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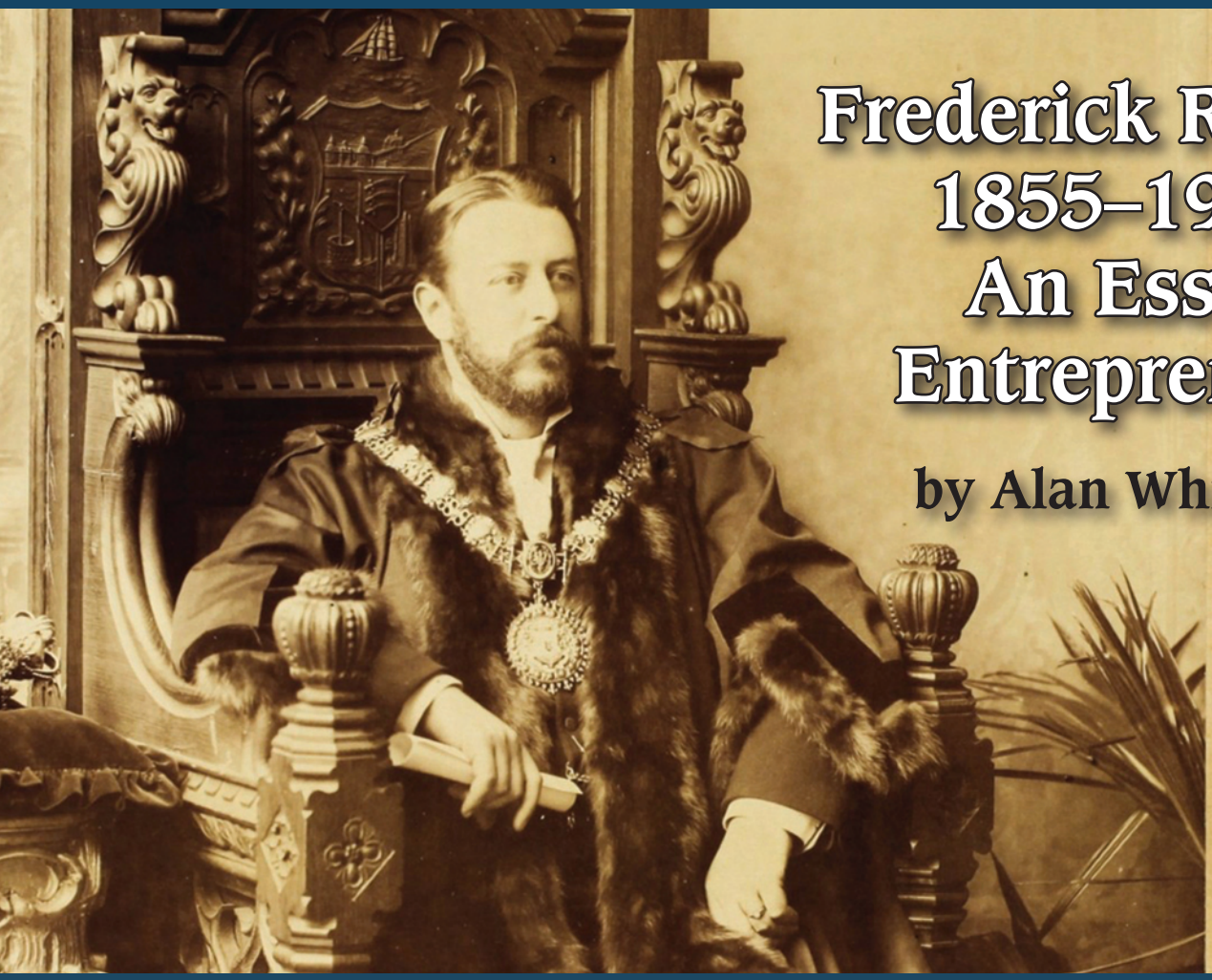

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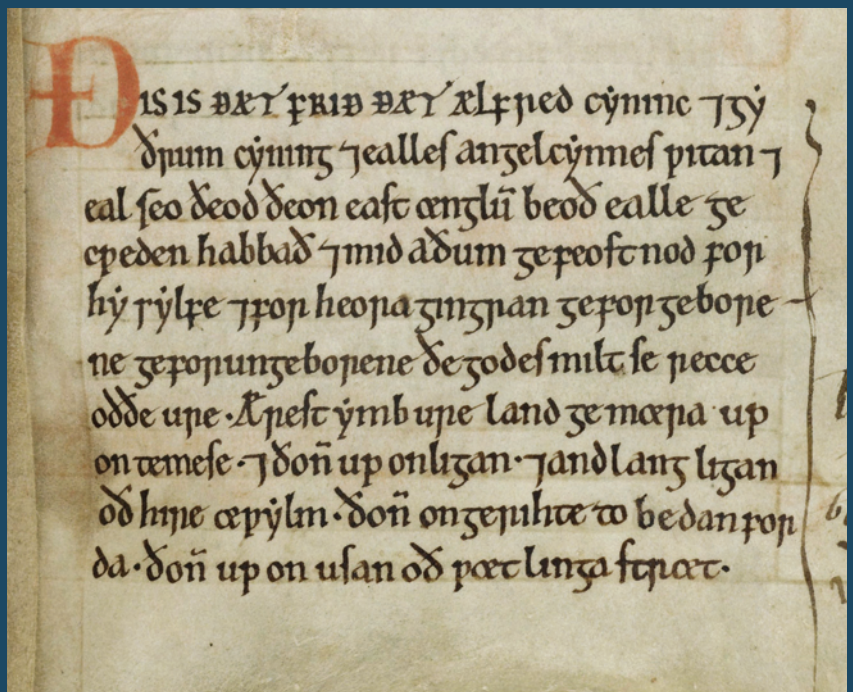

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Also in this issue:

- Sir Henry Bate Dudley at Bradwell-on-Sea: Part II
- Sir Stephen and Lady Virginia Courtauld: Their Africa Legacy
- Book Reviews

Welcome to the Spring 2026 issue of the *Essex Journal*

This issue provides some food for thought – and for reflection on the importance of our county in national life. The Book Reviews section is devoted in part to two recent titles from the redoubtable Ken Worpole, who has contributed a great deal to our national life through his examination of the effect of architecture and the environment on human behaviour. Ken famously asserted that coastal Essex played a very important part in the nation's development of alternative ways of thinking and doing. The two titles reviewed in these pages support this idea. A lavishly illustrated treatment of the restoration work in the 19th century at Waltham Abbey Church is also featured here.

Furthermore, we can enjoy the second part of Elaine Thornton's study of the career of Sir Henry Bate Dudley, in which the sometime clergyman, dramatist and newspaper editor took up the living at Bradwell-on-Sea, where his speculative improvement expenditure caused him more than a few financial problems. Ongoing litigation, bankruptcy, hostility and patronage by turns from the wealthy, manoeuvre and counter-manoeuvre – life can never have been dull for Sir Henry.

The Courtauld family featured in a previous issue of *Essex Journal* (can it really be five years ago?). We now take up the family's story in the years after the First World War, when the fortunes of war offered Sir Stephen and his Italian-born wife, Lady Virginia, opportunities for travel and adventure, which led them finally to settle in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and to commission a fine house in the Modern Movement style, a rarity in that part of the world. The philanthropic urge did not desert them though, and their time there benefitted many local communities.

In a useful follow-on from last issue's treatment of slavery in Essex in the pre-Norman period, Julian Whybra offers us a controversial reappraisal of the effect of the period of Danish domination and settlement in his piece Viking Essex?, where the question mark indicates the author's uncertainty. Or does it? The ancient kingdom of the East Saxons was larger than the modern county but the allure of its capital – London – attracted the attention of powerful outsiders, first Kent, then Mercia and finally Wessex. Most of the eastern seaboard was surrendered to Danish control (and likely some settlement, although how much population replacement took place is contestable), but the status of Essex has been misunderstood due to an unfortunate mistranslation of the treaty that Alfred of Wessex agreed with Guthrum, the warlord from East Anglia.

Finally, Alan White has supplied us with an entertaining and instructive account of the life of Frederick Ramuz, the son of an immigrant London merchant who almost single-handedly developed a large part of the north bank of the Thames estuary from Hadleigh to Clifftown in the 1880s. Working on the principle that land could be bought cheaply in large areas and subdivided for sale in small (but not cheap) plots, Ramuz made a significant contribution to the development of the landscape of this area even today, and to the provision of public amenities. Perhaps a controversial figure today, he seems to have been well-regarded by many of his contemporaries, and he certainly left his mark in the landscape of south Essex.

Stephen Pollington
Honorary Editor

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Cover illustration right:
Frederick Ramuz, Mayor of Southend, 1898–1900

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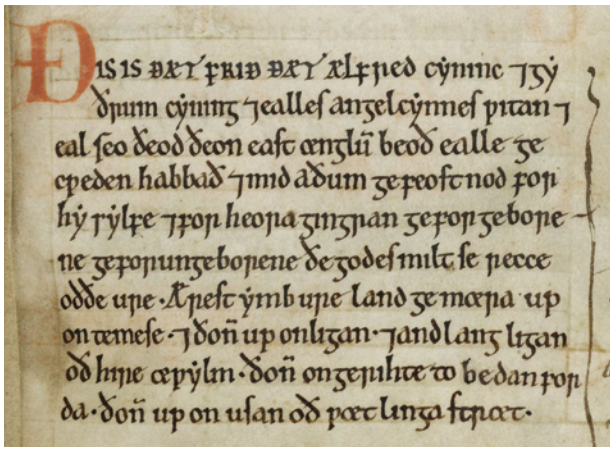
The preamble to a treaty between King Alfred and the Viking leader Guðrum



Sir Henry Bate Dudley at Bradwell-on-Sea: Part II

Elaine Thornton

By 1790, Sir Henry Bate Dudley had settled into Bradwell-on-Sea as both patron of the living and curate. His legal agreement with the absentee rector, George Pawson, allowed him to farm the parish's glebe land and collect the tithes. He expected to succeed Pawson as rector in due course: he was aware that Pawson was in poor health, and that it was only a matter of time until, as patron, he would be able to nominate himself to the rector's post on Pawson's death.

Print of a drawing of Henry Bate Dudley, c. 1805. Essex Record Office I/Pb 4/17. With permission

In view of his expectations, Bate Dudley had not hesitated to pour a huge sum of money into Bradwell: he had spent over £28,000 on developing the farm and the rectory, and by the early 1790s he was spiralling into debt. He had not paid off any of the principal of the mortgage that Pawson had taken out on the advowson, and in 1791 he stopped paying the monthly interest.[1] By early 1794, his financial problems had reached a crisis point, and he was forced to call a meeting of his creditors in London.

Lists were produced of both his debts and his assets. The assets included the offices in Catherine Street in the Strand where Bate Dudley's newspaper, the *Morning Herald*, was published, and various pieces of property he had acquired in Essex, including the manors and farmhouses of East Hall, Edwin's Hall and Delameres, as well as the advowson of Bradwell. Following the meeting, the advowson passed into the hands of Bate's bankers, who held it in trust for him, while they took over his debts with an assignment to secure the sum of £20,000 over a four-year period.[2]

Rector at Bradwell

It was not a happy position to be in, but Bate Dudley had a cheerful and active nature, and he was not a man to give way before challenges. In 1797, he received the news that George Pawson had died, which gave him the opportunity to consolidate his position at Bradwell. He promptly instructed his trustees to nominate him to the vacant post of rector. This move would require the approval of the Bishop of London, now the Right Reverend Beilby Porteus.

To Bate Dudley's astonishment, Porteus refused. The Bishop told him that he considered that the contracts relating to the sale of the patronage of Bradwell some fifteen years previously had contravened church law. In Porteus's view, the leasing of the glebe and tithes, which had allowed Bate to reap the profits of the living while curate, amounted to a 'virtual resignation' by Pawson in Bate Dudley's favour. The attempt to present himself to the post of rector was therefore simoniacal.[3]

Bate argued against this interpretation, and indeed, legal opinion on the case did not unequivocally support Porteus. A document in the Bishop of London's papers in the Lambeth Palace archives, drawn up by a Mr Le Blanc of Lincoln's Inn (probably the future judge Sir Simon Le Blanc), states that 'I do not think that the presentation [of Bate Dudley] by the trustees, after the death of Mr Pawson, can be considered as corrupt or simoniacal … because the post was occupied when the advowson was bought and the presentation was the result of his death, not his resignation'.[4]

Nonetheless, Porteus refused to approve Bate Dudley's institution as rector of Bradwell. There is no doubt that the Bishop, who had evangelical leanings, disliked and disapproved of the Fighting Parson, and was strongly opposed to advancing his career in the church. At around the same time, Bate Dudley had a disagreement with his churchwardens at Bradwell over the collection of tithes, and Porteus supported the wardens against him.[5]

Bate Dudley's only option was to initiate legal proceedings to overturn Porteus's decision. He worked hard to rally support for his case. The Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Lord Braybrooke, wrote a letter testifying to Bate Dudley's improvement of the neglected parish of Bradwell and his exertions as a magistrate, saying that, 'I really think you have been eminently useful, and praiseworthy in your neighbourhood'. He told Bate that, 'If any use can be made of my testifying to his Lordship [the Bishop], or to anyone else ... I shall be always happy to record [your meritorious services]'.[6]

Bate Dudley also took every opportunity to promote himself as a public figure. The French were believed to be planning an invasion of England in the late 1790s, and Bate Dudley's part of the Essex coastline had been identified as a potential site for a landing. Permanent shore defences, mounted with twenty-four-pounder artillery guns, were built near Bradwell to control access to the Blackwater, and the Admiralty deployed naval forces into the area to patrol the sea approaches.

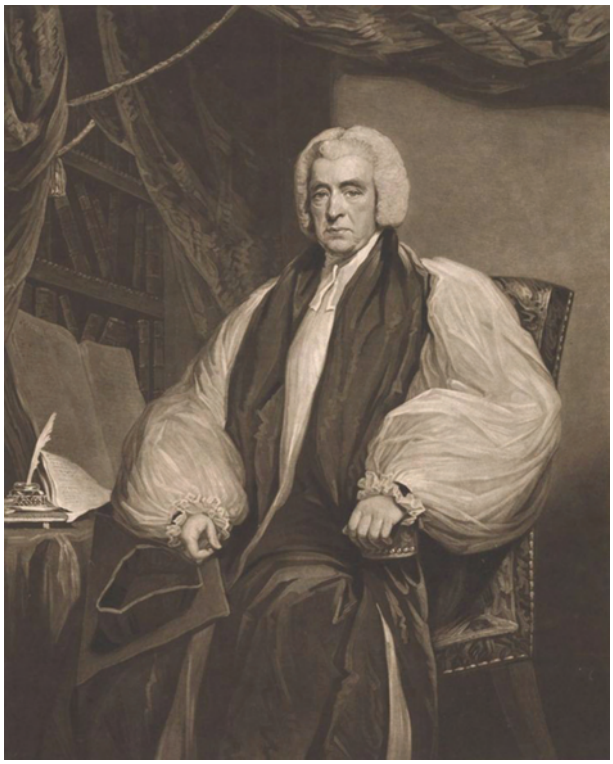
In February 1798, a 'Committee for the Internal Defence of the County' met in Colchester to oversee the planning for the area in conjunction with the General Officer Commanding Eastern District. Henry Bate Dudley was co-opted onto the committee and put in charge of organising the civil defence of the crucial central part of the Essex coastline, around the Blackwater and Crouch rivers.[7]

Over the next two years Bate Dudley's legal action against the Bishop ground on slowly until, in 1800, Porteus unexpectedly proposed a compromise: if Bate Dudley would drop the case, thus tacitly accepting a judgement of simony, the patronage of the living would lapse to the Crown. Porteus would then ensure that the Crown appointed Bate Dudley's brother-in-law, the Reverend Richard Birch, the husband of Bate's sister Elizabeth, as rector of Bradwell.[8]

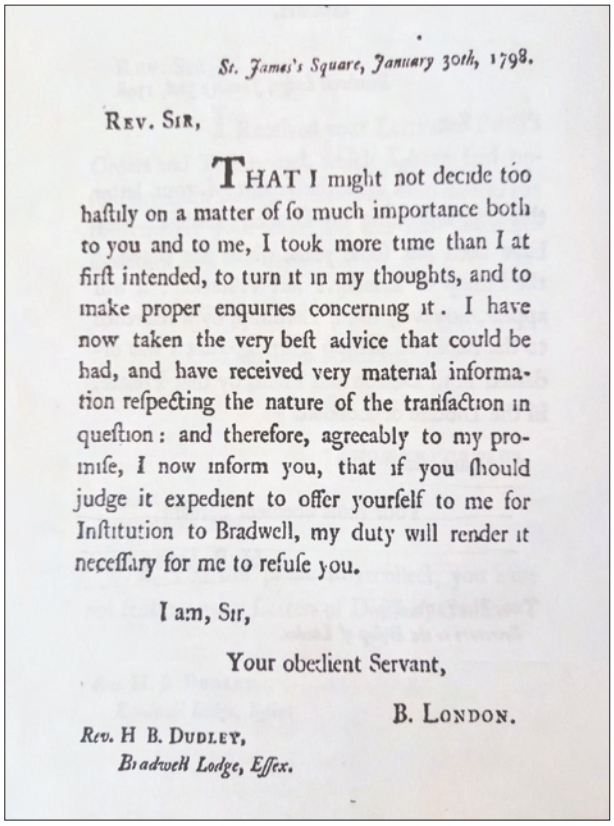
Discussion of the Bishop's proposal reached the highest levels: Lord Braybrooke approached the Prime Minister, William Pitt, pressing him to ensure that the Crown accepted Birch's nomination. The Archbishop of Canterbury, John Moore, also wrote to Pitt on the subject, supporting the 'respectable' Reverend Birch's candidacy but making his dislike of Bate Dudley clear.

