

# Essex Archaeology and History News



**Winter 2007**

# THE ESSEX SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

NEWSLETTER 153

WINTER 2007

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**COPY FOR THE NEXT ISSUE SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS NO LATER THAN 29 FEBRUARY 2008**

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

### Cover illustration:

Broadoaks, Wimbish as depicted in a print from 1853 by W Dickes, Old Fish St, London. This engraving was "dedicated to the Director and Teachers of Fulneck Schools" (in Yorkshire), "as a memorial of the celebration of the Centenary Jubilee of those Institutions". Broadoaks was a Moravian Boarding school for both girls and boys between 1742 and 1746 before the schools were relocated.

See Newsletter 152 pp10-11 for a report of the Society's visit in April 2007. A follow up to the inventory of the number of locks in 1703 at Broadoaks is featured in this issue pp 11-12.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Ensuring that historical and archaeological sites, remains and buildings are properly looked after and maintained is as important as the work of discovering them. Essex is very richly endowed with such features, but many are at constant risk from developers, vandals and sheer neglect.

Michael Leach drew attention to the threat to Thoby Priory, near Mounnessing, in our summer 2006 edition. In the same issue of the *News*, I cited earlier neglect of the Harlow Romano-British Temple site and the Baptist Burial Ground at Foster Street, near Harlow. Across the county, there are all too many examples of important survivals of our historic past which are in danger of deteriorating, or even disappearing entirely.

It would, however, be wrong not to recognise the immense amount of positive effort which has been exerted – often with considerable success – to defend and enhance our county's heritage. I would also pay tribute to English Heritage and the Essex County Council's Historic Environment services for all the excellent work that they do.

However, it should become one of the objectives of all local historical societies, which cover so much of the county's territory, to defend the local heritage. Many already achieve a great deal in researching, recording and publishing at the grass roots level. Defending what is of historic importance is also vital.

Many of our representatives on local authorities are too preoccupied with other issues or are not even aware of what is of historic value in their localities. Where a problem arises because of

planned development, the activity of vandals, or negligence, local societies and others concerned with the historic environment should alert councillors or council officers and seek to persuade them to act in defence of their local heritage. Sometimes financial stringency is advanced as a reason for inactivity, but grants are available in some cases to help remedy the situation and other positive responses are possible.

Local historical societies and members of this Society should keep a weather eye on the local situation and speak out.

Stan Newens

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## LATE DELIVERY OF THE TRANSACTIONS

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We again apologise to members for the late delivery of volume 36. Members will be aware of the very considerable difficulties that we have had in recruiting an Hon Editor to replace Owen Bedwin, who resigned the post over seven years ago. With great generosity, he has continued to act as caretaker editor, being very reluctant to witness the only alternative which would have been the complete collapse of the publication. We are enormously grateful to him. However his work pressures, and numerous problems and delays with the printer, have resulted in increasing intervals between the production of each volume. This is deeply regretted by all concerned.

However the future looks considerably brighter. We can now welcome an able new Hon Editor, Dr Christopher Starr, who will already be known to some members for his academic interest in the mediaeval soldier, Sir John Hawkwood.

There is already sufficient material for Volume 37, which he hopes to issue in the first half of next year, as well as some material for Volume 38 (estimated publication in late 2008). In addition, the index for the third series of the *Transactions* has been completed up to Volume 21, with funding already in place for the next nine volumes. It has been agreed to publish this index in two parts, and work has already started on preparing the first part for publication. This will cover Volumes 1 to 20, and should be in members' hands during 2008. It will be an overdue but invaluable tool for all researchers.

We ask again for members' forbearance, and hope that the continuing high quality of our *Transactions* will be some compensation for the delay, coupled with the anticipation that there is now, for the first time in eight years, a real prospect of catching up.

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## **EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

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This is currently being revised by Maria Medlycott of Essex County Council, and needs to take into account the key projects which have taken place over the last ten years. It also details new ideas about the approach to the historic environment which have been developed over that period. The Society has been invited to make observations, and I would be very pleased to hear from any member who would be interested in commenting on one (or more) areas. These are a) Palaeolithic b) Neolithic c) Iron Age d) Roman e) Saxon f) mediaeval g) post-mediaeval h) landscape i) urban. The task is not onerous as each document is quite short, but some specialised knowledge

in the field would be useful. There will be a workshop on 30 January 2008 at which contributors would be welcome.

Michael Leach

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## **THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT OF ESSEX: FROM EARLIEST HUMANS TO THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY. A CONFERENCE TO BE HELD AT THE ESSEX RECORD OFFICE, CHELMSFORD 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2008**

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The first conference on the Archaeology of Essex was held in 1978, subsequently published in 1980 as *The Archaeology of Essex to AD 1500* (ed D. Buckley), fifteen years later a second conference was held in 1993, subsequently published in 1996 as *The Archaeology of Essex: proceedings of the Writtle Conference* (ed O. Bedwin). Fifteen years further on again, takes us to 2008 and a third conference is planned for September 2008. The conference venue will be the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford and the conference will run from the afternoon of Friday 19th to Sunday 21st September. There will be a wine reception on the Friday evening and a conference dinner on the Saturday evening.

Continuing the changing emphasis over the years from a cut off point in 1500 in the first conference, to extensive coverage of post-medieval matters in the second, the third will aim to touch upon most aspects of the historic environment of Essex, archaeology, historic landscape and historic buildings, from the Palaeolithic to the 20th century.

