

ESSEX JOURNAL



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Greensted Church Revisited

Michael Leach, p19



THE LITTLE CHURCH AT GREENSTED, ESSEX, RESTORED.

Farewell to Alms: Part II Neil McCarthy, p4



9th & 10th Barons
Robert Petre



10th Baron
Robert Petre



17th Baron
Joseph Petre

Also in this issue:

- The “ISLAND BLOCK” in Chelmsford High Street – a re-evaluation of construction history
- PLEASANCE WEST
A Story of Tudor Mobility and the effect of the Vagrancy laws
- Book Reviews

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



It will not have escaped your notice that the Autumn '22 issue was rather late reaching subscribers. This was due to a combination of factors (family illness, Royal Mail disruption, Yuletide excess) which all serve to remind us that even a well-

oiled and highly-tuned machine such as the ESAH can occasionally spring a leak without warning. I hope that the timely arrival of the present issue will compensate for it. In this issue you will find the customary array of fine offerings. To set the ball rolling, Neil McCarthy provides the second part of his illuminating history of the Ingatestone Almshouses and their founders, the Petre family of Ingatestone Hall. Part I brought us to the 18th century and the eve of the social changes which were to transform the living conditions of the poor in rural Essex. The story continues through the 19th century and the transformative effect of the coming of the Eastern Counties Railway – and here Neil has discovered some previously unknown material including the original railway inspectorate report; the revision court newspaper extract on the right to vote; the 1881 census comparisons. He remarks: *“They’re all freshly uncovered items that, to my knowledge, have not previously been documented anywhere. Certainly, no trace can be found in the ERO, the Petre files nor any of the available literature I’ve researched – not even a hint in the transactions of the usually very thorough local history society which has examined the Petre-Railways feud in depth.”* Fascinating stuff which is bound to be of great help to future researchers.

Next, Peter Wynn takes a fresh look at the buildings in Chelmsford High Street, specifically a block which has so far received only superficial treatment, building on the work of previous researchers and extending the known history of the site which begins in the late 16th century. The plot passed from residential to commercial purposes over the centuries and Peter takes us through the various iterations of its usage into the 21st century. Detailed investigation of this kind is a painstaking but very rewarding

business; I hope the story presented here will inspire others to carry out something similar in their own neighbourhoods.

The wooden church situated in its rural setting at Greenstead near Ongar is unique in Essex – indeed, in Britain. It has been known to and speculated upon by antiquaries for more than three centuries, and various dates of construction proposed – often relating to its supposed association with King Edmund of East Anglia, whose body is said to have rested here on its post-mortem travels. With the introduction of the discipline of dendrochronology in the mid-20th century, it appeared that the guesswork could finally be taken out of the issue and some facts established

regarding the age of the timber – this proved an optimistic assessment from the infancy of the science. Michael Leach brings us up-to-date on the results of more recent investigations. Whether the church is the sole survivor of a vanished English building tradition or whether it is the result of a one-off commission by a Scandinavian-born local resident remains to be seen.

The notion of an immobile rural population tied to the estates of Tudor England is an enduring one, but Ian Beckwith shows that it is not the whole story. The harsh and worsening climatic conditions of the time were just one of the factors that prompted desperate people to set off in search of a new

life. He takes the case-study of Pleasance West, a Lincolnshire woman who set off for Kent with her family and died on the way: clearly, such people had enough knowledge to believe that the journey was achievable and the eventual reward of a safe home was worth the evident danger of a life on the road.

We have a new clutch of book reviews and it is encouraging to see that the cottage industry of local history research and publication still exists alongside formal, academic treatments.

Erratum: The portrait of Lord Petre which appeared in the previous issue should have been credited to the artist, Paul Brason.

‘ The harsh and worsening climatic conditions of the time were just one of the factors that prompted desperate people to set off in search of a new life ’



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Cover illustration above:
Greensted church from the south after restoration

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
Farewell to Alms - Part II Neil McCarthy	4
The "ISLAND BLOCK" in Chelmsford High Street Peter Wynn	14
Greensted Church Revisited Michael Leach	19
PLEASANCE WEST A Story of Tudor Mobility Ian Beckwith	26

In Brief	31
-----------------	-----------

Book Reviews	32
---------------------	-----------

The World of Disney: From Antiquarianism to Archaeology

Charters Of Barking Abbey and Waltham Holy Cross

Nehemiah Perry and his Gypsy Bride: adultery, divorce and homicide in nineteenth-century Strethall

Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Stations in Essex



Above left: 'The Anatomy Lesson' – by George Romney, 9th Baron Robert Petre & 10th Baron Robert Petre

Above portrait of the 10th Baron Robert Petre as an adult



Left:
17th Baron Joseph Petre

Farewell to Alms – Part II

Neil McCarthy

The first part of this account of the Ginge-Petre Almshouses began in 1555 and ended with the 1798 case of a destitute father and his children despatched to the local workhouse by the Ingatestone Vestry. It resumes in 1801 with the death at his Park Lane, London home of the almshouse patron, Lord Robert, 9th Baron Petre of Writtle.

Lord Robert, 9th Baron Petre of Writtle

His eldest son's inheritance, alongside the barony, was substantial wealth and extensive land holdings in Essex and elsewhere.¹ The title also bequeathed responsibility for the almshouses. Here the priest in charge was the Anglican parish rector John Lewis. Of later significance, missionary Catholic priests were openly administering for the first time since the Elizabethan era to 60 communicants at Ingatestone Hall's chapel.²

Providing aid for the impoverished, reliant on the parish for subsistence, was a longstanding vexation for vestry and ratepayers. Grievances shared nationally resulting from a relief system still operating under Tudor legislation.³ Fryerning, the borders of which were encircled by Ingatestone until civic merger of the parishes in 1894, was in a similar fix. The separate vestries investigated amalgamating resources, leading only to a jointly funded fire engine.³ The workhouse regimes remained separate despite the premises being located a few hundreds yard apart. Fryerning overseers discussed badging the poor in 1809 in anticipation shame would discourage claims for assistance.⁴

Minutes of Ingatestone's regular meetings in 1802, Rev. Lewis always in the chair, list goods or cash allotted to named recipients. As many as 15 different individuals sought assistance each month. In February, Purvis's boy was to have a pair of shoes; Widow Smith and four others varying lengths of cloth, stuff or flannel; Purvis also had a stack of wood, while Reynolds was given a gallon of beer. In March, 1/6d for six weeks was allowed for Eave's daughter if taken out of the poor house and 'the almshouse poor 6 pecks of coals each'; among others, J. Penny's widow 'a half guinea per week for herself and children till Easter next', and to Collar's children a pair of stockings each.⁵

Inventories of the workhouse were taken annually. In July of that year:

Kitchen, Large Kitchen, Spinning Room, Pantry, Cellar, Bake House, Wood House, Parlor, first front chamber (2 bedsteads 2 feather beds); 2nd front chamber (2 bedsteads, 1 feather bed, 1 flock bed), 3rd front chamber (1 straw bed, 1 bed, 1 feather bed), 4th front chamber (1 four post bedstead, 1 stump bed). An annexe at Mill Green Common served as a laundry.

William, the 11th Baron, succeeded in 1809 as a sixteen year old still at school, his land agent acting

as intermediary for the Rev Lewis in charge of the ten almshouse occupants. The Rector was also renting almshouse fields opposite the Stock Lane cottages, a Mr. Morton farming them on his behalf.

Regular income from endowed land covered the charity's outgoings. Annual receipts totalled £160. 0s. 7d, paid by farmers Edward Thompson of Buttsbury and John Nabbs in Mountnessing, Rev. Lewis's lease, the Crondon Park estate at Stock plus tithes, and quit rents.

Expenses included the services of local tradesmen for upkeep and supplies. Thomas Bridge received £13.10s. for five cauldrons of coal, the same sum went to Mr. Langley for 1000 faggots of wood. Mary Rook, responsible for carting the faggots and 35 stacks of firewood to Stock Lane, earned £6. 15s.⁶

Attaining his 21st birthday and marriage to Lady Frances in 1815, Lord William's signature appears beneath completed almshouse accounts for that and subsequent years.⁷ Having borne four healthy children, Frances died in childbirth in January 1822. In April the following year, Lord William remarried. With Lady Emma he was to have a further eight children.

A charitable gesture by Lord William occurred in time for Christmas 1823 after a survey of the number of poor in Ingatestone (76), Mountnessing (93) and Fryerning (22). His stewards distributed 191 portions of fresh beef and one penny for each child. Cattle farmer John Offin of Brentwood provided 200 stones of meat at a cost to Lord Petre of £33.6s..8d (5d per 1b). The children's 1d was secured from an added £1.⁸

Eastern Counties Railway Company

Legislation enacted in the 1834 Poor Law encouraged Ingatestone and neighbouring vestries to dispose of their own workhouses and transfer occupants to the new Chelmsford Union building, capable of accommodating 400 inmates from 31 surrounding parishes and opened in 1837. The Mill Green wash house was sold and the High Street tenements renovated and let to a private landlord. Seven men and a woman, aged and infirm, were resident at closure.⁹ Poverty, of course, continued but extreme cases were now removed from public view to behind workhouse walls in the county town.

Beside the 1834 reforms, other events were leading towards major changes for the Ginge-Petre charity. The 1829 Emancipation Act cleared most obstacles

preventing Catholics from participating in civic society, permitting Lord Petre to take his seat in the House of Lords. A new priest, Fr. (later Canon) George Last, ambitious to restore the position of Catholicism within the community, was installed to lead the Ingatestone Mission in 1832. And the Eastern Counties Railway Company (ECR), announced in 1836 it was to build a line between London and East Anglia.⁹

The ECR's directors faced a formidable adversary in Lord William who objected to their plans. Work on the railway started in 1837, routed via Stratford, Ilford, Romford, Brentwood and on to Chelmsford. By 1838 the ECR had to cede to Lord Petre's demands in order to cross separate tracts of his estates. Additionally, the almshouses stood where a 25ft deep cutting was needed for track with platforms alongside.¹⁰

Lord Petre compelled the ECR to pay £120,000 compensation before allowing construction in the Warley area. With that dispute settled, the ECR encountered further intransigence. These disagreements also brought Lord Petre opposition from Ingatestone townfolk including another notable local land owner, Mr. John Disney (1779-1857).¹¹

Lord Petre's conduct in the affair was subject to an enquiry by Major-General Charles Pasley, Inspector General of Railways. He reported:

[T]he inhabitants of Ingatestone and of eight adjoining parishes representing that they have been deprived of the use of 24 [stage] coaches, which formerly passed through that town in both directions, to their grievous injury, and that the Eastern Counties Railway had opened a very imperfect station, or rather a substitute for one, at a bridge in Stock Lane, Ingatestone, at which place being within a mile of Ingatestone Hall, the Company were prohibited by Parliament from erecting a station...without the consent of Lord Petre, which, withheld, the matter was referred to the Court of Chancery, who issued an injunction, which, without preventing the Company from taking up or setting down passengers or parcels there, or from issuing tickets and receiving money in an ancient building [the remaining standing former almshouses] near the said bridge, restrained them in all other respects... the present state of the access to the railway at this point is so bad and unsafe, that people are deterred from coming to Ingatestone, and that the trade of the place is declining, and the value of property depreciated in consequence.

The Major-General added that attempts to improve the temporary station were defeated by Lord Petre's injunction, forcing the ECR to remove wooden steps installed over the earthen slope from Stock Lane to the tracks below. In retaliation, the company erected a 'conspicuous placard on a board' informing of the intention to immediately improve safety, access and shelter if they could only obtain Lord's Petre's consent. The report's final paragraph states:

'I am sorry to say, that there appears to be little cordiality between Lord Petre and the Eastern Counties Railway Company... it is to be hoped that his lordship may be induced to withdraw the injunction...which would be an act of kindness to the people of that town and of the vicinity'.¹²

Lord Petre did not relent and Ingatestone's Station was built on his preferred site. The charity meanwhile received £965 from the sale of the cottages, Lord Petre adding £360 interest accrued from his compensation award towards their replacements. Three of the original brick and clay-tiled cottages of 1557 are extant (the ECR intended to utilise them as waiting rooms and a ticket office) and are now converted to two attached private homes.¹³ Six of the displaced alms-folk were named as William Murdock, Thomas Clarke, Frederick Atkins, William Nunn, Joseph Elliston and Widow Wood.¹⁵

Alms Row

Petre's land agent Joseph Coverdale extracted further minor sums on behalf of the almshouses. Contracts earning 1s. a year each were negotiated in 1857 for ECR access to a ditch, a spring, and fence on lease lands in the Billericay area during construction of the Shenfield-Southend branch.¹⁴ Fr. Last, backed by Lord Petre, and freed from pre-Emancipation sanctions, sought an understanding with Rector Lewis to allow Catholics to regain control of almshouse appointments. Rev. Lewis was amenable.¹⁵ The closure of the Stock Lane site and completion in 1840 of replacement dwellings called Alms Row was an opportune time to formalise the new arrangement.

Built on three sides of an open garden quadrangle, the 1840 almshouses provided cottage-style accommodation for 12 with a chapel at the centre of the High Street-facing block. From the outset, Alms Row was under new governance in which the Rector had no place. The 12 cottages were allotted to three men and seven women funded by the Ginge-Petre foundation, and two further beneficiaries sponsored by Lady Emma at Thorndon Hall. Lord William, under the revised Body Corporate registered with the Charity Commissioners, was again solely responsible for appointments; Fr. Last, priest-in-charge under the title Treasurer and Governor. Seven of the residents were eligible to join Lord Petre and the priest as voting members of the Body Corporate. Under the new constitution beneficiaries were to be baptised and practising Catholics, preference given to those living on Petre estates. Only unmarried or widowed candidates above the age of 40 and content to lead a chaste life could apply. Not only was bad behaviour cause for dismissal but religious good works compulsory. Prayer every morning and night, attendance at all services in the chapel, and care for each other when sick. Fr. Last was to dispense monthly pensions, allowances for firewood, and the livery alms-folk were required to wear.¹⁶ A later priest-in-charge wrote: '*This is the only case of a charity, founded by a Catholic, being lost and again recovered after 260 years*'.¹⁷

Expansion of the voting franchise under the Reform Act of 1832 was tested by four of the Alms Row residents

and their priest. Registered Ingatestone voters in the 1826 Parliamentary election for the rotten borough of Maldon totalled six. This rose to 27 for the 1836 election for the Parliamentary South Essex seat. Later that year Fr. Last and the Almshouses four sought to have themselves added to the roll under a clause allowing possessors of freehold property to register. Objections were raised by the Conservative party leading to appearance before the Court of Revision at Chelmsford.¹⁸ A newspaper reported:

At the Revising Barrister's Court on Tuesday last, before Mr. Espinasse, the Rev. George Edward Last claimed to vote as Priest to the Ingatestone Almshouses, which was endowed with freehold lands in the parishes of Mountnessing and Buttsbury. This was objected to by Mr. Herringham, on the part of the Conservatives. It appeared that the office had always heretofore been held by the Rector of Ingatestone, but the present incumbent having abandoned it, Mr. Last was appointed to succeed him by Lord Petre in February last. On the production of the deed of appointment, it was objected by Mr. Herringham that it was invalid, not being on sufficient stamp, and therefore he contended, Mr. Last not having been legally appointed, his claim to the vote must be disallowed. On the part of the Reformers, Mr. Copland urged that the deficiency in the amount of the stamp did not invalidate the deed but only prevented its being received in evidence, and that he had, by evidence of Mr. Last himself, sufficiently proved his possession of the office and its emoluments, the claim must be admitted. Mr. Espinasse, after conferring with his colleague, Mr. Reynolds, coinciding in the view of the case Mr. Herringham submitted that if the appointment were valid, yet, as it did not appear to be for life, or quad sine die disce, it could not confer a vote. Upon reference to the deed, it was found that the office was there expressed to be given "as the same as heretofore been held by another other person," and it appearing that had always been held for life, the objection was overruled and the claims allowed. The case occupied the attention of the Barrister for a considerable time, and was argued with much dexterity by the professional gentlemen on both sides; the successful, however, enjoying the advantage of the valuable suggestions of J. Disney, Esq.

Objections were also made by Mr. Herringham to the names of four persons, occupants of the Almshouses who claimed to vote on the grounds they were appointed for life. Mr. Coverdale, Lord Petre's Steward, deposed that he had heard an attorney read and translate the charter of the Almshouses, which is in Latin, and had himself read the statutes (a power to make which was given by the charter to Sir W. Petre and his successors), by which the appointment was declared to be for life. Neither the charter nor the statutes were produced. It was stated that one of the claimants was in receipt of parochial relief.

