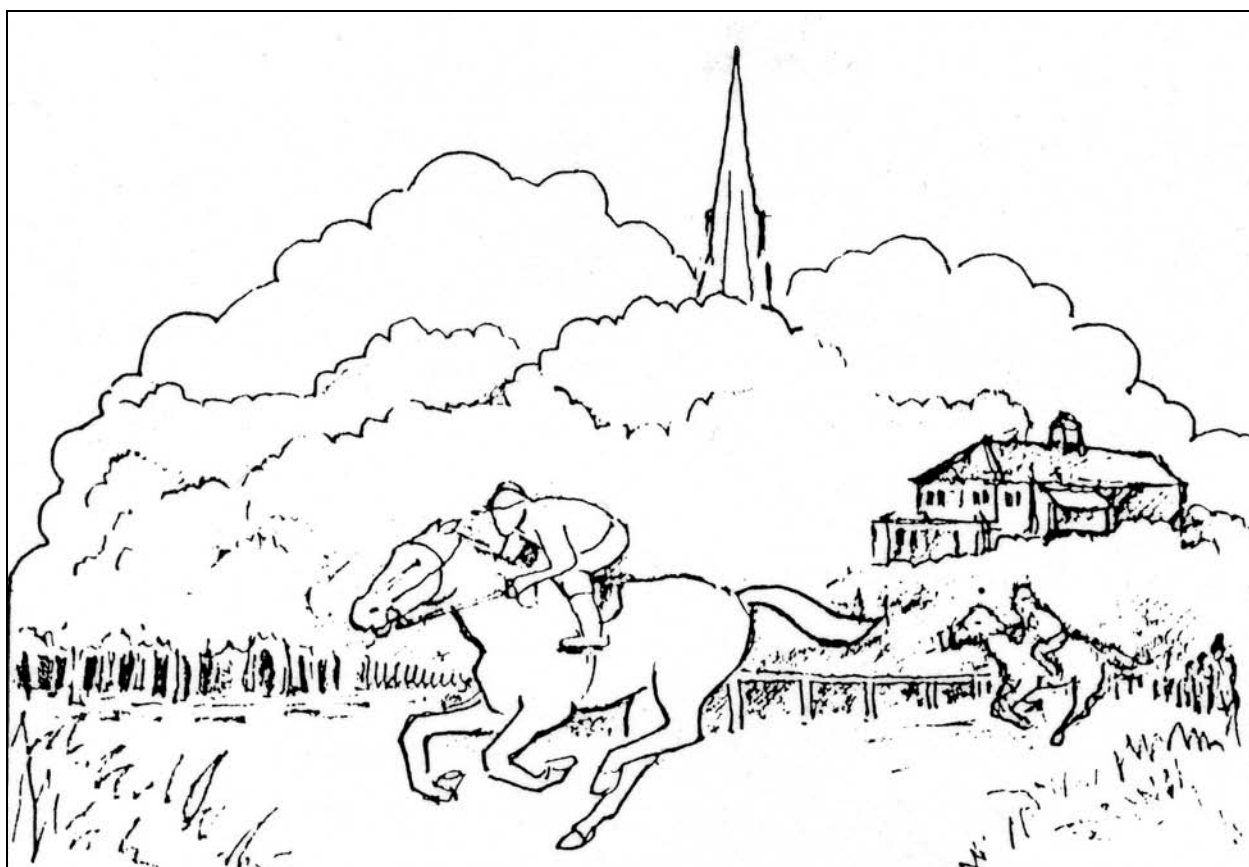


Essex Archaeology and History News



Winter 2008

THE ESSEX SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

NEWSLETTER 156

WINTER 2008

CONTENTS

FROM THE PRESIDENT	1
INDEX TO <i>ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY</i> VOLUMES 1-20 (THIRD SERIES)	2
VCH ESSEX	3
AGM AND THE GALLEYWOOD RACECOURSE	3
ESSEX PLACE-NAMES	5
THE EARLE COLLECTION AT THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON	6
THE SINKING OF THE MARY ROSE	7
THE ESSEX PAMPHILON VIOLIN MAKERS AND DENDROCHRONOLOGY	7
MA IN HISTORICAL STUDIES	9
HUMPTY DUMPTY SAT ON THE WALL AT COLCHESTER	9
ESSEX VCH IN CRISIS – A CENTURY AGO	10
W. RAYMOND POWELL (1920-2008)	11
ESSEX FROM ELSEWHERE	12
HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND	13
THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT OF ESSEX; FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO THE 20 TH CENTURY	13
MORE STRAW	14
ST NICHOLAS'S CHAPEL, COGGESHALL – AN INTERESTING DILEMMA	15
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, ESSEX BRANCH PROGRAMME 2009	16
WANTED	16

EDITOR: SALLY GALE

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

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

Assistant Editor: Michael Leach

COPY FOR THE NEXT ISSUE SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS NO LATER THAN 6 MARCH 2009

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

Cover illustration:

The Galleywood village sign, from "Glimpses of Galleywood" by Muriel Sanders, 1993, depicts the racecourse on the Common with the spire of St Michaels behind the trees. See the write up on the AGM on page 3 for more on the history of the racecourse.

There is a modern poem by Art Scmauz in "The Essex Hundred", 2007, pp62-63, compiled by Andrew Summers and John Debenham which evokes the action and atmosphere of 'The Queen's Plate race. This poem is illustrated by Elizabeth Summers.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope and trust that all members would have by now received copies of volume 37 of the *Transactions* (2006) and the Index covering volumes 1 to 20. I mention this as I would like to pay tribute to our new Editor, Dr Chris Starr, who has seen these publications through the press. The task has been further complicated by the appointment of a new printer. This decision has resulted in being able to maintain our customary high standards combined with prompt service and delivery. Moreover this change has also resulted in a substantial reduction in our capital expenditure for this flagship publication. Dr Starr, with the full backing of the officers and executive council, is determined to ensure that the publication programme for *Transactions* is brought fully up-to-date. It is therefore anticipated that volume 38 (2007) will be published in April/May 2009 with volume 39 (2008) appearing towards the end of next year. The latter represents the 150th volume, a significant milestone in the history of the Society. It is also fitting that it is proposed to dedicate this anniversary volume to the late Ray Powell, a short tribute to whom appears elsewhere in these pages. We are resolved to making an occasion of this landmark and I look forward to sharing our plans with you shortly.

