

Essex JOURNAL

A REVIEW OF LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Autumn 2015

North Weald Attack

EJ 20 Questions:
Adrian Corder-Birch



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CONTENTS

Editorial	43
News from the Essex Record Office	45
Hannah Salisbury	
You are Hear in Essex	46
Sarah-Joy Maddeaux	
Braintree Magna Carta Exhibition	47
Jennifer Rowland & Claire Willetts	
Magna Carta – Essex Connections	48
Katharine Schofield	
The Church Family of Gas and Water Engineers	56
Peter Wynn	
Tuesday 29th October 1940: North Weald attack	65
Neil Wiffen	
Book Reviews	77
Anthony Tuck & others, The Victoria History of Essex: Newport (R. Harris)	
Wendy Hibbitt & Susie Fowkes (eds), Historic Writtle: Village Life through Misfortune and War (J. Hawkins)	
Christopher Starr, Medieval Lawyer: Clement Spice of Essex (K. Schofield)	
Helen Walker, The Medieval Roads of Essex (M. Leach)	
Karen Bowman, Essex Boys (G. Willden)	
EJ 20 Questions? Adrian Corder-Birch	82

Now, you might think that the life of an Editorial Board member of the *Essex Journal* is one long round of boozy working lunches with contributors, fluffy design and layout discussions and lining up for yet another 'Best Local History Publication' award but no, not all the time – well not yet anyway! Far from it in fact! In order to get an issue out there is a lot of work and time involved and it is very much a team activity. It might be my photo that accompanies this *Editorial* but without the support of my colleagues I would not be able to write these words. For the past seven years Jenny Hawkins has most ably undertaken the role of Membership Secretary, working hard to ensure that our subscribers' details are up to date, replying to emails, chasing payments and most crucially preparing envelopes and address labels in advance of the mailing out of the latest issue. Without Jenny we would all have been a bit stuck, especially me. Jenny has always been on hand to run ideas past and get advice from regarding punctuation (not my strong point!) and saving me from myself in various draft editorials – Jenny's red editorial crayon has been well used! But after seven years Jenny is stepping back from the role and handing over to Jason Townsend, who we introduced a few issues ago. Fortunately Jenny remains on hand for advice as well as, I'm sure, the odd book review or two. Please join with me in thanking Jenny for all her hard work over the years. If you have any queries regarding membership you can contact Jason at membership@essexjournal.co.uk.

Talking of mailing out, I do hope that this issue has arrived safe and sound with you as we are using the printer to undertake direct mailing. As I have said in previous editorials, the subscription has remained unchanged for many years and we have absorbed the significant increase in postage costs that have occurred over that time without increasing it. By paying the printer for the mailing we should save money that we can use on more profitable enterprises.

Well, although there are only two issues a year they come round pretty quickly and I thank all contributors for their time and efforts in filling the pages. In this issue we have news from my colleagues Hannah and Sarah-Joy at ERO. Your continued

support in using the archival collections is much appreciated and I can only repeat that it is vitally important to keep on using the Searchroom, consulting documents. The reputation and service that ERO has built up over the last 77 years can only be carried on if the archive is used – so, to echo Hannah, I hope to see you in the Searchroom soon – yes really!



This year has seen some magnificent commemorations of the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta. Our friends at Braintree Museum report about their new exhibition – please do try and see it. Following on from this, if you were not able to get to ERO for the *Magna Carta: Essex Connections* event back in May then you're in for a treat as ERO Senior Archivist Katharine Schofield reprises the paper that she gave on the day.

Peter Wynn then discusses the mighty Church family of gas and water engineers. They certainly cornered the market, possibly the nineteenth century equivalent of techy entrepreneurs of our own day. Interesting to read about just how involved they were in so many schemes. After Peter, I then offer up my own research on one air raid on one day in the Battle of Britain. It has only taken about four years to get around to writing up the research as there is never enough time for looking at documents, more's the pity!

A selection of book reviews follow, nice to see the VCH publishing a 'short', before our very own Chairman, Adrian Corder-Birch, rounds off volume 50 in fine style with his answers to the *Essex Journal* 20 Questions.

Cheers,

Neil

Martin Stuchfield

In July 2015, Lord Petre, the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, appointed Martin Stuchfield as a Deputy Lieutenant of Essex. This is a well-deserved honour for all the charitable and other good works carried out by Martin in the county over many years. He has been very active in many historical, archaeological and ecclesiastical organisations and in particular to *Essex Journal*. The Editorial Board is always grateful to Martin for his sound advice and would like to take this opportunity of congratulating him upon his appointment.

Essex Journal Index – the first 50 volumes

As mentioned in the spring issue, plans are afoot to commission an index of the first 50 volumes of the *Essex Journal*. With an estimated 4,800 pages to be read and relevant key words extracted such work does not come cheap. While the financial situation of the *EJ* is much better now than it was when I took over eight years ago, we do not have limitless finances and are not able to foot the bill alone. With this in mind, members of the Editorial Board have been busy over the last few months approaching funding bodies and filling out forms to apply for grants to help pay the costs of producing the index. To date, and with the generosity of the Essex Heritage Trust, Hervey Benham Charitable Trust and the Augustine Courtauld Trust, we have secured grants totalling £4,500 to add to the £5,000 that we had already ring-fenced for the project.

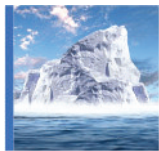
We still need to find another £2,500. Are you able to assist as an individual or institution? Any amount, large or small, can help us move towards reaching the total and would be most welcome. If you think you can help, and would like to

discuss donating, then please do contact me at editor@essexjournal.co.uk. If you would just like to donate then you can do this by either, sending a cheque (made payable to 'Essex Journal') to me at, Essex Journal Honorary Editor, 30 Main Road, Broomfield, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 7EF, or by visiting the *EJ* website and donating on-line, www.essexjournal.co.uk/home/donate/.

I would very much like to complete the indexing project by autumn 2016 and launch it to view for free on our website. The supply of hard copies is still under consideration and could be on a cost-recovery basis (If you have views on receiving a hard copy index then please let me know). With your support I know that we will get the index completed. This will then unlock all the wonderful research that has been published over the last 50 years in the pages of the *Essex Journal*.

Cheers,

Neil



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The Plume Lecture 2015

Saturday 21st November

The Trustees of Thomas Plume's Library are pleased to announce that Dr Robert Beaken will give this year's Lecture, which will be based on his recently published book

The Church of England and the Home Front, 1914-1918: Civilians, Soldiers and Religion in Wartime Colchester

The lecture will take place on 21st November 2015 at 7.30pm in All Saints' Church, High Street, Maldon, Essex, CM9 4PY.

There is no entry charge and advance booking is not necessary.

News from the Essex Record Office

The last few months are some of the busiest I can remember at ERO. We are on a mission to become more financially self-supporting, and this includes offering and promoting commercial archive services. This includes conservation and digitisation (both of documents and sound and video material), for individuals with family collections they want to preserve, and also for organisations with larger collections to look after. If you are in need of any assistance in caring for records for which you are responsible then look no further!

We also offer venue hire in the ERO Conference Centre, which has had three additional rooms added to its hire suite. It now offers everything from small meeting rooms to a 140-seat lecture theatre, taking in a medium size room to seat 64 on the way. All of the hire rooms are named after individuals or families of significance in the ERO collection, so one enjoyable job of mine recently was to research and create captions for each of them. Visitors seem to have really appreciated bringing more of the archive into the Conference Centre in this way, and it is something we hope to do more of.

One exciting result of this new aim is that we now have a brand new website all of our own, www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk, which gives details of all of the services that we currently offer, in addition to information for visitors and researchers. The next part of our digital project is to make improvements to the user experience of our online catalogue, Seax, so further news on that will appear soon.

We have also welcomed two new team members to assist us in the task of becoming more financially self-supporting. Valina Bowman-Burns has joined us as Learning from History Manager, and it is great to have someone back on the team focused full time on the educational services we offer. Keith Grinsted has joined us as Marketing Manager, a brand new position, and will definitely be kept busy!

Another exciting new departure (literally) for us was for two of our number, the *Journal's* own Neil Wiffen and ERO archivist Allyson Lewis to make a flying visit to Boston, Massachusetts, in August.

Their mission was to introduce our online subscription service, *Essex Ancestors*, to audiences in New England, where a high proportion of the original European migrants came from Essex. Neil and Allyson gave talks in several venues, including the New England Historical and Genealogical Society, Boston Public Library and Boston City Archives. We hope this is just the beginning of a continuous growth of our American audiences.

Of course, the point of all this commercial work is to protect our main *raison d'être* of looking after the historic documents of Essex and making them available to researchers. In this time of strain on the public purse we are fortunate to have been given the opportunity to find alternative sources of income, rather than facing cutbacks to our core services.

Since I am running out of space, I shall mention just one example of this more traditional side of our work. We were lucky enough to have an MA student from the University of Essex, Ashleigh Hudson, spend ten weeks with us in the summer to work on a project called *Chelmsford Then and Now*. Ashleigh researched the history of several properties in Chelmsford High Street, tracing them back through the centuries. The results of her research are being published in a series of posts on our blog, and a display will also be produced.

One final piece of major news – the Essex Sound and Video Archive have been successful in obtaining a HLF grant for their *You Are Hear* project, which you can find out about on page 46 opposite.

You can keep up with us by receiving our monthly updates. To be added to the mailing list, e-mail me, hannahjane.salisbury@essex.gov.uk, with 'e-bulletin' as the subject.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the ERO by visiting the Searchroom, coming to our events, reading articles we produce and joining in with us on social media.

We hope to see you at the ERO soon!

Hannah Salisbury, Engagement and Events Manager

Recently I've been using John Norden's 1594 map of Essex and I thought I'd share a detail from it to show you the exquisite detail that is contained in the original. (ERO, D/DMS P1.)



What does it sound like?

The Essex Sound and Video Archive (ESVA), part of the Essex Record Office (ERO), wants to know which sounds we should be recording today for future generations to enjoy. What do you hear in your community? Are there any sounds that are distinct to our county? How have local soundscapes changed, and what sounds are in peril of being lost if they are not captured today?

These investigations are running as part of a new ESVA project, *You Are Hear: sound and a sense of place*. We have received a Heritage Grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to run this project, which will digitise and catalogue a number of our recordings, then share them in innovative ways. As well as making them freely accessible through the ERO's online catalogue, we will take them out into the county, installing them on interactive audio-video kiosks; sonic listening benches; and pinning them to an online audio map. By listening to recordings made in Essex through the ages, we will help people develop their sense of place and connection to the county.

For example, our audio map will enable people to compare what Essex used to sound like with what it sounds like today. We have recordings of specific places and events in the Archive, such as excerpts from the commentary to the Colchester United versus Leeds United F.A. Cup fifth-round football match in 1971, one of Colchester's finest hours.¹ A recording made in the same location today would sound very different, now that the former Layer Road stadium has been demolished and the site developed into a housing estate. Would a recording of a match at the new Weston Homes Community Stadium in this season sound different to the match in 1971?

Similarly, we have an irreplaceable treasure trove of oral history recordings made with residents of Essex over the last 50 years. George Ewart Evans, a pioneer of oral history interviewing driven by the desire to capture manual agricultural processes before they died out, recognised the value of eyewitness accounts. He wrote, 'I make no apology for going to them as reliable historical witnesses. I have often found them more accurate than the printed word, and certainly wider in their sympathies and infinitely more stimulating in their responses.'² The content alone is valuable for revealing the history of the everyday, the socio-cultural detail that is not captured by official recordkeeping. Preserving testimonies in sound recordings captures another dimension: the ever-changing accents and speech patterns of the locality.

We will put montages of clips from these recordings on sonic listening benches, installed in

communities across the county. Will listening to people talking about their communities, while sitting in the midst of the places mentioned, enhance your appreciation of your environment?

Digitising sound and video recordings is imperative if we want to preserve them long-term. Unlike paper and parchment, which are relatively stable if kept in the correct conditions, recordings on film, tape, or optical discs are at great risk. The media themselves can degrade, making them unplayable – and the more they are played, the more they wear out. Obsolescence is another danger. Even if a cassette tape can be preserved for another twenty years, the second challenge is to keep the players running to use these historic formats.

Digitisation is not an entirely failsafe solution. Technological developments mean there is a continual challenge to keep up with the latest software to access files. Again, unlike paper and parchment, we cannot leave these electronic files sitting on hard drives in a strong room – or floating through the ether in 'the cloud'. However, once digitised, it is easier to keep migrating the files, and checking they have not become corrupted, to ensure we can keep accessing these unique recordings.

Once the files are digitised, it also becomes easier to use, re-use, and share them. Our touring interactive audio-video kiosks will provide a taste of the variety of recordings within the Archive, including video material, such as hospital television broadcasts, promotional and educational films, and folk dance festivals, not forgetting the famous South Woodham Ferrers advert from 1981.³

If you have any thoughts about Essex sounds, we want to hear from you. What sounds should we record? Which venues should we incorporate into our installation tours? What type of material is of most interest to you? We are also looking for community groups to adopt responsibility for sonic benches to be installed in Burnham-on-Crouch, Chelmsford, Clacton-on-Sea, Coggeshall, Great Baddow, Southend-on-Sea, and Witham.

You Are Hear will run for three years, until the summer of 2018. The project will also be supported by generous donations from the Essex Heritage Trust and the Friends of Historic Essex. For more information, please contact the *You Are Hear* Project Officer,

sarahjoy.maddeaux@essex.gov.uk

<http://www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk/you-are-hear/>

References

1. ERO, SA 27/12/1.
2. G.E. Evans, *The Farm and the Village* (London, 1974), p.15.
3. ERO, VA 3/3/2/1, 'South Woodham Ferrers: a riverside country town' (1981).

Magna Carta Exhibition

at Braintree District Museum

From 22nd September 2015 – 30th January 2016 Braintree District Museum is holding a special Magna Carta anniversary exhibition exploring Robert de Vere's role in the events of 1215. De Vere, baron of Castle Hedingham, was one of 25 key barons who instigated the events of 1215 and was listed as a surety of Magna Carta. The exhibition looks at the history of the de Vere family and their influence on north Essex, and features in particular the story of Robert's role in the build up to Magna Carta, the temporary loss of Hedingham Castle to King John in 1216 and Robert's subsequent return to royal favour after the accession of Henry III. Featuring the chair of state from Hedingham Castle, a replica King John seal that visitors can handle, and beautiful anniversary embroideries and pennants created by the Castle Hedingham Embroiderers' Guild, there is something for everyone. The museum developed this touring exhibition for Castle Hedingham Parish Council following the Council's successful bid for Heritage Lottery Funding, with further support coming from the Magna Carta Barons' Association and the Magna Carta 800th Commemoration Trust. As part of the project the Parish Council also commissioned a stunning reconstruction painting of Castle Hedingham, based on archaeological and written records, which is available to see as part of the exhibition.

To complement this Magna Carta exhibition there are also new displays exploring what Braintree District was like in the medieval period. Medieval rings and brooches from Kelvedon and Finchingfield are on display, as well as a thirteenth Century papal seal found locally. The important medieval pottery

industry based at Sible Hedingham is also explored. Different pottery finds are used to explain how the pottery was made and decorated, and what could go wrong in the process. The museum has also created reproduction pieces that visitors can handle. An interactive area enables visitors to explore the medieval towns of Braintree, Bocking, Coggeshall, Halstead, Kelvedon and Witham.

'Medieval Toil and Trouble: Castle Hedingham: Magna Carta' will be open during normal museum opening hours, Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm from 22nd September 2015 – 30th January 2016. Normal admission charges will apply (£3 adults, £1.50 concessions, children free).

For more information on Museum exhibitions and events please visit the museum's website at:

www.braintreemuseum.co.uk
or call 01376 328868.

Jennifer Rowland & Claire Willetts



Cllr Norman Hume (left), Chairman of ECC, unveils the exhibition with John McKee, Chairman of Braintree District Museum Trust, and Jennifer Rowland, the Exhibition's Curator.



Magna Carta – Essex Connections¹

by

Katharine Schofield

This year marks the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, an event celebrated for its role as a precursor of the civil liberties we enjoy today. Essex played a key role in the rebellion which forced King John to agree to the terms. One of the contemporary accounts of the events of 1215 was the *Chronicon Anglicanum* written by [Abbot] Ralph of Coggeshall² while ten of the 25 Magna Carta barons held lands in Essex, in particular in the north of the county. Two years of civil war followed Magna Carta and the castles of the Essex barons came under attack. This article will outline these Essex connections to Magna Carta.

Ralph of Coggeshall described how the barons, with many well-armed knights, pitched tents between Windsor and Staines in a meadow called *Runemad*, the king stayed apart from them in the same meadow in his pavilion. The archbishop of Canterbury, his fellow bishops and some neutral barons then negotiated a 'sort of peace' [*quasi pax*] between the king and his barons.³ To contemporaries, perhaps the most radical clause was Clause 61 which required the barons to choose 25 representatives to 'observe, hold and cause to be observed, the peace and liberties which we have granted and confirmed'.⁴ In an age of personal rules of kings, John had been forced to agree that his subjects would hold him to account to ensure that he kept his word. If necessary the barons had the power to seize by force or distrain royal property. The 25 barons chosen are known today as the Magna Carta barons.

In common with most rebellions, the main protagonists acted for a variety of motives. Since losing Normandy to the French in 1204, King John had used his feudal dues ruthlessly to demand money from his chief subjects –

the barons. Family and geographical ties may also have played their part. The Essex barons were not only neighbours, but also bound by family ties. Geoffrey de Mandeville, Robert de Vere, Richard de Montfichet, Richard and Gilbert de Clare and Roger and Hugh Bigod could trace their landholdings in Essex to their ancestors who had come to England with William the Conqueror in 1066 and whose lands were described in Domesday Book.

FitzWalter

Robert FitzWalter was generally considered to be one of the leaders of the barons. During the rebellion he described himself as the 'Marshal of the Army of God and Holy Church'. He was descended from a younger son of the de Clare family of Suffolk. The *caput* of his lands was at Little Dunmow, and his Essex lands included a manor in 'Woodham', called Woodham Walter to distinguish it from the other and manors there.⁵ It is believed that the custom of the Dunmow Flitch ceremony originated with the FitzWalter family. FitzWalter was also constable of Baynard's Castle in London, owned extensive lands in Northamptonshire, and had an hereditary claim to Hertford Castle which King John had ignored.

