

# EssexJOURNAL

A REVIEW OF LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Autumn 2018

Martin Stuchfield  
discusses fourteenth  
century female  
Essex brasses,  
and much more

Jennifer Ward  
Special

EJ 20 Questions:  
The Watkins



# Monumental Brass Society



The Society was founded in 1887 by a group of Cambridge undergraduates keen to preserve and record monumental brasses.

Early research into brasses focussed chiefly on English brasses of the medieval and early modern periods. Today, however, the field is much wider. Chronologically, it extends to brasses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and geographically to those of Continental Europe.

Membership will particularly benefit those with an interest in genealogy, ecclesiology and the study of costume, armour and heraldry, as well as those interested in church monuments.

## The Society aims:

To encourage the appreciation of brasses, indents of lost brasses and incised slabs by publications, lectures and meetings.

To preserve brasses by assisting with grant funding conservation and providing advice on their care.

To promote the study of brasses, indents of lost brasses and incised slabs, and to encourage and disseminate original research.

To Record lost and stolen brasses and those remaining in private hands.

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Well, yet another special issue of *Essex Journal* (*EJ*) this time dedicated to historian, author and tutor, Dr Jennifer Ward who turns 80 this year. The Editorial Board is extremely pleased that we can mark this milestone but, as ever, it is the generosity and enthusiasm of all the contributors to this issue that really makes it so special. I do hope that Jenny is as thrilled as I am with the results, in particular the bagging of one of the contributors who has eluded even the tenacious Jenny in the past – just for you Jenny, this once and never again!

One of the pleasures of working at the Essex Record Office (ERO) is that it has allowed me to meet so many historians who are working in the county. In some cases this has moved on to partnership working and, as mentioned elsewhere in the issue, Jenny was of major importance regarding *The Fighting Essex Soldier* conference that was held back in 2014. In advance of the conference Jenny guest curated a display of fourteenth and fifteenth century documents that highlighted various aspects of life on the home front in Essex during the Hundred Years War. I assisted by ordering up the documents and then producing them to the Searchroom for Jenny to assess. An enjoyable hour or two was had listening to Jenny explain the documents with an incredible lightness of touch. What appeared to me impenetrable Latin was read without any difficulty: 'This is the earl of Oxford going on pilgrimage to Bury [St Edmunds]', 'Here's a payment of 6d' and so on. Out of this document display came an article in the Spring 2016 issue of *EJ* which featured Jenny on the cover: 'Dr Jennifer Ward discusses Essex and the Hundred Years War'. A few months passed and at another ERO event Jenny was very pleased to tell me that she had been booked to give a talk on the strength of this cover after it had been seen on display. Jenny reported that the person who invited her to give the talk said that because she was on the cover of the *EJ* then she must be a 'proper historian' – how we laughed. I'm just pleased to have played such a part in Jenny's development as a historian!

I know from liaising with all the contributors that they are all profoundly appreciative of her inspiring research as well as the support that Jenny has generously given over the years, myself included. On more than one occasion in our communications regarding the content of this issue a comment along the lines of 'If only I could ask Jenny her opinion of this' has been said. I just hope that we have all done Jenny justice. In the absence of being able to ask Jenny her advice, the eagle-eyed among you will notice that in several of the articles the name of Dr Christopher Thornton, editor of the *Essex VCH*, appears. I'm sure the contributors will be in agreement with me when I thank Chris for all his advice and input in to not only the *EJ* but in many historical topics across the county. Thank

you very much Chris for your valued opinions, cheerful responses and willingness to help with research projects.

As ever I hope there is something for everyone in the issue, from the BALH award, to an update from the ERO, to the Home Guard in Clacton and



the move of the Thomas Stapel brass. This latter update from Martin Stuchfield is so important that I wanted to feature it. Just the pictures of the move are awe inspiring – well done Martin and all concerned with safeguarding such an important brass and keeping it on public display. Let us hope that it is a final move for the venerable brass of Sir Thomas Stapel.

Richard Harris kicks off with a piece on a thirteenth century seal that has to be seen to be believed. It is so small yet so fine and so old – how proud Sir Andrew Blund must have been of it. Great to feature Dr Christopher Starr, a contributor to my very first edition of the *EJ* back in 2007. Will we ever know the identity of the priest commemorated – who knows what archival material is still out there that might help with answering that.

Gloria Harris looks at the history of Baddow Park, one of many parks in Essex which demonstrate that there is still much to be discovered about their history, not all has been written about yet. Martin Stuchfield brings his truly encyclopaedic knowledge of brasses to discuss those that survive in the county from the fourteenth century that commemorate women.

To finish off we have articles by Dr Michael Leach and Ken Crowe looking at aspects of religious houses and the reformation. What a treat. As ever a selection of book reviews before the issue ends with the 'Twenty Questions' piece which features Brenda and Elphin Watkin. I've had the pleasure of assisting 'Team Watkin' at ERO and it is always lovely to see them and hear their opinions in stereo. What a wonderful finale to this issue and a first for *EJ* with not one, but two respondents or as Brenda said when we were discussing this, 'BOGOF' and on that note I will!

Cheers,

Neil



# British Association for Local History

## awards for *Essex Journal* and *Saffron Walden Historical Journal*

As reported in the last issue of *Essex Journal* one of our contributors, Andrew Emeny, won The David Hey Memorial Article Award 2018 presented by the British Association of Local History (BALH) for his article titled, 'When Bill Sykes junior came to visit: the rise of juvenile crime in Southend during the Great War' which appeared in our Vol 52, Spring 2017 issue.

The presentation of a certificate to Andrew Emeny was made by Professor Caroline Barron, President of BALH at their Local History Day held at York on 2nd June 2018. Andrew attended with his wife Rebecca and I represented our Editorial Board.

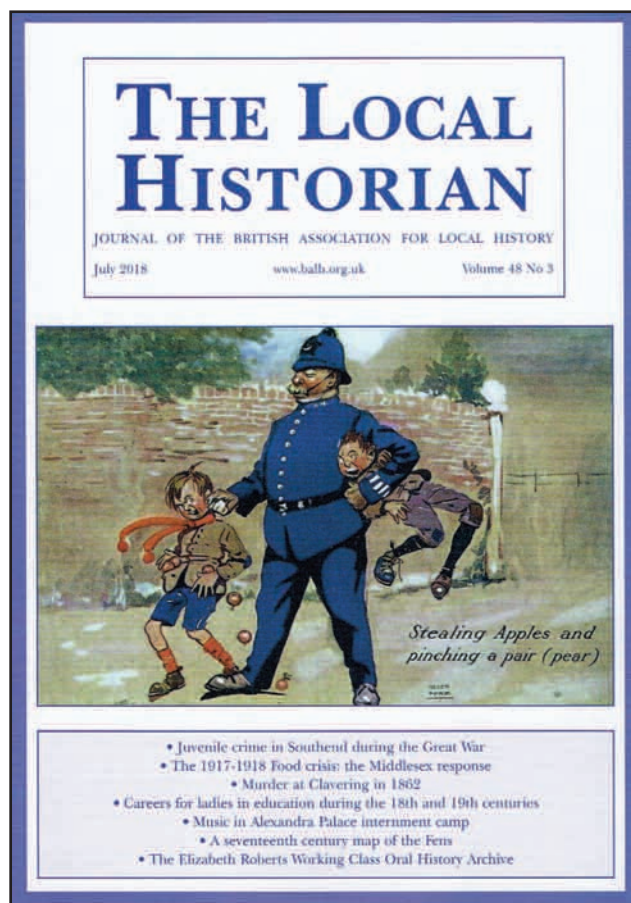
The Local History Awards were introduced by Jane Howells (Awards Secretary) and Dr Alan Crosby (Editor of *The Local Historian*). BALH has been making awards for publications since 1999 and all the judges had quite independently voted for Andrew's article to be given first place. There had been more unanimity among the judges than for any previous article, which was quite unprecedented. Andrew was congratulated upon his excellent article which was very analytical, contained descriptive moral structure, considered contemporary policy making and whether Southend was typical of other locations.

The Editorial Board would like to congratulate Andrew upon the Award, which was a great achievement and fully deserved.

Two awards were also made to contributors of *Saffron Walden Historical Journal*. The first was to Kevin Davey for his article 'The Hadstock arrests of 1661: Quaker radicals encircle Saffron Walden during the Protectorate', which appeared in the spring 2017 issue. The second award was to Jacqueline Cooper, who was the winner of the short articles category, for her article 'Murder at Clavering 1862: new documents' which appeared in autumn 2016. The authors were congratulated upon well researched articles.

It was a triumph for Local History in Essex that three out of nine research and publications awards were presented to authors of county journals.

Adrian Corder-Birch  
Chairman of the Editorial Board



Above, cover of *The Local Historian* which contains Andrew's article and, below, Andrew and Rebecca Emeny at the award ceremony in York.



# News from the Essex Record Office

**T**his is my first opportunity to introduce myself to you as Essex Record Office (ERO) Manager. It is particularly pleasing to do this in an issue dedicated to Dr Jennifer Ward to mark her 80th birthday. Dr Ward won the Young Essex Historian Award (formerly the Emmison Prize) for her history of Old Thorndon Hall (ERO, T/Z 13/27) in 1956, so her relationship with the ERO has been a long one – and one which has continued. For example, we were grateful for her support in generously assisting with *The Fighting Essex Soldier Conference* in March 2014. The ERO wishes Dr Ward hearty congratulations.

Considering such a long association with the record office (and I know there are others who can boast the same or similar), makes me feel very much like the ‘new boy’ – even though I am not new to the ERO at all, having been responsible for the Sound and Video Archive for 15 years. It reminds me that when someone takes that first (sometimes tentative) step through the door we should consider it not as a simple interaction but as the start of a relationship.

It also makes me feel a weight of responsibility, particularly as the ERO has itself reached its 80th anniversary; a sense of wanting to keep up the good work of those who have gone before. But as we develop the activities of the ERO we must be mindful of the changing times and the particular challenges they present.

Sustainability is of paramount importance now. We need, therefore, to further develop the services which generate income to support our other activities. And we need to take a more planned, focussed approach to fundraising. But our sustainability also depends upon our relevance – to Essex County Council, of course, but more fundamentally to the people of Essex and beyond. For this reason I intend the ERO to keep in mind

not only the records it preserves for the future, but also the difference it can make to individuals, communities and places in the present.

It has been a year of change for our staff. We have been through an organisational redesign, and at the same time some staff have decided to leave, either for retirement (long serving Searchroom staff, Gloria Harris, Meriel Kennedy and Grahame Harris) or to pursue other opportunities. We thank them for their service and hope they will remain part of the ERO ‘community’. But this has enabled us to welcome some new recruits to the team.

I would like to highlight some of the successes experienced recently. In July the ERO became an Accredited Archive Service under the scheme administered by the National Archives. This represents significant work by a number of people to submit the application. But more importantly it reflects the high standards and quality underpinning the activities carried out every day within the service.

This summer saw the end of our project *You Are Hear: sound and a sense of place*. In this project we digitised almost 1,650 sound and video recordings to better preserve them and make them more accessible. We then put them online and took them into every corner of Essex, encouraging the development of a sense of place by increasing appreciation for the sounds of Essex, past and present. This model of taking collections out into the county and placing them ‘where people are’ is one I want us to return to and develop further.

The success of the project was due largely to the staff who delivered it. I am pleased to say we have been able to retain them both. Catherine Norris, is now one of our Archive Assistants and Sarah-Joy Maddeaux has taken on the role of Sound Archivist which I recently vacated.

I should also say that the project could not have been delivered without the generous support of volunteers as well as helpful relationships with groups throughout Essex. The ERO is supported by volunteers in a variety of activities, from cleaning and repackaging architectural plans to listing library items, marriage licences and sound recordings, not to mention cataloguing by former members of staff. We are grateful to them all.

As we face the challenges ahead, we will need help from a variety of supporters. This means more opportunities for volunteers to help on projects, but also for individuals and groups to assist with advocacy, partnerships and fundraising. Together we can ensure both a more sustainable and a more relevant future for our past. Please do not hesitate to get involved if you would like to help us as we enter our ninth decade of service.

Martin Astell  
Essex Record Office Manager





## Discovering Dad's Army in the Tendring District

**T**o the sounds of Tendring Brass, three Home Guard re-enactors headed a small procession, including the Chairman of Essex County Council, Councillor John Jowers and his wife, and the Chairman of Tendring District Council, Councillor Mark Platt, to arrive at a surviving Second World War concrete pillbox in the centre of Great Oakley village. Here, about one hundred people were waiting. The occasion was the unveiling of an information board detailing this World War Two pillbox and the village defences, and honouring the service of the Essex Home Guard, 1940-44.

The event was the culmination of a Clacton VCH Group one year grant funded project titled 'Discovering Dad's Army in the Tendring District.' One of the aims was to survey and record sites, using contemporary documents and images, where the local Home Guard were ready to defend our land in the event of an enemy invasion, which in the summer of 1940 was thought to be imminent.

### Tendring Anti-invasion defences

Of all the eight districts in the county, Tendring had the greatest number of anti-invasion defence sites, indicating its vulnerability to invasion. The survival rate for the Tendring District is also above the county average. Some places inland from the coast were particularly well defended, Great Oakley and Little Clacton being examples, while other places had few defences.

The range and type of the defences was considerable; their purpose was to slow the advance of the enemy, and thus allow the regular army to group and respond.

Much of the Tendring coastline was defended by a barrier of scaffolding along the beach. Pillboxes guarded the cliff top, with the seafront buildings completing the physical barrier.

Manned road blocks, but with provision for everyday traffic, were numerous and sited where existing buildings and narrower areas would make the block difficult to avoid. Spigot mortar positions and a pillbox often completed the defence. The entrance to any pillbox was opposite to the expected direction of attack, and this type of knowledge was key to understanding some locations which the group visited.

Additional defences identified ranged from gunsites, defensive trenches, barbed (Dannert) wiring, poles and wiring over fields to prevent glider landings, to ammunition shelters. Tendring District additionally had a major anti-tank ditch system from the river Stour southwards to Holland Brook.

The creation of this range of anti-invasion measures was a great feat of construction, often hampered by shortages of timber, for shuttering, and cement.

The outcomes of the project which have all been achieved, are survey results for the Essex Heritage Environment Record, oral recordings for the Essex Sound & Video Archive, a public information board, and an exhibition.

Roger Kennell,  
Chairman, Clacton VCH Group

**The unveiling ceremony of the Clacton VCH, Essex Home Guard information board at the Great Oakley pillbox. (Photograph Clacton VCH Group)**



heritage  
lottery fund



# A new home for a medieval knight

by

Martin Stuchfield

Essex claims the distinction of being one of the most important counties in the United Kingdom for the number, quality and importance of its monumental brasses. Essex is fortunate in that seventeen fourteenth century brasses survive. Of this number ten are effigial, excluding a heavily mutilated half-effigy of a priest at Great Leighs and a small head of a lady at Hatfield Broad Oak.

From this period the brasses at Aveley, Bowers Gifford, Chrishall, Pebmarsh and Wimbish are of national importance. To this list can be added the significant brass commemorating Thomas Stapel, Serjeant-at-Arms to Edward III, dated 1371. The Stapel brass has endured a chequered history having originally been laid down in the now demolished church at Shopland,<sup>1</sup> moved to Sutton<sup>2</sup> church and transferred to its latest home at St. Andrew's church, Rochford on 17th April 2018.

## Thomas Stapel – the person

Thomas Stapel, or de Stapel, as recorded in his *Inquisition Post Mortem*, held extensive properties and rights in Essex, principally in the Rochford Hundred. In addition to the manor of Shopland<sup>3</sup> he held Canewdon<sup>4</sup> (Apton Hall except the marsh of Acres-fleet), Hadleigh, Hawkwell, Botlelersham in Highwood (north Essex), Prittlewell<sup>5</sup> (Botelers Hamstall), Rawreth, Shoebury Magna, Thundersley, and Wakering (Bluets). Stapel also held the honours of Basildon and Rayleigh and the Baileyship of Rochford Hundred for life. He married Margaret (or Margery), a daughter of Robert Lord Fitzwalter. At his death, on 2nd March 1371, he was succeeded by a son, Richard, who apparently died childless.<sup>6</sup> Stapel served as Serjeant-at-Arms in the household of Edward III. Otherwise, very little is known about his background.

## Thomas Stapel – Serjeant-at-Arms

The office originated in medieval England to serve the Sovereign in a police role, much like a bailiff in more recent times. Indeed, Serjeant-at-Arms constitute the oldest Royal bodyguard in England, dating from the time of Richard I (c.1189).

The Serjeant-at-Arms was a personal attendant upon the King, especially charged with arresting those suspected of treason. Richard I had 24 with him on the Crusades. They were formed into a 20-strong Corps of Serjeants-at-Arms by Edward I in 1278, as a close mounted escort. In 1399, Richard II limited the corps to 30 serjeants, and Charles II had 16. The number was reduced to 8 in 1685 and since then it has gradually declined.



Thomas Stapel,  
Serjeant-at-Arms to Edward III, 1371,  
Rochford (formerly at Shopland and Sutton).  
(© Author photograph)

The original responsibilities of the Serjeant-at-Arms included 'collecting loans and, impressing men and ships, serving on local administration and in all sorts of ways interfering with local administration and justice.' Around 1415, the House of Commons received its first Serjeant-at-Arms. From that time onwards this has been a Royal appointment.





**Shopland church before demolition.**

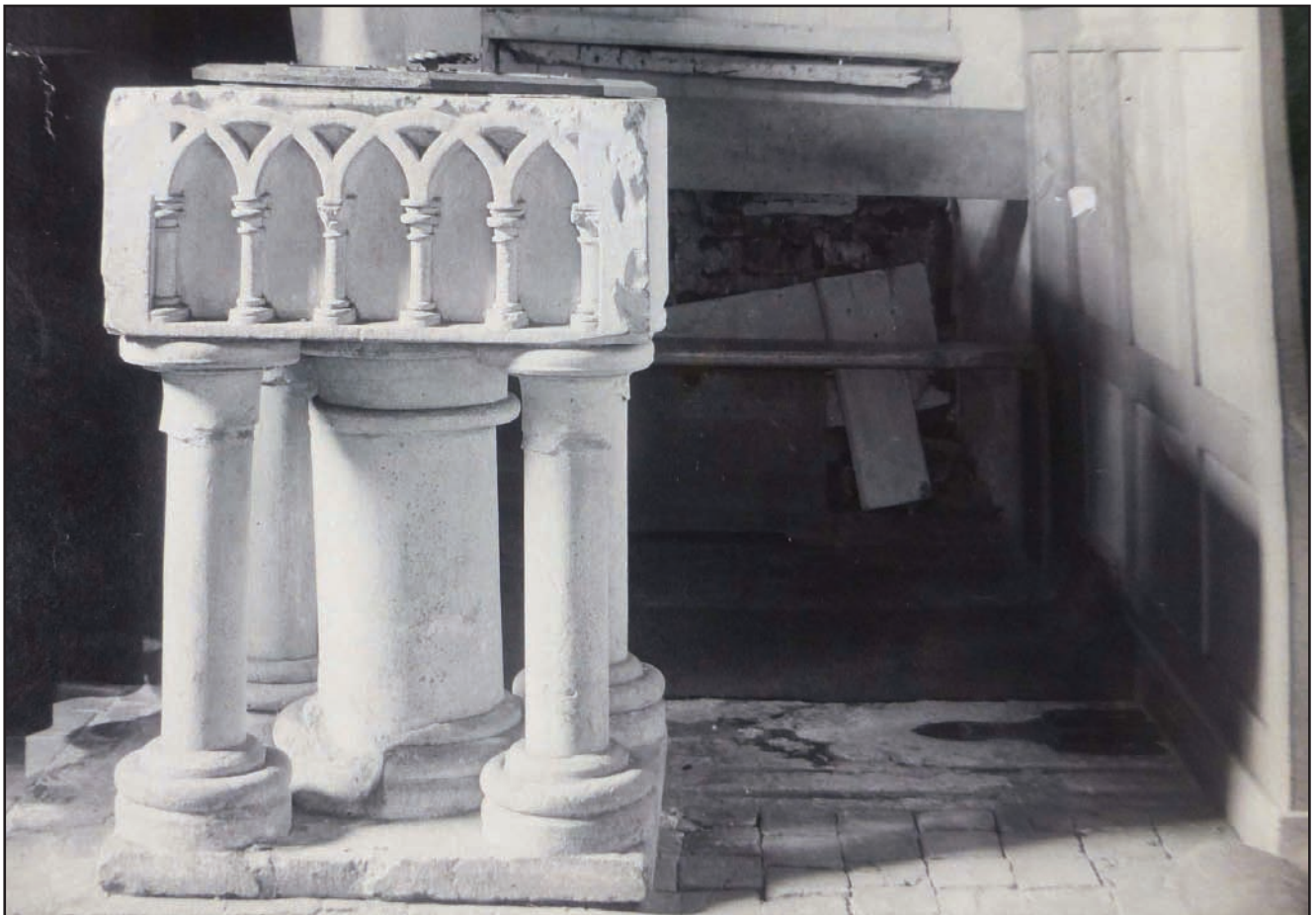
The formal role in modern legislative bodies is to keep order during meetings, and, if necessary, forcibly remove any members or guests who are overly rowdy or disruptive. Nowadays, Serjeant-at-Arms are invariably retired soldiers, police officers, or other officials with experience in security. The Serjeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons has general responsibility for certain administrative and custodial functions, as well as security within the chamber of the House.

In the Royal household of the fourteenth century the Serjeant-at-Arms was considered to be the

highest and most important rank of household esquire. By virtue of this position they were constantly in the presence of the King, riding before his person when he travelled and accompanying him on military campaigns abroad. In order to fulfill these duties Serjeant-at-Arms were 'sufficiently armed' and given three horses each.

A grant of 12d a day wages was made to Thomas Stapel in 1359 as a Serjeant-at-Arms. However, it appears that he had previously served as a 'yeoman of the household', indicating that Thomas entered the household shortly after 1353. He appears to have performed the role so well that he was promoted to the rank of Serjeant.

Three brasses depict Serjeant-at-Arms. The earliest commemorates Thomas Stapel, Serjeant to Edward III, dated 1371. The second at Wandsworth<sup>7</sup> (formerly Surrey and now in the London Borough of Wandsworth) portrays Nicholas [Maudyt], Serjeant-at-Arms to Henry V, 1420. This is an exceptionally worn brass with Maudyt (head lost) shown in armour with mace. A mutilated marginal inscription also remains with four shields lost. It is currently affixed, in its original slab, to the north wall of the chancel. Finally, a sizeable composition at Broxbourne<sup>8</sup> (Hertfordshire) shows John Borrell, Serjeant-at-Arms to Henry VIII, 1531, in armour holding an elaborate mace with a crowned head – an ornamental rather than a useful weapon! The Effigy (with legs lost) was discovered



**Interior of Shopland church with Thomas Stapel brass (right).**





**The now redundant church at Sutton.**  
(© Author photograph)

in 1892 in the private possession of Rev Francis Burton Shepherd, MA at Margaret Roding Rectory,<sup>9</sup> Essex and returned. In addition to the upper portion of the male effigy, only a group of three daughters and one scroll bearing *espoier en dieu* remain of this Cambridge style brass. His wife Elizabeth, a foot inscription, group of eight sons, representation of the Holy Trinity, seven other scrolls and two shields have been lost.