I have imparted this information because I am committed to keeping the membership fully informed of developments – after all you are the lifeblood of the Society. So far I have concentrated on the catch-up process which is largely retrospective but essential to the well-being of the Society. However, you may remember that I concluded my last contribution to this newsletter with the intention of focusing on the future and, in this regard, I wish to

advise you of two future initiatives.

Firstly, it is proposed to reintroduce the long discarded practice of producing a “List of Members” which it is anticipated will be circulated with volume 38 of the *Transactions*.

Inclusion is not a mandatory requirement but it is hoped that members will consent to the inclusion of their names, addresses and email address (the latter if known or supplied). It is also proposed to include the year of joining together with, if possible, full initials and post nominals (M.B.E., J.P., M.A., etc.). Please could I therefore ask you to carefully check the label on the envelope in which this newsletter arrived and advise me of any corrections/amendments/additions that you may wish to make? I can be reached by email at martinstuchfield@btconnect.com or by post at Lowe Hill House, Stratford St Mary, Suffolk CO7 6JX. **For logistical purposes it will be assumed that you consent to inclusion unless notification is received to the contrary. Please be assured that this document is intended strictly for membership use only and will not be made available for use by outside individuals or organisations in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1988. Members should securely dispose of lists which are not required or have been updated.**

Secondly, it has been agreed by the College of Arms (founded by Richard III in 1484) that the Society, with its distinguished pedigree dating back to 1852, may successfully petition for a Grant of Arms. The Society is further honoured by the fact that Mr Thomas Woodcock, who is one of the senior

Officers of Arms in his capacity as Norroy and Ulster King of Arms, has agreed to act as agent. The whole process is expected to take approximately one year to complete with many hurdles to overcome! The first step in the process is for the Earl Marshall to grant a Warrant authorising the King of Arms to proceed with the design of the shield, crest and mantling. It is at this stage that Norroy and Ulster will work with the Society to devise arms which are pleasing, representative and heraldically correct. Interestingly, the customary motto, yet to be devised and adopted by the Society, will not be subject to heraldic jurisdiction. Eventually, Letters Patent (a colourful illuminated and decorated document) will be granted authorising the Society to use the arms for posterity. It is anticipated that it will be possible to invite members to a special presentation of the Letters Patent.

I hope that you can see a picture emerging whereby we are combining our traditional interests in archaeology and history with new initiatives for the future. Enclosed with this newsletter is yet another exciting and varied programme of meetings. I look forward to meeting as many members as possible at these events and to reporting further in the Spring 2009 Newsletter.

H Martin Stuchfield

**INDEX TO ESSEX
ARCHAEOLOGY &
HISTORY VOLUMES 1-20
(THIRD SERIES)**

This will have been delivered to all full members before the receipt of this newsletter. The last cumulative index, covering volumes 6 to 15 of the Second series was published over 80 years ago,

though indexes to the subsequent individual volumes of this series were produced, up to (and including) the first volume of the Third Series. These still occasionally turn up in second hand book shops. Indexing ceased after the first volume of the third series and Council has been aware for some time of the urgent need for a proper index to make the material contained in *Essex Archaeology & History* accessible to researchers. A brave, but ultimately unsuccessful, attempt was made by Isobel Thompson, Ray Powell and others in the 1990s, though their rough draft (on large slips of paper) proved very useful for answering outside enquiries until very recently.

Indexing, however, is a complex matter and needs to be in a form that is widely used and recognised, in order to make the material available to a wide range of researchers, particularly in archaeology. There have been vast changes over the years. The 1926 index, for example, has just two entries for "pottery" whereas the present one has many columns over several pages. It became clear that we would have to use a professional indexer and that this would necessitate fund raising. The Society is deeply indebted to Chris Thornton, editor of the Essex VCH (and one of our past Presidents) for his perseverance in chasing up sources of funding (their generosity is acknowledged in the index), as well as in identifying a suitable indexer and co-ordinating the entire process from start to finish. Without the considerable time and effort that he gave to this, it is unlikely that the index would have been completed.

Every full and institutional member will receive a free copy, but additional copies will be available at cost (the price was not available at the time of writing this note, but please contact the Hon Secretary for details). It may be that

members, looking at the index, will wish to obtain a particular back number of *Essex Archaeology & History*. Unfortunately some of the early ones are out of print, and others are in very short supply. If you are looking for a particular volume, please contact Dr Jane Pearson, Hon Librarian, at Cob Cottage, Great Tey, Colchester CO6 1JS. If there is no remaining stock, an internet search or any good second hand book shop may be able to help.

As the Third Series has now reached volume 37, we need to continue the indexing and a start has already been made on the next ten volumes (21-30). When that is complete, we will have to tackle the volumes from 31 onwards. This is an expensive process – the indexing alone for the first 30 volumes will cost between £15,000 and £20,000 and, though most of this is covered by grants and the Society's reserves, the cost of publication must be covered, as well as the professional indexing costs after volume 30. Any contribution (payable to ESAH) towards the index fund - great or small - should be sent to Bill Abbott, Hon Treasurer, 45 Cambridge Road, Colchester CO3 3NR.

VCH ESSEX

On June 1st the institutional base of VCH Essex moved to the Institute of Historical Research, University of London (for employment and management) and to the Essex Record Office, Essex County Council (for core funding and office facilities). We are looking forward to collaborating more closely with the ERO and other relevant sections of ECC, both to forward the progress of the VCH series and to enhance the position of Essex at the forefront of historical research, understanding and debates. The County Editor and Assistant Editor remain on half-time contracts, and an

additional consultant is being employed for two days a week. Additional money from the VCH Essex Appeal Fund has remained critical to supporting the employment of staff. A new provisional timetable has been agreed with a view to completing and publishing Volume XI within the course of the 3-year funding contract with ECC. We can then look forward to re-starting work on Volume XII for which there is already a considerable amount of material in draft. Work is already proceeding in planning following volumes in the series, and additional offers of voluntary help have been received.