The Archbishop seemed ill-informed as to the details of the case, however: he called Bate Dudley 'the Revd Dudley Bates' and referred to the 'suit brought against him by the Bishop of London on [account] of certain scandalous & illegal transactions'. In fact, the case had been brought by Bate Dudley against the Bishop, to refute the accusation of illegality. In the Archbishop's view, however, Bate Dudley's 'criminality' was proved by the fact that he had now 'abandoned his defence'.[9]

Bate must have felt that he had little choice, given the implacable opposition of the church's hierarchy to his appointment to Bradwell. The legal battle with the Bishop of London had also been a drain on his resources; he had already been forced to sell one of his Essex manors to meet the expenses of the case. He agreed to the compromise.



Print of a portrait of Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, 1807. Yale Center for British Art. Public Domain



St. James's Square, January 30th, 1798.

REV. SIR,

THAT I might not decide too haſtily on a matter of ſo much importance both to you and to me, I took more time than I at firſt intended, to turn it in my thoughts, and to make proper enquiries concerning it. I have now taken the very beſt advice that could be had, and have received very material information reſpecting the nature of the tranſaction in queſtion: and therefore, agreeably to my promiſe, I now inform you, that if you ſhould judge it expedient to offer yourſelf to me for Inſtitution to Bradwell, my duty will render it neceſſary for me to refuſe you.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

B. LONDON.

Rev. H B. DUDLEY,
Bradwell Lodge, Eſſex.

Letter Bishop Porteus to Henry Bate Dudley 30 January 1798 refusing institution at Bradwell. Photo taken by Elaine Thornton from Henry Bate Dudley, Letters &c., which have lately passed between the Bishop of London, and the Rev. H.B. Dudley, *London: T. Longman 1798.*

Gamble: Success and Loss

When the advowson of Bradwell lapsed to the Crown, however, the government immediately appointed its own candidate, the Reverend John Gamble, without reference to Bate's agreement with Porteus. The appointment of Gamble came as a devastating blow to Bate Dudley. He remarked bitterly that he would never have consented to let judgement pass against him without opposition if he had not believed that Birch would be instituted rector 'under the sacred guarantee of the Bishop of London'. Bate suspected that Porteus had done nothing whatsoever to advance Birch's claim.[10]

There was a great deal of public support for Bate Dudley: the dramatist and MP Richard Sheridan, a friend of Bate's, made an impassioned speech on his behalf in the House of Commons, and Lord Braybrooke presented a petition to the Prime Minister signed by all the magistrates of Essex. None of this had any effect on the outcome of the judgement, which was financially disastrous for Bate Dudley, who had put all of his money into Bradwell in the belief – unjustified, as it had turned out – that it was his for life.

Bate Dudley continued to live and farm at Bradwell for almost two years after Gamble's appointment, forcing Gamble to take legal action to eject him. His stubborn occupation of the living ended in March 1802, when Gamble's action came up at the Chelmsford Quarter Sessions. At the hearing, which went against Bate Dudley, Gamble's counsel, William Garrow, one of the most eminent lawyers of the time, stated that the case was a simple one, as Bate Dudley accepted that Gamble was legally the rector of Bradwell.

Garrow then launched into an extraordinary speech. He started by paying tribute to 'Mr Dudley's popularity throughout the county, so long and honourably earned'. He added that he knew nothing of Gamble, except that he was his client, but that he had known of Bate Dudley almost all his life. He went on to say of Bate Dudley that, 'his public services were great, and universally acknowledged; by his exertions he had certainly created a paradise out of a desert; and if the rectory were vacant tomorrow and I had the power of presentation, Mr Dudley would be replaced at [returned to] Bradwell, as the object of my election'.[11] Bate Dudley's counsel could only agree. Gamble was awarded one shilling in damages.

The reports of the case were generally sympathetic to Bate Dudley, who was considered to have been treated unfairly. The *Bath Chronicle* commented that, 'Mr Gamble, according to the world's laws at present, has a right to get as much as he can catch. We envy him nothing but the living of Bradwell, which ought never to have been taken from the Rev. B. Dudley.'[12]

By this time, however, Bate Dudley had accepted his fate, and was busy exploiting his network of highly placed contacts to try to secure a church position elsewhere. He had the support of the Prince of Wales: for some years now, his newspaper, the *Morning Herald*, had sided with the Prince in his quarrels with the King.

Wexford and Willingham

Nonetheless, Bate Dudley was unable to obtain a living in England, and in 1804 he accepted instead the offer of a parish in County Wexford in Ireland. Porteus had tried to ensure that Ireland was also closed to Bate Dudley: he had written to the Irish bishops, advising them to close their ranks against him. However, the Prince of Wales had lobbied the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland vigorously on Bate Dudley's behalf – and in 1806, Bate Dudley acquired a second Irish living, in Kilglass in County Longford. He was appointed a magistrate in both Irish counties.

In 1809, Bishop Porteus died, and two years later the Prince of Wales was declared Regent. These events heralded a change in Bate Dudley's fortunes, allowing

James Gillray, caricature of Prince Regent. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Public Domain

him to return to England. Through the Regent's influence, Bate Dudley was appointed Rector of Willingham in Cambridgeshire in 1812, and obtained magistracies in both Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. That same year he received the ultimate reward for his allegiance to the Regent when he was elevated to the rank of baronet. Three years later, he was appointed a canon of Ely Cathedral. It was around this time that he finally sold the *Morning Herald*.

One of the most significant events for Bate Dudley following his return to England was his victory in a renewed legal battle to regain control of the patronage of Bradwell. The rector, John Gamble, had died in July 1811, at the early age of forty-nine. Bate Dudley, who had heard that Gamble was ill, had remarked to a friend in a letter: 'You have heard no doubt of the very precarious state of Mr Gamble's health; in the event of his death, I should repossess myself of Bradwell'.[13]

Bate Dudley believed that, although he had been found guilty of simony by a court judgement, the advowson ought to revert to him on Gamble's death. His argument was that the penalty for simony was for the owner of the advowson to lose the right to present a candidate to the living for that one disputed vacancy only. In his case, the penalty had been exacted when the Crown had taken over the advowson and had presented Gamble to Bradwell. That, Bate Dudley maintained, should be the end of the matter.

He was opposed by Pawson's son, who claimed that the finding of simony invalidated the entire sale contract between his father and Bate Dudley, and that the Bradwell advowson therefore belonged to him by inheritance.

In November 1814, the case was heard in the Court of Common Pleas. The judge, Lord Chief Justice Gibbs, summed up. His conclusions were in Bate Dudley's favour. He ruled that the laws against simony 'apply only to the presentation corruptly procured or intended to be procured and ... can be carried no further'.

Thus, as Bate had maintained, the charge of simony applied only to the attempt to present himself to the vacancy. The judge went on to affirm that when the Crown had subsequently presented Gamble, 'the simoniacal part of the transaction ended', and he ruled that the remainder of the sale contract was valid.[14]

Bate Dudley had regained ownership of the Bradwell advowson and could reassert his right to present a man of his choice to the post of rector. He promptly appointed his brother-in-law, Richard Birch – who had also succeeded Bate Dudley as rector of North Fambridge, in 1805. Bate Dudley resumed farming the Bradwell land himself, dividing his time between Ely and Essex. In July 1819, he wrote to a friend at Ely from Bradwell, reporting that, 'We have got a good way into our wheat harvest, and I have the satisfaction to inform you that our whole crops are as abundant & fine in quality as my heart could wish'.[15]

Farewell to Bradwell

By 1820, however, Bate Dudley was again in financial difficulties. His problems were compounded by a demand for the repayment of the mortgage on the advowson of Bradwell, which had been taken out by Pawson around fifty years previously, and which had never been paid. It now totalled nearly £7,000. In May 1820, threatened with foreclosure, Bate Dudley's financial circumstances finally forced him to make the difficult decision to sell the patronage of Bradwell.

He found a purchaser for the advowson in a Mr William Schreiber, whose family had amassed a fortune in fur trading. Schreiber intended the rectorship to go to his fourth son, Thomas, who was a clergyman. He paid £12,000 for the advowson, of which £7,000 was used to repay the mortgage, leaving Bate Dudley with £5,000.[16] Thomas Schreiber did not have to wait long for the rectorship – Richard Birch died the day after the sale contract had been signed.[17]

Bate Dudley's long connection with Bradwell-on-Sea had finally come to an end, nearly forty years after he had first seen the parish. He died suddenly four years later, in Cheltenham, where he had been taking the waters, during the night of 1 February 1824, at the age of seventy-eight.

Endnotes

1 Brown, Herbert, *A History of Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex*, Chelmsford, 1929, p. 79.

2 Essex Record Office (ERO) D/CP 2/53A.

3 Bate Dudley, *Letters, &c., which have lately passed between the Bishop of London, and the Rev. H.B. Dudley*, London, 1798, pp. 6, 9.

4 Lambeth Palace Library, FP Porteus 2.

5 Bate Dudley, *Letters, &c.*, *passim*.

6 Bate Dudley, *Letters, &c.*, p. 30.

7 ERO L/M 36, Lieutenancy Meetings 1797–98.

8 British Library, The Deposition of Henry Bate Dudley, Clerk, of Bradwell Lodge, in the County of Essex, 1800; Bate Dudley, A Letter to the Rev. R. Hodgson on his "Life of Bishop Porteous", London, 1811, pp. 9, 12–13.

9 British Library, Add MS 89036/1/6, ff. 6 and 8.

10 British Library, The Deposition of Henry Bate Dudley, Clerk; Bate Dudley, A Letter to the Rev. R. Hodgson, p. 13.

11 *Morning Chronicle*, 13 March 1802.

12 *Bath Chronicle*, 30 June 1803.

13 ERO D/DRa F69.

14 Taunton, William Pyle, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Court of Common Pleas and Other Courts from Trinity Term 53 Geo. III 1813 to Michaelmas Term 55 Geo. III 1814*, London, 1815, pp. 743–46.

15 Cambridge University Library, EDC 6/2F/1. Courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library and The Dean and Chapter of Ely.

16 Brown, Herbert, *A History of Bradwell-on-Sea*, p. 81.

17 Cambridge University Library, EDC 6/2F/1.

Sir Stephen and Lady Virginia Courtauld: Their Africa Legacy

Tony Crosby

The Autumn 2021 edition of *Essex Journal* included an article briefly describing the Courtauld family textile business, but mainly focusing on the legacy of the business and many family members through their philanthropic activity.[1] As well as the remains of the manufacturing sites, the article described the many workers' houses and community facilities provided for staff and the community at large throughout the 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries. Sir Stephen Courtauld MC, FRGS (1883–1967) was only briefly mentioned for purchasing 'Eltham Palace … in London which he renovated during the 1930s' as a home for himself and his wife, Virginia. This article describes the lives of Sir Stephen and Lady Virginia after they left Eltham Palace to settle in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), their philanthropic activity during their time spent there, and their legacy which survives to be seen and enjoyed today.

Stephen Lewis Courtauld

Stephen Lewis Courtauld was born on 27 February 1883 in Bocking, the son of Sydney Courtauld and Sarah Lucy Sharp. He was educated at Rugby, graduated from King's College Cambridge in 1901 and then studied chemistry in London for two years. He did not join the family firm, but his inherited shares in the family business ensured that he was able to travel, pursue his cultural and philanthropic interests, becoming an accomplished mountaineer and a patron of the arts. During the First World War he served in the Artists' Rifles, rose to the rank of Major in the Machine Gun Corps and was awarded the Military Cross in 1918.

After the war he returned to his favourite pursuits and it was while in the Italian Alps that he met his future wife, Virginia, then the Countess Spinoza (née Peirano). Her marriage to aristocrat Paul Spinoza was annulled and thus in 1923 Stephen and Virginia were married in Italy. Following a brief life in Florence they moved to London, where they continued to enthusiastically support the arts. Stephen was a trustee of the Royal Opera House, and he made a large donation towards the building of the Courtauld Galleries at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, which opened in 1931. In 1930 he joined the board of Basil Dean's Associated Talking Pictures, providing financial backing for the construction of the company's ambitious studios in Ealing. Michael Balcon arrived as head of production in 1938 and under him the company, renamed Ealing Studios, enjoyed its most commercially and creatively successful period.

Stephen & Virginia – Eltham Palace

In 1933 Stephen and Virginia Courtauld were looking for a semi-rural property within easy reach of central London. Eltham Palace met their wishes and they took a 99-year lease on it from the Crown. A medieval and Tudor palace, of which only the Great Hall survived, it was from the 14th to the 16th centuries an important royal palace, where monarchs often stayed and hunted in the surrounding parks. Centuries of neglect followed until Stephen and Virginia Courtauld commissioned architects Seely & Paget to design a modern home while retaining as much as possible of the historic palace. The result is an art deco masterpiece reflecting their own tastes and the work of the various architects, designers and craftsmen they commissioned. In it they displayed their extensive art collection, both 'old masters' and contemporary pieces, and entertained many celebrity visitors from royalty, and from the worlds of entertainment and politics; the latter included his niece's husband Richard Austen ('Rab') Butler, later Lord Butler of Saffron Walden. This modern home was filled with modern labour-saving devices – 'mod-cons' – as the couple took full advantage of what the 1930s technological advances could offer. These included various electric lighting effects, electric fires, synchronous clocks (which were regulated by the mains supply) and a loudspeaker system that could broadcast records to rooms on the ground floor. Siemens installed a private internal telephone exchange, while there was a GPO payphone for guests. There was also a centralised vacuum cleaner in the basement.

When living in London in 1926, Stephen had bought Virginia a pet ring-tailed lemur which was named 'Mah-Jongg' and became a constant companion, accompanying them on their travels by yacht. At Eltham Palace, Mah-Jongg had his own decorated and heated suite, which was on two floors matching those of the house with a ladder between the floors. He died in 1938 and was buried in the garden at the Palace, with a memorial obelisk of slate and stone over his resting place.[2]

As keen horticulturalists, the couple built on the existing garden design and structure of the trees and shrubs, adding ornamental plantations, shrubberies and specimen trees, all on two levels. They created a rose garden, a series of garden 'rooms' typical of the Arts and Crafts style and developed a large rock garden. They built glasshouses, which included two orchid houses and, in a small, secluded area, a swimming

pool. Much of this structure survives, although the pool was infilled after they had left the Palace.

Stephen and Virginia remained at Eltham for most of the Second World War, using the basement as a comfortable bomb shelter, although most valuable contents of the house were dispersed for safety. Four incendiary bombs severely damaged the east end of the Great Hall roof in September 1940 and bombs also damaged the glasshouses. Eventually, in May 1944 they moved out, having reputedly become tired of the bombing. Initially they moved to Surrey but then moved to Scotland, but Virginia did not take to the Scottish weather and suggested a move to a warmer, sunnier climate.

Their Travels

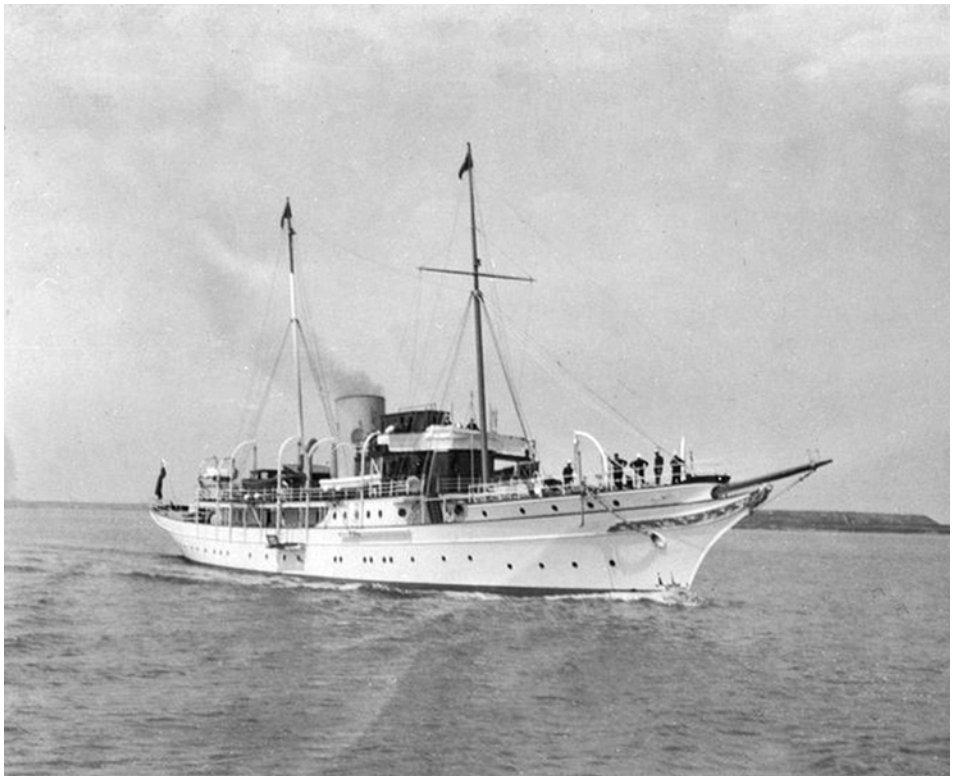
From early in their marriage Stephen and Virginia loved cruising in their yachts and in 1930 Stephen helped to design a new motor yacht, the *Virginia*.[3] Peter Malacrida, who had designed the interiors of Eltham Palace, also designed the interior of this yacht, which was built in Dalmuir on the upper Clyde in Scotland. During the winter of 1936/7 they spent time in Cairo as part of a world tour, then flew to South Africa, via Kenya, and what was then Southern Rhodesia, where they visited Victoria Falls and Great Zimbabwe. The following winter saw them cruising in the *Virginia* around the South China Sea, during which they collected orchids for future propagation at Eltham Palace. In 1949 they again flew from Cairo to Southern Rhodesia via South Africa seeking a place to settle. A friend who was farming near Penhalonga in the Eastern Highlands recommended the area around the town of Mutare (then named Umtali), and the next year they identified several adjacent properties on which to build their new home and create landscaped gardens. The wide Imbeza Valley with its high annual rainfall seemed ideal for growing the trees and shrubs which would form these gardens.

