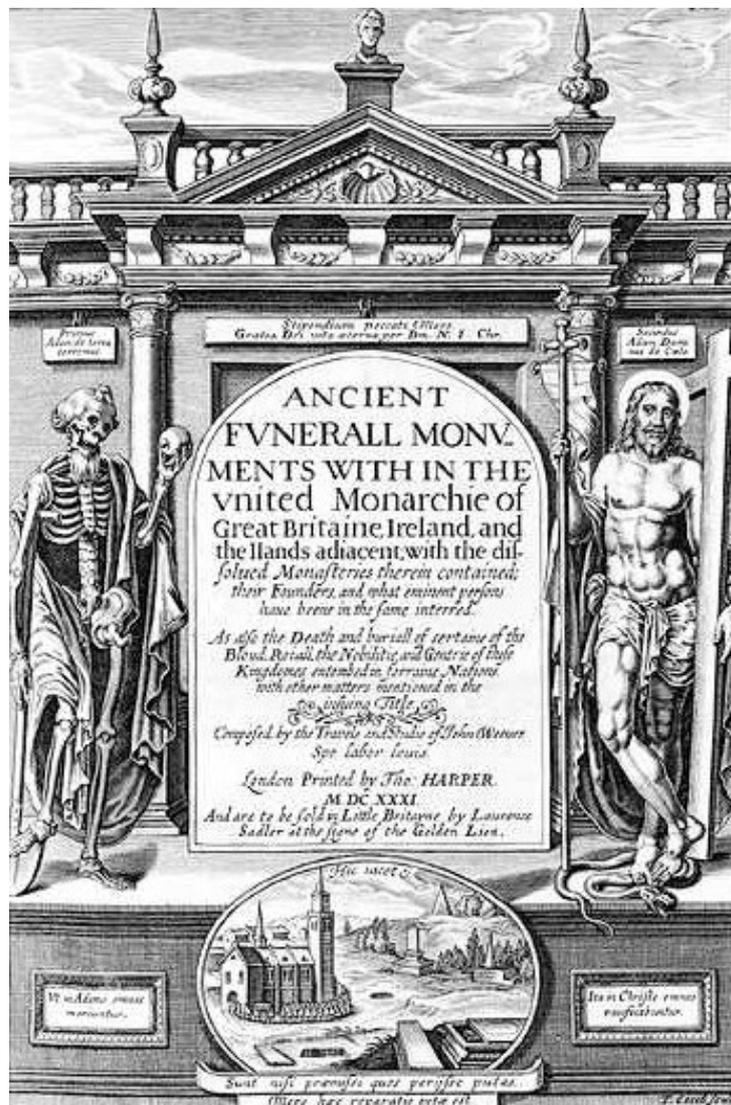


Essex Archaeology and History News



Summer 2007

THE ESSEX SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

NEWSLETTER 152

SUMMER 2007

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EDITOR: SALLY GALE

Historic Environment, Environment and Commerce, Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

Telephone: 01245 437513 E-mail: sally.gale@essexcc.gov.uk

Assistant Editor: Michael Leach

COPY FOR THE NEXT ISSUE SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS NO LATER THAN 19 OCTOBER 2007

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

Cover illustration:

Frontispiece from John Weever's Ancient Funerall Monuments within the United Monarchie of Great Britain and Ireland, 1631. The engraving by Thomas Cecill portrays Adam as a skeletal Old Man on the left, while on the right the New Man of Christ represents hope. See the article on page 3 to find out more about John Weever's travels through Essex. The image was found on the Folger Institute website at http://198.104.158.76/html/folger_institute/sacred/image18.html

Editors Note:

Please find the article by Ken Aberdour on the Essex Local History Recorder Scheme omitted from the Spring Newsletter on page 2. Many apologies for this earlier omission.

Sally Gale

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Essex is a county with an unending series of places of great historic interest stretching over many centuries.

Earlier this year, on 21st April, I attended in the Sampfords Village Hall a celebration of the highly successful community project to investigate the archaeological and historic past of the area, which has revealed an incredible amount of previously unknown information. As Kenneth Neale – an outstanding Essex historian, who has played a key role – explained, a landscape evaluation process has thrown light on a Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Roman and medieval past that no one previously realised it possessed.

At our Society's AGM this year, at the Langdon Visitors' Centre, we heard an extremely interesting talk by Colin Stratford, a veteran, on the history of the Plotlands development. In the first half of the twentieth century, many East Londoners with a desperate craving to live in the country bought plots offered for sale by a few large landowners, who had an eye to making their fortunes, in Langdon Hills and many adjoining areas in South Essex. On these they put huts, bungalows, disused railway carriages, old buses, etc., as rural retreats.

To the plotlanders, it was the achievement of a dream. Immense effort was expended to lay the basis for an Arcadian existence at weekends, or a permanent home when commuting to work daily became possible. The endless toil of construction, contending with the weather – which periodically converted the area to acres of mud and sticky clay – and the work of creating communities, were all cheerfully undertaken. Although more established county dwellers sometimes saw it as

desecration, the Plotlands movement was a significant feature of twentieth century Essex history.

As we saw on a brief tour, after the talk, much of the land at Langdon Hills is now reverting to woodland under the care of the Essex Wildlife Trust. The plotlanders' descendants live in more orthodox dwellings elsewhere. However, we visited an original bungalow which is being maintained as an example of a genuine plotland dwelling – replete with furniture and equipment from the period. This visit was illustrative of the recent past.

In contrast, the AGM of the Friends of Historic Essex this year, on 14th July, was held at Great Dunmow Maltings, a timber framed building estimated to date back to 1565. Malting, the process of converting barley into malt for brewing, is a very traditional Essex industry.

Elphin Watkins gave a fascinating account of the manner in which this rapidly deteriorating structure was rescued from the threat of demolition and restored by the community-backed Dunmow Preservation Trust, created in 1996. Securing the necessary funding from English Heritage and other bodies was a major part of ensuring that the building survived, but the actual work of restoration – in which Elphin was personally involved – was a task requiring immense stamina and ingenuity. Today, the building provides a town museum as well as an attractive venue for many different events.