The claims were ultimately allowed; one being expunged as he had not been in possession six months, as required by the Reform Act.¹⁹

George Mayhew, Joseph Turnedge, and Joseph Wicknar, listed as freeholders of the Almshouse duly appeared on the next register of voters. They were followed in later years by Thomas and Joseph Wood, Henry Clarke, Isaac Payne, John Tierman, Maylar Turner and Thomas Rumball. During a time when the number of eligible Ingatestone voters didn't exceed 30, they were in esteemed company.

1881 Census

A demographic comparison of the 12 residents occupying the almshouse cottages and the eight inmates from Ingatestone committed to the Chelmsford workhouse is provided by the 1881 census. Listed under the Alms Row address as pensioners of Lord Petre's charity, adding place of birth are:

Susan Morton, unmarried, aged 70 – Ingatestone, Essex

Frances Baker, widow, 70 – East Horndon, Essex

Elizabeth Butler, 16 (in an exception to the rules, Elizabeth, a housemaid, granddaughter of Frances Baker, allowed to stay due to unemployment) – Brentwood, Essex

Mary Dew, widow, 77 – Fyerning, Essex

George Brown, widower, 64 – Great Warley, Essex

Timothy Casey, widower, 75 – Kilfinane, Ireland

Patrick O'Brien, widower, 80 – Cork, Ireland

George. Prentice, widower, 87 – Paglesham, Essex

Eliza Smullons, widow, 52 – Dublin, Ireland

Sarah Shuttleworth, widow, 76. – Kempton, Oxfordshire

Jane Tiler, widow, 77 - Ingrave, Essex

Anne Wall, widow, 89 - Kilkenny, Ireland

In the workhouse, from a total of 255 inmates, the Ingatestone contingent:

Cornelius Adkins, widower, 74, agricultural labourer

Charlie Balls, widower, 65, agricultural labourer

Sophia Clover, widow, 70, needlewoman

Lucy Eckworth, unmarried, 59, cook & domestic servant (she had been in the workhouse for six years, unable to be released due to 'fits')

Sarah Finch, unmarried, 47, labelled 'imbecile'

George Jarvis, 12, a scholar (he is with other members of the Jarvis family shown as committed from Springfield and Brentwood)

Eliza Murdock, unmarried, 59, cook & domestic servant (she is listed with George Muddock, 67, agricultural labourer, committed from Mountnessing)

James Whybrow, widower, 76, agricultural labourer.

Emphasising continuing commitment of the Petres to their traditional faith, the 13th Baron was an ordained priest when succeeding to the title in 1884. Seldom at Thorndon Hall due to involvement in re-establishing Catholic schooling, he retired in ill-health to the The Hyde at Ingatestone, dying in 1893 aged 46. He was the first catholic clergyman since the Reformation to take his seat in the House of Lords.

Alms Row pensioners were joined by a young married couple and their even younger servant in apparent breach of the rules in the early 1890s. Of the three male residents, one was 24 year old Charles Howell from Maldon, owner of a bakery in the town. With him was wife Ada, 21, from Ingatestone and their servant girl aged 16. The family moved to their own home later in the decade. Also resident, former schoolmistress Margaret Hedley, 63, from Liverpool, first of several spinster teachers who retired to the cottages during the next century.

The Almshouses in the 20th Century

Further irregularity occurred in the years before World War 1 when a father and son occupied two of the cottages, using one as a photographic studio. Widower Adam Quilter, a retired picture framer from Chelmsford was sharing his accommodation at Alms Row with his professional photographer son, George.²⁰

A branch of the Petre family occupied a mansion, named Tor Bryan after Sir William's Devon birthplace, close by the almshouses. Edward Petre, 26, a pioneering aviator, was killed in 1912 when his plane crashed in Yorkshire. After the funeral service in Ingatestone Hall, his coffin was borne to the Catholic graveyard in Fryerning. A member of the family recalled, '*The cortege... turned right. It passed the square with the Ginge-Petre flint-grey brick Victorian almshouses... Here the old residents stood to watch the procession pass. From the small chapel in the centre of the square the bell tolled.*'²¹

The 17th Baron, Lord Joseph inherited at age one when his father Lionel, an Army Captain, died of wounds suffered in the Battle of Loos, France, in 1915. The Almshouses were in the care of Canon Roderick Grant during Joseph's minority. The Canon continued to serve as Priest-Governor until 1934. He wrote:

The priest and the poor are the absolute owners of the lands and property. Lord Petre is the Patron who reserves to himself and his heirs the right to make new rules or alter the old ones, as occasion should demand. The inmates are appointed by Lord Petre on the recommendation of the priest, and persons inhabiting parishes on the Petre estates have preference. They receive 18s. 6d. at Christmas now instead of the livery they were formerly obliged to wear. The priest is appointed governor of the Charity, and is to watch over the keeping of the rules as well as make all payments to the inmates. Each house consists of a bedroom, sitting room and scullery, and in addition to this the inmates receive £1 each month, coal five times a year, and faggots. Nowadays all who are seventy years of age can obtain the old age

pension in addition to what they have and can earn. The priest and the seven members of the corporation must approve and sign every lease or sale of property with the seal of the Charity, which is the Petre arms, gules, a bend or between escallops argent, the shield supported by an angel; and bears the legend, "Sigill domi hospitalis de Ingatestone. W.P." ²²

The almshouse chapel underwent repair in 1922. Overgrown ivy cleared, brickwork restored and windows replaced. Grant then said Mass there three times a week.

Vacancies were oversubscribed in the following decades. Brentwood Diocese offered first choice to priests approaching retirement. Widowed mothers of priests were among those granted appointments. Clergy throughout Essex and the east London parishes were invited to nominate candidates. But circumstances change, and through the 1950s and 60s rising costs of maintenance and utilities outstripped the charity's ability to pay its way. By the 1970s, total renovation of the interior and exterior was necessary if the almshouses were to remain habitable. Vacancies were left unfilled as the fabric deteriorated. Facing closure, sale and probable demolition, the now 17th Baron, Lord Joseph Petre proposed a solution. He offered to partner with the Bishop of Brentwood in reforming the statutes. The Diocese donated £10,000, the Trustees secured a £49,000 government grant, £5,000 from the Almshouse Association and with loans from Essex County Council and others the buildings were fully restored.²³

English Heritage awarded three separate Grade II listings for the range of buildings in 1976.²⁴ In March 1977, the Home Secretary laid before Parliament the change in status. Citing statutes of 1557, 1564, 1563, and 1840: *The corporation of The Priest and Poor of Ginge-Petre in the County of Essex constituted by the above mentioned Letters Patent dated the 7th July 1557 is hereby dissolved.* ²⁵

Under the new constitution Lord Petre was Trustee for life with the Bishop and three other clergy completing membership. The Trust's property consisted of 2,540 square yards containing the 12 almshouses and chapel and 20.3 acres — rented by a farmer for £140 yearly— in Stock Lane. The same land as was endowed in 1557.

To qualify, '*alms people shall be poor persons of the Roman Catholic faith who are not less than 50 years of age*'. Customary monetary pensions and allowances were ended. Residents henceforth made weekly payments from their own resources to cover maintenance and other essential services or risk dismissal.

Trusteeship under the chairmanship of Lord Petre (since 1989, John the 18th Baron) evolved to consist of just one priest, volunteer laity filling the other places. It was these Trustees who in 2019 began a review of how to better care for the varying welfare needs of the residents and upkeep of the buildings. During the Covid pandemic regular Trust meetings were transferred from the diocesan offices at Brentwood Cathedral to the

FAREWELL TO ALMS – PART TWO

more spacious Summer Parlour at Ingatestone Hall. It was there in 2021 the decision was made to approach Legacy East Almshouse Partnership (LEAP), a trust based in Essex already managing 14 other almshouses. Permissions were gained from the Bishop and the Charity Commission to complete the transfer.

The Ginge-Petre charity and assets were assigned to LEAP with replacement trustees taking control under a new management structure. Minutes of the final meeting read, 'Lord Petre has all Trustees present to confirm they wish to stand down with effect from July 1st 2022 authorising the Legacy East Almshouse Project to take over the management of the Trust. Trustees agreed unanimously and all resigned. The Clerk to advise the Charity Commission of the change'.

Sir William Petre's signature at Ingatestone Hall authorised the establishment of the almshouses. Lord Petre, his direct descendant, signed the document that some 465 years later ensured the charity remains able to serve its founder's purpose.²⁶

Ingatestone Parish February 7th

Ordered that Mr Martin to have 10/6
 Pines to have 2 1/2 of shoes.
 It was agreed to pay the Overseer of Inquiring
 the Balance of Poor rate due from the Paupers
 of this Parish
 Widow Smith to have 5 1/2 of cloth
 Pate to have 3 8ths of cloth
 Pines to have 1/2 sack of wood
 Prolly to have 2 8ths of cloth
 Chapman to have 2 1/2 of cloth 5 1/2 of stuff
 3 1/2 of flannel
 Ben to have 3 8ths of cloth
 Reynolds to have a gallon of beer
 John Lewis Bret
 Joseph Ward
 William Fletcher

Cloth, shoes, firewood, even beer, dispensed by the Vestry overseers from the poor rate. ERO D/P 31/8/3

Dist. - continued	£	s	d
of disbursements bro. forward	239	11	2
house poor 1 month's pay (asp. may 1 st last)	3	5	0
right groats p. month each, as heretofore	1	6	8
other poor right groats p. month each as before	0	16	0
bridges for 2 1/2 chaldron of coals deliv. house poor in 1805 - in lieu of paying the arrears of additional pay (£1.5 p. month) i. 1 st 1805, the date from which the arrears to take place, to may 1 st 1806 when it paid to them as before entered	7	6	3
house poor 1 month's pay	3	5	0
right groats p. month each, as heretofore	1	6	8
other poor right groats p. month each as before	0	16	0
house poor 1 month's pay	3	5	0
right groats each p. month, as heretofore	1	6	8
other poor right groats each p. month as before	0	16	0
house poor 1 month's pay	3	5	0
other poor right groats each p. month as before	0	16	0
other poor right groats each p. month as heretofore	1	6	8
Total	268	8	1

Disbursements recorded in the Ginge-Petre charity accounts ledger totalled £268. 8s 1d. In 1805/6. Groats (4d) were used in the tally of monthly pensions.

Vestry Room April 7th 1804

At a Vestry meeting held this day present
 to the above Notice it was resolved that the
 of this Parish be requested to enquire of Mr. Power
 the Poor Law Commissioner whether or no the
 Parishioners have it in their power to take
 or sell the workhouse, it having been
 up by the Union, the proposition of selling
 no longer necessary for the paupers
 and the Question is requested to make the above
 enquiry by letter, to lay Mr. Power's reply
 before the Vestry.
 The Question is proposed
 it is agreed by the parishioners present that
 if the workhouse shall be sold, that such
 proceeds shall be by public competition
 or auction; but that must be determined
 Mr. Power's opinion
 but if Mr. Power shall say that the Parishioners
 have the power of determining the workhouse to
 owned by the Parishioners to resolve that it
 shall be sold by public competition or auction
 pursuance of the foregoing resolutions
 the Parishioners present
 Messrs. Chairman John Jeff
 Corn. Peter John Jeff
 C. J. Holcombe Philip W. as man
 J. Keene N. Turner W. Windley

Vestry entry for 1804 shows the almshouse 'poor' being included in the Overseer's distribution or relief.

FAREWELL TO ALMS – PART TWO

136 Ingatestone Parish April 17th
 In consequence of the Parishioners
 not coming to any determination as to
 the disposal of the poorhouse on the
 14th Instant; another meeting has been
 determined upon for that purpose, and
 the following is a Copy of the Notice given
 in Church on this day —
 I give Notice that there will be
 a vestry meeting on Thursday next at
 eleven O'clock in the forenoon, to determine
 as to the propriety of selling or disposing
 of the poorhouse — {John Cable
 Church Clerk
 Guardians of the Poor
 for this Parish —
 George Wright
 Vestry Room April 21st 1836
 at a vestry meeting held this day pursuant
 to the above notice it was resolved the Rev-
 John Lewis in the Chair — it was proposed by
 the Chairman and seconded by Cornelius Butler
 Esq^r that the Poorhouse should be let
 at Public Auction on the 10th day of May

Minutes of two further meetings in April 1836 that conclude with the long-serving Rev Lewis successfully proposing the buildings (Brooke's Cottages) be let or otherwise sold at public auction

air of the Poorhouse being vacated
 and also that notice be given to the
 residing in the poor house at Mill
 Green being about to take place & to
 be required to quit their present ha-
 bitations on the 29th next ensuing
 further agreed that when the date
 shall be fixed the auction shall be
 held at the Lord Petres Arms in this Parish
 John Self
 present — J Lewis Rector
 Rob^t Bailey

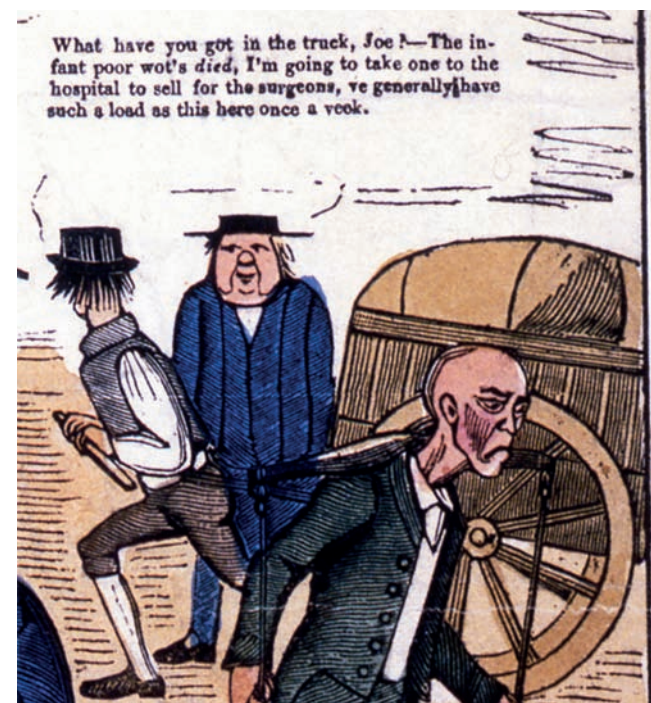
Extract of another 1836 Vestry minute in which the redundant premises are to be auctioned at an inn then called The Petre's Arms (license John Self) in the High Street. Also the inmates of the Mill Green Common wash house annexe given notice to quit by late September

No. 151 FIRST INSTALMENT.
 CHELMSFORD UNION—Parish of Ingatestone & Fryerning.
 Received the 11 day of August 1890
 of Mr. Trustees Roman Catholic School the
 sum of _____ Pounds, Three Shillings, and
 Four Pence, in respect of the POOR RATE of the above Parish
 made the 25th day of April, 1890, at 1s. 4d. in the Pound.
 £ s. d.
 Upon £ 5 Assessment ...
 Arrear of former Rate ...
 £
 1st Instalment now due.
 Allowance to Owner on Cottages at £25 per cent. 3/4
 Total £
 William Cliff
 Assist. Overseer.

Almshouse accounts for 1890 have this receipt attached (made out to the Trustees Roman Catholic School) from the Chelmsford Union for a discounted payment in respect of the Poor Rate



Brooke's Cottages in the High Street. These four linked tenements served as the Ingatestone workhouse, also known as the poor house, until 1836. The tower of the parish church is beyond



Detail from the poster on back cover. See back cover for the full hand-drawn poster

FAREWELL TO ALMS – PART TWO



The Petre family French motto *Sans Dieu Rien (Without God, Nothing)* appears on the Clock Gate entrance to Ingatestone Hall.



General view of the Almshouses as they appear now. The old water pump mechanism is encased in a blue wooden box sited in front of the Chapel



Three of the original almshouse cottages, converted to two private homes, remain on the original site chosen by Sir William Hunter in Stock Lane, Ingatestone. Built in 1556, they avoided demolition in 1838 when the Eastern Counties Railway retained the buildings with the intention of turning them into waiting rooms and a ticket office for a new station alongside. Seven others almshouse cottages and various outbuildings located to the immediate left of this scene were razed and a 25ft deep, 63ft wide cutting made to accommodate tracks and make-shift platforms. Lord William forced the railway to abandon plans to establish the station at this site.