FitzWalter had long been opposed to King John. In 1210 the chronicler Matthew Paris recorded that the king swore 'by the feet of God (for that was his customary oath) that either he or Robert should be king of England'.⁶ In 1212 he and Eustace de Vesci, another Magna Carta baron, had been accused of plotting against the king and had fled to France. Their exile had only ended in 1214 as part of the agreement with Pope Innocent III ending the papal interdict imposed on

England. As well as his links with de Vesci, FitzWalter's cousins included two other Magna Carta barons, William d'Aubigny and Saer de Quincy. His relationship with de Quincy was particularly close – they were brothers-in-arms. FitzWalter's seal in the British Museum which depicted him as a knight on horseback fighting a dragon also includes the arms of Saer de Quincy.⁷

Contemporary opinion of FitzWalter was not completely favourable. A French chronicler described him as 'one of the foremost barons of England and one of the most powerful'.⁸ But the biographer of William Marshal reported that the king of France described him as being like a torch that once used could be thrown in a cesspool.⁹ However, his role in securing Magna Carta led to a later view in Whig historiography of his worthiness as one of the founders of English democratic tradition. Alfred Hartley wrote in 1895 that 'We in Essex, therefore, with which county this noble knight was so intimately associated, may feel a glow of pride at the possession, amongst other worthies, of so powerful a personality'.¹⁰

As part of their opposition to the king, de Vesci and FitzWalter spread rumours that the king had made improper advances on women of their families. FitzWalter alleged to the king of France that John had attempted to rape his daughter Matilda¹¹ and following her resistance had poisoned her. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Richard Newcourt, an historian of the diocese of London described the event taking place in Dunmow and wrote that the king:

'sent a Messenger to the fair Matilda...about his old Suit in Love, and because

she would not agree to his wicked Motion, the Messenger poison'd a boil'd or poch'd Egg...and gave it to her, whereof she died. Matilda was buried between two pillars on the south side of the choir [in Little Dunmow Priory]¹²

The female FitzWalter effigy in Little Dunmow church today is said to be that of Matilda. The chronicler, Matthew Paris, who wrote later in the thirteenth century described FitzWalter's daughter as Matilda or Maud the Fair called Maid Marion. However, it was not until a play written in the early seventeenth century that the character became associated with the legend of Maid Marion and Robin Hood.¹³

de Mandeville

Matilda FitzWalter was the wife of another Magna Carta baron Geoffrey de Mandeville, 5th Earl of Essex who held lands mostly in the north and west of Essex, with castles at Pleshey and (Saffron) Walden. When Geoffrey de Mandeville killed a servant of John's official William Brewer in a dispute over lodgings when the court was at Marlborough, the king demanded that Geoffrey answer a charge of murder. His father-in-law FitzWalter declared 'You will not hang my son-in-law! By God's body you will not! You will see two thousand laced helms in your land before you hang him!'¹⁴ When the case was tried, FitzWalter arrived at court with 500 armed men.

Geoffrey and his younger brother William had assumed the surname de Mandeville. They were the sons of Geoffrey FitzPeter who had served as justiciar (roughly equivalent to today's prime minister) from 1198 to his death in 1213. He was described by Philip Morant as the 'firmest Pillar of the realm, generous, skilful in the laws, and in money and everything else and allied to all the great men of England either in blood or friendship'.¹⁵

Geoffrey FitzPeter had married Beatrice de Say, great-niece of Geoffrey de Mandeville, 1st Earl of Essex. When Geoffrey's youngest son William, 3rd Earl of Essex died without an heir, his extensive lands in Essex and elsewhere were disputed between two branches of the de Say family. However, Geoffrey FitzPeter had royal influence and King John appointed him Earl of Essex on his coronation day in 1199.

Despite his father's long service to the Crown, it is perhaps not surprising that Geoffrey was one of the Magna Carta barons. As well as being the son-in-law of FitzWalter, he was related to two other Magna Carta barons – his brother-in-law Henry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and cousin Geoffrey de Say, a rival claimant to the de Mandeville lands. The king's determination to raise money may also have played a part. After the death of Matilda, in 1214 Geoffrey married Isabella, the divorced wife of the king and one of the heiresses of the earl of Gloucester. John charged him 20,000 marks (more than £13,500) for the privilege.¹⁶ Geoffrey was killed by a French knight in a tournament in February 1216 and buried at Holy Trinity, Aldgate in London and was succeeded by his brother William who continued the opposition to King John. William was married to Christina, another daughter of Robert FitzWalter. He died in 1227 without heirs and the de Mandeville lands passed to his nephew, Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford.

de Vere

Robert de Vere, 3rd Earl of Oxford was based at Hedingham and Great Canfield Castles, and held lands mainly in the north of Essex, and also in Buckinghamshire through his wife Isabel de Bolbec. When she was widowed in 1207 she had petitioned the king, offering 300 marks and 3 marks 'that she might not be compelled to marry'.¹⁷

In that same year she married de Vere Robert's grievance with the king came when he succeeded his older brother as earl and had been compelled to pay a relief of 1000 marks. The king had also refused to confirm him in his title as earl of Oxford and also as chamberlain, a title seen as hereditary by the family. Only days after Magna Carta on 23rd June 1215, King John instructed the sheriff of Oxfordshire to pay the earl the third penny from the shire, in effect recognising him as earl.¹⁸ Robert de Vere died in October 1221 and was buried at Hatfield Priory in Hatfield Broad Oak, which had been founded by his great-grandfather. His effigy, now in the church, dates from the early fourteenth century, when building work at the priory was completed. It was probably commissioned by Robert's great-grandson another Robert, 6th Earl.¹⁹

de Montfichet

Richard de Montfichet could also trace his lands back to one of the king's tenants-in-chief listed in Domesday Book – Robert Gernon. The Montfichets held extensive lands in Essex, mostly in the west of the county, with the *caput* at Stansted Mountfitchet. Among the family lands was West Ham where Richard's great-grandfather William de Montfichet had founded Stratford Abbey in 1135.²⁰ At around the same date he made a grant of rights in the forest of Essex to Humphrey de Barantun, ancestor of the Barrington family.²¹ The Montfichet family had a hereditary claim to be keeper of the royal forest of Essex and this had been forfeited by Richard's grandfather, possibly for his part in a rebellion against Henry II. The importance of these rights to Montfichet are demonstrated by the fact that on 21st June 1215, while the king was still Runnymede, Montfichet was appointed keeper, one of a number of concessions made to the Magna Carta barons.²²

Montfichet was also related by marriage to Robert FitzWalter, more distantly to the de Clare family and his brother-in-law was William de Fors, Count of Aumale, another Magna Carta baron. He was captured at the Battle of Lincoln in May 1217 and forfeited his lands. In October of that year he was restored to his lands in return for his allegiance to the king. He had served as sheriff of Essex in 1200 and did so again between 1242 and 1246. He also went on to witness Magna Carta twice when it was reissued by Henry III in 1225 and 1237. He was the last of the de Montfichet line, and when he died in 1267 was both the longest lived and the last surviving of the Magna Carta barons.²³ In the late eighteenth century he was described as being 'famous for his high prowess and chivalrie'.²⁴

de Clare & Bigod

The remaining Essex Magna Carta barons all held lands in the county, but they were not necessarily their principal holdings. The de Clares and the Bigods were descended from tenants-in-chief listed in Domesday Book. Both families were more commonly associated with Suffolk and Norfolk, but they held fairly extensive lands in north Essex as well. The *caput* of the lands of Richard de Clare, 3rd Earl of Hertford and his son Gilbert de Clare, later Earl of Hertford and Gloucester was Clare in Suffolk, but their lands in Essex included a residence at Great Bardfield. Roger Bigod, 2nd Earl of Norfolk and his son Hugh Bigod were based at Framlingham Castle in Suffolk. Their lands in Essex included the manor of Dovercourt, and a descendant founded the town of Harwich there in the 1240s.²⁵

FitzRobert

John FitzRobert was lord of the Honour of Clavering, which had originally been part of the Honour of Rayleigh and had come to FitzRobert's family by

marriage. He was a relative of the Bigod family and had served as sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1213 and 1215. While the East Anglian and Essex barons were of the most strategic significance, given their control over land close to London and East Anglian ports, there was a second predominant group described by contemporaries as the Northerners. As well as Clavering, where the remains of the castle can still be seen today, FitzRobert was also lord of Warkworth Castle in Northumberland, and was related to two northern Magna Carta barons Eustace de Vesci and John de Lacy. John FitzRobert died in 1240 leaving a son Roger FitzJohn aged one and a half. When he died the chronicler Matthew Paris described him as 'A man of Noble birth and one of the Chief barons of the Northern parts of England'.²⁶

de Lanvallei

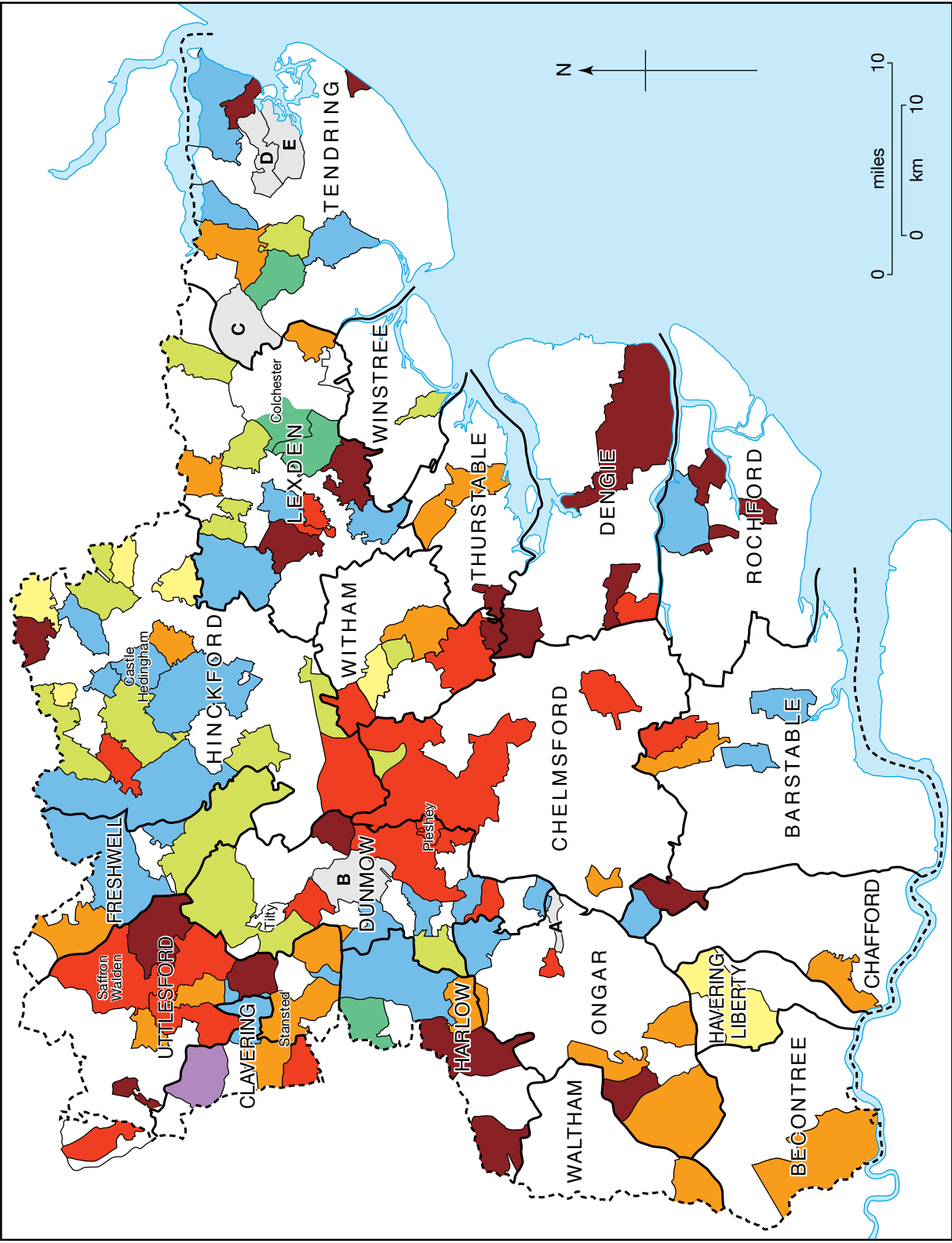
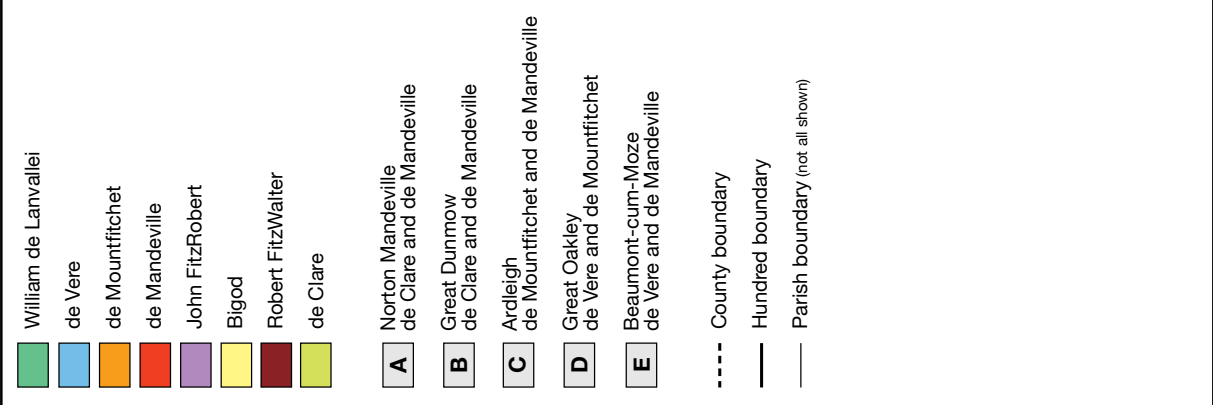
The final Essex baron was William de Lanvallei, lord of the manor of Walkern in Hertfordshire, a relative of both Robert FitzWalter and Geoffrey de Mandeville. Unlike the other Essex barons, his family were relative newcomers to the county, his grandfather another William had come to England from Brittany to serve as an administrator to John's father Henry II.²⁷ William only held four manors in Essex, Great Bromley, which had originally been held as tenants of the de Vere family, Great Hallingbury, Lexden and Stanway.²⁸ The hospital of Holy Cross in Colchester which later became the house of the Crossed Friars (and gave us the name of the present-day Crouch Street) was founded by the lord of the manor of Stanway, who may well have been this William.²⁹ He certainly granted the hospital pannage (the right to turn out pigs to eat acorns and other nuts) for 12 pigs in his wood at Shrub End and Wildenhey (Grymes Dyke in Lexden).³⁰

William also had some claim to be constable of Colchester Castle. His grandfather had married Gunnora, daughter of Hubert de St Clair. When Eudo Dapifer, the builder and keeper of Colchester Castle and founder of St John's Abbey had died without heirs, his lands had reverted to the Crown and had been granted to Gunnora's grandfather Hamo in 1120. From this, William de Lanvallei derived a hereditary claim to the castle. In 1200 he had paid King John to be made constable, only to have it removed from him in 1214. After Magna Carta, the king re-appointed de Lanvallei as constable. William died not long after Magna Carta, and his lands were inherited by his daughter Hawise who married John de Burgh, son of one of the king's supporters Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent.³¹

Land Holdings

The map (fig.1) shows the Essex holdings of the Magna Carta barons. It is based on Domesday Book and the Morant's two volume *History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*. It is both an over- and an under-estimate of the barons' holdings. The map is of Essex parishes and manors are rarely coterminous with parishes in the county, so a whole parish has been coloured where possibly a baron may have only held one manor out of two or three and therefore only part of the land. However, Morant did not always record the early origins of manors. It is also possible that some of those named as holders of adjoining manors may have owed their allegiance to one of the Magna Carta barons.

A number of the uncoloured areas may have also not been neutral. The manor of Tilty was held by the abbey there. This abbey had been founded by the de Mandeville family and thus might not have been entirely neutral. It was to make the abbey vulnerable to attack by royal forces in the civil war that followed. There were a number



1. Parish map of Essex indicating the approximate landholdings of the Magna Carta barons. (K. Schofield/C. D'Alton.)

of barons who did not rebel against the king, Ralph of Coggeshall described how some of the barons, presumably considered neutral (*baronibus nonnullis*) helped to broker the agreement that became Magna Carta.³² Unfortunately, from the king's point of view, they may not have joined the rebellion, but they did not join him either. Warren described how 'The rest of the barons of England, a hundred or more, would rather have held their hands'.³³

In some cases fathers remained loyal or at least neutral, while their sons joined the rebels. The Barnwell chronicler described these younger rebels as 'seeking to make their military reputation'.³⁴ William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke remained loyal to the king, becoming regent to his son Henry III in 1216 and finally defeating the barons and the French in 1217. His son William was one of the 25 Magna Carta barons. The family held the manor of Great Chesterford on the border with Cambridgeshire³⁵ which has been left uncoloured.

The map can be seen more as an impression of the baronial landholdings. It was from these lands that the barons derived their power and wealth. The barons held lands in the other counties in the east of England – Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and extending into beyond into Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. If there was a similar pattern of land ownership in these other counties, the Essex map gives some idea of the weight of opposition to the king, and the forces that his opponents could muster.

Essex had relatively few royal manors to act as a counterweight to the barons. The royal manor of Writtle was one of the main exceptions, although its strategic location on the main road to London was superseded in the reign of John's son by the 'new town' of Chelmsford.³⁶ John's court was peripatetic; among the

concessions of Magna Carta was the agreement of a fixed location for the dispensing of royal justice.³⁷ The king travelled throughout Essex and visited Writtle on a number of occasions. The Pipe Roll of 1211 recorded the expenditure of £13 6s.8d. 'on the work of the king's houses of Writtle' – better known as King John's Hunting Lodge.³⁸ By 1217 it was listed among royal hunting lodges. The site is now in the grounds of Writtle Agricultural College. Excavations in 1957 found evidence to suggest that the moats and fish pond were probably dug at this time, and the hall, kitchen, chapel and gaol were built.³⁹

Other Individuals

Magna Carta begins by stating that the king was acting at the advice of a number of named individuals and 'other loyal subjects'.⁴⁰ There were 27 named men, 11 from the Church and 16 lay men.