Though a mere sample of the riches and variety of historic Essex, these visits illustrate how much our county has to offer. One of our purposes must be to ensure that a greater proportion of our population appreciates this.

Stan Newens

THE ESSEX JOURNAL

It is now more than a year since it became apparent that The Essex Journal was no longer financially viable. Despite the magnificent work of its editor for seventeen years, Michael Beale, who has very sadly just died, the valiant efforts of the distribution manager, Martin Stuchfield, and the solid support of the editorial committee, chaired by Adrian Corder Birch, the income was just not enough to cover costs.

In response to this crisis, the editorial committee has been enlarged to include representatives of other organisations, including the ESAH, and steps have been taken to put the Journal on a firm footing.

A new editor, Neil Wiffen, MA, has been appointed and has undertaken training which will enable him to set up the copy by computer. This will obviate the need for this to be done by the printer and should reduce costs. Other measures are also in hand to achieve viability.

The only way to ensure success for the Journal is, however to improve circulation. I have given out subscription forms at a number of Essex historical meetings and am struck by the number of committed people who do not subscribe. Many claim that they are not aware of the Journal's existence.

The revamped Journal is to be launched at Ingatestone Hall on the evening of 26th October. This will presage a vigorous drive to obtain new subscribers. At £10 p.a. for two issues packed with archaeological and historical information, it should be taken by everyone with an interest in the Essex past.

The forerunner of The Essex Journal was the Essex Review, first published in 1892. With over a century of publishing on Essex history behind it, it is a 'must' for all who want to be informed about our county. If you already have a

subscription, take one out for a friend or relative as a gift.

Subscriptions of £10 (cheques payable to The Essex Journal) should be sent to: The Essex Journal, 11 Milligans Chase, Galleywood, Chelmsford, Essex, CM12 8QD.

Stan Newens

ESSEX LOCAL HISTORY RECORDER SCHEME

History is a record of the vast jigsaw of life, everything before the present moment. It is available to us as nature and artefacts, and of the latter, writings particularly. From these we form ideas of the past, the accuracy of which is related to the quality and extent of these sources.

Our interest in history may be to satisfy our curiosity about the past or to predict the present and future. Humans play a very large part in all that happens and are interested in themselves in a personal and family way, living conditions, leisure activities, and local, regional, national and international affairs. We, as is very well said, are predictable. This applies to nature too. Computers, with their ability to process masses of information, are of marked value in predicting the weather, hurricanes and the price of shares on the stock market, (i.e. how much people are prepared to pay for them). These and other developments can only go further.

As already said, this depends on the quality and extent of the information. We are interested, particularly, in our rulers, politicians, sport and famous people. This is slanted towards gossip issues. We are interested in crime and its gory details and in war, negative issues. We create, and we are what we think. To

improve we must think positively. From the history viewpoint this slants the information available. Only a few people and activities are permanently recorded. At a local level where most people live there are records but these tend not to be preserved and many things are not recorded at all. At this level many things are of a positive nature balancing the more negative wider fields. They need to be recorded permanently as availability of this knowledge should be of enormous value to future historians.

Donald Jarvis, an Essex historian living in Stock, undertook a review of the historical associations in Essex and formed the impression that there was need for local history recorders in every parish in the county. Under the umbrella of the then Essex Community Council the formation of the Essex Local History Recorder Scheme was agreed on March 12, 1981. Recorders were appointed for every rural parish in the county. The idea was each recorder to take an active interest in their parish, become aware of its history and be a reference point for their locality. They are expected to make regular reports to form a permanent record for future reference.

Some ten years later Donald Jarvis became blind and unable to continue running the scheme. Jean Aberdour took over. When she suddenly died in 1997 I, her husband, took over and now wish to retire as coordinator. The scheme had gradually bedded down, concentrating in the more rural areas. There is a great problem getting officers for the various branches. There are many parishes without a recorder. There are two very active branches, Tendring and Uttlesford. Recently Epping failed due to inability to get a new chairman. There are scattered recorders elsewhere.

The scheme is a valuable part of Essex and needs new members so that every parish does have an active recorder.

Should its role be enlarged to include preservation groups, restorers, and those studying special artefacts?

Ken Aberdour

ESSEX PLACE-NAMES PROJECT

The 11th Annual Place-names Seminar on Saturday 17th November 2007 at 2pm has been relocated to Essex University. There will be talks by Local Recorders and by Dr. Stephen Rippon of Exeter University. His subject will be "The Medieval Landscape in Essex and East Anglia". Tickets £5.50 (payable to "ESAH") are available from the Project Coordinator, 27 Tor Bryan, Ingatestone CM4 9JZ. Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope.

The Place-names Project is looking for Parish Recorders to record field and place-names from old maps and documents. Assistance and Guidelines are provided; no previous experience is needed. Further details from the Project Coordinator.

JOHN WEEVER'S TRAVELS THROUGH ESSEX

During the first three decades of the seventeenth century, John Weever (1575/6-1632) travelled '*at painful expense*' throughout England and some parts of Scotland to record monumental inscriptions. In the early 1620s, he befriended Augustine Vincent (c.1584-1626), then Rouge Croix pursuivant and later Windsor herald, enabling him to gain access to the records of the College of Heralds as well as introductions to Sir Robert Cotton, William Camden, Sir

Henry Spelman, John Selden and other antiquaries. In 1631 he published a part of his labours in *Antient Funerall Monuments*; this included a section covering the county of Essex.

