

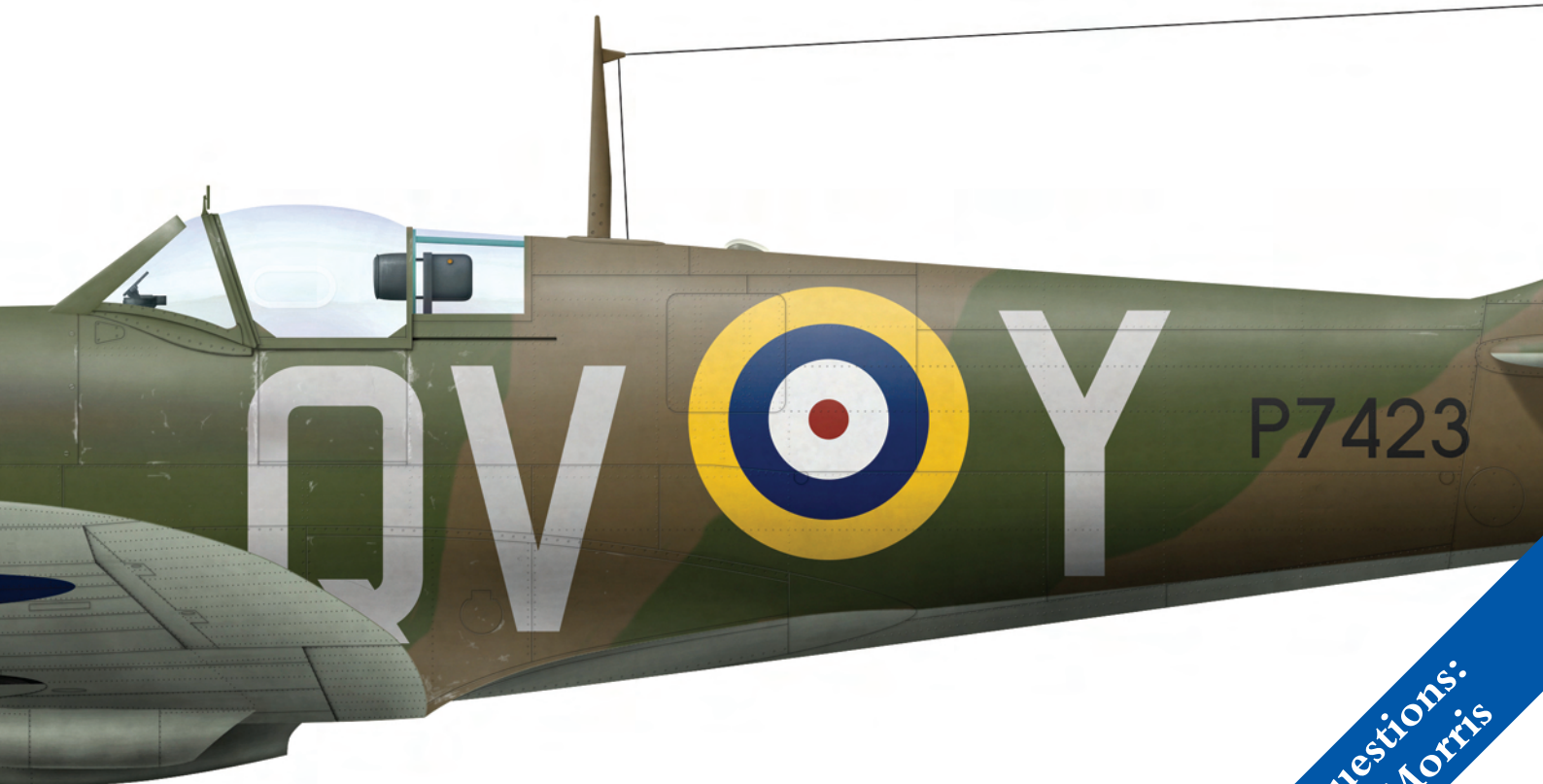
Essex JOURNAL

A REVIEW OF LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Spring 2017



Spitfire Down: The Life and Death of Arthur Giles Blake



And much more ...

EJ 20 Questions:
Richard Morris



Foundation, reformation & restoration: Essex churches from the Saxons to the Victorians

Essex is home to two of the oldest churches in England; St Peter-on-the-Wall at Bradwell-on-Sea (dating from 654) and St Andrew's at Greensted (dating from c.850). The fabric of church buildings can tell us about the history of the communities who built and worshipped in them, and their beliefs about the world. This one-day conference will aim to examine the evolution of Essex parish churches, with a scamper through history from the Saxons to the Victorians.

Saturday 21 October, 9.30am-3.45pm

Essex Record Office, Wharf Road,
Chelmsford, CM2 6YT

Tickets: £25, advance booking essential
For more information and to book please
see www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/events

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Cover illustrations: Arthur Giles Blake in uniform. His nephew, Keith Powell, remembers that as a small boy this photograph was always on his grandmother's (Arthur's mother Mary) mantelshelf when he used to pop in to see her – she living with his family. She would speak very fondly and proudly of her youngest son, while plying a young Keith with sips of sherry and puffs from her cigarette! (Reproduced by courtesy of Mr Keith Powell); Supermarine Spitfire Mk IIa. (Reproduced by courtesy of Chris S-B/inkworm). See p.33 'Tuesday 29th October 1940: Spitfire Down' for the full story.

Welcome to the Spring 2017 issue of the *Essex Journal*, the twentieth issue that I have edited. Quite a surprise that it has come round so quickly! I remember when I had completed the first issue thinking that if I carried on then at some point in time there would be half an inch, an inch, more in thickness of completed issues sitting on the shelf. I'll have to wait to get my copy of this issue to do the measuring to see how many inches of my life have passed in editing articles, liaising with printers, stuffing envelopes and sourcing illustrations. On the one hand it has been arduous and taken me away from other activities I might have preferred to have been doing (see my first editorial about wooden railways!) but on the other I have got to work with lots of interesting contributors as well as having the marvellous support of the Editorial Board. Thank you to all who have given me their support, in particular Sarah, Thomas and Chloe for all the times I have not been available because I'm 'working' on the next issue and thank you to all the readers and subscribers who make all this possible by your support and not least all the authors of articles and reviewers of books. I'm sure that it is all worthwhile and that we are all adding to the written history of our wonderful county as well as leaving behind something for future historians to read about our own times.

I've been thinking recently about 'serendipity' - 'the occurrence...of events by chance'. It is a word I like to use when introducing people to the art of historical research. Databases like Ancestry are all very good, but restricting searches to terms and names can mean that you miss out on those little chance connections that you happen upon when researching. Recently I was having lunch with American researcher Bob Anderson, quizzing him about the contacts that Thomas Hooker might have had with Broomfield (see autumn 2016 issue of *EJ*). Bob suggested that there might be a Pynchon family connection, the family having land in Springfield, Writtle and Chelmsford. I had a vague remembrance that I had seen a Pynchon entry, within the previous few days, in the Broomfield parish registers while researching Rev Thomas Cox. As soon as I got home I went on the Essex Archives Online website and found the Pynchon marriage I had remembered, albeit at the end of the seventeenth century, 50 or so years after Hooker had been in the parish, but nevertheless a little, serendipitous, echo of a possible

connection with him. If all of Essex Archives Online images were indexed, and I was just looking for Cox entries, I might never have found the Pynchon entry. A bit of archival leg-work is a wonderful thing for getting the feel of a person or a place and who knows what you might find, but it can also be a dangerous thing as you never know where you might end up - how many projects do we all have on the go at one time? - serendipity might after all just be a bit of tease!

In this issue Hannah Salisbury updates us on changes at ERO while those of you who are not familiar with the Galleywood Heritage Centre can read all about this great resource. Julian Whybra discusses the Tudor 'Home Guard'. The list of those too old to serve brings to mind thoughts of a sixteenth century Corporal Jones - there probably was one! Andrew Emeny looks at juvenile crime in Southend during the First World War, an interesting subject from the Home Front. The ever-prolific Michael Leach looks at the Ongar Radio Station using an archival collection that was saved by a forward-thinking former member of staff there - a very serendipitous act for future historians. My own article is a follow up on one from autumn 2015. I won't say anymore about it here apart from serendipity playing a part in it!

We have two obituaries, Peter Huggins and Beryl Board, both wonderful historians who are sorely missed and to round off we have our usual selection of book reviews. Finally the ever-green and prolific historian of all things woody in Epping, Richard Morris, answers the *Essex Journal 20 Questions*. I'm already looking toward the autumn issue as well as some exciting future projects so plenty to keep me busy and that's before serendipity throws in a chance encounter or two!

Cheers,

Neil



I'm currently researching the Home Guard in Essex. Do you have any photos or documents that could help to tell the story of those who served? Please contact the Hon. Ed. at neilwiffen@hotmail.com if you are able to assist. Thanks in advance, Neil

The Plume Lecture 2017

Saturday 11th November

The Trustees of Thomas Plume's Library are pleased to announce that this year's Lecture will be given by Dr Lisa Smith, Co-Director Digital History Centre; Graduate Director Research; Second Year Director and Study Abroad Officer at the University of Essex.

Dr Smith's current research interests are gender, health, the household, and the body – particularly, pain, illness experience, reproduction/infertility and domestic medicine. She is also developing an online database of Sir Hans Sloane's correspondence (c. 1685-1750) and is a co-investigator on a crowd-sourcing recipes transcription project (Early Modern Recipes Online Collective).

For further information please visit the Library's website:

www.thomasplumeslibrary.co.uk

The lecture will take place on Saturday 11th November 2017 at 7.30 pm in the United Reformed Church, Market Hill, Maldon, CM9 4PZ.

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

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News from the Essex Record Office

There are two key pieces of information which visitors to the ERO will hopefully be aware of: one, our Searchroom opening hours changed in April, and two, that Wharf Road surface car park will be closed from 28th May.

The Searchroom opening hours are now on a four-week rota system, with one longer week followed by three shorter weeks. On longer weeks we are open Tuesday-Saturday, including Tuesday evening until 8pm, and on shorter weeks we are open Tuesday-Thursday, 10am-5pm. Full details and a calendar for this year can be found on our website at: www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/visit-us/opening-hours/.

This change is due to two key factors. One, like all public services, ERO is facing tough financial challenges, and we are operating with a smaller team. Reducing our Searchroom hours means we can maintain service levels on the days that we are open. Two, the ways that people access records are changing, with more people accessing material online from home, or making shorter visits and digitising the documents they need to use.

We thought carefully to try to come up with a 'best fit' solution based on patterns of Searchroom use. We also ran a survey throughout February to ask users how the changes would affect them, and the majority told us that the changes would either have a minor impact or no impact upon them. We appreciate that the change means that some users will have to adjust the way they use the service, but we hope we can still accommodate most of the needs of our visitors.

Chelmsford City Council has informed us that Wharf Road surface car park will be closed from

Sunday 28th May. The site has been sold to Taylor Wimpey and will be developed as housing. We have updated the Visit Us page on our website with suggestions of alternative car parks nearby and details of the Chelmsford Park and Ride services (www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/visit-us/). The three blue badge spaces immediately outside ERO will be unaffected.

The Essex History Group lectures on Tuesday mornings have become so popular that we have decided to run all of them twice. Upcoming talks include Dr Jane Pearson on *Colchester's Lock Hospital* (13th and 27th June) and Dr Ben Cowell on *Some Essex Country Houses and their Owners* (5th and 12th September). Details of future talks, including how to book, are on the Events pages of our website.

On 6th May we hosted the launch of *The Fighting Essex Soldier: Recruitment, War and Society in the Fourteenth Century*. Three years in the making, this book has grown from a conference held at ERO in March 2014 looking at the contribution made by Essex to the fighting of the Hundred Years' War. The publication was supported by the Friends of Historic Essex and the *Essex Journal*, and is available to purchase for £18.99 from the University of Hertfordshire Press website.

Our next conference, *Foundation, reformation and restoration: Essex churches from the Saxons to the Victorians*, will be on Saturday 21st October; more details will be on our website soon.

We hope to see you at ERO soon,

Hannah Salisbury
Engagement and Events Manager

First year History students from the University of Essex visiting the ERO in February. The students spent a whole day at ERO, learning about how to use archives in their work. This was the fifth year we have run the workshop, and we look forward to welcoming more students in the future.



Galleywood Heritage Centre

Galleywood Heritage Centre, a registered charity, was opened in November 2009. The building which is located on Galleywood Common off Margaretting Road, is a conversion of the 1920s grandstand from the hey-day of horse racing.

The archives, held in the Heritage Room, include information on the history of the racecourse, St Michael's Church, the Napoleonic defences, golf course and other local features. There is an extensive collection of photographs, of both people and places, and these can be searched and viewed on computer. Whilst the photographs mainly relate to Galleywood these also include surrounding areas such as Great Baddow, Margaretting, Writtle and Chelmsford itself. Other items include maps of Galleywood, records of various clubs, past copies of both Galleywood and Great Baddow's Parish magazines. There is also a collection of books on Galleywood, Chelmsford and Essex and of general interest.

The Heritage room is usually open to visitors on Tuesdays 1.30-3.30pm and at other times by prior arrangement. For further details contact Wendy at: wendy.gf@blueyonder.co.uk. If you are not able to make a personal visit, queries can also be sent to this e-mail address.

Displays are held in the Heritage Room featuring different aspects of Galleywood's history. There is a programme of illustrated talks and the tea room is open for these and other special events. Walks and Talks on the Common and Church Visits can be booked by groups. There is a charge currently £5 per head including tea & cake. For more details contact Philip Walters on pwheritage59@gmail.com. Longer Guided walks and Bird watching walks are also arranged on a regular basis.

Details of talks, exhibitions and other events are detailed in the *Essex Chronicle* under the Galleywood section of Community News and on the centre's

website. A monthly e-mail newsletter can be requested from the e-mail address below.

Various Fund raising activities are organised by the trustees to assist with both running costs and projects such as the recent conversion of an out building into a new classroom, the Common room.

The Centre's Main hall, Heritage room, Common room and large Marquee in the grounds are also available for hire and a number of activities are offered by the various hirers. For further details the Centre can be contacted by the following ways:

T: 01245 357700,

E: mail@galleywoodheritagecentre.org.uk,

W: www.galleywoodheritagecentre.org.uk,

P: Galleywood Heritage Centre,
Margaretting Road,
CM2 8TR.

Susan Wilson

Galleywood Heritage Centre Volunteer

Below, visitors to the Galleywood Heritage Centre examining an exhibition on the First World War.

Bottom, an exterior view of the Centre.



Billericay & Great Burstead:

the Muster Roll of 1539

by

Julian Whybra

The *fyrde* or militia for home defence was first organized in England by Alfred the Great in the last quarter of the ninth century and was maintained, more or less efficiently, until 1066. After the Norman Conquest it was to a large extent overshadowed by the army of feudal tenants but it never wholly ceased to exist, and was revived by the kings of the twelfth century as a counter-weight to rebellious barons' feudal levies. Henry VIII found it defective in both organization and equipment and by way of reform appointed in each shire a lieutenant (today's Lord Lieutenant), who was made responsible for the efficiency of the force within his jurisdiction. As a result the men of each town and village were responsible for maintaining the necessary arms to defend themselves – this was known as the 'furnishing of harness' – and in order to ascertain what military forces were available for the service of the Crown, several musters of the male population were made periodically, when occasion demanded it, during the reigns of the Tudor monarchs. These were occasioned by the perennial threat of war with France and the fear of an invasion. This article will look at a surviving Muster Roll for Billericay and Great Burstead.

Musters were made in pursuance of orders from the Sovereign and Privy Council, and there is no reference to them on the Statute Book except the Act of Parliament in 1557,¹ which concerns itself mainly with the penalties to be inflicted on those who absented themselves. In the British Library there is a paper which describes how the muster was organized in 1522:² the King

appointed Muster Commissioners for every hundred;³ these Commissioners charged the Chief Constables of the hundred; they, in their turn, gave orders to the constables of each parish in the hundred to appear on a certain day with certificates in writing of the names of all the men above 16 years of age dwelling in each town, village, and hamlet. All these were to appear before the Commissioner 'furnished and appareled in their best arraye for the warre, that is to saye with bowes, arrows, bills, harness, or any other weapon, artillery, or harness for the warre, which they or anye of them have.'⁴

The Commissioners would inspect the harness and ensure each individual's equipment was noted and assessed with his quota of the cost. These inspections, known as Muster Rolls, recorded who owned the arms as well as the value of land (*valor terr et tent*) or value of goods (*valor bonorum*) held by the other residents of the parish who were liable to provide financial support if necessary. Many Muster Rolls have survived and are interesting not only from a military point of view but also as registers of local names.

From the able-bodied men aged between 16 and 60 a selection was made. Those selected were drilled to some extent and put through some kind of training. The orders of the Council giving instructions as to details of training during the reign of Henry VIII, to which period the Muster Roll transcribed below refers, have not survived or were not formally issued, but no doubt they were somewhat similar to those issued in the time of Queen Elizabeth, when the longbow was giving way to the *arquebus*, or *haguebutt*, an early matchlock, muzzle-loaded firearm. The

following gives some idea of what the authorities demanded of the 'Tudor Territorial' in the way of drill:

'A note of the Councelles lettres for the trayners of shott in the countie of Suffolk, 12 May, 1578.

A continuance of the vewing and traynyng of the number of men before prescribed for shott.

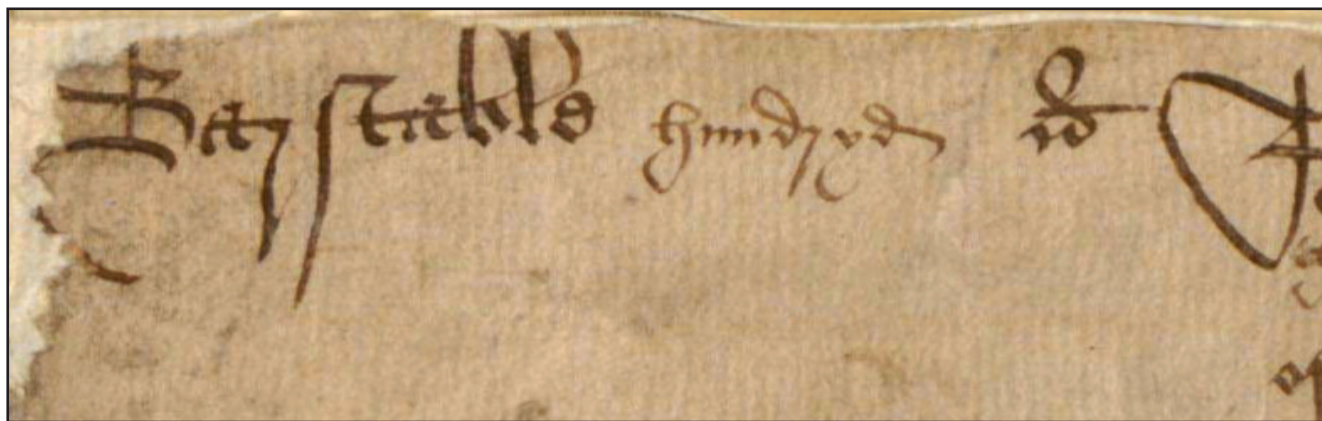
The vew of the hole number trayned to be in one place within the shiere if conveniently it may be ij holy dayes in Whitsun weeke and thither two dayes betweene Bartholomew and Mychelmas.

The trayners principallie to spend their tyme in the shott with the bullet.

This order to continue from yere to yere tyll order be taken by the Quene's maiestie or her Councell.

The burden and charge to be taxed generallie on all sorts of men valued in the subsidye booke, and not altogether of men of £V and upward in the subsidye booke.⁵

Another document describes training in Elizabethan times. It states that musters were to be made 'on Sundays and other holidays, and such working days as shall not seem unmeet until the whole may be twice mustered within the space of two months'.⁶ The horses, arms and equipment were not generally supplied by the Government but were to be found and kept by the people. The Act of 1557-8 gives an



1. The Muster Roll of 1539 (*rot. i* top left) with heading 'Barstable Hundryd'.
(All images reproduced by courtesy of The National Archives, E 101/59/8)

elaborate schedule of what horses and arms were to be kept by 'Noblemen, gentlemen, and temporal persons'.⁷ The amount of equipment that each person was to keep was graded according to his annual income from £1,000 to £10 per annum.

Extant Muster Rolls vary a good deal as to the information they contain. Some give valuations of the estates of the persons mentioned, as well as giving the arms they were to use; those that survive by no means cover all the hundreds of the shire and some that exist are in a very bad state of repair.

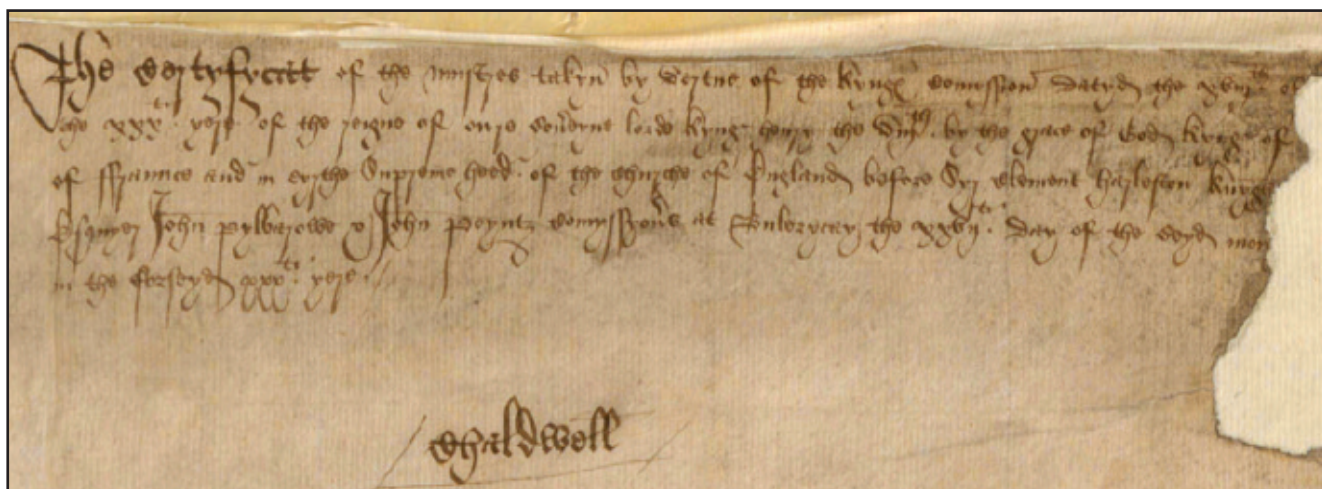
In 1539 there was an invasion scare in England. The previous year the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and King Francis I of France signed a ten-year truce and were thus free to take up

arms against the heretical Henry VIII following his break with the Church of Rome and the establishment of the Church of England. Thus in 1539 Henry embarked on a rapid building programme of coastal defences and ordered a muster of the nation's armed forces to forestall any attempt at invasion.

