



Essex Industrial Archaeology Group

# NEWSLETTER

Number 16

May 2017

Welcome to this latest edition of your Newsletter which this month includes the usual programme of visits and other events; details of a railway walk in Halstead; a book review; a plea for information on Corn Dolly makers; and most importantly details of the Industrial Heritage Fair in October. Please do spread the word about the Fair to family, friends and colleagues, and especially encourage any industrial and transport groups to which you belong to support the Fair by having a stand at the Fair. Booking forms for a stand can be obtained by emailing us at the address below.

If you have any comments on the Newsletter generally or specific items in it, or wish to make a contribution to the next Newsletter, please contact us via our email address - [essexiag@gmail.com](mailto:essexiag@gmail.com).

## Programme of ESAH/EIAG visits 2017

The programme of visits in 2017 includes the following of industrial, maritime and transport interest. Book your places soon to avoid disappointment:

The ESAH AGM is being held at Silver End, the company village developed by Crittalls – 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2:00pm.

Royal Gunpowder Mills Visit – Saturday 1st July at 11am

**There is an additional visit this year to the Royal Gunpowder Mills in Waltham Abbey.** The Gunpowder Mills are not open to the public on this day. The cost will be £13.00 per person, and includes entry, land train tour (which lasts 45 mins and allows you access to areas you are not allowed during opening times) and refreshments, which will be available all day. A minimum number of 20 is required to qualify for the group booking rate. There is free parking at the site. See below for further comments.

Thames Barge Cruise from Maldon – 12<sup>th</sup> July, 12 noon. Cost £20.00, afternoon tea £11.50

Tour of Bulmer Brick Works – 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 10:30am. Cost £5.00

Tour of Alderford Mill – 16<sup>th</sup> September, 10:30am. Cost £5.00

EIAG Annual Meeting, plus lecture on Railways and Industry – Chelmsford Museum – 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2:00pm. Free to members, £2.00 for non-members

To book contact the Excursions Secretary:  
Graham Gould, 16 Osbourne Road, Leyton, E10 5QW,  
0208 556 1423  
[drgegould@aol.com](mailto:drgegould@aol.com)

### **East of England Regional Industrial Archaeology Conference 2017**

This year's EERIAC event is on **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June at Braintree District Museum from 9:30 to 4:15**. Included in the day's programme are a talk by George Courtauld on the family business in Essex, a visit to the Warner Textile Archive, and a guided walk around Silver End, the Crittall company village. Full details and a booking form can be obtained by emailing us at [essexiaq@gmail.com](mailto:essexiaq@gmail.com)

### **Royal Gunpowder Mills in Waltham Abbey**

We have been able to arrange an additional visit this year to this internationally important explosives factory at Waltham Abbey, which includes the remains of a number of water powered incorporating mills, an internal canal system and many other unique and important structures. The whole site is at present the subject of major redevelopment proposals – although planning permission was refused by the District Council, the developers and the Foundation Charity which owns the site (but does not operate it) have appealed against this decision. If the appeal, which will be heard in the autumn, is successful, this visit may well be the last chance you will have to see and have access to many of the important buildings and other structures on the site as the development proposals include the demolition of unlisted but unique buildings and adaptation of other buildings to other uses without public access. So, do take advantage of this opportunity which has been arranged by your Society to visit the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills.

*Tony Crosby*



# **Essex Industrial Heritage Fair 2017**

Following the success of EIAG's first Industrial Heritage Fair held in October 2015 at Braintree District Museum, plans for this year's Fair are rapidly coming together. The date and venue are as follows:

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2017**  
**Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea, SS16 4UH**

We will again be inviting all the local industrial heritage groups, sites and museums to have displays at the Fair, putting on a series of short talks and activities, and giving an opportunity for the groups to network with each other. The site of the Country Park has a long and fascinating history, including industrial history, which can be explored using the Park's Trails. The area was used for fishing and the cultivation of oysters as evidenced by the remains of oyster pits at Timberman's Creek on the edge of the Park as well as at many other sites across the marshes.

In the 19th century the British Explosives Syndicate established a factory manufacturing nitro glycerine based explosives and in 1920 the Nobel Explosives Co. took over the site. Some of the original buildings and the protective blast barriers, in the form of large excavations or banks of earth, can still be found scattered throughout the Park.