In his introduction he regretted the neglect and destruction of funeral monuments –*‘grieving at this unsufferable injury.... I determined with myself to collect such memorials of the deceased, as were yet remaining undefaced.’* It is easy to underestimate the laborious nature of his task with long days on horseback on poor roads, perhaps with Norden’s map to guide him. Fifteen miles a day was probably the best that could be expected from a horse on the poor roads of the time. Travellers would have hoped to fall in with someone with local knowledge going in the right direction, and this is recorded on one occasion when he noted *‘riding from Raleigh towards Rochford, I happened to have the good company of a gentleman of this country...’*. Nevertheless, his journeys were frequently unproductive, and often met with a surprising local refusal to allow him to record what he had found, or to question people about monuments that had lost their inscriptions. He noted *‘having found one or two ancient funeral inscriptions, or obliterated sepulchres, in this or that parish church, I have ridden to ten parish churches distant from that, and not found one. Besides I have been taken up in divers churches by the churchwardens of the parish, and not suffered to write the epitaphs, or to take view of the monuments as I much desired, for that I wanted (i.e. lacked) a commission.’* Both John Leyland and William Camden had had the benefit of royal commissions to overcome such objections on their antiquarian journeys. Weever noted in his introduction that he became *‘altogether discouraged to proceed any further in this my laborious*

and expenceful enterprise.’ It was the friendship and encouragement of Augustine Vincent, as well as access to *‘many church collections, with divers memorable notes, and copies of records...’* that enabled him to complete and publish records covering the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, London and Norwich.

Often the text contains confirmatory evidence of a personal visit; examples include Corringham *‘the monuments in this church...are quite defaced...’*, Raleigh *‘...a monument ..of great antiquity, but who lies entombed herein, I could not certainly learn’* and Rochford *‘I am looking for some monument or other in this church, to the memory of some one of the lords...’* and many other similar. There are also incidental comments (about the building, or a decorative detail, or a conversation with a local person) that could only have resulted from direct contact. In addition the book has numerous marginal notes indicating the sources of additional information that he had incorporated. Examples include the College of Heralds, Sir Robert Cotton’s library, Camden’s *Britannia*, Stow’s *Annals*, Hollinshed’s *Chronicle*, Speed’s *History of Great Britaine*, records in the Tower of London, and so on. Very few entries are solely dependant on such secondary sources. In the introduction to his book, he indicated that he had set out the parish entries in the order in which he had visited them. Though it is not clear whether he did all his Essex visits in a single long journey, or returned to the county at intervals between his other travels (the latter is much more probable), I wondered if it might be possible to establish the route of some of his forays into Essex by careful examination of the 1767 reprint of his book.

The first tranche is fairly clear; starting in

West Ham, he moved steadily through the southern fringes of Essex, never far from the principal roads shown on Norden's map, as far as Prittlewell. The distance from church to church in straight lines totals 55 miles, but this obviously does not allow for less direct routes, or for the numerous trips to places where he found nothing or was denied access. It must have taken at least a week, but probably much longer. In view of his subsequent haphazard journeys across the rest of the county, it is tempting to think that London to Prittlewell represents a single trip. The subsequent two entries are Stansgate Priory (on the north of the Dengie peninsular) and St Osyth, but the text and the marginal notes suggest that he only used documentary sources for these two places.

The next parishes recorded are in and around Maldon, with evidence of personal visits to Woodham Walter and Maldon itself, and perhaps represents a second phase of his exploration of the county. Thence he went to Colchester, a day's ride away, perhaps using the route clearly marked on Norden's map through Great Totham, Tiptree and Stanway. Though he referred to ten Colchester churches, he only found inscriptions worth recording in St Giles.

At this point his journey becomes confusing, apparently zigzagging all over north west Essex, often re-crossing earlier routes more than once. Some distances (Writtle to Finchingfield, or Hatfield Peverel to Harlow, for example) would have been more than a day's journey, and must represent either different expeditions, or entries written up solely from documentary sources. In only one instance is it possible to fix the date of his visit. At Chelmsford he noted '*this church was re-edified about some hundred thirty seven years since, as appeareth by a broken inscription on the*

outside of the south wall.' He then recorded the inscription with its date (1489), placing either his visit, or his writing of this note, to 1626.

How many churches did Weever actually visit, rather than compiled from notes made by others? A close reading of the text reveals strong evidence of a personal visit to 32 churches (usually indicated by a comment that could have been made only from direct observation), and presumptive evidence in 29 others (such as recording a very fragmentary inscription, which only an enthusiast like Weever would have noted). Further confirmation of his personal contribution to these 61 entries comes from the absence of marginal notes that would indicate the use of a documentary source. In only 6 churches is there no definite or presumptive evidence of a visit, together with a marginal note making it clear that he had depended solely on another source. It seems clear that he personally visited the vast majority of the parishes he recorded, as well as numerous others unrecorded where he either found nothing of interest, or was denied access by the churchwardens.

It is possible that Weever's two notebooks in the library of the Society of Antiquaries (mss 127 and 128), which contain much unpublished material, might provide further clues about his Essex journeys. No other archive sources seem to have survived.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Kathman, D., 2004 'John Weever' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, OUP

Norden, J., 1594 'Speculi Britannia Pars' (Camden Society reprint of 1840)

Weever, J., 1767 reprint Antient *Funerall Monuments*, London

BOOK REVIEWS

Paglesham Natives, Mark & Rosemary Roberts (2006), pp 144, published by authors.

This engaging book is a labour of love anchored on the remarkable archive of the Wisemans of Paglesham and the related families of Browning and Pettitt: a gold mine of diaries, letters, survey books and ledgers covering the period 1750 to the dawn of the 20th century. All three families, as the title implies, were engaged in oyster cultivation.

The detail supplied from these sources of domestic, social and business practice is extensive and so verbatim as to render the book almost a primary source. It is very Victorian: family bickering (often about money), churchgoing, childhood deaths, but also respectable drunkenness and domestic violence. The text moves chronologically through thumbnail biographies from Paglesham to Australia, constantly enlivened by archive illustrations – family photos, paintings, drawings and some marvellous sketches surveying the channels of, inter-alia, the Rivers Crouch and Blackwater and the oyster layings along them. Indeed, an extended final section discusses the oyster trade.