A rundown market garden farm with a dilapidated homestead was purchased to form the centre of their new estate. As Sir Stephen wrote in the *Dedication* in volume 1 of his 'family chronical', *The Huguenot Family of Courtauld*:

> *We looked at all Africa and settled in Rhodesia. A delectable property in the Imbeza Valley could be purchased: it was entered on the official survey as Lot 5, and was called (from its previous owner) Zietsman's Farm, so a name must be found for it.*
>
> *The early history of the Courtauld family in Western France occupied our thoughts: 'Oleron' seemed difficult for an English tongue, but 'La Rochelle', recalling feats of valour, was sonorous and easy, and on this name we privately resolved. But when the old title deeds of the place were produced in the lawyer's office we were astonished to find there inscribed 'Lot 5 Imbeza Valley known as La Rochelle'! A startling and auspicious coincidence.*[4]

The Courtauld family originated from La Rochelle in Western France, a town which was a stronghold of the French Protestant (Huguenot) rebels during the war with the French Catholics, known as the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598). It was this civil war which resulted in the Huguenots fleeing France and the Courtaulds finding sanctuary in England.

Stephen and Virginia obtained Southern Rhodesian residence permits and, at the start of 1951, they moved to their new property. They lived initially in the existing homestead while they built the *rondavel* (a traditional circular, single-cell house with a conical thatched roof, common in southern Africa), which they named *The Peacock Cottage*, referencing the wallpaper frieze around the bed, and into which they moved while work continued on the building of the main house.



Stephen and Virginia's motor yacht the MV Virginia *© Caledonian Maritime Research Trust*

Interior of The Peacock Cottage, *the* rondavel *in which the Courtaulds lived while the big house was being built, showing the eponymous frieze*

La Rochelle – House and Gardens

The design for the house was put out to competition, although the name of the architect who won is currently not known. However, it was built by Costain's, with certain specialist workers going from England to Southern Rhodesia to assist with construction. Welsh slate was used for the roofs, but the size of the house was limited due to shortages of other building materials, a factor also in the delay to completion. It was due to be ready by April 1953, but the Courtaulds were not able to move in until the October. In 2004, Professor Anthony Hyland (then Head of Architecture at Bulawayo University) described the house thus:

> *… a rare example in Africa of a Modern Movement private house … The most striking and iconic feature of the house is the 20 metre high tower constructed at the northern end of the home in the style of the French chateau of Sir Stephen's ancestors.*[5]

Entrance to the house is through the Courtyard, which has an ornamental pool, a multi-coloured abstract mosaic constructed by Leonora Barta in 1959, and a metal sculpture designed by architect and sculptor Cedric Green.

Cedric also designed a private pavilion for Virginia known as *The Fantasy*, completed in 1962 and situated a couple of hundred metres from the main house. Built

The Courtyard entrance to La Rochelle, highlighting the mosaic by Leonora Barta

External view of the main part of La Rochelle, showing the verandah outside the Parlour, the Tower and the lawned garden close to the house

of brick with a reinforced concrete roof, it features stained glass in the windows, again designed by Green. It is described as 'built in the form of a large single room designed around a spiral, with the centre of the spiral culminating in a light well'.[6] Inside is a mural of various animals that Virginia and Stephen had seen on their travels, painted by a friend of Virginia's, the artist Ann Lindsell-Stewart.

The iconic feature of the house is the Tower, which is reminiscent of the three medieval towers situated at the entrance to La Rochelle harbour in France – Saint-Nicolas Tower (14th century), la Chaîne Tower (14th century) and la Lanterne Tower (12th and 15th centuries) – which are the remains of a large-scale programme of medieval fortifications built by the city. Apparently, the original design was for there to be two towers at La Rochelle, but again shortage of building materials resulted in only the one being built.

The principal room in the house is the Parlour, a large sitting room which runs from what was the Breakfast Room (now the hotel reception area) to the base of the Tower. It opens onto a covered verandah, which runs the length of the Parlour and overlooks the gardens, particularly the Rose Garden, and the distant mountains. Used as the main room for entertaining, the Parlour was designed with a fully sprung floor, indicating that it was intended for dance parties. Here the Courtaulds again entertained family and many celebrity visitors from the worlds of entertainment and politics, including Rab Butler. Some guests were invited to sign their names with a diamond stylus on one of three large window panes, two of which survive.

The Parlour sitting room, showing the doors to the verandah on the left

The Rose Garden. On the far right can be seen the obelisk marking the burial of the remains of Mah-Jongg

Other buildings of note at La Rochelle were *The Peacock Cottage*; the estate manager's house, called *Burnie Brae* after the estate manager Gordon Burnie; *The Lodge*, where the chief steward lived; and a school for the staff. The Women's Homecraft Club had its own building and was a training centre for the women who lived on the estate or lived locally, and was where Virginia taught needlework, embroidery, cooking and domestic science.

Most of the furniture, soft furnishings, works of art and other cultural items in the main house and *The Fantasy* had previously been used and displayed at Eltham Palace. Their extensive art collection contained examples from many of the well-known European artists, particularly Italian, reflecting Virginia's own heritage. They were also connoisseurs of English landscape artists, and J. M. W. Turner in particular. A number of Turner originals were displayed in the 'snug', hidden behind a sliding board on which copies hung, the originals only being on show on special occasions. Stephen had a fine collection of silverware, outstanding among which were examples made by successive generations of Courtauld silversmiths who worked in London during the 18th century. Other collections of items of art and culture included sculptures obtained during their world travels, Virginia's gem collection – including many African specimens which were donated to the National Museums – and Greek and Roman coins which were donated to the University in Harare.

Stephen and Virginia wanted to create a fine house, but also to surround it with a garden of great beauty, as at Eltham Palace. La Rochelle had the right climate and soil conditions, plus the added extra of far-reaching views, at which to create the garden they sought. From 1951 to 1955, John Mitchell, formally head gardener at Eltham Palace, designed the broad layout of the garden. Stephen directed the creation of the arboretum and chose the great variety of trees and shrubs from all over the world to be planted in it. The couple wanted a traditional English garden and hence there are large expanses of lawn leading from the house towards the views beyond, a terraced Rose Garden close to the house, which is viewed from the Parlour and in which one of the many varieties is the white 'Virginia Courtauld' rose. Other features of the gardens are a flower-filled Dell in the valley that slopes away from the house, with pathways leading to a dam and ornamental pond, and, as at Eltham Palace, orchid houses for propagation and display of Stephen's collection.

Philanthropic Work

As in England, so in Zimbabwe the couple's legacy is not just their magnificent private house and estate, but also their philanthropic work. While La Rochelle itself is not as large and sumptuous as Eltham Palace, the legacy of their philanthropic work is larger and of greater significance in their adopted community. They funded the construction of buildings in Mutare, including: The Courtauld Theatre (1955); The Queen's Hall (1957), which is a focal point for community events and cultural gatherings; and The Rhodes Club (1961), a multi-racial social club that aimed to bring different races together in colonial Zimbabwe; and they provided an interest-free loan for the construction of the Civic Centre (1959). In the capital, Harare (formerly Salisbury), they contributed money towards the National Gallery (1958) and the auditorium of the Zimbabwe College of

The Courtauld Theatre, Mutare of 1955, undergoing renovation in 2025

Music (1964). The Courtauld Theatre was repossessed by the City of Mutare authorities in mid-2025 from the previous organisation, which had been mismanaging it, in a move that is intended to signify 'the revival of a powerful legacy left by two remarkable benefactors [whose] philanthropic vision transformed the cultural and civic landscape of … Mutare'.[7] An obituary to Stephen noted that 'liberal in thought and open minded in his relations with people, it is said that when the question arose of racial segregation in his theatre he made it clear he would pull the building down before agreeing to such a measure'.[8] The Theatre is now undergoing renovations, with the intention to returning it to the centre of performing arts envisaged by the Courtaulds. The Courtaulds were leading donors to the Capricorn Africa Society, which promoted democratic and multi-racial development in East and Central Africa, and founded and endowed the Kukwanisa Farm School in Nyanga for smallholder farmers in 1964.

Final Years

In his early eighties Stephen suffered the consequences of long-untreated diabetes. He had to have one of his legs amputated in 1964, and then the other in 1967. Following this second operation he suffered a heart attack and died on 9 October. In 1970 Virginia suffered a stroke from which she never recovered fully and later that year she moved to live with her nephew, Peter Peirano, at his home on the island of Jersey, where she died just before Christmas 1972. Almost all of the remaining contents of La Rochelle were shipped to Peter's home in Jersey. Stephen and Virginia were

The Queen's Hall, Mutare of 1957

Memorial plaque to Stephen and Virginia at the base of the Tower at La Rochelle

reunited in August 1973 when their ashes were placed together beneath the plaque in the base of the Tower at La Rochelle.

Stephen had bequeathed La Rochelle to the then National Trust of Rhodesia, now the National Trust of Zimbabwe (NTZ), in 1967, just before he died, to be held in perpetuity and managed after Virginia's death. NTZ opened La Rochelle to the public in 1973, but because of the financial difficulties of maintaining the house and gardens it is now leased to a hotel company and is managed as La Rochelle, Country House and Spa.

Endnotes

1 Tony Crosby and Adrian Corder-Birch, 2001, The Courtauld Family and the Essex Landscape', *Essex Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, Autumn, pp. 47–54.

2 His remains and the obelisk were taken from Eltham Palace and relocated on the edge of the Rose Garden at La Rochelle.

3 The MV *Virginia* was requisitioned by the Admiralty during the Second World War, but was returned to the Courtaulds after the war. It was used as a presidential yacht by the Liberian government from 1957 to 1971, from which date it was operated as a floating casino in Sierra Leone. Although damaged by fire, it was still reported as in existence with prospects of rebuilding in 2020. https://www.clydeships.co.uk/view.php?ref=2183, accessed 11 Jan. 2026.

4 Sir Stephan Lewis Courtauld, 1957, *The Huguenot Family of Courtauld*.

5 National Trust of Zimbabwe, 2015, La Rochelle – Country House and Spa, guidebook, p. 8.

6 *Ibid*., p. 14.

7 *The Manica Post*, 6 June 2025, 'The Courtaulds' enduring gift to Mutare'. https://www.heraldonline.co.zw/the-courtaulds-enduring-gift-to-mutare/, accessed 11 Jan. 2026.

8 Quoted in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Courtauld, accessed 11 Jan. 2026

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Acknowledgements

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IN BRIEF

Epping Gold Ring

A field near Epping yielded its secret in April 2023: a gold finger ring with applied filigree ornament – ropework, spirals and beaded wire loops – and a bezel formed as a central square cell with radiating triangular cells, three of which still contained their garnet cloisons. The finder – Dean Young, a detectorist – took it to his local FLO for recording and has announced that it has recently been acquired by Epping Museum.

The workmanship is rather spectacular: it appears to date to the later 6th or 7th century (roughly contemporary with the Prittlewell chamber grave) and is the latest gold ring from Essex: Saffron Walden Museum acquired a 'Viking' period example in 2018, weighing 32 grams; the same museum earlier acquired the so-called 'Northwest Essex Anglo-Saxon Ring', with its Christian and pre-Chrisian iconography, including a figure with a processional cross and a falcon.

The ring at the time of its discovery. Photo: © Dean Young
Now recorded with PAS under ESS-2E1CD2

Papal Bulla

PAS Record ID ESS-BC9061

An unusual find which was reported in March 2026 is a papal bulla – a lead seal which was attached to a document issued by the papal authority. This one has the obverse legend 'GRE/GORIVS/PP.VIIII' for Pope Gregory IX, who was on the papal throne from 1227 to 1241. The abbreviation 'PP' is usually understood as *pastor pastorum* 'shepherd of shepherds'. On the reverse, the design is standard: two male busts in three-quarter view with the legend 'SPA.SPE' above, abbreviation for 'Saint Paul and Saint Peter'. Since the bulla was the seal of office, the document to which it was attached would have been a letter of instruction or of appointment. It was found at Castle Hedingham.

Image © Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service

Coin of Cunobelinus

PAS Record ESS-298370

A silver 'unit' (unnamed coin type) attributed to the ruler Cunobelinus, so datable to 8–41 AD, was found in March 2026. The obverse bears a plant within a circular border with the legend 'CVNOB IIINVS' and the reverse shows a standing figure with a cloak draped over his shoulder and a thunderbolt in his raised hand, legend 'CAMV' for Camulodunum (Colchester). The coin was found at Little Yeldham. While not as glamorous as the gold coins sometimes found from this period, this one is in rather good condition and is of a type that must have been more numerous and more familiar to the locals than the high-value coins.

Viking Essex?

Julian Whybra

Did the Vikings Ever Settle in Essex? Was There Ever a 'Viking' Essex?

In 828 or at some point in the following decade Essex ceased to be an independent kingdom and was ruled directly by Wessex. Over a century before then Essex had lost its western lands, *Middelseaxe* (including London), to Mercia. To the north of Essex lay the Kingdom of East Anglia which in 869–870 was overwhelmed in an attack by a Viking horde led by Guðrum. Any immediate threat to Essex was averted, however, by the Vikings' surprise incursion westwards into Mercia and beyond into Wessex in 871. The Mercian king submitted, was expelled in 874 and replaced as king by a puppet ruler, Ceolwulf II. He, dancing to Guðrum's tune, transferred the eastern half of Mercia to the Danes in 877 and accepted Danish overlordship in the western rump of his realm.

From Mercia, successive Viking attacks were launched against Wessex which King Alfred's army managed to withstand until its decisive victory over the Danes at Edington in Wiltshire in May 878. After this a peace treaty was made, the 'Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty', the five clauses of which set out the border between the two kings' peoples and attempted to provide for peaceful regulation of their contacts with each other on and across it.[1]

MAP 1. 'England after the Creation of the Danelaw' according to Milliken. N.B. Edington is marked as Ethandune (after which name there is a misleading tiny printer's inkblot which escaped the original publisher's notice).

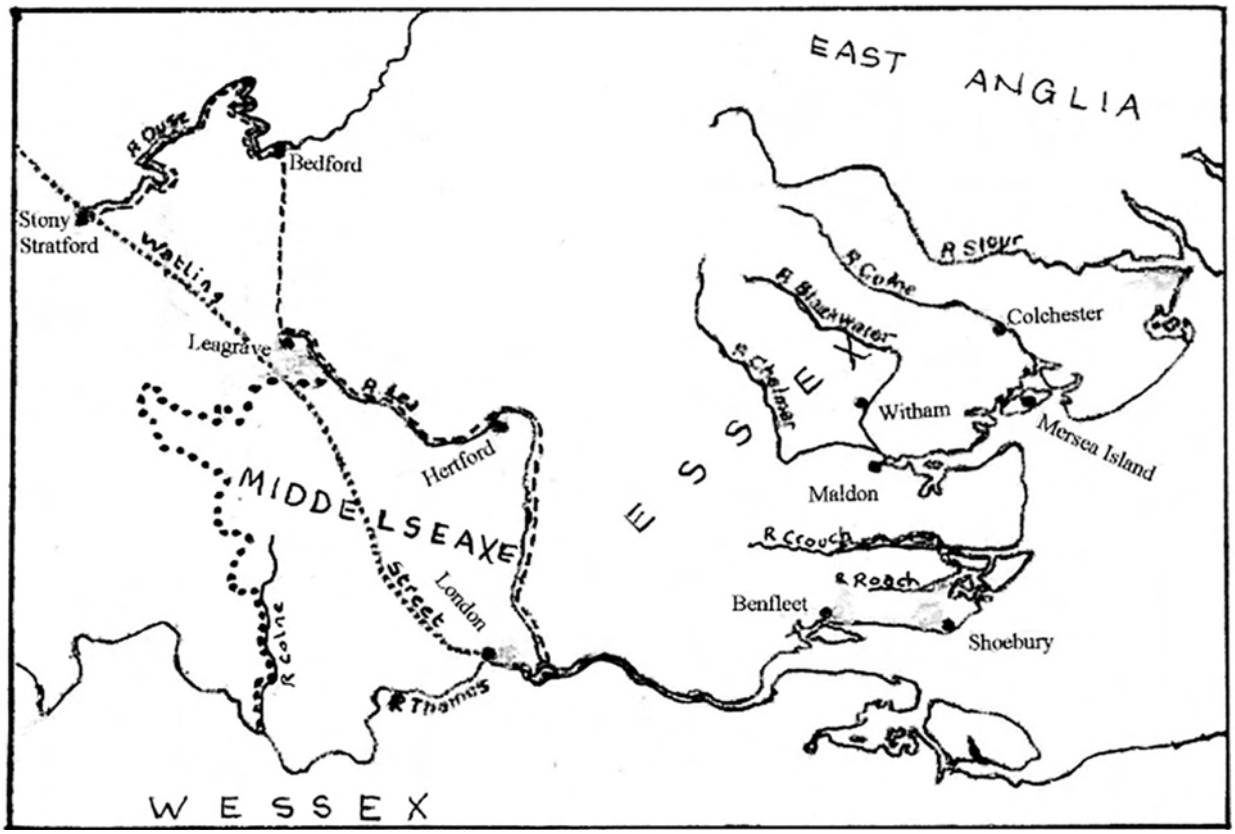
The Victorian View

In 1871 the eminent Victorian historian Edward A. Freeman described the immediate aftermath of King Ælfred's victory and the subsequent Treaty as follows:

> *Thence they went to Wedmore, because there the West-Saxon Kings had a house. There the Wise Men came together, and Alfred and [Guðrum] … made a treaty. [Guðrum] was to leave Wessex, but he was to keep East-Anglia, which he had already, and the north-eastern part of Mercia. The boundary ran along the Thames to the mouth of the Lea, then by Bedford and the river Ouse to the old Roman road called Watling Street. The south-western part of Mercia was to remain to Alfred … In 879 the [heathen] army went away from Chippenham to Cirencester; that is they went out of Wessex into Mercia, though not as yet into their own part of Mercia. At Cirencester they 'sat' for a year, seemingly by Alfred's leave, as we do not read of any fighting or of any mischief being done … Anyhow, in 880 they went quite away into what was now their own land of East-Anglia.*[2]

Freeman placed Essex firmly within the Danelaw. Map 1, 'England after the Creation of the Danelaw' with the suggested date of 878, showing Freeman's arrangement, appeared in E. K. Milliken's *Saxon and Viking*,[3] a textbook I had used as a schoolboy in 1965 and again on teaching practice as a student teacher in 1978. The map depicts a border line running diagonally from south-east to north-west England. Everything to the north and east of it was Danish (the so-called 'Danelaw'), to the south and west of it English.

