

Essex JOURNAL

A REVIEW OF LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Autumn 2020

Christopher Thornton
delves into the history
of Frith Wood, Laindon



Plus a first review of VCH Essex XII



Richard Morris Special

EJ 20 Questions:
Julie Miller

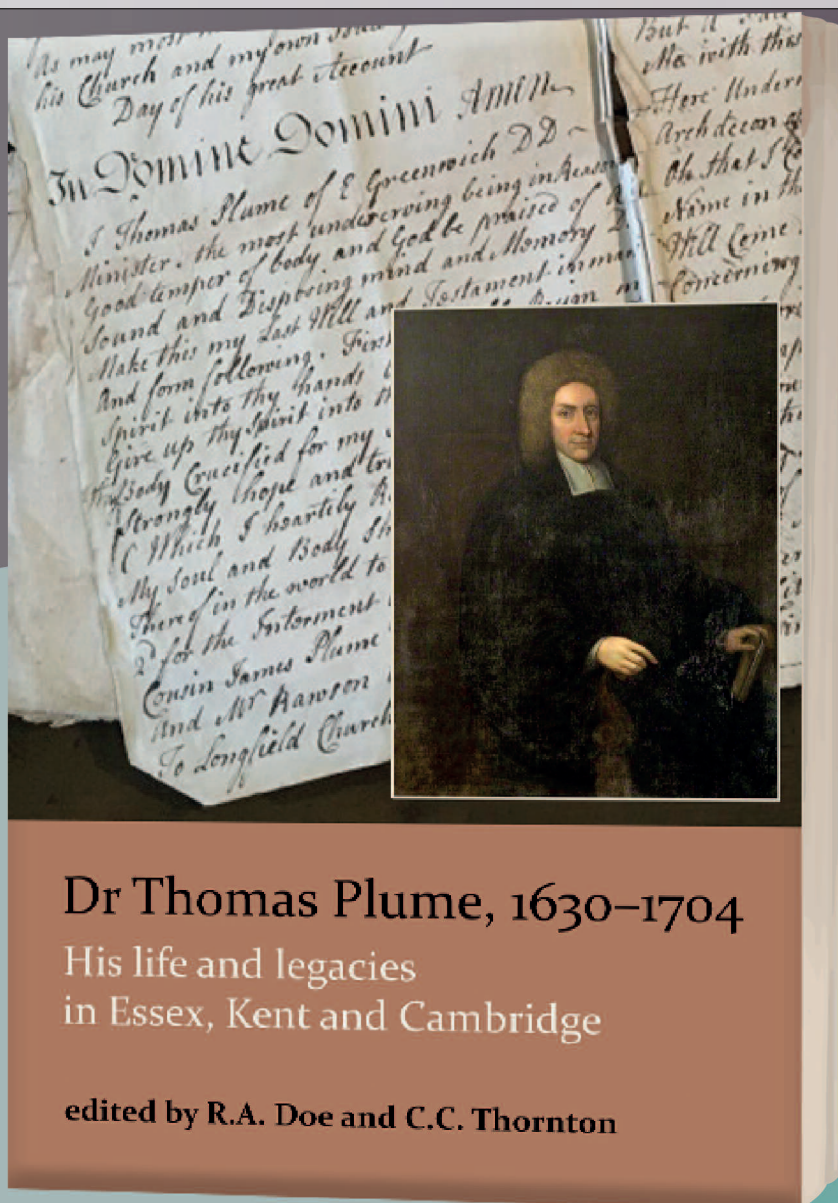
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Having lived through significant political, religious and intellectual tumult and debate, Plume's life and bequests provide valuable insights into the concerns and actions of an Anglican clergyman during a period of rapid change. His enduring legacies have continued to support the church, the poor and education for over three centuries.

Reviewed on page 132

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Well, that's that then! After 13 years this is my 27th and final issue. When I took on this job I wasn't sure how long I'd do it for and what to expect but there you go, perhaps it's best not to know! On the one hand there's an element of release but also of some regret – a period of one's life finishing. I can't help but review all that has gone by, especially those we have marked in these pages that are no longer with us – Debbie Peers springs to mind.

Recently I had to look back over previous issues, which made me realise how long ago some things were. I was struck by the breadth of articles, all 117 of them (at a quick count) that cover all sorts of subjects and include a couple of awards from the British Association for Local History. I hope that among the articles, shorter notices, book reviews and 20 Questions, you have all found something of interest and relevance – I assume so as you have kept on subscribing – many thanks for your support.

I was reminded of the importance of being relevant when, at the start of lock-down, I started watching episodes of *Time Team*. After so many years they make for interesting viewing – the tension between creating 'good' television but not at the expense of 'good' archaeology and in the middle the late Mick Aston smoothing over various issues. Reading up on him it is apparent his whole ethos was that archaeology (and we can add historical research and use of archives to that) doesn't need to be dumbed down. That all of us need to enthuse about our areas of interest to those who are less familiar than we are, but are curious and interested in the past. His obituary, published in *British Archaeology*, stated that: 'Aston reminded archaeologists [we can add archivists and curators] that 'their job is to do archaeology [or similar], and if that was an archaeology that meant nothing to ordinary people, there was no point in it — and government would be among the first to notice.' I passionately agree that we all need to ensure the study of the past, be it at ERO, at one of our museums or in a muddy hole, matters because if we don't no one will notice and the funding won't follow. This is something that ESAH, ERO and others, have to tackle head-on: be relevant and matter to those who don't yet know that they will become members of the Society or researchers uncovering topics that fascinate them.

This bumper issue is dedicated to that prolific historian and supporter of all things to do with the study of this county, Richard Morris, who turned 80 this year. I have also added some extra content but I'm sure you don't mind indulging me! Chris Pond talks us through the prolific Loughton Blue Plaque scheme, which has honoured so many interesting and curious residents. He then very kindly introduces us to the subject of this special issue. Alan Crosby begins with an article looking at Edward I's travels and his maps are striking – Edward really didn't go into the north of the county which is perhaps the opposite to what people do in this day and age!

The ever busy Chris Thornton (note VCH XII pt 1 and Plume biography in just this issue) has written an article on the long history of Frith Wood – a subject I know Richard with his Verderer's hat on will enjoy. Chris Starr

contributed an article to my very first issue and has also done so for my last. Well worth being reminded about the vagaries and accuracy of family histories: current genealogists do read!

An issue without an article from Michael Leach would be like sausages without mustard (see *EJ*, 42 (2) 2007, p.67 if you don't know that saying!) I feel doubly blessed with this contribution as not only has Michael written an article, but it is about Rev Thomas Cox, vicar of Broomfield for almost 50 years. Cox comes across as the most humane of men and I'm sure we all appreciate his sentiment when he wrote of loving 'to sit upon a contemplative cushion & my books about me which I have used for so long'.

Adrian Corder-Birch discusses Bishop Powell and his links to the county and other well-known characters while Maureen Scollan (another long term supporter of *EJ*) has written, at my invitation, the fascinating story of how Essex was policed during the miners' strike of 1984–5. Strange that what we might think was a far-away issue had such an effect on Essex.

Finally for my last orders, Amber Taylor looks at the development of County Hall and ends by pondering on the future of that building. Amber may be new to this journal but I was very pleased to ask her to contribute as her partner, David Humphreys, wrote an article for my first issue back in 2007. A whole heap of book reviews by many regular contributors follow and then Maldonian Julie Miller shares her interesting 20 Questions with us.

On the back page of this issue our Chairman extends his thanks to so many who have helped to keep *EJ* going over the years and I echo his words. Space limits me from adding my own to so many but I do thank Adrian for his support, especially the last few years when I have had personal challenges to overcome and seem to be ever pushed for time. His fantastic proofreading skills, advice, willingness to share the resources of his own library, and not least his friendship, has made my job much more manageable and enjoyable – thank you.

Before I sign off, one last look back. I introduced the 20 Questions feature as a way to record those who are research, writing and supporting the study of the past of our county. Lord Petre's answer, quoting a *Punch* cartoon, to 'How do you relax', has stayed with me: 'Sometimes I sits and thinks and sometimes I just sits!' – while I look forward to emulating this, it will probably only be the former as, having just started a PhD at UEA, I won't have much chance to examine the insides of my eyelids – *plus ça change...*

Many thanks, it's been a blast! Neil

News from the Essex Record Office

In preparation for writing this I decided to look back at what I had reported in the *Essex Journal* around this time last year. I suppose I ought to be used to looking at writings and testimony from the past with the benefit of hindsight. But it did strike me how distant it felt only one year on, and how innocent I was of what was ahead of us.

The pace of change as Covid-19 came among us now seems astonishing. While the ERO was perfectly confident in holding our one-day conference on the history of science at the beginning of March, by the end of that month we had sent all but a skeleton crew of staff home and closed our doors to the public – something I never thought I would have to consider, let alone insist upon.

It has been said, jokingly, more than once by staff that we would get a lot more done if it wasn't for the public coming in asking for documents and requiring advice and assistance. But it felt distinctly unsettling to merely be keeping our collections safe rather than preserved *and* accessible. However, it is remarkable that significant progress was made with some long-standing projects even with staff working from home and physically separated from the collections; for example, it was during the severest lockdown that we were able to publish the catalogue of a collection of 253 medieval deeds relating to the Barrington family of Hatfield Broad Oak (D/DbA T4) – not that the records themselves were taken home to be worked on, of course! Having made adjustments to the building, procedures and operations based on almost constant updates to guidance, I'm pleased to say that we were able to reopen our doors by the end of July and even more pleased to say that our users came back. Not yet in the same numbers as before Covid, but certainly enough to demonstrate that, although rarely a life and death matter, access to archives *is* essential.

The willingness of the ERO staff to return to the office and their efforts in adapting to the 'new normal' should be noted. It is remarkable that even behind masks and Perspex screens they have been able to earn numerous positive comments from users, one even describing the ERO as 'Britain's friendliest record office'. I'm thinking of having that inscribed over the door!

Covid-related restrictions on social gatherings are continuing to affect the ERO's ability to partly fund its operations through income generation, particularly our venue hire rooms. I am also concerned about the long-term impact for us of the wider economic outlook as the past few years have already presented a challenging position in all areas of local government. I feel we may have ever more reason to be grateful for the help we receive from supporters such as the Friends of Historic Essex, other local organisations and individuals who are keen to see the valuable work of the ERO survive and flourish. If you'd like to help, let me know, or simply visit the Support Us section of the ERO website: (www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/support-us/).

On the subject of funding support, a number of grant applications made over the past year have come to fruition, enabling the ERO to deliver a variety of projects. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is providing funding for our Communicating Connections project, developed in partnership with Chelmsford Museums, to digitise part of the Marconi photographic archive and record oral history interviews with former staff and others connected to the Marconi company. An Archives Revealed cataloguing grant from The National Archives will enable us to employ an additional Archivist for a year to catalogue the records of the Harlow Development Corporation. In a separate but related project, the ERO will also be playing a significant role in the establishment of a network of archives and museums across England which hold records of the new towns. The ERO Sound and Video Archive has received funding from the Association of Recorded Sound Collections to digitise recordings of the Essex Youth Orchestra and Colchester Youth Chamber Orchestra. We will be working with colleagues from the University of Essex, the University of East Anglia and BT Archives to help ERO develop a strategy for engaging audiences with digital collections (this supported by an EIRA Innovation Voucher grant). As part of this project, we are pleased to welcome back Lewis Smith from the University of Essex for another research placement to look at ways of making the most of the ERO's photographic and other collections. And the Essex Society for Archaeology and History and the Western Front Association (Essex branch) have provided some funding for more suitable archival packaging of Sister Kate Luard's First World War letters.

Most of these projects need a degree of match funding to complement the external grants, and for this we have generally used funds from a bequest made by the former County Archivist Ken Newton and his wife Mildred. It demonstrates the enormous impact a generous gift like this can have, and the lasting legacy it can provide.

One unfortunate consequence of the Covid-19 lockdown was that we couldn't go ahead with our planned event in April to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the ERO building. That is a shame, but we will just need to plan something bigger and better for our 25th year.

And finally, speaking of the ERO building, I would like to mention the sad death of Ron Brooke, the building manager and later Conference Centre Manager at the ERO for almost 20 years. Ron retired in March 2020 but very sadly passed away in September. During his time at the ERO, Ron made an enormous contribution to the smooth running and upkeep of our specialist building, and his work in ensuring it was maintained to a very high standard will stand us in good stead for years to come. Again, a legacy of which to be proud.

Martin Astell, Essex Record Office Manager

St Osyth witches

Once upon a time there was a woman writing a book about the St Osyth witches of 1582, but then there was a global pandemic. The Essex Record Office (ERO) was forced to close. So was the London Metropolitan Archives, where there were useful wills, and The National Archives, with its shipping and ecclesiastical records. The woman stopped writing and pined during lockdown for the crackle of parchment and the whirr of microfilm. However, this tale of woe may yet have a happy ending...

When the wonderful ERO reopened, I returned joyfully to the manorial court rolls and wills that I'd been parted from in late spring 2020. Since then, I've been hard at work on the book, which has shaped up into *The Witches of St. Osyth: Persecution, Murder and Betrayal in Elizabethan England* (publishers love a juicy subtitle and this one will be coming out with Cambridge University Press in late 2021 or 2022). References to both the witches and their accusers have continued to spill out of the records, especially about the accused witch in Little Oakley and her enemies: Annis Heard was involved in land transactions in the 1580s, after her mother's death, and meanwhile her key accuser Richard Harrison, the Rector of Little Oakley, got into deep trouble. Richard found himself charged with a hanging offence at the Assizes, the criminal court where he had accused Annis – something that must surely have given her some belated satisfaction.

Meanwhile, in Little Clacton I learned more about the accused witches Henry and Cysley Selles.

Cysley was accused of keeping a familiar spirit in the form of an animal improbably called Hercules, and this accusation cost her and her husband their lives when they died in prison in 1583. However, parish records reveal that Hercules was the name of their first son. He must have died, because his two surviving brothers told a story about how he visited them in the night. Finding his name in the parish records gives Hercules back his story: he was not a familiar but a small, sad, child ghost.

One of the aims of the book is to pay proper attention to the scattered records that tell us about the lives of the ordinary villagers of St Osyth and the surrounding villages in the 1580s. These people have often been seen as irretrievably lost to history, or worse still as unimportant: representative examples of people caught up in witchcraft events rather than individuals with homes, families, troubles, fields to till and bills to pay. So far my research has shown that although we'll never know many details about the lives of these people, it is most certainly worth assembling the facts that do remain and weaving them together to tell a fuller story.

Wonderfully, the Victoria County History (reviewed on p.129) volume covering 'St Osyth to the Naze' has just come out, and my copy arrived last week. I can't wait to read more about Elizabethan Essex in the Big Red Book.

Marion Gibson,
Professor of Renaissance and Magical Literatures,
University of Exeter.

**Bundle of deeds for properties in Great and Little Oakley, Beaumont, Moze and other manors.
(Author photograph, by permission of ERO, D/DGh T2)**



Boxted Airfield Museum: New Exhibit

In the spring 2018 issue of *Essex Journal* I reported on the coincidence which led to the then aeroplane mad schoolboy, Derek Aspinell, witnessing the crash of a Martin B-26 Marauder in Stondon Massey, to how in later life he was present when an important piece of this aeroplane was discovered. What made this truly amazing was that Derek had been asked in 1944, along with other children, to help look for the missing pieces of the Marauder to work out why it had lost the power of one engine.

Since their discovery in the 1980s Derek had kept the pieces that made up the propeller governor unit and one thing has led to another and now the B-26 Marauder Collection at Boxted Airfield Museum has them on loan from Derek's daughter. To accompany this new exhibit I was pleased to be able to work with the museum to create an information board that brings together Derek's story with other evidence that has since come to light that has kindly been provided by Essex Marauder expert Alan Crouchman.



The *Essex Journal* was pleased to fund the printing of the board.

John Camp, Trustee & Curator of the Marauder Collection, writes:

I am grateful to the *Essex Journal* for kindly sponsoring this information board, designed by Neil Wiffen, telling the story of Colonel Seymour's fatal crash in a Marauder on 17th July 1944. It nicely complements the items from the propeller governor assembly from his aircraft displayed alongside, which have been kindly loaned to the museum by Susan Stacey. It is a further step in the path to establish the Boxted Airfield Museum as a centre of excellence for the Marauder aircraft.

More information about Boxted Airfield Museum can be found at:
www.boxted-airfield.com/home

Neil Wiffen

Lost Heraldic Stained Glass

from the County of Essex

My co-author Dr Penny Hebgin-Barnes and myself are currently preparing for future publication a Catalogue of Medieval Stained Glass in Essex for the Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi (CVMA). Although *Medii Aevi* suggests the scope of the catalogue is for glass from the Middle Ages, we will include glass up to 1800 and use the old county boundary (i.e. pre-London Boroughs) to include interesting glass at locations such as Noak Hill, Ilford Hospital Chapel and Little Ilford. Having completed a photographic survey of such glass, the cataloguing process is now well underway. Images from the survey can be viewed on the CVMA website (www.cvma.ac.uk/jsp/locationIndex.do?countyCode=EX) click on the church dedication to see images of all the glass in that church. Glass in churches now located in the London Boroughs can also be viewed by using the 'Search by Location' option. In an appendix to the catalogue there will be details of lost and relocated glass from the county. Such glass includes the current east window of St Margaret's Westminster which had previously been installed in the chapel of the Palace of Beaulieu, now New Hall School, Boreham.

Additionally this glass was later acquired by Copt Hall and was possibly first installed in Waltham Abbey.

The largest loss of glass from the time of the Commonwealth has been heraldic shields of arms. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries two antiquaries, Richard Symonds and William Holman recorded amongst other things the heraldic stained glass then present in Essex churches and secular properties. The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (England) recorded just over 160 old stained-glass shields in Essex churches during the early decades of the twentieth century. However, Symonds and Holman recorded a far larger number of shields, most of which are now lost presumably due to neglect and the actions of later 'restorers'. The latter is graphically described in *Transactions of the Essex Society for Archaeology*, 2 new series, (1884), pp 113-5 where the 'abstraction' of ancient painted glass took place at Rochford, in particular a shield of arms for Bohun dating from the time of Edward III, along with the disappearance of other fragments of ancient stained glass, 'under the process which is called restoration'.



The Holman Manuscript is held by Essex Record Office (T/P 195) in just over 500 parts. Throughout 2020, when the ERO was able to open its doors, all parts of this manuscript were examined and details of heraldic glass recorded by myself. A summary of this research will be made available to the ERO in due course. A brief account of heraldic stained glass lost from churches along the north side of the River Blackwater is given by the author in 'Pre-1700 heraldic stained glass in Essex churches', *Journal of Stained Glass*, 43 (2019), pp.64-83.

Christopher Parkinson

Left. Shield of arms for Bohun (Earls of Hereford, Essex and Northampton), Great Waltham, SS Mary & Lawrence. (C. Parkinson)

Blue Plaques as stimuli of historical awareness: the Loughton scheme

The idea of marking the place where famous people lived, or where notable events occurred, dates from 1866, when plaques were installed by the Society of Arts in London. Most were actually brown, not blue. This scheme was later administered by the London County Council and Greater London Council (GLC), and except for a trial (which resulted in no installation in Essex) between 1998 and 2005, when in the charge of English Heritage (EH), has been confined to Greater London. There are some EH and GLC plaques in parts of Essex transferred to the GLC in 1965, for instance that to Clement Attlee on his house in Monkham Avenue, Woodford, and to Alliott Verdon Roe on a railway arch carrying the Chingford line over Walthamstow Marshes. A number of towns and cities, such as Hull and Alton, have their own schemes.

In Essex proper, the County Council had operated a scheme up to and during the 1980s, commemorating 25 such people as Margery Allingham and Eric Ravilious, but then abandoned it. So by the time Town Councils were re-established (local councils had not existed since 1933) in the southern part of Epping Forest in 1996, there was no public body that had an active historical marker scheme.

Loughton Town Council (LTC), responding to suggestions by the Historical Society, councillors, and members of the public, considered costings. They then decided on a budget of £1,000, 'in order that five or six plaques might be fixed [in 1997/98]'. They also agreed a trial installation in 1996/97, so as to commemorate in a timely way the centenary of the death of the lexicographer and compiler of the largest dictionary in English before the Oxford, Robert Hunter, which was to occur on 23rd February 1997. He was the designer and first occupant of my house, so I offered to pay for the experimental first installation, and if the Council liked the result, it was agreed they would continue the scheme. The cost of a standard 16-inch plaque in 1996 was £120, plus VAT of £21 and £12 for carriage.

Accordingly, the first plaque was ordered from the Bedfordshire firm, Signs of the Times, who were recommended by Dunstable Town Council, and erected on 20th

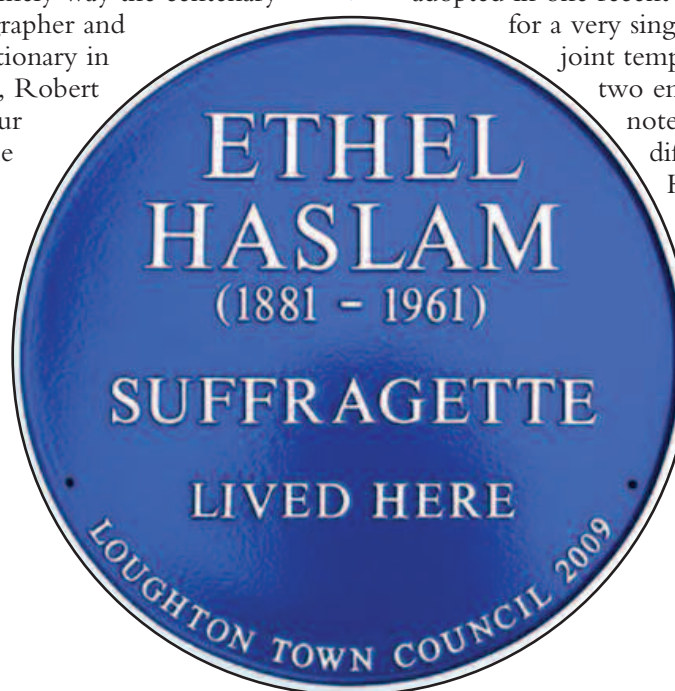
February 1997. The Council did like it, and an ongoing budget, (of some £700 per annum after the initial 'five or six') was agreed. The same firm have made all 44 plaques in the Loughton scheme.

English Heritage plaques are ceramic, but other materials, such as enamelled steel (like that to A.V. Roe mentioned above) or pressed aluminium (e.g. Leeds), have been used elsewhere. Those made of metal are liable to fading, warping, or rusting, so we specified a durable polycarbonate material, with a standard serif font (Times), the background blue to BS colour 20D45, with white lettering. With minor changes, that has been the norm ever since. This all followed helpful advice from Dunstable Town Council, who had such a scheme from 1985. The plaques are sited and installed by the Council in conjunction with the householder. They have to be plainly visible from the public highway, so as to fulfil the requirement of public education. The owner signs an agreement to display them for 25 years. Occasionally, a plaque needs sprucing up, and some householders get their window cleaner to oblige.

Following the initial decisions to erect a series of plaques, the council adopted a set of criteria¹ for deciding on the worthiness of the person or event to be commemorated, which included notable people or events of local significance as well as national figures. The criteria are occasionally revised; at first, for example, the place of birth of a notable person without measurable subsequent residence was not originally included, and a shorter residence was

adopted in one recent case (Kipling and Baldwin, for a very singular but character-forming joint temporary residence of those two eminent persons). It should be noted there are two significant differences from the English Heritage London scheme; firstly, the *site* or part of the boundary (e.g. a gate pier) of a former building (rather than the actual house) is admissible, and secondly, there is no requirement in the Loughton scheme for 20 years to elapse between the person's death and consideration for a plaque.

The Council advertised the inception of the scheme through its quarterly community newsletter, and invited suggestions from residents



Maker's photograph of the plaque to Ethel Haslam, leading suffragette in the Ilford branch.



Sir Hugh Cairns, the Australian pioneer neurosurgeon, who treated Lawrence of Arabia, and who lived in Loughton whilst working at the London Hospital. The plaque was inaugurated by three of his children, with a combined age of 279 years.

as well as from councillors. These were sifted by the then Environment, Heritage and Leisure Committee, and a decision was eventually made to install plaques at the rate of three per year. At the foot (or top if the layout suggests it) of the plaque appear the words 'Loughton Town Council' and the year of installation (which obviates any need to state 'on the centenary of his birth', or whatever).

As the scheme progressed, and an initial set of 15 plaques was achieved, the installation rate became less regular. There was also the occasional ad-hoc suggestion of a name, one refusal by a property owner, plus a couple of cases where it proved impossible to site a plaque. The list of plaques can be found on the LTC website and is repeated in the table below. The list is in order of date erected, and it can be seen that the first 15 included two VCs, four literary figures, and three local/Essex historians (a most neglected category!). One was a notable building, and one a joint plaque. I have generally been involved in the sifting process, and particularly have in mind the notability or otherwise of the subject, national or local, and also to verify the historical information provided – in one case, this was not verifiable, and in another, the committee did not accept the notability of the subject suggested.

After the first phase, public reaction was positive, so the Committee continued the scheme, receiving suggestions with or without prompting in the newsletter, and from councillors. Some suggestions have come from researchers on a particular topic or figure (e.g. Ralph Russell, the Urdu scholar, whose connection with Loughton had been forgotten, though it figures in his autobiography, Ethel Haslam,

suffrage campaigner), members of the public interested in a particular feature or person (Loughton CHS/author Darch), family history (Willingale, Campbell), or chance discoveries (Greenwood; it was known he had lived in Loughton but not where).

There have been one or two anomalies. The plaque to Mary Anne Clarke is in fact two plaques, one paid for by the owner, who adamantly wanted it sited in a particular place, not visible from the highway, so an additional one was placed visible from a public place. Mary Anne Clarke, being the *inamorata* of the Duke of York, had an additional part in Loughton history, as the street, Mutton Row, became known thereafter as *York Hill*. That to Hill and Stevens commemorates their association as schoolmasters, during which Stevens claimed Hill stole the idea of the postage stamp from him. We adopted the idea of a larger plaque (24-inch) where there was much wording (Adams, the Lesters, Kipling/Baldwin), or where a small plaque would be dwarfed by the size of the building (Pearson). The 1930s semi-detached house at 91 Staples Road Loughton is one of the 19 (at the last count) properties in the country to bear two separate blue plaques, many of the rest of which are in Bloomsbury or Hampstead.

By the time this article appears, there will be 45 in the town, reflecting, possibly, the fact that in late Victorian and Edwardian times, Loughton, with its proximity to both London and the Forest, was a really fashionable place to live, and also that many of the figures have been well researched (take for instance, Stan Newens' book on Arthur Morrison,² and the recent articles for the Kipling Society *Journal*³ by Janice Lingley on the seminal childhood Loughton holiday of Rudyard and Alice Kipling and Stanley Baldwin, Clyde Binfield's study of Cubitt⁴ and others in my own *Buildings of Loughton and notable people of the town*⁵).

The installation of a plaque is often followed by a ceremony, if the building owner wishes and permits it, usually with a short speech from the Mayor, and a contribution from the person who suggested the installation. A memorable one of these was the Ruth Rendell plaque on her first home when married, which was attended by Baroness Rendell's son, who had flown in from the USA, and other relations, and that for Lionel (Len) Murray, whose plaque was installed with a ceremony attended by all his children, one of whom is a Town Councillor. Ron Greenwood's was dedicated by his friend, Sir Trevor Brooking, who subsequently played football with the delighted children of the householder in their garden.

Do blue plaques increase the value of a property to which they are fixed? That is uncertain, but they probably do. In any case, nobody thinks they detract from it. They often appear in estate agents' particulars and articles about houses.⁶ There is an occasional refusal to erect a plaque, but most owners, in the

Loughton experience, seem reasonably keen. Once in a while, an owner will in fact make the suggestion him or herself.

The existence of a plaque on a property does not in any sense ‘list’ it. It may, however, have a significance in planning terms. There are 79 mentions of the word ‘heritage’ in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the definition of a heritage asset is not confined to listed buildings, as paras 184 and 197 of the Framework make clear. The status of a local heritage asset may be adduced or strengthened through the blue plaque. In Loughton, only one building in the scheme has been demolished, the home of Jose Collins, ‘the Maid of the Mountains’. This was before the first (2012) iteration of the NPPF, and it has occurred to the Council that had it been post-2012, it might have been possible to save the Victorian house. As it was, the developer who demolished it and built a block of flats was required to replace the plaque with new wording. He also then named the flats ‘Collins

Court’. The only plaque otherwise to have gone was that to W.W. Jacobs, which was hit by a dustcart, whose insurers replaced it.

Some commentators have suggested nationally that too many plaques are in existence, one article citing as particularly un-noteworthy the GLC plaque on the house from which Chopin set out to give his last recital; one Loughton councillor saying he’d not heard of many of those commemorated, though of course, that might reflect more on the bounds of his own knowledge. The Loughton scheme is designed to promote interest in the town’s history, which it does quite effectively, if the remarks of passers-by to my own house are anything to go by. The amount of information to be conveyed on a plaque is limited, and I would say, the fewer words the better (there’s nothing worse than an illegible one, so a test is whether you can read the wording from the street) and the Town Council has recently got a grant, which it will use to apply QR codes near plaques, to feed extra information through to those whose

List of blue plaques in Loughton

Deerhurst, 50 Baldwins Hill	Sir Jacob Epstein (1880–1959), sculptor
Forest Villa, 7 Staples Road	Rev Robert Hunter , (1823–97), lexicographer and naturalist
107 High Road (reinstalled on Collins Court)	José (Josephine) Collins , (1887–1958), music hall artiste
96 Goldings Road	William Wymark Jacobs , (1863–1943), author
9 Woodbury Hill	William Bridges Adams , (1797–1872), inventor and polemicist, and his wife Sarah Flower Adams , (1805–48), hymnodist and poet
Lopping Hall, 187 High Road	Built in 1883 out of compensation for the loss of Loughton’s lopping rights
169 High Road	Sir William Addison , (1905–92), Essex historian, author and jurist
8 Lower Park Road	John Strevens , (1902–90), artist
33 The Avenue	Capt Richard Stannard VC , (1902–77), Hero of the naval evacuation of Namsos, 1940
Roding Valley High School and Loughton County High School for Girls	Winifred Darch , (1884–1960), children’s author
164 Torrington Drive	Private Sidney Godley VC , (1889–1957), awarded the first VC of the Great War
70 High Road	Arthur Morrison , (1863–1945), novelist and writer on Japanese art
11 Wallers Hoppett	William Chapman Waller , (1850–1917), local historian
97 High Road	John Finlaison , (1783–1860), founding President of the Institute of Actuaries

116 Forest Road	George Granville Barker , (1913-91), poet
47 Poundfield Road	Marine William Sparks, DSM , (1922-2002), 'Cockleshell Hero'
47/49 Baldwins Hill	Muriel Lester , (1884-1968) and her sister Doris Lester , (1886- 1965), peace campaigners and philanthropists
Staples Road Junior School, Staples Road	George Pearson , (1875-1973), film producer (Headmaster, 1908-13)
St John's churchyard wall, Church Lane	Thomas Willingale , (1799-1870), lopper
311 High Road	James Cubitt , (1836-1912), architect
49 Forest View Road	Samuel Hazzledine Warren , (1873- 1958), palaeontologist and geologist
Meads, 77 Church Hill	Millais Culpin , (1874-1952), founding medical psychologis
22 Brooklyn Avenue	Ron Greenwood , (1921-2006), football manager
Goldings, Clays Lane	Everard Richard Calthrop , (1857-1927), engineer, pioneer of the parachute
43 Barncroft Close	Gladys Mills ('Mrs Mills') , (1918-1978), pianist
83 Baldwins Hill	Fred Stoker , (1878-1943), doctor and scholarly horticulturalist
Loughton Lodge, Steeds Way	Mary Anne Clarke , (c.1776-1852), royal mistress
3 Sparelease Hill	Ethel Haslam , (1881-1961), suffragette
11 Albion Hill	Sir Rowland Hill , (1795-1879) and Francis Worrall Stevens , (c.1807 – c.1880), pioneers of the postage stamp
47 Sparelease Hill	Rupert Arnold Brabner, DSO, DSC, MP , (1911-45), Commander of the Fleet Air Arm and Jean Gwenneth Brabner , (1913-44), hospital doctor
28 Roding Road	Donald W Gillingham , (1906-65), naturalist, author of <i>Unto the Fields</i>
41 The Uplands	Sir Frank Baines, KCVO , (1877-1933), Architect
Woodcroft, Whitakers Way	Sir Hugh Cairns , (1896-1952), neurosurgery pioneer, early advocate of crash helmets
Elm Cottage, Debden Road	William Brown Macdougall , (1868-1936), artist, and his wife Margaret Armour , (1860-1943), author
1 Connaught Avenue	Loughton Red Cross Military Hospital , (1914-19)
6 Queens Road	Ralph Russell , (1918-2008), Urdu scholar

Swiss Cottage, 40 Baldwins Hill	Ken Campbell , (1941–2008), actor, director and playwright,
University of Essex, Hatfields, Rectory Lane	Margaret Walker , (1922–2013), Founder of E15 Acting School and Joan Littlewood , (1914–2002), Theatre Workshop Director
45 Millsmead Way	Ruth Rendell , (1930–2015), author
140 Church Hill	Loughton bus garage , (1923–53)
91 Staples Road	Oriole Fruitarian Hospital , (1895–1903) and Dr Josiah Oldfield , (1863–1953), its director, friend of Gandhi
91 Staples Road	Barbara Harmer , (1953–2011), first woman commercial supersonic pilot
29 The Crescent, Loughton	Lionel, Lord Murray of Epping Forest , (1922–2004), trade unionist
Loughton Club, 8 Station Road	Rev William Dawson , (1836–1927), benefactor to Loughton, founder of the Club
Wall in Stanmore Way (site of former Goldings Farm)	Rudyard Kipling , (1865–1936) author, his sister Alice, and Stanley Baldwin , (1867–1947), Prime Minister
37 Jessel Drive	Peter Abrahams , (1919–2017), South African freedom writer

interest has been stimulated by them. There is of course already information on the LTC website, and the town hall often gets calls about them. Interested passers-by can sometimes be seen to consult Wikipedia on the person concerned via their smartphones. Courtesy of Robert Hunter's plaque, many more local people know the meaning of the word 'lexicographer' than previously!