Whilst the proceedings will focus on experience in Essex, what is known and what are key directions for future research, it is intended to take an expansive view relating Essex evidence to the rest of the east of England, London, the south-east, the North Sea basin and the wider world.

Tickets are available from Frances Van Keulen, Essex County Council, Field Archaeology Unit, Fairfield Court, Fairfield Rd, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3YQ, Tel. 01376 331431, e-mail [Con2008HE@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:Con2008HE@essexcc.gov.uk). The prices are; the whole conference, including conference dinner £88, the whole conference, excluding conference dinner £70, day ticket £42. The ticket prices include VAT, tea/coffee, lunch and wine reception on the Friday night.

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## SIR RONALD STORRS

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The Essex associations of Thomas Edward Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) are well known in Chingford. After the First World War, Aircraftman Shaw, as he was often known, purchased some fifteen acres of land at Pole Hill – one of the highest points in Essex – and lived there, sporadically, in two huts and a bell tent. He eventually sold out to Chingford Council, but his name is commemorated in Lawrence Hill and Arabia Close.

One of those whose name has been most closely linked with Lawrence, Sir Ronald Storrs, also has Essex links. Appointed Military Governor of Jerusalem in 1917, later Governor of Cyprus and then Northern Rhodesia (today Zambia), Sir Ronald was a great linguist, an expert on the Middle East and a very cultured man.

In his memoirs, *Orientalisms*, published in 1937 by Nicholson & Watson, Sir

Ronald, looking towards retirement, wrote:

*Still unfulfilled is the dream of some little old house with its garden and tennis courts in the quiet English country ... [Orientations, p.610].*

He found it at the Old Mill, Pebmarsh, where he lived out the remainder of his days. He died on All Saints Day 1955 and his grave is to be found close to the church of St. John the Baptist.

Stan Newens

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## ESSEX PLACE-NAMES PROJECT

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The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Essex Place-names Seminar was held at Essex University on 17<sup>th</sup> November. Miss Phil Hendy, Recorder for St. Osyth, gave a fascinating talk about St. Osyth's dead of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and how war broke out in the village after the decision to site the war memorial for all denominations and faiths in the Anglican churchyard. Omissions and misspellings resulted in a second memorial being erected in more 'neutral ground' with little reconciliation between the warring parties.

Mrs. Wendy Hibbit, Writtle History Group, spoke interestingly of the history and excavations of medieval Writtle and King John's Hunting Lodge with archive pictures, and of recent excavations of a Roman site originally detected by cropmarks.

The Guest Speaker, Mr. Simon Amstutz of the Dedham and Stour Valley Project, gave an insight into the development and variety of landscapes encountered from the Stour estuary to the Cambridgeshire border, how they are being managed and protected as a

designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the only one so designated in East Anglia to date.

A Training Half-Day for those wishing to know more about the reading and interpretation of historic Maps and Documents will be held at the ERO on Saturday morning, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008. No charge but prior booking necessary on 01245 222237.

James Kemble

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### **Heritage Sampford: Report 2002-2006, K Neale [Ed.] (2007) pp 52 (A4).**

This slim, lavishly illustrated volume represents a final report on the achievements of Heritage Sampford, an ambitious, wide-ranging and resoundingly successful exercise in community archaeology, historical research and landscape evaluation, which involved an impressively large number of this rural community, backed up by the best expertise that Essex can offer and resourced by the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, the Countryside Agency and our own County Council.

In the process fieldwalking had been completed over 193 of the parishes' 204 fields, surviving historical documentation reviewed, a community persuaded to bring forward all sorts of archaeological and archival treasures and the pre-history of this area transformed. Lithic and other findings, some of them rare, have demonstrated a Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic past, far richer than had been appreciated. A Neolithic stock raising farm, a new Roman villa site, a host of new Iron Age\Roman sites, a pre-historic origin for Great Sampford, a possible pre-historic crossing of the River Pant and medieval

moat locations have been traced, and medieval strip-farming and intercommoning have been demonstrated.

In short the Sampford Society has set down a marker for what a small, rural and dormitory community can achieve. Resounding congratulations: the challenge is now for others to follow suit.

**The War Years 1939-45: Recollections of Members of Great Dunmow Historical Society, K. Drury (Ed.) (2005) pp179**, Great Dunmow Historical & Literary Society, 18 Jubilee Court, Gr. Dunmow.

We are indebted to the Great Dunmow Society for compiling this collection of personal recollections, covering all three services, all parts of the globe and all manner of experiences (including those of children), during the dramatic years of the Second World War. In that sense this is not a book of Essex History, but it is a product of an Essex History Society, and further enriches our understanding of the way in which those six years have, while survivors last, come to signify an epoch turning moment, and why, for a later generation, "Don't mention the War" has come to be a comedy cliché.

Although described as Oral History (and a CD of three respondents accompanies the book), it is clear that some editing has helped turn the spontaneity of recollection into the order of narrative prose, helped surely by the fact that, in many cases, this is a story told before. The editor has skilfully woven them into themes, while the book's dedication to Peter Street doubtless acknowledges the group's main driving force.

**Get Some In: Memories of National Service, K Drury (Ed) (2006) pp 196**, Great Dunmow Historical Society, 18 Jubilee Court, Great Dunmow.

