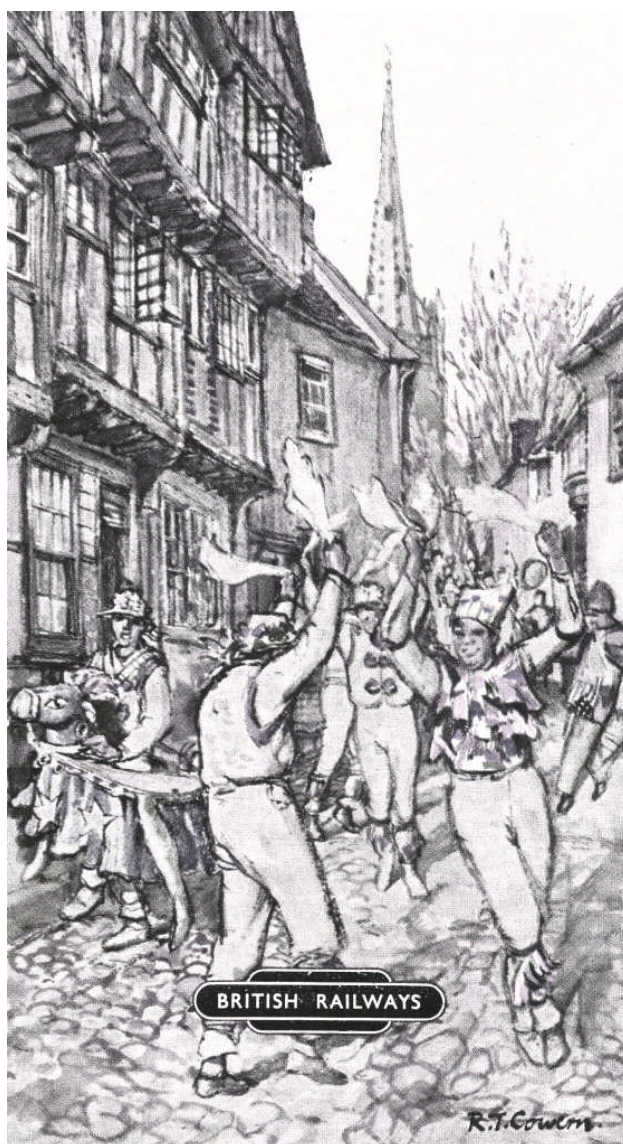


# Essex Archaeology and History News



**Summer 2005**

# THE ESSEX SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

NEWSLETTER 146

SUMMER 2005

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**COPY FOR THE NEXT ISSUE SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS NO LATER THAN 28 OCTOBER 2005**

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

## Cover illustration:

Thaxted Morris dancers depicted by R.T. Cowern in a British Rail leaflet of 1950 promoting the attractions of Essex then accessible by train. Thaxted was on the 'Gin and Toffee' line.

This leaflet, which shows the picture in colour, can be found in the Essex Record Office under reference T/P 99/1. The leaflet was one of over 200 illustrations featured in an Essex Record Office traveling exhibition of 1996 entitled 'Essex – a county, its people and its past'. This exhibition resulted in the Essex Record Office publication 'Essex Illustrated' in 1997.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Since the end of the Second World War, interest in the past and the scope for historical enquiry have, by and large, greatly increased. Not only have the numbers of young people following courses in higher education been greatly expanded, but there has also been a great upsurge in the pursuit of historical knowledge by mature and retired people. The study of family and labour history has, furthermore, led to a soaring demand for information about previously neglected lives of ordinary people in times past and drawn into historical activity thousands from sections of the population in which interest was previously little developed. Local history has undoubtedly been a beneficiary of this changed state of affairs.

While fully recognising this, however, there are regrettably signs at the present time that the situation is no longer improving and may be starting to change for the worse. It appears that fewer young and middle-aged people are coming forward to participate in the activities of historical societies and interest might, in some spheres, be flagging. A variety of features of modern life may, in fact, be militating against a continuation of the growth of historical interest, particularly at the local level.

Although many primary schools and museums and the Essex Record Office seek to promote a knowledge of local history among younger children, it is not followed up at the secondary stage. The National Curriculum does not require a study of local history; teachers are overburdened with administrative work and the maintenance of school discipline; and history may disappear completely from the timetables of the older pupils.

Even those pupils who are attracted to historical studies, including those going on to university courses, will be unlikely to study local history. After graduating, most are heavily encumbered with the requirements of the careers they embark upon, the need to earn sufficient to pay off loans, take out mortgages and secure the wherewithal for practical living. This may not change very much, in fact, throughout their working lives. This could help to explain why fewer people are persuaded to join in local historical activities before retirement. It may be that modern living encourages people to shun communal activity and concentrate on their individual or family responsibilities.

However, an awareness of the past, including that of localities, is vital to any community. Not only does it create an understanding of how the community developed, which is crucial to the resolution of problems and the shaping of the future; it fosters a sense of the value of our social, cultural and environmental heritage.

Vandalism, on a minor or major scale, demonstrates the complete absence of respect for the heritage. Although it is too much to hope that the small minority who obtain a warped satisfaction from smashing things up could be deterred by learning about their historic value, encouraging appreciation and pride helps to create a community which will value and defend the heritage.

More than this, however, the growth of local historical knowledge contributes to the creation of an enhanced local culture which enriches the quality of life for all. The work of historical societies, the creation of local historical collections, the provision of local museums, the

publication of books and articles and the encouragement of local studies are all aspects of this process.