Freeman's interpretation became the orthodox view. However, there were problems with it:



MAP 2.

(A) The Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty is shown proceeding from the Thames 'up the Lea' to Leagrave, in a straight line to Bedford, and 'up the Ouse' to Stony Stratford on Watling Street. London and its Middelseaxe *hinterland which Ælfred took from the Danes and gave to Mercia in 886 are shown: the eastern and northern borders coincide with the Treaty border and its western border is marked by the thick dotted line and delineated by the River Colne (or Ux) and the Chiltern Hills.* Middelseaxe *included modern-day Middlesex and southern Hertfordshire.*

(B) The many Essex rivers marked show the strategic importance of Hertford, Maldon, Witham and Colchester, as well as Benfleet and Shoebury on the north bank of the Thames estuary and Mersea Island.

1. According to Freeman, London in 878 was placed in West Saxon-controlled territory. Yet, it was recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that King Ælfred took London by force from the Danes in 886 (or possibly late 885) and gave it to Mercia. Undoubtedly this would have included its dependent *Middelseaxe* hinterland. See Map 2(A).[4] How would this have been possible if London was already part of Wessex? Either London was not in Wessex or the Treaty cannot be dated to 878.
2. Freeman presumed that Wessex held dominion or overlordship over the south-western half of Mercia (the area south-west of the Roman road, Watling Street). However, that was not the case. In 878 Mercia, still ruled by Ceolwulf II, was still firmly subject to Danish overlordship. Ælfred would have had no mandate to negotiate a treaty dealing with the Danish East Anglian–Danish Mercian boundary. On the other hand, after the Danes left the rump of western Mercia a year later, there is evidence that its king, Ceolwulf II, began to reassert his authority as an independent ruler.
3. Freeman has extended the border through areas not covered by the terms of Treaty such that the boundary line continues north-westwards along Watling Street from where the River Ouse meets it at Stony Stratford.
4. Freeman placed Essex in the Danelaw. Yet, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Guðrum promised that his army 'would leave his [Ælfred's] kingdom … and they kept their promise.'[5] This should mean that if Essex had been under Viking occupation (and there is no evidence it had), it would then have been vacated by the Danes.

None of these matters were mentioned in the clauses of the Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty. To reconcile these inconsistencies subsequent historians engaged in a series of convoluted contortions to make the history fit their interpretation of events. In 1902 Charles Plummer hit upon the year 886 as the most suitable for the date of the Treaty because in that year, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Ælfred ejected the Danes from, and 'occupied', London.[6] This was despite the fact that there was no evidence whatsoever for a treaty having been made that year.

The celebrated German historian Felix Liebermann was unhappy with dating the Treaty to 886 and in the third volume of his *Gesetze der Angelsachsen* of 1916 wrote that he preferred *c.* 880x*c.* 884[7] on the basis of a line in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year 885: 'the Danish army in East Anglia violated its peace with King Alfred.'[8] He proposed that this had to refer to another agreement between Ælfred and Guðrum broken by the Danes in 885. This was despite the fact that

there was no evidence for such an agreement and that the *Chronicle*'s wording could perfectly well have been referring to the Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty.

Liebermann seemed to find confirmation of Freeman's border in the Treaty's clauses. While there is only one manuscript of the Treaty in *Anglo-Saxon Laws*, it contains two differing versions. The version most commonly cited, the Liebermann B text, says the border ran *up on temese*, *up on lizan*, and *up on usan*, which Liebermann and others[9] translated as 'up the Thames', 'up the Lea' and 'up the Ouse'. By extension, 'up' implies 'upstream on the Thames', etc., giving the meaning: from the Thames estuary westwards to the next stipulated point of the boundary, the confluence with the River Lea. Such a line unquestionably separates Essex on the north Thames bank from Wessex on the south. From there the boundary would run upstream on the Lea to its source, near Leagrave, Bedfordshire, then in a straight line to Bedford, and finally upstream on the Ouse to its junction with Watling Street at Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire. See Map 2(B).[10] Therefore, Essex, according to Liebermann, lay within the Danelaw.

In 1943 Sir Frank Stenton wrote a volume for *The Oxford History of England* series, 'the most complete study of Anglo-Saxon history that has ever appeared.'[11] In this 'magisterial and massively authoritative' work[12] he had this to say about the Treaty:

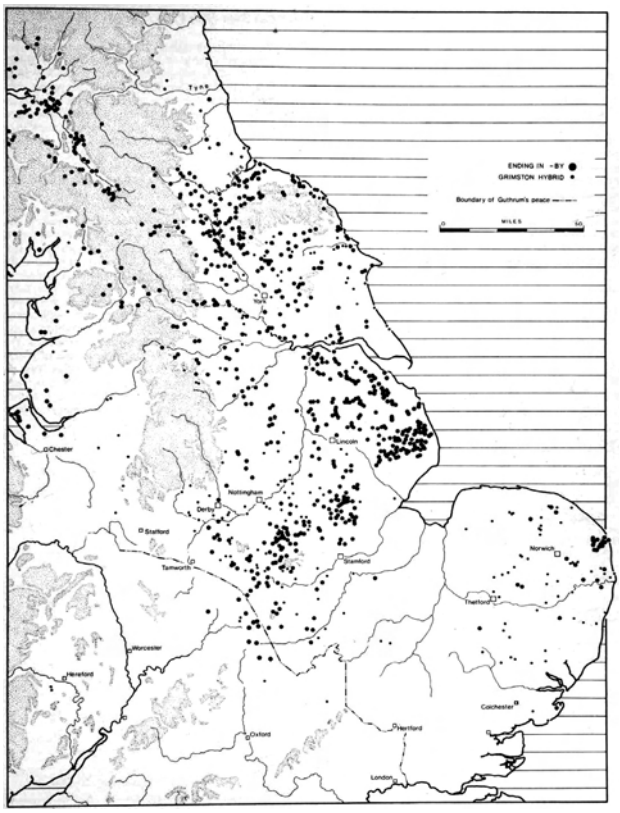
> *It is probable that the terms of the settlement after the war of 886 are preserved in a famous document … The line taken by this frontier shows that, although the centre of Guthrum's power undoubtedly lay in East Anglia, he had come to be accepted as king in Essex and in all the districts of the southern midlands which had been occupied by Danish armies after the division of Mercia in 877 … it is probable that Watling Street formed the western boundary of Guthrum's country.*[13]

Stenton's dating of the Treaty to 886x890, despite the absence of any record of it then, resolved the problem of London's status. However, as regards Essex, he simply ignored the *Chronicle* entry regarding the *de facto* wholesale departure of the Danes from Ælfred's kingdom of which Essex was an integral part.

Work in the 1980s

The 1980s brought forth minor alterations to Stenton's interpretation. David Hill produced a superb atlas relating to the Anglo-Saxon period in 1981. His map of Mercia and the Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty boundary showed an extension along Watling Street but described the eastern border as 'problematic'. Interestingly, a second map compared the boundary to the location of Scandinavian place-names and found them on *both* sides of Watling Street, the supposed legal and linguistic frontier line. Pertinently, there are only four, possibly five, Scandinavian place-names in Essex, all within close proximity to one another, just inside the county's north-east border close to Danish East Anglia (see Map 3).[14] As to the extent of Viking settlement in Essex, the map speaks for itself.

In 1982 James Campbell's seminal work on the Anglo-Saxons reproduced Hill's settlement map with a boundary according to the orthodox view but avoided



MAP 3. 'Scandinavian place names of eastern England' from **An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England** ***by David Hill (p. 45, no. 68). The only Essex examples lie just to the east of Colchester.***

commenting on its details.[15] R. H. C. Davis's 1982 essay agreed with Stenton's Treaty date and the border but suggested that there must have been a large unrecorded Danish invasion after 890 (possibly 893x895) into what is now south Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire in order for Ælfred's son, Eadward the Elder, to take them back from the Danes later. This unrecorded invasion is unsubstantiated. In addition, and importantly, Davis totally ignored the question of Essex's lying within the Danelaw.[16] During this period and afterwards, quite apart from the Treaty's date, a host of other contradictions regarding its boundary clauses were noted which called into question the assumption that the Danes ruled in Essex:

1. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* when referring to Guðrum, his kingdom or his peoples, only ever does so as *East Englum*, 'among the East Angles' or 'in East Anglia', never as *East Seaxe*.[17]

2. In 885 'King Ælfred sent a naval force from Kent into East Anglia.'[18] It first entered the mouth of the River Stour where it engaged a Viking fleet. The Stour was and still is the ancient boundary between Essex and East Anglia. If Essex were part of the Danelaw, it would have been more likely to seek Viking ships in the Thames or in one of the Essex river estuaries. See Map 2(B).

3. A fresh Viking army arrived in Kent to raid Wessex from 892 and was joined by the Vikings of East Anglia. Interestingly, Æðelweard the Chronicler describes the East Anglian Danes as leaving their own territory to go to Benfleet (*'extraneum petunt uestigio cursum'*).[19] At various times in the years 893

and 894 the Vikings set up temporary forts in Essex at Benfleet, Shoebury, on an islet in the River Colne, at a location near the confluence of the Rivers Lea and Stort, and on Mersea Island whence they raided inland. See Map 2(B). Notably, on two separate occasions the Vikings sent their women, ships and money into East Anglia for safety. In 896 the Benfleet fort was stormed by Ælfred and Æðelred's forces.[20] The Vikings abandoned their campaign and dispersed into East Anglia, Northumbria and across the Channel.

If Essex was already Viking territory, why would the Danes pillage their own lands from temporary forts? An area under supposed Danish control would not have had English armies moving freely and attacking Danish pirate bases in it. Viking raiders always based themselves in the farthest reaches of east Essex, where Ælfred's forces would be operating at full stretch. Moreover, when the Vikings sent their families and possessions to a safe haven, they sent them to East Anglia, not Essex.

4. It is written in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that many of the king's best thanes passed away during the years 893x895 and it names them. The list includes Brihtwulf, ealdorman of Essex.[21] An area under supposed Danish rule does not possess an English ealdorman ruling over it in Ælfred's name and certainly not one whose praises were being sung by the Chronicler.

5. In 899 Ælfred died and his son Eadward the Elder succeeded him despite the claim to the throne of Æðelwold, son of Ælfred's deceased elder brother. Æðelwold fled to Northumbria, enlisted the help of its Viking rulers, and in 902 landed in Essex to lay claim to the throne of Wessex. As a result, Essex submitted to him.

   Who exactly submitted? Not the supposedly resident East Anglian Danes, for in 903 Æðelwold persuaded them to break their peace with Wessex and ally with him. It can only have been Essex's West Saxon rulers who submitted. And why did Æðelwold land specifically in Essex? To stake his claim to the West Saxon crown, Æðelwold needed somewhere in Wessex accessible by ship and a place it would be as difficult as possible to be ejected from. Essex was the ideal location. Therein lies proof of Essex having been part of Wessex.

   Ultimately, Æðelwold was killed in 904 and the following year peace was made and the Vikings returned to East Anglia and Northumbria.

6. After an interval the Danes recommenced their incursions into Wessex-Mercia and in 912 King Eadward began to prepare for the reconquest of England from the Danes. Two *burhs* (forts) were built at Hertford to prevent Viking ships from sailing downstream on the Lea. Hertford lay in Mercia, which was by that time a West Saxon ealdordom (albeit one with room to manoeuvre independently). The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is clear that this was not an advance into Danish-held land but an internal preventive measure. In the same year the West Saxon army was in Maldon, Essex, preventing a Viking naval attack up the Blackwater, and a *burh* was built at Witham on the road to Colchester to forestall any Viking attack from that town. As confirmation of an ongoing threat from that direction, a *burh* was built at Maldon in 916. See Map 2(B).

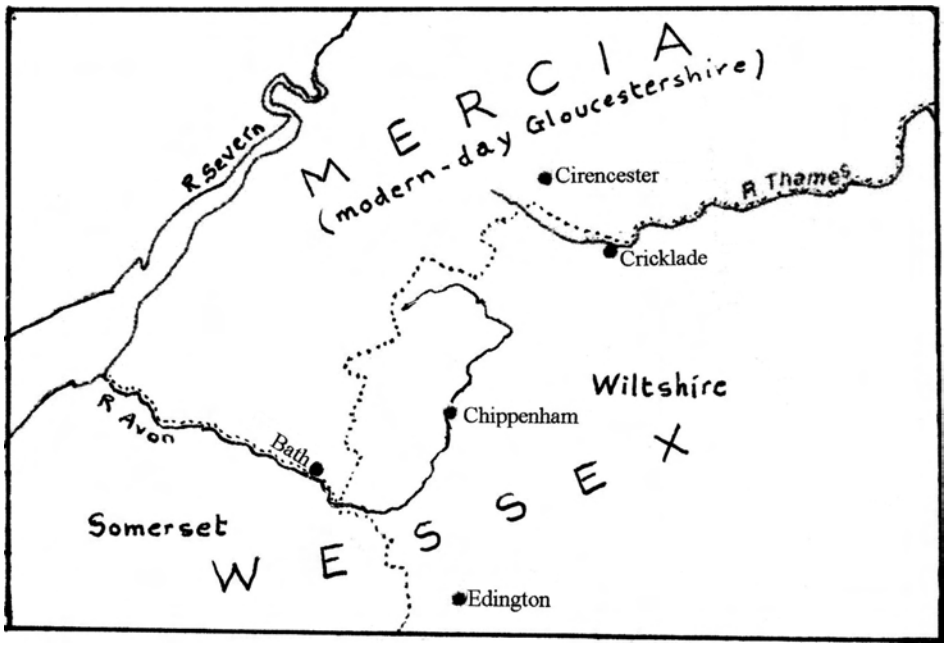
   According to the orthodox view, Essex should have been under Danish occupation. Instead, a West Saxon army was operating with impunity on its soil and it was the subject of West Saxon defensive military construction projects. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 917 brings yet more clarity: 'A great host assembled in autumn, from Kent, from Surrey, *from Essex* [author's emphasis], and from the nearest boroughs on all sides; and they went to Colchester and besieged the borough and attacked it until they took it.'[22] Essexmen subject to the Danes do not form part of the West Saxon army. Later that year Wessex re-fortified Colchester and the Danish threat was at an end. The inference to be drawn from this is that the Danish army either had not withdrawn entirely from Eadward's domain after 905, or by 912 had advanced into or occupied what is now north Hertfordshire and north-east Essex. Either way it does not indicate that the Danes had been in Essex since 878. North-east Essex was sparsely populated (it still is) and the Danish occupation of Colchester might be seen as marking the forward point of Danish military power. 'No serious [Danish] attempt was made to settle in Essex.'[23]

John of Worcester

All the above shows that the Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty never included Essex in the Danelaw. The idea that it had was first recorded in the early twelfth century by the monk John of Worcester, who recorded that when Eadward ejected the Danish army from Colchester in 917, 'many of the English in East Anglia and Essex, who had been enslaved to the brutal Danes for more than thirty years, joyfully submitted to him.'[24] However, John was relying on a late tenth-century account from Ramsey Abbey in Huntingdonshire[25] and 'apart from a royal genealogy there is no evidence that its author had at his disposal any ninth-century Essex sources of evidential value; his statement seems rather to have been drawing on local legend at this point in his narrative.'[26] John's comment was nothing more than an interpolation, but it became the extremely shaky, yet baseless, foundation on which rested Freeman and his successors' south-east to north-west, Wessex–Danelaw dividing line.

Dumville's Solution

Then in 1991 David N. Dumville wrote a typically radical and brilliant analysis of the Treaty and its clauses that turned the orthodox view on its head.[27] He had 'an international reputation as exploder of old chestnuts' such that he removed 'decades, sometimes centuries, of misunderstanding and scholarly preconception so that … history could be placed on a new basis built on hard evidence rather than wishful thinking.' His 'mastery of historical, philological, literary and palæographical disciplines made his work a model of interdisciplinarity long before the word was invented.'[28] In other words, his views were not to be taken lightly and he was an academic force to be reckoned with.



MAP 4. The Treaty boundary ran eastwards from Cricklade in Wiltshire on the West Saxon–Mercian frontier. Westwards it followed the line of that frontier. Note that Bath at this time was a Mercian town.

