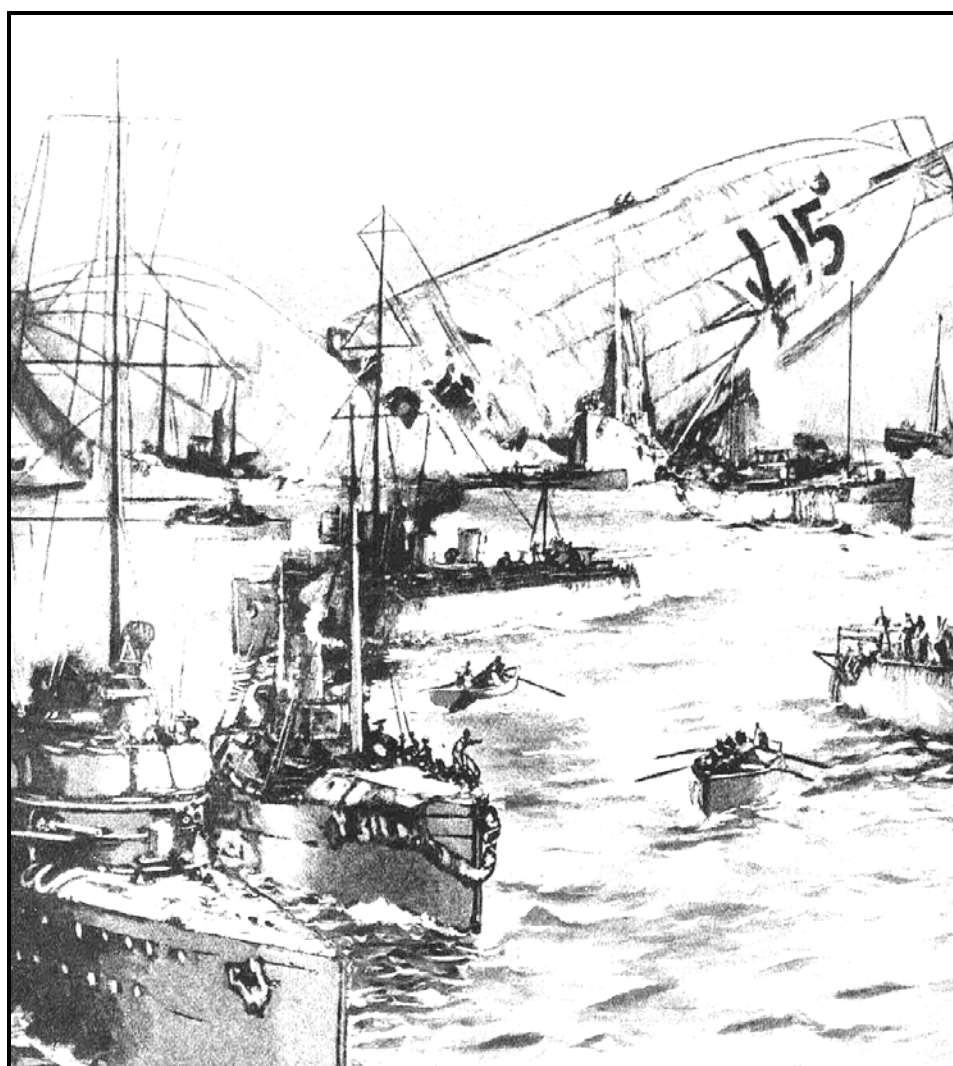


Essex Archaeology and History News



Spring 2006

THE ESSEX SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

NEWSLETTER 148

SPRING 2006

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COPY FOR THE NEXT ISSUE SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS NO LATER THAN 3 JULY 2006

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

Cover illustration:

Part of a sketch of Zeppelin L-15 (see 'Bombs over Blackmore' page 16) brought down off the coast of Kent. The original colour illustration is from *The Nations at War* by Willis John Abbot (1917) New York. Willis John Abbot (March 16 1863 - May 19 1934) was an American journalist, and author of naval and shipping books.

Image found at www.firstworldwar.com/photos/sources.htm

FROM THE PRESIDENT

At our last AGM and subsequently in our Newsletter I put forward the view that more needed to be done in our secondary schools and elsewhere to stimulate an interest in and a knowledge of local history and the heritage among young people. I went on to argue that we should seek to convince the education authority of this and consider what we could do to assist.

As this view found favour at a subsequent Council meeting, we approached the Essex Archaeological & Historical Congress, who agreed to support us, and wrote to County Cllr. Stephen Castle, Education Portfolio-holder, to raise the issue. In his reply, Cllr. Castle expressed general agreement with our concerns and suggested we should meet Chris Christofides, Principal Curriculum Adviser, and Andrew Scoff, Lead Adviser to the Schools Improvement and Advisory Service.

This meeting took place at County Hall, Chelmsford, on 14th December, 2005. Our delegation consisted of Kenneth Neale and Martin Stuchfield for Congress and Michael Leach and me for the ESAH.

Our views were warmly welcomed by the County Officers. We suggested that each school should seek to ensure that a member of staff was responsible for promoting some coverage of local history and heritage by pupils and that he or she liaise with agencies which might assist. These could include local museums, the Essex Record Office and historical societies active in the county. On our side, we would seek to provide help - although we made it clear that our resources, as voluntary organisations, were limited. We suggested that schools should have access to the appropriate volume of the Victoria County History,

where their area had been covered.

We agreed with the County Officers that, insofar as the local heritage was not part of the National Curriculum, it could feature as an aspect of Citizenship education.

We were invited to put our views to three meetings of Secondary Strategy Managers (usually Deputy Headteachers with responsibility for the curriculum) in March at Wickford, Harlow and Colchester. This we have done, and we now hope that there will be a positive response. It is our intention to approach appropriate members of our Society and local historical societies to assist in furthering this initiative.