In all, the Loughton scheme has, at very little cost, opened up public interest in the notable people and buildings in the town's history. Quite often, subjects of the plaques form material in the Press,⁷ for school projects, and comments about them or their subjects appear on the web;⁸ as inspiring wider projects, or feature on social media. An article in the local amenity society newsletter had wide circulation.⁹ A more general awareness of the depth and richness of Loughton's history has perhaps emerged, and the scheme has been copied in other places.¹⁰

It is a great pity the County Council gave up its countywide scheme, as the contexting of Essex history through its notable former residents throughout the county was very valuable.

Chris Pond

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Richard Morris: an appreciation

I well remember the night some twenty years ago when a new member turned up at a Loughton and District Historical Society (LDHS) meeting. We're a big society, with 70-90 people then coming to each meeting. The LDHS is sometimes accused of being a bit unfriendly, which is not really the case, but in a sea of heads, and with visitors turning up irregularly for different meetings, new members can sometimes be a bit anonymous. Not so the purposeful, tall, white-haired gent who came in out of the blue and paid a subscription, but little did we realise that that particular newcomer would seize the Society by the scruff of its neck, espouse local history with a vengeance, become a prolific author of great authority, and make his mark way beyond the confines of our own Society.

Richard Sidney Morris is a true man of Essex. He was born at Ilford in 1940, grew up on its border with Woodford, and was educated at Bancroft's School, Woodford Wells. His distinguished career was in the City, in a specialist field of export credit insurance; when he retired, as Managing Director of the Commercial and Political Risk consortium, he was awarded the OBE for services to HM Government in the Queen's Birthday Honours 1999. He also served as a part-time tutor to the GEC Management College near Rugby for some years. Richard, who is a bachelor, came to live in Loughton some 40 years ago.

The LDHS had ten books in print at the turn of the century, but these had not been professionally produced till the arrival on the scene of Ted Martin, our graphic and print designer, a couple of years before. It was the advent of Richard that consolidated our reputation for original research and scholarly publications, of which we now have 47. Richard's first project led to our publication in 2001 of *William Chapman Waller: Loughton's Historian*. This was the first hardback we had published. The Committee were a bit sceptical of such a major expenditure, since the LDHS had always looked after the pennies, but Richard believed in quality in presentation and production as well as in research, and underwrote the publication fully. When he first mooted a budget, I remember asking him if he wanted it printed on gold leaf. Twenty books by Richard (some as joint author) have appeared over the years; Richard also served as Secretary to the LDHS for some ten years.

And Richard has also been a good friend to this publication. He joined the Editorial Board during the early 2000s, when it was going through a difficult period, and strengthened it significantly. His wise counsel at meetings was very sound and he was an enormous help and as soon as *Essex Journal* returned to being the successful journal that it has continued to be, he retired. Nevertheless he has continued as a regular contributor and is the author of a number of excellent articles. More recently Richard has supported the indexing project.

Richard is also a member of the Essex Society for Archaeology & History and a great supporter of the

good work of the ERO as well as supporting the Victoria County History of Essex.

What would British society do without retired people? Richard threw himself into local history with great enthusiasm, as of course he did in his other public service role, that of Verderer for the northern parishes of

Epping Forest, a post to which he had been co-opted in 1998 and to which he was re-elected in 1999, 2006, and 2013. He retired in 2018. As a serving Verderer, he wrote what many will consider his *magnum opus*, the 200-page *Verderers and Courts of the Forest of Waltham in the County of Essex* (2004), a detailed study of the Forest administration over the centuries. The families and society of Essex in the past, at different periods, have always fascinated him. He also has been a liveryman of the Glovers' Company in the City for some 20 years.

Few people will have contributed more to what we know of Essex in the past than Richard, and his part in the continuing life of the Forest is without peer. He is proud to call himself an amateur historian. Essex in general and Loughton in particular has been fortunate to have him among us.

Chris Pond

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+ editor or joint editor, ★ joint author with Chris Pond



The travels of King Edward I in Essex

by

Alan G Crosby

Edward I reigned from 1272 to 1307. He was one of our most remarkable kings, arguably the greatest of the Middle Ages – a man recognised in his own time as a formidable military commander; a ruler under whose auspices key legal processes and forms of government and administration were modernised, regularised and expanded; and a man of strong and determined character. A recent biographer, Marc Morris, has argued that much about Edward could be seen in terms of superlatives and that his 35-year reign was instrumental in shaping the destiny of these islands: it saw, he says, ‘the forging of Britain’. His kingship was, in his view, ‘one of the most pivotal in the whole of British history [and] one of the most dramatic. Edward summoned the biggest armies and the largest parliaments seen in Britain during the Middle Ages; he built the greatest chain of castles in Europe; he expelled the Jews, conquered the Welsh and very nearly succeeded in conquering the Scots’.¹

He was also fascinating as a person, as a human being – an inveterate traveller, a devoted and loving husband, a pious visitor to holy shrines, the father of a very large family (albeit one tragically depleted by the deaths of infants and children), an enthusiast for outdoor sports, tournaments and Arthurian legend, tall in stature and a powerful magnetic presence. Edward and his wives Eleanor of Castile (who died in 1291 and was commemorated by the celebrated Eleanor Crosses) and Margaret of France (whom he married in 1299) travelled constantly throughout England and Wales, into Scotland including the far north, and on

frequent prolonged overseas trips. Michael Prestwich, another of his biographers, notes that ‘in 1285...he stayed at about a hundred different places in the course of his travels’ and that even in 1305, when the king was in his late 60s, he kept up the same frenetic pace.² This article explores a rather more relaxed dimension to the journeying of the king and queen – their numerous visits to Essex – and shows how sometimes they were in the county *en route* to somewhere else, but that the southern parts of Essex held a special place in the affections of the king.

Royal itineraries

Through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and into the middle decades of the fourteenth, the kings of England were always on the move, rarely staying long in one place. This had major implications for government and administration, since so much power and authority was exercised in person by the sovereign. The peripatetic royal household comprised the king and often the queen, sometimes other members of the royal family, their servants and retainers, bodyguards and advisers, clerks, officials and diplomats. It fluctuated in numbers but was the central element of the government. As the household was geographically footloose the decisions of the king himself or those confirmed by his officials using delegated powers, together with the routine business of administration, might take place almost anywhere in the country.

Documents would be dated according to the place where the decision was made and written down, or where the account was paid, the letter sealed, the order issued. Thus, a document of

Edward I might be dated (the original being in Latin) ‘at Lyndhurst on the Wednesday of the feast of the Decollation of St John the Baptist in the 13th year of our reign’, which when converted to present-day notation would be 29th August 1285. Such information means that it is possible to track the movements and whereabouts of successive kings almost day-by-day—we do indeed know that Edward was at Lyndhurst in the New Forest that day, in the middle of a short hunting trip. The documents in question are often of no great importance in themselves – they might be routine invoices, standard warrants or minor charters – and most were concerned with everyday administrative business. But they provide us with a paper trail (more accurately, a parchment trail) with which we can pinpoint with considerable accuracy what the king and his household were doing, and where they were.

Once administration became more fixed at Westminster and the bureaucrats tended to stay put, it can be more difficult to determine the whereabouts of the king or queen on a particular day. That process, of putting down roots and developing permanent government offices, was well under way by the last quarter of the thirteenth century when, in Edward’s reign, the growing scale and complexity of administration (and especially financial and legal business) meant that the chancery and exchequer became mostly fixed at Westminster.³ Nevertheless, key aspects of government did remain ‘on the move’ until the 1330s, since officials so often had to consult the king in person: important categories of document which provide evidence for this include

the Close Rolls, Patent Rolls, Household Accounts and a range of writs and memoranda books.

The ability to trace the movements of the royal household and the king himself has long intrigued historians. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the work of the Record Commission (which operated from 1800 to 1837 and was succeeded by the Public Record Office) in sorting and cataloguing the manuscript archives of the royal household, and beginning the mammoth task of publishing transcripts of key sources, made it possible for amateur and professional scholars to discover how and where, for example, kings travelled during periods of warfare; to look at royal visits to particular towns or religious houses; or to demonstrate with confidence the pattern whereby certain monarchs (including Edward I) spent long periods overseas. Reconstructing the political history of a period was made more convincing if it could be shown that, for instance, a king moved speedily from one castle to another at a certain time, while biographers could seek to demonstrate how the apparent personal piety of monarchs, or their favourite saint or relic, were revealed by a disproportionate number of visits to a particular shrine.

From the 1880s onwards this disparate evidence, scattered across thousands of pages of documents and rolls of accounts, was drawn together and collated by the remarkable efforts of Theodore Craib and Henry Gough, both of whom worked at the Public Record Office (now The National Archives). They compiled 'itineraries' of several kings—most notably Henry III (1216–72), Edward I (1272–1307) and Edward II (1307–27), the three for whom the evidence is most comprehensive – so that detailed calendars of their movements during the course of their reigns were for the first time available. Some of these itineraries were published,⁴ while

others remained in manuscript form. In the early 1970s E.W. Safford took Gough's itinerary of Edward I and revised it, checking a wider range of documents – including many which had been unavailable to researchers at the end of the nineteenth century – and correcting false readings and wrong interpretations of place-names. Published by the List and Index Society in 1974, Safford's three-volume edition of the itinerary of Edward I is the main source for this article.⁵

The journeys of kings (and queens)

Although the itineraries have been extensively exploited by historians researching the roads and routeways of later medieval England, they in fact rarely reveal details of routes in a specific sense. Rather, they tell us the places where the king and his household stopped each night or rested in the daytime, allowing us to draw a line between two points. Much of the interpretation of this basic information depends on reasoned supposition, rather than explicit statements of, say, which roads were used from Havering to Barking or Brentwood to Thurrock. Often the likely route is identifiable using common sense – for example, there might be a Roman road which had continued in regular use, or a road which was described in contemporary documents as *via regia* ('king's highway'). At other times, though, the road network has altered radically in the succeeding seven or eight centuries, or there might always have been several possible routes, so we cannot be certain.

Neither, in most cases, do the documents explicitly state the purpose of a journey. In some instances of course this is perfectly clear—in the case of Edward I, for example, his long travels around North Wales and into Scotland during the protracted wars of the 1280s and 1290s and the first years of the fourteenth century were military expeditions.

At other times, however, it is not so immediately obvious why the king was in a certain place or was following a particular itinerary. Therefore circumstantial evidence is important. For instance, we know that Edward's frequent and sometimes lengthy trips to the north Norfolk coast – which might otherwise be inexplicable – were because two of his favoured pilgrimage destinations were there. The celebrated shrine at Walsingham was one; the other was the small and somewhat obscure priory at Bromholm, on the edge of the sea near North Walsham, which treasured a fragment of the True Cross, an especially sacred relic which the king personally venerated.

Edward succeeded to the throne on 20th November 1272, on the death of his father Henry III. He was 33 and his wife, Eleanor of Castile, was 30: they had been married for 18 years and had already had six children. In November 1272 they were in Sicily, as part of a lengthy sojourn in the Mediterranean, having been on crusade. They turned for home but travelled at a very leisurely pace—they had only reached Rome on 5th February 1273—and, remarkably, did not arrive back in England until they landed at Dover on 2nd August 1274. It was a measure of Edward's absolute and total political control, and of the stability of the kingdom, that he could dally for a full year and a half before returning to England for the coronation at Westminster Abbey on 19th August 1274.

Essex was visited by Edward on many occasions. As far as can be ascertained from the itineraries, he and Eleanor first came overnight to the county as king and queen on 21st April 1275. They had spent the night of 19th April at Lavenham in Suffolk, and on 20th April stayed at a place unknown (probably Nayland), but on 21st April they were at Witham. This was part of a short 'progress' which had taken them, over a period of ten days, from Westminster to Bury St Edmunds

and other important places in Suffolk. Thereafter, as far as can be ascertained, the king visited Essex on 27 other occasions, sometimes only stopping overnight, at other times spending a couple of weeks. The final visit of his long life was a prolonged sojourn lasting for seven weeks in August and September 1305, when Edward was a weary old man of 66 with a new young wife, his second queen, Margaret of France. This was shortly before his final exhausting journey up to the Scottish borders during the bitter struggle against his foes. Having spent almost a year in Cumberland, he met an undignified death from dysentery on the Solway marshes outside Carlisle in early July 1307. He was 68 and had been fighting for almost 30 years.

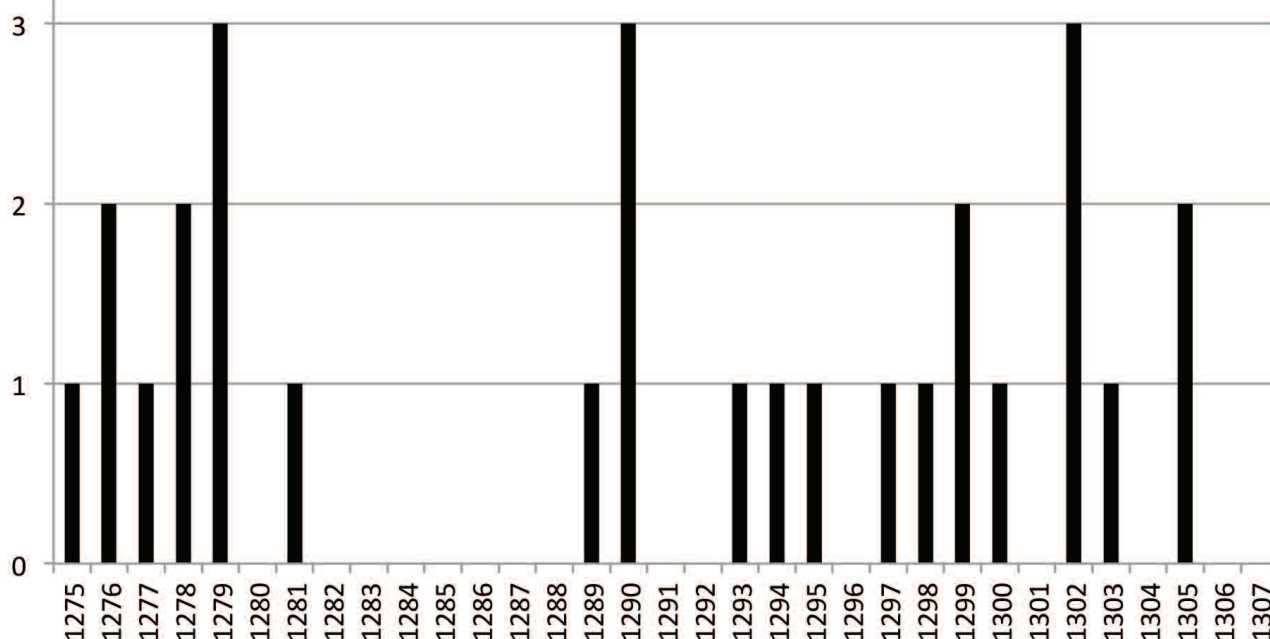
When did Edward come to Essex?

It hardly needs to be said that Essex posed no threats to the king—naturally, its inhabitants were peaceful and peaceable. The long wanderings which took Edward to the northern and western edges of his kingdom were about full-scale warfare,

defeating the Welsh and the Scots, securing the borders, expanding the realm. But the king always disliked staying in one place for long—and, very significantly, the queen almost invariably travelled with him. They adored each other and were inseparable: throughout their marriage, Eleanor rarely left his side and she spent many long and arduous months on the military campaigns. The graph below (Fig.1) shows the frequency of their visits to Essex, highlighting the fact that between 1281 and 1289 they did not apparently set foot in the county despite its proximity to London. The first half of that absence is explained by the crisis in North Wales, when Edward was campaigning from his military base at Chester and he and Eleanor spent much of their time in and around the mountains of Snowdonia (which is why their last, and only surviving, son Edward was born at Caernarfon Castle in 1284). Wales having been conquered, they then spent from May 1286 to August 1289 in France (mostly in Gascony) touring Edward's continental realm and enforcing his rule there.

With that exception they (or, after his remarriage in 1299, he and Margaret) came to Essex in most years. In 1290, for example, there were three recorded visits, two being not much more than day trips (one to Havering, the other to Stratford) but the third for just over a fortnight, when Eleanor was in the early stages of the illness from which she would die in Lincolnshire in November. The Essex holiday, for that is what it amounted to, was mainly spent at Havering, part of a long series of slow and relatively local progresses over the summer, before the king and queen moved north at the start of the autumn. They mostly travelled short distances each day, but stayed for longer periods in a few places – the 11 consecutive nights at Havering must have been a welcome rest for the ailing queen, who was only 49 years old but worn out by childbirth and incessant travelling (she had had at least 17 pregnancies since the age of 13½). Exhausted by the ever-changing, ever-moving world she inhabited, a peaceful week and a half in rural Essex must have seemed a blessed and welcome respite.

1. Number of known royal visits to Essex each year during the reign of Edward I.



Some royal visits involved the king and queen passing through the south of the county *en route* to Kent, or *vice versa*. About a dozen of the 28 which are known fall into that category. For example, on Tuesday 18th January 1279 they were at Westminster. The next morning Edward, Eleanor and their retinue went downriver to Thurrock, staying overnight, and on Thursday 20th January made the short crossing to Gravesend, going thence deeper into Kent and on to Canterbury. Criss-crossing the Thames and Medway was routine: on 2nd June 1293 Edward went from Westminster to Greenwich, then down to Gravesend the same day, and the next day crossed the estuary and travelled north to Hadleigh – but on 4th June he was over the river once more, at Minster in Sheppey. Another example was in October 1302, when he crossed from Chatham to Thurrock, and the following day (10th October) went up to Greenwich, before returning to Thurrock and on 12th October going back to Westminster.

Restless, ever the wanderer, Edward shifted incessantly. What exactly lay behind these numerous short trips over the river is generally unclear, but year after year the pattern was repeated. There was a sequence of landing-places on both sides of the Thames, each of which could be the starting point for a journey into the interior of Kent or Essex. It is unsurprising that these trips used the river as much as possible, for going down from Westminster by boat was standard practice for monarchs well into the eighteenth century. In the years around 1300 the river was a far easier, more reliable and indeed more comfortable means of transport than the roads and tracks of the Thames-side marshes. Claire Martin observes that in the fourteenth century there were recognised regular ferries with fixed fares (the ‘Long Ferry’ from Billingsgate to Gravesend, and the ‘Short Ferry’

from Gravesend to the Essex shore), and that the boatmen enjoyed royal patronage and protection. It was customary for the royal household to requisition boats or barges and to pay handsomely for doing so. There were also many private boats and ferry crossings, hireable for short journeys at short notice. The Thames was not a barrier—it was a link and a connection.⁶

Just as the Thames-side parts of the county were visited quite often because they were en route to Kent, so the king also travelled along the Lea valley because this was a favoured way out of or to London on expeditions which took him into Hertfordshire and Suffolk. Waltham Abbey, in particular, was used as the first or last overnight stop on such journeys, its convenience enhanced by the abbey’s possession of the miraculous Holy Cross, an object of pilgrimage. This route (going on to Ware and then towards Royston, mostly on the Roman road from London to Lincoln) was probably preferred over the Ipswich road via Chelmsford and Colchester because the king’s destination in Suffolk was often Bury St Edmunds, which he visited many times. For example, old and tired in the damp chill of the late winter of 1305, he came south from Walsingham (leaving on 4th February) via Swaffham, Thetford and Bury St Edmunds; spent five nights at Royston; six more as he very slowly passed through Hertfordshire, averaging only five or six miles a day; and came to Waltham on 24th February, having taken three weeks to travel 80 or so miles as the crow flies. He stopped at Waltham for at least two and possibly four nights, on 27th February was at Walthamstow, and on 28th February arrived at St Katherine’s by the Tower. The glacial pace reflects the king’s advanced age (he was 66) and the challenges of travel at that time of year. Two years earlier, in February 1303, the pilgrimage had been to St Albans, from which he returned

via Hatfield, Hertford and Stanstead St Margaret’s, spending three nights at Waltham Abbey and then two at Walthamstow – breaking the journey between the two with lunch and a bit of administrative business at Chingford.

Essex, by virtue of its close proximity to London, was highly convenient for leisure visits at times when military campaigns did not draw the king to the edges of his realm. Day trips or short breaks out of the capital were a regular part of the royal routine, a means of getting away from the pressures of Westminster, perhaps having discreet meetings and discussions with advisers, but also trying to escape formal ceremonial occasions – Edward was known to dislike public pomp and pageantry, he loathed grand social gatherings, and he preferred to wear plain and simple clothing.⁷ Two examples were in the spring of 1290, just before the queen fell seriously ill. On Monday 1st May they went to Havering for one night, before returning to Westminster, and a month later Stratford was the overnight destination. Another instance was in April 1300 when Edward, with his new wife Margaret, went from Westminster to Stratford for a long weekend, and returned via a night *en route* at Tottenham. To call this a mini-break in the country would perhaps not be totally facetious.

Where did the king and queen stay, and why?

As far as we can gather, Edward spent a total of 198 nights in Essex between 1275 and 1305, although for 32 of these there are no surviving documents to give a precise location. We can be sure that he was in the county on those nights, even though his exact whereabouts cannot be ascertained, from the evidence of documents processed on the previous and following days. For example, on both 29th September and 1st October 1279 he was at Eastwood, between Rayleigh and Prittlewell, but

there are no known documents dated 30th September. Logically, of course, Edward was at Eastwood that night as well, but we cannot be absolutely certain – he might, for instance, have gone overnight to Hadleigh or one of the other manor houses he visited in this part of the county, but undoubtedly he was somewhere in south-east Essex. Taking another instance, it is even more difficult to pin down where he was on the night of Saturday 3rd April 1294. On the Friday the king went from Witham to Chelmsford, and on the Sunday he was at Tilbury, but where he stopped for the Saturday night – presumably somewhere on the road between Chelmsford and Tilbury, perhaps Wickford – remains unknown.

The table (right) shows the 39 places in Essex where the king is known to have stayed. It must be emphasised that this list cannot be regarded as fully definitive, simply because of inherent uncertainties in the documentary evidence, but it is reliable in a general sense. In particular, the more favoured destinations (from Barking onwards) really did occupy that position in the table. It should also be borne in mind that it is not the total of places which he actually visited in the sense of ‘passing through’, because it excludes identifiable daytime stops where some business was transacted on the way to the eventual destination. In a number of instances documents were clearly dated at locations *en route* between one place and another. The example of Chingford has been mentioned; another instance was on 26th May 1302 when documents were dated at Greenwich, Aveley and Hornchurch, indicating that after the king had come down the river he landed at Purfleet and then stopped at Aveley for a break (maybe it was lunchtime?). His clerks took the opportunity to have a short session dealing with the parchment-work, and then they went on to Hornchurch.

Place	Nights	Place	Nights
Baddow	1	Rawreth	2
Beeleigh	1	Vange	2
‘Bures’ [Bowers Gifford]	1	Roding	3
Chelmsford	1	Walthamstow	3
Chingford	1	Witham	3
Colchester	1	Woodham Ferrers	3
Crondon	1	Barking	4
Downham	1	Stanford le Hope	4
Fobbing	1	Tilbury	5
Hornchurch	1	Writtle	5
Matching	1	Copford	6
Rainham	1	Stratford	6
Shoebury	1	Waltham [Abbey/Holy Cross]	8
Theydon	1	Harwich	10
Totham	1	Laver [High]	10
Wickford	1	Rayleigh	10
Brentwood	2	Eastwood	11
Hadleigh	2	Thurrock	19
Hatfield Peverel	2	Havering	27
Messing	2		

The table reveals interesting dimensions to the royal travels through the county, distinctive characteristics which are particularly emphasised if the places listed are also mapped (Fig 2). Most striking, perhaps, is the fact that both Colchester and Chelmsford were almost completely ignored, and that in the itineraries there is nowhere at all in ‘High Essex’. The king and queen largely confined their visits to the southern third of the

county, and apparently never set foot in the north-west despite the existence of such significant places as Saffron Walden, Castle Hedingham and Thaxted.⁸ Their furthest north-western destination within Essex was ‘Roding’, which of course is a somewhat imprecise description since it was a district rather than a specific place. High Essex apparently did not appeal to Edward and Eleanor as a holiday destination, and neither were its small towns

and castles associated with any pressing military or political issues which required the king's presence. Furthermore, travelling in that part of the county was more difficult, with its narrow muddy lanes and more varied topography, away from navigable rivers and Roman roads. But there is another factor – the availability of hunting – to which I will return shortly.

Royal visits in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were rarely undertaken for the same purposes as they are today. Visiting a town for its own sake, or for publicity purposes, was low on the agenda. Progresses were potentially beneficial in some senses, but the idea of royal visits in the modern sense is a phenomenon of a later century – Henry VII and Henry VIII developed an already-emerging principle of tours around the provinces deliberately for the purpose of inspecting their realm and to be seen by the populace, and

famously Queen Elizabeth I stage-managed this strategy to a high degree. For kings in the decades around 1300 the motive was more typically political and/or military – as with the extended campaigns in Scotland or North Wales – or personal, for royal leisure or holidays, piety when visiting shrines, or meeting the needs of administration. Michael Prestwich notes that at the beginning of Edward's reign there were ceremonial entries to London and Oxford, but that 'the excitement of having a new king on the throne did not last... his journeys were not grand progresses, marked by grand ceremonies intended to display the king to his people... It is unlikely that Edward's subjects were eager to welcome him [for] a visit from the king and his household was to be feared for all the disruption it would cause'.

One of the longest visits to Essex combined personal family reasons with the business of

government, and centred on a fascinating episode in the history of English town planning. On 7th January 1297 the 15-year old Princess Elizabeth, Edward's eighth and youngest daughter, was married at Ipswich to John I, Count of Holland and Zeeland. After the ceremony the widowed king stayed in Ipswich for three nights and then moved on to Harwich, where he spent ten nights. The king had previously summoned Sir Henry le Waleys of London and Bordeaux, Thomas Alard of Winchelsea in Sussex, and 'other prominent townsmen of England' to join him at that time, wherever he might be – to say the least, quite a challenge given the slowness of communications, the winter season, and the king's unpredictability. The reason was that the king planned to hold 'a *colloquium*, a conference to advise him ... how best to lay out the streets, buildings and defences of a newly-created...town and

2. Map of places in Essex visited by Edward I. (A.G. Crosby/C. D'Alton)



how best to devise its form of government'. Its immediate practical purpose was to set out designs and proposals for the reconstruction of Berwick-upon-Tweed, recently burned and half-destroyed in the Scottish wars, but it also set an agenda for a future programme of town foundation more widely across the country and in Edward's realm of Gascony and Aquitaine. Representatives came to Harwich from 20 towns and cities, although the convening of the meeting was fraught: 'the expert from Stamford had to be excused attendance at the last minute, and the men from Lincoln and Grantham had to be replaced by others, only to find that the Grantham substitute was deaf and ineligible'.¹⁰

Accommodation for royal visits in this period would, unless active warfare was involved, usually be found in comfortable and preferably luxurious buildings. Colchester Castle, though owned by the Crown, was already the county prison in the thirteenth century, and its amenities were not those of a well-appointed royal residence. It was visited only once – a pattern repeated in other counties: for example, on his frequent visits to York the king always stayed in the archbishop's palace, not the royal castle; he visited Norwich Castle only twice; and Cambridge Castle and Orford just once each even though both had been the subject of recent heavy expenditure.¹¹ Edward and Eleanor preferred top-quality accommodation – a country house or manor house – and made very good use of those held by other major landowners. This had the benefit (to the Crown) that the owner bore some or all of the heavy costs and expenses, and of course it meant considerable dismay and apprehension if a royal visit to an area was scheduled. Thus in late July 1281 the king and queen stayed for at least six nights (and perhaps as many as ten) at Copford, lodging in the manor house on

the estate which since the late tenth century had been one of the major properties of the bishops of London. It was convenient for Colchester and the great Roman road, and much more agreeable than an old and chilly stone castle. Similarly, the prolonged tour of Essex in August and September 1305, undertaken by Edward and Margaret, included four nights at Barking, where they stayed as guests of the nuns at the great and ancient abbey, over which the Crown claimed and exercised patronage. At Stratford, too, the abbey was conveniently located for overnight stops on the journey to and from Havering, of which more below.

Hunting and hawking

Edward adored hunting and especially hawking. While such pursuits are generally seen as pretty standard for medieval and sixteenth century monarchs, for Edward they were a lifelong passion. Exceptionally, his father Henry III was uninterested in the chase, but in 1246 had appointed a Hampshire knight, Bartholomew Pecche, to supervise and tutor the seven-year old prince, training him in riding, combat, hunting and hawking: a year later Henry granted Edward permission to hunt in Windsor Forest. The passion was intense: Marc Morris has noted of the king that at the beginning of the 1280s, before the crisis of the Welsh Wars, 'never was he more leisured ... [he] remained, at forty, as vigorous as ever. On several occasions during these years we catch him on what are evidently hunting trips, in Essex, Northamptonshire and the New Forest'.¹²

Essex was great hunting territory, and had been acknowledged as such by Edward's royal forebears. Darby, in his analysis of Domesday woodland, observes that 'it is obvious that Essex was a very wooded county', but that the cover was at its most dense in the western half. He notes that in Tendring and Rochford hundreds

the density of woodland was much lower, and this may be significant in terms of Edward's visits to the latter. Dense woodland was not the best environment for his favourite sport of hawking and falconry, and his apparent preference for the area around Eastwood and Rayleigh may be explained by its thinner woodland cover and more extensive open land.¹³

Nevertheless, as is well known, during the twelfth century almost the whole of Essex was at least nominally designated as royal forest. Not until the beginning of the thirteenth century and the troubled reign of Edward's grandfather, John, was this reduced. In 1204 all the county north of the Stane Street, the Roman road from Colchester through Braintree and Dunmow to Bishops Stortford, was disafforested, leaving no royal hunting grounds in High Essex.¹⁴ This, perhaps, was another reason why Edward and Eleanor or Margaret, as far as we know, never visited that part of the county. South of the old Roman road, however, a sequence of great hunting forests and chases remained and were carefully protected and managed. The king did not favour Waltham Forest (as Epping Forest was then known) or even Hatfield Forest, which had been a royal hunting forest since the reign of Henry I (1100–1135).¹⁵ Although he did spend a total of 10 nights at High Laver this was on a single visit during the summer progress of August 1305. Overall, he spent far more time in the area from Romford eastwards to Rochford.

Topographically, this made sense—hunting, like hawking, was better in less dense woodland interspersed with glades and open spaces, and stretches of 'champaign' or open countryside. This was the characteristic landscape of the area from Romford through Warley and Billericay and beyond. Sizeable areas of woodland, tracts of open common and heath, broad

swathes of pasture and marshland, presented a mosaic of landscapes ideally suited to the hunting pursuits of a medieval king. The low ridges and occasional more prominent heights, such as the Langdon Hills, added to the attractions, as did the deer parks which were an element in most larger estates by the latter decades of the thirteenth century.