Dumville went back to the original manuscript text of the Treaty. Liebermann had used the second version in the manuscript of *Anglo-Saxon Laws*, 'Liebermann B', the one more commonly cited.[29] Liebermann based his reading of *up on temese*, the boundary in Liebermann B's first treaty clause, as meaning 'upstream on the Thames', i.e. westwards from the Thames estuary, and *up on lizan* as 'upstream on the Lea', thus separating Essex from Wessex. This formed a cornerstone of his interpretation of the frontier. Dumville realised that the meaning of Old English *up(p)* was by no means clear-cut, especially where boundaries were concerned. While the phrase *upon temese* means 'on the Thames', as in 'Kingston-upon-Thames' and 'Kingston-upon-Hull', there is considerable doubt among academics as to whether *up(p)* means 'upstream'.[30]

Dumville then discovered a clue as to its meaning when he looked instead at the first version, 'Liebermann B2'.[31] He found that the phrase used in its first clause was *andlanz temese*, 'along the Thames', and that *up(p)* can mean simply 'along'.[32] Given that the Treaty was solemnised at Chippenham or nearby Aller or Wedmore, 'the relevant boundary would indeed, on my interpretation, have run along the Thames – downstream, that is, rather than upstream – between Mercia (which was controlled by the Danes) and Wessex to the confluence of the Lea.'[33] Beyond that confluence, the Thames was not a boundary because provinces of Wessex (Kent and Essex) lay on both banks.

In 878 the Danish camp lay close to Chippenham, where the Danes were brought to terms. Cirencester, north of it and just across the Thames, was where the Danes retreated to and 'sat' for a year. Between the two lie the source of the Thames and Cricklade, the river's highest navigable point from which the eastward-flowing Thames was the long-established West Saxon–Mercian frontier, 'a natural starting-point for the statement of a frontier between the Danes and the West Saxons.'[34] Westwards from Cricklade and the Thames, the ancient frontier followed the historic Wessex (Wiltshire)–Mercia border to the Avon and then the historic Wessex (Somerset)–Mercia border to the Severn estuary.[35] See Map 4.

Thus, the orthodox historical view had Ælfred controlling the land south-west of the Treaty border, while Guðrum ruled to the north-east, with all of Essex conceded to him. Dumville's interpretation reversed this reading: the Vikings controlled territory to the south-west (Danish Mercia) and the West Saxons territory to the north-east (namely Essex) and to the south (Wessex proper). Milliken's map might be redrawn to reflect this as in Map 5.

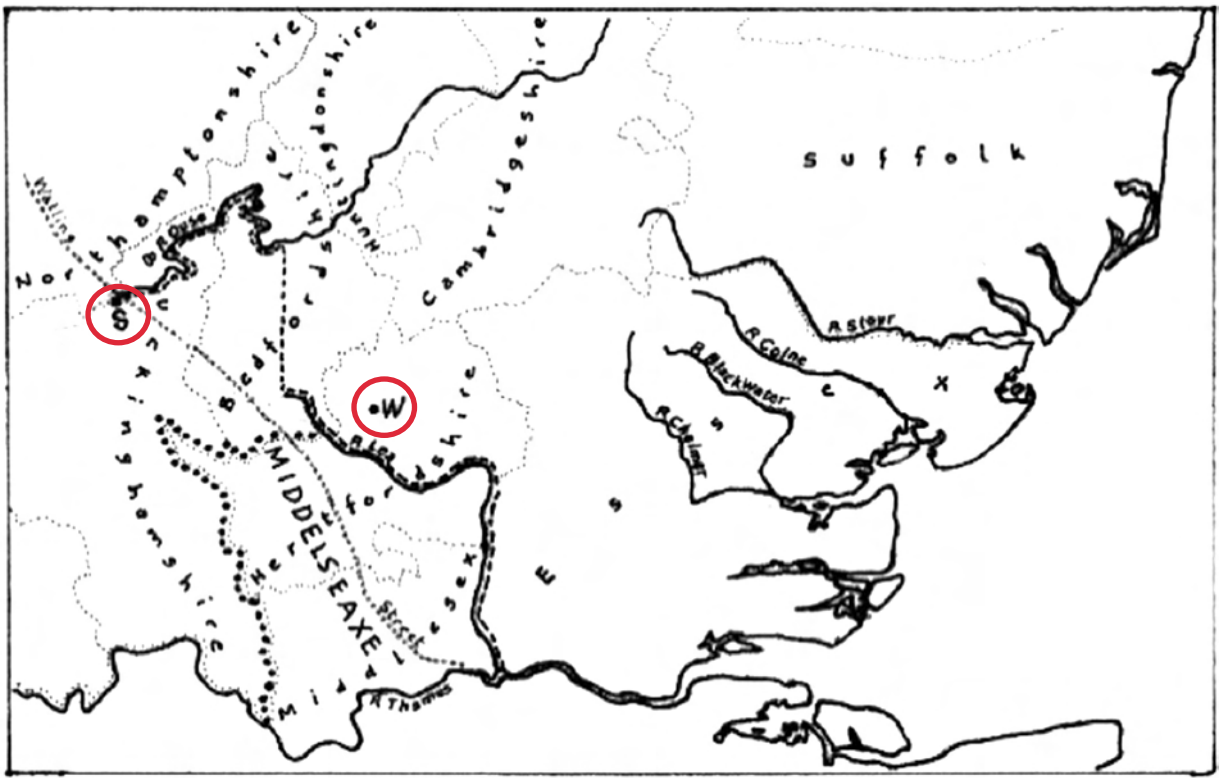
MAP 5. A revised Milliken map of the Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty 878. The Danes ruled not just East Anglia and the eastern half of Mercia (the Danelaw), but also held sway in the western half, their client kingdom under Ceolwulf II (marked 'Danish Mercia').

Dumville also addressed the question of the boundary's ending at Stony Stratford on Watling Street and the assumption that the Danish East Anglian–Danish Mercian border continued along it, for which there was no contemporary warrant:

> *The parties to the Treaty were taking for granted something which we now find very difficult to recover … some element essential for comprehension is missing. The simplest assumption would be that boundary met at Stony Stratford the boundary of a third party's territory – perhaps that of another viking-army.*[36]

In other words there was an existing politico-geographical entity in existence so well-known to both parties that it did not need mentioning. He concludes that this is currently unknowable but there are clues. Marc Morris suggested that from Stony Stratford the frontier (perhaps including part of Watling Street) may 'have been the line already agreed when the [Mercian] kingdom had been divided between Guthrum and Ceolwulf',[37] in 877, a line so obvious that it did not need re-stating in the Treaty.

There is however also the question as to how the boundary end-point relates to the Danish East Anglian–Essex border, which it was also unnecessary to mention. It was already known and did not require re-stating. But how might it have connected to our boundary end-point? Stony Stratford also sits on the historic boundary of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire – see Map 6(A). Although these counties did not exist in 878,[38] they were later founded on what were the erstwhile burghal districts, each one dependent on a fortified *burh*.[39] In turn, these burghal districts might have been based on even earlier military-political divisions developed as mechanisms for the defence and administration of Mercia. Might these burghal-district borders have represented the existing border between Danish East Anglia and Essex? It takes quite a mental stretch to imagine a 'Greater Essex' as far as Stony Stratford.[40] If one were to conjecture how that border might have continued, given that the Treaty ends on an historic shire boundary and that future shire boundaries might have been based on ancient ones, then its course might have followed the northern borders of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, the southern border



MAP 6.

(A) 'S' marks the location of Stony Stratford on the border of the historic counties of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, where the Ouse crosses Watling Street, and of Danish-controlled Mercia and Wessex. Although there were then no East Midland shires, their historic borders may be based on earlier administrative frontiers.

(B) If Stony Stratford lay on an existing boundary and everything to the east and north of the Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty line in 878 was West Saxon territory, then 'Greater Essex' would have comprised historic Essex, north Hertfordshire, east and north Bedfordshire, and trans-Ouse north Buckinghamshire. The status of Cambridgeshire then becomes crucial. Given that Suffolk and Norfolk comprised Guðrum's kingdom of East Anglia, it may be that there was an ancient Essex–East Anglian boundary running westwards from the source of the Stour through modern-day south Cambridgeshire, south of which was part of 'Greater Essex' and rounding the ealdordom out into a more administratively-manageable shape.

(C) 'W' marks the location of Walden where in the year 888 Æðelred of Mercia made a grant of land. If in 886 Middelseaxe *was taken from the Danes and given to Mercia this indicates that shortly thereafter or at the same time north Hertfordshire was also returned to Mercian authority from Wessex. Ultimately, how the border would have progressed from Stony Stratford is simply not known for certain and all is conjecture.*

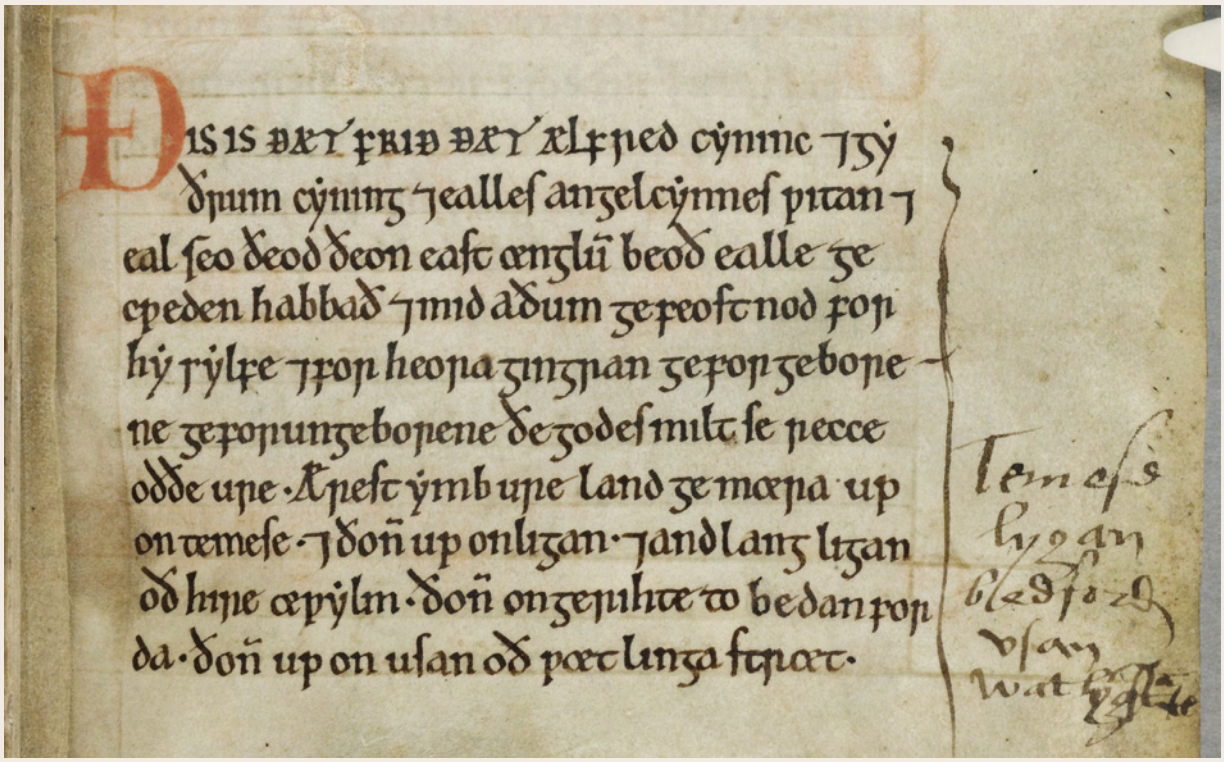
of Cambridgeshire, and the northern border (along the Stour) of Essex to the North Sea. See Map 6(B). This would imply that the area between such a course and the Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty line was all part of an oddly-shaped 'Greater Essex'.[41] A tortuous but not impossible boundary results.

Strangely, the conclusion of the Treaty's boundary is paralleled by its beginning. Historians have tended to overlook this. The beginning starts at a point on the Thames. Where this was, was so obvious to both parties that there was no need to state it: not evidently the source of the Thames, but the known navigable point from which one could sail *andlanz temese*, i.e. downstream from Cricklade on the West-Saxon–Mercian border. And that border was, as previously mentioned, also an existing politico-geographical feature (see Map 4). The Treaty begins as it ends.

In one fell swoop, Dumville had found solutions to all the inconsistencies and contradictions while creating no new problems of interpretation. Essex was placed firmly in Wessex outside Danish rule. The search for a non-existent treaty of 886x890 is made redundant by one

The Ælfred–Guðrum Treaty: Preamble and First Clause

The LIEBERMANN B Text



Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 383, f. 57r. © The Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Ðis is ðæt frið ðæt Ælfred cyninc 7 ȝy[-]	This is the peace which King Alfred and King Gu[-]
ðrum cyninȝ 7 ealles anȝelcynnes pitan 7	ðrum, and all the English people's councillors, and
eal seo ðeod ðe on east ænȝlum beoð ealle ȝe[-]	all those who dwell in East Anglia, have all
cpeden habbað 7 mid aðum ȝefeostnod for	agreed upon and confirmed with oaths, for
hy sylfe 7 for heora ȝinȝran, ȝe for ȝebore[-]	themselves and for their subjects, both living
ne ȝe for unȝeborene, ðe ȝodes miltse recce[a]	and unborn, who are anxious for God's favour
oððe ure • Ærest ymb ure landȝemæra up	and ours. First, about our boundaries: up
on temese • 7 ðonne up on liȝan • andlanȝ liȝan	the Thames, and then up the Lea, and along the Lea
oð hire æpylm • ðonne on ȝerihte to bedanfor[-]	to its source, then straight on to Bedford,
da • ðonne up on usan oð pætlinȝastræt •	then up the Ouse to Watling Street.

[a] *recte* reccen.

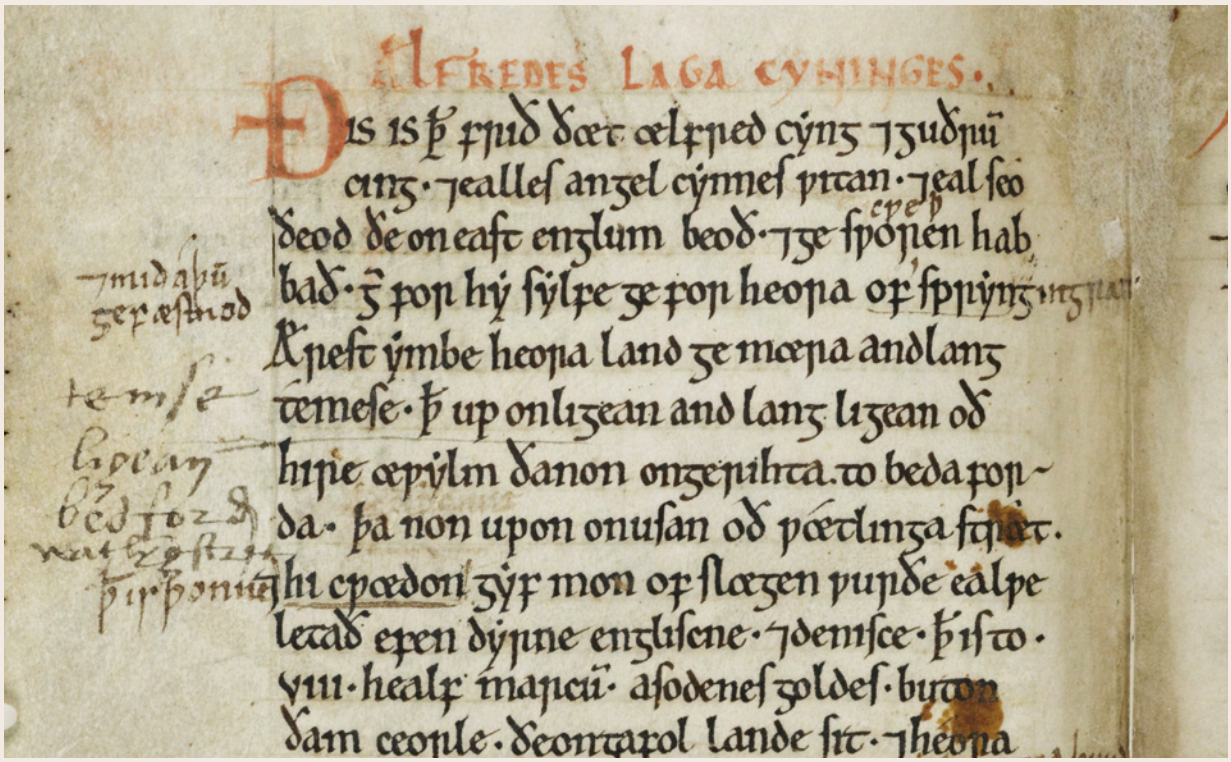
attested in 878. The post-Treaty shifts in the boundary, otherwise unmentioned elsewhere, were resolved. The necessity of having to explain Ælfred's control of Mercian lands to which he had no inherited claim is negated. Finally, a neat solution is provided regarding the Watling Street end of the boundary.

Despite the brilliance of Dumville's 1992 essay, local Essex museums, schools and histories have by and large failed to register the impact of its logic.[42] Other more recent histories tend either to toe the orthodox line regarding 'Viking' Essex[43] or be non-committal.[44]

This comes as no surprise: controversy and disputation are two of the hallmarks of Anglo-Saxon scholarship. As David Dumville was heard to say of discussions at Anglo-Saxon academics' symposia, 'no stone is left unthrown';[45] he was well-known for his irreverent sense of humour. Pertinently, no-one has ever been able to refute any part of his argument.

In conclusion it must be stated that there is no historical or other evidence that the Essex *ealdordom* was at any time in this period controlled by the Vikings. Not a *sauna*, not a *smörgåsbord* in sight.

The LIEBERMANN B2 Text



Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 383, f. 12v. © The Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Note the later additions in the left margin, copying wording from the Liebermann B text ('7 mid aþu[m] gefæstnod') and the 18th-century hand adding 'modernised' spellings such as 'Bedford'.

