

Chairman's Introduction - *Judy Lea*

Well, clearly spring is happening regardless of Covid! - beautiful blossoms and stirring wildlife are certainly coming into their own now. The glorious barges have been preening themselves for the new season and also gracing the Essex Serpent film set as seen recently on the Hythe.

This newsletter highlights that, despite Covid, our Society's protection and promotion of Maldon's amazing heritage has also continued since your last news update, as indeed it has throughout the year.



As ever, I am really appreciative of the commitment of our committee members, which of course now includes our two new members Jane Senior and James Reece-Ford who are already proving invaluable additions to our friendly team. We hope you will enjoy your renewed membership and to know you are actively contributing to furthering the Society's aims.

Before Covid we used to produce a newsletter just twice a year, in April and September, but while we haven't been able to meet, we've been attempting to summarise key events in member news updates each month, and we'll hope to continue this until we meet in person again.

We're also very grateful Ian Linton is doing such a good job with the website to keep everyone up to speed - www.maldonsoc.org

Meanwhile the imminent reawakening of shops, outdoor cafes and pubs on the High Street is keenly awaited, with a lot of work currently going on behind the scenes to ensure people can be confident protective measures will still be in place. Some of the bigger premises such as M&Co and Peacocks (seen by their national firms as financial rather than community assets) will not reopen, making it all the more important we support the businesses that do value serving the community.

Being on the Maldon Business Group I know that local businesses and the District Council are actively pooling ideas to make sure life, prosperity and enjoyment safely return to our town centre for the summer. The Town Council is doing their bit too, continuing their own community initiatives and sensibly moving the Tourist information service to the Maeldune Centre.

So, fingers crossed the national 'roadmap' is adhered to, and I do hope you can soon enjoy all that Maldon life has to offer, including tuning in to our further Zoom talks!

Planning Issues – *David Smye*

There have been several planning applications in Maldon in the past few years that involved what are called Live/Work units.

The term ‘Live/Work’ entered the language in the 1970s, coined to develop and market loft-style apartments in New York’s SoHo area. A valuable commodity was created from the unpromising raw material of generally disused, semi-derelict factories and warehouses located in an area with minimal infrastructure, lacking schools, health facilities, shops or other local amenities.

The UK home-based workforce is growing rapidly (accelerated by the Coronavirus pandemic); this means the number of Live/Work dwellings is likely to increase in the near future and there may be many more planning applications which may begin to alter the traditional High Street environment. Whether this is for the better or not, the Maldon Society needs to consider how to approach such proposals.

The rise of the internet, telecommuting, and even teleconferencing has created unprecedented opportunities and demand for home office and small, at-home businesses. This use will typically fall within the C3 Use Class (i.e. predominantly residential). However, these uses are most often ‘office-based’ functions that have no impact upon neighbours. Live/Work units within areas zoned for residential are generally not problematic, provided specific uses are determined and adhered to. The present ‘work from home’ dictate during the pandemic has not, it seems, caused any outcry from disgruntled neighbours.

To ensure continued and comprehensive retail shopping and commercial uses in our High Street and adjacent areas the introduction of widespread changes of use with an element of Live/Work thrown in to persuade planners that the historic use is being maintained will deplete the numbers of premises available for ‘legitimate’ retail/commercial uses. Is this a bad thing or do we have too many shops/offices in the present economic climate?

Where such developments are proposed within the central business area (High Street and adjacent streets) then we need to make sure that appropriate conditions are imposed that will allow the local authority to control the use, hours of operation, safety measures, noise controls, etc. of the work element to minimise disruption to any other residents within the building and business owners. The applications that we have seen recently feature very cramped accommodation – both the work element and the residential space. The floor areas available to both elements should provide adequate storage and sanitary arrangements for each.

The idea of an artisan living over the workshop strikes a nostalgic chord with a vision of a local craftsman/artist offering a more personal and local service, and we need to encourage that but ensure that the accommodation is satisfactory for all users of the property and their neighbours.

Maldon Society AGM

Last year it was decided to postpone the AGM, for obvious reasons! Now this year, we are still not able to hold our normal meetings, so the committee has decided to email or send out the relevant documents for you all to peruse.

Therefore, in May, once the accounts have been examined by our Auditor, we will send out copies of the last two years' accounts; together with a list of current committee members and their roles. According to our Constitution, we must have two Society members to propose that the committee members are approved and may continue for another year; we will be glad to receive this nomination from any one of you.

Please do get in touch with us about these nominations or the proposed revised AGM. As always we welcome comments on the running of the Society and suggestions for its future.

Contact us on: maldonsociety@aol.com or ring Wendy 01621 857054.

Current committee members are: Judy Lea, John Came, Peter Holmes, Lindsey Wright, Dorreen Linton, David Smye, Jane Senior, James Reece-Ford, Wendy Howell.

The High Street, Late Spring 2021

As it is just a month since my last update there have been very few changes.

- Talking Flowers has a new owner; sadly we have lost the wonderful window display that Jane continually changed. Let's hope that when it is properly open after 12th April that a beautiful window will take pride of place again.
- Thinking of beautiful windows, Coes window has been redressed for 12th April.
- Silo – Zero Waste has moved next to M&Co from Bright's Path.
- The Indian restaurant at the top of Butt Lane, has been renamed Maldon Spice.

We're all looking forward to 12th April when the shops and hairdressers should re-open.

Membership report- *Jane Senior*

I am glad to say that the 2020 membership list i have inherited is gradually being updated with many of you renewing your membership and providing current data. We also welcome two new members and hope numbers may swell as Covid restrictions ease and we get to meet in person.