As already noted, an advantage of Essex was its proximity to London and Westminster. Hunting visits to, for example, the New Forest, or Rockingham in Northamptonshire, took longer and required more planning and logistical juggling, particularly because the royal baggage-train was slow-moving and cumbersome. Essex, though, was on the doorstep and could be visited for short recreational breaks – perhaps even outings decided almost on the spur of the moment. Hunting was a longstanding aristocratic pursuit in South Essex – ‘one of the earliest recorded sporting

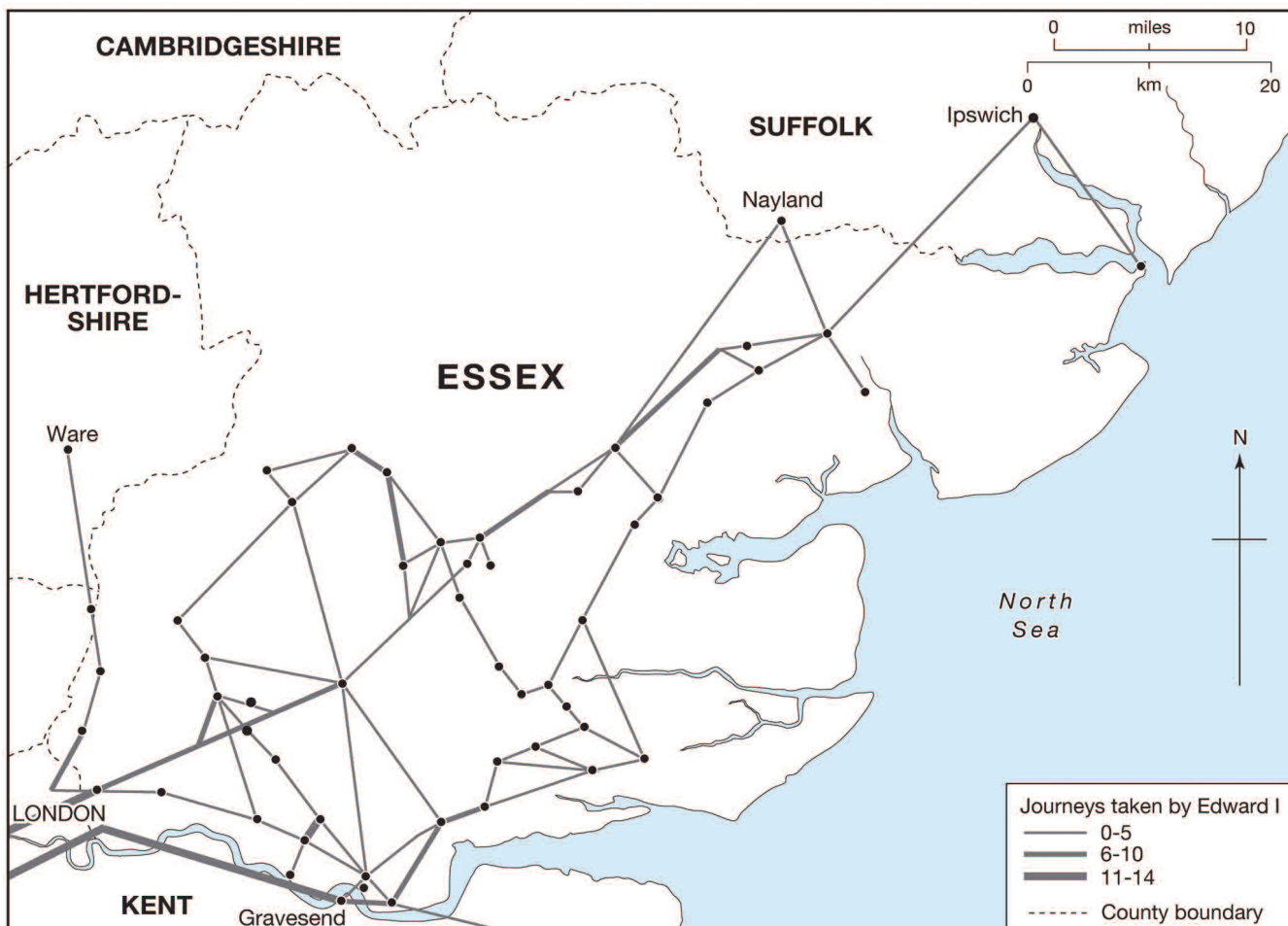
prelates was the abbess of Barking ... who in 1221 was permitted to hunt foxes and hares in Havering park’¹⁶—and as well as monastic houses and aristocratic or ecclesiastical centres there were several important royal or semi-royal residences in the county.

A well-researched example of a royal hunting centre is Writtle, where ‘the King’s house’ (generally known as King John’s Hunting Lodge) was built in 1210–11 by Edward’s grandfather as a base for hunting trips. It was briefly visited by Edward with Eleanor in April 1277 and for a longer period with Margaret in August 1305. Excavations conducted in the mid-1950s by Philip Rahtz revealed the evidence of a moated complex with a central courtyard, great hall, kitchens, buttery, pantry and screens passage, chapel, cross-wing with private apartments, and a gatehouse, as well as a sizeable ‘home farm’.¹⁷ This points to a comfortable manorial

establishment, exactly the sort of accommodation which the king required. The historian of woodlands, Oliver Rackham, dismisses the idea that medieval kings were avid hunters, arguing that the hunting was done on their behalf by professionals. He also questions whether these visits (and by implication others to Essex) were for hunting, on the grounds that they were at the wrong time of year. But his rejection of the idea is based on very limited and selective evidence, and it ignores the linked attraction of hawking. Writtle had a very suitable environment and landscape, with two large areas of woodland and glades, and a great circular park between them,¹⁸ but in 1305 there was perhaps a different agenda behind the royal visit, as explained below.

Therefore, visits which were surely for hunting and hawking were those which frequently took the king and queen to the

3. Frequency of journeys made by Edward I to places in Essex. (A.G. Crosby/C. D’Alton)



area of Rayleigh, Wickford and especially Eastwood. The last of these was particularly favoured as one of a group of places with excellent hunting potential on the parallel wooded ridges between Rayleigh, Hockley and Hawkwell, and from Thundersley through Hadleigh to Eastwood itself. There were only two recorded visits to Hadleigh, but ten nights at Rayleigh and 11 at Eastwood: this corner of south-east Essex was evidently one which Edward particularly appreciated. The details of the itineraries show how the king frequently moved day by day around this cluster of houses and hunting grounds.

As the table and Figure 3 indicate, the most favoured destination in Essex was Havering, where the king spent at least 27 nights during his reign. The reasons for this are obvious. As already noted, Havering was reasonably close to London, and just off the Roman road to Colchester which remained the main highway through the south-west of the county. Its special importance was that it was among the large estates which traditionally formed part of the jointure of successive queens consort. Havering itself had been a royal possession since at least the time of Earl Harold Godwinson, later King Harold II (thus, before 1066) and in 1262 the manor was formally granted by Henry III to his queen, Edward's mother Eleanor of Provence. It was later granted to Edward's wife Eleanor of Castile. By the early twelfth century there was already a sizeable royal residence at Havering – not a palace or a castle but a large country house – and in the first half of the thirteenth century this was greatly extended, with the provision of separate suites of apartments for the king and queen, a great hall, two chapels and irregular ranges of outbuildings. The great park, which as late as the 1640s covered over 1,300 acres, was well-suited to outdoor recreation, its hilly topography rising to over 350

feet and with copses and wooded areas, grassland, ponds and streams, as well as tenanted farmland beyond. As a place of retreat it was ideal – and it may seem surprising that Edward and Eleanor did not go there even more often. Perhaps the all too frequent call of the distant battlefield was partly to blame.¹⁹

Finally, we return to Writtle, an estate which had a most intriguing history: in 1241 it was granted by Henry III, with other Essex properties, to Isabel, great-granddaughter of David I and niece of Malcolm IV and William I, kings of Scotland, and wife of Robert de Brus, 4th Lord of Annandale. On her death in 1252 it passed to her son Robert, who held the estate until his death in 1295, and then to her grandson, another Robert, who died in 1304. Robert the grandson had been loyal to Edward I (he was known pejoratively in Scotland as 'the collaborator') in the hope that his reasonably strong claim to the Scottish throne (via Isabel) would be upheld by the English king – though Edward crushed those hopes, dismissing Bruce with a contemptuous royal put-down: 'Do you think we have nothing better to do than to win kingdoms for you?'²⁰ The collaborator's son, yet another Robert, is better known to us as King Robert the Bruce. Some believe that King Robert was actually born at Writtle, although Turnberry Castle in Ayrshire is considered the more likely venue.²¹ However, it is known that his second marriage, to Elizabeth, daughter of Richard de Burgh, earl of Ulster, took place on the family estate at Writtle in 1302.

However, in early February 1306 Bruce dramatically rebelled against Edward, and six weeks later was crowned king of the Scots at Scone, on 25th March 1306. By that time his Essex estates had been summarily confiscated.²² The accounts kept by Walter of Gloucester, Edward's treasurer, record the

revenues from 'two parts of the manor of Writtele which were Robert de Brus's earl of Carrick, a Scotsman and traitor to the King [which] fell to the King's hand by forfeiture' on 9th February 1306. He also recorded Robert's agricultural assets, including 294 acres of wheat and rye 'sown by Robert before the seizure'.²³

But there is an intriguing back story. Less than six months before, in late August 1305, King Edward and Queen Margaret had visited Writtle for several days, seeing the estate which he had last visited almost 30 years previously in the days of Bruce's grandfather. However, with truly dramatic timing, this visit came when the ghastly concluding ceremonies of an earlier rebellion were taking place. A few weeks earlier William Wallace had been captured and taken in chains to London, for trial at Westminster Hall. As Marc Morris observes, 'on 23 August 1305, while Edward amused himself in the forests of Essex, his sometime adversary was dragged from Westminster to Smithfield, hanged on a gallows, cut down while still alive, disembowelled and beheaded. His entrails were then burned, his body quartered, and the quarters dispatched for public display in Newcastle, Berwick, Stirling and Perth'.²⁴

Had the king deliberately secluded himself amid the woods and great park of Writtle, distant from the gruesome cruelty that he without question knew was going on that day in London? And, not trusting Robert Bruce, was he perhaps eyeing up the properties at Writtle for his own future advantage?

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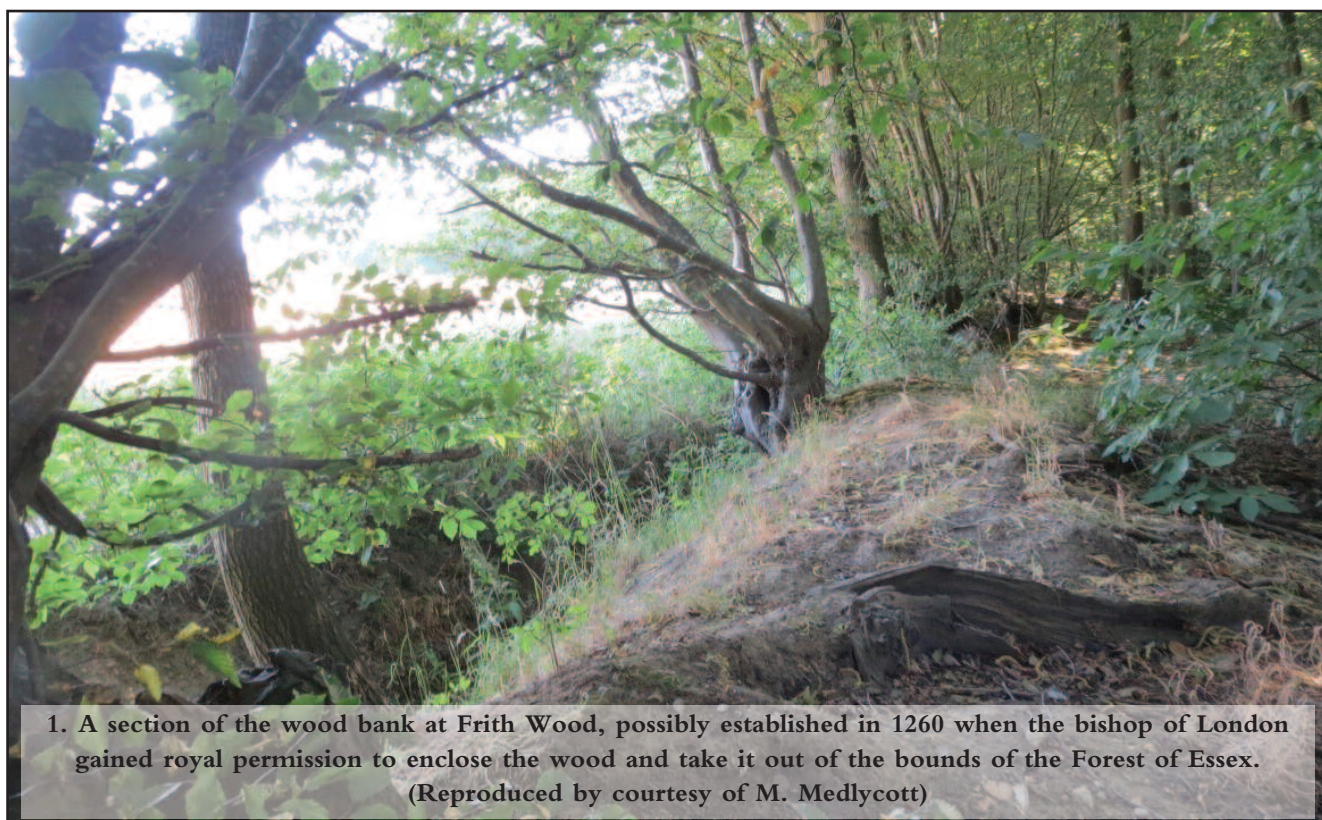
24. Morris, p.344.

The Author

Alan Crosby has been editor of *The Local Historian* since 2001. He is proud of his Essex lineage – John Francis, one of his 3 x great grandfathers, was remembered as 'the tallest and handsomest man on Romford market'; another, Isaac Spencer, was the licensee of the Swan in Brentwood in the 1790s; and his Woodley ancestry can be traced back to Stanstead Mountfitchet in the reign of James I.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Dr Jennifer Ward for her very helpful comments on the draft of this article.



1. A section of the wood bank at Frith Wood, possibly established in 1260 when the bishop of London gained royal permission to enclose the wood and take it out of the bounds of the Forest of Essex. (Reproduced by courtesy of M. Medlycott)

The history and management of an ancient

Essex wood: Frith Wood, Laindon

by

Christopher Thornton

Essex has been well-served by the historians of its forests and woodlands. The royal Forest of Essex, especially its core in Waltham and Hainault (now Epping Forest), and also Hatfield Forest, have been generously treated by Fisher, Round, Rackham and Morris. Their studies have enhanced understanding of forest history, society and administration, as well as the management of its woody resources, typically comprising wood-pasture commons.¹ The enclosed woods of south-east Essex, astride the Rayleigh Hills in Rochford Hundred, have been the subject of important studies by Rackham and Rippon.² Indeed, until recent publication of a gazetteer of Norfolk ancient woods, there was little to compare nationally with Rackham's study of the history and ecology of 47 ancient woods there.³ Rackham and Hunter have also contributed works on particular types of woodland, e.g. the mid-Essex limewoods owned by Coggeshall abbey, the earls of Oxford and other landowners, and the field-edge springs and shaws that apparently developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁴ In his magisterial *Ancient Woodland*, Rackham discussed many individual Essex woods, for example Chalkney Wood (Earls Colne) and Norse Wood (Billericay).⁵

This article's modest objective is to provide a single example of the history of an ancient Essex wood, one that only pays passing attention to its ecology. The site lies in the historic parish of Laindon (Barstaple Hundred), close to both Laindon Common and Little Burstead (Figs 1 & 2), all places not far from Billericay where I grew up. In the modern landscape, Frith Wood and Laindon Common Wood lie just

to the west of the A176 (Laindon Road) which links Basildon to Billericay via Noak Hill. This area of south Essex comprises mostly fertile London Clay soils, but Laindon Common and Frith Wood stand on a small area of undifferentiated deposited Head comprising pebbly sandy clay. Nearby at Little Burstead and Noak Hill are other similar areas of gravelly Head with pebbles in clayey matrix. These tracts of poorer land are suitable for lowland heath and woodland. Not far away to the east is a larger area of Claygate/Bagshot beds around Billericay.⁶

Frith Wood first emerged into documented history in 1260 when it was enclosed from the Forest of Essex by the bishop of London.⁷ At that time most of the county lay within the forest's bounds. Although the term 'forest' denoted a legal status as a royal hunting ground rather than tree cover *per se*, the county's inclusion undoubtedly reflected the existence of large tracts of wooded country. While Frith Wood does not stand in a major area of surviving woodland, it is clear that much formerly existed. Many commons or greens were relics of a wood-pasture environment such as Laindon and Burstead Commons and, a short distance away, Tye Common and South Green. Nearby enclosed woods include Blunts Hall Wood and Friern Manor Wood, and more woodland existed on the Langdon Hills to the south.⁸ The area is also situated between two larger groups of ancient woodlands; one to the west around Warley, Childerditch and Thorndon and one to the east around Billericay, Stock and Ramsden Heath.⁹

In 2020 Frith Wood was among the 52,217 sites registered by Natural England as Ancient

Woodland, defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD.¹⁰ It is not intended here to explore the 'ancient woodland' concept, but following the studies of Rackham, and more recently Barnes and Williamson, we know that virtually all woods were created or had their original character transformed by human hands. Additionally, the changing context of human population, settlement and economy, alongside biological changes in the natural world, mean that woodland is never static but continuously changing.¹¹ Nevertheless, Frith Wood takes the typical form of a medieval enclosed wood, combining a coppice with timber trees (known as 'standards'). Coppice trees would be cut on a cycle, every 4 to 8 years in the Middle Ages but extending to every 10 to 20 years by the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, producing a crop of rods and poles for varied purposes including hurdles, fuel and charcoal. The stump would then sprout anew eventually growing into a sizeable 'stool'. In contrast, standards were left growing through several cycles before being harvested at a size suitable for constructional timbers.¹²

Today, the mixed deciduous woodland of the Frith chiefly comprises hornbeam and sweet chestnut coppice with silver birch and pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) standards. Among the species found in the understorey are hawthorn, elder, crab apple and hazel, accompanied by many woodland plants including bluebells, pignut, wood anemone, wood sage and wood sorrel.¹³ Probably the Frith developed as an oak-hornbeam wood, with oak timber and hornbeam underwood, a common type on lighter,



2. Extract from an Ordnance Survey map showing Frith Wood within the boundary of the bishop of London's estate, as recorded on the tithe map of 1839 and an estate map of 1855.

All the land south of the wood (to the edge of Laindon Common), and towards the parish boundary to the east and north probably comprised a tract of early medieval woodland, reduced in stages by its conversion to farm land. Thrift farm is located in the south-east corner of the estate. (Reproduced by courtesy of Essex Record Office, 1st Ed, 25 inch OS, sheet 68-6, 1874)

higher, soils in Essex. When accompanied by oak-chestnut the types probably occupied different ecological niches within a single wood. Mixed coppice sites like the Frith obviously have great botanical interest due to their range of habitats and resulting diverse flora and accompanying fauna.¹⁴

Private owners of woodland in the Middle Ages defined and protected their woods' boundaries with large-scale banks and ditches. These helped deter the illegal removal of timber or illicit

grazing by livestock which could damage the undergrowth and saplings. The banks lay on the woodside and were often capped with pollarded trees, and sometimes pales (fences).¹⁵ Evidence for such an arrangement survives at Frith wood, where the south, east and north boundaries are delimited by a woodland ditch averaging c.1m in depth and a much-eroded bank. A number of historic pollards and coppice tools survive along the northern bank, probably defining its ancient limit (Fig 1).¹⁶

Place name, boundaries and resources

The wood was known in the Middle Ages as Frith Wood or 'le Frith', and by the seventeenth century as either a 'Frith' or 'Bushett'. The name later developed into 'Frith' or 'Thrift'; the property was called Threft Farm in 1777 and the Thrift c.1840.¹⁷ The most recent interpretation of 'Frith' by Gelling and Cole notes that the name is more common in minor names than in major settlement names. Their preferred derivation for Old English/

Middle English Fyrth(e) is 'land overgrown with brushwood, scrubland on the edge of forest'. It perhaps never applied to uninterrupted woodland, but instead was used for landscapes more like heathland with trees.¹⁸ The alternative name of Bushett was similar in meaning, deriving from Bush – 'a bush, a scrub'; all name variations thus imply a woody heathland or scrubland environment.¹⁹

The suggestion that Frith Wood was enclosed from a wood-pasture or forest type of landscape matches the historical information available (below, next section). The inference is also supported by the relationship of other 'Friths' to the forest. For example, in the early 1250s Richard de Munfichet, the king's forest warden (chief officer), held both land within the forest and an estate called Le Frith in Walthamstow; he made another enclosure of a wood in Theydon the following year.²⁰ Mynching or Myncheon Frith, which belonged to the Priory of Stratford-atte-Bowe in Barking, was another private wood located just outside the boundary of the royal forest in the fourteenth century.²¹

While the current Frith Wood measures only c.16 acres, it was clearly part of a formerly larger tract of wood or scrub. A 'Scrub Field' lay adjacent to Frith Wood on the 1839 tithe and 1855 estate maps (Fig 2), and another, smaller, wood (not part of the same estate) existed further to the north of Frith Wood called 'Scrub Wood'.²² The prevalence of scrubland must reflect the topographical location on poorer soils, including sands and gravels; areas avoided for cultivation in the early Middle Ages compared to the surrounding London Clay. The poor quality of the land at Thrift or Frith Farm was noted in nineteenth-century surveys describing it as 'generally of a poor hungrey gravel on clay', 'of very bad quality and altogether it is a poor spot' (1834), and 'of a poor sandy quality, part upon gravel, part upon water holding sand' (1855).²³ The adjacent heath-

lands of Laindon Common and Little Burstead Common were presumably of similar quality.

Parish boundaries are instructive concerning the original use of this tract of scrubby woodland. The main part of Laindon's ancient parish lay some distance to the south, with Laindon manor and church centrally positioned within a roughly square block of land. A thin tongue of Laindon land then ran northwards, crossing the river Crouch and passing between Little Burstead (west) and Great Burstead (east). It ultimately stretched as far as Laindon Common and Frith Wood, with the land being surrounded on three sides (west, north and east) by Great Burstead parish. Such a remarkable arrangement was undoubtedly contrived to give Laindon's inhabitants a share of the northern wood-pastures and is likely to be of pre-Conquest origin. Similar intercommoning patterns were identified by John Hunter in the so-called 'parallel parishes' of Little Warley, Childerditch, West Horndon and East Horndon. These long thin parishes, laid out north-south, were arranged so that each obtained a share in the Thames marshlands (to the south) and woodlands (to the north).²⁴

From Domesday Book to the thirteenth century

Calculating woodland density from the Domesday survey (1086) is problematic, because of likely underestimation and the variable forms of measurement used. Essex was a county whose woods were typically measured in numbers of swine that could be fed on the acorn mast (see Cover). The general view is that Essex was marginally more wooded than some lowland counties, with perhaps 20% tree coverage (the average was 15%). The county's west and south-west were perhaps the most wooded, but there was much local variation with larger tracts also occurring elsewhere.²⁵ The possible early existence of the Frith can be investigated by tracing the history of the bishop

of London's manor of Laindon, first recorded in the 'ship list' of St Paul's Cathedral dating from c.1000 AD. Therein an estate called 'Ligeandune' provided one shipman towards the manning of a ship for the royal fleet.²⁶

Domesday Book records that in 1066 the estate had been tenanted by a Saxon woman, Ælfthryth, but by 1086 the bishop was again in possession of the manor assessed at nine hides (the Domesday hide served as a unit of tax assessment, in Essex typically equating to c.120 acres) and valued at £1. The greater part was held in demesne by the bishop for his own exploitation, but two Normans, Ralph and William, held another three hides and 80 acres. The bishop's manor had woodland for 100 pigs and pasture for 100 sheep, grazing that quite possibly lay in the area of Laindon Common and Frith Wood. The bishop also held a second manor in 1066, called Wella and also valued at £1; it was tenanted by the Saxon Wulfwine. By 1086 the tenancy had passed to two Normans, Ralph and Turolde, when it had 30 acres with woodland for 40 pigs.²⁷ Reaney identified this second estate with Well Farm in Great Burstead, probably representing the bishop's later manorial holding in Great Burstead parish. Well Farm lay near to the Laindon boundary, and its attached woodland may also have lain within a tract of wood-pasture originally covering the Burstead Commons, Laindon Common and Frith Wood, though it cannot be proven.²⁸

The first certain reference to Frith Wood occurs in 1260 (1st October), when an inquisition *ad quod damnum* (an inquiry taken as a result of an application for a licence or grant) was held before the forester of the Forest of Essex concerning the bishop's enclosure of Frith Wood to form a private park:

Pursuant to an inquisition *ad quod damnum* taken by Richard de Muntfichet,

forester in fee of the forest of Essex, grant to H(enry) Bishop of London, for his good service, and to his successors, of licence to enclose with a dike and hedge the wood of Leyndon, called Le Fryth, with the demesne lands adjoining the said wood, which is without the regard of the forest and far from the covert; and to make a park thereof; grant also that the neighbouring lands, which they can acquire of the fees of others, they may enclose in like manner up to seventy-eight acres by the king's perch of the forest; and that they may hold all the fore-going, so enclosed, as a free park, quit of waste, view, and regard of foresters, verderers and all forest officers.²⁹

While 'forest' strictly refers to an area subject to the crown's hunting rights, the document clearly identified Laindon Frith as pre-existing woodland. Very probably it would have comprised part of a larger tract of intercommoned wood-pasture belonging to the bishop's manor before 1250. Forest law would have restricted any attempt to enclose or cultivate such an area, which could have impacted the king's deer, without such a licence being obtained.

It is worth digressing at this point to consider the Frith's enclosure within the forest context. William I was undoubtedly responsible for the forest's establishment, with its nucleus in the south-west (Waltham Forest), but it had later been extended, particularly under Henry I and Henry II, to cover most of the county.³⁰ Forest laws and rights were unpopular and there was continual struggle between the crown on the one hand and the barons and commoners on the other over its physical extent. Following the issue of the Charter of the Forest (1217) during Henry III's minority, special perambulations were ordered to survey the extent of each forest in order to

disafforest those areas added after 1154. The perambulation of Essex (1225) then disafforested much of the county's south and eastern parts, including Barstaple Hundred, but this was reversed only two years later after Henry III cancelled charters made during his minority.³¹ Perhaps the enclosure of Frith Wood was allowed in 1260 because of the status of the bishop as applicant and/or because the surviving woodland was already limited ('without the regard of the forest and far from the covert'). The wider struggle over the forest bounds continued through the fourteenth century, at the end of which they were effectively confined to Waltham Forest.³²

In more general context, growing population pressure upon resources meant that remaining areas of woodland became increasingly valuable by the thirteenth century. This promoted intensification and the conversion of wood-pasture into coppiced woodlands; only in the remaining forest and on some commons did true wood-pasture survive.³³ Frith Wood therefore fits into a common pattern whereby landlords sought to enclose or impark surviving timber for their own private benefit.³⁴ The licence enabled the bishop to dike and hedge around the Frith so that in future both royal forest officers and the local population could be excluded. Neither the size of the bishop's wood nor the adjacent demesne land is stated, but the bishop was given permission to acquire neighbouring lands to add to his enclosure up to 78 acres 'by the king's perch of the forest', which would be equivalent to about 53 acres in standard measurement.³⁵

Later, in the reign of Edward I, the origin and legality of such private rights were questioned (*Quo Warranto* proceedings, 1290), and another inquisition was held in 1291 concerning the bishop of London's Frith Wood enclosure.³⁶ Only a year previously Edward I had confirmed to the bishop a

view of frankpledge (the right to a public court leet) in the manors of Laindon, Orsett, and Chelmsford; the coincidence of timing may suggest that the bishop taking care to have his pre-existing rights confirmed. According to the eighteenth-century historian of Essex, Philip Morant, the Frith was the location of the manor-house 'where Courts are kept'.³⁷ That the Frith was still recognised as former forest land, now enclosed, is also suggested by Reaney's references to 'Leyden' frith, Leydonefrith' found in unpublished Pleas of the Forest (1291). These have yet to be investigated.³⁸

Woodland management in the later Middle Ages

Materials relating to the bishop of London's manor of Laindon survive in the form of court rolls and account rolls from 1386 to 1500 (Table 1). Whether or not the Frith had ever functioned as a private hunting park is not demonstrated by these records, but its small size rather suggests not. One of the provisions of forest law under The Assize of Woodstock (1184) was that all owners of woods within a royal forest should employ proper foresters in their woods called woodwards. These officials were the counterparts of the foresters who oversaw and protected the royal forest and, in some cases, may previously have served in that capacity. The bishop would have appointed a woodward at, or soon after, the enclosure of Frith wood in 1260, to both intensively manage and protect the timber and underwood. Woodwards located within the bounds of the forest were also sworn before the forest courts to protect the king's deer, and existed in large numbers; at a court in 1250 some 121 were named.³⁹ Table 1 confirms that a woodward or 'custodian of the wood of Leyndonfrith' was appointed as a manorial official. In 1442–3 and 1443–4 we even know his name: John Breton was

Table 1: Information on Laindon Frith 1386–1500	
Date	Details
1386–7	Inquiry held before the jury of the manorial court into the sale of 1000 faggots ‘in Leyndonfrythe’ at 2s. each.
1439–40	Thomas Gylot of Billericay, Robert Heyward, Thomas Rose and Stephen Sandon fined 1d. each for transgressing in the lord’s wood by cutting down brushwood in Leyndonfryth.
1441–2	John Breton fined 16d. because he cut loppings from three oaks without licence in Leyndonfrefth.
1437–8	£2 from 30 old trees sold this year in Leyndonfrefthe with 40 carts (i.e. cartloads) of billets and lops of the aforesaid trees.
1442–3	6s. 8d. from 500 faggots sold in Leyndonfryth.
1443–4	6s. 8d. was received from the sale of wood ‘in Leyndonfryth’.
1445–6	Thomas Alys, John Kele and John Rose transgressed in the lord’s wood called Leyndonfryth with their animals at diverse times; John Campe cut down 16 cart loads of wood there without licence.
1453–4	20 cartloads of underwood provided by the lord’s wood of Leyndon Frith, as well as 12 carts of green billets made from six trees.
1458–9	£4 from sale of underwood at 8s. an acre (i.e. from 10 acres in total) sold in the wood called Leyndon Frith by indenture between Master Richard Cole (for the bishop of London) and William More, Thomas Warley and John Reynold.
1462–3	For repairs undertaken to the bishop’s manor house at Orsett (South Hall) manor, a labourer, John Eyer, cut down diverse pieces of timber in the lord’s wood of ‘Leydon’ Frith’.
1463–4	Thomas Weston fined 8d. for digging clay upon the common called Leyndonfrith without licence.
1465–6	Nothing received from the sale of wood and faggots beyond Leyndonfrith.
1466–7 & 1467–8	Thomas Weston fined for digging clay and mud upon the lord’s common towards Leyndonfrith without licence.
1468–9	2s. from underwood sold to Thomas Weston beyond Leyndonfrith. Paid to John Weston labourer for making the bounds of the wood there called Leyndonfrith against the holding of John Hacch and the royal road containing in length 53 perches 2s. 2½d. (a perch = 16½ feet; thus about 875 ft in total length).
1479–80	The lord of the manor had 30 perches (about 500ft in total) of a ditch unscoured at Leyndonfryth.
1480–1	Thomas Weston took from lord’s wood of Leyndonfryth four cart-loads of ‘lops and crops’ which he had cut down without licence.
1481–2	Repairs made to fences on west and east parts of wood called Leydon Fryth for 54 perches (about 890ft), at ¾d. per perch. Total 3s. 8d.
1499–1500	Repairs to fences at Leydonnfryth towards le Chapelgrove.
Sources: LMA, DL/D/B/020/MS21665; DL/D/D/024/MS25416/001, 003, 005, 007–010; TNA, SC 2/173/11, 12; TNA, SC 6/1140/20, 22, 23.	

paid an annual stipend of 6s. 8d. His role would have been made easier by Frith Wood being ditched, which matches the surviving evidence on the ground and may infer that some or all of the wood’s surviving boundaries may date to the mid-fifteenth century or earlier.

Table 1 also reveals that Frith Wood was straightforwardly

managed for its timber products, either for sale or use elsewhere on the bishop’s wider estate. There were different types of underwood, one of the main products being bundles of underwood or brushwood known as faggots (used for fuel). The rods and poles would have been cyclically harvested from the coppiced stools, perhaps mostly hornbeam

and chestnut which still predominate in the wood (though it is possible the chestnut was a later introduction). Most enclosed ‘Friths’ would have become woods of this type: when Lawshall Frith (in Suffolk), now Frithy Wood, was leased in 1621 it was a coppice wood where poles on a stool were cut in rotation.⁴⁰ Although the age of the

coppice stools/pollards in Frith Wood has not been estimated, they probably take the form present in the medieval period.

References to 'lops' being taken from trees in the Frith, including from three oaks by the woodward John Breton in 1441–42, and the timber taken for the repair of Orsett manor house in 1462–3, indicate that the wood also contained oak timber trees. Oak is present in the wood today, but we cannot be certain that the modern trees have a direct line of descent from the medieval ones. Nevertheless, loss of the standards at various times, as they were cyclically harvested or even entirely removed, by no means invalidates the continuous existence of Frith Wood, as the survival of the underwood was more critical. As Oliver Rackham explained: 'Timber trees come and go; the continuity of the wood is maintained by the long-lived underwood stools and by the herbaceous plants which constitute the ground vegetation'.⁴¹

In the later fifteenth-century Thomas Weston was fined for digging clay on Laindon Common or Heath, and more occasionally at Laindon Frith from which he also illegally took underwood and cropped timber (Table 1). He was probably a clayworking craftsman (manufacturing pottery, brick or tile), using clay to make his products and wood to fire his kilns. This area of Essex produced a local style of pottery, identified by archaeologists as Mill Green ware after the first place it was excavated (near Ingatestone); another production site was located at Noak Hill, only 1.5km west of Laindon Common. Mill Green ware was also the predominant type excavated at Whitehall manor, Little Burstead, only a short distance away from Laindon Common/Frith Wood. It is therefore quite possible that Thomas Weston's enterprise formed part of this industry.⁴²

Post-medieval history and management

By the Elizabethan period the bishopric's administration switched away from direct management and instead leased Frith Wood out for an annual rent. A similar policy was adopted by the dean and chapter of St Paul's for their Essex woods. Later evidence from Frith Wood suggests that only the managed underwood and pasturage was let, while the timber, with its higher capital value, was reserved for the bishop. An undated document in Chancery Proceedings (but originating between 1558 and 1603) recorded the lease of 'Layndone Frith', estimated at 50 acres, to Thomas Tendring for 21 years at a rent of £2 annually. After Tendring's death, tenure was disputed between his heir or executor, John Paine, and Saloman Saterley, who had taken possession.⁴³ Regrettably, there are no early estate maps that show Frith Wood at this time, so we do not know whether the 50 acres refers to the size of the wood or to the estate (of which the wood was part).