This parallel Great Dunmow book looks

at that great British institution, National Service, with a further collection of personal experiences. It owes much to its editor and more to the wit and insight of its contributors, many of whose entries once more read more like the crafted written word than the spontaneous delivery of oral history. They are not, let it be said, a random sample of National Servicemen, but made up overwhelmingly of the articulate and upwardly mobile (we used to say 'Middle Class'). However, the editor has done a job by giving us initially several traditional stories of square bashing and ear bashing; subsequent secondment to all parts of the globe (notably Korea, Cyprus and West Germany), or bleak corners of the U.K.; with the familiar story of a discipline learnt, a comradeship forged, a boy made a man. After an array of these increasingly familiar versions, the editor has given us the mavericks, the doubters and the witty, never quite rubbishing National Service, but providing a string of anecdotes which make us all un-nostalgic for the mindless bureaucracy and needless bullying, and the sheer unfairness of the class system. This reviewer's favourite (printable) story is of the mother foolishly accompanying the serviceman to embarkation at Felixstowe, loaded with full kit. "Can't you get a porter to carry all that", she said, in the presence of other servicemen, as her son quietly died beside her.

**Surgeons and Apothecaries of Castle Hedingham, Essex, Jane Greatorex, (2006), pp 65 (A4), Browser's Bookshop, Woodbridge.**

This is a first and ambitious attempt to trace all those practicing the medical profession in Castle Hedingham since c.1100. The problem is that the number concerned is not large and the records

themselves, at least until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, often tangential. The author's solution is to quote at great length from these primary records, given us more a source book than a distilled historical analysis – though this is in part redeemed by quoting at length from secondary sources on the medical profession in general already in the public domain. Having made these caveats, this reviewer found this an interesting book, if only from its unusual approach, and we finish up knowing more about Castle Hedingham over the centuries, thanks to research which has been thorough and very extensive. Copies can be obtained from the author or Browser's Bookshop, Woodbridge.

**Grandad Played the Cornet: a History of Brass Bands in North East Essex, David Cawdell, (2007) pp 80 (A4) Pub. by author; Red Lion Books, Colchester £6.95.**

Between 1880 and 1914 brass bands were quite widespread: village bands, church bands, works bands. It was the greatest example of amateur mass music-making the country had ever seen. Yet they remain a somewhat neglected subject. Thanks to this book this is no longer true for North East Essex. The author has traced over 30 bands within the villages concerned, all active in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, backed up by over 100 surviving photographs. For good measure there is also a history of uniforms, of bandstands and their design, also illustrated by local examples. It was, of course, an all-male activity; it fitted the wearing of uniforms which characterised this period (think of the Salvation Army), and it had strong roots in church and chapel – indeed the very origin of brass bands may lie with those church choir bands, poised on balconies at the back of church to lead the congregations in worship, before the

universal organ, especially the American organ, swept them aside. Brass bands remained an important, but declining, inter-war activity, slumping most noticeably in more recent, casual days. But the bands are still there, even in Essex: they are not all the product of long-closed Lancashire mills. This is a fascinating book of original research, modestly priced and recommended.

**Rayleigh Tower Mill, Noel Beer (2007) pp 42, HTR Publications, 13, Nelson Road, Rayleigh.**

Another fascinating publication by Noel Beer about Rayleigh looks at its sturdy tower mill, which is one of nine remaining windmills in any reasonable state of preservation in our county. When the mill was built between 1810 and 1811 there were, amazingly to our minds, already three other mills in Rayleigh. Despite its impressive structural strength (the highest in Essex) the mill had a largely unsuccessful economic life, made worse in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the demise of Essex grain farming. The sails were removed, steam, then oil, engines drove the stones, but eventually the last owner was blown up in his wheelchair by his insane son. The post-war story of renovation began in 1964 when the mill was acquired by the local council and became a Museum. Extensive restoration in the early 1970's had to be done all over again (and at vast expense) in 2004. Though no longer a working mill, floodlit and open to the public, Rayleigh mill now looks, externally, just as it once did.

**Reverence My Sanctuary: History & Guide to the Parish Church of ..... Little Bardfield, R. Beaken (2007) pp 50, Taverner Publication [copies from the Rector, Rev. Robert Beaken.]**

This is rather more than a church guide. Lucidly written by the present Rector and marvellously illustrated with colour photos, we see one of the glories of our Essex parish churches, beautifully restored in recent years and active in its community today. With an Anglo-Saxon nave and tower one cannot look for greater historical continuity. That history the author sets in a wider and well-informed history of the English church, as he seeks to instruct as well as inform, from the standpoint of the High Anglicanism long practiced there. A separate chapter covers the Brotherhood of St Paul, a theological college to train priests in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, established in the parish by the remarkable Rev Edward Mears, incumbent from 1910 to 1940.

Andrew Phillips

***Harlow Recollections* by Jim Priest. Museum of Harlow and the Friends of Harlow Museum, 2007, £5.**

During 2007 the people of Harlow have been celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> year of its designation as a new town. Much attention has accordingly been focussed on all that has happened since 1947.

However, there is also much interest in ascertaining what existed beforehand. What was the character of the five rural parishes – Harlow, Latton, Netteswell, Great and Little Parndon – which made up the site of the new town before it was designated?

Prior to his death in 1984, Jim Priest, who was born in Great Parndon in 1906 and lived much of his life in the area, penned some of his memories, which were published as *Parndon Recollections* by the Harlow development Corporation in 1980. I met the author, attended the launch of his book and discovered a fascinating



description of the terrain and its people before the New Town.

