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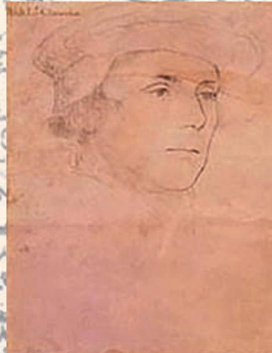
The changing balance of wealth and power in rural Essex

from the dissolution of the monasteries to the fall of the 4th Duke of Norfolk, 1571

by Mark Marston Norris



'My Darling Miss Blake'

Governess to the Rosslyn family in the late 19th century

Pamela Sambrook, p4

Also in this issue:

- THE 'GREATEST SCOUNDREL THAT EVER LIVED'
  The case of John Bagshaw and the development of Dovercourt new town in the 1850s
- How Early Did Christianity Reach Eastern England?
  A Review Of The Evidence
- Book Reviews

Welcome to the Autumn 2023 issue of the *Essex Journal*

This will be my sixth venture into the murky waters of Essex historical publications, and it is very pleasing to see the steady stream of articles, notices and observations which fills my inbox. I have been in the fortunate position yet again of choosing between some excellent contributions – and having more up my editorial sleeve to tempt you with in future issues.

We begin with Pamela Seabrook's interesting and rather startling revelations about the precarious life of the governess in the later 19th century. Governesses were often unmarried women 'of a certain age' or widows whose circumstances were such that they had to work to keep themselves. They were quite definitely socially inferior to their employers, but of higher status than a 'mere' servant – a hierarchical limbo which could be suddenly disrupted by changes in the fortune of their employers. The case-study – Miss Blake – was evidently held in high regard and her death was mourned by those who knew her from a wide range of social classes. Some well-known and highly remarkable ladies were among those for whom she had had charge – surely no accident, and a testament to the under-recognised position and influence of the Governess.

> *'Governesses were often unmarried women 'of a certain age' or widows whose circumstances were such that they had to work to keep themselves. They were quite definitely socially inferior to their employers, but of higher status than a 'mere' servant'*

Less encouraging, perhaps, is the case of John Bagshaw, whose plans for the development of the village of Dovercourt into a playground for the wealthy brought him into conflict with the local gentry, and whose more reprehensible dealings threatened to tarnish the good name of Harwich forever. The development and routing of a railway link to the capital offered ample opportunity for underhand deals and speculative investment – and as we know in our own times, the value of a property can go down as fast as it went up.

The mid-16th century was no less a period of social upheaval as Catholicism made way for Protestantism with all the implications for dislocation and disruption, and there were opportunities for a new breed of self-made men to displace the traditional wealthy landowners in positions of power. In the first of two essays, Marc Marston Norris examines a group of 124 Justices of the Peace who held office in Essex after the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-41) until 1571 when the 4th Duke of Norfolk died. Continuity alongside change – a dynamic that provokes 'interesting times' and openings for new ways of doing things. The lawyers of Essex provide a fascinating window into this crucial period.

More than a thousand years prior to this, another huge religious change was underway – not the replacement of one flavour of Christian worship for another, but the introduction of Christianity itself into Roman Britain. Dr Martin Parsons reflects on the possibility that the new religion may have established in Britain – specifically in Colchester – in the 2nd century AD and proposes that this has important consequences for the later history of the church. All hinges on the identification of a particular site named in only one source – tantalising stuff indeed.

The customary Book Reviews are included – fewer this time due to space constraints, but rest assured that there are more in the pipeline for the coming issue.

Finally I need to correct a few caption errors from the previous issue (with thanks to Richard Pusey, Chairman, Ingatestone and Fryerning Historical and Archaeological Society):

page 9 middle right – old Parish Workhouse identified as a picture of the Alms houses; page 11 bottom right – a picture of the 9th Lord Petre not the 10th as labelled (it actually says the 9th on the picture). This is an interesting picture by George Romney as it shows the 9th Lord (Baron) Petre pointing to the plans of the second Thorndon Hall which he had built; page 26, the map shows the course of the river Stour and not the Colne as labelled. The Colne Estuary is just to the east of Mersea Island at the mouth of the Blackwater and runs through Colchester.

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Cover illustration below:

John Norden's map in Speculi Britanie Pars: an Historical and Chorographical Description of the County of Essex, 1594

(London: Camden Society, 1840)

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Cover image left:
Sir William Petre (1505?–1572), secretary of state to Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, unknown artist, 1567, @ National Portrait Gallery, London.

‘MY DARLING MISS BLAKE’

Governess to the Rosslyn family in the late nineteenth century

Pamela Sambrook

Sources such as autobiographies and correspondence written by governesses show their place within a household could be uniquely fraught with difficulties.[1] A centuries-long tradition within aristocratic households, during the 19th century the employment of a governess expanded into some middle-class families. One issue shared by both contexts is the equivocal status of the job – it was neither one thing nor the other.

Governesses were usually single or widowed women who had to work to keep themselves and were socially inferior to their employers. Yet they were of higher status than a ‘mere’ servant – as one writer has described it, governesses were ‘sentenced to social death’.[2] Such an ambivalent life-style could cause long-term insecurity, exacerbated by the fact that the individual jobs of a governess were inevitably finite, requiring regular moving on with the passing of years, hoping to find new youngsters to teach. Their situation could be made worse if the employing household split up, or suffered a sudden death, although the latter could create work opportunities if children became motherless. Governesses were often unmarried with no children to support them in later years, so unless they accumulated sufficient savings to fund retirement, old age became a life of poverty and loneliness. Questions relating to the nature of the education supplied by governesses are difficult to assess. What sort of subjects were taught and why, and what was the relationship between governess and pupil? What impact, if any, did a governess have on the later life of her charges?

Maria Blake at Easton Lodge

Such were the issues I have tried to address in relation to a governess named Maria Blake who was employed by a series of extremely wealthy aristocratic families in the late 19th century. I first encountered her through a series of letters written by her to members of her employing family around 1890, towards the end of her working life. These survive in the family papers of the Dukes of Sutherland, related by marriage to the Rosslyns whose country seat was Easton Lodge in Essex.[3] Luckily an autobiography by one of Miss Blake’s charges at Easton, Frances Maynard (who later became 5th Countess of Warwick, also known as ‘Daisy’) provides some record of the governess/pupil relationship.[4] Thus Miss Blake’s letters and Daisy’s memoirs became the two main sources for this study.

Censuses also provided some basic, if limited, information. Only the entries from 1881, 1891 and 1901 identify Miss Blake with certainty and in all three she gave a slightly different age, younger than that given in her death certificate which gave her birth year as 1828. She would not be the first servant to lie to the enumerators or simply not to know exactly how old she was. The censuses give her birthplace as Dublin.

The Rosslyns of Easton Lodge

Although we know of several families which employed Maria, the Rosslyns were the most important for her. Their landed estate centred on Easton Lodge near Dunmow in Essex, the country house belonging to the Maynard family, occupied in the 1860s by Colonel Hon. Charles Henry Maynard and his wife Blanche Adeliza FitzRoy. They had two daughters - Frances Maynard, born in 1861, and Blanche Maynard in 1864. In 1865 Charles Maynard died and a year later Blanche Adeliza remarried, to the 4th Earl of Rosslyn, Robert Francis St Clair Erskine. They had five children, three daughters and two sons. Easton Lodge thus became the focus of a large family of seven children, five of whom were girls.

Miss Blake became governess to the Rosslyns sometime in the 1870s, though it is impossible to pinpoint exactly when her employment started. Daisy’s memoirs record how she was ‘inherited’ from a German aristocrat called Georg Herbert Münster, Count of Münster-Ledenburg, son of the Hanoverian ambassador to the court of George IV. He had divorced his first wife, and subsequently married an English woman, Lady Harriet Elizabeth St Clair Erskine. She died in 1867 after only two years of marriage, leaving the Count with two baby girls; later he employed Miss Blake as their governess. In 1873, like his father before him, the Count was appointed German ambassador to the United Kingdom and thus his household, including his daughters and Miss Blake, accompanied him to London.

The deceased Lady Harriet happened to be sister of the 4th Earl of Rosslyn, so before her death she formed the link between the two families, Munsters and Rosslyns. For many years they were on friendly terms both in London and in the country; for example, Count Münster and his family occasionally visited the Rosslyns’ Scottish seat at Dysart House in Kirkcaldy. Daisy mentioned the Munsters in her autobiography: ‘Miss Blake had brought up Count Münster’s motherless daughters, whom she dearly loved.’ The family would

have been multilingual and Miss Blake was a skilled language teacher. Daisy explained: 'A convent school in Paris had been responsible for her exquisite and accurate French, and her knowledge of German and Italian was equally good; as a language teacher she was unique amongst governesses.'[5]

In 1871 Miss Blake was still in Germany, so the census of 1871 has no mention of her but it does detail the household in Easton Lodge, which by then had been extended to accommodate a nursery wing. Neither Lord nor Lady Rosslyn was there during the census, just the five children then born – the two Maynards Frances and Blanche, plus three St Clair Erskines – Millicent, James Francis and Alexander Fitzroy; Sybil and Angela were not yet born. With them was a temporary governess, plus nineteen servants.

The eldest of the children was Frances Maynard (Daisy). Her memoir of an eventful life begins with a description of her education by governesses. She was taught to read and love books by a Miss Philips but by the later 1870s there were two governesses for the girls at Easton (the senior was Miss Blake) and a tutor for the boys, who were presumably later sent to boarding school. Daisy recalled an upbringing which was strict, bookish but happy. She also gave some information about Miss Blake herself:

> 'My own early story, happily for me, was a joyful pursuit of knowledge and explorations into the realms of taste and feeling, under the guidance of a much-loved Miss Blake... She was a plain woman, but unusually tall, with a remarkable carriage and the walk and swing of a Spaniard. Her figure was graceful and her arched feet unusually small... Like Dr Johnson she was as strong in her hates as in her loves...

According to her pupil, Miss Blake's teaching was thorough:

> 'While we learnt the history of our own nation, we learnt at the same time the contemporaneous history of other nations. This has helped me envisage historical movements broadly. Thus, while studying the growth of one democracy, I have known in an orderly way of the simultaneous democratic emancipation of other countries. Hence I have been able to grasp the idea that each democratic movement means really a world development.'

The youngsters were taken to concerts and exhibitions in London – the Albert Hall, the Royal Academy, and the National Gallery; she made them study in detail catalogues of the Louvre and the Florence galleries:

> 'In this way the names of the great world-pictures became intelligently familiar to us before we actually saw them. My first visit to Versailles, too, seemed to be a coming home to a place already detailed and familiarly peopled with historical figures... Miss Blake's method made history so real that this study became a true cultivation of the imagination, emotions and intellect.
>
> I had access to French literature for I was trained as a child to recite Racine, Corneille and Moliere as readily as Scott's easy lilts, and there was open also the - to me - still richer world of thought found in the works of Goethe, Schiller, and Heine.'

Daisy recalled 'romantic days with Sir Walter Scott as chief magician', also with Byron, Bulwer Lytton, Macauley, Tennyson, Malory – 'Beautiful Easton was a happy background for such romantic musings.' Access to the sciences was of course much more limited as these were then in their early development. Daisy was given only a 'timid nibbling at botany, geology and so forth'. Lessons in astronomy consisted of lying on her back on the grass on summer evenings as Miss Blake taught her the names of stars and constellations.

'... In all three [censuses] she gave a slightly different age, younger than that given in her death certificate which gave her birth year as 1828. She would not be the first servant to lie to the enumerators or simply not to know exactly how old she was.'

According to Daisy, her early education under Miss Blake instilled a respect for a wide range of thinkers, giving her an open mind and independence of judgement: 'I read and judged for myself'. Lessons in etiquette, deportment and social structure were strict and proper, for Miss Blake was 'inexorable' on such matters, but the governess's prejudices about social precedence did not stick to her pupil; for example, Daisy always disliked the practice of people curtseying to her on the way out of church.

The 1881 census recorded two Rosslyn households. Daisy's mother, the Countess of Rosslyn, was in a house in Carlton Gardens, Westminster, together with Daisy and Blanche; also present were Miss Blake as governess and fourteen servants. The daughters of the second marriage – Millicent, Sybil and Angela, aged thirteen, nine, and four – remained in the country at Easton Lodge, together with a second governess and eleven servants. The family's head, the Earl of Rosslyn, was visiting hunting friends in Leicestershire.

The 1881 census was taken on April 3rd. On the 30th of the same month the twenty-year old Daisy married Francis Greville, Lord Brook, the eldest son and heir of the 4th Earl of Warwick. Two months before her wedding she had been sent by her parents to spend a few weeks in Brighton, convalescing after measles, accompanied by her personal maid, a footman and the family's governess, Miss Blake, as chaperone.[6] But by the beginning of April all had returned to London to prepare for the wedding which was a grand affair in Westminster Abbey. All the leading lights of society

The print of an engraving of Easton Lodge completed by Henry Adlard, after an image drawn by W Bartlett which was published in 1832 by George Virtue. (c) Saffron Walden Museum.

were present, including the Prince and Princess of Wales and twelve bridesmaids, amongst them the Rosslyn girls. No doubt Miss Blake and most of the servants were there too.

After Daisy's wedding Maria continued as governess to Blanche and Millicent until 1884. Both became fluent in French and German, able to recite long passages from Goethe and Schiller, and Millicent was occasionally 'paraded before' the company of relations. When she was only twelve her father had her translate into German one of Prime Minister Gladstone's speeches - all testament to Miss Blake's linguistic teaching.[7]

The Sutherlands

In 1884, Millicent married Cromartie, the heir to the Dukedom of Sutherland. Around the same time Miss Blake was again 'passed on' to work for Millicent's new in-laws, the 3rd Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, as governess to their daughter Lady Alexandra Leveson Gower, (known as Lady Alix) then aged 18. Maria Blake was aged 56 and the new job must have provided great relief, offering the possibility of security for at least three more years until Lady Alix came of age. Maria was, however, entering a household which was deeply troubled.

Lady Alix led a rather isolated life, being the only daughter of a mother, the 3rd Duchess, who during the 1880s became increasingly reclusive, spending most of her time in two rooms in Stafford House, the family's luxurious London house, eventually retreating to a house in Torquay.[8] This separation was partly caused by the Duke's infatuation with a society widow with whom he had a scandalous affair. After Duchess Anne died in November 1888, he married his mistress within three months.