Ðis is þ[a] frið, ðæt ælfred cyng 7 guðrum	This is the peace which King Alfred and King Guðrum
cing • 7 ealles angelcynnes pitan • 7 eal seo	and all the English people's councillors, and all those
ðeod ðe on east englum beoð • 7 gesporen hab[-]	who dwell in East Anglia, have sworn to,
bað • ge for hy sylfe ge for heora ofspryng •	for themselves and for their offspring.
Ærest ymbe heora landgemæra andlang	First, about their boundaries: along
temese • þ[b] up on ligean andlang ligean oð	the Thames, then up the Lea, along the Lea to
hire æpylm ðanon on gerihta to bedafor[-]	its source, thence straight on to Bedford,
da • þanon upon on usan oð pætlingastræt •	thence up the Ouse to Watling Street.
...	...

[a] abbreviation for *þæt*.
[b] abbreviation for *þonne*.

Endnotes

1 A transcript of the treaty *c.* 1100, written in Old English, survives in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 383, *Anglo-Saxon Laws*.

2 Freeman, Edward A., *Old-English History* (London, 1871), pp. 125–126.

3 Milliken, E. K., *Saxon and Viking* (London, 1944), p. 87.

4 Thorpe, Benjamin (ed.), *Florentii Wigorniensis monachi Chronicon ex chronicis*, 2 vols. (London, 1848–9), I, p. 267: 'After the death of Ceolwulf, Alfred, king of the West Saxons, in order to expel the army of the pagan Danes from his kingdom, recovered London and the surrounding area by his activity [*strenuitate sua Lundoniam cum circumjacentibus terris recuperavit*], and acquired part of the kingdom of the Mercians, which Ceolwulf had held.' It is now believed that authorship was incorrectly ascribed to Florence. It should belong instead to fellow monk John of Worcester.

And the entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *s.a.* 886, confirms the transfer of London to Mercia in 886: 'The same year King Alfred occupied London fort, and all the English race turned to him, except what was in captivity to Danish men; and he then entrusted the fort to Ealdorman Æthelred to hold.'

The London-dependent area, *Middelseaxe*, once 'part of the kingdom of the Mercians', was much larger than modern-day Middlesex and included what is now southern Hertfordshire with an original northern border in the foothills of the Chilterns. The Treaty boundaries include what in all probability comprised its eastern and northern frontiers – see Map 2(A). 'It is noticeable that the ancient boundary which placed northeastern Hertfordshire in the kingdom of Essex and southwestern Hertfordshire in Middlesex is mirrored here. In 878 the vikings controlled the territory to the southwest of the border; that is a certain fact. If the boundary is to be dated to that year, then the West Saxons must have controlled the territory to the northwest, namely Essex, and indeed there seems little difficulty in crediting this view.' (Dumville, David N., *Wessex and England. From Alfred to Edgar* [Woodbridge, 1992], p. 17).

The warfare that ended with Ælfred's occupation of London may have lasted from 883 till 886 (see Dumville, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7 and fns. 34–35, and p. 15). Ceolwulf died in 879x881. His successor, Æðelred II, had by 883 accepted West Saxon overlordship and was reduced to the status of ealdorman (see Whitehead, A., *Mercia. The Rise and Fall of a Kingdom* [Stroud, 2020], pp. 138–139). That Æðelred was able to accept the 'gift' of London indicates that he was at that time free of the Danish menace. This new West Saxon–Mercian relationship was solemnised 886x887 by Æðelred's marriage to Ælfred's daughter, Æðelflæd. Ælfred is first recorded in 889 adopting the royal style 'King of the Angles and the Saxons' (Sawyer, P. H., *Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography* [London, 1968], S346) and, subsequently, 'King of the Anglo-Saxons' and 'King of the English' (S347, S348, S351, S353, S354, S355 and S356).

According to *Asser* § 83, Stevenson, William Henry (ed.), *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1904, p. 69) the occupation of London occurred in response to a series of further Viking attacks, 'after the burning of cities and the massacre of people'. This demonstrates how short a time the Treaty lasted before it was broken by the Vikings – eight years at most – and how briefly the Ælfred–Guðrum boundary existed. Indeed, Æðelred, as Ealdorman of Mercia, was already making grants of land in Buckinghamshire in 884 and Oxfordshire 886x887 (Sawyer, *op. cit.*, S217 and S219) in what had been Danish-controlled Mercia. By 886 West Saxon (and Mercian)-controlled territory north of the Thames included by the solid, contiguous block of modern-day Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Essex. It comes, then, as no surprise to find Æðelred making a grant of land at Walden in Hertfordshire as early as 888 (Sawyer, *op. cit.*, S220) – see Map 6(C).

Moreover, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entries for 886 (London-dependent area), 903 (West Saxon raids between Devil's Dyke and the Ouse), 906 (Tiddingford), 911 (Oxford-dependent area), 913 (Hook Norton and Luton), 913 and 914 (Hertford), and 914 (Buckingham) also then make sense since they would have been in the lands won from the Danes by Ælfred and transferred to Mercia by 886.

5 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *s.a.* 879.

6 Plummer, Charles, *The Life and Times of Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1902), p. 104 fn. 5 and pp. 108–109.

7 Liebermann, Felix (ed. and transl.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols. (Halle a. S., 1898–1916), vol. I, pp. 126–129 and vol. III, pp. 82–86 at p. 83.

8 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *s.a.* 885.

9 Particularly Attenborough, F. L. (ed. and transl.), *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 98–101.

10 To account for the odd course of the frontier, Adams, Max, *Ælfred's Britain: War and Peace in the Viking Age* (London, 2017), p. 175 records a story from Roger of Wendover that King Offa of Mercia (757–796) was buried in a chapel on the riverbank of the Ouse at Bedford. Offa's wife possessed a monastery at Bedford which may have been a royal mausoleum and this may explain its inclusion in the Treaty as a border marker, accessible from both sides. See Giles, J. A. (transl.), *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History* (London, 1849), pp. 166–167 and Whitelock, Dorothy, *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042*, vol. I (2nd ed., London, 1979), pp. 79 and 508.

11 Higham, Nicholas, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1992), p. 7.

12 Keynes, Simon, 'Introduction', in Hunter Blair, Peter, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd ed., Cambridge, 2003), p. iii.

13 Stenton, Sir Frank M., *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1943), pp. 260–261.

14 Hill, David, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1981), p. 45, no. 68 and p. 47, no. 70. Reaney, Percy Hide, *The Place-Names of Essex* (English Place-Name Society vol. XII, Cambridge, 1935) identified them as Kirby-le-Soken (p. 340),

Frowick (p. 349), Thorpe-le-Soken (p. 352) and Thorrington (p. 353). It was impossible to say whether Great Clacton (p. 334) has a Scandinavian or Old English origin.

[15] Campbell, James, *The Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1982), p. 162.

[16] Davis, R. H. C., 'Alfred and Guthrum's Frontier', *English Historical Review*, vol. 97, no. 385 (1982), pp. 803–810 at pp. 805–806.

[17] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *s.aa.* 885, 890.

[18] Ibid., *s.a.* 885. Essex has never been part of East Anglia. This is despite the presence on Essex soil of entities such as the East Anglian Folklore Centre in Colchester and the East Anglian Railway Museum in Wakes Colne.

[19] Æðelweard, *Chronicon*, IV.3 (ed. and transl. Campbell, Alistair), *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (Edinburgh, 1962), p. 44.

[20] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *s.aa*. 893, 894.

[21] Ibid., *s.a.* 896. Swanton, Michael, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 1996), p. 90 fn. 1, tried to explain the anomaly away by suggesting that Essex had been 'apparently reabsorbed with London in 886 … and in any case "East Saxons" extended as far west as Hertfordshire, and needed administration.' The former remark requires some stretch of the imagination and the latter, quite apart from the fact that Hertfordshire did not exist at that time, seems to contradict the former (i.e. that Essex 'proper' might still have been Danish).

[22] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *s.a.* 918.

[23] Reaney, *op. cit.*, p. xxviii.

[24] Thorpe, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 126–127.

[25] Hart, C. R., 'The early section of the Worcester chronicle', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 9 (1983), p. 280.

[26] Neale, Kenneth (ed.), 'The Ealdordom of Essex', *An Essex Tribute: Essays presented to Frederick G. Emmison* (London, 1987), p. 60.

[27] Dumville, David N., 'The Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum', in *Wessex and England: From Alfred to Edgar* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 1–28.

[28] The quotations come from his obituary: 'Remembering Professor David Dumville', Directorate of External Relations, *University of Aberdeen*, King's College, Aberdeen (11 September 2024), https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/23523/, accessed 13 Apr. 2026.

[29] Liebermann, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 83.

[30] Meroney, Howard Maxwell, *Old English 'upp', 'uppe', 'uppan', and 'upon'* (Chicago, 1943), p. 29 (§ 16.1–2).

[31] Liebermann, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 126.

[32] Colloquially, as in the sentence 'I walked up the street', with the sense of moving farther away from the starting point. Translation can be fraught with difficulties. Consider the difference in meaning between 'we went up on horseback' and 'we went upon horseback'.

[33] Dumville, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[34] *Ibid*., p. 21.

[35] Both Wiltshire and Somerset existed by this time. Modern-day Gloucestershire was first recorded in 1016. See Whybra, Julian, *A Lost English County: Winchcombeshire in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Woodbridge, 1990), p. 5.

[36] *Ibid*., p. 22.

[37] Morris, Marc, *The Anglo-Saxons: A History of the Beginnings of England* (London, 2021), p. 220–221.

[38] Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire were first recorded in 1010, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in 1011. Whybra, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 5–9. The west Mercian burghal areas were set up by Eadward the Elder in the early 920s, while the shiring of the Midlands began in 1007. See also Whitehead, *op. cit.*, pp. 236–238.

[40] The Treaty boundary divides modern-day Hertfordshire in two. The eastern half was part of Essex. The 'appendix' to John of Worcester's *Chronicarum chronica* states that in the Anglo-Saxon period Essex contained half of Hertfordshire: '*Reges Orientalium Saxonum dominabantur in East-Saxia, et dimidio Hertfordensi pago ; habebaturque et habetur episcopus Lundoniæ*' (Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 279). See also Petrie, Henry and Sharpe, J. (edd.), *Monumenta Historica Britannica, or Materials for the History of Britain from the Earliest Period* (London, 1848), p. 644; Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 80, no. 140; and Fenning, W. D., 'Elbow Lane', *East Herts Archaeological Transactions*, 6 part 1 (East Herts Archaeological society, 1915), pp. 68–71 (https://doi.org/10.5284/1126996). There is also an undated document quoted by a fifteenth-century writer which stated that half of Bedfordshire was at one time in Mercia (Harvey, John H. [ed. and transl.], *William Worcestre's Itineraries* [Oxford, 1969], p. 326). It is tempting, from the Treaty's frontier, to suggest that the other half lay in Essex.

[41] Intriguingly, might the lands transferred from the Danes to Wessex to Mercia by 886 (see endnote 4) provide a basis for the tenth-century ealdordom of Essex, Middlesex, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire as posited in Chadwick, Hector Munro, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 177–178 and 198.

[42] Pewsey, Stephen and Brooks, Andrew, *East Saxon Heritage* (Stroud, 1993), p. xix; Neale, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–62 (this despite Neale's being given access to a draft of Dumville's chapter on the Treaty). The information board in the newly refurbished Cater Museum in Billericay still states that Essex lay under the Viking yoke in this period.

[43] Wood, Michael, *In Search of the Dark Ages* (revised, London, 2023), pp. 153–154 dates the Treaty to 886; Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–176 dates the Treaty to 880x890 (but nearer the former) and suggests that since Ceolwulf II must have been dead (because he did not sign it), Ælfred was negotiating the border between Wessex-cum-Mercia and Danish East Anglia. In fact, nowhere does the Treaty pretend to concern itself with anything other than a West Saxon–Danish East Anglian frontier. Furthermore, Ceolwulf's signature to the Treaty was unnecessary as Mercia was not a party to it; *idem*, *The Mercian Chronicles* (Dublin, 2025), p. 389; Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 220–221 favours 879 for the Treaty date

but then has Mercia divided between Ælfred and Guðrum.

[44] Higham, Nicholas J. and Martin, J. Ryan, *The Anglo-Saxon World* (New Haven and London, 2015), p. 262; Whitehead, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–133.

[45] My thanks to Dr M. Paul Bryant-Quinn for this anecdote.

Acknowledgements and dedication

I must thank Simon Brown for his reading of the text and I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Tuija Ainonen, Sub-Librarian, Special Collections Librarian at The Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, University of Cambridge in the granting of permission to reproduce the Liebermann B and Liebermann B2 Texts.

I am grateful to the late David Dumville for having shared his thoughts about the Treaty and how it affected the county of Essex. This was several years before the publication of his *Wessex and England: From Alfred to Edgar*, a chapter of which was devoted to this subject. I was then a humble Research Fellow at Cambridge, but David always treated me as an equal. His scholarship and erudition were an example to all, and he was utterly selfless in the assistance and encouragement he gave me in getting my research published. Until his retirement David was Professor in History, Palæography and Celtic at the University of Aberdeen. He had previously been Professor of Palæography and Cultural History and, before that, Reader in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at the University of Cambridge, where we met. David passed away in 2024. This essay is dedicated to his memory.

About the author

Julian Whybra is a history graduate of the University of East Anglia and has carried out post-graduate research as a Research Fellow at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow and as a Fellow Commoner at Girton College, Cambridge. He lectured part-time in history in the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Essex until 2005 and is a past winner of the Browne Medal for Original Research in Military History.

Frederick Ramuz, 1855–1946: An Essex Entrepreneur

Alan White

Introduction

In the years around 1900 land in south-east Essex was bought and sold in prodigious quantities. At the forefront of this land sales boom were entrepreneurs, mostly London-based, who acquired, often at knockdown prices, farms and estates from landowners buffeted by the prolonged agricultural depression which had begun in the mid-1870s. These entrepreneurs – speculators, said their critics – viewed south-east Essex as an area ripe for development, but they were not hands-on property developers or builders who planned construction projects and saw them through to completion. Instead, they bought to sell: they subdivided their acquisitions into individual building plots which were then sold on to others, usually at auction.

Demand for these plots was high. Londoners of all kinds were attracted by the prospect of exchanging the stench, bustle and disease of the capital for a quieter and healthier life on the coast – provided, of course, that they were able to get to and from their workplaces in the capital quickly and cheaply.

Late nineteenth-century improvements in the Essex railway network made this possible. In 1888 the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway opened its 'cut-off' line from Pitsea to Barking, bypassing Tilbury and reducing journey times from Southend to Fenchurch Street to under an hour. In 1889 new routes into Liverpool Street became available in the form of the Great Eastern company's 'new Essex railways', the most important of which was the line from Shenfield to Southend via Billericay, Wickford, Rayleigh and Rochford.

A number of late-Victorian businessmen seized the opportunities on offer in south-east Essex and made names for themselves as plot-sales entrepreneurs. They included Robert Varty, a City banker, J. W. Humm, a Mile End factory owner, and Walter and Lysaght Rutter, Blackfriars land agents. But the highest-profile player in this particular arena, by some distance, was Frederick Francis Ramuz, owner of The Land Company, a man who once declared that he would pawn his coat in order to get a good estate.[1]

Early Life

In later life Frederick Francis (born Frédéric François) Ramuz liked to suggest that he was an entirely self-made man, someone who had started out with nothing more than the clothes on his back. In fact, his background was not quite as disadvantaged as he pretended: his father, George Ramuz, was a London wine merchant, albeit one with a chequered history. Ramuz senior was a Swiss national who had arrived in England in his twenties, finding work as a printer in Soho, then one of London's poorest districts, home to refugees, émigrés and exiles. In 1840 he served a one-year prison sentence for his involvement in a conspiracy to produce counterfeit Russian banknotes. The wine business came later. Frederick Ramuz's mother, Louise Honorine Touchard, George's third wife, thirty-five years her husband's junior, was also a first-generation immigrant: she was a French national from Savoy in the French Alps.

Frederick Ramuz was French-born, but grew up in Leytonstone, leaving school at thirteen to work as an office boy at Savill's brewery in Stratford. Within six months he had left and become self-employed. 'I speculated in various things', he later said of this fledgling stage of his business career, 'from cradles to bricks and mortar, from sardines to cod liver oil. I speculated in almost every description of article you could mention.'[2] Before long, though, he adopted a more selective approach, setting himself up as an estate agent operating mainly, though not exclusively, in east London. From there it was only a short step to buying and selling land on his own account. Ramuz bought his first patch of land, sight unseen, in 1880, and two years later, aged only twenty-seven, founded The Land Company, with offices at 68 Cheapside.