One of those listed was Hubert de Burgh, seneschal of Poitou. He served as King John's justiciar from 1215, throughout the Magna Carta crisis and the ensuing civil war and continued under John's son Henry III until 1232. After Magna Carta he was responsible for defending England against the French, acting as the ally of the barons. His successful defence of Dover Castle in 1216 was followed by the naval victory at the Battle of Sandwich on 24th August 1217 which forced Prince Louis to make peace terms. In the reign of Henry III de Burgh came to acquire lands in Essex, in particular the lands of the Honour of Rayleigh in the south-east of the county, which included manors at Rayleigh, Hadleigh, Wickford, Purleigh, Eastwood, and Foulness. He also acquired the manor of Hatfield Peverel from William de Mandeville.⁴¹ When Essex County Council came to decorate its newly-built Council Chamber with the names of notable Essex people in c.1938, it was Hubert de Burgh, named as a

'signatory of Magna Carta' who was chosen to represent the events of 1215 in preference to any of the Essex Magna Carta barons.

The list of advisers in the preamble included William [de St. Mere Église], Bishop of London. In 1199 the bishop had obtained royal charters from King John at the start of his reign to found the towns of Braintree and Chelmsford. The council chamber in Braintree Town Hall has a mural of the granting of the charter painted by Maurice Greiffenhagen in 1930 (Fig.2).⁴²

The preamble also named the king's friend, Hugh de Neville. He had fought in the Third Crusade with Richard I. Morant records that 'he performed a valorous exploit, by shooting an arrow into a Lion's breast, and when he rose against him, catching him by the beard, and running his sword into his heart'; an event which he chose to represent on his seal.⁴³ He was a close friend of the king, one of those with whom he liked to gamble and is named as one of the witnesses to the oldest Essex royal charter in Essex Record Office relating to Heydon in 1203.⁴⁴ He served as Chief Forester, and would have been one of the forest officials that Magna Carta was intended to curb. He acquired the manors of Langham, Wethersfield, Little Hallingbury, Great Wakering and Abbots in East Horndon from his wife and served as sheriff of Essex, 1197–1200 and 1202–3.⁴⁵ Despite his closeness to the king, he abandoned him in June 1216 when he surrendered Marlborough Castle to the French.

After Magna Carta

If Magna Carta was intended as a peace treaty, it failed very quickly. On 24th August 1215 Pope Innocent III, who had previously supported the opposition to King John during the interdict, annulled the agreement. In September he excommunicated nine of the

barons, including FitzWalter, de Mandeville and Richard de Clare. The king began recruiting foreign mercenaries and in turn the barons refused to surrender the city of London, which they continued to hold for the next two years. In September the barons offered the crown to Louis (the future Louis VIII), son of King Philip Augustus of France. At the end of November Prince Louis sent a small army to help the barons, they landed in the Orwell estuary and marched on London, presumably through Essex.

King John divided his forces into two, setting off north to deal with the northern barons. The other part of the forces under one of the king's mercenaries Savary de Mauléon and his half-brother the Earl of Salisbury headed into Essex. By Christmas Eve they were besieging Geoffrey de Mandeville's castle at Pleshey. Ralph of Coggeshall described how the royal forces laid the surrounding countryside to waste, demanded money and men and burned houses, destroyed parks and cut down trees.⁴⁶ The chronicler Roger of Wendover famously described the king's campaign in the north:

'The whole land was covered with these limbs of the devil like locusts, who assembled to blot out every thing from the face of the earth: for, running about with drawn swords and knives, they ransacked towns, houses, cemeteries, and churches, robbing everyone, sparing neither women nor children',⁴⁷ giving some idea of the horror of war on the civilian population.

On Christmas Day 1215 one of these raiding parties broke into Tilty Abbey during mass, destroying furnishings and breaking open the cellars and carrying away items stored there which had been deposited (for safe keeping) by merchants. A week later on 1st January Ralph of Coggeshall described how they broke into his own abbey, and stole 22 horses belonging to (among others) the bishop of London, the treasurer and the monks.⁴⁸ The royal forces then marched on the rebels forcing their retreat to Ely and Bury St Edmunds. At Ely Ralph of Coggeshall described how the royal army caused serious destruction there as they did everywhere, 'sparing neither age, nor sex, nor condition, nor religion.' He went on to describe

how they destroyed churches, stole items which had been deposited there and horribly tortured men to give up their valuables.⁴⁹ By the end of January Savary de Mauléon was besieging the French garrison at Colchester Castle, but retreated to Bury St Edmunds on hearing that a baronial force was on its way to relieve the castle.

In the north the king had been pursuing a successful but brutal campaign. Ralph of Coggeshall described how he laid waste the lands of the barons, intent only on plundering and burning. Their castles which they either surrendered or were captured in siege were totally destroyed, with the barons fleeing before him, only a 'few submitted to the mercy of the merciless one'.⁵⁰ Following the conclusion of the campaign, John headed south to Essex. On 14th March 1216 he laid siege to Colchester Castle. This time the French garrison surrendered on 25th March, having been guaranteed safe passage out of the castle. The king then attacked Hedingham Castle, which surrendered after only three days. Both castles were to change hands again during the civil war. In May 1216 Prince Louis landed in England with a larger French force. In the next few months, three forces ranged through Essex – the army of the king, the barons' forces led by William de Mandeville, Earl of Essex (brother of the recently dead Geoffrey de Mandeville), Robert FitzWalter and William de Huntingfield (another Magna Carta baron) and a mostly French force, supporting the barons.⁵¹

On 19th October 1216 King John died at Newark. His eldest son Henry III was crowned at Gloucester Abbey as the barons and Prince Louis still controlled London. He was 9 years old and it is said that his mother provided a circlet for his crown. The regent for the king was a much respected baron William Marshal,

2. Details from 'King John Presents the
Braintree, 1199'. (M. Greiffenhagen
Copyright Braintree



Earl of Pembroke. Marshal gradually persuaded many of the barons to support the king. In May 1217 the remaining barons were defeated at the Battle of Lincoln, with many being captured, including Robert FitzWalter, Richard de Montfichet and Gilbert de Clare. On 11th September 1217 the Treaty of Lambeth was agreed, with Prince Louis agreeing to give up his claim to the English crown. As well as settling with the French, the treaty made peace with the barons.

Magna Carta was reissued several times in the reign of Henry III, first in 1216 as a means of persuading the rebel barons to return to the allegiance of the king and then in 1217 as part of the agreement ending the civil war. In the reign of John's grandson Edward I, Magna Carta became statute law for the first time in 1297. Throughout the Middle Ages it was usually reaffirmed at the start of each new Parliament. Magna Carta came to assume an iconic importance as a symbol rather than for its actual contents. It was during the struggle between Charles I and Parliament in the seventeenth century that Magna Carta first took on the symbolism as a guarantee of the liberties of the individual against arbitrary rule that it has today. It was this symbolism that was taken by settlers to the New World and became part of the founding principles of the USA.

Two documents in the Essex Record Office reflect this importance. On 11th June 1649, only a few months after the execution of Charles I, Isaac Aleyn of Hazeleigh wrote to Mr Goldesburrough discussing the repair of a bridge in the parish. This letter survives sewn onto the Quarter Sessions roll of Midsummer 1649.⁵² The parish of Hazeleigh had been presented at Quarter Sessions two years earlier for failure to repair a

bridge. They had been fined and in order to avoid 'further trouble' had found the money to repair the bridge themselves. In a complaint that echoes down the centuries this was despite the fact that the Dengie Hundred (and therefore the parish) had had to contribute to the repair of other bridges in other 'remote' places in the county, listed by Aleyn as including Woodford, Fingringhoe, Baythorne Bridge in Birdbrook and Passingford Bridge in Stapleford Tawney. Aleyn had investigated various statutes including Magna Carta but they 'do nothing to help us'. Clause 23 of Magna Carta restricted bridge building: 'No town or person shall be forced to build bridges over rivers, except those with an ancient obligation to do so',⁵³ but did not deal with repairs. Nor did Magna Carta deal with the perennial issue of money being taken for work carried out elsewhere in the county, neglecting, in this case, contributors in the south-east of the county.

Some idea of the enduring power of the symbolism of Magna Carta is seen a century ago. On 13th June 1915 the register of services for Little

Dunmow church⁵⁴ recorded special services for the 700th anniversary of Magna Carta with a collection of £3 5s. going to the FitzWalter Memorial Fund (Fig.3). This was in the midst of the First World War, the 'war to end all wars'. The service register is full of intercessions for the war, in which seven men of the parish, including the organist were killed. Just as the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta has been marked throughout the country, one hundred years ago, it was seen as important to mark the 700th anniversary.

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Bishop of London with the Charter for (1862-1931). Oil on Copper, 1930. District Museum.)

REGISTER OF SERVICES.									
1915									
Date.	Hour of Service.	DAY (Season - Occasion)	PREACHER	Number Sung	No. of Com- municants.	OFFERTORY.			Remarks.
						Object.	£	s.	d.
1915. June 13 th	8.0	1 st Sunday after Trinity	E.R.	145	19	Brought up Fitzwalter Memorial Fund	10	19	9
" "	11.0	" "	E.R.	145	"	"	10	"	"
" "	3.0	" "	E.R. H.J. & G. Maxted	101	"	"	1	0	9
" "	6.0	" "	E.R. & G.B. West, CF	106	"	"	13	3	"
" 15 th	6.0	" "	E.R.	17	"	(Open Session Service) additional	15	6	5
							5	8	0
									£ 3.5.0
									War Intercession

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of Gas and Water Engineers

by

Peter Wynn

In 1974 John Booker stated that it was 'due to the energy and expertise of the Church family that public services in Essex grew as fast as they did'.¹ Booker drew attention to the confused genealogy of the family and in a footnote noted that the obituary in *Essex Review*² for Jabez Church who died in 1897 incorrectly stated that he was born, the son of John Church, in 1845. He stated that the date was incorrect and made the point that there was a Jabez Church, senior and a Jabez Church, junior. In fact the date of birth in the *Essex Review* was correct but his father had been incorrectly identified therein and, as shown subsequently, the forename Jabez was shared by three generations, in the current article identified as Jabez Church I, II and III. This article examines the work and wider community involvement of the family within Essex and beyond.

Jabez Church I

Jabez Church I, the son of Thomas and Ann Church (née Clark), was born on 4th June 1800 and was baptised at St. Margaret's Church, Rochester on 17th August 1800.³ An 1881 speech by Andrew Durrant of the Chelmsford Gas Company stated that 'The late father of their late friend, Mr Church, was the first engineer of the company'.⁴ As the Chelmsford gas works were constructed in 1819 and Jabez Church was described as a caulker living in Poplar when his first son was baptised in 1826, this implies that they did not initially employ an engineer.⁵ However in 1831 the baptismal record for his second son, Thomas James, shows Jabez Church I to be a Gas Factor at Springfield. The 1841 census records him as a Gas Engineer,

living at Hythe Quay in Colchester with his wife Jane and eldest son Jabez II and a number of other children.⁶

In evidence in a court case in 1842, Jabez I stated that he came to Colchester in 1838 as manager for the late Mr W. Fenton, the then lessee of the Colchester gasworks and that he, Jabez I, was now one of the lessees of the gasworks.⁷ The other lessee was then John Hudson Theobald, who was also Colchester Borough Treasurer.

In 1845 Jabez Church I obtained a patent for a new method of manufacturing coke. According to the *Mechanics Magazine*, coke produced by this method is 'of far better quality...than any ever known before - purer, denser, harder and of higher heating power'. Coke produced by this process was used as the basis of carbon electrodes for arc lamps developed by Staite.⁸ The uniqueness of the Church process was challenged leading to a Chancery case.⁹ There is an implication, but not a definite statement, in the *Mechanics Magazine* article that the case was settled in Church's favour. A search has not revealed the case mentioned in any Law Reports. In 1847 John Hudson Theobald and Jabez Church I entered a partnership with a Mr Gibson of Deptford gasworks. Unfortunately both this and the Colchester works were loss-making concerns with Theobald and Church being declared bankrupt in December 1847. Subsequently Theobald published a statement in which he blamed all around him for the problems, including Jabez Church I whom he described as a faithless partner.¹⁰

The 1851 and 1861 censuses show Jabez Church I as living in

Lambeth with his profession still shown as a gas engineer and in 1861 his residence was in Gasworks Yard and he would appear to have been with the Phoenix Gas Company¹¹ where he collected donations from workmen for the Patriotic Fund for the support of bereaved families during the Crimean War. In 1857 he was recorded as a patentee for the invention of 'improvements in the manufacture of artificial fuel' and, on a somewhat different line, in 1861 obtained a patent for 'an improved stand or rest for piano-fortes or other musical instruments'.¹² Jabez Church I died at Brighton on 26th October 1865.¹³

Jabez Church II

Jabez Church II was born on 2nd April 1824 and baptised at Poplar on 26th November 1826 and in the 1841 census he is shown as a gas fitter living at the Hythe Colchester with his parents and siblings.¹⁴ In the 1842 court case¹⁵ he stated that he had assisted in laying a new gas main in Wire Street, Colchester. A report of a meeting of Oddfellows at Colchester in April 1847 showed not only the respect of fellow members who presented him with the gift of a watch, but also indicated that he had taken up the management of Chelmsford gas works.¹⁶ The 1851 census confirms his occupation as 'Gas Engineer'. By then he was married and living in Springfield with a young family. The deaths of two of his children were recorded in early 1853.¹⁷ In notices of shareholder meetings for the Chelmsford Gas Light and Coke Company from 1854 to 1859 he is styled as 'Clerk and Engineer' to the company.¹⁸ For an engineer to hold the position

of Clerk is unusual: the post would normally be held by a lawyer. His position with the company did not prevent him acting as a consultant engineer for the design and supervision of construction of gasworks both within and outside the county of Essex as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

List of Gasworks where Jabez Church II has been identified as Engineer

Date	Location
1853	Romford ¹⁹
1854	Market Deeping, Lincolnshire ²⁰
1854	Harwich ²¹
1854	Southend ²²
1857	Bury St. Edmund's, Suffolk ²³
1858	Ramsey, Huntingdonshire ²⁴
1862	Burnham on Crouch ²⁵
1863	Brightlingsea ²⁶
1865	Epping ²⁷
1865	Ilford (extensions) ²⁸
1867	Hornsey, London ²⁹
1874	Dublin ³⁰

The completion of the Harwich works was recorded early in 1855 with mention of how Jabez Church had successfully overcome difficult foundation problems. He continued an association with the Harwich company with a record of his election as an auditor in 1856 renewed in subsequent years until in 1864 he was elected as Managing Director of the company.³¹ Foundation problems were also encountered at Bury St Edmunds with the local newspaper referring to 'the unwearied exertions of Mr Jabez Church'.³² In 1851 he was a witness in respect of the value of property of the Maldon Gas Company.³³ When, in 1859, the Louth Paving and Lighting Commissioners wanted the services of 'an eminent engineer' to advise on their dispute with the local gas company, it was to Jabez Church II that they turned.³⁴ In 1873 he

gave evidence to a Parliamentary Committee on the application by the Romford Gas Company for increased powers and the following year gave evidence in a similar application by the Tunbridge Wells Gas Company.³⁵

Jabez Church II presented a paper on the use of clay retorts in gas making to the Institution of Civil Engineers on 3rd March 1857, I.K. Brunel being in the Chair on that occasion.³⁶ He was elected as an Associate Member of that institution on 7th February 1854 and was transferred to the full Member class on 1st March 1870.³⁷ In the 1871 census,³⁸ living at Hamlet House [now named Dovedale House] in Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, he identified himself as a civil engineer, rather than a gas engineer, indicating his wider range of professional activity.

He was elected to the Society of Engineers in 1867 and appointed its president in 1872, his inaugural address concentrating on the importance of those aspects of engineering that contribute to public health: water supply and the removal of sewage.³⁹ He was the first president to hold office for two successive years. In 1872 he also held the presidency of the British Association of Gas Managers, having previously served on the committee of the association and frequently contributed to discussions at its annual meetings. During his presidency he successfully argued for the association to establish a benevolent fund.⁴⁰

He was also elected as a Fellow of the Geological Society in December 1869,⁴¹ although he does not seem to have had an active role in that organisation. The record of his election however shows that he had an office in Great George Street, Westminster, as well as at Chelmsford gas works. Contrary to the impression given elsewhere,⁴² it must have been Jabez Church II, not Jabez Church I, who was consulted by the Colchester Gas, Light & Coke Company when it was seeking an

amendment to its Act of Incorporation in 1874.

In 1869 he was a major witness in an Arbitration concerning the transfer of the gas undertaking in Dundee and in 1871 he was responsible for the valuation of the local gas undertaking in Ryde when it was purchased by the local authority.⁴³ In a report on the discussion of a similar proposed takeover of the assets of the Alliance and Consumers' Gas Company in Dublin by the city council, he was described as 'one of the cleverest engineers in the Three Kingdoms'.⁴⁴

By 1870, Jabez Church II had entered into partnership with his son Jabez Church III. From this time it is apparent that the professional interests of the family had extended to include water engineering. Table 2 shows the extent of the involvement of the practice in water supply and drainage schemes up to the death of Jabez Church II.



**1. Epping water tower.
(Author's collection.)**

Table 2

List of water supply and drainage schemes where Jabez Church and Son involvement has been identified

Date	Location	Comments
1868	Witham	Jabez Church presented evidence to the Witham Local Board of Health in support of the provision of drainage and water supply for the town. Church's plans for drainage and water supply were challenged by a number of ratepayers who commissioned Frederick Chancellor of Chelmsford to prepare alternative plans. A report by the Secretary of State for the Home Office concluded that Church's scheme was best for the locality. ⁴⁵
1869 - 1874	Hull	Jabez Church reporting to Hull Corporation on water supply issues. Suggestion made that the Council should obtain advice from an independent engineer such as 'Jabez Church, President of the Society of Engineers'. ⁴⁶
1869 - 1870	Epping	Government appointed Jabez Church for the drainage and water supply of Epping. ⁴⁷
1870	Southend	Tenders for main drainage to be returned to Messrs Church & Son. ⁴⁸
1870	Abingdon	After his proposals for sewage treatment and water supply courted local criticism on cost and technical grounds Jabez Church took members of Abingdon Town Council on a tour of sewage works in a number of other towns. ⁴⁹
1872	West Cowes	A member of the West Cowes Local Board put forward Jabez Church as a more appropriate engineer to consider water supply for the town than the engineer whose report they had just received. ⁵⁰
1874	Thetford	Jabez Church commissioned to design waterworks for Thetford. ⁵¹

The case of the drainage and water supply of Epping was particularly contentious. In consequence of the failure of the previously appointed sewer authority to take action, Church was personally given by Government the full power of a sewerage authority. However approved borrowing limits were reached before the scheme was complete.⁵² This meant that, although a water tower had been constructed (Fig.1) and a well sunk, the water distribution network was far from finished. Church handed his power back to the local board of guardians in 1872.⁵³

Jabez Church II was a shareholder and director of a number of other concerns as listed in Table 3.

