



Origins of the Mayflower



**Was the
May-Flower
built in
Leigh-on-
Sea?**

**Julian Whybra
examines the
evidence.**



**Sir James Wright and his
Part in the Earl of Chatham
Controversy of 1778**

Michael Leach looks
into the 'Imprudent and
Consummate Fool ...'

Also in this issue:

- Place-Names of the Riverscape of the East Saxon and Kent Thames
- 'An Honest Priest to Sing for my Soul'
- Humphry Repton of Hare Street: Mail Coach Entrepreneur
- A new edition of 'Chelmsford at War'

Greetings and welcome to the Autumn edition of the *Essex Journal*



Welcome to the Autumn edition of *Essex Journal*. Can it really be a year since I responded to the clarion call and offered my help with the editing of the magazine? It seems like just yesterday

Anyhow, I am very pleased to report that the *Journal* remains in rude health with many interesting and informative

articles in the pipeline, enough for several future issues. This in itself confirms my long-held suspicion that popular interest in local history remains very strong. It manifests itself in attendance at local clubs and specialist study groups, visits to stately homes and attendance at historical re-enactment events with costumed interpreters.

A similar interest in uncovering the physical evidence of the past is also to be found among metal-detectorists whose hobby does not always receive (or sometimes deserve) a good press. The unexpected successes of the television programme *Detectorists* about a fictional detecting club in the rural Essex town of 'Danebury' is due in no small part to the wonderful evocations of the natural world in the filming, and the reassuring friendship of the two central characters Lance and Andy, played by Toby Jones and Mackenzie Crook, who also wrote and directed the show. 'Danebury' is probably Maldon, to the extent that it is anywhere in particular. The series explores the two characters' struggle with the world of adulthood and their unshakable commitment to each other, as well as the dynamics of collecting clubs and their quirky members. Given that the series is slow-paced, sensitive and hilariously funny it is really reassuring to see it find a place in the nation's affections.

This time we begin with Julian Whybra's excellent review of the background to the story – almost a legend – of the association between the port of Harwich and the vessel *Mayflower* which conveyed the Founding Fathers to the New World and so helped establish an English colony in North America. The ship's master, Christopher Jones, was resident in the town for part of his life. But the tale has grown in the telling, and plausible speculation has come to be regarded as fact. The author reveals the results of his research into the ship – or ships – which have come to be celebrated as part of the county's transatlantic connections.

Regular contributor Michael Leach lifts the lid on a raging political controversy of the 18th century, and the part played in resolving it by Sir James Wright of Ray House, Woodford, an ambassador and industrialist. The venomous denunciations and public humiliation which resulted from press coverage deterred him from further ventures into national affairs – a lesson for us all, perhaps?

The layout and nature of post-Roman Thames-side settlements can be recovered by examination of the place-names of the area, as James Kemble shows. Many of these names are still in use today on both banks

of the river, some of a purely economic character (*Oysterfleete marish* from *ewestre* 'sheepfold') and others with the name of a former owner or inhabitant still attached (Beornmund at Bermondsey, for example). Even though little enough can be recovered of the origins and careers of the men and women who bore these names, they were sufficiently important in their day for the association to remain in place for centuries after.

In the first of two articles, Sue Howlett examines the part played by the concept of purgatory in the mediaeval mind – the place of 'purging' the deceased of accumulated sin. The evidence

of bequests in wills and public religious artworks such as the marvellously-titled 'Wenhaston Doom' is investigated to establish the extent to which new Lollard traditions affected the good folk of Colchester. The second part will look at the effect of Henry VII's break with the Roman church.

The name of Humphrey Repton is forever associated with triumphs of landscape gardening and with Sustead Old Hall in Norfolk. But Repton resided for a time in Romford, where his career took a very different turn. Deborah Kirk leads us through the fake news and dirty tricks which led to his disillusionment with the supposed benefits of cutting-edge information technology.

The popular local history book *Chelmsford at War* has recently been published in a second edition, having been revised after many years extensive research, and local author Andrew Begent has kindly provided some interesting excerpts to whet our appetites.

Read on!

Steve Pollington

'...a raging political controversy of the 18th century, and the part played in resolving it by... an ambassador and industrialist'



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Notes to contributors

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A contemporary engraving of the artificial slate factory – below



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Statue erected in 2020 commemorating the town's four Pilgrim Fathers, High Street, Billericay. (© Patricia Whybra)

The origins of The May-Flower: A difficult berth

Julian Whybra B.A. (Hons)

The quatercentary of the voyage of the *May-Flower* occurred during covid-ridden 2020.¹ Harwich in Essex is the spiritual home of the ship's master, Christopher Jones, for Jones hailed originally from the town (and was probably born there). It also lays claim to being the place where the *May-flower* was constructed.

To reflect Harwich's connexion to the voyage the local council erected a significant number of red information panels in 2020. Sadly they were poorly-researched and much of their content is wrong or 'remembered, with advantages'.² There is however also a persistent rumour in Leigh-on-Sea in Essex that the *May-Flower* was built and launched there. So what is actually known about the origins of the *May-Flower* and is there any truth in an Essex *May-Flower* connexion?

The May-Flower

The name of the ship which took the Pilgrim Fathers to the New World exists only in one document viz. Plymouth Colony's Division of Land Agreement of 1623 which listed the land given to those who "came first ouer in the May-Floure".³ No attempt was made to establish the name of the ship's master until 1888 when John Ward Dean first suggested in an annotation that Christopher Jones "may have been the Captain of the Mayflower" and an abstract of the will of May-Flower passenger William Mullins, sent from England to America, was found to bear the signature of "Christopher Joanes" as a witness.⁴ This appeared in an obscure American publication and was not common knowledge until an essay by Reginald Marsden appeared in 1904⁵ in which he was able to make for the first time a connexion between Christopher Jones, the May-Flower, and Harwich. Before this date Harwich did not appear in the May-Flower history and had no oral tradition relating to it.

The handful of primary sources relating to the voyage and the settlement of Plymouth Colony contain just a few descriptive morsels regarding the ship and name its master simply as "*Mr. Jones*". For a time, until Marsden's essay, the master was thought to have been Thomas Jones, whose character was known to be such that he might have taken a Dutch bribe and been responsible for a deliberate misplanting of the colonists in New England instead of Virginia.⁶ In fact, in September 1620 at the time of the *May-Flower's* epic voyage, Thomas Jones was in Virginia as master of the

Falcon and when the *May-Flower* returned in April 1621, he was being sued in a London court.⁷

Marsden found a record of a legal dispute in the High Court of Admiralty for the year 1612. It referred to a case arising from a voyage made August to December 1609 by the *May-Flower* "*of Harwich*", master and quarter-owner Christopher Jones also of Harwich, to Drontheim (Trondheim) in Norway (in contemporary Norwegian: *Brøndheimr*; Danish: *Trondhjem*; German: *Drontheim*).⁸ Marsden could find no Harwich connexion to the other owners: *Christopher Nicholls* (a London merchant), *Thomas Shorte*, and *Robert Childe*. Significantly one of Jones's crew, Thomas Thompson of Redriffe (a 24 year-old mariner, Jones's wife's brother), made a deposition in the court case dated 4th May 1612 in which he stated that he had known Jones for about ten years and that he had then "*byn for the space of fower or five yeares*"⁹ master of the ship. This meant that Jones must have acquired the *May-Flower* by 4th May 1608 at the very latest. Another Admiralty document dated 14th January 1611 regarding a salvage claim referred to both the *May-Flower* and Jones as being "*of Harwich*".¹⁰

Harwich lay at the tip of a peninsula with a thriving shipbuilding area extending inland as far as Manningtree, six miles away, but Harwich, being the main town, was registered as the suffix to all ships built within a seven-mile radius, the owners paying an annual sum for the privilege. At first glance it would appear that Harwich could reasonably claim to be the home of the *May-Flower*.

Marsden confirmed the *May-Flower's* identity and Jones's connexion with it by an examination of references to the *May-Flower's* home port in the Customs Books of the Exchequer (known as the London Port Books).¹¹ A search of these Books found that there were 29 ports containing merchantmen named Mayflower (four of them had two or three Mayflowers each) and that in August 1620 there were just three whose ships were engaged in trading voyages – one in the Thames, the second in Eastern seas, and the third was Christopher Jones's *May-Flower of London* bound for the New World.



Christopher Jones's House, 21 & 21A King's Head Street, Harwich – see fn. 20
(© Tendring District Council/Paul Nixon Photography)

Admiralty Records

The London Port Books, Custom Accounts, and Admiralty Court records enabled Christopher Jones and the *May-Flower's* recorded voyages to be traced with considerable accuracy until the Pilgrims sailed to America.¹² From the list of voyages below it can be seen that from January 1611 the ship was only ever referred to as being “*of London*”:

The May-Flower of Harwich:

- 1609 August-December **Trondheim**
outward cargo: hats, hemp, Spanish salt, hops, vinegar, Gascon wine
homeward: tar, deal boards of Norway pine, pickled herring
- 1610 April the Charente
homeward: Cognac wines
- 1610 September **Bordeaux**
Outward cargo: tufftaffeta
- 1611 January **Bordeaux**
homeward: Gascon wines
- 1611 January picked up wreckage, sails and ship's gear at Gore End in the Thames and presented a salvage claim to the Admiralty; in their appraisal on 14th January Jones and his ship are referred to as “*of Harwich*”

The May-Flower of London

- 1611 November **Bordeaux**
homeward: Gascon wines
- 1612 May La Rochelle
homeward cargo: various cloths, stockings, iron stubs, pewter, virginals
- 1613 April **Bordeaux**
homeward: Gascon wines
- 1613 July La Rochelle
Outward cargo: cloth, stockings
- 1613 November **La Rochelle**
Outward cargo: cloth, coney skins
- 1614 March **Hamburg**
homeward: taffeta, satins, sarsenets, fletia lawns (sent by a Merchant Adventurer Thomas Fletcher)
- 1614 June **Hamburg**
Outward cargo: English cloths
- 1615 January **La Rochelle**
homeward: Gascon and Cognac wines
- 1615 March **La Rochelle**
Outward cargo: cloth

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1615	May La Rochelle homeward: wines
1615	August La Rochelle and Malaga outward cargo: cloths, stockings, coney skins, fitch skins, lead, leaf tobacco
1615	October Bordeaux outward cargo: cloth
1616	Bordeaux or La Rochelle homeward: wines
1617	May La Rochelle outward cargo: cloth
1617	July La Rochelle homeward: vinegar
1618	September La Rochelle outward cargo: cloth
1619	October Bordeaux outward cargo: cloth
1620	January Bordeaux or La Rochelle homeward: French wines
1620	March-May La Rochelle homeward: Cognac and other French wines (the unloading was completed on 22 nd May)

An examination of Rotherhithe's baptismal register shows that during the winter of 1610-11 Jones not only moved the *May-Flower* from Harwich to Rotherhithe but also his family.¹³ The above entries above do not form a complete list of the *May-Flower's* voyages – that was never the Port Books' intention and what has survived is in imperfect condition. Furthermore there are other 'Mayflower' entries but they are insufficiently detailed to attribute to Jones's *May-Flower* and it is doubtful that any of them in fact do relate to her.¹⁴

From the entries it may be seen that on 28th January 1620 the *May-Flower* returned from France and unloaded a cargo of 160 tons of French wines (of this, the Book of Imports for the Port of London states, 10 tons and 3 hogsheads was taken by John Crabbe). The ship then returned to France a few months later arriving back in London in May 1620 where she began unloading her cargo. On 15th May she unloaded 19 tons of French wines for John Crabbe. On 19th May he took another hogshead. This was at the very time that Robert Cushman, co-purchasing agent for the Leyden Separatists, and Robert Weston, Merchant Adventurers' representative, were trying to hire a ship in London to take the Pilgrim Fathers to America. Cushman and Weston might well have heard of the *May-Flower's* availability from John Crabbe for Cushman wrote to John Carver (the Leyden party's other purchasing agent) in Canterbury on 10th June that Crabbe was considering joining the Pilgrims' venture, "For *M^r. Crabe, of whom*

you write, he hath promised to goe with us; yet I tell you I shall not be without feare till I see him shipped, for he is much opposed, yet I hope he will not faile."¹⁵ It can be no coincidence that Cushman and Weston hired the *May-Flower* sometime in the week of 12th-19th June.

The London Port Books contain no mention of the *May-Flower's* voyage to the New World. When it did return to Rotherhithe on 6th May 1621, Jones found that his wife had given birth to a son.¹⁶ The last record of the *May-Flower* in the London Port Books appeared on 31st October 1621: the unloading of a cargo of salt from La Rochelle. Jones died a few months later and was buried on 5th March 1622 in St. Mary's Churchyard, Rotherhithe (the grave is now lost). Administration of his estate was granted to his widow on 26th August. By 1624 the *May-Flower* was a rotting hulk on the mudflats off Rotherhithe. The Probate Inventory of the *May-Flower* referred to the application by "Robert Childe, John Moore, and [Josian] Jones the relicte [widow] of Christopher Jones deceased, owners of three fourth parte of the said Shippe" (the fourth owner was unnamed) dated 4th May for an appraisal of her worth in the High Court of the Admiralty on the grounds that she was "in ruinis". This was probably done as part of the settlement of Christopher Jones's estate and was carried out on 26th May; the ship and contents were then sold off and the vessel broken up.¹⁷ For the sake of completeness, the remaining history of the ship is below:

The May-Flower of London

1620	15 th July-11 th November & 1621 5 th April-6 th May Plymouth Colony outward passengers: colonists
1621	31 st October La Rochelle homeward cargo: salt
1624	26 th May in a ruinous state on mudflats near Rotherhithe; appraised, sold off and broken up

As for the *May-Flower's* tonnage one of the Pilgrims' elders and long-time Governor, William Bradford, wrote that the ship was "*of burden about 9. score*"¹⁸ i.e. 180 tons (meaning that her hold was capable of holding 180 casks or tuns of wine). In the above list of voyages the heaviest cargo recorded was 181¼ tons. Confirmation of the *May-Flower's* identity was thus confirmed by the discovery of the ship's name, master, home ports (between 1609 and 1624), and tonnage. A complete history of the ship was revealed from the 4th May 1608 (at least) until 26th May 1624. To discover its earlier history it is necessary to delve into the background of the ship's master, Christopher Jones.

Jones was probably born in Harwich in the winter of 1570-71 (the parish registers from May 1565 to June 1571 are missing), the eldest child of Christopher and Sibell Jones. Jones Senior, mariner, moved to Harwich from Stepney, Middlesex¹⁹ c. 1568 and, at his death in

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1578/1579, left his son his interest in the ship “*Marie Fortune*” when he reached the age of 18. Jones Junior married twice – both times to the daughters of wealthy local merchants and shipowners. By 1604 he had amassed a considerable estate and stock in various ships such that in 1605 he had built a new 240-ton ship, the *Josian*, named after his second wife.²⁰ In 1904 Marsden found that in February 1607 Jones sailed the *Josian* to Bordeaux to transport a cargo of 15 tons of damascene prunes (damsons) for which he failed to receive payment.²¹ However, in October 1608 the *Josian* is recorded loading a cargo for Leghorn, in Italy with Robert Bonner of Leigh-on-Sea as master. Between February 1607 and October 1608 the *Josian* had changed hands from Jones to Bonner.²²

Further research revealed that Robert Bonner had in fact been the original master of the May-Flower, “*One of the venturers, William Quarles, had sent, in February, 1606, a quantity of Wiltshire cloth to Middleburg in the Mayflower of Lee, which had Robert Bonner for master*” and “*...in January-February, 1607, the Mayflower of London, with the same master, was unloading a freight of Gascon wine*” from Bordeaux.²³ It will be recalled that Thomas Thompson stated on 4th May 1612 that Jones had been master of the May-Flower for “*four or five yeares*” (see above). Thus, between February 1607 and 4th May 1608 (at the latest) Jones and Bonner had bought each other’s ships. Perhaps they struck a deal while both ships were at Bordeaux in February 1607. Therefore, to the May-Flower’s history may be added:

The May-Flower of Leigh-on-Sea

1606 February Middelburg, Holland
outward cargo: Wiltshire cloth (sent by a Merchant Adventurer William Quarles)

The May-Flower of London

1607 January-February **Bordeaux**
homeward cargo: Gascon wine

The May-Flower’s home port before Harwich was recorded as London and, before that, as Leigh-on-Sea. “The variation in port-reference need cause us no trouble. It was not until a much later period that there was any compulsion upon owners to have a definite port-register for a ship and stick to it, and it frequently happens at this time, in the case of vessels coming and going in the Thames, that what is obviously one and the same ship is styled in one entry “of London” and in another of a neighbouring, or even the same, date, as of the port to which her master – who was often owner or part-owner – belonged.”²⁴

In fact it was Robert Bonner who came from Leigh-on-Sea and thus it might be inferred from the above references that the *May-Flower*’s home port pre-1608 was indeed London. The preceding changes to the May-Flower’s home ports may be summed up and more easily understood from the following timeline:

	JOSIAN	MAY-FLOWER
1606 FEB-MAR		“of Leigh”. Master Robert Bonner. Voyage to Middelburg, Holland.
1607 JAN-FEB		“of London”. Master Robert Bonner. Voyage to Bordeaux.
FEB	“of Harwich”. Master Christopher Jones. Voyage to Bordeaux.	
Between February 1607 and 4 th May 1608 Jones and Bonner bought each other’s ships.		
1608 by 4 th MAY		“of Harwich”. Admiralty Court documents of 1612 recorded Christopher Jones as master.
OCT	“of London”. Master Robert Bonner. Voyage to Leghorn, Italy.	
1609 AUG		“of Harwich”. Master Christopher Jones. Voyage to Trondheim, Norway.
1610 APR		“of Harwich”. Master Christopher Jones. Voyage to the Charente.
SEPT		“of Harwich”. Master Christopher Jones. Voyage to Bordeaux.
1611 JAN		“of Harwich”. Master Christopher Jones. Voyage to Bordeaux.
14 th JAN		“of Harwich”. Salvage claim records Christopher Jones as master.
In the winter of 1610-1611 Jones moved his family and the <i>May-Flower</i> from Harwich to Rotherhithe.		
NOV 1611- 31 st OCT 1621		“of London”. Master Christopher Jones. All voyages.
1624 26 th MAY		“of London”. Appraised, sold off and broken up.