There is, however, a crying need for new generations to provide the personnel to facilitate this. Those of us at present involved need to consider what we can do further to encourage younger men and women to come forward.

Much more could certainly be done to stimulate interest in and a knowledge of local history in the secondary schools. We should seek to convince the education authorities of the desirability of this and consider what we can do to help.

Many of our representatives on the County and District Councils, as well as in Parliament, should be tackled on the issue. The recent decision to halve the grant made to the Victoria County History project, as well as cuts in other aspects of the heritage provision, make it clear that more needs to be done to educate the decision makers about the importance of local history.

It would be good to recruit more teachers and others concerned with education into the ranks of the Essex Society for Archaeology & History. This is no easy task, but we need to ponder whether we could, at least, make them more aware of our activities and appreciative of our work. We should also give some thought to the possibilities that may exist for promoting our cause among other sections of the community.

The Society has a long and honourable record as a standard bearer for the cause of historical studies in Essex stretching back to 1852. We ought to reflect on what we can do to carry the standard forward at the present time. If I

am correct in thinking that there is a danger of general interest in the past falling off and a decline in the recruitment of younger people into historical societies, we should give some thought to the possibility of combating this. This article is an attempt to stimulate discussion of the problem.

Stan Newens

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## **JOHN HUNTER 1932-2005**

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Members will be sad and dismayed to hear of the sudden death from a heart attack on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005 of our past President John Hunter, the foremost authority on the history of the Essex landscape. John was born in 1932 and grew up in Thaxted. He studied architecture at Cambridge and at the Architectural Association in London, and thereafter worked for an architectural practice and later with London County Council where he became involved in conservation activities. He later took a postgraduate qualification in planning and returned to Essex in 1971 to work in Essex County Council's Planning Department, moving to Green Farm, Little Sampford.

This was a time of immense threat to the ancient pattern of the countryside from a combination of spreading urbanism, arable production and Dutch Elm disease. In 1972 John became involved in advising Essex farmers on tree planting in the wake of that disease, and discovered the necessity for evaluating existing landscape features and advising on how they could be retained and managed. He was also one of those involved in the production in 1974 of the well received report *Historic Features: Essex Landscape No. 1*, a first indication of his developing interest in the historic landscape. The Landscape Conservation

Programme his team initiated, that provided grant aid for tree planting and the protection and maintenance of hedgerows and other features, became a model for nationwide schemes. John realised that the preservation of important features such as ancient woodlands, hedgerows, ponds, and historic parks required an understanding of their traditional management. As John was later to write, all this led him deeper into the field of landscape history, which was not only a delightful subject in itself, but also of practical value in providing clues to beneficial management. He therefore set himself the task of exploring 'our forbears' attitudes to nature and landscape, and into their beliefs and their concepts; and to ask whether these have a value for us today'. The result was his stimulating book, *Land into Landscape* (1985), a tour de force journey from ancient Mesopotamia, through Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and much more besides all the way to Essex in the 1980s. During this period he also published widely in reports and articles for Essex County Council and in publications such as *Country Life* and *Landscape Design*.

From 1979 until his retirement in 1996 John was employed as Assistant County Planner and head of the Environmental Services Branch at ECC. His responsibilities included historic buildings, design, archaeology, landscape and country parks. This was a very wide brief and could only have been covered by someone with John's broad knowledge, vision and infectious enthusiasm. Not for nothing was he known, affectionately, as the one-man "University of Essex County Council". With other ECC officers he played a pivotal role in developing innovative policies to protect the historic Essex

landscape and sites from unsympathetic or damaging development or mineral extraction. He had a special talent for collaboration and he deserves special public recognition for fostering the tremendous development of the ECC archaeological service which has done so much to transform our understanding of the county's past.

In the 1990s John emerged as the leading historian of the Essex landscape through the publication of a series of learned papers on the historic landscape of the county, many of them published in *Essex Archaeology and History*. His studies culminated in another fine book, *The Essex Landscape: A Study of its Form and History* (1999), which filled a significant gap for Essex had missed out in the county series inspired by W.G. Hoskins great work *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955). As well as being a work of broad scope, learning and careful reflection it is written in an accessible style suitable for a general audience. Indeed, although rather shy of large audiences and formal occasions, John was a great populariser for his subject and took delight in debating his findings and helping other historians understand the landscapes they were studying. His last publication for the Society – and the first in a series of occasional papers to mark our 150th anniversary – was his paper *Field Systems in Essex* (2003). This provided a marvellous introduction and overview to our county's landscape development from the Iron Age to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century – no simple task – followed by a series of case studies of particular landscapes revealing his mastery of fieldwork and landscape reconstruction. Naturally, it has been widely and positively reviewed, a reviewer in *Agricultural History Review* hoping that it would inspire him to write another larger study. Alas for everyone

that cannot be, but John has laid the foundations for all future study of the subject in Essex.

John gave very freely of his own time supporting a great many voluntary bodies involved with history, archaeology and the countryside. At a regional level he served for 6 years on the National Trust regional committee, and was ESAH's representative on the Scole Committee. County organisations that benefited from his advice included the Essex Gardens Trust and the Victoria County History Appeal Fund, while more locally in NW Essex he supported Easton Lodge and Heritage Sampford. He was particularly pleased to have contributed to the Essex Farming and Wildlife Group (FWAG) from 1973 onwards. He gained much useful knowledge and contacts from many farmers who he realised were themselves the repository of generations of knowledge about the historic landscape. John served as President of our Society from 1996 to 1999, when he proved an excellent person to have in the chair, bringing his extensive knowledge of archaeology, history, conservation and the intricacies of both local government and national legislation and policy to bear on various problems that faced us. After he stepped down from that office he remained an active member of the Society's Council and several committees, frequently shouldering much of the burden of representing the Society's views on newly proposed legislation and consultation documents.

