

Essex Archaeology and History News



Rev. Sr

Amongst ye many noble Undertakings for promoting a general Reformation and propagating Christian Knowledge, carried on by Divers worthy vertuous Persons, of wch. some are of y^e highest rank both in Church and state, this before you is judg'd usefull for those excellent Ends and purposes. I question not yo^r approbation of so good a design, ~~whichever~~ Numbers of y^e Inclosed you please to write for they shall be sent according to order, directing to my house in Earls Court in Coveal Garden. I am Sr

London

Oct. 3. 1699

yo^r very humble
servant

Hen: Stukel

Summer 2008

THE ESSEX SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

NEWSLETTER 155

SUMMER 2008

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COPY FOR THE NEXT ISSUE SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS NO LATER THAN 24 OCTOBER 2008

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

Cover illustration:

A recent find within one of the books in the Dedham Muniments Room was a letter (illustrated, by kind permission) from a certain Henry Shute, dated 3 October 1699, addressed to 'ye Revd. Mr Burkitt at his house in Dedham' (see pages 5 and 6 of this Newsletter), attempting to gain financial support for the printing of religious tracts for distribution in the colonies. The handwriting has been compared to examples of Mr Henry Shute held at the Lambeth Palace Library.

There is a request in the Summer 2008 Dedham Parish Magazine for "Dedham memories, especially photographs, particularly if they have been or can be dated and any people in them can be identified. If you have Dedham photographs or other memorabilia that would not be wanted by your family, please approach the Muniment Room Society before permanently disposing of anything. Tel. 01206 322136"

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The well-attended and highly successful A.G.M. held in the Keene Hall at Galleywood on Saturday, 28th June signified the end of Stan Newens three year term in office as President. I speak from personal experience when I state, without hesitation, that Stan has been a most worthy holder of this office. Not only has he fulfilled the various duties with distinction but has demonstrated a level of commitment which represents an example to us all. Stan has also been an outstanding ambassador promoting the Society at every opportunity and in all corners of our county. Thank you Stan for your contribution - we owe you an enormous debt of gratitude.

Perhaps it would be helpful to impart some background information about your new President. I was born in Maldon and spent the early years of my life in Walthamstow (an area then very much part of Essex and which remains integral to the historic county). It was whilst living in the town that my lifetime interest in William Morris and the Gallery dedicated to his life and work was fostered. You will no doubt be familiar with the difficulties of the recent past culminating in the tragic loss last December of the Keeper (curator) of some thirty-five years standing.

It was also as a schoolboy in Walthamstow that I joined the then Essex Archaeological Society at the time when the late Dr Frederick (Derick) Emmison was President and John Appleby was completing his stint as Secretary.

I am immensely proud to have been elected as President of the Society – the thirty-fifth according to my calculations! You are probably oblivious to the fact that you have elected a second brass rubber as your President! The first was, of course, Rev Montagu Benton who

served as Secretary for a thirty year period prior to and post the last War. Benton also served as President at the time of the Society's centenary. Indeed, the President's badge originates from this date having been purchased from the proceeds of a Medieval Feast held in the Moot Hall in Colchester on 1st May 1953 as part of the centenary celebrations. Benton is a figure who, very sadly, I was not old enough to have met but one who has featured in my life in a number of ways. Firstly, he was extremely knowledgeable in the field of monumental brasses and especially those which are palimpsest (i.e. re-used and thus engraved on the reverse side). He wrote up a number of discoveries in our *Transactions* including one at Wivenhoe and, most especially, a significant find at Little Horkesley resulting from the destruction of the church by bombing in 1940. I possess a significant quantity of his correspondence in my archives emanating from the vicarage at Fingringhoe and all hand-written! Benton was also an authority on wall paintings and again contributed a number of papers on this subject to the *Transactions*. Indeed, it was Benton who strayed across the county boundary in January 1936 to visit the house where I currently reside in Suffolk. Here he discovered a wall painting of c.1600 date in the drawing room. This exciting discovery was publicised in the *East Anglian Daily Times* with a more detailed account appearing in *The Antiquaries Journal* (vol.XVI, no.2, pp.213-4).

I am also proud to be able to share the distinction (although absolutely no comparison can be drawn) of being one of four people to have served as both President of this Society and also the Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress ("Essex Congress"). I refer, of course, to Sir William Addison, Dr

Frederick (Derick) Emmison and the late William Raymond Powell.

The passing of the latter on 21st July at the age of 87 represents yet another terrible loss for Essex history. Ray Powell gained his reputation as the highly energetic, versatile and productive editor of the Essex V.C.H. From 1951 to 1986 he was responsible for seeing no less than six volumes through the press. Ray's contribution to our Society was no less significant. He served as President from 1987 to 1991, was subsequently elected a Vice-President and remained keenly interested in the affairs of the Society until his passing. Indeed, declining health prevented Ray from receiving a special award certificate at the last A.G.M. The Society was very well represented at his funeral held on 30th July at Earham Crematorium, Norwich. A more fitting tribute will appear in due course.

With an interest in archaeology and history it is natural to possess a predilection for the past. Stan Newens has very ably handed on the baton and thus, with the support of fellow officers, members of Council and the membership, we must focus on the future. I look forward to the challenge and to serving our Society.