In that year a Muster Roll for Billericay and Great Burstead was prepared which is held in the National Archives.⁸ The national musters for 1539 seem to have been taken at various dates during the spring of that year, most of them by virtue of a Royal Commission issued 1st March 1539. Some of the certificates specify this, others are distinctly dated, but a great number bear no date but were probably taken at this date. The

surviving Essex Musters contain two sections: the **first section** commences with a paper roll of 34 *rotuli* (leaves) which relate to Barstable Hundred. *Rotulus* (leaf) i has the title *Barstable Hundryd* to the left of the first line of a preamble positioned at the head of this hundredal section which, though it relates to the whole hundred, was executed in Billericay (Fig.1).

A rectangular section at the top right-hand edge of this *rotulus* is torn off (Fig.2); the preamble's missing text is represented below by dotted lines with suggested words in brackets. Unfortunately the tear begins just where the month is, though it was presumably March since Henry VIII's 30th regnal year ended on 21st April. The preamble reads as follows:



2. Preamble to the Muster Roll of 1539 (*rot. i* top) with missing section top right.

The certyfyfat of the mustres takyn by vertue of the Kinges comysson datyd the xvijth of ... the xxxth yere of the reigne of oure sovreyne lorde King Henry the viijth by the grace of God King of [England &]... of Franncce and in eyrthe Supreme Head of the Churche of England before Syr Clement Harleston Knygh[t]... Esquyer John Pylbarowe & John Poyntz Comysysoners at Bulerycay the xxvijth daye of the seyd mon[th]... in the forseyd xxxth yere.

Beneath this, starting with Chadwell St. Mary (Chaldwell), begin the musters taken in the parishes of the Hundred of Barstable. For each parish there is a list of names arranged as bowmen and billmen (occasionally some of them are women) and, in some cases, a list of unable men and gunners added, with the harness or weapons any of them possess, and totals of archers, billmen, etc. In most cases the name of the curate or parson heads the list. Gairdner and Brodie merely indexed, but did not transcribe, the Muster Rolls⁹ and they list Barstable Hundred as containing the following parishes in order of appearance (the total number of names, some appear twice, follows each parish):

Chaldwell 23, Westylbury 17, Duddynghurste 46, Northbemflete 13, Coryngham 29, Sowthbemflete 50, Gyngraff 19, Bulfan 29, Fenge 7, Langdon 13, Downham 20, Donton 13, Horndon 47, Hutton 27, Lyttyll Bursted 23, Ramysdon Bellhouse 23, Ramsdon Crays 17, Bulerycay & Bursted 69, Wygforde 14, Westhorndon 11, Newenden 13, Stanford in le Hope 39, Mukkyng 27, Shenfelde 41, Fobbyng 36, Thundrysley 16, Orset 82, Wygford Gyltable 25 (one of them with 'a wepyn called an halywater sprynkyll'), Thorokey Parva 15, Estylbury 29, Pytesey 13, Layndon 29, Basteldon 11, Esthorndon 15, Bowers Gyffordes 16.¹⁰

Billericay and Great Burstead¹¹ are listed in the above list of parishes as *Bulerycay and Bursted* and are positioned midway through the hundredal entries spread over three *rotuli* (xvii lower half, xviii, and xix upper half, Figs. 3 & 4).¹² Sixty-five men (given below in bold with abbreviated forenames given in full) are named within the 69 entries (some names appear more than once). The curate is first named, followed by 21 archers, 38 billmen, and five men too old and unfit for service. Author's notes are in square brackets:

Bulerycay & bursted

Sir John Okeley curat di[midium] shefe

{ **Thomas Harres** a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w^t William Hale }

{ **John Egett** a salet a gorgett & a bowe }

{ **Stephyn Peryman** a partner in a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w^t John }

{ Bocher & Henry Parker }

{ **Thomas Browne** a partner in a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w^t William Gylbanke & }

{ Thomas Freman & Thomas Wattes }

{ **Thomas Wattes** a partner in a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w^t William Gilbanke }

{ Thomas Browne & Thomas Freman }

{ **Thomas Bryce** partner in a hole harnes & a bill w^t Thomas Baker John Clement John }

{ Clarke Symond Potter William Thomlyn Thomas Wolmer John Payn }

{ **John Stamer** a bowe }

{ **John Clement** the younger }

{ **John Andrews** }

Bowmen { **Thomas Benett** }

{ **Thomas Raby** }

{ **William Cristofer** }

{ **John Dason** }

{ **William Clovylde**¹³ }

{ **William Cokoo** }

{ **John Cokoo** }

{ **Robert Parker** }

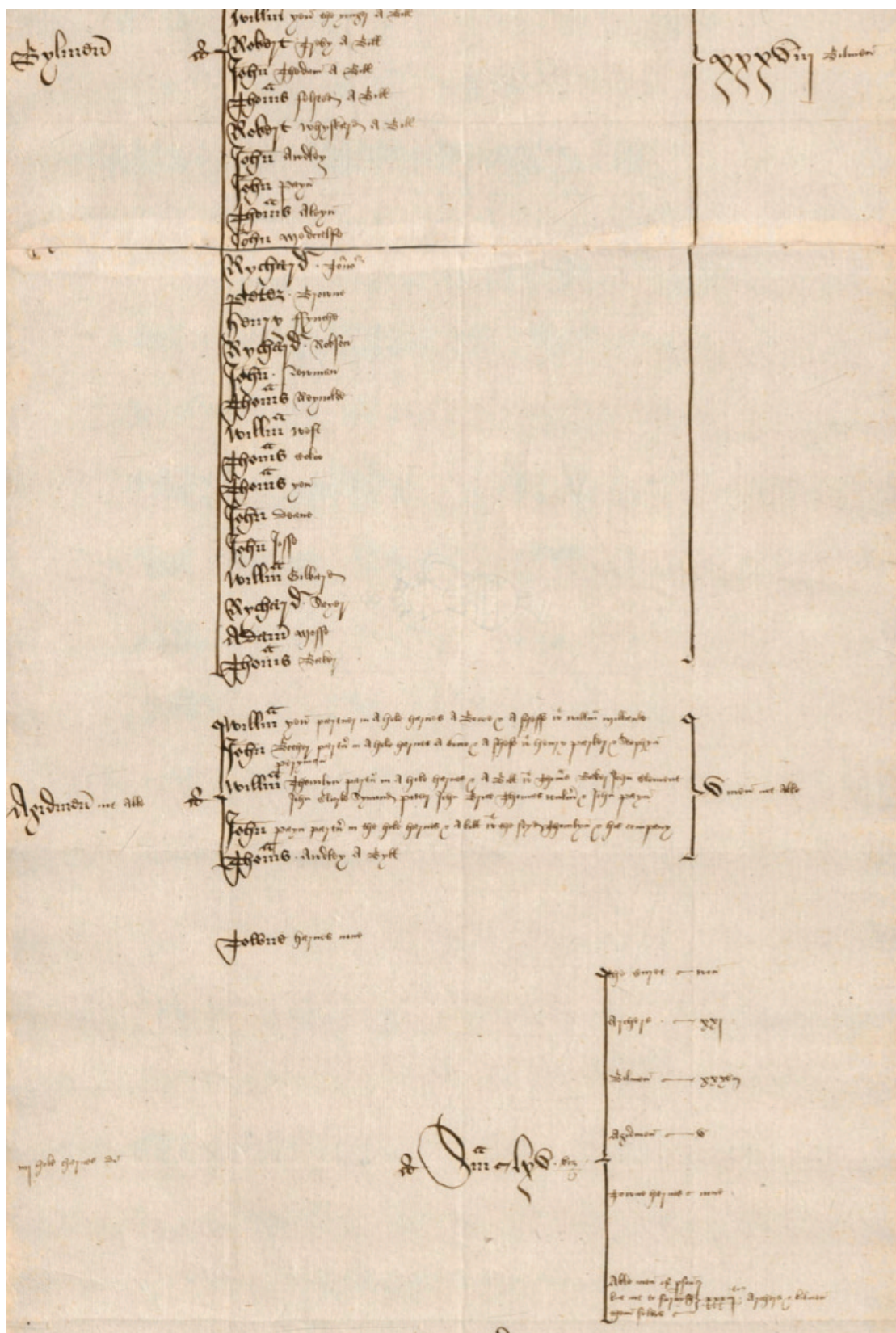
{ **William Ely** }

{ **William Andrews** }

{ **William Freman** }

{ **John Boyland** }

} xxj Archers



4. The Bulerycay & bursted entries (rots. xviii-xix) in the 1539 Muster Roll showing the 'Bylmen' from 'Robert Treby' to 'Thomas Baker', all five 'Agidmen not able', the 'towne harnes', and the summary section.

	{ <i>William Hale</i> a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w ^t Thomas Harres	}
	{ <i>William Harrys</i> a horse a hole harnes a byll a sword a dagger	}
	{ William <i>John Dymond</i> ¹⁴ di[medium] harnes a byll a sword & a daggard	}
	{ <i>James Harres</i> di[medium] harnes & a bowe	}
	{ <i>William Mylbanke</i>	}
	{ } a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe	}
	{ <i>William Yew</i> ¹⁵	}
	{ <i>John Bocher</i> ¹⁶	}
	{ } partners in a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w ^t Stephyn	}
	{ <i>Henry Parker</i> } Peryman	}
	{ <i>William Gylbank</i>	}
	{ } partners in a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w ^t Thomas	}
	{ <i>Thomas Freman</i> } Browne & Thomas Wattes	}
	{ <i>Thomas Baker</i>	}
	{ <i>John Clement</i>	}
	{ <i>John Clarke</i>	}
	{ <i>Symond Potter</i> } partners in hole harnes & a bill w ^t Thomas Brice an archer	}
	{ <i>William Tomlyn</i> ¹⁷	}
	{ <i>Thomas Wulmer</i>	}
	{ <i>John Payn</i> ¹⁸	}
	{ <i>John Pyter</i> a salet	}
	{ <i>William Yew</i> the younger a bill	}
Bylmen	{ <i>Robert Treby</i> a bill	} xxxviij bilmen
	{ <i>John Thedam</i> a bill	}
	{ <i>Thomas Felsted</i> a bill	}
	{ <i>Robert Whyskerd</i> a bill	}
	{ <i>John Awdley</i>	}
	{ <i>John Payn</i> ¹⁹	}
	{ <i>Thomas Aleyn</i>	}
	{ <i>John Medcalfe</i>	}
	{ <i>Rychard Tournour</i> ²⁰	}
	{ <i>Peter Browne</i>	}
	{ <i>Henry Fynche</i>	}
	{ <i>Rychard Robson</i>	}
	{ <i>John Penman</i>	}
	{ <i>Thomas Reynolds</i>	}
	{ <i>William West</i>	}
	{ <i>Thomas Cokoo</i>	}
	{ <i>Thomas Yew</i>	}
	{ <i>John Deane</i>	}
	{ <i>John Josse</i>	}
	{ <i>William Gilbard</i>	}
	{ <i>Rychard Sayer</i>	}
	{ <i>Adam Mosse</i>	}
	{ <i>Thomas Baker</i> ²¹	}

	{ William Yew partner in a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w ^t William Milbanke }	
	{ John Bocher partner in a hole harnes a bowe & a shefe w ^t Henry Parker & Stephyn }	
	{ Peryman }	
	{ William Thomlyn partner in a hole harnes & a bill w ^t Thomas Baker John Clement }	
Agidmen {	John Clarke Symond Potter John Brice Thomas Wulmer & John Payn }	v men not able
not able {	John Payn partner in the hole harnes & a bill w ^t the seyde Thomlyn & his company }	
	{ Thomas Awdley a bill }	

Towne harnes none

	{the Curet	won
	{Archers	xxi
	{Bilmen	xxxviiij
	{Agidmen	v
iiij hole harnes di[medium]	& S[um]ma - lxv viz	{Town harnes none
	{	
	{Able men of p[er]son }	
	{but not to furnysh }	xxxiiij archers & bilmen
	{them selves }	

The final summary section (*rot.* xix) has on the left in much smaller lettering a marginal note, ‘iiij hole harness di’ (four and a half whole harnesses). The actual total should be six whole and two half harnesses.²² This either represents a later revision of information from 6 to 4½ or it is simply a scribe’s marginal calculation. The ‘S[um]ma lxv viz’ (the total of 65, namely) equals the ‘won + xxi + xxxviiij + v + none’ in the list on the right, at the foot of which is a note that, of these, ‘xxxiiij archers & bilmen’ (33) are unable to furnish themselves with weapons.

The roll for the Hundred of Barstable concludes (*rot.* xxxiv) with final totals and summaries:

‘parsons, vicars, chantry priests and curates charged with armour and artillery at these musters 19, gentlemen at these musters 5, archers, besides three priests that be good bowmen 301, bylmen 524, aged men [57] and widows [9] charged with armour 66, gunners 1, town harness, viz., 3 harness, 2 jacks, 1 bow, 1 salet. There be at this muster 301 able men but not of sufficient substance to furnish themselves with harness or weapon.’

The second section of the Essex Musters consists of just two unnumbered *rotuli* with no heading or preamble. As with Barstable Hundred, under each parish is given a list of names of men described as bowmen or billmen with the harness and weapons they own. Gairdner and Brodie’s index²³ lists four entries spread over the two *rotuli*. On the first *rotulus* is one combined entry for the unidentified parishes of *Belye & Polomershe*(?), (11 names recorded), the entry for *Ryvenall* (Rivenhall: 12 names), and the start of an entry for *Garnetts* (10 names), the bulk of which is on the second *rotulus*. This is problematic for there was no Essex parish called Garnetts (though there are two manors and two farms of that name) and nowhere else is there anything other than a parish recorded.²⁴ The rest of the second *rotulus* contains the entry for *Bechampe Rodyng* (Beauchamp Roding: 15 names). Because the manuscript has no hundredal heading and the parishes all come from different hundreds it appears that Gairdner and Brodie thought this to be an addendum of places (or part of one) omitted from the initial muster.

However, Gairdner and Brodie made a number of errors.

First, *Belye & Polomershe*(?) is a mistranscription of *Bewres & Pebmarsh* (Bures and Pebmarsh), both in Hinckford Hundred (with 10 names recorded).²⁵ Bures was actually a hamlet of Bures St. Mary on the other side of the River Stour in Suffolk. Its western half was called Bures Hamlet and lay in Hinckford Hundred; its eastern half was called Mount Bures in the neighbouring Lexden Hundred in Essex. It thus makes perfect sense administratively to have grouped Bures Hamlet together with the adjacent parish of Pebmarsh in the 1539 Muster Roll. Secondly, *Garnetts* actually reads a *harness* and there is an insertion mark in the line below. Thus there is no separate third entry and the last lines of the first *rotulus* actually form part of the Rivenhall entry (with 11 names recorded). Thirdly, the two *rotuli* are very different from one another in shape with the second badly disintegrated and damaged such that it is almost impossible to tell if they were ever sequential. However, given that Rivenhall’s entry ends well before the bottom of the first and that the second starts midway through an unidentified entry (10 names recorded) with Beauchamp Roding (15 names) on its lower

half, it may be concluded that that the two are not consecutive and are in fact totally unrelated. They must indeed comprise the only surviving *rotuli* of an addendum since Bures Hamlet & Pebmarsh (in Hinckford Hundred) and Rivenhall (in Witham Hundred) are both on the first *rotulus*; the unidentified parish (hundred unknown) and Beauchamp Roding (Ongar Hundred) are on the second. The rest of the addendum is lost.

The day-to-day lives of many of those named in the Muster Roll recur in parish registers, guild and court records but it is rare to find personal information for ordinary sixteenth-century English townsfolk, let alone a record of their spoken words. However *Thomas Wattes* the archer and a handful of others prove to be the exception. They will feature in a forthcoming article entitled 'Billericay & Great Burstead: the Marian Persecutions. 1555-58'.

References

1. *Statutes of the Realm*, 4 pt. 1:3-320: 4 & 5 Ph. & M., (1557-8).
2. British Library (BL), Stowe MSS, 570, f.165.
3. Essex was divided into hundreds - administrative divisions founded in Anglo-Saxon times that lasted until the late nineteenth century. Several ancient hundreds have given their name to modern local government districts, such as Tendring and Uttlesford.
4. One might expect to find at the muster a variety of weaponry in the 'harness'. The 'bowe' (English longbow) was made from yew and was about 5-6 feet long. Arrows came in a 'shefe' (sheaf), usually a bundle of 24. A 'Di (abbreviation of *dimidium*) shefe' would be half a sheaf. The 'byll' or bill was a general-purpose, simple-to-make weapon designed for slashing with a hook-shaped axe-blade mounted on a 6-9 feet-long pole, developed from the agricultural bill-hook. A mace was a heavy club often set with spikes. A variant was the 'morgan sterne' or 'morgenstern' (morning star) which consisted of a heavy ball set with spikes, which either formed the head of the mace or was attached to the handle by a chain, as in a flail. Another weapon, the 'halywater sprynkyll' (holywater sprinkler), named after its resemblance to the *aspergillum* used in the Catholic Mass, was a type of morning star. A 'harnes' or 'herneys' or 'hern' (body harness or body armour) consisted of 'lames' or plates of metal which overlapped to facilitate movement in the collar, shoulder and abdominal areas. A knight's full suit of armour consisted of some 20 different parts. A 'dimidium harness' (half a harness) would be for the upper body only. 'Gorget(t)s' were overlapping (hinged) metal plates or laminations in the form of a collar to protect the neck. A 'salet' (sallet) was a light metal helmet, smooth and round like an inverted pot, with a backwards extension to protect the neck. Of course a variety of 'sweardes' (swords) and 'daggards' (daggers) would also be found recorded in sixteenth century musters.
5. BL, Harleian MSS, 309, f.216.
6. BL. Egerton MSS, 2790, f.93. More generally an Act of 1542 encouraged military archery by stating that 'the inhabitants of every city, town or place put and keep up butts and shoot at them or elsewhere on holy days and at other times convenient.' 16/01/1542, Parl. Roll, 33 Hen. VIII. R.O., 28. However by 1577 archery practice had declined such that in Gt Burstead (where the archery butts were on South Green) local people had been grazing their cattle on the land: 'Those who dwell around South Green and others who used to put their cattle on it henceforth put no cattle on it on Sundays or feast days in the afternoon between Easter and Michaelmas, because it is a hindrance and nuisance to the bowmen who of old shoot on the green.' Essex Record Office, D/DP M898-906, Gt Burstead Manorial Court Records, 1577, in F.G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Home, Work and Land* (Chelmsford, 1976), p.241.
7. BL, Stowe MSS.
8. The National Archives (TNA), E 101/59/8, Certificate of musters. (Essex). A copy of this Muster Roll for Billericay and Great Burstead is held by the Cater Museum, Billericay. They are described in J. Gairdner & R.H. Brodie, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and elsewhere in England* (London, 1894), 14, (I), pp.264-330.
9. Gairdner & Brodie. It contains occasional errors and sometimes includes shortened transcriptions that exclude words and phrases and can be misleading.
10. These are in order: Chadwell St Mary, West Tilbury, Doddington, North Benfleet, Corringham, South Benfleet, Ingrave, Bulphan, Vange, Langdon Hills, Downham, Dunton, Horndon-on-the-Hill, Hutton, Lt Burstead, Ramsden Bellhouse, Ramsden Crays, Billericay & Gt Burstead, Wickford, West Horndon, Nevendon, Stanford-le-Hope, Mucking, Shenfield, Fobbing, Thundersley, Orsett, Wickford 'Guildable' (refers to the collection of taxes within the Manor of Wickford Hall to distinguish it from the Manor of Wickford Stilemans within the parish), Lt Thurrock, East Tilbury, Pitsea, Laindon, Basildon, East Horndon, Bowers Gifford.
11. Billericay, because of its location, developed as a distinct settlement within the parish of Gt Burstead. It is first mentioned in 1291 (TNA, Pleas of the forest, unpublished) and only became a separate parish on 03/09/1844 (Bishop of London, Ecclesiastical Commission, Order in Council, 03/09/1844).
12. *Rot.xviii* commences with *John Andrews*; *rot.xix* commences with *Rychard Tournour*. The page numbers are on the top left of each *rotulus*.
13. Cloville is today a very rare surname. There is a Cloville Hall in West Hanningfield dating from at least 1412 that was held by a family of that name.
14. *Dymond's* incorrect Christian name has been struck through and the correct one inserted between the two lines.
15. *William Yew the elder* was not included in the 38 billmen because he appeared later in the

- aged men unfit-for-duty total.
16. *John Bocher* was not included in the 38 billmen because he appeared later in the aged men unfit-for-duty total.
 17. *William T[h]omlyn* was not included in the 38 billmen because he appeared later in the aged men unfit-for-duty total.
 18. *John Payn* was not included in the 38 billmen because he appeared later in the aged men unfit-for-duty total.
 19. *John Payn* is an able-bodied billman but appearing elsewhere in the list is a *John Payn* who is a 'partner in the hole harnes & a bill' with seven others, 'aged' and 'not able'; the former is presumably a different, possibly related, younger man with the same name.
 20. The superscription here could also render the spelling of this name as *Tornor*.
 21. *Thomas Baker* is an able-bodied billman. Also appearing in the same list is a *Thomas Baker* who is a 'partner in the hole harnes & a bill' with seven others; the former is presumably a different, possibly related, (younger) man with the same name.
 22. Viz., Thos. Harris-Hale,

Perryman-Bocher-Parker, Gylbanke-Freman-Watts, Bryce-Baker-Clement-Clarke-Potter-Thomlyn-Wulmer-Payn, Wm. Harris, Mylbank-Yew (whole harnesses); Dimond, Jas. Harris (half harnesses).