Many bitter arguments blew up between the Duke and his children, but the most immediate problem was the situation in which Lady Alix, then aged 21, found herself. Refusing to live with her father and his new wife, she spent the next few months visiting relations and even taking a six-week tour of Scandinavia, accompanied always by Miss Blake as chaperone, secretary and general adviser.[9]

Eventually in the spring of 1890 Lady Alix persuaded her father to provide her own household at Little Hales in Shropshire, one of the estate farmhouses. Lady Alix moved there in early summer 1890. She had a living allowance of £1000, generous for a daughter of a Duke living with her father, though hardly enough to keep her own establishment. According to her brother Cromartie, Alix's affairs were extremely 'pinched'. This was especially the case as 'she is obliged perforce to keep a Lady Companion as well as herself.'[10]

Lady Alix had led an entirely sheltered life, in chronic poor health as a result of rheumatic fever, and with no experience of housekeeping. Surviving correspondence between Lady Alix and her relations mentioned how relieved they were that she had Miss Blake to care for her. The two were obviously close friends despite the differences in age. A few years earlier when Lady Alix was visiting family without Miss Blake, the latter wrote in a letter: 'My dear Alix, you can hardly know how much I miss you...It seems so lonely without you', finishing: 'Yours affectionately, Blakie'.[11]

Yet in July 1890, faced with the continuing problem of a limited household budget, the two had a serious disagreement. Maria left Shropshire suddenly, saying she needed to find employment elsewhere as she had no home to go to. She was taken in by the Wemyss (the family of Millicent's grandmother) but in the end the

dispute lasted only a few months whilst Lady Alix's household at Little Hales was sorted out, but during their separation Miss Blake's letters to Lady Alix clearly show her insecurity:

> [July 15, 1890]… It seems to me that under the altered state of affairs, I am rather a burden than a friend, advisor, and companion to you… I hope if we may part, it will be to remain friends. I shall ever look back with a feeling of gratitude to the years spent and made happy to me.
>
> [July 17, 1890] …there is no use in returning to what is past and I really thought that [separation] would meet your views, both as regards the expenses of my salary, travelling expenses and also living… Of course I felt it deeply, and you know what else I disapproved of, but all was in your own interest, not in mine. I think too many interfere and give advice. Whenever I venture with mine, I am told not to do this or that. You see, dear Alix, at my time of life it is rather hard to bear…I have been 6 years with you, we have gone through a good deal together… I could never again go through the same anxiety…

She had, in fact, found a temporary situation:

> I hope, please God, by the end of the year to have saved a sufficient sum which I shall sink (that means never see it again) but purchase with it a small annuity, on which, however, I could not live, but in case of being for months again without a shelter, I should have something to go upon. It does seem hard after a long life of really hard work, one is no better off, but my having remained so long in Germany, although passing pleasant and an interesting life, it has left me a few hundred pounds poorer. If I had them, I should be independent of all my fine rich friends and not owe one of them a shilling, as I do now…
>
> I have no home to go to, in an emergency, nor the means to be out of occupation for, perhaps, 6 months, as I was before when Mrs Wemyss so generously took me in, and no one else helped...At my time of life I cannot knock about any more.'[12]

The letter speaks volumes about the dangers of developing close relationships with her 'betters'. She was aware of this, for after a chance meeting with one of Lady Alix's acquaintances she wrote: "[I] met Sir J. and Lady Fowler on my way back, she very stiff, looked as if to say "How dare you address us"? On inviting Lady Alix to stay, another friend added 'bring your maid'.[13] It was thus very clear how other people viewed Maria's status.

In the event, Maria did go back to live with Lady Alix at Little Hales, a paid servant but receiving from Lady Alix much less than a governess might expect. Eventually she summoned courage to write to the Duke asking him to pay her a full salary (£180), describing her worries about his daughter's health:

> ...she is so thin, so altered, has no physical strength left that it was pain and grief to contemplate our parting, just as she needs a friend and companion...
>
> ... I had begun a letter to Your Grace but my courage failed...Your Grace, I have never begged money in my long life...I do it now not for my own sake either. Let the small balance be in dear Alix's favour, it must seem paltry to you. I have such serious misgivings about her health who knows if she may long require it.[14]

The Duke agreed to pay the salary at a slightly reduced rate. Yet Lady Alix was a 'new age' woman who then made a surprising decision. In her letter Miss Blake referred to something of which she disapproved – this was almost certainly Lady Alix's relationship with St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. Lady Alix had worked there as a volunteer helper, but sometime in the summer of 1890 she signed on as a probationary nurse in the Hope Ward and for a while lived in the nurses' home. She was remembered fondly afterwards and addressed as 'Dear Nursie' in letters from the ward sister.[15] It lasted only a short time, for the work was obviously too much for her delicate state of health.

Short it might have been but such a step was almost unheard of at this level of society, when nursing was not considered a respectable occupation. It horrified Lady Alix's sister-in-law, Millicent, who wrote a letter which was forwarded to Lady Alix at St Bart's asking 'Is it wise?...what have you done with Miss Blake and the horses and dogs? Remember there is always a welcome here for them (the animals I mean) at any time'.[16] As a statement of Maria's awkward social status this grudging offer could hardly be bettered, made as it was by Millicent of all people.

Thwarted of a career in nursing, Lady Alix made plans for a journey around the world. Nothing materialised, for she became weaker and weaker and eventually was taken seriously ill in February 1891. She was nursed in Argyll Lodge, Kensington, the London house of one of her uncles.[17] In the census Miss Blake was staying nearby with Lady Grace Leveson Gower, widow of another of Lady Alix's uncles. She remained close to the young woman who had become her friend until the very end. On the 16th April 1891 Lady Alix died of a stroke, aged 25. Miss Blake is listed in the press as one of the mourners at her funeral.[18] The Duke's accountants were presented with bills for Lady Alix's care, including Miss Blake's wages and an extra 'considerable sum'.[19]

Back to Essex.

By this time Miss Blake was aged 63. In the end she had a long and happy retirement, for her old pupil, Daisy proved more loyal than Millicent. Rescuing her beloved governess, she provided her with a cottage at Brick End, Broxted, where Maria Blake spent the next 20 years. The 1901 census recorded her as being a retired governess living with a 55-year-old housekeeper.[20]

Daisy paid regular visits to the cottage whenever she was at Easton Lodge:

> During the long years she spent there, hardly a day passed that she was not visited by myself, my children, and later, by my grandchildren.[21]

But Maria had an even more surprising and exalted visitor, no less than King Edward VII, a result of the relationship between Daisy and Bertie, Prince of Wales, who succeeded to the throne in 1901:

> ‘My darling Miss Blake adored King Edward and had the warmest sympathy with his affection for me. The King appreciated and returned her friendship, and he whiled away many an hour in her pretty cottage at Easton, which was decorated by signed photographs of half the Royal celebrities of Europe dating from the Hanoverian period.’

Maria died in 1911, aged 83. The report of her funeral in the local press shows she was well-known in the village of Broxted:

Chelmsford Chronicle, Friday, Feb 24, 1911

> ‘The funeral of Miss Maria Blake, aged 83, for 40 years governess and friend to the Countess of Warwick and her sisters took place at Little Easton Church on February
>
> 2… All the arrangements for the funeral were carried out by the employees of the Easton Lodge Estate, a considerable number of whom followed the cortege and there was a large number of parishioners assembled at the Church.’

Thirty-three mourners laid wreaths, including the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland (Millicent); the Earl and Countess of Warwick (Daisy); the Earl of Rosslyn; the Dowager Countess of Rosslyn (Blanche Adeliza); Daisy’s eldest son; two of her younger children; Viscountess Helmsley, the daughter the 19th Earl of Shrewsbury; and the Hon. Mrs Hermann Hultzsch, widow of a famous German sculptor.

There appear to have been no family relations to mourn her; her death certificate recorded that it was the estate clerk from Easton who reported her demise. Maria died far from impoverished, for she left over £907.

Miss Blake’s Earlier Life

Maria Blake’s employment before the Munsters is obscure. The Earl of Shrewsbury contributed a wreath at her funeral, but there is no record to prove Maria worked for the family. There are no entries of her on passenger lists and early or Irish censuses are no help, though the best possibility is the 1861 census which shows a Maria Blake (aged 33) living as servant to a 32-year-old widow, Ann Miller, a private property owner in a respectable middle-class area in London. Mrs Miller had a seven-year old daughter and four male lodgers. One came from Holland, but the other three were from Hamburg, Hanover, and Saxony – what later became Germany. Was this where Maria Blake first made connections to Germany and perhaps learned to speak German? The problem is, however, that this Maria Blake said she was born in London and ‘Maria Blake’ was by no means an uncommon name.

Daisy explained the reason for mystery: ‘My stepfather [the Earl of Rosslyn] knew the secret of this lady’s origin, and it was understood that she was the pledge of an illicit love of highly placed personages. She claimed to be Irish but owned no relative in the world.’ We can only speculate as to who the ‘highly placed’ personages were, and how the Earl came to know the secret.

In her letter to Lady Alix, Maria mentioned Mrs Wemyss who ‘so generously took me in.’ The Earl’s own mother (Millicent’s grandmother) was Frances Wemyss, from a family descended from the Scottish Celtic nobility which certainly could be described as ‘highly placed personages’. Does this point to the Wemyss family as the source of one of Maria’s true parents? Were they being discreet in not attending her funeral - they were not listed amongst the mourners. On the other hand, there is an Irish connection at Maria’s funeral, Mrs Hermann Hultzsch who was listed as a wreath-layer. She was Hon Louisa Elizabeth Yelverton, not only the widow of sculptor Hermann Hultzsch but the daughter of Viscount Avonmore, of a titled family in Ireland where Maria had been born. Whoever the parents were, presumably the use of the word ‘pledge’ in this context indicates an agreement to finance the care and education of the child.

> *‘Daisy developed a very ‘racy’ circle of high society friends, notorious for becoming one of the Prince of Wales’s many mistresses.[23] Much of her time with him was spent at Easton Lodge’*

What is very clear is the thread of connections between the three families – Münsters, Rosslyns and Sutherlands – where individual marriages led to further friendships and obligations. Visits to family country houses played a big part in this, offering the opportunity to socialise and to practice the favoured pastimes of hunting, shooting, and fishing. We know, for example, that in the summer of 1881 the Duchess of Sutherland invited Lady Rosslyn and her 17-year-old daughter Blanche and 14-year-old Millicent to the Sutherlands’ great country house at Dunrobin in the north of Scotland. The intention was to introduce Blanche to Cromartie, the Sutherland’s eldest son and heir, aged 30 and still unmarried. In the event an unlikely friendship developed not between Cromartie and Blanche but between Cromartie and Millicent, which led to their marriage three years later, when Millicent was seventeen.[22] At this time, Maria Blake was still governess to both Blanche and Millicent and would have accompanied them. Indirectly, she seems to have sparked the relationship between Millicent

and Cromartie, which began over a conversation at the dinner table about the ability of a 'little girl' like Millicent to identify a painting by Romney. No doubt, like Daisy, Millicent had spent hours absorbing Miss Blake's art catalogues.

Miss Blake's Girls

Daisy developed a very 'racy' circle of high society friends, notorious for becoming one of the Prince of Wales's many mistresses.[23] Much of her time with him was spent at Easton Lodge, which she had converted from an uncomfortable country house to a palace fit for a king, even to the extent that she had built a small train station for the convenience of important visitors.[24]

In her mid-forties Daisy's lifestyle took a more serious turn. She stood as the Labour candidate for the parliamentary seat of Warwick and Leamington Spa. She was also a campaigner for women's education and founder of several institutions, including a technical and agricultural school at Dunmow, a needlework school in London and a hostel for women students of agriculture at Reading. She founded and financed crippled children's homes in Dunmow and Warwick. Her special projects at Easton were wide and imaginative – garden design, circus ponies, traditional dancing and dialect plays – all intended to educate, employ, and entertain the lower classes on the estate.

Millicent also became a great society hostess, also a strong advocate of social reform, well-known for her attempts to bring better working conditions to the Staffordshire Potteries, where she was known as 'Meddlesome Millie'. As a child she had been 'a serious girl' full of religious and charitable enthusiasms in which she was influenced not only by Miss Blake but also by her mother, the Countess of Rosslyn.[25] She had amazing courage. A year after Cromartie's death in 1913 she went to Germany to organise an ambulance unit and was trapped behind the German lines in Belgium. In 1940 she was again trapped after the German occupation of France. She died in 1955, a much lauded and formally decorated woman.

In respect of Daisy and Millicent, Maria's teaching certainly bore its intended fruit, a training for prestigious marriage. The whole system of governesses was targeted at this, and Miss Blake's legacy to all her girls was a facility with art, culture and complex etiquette which was required at the very top of society. Daisy's description of her governess's teaching, though, suggests Miss Blake's charges were given something more. No doubt some characteristics - a well-developed sense of responsibility for the disadvantaged and uneducated, for example – were influenced by their mother or by the spirit of the times they lived in, as well as directly by Miss Blake. Yet it can be no mere coincidence that she was governess to at least three remarkable women (including Lady Alix) who in their way led lives beyond the domestic, marital, or social. Among her gifts to her pupils was a very strong sense of independence, a wider appreciation of what women could achieve in the world and above all a skill with the main European languages – the tools needed to deal with a highly sophisticated and international aristocracy.

In return, the Rosslyns played a supremely important role in Maria Blake's life. The Earl and Countess had first employed her back in the 1870s. Their children and their relations not only provided Miss Blake with continuous work for almost twenty years, but also supplied the means to survive another twenty years in comfortable old age. Her friendship with the Rosslyn girls was to prove her salvation in retirement.

Notes

1. Three books which form useful context are: Ruth Brandon, 'Other People's Daughters: the Life and Times of the Governess', Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008; Kathryn Hughes, 'The Victorian Governess', Hambledon Press, 1993; and Trev Broughton and Ruth Symes, eds., 'The Governess: an Anthology', Sutton Publishing, 1977.
2. Brandon, p.7.
3. The Sutherland Papers are deposited in Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford (SRO)mainly D593 and D6578.
4. Frances, Countess of Warwick, 'Life's Ebb and Flow', 1929. The Countess of Warwick's names are confusing. Her maiden name was Frances Evelyn Maynard; for a time she was often given her stepfather's surname of St Clair Erskine, but then took her husband's surname of Greville. A family nickname by which she became widely known was 'Daisy' and for simplicity's sake I have used that here.
5. Warwick. Unless stated otherwise quotes in the following section are from 'Life's Ebb and Flow', pp. 17 to 28.
6. Sushila Anand, 'Daisy, the Life and Loves of the Countess of Warwick', Piatcus, 2008, p.27.
7. Stuart, Denis, 'Dear Duchess: Millicent Duchess of Sutherland, 1867-1955', 1982, p.25.
8. Stuart, p 43.
9. SRO, D593/P/29/1 & 2 Lady Alix's Diaries, 1889.
10. SRO, D6578/15/70/2a Henry Chaplin to the Duke, December 31, 1889.
11. SRO, D593/P/29/1/17 Miss Blake to Lady Alexandra, September 11, 1887.
12. SRO, D593/P/29/1/17 as above, July 15 and 17, 1890.
13. SRO, D593/P/29/1/26 as above, November 27, 1890.
14. SRO, D6578/15/70 Miss Blake to the 3rd Duke of Sutherland, August 6, 1890.
15. SRO, D593/P/29/1/26 From Sister Hope to Lady Alexandra, October and December 1890.
16. SRO, D593/D593/P/29/1/26 Millicent to Lady Alexandra, June 1, 1890.
17. 1891 census, Chelsea RG12, piece 61, folio 113, page 20.
18. 'The Lichfield Mercury', Friday, April 24, 1891, p.5.
19. SRO, D593/P/24/10 Statement made by the 3rd Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, 1892.
20. 1901 census, Broxted, RG13, piece 847, folio 63, page 3.
21. Warwick, p.19.
22. Stuart, pp.29, 35-6.
23. For the complexities of Daisy's marriage and love life, see Anand; also Warwick; and Catharine Arnold, 'Edward VII: the Prince of Wales and the Women He Loved', St Martin's Press, 2017.
24. Arnold, p. 170.
25. Stuart, p.26.