For more information ESAH members are invited to view the next issue of the newsletter of the Appeal Fund, *Essex Past* No. 11, which will be available very shortly and can be provided in hard copy and viewed on our website.

Please remember that our old postal and e-mail addresses have expired and we should now be contacted on:

Chris Thornton/Herbert Eiden

VCH Essex

Essex Record Office

Chelmsford

Essex CM2 6YT

01245 244680

Christopher.Thornton@sas.ac.uk

Herbert.Eiden@sas.ac.uk

www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/Essex

AGM AND THE GALLEYWOOD RACECOURSE

The AGM was held at Keene Hall, Galleywood on 28 June 2008. Stan Newens, having very ably served his three-year term as President, stood down and Martin Stuchfield (well known for his involvement with Congress, the

Essex Journal and the Monumental Brass Society) was elected in his place. Presentations for outstanding contributions to the Society were made to Andrew Phillips (past President, and Hon Librarian since 1986), Owen Bedwin (past President, and Hon Editor since 1987 till 2000, and his own locum till last year), Ray Powell (former VCH editor and past President, who has made numerous contributions to the Society, but was not well enough to attend the meeting), John Appleby (past President, and Hon Secretary for 13 years from 1959, as well as founder of the Newsletter) and Bill Hewitt (driving force and first secretary of the Publications Development Fund which has done so much to enhance the Society's *Transactions*). After the formal business, Ted Hawkins of the Galleywood Historical Society gave an illustrated lecture on the history of Galleywood racecourse.

Horse racing has a long history, going back to Roman times at least. In the Middle Ages it usually took the form of a race between two riders, each of whom put up a purse which was forfeit if the horse did not run. King Charles II is normally regarded as the father of the English turf, and remains the only reigning English monarch to have won a race at Newmarket (the Town Plate in 1664). Racing possibly began on Galleywood Common in the C17, but the first known record of the Chelmsford races dates from an announcement in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* in 1759. The establishment of organised racing was probably stimulated by the formation of the Jockey Club in 1751, an association of owners which established sets of rules for racing, acted as an arbitrator in disputes and, from 1763, published the official racing calendar; its membership was aristocratic and establishment or, in the words of one commentator, 'a

relation of God, or a close one'.

In 1764 the Chelmsford races were a three day event in August, though in subsequent years this was reduced to two days. In 1770 they received the royal stamp of approval when George III gave a 100 Guinea Plate. Races at this time were usually decided on the best of three, though towards the end of the century single races were introduced ('dash racing'). Race days were a great social event, an opportunity to show off fine clothes, to dance and to indulge in a wide variety of other entertainments such as bare knuckle boxing and cock fighting (until the latter was made illegal in 1849). The wealthy arrived in carriages which were lined up alongside the race course to act as a grandstand. At the beginning of the C19 the racecourse was disrupted by the construction of a redoubt built on the common to stop a feared French invasion, but this risk dwindled after 1805; the fortifications were dismantled soon after and the race course re-aligned. This circuit, a little short of two miles, remains intact apart from a small piece nibbled off at the southern end by the A12 Chelmsford bypass. It was a hilly course, unequalled in England, and required special skill and judgement by jockeys to get the best out of their mounts.

The hay day of the Chelmsford races was probably in about 1860 when a new grandstand was constructed. One unique of the course was that the circuit contained Galleywood church, built by Arthur Pryor of Hylands House in 1873, as well as a brickworks, a windmill and Chelmsford's first golf course! However two decades later there was a financial crisis. It was difficult, on open common land, to meet the safety requirements to enclose the racecourse after 1870, and the Royal Plate was discontinued in 1887, so in 1892 it was decided to

change to install a steeplechase with nine hurdles and one water jump.

In the First World War, the grandstand, racecourse and much of the common was taken over by the army for training purposes and, four years after the end of that war, the company put the course up for sale. It was revived in new company in 1923 at a cost of £10,000, with renovation of the old grandstand and construction of a new one for members. There was new accommodation for course officials, jockeys, trainers, horses and the press. The course was also improved and was deemed excellent, but was still unusual as there were four public road crossings where the tarmac surface was covered with oak bark from the Baddow Road tannery. But the main disadvantage was that, as the course ran over common land, it was only possible to charge people in the grandstand area, and most people could watch the races for nothing. They were run at a loss for some years, and the last steeplechase was in 1935, followed by another four years of pony racing. The axe finally fell in 1939 when the course was put up for sale, and in 1942 Chelmsford Rural District Council acquired 116 acres of the common for £2000, to be maintained for public use in perpetuity. It was used for growing food for the duration of the war.

Mr Hawkins, and his assistant Mr Stacey, were warmly thanked for their informative lecture, and members then enjoyed an excellent tea provided by Ann Newman and her helpers.

Michael Leach

ESSEX PLACE-NAMES

The well-attended 12th Annual Essex Place-names Seminar was held in Chelmsford. It heard a thoughtful talk by Mr David Bloomfield, until recently a

farmer near Brentwood, tracing the bounds of South Weald as contained in the copy of the charter of 1062 of Earl Harold's foundation grant to Waltham Abbey. Following the Weald Brook to the junction of two tributaries, the bounds are then defined by the Chafford-Ongar Hundred boundary. He suggested that Howgate might contain the Scandinavian element 'gata' (street), here near its most extreme southern limit. A boundary stone shown on an OS map but apparently no longer extant probably marked the change of direction near the 'wulfpitte'. The curious ear-shaped deviation on the eastern side described as 'purce' he proposed was enclosed land allowing the neighbouring manor access to the spring. He dismissed the fanciful interpretations of 'freobearnes' leap relating to pastime pursuits and preferred a hurdle-gate to contain livestock in the Common.