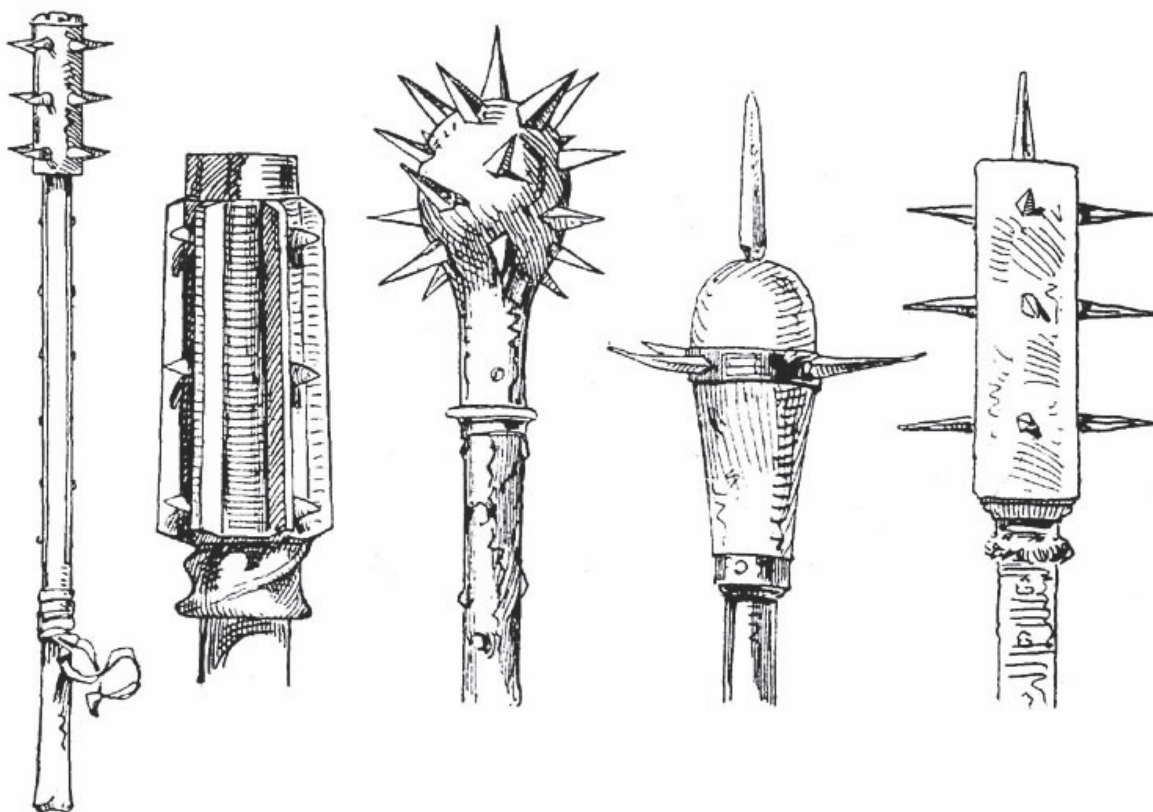
23. Gairdner & Brodie, p.270.
24. Garnetts is in Felsted (Hinckford hundred); Great Garnetts is in High Easter and Little Garnetts is in Great Dunmow (both in Dunmow hundred); and Garnett's Farm is in Gt Waltham (Chelmsford hundred). P.H. Reaney, *The Place-names of Essex* (Cambridge, 1935), pp.423, 482, 477 & 272 respectively.
25. Some of the entries under Bures Hamlet and Pebmarsh provide examples of persons offering to make cash payments e.g. *Thomas Sammes*, who is himself fully equipped, offered 'of increse att this tyme to fynd a man or in stede xxs. (20 shillings)'; *Thomas Maple* offers to find 'a horse a harness for [a man] yf nede be' and, besides, has 'ij talle men in hys howse'; and *Thomas Parker* *y^e myller*, and two others, have 'vjs. viijd. (six shillings and eight pence)' opposite their names.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Christine Brewster, former curator, and Katie Wilkie, present curator, of the Cater Museum, Billericay for their assistance in researching the 1539 Essex Muster Rolls; Dr Katy Mair of TNA for her help in finding the correct references for the manuscripts and obtaining photographs of them; the Archivists of ERO for their suggestions in deciphering some of the manuscripts' wording and abbreviations; and Dr M. Paul Bryant-Quinn, University of Exeter, who commented on the draft of this article.

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5. Types of maces that might have been found in a Tudor muster including a morning star (middle) and a holywater sprinkler (right).

(<http://annals.xlegio.ru/evrope/behaym/behaym11.htm>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7525409>, 05/05/2017)

When Bill Sykes Junior came to visit:

the rise in juvenile crime in Southend during the Great War

by

Andrew Emeny

In 1916, the Home Office warned of a 'crime epidemic' amongst Britain's youth and social reformer, Cecil Leeson, suggested that war was 'precluding healthy moral growth.'¹ Nationally, the number convicted of indictable offences before the age of sixteen rose from 14,325 in 1913 to 24,407 in 1917.² Southend was not immune to this epidemic and the number of children proceeded against in Southend's Police Court rose from 58 in 1915 to 108 in 1916.³ Chief Constable Henry Kerslake (Fig.1) claimed that over half of the cases heard in Southend's courts involved children, many of whom were responsible for multiple offences.⁴ Although the official figure for child offenders fell to 72 in 1917 (the last year that Mr Kerslake reported juvenile statistics), court registers indicate that there was a further rise in 1918.⁵ In total, 437 children living in the Southend area (400 boys and 37 girls) were charged with offences during the war.

As Southend's newspapers, police and court records rarely distinguished between adult and juvenile crimes before the war, it is impossible to show the extent of any rise in figures between 1913 and 1915. However, the absence of a 'Children's Court' column within local newspapers before October 1914 and the low numbers of children sent to Industrial School in the four years prior to 1914 (on average three per year compared to eight during the war years) would suggest that crime figures had been considerably lower before hostilities. In this article the rise in juvenile crime in Southend during the Great War will be

explored and its causes, extent and impact upon local authorities assessed.

The causes of the crimewave

From October 1914, the Southend-on-Sea Education Committee (SEC) regularly discussed causes, costs and remedies for juvenile delinquency and local newspapers published florid accounts of juvenile court cases. The *Southend-on-Sea Observer* observed that, 'as is the case in nearly every large centre of population, juvenile offenders have been numerous.'⁶ The



1. 'THE NEW CHIEF CONSTABLE
Supt. Kerslake, of Dewsbury, who has been appointed Chief Constable of the Borough.'
(Reproduced by courtesy of Southend Forum, Southend & Westcliff Graphic, 12/12/1913, p.7.

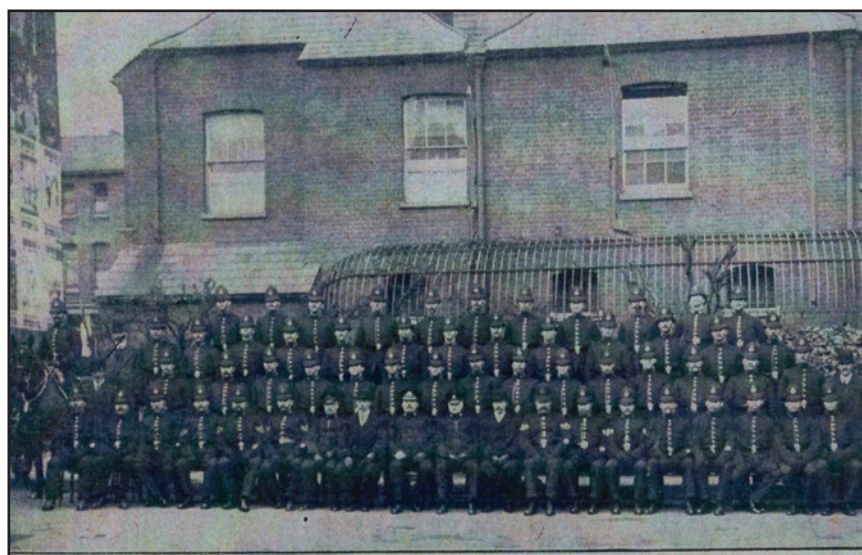
newspaper cited lack of parental control and cinema as the chief causes and called upon the authorities to provide a more suitable detention home for boys awaiting trial. At the time, girls were taken to the Girls' Shelter in Sutton Road whilst boys were housed in a room to the rear of the police station (Fig.2).

A commonly held belief was that war had weakened parental control, allowing children to stay out late and become embroiled in criminal activity without consequence. Mr Kerslake believed enlistment of fathers accounted for the greater part of this weakening control married with 'mothers either unable... or indifferent to the exercise of proper control of their children.'⁷ Despite many mothers undertaking war work that necessitated their absence from the home for long hours, there is little evidence that this was the prompt for crime. Furthermore, over half of Southend's boy defendants were already without a father before 1914 (due to death or separation) or had fathers deemed too old or unfit to serve. The absence of a father, serving in the forces, was only mentioned within 15 of the 310 juvenile court press reports.

As most offenders were schoolboys, below the age of 14, it is possible that the loss of other strong male role models in the form of teachers, club leaders and older brothers played a greater part than absent fathers. During the first 12 months of the war, 25 of the borough's 66 male elementary school teachers enlisted and by November 1917, a further 21 were serving.⁸ The Board of Education and local school managers encouraged male teachers to seek exemption from

conscription, on the grounds that they were 'indispensable.'⁹ Even so, few teachers tried to gain exemption and success rates were low. Head teachers' log books reveal that, by 1917, most elementary schools had only one or two elderly male teachers remaining and relied almost entirely upon female supply assistants and student teachers. Canon F. Dormer Pierce, speaking at Southend's Ingram Club suggested that the women assistants who had replaced male school teachers, 'were unable to exercise efficient supervision over the boys.'¹⁰ Miss Allard, headteacher of Bournemouth Park Road Infants appears to have agreed. She withheld pay increments from two female assistants as their 'discipline was weak,' and complained that, 'children suffer through the inexperience of the student teacher.'¹¹

After conscription was introduced in 1916, there was an increasing demand for children to take up full-time employment at 14 rather than continue with education.¹² This was to exacerbate the weakening control of home and school life. In his social study of pre-war South London, Alexander Paterson observed how once boys left school and took a job, their father's authority diminished.¹³ The war pushed the age at which this happened down from 16 to 14, as those eligible to leave school replaced older siblings who had 'taken the colours' or found more lucrative work in munitions factories. Southend's teenagers were receiving weekly wages of 10-15s. for jobs as diverse as gas meter reading, errand boy and bicycle messenger. However, the workplace lacked the discipline of home or school and so naive yet flush children became vulnerable to new temptations. Peer pressure and high wages, along with the responsibility placed upon youngsters to collect and handle cash, led some to embezzle money in order to fund gambling and night-time



2. 'SOUTHEND'S PRESENT POLICE FORCE UNDER SUPERINTENDENT JONES.'

Photograph of the newly expanded Southend Police force in 1914.

The picture was taken in the yard behind the police station in Alexandra Street. The caged area covers the entrance to the holding cells where, at the outset of the Great War, boys as young as 13 were still being kept on remand for up to one week as a stark reminder of the punishment they would receive should they continue their bad ways into adulthood.

(Reproduced by courtesy of Southend Forum, Southend & Westcliff Graphic, 06/02/1914, p.1)

entertainments. Long working hours and relaxed home control made them feel like men. Even when fathers were at home, working lads did not feel they should have to be obedient to their will when they were earning almost as much as them. A 1921 report into the economic effects of the war recalled the story of a boy who met his father's attempt to assert parental authority with the retort, 'Wait to talk till you have earned as much as I have.'¹⁴

The Children's Care sub-committee of the SEC reported that, 'the increasing irreligion of home life,' and the closing down of boys' clubs due to a lack of leaders were also contributing to the increase in juvenile crime.¹⁵ Church groups, such as the York Road Methodist Sunday School reported falling attendances, especially during the dark nights of the blackout.¹⁶ This lack of organised activities and clubs during school holidays, on Sundays and dark winter nights meant that crime peaked during these times. However, despite the

enlistment of some of its leaders, groups such as the Chalkwell Bay Sea Scouts continued to thrive, increasing their number from four to 35 boys between August 1914 and December 1915.¹⁷ This was no doubt aided by the elevated status of the borough's scouts during the war; assisting coastguards watching over the Thames, helping in the internment of German residents and relaying messages. Southend High School for Boys' cadet force likewise grew in strength, despite its reliance on the profits from the school's vegetable plot for survival.

The lighting restrictions introduced in response to the air-raids of 1915 provided would-be criminals with new opportunities and left shorthanded stall-holders vulnerable to theft. This blackout was conducive to other illicit night-time behaviours too. Canon Dormer Pierce remarked, 'darkened streets tended to make boys mischievous.'¹⁸ The majority of house and commercial break-ins occurred at night. Ironically, air-raids also led to spy-mania and

greater vigilance. Consequently, detection rates rose by 10% between 1915 and 1916 and more boys were caught in the act by policemen on the beat or spy-fearing locals. Another side-effect of the air-raids was vandalism against street lamps; residents were worried they would be spotted by Zeppelin pilots. Between 31st May and 13th November 1916, 312 panes of gas light glass were broken, predominantly by stone throwing.¹⁹ Two local boys were arrested for smashing lamps with a bow and arrow on April 1st 1916, the day after a raid of East Anglia involving seven Zeppelins.²⁰

Cinema was a convenient scapegoat for rising juvenile crime too; accused of glorifying the antics of the astute burglar and violent criminal. Indeed, even Southend High School for Girls' debating society carried the motion, 'Cinematographs have a harmful influence on national character,' by 27 votes to 18.²¹ The SEC investigated the impact of cinema upon

children and tried unsuccessfully to pressurise cinema managers into self-censorship. Mr Kerslake added his weight to their campaign, calling for the 'elimination of pictures of a criminal character'.²² In eight cases, defendants claimed that money was stolen in order to visit the 'pictures' or that the inspiration for crimes had originated in certain detective films. For example, one house-breaker confessed that he saw, 'a film which depicted stealing and got rather excited'.²³

Charlie Chaplin's wartime films contained a particularly high incidence of crime. *Police!* (1916) included pickpocketing, theft from a stall, running away from a policeman and breaking into a house using a crowbar. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that Chaplin's method of illegal entry was employed by the majority of Southend's teenage house-breakers. The film concludes with Chaplin becoming the saviour of the young lady whose house he had previously broken into! It was certainly an idealised

representation of burglary and possibly inspirational to those seeking adventure and heroism outside of the war. From July 1915, the Warrior Square Theatre regularly screened Chaplin films and evidently Southend's youngsters had seen them. "Titch Joiner," a pupil at North Street School recalled dressing up at Christmas as Charlie Chaplin and being taken from classroom to classroom to perform his routine in bowler hat, cane and baggy trousers.²⁴

Who were the offenders and what crimes did they commit?

Based upon the 437 Southend children who fell foul of the law during the war, common demographics can be drawn. Their average age was 12. The majority of young offenders (75%) were male, between 10 and 13; pre-teens being the main perpetrators of petty thefts such as scrumping (Fig.3) or taking milk cans from people's doorsteps, as well as shop-breaking and wilful



3. A cartoon by Helen Mckie on a postcard published by The Carlton Publishing Co. London. Posted in August 1913 and showing the light-hearted view towards juvenile crime, in particular 'scrumping', that existed before the war. (Author's collection)

damage. Fourteen and 15 year olds were more likely to be caught embezzling an employer, breaking into gas meters, hawking or taking bicycles.

The typical young offender lived in an overcrowded five-roomed terraced house, north of London Road/ Southchurch Road. In the 1911 census, they had an average of 7 people living at home (compared with the national average of 4.3). Thus, their parents may have encouraged them to be 'out of the house' as much as possible. Their fathers, usually the sole bread winner, worked either in the building trade or in retail; 80% of defendant's fathers were working in manual labour occupations in 1911. As a result, household earnings were below the national average and seasonally affected. During slack periods for the building trade and tourism, rather than sweets and toys, boys stole bread, milk, fruit and occasionally clothing. Poverty and food thefts became an increasing factor in juvenile crime as shortages and rationing took hold from 1917. Mrs Davey, pleaded for leniency during her son's defence, explaining that she had 'six little 'uns and only 8 bob (shillings)'.²⁵ As the war progressed, there were more cases of mothers appearing alongside their children, charged with receiving.

Many offenders were at the 'turning age' when compulsory schooling was ending, but before the SEC would grant permission for them to leave elementary school.²⁶ For the entire war teenagers desperate to leave school remained too young to enlist. A number of defendants spoke of their wish to join up and as a result were sentenced to five years attendance at a nautical training ship, such as the TS (Training Ship) Cornwall in Purfleet. Mrs Andrews claimed her son 'was beyond her control, had no father and had been a bad boy. He wanted to join the navy, but was a little too short.'²⁷ Such boys shared a sense of missing out

on the excitement of the war, which was accentuated by the fact that over three-fifths of them had older brothers eligible to fight. Despite this, a large proportion of the defendants' fathers were not serving when they were called to the Bench, either due to choice, ill-health or disability. These youngsters would have missed out on the treats provided by local philanthropists and cinema managers, 'for the children of soldiers and sailors'.²⁸ Thus, feeling alienated from the war effort and their peers, they may have sought excitement, treats and attention from criminal activity. This could explain why the majority of items stolen were leisure items such as footballs or treat foods like sweets and fruit.

The main crimes committed by children in the borough were theft (accounting for 82% of total cases) and wilful damage (12%). The theft cases heard in court ranged from a girl taking a lemon from a grocer's stall to a gang of boys breaking and entering into 25 houses in a single night. Occasionally, weighty legal terms such as embezzlement of a shilling or larceny of shallots make juvenile cases appear somewhat heavy-handed. Southend's youngsters were also charged with animal cruelty, gambling, hawking, indecent assault, obstruction of the highway, sleeping out and the unlawful placing of items on the railway track. A handful of youngsters fell foul of newly imposed Defence of the Realm (DORA) laws aimed at maintaining morale and public order during wartime. For example, a 14 year old news vendor was given a caution for spreading false news; he had been shouting, 'another Great British air raid; 400 bombs dropped,' in order to boost sales.²⁹

Most thefts seem to have been opportunist, prompted by a desire to obtain treats that were in short supply. Detective Sergeant Harris said of two shop-breakers (aged seven and nine), 'they had been in the habit of hanging about the

railway stations trying to earn money carrying parcels, when they got hungry and made for the nearest shop'.³⁰ Similarly, three boys between 10 and 13 were given 6d. by a parent in order to buy four bloaters (fish) for the Saturday evening meal. However, the boys wanted to go to the cinema and so they went to the Warrior Square Picture Palace instead. On their way home, at about 11.30pm, they remembered that they were expected to have some bloaters and so broke into a shop and stole some fish and mineral water.³¹

Bicycles appear to have been the item most sought after by juvenile criminals, probably due to their high value (on average £2) and ease of resale. Between December 1914 and October 1918, 25 bicycle thefts by children reached Southend's courts. The bicycle was a very popular leisure item for the middle classes, who took few precautions against theft and regularly left them unchained outside of shops or in their gardens. To the working classes, they were preferable to walking long distances on foot or costly tram fares. Thus, a ready supply and demand existed for the would-be bicycle thief.

There were eight gangs of boys known to the authorities in the Southend and Leigh-on-Sea area in 1916 and they were accountable for the majority of commercial break-ins. These gangs were based around geographical areas of two or three adjoining streets and several families. On 12th January 1916, five Guildford Road boys, aged between 10 and 14, were tried immediately after three 18-23 year olds were imprisoned for shoplifting. The younger boys were described as, 'an offshoot of the older boys' gang'.³² One of the Fairfax Drive gangs contained at least nine boys including the Gilbert and Sweeting brothers and their crimes included shoplifting, breaking and entering into

an office, sleeping out and sheep worrying. The other gangs were made up of boys living in the Sumercourt Road, Central Avenue, Hartington Road and West Leigh Schools areas.

Although less than 10% of the defendants were girls, it is worth noting that their crimes followed certain patterns too. Their mean age was 13 years; on average one year older than boys. They were predominantly involved in petty theft cases; money, clothes and jewellery taken from an employer or mother. Tragically, court appearances by girls often involved recriminations from, and disownment by, their mother. In

one case, a mother, who was found guilty of receiving a stolen ring and handbag, described her 15 year old daughter as a 'wicked little hussy' and said that she would never have her at home again.³³ Like the boys, the thefts were largely in order to finance leisure activities or trips to London. Those who did take items such as underwear from washing lines or bread did so due to neglect. Rather than being punished they were sent to the Girls' Shelter until a place at a children's home or a 'situation' in domestic service could be found. Several cases involved young girls becoming 'mixed up' with locally

billeted soldiers. There was a tragic case of a fourteen year old girl who was accidentally shot by a 'young officer with whom she was on very friendly terms'.³⁴ Another 14 year old girl stole and pawned items of jewellery and clothing from her mother and sister in order to pay for a room at the Royal Hotel. According to the newspaper, she had been 'going around with soldiers at night'.³⁵ Leeson cited cases of teenage prostitution and 'loitering around railway stations' in London and Horn refers to similar problems involving 14 year old girls in Liverpool and Manchester at the time.³⁶ However, there were no convictions for child prostitution in Southend's courts during the war.

Detection

Throughout the war, Southend Borough Police maintained a detection rate of 60-70%.³⁷ This was largely due to the 'Bobby on the beat' who had good knowledge of the local lads and often apprehended children in the vicinity of a crime scene (Fig.4). Suspects were interviewed in the presence of a parent or head teacher (the latter being more effective in obtaining a guilty plea!). Two-thirds of cases reached the courts within 24 hours of the crime and three quarters were concluded within a fortnight. DORA allowed stop and search and constables were encouraged to pass the names of any child discovered roaming the streets after dark to head teachers.³⁸ Southend's police force had expanded during 1913 with the addition of an extra four inspectors, four sergeants and 28 constables alongside the appointment of Southend's first Chief Constable.³⁹ In March 1916, the 119 police officers working in Southend and Westcliff were joined by 571 Special Constables.⁴⁰ However, the Chief Constable complained of a 'depleted strength' due to the enlistment of experienced men and additional responsibilities such as looking after locally-



4. *The Wrong Address*, a postcard published by The Garden Isles Stores, Newport, Isle of Wight and showing the effectiveness of the 'Bobby on the beat.' Date unknown. (Author's collection)

billeted soldiers, interning German residents and enforcing hundreds of restrictions under DORA.⁴¹ Consequently, some crimes such as 'sleeping out' and gambling were no longer pursued.⁴²

Inventive methods were used in order to catch young offenders. A shoe manufacturer, certain that his fourteen year old errand boy was embezzling funds, placed marked coins in his desk and concealed himself behind a curtain.⁴³ A greengrocer attached an electric lamp to two oranges using wire in such a fashion that the lamp exploded when the oranges were removed. This alerted the greengrocer, who gave chase on his bicycle and caught the culprit.⁴⁴ Policemen also used the latest detection methods. In June 1918, a 14 year old housebreaker, who had protested his innocence, was picked out by a witness from an identity parade of eight boys.⁴⁵ Subsequently, he admitted the theft and led the police and witness to where the stolen articles were concealed. Although finger printing of under 16s was not permitted by law, it did lead to the conviction of one child who was associated with two 17 year olds who had left prints at the scene of a crime.⁴⁶

Punishment

The 1908 Children's Act, part of the Liberal Government's programme of social reform, introduced juvenile courts, child-only prisons (Borstals) and legal protection against cruel punishments. Previously, the law had made little distinction between juvenile and adult crime; children could be sent to adult prisons and face brutal flogging. As Court Chairman, R.W. Grace told one child defendant, sentenced to five years on a training ship, 'if this case had come before the court some years back, you would have gone to prison'.⁴⁷ As a result of the 1908 Act, most first time offenders were placed on probation for 12 months. Judges regularly professed a

desire to give a 'second chance' and probation was certainly the cheapest option for the council. Cecil Leeson claimed that it was more effective than incarceration with 80% of probationers being discharged without further punishment.⁴⁸ Samuel Membury, appointed Southend's first probation officer in 1908, handled 155 juvenile probations in Southend during the war.⁴⁹ Over 90% stayed out of trouble for the duration of the probation and 71% did not reoffend for at least five years.

