

# ESSEX JOURNAL



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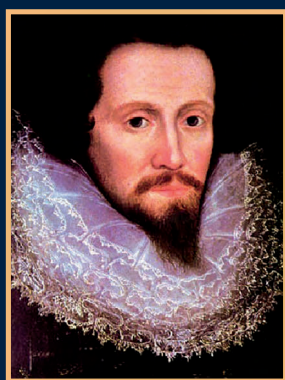
## The Dengie Peninsula

Neil McCarthy

Briefly mentioned in HG Wells' War of the Worlds, this peninsula has a very colourful history, p34



Sid Tiffin at home on the Dengie Peninsula 1925



## The changing balance of wealth and power in rural Essex

The dissolution of the monasteries to the fall of the 4th Duke of Norfolk, p13

### Also in this issue:

- Essex and The King Edgar Charter of AD 962
- An Unidentified Clergyman – *Food Supplies, Poor Relief and The Countess Of Warwick*
- Episodes in the Life of Two Essex Woods
- Hospitals and Disease in Medieval Essex
- Book Review

# Welcome to the Spring 2024 issue of the *Essex Journal*



A slightly enlarged issue this time allows me to offer you a wide range of interesting articles. We begin with an early written document – a charter issued by King Edgar (or Eadgar) in 962 AD. The parcel of land which changed hands is not – and never was – in Essex, but it nevertheless acquired a connection to our county in the course of its more than one thousand year history. Read James Kemble's fascinating article to discover how and why it ended up in the Essex Records Office.

Insurrection, strikes, riots and civil commotions were in the air at the turn of the 19th century, as well as the prospect of military defeat and subjugation to the ascendant revolutionary state in France. Poor harvests and imminent mass starvation were uppermost in the minds of the governing classes, who responded by imposing an additional bureaucratic burden on the functionaries – an assessment of the food supplies in store and the yield of the current crop. Michael Leach provides an arresting picture of one rural clergyman's attempts to game the system in order to acquire a reserve fund with which to alleviate the plight of the poor.

Mark Marston Norris rounds off his survey of Essex Justices of the Peace (Part I, Spring 2024) – this time relating the Essex officials to their counterparts in the capital. The purpose of the study is to present a picture of the changing balance of wealth and power in rural Essex after the dissolution of the monasteries down to 1571 when the 4th Duke of Norfolk died. Long-established local families did not provide as many of the Justices as might have been expected, and the new intake was rather heterogeneous in many ways. Interplay of Catholic and Protestant traditions accounts for some of this variety, alongside other factors. Dr. Morris's study shows that the Essex Justices were of a very high calibre, which was not always the case elsewhere.

Woodland management through coppicing was a routine part of the rural schedule and economy, extending back for centuries. To what extent do the effects of such practices survive in the modern landscape: can we still see evidence for it today? Rosemary Hall shows that not only do coppiced woods survive in the countryside, but many urban or suburban areas contain small coppiced woods. Taking as the starting point her research into two suburban woods, Daffy Wood in Broomfield and College Wood in Melbourne Park, she shows that even relatively humble (and largely disregarded) urban woodlands may have an interesting history. Public access to woodland is a great benefit, but not all members of the public have due respect for their sylvan surroundings, as Rosemary shows.

As devotees of historical studies, I am sure most of us confront the problems of disease, ill-health and injury in times past and wonder how people coped with these adversities without access to painkillers, antibiotics and reasonable (as we understand them) standards of hygiene. James Kemble provides an interesting overview of the subject with special reference to hospitals of Essex, of which several were founded in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. A few of these establishments have undergone archaeological evaluation of both the surface structures and the burials, in order to determine the environments in which patients were housed and, where possible, the osteological evidence for their medical conditions. Documentary evidence indicates that there were more such establishments, but they have so far escaped detection.

The Essex coastal marshes may not be the obvious setting for a crucial episode in a science fiction classic, but Neil McCarthy reminds us that one scene in *The War of the Worlds* was set in just such a location: the Dengie peninsula. Using a series of snapshots of life in the marshes, Neil demonstrates that the harsh conditions bred a necessary self-reliance among the inhabitants who scraped a living from fishing and fowling, supplemented by smuggling. Some moving tales of hardship survived as well as dastardly deeds remind us that the marshes contained more dangers than just the treacherous terrain.