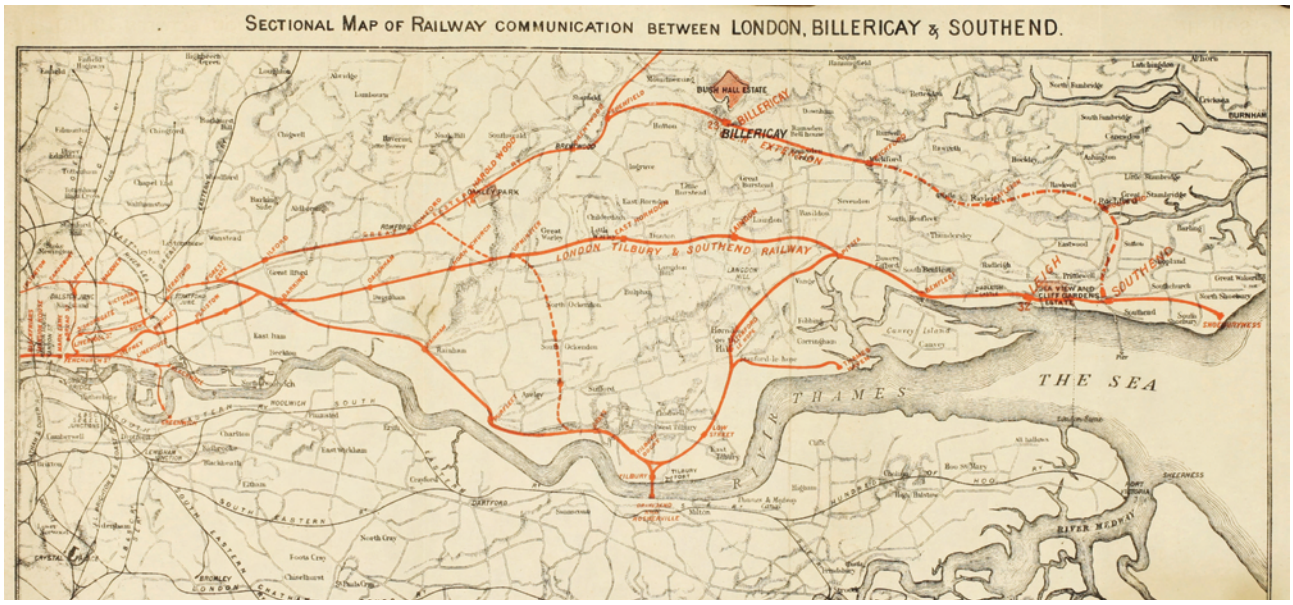
To start with The Land Company did most of its business, relatively modest in scale, in north and east London. In 1888, however, Ramuz looked further afield and bought eighteen acres of undeveloped farmland at Leigh, a place he had known since boyhood.[3] It was a pivotal moment in his professional life and opened the way to an equally significant change in his private life. In 1890 he did what he was soon to urge other Londoners to do: he moved with his wife and young family out of the East End and relocated to Southend, living first in the affluent Cliff Town area and then at Shorefields, an imposing house overlooking the Thames estuary, nowadays the site of Southend's Cliffs Pavilion.

Buying

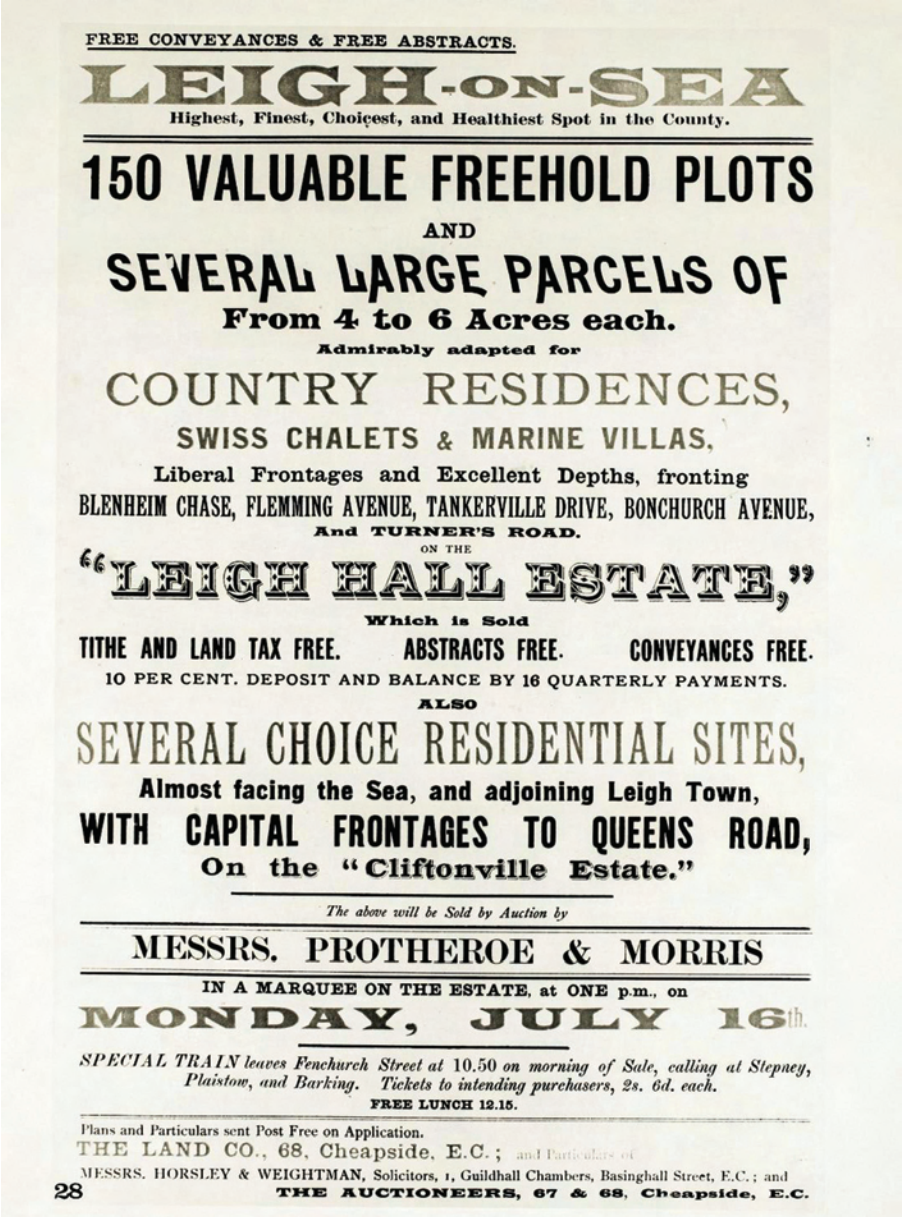
After his move to Southend Frederick Ramuz's career as a so-called 'plotter' of distressed farms and estates went into overdrive. During the 1890s he built up a huge property empire at dizzying speed. In Leigh, he quickly added to his eighteen-acre initial purchase by snapping up more than three hundred acres of undeveloped land, including Leigh Hall farm (225 acres), and then watched as the area underwent a transformation.[4] 'We practically created Leigh', one of his sons later claimed.[5] Ramuz invested on a similar scale in neighbouring Southend, buying up two sizeable tracts of land to the north-west of the town centre, the larger of which he marketed as the Westcliff Park Estate, the smaller as the Southbourne Grove Estate.[6] Further significant purchases in south-east Essex included land at Pitsea, Benfleet, Billericay, Wickford, Rochford and Rayleigh, all places on the railway network. In Rayleigh alone his landholdings ran to more than 11,000 acres. Nor was this buying spree confined to the county's south-eastern corner: Ramuz also purchased land at Tilbury, Stanford-le-Hope, Maldon and Walton-on-the Naze. In terms of acreage he became the biggest landowner in Essex.[7] Outside Essex, The Land Company invested heavily in Herne Bay and the Isle of Sheppey in Kent and to a lesser extent in Sussex and Hampshire. One contemporary estimate suggested that over a ten-year period Ramuz bought, in total, around 200,000 acres of land.[8]

Selling

In its promotional material The Land Company repeatedly presented itself as 'the pioneer of plot sales', the trailblazer who led while others followed.[9] It was not a claim that bore close scrutiny. What marked The Land Company out from its competitors was not its originality



The planned railway routes from the City through east London and onwards to the coast. © Essex Record Office



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Highest, Finest, Choicest, and Healthiest Spot in the County.

150 VALUABLE FREEHOLD PLOTS

AND

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From 4 to 6 Acres each.

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COUNTRY RESIDENCES,

SWISS CHALETS & MARINE VILLAS,

Liberal Frontages and Excellent Depths, fronting

BLENHEIM CHASE, FLEMMING AVENUE, TANKERVILLE DRIVE, BONCHURCH AVENUE,

And TURNER'S ROAD.

ON THE

"LEIGH HALL ESTATE,"

Which is Sold

TITHE AND LAND TAX FREE. ABSTRACTS FREE. CONVEYANCES FREE.

10 PER CENT. DEPOSIT AND BALANCE BY 16 QUARTERLY PAYMENTS.

ALSO

SEVERAL CHOICE RESIDENTIAL SITES,

Almost facing the Sea, and adjoining Leigh Town,

WITH CAPITAL FRONTAGES TO QUEENS ROAD,

On the "Cliftonville Estate."

The above will be Sold by Auction by

MESSRS. PROTHEROE & MORRIS

IN A MARQUEE ON THE ESTATE, at ONE p.m., on

MONDAY, JULY 16th.

SPECIAL TRAIN leaves Fenchurch Street at 10.50 on morning of Sale, calling at Stepney, Plaistow, and Barking. Tickets to intending purchasers, 2s. 6d. each.

FREE LUNCH 12.15.

Plans and Particulars sent Post Free on Application.

THE LAND CO., 68, Cheapside, E.C.; and Particulars of

MESSRS. HORSLEY & WEIGHTMAN, Solicitors, 1, Guildhall Chambers, Basinghall Street, E.C.; and

28 THE AUCTIONEERS, 67 & 68, Cheapside, E.C.

'Country Residences' for sale at Leigh Hall and plots facing the sea at Cliftonville estate. © Essex Record OfficeEssex Record Office I/Pb 4/17. With permission

or inventiveness, but the scale of its activities and the slickness and aggressiveness of its marketing operation.

The starting point of The Land Company's sales pitch was a more or less continuous advertising barrage in local newspapers in and around London. Its advertisements came in all shapes and sizes, from small ads to whole-page spreads, and would have been hard for readers to avoid. Potential buyers were presented with tantalising glimpses of an idyllic life on or near the coast, breathing fresh air ('laden with ozone') and getting to and from London with ease.[10] Much-touted destinations included Southend ('the Riviera of the East Coast'), Leigh ('the New Eldorado'), Westcliff ('the City Man's Paradise'), Rochford ('the fashionable suburb of Southend') and the 'sunny slopes and shady dales' of Pitsea.[11] These blandishments were accompanied by airy promises of financial reward: investing in property, insisted Land Company sales literature, was a one-way bet. 'Freehold land never shrinks in value, it is ever increasing', declared one advertisement. 'It is impossible for freehold land to depreciate', maintained another.[12] Another shot in the Company's promotional locker was the offer of easy terms, which enabled purchasers to secure plots with a five or ten per cent deposit, the balance being repayable over four or five years. The Land Company also undertook to pay for incidentals such as legal costs and conveyancing fees.

The Land Company did virtually all of its selling at auctions, which took place in marquees put up on whatever site was being sold off. Preparations for these auctions involved 'plotting' or 'pegging' the land on offer – that is, using pegs to mark out planned roads and individual building plots on what was otherwise open ground. Pegs became synonymous with plot-sales companies to the point that the parts of Essex in which they were most active were sometimes described as 'Pegland'.[13] The format of Land Company auction days themselves was fixed and unvarying. Prospective buyers were brought from London by special train, given a guided tour of the plots for sale and then treated to a free lunch – lubricated, said one account, 'with every conceivable drinkable liquid'.[14] Only when this softening-up ritual was complete did the auction proper begin. The Land Company's star auctioneer in the early

1900s was Frederick Ramuz's eldest son George, only in his twenties but by all accounts a genial and persuasive presence.

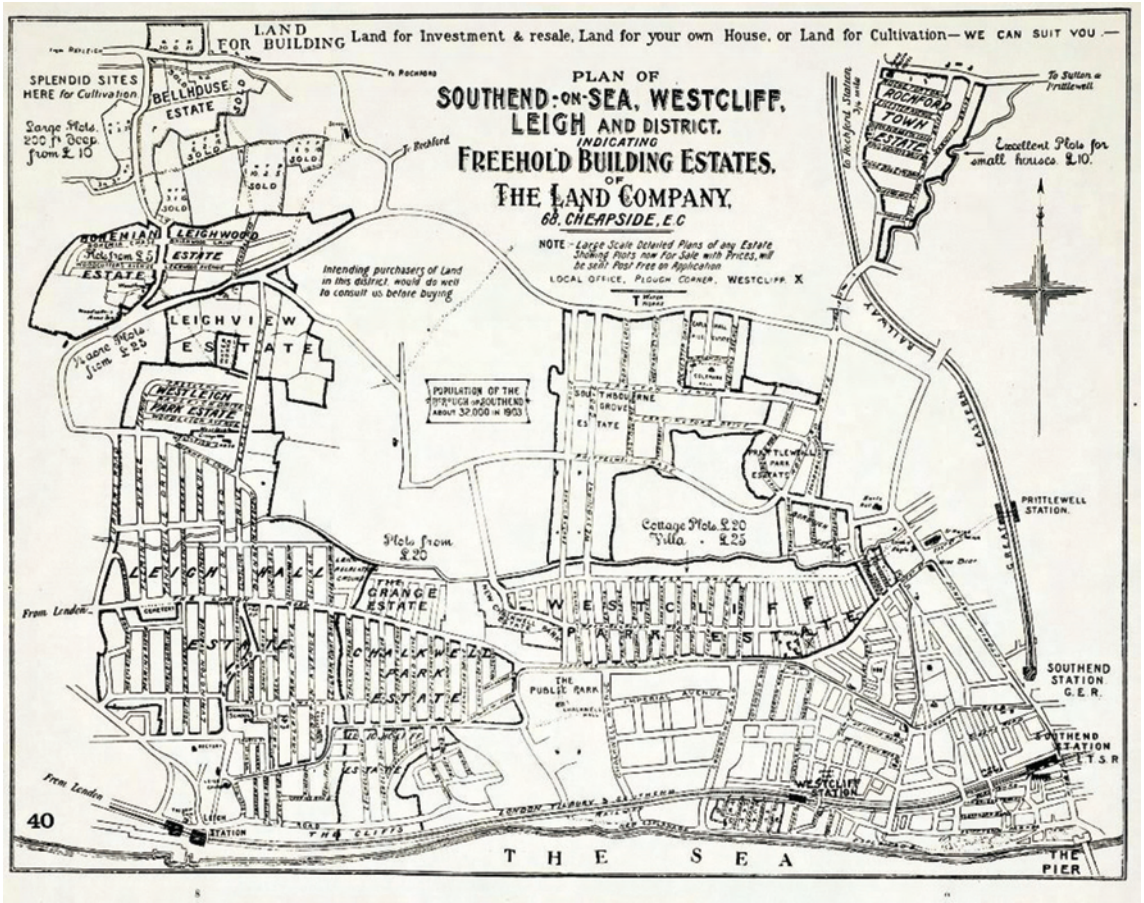
The price Land Company plots fetched at auction naturally varied in accordance with their size and location. Plots near the sea or a railway station were at a premium. A prime site on Leigh or Westcliff seafront could go for £200 or even more, whereas a plot at inland Laindon might be had for £5 or even less. Given these disparities, the bidders at Land Company sales were, unsurprisingly, a mixed bunch, with only the highest echelons of society absent. 'Mayfair may not have sent its contingent', reported a journalist from one auction, 'but all other sections are well represented. Half-pay officers, clerks, professional men, well-to-do mechanics, young couples, old men, speculators of the sort who buy a lot with the object of selling it at a profit.'[15] Not included in this list, but nevertheless among the leading buyers at Land Company auctions, were building firms, who generally bought plots in multiples.

The way Frederick Ramuz went about his business had implications for the pace and character of building development on his sites. His usual practice – given that an excess of land on the market was liable to have an adverse effect on the price at which it could be sold – was to dispose of the estates he acquired in stages, a process which in some cases took years. The first portions of the Leigh Hall estate, for instance, were sold off in 1893, the last in 1897. This drip-feeding strategy left some people living on half-developed estates for lengthy periods. It was also part of Ramuz's *modus operandi* to squeeze as many plots as he could on to each acre of land. In consequence most of the houses put up on Ramuz plots were either semi-detached or, more often, terraced.

Into Politics

In his first years living in Southend Frederick Ramuz gave every impression of being a young man in a hurry. In short order he became sponsor of the town's gymnastics, rifle and cycling clubs, President of the Southend Regatta, Vice-Chairman of Leigh Regatta, President of Southend Town FC and Vice-Chairman of Southend Season Ticket Holders' Association. He also gave liberally to local charities. This whirl of activity prompted one prominent fellow townsman to observe that Ramuz had 'his fingers into almost every pie between here and the North Pole'.[16]

Ramuz's generosity with his time and money in this period looks to have been, at least in some measure, a calculated exercise in image-building. The likelihood is that he was from the outset intent on a career in local politics and wanted to be able to deflect any suggestion that he was a mere 'land grabber and speculator'.[17] In the event his political career began inauspiciously: his first bid to win a seat on Southend Borough Council in 1894 ended, despite an energetic campaign, in a heavy defeat. Subsequently, however, his ascent was meteoric: he joined the Council in 1896 and became Southend's Mayor in 1898. He went on to serve two consecutive one-year terms in office.



The street layout of modern Westcliff and Chalkwell Park was determined by the development plans of Ramuz's The Land Company. © Essex Record Office

Ramuz during his mayorship of Southend, 1898–1900, with sumptuous robe and chain of office. © Essex Record Office

Municipal politics in late-Victorian Southend were no place for the faint-hearted. Personality clashes were rife, and violence was not unknown: on one occasion two councillors traded blows outside the Council chamber.[18] On matters of substance debate was generally heated and frequently ill-tempered: accusations of venality and double-dealing were thrown about freely and in all directions. Frederick Ramuz, though, seems to have been well-equipped in terms of personality and temperament not merely to survive but to flourish in this hostile environment: there is certainly nothing in the written record which suggests that he was a man plagued by indecision or self-doubt.

Ramuz proved to be a polarising figure in Southend. His many admirers pointed to his business acumen, his record as a public benefactor and his evident ambition for the town. His critics, also numerous, were headed, predictably, by his political opponents. A Conservative and a champion of the liquor trade, Ramuz inevitably

found himself at odds with Southend Council's contingent of Liberals and temperance reformers, the most formidable and influential of whom was J. H. Burrows, Wesleyan Methodist, forceful controversialist and proprietor of the *Southend Standard.* But there were reasons other than political partisanship why Ramuz became the target of so much vitriol. In some quarters there was alarm that his plot sales were turning Southend into a town of 'narrow streets, small tenements and puny gardens'.[19] Also called into question was the motivation behind his involvement in Southend's public life, the suspicion being that it owed more to self-interest and personal ambition than it did to any ironclad commitment to public service.