The wood's subsequent history has to be reconstructed from leases surviving in a continuous unbroken sequence from 1635 to 1848. Throughout this period they were for 21 years, but usually renewed every seven years,⁴⁴ a very similar scheme again being employed by the dean and chapter of St Paul's for their complex of woods in the Rayleigh Hills.⁴⁵ The cathedral's south-east Essex woods were usually let to families of note, and similarly in 1635 Frith Wood was leased to a member of the Essex gentry called Henry Smyth, of Cressing Temple (near Witham), otherwise known as Henry Nevill.⁴⁶ The acreage was again 50 acres and the annual rent £2, but the lease suggests that the main timber trees had been removed sometime previously, for it described the Frith as 'heretofore a Wood but longe since destroyed' (see below). By this time the woodland area may

have shrunk and more of the estate farmed from Frith or Thrift Farm site in the south-east corner of the estate (Fig 2). Nonetheless, some trees remained, or were expected to re-grow, as all timber, now and in the future, was reserved to the bishop:

All that Frith or Bushett heretofore a Wood but longe since destroyed scituate lyinge and beinge in the p[a]rishes of Layndowne Bursteede or Billerikeye conteyninge Fyftie Acres or thereabouts com[m]only called Layndowne Frith w[i]th all and singular the appu[r]t[er]nances together w[i]th all the Trees Woods and Underwoods growing or to be growing in and upon thee said Frith or Bushett w[i]th all & singular co[m]modities and p[ro]fits unto the sayd Frith or Bushett belonging or app[er]teyninge except and allwaies reserved unto the sayd Lord Bishopp & his successors all the tymber Trees now growing or hereafter to bee growing in or upon the p[re]misses.⁴⁷

The property's description remained unchanged in subsequent leases, as did the rental value, indicating the conservatism of the bishopric's administration. The wood's main significance to the estate was clearly as a timber reserve, a typical requirement for ecclesiastical landowners who had major buildings to maintain. From 1749 the property was let to Rev Stephen Newcomen (d.1770), the rector of St Nicholas church, Laindon. He was succeeded by his widow Mrs Sarah Newcomen, and in 1813 by their daughter Miss Sarah Newcomen.⁴⁸ The latter lease exhibited the first alteration by estimating the acreage of the whole Frith estate at 86 acres, and also set out the reserved rights of the bishop in more detail:

free ingress and egress and regress to and for the said Reverend Father and his successors and his and their servants and workmen to fell cut down and carry away with carts and waggons and horses such Timber Trees and the lop top and bark thereof from time to time and when he and they shall think fit and convenient in proper season.⁴⁹

The bishop's management of the Frith again appears akin to that of the cathedral's dean and chapter for their woods in Leigh and Hadleigh, where oak, ash and elm timber above the age of 20 years was reserved, with liberty to enter and remove the same (generally on a 120-year rotation).⁵⁰ Alas, there is no detailed map evidence of Frith Wood during the Newcomen family's tenure, so its exact size and boundaries remain uncertain. Only Frith/Thrift Farm (spelt 'Threft') was shown on Chapman and André's county map of 1777, as were the Laindon and Burstead commons, the whole tract being labelled as Little Burstead Common. Frith Wood is first shown on the first edition 1" Ordnance Survey map of 1805, accurately depicted to the north of Laindon Common.⁵¹

Further important sources for the wood's history are a surveyor's valuation report from 1834, the tithe map and award from 1839, and a further report and map from 1855.⁵² The 1834 report describes the lease arrangements, then the small farm house and outbuildings and finally the land totalling 83 acres, 1 rood and 27 perches. By then Frith (Thrift) Wood was said to be just 16 acres in extent; significantly, two nearby fields, no longer woodland, still had the word 'Wood' in their name (Woodfield; Tye Lane Wood Field). Concerning the Frith the report stated that:

There is no Timber in the Wood and the underwood is not of the best kind, there are plenty of thriving Oak saplings

that would become Timber but they are in a neglected state and unless properly trimmed will never produce a Tree worth the trouble of cutting, it is a pity to see them in such a state, and they ought not to have been left so at the time of felling the underwood, when a little attention and trouble would have put them all right at a trifling expense.⁵³

The tithe map of 1839 measured the whole of the bishop's Frith estate as 82 acres 2 rods 31 perches, of which 15 acres, 3 roods and 13 perches comprised Frith Wood (there was another 26 acres and 29 perches on Laindon Common).⁵⁴ The illustration of the wood on the tithe map shows open woodland and grass with two denser stands of trees, but this may be symbolic rather than representative. The shape of the wood in 1839 roughly matches that on the 1801 map, so any reduction in size had certainly occurred before c.1800, and perhaps as far back as the early seventeenth century. How this information tallies with the measurement given in leases of 50 acres from late sixteenth century onwards and then 86 acres from 1813 remains uncertain. The field pattern suggests that Frith Wood once stretched south right up to Laindon Common, and field names certainly suggest former presence of scrubland or woodland abutting the site (see Fig 2). Ordnance Survey maps then enable the static boundaries of Frith Wood to be continuously traced from 1875 through 1881, 1898, 1923 and onwards to the current day.⁵⁵

Concluding remarks

Frith Wood in Laindon is the only surviving fragment, in continuous existence, of a once much larger tract of medieval woodland. If the wood's ecology could be studied in more detail, its flora might reveal an earlier existence as wood-pasture. After

its enclosure in 1260 the bishop of London's officers quickly repurposed it as a coppice wood with additional oak timber trees. After the Reformation the underwood was leased, but the bishops retained control over the timber. Exploitation as a coppice wood never seems to have stopped, but possibly the timber trees were entirely removed at one point, a not unusual development, and their replacements may never have been adequately managed.

When the woodland was originally enclosed from the forest another portion remained as a resource for the local community as Laindon Common. Weaker control over demands for timber, fuel and grazing led to a landscape there more akin to open heathland. In contrast, the privately owned Frith Wood was defended by a wood bank and ditch, allowing the bishop's woodwards and courts to defend its valuable resources. In particular, that on the wood's northern side, coincident with the estate's boundary, could date to the late thirteenth century (Fig 1). The nature of the surviving evidence makes it difficult to establish the wood's original size. Some of the bishop's demesne land there was perhaps already being farmed in 1260, but the wood may only have been reduced to its final shape and size during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Since c.1800 the wood's boundaries have remained static and it has continued as a coppice wood into the twentieth century, allowing it to survive as a small but informative example of an enclosed wood first established more than 750 years ago.

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The Great Serpent of East Horndon

by

Christopher Starr

‘It is easy to see why in a new family’s rise to prominence, the last stages are the most obvious. The origins are bound to be obscure, and for that reason cry all the more strongly to be covered up.’ K.B. McFarlane¹

In 1903, Peter George Laurie published an account of the Great Serpent of East Horndon.² Unwittingly perhaps, he had described an example of what later became known as a lineage myth, a legend invented by a family to account for its entry into the ranks of the landed gentry, in this case the Tyrells of Heron Hall, East Horndon. Laurie was an unusual man, born in 1838 of Scottish descent, educated at Rugby and later in Germany, he joined merchants Jardine Matheson & Co as an agent, first in Hong Kong then in Shanghai. In 1854 Laurie took leave from Jardines and joined his brothers John and Julius, who were at that time professional army officers serving in the Crimea. As a civilian, Laurie took incredible risks, which he rather insensitively described to

his mother in a series of letters. Laurie toured the battlefields of the Crimea, including the Valley of Death, wishing that he could take part in the fighting. Following this he travelled to India where he avoided death in what became known as the Indian Mutiny. Prior to marrying Emily Smale (1843-1917), daughter of Sir John Jackson Smale (1805-1882), chief justice of Hong Kong, Laurie served in the Shanghai Volunteer Corps Mounted Rangers, a little-known military unit, during the Taiping Rebellion. Laurie and his family returned from China to London in the 1880s, and moved from there to Herongate in East Horndon in 1885, where they took up residence in Heron Court (Fig 1), a large house which is now a care home, some time before 1891. Peter Laurie

died at his home in Herongate in 1912 aged 74, and was interred in Highgate cemetery.

Having written several books about his travels in India and China, Laurie later took up antiquarian pursuits in Essex and he wrote and published a number of short local history studies, mainly about the Tyrell family of Heron Hall in East Horndon. In 1903 he published ‘The Great Serpent of East Horndon’ an account of a legendary serpent, which established itself near East Horndon churchyard (Fig 2) and ‘became a great terror to the neighbourhood’. His interest in the legend, which he had first heard about shortly after moving to Herongate, was prompted by a request for information from a well-known author, which he read in a ‘popular magazine of the day’ which was as follows:

The Serpent of East Horndon in Essex

I should like to know if there is in print any reference to a curious tradition, which was written down in 1695, by John Tyrell of Billericay in Essex, and of Barnard’s Inn, London, Esq., (died 20th September, 1712, and buried at Great Burstead in Essex). He says he had often heard his father, Thomas Tyrell of Buttesbury, and others say, that it was related to them by his great grandfather, old Sir Henry Tyrell of Heron in Essex, who died 20th May, 1588; and that Sir Henry said he had it ‘as a very truth from his ancestors’.

It is as follows: ‘That the merchants of Barbary having brought home a serpent in a ship, which lay upon the Thames, within twelve miles of Heron, (the ancient seat of the Tyrell’s ever since Sir James Tyrell married the heir of Sir William Heron), which escaping out of the ship, lived and haunted about those woods, ‘twixt Heron and Horndon Parish Church, devouring such passengers as came that way, which made the country seek redress from Sir James Tyrell, a great man in those parts. He armed himself, and hung a looking glass before his breast, and going to the aforesaid churchyard (or near unto it), the serpent came hovering at the glass, and playing at her own shadow, whereat Sir James taking his best advantage, struck the serpent and slew it, cut off his (*sic*) head, and carried it to his wife’s bedside before she arose in the morning. But he so overheated himself with his combat, that he shortly after died, and his son coming that way where the serpent’s bones lay, spurned one of them saying, ‘This is the bone of the serpent that was the death of my father,’ but the bone piercing the summer shoe, so hurt his toe, which gangrened, and his leg was cut off at the knee. The picture of which Tyrell with one leg is now to be seen in the glass windows at Heron, thereby causing the tradition to be often mentioned.



1. Heron Court, Herongate. (Author photo, 10/08/2020)

In his book about the serpent legend, Laurie refers to the author of the journal article, Mrs Bulkeley-Owen of Tedsmore Hall, Oswestry, Shropshire, as a descendant of the Tyrell family of East Horndon. She was in fact fifth in descent from John Tyrell esquire of Billericay, who recorded the 'tradition' in 1695. Laurie evidently contacted Mrs Bulkeley-Owen after reading her request and she told him that 'she got the information from 'the Honble. Edmund Petre, an uncle of the present Lord Petre' and that he had 'copied it from an ancient record preserved in the British Museum.' Laurie noted that Edmund Petre had 'unfortunately been dead for some years, and further information on the subject, so far as he is concerned, is now no longer procurable'. Edmund George Petre (1829-1889) was the son of William Petre, 11th Lord Petre (1793-1850), and great-uncle of Bernard, 14th Lord Petre (1858-1908).

Mrs Fanny Mary Katherine Bulkeley-Owen (1845-1927) was the daughter of John Ormsby-Gore, 1st Baron Harlech (1816-1876) and his wife Sarah, who he

married in 1844, daughter of Sir John Tyssen Tyrell of Boreham (1795-1877) 2nd Baronet, and the last Essex male representative of the Tyrells of Heron Hall. Sir John Tyrell's wife Elizabeth had caused a great scandal when she left her husband and ran away with the Rev John St Aubyn, who she married in 1829 after a notorious divorce from Sir John Tyrell, which required an Act of Parliament to resolve. In 1863 Fanny Ormsby-Gore married Lloyd Kenyon (1835-1865) by whom she had Lloyd Tyrell Kenyon, 4th Baron Kenyon in 1864. In 1880, having been a widow for 15 years, during which she established herself as a writer and authority on Welsh culture, Fanny Kenyon married the Rev Thomas Bulkeley-Owen (1827-1910).

Laurie deemed Mrs Buckley-Owen's story of the serpent to be 'of sufficient interest for enquiry' that he undertook some research on the subject. He compared the East Horndon serpent with the legend of the flying serpent of Henham-on-the-Mount, reported in a pamphlet published in London in 1669.³ This publication purports to describe the

recent appearance of a flying serpent in Essex, which so frightened the inhabitants of Henham that they tried to kill it with guns and clubs. Unlike the East Horndon serpent however, it survived all attempts to kill it, and eventually disappeared, having proved to be of 'comparatively very harmless nature'. The Henham and the East Horndon serpents appear to be two distinct versions of a common legend, and there are many other versions. These include the Lambton Worm (from the word *wyrn* meaning snake in Old English), which preyed on passers-by until killed by a local hero, and also the Linton Worm which ate local people until it was killed by yet another hero. The East Horndon story also has echoes of St George and the Dragon as well as the medieval myth of the Tiger and the Mirror, all of which are conflated in the serpent legend. However, the origin of the legend, which clearly incorporates ancient folk memory, is a subject for anthropologists rather than historians. But, as will be explained, the East Horndon serpent legend is relevant to one of the most important gentry families of Essex, namely the Tyrells of East Horndon.

The legend or 'tradition' of the East Horndon serpent probably arose from some half-remembered stories told around the fire, and was adopted and enhanced to justify and assert the Tyrell lineage at a time when this was still being questioned. This is an example of what Dr Philip Morgan has described as a lineage myth. It formed part of the family's lineage strategy, in this case the Tyrells' defence when they were regarded as mere newcomers or parvenus in Essex. Such a strategy was not unusual among families whose admission to gentry society was initially dependent upon an heiress marriage, making them prone to invent a story which supported their claim to gentry status. According to Dr Morgan, these



2. All Saints church, East Horndon from the north. (Author photo, 10/8/2020)

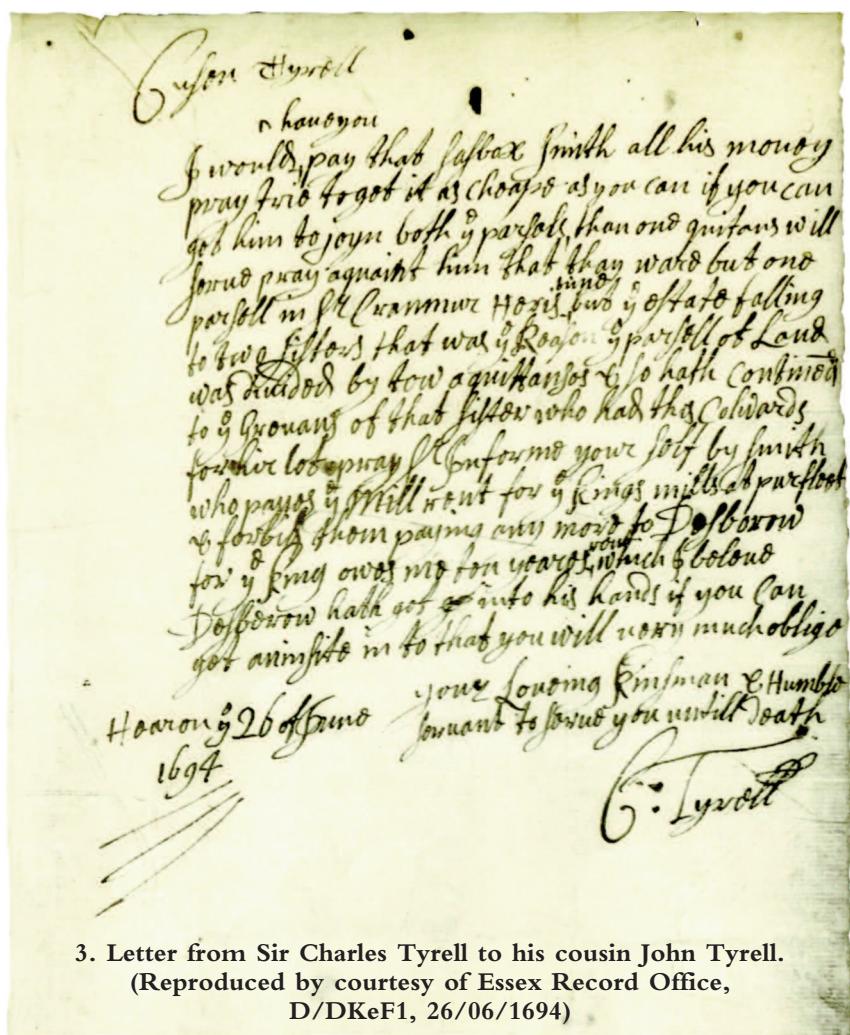
families ‘maintained their exclusivity by means of a pattern of inherited and invented traditions.’⁴

For some families, perhaps just a few generations away from servile birth, the key to gentility was proven lineage and usually military experience. Both of which were supplied by legends in which a heroic ancestor vanquished a deadly creature which was attacking his community. It was not necessarily enough for the family that they now occupied the house of their gentry predecessors, and perhaps had prepared for their burial beside them in their parish church, they also felt compelled to demonstrate that they were entitled to *worship*, that is, held in esteem by their community, by the accumulation of titles, coats of arms, and other trappings of what they considered to be gentle birth, perhaps risking the derision of the long-established county gentry. For this reason lineage myths were created. There were some Essex families such as the Markshalls of Markshall who had almost certainly held the same land since the Conquest who did not seem to need the reassurance

of a lineage myth.⁵ However, of great antiquity were the Barrington family of Hatfield Broad Oak, whose descent could reliably be traced to the Conquest and beyond. Despite this, the family chose to invent a fictitious Saxon knight Sir Odinell Barrington, so-called Forester of Essex, as their founding father. In this case, the county aristocracy went along with the fiction, and Lord Rich endorsed this nonsense by writing: ‘the aunciente name of Barrington, whose auncestors I canne averre to be knightes before Englishe was in England, or anie name of knightes that I knowe were in the countrie, that now make greate shew and are newe comers in amonge us.’⁶

The Tyrells of East Horndon were a family that went to great lengths to establish then protect their gentry credentials, including the invention of lineage myths as part of their overall strategy. The serpent legend repeated by Fanny Bulkeley-Owen and Peter Laurie is woven round the semi-mythical figure of Sir James Tyrell. According to the family, and included on their family trees, Sir James married Margaret, daughter and heir of Sir William

Heron, thereby acquiring Heron Hall. There was indeed a James Tyrell in the Heron Hall story, but not a *Sir* James, neither was there a Margaret or a Sir William Heron in this context. The truth is a little more prosaic, the name Heron Hall is derived from the Old English *hyme* meaning ‘a nook or corner’ and is first recorded in 1232 as *Fyndegodeshurne*. Findegod being a Middle English surname found elsewhere in Essex.⁷ The James Tyrell⁸ in question was a minor landowner in Buttsbury, Great Burstead and elsewhere in the late thirteenth century, who married Alice Blund, whose family were prominent London merchants and Essex landowners.⁹ This James Tyrell, who began life as little more than a peasant, eventually acquired sufficient resources to educate his sons, two of whom were named Thomas.¹⁰ In the process, James acquired the small estate which eventually became the manor of White Tyrrells in Buttsbury. Thomas Tyrell the Elder probably became a lawyer, acted for the Crown on local commissions, was appointed a JP and was then elected as a knight of the shire for Essex.¹¹ It was he



and his wife Joan, or perhaps his younger brother Thomas, who acquired the manor of Heron Hall either by marriage or by purchase, although there is no evidence that the Tyrell family held Heron Hall before 1363. Thomas the Elder died about 1360, apparently childless, and was succeeded by Sir Thomas Tyrell his younger brother who imparked 400 acres around the Hall during the course of his three marriages.¹² This remained the Tyrell family home for 400 years and like Joan Armburgh writing to her opponent in 1429, in the course of a bitter dispute over land she claimed should have descended to her from her ancestors, the Tyrells liked to play the ancestry card. In company with the Tyrells, Joan Armburgh had a lineage strategy and referred to Radwinter Hall in Essex 'that hath ben an habitation and a dwellyng place for many a worthi man of myn antiseters from the

conquest in to this tyme and long tyme beforn."¹³

The succession of Tyrell marriages in the fourteenth century, the fact that there were no heiresses among the brides, and no obvious source of their wealth, gave rise in later years to a certain amount of conjecture about the family's acquisition of gentry status. It was, as Professor Nigel Saul put it, an irony that 'at the other end of society, even the peasantry, provided that they held land, are better documented than the gentry.'¹⁴ No wonder then, that the Tyrells invented a defensive strategy, including one or more lineage myths, to protect their gentry credentials. The serpent myth was central to the Tyrells' strategy, but they also employed spurious family trees, apparently certified as genuine by officers of the College of Arms during their Visitations of Essex in the sixteenth century. In 1829, one of these Tyrell

ancestral charts was copied by the antiquary the Rev David Thomas Powell (c.1772-1848).¹⁵ Clearly the first few generations of Tyrell knights on the chart are a complete fabrication, as is some of the heraldry. Another aspect of their defence strategy was the family's claim to be descended from two supposed regicides, surely a record. Firstly Walter Tirel who killed William II in the New Forest, and secondly Sir James Tyrell who killed the Princes in the Tower. The lineage myth, which takes the form of a series of family monuments, some of them anachronistic, in parish churches such as those at North Ockendon,¹⁶ does not seem to have been employed by the Tyrells of Heron Hall, as they had a series of genuine family monuments dating from the mid fifteenth century in All Saints church, East Horndon.¹⁷

The East Horndon serpent myth was apparently written down in 1695 by the lawyer John Tyrell of Billericay, by which time the Tyrell baronets of Heron Hall were beginning to become enfeebled, fading away to extinction in the male line in three generations. Meanwhile their offshoot, the Tyrells of Billericay, were beginning to prosper but had not yet reached the distinction of baronet rank. Nevertheless, they too died out in the male line in a mere four generations. At the time the serpent legend was written down by John Tyrell of Billericay, who heard it from his father Thomas Tyrell of Buttsbury who had himself heard it from Sir Henry Tyrell of Heron Hall (c.1510-1588), the two Essex branches of the Tyrell family were in touch with one another. Sir Charles Tyrell of Heron Hall (1660-1714), was on friendly terms with John Tyrell esquire of Billericay (1642-1712), with whom he shared a common ancestor in Thomas Tyrell of Buttsbury (c.1575-1638). They respectfully acknowledged one other as 'cousin' as is evidenced

in a letter to John Tyrell of Billericay from Sir Charles Tyrell dated 26th June 1694 (Fig 3), in which he writes ‘Cuson Tyrell, I would have you pay that sasbox Smith all his money’ and signs himself rather extravagantly as ‘your Loving Kinsman & Humble Servant to serve you untill death.’¹⁸ In the event it was John Tyrell who died first. By this time the Tyrells of Heron seem to have been confident of their ancestry, but the Tyrells of Buttsbury were not. It was the latter who recorded the serpent legend, and passed it on to their descendants, perhaps to add some assurance that they were indeed gentlemen of long standing.

How effective then was the Tyrells lineage strategy? Did the serpent myth provide the necessary confidence in their status? In 1829, the antiquary and clergyman the Rev David Thomas Powell, formerly a cavalry officer, whose cousin the Rev Harry Powell (1771–1831), was the then rector of East Horndon church, and familiar with the history of the Tyrell family, noted that

‘The tradition goes that this family of the Tyrells of Essex are descended from the French Lord Sir Walter Tyrel, Lord of Poix, who accidentally with his bow slew King William Rufus... and Sir John Tyrell Bart 1829 [great-grandson of the lawyer John Tyrell of Billericay] living at Boreham is asserted by well-informed persons in the county & if I remember rightly by Lady Aran [sic] not to be of that ancient family.’

Childless Mary Tyrell (1763–1832), wife of Arthur Saunders Gore, Earl of Arran (1761–1837) and last of the Tyrells of Heron did not outlive her ‘cousins’ the Tyrells of Boreham (who lasted until 1877 in the male line), seems spitefully to have noted this aspect of family history, and the

ultimate failure of the Tyrell lineage myth.

A neutral observer, Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832), in an anecdote related by a ‘veteran Waterloo officer’ brings the subject to a conclusion.¹⁹

‘Sir Walter Scott was dining at a country house in Hampshire where, among the guests invited to meet him, was the then baronet (Sir John Tyrell of Boreham, 1st Baronet 1762–1832) of the Tyrrell family. The conversation turned on the antiquity of families, and particularly that of Tyrrell, which, it was said, was not only traceable to the Norman Conquest, but held a high position at that period; and the well-known story of William Rufus having been slain by an arrow from Sir Walter Tyrrell’s bow was cited as confirmation of the assertion. But, upon the prince of novelists having expressed grave doubts as to the authenticity of that fact, the worthy descendant of the knight was so nettled at any scepticism of the fond traditions of his house, that he somewhat fiercely exclaimed, ‘Then next, I suppose, you will say that we did not smother the princes in the Tower!’ My informant stated that Sir Walter merely bowed, and that the discussion was thus abruptly terminated.

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Acknowledgements

It is a great pleasure to pay tribute to Neil Wiffen, for his exceptional work as editor of the *Essex Journal*, and for his widely-recognised high standards of scholarship. I am happy to have had the opportunity to contribute to his first, and this his last issue as editor.

The Author

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Thomas Cox (1654–1734):

translator, historian and clergyman of Essex

by

Michael Leach

‘A clergyman of worth, and worthy of the acquaintance of all ingenious men’¹

Amongst local historians, Thomas Cox is generally assumed to be the compiler of the six volume *Magna Britannia et Hibernia* which was published anonymously and irregularly in parts between 1714 and 1731. However it is certain that the earlier parts are by another hand, and the authorship of the later sections cannot be definitely established.² The six volumes were re-issued, again without naming the authors, by another publisher in 1738. During the nineteenth century many of the whole volumes were broken up and bound as separate county sections, with newly printed title pages attributing each one to Thomas Cox. Cox’s involvement has been questioned on the grounds that this attribution arose from confusion with another unrelated Thomas Cox, who took over as one of the bookseller agents for the work in 1724. Though accused by its detractors of being largely derived from William Camden’s monumental *Britannia*, most of the county sections – particularly the later ones – show that much new material was incorporated. This paper will examine Cox’s family background, his published works and his career as an Essex clergyman and translator, as well as re-evaluating his contribution to *Magna Britannia*.

For clarity, the main subject of this paper, Thomas Cox (1654–1734) will be described as Thomas Cox 2, his father as Thomas Cox 1 (c.1614–1676) and his son as Thomas Cox 3 (1688–1763). Though Thomas Cox 3 was ordained, he has left almost no trace on the record.

Thomas Cox 1

Examination of the baptisms and burials in the parish registers of Great Waltham and Witham leave little doubt that the father of Thomas Cox 2 was the Thomas Cox who was vicar of Great Waltham from 1653 to 1670, and of Witham from 1671. The will of Thomas Cox 1, indicating that his wish was to be buried at Great Coggeshall ‘neare my relations’, suggests family links with one of several contemporary Cox families in this town, though identifying his parents and relatives there has proved elusive.³

Thomas Cox 1 is probably the Thomas Cox ‘of Essex’ who matriculated at Queens’ College, Cambridge in 1628, and was a fellow there from 1636 till his ejection in 1644 on the grounds of his loyalty to the monarch. If this identification is correct, Walker and Venn must be mistaken in recording his death in 1654 as vicar of Oakley, Bucks.⁴ He had been ordained deacon at Peterborough and priest at Ely in 1638 (May and September respectively) and, in spite of his ejection as a Royalist from Queens’ in 1644, he was puritan enough for the Commissioners to appoint him to the living of Great Waltham in 1653. After the Restoration he was sufficiently conformist to accept the Act of Uniformity in 1662, enabling him to retain the living. In spite of this apparent compromise, he retained the respect of the highly devout puritan, Mary, countess of Warwick, who went to hear him preach at Great Waltham on 5th November 1668 and noted ‘I was much affected, and wept at the consideration of God’s goodness.’

On another occasion, when Cox dined with her, she ‘had a good discourse’. It appears that, in the eyes of the countess at least, he remained one of the godly.⁵

His marriage is possibly the one that took place between Thomas Cox and Sarah North on 8th December 1650 at St Bartholomew the Less in London. When he made his will in 1675, he named his surviving wife as Sarah, and at least eight of their children were alive, the oldest surviving son being Thomas Cox 2 who was baptized at Great Waltham in September 1654.⁶

In 1670 he resigned the living when he was appointed vicar of Witham and was inducted there on 8th January 1670/1. It is impossible to guess the reasons for this move; though the Witham living was worth a little more than that of Great Waltham, the vicarage was in a ruinous state. A terrier of 1637 shows that it was a substantial house containing 21 rooms. In spite of the £200 worth of repairs carried out by his predecessor, the building was reported in 1672 as ‘soe ruined and dilapidated’ that another £150 was required for ‘further necessary’ work. Cox agreed to contribute from his tithes and rents until the building was habitable. The vicarage came with several outbuildings, a dove house and a very generous 146 acres of glebe.⁷

According to a now lost memorial in Witham church, recorded by the Essex historian William Holman, Cox died on 22nd May 1676 aged 62 years, and was buried at Witham. However it is clear from the

parish register that he was buried, as directed by his will, at Great Coggeshall on 25th May of that year. Perhaps Holman transcribed an inscription which commemorated the death, rather than the burial, of the 'Late Minister of Wytham'. He was certainly incorrect in naming Cox's widow as Ann. It is equally possible that the mistake arose from the stonemason's assumption that a burial had taken place. If so, it may have been felt that the cost of putting this right could not be justified.⁸

At his death the probate value of his goods was between £500 and £1,000, indicating a reasonable level of affluence for this period. His will (dated 18th November 1675) and its codicil (dated 11th April 1676) made careful provision for his widow Sarah and his surviving offspring, and clearly linked his family origins to Coggeshall where he had relatives. His 'Library' was left to his son Thomas with the stipulation that, if he died without issue, it should pass to his other son Edmond, provided 'he shall be brought up in a capacity to use it'. A further suggestion of his value of education is the provision of £15 per annum towards 'the education and maintenance' of his daughter Sarah.⁹

Thomas Cox 2's ministry

He was the oldest living son on his father's death, baptized at Great Waltham in September 1654. Nothing is known of his early education, but he attended Felsted School¹⁰ and was subsequently admitted to Queens' College Cambridge on 27th March 1672 as a sizar. This was the least expensive way of obtaining a university education with the college providing some financial assistance, probably at this time coupled with an obligation to perform certain domestic tasks, or to wait on better heeled undergraduates. He proceeded to BA in 1675/6 and MA in 1679. He was ordained deacon on 16th March 1678/9, and priest two days later, in London.¹¹

In the latter part of 1679 there was a vigorous exchange of letters between the bishop of London and two factions in the parish of Great Waltham concerning the choice of a new vicar, linked with problems concerning the collection of the vicarial tithes. One party favoured 'Mr Cox(e)' but he was not appointed. In view of his involvement in the subsequent acrimony in that parish (mentioned below), he may have been relieved to have been passed over. The following June (1680) he was inducted as rector of Chignal Smealey church near Chelmsford, the patrons being Sir Henry Mildmay and Dr John Yardley.¹²

The entry that Cox made in the Chignal Smealey parish register, dated 1st January 1680/1 shows that he realised the importance of historical records, not only for contemporaries but also for subsequent generations. He noted that he had found:

all Parish Businesses through Negligence of former Ministers much imperfect & none more yⁿ y^e Registry which was so confused & neglected that it could in no way answer y^e design w^{ch} is pious and commendable... [With the aid of a parish-ioner]...a woman truly Religious & Charitable & whom following Generations shall blesse for her Good Workys this Booke & a Registry not onely of Baptisms, Burialls & Marriages but of other things worthy of perpetuating. I did transcribe what I found in a former Registry which all will judge imperfect by what they see in this. Other things I was at Pains to gather that ensuing ages might not be left wholly in the darke.

