottage at the end of the Pier, when he was alerted that the steam tug Jubilee had capsized. It was reported that he didn't even get dressed before lowering his boat and rowed to save a man who was clinging to the upturned boat.

Beth Hooper, Project Manager,
HMS Leigh – Guardian of the Thames

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

As members know there are new Pier trains on the horizon and we very much look forward to these and with much manoeuvring in the Museum the accommodation of one of the current trains with us.

This is of course a mammoth operation on the Pier but for us also, in removing some carriages which are going to new homes and making room for the new exhibit to come in.

Much scratching of heads and removal of obstacles in order to achieve this. But it is not the first time the trains have changed of course and way back when the current trains were deployed the old 'green and creams' had to be gotten off the Pier and away in the 1980s.

We are indebted to local resident John Payne for allowing us to print his pictures of this momentous event.

John was a local fireman, and happened upon the trains when called to a fire at a breakers yard in Shoebury. John says "When we arrived I was surprised to find that the pier trains I had watched being removed from pier a few weeks earlier had ended up there. The fire was dealt with but before I left I requested permission to return with my camera to record their sad demise."

OUR AIMS

With the advent of the new Pier trains and the reopening after such a tumultuous year we thought it would be a good idea to refresh members' memories of the aims of the Trust.

The Museum aims to preserve the history of Southend Pier and provide visitors with information on why it was built, how it has changed, its important role during two world wars, survived disasters, and continued to provide pleasure for many generations. The Pier is part of our cultural and sociological heritage and we are working to preserve and conserve those reminders of happy days at the seaside.

NEW PIER TRAINS IN CONSTRUCTION

VERY SHORTLY THE NEW PIER TRAINS WILL ARRIVE—GREAT EXCITEMENT ALL ROUND.

HERE THEY ARE IN THE SEVERN LAMB WORKSHOP

FROM THE ARCHIVES 1993

Amid the chaos and confusion of the evening of 29 July 1976, when the entire Pier Head caught fire, there could be seen a small light plane flying through the smoke, perilously close to the flames. The pilot of the aircraft, normally used for crop-spraying, was Ladislav ('Ladi') Marmol, a Czech who had a remarkable life, and a remarkable passion to save the Pier.

Aged 18 when the Nazis walked into his native Czechoslovakia, Ladi spent the next few years escaping from Hitler, which he did four times in four different countries, arriving in Britain in 1943 and volunteering for the Free Czech Army, who taught him to fly.

By the time he had trained, the War was over, so he used his flying skills to start an import/export service from Southend to Prague. Getting arrested in Prague as a spy by the Russians proved no problem—he bribed the guard, escaped and was repatriated by the US Forces.

Ladi had a number of successful business ventures in Southend, became a world-renowned glider pilot, and started a crop-spraying business, and this picture, taken in the Museum, shows him pointing at a picture of himself in action on that fateful day. Also in the picture are Peggy Dowie, founder of the Pier Museum, and Joe Tobin, Southend's Mayor that year. Ladi died in 1997 and is buried in Rochford Lawn Cemetery. Richard Brown