#### **Thomas Stapel – the brass**

The Stapel brass is a product of the London series B workshop (c.1360–1467). The renowned antiquary John Weever<sup>10</sup> recorded the brass in 1631 when it was complete save for the two shields. Importantly, he noted the Norman-French marginal inscription that read: *Tho. Stapel, iadis Seriant d'Armes nostre Seigneur le Roi, qi morust le secunde iour de Mars, l'An de Gras Mil. CCCLXXI, gist ici. Diew de s'alme eitmercy. Amen* (Thomas Stapel, formerly Serjeant-at-Arms to our Lord the King, who died the second day of March 1371, rests here. God have mercy on his soul. Amen). Weever also describes a tomb although close examination of the slab does not support the likelihood that this memorial originally occupied a position on an altar tomb. Rev William Holman and Nathaniel Salmon<sup>11</sup> both recorded that the marginal inscription had been lost at the time of their visits to Shopland church in c.1719 and c.1740 respectively.

The memorial was covered for many years under boarding until the antiquary H.W. King (1816–93) of Leigh-on-Sea and Hon Secretary of the Essex Archaeological Society uncovered the upper part in 1850. It is interesting to note an account of the brass published in the *Transactions* of the Essex Archaeological Society, which stated that 'Nothing further was ascertained with respect to it until recent years, when, as a result of several visits to the church and of having obtained permission to take up some of the floor-boards, we were able to obtain a complete idea of what the brass had been

when perfect. We were able to do this, however, only with the greatest difficulty; for the brass is crossed every 9 or 10 inches, by the joists carrying the boarding, which, of course, we could not remove.'<sup>12</sup>

In 1932 a fragment of the marginal inscription bearing the word 'Thomas' was recorded under the font but is now frustratingly lost.

The church at Shopland was slightly damaged during World War II. It was not repaired and demolished in 1957. However, the Stapel brass was considered of such significance that it was moved to nearby Sutton church and mounted on a wooden board that was affixed on the south wall at the east end of the Nave.

The slab was also transported to Sutton and laid face downwards in the churchyard, close to the entrance gate.<sup>13</sup> Derrick Chivers and Major Geoffrey Wheeldon, CBE, both members of the Monumental Brass Society (MBS), instigated proceedings for the brass to be reunited with its Purbeck slab.

The brass was relaid into the original slab by Bryan S.H. Egan<sup>14</sup> on 20th June 1971 with the stonework completed by Percy F. Smith & Son of Southend at a cost of £29 10s 0d.<sup>15</sup>

The impending redundancy of Sutton church was brought to my attention by Paul Mardon and the late John Dobson, members respectively of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History (ESAH) and the MBS, who occasioned upon an article that was published in the *Southend Echo* newspaper.

The parishes of Shopland and Sutton have been linked to Rochford for a considerable period of time with several memorials in St Andrew's church making specific reference to this close association. A site visit with Rev Alun J. Hurd (Rector) and Clive Willson (Churchwarden) took place at



**Lifting of the Stapel brass and slab at Sutton.**  
(© Photograph, Simon Nadin, 16/04/2018)

Rochford church on 7th July 2016. This resulted in a proposal to move the Stapel brass and its slab from Sutton to Rochford. This was formally discussed at a meeting of the Rochford Parochial Church Council held on 11th July 2016 culminating in a unanimous resolution 'to receive and display the Brass of Thomas Stapel in St Andrew's'.

Application was made to the Church Commissioners Closed Churches Division confirming that the Rector and Churchwarden were agreeable to accepting the Stapel brass together with citing other precedents for the removal of brasses. Five further salient points were also highlighted to justify the move from Sutton to Rochford. Listed Building Consent was granted by Rochford District Council on 29th August 2017. Pre-application advice was received from Historic England on 6th November 2017 stating that relocation of the Thomas Stapel memorial 'would not cause harm to the significance of the church. Indeed, we welcome the proposal to mount the brass on north wall of the tower as it will assist in safeguarding the historic fabric of this memorial, which is of national importance, for the future'. Finally a Faculty granted by the Diocese of Chelmsford on 15th January 2018 permitted the fixing of the memorial in Rochford church that took place between 16th-19th April 2018 under the direction of Simon Nadin and his team from the Skillington Workshop.

In celebration of this momentous event a well-attended meeting arranged by the MBS, in association with ESAH, Rochford Hundred Historical Society and the Rochford Town Team, was held at Rochford church on 14th July 2018.

Martin Stuchfield, MBE, JP, DL, FSA, FRHistS  
President of the Monumental Brass Society

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The Stapel brass and slab being hoisted into position in Rochford church.  
(© Author photograph, 17/04/2018)



# Dr Jennifer Ward: an appreciation

It is with great pleasure that I have accepted an invitation to write a few words about Dr Jennifer Ward, MA, PhD, FRHistS, in this special issue of the *Essex Journal* dedicated to marking the occasion of her 80th birthday. As a pupil of Brentwood County High School Jennifer attended the original Essex Record Office (ERO) which was on the ground floor of County Hall in Duke Street, firstly with a party from her school before she started doing original research. A few years later I found my own way to the same ERO Students' Room to prepare a local history project for my GCE O level geography. That important first visit for each of us was a very long while ago!

I don't think it was any surprise that Jennifer became an historian as her mother, Gladys, was already renowned in that field, being a tutor at Westfield College (now linked with Queen Mary College in London University). Incidentally, one of Gladys' own students was Hilda Grieve who went on to become the Senior Assistant Archivist in charge of the ERO Students' Room and a renowned historian in her own right; her official history of the devastating 1953 Essex floods was especially well known. I was also a local history student under Gladys Ward, and remember fondly her afternoon summer tea parties in the garden of the family home in Brentwood. Gladys' own book *A History of Clare*, published in 1928 under her maiden name of Thornton is still highly regarded. In 1956 Jennifer won the Emmison Prize for her research on the history of Old Thorndon Hall in Brentwood. This was an annual prize for senior school pupils using ERO resources and was funded by F.G. Emmison, first County Archivist of Essex.

Jennifer graduated from Oxford and then completed her PhD at London University on the Clare family estates between 1066-1314, before teaching various aspects of medieval and women's history at Goldsmith's College in that university. Over the years Jennifer has published many books and articles on various aspects of medieval and women's history. One essay warrants comment as it is entitled 'Richer in land than inhabitants: South Essex in the Middle Ages' and was included in *An Essex Tribute* the volume dedicated to F.G. Emmison published in 1987. In 1991 Jennifer wrote the well received and oft quoted work *The Essex Gentry and the County Community in the Fourteenth Century* as part of the Studies in Local History series that was produced jointly by the ERO and Essex University.

The Middle Ages – and the fourteenth century in particular – is Jennifer's special area of expertise and many of her books and articles relate to this period in English history: for example *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500* (1995), *Women in Medieval Europe, 1200-1500* (2002, 2nd ed. 2016). *Women of England in the Middle Ages* (2006). More recently (2014) Jennifer has returned to the town of Clare and her doctoral thesis subject with the publication of *Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare, 1295-1360*. Back in Essex Jennifer has also written *Brentwood: a history* (2004) while also contributing many articles to local periodicals (including this one). She has recently contributed papers to *The Fighting Essex Soldier* (2017), as well as co-editing that volume.

In her 80th birthday year Jennifer Ward is to be congratulated for her life of researching and writing about many aspects of medieval and Essex history, and encouraging others to follow her example through her involvement in the Essex Society for Archaeology and History as its Past President and current Vice President. We hope that Jennifer continues to research, write and enjoy her domestic hobbies for many years to come.

Dr Maureen Scollan, MA, PhD.

**ESAH 1993 AGM held at Prittlewell Priory with retiring President, the late John Appleby, and newly installed President Dr Jennifer Ward. (Photograph, J. Ward, 05/06/1993)**



# Face to face with a thirteenth century knight

by

Richard Harris

Just before the turn of the Millennium, six decades' worth of the Essex Record Office's paper catalogues were converted to electronic form:—a remarkable achievement. However certain compromises had to be made. The new digital versions are sometimes inconsistent in layout, or contain unnecessary duplication.

Volunteers (including the author of this article) have been revising some of these digital catalogues, and at the same time correcting errors (of which there are gratifyingly few) carried over from the originals. The process of revision has occasionally brought before us original documents that are out of the ordinary run in terms of physical quality and artistry, which we can admire for their own sake, quite apart from the information contained in their texts. One such document occurs in the collection begun by Charles Gray of Colchester (1696–1782) and probably added to by Charles Gray Round (1797–1867). This accumulation of about 500 items appears to consist of a mixture of Round family archives and unrelated material acquired, at least in part, by purchase, as cuttings from

dealers' catalogues are found with some of the items.

John Horace Round, a relative of both of them, catalogued much of the collection in 1896 for the Historical Manuscripts Commission. In his introduction he describes finding it in a loft over the stables at Birch Hall.<sup>1</sup> The collection includes a group of six items relating to the Blund family and the estate known as 'Blunts'.

The item in question is a quitclaim issued by Sir Andrew Blund some time in the middle of the thirteenth Century (Fig 1).<sup>2</sup> It bears a small, but striking, seal, about the size of a modern £1 coin. This has clearly been made with a high quality die (Fig 2).<sup>3</sup> It shows, in profile, a man's head, enclosed in a helmet which incorporates a face mask. Under it he wears a chain mail coif. The inscription reads *SIGILL[UM] ANDREE BLVNDI*. It is not a portrait; apart from anything else his features are not visible, and the helmet is of a common design, but the image is clearly intended to represent its owner. This is how Sir Andrew wanted to be seen: — a knight in his fighting gear. He must have deliberately chosen this design

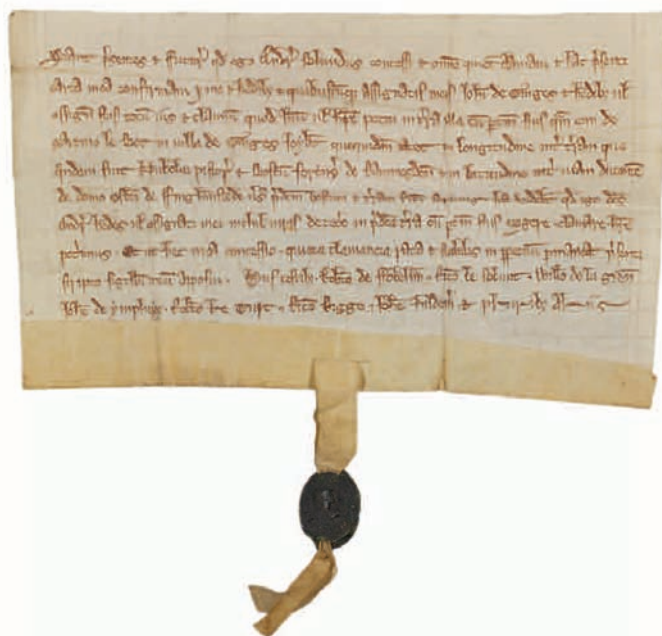
over the more popular armorial style. Very wealthy men, including the king himself, could have large seals that were both pictorial and armorial. They showed themselves mounted, in armour, and bearing their armorial devices on their shields and their horses' trappers. The seal die of Robert Fitz Walter survives in the British Museum (Fig 3). Fitz Walter, who died in 1235 was one of the greatest men in England, lord of the honours centred on Great Dunmow and Baynard's Castle in London. In all he was lord of over 90 knight's fees.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps pictorial seals were available ready-made, requiring only the inscription to be added, unlike seals showing coats of arms, which would require bespoke engraving for each purchaser. Regardless of the reasons for it, the image of the armoured head speaks to us across the intervening centuries in a way that heraldic devices do not.

Seals showing profile heads were quite common. The dies were sometimes made from actual surviving classical intaglio gems.<sup>5</sup> However this particular seal can only have been made in the thirteenth century, when this type of helmet was in vogue.

His helmet is typical of those in fashion in the early to mid century.<sup>6</sup> It is almost cylindrical, with a flat, or only slightly dished, top, with a full face mask, with eye and breathing slots, which is fixed, and not capable of being independently raised. What appears to be a row of rivets down the side shows how it was put together from several pieces of sheet metal. Unlike the later development of the pattern, known as the 'great helm', the back of the helmet does not come down as far as the front, leaving the back of the neck protected only by the mail coif. The wearer could therefore move his head relatively freely, and

## 1. Sir Andrew Blund's quitclaim. (All ERO images reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, D/DRg 1/8)





2. (Left) Enlargement of the seal of Sir Andrew Blund. (ERO, D/DRg 1/8)

4. (Right) Enlargement of the seal of Hammond Poreman. (ERO, D/DRg 1/6)  
Pound coin for scale.



the design must have been a compromise between lightness and adequate protection. In a *mêlée* of mounted knights, most sword blows would be aimed at the head. The flat top would seem at first sight to be less good at deflecting a downward cut than the earlier conical and rounded styles. However it allowed space for a lot of padding around the top of the head, under the steel, to cushion any blow. It would not have been so popular if it had not worked. Sir Andrew Blund died some time before July 1259.<sup>7</sup> He appears as a witness on other men's title deeds in 1246 and 1247.<sup>8</sup> In the latter document he is described as a knight (*miles*). At this date the term is still as much a job description as a mark of rank. In the deed with his surviving seal he gives himself no title.

Blund appears to have been what would have been regarded as a knight of the old school, owning (or, as contemporaries would put it, 'holding') one modest estate as his knight's fee, for which he performed military service in person. Such text-book knights were already ceasing to be the norm. He was not averse to improving his holdings by dealing in land for money. The deed that bears his seal relates explicitly to a piece of land that he had previously bought. Its format is that of a quitclaim, rather than the type of deed more

normal at the time, which came to be known as a feoffment. This suggests either a desire to keep the transaction private, or perhaps some more complicated financial arrangement, such as a mortgage.<sup>9</sup>

His property comprised what in later years became the manor with the extraordinary name of Ging Joyberd Laundry, but which in his time was regarded as two adjoining manors, Ging Joybert and Ging Landry, named after earlier owners.<sup>10</sup> These had been part of the large settlement of Ginges, usually shortened to 'Ing', which was subsequently broken up. Other parts were named after an early lay owner (Mountness Ing), or ecclesiastical owners (Fryern Ing), the dedication of the church (Margarett Ing), or a notable physical feature (Ing at Stone). Joybert and Landry lay mainly in what became the parish of Buttsbury, but did not correspond to it precisely, so these names have not survived as those of a modern parish.<sup>11</sup>

Blund's seal is neatly matched by one of virtually the same size on a quitclaim issued by Hammond Poreman, goldsmith of London, to another member of the Blund family, Hugh le Blund at, probably, a slightly earlier date (Fig 4).<sup>12</sup> Interestingly Poreman has an English surname, rather than the Norman-French one that might have been expected of a wealthy London citizen.

Poreman's seal is virtually a

civilian equivalent of Blund's. It also shows a male head in profile. It is a little worn, but the man appears to be wearing the linen coif popular with men of all ranks and ages. This was a close-fitting item, covering most of the head, including the ears, down to the nape of the neck. Fashion dictated that some hair should be visible peeping out around the edges.<sup>13</sup>

The wording is slightly worn, but appears to include Hammonds's forename only. An indication that this may have also been a standard product, adapted for the customer, is that the inscription does not occupy the full circumference, the gap being filled by what may be just decorative patterns, or may perhaps be intended to be dragons.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand Hammond might have made his own seal die. Goldsmiths were among the groups of craftsman who produced them.<sup>15</sup>

We do not have precise dates for either of these seals. Title deeds at this period were not usually dated, although it is apparent from other kinds of document that the ability to express and to understand an exact and accurate date was widespread. In the same way, deeds were not signed, but this was not because the parties were necessarily illiterate.<sup>16</sup> The seal authenticated the document, and the witnesses would swear to its accuracy if called upon.



Deeds were small. The writing was neat, but no larger than was needed to be easily legible. No space was wasted. There is rarely any significant blank space. Unless the scribes had an unusual ability to predict the size of parchment that a deed would require, the documents must have been cut to length after they were written.

Title deeds in the medieval period were authenticated by having seals attached (sometimes several, if the party issuing them comprised several individuals). The lower edge of the document was folded upwards and a slit cut through both folds, A ribbon-like strip of parchment was doubled through and the ends twisted together to form a tag. A ball of softened (but not molten) wax was moulded round the tag, and the seal die was pushed down into it. The wax was real bees' wax, usually mixed with resin and a pigment. It would not adhere reliably to the surface of parchment, hence the need for the tag. The quality of wax varied. A large proportion of surviving early medieval deeds have lost their seals, although the tags usually survive. The two seals referred to here are both made from the best quality wax. This has been heavily loaded with green pigment, to give a medium that is hard and almost black, unlike the natural or red-coloured waxes that are more commonly found, and which seem more fragile. As a protection, deeds were usually folded into a neat package, writing side inwards, and the seal tucked inside. Although many medieval deeds in record offices have been flattened in recent times, the folds are still usually visible.

This, and the fact that both are quite small, has enabled these two seals to remain firmly attached to their documents, and remarkably un-worn for over 700 years.

## References

1. RCHM, Fourteenth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical



3. Seal-die of Robert Fitzwalter, c.1213-19. Diameter 73.5 mm. (Image ID: 00035025001 © Trustees of the British Museum)

- Manuscripts* (London 1896), Appendix Part IX pp.1,2
2. Essex Record Office, (ERO), D/DRg 1/8.
3. There is a semantic problem that faces anyone who writes about seals. We tend (as did medieval man) to use *seal* to mean both the imprinted wax that is attached to a document, and also the object used to impress the design on it. The writer has followed a common (but not universal) practice and called the latter the *die*. *Matrix* is an alternative.
4. M. Strickland, 'Fitzwalter, Robert', *ODNB*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9648>, (25/09/2018)
5. J.A. McEwan, *Seals in Medieval London* (Woodbridge, 2016), p.ix.
6. Gravett, Plate A [p.32].
7. *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem (CIPM)*, I (London, 1904), entry 447, p.123.
8. ERO, D/DP T1/1553, Grant, 1246 & D/DP T1/611, Quitclaim, 1247.
9. The feoffment procedure involved a handover on the property, attended by the parties, or their representatives, and witnesses. It was thus difficult to keep such transactions private. The deed was (or purported to be) written and sealed *after* this event, and merely confirmed it, and was not strictly necessary.
10. *CIPM*, p.123.
11. P.H. Reaney, *The Place Names of Essex* (Cambridge, 1969), p.243.
12. ERO, D/DRg 1/6.
13. I. Brooke *English Costume of the Early Middle Ages* (London 1936) p.62. Brooke is scathing about the 'ludicrous' appearance of the coif, no doubt imagining a mid-

twentieth century gentleman wearing one, while acknowledging its popularity. The coif survived as the distinguishing accoutrement of Sergeants at Law.

14. For a dragon on a seal, see the seal die of Robert Fitz Walter.

15. McEwan, p.ix.

16. The ability to read was more common than the ability to write. The latter involved various physical skills, best left to professionals, as typing was before the development of personal computers. (I am indebted to Professor P.D.A. Harvey who pointed out this analogy many years ago.) Mixing a quantity of ink, and cutting a quill pen, just so that someone could sign a deed, would have been regarded as more trouble than it was worth.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Katharine Schofield of the ERO for suggesting to him the task of updating the catalogue of the collection in which these two fine seals appear.

## The Author

Richard Harris worked at the Essex Record Office from 1979 to 2008, retiring as Archive Service Manager. He has always had a great liking for Medieval history and literature since taking an MA in Medieval Studies at Southampton University. The working life of a local archivist always entails spending the greater part of one's time with more recent records, so the chance to go back to the thirteenth century as a volunteer has been greatly appreciated.

# ‘The portraiture of a man cut in wood’:

## the fourteenth century effigy of a priest at St John the Evangelist’s church, Little Leighs

by

Christopher Starr

**T**he small rural parish of Little Leighs lies north of Chelmsford and is co-terminus with the parishes of Felsted, Great Leighs and Great Waltham. The church, dedicated to St John the Evangelist, was built in the twelfth century; a century later, the chancel was taken down and rebuilt, probably to conform with changing liturgy, however the nave survives as a twelfth century-structure. Early in the fourteenth century a tomb recess, which projects into the graveyard (Fig 1), was built in the north wall of the chancel. Extensive building alterations were carried out to the chancel in the eighteenth century but these proved inadequate and were largely replaced when the church was restored in 1895. This modest church still retains some of its medieval furnishings, including the font, some oak benches and the south door. Most notably however, in the north wall of the chancel is the lavish tomb recess of about 1300,

in which lies the rare wooden effigy of a priest which appears to be older than the tomb, and dated about 1280 (Fig 2).<sup>1</sup>

Much of what is known about the history of this church is entwined in the history of Little Leighs priory (later known as Leez priory) which was built some two miles away. The priory was founded at the end of the twelfth century for Augustinian Canons and dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist.<sup>2</sup> The founder was Ralph Gernon, scion of a local gentry family, whose pious deed took place at about the same time that the chancel of Little Leighs church was reconstructed.<sup>3</sup> There are few records of the priory’s early years, or indeed of its foundation, but the original endowment is known to have included lands in Boreham and Little Leighs. According to Richard Newcourt, principal registrar of the diocese of London, writing in 1710, Little Leighs rectory was ‘all along’ in the gift of the priory and it is therefore likely that the advowson of Little Leighs church formed part of the endowment, together with the manor of Little Leighs of which Ralph Gernon was apparently then lord.<sup>4</sup> Even though the rectory was given to the priory, the rectorial property or part of it, may have been retained by the donor. The 1291-92 *taxatio*, an assessment for taxation, ordered by Pope Nicholas IV, shows that

Little Leighs was a poor parish assessed at a mere £2.0s.0d. when Great Leighs was assessed at £13.6s.8d. and Felsted at £32.0s.0d.<sup>5</sup>

It appears that by the date of the 1254 *taxatio* or soon after, the priory appropriated the rectory of Little Leighs; that is, appointed a vicar or deputy in place of the rector, to be responsible for the cure of souls.<sup>6</sup> The prior was henceforward responsible for the appointment of vicars at Little Leighs, subject only to the approval of the bishop. In the case of nearby Matching, the rectory was sold together with the Hall, to the cleric Hervey de Boreham in about 1260. Hervey gave it to the priory in 1274, but it was many years before the priory appropriated it.<sup>7</sup> Some monasteries kept their benefices disappropriated until they presented one of their own canons or an influential priest that they considered would be particularly useful to them.