Despite its success, some Southend councillors complained that probation let children off too lightly and offered victims little restitution. They felt that juvenile delinquents needed a short, sharp shock in the shape of the birch. However, the Children's Act restricted birch use and set a limit of a maximum six strokes for those under 14.⁵⁰ Southend's Bench often showed or described the birch to wayward eight to ten year olds in order to deter them from reoffending. In practice, the birch was only brandished for second timers who were deemed strong enough. According to Leeson, the birch was only effective if administered soon enough after the crime that a clear sense of cause and effect was experienced.⁵¹ Perhaps this explains why 35% of boys birched in Southend between 1916 and 1918 were caught reoffending within two years.

Persistent reoffenders and ringleaders were usually sent to an industrial school or training ship. Industrial schools were, 'intended for children under 14 years of age who, by reason of their surroundings or of personal moral weakness, are in danger of falling into crime'.⁵² They were meant to be preventative and not punitive in character. When one fatherless 12 year old, from a large Leigh family was sent to an Industrial School, the Chairman explained that they, 'were not sending him there for punishment, but with the hope that it would help him in life'.⁵³ The

term of attendance was five years or until 19 years old and the aim was to provide routine, break criminal habits and teach skills for a future occupation. Most inmates from Southend were sent to the Essex Industrial School in Chelmsford or the TS Cornwall moored at Purfleet. However, high demand for places nationally and a desire to disperse trouble makers further afield meant that some boys were sent to reformatories in Liverpool and the West Country. Girls were sent to industrial schools in Coventry and Wolverhampton. During the war, a total of 33 children from Southend were placed in industrial schools (against 11 in the four years prior to August 1914) at a cost of £600 per year.⁵⁴ The 1916 policy of dispatching ringleaders to reformatory institutions, whilst giving younger gang members a second chance on probation, was effective. As a result, most former gang members steered clear of the courts once leaders were removed and an overall fall in crime occurred during 1917.

Leniency when sentencing could be gained in certain circumstances. Anyone under the age of eight was deemed as not culpable for their deeds. When a six year old child, accused of being 'beyond parental control' appeared before the Bench in 1915, the Chairman dismissed the case immediately, chastising the complainant and ordering her to show him some motherly love!⁵⁵ In other cases, children were shown leniency and adults were blamed for their lack of supervision. For example, when fifteen schoolboys broke into an army magazine and stole 100lbs of biscuits, they each received six months on probation and the Sergeant-Major in charge of the magazine was chastised for leaving the door unlocked.⁵⁶

Scouts, Girl Guides and regular attendees of Sunday School received special dispensation too. A boy scout who 'borrowed' a bicycle after an 18-mile hike was dealt with sympathetically and

two girl messengers had a 5s. fine for cycling without lights waived.⁵⁷ Ill mothers, parents doing vital war work and serving or disabled fathers were considered when judgements were reached. Likewise, if a parent could prove that they had already birched their son or found them a 'situation' (preferably employment outside of the borough), then judges were generally satisfied and dismissed the case. Occasionally, a case was dismissed on condition that a boy was sent to live with a stern relative; after unlawfully wounding another boy with a knife, a 12 year old was ordered to reside with his step-grandfather who had a reputation as a 'martinet'.⁵⁸

The absence of a father weighed heavily upon judges' consciences. For example, a 15 year old errand boy only received a warning and 12 months' probation for embezzling money. His employer pleaded for leniency, saying, 'being a father myself, I sympathise with him because he had his father killed at the Front'.⁵⁹ Normally, such a crime commanded a week's remand and the full repayment of embezzled funds.

Occasionally the Bench demonstrated atypical severity. Thefts from War Fund boxes or the church 'self-denial fund box' would prompt the use of the birch for a first-time offender. Likewise, boys dressing up as scouts in order to fool the public into giving them money were pursued vigorously.⁶⁰ House breaking was dealt with more severely than commercial break-ins too. Furthermore, arrogance or rudeness in court usually accorded the maximum number of strokes of the birch permissible by law.

Although sentencing was brought in line with the spirit of the Children's Act by 1914, Southend did not set up an independently functioning Children's Court until January 1918. Police Court Missionary, Mrs Lamb wrote a letter to the

Southend Telegraph in December 1917, urging that children be tried in the Municipal Chambers rather than Police Court and that private remand homes rather than the police station be used.⁶¹ She also suggested that school reports, Sunday school attendance and home life be considered during sentencing. A month later, a specially constituted Children's Court, holding its main session on Wednesdays sat for the first time. It was chaired by JPs such as Robert Grace, the founder and Headmaster of Lindisfarne College and middle-aged 'family men' such as James Tabor and Thomas Dowsett, who had recent experience of bringing up teenagers. The chief school attendance officer, teachers, scout masters and clergymen attended in order to give character references and explain extenuating circumstances such as absent fathers or ill mothers. In addition, the press agreed to stop publishing the names or addresses of juvenile defendants in order to prevent, 'serious disadvantage to [their] future career'.⁶²

Preventative actions

Initially, Southend's journalists and officials made light of criminal acts involving children. The *Southend and Westcliff Graphic* referring to 'Bill Sykes Junior' and dismissing criminal damage and thefts as mischief. Euphemistic headlines such as 'Boys *indulge* in shop-breaking' and 'Southend Boys' *Escapade*,' appeared. In May 1915, three schoolboys from Thorpe Bay, 'bombarded a toolshed like Germans,' causing over £3 worth of damage.⁶³ Their parents paid costs and the boys were let off with a warning from the judge, 'not to let their patriotic feelings run too high'.⁶⁴ Even the uncensored school logbooks reveal an understating of the crimes of children; a serious assault at West Leigh School was described as an 'outburst of passion'.⁶⁵

By 1916, local magistrates and councillors realised that the juvenile delinquency problem

required urgent, robust action; too much money and time was being spent investigating dozens of cases every week and sending a growing number of reoffenders to industrial schools. Courts toughened their stance, by extending probationary periods from 12 months to two years and greater use was made of the birch. Increasingly, youngsters were remanded for a week before their case was heard in order to give them a taste of the harsh reality of imprisonment and deter future crimes. Newspaper editors followed suit with a toughening attitude to juvenile crime; referring to the offenders as 'foolish,' 'dangerous' and 'incorrigible' rather than mischievous as before. In 1917, the *Graphic* even mooted fines for parents of children who stayed out late.⁶⁶

In March 1916, the Watch Committee proposed an 8pm cinema curfew for children. Miss Reay said she was, 'told by the wives of soldiers that they could get their children home earlier if they were turned out of the cinemas'.⁶⁷ However, Councillor Potter responded by claiming, 'you cannot teach boys to love their homes by turning them out of cinemas at eight o'clock'.⁶⁸ In the end a compromise of 9pm rather than 8pm was agreed upon and Police Order 116 was issued. It directed that, 'children under fourteen years of age are not to be allowed to enter into, or be in, a licensed cinematograph exhibition after nine p.m. unless accompanied by a parent or guardian'.⁶⁹ Police inspectors occasionally visited cinemas shortly after 9 o'clock and informed licensees if they recognised any under aged customers. However, little progress was made in encouraging cinema managers to stop showing 'burglar' films. As the editor of the *Southend Observer* lamented in December 1916, 'the Education Committee tried to tackle the question of children and the cinema, but did not get very far; until the promised film censorship

by a Government Department materialises, it seems doubtful whether much can be accomplished.⁷⁰

In January 1917, the Southend Children's Care Committee were of the opinion that the lack of home control and increasing irreligion required the formation of play centres, preferably run by churches. Bournemouth Park Road and Hamstel Schools opened their playgrounds during holidays and the SEC organised a conference with church groups to seek their help.⁷¹ Local youth organisations were strengthened; by the end of the war there were a total of 46 units of Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Life Brigades, Sea Scouts and Church Lads' Brigades keeping 1,869 children occupied.⁷² In addition, evening classes for recent school leavers were organised; in cookery and house-keeping for girls and carpentry and surveying for boys.⁷³ Mr Membery also provided advice on how to control boys, primarily for mothers whose husbands were at the front. He was available for

one hour every weekday at the Ingram Club in Weston Road.⁷⁴

A lively debate ensued during the January 1917 meeting of the SEC. Alderman Brightwell, a businessman and magistrate, stated that free education, free dental clinics and feeding of necessitous children (Socialism as he called it) had, 'undermined the influence of parents...they did not care as they should about bringing up the children.'⁷⁵ His solution was to make parents responsible again, by removing 'grandmotherly legislation' and administering the birch regularly.⁷⁶ He claimed, to laughter from the other committee members, it had never done him any harm! Councillor Ward supported this tougher stance, asking for more birch than 'cuddling.'⁷⁷ In opposition, Miss Reay, daughter of the former vicar of Prittlewell and the first female Vice Chairman of the SEC, felt that seeking a greater role for local churches was the solution.⁷⁸ In particular, she cited the problem of 14-16 year olds who were beyond the

influence of the Education Committee and yet were not mature enough to be treated as adults. The debate between those advocating tougher punishments and other proposing a softer approach continued to rage, much to the glee of the *Graphic's* lampooning cartoonists (Figs.5&6).⁷⁹

Then, from mid-1917 onwards, discussion of juvenile crime suddenly ceased. Mention of juvenile crime disappeared from the Chief Constable's annual report and more pressing issues began to dominate local authority meeting agendas and newspaper columns, namely dedications to the fallen, food shortages and rationing disputes. Although the problem of juvenile crime had not gone away, its growth had been arrested. Fathers and teachers, invalidated by war, were returning to their roles within the family or school and SEC provisions of play areas and activities utilised. Schoolchildren, too young to serve or work, were becoming more involved in the war effort too. Rather than hang about the streets, they visited wounded soldiers in the hospitals, raised money for Relief Funds and laboured on school vegetable plots. Even the cinema owners may have unwittingly contributed to the drop in crime as they responded to the growing desire (that accompanied the austerity of 1917-18) for more comedies and musicals rather than detective films.

How typical was Southend?

Leeson's study uncovered a rise in juvenile crime, especially assault, gaming, larceny and wilful damage, within 17 of the largest towns and cities of Britain, including London.⁷⁰ Interestingly, whilst larceny and wilful damage cases increased in Southend, there was not the marked rise in gaming and assaults witnessed in larger towns and cities. Thus far, little research has been completed into the extent of wartime juvenile crime in towns comparable to Southend.



5. 'EARLY TO BED, EARLY TO RISE.

[Mr. Alec Steel's remedy for naughty children is to send them to bed early.]'

(Reproduced by courtesy of Southend Forum, *Southend & Westcliff Graphic*, 16/03/1917, p.7)

However, David Parker's study of the experiences of children in Hertfordshire during 1914-39 has revealed very similar cases of theft and wilful damage committed by gangs of teenage boys in towns such as Letchworth and Hitchin.⁷¹ He also noted a rise in concern amongst Hertfordshire's local authorities, newspapers and public, along with growing calls for severer penalties and film censorship, from December 1916 onwards. The response of Hertfordshire's Board of Education matched that of Southend's; simultaneous calls for greater use of probation and the birch, school facilities being opened for youngsters outside of school hours and blame for the crime wave placed firmly at the door of parents.⁷²

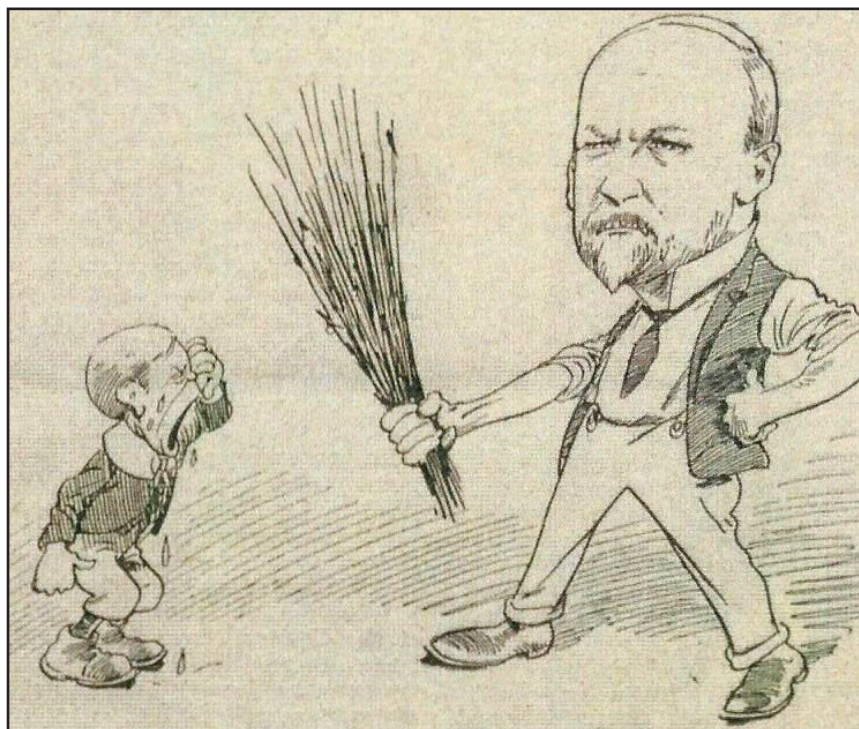
Conclusion

Like most urban centres in England, the Borough of Southend experienced a spike in juvenile crime, particularly theft, during the Great War. The loss of male role-models undoubtedly played a part alongside other social temptations and upheavals caused in part by hostilities. Once the authorities and press realised that this phenomena threatened the very structure of society, they responded with a range of preventative and curative measures. As a result, the spirit of the 1908 Children's Act became embedded in the local justice system and the SEC took a more active interest in the lives of children beyond the classroom.

References

1. C. Leeson, *The Child and the War* (London, 1916), p.10.
2. R.J.W. Selleck, *English Primary Education and the Progressives, 1914-1939* (London, 1972), p.11.
3. During this period, the law considered anyone under the age of 16 to be a child. Figures are from *Southend Standard* (SS), 05/04/1917, p.8, 'The Chief Constable and Juvenile Crime-Annual Report.'
4. Henry Maurice Kerslake had been appointed as Southend's

- first Chief Constable in December 1913.
5. ERO, D/BC/1/1/13/2/1, County Borough of Southend-on-Sea Register of the Court (Juveniles), records 120 children as being charged in the Children's Court between 01/01/1918 & 11/11/1918.
6. *Southend-on-Sea Observer* (SO), 27/12/1916, p.1, 'The Waning Year-Review of local life in 1916.'
7. SS, 05/04/1917, p.8.
8. *Southend-on-Sea Education Committee Minutes for years ending 09/11/1915*, p.132, & 09/11/1917, p.21. Copy at Southend Forum, E.SOU.2352.7.
9. *Southend & Westcliff Graphic* (S&WG), 02/07/1915, p.15. Mrs Russell of the Essex Education Committee suggested that it would be, 'more patriotic of teachers to stay and train up boys than go to fight.' She cited a US study that claimed that women did not bring up boys to be as manly as male teachers did.
10. SO, 02/02/1916, p.3, 'Juvenile Delinquents'.
11. ERO, D/BC 1/14/11/1, School Managers' Minutes, Eastern Division, 15/04/1915.
12. Although theoretically children could leave school at 12, with a certificate from the SEC, this was rarely granted (outside of harvest time). However, all children could leave school upon their fourteenth birthday and in Southend only one in 14 children progressed to the High Schools.
13. A. Paterson, *Across the Bridges or Life by the South London River-side* (London, 1911). See Chapter 2 on 'Family Life'.
14. I. Andrews, *Economic Effects of the World War upon Women and Children in Great Britain*, (Washington, 1921), p.189.
15. *Southend Telegraph* (ST), 10/03/1917, p.8.
16. ERO, D/NM 26/115, York Road Methodist Church Sunday School Minute Book, 13/05/1913 to 29/12/1922.
17. W.R.C. Ashby, *Old Gold: The story of the first fifty years of the 1st Chalkwell Boy Scout Group* (Southend, 1971), p.92.
18. SO, 02/02/1916, p.3, 'Juvenile Delinquents'.
19. ERO, D/BC 1/7/1/4, Orders Register, Southend Police, April 1914-December 1917. Order No. 146, 13/11/1916.
20. SS, 04/05/1916. p.5.



6. 'LEAVE HIM TO ME!

[Councillor Ward suggested at the meeting of the Education Committee on the 8th inst. that the best corrective of juvenile offenders was the application of the birch.]
(Reproduced by courtesy of Southend Forum, *Southend & Westcliff Graphic*, 16/03/1917, p.6.)

21. *Southend High School for Girls Magazine*, III, July 1918, p.20, 'The Debating Society'.
22. Mr Kerslake was quoted in the *S&WG*, 06/04/1917, p.4, within an article entitled, 'Bill Sikes Junior'.
23. *SS*, 23/11/1916, p.4.
24. Leigh North Street School archives, letter from 'Titch Joiner' who was a student at the school, 1912-17, written for the school's centenary celebrations in 1990.
25. *S&WG*, 29/01/1915, p.18, 'Six little 'uns and only eight bob!'
26. 'turning age' was a term regularly used by Miss Reay and other members of the SEC Care Committee.
27. *ST*, 19/06/1915, p.3, 'Mischievous at Westcliff.'
28. For example, a 'treat' was held on 30/12/1915, organised by the owner of the Empire Theatre. 1,500 children of soldiers and sailors attended. *SS*, 06/01/1916, p.6.
29. *SS*, 30/11/1916, p.9.
30. *SO*, 26/01/1916, p.3.
31. *SO*, 15/11/1916, p.3, 'How Southend boys secured free entertainments.'
32. *SO*, 12/01/1916, p.1.
33. *ST*, 16/02/1918, p.4.
34. *SS*, 05/10/1916, p.3. Second Lieutenant Kenneth Marshall of the North Staffordshire Regiment (described as looking in his teens) was visited at his home by Miss Marguerite Bell, aged 14 years and 10 months. Apparently, Marshall had left one cartridge in his gun and when playing with it shot her. The bullet penetrated her lung and she died. A verdict of accidental death was given.
35. *SS*, 11/10/1917, p.8, 'Southend girl's extraordinary conduct.'
36. P. Horn, *Young Offenders: Juvenile Delinquency 1700-2000* (Stroud, 2010), p176-7.
37. As indicated in the Chief Constable's reports for 1915-1917.
38. ERO, D/BC 1/7/1/4, Orders Register, Southend Police, Order 120, 08/03/1916.
39. Kelly's *Directory of Essex* (London, 1914), p.522 & Kelly's *Directory of Essex* (London, 1912), p.505.
40. *SO*, 22/03/1916, p.3, 'Report on Special Police Reserve Constables.'
41. *SS*, 05/04/1917, p.8, 'Annual Report of the Chief Constable and Juvenile Crime.'
42. *Ibid*.
43. *ST*, 13/03/1915, p.3, 'Boy's theft of money.'
44. *SO*, 16/02/1916, p.1, 'Traps for catching boys who pilfer.'
45. *ST*, 22/06/1918, p.3, 'Boy's astonishing thefts.'
46. *SS*, 14/02/1918, p.7, 'Boys and the biscuits.'
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51. Leeson, *Child and the War*, p.59.
52. London Metropolitan Archives, *Report of the London County Council to 31st March 1919*, p.60.
53. *ST*, 21/11/1914, p.3, 'Leigh boys in trouble.'
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55. *S&WG*, 16/07/1915, p.18, 'Give him a mother's care.'
56. *SS*, 22/03/1917, p.5, 'Boys' Feast on Army Biscuits'.
57. *SS*, 11/03/1915, p.9, 'Southchurch Boy Scout's Escapade' & *SS*, 15/11/1917, p.7, 'Girl messengers let off.'
58. *ST*, 24/11/1917, p.3, 'Westcliff Schoolboy's foolish conduct'. Although the newspaper report refers to 'step-father' the Court record for 13/11/1917 states that it was the boy's step grandfather.
59. *ST*, 19/02/1916, p.3, 'Boy's downfall through automatic machines.'
60. The *SS* printed a notice about a 'fraudulent Boy Scout collection' on page 7 of the 20/06/1918 edition, asking readers to 'detain the youth and send for a constable.'
61. *ST*, 01/12/1917, p.2, 'A Children's Court.'
62. *Southend, Leigh and Westcliff Graphic*, 30/11/1917, p.10, Juvenile Offenders, Borough Justices and the Press.'
63. *SS*, 27/05/1915, p.6, 'Like the Germans.'
64. *Ibid*.
65. West Leigh School Archives, Junior School Log book entry, 18/03/1915.
66. *S&WG*, 13/04/1917, p.9.
67. *SO*, 08/03/1916, p.3.
68. *Ibid*.
69. ERO, D/BC 1/7/1/4, Orders Register, Southend Police, Order 116, 06/02/1916.
70. *SO*, 27/12/1916, p.1, 'The waning year- a review of local life in 1916.'
71. See ERO, D/BC 1/14/11/1, School Managers' Minute, Eastern Division, 15/03/1917, p.129 and *Southend-on-Sea Education Committee Minutes for year ending 09/11/1917*, p.46. Copy at Southend Forum, E.SOU.2352.7.
72. *Southend-on-Sea Education Committee Minutes for year ending 09/11/1920*, p.14, 'Annual Report.' Copy at Southend Forum, E.SOU.2352.7.
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75. *ST*, 10/03/1917, p.8, 'Report on the Children's Care Committee.'
76. *Ibid*.
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78. *Ibid*.
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82. *Ibid*.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help provided by the staff of the Forum Library, Southend, the Essex Record Office, the British Library, London Metropolitan Archives and the Imperial War Museum. Also the staff at Hamstel School, North Street School, Southend High School for Boys and West Leigh School for allowing access to their archives. Finally, thanks to Ken Crowe, for his advice on this article and inspiration as Southend's pre-eminent historian.