Almshouse Chapel and general view of the Almshouses

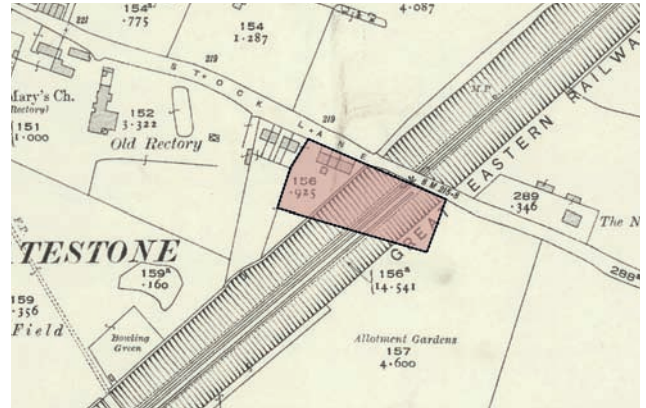


Robert, 9th Baron Petre - Petre Collection

FAREWELL TO ALMS – PART TWO



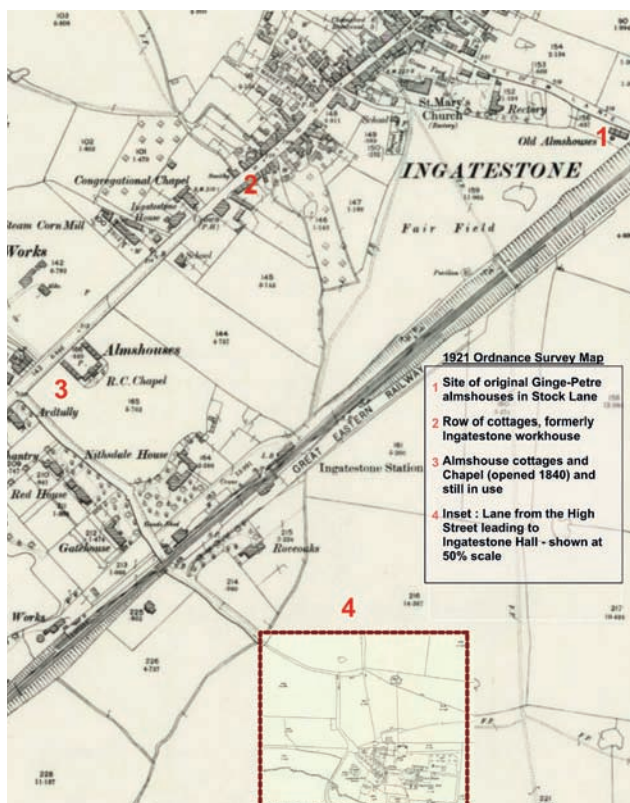
Almshouse gowns. Undated photo, presumed circa 1900, shows women dressed in almshouse livery uniform at the communal water pump with its elaborate stone surround. The redundant pump's metal work is now secured in a wooden case in the same position in front of the 1840 chapel entrance. Author's possession.



The shaded area shows the parcel of almshouse land lost to the railway



The Anatomy Lesson – by George Romney. Lord Robert (9th Baron) and son Robert (10th Baron). The Levy Collection at McMasters Museum of Art, Hamilton, Ontario



OS map of the Ingatestone area, 1921



Robert, 10th Baron - Petre Collection

FAREWELL TO ALMS – PART TWO



William, 11th Baron - Petre Collection



William, 12th Baron - Petre Collection



Monsignor William, 13th Baron - Petre Collection



Captain Lionel, 16th Baron - Imperial War Museum



Joseph, 17th Baron - Petre Collection

Notes

- ¹ Wills of the 9th, (Essex Record Office (ERO) D/DP F123) and 10th (National Archives PROB 11/1499/268) Barons
- ² PP53-5. *The Catholic Church in Ingatestone* Stewart Foster, Matthew-McCrimmon Ltd, 1982, henceforth Foster
- ³ Overview: Poverty and the Poor Law www.parliament.uk
- ⁴ ERO D/P 249/8/2
- ⁵ ERO D/P 31/12/3 - D/P 249/8/2 - D/P 31/11-14, 18
- ⁶ ERO D/DP Q11/16. D/DP Q11/18
- ⁷ ERO. D/DP Q11/12
- ⁸ ERO. D/DP A118
- ⁹ ERO Vestry records.
- ¹⁰ ERO D/DP 98/1-4, D/DP A288, D/DP E51/2. D/DP F141, D/DP E51/8
- ¹¹ Transactions of the Ingatestone and Fryerning Historical and Archaeology Society, Volumes 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15.
- ¹² PP395-7, Railway Department Report to Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, Vol. 39, 1846
- ¹³ ERO D/DP Q11/10; English Heritage no. 1197307
- ¹⁴ ERO. D/DP E52/1
- ¹⁵ PP 226-7 *Ingatestone and the Great Essex Road*, E.E. Wilde, Oxford University Press, 1931
- ¹⁶ P65 Foster
- ¹⁷ Brentwood Diocesan Magazine no 10 (1923)
- ¹⁸ Similar cases were heard throughout Essex by Courts of Revision (also known as Revising Barristers' Courts) over contested eligibility to vote following the 1832 reforms. Section 41 of the Act gave assises power for appointed barristers to adjudicate.
- ¹⁹ *Essex Standard* (Colchester), 4th November, 1836.
- ²⁰ Census returns, 1891,1901,1911; Electoral Register for Chelmsford (Mid) Division 1889-1915
- ²¹ P66 *The Family That Flew*, Ann Petre, Milton Ltd, 2017.
- ²² P84 *The Catholic Almshouses, Ingatestone*, 1920, Diocese of Brentwood archive. 'W.P.' represents initials of William Petre.



Lord Petre - family photo

- ²³ P83 Foster; Minutes of the Trustees, Cathedral House, Brentwood.
- ²⁴ English Heritage nos. 373695, 373696 & 373697
- ²⁵ Statutory Instrument no 456, 1977, Parliamentary archives
- ²⁶ Minutes of the Trustees

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The “ISLAND BLOCK” in Chelmsford High Street

Peter Wynn

In 2015 Essex University student *Ashleigh Hudson*, made a study of some of the buildings of Chelmsford High Street. Her work was published in the *Essex Chronicle* and on the *Essex Record Office Blog*. One group of buildings that was not covered by *Ashleigh’s* publications was the island site (77 to 81ⁱ) High Street), currently used by *Lloyds Bank*. *Bettley* described the building as being constructed in 1902.ⁱⁱ However I will show that only applies to that part of the island block (79 to 81) closest to *New London Road*.



Figure 1 *Brettons* in 1762 by *David Ogbourne*. Enlarged from *Figure 53* of *David Jones* (2003) *Chelmsford: A History*

Grieve’s Account

Hilda Grieve gave an early history of the site of 77 to 78 High Street. She said that in the 1590s an apothecary, *Thomas Watson* had enlarged the property, known as *Brettons* by adding two balconies overhanging the streets at the front and back of the house. In 1594 these were described in the manor court as “an evil and pernicious example to all the other inhabitants of the town and a nuisance to his neighbours” and he was ordered to remove them. By 1594, although he had done some remedial work, this was insufficient and in order to keep the galleries he paid a fine, compensation and an annual manorial rent of 6 pence on the “*evesdropp of the two galleryes fixed to his freehold tenement*”.ⁱⁱⁱ Grieve also told us about a subsequent controversy on the site. In about 1688 *Brettons* was acquired by *John Sharpe*, junior, who demolished the whole building and replaced it with two buildings having their foundations constructed to the full extent of the overhang and a balcony extending even further over the street, which he was ordered to remove.^{iv} Grieve further reported that from the 1750s *Brettons* was tenanted by *Timothy Toft*, a printer, who in 1753 married *Frances Lobb*, widow of *Richard Lobb*, an apothecary, printer and bookseller. In 1768 the property became the base of the *Chelmsford and Colchester Chronicle* produced under the imprint of “*T. Toft and R. Lobb, booksellers, bookbinders and stationers*”.^v In 1779 *Brettons* was purchased by *William Clachar* who had by then become the proprietor of the *Chelmsford Chronicle* and in 1783 he had let it to *Miss Ann Jones*, a milliner.^{vi}

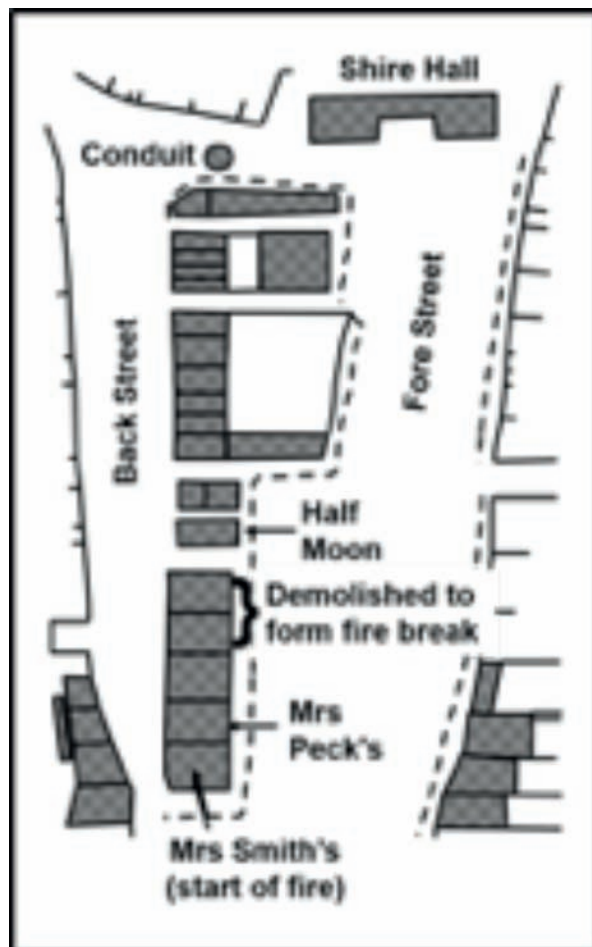


Figure 2 *The 1808 Fire* (traced from plan in *Kelham’s pamphlet*)

THE “ISLAND BLOCK” IN CHELMSFORD HIGH STREET

A significant fire was recorded in a contemporary pamphlet and summarised by Hilda Grieve.^{vii} This occurred during the early hours of 19 March 1808, starting in the part of *Brettons* which was occupied by Mrs Smith, a milliner, and initially spread to the next house where Mrs Peck, a chemist and druggist lived. Eventually all five properties in the block were destroyed, either by the fire itself, or largely demolished to form a fire break.

Subsequently the copyhold tenancy of the site of the properties formerly occupied by Mrs Smith and Mrs Peck was transferred to Elizabeth Collis and subsequently purchased from her by John Harris “the younger”, nurseryman of Broomfield, my 4 x great grandfather. On 17 April 1811 the Court Book recorded that he had lately erected two Messuages on the site.^{viii} The remainder of the properties had been rebuilt by 1820.^{ix}

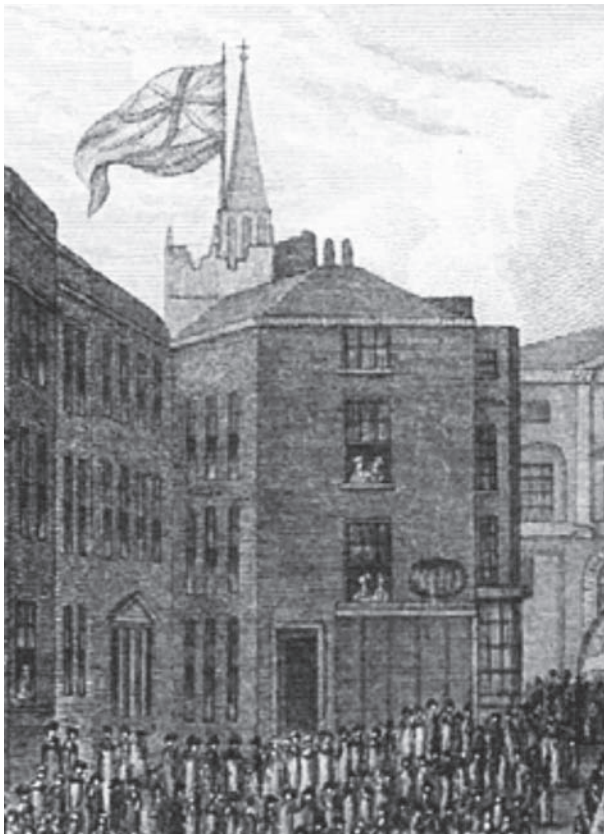


Figure 3 Coronation of George IV 1821 showing John Harris’s rebuilt premises. Enlarged from Figure 68 of David Jones (2003) *Chelmsford a History*

Census Records

John Harris died on 18 April 1841. In his will he stipulated that his properties should be sold.^x The High Street properties were included in an initial advertisement placed in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* by his son, also John. The description was of “Two capital newly-erected Brick-Built FREEHOLD HOUSES, situate in the centre of the Town, replete with every convenience for business or private residence, and now occupied by H. Bird, Esq. and Mr James Osbourn, saddler, &c. &c. at very moderate rents.”^{xi} It appears that the advertisement did not

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY
Messrs. Wakeling and Balles,
On FRIDAY, the 22nd of October, 1841, at the Saracen’s Head Inn, Chelmsford, at Three o’clock in the Afternoon, by Order of the Trustees under the Will of the late Mr. JOHN HARRIS, of Broomfield, Nurseryman; in Eight Lots.

Lot 1.

ALL that FREEHOLD substantially Brick-built and Slated RESIDENCE, fronting the High Street, and having an entrance from Conduit Street; containing on the ground floor a spacious room, used as a surgery, with parlour; on the first floor a commodious drawing-room, with sitting-room; on the second floor, two bed-rooms; on the third floor three bed-rooms, water closet and other conveniences. In the basement, an excellent kitchen, with force pump; pantry, cellar, and coal place; in the occupation of H. Bird, Esq., at £45 per annum.

This Lot will also comprise feet inches of the Shop now occupied with Lot 2, and the Purchaser of this Lot to erect a brick partition for separating the two Lots.

Lot 2. All that truly desirable Brick-built and Slated FREEHOLD RESIDENCE, most eligibly situated for business, in the centre of the High Street, Chelmsford, commanding a double frontage, and containing an excellent shop, with parlour dining and sitting-rooms, 5 bed-rooms, water-closet, kitchen, cellars, force-pump, &c., in the occupation of Mr. JAMES OSBORN, Saddler, at £60 per annum.—Possession of this Lot may be had on completion of the purchase.—A portion of the shop, as above described, will form part of Lot 1.

From the great improvements made and now in progress in Chelmsford and its vicinity, and the propinquity of this property to the New London Road, it must always command a first-rate trade, and is therefore very advantageous for occupation or investment.

Figure 4 Notice of Auction of the High Street Property of John Harris (*Essex Standard* 8 October 1841)

result in a sale for on 8 October 1841 the *Essex Standard* carried notice of a sale by auction. It was subsequently reported that each lot made £690.^{xii}

The 1841 Census showed the following principal residents of the island site:

Name	Occupation
James Osborn	Saddler
Henry Bird	Surgeon
Benjamin Bennill	Shoemaker
Thomas King	Surgeon
Frederic Veley	Solicitor
John Stevens	Shopkeeper

Clearly as there were only five properties on the site, there was an element of sharing of premises. Heads of households in 1851 were:

Name	Occupation
Josiah Shearcroft	Printer & Bookseller
Henry Bird	Surgeon, General Practitioner
One house ununhabited	
Daniel Pitt	Hat Maker
Benjamin Bennill	Boot & Shoe Maker
John Stevens	Trunkmaker

THE “ISLAND BLOCK” IN CHELMSFORD HIGH STREET

In 1861 the heads of household were:

Schedule No.	Name	Occupation
23	Henry Bird	General Practitioner
22	Lancelot Robinson	Bookbinder
21	Frederick Martin	Printer (Compositor)
20	Maria Smith	Dressmaker

I cannot be certain whether Schedule 24 related to a property in the block so have not included it here. The enumerator of the 1871 census was kind enough to include a sketch plan

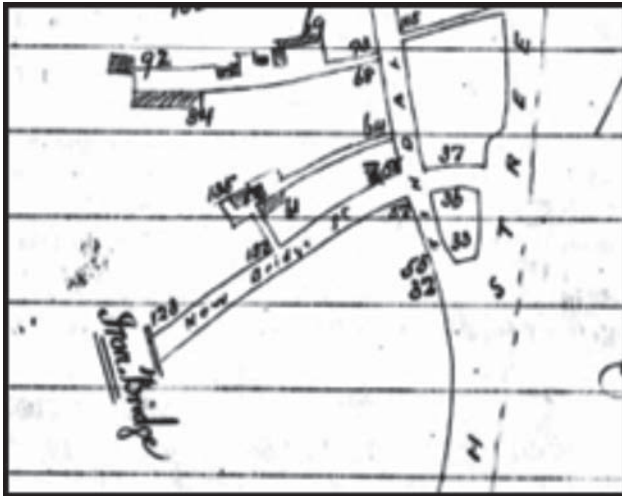


Figure 5 Enumerator’s Sketch Plan from 1871 Census

The heads of households for Schedules 33 to 36 of this 1871 census were as follows:

Schedule No.	Name	Occupation
33	Henry Bird	Surgeon
34	Mary Cox	Bootmaker
35	John Winterflood	Bootmaker
36	Maria Smith	Ladies Outfitter

Printing Office

Whilst the 1851 census showed Josiah Shearcroft, printer and bookseller, as a resident, the returns for 1861 and 1871 did not show any residents for the end house. However it appears that the premises were in commercial use. In 1860 George Piper of High Street, describing himself as successor to Mr. J. Shearcroft, was offering printing, bookselling and stationery services.