I was informed that Jim Priest had recorded further memories, but I never saw them and the years passed away. Now, 27 years later, local historian Ron Bill has edited a second volume entitled *Harlow Recollections*. Others have assisted him and funding has been provided by the Friends of Harlow Museum and Museum of Harlow.

The new volume, although slim, contains an invaluable description of early twentieth century Harlow, illustrated by often original photographs and sketch maps. The schools, the churches, the shops and many of the residents and other features are recalled in a unique form.

For anyone who knows Harlow but is curious about what it was like before the New Town, this book is a veritable goldmine. Ron Bill has done an excellent job in presenting this fascinating account.

Stan Newens

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## ASHDON RECORDS

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We are very grateful to the owner (who lives in Gloucestershire) for making five documents relating to Ashdon available to the Society. They were acquired about 20 years ago with a collection of postal history material which had, apparently, come from a solicitor's office in Horsham. All are in excellent condition.

The earliest is dated 1475 and is a confirmation of a settlement of the manor of Mortyvaus, later Mortimers, in Ashdon on Isabel, widow of Edmund Bendyssh esquire, during her life. Afterwards it was to descend to his son, William, and, failing heirs, to revert to Edmund's brother, Thomas, of Bumpstead, in accordance with the will of Edmund

Bendyssh, senior, grandfather of Edmund and Thomas. The family had held the manor since about 1392.

This branch of the Bendyssh family were then living at Barrington in Cambridgeshire where they later held a small manor called Bendyssh Hall and were still there in the early C19. An interesting digression is that Thomas Peyton, of Isleham, Cambs., the surviving trustee who confirmed Mortimers manor to Isabel, is probably the subject of the monumental brass dated 1484 in Isleham church with his two wives. The brass is illustrated in Pevsner's *Cambridgeshire* volume (p.335).

Mortimers was a small manor which later became one of Lord Maynard's group of manors in Ashdon. Its land lay in the south of Ashdon and seems to have adjoined the manor of Bendysh Hall which included land in both Ashdon and Radwinter.

It is Bendysh Hall manor with which the other deeds are concerned. Surprisingly the Bendysh family never appear to have owned it. The name is said to be derived from 'bean field' or 'tilled field'. Bendysh Hall in Radwinter survives as a C16 timber framed house with later additions. It is a moated site with part of the moat still surviving as a pond. In 1086 the manor was held by Eustace of Boulogne and was later given to Faversham abbey in Kent. at the dissolution it came to Sir Richard Rich, and later to Lord Cobham. The second document is a sale of 1542 of seven acres called Geboundes Croft, enclosed by fences and ditches, lying between pasture land called Mechell on the west, and the lane from Bumpstead to Saffron Walden to the east, and in the parish of Ashdon. Michells was included in the lands held in the manor and sold

to Lord Cobham. The 1542 sale was by Margaret Bankes, a widow of Hadstock, to Stephen Bukk, an Ashdon weaver, for £6 6s 4d paid, and a further 4 marks (£2 13s 4d) to be paid five months later. The name of the croft may be derived from Robert Geboun who held land in Ashdon in 1404.

The other three documents are copies of court roll of the manor of Bendysh Hall. In 1591 six of the tenants were empowered to make a partition of the land of John Curteys, deceased, between his three daughters; in 1594 they asked for this to be enrolled in the manor court records; copies of court roll were the title deeds to all copyhold property, though Curteys also held freeholds. The property divided between Audrey, Joan and Agnes, with their agreement, included a freehold house called Brandes in Winsmer Hill; in 1831 Wismore Hill lay near Goldstones Farm in Ashdon. In 1562 it was held by John Curteys as a toft (where a house formerly stood) so it appears to have been rebuilt; with it he held a copyhold called Craftes and 30 acres which he then passed on to his son, William, who died in 1571. Craftes had been left to the guild of St Mary in 1503. Most of Craftes (14 acres) was Agnes's portion; the remaining 18 acres, including Loves Close, came to Joan, with £18 from the other two portions because there was no house with her portion. The Curteys family can also be found in other documents (in the Essex Record Office). The remaining two copies of court roll probably held the 1594 document as part of their title for Crafts (or Crofts). In 1616 Richard Strachey held this as a house, garden, barn and ten pieces of arable, meadow and pasture (18 acres). In 1618 he also acquired another three acres, part of Bayleys, to be held at an annual rental of 23d and three eggs 'as agreed'.

He appears to have been consolidating his holding; a map of 1665 of the demesnes of the manor shows the land (perhaps by then a descendant's) as a larger area adjoining the common field of Polleys Wick, northeast of the Radwinter road, but in Ashdon. A C17 court roll shows 'Richard Strachey gent.' holding a tenement lately built and 15 acres, part of Crafts, and other land part of Bayleys. Entries on other tenants show a process of splitting holdings as tenants sold parts, or were able to increase their holdings piecemeal; among these were Craftes, Bayleys and Brandes.

These deeds together add interesting further details to the history of Ashdon. The owner has generously agreed to deposit the original documents in the Essex Record Office.

