

Essex Archaeology and History News



Spring 2009

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COPY FOR THE NEXT ISSUE SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS NO LATER THAN 3 JULY 2009

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

Cover illustration:

An old sketch of Mountnessing Windmill. From 'discover Mountnessing mill' ECC 2007

"From being a friendly focus of village life, the wind-mill has dwindled to an 'ancient monument'". These words were written by C. Henry Warren in 1940 in his book, 'Corn Country'. The miller at Mountnessing in Essex – the last of four generations of the Agnis family – had ceased business only a few years earlier. It is a post mill, built in 1807, replacing an earlier one on the same site. Chapman and Andre's map of 1777 has a mill mound but no windmill. Ownership was passed to Mountnessing Parish Council in 1937. Such was its importance that in 1947 the mill was given Grade II listed building status. However a lightning strike a few years later damaged one sail and the building sank towards dereliction (see illustration c1950). Its fortunes changed in 1975 with the formation of the 'Friends of Mountnessing Windmill' and an ambitious project of restoration began in 1979 which lasted four years. The windmill was officially opened to the public in April 1984 and it remains a fine example of village industrial past. The mill is open to the public during the summer on the third Sunday in the month.

Andrew Smith

The Society's programme includes a visit to Mountnessing Mill on Saturday 4 July.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I commence this Spring message by paying tribute to two long-standing and prominent members of our Society who sadly passed away in January.

Paul Buxton died of pneumonia at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow on 5th January at the age of 83. Paul was descended from Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, 1st Baronet, (1786-1845), a Member of Parliament, social reformer and eventually the sole owner of a brewery (Truman, Hanbury, Buxton & Co.). The Buxton family are steeped in Essex history, especially in the Coggeshall area and in the western regions of our county (the family seat was at Woodredon, Upshire). Paul, following service in the Coldstream Guards during World War II and graduation from Balliol College, Oxford, entered the diplomatic service with appointments in India and Guatemala. He joined the Society in 1961 at the conclusion of his father's term as President. Indeed, the recent Index (volumes 1 to 20 of the Third Series of *Transactions*) was published with the financial assistance of the Denis Buxton Trust and in memory of his father, Denis A. J. Buxton, J.P., D.L., M.A., F.S.A. (1895-1964). The cover appropriately features an early 19th century engraving of Paul's home in Chipping Ongar. Paul and his wife Margaret (an eminent historian), were very keen supporters of the Society, especially deriving considerable enjoyment from the meetings programme. The funeral took place on 28th January at the parish church in Chipping Ongar where the Society's representation included Michael Leach, Stan Newens and Jennifer Ward.

Nancy Edwards (née Briggs) was tragically killed a few hundred yards from her home in Chelmsford as a result of a

road accident on 23rd January at the age of 79. Nancy adopted Essex as her county in 1953 following graduation from St Anne's College at Oxford and subsequent training as an archivist at the Bodleian Library. She joined the staff of Dr. F. G. 'Derick' Emmison as Assistant Supervisor and served at the Essex Record Office until her retirement as Supervisor of the Search Room in 1987. Nancy became a member of the Society in 1960 and, subsequently, a frequent member of Council serving on the Library and Programme Committees with distinction over a considerable period of time. Indeed, I was highly honoured when she accepted an invitation to be my guest at a most enjoyable and well organised Morant Lunch held last October at the "Old Ship", Heybridge. A thanksgiving for Nancy's life was held on 25th February at Chelmsford Cathedral where the Society was extremely well represented. A more extensive appreciation of Paul Buxton and Nancy Briggs will be published in the *Transactions*.

Volume 38 of our flagship publication will be dispatched during the course of this month. I mentioned in the last newsletter that a change of printers had resulted in a substantial reduction in costs. I am, therefore, delighted to be able to report that some of these economies have the ploughed back enabling the introduction of colour. I am most grateful to our Editor, Dr Chris Starr, who deserves full credit for this initiative and for his diligence in seeing another worthy issue through the press. Once again, Chris was ably assisted by Helen Walker and I am thrilled to be able to report that this highly valuable contribution has been officially recognised with her appointment as Deputy Editor. By way of background, Helen is an archaeologist who commenced her career as a volunteer digger on a multi-period site at

North Shoebury. After working on various excavations around the country she worked on pottery and other finds from sites at Winchester, Carmarthen (West Wales) and for the Wessex unit before joining the team at Essex County Council in 1985 as a medieval and post-medieval pottery specialist. Her most recent publication is a monograph concerned with the Harlow pottery industries which she co-authored with Wally Davey.

As previously advised, a "List of Members" has been produced to accompany the *Transactions*. The response to my appeal in the Winter Newsletter was most encouraging and I am extremely grateful to all who responded. I hope that you will approve of the outcome! Please could I ask you to carefully check your entry and advise me (martinstuchfield@btconnect.com or by post at Lowe Hill House, Stratford St Mary, Suffolk CO7 6JX) of any corrections or amendments. **I do wish to draw your attention to the "health warning" printed on the inside front cover. Please can I also take this opportunity to assure you that copies of the membership list have not been mailed to the institutional members in order to ensure that this document is not placed at risk of display in a public place.**

I am finding it extremely difficult to come to terms with the fact that my first and a most enjoyable year as President is rapidly approaching a close. This conveniently enables me to draw your attention to the Annual General Meeting to be held on **Saturday, 6th June** in the Marriage Feast Room at Matching. This venue, with the church as a backdrop, constitutes one of the most evocative of Essex scenes. This elicits many happy cycling memories as a teenager which must have given my parents considerable cause for anxiety! Anne

Padfield and Alan Bayford will bring the history of this wonderful 15th century building to life. I am also delighted to report that the church contains a fine 17th century brass! I am looking forward to the occasion with relish. Why not join us - you will be assured of a warm welcome and considerably more besides.