The ‘Greatest Scoundrel That Ever Lived’

The case of John Bagshaw and the development of Dovercourt new town in the 1850s

Andrew Senter

John Bagshaw had a profound impact on the development of Harwich and Dovercourt in the mid-19th century. Politics and economics were intertwined as he became the archetype of the self-made Victorian businessman. Among his ambitions for Harwich and Dovercourt was establishing the resort of Dovercourt New Town. However, the inherently risky nature of resort investment in the pre-limited liability era and the fact that the period of the planned developments overlapped with the banking crisis of 1857 contributed to Bagshaw being bankrupted in 1859 and the New Town being very much smaller than intended.

Bagshaw in Harwich

John Bagshaw came to Harwich in 1838 or 1839 having made his fortune working in Calcutta as an East India merchant.[1] Relatively little is known of his earlier life, especially of his time in India, though his wife and a daughter were known to have drowned in Calcutta in 1820.[2] Bagshaw is believed to have returned to England permanently in about 1830.[3] He appears to have got interested in politics at around this time as he was initially considered as a candidate in the elections in Sudbury borough in Suffolk in 1832, presumably as a Reform candidate given his political leanings. Described as a ‘man of the people’ in the local press, he was elected MP for Sudbury borough in 1835 (after missing out by a single vote in the previous year) and again in 1838, having failed to gain election in Kidderminster in 1837.[4]

Bagshaw’s interest in Harwich and Dovercourt seems to have been based on business and political ambitions rather than having an established local link. He is reputed to have visited Harwich in 1838 to support the candidates for the Harwich municipal elections, including ‘hiring 20 sail of trawling vessels, and as many wilk [sic] boats, and any other thing likely to gull the burgesses’.[5] His efforts seem to have been successful as a Whig-Radical majority was returned in the municipal elections for Harwich in November 1838.[6]

Bagshaw was active in bringing commerce to Harwich, which had been in economic decline since 1815. He rejuvenated local industry through taking on the lease at the Royal Naval shipyard in 1841. He built for the Board of Ordnance and merchant services and also for the London Missionary Society between 1841 and 1844, and in 1845 was in partnership with Luke Blumer.[7] The Royal Naval Yard was taken over by John Vaux in 1850 and Bagshaw appeared to have no further involvement in the shipbuilding industry.[8]

A major barrier to the economic development of Harwich at this time was the lack of a railway connection. The earliest attempt at such a link was in 1825 but Bagshaw’s first involvement was as chairman of the Colchester and Harwich Railway Company, which failed to get an Act of Parliament for building the line passed in 1844.[9] The route to Colchester had been

1 Winifred Cooper, ‘The Bagshaws of Dovercourt’, *Essex Countryside* 22, 208 (May 1974): 26–9 (p. 26); *Essex Standard* 8 Nov. 1839, 2 July 1841 (second edition), 18 Mar. 1853.

2 Cooper, ‘The Bagshaws of Dovercourt’, p. 29.

3 Elizabeth A. Kemp-Luck, ‘The development and failure of Dovercourt Bay, Essex as a seaside resort during the nineteenth century’ (University of Essex MA, 2001), p. 14.

4 Essex Standard 26 Dec. 1834; F.W.S. Craig (compiled and edited by), *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832–1885* (London and Basingstoke, 1977), pp. 165, 294.

5 *Essex Standard* 26 Oct. 1838.

6 *Ibid.* 9 Nov. 1838 (second edition).

7 TNA, CRES 2/294, 2/1725; *P.O. Dir. of the Six Home Counties, viz., Essex, Herts, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex, with Maps Engraved Expressly for the Work* (1845), p. 77; W.H. Lindsey, *A Season at Harwich* (London and Harwich, 1851), pt II, p. 164; *Essex Standard* 5 Nov. 1841.

8 ERO, Acc. C308 box 1.

Dovercourt Spa, 1868. Only the terrace on the right of the picture, Orwell Terrace, was built. (Courtesy of Harwich town council archives)

opened in 1843 and there were numerous attempts to build a Harwich branch line, in most cases connecting with the mainline at Manningtree. One such attempt by a different company, the Harwich Railway Company, also apparently had the backing of Bagshaw.[10] Another effort, under the Harwich & Eastern Counties' Junction Railway Company, of which Bagshaw was deputy chairman, was rejected by Parliament in both 1845 and 1846, and the Bill was finally withdrawn the following year.[11] The railway connection was a long time in the making: Bagshaw, as director of another company, the Eastern Counties Railway Company, noted in 1848 at a half-yearly meeting of shareholders that, 'every acre of land required between Manningtree and Harwich had been purchased, the line staked out, and, as he before said, he had it from the best authority, that it would be begun within 10 days.'[12] Initial work was undertaken at Harwich in May of that year but it wasn't until 1854 that the railway opened having finally been completed by an amalgamation of the Eastern Counties Railway and Eastern Union Railway companies.[13] Bagshaw was also involved in putting forward ultimately fruitless plans to provide a steamer service to the Continent in 1844 and 1846 as a director of the European Steam Packet Company and latterly of the Harwich Steam Packet Company.[14] There were also various efforts to lay on steamers to northern Europe in the mid- to late 1850s but Bagshaw appears not to have been part of these ventures. His son Robert though did invest in one of the companies offering to establish links with the Continent at that time.[15] John Bagshaw was already in his sixties when he came to live in Dovercourt and appears to have intended his son Robert to continue as a key figure in his business and political ventures.

Bagshaw senior first occupied land in Dovercourt in 1840.[16] The land on the sea-front to which he was enfranchised in 1847 lay in an area bordered by the main road into Harwich, the cliffs, Mill Lane, and to the north-east the Board of Ordnance land of Dovercourt bay.[17] This site was intended to be where sea-front terraces would be built under plans put forward in the early 1850s.

9 *Ibid*. Q/RUm 1/94; *Ipswich Journal* 1, 8, 15 Jan. 1825; *Essex Standard* 6 Oct. 1843, 10 May 1844 (second edition).
10 *Essex Standard* 2 May 1845.
11 *Ibid*. 1 Nov. 1844 (second edition), 9 May 1845, 12 June 1846 (second edition), 18 June 1847.
12 *Ibid*. 18 Aug. 1848.
13 TNA, RAIL 186/10, 31 Dec. 1853; RAIL 187/10, 19 Dec. 1853; *E.S*., 26 May 1848.
14 *Essex Standard* 4, 11 Oct. (second edition), 18 Oct. 1844 (second edition), 2 Oct. 1846 (second edition).
15 *Ibid*. 11 Dec. 1857.
16 ERO, D/DU 680/1, 20 May 1840 (pp. 251–2, 255–7, 261–70); Acc. C308 box 1, abstract of title of John Bagshaw to land in Dovercourt, 1859.
17 ERO, D/DU 680/2, 11 June 1847 (pp. 68–81).

Perspective View of Dovercourt New Town near Harwich Essex

Dovercourt New Town and Spa

Dovercourt was probably a seaside destination for the select prior to the planned development of the new town. A road cut in 1833, an extension of Mill Lane, was intended to provide the visitor with a way to reach the beach.[18] However, despite its favourable location in a natural bay and with sandy beaches, it seems that little thought was given to developing the area prior to Bagshaw's arrival. It is likely that it was only economic uncertainty, particularly in the funding and building of the railway, which prevented the resort of Dovercourt taking shape in the late 1840s. A breakwater of over 1,500 feet at the foot of Beacon Hill was built between 1846 and 1849, while the adjoining promenade and cliffs were also improved.[19] Bagshaw was described as the 'Maecenas of Harwich', by Joseph Leech Bull, the owner of the Three Cups Hotel in Harwich, given his role as wealthy patron of Dovercourt. Bull 'recollected when almost the only dwellings there were a row of wretched huts—the ground a swamp and source of nuisance. It was now formed into a terrace for building upon to the extent of twelve acres, and was only waiting for capitalists to be brought to the place by the branch railway.'[20] There is some evidence of Bagshaw contributing to social life in Harwich. He built the sea-water baths and club house occupied by the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, which was founded in 1843, and he played a role in the revival of the regatta in the same year as he was a steward at the event.[21]Bagshaw built his own mansion, Cliff House, in Dovercourt in about 1845-6.[22] The site of his own property and the adjacent land on the peninsula was Board of Ordnance land leased to him by the Government.[23] By 1852, he occupied substantial strategic portions of Dovercourt parish and nearby land in St Nicholas parish, Harwich.[24] He also acquired land in prime sea-front sites in Dovercourt, including the undeveloped Shorefield, in 1854 and 1855.[25] Architect W.H. Lindsey produced plans for a series of apartments, of which Orwell Terrace, the only terrace eventually built, was a small part at the north-eastern end.[26]

The first evidence of the concept of Dovercourt New Town comes in advertisements placed in the local press in late 1850. These made available to let plots of ground suitable for marine villas, with Lindsey listed as the architect, and suggesting Harwich was the '[n]earest Watering Place, after Brighton, to the Metropolis'. Further inducements were that the ground was 'situated on a Plateau of the Cliff, commanding a bold Sea View, together with most charming Land and River Scenery.'[27] By late 1851, ten houses were in the course of erection, presumed to be in Victoria Street, as well as New Hall, all in Dovercourt.[28] The ongoing building of Dovercourt New Town was a factor in promoting Bagshaw as candidate in the parliamentary elections of July 1852.[29]

Bagshaw was responsible for 'discovering' the spa waters at Dovercourt and for the building of the spa, which opened in 1854. Perkin has shown how resorts

18 Kemp-Luck, 'The development and failure of Dovercourt Bay, Essex as a seaside resort during the nineteenth century', p. 12.
19 *Essex Standard* 24 Apr. 1846 (second edition), 10 Aug. 1849 (second edition).
20 *Ibid.* 7 Apr. 1848.
21 Lindsey, *A Season at Harwich*, p. 127; *Essex Standard* 15 Sept., 6 Oct. 1843.
22 *Essex Standard* 3 Oct. 1845, 3 July 1846, 11 Sept. 1846; Kemp-Luck, p. 15.
23 TNA, MFQ 1/830/7, 1/830/21–2; ERO, D/DU 798.
24 ERO, Q/RUm 2/94.
25 TNA, MAF 11/48; ERO, D/DU 680/2, 22 June 1854 (pp. 173–5).
26 Harwich town council archives, 156/4 'PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF DOVERCOURT NEW TOWN, NEAR HARWICH, ESSEX.'
27 *Essex Standard* 22 Nov.–27 Dec. 1850.
28 *Ibid.* 26 Dec. 1851.
29 *Ibid.* 9 July 1852.

Cliff House Dovercourt

developed their 'social tone' according to patterns of land ownership. Where there was control by a few landowners, such as Southport, the resort was able to retain an upmarket aspect. In contrast, Blackpool developed as a popular resort due to its scattered pattern of land ownership.[30] Bagshaw was the sole landowner in the planned development of Dovercourt New Town and it is clear that he envisaged the resort developing along upper-class lines. However, it is not possible to say whether the growth pattern in Dovercourt fitted Perkin's scheme since so little of the building development was realised. Bagshaw was a relatively new landowner in Dovercourt and it can be speculated that he would have been unable to exert enough influence to allow the resort to develop as a high-class destination. In 1846, visitors were welcomed every Monday to view the grounds of Bagshaw's seaside mansion and the promenade, both of which had recently been completed.[31] In 1847, on completion of further landscaping of his grounds and the cliff slopes, he again welcomed visitors every Monday to witness the improvements.[32] There were numerous instances of visitors of note being invited to Cliff House, as Bagshaw attempted to establish the reputation of the resort prior to development. For example, the 'Railway King' George Hudson visited as early as 1846.[33] In fact, there are interesting parallels to Hudson, who attempted to develop Whitby as a seaside resort and himself was bankrupted as a result. He was also involved in attempts to bring the railway line to Harwich as chairman of the Eastern Counties Railway Company in the 1840s. However, his tenure was not a successful one as Hudson was petitioned against by 60 shareholders in 1849 in a House of Commons investigation proposing an inquiry into management of the company's affairs regarding false representation of accounts.[34] A larger financial scandal in other railway companies and political bribery led to Hudson's downfall and the giving up of his parliamentary seat of Sunderland in 1859.