The *Josian* and *May-Flower*’s recorded masters and home ports 1606-1624.

The *May-Flower* can now be traced back to February 1606. If she were a new ship, the latest date when she might have been built and launched would have been 1605 x 1606. However, there is no reason to conclude that she was a new vessel. So how old might she have been and, since she was not built in Harwich, is there anything which might suggest that Leigh-on-Sea or London might have been her original home port?

Robert Bonner lived in Leigh within a few miles of John Vassall of Eastwood, whom he must have known. Vassall was French by birth, an acknowledged expert in navigation, and founder of a dynasty of shipbuilders and shipowners.²⁵ There is however no known association between the two men. The already-mentioned rumour of a Leigh origin for the *May-Flower* would appear to pertain to one of two ships of that name which fought against the Spanish Armada of 1588. One, the *Mayflower of* [King’s] *Lynn* at 150 tons under Lord Edward Seymour, took part in the fighting against the Spaniards but was not recorded thereafter. The other, the 200-ton vessel *Mayflower of London*, captained by Edward Banckes, was part-owned by Vassall and fitted out for Queen Elizabeth in 1588 for service against the Spaniards.²⁶ It figured prominently in the fighting and was later, in 1591, re-fitted and recorded as 250 tons. It should be noted that at the time Vassall, was living north of the Thames in Ratcliffe in Stepney, a riverside hamlet on the opposite bank to Rotherhithe known for the fitting out and provisioning of ships. He did not move to Eastwood, Essex until 1602.

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Two early twentieth-century works tried to make a case for the anti-Armada and the Pilgrims' 'Mayflowers' being one and the same ship.²⁷ Improbably this would require the 1588 *Mayflower of London*, last recorded in 1594, to reappear in the records in 1606 as Jones's *May-Flower* having miraculously 'slimmed' from 250 to 180 tons and changed ownership. An eleven-year long hiatus from 1594 to 1605 in which there was no mention of the ship is unlikely. Based on the evidence available they could not have been the same vessel.

However, since the Essex party of Pilgrims probably boarded the *May-Flower* at Leigh rather than at Rotherhithe, the two events of 1588 and 1620 might have become inter-connected and undoubtedly led to confusion in the minds of the town's future residents. Leigh's association with a ship named the 'Mayflower' became part of local lore and understandably the assumption was made (probably because of the Vassall connexion) that the *May-Flower* was built there.²⁸

Seventeenth-century ships' lifespans were nowhere officially recorded. Only when a ship achieved fame or notoriety was its history noted. Ocean-going galleons built for the English navy were designed to take a battering and built to last, such that with re-fittings and re-building they might ordinarily remain seaworthy for 30-50 years. However this was not necessarily always the case:

Ark Royal

launched 1587; re-built 1608; sunk 1636; raised and broken up 1638

Defiance

launched 1590; re-built 1615; sold off 1650

Golden Hind

launched 1577; 'museum ship' 1580; hulk and broken up 1650

Dainty

launched 1588; captured & repaired by the Spanish and entered the Spanish navy 1594; sold off 1619

Vanguard

launched 1586; re-built 1599; re-built again 1615; broken up 1630

Warspite

launched 1596; hulk 1627; harbour service and cut down to serve as a lighter 1635; sold off 1649
Cargo ships had a shorter lifespan of at most 20-30 years:

Mayflower of Ipswich

documented 1571 x 1598

Mayflower of Hull

documented 1573 x 1582

Mayflower of London

launched 1588 at 200 tons, furnished for service by the City of London at 250 tons 1591, last documented 1594

Mary Floure of Newcastle

first documented 1558, re-built 1566, last documented 1582.

On this basis we might expect to find the Pilgrim Fathers' *May-Flower* (documented 1606 x 1624) built in the period 1595-1605 probably in the years immediately preceding its first being mentioned in the records. Might Vassall have built it in this period following his arrival in Eastwood and before its first appearance in the surviving records in 1606?

It is worth mentioning that one of the two early twentieth-century works alluded to above proposed that Vassall had supposedly sold his share of the anti-Armada *Mayflower* after 1594 but bought it back at a later date to become

the unnamed fourth owner of the *Mayflower* in 1624 when the ship was broken up.²⁹ Furthermore, the authors found that one of the other two *Mayflowers of London*, with John Goodlad as master, had returned from a voyage to Zante (Zakynthos, Greece, then part of the Republic of Venice) with a cargo of currants on 21st November 1621. The authors' logic ran thus: both John Vassall, who died in 1625, and his son Samuel had a partiality for the 'Mayflower' name, the Goodlads also lived in Leigh, the Goodlads were good friends of and intermarried with the Vassalls – all of which indicate a possible Vassall interest in John Goodlad's ship. Over-enthusiasm got the better of the authors who concluded that if Vassall had become co-owner of his erstwhile ship he might have replaced an ailing Jones with John Goodlad in time for the Zante voyage. Thus a series of hypothetical Vassall-'Mayflower' links were surmised.

However, all this was mere fanciful conjecture and can easily be disproven.³⁰ As has already been stated, Jones's *May-flower* arrived back in London from a voyage to La Rochelle on 31st October 1621. There was simply not enough time available for a return trip to the eastern Mediterranean before 21st November. One-way, the distance is 1,393 miles (1,210 nautical miles) and non-stop, at a speed of 5 knots, this was a 20-day voyage. In addition the London Port Books, in which Goodlad's *Mayflower* figures frequently between 1612 and 1621, make it clear that she was not the Pilgrims' ship. When Jones's *May-Flower* was in London loading

After the *May-Flower* set sail from Rotherhithe to begin its transatlantic voyage, it anchored in the Thames to pick up a party of Essex Pilgrims, possibly at Grays but probably at Leigh.

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for La Rochelle, Goodlad's *Mayflower* was there loading for Zante. When Jones's ship was in New England, Goodlad's was in the Thames loading for Leghorn.³¹ Ultimately, there is no documentation to suggest Vassall was the fourth owner of the *May-Flower* nor that he had a share in Goodlad's ship.³² With a Harwich origin looking improbable and no evidence for a London or Leigh origin are there any other clues which might suggest the location of the *May-Flower's* home port?

Harwich is sited opposite the entrance to the River Orwell and seven miles away from Orford Haven containing the entrance to the River Alde. Harwich was much frequented by ships bound for Ipswich via the Orwell and for Aldeburgh via Orford Haven and the Alde. The Alde was very difficult to enter and could be crossed only at the top of high water. Thus many ships waited in Harwich harbour until the tide turned to cross the bar at Orford Haven. Ipswich and Aldeburgh, both in Suffolk, were shipbuilding towns and either might have built the *May-Flower*.

Interestingly, in one of the Trinity House certificates dated 25th February 1626 it is written that "there is now in the river of Thames a ship, about a year since built at Aldeburgh, called by the name of the Mayflower of London, of the burden of 200 tons or thereabouts, whereof are owners Robert Childes, John Totten, and Michael White, with others, John Moore being (under God) designed master."³³ The owners desired to have, for their ship's defence in her intended voyages, two sakers, ten minions, and two falcons, of cast iron. Child was the same man who was recorded as an owner of the *May-Flower* in 1609 and he and Moore are the same men who were its owners on its appraisal in May 1624. It would be reasonable to infer that, since the Pilgrims' *May-Flower* had ceased to exist as a ship in 1624,

*"the vessel built at Aldeburgh early in the following year was then called after her by reason of the wish of Child and Moore to preserve their association with the name."*³⁴ It might also be reasonable to infer that since the 1625 *Mayflower* was built at Aldeburgh, so might the Pilgrims' *May-Flower*.

The 1624 Probate Inventory is the only known document which refers to John Moore in relation to the *May-Flower*. However, it also named the four men who appraised the ship, the most important one being Robert Clay, shipwright of Redriffe (Rotherhithe). Clay also happened to be Josian Jones's brother-in-law.³⁵ Clay's connexion to John Moore is found in Moore's will of 28th May 1638.³⁶ Moore bequeathed his wife Elizabeth, as residuary legatee, all his "*parts of shippes and shipping*" and "*all that my messuage or ten't with th'appurten'nces scituate att or neere Harwich in the Countie of Essex wch I late purchased of Robert Clay.*" In other words Moore had bought Clay's property in Harwich. Moore also named in his will "*my fower daughters Josan Webb Susan Sheilds Margaret Worlich and Sara Prince*"; all four were baptized in Harwich. Indeed John Moore's own baptism was in Harwich.³⁷ There can be no doubt that Moore was originally a Harwich man and moved to Rotherhithe at about the time the appraisal of the *May-Flower* was made. That said, if Moore, a Harwich man, and Child had a ship built at Aldeburgh in 1624, is it not feasible that they had the ship that it replaced built there as well? Might therefore the *May-Flower's* original home port have been Aldeburgh?

Does then Essex have any claim to fame where the *May-Flower* ship is concerned? Harwich was certainly the ship's home port from 1608 to 1611 and its master and part-owner Christopher Jones did hail from that



Statue erected in 2020
commemorating the town's
four Pilgrim Fathers, High
Street, Billericay
(© Patricia Whybra)

town. Although John Moore of Harwich was part-owner of the ship in 1624 there is nothing to suggest he was an owner at the time of the voyage to America in 1620. Neither is there any evidence to suggest that the ship was built in Harwich or Leigh-on-Sea. Should research instead be focused on Aldeburgh in Suffolk?

After the *May-Flower* set sail from Rotherhithe on 15th July 1620 to begin its transatlantic voyage, it anchored in the Thames to pick up a party of Essex Pilgrims, possibly at Grays but probably at Leigh. On 10th November 2020, a 6-feet high, bronze statue of the *May-Flower* was erected on a plinth at the end of the High Street in Billericay, Essex to commemorate the four townspeople who went on the voyage - but that's another story.

Acknowledgements:

I am grateful to Suzanne Rose of *Visit Essex* for her assistance in obtaining permission to use the photograph of Christopher Jones's House and Patricia Whybra for her permission to use the photograph of Billericay's commemorative plaque. I would also like to thank Harry Black (<https://harwicensis.home.blog/>) for his willingness to share his researches into the Wetherhill family and the wills of John Moore, Thomas Thompson (senior) and John Gardener. I must also acknowledge the assistance of *May-Flower* historian Caleb Johnson and Jane le Cluse, Hon. Archivist at Dorking Museum, in tracking down elusive source material

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Annotations:

¹ The Pilgrim Fathers aboard the *May-Flower* left Rotherhithe on 15th July 1620, left Plymouth on 6th September, anchored off Cape Cod on 11th November, founded Plymouth Colony on 11th December, overwintered in Plymouth harbour, left for England on 5th April 1621 and arrived on 6th May.

² "Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot
But he'll remember, with advantages,
What feats he did that day."

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act IV, Sc. 3, lines 49-51.

³ The Agreement is recorded in the first part of the MS. volume *Plymouths Great Book of Deeds of Lands Enrolled from An^o 1627 to An^o 1651*, written by Governor William Bradford and now in the *Massachusetts Archives*. It was first published as Shurtleff, Nathaniel B. and Pulsifer, David, *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, (Boston, 1855-61). The quotation containing the ship's

name appeared in David Pulsifer's Vol. XII (1861), p. 4. It was written in the hyphenated form *May-Flower* and will continue to be so in this article.

⁴ Dean, John Ward, *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. 42, (Boston, 1888), pp. 62-64.

⁵ Marsden, R. G., 'The Mayflower', *English Historical Review*, vol. 19, no. 76, 19th October 1904, pp. 669-680.

⁶ Neill, Edward D., 'Thomas Jones, Captain of the *Discovery*', *The Historical Magazine*, 2nd series, vol. 5, no. 1, (Morrisania, New York, January 1869), pp. 31-33 and 'Notes on Early American History. No. 1 Thomas Jones, Captain of the "Lion," "Falcon," "May Flower" and "Discovery"', *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. 28, (Boston, 1874), pp. 314-17.

⁷ Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 672.

⁸ *The National Archives [TNA]*, High Court of Admiralty Examinations, vols. 40, 41, 42 *passim* and (or the owners) H.C.A. 3, 73 frog. For descriptions of the Trondheim voyage and court case see Johnson, Caleb H., *The Mayflower and Her Passengers*, (Philadelphia), 2006, pp. 20-25, Hutchinson, J. R., 'The "Mayflower", her Identity and Tonnage', *The Mayflower Descendant*, vol. XXII, (Boston, Massachusetts, 1920), pp. 68-69, and *idem*, 'The Mayflower, her Identity and Tonnage', *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, issue 70 (1916), pp. 337-342.

⁹ Thomas Thompson's deposition in the High Court of Admiralty case of Jones vs. Pawling 4th May 1612, *TNA*, HCA 13/42, fo. 43-43d. See Hutchinson, 'The "Mayflower", her Identity and Tonnage', p. 70. His identification as Jones's brother-in-law is found in *Kent Archives*, The Will of Thomas Thompson [senior], R 21.28, 26. From its content Thomas junior can be identified as the man who made the 1612 deposition. His given age matches his baptism and he is known to have moved to Redriffe/Rotherhithe about 1612. His statement that he had known Jones for ten years is reasonable given that Jones married Josian Gray née Thompson in late 1603.

¹⁰ *TNA*, HCA Lib. 74, no. 60.

¹¹ *TNA*, HCA Acts 27 & 28 *passim*; Lib. 73, nos. 27, 37, 69; Lib. 74, no. 125; Lib. 75, no. 143; War. Bks. 12, 7 & 10 Dec. See Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 672 *et seq.*

¹² See Horrocks, J. W., 'The "Mayflower" I', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 8, issue 1, (1922), pp. 6-8 and *idem*, 'The "Mayflower" II', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 8, issue 3, (1922), pp. 86.

¹³ The Joneses' son Roger was baptized in St. Mary's Church, Rotherhithe on 15th December 1611, as were his next three children: Christopher, Thomas, and Grace, on 13th March 1614; 4th May 1617 and 28th February 1619, respectively (*St. Mary's Register of Baptisms*). These facts, together with the assignment of the ship to London during the whole of this period, prove Jones's continuous residence at Rotherhithe.

¹⁴ Since it elsewhere erroneously written that the *May-Flower* voyaged to Portugal and Greenland, it is worth stating that none of the sailings alluded to in the 'other *May-Flower* sailings' relate to those destinations.

¹⁵ Carver, John, Letter to Robert Cushman, 10th June 1620 in Bradford, William, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, (State Library of Massachusetts), MS. written 1630-1651, p. 36. Bradford added the annotation about Crabbe, "He was a minster." Crabbe did not join the voyage. That Crabbe provided the connexion between the Merchant Adventurers and the *May-Flower* cannot be guaranteed. Jones had already had,

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at least on one other occasion in March 1614, dealings with one of their members.

¹⁶ John Jones was baptized on 4th March 1621 in Harwich (*Church of St. Nicholas Register of Baptisms*) where his mother must have returned for her confinement while Jones was away in the New World. Afterwards she returned to Rotherhithe and might well be the widow *Joan Jones* who married Thomas Barthelmore in Stepney in 1626.

¹⁷ The Probate Inventory of the *May-Flower*, 1624 is found in *TNA*, HCA 24/81, folio 167/219. The grant of the administration of Christopher Jones's estate is found in the Prerogation Court of Canterbury Administration Act Book, 1622, fo. 193 (*TNA*, PROB 6).

¹⁸ Bradford, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁹ From the fact that in his will he asked to be buried in Stepney it can be inferred that he was from that parish. Why else would he have wanted to be buried there? "*And my body I will to be buried within the parish Church or Churchyard of Stebenheath [Stepney]...*" *TNA*, PROB 11/61/67 Will of Christopher Johns or Johnes, Mariner of Harwich, Essex, written 13th October 1578, proved 3rd February 1579. Stepney at that time was a very large parish and where specifically in Stepney he came from is unknown – Limehouse, Poplar, Shadwell, Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, Ratcliffe, etc., though of course Ratcliffe was a centre for provisioning and fitting out ships.

²⁰ What is known of the life and career of Christopher Jones is documented with annotations in Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-28 *passim*. Importantly it corrects and renders obsolete all earlier biographies (incl. the oft-cited Banks, Charles Edward [1854-1931], 'The English Ancestry and Homes of the Pilgrim Fathers who came to Plymouth on the "Mayflower" in 1620, the "Fortune" in 1621, and the "Anne" and the "Little James" in 1623', MS., *Library of Congress*, Washington D.C., undated [Baltimore, 1962 & 2006], pp. 19-22; even the relatively recent Francis, Tony, 'The Tale of Christopher Jones', *Essex Life*, (October 2019), pp. 124-5 is in the main fictional, speculative or incorrect). Dixon, Stephen, *Christopher Jones' House*, (Harwich, 2020) provides an important, comprehensive record of Jones's still-standing erstwhile Harwich home.