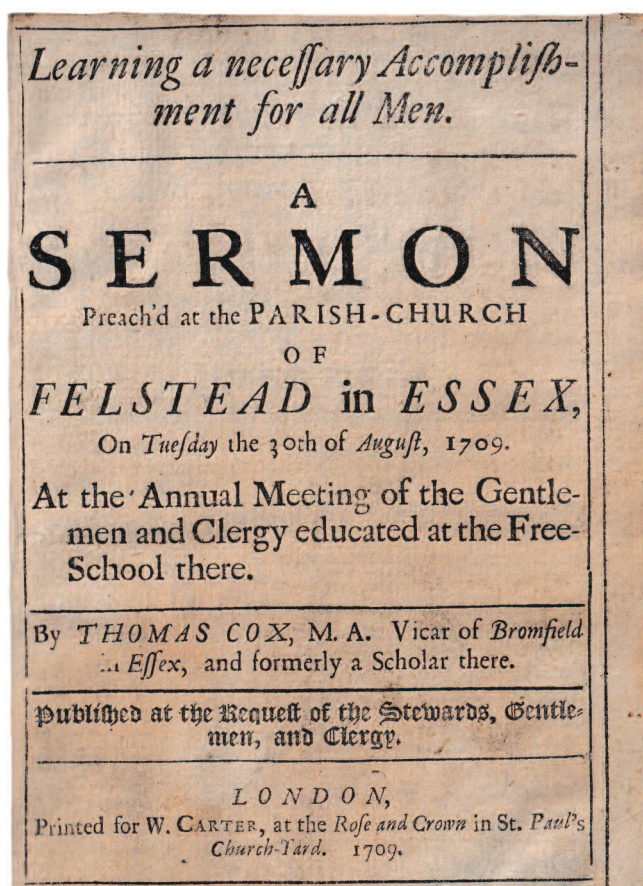
His entry ends with an elegant and touching apology: 'Pardon what may be amisse & Accept my good will to posterity.' It is ironical that, half a century later, Philip Morant wrote a similar

complaint about Thomas Cox 3 in the same parish register.¹³

He resigned as rector of Chignal Smealey in 1704 but had added Broomfield and Stock Havard to his livings (in 1685/6 and 1703/4 respectively). In 1719 he was appointed lecturer to St Michael's, Cornhill in London a post which he held for the next 11 years before resigning – perhaps on grounds of old age – in 1730. He, or his son, was probably the Thomas Cox who was appointed to a similar post at West Ham in 1728.¹⁴ He seems to have been in demand as a preacher and two of his sermons were printed – one delivered in Felsted church on 30th August 1709 'at the Annual Meeting of the Gentlemen and Clergy educated at the Free-School there' (Fig 1), the other at the Chelmsford Assizes on 21st July 1726.¹⁵ Both printed sermons included marginal references to a range of Biblical, classical and other later writers, showing that he owned, or at least had access to, a range of reference works. The last two groups of sources are particularly noticeable in his Felsted sermon. Examination of a few printed sermons from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries shows that it was not unusual to reference published sermons in this way, and that marginal notes were standard practice at this time.

Cox's personal life

On 1st September 1681 he was married to Love Manwood (d.1750) at Leaden Roding church by the rector, John Jackson. Love Manwood was the youngest daughter of Thomas Manwood (d.1650) and granddaughter of John Manwood (d.1610), author of a treatise on forest law first published in 1598. Thomas and Love had at least eight children, half of whom survived into adult life. Their oldest surviving son was named Thomas (Thomas Cox 3); though he was to follow his father into the church, he has left little mark on the written records of his time.¹⁶



1. Title page of the sermon that Thomas Cox 2 gave at Felsted school. Though he does not appear in their records, this image confirms that he was an alumnus of the school.

Thomas Cox 2's few surviving letters, unfailingly courteous and written in a rounded and legible hand, give occasional glimpses of his character. He was, for example, concerned that he had failed to credit Holman for the extensive use he had made of the latter's manuscript for his Essex section of *Magna Britannia*. Writing at length to Holman to apologise, he excused his omission to identify his source from his fear of undermining the sales of Holman's intended publication. Any lover of books will identify with another of Cox's undated letters (attributed to 1716, Fig 2) in which he complained of the cold weather, and noted 'I hate journeys & love to sit on my contemplative Cushion & my Books about me which I have used so long'. Other letters (all undated, but probably c.1716) express the all too familiar frustrations with his publishers, as well as his principled 'Burning Zeal against all abuses of charitable gifts'.

He was bothered about the misuse of the endowments of Chelmsford grammar school, concerning which only 'some faint endeavours have been made to restore it to its primitive use'. He noted bitterly that it was 'rowing against the stream to contend with great men who will favour one another, as well the spiritual as the temporal'. His involvement with the grammar school may have gone beyond that of an irate observer, as he had in his possession the school's foundation charter granted by King Edward VI.¹⁷

As well as his concern for maintaining good parish records, there is evidence that he took the broader pastoral care of his parishioners seriously. A number of wills, where he (and sometimes his wife) acted as witnesses, can be identified from his beautifully round and distinctive handwriting, and he would have surely provided advice and direction in their composition for those who were less literate. It is clear too that he

was supportive of John Osgood, the incumbent of the neighbouring parish of Great Waltham, in his embittered dispute with a local landowner. Not only did he provide a character reference, but he agreed to serve as a supporting commissioner when witness statements were taken in connection with Osgood's presentment to the higher ecclesiastical court. He was also appointed as a supervisor when it came to the repairs of Osgood's vicarage which had been badly damaged by vigilantes. It would be reasonable to assume that Cox was a known and trusted member of the wider community.¹⁸

His work as translator

Translators in the eighteenth century were often anonymous and their identities are now difficult to establish. However we have it on the authority of the Essex county historian, Philip Morant (who succeeded him as vicar of Broomfield) that not only was Cox 'a man of considerable learning, and great industry and application' but that he was responsible for a number of translations. These included two works by the French author, Louis-Ellies Du Pin which were published under the titles of *The Evangelical History with Additions* (octavo, 1694) and *A Compendious History of the Church* (duodecimo, four volumes, 1715-6). Other translations identified by Morant included Pancirolli's *History of Many Memorable Things Lost* (1715) from the Italian, and an abstract of Plutarch's *Morals* (1707) from the Greek. It has not been possible to verify any of these attributions, and the publications themselves either say nothing about the identity of the translator, or simply note 'Englished by a divine of the Church of England'. However Morant can be regarded as a reliable witness, particularly as he had acted as curate in an adjoining living and succeeded to Cox's living soon after the latter's death in January 1733/34.

Learned Sir

I should be glad to see you, but cant expect it this cold Season. Perhaps considering all things I am better provided for Journeys, than you, because I am more healthy, & keep a good Horse, but I hate Journeys, & Love to sit upon a contemplative Cushion, & my Books about me, which I have used so long, that I am not willing to go out of that path. However it may hap. that Necessity may force me to Coxall, and then I may take you in my way home.

I have such a burning Zeal against all abuses of Charitable gifts, that I cant bear with patience to see or hear of y^m Chelmsford School is none of the least, & some faint Endeavours have been made to restore it to primitive use, but tiring against Stream to contend with great men, who will favour One another, as well the spiritual, as temporal. Good men have no refuge in these cases, but prayer & Lamentation.

There were never more Sermons than mine preached at the School feast at Felstead, & no more, if four Sermons printed, viz. Mr Simon Lydiatt, Dr Wilm Bramston, my Own, & Mr Thomas Shirvill, Mr Edmund. And by way the first that was refused to be printed, & indeed it savoured so much of Solence, that it was not much esteemed. Mr Edward Jocolm was the next preacher. & I think, Mr Edward Ward was the last. The Stewards I do not know, but will enquire.

I am now upon Hampshire, & then shall proceed to Hartfordshire & afterward to Hertfordshire. I should be glad of some curious observation not taken Notice of by Camden, or the Saxon Historians, if I have, I have the New-Deerage. Edit. 3. & shall take Notice of w^t you write of y^e Earl of Oxford. when I come at it.

I have sent you the other part of Essex, as it comes to me, entire, all but a leaf. What I say of you, will be found at the End of Hinkford Hundred, w^{ch} is what with prodigal Compliment I thought you so fully deserve, & I can justify it to those, who think not so well of you, as I do, because they dont know you so well, w^{ch} yet I doubt not but you'll increase, when I shall be so happy, as to see your Composure, w^{ch} is much desired, & longed for.

Your sincere friend, &c. H. S. Tho. Cox

2. Cox's friendly letter to William Holman (undated but c.1716) illustrates many aspects of the man: a) his dislike of winter journeys; b) his love of his books and his creature comforts; c) his deep concern about the mismanagement of charities; d) his interest in the Felsted school sermons and; e) his progress with his county histories, including Essex. (Reproduced by courtesy of Essex Record Office, D/Y 1/1/52/5)

He must have been personally acquainted with Cox, and familiar with his work as a translator and historian.¹⁹

There is a further example of Cox's work as a translator from his own hand. In a letter dated 14th October 1716 about the Essex section of *Magna Britannia et Hibernia*, he noted that he was busy with a new edition of Puffendorf's *De Jure Naturae et Gentium* with annotations by Barbeyrac. This was presumably the edition of 1716, though once again the publication itself does not name the translator.²⁰ This customary anonymity may conceal other works for which Cox was responsible but which can no longer be identified. Cox, as a university graduate, would have been fluent in Latin and (probably) Greek, but must also have had a good command of French and Italian in order to translate these complex works.

The only other very indirect evidence Cox's interest in translations is that the Oxfordshire entry in *Magna Britannia* devoted more than a page to the life and achievements of William Tyndale as a translator of the Bible into English – though that might, of course, merely reflect the particular interests of a protestant cleric.²¹

Cox and the convocation crisis

Cox's ODNB biographer notes that he was drawn into the Convocation Crisis of 1697 which not only brought into sharp focus the conflicts between political factions, but also stimulated an interest in church history. The crisis arose from attempts to resolve doctrinal disagreements, and to protect the Church of England from what was regarded as the rising threat of non-conformity. Convocation failed to find a solution to these problems, in part due to a deep division of opinion between the two Houses of Convocation. The tory, high church faction, which was dominant in the Lower House, sought to impose

doctrinal discipline, and was deeply intolerant of dissent and of 'occasional conformity', a ploy which enabled non-conformists to hold public office from which they would otherwise have been debarred. It was opposed to what it saw as the laxity and excessive tolerance of the latitudinarian bishops in the Upper House which, it felt, encouraged dissent and atheism. Convocation, having failed to resolve its disagreements, was prorogued in 1717 and, apart from a brief session in 1741, did not meet again until 1855.

Cox's role in this dispute is not clear, but was perhaps related to his interest in the writings of Du Pin on church history. Du Pin was a French divine with tolerant views, whose moderation in a controversy over the extremely austere French sect of Jansenists cost him his professorship at the Sorbonne. He was also responsible for proposing a controversial union of the English and Gallican churches and, in 1718, was in correspondence with Dr Wake, archbishop of Canterbury, about this. Cox's role as translator of Du Pin's *The Evangelical History with Additions* in 1694 has already been noted. In addition, Morant credited him with the abridged four volume duodecimo edition of Du Pin's *Ecclesiastical History* (entitled *A Compendious History of the Church*) which was printed in 1715–6, near the end of the Convocation dispute. Though no evidence has been found, the unabridged multi-volume translation of Du Pin's work, which was came off the press from 1699 onwards, may also have been by Cox. It is reasonable to assume that he was in sympathy with Du Pin's views, thereby positioning him on the latitudinarian side of the dispute.²²

Cox as a historian

Little is known about this aspect of Cox's life or how he acquired his skills as a historian. We have it on Morant's authority that he was the author of the biographies of

Richard II, Henry IV, V, and VI in *A Complete History of England: with the lives of the kings and queens thereof ... to... William III* which appeared in three volumes in 1706.²³ Though this work lists the authors of most of the biographies, the four that were contributed by Cox are merely recorded as 'all new Writ in Mr Daniel's method'. Responsibility for the whole work is usually attributed to White Kennet (later bishop of Peterborough) but the first two volumes were collected by John Hughes, a non-conformist writer and librettist, and it is him with whom Cox must have collaborated. Cox's reasons for anonymity are unknown, as are the sources that he used for his biographies.²⁴

What is clear is that Cox acquired and valued books, as he made special provision in his will for the disposal of his library after his death, though no further details of his bibliophilia have survived.²⁵ He probably collected manuscripts too, as in 1711 he owned a fragment of the 1646 minute book of the Essex County Committee. This later passed to Philip Morant and is now amongst the latter's papers in the British Library.²⁶

The origins of *Magna Britannia* and Cox's authorship

The origins of *Magna Britannia et Hibernia* (Fig 3) are closely linked with *Atlas Geographus*, a world atlas which was issued in monthly parts (costing a shilling each) from May 1708 onwards, printed and published by John Nutt. In 1711, the verso of the title page of the first completed volume of *Atlas Geographus* promised the publication of *Magna Britannia* within six months, to be issued in monthly parts, costing a shilling each. However, the first part did not appear until January 1714 and only two more parts were published over the next nine months, completing the general introduction. It took a further six years to publish the alphabetical county sections up to, and including, Lincolnshire, and at

that point an introduction, and a title page dated 1720, were provided to make up the first two volumes comprising just over 1,500 pages. The remaining counties were published sporadically over the next 11 years, forming the last four volumes of *Magna Britannia*.²⁷

None of the six volumes of *Magna Britannia et Hibernia* identified the author or authors. When advertised in the Africa volume of *Atlas Geographus*, it was stated that 'a learned and ingenious Gentleman at Oxford' would be preparing it for publication. This was Dr Anthony Hall, sub-librarian of the Bodleian Library and a fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, who probably wrote the introduction which was closely derived from Camden's *Britannia*, as well as some of the earlier county sections. In September 1714 it was announced that the fourth part, presumably the first county section describing Bedfordshire, would be 'speedily published'.²⁸

Hall himself did acknowledge that he had compiled the Berkshire section but denied authorship of Cumberland, suggesting that he was wholly or partly responsible for the first six county sections up to, and including, Cornwall. Hall seems to have parted company with the project on bad terms. A manuscript note in Richard Gough's handwriting in his own copy of *Magna Britannia* indicates that Hall 'thought himself ill-treated by the booksellers, who undertook the whole work'.²⁹ It is now impossible to know the basis of their disagreement, but the promised monthly schedule of publication was seriously in arrears by the end of 1715 (only nine parts over two years) and this may have been part of the problem. Hall was probably not a reliable author, being described by a contemporary as 'a Man of no Industry, it being common with him to lye abed 'till very near dinner time, and to drink freely of the strongest of liquors'.³⁰



3. Title page of the first completed volume of *Magna Britannia* (1720).

Change of authorship is confirmed by Philip Morant's assertion that Cox was responsible for *Magna Britannia*'s county sections from Cumberland onwards and is further supported by a series of letters from Cox, now in Essex Record Office. These show that in January 1715/6 he was seeking to borrow material from the Essex historian, Rev William Holman, to assist with the compilation of the Essex section, and a month later was asking him for Domesday transcripts. Both requests were made on Cox's behalf by his friend, Rev Anthony Holbrook, rector of Little Waltham. In May 1716 Cox wrote directly to Holman, indicating that he had been forced to put Essex to one side in order to stand in for an unnamed individual, who had

been working on Cumberland and Durham, and had been forced to step down due to illness. Cox felt under considerable pressure from the publisher's deadlines and this shows in the printed text where he was often obliged to leave blank the day on which local markets took place, perhaps because an informant had failed to answer an enquiry in time. When the Essex section was about to go to press (probably in mid 1716), he was working on 'Hampshire, Hartfordshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, &c'. Information within the published text confirms that Devonshire and Essex were compiled during 1716.³¹

It is not clear how Cox came to be involved as author, or whether he had worked jointly

with Hall on the earlier sections. However he was already known to printer/publisher of *Magna Britannia*, John Nutt, who had printed one of his translations of Dupin in 1703. Also John Morphew, the bookseller involved with the early issues of *Magna Britannia*, had handled Cox's edition of Pancirolli in 1715. It is possible that one or both had identified Cox as a safe pair of hands to replace Hall.³²

On the basis of Cox's surviving letters, the authorship of the sections from Cumberland to Gloucestershire can be attributed confidently to him. The early county sections for England, initially of 30 or 40 pages each, were heavily dependent on Camden's *Britannia*, but became less derivative and much more substantial by the end of the series – Warwickshire ran to 339 pages and Yorkshire to 379 pages. It is clear that Cox incorporated new material from other published works (which he listed in his 1720 preface to volume 1) as well as from the circulation of a proforma sent out to likely informants, of which an undated handwritten example has survived.³³ It is also evident both from his correspondence and from the published text that he circulated preliminary drafts of some of his county sections for comment. In the case of Essex, he made amendments after criticisms from William Holman, and for Suffolk he added a nineteen page appendix of additional materials and corrections sent by the architect and antiquary, James Burrough (1691–1764).³⁴ There are no obvious changes in editorial style after Cox took over responsibility, so it is possible that he was responsible for the rest of the series, through to the publication of Yorkshire in 1731.

The subsequent history of *Magna Britannia*

Though England was completed by 1731, Wales, Scotland and

Ireland were never attempted, perhaps because, after 17 years and numerous delays, the project had lost its momentum. If Cox was still the author, he would have been in his 77th year and probably reluctant or unable to continue the work. It seems likely that the project was not a commercial success as, seven years later, there was still unsold stock and 'the whole copy and plates' were sold off on 5th October 1738, presumably by the unrelated Thomas Cox who had taken over as bookseller after the death of John Morphew. The purchasers were the booksellers Caesar Ward and Richard Chandler who reissued or reprinted the six volumes in the same year with a new title page, but using the original plates, county maps and distance tables. Significantly '*et Hibernia*' was omitted from the title. Though this enterprise may have been ill advised commercially, it seems to have been a later unsuccessful publishing venture in 1742 which led to Chandler's suicide in 1744 and Ward's bankruptcy in 1745.³⁵

This was not the end of the story for *Magna Britannia*. As early as 1730, it was realized that there was a market for the individual sections, and at least two counties (Cambridgeshire and Oxfordshire) were separately reprinted in that year.³⁶ In 1738 the title page of Ward and Chandler's reprint indicated that individual counties could be supplied. A century or so later, second hand booksellers, probably finding that the whole sets were unsellable, resorted to breaking up the volumes and binding them into their separate counties, each with a newly printed title page providing a spurious publication date of either 1700 or 1720. It is surprising that there was a market for these as, after a century or more, they would have been significantly out of date, both in content and appearance, but it was claimed that they 'caught the eye of the county collector'.³⁷ Other sets may have been broken up to

extract the more marketable Morden county maps and the topographical engravings. Today it is very unusual to find the entire set for sale, but the individual county sections, either disbound with traces of their original tooled leather spines, or in their later nineteenth century bindings, are relatively easy to find, nearly 300 years after Cox completed his work.

Conclusion

It is impossible not to agree with Holbrook's elegant assessment of Thomas Cox 2 as 'a clergyman of worth, and worthy of the acquaintance of all ingenious men'. He was a man of many parts – a historian, a translator (whose identity is largely lost in eighteenth century anonymity) and a valued preacher. Though doubts about his authorship of much of *Magna Britannia* have been expressed, there is clear evidence that he compiled most of the first two volumes, and possibly the last four. Under his hand, the county sections steadily developed from a pastiche of Camden's *Britannia* to a work containing much new material derived from printed works, as well as from correspondence with local informants. As an individual, Cox was clearly public spirited and courteous, a good friend to his acquaintances, a conscientious preserver of records, and a dedicated historian and bibliophile who preferred the comforts of his library to arduous journeys on cold winter days (a sentiment with which most readers of this journal will identify). In spite of the many demands on his time, the evidence suggests that he was committed to his pastoral responsibilities, and that he was valued for his wisdom and discretion by the wider community. One is left with the feeling – indeed the hope – that other anonymous works will be recognised as coming from his hand, and that he will receive due credit for them. He deserves to be much better known.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Neil Wiffen for contributions to this article. I alone am responsible for errors and omissions, and can only echo Thomas Cox 2 by adding 'pardon what may be amisse & accept my goodwill to posterity'.

The Author

Michael Leach is a retired GP with an interest in all aspects of seventeenth century Essex clergy and the historiography of the county.

Bishop Powell at Castle Hedingham

by

Adrian Corder-Birch

I am privileged to dedicate this article to Richard Morris, OBE, a good friend and supporter of *Essex Journal*. Richard was author of *The Powells in Essex and their London Ancestors*, which was published by The Loughton and District Historical Society in 2002. This article is a sequel to the chapter about Bishop E.N. Powell and two of his sisters, namely the Misses Annie and Beatrice Powell.

They were three of the children of Nathanael Powell (1813–1906) and Agnes Powell (1820–1902), who were first cousins. Nathanael was a wine merchant and glass manufacturer, a member of Essex Archaeological Society, a Justice of the Peace and a Deputy Lieutenant for Essex.¹ David Powell (1764–1832), the father of Agnes, was also an Essex Deputy Lieutenant.² Nathanael entered Chigwell School in 1822, became a Governor in 1856, Governor Emeritus in 1901 and died in office having completed 50 years–service. He was chairman of the Governors and was described as the ‘Grand Old Man of the school’.³ His height was 6ft 6in and many of his children, including Edmund and Beatrice, were also exceptionally tall.

Edmund Nathanael Powell (1859–1928)

The Right Rev Bishop Edmund Nathanael Powell, DD, MA, who was appointed Lord Bishop of Mashonaland, Africa in 1908, was thereafter known as Bishop Powell, as I shall refer to him in this article (Fig 1).

He was ordained a deacon in 1883, a priest in 1884 and his first curacy was at St Mary’s Church, Chelmsford (later the Cathedral), where he remained until 1887. It was during his curacy that he first visited Castle Hedingham upon the occasion of a harvest festival. At that time the vicar of Castle

Hedingham was the Rev (later Canon) Henry Lake, MA, who afterwards became rector of Chelmsford.⁴ In 1883 a mosaic and *opus sectile* panel, designed by Charles Hardgrave, was installed on the east wall of the south aisle of Castle Hedingham Church by James Powell & Sons, glass manufacturers, of which members of the Powell family, including Nathanael, were partners. It represented the Good Shepherd and was erected ‘To the Glory of God and in grateful memory of Ashurst Majendie and Frances his wife – L.M., S.M., 1883’.⁵ James Powell & Sons, glass works, Whitefriars, London was founded by James Powell (1774–1840), the father of Nathanael. It became firmly established as one of the,

leading suppliers of high quality ecclesiastical stained glass in the country. By the early 1880s they developed the craft of mosaic and the year after their work at Castle Hedingham, provided a fine mosaic in St Paul’s Cathedral.⁶

Dr Powell, as he then was, was consecrated as the second Bishop of Mashonaland at Cape Town Cathedral on 24th February 1908. It was the second largest Church of England diocese in the World and about five times larger than England and Wales combined. It actually comprised of more than Mashonaland and contained the whole of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), a large portion of the Bechuanaland Protectorate



Bishop Edmund Nathanael Powell.
(All photographs from the author’s collection)



Beatrice Pryor Powell

and a great piece of Portuguese Territory. In the northwest corner were the Victoria Falls and the Bechuanaland portion reached to within 20 miles of Mafeking,⁷ where his cousin, Colonel Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, became famous for his defence during the great siege in the Boer War. He later became Lieutenant General Baron Baden-Powell of Gilwell, OM, KCB, GCVO, GCMG, DCL, LLD, founder of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. His branch of the Powell family had assumed the name of Baden-Powell as their surname in 1870.⁸ His grandfather, Baden Powell (1767-1844) was a brother to both of the Bishop's grandfathers, David Powell (1764-1832) and James Powell (1774-1840).⁹

Bishop Powell was accompanied by one of his sisters, Miss Beatrice Pryor Powell (Fig 2) in Africa, but sadly, ill health forced him to retire from the bishopric and he returned to England in 1910. He was appointed vicar of St Saviours, Poplar where he remained for seven years. Following a serious operation it was imperative to seek a less arduous position and in January 1917 he accepted the living of St Nicholas Church, Castle Hedingham, where he became vicar, in succession to the Rev George Cecil Twist, MA, when he became rector of St John's, Moulsham, Chelmsford.¹⁰

The living at Castle Hedingham was in the gift of Col James Henry Alexander Majendie, DL, JP, and Mrs. Beatrice Cecilia Majendie of Hedingham Castle who were the patrons.¹¹ Bishop Powell, with two sisters, the Misses Annie (Fig 3) and Beatrice Powell took up residence in the Vicarage on 19th April 1917. His induction and institution took place on 28th April 1917, with the institution being performed by the Bishop of Chelmsford and the induction ceremony by the Bishop of Colchester.¹² The Vicarage was the best classical brick house in the village comprising five bays, three storeys, stucco bands and quoins, Ionic pedimented doorcase, Venetian window above and semi-elliptical window above that.¹³

Unfortunately, during August and September 1917, Bishop Powell was indisposed and the services in Castle Hedingham Church were taken by the Rev Serverne A. Ashurst Majendie, who was on a visit to Hedingham Castle, his ancestral home¹⁴ and by the Rev James Baden-Powell, MA, (1842-1931) of St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, a cousin of the Bishop.¹⁵ Lord Baden-Powell sometimes stayed at the Vicarage, when he met members of the Majendie family, including Miss Musette Majendie, who he inspired and she became very active in the Scout Movement.¹⁶ During June 1932 Lord Baden-Powell, Chief Scout, stayed at Hedingham Castle and visited 'The Hedinghams Training and Employment Scheme' headquarters situated in the Castle grounds.¹⁷ It was run under the auspices of the Scout Association and Lord Baden-Powell kept in constant touch with its work.¹⁸ Following his death in Kenya on 8th January 1941 a Memorial Service was held in Castle Hedingham Church when Miss Majendie gave an impressive talk on his life and work.¹⁹

Bishop Powell was warden of the Castle Hedingham Church Guild and supported the Castle



Annie Louisa Powell

Hedingham Temperance Society. He arranged regular musical evenings in the village with his sister Beatrice; which were very successful and popular with Nonconformists as well as Church members. Throughout his life he was a keen sportsman and was a vice-president of Castle Hedingham Cricket Club. When the Sible Hedingham Branch of the Worker's Educational Association was formed in November 1918 he was elected as a vice-president.²⁰ He supported education and was a vice-president of the Forest School, Snarebrook where he awarded the Powell Prize for Divinity.

Special services were frequently arranged such as one for the Essex Association of Bell Ringers on 30th June 1917. On the evening of 11th November 1918, a special thanksgiving service was held for the peace at the end of the First World War.²¹ During and after the war, Bishop Powell was often called upon to dedicate war shrines and war memorials. In July 1918 he dedicated a war shrine to the memory of the men of Stebbing who had fallen in the conflict. It was the gift of Henry and Margaret De Vere Stacpoole who had retained their former residence in the village.²² On a sad note, the Bishop often participated at the funerals of clergy, when he read lessons, gave addresses and pronounced

blessings. Two examples were for the funerals of the Rev George Samuel Wilson at Little Yeldham and the Rev William Paxton Thorp at Great Maplestead both during December 1918.²³

During summer 1921 it was announced that Bishop Powell had resigned the living of Castle Hedingham, which was received with great regret by parishioners. On 12th August an emergency meeting of the Parochial Church Council was held and a deputation was appointed to meet him to ask him to reconsider his decision. He agreed to consider the question and to give an answer on 16th August when another Parochial Church Council meeting was held. The Bishop appreciated the request asking him to stay in the parish, but regretted he could not alter his decision as he felt it a call and duty to go to more arduous and difficult work in London-over-the-Border.²⁴ In November 1921 he took up a new position at St Columba's Church, Wanstead Slip. On 21st November 1921 the Bishop was presented with a gold watch bearing the inscription 'E. N. Powell, Castle Hedingham, 1917-1921' and an album containing the names of 200 subscribers. Miss Annie Powell was presented with a hymn and prayer book and a travelling clock. Miss Beatrice Powell was presented with a mahogany study chair lined with red morocco. It was noticeable that prominent members of the Congregational Church served on the committee to arrange the collection and presentation including Harry Tucker Ripper, Edith Ripper and Alice Drury, who found the bishop and his sister's good friends and neighbours. The Bishop and the Misses Powell left Castle Hedingham on 28th November 1921. During his vicariate of Castle Hedingham, the bishop and his sisters endeared themselves to the parishioners and their leaving the village was the cause of much regret.²⁵

Bishop Powell became one of the best-known clergy in the Diocese and in 1921 was appointed honorary canon of Chelmsford Cathedral. The Diocesan Chronicle stated, 'Bishop Powell has been in Orders 38 years, all but nine of which have been spent in this diocese...The Bishop has rendered valuable and willing help by taking confirmations and in various other ways and it is fitting that he should have some official status in the diocese.'²⁶

He was sometimes guest preacher, at special services in the Cathedral, such as for the Mothers' Union.²⁷ He also preached at Ordination Services for new priests and deacons²⁸ and conducted re-dedication services. These even extended to the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, when he re-dedicated the bells at St Gregory's Church, Sudbury following repair and re-tuning.²⁹ He also addressed meetings in Sudbury of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

He regularly took confirmations at the request of the Bishop of Chelmsford. At one service in Castle Hedingham Church on 21st December 1918, some candidates came from as far away as Takeley.³⁰ The following year he confirmed 159 candidates at Chelmsford Cathedral.³¹ One of his last confirmation services was at his old church in Castle Hedingham during early 1928. Although he had served in South Africa and Castle Hedingham, his heart and most of his work was done in London-over-the-Border. He remained at St Columba's Church, until his sudden death on 11th April 1928 aged 68 years.³² His funeral took place on 14th April 1928 at St John the Baptist Church, Buckhurst Hill, where he was buried in the Powell family vault.³³ Floral tributes included a wreath inscribed, 'In affectionate remembrance from the parishioners of Castle Hedingham'. His successor at Castle Hedingham, the Rev Stewart Sim, referred to

the life and work of the late Bishop during Sunday services.³⁴

Some of Bishop Powell's sermons were published and in addition he was the author of *The Pastoral Ideals of a Bishop*, written in 1908 when he was Bishop of Mashonaland.³⁵ A fitting memorial for Bishop Powell was a stained glass east window, installed at St Columba's Church, Wanstead Slip to which all churches, which had the benefit of his administrations, including Castle Hedingham, contributed.³⁶ Sadly this church was badly damaged by enemy bombing during the Second World War and was later completely demolished.

Castle Hedingham War Memorials

Bishop Powell was the principal person responsible for the acquisition of two war memorials in Castle Hedingham; the first being inside the church and the second in the churchyard. The first memorial was dedicated by Bishop Powell on Good Friday, 2nd April 1920. It was located on the east wall of the nave between the pulpit and the vestry door and takes the form of three niches filled in with blue glass mosaic with gold lettering, including the names of the fallen. The work of making and erecting this memorial was carried out by James Powell and Sons.³⁷

Just over 18 months later a war memorial was erected in the churchyard and remains one of the most unusual in the country (Fig 4). This memorial incorporates the plinth and shaft of an ancient market cross believed to date back to the Saxon-Norman period. Pevsner describes it as: 'Churchyard Cross, C12 shaft and plinth with carved decoration and bosses on the chamfered edges. Incorporated into a war memorial by P. M. Johnston, 1921, with the addition of a wooden wheel-cross.'³⁸

It was thought to have stood at Crouch Green, where meetings of the Hinckford Hundred and other events, such as fairs and



Bishop Powell (back to the camera to right of the cross) dedicating the war memorial at Castle Hedingham on 13th November 1921.

political meetings took place. It was probably removed for safety during the Dissolution circa 1535 when it was placed in the cellar of the Falcon Inn to support a massive load-bearing beam. In 1890 it was inspected and recorded by Edward Bingham, potter and historian, who described it as a monolith or shaft of ashlar stone 73 inches high, 40 inch girth, with elaborate carvings on each of its four sides.³⁹ It remained in the cellar until 1921 when Bishop Powell persuaded Robert Kendall, beer retailer, pig dealer and owner of the Falcon Inn to donate it for a war memorial. His nephew, John Nelson Kendall, known as Jack, who later inherited the Falcon Inn and continued the business of beer retailer, was consulted and agreed to the village having it for a memorial. Jack Kendall stated,

Bishop Powell was a great one for having it. He bothered my uncle and me too. At last my uncle said: Go and ask Jack – whatever he says. So he came to me. Well, I'd been in the 1914 war. I might have copped a bullet. Let them have it for a memorial, I said. Let them have it, uncle... So we let Bishop Powell take it.⁴⁰

The Kendall family gave the shaft and plinth, but Bishop Powell

paid £50 for a replacement pillar of brick and mortar to take the weight of the building. He commissioned Philip Johnston⁴¹ to design the memorial, which included a new cross being fixed to the top of the shaft. Philip Johnston undertook, on behalf of the Royal Archaeological Society, to supervise the restoration. Forsyth and Maule, architects of Oxford Street, London also acted and the stone work was carried out by Wray and Fuller, masons of Chelmsford. The lead cross of Celtic design was made by J.P. White and Sons of London and fixed to the summit of the shaft. The original plinth and shaft, was fixed above a base of two steps, new in 1921, which was carved with the names of the 37 fallen and the following inscription, 'To the glory of God, this twelfth century cross was recovered and restored to the churchyard, A.D.1921 in memory of those who fell in the Great War, 1914-1918.'