Bagshaw's association with Harwich and Dovercourt was chequered and his political and business ambitions seem to have been closely aligned. The first office he held in Harwich was high steward for the borough from 1842, a post he was elected to by the Whig-Radical majority on the town council only one week prior to their municipal election defeat.[35] In 1841, as a Liberal candidate for the parliamentary borough of Harwich, he was defeated by just ten votes,

[30] H.J. Perkin, 'The 'social tone' of Victorian seaside resorts in the north-west', *Northern History* XI (1976): 180–94 (pp. 185–8).
[31] *Essex Standard* 11 Sept. 1846.
[32] *Ibid.* 16 July 1847 (second edition), 24 Sept. 1847 (second edition).
[33] *Ibid.* 11 Sept. 1846.
[34] *Ibid.* 18 May 1849 (second edition); Andrew White, 'The Victorian development of Whitby as a seaside resort', *The Local Historian* 28, 2 (May 1998): 78–93 (pp. 79–84).
[35] *Essex Standard* 11 Nov. 1842 (second edition).

as Major William Beresford and John Attwood were returned for the Conservatives.[36]

Harwich – 'The Most Corrupt Borough In England'

Harwich was one of a number of borough constituencies that returned two MPs having escaped being adequately reformed under the Reform Act of 1832, in spite of a small electorate, as analysed by Salmon.[37] The Reform Act had addressed the most egregious cases of rotten boroughs by balancing the electorate according to population. However, in an era prior to the introduction of the secret ballot, it left open the continuance of bribery in seats where the electorate may be only a couple of hundred. The borough of Harwich became the target for parliamentary investigations into alleged corrupt practices. The Roebuck inquiry and select committee of the House of Commons of 1842 into bribery, treating and corruption by the winning candidates included a petition brought by Bagshaw that was subsequently withdrawn.[38] The vote however decided not to rescind the result of the election at Harwich and in the similarly contested constituencies of Nottingham, Lewes, Reading, Falmouth and Penryn, and Bridport, pending further legislation. This was in spite of finding that the 'present laws have been found insufficient to protect the voters from the mischievous temptations of bribery'. Bagshaw's proclamations at the Roebuck inquiry alluding to electoral corruption still proved divisive some 11 years later. His address for the 1852 election was challenged in an editorial in the *Essex & West Suffolk Gazette*, which commented that '[i]t is lamentable to find that by Mr. Bagshaw's EVIDENCE ALONE — HARWICH WAS BRANDED THE MOST CORRUPT BOROUGH IN ENGLAND.' While recognising misconduct among the voters in 1841, the editorial maintained that Bagshaw had 'swore that he, " though he could induce any committee to believe that the constituency were ALL bribed, directly or indirectly, that he COMPLETELY DESPISED THE BOROUGH, and that he did not care a straw for it." '[39]

> *Bagshaw was described as the 'Maecenas of Harwich', by Joseph Leech Bull, the owner of the Three Cups Hotel in Harwich, ... Bull 'recollected when almost the only dwellings there were a row of wretched huts—the ground a swamp and source of nuisance.*

John Attwood occupied a residence at Holly Lodge in Dovercourt, as well as having his main home at Hylands House in Chelmsford. In 1849, he was elected high steward of Harwich borough by a narrow majority replacing Bagshaw.[40] Attwood was also involved in schemes to bring the railways to Harwich in the 1840s, apparently both in competition with and alongside Bagshaw.[41] Attwood was re-elected to Parliament in 1847 but the next year a committee voided the result due to bribery and corruption.[42] He is said to have spent £10,000 on persuading electors to vote for him.[43] Bagshaw gave evidence at the inquiry stating that 20 or 30 appointments had been procured for the electors of Harwich during the previous five years. He confirmed that there had been 'great corruption' in 1841 among the 180 voters, but denied employing a committee of his own and bribing the chairman £1,000.[44] The large increase in the electorate to 290 in 1847 confirmed the scope for venality. To an extent, election bribery in the period between the Reform Act of 1832 and the mid-1850s, when bribery itself was defined by statute, was accepted as part of the election ritual.[45] In 1857, an election canvass for the Liberals in Harwich describes 19 voters as 'venal' (i.e. capable of being bribed).[46]

Bagshaw was himself elected in 1847, promising to restore Harwich to a state of prosperity through implementing improvements, including the establishment of the railway connection.[47] Bagshaw had also sought a nomination for Sudbury in 1843 and for Newcastle in 1845.[48] It was common for candidates to seek out seats in places where they were not resident and it seems that Bagshaw's electoral success was closely linked to his both being permanently living in Dovercourt from about 1845 and investing in the local economy.

Bagshaw was narrowly defeated at the poll of 1852, his number of votes diminishing from 213 to 125.[49] The disgraced Attwood chose not to stand and Bagshaw made a point at the nomination of mentioning that

36 Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results* 1832–1885, p. 144.
37 Philip Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work: Local Politics and National Parties, 1832–1841* (Woodbridge, 2002).
38 Hansard, HC Deb, 28 July 1842, vol. 65, cc767–833; Essex Standard 13 May 1842 (*second edition*), 29 July 1842.
39 *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 13 Aug. 1852.
40 *Essex Standard* 16 Nov. 1849 (second edition); Kemp-Luck, p. 15.
41 *Essex Standard* 3 Nov. 1843 (second edition), 2 May 1845, 17 Apr. 1846 (second edition).
42 Hansard, HC Deb 15 Mar. 1848, vol. 97, cc598–61; *Essex Standard* 17 Mar. 1848; Craig, p. 144.
43 Cooper, 'The Bagshaws of Dovercourt', p. 26.
44 Hansard, HC Deb 15 Mar. 1848, vol. 97, c605; *Essex Standard* 17 Mar. 1848.
45 Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work: Local Politics and National Parties, 1832–1841*, p. 102.
46 ERO, D/DU 572/13, note relating to canvass for Harwich parliamentary election, 20 Mar. 1857.
47 *Essex Standard* 30 July 1847 (second edition supplement); Craig, p. 144.
48 *Essex Standard* 26 May, 7 July 1843, 25 July 1845.
49 *Ibid.* 9 July 1852; *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 13 Aug. 1852; Craig, p. 144.

Attwood's promise at a previous election of £20,000 for a 'Whig railway' to Harwich had not materialised.[50] The building of the railway continued to be a paramount issue in local politics with David Waddington, chairman of the Eastern Counties Railway Company, canvassing as prospective Conservative candidate in 1852 and elected with more votes than Bagshaw.[51]

The result of almost every election in Harwich was challenged in this period. Henry Thoby Prinsep, supported by Attwood, was elected as Whig representative in Harwich in March 1851 but was swiftly excluded on the grounds he lacked a property qualification to stand.[52] Robert Wigram Crawford, who was backed by Bagshaw, was elected in a contest with Prinsep in May 1851.[53] In 1852, Sir Fitzroy Kelly was elected unopposed for the Whigs replacing Crawford, whose election was in turn declared void.[54] Kelly himself was replaced within a few weeks by Isaac Butt as he took up the vacant seat of East Suffolk.[55]

'The greatest Scoundrel that ever lived'

One of the major drawbacks of Bagshaw's investments in the area was his reputation as an outsider and the animosity shown to him by some established local figures. He was said to have been described as the 'greatest Scoundrel that ever lived' by Edward Chapman, clerk of Harwich town council, in the early 1850s.[56] In 1853, Chapman was cleared of any impropriety over the implementation of the Harwich Improvement Quays and Pier Act, though Bagshaw does not seem to have been directly involved in the dispute.[57] Bagshaw had sought to have Chapman replaced by one of his own local representatives Edward Pownall, who was the source of the 'scoundrel' comment.[58] An attempt in 1855 to displace Chapman as town clerk failed.[59] Pownall was responsible for the parliamentary revisions to determine whether electors were validly on the register. A key part of local political campaigning was to contest the eligibility of voters, which could be decisive in a close election. For example, at the North Essex registration court in October 1852, there were 25 objections in Harwich and Dovercourt, though only nine voters' claims were expunged.[60] Bagshaw generated further opprobrium in a financial dispute with Pownall, the latter describing his conduct as 'most disgraceful'.[61] Bagshaw enlisted the support of Captain (later Major) George Warburton, an officer of the artillery stationed at nearby Landguard Fort, to stand as a fellow Liberal candidate in Harwich in 1852. Bagshaw confessed to Warburton of the 'sad condition of our persecution' and threatened to 'never again to have any thing to do with Harwich'.[62]

The label Liberal seemed to one of convenience for Bagshaw, who at other times was described as a Radical or Whig. Indeed, the very terms identified merely a loose coalition of pro-reform and pro-trade candidates opposed to what was seen as the traditional Tory landed interest. The mixture of commerce and agricultural interests at Harwich and Dovercourt meant that the borough appealed equally to both political factions and it was closely contested by Conservatives and Liberals/Radicals at local and general elections throughout the 1840s and 1850s.

Bagshaw was elected again as MP for Harwich in 1853 following petitioning, a parliamentary investigation and the subsequent unseating of the Conservative incumbent Montagu Peacocke.[63] Bagshaw's election caused consternation in the local pro-Tory press: 'WE are sorry to have to announce as the result of the Harwich election, the very unexpected return of Mr. BAGSHAW by a majority of twenty-five.'[64] However, attempts at a counter petition to replace Bagshaw in turn were dropped.[65] In 1855, Bagshaw was returned to the post of high steward in place of Attwood, with Liberal municipal councillor Matthew Johnson claiming Bagshaw 'had done more than any other for the benefit of the borough.'[66]

The local opposition to Bagshaw seems to have been mainly politically motivated and he appears to have become accepted only as a result of his local investments. Perhaps due to Bagshaw's potential unpopularity, it was intended that his son Robert contest the parliamentary election of March 1857. However, he stood down as a candidate at the request of the Radicals to allow John Bagshaw and Major George Warburton to challenge the Conservatives. Both were returned for the Liberals, prompting triumphalism that saw Bagshaw proclaim that, 'never, he believed, would a Tory enter that Borough as its Representative.'[67] The Liberal ascendancy was further reinforced by the election of Robert Bagshaw later in 1857, as

50 *Essex Standard* 9 July 1852.
51 *Ibid*. 19 Mar. 1852 (second edition), 9 Apr.1852; *Essex Gazette*, 28 May 1852.
52 ERO, Acc. C1032 box 4, Winifred Cooper, 'Harwich elections mid-19th century' typescript; *Essex Standard* 7 Mar., 9, 23 May 1851; Craig, p. 144.
53 *Essex Standard* 7 Mar., 30 May 1851; Craig, p. 144.
54 *Essex Standard* 23 Apr. 1852 (second edition); Craig, p. 144.
55 *Essex Standard* 16 Apr. 1852 (second edition), 14 May 1852 (second edition); Craig, p. 144.
56 ERO, D/DU 572/9, extract of letter from Mr Pownall to Mr Bagshaw, 18 Mar. 1854.
57 *Essex Standard* 23 Dec. 1853; *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 23 Dec. 1853.
58 ERO, D/DU 572/9, extract of letter from John Bagshaw to Captain Warburton, 9 Oct. 1853.
59 *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 16 Nov. 1855.
60 *Essex Standard* 15 Oct. 1852.
61 ERO, D/DU 572/9, extract of letter from E. Pownall to Captain Warburton, 16 Oct. 1853.
62 *Ibid*. extract of letter from John Bagshaw to Captain Warburton, 21 Jan. 1854.
63 *Essex Standard* 6, 13 May, 24 June 1853; *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 6 May, 24 June 1853; Craig, p. 144.
64 *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 24 June 1853.
65 *Ibid.* 24 June, 5, 12 Aug. 1853; *Essex Standard* 5, 12 Aug. 1853.
66 *Essex Standard* 16 Nov. 1855.
67 *Ibid*. 3 Apr. 1857; Craig, p. 145.

a replacement for Warburton, who had committed suicide.[68] Bagshaw junior was also elected by a narrow margin on to the town council at around the same time.[69] This led to reports of a 'Bagshaw and Son' takeover and tongue-in-cheek fears in the local press that Harwich would become a pocket borough for the Bagshaws.[70] Robert Bagshaw similarly invested heavily in Harwich and Dovercourt, said to have amounted to £20,000 towards the railway and £7,000 to one of the steamboat companies seeking to run a service to the Continent.[71] However, he resigned as MP in 1859 and the Conservatives reclaimed one of the Harwich seats in the subsequent election.[72] Robert Bagshaw did not put himself forward for national elections thereafter; he also stepped down from the local council in 1860 and narrowly failed to get elected in 1864.[73] With John Bagshaw losing his position as high steward in 1860 the Bagshaw's political influence in Harwich came to an end.[74] Another relation of John Bagshaw, his grandson Duncan Thompson, canvassed in Harwich in 1860 but was not selected by the Liberals.[75]

John Bagshaw's economic influence also faltered at around this time. The turning point in the viability of Dovercourt New Town came in 1859. Two new hotels, the Queen's Head and the Victoria Hotel, had been completed by that stage and it was reported that around 100 new houses were in the course of being built.[76] However, the housing boom of 1858-9 did not happen on the scale anticipated as contemporary newspaper reports suggest that the figure of 100 was an exaggeration.[77] Illness contributed to Bagshaw's subsequent bankruptcy which meant that the full development plans for Dovercourt never materialised. Bagshaw was said to have lost about £30,000 on the speculation.[78] He was jailed at Springfield following the bankruptcy as a result of a case brought by a creditor over his involvement on the board of the Lake Bathurst Australian Gold Mining Company, which was subsequently wound up.[79] Bagshaw died in 1861.[80] His insolvency resulted in the sale of Orwell Terrace, the new Queen's Head, his home at Cliff House and the Bath House in Harwich, and the spa itself was also offered for auction.[81] Freehold land at Dovercourt owned by Bagshaw and intended for further development was auctioned in 1860 in two separate sales.[82] The land included the properties along Cliff Road and the Cliff Hotel, which was under construction at the time.[83] His life policies, household furniture and personal property were also sold in the same year.[84] Bagshaw's failure also led to local businesses going bankrupt, such as Dovercourt builder William Henry Child in 1862.[85]

Economic factors were paramount in bringing down Bagshaw, alongside his political unpopularity. The 1850s was a precarious time to be trying to develop a resort. The inherent difficulties of building a seaside resort were compounded by the effects of the economic crash of 1857. This crisis started in the United States but spread quickly to affect the United Kingdom, though it was relatively short-lived. Also, prior to 1855 when the first Act was introduced, there was no provision for limited liability. As a result his grand plans for the resort of Dovercourt New Town never materialised.

Bibliography/Further Reading

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Andrew Senter, *Harwich, Dovercourt and Parkeston in the 19th Century* (2019)

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About the Author

Andrew Senter has a particular interest in the history of seaside resorts in Essex. He is currently working on the history of Harwich, Dovercourt and Parkeston during the First World War and in the interwar period for publication in Volume XIII of the *Victoria County History of Essex*.

68 ERO, D/DA O15; Craig, p. 145.
69 *Essex Standard* 6 Nov. 1857.
70 *Ibid.* 11 Dec. 1857; *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 11 Dec. 1857.
71 *Essex Standard* 11 Dec. 1857.
72 Craig, p. 145.
73 *Essex Standard* 2 Nov. 1860, 4 Nov. 1864.
74 *Ibid*. 16 Nov. 1860.
75 *Ibid*. 30 Mar. 1860.
76 *P.O. Dir. of Essex, Herts, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex; with Maps Engraved Expressly for the Work and Corrected to the Time of Publication* (1859), p. 96; *Essex Standard* 2, 9 Apr. 1858; *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 26 Mar. 1858, 22 July 1859.
77 *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 3, 17 Sept., 29 Oct. 1858.
78 *Essex Standard* 20 Jan. 1860.
79 *Ibid*. 27 Jan. 1860, 30 Aug. 1861.
80 Kemp-Luck, pp. 28–9; Leonard Weaver, *Harwich: Gateway to the Continent*, p. 39; *Essex Standard* 11, 18 Mar., 20 May, 8, 29 July, 18 Nov. 1859, 27 Dec. 1861; *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 18 Mar. 1859.
81 British Library, Maps 136.a.7.(25.) sale catalogue for Cliff House estate, 1860; SRO, HE402/1/1859/3; HE402/1/1861/3; *Essex Standard* 8 July–26 Aug. 1859; *Essex and West Suffolk Gazette* 5–26 Aug. 1859.
82 *Essex Standard* 20 Apr., 27 July–24 Aug. 1860.
83 Harwich town council archives, 149/26.
84 *Essex Standard* 15 June, 31 Aug. 1860.
85 *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1862.

