

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN • 2020



**The Essex Society
for Archaeology & History**

FORMERLY THE ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Copy for the next issue should be sent to the editor at the above address by no later than 15th October 2020

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Society or its officers.

The illustration on the front cover are a stained glass representation of the Royal Arms from the Old Rectory at Widdington and is reproduced with kind permission of Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers.

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From the President

I trust you are still all keeping well; the pandemic is of course continuing to cause disruption, unable to physically meet during the summer the Society's Council held an abbreviated virtual meeting in July. Unfortunately at that meeting, because of the difficulties and uncertainty of the ongoing pandemic, it was decided to cancel this year's Morant Lunch, AGM and November Symposium. The annual report and accounts were circulated with the Summer Newsletter if you have any questions or comments please send them to the Society's secretary, Howard Brooks. Despite the disruptive effects of the covid virus, at the time of writing, things are beginning to gradually return to something like normal and we are planning our programme of events for 2021, the programme will be circulated with our Winter Newsletter.

Speaking of the newsletter we are still seeking a new editor, we are also still looking for someone to take on the Society's Twitter account and for an editor for the *Essex Journal* to be ready for when our Society takes on responsibility for its publication next year. If you are interested in finding out more about any of these roles, please contact, in the first instance, the Society's Secretary, Howard Brooks.

As it becomes possible to get out and about again it will be well worth visiting Southend Museum to see their exhibition on the princely burial from Prittlewell, which displays many of remarkable objects from the grave. I visited last year and was recently reminded of the exhibition since I have been reading the publication of the burial (Blackmore *et al* 2019) with a view to writing a book review for the

next volume of our *Transactions*. The book notes that in the 5th and 6th centuries AD the lower Thames was an area of cultural commonality with links to the Elbe – Weser area. An area of north-east Germany whose archaeology and historic landscapes I became quite familiar with a few years ago, whilst part of a team doing some work for the Wadden Sea Common Secretariat (the Wadden Sea is the shallow part of the North Sea along the north coast of the Netherlands, north-east Germany and south-east Denmark roughly equivalent to the 'German Bight' well known from the shipping forecast). Travelling back and forth between Essex (territory of the East Saxons) and Lower Saxony had a certain resonance. There are also indications of interaction far older than the Saxon period, one of the urns from the Bronze Age cemetery at Ardeleigh is a distinctive pot known as a 'deckseldoos' derived from the south-west of the Wadden Sea area. It appears that the two areas are not just connected by human interaction; in the winter every year I go to one or other of the of the marshland landscapes along the Crouch estuary to have a look at the flocks of Lapwings and Brent Geese. The spring issue of Essex Wildlife has the story of 'Bran 17' a GPS tagged Brent Goose which took off from the Crouch saltmarsh in March and flew straight to the German part of the Wadden sea covering 360 miles in 8 hours (Smith, 2020), the first leg of its return journey to its breeding grounds in Siberia.

In the summer issue of our newsletter I noted the importance of the linkage between conservation of the historic and natural environment and the need to develop integrated conservation management. One of the great successes

of this approach locally has been the removal of the interior of the Roman shore fort at Bradwell from arable cultivation. That created an area of grassland rich in wild flowers which became home to rare species of bee, enhanced the setting of the Saxon Chapel and halted the slow erosion through ploughing of the archaeological deposits in the forts interior. It is therefore sad to record that after 15 years that land has again been ploughed, destroying instantly its value for nature conservation and renewing the process of erosion of the archaeological deposits. Fortunately it appears that this might be a temporary setback, and the meadow will be restored. Let us hope so, but in any case this is a reminder of how fragile the benefits provided by environmental enhancement schemes are; often essentially depending on a decision over whether the value of a grant for delivering 'public benefit' is greater than the value of an arable crop.

Nigel Brown

Sources:

Blackmore, L., Blair, I., Hirst, S. and Scull, C., *The Prittlewell: excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003*, Museum of London monograph 73 (2003).

Smith, R., 'Brent geese: it's a family affair', *Essex Wildlife*, no.111 (2020), pp.22-3.

We welcome as new members

Paul Bonnici of Maldon; Adrian Brown of Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol; and Stephen Pollington of Boxted.

Editors for the *Essex Journal* and Newsletter required

Unfortunately Neil Wiffen intends so stand down as editor of *Essex Journal* at the end of this year, when ESAH will assume responsibility for publishing. We need to find a new editor with effect from the Spring 2021 issue. There are two issues a year and an honorarium of £250 per issue is available.

From Spring 2021 there will be a vacancy for editor of the ESAH Newsletter, which in future will be digital and distributed electronically to members at regular intervals.

Finally, a volunteer is required to operate the Society's Twitter account.

If you are interested in any of these positions and would like more details please email our Secretary, Howard Brooks (howard000brooks@gmail.com) who will be pleased to provide further information.

It is important that these positions are filled to enable the Society to continue to operate smoothly.



British Association for Local History awards

As reported in the last newsletter, two Essex publications were the recipients of awards this year from the British Association for Local History. *Essex Journal* received its second national award in two years, when Neil Wiffen, was presented with an award for his article, *Supplying the army: the contribution of Essex to provisioning the forces of Edward III, c.1337*.

This was followed by an award for the *ESAH Newsletter*, which our Assistant Editor, Dr. Michael Leach was due to collect at the BALH Local History Day in London. Unfortunately this had to become a virtual event, but it did not stop the annual recognition of achievements in local history. The panel of assessor's comments regarding our Newsletter were as follows:

"An attractively-produced Newsletter, which regularly includes a letter from the President, topical news items and snippets about aspects of Essex history culled from other journals and newspapers, brief notes on historical topics, Society information with full details of forthcoming events and short book reviews as well as letters from readers. This quarterly newsletter is exactly what is needed for a county society and makes maximum use of the opportunity provided by 24 pages. Like all good Newsletters it is both a handy reference and a way of maintaining contact with the membership. It also serves as a historical source in its own right – well worth keeping for your local history collection."