His contributions to the local community are seen in his election to the committee of the Chelmsford Mechanics' Institution in 1850, his represen-

tation of the Chelmsford Literary and Mechanics' Institution at the 1861 conference of the Society of Arts and his appointment to the Local Board of Examiners for the Society of Arts examinations.⁶¹ In 1862 he was elected to the committee of the Chelmsford and Essex Horticultural Society. In spite of conflict between Jabez Church II, representing the gas company, and the Chelmsford Local Board of Health in 1863, he was elected as a member of the Board of Health in the following year. In 1866 he was associated with Holy Trinity Church, Springfield and from 1867 was a churchwarden of St John, Moulsham.⁶² In 1868 he commissioned an illuminated text around the chancel arch to the church and his son's personal handicraft in the form of another illuminated text also featured. In 1872 he represented Chelmsford in a deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer against

Schedule D Income Tax and the Chelmsford Anti Income Tax Association at a meeting convened by the National Chamber of Commerce. The local paper reported that the decorations at his home were the first to great visitors to a festival held in the town in 1874.⁶³ Jabez Church II died on 20th May 1875. He was interred in the burial ground adjacent to St John's Church, Moulsham (Fig.2).⁶⁴

Jabez Church III

This eldest son of Jabez Church II was born in Colchester in 1845. His obituary in *Essex Review* incorrectly misidentified both his father and place of birth. That obituary, and also the one produced for the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), which also incorrectly recorded him as being born in Chelmsford, stated that he was articled to his father and subsequently became his business partner. The latter obituary

Table 3

Directorships held by Jabez Church II

Company	Comments
Huntingdon and Godmanchester Gas and Coke Company	Jabez Church was present at a shareholders meeting of the company in 1858. ⁵⁴
Plym River Slab and Slate Company	In the 1863 share offering he was listed as a director. The company was wound about three years later. ⁵⁵
Gas Meter Company and the Liquid Meter Company	The Liquid Meter Company's initial share offering in 1866 identified Jabez Church as a director of both companies. ⁵⁶
Braintree and Bocking Gas Company	In a dispute, Jabez Church was identified as one of two shareholders in the company. An 1872 circular announcing a price rise gives his name as the Managing Director. ⁵⁷
Walton-on-the-Naze Gas and Water Company	In 1870 he wrote from Chelmsford, on behalf of the company, to the Walton Improvement Commissioners offering to provide gas lighting and water supply to the town. The following year a share offering listed him as one of the directors of the company, along with Peter Bruff, the chairman of the Commissioners. ⁵⁸
Steam Stoker Co	Listed as a Director in the 1872 share offer. The main business of the company was the manufacture of mechanical equipment to replace manual labour in the charging of retorts at gasworks. The equipment had been installed at Dublin gasworks with which Jabez Church had been associated. He was among a number of directors fined for failing to arrange a shareholders meeting. ⁵⁹
Coal Gas Improvement Co.	A newspaper report noted that Jabez Church was a director of this business. The company was formed to exploit a patent in which bitumen was added to lower grade coal to improve the illuminating power of the gas produced. ⁶⁰

recorded that he was one of the first Student Members of the ICE in 1867, becoming an Associate Member in 1871 and a full Member in 1877. One obituary incorrectly stated that he had been a president of the ICE.⁶⁵

The 1871 census recorded him as a civil engineer living with his parents and siblings in Moulsham. However in 1881 he was living in Kensington with his wife, who was born in that vicinity, and young family. As he was no longer resident in Chelmsford, it seems unlikely that he was the Jabez Church who represented the Chelmsford Provident Society on the organising committee for the Friendly Society Service at Chelmsford in 1882: there was a probably unrelated Jabez Church, a tailor, recorded living in Hall Street in the 1881 census.⁶⁶

Jabez Church III took over the business of Jabez Church and Son on the death of his father in 1875. He was elected as a Fellow of the Geological Society in 1881. As with his father, he served for two years as the President of the Society of Engineers.⁶⁷ He continued his father's association with the Dublin gasworks, appearing before a Parliamentary Select Committee to support the Alliance and Dublin Consumers' Gas Company's bill to obtain increased powers. Later he approved the design of a new gasholder at the works, stated to be the largest in Ireland and only exceeded in size by a few in England.⁶⁸

In 1875 he presented a report on a possible gas supply to inhabitants of Thorpe-le-Soken.

The successful completion of the gasworks for the Clacton Gas and Water Company under his supervision was recorded in 1877 along with a statement that he was preparing plans for the water scheme for the company. The waterworks were opened in 1881 and featured in one a series of articles on water supplies for small towns in *The Engineer* (Fig.3).⁶⁹ The series also included descriptions of his works at Frith Hill, Godalming and Farncombe, Henley on Thames and Balcombe.⁷⁰

In 1885 he was a founder shareholder of the Horley District Gas Company and in the following year he was listed as one of four Directors of the Consumers Economic Water Softening and Purifying Company, another Director being the Chairman of

He was called as a witness during a Parliamentary Select Committee hearing on the Tending Hundred Water Bill. He testified as to the poor quality of water then currently available to Walton and Harwich. His father's previous role as a Director of the company supplying Walton was not mentioned! The bill was unsuccessful but was reintroduced the following year. Jabez Church III stated that he was the Engineer for the scheme being promoted and gave similar evidence to previously about the brackish nature of the existing supplies.⁷² A subsequent share offering showed him as the Consulting Engineer to the company.⁷³ By 1893 he had become the Managing Director of the company and had to report a loss on its gas making activities and increased costs arising from having to make a constant water supply to Harwich.⁷⁴

In 1884 his role as the Engineer for Marlow waterworks was reported. In 1887 in describing proposed waterworks in the Soar Valley, Leicestershire, a newspaper report states 'The works will be well carried out. The engineer is Mr. Jabez Church, C.E., F.G.S., who is well-known in connection with gas and water undertakings'.⁷⁵

We return closer to home, seeing him associated with an enquiry concerning the water supply at Saffron Walden, and at the opening of the Halstead Water works in 1891.⁷⁶ The latter followed criticism of the expenditure considerably exceeding his estimate requiring him to explain the situation to the Local Government Board. Delays during construction also resulted in criticism from members of the Halstead Local Board of Health.⁷⁷ Things did not go well for him at Braintree either where, in connection with the route of a pumping main, he was upset by comments of board members reflecting on his ability as an engineer. He received an apology for statements that had been made. The problems at these two locations led the *Chelmsford Chronicle* to describe him as being 'extremely unfortunate'.⁷⁸

In 1893 it was reported that the Gainsborough Local Board of Health had decided 'to appoint Mr. Jabez Church, of Westminster, the eminent artesian engineer' to supervise the construction of a new well for the town. Although it was reported that the board had abandoned that scheme as too risky and had decided on an alternative approach, a later report stated that the well had been completed and was the 'largest sunk for waterworks purposes in this kingdom, if not the world'.⁷⁹

His *Essex Review* obituary stated his association with other gasworks in Essex at Barking, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Epping, Harwich, Ilford and Saffron Waldon as well as further afield in Cromer and waterworks at Barnet. The Institution of Civil Engineers obituary omitted Chelmsford from the list of Essex gasworks with which he was associated and the plan prepared for the 1885 Chelmsford Gas Order names Arthur Mead as the engineer. However Mead was a former pupil of Jabez Church II. Following his death on 20th March 1896, his practice was taken on by his partner, Mr Percy Griffith.⁸⁰

Other Church family associations with the gas industry in the nineteenth century

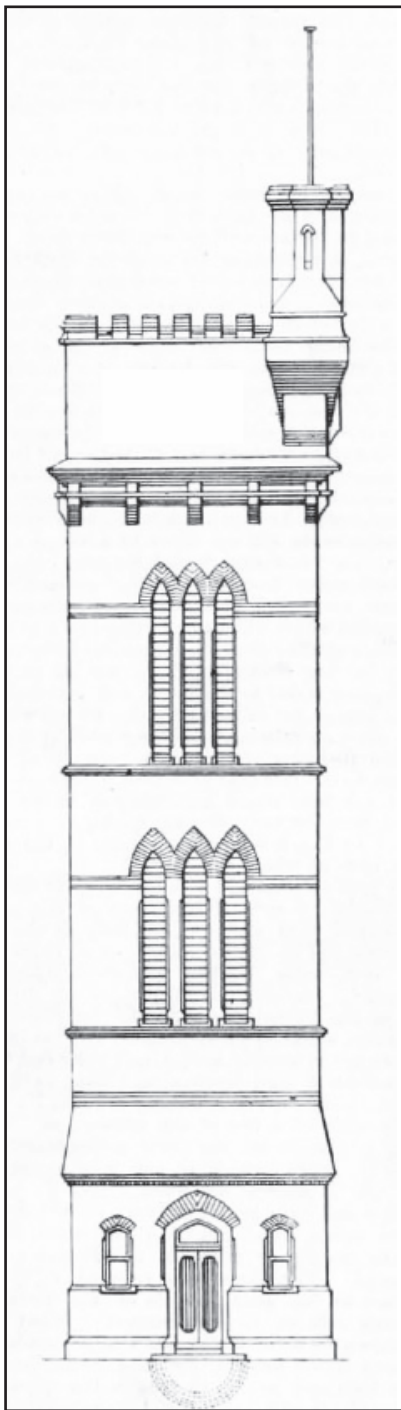
A number of other members of the family were active in the gas industry. None however appear to have gained the reputations of Jabez Church I, II or III. The 1841 Census showed a James Church as a gas factor at Witham while the 1851 Census shows, aged 58, that he was born in Rochester.⁸¹ He was an elder brother of Jabez Church I⁸²

Robert Monk Church, was living with James, his father, at Witham in 1841. Subsequent censuses show that he was born in Rochester. He was the engineer of Hertford gasworks by 1851. In 1861 he was the engineer of Melcombe Regis gasworks and by 1871 he was at Chichester and was recorded as having a secretary, 2 fitters and 9 labourers.⁸³ He was succeeded as engineer at Chichester by his son, Robert S. Monk who continued in this role for the rest of the nineteenth century.

Robert Monk Church's brother, John Church, was also living at Witham in 1841 and was recorded with his widowed sister at Hertford in 1851. In 1861 he was a gas manufacturer at Lymington in Hampshire. The 1881 census recorded that he employed 5 men there. Living

2. Tomb of Jabez Church II and his wife Mary Ann Church in the graveyard of St John's, Moulsham. (Author's collection.)





3. Front elevation of Clacton Water Tower as reproduced in *The Engineer*, 1882-3. (Grace's Guide.)

with him from 1871 was a house-keeper born in Hatfield Peveril.⁸⁴ The 1871 census also showed living with him was his son Joseph who was also a gas engineer.

Another person present at the shareholders meeting at Huntingdon referred to earlier was Edgar Church. He was recorded as a Gas Engineer on the 1861 Census for Huntingdon.

Edgar was born in Rochester to William Church, another brother of Jabez Church I.⁸⁵ William was a gas fitter at Lambeth in 1841.

The 1851 Census showed Thomas James Church, a brother of Jabez Church II, to be a journeyman gas fitter living in Springfield Road, Chelmsford. On his marriage in 1853 he is recorded as 'of the gasworks, Maldon'. It seems likely that he was the Thomas Church who was recorded as the superintendent of Harwich gasworks in 1855. Sometime between then and 1860 he appears to have become the manager of Romford gasworks. As his daughter was born about 1856 in Romford it appears that he had been based there at that time. Brentwood Census entries from 1861 onwards record him as the manager of Brentwood gasworks and his position is confirmed by Kelly's directory.⁸⁶

Mr Worthington Church was the proprietor of a number of gas undertakings in Essex in the first part of the twentieth century. However this gentleman does not seem to be connected to the family that had originated from Kent.

Continuing twentieth century involvement of the Church family with the gas industry in Essex

The earliest known surviving minutes of the Braintree and Bocking Gas Company record that directors meetings and general meetings were held at 51-52 Fenchurch Street, London. This was the office of Alfred Frederick Church and Frederick Basil Braby Church, solicitors, sibling and nephew respectively of Jabez Church III.⁸⁷ At the Ordinary General Meeting of 8th May 1905 Alfred Frederick Church was attending as executor of the estates of Jabez Church II and III as well as in his own right. Also present was Miss E.M. Church, Mrs Kate Mills (née Church) and Mrs M.J. Worlledge (née Church).⁸⁸ Frederick Basil

Braby Church was elected as a director in 1907. In 1911 Mr Percy Griffith, presumably the engineer who took over the practice of Jabez Church III, resigned as company secretary in order to be able to become a director of the company. F.B.B. Church died in 1932 but Percy Griffith and members of the Worlledge and Mills families were still represented on the Board of Directors as late as 1934.⁸⁹

Discussion

Although originating from the Rochester area of Kent, the Church family's activities in the gas and water industries centred on Essex. The family exemplify Watson's observation that in the nineteenth century engineers in Britain were brought up via a master/pupil relationship rather than having a separate academic route for the training of the professional engineer.⁹⁰ Thus we see for example Thomas James Church as a gas fitter in Chelmsford in 1851 becoming manager of Brentwood gasworks by 1861.

During the period under review, the role of professional bodies was growing. Of the organisations in which the Church family have been found to have membership, the Geological Society was founded in 1807, the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) in 1818, the Society of Engineers in 1854 and the British Association of Gas Managers in 1863. These bodies tended initially to be formed as 'self help' groups, in the case of ICE 'for facilitating the acquirement of knowledge necessary in the civil engineering profession and for promoting mechanical philosophy'.⁹¹ Typically the knowledge acquisition was through attendance at meetings of the societies where formal papers were presented and discussed. We see this for example in the paper read by Jabez Church II to the Institution of Civil Engineers referenced in endnote 37.

We also see his and his son's leadership of the Society of Engineers and the Association of Gas Engineers and, in the case of the former, both unusually held the Presidency for two years. Over time membership of a professional body became significant in its own right and some learned societies became concerned with the education of new entrants to the profession. The ICE for example introduced a Class of Student Member in 1867 and, as mentioned earlier, Jabez Church III was one of the first to be admitted to this class of membership indicating that the family were taking professional development seriously.

The range of roles Jabez II in particular held must have been challenging. He was an employee of the Chelmsford Gas Light and Coke Company, a shareholder in others and a consultant to a number of other organisations. No doubt in the present century he would have had to make extensive declarations of conflicting interests!

Mid nineteenth century legislation encouraged the development of arterial sewerage systems based on water transport in urban areas and this gave Jabez Church II and III opportunities to expand their interests beyond the gas industry. Whilst it is this area of work that seems to have led them into most problems, for example at Epping, Braintree and Halstead, it needs to be appreciated that large scale extraction of groundwater for public water supply was then new technology: the problems at Halstead and Epping for example involved the need to sink wells beyond depths originally envisaged at the time cost estimates were made. In addition the work was at times carried out with local opposition from ratepayers on whom the financial burden would ultimately fall. Nevertheless in spite of such problems the family's reputation does not seem to have suffered greatly.

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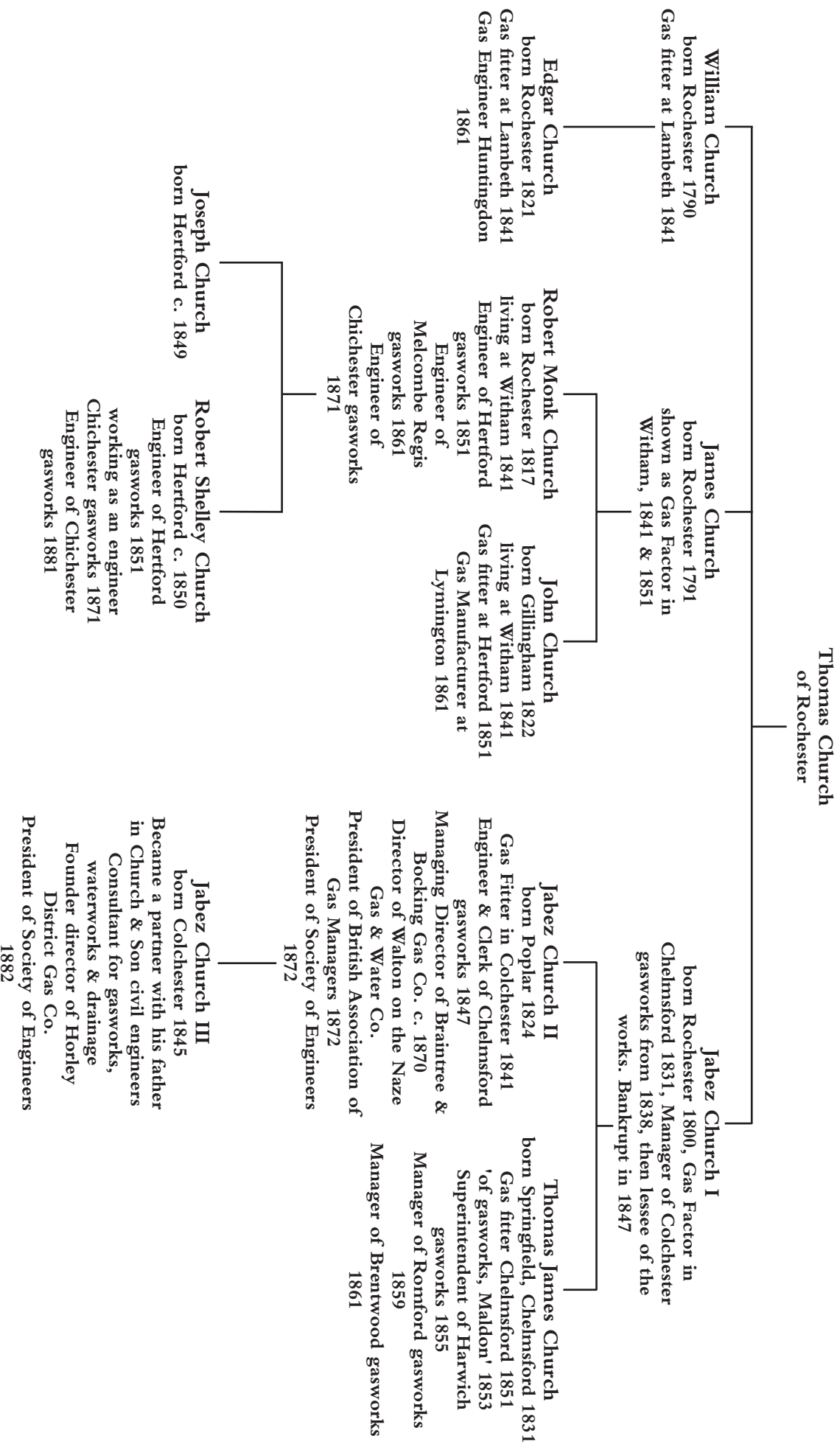
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84. TNA, HO107/1711, f.320, p.2, RG9/663, f.58, p.22, HO RG11/1189, f.37, p.5, & RG10/1173, f.46, p.39.
85. TNA RG9/975, f.23, p.7; The parish records of St. Margaret Rochester show Edgar Church as being born to William and Sarah Church on 09/03/1822 (MA, P305/1/7). The same record shows William being baptised on 14/11/1790.
86. TNA, HO107/1776, f.388, p.10; *CC*, 'Marriages', 07/01/1853, p.3; Mentioned in a court case concerning one of his employees at Harwich in *ES*, 29/08/1855, [p.3]. The 1859 Post Office Directory (p. 149) listed Thomas Church as the manager of Romford gasworks. In the record of a directors' meeting of 30/07/1856 within ERO, D/F 5/11/1 mention was made to Mr Church having been with them one year and in a directors' meeting of 03/10/1860 it was stated that a Mr Marriage had commenced his engagement at the works as manager, presumably as a replacement for Church; TNA RG9/1075, f.19, p.88 & RG10/1656, folio 22, p.35. The details of age and place of birth for Thomas J. Church on these censuses accord with the details for Thomas James Church the son of Jabez Church I cited in EN 7 above; E.R. Kelly, *Post Office Directory of Essex* (London, 1875), p.35.
87. ERO, D/F 27/7/1, 1903-1916; TNA, HO107/1776, f.388, p.10, & RG13/123, f.157, p.18.
88. Kate Church married Walter Henry Mills, 24/04/1879; *CC*, 02/05/1879, p.8, & Minnie Jane Church married Edmund Clark Worledge, 16/01/1890; *CC*, 24/01/1890, p.1.
89. ERO, D/F 27/7/1, p.51-52 & D/F 27/7/2, pp. 387 & 433.
90. J.G. Watson, *The Institution of Civil Engineers: A Short History* (London, 1982), p.11.
91. 'Regulations: Section 1, Of its Object', *Transactions of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, 1 (1836), p.xv.

