

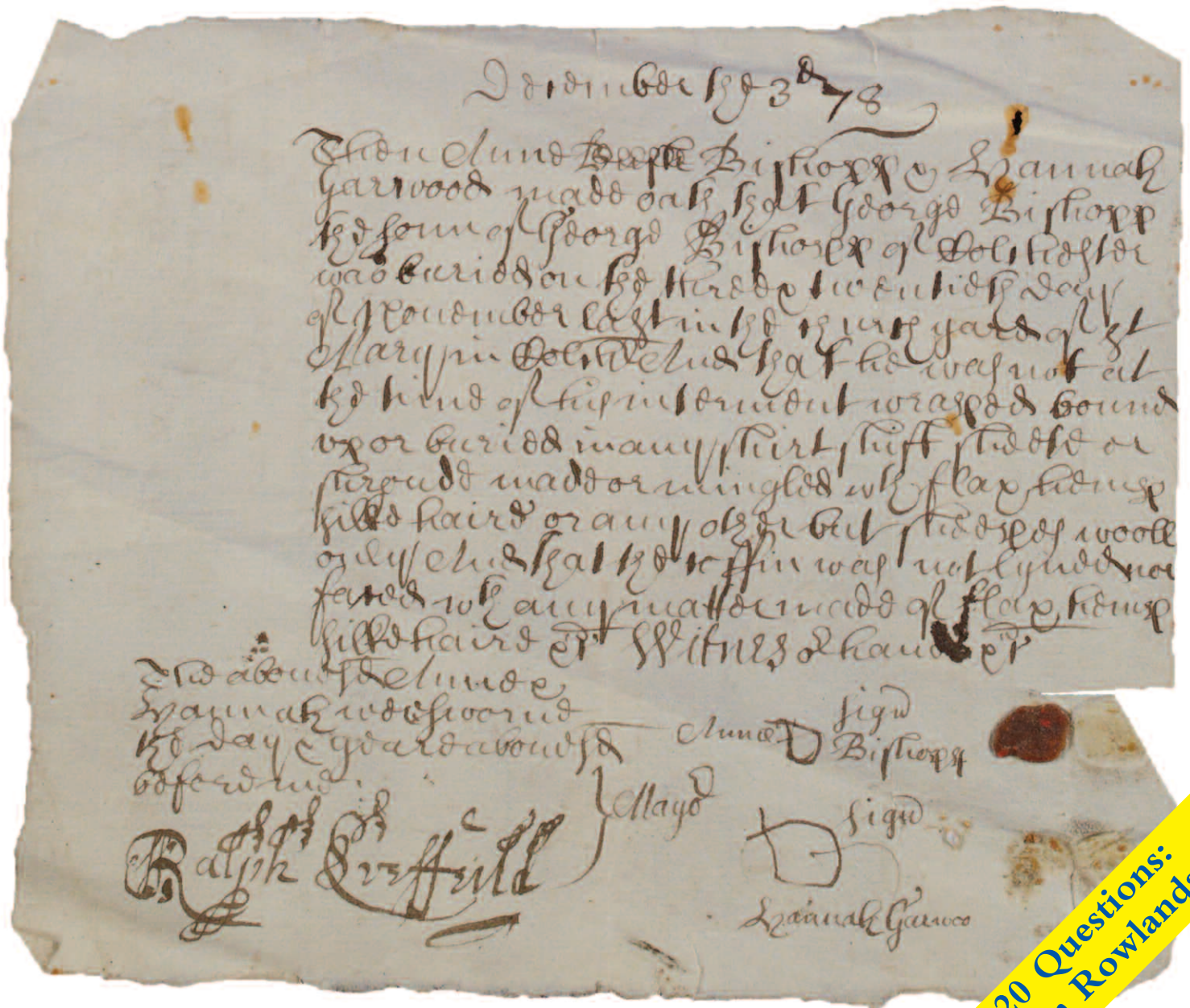
# Essex JOURNAL

A REVIEW OF LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Autumn 2014

## CHRISTINE JONES DISCUSSES THE BURIAL IN WOOLLEN ACT

AND SO MUCH MORE...



EJ 20 Questions:  
Alison Rowlands





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It seems that wherever one turns in Chelmsford, and I suspect it's the same for much of Essex, there's a lot of building and development going on, with more in the pipeline. Some of it seems to take an age to even start. I have been waiting for the first brick to be laid in the much anticipated (and imminently imminent?!) building of the John Lewis store on the site of Walker's 'backsydes' for some while now.

However, there's plenty to watch such as the Marconi New Street development, and others around the fringes of the city. One site is in 'north Chelmsford', where many houses are planned over the next few years. I pass this development, off of White Hart Lane on what was productive farmland now being built on, quite regularly. Perhaps autumn is not a time to dwell too long on such a melancholy sight of diggers and graders and bulldozers churning up the soil.

Almost one thousand years ago we know that a chap called Godric Poinc held the manor of Belstead Hall in Broomfield where these house are now being built. I suspect that he himself did not work the fields nor move the soil with the two ploughs held in demesne that *Domesday Book* tells us he had. He would have had men for that. I suspect though that he would have looked out across his fields, on the slopes of the Chelmer valley, and perhaps felt a sense of pride for a crop fair grown, a hedge cleverly laid or a field well ploughed. Equally I can assume that he also had moments of despair when the rain never stopped or the sun didn't shine. I suppose he would have shared these feelings with those who did the really hard work that the land demands in return for a harvest. They would have all been regulated and ruled by a rhythm of agrarian and religious life, ceremonies and celebrations that would have marked the years as they spun by. Successors would have come over the centuries as the fields were tended and the harvests taken. A farmer who succeeded Godric Poinc was David Smith of Hill Farm, Broomfield. It was he who wrote of his farms in *The Same Sky Over All* (London, 1948) and mentioned the various fields he looked after with their individual features, characteristics that I'm sure Godric Poinc would have recognized. But now the long cycle of ploughing and weeding and harvesting are coming to an end under a new estate of houses – sad days to witness perhaps, except that all our houses have been built on somebody's field at some time!

However, perhaps the story is never finished, the whole tale never told for also in Broomfield there is an arable field called Dragon's Foot in which the remains of a high status Roman building still litter the soil. Those who witnessed the building of this some two millennia ago might have had similar thought to ours and wondered what the world was coming to. But where now is the bustle and noise? Standing in the field today, looking down across to Chelmsford in the distance, one could almost be in

a different world, one of quiet solitude disturbed only by the birds. Who knows what lies ahead – bit dangerous to be too certain on anything.

What I can be certain of though is the content of this issue of the *Essex Journal*! I do hope that some of you have discovered the wonderfully irreverent



BBC Four comedy series *Detectorists*, which is set in Essex on the hunt for a Saxon ship burial. If not then you must find it on iPlayer and before you watch it brush up on your Saxon royal genealogy by reading Julian Whybra's article on the identity of the Prittlewell burial. Who knows, perhaps they're just waiting to be found?

Something completely different follows written by that doyen of Essex local history research, Andrew Philips. Andrew looks at the origins of the 'ancient' annual Colchester oyster feast. I've never eaten an oyster before and I'm not sure that, despite Andrew's fascinating article, I feel inspired to go ahead and try one but perhaps you all feel differently.

Christine Jones has written a wonderful history of 1678 Burial in Woollen Act and its adoption throughout Essex. It is interesting to see how different incumbents recorded it and the varying degrees of detail that was written down. Was it just a bit of a pain to administer and did it really usefully provide a stimulus to the woollen industry?

Alan Tritton examines some Essex connections with India – staggering that there is estimated to be two million mainly British burials in the Indian sub-Continent alone. I wonder how many 'ordinary' Essex men and women have ended their days under a foreign sun? Perhaps you've been researching one?

I do hope that you might find a book to hunt out and read on the recommendation of our book reviewers but if you just want to make it to the back cover then there's a treat in store as Professor Alison Rowlands, of the University of Essex, shares her 20 answers with us. As ever a fascinating look at a historian at work in our wonderful county.

As ever thanks to all those who help me make this all possible, from all of the contributors, book reviewers, technical experts and those who I can go to for advice – all very much appreciated.

See you all for Volume 50 next year,

Cheers,

Neil



# News from the Essex Record Office

**T**he ERO has had such a busy few months I hardly know where to start! Our major event commemorating the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War took place at Hylands House on Sunday 14th September, which was a huge success with around 1,000 people attending. The day included displays from ERO and Hylands House, WWI living history groups, children's activities, and the launch of the *Now the Last Poppy has Fallen* exhibition, which will now tour the county over the coming months. We were lucky enough to have a filmmaker attend, and a short video with highlights from the day is available on YouTube – just search for 'Essex at War'.

September also saw us welcome Sir Tony Robinson to the ERO as part of Ancestry's 2014 tour. Sir Tony was a brilliant speaker, and talked about his own family's connections to the First World War and why remembrance of the War is so important.

Since last writing we have done our best to get out and about across the county; so far we have been to Tilbury, Harwich, Colchester, Southend, and Saffron Walden. Each time we travel to the towns and villages around Essex I am always reminded what a diverse (and large!) county we live in, and we have been very gratified with the reception we have received on our travels. Thank you if you have attended one of our outreach events!

Since the last *Journal* we have sadly waved off two more members of our team – our Senior Conservator Tony King has moved to a new post at Cumbria Archive Service, and Archive Assistant Edward Harris has left to take up a post with a firm of solicitors, to pursue a career in law. We wish them both the very best of luck and thank them for their very valuable contributions to the ERO.

We have since welcomed Diane Taylor as our new Senior Conservator. Diane may already be a familiar figure to some as she has worked part-time in our Conservation Studio for some years already, and runs our bookbinding courses. If you would like to benefit from Diane's expertise yourself, the next course begins on Monday 2nd March 2015. More details are in our events guide, which can be downloaded from:

[www.essex.gov.uk/EROevents](http://www.essex.gov.uk/EROevents)

You can keep up with the ERO by joining the e-bulletin to receive monthly updates. To be added to the mailing list, e-mail,

[hannahjane.salisbury@essex.gov.uk](mailto:hannahjane.salisbury@essex.gov.uk)

with 'e-bulletin' as the subject.

We hope to see you at the ERO soon!

Hannah Salisbury, Access and Participation Officer



Hannah Salisbury, Sir Tony Robinson and Neil Wiffen at the ERO for the Ancestry First World War Tour.  
(Reproduced by courtesy of Ancestry.co.uk.)



# The Essex Great War Archive Project

The Essex Record Office (ERO) and The Friends of Historic Essex (FHE) are working together on a project to commemorate the centenary of the Great War. The Essex Great War Archive Project will run from 2014 to 2018 and aims to preserve documentary evidence of the period for educational study, family history research and community histories.

The ERO is collecting documents relating to Essex such as photographs, letters, diaries, community records and official documents from individuals and wartime organisations. These can be digitally copied and included in the archive or the originals deposited for permanent preservation and safekeeping. If you have any such records please contact the ERO at [ero.enquiry@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ero.enquiry@essex.gov.uk) or 01245 244644.

The FHE are collecting donations to fund the conservation, cataloguing and digitising of both new acquisitions relating to the Great War and some that are already held at the Record Office. If you feel you can help please visit the website [www.essexinfo.net/friends-of-historic-essex](http://www.essexinfo.net/friends-of-historic-essex) for further information.



## The Saulez Family Collection

The FHE have recently acquired a family collection which has since been deposited at the ERO (Accession A14026). A large part of the collection consists of letters and telegrams from and relating to the sons of the Reverend Robert Travers Saulez. Robert was born in India in 1849 where his father, George Alfred Frederick Saulez, was an assistant chaplain at Nainee Tal. After gaining his degree from Trinity College, Cambridge, Robert served as curate in Lancashire, Hampshire and London before moving to Essex in 1886. According to *Crockford's Clerical Directory* he was vicar of Belchamp St Paul from 1886 to 1901 and rural dean of Yeldham from 1899 to 1901, vicar of St John, Moulsham from 1901 to 1906 and rector of Willingale Doe with Shellow Bowels from 1906 to 1927. He retired to Twinstead where he died in 1933.

Robert and his wife Margaret Jane had three sons and a daughter between 1882 and 1887. Their sons, Robert George Rendall, Arthur Travers and Alfred Gordon were all educated at Felsted School and later served in the army. The letters deposited appear to date from towards the end of the Boer War through the Great War and beyond.

Robert George Rendall Saulez answered the call to serve in the South African Constabulary from 1902 to 1904 so is likely to be the author of the earliest letters in the collection. He volunteered soon after the outbreak of the Great War and served with the Army Service Corps in Egypt and Palestine. He was a good horseman and was recognised during the war for his share in providing an efficient transport service by 'Horse, Camel or Motor'. After the war he served in the Supply and Transport Corps in the Indian Army until about 1922 after which it is believed he settled in the country.

On leaving school Arthur Travers Saulez attended the Royal Military Academy before joining the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was posted to India in 1907 but returned to England prior to 1914 and was sent to France in May 1915. He achieved the rank of Major and having survived the Battle of the Somme was killed on 22nd April 1917. The pencil in his diary which is amongst the collection is lodged in the page of the week of his death. A window was erected in the church at Willingale Doe in memory of Arthur Travers Saulez by the officers, NCOs and men of his battery.

*Hart's Annual Army List* for 1908 shows that the youngest of the brothers, Alfred Gordon Saulez, had joined the Army Service Corps in 1906 and when war broke out he was sent to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. Like his brother Arthur he rose to the rank of Major but unlike his brother he survived the war; however nothing is known of his service throughout the conflict so hopefully some of his letters in the family collection will reveal more. Following the Armistice he was posted to Mesopotamia where he died in 1921 apparently as a result of the 'excessive heat'; he left a wife and two children.

Robert and Margaret's daughter Margaret Hilda embraced the opportunity that the Great War gave women to be involved. She served with the Scottish







Images, from left to right: Some ERO documents that relate to the Great War; a detail of stamps on a selection of the Saulez letters; ERO Archivist Allyson Lewis accepting the Saulez collection from Dr Chris Thornton, Chairman of the FHE; a look inside one of the trunks, including a whistle, and Arthur Saulez's diary. (All ERO.)

Churches Huts which, like the YMCA, provided support behind the lines in France. Following the war she married Wilberforce Onslow Times at St Christopher's in Willingale Doe with her father conducting the service.

Until this collection of over 300 letters and other items can be sorted and catalogued the full story of this family's experiences serving their country remains untold. It is hoped that funding can be raised to expedite the cataloguing and storage of the collection and the provision of an educational resource for students and people of all ages. If you as an individual, group or institution are interested in helping fund this project then please contact:

[FriendsofHistoricEssex@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:FriendsofHistoricEssex@hotmail.co.uk)

Sarah Ensor





# The Identity of the Prittlewell Prince

by  
**Julian Whybra**

**B**etween 22nd October and 20th December 2003 an archaeological excavation uncovered an undisturbed East Saxon royal burial tomb beneath a mound on land north-east of Priory Park in Prittlewell. It was the most significant and spectacular discovery of its kind since the finding of the Sutton Hoo ship burial of 1939, with which it has been compared. The man laid to rest at Sutton Hoo was almost certainly King Rædwald of the East Angles. But who was the man buried at Prittlewell? A date in the early seventh century for the burial has been proposed but it can be argued, based on the archaeological evidence, that the burial took place rather later in the mid-seventh century.

Whilst there was no ship buried at Prittlewell, the burial chamber was vast. The body had disintegrated. Bone preservation in sandy soil is poor but fragments of human tooth enamel were found in soil from where the head would have lain. The body had been placed underground in an inner room and was surrounded by precious objects demonstrating his wealth, power and status. The

masculine nature of the artefacts and the total absence of women's jewellery indicate that the occupant was male. His possessions included his weapons (a sword and shield), a gold-decorated drinking horn, a tunic with gold braid woven into the neckline, a throne-like folding stool, and a (royal?) standard.<sup>1</sup> The quality of the drinking vessels and plate shows the lavishness and generosity of his hall and their origins from across the then known world are an indication of his ability to acquire and commission the finest objects. The discovery of such artefacts soon attracted the attention of the press nationally and internationally and their owner was quickly dubbed the 'Prince of Prittlewell' and the 'King of Bling'. All the indications point to the burial of a King of the East Saxons.<sup>2</sup> Alternative identities have been put forward – an unknown king of the East Saxons, a princely member of the royal house, a rich and powerful noble – but there is no archaeological or historical evidence to support such suggestions.

Unearthed from the deep timber-walled underground room

were over one hundred objects of gold, silver, iron, copper, and glass, some of which can be dated. These included a gold belt buckle datable to AD 600–640, two small copper-alloy shoe buckles virtually identical to those found in the Sutton Hoo ship burial (probably of Rædwald who reigned c.599–625), one gold coin (a Merovingian tremissis) datable to the early seventh century and a second from a series that was in use from between 570 and 580–670.<sup>3</sup> Two tiny gold-foil Latin crosses, undoubtedly Christian symbols, date from the late sixth and seventh centuries and have their origin in what is now Lombardy, south-west Germany and northern Switzerland. Evidence of Roman missionary activity in south-east England in the late sixth and early seventh centuries bears out this suggestion of a connection to northern Italy. A small copper-alloy cylinder with lid dates from the sixth century as does an accompanying silver (communion?) spoon which bears the remains of a seventh-century two-line Latin inscription underneath a cross. A Byzantine flagon



1. These blue glass squat jars were found against the east wall and are decorated with an applied floral design (seven petals) on the base and applied plaitwork with three overlapping wavy lines around the body. The jars are exactly paralleled at the Broomfield princely burial in Essex and at Aylesford in Kent, where pairs of vessels were also found. It is likely that all were made by the same craftsman.