Mr. Andrew Luce, a retired mechanical engineer, had been researching the origin of street names in Springfield and along the Chelmer Navigation. He had traced Berkley Drive, now on what was in 5000 years a 'Neolithic cursus', to a sponsor of the construction of the Navigation, a Rev. Roland Berkley (born 1742), and Salter Place to Rev Phillip Salter of Shenfield. Similar origins from interested parties and individuals have given their names to names in the district, many seemingly dating from the 18th century.

Dr. Tom Williamson, professor of Landscape History at University of East Anglia, gave a lively and stimulating lecture about medieval settlement in Essex and East Anglia. An understanding of the geology was key to the development of settlement, river valleys being preferred. Medieval social groupings related to river drainage patterns. He warned against the acceptance of the theories that Roman

roads cutting across field systems necessarily implied the pre-existence of the fields, since post-Roman lines of communication may have led to ignoring the presence of the Roman road producing patterns independent of them. As John Hunter had pointed out, open fields predominated in river valleys. Champion land, of two types, on light soils and on Midland clays, implied different settlement patterns, the former resulting in strips fields as water was in short supply and depended on creation of artificial ponds or localised springs, the latter in clustered settlements when sharing of ploughing resources was necessary to exploit the short window of opportunity for harvesting. Where peat soils as in Norfolk provide poor arable, large Commons were necessary to allow for the manuring of the land by sheep.

There was a significant divide, explicable by the geology and soils, roughly along a line Bury-Ipswich, to the north of which open fields were the norm, and south of which the pattern of smaller irregular fields typical of Essex. Early piecemeal enclosure of strip fields has given rise to long wider fields and many can be dated to the 14th and 15th centuries. A difference of settlement names was also detectable, 'tuns' being commoner on Norfolk clays than in Essex, while 'tyes' predominate in the south. Indeed this division is detectable in other aspects, such as the border between the Iron Age Icenic and Trinovantes, the use of pantiles for roofing in Norfolk rare in south Suffolk and Essex, the frequency of Scandinavian influence on place-names in the north compared to that further south.

The interest generated by this speaker was apparent by the questions posed of him at the conclusion.

James Kemble

THE EARLE COLLECTION AT THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF LONDON

Joseph Sim Earle (1839-1912) was elected a fellow of the LSA in 1893. Though not a native of Essex, he was a keen competitive yachtsman (a member of the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, amongst others). This enthusiasm led to extensive explorations of the Essex and Suffolk coastline in the company of a fellow antiquarian, the Rev Edward Farrer. When in port the two men explored the inland villages and churches, recorded by Earle in watercolour paintings of variable quality. He also collected – somewhat indiscriminately, it would seem – a large number of maps from a variety of sources (one Essex map bears the stamp of the Hull Police Library), as well as an assortment of sundry material such as prints, drawings, visiting cards, newspaper cuttings, brass rubbings and sales catalogues. On his death this collection, together with his library, was left to the LSA. There are 37 boxes relating to Suffolk, and 21 for Essex, each containing about 70 mounted sheets, and though the Suffolk material is better known to researchers, that relating to Essex is of considerable interest. Examples include a manuscript journal of a tour of Suffolk and Essex in 1711 made by Sir James Thornhill, a detailed parish survey of Chigwell dated 1727, and a series of Essex topographical drawings by Charles and Henry Warren made between 1815 and 1817.

Michael Leach

Source:

Mc Hardy, G, 2004 'Joseph Sim Earle, FSA and his Bequest to the Society' in *The Antiquaries Journal* lxxxiv, 399-410

THE SINKING OF THE MARY ROSE

The sinking of the Mary Rose during a battle with the French in the Solent in July 1545 is very familiar. It is generally believed that the disaster occurred during a sharp turn which caused the vessel to heel over and to ship large amounts of water through the open gun ports. Recent palaeopathology on some of the skeletal remains recovered from the wreck have added an interesting extra dimension to this theory. Dental analysis can provide an indication of the long term dietary habits of the individual, and these tests suggest that a large proportion of the crew were of south European origin. It is conjectured that they may have been some of the 600 Spanish soldiers who were shipwrecked off Cornwall six months earlier and subsequently pressed into service in the English army.

Ships of this type, with multiple gun ports close to the water line, required a well disciplined crew able to close the shutters promptly before any manoeuvre that was likely to cause the vessel to list. The suggestion is that the pressed Spanish gun crews, with a poor understanding of English, failed to act quickly enough to prevent the shipping of a catastrophic amount of sea water. This might also explain Admiral George Carew's enigmatic last words, shouted to another ship as he sank, that his men were "knaves I cannot rule".

Michael Leach

Source:

The Daily Telegraph, 1 August 2008

THE ESSEX PAMPHILON VIOLIN MAKERS AND DENDROCHRONOLOGY

In 1924, W. Minet contributed an article to the *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society* on the Pamphilon family. Nicholas Pamphilon, a musical instrument maker of Rickling, bought a house in Little Hadham in 1694, and lived there until his death in 1726. Until the early C19, his house was, very appropriately, known as Fiddler's Croft. In his will, he is described as a violin maker, and names three Pamphilon cousins who were also violin makers – Nicholas and Francis of Little Hadham, and Richard of Clavering. C17 parish register entries show a concentration of Pamphilons in Rickling, Quendon and Clavering and, though the surname does not sound English, J H Round noted that a member of this family, who was hanged for felony, was living in Thaxted in 1306. It is also surprising to find that there is still a Pamphilon listed in the 2008 Chelmsford telephone directory.

However the most noted Pamphilon violin maker was Edward, active in London between 1660 and 1690. Nothing is known about his origins, though with such an unusual surname it seems probable that he came from the Essex family. It is said that his workshop was on old London Bridge, but it may be merely that his instruments were sold there in the premises of John Miller. A. F Hill, an early C20 violin expert, believed that Edward was apprenticed to Thomas Urquhart about 1660, and that he became an itinerant violin seller at country fairs. Some of Edward's instruments have survived, though most, if not all, have been subsequently modified. Makers' labels are highly problematical, often being forged or moved from one instrument to another.