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The Author

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The Church family at a glance

North Weald attack

by
Neil Wiffen

Seventy-five years have now passed since the Battle of Britain¹ was fought in the summer of 1940 and it still has to be seen as a pivotal moment in twentieth century history. There are few now alive who witnessed any of these events and even fewer who took an active part although there seems to be a real interest in the Battle as witnessed by the recent anniversary events of this summer. The story of the Battle is well known: having suffered heavy losses in daylight raids, which nearly succeeded in defeating the RAF, the Luftwaffe changed tactics in an effort to preserve its strength. To continue the offensive against Britain, it resorted to nocturnal bombing – the night Blitz – while at the same time introducing small pinpoint daylight raids by fast fighter-bombers to reduce aircraft and aircrew losses. One such raid took place almost on the last official day of this long battle when North Weald aerodrome was attacked. This article will describe the reason why the raid was chosen along with an examination of its main events and participants.

My interest in this raid is purely accidental: I do not live in North Weald and nor was I around at the time. For as long as I can remember though, I have been interested in the Second World War in general and in aircraft in particular. I blame my Dad! Michael Wiffen was a youngster during the war and was himself mad on aircraft and the goings on of military affairs, as I think most lads were (Fig.1). One story that he still recounts is about when he and some mates were playing football after school, on the Christy & Norris sports field at the back of Patching Hall

farm, just to the north of Chelmsford.² His younger sister Muriel was also there, collecting acorns from the adjacent hedgerow oaks to provide winter-feed for their rabbits. The kick-around was interrupted by a low flying Messerschmitt Me 109 fighter flying low overhead, from the west, quickly followed by a pair of Hawker Hurricanes (Fig.2). He later heard about a worker at the gravel pit, on the other side of the Chelmer Valley, on Back Lane, Little Waltham (later Middle Essex Gravel Pit), who was atop one of the gravel washers, 20 or 30 foot higher up than ground level. He, so it was said, was mightily surprised to be even closer to the aerial pursuit than those on the ground. It is not recorded if he had time to duck or jump – perhaps he just swore! What a story I thought, how wonderful to see at such close quarters Hurricanes seeing off a Me 109. Those lads must have talked about that for ages after – indeed a lifetime.³

1. A young Michael Wiffen immediately pre-war. Taken in the garden of the Lodge to The Orchards, Broomfield. (Author's collection.)



One thing always puzzled me about the story was that the Luftwaffe was hampered during the Battle of Britain by the very short range of the Me 109. One of the reasons they lost so many bombers was that because the Me 109 could not stay with them for long once the RAF joined battle because they had too little fuel on board to hang around and fight. London was at its extreme range when flying at combat speed, rather than on economical cruise settings. One eye was always on the fuel gauge and when to dash for their airfields in the Pas de Calais. So what was an Me 109 doing flying over Broomfield heading east? I have never doubted the aircraft spotting and identification skills of wartime children, but still...

The answer to this question wasn't to come for many years, not until I was reading *Gun Button to Fire* by Tom Neil, an account of his experiences while flying with 249 Squadron out of North Weald:

'Tuesday 29 October...the first of a stream of [Me] 109s flash across the top of my head...Thereafter, it was bedlam. As the bombs began to drop, the air was thick with the sound and fury of explosions, the ripping burp of machine-guns, and the roar of engines...Most of 249, having been ordered to patrol base at 15,000 feet, had just become airborne when the first of twenty or more 109 bombers and escorts had appeared...Thereafter, it had been a running fight as far as the coast with Butch and Sergeants Davidson and Stroud claiming one 109 'destroyed' and four others 'probable' and 'damaged'...

three or four of the attacking force had come down somewhere south of Colchester.⁷⁴

In Tom Neil's description is the answer to my question. North Weald is in the west of the county and Colchester to the northeast. If you run a course from one to the other what is very close to it in the centre? Broomfield. Could the Me 109 that my Dad saw being chased by Hurricanes be part of this raid? Possibly. The time of year was right as Aunt Muriel was collecting acorns. It was after school as well so the time of day was right. Hurricanes were based at North Weald as well and to an aviation-mad youngster it was easy to tell the difference between a Hurricane and a Spitfire. Possibly this is as far as we can get to saying that it was definitely associated with this raid and unless there were any others that occurred during that autumn then I'm content with the evidence to connect the memory with the raid. But can we find out anything more about the events of that October day when Me 109s and Hurricanes fought over Essex?

The Battle of Britain

The story of the Battle of Britain⁵ is well known and by the end of October the fighting had changed considerably from the long days of summer. From the German point of view it was simply a battle to gain air superiority that would then allow the invasion of Britain to take place as quickly as possible, with the naval might of the Royal Navy⁶ nullified by an umbrella of Luftwaffe fighters and bombers. For the British, it meant not losing air superiority while fine summer and early autumn weather and calm seas continued; survival through to autumn storms would mean that a German invasion would have to be put off until the spring of 1941 giving Britain time to fortify landing beaches, re-arm and make good its losses to date.

The Battle has been divided up by historians into four main phases:⁷

July 10th – August 11th:

Known to the Germans as the *Kanalkampf* or 'Channel battles'. This was the period when the Luftwaffe was moving units within France, replenishing supplies and equipping airfields after the swift invasion of France and the Low Countries that had taken place from May 10th 1940. The Luftwaffe were also testing the RAF reactions and their first aim was to close the English Channel to British shipping.

August 12th – 23rd:

Adlerangriff or 'Eagle Attack', was the early assault against the coastal airfields as well as essential radar stations.

August 24th – September 6th:

the Luftwaffe continued to attack the RAF airfields and it is in this phase that they come closest to victory.

September 7th onwards:

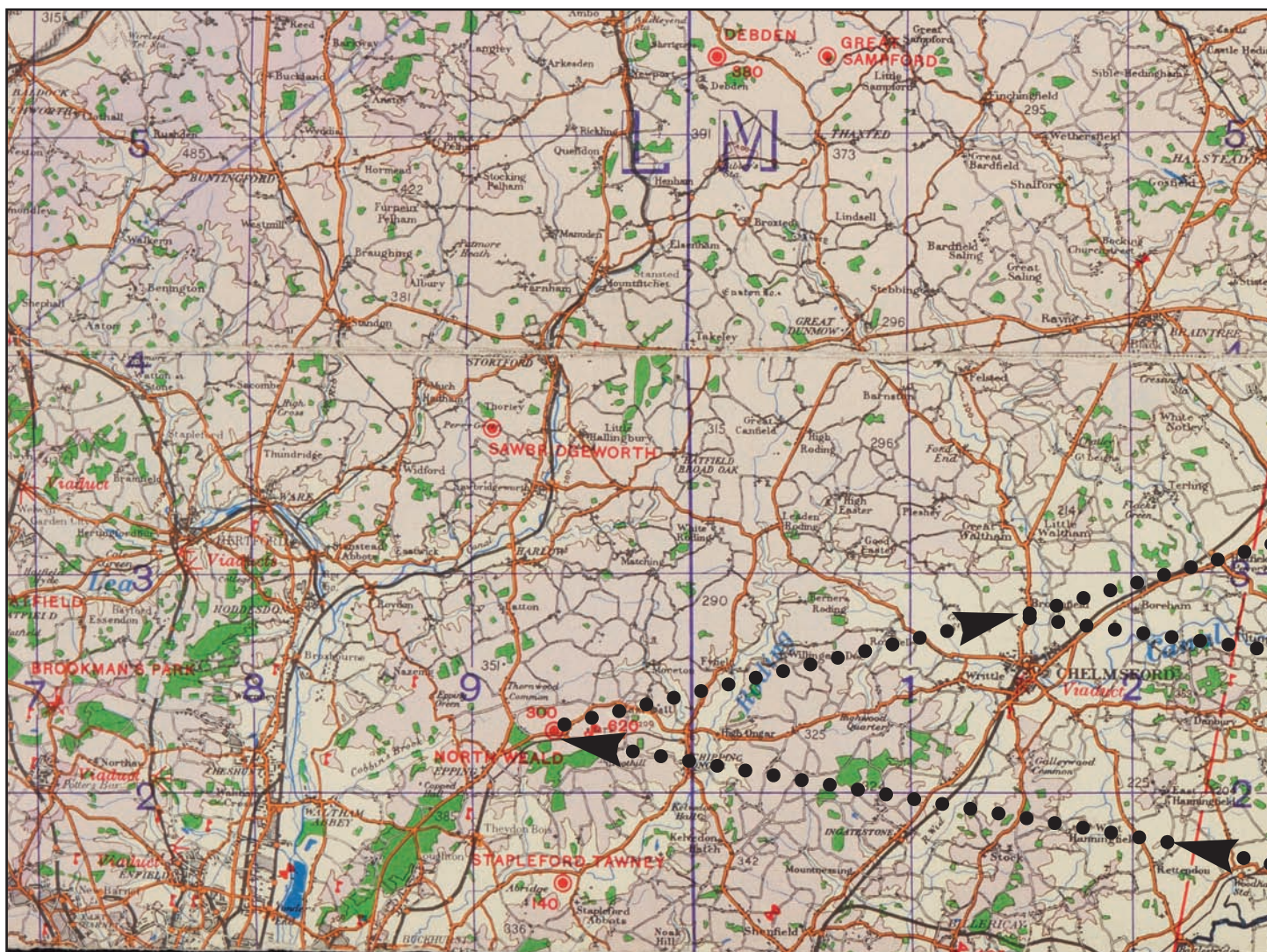
the Luftwaffe, believing that the RAF were very low on fighters and aiming to bring the Battle to a conclusion, and in retaliation

for RAF raids on Berlin, switched their main effort to attacking London. This gave the RAF a chance to repair their airfields. The Luftwaffe also began to switch their main bombing efforts to night raids as their losses continued to mount during daylight raids.⁸ RAF nocturnal defences were nowhere near as advanced as those that had been evolved for daylight interceptions over the previous few years. To compliment the medium bomber raids at night, fast fighter-bomber attacks were being launched by day, 'raids...designed...to lure the RAF into combat, and to attack with as much precision as possible a suitable military or economic target.'⁹ These raids were a clever change of tactics for a Luftwaffe aiming to conserve its resources as they 'were causing a considerable nuisance to [the] RAF...[as] politically they couldn't be ignored. The pilots of Fighter Command were compelled to intercept them, suffering many losses as invariably the bomb carrying aircraft had an escort flying still higher and ready to 'bounce' the defending fighters'.¹⁰

2. 'quickly followed by a pair of Hawker Hurricanes'.

(Author photo, 19/09/2015.)





3. The area of operations with possible routes flown by the attacking aircraft.
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, Air Sheet 9, 1942.)

It is in this end phase of the Battle of Britain that the raid on North Weald, a 'suitable military target', took place.

North Weald was indeed a prime target for the Luftwaffe. It was an important RAF sector fighter station in Air Chief Marshall Hugh Dowding's Fighter Command. Within 11 Group, under the control of Air Vice Marshall Keith Park, that section of Fighter Command was tasked with the defence of the London and the south-east; it was strategically situated to fulfil the role assigned it. Also it was not alone as there were other important 11 Group sector fighter airfields in Essex at Debden and Hornchurch along with satellite airfields at Stapleford Tawney and Rochford.¹¹ (Fig.3) Two Hawker Hurricane squadrons, 249 and

257 were stationed at North Weald on 29th October.

The Luftwaffe had already attacked North Weald, along with other Fighter Command airfields in Essex, it being targeted on 24th (and Hornchurch) and 31st August (Debden also and Hornchurch twice) and 3rd September. This was all part of the campaign to knock the RAF out of the war and pave the way for the invasion of Britain once air superiority had been achieved. Damage was sustained to the airfield, including the deaths of nine soldiers from the Essex Regiment on the 24th when their shelter was hit. Eight weeks later much of this damage had been repaired.¹²

October 1940 was generally a dull, wet month but on the 29th there was moderate fog in the

morning but during the day visibility was 'moderate-fine or fair' while the surface wind was 'calm or E-SE slight', although Tom Neil described it as 'A 'nothing' day early on: mist, low cloud, dull and miserable.' 'Haze up to 1,000 ft. & patchy cloud above' was how 249 Squadron intelligence recorded the weather.¹³ However, the dreary weather was not bad enough to put a stop to operations. 257 Squadron flew two air raid patrols that day, between 09:30-11:05 (10 aircraft) in the Maidstone area, and then another at between 12:40-14:10 (10 aircraft).¹⁴ On both of these, Squadron Leader Robert Stanford Tuck DFC had flown having claimed two Me 109s shot down over the Gravesend area the day before.¹⁵ North Weald's other



resident Squadron, 249, was also busy. Pilot Officer (PO) Millington had undertaken a solo patrol first thing, 07:05-08:15, and he was followed by POs Neil and Thompson between 09:15-10:25 when they patrolled their base. While they were up a further nine aircraft were on patrol between 09:30-11:05. Participants in this patrol were Canadian Flight Lieutenant 'Butch' Barton,¹⁶ and POs Maciejowski and Millington. Another Patrol was sent up between 11:45-12:10 (12 aircraft) while a further five aircraft followed them up at 14:50-15:05 and three between 15:45-16:20.¹⁷ Even though at the end of the Battle there was still plenty of flying to be undertaken from this busy airfield.

The Attack

On the other side of the English Channel, in the Pas de Calais,

plans had been drawn up by Lehrgeschwader 2 (LG 2)¹⁸ of Luftflotte 2 that would interrupt the daily routine being undertaken at North Weald. One of the Luftwaffe pilots, Josef Harmeling, who took part in the raid recalled:

'It was late in the afternoon, about 1700 hours (local time) when about 40 Messerschmitts Bf-109's of my Gruppe took off from Calais/Marck airfield. We headed on a course for London and reached the English coast at about 6,000 metres. Our Gruppe's objective was an airfield to the north-east of London. This was a diversionary feint attack about 20 kilometres from the primary target and we took the opportunity to descend to about 4-500 metres for the attack.'¹⁹

An Intelligence Bulletin summarising enemy activity for the day stated that this attack was just one of four sent in over Kent towards London while another was aimed at Southampton.²⁰ In what was titled 'Attack on Kent and Essex 1620-1718' 11 Group identified 11 separate raids with around 150-200 enemy aircraft involved. Of the 11 'Two raids approached Essex via North Foreland, turning west at Burnham, and dive-bombed North Weald. The other raids approached from the South-East but none of them reached London'. As the Me 109s completed their turn over Burnham they would have been between five and six minutes, depending on speed, away from North Weald.²¹

As the German aircraft were flying towards their target both 249 and 257 Squadrons were in the process of sending up aircraft,



4. 'aircraft from both 249 and 257 Squadrons were still in the process of taking off'. A taxiing Hurricane on the grass at Duxford. (Author photo, 19/09/2015.)

nine from 257, airborne at 16:40, along with five from 249 (Barton, Davidson, Millington, Stroud and Maciejowski), who were ordered to patrol base at 15,000 feet, followed by another five at 16:45.²² (Fig.4) The North Weald Operations Record Book records the time of the 'surprise attack' as 16:40.²³ As a surprise attack is mentioned possibly the Luftwaffe had succeeded in keeping RAF Fighter Command guessing as to where the attack would take place. This form of attack, with fast fighter-bombers, worked to the advantage of the Luftwaffe. Once a raid had crossed the coast it could not be tracked by Radar, only by the Observer Corps by sight and sound. As there was light cloud and haze about this would have hampered visual tracking and the height, c.20,000 feet, and speed, over 300mph, of the Me 109s, would not have helped the Observer Corps. The attack itself would have happened quickly as the Me 109s dived from their cruise altitude of about 20,000 feet to around 1,500 feet, as Harmeling recounted, with a subsequent increase in air speed as well, perhaps nudging 400mph depending on the angle of attack. Tom Neil did not report any air raid sirens going off, the first he knew of the attack was when:

'It was about tea-time and I was sitting in my bedroom in the hut alongside the mess...After a time I heard the far-away noise of engines and concluded that the squadron, entirely or in part, was being sent off on patrol... I crossed to the window, just in time to see the first of a stream of [Me] 109s flash across the top of my head.'²⁴

The speed of the attack meant that surprise was achieved at North Weald as aircraft from both 249 and 257 Squadrons were still in the process of taking off, which their respective Operations Record Books make clear. However, PO Millington, in his Combat Report does say that 'Just after the squadron was ordered to scramble bombs started to fall' so perhaps there was a last moment warning of attack?²⁵ While five, Barton, Davidson, Millington, Stroud and Maciejowski, were already airborne, having taken off a few seconds or possibly a minute earlier, Yellow Section of 249, comprising Flight Lieutenant Lofts, POs McConnell and Thompson were caught in the process of taking off. The Hurricane in which PO Lofts was flying, V7627, was damaged

by bomb blast but he was able to land back at base.²⁶ However, 257 Squadron (presumably taking off a little later than Barton and his comrades although they are recorded as having taken off at the same time in squadron records) were less fortunate. Sergeant Girdwood's aircraft 'was struck by bomb blast and set on fire and he was burned to death'.²⁷