(© Museum of London Archaeology Service)



with embossed medallions showing Christian saints is typical of those made in the eastern Mediterranean between the sixth and ninth centuries. A large 'Coptic' copper-alloy bowl, of a type found from East Anglia to Kent, can be dated to the first half of the seventh century. Both flagon and bowl might have been used for the Christian ritual washing of hands and feet. Two sets of blue and green glass jars can be dated to between 580 and 630 and are believed to come from a workshop in Aylesford, Kent (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> Other finds can be dated to the sixth or seventh centuries.<sup>5</sup> It is anticipated by archaeologists at the Museum of London, where the artefacts are being examined, that more items will be dated in the future and that dating might become more accurate.

The burial artefacts provide approximate dates of manufacture of between 600 and 630–650. The burial would have probably taken place in the latter half of this period or just afterwards. Whilst the tomb contained *Christian* objects, the burial mound and chamber grave, filled with useful items for the afterlife, hint at a high-status *pagan* ceremony yet without the lavishness found in the Sutton Hoo burial. 'The poverty of his [the occupant's] actual dress (where is Sutton Hoo's lavish gold and enamel purse packed with gold coins? The luxurious helmet? The complex toilet kit?) may be a statement of Christian spiritual wealth.'<sup>6</sup> It is these conclusions that will provide clues as to the identity of the tomb's occupant.

Any investigation must begin with a search for likely candidates among the members of the East Saxon royal family of the seventh century. Bede provides a succession of the East Saxon kings – this information can only have come from a regnal list for it is unlikely that Bede would have written with such confidence had he not had access to such.<sup>7</sup> The only surviving pre-Conquest East

Saxon royal genealogy is London, British Library, Add. 23211 comprising two mutilated folios.<sup>8</sup> A few additional references can be gleaned from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.<sup>9</sup> There are two post-Conquest works which provide a history of the East Saxon kings and genealogical table<sup>10</sup> and three other post-Conquest works which had access to pre-Conquest material not recorded elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Taken together these are able to provide a genealogy which, with the exception of the exact position of the two Sigebert, may be taken as reasonably accurate (See family tree over-leaf).<sup>12</sup>

Kingship was hereditary but not based on primogeniture. A king had to be a member of the Sledinga royal family and selection seems to have been determined according to fitness for the post. A distinctive feature of the East Saxon monarchy was shared kingship as was each king's forename beginning with the letter 'S'. The succession passed from Sleda to his son Sæberht, to his three sons Seaxred, Seward and Seaxbald jointly, to their cousin (probably) Sigebert I, to his first cousin once removed (probably) Sigebert II, to his cousins Swiðfrið and Swiðhelm jointly, to the latter's first cousin once removed Sigehere I and cousin Sæbbi jointly, and to the latter's sons Sigehard and Swæfred and his first cousin twice removed Offa jointly.

Given the parameters suggested by the grave goods' dates the candidates among the royal family for the identity of the occupant of the Prittlewell burial mound may be narrowed to Sleda, Sæberht, Seaxred, Seward, Seaxbald, Sigebert I and Sigebert II as these are the only kings whose dates of death coincide with having been the possible owners of objects made between 600 and 650. All, by dint of their position, would have had access to high-status goods and, since Sleda had been married to Rícula, sister of King Æthelberht of Kent, would have

had access to goods from that kingdom.

Sæberht was converted to Christianity in 604, so presumably his father Sleda still retained pagan beliefs. Sæberht's three sons reverted to paganism and expelled bishop Mellitus from the kingdom. Subsequently all three were killed in battle against the West Saxons. Sigebert I 'the Little' succeeded them and was in turn followed by Sigebert II 'the Good' who underwent a conversion to Christianity in 653, implying that his predecessor had been pagan. These are the only two known early seventh-century Christian kings of Essex. Thus, the presence of Christian objects in the burial chamber further reduces the list of candidates to two: Sæberht and Sigebert II.

### The case for Sæberht

The principal source for Sæberht's reign is Bede (d.735) who claimed to have derived his information from Abbot Albinus of Canterbury via the London priest Noðhelm, later Archbishop of Canterbury (d.739). In 604 Augustine of Canterbury consecrated the Gaul Mellitus as the first bishop of the East Saxons, to be based in the East Saxon capital, London. Furthermore Bede stated that Sæberht converted to Christianity in 604 and was baptized by Mellitus, while his sons remained pagan. Sæberht then allowed the establishment of the bishopric with the church dedicated to St. Paul being built in London. However, the traditional foundation legend of Westminster Abbey is also linked to Sæberht, who after his baptism, to show himself a Christian, immediately 'built a church to the honour of God and St. Peter, on the west side of the city of London, in a place (which because it was overgrown with thorns, and environed with water) the Saxons called Thorney'.<sup>13</sup> Sæberht's death is recorded by Bede as subsequent to that of his uncle Æthelberht of Kent in 616. That must have been in 616 or 617, as bishop

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Mellitus's expulsion by Sæberht's sons cannot have taken place later than January 618. The arguments have been made that 'the Prittlewell burial is that of the Christian East Saxon king, Sæberht, defiantly buried by his sons in pagan splendour, rather than in the church at London'<sup>14</sup> and:

'if these pagan sons influenced the actual burial process, as one might expect, then the failure to bury in a Christian cemetery or in association with a church is understandable. Burial in an inhumation cemetery in current use perhaps implies their commitment to traditional practices within a cemetery which already had strong associations with the élite, perhaps even with their own kin.'<sup>15</sup>

Whilst those circumstances would fit with the nature of the burial, tradition states that Sæberht was buried at Westminster Abbey: 'Sebert was buried in this church, with his wife Athelgoda; whose bodies many years after, to wit, in the reign of Richard II (saith Walsingham), were translated from the old church to the new, and there entered.'<sup>16</sup> In a later edition of the same work appeared the line 'His body lies in an ancient Sepulchre of Stone, arched, situated on the South of the High Altar.'<sup>17</sup> It was actually translated there in 1308 in the reign of Edward II and the tomb can still be seen. The monument lies in the south ambulatory, between the tombs of Anne of Cleves and Richard II, facing the south transept, backing directly on to the high altar. In the high altar area itself there is a remarkable painting of Sæberht on the sedilia (on the tall wooden panel behind the seats nearest to, and on the south side of, the high altar) which was painted about 1300.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore there is a local legend<sup>19</sup> that Sæberht was buried in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Great Burstead near

Billericay. Perhaps his heart was buried in one place and body in another? It would certainly seem unlikely that the king who founded Westminster Abbey would be buried anywhere else. In addition, Sæberht's recorded death in 616/7 would seem to be too early within the parameters of the time frame for the burial of the 'Prittlewell Prince' (600–630x650).

### The case for Sigebert II 'the Good'

Sigebert's place in the Sleddinga family tree cannot be stated with certainty. William of Malmesbury and Florence of Worcester both suggested<sup>20</sup> that he was the same Sigebert as the man who appears in the family tree's fifth generation from Sledda and was the father of King Selered (r. 709–46) but that poses genealogical impossibilities. Both sources also suggested that Sigebert I 'the Little' was the son of Sæward and grandson of Sæberht. However, that also poses genealogical difficulties as Sæward would probably have been still too young at his death to have sired a child mature enough to succeed him. It is more likely that Sigebert I was Sæward's cousin and Sigebert II was Sæward's son.

Bede supplied the details of Sigebert II's reign stating that he was on friendly terms with King Oswig of Northumbria, a distant relation who frequented Sigebert II's court and convinced him of the importance of Christianity. Sigebert II also visited Oswig's court and asked him to send him teachers. Oswig sent Cedd, a priest from Lindisfarne, who re-established Christianity in Essex and converted Sigebert II in 653, the only date which can be fixed in his reign. Sometime after his conversion (exactly when is not known) Sigebert II was murdered by two brothers, his kinsmen, in a pagan reaction. After his death the kingship was shared by two brothers, Swiðhelm and Swiðfrið (who might have been their predecessor's murderers), the former

eventually being baptized by Cedd and both dying a decade later.<sup>21</sup>

Kings Sæberht and Sigebert II were both Christian converts replaced by pagans. The argument that the politico-religious circumstances which pertained at the death of the Christian King Sæberht led to his pagan-style burial can be equally applied to the death and burial of the Christian King Sigebert II. While it can be shown that many grave goods from the burial chamber originate from the first 30 years of the seventh century (a) it would be difficult to refine that period down to the first 15 years of the century in time for Sæberht's burial and (b) many other grave goods cannot be dated any closer than the first 50 years of the century, leaving open the possibility that the grave was Sigebert II's. In addition, the known facts of Sæberht's life and the circumstantial evidence surrounding his death and final resting-place would far better accord with a burial in Westminster Abbey. The circumstances and timing of Sigebert II's death about 653x654 seem to fit in much better with the time-frame of the Prittlewell burial mound and make him a preferred candidate for being its occupant.

### References

1. The iron stand, 4' 4½" high has four feet. S. Hirst, T. Nixon, P. Rowsome & S. Wright, *The Prittlewell Prince: The Discovery of a Rich Anglo-Saxon Burial in Essex* (London, 2004), pp. 29–30: 'X-rays show that the base was made of four curved strips, welded together at the shaft... twisted at intervals for decorative effect. It tapers to a point and has at least two additional side prongs. The...stand may have been a royal standard, perhaps holding a banner, or...to hold a burning wooden torch or candles.' Though comparable in concept to one found at Sutton Hoo, its form is unique in England.
2. [www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk) *The Prittlewell Prince: The site and the princely*

burial, 'The size of the burial chamber and the quality and quantity of the accompanying grave goods can leave little doubt that this was a rare example of a 7th-century princely burial.' I. Blair, E. Barham & L. Blackmore, 'My Lord Essex', *British Archaeology* (2004), 76, pp.10-17, 'He was a leader, represented by his standard and his throne-like stool, and perhaps the item worn around his neck decorated with gold braid. For those who knew him, his sword and shield may have recalled battles in which he had fought, famous warriors he had killed or wounded...Everything sings of a man of wealth and power, able to acquire or commission fine things from across the known world: and more, for his followers to consign them in perpetuity to the afterlife, to create his monument and myths to inspire future generations.'

3. Once these coins have been fully examined, they should help to date the grave far more exactly than would otherwise be possible. In 2004 Gareth Williams, Curator of Early Medieval Coinage at the British Museum, suspected they may date to about AD 600-630: 'Although some Merovingian coins carry the names of rulers, providing an absolute chronology, on others, no ruler is mentioned. In such cases – as with the coins found at Prittlewell – the amount of gold used will be scientifically analysed to suggest a likely date. For, over the course of their issue, between AD 570-670, less and less gold was used in the coins. Even without scientific analysis, experts can see how early coins are deep gold, while later examples are silvery-gold. The Prittlewell coins seem to be a mid-goldy colour'. This suggested Williams's guess at a date of 600-630. The Museum of London Archaeology Service, 'Prittlewell: Treasures of a King of Essex', *Current Archaeology*, 16, No. 10 (190), (February 2004), p.431.
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than the fact that Seaxa was Sæberht's brother and might have been alive in 616. There is no evidence of Seaxa's Christian conversion.

16. Stow, p.405.
17. Ibid., (2nd edn., London, 1603), p.405; T. Pennant, *Some Account of London* (London, 1780), Vol. I, f.134 states that the translation occurred in the reign of Henry III (r.1216-72) who began restoring the Abbey in 1245 and who 'performed two acts of pious respect to the remains of the founders of the Abbey, which must not be omitted; he translated those of Sebert into a tomb of touchstone, beneath an arch made in the wall.'
18. There is also a statue, believed to be of Sæberht, in Henry V's chantry chapel, high up on the exterior of the turret, which dates from the early fifteenth century.
19. K.D. Box, *24 Essex Churches* (Letchworth, 1965), p.48. There is also a road named after Sæberht in Great Burstead to commemorate the legend.
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21. Colgrave and Mynors, 3.XXII.

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## Colchester and its Oysters

by

Andrew Phillips

**C**ivic ceremony has deep roots, but historians now recognise that ancient civic rituals often turn out to be calculated inventions or re-inventions in which the late Victorians and Edwardians emerge as arch culprits. This article looks at Colchester's long love affair with oysters to establish how its present ceremonies evolved and how far they were invented or re-invented in the period 1880-1914.

### The Colchester Oyster Feast

Of the two surviving oyster events in Colchester's civic calendar the best known is the Oyster Feast. In its heyday between 1885 and 1939 this attracted royalty (including the future Edward VIII and George VI), cabinet ministers (including six former prime ministers), ambassadors, heads of the armed forces, and stars of learning and letters like Lord Kelvin, Hilaire Belloc, and John Buchan.<sup>1</sup>

Despite regular reference to 'time immemorial', the 'ancient' nature of the Oyster Feast has now been carefully assessed. It was first held on 20th October 1845. Its inventor was the mayor for that year, Henry Wolton (Fig. 1), a successful High Street grocer, and the event followed the opening of a new town hall, a building now replaced by the present town hall. What has not been examined is why it was Wolton who chose to feast 200 fellow citizens at his own expense, an act of generosity for which he was, eventually, re-elected five times. 'This', Sir Edward Heath observed at a more recent Oyster Feast,

'sounds like a good investment'.<sup>2</sup>

Public feasting (and drinking) has an august history, yet, on the threshold of the Victorian Age, municipal feasting at public expense had become such a perceived abuse that the landmark Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, a cornerstone of modern local government, specifically forbade it. Overnight, a practice as ancient as local government stopped. Colchester's male elite, however, were fortunate: one public feast did survive, albeit behind partially closed doors.

During the late eighteenth century there had sprung up throughout Britain a rash of provincial Associations for the Prosecution of Felons, Horse Stealers and Thieves. In Essex alone over 100 such organisations were formed. Most died out in the mid-19th century with the advent of formal policing and police prosecutions. However, in Colchester the 'Thieves', as they came to be called, not only continued a trickle of prosecutions but also established a popular annual dinner which the business community attended in some numbers and which soon developed its own traditions. From an early date the key post of treasurer of 'The Thieves' was earmarked for the town's best 'chap', the leading personalities of the Colchester 'shopocracy', the worthy burgers who ran the town; and in 1845, the very year he became mayor, Henry Wolton began a 24-year reign as Treasurer of the Thieves.<sup>3</sup>

Now promoter of Colchester's only surviving 'feast', Wolton could also reflect on the comparable hospitality expected of a

mayor. He would recall the now lost Mayor's Dinner, which, less than ten years previously, had been held every Michaelmas (September 29th) by the incoming mayor, feasting up to 200 at a cost to the borough of £80, (say £60,000 today). Pondering how this practice might be revived, Wolton fixed upon an existing event, the annual Corporation Lunch, an event with its own rationale, not to say traditions.

For the previous 30 or so years the Colne Fishery Company, the canny oystermen from Mersea, Brightlingsea and other riverine parishes, currently making a fortune from

**1. Henry Wolton 1803-74, wholesale grocer and six times mayor of Colchester, who invented the Colchester Oyster Feast and promoted earlier ceremonies associated with the Colchester Oyster Fishery. (Reproduced by courtesy of Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service.)**





**2. The male elite of Colchester gather in the old Corn Exchange for the Oyster Feast of 1902, a celebration of Colchester's grandeur. Along the top table sit the senior ministers of Mexico and Japan, the Lord Mayor of London, 11 other mayors, ambassadors, military grandees, and the great and the good of Essex. (Author's collection.)**

Colchester's oyster fishery, had presented their landlords, Colchester Borough Council, with some oysters, in thanks for renewing their licences, at a little lunch held every October in the town hall before the robed mayor, aldermen and councillors undertook the onerous task of marching down High Street to proclaim the ancient St Dennis Fair. This, Colchester's own *Oktoberfest*, had been held since at least 1318, when, their pockets full of harvest money, people from a considerable surrounding area had descended on Colchester High Street, crammed for days with stalls selling goods, to indulge in some traditional feasting and drinking of their own.

In taking over an existing event, Wolton now sought to

recreate the Mayor's Dinner or Feast. To stress the direction he was taking he gave the new event an original name, the Colchester Oyster Feast. By Wolton's day railways and modern marketing were killing the St Dennis Fair, yet the same agencies would eventually promote and transform his Oyster Feast – eventually, but not immediately. Many of Wolton's successors as mayor had neither his deep pockets nor his public spiritedness; for Wolton had avoided the sanctions of the Municipal Corporation Act against feasting by paying for the entire Oyster Feast himself. Not all his successors were so willing.