²¹ This resulted in long, drawn-out litigation in the High Court of Admiralty which was ongoing until May 1611. See *TNA*, HCA, Lib. 75 no, 250; Acts 28, March 1610 and April 1611; War. Bks. 12, 6th March 1610; Common Roll East. 9 Jac. I, rot. 1506. See Marsden, *op. cit.*, pp. 674-5.

²² See Horrocks, 'The "Mayflower" I', pp. 5-6

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁵ See Whybra, Julian, *The May-Flower Pilgrims 1620 and the Founding of Billerica, Massachusetts 1655*, (Writtle, 2020), pp.78-9.

²⁶ Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 675; Mason, Rev. Thomas W., and Nightingale, Rev. B., *New Light on the Pilgrim Story*, (London, 1920), p. 125; Horrocks, 'The "Mayflower" I', pp. 4-5. The last two try to make a case for the anti-Armada and Pilgrims' 'Mayflowers' being one and the same ship.

²⁷ Mason and Nightingale, *op. cit.*, (London, 1920), pp. 128-131; Horrocks, 'The "Mayflower" I', p. 5.

²⁸ The very existence of 'The Mayflower' public house adjacent to the slipway into Leigh Creek is based on that assumption.

²⁹ Mason and Nightingale, *op. cit.*, p. 126 *et seq.*

³⁰ See Horrocks, J. W., 'The "Mayflower" III', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 8, issue 5, (1922), pp. 144-145.

³¹ *TNA*, HCA London Port Books I9/S and 24/2.

³² Harris, Prof. Rendel, (University of Manchester), *The Finding of the Mayflower*, (London, 1920), pp. 47-56, tried to make a case for Pilgrim Father Richard Gardiner (or a putative relative, William Gardiner, to whose family he claimed Richard belonged) being the fourth owner of the *May-Flower* ship. However, he failed to establish any connexion to that family and failed to prove any link between the Gardiners and ownership of the ship. See Horrocks, J. W., 'The "Mayflower" V', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 8, issue 12, (1922), pp. 354-362.

Banks, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22 suggested that the fourth owner was Robert Sheffield, mariner of Stepney, resident in Blackwall, who, in his will of 10th September 1625, bequeathed to his wife Joan his part of "*the good ship called the 'Mayflower' of London being of the burthen of 200 tunnes or thereabouts*" (The London Metropolitan Archives, Commissary of London [London Division], xxiv, 646). However, both from the date and the tonnage, this cannot possibly be the Pilgrims' *May-Flower* but can only relate to one of the other three Mayflowers of London afloat in 1625.

Significantly, the recent researches of Harry Black revealed a possible contender for the rôle of fourth owner. Anne Wetherhill was the sister of Elizabeth Russell née Wetherhill who was the widow of Robert Russell, Christopher Jones's stepfather. Anne's fifth husband, Robert Bence, whom she married in November 1605, had a daughter Joan whose husband "*Robert Wheatley, a slater of London. Wheatley was also a ship owner and probable shipwright, but of most relevance is that he lived near and had dealings with a Christopher Nicholls, quite possibly the same man who owned a quarter part of the Mayflower. Evidence suggests both Wheatley and Nicholls even held part ownership of another vessel together, with others.*" (See 'Making a Mountain out of a Wetherhill', 23rd January 2020, <https://harwicensis.home.blog/>.) Wheatley, however, died in 1618 so could not have been the fourth owner in 1624.

³³ *TNA*, HCA London Port Books S. P. Dom., Charles I, xvi, 25.

³⁴ Horrocks, *op. cit.*, p. 143

³⁵ The sister of Josian Gray (née Thompson), Ellen Thompson (baptized, Harwich, 29th December 1594) married Clay in Rotherhithe on 1st April 1616. The will of the women's father, Thomas Thom(p)son of Chatham, mariner, written in May 1622 and proved February 1624, referred directly to "*my eldest daughter Joyson Jones widowe late wife of Christopher Jones*" and to "*my daughter Ellen Clay the wife of Robert Clay*", *supra*, *Kent Archives*, Wills, R 21.28.26.

³⁶ *TNA*, Prerogation Court of Canterbury Administration Act Book, Lee, 71.

³⁷ Harry Black's research found that the baptism of all four daughters of *John* and *Marie/Maria Moore*, in the same order given, were respectively, 23rd October 1608, 21st August 1613, 22nd October 1615, and 8th December 1619 (*Church of St. Nicholas Register of Baptisms*). John Moore's own baptism is in the same register, 14th September 1585, the son of Thomas and Maria (née Barnaby) Moore who married in Harwich on 21st January 1608. The baptisms and burials of his other children are found in the registers from that date until the burial of his son John on 17th July 1625 where he is referred to as "*of London Maryner*". See '*John Moore: the Other Mayflower Owner of Harwich*', 3rd September 2019, <https://harwicensis.home.blog/>.

‘Imprudent and a consummate fool... acting with officious and false zeal’:

Sir James Wright and his part in the Earl of Chatham controversy of 1778

Michael Leach

Introduction

Though not Essex born, Sir James Wright (c.1717–1803) acquired the Ray House estate at Woodford Bridge in 1770 and employed the architect Robert Adam to design extensive improvements to the house. These included a 65 foot long picture gallery in which to display the paintings he had acquired during his travels in Italy. Ray House was his main residence during the Earl of Chatham controversy of 1778, and is, in fact, the vital clue that distinguishes him from his contemporary namesake who was governor of the colony of Georgia during the American War of Independence – a doppelganger who has confused some subsequent commentators. It was also in the grounds of Ray House that he built a factory for making the artificial slates which he actively promoted as a roofing material for use in the West Indies where he had acquired, through marriage, a part share in a slave sugar plantation on St Kitts.¹

Though of ‘old family’ rather than coming from aristocratic origins, Sir James married an heiress and had useful connections with influential relatives. By 1762, he was already on familiar terms with the George III and was appointed groom of the bedchamber, a post in the direct gift of the king. He was knighted, and nominated as resident minister to the republic of Venice, in 1766, and remained on friendly terms with the royal family for the rest of his life.² The evaluations of his diplomatic achievements are widely divergent – ranging from being ‘noted for connoisseurship and ill health, rather than any diplomatic distinction’ (according to his ODNB biographer) to ‘having the utmost Zeal and Attention to our Concerns’ (in a testimonial from the English merchants resident in Venice).³ Sir James was relieved of his responsibilities in Venice in September 1774, when he had been home on sick leave for over a year. He retained his post of groom of the bedchamber until 1800, but he had no



A contemporary engraving of the artificial slate factory, with Ray House visible in the background. From the *Universal Magazine* of August 1798. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office, (D/DU 1578/1, pp.74-5)

other public post and presumably was busy supervising his improvements to Ray House, and establishing his slate manufacturing business there.

The government crisis of 1777-8

By 1777 Lord North's administration was in considerable difficulties over the management of the American War of Independence and was facing the imminent risk of France and Spain joining the fray by providing financial and military support to the revolutionaries. In February of the following year, Sir James and his physician acted as negotiators in an unsuccessful attempt to prepare the ground for a new government involving William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham (1708-1778) and the Earl of Bute (1713-1792). There was no face-to-face meeting between the peers but the two men, who seem to have initiated the contact, carried messages between them. One or other of these intermediaries (or sometimes both) were castigated when, later in the year, the story came to public attention through the publication of pamphlets and extensive press coverage.

Sir James Wright was in a strong position to act as a go-between. He had been a friend of Bute since the earl had stayed in his residence on a picture-buying visit to Venice in the 1760s and they had both employed the same architect to make improvements to their mansions. Sir James was also a close friend since childhood of the second intermediary, Dr Anthony Addington (1713-1790).

Dr Addington was an eminent physician who had attended both Chatham and Sir James during their episodes of ill health during 1777. As well as being the earl's physician, Addington's correspondence indicates an intimacy with the Chatham couple who were 'genuinely attached to him' and thought that 'his opinion was ... of interest and value [to them] on many subjects far remote from medicine. Dr Addington visited the household almost every day and would often bring his wife and children with him.'⁴ The February negotiations – if this is what they amounted to – had been put in writing by Sir James on Bute's instructions and were broadly supportive of the suggestion of a Chatham-led government to replace North's administration, but excusing himself from any personal involvement. It would seem this message was expanded or misunderstood by Addington to indicate an offer from Bute to join a Chatham administration as Secretary of State in place of Lord Weymouth. By this stage, Chatham, though still active in politics, was in very poor health, and seems to have been particularly irritated by the suggestion of an alliance with Bute with whom he was adamant that it would be impossible to work. Three months later Chatham was dead and nothing more of this dispute appeared in the public domain until some months later when the first press comments appeared.⁵

The controversy in the public domain

It was in early July 1778 that a few short paragraphs, buried within a political report in the press, accused

Sir James of being "an avowed tool of Lord Bute who was willing to accept a post in any government headed by Chatham".⁶ Though nothing more was published immediately, it seems probable that rumours were circulating as, six weeks later on 16 August, Bute wrote to Chatham's widow to deny that he had had any intention of seeking office in a potential Chatham government.⁷ From the middle of October, extensive press comment appeared, probably as a result of the recent publication of the first of two pamphlets detailing the events which had taken place eight months earlier. Though published anonymously, *An Authentic Account* was almost certainly written by the widowed Lady Chatham and her son, William Pitt, both of whom had access to the dead earl's correspondence. Within a few weeks, the pamphlet had run to a second edition, and then to a third, with appendices containing the accounts of Addington, Lord Mountstuart (Bute's son) and William Pitt the younger.⁸ The subsequent storm of press coverage was generally, but not exclusively, hostile to Sir James. He was described by one correspondent as an "imprudent [man] and a consummate fool ... acting with officious and false zeal".⁹

Dr Addington's appendix in *An Authentic Account* stated that it was Sir James who had told him in conversation that he 'had the same earnest desire with Lord Chatham to save the country; and was also certain, that nobody could save it, but Lord Chatham, with the assistance of Lord Bute; that Lord Bute was ready to assist him, and would be the Secretary of State in Lord Weymouth's room.'¹⁰ Addington undertook to convey Bute's message to Chatham, and asked Sir James to put the earl's offer in writing before he did so. Sir James, perhaps needing time to consider this, declined to do this immediately as he needed to return to Woodford, but promised to write to Addington that evening. His letter, delivered to Addington the following morning, only contained general support for the idea of Chatham forming a government. Nevertheless the doctor, having read this letter to Chatham, mentioned in the ensuing conversation that Bute would be willing to serve in his administration.¹¹ Subsequent comments in the press claimed that Bute's expression of support for a Chatham government carried an implicit desire to serve in his administration.

Sir James naturally took a somewhat different view, and promptly paid for a disclaimer to be published in a range of newspapers, denying that he had ever briefed Addington with an offer from Bute to accept office in a Chatham administration.¹² It is easy to see how the misunderstanding might have arisen between what Bute has authorised, and the privately held views of the two intermediaries who had frequently discussed political affairs. During Sir James's illness over much of the previous year, the doctor had "attended him almost daily; ... equally attentive to the constitution of his country, as to the constitution of his patient, he recurred to his darling topic – politics; that the hero of his theme was Lord Chatham; that the burden of his song were the distresses of the nation."¹³ Had Addington confused his enthusiastic bedside discussions with Sir James

with a concrete proposal from Bute to join a Chatham government?

As there was no sign of the press interest dying down, Sir James published his own account of the events. The consequent flurry of press comment suggests that this pamphlet, *Another Account of a Transaction*, appeared in mid to late November 1778. It reprinted verbatim Addington's narrative from *An Authentic Account* as an appendix, and provided detailed, section by section, comments on the doctor's claims. In particular, Sir James stressed that though Bute had indeed had a high regard for Chatham and his ability to form an administration, he had not made any offers to serve in such a government. Nevertheless, it must be said that there was some ambiguity in the letter that Sir James had written to Addington setting out what Bute had said about the proposal. This included the statement '... that nothing but the most imminent danger to this country, should induce him to take part in the Government of it, unless in conjunction with an upright and able Administration'.¹⁴ This remark was widely reported in the flurry of press comment, and could perhaps have been misunderstood as a covert offer to serve. Though no versions of this letter were printed in full, what was published certainly contained no suggestion that Bute was seeking the post of Secretary of State in place of Lord Weymouth, or overtly lobbying for a position in a Chatham government.

The final piece of evidence comes from Lady Chatham who sent a letter to Addington on 9 February soon after the doctor's visit to the earl. Referring to Sir James's letter which the doctor had delivered to Chatham she wrote "the gentleman's letter which you transmit is handsomely written, and sufficiently explicit. At the same time, it is impossible not to remark, how widely it differs from the tenor of some of the intimations conveyed in former strange conversations to you."¹⁵ This does suggest that Addington had said something that had struck her as unexpected, and perhaps went beyond the remit of what Bute had authorised.

The end of the affair

It is difficult now to establish where the fault or faults lay in this affair. Was it a series of unavoidable misunderstandings, all too possible when messages pass through intermediaries? Or did either Sir James or Dr Addington, in their desire to find a political solution to the crisis, overstep what they had been authorised to say in their negotiations? Lady Chatham's letter certainly suggests that the doctor had said, or implied, more than Bute had authorised in Sir James's written instructions, and this could well have been a contributory factor in the subsequent disagreements.

An alliance between the two men was, in any case, an unlikely proposition. Bute had been embittered about his displacement as prime minister by Chatham in 1763, and had been out of politics for 15 years, devoting his life to his private collections, and to the support of literature, the arts and science. Chatham, though active politically to the end in the House of Lords in opposition

to Lord North's administration, was very out of favour with the king and his political contemporaries, and was in extremely poor health by February 1778. He died a few months later, on 11 May. This episode seems to have been Sir James's only venture into national politics, and the extensive press publicity may have been a sufficiently unpleasant to discourage him from any further involvement. Dr Addington retired to Devon a couple of years later, and Bute seems to have avoided any further political entanglements and devoted himself to his collections and his good works. No one other than the newspapers and the printers benefitted from the affair but, in spite of the challenges it faced, Lord North's government survived for another four years.

The Author

Michael Leach is a retired West Essex GP (all too familiar with the risks of mixing medicine with politics at the bedside) and a local historian with a particular interest in the origin of disputes.

Notes

- ¹ King, J., 'Sir James Wright, first baronet' in ODNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/68916>; King, J., 'An Ambassador's House in Essex', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol.vii, 1997, pp.117-129; Ingamells, J, (ed) *A Dictionary of British & Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800*, Yale, 1997. Sir James's art collection was dispersed at auction sales before and after his death, and Ray House was totally destroyed by fire in 1838.
- ² Letter of 3 November 1792 to Prince of Wales, Royal Collection Trust GEO/MAIN/38766-38767
- ³ 'News', *Public Advertiser*, 16 June 1768.
- ⁴ Ziegler, P, 1965, *Addington: A Life of Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth*, Collins p.32. Ziegler was mistaken in identifying this Sir James as the former governor of Georgia. There were two contemporary baronets of this name, one of whom was indeed the former governor, but it was the other baronet who was Bute's friend, formerly resident in Venice and, from 1770, the owner of Ray House, Woodford.
- ⁵ These included numerous editions of *The London Chronicle*, *The Morning Post*, *The London Evening Post* and others, between mid October and Christmas 1778.
- ⁶ *The Public Advertiser*, 3 July 1778
- ⁷ Anon, 1778 *An Authentic Account of the Part taken by the late Earl of Chatham in a Transaction which passed in the Beginning of the Year 1778 ...*, London, p.26-7
- ⁸ The second edition of *An Authentic Account* was priced at sixpence, the third (with some additional material on which this account is based) at a shilling. This pamphlet has been erroneously assumed to have been compiled by Addington, but his contribution is limited to his five page 'narrative'.
- ⁹ *The General Advertiser*, 21 October 1778. This attack was written by 'Q in the Corner'.
- ¹⁰ *An Authentic Account*, appendix, p.1
- ¹¹ *An Authentic Account*, p. 17-18
- ¹² For example *The London Evening Post*, 20 October 1778
- ¹³ Anon (Wright, J) 1778, *Another Account of a Transaction which passed in the Beginning of the Year 1778, rather more correct than what is called An Authentic Account ...*, London, p. 6
- ¹⁴ *Another Account*, p.11 (italics added by this author).
- ¹⁵ *An Authentic Account*, p.15

Place-names of the riverscape of the East Saxon and Kent Thames

by James Kemble

The departure of the Roman legions, nominally in AD 410, continued the period of decline and desertion of the trading centre and port of London out of the walled city, a process which had probably begun in the late 3rd century. Trade with Francia, the Mediterranean and beyond did not entirely cease though apparently it was, for over a century, much reduced. The six hundred years between AD 410 and the end of Saxon rule in 1066 saw the emergence of regional kingship often at war amongst itself, from which eventually coalesced an England under King Egbert (802-839) and his successors. Much of the topography of the Thames and its estuary as it was during the first millennium can be reconstructed from a study of its first-documented place-names which described the shoreline. This paper draws together from place-name, historical, archaeological, landscape and geological evidence some of the characteristics of the lower Thames in the East Saxon and Kentish kingdoms during these formative six centuries.