Stan Newens

SOCIETY VISITS TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIGS

The programme of visits is arranged about a year in advance, and interesting excavations (such as the princely burial at Prittlewell or the 'circus' at Colchester) come to light at much shorter notice. Some, such as the Prittlewell site, are excavated under high security, or under very difficult conditions, and would be unsuitable for visiting. However, if something both suitable and of interest did crop up, we are handicapped by having no easy means of communicating quickly with members.

It has been suggested that e-mail would overcome the communication problem, and this has been done by other societies, such as the Kent Archaeological Society, to advertise meetings organised at short notice. There are obvious problems with keeping e-mail addresses up to date (they seem to change more frequently than postal addresses), and in ensuring that the database is not unofficially

raided by worms, or some other form of e-espionage. It would be interesting to hear members' views on this. It would also be useful to know if directors of digs would welcome visits of this sort by Society members. Please send your views, pro or contra, to the Hon Newsletter Editor, or to the Hon Secretary on family@leachies.freemove.co.uk

UPDATE ON OUR 2006 EVENTS

May 19th - Morant Lecture - "The development of railways in Essex" by Adrian Wright County Hall, Chelmsford. 7.30pm.

June 17th - AGM - Gt. Leigh's Village Hall followed by a talk on "Round Tower Churches" by Anne Haward. 2.00pm.

July 22nd - visit to Panfield Hall and Panfield Church - 2.30pm.

August 23rd - visit to Hylands House, Chelmsford - talk and tour led by Nick Wickenden. 7.00pm.

September 23rd - visit to Edwings Hall, Woodham Ferrers. (Fully booked)

October 15th - Morant Lunch - The Bear, Stock - after lunch speaker our patron, Lord Petre. 12.30 for 1.00pm.

All bookings through Pat Ryan - 01245 222237

ESSEX PLACE-NAMES PROJECT SEMINAR

The next Seminar will be held at Maldon on Saturday 18th November 2006. The Guest Speaker will be Mr Edward Martin of Suffolk Archaeology, he will speak on "Medieval Landscapes".

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

ESSEX HISTORY FAIR 25 JUNE 2006

Sunday 25th June 10am – 4pm Braintree Market Place.

Any enquiries please contact Maria Medlycott on 01245 437641

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY IN ESSEX

The committee met on three times in the year, under the chairmanship of Cllr Manning-Press, attended by museum curators, archaeologists, local society representatives and English Heritage. The chairman announced his resignation due to pressure of work, and was thanked for his long standing contribution to the committee.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme was recording significant finds brought in by the public for identification; these are entered into a database available from Caroline McDonald at Colchester Museum or www.finds.org.uk. Museum collections can be explored from the <http://eesopessex.essexcc.gov.uk> site. Information on archaeological and historical sites is available at <http://unlockingessex.essexcc.gov.uk> with a children's section at <http://uepkids.essexcc.gov.uk>

The first Stansted excavation report has been published in East Anglian Archaeology vol. 107. The report on Rochford's WWII defences is complete, and other defence sites continue to be recorded in the Chelmsford area. Essex's Historic Landscape

Characterisation has been completed. Neolithic and Roman remains have been found at Sampford. At St Osyth, a causewayed camp has been excavated, and was filmed by "Time Team". A Roman circus has been excavated at Colchester, as well as further archaeological work near St Botolph's. A Saxon burial chamber has been found at Southend, and some Iron Age roundhouses at the Shoebury 'Danish' camp. The lyre from the Saxon princely tomb at Prittlewell is being reconstructed. Successful events have been held at history fairs at Canvey Island, Hadleigh castle and Tilbury fort. Restoration is being undertaken at Jaywick Martello tower, which was visited, by an international group of archaeologists.

The Essex Field Archaeology Unit has been involved at Great Dunmow Iron Age/Roman site, at Rayleigh Saxon burials, at Maldon within the Saxon burh, and at Harlow Iron Age enclosure.

Satisfactory progress has been made in discussions with district councils regarding contributions to continue the central discretionary planning and recording services. An East of England Co-ordinator has been appointed for the European Route of Industrial Heritage (of which Waltham Abbey is the anchor site). The Countryside Archaeological Adviser continues to foster good archaeological practice with farmers. Plans are in preparation for new museums at Chelmsford and Saffron Walden.

James Kemble

**THE SCOLE COMMITTEE
FOR ARCHAEOLOGY IN
EAST ANGLIA**

The Scole Committee, named after the

location of its early meetings in the 1970s on the Norfolk/ Suffolk border, is the regional committee for co-ordinating archaeological and related endeavours in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. It acts as a link between organisations, both independent and professional, in the three counties. The Committee provides a meeting ground for archaeologists, including representatives of the county societies, to present reports and debate issues of common interest and to comment upon matters of mutual concern in the region. The Essex Society for Archaeology & History is represented by David Buckley.

The Committee encourages greater awareness of the historic environment in the region, including recognition that material evidence of our past is an essential component of the common heritage and should be accessible to all. It supports education and public awareness in archaeology. The Committee is no longer responsible for publishing the volumes of reports in the "East Anglian Archaeology" series but remains active in promoting this series.

As much of government policy and action is increasingly mediated through the Government Regional Office for Eastern England and various Governmental Regional Agencies the Committee makes representations at a regional level as well as responding to local and national initiatives. Topics discussed include the importance of ensuring that local planning authorities recognise the value of the historic environment. More information on such issues is available through Heritage Link on their website at www.heritagelink.org.uk.