Only from the mid-1880s did a string of wealthy mayors, most of whom helped build Colchester's present flamboyant

town hall, transform the Oyster Feast into what Wolton had conceived, a public celebration of consensual civic pride (Fig. 2). London VIP's, including the Lord Mayor, travelled by a special train, pulling into North Station at 12.55 precisely. No thoughtless leaves clogged the line; no public discord marred the event. Colchester stopped for the day as troops lined the route, traffic was stopped, and crowds watched in awe as a procession of carriages made its way to the High Street. Here the male elite of the district, 4-500 strong, ate 12,000 oysters and sought to follow three hours of speeches without the aid of a public address system. All this was paid for by the mayor himself until 1927. Then Colchester's first Labour mayor announced



that without public funding he could not hold an Oyster Feast. Thereafter the event has been paid for from the mayor's allowance, with all but a handful of guests now paying their way, even as token celebrities have replaced the metropolitan dignitaries of earlier days.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Opening of the Oyster Fishery**

The pedigree of Colchester's second oyster ceremony is more complex. Oysters had long been Colchester's unique selling point. From its earliest royal charters of self government, the freemen of Colchester had a monopoly of the River Colne fishery from North Bridge to Westness, usually interpreted as the mouth of the estuary: St Osyth Point to the east and Mersea Island, to the west. Fish was an important source of medieval trade and fish included shellfish like oysters (though the charter did not specify), and these existed in such abundance that they were often called the poor man's meat.<sup>5</sup>

The sheer area of their exclusive fishery prevented Colchester from realistically controlling it all. Famously in 1350 Lionel de Bradenham, Lord of the Manor of Langenhoe, who had effectively taken control of the south western creeks and channels, when charged with laying six great fish weirs across the river to trap fish, marched on Colchester with 200 men at arms, intent on burning the town. Though repelled, Bradenham besieged Colchester for 11 weeks until it capitulated and agreed to pay him ransom money. Eventually Bradenham was ensnared in a court of law, a landmark moment in the borough's transition from brute force to good lawyers in the defence of its fishery. This, of course, could work both ways. In subsequent centuries Colchester's neglect and Brightlingsea's persistence in courts of law led to the loss from the Fishery of all Brightlingsea Creek.<sup>6</sup>

By this date the lot of the oyster had profoundly changed.

During the reign of Elizabeth 1 from limitless abundance the wild oyster was almost completely fished out. Not only were oyster boats (called smacks) poaching far and wide, but the growing London market was depleting local stocks beyond renewable limits. In 1566 the corporation ruled that Colchester oysters, perceived as a vital source of food for the poor, should only be sold at Hythe Quay, the town's port, with a close season introduced from Easter to September 15th, during which no oyster fishing should take place, a rule enforced by strict penalties, including confiscation of offending boats and fines of up to £5. In August those wishing to fish had to apply for a licence from Colchester's two bailiffs, the predecessors of the mayor. An outcry promptly arose from the Colne fishing communities, showing how much they had hitherto helped themselves, but the County Assize upheld the principle of conservation, restricting boats to a certain size, with only one dredge (i.e. net) and only two men to each boat. It was all a very modern measure, reminiscent of current EU regulations, and it set the agenda for the next 400 years, though modifications to the length of the close season did take place.<sup>7</sup>

Now, of course, Colchester Corporation had to enforce these draconian measures, the perennial problem they had always faced. The oldest surviving borough accounts date from 1579/80, very soon after this. They record payments to one of the bailiffs for bread, beer and cheese for the 'first going down the river' and later a 'second going down the river'. We might assume this referred to one trip to close the oyster fishery and one to open it, but subsequent bills make clear that they refer to one trip to 'shut the river', usually in late March, soon called, thanks to the Essex accent, 'setting the river', while the second trip referred to the Admiralty or Conservancy Court, held at Mersea Stone, the most

easterly point of the island, where there was a military blockhouse guarding the entrance of the river. Here cases were tried of smacks and fishermen who had offended the new legislation. Philip Morant, writing in 1748, had access to records from the 1550s, now lost, which, he claimed, provided evidence for these outings.<sup>8</sup>

The shortage of oysters and the new legislation were followed in due course by the rise of oyster cultivation. Without being too technical, this involved both the maturing of oysters in pits dug in the inter-tidal saltings, and the putting down of 'layings', piles of broken shells called cultch, on which the pin-prick oysters (spat) settle when first released as a milky bloom from their bisexual parents. In a competitive market, dredging up someone else's cultch might be worth the risk of a fine. Thus both 'goings down the rivers' by the bailiffs (later the mayor) were functional and rational events. Shutting the river, at which the town clerk read a proclamation, provided a legal terminus on which prosecutions might stand. Holding the Admiralty Court at the wind-blown Mersea blockhouse, rather than Colchester's Moot Hall, reinforced the borough's presence and the 'fact' (which some contested) that Mersea Stone, the last landfall, was the boundary of the fishery.

For most of the seventeenth century borough records are fragmentary, but Admiralty Courts were regularly held at Mersea Stone and usually had an accompanying meal. The blockhouse continued to serve a military purpose, not least during the 1648 Siege of Colchester, when it was seized by Parliamentary forces. During the eighteenth century the blockhouse became increasingly decrepit, and for much of the century the borough leased out the fishery, leaving the leasee to supervise its boundaries. It is unlikely that 'going down the river' twice or even once a year took place either then, or



during the 22 years (1741–63) that Colchester was without its royal charter, and therefore without a mayor and corporation, the body which held Admiralty Courts. Control of the fishery disintegrated. An Act of Parliament was finally passed empowering three local JP's to fulfil the role of the absent corporation.<sup>9</sup>

Before this became law in 1758, Philip Morant published his 1748 *History of Colchester*. In describing the oyster fishery, he states:

'In March or April yearly, Proclamation is or *ought to be made* in the river near Mersea Stone within the jurisdiction of the town of Colchester, that the River Colne is shut, and all persons forbid... to take any oysters out of the said river... before July 22nd and then to come in and take licenses... This is

called Setting the Colne.'  
(author's italics)

There is enough leeway here to support the view that in 1748 an annual observance of the ceremony was not taking place, but that the form and the need for the ceremony was clear to Philip Morant. There is also sporadic evidence in borough records of the event taking place. The proclamation reappears 31 years later in the local press, when, with wording almost identical to that used in Morant, it records that the town clerk, Francis Smythies, proclaimed the shutting of the river from a boat off Mersea Stone on March 1st 1779.<sup>10</sup>

Smythies, town clerk between 1767 and 1797, regularly billed the borough for a journey to Brightlingsea to shut the river, often giving the Water Bailiffs and Colne 'jury' (see below) a dinner at the town's expense. He

and his successor spiced up the Admiralty Court held at Mersea Stone in the late summer. As the blockhouse collapsed to a ruin, a large marquee, or even a temporary booth erected by a local carpenter, served to house the mayor's party for a substantial liquid lunch, complete with toasts and speeches.

Smythies long reign as town clerk was followed from 1820 by one by his son, also Francis Smythies. By now the August Admiralty Court was being called Colne Fair, the council and hangers on arriving by boat with their own band on board. After the Court and lunch a sailing match was organised, followed at night by dancing on the beach. The trip increasingly included a formal tour of the boundaries of the fishery, itself an enjoyable outing, given the time of year. For all its legal relevance, the event had become a town hall 'jolly'. And there is no further

**3. An early 20th century version of 'hauling the first dredge' taken before it was performed by the mayor in full regalia. The operation of *two* very full dredges is overseen by Alderman Henry Laver with white beard and top hat, who had recently added this gesture to the ancient ceremony. The town clerk, Henry Wanklyn, stands at the rear, bare headed and in civilian clothes.**  
(Author's collection.)



evidence of 'shutting' the river each March.<sup>11</sup>

The 1758 Act of Parliament had also established a 'jury' of '12 of the most sufficient and intelligent' of the dredgers to make rules 'for preserving and governing the fishery'. In 1807 the dredgers went further and set up The Colne Fishery Company (it had no statutory standing) with its own officers. At each Admiralty Court licences were bought by a growing number of dredgers. It was this Company which, you recall, treated the mayor to fresh oysters every October, at the Corporation Lunch. From 1827 they took power to borrow up to £5,000 to expend on new stock, spat and cultch.<sup>12</sup>

By this date the Admiralty Court was being held at the Moot Hall in Colchester, followed by dinner at the George Hotel, until matters were transformed by the Municipal Corporations Act which, *inter alia*, abolished all corporation Admiralty Courts. On the eve of the act the mayor for 1835, Roger Nunn, held, as he thought, one last Court at the Blockhouse site, the first for seven years, in what was probably a party political statement.

The Municipal Corporations Act had been preceded (and justified) by public enquires into the affairs of some of the older, more suspect, corporations by the then Whig/Liberal government. Colchester's all-Tory corporation had fiercely opposed being investigated and the town clerk, Francis Smythies, totally refused to co-operate. This somewhat played into the hands of the local Liberal party, increasingly dominated as it was by high-minded Nonconformity. Waving the banner of reform, the Liberals secured a slender majority at the first council elections following the act, sacked Smythies, and held the mayoralty and all the aldermanic seats for the first two years, setting up a Fisheries Committee to treat this asset in a more businesslike way. Nor is

there evidence that they made late summer outings to the boundaries of the fishery or had dinners at the Blockhouse.

Liberal triumph, however, was short-lived. The Admiralty Court did survive in order to issue licences, and in 1837 the Conservatives resumed a further 42 years of political control and monopoly of the mayoralty. In 1839 the August tour of the corporation's fishery, with lunch at Mersea Stone, re-commenced, the Conservative *Essex Standard* declaring: 'The renewal of this ancient custom is very desirable at a time when the modern spirit of innovation and encroachment...is regardless of the rights of property', a clear dig at reforming Liberalism. The tour was not repeated, however, for five years, with what proved to be a grand finale to the Blockhouse 'jolly'.

At 7 am, preceded by a band, the mayor and his large party took breakfast at Wivenhoe, then, cheered by a crowd, embarked in several smacks, trimmed with bunting and carrying two bands. Arriving at Mersea they were greeted by a gun salute from up to 100 vessels assembled for a Regatta. They then proceeded to sail the boundary of the fishery. On returning, the national anthem was sung as a procession formed to the special booth built for the Admiralty Court and the Dinner. Here they were joined by the town's Conservative MP and a considerable number of ladies. The afternoon was filled with sailing matches followed by dancing at night. Some 5,000 people were allegedly there that day; yet the population of Mersea was only 1,250.<sup>13</sup>

Over the next decade a new pattern emerged. Licenses were renewed in Colchester town hall at an Admiralty Court in February, followed by a dinner, which, starting at 4 pm, might last until 10 at night. Financed by the Colne Fishery Company it did not technically offend the Municipal Corporation Act. Then, early in July (not August), also financed by the Colne

Company, came a sailing of the boundaries by mayor and councillors, invariably with a meal on board and supper on their return to Brightlingsea. This, from at least 1836, began to be called the 'Closing of the Oyster Fishery' even though in practice the fishery was closed for breeding some months before. One member of the council invariably present was Alderman Wolton, who, shortly afterwards, invented the Oyster Feast, providing the third instalment of municipal feasting.

That all this bore an element of calculation by the now dominant Conservatives was made clear in their newspaper, the *Essex Standard*, some 20 years later on Closing Day 1858:

'they had preserved...those festivities for which Corporations were once so celebrated, but which the Municipal Reform Act remorselessly put an end to. Thanks to the Colne Fishery Company – the Reform Act notwithstanding – the Town Council of Colchester can enjoy and boast of three feasts in a year of true Corporation abundance and freedom.'

Few Liberal councillors were elected during this era, but it is surely significant that where press accounts list those present, no Liberals are among them.

As the council set sail each year the town sergeant rapidly called them to order. As they stood in a circle the town clerk read a proclamation closing the fishery till August 1st. The town sergeant then cried, 'God Save the Queen', followed by three cheers for the Mayor. As the town clerk signed the proclamation, those present 'partook of the time honoured fare of gin and gingerbread'. This eighteenth century antidote to severe cold (it sold extensively when the Thames froze over) perhaps recalled the much chillier 'Shutting' ceremony formerly held in March.





4. Mayor Wally Porter hauling the first dredge in 1962, a task he found quite demanding.  
(Author's collection.)

The company now settled down to a 3 hour sailing of the boundaries of the Fishery, punctuated by a substantial lunch when, in 1858 for example, 'the consumption of pale ale, Dublin stout and sherry was on a par with the more solid ingredients of the feast' and 'an agreeable addition was made by Alderman Wolton in the shape of a hamper of champagne.' Much frivolity followed as crabs and jellyfish found their way into several councillors' pockets.<sup>14</sup>

Before long, however, the borough decided their oyster fishery was being run as a benefit club for the oystermen, whose leaders ran private businesses on the back of it, and whose many relatives became 'apprentice' oystermen at an accelerating rate: from 73 registered dredgers in 1807 to 413 in 1866. A long, expensive, legal challenge to the Colne Fishery Company led to an 1870 Act of Parliament, which made the Company a legal entity, jointly run by six borough and six oystermen representatives. But the underlying antagonism continued. This is not surprising. It was a contest between landlord capitalism and dredgers' collec-

tivism, the one anxious to make a profit on an asset, the other to further their livelihood.

The annual sailing of the bounds appears to have suffered. From 1868 to 1884 only one press report of the ceremony can be traced. This was in 1879 at the specific urging of the Borough's Estate & Finance Committee that 'it was expedient that the corporation should go the bounds of their Fishery every year.' As a visible assertion of the borough's rights, sailing its fishery and reading a proclamation remained a rational measure, but the 1879 sailing took place a month later than usual, and was called, in a Council bill, 'Opening and beating the bounds of the Oyster Fishery.' The 'Closing' had become an 'Opening' ceremony.<sup>15</sup>

Matters were now complicated by the return to power of the Liberals, after '42 years of Tory tyranny', as one of them put it. Starting with the town clerk, key Conservative officials were sacked, and acrimony marked borough affairs for the next few years. This political confrontation coincided with a rising programme of 'Municipal Socialism' which came to a head over the

building of the Borough's gigantic new water tower, soon nicknamed 'Jumbo', whose initial shortcomings were blamed on the ruling Liberals. Finally, wise voices secured a 'Municipal Compromise' between the two political parties to protect the rising responsibilities of the Council from such party bickering, one outcome of which was to alternate the mayoralty between the two political parties.

Business acumen was meanwhile directed at the Oyster Fishery. Alderman Henry Laver, the Conservative mayor for 1886, a local doctor and man of wide learning, gained an intimate understanding of oyster cultivation, and uncovered secret meetings and questionable book-keeping by the dredgers, who had found it easy to bamboozle their Corporation colleagues. Laver installed a full-time professional manager, who could not be bamboozled, established river police and transformed the fishery's income.<sup>16</sup>

From 1884 the newly named and newly timed 'Opening of the Fishery' became once more an annual reported event. A new dignity, as became the late



**5. Town Clerk Wanklyn and Colchester's first lady mayor, Catherine Alderton, 'taste the first oyster', a ceremony invented a few years before for the benefit of press photographers.  
(Reproduced by courtesy of Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service.)**

Victorian period, prevailed. Like the Oyster Feast it became a statement not of party politics but of consensual civic pride among council members. As Laver himself put it, 'instead of the rough horseplay which had characterised it, many improvements have been made.' Firstly, the sailing of the bounds, once the main purpose of the exercise, ceased to be obligatory, sometimes being retained for a second 'outing on the waters' in the summer months. Secondly, the midday meal took on greater significance and length, its speeches being fully reported in an enlarged press coverage. Thirdly, a new element to the ceremony was institutionalised.

When sailing the bounds, a dredge (Figs. 3&4) had often been thrown overboard at lunchtime and, such was the still relative abundance of oysters, fresh oysters were hauled aboard to be eaten with lunch. Now 'hauling of the first dredge' was directly linked to the proclamation, loyal toast, and gin and gingerbread ceremony which now took place in Pyefleet Creek, home to the Pyefleet oysters, on a site not far from Mersea Stone, followed by lunch in that modern blockhouse, the oyster packing shed on Pewitt Island.

The final flourish of the revised ceremony came with photographing the event for the press. In 1905, the mayor for that

year, Edwin Sanders, somewhat surprised councillors by turning up for the 'Opening' in his official robes, accompanied by the Town Sergeant in his, and the town clerk in full robe and wig. A few years later a photo opportunity was created by inviting the mayor in full regalia to 'taste the first oyster' (Fig. 5). This soon became the stock photo of the event and remains a key element in the ceremonial today. Finally, since proclaiming an order closing the fishery until August 1st was no longer appropriate, the solemn history of the event was underlined by the town clerk reading a proclamation 'made in Colne water', said to date from 1256, concerning the borough's fishery



rights and the dredging of oysters.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, soon after 1900, an updated oyster fishery ceremony, which had evolved and fluctuated over the past 100 years, based on precedents that were perhaps 350 years old, no more muddled by party political conflict, became fixed and little modified over the next 100 years. Such ossification was partly achieved by continuity (the event even took place during the First World War), and partly by the loss of all the legal tensions which had modified its form down the years.