Littlebury: A parish history, Littlebury Millennium History Society (2005), pp288, Littlebury Millennium Society £15
This large and opulent book is the culmination of a 3-year community project funded by the Local Heritage Initiative. Over 40 authors have contributed and many others have been involved, almost all amateur or first-time historians. It is one of those 'everything' books, telling the story of this small community – which includes Catmere End and Audley End – from the Cretaceous Period to the roar of the M11, though an earlier generation might

have called it a Saturday Book, a miscellany. The editors call it a patchwork quilt. It is lavishly, lavishly illustrated with over 600 images, most in full colour, making skilful use of its A4 format. It is learned, lucid and omnivorous. It is remarkably free from typos or overstatements. If a little rose-tinted, then the genre deserves it. With such a compilation it is invidious to name names, but the central role of its joint editors, Gillian Williamson and Lizzie Sanders, is very apparent. And whoever raised the money is invited to sit on our Council. Can a short book review do justice to its 93 sections? No; nor will I try. The reader must beg or buy themselves a copy. It may well be a millennium before Littlebury gets (or needs) anything like this again. And only £15. Wow.

Round About Colchester, Patrick Denney (2006) pp176, Wharncliffe Books £12.99.

Patrick Denney has again produced a lively and entertaining 'Colchester' book, enriching contemporary topics with his knowledge of the town, his large collection of historic photographs and his work in oral history. From civic events like the Oyster Feast and the building of the town hall to personal stories of World War II, Colchester Zoo, the 1953 floods, and transport from trams to barges, words and pictures present the background to articles originally published in the East Anglian Daily Times.

The Old Rayleigh Rectory, Noel Beer, (2006) pp 42, HTR Publications, 14 Nelson Road, Rayleigh.

Noel Beer's latest booklet covers a neglected subject and he assembles, as ever, a lucid and thorough account of the fall of one of Rayleigh oldest building (c. 1400?) 40 years ago and the rise of its

modern replacement.

Rooted in Essex: A Gazetteer of Designers, Nurserymen, Writers & Artists associated with the historic gardens of Essex, Twigs Way [Ed], (2006) pp66, Essex Gardens Trust. c/o 2 Landview Gardens, Ongar, £6.50

This admirable compilation's subtitle is wholly explanatory, yet does not convey the thoroughness and scholarship with which this biographical dictionary has been put together by its team of Essex authors. Covering 500 years of our history, entries range from one of the earliest garden writers (Thomas Tusser) to Edwardian eccentrics like Ellen Willmott and previously unrecognised contributors to Essex gardens such as Metcalfe Few. Frequent illustrations intersperse the lucid prose.

Recent Library Purchases

The Cistercian Abbey of St Mary, Stratford Langhorne, Essex, Barber, Dyson & White, MoLAS Monograph 18.

John Ray: A Personal Life, Janet Turner & Ann Wood

Robert Surman of Valentines, Georgina Green

Gentlemen Cricketers of Maldon, Richard Cooper

BUILDINGS: A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT OF THEIR STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS IN C16

William Harrison (1535-1593), rector of Radwinter from 1559 until his death (and vicar of Wimbish for part of that time) compiled his *Historicall Description of the Island of Britain* which was included in the two C16 editions of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. It is a curious mix of classical

erudition, fabulous stories, antiquarian curiosity, puritan conviction and plagiarism (the last principally from Leland's *Itinerary*). From time to time, he upbraids himself from straying from the point, with a terse reminder to himself, 'but to my purpose, from whence I have now digressed.' However, when writing from his own experience, his account comes vividly to life. His *Description* is a series of short essays on a wide range of topics, from 'Of Sundry Kinds of Punishments Appointed for Malefactors' to 'Of Hawks and Ravenous Fowls' and 'Of Our Saffron and the Dressing Thereof'; all contain much interesting material.

There are essays on buildings, and on stone and on timber.

He makes a clear distinction between timber framed houses in 'plain and woody soils' (those that we now call close studded) and those in 'champaign country' where there was a shortage of trees, and timber had to be used more sparingly. The frame was infilled with 'raddles' (thin woven rods) and plastered with clay which came in three colours – white, red and blue. He refers to the application of lime (made by burning chalk or sea shells) to the exterior, probably as a wash. The best houses had lime and hair plaster applied onto lathes, or reeds or 'wickers' nailed to the main frame; the last two, he noted, carried a higher fire risk. The plaster had a 'delectable whiteness...laid on so even and smoothly as nothing in my judgement can be done with more exactness'. Internal plastering was done with burnt alabaster, 'very profitable against the rage of fire', but the best houses were panelled with English oak, or 'wainscot' imported from the 'East countries' (i.e. the Baltic). The internal plastered walls were covered with tapestry, arras work or painted cloths 'wherein divers histories, or herbs,

beasts, knots and suchlike' were depicted. It is interesting, though not surprising, to note his concern about fire which must have been an ever-present risk.

He then discusses window openings which, before the widespread use of glass, were filled with 'fine rifts of oak in checkerwise', or horn or 'specular stones' (mica, perhaps?). However the use of glass, mostly imported from Normandy, Burgundy and Flanders, was already widespread by his time. English glass was inferior in clarity, but he considered that it could be improved if 'we were diligent and careful to bestow more cost upon it'. This is by no means his only complaint about this country's readiness to import, rather than to manufacture, its goods, some of which deeply offended his puritan sensibilities. These included 'twopenny tabors, leaden swords, painted feathers, gewgaws for fools, dogtricks for dizzards, hawkshoods and suchlike trumpery...'

He has much to say on stone, and clearly disapproved of brickmaking 'whereof a great part of the wood of this land is daily consumed ... to the no small decay of that commodity, and hindrance of the poor, that perish oft from cold'. He is equally disapproving of the practice of importing stone, when excellent and varied materials could be quarried locally. Clearly fascinated by reports of fossils, he noted 'I myself have seen stones opened, and within them the substances of corrupted worms like unto adders (but far shorter) whose crests and wrinkles of body appeared also therein...'. He must have been describing ammonites.