Introduction

Kent, known to Julius Caesar as Cantium in 51 BC, and Essex, documented as *East Seaxe* in 894¹, share their descent from residual Roman *civitates* or city territories, respectively Canterbury (*Durorverno*, 'fort at the alder-swamp') and Colchester (*Camulodunum*, 'fort of the war-god Camulos'). Both are British Celtic names probably referring to strongholds in existence before the Roman settlement. The origin of the name *Cantium* discussed by Rivet² is associated with the Celtic root *canto-*, 'periphery, edge', hence 'promontory or coast-land'. Caesar³ knew the River Thames from its British Celtic name "*flumen quod appellatur Tamesis*", and Tacitus⁴ called the estuary "*in aestuario Tamesae*". The name is believed to be based, together with the Rivers *Tamar* (Cornwall) and *Thame* (Oxfordshire), on the Indo-European root *ta*, 'to flow'⁵. The Saxons shortened the name. In 685, Berhtwald, subking of Mercia, granted 40 acres of land on the east bank of the river called *Temis* near its source at Somerford [Gloucs] to Abbot Aldhelm of Malmesbury⁶. In 843, in return for freeing certain of his ministers from captivity, the bishop of Leicester granted 14 hides of land near the stream called *Temes* at Pangbourne to Bertwulf, king of Mercia⁷.

Certainly, since the first century AD and probably before, the River Thames has provided access to southern England. The Wantsum Channel which separated the Isle of Thanet from the mainland of Kent, in the 8th century some three *stadia* [555 metres] wide⁸, was the main entry to the river from the south avoiding the dangerous shoals and currents around Foreness Point on Thanet. (The king of Kent granted to the abbot of Reculver land on Thanet documented as *Tenid* in 679 which Ekwall⁹ suggests means 'bright or fire island', perhaps referring to a warning beacon or lighthouse¹⁰ (Figure 1).

Richborough at the southern mouth of the Wantsum was a major Roman port from AD c.50, and, according to Bede, it was here that Pope Gregory's ambassador Augustine landed in 597 to bring the Christian faith back to Britain. He calls the channel by its Old English name *Uantsuma*, 'winding', a description of its sinuous nature, now represented by the lower reaches of the River Stour. In 944 King Edmund granted to his minister Ælfstan 12 hides bounded by the river *Wantsume* as far as the boundary of the Reculver people¹¹. By 1038 silting of the channel had progressed sufficiently for the abbot of St Augustine's Canterbury to build a wall on his land at Minster-in-Thamet to enclose marsh for sheep grazing and by c.1400 some 9000 acres had been reclaimed from the Wantsum¹². By the 17th century it ceased to be a navigable channel, and ships had to navigate the dangerous course around the northeast coast of Kent. The Goodwin Sands which are exposed at low tides have seen many ship-wrecks, and Ekwall¹³ draws attention to a tradition that Earl Godwin, father of King Harold, owned an island called *Godewynsonde* which was inundated in 1097.

The northern end of the Wantsum Channel was known as the river *Yenlade*, 'inlet or creek'¹⁴. At its mouth Reculver (in c.425 *Regulbium*) guarded the entrance to the Thames estuary. The name is Old British, *gulba*, 'a promontory', probably with the prefix *ro-*, 'great', thus 'Great headland'¹⁵.

One of the forts of the Saxon Shore, like that at *Othona* Bradwell in Essex, was built here in the 3rd century and in 669 an Anglo-Saxon minster church and monastery, *Reculfmynster*, was founded on land granted to *Bassa*, a mass-priest¹⁶. The extant site of the fort and church is no longer on a headland but when it acquired its name the promontory coastline was several kilometres further north.

Geology

The flow of the water of the Thames has eroded the surface geology since the river was diverted to its present course from a more northerly one through Hertfordshire and Essex during the Anglian Ice Age 450,000 years ago when the ice reached as far south as Hornchurch. The river has cut down through the London Clay deposited 40 million years ago leaving terraces of sands and gravels. At a few places such as Purfleet, Thurrock and Cliffe-at-Hoo the 100-million-year-old basal chalk is exposed. (The parish Chalk-by-Gravesend (*Celca* in Domesday Book), site of a Roman villa, is on limestone). This basal chalk underlies the clay in a syncline (trough) which rises again around Saffron Walden in the northwest and in the North Downs of Kent in the south. The chalk at Stud Hill by Herne Bay, and further east the cliffs of Thanet are also exposed by erosion of the overlying London Clay.

More recent deposits of alluvial mud and silt have accumulated from periodic flooding of the river, and contain Mesolithic and Neolithic flints. The Swale Channel around the south and west of the Isle of Sheppey has a similar alluviation, and at low tide exposes extensive salt marsh. Landslips of the clay occur along unprotected north Kent coast and the northeast coast of Sheppey. Brickearth wind-blown loess is found around Rayleigh and overlying river-deposited silty gravel and sand near Faversham¹⁷. The “long plateau”, Langdon Hills, which extends from Dunton eastwards towards Basildon rising to 100 metres consists of pale yellow Bagshot sands which are capped by million year old Pleistocene gravels¹⁸. Surface geology is recorded in the name of the former Island of Grain, Old English *greon*, ‘gravelly sand’, Erith, ‘gravel landing-place’¹⁹ and Chislet, ‘gravelly place’, (or possibly from *cist-gelæt*, ‘water conduit from a cistern’²⁰). In 677 Bishop Eorcenwold granted to Barking Abbey²¹ lands at *Badoricesheah* (Battersea, Beaduric’s island) and *Earhyth* (Erith)²².

The shoreline at the junction of the Thames, Watling Street and the River Ravensbourne characterises Greenwich (in 916 *Gronewic*) as ‘a gravelly/sandy harbour’²³. On the north bank of the Thames in London just upstream of Southwark Bridge, a similar timber-revetted gravel harbour can still be seen at Queenhithe (named after Henry I’s wife) (Figure 2)²⁴ given by King Alfred to ealdorman Æthelred in 885 (formerly called *Ætheredes hyd*)²⁵. Downstream another landing place is recorded in the name Stepney (in c.1000 *Stybbanhyth*, Stybba’s hythe), perhaps a Saxon merchant’s private enterprise.

Sailing in to the Thames from the east, the estuary between Shoeburyness (in 894 *Sceobyryg*, ‘promontory with a sheltering fort’ built by the Vikings) on the Essex coast and the Isle of Sheppey on the Kent side is about eight miles wide, and the voyage to London Bridge of some 40 miles under sail depending on tide and wind takes about seven hours. At Foulness was a safe refuge from storms for ships at the estuary mouth in the creeks of *Havenemersche* (later Havengore). Both northern and southern banks are for the most part low-lying. Before artificial embanking, islands and marshland predominated, and this is evidenced by the Old and Middle English place-names, as the Isle of Harty (stag-island) now part of Sheppey (in 696 *Scepeig*, sheep-island), Stodmarsh (marsh where horses were grazed²⁶), Pitsea (Pice’s island), Canvey (possibly island of Cana’s people), Bermondsey (Beornmund’s island) and Labworth (Old English *-werth*, marsh) in Benfleet.

The place-name Mucking, the site of early 5th century Saxon settlement, has been discussed by Gelling²⁷. The personal name Mucca is on record (hence ‘settlement of Mucca’s people’), but a possible alternative origin is Old Norse *mykr*, ‘soft/muddy’ which fits well with the foreshore. Cote names (*Cawtecote* in Kitcotmarsh on Canvey and *Shepcote* in Dagenham) Stephen Rippon believes indicate raised islands in marshland on which sheep could refuge or as salt-production sites²⁸. Land in Frindsbury (‘Freomund’s fortified place’) was granted to the bishop of Rochester in 779²⁹ with marsh at Yantlet Creek, a former name for the lower Medway³⁰. Many of these marshes have since been reclaimed by embankments and can no longer be described as islands or marshland (Figure 3).

The *wic* place-names³¹ such as Greenwich and Woolwich (*Gronewic* and *Uuluwich*) suggest these were market trading places, at Woolwich a sheep farmstead or place from which wool was sold³². King Alfred’s daughter granted Greenwich and Woolwich to the abbey of Ghent, which was a major Belgian port in 918, and the acquisition of their own landing-place in the Thames would no doubt have been useful as a trading centre free of tolls³³. Fordwich was a trading place on the River Stour from which goods were loaded and unloaded close to Canterbury³⁴. (The later 16th century Knightswick and Furtherwick in the marshes of Canvey refer to dairy farms producing milk and cheese). The scarcity of early major *wic* names on the north estuary shore is no doubt accounted for by the dominance of *Lundenwic* along The Strand as a trading centre, but Barking Abbey may have had its own market *Barkingwic* near the mouth of the River Roding³⁵.

1.75 km northeast of the village of Graveney (Old English *grafon eah*, ‘stream in a ditch’) near Whitstable, 1 km inland from the present coastline, a pre-Conquest clinker-built boat over 10m long by 3.4m wide was excavated in 1970. Carbon-dating of timbers gave felling dates c.886 and c.870 AD³⁶. The cargo included a quern stone from the Rhine valley and an unglazed vessel base of north French or Belgian origin³⁷. The vessel’s sturdy construction suggested it would have been capable of sea-going. It had been

PLACE-NAMES OF THE RIVERSCAPE OF THE EAST SAXON AND KENT

docked alongside a jetty in a waterway which had been in marshland before the seawall was built in 1325³⁸. This boat was probably typical of the trading vessels which were plying across the North Sea bringing goods from the continent and taking back wool and slaves. A smaller boat constructed c.950 from a single oak log found by the River Lea may have been used as a ferry and for carrying produce locally up and down the river³⁹; a similar ferry boat may have plied across the Thames between Tilbury and Higham.

Water surrounding the southern and western shores of the Isle of Sheppey is The Swale. In 812, Coenwulf, king of Mercia, granted Archbishop Wulfred land at Graveney which was bounded to the north by *Suuealuuu fluminis*. The name is related to Old English *swillan*,

‘to wash’ and *swalm*, ‘whirlpool’, hence ‘whirling river’ with reference to the fast tidal flow in this restricted narrow channel⁴⁰.

The creeks and inlets the Saxons called *fleets*, fleets. In Kent at Northfleet opposite Tilbury, the River Ebbsfleet joins the Thames where a Roman temple, villa and small Saxon settlement of eight *grubenhausen* (sunken-feature buildings) around an early eighth century tidal water mill have been found (Kent HER TQ67 SW699). Purfleet marks the confluence of the Mardyke stream⁴¹ (Old English *mearc dice*, boundary ditch⁴²). Before 894, the Viking leader Hæstan built a fort at *Beamfleot*, ‘the inlet with a beam footbridge’ which was probably at Benfleet creek⁴³.

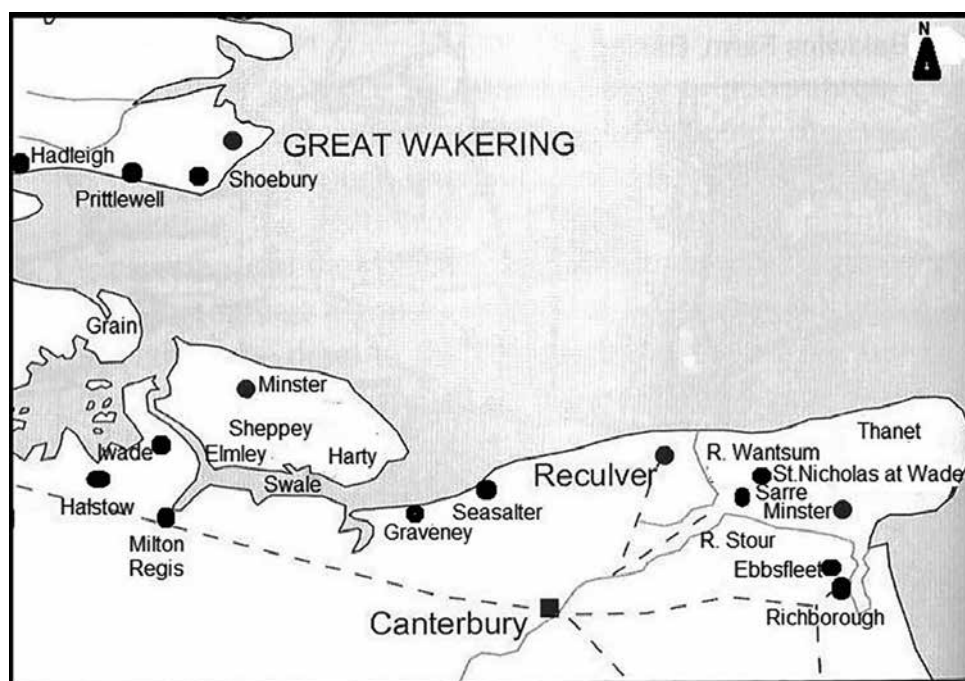


Fig. 1a. Places named in the text – eastern part

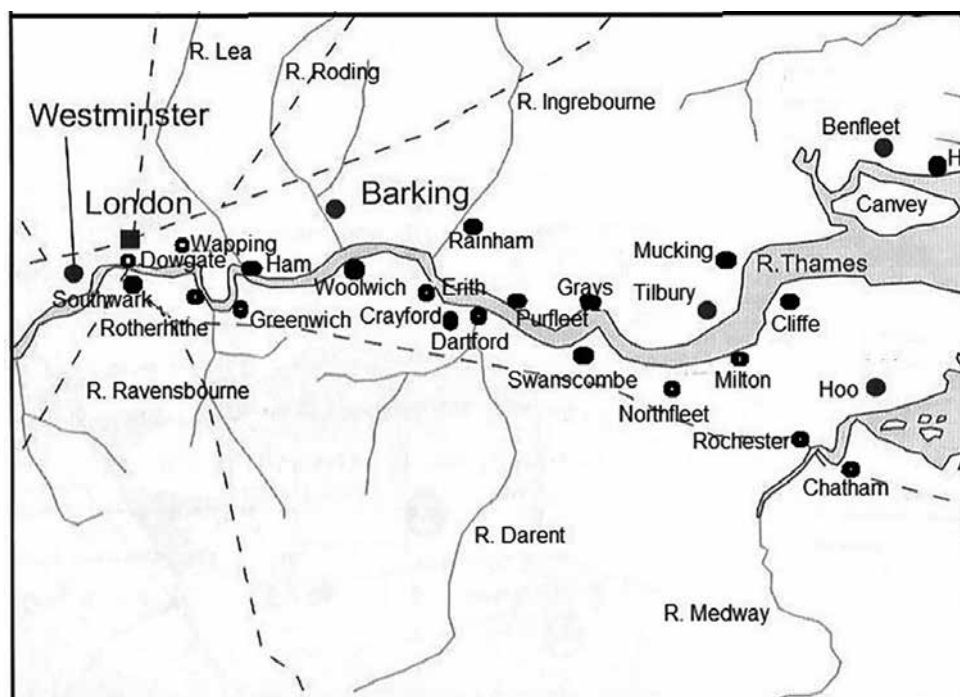


Fig 1b. Places named in the text – London and western part

Settlements

The observer sailing up the Thames would have seen scattered habitation and farms along the north and south banks. Excavations suggest a series of separate small settlements along the coast⁴⁴. Evidence of Early Saxon settlements has been found at Barling⁴⁵, Orsett⁴⁶, Shoebury⁴⁷ and Sutton⁴⁸. At Chadwell St Mary, a *grubenhaus* (SFB) and loomweights have been excavated indicating a small settlement of the 5th/6th centuries with a weaving industry⁴⁹. Great Wakering has also produced evidence of SFBs⁵⁰. At Mucking⁵¹ was a series of settlements each of up to 10 timber-halls and 14 SFBs, perhaps a population of 100 at any one time; the settlement spread from southwest to northeast over a period of two to three centuries from the 5th century onwards and has been variously interpreted as an enclave of foederati (those bound by treaty, mercenaries) or of Saxon settlers⁵². An interesting observation as to the underlying geology determining whether Saxon buildings were post-built or SFBs is made by Cowie⁵³ who found the former predominated on chalk, the latter on sandy soils.

On the south bank is evidence of several Early and Mid-Saxon settlements in the Darent and Cray valleys around a Roman villa system, close to the Roman road to London⁵⁴. At the foot of East Hill at Deptford (the 'deep ford' through the river Ravensbourne), the pebble road where it forded the river was excavated in 1897⁵⁵. An early farm settlement and cemetery have been found at Sarre in Thanet⁵⁶. It was former Roman military sites that Saxon kings granted to holy men to establish churches, such as the priest Cedd at Bradwell Othona, Fursa at Burgh Castle (Suffolk) and Bassa at Reculver; the place-name Tilbury where Cedd built a church⁵⁷ suggests this too was formerly a site with military obligations guarding a strategic bend in the river, part of a thegn's duties⁵⁸.

The sailor may have heard and seen the ring of hammers on anvils and the glare of the furnaces as he passed Faversham (Latin *faber* + Old English *ham*, 'settlement of blacksmiths') where the chapel contains remnants of a Roman mausoleum⁵⁹. Excavations are gradually building up a more complete picture of Saxon activity along the Thames downstream of London in the 5th and 6th centuries. Walton's Hall near Mucking may hold a distant memory of a residual native British enclave ('settlement of *weahlas* or Britons'). The Old English place-name of Rotherhithe *Hryther-hyth* has been interpreted either as "landing-place where cattle were shipped", or rather *hyth* "sailor's landing-place". Roman bricks in the tower of St Mary's church here indicates the presence of a Roman building in the vicinity. On the opposite bank is Wapping, formerly *Wappingge* at *Wose*⁶⁰, "muddy marshland" which was appropriate for the topography⁶¹.

In 787, three ships of Norwegians first came to England and slew the king's reeve. Sixty-four years later the Viking heathen army overwintered in Thanet; they came to the mouth of the Thames and attacked Canterbury and London⁶². In 855 they wintered on Sheppey. The

army built forts at Milton Regis, Benfleet and Shoebury in 892 and 894 which would have been visible from the river⁶³. Excavations have shown that the bank-and-ditch fort at Shoebury has Bronze and Iron Age origins which the Vikings adapted as defences for their camp suitably sited at the foreshore. The site of the fort at Benfleet⁶⁴ has been tentatively located at Benfleet Creek to the south of the church⁶⁵.