Angela Green

Sources:

Ekwall, E, 1980 *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names*

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Lysons, D & S, 1808 *Magna Britannia*, ii, pt. i, Cambridgeshire

Morant, P, 1768 *History of Essex*, ii

Pevsner, N, 1954 *Buildings of England; Cambridgeshire*

RCHM, 1916 *Essex*, i, 216

VCH, 1903 *Essex*, i

Documents:

BL: Harl. Ch. S.16

ERO: D/ACR 6 f.347; D/DK M 37; D/DMg P13

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## SCRATCH DIALS

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These simple mediaeval sundials are often found, as their name suggests, scratched on the south wall of church buildings. Many will have been lost to weathering, others destroyed in restorations or hidden by later features

such as porches. The canonical day was divided into 12 'hours' between sunrise and sunset – these 'hours', of course, varied in length from season to season, and were only equal to the modern hour at the spring and autumn equinoxes. The midwinter hour would have lasted for 40 minutes, the midsummer one for 80 minutes. The marks on the scratch dial usually indicated the important times – three 'hours' after sunrise (Terce - the correct time for the celebration of mass), midday (Sext), and three 'hours' before sunset (None). Many scratch dials have a horizontal line which marks the shadow of sunrise and sunset on a dial facing due south. Such a horizontal line also shows that the gnomon mounted on this line must have projected horizontally. The angled gnomon, associated with modern sundials is a later sophistication to correct for latitude. Some mediaeval dials had additional divisions and later ones became more accurate with the growth of scientific knowledge, showing, for example, the 'bunching' of the hours around midday which is to be seen on modern sundials. By the C17 sundials were considerably more accurate than contemporary clocks; indeed the owner of a clock would have needed a sundial with which to correct his timepiece! It is believed that the canonical hour, and the modern fixed hour, co-existed for some time, possibly into the C18 by which time most parishes would have had reliable mechanical timepieces, and the canonical hour would have long lost its liturgical significance. Hence the use of the expression 'o'clock' which indicated what type of hour was being referred to.

In many counties, scratch dials have been an area of continuing antiquarian curiosity. Finding them can be difficult; almost all have lost their gnomons, and many are very difficult to identify due to

weathering, repairs or concealment by extensions. Occasionally they are sited eccentrically, as at Rawreth on the jamb of the bell chamber window, and at Sandon on an angled buttress quoin facing southwest. There are inexplicably large numbers in Gloucestershire, though it is not clear if this is due to an unusual local custom, or to assiduous recording by local enthusiasts. In some instances the dial has been angled to compensate for the inaccurate orientation of the wall surface, and at Sandon (mentioned above) the hour marks have been cut differently to allow for its southwest aspect. As far as Essex examples are concerned, a quick search through the indexes of the Society's Transactions reveals no entries (apart from one at Beeleigh abbey) though it is possible that indexers ignored brief references in church articles as being of insufficient importance. The RCHM volumes for Essex mention 26 churches with scratch dials, including 10 buildings with two or more examples. The Essex Review in 1935 noted their presence in 41 churches, and a SEAX search has revealed another three. However it seems probable that every mediaeval church once had an example of a device that was very simple to make, as well as being important for the correct celebration of mass.

Some dials may have been painted, rather than incised, onto a lime-washed wall surface; if so, no known examples have survived. Nearly half the Essex scratch dials described by the RCHM are on door jambs, about a quarter on buttresses, and the rest on windows, parapets and other wall surfaces. Some doorways with dials are now protected by later mediaeval porches (hence perhaps their higher rate of survival) though this would probably have led to the cutting a new dial elsewhere. This

appears to have happened at Chadwell. A few churches have a surprising number of scratch dials; Chickney was noted to have eight!

Other than those now protected by church porches, all must be at risk from loss due to weathering. Should a good photographic record be made of those that do still survive?

Michael Leach

Sources:

EAT n.s xvi, 227

Essex Review, xxxvi (1927), 192; xlv (1935), 135

Williams, C H K, 2007 'The Scratch Dials of Kent' in *Archaeologia Cantiana* cxxvii

Friar, S, 1998 *Companion to the English Parish Church*, Sutton

RCHM, 1916-23 *Essex*, i, ii, iii, iv

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## **THE CHALLENGES OF CONSERVATION – WEST THURROCK MARSHES**

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Most readers will be aware of the considerable pressure from central government to develop the southern fringes of Essex from Thurrock to Southend. Compared with the leafier parts of Essex, it would seem to be a reasonable place to provide housing and factories in a crowded land – surely better than releasing swathes of Green Belt? Last November, Thames Gateway Development Corporation granted outline planning consent for a Royal Mail depot (to be re-located due to the 2012 Olympics) on a brownfield site at West Thurrock Marshes. At first sight, this seemed uncontroversial; the area is uninviting as, over the years, layers of pulverised ash from a nearby power station have been dumped on the surface of the original marsh. The result,

to the uninformed eye, is an unsightly wasteland of scummy water, with tussocks of marsh plants, grass and scrub, seemingly a typical brownfield site awaiting development. However the misuse of this marsh has inadvertently created an extremely rich biological habitat for numerous invertebrates, including 36 species whose survival is endangered nationally. This makes it one of the richest wildlife sites in Britain although most of the insects are only visible with a hand lens, and their significance is only apparent to a few entomologists. But does this make the site any less important than a listed building, or an ancient woodland? Brownfield sites have no protection, and planners and developers have no obligation to make an ecological assessment. This is not the first instance of the surprising biological diversity of neglected urban sites; indeed they are often far richer in wildlife than the monoculture of wheat or oil seed rape in the more obviously attractive rural areas of the county.