Meanwhile the oyster fishery has been anything but unchanged. After a golden and remunerative era from the 1890s to the early 1920s, pollution and the invasion of foreign species decimated the number of oysters maturing. After the Second World War cold winters almost wiped out the native oyster. American and Portuguese oysters were introduced to the oyster beds and Scottish oysters were served at the Oyster Feast. As losses mounted, an industry that had once employed hundreds now scarcely employed ten. The infamous winter 1962–3 delivered the *coup de grâce*. In 1964 the Colne Fishery Company ceased to exist. In the 1980s a new parasite, bonamia, caused devastation again. Today the ‘hauling of the first dredge’ is preceded by the sight of an official not very secretly placing a handful of oysters in the dredge before the mayor hauls it out, the chance of casually dredging oysters being now non-existent.<sup>18</sup>

And the proud Borough Council of 1884, masters of all they surveyed, are no more. Their powers decimated by local government reorganisation and the actions of central government, today’s councillors and mayor nevertheless look forward to two ‘jollies’, two moments of ceremonial tradition: the Opening of the Oyster Fishery in August and the Oyster Feast in October. The twentieth century’s slavish perpetuation of both

events has been remarkable. It remains to be seen whether the twenty-first century will sustain them with equal tenacity.

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# 'Made of Sheeps Wooll Onely'

by

Christine Jones

In the second half of the seventeenth century the British woollen industry was struggling in the face of imports of foreign cloth, particularly linen. The manufacturers and merchants petitioned the King for legislation to protect their interests and in August 1678 the Burial in Woollen Act came into force.<sup>1</sup> As with much recent legislation the Burial in Woollen Act resulted in a great deal of paper work. In fact had the paper makers, stationers and printers of Britain wanted protection for their industry they could not have devised a better method. No one parish in Essex has examples of each document, but searching across the county much has survived to demonstrate the workings of the Act and which this article will consider.

Initially each parish would have received a copy of the Act, which was to be read publicly after Divine Service 'upon the first Sunday after the Feast of St Bartholomew' every year for seven years. As there were over 18,000 parishes in England and Wales and each copy consisted of five double-sided sheets the printing involved was not inconsiderable. The surviving copy in the Witham register is in suspiciously good condition. Most copies would have rapidly become dog-eared with repeated usage and, when the parish chest became full with later registers, were probably thrown away; hence few copies have survived.

The Act stipulated that relations of the 'party deceased, or some other credible person' should swear an oath before a magistrate or Justice of the Peace, who could be the clergyman of a neighbouring parish, that the body was wrapt, wound up or buried in nothing but sheep's wool. The oath was to be witnessed by two further persons. Records of the oath making

process appear in a volume among the documents of the parish of Little Warley for the period 1680 to 1687.<sup>2</sup> Each entry gives the name of the deceased, the name of the person swearing the oath and often their relationship to the deceased, the names of the two witnesses and the name of the Justice. A high proportion of the people swearing the oath were female, as were quite a number of those witnessing the oath. It would usually have been female relatives who laid out the corpse and could reliably vouch for the shroud material. Perhaps it was less costly in terms of time for the female members of the family rather than wage-earning males to make the journey to the Justice. Other unrelated names appear repeatedly; maybe that of the parish 'nurse'. The surnames of the witnesses suggest that sometimes they were relatives of the Justice, perhaps a wife. Other names occur repeatedly for the same Justice suggesting that they were members of his household, perhaps servants.

It was actually the verbal oath that was an affidavit, but the term was usually applied to the piece of paper on which the details were recorded, which then had to be returned within eight days to the clergyman of the parish where the deceased was buried. In London and large towns such as Luton these certificates were printed forms completed by hand.<sup>3</sup> No examples of printed forms appear to have survived from Essex. There are three examples of handwritten certificates, one from St Mary at Walls Colchester 1678 (Fig. 1), one from Horndon on the Hill 1761 and one from Moreton 1793.<sup>4</sup>

The act made provision for what should happen if the clergyman failed to receive the certificate in due time. He was to notify his Church Wardens or

Overseers of the Poor in writing and they within eight days were to go to the Justice of the Peace who would grant a warrant for levying a forfeiture on the goods and chattels of those responsible for making the affidavit.

Certificates from the vicar to church wardens can be seen among the papers of Sir William Holcroft, a Justice for Walthamstow, relating to parishioners from West Ham in 1686.<sup>5</sup> Some overseers and wardens kept lists separate from the burial registers of those bodies buried in woollen. Those from Ramsey for the period 1726 to 1752 and from Dedham for the period 1707 to 1757 have survived.<sup>6</sup> Since it was what the body was wrapt in rather than who the body was that was important, these lists include still-born infants, often missing from burial registers since they were un-baptised. The lists were submitted to the Justices each year. The opposite end of the same process can be seen among the papers of the Mildmay Family relating to burials in Hornchurch, Romford, Noak Hill and Collier Row for the period 1681 to 1700.<sup>7</sup>

The act also made provision for non-compliance by those who were determined not to be buried in wool, those preferring linen or the more exotic silk, fur, gold and silver. They were to pay a fine of five pounds, half of which went to the informer and half to the poor of the parish. By ensuring that the informer was a member of the family the fine was effectively reduced to 50 shillings. Many gentry families regarded this as a small price to pay and the registers abound in entries including the words 'buried in linen' sometimes with the addition 'penalty paid' for example from Wanstead '13 May 1774 Miss Letitia Morris in the Family Vault paid to the poor of the Parish £2/10/0'.<sup>8</sup>



Litten cites the case of Hannah Deane of High Ongar who specified in her will that she wished to be buried in linen and set aside the appropriate amount from her estate.<sup>9</sup> Examination of the will, written in 1769, reveals that she also specified who she wanted to make her coffin and that she wanted to be buried at Stanford Rivers near her parents. A transcript of the registers for Stanford Rivers shows Hannah, the daughter of John and Mary Dean, baptised 19th April 1718. She had several siblings, most of whom died in infancy. John Dean was buried 11th March 1720. Mary Dean, widow of John, was buried 23rd May 1767.<sup>10</sup> Hannah Dean of Ongar was buried 20th April 1784.

We can sympathise with Mary Graygoose, who was buried at Roydon on 7th July 1745, a widow aged 74 'who being according to her own desire buried in Linen contrary to Act of Parliament in ye case y forfeiture of 50 shillings was paid by her son (who informed) for y use of y poor of this parish', since she was a Linen Draper and would have had as much interest in supporting the linen trade as in supporting the now defunct Essex woollen industry.<sup>11</sup> On 2nd May 1802 Thomas Kershman Esq of Church Hall Paglesham was buried in his military clothes, being a Captain of a Volunteer Corps.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand individuals of some standing in the community might set a good

example, for example a Garter & Principal King at Arms, Sir Thomas St George, was buried in a vault at the east-end of the chancel in woollen at St Mary the Virgin Woodford in March 1702/3, the Honourable Sir Stephen Langham at Stanstead Mountfitchett in 1709, and the Reverend Edmund Manning MA Rector of Colne Engaine in 1765.<sup>13</sup>

The act stated that there was to be no charge for administering the oath; despite this there is a note in the register of Kelvedon Hatch in 1799 that the fee for an affidavit for burying was six pence.<sup>14</sup> A six pence fee was also charged at Rivenhall sometime between 1733 and 1796, at Romford in 1771, at South

1. Certificate from St Mary on the Walls, Colchester, 1678.  
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, D/P 246/18/2.)

I didinde by 3<sup>rd</sup> 78  
 Thonclund Bishopp & Hannah  
 Garwood made oath that George Bishopp  
 the son of George Bishopp of Colchester  
 was buried on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of December  
 of the year last in the churchyard of St  
 Mary in Colchester that he was not at  
 the time of his interment wrapped round  
 up or buried in any shirt, shift, tuddor  
 or rugg made or mingled w<sup>th</sup> flax, tennys  
 filled hair or any other but shod w<sup>th</sup> wooll  
 only and that the coffin was not lined nor  
 faced w<sup>th</sup> any matter made of flax, tennys  
 filled hair or any other  
 Witness our hand  
 And also the hand  
 Hannah Garwood  
 the day & year above  
 subscribed  
 Ralph Driffield  
 Mayor  
 Sign  
 Bishopp  
 Sign  
 Hannah Garwood

Benfleet in 1772, at Springfield All Saints sometime between 1774 and 1809, at Tendring around 1790 and at Woodham Walter in 1801.<sup>15</sup>

The act further stipulated that the clergyman was to keep a register of all the burials and of all the affidavits, and make a memorial in the register when the certificate failed to be produced and the time when he notified the wardens or overseers. Clergy interpreted this in various ways. In 1678 there were no printed parish registers and no uniform style of entries. In some large parishes opposite ends of the same register book were used for baptisms and burials, with marriages being inserted in the middle. In smaller parishes they might be entered in blocks on facing pages or entered chronologically without regard for which type of event was registered. In several parishes a new register was indeed purchased specifically for burials.<sup>16</sup> In the register for Stock there is an entry 'A Register Book for burying in woollen was bought at the Parish charge 1678'. In Broomfield the old register continued to be used for baptisms until 1812. In Rivenhall the old register continued to be used for baptisms and marriages until it was full and then they were included in the new burial register.<sup>17</sup>

In other parishes a fresh page was started in an existing register and there was an attempt to be more systematic in writing up the entries.<sup>18</sup> At Bocking St Mary the whole opening was used, burials on the left hand page and affidavits on the right hand page; similarly at Colchester St James, Colchester St Nicholas, Danbury, East Hanningfield, Sandon and White Roding.<sup>19</sup> At Chelmsford a separate column was ruled for details of the affidavits.<sup>20</sup> By 1682 the amount of detail had been reduced and by 1684 the column was headed 'certificate dated' or 'date of certificate'. Several other parishes began ruling columns in their registers.<sup>21</sup> At Wimbish two

date columns were ruled, one for the date of burial and the second for the date of affidavit.<sup>22</sup> Rivenhall ruled four columns: Person buried, Affidavited [*sic*] by, Before, Date.<sup>23</sup> In other Essex parishes this aspect of the law appears to have been ignored and the register continues much as before. For Goldhanger there is a gap in the burial entries between 1678 and 1695, and similarly for East Tilbury for 1678 to 1687, which may indicate that they started new registers but then abandoned them and they have since been lost.<sup>24</sup>

The wording with which clergy and parish clerks made the entries varied from parish to parish, from writer to writer, and even from page to page. Many refer to the affidavit having been brought, filed, made, received, provided or sworn, often referring to the 'late Act of Parliament'. Others refer to being buried according to Law or contrary to Law; some merely 'legally interred'. Some use the word certificate and others the word oath. Many mention woollen, but some specify 'not linen'. Felstead used the term 'Woollen Apparellage'.<sup>25</sup> Some invoke the Justices and may be in the form: AB made oath before CD date that EF was not buried in any thing but what was made of sheeps wool only'.<sup>26</sup> At Blackmore each affidavit was listed in detail from 1678 to 1717.<sup>27</sup> Some of the early entries are so detailed and so lengthy that they took up half a page in the register.<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly this did not last, particularly in parishes with a large number of burials, and a range of abbreviations was introduced: Affd Recd; Affid; Affd; Aff. However, the transcriber of the Twinstead registers thought that 'afd' meant 'affirmed'.<sup>29</sup> A note in the Coggeshall register dated 1811 states 'The letter A annexed to the name signifies that the Affidavit was made'.<sup>30</sup> This occurs either in the left hand margin or at the end of the entry and continues to March 1812.

By 1678 entries were supposed to be in English but some clergy persisted in using Latin. Usually the word 'affidavit' can be deciphered.<sup>31</sup> At Hornchurch the expression *fecit fideren* was used.<sup>32</sup> At Purleigh the baptisms, marriages and burials had been mixed and entered in Latin. Suddenly in 1678 the burials are entered in English while the baptisms and marriages continue in Latin. Maybe the writer didn't know the Latin for what he was required to enter.<sup>33</sup>

Initially there seems to have been some improvisation, on 4th September 1678 someone was buried in 'flannell' and on 18th September another body 'was buried in an old woollen blanket'.<sup>34</sup> At Lawford between 1678 and 1702 the Rector of Little Bromley and the Curate of Mistley were doing much of the certifying.<sup>35</sup>

The Act made provision for exemptions for those dying of contagious diseases and four people dying of smallpox in Canewdon in 1748/9 are marked 'no affid'; two people dying in High Laver in 1772 are marked 'the aforementioned persons dying of the smallpox the affidavits could not be procured in due time'. However, many dying of smallpox in Broomfield in 1719 were still listed as buried in woollen.<sup>36</sup>

Initially mention of the affidavit was made against each burial but, again in the larger parishes, over time there was a tendency to group the burials and account for the affidavits at the end of each page or each year, or sometimes vertically down the margin.<sup>37</sup> In Corringham the certificates were noted retrospectively in 1680 'A Certificate was delivered and special session holden at Brentwood on July 29 1680 of all the foregoing Burials since begin Act for burying in woollen'.<sup>38</sup> From 1714 the Langham register lists who the affidavit was made before and at the end of each year gives the date when an account was given to the Justice.<sup>39</sup>



Essex  
Newit) Mary Moreham of the parish of Moreton m. keth  
oath that the body of James Moreham an infant deceased, who  
buried in the said parish 12 day of May was not wrapped, when  
buried, in any materials but what were made of sheeps wool only,  
according to an act of Parliament in that case made & provided  
sworn before me this 10 day of May 1793  
Appointed Hu<sup>n</sup> of Bulwington

## 2. Certificate from Moreton, 1793 (ERO, D/P 72/1/2.)

It even gives details of the affidavit when it omits the details of the person buried. There is less detail from 1723 to 1743, but it still records 'Affidavit account was given to ye Justices' until 1735.

In at least 16 parishes there is no mention at all in the registers of affidavits or certificates, of woollen or linen. It is as if the Act was totally ignored, even though in the case of Great Canfield a new register was begun in 1678.<sup>40</sup> At Wivenhoe there was no mention of the act until 1726 when there is a signed statement 'I do hereby certify that the Affidavits were made according to y Act of Parliament for burying in Sheeps Wool only. Witness my hand.' But then there is no further mention until 15th Dec 1772 when one was 'buried in Linen and the Penalty paid according to Act'.<sup>41</sup>

A note in a register of Little Canfield, probably written between 1930 and 1952, claims that the act had fallen into disuse long before its repeal in 1814.<sup>42</sup> In 1946 William Tate wrote, 'to judge by the register entries, for some years before its repeal the act had been generally disregarded'.<sup>43</sup> Don Steel repeated the same statement word for word in 1976.<sup>44</sup> Is this assertion true and are the register entries reliable or indeed the only evidence for the observance or disuse of the act? Take the case of the Little Canfield registers themselves: the earliest mention of an affidavit is in 1706 and the last in 1749. Can we assume that it was only during those 44 years that the act was observed? That the parishioners

and clergy ignored the act for the first 28 years that it was on the statute book and only in 1706 adopted it? There is a burial in linen with the penalty paid in 1759, so some aspects of the act were still in use at that time, ten years after the last mention of an affidavit.<sup>45</sup> It is true that the other documents apart from parish registers, described in this article, all date from well before 1814. The records of the oath making process at Little Warley cover the period 1680 to 1687; the Holcroft papers date from 1686; the Mildmay papers date from 1681 to 1700; the Ramsey lists date from 1726 to 1752 and the Dedham lists from 1707 to 1757.<sup>46</sup> All these are over 50 years before the act was repealed. However, the latest surviving certificate of affidavit is dated 1793 (Fig. 2), only 20 years before the act was repealed.<sup>47</sup> Fees for affidavits were still being charged at Woodham Walter (contrary to the act) in 1801.<sup>48</sup>

To assess the extent and reliability of the register entries, all those registers deposited at the Essex Record Office and available on microfiche for the period 1678 to 1813 were examined for evidence of burial in woollen or affidavits and each year in which this occurred was noted on a spreadsheet. Parishes whose registers have not survived, or have not been deposited, or are not available for the entire period, or are not decipherable on microfiche were not included.<sup>49</sup> A total of 265 parishes were included in the study. However, for no year were all of

them in observation because of gaps in the registers. In smaller parishes in the early years it was quite common to find no burials in a given year, for example in the parish of Lamarsh in 1692 'This year Thanks be to God no Burials'.<sup>50</sup> The number of parishes in observation at any one time ranged between 203 and 257. Any mention of woollen or of an affidavit in a year counted as observation of the act. It is further argued that any mention of linen or unlawfully buried or a penalty also counts, since these are evidence that the majority of parishioners were observing the act by being buried in woollen, even when it is not recorded in the register.