At Warden Point (*weard dun*, watch-hill) on Sheppey was a look-out post and probably a fire beacon for communication as warning of the approach of hostile ships, similarly at Beacon Hill in Purfleet⁶⁶, and possibly also at Becontree⁶⁷.

Husbandry

The extensive marshland along the river was exploited as sheep grazing pasture. The name of the marsh *Oysterfleete* marish (Old English *ewestre* = sheepfold) in Canvey encapsulates its use⁶⁸. Current evidence is that the Early Saxon period saw an increase in animal pasture at the expense of arable but that from c.7/8th centuries arable farming predominated⁶⁹. Clearly wool and dairy produce were significant trading commodities, but swine-pasture is referred to in the village name *Bordena* (Borden near Sittingbourne).

The presence of the heavy London Clay has influenced the type of farming. The Early Saxon farmers continued to use the fields as their Romano-British predecessors had done. Although the Saxons utilised the Roman plough which turned the soil and so replaced the ard which only scored it, to plough the heavier clay required a team of three or four horses or oxen, while lighter soils needed only one or two. Further inland from the marsh there is evidence of arable farming at Stratford⁷⁰. The clay suited barley, rye and oats, to a lesser extent wheat. Pulses, apple and bramble seed have been found with a sunken-feature building on sandy soil at Chadwell St. Mary⁷¹.

Excavations of a small enclosed farmstead at Southend produced a corn-drier and evidence of weaving, leather, antler, bone and iron working. Probably also of Anglo-Saxon date were deposits of marine shells of cockles and mussels. Charred grains of wheat and barley within the house floors indicated cooking or fire. Pits containing wheat, barley, rye, bean and pea were probably storage sites or cess pits⁷².

The Romano-British field systems continued into the Saxon period but the villa land-holdings were reorganised. Rippon⁷³ has detected several different identifiable holdings from the orientations and patterns of the field boundaries around Southend and Thurrock, probably dating to the 8th to 10th centuries. The amount of woodland may have increased slightly in the early Saxon period⁷⁴. Inland from the Thames marshland, Saxon woodland can be mapped from Domesday Book, and although this mainly describes pannage (for pigs) rather than woodland managed for timber, there is no reason why pannage should not also have

been managed as a building resource. The grant by Offa king of Mercia in 786 to Ealdbeorht and his sister abbess Seledhryth of swine-pastures at Blean plus 100 loads of wood seems to encompass both⁷⁵. 'Pasture of the swineherd' is documented in Swanscombe; in 687 Bishop Eorcenwold granted *Suanescamp* to Barking Abbey⁷⁶. In 811 Cenwulf king of Mercia granted land at *Borhsteall* with swine-pastures to Bishop Beornmod⁷⁷. The village of Borstall, now subsumed into Rochester, had its reform school established in 1902 which gave the name to similar young offenders' institutions worldwide. Its Old English name signified a 'secure refuge place', though dialectally came to mean a 'steep path uphill' which was perhaps the aim of the institute's instructors.



7 Figure 2. The gravel Thames wharf at Queenhithe (Ætheredes hyd) in the 16th century

Particular types or features of woodland are specified in Celtic British *céd* and Old English *wudu*, *gráf* (coppice, thicket), *fyrhth* (brushwood), *leah* (glade, clearing), *hyrst* (wood on a hill), *holt* and *wald* (forest). In this study area along the Thames, they occur both as field- and wood-names and as parish or manorial place-names, including Chatham and Chattenden (settlement in woodland), *Rocholt* in Leyton (wood with rooks), *Tigelhyrste* in Upminster (wood with clay for tile-making), *Munteffrid* (elevated scrubland) in Horndon. Place-names with *wudu* and *leah* are common: Eastwood, Thundersley (Thunor's glade), Hadleigh (heather-covered clearing), Leigh, Rayleigh (roe-deer or rye clearing), Wheatley (wheat-clearing) in Rayleigh and Aveley (Ælfgyth's clearing). *Gráf* occurs in Gravesend. *Wald* and *hyrst* occur in Walderslade (wood in a valley) in Chatham and Henhurst (bird wood). These names indicate the pattern and type of wood cover which predominated at the time they acquired them⁷⁸.

Tree-pollen studies mapping presence of tree-cover⁷⁹ have been interpreted as indicating that one-fifth of Essex was woodland in the 11th century⁸⁰. Occasionally a place was defined by the prominence of a particular species of tree. Examples are Darent (*derva* = oak) from the British name 'place where oak-trees are abundant', Acol-on-Thamet (oak wood), Bexley (box wood), Plumstead and Iwade 'shallow fording place by yew trees'. There seems to have been particularly extensive areas of woodland around Chatham and Blean (north

of Canterbury) in Kent⁸¹, and scrubby woodland characterised Hadleigh and Rayleigh on the northern shore in Essex.

The climate of Kent in the first millennium favoured the growing of vines. Domesday Book records at Chart Sutton three arpents, a French measure, belonging to the bishop of Bayeux and a further three at Chislet of St. Augustine's Church⁸². In Rayleigh 6 arpents could be grown if the year was good. As beer was the drink of the Saxons, Round⁸³ believed that wine-growing was re-introduced to England by the Normans, but Bede⁸⁴ writing in the 8th century affirms that vines were cultivated in various places in England. 8th and 9th century records⁸⁵ indicate that the Roman vineyards were remembered and still cultivated well before the Norman conquest⁸⁶.

Along the Thames, fisheries were frequent. Aerial photography and excavations at low tides have shown these to be extensive V-shaped rows of netted or wattled stakes designed to trap the fish as the tide receded⁸⁷. Domesday Book records eleven along the Essex shore and fifty-nine along the Kent shore including thirty-two at Milton Regis which must have been the "fish capital" of the region. Fisheries are documented at Barking, Tilbury, Mucking, Horndon on the Hill, Fobbing, Southchurch, Wheatley in Rayleigh, Thurrock, Southchurch, Benfleet and Chadwell on the Essex side. In the Kent estuary, Greenwich, Milton Regis, Monkton, Stone, Swanscombe, Hoo, Lessness, Oare (*ora*, shore) in Faversham, Minster in Thanet, Newington, Seasalter and Reculver had fishing industries. After the 12th century record of such fishtraps is rarer, perhaps a consequence of Magna Carta ordering their destruction⁸⁸.

Salt was highly prized and traded as a meat preservative and for making butter and cheese. Seasalter, on the north Kent coast, was an eponymous salt-production site. In 858 King Æthelberht granted land to his minister Ealdbeorht and his sister Abbess Seledhryth at *Sealterna* and for wood-collection [for burning to evaporate the brine-pans] at Blean⁸⁹. Milton had twenty-seven salthouses manufacturing the preservative out of ninety-seven on the Kent side. Domesday Book records salt production on the Thames and Wantsum in Kent at Whitstable, Reculver, Oare, Minster-in-Thamet, Monkton and Graveney. Chislet had fifty-seven salthouses supplying Canterbury. Along the north Thames shore salt from the estuary had been produced since the Bronze Age. Early salt production sites have been identified at Vange, Tilbury⁹⁰, Stanford le Hope and Canvey⁹¹, but for how long in to the early medieval period production continued here is unclear⁹². By the 11th century only Wanstead on the tidal river Roding is recorded as having a salt-house in Domesday Book⁹³.

Minsters and churches

With the arrival of Augustine and his missionaries in 597, early churches were built on both banks of the Thames⁹⁴. A small church probably dating to Augustine's appointment of Justus in 604 to the See of

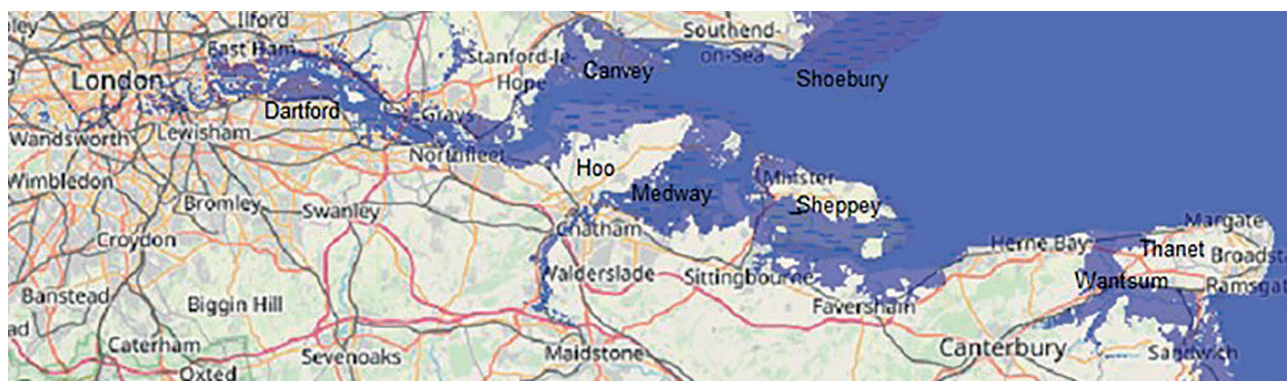


Figure 3. The high tidal Thames estuary in middle of 1st millennium showing multiple islands in marshland.

Rochester (Roman *Durobrovis*, ‘fort with a bridge’ over the Medway⁹⁵) has been identified beneath the Norman cathedral. The Roman town walls were still standing above ground in the Saxon era as the Normans built on the Roman foundations⁹⁶. The 7th century monasteries of Minster-in-Thanet⁹⁷, Hoo (founded by St. Werberg⁹⁸) and Sheppey, founded by St. Sexburga who became abbess of Ely in 679, were of the type modelled in Francia⁹⁹. King Æthelberht built St Paul’s church within the walls of London, probably in the comparatively unencombered part west of the river Walbrook, by 604, and a church at Tilbury was built in the mid-7th century. Barking monastery was founded in c.666¹⁰⁰, and minsters were at Great Wakering in the 7th century¹⁰¹ and Reculver in the 8th ¹⁰². By the early 7th century a chapel, of which an arched doorway remains within the fabric of the north wall of St Mary’s Church, had been built at Prittlewell¹⁰³. By the Essex shore at Benfleet is St Mary’s church, by tradition founded after King Alfred’s battle here against the Danes in 894. Documented in Domesday Book, Rainham and Chadwell each had an attendant priest, possibly working out of Barking abbey or Tilbury church.

Minsters, abbeys and churches were in existence in the marshes of Bermondsey in the 8th century¹⁰⁴, in Southminster c.1000 (perhaps so named as being south of Cedd’s minster at Bradwell *Othona*), Upminster before 1062, and Southchurch is documented in the mid-11th century¹⁰⁵. At Northfleet a stone church was present by the 10th century of which long-and-short work fragments remain in the walls of St. Botolph’s¹⁰⁶. The rebuilt Rochester cathedral (the western front of which overlies the apse of the Saxon church founded in 604) has a timber door dendro-dated 1075-1108¹⁰⁷. Of these, significant early information survives for Minster in Thanet¹⁰⁸, St. Paul’s and Barking¹⁰⁹ but less about Sheppey which probably suffered as a result of the island being a favoured landing place of the Vikings. The Danish king Cnut used the island as a refuge when he retired from hostile Londoners in 1017¹¹⁰. By the time of Domesday, the archbishop of Canterbury had churches at Bexley, Crayford, Northfleet, Reculver and Whitstable, and his monks at Cliffe and Seasalter. The bishop Odo of Bayeux held one at Chalk, and the bishop of Rochester another at Stone-by-Dartford. By Domesday there was a minster St Overie (“over the river”, since 1905 Southwark cathedral) beside the

Thames shore at the southern end of the crossing point in to London; its eastern end stands where a nunnery had been founded by Mary, daughter of the ferryman. This House was converted to a college of priests who rebuilt a timber bridge before AD 994¹¹¹.

In the Middle Saxon period, the Hoo peninsula between the Thames and Medway (in 764 called *Meduuuæian*, ‘water mead’¹¹²) was a place of importance and readily accessible by boat and from the mainland of Kent. Archbishop Theodore convened a synod in 673 at Hertford which fixed the date of Easter and determined that an annual synod should be held at *Clofeshoh*, possibly Cliffe-at-Hoo where Domesday Book records a church¹¹³. The great church councils of 716, 742, 747, 803, 822 and 825, which took the form of witenagemots which kings, great ecclesiastical and lay persons of the nation attended, met here.

Cemeteries

Both the north and south banks of the Thames are particularly rich in first millennium cemeteries indicating continuous occupation and settlement which would have been apparent to the observer sailing up the river. Early Jutish presence in Kent is recognisable in the form of gold bracteate armulets and square-head brooches in the cemeteries at Sarre and Ozengell on Thanet and at Lyminge¹¹⁴. Cultural links to Francia are in evidence from the 6th century when the pagan king of Kent Æthelberht married a Christian Frankish princess and in 597 AD received Augustine accompanied by Frankish interpreters¹¹⁵. Silver and garnet objects, radiate-headed and S-shaped brooches with northern Francia influences have been found at Dartford and Whitstable (*Witenestapel* in 1086) where a white post marked the Hundred Meeting place¹¹⁶.

On the north bank, cultural similarities are apparent at the Prittlewell cemetery where Kentish pendants and wheel-thrown pots have been excavated, indicative of cross-estuary communication and trade. The glass vessels in the late 6th century “princely burial” were probably from Kent while gold coins, a flagon and spoon came from the Mediterranean¹¹⁷. An iron buckle with inlaid silver wires has been dated to the 5th century.

Conclusion

In the middle of the first millennium, the shore of the Thames estuary was dotted with farmsteads and small settlements on islands and higher ground above marshland. Before embankment, flooding was frequent. Sheep farming was the predominant activity, but interconnected trading posts grew up on both sides of the river. Buckingham Hill Road has been proposed as an ancient ridgeway leading to the cross-river ferry between East Tilbury and Higham¹¹⁸. River traffic flowed between the continent and these trading centres. Once the Roman bridge in London had decayed, probably by the 5th century, larger boats could access west of London, but the evidence is that Saxon London trade initially focussed largely with the home counties rather than with the continent.

For a period in the early 7th century, Kentish kings were influential over the East Saxon, but by the second half of the century, Kent was within the orbits of Mercia and Wessex, although c.690 Swaefherd of the East Saxons had held overlordship in western Kent. The Viking incursions of the 8th and 9th centuries were disruptions, and settlement, at first temporary but later more permanent, added fortifications to the scene.

The road system converging on London makes it clear that it was drawing its wealth from England as well as from the continent. By the time of Domesday, London, “the emporia of many nations who visit it by land and sea” drew much of the trade from within the country as well as from Europe¹¹⁹. Wharves were being built east of the new bridge for the continental trade, while Lundenwic at the Strand seems to have been largely abandoned by the 10th century, and, under Edward the Confessor, the royal administration moved upstream to Westminster.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

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‘An honest priest to sing for my soul’

Part One: seeking remission from Purgatory in pre-Reformation Colchester

Sue Howlett

Abstract

Today, we often describe a period of painful endurance as 'purgatory'. To our medieval ancestors the term was more terrifying, evoking a transitional state where souls of the dead might endure long, painful purgation before entering Heaven. Based on a study of around 70 Colchester wills drawn up between the 1460s and the 1540s, this article considers bequests possibly motivated by the desire to reduce time spent in Purgatory. To what extent were such gifts inspired by personal faith and religious devotion, or made with an implicit (or even explicit) hope to 'purchase' remission from Purgatory and a speedy salvation? (Quotations from the wills have been transcribed into modern English. Photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.)

The Day of Judgement

Just over 500 years ago, Martin Luther made public his 95 theses, opening the floodgates to a rising torrent of religious protest, questioning and conflict, leading to what became known as the Protestant Reformation. In pre-Reformation England, as in other Christian states, membership of the Church was not optional. Its teachings and rituals, mediated through the authority of priests and the Latin liturgy, were woven into the daily lives and dying moments of every man, woman and child. Often illiterate, and with no access to the Bible in their own tongue, parishioners learned the stories of their faith from sermons, statues, windows and wall paintings. The most terrifying of the latter were Doom paintings, which traditionally filled the west wall of the nave over the chancel arch, the most dominant and conspicuous point for the assembled congregation. These showed in graphic detail the torments of the damned, dragged by demons into the gaping jaws of Hell. The saved, in contrast, were depicted on the right hand of Christ, welcomed by angels or saints into the joys of Heaven.