H Martin Stuchfield

ENQUIRIES RECEIVED BY E-MAIL

Most members will know that the Society has a website, kindly hosted by the University of Essex www.essex.ac.uk/history/esah. This provides my e-mail address and, as a result, I receive a steady flow of enquiries. These come in all shapes and forms. The most common are requests from potential volunteers looking for archaeological digs - most, as far as I can tell, are from youngsters. Unfortunately the Society has no provision for such enthusiasts, and I can only refer them to their nearest archaeological group. Less frequent are enquiries about back numbers of *Essex Archaeology & History*, or about membership of ESAH.

From time to time there are enquiries from individuals with specific interests. These are often family historians wanting to know about particular Essex places or Essex ancestors. Some, from overseas, clearly hope I will do their work for them. I usually make a quick check of the indexes that I have available at home (such as Morant, the RCHM and the VCH bibliographies) and provide them with possible sources of relevant information. It is most unusual to receive any thanks for these suggestions - clearly I disappoint most of these enquirers!

Another special interest group is those opposing a local planning application who are seeking specific information about a particular building or landscape. These are often difficult to answer without local knowledge, but I can usually suggest possible sources such as libraries or statutory authorities. I often receive grateful replies and, sometimes, useful additional information. Recently there was an unprecedented request from a firm of structural engineers who were dealing with a subsidence problem on an old property. They discovered that an excavation in the back garden had been written up in *Essex Archaeology & History* in the 1970s, and they wanted a copy of the relevant back number in the hope that there might be some useful trench sections. Having cautiously established that the Society could not be held liable for undermining the building, I supplied photocopies as the relevant volume was out of stock. Two sections did provide useful information about the soil in the back garden as well as the presence, near the house, of a deep post-dissolution robber trench on the site of the monastic boundary wall – clearly not ESAH's responsibility!

Finally there are a few very eccentric enquiries which I usually leave unanswered. However the strangest of these caused me some anxiety. The correspondent explained that he was investigating extra-terrestrial visitors, and that he had uncovered in his garden the top of a large green metallic object with fins. He was convinced that this was a buried spacecraft and was very keen that ESAH should come and excavate. Initially I dismissed him as another crank but then had a rather disturbed night, dogged by the thought that he might have uncovered the top of an unexploded bomb. The next day, with some trepidation, I phoned the police to

explain my concern. I detected a certain patient weariness in the voice that answered me, and suspected that I had been identified as yet another time waster. I heard nothing more from the police, but did feel relief when the days passed with no reports of an unexpected explosion in an Essex coastal town, or a summons for wasting police time!

My impression is that the website is a useful window for the Society. It has certainly attracted a number of new members, as well as several articles for the Newsletter and for *Essex Archaeology & History*. Suggestions for its improvement are always most welcome from members (and other users).

Michael Leach

JOINT MEETINGS WITH OTHER SOCIETIES

There is, perhaps, a tendency for county societies to be insular and never to stray beyond their borders. However there are occasional welcome exceptions, and one came to light recently in a slim pamphlet published by our sister society in Cambridgeshire in 1889. On Friday May 24, thirty members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society boarded a special saloon carriage, attached to an ordinary train and, after a 30 minute journey, arrived at Bartlow station at 2.15pm. They joined the Essex Archaeological Society in the school house at Bartlow, and the meeting was presided over by the Essex Society's president, G A Lowndes. The Rev. Dr H B Swete, rector of Ashdon, read a paper about the site of the battle of Assandun in Essex, where Cnut defeated Eadmund in 1016 and (according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle) 'all the nobility of the English race was then destroyed'. In 1020, King

Cnut and Archbishop Wulstan consecrated a new Minster at Assandun, 'built of stone and lime for the men who there were slain'. Ashdon and Ashingdon still contest the doubtful honour of being the site of this brutal battle though, in 1889, Mr Swete (not surprisingly, as the rector) favoured his own parish. His paper was published in full in volume 4 of our Transactions (Second Series).

The meeting then adjourned to the Bartlow Hills where Prof. Hughes talked about mounds, place names and the various discoveries made by the series of excavations in the 1830s carried out by John Gage on behalf of Viscount Maynard. These digs had clearly attracted a lot of interest at the university, as in both 1838 and 1840, Adam Sedgewick (professor of geology), William Whewell (professor of mineralogy) and John Henslow (professor of botany, and formerly tutor to Charles Darwin) all made day visits. The pamphlet prints a light-hearted letter of 1840 from Sedgewick to a young relative, describing some of the finds, and including a drawing showing a hobbit-like 'new door' in the base of the largest mound. This was one of the tunnels made by the archaeologists, and was probably responsible for the later partial subsidence of the top of the mound.

The next destination was the church at Hadstock (where the door, then believed to have been covered with the skin of a Dane, was admired) and a paper on the history of the parish was read. The meeting moved to the rectory for afternoon tea, and inspected the church plate and the registers. Then they drove back to Bartlow, to be reinforced with a more substantial tea at the Three Hills inn, and a visit to Bartlow church where another paper was read. The 7.41pm train delivered the Cambridge visitors back to the university town at 8.30pm.