As some of Edward Pamphilon's violins had a very high quality varnish, dealers may have removed labels in order to pass them off as more valuable north Italian instruments, with which they have strong similarities. However there are certain construction techniques unique to the Pamphilon violins, making them recognisable to experts.

A musician friend of mine owns a violin, believed to have been made by Edward Pamphilon, though it has long lost its label, if it ever had one. It had been bought as a Pamphilon by one of his forebears at the end of the C18 when its purchase (and attribution) were noted in a contemporary account book, still in the hands of his family. A recent accident to this violin necessitated some repairs, and the instrument was examined by a musical dendrochronologist, with very interesting results. Most of the body of the violin is made from sycamore or maple, and is unsuitable for dating purposes. However, the front of instrument is usually spruce and, because of the way it was cut to display the radial grain, dendrochronology is useful for dating, and a good database has now been established. It is therefore possible to establish an earliest possible felling date (*terminus post quem*) for the timber from which violins are made (1671 in the case of my friend's instrument). Additionally, comparison of the growth patterns of wood from different instruments provides clues about common sources of timber, and in this case the nearest matches were a violin made by Thomas Urquhart (Edward's alleged erstwhile teacher) in 1690, and two Dutch instruments made at about the same time. This synchronicity has been noted before, and it has been suggested that the wood was imported via the Low Countries, with perhaps the Dutch musical instrument makers getting the first helping of the

best pieces. A similar match has not been found with instruments from this period made in other European countries, suggesting that their spruce came from another source. However, by the early to mid C18, this pattern had changed and English, Dutch and other European instrument makers all appear to have been getting their wood from the same vicinity (possibly the Italian Dolomites).

More information is badly needed on the sources and import routes of spruce in the C17 and C18. Spruce was highly prized for the masts of sailing ships, obtained from cold places where the slow growth of the trees ensured the essential attributes of strength, elasticity and straightness of grain. Similar qualities were required by violin makers for their tone wood, and it is a possibility that the small quantities of wood they needed were obtained as offcuts from shipyards. No comparative dendrochronology exists for contemporary masts which have a much poorer survival rate than violins for obvious reasons! One prime source for masts during this period was the forests of the Dolomites, and modern violin makers still obtain excellent spruce from here.

Any information on spruce imports in the C17 and C18 would be most welcome, and will be passed on to my friend's musical dendrochronologist.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Minet, W., 1924 'The Pamphilons: an Essex Family of Violin Makers' in *EAT*, xvii, 73-82

Round, J.H., 1926 'The Pamphilons' in *EAT*, xviii, 137-8

Dilworth, J. 'Pamphilon, Edward' in *Grove Music Online* [www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscri

ber/article/grove/music/41514 accessed 3/09/08]

Ratcliff, P., 2008 dendrochronology report on Pamphilon violin (unpublished typescript) & personal communications

MA IN HISTORICAL STUDIES

The Department of History at the University of Essex at Colchester is offering an MA in Historical Studies tailored especially to meet the needs of part-time learners. Taught in the evening over a minimum of three years, students can choose from an exciting range of modules in early modern and modern British, European and world history, reflecting the expertise of an internationally renowned team of historians.

There are also summer schools held over one weekend each year. Study is by credit accumulation so students can take a break if necessary, and fit the degree round their working and home life. Course leader Dr Peter Gurney said; 'we have run some one-off history lectures for the public this year which had a very enthusiastic response, and this course is the next step. There is a great deal of interest in history and many people would like to study the subject at postgraduate level but aren't able to commit to a daytime course because of family and work commitments. This MA will hopefully help to overcome those hurdles.' The course will appeal particularly to people seeking career enhancement in teaching and other professions, as well as those who simply wish to keep their brain cells active.

Applications from individuals who do not meet standard entry requirements will be given sympathetic consideration. If you wish to find out more about the course please contact Dr Peter Gurney in the

Department of History, University of Essex, Wivenhoe CO4 3SQ
(pjgurney@essex.ac.uk)

HUMPTY DUMPTY SAT ON THE WALL AT COLCHESTER

A new book by Albert Jack on the origins of nursery rhymes suggests a close link between the ill-fated egg and Colchester. According to the author, Humpty Dumpty was the name of a cannon which was used by the Royalists during the siege of Colchester in 1648, and was mounted on the church tower of St Mary at the Walls. The gunner, One-Eyed Thompson, managed to bombard the besieging Parliamentary troops for several weeks until the latter scored a direct hit on the church tower, and the cannon fell down outside the town walls to be embedded in the marshy ground outside. Subsequent attempts by the 'all King's horses and all the King's men' to retrieve the cannon were successfully repulsed by the besiegers. The familiar verses of the nursery rhyme are preceded by two rarely-quoted (and rather ill-scanning) stanzas:

In sixteen hundred and forty eight
When England suffered the pains of
state

The Roundheads laid siege to
Colchester Town
Where the King's men still fought for the
Crown

There One-Eyed Thompson stood on the
wall

A gunner of deadliest aim of all
From St Mary's tower his cannon he
fired

Humpty Dumpty was its name.

Morant, in his History of Colchester, confirms the broad details of this

account, in particular the damage inflicted on the Parliamentary forces by a brass saker which was mounted on the bell frame of St Mary's church, and was operated by a one-eyed gunner. The tower came under repeated attack, but the gunner had wisely posted a skilled observer who was able to direct his fire at the Parliamentary attackers with such effect that they were forced to desist. It was only later that heavier artillery, in the form of two demi-cannons and two culverins, were successfully deployed at St John's Green. These were presumably safely out of range of the saker (which was a smaller gun), and the besiegers were finally able to silence both the one-eyed gunner and his piece. The church lay in ruins until being rebuilt, in a slightly different position in the churchyard, in 1713; the tower itself was repaired later, the upper part being rebuilt in brick. Morant would have had a particular interest in this event as he was rector of the parish from 1738.