Conversations with his elderly parishioners in Radwinter had revealed that three things were much changed during their lifetime. The first was the 'multitude of chimneys' though he did not see this as entirely beneficial, observing

'now have we many chimneys, and yet our tenderlings complain of rheums, catarrhs and poses. Then we had none but reredoses, and our heads did never ache. For as the smoke in those days was supposed to be a sufficient hardening of the timber of the house, so it was reputed a far better medicine to keep the goodman and his family from the quack or pose, wherewith as then very few were oft acquainted.' The second change was the great improvement in bedding; straw pallets, with 'pricking straws that ran oft through the canvas' being replaced by flock or down mattresses. Coverlets of 'dagswain or hop-harlots' had been replaced with finer materials, and pillows were no longer regarded as only for women in labour. The third change was the replacement of wooden platters and spoons with pewterware or silver, as well as a significant increase in the number and the quality of household furnishings in the wealthier homes. He gives a strong impression of a marked increase in living standards. Costly furnishings were to be found not only in noble houses; 'now it is descended yet lower, even unto the inferior artificers and many farmers, who have... learned also to garnish their cupboards with plate, their joint beds with tapestry and silk hangings, and their tables with carpets and fine napery.'

His essay, 'Of Woods and Marshes', has much to say about timber, only a little of which is relevant to its use in building. As already noted in connection with brickmaking, he was concerned about the reduction in woodland, which he partly attributed to a much increased demand for oak for construction. 'In times past men were content to dwell in houses builded of sallow, willow, plum tree, hardbeam and elm. Nevertheless... of our time ..every man almost is a builder... and will not be quiet till he have

pulled down the old house... and set up a new after his own device.' He refers to hedgerows as an important source of timber, and notes that oaks grown in parkland are more prone to 'spalt and brickle' than hedge oak. However, in his view, the best oak in Essex for joiner's work came from Bardfield Park, 'for oftentimes have I seen of their works made of that oak so fine and fair as most of the wainscot that is brought hither out of Dansk, for our wainscot is not made in England.'

Much can be gleaned, on a wide range of other topics, from Harrison's essays. I would recommend the unabridged edition by Georges Edelen, published in 1994, which is indexed (though not perfectly) and can be obtained new through www.abebooks.

Michael Leach

**JOSIAH EDWARD
MICHAEL BEALE, M.A.
(1928-2007)**

Michael Beale, Hon Editor of the *Essex Journal* from 1990, died on 8th June 2007 at Broomfield Hospital, near Chelmsford. He was tended by his devoted family to the last. With his passing our beloved county of Essex has been deprived of one of its most dedicated servants and a scholar of distinction.

His life may be briefly summarised. He was born on 29th September 1928 at Upminster, his father being Josiah Edward Beale and his mother Phyllis Newell. His childhood remained in the county where he was educated at Brentwood School before gaining a scholarship to Jesus College, Cambridge. Completing National Service in the Intelligence Corps he embarked, in 1952, upon a distinguished career in the

Civil Service where he served in the Civil Aviation Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, the latter included a three year secondment in Singapore, before retiring in 1985.

He married Jean McDonald at South Weald church in 1958 and was the proud father of two daughters, Stephanie and Harriet, and three granddaughters. He was above all a man who loved and cared passionately about his wife and family who always assumed the highest possible priority.

He was also seized of a deep and committed faith - no doubt heavily influenced from an early age by virtue of his father, who served as churchwarden of St Laurence's at Upminster, and his maternal grandfather who was a churchwarden at St Anne's, Limehouse. He was a regular worshipper at Shenfield parish church and upon moving to Great Waltham in 1987 promptly immersed himself in church life where he also became a churchwarden. The love of his parish church manifested itself in the authorship of a, recently published, historical guide to the building of great erudition.

His abiding interest was history and most especially that concerned with Essex. He cared passionately about the Essex Record Office and served as Hon Secretary of the Friends of Historic Essex from 1987 until 2002. During this period he enjoyed an excellent relationship and personal friendship with Kenneth Neale whom he ultimately succeeded as Chairman.

His modesty precluded committing his vast knowledge to print, for he rather preferred to act unselfishly as a facilitator and motivator in encouraging others. Notwithstanding, glimpses of his undoubted scholarship did emerge into the public domain. A case in point was his accomplished essay concerned with the *Religious Census of Essex in 1851*

contributed to the *festschrift* volume published in 1996 by the Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress ('Essex Congress') as a tribute to the former Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Sir John Ruggles-Brise, its Patron. However, his most important contribution was to assume the heavy burden of responsibility as editor of the *Essex Journal* at a pivotal time when this title had been rescued from collapse by a consortium led by Jerry Knight who initiated publication under the management of an Editorial Board consisting of representatives of Essex Congress, the Friends of Historic Essex and the Essex Record Office. In his first editorial Michael modestly declared: "I feel humble, and thoroughly unqualified, in taking over the editorship". His achievement as the longest serving editor of the *Essex Journal* bears ample testimony to his understated ability and serves as an enduring legacy. I was privileged to be able to work with Michael, in all but the first issue under his editorship, and in so doing embarked upon a highly valued relationship where it proved possible to witness at close quarters his noble qualities of modesty, commitment, integrity and sense of duty which characterised this quintessential gentleman of Essex.

Requiescat in pace.