There is no report of how the Essex members found their way home, but doubtless many would have also arrived and departed by train

It is interesting to note that this account was not published in the Cambridge society's transactions, but was reprinted from the detailed report which had appeared in two separate editions of the *Cambridge Chronicle*.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Papers read at a Joint Meeting of the Essex Archaeological & Cambridge Antiquarian Society (reprinted from the *Cambridge Chronicle* of 31 May & 7 June 1889)

Powell, W R (ed), 1963 *Victoria County History of Essex*, iii, 39-43

Swete, H B, 1889 'Identification of Assanduna with Ashdon' in *EAT*, iv, 5 et seq

ESSEX SEEN FROM ELSEWHERE

The Autumn 2008 Newsletter of the Ancient Monuments Society has a few notes relevant to Essex.

- a) The first stage of work on the serious subsidence of the chancel of Mundon church (now in the care of the Friends of Friendless Churches) has been completed at a cost of nearly £106,000. However further work remains to be done.
- b) Two silver candlesticks and a cross, commissioned in about 1910 for a church in Ingleby Road in Ilford (destroyed by bombing in WWII) have been purchased for the parish church of Great Barrington in Gloucestershire.
- c) Colchester garrison church in Military Road is to be adapted as a place of worship for the Russian Orthodox Community.
- d) Some good news for rural communities beset by loss of shops,

post offices and services generally; the vestry of St Giles church at Langford has been converted into a new village shop, replacing the last one which closed over 20 years ago. Incidentally, the C12 church, much restored in the C19, is remarkable for having a surviving apse at the west end.

Michael Leach

BADYNTHAMS, GREAT WALTHAM – A TALE OF TWO RESTORATIONS

An article in *Cornerstone*, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings magazine, discusses the complex problems facing the restorers of this much-modified mediaeval building. This was originally 'H' shaped, of which only the east wings survived into the C20. It was described as 'a range of three tenements' by the RCHM in 1921. A modest photograph in the Essex volume shows that the space between the east wings had been filled in with a shop front and sash-windowed accommodation above. The cross wings had gothic windows in the gable ends, and the whole frontage was plastered, or painted white. Three spectacularly tall brick chimney stacks dominated the building and were the only external manifestations of its age and status.

In the 1960s all these later accretions were cleared away (including the infilling of the courtyard). The timber frame was exposed externally, and all the C18 windows were removed and replaced with Tudor leaded lights. Cement mortar, decorated with an impermeable plastic paint, was used to infill the newly exposed timber frame.

This treatment of timber frame walls, common in the 1960s, frequently causes serious trouble. Movement of the timber

causes small cracks in the rigid infill, allowing water penetration which is unable to dry out due to the impermeable nature of the cement mortar and the modern paint. Forty years on, this timber frame, which had survived intact for 500 years, was showing serious signs of decay. Some panels were breaking away, and there was also evidence of damp penetration inside the house. It was clear that major repairs would be required.

Three options were considered. Examination of the external timbers showed numerous nail holes, as well as fragments of surviving lime plaster under the eaves, indicating that the whole exterior had, at one time, been protected by a lath and plaster skin. The first option was to cover the exposed frame with a new layer of lath and plaster, but the owner was unhappy about such a radical change to the appearance of his house. The second option was to remove the cement infill, to replace it with lime plaster and then to lime wash the whole (including the timber frame). The third option was the same, apart from leaving the timber frame unpainted. Both the first and the second options were chosen for different frontages. The first task was the exploratory removal of a cement panel in order to assess the problems likely to be encountered. This revealed a further complication; beneath the cement render, most of the timber frame had been infilled with breeze block or new brick during the 1960s restoration. There were concerns about whether the frame was capable of taking the additional load. Removal of the infill was considered, but this would have caused considerable disruption to the interior of the house. Careful examination of the frame showed no sign of movement over the last forty years. It was decided to reduce the thickness of the modern breeze block

infill in order to reduce the weight, as well as to enable the insertion of sheep's wool insulation under the battens for the external lime plaster. The discovery of death watch beetle, as well as an extensive area of rot, necessitated the demolition and rebuilding of the north-west corner of the building. After all the necessary repairs, the exterior was plastered with three coats of lime putty mixed with copious quantities of animal hair. Spalled bricks in the immensely tall chimneys were replaced, and other essential external repairs and maintenance were done while the scaffolding was in place.

Judging from the photograph, the appearance of the restored building belies all the changes which have been made to it over the last 200 years. Even the brick gable ends show no signs of the gothick windows which had been punched through, and were so obvious in early C20 photographs.