H Martin Stuchfield

KENNETH HALL (D. 2008)

Members will be very sad to learn of the death of Ken Hall, the former Essex County Archivist. Ken was a very good friend to this Society, as well as to anyone interested in local history research to whom he gave his time, as well as excellent and practical advice, unstintingly. At not insignificant cost to his health, he saw through the planning, execution and move to the new ERO premises in Wharf Road which present

and future generations will have great cause to be grateful for. It is hoped that a fuller obituary will follow this brief note in due course.

VALERIE MANSFIELD (D. 2008)

Valerie, daughter of Major Alan Mansfield, died on 30 March 2008. Her funeral took place in West Mersea parish church. She illustrated her husband's *Handbook of English Costumes in the 20th Century, 1900-1950* which was published in 1973, and co-authored by Phillis Cunnington. Their other joint publication, with which Valerie was also involved, was *English Costume for Sport & Outdoor Recreations, 16th to 19th Centuries* in 1969. The costume collection at Hollytrees museum at Colchester was started by Valerie, assisted by other seamstresses, and their expertise was often used in repairs as well as in the making of replicas. She will be deeply missed by her family and friends.

John S Appleby

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY IN ESSEX

The Committee met on 3 occasions in the year under the chairmanship of Cllrs. Higgins and Manning-Press with councillors, museum curators, archaeologists, and local society representatives. At the invitation of Carolyn Wingfield, Uttlesford Museums Officer, a visit was made to Saffron Walden where the collection of antique books in the Town Library, the Fry Art Gallery and Bridge End Gardens were appreciated.

Attention was drawn to the Draft Bill going through Parliament which would make Sites and Monuments Records (EHER) statutory, and to the web sites <http://unlockingessex.essexcc.gov.uk>.

and <http://uepkids.essexcc.gov.uk> which contained the Essex Historic Environment Record database.

The proposals for relocating the Field Archaeology Unit in a new purpose-built Outreach Centre at Great Notley had been suspended for funding reappraisals by Essex County Council. Field projects had shown a significant decline since the slow-down in building development in the county. Bronze Age field systems with waterlogged deposits have been excavated at Priors Green, Takeley. A henge with surviving timbers and a ceremonial avenue were excavated at Boreham. The Colchester Circus has been reassessed as having 8 starting gates, not 12. Crouched Friars church in Crouch Street, Colchester has been exposed with its adjacent cemetery. 11m of an intact and still-functioning Roman wooden drain has been dendrodated to c.62 AD in St Peters Street.

A pilot scheme for national mapping of cropmarks was being undertaken in the Tendring peninsula funded by English Heritage. WWII defences have been recorded in Castle Point and Basildon. 300 hectares are to be field-walked and 5% are to be trenched at Stansted.

Reports have been published on Frogs Hall, Takeley and Park School, Rayleigh. Copt Hall, Epping has been described in "Current Archaeology". Essex publications on Place-name studies are now being included in the annual National Bibliography produced by the English Place-names Society in its Journal. Chelmsford Borough Council was funding an extension to Oaklands Museum.

James Kemble

ESSEX PLACE-NAMES PROJECT

The Essex Record Office has published a series of Parish booklets containing the place-names of each parish. The record relates to the names of fields, inns, woods, hamlets etc. as they were called and spelled about 1840 as well as earlier spellings. The booklets include location maps. How these names have evolved over the centuries - and sometimes become "mangled" by dialect and repetition - gives a clue to their origin and meaning.

The booklets which cover over 150 parishes are available from the Record Office searchroom at very reasonable cost (tel: 01245 244644), in hard copy or on CD.

Bookings are now being taken for the 12th Annual Place-names Seminar to be held in Chelmsford on Saturday 15th November at 2pm when Professor Tom Williamson of University of East Anglia will speak on "Medieval Landscapes in Essex and East Anglia". There will also be talks by Local Recorders. Tickets £6 (payable to "ESAH") from the Project Coordinator, 27 Tor Bryan, Ingatestone, CM4 9JZ. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

FRANK ALDOUS GIRLING (1898-1966)

The National Gallery of Scotland has a project in hand for either a catalogue or a specific exhibition about collectors, great and small. I was asked to supply details of Frank Girling who was a collector of art (works by Munnings, Beran etc.) and who made donations to The Minories at Colchester. Often he was called upon to lecture to the Art

Workers' Guild in London. He also collected flints when walking in Little Bromley and elsewhere, and these were donated to the Colchester and Essex museum. His collection of his own photographs of Essex was donated to our Society and then passed on to the same museum, and his Suffolk photographs went to Ipswich library on his demise. The renowned maritime photography, Douglas Went, was a friend. Girling's collection of Staffordshire pottery went to his wife, Minnie How, whom he had married in 1949.

Frank was born in 1898 at Moverons Farm, Brightlingsea where his father F D Girling farmed. In 1902 the family moved to Hall Farm, Thorrington. Frank was commissioned in to the army in 1917 and saw active service in France. After demobilisation in 1920 he farmed at Holly Lodge and New House Farm, Little Bromley, acting initially as his father's foreman. His judging skills were called on by both local and national bodies.

By 1930 he had collected enough information to publish a book on Suffolk pargetting. He began photography as a hobby as well as collecting merchants' marks. Articles on the subject appeared in many publications. In 1942 he was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. He served on the Council of the Essex Archaeological Society for many years, and was also a member of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology.

When World War II came in 1939 he raised and commanded the Home Guard in the Bromleys and also served on the Tendring Hundred War Agricultural Committee. Farming was his life. He bred Suffolk black faced rams, and in 1949 was awarded two prizes for his barley exhibits at the Brewers' Exhibition in London.

