



Betty Nora Matson

Botanist and Bell
Ringer!

Sadly passed away on
11th January 2017

The Matsons were a long standing Benfleet family, closely involved in the community and church life.

Betty and her sister Joan were born in her grandmother's house, St. Katherine's, in Vicarage Hill.

The family lived in Bedford at the time but moved to Benfleet when her grandmother had a stroke.

Betty would then have been 8 years old.

This photograph is of Emilie Marie Holthouse née Wehrung. This lady is Betty's maternal grandmother and she is pictured here outside the house in Vicarage Hill. She was born in 1858 and died in 1934.





*St. Katherine's
and Vicarage Hill
at about the time
Betty was born
and, below, how it
looks now!*

Betty and her sister spent the greater part of their lives living in the family home at 75 St. Mary's Road, remaining there after the deaths of their parents.



A teacher at Westcliff High School for girls, Betty was also a keen gardener and botanist, being member of the South East Essex Natural History Society. (Joan worked for a short while at the Stanley House School in Benfleet.) A leading light of the local hand bell group, Betty, along with her sister and father were bell ringers at St. Mary's Church.

Finally, living alone, Betty moved to retirement accommodation in Rochford in 2014, but before she did so, she passed a lot of local ephemera to the Benfleet Archive.

The Matson Collection!

Through this abundance of archive material we have been able to find out much of interest about The Matsons and old Benfleet, in particular that the family had a strong connection to St. Mary's Church. Betty's Great Uncle was The Reverend Arthur Carsten Holthouse (vicar from 1914–1920).



This silver salver was presented to Betty's great uncle Rev Holthouse and his wife by the parishioners of St Mary's Church on the occasion of their marriage on October 24th, 1916. Betty was very attached to this item.

Charles L. Matson, Betty's father was Church Warden for a time.

“One of the oldest residents of Benfleet, he witnessed its development from a village to an urban district and residential area, and the growth of its institutions.....He was a prominent member of the Church and was keenly interested in its history. Of late years he was a leading member of the group which took an interest in the re-tuning and re-hanging of the bells, and acted as Ringing Captain.”

(Taken from a tribute in the 'Benfleet Historical Society Journal' after his death in April 1974. Sadly his wife, Betty's mother, died shortly after and is also mentioned)

Note: Charles was also auditor of the Historical Society before becoming President in 1959. He also served as vice-President from 1970-74.

This is just one of the press cuttings, carefully preserved by the family. Betty, her father and sister are all in the photograph. Both Charles and Joan became bell ringing captains in future years.

8

SOUTHEND STANDARD, THURSDAY, OCT. 13, 1949.



THE PEAL OF BELLS at St. Mary's Church, South Benfleet, which now includes the 1939-1945 Victory Thanksgiving Bell, was heard for the first time in 35 years on Thursday. The bells were tried out prior to their rededication by the Bishop of Chelmsford next month.

(Photo by Shiner and Holmes, South Benfleet.)

Southend Standard in October 13th, 1949.

left to right:- **B. N. Matson**; M. Pearcey (now Mrs Cox); G. Wines; P. Herbert; **A.J. Matson**; E. Quilter; **C.L. Matson**

“The peal of bells at St. Mary's Church, South Benfleet, which now includes the 1939-1945 Victory Thanksgiving Bell, was heard for the first time in 35 years on Thursday. The bells were tried out prior to their rededication by the Bishop of Chelmsford next month.”

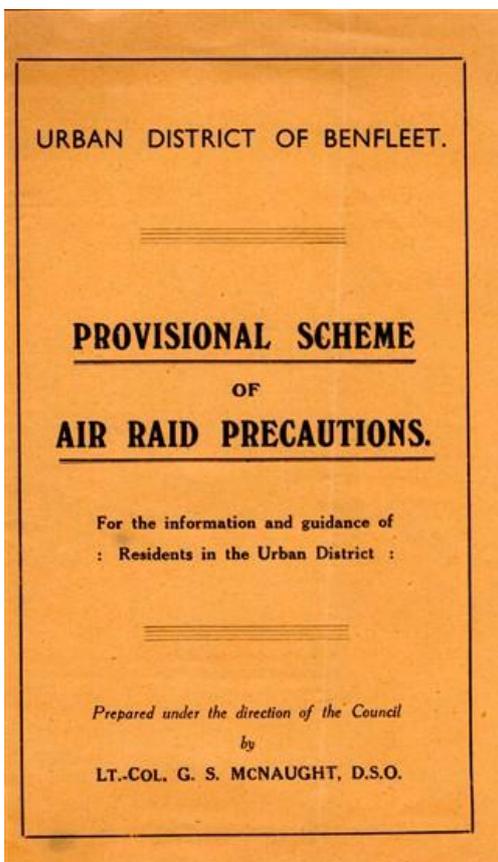
Also, thanks to the Matson Family, we received a multitude of information leaflets issued by the authorities during the Second World War on subjects, ranging from the alarming “If the invader comes” to the mundane “Your Anderson shelter this winter” .