Over the past decades many of us will have spent many happy hours with John in the field (though it seems all too few now), and come away with something new and challenging to think about. And after a tiring morning tramping about

some Essex fields, park boundary or muddy lane, John always seemed to know the best place for essential refreshment before a cheering pub fire. And these were the occasions for wide ranging discussion and development of ideas that will be sorely missed. My personal sense of loss was clearly shared by the many members of the Society who attended John's memorial service and celebration of his life and achievements held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2005. The moving service also paid due attention to his lifelong interest in folk music and dancing. His ashes have been interred under the East window of the Parish Church of St John The Baptist Our Lady and St Laurence at Thaxted

Chris Thornton

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**(ALBERT) CHARLES  
SPARROW QC, DL, FSA.  
1925-2005**

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(Albert) Charles Sparrow QC, DL, FSA. Charles Sparrow, past President of the Society (1975-1978), Honorary Legal Advisor to the Society, and Patron of the VCH (Essex) Appeal Fund, was born in Kasale, India, on 16 September 1925, the son of Charles Thomas Sparrow and his wife Antonia.

His father was Garrison Sergeant Major at Colchester Garrison in the 1930s and attached to the Essex Regiment. The family lived in Abbey Terrace, St John's Green, Colchester, near to the abbey gatehouse, where I met him, as we both attended the Royal Grammar School, Colchester from September 1936.

With the outbreak of World War II, GSM Thomas Charles was promoted Captain. Charles and I joined the local ARP as messengers; he was at the local

headquarters in Maidenburgh Street, while I was at the Warden's post in Priory Street. We did fire watching duty together at the School. He edited the *Colcestrian* and was a full prefect.

While still at school, I produced the *History of St Runwald's Church, Colchester*, in 1942; he reviewed it in the *Colcestrian*, and went on to produce his article in *Essex Review* LII, 1943, pp 67-70, entitled *The Precinct Wall of St John's Abbey*, followed by *Earthworks at Lexden, Colchester*.

When we left CRGS in July 1943 Charles went as a cadet officer to India Command attached to the Royal Signals Regiment, where he rose to captain; I went as a cadet to the Royal Navy. Two years later I was at HMS Tengra, Mandapam, South India, as First Lieutenant, when Charles, who was at Mhow, wrote to me and sent an "invitation" to reflect and drink to those friends in our school group who were all on active service. I have it still and it shows that he had a wonderful sense of humour, sometimes not apparent perhaps. We both went on to serve in the Far East.

On demob, Charles studied law and took his LLB, gaining several prizes. He was called to the bar (Grays Inn) in 1950 and subsequently was a bencher in 1976; Master of the Pictures and Silver, 1985-2001; Treasurer, 1994; a member of the general Council of the Bar, 1994; and a member of the Senate of the Four Inns of Court.

In his civil life, he became Honorary Legal Adviser to the CBA, and later treasurer and was the one who drafted the Abinger Bill on treasure trove. In 2002 he was Honorary Vice-President. He was elected FSA in 1972, and a

freeman of the City of London. He also undertook work for the RSPCA, the Girl Guide Movement, the Royal British Legion, the St John Ambulance Brigade, the Court of Essex University, the Freemen of England, etc.

In 1949 he married Edith Rosalie Taylor and they had two sons and a daughter. Edith died in 1985 and he never recovered from this loss. Lately he had been unwell, and he died of pneumonia in Broomfield Hospital on 16 May 2005.

Charles was always one who spoke his mind. He was a dominant figure and will be missed and a great loss to the organisations he served so well in Colchester, Essex and beyond.

John Appleby

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## JAMES H G SUNNUCKS 1925-2005

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James Horace George Sunnucks died peacefully at his home East Mersea Hall, aged 79 years, on 16 March 2005. He leaves a wife, Tessa, and sons William, John, David and Andrew, ten grandchildren and his sister Anne. The funeral was at East Mersea parish church on 23 March.

James was a Reader at East Mersea for over forty years and was actively engaged in parish work there. He was also a member of this Society for the same length of time. In addition he was very much connected with the Baring Gould Society and often entertained the members at his home.

He had been ill with cancer for some time and had been at St Helena Hospice, Colchester, where as one of the chaplains, I was able to be with him

and we recalled the Society's past activities and those involved. It was his wish to die at home and he will be sadly missed in many fields.

John Appleby

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## **ESSEX PLACE-NAMES PROJECT SEMINAR**

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The Ninth Annual Place-names Seminar will take place in Saffron Walden on Saturday afternoon 12th November 2005. The Guest Speaker will be Dr. S. Oosthuizen, PhD, of Cambridge University.

Tickets are available (price £5 payable to "ESAH") from the Project Coordinator, 27 Tor Bryan, Ingatestone, Essex CM4 9JZ. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

James Kemble

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## **VISIT TO STANTONS FARM AND FAULKBOURNE HALL**

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On 23 April 2005 members of the Society visited Stanton's Farm, Black Notley. The house is noted for its exceptional woodwork which is considered to be some of the finest in Black Notley. The earliest part, c1300, consists of an aisled two bay hall and service bay, with a 17th century crosswing at the eastern end. The high end of the building was lost in the distant past. It was in the possession of Clement Spice in 1483 (Wright's).