Michael Leach

Sources:

Cornerstone vol 29, iv, 2008

RCHM, 1921 *Essex*, ii, facing p.129

PREHISTORY, GIANTS AND ANTIQUARIES

Much of our shared interest centres on trying to make sense of the enigmas presented by the fragmentary evidence from the past. It is interesting, in this centenary year of Charles Darwin, to see how earlier thinkers - dating back to the monk chronicler, Ralph of Coggeshall, in the early C13 - struggled to interpret the puzzling faunal remains from the past that were being turned up by human activity and by coastal erosion. William Camden in 1607 (in his *Britannia*) noted: 'From Colchester, the shore thrusts itself

out in a vast way, to Nesse-point....What was once found hereabouts, let Ralph de Coggeshal tell you, who wrote 350 years ago. *In the time of King Richard, on the sea-shore, in a Village call'd Edulfinesse, were found two teeth of a Giant, of such prodigious bigness, that two hundred of such teeth as men ordinarily have now, might be cut out of one of them. These I saw at Cogshal, and handled with great admiration.* Another, I know not what Gigantick relique, was dug up near this place in Queen Elizabeth, by the noble R. Candish. Nor shall I deny that there have been men of such extraordinary bulk and strength, as to be accounted Prodigies; whom God (as St Austin tells us) produc'd in the World, to show that comeliness of body and largeness of stature, were not to be esteemed among the good things, because they were common to the Wicked, with the Virtuous and Religious. Yet we may justly suspect, what Suetonius hath observ'd, that the vast joints and members of great beasts, dug up in other countries, and in this Kingdom too, have been called and reputed the bones of Giants.'

A century later (in Bishop Gibson's revision of Camden's *Britannia*) the religious significance of these relics, and the acceptance of the erstwhile existence of giants, had been replaced by a scientific and historical interpretation. In the summer of 1701, the rector of Wrabness, Rev. Robert Rich, sent off some newly discovered bones to John Luffkin, a member of the Royal Society of London, and to Dr Samuel Dale of Braintree, physician, botanist and antiquary. The bones had been found during gravel digging, some 15 or 16 feet below ground level. The two men had different views (or possibly were sent bones from different animals) – Dale considered that they were whale bones "from the thickness, shortness

and largeness of them”, while Luffkin thought that they were from elephants which, he presumed, had been brought over by the emperor Claudius in his invasion of Britain. Anyone familiar with Samuel Dale’s edition of Silas Taylor’s *History of Harwich* will know that the problem of explaining the presence of marine fossils well above sea level, and a long way inland, was exercising the natural philosophers of the time. Some felt that, as fossil shells bore no resemblance to any living species, they were merely artefacts caused by geological processes. Others thought that they were living organisms which had been deposited after the turmoil of Noah’s Flood. Both Dr John Woodward, a distinguished doctor, antiquarian and professor of physic at Gresham College, and Rev. Adam Buddle, the Essex botanist, had been collecting marine fossils in the Harwich area. Woodward himself firmly ascribed to the ‘antediluvian deposition theory’.

Philip Morant wrote about the discovery of elephant bones near Harwich, he himself having picked up a tooth weighing about 7 pounds. He reported that such finds were commonly thought to be from giants. However he added that naturalists considered them to have been buried, if not during Noah’s Flood, then at a time when “the earth suffered some great alteration in its surface”. He himself seems to have been aware of the stratification of some of the finds, and noted the association of some of them with Roman deposits, leading him to agree with Luffkin that they were probably animals brought over in 43AD.

There have been C20 finds from coastal erosion at or near the same site, and these are now recognised as bones from the Ipswichian interglacial of about 120,000 years ago. The species represented included straight tusked elephant, mammoth, bison,

hippopotamus, red deer and whale. It would seem that both Dale and Luffkin had come to very reasonable conclusions about the species represented, but the latter could have had no idea of the immensity of the prehistoric timescale, and therefore came to his understandable, but incorrect, conclusion about their Roman origin.

Michael Leach

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Camden, W. (rev. Gibson, E.), 1722 *Britannia*, London, 423

Essex Field Club Newsletter, xxi, May 1997, 4

Kemble, J., 2001 *Prehistoric & Roman Essex*, Tempus, 163

Morant, P., 1768 *History of Essex*, ii, 502

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LOCAL HISTORY IN BRITAIN AFTER HOSKINS

This conference, from 9 to 12 July 2009, is the result of collaboration between the Centre for English Local History (University of Leicester) and the British Association for Local History. It aims to bring together local historians of all kinds – including academics, research students, and members of local history societies – to discuss eight themes in local history. Sixty papers are planned over the three days, and there will be excursions, receptions and plenary lectures. The aim is to remember W.G. Hoskin’s major contributions to the study of local history as an academic discipline, to survey the current state of the subject, and to look forward to new developments. It will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Hoskin’s *Local History in England*.

Information is available from the local history website at Leicester, www.le.ac.uk/elh or from Dr Christopher Dyer, Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester, 5 Salisbury Road, Leicester, LE1 7QR

And thirdly his thesis was for M.Litt. (not D.Lit.). We apologise for these errors.

AN UNOFFICIAL ESSEX VCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

I recently acquired a foolscap typescript bound between hard boards in VCH scarlet, entitled "V.C.H. Essex Bibliography Supplement No 1" and produced by J. G. O'Leary of Valance House in 1962. It seems to have spent all its life in Finchley Public Library and its loan label (threatening a fine of 3 old pence per week for overdue books) shows that it had never been borrowed. It is laid out in exactly the same way as the official first Essex VCH Bibliography of 1959, and each entry has a page reference relating to that first volume. Many - but by no means all - of these entries are included in the official VCH Bibliography Supplement which was published in 1987.

Having never previously heard about this unofficial supplement, I wondered if any others had been produced.

Michael Leach

RAY POWELL – A CORRECTION

We very much regret that there were a number of errors in Ray Powell's obituary in the last Newsletter (something that he himself would never have allowed to creep into his publications). Firstly it was erroneously noted that his father was a Baptist. He was, in fact, a Methodist. Secondly Kingswood School is in Bath, not Exeter.