A photograph in the Essex Record Office, dated as c. 1870, shows a prominent notice “PRINTING OFFICE” on the end of the block.^{xiv} Apart from that notice, the property looks little different from the 1821 view of Figure 3.

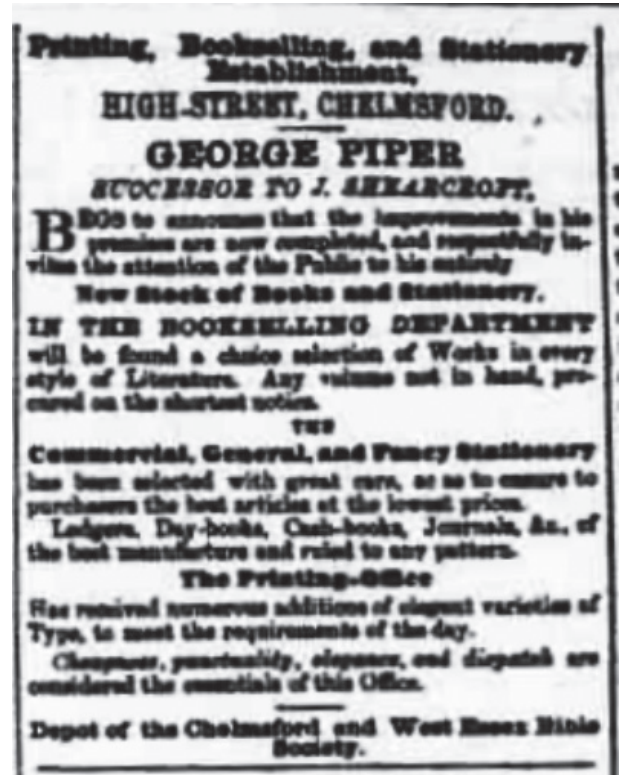


Figure 6 George Piper Successor to J. Shearcroft Chelmsford Chronicle 20 July 1860 [p. 3]



Figure 7 Enlargement from photograph recorded as c. 1870 showing “Printing Office” Essex Record Office I/LS/CFD/00046

In 1870 the proprietorship of the business changed again, with John H. Clarke advertising that he had succeeded to the business formerly carried on by George Piper.^{xv} House numbers were adopted in 1876 and this was reflected in the 1881 census which recorded these, providing us with a more reliable basis for who was resided where within the island site:

THE “ISLAND BLOCK” IN CHELMSFORD HIGH STREET

House No.	Name	Occupation
77	Uninhabited	
78	Henry Bird (died later in the year)	Doctor of Medicine
79	Louisa Grave	Milliner
80	Ezra Kidd	Bootshop Manager
81	Uninhabited	

It may be worth noting that James Norris, from Huntspill in Somerset, who would go on to join Fell Christy in the business of Christy and Norris, was shown as a lodger in No. 79 in 1881. In 1888 No. 81 was reported as being occupied by T.H.P Dennis as “*The Dustpan and Brush*”^{xvii}

By the time of the 1891 census, Sarah Jane Clarke, the widow of John, was living in the High Street property:

House No.	Name	Occupation
77	Sarah Jane Clarke	Bookseller & Printer
78	no entry	
79	Frederick Lewis	Oil and Colourman
80	Ezra Kidd	Bootshop Manager
81	Isaac Cubitt Shepherd (with his wife listed at Half Moon PH as part of same household)	Licensed Victualler

Another photograph, dated c. 1900 continued to show “PRINTING OFFICE”.^{xviii}

In 1901 the heads of household were:

House No.	Name	Occupation
77	Sarah Jane Clarke	Printing & Bookselling Proprietor
78	no entry	
79	Ezra Kidd	Bootshop Manager
80	Joseph Paulton	Carman
81	Uninhabited	

Capital and Counties Bank

At the end of 1901 it was reported that plans for the new building of the *Capital and Counties Bank* in the High Street had been completed by Messrs Clare and Ross.^{xix} The newspaper article stated that the building was to be constructed on the site occupied by Fuller’s boot shop and the “*Dust Pan and Brush Warehouse*”. The building was to stand four feet back from the then current building line, allowing for a

wider road. In April 1902 demolition of the existing buildings was about to commence. The new bank would be four storeys high, somewhat higher than the adjacent building of J.H. Clark the lower storey of stone with a polished Derbyshire stone plinth and the upper storeys of red brick with stone facings.^{xx} On completion, the new building was described as “*a very handsome structure, quite an ornament to the town*”.^{xxi}

Apart from the family of the manager of the *Capital and Counties Bank*, there was no longer any residents on the “island site” listed in the 1911 census. It showed that Sarah Jane Clarke was then living at 56 New London Road. In the following year Chelmsford Town Council discussed



Figure 8 J.H. Clarke High Street Premises c. 1950 Enlarged from Essex Record Office I/MB 741/1/32

an application for the re-building of Clarke’s High Street premises^{xxii}. Somewhat reminiscent of *Brettons* in earlier centuries, the discussion largely centred on whether the council should take some of the area of the building for road widening, eventually deciding not to do so. In May 1912 Clarke’s announced their

THE “ISLAND BLOCK” IN CHELMSFORD HIGH STREET

temporary move to Moulsham Street whilst rebuilding took place and re-opening of the High Street shop took place in October.^{xxiii} The architects for the re-building were C. & W.H. Pertwee.

Sarah Clarke died after her long widowhood in January 1919, but the business continued.^{xxiv}

In 1968 Lloyds Bank, having taken over Capital and Counties Bank in 1918, were occupying 79/80 High Street but 77/78 was vacant, J.H. Clarke and Co. having moved to premises in New London Road, prior to an eventual re-location to Exchange Way followed by sinking into debt and entering receivership at the start of the 21st century. After Clarke's departure, Lloyds Bank took over their premises, and faced the ground floor with stone cladding in order to provide some continuity of style with their 1902 development.

Notes

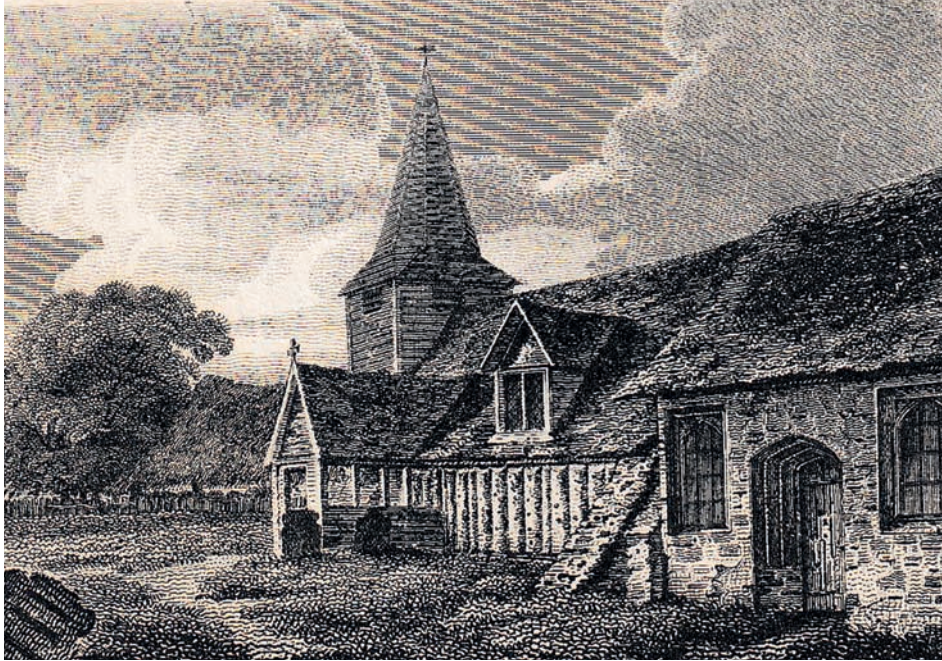
- i I have here used the numbers allocated in 1876 and appearing in published censuses from 1881. At some point in the twentieth century, No. 81 was removed from its use as part of the “island block” and re-allocated to the last building to the north of the junction with New London Road. I assume this re-numbering took place subsequent to the demolition of the Half Moon and the improvement of the road junction shortly before the Second World War.
- ii J. Bettley & N. Pevsner (2007) *The Buildings of England: Essex* Yale University Press p. 214.
- iii H. Grieve (1988) *Sleepers and the Shadows* Volume 1 Essex Record Office p. 117.
- iv H. Grieve (1994) *Sleepers and the Shadows* Volume 2 Essex Record Office p. 104
- v Grieve Vol. 2 p. 208.
- vi Grieve Vol. 2 p. 211 & 224.
- vii R.H. Kelham (1808) *Narrative of the Great Fire at Chelmsford, Essex* and Grieve Vol. 2 pp. 259-261.
- viii Essex Record Office D/DGe M6 Court Book of the Manor of Bishops Hall 1777 – 1816 pp. 382 & 388. Grieve stated (p.261) that the purchaser, John Harris, was a tallow chandler but this does not agree with the record contained in the Court Book.
- ix Grieve Vol 2 p. 261.
- x Essex Record Office D/ABW 135/1/52 Will of John Harris of Broomfield, nurseryman.
- xi *Chelmsford Chronicle* 23 October 1841 [p. 3].
- xii *Essex Standard* 8 October 1841 [p. 3].
- xiii *Essex Standard* 29 October 1841 [p. 2].
- xiv Essex Record Office I/LS/CFD/00046.
- xv The 1871 census recorded John H. Clarke as living, along with his wife, Sarah in Cottage Place. He was listed as a painter [sic] and bookseller. John Clarke's funeral was reported in the *Essex Herald* on 24 September 1872. Sarah was listed as a bookseller and stationer living in Western Terrace, New London Road in the 1881 census.
- xvi *Essex Herald* 27 December 1881 p. 8
- xvii Grieve Vol. 2. p. 405.
- xviii Essex Record Office I/Mb 74/1/168
- xix *Essex Newsman* 21 December 1901 p. 4.
- xx *Essex County Chronicle* 18 April 1902 p. 8.
- xxi *Essex County Chronicle* 15 May 1903 p. 8.
- xxii *Essex County Chronicle* 26 April 1912 p. 5.
- xxiii *Essex County Chronicle* 10 May 1912 p. 1 and 25 October 1912 p. 8.
- xxiv *Essex Newsman* 18 January 1919 p. 4.



Figure 9 J.H. Clarke Wartime Advertisement Chelmsford Citizen's Handbook 1943

Greensted Church Revisited

Michael Leach



View of Greensted church from the south in 1809. Note the single dormer window, the massive buttress at the SE corner of the nave and the sixteenth century brick chancel

Introduction

So much has been written about Greensted church that it is tempting to think that there is nothing new to say. But another look at the article in *The Antiquaries Journal* of 1979, (following the excavation of 1960 which, alas, was never written up in detail) is a reminder of the importance of reviewing all the information which is scattered throughout a number of sources, and evaluating it in the light of more recent literature about stave structures elsewhere. It is also useful as a sanguine reminder of the importance of making permanent records of any intrusive investigations or repairs.¹

Early observations

It is not certain when the significance of Greensted church was first noted. The earliest written account is found in Holman's manuscript dated 27 January 1719 when he noted '*the church & chancel of one size. Tis a little church. Tis very old & ye walls of it are of wood massioprows split asunder & put in pannell like old wainscott*'.² Two decades later Salmon, in his incomplete *History of Essex*, described it as a 'very uncommon unique Building; Walls consist of massy Trees split in two, receiving and being received by one another.'³ The Wanstead antiquary Smart Lethieullier (1701-60), who seems to have originated the (probably) erroneous account of St Edmund's body resting here in 1013, provided the first plan and sketch elevations of the building as he found it in 1748.⁴ It may have been these that alerted the Essex historian Philip Morant to its importance. He noted '*It is a very uncommon antique building; for the Walls are timber, not framed, but trees split or sawn asunder, and set into the ground. There*

is a print of it engraved by the Society of Antiquaries.'

It is not clear if his description implies that the timber staves were set directly into the ground, but Buckler's drawing of 1810 shows that by that date they were inserted into a substantial ground sill.⁵

Sketches by Buckler in 1810 and 1824, and Suckling in 1845 confirm the general accuracy of Lethieullier's images, though all vary in the number of the upright split logs which formed each wall.⁶ This probably reflects the schematic form of their drawings, rather than a need for replacement which is hinted at by the writer of *A Gentleman's History of Essex* who found carpenters at work when he visited in, or just before, 1770. They told him that the timbers were not oak but chestnut, a misconception that persisted well into the nineteenth century.⁷ All the early images appear to show a blocked doorway on the north side of the nave, opposite the present south entrance into the nave. This section of the north wall is now infilled with three lengths of re-used squared timber, which had originally been shaped for a different purpose. It is disappointing that recent dendrochronology was unable to provide a date for these, but they may have once been sill or wall plates that were recycled during the 1848 reconstruction.

The other unexplained discrepancy is in the west wall, or gable end, which Lethieullier drew as a complete wall of full height staves rising to the apex of the roof, only broken by a small central doorway. This must have been a conjectural image of the entire wall, most of which would have been hidden from the west by the present tower which was shown in a separate perspective drawing of the building. It is difficult to

GREENSTED CHURCH REVISITED

know how to interpret Lethieullier's plan which shows an insubstantial rectangular building (clearly not the existing tower) abutting the west end. The present tower is fully boarded internally and is difficult to date precisely, though it appears to incorporate much re-used timber. The church had two bells in 1552 and one surviving bell is dated 1618, mounted on a bellframe compatible with that date. These could have been re-used from an earlier tower.⁸

resisted the attentions of his 'exceedingly good pocket knife'. He observed that the external surface of the staves were weathered and 'furrowed to the dept of about an inch into stringy ridges', that the north door had been blocked and that the whole interior of the building and the underside of the roof was plastered.¹¹

Before the restoration the rector had been visited by members of the Linnean Society who confirmed that



Greensted church from the south after restoration. Note re-arrangement of the nave buttresses, additional and rebuilt dormer windows, and reconstructed porch (Illustrated London News of 3 March 1849)

It is reasonable to conclude that the west gable wall seen by Lethieullier consisted entirely of staves, and that the present much larger opening between tower and nave was formed in the 1848 reconstruction. If the sketches made by eighteenth and early nineteenth century antiquaries are accurate, they show each stave as a single scantling rising to the full height of the apex of the west wall which, at 3.3m, would have been an exceptionally long for a straight timber in an early medieval Essex building.⁹ Philip Ray, the rector who initiated the 1848 repairs, noted that the surviving staves were not long enough to reach the full height, that they had been constructed in sections, breaking joint horizontally and joined by treenails. Perhaps this had always been the original arrangement which the antiquaries had chosen to ignore in their sketches.¹⁰

Suckling visited the church before publishing his 1845 account. He described the manner of its construction and noted that brick buttresses had been built to stabilise the outward and eastward lean of the south wall. Nevertheless, he was of the opinion that the building was generally in good shape, and found that the timber wall at the west end was iron-hard and

the staves were oak, and not chestnut. They probably alerted him to the damage being done by a beetle, *Ptinus pectinicornis* or the fan-bearing wood borer, as well as pointing out that the weather erosion of the sapwood (and sapwood/heartwood junction) of the staves was more marked on the southwest side of the nave wall, but less obvious on the north wall where it was better protected from sun and weather.¹²

Repairs and reconstruction 1845-9

In 1845, Ray restored the chancel, underpinning the flint walls, adding to the patchwork of brick repairs above ground level and partly rebuilding the upper part of the east end, under the supervision of the architect T H Wyatt (1807-1880). There must have been long-standing structural problems with the chancel, as the archdeacon's visitation in 1683 had noted cracks on each side of the east window, and doubted at the time whether recently inserted beams would prevent further movement. Having completed the chancel, Ray turned to the necessary repairs to the nave in 1848, spurred on by the threat of the wood boring beetle, as well as the decay of the sill and the lower part of the staves. 'It was therefore necessary', he wrote, 'to take