Anyone doubting the potential of brownfield sites would do well to visit the newly opened RSPB reserve at Rainham Marshes, a former military firing range which, at one point, was on the short list for the Euro-Disney development. After seven years work, and the removal of a great deal of toxic waste and old ammunition, this area is now an arcadian idyll, with cows and sheep grazing the marsh and a great deal of bird life on the carefully managed wetlands. The nationally endangered water vole has flourished here, and the ditch banks are peppered with their holes. It is also well used by people and is a much needed green space in the industrial wastelands flanking the nearby A13. There is clearly a strong case for better evaluation of brownfield sites before giving planning

consent for building, and for a rejection of the presumption that commercial development is always appropriate on such sites.

Michael Leach

Sources:

*The Guardian*, 30 August 2007

*Natural World*, Summer 2007

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## LOCK IT OR LOSE IT?

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Members who visited Broadoaks at Wimbish in April 2007 (see Newsletter no: 152) may recall a surprising reference to an inventory of 1703 which listed between 30 and 40 sets of locks and keys. There is still ample evidence of lock scars on some of the C17 internal doors. Nowadays there is a perception that having to lock everything is a recent phenomenon, and that there was a golden past when you could with impunity leave your home - or your car - unlocked.

A few random findings suggest that this perception may be a delusion. Christ Church Priory in Canterbury owned the manor of Westwell in Kent, and the bedel roll for 1290-91 provides detailed records of the building work that was done on the estate. One unspecified new building (which must have had a domestic function as there is reference to a kitchen and a 'food chamber') was fitted with two locks costing 5d... At the same time, a barn and ox-house were dismantled and rebuilt on a new site. This must have been a substantial building, as 200,000 roof tiles were required. There was one door for the barn and several (the number was not specified, though 11 pairs of hinge rings and pins were required) for the ox-house. It is surprising to find that five locks were supplied for this building,

costing a total of 16d. It would appear to have been necessary to lock up the animals, perhaps when the yard was not supervised, though the term 'lock' might simply indicate a door fastening, rather than something that could be locked with a key.

A report was prepared in 1596 'to a view of the repayryne of the lodgyng houses and offyces' at Havering Palace in Essex. This reveals a profusion of locks; keys (both single and double) are also listed so it is clear that these were locks in the modern sense. Almost every door had a 'barre', or a 'bolte', or lock and key. The presence chamber had five doors 'with boulttes and rings and four double lockes'. Many of the other important rooms also had double locks, and even the minor domestic offices, such as scullery, the wet larder and the spicery had doors with single locks. Royal servants were obviously not to be trusted.

Locks, or their mislaid keys, could sometimes have unexpected benefits. On 21 February 1644 the iconoclast, William Dowsing, recorded in his diary a visit to the Roman Catholic Waldegrave family at Smallbridge Hall: 'at Mr Watgraves chapell, in Buers, there was a picture of God the Father, and divers other superstitious pictures, 20 at least, which they promised to break, his daughter and servants. He himself was not at home, neither could they find the key of the chapell.' Thus by prevarication were religious images saved!

No locks are mentioned in Steer's *Mid Essex Inventories*, apart from one padlock on a hutch (chest) in the corn chamber of a farmer who was wealthy enough to own a clock, as well as two looking glasses, in 1691. The omission of locks from the inventories may be

because either they were not regarded as part of the movables to be valued by the assessors, or they were not fitted in the houses of small farmers and tradesmen at that time.

However, the tradition of lockable domestic doors seems to be a long-lived one. Looking at my own small house (built in 1947 to a 1930s design) I realise that every internal door shows evidence of a lock, although the keys were lost long ago. Doubtless many houses of that period were similarly equipped. Why this obsession with locks which any malefactor could easily overcome with shoulder or boot? In practice, were they ever used? This could be a puzzle for future house historians.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Semple, J, 2007 'Westwell – the establishment of a village' in

*Archaeologia Cantiana* cxxvii, p.191-2

Ogborne, E, 1814 *The History of Essex from the earliest period.....* London, p.114

Cooper, T (ed), 2001 *The Journal of William Dowsing*, Boydell & Brewer, p. 248

Steer, F W, 1950 *Farm and Cottage Inventories of mid Essex*, Essex Record Office, p.209

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## A LITERARY ANNIVERSARY, HEDGES, STRAW AND THE ALPS

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2007 was the hundredth anniversary of the publication of *A Countryside Chronicle* the first book of short stories about the Essex countryside and its people by S. L. Bensusan. Over the next fifty years Bensusan continued to publish further volumes of these stories.

The books generally have a short forward, by an eminent local dignitary, which often compares Bensusan with Thomas Hardy, a natural enough comparison for a writer concerned with a particular place and its rural inhabitants. Though Bensusan was not a writer of the stature of Thomas Hardy his stories are often well crafted, resonant of place and frequently accompanied by evocative illustrations, particularly those by Joan Rickarby which adorned the books published after the Second World War.

One of his stories 'Mr Woodpecker strikes it lucky' (published in *Comment from the Countryside* 1928), describes a particular form of hedge management 'It was too wet for ordinary work on the land, but Mr. Smallbone having given him a hedge in return for the stubbing thereof, Mr Woodpecker could see profit. There would be thick pieces for firing, brashy stuff for faggots and perhaps a few dozen straight briars that would root and serve for grafting standard roses. Such wood has a value in Maychester' This sounds very like the hedge management which Tom Williamson (2002) records Arthur Young describing in 1805 '...in Essex the hedges were cut down at intervals of nine, ten or twelve years and that fifty years before they had provided enough firewood to supply the requirements of the county' As agricultural subsidy changes from production to environmental management and Green Infrastructure Strategies are drawn up it is worth remembering that the traditional management of an Essex hedge is not necessarily the same as that in, say, Leicestershire. The same story contains an interesting echo of prehistory; Mr. Woodpecker prepares himself to keep out the wet by reinforcing his clothing with hay and straw which works effectively even though '... the

rain searched for joints in his straw armour'. The use of straw in this way in early 20th century Essex is reminiscent of the way the Ice Man, in the late Neolithic had used straw to keep out the much harsher weather of the Alps.