Charles Matson (pictured) lived through both world wars, serving in the Royal Air Force in the first and then, in the second, signing up as an Air Raid Warden in 1938 and the Home Guard in 1943.



These documents are in some cases personal as in the Home Guard certificate of proficiency (shown here) belonging to Betty’s father.

(More can be seen on our Site.)



A.F.W 4026

Certificate of Proficiency HOME GUARD

On arrival at the Training Establishment, Primary Training Centre or Recruit Training Centre, the holder must produce this Certificate at once for the officer commanding, together with Certificate A if gained in the Junior Training Corps or Army Cadet Force.

PART I. I hereby certify that (Rank) Pte (Name and initials) Matson C.L. of Benet Company 1st Reserve Battalion HOME GUARD has qualified in the Proficiency Badge tests as laid down in the pamphlet “Qualifications for, and Conditions governing the Award of the Home Guard Proficiency Badges and Certificates” for the following subjects:—

Subject	Date	Initials
1. General knowledge (all candidates)	16.11.43	CM
2. Rifle	16.11.43	CM
3. 36 M Grenade	16.11.43	CM
4. (a) Other weapon <u>Moskito</u>	16.11.43	CM
(b) Signalling		
5. (a) Battlecraft, (b) Coast Artillery, (c) Heavy A.A.—By-works, (d) <u>AA</u> —Battery work, (e) Bomb—Disposal, (f) Watermanship (e) M.T.	16.11.43	CM
6. (a) Map Reading, (b) Field works, (c) First Aid	16.11.43	CM
7. S.T.B.N.		

Date 14/1/1943 1943 Signature W. B. [Signature]
* President or Member of the Board.

Date _____ 194____ Signature _____
* President or Member of the Board.

Date _____ 194____ Signature _____
* President or Member of the Board.

Date _____ 194____ Signature _____
* President or Member of the Board.

Date _____ 194____ Signature _____
* President or Member of the Board.

PART II. I certify that (Rank) Pte (Name and initials) MATSON C.L. of A Company 1st Reserve Battalion HOME GUARD, having duly passed the Proficiency tests in the subjects detailed above in accordance with the pamphlet and is hereby authorized to wear the Proficiency Badge as laid down in Regulations for the Home Guard, Vol. 1, 1942, para. 41d.

Date 15th Dec 1943 Signature [Signature]
Commanding Officer

PART III. If the holder joins H.M. Forces, his Company or equivalent Commander will record below any particulars which he considers useful in assessing the man's value on arrival at the T.E., P.T.C., R.T.C., e.g. service, rank, duties on which employed, power of leadership, etc.

Date _____ 194____ Signature _____
* Delete where not applicable.

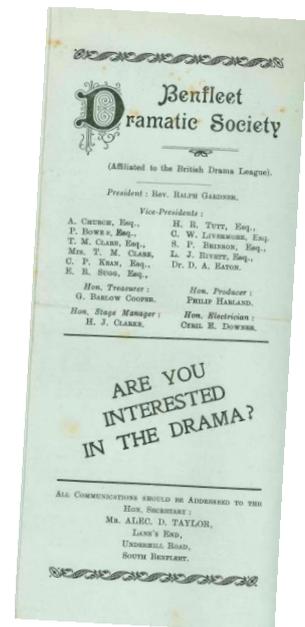
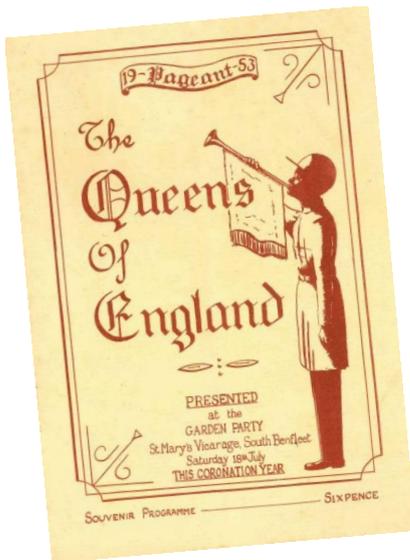
The documents were of their time and treated as redundant after the war hence their scarcity now.

One intriguing item passed to the Benfleet Archive was an envelope containing a letter from Sir Charles Nicholson to Rev. Ralph Gardner (vicar of St. Mary's from 1927-42) and the sketch of John Augustus Browne of Reeds Hill Farm. To preserve them, we have had them framed (They can also be seen on our site).

Of course we can only show a fraction of the items donated here and many have already been put on our site for you to see.

Other documents include Journals of the Historical Society, Programmes from shows and pageants, historical records from the

Church and local parish magazines and we hope to add these to the Archive too.



- A very big thank you to Betty and her family -



Betty liked to visit our shows when she could and she is pictured here in 2014 meeting with old friend Iris Sugg (sitting) and Ron French.