As Michael was unable to collect the certificate in person, it was posted to our secretary, Howard Brooks, who has kindly arranged to frame it and will be displayed in our Library at Essex University.

Adrian Corder-Birch

Obituaries

I am sorry to report the recent deaths of two Essex historians namely David Young of Chingford and Maurice Young of Braintree (who were not related).

David Arthur Young (1927-2020)

David Young, who died on 26th May 2020, aged 93 years, took a keen interest in the history of the Chingford area. He was a member of Chingford Historical Society for over 40 years and during the 1980s was, chairman and joint Hon. Secretary, before his election as President. He was a prominent supporter of Essex Historical and Archaeological Congress and regularly attended meetings for many years. His lifelong interest in sundials led to being a co-founder of the British Sundial Society in 1989. He often gave well illustrated talks about the history and technology of sundials and in 2000, as part of the Millennium project at Easton Lodge Gardens he helped design and install a living sundial, which remains very successful.

Adrian Corder-Birch

Sources:

I am grateful to Dorothy Lockwood and Martin Stuchfield for their help.

Epping Forest Guardian (7th July 2020)

Maurice William Young (1934-2020)

Maurice Young who died on 1st June 2020, aged 86 years was a retired solicitor, commissioner for oaths and a former part time clerk to the justices. He had a particular interest in the history of Gosfield, where he was clerk to the Parish Council and had lived before moving to Braintree. He was a long standing member of Halstead and District Local History Society and its auditor for nearly twenty years, before election as a Vice-President. He was an active member of the former Braintree and Bocking Civic Society and continued as a leading member of its successor The Braintree Society.

Adrian Corder-Birch

Sources:

This is abbreviated from an obituary I wrote for the Autumn 2020 issue of the Halstead and District Local History Society Newsletter.

Call for papers for *Itinera*, a new Journal for research into Roman roads

The Roman Roads Research Association (R.R.R.A.) is launching its own peer-reviewed journal, *Itinera*, which will be devoted to publishing material that contributes to a better understanding of the Roman road network and its place within the wider context of Roman studies, both in Britain and internationally. It will be published both digitally and in hard copy.

R.R.R.A. are keen to accept contributions from anyone whose work or research may involve a Roman road. The Journal will welcome longer

peer-reviewed contributions, which could include accounts of newly identified roads, or papers exploring the wider context of roads as related to military and civilian activity, forts, planning, surveying and all aspects of Roman life. In a similar fashion to Britannia, *Itinera* will also contain a section (Roman Roads in XXXX) designed to provide an overview of all archaeological work and discoveries involving Roman roads in the previous year. In short, if it involves a Roman road, it will find a home in *Itinera*. Since our readership is unlikely to duplicate that of most other societies, we are happy to consider papers that have been previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere, subject of course to the agreement of the other publisher.

If your work, research or study has recently involved a Roman road and you feel that can make a contribution to our exciting new project, please contact *Itinera's* editor, Robert Entwistle (itinera@romanroads.org). The deadline for submissions is 15th November 2020, but please let us know as soon as possible if you are thinking of submitting a paper.

Further details, including Notes for Contributors, can be found on our website at www.romanroads.org/itinera.html.

**Mike Haken
Chairman, R.R.R.A.**

Essex coal

In the Summer 2020 Newsletter, pp.11-12, there was an interesting article by Dr. Michael Leach about the Eastern Counties Coal Boring and Development Association Limited. A little more information about the



Essex and Suffolk Coal Exploration Scheme has been re-discovered and I hope this short sequel to Dr. Leach's article will be of interest.

A long coal strike took place during 1893 and this gave geologists a new impetus to try and discover coal at workable depths in Essex and Suffolk. It was considered that if Essex clay could be burnt with Essex coal, then brickmaking would be a more profitable speculation. Essex coal would be significantly cheaper because transportation costs would be reduced. The company from Whitehaven whose tender was accepted to carry out experimental borings in the search for coal was the Vivian Boring and Exploration Company. They made the first bore on the estate of William Isaac Graham at Crepping Hall, Stutton, but to the disappointment of geologists and investors no coal was found. Two of the personnel involved with the Eastern Counties Coal Boring and Development Association Limited were George Frederick Mansell and Richard C. Rapier. George Mansell, the company secretary, was an accountant practicing from St. Mary's Chambers, 10 Church Street North, Colchester and Richard Rapier of Ipswich was the chairman who hosted company meetings.

Adrian Corder-Birch

Sources:

The British Clayworker (September 1893) p.102; (September 1894); (November 1894) p.175.

Interesting find at Pebmarsh

I have known Bob Bell, a retired officer with Essex Police for a number of years.

About four years ago he took up the hobby of metal detecting, often joined by his father-in-law, Jim Hutchins, a keen local historian. Towards the end of last year Bob was metal detecting in a field at Pebmarsh when he found a metal badge, which he immediately recognised as a policeman's helmet badge inscribed, *Essex Constabulary*. This discovery led to information about a very gruesome murder being unveiled. During the early morning of 2nd September 1896, Samuel Bentall Collis, a farmer of Valiants Farm, Pebmarsh went to his widowed mother, Susannah Collis's nearby Old Hill Farm in the village and tried to gain admittance, but not being able to do so, threw an iron bar through a downstairs window. When Robert John Cockerill, who was his mother's farm bailiff, arrived at the farm, Collis was seen to speak to him for a couple of minutes, shot him and then cut off his head. Collis then marched off the farm with the bailiff's head in a bowl. He was met by P.C. Charles Henry Cook of Essex Constabulary, who tackled him, took the gun from him, also a revolver, razor and carving knife and with assistance tied Collis to a cart and conveyed him to Halstead Police Station. The prisoner was brought before Charles Portway, J.P., and remanded in custody to appear at Chelmsford Assizes. An inquest was held at Pebmarsh and following summing up by the Coroner, the jury found that the deceased, Robert Cockerill, aged 54, married and the father of eight children was wilfully murdered by Samuel Bentall Collis. Robert Cockerill was buried in Pebmarsh Churchyard and on 11th September his family left the village for London. Collis was remanded on 7th September 1896 by

Halstead Petty Sessions, certified insane on 8th September 1896, confined to Chelmsford Prison and removed to Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Crowthorne, Berkshire on 10th September 1896. He died at Broadmoor on 23rd May 1899, aged 37 years.