During the Second World War the area of the Park was owned by the Ministry of Defence and buildings still survive now as evidence of a Naval Depot. More importantly the GHQ line, Britain's most important defensive line, began in the area of the Country Park before running up through Basildon to Chelmsford and beyond. Evidence of the line can still be seen in the Park in the form of four pill boxes and anti-tank ditches and blocks.

The venue is just off the A13 at Pitsea; Pitsea railway station is about a mile away and a number of bus routes stop at the railway station. There are full visitor facilities on the site including a café. For more information on the venue go to the Park's website at: <https://www.wattylercountrypark.org.uk/our-story/>

Exhibitors already booked to attend include Bata Heritage Centre, Beeleigh Steam Mill, East Anglian Railway Museum, Upminster Windmill and Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills and Basildon Heritage. Topics of the talks will include EKCO radios of Southend and explosives industries in Essex. The miniature railway will be running (weather permitting!) along with the other attractions at the Country Park, and we hope to have some historic vehicles on display.

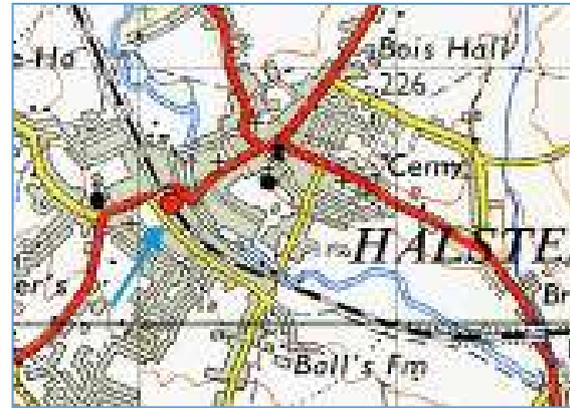
So, put the date in your diaries now and we look forward to seeing you all at the Fair! Look out for more details of the programme for the day as they develop which will be in future editions of this Newsletter and on other widely circulated publicity. Also do encourage your local history group, society or museum to book a stand at the Fair. Booking forms can be obtained by emailing us at [essexiaq@gmail.com](mailto:essexiaq@gmail.com).

## Halstead Railway Walk, led by Malcolm Root

For just over 100 years Halstead had the advantage of having a railway, enabling people and freight to move more easily in and out of the town. To help us learn about, and understand, this Malcolm Root, President of Halstead and District Historical Society, has put together a walk round the town area looking at where the railway had been and the effects that it had on the town. This article gives a description of the walk.

The walk naturally started outside The Locomotive pub on Butler Road, NNW of the former station. Here Malcolm showed us where the line of rail would have been and gave a quick historical aspect of the beginnings and endings of the railway.

*'It all started with the grand sounding Colchester, Stour Valley, Sudbury and Halstead Railway of 1846. The Sudbury branch was opened 3 years later. by 1856 there was no sign of a branch to Halstead. Townsfolk took matters into their own hands and in 1856 the Colne Valley and Halstead Railway Co was formed. This was largely due to Mr Edward Horner, the chairman and James Brewster. The line reached Halstead from Chappel in April 1860 and was extended to Haverhill which it reached in 1863. The line closed to passengers in December 1961 and to freight in April 1965.'*



Following the path of the line of rail alongside Butler Road we walked down to Trinity Street, turned left to 'cross' the railway and then to opposite the Corn Exchange. This having had many different uses is now the town library. The Corn Exchange gives a view of the architecture of the time with the station having been done in the same style. The station was built in 1862 at the cost of £2730. It has now disappeared completely with a block of flats occupying the space. The station became a hub of the community especially for war time traffic. It was particularly important for transporting hides for the tannery.



We walked through 'the station' to Kings Road which runs parallel to the former railway. Demolition of former EMD factory in January 2016 revealed part of the former station related buildings. It was hoped that Colne Valley Railway would take these but they were demolished.



Disputes arose over the railway with Halstead Gazette supporting it and Halstead Times disagreeing with it.