It was found that in 1678 just over 61% of Essex parish registers recorded an observation of the act. It never rose higher than that in subsequent years. This could be taken to show that, even in a county with a woollen textile industry, over a third of parishes were not observing the act. However, as I hope to show, this was not necessarily the case. By 1681 the proportion recording observation of the act had fallen to just below 60% and continued at this level until 1685. It then fell to just under 55% and remained at this level until 1694. It may be that some parishes thought the act had been repealed after seven years when it no longer had to be read publicly annually. In 1697 observation of the act dropped below 50% and in 1700 dropped below 40% for the first time, though there was a rally during the first half of the eighteenth century. It finally dropped below 40% in 1751 and below 30% in 1761. It did not drop below 20% until 1782.

An Act of Parliament for paying a duty upon Christenings and Burials came into force from 2nd Oct 1783. Printed registers were produced, though few Essex parishes used them. The instructions for entries and the example provided do not include any mention of woollen or affidavits. A dozen parishes managed to

BURIALS in the Parish of <i>South Hanningfield</i> in the County of <i>Essex</i> in the Year <i>1813</i> <i>1814 and 1815.</i>				
Name.	Abode.	When buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
<i>Elizabeth daughter of John Bayliff &amp; Phoebe his wife (late Phoebe West Spunter) Affidavit received in No. 1. due time</i>	<i>South Hanningfield</i>	<i>April 30<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>7 years</i>	<i>Thos. Brooksby Rector</i>
<i>Eliza King - Widow - Affidavit received in due time No. 2.</i>	<i>Great Baddow</i>	<i>September the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1813</i>	<i>51 years</i>	<i>Thos. Brooksby Rector</i>
<i>John the son of John Proff and Hannah his wife (late Hannah Taylor) Affidavit received in due time No. 3.</i>	<i>this Parish</i>	<i>November the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1813</i>	<i>An Infant</i>	<i>Thos. Brooksby Rector</i>
<i>John (base-born) son of Elizabeth Bayliff &amp; William Hills. Affidavit received in due time No. 4.</i>	<i>this Parish</i>	<i>January the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1814</i>	<i>3 years</i>	<i>Thos. Brooksby Rector</i>
<i>Robert Holmes - a stranger - No. 5.</i>	<i>of this parish</i>	<i>May the 6<sup>th</sup> 1814</i>	<i>30 years</i>	<i>Thos. Brooksby Rector</i>
<i>James Cobbin - son of Jacob Cobbin and Sarah his wife (late Sarah Cloyer Spunter) No. 6.</i>	<i>of this parish</i>	<i>June the 28<sup>th</sup> 1814</i>	<i>An Infant</i>	<i>Thos. Brooksby Rector</i>
<i>John Glascock - of the parish of Gironham No. 7.</i>	<i>of the parish of Gironham</i>	<i>October the 27<sup>th</sup> 1814</i>	<i>52 years</i>	<i>Thos. Brooksby Rector</i>
<i>Elizabeth Thoroughgood the daughter of William Thoroughgood &amp; Elizabeth his wife (late S. Thorne Spunter) No. 8.</i>	<i>of this parish</i>	<i>April the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1815</i>	<i>21 years</i>	<i>Thos. Brooksby Rector</i>

[A]

### 3. First page of burial register from South Hanningfield, 1813-15. (ERO, D/P 378/1/10.)

administer both tax and affidavits.<sup>51</sup> Half a dozen parishes administered the tax but no longer mentioned affidavits.<sup>52</sup>

The proportion of registers observing the act dropped below 15% in 1789, but in 1800 was still over 11% and in 1813 was only just under eight per cent.

Not all of these 18 parishes had been observing the act continuously since 1678 but 13 of them had observed the act consistently from 1800 to 1813.<sup>53</sup> These range from the densely populated urban parishes of Chelmsford and Colchester St Nicholas to the tiny villages of Great Maplestead

and Buttsbury, with populations in 1811 of 353 and 474 respectively.<sup>54</sup> Although there is a concentration in the northeast of the county, possibly reflecting the area of the seventeenth century woollen industry, there is also the parish of Debden in the far southwest and Ingatestone in the southeast. At Chelmsford where there were about 30 burials per page, by 1688 there are some gaps in the affidavits, by 1694 only about half were completed, and by 1700 between a third and a quarter completed. Procedures seem to have been tightened up in 1706 when most are again dated. In 1729 only five out of 253 burials were without affidavits.<sup>55</sup>

The last mention of burial is linen occurs at Shellow Bowells only four years before the act was repealed 'Mary wife of the Revd Rich Birch of this Parish buried in Linen 15th Feb 1810 aged 78'.<sup>56</sup> Thomas Brooksby, the rector of South Hanningfield deserves special mention as his recording of affidavits continues into the printed Rose's register, the last entry being for 23rd November 1813 (Fig. 3).<sup>57</sup>

Often the cessation of recording affidavits occurs when there was a change of clergyman or clerk, frequently followed by his burial recorded in another hand.<sup>58</sup> But equally recording of affidavits could start or re-start with the appointment of a new clergyman or clerk.<sup>59</sup> At Radwinter it restarts following the burials of the clerk and the rector within five months of each other in 1745/6.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, recording could continue despite the death of a clergyman and the appointment of his successor.<sup>61</sup> Conversely recording could stop without a change of handwriting or clergy.<sup>62</sup> This might be when starting a new register, as at Rickling in 1778, or merely turning a page, as at Stanstead Mountfitchet in 1725, or when the pattern was interrupted by a high social status baptism, as at Waltham Holy Cross in 1688.<sup>63</sup>



The suspicion therefore is that it is the recording of the affidavits rather than burial in woollen that was falling into disuse. The only register in which there is evidence of the parishioners ignoring the act, and then possibly only the requirement to produce an affidavit rather than the choice of shroud material, is Stanford le Hope. There are many mentions of affidavits not being brought (1713, 1727, 1737, 1741, 1742), as if the clergyman was more zealous than the parishioners, but was having difficulty enforcing the act. However, from 1748 to 1769 there are mentions of affidavits for all burials and from 1805 to 1810 affidavits are noted at the bottom of each page.<sup>64</sup>

In Braintree in the late seventeenth century occupations were given for the people being buried and a lot of them were weavers. It might be expected that they would be eager supporters of the Act, but there is no mention in the registers of burial in woollen or of affidavits. The only negative reference is on 27th May 1684 of Mrs Margaret Maryon 'buried in Lining'.<sup>65</sup>

In the Manningtree register the comment 'Thus far sworn to the Justices' appears in September 1705, June 1706, March 1710, September 1712 and April 1715 although there is no mention of woollen or affidavits in the intervening months.<sup>66</sup> Can this be taken to imply that all the intervening burials were in woollen with individual affidavits? There is no mention in the Steeple Bumpstead register between 1689 and 1749 except for an entry on 31st July 1711 'No affidavit within eight days'.<sup>67</sup> At Hadstock in 1727 there is a comment against the burial of the relict of the late rector that no affidavit was brought and notice was given to churchwardens, but there had been no mention of affidavits since her husband died in 1720.<sup>68</sup> Does this mean that all the intervening ones had brought affidavits? At Ridgewell there are entries marked 'no affidavit' in 1729 and in 1762 but there had

been no mention of the presence of affidavits since 1696.<sup>69</sup>

At Shenfield there was no mention of affidavits from 1678 to 1749 for local burials but there is a note against a 'trafficked' corpse on 30th March 1750, 'Buried John Williams brought from Chelmsford by Richard Bishop carpenter in Fenchurch St, near Aldgate, London, who made oath that the Corpse was wrapt in Order to its Burial in Nothing but Sheep's Wool'. There is no further mention until another 'trafficked' corpse in June 1757, 'Buried Elizabeth the Wife of Wm Clarke of Arnolds in Mountnessing and Sarah Porter of Much Haddam swore to have been wrapp [*sic*] in nothing but sheeps wool'.<sup>70</sup> At the beginning of a new register by a new rector in January 1772 is the statement 'N B Affidavits of being buried in wool according to Act of Parliament regularly brought except where expressed to the contrary'. This register continues to 1812 without mention of linen or payment to the poor or non-production of affidavits. The same rector made the entries in the Rose's register from 1813 without mentioning woollen or the repeal of the act.<sup>71</sup>

At Newport the register was still noting burials in linen in 1772 and affidavits not being brought in 1737, long after last mention in 1713 of an oath given.<sup>72</sup> At South Weald there was no mention of affidavits between 1756 and 1778, then in 1779 there is an entry of an affidavit for 'a person unknown'.<sup>73</sup>

At Great Hallingbury in 1780 Thomas Lepyatt, who had probably been Rector since 1758 when the previous Rector was buried, and who had never mentioned affidavits during those 22 years commented:

'No affidavit of the burial of the above Sarah Prior having been brought to me within eight days I certified the Churchwardens of the same. But on the ninth day a proper Affidavit was brought

me of her being buried in woollen only. Except in this one instance I know not that there has been any omission of this sort since I have been Rector of this parish'.<sup>74</sup>

At Springfield All Saints there had been no mention of affidavits between 1748 and 1799, then in 1800 there is a very full entry for William Sturdy and a similar one in 1811 for Eliz Sturdy:

'Affidavit made relative of the body of Eliz Sturdy being enwrapped in material made of Sheeps wool only as the Act of Parliament in that case provided directs. This Affidavit was made by John Bartlett before H Gretton, rector, in the presence of Wm Sharping Sexton and Parish Clerk (Romford) bur Jan 14 1811 age 64'.<sup>75</sup>

Also in the Springfield All Saints register is a note about a burial in Danbury '28th August 1803 affidavit made by Elizth Pennel for Thos Matthews age 76 and sent to the Officiating Minister at Danbury where he was buried'. However, on checking the Danbury register there is no mention against Thomas Matthews' burial entry of an affidavit.<sup>76</sup> Similarly there is a note that 'Mary Mills who died in this Parish was buried in the parish of Boreham. Ann Bass made Affidavit of Her Body being enwrapped in Material made of Sheeps Wool only according to Act Of Parliament. The above oath was made before me H Gretton 26 July 1811'. The corresponding entry in the Boreham register for 21st July 1811 says 'Brought from Springfield' but there is no mention of woollen or affidavit.<sup>77</sup>

Where documents other than registers for a parish have survived it is possible to compare the recording from the two sources for the same periods. We have an affidavit from Horndon on the Hill for 1761 (Fig. 4) and one from Moreton in 1793, but

there is no mention of affidavits at those years in either register.<sup>78</sup> We have the certificates from the vicar to the church wardens when affidavits had not been produced among the papers of Sir William Holcroft, a Justice for Walthamstow, relating to parishioners from West Ham in 1686 but there is no mention of affidavits or their absence in the West Ham registers.<sup>79</sup> The Overseers' Memorandum book from Dedham mentions affidavits for most years between 1707 and 1719, and also burials in woollen for 1727-8 and 1730-60, periods when they are not mentioned in the registers.<sup>80</sup> Individual fragments from the parish of Fingringhoe supply the gaps in the Fingringhoe registers for 1741 and 1745.<sup>81</sup> The overseers' records of Ramsey cover the period 1678 to 1752 with frequent mentions of affidavits where there is no mention in the registers.<sup>82</sup> The same source provides the cost of a 'burying suit' as five shillings and five pence, while the cost of a 'coffing' was two shillings and six pence in 1728. By 1744 the cost of a coffin had risen to four shillings, but in 1750 the cost of laying out and making a burying suit was only five shillings.

This article has only looked at the situation in Essex. The custom in other counties may have been different, but

archaeological evidence from Christchurch, Spitalfields, confirms that the bulk of textiles excavated in the eighteenth century were woollen, with cotton only making an appearance after 1815. The archaeologists conclude that this confirms that in that parish the act was complied with.<sup>83</sup> From this we can conclude that the parish registers are not wholly reliable as evidence for the observance of the Burial in Woollen Act. Far from being 'generally disregarded' as Tate asserted, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the spirit of the Act was being observed, in that bodies were buried in woollen, even when the letter of the law was being gradually ignored, in that affidavits were no longer being recorded and may not even have been made.

#### References

1. W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times* (Cambridge, 1917), pp.393, 903. Copies of the full wording of the Act can be seen in the registers of Gt Henny and of Witham, D/P 367/1/1 & D/P 30/1/2. All references are for documents held at Essex Record Office.
2. D/P 6/8/1.
3. W.E. Tate, *The Parish Chest* (Cambridge, 1946), p.67; J. Litten, *The English way of death: the common funeral since 1450* (London, 1991), p.74.

4. D/P 246/18/2; D/P 56/1/2; D/P 72/1/2.
5. D/DCv 2/8, 9.
6. D/P 7/8/1; D/P 26/8/1.
7. D/DMY/15M50/673/1-45.
8. D/P 292/1/2.
9. Litten, p.74; D/AEW 39/1784; Hannah's surname is spelt Deane in her will.
10. T/R 67/1; the surname is spelt Dean in the registers.
11. D/P 60/1/2.
12. D/P 219/1/2.
13. D/P 167/1/3A; D/P 109/1/2; D/P 193/1/3.
14. D/P 296/1/4.
15. D/P 107/1/3; D/P 346/1/3; D/P 300/1/3; D/P 211/1/2; D/P 353/1/3; D/P 101/1/4.
16. Beaumont cum Moze D/P 285/1/2; Blackmore D/P 266/1/2; Broomfield D/P 248/1/2; Gt Baddow D/P 65/1/3; Gt & Lt Henny D/P 367/1/1; Kelvedon D/P 134/1/2; Lt Bromley D/P 5/1/2; Lt Burstead D/P 100/1/1; Margaret Roding D/P 309/1/2; Margaretting D/P 235/1/1; Messing D/P 188/1/2; Mile End D/P 410/1/2; Stambourne D/P 24/1/3; Theydon Garnon D/P 152/1/28; Wanstead D/P 292/1/2; West Horndon D/P 380/1/2.
17. D/P 54/1/1; D/P 248/1/1; D/P 107/1/2.
18. Cranham D/P 118/1/1; Gosfield D/P 165/1/1; Gt Leighs D/P 137/1/4; Newport D/P 15/1/2; North Ockendon D/P 308/1/2; Rayne D/P 126/1/3; Romford D/P 346/1/2; South Ockendon D/P 159/1/1; Stapleford Tawney D/P 141/1/2; Theydon Mount D/P 142/1/2.
19. D/P 268/1/3; D/P 138/1/8; D/P 176/1/3; D/P 114/1/1; D/P 250/1/4; D/P 253/1/1; D/P 304/1/1.
20. D/P 14/1/7.
21. Colchester St Peter D/P 178/1/3; Fryerning D/P 249/1/1; Good Easter D/P 57/1/2; Gosfield D/P 165/1/1; Gt Horkesley D/P 205/1/2; Gt Leighs D/P 137/1/4; Gt Parndon D/P 184/1/2; Hadstock D/P 17/1/2; at Gt Baddow in 1720 D/P 65/1/2; at Finchingfield in 1746 D/P 14/1/2; and at Gt Bentley 1776-1806 D/P 171/1/4.
22. D/P 313/1/2.