Stanton's ceased to be a working farm in 1969, when the house and some 240 acres of land were offered for sale. The house and 11 acres were subsequently purchased by an American couple, Mr.

and Mrs. W.C. McLeod, who without consulting the proper authorities proceeded to strip the plaster from the 17th century crosswing, exposing the timber framing and removing the porch from the south side of the aisled hall.

Interior changes included the removal of the inserted floor and interior walls to reveal the extent of the wood framing and hall. These changes resulted in the loss of the Gun room, Breakfast room, Drawing and Dining rooms, dairy, main staircase and two secondary staircases.

According to Newspaper reports in March 1971, Essex County Council wrote to the McLeods enquiring about the porch and the removal of the rendering. The McLeods were perplexed and failed to understand the meaning of the terms used. To Americans a porch is a verandah. Subsequently a Listed Building Enforcement Notice was served on the couple. An appeal made to the Minister of the Environment resulted in the order being quashed after an enquiry was held at Braintree on 30 January 1973. Mr. Jackson said in his report "I am not convinced that if these timbers were to remain exposed their deterioration would inevitably be accelerated as feared by the Council".

Other subsequent alterations which have taken place include making a new entrance to the house from the former Brewhouse at the southern end of the crossway. A great deal of new and re-used timber has been installed at various locations in the house. The present open tread staircase is one such feature.

The alterations enabled us to appreciate the beauty of the previously concealed woodwork and chimney, particularly the octagonal parts of the central truss with moulded capitals and cambered tie



beam supported on moulded arch braces, and the three doorways at the low end between the hall and service rooms.

Mr. and Mrs. Watkins pointed out all the fascinating features of the wood framing.

My late uncle, John Earey, lived and farmed at Stantons until his death in March 1969. For years I visited my grandmother, Mrs. Margaret Earey, her son John and daughter Mary at Stantons. They lived a life style which had probably not changed for centuries.

The house did not have mains water or drainage, or electricity until after the Second World War Water was taken from a pump beside the Brewhouse wall, lighting was by oil lamps and candles, washing was by using a jug and basin. Baths were taken in the Brewhouse in summer or in the kitchen in winter times - the brick copper being used to heat the water. Butter was made with milk from my uncle's cows and cooking was conducted on a cast iron cooking range. Going to the toilet entailed a trip to the privy in the garden — chamber pots were used at night. During winter time when staying at Stantons, on going upstairs to bed I carried a candle in one hand and a hot brick wrapped in paper in the other. Right up to the time of his death my uncle did not have a TV or telephone.

Appreciation must be given to Mrs. Stanton for her kindness in allowing us to visit her home which she has owned since 1974.

The resident ghost seen by Mrs. Stanton on several occasions is thought to be that of my great aunt Beatrice Batchford, who died at Stantons.

Members then went on to Faulkbourne Hall where Mr. C.W.O. Parker, his son and family members kindly allowed us to view their lovely early brick mansion dating back to the 15th century, when it was owned by John Montgomery, passing to Sir Edward Bullock in 1637, whose family lived at Faulkbourne for 250 years.

The exterior brickwork, the crenellations and the spiralling barrel vaults to the stairs leading to the towers being particularly attractive.

The early c15th century timbers of a timber framed building, being the first phase of the building, caused a lot of speculation and discussion.

In the latter 17<sup>th</sup> century the house underwent one or more periods of renovation which included the extension of the east front, the facing of the south front with brick and the building of another half octagonal turret on the south-west corner to balance the 15th century one on the north-west corner. In the early 19th century further additions were made between the main block and the 17th century wing. The 15th century tower and north front have survived with little alternation except the blocking of some windows and the renewal of others.

If Stantons has had all of its secrets and mysteries exposed, Faulkbourne Hall still retains its secrets and mysteries which offer plenty of scope for future research.

As a bonus to a thoroughly enjoyable day we were given the opportunity to visit Faulkbourne Church, dedicated to St. Germain, and dating from 12th century.

Robert J. Wager

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## LIBRARY REPORT

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The Society has received a substantial donation of books from Frank Clark. The range of the donation is extensive, covering pre-Roman and Roman archaeology, archaeological method, guide books and runs of serials and publications. Mr Clarke has been vice-president of the West Essex Archaeological Group and has excavated and published extensively on the archaeology of south west Essex. He directed excavations at Little London, Wanstead Park and Harlow Temple and has written for the Essex Journal. In 1977, with Julian Litton, he produced '*St Mary's Church, Woodford, Essex*', published by the Passmore Edwards Museum.

Andrew Phillips

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## OFFENDED BY THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AT INGATESTONE

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C E Keyser's book, *List of Buildings having Mural Decorations* (1883), is, as its title suggests, a rather spare account of surviving or lost mediaeval wall paintings. It appears to have been compiled from a wide variety of publications, including the Transactions of numerous county archaeological societies, as well as from articles on church restorations printed in *The Builder*. There are not a large number of Essex entries in the book, and many of those that are included had been previously reported in our Transactions or national journals. The Society of Antiquaries library in London has a 'grangerised' copy compiled by H H Brindley who had a particular interest in

images of St Christopher. Sadly this volume contained little additional Essex material, most of what there was being gleaned from newspaper articles, or letters from local incumbents. One of the latter, dated 26 October 1915, was in answer to an enquiry about a wall painting of St Christopher at St Mary's, Ingatestone.

'I have never seen or heard of any painting of St Christopher in Ingatestone church, and I have been rector since 1886. There were paintings on the walls of the Seven Deadly Sins, but these offended my predecessor, and were covered over, when the church was restored in 1868. Perhaps the painting to which you refer was covered over at the same time.'