At the conclusion of the Inquest, P.C. Cook was commended for his action. Similarly, at the next Halstead Petty Sessions, with Lewis Hornor, J.P., presiding, he referred to the gallantry of P.C. Cook, who was presented with a Certificate of Merit. It was thought that he probably averted the perpetration of further crimes by the murderer. It is highly likely that P.C. Cook lost his helmet badge during his struggle with Collis and that it remained in the field until found by Bob Bell over 120 years later.

Adrian Corder-Birch

Sources:

Criminal Lunacy Warrant and Entry Books 1882-1898.

Chelmsford Chronicle (4th September 1896), p.8.

Essex Standard (12th September 1896), p.2.

Essex Standard (19th September 1896), p.2.

Chelmsford Chronicle (22nd September 1896), p.7.

Essex Newsman (14th November 1896), p.3.

Daily Mail (28th November 2019), p.32.

Stained glass from the Old Rectory Widdington

A little bit of Essex history passed through the saleroom of Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers, Stansted Mountfitchet, on 11th March 2020, when five panels of armorial stained glass were sold for £1,800. They were described as the property of the late Mr. and Mrs. Brian Lister of the Old Rectory, Widdington, where they had lived for more than forty years. Brian Lister, a designer and builder of sports racing cars, died in 2014, and the house was put on the market in 2018 following the death of his widow Josephine. The stained glass was among a number of items sold by Sworders, and the panels can be seen in the sale particulars for the house displayed in lightboxes on the walls of a converted barn in the grounds.

Both the Old Rectory and the barn (or stable block) are timber-framed and listed Grade II, the former dating back to the 16th century, and although the listing descriptions do not mention any stained glass, it is described in some detail by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments' *Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex*, vol.I (1916), p.348, where it is said to be hanging in the front door. This door is indeed glazed, but now with clear glass. It would seem, therefore, that the glass had been in the rectory for at least a century, but that it was taken out of the front door by the Listers for whatever reason.

Two of the panels have shields with the Tudor royal arms within a garter, in both cases with the third quarter replaced with plain red glass that has been used for repairs in a number of places. The third panel is made up of oddments including a lion passant crest.



*The arms of Mildmay impaling Radcliffe.
(photo: © Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers)*

The remaining two panels, however, are of greater interest, and they both helpfully include the names of those commemorated: 'Waldegrave Myldemay' and 'Myldemay Radclyf'.

Both shields are set in a border of strapwork garnished with fruit. The first bears the arms of Sir Thomas Mildmay of Moulsham Hall (d.1608) impaled with those of his first wife Lady Frances, daughter of Henry Radcliffe, 2nd Earl of Sussex. The second commemorates Sir Thomas's sister Elizabeth (d.1581), who married Sir William Waldegrave in 1564.

Sir William Waldegrave rebuilt Smallbridge Hall, Bures, and there is a fine monument to him and Elizabeth in the parish church there. Smallbridge Hall has been much altered and reduced, but there survives within it a piece of armorial glass dated 1572 which has the Waldegrave arms impaling those of Mildmay: not, however, the same Mildmay arms, as these changed in 1583, and as the Widdington glass shows the new arms, this piece must have been made after Elizabeth's death. Nonetheless the style of the glass

is very similar, and Edward Martin (to whom I am indebted for much of this information) had previously noted a similarity between the Smallbridge Hall glass and another piece in Erwarnton Hall, dated 1575 (with the Parker/Morley arms), and thought that they might be by the same maker.

William Tyllotson, who visited Smallbridge Hall in 1600 as part of his cataloguing of arms and epitaphs, makes no mention of the Widdington glass, so perhaps it was originally in Moulsham Hall, which Thomas's father (also Thomas, d.1566) had rebuilt on a grand scale. This was pulled down in 1809, and it is tempting to speculate that not long afterwards these panels might have been acquired by a clergyman with antiquarian tastes and found their way to Widdington.

James Bettley

Sources:

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments' Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex, I (1916), p.348.



*The arms of Waldegrave impaling Mildmay.
(photo: © Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers)*

Ballington Hall

Ballington-cum-Brundon was in the historic county of Essex, but is now in Suffolk. Ballington Hall was the last home of Charles Frederick Denne Sperling, J.P., M.A., F.S.A. (1861-1938) who was President of Essex Archaeological Society, as it then was, from 1928 to 1933. This large Elizabethan manor house has recently been advertised for sale, which is an opportunity to remind us of its very unusual history. In 1972 it was moved about a thousand feet up Ballington Hill onto higher ground so its owners

could enjoy views over Sudbury and the Stour Valley. The chimneys and some internal walls were removed and the remaining structure, weighing some 170 tons, was encased in a massive metal frame and lifted by hydraulic jacks onto 26 wheels. The building was then hauled very slowly, inch by inch, up the hill to its final position, which took a few weeks. I remember visiting on a couple of occasions to watch this work with enormous interest. I wonder what our former President would have thought about his home being moved!

Adrian Corder-Birch



*Ballington Hall in the process of being moved to its new site (April 1972).
(photo: © Historic England)*



Lockdown landscapes

One of the few upsides of the Covid-19 pandemic is that it has made some of us explore our immediate locality with considerably more thoroughness than we have ever done before.