Nigel Brown

Source:

Willamson, T. 2002 *Hedges and Walls* (National Trust)

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## **COLCHESTER SHIPPING REGISTERS – HELP SOUGHT.**

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Mike Dun from Jersey is interested in Channel Islands shipping, particularly in connection with privateering and smuggling, a profitable sideline for local ship owners, or those having shares in a local vessel. He hopes that someone in Essex might be willing to look at the Colchester Shipping Registers at ERO (A/SR 3/1/2 – 7) for the years 1786 to 1832, and extract details of vessels registered with Guernsey, Jersey or Alderney owners (or vessels with any other obvious Channel Island connections), as well as details of any vessel seized for smuggling (which he might recognise from his present database). Smuggling between the Channel Islands and the East Coast was well known, but no early registers from Kent's ports have survived, and he would like to obtain information from further round the coast into Essex.

Anyone who might be able to help can obtain further details from Mike Dun on 01534 862929 or on [mikedunjersey@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mikedunjersey@yahoo.co.uk). He assures me that the work should not be onerous and would be a very pleasant

way to spend a wet afternoon in Chelmsford!

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## **ESSEX HISTORY FAIR – SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE NEEDED**

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Most members will know that this is held every other year. In 2006, it filled the town centre of Braintree, and provided a great opportunity for the public to meet the wide range of organisations involved in many different ways with the heritage of Essex. Paradoxically, though it was a great success, the inability to charge an entrance fee to the town centre has left the organisation's funds seriously depleted. It is an excellent event for the county, and it would be a great loss if it were to lapse. The Society is looking for a member to represent it on the History Fair committee, and anyone keen to do this is urged to contact me on 01277 363106, or [family@leachies.freemove.co.uk](mailto:family@leachies.freemove.co.uk), or by post at 2 Landview Gardens, Ongar CM5 9EQ.

Michael Leach

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## **OUTING TO OLD LEIGH- ON-SEA**

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Members were welcomed by members of the Leigh Society at the Leigh Heritage Centre on 22 September 2007. The Essex coast is always a surprise to 'inlanders' with its vast skies, and its prospects of a wide and distant horizon. A plethora of private sailing boats beached on a glittering expanse of mud, as well as the infrastructure necessary for catching and eating various marine

molluscs, added to the sense of arriving in a different land.

Slides of old Leigh, and a talk set the scene. Historically fishing, shipping and boat building had been the main occupations of the town. It had been capable of building ships of 100 tons in the mediaeval period. The arrival of the railway in 1854 destroyed a swathe of properties along the northern edge of the High Street; apart from one level crossing, the town was cut off from mainland Essex! It was densely populated, with high levels of poverty. The prosperous Victorian and Edwardian suburbs spread northwards up the hill and now merge into the Southend conurbation. The damage inflicted on Leigh by the London Tilbury and Southend railway was nearly completed in the 1970s when a proposed relief road along the southern edge of the High Street would have destroyed another swathe of old buildings, and cut the town off from the sea as well! Fortunately this scheme was abandoned after vigorous local opposition.

Cockles (and oysters) are still an important local industry, at one time exported to all parts of the country as well as abroad. The old cocklers cooked the shell fish on the return voyage, and these boats were termed 'boileys'. Modern fishing vessels suck the molluscs off the sea floor (in the interests of conservation, the quantities are now controlled by EU legislation) and deliver them fresh to the shore for preparation. In the past, the quays were busy with Thames barges carrying hay up to London to fuel the city's traffic. Old photographs show the laden barges resembling floating haystacks with a protruding mast and sail; appropriately they were called 'stackkeys'. They returned from London laden with manure

and city waste. The manufacture of earthenware storage jars was another local industry, the necessary clay also arriving by boat. As with any coastal town, smuggling was a useful additional source of revenue, though the romantic gloss of 'brandy for the parson, baccy for the clerk' probably concealed a rather more brutal picture.

A walk completed the visit and we were shown a variety of buildings, many of whose facades concealed older cores. Though there was evidence in the old town of damage from the insatiable demands of the motor car, the centre remains attractive and is clearly well used by visitors. We are very grateful to members of the Leigh Society for giving their time to tell us about the town, and to Ann and her helpers for an excellent tea.