Anyone curious to see why these images offended will find them illustrated in an article by J Piggot junior in volume IV of the first series of the Society's Transactions. St Christopher, however, seems to have vanished without record.

Michael Leach

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## ST LAURENCE & ALL SAINTS CHURCH, EASTWOOD

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Members will recall plans to move this mediaeval church to a new site in the churchyard in order to accommodate the air traffic requirements of Southend airport. This was opposed by the Ancient Monuments Society, by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, as well as by the parish itself and numerous other organisations. It is encouraging to report that planning permission for this bizarre proposal was unanimously rejected by the planning committee. Apart from the enormous practical

difficulties of moving a mediaeval building, there are very strong archaeological and historical reasons for retaining ancient buildings on their original sites.

The church is of considerable interest, of several different periods, and has a surviving priest's chamber at the west end of the north aisle. Two doors are of major importance, though Cecil Hewett was unable to give a precise date. The complex ironwork suggests both the C12 and C13 contributions. There is a faint inscription in Lombardic lettering on one of the straps, 'pax regat intrantes eadem regat egredientes' ('may peace rule those entering and also those leaving'). The carpentry is unusual - three vertical planks are rebated together, and held by tapered ledges which are dovetailed in section. The ledges were driven into dovetailed rebates cut across one side of the three planks. Hewett noted an identically constructed - though undated - door at Durham cathedral.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Saunders M & Kelsall F 'The Society's Casework in 2004' in Transactions of Ancient Monuments Society Vol 49 (2005)

Hewett C 'Church Carpentry' (1982)  
Phillimore

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## **GROWING NEW FORESTS – PLANTING VERSUS NATURAL REGENERATION**

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The last Newsletter reported the Woodland Trust's plan to buy farmland adjacent to the remaining fragment of Hainault Forest, and to plant this area

with native trees in order to extend the area of ancient woodland. Would this be best achieved by planting trees – or would natural regeneration (Oliver Rackham's favoured approach) work better?

The experience in the new Thames Chase forest is interesting. Natural regeneration is surprisingly fast, with a thorn scrub/oak succession, providing there is nearby woodland to supply acorns and jays. In other areas, neglected sites awaiting the developer have been known to reach the point where a tree preservation order could be applied. However, in the majority of cases where public amenity and access are important, tree planting usually gives a quicker result as the saplings can be protected effectively, and nursed through their early years. It also avoids the unkempt appearance of the early phases of the thorn scrub/oak succession, though this untidiness provides better biodiversity than planted saplings. Nevertheless, natural regeneration does occur in planted woodland and it is not unusual for this to result in an apparently nonsensical 110% survival rate. This is because the number of self-sown trees exceeds those lost amongst the planted saplings.

Michael Leach

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## **EAST SAXON CHRISTIANS AND PAGANS – THE PRITTLEWELL FINDS IN CONTEXT**

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Dr Martin Welch gave the Morant lecture on 6 May 2005. Detailed descriptions of the archaeology would be found elsewhere. The site was known as a mid to late C6 Saxon cemetery from earlier

finds, particularly those uncovered when trenching for a sewer in 1923, and digging a railway cutting in 1930 (see *EAH xix* pp 91-116). The recent excavation, in advance of proposed road widening, was done under great secrecy and uncovered an unexpectedly rich burial dating from the early C7. When the national press were briefed, there was considerable interest, with dramatic tabloid coverage describing the grave as that of the "Bling King". The site does not overlook the Thames, but is on high ground above a small valley running north-south. It would not have been in sight of the sea, but most Anglo-Saxon burials were either not far inland, or near a navigable waterway. The burial chamber contained a rich assembly of grave goods – bronze vessels, gold buckles, gold thread, a cauldron, gaming pieces, a drinking horn, a folding stool (the first found in a British Saxon grave) and so on.

The burial goods are a mixture of what one would expect to find, plus several things that are unique. The Prittlewell buckle, though of the typical triangular form, is unusual in being without the usual elaborate filigree patterns and zoomorphic decoration. The brooch is set with three symmetrically garnets (the stones being an import from the Indian subcontinent). The two crosses cut out of gold foil, and found in the face area, are most unusual. All previously discovered crosses have either been much more substantial objects with suspension loops, or foil crosses with fixing holes for sewing to clothing. The Prittlewell ones are totally plain and appear to have been purpose cut for laying on the corpse, lacking any provision for fixing or mounting, and showing no signs of wear or use. There are early C7 precedents in north Italy and south Germany for including crosses

in Christian burials, though the idea may have come from a sub-Roman tradition.

Gold thread was found in the chest area of the body and probably represents the braided edge of an open fronted tunic, which would have overlapped across the chest and have been secured by a belt at the waist. There is other Saxon evidence for such clothing, a Scandinavian tradition. The Prittlewell folding stool is unique. The shield boss is very plain, similar to those from earlier finds nearby (described in *EAH xix*). Other items include a wooden tub (probably for keeping ale); blue glass vessels, similar to one found at Sutton Hoo mound 2, and possibly made in Kent; a drinking horn with a metal mount, but lacking the metal terminal of the Sutton Hoo and other examples; a lyre, not an unusual finding in graves of this period; a metal spoon of Mediterranean origin, with an obscure inscription on the bowl; a lamp stand similar to the ones found at Broomfield and Sutton Hoo; and bone gaming pieces from a game in the backgammon family.