He was a very quiet man who went about his daily work and his hobbies with diligence. I was pleased to know him

when I was Hon Secretary of this Society and I was able to assist him sometimes with his archaeology and photography. When he died in 1966, I took part in his memorial service at Thorrington parish church where the congregation was informed that his body had been donated to a London teaching hospital for research into heart block, a condition from which he had suffered.

There has not really been an equal successor in his many fields. Shall we ever see the likes of him again?

John S Appleby

BOOK REVIEW

Francis, Pat: *Borough Over the Border; Life in West Ham 1895-1915*, (2007) East London History Society, pp 222, £8.40.

This is a considerable undertaking. The author has bravely gone where many local historians will not go and has systematically trawled the local newspapers and periodicals of the period, those rich sources of Victorian and Edwardian studies. It takes a lot of time, but it is worth it. West Ham was a cauldron of change and political drama during these years, its public excesses reported, half in ridicule, half with a shudder, by the more traditional regional newspapers of shire Essex. What we therefore have is, to my knowledge, a 'first', a detailed insight into the unfolding life of this teeming borough, reported by its own press, notably the *Stratford Express* and the *Stratford, Forest Gate and Plaistow Advertiser*. Finally, the author had sought to explore, in some detail, the reading and musical activities going on outside those more familiar West Ham themes of poverty, industrial unrest and left wing politics with which it is associated during these years.

There is always a problem for the writer of such micro-history as to whether to tell their story chronologically or thematically. There are advantages with both approaches, and here, after three introductory chapters, the author divides her story into nine chapters of tight three-year periods, seeking to give each one an over-all theme. 1900-1902, for example, is labelled 'A New Century; a New Reign'. Problems however arise for the reader where the detailed history of West Ham on the ground does not fit these sweeping national themes (or three-year periods), while issues like poverty and labour surplus are likely to recur in every chapter. By and large the author copes with this reasonably well, and the book is happily free of repetition. A second problem, freely recognised by the author in her introduction, is that locals newspapers of this period inevitably reflect the interest of their readership which did not, by and large, include the poorer half (or in the case of West Ham three quarters) of the population. They print in great detail about good-cause public meetings and even more about party politics. While this book avoids too much of the former there is a lot about the latter. In particular we hear a great deal about Will Thorne and Charles Masterman, M.P.'s for West Ham South and West Ham North respectively, and, perhaps inevitably, for this is West Ham, the sectarian divisions of left wing politics. It would be nice to have more analysis of right wing politics in the borough, for, given popular perceptions, it should not have existed. This reviewer would also have liked a more systematic look at occupational and demographic structures. West Ham was a borough full of immigrants – where did they all come from?

The author's concentration on musical and reading interests deserves some special mention. Here the *Musical*

Herald provides her with a constant source of minutiae, if not trivia. As usual, if you scratch local history hard enough, you find much conventional wisdom challenged. Library provision and library loans reflect more serious reading than might be expected, certainly than this reviewer has found in the contemporary borough of Colchester. Music likewise was never absent from people's lives and public music – choirs, music hall, brass bands – abundant.

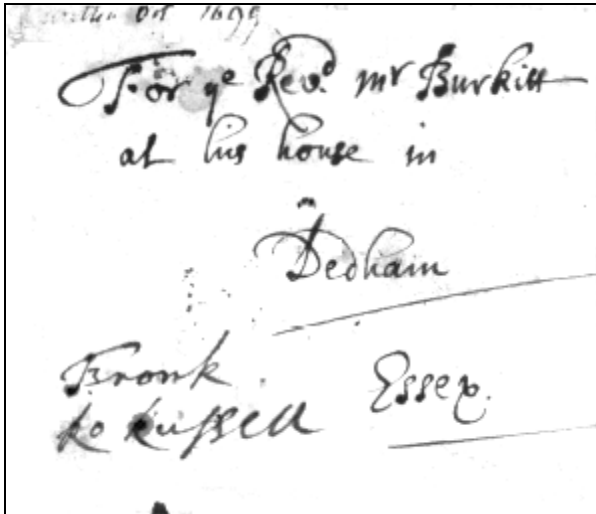
All in all then, this is an impressive book, compulsory reading for anyone interested in West Ham history and a credit to the long, long hours of research it must have involved. It is pleasantly printed in A5 format. There is a sprinkling of interesting photos, though it would have helped if they had been placed on the pages of text to which they refer. The book desperately needs a map, ideally one drawn specifically for this volume to help the non-resident navigate the subtle by clear divisions between the Docks, Silvertown, Beckton, Plaistow, Stratford, and all stations between, which made up this melting pot world.

Andrew Phillips

ESAH VISIT TO DEDHAM

Members of the Society met Revd. Gerard Moate and his parishioners on a recent visit to Dedham who gave us a tour of the church and tower. In the area above the porch, the Vicar has created a Muniment Room. When he arrived thirteen years ago it was a storage area for defunct vacuum cleaners and discarded books. But on tidying the area some great discoveries were made, not least a Geneva Bible. Work began on building bookcases, rationalising and cataloguing the contents. The Vicar has concentrated on restoring books with a

Dedham connection, in particular that of Revd. Burkitt, and acquiring other material to illustrate the village's history.



The simple address on the letter from 1699
see cover illustration for details

Revd. Moate writes, "The 'Muniment Room' is certainly a treasure and I am delighted that people outside of Dedham are beginning to appreciate it". The current Vicar is truly a modern-day antiquarian.