Greensted church from the north in 1845, immediately before restoration .Note the blocked nave doorway (Suckling's Antiquities of Essex)

the timbers down and it is worthy of remark, as being a most singular coincidence, that they were lying on the ground when the oak, which for years went by the name of King Edmund's oak, fell in a field' at Hoxne where the king had been martyred. It is regrettable that his booklet is mainly devoted to the myths and legends surrounding King Edmund and gives few details of the restoration work that was undertaken in 1848-9, though the builder's report (detailed below) makes good some of the omissions. Neither provide any information about the roof that was removed, or the new one that replaced it, though Ray noted that he had inserted into 'one of the spandrils' a carving of the wolf guarding King Edmund's severed head.¹³

Word must have circulated that extensive and potentially destructive restorations had been carried out at Greensted, and in 1849 the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* carried a short article on the church mentioning 'the recent demolition of this primitive relic' and the extensive damage done by the wood boring beetle which had 'hitherto baffled all attempts to eradicate it from timber once attacked'. The author was A. H. Burkitt, a Bank of England clerk who was also an artist and printmaker. His engraving which accompanied the article showed the staves raised on the dwarf brick wall of Ray's restoration, and

the additional ones which had recently been inserted into the long-blocked north door opening.¹⁴

It may have been this article which prompted a response from James Barlow, the Ongar building contractor who had carried out the work under the instructions of the architect. This provides more information about the work done than any other source. Though he did not deny the beetle problem, it was clear that the main problem was the extensive rot in the ground sill which had allowed the staves to be driven down through them by the weight of the superstructure, imperilling the stability of the building. His opinion was that the collapse of the tiled-covered nave had only been prevented by the ends of the wall plates being embedded in - and obtaining support from - the brick work of the chancel. He emphasised the determination of the rector and the architect to preserve as much original material as possible, and that he had only had to cut off about six inches from the bottom of the staves before tenoning them into replacement oak sills resting on new twelve inch-high dwarf brick walls. The original sills had rested on bare earth and a scattering of unmortared flints. He confirmed that, during the repairs, all the internal plaster had been removed from the walls and from the underside of the roof. The latter had been completely reconstructed, as the

GREENSTED CHURCH REVISITED

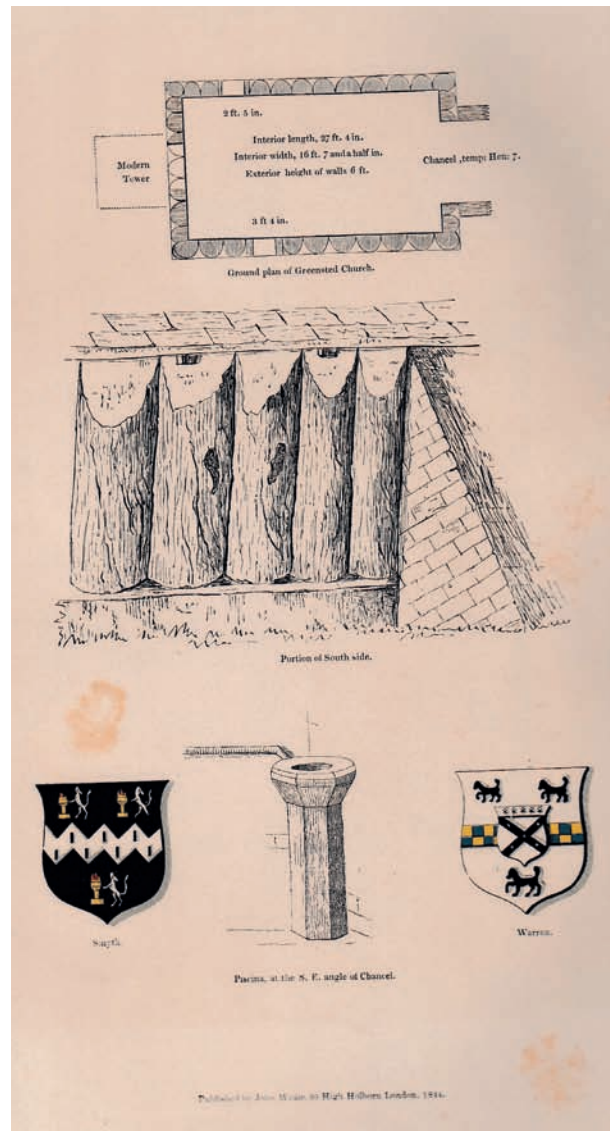
old tie beams had given less than six foot headroom in the nave. Though Barlow does not mention this, the work must also have included the removal of the substantial brick buttresses at the southeast and southwest corners of the nave which were shown in the Lethieullier drawing, presumably inserted at some point to resist the outward thrust of the stave wall.¹⁵

Barlow's report was supplemented by an anonymous account in the same volume of *The Builder*, perhaps written by the architect because it noted that the restoration work had been directed by 'Messrs Wyatt and Brandon' (this partnership was terminated in 1851). The oak sill had been eight inches square with an inch and a half deep slot to take the bottom tenons of the staves. The wall/roof plates were very rough-hewn, varying in size from seven to ten inches square. There were twenty five staves in the north wall, and twenty one on the south (the modern counts are twenty eight and twenty three respectively, excluding the south west and south east corner posts, a discrepancy could have resulted from the smaller width of the replacement staves). The staves on the north had been shortened by only about an inch, those on the south by about five inches, a smaller amount than James Barlow had noted in his letter earlier that year, and much less than the RCHM entry claimed. The internal wall plaster had shown no evidence of damp penetration where the upright timbers butted, showing the effectiveness of the concealed vertical tongue fitted into the hidden slotted edges of the staves where they abutted. It is not clear if the applied fillets which cover the inner face of the butt joints were added by Wyatt, but they are shown and dimensioned on Chancellor's drawing, suggesting that they may have been his addition.¹⁶

More than half a century later, an editorial in *The Builder* perhaps needs to be read with some caution. It claimed that only one or two staves had been replaced in the 1848 reconstruction, and that a single one had required patching. Recent dendrochronology (see below) suggests that at least ten (four on the north, six on the south) were renewed. The editorial noted that by 1892 the softwood roof which had been constructed in 1848 was seriously decayed, necessitating its replacement by a new oak roof designed by the Chelmsford architect, Frederick Chancellor. No vestiges of the pre-1848 roof had survived, so Chancellor had broadly followed Wyatt's replacement. At the same time a substantial brick buttress, shown in a crude woodcut of 1867 (and in Chancellor's drawing of 1889), was found to have pulled away from the centre of the north wall, and this was removed, exposing sound timbers behind it. This buttress must have been added when, or soon after, the stave wall was reconstructed in the 1848 restoration, as it is not shown in earlier images.

A marked increase in wood boring insect damage between 1903 and 1904 had been observed. The three timbers which had been inserted to block the north doorway were 'freckled with worm holes' and it was recommended that they should be painted with equal parts of benzine and linseed oil. The editorial expressed regret about the large opening made in the west stave wall between the nave and the tower, the loss of the unusual shaft piscina from the chancel illustrated by

Suckling, and the unsympathetic brickwork repairs to the chancel walls. It also mentioned a 24 by 10½ inch painted wooden panel of St Edmund, probably late C15 or early C16 Flemish work, but expressed scepticism that it had formed part of the church's lost rood screen. This painted panel was stolen from the church a few years ago, and has not been recovered, but the piscina had been returned to the church by the time of the RCHM report published in 1921.¹⁷



SE wall of nave showing staves in 1845, and what appears to be a timber cill, shortly before restoration. Note also the massive brick buttress (removed in the restoration), doubtless built to resist the outward thrust of the nave roof, or the partial collapse of the stave wall due to rot in the cill

'Dendromagnetic dating' 1958-60

This unpublished work, carried out by J E Crawford Stringer, was based on rubbings made from the end grain of some of the external timbers, and claimed a date of c.845 AD. However, with the lack of reliable tree ring chronologies until the 1980s, and the impossibility of obtaining reliable ring width sequences from rubbings, this date can no longer be accepted as reliable.¹⁸

The excavation of June 1960

A further extensive evaluation took place in June 1960, with the aim of trying to establish by excavation whether an earlier timber stave chancel had been earth-fast, or tenoned into a timber sill. This investigation was frustrated by numerous difficulties. These included the various repairs and reconstructions of parts of the later masonry chancel (and the trenches for its Victorian brick underpinning), the dwarf brick walls to support the choir stalls, and much disturbance from intramural graves and burial vaults. It is particularly unfortunate that the excavation was never written up due to the subsequent prolonged illness of the director, Dr Brian Hope-Taylor (1923-2001), a noted Anglo-Saxon archaeologist and broadcaster, though plans and sections were deposited at the Society of Antiquaries. These were tentatively interpreted in 1979 as suggesting of an earth fast timber wall on the north side, with possible evidence of a timber sill on the south, perhaps of different periods of construction or repair, but both predating the larger replacement flint rubble chancel of unknown date, partly rebuilt in brick in the C16.¹⁹

A paper in *The Antiquaries Journal* also looked in detail at the physical and documentary evidence in the surviving timber nave, much of which has already been summarised here. It provided an accurate plan showing the size and position of all the staves, and a section showing the tripartite wall plates, doubtless devised to compensate for the shortened staves – though it is not clear if this arrangement dated from the 1848 or the 1894 roof reconstruction. It mentioned, for the first time, evidence of traces of tar on the outer faces of the staves, though gave no opinion on when it was applied, or whether it was to prevent rot or insect attack. The bevel on the outer upper end of the staves was thought to be an original detail. As the adze marks on the inner face of the staves continue unbroken across later repairs, it suggested that this was not the original finish but much later preparatory work prior to the application of an internal coat of plaster. The upper part of the inner face of some of the staves is slightly tapered, possibly to ensure an accurate fit into the wall plate, and a series of plugged holes at this level date from the injection of a mixture of pentachlorophenolate and dieldrin in the early 1950s and the mid-1960s.²⁰

In spite of the constraints of the abutting tower, the west wall was examined. What had been their outer faces was badly weathered and had been attacked by dry rot, but was of similar form and construction to the side walls. They were thought to have been shortened at both ends, and then extended at the top by the insertion of short pieces from other staves. The longest visible unjointed stave was 3.3m long, indicating that they had reached to the gable rafters without being tenoned into an intermediary plate level with the top of the north and south walls – this would have been the normal practice in stave churches in Scandinavia. These end wall staves also seem to have lacked the external splay which is found at the upper ends of the side wall staves. One of them was a squared piece of timber which showed signs that it had been re-used and that it had originally been shaped for a different

purpose, possibly as a wall plate. Another re-used timber had an angled mortice retaining its original peg, possibly a rafter from a roof truss with a collar beam. It also had a regular series of large horizontal holes containing the remains of dowels, possibly the remains of a primitive ladder to give access to the belfry. The two western corner posts (one of which was later dated to the 1848 rebuild) have had their internal quadrant cut away, another deviation from Scandinavian practice which would have left the cylindrical trunk intact.

Where small gaps between the staves allowed, the internal tongues and the butting faces of the staves were examined. Those that were visible showed evidence of saw marks and were presumed to date from the 1848 rebuild. The rebates to take the tongues in the sides of the staves appeared to have been formed by drilling a line of 2cm diameter holes, about 10-15cms apart, and then chiselling out the redundant wood to form the groove.²¹

Cecil Hewett's 1980 analysis

The following year the Essex timber building expert, Cecil Hewett, published a comprehensively detailed and illustrated description of the structure, with diagrams showing how the jointing at various points might have been effected at the corner posts of gable end, and also where a tie beam must have spanned the middle of the nave at wall plate level. He was non-committal about whether the west gable had had an inner skin of planks onto which the staves were pegged (as had been suggested by Ray) but he did stress that, to ensure the stability of the structure, a tie beam at wall plate level would have been necessary on the inner face of the gable. He found a sufficient number of peg holes in line at the right level to confirm his opinion about this. His detailed description is impossible to summarise concisely here and should be read in full in *English Historic Carpentry*.²²

Dendrochronology 1996

The most recent technical report was published in 1996 by Ian Tyers. This applied modern dendro-dating to establish an approximate building date for the church which, in 1960, had been dated to about 845 AD using an inadequately validated method, and no relevant tree ring database. Many of the timbers appeared suitable for dating, and a total of 20 were chosen for sampling, of which 19 provided a range of felling dates (not allowing for the loss of sapwood) from the mid C10 to mid C11. Tyers's experience would have enabled him to distinguish between original and replacement staves, and none of the latter were sampled. There were concerns that bore holes should be as inobtrusive as possible, and some bog oak, with an excellent colour match, was turned to form suitable plugs to glue into the 15mm diameter bore holes. All the samples lacked sapwood, apart from one of the re-used squared timbers employed to block the old north doorway in 1848, though unfortunately it was not possible to date this piece which might have been a re-used sill or wall plate. With the loss of an unknown number of sapwood rings (and possibly more at the sapwood/heartwood junction), between 10 and 55 years has to be added to establish the felling date.

The results showed that different staves showed a marked variation in the age of the trees when felled, ranging from perhaps 100 to 250 years old. Some, but not all, had come from woodland with an open canopy which had encouraged side growth. As the staves were split trunks, the investigators were surprised to find no matching halves of the same tree. It was suggested that the original structure used the whole trunks which had been cut back on the inside at a later date. But this seems very unlikely from a practical point of view, and ignores the observation that the adze marks on the inside faces of the staves run unbroken across later patches and repairs. On the available evidence, and allowing for the total loss of sapwood, the investigation estimated a felling date for the sampled staves of between 1063 and about 1100.²³

Comparisons with Scandinavian structures and more recent archaeological findings

When discussing stave structures, it is important to clarify the definition. For the purposes of this article, they consist of a continuous vertical plank wall, closely butted and carrying the weight of the superstructure. Stave construction is quite distinct from the post-and-infill structures which subsequently replaced them and were far more economical in their use of timber and labour. Stave walls could be either entirely earth fast and set between substantial corner posts, or placed on ground beams (or sills), with corner posts of similar scantling supported in the same way. However, recent excavations suggest that there may have been an intermediate or alternative form which had earth fast corner and intermediate posts, with an infill stave wall resting on a ground beam running between them. Such an arrangement leaves a faint pressure shadow which can be revealed by careful excavation, as at Potterne, Wiltshire in 1964 and at Beeleigh Abbey in 2019, though the latter does not appear to have had earth fast corner posts. The so-called 'weaving shed' at Goltho, Lincolnshire, attributed to the tenth century, showed a series of rectangular impressions made by earth-fast staves in the bottom of a wall trench.²⁴

It is not surprising that Greensted church attracted the interest of two Norwegians, namely Dietrichson who visited in 1884, and Shetelig in 1902. Shetelig's observations formed the basis of later references in Scandinavian literature, including Emil Ekhoft whose book *Svenska stavkyrkor* became the standard work on Swedish stave churches.²⁵ Greensted is closer to Swedish, rather than Norwegian examples, particularly in the use of the double groove and inserted fillet arrangement for connecting the butting edges of the staves, and the cutting-out of the inner quadrant of the round corner posts, but it is significantly earlier in date. The west wall at Greensted differs from Scandinavian practice in lacking a substantial beam which linked the ends of the wall plates across the outer face of the end gable, presumably regarded as necessary to resist the outward thrust of the roof on the corner posts and the side walls, and to provide greater rigidity to the structure.²⁶ Images of Greensted from before the 1848 restoration show substantial brick buttresses at each end of the south stave wall (and another at the northeast corner), perhaps suggesting

that this outward thrust had been causing problems. Suckling had noted that the south wall was 'leaning a little outwards [and] inclines somewhat towards the eastward'.²⁷ However, this may have been caused by the long-standing structural problems of the chancel walls, the south west section of which still has visible outward lean. The removal of the east stave wall, and the insertion of a chancel arch in the sixteenth century, may have aggravated this problem.