This type of assemblage, with a mixture of weapons and leisure items, is found in Europe from the C3 onwards. The only comparable site in Essex is at Broomfield, excavated in 1888. This too contained a buckle decorated with garnets (though more ornate than the Prittlewell example) and blue glass vessels. (See brief report in *EAS Transactions* ns v p 237). Another site at Taplow, Bucks, was dug in 1882 by burrowing into the side of a mound. Unfortunately a collapse caused considerable damage, but three shields were found (old Icelandic law permitted three shields in a duel), glass vessels, a gaming board, a throwing spear, decorated bronze buckles, bronze lyre mounts and a decorated drinking horn.

There is a possibility that this site may be re-excavated to obtain more information.

Another comparison is with Sutton Hoo ship burials, mounds 1 and 2. The adjoining mounds contain cremation inhumations. There is no Prittlewell equivalent of the striking helmet found in the ship burial (comparable helmets are known from Sweden) or the purse containing coins, believed to be for the payment of oarsmen in the afterlife. Neither is there anything like the decorated whetstone. The gold items at Sutton Hoo, as well as the shield bosses, were much more elaborately decorated. Mound 2 had the burial chamber under the boat and it has been suggested that the prow and stern of the boat originally projected from at each end. Another earlier ship burial from the C6 was uncovered at Snape in 1862, and other rich burials of this earlier period have been found at Lakenheath, some accompanied by the adjoining burial of a fully equipped horse.

The Prittlewell burial has been dated to the early part of the C7. It is of particular interest because of the presence of the gold crosses, the plainness of the metal work (perhaps a Christian modification of the pagan splendour displayed at Sutton Hoo) and the fact that it was part of an earlier extensive cemetery. It is normally believed that C7 princely burials were on separate sites from communal cemeteries, but this is certainly not the case here. It is not possible to say if this was a royal burial or a princely one, but it is undoubtedly that of a wealthy and powerful individual. It is hoped that more information will emerge from the continuing post-excavation analysis, and from possibly further excavations on the site.

Michael Leach

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## HENRY WINSTANLEY'S HOUSE AND GARDEN AT LITTLEBURY

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Henry Winstanley (1644-1703) is best known for his heroic efforts in building, between 1696 and 1700, the first Eddystone lighthouse. The difficulties included raising all the funds himself (Trinity House declined to make any contribution), and supervising the extremely hazardous construction on a slippery rock (only uncovered for a few hours at low tide), some 3 hour's hard rowing from Plymouth. Apart from the obvious hazards of working on an exposed rock in all weathers, there was another unexpected risk. An attack by French pirates in June 1697 resulted in the destruction of the partially constructed lighthouse. The workmen were set adrift in a boat and Winstanley himself was carried off to France as a prisoner until Louis XIV, realising that the lighthouse would benefit French shipping as much as English, ordered his release. During its short operational life, not a single ship was wrecked on the rocks and, though it was swept away (with Winstanley himself, who was attending to some repairs) in a storm on 26 November 1703, it did prove that it was possible to build remote off-shore lighthouses and that they could be of great benefit to shipping.

Winstanley was born in 1644 in Saffron Walden. On leaving the grammar school in 1660, he found employment in the estate office at Audley End house. When the house was purchased by Charles II in 1668, he was disappointed not to obtain the post of clerk of works, and travelled for several years in Europe, not returning home until 1674. He then tried his hand at making engravings of

country houses and their gardens, including a series of Audley End house and its park. Though these are striking (and now an invaluable source for historians) his mastery of perspective was not entirely convincing and this may have been why there were no further commissions. In 1679 he was appointed clerk of works to the royal palaces of Audley End and Newmarket. At the former, he is said to have used his mechanical ingenuity to solve problems of building maintenance, as well as to drain the waterlogged garden. It is likely that he was kept very busy, as both the house and its grounds had been neglected since the disgrace and financial ruin of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Suffolk in 1618. When John Evelyn visited in September 1654, he noted *'the Gardens are not in order, though well inclosed'*. He was not impressed by their setting, *'being placed in an obscure bottome'*. By the time that Charles II acquired the property 14 years later, all the roof lead was defective, much timber rotten and (according to Sir Christopher Wren) *'the Fabrick weak, built after an ill manner rather Gay than substantial'*. It was estimated that £10,000 worth of repairs were required, as little had been done to it since it was built. £500 a year was spent until 1688 by which time the roof had been repaired and many chimney stacks rebuilt. Thereafter the budget was cut to £200 a year. In 1695 the Earl of Suffolk (who appears to have been living as a tenant in part of the house) wrote to complain about the daily danger from falling masonry, the collapse of one of the bridges, and the ruinous state of the stables and other outbuildings. As a result of this complaint, Sir Christopher Wren visited Audley End and costed the essential repairs at £2830; these included rebuilding a further 20 chimney stacks, remedying various *'defects within the House requiring Speed'*, making

repairs to bridges, providing a new pale for the garden, and the park wall *'to be amended and new coped'*.

Charles II is said to have made a few unspecified changes to the gardens and park at Audley End (originally laid out in 1618), but these may have been made before Winstanley's time. It seems unlikely that much money was spent on the garden if the house had got into such a bad state. However, Winstanley was also clerk of works at Newmarket where improvements were definitely made to the palace gardens during his term of office, as Henry Wise (1653-1738), the superintendent of royal gardens, was paid £225 in 1698-99 for unspecified works there. The palace at Newmarket was very convenient for monarchs with a passion for horse racing but, though it remained in royal hands until well into the C18, little is known about it. Audley End, for practical or economic reasons, was returned to the trustees and co-heirs of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Suffolk in 1701, though the lengthy legal squabbles did not resolve who was to be the new owner until 1708, after Winstanley's death.