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Ongar Radio Station

by
Michael Leach

The masts of Ongar Radio Station were, for over 60 years, a familiar site to anyone travelling on the road from Ongar to North Weald. Throughout its life, it was a radio telegraph transmitting station, and in its busiest period provided simultaneous services to Europe, USA, Africa, India and Australia. It was widely used for several decades for rapid international transmission of newspaper pictures and text, before the development of modern satellite telephone networks made this commonplace. It saw the development of radio telegraph transmission from Morse code to worldwide telephone telex and picture transmission, even under adverse atmospheric conditions.¹

The early years

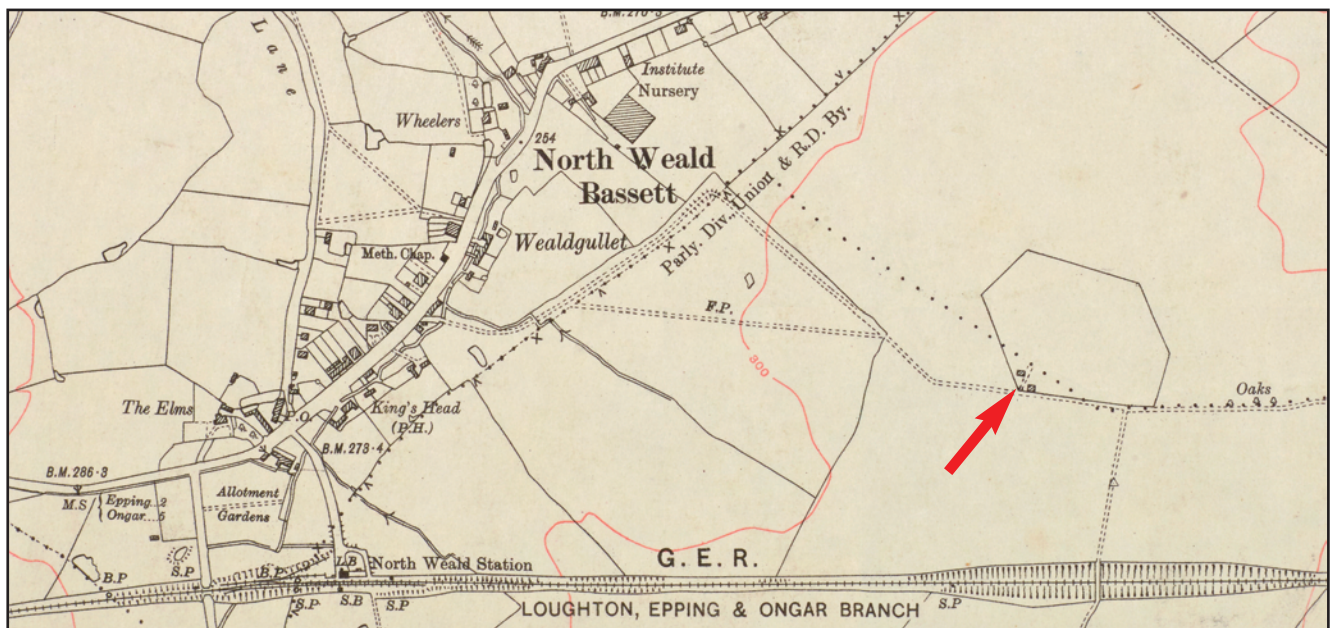
The site, which incorporates the Essex Redoubt built as an outer defensive ring to protect London in the 1890s,² was acquired by Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company Ltd in 1920 (Fig.1). Due to legal and planning

delays, the radio station was not completed until the summer of 1922. The separate receiving station at Pilgrim's Hatch, Brentwood, was constructed at the same time. Completion of both was timely, as it resolved the problems caused by the successful IRA sabotage of the Clifden radio station on the west coast of Ireland in July 1922. Services previously based at Clifden were shared between Carnarvon, Towyn, Ongar and Brentwood.³

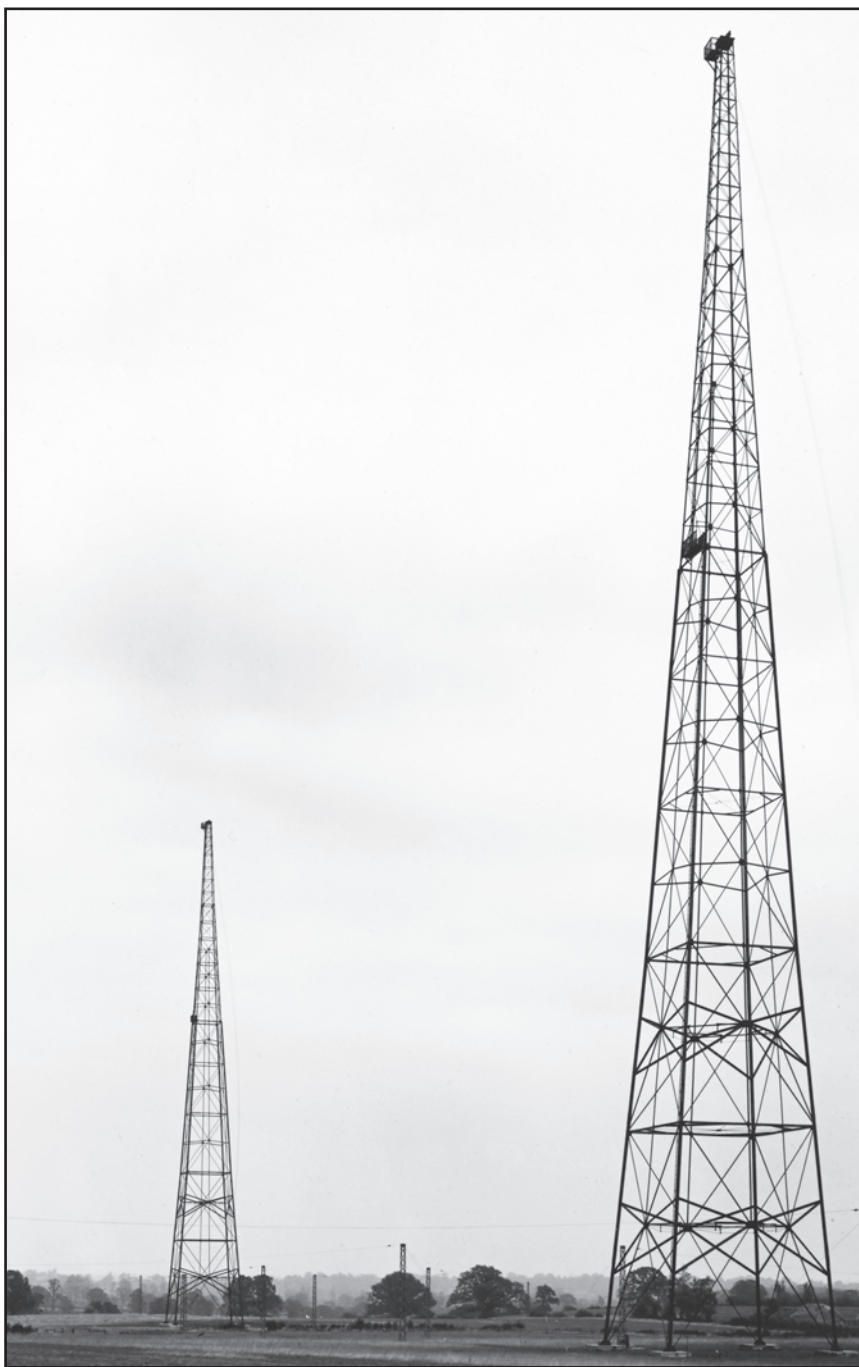
In 1922, Ongar Radio Station represented the ultimate in wireless communication. There were three separate transmitter buildings, 'A', 'B' and 'C' stations, providing long wave telegraph services to Paris, Berne and Madrid, with a capacity of up to 80 words per minute. Two transmitters in 'A' station were designed to work simultaneously, the signals being mixed and fed to a single aerial (Fig.2).⁴ A later commentator wrote 'it is hoped that no one will rediscover this ingenious system, as we understand that the economy in

masts and aerials was more than outweighed by the heavy responsibilities thrust on the engineering staff, whose duty it was to prevent these two frequencies from becoming mixed up inside the building'.⁵ The transmitters worked with an anode voltage of 10,000 volts and contemporary photographs show the exposed high voltage equipment protected only by a low barrier (Fig.3).

Each station had its own separate aerial, consisting of two circular cages of four wires slung between a pair of 300 foot high lattice masts. Lines of cables beneath, mounted 30 feet above the ground, formed an earth screen to reduce power loss. The masts were ungalvanised and required repainting every three years. Messages for transmission originated at Radio House, Wilson Street, City of London and were encoded in Morse code onto paper tape by a keyboard operator, and then converted into electrical signals to be sent directly by landline to the relevant transmitter at Ongar.⁶



1. Location map showing the proximity of the North Weald redoubt (arrowed) to the village and railway line (Reproduced by courtesy of Essex Record Office, 6inch OS, Sheet 61 NW, 1915)



**2. 'A' Station lattice masts in 1921.
(Reproduced by courtesy of ERO, A 14352)**

As mains electricity was not yet available in the area, power was generated on site by three sets of Vickers-Petters oil engine generators with hot bulb ignition. These remained in service until 1957. The hot bulbs had to be heated up with a paraffin blowtorch before starting up, and if this was done too enthusiastically the bulb blew out dramatically when the engine was turned over. The powerhouse occupied one of the storage buildings of the former Essex Redoubt, suit-

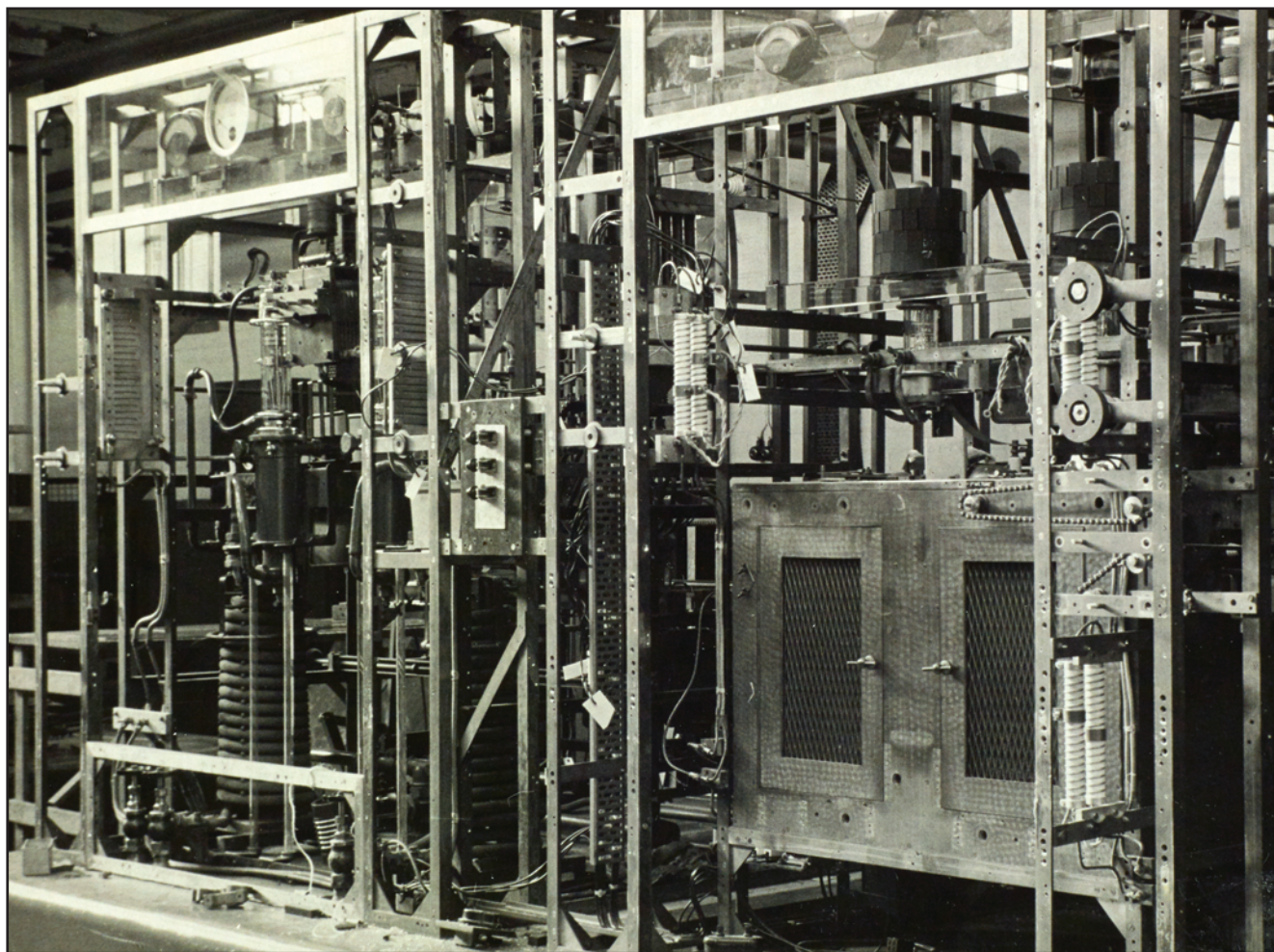
ably adapted. Cooling water for the engines was pumped from a specially constructed pond to the south of the powerhouse. At a later date, when fan assisted cooling was installed, the cooling pond was converted into a staff swimming pool by removal of the baffles.⁷

At an early stage, and certainly by 1923, a row of semi-detached bungalows was built along the Ongar road in the extreme north west corner of the site. These were intended for overseas

personnel on furlough, but at least one (number 6) was being permanently let to Mr Benjamin Cooper at £3-6-8d per calendar month in 1923. These buildings are still known as Marconi Bungalows.⁸

Various experimental transmissions took place from Ongar Radio Station, which was conveniently placed for the Marconi works in Chelmsford. In 1919, Marconi had proposed a service to South Africa, India and Australia using high power long wave transmitters, but this idea was turned down by the Norman Committee that favoured a line of stations every 2,000 miles along these routes. In 1921, this plan was rejected as outmoded by the Imperial Communications Committee, chaired by Winston Churchill.⁹ In 1924, Marconi challenged the idea that long wave plus high power was best for long distance transmission, and had equipped 'C' station with short wave transmitters. Initially, these used vertical aerials suspended from portable 70 foot masts, and by 1927 Ongar was transmitting on short wave to Argentina and Brazil. By this date, the original 'A' station long wave aerial had been extended with a third 300 foot mast to enable transmissions to France, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Austria, Yugoslavia and Russia (Fig.4).¹⁰

The growth of flying, and the proximity of North Weald airfield, necessitated the installation of warning lights on the masts. In April 1925, a formal agreement was signed by Marconi and the Secretary of State for Air. The latter agreed to reimburse the former for the cost of power as well as for the expense of maintenance.¹¹ Doubtless the lights acted as a useful guide for pilots who at that time lacked sophisticated navigational systems to help them. One early training flight did collide with an aerial, but landed safely in a hedge within the radio station without injury to pilot or trainer!



3. Early high voltage transmitters during the later installation of protective cages.
(Reproduced by courtesy of ERO, A 14352)

The development of the short wave beam aerial in 1926 was to have a marked effect on the development of Ongar Radio Station. But before that happened, responsibility for the station passed, in September 1929, to Imperial and International Communications (renamed Cable and Wireless Ltd in 1934). Control of the transmitters moved to Electra House, Moorgate, City of London. By 1934 a large transmitter hall had been built adjacent to the original 'C' station building equipped with Marconi short wave transmitters, capable of providing a service to New York, Africa, Egypt, Turkey, and Las Palmas (Fig.5). Frequency changes had to be done manually on the transmitters themselves, and took about 25 minutes to complete. A smaller beam transmitter was used for Vienna and other European services. All

these transmitters were at floor level in the new building, with the associated thermionic valves and mercury vapour rectifiers in the gallery above. The long wave transmitters (also manufactured by Marconi) occupied a different part of the hall.¹² The large transmitter valves were cooled with water from a purpose built reservoir just to the south of 'C' station. There was a pump house and a cooling pond with baffles to the northeast.¹³

New aerial systems had also been installed. One, of the eight wire type for the long wave transmitter, ran north east from 'C' station supported by four 285 foot masts and was nearly a mile long, as well as four new beam aerials for short wave transmission. There was a unique system of copper coaxial feeders which is believed to have been developed at Ongar. Two copper tubes, one inside the other, were

separated by ceramic insulators. To allow for thermal movement, the outer tubes were connected at intervals by flexible bellows, while the inner tube had a sliding connection which proved to be rather prone to failure.¹⁴

By 1934, mains power supplied by the County of London Supply Company, ran two 240 volts DC generators which drove a further set of generators to provide the range of voltages required for the different transmitters. For standby purposes, the original three Vickers Petters oil engine generators were supplemented by a further four generators, as well as two high tension DC machines producing 12,000 volts for the long wave transmitter.¹⁵

In 1938, Ongar was transmitting to Belgrade, Berne, Las Palmas, Lisbon, Madrid, Melbourne, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Paris, Salisbury,



4. 300 foot lattice masts in 1932.
(Reproduced by courtesy of ERO, A 14352)

Shanghai, Sofia, Stamboul, Teheran, Tokyo and Vienna.¹⁶

The Second World War

The war – and the immediate period before – brought many changes. An incomplete file of correspondence records the following events:¹⁷

In September 1938, instructions were issued about air raid and blackout precautions. The radio station was to close down on receipt of an air raid warning. Lengthy instructions were given on the construction of ‘garden trenches’ as air raid shelters. These were simple trenches with a timber roof covered with earth, closed off with a wetted blanket to form a gas curtain.

Twelve months later, a single line from Electra House (Embankment) was installed, in case Electra House (Moorgate) was put out of action. Further

blackout instructions were issued, and the previous directive to cease transmissions on receipt of an air raid warning was revoked (with the exception of long wave transmissions).

At the end of 1939, qualified volunteers were being sought to listen for illicit transmissions. Ongar Radio Station was listed as a ‘key point’ of national importance, with an obligation to notify the County ARP controller of any damage or sabotage.

In May 1940 a trial of the emergency arrangements from Electra House (Embankment) took place with disconnection of all lines from Moorgate. The Redoubt was being used as an air raid shelter for non-essential personnel. Instructions were given that the plant should be shut down, and all lights extinguished, if the skylights of

the transmitter hall or powerhouse were blown out. Armed police were on duty, and staff were advised for their own safety to stop promptly for identification if challenged!

In the following month, further instructions were issued to cover the possibility of the destruction of the Central Telegraph at Electra House (Moorgate). Ongar’s transmitters were to be controlled by London through the Brentwood Radio Station tone sender channels. Mast warning lights were not to be switched on at night, except by special request of North Weald airfield.

During August 1940 there was a visit by General Sir Walter Kirke to advise on protective measures. He thought that the proximity of a ‘considerable garrison’ at the nearby airfield reduced the risk of sabotage, but increased the risk of air attack. He did not think that the aerials were particularly vulnerable, but that it would be wise to maintain a store of materials for making temporary aerials, or repairing damaged ones. He noted the presence of six armed policemen, day and night. Though the main building was surrounded by concertina wire, he reported several large gaps in it, and advised that these gaps should be closed with ‘knife rests’ and that the entire fence should be heightened. Personnel at the station numbered about 60, of whom 23 were in the Home Guard. The station had twelve rifles that could be used from the three defensive posts ‘recently erected by the Military’. The main buildings were recognized as being highly vulnerable to air attack, and nothing could be done to alleviate this. He advised the construction of 14 inch thick brick blast walls outside all ground floor windows to protect personnel and equipment from flying glass in the event of a near miss. Fire fighting equipment was limited to stirrup pumps and chemical extinguishers. As the cooling

ponds contained about 50,000 gallons, he advised the acquisition of a trailer pump and hoses to improve fire-fighting capacity. A small brick building was provided for this on the access road just to the east of the Redoubt.

Royal Artillery officers visited a month later to agree a site for one or two anti-aircraft guns. Field 17 was chosen, midway between the railway and the house of the engineer-in-charge, Mr L.D. Hill. The latter was concerned about the risks to a nearby high tension feeder cable, and felt that the guns would increase rather than decrease the vulnerability of the station to attack.

Three months after General Kirke's visit, sufficient barbed wire had arrived to erect a chest high fence nine feet deep, running 50 to 60 feet from the main building, with removable 'knife rests' for the roadways. Camouflage officers from the Directorate of Camouflage at Leamington Spa visited the site.

During September 1941 instructions were received that, in the event of invasion, civilian personnel were to remain at their posts until the last moment when the radio station would be 'immobilised in accordance with the scheme already agreed'. The Vulnerable Points Advisor was anxious that all but one entrance to the main building should be blocked to make the guard more effective.

The question of camouflage rumbled on, nearly a year after the visit of the officers from Leamington Spa. In October 1941 concern was expressed about the cost, the difficulty in obtaining materials, and the risks of camouflage material catching fire due to sparking or incendiary bombs. The scheme proposed involved the construction of artificial hedges and trees with posts, wires, brushwood and 'tree tops'. The hedges were to vary from 5 to 10 feet in height, with the 'tree tops' mounted at 12 to 15 foot intervals on posts. A complicated system of netting to

conceal the Redoubt was abandoned and the area was planted with trees.

By the end of 1941 Cable and Wireless were still having doubts about the camouflage. One scheme alone required 20 miles of wire and very large numbers of wooden stakes. The military authorities felt that camouflage was essential. The costs were to be split equally between the company and the government. Nine months later little progress had been made. Cable and Wireless noted that the camouflage scheme was only partly complete. On aerial photographs, the barbed wire was conspicuous and the artificial trees were ineffective.