The tomb recess at Little Leighs was first recorded by the



1. (Left) The tomb recess projecting into the graveyard.
  2. (Right) The tomb recess as seen from the chancel.
- (All images, unless otherwise stated, by Susan Clark-Starr, 11/08/2018)



Leighs Parva.

in the North Window  
of the Church  
it is  
very old.



In the North Wall when an Arch has the portraiture of  
a man. But in wood, at six feet high 2 dogs by the  
are adorned w<sup>th</sup> oaken branches. And Emblament of Arms.

It is most like to the  
figure of a priest for  
he has no manner of  
Arms about him, nor  
not (coat of Arms).



W<sup>th</sup> of Leighs Parva M<sup>r</sup> Geo: Allyn: 120<sup>th</sup> of the. After land

R<sup>th</sup> Earl of Warricke was y<sup>e</sup> gift of the Vicaridge.

500 acres of Land

The site of y<sup>e</sup> Priory where my lord lived is wholly  
in the gift of the Bishop.

## Lees Parva

The church lyeth about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of mile on the right hand of the road leading from Braintree towards Chelmsford. Its a small church consisting of a nave and chancel tiled: at the west end a wooden frame with a shaft shingled with wood in which

In this church is neither inscription nor coat of arms, the only monument that is here is in the ~~arch~~ in north wall of the chancel where in an arch lyeth the Effigies of one of the Priors of the ~~monastery~~ Monastery but who he was is not known there being neither inscription nor arms to assist. Also in the Church yard are two stones in the ancient form of coffins with a cross cut upon them but to whom they did belong cannot be now known there being no inscription on them, tradition makes them to be of some of some of the Priors.

I am S<sup>r</sup>

Your real friend & ser<sup>t</sup>

S: Dale

#### 4. Samuel Dale's 1718 letter to fellow antiquary Rev William Holman. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, D/Y 1/1/57/20)

Essex soldier and antiquary Richard Symonds (1617-60) of Black Notley, who visited the church on 24th July 1640 and wrote: 'In the north wall within an arch lies the portraiture of a man cut in wood, at his feet lie 2 dogs, the arches are adorned with oaken branches sans semblance of arms. It is most like to the form of a priest' (Spelling modernised).<sup>8</sup> Symonds, who visited Little Leighs church about a hundred years after Little Leighs priory was acquired by Sir Richard Rich, also made a rough sketch of the effigy (Fig 3).

The next known reference to the tomb and effigy is by Samuel Dale (1659-1739), apothecary and

physician of Braintree, in a letter (Fig 4) dated 23rd September 1718 to his fellow antiquary the Rev William Holman (1669-1730), non-conformist minister of Halstead, which refers to 'Lees Parva' church as follows:

In this church is neither inscription nor coat of arms, the only monument that is here is in the north wall of the chancel where in an arch lieth the effigies [*sic*] of one of the priors of the monastery but who he was is not known there being neither inscription nor arms to assist. (Spelling modernised).<sup>9</sup>

The Rev Frederick Spurrell (1824-1902), rector of Faulkbourne, wrote a paper which was published in the *Transactions* of the then Essex Archaeological Society, in which he described the tomb and effigy in detail.<sup>10</sup> Frederic Chancellor (1825-1918) diocesan surveyor, published his *Ancient Sepulchral Monuments of Essex* in 1895, and it gave not only a description of the tomb, but measured drawings of it.<sup>11</sup>

To put the effigy in context, the tomb recess in which it lies is in the most sought-after burial place in the church, that is within the north wall, close to the east wall. In this position it





**5 & 6. Two views of the recumbent effigy of a priest in full Eucharistic vestments.**

represented not only the right hand of God but was a constant reminder to the priest at the Eucharist to say prayers for the commemorated person's soul.<sup>12</sup> Prayers were said in the hope of reducing the amount of time a soul spent in Purgatory. This tomb is similar to another (of about 1310) in the same position at nearby Great Leighs church; not as ornate, but associated with a richly decorated sedilia and piscina in the south wall opposite.<sup>13</sup> The Great Leighs recess does not surround an effigy, perhaps it never did. The possibility exists that it was an Easter sepulchre, but it is sometimes very difficult to distinguish a tomb from a permanent Easter sepulchre. The parish priest at Great Leighs in the early fourteenth century was John de Boreham (he first occurs in 1306), well connected with local gentry and apparently a man of means, and this may have been his burial place, as some of his successors are buried in the chancel beneath floor slabs set with monumental brasses. At Great and Little Leighs an Easter sepulchre is most likely to have been a temporary wooden structure used for only three days a year in the manner of a Christmas crib, rather than a permanent stone structure.

Associated with the Little Leighs tomb recess are two thirteenth-century coffin lids

which lie outside the chancel, said to have been brought to Little Leighs church from the priory, but there is no evidence for this. They are mentioned by Samuel Dale in his letter to William Holman so they have been in situ for at least 300 years. Dale also mentions the 'tradition' which 'makes them to be of some of the priors'.<sup>14</sup> Stone coffins were invariably set in the floor of the church (usually the chancel) with lid visible and the rest buried beneath the surface. Many coffins which survived until the nineteenth century, were lifted and placed either against a wall of the church, or were deposited outside when restorations took place.

The tomb in the north wall of the chancel at Little Leighs consists of an arched recess about six and a half feet wide and two feet deep, within which lies the recumbent effigy of a priest in full Eucharistic vestments (Figs 5 & 6). This recess projects one foot outside the chancel wall. The arch is a flattish ogee, six feet high and carved into a cinquefoil, strikingly cusped and sub-cusped, with large spandrels.

Within the two central spandrels are sculptured heads surrounded by beautifully worked foliage – the head on the east side being that of a man, on the west side being either a lion or more likely a devil mask (Figs 7 & 8). The outer spandrel on the east is

filled with oak leaves and acorns and on the west with stylised leaves. The hood of the ogee arch has large crockets comprising oak leaves connected by acorns. The ogee terminates in a large lavishly carved finial, decorated with the representation of small human faces.

On each side of the tomb is a buttress, terminating in a richly decorated pinnacle; each buttress rests on a shaft with a carved capital. The style of this tomb and more particularly the naturalistic foliage which decorates it, suggests a date of construction of about 1300, but there can be no precision in this matter without more evidence. In its original state, the interior of the tomb would probably have been painted, perhaps with brightly coloured religious images. If so, they have not survived, unless they are beneath the layers of whitewash which cover the tomb.

What do the symbols on the monument signify? To begin with there is little to suggest that the tomb is associated with a priest, neither is there anything to link it to the church's dedication to St John the Evangelist, his symbols being an eagle and a serpent. What then is the significance of the acorns and oak leaves? What about the evil-looking long tongued creatures on the buttresses – are they there just for decoration?





More significant perhaps, what is the meaning of the Christ-like human face on the eastern spandrel and the juxtaposed devilish face of the one on the west? Do they perhaps represent good and evil? The human face is in the form of what in the last 90 years has become known as the Green Man symbol, whose meaning is still very little understood.

On closer examination, the foliate head, a so-called Green Man, on the east has a long-haired bearded face – eyes wide open, natural, Christ-like, teeth bared, leaves spouting from his open mouth. On the west a devilish, short-haired figure with pointed ears, large nose, piggy eyes and a huge pointed tongue, disgorging from his mouth a bush with five roses. Although the Green Man image on the east could be purely decorative, it has long been thought that in the Middle Ages, this face came to symbolise sin, but there are many possible interpretations. Generally, as here, the Green Man appears in semi-hidden places and at the margins of medieval buildings. However, it is impossible to know what the mason intended or, more to the point, what the man who commissioned the tomb wanted to portray. Perhaps it was the conflict between good and evil, perhaps an Easter theme of death and rebirth. Such carvings are sometimes in the form of a rebus – a sort of visual pun such as are on the tomb at Sible Hedingham which has hawks and foliage representing the name of Sir John

#### The two central spandrels of the tomb arch.

7. (Left) The west side being either a lion or a devil mask.
8. (Right) The east side being that of a man.

Hawkwood.<sup>15</sup> It may also be that the mason at Little Leighs was given the freedom to carve what he wished. Not until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did 'green men' (such faces were not so described until 1939) appear in parish churches in large numbers.

As has been said, an identifying name or coat of arms is conspicuously absent from the tomb. The graffiti scratched on the inside of the tomb arch give no further clues, but at least one of them appears to be a mason's mark. There is no tomb chest; perhaps, as was often the case, the effigy was originally placed at floor level. The monument is in excellent condition, especially the carvings in the spandrels and the excellent quality of the tomb indicates a high status burial, perhaps a cleric of more senior rank and importance than a parish priest.

Turning now to the effigy. There are ten remaining medieval wooden effigies in Essex, the highest number for an English county except Northamptonshire which also has ten. The Essex effigies are located as follows: Little Baddow two, Little Horkesley three, Little Leighs one, Danbury three, and Elmstead one, of which six are military, and two represent women. It is known that at least another five wooden effigies were destroyed in Essex during the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> This compares with the number of medieval stone effigies (freestone and alabaster) surviving in Essex, which is 25 excluding incised slabs.<sup>17</sup> Countrywide in England and Wales, 96 wooden effigies survive (24 others are known to have been destroyed) of which only three represent priests: the effigy at Little Leighs, another at Clifford in Herefordshire and the



effigy of Archbishop Peckham in Canterbury Cathedral. Despite this, it has been repeatedly asserted that the Little Leighs effigy is the only wooden one of a priest in England.

At Clifford, the wooden effigy of a tonsured priest in Eucharistic vestments, also appears to date from about 1280 and it is locally considered to represent one of the Cluniac monks, possibly the prior, from nearby Clifford priory. Again there is no evidence for this and it may well commemorate a parish priest, possibly the last rector before the rectory was appropriated in 1292. Coincidentally the chancel at Clifford like the one at Little Leighs, dates from about 1300 and the font is also of a similar date to the font at Little Leighs. The wooden effigy of Archbishop Peckham in Canterbury Cathedral is of about 1300 and is in the north wall of the north transept, close to the site of Becket's martyrdom.

Why then were effigies made of wood, which appears to be less durable than stone and not as easily worked? It seems that wooden effigies occur mainly in areas where stone was in short supply, especially East Anglia; wood being much lighter than stone it would have been easier to transport: it was cheaper too. However, it appears that cost was not the determining factor, as wooden effigies were made for high status individuals who could have afforded stone. It must have been the characteristics of wood such as well-defined grain that gave it its appeal. Wood gave



**8. The feet in long pointed shoes resting close to a lamb and a lion.**

way to alabaster from about 1350 when alabaster became generally available for the first time.<sup>18</sup>

The effigy is of a well-built man, mature but not elderly, some six feet tall. He is lying on his back in repose, his face almost serene, despite his damaged nose. However, in the fourteenth century the concept of portraiture on an effigy would have been virtually unknown. His arms are folded and his hands are in an attitude of prayer. He is dressed in Eucharistic vestments, the folds of which fall horizontally rather than vertically, as though he was standing upright. His robes consist of a linen hood or amice; an alb or linen robe reaching down to his feet; a long stole round his neck, tied at the waist with a cord; a linen maniple over his left wrist; and over all, a chasuble of embroidered silk. The cleric is wearing a skull cap, his hair is medium length, cut in a straight line below his protruding ears. He is closely shaven but, because he is wearing a skull cap, it is not clear whether he is tonsured. He wears long pointed shoes with no visible laces and his feet rest close to a lamb and a lion, perhaps intended as Christian symbols (Fig 9). His head rests on a thick pillow placed diagonally under his head

and supported by two small figures, one of which has had its head neatly sawn off. The small figure's undamaged partner, which is rather indistinct inside the recess, is a tonsured priest which is almost a miniature mirror-image of the effigy, certainly not an angel, as it has been many times described.

Carved from a single block of oak the effigy is remarkably well-preserved, apart from a crack extending downwards from the figure's knees, and the deliberate but inexplicable mutilation of the priest holding the cushion. It is likely that the effigy was hollowed out at an early stage of its production and filled with charcoal, this was to absorb water and prevent serious cracking as it dried out. If the wood was well-seasoned by the time it was carved, the charcoal served as an extra precaution against unsightly cracking.<sup>19</sup> Dendrochronology would give us the date that the timber used to make the effigy was felled, but so far no such tests have been undertaken. The Rev Spurrell described the effigy as being covered in white paint in 1863, this must have been done long after the effigy was originally painted. Much of this white paint still survives, as do smaller amounts of red and blue polychrome, mainly in the folds of the priest's clothing. Other wooden effigies have lost their original paint, and others, like the effigy of a man at Much Marcle, Herefordshire, have been restored and repainted in recent years. The place of manufacture of the Little Leighs effigy is not known.

Who then was the priest commemorated at Little Leighs? There is no definitive answer to this question as records are incomplete or non-existent. Furthermore, it remains an open question whether the tomb recess and the effigy are in fact coeval.

It is clear that the rectory of Little Leighs and at least part of its income were transferred to the priory at some time between its

foundation in the twelfth century and the *taxatio* of 1254. Shortly after this date it was appropriated by the priory and a vicar appointed at Little Leighs. It remained appropriated until at least 1333 when the prior of Little Leighs presented Robert Kere to the vicarage.<sup>20</sup> It is not known when the church was disappropriated, but it was probably in the early part of the fourteenth century. However, it was never a valuable benefice and cannot have been an attractive prospect for a priest, it is therefore surprising that it has such a sumptuous tomb in the chancel.

Assuming that the effigy was carved and the tomb constructed during the time that the benefice was a vicarage, the most likely individual to have been buried in the tomb is one of the vicars of Little Leighs. Records of incumbents are incomplete and only date from 1333; as the priest commemorated probably died about 1280 it is not possible to suggest a name. As the benefice was in the prior's gift, the priest commemorated by the tomb may be one of the canons at the priory, only one of whom is known. He was the sub-prior, a serial adulterer named Roger de Colne who received dispensation for his sins from the Bishop of London in 1319 when his adultery with Margaret, wife of a certain William of Little Leighs, came to light, along with similar offences against canon law.<sup>21</sup>

However, the priest whose effigy lies in the chancel at Little Leighs may simply have been from another benefice but deemed worthy of appointment as vicar of Little Leighs by the prior, or perhaps a priest considered useful to the priory. The outstanding candidate in this latter respect is Hervey de Boreham whose relative John de Boreham was vicar of Great Leighs church in the early fourteenth century, and who may have been buried there.<sup>22</sup> The Boreham family had a long association with Little Leighs

priory by the time Harvey was ordained; his parents were buried in what became known as the Boreham Chapel in the priory, and Harvey made elaborate arrangements for the welfare of their souls.<sup>23</sup> It is also clear that he was wished to be buried with them.<sup>24</sup> The Boreham family were lords of Old Hall, Boreham from at least the twelfth century, and they chose the priory as their last resting place because the clergy there could be relied on to pray for their souls in perpetuity, so as to shorten the time their souls spent in Purgatory.<sup>25</sup> In return, the Boreham family gave the manor of Old Hall in Boreham, as well as other property, to the priory.<sup>26</sup>

Harvey, who was clearly far more important than a mere parish priest, appears to have had an outstanding dual career both as a priest and as an administrator. In 1268 he was chancellor to Earl Gilbert de Clare; by 1271 a canon of Hereford cathedral; archdeacon of Shropshire by 1278 and canon of St Paul's cathedral by 1272. In 1274 he was appointed Dean of St Paul's and in 1276 he died whilst being investigated by the Archbishop of Canterbury for pluralism.<sup>27</sup> If Harvey was indeed buried at Leigh priory beside his parents, it is possible that an effigy may have been on his tomb and was rescued and brought to Little Leighs when the priory was destroyed following the Dissolution.<sup>28</sup> Possibly there was an empty tomb recess in Little Leighs church that perfectly fitted his removal there. If none of this was the case, Hervey de Boreham may, simply for his own reasons, have arranged his own burial and commemoration at Little Leighs having been appointed to the living by the priory (it is clear he was a collector of benefices and was under investigation for pluralism), an appointment which had been kept open for such an eventuality.

We may never know the name of the priest commemorated, but as long as his effigy survives we should treat this great treasure with due reverence and care, and hope that one day his identity may come to light.

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## The Author

Dr Christopher Starr is a retired Army intelligence officer with an interest in Essex history, particularly the Essex gentry in the fourteenth century.



# Shaped from the Landscape:

## Great Baddow's medieval deer park

by

Gloria Harris

Deer parks were a common feature in the English landscape during the medieval period. Across England, 35 parks were recorded at Domesday. Two of these were in Essex; one in Ongar, known to have existed before the conquest, and the other at Rayleigh. By 1300, when parks were in their heyday, numbers in England had risen to around 3,200.<sup>1</sup> Anyone could create a deer park if they were wealthy enough. The biggest initial expense was enclosing an area of a lord's estate with a wooden pale, or fence, in which deer were kept and just replacing or repairing the park pale involved a long-term financial commitment. However, it was a commitment that increasing numbers of wealthy landowners chose to make throughout the medieval period, although there may have been limitations on the quantity and quality of land available. Deer were the focus of any park where the pleasure of hunting went hand-in-hand with providing baronial halls with a luxury meat for the table. However, some parks may have been more than a rich man's playground and this article will

look at just one example – Baddow Park in the parish of Great Baddow (Fig 1).

Traditionally, research on medieval deer parks has had a local focus, and this article follows in that tradition. However, there is a growing interest in the nature and development of parks in a wider context, including subjects such as when did parks appear, where in the local landscape were they sited, what was the purpose of a park and did they change over time? Mileson's work on Medieval parks provides a framework for this study and although evidence for Great Baddow's medieval deer park is thin, enough has been found that can answer some, at least, of these questions.<sup>2</sup>

### **Baddow Park – a chronological review**

During the thirteenth century, when new parks were being made or existing ones enlarged, it had become necessary to obtain a licence from the king to make these changes to the landscape.<sup>3</sup> No record of a licence for a deer park has been found for Great Baddow during the thirteenth century, so dating it is not precise, but it seems that it was in existence

during that century. The first indication that a park existed in Great Baddow was in 1291 when William the parker of Badewe and John de Galingal of Colchester, were taken and detained in the tower of London for breaking the king's park at Langham, Essex and carrying away deer.<sup>4</sup> Sometime before 1304, Robert Bruce the elder, appointed William the parker of Great Baddow as keeper of his parks and warren in Writtle. William was also granted a house in the park of Writtle for life, but in 1306, following the Bruce rebellion in Scotland, the manor of Writtle, and many others in Essex, was taken into the king's hands.<sup>5</sup> William's fate is unknown but as Great Baddow and Writtle were historically connected (they both shared manorial organisation and officials) he may have been a victim of politics, losing his position and privileges as keeper of both parks when the manors passed from the Bruce to the Bohun family in 1306.<sup>6</sup>

Although precise dating of the park has not been possible, it seems likely it was made sometime around the mid- to late-thirteenth century. William the parker was said to be of 'Badewe'

1. Extract from Christopher Saxton's 1576 map of Essex showing Baddow Park with its pale. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, MAP/CM/1/1)



and his position as keeper of the Writtle parks and woods, prior to 1304, suggests that the original Great Baddow deer park may have been created while both Writtle and Great Baddow shared the Bruce family as manorial lords, if not before. It has been suggested that Writtle Park was created before Isabel Bruce was granted the lordship of Writtle in 1238. Like the Great Baddow deer park, there is no record of a licence to enclose the principal park within the manor of Writtle.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore possible that if both parks were created *before* the system of licensing began then no record exists for the creation of either park, and that they share a similar, early history.

The transfer of manors from one landowner to another was often the result of political fall-out between kings and nobles, and events like the 1306 Bruce rebellion, whilst far-removed geographically, often had unlikely consequences of a more local nature as new owners had new ideas. Following the transfer from the Bruce family to the Bohun family, Baddow Park underwent some changes. From 1306, the manor of Great Baddow was held by Earl Humphrey de Bohun and by 1319, Adam had superseded William as the new parker there.<sup>8</sup> It is under the Bohuns that we have the earliest known written reference to the site of the park, 1320, when it was in the possession of Humphrey de Bohun. A grant of land was made, which lay 'between the park of Badewe and Kyngesho'.<sup>9</sup> Three years later Earl Humphrey died, a rebel and a traitor, at the battle of Boroughbridge, resulting in his lands, including Great Baddow, being taken into the king's hands.

For the next few years the Bohun family fell from royal favour but their fortunes began to recover when Humphrey's son, John de Bohun, was restored to his estates in 1326. He lived for a further ten years.<sup>10</sup> During his relatively short time as Great Baddow's lord, John made some changes in his manor, which

included enlarging his deer park. At this point, the size of the park is unknown, although we can guess (see below), but it was extended when John took Burylie, a 29 acre field of demesne arable, out of production and enclosed it to create a laund, an open grassy area, for the deer.<sup>11</sup> Following John's death, his brother Humphrey inherited the manor of Great Baddow, just one of the Bohun's vast estates.<sup>12</sup> Very soon after, a survey was made listing all Great Baddow's demesne land and Adam the parker is found among the list of jurors, still in his position after 20 years.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the lordship of John's brother, Humphrey, there is little known information regarding the park except for an incident that took place in 1342 allowing a glimpse of what might have been within the park pale. Hugh de Badewe, knight, along with accomplices, broke into several parks in Essex belonging to Humphrey and carried away his deer. The gang also entered the free warren at Baddow, taking hares, rabbits, partridges and pheasants before moving on to assault Bohun's men and servants in Chelmsford.<sup>14</sup> The manor of Great Baddow continued in the lordship of the Bohun family until the death of Joan de Bohun, widowed after the death of her husband Humphrey in 1373. Throughout this post 1342 period there is no known information concerning the deer park.<sup>15</sup>

Joan remained unmarried until her death in 1419.<sup>16</sup> Her death resulted in a partitioning of lands that formerly were held by her husband Humphrey, between Henry V and his sister Anne Stafford. As might be expected, the king 'had his choice' which included the manor of Great Baddow, a park and two groves. From 1419, these lands were brought under the jurisdiction of the duchy of Lancaster.<sup>17</sup> During the remainder of the fifteenth century, duchy lands could be used to fulfil the provision of the

wills of successive kings or to endow their queens.<sup>18</sup> The park continued to function into the sixteenth century and it was said to contain 240 acres in 1582.<sup>19</sup>

### Where was Baddow Park?

Throughout the medieval period, no known existing contemporary documents contain information on the precise location of Great Baddow's deer park. Place-names are always a useful pointer in identifying features in the landscape and it would have been tempting to look no further than the sites of the, still working, Baddow Park Farm and Parklands Farm (now in the parish of Galleywood but historically in the parish of Great Baddow) and consider the task complete. However, over time, the location of parks sometimes changed with a different owner and shifts in fashion. With the passing of eight centuries it can not be assumed that the current farms with Park names covered the same, or similar, ground as that of the original medieval deer park.