Since 18th March, when Essex County Council sent its employees to Work from Home, we have walked nearly all of the public footpaths, bridleways and green lanes within a 5km radius of Cressing. Many, possibly most, of these are medieval in origin and it is possible that some may have been even older. Recent archaeological fieldwork has demonstrated that it is possible to reasonably accurately predict the location of lost medieval sites by looking at the pattern of the surviving footpaths, which tend to be longer lived landscape features than the settlements which they originally linked. Thus Marsh Lane in Harlow, which now leads to the Gibberd

Gardens, makes a pronounced dog-leg halfway along its length around a site that has not existed since the 11th or 12th century (Oxford Archaeology East pers. comm.). Excavations at Prior's Green, Takeley recorded two medieval sites off Jacks Lane green lane (Germany *et al* 2015). Jacks Lane makes a slight detour around the surviving Jacks Green medieval moated site whilst the 12/13th century site is located on the opposite side of Jack's Lane and the 13/14th century site slightly to the east of the moated site. Excavations in advance of quarrying at Bradwell Quarry in Rivenhall have identified a whole range of medieval sites strung out along what was once a footpath linking Woodhouse Farm to Sheepcotes Farm (Archaeology South East pers. comm.).

Our walks around Cressing have identified a number of new sites that maybe medieval in origin. On the western side of the Braintree to Witham



*Staceys Farm, Villiums and Wights Farm, at Tye Green, Cressing.
(photo: © Crown copyright)*

road is a green lane leading down towards the River Brain. The original length of the green lane was split by the Braintree-Witham railway in 1848. The eastern end is still in use as a farm track, the western half is now hidden within what appears to be a hedge from the outside but can still be walked once you have barged your way through the nettles. The 1st edn. O.S. map (1875) shows that the lane once led to a farm called Villiums. Once the crop has been harvested we plan to do some fieldwalking on the site to see if it had a medieval predecessor.

On the other side of the Braintree Road the footpath to the north of Wright's Farm terminates at a ditched enclosure. The 1st edn. O.S. map shows a cottage on the site in 1875, but the earthworks are suggestive of a medieval origin, possibly a small moated site. To the east of Ashes Road next to Stacey's Farm is another short stretch of green lane which terminates at an unusually wide ditch, the adjoining small field looks as if it may have originated as a medieval toft. The lane continues along the edge of this parcel of land as a footpath to Lanham Lane (itself a historic lane linking Cressing with the A120).

John Hunter in his paper on 'Field Systems in Essex' (2003) identifies this portion of Cressing parish as an area of polyfocal settlement, separated from the Cressing Temple manorial lands by a band of common fields.

Once the Essex Record Office reopens we hope to further pursue our research into these sites through the documentary and cartographic route. In the meantime we will continue walking the footpaths and lanes of Essex.

Maria Medlycott and Richard Havis

Sources:

Germany, M., Masfield, R. and Scruby, A. 'Excavations of prehistoric, Roman and medieval remains at Prior's Green, Takeley, Essex', *Essex Archaeol. Hist.*, VI (2015), pp.46-105.

Hunter, J., *Field Systems in Essex, Essex Archaeol. Hist. Soc.*, Occ. Paper 1 (2003).

A tale of a tub

As mentioned above in my introduction I have been reading the publication report on the elaborately furnished Saxon chamber tomb excavated at Prittlewell. The many and various objects in the tomb included a tub placed against the west wall of the chamber. For such a mundane sounding object the tub was a rare and remarkable find, but it's not the tub itself which prompted me to write this piece but rather what was found in it; the complete blade of a long scythe. As the report points out the long scythe was the archetypal tool for the intensive exploitation of hay meadows.

Such meadows have historically been a prominent part of the historic landscape of Essex river valleys, and often even quite small stream valleys. Whilst a surprising amount of grassland still survives in the county's river valleys, by far the greater part of the formally extensive meadow land was ploughed up in the later part of the 20th century. I walk across one of the Chelmer valley's larger former meadows, Risley Mead, several times a week. The early 19th century tithe award map shows Risley Mead divided into strips; such was the importance of these meadows that they were often



Risley Mead in winter when it floods, looking south from below the lynchet on its northern boundary, the Chelmer is 0.5km away where the cricket bat willows lining its banks can just be seen in the misty middle distance.

(photo: © Nigel Brown)

divided in that way with various, often quite distant, farms owning strips of meadow land. That system survived into the mid-20th century as this account of another of the Chelmer valley's former meadows indicates 'No description of the farm fields would be complete without mention of Cuton Mead which is some four miles away past the hamlet of Brook End. It is a large stretch of mead land divided up into strips of various sizes which are allotted to various farms in the district. Our share is ten acres, which are bought with the farm as part of it. They give an excellent crop of hay, and moreover one may graze two cattle per acre from the 12th August to 12th October. Cuton is the object of an annual expedition for which everyone prays for good weather so that it may be briefly concluded and the hay brought safely home' (Smith (1948)).

Knowing that such meadows were an important part of the medieval economy, on the odd occasion when I have spoken about Risley Mead and similar meadows, I have often suggested they were probably managed as hay meadows for a thousand years or more, being pretty certain that they will have been around in the Saxon period. The scythe from Prittlewell makes one wonder if they are even older, established in the early Saxon period if not before. Detailed study of archaeological finds of long scythes across northern Europe from the 5th century onwards has demonstrated that they were developed from Roman prototypes (Hirst with Blackmore (2019)). Continuity of hay production in England from the Roman period has long been suspected (Lambrick and Robinson (1988), p.73). There are other suggestions of agricultural continuity

in and around the Chelmer valley; a pollen sequence recovered from waterlogged sediments in advance of construction of the A12 Chelmsford bypass indicated continuous cereal production from the Iron Age through the Roman and Saxon periods (Murphy (1996), 177). Some field boundaries established around the villa at Great Holts, Boreham survived to influence the field boundaries mapped on the 1st Edition O.S. (Rippon (2012), p.102).

One of the features of meadows like Risley Mead is the presence of lynchets around their up slope boundaries. Lynchets are earth banks resulting from differential land use; in the case of those around valley bottom pasture, arable cultivation on the higher ground meant that soil moved down slope to the boundary of the permanent pasture over the centuries forming a bank which can be quite substantial. Lynchets separating historic pasture from arable occur in river and stream valleys throughout Essex, they are significant ancient landscape features in their own right, and can seal buried soils which may contain plaeo-environmental evidence. As long lived boundaries they are often associated with ancient hedges of considerable value for nature conservation, the banks themselves offer microhabitats important for biodiversity. Even where the meadows have been ploughed the lynchets survive around the boundary. Where fields have been amalgamated and the old boundaries removed, lynchets can often still be detected as a somewhat step like break in slope, and marked by a clear change of soil character from the dark friable soil formed by the ploughed meadow peat to the light stonier soil up slope. As and when opportunities arise

for new planting or re-establishment of hedges these lynchets may be useful targets; restoring ancient landscape features and enhancing biodiversity and visual interest. No systematic survey of lynchets in Essex river valleys has been undertaken and an understanding of their location and present condition could be useful. That is something for future consideration and has taken us a long way from a tub placed in a grave in what is now Southend at sometime between A.D. 575 and A.D. 605.