Purgatory

Concepts of the Last Judgement and afterlife are not limited to Christianity, and such binary options as Heaven or Hell, bliss or damnation, have always reinforced moral behaviour. However, for medieval Christians contemplating their mortality, a third likely



Plate 1. The Wenhaston Doom, painted on wooden boards formerly in the Chancel arch of St Peter's Church, Wenhaston, Suffolk. Wikimedia Commons: (Brokentaco, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wenhaston_Last_Judgement.jpg)

prospect also weighed heavily. In the words of Professor Eamon Duffy:

Wherever one turns in the sources for the period [1400 to c1530] one encounters the overwhelming preoccupation of clergy and laity alike, from peasant to prince and from parish clerk to pontiff, with the safe transition of their souls from this world to the next, above all with the shortening and easing of their stay in Purgatory. It is a preoccupation which shows no slackening up to the very moment of Reformation.¹

'AN HONEST PRIEST TO SING FOR MY SOUL'

Purgatory was perceived as a state of existence between earthly and heavenly life. Dante's 'Purgatorio' depicts this as a mountain representing the stages of suffering and spiritual growth, while the legend of St Patrick's Purgatory locates it in the depths of Lough Derg, Donegal, Ireland.² More commonly, Purgatory was represented as an endless but unconsuming fire in which sinful souls were purified before entering Heaven. A lifetime of good works, heartfelt repentance, penance

and priestly absolution was deemed insufficient to allow one's soul to enter directly into heaven. But while saints might merit immediate entry, medieval Christians were led to believe that their fallible souls must first pass through Purgatory. The faithful departed were promised eternal salvation, but only after a painful and possibly lengthy purification. Indeed this doctrine is still central to Catholicism and is defined thus:

All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified ... undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect ... The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire ... From the beginning the Church has honoured the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead.³

Long before the English Reformation, which began during the 1530s, radical followers of John Wycliffe (d.1384), known as Lollards, challenged some of the Church's doctrines including the need for prayers for the dead. Two such Colchester men were burnt as heretics at Smithfield in 1511, but by 1527 Lollards were active in Colchester, 'where they preached in each others' houses and read English books, including Wyclif's Bible and the New Testament, which they obtained from London.'⁴

Colchester wills

Since wills of the pre-Reformation period were frequently drawn up and/or witnessed by local priests, there is little evidence of Lollard influence, or of doubts about Purgatory. They normally begin with a formulaic preamble commending the testator's soul to God, the Virgin Mary and the saints in heaven, followed by any religious bequests. Many Colchester wills have now been digitised, while others can be consulted as original documents in the National Archives or Essex Record Office. In addition, 198 wills from Colchester parishes, copied into the Colchester Archdeaconry registers between 1500 and 1540, are available on microfiche in the ERO searchroom, while nearly 100 from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury can be consulted in the form of typescript summaries.⁵ These collections of pre-Reformation wills reveal many details of social, economic and, particularly, religious life, providing rich



Plate 2. God waits in Heaven (above) to receive redeemed souls, raised from the flames of Purgatory (below right) by the power of alms-giving (below left) and memorial masses (centre). From a fifteenth century Carthusian manuscript, written at Mount Grace Priory in Northern Yorkshire. ©British Library Board Add. MS 37049, fol. 24v.

1 E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, (Yale, Second Edition 2005) p.301.

2 *ibid* pp. 343-4; St Patrick's Purgatory: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_\(1913\)/St._Patrick%27s_Purgatory](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/St._Patrick%27s_Purgatory) (03/09/2019).

3 Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part I, Section 2, Chapter 3, Article 12, clauses 1030, 1031, 1032: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM (31/10/17).

4 N. Goose & J. Cooper, *Tudor and Stuart Colchester* (An extract from *The Victoria History of the County of Essex*, Volume IX: The Borough of Colchester) reprinted 1998, p.121.

source material for local historians, as can be seen particularly in the studies of Elizabethan life compiled by F. G. Emmison.⁶ Evidence discussed in this article is drawn from around 70 late medieval and early Tudor wills, selected from the collections listed above.

In 1991 Laquita Higgs published a study of religious attitudes in Colchester between 1485 and 1603, based on analysis of 942 wills and testaments. She sought to measure 'degrees of piety' before, during and after the Reformation, using indicators such as requests for prayers for the soul; ownership of a religious artefact or books; unusually heartfelt preamble or religious statement, and mention of a specific clergyman. In the 'Catholic years' from 1485 to 1529, scores were unsurprisingly high, the highest scoring indicators of piety being 'Bequest for Prayers' (66% of 206 wills) and 'Mention of a specific clergyman' (63% of 206 wills). However, these rates were already declining before the changes of the Reformation, with prayers for the dead, assessed at 94% in the late fifteenth century, down to 53% in the 1520s.⁷

One regular bequest to the church, excluded from Higgs' measures of piety, was money bequeathed in virtually every will to the high altar of the testator's parish church. Even the poorest parishioners contributed, with sums ranging from 4d. to 40s., explicitly in settlement of any forgotten or neglected tithes. In 1489, Julian Cattes of Colchester left 12d. to the parish altar of St Botolph's Priory, 'in recompense of my oblations and tithes not duly yielded in time past'.⁸ In rural parts of Essex, an animal, designated a 'fordrove', might be paid to the altar for the same purpose: in 1522 Amy Smyth of West Mersea, nine miles from Colchester, bequeathed a sheep as her fordrove.⁹ Such bequests might be regarded as insurance for the soul, mitigating suffering in Purgatory for any unabsolved, if unintended, sin.

How to avoid Purgatory: Works of Mercy

In life, Christians were exhorted to perform the seven spiritual and seven corporal works of mercy. Of the spiritual works, only prayers for the dead are recorded in wills, in ubiquitous requests for prayers for the souls of the deceased, their relatives, and 'all christen

souls'. However, many wills contain bequests linked to the seven corporal works of mercy, as propounded by Jesus in St Matthew 25:34-46.¹⁰ Of these, giving to the poor was most frequently mentioned, often in the form of a dole of bread or money distributed to poor people attending the funeral, with the expectation of prayers for the deceased. William Wheler, in March 1492/3, wished his silver plate to be sold, to distribute two pence in bread to 'the most neediest every Friday in the year to pray for [his] soul' for six years. He also gave bread and ale 'to cause all the parish to remember to pray for [his] soul.' Fulfilling other works of mercy, he bequeathed money to the prisoners in Colchester's castle and Moot Hall, as did others.¹¹ John Tey was the only testator among those studied to remember lepers: in his will of 1534 he bequeathed two shillings to 'the two Lazar houses at the west end of Colchester town' to pray for his soul.¹² It was a Christian duty to relieve the poor, sick and prisoners, but if this could be combined with prayers to speed the benefactor to salvation, there was obviously a double benefit.

How to avoid Purgatory:

Prayers, Masses and Trentals

The most striking feature of pre-Reformation wills is the number and variety of prayers requested for souls of the deceased. As well as bequests noted above, William Wheler bequeathed three shillings to the curate of St James' to pray for his soul 'in the bederoll' [list of deceased recipients of regular prayers]¹³ every Sunday for a year, and to say *Placebo* and *Dirige* for him each first Sunday in Lent. [These Latin words, often mentioned in wills, were the opening responses in the services of Vespers and Matins, comprising the Office of the Dead.¹⁴] He also, unusually, left two pence to 'the bellman of Colchester on the first Sunday in Lent [to] go about town with a bell to cause people to pray for [his] soul'. Wealthy testators often left payment for further Requiem masses, or 'obits', taking place at the 'Month's Mind' and other anniversaries. A mass might also bear a specific dedication, for example the 'Mass of Jesus' to which bequests were made at St Nicholas' and St Peter's churches.¹⁵

For those who could afford to 'bulk buy', masses could

5 Essex Record Office, D/DCM F1/1-96, Abstracts and summaries of PCC wills.

6 F.G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life* (two volumes based on Essex wills published by Essex County Council, 1976, and Essex Record Office, 1978).⁷ L. Higgs, 'Wills and Religious Mentality in Tudor Colchester', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 22, (1991), pp.87-100.

8 The National Archives, PROB 11/8/442, PCC will of Julian Cattes.

9 ERO, D/ACR 2/135/1, Registered copy will of Amy Smyth.

10 S. Badham, *Seeking Salvation: Commemorating the dead in the late-medieval English parish*, (Donington, 2015), pp.39-40.

11 ERO, D/DCm F1/89.

12 ERO, D/DCm F1/40.

13 ERO, D/DCm F1/89. For bede rolls see, for example, Elizabeth Norton, 'Parish bede rolls during the English Reformation', *The Local Historian*, 48 (2018), pp.19-29.

14 Duffy, *Stripping* pp.368-9.

15 TNA, PROB 11/5/191, PCC Will of Kateryn Peke.

be procured in units of 30, or trentals. The going rate for these was normally ten shillings, which suggests the commercial nature of many such legacies where a testator sought to reduce his time in Purgatory. In 1501 Richard Oteway left this sum to the church of St Nicholas for a trental of masses, and two years later William Ball left the same amount to St Mary at the Walls. Richard Britoff, gentleman, was more specific, leaving ten shillings to St Giles' church for 'an honest priest to sing a trental there'.¹⁶

An honest priest

Testators frequently sought regular prayers from priests of 'good name and fame', or spotless reputation, since the prayers of the sinful would not carry weight. The will of John Godfrey, quoted above, specified that his testators should select an honest priest to sing and pray for his soul for one year on a salary of ten marks, and John Salough left ten marks each for two honest priests to sing for him for one year in the churches of All Saints and St Botolph.¹⁷ Many testators named familiar parish priests who perhaps also wrote as well as witnessing several wills. One such was Richard Caumond, vicar of St Peter's for 42 years, appointed in 1512/13 as supervisor of the will of Robert Cowbrig of St Mary at the Walls parish,¹⁸ and named as executor by other parishioners. This priest's early reputation was compromised, however, by an accusation of receiving stolen goods and, in his later years, of sexual misconduct and other unlawful acts.¹⁹ After providing abundantly for his many relatives, Richard Caumond commissioned a conspicuous tomb with his image in St Peter's, while modestly bequeathing to his church two of his best sheets to make altar cloths and 'my best diaper towel' to be used at Easter.²⁰

Three other Colchester priests whose wills survive sought only prayer for their souls and charitable distribution of their worldly goods. One such was John Adam (d. 1491), Rector of St James', who seems to have been loved by his parishioners. Among many religious legacies, he bequeathed to his own church

'my porteous [portable breviary] and all my books that are bound, to be chained in St Peter's chapel by the bible'. His unbound books were to go to the secular priests of Colchester, with 6s. 8d. to the reparations of each of Colchester's churches. In a final compassionate touch, he bequeathed his mantle [a loose, sleeveless cloak] 'to some poor woman for to lay on her bed'.²¹ While he himself asked to be buried beside one of his predecessors, nine years later Nicholas Clere, clothier and a former Bailiff of Colchester, requested burial next to the grave of the faithful priest, John Adam.²²

Chantries

In his Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, written a century before the wills under discussion, Geoffrey Chaucer described an array of clerical characters in tones ranging from pure admiration to savage mockery. He satirized the lucrative and widespread sale of indulgences and pardons, some of which claimed to offer remission from Purgatory ranging from 12 days to thousands of years.²³ Chaucer's Pardoner displayed his wallet, 'Bret-ful of pardon, comen from Rome al hoot', while the gullible faithful paid what they could to gaze on a jar of 'pigges bones', advertised as holy relics. In stark contrast to this, and other religious hypocrites such as the Monk and the Friar, Chaucer included an account of a truly Christian poor parson, who resisted financial temptation and cared for his flock as a shepherd rather than a mercenary:

*'He sette nat his benefice to hyre
And leet his sheepe encombred in the myre,
And ran to Londoun, unto Seint Poules,
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules ...'*²⁴

A chantry was a temporary or permanent endowment for priests to celebrate masses for the soul of the founder, perhaps at a separate altar or enclosed chapel within a church.²⁵ The chantries of Saint Paul's Cathedral, in particular those within the cloistered churchyard known as 'Paul's Pardon', might well have tempted an aspiring, impecunious priest.²⁶ Paul's

16 ERO, D/ACR 1/6/2; D/DCm F1/61; D/DCm F1/64.

17 ERO, D/DCm F1/76.

18 ERO, D/DCm F1/38.

19 L. Higgs, *Godliness and Governance in Tudor Colchester*, (Michigan 1998), pp.82, 84.

20 ERO, D/DCm F1/66.

21 ERO, D/DCm 51/55.

22 ERO, D/DCm F1/52.

23 Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, pp.30-31.

24 A.W. Pollard, ed., *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Globe Edition, London, 1904), p.8, ll.507-510; p.11, l.700.

25 Oxford English Dictionary, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/30532?redirectedFrom=chantry#eid> (5/8/2019).

26 M-H. Rousseau, *Saving the Souls of Medieval London: Perpetual Chantries at St Paul's Cathedral, c 1200-1548* (2011) p74. https://books.google.co.uk/books?redir_esc=y&id=VWGeVHlh1p8C&q=pauls+pardon#v=onepage&q=pauls%20pardon&f=true (19/08/2019).

Pardon received bequests from six out of 74 Colchester wills studied. It appears to have been well known even on Mersea Island, where nine out of 39 wills included small bequests to a place that few testators might have visited. Perhaps the status of a chantry within their Mother Church of St Paul's Cathedral offered added assurance that such prayers would carry more weight with the Almighty than those delivered in a humble parish church.

Colchester, too, had its own chantry altars and chapels. In 1535 five perpetual chantries were listed in Colchester's parish churches, of which two were at St Leonard's church and the others at St Mary at the Walls, St Peter's and St Nicholas'.²⁷ In addition, there were temporary chantries in churches and chapels, including St Helen's chapel which still stands, and St Anne's beside a holy well on the Harwich Road, long since demolished. In 1502 Edmund Harmanson bequeathed ten shillings to the canons of St Botolph's Priory to sing a trental of Masses in St Anne's chapel,²⁸ and three years later his widow, Elizabeth, founded a temporary chantry there.²⁹ Edmund Harmanson was one of Colchester's most successful Flemish immigrants, a beer-brewer who in 1482-3 became master of St Mary's guild in St Leonard's parish.³⁰ He desired to be buried by his first wife in St Peter's chapel within St Leonard's, with *Dirige* and mass to be said at St Peter's altar. Among many religious bequests, he bequeathed a tenement to St Leonard's chantry, to which his executors were to pay 6s. 8d. yearly and keep his 'bere house by the conduit' to pay the priest to sing for his soul. The will was witnessed by, amongst others, 'sir' John Day, the chantry priest of St Leonard's. ['sir' was a courtesy title for priests without a university degree.]

The church of St Leonard-at-the-Hythe

On the eve of the Reformation in 1530, Colchester boasted ten medieval churches within or close to the town's Roman walls, as well as chapels, two friaries, a priory and an abbey. St Leonard's was one of the more prosperous parish churches, founded in the 12th century to minister to the growing community of New Hythe, Colchester's relocated port on the River Colne. With wealthy resident merchants and ship-owners, gifts and bequests funded improvements to the church, including its fine 15th century clerestory, chancel arch and south porch with the original surviving door, and the nave's magnificent hammerbeam roof dating from the early 16th century. In 1464 the rector, John Pollying,

bequeathed 20 marks to the fabric of 'Le Clerestory',³¹ and money was frequently left for 'reparations' to the church. Some bequests came in property: John Honyngton (d. 1484) left a field to St Leonard's chantry as well as shares in two boats and two crayers [small trading vessels], and 'Flemish money' worth just under £20.³² John Bardefeld, owner of 'the sign of the Hart', left tenements and a field to pay for prayers and obits for 100 years: his will of 1506 was witnessed by sir James Foster, priest of St Leonard's, and sir John Cobold, then chantry priest.³³



Plate 3. South porch and tower, St Leonard-at-the-Hythe

Colchester's local cloth trade had reached its peak in the 1440s through increased trade with the ports of the Hanseatic League, followed by a slight decline before an influx of Dutch immigrants in the 1550s introduced the profitable 'new draperies'.³⁴ Yet during the early decades of the 16th century, on the eve of the Reformation, lucrative bequests continued to flow. Churches still received endowments of lands and houses; bales of expensive russet cloth and weys of salt;

27 Higgs, *Godliness*, p.81.

28 ERO D/CM F1/44.

29 A P Baggs, B Board, P Crummy, C Dove, S Durgan, N R Goose, R B Pugh, P Studd and C C Thornton, 'Ancient chapels', in *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 9, the Borough of Colchester*, ed. Janet Cooper and C.R Elrington (London, 1994), pp.336-338. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol9/pp336-338> (19/8/2019).

30 *VCH Essex* IX p.57, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol9/pp57-66#highlight-first> (19/8/2019). However, Harmanson's name is not listed on the database of immigrants: <https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/> (04/09/2019).

31 ERO, D/DCm F1/82.

32 ERO, D/DCm F1/87.

33 ERO, D/DCm F1/39.

34 Goose & Cooper, 1998, p.67.

pennies from the poor and shillings, marks or pounds from the rich. Rich clothes were occasionally given to make ecclesiastical vestments, and sheets to make altar cloths. Improvements to church buildings continued, as well as bequests for windows, painted images and 'lights' to enhance their interiors. Hundreds of masses for the souls of deceased parishioners were constantly performed at altars or in chantry chapels. When in 1506 John Bardefeld the elder left a field to St Leonard's church to perform anniversary obits for himself, his parents and two wives for 100 years, he must have felt that this valuable investment would secure the well-being of all their souls far into any conceivable future.

Even local Lollards could not have predicted that their desire for reform of the English church would be so suddenly and brutally imposed. The cataclysm began in 1535 with the valuation, closure and confiscation

of smaller monasteries, followed by those of the greatest abbeys. No longer permitted to pray for the souls of the dead or observe their centuries-old rituals and routines, monks, nuns and friars were expelled to seek new, unfamiliar lives. Most of their churches were demolished and buildings sold to wealthy laymen, providing land and building materials for substantial new mansions. As the townscape of Colchester was drastically reshaped, devout townsfolk must have felt an acute sense of loss and shock. No longer could their dread of a prolonged time in Purgatory be mitigated by generous bequests in return for masses and prayers. This long-established relationship with Colchester's religious houses, in which legacies might support monks and friars to pray repeatedly for donors' souls, is further explored in the second part of this article, in a forthcoming issue.

New Light on the Uttlesford Finger Ring?