Martin Stuchfield

VISIT TO BROADOAKS, WIMBISH

Members of the Society visited this house, previously known as 'Braddocks' or 'Braddox', on 21 April 2007. It is a brick-built mansion of two storeys with attics, on a moated site on high ground, remote from any settlement. Some, but

not all, of the window mullions and transoms are of clunch, rather than the lime-plastered brick more often found elsewhere in Essex. Dendrodating suggests construction in the last quarter of the C16, probably by Thomas Wiseman who died in 1585. A C19 lithograph (a copy of an earlier image) shows that the present house is the north wing of what had been a much larger building. This makes the interpretation of the internal arrangements of the surviving fragment much more difficult; a further complication is that the C17 or C18 infill on the south east side was built using C16 bricks. In 1662 the house was taxed on 15 hearths and an inventory of 1703 (before the house was reduced in size) lists numerous rooms and passages, now impossible to identify, as well as between 30 and 40 locks and keys, including a set at the foot and at the head of the main staircase. There are substantial original chimney stacks with octagonal shafts, with projecting pipes just below the cap of each stack. These are said to date from the 1960 restoration (supposedly to reduce wind resistance after the collapse of one stack) but the photograph from the RCHM visit in March 1913 shows similar projections. It would seem that the 1960 rebuild may have copied what was there before.

Internally there have been many alterations since the RCHM visit. The cellar has been filled in, and two separate staircases (with their oak battened doors) have been replaced by a single new staircase against the north wall. One staircase had provided access to a mezzanine floor (now removed) over the north-east room. A number of internal partitions have also gone, notably in the north-west and south-west rooms on the ground floor. The north-west room (which was two rooms,

kitchen and dairy, when the RCHM visited) has a C17 panelled fireplace surround which has either been truncated or is not in its original position. A beam running east-west across the middle of the hall has mortices and pegholes suggesting that there was a substantial internal timber-framed wall here, not unusual in brick-built buildings of this date. However the corresponding timber frame on the first floor has evidence of a possible high level window opening, suggesting that it may have been an external wall.

Upstairs there were more questions than answers. The west half seems to have been a substantial single chamber with high ceiling (now two rooms), with a large three tier six light mullion and transom window in clunch at the north end, perhaps the solar of the now lost great hall. The east half of the first floor has lower and smaller rooms with some C17 panelled oak doors of various patterns (some probably with their original nail-fixed loop handles), and some dado panelling of similar date in one room. In the light of the 1703 inventory, it was not surprising to note that several of the doors had evidence of up to three keyholes!

In the attic, the north-east room is narrow, and may have had a dormer to the north, but originally appears to have been narrower still as the purlins on each side had been cut to take studs. This would have reduced the room to corridor width. From the attic landing, a few steps of quartered oak logs lead to a long attic room over the great chamber below. This is lit from the north and south gable ends, and possibly at one time by dormers in the roof slope to the west – the structural evidence for this was inconclusive. This room contains the famous priest hole discovered in 1931, said to have been constructed by Nicholas Owen who was noted for his

ingenuity in creating unexpected spaces, ingenuously concealed within the structure. Here, a space 2' wide by 5' 6" high had been formed below floor level within the chimney stack, accessed by sliding back part of the hearth of the attic fireplace. The Jesuit priest, John Gerard, spent four days hidden here in 1594, and recorded this experience in his diary.

Descendants of the Catholic Wiseman family continued to occupy the house until 1742 when it was leased to the Moravian church for use as a school. It was vacated three years later and sold in 1749 to Lord Charles Maynard. It was during the Maynard's ownership the house was considerably reduced in size. We are extremely grateful to the owner for allowing members free access to this interesting house, and to Anne and her team for organising the practical and edible aspects of the visit.

Michael Leach

EARTHQUAKE AT COGGESHALL

“September 8 1692, being Thursday, and the same day that Jacob Cox dyed, about 2 o'clock, there was an earthquake in Coxall, and many towns besides hereabouts, and at London and severall other countries, we heard, and in the news letter said it was at ye same time in Holland, and ye rest of ye provinces of ye Netherlands. I was in our garret at that time, and heard the house crack, and perceived it shake, and was afraid it would fall, and therefore ran down staires.”

Quoted from 'Curious Extracts from an MS Diary of the Time of James II and William and Mary' by Rev. E. L. Cutts in *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, first series, i, 125. The diarist was John Bufton of

Coggeshall and the diary at that time was in the possession of a descendant, Miss Hunt, though one volume had already been lost. It would be interesting to know what other accounts of this earthquake have survived, the details of the 'news letter' which reported the tremor in Holland, and whether any of these manuscript diaries are still extant.

STOUR VALLEY LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

This is a project shared by Essex and Suffolk, mainly supported from Heritage Lottery funds but with some funding from the main partners. A grant of £50,000 has already been obtained for preliminary work to inform the main bid itself. The intention is that groups or organisations will put up projects to form part of the main bid. Such projects could cover a variety of topics related to the landscape of the area, such as;

- The landscape of the valley, and its representation by artists
- The history of the landscape, and the development of its agriculture
- Oral history, photographic and archive collections
- Archaeological investigations, such as field walking
- Research or conservation work on historic structures, landscape features and habitats
- Interpretation of the valley's heritage
- Events to celebrate the valley's cultural history
- Schemes to promote better access, as well as understanding the area's significance.

The relevant Essex parishes covered by the project are Alphamstone; Ashen; the Belchamps (Otten, St Paul and Walter);

Birdbrook; Borley; Boxted; Bulmer; Dedham; Foxearth; the Horkesleys (Great and Little); Lamarsh; Langham; Lawford; Liston; Little Yeldham; Ovington; Pentlow; Steeple Bumpstead; Sturmer; and Wormingford.

At the time of writing, the Society was considering the possibility of becoming involved through the Essex Place-names Project. Any individual or group wanting further information should contact the Operations Manager, Simon Amstutz, c/o Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX as soon as possible, or visit www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org

Michael Leach

JOHN HERSCHEL, THE CAMERA LUCIDA AND STONEHENGE

John Herschel (1792-1871) is perhaps best known for the haunting and atmospheric photographic portrait of him by Julia Margaret Cameron. His achievements in chemistry, physics, astronomy, mathematics and education were very considerable but are now largely forgotten. He was also a photographic pioneer, being the first to describe the effect of 'hypo' on silver salts (which became the basis of fixing photographic images on light sensitive film). Within a week of hearing of Daguerre's success in fixing an image on a silver iodide plate, he had not only made his first negative but had also made a positive print from it on sensitised paper. He was also a pioneer in the use of the light sensitive vegetable dyes for use in colour photography.