#### 4. Certificate from Horndon on the Hill, 1761. (ERO, D/P 56/1/2.)

Mary Freeman of the Parish of Horndon on the Hill in County of Essex made oath that y<sup>e</sup> Body of Aquilla Root - late of y<sup>e</sup> parish aforesaid was wrapped in nothing for its Burial but what was made of Sheep's Wool only, according to an act of Parliament in that case made & provided. Inom before me the sixth day of December 1761. Tho: Combs Curate of Horndon-le-Hill



23. D/P 107/1/2.
24. D/P 19/1/1; D/P 92/1/1.
25. D/P 99/1/3.
26. Cranham D/P 118/1/1.
27. D/P 266/1/2.
28. East Horndon D/P 260/1/1; Fyfield D/P 144/1/2.
29. T/R 252/1.
30. D/P 36/1/9.
31. Elmstead D/P 168/1/2.
32. D/P 115/1/1. *fecit* = he made; *fider* = faith; *fiderem* = trust; the actual Latin for affidavit is *adfirmator* but the clergyman may not have known that and used the nearest word he could think of. With particular thanks to the ERO Archivists' team for their advice on this point.
33. D/P 197/1/2.
34. Grays Thurrock D/P 382/1/1.
35. D/P 347/1/1.
36. D/P 219/1/1; D/P 111/1/1; D/P 248/1/2.
37. Canewdon D/P 219/1/1; Colchester St Martin D/P 325/1/2; Colne Engaine D/P 193/1/3; Elmstead D/P 168/1/2; Dedham 26/1/2; Epping All Saints D/P 302/1/4; Gt Burstead D/P 139/1/3; Gt Holland D/P 396/1/1; Mashbury D/P 352/1/1; Mountnessing D/P 73/1/2; Pebmarsh D/P 207/1/1.
38. D/P 402/1/1.
39. D/P 154/1/3.
40. Gt Canfield D/P 364/1/2, 3; Gt Chishall D/P 210/1/1, 2; Gt Easton D/P 232/1, 2; Gt Yeldham D/P 275/1/2; Heydon D/P 135/1/2, 4; Langley D/P 335/1/1; Lt Baddow D/P 35/1/1, 2; Lt Chesterford D/P 398/1/1, 2; Marks Hall D/P 61/1/1; Sheering D/P 370/1/1; Takeley D/P 225/1/1; Thaxted D/P 16/1/2-5; Wendens Ambo D/P 389/1/2, 3; West Ham D/P 256/1/1-4; Wicken Bonhunt D/P 2/1/1, 2; Wormingford D/P 185/1/2, 3.
41. D/P 277/1/2, 3.
42. D/P 227/1/2.
43. Tate, p.69.
44. D. Steel, *General Sources of Births Marriages and Deaths before 1837*, (National Index of Parish Registers Volume I) (London, 1976), pp.72-3.
45. D/P 227/1/1, 2.
46. D/P 6/8/1; D/DCv 2; D/DMY/15M50/673/1-45; D/P 7/8/1; D/P 26/8/1.
47. D/P 72/1/2.
48. D/P 101/1/4.
49. It is possible that using the digitised images now available through ERO's *Essex Ancestors* that more registers could have been included.
50. D/P 222/1/2.
51. Broomfield D/P 248/1/2; Broxted D/P 19/1/1; Castle Hedingham D/P 48/1/4; Chelmsford D/P 14/1/7; Chignal Smealey D/P 351/1/1; Fingringhoe D/P 369/1/2; Gt Burstead D/P 139/1/4; High Laver D/P 111/1/1; Lindsell D/P 110/1/1; Ramsey D/P 7/1/2; Rayleigh D/P 332/1/6; Wimbish D/P 313/1/4.
52. East Tilbury D/P 92/1/4; Fobbing D/P 414/1/5; Good Easter D/P 57/1/2; Gosfield D/P 165/1/2; Rainham D/P 202/1/5; Rochford D/P 129/1/3.
53. Buttsbury, Chelmsford, Coggeshall, Colchester St Nicholas, Debden, Gt Baddow, Gt Maplestead, Gt Oakley, Ingatestone, Langham, Lawford, Lt or Bardfield Saling and Tendring.
54. Census of Great Britain, 1811, Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an Act, passed in the fifty-first year of His Majesty King George III. intitled "An act for taking an account of the population of Great Britain, and of the increase or diminution thereof". Preliminary observations. Enumeration abstract BPP 1812 XI (316) pp.98 and 101.
55. D/P 14/1/7
56. D/P 339/1/2.
57. D/P 378/1/10.
58. Upminster 1685 D/P 117/1/1; Moreton 1687 D/P 72/1/1; Theydon Mount 1699 D/P 142/1/3; Gt & Lt Henny 1708 D/P 367/1/1; Bradwell juxta Mare 1722 & 1770 D/P 51/1/3, 5; North Weald Bassett 1729 D/P 84/1/1; Twinstead 1730 D/P 212/1/2; Margaretting 1731 D/P 235/1/1; West Mersea 1731 D/P 77/1/1; Fyfield 1733 D/P 144/1/2; Stapleford Tawney 1753 D/P 141/1/2; Feering 1770 D/P 231/1/2; Lambourne 1776 D/P 181/1/3; Terling 1796 D/P 299/1/4.
59. Rainham 1685 D/P 202/1/2; Rettendon 1694 D/P 251/1/1; Chappell 1702 D/P 87/1/1; Romford 1706 D/P 346/1/2; St Osyth 1709 D/P 322/1/1; White Roding 1710 D/P 304/1/2; Rayleigh 1720 D/P 332/1/5; Theydon Garnon 1721 D/P 152/1/4; Rettendon 1723 D/P 251/1/1; Stanford Rivers 1733 T/R 67/1; Feering 1736 D/P 231/1/2; Ingrave 1736 D/P 187/1/1; Great Tey 1746 D/P 37/1/2; Mount Bures 1752 D/P 281/1/1; Wickham Bishop 1755 D/P 236/1/9; St Osyth 1769 D/P 322/1/2; Radwinter 1771 D/P 22/1/10; Gt Bardfield 1773 D/P 67/1/2; Wrabness 1785 D/P 6/1/1.
60. D/P 22/1/9.
61. Matching 1685 D/P 411/1/1; Woodham Mortimer 1693 D/P 274/1/1; Witham 1724-1755 D/P 30/1/2; Sandon 1803 D/P 253/1/2.
62. Upminster 1753 D/P 117/1/1.
63. D/P 1/1/3; D/P 109/1/2; D/P 75/1/6.
64. D/P 404/1/1.
65. D/P 264/1/3.
66. D/P 265/1/1.
67. D/P 21/1/1.
68. D/P 17/1/2.
69. D/P 405/1/1, 2.
70. D/P 295/1/2.
71. D/P 295/1/3, 8.
72. D/P 15/1/2.
73. D/P 128/1/4.
74. D/P 27/1/5.
75. D/P 211/1/2.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. D/P 56/1/2; D/P 72/1/2
79. D/DCv 2; D/P 256/1/2.
80. D/P 26/8/2; D/P 26/1/2.
81. D/P 369/12/4; D/P 369/1/1.
82. D/P 7/8/1; D/P 7/1/1.
83. M. Cox, ed. *Grave concerns: death and burial in England 1700-1850* (York, 1998), pp.24-5, 115.

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## relating to the Sub-Continent of India

by

Alan Tritton

**F**or over 250 years the Honourable East India Company (HEIC) conducted and regulated the trade between English merchants and countries from the Red Sea to the China Coast but most importantly the India subcontinent. This trade was an attractive proposition to generations of Britons hoping to share in its wealth and many joined in hoping for success. Along with the natural cycle of life, the rigours of overseas climates and diseases took their toll on those abroad and with no option for repatriation of bodies back for burial cemeteries were established in the countries with an HEIC presence. However, burial abroad did not mean that these individuals were necessarily forgotten in their native country. In Essex alone there are nearly 50 Churches with memorials commemorating around 200 individual men, women and children who died or were killed and who are buried, or in many cases not buried, in just the Sub-Continent. This article will look at the role of the British Association of Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA), the organisation charged with maintaining and recording overseas resting grounds and memorials, as well as looking at some of the memorials that are closer to home in Essex.

BACSA is the only established organisation responsible for looking after the many hundreds of former mainly British cemeteries, isolated graves, monuments and memorials in the area from the Red Sea to the China Coast (Figs 1-3) – in fact wherever the

HEIC was established. BACSA estimates that about two million Europeans, mainly British, soldiers, civilians and their families are buried in the Indian Sub-Continent alone. There is a belief that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for all military graves abroad, but this is not the case – their remit only covers the two World Wars.

BACSA undertakes several functions; firstly it records the locations of all cemeteries and monuments and the inscriptions on head stones in South Asia; secondly it supports local people interested in the restoration and conservation of European graveyards; thirdly it publishes cemetery and church records containing names, inscriptions, and biographical notes on individual tombs, memorials and gravestones; it also records memorial and monumental inscriptions in the British Isles

which relate to the British connection with South Asia which is maintained at the India Office Library, now subsumed into the British Library. Its House Journal – *Chowkidar*<sup>1</sup> – is published twice a year and deals with news, queries about ancestors and topics of South Asian interest.<sup>2</sup>

### Peter Curgenvén

The earliest Indian Memorial in Essex is dated 1729. It is to Peter Curgenvén (1684-1729) and is situated in Great Waltham Church (Fig. 4). The wording of the Memorial;

‘Near this Place lyeth  
the Body of PETER  
CURGENVEN Merchant

He was sent in his  
Youth to the East Indies  
where attaining a thorough  
knowledge of the INDIA  
trade in all its Branches he  
acquired a plentiful fortune

### 1. The Old Protestant Cemetery, Penang, Malaysia. The tomb of Penang’s founder Francis Light in centre. (BACSA.)







**2. The BACSA restored tomb of Major Gonville Bromhead VC in the New Cantonment Cemetery, Allahabad, India. Bromhead was the Lieutenant commanding the detachment at Rorke's Drift in 1879 which was nearly but not quite overwhelmed. In the film *Zulu* he was played by Michael Caine and thus became quite famous. (BACSA.)**

and withal what is more valuable the universal Character of a Man of great Honour and Honesty of invincible Faith and Integrity which Virtues he adorned with an uncommon Affability and Politeness.

Preparing after a twenty five years absence to return to his Native Country, he unfortunately fell into the hands of Connajee Angria,<sup>3</sup> Admiral to the SOU RAJAH then at war with the English at Bombay, and remained in a miserable Captivity about five years during which he behaved with an unparalleled Patience, Generosity and Greatness of mind, not only comforting, assisting and Supporting his Fellow Sufferers but even refusing his own Deliverance without that of his Companions

in Misery. At last, having freed himself and the rest by his own Industry and Management, he embarked for England in the hopes of sitting down in quiet and enjoying the Fruits of his Labours; but see the Uncertainty of all things here Below; Just before his Landing, a Violent Fit of the Cramp seizing his Thigh and bursting his Veins, tho' the Effects were barely discernable, yet soon after his Arrival at London to have his thigh first laid open and then cut off almost close to his Body. Scarce ever was the like Operation performed; Never any undergone with more Resolution and Firmness, without so much as a Groan or the least Motion to express his Anguish; he outlived this Operation 12 days when the wound bleeding afresh he resigned his last Breath with a surprising Sedateness and unconcern at leaving this world, being fully persuaded he was going to exchange his Perishable for everlasting Riches.

He died June 20th 1729 in the 47th year of his Age.

He was son of WILLIAM

CURGEVEN a Gentleman of good Family in Cornwall and married FRANCIS Daughter of JOHN ROTHERHAM of the Parish Esq whom he left his sole Executrix having no issue and who Erected this Monument over his Grave as a Token of her Affection and Gratitude.<sup>4</sup>

His family name was Lean and that family came from Lelant in Cornwall – not far from Penzance, but the Reverend Thomas Lean – his uncle – changed the name to Curgenven. His brother William married Rachel Rich in 1667 and they had nine children. After their death the Reverend adopted the youngest of their children and he was named Peter Curgenven. What is interesting is that the brother-in-law of the Reverend was Thomas Pitt, who made such a success of his first voyage to South India that his employer the HEIC appointed him later as Governor of Madras. He remained as Governor for 11 years – a long time in Company terms – during which he made an enormous fortune, retiring in 1709.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Pitt had a son Robert and it is interesting to note that in one of his letters to his

**3. The tomb of Major Francis Shirref, Gwalior, India, who was killed in the Mutiny of 1857. (BACSA.)**



father after he had married, he wrote 'You have always advised me against a disreputable marriage, which I have avoided by marrying a lady of family and character, with the approval of my mother and my uncle Peter Curgenven!'<sup>6</sup> For the sake of completeness, it should be remembered that Thomas Pitt was also the grandfather of William Pitt (the Elder), 1st Earl of Chatham (1708–1778).

### Robert and Henry Thornhill

The next monument for consideration is the Thornhill Memorial in Liston Church (Fig. 5). It is remarkable in that it is set in marble and positioned at the rear of a piscina in the nave of the church adjacent to the Victorian Palmer Chapel. It is unusual for a piscina to be positioned in a nave, but there must be some reason. However, much more remarkable is that it commemorates two families – fathers, mothers, children and their children's nursemaids, who were all massacred during the Indian Mutiny in 1857. Let us now look at the words of the Memorial.

'In Memory of Robert Bensly Thornhill And Mary White his wife Who after 66 days and nights Of extreme suffering Were with their infant children Charles Cudbert and Mary Catherine And their faithful nurse Mary Long Cruelly massacred On the 15th July 1857. At Cawnpore.

The Righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to hearts and merciful men are taken away none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

Henry Bensly Thornhill And Emily Heathfield his wife And their infant child Catherine Who with their faithful nurse Eliza Jennings Were ruthlessly murdered At Seetapore

On the 3rd June 1857 They

were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they were not divided.'

Robert and Henry were brothers in the service of the Honourable East India Company, of which their father, John Thornhill, was a Director.<sup>7</sup>

However, let us concentrate on the first Thornhill family and their massacre at Cawnpore as the events leading up to that massacre are well documented.

Fatehgarh, where they were stationed, lies about 80 miles upriver from Cawnpore now Kanpur in the then District of Farrukhabad. It was the Sudder or Chief Civil Station of the District, which the British had acquired from the Nawab Vizier of Oudh. Fatehgarh was regarded as more or less the dead end of most military and civil careers, whilst the morale of the Sepoys, there was notoriously low and from time to time there were minor mutinies. Furthermore, the Regiment stationed there at that time was the 10th Native Regiment, whose Sepoys had lost caste as a result of their being made to cross the 'black water' (the Bay of Bengal) as it was called – to fight in Burma for the British. Nobody had apparently thanked them and when they arrived at Fatehgarh, the whores and pahn<sup>8</sup> sellers jeered at them for being a 'Christian' Regiment.

The Fatehgarh Magistrate Robert Bensly Thornhill from Liston, Essex, was so fed up with India and Indians that he saw fit to recite the following offensive doggerel in open Court;

'With a Puggree on his head and a Talwar on his thigh  
The stinking nigger mounts his gat to turn his back and fly;  
Then let the conches blast  
To the loud tom tom reply  
A nigger must his hookah smoke  
Or without his hookah die.'<sup>9</sup>

Outside the Station, as it happens, was an outpost of the Board of

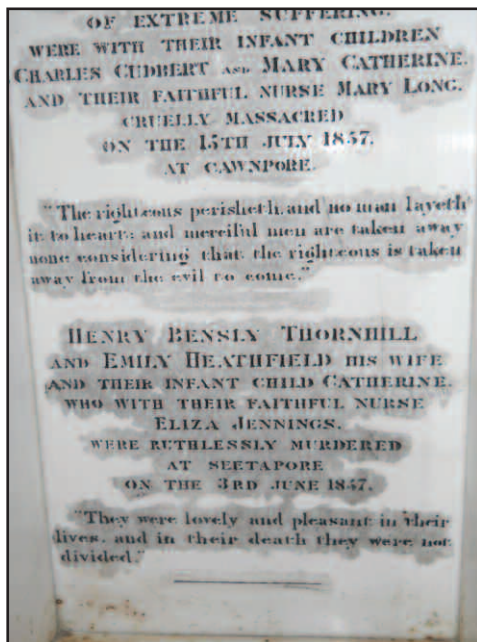


4. Peter Curgenven's memorial in Gt Waltham Church.  
(C. Starr.)

Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, which enthusiastically preached the Gospel, ran Christian schools, distributed Gospel tracts and argued with the local Brahmins – without much success. Most Hindus found Christianity bewildering and they noticed that hardly any British went to Church and that many drank heavily. They also believed that the American Presbyterians wanted to undermine not only their faith but also their caste system, despite the disavowal of the Government of India, who enjoined the newly joined British subalterns, in particular, not to do anything to inflame the suspicions of the local populace and, in particular, the disaffected Sepoys of the 10th Native Infantry.

It did not help the residents at Fatehgarh that the Colonel commanding the Station was a certain George Acklom Smith, who was 60 years old and regarded as somewhat of a mediocrity. He had spent most of his career in India with the 47th Native





##### 5. The Thornhill memorial in Liston Church. (Diana Tritton.)

Infantry so that when he was put in command of the disaffected 10th Native Infantry, he did little to soothe their wounded pride at having had, against their caste, to cross the 'Black Water'. It was also the case that, unlike hardly any other Station in northern India, there were no European soldiers stationed at Fatehgarh.

When the Fatehgarh residents heard that some mutineers from up country were approaching the Station to join up with the men of the 10th Native Infantry, most made a rush for the boats, which had already been prepared, to take them down river to what they thought was the safety of Cawnpore. However, the Senior Civil and Military residents together with their wives and children generally, including Robert Thornhill, who, as the Magistrate was the senior Civil Officer of the Station, had stayed behind, either in Fatehgarh or Dharampur to the east, doing everything they could to pacify the men of the 10th Native Infantry, but with little success.

The civil residents numbering 126 European fugitives – the majority of whom were women and children – had a difficult and dangerous journey down the river – being fired on from time to

time. When they arrived at Cawnpore, thinking they were safe, they found to their horror that Cawnpore was now in the hands of the Nana Sahib and the Cawnpore mutineers. They were seized, bound with ropes, forced to sit down in a ditch exposed to the heat of the Indian mid-day sun and after two volleys were discharged at them, were slaughtered by the jullads – low caste butchers – with swords and knives. Afterwards their bodies were stripped of their clothing and thrown into the river.