Membership renewal is now due and we trust more members will renew, which in turn sponsors The Maldon Society's work in the interests of the town as well as giving you the opportunity to enjoy the organised talks.

Just to help, fees can be paid directly into the Society's bank account: Account name: The Maldon Society; Account number 02659214; Sort code 30-91-85 or you can send a cheque payable to The Maldon Society to me at 48 Mariners Way, Maldon, CM9 6YW (01621 851142).

Meanwhile, it was a pleasure for me to see some of the faces that go with the names as several of you attended Tony Tuckwell's Zoom talk on 1st April. As we move through the Covid roadmap, I hope it will not be long before I get to meet you all.

Oral History - *Wendy Howell*

Maldon Millennium Embroidery, displayed in the Maeldune Heritage Centre is 30 years old this year. We have interviewed several of the ladies who worked on it and here are the words of embroiderer, Wendy Munnion. The Heritage Centre re-opens in April.

(Lee Cash, mentioned below, was a professional embroiderer who directed and supervised the stitching. Sheila Allen was one of the chief embroiderers. Humphrey Spender was the designer).



“There were 86 ladies who took part and they came from such groups as the Embroiderers’ Guild in which Lee was an important part, as was Sheila. Gradually it spread out to Essex Handicrafts, the Blackwater Quilters, W.I. and volunteers. You had to be of a certain standard, obviously, and Lee was very good in her vetting process.

The ladies were contacted by Lee to go to her farmhouse in East Hanningfield (Humphrey’s designs were displayed there) to see what they had let themselves in for and choose what they’d like to do. We walked in and there was this 6 foot painting and you would stand there, mouth open, thinking what I am doing here.

I tentatively suggested I might do some of the danegelt (Viking coins) in the borders. About 6 weeks later you would get through the post a little package and inside was Humphrey’s painting of your chosen motif and all the materials and threads with colours that had been carefully matched. Plus guidelines and the list of stitches you were to use.”

Which motif did you find especially challenging?

“Well, the first one, the simple danegelt, wanting to get it to the right standard. And then on the second panel, I did Byrhtnoth’s widow sitting in the archway of Ely Cathedral working on an embroidery. When I took that back, Lee took me to one side and said ‘Would you like to do Henry II?’

I looked at her in aghast and thought Henry II – it will be the next millennium before I finish that! Anyway, I did say yes and took it on, but it was over 260 hours of stitching later when it was finished. By then I felt that the King and I were on very good terms with one another!”

What other motifs did you do?

“I did on panel 4, HMS Jersey and Dr Thomas Plume. Then on panel 5 I was given Edward Bright – he was another challenge because he is mostly embroidered in greens and blues, on a green background. The shades of colour were so close, it was very very difficult to differentiate between them. On the 6th panel I did the Bentall car and on the last panel, the Pride of Maldon rose.”

When it was finally finished I believe it was displayed in the Moot Hall?

“It took a long time to find a home for it, which worried Humphrey considerably, because he wanted it displayed in one long line, for its continuous design. There were no funds available to have a purpose built home, so the Town Council kindly said we could use the Lower Committee Room of the Moot Hall. So it was set up on three sides of the room from June 1991 to 1999.

It was in the pipeline that the public library at St Peters would move to a new building; so it was decided the empty space could be made into a Heritage Centre. The money was found to re-frame the Embroidery with purpose made lighting and blinds to protect it for, hopefully, the next 1000 years.”

And it still looks absolutely wonderful doesn’t it?

“It does. I had threatened that all 86 ladies might come back in 1000 years and if it is not looking wonderful, we’re going to haunt everybody.”

Myra Sadd-Brown - *Peter Holmes*

We have recently been approached by the Lord-Lieutenant of Essex, Jennifer Tolhurst, to assist with a County-wide project to 'celebrate and commemorate inspirational women of Essex who may not have received the public recognition they deserve'. It has been decided that a good way to do this would be to install a blue plaque on buildings where these women lived.



For our part, we have been asked to research the life of Myra Sadd-Brown, a renowned suffragette and campaigner for women's rights. So far, we have managed to establish that:

- Myra was born to John and Mary Sadd at an address in London Road, Maldon on 3rd October 1872, tenth of eleven children.
- Was privately educated at a school in Colchester
- Married Ernest Brown on the 21st July 1896 in the United Reform Church, Market Hill, Maldon
- Myra and Ernest had four children, one boy and three girls.
- Myra became involved in Women's Suffrage during the early 1900s and joined the Central Society for Women's Suffrage, Women's Social and Political Union and the Women's Freedom League.
- Was sent to prison in 1912 for damaging a police station
- While travelling in the Far East, had a stroke and died, aged 66, in Kowloon hospital.
- Cremated in Hong Kong

The next stage is to find out where Myra was born and brought up. From the 1871 census and Kelly's directory 1874, we know that the Sadd family lived in London Road, Maldon but, so far, we have been unable to identify the actual address. We also know that, sometime later, they moved to Market Hill and then to 'Mount View' in West Chase. Ideally, we would like to put the plaque on the house where Myra was born but before we can do that, we obviously need to know the correct address.

If you have an interest in Family History research and feel you might be able to help with this project, we would love to hear from you.

Keep in contact with The Maldon Society

Does the Society have your email address? It would help us to get in touch with you about future events and news. Please contact us via the website to give us your details. Thank you.

Email: maldonsociety@aol.com

Website: www.maldonsoc.org