The changing balance of wealth and power in rural Essex from the dissolution of the monasteries to the fall of the 4th Duke of Norfolk, 1571.

Part I

Mark Marston Norris

Introduction

It is commonly understood that the justices of the peace (JPs) of England, at least in the sixteenth century, were a group of the most influential men in the land. Even a cursory glance at any group of JPs in England will reveal this. But the JPs were even more than that. J. H. Gleason argues in *Justices of the Peace in England, 1558-1640s* that they were a body of diverse men, commissioned to keep the peace, who themselves reflected the lives of the upper crust of the land in which they inhabited. A look at almost any county will reveal this. One will see the nobility, gentry of various degrees of wealth, lawyers, scholars, clergy, merchants, and courtiers. What they did in their microcosm represented directly the wider group of elites in England and the JPs themselves were chosen from that group [2].

It is certain that trends among the commissioners of the peace reveal trends among the English elite as a whole. But yet this must not be taken so far as to ignore regional variations and regional peculiarities. Geography, education, population, proximity to certain institutions and cities, county history, religion, etc. affected each county. Indeed, the elite of each county of England roughly had certain characteristics which were indigenous to their specific counties, and the JPs can be said to have reflected that character [3].

This then reveals the purpose of this study – to look at a group of 124 Essex JPs to get a picture of the changing balance of wealth and power in rural Essex from the dissolution of the monasteries to the fall of the 4th duke of Norfolk in 1571. This study will not only give a picture of the JPs of Essex, but it will provide a three-dimensional portrait of a dynamic group of people as they responded to a world of change and opportunity. As the rules of the game changed – as Catholicism made way for Protestantism and all of its many implications – so too did the players. It was not a total turnover. Certainly, there was a degree of continuity. But at least in Essex, with change came a new group of men, sprinkled heavily amongst those who furnished the continuity, to deal and help with that change [4].

Because of limitations of time and space, this work focuses on a majority, but not the total number, of Essex JPs who were commissioned from 1540 to c. 1570. JPs who had main residences only in the hundreds of: Barstable, Tendring, Winstree, Thurstable, Rochford, and Dengie have been excluded. Exceptions to this include men who although they may have had main residences in the above-mentioned hundreds, yet they possessed power, influence, and landed wealth on so large a scale as to extend considerably beyond hundredal borders. Also, all Essex sheriffs from 1540–1571 have been included (and every sheriff in Essex sat this time was also an Essex JP, though not at the same time) regardless of which area of Essex they inhabited. However, no JPs have been included who did not have at least one main residence, or significant landed interest, in Essex. The purpose of these exclusions is to narrow the field and yet maintain an unadulterated representation of Essex JPs.

Every effort has been made not to leave out groups of people who, by their exclusion, would alter the true picture. Therefore, it is felt that excluding JPs on basis of location only (and a few scattered locations at that) would present a relatively unbiased approach than probably any other method which would reduce the total number.

By leaving out non-resident Essex JPs, specifically, a truer picture of the Essex scene can actually be gained. Each commission contained a number of men at the beginning of the list who held the office virtually because of their position in national life. In fact, some of the dignitaries were JPs for numerous counties at the same time. Being on the commission was more or less a sinecure for them. These men included: Thomas, duke of Norfolk, treasurer of England; William earl of Southampton, keeper of the privy seal; and Thomas, earl of Rutland, among numerous others

The following page shows both the legend and the map of Essex drawn by John Norden in 1594.

Essex JPs and the Dissolution of the Monasteries

With the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 came a two-fold change in the balance of wealth and power in Essex. The first 'fold' was actually a partial change in personnel and transfer of the old wealth and power to the new men. The best example of this can be found in the two Essex JPs, Henry Bourchier, earl of Essex, and Sir William Parr, later the wealthiest men in Essex. On 13 March, 1540 Henry was riding a horse that was

John Norden's map in Speculi Britanie Pars: an Historical and Chorographical Description of the County of Essex, 1594, ed. From the original manuscript in the marquess of Salisbury's Library at Hatfield by Sir Henry Ellis, (London: Camden Society, 1840), pp. 6–7

Theis carracters following doe distinguishe the places obserued in the Mappe, viz.

- Market townes ; if in a streete thus
- Parishes.
- Hamlettes.
- Howses of name. Of nobilitie thus
- Castles.
- Religious howses.
- Chappells of ease.

Left: William Parr, marquis of Northampton and earl of Essex (b. 1513, d. 1571) is an example of the transfer of wealth from an older Essex nobleman, Henry Bourchier, earl of Essex, to this new Essex nobleman. Parr eventually inherited Bourchier's land and title. Artists: Fancesco Bartolozzi, John Chamberlaine, and Hans Holbein the Younger. Pub. 1796 @ National Portrait Gallery, London.

not yet quite tame. The horse threw him to the ground and he broke his neck as a result. He died without male heirs so his barony descended to Anne, his daughter. She later married Sir William Parr who assumed would come into possession by marriage of the title and the property, though this was seized by Thomas Cromwell. However, by 1543, through the influence of his sister Katherine who had married the king, he did inherit the earl's property as well as his title, earl of Essex.[7]

Another example of this transferal of wealth and power to the new Essex elite can be found in John Lucas, JP and master of requests, whom the *Visitations of Essex* describe as a great 'gamster'. In addition to the large amount of land he purchased from the earl of Oxford, it is apparent that he won the wardship of one Roydon from the earl by gambling.[8] Numerous other examples exist amongst the JPs of Essex of the 'old' wealth transferring to the 'new' men.

By far the most significant aspect of change occurred in the method of gaining wealth and power. Younger sons and those who were not from wealthy families could now, more than ever, profit from the new wealth. This new wealth was derived from the sale and granting of former ecclesiastical property as we have seen. The method by which this was achieved was through connexions with prominent court officials, or if one was lucky, with the royalty itself, although the sale of land, on strictly commercial terms, was open to all who had sufficient capital to invest. Most of the change occurred in the transfer of wealth and power form the monasteries, religious houses, and, later under Edward VI, the chantries to those who were fortunate enough to receive them. Wealth that had lain dormant or had been sent to Rome for centuries was now 'awakened' and diverted to those who may or may not have set foot in a monastery or a chantry for quite a while. The crown naturally took initial possession itself of the dissolved religious houses.

Grants or sales of land occurred rather slowly at first. But soon, the former monastic property was given or sold at an accelerated pace. A vivid picture of this can be seen in S.B. Liljegren's work, *The Fall of the Monasteries and the Social Changes in England*. He took a month-by-month assessment of crown granted former monastic land from the beginning of the dissolution. The first month has only one entry, but the entries quickly accelerate to include pages of grants.[9]

This then created new options for those who could not have benefited much from inherited wealth. Royal favour and connexions at court (and especially with the court of augmentations) became more important than before. Names such as: Thomas Lord Audley, lord chancellor from 1533 to his death; Sir Richard Rich, chancellor of the court of augmentations from 1536 to 1544 and created baron in 1547; and Sir William Petre, one of the principal secretaries, as well as others appear again and again as those who, at various times helped the lesser men into some of the higher circles of influence.

In particular are Sir William Petre and Richard Lord Rich who are fine examples of this. In 1537, Sir William acquired lands in southern Essex that were both from monastic and private owners. Then in 1538 he took the lease of the manor of Ging Abbess from the convent of Barking, Essex. This became the centre of what is now called Ingatestone. In fact, by 1540, lands he purchased yielded him, in rents and sales, about £500 per annum. He was trained as a lawyer at Oxford and by 1536 he was a deputy to Cromwell in ecclesiastical matters which led him to become involved in the visitations of the monasteries. He was known as being honest, and hardworking in performing his duties. He became one of two principal secretaries under Henry VIII and he was reappointed under Edward and Mary. He was also appointed treasurer of the court of first fruits and tenths in 1549. He was new to Essex – his father was a tanner and farmer from Devon. His rise to power and influence was astonishing for the times, as was his prudence and skill in helping others similarly to gain from the dissolution.[10]

Similarly, Richard Lord Rich was well placed but less prudent. He was born in London and was lord chancellor during the reign of Edward VI which put him in an excellent position to receive grants of ecclesiastical land. He was a rigorous persecutor of perceived opponents of the crown including Catholic martyrs Thomas More and John Fisher, but also the protestant martyr Anne Askew.

Sir William Petre (1505?–1572), secretary of state to Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, unknown artist, 1567, @ National Portrait Gallery, London. He purchased the lease of religious property on which he built the beautiful family estate of Ingatestone Hall, Essex. Dominic Petre for the use of these pictures of Ingatestone.

Ingatestone Hall, Essex – upper image is the front and below is the back. . I would like to thank Hon. Dominic Petre for the use of these pictures of Ingatestone.

Ingatestone Hall, Essex – back view. I would like to thank Hon. Dominic Petre for the use of these pictures of Ingatestone.

That the dissolution of the monasteries affected the commissioners of the peace, in general, there can be little doubt. One only has to glance through Morant's *History of Essex* and witness the buying and selling of land, especially to JPs, in order to be convinced.[11] But what remains to be decided is what proportion of the JPs were affected by this transfer of wealth and power. In other words, were the new Essex men able, as a whole, to experience a rise in wealth and power?

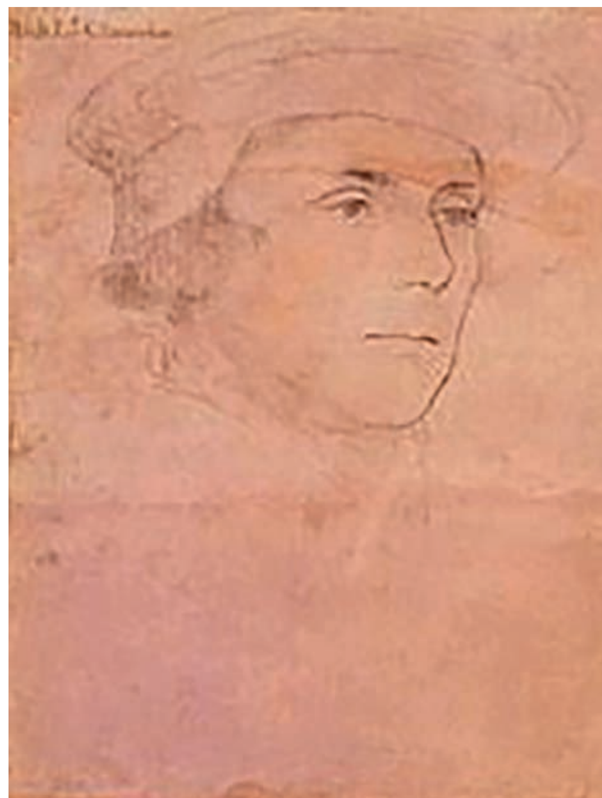
Each JP has been examined in regard to family status, degree of wealth, and religion. Three categories for the family status have been devised. An established Essex family was one in which the JP's family was in Essex before 1485 and had witnessed a fair degree of prominence since then. If the JP was a new man to Essex, but from an established family elsewhere, this means that the family was established before 1485 and witnessed a fair degree of prominence since then but that the JP or his immediate ancestors had not continuously resided in Essex before 1485. The third category is the new Essex man. This category refers to JPs who were not from families established before 1485 and were now residing in Essex, or in a few cases, had at least a significant landed interest in Essex.

I have tried as far as possible to give some indication of the amount of wealth each JP possessed. One of the sources I have used to determine wealth is the subsidy assessments. As in modern life, when it is time to fill out tax forms tax-payers tend to appear as poor as possible, so it was also in the Tudor period. However, as a rough guide, those who were assessed at above £200 of landed revenue had a superior amount of wealth, those at above £80 from land were very well off, those at £45 to £80 inclusive had an average degree of wealth, and those at under £45 had a comparatively humble standard of living. Some assessments were also based on goods. The general amount of land each JP possessed has also been taken into account, as well as any grants of money, or annuities he may have received for offices.[12]

A large portion of the men were new to the ranks of established families. 53 of the 124 JPs were from new Essex families. This is 45% of the total, which is quite a large sum. If the new men who were formerly from a family established in another country are included, then the total is raised to 61%. This means that only 39% of the JPS were actually from established Essex families.

Of the total number of JPs, 21 have been designated as having a superior amount of wealth. Of these 21, 10 were from new Essex families, 1 was from a new Essex family, but established elsewhere, and 10 were from established Essex families. A little under half of the JPs who were designated as having a superior amount of wealth were from established Essex families.

Of those JPs who had at least a medium amount of wealth (sup., high, and midd. combined), it can be seen that of the 99 JPs who fit into this group, only 42% were from established Essex families. This corresponds roughly with the above total of 39% of the JPs who were from established families.



Richard Lord Rich (1496–1567) was born in London and was strategically located as lord chancellor which helped him not only to gain from the riches of the dissolution of the monasteries but to help associates to the same. ©National Portrait Gallery, London.

A significant picture can be seen from all of this. Not only were the established Essex JPs a minority, but they held a minority of the wealth. In the highest category they had proportionately a little more than their share, but when the total picture is taken it can be seen that they were in the minority and on the average were hardly richer than the new men.[13]

Essex JPs, Education, and the Law

The JPS of Essex were well-educated. Over half, 54%, of the JPs sampled in this work attended either an inn of court or a university. Even among this high percentage, a number of the men attended more than one institution. 13% attended an inn of court and a university. A few JPs attended more than one inn of court and a few attended more than one university.[14] Probably the most educated man on the commission was Sir Thomas Smith who attended Cambridge, Padua, and the Middle Temple. Few, however, achieved that range of scholarship.[15]

It is interesting to observe the number of men who attended each institution. Ten of the JPs attended Gray's Inn. That was the lowest number of the JPs who attended an inn. The Inner Temple admissions were slightly higher with 12, or just under 10%. The number of JPs attending Lincoln's Inn was 14. The inn with the highest attendance was the Middle Temple with 20, or 15.3%. The total number of JPs who attended at least one inn of court was 54, or 44%.

Many of the Essex JPs were highly educated including Sir Thomas Smith (1513–1577) who was born at Saffron Walden and who became a scholar, a parliamentarian, and a diplomat. He was also an early convert to Protestantism. This is by Jacobus Haubraken after Hans Holbein the Younger, 1744 @ National Portrait Gallery, London.