Nigel Brown

Sources:

Hirst, S. with Blackmore, L., 'The Scythe Blade' in Blackmore, L., Blair, I., Hirst, S. and Scull, C. *The Prittlewell princely burial: excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003*, MOLA, London (2019).

Murphy, P., 'Environmental archaeology in Essex' in Bedwin, O., ed., *The Archaeology of Essex: proceedings of the Writtle Conference*, (1996), pp.168-18.

Lambrick, G. and Robinson, M., 'The development of floodplain grassland in the upper Thames valley' in Jones, M., ed., *Archaeology and the Flora of the British Isles*, O.U.C.A., Oxford (1988), pp.55-75.

Rippon, S., 'Ancient and planned countryside: the origins of regional variation in landscape character across Essex and East Anglia' in Brown, N., Medlycott, M. and Bedwin, O. 'The Archaeology of Essex: proceedings of the Chelmsford conference', *Essex Archaeol. Hist.*, III (4th series), pp.97-109.

Smith, D., *The Same Sky Over All*, London (1948).



Dismantling of the Monasteries: an Essex study

When this writer was working at Southend Museum, one of the last projects he undertook before retirement was the investigation of the post-dissolution history of Prittlewell Priory. This resulted in an article for our *Transactions* but he became aware, during the research, how ignorant he was of the fate of other Essex monastic buildings following the dissolution of the later 1530s. And then, following a literature search, it became clear that, apart from Oxley's work, very little work had been undertaken on this general theme in Essex, although there



Bicknacre Priory.
(photo: © Ken Crowe)

has been, more recently, a growing interest in the post-dissolution history and archaeology of monastic buildings nationally.

It was decided that this was an aspect that needed further investigation, and so began the research project that this short note describes. The project will be based on a combination of documentary (mainly records of the Court of Augmentations) and archaeological evidence, both published/unpublished, and from personal observation of standing remains. Three principal elements will be investigated: the dismantling of the monastic buildings; the re-use of monastic materials; conversion of remaining monastic buildings to other uses.

The dismantling of the monastic buildings will look at the process and chronology of demolition, the methods used in taking down the buildings, the personnel involved (the categories of workers together with named individuals), the cost of the work, including wages paid and the methods and costs of transporting the materials. The potential dangers of demolition will also be touched on.

The re-use or recycling of materials will start with the on-site sales of materials which sometimes included 'structural' elements such as wainscot and floor tiles; these must have been purchased with re-use in mind. The lead taken (mainly) from the roofs of the monastic buildings was normally reserved for the king (but not always), and it is generally possible to identify lead from particular monasteries being ear-marked for specific crown works, to be delivered to a clerk of works or to a contractor/subcontractor.

The recycling of stone is an element that spans several centuries, from the

time of dissolution up to the 18th and 19th centuries. Essex is an interesting (if frustrating) example, since it is a 'non-stone' county, one in which stone was not generally used in domestic buildings (except in the very grandest). So, finding examples of the re-use of monastic stone in secular buildings (outside the monastic precinct) presents something of a challenge. However, examples of the re-use of monastic stone in other secular contexts is much more fruitful, and one that will take us well into the 19th century.

The third element, the conversion of remaining monastic buildings (or parts of them) to other uses, is one that has received considerable attention in the recent past, principally because the resulting structures are, on the whole, still present in the landscape. This includes both secular buildings, (for example, some grand country seats), and many parish churches.

This, then, is a very brief outline of the project, which was under way before the 'lock-down'. Still, the last few months has provided the opportunity to get to grips with the medieval Latin and hone palaeographical skills!

Ken Crowe

Sources:

'Prittlewell Priory since 1536', *Essex Archaeol. Hist.*, VI (4th series, 2015), pp.344-65.

I must acknowledge the invaluable help and encouragement of several people, even at this quite early stage, including Dr. Matt Bristow (V.C.H./I.H.R.), Dr. Michael Leach, Maria Medlycott (Historic Environment), Dr. Chris Thornton (V.C.H.) and Neil Wiffen.

The Petition of the freeholders of Essex to the House of Commons in April 1640

The decade of the 1630s was marked by the imposition of unpopular policies in Essex and elsewhere by the regime of Charles I. In the Church of England, Puritan ministers found themselves silenced and often deprived of their livings for resisting the new emphasis on the sacraments rather than on preaching, on the doctrine of free will rather than on predestination, on the movement of altars to the East end of churches and over the toleration of games on Sundays. In the State, levies like Ship Money were extended inland (without Parliamentary sanction), novel monopolies in trade were established and the forest of Essex's boundaries were widened to cover almost all of the county. Naturally enough, when Charles was obliged to call Parliament again in the spring of 1640 because of Scotland's rebellion, the grievances of the freeholders of Essex were presented to the House of Commons through the hands of the county's two M.P.s, Sir Thomas Barrington of Hatfield Broad Oak and Sir Harbottle Grimston of Bradfield Hall.

Other counties had similar complaints. But the order in which the complaints were made in a formal petition on Church and State matters was common to the petition from Hertfordshire presented to the House of Commons on the same day (18 April 1640). The burden of ecclesiastical courts and the dangers of heresy and schism threatening to undermine the peace of the commonwealth were stressed in both



petitions. Hertfordshire like Essex was imperilled by exactions like impositions, monopolies, and ship money although not by an extension of forest boundaries. The two petitions shared some phrases and made the same case against the King's rule. What appears, *prima facie*, to have been a summary of a petition from the freeholders of Northamptonshire had been presented the previous day with a similar order setting out that county's grievances.