At its last meeting the Committee agreed that it should be more pro-active over regional issues such as funding and planning, and should appeal to a larger body of the public who are unaware of

archaeology and the potential threats to sites of historic interest. The Committee intends to promote a conference for teachers on the better teaching of archaeology and history. It will also seek the best ways to provide advice to member organisations about obtaining funding from local, regional and European sources, and assist local groups in preparing bids for grants to support archaeology. If you wish to make your views known to the Committee please contact David Buckley or me.

John Fairclough
Chairman of the Scole Committee
John.fairclough@ntlworld.com

MEMORIES OF JOHN WYMER

John Wymer sadly died in February and many members will have seen one or more of the obituaries which appeared in the major national newspapers. Of particular significance in his long and varied career was the production of a series of gazetteers and synthetic overviews which remain cornerstones for our understanding of the Palaeolithic; the most recent, The English Rivers Survey in which he worked with Wessex Archaeology was completed in 1999. John was held in high regard both nationally and internationally, his chosen specialist field, of Palaeolithic archaeology, demands a sound working knowledge of a wide range of technical and scientific topics. John had the knack of making this knowledge accessible to general audiences, and was always generous with his time in giving talks to and working with local societies.

John was a member of the society for many years and a great admirer of its library, making extensive use of it when he was preparing the report on his

excavations of Palaeolithic deposits at Clacton. John's connections with Essex were extensive he studied and published widely on the Palaeolithic remains of south Essex associated with the Thames terraces. He contributed papers on the Palaeolithic of Essex and both the 1978 and 1993 conferences on the Archaeology of Essex. Both papers were published in the conference proceedings and remain the best starting place for anyone wanting to understand the earliest evidence of human activity in the county. In the early 1980s John was employed by Essex County Council to direct excavations at a large multi-period site at North Shoebury near Southend when I first met him.

We quickly became firm friends and discovered a wide range of shared interests which included beer and, that well known local delicacy, cockles. I remember just a few years ago sitting, one summers evening, on the wharf outside the Crooked Billet sharing a pint of cockles and a couple of beers watching the tide coming in around Leigh marsh whilst John held forth on his love for the Thames estuary. For him, like me, the appreciation of these things was founded on childhood experience (not the beer of course). Before the war John's father had built a small plotland house in what is now Basildon, and many of John's childhood summers were spent roaming the Langdon Hills and south Essex marshes. Consequently John could recite every station, in order from Fenchurch Street to Shoeburyness, throwing in the Tilbury loop by way of an encore. He will be much missed.

Nigel Brown

ADRIAN GIBSON

Of those prominent in the development of timber-framed building studies over

the last 40 years, Adrian Gibson, who died suddenly on 16th March, was outstanding as a teacher and communicator. As such, he was known to a very wide number of people. As well as timber-framed building enthusiasts, property owners, architects, archaeologists, contractors and other professionals came to a greater understanding of old buildings through Adrian, and often to rely on his expertise. Adrian grew up in London's East End. He settled on a career in teaching. Having trained in woodworking and metalworking at Borough Road College, he established the technical department at Parmiter School. But he had also developed a keen interest in archaeology and was working on excavations. Whilst working at Swanscombe with the late John Wymer, it was his spade which found the famous skull. He took an Extra-Mural Diploma at the London Institute of Archaeology, and was persuaded by Professor Zeuner to start teaching extra-mural classes himself. One result of this was the publication of a book, *Instructions in archaeology* (1963), a general introduction to British archaeology for extra-mural students and amateurs. On moving to work at the Richard Hale School in Hertford, he became active in Hertfordshire archaeology with the East Hertfordshire Archaeology Society. A chance meeting with Cecil Hewett at Olives Farm, Hunsdon, when working on a Roman site, was to change the direction of his interests. Adrian became a life-long supporter of Hewett in his research on carpentry history, and a champion of, and propagandist for, his theories and ideas.

Although much of his work was in Hertfordshire, in Essex he worked with the County Council and the Department of the Environment preparing the revised listed building lists for Saffron Walden

and Brentwood. He was actively involved in helping the County Council with Cressing Temple at the time of its acquisition, in particular with the design and content of the Wheat Barn exhibition. He also was instrumental in rescuing the wheelwright's shop from Kedington over the border in Suffolk. He was a regular guide at Cressing Temple, and took a party from the Architectural Association around the site only two weeks before his death. In the publication of the Cressing Conference on *Regional variation in timber-framed building in England and Wales*, he wrote the chapter on Hertfordshire buildings. Recently, he had gained much pleasure from advising on royal palaces, in connection with which he had appeared on television. But Adrian's main contribution was the lectures he gave and the classes he taught, as he had not just enormous enthusiasm but the gift of conveying it to others. He will be sadly missed.

David Andrews

PETER COTT 1928 - 2005

Peter Cott passed away peacefully at home in Great Bardfield on 17 September 2005, having battled with cancer for several years. He leaves his wife Jean, a son, a daughter and grandchildren.

Peter, a member of the Society for many years, was one of those multi faceted, gifted people who excelled in all fields in which he worked, or adopted as a hobby. His early interest in history was fuelled when he and Jean attended a lecture by Ernest Rudge on the Lost Trackway from Grimes Graves to Stonehenge. They both cycled along much of its Essex route in the early 1950's.

Peter was a graduate in engineering and worked for the Marconi Company. In the early days of satellite communication he was responsible for turning basic theories of using the satellite into practical use. The British military Skynet and SCAT systems were largely Peter's work from Goonhilly to Hong Kong.

Later he joined Cable and Wireless where his encyclopaedic knowledge of satellite communications in system design was further extended. His work included the blueprint of the Mercury telephone network.

His next challenge with Cable and Wireless took him to Hong Kong and China where he played a key role in satellite communications in the Asia/Pacific region. During this time he was responsible for masterminding the recovery of a satellite from an incorrect orbit, refurbishing it and subsequently its relaunch.

He was regarded amongst his peers as an engineers, engineer.