About the time of his marriage in the 1670s, Winstanley built a house for himself in Littlebury. He subsequently made an engraving of this, showing a symmetrical two storey building with a central roof lantern. Between the house and the stable block to one side was a windmill, a sign of Winstanley's practical interest in hydraulics. Both house and garden were equipped with a number of eccentric features and by the 1690s, when he was raising money for his Eddystone project, the house had been fitted out with a variety of devices to startle visitors, such as distorting mirrors, mechanical ghosts and chairs that trapped or ejected anyone sitting on them. An artificial stream in the garden

was fed by the windmill which produced mechanical music. When Celia Fiennes passed by in May 1697, she noted 'a house with an abundance of fine Curiosities all performed by Clockwork and suchlike which appears very strange to the beholders; but the Master was not at home so I saw no more than the Chaire they set in when they are carryd about'. The public paid one shilling a head to see these curiosities and nearly a decade after Winstanley's death, his widow was still opening the house to paying visitors

Though Winstanley did not engrave a plan of his garden, there is no doubt that a plan of 1767 shows what had been his house and garden, by then in the ownership of Gilbert Marshall esquire. The plan includes an engraving of the house, identical in all but a few details to the prints made by Winstanley himself. Obviously some changes had occurred since Winstanley's time – for example, the windmill (and presumably the fountains and the artificial stream that it supplied) had gone. However the eccentric design of the garden (which must have been extremely out of fashion by 1767) suggests Winstanley's hand. It was about 400ft by 260ft with a series of avenues leading from the house. The central one terminated in a building, presumably a grotto or gazebo. In the north east corner there was a quadrilateral structure with ascending or descending steps - it is not clear from the plan whether this was a raised mound or a sunken area, but probably the former, as mounts were a popular feature in C17 gardens. A series of beds, arranged slightly asymmetrically on the line of the main avenue, are probably part of the original scheme.

The house is said to have been taken down in 1778, though the site cannot be

identified on Chapman and Andre's map which was published in 1777. The most likely site seems to be immediately to the south of Littlebury parish church (at grid reference TL 517394). The area is approximately the same shape as the plot shown on Gilbert Marshall's plan and conforms with an early C18 account of its proximity to the old main road to Cambridge. The house and garden had certainly disappeared when the inclosure map was surveyed in 1805 and the field on the presumed site was known as 'The Paddock', giving no hint of its former use, though its shape is similar to the property boundary on the 1767 plan. Thomas Bird of Romford, writing in the *Essex Review*, identified the site to his satisfaction in 1893 and noted that the only remaining evidence of the house or its garden was 'a mound planted with shrubs'. This mound cannot be identified on the second edition of the 25" OS map. Today, if the correct site has been identified, the mound has disappeared and the rough pasture now covering the former house and garden shows various irregular deformities.

*Wren Society* Vols iv, 36 & xviii, 122-3 & 162-3

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Plan of house and gardens at Littlebury, 1767 (ERO: D/Dby P21)

Littlebury inclosure map, 1805 (ERO: Q/RDc 6B)

OS map 25" second edition (1896)

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## THE THREAT TO ST NICHOLAS'S CHURCH, LITTLE WIGBOROUGH

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This remote late C15 church overlooks the Blackwater estuary west of Mersea Island. It is now in danger of collapse, due to serious subsidence in the NW corner of the nave, with part of the wall 15° off vertical. The building has had structural problems since the C17 at least, and was further damaged by the 1884 Colchester earthquake. Wall scars show that at some point the south porch was removed. During the 1886 restoration, the nave walls were heightened, and the upper two stages of the tower rebuilt, but the RCHM inspector in the early part of the C20 noted its condition as "*fairly good, but some cracks in walls*". It would appear that the 1886 work had not resolved the structural problems, and even possibly aggravated them by raising the height - and hence the foundation loading - of the nave walls. Further repairs were done to the chancel and the north nave roof in 2001.

The parochial church council has called in English Heritage to make a full report on the feasibility of repairing this church. It is likely that substantial work will be required if the building is to be saved.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Heritage Today (East of England)  
Summer 2005

Essex RCHM Vol iii (1922)

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## ANCIENT MEASUREMENTS

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This interest started some time ago on reading an article mentioning Dr A Thoms in *Circles and Standing Stones* by Evan Hadingham. Dr Thoms proposed a basic unit, the megalithic yard, exactly 2.72 feet long, and a megalithic inch of 0.816 inches (or exactly 1/40<sup>th</sup> of a megalithic yard). He suggested that trammels or beam compasses could achieve accuracies of a few thousandths of an inch. As a person whose work entailed using precision instruments, this struck me as highly suspect, and further reading showed that this view was shared by others. Apart from the problem of measuring such accurate distances between megaliths which, by their nature, are crude blocks of stone, where do you decide where its centre was established?

This started me looking into the origins of present day measurements and I discovered the following. The **inch** was measured by taking three grains of barley from the middle of the ear, well dried, and placed end to end. The **cubit** was the distance from the elbow to the end of the middle finger (18 inches). The **ell** was fixed in 1101 as the length of King Henry I's arm (45 inches). The **foot** was 12 inches, and the **hand** the width of the palm plus the thumb (4 inches). The **nail** was measured from the second joint of the middle finger to the end of the nail (2¼ inches) and was a cloth measure. The **pace** was five feet, the **palm** the width of the palm (3 inches) and the **span** the distance between the end of the thumb to the end of the little



finger with the hand spread (9 inches). The more familiar **rod** was 5½ yards or 16½ feet.