Though he never took up photography seriously, he made a considerable number of topographical drawings using

the camera lucida. This optical instrument had been patented in 1806, but was almost certainly a much earlier invention, and was probably used by some Renaissance artists to overcome the problems of perspective. It was light and easily portable, unlike C19 plate cameras, and required no chemicals. It had an adjustable arm which could be clamped to a board; this arm carried a partially mirrored prism and viewing lens, which enabled the user to see simultaneously both the image in front of him, and the surface of the drawing board below. This made it possible to swiftly outline an extremely accurate drawing. He made a camera lucida drawing of Stonehenge in 1865, and a modern photograph taken from the same viewpoint confirms the precision and accuracy of his drawing. Apart from the re-erection and straightening of various stones during the C20 (and the patching of one with concrete), it is clear that there has been a significant rise in ground level since Herschel's time. It is not obvious how this has happened. It could be due to the spoil produced by various archaeological digs, or to deliberate landscaping of the site to improve its setting or access. In addition, it is very likely that earthworms have been a significant factor. In the mid C19, Charles Darwin observed how the activities of these creatures contributed to burying archaeological features by raising ground level; also how the process of burrowing under large objects results in their gradual subsidence into the earth. Careful observations by Darwin and other naturalists over many years indicated that the weight of worm casts over an acre of ground averaged about 10 tons a year, sufficient to raise ground level by about one fifth of an inch annually. Darwin himself had made observations at Stonehenge (probably at about the time Herschel was making his

drawing) and concluded that it was earthworm activity that had caused the partial burial of the large fallen stones. Herschel was a prolific artist and he himself catalogued 763 of his own drawings (the majority made using the camera lucida). However his list must have been incomplete, as the Getty Museum now holds over 2000 of his drawings and prints. Do any relate to Essex? And were there any Essex users of this elegant and accurate instrument?

Michael Leach

Sources:

British Archaeology July/August 2007
 Graham, E C, 1965 *Science Dictionary in Basic English*, Evans Brothers
 Crowe, M J., 2004 Sir John Frederick William Herschel in *ODNB*
 Darwin, C., 1881 *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Earthworms*, John Murray

DISCOVERY OF WALL PAINTINGS AT ST PETER'S, WICKHAM BISHOPS

This mediaeval church, now in the care of the Friends of Friendless Churches (FoFC) and tenanted by a stained glass artist, was superseded in 1850 by a new church designed by Ewan Christian. Recently, traces of wall paintings of C13 date have been observed. These are not figurative, but consist of a complex pattern of repeated geometrical shapes, suggesting that this was a high status church, perhaps serving the Essex estates of the Bishop of London. Mediaeval plaster survives in the window reveals but there is no trace of decoration here – possibly lost from weathering when the windows were

unglazed. FoFC are investigating the best way of stabilising these fragile but unusual survivals.

Michael Leach

Source: Ancient Monuments Society Newsletter, Summer 2007

2007 AGM AND THE ESSEX PLOTLANDS

The AGM was held in the Langdon Visitor Centre near Basildon. After completion of the routine business, the President expressed his concern about cuts over the last year in various heritage services that we have come to take for granted. These include repercussions from Essex County Council's funding cuts to the VCH; ECC's decision to cease to employ specialist librarians in the county; the weekday closure of the Vestry House Museum and the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow; the planned closure of the Family Record Centre in central London; discussion of charging for use of the British library; and the transfer of large numbers of local history books from open shelves to closed storage in Essex libraries (combined with the loss of specialist librarians, users now have considerable difficulty in getting access to these books). The President asked members to be vigilant, to inform the Society of any further cuts or threats, and to write to their District or County Councillor.

Colin Stratford then spoke about the plotlands movement. Eighty years ago the adjoining area was called as 'three horse land' – the clay was so heavy that it required that number of horses to pull a single furrow plough through it. Corn prices were low and then, as now, farmers were looking to diversify to cut

their losses. A large area of poor land was sold to an entrepreneur who divided the fields into plots (usually 20 feet wide by 150-180 feet in depth). Potential purchasers were brought by special trains from London (and plied with champagne on the way!); many signed up on the spot, often buying more than one plot (initially at £20 apiece). There was no road, and no services – the route of the road (40 feet wide) was pegged out, but not tarmaced till much later. Many of the branch roads were never surfaced, and the winter mud was formidable. Gradually tiny bungalows were built over many weekends; on other plots, old bus bodies, railway carriages, and the backs of lorries were installed. The structures varied hugely – one shack was faced with Italian marble. There were a limited number of standpipes, and most residents collected and stored rainwater. In dry summers, water bowsers were required to fill the wells at 7/6d for 500 gallons. In the absence of running water and any form of sewerage, earth closets were the norm. Orsett RDC, Grays UDC and Essex County Council, alarmed by the unplanned spread, bought up surrounding land to stop any further growth.

During World War II, many owners moved out from London and lived here permanently. Most commuted to work, as there was very little local employment and, on winter weekdays, the waiting room at Laindon railway station was notorious for the large number of muddy Wellington boots left by commuters. With the development of Basildon new town after the war, and an increased expectation of the services that we now take for granted, residents were gradually moved out, sometimes without explanation, and often with very inadequate financial compensation. Those who had lost their deeds of sale

often received nothing, though many had rosy memories and, even now, sometimes return to find the overgrown plot where they had grown up.

It is now managed as a nature reserve, and is slightly eerie, with ruins half visible in the encroaching scrub. After the talk, members were able to visit the nearby museum, the last remaining bungalow, furnished as it might have been in the 1930s and 1940s.