A remarkable gold finger ring was found by metal-detecting in 2011 in the Uttlesford area. The ring dates to the late 6th or early 7th century has many unusual features. Its shank is decorated with high-relief arched motifs and more subtle Style II interlaced bands. Its square bezel features a pelleted border enclosing a standing figure holding a processional cross, with a raptor above his(?) head and another perched on his wrist.



The ring went through the treasure process in 2014 and was purchased by Saffron Walden Museum Society after an appeal for funds which was very well supported locally. The ring is now on display in Saffron Walden Museum.

Robert J. Wallis of the American International University, London has recently re-evaluated the iconography of the ring and published his findings in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* (Volume 30 , Issue 3 , August 2020). Wallis contends that the ring's likely date – on the cusp of the adoption of Christianity by the emergent Anglo-Saxon kingdoms – makes it likely that its imagery draws on both Christian and non-Christian traditions and that it had meaning for both groups of people. The figure is apparently engaged in falconry, which was at this time a newly introduced sport for nobles. "I suggest that falconry, and the ring itself as a high-status and possibly royal object, may have played important roles in the dynamics of pagan-Christian 'discursive space'..." says Wallis in his article "*The 'Northwest Essex Anglo-Saxon Ring', Falconry and Pagan-Christian Discursive Space*".

Humphry Repton of Hare Street: Mail Coach Entrepreneur

Deborah Kirk

The renowned landscape gardener Humphry Repton moved to the Romford area from his Sustead Old Hall estate in Norfolk in the mid-1780s, but so far none of his biographers seem to know why. For example, in 1962 Dorothy Stroud remarked:

... the Reptons made plans to move to Hare Street, near Romford, to a somewhat inelegant cottage close to a fairly busy highway. That a man so closely associated with his family should leave the nucleus in northern Norfolk and settle in Essex without work to go to is perplexing, but Repton obviously sought the proximity of London and the available connections in the hope of work. (1)

In reality, Humphry Repton *did* have ‘work to go to’ when he arrived in Essex, and this article will reveal his reasons for choosing to rent an ‘inelegant cottage close to a fairly busy highway’ near Romford.

From Calicoes to Coaches

Born in Bury St Edmunds in 1752, Humphry Repton initially trained to become a trader in calicoes and satins, whilst devoting much of his free time to poetry, music and drawing.⁽²⁾ His father set him up as a general merchant in Norwich, but when the profitability of his business became uncertain, he moved twenty miles out of town to Sustead Old Hall intending to make a living off the land. In order to expand his knowledge of botany and refine his artistic skills, Repton borrowed books from his neighbour William Windham, a Whig politician, but when he failed to procure an income from farming the land at his Sustead estate, he needed to find a different means of financing his gentleman's lifestyle.⁽³⁾ In the spring of 1783, Repton heard that William Windham had been appointed secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, so he immediately asked for a job as his personal assistant. Windham readily agreed, but after just a few months, he became disillusioned with his post and he resigned, leaving Repton in Ireland to fulfil his obligations. Although he clearly enjoyed himself and embraced the opportunity to mingle with the nobility, Repton did so without remuneration. However, whilst in Ireland he became acquainted with the actress Mrs Siddons through whom he eventually made some stimulating new friends and became involved in the project that would bring him to Romford.

Sarah Siddons, who was considered to be the greatest tragic actress of her time, lodged in the same house as Humphry Repton and William Windham in Ireland

and, as a lover of the arts, Repton was enthralled by her anecdotes and in awe of her celebrity status.⁽⁴⁾ They soon became firm friends and by joining her social circle, he began to mix with some influential people, including Joshua Reynolds who painted the famous portrait of Mrs Siddons as *The Tragic Muse*, and a theatre owner called John Palmer.⁽⁵⁾ Mrs Siddons had honed her acting skills at theatres in Bath and Bristol owned by John Palmer who had set up a safe and speedy coach service to move his actors, stagehands and props between the two locations.⁽⁶⁾ He was sure that the same system could be used for a countrywide mail delivery service and Charles Bonner, an actor who had previously been apprenticed to a coach builder, became his partner in the fledgling mail coach enterprise.⁽⁷⁾ There can be no doubt that Humphry Repton became acquainted with Palmer and Bonner in 1784 through his association with Mrs Siddons, and he decided to get involved in the mail coach project, investing his ideas, energy and capital into making the venture a success.⁽⁸⁾

The Launch of the Mail Coach Service

Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger agreed to a trial run of the first mail coach which took place on 2nd August 1784 from London to Bristol via John Palmer's home town of Bath.⁽⁹⁾ It was a tremendous success, cutting the journey time from 38 hours to just 16, so work on new routes from London to Norwich commenced immediately: one via Bishops Stortford and Newmarket and the other via Colchester and Ipswich.⁽¹⁰⁾ In modern reference books and articles about John Palmer's mail coaches, Humphry Repton's name is inexplicably absent even though by October 1784 he and his new business partner John Crouse had been contracted to run the London to Norwich services.⁽¹¹⁾ For the operation to run smoothly, one of the Norwich



Humphry Repton's 'View from My Own Cottage, in Essex', 1816, 'Before' and 'After' (Kind permission of Essex Record Office)

partners clearly needed to be in London, but John Crouse had business commitments as a newspaper publisher in Norwich, so it was Humphry Repton who relocated to the capital, renting his small cottage in Hare Street which was considered to be:

...at once incommodious, mean, and grovelling...In short, the foot-passengers, waggons, and stage-coaches, passed close to the entrance (12)

Of course, this would have been part of its attraction for Repton. It was located just fourteen miles from London on the stagecoach route to Norwich meaning that he could watch his mail coaches as they passed right outside his front window! (13)

The first London to Norwich run via Colchester and Ipswich took place on Friday 25th March 1785, and via Bishops Stortford and Newmarket on Easter Monday 28th March.(14) The coaches on both routes arrived before their time, but the Newmarket postmaster was furious that the new mail coach had overtaken the regular mail cart which had set out the day before, so that Monday's mail arrived before Sunday's!(15) However, much worse was yet to come.

Fake News

Palmer, Bonner, Repton and Crouse decided to extend their service to the rest of England, a move which infuriated the rival coach operators who set out to thwart

their plans. In May 1785, Repton was perplexed to hear that the Ipswich Journal had published an anonymous letter about a mail coach which had overturned due to the lightness of its structure, breaking its clock and causing considerable delay to its passengers. There was also an advertisement, purportedly placed by a passenger, for the return of a gold seal lost when a Norwich mail coach was accidentally overturned by its intoxicated driver. (16) In reality, an overhanging bough had smashed the lamp on the coach in question resulting in a delay of no more than half an hour. Repton and Crouse had immediately fired the coachman and the guard, and when they questioned the other passengers after the event, no one knew anything about the loss of a gold seal.(17) Repton was particularly horrified that someone had *paid* for a fictitious advertisement intended to sabotage his new venture, so he wrote to the paper straightaway from his Hare Street cottage to set the record straight, observing that 'Success will ever excite envy'. The editor himself included a statement dismissing the letter about the accident as 'being without the least foundation' and asserted that the 'very respectable name' of H. Repton 'leaves us not the least doubt of removing every prejudice that may have arisen'.(18) Nevertheless, as services were extended to include routes from London to Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Southampton and Poole, the campaign of 18th century fake news continued, with letters published in the papers about horses dropping dead as a result of the increased speed of the mail coaches, and the gold seal notice re-appearing

time and time again. According to Charles Bonner, defamatory advertisements and posters were displayed in taverns and coffee houses in many of the principal county towns, and rewards were offered to the destitute to remove a mail coach linch-pin when the carriage had stopped so that the ensuing accident would be reported in the papers. At one point a man was actually bribed to get a job as a mail coach driver so that he could deliberately overturn a carriage!(19) An anonymous advertisement for a competitor's coaches that appeared in *The Times* on 2nd September 1785 warned about the 'many accidents that have happened by Mail Coaches' and referred to a passenger who was 'in St Bartholomew's Hospital with a shattered and broken bone'.(20) This damning allegation was the final straw, and Repton, Crouse, and Bonner (acting as the London agent for Palmer) promptly wrote to *The Times* and other newspapers to settle the matter once and for all. They used supporting evidence to clarify that no mail coach horses or passengers had been killed, but it was in fact other, established coaches that had been involved in horrific accidents.(21) The editors were clearly persuaded because they stopped publishing the fake news reports immediately and the mail coaches went from strength to strength, with further services to Nottingham, Leeds, Dover, Portsmouth, Exeter, Gloucester, Worcester, and Carlisle established by the end of 1785.



Blue Plaque in Romford commemorating Repton

A Shattered Dream

Although the mail coach venture was proving to be a roaring success, it is unclear exactly how long Humphry Repton stuck with it. He would have been deeply disappointed in November 1785 when William Pitt the Younger rewarded John Palmer by making him the Surveyor and Comptroller General of the Post Office, and even more so when he heard that Palmer had employed Charles Bonner as his deputy, but the situation was getting increasingly worse.(22) Impressed with a wheel axle design by an innovator named John Besant, Charles Bonner waited until John Palmer was away on business in France and in his absence signed a long

contract with Besant and his coachbuilding partner John Vidler which committed the Post Office to using their new coaches exclusively. Bonner also reached a clandestine agreement with Besant to make himself a sleeping partner in the business.(23) From this point forward, all the contractors were obliged to lease their mail coaches from Besant and Vidler, pay them for coach maintenance, and pay an operating charge of two pence per mile to the Post Office. The result was a monopoly on the supply and servicing of coaches by 1787, and many of the unhappy contractors refused to pay, while others like Repton ceased to be involved in the mail coach scheme altogether and effectively lost their investment.(24) Repton would certainly have abandoned the Norwich coaches at this point if he had not already done so, although evidence from an extant timetable shows that John Crouse continued as a contractor into the 1790s.(25)

Unlike Crouse, Humphry Repton did not have a publishing business to fall back on, and although his contribution to John Palmer's revolutionary mail enterprise receives limited attention from even the most meticulous of his biographers, Repton himself would never forget it – how could he when the mail coaches to and from Norwich still drove past his Hare Street cottage every single day? In the biographical notice of the 1840 edition of *The landscape gardening and landscape architecture of the late Humphry Repton, esq.*, his bitter disappointment is noted:

After many years, Mr. Palmer received a considerable, though scarcely adequate, pecuniary reward, in acknowledgment of his claims upon that public and that Government; but Mr. Repton, without whose assistance those plans could scarcely ever have been brought to perfection, received no recompense for his services, and the pecuniary losses which he sustained. (26)

John Palmer's employment with the Post Office was not destined to last. He made the mistake of writing detailed letters to Charles Bonner explaining how he managed to by-pass the plans of his superiors without their knowledge, but when cracks began to appear in their friendship, Bonner presented the letters to Palmer's managers. Although Palmer was never formally dismissed and remained popular with the public, his position at the Post Office became untenable and he left of his own accord in 1792.(27)

A Poem to Mrs Siddons Sent from Sustead in 1786

So why have Humphry Repton's biographers failed to realise that it was the mail coach venture that brought him to Romford in 1785? The answer to this conundrum can be found in Repton's poem entitled *SENT FROM SUSTEAD, IN NORFOLK TO MRS SIDDONS, IN LONDON, 1786*. It begins:

*Since Christmas day last, nearly two months ago,
Our fields and our roads have been cover'd with snow
So because I can't go up to town, like my betters,
I'm contented with boring my friends by my letters,
And now, since I hear that the Siddons is well,
I have spirits to write, though I've nothing to tell;
But how I lamented to learn by the papers,
Her illness had cured Covent Garden of vapours;
But how I rejoiced when kind Windham, so cleverly,
Wrote to inform me he'd seen Mrs Beverley; (28)*

The poem was written two months after Christmas, indicating that it was sent to Mrs Siddons in February 1786, but Humphry Repton had already moved to Romford by the spring of 1785 and tenants were occupying Sustead Old Hall by the end of that year. (29) A closer examination of the events described in the poem reveals that they actually took place at the beginning of 1784 and not in 1786.

In his diary, William Windham makes no mention of Mrs Siddons or her plays in his early entries for 1786, whereas in January and February 1784 he socialised with her regularly and went to see her at the Drury Lane theatre numerous times. (30) Windham noted that he saw Mrs Siddons in the role of Mrs Beverley in *The Gamester* by Edward Moore twice at the start of 1784: on 29th January and on 13th February. A search of the *The London Stage Database, 1660-1800* for 1784 confirms that Mrs Siddons did in fact perform as Mrs Beverley on both of these dates, whereas in 1786 she did not play the part until 27th May. (31) There was a gap in performances at Drury Lane from 3rd to 28th January 1784 when Mrs Siddons was absent due to the illness referred to by Repton, but at the beginning of 1786, she certainly wasn't ill, although she may have been exhausted! Mrs Siddons gave birth to her son George on 27th December 1785, an event that was widely reported in the papers, so if Repton's poem had been written to her early in 1786, surely he would have made a reference to the new arrival? (32) In fact, Repton was so well established in Romford by 1786 that his name appears in the published list of workhouse directors for that year. (33) So was the mistake in the date of the poem a straightforward typesetter's error? Taking into account the new research presented in this article, Professor Stephen Daniels speculates that Repton may have been publicly reticent about his mail coach years, and that the misdating could have been a half-deliberate means of smoothing his transition from Sustead gentleman farmer to Hare Street landscape gardener. Daniels goes on to suggest that Repton's 1816 illustrations of the 'View from my Own Cottage in Hare Street' may represent memory images of his life 'before' as a coaching entrepreneur and 'after' as a landscape gardener. (34) Sadly, this single error has apparently caused all of the chronological confusion

surrounding Humphry Repton's arrival in Romford and effectively prevented his biographers from addressing his fascinating foray into the amelioration of 18th century mail coach services.

The Author

Deborah Kirk is a local history researcher and volunteer at Langtons House in Hornchurch.

Notes

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- 5 Robyn Asleson (ed.) *A Passion for Performance: Sarah Siddons and Her Portraitists* (Getty Publications, 1999). Repton refers to being present when Mrs Siddons discussed with Joshua Reynolds her hairstyle in *The Tragic Muse* painting; Humphry Repton *Fragments on the theory and practice of landscape gardening* (J. Taylor 1816) from The Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/mobot31753002820014/page/143> (19/08/2019)

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- 13 Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Paterson Paterson's Roads (Paterson, 1804), gives the Mail Coach Road route as London, Romford, Chelmsford, Colchester, Ipswich and Norwich, and lists Hare Street, Romford as part of this route. From Google Books: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Paterson_s_Roads_in_a_Pocket_Size_for_thliQp0k6PWEoC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=pater-sons%27+roads&printsec=frontcover (01/09/2019)
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34 Comments from Professor Stephen Daniels e-mailed to the author on 19th November 2019.

Acknowledgements

View from my Own Cottage in Hare Street illustrations reproduced with permission from The Essex Records Office.

In Brief

New Museum for Harwich

In August this year a new dedicated museum for the town of Harwich was opened by TV presenter Tim Wonnacott. A privately-funded venture, the 'Harwich Museum' aims to complement the town's existing historic facilities such as the Redoubt Fort and Maritime Museums. The exhibits are mainly on loan from the private collections and includes objects of local interest such as notes issued by the Harwich Bank, beer and lemonade bottles made for businesses operating in Harwich, town weights and other items. With so many official museums struggling to survive, it is heartening to hear of a locally-funded volunteer project with so much support.



Inside the new Harwich Museum (Credit: ITV News Anglia)

Early Coin Find

The PAS records for Essex have been augmented with an unusual find: a silver stater issued in Neapolis in Macedonia between 510 and 480 BC. It was found in the vicinity of Holland-on-Sea and recorded in September this year. The obverse of the coin shows a Gorgon's head facing, with protruding tongue – a familiar motif which was used widely in the ancient world to ward off evil.



This remarkable silver coin must surely count as one of the earliest closely datable finds ever made in the county. How it reached the Essex coast from the Aegean would be a tale worth hearing!

The PAS website reference is: <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/1039159>

Steve Pollington
Editor

Gorgon's head, with protruding tongue (Rights Holder: Bristol City Council)

A new edition of 'Chelmsford at War'

Andrew J. Begent

Local historian Andy Begent describes creating '*Chelmsford at War*' the story of Chelmsford and its surrounding villages through the Second World War, then picks out just a few stories from the many tales of trial and tribulation in the book.

As a youngster set free in the Chelmsford of my youth I found a landscape dotted with pill boxes, war memorials and the like. Tales of the Second World War still featured in films and comics back then. I guess that bred in me a life-long fascination for finding out what life was like in Chelmsford under siege. I never cease to be amazed, how much evidence of those tempestuous years still survive in the landscape today.

My research started with a review of the extensive air raid precaution (ARP) records for Chelmsford preserved at the Essex Record Office (ERO). Pages of records written by hand describe the business of responding to the hundreds of bombs and crashed aircraft that dropped from the skies above Chelmsford. Bomb craters, 'blitzed' houses, heroic rescues, evacuees, conscientious objectors, tragic losses all are recorded in papers held by the ERO and of course those who back then gave their lives for their country are recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Then the *Essex Chronicle* and *Essex Weekly News* (1938-1948) flesh out the 'Home Front' in the Chelmsford area. Here were the real people, their worries, their losses, sometimes their misbehaviour and often their grim resolution in a town on the front line of the Home Front. These gave flavour to the business of managing the war recorded in detailed council minutes held at the ERO.