The earliest visual evidence of the Baddow Park appears on Christopher Saxton's 1576 map of Essex (Fig 1) where many Essex parks are depicted as small circular enclosures within park pales. The drawings are not to scale so precise locations of parks is not possible but they do provide a basis for a park's existence.<sup>20</sup> Baddow Park is also shown on the Chapman and André map of 1777, again giving a vague location, but Parklands is not shown.<sup>21</sup> Earlier written evidence shows that Parklands was in existence in 1594 and the abutments place it in its current location.<sup>22</sup> Evidence of the location of the park itself also rests on it being referenced as an abutment to other holdings and, like Parklands, places it in its current location.<sup>23</sup>

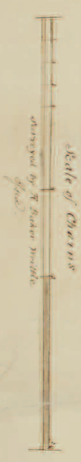
Parklands and its relationship with the park itself presents a problem. In 1419 a description of the demesne land of Great Baddow mentions, 'Parkland in the Netherfield and Parkland in



Total Contents

Park farm	220. 5. 20
Common Mead	4. 0. 0
Total	224. 5. 20

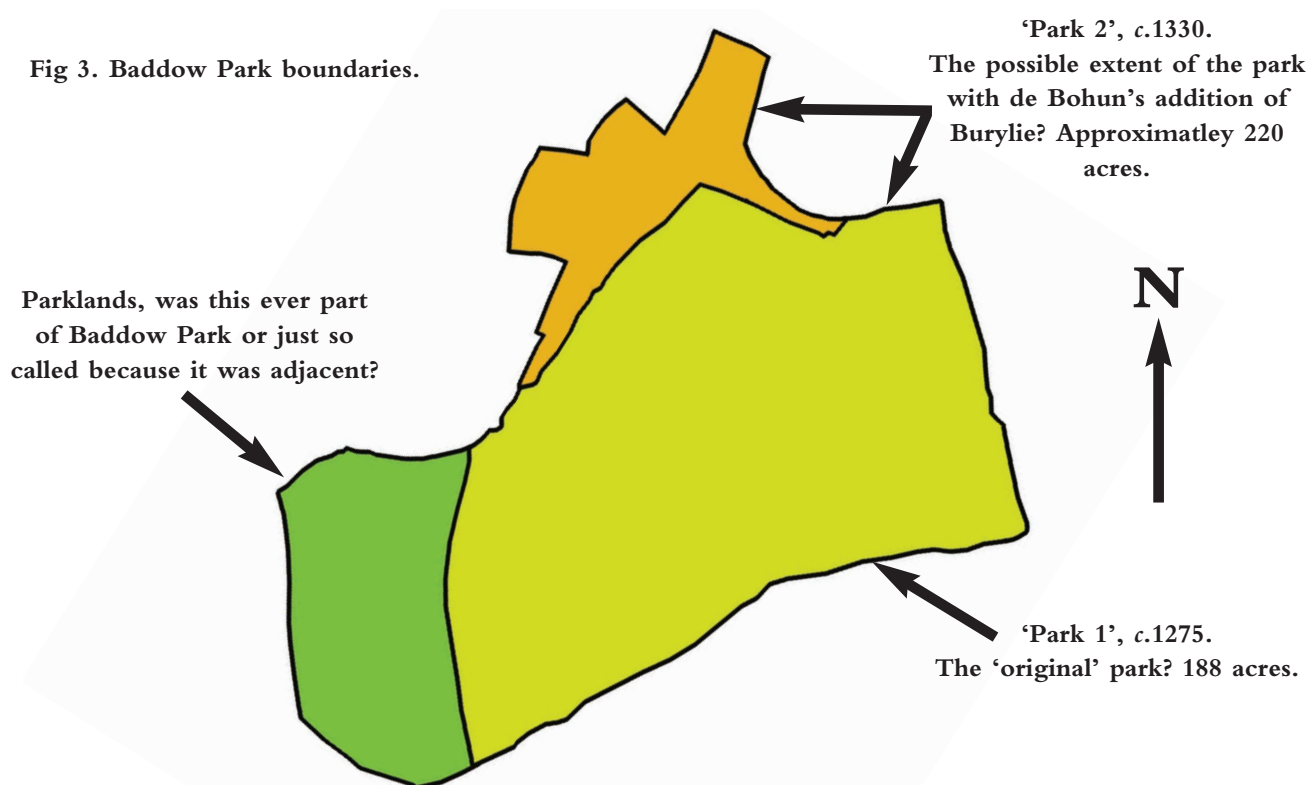
2. Robert Baker's 1829 A Plan of the Park Farm.  
(Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, D/DDw P23)



**PARK FARM**  
In Great Saffron Walden.  
Belonging to Mr Robert Baker  
1829



Fig 3. Baddow Park boundaries.



the Overfield', each containing 27 acres of arable.<sup>24</sup> This area cannot satisfactorily be identified with the 'Parkeland' recorded in 1605, 1594 and 1548, when it contained 30 acres at all three dates, and in 1605 was divided into 8 pieces'.<sup>25</sup> Throughout this 50 year period 'Parkeland' appears to have been cultivated, as it was in 1419, but was half the size, which suggests that it had already been divided. If this is the same area of land, it may never have been part of Baddow Park during the medieval period or, if it was, then it may have been converted from arable to pasture and back again between the 1330s and mid sixteenth century. It is doubtful that part of it was converted to create the laund as in 1419 the two Parkeland fields were recorded as part of the demesne arable and that Burylie had been, but was now taken into the park. This suggests different parcels of land. On the other hand, where is, or was, the other half of the 1419 Parkland? It is possible that it was never part of Great Baddow Park and was so called because of its proximity to it. Likewise, the 29 acre field of demesne arable called Burylie, enclosed for the laund during the

1330s cannot be identified. Burylie has not been found to appear in any record other than the 1419 survey. By definition, any land brought into the existing park to enlarge it, would have a shared boundary with it, and four fields to the north-west of the park, in later records, create an irregular shape to the circuit boundary as can be seen in Robert Baker's 1829 *A Plan of the Park Farm* (Fig 2). This does not conform to the typical shape of a park which was, generally, rectangular with rounded edges for economy of fencing. However, this area measures approximately 32 acres and so presents a likely location for the 29 acre laund. Evidence that does exist for the location of the medieval park, in the form of an abuttal to other holdings, suggests that its original site remained largely the same from its creation until the present day, even though the land usage has changed and the A12 has sliced into it on its boundary.

#### How big was Baddow Park?

As discussed in the previous paragraph it can only be speculation as to where and when additional parcels of land were added to

Baddow Park. However the 1419 survey does provide some clues as to how big the park was at various times in its history (excluding Parklands). While the survey does not tell us explicitly where the park was it does reveal that the circuit of the park measured 701 perches over and above the 29 acres of demesne arable that John de Bohun had enclosed to create a laund.<sup>26</sup> It was stated that a 'Baddow perch' measured 18ft when a standard perch was 16½ feet. This allows us to calculate the circuit of the park, possibly the original thirteenth century park as it was set out, giving a length of 12,618ft (701 x 18ft). Using the Great Baddow Tithe Map to identify the area classed in 1838 as Baddow Park<sup>27</sup> and then the very detailed 1st Edition 25" OS maps, we can trace the boundary of the park area as it appeared in c.1875. From this we can measure the circuit as a comparison and doing so gives an approximate length of 12,205ft, an error of less than 2% from the 1419 survey. The area within this boundary, again using data from the Tithe Map, is approximately 188 acres (Fig 3, 'Park 1'). This compares favourably with the average size



of a medieval deer park, which may have been around one to two hundred acres, with larger ones covering several thousand acres and smaller ones, just 50.<sup>28</sup> To put Baddow Park into context, the de Bohuns had 1,475 acres of parkland in the immediate vicinity of Pleshey.<sup>29</sup>

Where was John de Bohun's 29 acres to extend the park with additional land? As mentioned above, Baker's *A Plan of the Park Farm* shows an irregular shaped addition of four fields to what we think might have been the original park ('Park 1') These comprise approximately 32 acres, which could well be the 29 acres of Burylie added by de Bohun sometime during the 1330s. This acreage combined with the original park gives a total area of around 220 acres (Fig 3, 'Park 2').

We also know that in 1582 the park contained 240 acres. The difference in the acreages recorded between various documents over several centuries is of concern but hopefully within acceptable limits. It has not been discovered yet if small parcels of land were added or taken away over the years, which is possible, or was it the result of differing standards of measuring the land?

### **The landscape of Baddow Park**

Medieval deer parks were generally created in well-wooded areas and are almost always associated with wood pasture where growing trees and grazing deer co-existed in a managed system. However, not all park enclosures were made from a wooded area, some were created from a moorland or heathland landscape. One such example of a heathland enclosure occurs at Great Baddow in 1248. Soon after the system of licensing was introduced, Master Roger Cantilupe was granted a licence, 'to enclose with a dyke [ditch] and hedge and cultivate 60 acres of heath in [Great] Badewe which is in the Forest of Essex, but so that the deer can freely pass in and out'.<sup>30</sup>

It has been assumed that this enclosure was the creation of an early park in Great Baddow.<sup>31</sup> However, this is doubtful. To enclose any part of the Royal Forest, required a licence whether there was an intention by the landowner to make a park, or to convert the land to agricultural use known as 'creating an assart'. Licences to impark usually clearly say so and some specify certain hunting rights. In the case of Cantilupe's enclosure on the heath at Great Baddow, the reference to cultivation is clear but this was on condition that the deer had free passage in and out of the enclosure. According to Forest Law the condition went further, requiring assarts to be enclosed with such a small ditch and low hedge that a doe and her fawn might easily go in and out over the fence and, it goes on to say, 'Such a fence ought not, according to the assize of the Forest, to be more than four and a half feet high'. If an owner of Forest land was given leave to make it into a park, then that owner was bound to keep it well fenced against the deer, with inleaps or deer leaps being strictly forbidden.<sup>32</sup> Within Forest law, a distinction was made between land enclosed for any purpose other than making a park, and land that was enclosed for the express purpose of creating a park. Cantilupe's licence to enclose 60 acres of heath was probably not a licence to create a park in Great Baddow.<sup>33</sup>

Although most parks were created from a woodland landscape, generally they could be made anywhere. With the passing of eight centuries, since the creation of the deer park in Great Baddow, land usage would have changed to meet manorial economic needs, or possibly on the whim of a lord. This makes it difficult to determine what sort of landscape was enclosed to make Baddow's deer park. Cantilupe's enclosure in 1248 took in 60 acres of heath. The heath can be identified from contemporary documents.<sup>34</sup> It was part of a

mixed woodland and common landscape in the district of Galleywood, which was and still is, defined from its wooded common landscape. The topography of that area would have provided the kind of landscape typical of that in which many parks were sited, which was often on high ground where soil quality was poor. This is borne out by the creation of Crondon Park when the Bishop of London was granted a licence in 1204 to enclose an area of Stock to make a park with a hunting lodge on higher ground than the often damp and swampy ground of Orsett in which his palace lay.<sup>35</sup> Crondon Park pales bounded an area of Galleywood common, which stands on high ground, approximately 80 meters above sea level. Although set back from the heath, most of Baddow Park covers a gentle rise toward Galleywood (Fig 4). The area of heathland that existed in the thirteenth century may have been natural, or, more likely, the product of continuous overgrazing of a once, more heavily wooded area.

The nature of the terrain when the park was created is not known, but it is assumed it was wooded to some extent (Fig 5). The site chosen was near to, but not next to, the heath, common and woodland. Galleywood itself lay on the southern edge of the Great Baddow parish boundary. The wooded area of Galleywood in 1733, contained 100 acres,<sup>36</sup> but was destroyed in the early nineteenth century and converted to farmland which became Wood Farm.<sup>37</sup> Parks were often sited on high ground where soil quality was poor and of limited use as to what could be grown there. So the park at Baddow may have been sited where it was, based on consideration of conserving the existing resources available in Galleywood, heath and common when at times 'the reduction and overuse of wood pasture was... sometimes a cause of concern', and 'men were worried about securing supplies of timber, fuel



**4 (Above). Part of the western boundary of Baddow Park taken from Barn Field looking toward The Wood (Plots 14 & 16 on Baker's 1829 map).**

**5 (Right) Possible surviving length of park bank taken from Little Mead (Plot 15) looking into The Wood. (Photographs, Bon Harris, 27/08/2018)**



and fodder'.<sup>38</sup> This would make sense in the two centuries leading up to the Black Death, when population growth was rising and there was increasing pressure on woodland resources.

### **The purpose of Baddow Park**

For around 150 years, since its possible creation, Great Baddow's deer park had been under the lordship of just two families, the Bruces' and the Bohuns', except for the periods when both families were out of royal favour and Great Baddow was returned, temporarily, to the crown. The creation and maintenance of a park required a great deal of financial investment, and wealth was something that neither family lacked. Another common factor was, both families were absentee manorial lords. So, was this another aspect that affected decisions concerning the management and use of the park? Discussions surrounding the purpose of medieval deer parks include to what extent were they seen as practical or aesthetic enterprises. Were they just enclosures in which to keep deer, and where the pleasure of hunting, or provisioning of the tables in baronial halls were seen as their

main purpose? Alternatively, were parks planned and laid out for visual effect to impress visitors on their approach to a lord's residence?<sup>39</sup> While Baddow Park remained in the possession of the Bruce family, during the thirteenth century and just beyond, it can probably be assumed that it did not play any part in aesthetically enhancing any lordly residence, sited where it was, away from the manorial centre and where there was no great manor house. Assumptions about parks as recreational hunting grounds for the aristocracy have undergone a review, in particular, because of the relatively confined area of many enclosures with some covering little more than 50 acres.<sup>40</sup> However, if a park was not simply a 'hunting park', shaped and financially maintained as a micro version of a regal playground, then what was it for?

Lack of evidence for the early part of Baddow Park's history during the thirteenth century, causes difficulties in gaining insight into what might have been its original purpose. Close connections between Writtle and Great Baddow, while in the possession of the Bruce family, when William the parker's role was divided between the two manors, show that Baddow's

park was important in the wider economy of the family's estates. It is not clear whether the park and its livestock were maintained when the manor of Great Baddow was forfeited to the king following the battle of Boroughbridge. Certainly John de Bohun, during his relatively short time as Great Baddow's manorial lord, enhanced the existing park by creating a laund for the deer and in some parks open launds, were interspersed with large trees, making the area more suitable for hunting and, or, possibly more aesthetically pleasing.<sup>41</sup> It is doubtful that there were initially many trees in the laund, apart from surviving hedgerow trees, as it had been created from arable land.

The Bohun family held vast estates, including nearby Pleshey Castle which had a park attached so it was unlikely that the Baddow Park would be seen as a preferred hunting ground. By 1342, while under the lordship of Humphrey de Bohun, the park appeared to be well-stocked with deer, and the warren with other small animals, which Hugh de Badewe and his fellow gang members carried away.<sup>42</sup> As the 1342 park raiding incident shows, Humphrey de Bohun had a group of parks at his disposal, Baddow being one of them. Although the manor of Great Baddow was a few miles distant from Pleshey and did not have a grand manor house, this does not mean that the park was not seen as part of the de Bohun's lordly status, albeit on a much smaller scale than those parks in the vicinity of Pleshey.<sup>43</sup> These private enclosures were visual symbols of lordly authority and power, stocked with deer that may have been hunted but that would eventually end up as a luxury meat on the baronial table. It was no coincidence then that parks were frequent targets of gang attacks. This was typical, and there were many reasons for them, including revenge, envy or male rivalry. If the Bohuns' did enjoy the thrill of the chase in



Baddow Park, no evidence has been found.

By 1419, when Baddow was absorbed into the duchy of Lancaster, the survey shows that the park appeared still to be functioning. Compilers of the survey drew on information from 'the old extent' but did not give a date. If the retrospective information came from the 1337 survey, which is damaged, then it is unfortunate because, used together, both might have provided an insight into the use of the park and its role in the manorial economy, both before and after the catastrophe of the Black Death which arrived in Essex in the Spring of 1349.

In the 250 years leading up to the Black Death, population in England was rising, peaking around the year 1300. By then, pressure on land and resources was at its greatest. Interestingly, this increase in population coincided with growth in the number of parks and changes in land use. During the 1330s, when population was still high, demand for food great and land was at a premium, John de Bohun decided to take 29 acres of demesne arable out of production and enclose it to extend the park. He was not alone in doing this as 'the imparking of arable seems to have been particularly extensive in the 20 years or so before the Black Death... Significant numbers of parks took in land that was, or had been, recently under the plough and this land was overwhelmingly converted to deer pasture.'<sup>44</sup>

The 1419 extent records all areas of the demesne land, and its use, in the manor of Great Baddow. From the brief description of the park at that time, it appears to have been wood pasture, planted with oak, beech and maple.

However, 'the pasture of the land thus enclosed' was worth nothing per year above the sustenance of the beasts' (deer). Underwood, which had many uses including logs, faggots, stakes, charcoal and in the

construction of buildings in the wattle and daub process, was valued at 6s.8d per year which 'they were able to sell'. The custom of pig's pannage, a minor use in wood pasture, was, in theory, carried on within the park. Pigs of every customary tenant were allowed to forage for acorns in the park, for which a payment was made to the lord for each pig, according to its age. Oak trees did not yield a reliable annual crop and so pig keeping was not dependant on woodland so it was recorded that 'pannage within the...park was not extended because seldom falls due'.

What this record suggests is that the park, in the early fifteenth century, before 1419, was certainly playing a role in the manorial economy, but there is also a sense that its main purpose was provisioning the lord's household. Pasture in the park was used for the deer only and brought in no income from pasture rents but there was some potential revenue to be had from the sale of underwood. Certainly during the Bohun family's lordship of Great Baddow, the park was close enough to Pleshey to cart additional produce from the park, such as venison, fuel and underwood, back to Pleshey Castle. Whatever the gains from the park produce, there were also expenses. From the entire value of the demesne lands in 1419, which amounted to £41.5s.4d, deductions were allowed for the wages of the parker and the warrener, both of whom were paid 4d per day. Wages of park personnel were a considerable part of park expenditure and even humble parkers were paid more than those who looked after livestock. They were supplied with sturdy lodges such as the house William was granted in 1304 in the park of Writtle.<sup>45</sup> No contemporary record has been found for a parker's lodge but later documents suggest that there may have been one, which would be expected. Parkers, as described in 1617 as 'a messuage,

orchard and one croft of land called Parkers'. It was also said to be heriotable, which suggests that the site was of ancient origin. The location of Parkers can be placed near the (current) junction of Vicarage Lane and Brook Lane, close to The Chase which leads into the land of Baddow Park.<sup>46</sup>

The 1419 extent was made following Great Baddow's inclusion in the duchy of Lancaster. For the remainder of the fifteenth century and beyond, the manor was held by a succession of queens bestowed on them for their maintenance. In the customs of the manor of Great Baddow, the queens, through the farmers of the manor, derived an income from wood on Galleywood Common but also the park. In 1448, it was recorded that 'there were in the park and common of Gavelwood for the use of the lady Queen... 1600 faggots...for which the farmer was answerable' and in the following year, 'the court was informed...there were in the common of Gavelwood...800 faggots, and in the park of this manor, 800 faggots'. Of these, 150 were assigned for tithes and 300 for the farmer for his firewood and for the officials'.<sup>47</sup> Without these snippets, the park's history would be the poorer. It is not known if deer were maintained in the park after 1419, but it continued to provide an income from the wood and as seen above, was still functioning until at least 1582.

How many people now, when passing the entrance to Baddow Park Farm, on the road to West Hanningfield, give a thought to the origins of its name, would imagine a deer herd roaming the landscape or underwood being gathered from the park for the maintenance of queens? The deer park has been virtually lost from Great Baddow's history and it is hoped that this work has gone some way to recover it; that it can add to the historiography of medieval deer parks and show that they played an important

part in medieval life; that these private enclosures were not just rich men's hunting grounds. No evidence has been found that the Baddow Park was created specifically for hunting, or that hunting ever took place there, but it is possible that it did. Deer were certainly the focus of the park throughout the medieval period but perhaps were farmed within the enclosure to provide a succession of aristocratic owners with venison for the high table. Some of those owners, like John de Bohun, made changes to the park either for aesthetic or practical reasons. The siting of the park was not on the highest ground, like many parks were, but it did occupy a gentle gradient toward the highest point. Its position was removed from the wood, heath and common landscape but, by the early fifteenth century, was part of that woodland economy, supplying faggots for the benefit of queens and their officials. The research on Great Baddow's deer park has not been exhaustive, for example court rolls and estate accounts have not been examined. For now, though, this work lays the ground for more to be undertaken in the future.

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## The Author

Gloria Harris has lived in Great Baddow for 50 years and the parish is the focus of her research. She has an MA in Local and Regional History from the University of Essex and has recently retired from the ERO.



## a portrayal of the fourteenth century lady in Essex

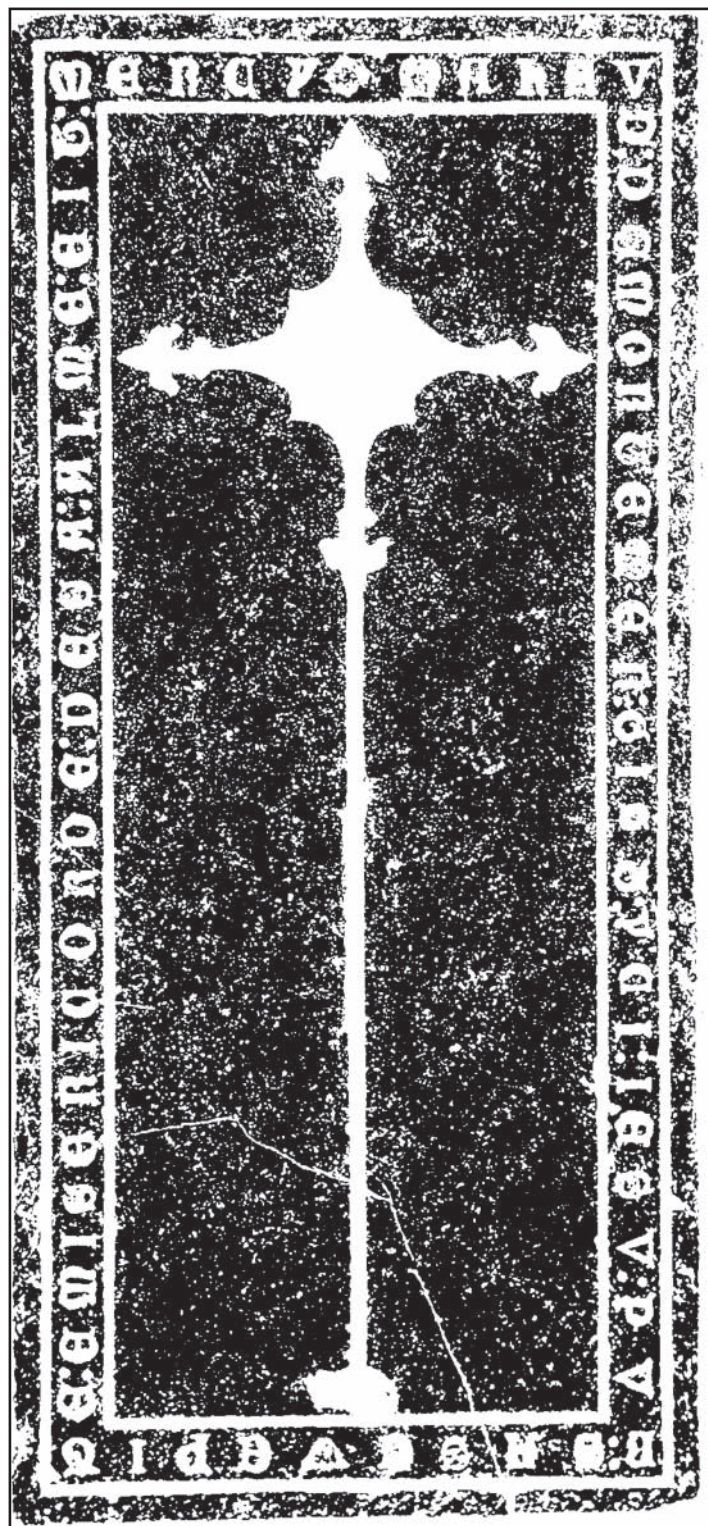
by

Martin Stuchfield

Jennifer Ward is renowned as a specialist in the study of medieval women and has made a significant contribution to the subject through her extensive writings. Her publication record is formidable with the following titles of particular relevance: *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (1992); *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500* (1995); *Women in Medieval Europe: 1200-1500* (2002; 2nd edn, 2016); *Women in England in the Middle Ages* (2006); and *Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare: 1295-1360* (2014). Whilst this last title, published by the Suffolk Records Society, relates to the neighbouring county this brief account is intended as a tribute to Jenny's life and work in Essex and will concentrate on the fourteenth century.