Curiously the Oxford English Dictionary gives the earliest recorded use of humpty dumpty as 1698 and defines it as a) a drink; ale boiled with brandy b) a dumpy hump-shouldered person. According to Albert Jack, the association of the name with an egg was an invention of Lewis Carroll, and his illustrator, John Tenniel, in *Through the Looking Glass* which was published in 1871.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Jack, A., 2008 *Pop goes the Weasel: the Secret Meanings of Nursery Rhymes*, Allen Lane

Morant, P., 1748 *History and Antiquities of Colchester*, London

Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1973 edition)

ESSEX VCH IN CRISIS – A CENTURY AGO

The General Meeting of the Essex Archaeological Society was held on 23 April 1908 in Colchester Castle. After the normal business, a paper by JH Round was read (in his unavoidable absence) on the plans for publishing volume III of the *Victoria County History of Essex*. This was to be in two parts. The first section would complete the series of general articles on the county published in volumes I and II, including in particular Dr Haverfield's account of Roman Essex. He, was, however, too busy to provide more than an overview of this subject, and detailed information from local sources would be essential to provide the details. It was also intended that this section should bring up to date all the manorial descents in the county since Philip Morant's time, and Round appealed for the necessary information from antiquaries, landowners, solicitors, land agents and anyone else able to assist. It was hoped that press publicity might also be helpful in eliciting this information.

The second part of volume III would cover the three hundreds of Lexden, Witham and Chelmsford, together with the town of Colchester itself. Round appealed for the loan of estate maps, as well as other sources of information for the relevant parishes. He was also keen to recruit local historians to correct the proof sheets of the parish histories of the areas to be covered, and he emphasized the vital need for conciseness, in order to produce a volume worthy of the county.

By modern standards this would seem to be a hopelessly ambitious target for a single volume. Ultimately, Colchester required a whole volume to itself, and Lexden hundred was only partially

covered by another. Ray Powell, in his biography of JH Round, provides the background to Round's impassioned plea for local involvement in the production of volume III. At that time the VCH was centralised, and the parish histories were written by its own staff in London, largely based on the printed calendars of public records. Very little use was made of local records, or local informants, and VCH staff were not expected to visit the parishes that they were writing up. By the autumn of 1907 Round, having seen some of the drafts prepared for the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire volumes, began to have serious concerns about the limitations of this approach. Though his paper at the EAS General Meeting had asked for help in bringing the manorial descents up to date, he had already expressed grave doubts about the benefits of this, other than to 'the occasional lawyer', and felt that it would make very dull reading.

By the end of 1907, he had received from the VCH the first drafts of parish histories for the hundred of Clavering. He was highly critical of these, commenting that they 'might have been written in Berlin with the aid of a map'. Ray Powell notes that, though this may have been an unkind swipe at Miss Niemeyer, the staff assistant responsible, his real target was William Page, the general editor, whose policy was the swift and centralised production of the county volumes. An astonishing 74 volumes were produced in the 15 years up to 1914. Though Page did make some concessions to Round's criticisms, the financial position of the organisation deteriorated rapidly during 1908 and, by the end of the year, work on most counties (including Essex) had ceased.

In spite of this, Round remained enthusiastic about restarting the Essex VCH and as late as 1925, towards the

end of his life, he wrote to Page suggesting possible sources of private donations from Essex families. Nothing came of this, and it was not until 1951 that the Essex VCH was reborn, thanks to the establishment of an energetic county committee and the generous support of local authorities. The long delayed volume III finally appeared in 1963, and was devoted to Roman Essex. It included a large amount of new material that had come to light since Dr Haverfield's death in 1919; his notes, however, were not wasted and were of assistance to the compilers of the volume. Volume IV had appeared seven years previously, edited by Ray Powell and incorporating all of Round's suggestions, including the use of a wide range of local sources and local volunteers.

Michael Leach

Sources:

EAS General Meeting, 1908
Transactions of Essex Archaeological Society, n.s. x, 358-9

Powell, W R (ed), 1963 *Victoria County History of Essex*, iii, introduction xv, OUP

Powell, W R, 2001 *John Horace Round, Historian and Gentleman of Essex*, 159-164, ERO

W. RAYMOND POWELL (1920-2008)

Members will be deeply saddened to learn of the death in July of Ray Powell, former editor of the Essex VCH, and a very great friend of this Society. Though a mediaevalist by training, his interests covered the entire compass of historical research.

He was born in Somerset, son of a Baptist minister whose missionary work took the family to South Africa in Ray's

early years. On the death of his mother, his father returned to England and remarried, providing Ray with some step-siblings – perhaps the root his life-long love of children. He went to Kingswood School, Exeter and obtained a place at Merton College, Oxford to read history. However World War II intervened and he volunteered for the RAF, training as a radar operator and seeing service in West Africa. He returned to Oxford in 1945, graduating in 1947 and proceeding to a DLit thesis. He joined the VCH in 1949 and was appointed editor of the Essex VCH (which had been in the doldrums for several decades) in 1951. His energy had very productive results, with volume IV published in 1956, the first bibliography in 1959, and volume III (on Roman Essex, but including an index to volumes I and II) in 1963. All this was done on the financial shoestring, requiring the renegotiation of grants every year and the recruitment of a number of voluntary helpers. Only later was some security provided by support from ECC. Meanwhile his family grew, and he proved to be a calm, kind, sympathetic father who engaged with all aspects of family life at a time when that was much less usual than now. Further VCH volumes were published (six, plus two bibliographic volumes by the time he retired) and his work on metropolitan Essex, for the earlier VCHs, had led to a strong interest in Keir Hardie. His determination and stoicism saw him through an early heart attack, and later major cardiac surgery. After retirement he was busier than ever, publishing numerous articles, as well as a major biography of the noted acerbic mediaeval historian, JH Round, in whom he had long had a deep interest. He had previously edited, for the Society's *Transactions*, a number of articles which had remained unpublished at Round's

death. In the last weeks of his life, Ray was busy editing letters from Round's cousin, written from the First World War trenches. This article will be published in the *Transactions*.