THE MONETARY CRISIS OF THE LATE C17

Up to 1662, English silver coins were made from sheet metal, cut by hand into a round disk and hammered between two dies. Inevitably such coins were never perfectly circular, and each varied slightly in size and metal content, a situation which tempted the unscrupulous to snip a sliver of metal off the edge. After all, a clipped shilling would still buy a shilling's worth of goods, even when underweight, so the fraud was very tempting and, as some would wrongly think, a victimless crime. Coins had a surprisingly long life and became naturally worn and battered. An indictment at the Essex Assizes in 1675, for example, contains a list of coins alleged to have been clipped, the oldest of which dated from the reign of Edward VI. This would have been in circulation for well over a century and trimming such a worn coin could easily go unnoticed, yielding a useful profit to the clipper.

Clipping had been a long-standing problem, and was serious enough to have been made a treasonable offence in the reign of Elizabeth, though there seem to have been very few prosecutions in Essex, where only two cases were presented at the Assizes before 1660. However coin clipping continued, and at the Restoration mechanically stamped coins were introduced. These were perfectly round, with milled or inscribed edges, and were much harder to forge than hand stamped coins, and impossible to clip without inflicting obvious visible damage. It was assumed that the new coins would drive out the bad, battered and clipped ones,

but this proved to be a grievous mistake. Vast numbers of the new coins disappeared from circulation, to be sold at a profit, contrary to statute, in the Europe market where silver commanded a higher price. Clippings continued to be sold to dealers who asked no questions, or to be melted down, adulterated with copper and white arsenic, and made into forged and inferior hammered coins. Thus clipping and forgery were encouraged and the profits were such that the occasional risk of detection and execution had little deterrent effect. One accused forger was said to have offered a bribe of £6000 for his reprieve, and juries were notoriously reluctant to convict.

Though there was one Essex indictment for clipping a sovereign in 1607, gold coins were not usually subject to clipping, as they were valued by weight. However the heavy demand for a more reliable form of currency was a factor in driving up the parity of gold coins against silver. This could even vary across the country; a guinea worth 22 shillings in the north might realise as much as 30 shillings in London and eventually, in order to protect tax receipts, the value of the guinea had to be set by statute to a maximum of 30 shillings. A further problem was that any successful attempt at reforming the silver coinage was likely to reduce the value of the guinea – an unattractive prospect for anyone holding a significant amount of gold coin. In 1696 the diarist John Evelyn noted his concern about the fall in the value of the guinea to 22 shillings, as well as the wholesale export of currency to Europe where it realised more than its face value at home. Large fortunes were made (and probably lost) in currency speculation. The official and unofficial value of the guinea fluctuated considerably until it was finally fixed by statute at 21 shillings in 1717.

From 1690, England had been at war with France, and large quantities of silver coinage crossed the Channel to pay the soldiers and to provide for their essential supplies. This aggravated the shortage of coins, a factor aggravated when traders began to mark down the value of clipped silver coins, so that a damaged shilling could be valued at much less than its face value – sometimes at as little as four pence. This was a grievous situation for someone who had been paid at face value in clipped coinage, and then found that his purchasing power had been reduced by a third or a half or more – a perverse form of rampant inflation. It led to countless arguments and great ill feeling. There were protests from groups such as the shipyard workers at Chatham, and from individuals such as the poet Dryden who pleaded with his publisher for payment in milled coin. The philosopher John Locke, concerned about the repayment of a loan due to him, wrote to a close friend in 1695 to ask whether he was entitled to refuse payment in clipped coinage, and was advised that he was.

Government committees sat and made reports, and there were various attempts at legislation towards the end of the C17 which focussed (as ineffective government often does) on increasing the penalties and encouraging informants, rather than addressing the fundamental cause of the problem. Branding the letter “R” on the cheek was added to the list of penalties, but it is hard to see how this would have acted as a deterrent when the offence was already a capital one. Perhaps it was hoped that juries might be more likely to convict if there was an alternative to hanging.

Other solutions were considered. Devaluation of the coinage was an option which had been used before, notably by Henry VIII who had

adulterated the silver with copper, leading to his nickname of 'old copper nose' from the bizarre effect of wear and tear on the royal portrait on his coins. In 1695 William Lowndes, the Secretary of the Treasury, proposed a new devalued shilling, with seven coins to an ounce of silver rather than five. Though this would have removed the incentives to profit from selling coins abroad, it would have increased the cost of imported goods, as well as reducing the government's tax revenues at a time when there were already difficulties in financing the war with the French. John Locke suggested an alternative proposal, namely that a date should be fixed when hammered coins would only be accepted at their value by weight. This would immediately remove the incentives for clipping, and would encourage the return to circulation of proper milled coins. The main drawback was the personal loss to the individual who possessed clipped coins. A proposal to exchange clipped coinage for milled at face value was rejected, as it would have provided a strong incentive for the clippers to continue their work, and to be rewarded for their misdemeanours at the expense of the state. However it was becoming clear that something had to be done and that the state would have to find a way of bearing the immediate cost of reforming the currency.

Eventually it was agreed that, from the 4 May 1696, the government would refuse to accept tax payments made in hammered money, which itself would cease to be legal tender within two years. Before this date a flood of old battered and clipped money poured in, and large amounts were melted down for recoinage. Those who were too poor to pay tax to the government were obliged to dispose of their hammered coins through intermediaries who charged a commission, so it would appear that the

disadvantaged were, in the end, disadvantaged, though not as much as they might have been. There was a serious shortage of silver coin for about three years, forcing the government to peg the value of the gold guinea at a maximum of 22 shillings, though it was unofficially trading at up to 30 shillings. The cost of the re-coining was met by a loan from the newly formed Bank of England, secured on a new tax on property to be raised by the government – the Window Tax, which was not finally repealed until 1851.