The nearest structural equivalent to Greensted was found at Hemse, in Sweden, only known from the discovery in 1896 of some fifty stave and other timbers, attributed to the second half of the C11. These had been re-used for flooring a new church and were similar to those at Greensted, with the semi-circular outer face, the edge slots for connecting fillets, and the oblique chamfer at the top of the outer face. There are at least three other Danish churches with staves of the Greensted type (Flinterup, Saeby and Framlev). The transition from ground fast staves to timber sills appears to date from the C12 and C13 in Scandinavia, so the original arrangement at Greensted – still largely unresolved – would be of key interest. It is not clear if Greensted originally had round-section corner posts (with the inner quadrant trimmed back at a later date), or whether it was originally built in this way. There is also the unresolved question of which country first developed the stave technique, or whether it was developed independently.²⁸

Though no comparable standing buildings have survived in England, there is archaeological evidence suggesting the use of stave retaining walls on a number of Thameside wharfs between the mid C11 and the late C14. One of these revealed a sill from the mid twelfth century made from a re-used domestic wall plate. In the Lincolnshire Wolds, investigation of a mid C16 farmhouse has recently uncovered twenty two C12 staves (about 2.5m in length) which had been re-used as floor joists. Though the ends had been trimmed off, removing any details to show how they had fitted into sill or wall plates, it was evident that pegs had been used to link together the butting edges of the staves. The timbers had been precisely worked and showed no signs of weathering, so would have come either from a very well sheltered external wall, or from an internal one, possibly from a nearby priory.²⁹

Conclusion

Though many of the questions about the original form of the stave walls at Greensted are likely to remain unanswered, it is hoped that excavations, and careful observations by those working on medieval buildings will provide more evidence about the development of this sort of building. It may be difficult, or perhaps impossible, to determine whether this technique originated in Scandinavia and was imported to England, or vice versa – or whether it developed independently on each side of the North Sea.

Endnotes

- ¹ Christie, H et alii, 1979 'The Wooden Church of St Andrew Greensted' *The Antiquaries Journal*, 59, 92-112

- ² ERO Holman MSS, T/P 195/3/9. The meaning of 'massioprows' is clear enough, though the word seems to be Holman's invention.
- ³ Salmon, N, 1740 *History and Antiquities of Essex*, London, 55
- ⁴ Lethieullier sent his drawings to the Society of Antiquaries in 1748. This must have alerted other antiquaries, such as Dr Ducarel who referred to the unique survival of Greensted in his *Anglo-Norman Antiquities Consider'd* in 1767. Lethieullier's drawings were not engraved and published until 1789 as plate 7 in the second volume of *Vetusta Monumenta*.
- ⁵ Morant, P, 1768 *History of Essex*, ii, 152-3. Buckler's 1810 drawing, taken from B.M. Add. MS.36434, f.173, is plate xxvii in Christie (1979) op. cit.,
- ⁶ B.M. Add. MS.36434 & f.173, 36362, f.50; Suckling, A, 1845 *Antiquities & Architecture ... of the County of Essex*, London, 4-5.
- ⁷ Anon, 1770 *A New and Complete History of Essex by a Gentleman*, iii, Chelmsford, 383
- ⁸ Powell W R (ed) 1956 *Essex VCH*, Oxford, iv, 61; King H W, 1884 'Inventories of Church Goods' *Essex Archaeological Society Transactions*, n.s., ii, 237; E Watkin pers. com.
- ⁹ E Watkin pers.com.
- ¹⁰ Ray P W, 1869 *The History of Greensted Church near Ongar, Essex*, Chipping Ongar, 15.
- ¹¹ Suckling (1845) op.cit., 5-6
- ¹² Ray (1869) op. cit., 18-19
- ¹³ Ray (1869) op. cit., 19: *EAT*, n.s. xix, 268.
- ¹⁴ Burkitt, A H, 1849 'A wooden Church & Remains of Shrine of St Edmund' *Journal of British Archaeological Association*, v, 1-6.
- ¹⁵ *The Builder*, 1849, vii, 45.
- ¹⁶ *The Builder*, 1849, vii, 115; *RCHM Essex*, ii, 1921, 112; Chancellor's contract drawings, August 1889, ERO D/F 8/251/1
- ¹⁷ Chancellor's contract drawings, August 1889, ERO D/F 8/251/1; *The Builder*, 1904, lxxxvii, 60-2; *EAT* o.s. iv, 1867, 91; *EAT* n.s. iv, 1892, 223; *Essex Review*, i, 1892, 139.
- ¹⁸ Tyers, I, 1996 *Tree-ring Analysis of Timbers from the Stave Church at Greensted, Essex*, Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 14/96, 7-8, 20-1.
- ¹⁹ Christie, H et alii, 1979 'The Wooden Church of St Andrew Greensted' *The Antiquaries Journal*, lix, 107-110 & plate xxxi
- ²⁰ Christie (1979) op. cit., 94, 96-8
- ²¹ Christie (1979) op. cit., 98-101 & endnotes 7 & 11
- ²² Hewett, C, 1980 *English Historic Carpentry*, Phillimore, Chichester, 5-13
- ²³ Tyers (1996) op. cit., 3-10, figures 2- 3, tables 1-4
- ²⁴ Davey, N, 1964 'Pre-Conquest Church and Baptistry in Potterne' *Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Magazine*, lix, 116-123; E Watkin, pers.com.; Gardiner, M, 2021 'Twelfth Century Timbers from Sixhills, Lincolnshire' *Vernacular Architecture*, lxii, (1), 30-40
- ²⁵ Dietrichson, L, 1892 *De Norske Stavkyrkor*. Kristiania; Shetelig, H, 1904 'Kirken i Greensted, Essex' *Foreningen til norske fortidsminders bevaring Årsberetning*, 256-9; Ekhoﬀ, E, 1916 *Svenska Stavkyrkor*, Stockholm. None of these works has been translated into English
- ²⁶ Christie (1979) op. cit., 103-6; Gardiner, M, 2021 'Twelfth Century Timbers from Sixhills, Lincolnshire' *Vernacular Architecture*, lxii, (1), 30-40
- ²⁷ Suckling (1845) op. cit., 6
- ²⁸ Christie (1979) op. cit., 103-106 & plate xxx; Ahrens, C 1996 'An English Origin for Norwegian Stave Churches' *Medieval Life*, issue 4, 3-7
- ²⁹ Gardiner (2021) op. cit., 30-40

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PLEASANCE WEST

A Story of Tudor Mobility

Ian Beckwith

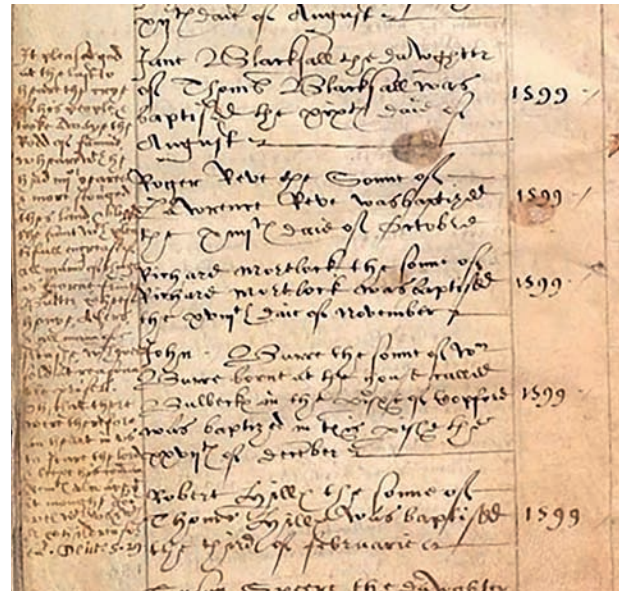
Background

Between 1494 and 1572 a series of Acts of Parliament had imposed severe restrictions and conditions on vagrants, requiring those considered too infirm to work, to be licenced to beg by the magistrates. Those deemed to be 'sturdy beggars', who could work but wouldn't, were to be stripped to the waist (men or women), lashed to a cart's tailboard and whipped until the blood ran; a recalcitrant vagrant was condemned to have his or her right ear pierced with a red-hot iron and, if he or she persisted, was to be branded with a V. The ultimate penalty was to be hanged. However, as anyone who has read Wrightson and Levine's study of Terling or French and Hoyle on Earls Colne or the work of Christopher Dyer and others on this period will know, to quote Wrightson and Levine's robust judgement: *'Bygone historians were not simply wrong when they asserted the immutability of the village community. They were dyslexic'*.¹ While the Tudor laws were predicated on the notion that everyone must stay put in their place, the parish registers tell a different story, of a defiant population on the move.

Hard times

The late 1580s-90s were the hardest of times. Not only was plague rampant: the villagers of Tudor England were no more able to control the climate than we are - they were at the mercy of God. This was the period of what has become known as the 'Little Ice Age', beginning in the early fourteenth century and ending in the mid-nineteenth century, which entered its coldest period, lasting some hundred years with cold wet springs and particularly during the "Grindelwald Fluctuation" (1560-1630) erratic weather patterns, including increased storminess, unseasonal snowstorms and droughts, across the whole of Europe, made familiar to us, usually on Christmas cards, by the paintings of snowbound landscapes by Peter Breugel the Elder, notably *'Hunters in the Snow'* (1565), *'Winter Landscape with Ice-Skating'* (1565), and *'The Massacre of the Innocents'* (1567).ⁱⁱ Rivers froze (a 'Frost Fair', the first to be so-called, took place on the Thames in 1608). Jean Ingelow's epic poem, *High Tide on the*

Lincolnshire Coast, published in 1892, refers to a tsunami-like tidal surge in 1571. It was a period of extreme weather, dearth and high prices – what, in our age, would be referred to as a cost-of-living crisis. Indeed it has been claimed that what drove many people to make a life in the New World was not only a desire to establish a more 'Godly' society, free from persecution, but also the terrible weather conditions being experienced in the Old World, in the mistaken belief that all they, God's Chosen People, elected from before time for salvation, would have to do was sit back and watch the climate and soil provide an abundance.



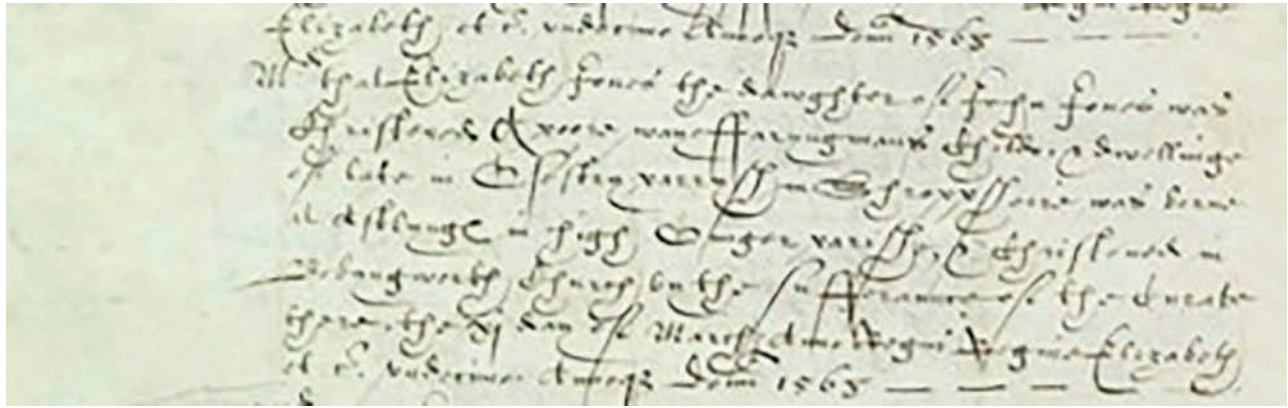
Marginal note in the Aldham parish register thanking God for relieving his people

In spite of travellers' tall tales doing the rounds, enticing possible investors with yarns of a land flowing with milk and honey (it wasn't: winters were as harsh, if not harsher), very few people chanced the Atlantic crossing and life in a strange land. Many of those who did gave up and returned. Clearly, nevertheless, people were on the move, as evidenced by the number of travellers, the so-called 'walking' men and women, who chanced to receive a mention in the registers of the parishes they were passing thorough, either because a woman went into labour there and her child received baptism before she moved on or because one of these homeless, and, for the most part, nameless, people died in barns where they had sought shelter or out in the open and were given Christian burial.

Walking Men and Women

Essex parish registers, in particular those parishes on the roads leading to London, are full of entries such as *'Quidam p[er]egrinus inventus mortuus in Campis'* (a certain traveller found dead in a field) at Newport in January 1589. More often than not, like *'Quidam peregrinus'*, their names were unknown: yet they belong on someone's family tree. At Gt

1 'It pleased god at the last to heare the crye of his people, & take away the Rodd of famine whearew[i]th he had iiij yeares & more scourged this land, & blessed w[i]th plentiful encrease of all mann[er] of things as corne, fruits, Butter, Cheese honye, A? ers, & all man[n]er[er]of --cashe w[h]ich were sold at reasonable prises. Oh that there were therefore an heart in us to feare the lord & keepe his com[m] and m[en]ts always that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever. Deut 5. 29'.



Entry in Bobbingworth parish register, recording the baptism of Elizabeth Jones, daughter of John Jones, from Os[w]estry, Shropshire.

Baddow two walking women, Joan Savidg and Annis Forte were buried in November 1592, followed, four months later, by a walking man who died at William Notes' barn. 1593 saw the burial at Gt Baddow of Alse Gryffen, daughter of Davie Gryffen a walking man; in August 1594 Gyles Hickes a 'waken Manne' died and was buried, followed in December by Richard Duffold, a 'walken mane'. Two years later a walking woman, Alse Fancknar, was buried and two years after that, in April 1598, John Wynton 'a pore walking beggerman' was buried. On the road through Sheering, in December 1577, 'luc a child being borne of a woma[n] travelling by the waye whome we known not to have bene married nor yet her mothers name was Christened.' Nor do we know the story behind the entry in the Manningtree register which recorded, in 1580, that 'John Andrewes sonne of Helyn Andrews as she travelled [th]e Contry seeking for Robert And[drews] her husband was brought to bed at Mannyngtree and the child baptised the 14 of februarii.'² Multiplied by the number of parishes and bearing in mind that we have only the records of those walking men and women who chanced to give birth or to die in any given parish, the actual number of homeless people on the roads must have been considerable. Some, like the 'poor wench' and 'a poor child' who died in Bullocks Barn at Copford in 1586, were found in outbuildings. Often these walking men and women encountered the kindness of strangers. At Terling in 1586:

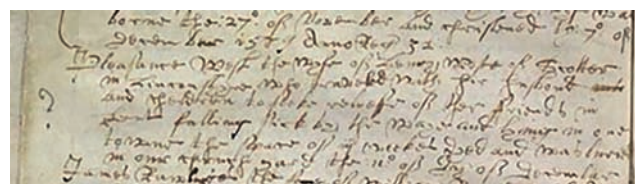
The xth day of ffebruary was buried a younge man who was a Stranger & dyed in the highe waye, who before had lven a certeyn tyme sicke in my Lady Brownes barne.

Not all were so fortunate: at Coggeshall in January 1600, 'Moses [th]e sonne of a stranger borne in [th]e street' was baptised.