Along with the Hurricanes of Girdwood and Lofts, the bombs caused much other damage. The guardroom, only just rebuilt from a previous raid, was destroyed along with a hanger, containing a truck and a crane, a Miles Magister aircraft and several other huts. Strangely the Station's Operations Record Book only states that 'In all there were *about* six fatal casualties' (my italics).²⁸ 249 Squadron lost 20 year old Aircraftman 1st Class T.H. Saunders who was caught on the ground by blast from the bombs. He 'was admitted to St. Margaret's Hospital, Epping, where he died the next morning' with the rather brusque 'Usual signals sent and next of kin informed' being recorded.²⁹ The bombs did not discriminate about whom they killed; 61 year old George Tyrell of Harlesden, London, was injured during the attack and died later on the same day in St Margaret's. Possibly a civilian contractor.³⁰

News of the raid soon spread through the local civil defence reporting network. First notification of the raid was sent to Essex County Control (at County Hall, Chelmsford) at around 16:56, just ten minutes or so after the attack. All that was recorded was that 'H.E. Bombs have fallen at North Weald. Further report to follow. Watermains damaged, Company notified Time of occurrence 16.59'.³¹ As further information was collected and the situation on the ground assessed a clearer picture of what had happened at North Weald began to appear. At 20:51 Essex County Control were able to report to Regional Control Cambridge that:

'Ref my 17.20 [message] raid on North Weald at 16.59 stop Time now stated to be 16.45 stop 12 to 16 H E dropped across aerodrome direct hit on guardroom being obtained causing 3 minor casualties stop One British fighter believed hit when leaving ground and pilot believed killed stop 6 bombs fell near Toll House Corner and one RAF guard was killed and another slightly injured stop minor damage to road and water main and to property on aerodrome stop No roads now blocked stop 2 H E fell 16.40 rear of Parishes Farm High Road North Weald and railway line rear north Weald Station is blocked stop a farmhouse was damaged stop.'³²

At 05:15 on 30th October a Situation Report recorded that 'it is now ascertained that 15 enemy fighter bombers attacked North Weald aerodrome 20 to 30 bombs were dropped Casualties. 4 dead and 7 injured considerable damage to drome buildings also 2 planes and 1 training plane'.³³ It is interesting to note that while Josef Harmeling stated that 'about 40' Me 109s took off for the attack, 249 Squadron reported that 12 aircraft bombed while the final Situation File report said it was 15. The number of bombs dropped being 'about 44...about 27 falling on the camp, mostly on the landing ground' (North Weald Operations Book), '20-30' (Situation File) and 'about 40' (249 Squadron Operations Record Book) while 257 Squadron recorded that the 'station was dive bombed'. Some of the bombs were recorded as 'Two large bombs' (North Weald Operations Book) or 'One large one, 500lb., was dropped in the middle of the aerodrome' (249 Squadron Operations Record Book). It would seem that some of the ME 109s carried 'large' 250kg bombs, which would tie in exactly with the 500lb one mentioned, with the majority carrying four 50kg bombs which

would make the numbers of bombs being dropped by around a dozen aircraft about 40 or so as recorded by the RAF. And what of the residue of the 40 fighters not accounted for in the attack? They must have been flying escort for those with bombs, just waiting to pounce on any defending RAF fighters.

The Aerial Battle

So, with the fleeting attack on the airfield over, emergency services would have started to deal with the damage and casualties inflicted, while the (now) low flying Me 109s that had just dropped their bombs turned for the coast, probably on the lookout for RAF fighters. However 257 Squadron were not in a good tactical position to respond. Already they had lost one pilot and the rest of the squadron would not have had time to gain any height or speed in which to pursue the fast, low flying enemy. However Flight Lieutenant Blatchford, acting Squadron Leader of 257, did attempt an intercept but without success. After chasing a Me 109 he was himself attacked and his aircraft damaged. He did manage to land though and was thus luckier than PO Surma who 'heard an explosion at 3,000 feet and discovered his cockpit full of smoke. He baled out and landed in a tree near Matching and after informing Home Guards of his nationality was taken down from the tree, given a couple of whiskies and driven back to the camp. Apart from a black eye he was not injured'.³⁴ This is probably the 'completely smashed' 'British Hurricane fighter' recorded as coming down in a field adjacent to Moreton Road, Bobbingworth at 16:50 with an uninjured pilot.³⁵ It is interesting to speculate that it might have been the (higher flying?) fighter escorts, diving down, that attacked Blatchford and Surma as the Me 109s that had dropped their bombs might just have been more interested in escaping?

As for 249 Squadron, some of their aircraft were also only just taking off as the attack begun and at least PO Lofts was in no position to continue the pursuit. However Barton, Davidson, Millington, Stroud and Maciejowski appear to have escaped taking off during the actual attack, possibly by only a few seconds³⁶ which would have allowed the pilots time to get their Hurricanes in flying trim, work out where they were and, crucially, gain some altitude which could then be traded for speed, if needed, by diving. They may well have seen the Me 109s speeding across their home airfield and watched the bombs exploding. If this was the case, they were well placed to start the counter-attack.

At low level the Hurricane, which could struggle against the Me 109 at higher altitude, had a performance that was much closer to that of the German fighter. Millington stated that the German fighters 'made off due west diving down to about 500 feet' while Sergeant Davidson 'chased the e/a [enemy aircraft] which were splitting up in all directions'.³⁷ The chase to the coast was on but for some it would have been even more finely balanced to whether they could escape the counter-attacking Hurricanes as Harmeling stated that:

'it was during this low-level attack that I received a hit in the radiator system, presumably from the ground defences. The result was that the coolant temperature rose quickly and the motor commenced losing revs with alarming speed. However, I sought to gain height, in case I had to get out in an emergency.'³⁸

If his Me 109 had indeed been hit by ground fire from the airfield defences then Harmeling's chance of getting back across the channel were very slim even without further attack from pursuing Hurricanes. Very soon

his engine, without its vital coolant, would have seized up or caught fire. By gaining height Harmeling was trading the speed he had accrued in the dive to attack North Weald into height in case he had to bail out. However, by climbing he would have reduced his speed allowing the pursuing Hurricanes the opportunity to catch him up.

And catch the Messerschmitts they did. Millington, in his Combat Report noted that 'I opened up to medium speed and gradually I overhauled E.A. which had climbed to about 3000 feet near the coast west of Southminster.' All the claims for shot down aircraft were made in the east of the county.³⁹ This suggests that the Me 109s might well have had the initial speed advantage in escaping from North Weald and that it took the Hurricanes of 249 Squadron some time to catch up with them. Michael Wiffen in Broomfield witnessed one Me 109 at 'low level', being pursued by two Hurricanes but at this distance of 75 years from the events of the day the approximate time between the Me 109 and

the Hurricanes is not recalled. Broomfield is about 13.5 miles from North Weald as the crow flies and at a not unrealistic 300mph it would have taken just under three minutes to reach it, a further two minutes or so to Heybridge and another couple of minutes to Langenhoe. In that time, six to seven minutes, a race to the coast was being flown and it was in the east of the county that the price was paid by some of the Germans.

The Claims

Barton: Attacked six claiming damage to two, one 'streaming glycol from Rad[iator] (other small amount of white smoke from wing root)'. A third was attacked and the pilot bailed out and the Me 109 crashed on the Maldon to Goldhanger Road.

Millington: Attacked one of four Me 109s, 'with two HE 113s weaving behind'. The Me 109 dived with large pieces coming off of it, disappearing into the haze at about 500 feet emitting large quantities of black smoke... crashed in the vicinity of Buxey Sands.'

Maciejowski: 'delivered a 5-10

second burst stern attack on an Me.109 which immediately burst into flames and crashed to earth about 200 yards from the seashore, probably off the river Blackwater.'

Stroud: 'overhauled a pair of Me.109s near the river Blackwater and carried out a beam attack on one of them... He saw the bullets entering the cockpit and engine...and when last seen, was steadily losing height and it probably crashed about 12 miles out of the Estuary...also attacked another and bits flew off but he lost it in the clouds.'

Davidson: 'at about 3,000 ft. caught up with an Me109 which broke the cloud ahead of him [*sic*]. He carried out a quarter beam attack, giving two short burst which entered the engine and cockpit. The e/a. flicked over and dived vertically through the clouds belching black and white smoke...He lost it in the haze and saw no further sign of it.'

The pilots were awarded 2 Me 109s as destroyed, 3 as probably destroyed and 3 as damaged.⁴⁰



On the ground

With the attack on North Weald having taken place at around 16:40, the RAF aerial pursuit of the retreating Me 109s would have reached the east of the county some six or so minutes later. By then Barton and his fellow pilots were busy making their attacks count and on the ground things were going to get busy for the authorities, as well as for the Germans who had been pursued.

The Eastern Report Centre appear to have got the first message through to Essex County Control with their preliminary report message timed at 17:25: 'One Messerschmitt down Chantry Farm Maldon Goldhanger Road stop Pilot baled out stop Telephone wires in vicinity down stop Pilot just been brought into St Peters Hospital Maldon by the military badly wounded'. Barton claimed that the third Me 109 that he attacked had come down on the Goldhanger Road, which this report confirms. The pilot, Hans-Wilhelm Rank later died of his wounds. A scrap of paper accompanying this report is

imed '16:45' which ties in exactly with the estimated time-line of events and when the aircraft should have been over the coast.⁴¹

Another corroborating piece of evidence is the Crashed Aircraft Report sent at around 19:05 from the Eastern Report Centre to Chelmsford: 'German plane total wreck due east Marsh House Farm Tillingham between 1st + 2nd seawalls stop Pilot uninjured stop about 16:45 stop.'⁴² Was this a victim of Sergeant Davidson? He does not specify where the aircraft that he shot down landed as 'He lost it in the haze and saw no further sign of it.' The other pilots all claim that aircraft they attacked went down in the Blackwater estuary or further out to sea. If it was then he had shot down Konrad Jäckel, who was reported to have been 'captured' at a message sent at 19:12.⁴³

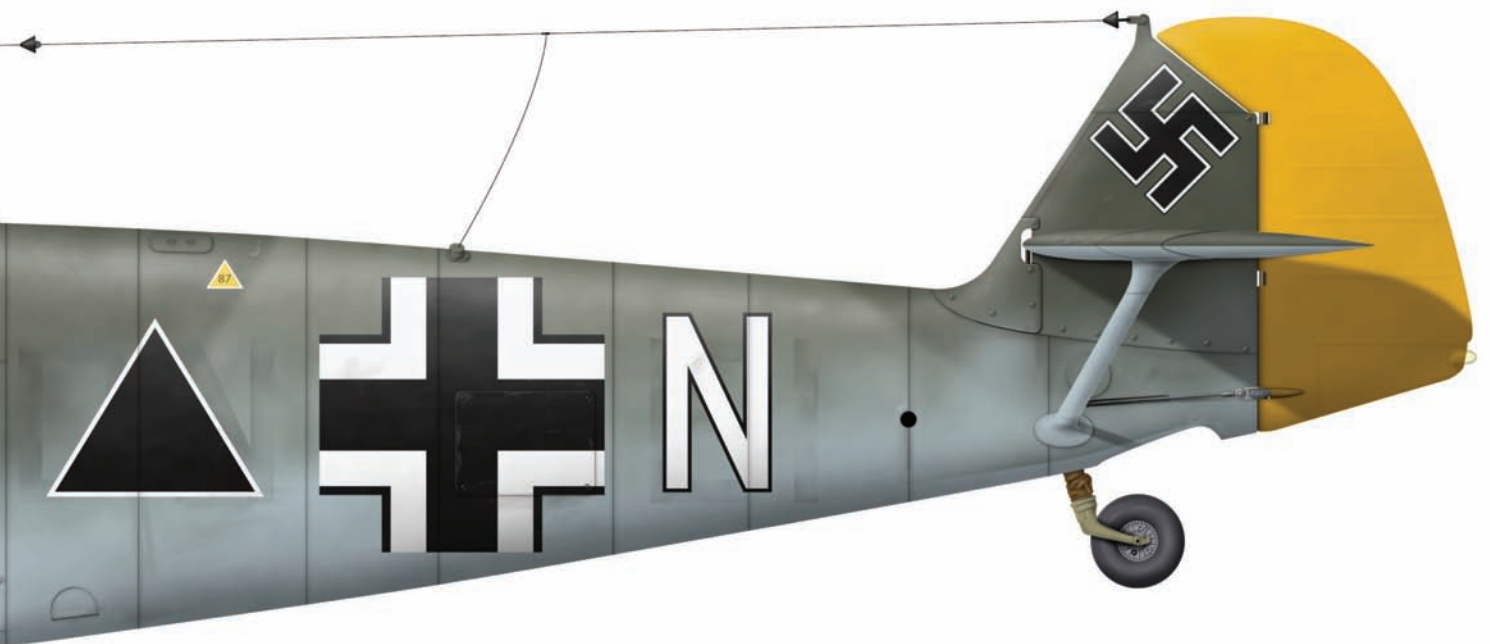
Meanwhile over at Colchester, Divisional Control were collating information about another Me 109 that had come down which was sent on to Chelmsford at 19:46:

'4/5 mile SE by E of St Mary's Church Langenhoe. FAIRLY intact and guarded by H. Royal Scots. 17:00.

Pilot slight head injuries and has been captured. German Messerschmidt 109, single seater brought down by Hurricane.' (Fig.5)

This was the Me 109 piloted by Harmeling who recalled that, having been attacked by a Spitfire [*sic*] and Hurricane at an altitude of 'about 80 metres', in which he was wounded in the head and right arm, he then went on to crash land his aircraft 'in a rural area near Colchester. After my landing I summoned my strength to jump out of my aircraft and attempt to destroy it but some British soldiers intervened.'⁴⁴ Tom Neil wrote that:

'The news...leaked through that three or four of the attacking force had come down somewhere south of Colchester; several 109s crashed to destruction and one, Butch's, which had been hit in the radiator,



5. The Me 109E-4 of Josef Harmeling which he crash landed '4/5 mile SE by E of St Mary's Church Langenhoe'. (Reproduced by courtesy of Chris S-B/inkworm.)



6. The Me 109E-3 of Horst Perez, brought down on 30th August 1940 and now on display at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Neil's 'wan, pallid little thing, not at all the venomous, waspy creature we had so often encountered zipping around the sky'. (Author photo, 21/10/2012.)

landed wheels-up in a field. As it was said to be in one piece, we decided to visit the scene to inspect it when the first opportunity presented itself.⁷⁴⁵

An intelligence report stated that this Me 109 had 'Following fighter action, during which cooling system was hit and engine overheated pilot made fair belly landing. 60-70 .303 strikes coming from astern are evenly distributed over airframe and each radiator has two strikes'. It was fitted with an external bomb carrier.⁴⁶ This certainly ties in with Barton's claim that one of the Me 109s he attacked was streaming glycol from its radiator. Did any of the .303 strikes that had hit the aircraft come from ground defences at North Weald as Harmeling thought? Possibly a more forensic investigation of the Me 109 might have found evidence for this but with so many German aircraft to salvage, the exact nature of where the fatal shot came from was not

considered pressing. A claim such as Barton made would have been more than proof that he was responsible for bringing Harmeling down.

Tom Neil accompanied Barton the next day, once they had been stood down at lunchtime because of the bad weather, to go and look for the crashed Me 109:

'We located it, finally, in a field a few miles south of Colchester, sitting forlornly on its belly...It was the first time I had been within touching distance of a 109 and I was not too impressed...It seemed a good deal smaller and slimmer than a Hurricane and, with an engine approximately the same power as a Merlin, it was obvious why the 109's performance was so much greater than that of our own aircraft, particularly at altitude. The cockpit seemed tiny by comparison and the instrument layout and controls, simple to the point

of being primitive. The hood, too, had bars everywhere and we were all agreed that visibility could not have been anything special. In fact, it seemed a wan, pallid little thing, not at all the venomous, waspy creature we had so often encountered zipping around the sky.'⁴⁷ (Fig.6)

A further Me 109 is recorded as having been lost, coming down at sea 12 miles east of the Blackwater estuary that afternoon. This belonged to Hans-Benno von Schenk whose body was washed up at Southend five days later.⁴⁸ He could have been the victim of Stroud, who claimed a victim 'about 12 miles out of the Estuary' or it could have been Millington who claimed a Me 109 which went down 'near Buxey Sands', which is to the east of the Dengie peninsular. Maybe they attacked the same machine in the heat of battle and both claimed it. This was not uncommon. An Me 109 of LG2 just made it across the

channel to crash-landed at Wissant, possibly the last Luftwaffe aircraft lost this day from the raid on North Weald.⁴⁹

The majority of the Hurricanes of the two squadrons returned to North Weald over the course of the next half hour or so. Surprisingly most of 257 Squadron landed later than 249 Squadron despite not having been directly in combat or having made any claims against enemy aircraft. Possibly in the confusion of the air raid they scattered and took some time to regroup and then decide on the state of the airfield to see if they could actually land. Maybe they went looking in different directions to try and find a fleeing enemy? Barton however, was back at 17:05, demonstrating just how quickly the chase and combats were while Maciejowski didn't land until 17:40. Was he was checking that there were no straggling enemy aircraft to attack or did he stooze around and take a look at where he thought the Me 109s had gone down?⁵⁰

It is interesting that it was only the five pilots of 249 Squadron (Barton, Davidson, Millington, Stroud and Maciejowski) out of the 19 from both squadrons who were in the process of taking off or had just taken off, that were in a position to attack the retreating German aircraft with any success. Getting airborne just before the attack struck was crucial to their success in shooting down Me 109s a few minutes later over the coast. Their comrades were either being attacked themselves, or damaged or killed by bomb blast or just not in a position to take up the pursuit. Disorganised and having survived a take-off through bomb blasts would not have been good for a pilot's concentration. Height and speed would not have been gained and the low cloud and haze would have meant that the fast flying Me 109s would have soon disappeared from view. Luck, altitude and speed were with those five pilots and they made it count.



7. The approximate locations of the Me 109s brought down following their attack on North Weald.
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, Air Sheet 9.)