Andrew Smith

REV. CANON G. H. RENDALL AND THE DEDHAM MUNIMENTS ROOM

I have recently had the pleasure of preparing a guide to the archives of Canon Rendall at Dedham church. There is no biography of Rendall and today he is largely forgotten, but in his own time he was held in high esteem. His death was noted in *The Times*, and obituaries appeared in various journals and local newspapers. He was the author of numerous works on church history, classical, biblical and Shakespearean criticism, as well as two books on the history of Dedham,

published late in his life. Rendall had retired to Dedham at the age of 60 and died there on 4 January 1945 within 3 weeks of his 94th birthday.

Rendall was born on St Paul's day, 1851 at Harrow where his father Frederick was assistant master. His mother was Anna Downes, the oldest of three daughters of Major William Downes of Hill House, Dedham. The second daughter, Elizabeth, married Gerald Thomson Lermitt, headmaster of Dedham Grammar School. Rendall was his godson and named after him. The third daughter, Laura, was the first wife of James Medows Rodwell who was, for many years, a Dedham churchwarden.

In his preface to *Dedham, Described and Deciphered*, Rendall left a portrait of the village as he remembered it in the 1850s. 'Throughout childhood and boyhood, Dedham was for me the world of holiday, in which the Christmas festival was kept with all time-honoured celebrations, when the church was decked with berried holly-wreaths, the hall with mistletoe, the board with roast turkey and plum pudding set-on-fire, to be followed by snapdragon and the Christmas tree in which all members of the household shared. At Dedham in summertime, I learned to blackberry, to fish, to row, to swim, and in winter to slide and skate and dance.' Perhaps it is not surprising that he chose to spend his retirement in the village.

Educated at Harrow, Rendall followed his father to Trinity College, Cambridge. He graduated BA in 1874 and MA in 1877. Scholarships and prizes followed in rapid succession. In 1875 he was elected to a college fellowship and remained as an assistant tutor until 1880. He was then appointed Gladstone professor of Greek at University College Liverpool from 1880 to 1897 and principal of the College. In 1890 he was chosen as vice chancellor of Victoria

(Manchester) University. From 1897 to his retirement in 1911 he was headmaster of Charterhouse, and was ordained deacon in 1898 and priest in 1899.

Rendall acquired Dedham House in 1909 and almost immediately entered into village life. He also left his mark on the wider community of Essex. He became Honorary Canon of Chelmsford cathedral in 1918, and for many years was governor of Colchester Royal Grammar School. In April 1922 he was elected to the Council of the Essex Archaeological Society, and served on this for the rest of his life. He was a member of three Dedham trusts, and for two decades was chairman of the Lectureship Trust. During the First World War he organised a canteen for soldiers in the Village Club (now Duchy Barn). He also formed a detachment of St John Ambulance and was its first commandant.

What are now housed in the Dedham Muniment room are only the materials for a fragment of Rendall's literary output. There can be no doubt that, after his retirement, he intended to write a history of Dedham. The anonymous author of his obituary (in the February 1945 edition of the parish magazine) credits Rendall with these words: 'Dedham, with its woollen industry and its mill, its Grammar School and its Lectureship, touched national life at many points, and offered a particularly interesting example of social, industrial and ecclesiastical development in the history of the English people.' Although Rendall never wrote his projected history, he produced a short book on local topography, and a learned, if slight, volume on feudal and early modern Dedham. His account of the first lecturers is based on impeccable research and a profound understanding of the puritan movement. He was the

author of a number of scholarly essays and several pamphlets, nearly all with a Dedham theme. He was also a popular speaker.

Over many years Rendall accumulated a considerable archive of notes, papers and books relating to Dedham and the Stour Valley. Towards the end of his life he determined to bequeath this collection to the village, and to house this he converted the lumber room over the north porch into a muniment room. The bookcases, panelling and furniture were all designed by the architect, Marshall Sisson, and built by Heals of London. It was opened on 24 September 1938 by Rendall's cousin, Dr Montague Rendall, a former headmaster of Winchester. About fifty people accepted a joint invitation from Rendall and the vicar of Dedham, Rev. F.G. Given-Wilson, to attend the opening.

One other aspect of Rendall's scholarship requires notice here. In the 1920s he was converted to the theory that the real author of the sonnets, classical poems and some of the plays attributed to Shakespeare was Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford. Rendall's principal concern was with the sonnets and poems where he deployed his extensive knowledge of Elizabethan literature to considerable effect. His most important works were *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Edward de Vere* and *Personal Clues in Shakespeare's Poems and Sonnets*. In his *Shakespeare in Essex and East Anglia* he proposed that scenes from *Henry VI* and *Cymbeline* were set in the Stour Valley, stating that 'names, places and distances, even personalities are thinly disguised, and both plays contain unmistakable evidence of Oxford's handiwork.' The de Veres flourished in Essex from the Conquest to the death of the 20th earl in 1703, and this may have had a subliminal part in strengthening

Rendall's view that some of the works attributed to Shakespeare were in fact written by the 17th earl. A number of papers in the Dedham archives touch on the question whether Shakespeare wrote anything that bears his name.

Rendall was reticent about himself. His papers reveal little of his personality apart from his relish for historical and literary research. His correspondents on Dedham, and on Essex matters generally, were the antiquaries L C Sier, Rev. Montagu Benton and Sir Gurney Benham, all of whom are represented by letters in the collection. Periodically he corresponded with other scholars – there is an interesting exchange of letters with Sir George Sitwell – but in the main, the letter writers are like minded clergymen, often with an interest in the ecclesiastical history of Dedham.