The attendance at the universities had a similar picture. The number of JPs who attended Oxford was 11, or just under 10%. 20, or just over 15% of the Essex JPs in this study attended Cambridge, while only one, (Sir) Thomas Smith, attended Padua. 14 or 11% of the JPs attended only a university and not an inn of court, while 38 or 31% attended only an inn of court and not a university.

Perhaps the most significant figure is that 54 or 44% of the JPs attended at least an inn of court. It is clear that while just under a third of them attended a university, a slightly higher figure attended inns of courts. But if one considers that some of those attending a university were actually studying law it is clear that over half of all of the JPs of Essex were receiving some type of legal education. Of these, at least 30 or 24% were called to the bar and became active lawyers.

An interesting phenomenon is that certain families tended to patronize certain inns of court, probably because the inns were more than just academic centres. A few young men attended only for relatively brief periods and never received much in the way of formal learning. The social atmosphere itself and the important lawyers with whom one could come in contact were enough to attract some people. This social as well as academic atmosphere tended to attract family members in a way that the universities appeared to do on a lesser scale.

One family of JPs who patronized an inn of court were the Mordaunts. Many generations of them attended the Middle Temple. Edmund, as well as (Sir) John, the future Lord Mordaunt, and Robert all attended the Middle Temple. Edmund and Robert were brothers while John was in the same family branch but was a more distant relative. All three became lawyers and none of them appeared to attend a university. Other Mordaunts are sprinkled throughout the *Middle Temple Records*. Most notable is the father and grandfather of (Sir) John, who were prominent benchers. Through their legal training, and as lawyers, the Mordaunts were able to amass quite a fortune. Robert, Sir John, Lord Mordaunt, and Edmund were able to obtain a 'high' degree of wealth. The Mordaunts were a new Essex family, originally from Bedfordshire.[16]

The Ayloffs, on the other hand, attended Lincoln's Inn. William (the father of the Essex JP who died in 1569) through his training at Lincoln's Inn and later as a lawyer was able to amass not a small fortune for himself. However, his son William, who died in 1569, did not attend Lincoln's. But the grandson, William, who was JP after his father's death, took up where his grandfather left off and not only attended Lincoln's Inn, but became justice of the Queen's Bench. The Ayloffs, like the Mordaunts, directly or indirectly through the law were able to obtain a high degree of wealth. Also, like the Mordaunts, they were a new Essex family, though the Mordaunts were from Bedfordshire.[17]

John Lucas, his father, and his son, (Sir) Thomas, all attended the Inner Temple. John Lucas became a prominent lawyer and was able to amass an extremely large fortune for himself. His son followed in his footsteps. As with the Ayloffs and the Mordaunts, the Lucas family was new to Essex. They were originally from Suffolk. It is interesting to note that John Lucas was admitted to the inn in 1526, which was the year in which Thomas Audley was autumn reader there. Lucas doubtless owed at least part of his future advancement to that connexion.[18]

(Sir) Humphrey Brown, as well as his nephew, (Sir) Anthony Brown, both attended the Middle Temple. Humphrey became sergeant-at-law, and Anthony became justice of the common pleas. Unlike the above mentioned three families, the Browns were an established Essex family. But also, unlike the other three, they appeared to amass only a moderate degree of land and wealth.[(19)1] These family illustrations also confirm our theses that the new Essex men were in the majority and that they held a majority of the wealth. But further information can not only prove this, but show that the law was a vital instrument many JPs used to help them obtain wealth and influence.

Lincoln's Inn Gatehouse from Chancery Lane is the oldest surviving structure of the inn. It was built between 1517 and 1521 and the oak doors were added c. 1564. William Ayloff (1504-1569) attended Lincoln's Inn as did his grandson William (d. 1585). In this study, 14 JPs attended Lincoln's. In total, 44% of Essex JPs attended an inn of court while one-third went to university. By Shadowssettle - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=88972773

As mentioned earlier, at the minimum, 30, or 24%, of the JPs actually became professional lawyers. But the make-up of these 30 JPs presents an astonishing picture. 53% of these were from new Essex families who had not been established in any other county. 20% of the 30 lawyers were from families new to Essex but established in other counties, and only 8, or 27%, of these were from established Essex families. As can be seen, 73% of the lawyers on the Essex commission of the peace were from either new Essex families, or from new Essex families which were previously established in a different county. Only 27% were from established Essex families! This clearly presents a picture of social and geographical mobility made possible by a legal career.

Yet, from this sample of Essex JPs who were lawyers, a large degree of economic mobility can also be found, as the next few paragraphs will show. Of this group, 17% possessed a superior amount of wealth and land, 23% had a high degree, 43% a middle degree, and about 17% had a low degree of wealth and land. This means that 83% of the lawyers had at least a middle degree of wealth. This is higher than those who were not lawyers. Of the JPs in our survey who were not members of the legal profession, 79% had at least a middle degree of wealth.

What is more interesting is that only 1 man, from the group of lawyers, came from an established Essex family and actually had a superior degree of wealth and land. No lawyers from established Essex families had a high degree of wealth. 16% of the lawyers were established and had a medium degree and 6% had a low degree. Yet for the new Essex men, the results are much better. 10% of the lawyers were new Essex men who had a superior degree of wealth, as opposed to the 3% for the established group. (This 10% figure can also be compared favourably with the group of non-lawyers who were new Essex men with superior wealth. They only made up 7%.) 13% of the lawyers were new Essex men with a high degree of wealth and land, 16% with a medium degree, and 10% were from new Essex families who had a low degree.

To make the picture clearer, the following can be stated: A high of 40% of the lawyers were new Essex men who had between a medium to a superior degree of wealth. If one adds the new, but established elsewhere group, then the figure rises to over two-thirds. At the same time, only 20% of the lawyers were from established Essex families who had at least a moderate degree of wealth. Truly, among the JPs in Essex who were lawyers, the majority were from new Essex families who were able to achieve an astonishing rise in wealth. This included men such as John Hasilwood, esq., Sir Richard Rich, Lord Rich, Sir William Petre, and many others. Also, as a group, the lawyers were at least slightly wealthier than those JPs who did not have a legal career.

Coming in Part II

Part II of this article will look into more detail the effect of the connection of Essex JPs with nearby London. It will also examine the change in composition of Essex JPs from 1540 to c. 1570.

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Shadowsettle gave me permission to use the image of Lincoln's Inn Gatehouse from Chancery Lane. I finally thank Hon. Dominic Petre for the generous use of his fine pictures of Ingatestone.

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Notes:

1 For an earlier version of the study, complete with biographies of each JP investigated, see: M. M. Norris, 'The Changing Balance of Wealth and Power in Rural Essex from the Dissolution of the Monasteries to the Fall of the 4th Duke of Norfolk, 1571,' (M.Sc. dissertation, the University of Edinburgh, 1988).

2 J. H. Gleason, The Justices of the Peace in England, 1558-1640s (Oxford, 1969), pp. 83–95.

3 C.J. Black notes this in her unpublished Ph.D. dissertation entitled 'The Administration and Parliamentary Representation of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire 1529 to 1558' (unp. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1966).

4 The following sources were used to locate Essex JPs from c. 1540 to 1571:

6 Feb. 1540 – *Letters and Papers Henry VIII* (L and P H VIII) vol. xv g. 282(20) p. 106.

22 Feb. 1541 – *L and P H VIII* vol. xvi g. 580(89) p, 280.

27 Nov. 1542 – *L and P H VIII* vol. xvii g.1154(91) p. 642

29 Oct. 1544 – *L and P H VIII* vol. xx pt. I g. 623 p. 322.

26 May 1547 – *Calendar of Patent Rolls (CPR) Edw. VI vol*. i p. 83.

Mich. 1552 – TNA E372/397 (pipe rolls) – only a partial list.

18 Feb. 1554 – *CPR Philip and Mary*, vol. I 1553–4 no 864 p. 18.

1555 – *Liber Pacis* 11/5 item 6 (f3r).Dec.

1558 – Jan. 1559 – British Library Lansdowne 12118 ff 1–44.

20 Oct. 1559 – E 137/11/4.

4 July 1560 – TNA Essex Assize File 32/2/5, no. 16.

1561 – BL Lansdowne 1218 ff 55–92.

11 Feb. 1562 – TNA CPR/935.

1 June 1564 – *CPR Eliz*. I vol. iii 1563–66 no. 20 p.22.

4 Nov. 1569 – *CPR Eliz.* I vol. v 1569–72 no. (1,889) p. 22.

Emmison 1562–71+ -- *Elizabethan Life: Disorder* (Chelmsford, /Essex: 1970), pp. 321–26. He gives figures only from 1562 and he writes that they are very conservative figures.

5 John Norden, *Specali Britanniae Pars: Historical and Chorographical Description of the County of Essex*, 1594 (London: Camden Society, 1840), pp. 6–7.

6 See for example: *L and P Foreign and Domestic Henry VIII* vol. xvi 1540–1541, no 580 Feb. gr 89, Commission of the Peace, Essex.

7 William A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*, vol i, (London, 1906), p. 19. S.J. Gunn, 'Henry Bourchier,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* vol. 6 pp. 816–7 and vol. 42 pp. 856–7; A.J.A. Malkiewicz, 'Essex Under Edward VI', unpub. article, p.3.

8 *Visitations of Essex*, Harley Soc., pt I, [Rawen 1612], ed. Walter C. Metcalfe (London: Mitchell & Hughes, 1878), pp. 235–6; Bindoff vol ii pp. 553–5.

9 See: S.B. Liljegren, *The Fall of the Monasteries and the Social Changes in England* (Arsskrift: Lund, 1924).

10 *The History of Parliament*, Petre, William (1505/6–72) of Ingatestone, Essex, and Aldersgate Street, London. https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/petre-william-15056-72#:~:text=In%201537%20he%20acquired%20lands,at%20what%20is%20now%20Ingatestone. Accessioned 20 July 2023.

11 Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, vols. i and ii (London: 1768). A 1978 reproduction was used.

12 The following are the subsidy returns used here from here from TNA: E/179/108/229 (1541), E179/108/238a (1541), E179/109/300 (1547), E 179/110/320 (1546), 179/109/311 (1547), E179/110/347 (1549), 179/110/384 (1552), E179/110/406 (1563), E179/110/425 (1567), E179/110/428 (1567).

13 It must be noted that the wealth of a JP is estimated where possible at the height of his career; a stipulation particularly important in the case of the rising new men.

14 The following works have been used to compile this data on education:

Alumni Cantabrigienses, part I to 1751, comp., by John Venn & J.A. Venn vols. i and iv (Cambridge, 1922).

Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714, compiled by Joseph Foster vols i and ii, (Oxford, 1891).

A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford 1501-1540, by A.B. Emden (Oxford, 1974).

A Calendar of the Inner Temple Records, vol. i 1545-1603, ed. F.A. Inderwick, Q.C. (London, 1896).

F.G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder*, Essex Record Office Pub. No 56 (Chelmsford, Essex., 1970) pp. 32–6.

Members Admitted to the Inner Temple 1547–1660 (London, 1878).

The Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: The Black Books. vol. i from 1422 to 1586 (Lincoln's Inn: London, 1897).

The Middle Temple Bench Book, by J. Bruce Williamson, 2nd edn, (London, 1937).

Middle Temple Records, vol. i 1501-1603, ed. Charles Henry Hopwood K.C. (London, 1909).

Records of the Society of Lincoln's Inn Admissions & Chapel Registers, vol. i, (Lincoln's Inn: London, 1896).

Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn 1521-1889, Foster, Joseph (London 1889).

15 Ian W. Archer 'Sir Thomas Smith' vol. 51, *ODNB*, pp. 324–9

16 For Edmund, *Middle Temple Records – Minutes of Parl.* pp. 82, 88, etc.; for Robert, p. 57; for John, Emmison, Disorder, pp. 321–6; John's father and grandfather, *Middle Temple Bench Book,* pp. 48 and 69.

17 Thomas's will – PCC 18 Blamyr; William's (I) will – PCC 1 Ayloff; William's (II) will – PCC 5 Sheffelde; Morant vol. I part ii pp. 69–70 (see also for William, son of William (II) and Mary) 142, vol. ii pp. 138–9; L and P Hen. VIII vol. 18. p.i, 832; vol. 15 no. 14 (v.6), vol. 13 pt. i 887(8), vol. 21 pt i doc. 1384 p. 695, vol. 21 pt 2 476(34); APC 1588–70 p. 137; Camden Misc. vol. ix p. 62–3; A.J.A. Malkiewicz, 'Essex Under Edward VI pp. 16–7; TNA E179/110/320, 300.

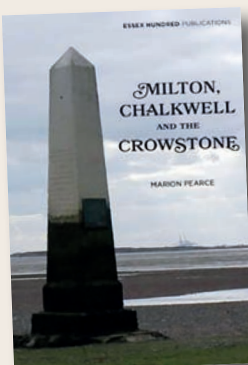
18 S.T. Bindoff, *The House of Commons: 1509-1558* (London, 1982) vol. ii pp. 553–6.

19 Bindoff, vol. i pp. 516–8; *Middle Temple Bench Book* p. 56; *Visitations of Essex* part I [1612] pp. 165–7. For Sir Humphrey see J.H. Baker, *ODNB* vol. 8 p. 169. For Sir Anthony Brown see J.H. Baker *ODNB* vol. 8 pp. 146–7.

Book Reviews

Marion Pearce

Milton, Chalkwell and the Crowstone



Essex Hundred Publications, Benfleet, 2023. 131pp, card covers, monochrome photographs. ISBN 978-1-73993-160-5 £12.99

This book offers a summary history of the development of the seafront areas between Southchurch and Chalkwell on what is now called the Thames Estuary. The once-thriving town of 'Milton' has all but disappeared from the modern map: it is commemorated in 'Milton Road' in Southend running parallel with the course of the railway track by Southend Central station. A thousand years earlier, in 959 AD in the reign of King Edgar, the estate called Meletun was granted to Christchurch Canterbury – 'Meletun' probably stands as a medieval spelling of *middeltun* 'the middle estate' between the holdings of Southchurch and Prittlewell. A watermill was recorded in the area, which was replaced by a post-mill in 1299 at a cost of £15 5s 10d. and it was maintained down to 1869 when it was sold, but had to be demolished in 1878 and the constituent parts and timbers sold off separately. A painting of 1845 shows it in rural surroundings but looking in rather poor repair. Milton remained a private manor into the 1860s but was swallowed by the large-scale building undertaken at Prittlewell's south end alongside the dedicated public space called The Shrubbery (later redeveloped as Royal Terrace).

Summarising a millennium of social history in so small a book is no mean feat, especially as the documentation down to the early 19th century is relatively sparse – and once the Victorian watering hole began to take shape, the records are so profuse as to be overwhelming. Marion Pearce has provided a fine outline study of the story of the settlements and their convergence into the modern city.