Bishop Powell was chairman of the committee for the erection of the memorial and Cyril Baines, MM, was honorary secretary. Other members of the committee were Harry Gatward, Thomas Morgan, Harry Tucker Ripper, Alfred Turner and Mrs Mary Wynne-Edwards. The memorial was dedicated on Sunday, 13th November 1921 the service being conducted by Bishop Powell and

the lesson read by the Rev George Twist, a former rector, who had known the majority of the fallen. Lt Col George Davey Symonds of Moyns Park, Birdbrook and Steeple Bumpstead, performed the unveiling and Harry Tucker Ripper, as one of the elders of the Congregational Church read the names of the fallen.⁴² Following the Second World War another four names were added and in 2014 the memorial was renovated with assistance from the War Memorials Trust.⁴³

Annie Louisa Powell (1851-1928)

Miss Annie Powell was a devout church worker, particularly at St Stephen's Church, Buckhurst Hill, where she lived for over 60 years. She took an interest in the Girls' Friendly Society and Mothers Meetings. In 1917 she accompanied her brother to Castle Hedingham and actively supported his work there and later at Wanstead Slip. She was always ready to sacrifice herself for the good of others and devoted a large amount of time and energy to church and philanthropic work. Her special vocation in life was visiting the sick, although not in good health herself.⁴⁴ She lived latterly at Southfleet, 111 High Road, Buckhurst Hill and died on 12th August 1928 only four months after her brother and was buried in the family vault at Buckhurst Hill on 16th August 1928 aged 77 years.⁴⁵

Beatrice Pryor Powell, JP, (1862-1951)

Miss Beatrice Powell helped her brother in Rhodesia, Poplar and Castle Hedingham. She was one of two commissioners of the 1st Hedingham Company of Girl Guides⁴⁶ and was also a commissioner for the Saffron Walden Division. She was a member of the committee to arrange the 'Welcome Home Dinner and Concert' to First World War ex-servicemen, which was held at the National School, Castle

Hedingham on 13th January 1920. At the dinner Bishop Powell proposed a toast to Harry Tucker Ripper, chairman of the committee.

She took a great interest in the game of cricket and made arrangements to provide tea for the cricketers. Before leaving the village, Charles Hatfield, honorary secretary and treasurer of Castle Hedingham Cricket Club, presented her with a walking stick in appreciation of her assistance to the club and to other sports.⁴⁷ Her interest in cricket may have come from her father who founded Buckhurst Hill Cricket Club in 1863.⁴⁸

In 1922 she was elected as diocesan president of the Girls Friendly Society and held this position for ten years.⁴⁹ In this capacity she visited and attended meetings in all corners of Essex.

At the Essex Quarter Sessions held at Chelmsford on 1st January 1930 seven Essex residents qualified as Justices of the Peace of which four were ladies, including Beatrice Powell.⁵⁰ In this position she followed her father, Nathanael Powell who had been a JP for many years. As a JP, Beatrice regularly sat at Essex Quarter Sessions at Chelmsford as well as at her local Magistrates Court.

She lived with another sister, Emma Sophia Powell (1857–1939) at Southfleet, 111 High Road, Buckhurst Hill, which was built by their father in the grounds of his home ‘Luctons’ shortly before his death.⁵¹ Beatrice was the last survivor of the 13 children of Nathanael and Agnes Powell and lived latterly at Grosvenor Road, Wanstead until her death on 19th April 1951, when she was also buried in the family vault.

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Acknowledgements

I am very pleased to dedicate this article to Richard Morris, an authority on the Powell family history. It has given me the opportunity to add to Richard’s excellent book, by recording further information about one branch of the family. I am grateful to my sister, Christine Walker, for her help with compiling this article and in particular for sourcing some of the illustrations. Bishop Powell officiated at our grandparent’s marriage and our mother’s baptism. He was our mother’s godfather and his sister Beatrice, after whom our mother was named, was one of her godmothers.

The Author

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Keep the Home Fires Burning: when Essex policed the miners' strike, 1984-85

by
Maureen Scollan

In this more enlightened age strict boundaries no longer exist between jobs specifically for men and those just for women. Policing is no exception, and the following article explores one particular aspect of policing which caused tremendous problems for Essex in the 1980s.

I grew up in the Crittall Metal Window company's village of Silver End, between Braintree and Witham, where my parents, younger brother and I lived next door to the village police house. Over some years we got to know the various police constables who lived there with their families, and the supervisory officers who visited what was then known as a 'detached beat'.

At that time police recruits had to be under 30, and although I loved my job working in the Essex Record Office I had a longstanding interest in police work as well, and wanted to at least try it before I was too old. In August 1971, therefore, I was sent to do my initial training at one of the national police training centres at Ryton in Warwickshire, and was eventually posted to Basildon new town at the opposite end of Essex from where my family lived. It was necessary to find lodgings in Basildon as women constables were supposed to be available for call-out during the night, and the A130 dual carriageway was still in the future. After some years of operational policing experience, I passed the then stringent course to qualify as a police trainer, and spent three years as a member of the staff back at the Ryton Police Training Centre which took both men and women, although there

were more men than women they came from all over the country. For example in 1965 there were 750 men and 270 women, and in 1969 600 men and 265 women.

Women Police History

Women wearing an official looking uniform, but with a limited range of duties, made their earliest appearances in the First World War in a variety of

places around the United Kingdom, although most were volunteers and only a small number had full police powers. By the start of World War Two there were still only just under 300 such women in the UK, most of whom operated in cities like London and Liverpool, where they mostly dealt only with vulnerable women and girls especially those involved with prostitution. The passing of the



1. Sergeant Scollan in her first days as a patrol sergeant at Colchester, c.1983.
(Author's collection)

Children and Young Persons Act of 1933 helped to formalise such a specialist role.¹

Essex was one of the counties where the effect of changes in World War One gave women their first tentative opportunities to be involved in preventative policing. One group of women volunteers were organised by a branch of the National Council of Women Workers at Romford (now in the Metropolitan Police district), and Brentwood which had a garrison at nearby Warley. The Essex Chief Constable terminated their role at the end of the war and refused to accept that there was also a peacetime need for women police. Such an attitude continued until after the Second World War. However, there were two full-time clerks and typists at Essex Police Headquarters in Chelmsford who were members of a Women's Auxiliary Police Corps which had a small amount of police and civil defence training although no power of arrest. Of the two independent borough forces which existed until 1969, Colchester gave its women police a power of arrest while Southend did not.²

It was some public pressure about the need for professional women police on outside duties that made the then Essex Chief Constable Captain Jonathan Peel (from 1933–62) accept a woman sergeant on secondment from the Metropolitan Police. Sergeant Dorothy Jordan was promoted to inspector and soon afterwards changed her surname to Hodges (which was usual at that time) when she married Essex Superintendent George Hodges. Dorothy had difficulties in recruitment as women police from other counties were reluctant to even consider applying to the Essex Constabulary as its senior officers clearly did not want women police. But as policemen started to return to Essex from war service some of the more antagonistic attitudes eased, because such men had grown used to working alongside

servicewomen who might have served in such roles as army drivers or engineers.³

Barbara Lock joined the then Essex Constabulary in 1959 and was sent for initial training which was then carried out on a national basis at police training centres such as Mill Meece in Staffordshire. The 13 week national basic training programme included drill and physical training and law and procedure. Some years later the author's basic training took place in a similar establishment at Ryton-on-Dunsmore in Warwickshire. After Barbara had completed her basic training course she was posted to Chelmsford Police Station in the town centre where there was a Woman Police Department. As well as supervising the behaviour of women and girls in general, the policewomen based there also had to attend the Courts of Quarter Sessions and Assizes in the Shire Hall when women were giving evidence. Along with checking on girls found misbehaving around the town they also did occasional evening foot patrols in Maldon. After four years in Chelmsford Barbara was moved to a Women Police Department at Clacton before being promoted to sergeant; she was then moved to Brentwood where she did traditional women police work before being sent to Grays, and then back to Clacton, just before the Sex Discrimination Act was introduced: specific Women's Departments ceased in 1975. Barbara was then one of the first woman sergeants to be trained under PACE (the Police and Criminal Evidence Act) which tightened up arrangements for identifying more offences and the evidence needed to prove them.⁴

After Essex County and the Southend police forces were amalgamated in 1969 (the Colchester force having been absorbed into Essex in 1947), the expanded constabulary was authorised to employ 81 female officers including a woman

superintendent; Violet Helen Welburn transferred from Cheshire to Essex in 1970. The newly-structured Women Police Department became a specialist department in the same way that CID and Traffic Division were. A woman inspector was then posted to Southend and another to Colchester, both formerly independent borough forces; woman sergeants and constables were based in the larger stations such as Chelmsford and Harlow. Male sergeants and male inspectors also supervised the women officers at such police stations.⁵

When the author joined Essex Police in August 1971 a woman recruit was only paid 90% of that paid to a male constable. The uniforms of women officers were still geared to their mostly restricted duties, which included such activities as taking written statements for sexual offences or acting as a chaperone while a woman was being interviewed by a detective. For some years uniform trousers were only issued to the very few women officers who had been trained to drive high powered motor patrol vehicles. After a test drive with a police driving school instructor the rest of us might be given a permit to drive a marked mini police car; this included an older recruit such as myself who had owned and driven a car for around ten years before becoming a police officer. Legislation promising equality between men and women was on the horizon, but it certainly did not change attitudes overnight.

Mutual aid

On the night of 31st January 1972 Basildon town and much of mid and south Essex was disrupted by freezing fog on top of heavy snow and all police vehicles were grounded; police officers had to walk everywhere or accept their own responsibility for using a police vehicle. A squad of local officers were drawn up to deal with a crowd of striking miners who descended on the opening of the new

Labour Exchange in Basildon which was being visited by the Employment Secretary. The weather may have been one of the reasons why a couple of other women constables and myself were put on crowd control to deal with the people who were showing support for the striking miners. While such a practice was very unusual at that time, the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 was on the horizon so negative attitudes to women being involved in operational policing had to be prepared for change. The effects of the Miners' Strike of 1984-1985 contributed to such changes, not all of which were popular among certain types of policemen!

Between 1836 and 1947 Colchester was an independent borough force, and in 1940 its headquarters was created out of the former Miss Daniel's Home for Soldiers at 37 Queen Street, which included six male and one female cell plus an ammunition strong room.⁶ Since the early twentieth century civil police forces were obliged to help each other by sharing manpower if there were particular problems, and the practice became more common after the city riots of the early 1980s. Officers on operational police duties were organised on the four shift system, A to D, and each shift had two sergeants and a team of constables with an inspector in overall charge. Officers of all ranks worked seven days of shifts either early (0600-1400), late (1400-2200), or nights (2200-0600); there were then two days off before the seven day cycle began again. Cells and custody offices were controlled by a full-time custody officer of sergeant rank. In 1984 I was one of the two operational sergeants on B shift at Colchester police station.

After the 1984 miners' strike began male police officers from many different forces throughout the country were sent to the mining areas of the Midlands; women officers were therefore

obliged to take on a much wider role in ordinary policing. My male colleague who was the other Colchester B shift sergeant was very experienced in policing public order events, so I was left to run the shift with older or more 'fragile' male constables. Until they got used to only having a woman sergeant it was amusing to note how they watched their language if I was around, even if I had made it clear that I wouldn't faint if someone used a four letter word in my presence! An anonymous woman constable wrote to *The Law* (the Essex Police newspaper at that time) that she was capable of any aspect of the job (including at the mines) except where physical strength was concerned. An anonymous male constable from Harlow new town complained in print that thanks to the town being policed by women the jobs were taking over; he was sure it would take ages to restore order when the strike ended.⁷

Support call

In the first weekend of the Call requesting Essex Police to support Nottinghamshire it was initially decided to send members of the full-time Force Support Unit which was supervised by Inspector Paul Tedder; some senior officers went as well, including Chief Inspector Roy Bracey who was at that time the Force Research Officer but who had also taught riot training. A full support call consisted of two units of men, each comprising an inspector, two sergeants and 20 constables who were transported in two personnel carriers, with an accompanying blue van for luggage. The senior officers were carried separately in a Traffic patrol car, and on arrival in Nottinghamshire were based in a former army camp called Proteus, on the A614 in Sherwood Forest. Roy remembered spending much time at Clipstone Colliery where the miners were glad to see the various police support units, as those particular miners wanted

to continue working rather than striking, and continued to do so.

Only a few women officers had been trained to the high standards of the Essex Traffic Division which was based at Police HQ in Chelmsford, and one of the earliest women officers to work full-time in the high speed Traffic vehicles was Cheryl Callow who saw a way of extending her experience when the men were sent to the coalfields. At that time only men were taught public order techniques, so she got herself trained in weighing vehicles and prohibiting overweight lorries which sometimes led to her escorting vehicles into the closed mining areas. Later still she fought for women to be allowed to take the full public order training course for police officers.⁸

Carol Brock was another early woman member of the Traffic Division who was based at Rayleigh. In March 1984, halfway through an ordinary day shift, she and her female colleague were unexpectedly directed to Police HQ where they joined Traffic officers from all over Essex who were taken in the Force coach to Nottinghamshire. Each officer was then detailed to drive back to Essex the transit vans carrying the men who had been on the first week of mutual aid. The women officers were told that their weary male colleagues had experienced a very rough week with hardly any food or sleep. When the men found they were to be driven home by a policewoman their stress levels increased even more. Carol's transit had not gone far when swearing and other unpleasant personal habits began, so she pulled her vehicle out of the convoy into a layby and set down some ground rules. Telling the men she knew they were fed up and exhausted, Carol apologised that they had drawn the short straw with her as their driver, but she was not prepared to drive all the way back to Chelmsford wearing ear plugs

and with the van windows down. Much to her amazement she was greeted with brief applause from several of the men, and there was no more trouble.⁹

While the miners' strike began in March 1984 it did not make a major effect on the busy divisional station of Colchester until the beginning of April when a local front opened up in the nearby small ports of the Hythe, Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe, Mistley, and Rowhedge. The remaining patrol officers from Colchester then had to spend a good deal of time sitting in reserve at the Wivenhoe football club, in case there were any more 'flying pickets' attacks on the nearby ports. The *Essex County Standard* for 19th April 1984 reported two policemen hurt and 26 people arrested at the Wivenhoe private port, when 'flying pickets' from South Wales and Kent joined students and trade unionists in mass protests outside the port. The miners claimed that Wivenhoe and Brightlingsea were battlefields in their fight for jobs.¹⁰

Although women officers were not sent to the coalfields they were deployed at these small ports where coal was being unloaded, greatly to the annoyance of pickets of all kinds. Women officers like me were not supposed to be involved in crowd control as most of us were untrained. I protested to the local chief inspector that I was being discriminated against as I was taller and heavier than several of the male sergeants who were also untrained in crowd control techniques. To my surprise he agreed, saying, 'I am a male chauvinist. She gets the same money as my men do, so why shouldn't she be in charge of a section of officers during such a public order event!' As a patrol sergeant at the busy Colchester station I soon found I was often the only sergeant. Manpower for patrolling the town centre was provided by a handful of elderly or infirm male constables and one of the handful of women police

usually based at the station. Foot patrol or mobile patrol in a panda car (usually a mini or other small vehicle) was provided by officers holding an ordinary civilian driving licence who could deal with incidents such as shoplifters or missing children.

But ordinary police work in the Colchester area still had to carry on while support units from Essex were in the mining areas, and my shift members and I were on call-out for squads of pickets as well. In the beginning of June 1984 we had to deal with four sudden deaths on consecutive days which were nothing to do with the strike. We had to perform what was an occasional police duty within a mortuary after a 14 year old boy had died from sniffing solvents.

During the 1980s it was quite common to fill an inspector's specific role by designating an experienced sergeant such as myself as acting inspector. One of an inspector's specific jobs at that time was to deliver a formal caution to any juvenile (someone under 17) who had been found guilty of committing a relatively minor offence not serious enough to be put before a court. There were no women inspectors in the Colchester area at that time so I had to raid an off duty male inspector's locker to borrow his much larger epaulettes bearing the two silver stars of rank on each shoulder. Having duly delivered the caution I then had to return the male inspector's epaulettes to his locker – but I earned my own about three years later!

Although I was often the only operational sergeant available in the Colchester area while my colleagues were on mutual aid, we did have access to another source of help which was especially welcome on night duty. Colchester garrison was very near the centre of the town, and off duty soldiers regularly took advantage of the large number of public houses locally. The military authorities at the garrison had agreed with the divisional

police commander that one of the Redcaps – members of the Royal Military Police – could parade with the night shift and then accompany one of the police constables on foot patrol which often stopped public order problems getting out of hand.¹¹

As well as the garrison Colchester also had a football club, and on 21st April 1984 my shift and I had been on the dockside supervising pickets before 6am. That evening Colchester United football team was playing Peterborough so the policing of that match had to be entirely carried out by officers on overtime. Everyone – including the acting inspector (me!) had to be involved so we worked from 6am to 6.30pm with no real breaks. There was a big fight at the end of the match when four men were arrested. The acting inspector assisted by sitting on one offender while someone else put on the handcuffs. The rest of that week was almost as bad so on 24th April 12 hour days became compulsory for every officer and only the occasional day off was allowed.

The police manpower problems were all embracing and in May 1984 the small ports around Colchester – especially Wivenhoe – were being picketed intermittently by hundreds of pickets and demonstrators of various types, including 'flying pickets' from as far away as Kent and South Wales. Intelligence gathering was vital to ensure adequate policing on all local fronts, and this had to start about 40 miles away at the Dartford river crossing where the National Reporting Centre sometimes had contact with local press and monitored police radios. Simple observational techniques were also employed, such as trying to gauge where vehicles containing a number of men had come from. Stephanie Hoskins had been on Traffic since 1977, and was then based at Brentwood. She was adept at recognising possible pickets who turned off

the A12 near Brentwood and started heading towards Colchester. She recalled that 'they were usually four up, and were big and beefy in an old banger so were easy to spot'.¹² Most pickets tried to ignore the police, and even though I smiled and wished them 'good morning gentlemen' the best response received in return was two brief nods. However, things did sometimes turn a little bit more lively and in one of the scuffles at Wivenhoe I received a kick on the knee which caused problems for a long while afterwards.

By the middle of July Colchester town centre had a popular event to police. The famous Colchester Military Tattoo was especially difficult to police while the miners' strike continued. Because the barracks were so close to the town centre it was usual for the visiting regimental bands to march through the town to present their colours to the Mayor of Colchester in the Town Hall. In 1984 one of the visiting bands to the Tattoo was that of the Pipes and Bands of the King's Own Scottish Borderers.¹³

It was being acknowledged by the powers-that-be in Essex that overtime would have to fill the gaps in local operational policing when so many police sections had been sent to the mining areas. But there were varying definitions of what comprised a 'section' amongst the senior officers at Essex Police HQ and the officers who had been left to patrol the various parts of the force area. As the senior operational sergeant in Colchester I was frequently left with only two patrolling officers after the cells, control room and front office were covered. Meanwhile around 80 public order trained men were sitting in vehicles on the outskirts of small ports around Colchester waiting for trouble. In other parts of Essex the small number of women officers who had been trained to drive the local patrol cars were also supposed to be given more

operational involvement – if indeed they were *allowed* to do so. For example, Alyson Nyland, an area car driver at Basildon, was on mobile patrol with a woman colleague when they were called back to the station by a senior officer who had decided that it was not safe to have the main emergency car crewed by two women!¹⁴

But police dogs and their handlers were also used to patrol around the small ports, especially at night. On one occasion in May 1984 PC Ian Learmonth was patrolling with his dog when he saw damage being carried out by pickets who then escaped over a wall. He got over the wall after them but his dog did not, and the pickets set about the officer, badly assaulted him and were subsequently charged and convicted of grievous bodily harm. The dog, thinking he was protecting his master on the other side of the wall, would not allow any of the other police officers who responded to his personal radio calls for help to get over the wall for some time.¹⁵

The Strike is Over: what now?

By the beginning of 1985 the miners' strike was grinding to a halt and a harsh winter helped to make strikers more disposed to return to work. Only the Kentish miners voted to carry on. According to the Chief Constable's Report to the Essex Police Committee there were still four small and peaceful demonstrations at power stations in Tilbury and Grays. The last police support unit to be sent anywhere went to South Yorkshire and returned on 1st February 1985. The last mutual aid officer returned to Essex on 5th March 1985 when the strike ended officially.¹⁶

It was probably women officers who eventually gained the greatest long-term benefits in the progression towards equality. For example, Gwynn Williams had joined Essex Police in 1981 and had been posted to Grays

Division in the south of Essex three years before the miners' strike began. Gwynn passed her sergeant's exam and started to do a small amount of acting sergeant duties during the later stages of the strike. While many of her colleagues were supportive it was mainly policemen in the middle years of service who were not. Gwynn remembered one incident involving a neighbour dispute over a land boundary in what was then still quite a rural area; she was sent to deal with the incident on her own and when the offender also threatened her she arrested him. He told everyone that she should have been sent to the Orgreave colliery because he was shocked that she had arrested him after a prolonged tussle with several neighbours looking on.¹⁷

From 1988 women were allowed to take part in the more advanced Level 2 Public Order training, and by then there were also some gender specific firearms and crowd control courses. Even the author was sent on a crowd control training familiarisation course, and still remembers the difficulties of leading a group of officers who were all required to wear long trousers and lined protective helmets with visors, while running some distance over rough ground; it was also surprisingly difficult to make my own voice heard through the helmet. Such actions meant that women police officers received opportunities towards equality and integration which might have been much longer coming under different circumstances. After the strike ended Gwynn Williams joined up with two other women officers to form a women's public order serial which trained with the Metropolitan Police Training Unit at Hounslow.

Many of the men and women who have provided evidence for this article – as well as the author herself – remember the constant tiredness (see diary entry overleaf) which built up from long weeks of compulsory 12 hour shifts with

Sunday 15th July 1984

Transcript of an entry from the author's diary

Was too weary to give more than a casual thought to the fact that today is my 40th birthday: oh dear what a potentially depressing thought. I don't normally feel it or give any thought to age: I suppose only tiredness makes me do so now. David [David Wilkinson, fellow sergeant on B shift] and the guv'nor [Inspector Mike West] were back today full of their exploits in Nottingham: got a bit wearing. In some ways I quite resented handing back all the responsibility: I've enjoyed being the gaffer. Couldn't stay awake when I got home, and because it was dull and damp I went to bed, birthday or not.

only the occasional day off. Only in retrospect did the payments received for all the compulsory overtime become some consolation, and many new cars and deposits for houses resulted. Roy Bracey, for example, bought a giant top-of-the-range television set which his family always referred to as 'Arthur' (after Arthur Scargill) to remind them of the miners' strike which had funded it!

References

The initial sources for this article were the personal diaries of the author and letters to her (now sadly late) brother who was then working in the Middle East and subsequently many discussions with former colleagues.

1. L.A. Jackson, *Women Police, Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester, 2006), p.3.
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4. Notes provided by Barbara Lock and discussions with her.
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6. Essex Record Office (ERO), D/B 6 M27/14, Colchester Borough Watch Committee Minutes 21/09/1938.
7. Various editions of *The Law*, Essex Police newspaper.
8. Notes provided by Cheryl Callow and discussions with her.
9. Notes provided by Carol Brock and discussions with her.
10. *Essex County Standard*, 19/04/1984.
11. M. Scollan's diaries for May to July 1984.
12. *ibid.*
13. Written notes provided by Stephanie Hoskins.
14. References to You Tube films of bands marching through the centre of the town and presenting their colours to the Mayor of Colchester outside the Town Hall. The front of the original police station in Queen Street remains while the inside includes various artistic activities and a popular cafe.

15. Notes provided by Alyson Nyland and Lesley Rosenwould. Ian Learmonth ended his police career as Chief Constable of Kent.
16. ERO, C/DX 1/1/48-49, Chief Constable's Annual Reports, 1984-85.
17. Written notes provided by Gwynn Williams.
18. Written notes provided by Roy Bracey.

Acknowledgements

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The Author

Maureen Scollan grew up in Silver End and first worked at the ERO in the 1960s when F.G. (Derrick) Emmison was County Archivist. She joined the Police in 1971 and retired in 1998 having attained the rank of Inspector. Maureen was Chairman of the Friends of Historic Essex from 2004 to 2014.



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Last orders at the George: the development of County Hall, Chelmsford

by
Amber Taylor

How many Council staff may have worked at a site where pints of beer were previously served? Probably quite a few, although they might not have realised it. It was not just last orders for the George, when Essex County Council (ECC) decided they needed a central site for all their teams, it was also last orders for the Coach and Horses and the last remaining outbuildings of the Blue Boar. Duke Street at the turn of the twentieth century was filled with pubs, breweries and school buildings.

The variety of business and homes that once stood on the site reflect how the County town in the early twentieth century had developed over the years. Whilst a detailed discussion of every premise cannot be included in this article, I will examine how the Council buildings came to be, why they were needed, and what we know of the construction work of the earliest buildings. Some of the locations had multiple names and uses, but I will try to refer to the last known name wherever possible.

There are five main council blocks at County Hall (Fig 1) named A to E. Block D, rather un-alphabetically, is the oldest followed by Block C. D and C Block are the main focus of this article but A Block (completed in 1964) and E Block (opened 1988) are not without their own interesting stories.

Before County Hall

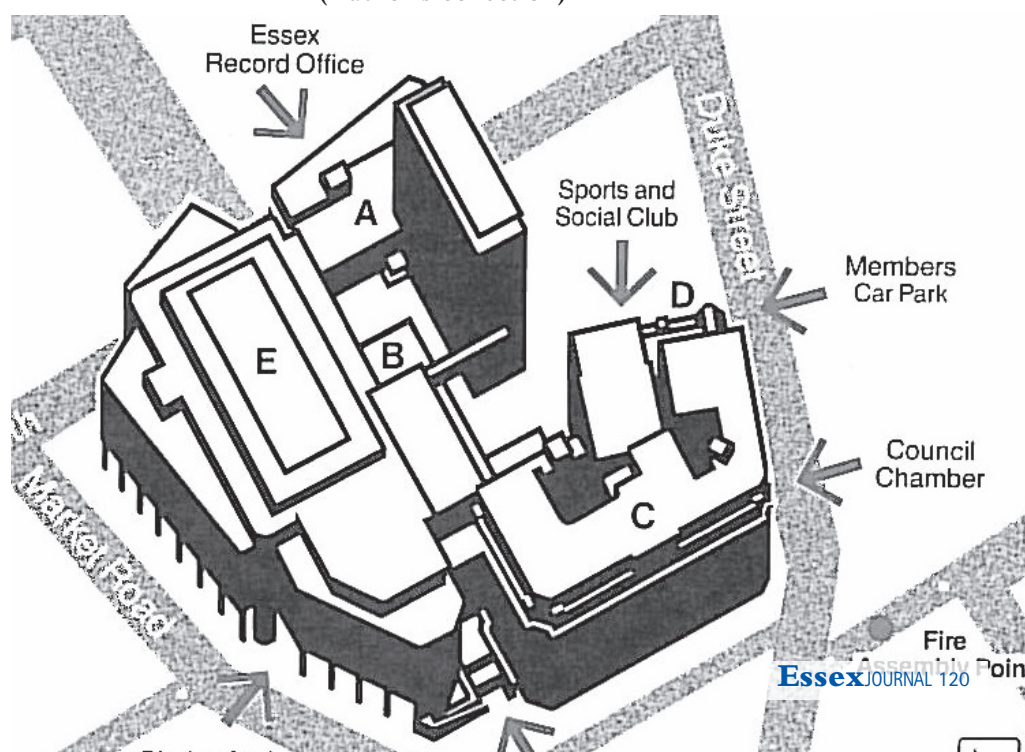
Anyone walking along Market Road or Duke Street, in the mid-nineteenth century, would have likely known the area for the school located there, if not for the surrounding pubs. Already a long-standing establishment, it was around 1620 that the gover-

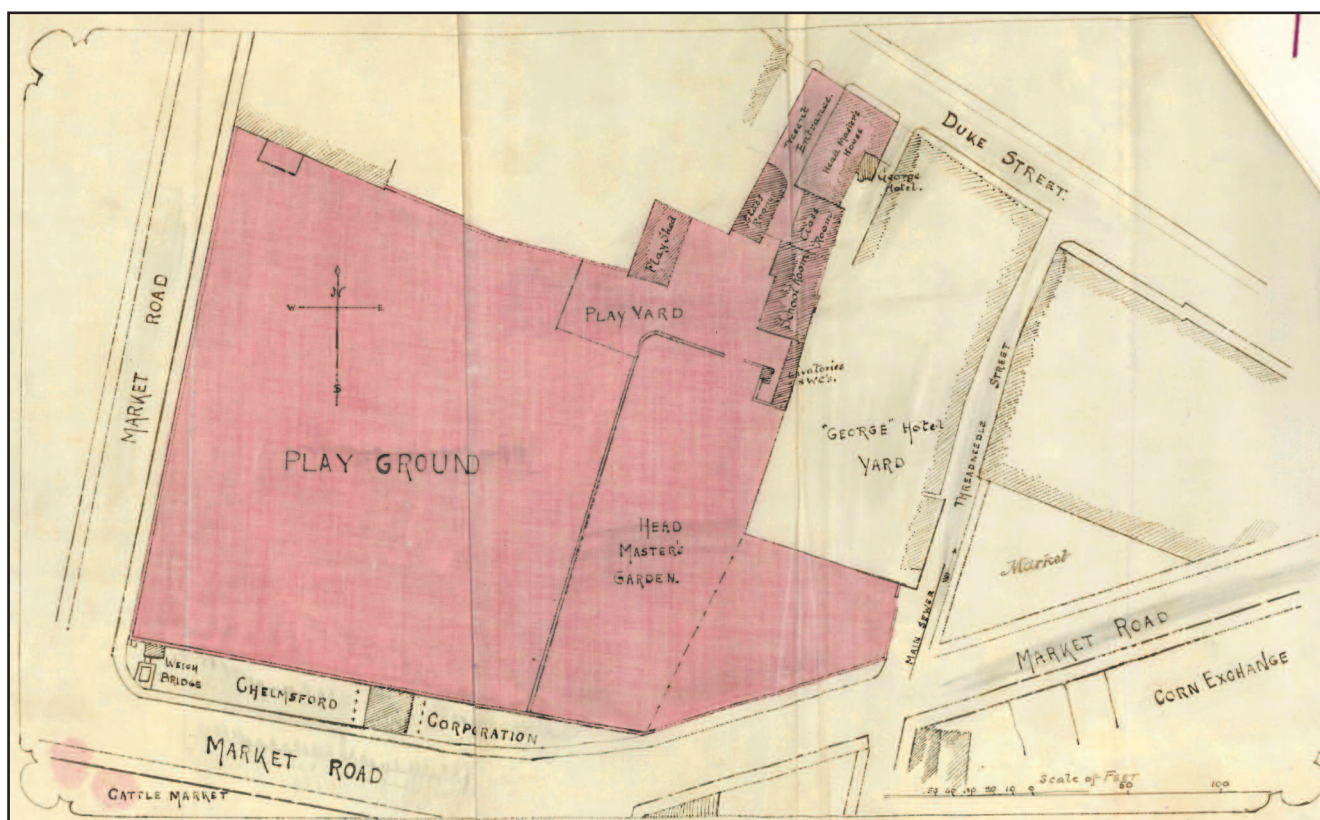
nors bought the neighbouring George Inn from Edward Mildmay for £350. This property was originally two pubs, the Wheatsheaf and George and Dragon, which both appear on eighteenth century maps. By 1857 they were both owned by Robert Butcher and, according to the Declaration of his brother Thomas Samms (dated 13/10/1882 and included with the property deeds) had been named the George for 'upwards of thirty years'. This inn, with its 'outbuildings, stables and malthouse ranged round a quadrangular courtyard, and an orchard behind',¹ was to be purchased and rebuilt upon for the expansion of the school. The governors also purchased (from John Knightbridge for £42) a 'small plot with a carpenter's cottage and a garden next to the George, part of the larger site housing the Blue Boar.'² The north wing of the George became the Headmaster's house (later the County Accountant's

office) and the outbuildings demolished for a schoolhouse to be built. The funds for this purchase and the alterations totalled over £1,000 which Lord William Petre paid for on the understanding that rent from the parts of the George still remaining would be paid to him until the debt was erased. At his death the rent had failed to pay off the debts and he was still owed around £202 and the George remained in the Petre family hands until 1645 when Parliament confiscated and 'reassigned' the premises as Royalist property. The rest of the school remained a teaching establishment for the next 275 years, albeit in various states of repair and refurbishment.

In 1879 the Chelmsford Board of Health decided to purchase some of the school's estate (along with the neighbouring land), spanning an area between, what is now, Central Park and the shopping centre, with the plan to create the Chelmsford

1. Plan from *Handbook for Staff* (Chelmsford, 1993) of the layout of County Hall. This shows the blocks that are mentioned in the text. (Author's collection)





2. Plan of the school site. (Records Management, C/T 28, Deeds, Former Offices for Chief Surveyor of Main Roads & County Accountant, 1893)

Cattle Market.³ Most of the land not used for the cattle market became houses on either side of King Edward's Avenue. These houses were constructed on the headmaster's garden, school outbuildings and playing fields identified in the southern part of the land; 'King Edward's Avenue cuts right through what was once the school field. This stretched down to the market and was surrounded by high walls and rows of very beautiful trees'.⁴ The area was described on the sale poster as 'Frontage of 57ft and known as King Edward VI Grammar School with Spacious school room and classrooms, a large open shed and other outbuildings and 15 plots of valuable building land eligible for the erection of dwelling houses and warehouses'.⁵ The cattle market and housing on King Edward's Avenue were not finished in their connection with County Hall; purchasing occurred of much of the area in the 1950s, for the construction of A Block, then again in the 1980s when E Block was built.