Considering the scale of the problem, there were remarkably few indictments at the Essex Assizes, some 14 cases in the last 40 years of the C17. The outcome was two death sentences (one of which was later commuted to transportation), one transfer to face charges in Middlesex, five acquittals and six cases where the outcome is not indicated. The majority of the last group were probably rejected by the Grand Jury, and never came to trial. Many of the indictments seem formulaic, suggesting a lack of solid evidence. For example, in 1695 Edward Pamphilon of Rickling, and others, were charged with clipping 100 half crowns, 100 shillings and 100 sixpences in 1695. There seems little doubt that evidence was difficult to come by (and in at least one case the principal witness failed to attend court), and that juries were cautious about returning a guilty verdict. All three women accused (two of whom were widows) were acquitted. There appear to have been no prosecutions after 1698, by which time hammered coin had ceased to be legal tender and the milled coinage was universal.

Michael Leach

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BOOK REVIEWS

Essex Place Names: places, streets and people, James Kemble, Historical Publications (2007), pp 160 £14.95.

Here is a lively legacy of James Kemble's hugely important Essex Place Names Project, which he has led for over 10 years. A full review will appear in Essex Archaeology & History.

Essex Excellency: The Election of two Knights of the shire for the county of Essex August 1679, Richard Morris, Loughton & District Historical Society (2007) pp 40 (A3).

Richard Morris has given us a close analysis of this significant election at the height of the Exclusion Crisis, providing, for the first time, the full text of rival election pamphlets produced by the Court and Country Parties respectively, the latter providing the title of this study. After a lucid introduction to this often neglected, indeed misunderstood, period of history, including a useful description of the sheer mechanics of the electoral process, Richard gives us close biographies of the four candidates and their two aristocratic backers – crucial figures at this period. Biography is a field of history Richard has made his own and in detail these are comprehensive and masterly. We then have an account of the election itself, followed by the full text of the two pamphlets. The outcome is a

welcome addition to the corpus of Essex history, clearly expressed, well argued and a pleasure to read. This reviewer was interested to see how many features of the electoral process, in all its course arts, which were to enliven the 18th, and much of the 19th, centuries were well established at this early date of party politics.

The Churchyard of Holy Trinity Rayleigh: A biographical tour, Noel Beer, HTR Publications (2007) pp 47.

The fertile pen of Noel Beer has brought us yet another Rayleigh booklet, this time putting some flesh on the bones of the churchyard tombstones. A selection of former residents, mostly Victorian, have what we know of their lives reviewed, with a little discussion of tombstone design.

Andrew Phillips

ANOTHER LOST ESSEX CHAPEL

The muniment room of Dedham church contains a small cache of papers, once the property of Canon Gerald Rendall, concerning 'the Lord's Chapel' on Chapel (or Gun Hill) at Dedham. Over many years Rendall accumulated a considerable archive of books, papers, other records and memorabilia relating to Dedham and the Stour valley. Towards the end of his life he determined to bequeath this collection to the village and had the room above the north porch converted to accommodate it in 1938. Rendall continued to add material to the muniment room until his death on 4 January 1945, within three weeks his ninety fourth birthday.

On 30 January 1924, the Colchester based antiquary, L C Sier, wrote to Rendall with the startling news that 'the Lord's Chapel – or the remains of it – is

still in existence. I find that in 1867 it was sold to Mr George Ringe, a gardener of Dedham, by the following description: "All that double tenement cottage and garden containing about 23 rods situate near the Toll Gate at Dedham described in the Court Books as all that messuage called the Lords Chapel being demesne at and under the yearly rent of 2/-." Mr Ringe apparently survived until 1916 and his Executors sold the property to Mrs Mary Arnold on The Grove, Dedham, in January 1917. One of the cottages was occupied by Mr George Ringe and the other by William Clarke. I remember some years ago noticing that one of the windows in a cottage on the left of the road leading from the bottom of Dedham Gun Hill to Dedham had an ecclesiastical appearance. I shall certainly take the opportunity of asking the occupants of the cottages to allow me to inspect the interior the next time I am in that neighbourhood, and probably you may like to do likewise.'

It is not certain whether Sier or Rendall visited the cottages but in all probability they did. In the *Essex Review* of July 1937 Sier published a short article titled 'Dedham Gun Hill and Vicinity'. He gives an account of the buildings on the Dedham side of the Stour, including a woadhouse or dyehouse demolished in 1775, the toll gate, 'Leggs' (otherwise 'Talbooth') also demolished in the C18 whose site was used as a limekiln and wharf for landing chalk, and another part of the estate which by 1678 was known as 'Le Talbooth'. In 1928 it consisted of a detached cottage, and a pair of semi-detached buildings then known as Lime Kiln Cottages. It is now, of course, the prestigious 'Le Talbooth' restaurant.

The Lord's Chapel stood within a few yards of the bridge on the left hand side of the road at the foot of Gun Hill leading to Dedham. However by 1937 Sier had discovered that this was only the site of

the chapel and that none of the original building had survived. The chapel was mentioned in the will of John Webb, clothier, dated 2 April 1523, in which he directed that his executors 'should make substantially the highway from St John's chapel in Dedham to the church gate at Dedham next unto the vicarage of the said town.' He also gave forty shillings for the repair of Stratford bridge.