When relaxing, Peter's interest were multiple, he was a practising Christian, an accomplished musician and loved playing the organ in his local church. His interest in history extended in his retirement. He purchased his own resistivity meter and later advised the Colchester Archaeology Society on their purchase of a magnetometer. His interest in history centred on the Roman occupation period of the UK. He carried out geophysics surveys on many sites including Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex to the countryside of Albania. He was particularly pleased with his geophysics survey at Venta Icenorum, modern Caistor St Edmunds, south of Norwich, confirming aerial photography of a Roman amphitheatre on the site. His main archaeological work in Essex was around the Colchester area, particularly Gosbecks. Jean his wife, in the early

days of resistivity surveying recorded the readings manually before the availability of automatic recording. His work on the earliest church site in Pleshey was one of his many successes.

Peter's local interest in retirement included, becoming editor of the Bardfield Times, chairman of the Historical Society and worked on the village appraisal. During the millennium he filmed activities and local characters throughout the year to produce the video, 'A Year in the Life of a Village'. During his busy retirement he continued to expand his quest for knowledge, rewarded by a M.Phil in geophysics.

Archaeological work commenced or suggested by Peter continues in the Colchester and west Essex areas.

Peter Sharp

JOHN MEAD

24.11.31 - 13.11.2005

We were sorry to hear of the death of John who was librarian of the Society for many years.

As a mature student he took a degree in history at Essex University. In his later years he had been working on the history of the Mead family, something he was able to do when it became difficult for him to get about.

A celebration of his life was held at the parish church in Boxford. Our sympathy goes to the family.

Jean Blowers

ON ICEHOUSES

*Yonder the harvest of cold months laid up,
Gives a fresh coolness to the royal cup,
There ice, like crystal, firm and never lost,*

Tempers hot July with December's frost.

Most people will be familiar with these curious underground brick structures, often found hidden by an earth mound, or a plantation of trees, in the grounds of large country houses. Packed with ice during the winter, they provided the means of cooling drinks and making frozen puddings during the summer months. I have always been intrigued by these abandoned and usually ruinous structures and recently, walking through the science section in the London Library, my eye was caught by "The Icehouses of Britain", shelved under 'Refrigeration'.

The book proved as interesting as expected. Icehouses have a long history on the continent, even with some slender archaeological evidence from the Roman period. The first documented one in Britain was the 'snow conserve' built in Greenwich Park for James I in 1619. This was a wide brick well, covered with straw insulation and a thatched timber structure, and was apparently successful, as a second one was built at Greenwich two years later, and another at Hampton Court in 1625. A fourth royal icehouse followed in 1660 in St James's Park and aroused the interest of Robert Boyle and John Evelyn in the newly established Royal Society, as well as inspiring the stanza by Edmund Waller quoted above. However they remained, for another century, an extravagance to which only the very rich could aspire.

During the eighteenth century, many wealthy landowners built icehouses on their country estates, and by the early nineteenth century numerous commercial ones had been built in cities to provide ice for freezing, for cooling drinks and for the confectionary trade. In 1818 the architect J B Papworth was promoting the idea of small ice wells in the basements of London houses and by

the latter part of the century popular publications carried illustrations of suburban timber ice sheds, suitable for the back garden. These were double skinned buildings, with sawdust insulation in the cavity. It would be interesting to know if any have survived as gazebos, though they would have been highly vulnerable to rot from the constant wetness of the thawing ice, and probably had a very short life. Ice was commercially available by this time, so the suburban owner was not expected to rob his local pond during the winter months! Initially ice was imported from America, and later from Norway, in vast amounts, requiring the construction of huge ice stores adjoining harbours. After the development of mechanical refrigeration, it was (and still is) made artificially, though imports of ice from Norway continued up to the early 1950s. Country estate icehouses were built during the latter part of the C18, and throughout the C19. They were expensive to construct and to run, and rapidly became obsolete in the early C20 due to the ready commercial availability of ice, as well as the introduction of domestic refrigerators. Most seem to have been abandoned during the First World War when the labour force, necessary for cutting, carting and packing the ice, was serving in the army. A few were converted to other uses, but the vast majority were filled in or now lie derelict in a forgotten corner of the park. Icehouses were often, but not invariably, sited near a source of ice, usually a lake. The structure was often egg-shaped, with access through a tunnel (with double or treble doors) into the side of the dome, though some only had access through a hatch at the top. Often the dome and the tunnel were covered in earth, and shaded by tree planting. In the southern counties, they were usually built of brick, not infrequently in cavity

wall construction. The cavity was not, as might be expected, for insulation but was an attempt by the builder to overcome the problems caused by ground water penetrating the icehouse itself. Water is a good conductor of heat, and it was essential that the icehouse should be kept as dry as possible to prolong the life of its contents. For this reason, a drain or substantial sump was always provided at the bottom of the structure to take off the melt water. Examination of a number of icehouses has shown internal smoke blackening, and it seems likely that fires were lit to dry out the brickwork before the ice was packed in. Though double or treble doors were provided to exclude warm air, the importance of ventilation (to reduce condensation) was recognised and a variety of provisions were made. The basic form of the icehouse was sometimes elaborated with additional adjoining chambers for storage of food and drink, or even picturesque buildings above ground to enhance the landscape.