Essex contains a surprisingly large number of brasses commemorating women from this period. Twenty-seven examples can be attributed of which 6 brasses and 11 indents (stones that formerly contained brass) survive. A further 10 lost memorials are recorded from documentary sources in the churches at Feering,<sup>1</sup> Great Waltham,<sup>2</sup> Layer Breton,<sup>3</sup> Liston,<sup>4</sup> Pattiswick,<sup>5</sup> Rochford,<sup>6</sup> Shelley,<sup>7</sup> Stifford<sup>8</sup> and Widdington.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Garter King of Arms (c.1460-1534) recorded a lost brass comprising an inscription and two shields to Sir John de R[h]odes, and wife Beatrice, daughter of John de Dunstantville, 1380-1, at Walden Abbey.<sup>10</sup>

The indents at Lindsell,<sup>11</sup> Shalford<sup>12</sup> and Stebbing<sup>13</sup> are nearly effaced with those commemorated remaining



Maud de Mortemer, c.1340, at Tilty.  
(rubbing: © Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore,  
(The Monumental Brasses of Essex)

anonymous. Examples at Hempstead<sup>14</sup> (Dame Margerie de Basingge, early fourteenth century) and Wivenhoe<sup>15</sup> (Margery de Suttone, early fourteenth century) are simple in design comprising a marginal inscription in early Lombardic lettering whilst slabs at Little Easton<sup>16</sup> (Margerie, daughter of Sir Thomas de Lovaine, c.1310) and Tilty<sup>17</sup> (Maud de Mortemer, c.1340) are additionally adorned with a floriated cross. A stunning indent at Birdbrook,<sup>18</sup> dated c.1370, shows a lady on a bracket under a single canopy with four shields and a marginal inscription completing the composition. A perfectly preserved indent containing a fine late-fourteenth century lady in mantle with canopy, inscription, four shields and a marginal inscription at Great Oakley<sup>19</sup> was recorded as lost as long ago as 1639 by the antiquary Richard Symonds<sup>20</sup> (1617–c.1692). Annoyingly, the slab is partly obscured by an altar dais. Although John Weever<sup>21</sup> (1576–1632) noted the brass to Margery, wife of [John de] Gildesburgh at Wennington<sup>22</sup> 1631 it was sadly lost when William Holman<sup>23</sup> (1670–1730) visited in 1719. The outline in the stone clearly indicates that Margery was portrayed wearing the nebulé or zig-zag headdress and the cote-hardie. Finally, an important indent was rediscovered at Marks Tey by the Colchester Archaeological Trust<sup>24</sup> in 2009. St. Andrew's church is regarded as a 'charismatic evangelical' church and, in order to advance modern doctrine, a Faculty was granted in 2006 to re-order the building substantially. An integral aspect of the works was the removal of the existing Victorian flooring in order to achieve a lower and consistent floor level throughout. A number of objects were found under the old floorboards including, at the west end of the chancel on the north side, a sizeable Purbeck slab commemorating Robert de Teye and his wife, Katherine, 1360, under a double canopy with foot inscription.



**Alice, wife of Thomas Tyrell, c.1380, at Downham.**  
(rubbing: © Lack, Stuchfield & Whittemore,  
*The Monumental Brasses of Essex*)

In focusing on the brasses that remain it is necessary, for completeness, to include the inscription in French and shield bearing the arms of d'Adeleigh (*Chequy, or and sable*) laid in memory of Alice, wife of Thomas Tyrell, dated c.1380.<sup>25</sup> This was discovered under flooring in 1871 and thankfully survived the devastating fire that engulfed Downham church in March 1977.

Five effigial brasses survive at Chrishall, Hatfield Broad Oak, Stebbing, West Hanningfield and Wimbish – all are products of the London workshop.

#### **Female costume on brasses**

The depiction of female costume on brasses is numerous. Ladies attire was generally simple in design with the exception of the headdresses, which are often elaborate. All women are shown wearing the kirtle which closely fits the figure. The sleeves usually cover part of the hand if the form of a mitten and are invariably profusely decorated with buttons (Chrishall and West Hanningfield). The surcoat is commonly worn over the kirtle with two hand slits or pocket holes (Stebbing). In other examples the short-sleeved surcoat is

represented with long tippets almost hanging to the ankle (Chrishall). A mantle is commonly shown fastened across the breast by a tasselled cord and is usually worn over the kirtle alone (Stebbing). The headdress affords the most decorative feature on female brasses. The graceful and simple veil headdress is evident at West Hanningfield. More common is the elaborate nebulé headdress in which the face is framed by veils starched into wavy flounces, and smaller flounces at the bottom of the veil are arranged on the shoulders (Chrishall). By 1390 these frills are mainly shown framing the forehead only, and not falling below eye-level (Hatfield Broad Oak). This form of headdress has also been described as zig-zag from the manner of its representation, the undulations being expressed in a less contracted form to give a zig-zag outline.

Widows are represented in dignified but plain dress, its most distinctive feature being the plaited barbe covering the throat and chin. The head is covered with a veil, and a plain mantle is worn over the kirtle. The costume is indistinguishable from that of nuns (Stebbing).





Sir John de Wautone (d. 1346),  
and wife Ellen, at Wimbish.  
(© Author photograph)

**The commemorated  
Ellen, wife of Sir John de Wautone  
(d. 1346), at Wimbish<sup>26</sup>**

The earliest of our ladies and a product of the London (Hastings) workshop (c.1347–48), wears a plain mantle fastened by a broad band in front, over a flowing cote. The hair is uncovered, except for a curiously braided fillet. Ashdown in her book on British costume describes the headdress at “singularly quaint and graceful, and in marked contradiction to the unbecoming style which succeeded it. The method of doing the hair explains itself, but it should be mentioned that the plait passing over the head reached to a similar point on the right hand side of the head, although the medieval artist has portrayed it somewhat out of place”.<sup>27</sup> This small effigy (444 x 164 mm) is depicted with

her husband in the head of an octofoil cross the shaft of which rises from the back of a now lost elephant. A marginal inscription with evangelistic symbols at the corners originally completed the composition.

Wautone was Sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire on three occasions during the reign of Edward III. He established himself through service to the Fitzwalter family and to Elizabeth de Burgh.<sup>28</sup> In 1322 he was summoned to perform military service against the Scots and fought during the early stages of the Hundred Years War being present at Crécy. His *inquisition post mortem*, indicates that he died on 31st December 1346, probably of dysentery during the siege of Calais.<sup>29</sup>

**Isabel Clonvill and son John, 1361,  
at West Hanningfield<sup>30</sup>**

This brass is the only example from the important London A workshop (c.1358–1410). Isabel is depicted in demi-pose with her son (now lost) and



Ellen, wife of Sir John de Wautone (d. 1346), at Wimbish.  
(© Author photograph)



sports a rare representation of the gorget, or wimple perhaps indicating her status as a widow. Note the sleeves of the buttoned kirtle that end at the wrists.

The brass is located in the south aisle which it is thought Isabel Clonvill erected in c.1330. A north nave window retains fragments of medieval glass including a representation of the Clonvill family arms (*Argent two chevrons sable, each charged with five nails or*).

The male effigy was recorded as lost in c.1720 by Samuel Dale<sup>31</sup> (c.1659-1739). John Clonvill was appointed to the commission of the peace for the county of Essex and the liberty of the Hundred of Rochford on 21st March and 2nd June 1361.

It is probable that mother and son both fell victim to the plague that returned in 1361 causing the deaths of at least 20 per cent of the population.

***Joan, daughter of Sir John de Cobham by Margaret, daughter of Hugh Courtenay, Earl of Devon, 1380; wife of Sir John de la Pole, at Chrishall***<sup>32</sup>

The remaining three brasses under consideration all emanate from the London B workshop (c.1360-1467). The brass at Chrishall is the largest and most spectacular of the series and, with Wimbish, is of national importance. The de la Pole memorial is also highly distinctive in that husband and wife are depicting holding hands –

an unusual feature also found on surviving brasses at Dartmouth, St. Saviour (Devon),<sup>33</sup> Draycot Cerne (Wiltshire),<sup>34</sup> Great Berkhamsted (Hertfordshire),<sup>35</sup> Herne (Kent),<sup>36</sup> Little Shelford (two examples) (Cambridgeshire),<sup>37</sup> Nether Heyford (Northamptonshire),<sup>38</sup> Owston (Yorkshire),<sup>39</sup> Southacre (Norfolk)<sup>40</sup> and Trotton (Sussex).<sup>41</sup>

The elegant Joan is portrayed wearing the nebulé headdress to the shoulders and a close-fitting kirtle with sleeve-lappets. Her feet resting on a dog with bell-collar.

This magnificent brass is closely connected to the outstanding series at Cobham (Kent) reflecting that Joan was the daughter and heiress of Sir John de Cobham, 3rd Lord Cobham. Lord Cobham (who himself is commemorated by a magnificent brass) founded Cobham College for a Master and five priests having received a Royal Licence from Edward III in November 1362. He was also responsible for the four sumptuous London A brasses at Cobham together with a number of London B memorials. Lord Cobham lived to a great age dying in 1408. It is highly probably that he also commissioned the Chrishall brass. Sir John de la Pole was the grandson of Richard de la Pole, a wealthy wool merchant from Hull and brother of Richard de la Pole. The de la Pole family made a huge fortune especially from lending to the Crown and in particular to Edward III. Both brothers were keen to establish themselves as gentry. This process was greatly enhanced with the inheritance of a number of manors in Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Suffolk, and Chrishall in Essex. The family was responsible for rebuilding the church. Sir John de la Pole (and his brother) were frequently away on active service especially against the French. In 1369 he was part of the expedition to Aquitaine with the Earl of Pembroke and served with Thomas of Woodstock to relieve the blockaded port at Brest.<sup>42</sup>



Isabel Clonvill and son John (effigy lost), 1361, at West Hanningfield.  
(© Author photograph)





Sir John de la Pole, wife Joan, daughter of Sir John de Cobham, 1380, at Chrishall.  
(© Author photograph)





**Lady in widow's dress, c.1390, at Stebbing.**  
(© Author photograph)

***Lady in widow's dress, c.1390, at Stebbing*<sup>13</sup>**

Sadly the loss of the marginal inscription and three shields (in addition to a prayer scroll and four roundels) from the brass of a large lady in widow's dress (1208 x 370 mm) at Stebbing renders the deceased unknown. This graceful lady is portrayed wearing a wimple or gorget covering the forehead, the cheeks and chin being tightly drawn around the face. She also wears a veil or coverchief with waved edges, over her head that falls upon the shoulders. The kirtle is simple in design with tight-fitting sleeves and no buttons to the sleeves whilst the plain cote-hardie

extends only to the wrists. An elegant mantle, fastened by a cord with tasseled ends, extends to the ground completing her attire. A small lap-dog with a belled-collar rests on the folds of her gown. Regrettably, this graceful figure is suffering significant bat damage with extensive spotting evident. Unfortunately, bat urine decays to form dilute ammonia, which is chemically aggressive causing pitting and unsightly staining

It is highly probable that this sumptuous brass depicts Margaret (née de Percy), wife of Henry de Ferrers. She survived her husband who held the manor of Stebbing and died in 1371.

***Head of a lady, c.1395, at Hatfield Broad Oak*<sup>44</sup>**

Finally, at Hatfield Broad Oak, the tantalizing head of a lady, dated c.1395 (98 x 72 mm), was discovered several feet below the surface on the site of the choir of the priory church in 1903.

This fragment exhibits the later form of the nebulé headdress whereby the frills are shown framing the forehead and do not descend below eye-level. Instead the frills are replaced with a light kerchief with the ends falling upon the shoulders. The original effigy was probably some 560 mm in length and possibly commemorates Margaret, widow of Sir John Beryngton.

This remarkable survival is now kept in the parish library located in the former south chancel chapel enlarged in 1708 for the purpose.



**Head of a lady, c.1395, at Hatfield Broad Oak.**  
(rubbing: © Lack, Stuchfield & Whittemore,  
*The Monumental Brasses of Essex*)

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### The Author

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# Thoby Priory, its lands and its post Dissolution changes

by

Michael Leach and James Kemble

**T**hoby Priory, a religious house of Augustinian canons in Mountnessing, south of Chelmsford, was never a great and powerful place, but was, for centuries, a spiritual haven (Figs 1 & 2). Today only a small fragment of the ruined church remains, surrounded by a car breaker's yard and a small industrial estate. The priory itself was dissolved with papal consent in 1525 to provide Thomas Wolsey with funds to endow two educational foundations – his school at Ipswich and Cardinal College, later renamed Christ Church College, Oxford (See article below by Ken Crowe). This article will examine three aspects of Thoby Priory. Firstly, it will look at its landholdings in the Middle Ages, as far as these can be identified from surviving records. Secondly, it will attempt to reconstruct the arrangement of the demesne lands surrounding the priory at its dissolution. Finally, it will describe the subsequent changes to its buildings and the surrounding landscape.

## The formation of the priory's landholding and wealth

The lands which sustained the priory lay around the foundation, initially one hide (perhaps 120 acres) granted in c.1141 by Michael Chèvre for the souls of his mother, father and ancestors, together with pannage for 40 hogs, tithes of their own hay and mill, and sufficient wood to be taken out of their wood of Ginges.<sup>1</sup> His gifts of the church dedicated to St Giles (adjacent to Mountnessing Hall) and the Greate Woode of Thoby were confirmed by Richard, bishop of London (1152–1162).<sup>2</sup> The monastic buildings were sited in the centre of the demesne estate on rising ground of glacial boulder clay at the 65m contour, protected from the west wind by the Greate Woode, bounded by the lane from the King's highway to Blackmore on the south, and the small river Wid, a tributary of the Can, to the east and north. Michael Chèvre held the manor of Chevers in Doddington, which lay close to the parish's

western boundary but was never owned by the priory.<sup>3</sup>

Further land was acquired by gift, exchange and purchase, and included land outside Mountnessing. In 1276 Peter the farmer owed the canons 12d in annual rent for a tenement in Springfield.<sup>4</sup> Simon, the prior of Leighs Priory, paid 2s rent for a tenement in Boreham in 1280.<sup>5</sup> In 1346 the prior granted Isabel Spedis and her son John a croft called Pretescroft in Great Burstead.<sup>6</sup> Two decades later the same croft was tenanted to William Clarke and his wife Alice for 12d per annum.<sup>7</sup>

Occasionally the priory came into some easy income. In 1358 the body of a man murdered by robbers was found in a ditch on the canons' demesne. Edward III ordered that the barons and sheriff to whom the death had been reported should desist from demanding from the canons the £8 in gold which had been found on the dead man, doubtless a verdict welcomed by the priory.<sup>8</sup>

1. Thoby Priory, midway between Brentwood and Ingatestone as depicted in Bowen & Kitchin's 1749 *An Accurate Map of the County of Essex*. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, MAP/CM/23/3)







**2. Engraving of the ruins of Thoby Priory from Suckling's *Antiquities & Architecture of the County of Essex*. (M. Leach)**

Disputes about ownership were taken to the manor courts, and sometimes elevated to the higher courts. In 1239 the abbot of St John's Abbey, Colchester, was ordered to adjudicate a dispute between the priors of Blackmore and Thoby about ownership of tithes due on an assart.<sup>9</sup> Because of the proximity of Blackmore to Thoby priory, less than four miles to its east, this probably related to the wooded area on the parish boundary near the Greate Woode. In 1225 the court directed that the right of tithe of the manor of Cowbridge in Mountnessing belonged to the abbey of Stratford Langthorne, and that the abbot should pay 42d annually to the prior of Thoby.<sup>10</sup> Some 40 years later another dispute with the same abbey over a tenement and land in Mountnessing resulted in the abbot paying the prior three marks in silver.<sup>11</sup>

The disputes with Stratford Langthorne abbey were no doubt the result of confusion over the rights which had been granted to the two houses. In 1253

Henry III had granted to Stratford free warren on their demesne land in Mountnessing, Burstead and elsewhere. Thoby had been granted the church of Mountnessing, and is recorded as having the manor of Mountnessing Hall which, after the Dissolution, came to Sir William Berners, and later to Lord Petre.<sup>12</sup> There was also friction between the priory and the vicar of Mountnessing over tithes, requiring a negotiated agreement in 1503 to determine which dues could be claimed by the vicar. This agreement was itself the source of intermittent litigation between the Petres and the occupiers of Thoby between 1739 and 1797.<sup>13</sup>

Ultimately the priory obtained its income from its own manor, and from the manors of Mountnessing and Bluntswall, as well as from other properties and over 3,500 acres of land scattered across more than a dozen other parishes.<sup>14</sup> In spite of Thoby's relative wealth it does not appear to have flourished during the latter part of the fifteenth century,

as the selection of at least two priors defaulted to the bishop, indicating that there were fewer than the six canons required by ecclesiastical law to elect a successor. By 1490 Thoby housed the prior and only three canons and, by the time of its dissolution, it had shrunk further to the prior and two canons.<sup>15</sup>

The beginning of the end came in September 1524 with the delivery of a papal bull from Clement VII. This authorized the suppression of 22 of the smaller religious houses in England to provide funds for cardinal Wolsey's educational foundations – a new college at Oxford University and a new school at Ipswich. Of the six houses to be suppressed in Essex, Wix was the richest, worth just over £92 per annum, Thoby was valued at about £75 per annum and Tiptree was the poorest with just under £23 per annum. Within two weeks, royal assent had been granted and Thoby surrendered to Dr John Aleyne, an agent of Wolsey, on 15th February 1525.<sup>16</sup>

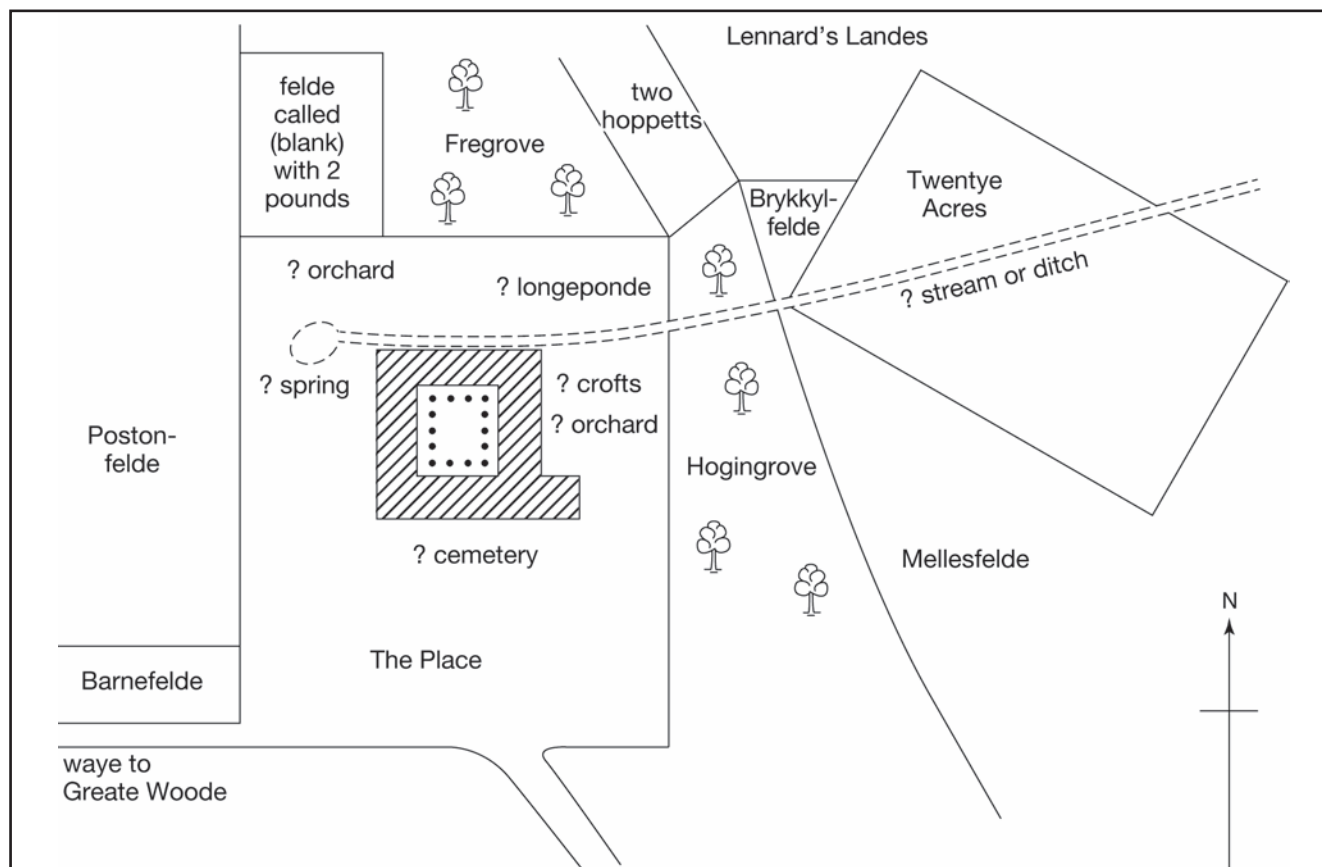
An inquisition before John Strangeman, the King's escheator, at Chelmsford on 8th August 1525 recorded that the prior had died since the surrender, and that the remaining two canons had been transferred to other religious foundations.<sup>17</sup> The priory must have been empty at this point, perhaps in the hands of a caretaker to discourage pilfering. The buildings were probably not stripped immediately, as it was not until October 1527 that a payment of 13s 4d was made for taking down the priory bells and carting them to London.<sup>18</sup> Though the site of Thoby had been granted to the dean of Wolsey's Oxford college early in 1525, the legal processes of surrender to the crown, establishing and settling liabilities, conveyancing to the cardinal, taking seisin, and settling the property on the beneficiary were slow and complex. At least two bags of 'evidences', which had been collected in the summer of 1525 from Thoby, did not reach

the dean until June 1527. Two years later matters were further complicated by Clement VII's authorization to transfer part of the Oxford endowments (including land from Thoby) to the Ipswich school which was by then in serious financial difficulties.<sup>19</sup> On 9th October 1529 Wolsey was indicted for *praemunire*, (the early medieval offence of asserting or maintaining papal jurisdiction in England, contrary to the supremacy of the monarch) and, following his admission of guilt a fortnight later, all his college and school endowments were forfeit to the crown.