Most illuminating, I conducted a series of interviews with Chelmsford people: people who had real memories of the war in Chelmsford and the countryside around. These were so rewarding and I was able to convert them into 'eyewitness accounts' focussing on particular incidents or themes. Now in 2021, one of the sadder aspects of producing this new edition of '*Chelmsford at War*' comes with the realisation that most of those I interviewed have since died. I am pleased though that their memories have been captured for future generations... for their grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Work on the new edition of *Chelmsford at War* started in 2013 and came to last longer than the war itself. Research took me far afield searching for units ranging from the United States Army Air Force in the US National Archives to the Royal Observer Corps at Hampshire's county record office. Mining the National

Archives for information opened up the military world in Chelmsford. Here were the records of the Home Guard units, the regulars of bomb disposal, the intelligence reports written about German airmen captured in Chelmsford and most poignantly the RAF pilots who died in the skies above our city. Here too I found the darker world of the secret Auxiliary Units, local people set up in secret when invasion was imminent to serve as sabotage and assassination squads once the Nazis had invaded.

I have been lucky through all these sources and more to assemble a detailed narrative, map and photographic record of what it was like to be in *Chelmsford at War*. Alongside the book much of my material now goes to populate the Chelmsford War Memorial website which I created in 2008. Free to access on the internet this website like the book keeps alive the memories of the sacrifices made by the people of Chelmsford and its surrounding villages.

The book has been constructed with the format of a newspaper, with hundreds of 'stories' arranged in chronological order, covering Mr Chamberlain's declaration of war, through the 'darkest hours' of threatened invasion, the dogfights of the Battle of Britain, the blitzes of Chelmsford, the arrival of the US allies, and a few post-war events. The newspapers of the time were very guarded in their reports and so I constructing my account I have tried to lift that veil of secrecy. The 'stories' are written from a variety of original sources and converted to the newspaper format allowing the reader to both dip in and out of matters of interest to them and/or read the book conventionally from start to finish.

Here are a few tasters:

Wednesday 19th June 1940 – Heinkel Bomber Shot Down at Bishopscourt

In the moonlit early hours, Flying Officer Adolph 'Sailor' Malan D.F.C (subsequently played by actor Robert Shaw in the 1969 '*Battle of Britain*' film) shot down a German bomber which plummeted to earth crashing in flames in the grounds of Bishopscourt in Springfield Road, Chelmsford. The Heinkel had been one of around

A NEW EDITION OF 'CHELMSFORD AT WAR'

a hundred raiders that night who aided by a full moon had launched air attacks on targets throughout eastern England. In all seven of the bombers were shot down, two of them over Essex.

The aircraft that crashed in Chelmsford was a Heinkel He 111 H-4 of *Kampfgeschwader 4* (werke number 2894, fuselage code 5J+GA), operating from Merville, France. It was engaged over the Thames Estuary by Malan's Spitfire of 74 Squadron operating from Rochford Aerodrome. When over Danbury Malan's aircraft approached the Heinkel from the rear, which changed course to the west towards Chelmsford. At 12.29 am Malan attacked from astern and after three short bursts of gun fire, the first two of which attracted returning fire, thick black smoke was seen to come from the bomber as it began to fall in wide circles. It circled Chelmsford two or three times before crashing across the garden of Springfield Tyrells then Springfield Road, before grinding to earth in the grounds of Bishopscourt, then the home of the Bishop of Chelmsford. It was 12.30 am. The pilot of the Heinkel, Leutnant Erich Simon, had managed to parachute to safety. An

so fortunate. Probably wounded they failed to get out of the plane and were killed before or when it crashed. Two bodies were thrown clear of the wreckage and the third, a gunner, was found dead at his post. They were later named as Oberleutnant Heinz-Georg Corpus (observer), Oberfeldwebel Walter Gross (bombardier) and Feldwebel Walter Vick (wireless operator).

Incredibly there were no casualties among people on the ground, though a major tragedy was avoided by a matter of feet when the aircraft just missed Springfield Tyrells house, which was run by Dr. Barnardo's as a training school and contained 54 people, of whom the majority were girls. Elsewhere all around was a trail of devastation until the burning wreckage of the aircraft ended up in the bishop's garden.

Local rumour in Chelmsford soon claimed the bishop himself had shot the Heinkel down with a shotgun he was known to possess. He had, after all, been an early recruit to the Home Guard. Remarkably, after the incident he was to receive a letter from a fellow Bishop congratulating him on his marksmanship! Fittingly, the



The remains of the Heinkel bomber which crashed in the grounds of Bishopscourt in the early hours of 19th June 1940. The police officer wearing a tunic, caught in the morning sunshine and closest to the aircraft, has been identified as P.c. 465 John Stephen (Jack) Williams. (Courtesy Essex Police Museum)

experienced airman with several years' service and a veteran of numerous wartime flights, he landed slightly wounded close to Writtle. His three comrades were not

Bishop of Chelmsford officiated at the joint funerals of the three German airmen two days later at Chelmsford Borough Cemetery in Writtle Road.



Illustration of the Heinkel He 111 which crashed at Bishopscourt. Its pilot was the only crew member to survive the incident, having parachuted to safety at Writtle. The aircraft had been on a reconnaissance mission and carried no bombs.

Wednesday 31st July 1940 – The GHQ Line

Chelmsford was at the heart of a series of defensive fortifications thrown up after the Dunkirk evacuation called the G.H.Q. (General Headquarters) Line which was completed on this date. Here the German Panzers were literally meant to be stopped in their tracks.

The G.H.Q. Line consisted of hundreds of pillboxes, strongpoints and gun positions, usually in two parallel lines, sited behind obstacles such as rivers, embankments and specially dug anti-tank ditches. Many around Chelmsford still survive to this day.

Wednesday 31st July 1940 – Secret Home Guard Auxiliary Units Established

Very much a pet project of Prime Minister Winston Churchill these were secret cells of well-trained irregular troops who when the Nazi's invaded were expected to operate as an underground or guerrilla force. The invading armies would pass over them 'hidden in plain sight' then from underground bases in the countryside around Chelmsford they would emerge to assassinate collaborators, kill the occupying enemy, destroy enemy communications and ammunition dumps.

Each unit consisted of a cell of up to ten men, with good knowledge of the local countryside and/or some military experience. They were trained in secret at Coleshill, Berkshire, wore Home Guard uniforms, were heavily armed and were expected to fight until they were killed. Once activated they had a life expectancy of two weeks.

In central Essex the units were part of 202 (G.H.Q. Reserve) Battalion, Home Guard which was commanded by Captain H. H. Waugh of River House in Earls Colne. In the early part of the war the battalion consisted of five groups in Essex.

The Witham Group, commanded by then Lieutenant William Keith Seabrook a farmer of Leighs Hall in Great Leighs, had six cells - two in the Chelmsford district at Boreham and Great Leighs. The Maldon Group, commanded by Lieutenant G. E. Tucker, had two of its three cells in the Chelmsford district - at Little Baddow and Bicknacre. Lieutenant C. G. Ford commanded six

cells in the south of the county including one known as the Wickford cell which was manned by men from Chelmsford but located in South Hanningfield.

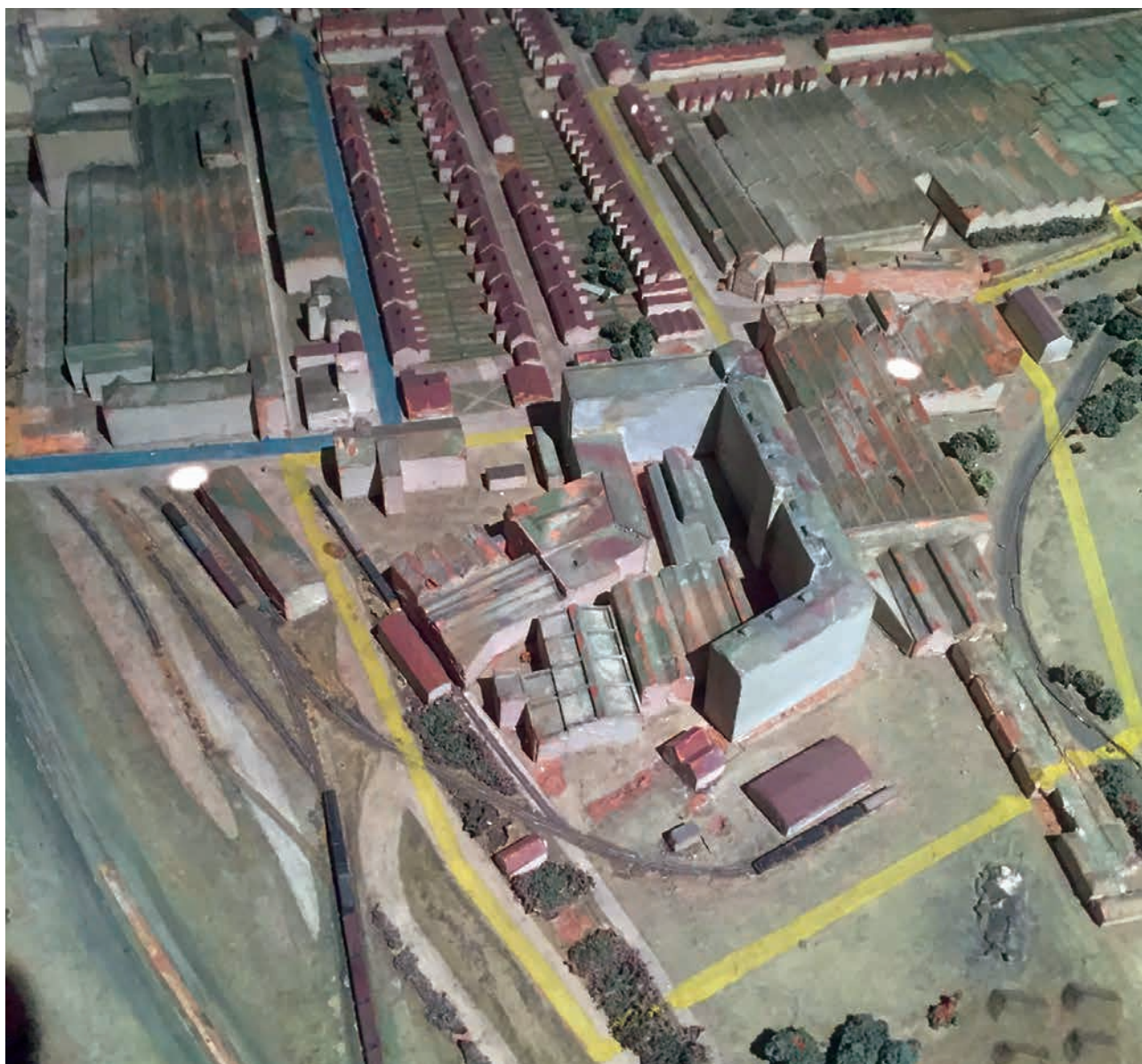
The definite locations of two of the five operational bases in the Chelmsford district are known, plus the approximate position of one of the others. Invariably the operational bases, literally an underground cramped cell, were designed to defy detection. A number of them still defy detection today.

Friday 14th March 1941 – Loss and humanity in war - Danbury

Two soldiers, Lance Bombardier Gloves and Gunner Phelps of the Royal Artillery, were standing at a bus stop in Danbury, awaiting a bus to take them to Clacton on leave. As they waited a large saloon car, driven by a chauffeur, drew up and a middle-aged woman beckoned the men. Gunner Phelps stepped forward and the woman handed him a packet and said 'Please take this laddie, it's a present for you and your friend.' Rather surprised, the gunner thanked the lady and the car drove off. The soldiers opened the packet and, to their amazement, found that it contained £150 in £1 notes. Accompanying the money was the following letter; *'For a soldier serving his country, today's my son's birthday. He was killed early in the war and the money would have been used as his birthday present. Use it laddie. God bless you, a broken-hearted mother.'*

Friday 27th October 1944 - 994 bottles of champagne found in Manor Road house: American airmen suspected of smuggling champagne

HM Customs & Excise unearthed 994 bottles of champagne at a house in Manor Road, Chelmsford 'Liberated' from France by American airmen the 'bubbly' had been flown to Boreham Aerodrome, then a USAAF base. From here the cache had been driven to the house by lorry. A number of Americans were questioned by police and customs authorities. In the West End of London bottles could frequently cost £10 each. Attracting national attention, *The Times* described the Manor Road house as a 'champagne dump' on 28th October 1944 and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was



The Luftwaffe model of Chelmsford, used to familiarise aircrew with the town's primary bombing targets – the Hoffmann and Marconi works in New Street and Rectory Lane.

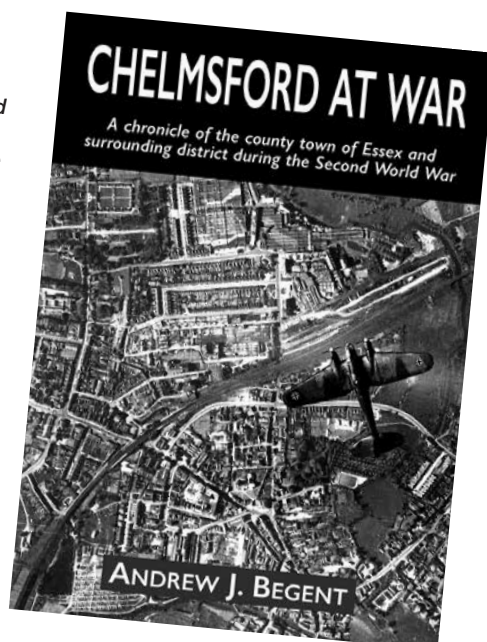
asked in the House of Commons whether he was aware of the wholesale smuggling that was going on.

By way of contrast it is perhaps worth reflecting that many of the US airmen flying from Boreham airfield were killed on operations over France in the run-up to D-Day.

Tuesday 12th June 1945 – Luftwaffe model of Chelmsford found in Germany

Giiving us some hint as to how much Chelmsford was in the sights of the enemy in wartime, as the war ended R.A.F. officers discovered a scale model of Chelmsford's Hoffmann's and Marconi's works reconstructed from aerial photography, in a fire-gutted photographic intelligence building at Quedlingburg Aerodrome in Germany. The officers presented the model to Marconi's and today it can be viewed in the Chelmsford & Essex Museum in Oaklands Park.

Chelmsford at War, a chronicle of the county town of Essex and its surrounding district during the Second World War is available directly from the Chelmer Publications website (chelmerpublications.co.uk), and online from the booksellers Waterstones and Foyles.



Book Reviews



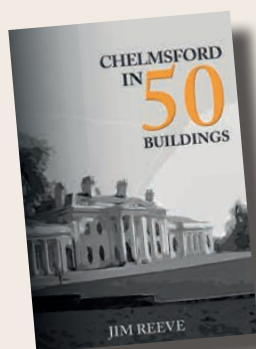
Correction

The review in the last issue of *Humphry Repton and his family* was erroneously attributed to Neil Wiffen. It should have been to Michael Leach.

Jim Reeve

Chelmsford in 50 Buildings

ISBN 978 1 3981 0685 7 card covers, 96 pp,
Amberley Publishing, 2021, £15.99



The latest offering from Amberley presents portraits of Chelmsford and its immediate area through fifty images, ranging from recent colour photographs (New Hall School, Anglia Ruskin University campus), old sepia photos (County Skating Rink, Old Moulsham Mill) to Victorian hand-tinted sketches (The White Horse pub, Great Baddow). A handy coloured map with reference numbers allows the reader to locate

the various features in the modern landscape, some of which are still standing and worth a visit today; this is a two-page spread and appears at the front before the text to help plan an outing.

The author's choice of buildings is wide-ranging, including the impressive Shire Hall and Cathedral and some humbler edifices; Hylands House, Coval Hall, Ingatestone Hall and a number of rather aristocratic seats; the Hoffmann Ball Bearing Factory and the Gray & Sons brewery attest to manufacturing in the town as do Britvic and Marconi's. Perhaps less well-known are the leper hospital at Bicknacre and the Galleywood racecourse. Pubs feature in the book (The Three Compasses, The Golden Fleece, The Tulip, The Spotted Dog and others) each with a tale attached – a slice of social history. The Army & Navy Flyover gets a mention – a controversial landmark that is now just a memory.

There are interesting stories attached to many of these

buildings – one such is Cuckoo Farm, Little Baddow, the former home of Thomas Hooker, an early 17th century religious orator who fell out with the ecclesiastical authorities in England, fled to Holland and on to New England. Further disagreements and relocations resulted in his taking on a political role, drawing up a constitutional document for the state of Connecticut which formed the basis of the present American Constitution.

Then-and-now photos allow the reader to compare the modern landscape with that of former times: two views of St Mary's, Great Baddow in 1900 and 2013, for example, or Oaklands House in 1900 and its modern guise as Chelmsford Museum.

The image content of the book is dominated by recent photographs, a few of which are perhaps of limited interest (e.g. a parade of mid-20th century shops standing on the site where Judge Tindal was born). The text is uneven in content and style and would have benefitted from a more thorough proof-reading before going to press. On page 7 the Romans conquered Britain in AD 43 but on page 15 the date is given as AD 47. We learn that in the year 2018/19 Chelmsford station was used by 8,927 million passengers (i.e. more than the entire population of the planet). In 1973 the Essex Regiment moved its treasurers into Oaklands House ... These (and some grammatical errors in the text) should have been picked up and rectified early on, since they affect the reader's confidence in what the author has to say.

As a visual record of Chelmsford in the 20th and 21st centuries mainly, the book should appeal to researchers of local history and those interested in the development of the city. The text covers a great deal in a few pages but it really only comes to life when Reeve has personal anecdotes to share.

Steve Pollington





The Uttlesford Ring

The central gold ring contains a bird of prey bearing a cross

© Saffron Walden Museum