The book reports on an interesting experiment. The icehouse at Levens Hall in Cumbria had been cleared out by volunteers and it was decided to assess its effectiveness by filling it with ice in January 1980. Good drainage at the base was ensured, and the walls were lined with straw bales as the flake ice was packed in. Initially this was compacted with pavement rammers but these were abandoned when the volunteers were unable to keep up with the incoming ice. Possibly as a result of this, the icehouse only took 17 tons of ice, instead of the calculated 27 tons. Using commercially supplied ice delivered to the door by lorry, the project required 20 volunteers working for two days. When the pit had been filled, the top of the ice was covered with bales of straw, and straw was also packed between the two doors in the access

tunnel. Regular temperature and humidity recordings were taken, and it was found that the surface of the ice remained at a constant 3⁰ C, winter and summer. However the temperature at the top of the dome rose to 15⁰ C at the height of summer, supporting the view that icehouses would have been poor places to store perishable food. In addition, the relative humidity within the dome was very high, often reaching 100% with the inner brickwork running with condensation. This would have been exacerbated by the lack of ventilation in this particular structure, and would have also accelerated the melting of the ice. Even so, the last of the ice melted 13 months after filling, showing that icehouses were indeed effective throughout the summer months.

The gazetteer in the second part lists icehouses by county. Essex is poorly represented, but it is clear that the list is incomplete, as at least three known to me are not included – Moynes Hall, Highlands Park and Navestock Park – and it seems likely that most, if not all, country houses would have had some means of storing ice by the C19. There must be many others waiting to be recorded.

Michael Leach

Source:

Beamon S P, & Roaf S, "The Icehouses of Britain" (1990) Routledge

SILBURY HILL – AN UPDATE

Readers of the Spring 2005 newsletter may remember reading about the collapse of Silbury Hill in Wiltshire, the largest man-made prehistoric earth mound in Europe. This was thought to be due to previous archaeological excavations. The most recent of these,

in the 1960s, drove a tunnel large enough to take a dumper truck from the base to the centre of the mound. This was not backfilled, and the partial collapse of the 1970s shoring seems to have been responsible for the worst of the damage. To compound the disaster, the dig was never properly written up due to the death of the director, and there were serious concerns that evidence (both of the complex construction of the hill, and of the landscape that existed before its construction) would be damaged or lost. Now there is better news – English Heritage has agreed (subject to obtaining funds) to re-open the partially collapsed 1960s tunnel in order to properly record the archaeological and ecological evidence. Once this has been done, the tunnel will be re-filled with consolidated chalk to prevent both further collapse and the oxidation of the biological remains of the ancient landscape. When the hill has stabilised, the temporary polystyrene packing at the summit will be removed and replaced with chalk.

Michael Leach

Source: British Archaeology Jan/Feb 2005

BOOKS FOR REVIEW

Any member publishing a book or pamphlet on Essex archaeology or history is encouraged to send a review copy to the editor. This has two benefits. Firstly the publication will be reviewed in the Newsletter, giving the author useful publicity. Secondly, after review, the book will be deposited in the Society's library at the University of Essex where it will make a useful contribution to our growing collection.

It is suggested that anyone submitting a book or pamphlet for review should give

details of the price, and from where the publication can be obtained. Readers sometimes find it difficult to obtain items which have been reviewed (particularly if published privately), and are much more likely to purchase if the details are supplied.

HENRY WINSTANLEY'S HOUSE AND GARDEN AT LITTLEBURY

I am very grateful to Alison Barnes for providing corrections to this article, which appeared in the Summer 2005 Newsletter, as well as additional information about Winstanley and his house. There are a number of myths and misconceptions in circulation about this remarkable man which she is anxious to dispel.

Firstly, in connection with his career as an artist, he did obtain other commissions from estate owners after his series of engravings of Audley End, and there were also four fine costume pieces which can be seen in the Ashmolean museum.

Secondly, his house was built in 1677, two years before his appointment as clerk of works at Audley End. He was married some years later in Little Mundon parish church in 1683 and his house was open to paying members of the public from 1696 until 1738, long after his death. It is shown on the Chapman and Andre map, immediately to the south of the church.

Thirdly, there were no distorting mirrors, or devices that trapped visitors, but there were various mechanical devices such as automatons, and a chair that carried visitors to the basement. Winstanley was a deeply religious man and some of the devices had religious symbolism. The windmill, however, only pumped water to the kitchen from the River Cam, and did

not feed an artificial stream in the garden, or produce mechanical music. There were, however, mechanical jacks which struck chimes for one of the clocks on the front of the house.

Fourthly, the curiosity of travellers on the London/Cambridge road, which turned sharply north in front of the house, would have been aroused by the 40 foot high model of the Eddystone lighthouse in the garden.

Fifthly, the house was sold by auction by Gilbert Marshall in 1764 (Alison Barnes would be very grateful for any details of this auction) and the building was pulled down in 1778. The bricks and some of the interior fittings (such as panelling) were used in the reconstruction of the nearby water mill on the Cam (now a private house), and Winstanley's mound (originally surrounded by a water-filled moat) can still be seen in its garden.

Michael Leach

KING ALFRED'S NAVAL BATTLE IN 885 - WHICH RIVER STOUR?

An article in the recent volume of *Archaeologia Cantiana* re-examines the evidence for this battle, which is usually assumed to have taken place in the Essex Stour. The author looks at the evidence from the various surviving versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, as well as Aethelweard's *Chronicon* (written a century or so after the event, possibly based on oral sources, as well as a lost version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle). She also draws on her personal experiences of crossing the Thames estuary from Kent to Essex in a small boat.

The sources reveal three naval engagements with the Danes before the

advent of Alfred's newly designed war ships in 896. The last of these three battles, in 885, took place after Alfred had sent his army to relieve the siege of Rochester. The besiegers fled "across the sea" and Alfred sent ships from somewhere in Kent to pursue them to "Eastengle" (in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle) or "in orientales partes anglorum" (in the Latin *Chronicon*). After the pursuers' initial success in the River Stour, they ran into a large number of Viking ships on their way home and were soundly defeated.