Meanwhile, at Seetapore (Sitapur) thirty miles west of Lucknow, the 41st Native Infantry had mutinied and had then gone on to massacre the officers and civilians including Henry Bensly Thornhill and his family. They then sent a message to the 10th Native Infantry at Fatehgarh instructing them to kill their officers but the latter replied that, while they were unwilling to do this, they had no objection if the 14th Native Infantry did so. The European military and civilians and their families then moved into the Fort, but the only trained fighting men were officers and many of them were quite old including Colonel Smith. The Fort, which was constantly being attacked, in the end became indefensible and they, therefore, decided to make a run for the river to see if they could get down to Cawnpore, being unaware that Cawnpore was now in the hands of the mutineers.<sup>10</sup>

It was now midnight – the women and children boarded the remaining boats first, together with the pensioners, the wounded and the ayahs and servants laden with all their baggage. The noise of their departure alerted the mutineers who started firing at them and from now on the journey down river was a nightmare – again there is not sufficient space to give a full description of their terrible journey. Eventually, on the 9th July, the Colonel's boat arrived at Fatehpur Chaurasi opposite the Nana's palace at

Bithur – about 12 miles from Cawnpore and here once more they were attacked. By now, of the 100 who had set off from Fatehgarh, only 60 remained alive. Soaked to the skin, many of the refugees were by now wounded or ill. They were taken in bullock carts covered with thatch to the old Residency, where there was temporarily an element of normality with even breakfast being offered to them, but this did not last long. Their arms were tied behind their backs and they were hurried to a train of bullock carts for the 12 mile journey to Cawnpore, where they were decanted in front of the Old Cawnpore Hotel in front of the Nana Sahib. The women and children remained in the carts to be taken to the Bibighar of subsequent fearful fame.<sup>11</sup>

While Robert Thornhill and Colonels Smith and Goldie were led away also to the Bibighar, being glimpsed by their temporarily relieved wives and children, the remaining men were shot, but a few survived and as was customary in these matters, the jullads, whom we have mentioned before, then moved in to sever their heads and strip the corpses, which were left lying on the ground – this was to enable the Muslim mutineers to practice their sword strokes on the dead bodies, even instructing their children how to do so.

The Bibighar was situated close to Sir George Parker's ruined compound and, as its name suggests, had been originally built for an officer's *bibi* – that is to say his native mistress. The Bibighar itself was quite small and stiflingly hot and into this building were herded at least 180 women and children – another Black Hole of Calcutta but even worse. But there was some hope as they could now hear the guns of Havelock's approaching relief army. Equally there was trepidation as to what might happen to them given the unpredictability of the mutineers.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile the three Burra Sahibs<sup>13</sup> – that is to say the now

wounded Robert Thornhill and Colonels Goldie and Smith including a young boy Frank Greenaway were marched away and made to stand against the wall of a commissariat godown, or warehouse, looking out towards the Theatre and the Assembly Rooms and the damaged tower of Christ Church. While Robert Thornhill held Frank Greenway's young hand, Tatyá Tope<sup>14</sup> waved to the jemadar<sup>15</sup> to open fire. Robert Thornhill fell first, followed by young Frank and then the two Colonels.

As it happens, the Sepoys were reluctant to massacre the women and children, particularly bearing in mind the imminent arrival of Havelock's relieving force, but they were over-ruled by Tatyá Tope and they followed the Begum to the door of the Bibighar, where she and Tatyá Tope berated the Sepoys for not killing them. Once again, two volleys were fired and once again the jullads moved in and after an hour, it was nearly all over and 180 women and children were dead or dying, watched by hundreds of spectators. A few survived and rather than being slaughtered, they threw themselves into the Bibighar well, into which were also thrown many of the dead and dying, including Mary Thornhill and her two children Charles Codbert and Mary Catherine and the children's nursemaid Mary Long.<sup>16</sup>

'These are they who come out of great tribulation. They cried but there was none to save them; even unto the Lord but He answereth not. Sacred to the perpetual Memory of a great company of Christian people, chiefly women and children, who near this spot were cruelly murdered by the followers of the rebel Nana Dhundu Pant and were cast, the dying with the dead, into the well below, on the 15th day of July 1857.'<sup>17</sup>

It is this story, which the Memorial Tablet at the back of the piscina in the nave of Liston Church, commemorates.

### **Patrick Mullane VC**

We now move from the Essex Suffolk border to Leytonstone and to St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Cemetery and there in this Cemetery you will see a large Gravestone and on it are inscribed the following words;

'Sergeant-Major Patrick Mullane V.C.  
Royal Horse Artillery  
Victoria Cross  
Awarded at the Battle of Maiwand 27th July 1880  
Buried nearby.  
'Thank you for your bravery and service for Queen and Country. Honouring you on the anniversary of the Battle of Maiwand 1880 where you earned the Victoria Cross.  
God Bless you and rest in peace – a hero. You will never be forgotten.'

The Citation for his VC reads thus:

'For conspicuous bravery during the action at Maiwand on the 27th July 1880, in endeavouring to save the life of Driver Pickwell Istead. This non-commissioned Officer, when the battery to which he belonged, was on the point of retiring and the enemy were within ten or fifteen yards, unhesitatingly ran back and picking up Driver Istead placed him on the limber, where, unfortunately, he died almost immediately. Again, during the retreat, Sergeant Mullane volunteered to procure water for the wounded and succeeded in doing so by going into one of the villages, in which so many men had lost their lives.'<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the Victoria Cross, he was awarded the following decorations; Afghanistan Medal 1878-1880; Kandahar Meritorious

Service Medal; Army Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

But what was happening at Maiwand in Afghanistan in 1880? Maiwand, which is roughly 100 miles south-west of Kandahar, was the scene of one of the worst military disasters, which the British ever suffered in the Sub-Continent, when a British Expeditionary Brigade was destroyed by the Afghans.

This British invasion of Afghanistan resulted from their worries over Russia's expansion into Central Asia in the 1860s and 1870s and we all know about the 'Great Game'. Afghanistan, which was then independent, was caught between the advancing Russians and the British Indian Empire and when a Russian delegation called on the Emir in Kabul, the Afghans dismissed a British delegation. This was too much for the nerves of the British. They, therefore, immediately declared war on Afghanistan, invaded the country and captured the key cities of Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Khost. The Emir fled, having put his son on the throne and died soon afterwards in north Afghanistan at Mazir-e-Sharif – a now familiar name.

The Emir's son failed and the British, therefore, put his nephew on the throne in Kabul and then effectively divided Afghanistan into three separate provinces – that is to say Kabul, Kandahar and Herat in the west of the country close to Persia. A British Bombay army was stationed in Kandahar along with an Afghan army commanded by its Governor, whilst the Herat province was governed by Ayub Khan the son of the late Emir. The British began to think in terms of leaving.

However, in spring 1880, it became apparent that Ayub Khan was raising a large army with a view to seizing Kandahar. When the British heard this, a Brigade Column was ordered to advance from Kandahar to the banks of the Helmand River, the name of which is now familiar to all of us,



to prevent Ayub Khan from crossing. It is worth noting the names of the Regiments of this British Indian Army brigade – there were two Cavalry Regiments – the 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry and the 3rd Sind Light Horse, the 1st Bombay Grenadiers, the 30th Bombay (Jacob's Rifles), supported by the British 66th Infantry Regiment, a Company of the Bombay Sappers and Miners and particularly for our purpose E Battery, B Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery to which Mullane belonged.

This Column was ordered to link up with an Afghan army led by Sher Ali Khan the Governor of Kandahar, which was now already across the Helmand River. However, the infantry and artillery of this Afghan army mutinied – although, as it happens, not the cavalry – and then deserted to join the Herat army led by Ayub Khan which now comprised 7000 infantry and cavalry including the mutineers and 3500 irregular volunteers. The British Indian Army Brigade Column moved forward to attack – the temperature was 120 degrees Fahrenheit – and the heat haze severely limited visibility. The British were outmanoeuvred and the final attack on the British column was led by thousands of Ghazis dressed in their suicidal white shrouds – the then equivalent of the Taliban. The British were routed and Maiwand was one of the major military disasters of the Victorian era.

It was during the British retreat that, as the left flank of the Column started to disintegrate, the Royal Horse Artillery battery began to withdraw and it was during this withdrawal that Mullane won his Victoria Cross and we have set out the Citation above.

As a footnote, the remains of the Column fled to Kandahar and Ayub Khan was able to contain them there, until he, himself, was decisively defeated on September 1st 1880. Thus ended the Second Anglo-Afghan War but the Afghans, who have long memo-

ries, never forgot it and from thereon, the British were deeply distrusted and hated particularly in the Helmand, which makes one wonder why the British in the current Afghan War were sent to the Helmand. Do we not have long memories like the Helmand Afghans?<sup>19</sup>

These are the stories behind just three of the many Memorials in Essex Churches which relate to the Sub-Continent – there are many more and behind most of them lies a fascinating story.

### References

1. (In South Asia) a watchman or gatekeeper, Oxford English Dictionary (OED).
2. For more information on the organisation see its website: [www.bacsa.org.uk](http://www.bacsa.org.uk) which sets out the organisation's aims, examples of restoration and conservation work along with information on the cemeteries it looks after as well details on publications and how to subscribe.
3. Conajee Angria was a famous pirate Captain who operated on the high seas between Goa and Bombay. Curgenvin was held captive by him at Gheriah (now Vijaydurg) on the west coast of India. See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanhoji\\_Angre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanhoji_Angre) (28/04/14).
4. The author is indebted to Dr Christopher Starr for the transcription.
5. This fortune included the famous Pitt Diamond, which weighed over 136 Carats and caused him endless anxiety. He sold it eventually to the Duc d'Orleans for 2 million livres – in the value of money at that time £125,000. It became one of the Crown jewels of France, in the ornamentation of the Crown that was made for the Coronation of King Louis XV in 1722.
6. C. Lawson, *Memories of Madras* (London, 1905), pp.23-4.
7. John Thornhill was Director between the following dates: 1815-6, 18-21, 23-6, 28-31, 33-6 & 38-40. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_East\\_India\\_Company\\_directors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_East_India_Company_directors) (09/10/2014).
8. Pahn or Paan is a Hindi word derived from Sanskrit for a betel leaf which combines two basic

ingredients – areca nut and tobacco, making it a mild narcotic.

9. A. Ward, *Our Bones are Scattered – the Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (London, 1996), pp.88-9. The Author and Hon. Ed. would like to state that they do not condone the use of the offensive word in this passage but reproduce it verbatim in the original form it was used.
10. Ibid., pp.87-93, 207.
11. Bibigarh was the name of the homes of the European's' Indian mistresses, from which they were escorted at nightfall into the beds of the usually infatuated and besotted European masters and from which they had to be escorted out at first light in the morning. Bibi, sometimes spelt Beebee, is a Hindu word derived from the Persian and at this time it denoted an Indian mistress.
12. Ward.
13. A title of respect used by Indians in referring to the head of a family, the chief officer in a station, the head of a department, OED.
14. Taty Tope (1814-59), whose real name was Ramchand Pandurang, was the leader of the mutineers at Cawnpore. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taty\\_Tope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taty_Tope).
15. A native officer in a Sepoy regiment, ranking next below a subahdar, and corresponding to a lieutenant, OED.
16. Ward, p.411.
17. John Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers in India, Burma and Ceylon* (London, 1901), p.264.
18. Citations given to the author by the Victoria Cross and George Cross Association.
19. A. Jalali & L. Grau, Expeditionary Forces: Superior Forces Defeated – The Battle of Maiwand', *Military Review*, May-Jun (2001).

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr C. Starr for his photograph and translation of the Curgenvin Memorial and to C. Whitehead of BACSA who provided me the list of Churches in Essex which have Memorials relating to the Sub-Continent.

### The Author

Alan Tritton, CBE, DL, is the President of BACSA as well as a Friend of Essex Churches.

# Book Reviews

Michael Fox,  
**Chelmsford Diocese – the first 100 years**,  
 pp.126. No ISBN. Chelmsford Diocesan  
 Board of Finance, no date, £5.

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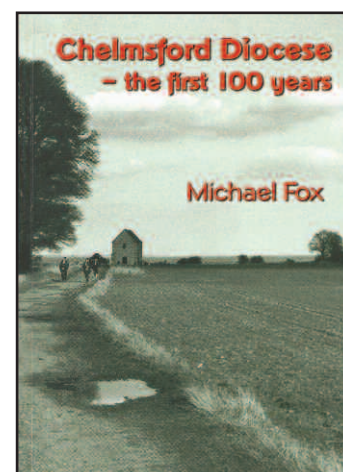
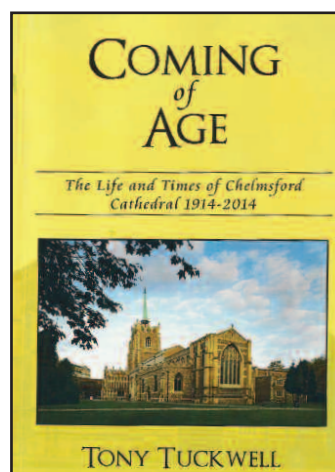
Tony Tuckwell,  
**Coming of Age: the life and times of  
 Chelmsford Cathedral 1914–2014**,  
 pp.420. ISBN 978-1-47977-746-4, Xlibris,  
 2013, £25 hardback, £15 paperback; also  
 available as an e-book

Both available from the Diocesan Bookshop, 53 New Street, Chelmsford  
 CM1 1AT

Someone born in Essex in 1845 and who enjoyed the prescribed threescore years and ten would have lived in four dioceses without leaving his native county. This is a surprising circumstance, given that Essex had been part of the diocese of London since 604, when Mellitus was consecrated Bishop of London by St Augustine in St Paul's Cathedral. The links are strong and enduring. It was probably in 608 that the parish of Tillingham was granted to Mellitus by King Ethelbert of Kent. In 2014 the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's applied for planning permission (later withdrawn) to build houses on land in Tillingham that they still own.

To have changed dioceses three times in 70 years (Rochester 1846, St Albans 1877, Chelmsford 1914 – the years are those in which the changes came into effect, rather than when the necessary decisions were taken) looks remarkably like bad management, but in large part the changes were the result of the rapid growth in the population of London in the 19th century. Charles Blomfield, Bishop of London 1828–56 (and earlier Bishop of Colchester), took the first step. He was generally conservative, but is also remembered as the first bishop to give up wearing a wig. He built a number of new churches in London – ten in Bethnal Green alone – but that did nothing to reduce the geographical extent of his diocese, which included the county of Middlesex and part of Hertfordshire, as well as Essex. It lay entirely on the north side of the Thames; the south side of the river was divided between Winchester and Rochester.

Blomfield decided to focus his efforts on the urban parts of his diocese, in effect acknowledging the status of London as a metropolis long before the civil authorities did the same by setting up the London County Council in 1889. He took parishes from Winchester and Rochester, as well as some peculiars of Canterbury, and in exchange shed the Hertfordshire parishes and all of Essex save nine suburban parishes – Barking, Chingford, East and West Ham, Little Ilford, Low Leyton, Walthamstow, Wanstead, and Woodford. Most of Essex and all of Hertfordshire were then assigned to Rochester, to make up for those parishes it had lost. George Murray, Bishop of Rochester 1827–60 (and, in



contrast to Blomfield, the last bishop to wear his wig in the House of Lords), moved to Danbury Park (renamed Danbury Palace), as described by Noel Beer in the *Essex Journal*, Spring 2014. To modern eyes this seems a daft arrangement, but Danbury was approximately in the centre of the new large diocese, and it was relatively easy to get from there to Rochester, crossing the Thames from Tilbury to Gravesend – the railways were not yet sufficiently developed for it to seem obvious to go up to London and down again, as would soon be the case.

In 1867 the diocese of Rochester was augmented by the addition of the nine Essex parishes retained by London in 1846. This greatly changed the character of diocese, and was one of the factors which led in 1877 to the creation of the diocese of St Albans, comprising the counties of Essex and Hertfordshire. Rochester was given the London parishes south of the Thames, which it held until the formation of the diocese of Southwark in 1905, at which point Rochester reverted to its original boundaries, those that had existed for 1,200 years up to 1846. As far as Rochester was concerned, all the changes of the previous 60 years had apparently been for nothing.

The first Bishop of St Albans, T.L. Cloughton (1877–90), continued to reside at Danbury; his successor, J.W. Festing (1890–1902), lived in St Albans. Meanwhile the nine suburban parishes (known as 'London-over-the-border', i.e. over the border in Essex) continued to grow. It is no wonder that Edgar Jacob, who succeeded Festing as Bishop of St Albans, drove forward plans that had already been mooted to split St Albans into its constituent counties. The result was an act of parliament in 1913 enabling the creation of the see of Chelmsford; Sheffield and Suffolk (known as St Edmundsbury and Ipswich) were created at the same time.

This decision did not, of course, come out of the blue. It was anticipated, for example, by the Revd J. Charles Cox's book *The Cathedral Church and See of Essex*, published in 1908; at that stage the inevitability of the new diocese was accepted, but it had not yet been given a name. It had, however, been decided that the cathedral should be in Chelmsford, and Cox's book includes a plan by Chancellor & Son



showing a proposed eastward extension of the parish church (St Mary's) and the addition of an octagonal chapter house leading off enlarged vestries.

The process of choosing the cathedral town, described in fascinating detail by Tony Tuckwell, had been started by Bishop Jacob in 1906. There were seven candidates: Barking, Chelmsford, Colchester, Thaxted, Waltham Abbey, West Ham, and Woodford. Competition was intense. One desideratum was that people should be able to travel to the cathedral and back from any part of the diocese in a day, clearly a problem for deeply rural Thaxted. Its supporters extracted a promise from the Great Eastern Railway to link the village to the Cambridge line, but by the time this had been achieved (in 1913) it was too late; the honour had already gone to Chelmsford, and by a large margin. It might be thought that it was a foregone conclusion, given Chelmsford's location in the centre of the county and its status as county town. How different things would be if Waltham Abbey had become a cathedral at the Reformation, instead of being largely demolished.