Ray was President of this Society from 1987 to 1990, and remained active on Council, on the Library sub-committee and as a trustee. Even after his exile to Norwich, he continued to write on various aspects of Essex history and remained a very loyal supporter of everything that the Society stands for. He made numerous behind-the-scenes contributions – by providing encouragement, practical and financial support, by recruiting officers to serve on Council, and by generally acting as a custodian of the continuing well-being of the Society. He was a kind, supportive and generous friend to all who knew him, and he will be deeply missed.

It is intended to publish a fuller obituary in the Society's *Transactions* (volume 39) which will be dedicated to him.

Michael Leach

ESSEX FROM ELSEWHERE

There are two matters of Essex interest in the recent Ancient Monuments Society newsletter. Firstly, a start has been made on the underpinning of the chancel of Mundon church, though the job is so extensive that, for funding reasons, it will be done in two phases. The building, in the hands of the Friends of Friendless Churches, will remain closed to the public for some time yet. Secondly, a new use has been found for the garrison church at Colchester barracks. This spartan and unusual building of 1865, timber-framed and weather-boarded, is to be converted into an Orthodox church

and will be enhanced with gilding and a full length iconostasis.

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

This fund continues to make grants to projects great and small. Major beneficiaries in the recent round were the Mary Rose Museum Project in Portsmouth, and the continuing restoration (after last year's disastrous fire) of the Cutty Sark at Greenwich. Several smaller, but not insignificant, Essex projects have benefited. A grant of £50,000 was awarded to carry out essential repairs to the Electric Palace Cinema in Harwich. This was built in 1911 and is one of the oldest purpose-built cinemas in the country. It re-opened as a cinema in 1981, after much effort and campaigning by a local trust. A grant of £990,000 was made for the creation of a new museum within one of the remaining sections of the old Romford Brewery. And Saffron Walden museum has also benefited from a grant of £976,500 to build an outstore and resource centre on the outskirts of the town.

Michael Leach

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT OF ESSEX; FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO THE 20TH CENTURY

This conference took place in the ERO from 19 to 21 September and was the third to be organised by the county council on recent developments in archaeology. The first took place in 1978 at Clacton¹, the second in 1993 at Writtle², and both proved to be

invaluable for sharing new ideas and discoveries about the county's past. The third conference this year followed the excellent precedents of the previous two, and the details will be published in a full report in due course.

It is impossible in a brief report to do anything like justice to the wide range of papers that were read and I will only touch on two matters which particularly caught my attention.

The first is the immense progress that has been made in our understanding of the very distant past, known only from findings of worked flint and fossil remains. The earlier idea of 'an Ice Age' has been replaced by one of a multiple series of ice ages, alternating with a semi-tropical climate. During this period, Britain was repeatedly colonised in the interglacial periods, and then abandoned in the face of the advancing ice. It was a climate of extremes, ranging from hippopotamuses roaming in the Home Counties in the interglacials, to icebergs drifting as far south as Portugal when the ice cap covered northern Europe. In a world very different from our own, much of what is now the North Sea formed a land bridge between Britain and the continent. Research has resulted in a much better understanding of the geological consequences of this repeated climatic turmoil, and its effect on the movement and re-deposition of human artefacts and fossil bones. Because of its rich deposits of gravel deposited sequentially by each Ice Age, Essex archaeology is in the forefront of this new understanding of the Palaeolithic and Pleistocene periods. Dating the different phases of this geological turmoil has been possible from the study of fossil animal remains, combined with a better understanding of the timescale of evolutionary change. Voles are particularly good news here – being very fast breeders, the evolving

changes in their skeletons take place at a predictable rate and has proved invaluable for dating different deposits.

Our knowledge of this very remote period has also been assisted by the changing pattern of gravel extraction by the construction industry. Inland quarrying has become increasingly difficult due to the shortage of suitable sites, and contractors have turned to dredging gravel off the bed of the North Sea. From an archaeological point of view, this is a very destructive process but it has produced much evidence of human occupation of what is now the sea bed, in the form of large numbers of worked flint tools spotted by sharp-eyed archaeologists working under difficult conditions in this country and in Holland. The pressure to find new sources of oil has also greatly expanded the understanding of the Mesolithic landscape of the submerged lands of the North Sea. Seismic surveys of the sea floor have revealed the complex patterns of a vast estuary, interspersed with shallow lakes and salt domes. Further information has come from the erosion of the Essex coast which has exposed ancient features, such as the remains of forests killed by saline water-logging.

The second matter which caught my attention was also related to coastal archaeology. With climate change, rising sea levels, the steady sinking of the south east and the increasing necessity for 'managed retreat', coastal archaeology is under constant threat. Though we now understand the process of prehistoric and Roman salt extraction (vitally important for the preservation of food) reflected by the 'red hills', little is known about the later techniques of production by filtration and concentration which has left large mud mounds (known as 'sleaching mounds'). The vast coastal fish traps, still visible at very low tides, have been dated to between 650 to 850

AD, after which they seem to have been abandoned for reasons which are not understood. Were they replaced by smaller traps that have not survived? Were they so efficient that they depleted coastal fish stocks? Did improved boat building make off-shore fishing a more economic option? Did Viking raids result in a withdrawal of population or discourage monastic involvement? It might have been a combination of any (or none) of these factors.

Development imposes another threat to coastal archaeology. Nuclear generation at Bradwell is likely to be expanded and this part of the coast will have to be permanently protected from erosion, with consequences elsewhere. Meanwhile developments at Shell Haven (as well as other ports) will require detailed surveys of the underwater landscapes before their destruction. Managed retreat (the deliberate destruction of sea walls to create new saltmarsh) will threaten various sites, but will also bring opportunities for research. At Wallasea Island, for example, it should be possible to gain much information on the soil profile changes and the formation of new saltmarsh if the sea is allowed to flood areas of arable farmland.

The next conference should be in 2023. What major shifts in our understanding of the past will be reported then?