The market was still in use when C Block was being constructed. At 4pm on 30th September 1892, at the Corn Exchange, the land on 78 Duke Street, and 15 building plots behind, were put up for sale by the trustees of King Edward VI Grammar School. This was to be the catalyst for the beginnings of the complex we now know as County Hall. By this point the school was surrounded by two pubs and the newly constructed market, with plans from the board of health to install a public urinal next to the headmaster's garden.⁶ This, and the fact the school premises were old, overcrowded and very dilapidated, was undoubtedly a large incentive for the relocation of the school. A former pupil recalled, in 1933, 'a gymnasium with one side open to the air'⁷ without a roof and with the sounds of drinking overheard during lessons due to a shared wall with the George. One student described the Coach and Horses as 'especially patronised by organ-grinders who spent most of Sunday repairing and

tuning their instruments'.⁸ On 14th Oct 1892 the Charity Commissioners authorised the sale of the buildings to the council, although the new school site, on Broomfield Road, had already opened in June 1882. The sale of the old site was delayed when Fred Chancellor claimed damage to the properties had occurred in the move.

The remaining school building that fronted onto Duke Street, largely laboratories (including one containing photographic equipment), was purchased in 1893 by Essex County Council to be used as their first offices on the plot (Fig 2). This building, no longer standing, was likely just re-use of an existing school building. The area was also still not a centralised site for all council departments until the early twentieth century, when the Council began to consider co-location of its disparate offices.

Perhaps we need to pause and consider the question of why did the Council decide they needed new buildings? The answer lies in the rising population of the

county, the functions now maintained by the authority and the changes they brought to the county. With the Local Government Act of 1894 even greater administrative functions were bestowed upon district councils, and the County Council was given the 'duty to supervise and assist the new authorities'.⁹ This greater supervision was no doubt to assist the districts in management of the increasing population of Essex. By 1921 the population of Essex was 920,141, and by 1939 (after the building of C and D Blocks) the county's population had increased to an estimated 1,377,700. This was also reflected by the increase in Members on the County Council to 125 from 84 and main committees from nine to 23. This increase in structure impacted inter-team working and increased the need for office space for the staff to assist these teams:

In their early days several county councils had no full-time officers in their employ. The Clerk of the Peace was frequently a solicitor in private practice, the County Treasurer the manager of a local bank, and the County Surveyor an engineer who gave only a small part of his time to the service of the Council. Such further clerical staff as was necessary was provided by these officers.¹⁰

Increases in responsibility occurred across many of the departments of the council. New duties under one statute in particular, the Technical Instruction Act 1889, had particular consequences for the County Hall site. The Act allowed county and borough councils to provide educational facilities (funded via beer and spirit duties), and ECC made use of this provision. One of these facilities brought into being was the Essex Institute of Agriculture, which made use of the old grammar school laboratories on Duke Street before later moving

to Writtle (now the Writtle University College).¹¹

In 1926, in the midst of the building process for C Block, Cllr C.W. Staines was of the opinion that 'County Councils were likely to become more important, with more work to do in the future'.¹² This awareness of increasing pressures was also reported in connection to the new buildings in 1929 when the *Essex Chronicle* (EC) detailed how the situation had changed since the council had decided to proceed with their new building in May 1927. The 1929 Local Government Act had 'thrown upon the Council several important duties and responsibilities involving a considerable augmentation of their staff'.¹³

A great convenience

Essex County Council held its first official meeting on 2nd April 1889 at 35 New Broad Street, London. There was little to discuss, aside from the allocation of Members to the various Committees and, despite a proposal to find suitable accommodation in London, the decision was made to conduct all Council business in Chelmsford. It was from here that, gradually, the various departments started to gravitate towards Duke Street 'on grounds of efficiency alone there was a case for centralised offices even before the First World War'.¹⁴

C and D Block construction occurred between 1905 and 1939 and while D Block, built first, was for only the Education Department, C Block was designed to accommodate 600 staff and draw into one central location staff working at scattered offices. These offices included some already local to the City, previously based at Shire Hall, but others were much further afield, for example Essex House in Finsbury Square London. The County Council at various times leased buildings along Duke Street and in Tindall Square, and in 1920 bought Old Court in Arbour Lane, Springfield, for

the Architect's and Main Roads Departments. The County Council itself met in the Shire Hall, but many of the smaller committees met at the London Offices (located from c.1912 in River Plate House, Finsbury Circus).

Very little documentation has survived concerning the building of D Block and the decisions behind the location and building materials. The main source of information is the Council Minutes (The Education Committee, in particular, as their staff were the intended inhabitants of the building). The site was originally the Coach and Horses inn and was built next to the already existing Education Department laboratories (this being one of the buildings of the Grammar School, behind the County Accountant's office, and was later demolished to make way for C Block). The building was designed by Frank Whitmore, responsible for the design of various buildings around the borough. Initially ECC were not willing to purchase the Coach and Horses, as the proposed cost of £2,100 was deemed too high, and alternative sites to the Duke Street premises were considered.¹⁵ In the likelihood of not being able to afford the Coach and Horses, plans were considered for a building on the present site, next to the pub, at an estimated cost of £1,400 (it is assumed this is on the entrance to the courtyard or to replace the County Accountants Office which stood between the George and the Coach and Horses).¹⁶

During a General Committee meeting in 1906 it was agreed that the purchase of Coach and Horses rooms (for £1,500) and yard (for £250) would proceed. The site encompassed 'Stable and Harness rooms now used as a cycle shed by the committee' containing an area of 518 square foot, lying between the pub on the North and the premises of the County Education Committee on the South and East.¹⁷



3. Postcard of Duke Street, c.1910. The view is looking towards Tindal Square. D Block is visible (arrowed) and the County Architects office to the left of it, the latter was demolished when C Block was built. (Author's collection)

Throughout the year the Committee continued to discuss the issue of where to site the Education Department, frequently returning to the Coach and Horses. A site was required 'at a point as near as possible to the Shire Hall' and an 'enlargement of the site of the County Laboratories would be the most satisfactory and economical plan'.¹⁸ The Council once again approached the owners of the Coach and Horses, obtaining a reduction from £2,100 to £1,750, but this was still considered too expensive for the site.

By early 1908 the minutes show that the Coach and Horses was now being offered for £1,000 (a bargain as the 'present offices were scarcely up to the standard, say of a Cathedral City'¹⁹). The same committee minutes later in the year record that the Coach and Horses has now been pulled down and, of the 27 tenders received, the Council has accepted the lowest of £3,900 from Messers Parkington & Son, Ipswich

C Block

Whilst part of the land on which County Hall C Block now stands was once the Grammar School, the school had also shared its land with a drinking establishment: the George. This inn had originally been named the Chequer Inn according to contemporary maps dating to around the time of the Peasants' Revolt but had been renamed when Edward Mildmay bought it at the end of the sixteenth century. The George, along with outbuildings and the remains of the neighbouring Blue Boar Inn, had been bought by the governors of the Grammar School in 1627, with financial help from Lord William Petre, from Mildmay. They paid £350 with the intention of converting it into more teaching space for the existing building. The site was an acre of land with buildings 'ranged around a quadrangular courtyard, and an orchard behind'.²⁰ The two stories in the north wing of the inn was converted to a similar storied house for the master and usher.

Another two-storey brick school-house was built on the outbuildings behind and a fence erected. The new entrance to the site was via the old carpenter's garden, which now became part of the orchard and schoolyard.

Lord Petre paid £402²¹ towards the purchase that was to be paid off by the school; but by his death in 1637 he was still owed £202. As mentioned, a condition of his assistance was his renting out what remained of the George – the gatehouse, hall, south wing, courtyard, south and west ranges of outbuildings, and part of the orchard.²² When the Council purchased the school buildings in 1882, for the County Accountants Department, it appears they may have taken on the rental of parts of the George, as in 1912 it is said of the Accountants Department that the 'the greater part of this department is accommodated in what was originally the old George and the Old Grammar School Buildings in Duke Street'.²³ It is unclear if this meant

the rest of the George was still operating as a public house or if the site was now unused.

The location of the County Accountant's Department on Duke Street, the existing newly built Education offices, and the likelihood that owners of the George were already considering sale, may be the seed for the idea of Duke Street being the centralised site of the County Council (Fig 3). The concept for a shared venue, and further building of new offices, were first discussed, by the Standing Joint Committee, in 1911 and a new committee was set up to discuss the notion further. The County Office Committee minutes on 14th January 1912 note that moving all departments to one building

would greatly assist the County Officers in their work and tend to improve the efficiency of the work of all departments. At the present time the various departments are scattered in some five different buildings between the Shire Hall and the Railway Station in Chelmsford and when two Chiefs of departments desire to confer, a necessity which arises daily, it is necessary for one of them to take a journey along the street to call upon the other; the loss of time and inconvenience thus occasioned is probably not infrequently the cause of an interview which would be useful not taking place.²⁴

Finally, in September 1911 the Finance Committee sanctioned the purchase of the George Inn to be able to extend the County Offices. The Minutes describe the site as 12,394 square feet fronting Duke Street and King Edward's Avenue, adjoining present County Buildings (comprising the Education Dept) on the south east. The New County Offices Committee went on to commission a report on the various departments and

their current accommodation as of 1912. The Accountant's Department was described as 'old, but not historically interesting, building formally used for a Grammar School'²⁵ which adjoined the Education Department office on one side and the George Inn on the other. Looking at the plan above (Fig 2) this was the former Headmaster's house that fronted onto Duke Street.

A trip was made by members of the Committee to Reading to view Berkshire County Council's new buildings and, presumably to get ideas for their own prior to the committee meeting in July 1912²⁶ and following this visit sketch plans were requested to be submitted and presented in the Grand Jury Room for the next meeting at Shire Hall on 4th September 1912. In the meantime it was asked that present tenants vacate the buildings on the planned site.

The sketch plans showed rooms for departments and committees except for the Education Department (who were already accommodated at Duke Street in D Block). At the New County Office Sub-Committee²⁷ meeting in September 1912, the plans were viewed, and their estimated cost of £42,000 approved.

By February 1913 interviews were being held with department heads to ascertain the requirements of the various departments. Of note was the Education Department: 'It will be necessary to provide a large room for a Requisitions room in place of the room at present used for that purpose, which will be pulled down' (one assumes this refers to the Accountants Offices)²⁸ Also during this session of the New County Offices Sub-Committee it was rejected that a Council Chamber be built within the site (a plan later altered by a kind donation from Councillor William Julien Courtauld).²⁹

Plans were completed by 1913 but the outbreak of the First World War slowed purchasing of the various required properties on

the site. However, by 1916 the Committee were in a position to ask the County Architect, Frank Whitmore, to continue refining the plans. After the war, with borrowing even more difficult, it was decided to build in two phases (with the departments in most urgent need for accommodation to be relocated first) and over the next 20 years various loans were applied for, from central Government, not all successfully.

The size of C Block was always intended to vastly surpass D Block; the latter built only to house one team not many. As a result of this Committee members agreed that the new County Buildings be dealt with in two portions: 'first to commence building on the South-East corner of the site facing Threadneedle Street and King Edward's Avenue. This portion of the building, excluding furniture, is estimated to cost £90000 and will probably accommodate the Finance, Highways, Agricultural and Small Holding Departments'.³⁰

Construction

Sadly none of the original building drawings can be located in the archives (although some images of the frontage, and details of interior decorations, exist within other files) and much comment has been made about the swastikas, on the exterior, above the main (old) entrance to County Hall C Block. It should be remembered, though, that the building was designed in 1929 – before the connotations we have now were formed. We do know, from an account Winston Moss, who worked on the construction, that the 'final building would be in the form of a quadrangle'.³¹ Moss gives us his own interesting view of the characters working on the first extension (the area extending from the current public toilets along Threadneedle Avenue) as well as some of the standards for the workers, including not employing any worker whose 'shovel was not clean



■ 75 Duke Street	■ 79 Duke Street	■ Properties not purchased
■ 76 Duke Street	■ 80 Duke Street	■ Land around properties
■ 77 Duke Street	■ 81 Duke Street	■ Rights of way/access passageways/yards
■ 78 Duke Street	■ 82 Duke Street and 1-2 Threadneedle Street	

**4. Map with key showing the properties discussed in the text,
Based on 2nd Ed 25 Inch OS Map, Sheet, 52-4, 1895. (A. Taylor/C. D'Alton)**

enough to fry an egg³² Moss also tells some events probably not included in the Council minutes including one incident where concrete being poured later than expected (due to finding a Roman coin) led to the Clerk of Works, Main Contractor, and the County Architect ended up 'waist deep in very wet concrete'!³³ Apparently the Clerk of Works, a Mr Greatrex, also left four finger marks in the north-east corner of the council chamber, perhaps now concealed under layers of paint.

It appears from the account of the Council meeting on 6th September 1912 that some debate occurred over the plans and the extent of additional decorative features. The debate was between 'ornamentation and economy and

those of expense and facilities'³⁴ with Mr Brewster firmly believing that money should be put towards external decoration and the current plans were 'unworthy of the county'. Alternatively, Mr Taylor felt the offices must match those already there on Duke Street (one assumes this primarily referenced the Education building). When we compare C and D Block, as they stand today, it would seem Mr Taylor's views were not carried over into the final plans.

The original deeds for the sites purchased, and demolished (Figs 4-9 & table), are also still held within the Council's Deeds Registry and provide some of the evidence for the properties' size and usage. They give an over-

view of purchasing price and, in the case of the Coach and Horses, interesting information around its previous names and owners.

The building took some time to complete, not helped by the contracted construction firm, W.S. Sharpin of Wellington Works, Bow, going bankrupt on 10th December 1928 or by the difficulties in agreeing with Mr E.J. Rippon (owner of the corner premises) on a suitable sale price. Sharpin had been awarded the contract in October 1928, at a cost of £82,348, but part way through 1st phase the building work was forced to stop entirely until a new contractor could be found. On 4th March 1930,³⁵ a new contract for continuation of work was issued to Frederick Robert Hipperson & Sons,

Summary of buildings, owners, purchase prices and usage

Building number at time of purchase	Date of purchase	Owner	Purchase price	Other details
75 & 76	16/04/1931	W.G. Webber & F.G. Burrell	£5375	Included the passageway to the left of 76 and 'Avenue House' on King Edward's Ave to ensure the land and right of way belonged to ECC.
Yard and buildings between 76 & 77	09/07/1906	J.H. Nicholas	£250	
77 (Coach and Horses/ Royal Coach)	04/03/1908	The Writtle Brewery Co.	£1500	Some of the frontage, which overlapped the path, sold to the Borough Council prior to 1908 for £43.
78 (County Accountants office)	24/06/1893	F. Chancellor	£2,175	This is likely the existing house for the grammar school master and usher, as no record can be found of demolishing and rebuilding on the site.
79 (George Inn)	24/06/1911	Mrs M.A. Capon	£3,300	The Declaration on the deeds states that this was originally two pubs, The Wheatsheaf and George and Dragon.
80	04/04/1912	E. Butcher	£1,000	This property was leased until Christmas 1915, but as it fell in the second extension part it did not interfere with initial plans.
81 (in 1914 a double fronted shop)	01/05/1914	F.G. Burrell & W.G. Webber	£1,750	Site actually purchased in the process of building D Block as it removed the access rights that the property had behind the Coach and Horses.
82 (This was one property and three cottages)	09/07/1931	E.J. Rippon	£1,750 (plus £350 for garage area behind)	It was suggested that these premises were compulsory purchased as the offered price was too high in 1929.
Two cottages on Threadneedle Street (including a covered yard)	17/06/1912	M.A. Ward	£1,700	The covered yard was purchased from A.L.G. Gunn, 12/02/1913.

6 Broad Street Place, at cost of £71,990, and the first phase likely completed soon after. The Aberdeen granite foundation stone, on the corner of Threadneedle Street, was laid in April 1933 (the ceremony performed by the retiring Alderman J.H. Burrows.³⁶ The *EC* quotes the County Architect as stating the Finance Department had moved into the first floor on 8th December 1930.³⁷ Of course without plans it is hard to conclude what each phase involved but from photos³⁸ it would appear phase one was

considerably larger than phase two (I assume this is where phase two begins based on the foundation stone, at the corner where the Golden Fleece currently stands, being laid in 1933 and the tender for the second extension being made in 1935).

By 1936 the second phase was already underway, with the tender awarded to T.J. Bailey for £88,874 in November 1935, and it would appear the Council Chamber was probably officially finished in 1938 when tours were held for local dignitaries. An article in the *EC* in September

refers to these tours of the chamber and the 'extensions on Duke Street side, comprising the third section of the building'.³⁹ An earlier article in the *EC* mentioned a 'third extension', to store documents from the Quarter Sessions.⁴⁰ This is likely actually the second extension but, as the first was built in two phases, it was the third stage of the building process. The final building, in 1938, housed the Council Chamber, lobby, committee room. Chairman's room, and accommodation for 600 staff.



5-9. Montage of photographs showing the demolition of the buildings of 81 and 82 Duke Street, c.1930.
5 and 6 show the view along Threadneedle Street and 7, the corner shop owned by E.J. Rippon.
8 and 9 are the view from the rear of the buildings (8 assumedly taken from the roof of
the newly built first extension, which can be seen in the background of 6) looking out
onto Duke Street. (Author's collection)

The *EC* records the decision to name the buildings 'County Hall' was made at the New County Buildings Sub-Committee on 10th February 1931; although Councillor Pash was worried that it might cause confusion with the nearby Shire Hall and proposed the title 'County Council Hall' but this was out voted by a 'large majority'.⁴¹

The Chamber was officially opened on 24th September 1938 though it was not the end of the anticipated process with plans that the two first buildings would be repeated; creating a U-shaped building with a courtyard inside. D Block would have been knocked down to achieve this

and the evidence of this can be seen in the Council chamber where some of the stained glass sadly looks out into a wall rather than the daylight the images need.

It would be many years before the next block (A) would begin to be constructed (building work for the first part commencing in the mid-fifties) and by 1988 the final block (E) was in place; even so increasing the office space was already being considered in 1933, when the local paper mentioned that the Highways and Public Assistance Departments would not be in the final extension of C Block but 'no doubt, the extension would continue along

Duke St'; although, in fact, it was Market Road and King Edward's Avenue where later development spread.⁴² A Block resulted in the demolition of the busy street King Edward's Avenue in 1984, remembered for the triangular building on the end that had been originally occupied by the same firm of agricultural machinery distributors (J. Brittain Pash Ltd). By 1962 ECC were using the triangular building, one floor housing the social club (now since defunct), and the top was removed at demolishing to be used as a pagoda in the garden of an Essex resident.

Not only did the County Hall complex change the landscape of

Duke Street dramatically, it also signposted a change in organisation at local government level with a need for teams to work more closely together, even as transport started to become more convenient (an underground carpark was suggested in 1960). Each block is typical of its era; the red brick office style of D Block, the tall, Portland Stone (from Dorset) walls of C, the grey symmetry and efficiency of A Block, and the white expanse of E. Each one very much reflecting the fashions in municipal buildings at the time it was built. C Block was built with offices set away from the public; whereas E Block (completed in 1988) is full of open plan floors and large windows.

Each architect tried to tie their designs into to the local area; whilst in the 1930s this resulted in the ornate paintings of the famous in the council chamber, by the 1980s it was more subtle with the glass of the atrium above the doors mimicking the sails of boats of the Essex coast. Above all else the aim was to centralise teams and create a feeling of civic unity. As more people work from home and society moves to more private and charitable organisations that don't require that central place, will our Council Buildings one day be pulled down to be replaced with trendy wine bars and clubs? Perhaps it is not quite time to ring the final bell for the George just yet.

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5. ERO, SALE/A616, Sale catalogue: King Edward VI Grammar School, being 78 Duke Street, Chelmsford. Including 15 building plots to King Edward Avenue, 30/09/1892.

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8. Ibid, p.92
9. *The Essex County Council: 1889-1974* (Chelmsford, 1974), p.2.
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11. *The Essex County Council*, p.8.
12. *Essex Chronicle* (EC), 19/11/1926, p.3, 'Expenditure'.
13. EC, 15/11/1929, p7, 'New County Offices'.
14. *The Essex County Council*, p.52.
15. *Essex Newsman*, 07/10/1905, p4, 'Sites for Education Offices'.
16. Essex County Council (ECC), Education Committee minutes, 1905. Copy in ERO Library.
17. ERO, C/MG 2, ECC General Committee minutes, 1906.
18. Ibid.
19. EC, 01/11/1907, p4, 'County Education Offices to be at Chelmsford'.
20. This appears to be a period of growth for inns in the street for in 1618, 81 and 82 Duke Street were the Maidenhead Inn. By 1888 it appears that it was no longer an inn, but a drapers. The Blue Boar inn was located at 84 Duke Street (now the location of the Golden Fleece) but in the 1600s some of its buildings appear have been located very near to the grammar school (likely where the entrance to County Hall now stands). See H. Grieve, *The Sleepers and the Shadows*, 2 (Chelmsford, 1994), p.13.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid, p14
23. ERO, C/MG 2, New County Offices Sub-Committee minutes, 24/01/1912.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid, New County Offices Sub-Committee, 1912.
26. Ibid, Sub-committee to 'visit and inspect County Buildings recently erected in other counties', 14/06/1912.
27. Ibid, New County Offices Sub-committee, 1912.
28. Ibid, 24/01/1912.
29. *The Council Chamber of the Essex County Council: An Account of the Decorations* (Chelmsford, 1938), p.3.
30. ERO, C/MG 2, minutes, New County Buildings Sub-Committee, 26/10/1926.
31. ERO, T/Z 357, Account of

the Construction of the First Extension compiled by W.H. Moss, 1989, p.1. This includes interesting details on some of the characters involved: T.J Bailey and his son, Eric, were the main contractors but their first love was 'their land, horses and pigs' while the Clerk of Works, Mr Greatrex, seemed more interested in selling eggs to ECC staff.

32. Ibid. p.2. Apparently, the workers would use their shovels as frying pans, at meal times, over the open braziers onsite.
33. Ibid. p.3.
34. EC, 06/09/1912, p.3, 'Big Office Scheme: Are the Plans Like a Union House?'.
35. EC, 07/03/1930, p.6, 'The Loss Covered'.
36. EC, 07/04/1933, p.2, 'New County Hall – Stone-laying Ceremony'.
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38. Some of the Spalding photos stored at the ERO, as well as the one's in the author's own collection, show the stages of the build in the background of other shots.
39. EC, 30/09/1938, p9, 'Viewing the Decorations: the Story of Essex People'.
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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to David Humphreys' invaluable feedback in the writing of this article and to Neil Wiffen's endless patience in receiving drafts. Also thanks to the many individuals who have shared their experiences of working at County Hall with the author.

The Author

Amber Taylor has lived in Chelmsford for over 40 years and worked for ECC for 18. Her interest in local history was begun with tales from her father of the local area; in particular the parts that ordinary working people would have been involved in, but that are rarely noticed in modern life.

Christopher C. Thornton (ed)
assisted by Herbert Eiden,
**A History of the County of Essex, 12,
part 1: St Osyth, Great & Little Clacton,
Frinton, Great Holland & Little Holland,**
pp.xxiv & 417, ISBN 978-1-90435-649-3.
Institute of Historical Research, 2020,
£95.00. Special price **£61.75** – see below.

This latest addition to the VCH volumes covers the parishes of St Osyth, Great and Little Clacton, Frinton to c.1880 and Great and Little Holland. It is intended as a companion to volume XI which covered the history of the seaside resorts of Clacton, Walton and Frinton. This deals with the earlier history of those places as well as the adjoining parishes of St Osyth and Great and Little Holland.

The volume begins with an introduction to the general area and its history detailing its landscape, land ownership, settlement, economy and military defence from the Middle Ages to the Second World War. It is interesting to note how the ecclesiastical landholdings of the Bishop of London, St Paul's Cathedral and of course St Osyth Abbey dominated the early development and economy of the area. The shaping of the environment by coastal erosion and flooding has particular resonance today and the introduction illustrates that this affected how the area was farmed or otherwise exploited. It also covers the work of the Commissioners of the Tendring Level and sea defences in general as well as the somewhat thorny issue of foreshore rights. Sections within the introduction on smuggling and wrecks and stranded whales add a more specific local flavour. A stranded whale is recorded as having attracted visitors to the area as early as 1677 and more recently a pod in 2014.

St Osyth is the most significant of the parishes covered in the volume in the conventional VCH manner with sections on the built environment, land ownership, social history, religious history, local government and military defences, war and the community. The history of the manor is dealt with only briefly having been covered in more detail in *VCH II* (1907). Some supplementary information is added, in particular additional known abbots are listed. The section on the built environment of the parish includes plans and detailed descriptions of what remains of the abbey and how these might have fitted into the original structure. This in turn leads to a description of the Priory or Darcy mansion and the present structure. The other sections of the St Osyth section, in particular land ownership and economic and social history detail the significance of the abbey. Together with the information in *VCH II* there is a

comprehensive history of the abbey and its significance. The information is split between the different sections of St Osyth, and this might be considered to be a disadvantage, but for the fact that the intention is clearly not to create a detailed history of the abbey, but to show its significance to the history and development of the parish as a whole. This works well with the other subjects covered in St Osyth. The abbey and its post-Dissolution ownership dominated the parish, but perhaps unlike less thematic histories of the village, it does not dominate the account in quite the same way, which means that the history of the village beyond the abbey and the priory estate is covered extensively. This includes all of the aspects of the history of the parish which VCH normally covers, updated to the twenty-first century, including the economy, religion, education, local government and politics, health, housing, drainage and refuse, gas, electricity and green energy and leisure as well as holidaymaking.

The sections on the other parishes follow the same format as St Osyth. Those for Great and Little Holland are much smaller and Great and Little Clacton are combined as they derived from one Anglo-Saxon estate and remained as one manor to the late nineteenth century. The history of Frinton is only covered to c.1880, but both Clacton-on-Sea and Frinton are covered in the seaside volume XII.

As we have come to expect from VCH, the footnotes are excellent and I am sure that they will, as ever, prove extremely useful to the archivists in the Essex Record Office as well as other users. Reading the volume as a history of the area is extremely informative and absorbing but the index of people, places and subjects will mean that the volume will be just as useful for reference purposes. The glossary, notes on sources and bibliography will hopefully make the volume accessible to a wide range of readers.

The many illustrations, tables, maps and plans at appropriate intervals throughout the book in addition to the colour plates illustrate the points made in the text. The production values undoubtedly enhance this volume, together with its earlier companion, making it not only a useful reference book, but also a pleasure to read.

Katharine Schofield,
Archivist, Essex Record Office



Order online at www.boydellandbrewer.com,
just enter the offer code BB883 at the checkout. Code expires 31/12/2020.

Book Reviews

Richard Morris,
Saving Epping Forest: William George Shakespeare Smith and the Forest Fund,
pp.30, ISBN 978-1-90526-929-7.
Loughton & District Historical Society,
2019, £5.00.

Epping Forest, although surrounded in part by London's outer suburbs, is one of the jewels in Essex's crown: a wild and beautiful place, an ancient wood-pasture rich in wildlife. But it was nearly lost to us, through enclosure and development in the 1860s and 70s. How it was saved is the subject of this excellent book. The topic has, of course, been touched on before, usually in more general accounts of the origins of the Open Spaces Society and the role of individuals like Thomas Willingale, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton and George Shaw Lefevre – most notably, perhaps, in the important study by Elizabeth Baigent, published in 2011. What makes this book so useful, and enlightening, is its particular focus on the activities of an overlooked character, the solicitor W.G.S. Smith, and on the information contained in his two scrapbooks, which have survived in the archives of the Essex Field Club.

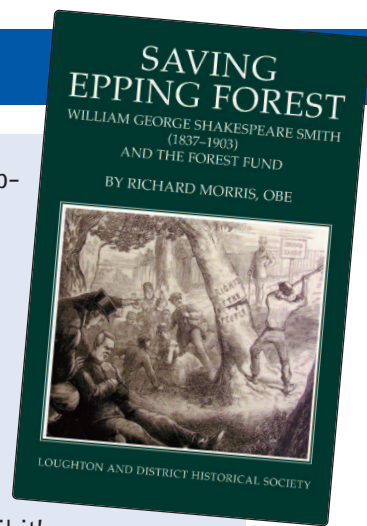
The author begins by providing much useful background, including brief details of Smith's biography, and those of D.J. Morgan, Antonio Brady and other key figures, together with a succinct account of the early development of the Commons Preservation Society (later the Open Spaces Society). He notes the wider context, especially the way in which the threat to Epping followed hard on the fights to save other commons in the vicinity of London – Berkhamsted, Hampstead Heath, Wimbledon and Wandsworth. The late enclosure of these places, in the 1850s and 60s,

came at a time when commons close to urban areas were developing new roles as places for recreation. Nevertheless, the author makes clear that from the start the campaigners wanted something more than a recreational space: the Forest was valued for its wild and ancient qualities. As an article in *The Times* put it: 'The Forest has only to be kept as forest: to convert it into an ornamental park would be to spoil it'.

The complex twists and turns of the campaign, which skilfully elided a defence of Crown rights and commoners' rights with a championing of the interests of Londoners, are clearly set out, with skilful use of letters and other documents. There are particularly interesting discussions of the way that public opinion was mobilised and of the role of the Forest Fund, of which Smith was Treasurer. In addition, the book contains a number of concluding sections which discuss the visit of Queen Victoria to the Forest in 1882, the establishment of the Essex Field Club and its early archaeological investigations in the Forest, and the contents of Smith's scrapbooks; these are fully listed in an Appendix. The volume is well illustrated throughout with colour and black and white images, including reproductions of posters relating to the campaign.

This is local history at its best: clearly and engagingly written, thorough, original, and relevant. An excellent book, and a bargain at £5.

Tom Williamson,
Professor of Landscape History,
University of East Anglia

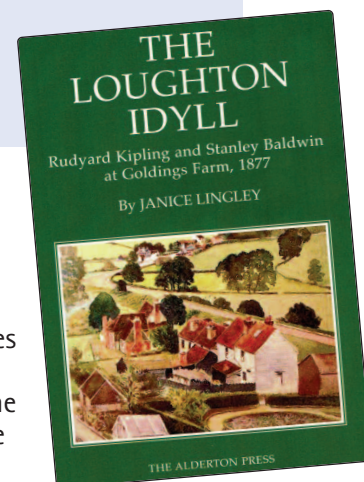


Janice Lingley,
The Loughton Idyll: Rudyard Kipling and Stanley Baldwin at Goldings Farm, 1877,
pp 76, ISBN 978-1-90526-934-1.
The Alderton Press in association with
the Kipling Society, 2020, £6.50.

The Alderton Press is the imprint of the wonderful Loughton and District Historical Society, and inside the back cover of this fascinating book is a list of their publications back to 2006: twenty-two, including nine with Richard Morris as author or co-author. What distinguishes them (or at any rate the ones I am familiar with) from many local history publications is that they are of a high standard in terms of research and writing and production, and very often take us beyond the narrow confines of Loughton. *The Loughton Idyll*, published in association with the Kipling Society, is no exception (in all

respects save one, of which more later), and is a worthy addition to the list.

In his preface, Chris Pond (another prolific LDHS author) remarks that people are sometimes surprised that Loughton was a favoured holiday destination in the nineteenth century, but it had the advantage then of being in open country, on the edge of Epping Forest, yet easily accessible from London. Janice Lingley cannot say for sure why Kipling (hereinafter 'Ruddy') spent the summer of 1877 at Goldings Farm, Loughton, as a child, but speculates that it might have been on the recommendation of the man the Kipling children knew as Uncle Topsy, better known to the rest of us as William Morris (the William Morris). Names like this drop casually throughout the narrative, thanks to marriages contracted by the four remarkable Macdonald sisters: Alice, wife of Ruddy's father John Lockwood Kipling;



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Agnes and Georgiana, who married the painters Edward Poynter and Edward Burne-Jones respectively; and Louisa, mother of Stanley Baldwin (the Stanley Baldwin, the future prime minister), who joined his cousins Ruddy and Trix for the Loughton idyll.

The fact that Ruddy and his sister Alice (known as Trix) were sent home from India by their parents and had a miserable time at a boarding establishment in Southsea is well known, because he wrote about it in his autobiography and it formed the basis of his harrowing short story 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep'. The happiness of the months at Loughton perhaps did not seem to a writer to provide such good material, so this interlude is known principally through a memoir written by Trix in 1939, after Ruddy's death, and Janice Lingley has done a great service to those interested in Loughton and Kipling, two groups who might not otherwise overlap to any great extent, in bringing this carefree summer holiday to our attention.