The modest additions suggested by Chancellor & Son in 1908 were superseded in 1920 by very much more ambitious ones proposed by Sir Charles Nicholson, whose family came from South Benfleet (he is buried in the churchyard there) and who lived in Southend at Porters (now the Civic House and Mayor's Parlour). Nicholson's idea was for the nave of the church to become the south aisle of a new cathedral, with the addition of another west tower to balance the existing one. In the end he was confined to extending the chancel, by only two bays as opposed to the Chancellors' three and with no flanking chapels, as well as enlarging the vestries. The decision not to embrace Nicholson's grand scheme may have been forced on the diocese by the Depression, but it was nonetheless a wise one. Nicholson prepared a similar scheme for Sheffield in 1922 that was started, stopped by the Second World War, and brought to an unsatisfactory conclusion in 1966. Chelmsford Cathedral reached its present size in 1929 (with just a small addition to the vestries in 2003–4), and those who have the responsibility for looking after it are, on the whole, grateful that it is no bigger.

Few readers of the *Essex Journal* will fail to have noticed that in 2014 the diocese of Chelmsford has been celebrating its centenary. Some of the celebrations have been focussed on the cathedral, most obviously the visit by the Queen on 6th May; others have embraced the diocese as a whole, notably the whirlwind tour later in May by the Archbishop of Canterbury that took him from Stratford and Canning Town in the west to Bradwell in the east, with many stops in between including a car boot sale at Boreham. So it is with the two books under review. Michael Fox's *Chelmsford Diocese – the first 100 years* is almost exclusively concerned with the life of the diocese as a whole, and might usefully

have borrowed from the subtitle of Tony Tuckwell's book, 'the life and times', because a large proportion of it is spent giving the national background, both political and religious, to what was happening in Essex. Fox acknowledges his debt to Gordon Hewitt's *History of the Diocese of Chelmsford* (1984) and anyone wanting the complete picture will need to read that book as well.

Whereas Fox's book hardly mentions the Cathedral, the centre of Tuckwell's narrative – once the fateful decision had been taken – is firmly situated in Chelmsford. This may be symptomatic of a division that exists in many dioceses between what goes on in the cathedral, a somewhat unreal, other-worldly institution with a life of its own, and what goes on in the diocese at large. This is more apparent in ancient dioceses with enormous medieval cathedrals than in Chelmsford and other dioceses with cathedrals that are still, in many respects, parish churches. Much of *Coming of Age* might indeed be about a large-ish parish church in a large-ish market town, with its parochial problems of churchwardens and parish magazines, and Chelmsford still does not quite convince as a cathedral in the way that the corresponding building in Bury St Edmunds so triumphantly does.

Michael Fox shows us that the diocese of Chelmsford has experienced all the difficulties that faced the Church of England as a whole in the twentieth century, which might be summarised as declining numbers of worshippers and consequent declining income, set against the need to bring clergy salaries up to something approaching a living wage, and managing the expensive legacy of historic churches and parsonages. Chelmsford, however, faced the additional particular challenge of the discrepancy between London-over-the-border and the rest – a problem that Fox, who grew up in Barking, served his curacy on the Becontree estate, and ended up as Archdeacon of West Ham, is in a good position to appreciate. The precise nature of the problem may not be quite what it was in 1846, 1877, or 1914, but it's still there.

Anyone interested in the centenary of the diocese will want to read both these books, which are complementary. Michael Fox's book is published by the Diocesan Board of Finance, with a grainy photo of St Peter's Chapel on the cover, and a map of the archdeaconries and deaneries split between the two inside covers, but no other illustrations. The price reflects this. Tony Tuckwell's book is produced to higher standard, with a number of black-and-white photographs and other illustrations, but printed (as is currently the fashion) on the same matt pages as the text, with resulting loss of quality. In both cases the lack of good illustrations is a missed opportunity, given the wealth of interesting material available.

James Bettley

# Book Reviews

Adrian Corder-Birch,  
**Bricks, Buildings and Transport:  
A History of Mark Gentry, the  
Hedingham red brick industry,  
buildings, road and rail transport,**  
pp.192. ISBN 978-0-95672-191-4.  
Published by the author, 2013, £14.95.

This book is a follow-up to the author's *Our Ancestors were Brickmakers and Potters, A history of the Corder and related families in the clayworking industries*, incorporating the results of additional research. At its core is a biography of Mark Gentry (1851–1912), but there is much else. The title is a fair summary of the contents.

Gentry was a typical middle class entrepreneur of his time. He was active both in the London fringes and in rural Essex. He began his business career as a builder and contractor in Stratford. (If any trade could be said to epitomise late nineteenth century urban life in Britain, it would be that of builder.) The book includes details of the significant buildings that he constructed. He was also involved in two apparently unrelated businesses, 'impermeable' collars and cuffs, and proprietorship of a local newspaper.

Gentry moved to Sible Hedingham in 1884, having bought the Langthorne brickworks, to which he later added the Highfield brickworks. He was one of several brick makers in the area.

He also bought the Rookwood's estate for his home. No doubt he wished to lead a rural life. This was, however, no peaceful retreat. He was heavily involved in local politics. His position as a substantial local business man and employer made this virtually inevitable. He was a Rural District Councillor (and at this date this meant also a member of the Board of Guardians), a candidate (unsuccessful) for the County Council, and supporter of Conservative parliamentary candidates. The section of the biography covering these activities provides an insight into how local power structures worked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was rougher than we tend to think, as incidents related in the book show.

Although his fortunes suffered a major blow with his bankruptcy in 1892, which marked the end of his building activities, and forced him to sell Rookwood's and move to a smaller house, he continued in the brick making business, and in local politics, until his death in 1912.

The arrangement of chapters in the book is by topic. Thus the outline of Gentry's life and political activities is in chapter 2, his history of property ownership in chapter 3, and his activities as a builder and brickmaker in chapters 4 and 5. It is in chapter 3 however, that we find the account of his bankruptcy. This makes it more difficult to see his personal, political and business life as a single chronological story.

Moreover none of the sources quoted are private or personal documents, no doubt no relevant ones survive. So we never really hear Gentry's own voice. Perhaps the most revealing item is his portrait photograph, which is the frontispiece to the book, and also the image that he chose to put on his campaign literature when he stood for re-election

to the RDC in 1907. It is the face of a man who seems not quite in charge of his own destiny.

An interesting section of the book details significant buildings constructed with Mark Gentry's bricks from Hedingham. They share the same dark red colouration and moulded brick decorative work, and are in a recognisable turn of the century style. They include Claridge's Hotel in London and the former Barclays Bank building in Chelmsford, now Jamie Oliver's *Trattoria*.

A fascinating chapter is devoted to steam transport. It describes Gentry's traction engine. He purchased it to replace horses to take bricks from his works to the railway. The front cover, and six photographs inside, depict it being borrowed and used to transport a huge boiler to Courtauld's factory in Halstead. Also described are the narrow gauge tramway used to transport clay from the pits to the Langthorne brickworks, and an intriguing home-made steam locomotive, nicknamed the 'tin pot', which ran on it.

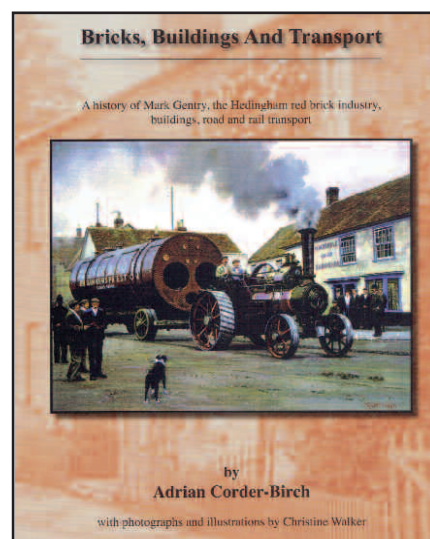
Another chapter tells of abortive proposals to build additional light railways in Essex, one of the functions of which would have been to carry bricks more speedily to London.

Details of other brickworks in Hedingham, and biographical information Gentry's son, a number of his employees, and other local residents are included. The most lengthy of these is a brief biography of H Greville Montgomery (1863–1951), a one-time Hedingham resident (although MP for Bridgewater), and best remembered as the organiser, for many years, of the annual Building Exhibition.

One of the appendices describes archaeological excavations on the site of the Langthorne brickworks.

The book is well illustrated with almost one hundred photographs, as well as reproductions of maps, plans, advertisements and documents. It is an indispensable addition to the local history of an industry that by its nature linked town and country, and whose products are still to be seen in buildings everywhere.

Richard Harris





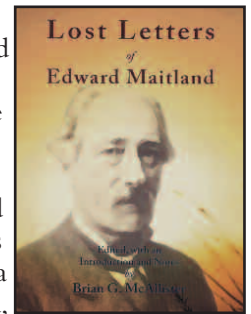
# Book Reviews

Brian G. McAllister (editor),  
**Lost Letters of Edward Maitland**,  
pp.353, ISBN 978-0-95737-152-1,  
Imagier Publishing, Bristol, 2014,  
£17-50.

**E**dward Maitland (1824-97) was a writer, a theosophist, a religious mystic and a vegetarian. He corresponded extensively with several women sympathisers, one of whom (Eliza Sophia Smith) was a cousin of the historian John Horace Round. These letters must have been gathered up by Round after his cousin's death in 1903 and ultimately found their way into the Essex Record Office. Though doubtless of considerable importance to historians of theosophy and Christian mysticism, they contain no Essex material. General readers will find some incidental details of interest, such as the first use of a typewriter in 1876, and details of Maitland's

vegetarian diet. All the letters have been thoroughly edited, and annotated with footnotes identifying individuals referred to. The editor has contributed a very useful introduction as well as brief biographies of Maitland and his main sympathisers. Maitland's relationship with one of these – a married woman, Anna Kingsford, with whom he shared accommodation in Paris while supporting her medical training – seems somewhat surprising for the nineteenth century. The editor makes no attempt to examine this aspect of Maitland's life, though, judging from the letters, he remained an accepted member of the London social scene. The book is well indexed and will be a useful, if somewhat specialised, resource.

Michael Leach



Richard Morris,  
**William D'Oyley 1812-1890**,  
pp.56 & viii pages of colour illustrations.  
ISBN 978-1-90526-919-8,  
Loughton & District Historical Society,  
2013, £5.

Available from  
<http://www.theydon.org.uk/lhs/lhs%20pages/publications.htm>

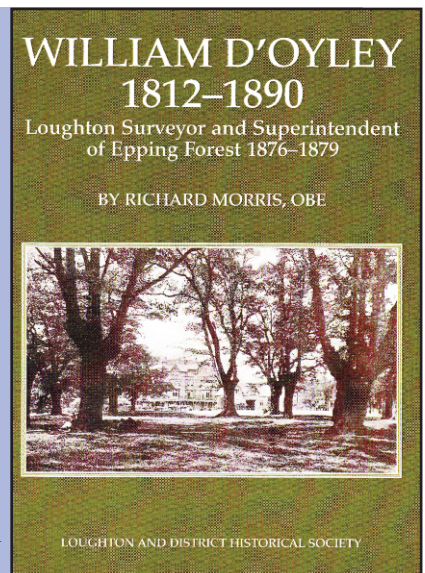
**T**his is a fascinating account of the central role played by William D'Oyley, land surveyor and map maker, in the shaping of the Epping Forest we now know through his role as Superintendent from 1876-9. Having lived for a decade on the southern edge of the forest it drove this reviewer back to discover how we very nearly lost the last remains of the great Essex Royal Forest.

The final phase of enclosures in the nineteenth century was only stopped because, by purchase of part of Aldersbrook farm (in order to create a vast cemetery) by the City of London Corporation, they became forest commoners. This gave them commoners rights to Forest waste and cattle grazing and made them aware just how much the new landowners were denying to local residents. As a result they fought through parliament both recent and proposed enclosures finally resulting in the Epping Forest act of 1878. By 1876 the Corporation had purchased from nineteen Lords of the manors the near 3000 acres that remained for around £250,000 thus ensuring the forest would be there for the recreation and enjoyment of all people.

William D'Oyley knew south east Essex, having been born in Epping and having a father, primarily a London surveyor, who had acted for the Earl of Mornington at Wanstead House surveying his estates throughout Essex. Along with other clients work he produced many maps 20 of which are held by the ERO. William moved to Loughton in the mid 1850's so knew at first hand the trials and losses of the commoners.

This beautifully produced and illustrated study published by the Loughton and District Historical Society tells the whole story of the battle and D'Oyley's role in the process from the early plan of 1867 right through to his work from '76-9. Full details of where his maps are now held are included and could lead you on a major tour of the ERO and the London Metropolitan Archives. I, for one, will not take the forest for granted in the future.

Michael Fox



**Your Book Reviewers are:** James Bettley, Chairman of the Friends of Essex Churches Trust, and the author of the revised Pevsner *Architectural Guide to Essex*; Michael Fox, retired Archdeacon of West Ham and long term resident of Colchester; Richard Harris, the former Archives Service Manager of the Essex Record Office; Michael Leach, a retired GP and local historian.

# EJ 20 Questions? Alison Rowlands

**Alison Rowlands** was born in 1965 and grew up in Derbyshire. She completed a BA in History at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and then went to Clare College, Cambridge to do a PhD in early modern German history. This involved about 18 months of archival research in Rothenburg ob der Tauber and Nuremberg. Alison taught part-time at the University of Durham and has taught European history full-time at the University of Essex since 1992, first as a Lecturer, then Senior Lecturer, and now Professor. Her specialist areas of research include the history of Rothenburg ob der Tauber; witchcraft and witch-trials in early modern Europe; and the commemoration of witch-persecution in the modern age.

**1. What is your favourite historical period?**

The early modern period (1450-1700), because so much was going on (the Reformation, state-building; civil and religious wars and popular rebellion across Europe; witch-persecution and so on).

**2. Tell us what Essex means to you?** Home, since moving here in 1992 to work. It is a wonderful county with a rich history, beautiful coastline, lovely countryside, and a great University.

**3. What historical mystery would you most like to know?** What happened to the sons of Edward IV after they were lodged in the Tower of London by Richard III. I have happy memories of acting as the defence lawyer for Richard in his mock trial for their murders which we held at school when I was 12.

**4. My favourite history book is...** *Round About a Pound a Week*, by feminist/socialist Maud Pember Reeves (1913). It's a study of working-class poverty in Lambeth and helps to remind me that for most people in history, daily life was dominated by the struggle to feed their families.

**5. What is your favourite place in Essex?** My home-town of Wivenhoe. It is on the Colne estuary and I love the water, boats, big skies, independent bookshop, and great sense of community.

**6. How do you relax?** With difficulty, but I run, play netball, watch football, read fiction, and spend time with my family.

**7. What are you researching at the moment?** I'm writing an article on a 'witch-family' in 17th-century Germany and a book on the discovery of the St Osyth 'witch' skeletons in 1921.

**8. My earliest memory is...** Spending time with my Mum before I started school; she taught me to read and write and we also watched Gilbert and Sullivan operas on telly (no CBBC in those days!)

**9. What is your favourite song/piece of music and why?** The 16th-century Christmas carol, *Gaudete*. I am not religious but hearing my kids sing it in the school choir sends shivers down my spine.

**10. If you could travel back in time which event would you change?** I'd try and ensure that



(Photograph: A. Rowlands)

Leeds United won rather than lost the 1970 and 1973 FA Cup Finals and the 1975 European Cup Final.

**11. Which four people from the past would you invite to dinner?** Queen Elizabeth I; Katharina von Bora (Martin Luther's wife, about whom we know very little); 19th-century writer Elizabeth Gaskell; and the late 18th-century diarist and country parson, James Woodforde (who was always keen to get a good dinner!)

**12. What is your favourite food?** For a main course, fish and salad. Pudding would involve chocolate or raspberries (but ideally both).

**13. The history book I am currently reading is...** For work, *Dämonische Besessenheit* (essays on the history of demonic possession).

**14. What is your favourite quote from history?** 'It is rating one's conjectures very highly to have someone burned alive for them', by 16th-century French philosopher Michel de Montaigne. This completely encapsulates my view on religious/political persecution, then and now.

**15. Favourite historical film?** I don't have one, but love historical comedy, especially *Blackadder*, Monty Python's 'historical' films, and (with my kids) *Horrible Histories*.

**16. What is your favourite building in Essex?** Colchester Castle; it's an imposing building set in the beautiful Castle Park, and one of the few buildings that we can definitely link to the East Anglian Witch Hunts of 1645 (accused women were held there before being taken to Chelmsford for trial).

**17. What past event would you like to have seen?** The immense popular rebellion known as the German Peasants' War in 1524-5, which tried (but failed) to achieve greater social equality for ordinary people (from a safe distance, of course!)

**18. How would you like to be remembered?** For a very long time by my loved ones, and as a good historian and teacher professionally.

**19. Who inspires you to read or write or research history?** Ordinary people who lived in the past; I find their lives and fates endlessly fascinating.

**20. Most memorable historical date?** 1517; the start-date of the German Reformation.





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