By December 1530 the priory site had been granted for life to Sir Richard Page, a career courtier, though Thoby does not appear to have become his residence. After he had been banished from court and briefly imprisoned in 1536, he retired to his 'poor cabin' at West Molesley in Surrey and, when he died in 1548, he was either at his London

house or in his country residence at Flamstead, Hertfordshire (another former monastic site). It is not known when Thoby's buildings were dismantled but, in these early dissolutions, it was often several years before the buildings were stripped of their saleable assets, as discussed by Ken Crowe below. The grant of the reversion of Thoby to William Berners and his wife, dated 24th April 1539, referred to 'all the church steeple or belfry & churchyard of the said late monastery' so it may well be that part of the priory church was still standing. The west range of the priory buildings was adapted for secular use at an unknown date, but this had been completed by 1556 when an inventory reveals a substantial house with hall, buttery, parlour, pantry, kitchen, cellar and 14 chambers, as well as various domestic offices.<sup>20</sup> In 1670 it was the largest house in the parish, taxed on 18 hearths. The RCHM survey, published in 1923, concluded that the fabric

### 3. Sketch plan of Thoby Priory & its surrounding fields reconstructed from the 'Extent of Monastries' MS. (The authors/C. D'Alton)





of the hall was fifteenth century, with an extension to the south (still probably on the priory foot-print) of mid sixteenth century date. There were later undated extensions to the south and east.<sup>21</sup>

### The demesne lands at the Dissolution

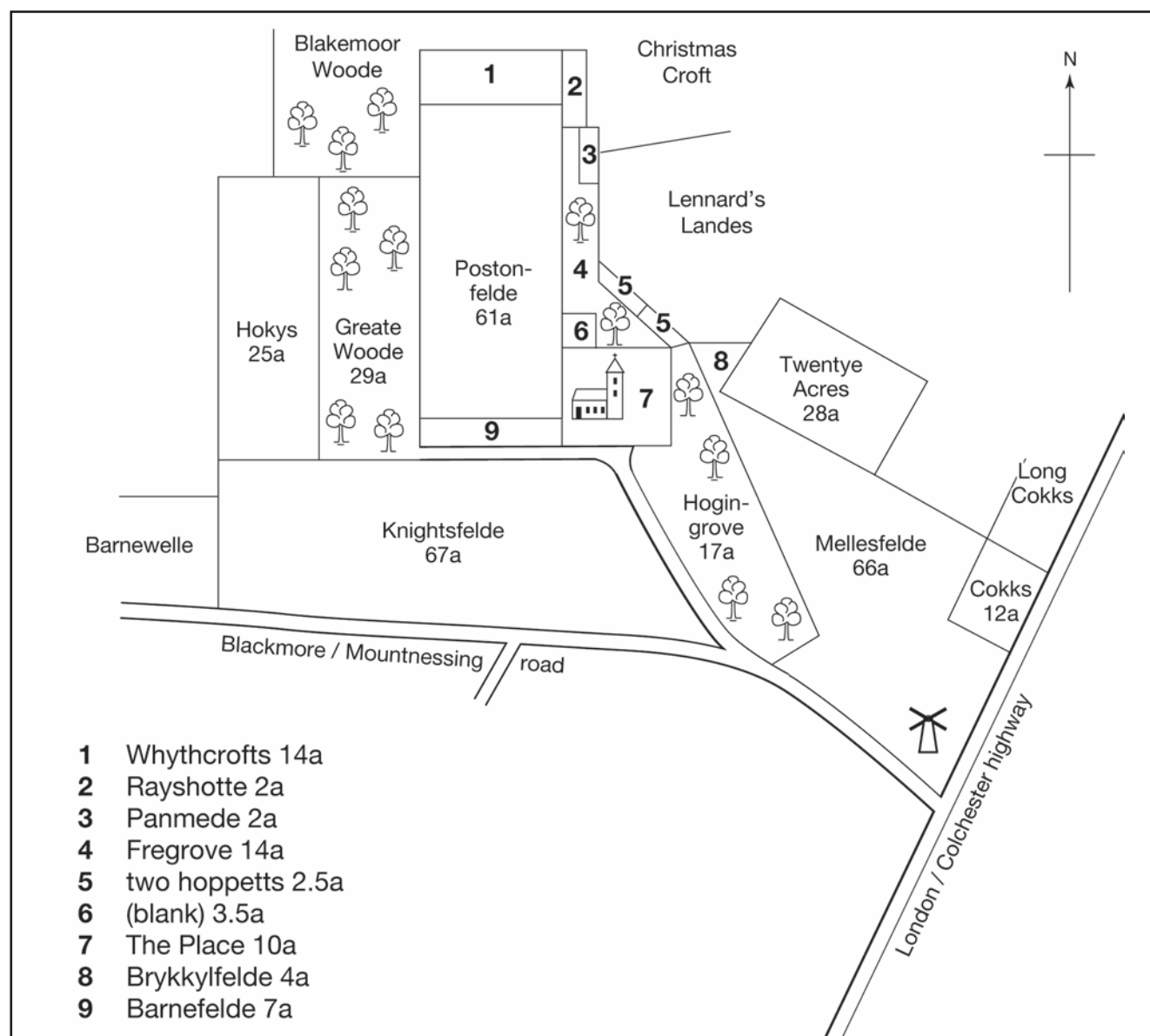
In 1845 Rev Alfred Suckling printed a transcript (in its original spelling) of the priory lands in Mountnessing from the 'Extents of Monastries' (*sic*).<sup>22</sup> He gave neither the date nor the source of this MS which must have been compiled either at Wolsey's acquisition in 1525, or the surrender to the king after the cardinal's fall in 1529. It described

the demesne lands surrounding the priory, as well as its scattered holdings elsewhere in the parish, by field name, abutment and area. Though there are some confusing inconsistencies<sup>23</sup> (arising perhaps from errors in commission or transcription) Suckling's description provides sufficient detail of the priory site and its surrounding demesne to draw up sketch plans of both (Figs 3 & 4).

The site of the priory itself, of just over ten acres, contained 'the place, the Churche and Churche yarde, the Orcharde, Gardeyn, Yarde and utter Houses' (out-houses) and an unspecified number of ponds, including

Longeponde to the east of the main buildings. Two crofts, both with ponds, were immediately to the east side of the priory precinct. A small stream, shown on modern maps flowing eastwards from the site to join the River Wid, is not mentioned in Suckling's description. However, if the cloisters and dorter were to the north of the church (as seems probable) this would have been conveniently placed for flushing the reredorter and its channel may have been specifically cut or re-aligned for this purpose. It may also have served as the precinct boundary ditch as later maps show that it had a right-angled extension to the south.

#### 4. Sketch plan of the Thoby Priory demesne reconstructed from the 'Extent of Monastries' MS. (The authors/C. D'Alton)



Though there is enough information to locate the larger fields with reasonable certainty, it is less easy to do so with the smaller fields and woods. There was a linear cluster of these small enclosures running north and south, just to the east of the priory precinct and its access lane from the Mountnessing/Blackmore road. The largest was a 17.5 acre grove called Hogingrove, possibly managed woodland to provide fuel and timber for the priory and its estate. Towards the northern end of Hogingrove was an unnamed field of 3.5 acres containing two pounds, presumably for impounding animals that had wandered onto priory land. To its north was another grove (Fregrove) of 14 acres, adjoining a hoppit and a small meadow (Panmede) of 2.5 acres. Beyond the northern end of Fregrove was a 2 acre field called Rayshotte and two further hoppits, totaling 2.5 acres adjoined Fregrove. Though the abutments in Suckling's description are difficult to reconcile, it is probable that Brykkylfelde of 4.5 acres and a 'felde called twentye acres' lay at the southern end of Hogingrove. Brykkylfelde may have been where bricks and tiles were made for the priory's use.

Most of the remaining fields were considerably larger. Postonfelde of 61.5 acres, and Barnefelde of 7.5 acres, lay between the priory and the Greate Woode. This wood of 29 acres abutted Blackmore wood to the north, but was considerably larger when mapped in 1777 by Chapman and André. Knightsfelde (67.5 acres) lay to its south, and Hokys (25 acres) to its east. Another large field was Mellesfelde (66.5 acres) in the south east corner of the demesne. At its southern tip there is still a windmill, rebuilt in about 1807 and first documented in 1581. Though it is possible that this was the site of the windmill granted to the priory by its founder in c.1141, this would have been a very early date for

use of wind power and it is more likely that the first monastic mill would have been driven by water somewhere on the River Wid which runs nearby.<sup>24</sup>

North of Postonfelde, with Blackmore wood to its west, lay the 14 acres of Whyth crofts, curiously described as 'thre(e) Crofts with cartayne Hedgerowes'. It is uncertain why these hedgerows were specifically mentioned.

The total area of the priory demesne amounted to just over 396 acres. The rest of Suckling's transcript lists the priory's lands scattered elsewhere in the parish, amounting to slightly over 203 acres, some leased by indenture, the rest by copyhold. Though acreages and abutments are given, together with tenants' names, it has not been possible to locate them. An Essex Record Office manuscript marked 'Thoby: note of the manor boundaries 1739' is only a list of the manorial roads and wastes scattered throughout the parish, and does not help to identify the scattered leasehold and copyhold lands. The 1839 tithe map and apportionment are of no assistance either, as monastic property remained tithe exempt after the Dissolution and the former priory's landholdings appear only as a blank on the map.<sup>25</sup>

### **Subsequent changes to the Thoby demesne land**

Amongst a bundle of Petre papers in Essex Record Office is an undated sheet, giving an 'old account' of the Thoby lands on one side, and a 'new account' on the other.<sup>26</sup> The two lists contain field names and approximate acreages though the 'new account' omits all the woodland. The MS is in an early eighteenth century hand, suggesting that the 'old account' dates from some point in the seventeenth century. Many of the field names from both these accounts can be identified in Suckling's list.

The table (Fig 5) lists the fields mentioned in the three accounts. Many of the large demesne fields

had been divided up into smaller units, and a number of new small fields are created. The Greate Woode had been enlarged to about 75 acres, roughly its size before it was felled in the mid-twentieth century. The Ordnance Survey surveyors' map of 1799 suggests that further subdivisions had been made, but the regular field boundaries that they recorded appear to have been schematic.<sup>27</sup> Later nineteenth century OS maps show a significantly different pattern of irregular field boundaries and these survived unchanged until Thoby Wood, along with many of the hedgerows, were grubbed out after the Second World War.

The other striking feature of the 'old account' was that a park of 30 acres had been created surrounding the house that had been built on the site of the priory buildings. This was three times the area of the priory precinct, and some of the extra land required may have come from the felling of Fregrove which had disappeared by the time the 'old account' was compiled. By 1824 the park had been reduced to 22 acres, and there had also been a reduction in the overall size of the estate, probably from piecemeal sale of land to adjoining farmers.<sup>28</sup>

A number of the priory's other landholdings in the parish were subsequently acquired by Sir William Petre. These included the manor of Bluntswall in Great Burstead (described in a valuation of 1544 as 'late of Thoby Priory'<sup>29</sup>) and by 1550 he had added the advowson and rectory of Mountnessing. In 1560, he purchased the wardship of William Berners junior, the underage son of Sir William of Thoby priory. This would have given him control of the estate until William's majority. Later he had further involvement with the family through his guardianship of Griselda, daughter of William Berners junior.<sup>30</sup> Relations between the Petres and the later owners of Thoby were not always harmonious, judging by a



## 5. Thoby priory land & field names

'Extent of monasteries' 1525/9 (Suckling)	'Old account' ?C17 (ERO, D/DDw L1)	'New account' ?early C18 (ERO, D/DDw L1)
the place, crofts, orchards &c 10a 1r	Park enclosed with pale 30a 0r 0p	Park 20a
Hogingrove 17.5a	Hodgkins, Hodgkins meadow & meadow adjoining 27a 3r 30p	no match
Mellesfelde 66.5a	Gt Millfield 2 pieces 55a 0r 5p Lt Millfield 2 pieces 10a 0r 12p	Millfield 20a
another felde called 20 acres 28a 3r	20 acre pasture 31a 1r 8p	no match
Cokks Medowe 12.5a	piece adjacent (to Millfield) voc. Cocks Meadow 12a 1r 14p	no match
Brykylfelde 4a 1r 20p	no match	no match
two littell hoppetts 2.5a	no match	?hoppet 6a
Fregrove 14a	no match	(woodland omitted)
felde called [blank] 4.5a 16p	no match	?4 acre meadow 4a
Postonfelde 61.5a	Posterns 47a 0r 16p	Posterns Gt 25a. Posterns Lt 16a
Rayshotte 30.5a	Ryshots 37a 0r 5p	Gt Ryshots 20a Ryshots Parva 20a
medowe called Panmede 2.5a 20p	Pan meadow 6a 1r 0p	no match
Thre Crofts called Whyth crofts 13a	Whites Croft 3 pieces 19a 0r 26p	Whites Croft 19a
Barnfelde 7a 20p	Barnfield 9a 3r 21p	no match
Greate Woode of Thoby 29a	part of wood <i>voc</i> Thoby wood 48a Residue of Thoby Wood 27a 0r 0p	(woodland omitted)
felde called Hokys 25a	Hither Hooks 19a 0r 6p Farther Hooks 13a 1r 5p	Hooks Gt 15a Hooks Parva 10a
felde called Knyghts felde 67.5a	Hither Knightsfield 34a 1r 10p Farther Knightsfield 37a 1r 0p	Knightsfield 25a Knightsmead 11a
no match	no match	Plains 2p <sup>c</sup> 5a
no match	no match	4 acre meadow 4a
no match	no match	12 acre mead 12a
no match	no match	Wheat Each 11a
no match	no match	2 fallows 12a & 8a
no match	no match	Dovehouse croft 10a
<b>Total: 397a 1r 16p</b>	<b>Total: 468a 3r 38p (correct total 464a 3r 38p)</b>	<b>Total: 261a (correct total 273a)</b>

series of disputes about tithe payments and conflicting claims to the copyhold tenancy of Malbrooks and Bacons Farm, both of which had been part of the original Thoby estate. These were not finally resolved until the latter part of the eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

### **Thoby Priory garden and park**

The first cartographic glimpse of this area is the two inch to the mile Chapman and André map published in 1777, but surveyed three or four years earlier. It appears to show a double line of trees to the west of the house, with an orchard or regular plantation projecting from the SE corner. It is impossible to know whether this representation is accurate or schematic. An indenture dated 10 years later refers to a shrubbery and gardens adjoining the house, as well as an orchard. Meadows and pasture lands named Upper Mead, Dovehouse Mead, and Calaias were excluded from the lease of the mansion, presumably because they were in separate tenure.<sup>32</sup>

Another indenture in the same group of documents, dated 1824, gives a clearer picture. The house with its plantations, canals and offices occupied just over an acre. There were separate stables, a two acre lawn, an acre of orchard, as well as two fields previously excluded from the lease – The Callas of two acres and Dovehouse Croft of 11 acres. The origin of the first name remains obscure, the second is self evident and is probably the 10 acre field listed in the ‘new account’.<sup>33</sup> The owner retained possession of 120 acres of the surrounding farmland, and nearly 100 acres of wood (‘abounding in game’) – presumably the expanded Thoby Wood (which probably, by that date, included Blackmore Wood to the north).<sup>34</sup>

A sketch plan on the back of a lease of 1861 shows that the house had been extended to the north. To the north west lies a rectangular shaped piece of water

with a western limb and a central island (doubtless the ‘canal’ of the 1824 description). Further north is a slightly irregular oval track, and to the east is a small rectangular enclosure, possibly a fenced garden. Immediately south of the remains of the priory church, is another enclosure which, by the twentieth century, was the vegetable garden. In the south west corner of the site is a pear-shaped pond, partly concealed in a serpentine belt of woodland. A lodge is shown at the junction of the access drive with the Mountnessing/Blackmore road.<sup>35</sup>

The 1895 Second Edition edition of the 25” OS map shows a similar picture, except that the pear-shaped pond has been filled in and the buildings of Thoby Farm inserted into the south west corner of the park, screened from the mansion by an extension of the serpentine woodland belt. The park also appears to have been extended by incorporating a field to the north east; its eastern edge was planted with a mixed conifer and broadleaf plantation and contained a small pond.<sup>36</sup> Images from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries<sup>37</sup> show that the remaining church wall, with its two arches, was a prominent garden feature on the south side of the lawn to the east of the house. One arch was surmounted by a weathervane.

The New Series 25” map of 1920 shows no significant change. The 1919 sale catalogue mentions a tennis court and bowling green, surrounded by a herbaceous border, a glasshouse with vinery, two smaller glasshouses, and an extensive kitchen garden with good fruit walls. It also notes that the grounds of a little over 27 acres were separated from the ‘park’ (i.e. the surrounding farmland) by a sunken fence, which may be the narrow double line shown on the north and west boundaries on the 25” OS maps.<sup>38</sup> It is possible that this was a relic of the priory precinct boundary ditch.

Though it remained in the ownership of the Blencowe family, the house appears to have been tenanted for much of the nineteenth century.

There was a serious fire on 13th August 1893 and comparison of an engraving of 1818 with an early 1900s photograph suggests that it was the northern half containing the monastic core that was damaged. Most or all of the medieval woodwork was lost, but the building was subsequently reconstructed and given a distinctive Victorian facade.<sup>39</sup> During World War I Belstead School appears to have been relocated from Aldeburgh in Suffolk to Thoby but this did not prevent the owner, Mr H.P. Blencowe, from inviting a large party of members of the Essex Archaeological Society to visit the house and the ruins, and to provide them with lunch in the garden in June 1916.

In 1940 the contents of the house down to the last jam jar and hot water bottle cover were sold by auction over two days,<sup>40</sup> the army took over the house and a prisoner of war camp for German (and later Italian) prisoners) was constructed. A searchlight and ack-ack gun were installed in a field behind the farm. Later in World War II it was used as a training centre for the Land Army, taking its last trainees in 1948. The mansion, doubtless by then in a very sorry state, was demolished in 1953 and the site has subsequently been used for workshops and industrial storage, and as a car breakers yard.<sup>41</sup> The one surviving standing wall of the priory church, heavily overgrown with ivy and shrubs, is in very poor condition and by 1999 one of the two surviving arches had collapsed, with its debris remaining *in situ*.<sup>42</sup> In the 1950s Thoby Wood and most of the hedgerows in the surrounding landscape were grubbed out in the interests of modern farming practice.



## Recent evaluation

Suckling noted the discovery of six oak coffins of the 'dug-out type with pegged lids' in the 'north west angle of the cloisters', as well as slip-decorated floor tiles in the chancel area, and the lower portion of a damaged stone figure of a knight templar. A stone coffin containing a skeleton was found by workmen in 1934.<sup>43</sup>

Since the late 1990s there have been various planning applications for development of the site for housing, the latest of which obtained outline consent for 87 residential units on 21st July 2015.<sup>44</sup> Approval was subject to various conditions, including archaeological evaluation. After an earlier application, the Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit had dug a number of trial trenches under difficult conditions in November/December 2001. The cutting of some trenches was frustrated by large quantities of dumped reinforced concrete, steelwork and modern rubbish. Others were quickly flooded before reaching the natural. Most of the very limited finds were scattered post medieval domestic and building material, with a few late Iron Age/Roman and medieval Mill Green ware sherds from a ditch fill. The northern and southern arms of the pond (and its central island which had formed a garden feature to the north west of the house) were identified in one trench; the southern section was nearly 10m. wide, twice the width of the northern section, and was about 2m. deep.<sup>45</sup>

In 2002 further evaluation trenches were dug to the south west of the site of the church. These revealed 29 graves, assumed to be contemporary with the priory, the fill of two of which yielded medieval pottery. The well-preserved remains of the post-Dissolution manor house and the medieval foundations of the priory church were located. The human remains were left *in situ*.<sup>46</sup>

## Summary

Most of the scattered properties acquired by the priory in the medieval period passed into different ownership after the Dissolution, but the majority of the demesne lands (albeit divided up into smaller fields) remained in the hands of the Berners family and their successors by marriage or inheritance into the twentieth century. The area immediately surrounding the medieval priory remained as gardens and a small park for the mansion which had incorporated part of the west range of the monastic buildings. This house, enlarged in the nineteenth century, was severely damaged by fire in 1893. Though subsequently repaired, it suffered from the gradual decline typical of many country houses in the twentieth century, and was demolished in 1953. The former priory demesne also underwent major changes, with the removal of the whole of Thoby Wood, most of Blackmore Wood and the majority of the field hedgerows. The priory site is currently used for commercial and industrial purposes. Over the years there have been a number of applications for residential development and, if the most recent one comes to fruition, there would be an opportunity for an extensive archaeological evaluation of the small medieval priory and its subsequent use.

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**James Kemble** studied archaeology at Cambridge and London, and took a degree in Archaeological Science. He has taken part in excavations in Chelmsford, Colchester, Beeleigh, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and elsewhere. He is Coordinator of the Essex Place-names Project.



# Dismantling the Monasteries

by

Ken Crowe

**T**he aim of this article is to examine two aspects from a much wider research project on the history of Essex monasteries and monastic buildings following the dissolution of the first half of the sixteenth century. Using archaeological and archival/documentary sources it will examine the evidence for the physical process of taking down the monastic buildings, the workmen involved, the order in which the buildings were removed and the general chronology of the process. One of the questions it is hoped to address concerns the factors that determined the scale of destruction, in particular cases.

The second aspect tackled in this paper relates to the evidence for the re-use, or recycling, of monastic materials and, again, an attempt will be made to answer some questions relating to this, at least as far as Essex monasteries are concerned (Fig 1).

## Wolsey's 'Little Dissolution' of the 1520s

In 1525, having obtained papal authority, and royal agreement, Wolsey embarked on a programme of dissolving a total of 20 small monasteries in the south east, the revenues from which houses were to be directed towards the founding and support of his new (Cardinal's) College at Oxford. This was followed a few years later by the dissolution of seven more monasteries for the support of his school at Ipswich.