It has always been assumed that the river was the Essex Stour. One key question is the meaning of "Eastengle". In the first part of the ninth century, this usually meant East Anglia or the East Angles, and there is no linguistic distinction between 'the Angles' and 'the English'. However, later in the century, the terms 'England' and 'the English' were actively cultivated by Alfred and the author suggests that "Eastengle" may have meant 'the eastern part of England', as indeed the Latin of the *Chronicon* suggests. At this time East Anglia was firmly under the hand of the Danish king Guthrum and was far from English, and certainly not part of the new English kingdom. This being the case, "Eastengle" may have been east Kent where two River Stours converged at a place still called Stourmouth on what was then the navigable Wantsum channel separating Kent from the Isle of Thanet. It may be significant that Aethelweard, (unlike the writer of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle) located the battle at Stourmouth, rather than in the River Stour. There is no evidence that a place of this name ever existed on the Essex/Suffolk coast.

Several sources state that Alfred's ships left from Kent. It seems unlikely that they would have been in the Medway during the Danish siege of Rochester. The

author believes that the most likely point of embarkation would have been from Sandwich, a well-known port at the southern end of the Wantsum channel. The initial fight with the six Viking ships may have taken place across the Thames at Benfleet (where Guthrum was said to have had a presence at this time) with Alfred's fleet being surprised on their return to Sandwich at Stourmouth, the point where the two Kentish River Stours flowed into the Wantsum channel. Though the place-name has survived to the present day, the Wantsum channel has disappeared and is now productive farmland. The Vikings were very familiar with Thanet (one of their over-wintering sites), the Wantsum channel and Sandwich, and the ambush of the Alfred's exhausted crews would have been a simple matter for them.

Crossing to Benfleet would have been relatively simple, involving navigation along the coast line, rarely, if ever, out of sight of land. However the author, from her personal experience of navigating further to the east across the wider mouth of the Thames estuary, believes that the open sea route from Kent to the Essex Stour would have been extremely difficult for primitive ships. She estimates that the return journey was roughly 100 nautical miles, and would probably have taken about twenty hours, to which must be added the time for two sea battles. For much of the voyage the coast would have been out of sight, and the strong tidal flows would have made navigation through the numerous sandbanks very dangerous, if not impossible. Even today, with a small boat, modern maritime technology and marked channels, it is not an easy journey in daylight and in good weather.

The argument in favour of the Kentish Stour seems to be strong.

Michael Leach

Source:

Grainge C 'King Alfred's Naval Engagement with the Danes in 885: which River Stour?' in *Archaeologia Cantiana* cxxv (2005) pp 229-241

HORNDON ON THE HILL

Last year's AGM was held in the Market Hall, Horndon on the Hill, and was preceded by a very informative talk by Anne Padfield on the building and its context in the history of the town.

Horndon on the Hill is the most southerly of the three Horndon parishes. As its name indicates, it is set on a hill, surrounded by the former Essex Thames marshes, once rough grazing land for large herds of cattle and sheep. Its easy access by water (plus road links to Billericay and Chelmsford to the north) established its early importance as a trading centre; there was a yearly fair from 1277 as well as a weekly market by 1281. The rectilinear layout of its street, with the central parish church not adjoining the manor house, suggests a planned town. The parish is divided into four manors which, in the C15, divided the market tolls between them.

A Feet of Fines of 1502 refers to '16 messuages, 60 shops and 70 stalls', indicating that it was the Middle Ages equivalent of a shopping mall, with shops greatly outnumbering houses! Some stalls in the market seem to have been permanent, as in 1527 several stallholders were fined for not repairing them. One required re-thatching. 'Shops' would have included workshops; there were tanners, shoemakers, collar makers and candlemakers, as well as tradesmen associated with the woollen industry, such as shearmen, spinsters, weavers and tailors. Further evidence of the woollen industry in this part of Essex (not normally closely associated with this

trade) is found in 1607, when a labourer was found guilty of stealing 30 yards of kersey (a coarse ribbed cloth) from a house in Horndon.

In 1501 Sir John Shaa, lord of the manor of Arden Hall, obtained a royal licence to import Bordeaux wine and to export wool and woollen cloth. This document contains the first mention of a market house, possibly the building now clad in yellow brick just to the north of the present Market Hall. This was a high quality mediaeval building with shop units on the ground floor and a single public room above. The court rolls of 1563 mention a 'market house' and in 1596 refer to 'the newe Hall alias the Market Hall'. The use of lamb's tongue chamfer stops on the main posts of the present Market Hall suggests a date after about 1570. It was a multi-purpose building with the open space at ground level being used for corn, wool, cloth and leather goods, the upper floor being used for court sessions and by the officials collecting market dues.

The cloth industry collapsed in the mid C17 and in 1688 the Market Hall was converted into a cottage. By 1734 it had been converted into three tenements 'for the use of widows and other poor persons'. In 1883 it was repaired, with part of the building being used for public meetings, but retaining dwellings on the High Street frontage. During World War II, it was hit by an incendiary bomb which failed to detonate. The only damage was the destruction of a jar of pickled onions! In 1969 the last poor widow left and the building was restored to something near its C16 appearance by the architect, John Graham, a Horndon resident, with a new rear extension to provide the necessary public facilities.

Originally the building had a jetty back and front. It has a 4 bay butt purlin roof over a 3 bay sub-structure. The timber is a mixture of oak and elm, adequate for

the job but not of the highest quality. Blocked mortices in the front central bay suggest that there may have been an oriel window here, with a rooflet above. Access to the upper floor, which was divided into two rooms of unequal size, would have been by an external stair at the south end. A join in the main timbers of the north bay suggests later repair, or remodelling, or simply the end of one season's construction. Most of the intermediate studs are later replacements and some of the main posts at ground floor level have been repaired or replaced. However it is a remarkable survival and the only Elizabethan market building in Essex to have been in community use throughout its existence.