The Rendall archive at Dedham consists of the following: eight box files; six manuscript books; books and pamphlets of which Rendall was the author; long runs of the *Essex Review* and the *Transactions* of the Essex Archaeological Society containing material by Rendall, or pertaining to him; books in which Rendall material survives (usually in loose leaf form); and maps once in Rendall's possession. He also compiled a catalogue of books donated to the muniment room, the great majority of which were purchased by Rendall or presented to him by other scholars. A few volumes were added in the years after his death, and some printed material on other Essex and Suffolk parishes has been disposed of. The present incumbent has recently acquired more material specific to Dedham and its puritan heritage. This is expected to continue in future. There is also a programme to conserve C17 and C18 volumes which have suffered the depredations of time.

I have resisted the temptation to re-order the archive. This decision carries with it some disadvantages for the user. Some topics are treated in more than one box file or notebook. Rendall often returned to a subject that he had examined before and as often without consolidating his papers. On occasions he filed material under more than one heading, and even placed on-going correspondence in two different locations. These are working papers and it seems most appropriate to treat them as such.

Who will benefit from access to this archive? Local people with an appetite for the history of their community will find much of interest here. Students of local topography will be equally gratified. Anyone contemplating a history of Dedham will find Rendall's papers indispensable. Scholars of Elizabeth I's church settlement or the Caroline puritan movement will gain considerably from his research. Rendall's industry was exceptional and his scholarship rigorous. Authors, editors, cataloguers and researchers incur obligations. I should particularly like to thank Caroline Merriam for her company on the journey through the Rendall archive. We both hope that future researchers of the history of Dedham will feel that the present modest exercise has been worthwhile. I should also like to thank Dr Michael Leach for his invaluable help bring the guide to this archive into a final and, I hope, comprehensible form.

Mark Lockett

MISSING COUNCIL MINUTES

Readers will be aware that a very embarrassing problem came to light in 2006 – the Society had no copies of any of its Council minutes between March

1972 and October 1987. After extensive enquiries of former Council members, it is good to report that a virtually complete set has now been assembled from several different sources and that, when these have been sorted (and copied where the original is very tatty), it will be properly bound by a professional bookbinder. There are still a few gaps between 1974 and 1980 and, if any member has Council minutes from this period, please contact Michael Leach on 01277 363106, or leach1939@yahoo.co.uk . We are particularly grateful to Elizabeth Sellers (a former Hon Secretary of the Society) and Peter Sharpe for their hard work in successfully retrieving this missing part of the Society's past.

Michael Leach

TILTY MILL

Many members will be familiar with the beautiful monastic site at Tilty. Most will be less familiar with the Grade II* listed mill on the edge of the site, a late C18 watermill containing an almost complete set of mill machinery. This comprises a cast iron waterwheel with a complete set of gearing to three pairs of millstones, a sack hoist, a modern hammer mill and a fourth pair of stones which were installed but never connected. There is also a World War II pillbox concealed in one of the outhouses! The mill pond and leet are intact, though now without water.

The mill last worked in the 1950s and has lain disused since then. It has been on Essex County Council's Buildings at Risk register since 1986 with unspecified structural problems, decaying windows and invasive vegetation. In 2007 there was a successful planning application to convert the mill and its outbuildings into two dwellings (involving a significant amount of new building on the very

restricted site) in spite of opposition from a number of organisations, including this Society. The application was opposed for two reasons. Firstly the mill and its machinery were a most unusual survival, and domestic conversion would result in the destruction of many of the historic features. Secondly, though it may not be on the exact site of the mediaeval abbey mill (referred to in 1224 as 'newly built') it is a very important part of the setting of this monastic site, and the intrusion of much new building would inevitably detract from this. After Uttlesford District Council had granted consent, all the groups which had opposed this development made representations to GoEast, the regional planning authority based in Cambridge.

Crucially the application had not been opposed by English Heritage, allegedly on grounds of the costs involved. However the Ancient Monuments Society and the Mills Section of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings were actively involved and, probably as a result of the well-organised opposition to this development, the planning application was subsequently 'called in' by the Secretary of State. A public enquiry was duly held at the end of October last year. A representative of the Society attended and was impressed by the inspector's thoroughness and keen interest in the whole matter. As a result of the inspector's report, the Secretary of State overturned Uttlesford's decision, and revoked the planning consent. In doing so, a useful precedent may have been set. The proposed new building, on this very remote rural site, was on a substantial scale, occupying three times the ground area of the existing ones. The applicant justified this on the grounds that it constituted 'enabling development' – in other words, that it would provide funds to finance the

preservation of the mill. However the plans for the new housing involved using part of the old mill, with the loss of its machinery. Amongst other reservations, the inspector pointed out that this 'enabling development' actually damaged part of the building that it was supposedly setting out to save. This was one of his reasons for advising that the local authority's consent should be rescinded.

The challenge now will be to find a new and more appropriate use for this remarkable survival; most conservationists would prefer to see it retained as a preserved mill. Many problems will need to be overcome before this can be achieved, not least the problem of obtaining adequate access for vehicles. However it is very encouraging (and somewhat unusual) that the planning consent has been overturned, and it will give interested groups both time and opportunity to set up a viable scheme.