For those opening their newspapers the following morning there was scant information about the events of the previous day. The *Manchester Guardian* reported that 'The air war over Britain yesterday went strongly in favour of the Royal Air Force...Four attacks were made on London, but few Nazi machines – mostly fighters and fighter-bombers – eluded our defences...Only a small number of bombs have been dropped, mostly in the outskirts of the capital, and little damage and few casualties are reported'. There was a little more a few days later with two small reports in the *Essex County Standard*: 'A [Me 109] was brought down in an engagement over an Essex town just before dusk on Tuesday. The pilot, wearing an Iron Cross, was wounded and baled out. His machine crashed in a cabbage field. The pilot was taken to hospital, and died on Wednesday'. This was Rank and his aircraft. Further on, it was also reported that 'Mr. Jum Brown, a member of the Home Guard in a S.E. village, has shown great presence of mind and agility in capturing a German pilot who landed in a damaged 'plane. Mr. Brown captured the pilot in time to prevent him setting fire to the 'plane'. This was the Me 109 that Harmeling crash-landed at Langenhoe.⁵¹

So, as this day, so near to the end of the Battle of Britain, ended, there were those who had been killed, like Alexander Girdwood to be taken care of, and those with fatal injuries, Thomas Saunders or Hans-Wilhelm Rank, to be tended and those 'Usual signals sent and next of kin informed'. Just a few casualties on this day out of the 2,698 Luftwaffe aircrew and 544 Fighter Command pilots who were killed during the Battle.⁵² For some it meant the end of their war as they started their first night in captivity and for others it must have meant a night in the mess with a beer or two. Maybe for younger witnesses to the day's events, there was much to talk about over tea, much to be remembered and recounted in the years to come. For 23 year old PO William Henry Millington, having travelled half way round the world to fly and fight in the RAF, there was less than a day remaining to live, being killed on the 30th in combat over the Channel. On the aircraft side, a Miles Magister, a couple of Hurricanes and five Me 109s had been destroyed with other aircraft damaged – just a small number out of the staggering 1,887 and 1,547 aircraft that the Luftwaffe and the RAF lost respectively during the course of the Battle.⁵³ A day to remember for many reasons,

a day which probably doesn't feature much in the historiography of the Battle of Britain but a satisfying answer as to why Me 109s were flying over Broomfield one afternoon 75 years ago.

References

1. The Battle of Britain, for the British, officially lasted from 10th July to 31st October 1940, representing the most intense period of fighting. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Britain#cite_note-9, (21/09/15).
2. These included Hubert and Bernard Fisk, Philip Lakin and Bobby Burns.
3. This account, including the gravel pit reference, is just as my Dad has always told it.
4. Neil, T., *Gun Button to Fire*, (Stroud, 2010), pp.151-3.
5. Possibly the finest recent account of the battle is S. Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain* (London, 2001). See also W.G. Ramsey (ed), *The Battle of Britain, Then and Now* (Harlow, 1989).
6. It is important to remember just how dominant the Royal Navy was. Bungay highlights this strength: 'By July 1940, the German navy has already lost one pocket battleship, three cruisers, and ten destroyers (all during the 'phoney war'). Its two battleships were still being fitted out, its two battlecruisers had been torpedoed and were being repaired and its remaining two pocket battleships were also in dock...There were one heavy cruiser, three light cruisers and nine destroyers left. The Royal Navy had five battlehips, one aircraft carrier, ten cruisers and fifty-seven destroyers in home waters alone, with more on escort duty, and a powerful Mediterranean fleet', p.114-5.
7. See Wikipedia entry for a good introduction to these phases.
8. While we tend to think of RAF losses as being crucial to the outcome of the Battle, the Luftwaffe were also losing planes and men at an astonishing rate. They had already lost 1,428 aircraft destroyed during the invasion of France (RAF 959). 'In a lecture held in Berlin on 2 February 1944, the Intelligence Officer of KG2 showed that from August to December 1940 German fighter strength declined by 30% and bomber strength by 25%.' Bungay, pp.105, 368; See P. Rusiecki, 'Front-Line County: Essex and the Blitz, 1940-1941', *Essex Journal*, 46, (2) 2011, pp.61-8 for a discussion of the impact on Essex of the Blitz.
9. R. Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939 - 1945* (London, 2013), p.91
10. N. Parker, *Luftwaffe Crash Archive*, 6 (Walton-on-Thames, 2014), p.643.
11. G. Smith, *Essex Airfields in the Second World War* (Newbury, 1996). Sector stations were fully equipped airfields which controlled the fighters once airborne while satellite airfields had only basic facilities but allowed fighters to be deployed further afield, allowing dispersal of resources from enemy attack.
12. There is much useful information in Ramsey, pp.160-75.
13. Meteorological Committee, *Monthly Weather Report of the Meteorological Office*, 57 (10) 1940, www.metoffice.gov.uk/archive/monthly-weather-report-1940s, (29/05/15); The National Archives (TNA), AIR 28/603, Operations Record Book of RAF Station, North Weald, p.4; Neil, p.150; Royal Air Force Museum (RAFM), T211898, Combat Reports for 249 Squadron, 08/1940-04/1941.
14. TNA, AIR 27/1526, 257 Squadron 'Operations Record Book' Form 541, f.126 & Form 540, p.6.
15. Tuck was a leading ace and went on to claim at least 28 enemy aircraft shot down. Post war, coincidentally, he moved to Broomfield for a few years, living in the Vineries on Church Green.
16. See www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/military-obituaries/air-force-obituaries/8074133/Wing-Commander-Butch-Barton.html, (21/09/15).
17. These four patrols all saw the Station Commander, Wing Commander F.V. Beamish take part in. See www.bbm.org.uk/BeamishFV.htm, (21/09/15). This website has very good biographies of the pilots mentioned in this article.
18. LG 2, or Demonstration Wing 2 was a experimental unit tasked with evaluating new aircraft and tactics. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lehrgeschwader_2, (21/09/15)
19. A very useful web page supplied many details and photos of Harmeling's experiences and Me 109. However, since I came upon it, it is now not live. Annoyingly there were no references to the origin of much of the material posted! <http://asisbiz.com/il2/Bf-109E/Bf-109E-LG2.4-28%5E+N%29-Harmeling.html>. Hereafter 'Harmeling'.
20. RAFM, T567279, No 11 Group Intelligence Bulletin No. 97, 29/10/40.
21. It is interesting to speculate what the main target for the Germans was if the North Weald raid was a diversion. Was it London itself? Also did the 'two raids' that turned west at Burnham represent fighter-bombers and their escorts flying as separate formations, joining up for the final run-in to the target or with the escorts remaining at high altitude ready to dive down and protect their bomb carrying colleagues?
22. RAFM, T211898, records that the 'Squadron left North Weald at 1640' and that 'Barton was 'first off the ground and over the Wireless Masts when the bombing started'. However AIR 27/1498 is clear that there were five minutes between the first group of aircraft taking off and the second. The Wireless masts were under a mile to the east of the airfield.
23. TNA, AIR 27/1498, 1526; AIR 28/603, p.3, f.45. 249 Squadron Operations Record Book (AIR 27/1498, p.18) recorded a different time: 'A lively day for North Weald. About 1700 hours Squadron ordered to patrol base'. 16:40 is the most consistent time for the attack to have taken place.
24. Neil, p.151. 'flash across the top of my head' does seem to suggest that the Me 109s were lower than 1,500 feet although the German pilots would have to be careful not to go too low and be caught in the blast of their own bursting bombs. Generally the rule was the lower and faster you were the better your chances of survival. Harmeling also described using the 'fixed armament', machine guns and cannons, in the attack so the aircraft would have had to have been low enough for their use.

25. RAFM, T211898.
26. TNA, AIR 27/1498.
27. TNA, AIR 27/1526. A.G. Girdwood, RAFVR, was 22 when he was killed. He now rests in Paisley (Hawkhead) Cemetery. www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead, (21/09/15).
28. TNA, AIR 28/603. It is suprising that the exact numbers of casualties are not stated.
29. TNA, AIR 27/1498; Twenty year old T.H. Saunders, RAFVR, is buried in Leicester (Welford Road) Cemetery. www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead, (21/09/15).
30. UK, WWII Civilian Deaths, 1939-1945, www.ancestry.co.uk, (30/09/15).
31. Essex Record Office (ERO), C/W 1/2/89, Incident Files for Western Area, 29/10/1940. These wonderful records are a source of much valuable information, mostly concerned with the civil infrastructure, which builds on RAF records. However, the timings of this initial message are not quite clear but they do correspond with broad outline of events. For further information see the introductory notes for the C/W catalogue. seax.essexcc.gov.uk, (21/09/15).
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. TNA, AIR 27/1526. Surma was Czech: see B. Cull, *249 at War* (London, c,1997), p.49.
35. ERO, C/W 1/2/89 and also a copy in C/W 1/11/1. Crashed Aircraft Reports, 22/05 – 26/12/1940. While Matching and Bobbingworth are not adjacent to one another at the heights and speed that the aircraft were operating at it does not take long to travel some distance and the plane might have gone one way and the parachuting pilot another.
36. If Barton, leading the squadron, had only got as far as the Wireless Masts less than a mile to the east he could not have been airborne for very long, see EN 22.
37. RAFM, T211898.
38. Harmeling.
39. RAFM, T211898.
40. Ibid. Instances of RAF pilots claiming to have seen the Heinkel He 113s, a rival to the Me 109 that was not chosen to go into production, were quite common during the Battle of Britain due to German propaganda efforts. An intelligence report was even prepared on it, see TNA, AIR 40/237. For a recent discussion see T. Spencer, 'Hook, Line and Sinkers', *Luftwaffe Eagles, Flypast Special*, (2015), pp.40-45.
41. Rank is buried in the German Military Cemetery at Cannock Chase, P1.R.4.G.113; ERO, C/W 1/2/45, Incident Files for Eastern Area, 29/10/1940. See also Parker, p.652. The photo reproduced there, and in Ramsey, p.705, is not given a source. It clearly shows that the Me 109 came down very violently being almost totally unrecognisable as an aircraft.
42. Ibid. There is also a copy of this, and for Rank's Me 109 at Goldhanger, in C/W 1/11/1.
43. ERO, C/W 1/2/45; Parker, p.651. In this Jäckel is recorded as flying with 8/JG26, a different fighter group to Harmeling and Rank. Does this mean that Jäckel and fellow pilots from JG26 were flying fighter-escort for the fighter-bombers from LG2?
44. Harmeling; Parker, p.653.
45. Neil, pp.153.
46. TNA, AIR 22/266, Location of enemy aircraft brought down in U.K., Nos. 1-124, Aug. – Dec. 1940, Report No, 73/5.
47. Neil, p.155. You can wander around a downed Me 109 just as Neil did at the IWM Duxford, where the Me 109 of Horst Perez, which crash landed on 30/08/1940 near Eastbourne, has been positioned on its belly.
48. Parke, p.656. Buried at Cannock Chase. P1.R.4.G.115.
49. Foreman, *The Fighter Command War Diaries*, 2, (Walton-on-Thames, 1998), p85.
50. TNA, AIR 27/1498, 1526.
51. *Manchester Guardian*, 30/10/1940, p.5,c.5; *Essex County Standard*, 02/11/1940, p.5,c.7. The following is from the now disappeared Harmeling website: 'Apparently he was captured by the local gamekeeper, Jum (short for Jumbo) Brown, who was a private in the Essex Home Guard...called on Harmeling to surrender...Jum prevented him setting fire to the plane and as result a complete plane...fell into British hands. Jum took Harmeling home for breakfast[?]. When he had finished his breakfast, Jum marched him across to the local Regular Army detachment. Jum said that when Harmeling crashed, the British plane followed him down to see that he landed alright and that the 2 pilots waved to each other.'
52. Bungay, p.373. See Wikipedia Battle of Britain entry for a guide to further losses.
53. Ibid, p.368.

Acknowledgements

To Mr Gordon Leith of the RAF Museum for his generous assistance with answering questions and supplying copies of documents. To Dr Paul Rusiecki for reading through a first draft of the text and his very useful comments. To Mrs Sarah Ensor for bringing to my attention information about UK civilian war deaths.

The Author

Neil Wiffen is the Hon Ed of the *Essex Journal* and has a special interest in the history of WW2. When not reading about or researching various military topics he can either be found working at ERO or in the garden talking to his chickens!



Anthony Tuck & others,
The Victoria History of Essex: Newport,
pp.[xi] & 179. ISBN 978-1-90964-605-6,
Victoria County History Publication, 2015,
£12.

The first volume of the Victoria County History of Essex was published as long ago as 1903, but the process of compiling the histories of all the parishes is still far from complete. As in every county, these have traditionally been grouped geographically and published in the familiar large red volumes, a format which has been virtually unchanged for over a century. Readers interested in a particular place have had to wait until all the other parishes making up its volume were ready. This history of Newport is the first in Essex and the third nationally, to be published in a new and different way – as an individual volume on a single parish in medium-sized paperback format. The VCH calls these ‘shorts’. (The foreword to this volume might lead readers to understand that the previous two shorts are also Essex-related. In fact they are for parishes in Hampshire and Herefordshire.)

As important a change as the format is the fact that the shorts are researched and written by local people, under the supervision of the VCH. For Newport, Anthony Tuck has been joined by five other members, or former members, of the Newport Local History Group, Ben Cowell, David Evans, Bernard Nurse and Gillian Williamson. In addition, James Bettley, author of the revised Essex Pevsner has contributed the material on buildings.

Although the name means ‘new town’, Newport was certainly already in existence at the time of Domesday Book, and probably long before that. It may or may not have been a Saxon *burh* – this is one of the few points in the book that are left as speculation. In the middle ages it had many of the characteristics that led to other places becoming chartered boroughs. By the early modern period it had reverted to being a mainly agricultural village, albeit with a larger non-farming population than most. It was dominated by two large estates, Shortgrove and Quendon Hall. In the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries these estates shrank as parts were sold off. The farming population dwindled as agriculture became less labour-intensive and Newport became the dormitory or commuter village that it is today.

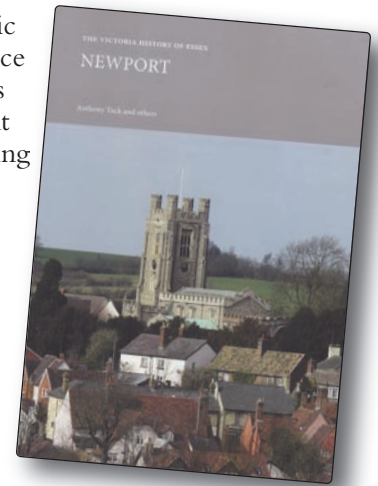
Most of Newport’s agricultural land was in open fields until the Inclosure Act of 1861. This is in contrast to most of Essex, which has been enclosed since before recorded history. The individual farmyards were not distributed over the parish, but concentrated in the village centre. As the book explains, this pattern still to an extent determines the layout of the village, as farmstead sites were gradually replaced by infill developments.

As has been characteristic of VCH parish histories since their beginning, the story is taken as close to the present day as publication timetabling allows. Because of the way that this volume has been published, this is very close. The latest year that is referred to in the text is 2014. In the substantial sections dealing with architecture, the histories of those buildings that are still standing inevitably include descriptions of them as they now are.

These factors can lead the reader to feel that the work will rapidly become outdated, not because the research will soon be superseded – far from it – but because Newport itself is changing quite rapidly, and will continue to do so. As an example, if the volume had been completed just one year earlier, it would have missed the re-naming of Newport Free Grammar School as the Joyce Frankland Academy.

The book is organised into sections (the word ‘chapter’ is not used). These correspond fairly closely to the sections in standardised VCH parish histories, and with some of the same titles. Each section is probably longer than it would have been if published in the traditional way. The first section, *Introduction*, is longer and contains much more than the word would imply. It incorporates, among other things, the general geology and pre-history of the area, a quite detailed history of the railway, and a survey of the historically significant secular buildings. The second covers landownership, with an emphasis on the ownership of the manors. This has always loomed large in VCH parish histories, reflecting the preoccupations of their first, early twentieth century, readership. The third section deals with economic history; the fourth social history; the fifth local government; and the sixth religious history (including religious architecture). The book ends with a short section on post-war development.

This structure leads to a certain duplication, or arbitrary placement, of content. The history of the manors is divided between the second section (their ownership), third (their function as economic units), and fifth (their function as administrative/judicial units). In addition the social and philanthropic activities of some of their owners are covered in the fourth section. Poor law administration is covered under social history, rather than local government. Education is also assigned to the social history section, which includes a substantial history of the Grammar School. As mentioned above, the railway is primarily covered in the introduction, rather than the economic history section.



Book Reviews

The book has been well edited, and does not read like the work of a group of contributors. It is stylistically quite uniform. On the other hand, there is little of the idiosyncrasy that can characterise histories written by single individuals. It has the objective tone that we expect from the VCH. It is apparent however that the authors have been allowed more space to tell their story than would be the case in a standard VCH parish history.

The book has 64 illustrations. They are in colour where the originals are. The great majority are photographs of buildings. Portraits and group photographs form the next largest group. Many of the photographs are early, and even some of the colour ones are several decades old. The quality of reproduction is good, given their relatively small size. There are also five maps.

As is only to be expected of a product of the VCH, the footnotes, note on sources and index are exemplary. This reviewer would however have liked more information about the illustrations.

Many present or former residents of Newport will wish to own a copy of this work, probably far more than would ever seek to acquire one of the full-size VCH volumes. It will also be enjoyed by those with a more general interest in Essex in general, and the north-west of the county in particular. This reviewer waits with anticipation to see whether this new way of producing affordable VCH parish histories will be adopted for other Essex places.

Richard Harris

**Wendy Hibbitt & Susie Fowkes (eds),
Historic Writtle: Village Life through
Misfortune and War,**
pp.112, (No ISBN, no date),
A Heritage Writtle Publication,
£5.00 plus £1.80 postage.

Available from: wendyhibbitt@hotmail.com or from
Writtle Library, and Writtle Archives (open on Wednesdays
2.00-5.00 pm at the Christian Centre by the church).

This book is the successor to *Writtle and the Romans*, the first publication in the 'Historic Writtle' series. Both draw on the considerable resources of Writtle Archives and the enthusiasm, research and practical activity of members of Heritage Writtle and the local community.

The book was published, as illustrated on the front cover, to coincide with the centenary of the start of the First World War. It brings the story up to the end of the Second World War, and the greater part is devoted to those conflicts. As well as 'Misfortune and War' however, village life is recorded through its social and industrial history.

The first part reviews the history of Writtle from the Stone Age to the beginning of the twentieth century. By the date of the Domesday Book Writtle was the largest village in Essex with a population in the region of 1,000, considerably larger than Chelmsford. It was here that King John built his Hunting Lodge in 1211.