Michael Leach

FRIENDS OF FRIENDLESS CHURCHES

This worthy organisation, which must be subject to increasingly difficult demands as church redundancies multiply, has been benefiting several Essex churches recently. Old St Bartholemew's, Wickham Bishops (of late C11 date with later additions, and shown in a very dilapidated state in the 1921 RCHM volume) was being vandalised, and protective grilles have been fitted to the windows. St Mary's, Mundon, (another redundant church with a timber tower, and a C17 north porch, described by Cecil Hewett as the finest of its type in the county) has received an English Heritage grant of £52,000 for underpinning and exploratory work. FoFC always intends to keep churches in their care open at all times, but Mundon has had to be closed for safety reasons.

The future of Mashbury church (dedication unknown) is very uncertain. Redundant for more than a decade, the present owner wishes to dispose of it for possible residential use. FoFC feels that its character would not survive conversion, and is investigating the possibility of taking it into their care.

Though principally concerned with conservation, FoFC has a fund for purchasing religious objects of beauty for churches and has recently purchased a statue carved in lime wood (by Ivor Livi) to be installed in the late Saxon church of Little Bardfield.

Anyone who wishes to support the work of FoFC can contact the organisation at St Ann's Vestry Hall, 2 Church Entry, London EC4V 5HB.

SEWARDS END FARM, SEWARDS END

This is another C17 listed building in dire peril. When the owner died in 2003, the building showed all the signs of many decades of neglect, with holes in the roof, rotten windows and un-modernised services. However examination by an architect highly experienced in conservation work confirmed that repair was both feasible and economically viable, and the house was sold for £690,000. A temporary scaffolding roof was erected over the building and all seemed set for restoration.

However this was not to be. The structural timbers of the roof were completely removed and destroyed, without being recorded, and all the elm floorboards were stripped out, apparently as an emergency measure. It was claimed that the structure was in far worse state than the original survey had revealed. A new survey claimed that the timber frame was extensively rotten and that there was little historical fabric left to

be repaired. The owner felt that restoration was neither historically nor economically viable, and applied to Uttlesford DC for consent to demolish. This was opposed by the parish council and the CPRE, but the district council does not appear to have approached other organisations normally consulted about the demolition of listed buildings. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings only learnt of these proposals by chance; it remains unconvinced by the economic and conservation arguments for demolition, and believes that the removal of roof and floorboards was carried out without listed building consent, and that prosecution should be considered. It is strongly opposed to the demolition of this building.

Michael Leach

Source: Cornerstone xxvi, no 2, 24-25 (2005)

LAWFORD HALL AND CHURCH

The Society is very grateful to Mr and Mrs Nichols for allowing members to visit Lawford Hall on 24 September 2005. This fine building is hidden at the end of the lane which leads past the church. It is a very substantial late C16 timber framed building, originally on an irregular "H" plan, said to have been built by Edward Waldegrave (d. 1584) in the 1580s. In the C18, the shorter arms of the "H" were cut back about 5 feet to accommodate a symmetrical red brick frontage on the south side of the house, with central 3 bay pediment and slightly projecting side wings. However the survival of an earlier building behind this façade is revealed by the high pitch of the tiled roof behind the parapet, and by the large octagonal chimney stacks at each end. Though these have been

rebuilt in later brick (probably more than once) the square base of these stacks, visible above the parapet, is in C16/C17 brickwork. The front porch was added in 1910.

In the inner angles of the long arms of the "H" are two stair turrets. That to the west was altered in the C18 to take a spacious staircase, but the one on the east retains part of the original solid tread staircase with a box centre – an unusual survival. The roof is original, though altered somewhat on the south side to accommodate the C18 façade. It is of double side purlin construction, with joggled purlins at the lower level. The purlin timbers are of various sizes and were not trimmed to fit, leaving a rather untidy joint with the principal rafters. This is surprising, given the status of the house, and the standards usually expected of craftsmen. Originally the open end of the "H" to the north was closed with a wall to form an enclosed courtyard. The two storey east and west wing are very substantial timber framed structures, that on the east rising from a brick sub-basement.

Internally the height of the rooms indicates a high status building. Most of the timber frame is concealed by plaster and panelling of various dates, and the main hall is of C18 appearance. The main structural timbers exposed by the alterations required for the C18 staircase are boxed into classical pillars, both downstairs and up. The armorial C16 stained glass, reset in the window of the west stair turret, appears to have come from elsewhere, as the families depicted do not correspond with the earlier owners of Lawford Hall. Judging from the pattern of the panelling in the main hall, the fireplace had been reduced in size, probably in the C19. Alterations in the C20 include the refurbishment of the room north west of the hall with C18 panelling, the insertion of a spiral

staircase in the west wing and the addition of a single storey, flat roof extension between (and obscuring) the bases of the stair turrets. There is evidence of wardrobe shutters inserted beside several of the main chimney stacks, including the main stack rising from the fireplace in the hall.

The most interesting room seen was the northernmost in the west wing. The timber frame is visible here. Surprisingly, the main structure finishes about 5 feet short of the end of the building, with a relatively insubstantial timber frame providing the infill. There is no similar break in the roof structure, so there is no obvious explanation for the discrepancy in the framing at ground floor level. Possibly the building was extended backwards after the main frame had been erected, but before the roof was constructed. There is a relatively light load on this end of the building, as the roof end is hipped. The central part of the tripartite window on the north wall contains glass of the C18 or earlier. Two filled-in frieze windows with ovolo mullions survive on each side. Externally the base of the central window is formed from a carved bresummer (decorated with griffons, according to the RCHM). The peg holes indicate that this is not in its original position.