The word 'idyll' is right, providing a picture of a vanished age, when children were let loose for the day to do what they liked, provided they didn't leave gates open, throw stones at the animals, or damage the fruit trees. The image of the 'the future Prime Minister and the future Bard of the Empire', as they 'pranced and capered like happy demons round and through the flames' of a bonfire, Ruddy with his pet toad Pluto in his pocket, is a welcome corrective to the pictures of these men that we are used to.

Janice Lingley argues strongly that this episode had a lasting effect on the outlook and lives of Kipling and Baldwin, although the latter was already familiar with farm life, and I wonder whether Goldings Farm is given too much credit for rural themes that crop up in Kipling's writings. There is an interesting chapter on Waltham Abbey and the Pre-Raphaelites, a building to which Ruddy's uncles Burne-Jones and Poynter both contributed works of art, but the reasons for including it here seem somewhat tenuous and based on speculation as to what various people might have thought or done. Having said that, it does show what a remarkable cultural milieu these children inhabited.

Anyone with more than a passing interest in Loughton, Kipling, or Stanley Baldwin will want to read this book, but they will buy it for the text and not, alas, for its illustrations. It is all too easy to download low-resolution images from the Internet and to publish them without acknowledgement, and to a standard that lets everything else down. The picture of the Burne-Jones tiles, in particular, is of such poor quality as to be meaningless. The two photographs of Bateman's look as if they started out as National Trust photographs before being downloaded and distorted. It can be expensive getting the right illustrations, but it is worth it.

James Bettley,
Architectural historian

Richard Morris, **Epping Forest, Bedford or Grimston's Oak: the enigma of two oak trees** pp.24. The author, 2019, £3.50.

Available from Epping Forest Visitor Centre the View, 6 Rangers Road, Chingford, E4 7QH. Open Tues to Sun inclusive 10am-3.30pm.
Tel: 0207 3321911.

This short, but meticulously researched, work by Richard Morris addresses the question of the identity of what was either one magnificent oak tree in Epping Forest, known by two different names, or two different, but visually very similar, trees. The author is well placed to pursue this, having been a Verderer of Epping Forest from 1998 to 2017.

The names both date from the period shortly after the Forest came under the control of the Corporation of London, as a public open space, with the Epping Forest Act of 1878, at which time the tree or trees were, of course, already centuries old. The naming or re-naming could be seen as symbolic of this change in status; it would certainly not have taken place without it. It also shows a new desire, on the part of some leaders of society, not only to preserve nature and make it accessible to the general public, but also to be applauded, in a modest way, for doing so.

John Thomas Bedford (1812-1900) was a leading member of the Court of Common Council of the City. (He promoted the removal of the old Temple Bar on

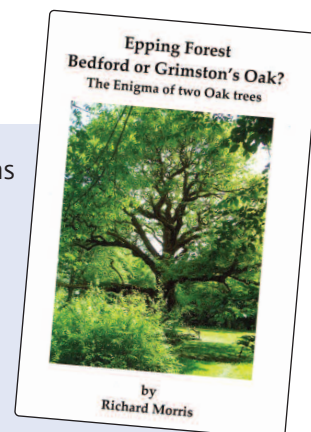
Fleet Street, and is named on the monument that replaced it.) He was seen as having taken the initiative in the moves to save the Forest. A tree which was already regarded as particularly impressive, known as 'the Cuckoo Oak', came to be known instead as 'Bedford's Oak' in commemoration of this.

The Hon Robert Grimston (1816-84) was a businessman, with interests in international telegraphs, but better known to contemporaries as a sportsman. He was a member of the family of the Earls of Verulam of Hertfordshire, but knew Epping Forest well enough to write to the managing committee in 1879, successfully requesting the clearance of scrub and undergrowth to facilitate public access to a particularly splendid oak. The tree in question therefore became known as 'Grimston's Oak'.

Were these two different trees, or the same one? The author comes up with an answer, but this reviewer will not reveal what that is!

The work is well illustrated, with portraits of Grimston and Bedford and contemporary photographs or drawings of the trees. It is a fine example of the short monograph.

Richard Harris,
Former Archive Service Manager, Essex Record Office



Book Reviews

Richard Gresty,
Loughton in the 1930s and 40s,
pp.72, ISBN 978-1-90526-930-3.
Loughton & District Historical Society,
2020, £6.95.

It is very appropriate to review a book about Loughton for this particular issue of *Essex Journal*, which is dedicated to a Loughton local historian. Loughton and District Historical Society have the impressive record of having published over 30 books, upon many different aspects of the history of its district, buildings and residents. The latest book, **Loughton in the 1930s and 40s** by Richard Gresty makes a valuable addition to the series. Its A5 size matches other books published by the Historical Society often at the rate of two a year.

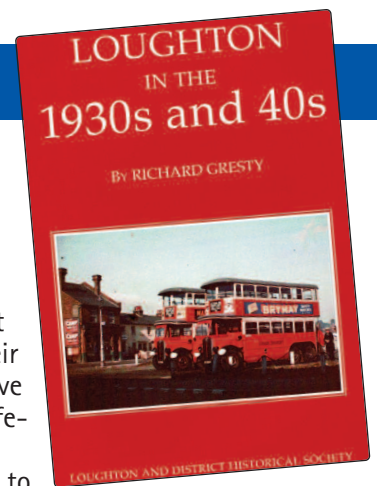
Richard Gresty describes in detail the Loughton he remembered for some 20 years through his childhood and teenage years. He has a good recollection of the shops, the people who ran them, tradesmen and public transport, particularly the railway and buses. However the author has gone much further than this, by detailing a variety of topics including education, religion, banking, entertainment, crime,

holidays, events, prices and incomes, medical and dental services and many other subjects. I had no idea, that when extractions by a dentist by anaesthesia took place, that prudent patients often had their doctors present. How times have changed during the author's lifetime of well over 90 years. The final fifteen pages are devoted to the Second World War and it is likely that some of the incidents recorded are unique and not reported elsewhere.

I was delighted to see a chapter about Sir William Addison (1905-1992) who I remember as an author and a long serving president of The Essex Society for Family History. He was a friend of the author's father and they both served together as air raid wardens in Loughton.

I really enjoyed reading this book, which also contains 30 illustrations, many being new and not previously published. This book makes an essential addition to the history of Loughton.

Adrian Corder-Birch



R.A. Doe & C.C. Thornton (eds),
**Dr Thomas Plume, 1630-1704:
his life and legacies in Essex, Kent
& Cambridge**,
pp.328, ISBN 978-1-91226-016-4.
Essex Publications, 2020. £18.99.

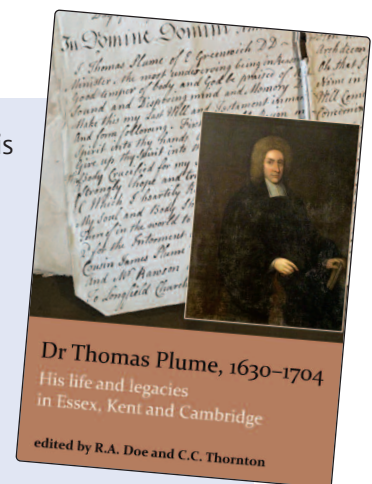
This review is based on a proof copy supplied by courtesy of University of Hertfordshire Press. The book will fill a significant gap in our knowledge of Thomas Plume who left to his Essex birthplace a magnificent library which survives, little changed, to this day. With unusual foresight he made provision for a building to house his bequest, perhaps because he was aware of the unfortunate treatment of the books bequeathed by archbishop Harsnett to the town of Colchester. Plume also left a large number of charitable bequests, spread over the three counties associated with his birth, his education, and his professional life as archdeacon of Rochester.

The first chapter is an introduction, covering the essential details of Plume's background, his life and his testamentary intentions, put into the political and religious context of the times. It sets out to challenge the late Bill Petchey's contention that Plume was 'not to be found in his books' by using different contributors to examine various aspects of Plume, his library and his legacies. This lucid introduction is a credit to its contributors and (perhaps) to the ambience of the place in which they held their regular meetings – Dr Plume's own library – even though the man himself could not preside in person! His clearly expressed intention was

that his portrait should **never** be hung there, and it remains to this day a safe distance away in Maldon's Moot Hall.

The second chapter examines the origins of the family who came from minor gentry status. Dr Plume's father established himself as a significant buyer and seller of land and property in Maldon. Both he, and, later by his older son, Samuel, were closely involved with the town's government, and with the responsibilities and litigation that ensued. Plume's father had been a trustee of two Maldon educational charities established by bequests, a precedent to be followed later by his younger son. Maldon was not only an important market town and port, but had a higher proportion than average of educated residents, as clergy serving the unhealthy marshland parishes of the Dengie saw the town as a safer place to live.

The third chapter follows Dr Plume's education in Chelmsford during a period of religious turmoil, perhaps sowing the seeds of his later antipathy to Presbyterianism and subsequently hardened by his experiences as a Cambridge undergraduate during the tumultuous years of the late 1640s. Some of his notebooks from this time survive in the Plume library, a densely written mix of expenses, poems, notes on sermons, and scatological and anecdotal material, in a hand difficult to decipher but worthy of more detailed study. There are other notebooks too from the little-known period between graduation, his



episcopal ordination during the Commonwealth, his residence in the partly abandoned Nonsuch Palace in Surrey, and his nomination to the desirable (but poorly remunerated) living of Greenwich. The influence of his patron John Hacket, future bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, is discussed, as well as the evolution of Plume's political and doctrinal views over this period. His work as archdeacon of Rochester, and the problems of church repairs and establishing conformity are discussed. His book purchases and his will are mentioned, though both are more fully discussed in later chapters.

The next chapter looks in detail at Plume's complex 19 page will and its large number of bequests to charitable causes. Having never married, he had fewer family obligations than most of his contemporaries. The recent discovery of the original document (rather than the registered copy) shows that it was written in at least four different hands, with unwitnessed codicils, and a possibly illicit insertion. An oblique reference to a 'pretended' will appears to be connected with a man convicted of conspiring to poison Plume a decade earlier. The complex provisions presented considerable difficulties for Plume's executor, and it took several years – and a number of court cases – before the will could be fully executed. There were a small number of bequests to individuals and organisations, but the majority were to establish the management of charities for the relief of the poor, for education, for the support of the clergy (and their widows), and for the Maldon library and the town's workhouse. It also set up a new chair of astronomy at Cambridge university.

The operation of Plume's Maldon trust is examined in detail in the next chapter and illustrates the challenges faced by the trustees as the income increasingly failed to meet its requirements over the next two centuries. Parts of Plume's intentions had to be abandoned on account of the shortfall caused by a decline in agricultural rentals, and the capital expenditure necessary for the maintenance of the property which generated the charity's income.

The sixth chapter deals with the Maldon library itself. With admirable foresight, Plume had already provided the building to receive his books. This was on the upper floor, with a schoolroom below. The categories of his books show a similar pattern to other gentlemen's libraries of the period, nearly two thirds being broadly theological and representing, in spite of the owner's conformist views, a spread of opinions across the religious spectrum. The remaining titles covered a wide range of subjects including the classics, history, natural philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, languages, travel, literature, law and medicine. Little is known about how he acquired his books. Some date from his student days, and many others were probably bought second hand in the London book markets. Some new volumes were gifted by their authors, and there is only limited evidence of acquisition by inheritance, or purchase

of an entire collection. Some books bear his name in manuscript (with or without an unexplained PL monogram). Though he was not a marginal annotator, he sometimes noted points of interest on the flyleaf. The majority of his reading notes were made in separate notebooks which survive in the library, though his handwriting is a challenge to read. Plume's lack of ostentation obviated the need for expensive bindings, and the few books that are richly decorated came from other owners. There is a significant collection of contemporary pamphlets. Though there are no great rarities in the collection, its value lies in the survival, virtually intact, of the working library of a seventeenth century individual, together with the manuscript evidence of how he made use of it.

The next chapter looks in detail at the unadorned brick building itself, erected by Plume towards the end of his life on the site of the decayed church of St Peter, and extended eastwards by two bays in the nineteenth century. Only the much repaired fifteenth century tower was left, probably to the regret of later trustees for whom it became a financial liability well into the twentieth century. The library has no original interior furnishings and it is not known how the books were initially shelved. Most of the present fittings date from the nineteenth century, and the seventeenth century panelling, which has been adapted to fit, probably came from elsewhere. Apart from books and manuscripts, the library holds several of Plume's paintings – but not, as he stipulated in his will, his own portrait.

The eighth chapter deals with Plume's 'manuscript-papers of my own hand'. In fact, only a quarter of the material is in Plume's hand, notes on sermons he had heard or was to preach, or on books that he had read, as well as a wide range of other matters. There is evidence that this was much re-read, and added to, over the years. There are also other manuscripts in different hands comprising sermons, reading notes, common-place writings, draft treatises, correspondence and so on. Their origins and possible mode of acquisition are discussed and they appear to have been used by Plume, and regarded as useful to others after his death.

The ninth chapter discusses in detail the setting up of Plume's Kent charities, and the numerous problems (and some failures) faced by the trustees. With the passage of time, Plume's complex instructions proved to be too proscriptive; after two centuries the value of the bequests became derisory, and the trustees had to make a number of applications to the Court of Chancery, or the Charity Commissioners, to alter the provisions of the will. In the nineteenth century, as in Essex, they faced the problems of declining agricultural rents, and the heavy costs of repairs and improvements to the property which generated the charity's income.

The final chapter covers Plume's establishment of the Plumian chair of astronomy at Cambridge University, and the building there of an observatory,

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doubtless inspired by what he had seen built in his own parish of Greenwich. As with some of Plume's other endowments, he did not make adequate financial provision and his bequest proved insufficient to fund the observatory, finally built well over a century after his death. However the chair itself was sufficiently funded to attract many outstanding occupants up to the present day, all of whom are provided with brief biographies.

The book ends with a full transcript of Plume's MS will, and a very extensive bibliography. Each chapter is fully referenced with extensive endnotes, and there are well chosen black and white illustrations throughout. The proof copy had no index, but this is in preparation and will doubtless be up to the excellent standard of the rest of the work. Even those chapters which are packed with much factual detail are well written and clearly laid out. It is an academic book, but highly accessible to the interested lay reader.

This is a model biography which illuminates its subject by examining his life as a student, a cleric in testing times, an acquirer of property, a book lover and a writer of a complex will benefitting a wide range of charities. He was a modest, almost self-effacing, philanthropist, deeply concerned with the education of the poor, the improvement of clergy, and the relief of their widows. This book makes very thorough use of the available sources and – where these are scanty or lacking – provides carefully qualified interpretations. Throughout it provides the contextual background for the period. Above all, it gives a full account of Dr Thomas Plume's life and times, and – should one meet him by lucky chance in Maldon High Street – he would be immediately familiar to those who have read this excellent book.

Michael Leach

Lizzie Sanders.

Audley End: Landscape Histories,
pp.161, 978-1-87366-920-4.
Saffron Walden Historical Society, 2019,
£12.00.

Available from Saffron Walden Tourist Information, 1 market Street,
Saffron Walden, CB10 1HR, tourism@saffronwalden.gov.uk.

For almost 900 years Audley End has featured as a landmark in the lives of the people of north-west Essex and beyond. Few more beautiful sights greet the visitor to Essex today than this cool Jacobean mansion with manicured lawns reflected in the clear waters of the river Cam. Countless children have enjoyed their very first train journey courtesy of its miniature railway? Hundreds have bathed in the warmth of its classical concerts or relaxed in the cloistered peace of the walled kitchen gardens? I for one will never forget on one glorious summer's day playing cricket against the backdrop of its seventeenth century splendour. Doubtless it was such beauty that lead me to fluff that catch at deep square leg.

Lizzie Sanders in her **Audley End: Landscape Histories** takes us on a series of fascinating journeys into this historic estate and its surrounds. We witness the perils of keeping an estate together through the vicissitudes of inheritance, share the frustrations of preparing for a royal visit that never arrives, while appreciating how fine is the balance between estate creation and the interests of the small army of workers who kept it together.

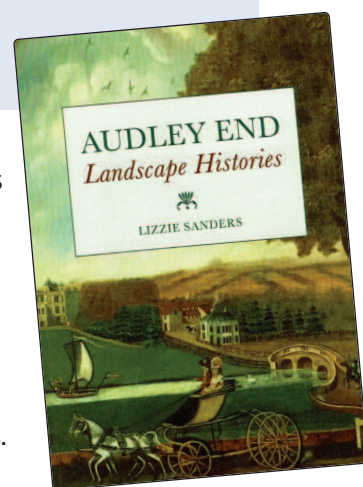
Lizzie traces Audley End estate from its twelfth century monastic beginnings through the families of Audley, the Crown and the Howard, Earls of Suffolk up until its partition in 1745 when the 7,000 acre estate was severed in two. The first Lord Braybrooke – Sir John Griffin Griffin resolved to make good the partition. Returning from service in the Seven Years

War, this was to be his life's longest campaign. Over 30 years he restored much of its lands and did more than any to sculpt the estate we see today. Little wonder is it that this seasoned campaigner left us an exquisite collection of maps and precious examples of landscape art with which to trace his achievements. Lizzie, herself an accomplished artist, guides us through the creativity involved, not only in moving the earth and planting the trees, but reflected in its sublime depictions in oil and watercolour.

A thoroughly researched and beautifully illustrated work **Audley End: Landscape Histories** combines the virtues of a bedside or coffee table book, while being portable enough to guide us on our own journeys through the Audley End estate. Detailed research has made each chapter an excursion in itself. And accompanying us on this journey are many and varied fellow travellers:

Lords and ladies of course feature strongly. Prior Reginald, who, becoming the medieval Abbey's first abbot in 1190, was the first to take exception at the masses walking past his front door. Thomas Howard, 1st Earl of Suffolk, who, shaking off his father's attainder and execution under Elizabeth I, demolished the old abbey buildings in 1603 to create the magnificent palace we see today. Through Griffin Griffin's ceaseless exertions to the cost in young men's lives lost in two world wars Audley End is no stranger to sacrifice.

The impression gained is one of an estate which, from its medieval roots has always balanced the ascetic with the agrarian. Walden and Audley End's wealth may have been founded on its access to the waters of Cam and its tributaries, but it is in a sense reassuring that the threat of flooding that beset the



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earliest monks was still causing drainage problems in the nineteenth century. Throughout, the beauty of Audley End has only ever been created and is only ever maintained by much hard work. Like the swans gliding across Audley End's glass-smooth waters, there's always been a lot of pedalling going on below the surface.

Gillian Darley,
Excellent Essex: in praise of England's most misunderstood county,
pp.342, ISBN 978-1-91040-067-8.
Old Street Publishing Ltd, 2019, £14-99.

This book is really hard to categorise – and certainly none the worse for that – being, in the approving words of another reviewer, altogether non-conformable. It consists of a series of loosely themed chapters, enthusiastically celebrating aspects of Essex life and culture which have been greatly enriched by the unusual individuals, the eccentrics, and the mildly scandalous who have contributed to its rich tapestry. It certainly succeeds in its aim to rescue the area from the dreary stereotype of Essex girl and Basildon man which, in the words of the author's introduction, has resulted in it being 'the most overlooked and undersold of counties'. There is a long historic tradition that Essex has nothing worthwhile to offer – even Charles Dickens, having failed to find a Sunday newspaper for sale in the town, denigrated Chelmsford as 'the dullest and most stupid place on earth'.

The author is (amongst other things) Essex born and bred, an architectural journalist and a biographer of the inimitably spikey and perceptive Ian Nairn. It is not surprising that her book takes a critical but discerning look at the visual qualities of the county's buildings, its towns, its planning and its countryside in the twenty first century, interwoven with unexpected details of its rich history. Ian Nairn (always a welcome visitor) steps onto the pages early in the book, identifying Cranham as 'of all the ways that London meets its countryside...the least credible'. Drab housing still ends abruptly here, edged by the neglected, weed-infested fields visible to motorists heading down the M25 towards the Dartford crossing. The author adds an intriguing coda to this sad assessment, noting the London Borough of Havering's unsuccessful attempt to escape from the entrapment of Greater London, and to 'Hexit' safely back into the county of Essex.

George Courtauld (ed)
Daisy's Diary, 1888-1900,
pp.iv. & 192, ISBN 978-0-95673-9-766.
Essex Women's Advisory Group, 2019,
£11.00.

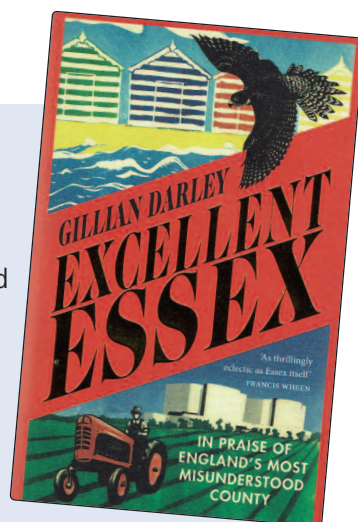
Sadly since writing this review Lizzie has passed away following an illness which she bore with fortitude. She never for one moment lost her sense of beauty or her desire to share it with others.

Simon Coxall
Landscape Archaeologist

Throughout the book the author reveals how well informed she is, particularly about the modern history of the county. She does justice to those who have contributed to its widely varied cultural scene – writers, artists, architects, pioneers in dating timber-framed buildings, naturalists, innovative industrialists, eutopians, social reformers and many others. She provides the background to the creation of Grayson Perry's exotic 'House for Essex' at Wrabness, and justly celebrates the pioneering 1931 Royal Corinthian Yacht Club at Burnham-on-Crouch – still, at 80 years old, one of the finest modern buildings in Essex. But the book is rich in people too, with, for example, amusing accounts of that 'arch reactionary' artist, Sir Alfred Munnings, painter of the social elite and their horses, who believed that taste should be determined by the 'man in the street', and that 'poetry should rhyme'. In a choleric outburst against the sculpture of Henry Moore, he described his work as 'distorted figures (with) knobs instead of heads'. When the Dedham art school burnt down in 1939, Munnings was seen driving around the town in a bright yellow car, yelling in uncontrolled delight – he is identified as 'veritably the Mr Toad of modern art'!

Touches like this – and there are many others – give the book an enjoyable vitality, and leaven the gloom of Cranham's surroundings, one of the few downsides of Green Belt policy. It is strong too in social history, illustrated with engaging, but relevant, anecdotes. Above all it is the author's knowledge of, and her enthusiasm for, the county which make this book a pleasure to read. It is usefully, if sparsely, referenced, is well indexed, is illustrated with numerous half-tone images, and has a select bibliography. It would provide an excellent antidote to anyone claiming that Essex has little or nothing to offer.

Michael Leach



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of the well-known textile manufacturing family and became a farmer.

Their grandson, George Courtauld recently found her diaries at his home in Colne Engaine and with the help of his daughter, Henrietta, has carefully transcribed them. Daisy provides an insight into life in a large house, with a governess and servants, in late Victorian England. The transcription retains Daisy's original spelling from 12 years of age and in July 1889 I was amused to read the family had a visit from the 'Archillogical' Society for afternoon tea at Whittington Court.

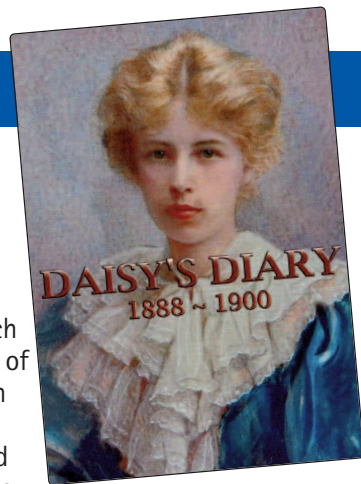
The diaries are detailed and fascinating, but inevitably relate mainly to Gloucestershire rather than Essex. However entries of interest to Essex commence in May 1897 when Rene is first mentioned. In July, Daisy, her brother Guy and Rene attend Henley regatta. The Dobell family were brewers and Guy and Rene intended to form a partnership in the brewing industry. Rene later informed Guy he wouldn't be continuing brewing as his father had offered him the management of one of his farms in Essex.

I found the entry of 10th April 1898 where Daisy meets members of the Courtauld family in

Bournemouth informative. They were engaged for two years and the last entry on 29th June 1900 was less than two months before their marriage. It is a pity Daisy did not continue her diaries, which could have recorded more details of the families during the Edwardian era.

George Courtauld has provided a very helpful postscript about the Dobell and Courtauld families and especially those members mentioned in the diaries, together with a Dobell family tree. It is well illustrated with ten pages of photographs of Daisy, her siblings, their home and Rene, which are contemporary. There is a beautiful coloured picture of Daisy on the front cover and a copy of a painting by Helen Allingham of the interior of Whittington Court on the back cover. This book makes good reading for family and social historians and those interested in the late Victorian period.

Adrian Corder-Birch



Neil McCarthy,
Forgotten Flight of Baby Doll III,
pp.42, ISBN 979-8-61235-9-333
The author, 2020, £5.70.

Currently only available from Amazon.

In the autumn 2013 issue of EJ I reviewed Stan Bishop and John Hey's *Losses of the US 8th & 9th Air Forces, Vol 4, 1st July 1944 – 30th September 1944*. In it a total of 3,613 American aircraft were listed as shot down or destroyed in accidents or scrapped during a three month period of operations. One of them was a Martin B-26 Marauder of the 391st Bomb Group, then operating from an airfield in France. While on a ferry flight back to Matching airfield, it and five other Marauders were caught in bad weather and became lost. While attempting to find somewhere safe to land, two did make it to Matching and crashed there without casualties, while a third landed at another airfield. The remaining three all crashed: at Rochford (named **Lilly Commando**), at Hatfield Heath (**Miss Laid**) and Blackmore (**Baby Doll III**). In total 11 aircrew were killed. While Bishop and Hey were unable to go into details author Neil McCarthy has researched the story of **Baby Doll III** and of the four men who died when it crashed.

Starting with the crash the author goes on to describe the four crew members. The pilot was a 25 year old veteran of 65 missions and was waiting to go home; Richard Baehr left a wife and six month old daughter back in Connecticut. Co-pilot Frank Yawitz had already earned an Air Medal for heroism. The flight engineer was Edward Demyanovich and radio-gunner John Myers. The latter two still lie in England, buried in the American Military Cemetery at

Madingley, Cambridgeshire while Baehr and Yawitz were repatriated.

McCarthy briefly describes the history of the 391st Bomb Group and then examines the airfield at Matching where the 391st was based for much of its combat career. While historian Roger Freeman has discussed in much depth the building of airfields, it is still worth marvelling at the prodigious quantities of materials that were required to build just one:

120,000 cubic yards of concrete, 350 buildings, six miles of water mains to name but a few. Winning the war was a mighty endeavour in so many areas.

There is a chapter on the Martin B-26 Marauder before the author discusses the other two fatal crashes and then briefly looks at the American forces in the UK and the efforts they, and their hosts, went to during the war. Blackmore is obviously discussed which includes some detail on a decoy airfield site called Q42B – very interesting and something which might repay further research. To conclude the author describes the unveiling of the memorial to the four airmen.

This is an interesting and well-written account of just one small, life-changing event that took place in a long war. It is a shame that some of the pictures are quite small (especially those of the crash site on p.8) but this could be to do with them surviving only as microfilm copies. The picture of Nissen huts and mud at Matching airfield (p.16) reminds us of the primitive conditions that existed on Essex airfields.

Neil Wiffen



**Forgotten
Final Flight
of
Baby Doll III**

An Essex village rediscovers its
tragic wartime link to 500,000
American Airmen

Neil McCarthy

Julie Miller was born in Maldon in 1967 and still lives there with her husband and family. In 2018 she gave up a career in the automotive industry to become a historian. Julie writes on the local history of Maldon and works as the Curator for the Combined Military Services Museum in Maldon. She is a Trustee for the Friends of the Moot Hall Charitable Trust which looks after a fifteenth century tower house in Maldon, built by the D'Arcy family in 1420, and she is also the Chair of Maldon Art Club. Julie has just completed her Taught Master's in History at the University of Essex on the life and times of Quaker John Farmer and is about to embark on a PhD to look further into his life and wider networks.



1. What is your favourite historical period?

I'm an early modernist and so the period from the Tudors to the Georgians is where I am happiest. My work at the museum also means conducting broad research from the 15th to the 20th century.

2. Tell us what Essex means to you? Above all it means home. It's about big skies, salt marshes and tidal estuaries, but also being rich in history.

3. What historical mystery would you most like to know? How did Amy Robsart fall down the stairs? Because if she wasn't murdered Robert Dudley could have married Queen Elizabeth and British history would have been very different.

4. My favourite history book is... *The Maldonians* by David Hughes. It's the humorous story of the Victorian Maldon Borough Corporation and their struggle not to supply a municipal drainage system.

5. What is your favourite place in Essex? Beeleigh where river and navigation and fresh and saltwater meet. There's the Abbey buildings, remains of a steam flour mill as well as falls and weirs. An exciting, beautiful, natural and industrial heritage landscape. But we don't tell anyone it's there.

6. How do you relax? I'm not good at doing nothing, so I like to paint watercolours, do up old dolls houses and I read history books in the bath.

7. What are you researching at the moment? Eighteenth century Quaker John Farmer, who lived in Saffron Walden and Colchester. Farmer travelled widely before going on a 3-year journey to America. His later adventures as an early anti-slavery campaigner will form the basis for my PhD.

8. My earliest memory is... Visiting Brunel's masterpiece, the SS *Great Britain* in Bristol in 1970.

9. What is your favourite song/piece of music and why? *Wish You Were Here* by Pink Floyd.

10. If you could travel back in time which event would you change? There are rules about changing history, but I might have attempted to save Prince Arthur at Ludlow in 1502, maybe some penicillin to change the course of history.

11. Which four people from the past would you invite to dinner? Jane Austen, I'm sure she would have been scathing later in her letters; Robert D'Arcy to tell me about Moot Hall; Mary Farmer to dish the dirt on her husband, and E.A. Fitch, 19th century antiquarian, Mayor and Maldonian.

12. What is your favourite food? Rare roast beef with all the trimmings, washed down with a good red – lush! Followed up with something chocolatey.

13. The history book I am currently reading is... I've just inherited a large collection of history books, so I'm reading and sorting as I go. Too many to mention.

14. What is your favourite quote from history? Elizabeth I at Tilbury as misquoted by Miranda Richardson in *Blackadder 2*: 'I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a concrete elephant!'

15. Favourite historical film? *Made in Dagenham* for depicting the struggle for equal pay in the 1960s

16. What is your favourite building in Essex? It's a close call between St Peter's, Bradwell, Thomas Plume's Library or the Moot Hall. They are all special but Moot Hall wins overall.

17. What past event would you like to have seen? I really wish I had a front row seat at Live Aid in 1985.

18. How would you like to be remembered? I hope as someone who helped bring the Moot Hall back to life and as the re-discoverer of John and Mary Farmer, simple Essex Quakers with a big story.

19. Who inspires you to read or write or research history? My PhD supervisor Dr Lisa Smith now, but in the past Plume Librarians William Petchey and Olive Earnshaw. Olive and her husband Max were also family friends who introduced me to history and books at the age of about 8.

20. Most memorable historical date? 1420, the year we believe the Moot Hall was built – happy birthday this year, although we haven't been able to celebrate properly.

Last thoughts on Essex Journal

This issue of *Essex Journal* completes 55 volumes since publication began in 1966. In 1989 a new Editorial Board was formed to continue the good work started by our predecessors. I have had the privilege to be chairman of the board since 1997, but this is surpassed by Martin Stuchfield who is the earliest surviving member of the board and more recently our consultant, who has always provided sound advice and support, which has been greatly appreciated.

In 2007 we were fortunate to recruit the services of Neil Wiffen, as editor, who has not only continued the good work of previous editors, but has made his own mark with new features and special 'tribute' editions. As this is Neil's last edition, I should like to thank him for all his hard work and to wish him well in the future as he moves onto new challenges. I should also like to thank his partner, Dr Sarah Honour, and their children, Thomas and Chloe, for allowing Neil so much time to devote to *Essex Journal*.

The Editorial Board has been supported by many good members over the years who; deserve our grateful thanks. The final members in the photograph below include Geraldine Willden our hardworking treasurer for many years, Samantha Butler our excellent secretary and Stan Newens, a very loyal 'ambassador' for *Essex Journal*.

The existing Editorial Board will be wound up on 31st December 2020 and from 1st January 2021 the Essex Society for Archaeology and History (ESAH) will assume responsibility for publishing. As a subscriber you should receive a letter from ESAH regarding the new arrangements before the end of this year. Our plans for the compilation of an index for the first 55 volumes are progressing and arrangements for the launch of a hard copy will be announced next year.

I am delighted to introduce Stephen Pollington, as our new editor, whose first issue will be Spring 2021. Stephen, who lives at Boxted, has previous editorial experience and is a specialist on Anglo Saxon history, being the author of several books. If you wish to contribute to future editions of *Essex Journal* will you please email Stephen in the New Year via: editor@essexjournal.co.uk or: stevepollington@googlemail.com.

Finally, may I thank all authors and subscribers for your support and I trust you will continue with your membership under the new arrangements.

Adrian Corder-Birch
Chairman of the Editorial Board

Your Essex Journal Editorial Board, from left to right: Neil Wiffen, Geraldine Willden, Adrian Corder-Birch, Samantha Butler and Stan Newens. (S. Honour, 16/11/2019)