It is impossible to be certain but the likelihood that these petitions were part of an organised campaign cannot be ruled out. The dominant figure in Essex and in the contested county election to the Short Parliament, Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick, had close connections with Hertfordshire as did Barrington and also held land in Northamptonshire. The petitions from the first two of these counties were preserved in a collection of miscellaneous papers along with other material linked to Warwick's household Chaplain, John Gauden, later Dean of Bocking. The balance of the evidence hints at the co-ordination of protests against the Caroline regime. Admittedly, this came to nothing in the spring of 1640: after the failure of Charles I's expedition against the Scots in the summer of that year, the redress of these grievances became irresistible when the Long Parliament met in November 1640.

Christopher Thompson

Sources:

Esther S. Cope and Willson H. Coates, ed., *Proceedings of the Short Parliament of 1640, Camden Society*, XIX (4th series, 1977), pp.274-8.

Brit. Lib. Harl. MS. 4931 for the inclusion there of Edward Benlowes's verses which also appear in *Cambridge University Library MS. Add. 5350* along with other tributes to Warwick's late daughter-in-law, Lady Anne Rich.

The 1665-6 plague from the reports of Ralph Josselin of Earls Colne

Under the confinement of the present coronavirus lockdown, it is not unnatural to look back at previous similar events, and to turn to Ralph Josselin's diary which, for much of 1665 and 1666, records the totals from London's weekly bills of mortality. He must have received these publications every week for nearly 18 months in order to be able to enter the deaths so regularly. For much of this period, he also obtained weekly figures for Colchester which presumably reported the town's weekly plague deaths in a similar way. Being unable to compare Josselin's figures with other contemporary sources, one should be cautious about their accuracy, though they do appear to have been systematically and carefully noted in his diary. Thomas Cromwell, writing in the early 19th century, also produced an unreferenced set of figures for the town's plague deaths, perhaps compiled from the same source that Josselin used, though he totalled them month by month, rather than week by week, so they are not exactly comparable. Though Josselin's figures for the month of September 1665 are confusing, there is otherwise a remarkable similarity in the progress of the epidemic reported by the

two men, suggesting that both probably used the same source.

The London plague death figures, though undoubtedly substantial, should probably also be questioned. There must have been an element of uncertainty about the accuracy of the diagnosis, as the 'viewers' who examined the corpses would have been hard put to it to keep up with over 7,000 weekly deaths in the early autumn peak of 1665. In addition, a significant number of plague deaths would have been caused by septicaemia or pneumonia which would have left external stigmata on the corpse to assist the 'viewer' in making a diagnosis. Josselin gave the total number of London plague deaths over the course of 1665 as the astonishing figure of 68,596, with nearly another 30,000 from other causes (some of which would also have been plague). Population estimates for London in the mid-17th century vary widely but, even if it was high as 500,000, this would suggest that at least one in five of the city's population died in that single year.

Josselin first noted plague in London in May 1665, and at the beginning of July one of his sons was released by his London master and allowed to come home. It was not till mid-August that Josselin noted 'Colchester's infection', and the unexpected death of two men returning from that town. After this incident, he normally reported the Colchester figures for almost every week, and these showed a dramatic increase in early autumn, similar to the pattern in London where the deaths rose from 267 in the beginning of July to 7,165 three months later. This autumn peak is characteristic of plague, caused by the

rat fleas seeking an alternative (though less favoured) means of sustenance when their rodent hosts had died in substantial numbers. Plague deaths then dropped off over the winter, and peaked again in the early summer of 1666. A similar pattern was seen in London, though its 1666 peak was very much smaller than the one in the previous year. Josselin did not total the plague deaths for Colchester for 1665 and 1666, but Cromwell's figures added up to 4731, accounting for nearly half the town's estimated population of 10,000. This heavy mortality must have resulted from the crowded nature of the town which, a decade earlier, had been described by the somewhat jaundiced pen of John Evelyn as 'a ragged and fractious town, now swarming with sectaries'. The severity of the town's epidemic necessitated the construction of two new pest houses, as well as local and countywide levies to support the destitute. 'Searchers' were appointed to identify plague victims, as well as 'buriers' who must have been hard pressed to keep up with their gruesome task.

Josselin noted that other Essex towns were visited by plague, and named Braintree, Coggeshall, Feering, Halstead and Kelvedon, with the last town recording 57 deaths in the last week of July 1666, and 23 in the first week of the following month. In early October, there had been 100 burials in the previous three weeks in Harwich, the graveyard was full and a new site for a cemetery was being sought. Josselin believed that the deaths were divine retribution for human wickedness, though he expressed surprise that his own sinful parish had been spared. Periodic national fast days were organised throughout



the epidemic, but no other specific preventative measures are mentioned, other than an instruction to Londoners in September 1655 to keep fires burning continuously for three days and three nights outside the door of every house.

In London, Evelyn briefly referred to 'the shops shut up, all in mournful silence' and 'multitudes of poor pestiferous creatures begging alms' in 1665, but Josselin said nothing about the effects on local society or the individuals that he knew. Death and disease were ever present in town and country, and epidemics were a much more frequent phenomenon, though their effects must have been less obvious in a rural community. Even so, it is hard to accept that Colchester could have been entirely fatalistic about losing half its population. Yet within a decade, its population appears to have returned to, or near to pre-plague levels through inward migration – the usual mechanism by which cities and towns made up their lost numbers.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Bray, W., ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn*, I, (London, 1952) p.318, pp.404-5.

Conybeare, J., ed., *A Textbook of Medicine* (Edinburgh, 1929), pp.87-8.

Cooper, J., ed., *Victoria County History of Essex*, IX (1994), p.68.

Cromwell, T., *History & Description of ... Colchester* (London, 1826), pp.162-3.

MacFarlane, A., ed., *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683*, (British Academy, 1991), pp.518-33.