A Civil Defence document, dated 1st September 1952, listed the wartime defence measures at Ongar Radio Station. Blast walls in 14 inch brickwork had been built to protect all ground floor windows at 'C' station, the office block and the power house. All window glass was covered with cellophane tape or brown paper, and plywood blackout screens were made for the upstairs windows. Outdoor air raid shelters, with bench seating for 12, constructed of steel and covered with four feet of earth, were provided at 'C' station and the power house. Concrete blockhouses were built inside 'C' station and the powerhouse. A reinforced concrete underground valve store was built outside 'C' station. Two steel domed lookout shelters, Allen-Williams turrets, were installed by the military authorities on the earthworks of the Redoubt. The main buildings were enclosed by a coiled barbed wire screen, with double gates at the entry point. The sentry boxes here were manned first by special constables, then by the Home Guard and finally by the Military Police. Fire fighting provision consisted of a static pond close to 'C' station, and a trailer fire pump. Precast concrete air raid shelters were provided at the staff houses, and steel helmets for all employees. There was an

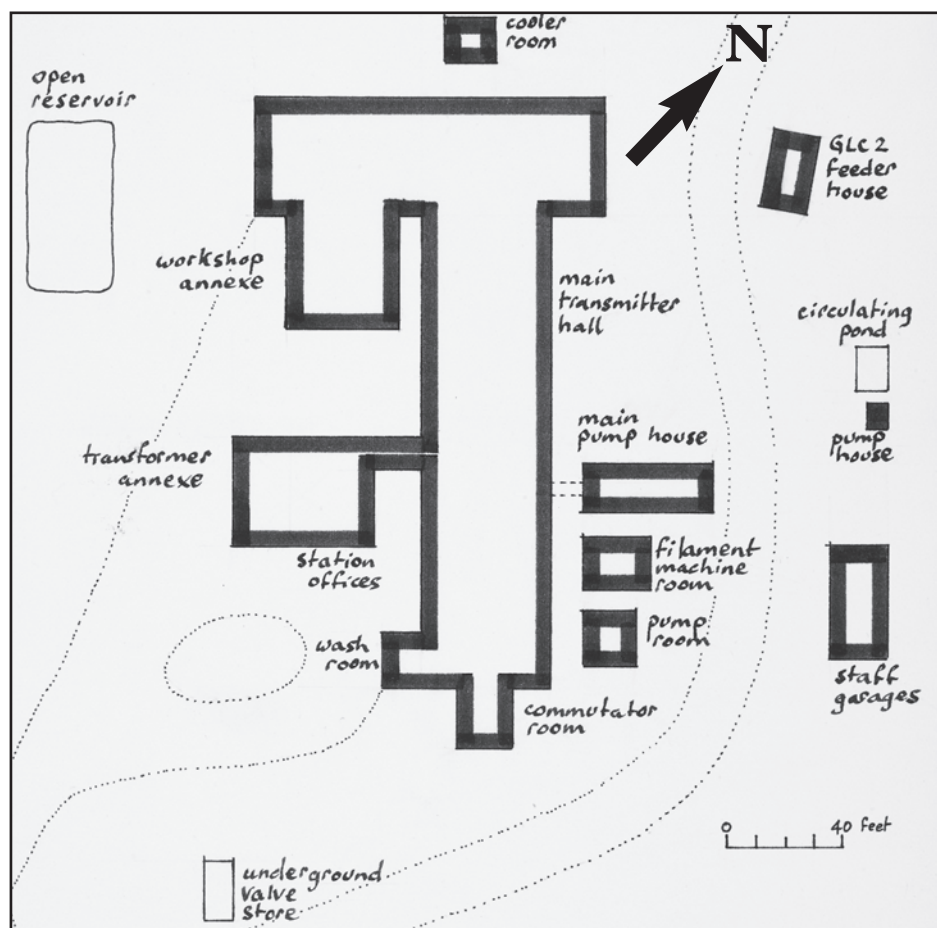
auxiliary telephone switchboard in the Redoubt for staff use if 'C' station had to be abandoned. There was also a VHF radio link with Electra House, with the necessary aerial on top of one of the beam aerial masts, to be used if the landlines were disrupted. Finally there was a petrol engine generator set to supply a low power transmitter and receiver.¹⁸

In spite of the radio station's apparent vulnerability and its proximity to North Weald airfield, there was very little disruption to its operation. At least 25 high explosive bombs fell nearby between October and November 1940 causing only minor damage. The only significant event occurred in July 1944 when a flying bomb collided with one of the radio masts and exploded in the air, damaging many local properties.¹⁹

Further developments and expansion

In December 1943, 'D' station was opened, three quarters of a mile east of 'C' station and just to the north of Ongar Park farm. This contained five unattended short wave transmitters, remotely controlled from 'C' station. A later commentator wrote 'in 1943 a star exhibit of the station was the 20 kW transmitter which could be started up, any one of four frequencies selected, and the transmitter tuned and connected to the right aerial – all in 20 seconds. This however necessitated the use of numerous electric motors, chains and cams, far removed from the sophisticated circuitry...which we are pleased to accept and put into operation today'.²⁰

'E' station was completed in December 1946, sited just to the south of the bridge over the railway cutting. This had six remotely controlled Marconi transmitters. Though aerial direction was controlled remotely from 'C' station, frequency changes required a visit from the technical staff.



**5. Block plan, by the author, showing 'C' Station transmitter hall and subsidiary buildings at the end of its operating life.
(Reproduced by courtesy of ERO, A 14352)**

A staff list of November 1949 shows that a work force of 93 was required to keep the station running 24 hours a day. There were 42 technical staff working in the transmitter hall and power house, 15 staff (riggers, fitters, electricians and labourers) looking after the aerials and feeders, and a further 18 classified as 'skilled and unskilled' working in 'C' station and the power house. Six labourers worked on site and on road maintenance, and two store keepers, four clerical staff and six others (mechanics, carpenters and a lorry driver) completed the establishment.²¹

Under the Commonwealth Telegraphy Act (1949), UK radio stations run by Cable and Wireless and the General Post Office were integrated on April 1st 1950. Ongar was controlled by the GPO Engineer-in-Chief's office from that date. Three years later, control passed to the External Telecommunications Executive.

By the late 1950s the rapid growth in demand for radio telex and radio telegraph circuits made much of the equipment obsolete. The station underwent extensive modification with the installation of seven new short wave transmitters, built and installed in 'D' station by Standard Telephones and Cables Ltd. This was formally opened on 19th February 1959 by the Assistant Postmaster General. The new transmitters were all controlled remotely from the central control position in 'C' station, and were operated by one man. Switching frequencies on this new equipment could be achieved in under half a minute. There were further transmitter updates in the 1960s with new equipment supplied by Standard Telephones and Cables Ltd.²²

New transmitters required new aerials, and 'D' station was provided with rhombic antennas slung in pairs between masts.

Remotely controlled aerial switches selected the correct unit for any particular transmission. A contemporary account states 'this latest addition to the capacity of Ongar Radio Station will enable more and better services to be provided. Flexibility in use, in that any of the seven transmitters can be used to transmit any type of telegraph or picture transmission – they could equally be used for telephony should this be required – and the saving in manpower by the almost complete automatising of the processes of operating and monitoring the transmitters are the keynotes to the design'.²³

Safety considerations were becoming more important, with oil filled equipment enclosed in a fire proof space, and the transmitter cubicles interlocked with the main power supply so that access was impossible until the power was off. The older transmitters with water-cooled valves were enclosed in cabinets by 1955. The original Vickers Petters diesel generators, with their potentially lethal hot bulb ignition, were replaced in 1957 by diesel-powered units.²⁴

The older aerials also had to be updated. In 1952 there were 19 beam aerials, but rising maintenance costs and the demand for greater frequency flexibility resulted in their progressive removal after 1966. They were replaced by (a) the more versatile two-tiered rhombic aerials on 150 foot masts suitable for transmitting a range of frequencies and (b) log periodic aerials which were particularly suitable for facsimile service. Rhombics grew from 20 in 1952 to 51 in the early 1970s. The original 1922 Marconi short wave aerials were gradually removed, the last being dismantled in 1982.²⁵ The mile long GLC aerial for the long wave transmitter was still in use in 1952 but was subsequently taken down. Dipoles had a minor role (six in 1952, reduced to two by the early 1970s) and the five log periodics were installed in the two decades after 1952.²⁶

After the IRA explosion at the Post Office Tower in central London in the early 1970s the station was deemed to be a potential target and was surrounded by a security fence. This necessitated the diversion of the road to Ongar Park farm around a new fence, which enclosed the powerhouse and the cooling tank. Up to this time, local residents were free to come and pick the blackberries that grew very well on the Redoubt!²⁷

The next major telecommunication revolution – satellite communication – resulted in the centralisation of services at Rugby and the closure of Ongar Radio Station on 31st October 1985.²⁸ All the masts were demolished soon after, and the only mast now remaining is a cellular telephone aerial adjacent to 'E' station. All the other buildings were left derelict, and were badly vandalised, with part of the main transmitter hall at 'C' station damaged by fire. The original Marconi 'A' and 'B' stations remained in splendid isolation almost exactly as built in 1922, and the similar original C station building of that era could be identified in the south west corner of the transmitter hall complex, largely unaltered externally. 'D' station was invaded by brambles and scrub, but 'E' station remained in use for equipment connected with the adjoining cellular telephone mast.

Attempts by the Post Office to obtain planning permission for 900 houses on the site, which is within the Metropolitan Green Belt, were rejected by the planning authority. The subsequent owners, London and Continental Developments, applied for a variety of schemes including a hotel, golf courses, a business park and a holiday village as well as residential development. All were refused. In 2002 a golf course was constructed on the northern part of the site, but the rest remains in agricultural use within the Metropolitan

Green Belt. During March 1999, all the radio station buildings (apart from 'E' station) were demolished, leaving the Redoubt and its original associated buildings vandalized and heavily overgrown.

References

1. GPO press releases (PB32 & 32a) dated 19/02/1959 (private collection); information from Mr G. Hunt. One difficulty in researching industrial history is the frequent loss of all archive material when a firm or organization is closed down. Most of the Ongar Radio Station records were destroyed after its closure in 1985, but some were rescued by a former employee, Mr G Hunt, who had worked there since 1950, and these form the basis of this article. The entire archive, which contains much additional technical detail about wavelengths and types of transmitter used, has recently been deposited at Essex Record Office (accession no: A 14352).
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24. Ibid.
25. A.S. Newens, *A History of North Weald Bassett and its People* (North Weald, 1985), pp.125, 138-40.
26. *Ongar Radio Station aerial & site plan*, dyeline print, 18/06/1949; *Ongar Radio Station site plan and aerial layout*, dyeline print, 18/06/1975 (private collection).
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Acknowledgments

Mr Geoffrey Hunt's invaluable assistance in writing this article is gratefully acknowledged.

The Author

Michael Leach is a retired GP with a long-standing interest in local history, former Hon. Sec. of the Essex Society for Archaeology & History'. His interest in radio transmitters was formed in childhood, when experimenting with crystal sets.

Spitfire Down

by
Neil Wiffen

In the autumn 2015 issue of *Essex Journal* an article on an air raid on North Weald aerodrome was published.¹ This dealt with a fast and furious Luftwaffe fighter-bomber attack that then turned into a series of individual combats by defending RAF Hurricane fighters on the retreating Messerschmitt Me 109s as they scattered across Essex. Two Me 109s coming down near Maldon and one to the southeast of Colchester. During the flight across mid-Essex my Dad, Michael Wiffen, witnessed some of the action. Just these very straightforward, low-level events were sufficient to tell the story of this one raid. Several other raids took place that day with many more aircraft from different squadrons being involved to combat German incursions. One of the RAF fighters lost that day, shortly after the attack on North Weald was a Spitfire from 19 Squadron that crashed in Chelmsford. While aware of it there was not room to include it in the original article. This *addendum* to my original article is the result of a serendipitous meeting at ERO.

After I gave a talk at ERO, on the North Weald raid, on Tuesday 3rd November 2015, I was involved with a tour that included Councillor John Aldridge, Chairman of Essex County Council. On hearing about my talk, Cllr Aldridge asked me if I knew of the crash of the Spitfire at the top of New London Road (Fig.1). I did and that evening was able to send Cllr Aldridge the text of the Incident Reports² that are held by ERO, having transcribed them during the course of my research into the original article on the North Weald attack. Cllr Aldridge went on to say that the reason he was

interested in the crash was that, following a Memorial Service on Canvey Island for nine USAAF aircrew, he had been approached by Mr Trevor Williams and Mr Rod Aspinell as to why no memorial existed for Sub Lieutenant (Sub/Lt) Arthur Giles Blake the pilot of the Spitfire in question (see cover illustration). With information supplied by these two aviation historians Cllr Aldridge was planning to arrange a memorial to commemorate Blake's death. A Faculty with the Diocese of Chelmsford was being arranged so that a plaque could be installed in St John's Church, Moulsham. I was asked if I would be able to assist with some of the background research and being a life-long Second World War aviation buff I couldn't refuse. The results of that research form this article.³

The Pilot

Arthur Giles Blake was born in Northumberland in 1917, the seventh and youngest child of John Henry Laws Blake and Mary Jayne Blake. Although born in the north the family lived in Langley Road, Slough, where Arthur attended Slough Grammar School. He played rugby for Windsor and Eton Rugby Club as well as rowing for Eton Excelsior Rowing Club. He passed through the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, before joining the Fleet Air Arm (FAA), having worked hard so that he could realize this ambition. His first posting was to HMS Daedalus, a primary shore station of the FAA and he gained his wings in January 1940.⁴

Arthur Blake became one of Churchill's 'Few', indeed he really could be said to have been one of the 'Few of the Few' as he was one of only 23 Naval pilots

who served with RAF Fighter Command, out of a total of 2,937 British and Allied airman who were recognised to have flown during the Battle of Britain.⁵ His 'loan' to the RAF came about because by the beginning of June 1940 the RAF were desperate for trained pilots following severe losses sustained during the Battle of France and covering the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk. The supply of new and repaired Spitfires and Hurricanes was never really a issue during the Battle of Britain – it was trained pilots that were needed and Blake helped to fill the shortfall.⁶ So in mid-June 1940 he was attached to the RAF, along with his very good friend Sub/Lt Richard 'Dickie' Cork.⁷

Combat Career

Converting to the famous Supermarine Spitfire, Blake was posted in July to 19 Squadron, flying out of Duxford and Fowlmere in Cambridgeshire. Coming from the Navy he was given the appropriate nickname of 'Admiral' by his fellow pilots.⁸ At a time when only about 5% of pilots shot down five or more aircraft, Blake became a successful fighter pilot.⁹ He opened his tally on the morning of 3rd September, 'south of Colchester' at 20,000 feet, by at least damaging a Messerschmitt 110 twin-engined fighter, one of the escorts for 50 or so bombers that had just raided North Weald: 'Carried out a 'quarter' attack from above...having opened fire observed the E/A [enemy aircraft] (ME110) to turn violently away & downwards. As I was in turn attacked by other E/A I was unable to repeat attacks, but my No. 2 thought E/A attacked was emitting smoke.'¹⁰

His first confirmed victory was a Heinkel He 111 medium bomber on the 9th September. Flying as Red 2 he made a 'shallow dive out of a setting sun and carried out a stern attack. Saw bits flying off & as I broke off observed him to be smoking and on fire', having fired off 825 rounds of .303 ammunition from his eight Browning machine guns. However, the 19 Squadron 'Operations Record Book' makes clear, it was not an easy victory: '[Blake] almost got it himself, a bullet entering the sliding roof and ricocheting [*sic*] from the windscreen passed into the top petrol tank.' Blake, for some reason did not mention this in his combat report.¹¹

The 15th September was a particularly busy and momentous day as Blake damaged a Dornier 17 – the famous 'Flying Pencil' bomber – in a morning sortie whilst during the afternoon he successfully claimed a deadly Me 109 single-engine fighter, which 'burst into flames', as well as sharing in the destruction of an He 111 bomber. As his Spitfire was 'smoking badly'

('Sub/Lt. Blake [was] shot down') he had to 'force [land] at ROCHFORD aerodrome'. He was obviously unhurt and unshaken as he was able to lead Red Section on patrol over Duxford the next day.¹²

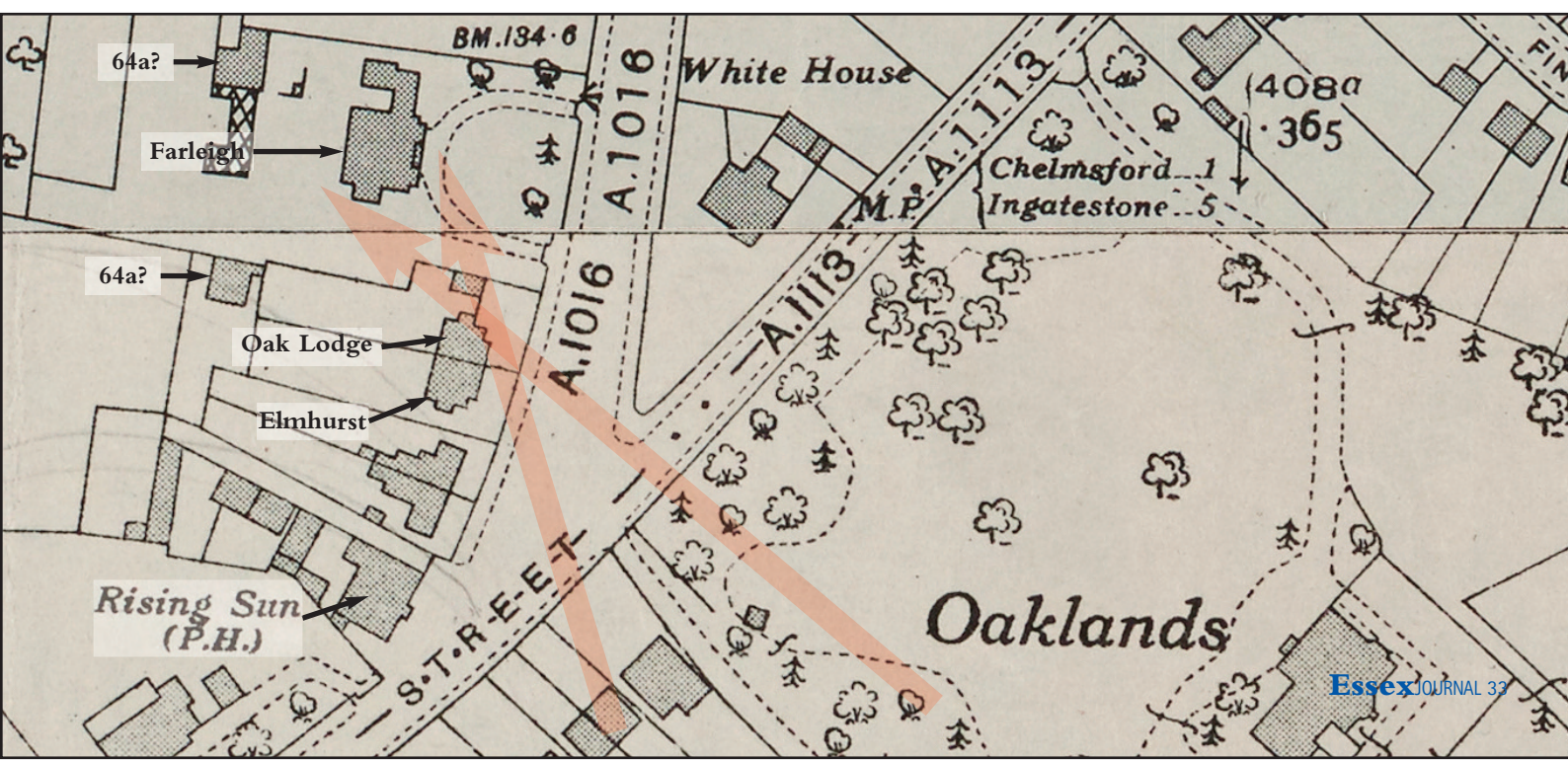
His luck continued and on the 17th September he destroyed two more Me 109's. Perhaps confirming his naval background he described the first victory thus: 'I followed him and drew within range gave him another burst, pulled out to his port side, and throttled back, when for some reason turned right across my bows [*author's italics*]. So I just pressed the button and he dived straight into the sea.'¹³ The squadron did not have it all its own way and while on patrol over Kent on the 27th they were attacked by Me 109s and in the ensuing dogfight Blake was credited with two of the seven claimed. However they lost one pilot killed and another injured.¹⁴

October was also a busy month for 19 Squadron. Even though large daylight raids were over, the Luftwaffe continued the attack. Often single bombers took

advantage of cloudy weather or fast fighter-bomber attacks were made on strategic targets. Along with the other Duxford-based Squadrons, multiple patrols were flown on most days, weather permitting; October 1940 being generally a dull, wet month.¹⁵ Blake flew his fair share of sorties including one on the 11th where over Eastchurch: 'at 26,000 feet. Sighted some...two-engines [*sic*] aircraft but owing to R/T [radio] trouble experienced by leader of Wing were unable to contact enemy...Also saw one Me.109... at approx. 30,000 feet'.¹⁶

The flying continued throughout the month and the 29th October was no exception. The first patrol flown by 19 Squadron was between 10:40–12:10 although Blake did not participate in this: 'The Wing was on a patrol line Maidstone – Sheerness at 20000' – 25000' [feet]. No E/A [enemy aircraft] were seen, but it is becoming the general feeling that this is not high enough...P/O. [Pilot Officer] Vokes lost consciousness at 25000' due to oxygen failure. He recovered at 6000' in a spin.'¹⁷

1. The junction of New London Road and Moulsham Street, the area where Sub/Lt Blake crashed in his Spitfire on 29th October 1940. Possible candidates for 64a have been marked although it is more likely to have been that at the top of the map. Two possible routes that the Spitfire came in on are shown depending on if the Spitfire, or just debris from it, came to rest in the front or rear garden of 'Farleigh'. Both could have taken out the corner of 'Oak Lodge', the garage alongside the house as well as throwing debris towards 'Farleigh' (see extracts from D/B 7 S3/1 below) and the 'probable' 64a beyond. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, 25 inch OS sheets 54-14 & 63-2, 1939)



At heights such as these the temperature was extremely low or in understated RAF parlance 'jolly cold';¹⁸ cockpit canopies could ice up and inhibit visibility and as P/O Vokes found out, oxygen systems could fail. These problems had to be faced even before the enemy. The Me 109 was a very good performer at height, as the Squadron saw on the 11th when one was higher than the Spitfires, while on the 29th the Squadron thought that they had to fly at a higher altitude. As Battle of Britain pilot Tom Neil remembered the Me 109 was a: 'venomous, waspy creature we...often encountered zipping around the sky. Even so, this was the type that was running rings round us at 20,000 feet and picking off our best chaps whenever it felt inclined to do so'.¹⁹

The second patrol of the 29th, between 13:30–15:15 and again over Kent, was flown by Blake and was uneventful. Further Luftwaffe inactivity was not to last long. A series of fighter-bomber attacks, aimed at London and its surroundings, included a sharp attack on North Weald, at around 16:40. It was possibly as a result of approaching enemy aircraft that 19 Squadron had

been ordered off at 16:15. During the attack on North Weald substantial damage and several deaths were inflicted before the resident 249 Squadron put paid to several of the attacking Me 109s. While the chase across Essex at low level was petering out, 12 Spitfires of 19 Squadron, Blake among them, and in company with other Duxford squadrons, including 242 led by Douglas Bader were:

'again on patrol over Kent area. Considerable amount of A.A. [anti-aircraft] fire both to South and near London. No interceptions as the leader of the Wing [Bader] had a U/S [unserviceable] Radio. Some M.E.109s were seen by our search formation but we could not attack. Sgt. [Sergeant] Macgregor forced landed at Rochford due to lack of fuel. He had been sent up without refuelling. S/Lt. Blake did not return from this trip and no news has reached the Squadron as yet'.²⁰

Clarification as to what happened is provided from further 19 Squadron records:

'Some members of our Squadron saw about 7

Me.109's above us. It was unfortunate we were unable to attack them as it is probable that some of them attacked S/Lt. Blake who was doing search behind the Squadron. He was found near Chelmsford. It is a great loss to the Squadron as he was very well liked by all as well as a pilot of exceptional ability'.²¹

It is interesting that Blake was reported as 'doing search behind the Squadron'. This might have been as a 'weaver', a rather out-dated tactic to be carrying out at this stage in the Battle. The RAF were slowly adopting Luftwaffe practice of looser formations based around a pilot and his wingman, two pairs being a standard unit, tactics which had been developed in the Spanish Civil War and are still standard practice today. If this is correct, Blake would have had to literally weave behind the main squadron formation looking out for enemy aircraft while keeping up with the others. This was a dangerous role, as the weaver would have been flying behind his fellow pilots, possibly on his own and thus vulnerable to a fast, diving attack from altitude. Maybe his cockpit canopy had iced up impairing his



vision out, perhaps becoming disorientated and separated from the Wing formation. It was not unknown for aircraft to get lost due to cloud cover. He might have been confused as to what was going on as at least Bader's radio was not working. Was his oxygen system operating correctly?