The garden appears to have been laid out (or improved) in 1874, judging by the date on the walled lawn on the north side of the hall. The low brick boundary walls of the gardens to the east and south of the hall have the same ornamental coping as the walled lawn. The wall to the south rises from a shallow ha-ha. On the west side is a croquet lawn and a formal garden with low clipped hedging. From the hall, members descended the hill to look at the extensive range of buildings forming a model farm, built in 1871 in red brick with diaper patterning in blue headers, and a pantile roof. It is

not clear what some of the units were used for, though there was a horse gin in the apsidal end of the long barn. Gins are relatively rare in Essex; for further information readers are referred to the Shire publication on animal powered machines, by J Kenneth Major. Another shed with brick pens was possibly for sheep. There was an attention to detail (such as the bull's eye glazing in the iron framed windows, and the ornamental stones bearing dates, Latin mottos and Victorian aphorisms) suggesting that these model farm buildings were designed by an architect. (There is a similar, but less, elaborate model farm of the similar date at Norton Mandeville by an unknown architect). Adjoining is a matching brick house of the same date, presumably to house the farm manager. The scale and quality of these buildings was surprising, and they are still largely unaltered. They should provide an insight into farming practices of the 1870s.

After tea in the church hall, members were surprised to be guided round church and churchyard by a goodwife in C17 costume!

Michael Leach

RABBITS – WERE THE NORMANS TO BLAME?

The usual view is that the European rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, was introduced by the Normans and reared in the artificial warrens known to archaeologists as pillow mounds. According to Oliver Rackham, the earliest post-Conquest finds date from about 1100, and were unearthed at Ipswich, and Hadleigh, Essex. The remains of burrowing animals can confuse archaeological stratification, and rabbit bones found apparently sealed in

an early Mesolithic layer at Thatcham, Berkshire, were shown by carbon dating to be of recent date. They were also the larger bones of the present day rabbit.

However a recent dig of a rubbish pit in Lynford, Norfolk, revealed rabbit bones bearing butchery marks, associated with late Iron Age or early Roman pottery. Bones have also been found in the third century AD fill of a bath house at Beddingham, East Sussex and again the evidence is strongly against later intrusion by a burrowing animal. It is significant that both sets of bones are of the smaller southern Mediterranean rabbit, suggestive of Roman introduction of this animal. Perhaps the smaller Roman rabbits had failed to adapt to the British climate, and were extinct by the time the Normans arrived with their larger and hardier north European species. In that case, both invaders can be held responsible for inflicting a third invader, the rabbit, on our countryside!

Michael Leach

Sources: British Archaeology Jan/Feb 2006 p. 7

Rackham, O, The History of the Countryside (1993) Dent

RESIDENTIAL COURSES AT OXFORD

Some excellent courses are organised for local historians by Oxford University Continuing Education. Here are some tempting examples:

21-22 October 2006: understanding probate records 1541-1858

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4 November 2006: rural England – twentieth century histories

25 November 2006: the art of husbandry 1200-1900.

One or two year part time certificate courses are also run on vernacular architecture, local history via the internet, English local history, and architectural history.

Details can be obtained by writing to the Department for Continuing Education, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA or by visiting www.conted.ox.ac.uk

BOMBS OVER BLACKMORE

Memorials are a common feature in church stained glass windows. At the Priory Church of St Laurence, Blackmore, many of the windows date from the first two decades of the twentieth century.

An unusual record is on one, in what is now the kitchen: "This window is erected as a thank-offering to Almighty God for the protection in the Great Air Raid of March 31st 1916".

Curious to find out more, I looked at local newspapers for the time, and visited the Essex Record Office.

During the First World War, civilians were subjected to indiscriminate bombing from Zeppelins: large airships which flew at high altitudes. In all there were 53 separate attacks on England, twenty in Essex, which then had army and naval garrisons at Harwich, Colchester and Southend, and docks along the River Thames.

The night of 31st March 1916 was to be one of the greatest in terms of civilian casualties, when the L14 and L15 flew over Essex, dropping bombs in Colchester, Braintree, Stanford-le-Hope, Thameshaven and Blackmore. 223 bombs were dropped, resulting in 48 deaths and 64 injuries.

The night, though, marked a turning point for the allies because L15 was the first to be shot down during the War. The

Anti-Aircraft gunners of the 3rd Company, Essex and Suffolk Royal Garrison Artillery based at Purfleet were credited with the success. This was a major breakthrough, and the Lord Mayor of London gave gold watches to the members of the gun crew. (He had originally put up a reward of £500). An eyewitness recorded, "It was about 12.15am on April 1st 1916 that she came across Essex from north east at a height of about 14000 feet ... shrapnel shells [were fired] at the raider". An aeroplane failed to hit the target. The Zeppelin "dropped into the sea [near Margate] and sunk while being towed to land. Seventeen members of the crew were rescued and are prisoners of war at Chatham Barracks". The news must have travelled fast because Robert Taylor Bull, of Burnham, recorded in his diary the following day, "A Zeppelin was brought down at Thameshaven". On 1st April he wrote: "A Zepp went over last night about 9 ... with usual noise.

We must assume that the L14 dropped bombs on Blackmore, because reporting restrictions prevented newspapers giving precise locations. The Essex Weekly News referred to "Friday's Attack On The Eastern Counties". Looking at the Burial Register at the church, it seems unlikely that anyone was killed in Blackmore, but there could have been a few near misses.

During September 1916, two Zeppelins were intercepted by members of the Royal Flying Corps at Billericay and Wigborough, marking the beginning of the end of the raids. Inside the church at Great Wigborough there is a small part of what remains of L33.

Andrew Smith

1. Essex Record Office T/Z 473/1
2. Essex Record Office D/DS 200/7
3. Essex Weekly News. 7th April 1916
4. Essex Record Office T/S 245

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Michael

Leach

THE ESSEX SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 148

ISSN 0305-8530

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