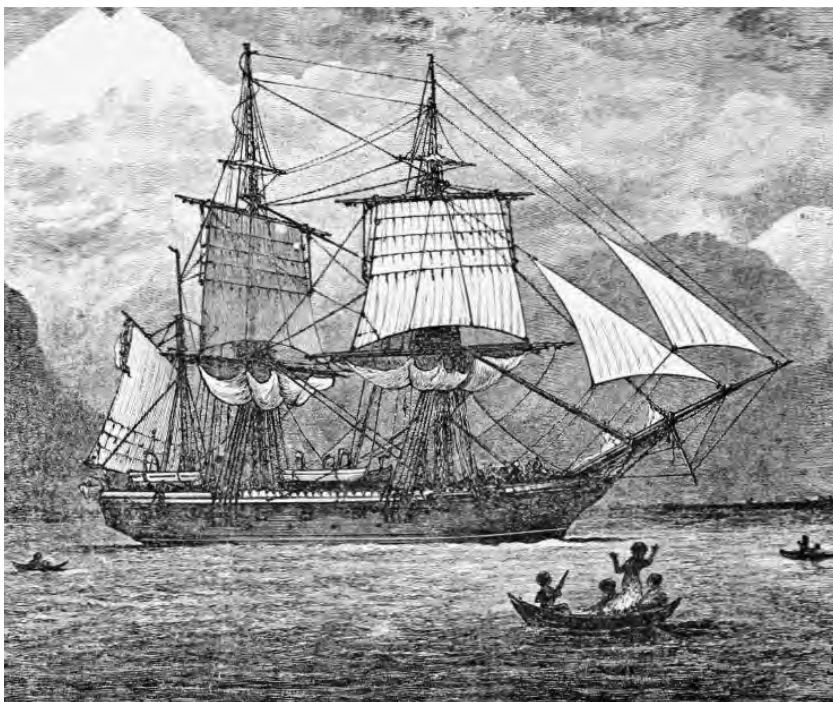
Protection for Essex mud dock and remains of H.M.S. *Beagle*

In May this year Dave Buckley alerted me to the designation and protection of a rare mud dock at Paglesham, Essex as a Scheduled Monument by Historic England. This had been announced in their monthly online newsletter (<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/rare-19th-century-ship-dock-protected>). Moreover, there was particular interest in this specific site over and beyond its rarity as a mud dock (apparently only five are now known from England). This is because it is thought to be the last resting place of H.M.S. *Beagle*, the Royal Navy ship in which Charles Darwin voyaged around the world from 1831 to 1836, making the observations that would eventually result in his theory of evolution.

Dave knew that I would be interested in this, especially as I had some involvement with the site back in 2000, when he was my manager at Essex County Council (E.C.C.). Indeed, this was one of the most interesting and unusual projects that I worked on during my career at E.C.C. This was partly owing to some of the people involved, with the result that as well as looking to the past there was also a link to the exploration of outer space, specifically Mars! I had been approached to represent E.C.C. on a team which was trying to find the remains of H.M.S. *Beagle*. The team was led by the late Dr. Robert Prescott of the Scottish Institute of Maritime Studies at the University of St. Andrews, who provided the nautical heritage expertise. A more exotic element came

from the people behind the project, Professor Colin Pillinger and his wife, Judith. They were scientists and the inspiration behind the *Beagle 2* Mars Lander, due to reach Mars in 2003 with experiments to look for evidence of life. As they had named the lander after Darwin's ship the Pillingers were interested in what had happened to the original *Beagle*. If successful, this could help with publicity for *Beagle 2*, something they had been very adept at, securing the involvement of such figures as the rock band, Blur, and the artist Damien Hirst. Colin Pillinger was a larger-than-life character who became a recognizable figure with his extravagant, mutton-chop whiskers and gift for popularising science.

Documentary research into what happened to H.M.S. *Beagle* had led the project to Paglesham. After the end of its naval service, which included other voyages of exploration, the ship was refitted as a coastguard watch vessel and transferred to H.M. Customs and Excise. Now known as 'W.N.7' the *Beagle* was moored in the River Roach near Paglesham, where her mission, with other similar, stationary vessels, was to control smuggling on the Essex coast. The *Beagle's* position is shown on nautical charts from the period and census records provide information about the crew of seven coastguard officers and their families who lived on board.



H.M.S. Beagle in the Straits of Magellan.



In 1870, the *Beagle* was sold to be scrapped, to 'Murray and Trainer' and it was at this point that the trail went cold. We were unable to find any information about a salvage company of that name. However, documentary research revealed that in 1851 local oystermen petitioned Customs and Excise to move the ship from the middle of the channel where it was felt to be obstructing the river. I, and others, looked at early O.S. maps and we noticed that, at this time a ship-shaped indentation, similar in size to the *Beagle*, appeared on the north side of the Roach. If this represents a dock where the vessel was moved to, it would have sat on the mud for about 20 years before scrapping commenced. As it was thought that only the more easily accessible upper parts of the ship would have been removed, it was possible that the lower parts of the *Beagle* could have survived.

Dr. Prescott and his team carried out further survey and research in 2003, which indicated that substantial timbers could still be present in the dock, which had almost completely filled in since the 19th century. It was also found that the 1871 census referred to a new farmhouse in the names of 'William Murray' and 'Thomas Rainer'. So, if 'Trainer' is a misprint for 'T. Rainer' it is possible that they were the people who bought the ship for scrapping. The house had been demolished but timbers that could have come from the *Beagle* were found in a boathouse close to the site of the building, and anchors were found in nearby villages. The 2003 work became the focus for a B.B.C. documentary and was also reported on by Dr. Michael Leach in issue 142 of *Essex Archaeology and History News*.

To bring the story up to date, in 2019 Historic England commissioned Wessex Archaeology to carry out drone and geophysical surveys of the site, ahead of the bicentenary in 2020 of the launching of the *Beagle* in 1820. The surveys confirmed the outline of the mud dock and also of a brick slope or 'hard'. Interestingly, a dock of this type is shown in John Constable's painting 'Boat-building near Flatford Mill', now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. This shows what the Paglesham dock might have looked like. Although it has not been possible to confirm that any timbers in the dock belong to the *Beagle*, as a rare survivor of a mud dock the site has value in itself. Accordingly, the remains of the dock entered the National Heritage List as a Scheduled Monument (List Entry Number 1467785) on 13th March 2020.