The book includes a short index of topics and names. It would have benefitted from a more in-depth bibliography since the name of the author and title of the book alone make further research difficult. That said, the book serves well as a light read which may inspire further research.

Steve Pollington

Alan F. Crouchman

Flak-Bait: the only American Aircraft to survive 200 bombing missions during the Second World War

Alan F. Crouchman, (Atglen, PA, 2022), pp.352.
ISBN 978-0-7643-6343-6.
£40.99.

Ever since I was given Monogram's 1/48th scale model, sometime around 1984, I have been in love with the Martin Marauder. I already knew of the Marauder, for my dad used to tell me about how he would cycle from Broomfield to view them at Boreham airfield, albeit from a distance and through a hedge, which was home to 64 or so of them from the 394th Bomb Group. However, it was that model, with the sublime box-top artwork in the markings of *Flak Bait*, that cemented my love and ever since that moment I have collected all the books I could get on the type. Imagine my delight when I heard that well-known aviation historian and man of Essex, Alan Crouchman, was writing a book on the famous *Flak Bait*, and what a book it is and well worth every penny of the cover price!

Alan has been around the aviation scene for many years, his family lived near the airfield at Chipping Ongar, from where Marauders also flew, and has written much on the subject over the years, assisting aviation historian Roger Freeman on several occasions. He has now produced a nuts and bolts history of *Flak Bait*.

But why should *Flak Bait* be so singled out? Well, the sub-title spells it out. *Flak Bait* flew more than 200 missions from July 1943 to April 1945, a total unsurpassed in American service and possibly only exceed by one aircraft, a de Havilland Mosquito which flew 213. More importantly for us though, over half of *Flak Bait*'s missions were flown from Andrews Field near Braintree, when, as part of the 449th Bomb Squadron of the 322nd Bomb Group (BG), it was involved in the bombing campaign in the run-up to the invasion of Europe. And what makes *Flak Bait* even more special is that at the end of the war, all the B-26 Marauders then in Europe, along with many other aircraft types not required, were destroyed so that their aluminium could be recycled to help get the German economy up and running again. All that is except *Flak Bait* which, incredibly, was singled out for preservation. For many years the nose section was displayed in the National Air and Space Museum but in the last few years, it and the rest of the aircraft have been undergoing a painstaking restoration, for Flak Bait, might just be the most authentic veteran Second World War aircraft.

The first two chapters discuss *Flak Bait*'s construction and assignment to the 322nd BG along with outlining the history of the Group and early Marauder missions. By far the largest section of the book (eight chapters) covers the operational record from first mission to post-war preservation. All the missions are outlined with 'mission summaries', giving the date, target and field order numbers. The crew members are listed and timings of the mission (take-off, time over target and return to base) with a 'mission narrative' and 'crew comments'. They do vary in length but give a host of information not before published, as far as I'm aware, and thus greatly adds to what is known about American bombing operations. Points that stood out for me are the frequency of bomb rack malfunctions, which meant that bombs weren't dropped on target, crews asking for tinted gun sights to enable searching for German towards the sun and lack of transport and food on return from missions landing in the evening – you'd really think the crews would have been looked after. A curious feature of many early missions was a 3,000lb bomb load when the Marauder was capable of carrying 4,000lb; perhaps heavier loads were only carried once crews became more proficient?

There are 15 appendices covering a comprehensive selection of topics such a 'camouflage and markings', a couple of missions as described by veterans and information about Andrews Field and the other airfields that Flak Bait flew from. The stand-out section for me is that on the restoration project which is just filled with the author's colour photos of various external and internal sections of Flak Bait – staggering! This is what a genuine WW2 aircraft looks like, which is beaten about.

The volume is so well illustrated throughout, with photographs from many contributors, including B-26 expert Trevor J. Allen. While in general books on the B-26 the same old three or four pictures of *Flak Bait* are reproduced, to the extent that I wondered if any more existed, the answer is a resounding 'yes'. And not only of *Flak Bait*, but lots of 'new' photos of other 322nd BG Marauders. My only gripe is that many are reproduced as quite small images, but then that's an opportunity to have a large format book of all these 'new' images. Go on Alan, you know you want to!!!

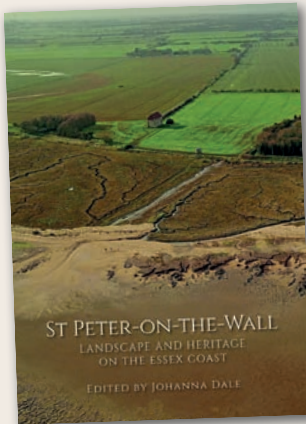
So, while this book might not be for everyone, if you have an interest in United States Army Air Force aviation in Essex during the Second World War, this has to go on your shelf: it's a major addition to aviation history.

Oh, and why *Flak Bait*? Well its original pilot, James Farrell, had a dog back home called Flea Bait that was the target of those pesky insects. He found that the European skies were generously filled with German anti-aircraft fire ... – I'll let you work out the rest!!!

Neil Wiffen

Johanna Dale (ed.)

St Peter on the Wall: Landscape and Heritage on the Essex Coast



UCL Press, London, 2023. 389pp, card covers, colour and monochrome photographs, maps. ISBN 978-1-80008-436-0 £50

In this sizeable paperback, University College London has produced a collection of essays relating to the area of Bradwell-on-Sea and the Roman ruins to be found there, later used as a chapel in the Saxon period and subsequently as a storage shed until its likely history was finally realised in the 19th century. The authors include some who have produced notable independent contributions to Essex history, such as Stephen Rippon, Barbara Yorke, Richard Hoggett, David Petts and James Bettley among others. The text is divided into two sections: the first deals with the pre-modern history of the site from a variety of angles, and the second tackles the building in its modern context(s). Each piece has its own notes and bibliography, which is always helpful when pursuing a lead.

David Andrews reviews the physical evidence available at the site and what deductions can reasonably be made from it. Unlike most parish churches, the chapel has not seen extensive remodelling down the centuries and the fabric of the building is 'unimproved', although there are breaches in the long walls and some of the masonry was repointed in the last century, porches and other features being only vestigially present today. The text includes a brief but fascinating discussion of the likely form of the Roman building and its subsequent phases, as well as detailed architectural drawings from a 1978 survey by Jane Wadham which had not been published before. Andrew Pearson's chapter discusses *Othona* the Saxon Shore fort, where the defensive function of the site may have taken a back-seat to meat production in the supply chain for the military in the Channel zone. Stephen Rippon expands on his previous work on the Essex landscape with a study of the later regio 'administrative district' based on Bradwell and the Dengie Peninsula. Barbara Yorke takes the opportunity to discuss the life and works of St. Cedd who was instrumental in bringing Christianity to this corner of the estuary. As a British-born missionary, his career is rather different from those of his contemporaries. The liminal position of Bradwell is not unique, and both David Petts and Richard Hoggett contextualise Bradwell as a Roman structure superannuated into later religious usage; is the use of Roman building materials an opportunistic recycling campaign in a landscape devoid of freestones, or did it have symbolic aspects relating to the glory and authority of Rome? The building's coastal site is rather bleak and remote in the modern landscape but was at the time of its construction a thriving and busy waterway with both military and commercial traffic. Commercial and economic history converge in the essay by Chris Thornton, Kevin Bruce and Neil Wiffen which considers the exploitation of the marshes generally down to the 17th century.

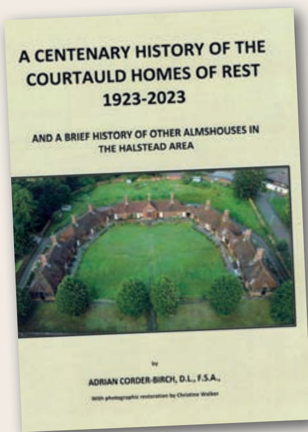
The modern period aspects of the location are tackled in a variety of ways. James Bettley covers the rediscovery of the religious nature of the building and its rededication in the 19th and 20th centuries, which is illustrated by a photograph of pilgrims approaching it in the 1950s. The Othona Community is described by Ken Worpole, the present-day custodians and spiritual guardians of the site. The mid-20th century decision to build a nuclear power station close by is discussed by Gillian Darley, where heritage and environment considerations were barely acknowledged in the scrutiny of its planning. Johanna Dale situates Bradwell in the broader context of green lanes and walking routes, and St. Peter's Way which leads to the chapel from Chipping Ongar. Although St. Cedd and the Roman fort are of arguably national importance, much of Maldon Council's heritage budget is focused on the events of 991 AD and the Viking attack; Beth Whalley discusses the impact of such choices on tourism and the rural economy today. Grayson Perry's *A House for Essex* is discussed by Charles Holland, the architect who designed it and was partly inspired by St. Peter's. Finally, a collaborative effort by Warren Harper and Nastassja Simensky discusses creative approaches to landscape and nuclear power.

Any collection of essays is bound to vary in its approaches – that is rather the point – and within these pages there is much to stimulate the reader with a historical eye. I found the factual pieces more interesting and more engaging – a failure of mine, no doubt, and no reflection on the quality and relevance of the texts. The price-tag may appear rather hefty for a paperback but I consider three of the essays together worth the cover price by themselves (I shall not say which ones, though!) and the detailed architectural discussions and drawings are invaluable to the serious student of Essex history.

Steve Pollington

Adrian Corder-Birch

A Centenary History of the Courtauld Homes of Rest 1923-2023: and a brief history of other almshouses in the Halstead area (Halstead, 2023)



ISBN 978-0-9567219-5-2.
PP.104. £15.00. Available from the author:
acb@corderbirch.co.uk

This book, written by well-known historian and Halstead expert Adrian Corder-Birch, has been published to mark the centenary of the Courtauld Homes of Rest (CHR) and their founder, Samuel Augstine Courtauld (SAC) (1865-1953). With this author we know we're in safe hands, not only for his knowledge of Halstead and environs but as he is also the current clerk of the homes! Obviously the book concentrates on the CHR (well over half the content is about the institution and SAC) but the author also delves into other almshouses in the Halstead area (those in the Hedinghams, Earls Colne and Great Yeldham – all very much part of the author's stamping ground), along with a selection of interesting appendices, including one on the other buildings of SAC – who clearly had a passion for construction. A bibliography and a very good index round off the publication and I suspect many of the excellent illustrations came from the author's extensive collections.

The history of the CHR is intimately bound up with the story of the Halstead Union Workhouse, it being built on the site of the latter after it was knocked down in 1922-3 (only the boundary wall remaining from the workhouse). This solved a mystery for me as, being aware of the location of the workhouse from historic OS maps, whenever I drove down Hedingham Road, I'd look out for it but, being the driver, I could never concentrate on the 'lie of the land'. Anyway, the reason I couldn't see it was that it was no longer there, the site being occupied by the CHR – so that answers that question! The author being the author, we know that the bricks for the workhouse came from the yard of John Tricker of Hedingham. The site was acquired by SAC when the workhouse was no longer required, and it was he who built the CHR.

> *As built, each home comprised a living room, bedroom, scullery and outdoor lavatory. It was only in the 1950s that the provision of bathrooms and showers was considered*

The CHR was designed by E.W. Coldwell, a London based architect, and built by Charles Deaves, a builder of Bures. Built in a Tudor style, the complex is very attractively designed in an Arts and Crafts style. As built, each home comprised a living room, bedroom, scullery and outdoor lavatory. It was only in the 1950s that the provision of bathrooms and showers was considered. However, many residents were not particularly concerned with such modern amenities so it was not until 2006 that the last of the 20 homes was provided with such.

As is to be expected with this author, this is a very thorough account and what one can only assume must be the most comprehensive history, including sections on 'Electrical improvements', 'Insurance' and the 'Sprinkler System'. The trustees and chairmen are recorded and, of course the residents ('person of either sex who had been resident or working in Halstead for not less than 25 years and bear a good character for honest sobriety and steady work'). Meanwhile the section on the boundary wall records several occasions when it was damaged – on all occasions the full costs were recovered from various insurers, one suspects all because of the diligence of the CHR clerk; motorists beware!

George Courtauld in his foreword quotes that the founder, SAC, was described as 'a shy millionaire who did enormous good with his money' - if only there were more of those these days. In their absence, this very interesting book will have to suffice in celebrating a wonderful philanthropic undertaking at 100. And we can all be left hoping that when the time comes, we might find rest in such a contented place.

Neil Wiffen

How Early Did Christianity Reach Eastern England?

A Review Of The Evidence

Dr Martin Parsons FRGS, FHEA, MAE

In 1981 Peter Salway in his survey of Roman Britain observed that in relation to Christian origins in Britain "*it is generally unsatisfactory to rely on negative evidence*."[1] However, in practice the absence of clear archaeological evidence has led to the dominance of an assumption that Christianity arrived relatively late, having slowly filtered into Britain by the end of the second century and thereafter gradually increased until the conversion of Constantine in 312 gave it a new degree of social acceptability.

The inherent problems with assuming a late arrival of Christianity in Britain

First, it fails to address the question of what sort of evidence it might be reasonable to expect in the first two centuries of Christianity.

Secondly, there is a tension between the assumption of the late arrival of Christianity in Britain and the existence of a highly organised church immediately after Constantine's 312CE conversion and the 313CE Edict of Milan agreeing religious toleration across the eastern and western empires. As Philip Crummy observes:

> "*Evidence of early Christianity in Britain is fairly thin, and it is difficult to tell just how widespread its support turned out to be. However, just one year after the edict of Milan, we find three British bishops and representatives of a fourth attending a major ecclesiastical gathering in Gaul.*" [2]

Thirdly, the external evidence suggests that Christianity was relatively well established in Britain by the end of the second century. Tertullian (160-225CE), a Roman lawyer and church leader in Carthage North Africa, appears to assume that his readers know that Christianity had by then i.e. turn of second/third centuries, reached even to those parts of the British Isles which were beyond the limits of Roman control i.e. Ireland and most of the area north of Hadrian's Wall.

> "*…all the limits of the Spains, and the diverse nations of the Gauls, and the haunts of the Britons—inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ…In all which places the name of the Christ who is already come reigns.*"[3]

Similarly, the early church theologian Origen (c.185-254CE) in his commentary on Ezekiel probably written in Palestine at some point between 232-55CE,[4] implies it was then common knowledge that churches were widespread in the British Isles, which the Romans regarded as being on the very edge of the world. That knowledge of the British church had by the early third century reached both North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean respectively suggests a sizeable British church had existed for some time.