Was he feeling the affects of the cold at high altitude or fatigue generally, this being his second sortie of the day after many days of flying sorties? Me 109s had already been spotted at higher altitude, maybe on their own patrol, a *frei jagd* (free hunt) to cover the retreat of their fighter-bombers, looking out for and hunting RAF fighters and a lone Spitfire flying around somewhere over the Thames Estuary would be exactly the target they were looking for.

Possibly Blake wasn't shot down but suffered a malfunction of oxygen equipment similar to that which P/O Vokes had had. Maybe it was a mechanical problem with his Spitfire? Whatever it was, Blake came down in Chelmsford.

The Crash

The remaining aircraft of 19 Squadron landed at 17:15, just shortly before Essex County Control were receiving news of a crashed aircraft. The first report, at 17:20, informed Essex County Control that '1 Spitfire reported crashed in flames at Chelmsford 17.12'. Twenty-three minutes later Police Headquarters stated that 'The plane crashed at Oak Lodge London Road. Plane & house on fire, Fire brigade & Police on spot'. By 17:54, 11 minutes on from the previous message, Essex County Control were informed that 'at junction of road 1016 [New London Road] & 122 machine burnt out. British pilot presumed dead'. It was not until almost two hours later that County Control had it confirmed that the pilot was dead: 'Remains...removed to St Johns Hospital. Road now reopened'.²²

'Oak Lodge', 65 New London Road,²³ was occupied by 586 Army Field Company and took the full force of crash and damage was considerable:

'Front corner of house including box room, scullery, cellar, W.C., coal shed & garage completely destroyed. Kitchen fireplace and stove damaged door and frame smashed. Windows broken. One chimney stack severely cracked and one partially demolished. Boundary wall partially demolished. Most internal walls and ceilings cracked. Wash basin & W.C. pan smashed. Partition fence smashed. Few tiles off roof. Service pipes damaged. Staircase, hall doors and windows damaged. Wall between Scullery & Hall badly damaged (Fig.3).'²⁴

Neighbouring 'Farleigh', 64 New London Road, suffered less damage: 'boundary wall partially destroyed. Slating, gutters &c to Sun Room damaged. Three ceilings partially collapsed. One or two windows smashed.'²⁵ From this information it would appear that Blake's Spitfire came in from the south to south-east, which would be the approximate



2. Supermarine Spitfire Mk IIa as flown by Sub/Lt Blake. Built at Castle Bromwich shortly before being issued to 6 Maintenance Unit, 16/09/1940. Taken on charge by 19 Squadron on 26/09/1940, serving until shot down at the end of October. (www.airhistory.org.uk/spitfire/p004.html). (Reproduced by courtesy of Chris S-B/inkworm)

direction he would have been flying if trying to return to Duxford.

Eyewitnesses

Eyewitness reports from the ground do survive. An unknown employee for the local building firm of Horsnell's recounted what he had seen when driving home from 'doing house repairs around the area of North Weald:²⁶

'It was as we turned out of Writtle Road into London Road that the shouting started, and looking skywards saw a Spitfire in serious trouble as first it did a couple of dips and then levelled out again before making what we knew to be its final and fatal plunge to earth. The diving aircraft appeared to be heading straight for us which left me with no other option than to put my foot down and hope for the best. We hadn't reached the Wood Street round-about when I heard the crash and the men shouting in the back of the lorry. I stopped and we all raced back to the Rising Sun pub from where we could see smoke rising. It was however into the front of the far house of a pair next to the Rising Sun that the Spitfire had crashed. The fuel had ignited and the ammunition was exploding, by the time we reached the scene, and it was obvious there was little we could do to help with the aircraft embedded into the house. We guessed the pilot was still on board as there had been no sign of the pilot bailing out.'

This account compliments some of the evidence from the Incident Reports – 'Plane & house on fire'. However it should probably be treated with some caution. Quite what view the driver had out of his van must be open to question, not only the restricted view from within the cab but with trees and houses either side

his outlook would have been still further limited. Possible the aircraft appeared to be heading straight for the van, which it would have done if heading directly from the south, but if Blake's Spitfire was heading from the southeast it would have crossed over New London Road, Fig.1. If this was the case possibly the driver looked to his left at the junction with Moulsham Street and saw it heading towards him causing him to put his 'foot down and hope for the best'? The certainty that it was a 'Spitfire' is interesting – is it because the eyewitness knew subsequently that is what it was? Even RAF pilots, with all their training, did not always get identification of aircraft correct.²⁷ However, the reference to a 'couple of dips', if actually witnessed, could suggest that Blake was still in some control of the aircraft, and if it were not coming down very fast might have given longer to see it. A second eyewitness, the then ten year old Alec Fulcher, adds to the evidence:

'I was with some friends in Oaklands Park. We heard machine gun fire, saw planes in the sky having a dogfight and shortly afterwards an aircraft on fire coming down. The next thing I remember is being thrown flat on the ground with something running past me at high speed. I estimate that I was on the ground shaking with fright for only about half-a-minute but during that time I heard a crashing sound. The aeroplane crashed into a house...of course I stayed to watch... Boys were digging in the rubble, recovering items such as machine guns which they tied to the crossbars of their bikes. The police came to our school later in the week inquiring about the missing equipment from the plane.'²⁸

How does this fit the picture so far? There is no suggestion that

Blake was involved in a dogfight over Chelmsford. His Squadron thought that Me 109s, at altitude, had probably accounted for him. However, aircraft from the low-level raid on North Weald would have only recently have crossed over the Chelmsford area. Did Alec Fulcher see and hear this chase? Was one of the Me 109s that later came down near Maldon possibly on fire? Then, a matter of at most half an hour later, a Spitfire crashed. If the eyewitness account was given some decades after the war, this interval – 'shortly afterwards' – could easily be forgotten. The first eyewitness does not mention the Spitfire coming down in flames – fire is only mentioned after the crash which makes the likelihood of school children getting anywhere near to take mementoes from the crash site remote. Possibly later if the area was not particularly well sealed off. However, Alec was in Oaklands Park and if Blake was coming down from the southeast then he could have gone straight over him, see Fig.1, and the 'something running past me at high speed' could just have been the Spitfire at low altitude? If the Spitfire was coming down from the south it would not have gone over Oaklands Park.

Some days after Blake's death, a neighbour wrote to his mother, giving some more detail:

'Dear Mrs Blake, Forgive the liberty I take but I feel very much that I would like to write to you & let you know how very much I have thought of those left behind to bear the great sadness and great loss...When your sons plane came down in our garden – on the 29th October – & when we got over the shock, my heart went out to those who loved the brave Pilot who fell, & so I took the liberty to write ...I saw the fight in the air, & when I saw how your sons plane fell that I knew your son died long before his plane touched the

ADDRESS 65 New London Road. PHONE NO. 0166

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY Dwelling House.
O.C. Major Lawrence.

NAME OF OCCUPIER 586 Army Field Co. Royal Engineers. GROSS VALUE £ 60

NAME AND ADDRESS OF OWNER Miss. D. L. Wackrall. RATEABLE VALUE £ 48
1, Crabton Close Road, Boscombe. Hants. PARISH / WARD West/Widford

NUMBER OF PERSONS RESIDING ON PREMISES AT TIME _____ NUMBER OF PERSONS DISHOUSED _____

DAMAGE CAUSED BY Falling Aircraft REPORTED BY _____ DATE 29/10/40 TIME _____

REPORT OF DAMAGE Front corner of house including box room, scullery, cellar, W.C., coal shed & garage completely destroyed. Kitchen fireplace and stove damaged, door and frame smashed. Windows broken. One chimney stack severely cracked and one partially demolished. Boundary wall partially demolished. Most internal walls and ceilings cracked. Wash basin & W.C. pan smashed. Partition fence smashed. Few tiles off roof. Service pipes damaged. Staircase, hall doors and windows damaged. Wall between scullery & Hall badly bulged.

BUILDER INSTRUCTED _____ DATE _____ TIME _____

REPORT OF BUILDER _____

3. Page showing the damage listed for 65 (Oak Lodge) New London Road.
 (Reproduced by courtesy of Essex Record Office, ERO, D/B 7 S3/1)

earth...when all is cleared away I shall put a small cross, in memory of a very brave man, one of many in our wonderful wonderful air force...I enclose a cigarette case, which I found, also a button from his coat, and I managed to cut a piece of the silk from the parachute [sic], which landed right in front of our front door, the cord is a piece which runs through one of the seams of the parachute – it is all I could get, God bless you and Comfort you.
 Yours ?²⁹

The signature on the letter is undecipherable but there are three possible candidates, traced to date, who could be the author. The Electoral Register for 1939 shows that at 'Farleigh' Barrington and Florence Wells were eligible to vote while at 64a, the cottage to the rear of 'Farleigh', Albert and Dorothy Wilde are listed. At 'Oak Lodge' Cyril and Amy Abbott were living.³⁰ In the full text of the letter 2 teenage sons are mentioned so with more research

it might be possible to confirm if any of these couples had children and could thus possibly be the author. However, we have seen from the Chelmsford Borough 'Property Damaged by Enemy Action' reports that at the time of the crash the army were occupying 'Oak Lodge' so had Cyril and Amy Abbott moved on be discounted? While at 'Farleigh' 'Col. B. Wells' is listed as the occupier – was he part of another army unit? If not perhaps a Mrs Wells could have been the author of the letter, having moved in between the taking of details for the electoral register and the crash? Or was it a resident of 64a? Depending on the direction Blake's Spitfire came from, either of the last two are the most plausible, if 64a is correctly identified (Fig.1), as both properties could have ended up with debris (the parachute – still furled or deployed?) at their front doors and both would have ended up with wreckage in the ('our') garden.

Whoever the author was though, is there again confusion with the withdrawal of Me 109s from the North Weald attack half

an hour earlier? Did the author really see the Spitfire come down or were they trying to comfort Mrs Blake with the prospect of her son having a quick and heroic death? By this time of day, it would have been beginning to get dark on an already overcast day and the likelihood of Me 109s being in the Chelmsford area must be remote so as to probably discount a dog-fight. Regardless of the mysteries of some aspects of the letter, it remains a touching tribute written to a grieving family.

Likely Narrative of Events

Taking all the evidence that has been accumulated, how do the eyewitness accounts affect the story? I suggest that they have possibly conflated the events of the late afternoon. While 19 Squadron report they did not take part in any dog-fighting, aerial combat had occurred over mid-Essex. Ten year old Michael Wiffen cannot have been the only person to have seen an Me 109 being pursued by Hurricanes. From his vantage point at the Christy & Norris Sports Field on Patching Hall Lane, the junction

of New London Road and Moulsham street is just a shade over 2 miles away as the crow flies. With around 15 low flying fighter-bombers, possibly more escorting Me 109s, and a dozen or so pursuing Hawker Hurricanes, there were plenty of aircraft for many witnesses to see and hear.

All the events described took place in about half an hour. At North Weald the time of the 'surprise attack' was recorded as 16:40.³¹ First notification of this raid sent to Essex County Control (at County Hall, Chelmsford) was around 16:56,³² but by 20:51 Essex County Control were able to report to Regional Control Cambridge that 'raid on North Weald... *Time now stated to be 16.45* [author's italics].'³³ The Eastern Report Centre sent a first message through to Essex County Control with a preliminary report timed at 17:25: 'One Messerschmitt down Chantry Farm Maldon Goldhanger Road.'³⁴ The first report that mentioned Blake's Spitfire crashing said it had happened at 17:12.

So within the space of half an hour or so, following on from the bombing of North Weald, there had been a low-level pursuit across the county, with Hurricanes firing at Me 109s (was one of these on fire?), shortly followed by a Spitfire crashing. It is quite possible that after several decades the first two eyewitnesses merged all the exciting and terrifying sights and sounds they had witnessed that late afternoon into one linked simultaneous event. Yes there had been a 'dogfight' of sorts over Essex, albeit a rather one-sided pursuit at low level and not involving 19 Squadron. The most likely explanation as to what happened is that Blake crashed while attempting to return to Duxford. He had possibly been wounded and his Spitfire damaged in a lone attack or been struggling with general mechanical or equipment issues.

He then lost control of the Spitfire due to the damage it had sustained, or consciousness from wounds he had suffered, or general mechanical failure as he neared Chelmsford, crashing in New London Road. We will probably never know for certain.

Remembrance

The afternoon of Sunday 23rd October, 2016, was peaceful and sunny, a far cry from freezing, high-altitude dogfights of the Battle of Britain. At 3.30pm in St John's Church, Moulsham, a Service of Commemoration in memory to Sub/Lt Arthur Giles Blake was conducted by the Rev Canon Carol Smith.³⁵ In the presence of Sub/Lt Blake's nephew, Mr Keith Powell, the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Lord Petre, other dignitaries and guests, along with the congregation, Arthur was remembered and honoured (Fig.4). At the end of the service those present assembled as a plaque, Faculty granted, was unveiled and blessed before the Last Post was sounded.

Arthur Blake, aged 23, was one of 544 aircrew who were killed during the Battle of Britain, while his Spitfire, P7423, was just one of the 1,744 aircraft the British lost.^{xxxvi} He is buried, with his parent's, in St Mary's churchyard, Langley Marish, Slough, remembered fondly by family and others and now commemorated close to where he died.

References

1. N. Wiffen, 'Tuesday 29th October 1940: North Weald Attack', *Essex Journal*, 50, II (2015), pp.65-76.
2. Essex Record Office, C/W 1/2/18, Incident Report, Central Area.
3. Events of the day are broadly known, such as 'Naval Flyer Who Crashed In Chelmsford', *Essex Chronicle*, 25/07/1980, p.23.
4. The other children were: Edith, Nora, Lydia, Doris, Henry and Margot. Thanks to Mr Keith Powell for this and other Blake

family information; see also bbm.org.uk/airmen/BlakeGA.htm, (18/10/2016).

5. bbm.org.uk/the-airmen/, (18/10/16).
6. Twenty three Naval pilots served with 12 RAF Fighter Command Squadrons, a further 33 served with FAA Squadrons: http://fleetairarmoa.org/Content/sites/FAAOA/pages/178/FAA_amp_BoB.PDF, (18/10/2016).
7. bbm.org.uk/airmen/Cork.htm, (18/10/2016). 'Dickie' Cork was posted to 242 Squadron which was led by Douglas Bader, later to be stationed at Duxford with Blake's 19 Squadron.
8. bbm.org.uk/airmen/BlakeGA.htm, (18/10/2016).
9. S. Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy: a history of the Battle of Britain* (London, 2001), p.239.
10. TNA, AIR 50/10/143, Combat Report, 03/09/1940.
11. TNA, AIR 50/10/143, Combat Report, 09/09/1940; TNA, AIR 27/252/24, 19 Sqd. Operations Record Book for September 1940 (RAF Form 540). Blake sent the damaged windscreen from Spitfire P9341 to his brother from whom it was given to aviation historian Bryan Hymas. Thanks to Mr Rod Aspinell for this information. The windscreen survives in the RAF Museum, Hendon, accession no. 80/A/1142. Thanks to Mr Andrew Simpson of the RAFM for confirming this.
12. TNA, AIR 50/10/2, Combat Report, 15/09/1940; TNA, AIR 27/252/24.
13. TNA, AIR 50/10/2, Combat Report, 17/09/1940.
14. TNA, AIR 27/252/24. The events for the 17th & 27th are slightly confused as both combat claims are worded the same. The Squadron Operations Book reports (typed) that 'No E/A' aircraft seen' but in the margin (pencil) is written: 'Sub. Lieut. Blake destroyed 2 Me 109. See IIN40/j17/15'. This reference is repeated on the Combat Report for 17/09/1940 but the wording is repeated for 27/09/1940. Is it due to some confusion in record keeping due to the hectic nature of operations?
15. Wiffen, p.67.
16. TNA, AIR 27/252/27, 19 Sqd. Operations Record Book for October (RAF Form 541).

17. Ibid.
18. TNA, AIR 27/252/24. Reported on 14/09/1940 when the oxygen system also failed for Sgt Amrek.
19. T. Neil, *Gun Button to Fire*, (Stroud, 2010), pp.155–6. He was flying Hurricanes, which were not such good performers at high altitudes as the Spitfire.
20. TNA, AIR 27/252/27, 19 Sqd. Operations Record Book (RAF Form 541).
21. TNA, AIR 27/252/26, 19 Sqd. Operations Record Book (RAF Form 540).
22. Essex Record Office (ERO), C/W 1/2/18, Incident Report, Central Area.
23. House numbers have since changed: 64 'Farleigh' to 212, 64a to 214 and 65 'Oak Lodge' to 216. See ERO, D/B 7 S5/1, Chelmsford Borough Council, Engineer's Department, Street re-numbering, 1922–75, p.205, 19/11/1953.
24. ERO, D/B 7 S3/1, Chelmsford Borough Council, Engineer's Department, Property Damaged by Enemy Action, 19/06/1940–22/05/1941, entry 166.
25. Ibid, entry 167. Farleigh Hospice

- was established (1984) in 'Farleigh', see: www.farleighhospice.org.our-history, my thanks to Mr Andy Morgan for this.
26. Un-named respondent's in document from Rod Aspinell Collection. North Weald had already been raided on 24th and 31st August and 3rd September. W.G. Ramsey (ed), *The Battle of Britain, Then and Now* (Harlow, 1989), pp.160–75. Possibly Horsnell's were undertaking repair for damage caused on one of these raids?
27. Wiffen EN 40, p.76.
28. Rod Aspinell Collection.
29. Ibid.
30. ERO, C/E 2/1/22, electoral register for Chelmsford, West Ward (Widford), 1939, p.13.
31. TNA, AIR 28/603, North Weald, Operations Record Book, 1927–45, p.3, f.45.
32. ERO, C/W 1/2/89, Incident Files for Western Area, 29/10/1940.
33. Ibid.
34. ERO, C/W 1/2/45, Incident Files for Eastern Area, 29/10/1940.

35. Cllr John Aldridge: 'I was greatly assisted by the Rev Canon Carol Smith who offered support in allowing her Church of St John, Moulsham, to be the place where a memorial could be erected.'
36. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Britain, (18/10/2016). The Luftwaffe lost 2,585 aircrew killed or missing with 925 captured and 1,977 aircraft.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks to Cllr John Aldridge for his support and assistance and asking me to join him in his project. To Mr Rod Aspinell who gave of his time and research notes very freely and Dr Chris Thornton for talking through some of the topics relating to the archive material and Dr Sarah Honour for commenting on the draft article. Finally to Mr Keith Powell who supplied information on his hero most willingly and with much enthusiasm.

The Author

Neil Wiffen is a historian who also happens to be the Hon. Ed. of the *Essex Journal*.

4. The unveiling of the plaque, left to right: Cllr John Aldridge, (Chairman of Essex County Council), Mr Keith Powell (nephew of Sub/Lt Blake), Rev Canon Carol Smith (Vicar of St John, Moulsham), Lord Petre (Lord Lieutenant of the County of Essex), Cllr Patricia Hughes (Mayor of Chelmsford) & Mrs Lorna Rolfe (High Sheriff of Essex). Inset, detail of the plaque. (Both author photographs)



Peter Joseph Gibson Huggins (1926–2016)

Peter Huggins, an outstanding archaeologist and pillar of Waltham Abbey Historical Society since the 1960s, died on 4th November, 2016, in a care home near to his daughter's home at Fulbourne, Cambridgeshire. He was 90 years of age. Born at Kings Lynn on 31st May, 1926, the son of an Anglican vicar, the Rev. Albert Huggins, and his wife Doris (née Barker), he was educated at Kings School, Ely, and obtained a BSc in Mechanical Engineering at Bradford Technical College.

He was employed, in turn, on the railways, in the aircraft industry, at rolling mills in Sheffield and then at Enfield Rolling Mills which led him and his wife, Rhona, to move to Chingford and then Waltham Abbey. He later became a lecturer at what is now Middlesex University.

Having visited archaeological sites in Yorkshire and taken part in a dig at Stonehenge, he and his wife joined Waltham Abbey Historical Society and he undertook the direction of local digs. Backed up by detailed research into the archives this made him a leading expert on Waltham Abbey's past.

His excavations established a sequence of five Christian churches on the same site: the first built in the seventh century; a second built in the eighth century; the third built by King Harold before he ascended the throne; the fourth built between 1090 and 1150; the fifth an Augustinian abbey begun by Henry II and comparable in size and extent to Durham Cathedral. All this except the western end, which remains as the church today, was destroyed when the monasteries were dissolved by King Henry VIII after 1540.

Peter's archaeological work and studies ranged over the Abbey site and the town as a whole and go back to the Stone Age. He uncovered Waltham Grange, the home farm, together with a forge, a great barn, a stable block, two dovecotes and a dock on the Cornmill stream. He excavated the remains of a nunnery at Nazeing, apparently founded by the East Saxon King Swebred in the seventh century and destroyed by the Danes in the ninth century. He produced a large number of papers and articles in different journals, including the *Transactions* of the Essex Society for Archaeology & History, *Post Medieval Archaeology*, *Medieval Archaeology*, *The London Archaeologist*, the Waltham Abbey Historical Society *Newsletter*, and others – some jointly with his wife Rhona and the late Ken Bascombe, another expert on Waltham Abbey history. Some of Peter's work was published in separate papers or paperback books.

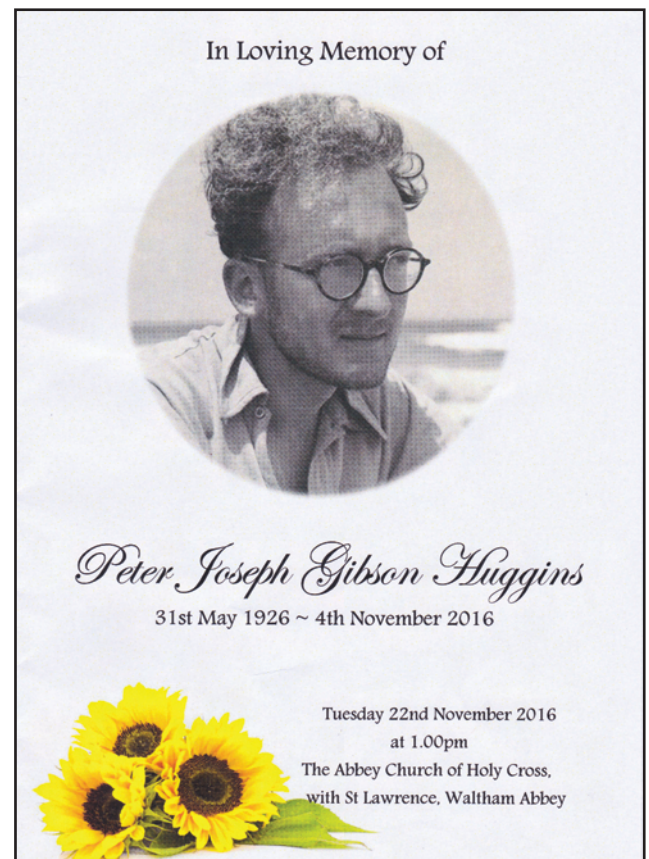
What is known today about Waltham Abbey, one of the most fascinating historic areas in south-east England, owes much to the dedication of Peter Huggins. He also held numerous offices within and



gave immense support to Waltham Abbey Historical Society, and inspired others by his example.

