Issue 7 Spring 2022

STOP PRESS—NEW PIER TRAIN IS ON THE MOVE

Pier Review

SOUTHEND PIER MUSEUM FOUNDATION TRUST LTD

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Tim Watts

Well, what a busy three months! We kicked the year off with a successful AGM which included non-board members and even people joining via Zoom videolink.

The main activity has been the change in pier carriage exhibits, out with the old and in with the (relatively) new (see below). This is probably the biggest internal change in the museum in decades and I hope it goes down well with visitors. I had hoped to provide some pictorial evidence of the museum in its new state but renovations, restorations and refurbishments will continue "up to the wire" before we re-open for the summer season on Good Friday.

We remain entirely dependent on volunteers and so are working on the basis that it will be weekend and bank holiday opening only unless we can persuade more enthusiasts to join us to open up during the week. All are welcome, no experience needed! A half a dozen schools have already booked to visit us during the summer term and we will be opening up specifically for them.

We have also commenced providing talks about the history of the pier and museum to local special interest groups. This all helps raise much needed funds. If you know of any society or organisation who might be interested in either a talk or a museum visit, do get in touch.

All in all, we are preparing for a busy summer season and hope you will be able to visit us at some point.

FROM THE ARCHIVE—RICHARD BROWN

William Bradley, aged about 40, proudly wearing his three Royal Humane Society medals.

WILLIAM BRADLEY— THE MAN WHO LIVED AT THE END OF THE PIER

William Bradley (1850-1932) was undoubtedly the most famous man in town for a lot of his quite long life. Although his mother came from the Shetland Isles, the Bradley family went back a long way in Southend's history—to a time when Old Southend consisted of little more than a few fishermen's cottages around where the Golden Mile stands now.

At the age of 20, he became the Pier Head Man, responsible mostly for keeping the navigation light running and organising the loading and unloading of boats. He lived in a small two roomed cottage beneath the light, along with his wife Sarah and three daughters. For all of this, he received £1 per week, and sold cakes sweets and ginger beer to the passing traffic to augment his income. He was also not averse to a bit of smuggling.

But his main contributions to the small town of Southend were the astonishing feats of life-saving he was responsible for. Before the days of coastguards and lifeboats, you had to rely on the goodwill of others to get you out of trouble if, for example, you fell off the Pier, or were in a boat wrecked somewhere off the coast. William Bradley saved 19 lives in 21 years in control of the Pier head, received three Royal Humane Society medals, one from the Royal Lifeboat Society (now the RNLI) and many 'subscriptions' of money given by a grateful public.

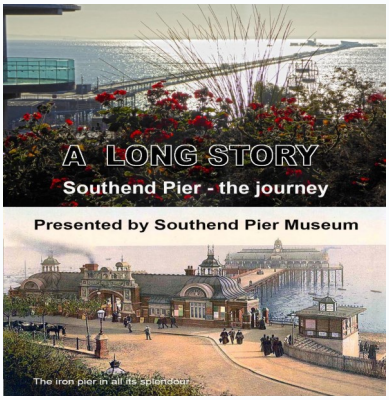
Following his retirement from the Pier at the age of 41, he became the coxswain of Southend's first lifeboat, newly installed in its Lifeboat House in Hartington Road, just off the seafront, and just down the road from his own house. In the museum, you can find the cannon which was fired off the beach to convene the lifeboat crew. In later life, he became an Alderman and Mayor of Southend. He died in 1932 and is buried, with his family, in the churchyard of St John's Church.

THE PIERHEAD 1971

This is an excellent picture of the Pierhead in its best ever condition, before decline set in and it caught fire in 1976. There were three decks—the top, Promenade deck, which was usually crowded with occupied deck-chairs; the original middle, deck where visiting steamers tied up; and the bottom deck which was only used at low tide. The boats in this shot were gathering for an anti-Common Market demonstration.

THE PIER—ITS BEEN A LONG STORY

'A Long Story' is the history of Southend Pier from 1829 to the new millennium and the delivery of the 'Culture Centre', aka Royal Pavilion, and beyond. You can arrange purchase of the DVD (cost £12inc p+p) by either contacting sales@southendpiermuseum.co.uk or by writing to Southend Pier Museum Foundation Trust at Western Esplanade, Southend-on-Sea SS1 1EE . Cheques payable to Southend Pier Museum Foundation Trust



FREDERICK BRAND

We have had a request for any information from the great grandson of Frederick Brand who retired in the 1960s after 40 years working on the Pier as Pier Repairs Foreman.