Weights and measures were first fixed by standard in England in 1257, with statutes passed in the reigns of Henry III, Edward I and Henry VII. The basis was a grain of wheat, corn or barley; 32 grains of wheat gathered from the middle of the ear and dried were to make a pennyweight, subsequently divided into 24 equal which were called **grains**. Measures of capacity were taken with 8 pounds of wheat of a similar kind to make a **gallon**, and 8 such gallons made a **bushel**.

It can be seen from the above that early measurements were defined in a somewhat arbitrary fashion, but it must have been very convenient to use parts of the human body. On looking at the use of the body for measurements, it becomes clear how the 'span' could have been used to define other measurements; for example a 'nail' is quarter of a 'span', four of them make one 'quarter' (a cloth measure). The 'cubit' is two 'spans', the 'foot' one and a third 'spans' and the 'ell' five 'spans'. At first sight the 'rod' does not fit into this scheme, but when converted to inches I realised that it was 22 'spans'.

One paper published in the CBA Research Report No. 60 by Birthe Kjølbye Biddle on the C7 minster at Winchester goes thoroughly into the use of the 'rod' as a measurement, and states that it was used in the charter of Edward the Elder when granting land to New Minster in about AD 904. Berthe mentions it being laid out using the Drusian foot to make the 16½ foot 'rod'. Is it possible that it was based on the 'span' rather than the foot?

Re-reading Adrian Gibson's excellent article in volume 27 of *Essex Archaeology & History*, I wonder if it is possible to establish whether any measurements were multiples of the 'span'? Problems would arise from trying to divide the 'rod' accurately, and any error would be cumulative. As they didn't have precision instruments, such error would have to be allowed for, though this begs the question of whether it was necessary to achieve the level of accuracy expected today.

John Warbis

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## SHIPS, SIGNATURES & SYMBOLS – ENGLISH MEDIAEVAL GRAFFITI

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For many years I have been recording mediaeval incised and scratched drawings, or graffiti, which are found on the pillars and walls of our churches and secular buildings. These are largely worked on the soft limestone, or clunch, used so extensively in the Midlands, eastern and southeast England. They vary in subject matter. Some are pictorial – fighting ships, harps, ladies in elaborate headdresses, knights in armour, windmills, birds and animals. There are also scraps of writing, signatures and dates, and musical notes. Less easy to understand are the symbols which, no doubt, had an underlying heraldic or religious significance. These are a powerful reminder of the important part played by symbolism and imagery in the mediaeval world.

The drawings vary greatly in artistic ability. Some are mere casual scribbles; others are works of art in their own right, the work of a sure hand and purposeful mind, ranking artistically with wall

paintings and stained glass. Sadly, many fine graffiti are being destroyed. Clunch weathers easily, and stone surfaces are constantly being scraped and covered with layers of whitewash. Thus we are rapidly a unique and little appreciated part of our heritage.

In order to gain some idea of the distribution and variety of these graffiti, it is necessary to look at a considerable number of buildings in the eastern and south-eastern side of England, as well as the Midlands.

Will you help with this survey? All that is needed is a seeing eye and an enquiring mind, a torch (for looking in dark corners, or for easier reading of graffiti by oblique lighting), a feather duster (for removing age-old cobwebs) and pencil and paper for recording. Rubbings frequently destroy the outline of the graffiti and should not be undertaken without prior consultation and consent. I have the backing of English Heritage, the National Trust, various county historical societies, and many museums and art historians, NADFAS and various church authorities.

If you would like to help, or know of any graffiti, please contact Rosemary Bowden-Smith, The Chestnuts, Hacheston, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 0DR, or telephone 01728 747293. All enquiries are welcome.

Rosemary Bowden-Smith

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## **A PLAGUE OF MICE**

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I wish the sad casualties may never return, which lately happened in this county: the one, 1581, in the hundred of Dengie (vide Stow's Chronicle anno citat), the other, 1648, in the hundred of Rochford and the Isle of Foulness (rented in part by two of my credible

parishioners, who attested it, having paid dear for the truth thereof); when an army of mice, nesting in ant hills, as conies in burroughs, shaved off the grass at the bare roots, which withering to dung was infectious to cattle. The March following, numberless flocks of owls from all parts flew thither, and destroyed them, which otherwise had ruined the country, if continuing another year. Thus, though great the distance between a man and a mouse, the meanest may become formidable to the mightiest creature by their multitudes; and this may render the punishment of the Philistines more clearly to our apprehensions, at the same time pestered with mice in their barns, and pained with emerods in their bodies (vide 1 Samuel vi, 11).

Rev Thomas Fuller

(perpetual curate to Waltham Abbey 1648-58)

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## **ESSEX EGYPTOLOGY GROUP**

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If you are interested in any aspect of Egyptology you may wish to join this newly-formed group. It meets on the first Sunday of the month at 3pm at Spring Lodge Community centre, Powers Hall End, Witham. For more details, please contact Charlotte Booth on 01621 840171 or [charlotte\\_booth@yahoo.com](mailto:charlotte_booth@yahoo.com)

Future meetings include: A talk/demonstration from Andrew Walpole about the Bronze Age axe in Egypt; Suzanne Bojtos on Middle Kingdom tombs and nomarchs; A practical workshop on Egyptian art; A practical lecture from Rosalind Jansen on the Egyptian laundry.

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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.

Michael Leach

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