According to Sier 'in 1671, William Downes was admitted to this 'Chapel' and one acre of pasture called 'Chapell Hill' on the death of his mother Susanna, wife of Allen Downes, and as their youngest son. Thereafter the property is called 'the Lord's Chapel' on the court rolls. In 1826 the building and all evidence of its original use was demolished, and the present double cottage erected, the date being put at the top facing the road leading to Dedham. The Chapel occupied 23 rods....the Chapel and Chapel Hill were immediately opposite, with the road to Dedham separating, and were part of the demesne of the Manor, and usually held together, and the latter consisted of a strip of land on the south side of Gun Hill extending from the bottom to property belonging to the 'Gun' Public House.'

Until 1788 Gun Hill was very narrow. A portion of the Chapel land along its whole length, and consisting of one rood and 13 perches (143 yards), was incorporated into the hill 'for the purpose of making the turnpike road called Gun Hill more commodious.' Both the Chapel and Chapel Hill belonged to Palmer Firmin of Dedham. All this occurred shortly after the new bridge was built at Stratford St Mary.

In the year that Sier's article appeared, Rendall published his *Dedham Described and Deciphered*. It contains two photographs of the cottage that replaced the Lord's Chapel, one taken from the front, the other from the lane

that led to Dedham. Rendall followed Sier's account. 'In 1671 the name of 'St John's Chapel' had been exchanged for that of 'Lord's Chapel', by which it was known till it was demolished in 1826, and replaced by the present cottage which contains faint reminiscences of its predecessor in the interior structure, the re-used ceiling beams, and the carpenter's Gothic of the window frames. Opposite the cottage was the acre of land called Chapel Hill, a strip which was conceded for widening the road.'

Rendall preserved Sier's notes 'Re St John's Chapel, Dedham.' Sier obtained much of his information from the court rolls of the manor of Dedham Hall. He treated the evidence of John Webbe's will with caution. 'John Webbe was interested in Stratford Bridge and in St John's Chapel. Probably, his journeys often took him along the highway from Dedham to Stratford Bridge and the bequest & direction contained in his Will, before quoted, may have been prompted from worldly as well as religious motives. An objection can be raised from the assignment of the site of St John's Chapel as at the foot of Dedham Gun Hill on account of the distance from Dedham Church gate, but there is nothing, it is submitted, in the direction in the Will which makes it at all certain that John Webbe's Ex[ecutors] would have had a very expensive or onerous duty to perform if they "made substantially the highway" between these points. It is clear that the duty was only to be performed once and it may have involved little more than filling up holes and placing stones (obtained from local gravel pits) where the road required same, so that the expense was probably small.'

On 12 July 1943 Sier wrote to Rendall again on the same subject. His letter is worth quoting in full. 'Mr Charles Partridge recently kindly lent me a most

excellent pamphlet on Stratford St Mary church by the Revd Brewster in which I noticed that, in January 1504, the Bishop granted licence "to Margaret Mors (widow of Thomas Mors, and mother of Edward) to have divine service celebrated by Robert Kerver in the Chapel of St John Baptist in the same parish, provided it be not to the prejudice of the parish church." The author goes on to say: "It is not easy to decide to what building this refers, but no doubt it is the same as that mentioned in Edward Mors will as 'the chapel edified by my said father sett and being in Stratford Streete.' This seems to indicate an altogether separate building in another part of the parish." In a footnote the author states: "Edward Mors was one of the Executors appointed by John Webbe, of Dedham, his brother in law." This leads me to suppose that the building was the Chapel on the site of the cottage at the bottom of Gun Hill and, although not strictly in the parish of Stratford St Mary, it may (perhaps erroneously) have been considered in 1504 as in Stratford Street and in that parish by the person drawing up the Licence.'

It is by no means certain that Brewster was correct in identifying the Chapel referred to in the will of Edward Mors as one and the same as St John's Chapel at the foot of Gun Hill, Dedham. Another site in Stratford from an early date bore the name 'Chapel Field'. It was in the centre of the village, abutting the 'Streete' and close to the Mors' family home. Dedham was on the northern edge of the vast diocese of London. Stratford was on the southern border of the equally vast Norwich diocese. Margaret would have made her application to the bishop of Norwich to have divine service celebrated at the 'Chapel of St John Baptist'. He would have had no jurisdiction over a chapel in

Essex. Of course, as Brewster noted, geographical proximity may have led to confusion but this seems unlikely.

In the C20 the area below Gun Hill changed irrevocably. Quoting again from *Dedham Described and Deciphered*, 'the demands of modern traffic decreed the removal of the fine old 1786 pile-bridge, and its replacement by girders and concrete. Sentence of superannuation was passed on two landmarks of the past. The first was the quaint little tollhouse, which during the turnpike era guarded the entrance to the bridge, and bore the inscription:

*Rest drivers, rest on this steep hill,
Dumb beasts pray use with all good will,
Goad not, scourge not, with thonged whips,*

Let not one curse escape your lips.