Unsurprisingly many of these deaths occurred in the winter: November, December, January, February were not the months to be tramping the roads during the

Little Ice Age. Apart from the cold, snow and ice, the roads themselves were churned into muddy rutted tracks. And there was always the risk of encountering a footpad. Nor does the old nursery rhyme, 'Hark, hark, the dogs do bark, the beggars are coming to town' just a childish song: dogs do not always see strangers in a friendly light. Thus it seems that, far from the sixteenth century population being static and notwithstanding the draconian laws, which came down hard on vagabonds, there was a considerable and constant movement of people, from pillar to post, as the saying went, through Essex parishes, especially those on the western perimeter of the county, making, like the legendary Dick Whittington, for the sound of the Great Bell of Bow, in the hope of bettering themselves or, more fundamentally, for subsistence, simply to survive.⁴ Such a 'walking woman' was, for example:

*Pleasance Weste the wyfe of Henry Weste of Scotter in Linconschyre Who travelled with hir husband and children to seeke reliefe of ther friends in Kent falling sick by the waye and being in our towne the space of iij Weekes died and was buried in our church yard the ii of December 1589.*⁵



The entry in Downham parish register recording the burial of Pleasance West

Usually very little was known of the identity or place of origin of the walking man or woman who chanced to die within the boundary of the parish they happened to be passing through at the time of their death. Perhaps a Welsh surname would provide a clue,

2 Eight years later, in the same register, the baptism was recorded, on 14th December 1588, of John Andrews son of Robert Andrews alias Paynterson, so perhaps she found him.
 3 'Elizabeth Jones, the daughter of John Jones was Christened A poor wayfaring man's Child, & dwelling of late in Osestry (Oswestry) parish in Shropshire was born at Astling in High Ongar parish & Christened in Bobbingworth Church by the sufferance of the Curate there, the xj day of March 1568'.
 4 Vagabond, ultimately derived from Latin vagus, via Old French vacabond, seems not to have acquired its meaning of a disreputable person until the 17th century. 'Vague' is derived from the same Latin word: etymonline.com
 5 Essex Record Office, Downham Parish Register, D/P257/1/1

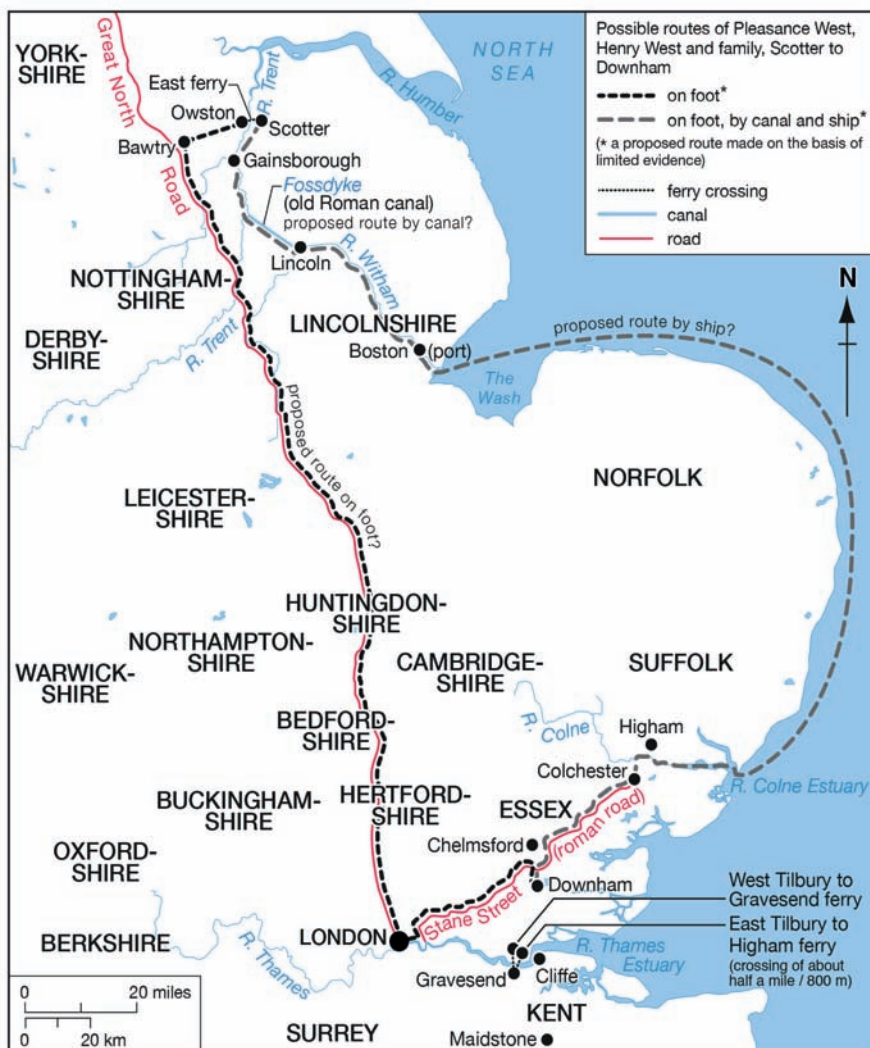
PLEASANCE WEST – A STORY OF TUDOR MOBILITY

or the dying person would manage to utter with their dying breath 'Oswestry' or 'Stafford'. Otherwise, the parish authorities performed the baptisms or burials (often in the same day) of these unknown unfortunates, paying the gravedigger and the sexton at the parish expense, simply entering the fact in the burial register as 'peregrinus'. So the detail that we have in the case of the Wests, sparse as it is, while not rare, is unusual. Pleasance West's life's journey ended at Downham in Essex in early December. Although nobody, apart from the Wests, seems to have known precisely where the family was heading for in Kent, the distance from Scotter in North-West Lincolnshire to Maidstone is about 194 miles. The average walking speed on the flat for a fit person in the twenty-first century is between three and four miles an hour. Assuming that the Wests kept up a steady pace, at that rate it would have taken them about 65 hours, or just under three days. But that is to leave out of the account, night-time: the hours of daylight are fewer in winter than in summer, providing perhaps ten hours at most between dawn and dusk during the season of the year that the Wests left Scotter and took to the road. At three miles an hour in the ten hours they had got to be able to see to put one foot in front of the other, it should have

taken them about a week to reach the Kent coast. That is the pace a fit person enjoying the benefits of a good diet and advances in medical knowledge and hygiene in the twenty-first century might be able to maintain. Pleasance West was obviously not such a person: nor is it likely that her husband would have had the stamina of a modern man either. Moreover, 30 miles a day takes no account of the need to take a break from walking, to eat and perform the necessary functions of the human body; it takes no account of the times when the pace was slowed down by the uphill gradient; it takes no account of weather conditions; it takes no account of the time lost by taking a wrong turning, or making a diversion round a town where the barking of the dogs warned the travellers that they might not receive a welcome; it takes no account of the encumbrance of Pleasance West's heavy full ankle-length dress; most of all, it takes no account of the children. Well might they ask, "*Are we nearly there yet?*" Hence, it could easily have taken the West family the best part of three weeks to get themselves by Shank's pony, as far as the parish of Downham in Essex, about 50 miles as the crow flies from Maidstone. By then, no doubt, they envied the crow's ability to fly in a straight line. Still ahead of them lay the ferry across the Thames from East Tilbury to Cliffe, a crossing of about half a mile (800m).

The Great North Road

In other words these were desperate times and desperate people sought desperate remedies, even if this meant finding their way, with no map to guide them (even had they been able to read one), on foot from the north of Lincolnshire to somewhere in Kent. It is highly unlikely that they would have even heard of, and certainly not owned, the atlas, mapping 35 English counties, produced by Christopher Saxton, a member of a Yorkshire yeoman family, that had been published in 1579, ten years before Henry and Pleasance West had set out from Scotter. Saxton's maps enable us to plot the route the Wests probably took. In fact they faced a choice of roads leading south from Scotter. Presumably, at some point, however, they would have needed to pick up the Great North Road. Scotter is on the east (Lincolnshire) side of the River Trent, just over ten miles by road from the then thriving river port of Gainsborough. Assuming that Henry and Pleasance and their children



The route of the West's journey from Scotter, Lincs

took the Great North Road south to Kent, they probably picked up the trunk highway where it ran through the middle of the small Nottinghamshire market town of Bawtry, about fifteen miles, as the crow flies, west of Scotter. First, however, they would have had to get across the Trent. This entailed one of several ferries, the nearest being East Ferry, roughly six miles distant, which would have landed them at Owston, on the west (Nottinghamshire) bank of the river, from where they could follow a minor road taking them the remaining nine miles across mainly flat country to Bawtry.

This first leg of their epic journey would have involved about a five-hour walk: already they were further away from home than probably any of them had ever been before. Studies have shown that, at that period, few people walked more than six or seven miles from home. This was the break-point within which they did their weekly shopping, on the whole not using markets much further away; *pari passu*, the smaller market towns operated within a radius of about seven to ten miles: this constituted what social historians refer to, using the French word, their *pays*, of which they were the shopping centres, where people from the villages in the surrounding *pays* bought their everyday provisions. For higher order goods, those like the nobility and richer gentry, who could afford luxuries like furs from the Baltic, oriental muslin, silk and damask, fine tapestries from Flanders (as opposed to the painted cloths most people of the ‘middling sort’ had hanging in their houses as insulation), glassware and other high-end wares, the annual or sometimes biennial fairs lasting over several days in the spring and autumn, held on the outskirts of various towns, were the places to go, or rather to send their agents to do the buying for them.

In the five hours since they’d left Scotter, the Wests had been transformed into strangers, leaving their own bit of the country, or their *pays*, leaving behind their kith (NB: a word meaning friends or neighbours) and kin (their family relations), in an age that laid much store by neighbourliness and neighbourhood, and in which blood was always thicker than water. Neighbours were people in your own village, who helped you and who you, in your turn, helped out; your kin tended to be spread out in clusters in contiguous parishes, where marriage and/or (the two were often the same) the prospect of bettering themselves had taken them. On the downside, in the surveillance state that was the Tudor polity, neighbour spied on neighbour, reporting to the authorities any words or actions which might be regarded as seditious or tending to witchcraft. As was described at the top of this piece, draconian measures existed to deter people from taking the steps that the Wests were quite literally taking, to stop them in their tracks. Everyone must know his or her place in the divinely-appointed social order and remain in that place. Shakespeare likened the harmonious working of society to a piece of music: ‘*untune that string and, hark what discord follows*’,

are the words he puts into the mouth of Ulysses.⁶

In setting out from Scotter, the place where they belonged, the Wests were about to become vagabonds, vagrants, people with no fixed abode, sturdy beggars, who contributed nothing to the common weal but became a charge on which ever parish they happened to be passing through: hence the system to send them back to where they belonged. Out of their place in the music of society, the Wests were a threat to its harmony. Nor was migration only one way. As one man or woman, or as in this case, a man and his family, moved to a new area, so another moved out. Two years before Pleasance West and her family left Scotter, Gainsborough had recorded more burials than baptisms (i.e. births): yet its population was growing, a fact that can only be explained by immigration.

Yet, despite knowing what the penalties could be for what they were about to do, the Wests took to the road. What they might not have realized was how far they had to go before they reached their destination in Kent. Pleasance died and was buried on 3rd. December 1589 after spending three weeks in Downham, a distance of about 150 miles from Scotter, suggesting that the Wests had reached Downham in the first week of November. Assuming that they had made no prolonged stops between Lincolnshire and Essex, it might have taken them about three weeks to reach Downham and the end of the road for Pleasance, meaning that they had left Scotter in, probably, early to mid-October.

The Isle of Axholme, across which the first ten miles of their journey ran, was undrained fenland. It was best to stick to the roads rather than take the risk of going cross-country and getting lost in the morass of wetlands. Here and there villages appeared, as if on islands, landmarks standing out in the midst of the low-lying land – their *-ey* and *-holme* suffixes being Old English and Old Scandinavian words, meaning ‘island’. These were portents of the journey through *terra incognita* that lay ahead. The Wests’ route would be dependent on the directions they got from people who, like themselves, would have rarely known much about what lay more than six or seven miles beyond their own village. From the incidental entries in the Essex parish registers, we can see that most of these ‘walking men and women’, slept under the stars or, if they were lucky, found a barn or a shed in which to shelter, with or without the owner’s permission. They lived by poaching or on hand-outs from compassionate villagers, most of who lived at subsistence level themselves. As with the Wests, we only know this much about these passing figures when either a woman went into labour and her newborn child was baptised where it was born or because one of them died and had to be buried there and then. The event is recorded in the parish register of which-ever parish they happen to be: otherwise they would pass on their way, undocumented, except by evidence of the growing populations of towns, thanks to migrants such as the Wests.

6 Troilus & Cressida Act 3, Scene 1

The West family

The Wests have left one small trace element of their existence in sixteenth century Scotter. On 10th April 1598, nine years after the death of Pleasance West at Downham in Essex, Henry West, son of John West, was buried in Scotter. That this Henry was the late Pleasance’s widower, returned from Kent, is possible but unlikely. For one thing, unless he had remarried, again not impossible, given that the death of Pleasance had left Henry a single father with children to look after, the entry recording his burial in Scotter would have designated him as ‘Widower’. Instead he was designated ‘*Son of John West*’, a sure sign that this Henry was a child, or certainly below the age of twenty-one and hence had not yet achieved his majority. Henry is a common-enough name and families in the past have shown themselves to be conservative when it came to naming their children, as many a family-historian has found to his/her frustration. That having been acknowledged, it is possible that Henry West junior deceased was related to his older namesake: perhaps the latter was his uncle and his godfather, who literally gave him his name at the font. This scenario would make John West the stay-at-home brother of Henry.

However, a search of the local parish registers shows that in the sixteenth century the surname *West* occurs in clusters, one in and around Stow-in-Lindsey; another around Upton; and a small group in Haxey, in the fen country known as the Isle of Axholme, on the west side of the River Trent. The record of the baptism of Henry, son of John West of Scotter was an isolated case. In fact, a trawl through the parish registers for the shires through which the Wests would have passed on the Great North Road – Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire, and Cambridgeshire (although there were many marriages in which one of the parties was named *West*, it seems unlikely that a walking family would be in a situation where a marriage could have been arranged for travellers on the road) produced no baptisms for anyone with the surname West, and scarcely any burials for the year 1589, implying, though on admittedly scanty evidence, that the Wests were not obliged to stop-off anywhere *en route* because of the birth of a child or a death, until they reached Downham. The burial of Elizabeth West at Leverington, near Wisbech in north-east Cambridgeshire in October 1589 fits the date but her father’s name was given as William; similarly, the burial of Winefrid, at Barking St Margaret in Essex in October 1589 states that she was the wife of Edward West.

Which raises the question, why Downham? How had their journey led them on what appears to a detour fifty miles east of the Great North Road, instead of continuing on the Great North Road towards London and detouring west if they wished to avoid the city, crossing the Thames by ferry at Shepperton, which would have brought them to them to Weybridge. The

inference to be drawn is that they were obviously aiming for the West Tilbury-Gravesend ferry, or for the East Tilbury-Higham ferry. There is evidence of a causeway below the surface of the estuary at Cliffe, possibly of the Roman period, but rising sea levels, caused by the changes in climate discussed at the beginning of this article, had made this unusable, so that, coupled with the increasing liability of the area to flooding, the landing at Cliffe became marshy and unreliable, and consequently traffic had shifted up-river to the West Tilbury-Gravesend crossing. In turn this raises the possibility that the Wests did not travel by road from Scotter, but by water, embarking, probably at Gainsborough, up the Trent to its junction with the old Roman canal known as the Fosdyke, which, although silted up and barely navigable, would connect them at Lincoln to the River Witham, bringing them to the thriving port of Boston, from where they could take ship for London, following the coast south. At which point, another question arises – if their ship was London-bound, why not sail directly up the Thames estuary and make their landing on its Kent shore? Instead, they turn up in Downham, on the Essex side and some distance inland from the Thames Estuary. In that case, did the Wests’ ship sail up the estuary of the River Colne, land at Colchester and follow the line of the Roman road known as the Stane Street, south-west, via Chelmsford, to end up at Downham? These are questions that it is unlikely will ever be answered.

The Wests set off from Scotter in Lincolnshire, to seek relief, not from kinsfolk in Kent, so it was reported in the Downham parish register, but from friends. Based on the crude statistics of the number of references on the *FindmyPast* database to the surname West for the period 1500-1650,⁷ the entries per county travelling south along the Great North Road, with the detour into Essex, are:

	References to West:	Area (sq.m.)	Wests / sq.m.
Lincolnshire	336	2,274	0.04
Nottinghamshire	141	805	0.2
Leicestershire	59	984	0.06
Northamptonshire	51	913	0.05
Cambridgeshire	94	1176	0.08
Huntingdonshire	16	350	0.04
Essex	169	1,338	0.14
Kent	153	1,442	0.1

While based admittedly on the showing derived from very crude evidence, in the period 1500-1650, the references to the surname West along the overland route south are most concentrated in Nottinghamshire (0.2/sq. mile), Essex (0.1/sq. mile) and Kent (0.1/sq.mile). The same evidence appears

⁷ This is subject to the caveat, that many names are entered twice or more,

to show a scattering of Wests, settled in twenty-two parishes in the vicinity of Downham in Essex, before and after the Lincolnshire Wests rested there in November 1589.⁸ Obviously the name appears in the table to have been most strongly represented in Kent, the intended destination of Henry and Pleasance West and their children. While not so densely concentrated as in Essex, the name occurs frequently in the parishes contained within a twelve mile-wide strip of the Thames and Channel shore, extending from Deptford in the east to Sandwich on the Channel coast. The only Henry on any of the family history databases who possibly 'fits the bill' in terms of presumed date of birth and first name, Henry West, son of William, was born in Margate in 1565. Unfortunately, the absence of baptism registers for Scotter makes it impossible to know whether the Henry who set out with his family from that Lincolnshire village in 1589, to throw themselves on the mercy of friends in Kent, had been born there – or was he, perhaps this same Henry, born at Margate twenty-five years earlier? If so, then it would come as less of a surprise that a family in Lincolnshire, almost 200 miles away, in an age when social media of even the most rudimentary form did not exist, had ever heard of friends in Kent. There is then a possibility that some link existed between their decision to move from Scotter to Kent and this possible indication that the surname West was apparently prevalent in Kent and Essex at the time of Henry and Pleasance's ill-fated journey south.

Mobility in Tudor England

When, the levels of mobility in Tudor England are discussed, it is easily forgotten what such mobility entailed. People moved across country much more than that 'dyslexic' generation of historians, castigated by Wrightson and Levine, had realised when they portrayed the immutable *gemeinschaft* qualities of the pre-industrial English village community. However, as this case study shows, this mobility did not come easily: choices had to be faced; decisions had to be made; chances had to be taken, all of which governed whether the Wests found lodging for the night or not, food, the right direction, the safest and quickest route, and contacts established. Get one of these wrong, could lead to being taken before the local authorities as a sturdy beggar, a vagabond, someone out of place and the consequences might be a whip across one's bare back or a white-hot branding iron. All this is why it was vital to be able to say that you had somewhere to go to, friends in Kent who would be able to relieve you, the unspoken understanding being that therefore you would not become a charge on parish relief. Whether it was the ties of kinship that caused the Wests to make the detour that brought them to that specific part of Essex, where people named West were most numerous, and where Pleasance breathed her last, their ultimate destination being to find themselves at home among the many Wests who peopled the Kentish shore of the Thames estuary, are tantalizing questions in the case to which no answer is possible.