Michael Leach

¹ published in 1980 as *Archaeology in Essex to AD 1500*, edited by David Buckley

² published in 1996 as *The Archaeology of Essex*, edited by Owen Bedwin

MORE STRAW

Regular readers may recall in the newsletter a year ago I mentioned that the works of SL Bensusan contained an

interesting account of an Essex farm worker using straw to enhance the weather proofing of his clothes in a similar way to the prehistoric 'Ice Man' whose remains were recovered from an alpine glacier. Recently rereading the Thomas Hardy novel 'Under the Greenwood Tree' I noticed that members of the Mellstock Quire do exactly the same in preparation for going out carol singing on Christmas Eve '...a thin fleece of snow having fallen since the early evening, those who had no leggings went to the stable and wound wisps of hay round their ankles to keep the insidious flakes from the interior of their boots.' Perhaps since the adoption of farming down to the 20th century people had recourse to the weather proofing and insulating properties of hay and straw when venturing out into the winter cold.

Nigel Brown

ST NICHOLAS'S CHAPEL, COGGESHALL – AN INTERESTING DILEMMA

This was built as the gatehouse chapel to Coggeshall abbey in about 1225, and has been described by Warwick Rodwell as the finest piece of Early English brickwork in England. After the dissolution, it was adapted for use as a barn by making a large opening for wagons in the south wall. This was closed in the restoration of 1863 when a new south door was inserted. There was a further restoration in 1897. During one of these restorations, three crude and visually intrusive square brick piers were built to support the arches of the three sedilia. Recently the parish has instructed an architect to improve the appearance of this very inelegant repair. This poses an interesting dilemma.

Though the repair, in large pale mottled Victorian bricks, is certainly very unsympathetic to the modern eye, there are no structural or conservation problems which require attention. The C19 brick piers are very much part of the history of the building's rescue from agricultural use. There is no surviving evidence to show how the arches were originally supported, so that any plan for reconstruction would be highly conjectural. It is obviously important that any new alterations should be less visually intrusive than the Victorian repairs. One proposal is to rebuild the piers in a more appropriate thin red brick, with column bases and capitals in stone based on contemporary examples in Canterbury cathedral. The brick arches that they would support are also very damaged and largely incomplete, and were probably originally finished in lime plaster. Placing perfectly formed new columns beneath, with stone capitals and bases, might look as incongruous as the Victorian repair. There is also a risk that the removal of the existing brick piers could damage parts of the original structure to which they are attached. A less invasive solution might be simply to reduce the visual impact of the Victorian brickwork with a coat of limewash. It would seem that a very careful evaluation is needed before any work is done, particularly as there are no pressing structural problems to be remedied. Negotiations to find a satisfactory solution are continuing.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Cornerstone (the magazine of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) vol 29, no. 3, 2008

Bettley, J & Pevsner N, 2007 *The Buildings of England: Essex*, Yale University Press

**HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION, ESSEX
BRANCH PROGRAMME
2009**

All lectures are in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford.
Members and visitors are asked to arrive 15 minutes before the meeting in order to be escorted to the lecture room.

Sat. 7 Feb. 2.30 The Horses of Venice (illustrated)
Mr Charles Freeman FSA, historian of the Ancient World
Sat. 7 Mar. 2.30pm Parish Constables versus Police Constables?
Dr Maureen Scollan, Chairman, Friends of Historic Essex, and former police officer

Fri. 3 Apr. 7.30pm The Essex Journal: Past, Present and Future
Mr Neil Wiffen, Essex Record Office.

The branch is pleased to announce that Dr Paul Rusiecki, our Programme Secretary, is having his book published by the Essex Record Office in October. Its title is *The Impact of Catastrophe: the People of Essex and the First World War*.

WANTED

I am looking for an index for the Society's *Transactions* volume xvii, second series. If anyone has a spare for sale, please let me know on 01277 363106 or leach1939@yahoo.co.uk

Michael Leach

Over 400 Books about Essex & East Anglia

History, Topography & Natural History

Search on-line for our books at
www.ukbookworld.com/members/quentinbooks

For a list of stock or an appointment to view

Phone: 01206 825433
Fax: 01206 822990
e-mail: quentin_books@lineone.net

Other Subjects include:

- ❖ Books about Books
- ❖ History, Politics & Biographies
- ❖ Americana
- ❖ Maritime
- ❖ Various Essex Journals

Quentin Books Ltd
38 High Street
Wivenhoe
Colchester
CO7 9BE

Special Offer: The classic *Flora of Essex* by Stanley T. Jermyn
over 300 pages illustrated with charts and colour plates
Copies available at only £4.95 (plus p&p)

MEMBERSHIP - Subscriptions due on January 1st each year

Single Member - £20

Family Membership - £22

Student - £9

Associate Member - £9

Institutions - £25

NAMES AND ADDRESSES

Secretary

Dr. M. Leach

2 Landview Gardens

Ongar

Essex CM5 9EQ

Tel. 01277 363106

Membership Secretary

Miss Ann Turner

1 Robin Close

Great Bentley

Essex CO7 8QH

Tel. 01206 250894

Librarian

Dr Jane Pearson

e-mail

DrJanePearson@hotmail.com

Enquiries about delayed or missing publications and about the supply of recent back numbers should be addressed to the Secretary.

APPEAL FOR THE PUBLICATION AND RESEARCH FUND (PRF)

This fund replaced the Publications Development Fund in 2004. It supports the publication of articles in each Volume of *Essex Archaeology and History* as well as Occasional Papers. Donations are placed into an INALIENABLE account, which cannot be spent. It is the Interest thereon which is distributed by awards granted by our COUNCIL. As at December 2007 the projected value of the fund stands at £41,048.

Donations payable to: The Essex Society for Archaeology and History

By: Cash/Cheques; Gift Aid Schemes; "In Memoriam" Donations; Bequests by Wills

Donations of acceptable books

Please address enquiries to:

Bill Abbott, 45 Cambridge Road, Colchester C03 3NR

Tel. 01206 369948 or e-mail bill.abbott@btinternet.com

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.