Michael Leach

Source: *Cornerstone* (The Magazine of the SPAB) vol. xxix, no: 1

THE LOST ROMAN TOWN OF GREAT CHESTERFORD

This was the subject of this year's Morant lecture given by Maria Medlycott. Trained as a field archaeologist, she has updated Essex County Council's historic towns reports, as well as doing much new work on village settlements in the county. Recently she obtained an English Heritage grant to pull together all the disparate information on Great Chesterford, and to publish a report which will appear in the East Anglian Archaeology series later this year, or early in 2009.

This is the second largest Roman site in Essex, now ploughed flat with a faint pale line as the only visible evidence of the line of the town wall on the west side. The present mediaeval town lies south and south-east of the Roman site and the curve of the Newmarket Road on its northern edge marks the line of the wall on the south and east sides of the Roman settlement.

Over the last 300 years many have studied this site, commencing with William Stukeley in 1719 who drew a rough plan of the flint rubble walls, then being demolished for use as road-making material. He also noted a 'ghost temple' visible as a crop mark. As part of his enquiries, he supplied locals with a pint of beer and a pipe of tobacco, and plied them with questions. The next serious enquirer was the Hon. Richard Cornwallis Neville (later Lord Braybrooke) who had given up beagling due to poor health, and enthusiastically embraced archaeology instead. By the standards of the time, he kept good written records but – frustratingly for the modern researcher – made no plan, and it has proved impossible to establish where he made some of his finds. He only kept whole pots, throwing away the contents and discarding broken sherds. He lifted the mosaic from the temple site 1km to the east of the town (a ploughman had reported hitting an underground obstruction here) and, though this has subsequently been lost, a coloured engraving was prepared so we know what it looked like. His findings were published in the *Archaeological Journal* in 1855, and elsewhere.

There were sporadic digs in the 1920s, and a well organised rescue dig by Major Brinson (a past President of the Society) in 1948, necessitated by gravel extraction from the northern sector of the town site. This was conducted in appalling winter conditions and box

scrapers had already done some damage. There were rumours of a coin hoard being distributed amongst the quarry diggers. A summary of the findings was written for VCH volume iii, and the pots were rescued after Major Brinson's death, though unfortunately mice had eaten the labels. Then in 1953 an Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found adjacent to the town site.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Great Chesterford Archaeology Group did a number of excavations and kept a watching brief whenever the ground was disturbed by services or by new building. They kept good records but, as often happens with amateur archaeology, the final analysis and write-up proved too difficult. Knowing the importance of the site, they wisely enlisted the help of Essex County Council.

It was decided that the best starting point would be to obtain a geophysical survey of the whole site. Fortunately the soil proved to be ideal and, apart from those areas already destroyed by gravel extraction, the survey showed the town plan in remarkable detail - the walls, the main roads converging on the forum, the forum itself, a maze of back alleys and various buildings, including an unidentified, possibly octagonal, building. It also showed some non-linear features not aligned with the Roman layout, and these may be evidence of an earlier Iron Age settlement.

When all the evidence had been brought together, the history of the town's development began to emerge. The first Roman construction was a rectangular fort with evidence of a gate, dated to about 60AD and only in use for a few years. This was superseded by a civilian town protected by a roughly oval bank and ditch. The important buildings were in masonry, but the majority of the smaller ones were only represented by beaten clay floors and were presumably

constructed in timber. Major Brinson had identified a few of the latter, but many must have been lost to box scrapers in the foul weather of the winter of 1948. The town wall was a later construction, dating from the mid to late C4 and its building was preceded by the clearance of a 20m wide swath, with most of the residual pits and holes being filled with rammed chalk to provide a good foundation. One that was missed provided dating evidence of c. 360AD. The wall was of flint rubble with lacing courses of tiles, 3 to 4m wide, with no evidence of towers. A single arch gate was provided, later a second arch was added, suggesting perhaps increased traffic and growing prosperity. It is not clear why the wall was built so late, but it was a time of Pict and barbarian incursions, and the town may have required defence if it was a tax collecting centre. It was also quite near to the Fen waterways which would have provided convenient routes for incursions.

There was also a considerable extra-mural settlement, with suburbs to the south and south east. These include a walled enclosure (now the site of the parish church - probably a Saxon minster site - and its churchyard) in which an iron working hoard buried in a deep sealed shaft, and wells with ritual deposits have been found here. This suggests that the Christian church was established on a site which already had ritual significance. 1km to the east is the temple site discovered by Neville's ploughman. It was excavated by him, the mosaic was removed and the walls were lowered for the benefit of the ploughman. It was re-excavated in the 1980s. The building is a square within a square, of typical early Romano-British form, and it was built on top of a probable Iron Age shrine. A porch was added later on the east side (i.e. facing away from the town). There was a major refurbishment

in the mid C3 or early C4AD, including re-roofing and re-plastering. The temple was contained within a precinct ditch, in the south west corner of which were some substantial pits containing about 2000 front right sheep legs. Doubtless the rest of the animal was eaten. Raised iron content of the infill suggested the possibility of blood libations here. Part of the temple refurbishment included the building of a gateway in the east side of the precinct enclosure, as well as a curious 'half temple' between this and the main temple. The dedication remains obscure but the discovery of votive offerings (including a silver plaque bearing a god's head, silver foil leaves, letters of the alphabet and non-functional brooches) leave no doubt about its function. There may well be other features in the precinct but unfortunately the farmer refused permission for a geophysical survey.