The choice of which monasteries to close seems to have been based on geographical and administrative criteria rather than solely on their size, and included six monasteries in Essex: Tiptree, Blackmore, Thoby, Horkesley, Stanesgate and Wix.<sup>1</sup> For Thoby see article above by Michael Leach. The process of dissolution, overseen by Thomas Cromwell and John Smyth, as Wolsey's

attorneys, has been fully described elsewhere, and need not be repeated here.<sup>2</sup> However, it may be of interest to examine in a little detail an aspect of one of the monasteries suppressed at this time, the Augustinian house of Blackmore. Standing adjacent to the monastery was a building now known by the name of 'Jericho Priory'.

Morant tells us that this was one of Henry's 'Houses of Pleasure' in which his mistress, Elizabeth (Bessie) Blount gave birth to his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy.<sup>3</sup> The contemporary chronicler, Edward Hall (1497-1547), who makes no mention of Blackmore Priory or Jericho, describes the boy as 'a goodly manne child, of beautie like to the father and mother.'<sup>4</sup> The story has been repeated, and embroidered, many times in recent years, but with rarely any reference to an original source. Many of the authors agree, however, that it was through Wolsey that arrangements had been made with the prior of Blackmore, Thomas Goodwyn, for Bessie Blount to have use of the building at this period.<sup>5</sup> If this is so, then Wolsey presumably had personal knowledge of the priory, which perhaps influenced his decision to include it among those to be dissolved in 1525. It is also interesting to note that John Smyth (the attorney) was granted Blackmore in 1540, following its final dissolution. We shall be returning to Blackmore, and these other monasteries a little later in this paper.

## Taking Down the Buildings

In August 1538, John Freeman, who had been given instructions to demolish the monasteries in Lincolnshire (following the 1536 'Lincolnshire Rising'), wrote a letter to Cromwell in which he stated that he had been instructed 'to pull to the ground all the

walls of the churches, steeples, cloisters, fraters, dorders, chapter houses, with all other houses saving those that be necessary for a farmer.'<sup>6</sup> He goes on to say that, since the cost of the demolition work could in no way be defrayed by the sale of the stone and other materials, it would be better, surely, to strip and sell lead and bells, pull down the roofs, but let the walls stand as a quarry for any who wanted to come and remove the stone, for which they could be charged. If the King insisted on the Commission being carried out to the letter, this would be done, but it would take a long time, since, this being harvest time, few men were around to help.<sup>7</sup>

Leaving the matter of costs involved for now, and the removal of lead and bells which shall also be dealt with a little later, we must now turn to evidence for the actual process of demolition. The only detailed contemporary documentary source relating to the process of demolition of an Essex monastery is that relating to Barking Abbey.

Barking, the earliest and largest of the Benedictine foundations in Essex was, at the Dissolution, the third richest nunnery in the country, and surrendered to Dr William Petre (c.1505-72, ancestor of the current Lord Petre) in November 1539.<sup>8</sup> The monastery was taken into the King's hands together with other monastic sites in the Thames valley with the intention of using their materials for the rebuilding and refurbishing of royal residences, including the conversion of Dartford Priory.<sup>9</sup> The site of Barking Abbey, with its demesne lands, were later granted to Edward, Lord Clinton.<sup>10</sup> James Needham, surveyor of the King's Works, kept meticulous accounts of the demolition work.<sup>11</sup>

The lead and bells having

been removed,<sup>12</sup> demolition work began in June 1541, taking about 18 months to complete. A total of 128 men worked on site over this period (although never more than 70 at any one time). There were just three carpenters, paid at 7d a day; all three worked for the first month, and then two for the next four months. They removed the timber work from the cloisters, steeple and elsewhere, and also made barrows for the labourers and hafted pick-axes and mattocks for the miners. Eighteen miners in total were employed, their work being principally to 'undermine' the walls. They began with the two round towers of the church, being careful 'in lyke man[er] providing the ffyrest coyne stones and other cayne stone for the lading of lighters to be employed at the Kings man[or] of Dartford.'<sup>13</sup> The final principal task for the miners was to undermine the steeple, in the last quarter of 1541. From the end of

1541 the number of miners fell to seven, and by February–March of 1542, to 3 or 4, after which no more miners were employed on site.

The labourers were the most numerous of the workmen on site, with between 16 and 24 working in the first six months. Over the following year there were about 11 on site, and seven in the final two months. Paid at the rate of 4d or 5d a day, their jobs included separating the 'rubbish stone' from the best stone to be used at Dartford, using the former for mending and levelling the roads for the wagons, and helping to load the stone into the carts for transport to the water side and then loading the stone into the vessels for transport to Dartford.

The carters were the most highly paid (16d a day) of the Barking workmen, the reason for this being that they must have provided their own heavy carts (called 'courts') and animals. The

carters' work depended on the industry of the miners and labourers, their work being concentrated in the first seven months, with a maximum of 14 being on site in any one month; thereafter five carters were paid for most months, and just three in the last couple of months.

Many (possibly most) of the workmen on site were tenants of Barking Abbey.<sup>14</sup> It is also clear that several men from the same families worked on site, including the Clerke family (Henry and William), Thomas and William Sparrow and Henry, John and William Uppnaye, all of whom were carters. Very few of the labourers and carpenters were recorded as tenants; most were probably sub-tenants, and therefore not recorded. None of the miners was recorded in the Ministers Accounts as a tenant. However, the reason for this may be that, being specialists, they might have been brought in from further afield. Indeed,

1. Religious houses in Essex. (K. Crowe/C. D'Alton)





five of the 18 miners recorded at Barking also worked at Dartford, suggesting that some, at least, travelled from site to site.<sup>15</sup>

Excavations can also sometimes provide evidence for the process of demolition, as in the case of Chelmsford Friary, which was subject to detailed archaeological investigation at various times between 1968 and 1977. These located the monastic church and east claustral range, with reredorter, undercroft and chapter house.<sup>16</sup> The friary had been surrendered to Richard, Bishop of Dover in December 1538, and leased to Thomas Mildmay the following July.<sup>17</sup> Between the surrender of the house and the grant to Mildmay, the site appears to have been left derelict following the removal of the roof of the church; the floor tiles and gravestones had also been taken up in this first phase of dismantling,<sup>18</sup> a layer of silt having accumulated on the mortar floor. Undergrowth and scrub were cleared by fire before the process of dismantling the walls could begin.<sup>19</sup> When the actual process of dismantling began is uncertain,

but probably between 1539 and 1542; in the latter year the reversion of the property had been granted to Antonio Bonvix, and Mildmay, having acquired the manor of Moulsham, began building Moulsham Hall.<sup>20</sup>

The first of the walls to be dismantled were those of the nave and part of the chancel of the church, the men working from scaffold platforms, erected between the piers. Following the demolition of the nave, large amounts of brickearth were dumped here to level the site. Following the clearance of the weeds and scrub from the area, scaffolding was also used in the cloisters, where some of the walls were taken right down to the natural, while other walls were left as stubs.<sup>21</sup> Other walls had been left standing for some time; the last to be taken down being those forming the rest of the chancel,<sup>22</sup> while much of the area was covered with a large amount of demolition material, including (mostly broken) floor tiles.

The impression at Chelmsford is that the walls of the nave and chancel, in general, were carefully dismantled, and that the window

glass remained in situ until the walls were taken down.<sup>23</sup> However, it appears that all figurative work in the widows had been smashed in the first phase of demolition in a deliberate spate of iconoclasm, while the windows remained in place. Indeed, loose glass sherds were rare, suggesting that the remaining glass was carefully removed, perhaps to be salvaged for sale or use elsewhere. The lead was also salvaged, and was melted in hearths on site. The transept walls, in contrast, appear to have been pulled down, and much of the painted glass and lead from the windows in this area were dumped in a pit.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of the sixteenth century, as John Walker's map of 1591 indicates, all traces of the friary had disappeared except for the gatehouse (Fig 2) and kitchen.<sup>25</sup> It is likely, in fact, that most of the site had been cleared by 1551 when the precinct was occupied by a school, possibly in the converted refectory or hall.<sup>26</sup>

Deidre O'Sullivan suggests that the demolition of the some of the houses suppressed by Wolsey in 1525 may have begun by the end of that decade.<sup>27</sup> However, there is no evidence for this in the case of the Essex monasteries. Although the Guest House at Tilty continued to be occupied by the Marchioness of Dorset's family into the 1560s, documentary evidence suggests that demolition of the rest of the abbey buildings had begun by 1536, but was certainly not completed here, nor at Dunmow nor Castle Hedingham by the end of the following summer, when plumbers were stripping lead from the roofs.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, some lead had remained at Dunmow until September 1538, when Francis Jobson, Receiver for the Augmentations collected it at a cost of £2 7s 11d, possibly suggesting that demolition by that date was nearing completion.<sup>29</sup>

Demolition of Blackmore Priory is often said to have taken place in 1543, based on witnesses statements taken at the

**2. Painting by W. Brown of the gatehouse to Chelmsford Friary, 1885.**  
(Reproduced by courtesy of Chelmsford Museum)



Archdeacon's Court 40 years later.<sup>30</sup> Geoffrey (*Galfridus*) Wyatt of Blackmore, one of the witnesses before the Archdeacon's court in 1583, speaking of the priory there, stated that he 'did se it pulled downe' by Sir Brian Tuke.<sup>31</sup> That happened, he said, along with the other witnesses, about 40 years previously. However, Oxley may be correct in suggesting that the demolition at Blackmore took place before the suppression of Waltham Abbey (in 1540; following Wolsey's fall Blackmore had been granted to the abbot and convent of Waltham in 1532<sup>32</sup>), and its subsequent grant to John Smyth.<sup>33</sup> This would possibly account for the fact that the grant, in Letters Patent to John Smyth in that year, makes no mention of any buildings on the site of the Priory.<sup>34</sup>

### The Re-Use of Monastic materials

The lead from the roofs (and probably elsewhere) together with the bells were normally (though not invariably) reserved for the king, and valued as such at the time of the suppression. These elements were also normally the first to be removed from the monastic buildings, the lead being melted down and converted into ingots on site by the crown's plumbers, using timber from the buildings as fuel. While much of the lead was destined for export by contractors (or sub-contractors) some, as that removed from Dunmow, Tilty and Castle Hedingham was to be used in the king's buildings, in this case, Westminster, St Giles and Chelsea.<sup>35</sup> Presumably the lead from these buildings had been ear-marked for this particular purpose, and so these buildings were not demolished earlier. Bell metal, also exported under licence, was valued for another purpose, conversion into canon.<sup>36</sup>

A considerable amount of building material and other items were bought by local people at the on-site sales (O'Sullivan

usefully terms these 'yard-sales'), as noted on copies of the monastic inventories. Although these records vary in the amount of detail recorded, several examples from Essex help to illuminate this very interesting and important aspect of the story of the disposal and re-use of monastic materials in the immediate post-dissolution period.

At the Blackfriars, Chelmsford, much of the building material and furnishings were sold to cover the extensive debts of the house. These items included the 'pathement' (floor tiles) from the cloister, chapter house, chapels and church, together with iron and glass from the same buildings, and gravestones from the church and chapels.<sup>37</sup> The sale of this material presumably indicates that there was a ready market for such items. The removal of tiles was confirmed during excavations on the site, with the discovery of light brown silts covering mortared floor surfaces where tiled floors had once been.<sup>38</sup>

At Hatfield Regis (Broad Oak) a Mr Noke was recorded as the purchaser of the 'tyle stones in the Church and Cloystre. The grave stones alter stones and the stalles in the Quire'.<sup>39</sup> This was Robert Noke, the vicar of

Hatfield Broad Oak. In 1921 the Royal Commission recorded the presence of fourteenth century slip tiles with a geometric pattern in the chancel of the church, re-set from the site of Priory (Fig 3).<sup>40</sup> The presence of the tiles, and their identification, has been confirmed by Paul Drury.<sup>41</sup>

In 1538 the churchwardens of Great Dunmow 'Payd for lyme, sand and for fechyng iiij<sup>xx</sup> paving tyle from Tylyt xj<sup>d</sup>.' and 'Payd to Richard Barker for laying the foresaid pavyng tyle in the church vj<sup>d</sup>'.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately the flooring does not appear to have survived, perhaps being removed or covered over in the nineteenth century. It is also likely that some of the tiles in the chancel of Little Easton church may have come from Titly.<sup>43</sup> Paul Drury is of the opinion that it was as a result of the suppression of the monasteries that such 'exotic' tiles reached parish churches, citing Springfield and Writtle as other examples.<sup>44</sup>

In 1538, again, Robert Noke (vicar of Hatfield) was paid 20s by the churchwardens of Great Dunmow for a tabernacle 'bowght at Hatfield'.<sup>45</sup> This was almost certainly among the contents of the 'Quire', 'St. Kathrynes alter' and the 'Lady Chappell', and elsewhere,

### 3. Medieval tiles in Hatfield Broad Oak church. (Author photograph, 20/06/2018)





purchased by Noke at the 'yard sale' at Hatfield Broad Oak.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps further research would reveal details regarding the dispersal to other parish churches and perhaps private chapels, of similar devotional or liturgical items from the dissolved monasteries.

Other materials recycled from the suppressed monasteries include timber work. A sixteenth century moulded beam in Church Street Cottage, Blackmore, may have originated in the monastery.<sup>47</sup> There are also local traditions of re-using roof timbers, and possibly entire roofs, from monastic buildings in local churches and other buildings. Wickford church and Rochford Hall are both said to have roof timbers from the dissolved Prittlewell Priory.<sup>48</sup> Several re-used timbers in houses in St Osyth's may have been recycled from the abbey.<sup>49</sup>

Now we come to the question of the re-use, or recycling, of the most abundant of the materials from the demolished buildings – the stone. There is no documentary evidence in Essex for the sale of stone from the dissolved monasteries.<sup>50</sup> Where the best stone from the dismantled buildings was used in any quantity it appears mostly to have been employed by the site's new owners either for converting buildings on site to another use (which is beyond the scope of this paper) or for erecting a new (high status) building, using the materials close at hand. The most impressive surviving example in Essex of the re-use of monastic stone in a new building is the so-called Abbot's Tower at St Osyth's, built by the Darcys. Thomas Darcy had been granted St Osyth's (in 1550) following the fall of Thomas Cromwell. The tower features blocks of re-used ashlar alternating with knapped septaria, in chequer-board fashion.<sup>51</sup> Another building constructed in the post-dissolution period using considerable quantities of monastic stone is Bourne Mill at Colchester (Fig 4).



**4. Bourne Mill, Colchester. (Author photograph 06/06/2018)**

It was built in 1591 (perhaps on the same site as the medieval mill) by Thomas Lucas as his fishing lodge, using stone from the ruins of St John's Abbey, together with other materials.<sup>52</sup> Rochford Hall, near Southend, was rebuilt about 1550, possibly using some stone from the recently demolished church and east cloister range of Prittlewell Priory.<sup>53</sup>

Monastic stone was also used, on occasions, in the walls of near-by churches. The walls of Blackmore church, originally the nave of the monastic church, display a large amount of stone from the demolished monastic buildings, presumably used here to repair the walls of the building, which are principally of flint rubble.<sup>54</sup> At Chelmsford, there is evidence that the majority of the stone from the friary was converted on-site to lime, possibly for lime-mortar.<sup>55</sup> If this

was the case, perhaps it was to be used in Mildmay's new brick-built mansion of Moulsham Hall?

However, the presence of recycled monastic stone visible above ground level in standing (domestic) buildings, beyond the monastic precinct is quite unusual in Essex.<sup>56</sup> This is principally because the traditional building materials in the county for domestic structures have been timber and brick.<sup>57</sup> Stone used below ground level, on the other hand, is another matter. A survey of buildings in St Osyth's for the Victoria County History identified recycled monastic stone used in the cellar of a property in Mill Street.<sup>58</sup> There are probably other similar examples waiting to be identified.<sup>59</sup>

Stones from demolished monastic buildings have also been used as foundation material. At

Barking, in the 1960s and '70s, during demolition and clearance of properties in Heath Street, to the south of the abbey site, quantities of carved stone were found; these had probably been used in the foundations of the post-medieval buildings.<sup>60</sup> There is also documentary evidence suggesting that stone from the abbey site was used as foundations for a large building known as 'Cobbler's Hall' in Barking.<sup>61</sup> Observations and limited excavations at Hatfield Broad Oak in the early 1990s at the rear of the Cock Inn recovered a group of medieval architectural fragments originating from the near-by monastery, which had been used in foundations.<sup>62</sup> At Maldon the footings of a post-dissolution building on the site of the dissolved Carmelite friary contained a small quantity of re-used Caen stone, including a fragment of window tracery.<sup>63</sup>

The lower courses of the post-medieval wall surrounding gardens on the site of the Maldon Friary are made almost entirely from re-used monastic stone. There is a report of dressed stone (probably from the abbey) in a wall in Chapel Lane, St Osyth's, but this was demolished quite recently.<sup>64</sup> At Thaxted a post-medieval boundary wall at Park Farm (Park Street) contains carved stones, headstops and other stone of probably fourteenth century date thought to have originated from Tilty Abbey.<sup>65</sup>

At Tilty Abbey itself, Ferdinand Malyn, who had been employed by its new owner, Henry Maynard, to survey the site, stated that the existing 'mansion house' was spacious yet 'ruinous' and that 'the ruyns of the Abey will yeld both ffrestone & other stone' for the building of a new house.<sup>66</sup> A new house was not built from the 'ruins' of the abbey, and there seems to have been no deliberate attempt to demolish all of the monastic buildings, although the church and chapter house probably had been dismantled

quite quickly. Instead, stones were taken from the ruined walls of the remaining structures over the years, and were still being removed into the nineteenth century (though for what purpose is unclear) according to the vicar of Thaxted, who gave a talk to Cambridge Antiquarian Society on the subject.<sup>67</sup> The vicar recited a legend that stated if anyone removed stones from the ruins of Tilty Abbey they would be dead within a month. And, of course, when a steward from the Grange removed stones from the walls, he died within the month. And the same thing is said to have happened to another member of the same family some years later.

We can only speculate about the use made of these stones from Tilty. However, evidence from elsewhere in the county suggests a likely answer. During the dismantling of Barking Abbey, one of the labourers' tasks was to use some of the 'rubbish' stone for 'making and mynding of the heyways and in lyke manner leveling the grownde for the land carr' of the said stone from the Abbey to the water syde'.<sup>68</sup> Road mending appears to have been one of the principal uses of monastic stone that was not earmarked for any other use. This would have included the flint and other material used for the core of the walls, together with broken and decorated stones. In the days when the manor and, later the parish, was responsible for maintaining the roads, such a source of material would have been a useful supplement to the usual gravel dug from pits or collected from the beach or stones collected from farm fields by women and children.<sup>69</sup> Where a monastic site had been left as a ruin, as at Tilty, the buildings would have been used as a quarry. And at Bicknacre, for example, 'For many years the roads in the vicinity have been mended with stones taken from the ruins; at this time the small remains of the [priory] church are suffering reduction for the same purpose'.<sup>70</sup>



**5. Gate post, Flagstaff Road, Colchester**  
(Author photograph 22/05/2019)

The recycling of monastic stone has continued into modern times where the material has been available although, one hopes, no longer taken from the monastic sites. At Tilty Grange and possibly Lamb Farm in St Osyth's, monastic stone forms elements in garden features. At Tilty Grange, again, two sections of column have been used to mark either side of the drive way into the property, while in Flagstaff Road, Colchester,



monastic stone has been used to 'decorate' a pair of gateposts which are, presumably, twentieth century in date (Fig 5). Fragments of carved stone from monastic churches and other buildings can still be found on site. For example, at Blackmore several pieces of carved stone, which must have come from the monastery, have been piled against the north porch of the church, while at Bourne Mill, in Colchester, fragments of decorated stone lay on the floor in one of the rooms. At Prittlewell, Southend, the path leading to the south porch of the parish church is partially lined with decorated stone from the near-by monastery, although these may have been recovered during excavations on the site of the monastery in the 1920s.

## Conclusions

Where evidence survives it appears that many monastic buildings were dismantled with some care. At Barking this may have been, partially at least, because of the need to preserve the best blocks of stone for the King's work at Dartford. At Chelmsford most of the walls also appear to have been taken down carefully, partly, perhaps to avoid damage to surrounding buildings in this urban setting. In both cases, however, it is certain that the potential dangers of demolishing large stone buildings were fully realized.

It is quite clear that on many sites, while some of the monastic buildings had been converted to secular uses, the other buildings were left as ruins. While there appears to have been a ready market for structural elements such as floor tiles and timber, iron and glass, together with furnishings and fittings, in a county where there was no immediate use for stone as a building material, it would have been regarded as a needless expense to demolish surplus monastic buildings.

In the rare cases where high-quality stone was used

in construction it tended to be employed by the site owners as a ready source of material for high status projects. Elsewhere, stone was used for repairs and in foundations and for the construction (or as elements in) boundary or estate walls in the immediate post-dissolution period. There is also some evidence for its use internally for cellar walls. One of the most common uses of monastic stone, which continued to be taken from the ruined buildings now used as quarries, was for road mending and, into the modern period, for garden and decorative architectural features.

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13. Bod, Rawlinson MS. D.782, f.2b.
14. The tenants of the Abbey were recorded in the Ministers' Accounts for 1540, translated and transcribed by J. O'Leary, the manuscript volume being deposited with the Valence House Local Studies Centre, and used as the basis for this section.
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19. Harris, p.29-30.
20. H. Grieve, *The Sleepers and the Shadows*, I (Chelmsford, 1988), pp.93-4. By 1551 Mildmay had the freehold of the Friary site.
21. *Ibid.*, pp.30-33.
22. *Ibid.*, p.134.
23. *Ibid.*, pp.132-3. Regarding the dangerous nature of the work of dismantling the monasteries, see Stephen Gunn, 'Everyday Life and Fatal Hazard in Sixteenth Century England' at [www.tudoraccidents.history.ox.ac.uk](http://www.tudoraccidents.history.ox.ac.uk). I am grateful to Dr C. Thornton for bringing this research to my attention, and to Dr Gunn for providing the findings from his research relating to fatal accidents on monastic sites.
24. *Ibid.* 158-65.
25. Essex Record Office (ERO), D/DM P2, 'A trew platt of the mannor and hamlett of Moulshum', 1591.
26. Grieve, pp.36, 52.
27. O'Sullivan, p.245.
28. D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life* (London, 2018), p.309; Oxley, pp.96, 117; L&P, XII (2), p.329.
29. L&P, XIII (2), p.313.
30. For example, A. Smith, *Blackmore, a Short History* (Blackmore, 2006).