More than once it was battered, and all but demolished, by motor lorries which had lost control, and skidded on the Gun Hill curve. The second, Gun Hill cottage, now menaced by road improvement schemes.....' In the event the menace turned into reality, but only many years after Rendall's death. In the 1960s the A12 trunk road was built and the cottage swept away. The lane that led to Dedham was re-aligned over a newly constructed bridge and the sharp corner, where Gun Hill begins to climb, softened and a cul-de-sac made from the old roadway. Photographs of the cottage suggest a building much earlier than 1826, but it would be wishful thinking to believe that 'St John's Chapel', or part of it, survived into our time.

Mark Lockett

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AQUITAINE AND ESSEX

The Duchy of Aquitaine, around the City of Bordeaux in south-western France, was held by the English Crown for three hundred years from 1154 to 1453. King Henry II, who ascended the English throne in 1154, had acquired it in 1152 by marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, previously wife to the French King Louis VII. It was not taken back until 1453 when King Charles VII of France finally defeated the English at the end of the Hundred Years War.

The English Kings, Richard I (1189-99) and John (1199-1216) were, accordingly, Dukes of Aquitaine, and the Black Prince (eldest son of Edward III), made Bordeaux his political capital prior to his death in 1376.

The English connections were firmly impressed on me when my wife and I visited our son, who has been studying at Bordeaux University. In Place Pey Berland, near the Cathedral, a plaque records the granting of rights to the townspeople by King John, from whom the English were hard put to extort Magna Carta in 1215.

Then, in the Musée d'Aquitaine, we were suddenly confronted by a large photograph of brasses from the tomb of Sir Robert Swynborne and his son Thomas in the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Little Horkesley, in our home county of Essex. Both were Maires of

Bordeaux in the late 14th and early 15th centuries.

Martin Stuchfield and his collaborators in *The Monumental Brasses of Essex* (Monumental Brass Society 2003) have reproduced a similar picture (Vol. I, p. 362).

Probably the most notable connection is, however, the massive export to this country over centuries of Aquitaine's most famous product, wine – also represented in the Museum. We could hardly be unaware of the English links after our visit to Aquitaine.

Stan Newens

ROGATIONTIDE IN STONDON MASSEY: 1909

Five weeks after Easter is the ancient celebration of Rogationtide when the fields are blessed within the parish boundary in the hope of a good harvest. At that time of year the Annual Perambulation (or 'beating the bounds') was held. It marked the area of the parish and declared the territory which was subject to tithing to the Rector. This custom continued until about 1834 when it was superseded by the Tithe-Rent-Charge Map. The payment of tithes ceased in 1936.

In May 1909 Revd. Reeve, the Rector of Stondon Massey and a keen local historian, decided to re-enact this event using the perambulation of 1828. "I myself was still in good health", he wrote, "and in possession of perhaps an unusual store of minute and local information: our new lord of the manor, Mr Herman J Meyer, has just succeeded to his responsibilities and was anxious to see what he could do for the Parish, and a number of Parishioners were willing to give up the day to accompany us".

The party assembled at Stondon Place

at 10am. "The round was, of course, taken at a leisurely pace, as we wanted if possible to identify all the old land marks. We did not think it necessary, as no legal issues were involved, to beat literally every corner and to crawl along brambly ditches or brave the Roding's flood; but we took care to go so near to every boundary as to satisfy ourselves of it. We probably walked about seven miles in accomplishing the round.

Ancient Religious aspect of the Perambulation was observed in a short service of a few special Prayers and Collects held before luncheon at Woolmonger's Farm".

Reeve tells of the capital luncheon provided by Mr Brace and the loyal toasts given to the lord of the Manor and himself.

"It was many times remarked that a suitable time was this of Rogationtide for a Perambulation, the country was looking at its best, and yet the crops not being sufficiently advanced to impede progress".

Andrew Smith

HUMPTY DUMPTY HAS A GREAT FALL

As defender of Colchester's true history I have spent 30 years seeking to dispel the Humpty Dumpty myth. I know I will fail. However, I am indebted to our indefatigable Secretary for bringing it to the attention of our learned society. Here is the true story – an instructive tale of how modern myths are born.

In 1956 Professor Dennis Daube wrote a series of spoof explanations of common nursery rhymes for the Oxford Magazine, saying that Humpty Dumpty was a siege tower blown down during the English Civil War. This was taken up by the composer Richard Rodney Bennett, who

in his operetta 'All the King's Men' (1968) claimed it referred to the Siege of Gloucester (1). By the 1970s the story had been transferred to the Siege of Colchester (by whom?) and to the firearm used on top of St Mary's Tower by a one-eyed gunner (sometimes called Thompson), shot down by Parliamentarian cannons. Incidentally, his weapon was actually a saker, a smallish firearm, not a cannon. In any event, there is no evidence whatsoever that it (or Thompson) was called Humpty Dumpty. The story was hi-jacked between 1956 and 1970.

Needless to say the appearance of Mr Jack's populist book has led to a fresh outburst of Humpty Dumptyitus in Colchester and on Radio Essex. Of course, the essential story is correct. There was a one-eyed gunner on St Mary's tower in 1648, which led to the

still visible destruction of the top of the tower. People are then hungry to believe the rest. Personally I would be more impressed with Mr Jack's scholarship if he could give us the source of the two extra (hitherto unknown) stanzas to the Humpty Dumpty poem he quotes, or to any reference to this modern myth before 1960.

By the way, there is no evidence that the poem Old King Cole (an Irish drinking song) is anything to do with Colchester either. Only Jane Taylor's 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' can be claimed by the town.

Andrew Phillips

(1) I am indebted to Don Scot for bringing a relevant press reference to my attention.

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