Paleo-botanical evidence from the surrounding area suggests that in Roman times it was an open landscape with little woodland, meadows for hay and for grazing, and some arable (oats, barley and two types of wheat). There is cartographic evidence of a near-circular boundary several miles in radius, part of which was described in a Saxon charter. It is not clear if this was a Saxon boundary or the edge of the Roman territorium.

The temple was in ruins by the late C4AD, though curiously a Saxon spear was left in it at a later date. Was this an accidental loss or a deliberate ritual deposit? There were mixed burials after the Roman period (some Saxon, some associated with Roman material, others with Frankish goods) suggesting that the population was of varied ethnic origin. One high status Saxon was buried with his horse.

There is undoubtedly much more to be learnt about this complex site, and future

archaeologists will be deeply indebted to Maria for organising and interpreting the mass of information (much of it unpublished) gathered over the last 150 years.

Michael Leach

ESSEX HISTORY FAIR – SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVE NEEDED

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 leach1939@yahoo.co.uk or by post at 2 Landview Gardens, Ongar CM5 9EQ.

HILL FARM, GESTINGTHORPE

Society members visited this delightfully remote and peaceful part of Essex on 10 May. We were first shown the Roman villa site, discovered by Mr Cooper during post war ploughing. This was the beginning of a lifetime interest in archaeology – 30 years of excavation, followed by a similar period of regular field walking after the scheduling of the

site by English Heritage in the 1970s. The villa was relatively modest (no mosaics, for example, merely opus signinum floors) but nevertheless it had a bath house and a hypocaust heating system. It occupied a site 20m by 30m, an area sufficient for 3 or 4 modern town houses. Footings consisted of substantial flint walls, and the roof appears to have been supported by two lines of aisle posts, for which one set of post holes were found. The superstructure was probably a substantial timber frame, as the estimated weight of the tiled roof was about 40 tons. The villa was surrounded by a settlement which included various workshops, including iron working, but also one used for casting bronze figurines – the only one known in Britain. A paved area, where many coins were found, suggests a possible market. To the northeast was a building orientated exactly east-west, and floored with red tesserae, tentatively thought to have been a temple. The whole site is close to the supposed line of the Braintree to Sudbury Roman road, the exact course of which has still not been established. Quantities of roof tiles, glass, pottery, jewellery, carpenters' tools and domestic equipment, recovered from the site both by excavation and field walking, are now displayed in the farmhouse.

There are hints of earlier occupation and possible use as a Celtic votive site. The soil is highly variable, and the modern plough sometimes turns up a striking red sand. Unexpected sink holes periodically appear in the fields, probably caused by the collapse of eroded layers in the deep chalk strata. The nearby stream also disappears from time to time (presumably by the same process) and all these phenomena might have contributed to its significance in Celtic eyes.

We then examined the substantial collection of artefacts in the farmhouse. On display was a white roof tile (perhaps made from the local clay, used more recently for making white bricks), an entire storage jar found in the kitchen, and elegant jewellery, as well as a wide range of other artefacts.

After lunch we had a tour of the farm buildings, considerably modified by Frederick Chancellor in the 1870s and 80s. The farmhouse itself was a new build by him, as were the symmetrical ranges of brick farmyard buildings on the south side of the C18 barn. The quality of the Victorian brickwork was striking – gauged brick lintels to windows and doors are not normally to be found in farm buildings! The C18 barn contained much reused timber, some showing mouldings, joist mortices and shutter grooves from earlier domestic use. Tie beams and wall plates are fixed together with iron straps – typical C18 practice. Barns are usually found on the north side of the farm yard, with the central drive-through orientated north-south, to exploit the prevailing wind to blow away dust and chaff after threshing. Adjoining the barn was another re-used timber building, formerly jettied, and with upstairs windows with shutter grooves and mortices for diamond mullions. The quality of the carpentry, as well as the substantial size of the timbers, and the absence of downstairs windows, suggest that it may have been a re-used guildhall. Members were diverted by a well-cut mortice with peg holes in one main beam – in that position it could never have received a timber and seems to have been cut in error, not an unusual finding in timber framed buildings. Outside, two cylindrical corrugated iron grain silos, with pyramidal roofs, dating from the 1970s, are redundant (being far too small for present yields) and are due for demolition – a reminder of the rapid

progress of farm technology and productivity since World War II.

We were very indebted to our hosts at Hill Farm, and deeply impressed by their enthusiasm for the archaeology and history of this working farm.

Michael Leach

SUCKLING REVISITED

The first half of the C19 saw the publication of a number of histories of Essex – Britton and Brayley in 1803, Elizabeth Ogborne in 1814, T K Cromwell in 1818/19, Thomas Wright in 1836. With the exception of Elizabeth Ogborne, these were largely derivative works with only a limited amount of new material, though all were more generously illustrated with engravings than the C18 histories from which they had obtained much of their material.