Michael Leach

SILBURY HILL, WILTSHIRE

Previous Newsletters have reported on this hill, probably the largest man-made prehistoric monument in Europe. There have been concerns about its stability as a result of damage caused by various invasive investigations in the past to discover the purpose and structure of this enigmatic monument. There has been a collapse of the top of the hill, partly due to an earlier shaft sunk from the summit, and partly due to a substantial tunnel (large enough to take a dumper truck) which was driven into the base in 1968. The latter was inadequately backfilled and the steel shuttering is beginning to give way. Sadly the 1968 exploration was never written up, and the opportunity to learn more about the archaeology and palaeobotany of this unique site was wasted.

Recently funds have been found to re-open the 1968 tunnel, to rescue and record some of the potential archaeological information, and to properly repack the void to prevent any further collapse. Progress can be followed on the English Heritage website www.english-heritage.org.uk/silburyhill This will be regularly updated as work proceeds.

VISIT TO STANLEY HALL, PEBMARSH

Members visited Stanley Hall on 7 July 2007. We were warmly welcomed by the owner, Christopher Stewart-Smith, who was our most hospitable guide to the house and its grounds. The site is of considerable interest, with a substantial moat enclosing what were originally two islands of about an acre each. The western one is presumed to have been the site of an early timber framed building (of which no trace remains); the present house was built on the eastern island in about 1570. As with numerous Essex houses, it was reduced in size by demolition of its NW wing in the latter part of the C19. Panelling from the old building was used to construct new pigsties. In the 1920s, the house was purchased by the artist, Percy Middleditch, who restored and improved the building. In the 1950s there was a one-room extension on the NE corner designed by Andrew Butler, and recently a larger extension northwards designed by Charles Morris.

Middleditch's improvements to the four bedroomed Tudor remnant involved removing the plaster from the south front and opening various windows (noted to be blocked in the RCHM report of 1922). It is not easy to distinguish between the original structure and the C20 repairs and modifications, but the two gable bressumers with billet ornament are mentioned in the RCHM report which pre-dates Middleditch's alterations. Internally, some old woodwork was imported, and much new woodwork (of a very high standard) was carved by Ernest Beckwith. Downstairs the original hall, and the shadow of screens passage partition on the ceiling joists, were clearly visible. The original hall fireplace (and chimney stack) on the N wall has been

removed and replaced by a doorway though to the 'pillar hall'. The main staircase is said to be a copy of one in Bedingfield Hall. Upstairs there was the same mix of old (probably partly re-used), and well blended new work; second-hand oak panelling must have been available by the acre in the 1920s! The top-lit 'pillar hall' made a light and airy contrast, and its bold external detailing was interesting and visually effective. There is a substantial well (now glazed over) with visible water movement at the bottom; the vigorous springs on this hill top site (which also feed the very substantial moat) are difficult to explain. Research by the owner's father, who bought the house in 1938, suggested that NW Essex had the lowest annual rainfall in the country (at 22 inches).

Tea was followed by a general reluctance to leave, encouraged by the enthusiasm of our host, the excellent tea, and the rare appearance of warm sunshine after weeks of rain and grey skies. Some stalwart members eventually proceeded to Pebmarsh church.

Michael Leach

HELPERS NEEDED

We are still looking for members to join the Programme Committee. If you enjoy the Society's outings, this is a chance to join a friendly committee which meets only twice a year in Chelmsford under the skilful guidance of David Andrews. Special knowledge is not needed, just an enthusiasm to contribute something to the Society's main social (and educational) activity. Don't be reluctant to offer your help – you will be made very welcome by the committee. Please contact Michael Leach on 01277 363106 or family@leachies.freeserve.co.uk

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, ESSEX BRANCH, LECTURE PROGRAMME FOR 2007-8

All lectures are at County Hall in Chelmsford. Please arrive by 2.15 in order to be escorted to the lecture room. *Visitors and prospective members warmly welcome - a £2 donation is requested.*

Sat. 8 Sept. 2.30 AGM and Dr Timothy Ryder, Department of Classics, University of Reading, *Ancient Athens' Finest Hour? The Battle of Marathon, 490 BC.*

Sat. 6 Oct. 2.30 Mr Roy Chandler, *The Chelmer Navigation.*

Sat. 3 Nov. 2.30 Prof. David Bates, Director, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, *The Bayeux Tapestry and the Norman Conquest* [illustrated]

Sat. 1 Dec. 2.30 Short Talks by Members

Sat. 12 Jan. 2.30 Dr Rohan McWilliam, Department of History, Anglia Polytechnic University, *A Victorian Imposter: The Tichborne Trials 1867-1886.*

Sat. 2 Feb. 2.30 Dr Patricia Heal, Jesus College, University of Oxford, *Charles I and Images of Monarchy* (illustrated)

Sat. 1 Mar. 2.30 Dr Paul Rusiecki, *Commemorating Sacrifice: the War Memorials of North and Central Essex* (illustrated)

Fri. 4 Apr. 7.30 Dr David Noy, *Roman Deathbeds* (illustrated)

Further information from:

Mrs. D. Cresswell 01245 355409

MEMBERSHIP - Subscriptions due on January 1st each year

Single Member - £20

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NAMES AND ADDRESSES

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2 Landview Gardens	1 Robin Close	19 Victoria Road
Ongar	Great Bentley	Colchester
Essex CM5 9EQ	Essex CO7 8QH	Essex CO3 3NT
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Enquiries about delayed or missing publications and about the supply of recent back numbers should be addressed to the Secretary.

APPEAL FOR THE PUBLICATION AND RESEARCH FUND (PRF)

This fund replaced the Publications Development Fund in 2004. It supports the publication of articles in each Volume of *Essex Archaeology and History* as well as Occasional Papers. Donations are placed into an INALIENABLE account, which cannot be spent. It is the Interest thereon which is distributed by awards granted by our COUNCIL. As at December 2006 the projected value of the fund stands at £40,126.

Donations payable to: The Essex Society for Archaeology and History
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Bill Abbott, 45 Cambridge Road, Colchester C03 3NR
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DATA PROTECTION ACT

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

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

Michael Leach

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