And what of the *Beagle 2*? In 2003, it seemed that although the lander had reached Mars, it had not survived the landing. I had enjoyed meeting and working with the Pillingers and appreciated their tremendous enthusiasm for finding Darwin's *Beagle* so was naturally disappointed on their behalf. However, in 2015 evidence was found that the *Beagle 2* had indeed reached the surface safely, but it had not been able to deploy fully, and therefore was unable to carry out its mission. Sadly, this information came too late for Colin Pillinger, who had died in 2014. However, I am sure he would have been pleased and proud that the work he started in 2000 had eventually resulted in the likely discovery of the final resting place of H.M.S. *Beagle*.

Paul Gilman

By train to the City of London cemetery at Ilford

The population growth of London, the insanitary state of many inner-city burial grounds, and a series of early 19th century cholera outbreaks necessitated the opening of new cemeteries. The 'initial magnificent seven' were constructed between 1833 and 1841 (none of which were in Essex), supplemented in 1853 by the City of London's plans to construct a new one for their own use. Dr. Simon, the City's Medical Officer of Health, had clearly had his eyes on cemetery developments elsewhere.

In 1854 the London Necropolis Co. had opened a dedicated building at Waterloo station to run funeral trains to Brookwood cemetery in Surrey which had its own two private stations – one for Church of England funerals, the other for non-conformists – reached by a short branch coming off the main line to Basingstoke and beyond. These trains operated for nearly a century until the terminus at Waterloo – and much of its specialised rolling stock – was badly damaged by bombing in 1940. Perhaps inspired by the London Necropolis Co's example, Dr. Simon had started negotiations in 1853 with the Eastern Counties Railway Company about the possibility of a railway link to the City's proposed new cemetery, even before the Ilford site had been selected. This move was motivated – at least in part – by a desire to reduce funeral costs, as it was anticipated that two thirds of burials would be of paupers. Responsibility for choosing the Ilford site, and for its construction, fell to William Haywood assistant surveyor to

the Commissioners of Sewers. As the Eastern Counties Railway (E.C.R.) ran immediately along the southern edge of the chosen site at Ilford, his initial plans included the provision of a new siding and single bay platform to accommodate funeral trains. Negotiations with the E.C.R. started in the summer of 1853 but, over the next 18 months, there were unresolved difficulties over the provision of special facilities for funerals at Bishopsgate station. E.C.R. proposed to build and rent accommodation to the Commissioners who, in turn, agreed to meet the cost of building a platform, waiting room, mortuary and siding at Ilford. E.C.R. may have had cold feet about the economics of the whole enterprise, as they proposed a fare that was double that charged for transporting a coffin on the significantly longer journey to Brookwood cemetery. By the end of 1854, negotiations petered out and it was a horse-drawn hearse that delivered the first burial to the completed cemetery in July 1856. It would seem that both parties realised that the relatively modest demand for railway transport did not justify the investment required. Brookwood, by contrast, was – and still remains – the largest cemetery in Europe.

Today the City of London cemetery is one of the best preserved and maintained of all London's Victorian burial grounds, well landscaped with two picturesque Gothic lodges and an Anglican chapel in the same style.

Michael Leach

Source:

Parsons, B., 'The proposed rail service to the City of London Cemetery' in *Journal of the Great Eastern Railway Society*, no.182 (2020).

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Donations for this Fund, or to the Society's General Fund where the capital can also be used in support of the Society's objectives, are welcome.

Donations should be made payable to the 'Essex Society for Archaeology and History' and could attract Gift Aid.

Please address enquiries to the Hon. Treasurer, Bill Abbott at 13 Sovereign Crescent, Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3UZ or bill.abbott@btinternet.com.

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In order to run the Society it is necessary to keep paper and electronic records of members' names and addresses. It is the Society's policy to keep members' names, addresses, telephone numbers and subscription status only. This information is disclosed to no one, inside or outside the Society, other than those officers and members of Council who need it in order to run the organisation.

Members do have the right to refuse to allow any information about them to be stored on computer, and they should let me know if this is their wish. However, we hope that this note will reassure members that the very limited information held about them is secure and will not be used for any purpose other than the efficient running of the Society. Anyone requiring further details can contact me, or the Newsletter Editor.

Howard Brooks

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2020

Unfortunately three events planned for this autumn have been cancelled as a result of the pandemic. However, it is hoped that the following events can take place:

Sunday, 20th September

Walking tour of Colchester's Victorian red-light district.

For further details of this event and booking please contact either Howard Brooks (Hon. Secretary) at 13 Greenacres, Mile End, Colchester, Essex CO4 5DX – essexarchaeology@hotmail.com or Jane Pearson (Hon. Programme Secretary) at Cob Cottage, The Street, Great Tey, Colchester, Essex CO6 1JS – drjanepearson@hotmail.com. All events to be booked at least 10 days prior to the event. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope for each event, for maps and other instructions if you do not want these by email. Cheques should be made payable to the *Essex Society for Archaeology and History*.

Saturday, 14th November

Essex Industrial Archaeology Group Annual Meeting at Chelmsford including a talk by Dr. Cathy Pearson about the Frederick Roberts Archive of Hoffmann and Marconi. Enquiries to: essexiag@gmail.com

The visits on the Society's programme are open to members and associate members only. The Society can accept no liability for loss or injury sustained by members attending any of its programmed events. Members are asked to take care when visiting old buildings or sites and to alert others to any obvious risks. Please respect the privacy of those who invite us into their homes.

Reminder

It is very important that the Society can keep in communication with you regularly. Quite apart from the present crisis, but also in the future, when printed newsletters cease and digital news will be distributed electronically from early next year. **If you have an email address will you please remember to email it to our Membership Secretary, Martin Stuchfield at martinstuchfield@pentlowhall.uk.**