The Rev. Alfred Suckling's *Memorials... of the County of Essex* of 1845 is in a different category. To start with, it is an oversize folio, lavishly illustrated with engravings made from the author's own drawings. It is clear from the text that his descriptions were based on personal observations. He tested the toughness of Greensted's timber walls with 'a good pocket knife', and commented elsewhere on dirty or ill-kempt churches, and dishonest parish clerks who had sold off monumental brasses for their own profit. He was very upset by official vandalism, and noted that Messing church had 'a few years since, contained the effigy of her founder, a wooden figure of a crusader in chain armour, which occupied a niche in the north wall. My sole object in visiting this village was to draw this ancient monument, and my regret may easily be conceived, on learning that the late vicar had given it, a short time before, to the parish clerk, to be burnt as a piece of useless lumber;

[he] obeyed the directions of his tasteless superior to the very letter.' At Little Horkesley, three oak effigies had been 'removed from their original situation and barbarously thrust into an obscure corner of the church, covered with dust and rubbish.' Remarkably these figures survived not only this neglect, but also the almost total destruction of the church in World War II. Suckling's antiquarian zeal is evident. At Layer Marney he noted 'as the writer had already walked nearly twenty miles, and seven more lay between him and Colchester, the ultimate and most important object of his tour, the shades of an October evening warned him that any attempt to draw these effigies with accuracy and care would be fruitless ... lest, however, he be charged with apathy on this score, let the reader understand, that having breakfasted at six that morning, he had subsequently already visited the churches of Great and Little Braxted, Inworth and Messing, had made sketches of those portions to be found in this volume, with the brasses, arms and inscriptions associated with them; had also drawn a view of Layer Marney tower, the exterior of the church, the arms and font, and copied all the monuments, without any assistance.'

The printer's introduction explained that this book was reprinted from his series of *Quarterly Papers on Architecture*, without any further input from the author – perhaps not even with his consent. The relationship between the two does not seem to have been a very happy one, and in 1846 they fell out over Suckling's *History of Suffolk* which stalled after the second volume. It has to be said that the Essex volume is very patchy – some parishes are dealt with at length, others with great brevity, and many not at all. The index is surprisingly inadequate, and omits ten parishes, some of which (Danbury, for example)

are covered in considerable detail. His main interests were church architecture, heraldry and monumental inscriptions. He also gives an interesting insight into the state of church buildings before later C19 restorations unblocked bricked-up east windows, and replaced timber mullions and transoms with stone tracery. He attempted to date buildings accurately from their architectural details, made careful drawings of surviving tracery, had a particular interest in fonts, and usually assiduously recorded monumental inscriptions. With the last, he was occasionally frustrated, as at Willingale Doe where he noted 'it is impossible to read what filial piety has here inscribed without the assistance of a ladder' but added with some asperity, that 'a perusal of the inflated language on a lower slab of marble will be amply sufficient.'

Occasionally he wrote in considerable detail. The entry for Thoby Priory, for example, covered eight pages and included a detailed transcript of an inventory of the priory lands, including acreages, field names and abutments. Elsewhere he ran out of time. Having described Colchester castle, St Botolph's Priory and St John's Abbey, he noted that he had insufficient time to look at any of the town's churches. The published engravings sometimes bear the date of Suckling's original drawing, and this evidence suggests that he made many of his visits to Essex between December 1833 and March 1835. All the illustrations are detailed and accurate (he himself noted the trouble he had taken to delineate the courses of Roman brickwork in the drawing of Colchester castle) and contain the occasional quirk. The Little Braxted font, for example, showed a floor slab bearing his name and the date, with the inscription 'Requiescat in Pace' suggesting that it was his own gravestone!

Generally his style is plain and factual, but there are periodic flights of orotund verbosity. At Danbury he noted '...the same tough and knotty oaks yet flourish, and adorn the park of the nineteenth century, which beheld the stern era of the Norman rule. Long will they yet flourish! For who can deploy the axe in the destruction of the monarchs of the grove, which Norman tyranny could spare, which the taste of our forefathers has respected, and which time, which antiquity, has rendered sacred?' Nevertheless, there is much useful material in the somewhat variable text, as well as useful information from the engravings about the condition of church buildings before their Victorian restoration.

Alfred Inigo Suckling was the only son of Alexander Fox, and adopted the surname of his maternal grandfather on inheriting the latter's Norfolk estates in 1820. Through his maternal grandmother he was related to the famous C17 architect, Inigo Jones, hence his unusual second name. Though ordained in 1820, he was not beneficed until 1839, so he had ample time and sufficient income to pursue his antiquarian interests. A collection of his notes survives in the British Library as Add. MSS 18476-18491, and might be worth further examination for unpublished Essex material.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Blatchly, J M, 2005 'Suckling (formerly Fox), Alfred Inigo (1796-1856)' in *ODNB*, Oxford

Suckling, Rev A, 1845 *Memorials of the Antiquities and Architecture, Family History and Heraldry of the County of Essex*, John Weale, London

A CELEBRATION OF WILLIAM WINSTANLEY

On Saturday 29 November 2008, Quendon village will be celebrating William Winstanley (?1628-1725), the 'barber poet', pioneer of publishing almanacs and chapbooks, and uncle of the Eddystone lighthouse designer. From 10am to 4pm there will be stalls and events round the church, and two new books will be for sale – a book of Winstanley's unpublished rural Essex poems, and Jackie Worthington's biography, *The Man who saved Christmas*. At 7pm, in the church, Caroline Wingfield, curator of Saffron Walden museum, will give a talk on 'William Winstanley – family life in the C17.'

HEDINGHAM CASTLE – NEW LIVING HISTORY DISPLAY

A new living history display has recently been opened here, providing an idea of the work involved in running a castle as a business centre, a family home and a final point of defence against an attacking enemy. The owners have researched family records for images, material and information about the important episodes in the castle's history since its first construction by Aubrey de Vere in 1140. The castle is open from 10am to 5pm, from Sundays to Thursdays between Easter and the end of October.

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

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

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