A memorial meeting took place in the Abbey Church, Waltham Abbey on Tuesday, 22nd November. Peter is survived by his ex-wife, Rhona, his daughter, Tessa, and granddaughter, Layla.

Stan Newens,



Beryl Board (1929–2017)

My former VCH colleague Beryl Board, who has died, was born in Perth, West Australia, in 1929, the second of two daughters born to English parents. The family returned to England in 1932 during the Depression to settle in Enfield. Beryl was very successful academically at Enfield County School and was set to continue to university, but for various reasons she took a different path. With a gift for languages and a meticulous approach Beryl trained as a librarian, specialising in reference work and bibliography. She worked for a while at the BBC in London and had many stories about her time there. She married Kenneth Board, a former aircrew member of RAF Bomber Command, in 1952 and had a long and very happy and companionate marriage until his death in 1995. The couple moved to Essex in 1954, when Ken obtained a post as a technical draughtsman at Marconi's Chelmsford, and they lived at Wickford before moving to Stow Maries in 1963. During the Second World War Ken had been shot down in Normandy and sheltered by the members of the Maquis, with whom on reunions in later years Beryl was able to converse in her fluent French, fortified by their generous offerings of Calvados.

Beryl made a great contribution to the history of Essex. In 1969 she joined the staff of the Victoria County History of Essex, to work with the county editor Ray Powell until 1986 and then with his successor Janet Cooper. Her skills were put to good use, and she was promoted from part-time editorial assistant, to senior editorial assistant, from 1979 to a full-time assistant editor and from 1985 to senior assistant editor, working on volumes VI to IX and the first Bibliography Supplement. The introduction of computers to VCH work in the 1980s was an unwelcome challenge, but Beryl applied herself, and adapted to the changes. On her retirement in 1992 she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. In 'retirement' Beryl worked voluntarily with Pam Studd to produce the second Bibliography Supplement, published in 2000. She contributed papers to the *Transactions* of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History and *Essex Journal*, and indexed many publications, including John Hunter's *The Essex Landscape*. She was the subject of the *Essex Journal* '20 Questions' in the autumn 2010 edition.

There was close involvement in the local community, with service as a Stow Maries parish councillor, an independent Maldon district councillor, and a governor (sometime chair) of Cold Norton School. Beryl was a leading light in parish social activities, and in later years served as a churchwarden. She also found time to read, with her usual clear and precise diction, for the Talking Newspapers for the Blind. She researched extensively the history of Stow

Maries, drawing on written and oral sources, writing regular articles for the parish magazine. She was a driving force in preserving the First World War aerodrome, and also raised vital funds for its memorial on the parade ground. The new research library at the aerodrome will be named in her memory.

Beryl loved her home and garden, and there was always a dog to make up the household and to take for walks in the peaceful countryside around Stow Maries. She enjoyed music and literature, especially Jane Austen's novels, which she re-read every year, and poetry. She liked driving her 2CV car, and Chris Thornton recalls a 'terrifying white-knuckle' ride at speed as a passenger when 'the concept of giving way' did not seem to occur. Despite her active life in the community Beryl was in many ways a private person. Many of her kindnesses went unnoticed and she was a deeply caring daughter. Her many qualities included loyalty and reliability, and there was a sense of humour. She liked to think that, if there were a 'diocesan terrier' dog, it would have a white collar. Her Christian faith sustained her through bereavement and sickness.



Shirley Durgan

The swallows were zipping around the church of St Mary & St Margaret, Stow Maries, on Thursday 20th April – probably pleased to be back in Essex – and the view across the Crouch Valley was glorious. It was the first time I had been to Stow and unfortunately it was to say goodbye to Beryl. By the time the service started there was standing room only and mourners spilled into the churchyard. There was much to celebrate about Beryl's life and Rev Tillett certainly had a lot to talk about a life well lived.

I met Beryl through the *Essex Journal*, and a few years ago Beryl showed me around Stow Maries aerodrome, obviously enjoying her role as Honorary Archivist. She knew everyone there and had time for a word with all, especially Ivor Dallinger who joined us. As I was leaving Beryl said 'we must get you and Chris [Dr Chris Thornton] back and I'll put you up some lunch'. Well Chris and I did come back for some lunch, but because of one thing and another, it wasn't after a tour of the aerodrome but after Beryl's funeral. I wish it hadn't been so – what fun we would have had!

Neil Wiffen

Joan Gurney & Alan Skinner,
Grey Friars: Colchester's Forgotten Corner – the seven lives of a special site
 pp.208. ISBN 978-0-95518-262-4.
 Access Books, 2014, £10.00.

Access books is the publishing arm of a charity known, at the time this book was published, as Colchester Adult Learning Assistance, now renamed Learning Never Stops. This grew out of community involvement in Grey Friars when it was an adult college. The two authors were both on the staff of the college and are now both closely involved with the charity. They clearly have an emotional attachment to their subject, and have been able to draw on the help of others who are similarly involved.

The book is an example of the high technical quality of output that is now achievable by small publishers. However this reviewer wonders whether the electronic means by which text and illustrations can be created and combined may soon see the end of the hard copy publishing of works of this kind. A version of this book, with mainly the same text and illustrations is available on line at the publisher's website: www.greyfriarscolchester.org.uk.

This does raise the question of the reason for producing the hard copy. The publishers say on their website, 'There is nothing like having the book itself!'; but this appears to come close to saying that the book is nice to have as an object (the word 'retro' comes to mind), although the electronic version is just as good for practical purposes.

In the end one can only say three things. If only the hard copy were available, it would be well worth the cover price. Secondly, purchasing the book makes a contribution to funds of the charity (assuming that the price covers more than just the cost of printing and distribution). Thirdly, the web site may continue to evolve and be revised, while the hard copy gives a version of the work at one moment in time.

When the main text of this book was completed, the former town house called Grey Friars, with the adjoining buildings, was still in the process of being converted to a luxury hotel, having been empty since 2008. This work was completed by the time that the authors' foreword was written. There cannot be many hotels that have had such an extensive history written about them. However it is perhaps to be regretted that the book appeared too soon to incorporate details of the conversion, and specifically to say how far the building's historic features are now visible to the hotel's customers.

The work is divided into two parts of roughly equal length. Each part is divided into seven sections. Whether this symmetry is deliberate or a coincidence is unclear.

The name Grey Friars referred originally to a large area within the northeast corner of the Roman walls. More recently, as parts of the property were sold off, it came to signify just the present building and its immediate grounds. The first part of the book traces the history of the site from pre-Roman times to 2014. The 'seven lives' of the subtitle refers to the different uses of the grounds and buildings over this period (although the division into seven seems somewhat arbitrary). Section 1 of part 1 covers the pre-Roman, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and early medieval period. Section 2 is devoted to the time from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries when the site was occupied by the Franciscans (the grey friars), whose acquisitions brought the property to its greatest size. Section 3 covers the period from the Dissolution to the late seventeenth century; and section 4, on the eighteenth century, sees the building, in 1755, of the town mansion that forms the heart of the present Grey Friars, and its significant enlargement in 1780.

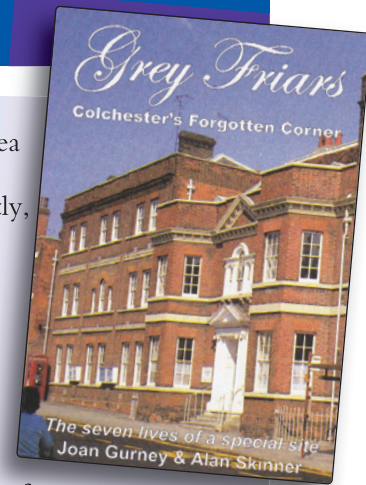
Section 5 covers the nineteenth century, when the house was a private dwelling. There is much interesting information on the families who owned or occupied it. An important part of the story of these years is the disposal of much of the outlying parts of the original site, for a while for the short-lived Botanical Gardens, and later for housing development and the Quaker burial ground.

The sixth section deals with the educational use of the house, and the adjoining premises in the twentieth century, first as a convent school, later as part of the High School for Girls, and lastly, from 1965 to 2008, as an adult education establishment. Section 7 'now and the future' is mainly concerned with archaeological investigations on the site.

The second part of the book begins with a consideration of the present building in the contexts both of buildings nearby in Colchester and of the history of English domestic architecture.

There follows what the authors describe as a 'guided tour' of the buildings' exterior, interior and grounds. These are described in considerable detail, with much information on how various parts may have been used at different times.

Most of the many photographs in this half of the book appear to have been taken while the building was still in use as an adult education establishment, or very soon after it closed. They show a building still well-maintained. The guided tour that is described was presumably physically possible then. The extent to which members of the public might be able to repeat it after the recent conversion to a hotel is not made clear. Matters like this were presumably up in the air at the time of publication. This part of the



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book is therefore best read as a snapshot in time, or, for those who visit the new hotel, an aid to understanding why it is as it is.

The book contains around 350 illustrations; that is an average of well over one and a half per page. They are mainly modern photographs, but there are also many reproductions of old photographs, paintings, drawings and plans. All are in colour, except when they are copies of black and white originals. All, except the covers and endpapers are in the body of the text. Naturally, many are very small. However

the quality of reproduction compensates for this, and the size prevents them overwhelming the text. There is no index; but there is a glossary of architectural and design terms and practitioners.

Whether read in hard copy, or in electronic form, this work will be enjoyed by those with an interest in Colchester's history, and by those who like to know what a building that they know well from the outside is or was like inside.

Richard Harris

Keith Snow,
**A Guide to St Martin's Church,
Chipping Ongar,**
[pp.24]. Ongar Millennium History Society,
2015, £3.00, available from the church.

The Ongar Millennium History Society dates back to 1996, and the Group (as it then was) published the multi-author *Aspects of the History of Ongar* in 1999. Since then it has produced a number of leaflets and booklets relating to Ongar (see www.omhs.org.uk for details), and now a more substantial guide to the parish church. It is not easy to know where to pitch a church guide nowadays. The old-style antiquarian guide, usually written by the rector, that dismissed everything later than 1715 as 'modern', is no longer acceptable. The other extreme, increasingly evident, is to provide an explanation of what a font, pulpit, and altar are for, without telling us much about the individual object in front of us. The Ongar guide, written by Keith Snow with the assistance of Stan Ball and Michael Leach, adopts the strategy of leading the visitor gently round the church and describing what he or she is looking at, including transcriptions of the

texts on memorials (often hard to read, and in some cases covered by carpet), with translations from Latin or other explanation as necessary. Knowledge of the basics (e.g. the purpose of a font) is assumed, but a concise explanation of the origins of 'ye', or the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, will be welcomed by most. There is a plan, and many colour photographs. The guide is up to date in that it makes use of recent research by Daniel Secker, published in 2013, which demonstrates that the bricks from which much of the church is built were made in the 11th century and not, as previously assumed, the 12th. If rather a lot of space is devoted to the embroidered kneeler, completed in 2008, that may be excused: it was designed and made by members of the Society. Like the kneeler, the guide is an admirable addition to the Society's productions, and sets a high standard for others to follow. As with all the best church guides, it will be useful to researchers even if they cannot visit in person, and deserves a place in all the usual libraries.

James Bettley



Thurrock Local History Society,
**Discovering Alfred Russel Wallace
in Thurrock,**
pp.20, Friends of Wallace at the Dell,
2015.

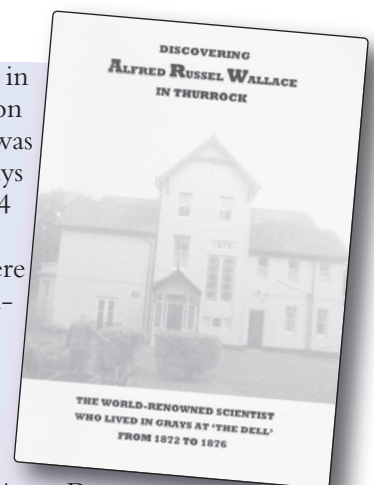
In 2014, Thurrock Local History Society embarked on a campaign to publicise the name and achievements of the eminent naturalist, Alfred Russell Wallace, who built a house and lived in Thurrock from 1872 to 1876.

Born in Usk, Monmouthshire, in 1823, educated at Hertford Grammar School, Wallace left at 14 years of age and earned a living surveying for enclosures, tithe maps and the new railways with his brother, William. Becoming interested in natural history, he attended lectures at mechanics institutes and, in 1848, travelled to Latin America with the naturalist, Henry Walter Bates, to collect insects and other specimens.

On his way back to Britain, in 1852, he lost his entire collection when the ship caught fire and was lucky to be rescued after ten days in a lifeboat. However, in 1854 he embarked on an expedition to the islands of Indonesia, where he collected live and dead specimens and reflected on genetic variations in different species, leading him to postulate a theory of evolution.

At this point he sent his paper, *On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original*, to Charles Darwin – prompting the latter to publish his own theory of evolution, on which he had been working for 25 years.

As a result, in August 1858, the Linnaean Society published a paper by Wallace and Darwin which put forward the theory of evolution. Darwin published



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his seminal work *The Origin of Species* in 1859, but gave full credit to Wallace as the co-author of the theory which became known as the Darwin/Wallace Theory. In 1862, after research and another paper *On the Zoological Geography of the Malay Archipelago*, which he sent to Darwin, Wallace returned to Britain and devoted himself to lecturing, writing articles, and activities aimed to defend the theory of evolution against its detractors.

After 1870, Wallace acquired the lease of four acres of land in Grays – a rapidly developing area since the arrival of the railway in 1854 – and built on it a house called The Dell. He was probably motivated in part by the hope of becoming the Director of a proposed Natural History Museum at Bethnal Green or the Superintendent of Epping Forest. Neither hope materialised, however, and for

this and other reasons he left The Dell, which was sold by auction in 1876, and moved to Rose Hill in Dorking.

Wallace lived to November 1913, receiving the Order of Merit in 1908 and numerous other honours. His grave at Broadstone Cemetery was restored in 2000 and a green Thurrock Heritage plaque was unveiled on The Dell (now 25 College Avenue) in 2002 by Wallace's grandson.

Thurrock Local History Society is to be congratulated on its efforts to commemorate the achievements of this great man and his association with Thurrock. This little book tells a fascinating story which enhances our knowledge of Thurrock heritage. Long may The Dell survive!

Stan Newens,

Rachel Lichtenstein,
Estuary: Out from London to the Sea,
pp.ix & 327. ISBN 978-0-24114-288-2.
Hammish Hamilton, 2016. £18.99.

From the first page of this fascinating book one is immersed (metaphorically, at least) in the Estuary of the River Thames. The book is divided into three parts and a total of 27 chapters, which take us on a journey from London to the outer reaches of the Thames Estuary, and back again. On the way we pass by, and encounter, fascinating facts and people. The journey begins with the author being invited to be the writer-in-residence for a multi-disciplinary arts project focusing on the Thames, 'responding to place.' The result is a splendidly atmospheric evocation of the river, its people, places and structures, taking in the landscape, history, wildlife, industry and archaeology, including the discoveries made as the result of the dredging of a deep-sea channel for the new super port at Shell Haven. The author states that she wanted to know more about the people who worked on the estuary; she wanted to walk through those mysterious rural landscapes on the Hoo, to visit sea forts and to discover more about the mythology of the place and listen to stories about the Thames.

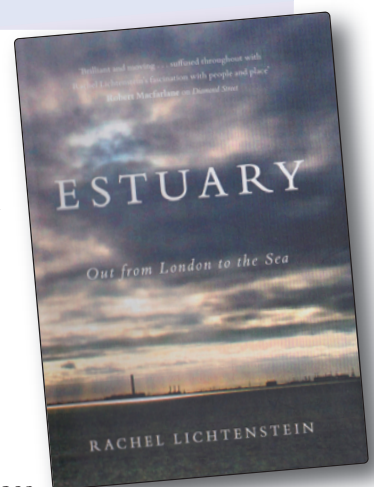
All this is achieved with consummate skill, while we learn about daily life aboard the Thames barges, their skippers and cargoes; the fishermen and their families, and others who work on the Thames and in the intertidal zone, the Richard Montgomery, 'a ship full of bombs;' we visit, with the author, the off-shore wind-farms and the Second World War sea forts of the 'Shivering Sands,' ('these extraordinary spaces in the sea') many of which had been the home of the first pirate radio stations in the 1960s.

The author takes us to 'Sealand,' a former naval fort off the coast of Harwich to meet 'Prince Michael' and learn about the 'German invasion' of his home and 'kingdom'. We also visit Southend Pier, and meet other characters on Canvey, at Gravesend, the Hoo Peninsular, and Foulness, all of whom have fascinating stories to tell. The author invites all of these people, those who make their living from the estuary, others who live on it, and others who study, enjoy, paint, photograph and in many other ways experience the estuary, to tell their own stories, which are so skillfully woven into the fascinating narrative.

The writing is truly atmospheric, and at times very moving. It is a personal travelogue (including the trials and tribulations experienced by the author herself), but with stories of and by the many people for whom the Thames and its estuary are part of their every-day lives, and how those lives are changing as the result of modern developments. It is gripping, sad, funny, and so well constructed. And fortunately, for the landlubber, there is a very useful glossary of technical terms at the end, although this writer is still in the dark about 'sailing goose-winged'!

It seems churlish to criticize this book, but perhaps one or two 'facts' could (should?) have been checked, such as the reference to tea clippers visiting Southend Pier. And, while the black and white photographs are just what is called for (colour ones would have ruined the 'atmosphere') the quality of their reproduction could have been better.

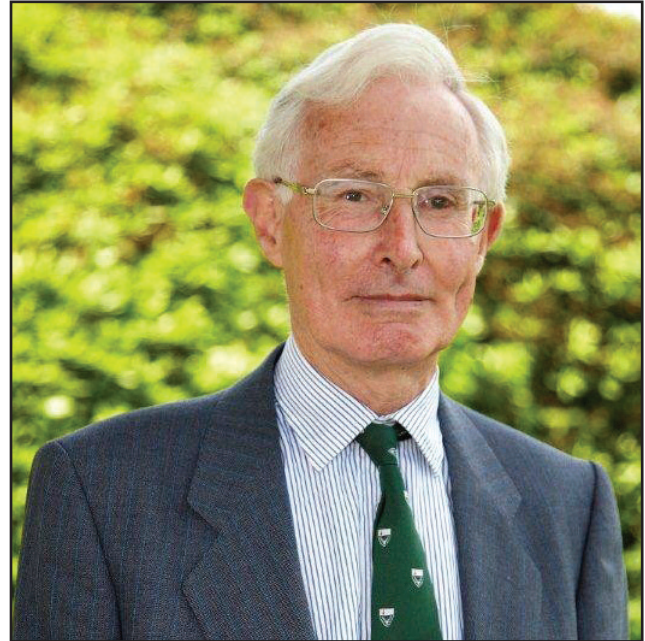
Ken Crowe



Your Book Reviewers are: James Bettley, architectural historian and author of the revised Essex Pevsner; Ken Crowe, retired Curator of Human History for Southend Museums Service; Richard Harris, former Archive Service Manager at the ERO; Stan Newens a former politician and member of the *EJ* Editorial Board.

Richard Morris

Richard Morris was born at Woodford in 1940, and has lived in the south-west of the County ever since. Educated at Bancroft's School, his main business career has been in the City of London, after a few years of experience in industry. He was awarded the OBE in 2000, for his work on finance and insurance facilities for UK companies involved in international construction projects. He was appointed a Verderer of Epping Forest in 1998, and has been re-elected at three septennial elections. An active interest in local history began on his retirement, and he served as Hon Sec of Loughton & District Historical Society for ten years. He has written five books, all of which have an Essex link, including 'The Powells in Essex and their London Ancestors', 'Merchants, Medicine & Trafalgar', 'The History of the Harvey Family', 'The Verderers and Courts of Waltham Forest in the County of Essex', and 'The Man Who Ran London During the Great War, the Diaries and Letters of Lt Gen Sir Francis Lloyd, 1853-1926'.



1. What is your favourite historical period?

The late Renaissance period during which so many great European artists were at their height, including Titian, Murillo, Anthony van Dyck, Gerrit Dou, Caravaggio and Willem van de Velde (the younger).

2. Tell us what Essex means to you? Essex has changed so much over my lifetime. Gone are so many great industrial companies: Marconi at Chelmsford and Ford at Dagenham.

3. What historical mystery would you most like to know? Was King John poisoned or did he die from a fever and dysentery, produced by fatigue, eating too many peaches and drinking new 'cyder', as his army retreated south from Lincoln?

4. My favourite history book is... A.L. Rowse (1903-1997): *The England of Elizabeth* (1950).

5. What is your favourite place in Essex? The 6,000 acres of Epping Forest, because of its history as the remaining fragment of the Royal Forest of Essex, and as a natural woodland open to the public.

6. How do you relax? Reading mainly biography and history.

7. What are you researching at the moment? I have just finished writing a history of Thomas Walker (1664-1748) of Bishop's Hall, Lambourne, and his important collection of Renaissance pictures which he displayed at his London house in Clifford Street. The rest of the year will be taken up with the 800th anniversary of the Charter of the Forest of 1217.

8. My earliest memory is... The V1 flying bomb and V2 rocket raids on London in 1944. I was living in Ilford and we had an anti-aircraft battery at the top of our road.

9. What is your favourite song/piece of music and why? *The Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams, as it evokes so perfectly the peace of the countryside.

10. If you could travel back in time which event would you change? The political background leading to the First World War and the ensuing carnage.

11. Which four people from the past would you invite to dinner? Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey (1758-1830), Captain of the *Téméraire* at Trafalgar, Lt Gen Sir Francis Lloyd (1853-1926), Churchill and Lloyd George.

12. What is your favourite food? Fish – grilled Dover Sole.

13. The history book I am currently reading is... *The British Oak* (2013), by Archie Miles, an illustrated history of some well known ancient oak trees in the UK.

14. What is your favourite quote from history? 'Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.' President JFK.

15. Favourite historical film? *Henry V* (1944), starring Laurence Olivier, who also directed the film. Music composed by William Walton.

16. What is your favourite building in Essex? *Audley End at Saffron Walden.*

17. What past event would you like to have seen? Elizabeth I reviewing her troops at Tilbury in 1588.

18. How would you like to be remembered? As a champion of Epping Forest.

19. Who inspires you to read or write or research history? G.R. Elton (*England under the Tudors*) and G.M. Trevelyan (*Illustrated History of England*), and the wealth of information in all the County Record Offices.

20. Most memorable historical date? 1066.



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