Fourthly, we have claims made by the earliest extant British church histories that Christianity arrived relatively early in Britain. Both Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* completed in 731 CE and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* written about a century and half later, but seemingly drawing on independent sources, refer to a mid-second century request to the bishop of Rome from "Lucius, king of the Britons" (presumably a vassal chieftain) for conversion.[5] This should probably be interpreted as a request for Christian teachers, implying a specific evangelisation strategy. However, it also suggests that Christianity was sufficiently widespread in at least some parts of Britain for Lucius to make such a request. Although *The Ruin of Britain*, an admonitory sermon written by the monk Gildas around 540CE, has been criticised for somewhat implausibly claiming that Christianity arrived in Britain during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius (14-37CE), it almost certainly does reflect a sixth century assumption that Christianity arrived in Britain during the early decades of Christianity.

The wider context of Church history

The absence of archaeological evidence for early Christianity in Britain needs to be viewed in the context of an almost total absence of such evidence in the first century and half of Christianity anywhere else, despite its evident geographical spread during this period. The explanation for this is almost certainly the fear of persecution.

Whilst Judaism was a legally recognised religion in the Roman Empire, a status which Christianity was

Roman building materials were still readily to hand when the doorway to Holy Trinity church was constructed in the centre of Colchester, possibly around 1050 AD

briefly able to shelter beneath, Suetonius' reference to Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from Rome because of tumults concerning "*Chresto" (Iudaeos impulsore Chresto adsidue tumulttuntes Rome expulit)*[6] has been interpreted by NT scholars to mean that after the fifth decade of the first century CE tensions between Christians and Jews in Rome over whether Jesus was the Messiah (Gk. 'Christos') made the distinction more obvious. Christianity, thereafter, increasingly became an illicit religion even though formal state-sponsored persecution, which began under Nero (54-67CE) was far from continuous. Tacitus describes the "*refined torture*" Nero inflicted on Christians, as including being thrown to wild beasts, crucifixion and being set on fire as human torches to light Nero's gardens. He also implies that executions occurred in the Roman Circus with Nero himself dressed as a charioteer to oversee them.[7]

However, what is equally noteworthy is that Roman historians such as Tacitus and Suetonius not merely refer to the persecution of Christians but appear to reflect popular anti-Christian prejudice in the first half of the second century by suggesting it was justified. Tacitus (55-120CE) himself a Roman Senator and Consul describes the Christians persecuted by Nero as "*criminals who deserved exemplary punishment*", while Suetonius (c.70-140CE), a high ranking official of the emperors Trajan (98-117CE) and Hadrian (117-38CE) describes the Christians Nero persecuted as "*a new and malicious superstition*".[8] It could therefore reasonably be expected that Roman officials in Britain would have held similar attitudes towards Christians. Indeed, **Gnaeus Julius** Agricola (40-93CE), Roman governor of Britain between 77-84CE, was Tacitus's father-in-law.

Herein lies the first problem, which is that religious minorities which lack legal recognition do not normally leave visible evidence of their existence. We see the same pattern in more recent church history such as the almost total absence of dissenting chapels built prior to the 1689 Toleration Act in England, as well as in countries today such as Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia where Christians face persecution from state-actors. That is almost certainly why there is virtually no archaeological evidence anywhere for Christianity in the first century and what does possibly occur, such as *sator* squares, the fish symbolising a Christian mnemonic, and possibly pavement carvings pointing to a Pompei house where Christians met,[9] have a somewhat cryptic character.

We should not expect to find church buildings, because Christians met covertly in private houses or remote locations where they would be unlikely to be discovered. The only known example of a church 'building' anywhere in the Roman Empire before the 313 Edict of Milan is in fact part of the interior of a private house which has been converted into a worship space in the mid third century at Dura Europos on the Euphrates.[10]

The evidence we do have for early Christianity in the first century and first half of the second century is almost exclusively manuscript evidence of the New Testament, of which the earliest are papyri dated in the first decades of the second century.[11] However, all of these have been discovered in locations with extremely arid climates such as Egypt. By contrast, in Britain we have no extant manuscripts of any description, on any subject, from the first half of the first millennium.

In other words, the absence of archaeological finds of indisputably Christian pre-Constantinian artefacts, particularly in the first century and half of Christianity is part of a wider pattern across areas of the Mediterranean and Near East where Christianity clearly was established at the time.

The New Testament

The evidence we do have for first century Christianity is the record of early Church expansion in the New Testament (NT), particularly in the Acts of the Apostles, which is widely regarded by NT scholars as having a high degree of historically validity, regardless of whether or not one accepts the associated truth claims.[12] These depict the expansion of Christianity occurring in two main ways:

i) through specific evangelisation strategies, such as the apostle Paul's missionary journeys which occurred between approximately 46-57CE initially to Cyprus and eastern Turkey, then westwards right across the area covered by modern Turkey into Europe and down to the south of Greece,[13] with Paul repeatedly emphasising his intention to then travel to Spain, the Atlantic coastline which, as far as the Roman Empire was concerned, then constituted the "ends of the earth".[14] There is an assumption by NT scholars, based in part on a number of second century church history texts[15] that Paul was probably released from his first Roman imprisonment after two years, the imprisonment being variously dated between 59 and 64 CE, whereupon he undertook a missionary journey to Spain.[16]

ii) through migration across the Roman Empire. The Acts of the Apostles cites Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from Rome (many Christians being Jewish), which appears to have occurred at some point around 49 CE as being a particular cause of this. Acts 18:2 narrates that when Paul arrived at Corinth:

> *"There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome."*

Such people appear to have been highly mobile. Aquilla, moved from the Roman province of Pontus on the Black Sea coast to Rome, then to Corinth and later accompanied Paul to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19,26). Then after the death of Claudius he returned to Rome (Romans 16:3), but later returned to living in Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:19) possibly due to persecution in Rome.

The churches established in major urban centres by either of these approaches, appear to have then planted churches within their region. For example, Paul himself does not appear to have planted the church at Colossae to which he addressed his letter to the Colossians, but it was probably established from the church at Ephesus and in turn oversaw the planting of the churches at nearby Laodicea and Hierapolis (Colossians 2:1; 4:13). Similarly, the Church at Rome, which appears to have been established primarily by migration, appears to have established the church at Pute'oli, around 30 miles from Pompei (Acts 28:13-14).

In other words, in the space of two decades the Christian church spread right across the Mediterranean world to the Atlantic coast, not merely in the major centres visited by Paul, but almost certainly as a local church planting movement carried out both by specific evangelisation strategies and by informal migration of Christians across the empire, some at least of which were highly mobile.

This forms the context against which we have to consider hypotheses related to the arrival of Christianity in Britain. The question therefore arises as to whether it is credible that Christianity having raced right across the Roman Empire to reach the Atlantic coastline by the late 60sCE suddenly came to a juddering halt and did not in any form reach Britain for roughly another century?

Could Christian craftsmen and merchants have come to the new Roman Colonia of Colchester?

The issue becomes acute when one considers:

i) that historians and archaeologists reconstructing the early Roman history of Colchester are drawing on the same Roman historians (particularly Tacitus and Suetonius) as NT scholars reconstructing the background to the Acts of Apostles.

ii) that Claudius's conquest of Britain in 43CE and establishment of the Roman colony at what is now Colchester in 49CE happened immediately before and during this westward expansion of the church across the Roman Empire, described in the NT.

An intriguing possibility arises from the date of the establishment of Colchester as a Roman Colonia in 49CE. The date is in the same timeframe as Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from Rome. The account of Suetonius, archaeological evidence related to the dating of Gallio's proconsulship of Achaia (Acts 18:12) and the early church historian Orosius, point to the expulsion happening in 49CE,[17] i.e. the same year in which Colchester became a Colonia.

It is likely that the entire Jewish-Christian element of the church at Rome was forced to leave Rome, as the context of Paul's letter to the Romans appears to be addressing issues caused by the return of Jewish-Christians after the death of Claudius (54CE) to a church which had been exclusively Gentile-Christians for several years. The question therefore arises as to where Jewish-Christians involved in trade would have gone when ordered to leave Rome. Given that Claudius' conquest of Britain in 43CE, succeeding where Julius Caesar had failed, would have been the talk of the Roman Empire, it is likely that the establishment of Colchester as the empire's newest Colonia in 49CE would have been well known in Rome.

The close proximity of the date of the expulsion with the founding of Colchester as the empire's newest Colonia, raises at least the possibility of whether any such traders migrated here – although the absence of evidence from the period, means that this can never be stated as more than a possibility to be considered. Moreover, even if any such Christians had left any indications of their presence in Colchester, any such evidence would almost certainly have been destroyed in the Boudican revolt of 60-61CE.

As we earlier noted, Gildas reflects a sixth century belief that Christianity arrived in Britain during the earliest decades of Christianity. Although he somewhat implausibly refers to this happening during "*the last days of Tiberius Caesar*". However, it is possible that Gildas has confused the emperor Tiberius Caesar Augustus (14-37CE) with[18] the emperor Tiberius Claudius Caesar (41-54CE). In which case, this is a more plausible scenario involving the migration of Christians across the Roman Empire, for the reasons set out above, with Colchester, as the empire's newest Colonia, being a possible destination. This would then be in the latter part of Claudius reign (i.e. 49-54CE).

This would also be consistent with the claim made by both Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that in the second half of the second century Lucius, a British king wrote to the bishop of Rome requesting conversion. Given the second century hostility of Roman officialdom towards Christianity, the request for conversion would only make sense if there was already a Christian presence in Britain.

Early bishop of Colchester?

The possibility that Christianity may have existed in eastern Britain in the first century and half of Christianity raises a further issue. The list of attendees at the Council of Arles in 314CE includes a bishop of the city of *Colonia Londinensium*:

> *"Eborius episcopus de civitate Eboracensi provincia Brittania*
>
> *Restitutus episcopus de civitate Londiensi provincia suprascripta*
>
> *Adelphius episcopus de civitate Colonia Londiniensium*
>
> *Exinde Sacerdos presbyter Arminius diaconus.*
>
> *[Eborius, Bishop of the city of York of the province of Britain.*
>
> *Resitutus, Bishop of the city of London of the above-named province.*
>
> *Adelphius, bishop of the city of Colonia Londinensium,*
>
> *Furthermore, Sacerdos the priest and Arminius the deacon"].*[19]

In a pioneering study of Christianity in Roman-Britain Toynbee argued in 1953 that this referred to Colchester, which as the senior Colonia in Britain was likely to have had a bishop, possibly the first such bishop in England.[20] However, more recently the assumption that Christianity slowly filtered into Britain at some point in the second half of the second century has favoured this being a reference to Lincoln, or possibly Cirencester due to Colchester's declining importance in the third century.[21] However, if Christianity had arrived in Colchester in the first century, then it is extremely plausible that a bishopric would have emerged there.

However, it is unlikely that it survived the Anglo-Saxon invasions. Whilst there are a number of possible explanations for the destruction of Duncan's Gate in Colchester,[22] a range of evidence points to widespread destruction of churches and church organisation following the Saxon invasions. Gildas's describes the specific targeting of churches, with

> *"the inhabitants, along with the bishops of the church, both priests and people, whilst swords gleamed on every side and flames crackled, were together mown down to the ground."* [23]

Similar descriptions are provided by Welsh poetic sources.[24] While Bede indicates that when Augustine landed in 597CE the nearest British bishops were in the Welsh border regions.[25]

Conclusions

What is clear is that that the absence of indisputably Christian archaeological evidence in the first two centuries is precisely what we would expect from a church forced to operate in the shadows and lacking legality. It is also the pattern found across much of the Roman Empire where Christianity clearly did exist. As such, it cannot be used to discount the accounts of historical sources indicating an earlier arrival of Christianity in Britain.

In fact, the idea that Christianity raced across the Mediterranean to the Atlantic coastline in the space of two decades, then came to a juddering halt for

the next century or so, before slowly permeating to Britain towards the end of the second century lacks credibility. Indeed, the trading links between the new Colonia and the rest of the empire make it highly likely that it did arrive earlier, though more likely by individual migration than as a specific evangelisation strategy. Although it is impossible to know whether the founding of the Colonia in the same timeframe as Claudius expelled Jews from Rome led to the arrival of Jewish-Christian merchants, it is clearly a possibility that cannot be discounted.

Finally, this in itself adds a degree of plausibility to Toynbee's suggestion that Adelphius, the British representation at the 314CE Council of Arles, was a bishop of Colchester.

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In Brief

Image above:

The Portable Antiquities Scheme has received an unusual trader's token dating to 1666, 19.5mm in diameter.

The obverse shows three tobacco pipes with the legend in the border: '+ MILES . HACKLVITT. 1666.' The reverse continues the legend: 'HIS HALFE PENNY. + IN . BILREKEY. IN. ESSEX'. This spelling of 'Billericay' is no more outlandish than many others - Bulerycay in 1539 AD and Billyrecha in 1436 according to Reaney's Place-Names of Essex.The pipes are said to show that the issuer was a churchwarden. The reference is ESS-3FF1DA.

Image above:

Another recent find notified to the PAS is this curious heraldic mount which was found at Navestock, dating from 1250-1400 AD. It is heater-shaped, like so many mediaeval horse-harness mounts and pendants, but it was mounted by means of three spurs radiating from the angles and each terminating in a pierced lobe. The spurs are all angled so that the mount stood proud of the surface – probably a strap or part of the horse's tack – to which it was attached. It is 54mm long (2 ¼") so not a large or impressive emblem.

The display surface was originally enamelled in red and the design is 'gules, three lions passant guardant argent' although it is possible that the present white appearance of the enamel is due to degradation and that the lions were once yellow: if so, they would be the arms of the king or his household.

Image left:

Cotswold Archaeology's excavations ahead of road-building near Harlow uncovered an assemblage relating to a settlement site of Early Iron Age date (c. 700-400 BCE). The vast majority of artefacts were ceramic sherds and loom weights but one notable exception was a beautifully preserved copper-alloy pin excavated from a pit, which was probably utilised to fasten clothing. It bears a small group of raised, moulded ridges at the point where its wound head meets the shank.

This pin is of the 'ring-headed' type - well-known throughout Britain and Ireland, clustering in Wessex and the upper Thames Valley as well as eastern England.

From Highwood (near Ingatestone) comes a rather lovely bronze harness fitting, probably a bridle cheek-piece and one of a matched pair. Its is 90mm long and 13mm thick and has a elliptical aperture at the centre (through which the bridle passed). The central area is decorated on one side with a band of lozenge-shaped cells in three tiers, each filled with enamel: a pale blue-white in the median row and red in the outer rows.

These objects are sometimes ascribed to the very end of the Iron Age, perhaps the early 1st century AD, although it is also possible that they continued to be made under Roman rule. (There is an assumption that those with red enamel were pre-Roman and the polychrome examples came later, but this remains to be tested.) Horse-breeding was apparently one of the mainstays of economic life in Britain at that time and the provision of suitably impressive fittings was important.