It should be said that there were points at which Ramuz acted in ways which gave his critics ammunition. In 1896 he called for Leigh to be formally renamed Leigh-on-Sea, citing the risk of confusion with England's other Leighs, only to be met with protests that his real intention was to popularise a name already being used in Land Company advertisements. In 1898 his appointment as Southend's Mayor was preceded by an unseemly wrangle which saw him accused of lacking 'robust manliness' by the *Southend Standard* and charged with 'treachery and traitorous dealing' by a Conservative colleague.[20] And in 1899 his decision to support a scheme to build a tramway linking Leigh and Southend was greeted with insinuations that he had been influenced by the prospect of personal gain, since the proposed route passed through several Land Company estates, significantly increasing their value.

Setbacks

The Land Company traded strongly throughout the 1890s. The farmland it was buying for £10 or £20 an acre fetched £100 or even more per acre when sold in plot form.[21] 'Cutting up Old England', as Frederick Ramuz put it, was paying handsome dividends.[22] The future, too, looked bright: a report on the south-east Essex property market by a Southend estate agent in 1900 spoke of 'the apparently perennial demand for small plots of land' in the district.[23] Then things changed. A downturn in the economy in the first years of the new century led to an increase in unemployment, a fall in real wages and a slowdown in plot sales. The Land Company's profit margins were further eroded by a spike in interest rates: since its land purchases were largely funded with borrowed money, the cost of servicing its debts rose. Frederick Ramuz, facing a cash-flow crisis, found himself struggling to meet his obligations.

Ramuz's financial problems were compounded by his involvement in the high-stakes business of buying and selling licensed premises. Between 1896 and 1899, again reliant on borrowed money, he bought pubs at Braintree, Bocking, Bulmer, Chelmsford, Coggeshall, Maldon, Rettendon and Tolleshunt D'Arcy. In addition, he acquired the Pier and Royal Hotels in Southend and completed the building of the Grand Hotel in Leigh. The sums of money involved in these transactions were eye-wateringly large. The freehold of Southend's Royal Hotel, for instance, admittedly Ramuz's biggest single buy, cost him £45,000 – around £5 million at today's prices.[24] Quite what went awry with Ramuz's pub and hotel investments is impossible to say, but he undoubtedly got his fingers badly burnt. 'He engaged in hotel speculations', George Ramuz later said of his father, 'and afterwards met with tremendous losses when the slump came.'[25]

Public life in this traumatic period offered little or nothing by way of respite or consolation. Ramuz's term as Mayor of Southend ended in 1900, but he remained an elected councillor. In this capacity he soon found himself facing a charge of impropriety. The allegation was that he had covertly and improperly used his influence as a councillor to ensure that Land Company advertisements were printed on the back of entrance tickets to Southend's council-owned pier. An investigation by the Town Clerk proved inconclusive, not least because Ramuz refused to co-operate with it, and the matter was allowed to lapse.[26] But it may not have been far from his fellow-councillors' minds when, in early 1902, they were required to choose one of their number as an alderman – a sought-after position which enabled its holder to serve a six-year term as a co-opted member of the Council. Ramuz was one of four candidates vying to fill the vacancy, but when the Council ballot took place, he was humiliated, winning only one of the seventeen votes cast.

This defeat effectively marked the end of Frederick Ramuz's career in local politics. In his final year as a councillor in 1902, presumably disillusioned, he more or less gave up, attending only a handful of the scores of meetings to which he was summoned.[27] He never sought elective office in Southend again. He did, though, continue to serve as a magistrate in the town deep into the 1930s. This might have given those critics who saw him as a man driven solely or primarily by self-interest some pause for thought.

Later Years

Retirement from Southend's political life enabled Frederick Ramuz to give his undivided attention to the business of extricating himself from his financial difficulties. In the event, aided by an upturn in the wider economy, he was able to find a way through the crisis which had threatened to engulf him. All claims against him were settled in full, and no investor was left out of pocket as a result of investing in The Land Company.[28] Ramuz's return to solvency, however, came at a price: it is surely no coincidence that in 1909 he let out his home, Shorefields, on an eighty-year lease and moved to smaller accommodation nearby. In the first instance Shorefields became a fifteen-bedroom private members' social and residential club.

In his later years Frederick Ramuz was a somewhat diminished figure, no longer the swashbuckling entrepreneur he had been in the 1890s. He ceased to be involved in the day-to-day affairs of The Land Company, stepping back in favour of his eldest son. But his working life was not over. He continued in business on his own account, investing mostly at the low-risk end of the property market. He became a landlord, renting out residential properties in Southend, and bought the freehold of around thirty shops in Southend and Chelmsford, which were also let out. In addition, he was for a short while before 1914 the owner of two of Southend's cinemas. At this point the only vacant building plots in his property portfolio were in Tilbury

– clearly not prime sites, since they were advertised as being suitable for use as gardens or allotments as well as building.[29]

Frederick Ramuz was still offering plots for sale in Tilbury in the 1920s. But by that time, the steam had long since gone out of the plot-sales market. The plot-sales boom had arisen out of a distinctive set of circumstances, as explained in a jaundiced but pithy fashion by a journalist in 1901:

> *First of all came Richard Cobden. Then free trade. Then foreign corn at low prices. Then ragged farmers. Then farms in weeds, and now – the 'plot pegger'. He is manufacturing new landowners wholesale.*[30]

In the years before 1914, however, the era of cheap land came to an end. Essex's rural economy began to recover, with farmers diversifying out of cereals and into root crops, market gardening and livestock farming. As 'derelict Essex' became a thing of the past, landowners were no longer willing to sell at rock-bottom prices. Meanwhile, in fast-growing urban areas like Southend and Leigh land values rose sharply. In the 1890s Land Company advertisements proclaimed 'We buy land largely and sell cheaply'. On the eve of the First World War it was increasingly unable to do either.

Frederick Ramuz lived to see the end of the Second World War, dying in 1946 at the age of ninety. In his will his estate was valued at £189,000 – a fortune at the time, certainly, but not an immense one.

Conclusion

Frederick Ramuz was, in his own way, an historical figure of some weight and consequence. In his own time he was something of a celebrity. 'Everybody knows him', claimed the *Southend Standard* in 1896.[31] His fame rested chiefly on his role in the plot-sales movement, a phenomenon perhaps under-explored by historians. The company he founded not only became 'the biggest purchaser of land in the United Kingdom for resale in plots' but was also by far the most highly publicised.[32] Ramuz was as well an influential figure in Southend's affairs at a time when it was one of the fastest-growing towns in the country, mostly siding with the progressives intent on improving the town's amenities for the benefit of locals and visitors alike against the 'do-nothings' bent on minimising expenditure. The most enduring legacy he left to the town, however, was the grid-iron street patterns and tightly-packed terraced housing characteristic of much of Leigh and Southend.

Late in life, George Ramuz recalled his father as a person of 'unceasing equanimity and gentleness', adding that 'He avoided arguments and was a man of very few words'.[33] This was a picture that those who knew Frederick Ramuz as a young businessman might have struggled to recognise. The young Ramuz was voluble, assertive and an unapologetic risk-taker, someone in thrall to entrepreneurial instincts which perhaps never fully left him. At the mid-point of his Mayoralty in Southend he told an audience of builders how much he admired the pluck of anyone, of whatever age, who turned their back on regular employment and struck out on their own. He might have been talking about himself.[34]

Endnotes

1 *Essex Newsman*, 19 September 1896.

2 *Southend Standard*, 10 November 1898.

3 *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 11 May 1888.

4 *Morning Leader*, 1 May 1894.

5 *Morning Leader*, 15 September 1900.

6 See Essex Record Office D/DGs E142 for Ramuz's estates in the Southend area.

7 Colin Ward, 'A Century of Land Settlement in Essex', *Colchester Archaeological Group Bulletin*, vol. 33 (1990), p. 41.

8 *Morning Leader*, 15 September 1900.

9 See, for example, *Daily Express*, 31 December 1901.

10 *East End News*, 8 May 1906.

11 *East London Advertiser,* 28 January 1904 (Southend); *Southend Standard*, 28 September 1893 (Leigh); *Leytonstone Express*, 20 July 1901 (Westcliff); *Walthamstow Express*, 30 July 1898 (Rochford); *East London News*, 18 May 1906 (Pitsea).

12 *Eastern Mercury*, 8 March 1904; *East End News*, 19 June 1906.

13 See, for example, *Daily Express*, 20 April 1905.

14 *Southend Standard*, 18 January 1900.

15 Arthur Goodrich, 'How Landowners Are Made', *Windsor Magazine*, vol. 12 (June–November 1900), p. 246.

16 *Southend Standard*, 15 November 1900.

17 *Southend Standard*, 1 June 1899. This phrase was coined by Councillor George Allen, Liberal, teetotaller, and one of Ramuz's main political adversaries.

18 *Southend Standard*, 28 December 1895.

19 *Southend Standard*, 21 March 1907.

20 *Southend Standard,* 10 and 18 November 1898. These accusations arose out of an episode involving Councillor E.J. Bowmaker. In late 1898 Bowmaker was chosen by his fellow-Councillors to serve as Southend's Mayor in 1898-99, in full knowledge of the possibility that he might lose his seat in an election due he before took up office – which is precisely what happened. Some Councillors nevertheless wanted Bowmaker's candidature to proceed, since it seemed likely he would regain a Council seat in a forthcoming by-election. Behind the scenes, Ramuz evidently opposed this course of action, and was accused of doing so in order to further his own candidature. Ramuz protested his innocence: see *Chelmsford Chronicle,* 25 November 1898.

21 Land Sales in South-East Essex', *Southend Standard*, 18 January 1900.

22 Speech by F. F. Ramuz, reported in *Southend Standard*, 27 January 1898.

23 'Land Sales in South-East Essex', *Southend Standard*, 18 January 1900.

24 *Southend Standard*, 27 October 1898.

25 *Sheerness Times Guardian*, 30 June 1961.

[26] The correspondence arising out of this affair is reprinted in *County Borough of Southend, Proceedings of the Council*, vol. IX (1900–01), pp. 576–80 (Southend Central Library).

[27] For Ramuz's voting record, see *ibid.,* vol. X (1901–02), p. 247.

[28] George Ramuz, letter to the editor, *Sheerness Times Guardian*, 30 June 1961.

[29] *Grays and Tilbury Gazette*, 30 October 1914.

[30] *Southend Standard*, 2 May 1901. Richard Cobden (1804–65) campaigned in the late 1830s and 1840s for the repeal of laws which protected British agriculture against foreign competition by imposing duties on imported foodstuffs. The Corn Laws were repealed in 1846, a landmark victory for the cause of free trade.

[31] *Southend Standard*, 29 October 1896.

[32] *Eastern Mercury*, 8 March 1904.

[33] George Ramuz, letter to the editor, *Sheerness Times Guardian*, 30 June 1961.

[34] Speech by Ramuz, reported in *Southend Standard*, 19 January 1899.

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Book Reviews

Grenville Weltch

From Norman to Victorian Gothic

Waltham Abbey Church, Essex in the 19th Century

Waltham Abbey Historical Society, 2025, 214 pp, colour and monochrome photographs. ISBN 978-1-0369-1149-2. £30

There was a time when books by local historical societies were usually a disappointment with murky photographs, hand-drawn sketches and poorly laid-out text. In case you needed reassurance, those days are surely gone as this gloriously illustrated book demonstrates. The cover shows off the brightly-lit interior of the abbey church to great advantage, with its rich colours and impressive dimensions. But this attention to presentation runs through the whole book, offering reproduced watercolour paintings, building plans, engravings and sepia photos alongside the full-colour modern record of the building.

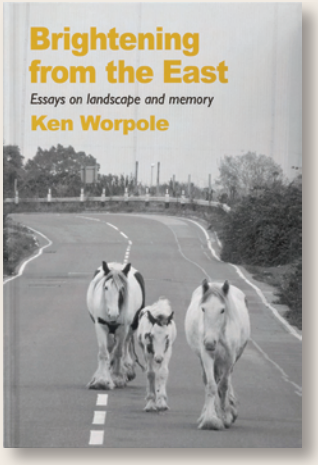
The text follows the chronological sequence from the late 18th-century decision to repair the building, which had fallen into disrepair; the initial restoration project under Burges in the third quarter of the 19th century, and the culmination with the re-erection of the tower in 1905.

For so important a building, the abbey church had suffered a great deal of neglect from absentee clergy and a board of governors whose main interests were elsewhere. Parts of it were used as a timber yard, and the interior had been subdivided by galleries that masked the layout of the original construction. It was close to demolition due to its unsafe condition when two architects (Lapidge and Poynter) were appointed to undertake restoration; later, William Burges applied his considerable talent and energy to the task. The delicate balance between preserving the ancient structure and providing a usable modern building is never easy to strike, but the impressive building we have today is testament to the good judgement of a string of architects and workmen.

The text is divided into the three main phases, with a postscript on the Francis family. Appendices offer a wealth of detail: accounts for the 1861 restoration, a list of subscribers (from Mr Watson's ten shillings to the Francis family's £86), an account of the Vestry where committee meetings took place. The first appendix tackles the thorny question of whether the original church was erected under King Harold II (he is the first named owner) or was commissioned by one of the early Norman kings. The answer is: a bit of both. Separate indices cover the building itself, the fittings, the personnel and locations mentioned in the text.

This is a really engaging read and a splendid record of the abbey church's recent history. At a very good price for so much information so well presented.

Steve Pollington



Ken Worpole

Brightening from the East

Essays on Landscape and Memory

Littletoller Books, 2025, 238 pp, card covers, monochrome. ISBN 978-1-91506-546-0. £16

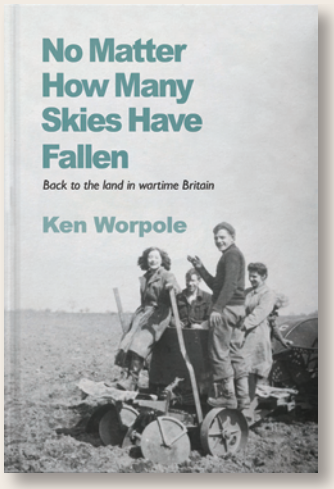
Ken Worpole is something of a national treasure, having spent more than half a century writing and presenting on the subject of 'landscape and the built environment' and its effect on individuals and society at large. His focus often comes back to his starting point – East London and the adjoining parts of Essex from the late 1950s. This book represents a selection of his essays touching on diverse topics – the 1953 floods, the role of statuary and public monuments (celebration or warning?), the Green Belt, the Peculiar People, Thaxted Folk Festival, isolated weatherboard houses, the Plotland 'villa', the bleak coastal marshes.

The role of the A13 road recurs, connecting the industrial areas of Dagenham and the Ford car factory, via a strip of often scrubby agricultural land to the coast at Southend with its lively music scene, relentless pursuit of changing clothing fashions and pavement cafés. Vivian Stanshall, Robin Trower, Wilko Johnson and others showed the way for a generation in music and teenage culture, all local lads who had an influence on the wider public taste.

The text follows Worpole's interests, and it often seems to be meandering, but never aimless: the papers offer thoughts on a range of social issues, but the underlying thrust is that buildings and surroundings affect the people who use them in ways which are seldom appreciated. Worpole guides the reader down some dark paths, with radical politics and religion ever in the background. Coastal Essex, he seems to imply, has always been a breeding ground for new ways of looking at the world.

In all, this is a valuable documentation of some under-explored areas of social history, presented more as fond reminiscences of people and places than as dry academic discourse. The format is a compendium of individual papers, but Worpole's interest in social history forms a continuous thread running through the contributions.

Heather Godfrey



Ken Worpole

No Matter How Many Skies Have Fallen

Back to the Land in Wartime Britain

Littletoller Books, 2021, 169 pp, card covers, monochrome, maps. ISBN 978-1-908213-86-0. £15

Frating Hall Farm in the Dengie peninsula was a rural backwater when it was taken over by a group of radical thinkers in 1943 as part of the drive for increased production of home-grown food. The farm provided an opportunity to introduce alternative lifestyles and working methods. Initially, there was a good deal of opposition from the local populace, but over time the economic success of the venture won them respect.

This book documents the establishment of the project and something of its progress. Relying on memoirs and reminiscences, photographs and outside comment, Worpole shows how the combination of utopian ideals and sheer hard work created a unique experiment. The group subscribed to pacificist views as well as some unorthodox religious ideas, and it took in refugees from the Spanish Civil War, prisoners of war, evacuees from east London's bombed docklands and others. Among the luminaries associated with the project were D. H. Lawrence, Vera Brittain, Max Plowman and George Orwell; Plowman had previously run *The Adelphi* magazine with John Middleton Murray and established accommodation for Basque refugees at The Oaks in Langham.

The book includes a photographic record of agricultural work – ploughing, sorting potatoes by hand, threshing hay. With so many creatives among the inhabitants and their supporters, there was inevitably a lively music and choral scene and theatrical performances; these toured the villages locally and were very popular, which helped overcome the distrust and suspicion with which the incomers were viewed.

The experiment did not last beyond its eleven-year term: economic factors post-war acted against all but the most efficient farming methods and created the empty monocultural plains which now dominate East Anglia.

As a social-historical document, the book is of great importance in its treatment of the changing economic, religious, political and social factors in the decade after the Second World War. It offers a good balance of personal observations and a snapshot of an attempt to do things differently, by people who were prepared to put their ideas into practice. One criticism: it lacks an index, which would have made it more useful for the researcher.

Heather Godfrey

Gold ring, late 6th or 7th century, found in a field near Epping by detectorist Dean Young in 2023.
PAS Record ID ESS-2E1CD2 (see page 15)

Sir Henry Bate Dudley, 1st Baronet (1745–1824), mezzotint of portrait by Thomas Gainsborough *(see article on page 4)*