8 There are Wests in parishes north of Braintree, but the main concentration appears to be in the south east, contained within a triangle of which Chelmsford forms the tip and the coast from the mouth of the Blackwater Estuary and up the Thames Estuary as far as Barking forms the base.

In Brief



A (probable) Roman defixio or curse tablet was found near Colchester recorded with the PAS under reference ESS-AD217A in October 2022. The lead sheet would have been inscribed on one face with a curse – perhaps laid upon the miscreant who had stolen something of value – and placed in a location thought to be frequented by the otherworldly powers – often in running water or nailed to the wall of a temple. Only unrolling the lead would reveal the inscription, but it is unlikely that the object would survive that procedure. The find has been donated to an unnamed local museum.



An unusual North Thames type gold quarter-stater was found in November 2022 at Beaumont-cum-Moze and recorded under reference ESS-6B583D. The coin is incomplete, issued by Cunobelin and ascribed to the tribes Catuvellauni and Trinovantes. It is the 'Cunobelinus Wild' type dating to c. AD 10-40 (ABC 2816, Sills 'Wild A' class 3e). The obverse bears the image of a corn ear and the legend: 'CA' to the left and 'M[V]' to the right. The reverse shows a horse facing right with dashes for its mane, and the legend 'CVN[O]' below. Although this coin was a single find, it is deemed to constitute 'treasure' as it was recovered from the same findspot as a previously recorded coin of a similar date (reference ESS-DE47C2) and is recognised as being part of that same find.

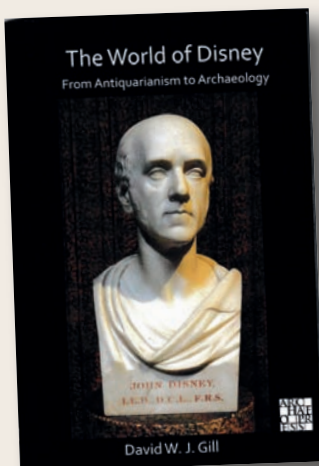


A copper alloy seal matrix of 11th-13th century date was found near Braintree in September 2022 and recorded under ESS-AD3B44. It is vesica-shaped and has an integral loop and strap to the reverse. The obverse features a crescent between two stars, all within an incised groove for the border. Sadly the surface is too worn for the legend to be made out.

Book Reviews



David W. J. Gill



The World of Disney: From Antiquarianism to Archaeology

142pp., monochrome & colour illustrations, Archaeo Press, 2020, ISBN 978-1-78969-827-5, card cover, £ 25.00

This book is centred on Dr John Disney (1779-1858). The author sets out his two main aims in the introduction, namely to establish why Disney selected archaeology for gifts and bequest to

Cambridge University at the end of his life, and from where did he acquire the wealth and the artefacts which made this possible. The author reaches back several generations to detail friends and relatives, a number of whom had nonconformist, reformist and republican leanings. Some were supportive of libertarian events such as the defeat of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, and the American war of independence, and others were committed to the provision of educational opportunities, social justice and political reform. There was a strong thread of public service through the army and in the administration of local justice, and this educated and well-to-do background provided the source of Disney's wealth, as well as his inherited collection of Roman and classical sculpture and artefacts. For the reader, these connections are confused by Disney's marriage to his uncle's daughter, as well as his uncle's adaptation of his surname, and the inclusion of a family tree in the text would have been helpful.

The Disneys were not originally an Essex family and it was not until 1804 that John Disney's father, the Unitarian minister of the Essex Hall chapel in London, was bequeathed an estate in Ingatestone called The Hyde. This was the result of his close link to two wealthy benefactors of the chapel, Thomas Brand and Thomas Hollis (the latter, confusingly, adding Brand to his surname). These benefactors had travelled together on Grand Tours in Europe between 1748 and 1753, purchasing antique statuary and pottery, as well as visiting the recently opened excavations at Herculanium. In 1761 the architect Sir William Chambers was commissioned to alter The Hyde for Brand, and to provide a fit setting for the collection. On Brand's death in 1774, both were bequeathed to Hollis-Brand. Subsequently Disney's father – and then Disney himself who visited Rome in 1826-7 – inherited both the house and its collection, making many additions to the latter, including Roman material dug up during the construction of Colchester's new hospital in the early 1820s.

The author describes Disney's life in public service, as well as his involvement in a wide range of charitable and learned societies (including the formation of the Essex Archaeological Society in 1852). Apart from adding to his collection and compiling a detailed and respected catalogue (published in 1846 with a revised edition three years later) it is difficult to discern the author's claim of a transition of the Disneys from antiquarianism to archaeology. Such a distinction was probably not clear until the latter part of the nineteenth century when archaeology came to be associated with scientific excavation and classification. Up to then, it was largely seen as the means of investigating the past from its surviving physical remains, in contrast to historians who relied mainly on archival sources. Novelists and cartoonists associated antiquarians with gathering up anything that was tarnished with the mists of time in an entirely unsystematic and uncritical manner. In contrast, Disney's collection of Roman sculpture and pottery had been deliberately and selectively acquired since the mid eighteenth century, though it is now impossible to know if this was driven by motives of status, aesthetics or archaeology – or a mix of all three.

For whatever reason, Disney made two significant contributions to archaeology. In 1850 he donated part of his collection to the University of Cambridge and it now forms a significant part of the display in the Fitzwilliam Museum there. In 1851 he provided funds (which he later supplemented) for the first English chair of archaeology in the same university. He appointed as its first professor John Marsden, an Essex clergyman, whose sole obligation was to deliver six lectures a year. Archaeology, as a serious academic subject in universities, was still some way in the future.

This book is well illustrated and set out, but does provide unnecessary information (such as the exact

dates of marriage of distant relatives, and details of siblings who have little or no relevance) and these details interfere with the flow of the text. As a reference book, it has a frustratingly inadequate index. However, the author has uncovered the intriguing network of nonconformist and libertarian threads in Disney's background, and provides convincing evidence that these must have been influential in his decision to make his pioneering benefactions to the University of Cambridge.

Michael Leach

S.E. Kelly (ed). Anglo-Saxon Charters 20.

Charters Of Barking Abbey And Waltham Holy Cross

British Academy / Oxford University Press, 2021. Hardback, 326 pp, maps. ISBN 978-0-19-726688-5 £75



This latest addition to the ongoing 'Anglo-Saxon Charters' series covers the documents associated with the two main religious houses of Essex outside London. The text is divided between the charters of Barking (previously *Beddanham*) and Waltham Holy Cross with a short history of each foundation.

The latter begins with the founding of the religious house in the reign of Cnut by Tofi the Proud, a staller ranking below an earl but above a sheriff. Legend says that there was only a lowly hut on the site where Tofi used to go hunting before he decided to erect a religious building to house a miraculous figure of Christ which had been unearthed on his land in Somerset; archaeology indicates some small habitation here in the 6th c. and a series of religious buildings dating from circa 700 AD on a royal estate straddling the River Lea. The site then passed to Earl (later King) Harold who endowed it, and subsequently to the Norman kings. The evidence of the sole surviving charter is presented in the standard edited format with the original Latin donation by King Edward in 1062, followed by the *landgemaera* 'boundaries' (in Old English) of the parcels of land attached – Paslow, South Weald, Upminster, Walkfares (Boreham), Debden Green, Alderton, Woodford, Lambeth and Nazeing.

More complex is the evidence relating to Barking, which was famously the site of a nunnery and double-monastery in the 7th c. under Abbess Æthelburh

with landholdings in London; records pertaining to the period 720-950 are absent, from which the inference is drawn (backed up by the archaeology) that the religious community withdrew to the safety of the city during the uncertainties of the Danish wars. Evidence resumes circa 950 with references to a local church dedicated to St. Mary. The charter evidence for Barking is very important – it includes a donation by an otherwise unknown (but entirely plausible) King Swithfrith to Eorcenwald, bishop of London.

The Latin texts for Barking are given, including the lists of co-signatories, some of whom can be traced through other documents. It was for a long time accepted that only two charters relating to Barking survived – and one of these highly suspect as to its authenticity – until the discovery of a group of eight fresh documents which had been collected and copied out in a 16th c. manuscript connected to Ilford hospital. The discoverer of these rare gems was local historian H.H. Lockwood, and the initial publication took place in *Essex Journal* (no.25) in 1990!

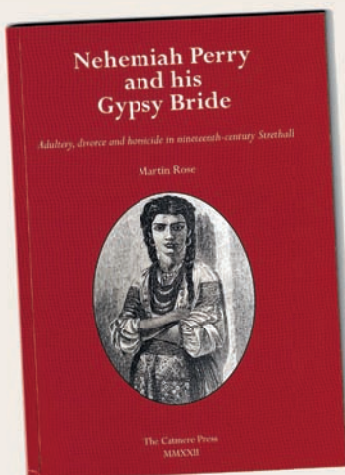
A series of short essays set out the overall history of the foundations and their importance. Individual topics are developed with good references to follow up. The charters are given in full with ample notes, an index of place-names and of personal names and notes on editorial decisions. Anyone with an interest in the early history of Essex, the early church in England or place-names and personal names will need to have this volume to hand.

Steve Pollington

who having been already threatened, was armed and ready. One of the band was shot dead. Next day, Perry and his friends drank toasts around the corpse (who was an unrelated gypsy and petty thief), death masks were made of the victim, and the remains of the unfortunate man subsequently exhibited by the sexton in the parish church for threepence admission. Though the title of the book and its subject matter might suggest lurid sensationalism, it is a very thoroughly researched piece of work which looks at the antecedents of this violent event, and the uneasy relationship between the permanent residents of the village and the itinerants. It examines the doomed marriage between Perry and Sarah Shaw who was one of the local gypsy community, the husband's ill-considered attempts to isolate his wife from her family and her cultural background, and his inability to comprehend the intractable difficulties arising from such an unbridgeable gulf in their social status. Combined with his intractable personality, this led to what we would now term 'coercive control', and its unhappy consequences. Even when banished to a solitary cottage, Perry kept a close eye on her every movement through his paid servants.

The author has made excellent and critical use of a variety of sources and is keenly aware that each carries its own particular bias. There are the press reports which inevitably err on the side of sensationalism, as well as pandering to the local prejudice against the gypsies. There are accounts compiled some decades later by gypsy historians which will be biased to some degree in the opposite direction. There are the depositions from Perry's ecclesiastical divorce in the Bishop of London's Consistory Court but, since his wife refused to testify, her side of the story was never heard. The author's research has provided a clear background of the rural village community, as well as looking ahead to the subsequent consequences of this violent marriage, Perry's probable decline into mental instability, and the complications surrounding his invalid last will and testament. The consequent dispute ended up in the Court of Chancery which established that, though there had been an ecclesiastical divorce, this only amounted to separation from 'board and bed', and that Sarah's claim to an inheritance as his widow was legally justified. Unfortunately, in the end, Sarah received nothing due to a further technical decision that a substantial mortgage should be paid off from the proceeds of Nathaniel's real, rather than his personal, estate. The fact that Sarah could not possibly have met the considerable expenses of a case in Chancery hints at the crime of champerty – a suit brought by a third party, ostensibly on behalf of another litigant, but covertly intended for their own personal gain. Even the solicitors who had drafted the wills of Perry and his brother appear to have acted unprofessionally by making themselves beneficiaries.

This book is very readable and well researched, and



Martin Rose

Nehemiah Perry and his Gypsy Bride: adultery, divorce and homicide in nineteenth-century Strethall

44pp, monochrome & colour photographs, The Catmere Press, 2022 No ISBN, card covers, £5 plus p&p from martin.rose@magd.oxon.org

This is an account of an infamous incident which took place one night in 1849 in rural north west Essex. Masked and armed intruders broke into the house of Nathaniel Perry, a wealthy village landowner. Perry,

the thorough referencing reveals the wide range of sources which the author has used to add useful contextual background. It is a pleasure to read a local history which, though focussed on a single parochial event in a remote rural parish, provides a much broader insight into contemporary society at large, the functioning of civil and ecclesiastical courts, and the long-term consequences of a single dramatic event, as well as an introduction to the infamous (but doubtless still practised!) crime of champerty.

Michael Leach

Paul Hawkins & Paul Reyland

Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Stations in Essex

pp.130, ISBN 978-1-80369-382-8
New Generation Publishing, 2022,
£8-99 from Amazon or from
paulhawkins1951@btinternet.com

In general, former industrial and technical industries are very poorly recorded, so this book, authored by two very well qualified individuals who spent their working lives in various aspects of radio communications, is an extremely welcome account. It examines the very significant contributions that were made to the developments of this technology by the Chelmsford based firm of Marconi.

The first regular wireless telegraph link was set up by Marconi in 1907 between Clifden on the west coast of Ireland, and Nova Scotia in Canada, places that were chosen to minimise the distance for the primitive spark transmitters. However, this did require very long landlines to connect these stations to the commercial centres that they served, and it was Marconi's development of thermionic valves over the next decade that enabled transmitters to be sited closer to these centres, initially in North Wales and ultimately in Essex.

The sites in Essex – long wave transmitters at North Weald (always referred to as Ongar) and a receiver station at Brentwood – were developed immediately after World War I. For the transmitter station, Marconi had acquired the 730 acre site at North Weald by 1919. This was a large farm which

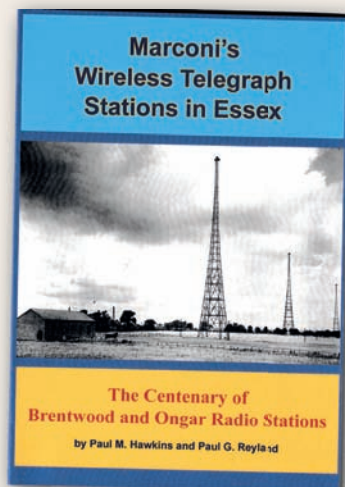
included an abandoned mass concrete redoubt constructed in the 1890s as part of a chain of forts to defend London from invasion. Its associated buildings and underground fortifications were put to use for storage, and as a power house for generating electricity, as the area was still off grid at this date. The separate receiver station was on a much smaller 11 acre site on the northern edge of Brentwood. Both stations were connected by landline to Marconi's Central Telegraph Office in London, signals in Morse being converted into perforated paper tape and rendered into English on paper strips similar to those that were formerly used for telegrams.

The authors carefully detail the subsequent developments of increasingly powerful long and short wave transmitters, the requirements for increasingly sophisticated aerial systems to serve them, and the steady growth in the number of worldwide connections. Their book is very well illustrated, and includes site plans and an intriguing early photo showing banks of brightly glowing thermionic valves, with only a simple wooden barrier to protect operatives from the high voltages necessary to power the transmitters. Safety concerns, and the development of other means of cooling the valves, soon ensured that the transmitters were enclosed in protective cabinets.

The book provides much technical detail which will be invaluable to future historians of wireless telegraphy, as well as providing the background to the takeover of the stations by what became Cable & Wireless, the development of picture and facsimile transmission (first developed as a public service in 1926), and the importance of the service during the Second World War when U-boat sabotage to undersea cables became a serious concern. It then covers the postwar expansion into radio telephones, picture transmission for the press, and maritime communication – and finally on to its ultimate demise in the face of competition from satellite communication. Brentwood closed in 1967, Ongar in 1985. The subsequent demolition of all the buildings, and an examination of today's vestigial remains in the landscape completes this excellent and useful account of what is now, to the general public, a largely forgotten technology.

This is a first rate and well researched account by authors who are fully conversant with the technical aspects of wireless telegraphy. There are useful appendices covering transmitter types, codes in use, overseas destinations, staff information and ground plans, as well as a useful bibliography. Though the index is unsatisfactory, this does not detract from what is an extremely useful record of a vanished technology of which the only active survivor is at Rugby whose aerials, visible from the M1, are a reminder of what used to be part of the west Essex landscape.

Michael Leach



The New POOR LAW with a description of the new Workhouses

Look at the Picture—See



A hand-drawn poster, circa 1837, on which a printed graphic has been pasted depicting horrendous conditions inside a workhouse. Campaigners against harsh regimes imposed in Union workhouses following the Poor Law Reform Act petitioned Parliament to intercede. Source: National Archives - Empire and Industry, 1750-1850