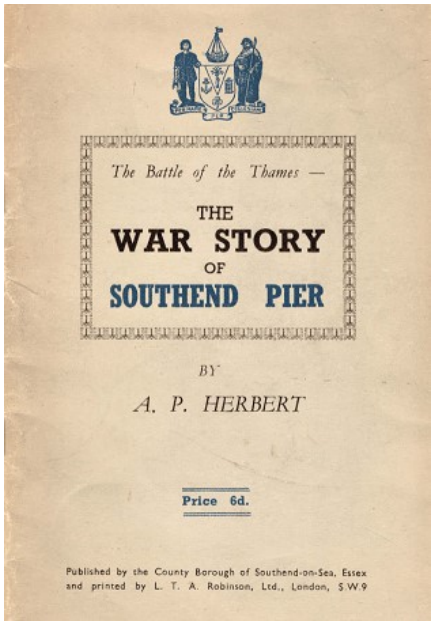
Hopefully his picture of Frederick will jog some memories.

Frederick was awarded a medal by Southend Council for saving two lives and the medals are shown here with the dates of the incidents engraved. If anyone can shed any light on the two events that would be excellent for both Frederick's great grandson and the Museum archive.

The dates of the two incidents are 10 June 1924 and 10 August 1925

WAR STORY

After the roaring success of the HMS Leigh Event last year we are pleased to say we have been able to get a reprint of the War Story of Southend Pier by A P Herbert. This is available for purchase in the Museum for £5 or by post £6.



MUSEUM UPDATE

Work has been going on apace over the winter months in time for reopening at Easter.

The whole Museum is being revamped with a new sales area at the entrance, a larger area for groups and potential video shows as well as soon to arrive new lighting.

Our displays are being revamped and many areas have been given a new lick of paint. With our dedicated volunteers some redesign of various areas has been done and a review of our archives is underway.

The stores have been raided for artefacts and we have been very environmental in our remodelling by recycling old doors and other materials within the changes.

We are also looking to improve our stock with a number of books about Southend and the Pier.

Many thanks goes to the Committee members involved in the revamp and the very industrious and willing band of volunteers.

A NEW NAME FOR A NEW TRAIN

The 1st of March 2022 became City Day in Southend and to celebrate that momentous occasion the Pier was visited by Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

After the official civic ceremony where the Letters Patent awarding City Status were handed to our 100th Mayor, Cllr Margaret Borton, the Royal couple travelled to the Pier to carry unveil the first of the new Pier trains by naming it Sir David Amess. Sir David was also awarded the first Freedom of the City of Southend-on-Sea.

Lady Amess (right) is seen here with Cllr Martin Terry, Cabinet Member in charge of operational aspects of the Pier, and Cllr Carole Mulroney, Cabinet Member for tourism and a member of the Pier Museum Board.

A fitting end to a wonderful day tinged with the sadness of the loss of Sir David in such tragic circumstances. We are sure though that he would be very proud to have the train named in his honour and we thank Lady Julia Amess for being in attendance to see the unveiling.

RECYCLCING AT THE MUSEUM

As you can see from the front page a lot has been happening at the Museum.

It started when the builders came in to remove a section of the outside wall to enable the train carriages to be taken out. As they removed pieces of the wall we saved some of the materials for later use. First the inside cupboard came out. The window sill became the new shelf for the slot machine area. This will allow us to have more slot machines on display. The cupboard doors, together with others, became the front panels of the new retail sales counter. This has been built alongside the entrance stairs.

The padding on the wall-boards has been removed and they are now all painted white. Shelving and a television screen have been installed. A new work-top and counter were purchased and erected. Next, the tongue and groove panelling, that was covering the existing doors was saved. This has become the new side wall of the re-cycled ticket booth. This booth has been moved down the Museum, as it is to be the new photo booth.

We then went through the workshop store-room, clearing out various items. Many had been ruined by the ingress of rainwater (we wait on the Council contractors to survey the store-room roof, for replacement.). There were some wooden frames dismantled and re-used to build frameworks for new dividing walls between the Museum bays (around the support steelwork). Some of the old plain display doors were then used to complete the facing of these walls. Much of the stored timber has been re-used around the new displays.

The old “Zeppelins-over-Southend” square display board stands have been separated and re-purposed as flat display boards, around the Museum. The existing padded display boards, are now present as new display bays, down the centre aisle of the Museum. This gives the visitor a circular route around the Museum displays. We have been busy re-painting the walls of the Museum, in our new blue and white colour scheme. But, there is still a long way to go. There are many new display items on show now, which were previously hidden from view. Two of the old 1949 carriages (No 2 & No 11) have been removed, and ownership has been transferred to Southend City Council (these are to be fully restored.). The 1986 Sir John Betjeman carriage (from train A) has now been installed in the Museum, and is awaiting restoration. We would welcome you all down to see the new look Museum, and we will answer any queries you might have. We would also welcome anyone wishing to volunteer at the Museum. See you soon. Chris Hebden. Trustee

Contact details ...Email - membership@southendpiermuseum.co.uk Tel 01702 611214 - leave a message if we are not open .