From Kings Road the current road going past the new doctor's surgery was originally a wooden foot bridge over the railway built in

1862. In the early 1900s, as the railway sidings enlarged the railway, this was replaced with a long steel bridge.

Further disputes arose with a particular one concerning a siding for loading castings from the Tortoise works. However it was laid down that shunting could not take place over the level crossing which meant the sidings could not be used. From this argument the railway

manager had a large 'spite' wall built in front of the Tortoise manager's house, theoretically as a storage shed.

Along Kings Road we followed the line of rail to Parsonage Street where we turned left to go over the 'crossing'. Here we learnt about a major accident that had happened in 1899.

*'A goods train in the loop at the station thought he was on the main line and started off against the signals in the direction of Parsonage Street. He ran through the buffer stops across the road and demolished the signal box. Chickens escaped from a wagon, some covered with flour, which was also part of the cargo. It was reported that locals had a good dinner the next day. A tall signal box was subsequently built and in use until replaced by the Gatehouse in 1930. It was a long pull of about a mile for the distant signal at Bluebridge.'*

Another left turn after the 'crossing' took us onto Factory Lane West. The kink in the road is on purpose to avoid the need for 2 level crossings. As to be expected Factory Lane West was an industrial area alongside the railway. Examples of the former industry include Cocksedges, a wood turning business, which closed in 1963. The current Pharmacy is a former railway building probably originally for storing tarpaulins for covering wagons.

And so running parallel with the railway, past the mill, an original terminus for the railway, along the Causeway and back to The Locomotive. A very informative walk bringing old industrial Halstead back to life with the trains chugging through, providing movement for people and freight.

**Jane Giffould**

### **Book review:**

#### ***Wind, Water and Steam. The story of Hertfordshire mills.***

**By Hugh Howes**

Although this book is not about the mills of Essex it does cover mills on the borders of the two counties. These include Hallingbury, Harlow, Parndon, Roydon, Sheering, Waltham Abbey and the Royal Gunpowder mills also at Waltham Abbey. What it does cover is a much wider diversity of mills than found in Essex. As with Essex the surviving mills are relatively few and many were on very ancient sites with continuous use and development. The book covers the changes in transport that enabled new technologies to be developed to keep mills profitable. The changes in the London corn market, which also effected Essex, to mainly imported grain meant that only the best survived usually by taking on the new steam power and eventually electricity to enable continuous working. Being reliant on the London market meant constant change to keep up with the latest developments. The many different types of mill in Hertfordshire enable this volume to cover mills for corn, paper, gunpowder, silk, cotton, fulling, saw-milling, stone crushing and water pumping as well as variations covering leather work, oil seed cake and brick making. This diversity of industry was developed through the nineteenth century with the arrival of rail to compliment the already available navigation in the east of the county and enabling efficient supplies to the London market. This is a very detailed well researched book covering the many types of milling found in Hertfordshire as well as a gazetteer of mill sites. It has very many excellent illustrations, photos and copies of many early paintings. These show such things as a sailing barge docked at a mill in Hertford and in the photos many mills that no longer survive. To anyone with an interest in mills the book would provide much information way beyond the purely Hertfordshire detail.

The 253 pages are illustrated with maps of the locations of mills, diagrams, and many archive and contemporary black and white, and colour photos. It is published by University of Hertfordshire Press, 2016, and available from University of Hertfordshire Press, <http://www.herts.ac.uk/uhipress/books-content/wind,-water-and-steam>. ISBN no. 9781909921737.

Hugh Howes is also author of *The windmills and watermills of Bedfordshire – past present and future*.

### ***Elphin Watkin***



**Two views of Pardon Mill, Harlow, an example of a water mill which had steam power added later.**



## **Corn Dollies**

Corn Dollies formerly known as Harvest Trophies (<http://www.strawcraftsmen.co.uk/cdolly.php>) have been made with the last stalks of wheat to provide refuge for the Corn Spirit since the start of domestication of cereals, probably in the Fertile Crescent. I have been asked by a Corn Dolly maker if there any other Corn Dolly makers in Essex. Agriculture is part of our Industrial Heritage and so I am asking if any of the readers know of any other Corn Dolly makers. Please contact [jgiffould@aol.com](mailto:jgiffould@aol.com) if you have any info. Thanks.