Michael Leach

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## BUILDINGS AT RISK IN ESSEX

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a) Tilty Mill, Tilty. Though planning permission was granted earlier this year by Uttlesford DC to adapt this mill and its outbuildings for residential use, the plans were 'called in' by the minister. A public enquiry was to be held at the end of October (the result of which was not known at the time of writing this report). Most unusually, the mill is still fully equipped with its C18/C19 mill machinery. It is probably on the site of the mediaeval monastic mill. Apart from the inevitable destruction of the mill equipment if the building is converted, it is a visually sensitive site, forming part of the rural setting of the ruins of Tilty Abbey itself.

b) Thoby Priory, Mountnessing. The



quinquennial inspection by English Heritage confirmed the dire state of the ruins (probably structurally supported by the dense growth of ivy covering it!). Re-development of the site (now unsuitably used for commercial and industrial purposes) could provide enabling funds to stabilise the ruin. However this approach is blocked by Brentwood BC, who will not agree to alternative uses for the site. The impasse appears to be intractable.

c) The Court, St Osyth. This large C15 timber framed building is Grade II listed, but cannot wait much longer for a white knight to rescue it. It is swathed in scaffolding. An Unauthorised Works notice has been issued by Tendring DC, covering works apparently carried out by its present owner. These include the removal of roof tiles, as well as the destruction of internal lath and plaster walls. The latter work has unexpectedly revealed a large section of an earlier wall covered in trompe l'oeil decoration, believed to date from 1600 or earlier. The house was for sale when this report was written.

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## NO MARKET FOR COLCHESTER'S ANTIQUITIES?

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On 16 November 1720, Mr Great of Colchester visited Robert Harley's librarian (Humfrey Wanley) in London to enquire about some coins and other artefacts that had been found in Colchester. These had been brought in about 18 months previously and offered for sale. Apparently no decision had been made, and Mr Great was asked to return later. He came back on 19 May the following year, asking for a decision, and returned the next day 'asking an exorbitant price'. He was asked to return

two days later, when he could take away the artefacts and would be given a 'gratuity'. Calling again on 22 May, he collected his coins (but left behind the 'tiles & earthen fragments'). As Harley was out, Wanley was unable to give him the promised gratuity and Mr Great (hardly surprisingly) considered that he had been ill used. No more is heard of this Colcestrian who may have been the son of Samuel Great, an apothecary of Colchester who died in 1706.

Michael Leach

Source:

Wright C E & R C (eds) *The Diary of Humfrey Wanley* (1966) London

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## ESSEX JOURNAL

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Readers might want to give their support to the recently re-launched Essex Journal now under the Editorship of Neil Wiffen.

The *Essex Journal* is published by a consortium including the Archaeological and Historical Congress, the Friends of Historic Essex and the Essex Record Office on behalf of the County Council. It is published twice a year, in the spring and autumn, and the articles published in it come from a wide range of contributors.

The origins of the *Essex Journal* stretch back to 1892, when the first edition of the *Essex Review* was published. The scholarly articles on local history and archaeology which for sixty-four years filled its pages set a standard which the *Essex Journal* has endeavoured to emulate.

Today articles in the *Essex Journal* attract a wide and varied readership from academic historians to those who are

just interested in the history and antiquities of Essex. Recent editions have included articles ranging from the life of nuns at Barking Abbey to Oliver Cromwell at Saffron Walden. The latest issue, Autumn 2007, includes articles as varied as the discovery of an Iron Age warrior burial in Kelvedon, the provision of childcare in Chelmsford during the Second World War and modern computer archives.

Subscription is just £10 per year cheques payable to the Essex Journal. Please contact the Honorary Treasurer Mrs. Geraldine Willden, 11 Milligans Chase, Galleywood, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 8QD.

E-mail:

[geraldine.willden@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:geraldine.willden@essexcc.gov.uk)

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## **ESSEX CONNECTIONS WITH THE EMANCIPATION OF SLAVES**

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William Wilberforce and others have all been mentioned as being instrumental in the emancipation. There is also another gentleman with Essex connections who should be included, he was Charles Abbot, later the first Lord Colchester.

Charles Abbot, (elder son of the Revd. John Abbot, MA, DD, Rector of All Saints Church, Colchester, from 1753 to his death April 29<sup>th</sup> 1760, aged 43), was MP for Helston, Cornwall. He became Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1801 and was Speaker of the House of Commons, 1802 to 1817. He was responsible for the first Census Act, 1801, and for his services was created Lord Colchester in 1816. He died in 1829.

Charles' mother, Sarah, nee Farr, a widow with two small sons, John, aged six and Charles later Lord Colchester,

married Jeremiah Bentham of Whititan fame (1748 to 1832), at St Mary's, Westminster, October 14<sup>th</sup> 1766. Jeremiah was the father of Jeremy and Sir Samuel Bentham, the naval architect. Sarah was thus mother and step mother and both the family of Abbot and Bentham owed much to her encouragement in their exciting lives.

Speaker Charles' eldest son, also Charles, entered the Royal Navy as a Midshipman on HMS Revenge, (Captain Nash) in 1811. His Midshipman's' log book was published by the Navy Records Society, (NAVY RECORDS SOCIETY Volume XCI 1951). He progressed to Rear Admiral, 1854; Vice Admiral, 1860 and Admiral in 1864. He died in 1867.

Thanks to Charles, Lord Colchester, the bill for the Slaves' Emancipation safely passed through the Commons in 1807.

John S Appleby

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## **FOR SALE**

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Substantial, elaborately carved, wooden Victorian gothic chair, with large pierced finials, elaborate armrests, and a nominally upholstered back. Provenance unknown, but possibly an ecclesiastical throne, 57" high, 28" wide and 26" deep. Needs some light restoration, but complete apart from one boss. Not suitable for sybarites, or for those living in a small house, but would look great in a Victorian rectory or similar! Photos can be supplied to anyone interested in making an offer. Proceeds will be donated to ESAH. Please contact Michael Leach on 01277 363106 or [family@leachies.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:family@leachies.freeserve.co.uk)

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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.

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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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