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33. Oxley, p.74. Blackmore had been granted to Waltham Abbey following Wolsey's fall. It is possible that Brian Tuke was acting as John Smyth's agent.
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36. For example, William Clifton, merchant tailor of London was licensed to buy and export 120,000 lbs. of bell metal in June 1538 (*L&P*, XIII (1), p.1309).
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46. Galpin, p.344.
47. M. Medlycott, *Blackmore Historic Village Assessment* (Chelmsford, 2002), p.6.
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50. Unlike, for example, at St Augustine's Canterbury; see D. Sherlock, 'The Account of George Nycholl for Augustine's 1552-1553' in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XCIX (1984), pp.25-43.
51. D. Andrews, 'The Buildings of St. Osyth Abbey', report of Essex Historic Buildings Group meeting, 24/07/2015.
52. J. Moore & J. Mallinson, 'St. John's Abbey, Colchester', *Colchester Archaeological Group Bulletin*, 56, (2016), p.25. See also historical report by C. Thornton, [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk).
53. D. Andrews, 'Lord Rich's Mansion at Rochford Hall' in *Transactions of the Essex Society for Archaeology & History (TESAH)*, XXXIV (2003), pp.69-90.
54. J. Bettley & N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Essex* (London, 2007), p.141.
55. Harris, pp.132, 134. N. Wiffen tells me that another possible use was in the tanning industry.
56. The consideration of the conversion of monastic buildings to secular use, and the survival of monastic period structures in those buildings, is largely beyond the scope of this present paper. J.C. Dickinson believed that demolition of the monasteries in the south east took place fairly rapidly after the dissolution, because of the scarcity of building stone in that area; that may have been the case in counties such as Kent and Sussex (and Norfolk), but, for reasons stated here, this was not the case in Essex. See Dickinson, 'The buildings of the English Austin Canons after the Dissolution of the Monasteries', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, XXXI (1968), pp.60-95, esp. p.62.
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58. I am grateful to Dr C. Thornton for this information in advance of publication.
59. It is interesting to note, however, that a survey of the cellars in Maldon failed to identify any re-used monastic stone. See Maldon Archaeological Group, *Underground Maldon* (1998).
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#### Acknowledgements

Thanks to M. Stevens (Tilty); Rev Dr N. Wormell ( Hatfield Broad Oak); Churchwardens and parish-ioners (Blackmore); G. Worriker and J. Bishop (Bicknacre); Dr C. Thornton (Bourne Mill and various sources) & Dr M. Leach for his good humoured support and excellent suggestions for improvement. Thanks also to the staffs of ERO and Chelmsford Museum.

#### The Author

Ken Crowe retired as Curator of Human History at Southend Museum in 2014 after 30 years of looking after its collections. His research on the history of Prittlewell Priory sparked his interest into the fate of other monastic buildings in the post-dissolution period.



# Book Reviews

Anthony Goodman,  
**Joan, the Fair Maid of Kent**,  
 pp.xviii & 244, ISBN 978-1-78327-176-4.  
 Boydell Press, 2017. £25.00.

Joan Plantagenet, the Fair Maid of Kent, otherwise princess of Wales and Aquitaine, countess of Kent and baroness Wake, apparently a woman of outstanding beauty and charm, is comparatively little known today. This excellent biography by the late Professor Anthony Goodman will undoubtedly restore Joan to her rightful place in the pantheon of remarkable medieval women.

Joan was born about 1328, the daughter of Edmund, earl of Kent, sixth son of Edward I. After her father was executed for treason, the infant Joan was probably brought up in the royal household in the care of Queen Philippa, wife of Joan's cousin Edward III. As a girl of about 12 or 13, she voluntarily entered into a clandestine marriage with the personable but penniless knight Sir Thomas Holand, who not long afterwards left the country to fight in foreign wars. In Holand's absence, Joan's mother obliged her to marry William Montagu, son and heir of the earl of Salisbury, either ignoring or being unaware of Joan's earlier marriage. Holand later returned to England having made a fortune from the ransom of a French nobleman, only to find his wife had been forced into a bigamous marriage. Before long he successfully (and expensively) petitioned the Pope for an annulment of Joan's marriage to Montagu.

Thereafter, Joan and Sir Thomas Holand resumed their marriage, and before Holand's death in 1360 had five children. Just six months after Holand's death, despite being a twice-married widow with four (surviving) children, she married Edward, prince of Wales (the Black Prince) to whom she was related within the prohibited degrees for marriage. It was probably another love match, and one to which Edward III was quickly resigned, despite his plans for a dynastic marriage for his son.

John S. Lee,  
**The Medieval Clothier**,  
 pp.xix & 365, ISBN 978-1-78327-317-1.  
 Boydell Press, 2018,  
 £25.

This addition to the *Working in the Middle Ages* series is a survey of the cloth trade in England from c.1350-c.1550. It begins with a brief summary of the trade in the early Middle Ages before considering the circumstances of land, labour and capital essential for successful trade and reasons for expansion from the late fourteenth century. There is a brief summary of the historiography of the subject

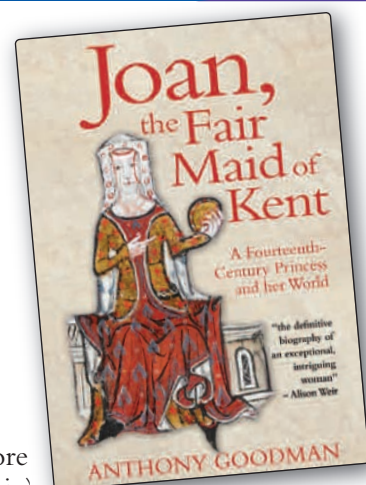
Having married Europe's most eligible bachelor, and now princess of Wales, Joan seized the opportunities which came her way. Based in Bordeaux, Edward and Joan established a glittering royal court, and spent huge sums of money on luxuries and patronage of the arts. In Edward's absence fighting England's wars, Joan acted as unofficial regent in Aquitaine. Importantly, Joan had two more sons Edward (who died aged six) and Richard who, after the successive deaths of his father the Black Prince in 1376, and his grandfather Edward III in 1377, became king.

Joan never remarried, but devoted herself instead to the upbringing of her son Richard and the administration of her inherited estates in Essex and elsewhere. She gradually intervened in national politics, an emollient influence between her headstrong young son and the nobility. At the same time she earned the respect and even the love of the common people. Although her will shows that her religious beliefs were orthodox, she was nevertheless patron of the dissident priest and reformer John Wycliffe, and several of her household knights were Lollards.

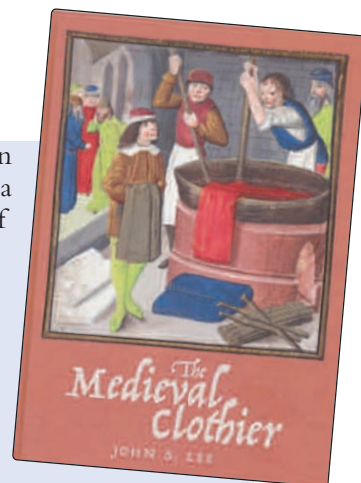
The noblewoman described by Jean Froissart as 'the most beautiful lady in the whole realm of England' died in 1385 after a long illness, it says much that at the end she chose to be buried beside Sir Thomas Holand rather than beside the Black Prince.

Having read Anthony Goodman's book we will remember Joan as an empowered, charismatic and no doubt beautiful woman who was courageous and successful in a world of ruthlessly ambitious men.

Christopher Starr



and the sources which have been used. The book continues with a chapter describing the process of cloth making, before the author moves on to the marketing of cloth and the evolution of the clothier or cloth merchant. A chapter on identifying clothiers includes maps showing the distribution across the country based on the poll taxes of 1377-1381 and the plea rolls of 1453 and 1549 and considers area by area the local conditions which allowed the trade to flourish. There are chapters on the government influence on the cloth trade,



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the role of clothiers in their local communities and a chapter on famous clothiers, including Thomas Paycocke of Coggeshall. The author also mentions the possibility that the Winchcombes of Newbury in Berkshire may have originated from the Barking area.

The appendices include details of cloths taxed by county and by locality, a description of the different types of cloths defined by statute in 1552 and transcripts of the wills of significant clothiers including Thomas Paycocke, the originals of which are all at The National Archives. There is also a helpful gazetteer of surviving buildings with a brief description of the links to the cloth trade which are still visible today. A glossary of cloth making terms may be useful for reference purposes, together with the extensive bibliography. The book is well-illustrated and indexed.

The book gives a useful overview of the cloth trade and the cloth merchants or clothiers who came to prominence during the period. The author includes many references to the trade

in Colchester and the Stour valley. These are based on the research of the late Professor Richard Britnell and are taken from the court rolls of the borough of Colchester. Placed in the context of similar research in other areas of England, the Essex examples demonstrate the importance of the trade in the north of the county and in turn its significance nationally. The section on Thomas Paycocke draws on the work of Eileen Power in the early years of the twentieth century and more recently on the research of Chris Thornton.

*The Medieval Clothier* provides an interesting, accessible and well-referenced survey of the cloth trade in the late Middle Ages. It includes many references to the trade and to clothiers in the north of Essex and places these in a national context, highlighting both similarities and some specific local circumstances. It concludes with case studies of four famous clothiers, including Thomas Paycocke.

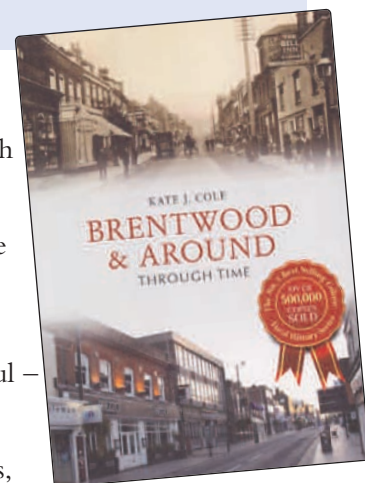
Katharine Schofield

Kate J. Cole,  
**Brentwood & Around through Time**,  
pp.92, ISBN 978-1-44564-835-4.  
Amberley Publishing, 2016, £14.99.

At first sight, this is one of the familiar and very popular 'then and now' photographic series. These are often poorly produced, and show less than adequate research in their scanty text. This volume is definitely an exception to that norm. The quality of the photographs is excellent, and the modern views have been taken with considerable care to establish the exact viewpoint of the historic image shown on the same page. Another commendable feature is the provision of a date for each old photograph, sometimes derived from the postmark on the original card, more often from evidence deduced from the image itself. In addition, the descriptive text is

more detailed than usual, and is based on a very adequate bibliography which is provided at the back of the book. The only regret is that the last four pages are occupied by the publisher's full page colour advertisements for other books in the series. Much more useful – both for local residents and researchers – would have been an index. Nevertheless, those who know the area will be able to navigate the book without too much difficulty, and it will provide a useful introduction for those unfamiliar with local history.

Micahel Leach



Michael Foley,  
**Secret Brentwood**,  
pp.96, ISBN 978-1-44567-817-7.  
Amberley Publishing, 2018, £14.99.

This is an attractively produced paperback book containing 96 pages and 100 mostly coloured more recent photographs as well as other sorts of illustrations. After a short introduction to the communities which eventually became 'Brentwood', the rest of the book is arranged by headings such as 'Local Events', 'People', 'Shops and Businesses', 'Crime and the Military'. Various pages throughout the book include a blue box headed 'Did you Know?' These blue boxes contain details of more unusual local questions regarding Brentwood – and

their answers. For example on page 30 the blue box relates to 'fagging' one of the traditional aspects of public schools (remember *Tom Brown's Schooldays* that many of us read in our youth?). It seems that fagging continued at Sir Anthony Browne's Brentwood School until September 1962!

Although I have never lived in Brentwood I found the section about Warley barracks and its development particularly interesting. In 1940 both my parents had joined the army at Warley barracks and wanted to marry before my





# Book Reviews

father was posted to Burma. Originally a Roman Catholic from Liverpool, he was not pleased to find that his application to marry in the Catholic Church at Warley was refused because my mother was an Anglican who did not intend to convert. They were therefore married in uniform in Christ Church Warley, although she was at least allowed a white

Lynn Haseldine Jones,  
**The Golden Age of Buckhurst Hill depicted in Postcards**,  
pp.42, ISBN 978-1-905269-23-5.  
Loughton & District Historical Society,  
2017. £7-50.

**T**his book was inspired by the author's purchase of the Buckhurst Hill section of a collection of postcards, dating from between 1902 and 1930, which had been amassed by a local enthusiast, Helen Kay. The author reminds us that, with four postal deliveries a day in Buckhurst Hill at that period, postcards could fulfil the function of today's e-mail. The book has four images per page, each with a brief text identifying the location as well as providing a little historical detail, and there is a useful index to help readers find a particular subject. As would be expected, the images are atmospheric but are not always very sharp, perhaps reflecting the quality of the printed postcard or the technical difficulties

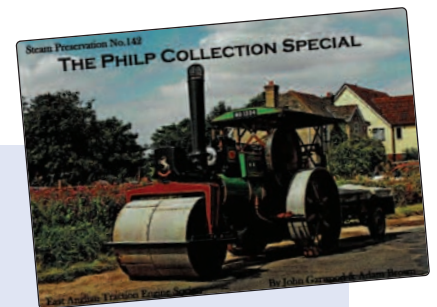
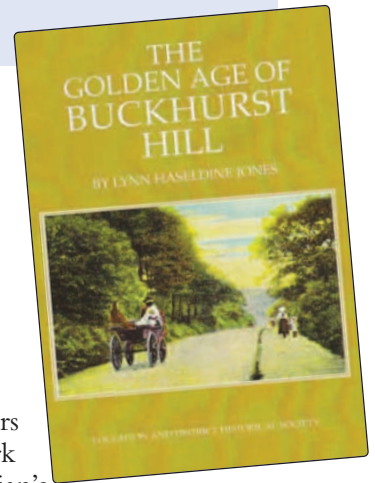
bouquet to liven up her uniform; father's family broke with him too.

The layout of this book makes it easy to dip in and out of, so readers interested in the area might find it suitable for bedtime reading!

Maureen Scollan

of capturing the original. Though the book is similar to others of this type, the author has taken the unusual step of identifying some of the correspondents and the recipients, and of printing some of the brief messages written on the back of the cards. Inevitably these only relate to minor personal matters but, like the Roman birch bark letters found at a site on Hadrian's Wall, they connect us to the familiar daily concerns of a past generation. This book will be mainly enjoyed by those familiar with Buckhurst Hill, but the use made by the author of the written messages on the original postcards is an interesting departure from the usual format of similar publications.

Michael Leach



John Garwood & Adam Brown,  
**The Philp Collection Special**,  
pp. 48. East Anglian Traction Engine  
Society, 2016, £3.50.

Available from: Springwell Farm, Little Chesterford,  
Saffron Walden CB10 1UE

**I**n 1909 the Philp family moved from Cornwall to Castle Hedingham, initially farming Priestfields Farm and then in 1920 moving to nearby Kirby Hall. At that time ploughing the heavy clay was with traction engines. It was contracted out until 1936 when S.J. Philp and Son purchased their first ploughing engines. They were superseded by a second pair in 1939 and from the late 1940s Cyril Philp began buying old traction engines and farm machinery. This was the beginning of what became a very large and well known collection.

It eventually included six ploughing engines, three portable, four steam rollers, a road locomotive and others. These engines were built by well known

makers including a portable by Davey Paxman of Colchester. One steam roller was from Essex County Council, which had

operated it from new in 1917 until sold to Cyril Philp around 1962. Another roller, *Clacton Queen*, was in a very bad condition, but at least the Philp family saved all these engines from being cut up for scrap. The book includes a brief history of each of these engines.

Following the death of Cyril Philp, the bulk of the collection was sold in 1995, followed by further sales in 2005 and 2014/5. One surviving engine, built in 1899, was restored by John Garwood from 1977 and is driven by him in the Hedingham area. He is one of the joint authors of this book and a well-respected engineer and enthusiast. The book is well illustrated with a colour cover and some 40 black and white photographs.

Adrian Corder-Birch

**Your Book Reviewers are:** Adrian Corder-Birch, Chairman of the Essex Journal Editorial Board and former President of the ESAH; Michael Leach, a retired GP and former Hon Sec of ESAH; Christopher Starr, historian and author; Katharine Schofield, Senior Archivist at the ERO, and Maureen Scollan, former Police Inspector, now a historian and author.

# Brenda & Elphin Watkin

Thomas Elphin Watkin was born in Chelmsford in 1937 where his father was a lecturer at what became Writtle Agricultural College. The outbreak of war saw Elphin, his sister and mother move to family members in Wales. Elphin then schooled in Cardiff and only by chance chose to join an apprenticeship scheme with Crompton Parkinson (CP) in Chelmsford. After National Service in the RAF and a further period with CP he moved to design specialist sliding door gear at Harold Wood and finally worked in Witham. The collapse of engineering at the end of the 1980s saw a major change from part time hobby analysing the structure of historic buildings to main occupation. In 1992 Elphin was commissioned by English Heritage (EH) to record the Spire of All Saints, Maldon and then to run the EH prototype bellframe survey for Essex.

Brenda Brookes was born in Great Baddow in 1939 and attended Chelmsford County High School. Wishing to study architecture, the careers advisor suggested to Brenda that she should first obtain a degree in mathematics but instead, doing it her own way, Brenda joined the County Council's Architects' Department and the Chelmsford School of Architecture in Market Road. Moving to Bristol with Elphin in 1960, Brenda joined a leading practice called Ivor Day & O'Brien working on everything from upmarket houses to Headquarters for an Insurance company. Back in Chelmsford and working from home, which they had designed and built in 1962, Brenda worked for architects and Savills. Becoming disappointed with modern architecture she joined the Countryside Section of ECC Planning Department and eventually the Historic Buildings Section.

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

**B.** Medieval closely followed by Victorian.

**E.** Most likely the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries.

**2. Tell us what Essex means to you?**

**B.** A county mocked by most but those who really know it can find deserted coastal walks, undulating countryside, ancient woodland, wide open skies and masses of vernacular buildings.

**E.** A county where an enjoyable life has been made although Wales still tugs.

**3. What historical mystery would you most like to know?**

**B.** Who really wrote the works attributed to Shakespeare although I would hate to see Castle Hedingham become the tourist attraction if it did turn out to be the Earl of Oxford.

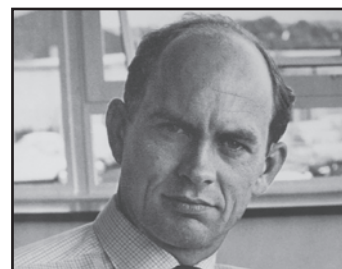
**E.** The true story of the Princes in the Tower.

**4. My favourite history book is...**

**B.** Any volume of *The House of History* bought for



Brenda and Elphin are involved with the Essex Historic Buildings Group, Herts & Essex Architectural Research Society, Ancient Monument Society, Vernacular Architecture Group, the Diocesan Advisory Committee, the Essex Society for Archaeology & History and are great supporters of the Friends of Historic Essex. Brenda and Elphin first met as teenagers at the various sports and social clubs they frequented in Chelmsford during the 1950s. They married in 1960 and have four sons, one of whom died young, and three grandchildren. They are still busily recording buildings and occasionally attempt to hang up their set squares!



**Brenda and Elphin (top) on a recent visit to the Essex Record Office Searchroom, and (above) in younger days.**

me by my father on his return in 1945.

**E.** *The Trial of The Templars*, by Malcolm Barber. It ended the historic rumours as to how terrible they had been.

**5. What is your favourite place in Essex?**

**B.** St Osyth which has an amazing mix of landscape and buildings.

**E.** Has to be the Cressing Temple site.

**6. How do you relax?**

**B.** Working in the garden and enjoying travel to different parts of the world.

**E.** What is that? A month in Sri Lanka when we have time.

**7. What are you researching at the moment?**

**B.** Having recorded the fifteenth century Cock Inn at Boreham I am now finding out more about the people involved with the building.

**E.** Boreham as we have studied the Cock Inn and now a WWII airfield building.



**8. My earliest memory is...**

**B.** The embarrassing experience of my knicker elastic breaking in first weeks at infant school.

**E.** My sister pushing me down the garden in her pram and tipping me out!

**9. What is your favourite song/piece of music and why?**

**B.** *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* by Handel.

It takes me back to the Victorian church at Galleywood where after a successful choir practise the organist would treat us to his rendition of this piece.

**E.** Purcell's *Trumpet Voluntary* played by Harry Mortimer. Recorded in the late 1940s and one of the first records I bought and my sister sat on it.

**10. If you could travel back in time which event would you change?**

**B.** The birth of Adolf Hitler but how can we predict if the outcome would have been any better.

**E.** Stop Chelmsford Borough Council destroying its historic core.

**11. Which four people from the past would you invite to dinner?**

**B.** Christ, Buddha, Mohammed and Confucius to ask them what they think of the present interpretation of their ideals.

**E.** Gruffydd ap Cynan, Head of the 1st Royal Tribe of Wales (My earliest recorded ancestor), Simon de Montfort, King John and Edward I, to compare the politics of nearly 200 years – is it ever different?

**12. What is your favourite food?**

**B.** Ham, eggs and chips.

**E.** Fish in various forms.

**13. The history book I am currently reading is...**

**B.** *Child of Conquest, Building Battle Town an Architectural History, 1066-1750* by David & Barbara Martin, Christopher Whittick and Jane Briscoe

**E.** *Boreham – History, Tales and Memories of an Essex Village*, by the Boreham Histories Project Group.

**14. What is your favourite quote from history?**

**B.** 'Let them eat cake', the popular translation of

Marie Antoinette's comment on hearing that the peasants had nothing to eat. It reminds me how fortunate we are today.

**E.** Churchill's 20th August 1940 speech 'Never was so much owed by so many to so few' made during the Battle of Britain which we heard recently in the atmosphere of the Control Bunker at Uxbridge.

**15. Favourite historical film?**

**B.** *The Bridge over the River Kwai*, filmed in Sri Lanka where we have close friends. My father served in Burma.

**E.** The 1953 *Julius Caesar* with Marlon Brando.

**16. What is your favourite building in Essex?**

**B.** The church of St Mary the Virgin, Saffron Walden, a large, prominent and striking medieval church of one build with the added connection to King's College, Cambridge through John Wastell, one of the most distinguished masons of his generation.

**E.** Has to be Great Dunmow Maltings as it took 25 years of my life to help save and restore it.

**17. What past event would you like to have seen?**

**B.** Henry VIII's Field of Gold.

**E.** Elizabeth I's address at Tilbury.

**18. How would you like to be remembered?**

**B.** As making a contribution, however small to the future survival and conservation of the historic buildings of Essex.

**E.** As someone who has tried to help others understand what is around us.

**19. Who inspires you to read or write or research history?**

**B.** The many custodians of the historic buildings of Essex desperate to know more about their buildings.

**E.** All the many people who still come on to ask questions that I can't initially answer.

**20. Most memorable historical date?**

**B.** 15th June 1215 the signing of Magna Carta.

**E.** Coronation Day 1937 – my birthday. I was never forgiven by my mother for her missing being able to be in London for the Coronation.

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