The Napoleonic wars were the first to impact directly on Writtle. Barracks for 4,000 men were built in Roxwell Road, and the Writtle Local Volunteers were formed in 1803. A large number of musket balls and military buttons from this period have been found by local metal detectors and in the Heritage Writtle excavations.

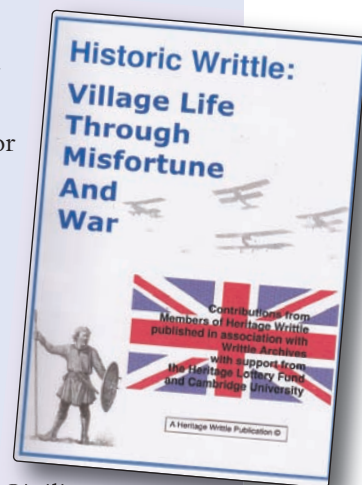
Other topics in this section include an account of the Writtle workhouse, which functioned from 1717 to 1835, and the collapse of the church tower in 1800 - a misfortune indeed!

We are reminded that at the beginning of the twentieth century living conditions were still quite primitive, with often harmful effects on health including an outbreak of diphtheria in 1901. Mains water and electricity did not arrive in the village until the 1930s.

The second, more detailed, part of the book deals with the impact of two World Wars on the villagers and village life. Records are plentiful and the later events still within living memory, providing vivid and immediate accounts. Methods of warfare had moved on, and by 1914 aircraft were playing a major part in the conflict. It may be news to some readers that two airstrips were laid out and operated in the area, one adjoining Lawford Lane, and the other at Widford.

Family records fill out many stories, both sad and inspiring, of the total of 74 men and three women whose names are recorded on the War Memorial. Civilians too played their part and, following the national trend during the twentieth century, more women went out to work. In the First World War they served as nurses, and nearer home worked in offices and factories, including Cromptons, Marconi and Hoffmanns in Chelmsford. In the Second War more opportunities for women opened up, and many local girls and women joined the Land Army to work on local farms; their reminiscences, generally cheerful and positive, pay tribute to their contribution to the war effort.

In both wars Writtle played host to 'outsiders'. In the first, 1,000 men of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry were billeted in Writtle for seven months from late 1914, increasing the population by a third. They were made welcome and somehow local resources were stretched to accommodate them. The second war



Book Reviews

brought evacuees, children from London who gradually adapted to rural life. They were expected to help on the farms and one of their tasks was to collect quantities of conkers to be made into glucose syrup! Later in the war Prisoners of War arrived and were housed in a camp at Hylands House. Some became friends with local people and made toys for their children.

During the period covered by the book Writtle, despite its proximity to Chelmsford, was not a 'dormitory' village. Having been an important agricultural centre for many centuries it went on to develop its own industries, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These included Writtle Brewery and Writtle Gas works, and, most importantly, the Marconi company, which operated in the village for nearly 70 years from 1919. The main site was on Lawford Lane where First World War huts were used to establish the Marconi Airborne Telephony Research Department, which started with eight staff. By the time of the Second World War, when it was contracted to make radio equipment for Bomber Command, numbers had increased to over 200.

It was from this site too that radio broadcasting developed, leading to the formation of the BBC. The site closed in 1968, and is now occupied by Melba Court, a block of flats commemorating Dame Nellie Melba, the singer who broadcast from Chelmsford in 1920.

No industries now remain in Writtle, but Writtle College, founded in 1939, has continued to develop, preserving its original agricultural specialism and adapting to new demands for a variety of practical courses.

The book is well illustrated with many photographs, both topical and of artefacts discovered by metal detectorists and in the Heritage Writtle excavations. The abiding impression is of a community with a strong sense of identity who throughout their history have risen to meet many challenges, of war and misfortune certainly, but also of changing times and patterns of employment. Let us hope that Heritage Writtle will continue to record the history of the village since 1945, perhaps for a further book.

Jenepher Hawkins

**Christopher Starr,
Medieval Lawyer:
Clement Spice of Essex,**
pp.80, ISSN 978-0-9931998-0-6,
Essex Society for Archaeology and History,
2014, £12.50 plus £2.50 postage.

Available from the author at: 10 Kings Meadow, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 0HP. Cheques made payable to 'Essex Society for Archaeology & History'. For further details please contact the author at: kanonium@hotmail.co.uk

This biography of Clement Spice of Essex is part two of an intended trilogy, *Medieval Mercenary*, a biography of Sir John Hawkwood, published by Essex Record Office in 2007 and *Medieval Merchant*, described as forthcoming.

Relatively little is known about Clement Spice beyond references to him in official documents. Using these documents and also deeds to which Spice was party, Christopher Starr has traced the history of how a fourteenth century lawyer built up a client base among the aristocracy and gentry of Essex, at one point serving the three greatest families in the county – the de Veres, Fitzwalters and Bouchiers.

It is likely that Spice came from relatively humble origins, probably in Suffolk, and Christopher Starr traces possible links with the Suffolk gentry who may have given him his start in London. He went on to serve the Black Prince, eldest son of Edward III, but his other clients ensured that his career survived not only the death of the Black Prince in 1376, but also the fall of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester in 1397.

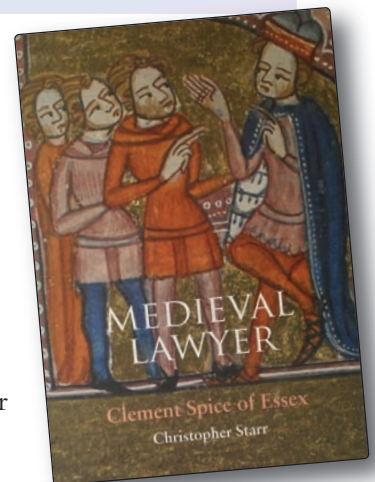
The book demonstrates the importance of men such as Spice in supporting central government in the localities. This was augmented from 1361 with the introduction of justices of the peace to maintain law and order. Spice served as justice, and also at various dates as a royal commissioner and escheator for Essex and Hertfordshire.

Christopher Starr also traces Spice's acquisition of lands in various parts of the county, beginning with a small estate in Stisted, which he first acquired through marriage to Alice Bocking. He acquired further lands in the county, including at Bocking, and was ultimately to become lord of the manor of Willingale Spain.

Inevitably, given the official nature of the documents in which Spice appears, much of the additional detail is speculative. Nonetheless Christopher Starr shows how a medieval lawyer was able to exploit his position and associations to build up his own status and lands and enter the ranks of the county's gentry.

The book is extensively footnoted and includes an index of people and places. It also has colour pictures of documents and places associated with Spice, a map of key places in Essex and Suffolk and a family tree.

Katharine Schofield



Helen Walker,
The Medieval Roads of Essex,
pp.67, illustrated (with additional links
to digitised images).
Published as an e-book by Amazon, 2014
free to Kindle subscribers or £4.34 as a
download

A review of a book that is only available online is a first for the *Essex Journal*, as well as for this reviewer. Though the latter remains addicted to the printed word, e-books have obvious advantages for publishers and distributors due to lower costs of production, and for libraries which no longer have to plan for expanding shelf space. They are easy to revise or make additions to, and also have the additional advantage of providing links to other relevant sites – in the case of this e-book, to digitised images from the Essex Record Office and elsewhere. Due to these economies of production, e-books can afford to be less conventional, or more experimental, and they are perhaps more likely to be accessed by anyone interested or curious. Nevertheless, for a publication as useful as this one, it is a pity that it does not have a more permanent presence on a library shelf.

It is evident after a few pages that the book is based on the writer's own careful observations during her explorations of the Essex countryside (in one instance, from the excellent viewpoint of the top deck of a number 70 bus). She has also made good use of the limited archive sources available. The few known maps from the medieval period are small scale and unreliable in detail, and the book examines (with numerous local examples) how the historic pattern of roads can be deduced from other evidence. Apart from the northwest corner of the county, most of Essex is ancient countryside and has not been subjected to re-organisation through open field enclosures. The county is fortunate to have the Chapman & Andre map (published in 1777) showing local roads, which were probably little changed since the Middle Ages. Some of these roads have subsequently fallen out of use (though their route often survives today as a footpath or bridleway), others have been altered by new road construction, the creation of deer parks and country estates, and urbanisation. But many survive unexpectedly – Harlow new town, for example, retains a medieval holloway now used as a cycle track on the edge of the town park.

Helen Walker identifies the major prehistoric and Roman roads in the county, and lists some of those that developed later to meet local needs. Some retain names identifying their original purpose, such as the Old Salt Road from salt marshes of Woodham Ferrers to Bicknacre. There are other surprising survivals too, such as the surprisingly wide drove road at Epping Long

Green. Evidence gleaned from observation and from later maps can be supplemented by descriptions of medieval royal progresses and other itineraries (such as the journey undertaken by two brothers from Tilty abbey in 1444). Place-names – a medieval name containing 'ford' or 'bridge' for example – speak for themselves. Contemporary wills occasionally reveal bequests for bridge repairs and archaeology can add to the picture; the substantial Strood causeway at Mersea island, dendro-dated to about 700AD, must have been part of a significant route to justify such a substantial construction.

The writer looks at other aspects of medieval roads, including how they were maintained, who used them and for what purposes. For example, medieval Hedingham ware found its way (mainly or entirely by road) throughout southern East Anglia, and as far west as Bedfordshire. She addresses the problem of how travellers found their way round without proper maps, a conundrum that has long puzzled this reviewer. Signposts were a rarity (in any case, most travellers would have been illiterate). People probably found their way by asking (or joining the company of) fellow travellers, enquiring at inns, or (for those with a long purse) hiring local guides. Regular travellers on a particular route would have become familiar with the road's topographical features and waymarks. The significant dangers of travel, and the need for refreshment and a bed for the night, are discussed, as well as the features and natural history of the present day survivors of old roads. The book ends with details of three local excursions that illustrate many of the points made in the text.

This book is an excellent introduction to various aspects of local topography. It is well written and clearly based on the writer's practical observation of evidence still to be found in the Essex countryside. She teases out a great deal of information from the slender details offered by written sources and maps. The book is well illustrated with sketch maps, photographs, and images from archive sources, and a wider range is available to electronic users. There is also a list of books and articles that she drew on, many of which would be useful for further study. This reviewer's only regret is that the book was not published 25 years ago when he first became interested in local topography!

Michael Leach



**Digital
Book**

Book Reviews

Karen Bowman,
Essex Boys,
pp.192, ISBN 978-1-4456-4521-6,
Amberley Publishing, 2015, £9.99.

This book is a companion book to the author's previous book entitled *Essex Girls*. Despite its 'tongue in cheek' title it is a very well researched book and includes many people not usually connected with Essex. The book is divided into fourteen chapters containing different subject matter and follows the lives of various 'Essex boys'. The subjects are varied and diverse, from LANDOWNERS, PRINCES & KINGS through MARTYRS to HUSBANDS, LOVERS & ROGUES.

Each person is very well researched with a wealth of historical and interesting facts. The first entry is Eudo Dapifer, a Norman overlord (d.1120). The Colchester Chronicle records that 'William Conqueror gave Colchester to Eudo the year after it was burnt by the Danes – and should start building his castle straight away'. Eudo was not only Colchester's castle builder but also its benefactor. He founded St. John's Abbey and was responsible for founding the Leper Hospital of St Mary Magdalene and he restored St Helen's Chapel.

Under the chapter entitled 'WARRIORS' there are four pages dedicated to the great warrior of the Battle of Maldon – Byrhtnoth. We learn that the name is composed of the Old English *beorht*, meaning 'bright' and *noth* meaning 'courage'. History also records that when his bones were discovered and examined at Ely Cathedral, Byrhtnoth had an estimated height of 6 feet 9 inches. He was also a man of considerable wealth and at the time of his wedding he gave his prospective bride, among other things, the village of Rettendon (*Retendune*) in Essex. The same chapter covers 'The Peasants' Revolt. The unpopular poll tax brought in far less revenue than expected as households were evasive about the size of their families and how many dependents they had. Records show that during the poll tax years 1377-80 the whole Essex population 'miraculously' dropped from 47,962 to 37,740. The population of Colchester alone almost halved, from 2,955 to 1,609. The shortfall in revenue led to a further tax being imposed and so the discontent grew and finally exploded in 1381.

There is a moving tribute to Captain Lawrence Edward Grace Oates (1880-1912) in the chapter entitled 'EXPLORERS' (See also A. Corder-Birch,

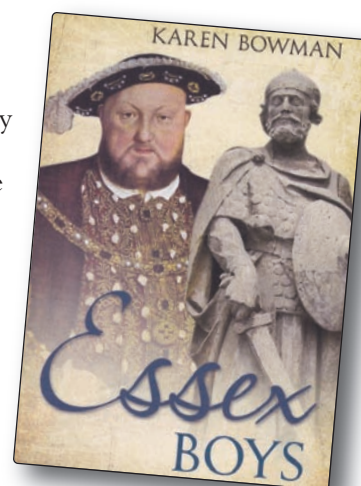
'The Oates Family and Gestingthorpe, *Essex Journal*, 47, 2 (2012), pp.65-9). Born in Putney he spent his formative years in the family home at Gestingthorpe Hall. Scott's expedition to the South Pole has been well documented over the years but entries in Scott's journal give an insight into the bravery of his companion. Oates was the worst affected with frostbite. Scott's journal of 6th March notes 'Poor Oates is unable to pull, sits on the sledge when we are track-searching – he is wonderfully plucky, as his feet must be giving him great pain. He makes no complaint, but his spirits only come up in spurts now, and he grows more silent in the tent'. On 16th or 17th March Scott finally wrote: 'Should this be found I want these facts recorded. Oates' last thoughts were of his Mother...We can testify to his bravery...he did not and would not give up hope to the very end. He slept through the night before last hoping not to wake; but he woke in the morning – yesterday. It was blowing a blizzard. He said, 'I am just going outside and may be some time'. He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since.' There is a memorial to him in Gestingthorpe church.

Augustine Courtauld's life (1904-59) is covered, too, in this chapter. He was from an old and distinguished Essex family and was a seasoned explorer. He joined the British Arctic-Air Route Expedition in 1930. Details of the expedition and Augustine's bravery and survival are well worth reading.

There is a very interesting tale of the Clockmakers of Colchester which is contained within the chapter 'MEN OF SCIENCE & VISION'. It tracks early clockmakers of Essex and Nathaniel Hedge (1710-95) was one such man and, from the eighteenth to well into the nineteenth century, the Hedge family – through several generations and many Nathaniels' – perfected and so dominated this local industry.

With the wide variety of subjects covered, a comprehensive index and the fact that this book can be 'dipped into' very easily mean that it is a worthy addition to any book shelf.

Geraldine Willden



Your Book Reviewers are: Richard Harris, former Archive Service Manager of the ERO and medievalist; Jenepher Hawkins, the outgoing EJ Membership Secretary; Michael Leach, a retired GP, now concentrating on researching and writing local history; Katharine Schofield, Senior Archivist at ERO with a keen interest in English medieval history; Geraldine Willden, the EJ Treasurer and long-term supporter of all things to do with Essex history.

EJ 20 Questions? Adrian Corder-Birch

Adrian Corder-Birch was born at Stambourne in 1953, and currently lives in Halstead. He was a member of the legal profession for 36 years and also part time Clerk to Little Yeldham, Tilbury Juxta Clare and Ovington Parish Council, a position he has held for 44 years. Following 15 years as Chairman and Secretary of Halstead and District Local History Society he is now Patron. In 2015 he was elected as President of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History and is Vice Chairman of its sub group, the Essex Industrial Archaeology Group. He has served as President of Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress (1998-2001) and has been Chairman of the Editorial Board of Essex Journal for many years. In 2013 he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant for Essex. He is married to Pam and has a daughter Lianne and grandson Alexander.



1. What is your favourite historical period?

The Victorian period, with major expansion of railways, industry and the Empire.

2. Tell us what Essex means to you? I was born and have lived in Essex all my life. It has beautiful countryside, a rich history and many outstanding buildings some of national importance.

3. What historical mystery would you most like to know? The true author(s) of the works attributed to Shakespeare and in particular any works written by Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford of Hedingham Castle.

4. My favourite history book is... *The Discovery of Britain – A Guide to Archaeology* by Jack Lindsay, 1958. This book is about the local history and archaeology of the Hedinghams and surrounding area. Whilst at school it cost me 15 shillings – a large sum of money then for a young boy.

5. What is your favourite place in Essex? If I have to choose then perhaps it is Castle Hedingham because of family connections.

6. How do you relax? These opportunities are rare but I enjoy reading and listening to cricket on the radio.

7. What are you researching at the moment?

I am currently researching the history of the Whitlock family and factory at Great Yeldham. Whitlock Bros started as agricultural engineers in 1899 and later manufactured earth moving equipment. They built and supplied diggers some two years before JCB or any other competitor.

8. My earliest memory is... being taken by my father to watch Stambourne play cricket and getting into trouble. I had watched players remove the stumps and one day when I was about three years old, I ran across the pitch and removed them. Although this was during a match, fortunately I avoided injury.

9. What is your favourite song/piece of music and why? *Jerusalem*, because it was sung at my wedding to Pam and at some cricket matches.

10. If you could travel back in time which event would you change? 23rd April 1944 when six members of Hedingham Platoon, Home Guard, were killed. The largest single loss of life the Home Guard suffered in one incident during the war.

11. Which four people from the past would you invite to dinner? Sir Winston Churchill; Peter Muilman, (1713-90) historian and author; John Corder (1806-80), brickmaker and potter and my great, great grandfather; Dr William Whewell (1794-1866), Master of Trinity College Cambridge, scientist and mathematician, who would be able to provide information about my wife's family history.

12. What is your favourite food? Sausages, which I need to reduce because I am putting on too much weight!

13. The history book I am currently reading is... *Medieval Lawyer: Clement Spice of Essex*, by Christopher Starr.

14. What is your favourite quote from history? 'By my faith, my Lord, I thank you for your good cheer, but I may not have my laws broken in my sight. My attorney must speak with you.' King Henry VII to John De Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford.

15. Favourite historical film? *The Dam Busters*.

16. What is your favourite building in Essex? Hedingham Castle, one of the best preserved keeps with the largest single span Norman arch in Europe

17. What past event would you like to have seen? Following Queen Elizabeth I on her 'Progresses' through Essex.

18. How would you like to be remembered? For kindness and good service to the community.

19. Who inspires you to read or write or research history? My mother, Beatrice Birch and two teachers, Cleone Branwhite and Fred Pawsey, DFC, JP, who is about to celebrate his 96th birthday.

20. Most memorable historical date? 18th June 1815, the Battle of Waterloo, and also my birthday and wedding anniversary – very memorable!



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