

Memories of Bowers Gifford – Lizzie Long Legs

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Finally, a little bit of local history:

During World War II, a lady known as ‘Lizzy Long Legs’ or ‘Long Lizzy’ occupied a house in Pound Lane with her mother. If anyone knows Lizzie’s surname we would be interested to find out. With clothing material in short supply, Lizzie wore her skirts short and her height and shapely legs drew a great deal of attention. Squaddies on leave in Vange, Pitsea and Tarpots often found their way to the Gun inn where, in the corner of the saloon bar, Lizzie held discreet soirees. Later, Lizzie would stroll back home with her ‘escorts’ and provide them with comfort. Apparently, some local lads tried their luck with Lizzie but were disappointed – Lizzie’s delights seemed only to be on offer to the lads in the armed forces.

Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet had a growing number of ‘wartime refugees’ from London making homes for themselves in the plotlands. Some slept in disused train carriages which had been hauled to the plotlands – even cold and leaky shelters in muddy North Benfleet, with no running water let alone electricity, were better than living through the bombs being rained down over London. Other London migrants found lodgings/rented properties or took shelter in their North Benfleet summer homes (many of which were just sheds). So, the local community had become more urban than rural in its outlook.

Apart from being the subject of local gossip, Lizzie’s activities caused her little more than the occasional insult - and apparently her responses were swift and sharp. As far as Lizzie’s services were concerned, most people were broad minded. It’s said that she didn’t offer her services to local husbands, or if she did she was very discreet. In general, most people seemed to think that Lizzie was doing her bit for the war effort.