The Book Review section is a little thin this time, although this is not due to lack of books but rather to the speed of the review process. Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

Finally: a musical interlude, courtesy of a conversation I had with my friend John Culley concerning songs and their recordings relating to Southend-on-Sea. John has a splendid collection of old gramophone records and has been assembling a store of related material all his life, I believe, so it came as no surprise to learn that he had gathered so many resources. I wonder if a parallel collection exists relating to Clacton or Dovercourt, for example?

And finally ... I am fortunate to have received a good many interesting articles for consideration. I am always reluctant to turn them away yet I often must due to considerations of length. In a magazine of the size of EJ, the ideal word-count for a piece is around 2500-3000. It pains me to receive useful material compiled in great detail but amounting to 10,000 words – too long to be run over two or even three successive issues of the Journal. Hence, if you are considering submitting an article, please let me know in advance so that I can take an informed view based on the present state of the 'waiting' pile.





Hon. Editor: S. Pollington:  
editor@essexjournal.co.uk

Hon. Membership Sec: M. Stuchfield  
martinstuchfield@pentlowhall.uk.

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Cover illustration below:

*Coastguard signalmen on the Dengie Peninsula*



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Cover image left:  
painting of Sir Anthony Cooke  
(1507-1576) of Gidea Hall,  
Romford, Essex.

Cover image below: Sid Tiffin on the  
Dengie Peninsula, 1925



# In Brief

A remarkable hoard of late Anglo-Saxon pennies was discovered in 2019 by metal-detectorists at an unnamed site near Braintree. The hoard comprised 144 of the silver coins, all dated to the reign of Harold II – Harold Godwinson, the king who fell at Hastings after only a few months on the throne. The coins must therefore all have been minted in 1066, and there is the tantalising possibility that they were hidden by a wealthy landowner who went off to fight at Stamford Bridge or Hastings in Harold’s army, and never returned to unearth them.

Sixteen of the most academically interesting coins were taken into the collections of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and Colchester Museum; the balance was put up for sale at auction in February this year and fetched a hammer price of £325,560.



Image copyright DixNoonanWebb



March this year has supplied two instances of Roman Harlow-type bow brooches, an uncommon and early type which is normally dated to the period 50-80 A.D. and thus stands at the beginning of the Roman period in Britain – within a generation of the Claudian invasion of 43 A.D. and plausibly from the period of the Boudiccan revolt.

The Harlow-Type brooch comprises a one-piece body with two holes in the lug behind the head, through which a coiled rod passes forming the spring and developing into a tapering pin. One of these examples still has most of the spring in place. The swept catchplate at the other end has an integral lip which secures the pin. The PAS references are: ESS-ACCE62 and ESS-AD1A5A.



Both brooches were recovered by a metal-detectorist from the Swards End area. The PAS records several more Roman-period finds reported recently from this area (e.g. bracelet ESS-469B4A, propeller strap-mount ESS-44D982).

## St Peter-On-The-Wall – Landscape and heritage on the Essex coast

Edited by Johanna Dale

This valuable title was reviewed in Essex Journal (Autumn 2023) and is available in paperback for £35 and hardback for £50. Those prices still apply, but a free download is now available direct from the publisher at: <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10169550/1/St-Peter-on-the-Wall.pdf> . PDFs will never replace hardcopy, but a free book is a free book all the same.





Grange, Sorley House, Sorley Barn and a few scattered houses. Sorley Manor (Devon Historic Environment Record MDV 42856) is probably the site of the ancient Domesday manor. Old Sorley Cottage, a cross-passage house (DHER 104625), was demolished in 2011. Sorley Farmhouse (listed ) is early 19th century. Algar held the estate in 1066. He did not retain Sorley after the Norman Conquest but an Algar, probably the same man, held nearby Plympton as tenant-in-chief in 1086. At Domesday the tenant-in-chief of 'Surlei' in the Hundred of Diptford was Judhael of Totnes, with Fulco the undertenant, a small settlement of three villagers, four smallholders and one slave, with two men's ploughteams, one lord's ploughteam, one acre of meadow, 18 cattle, 12 pigs and 125 sheep. In 1235 John de Rak held one fee in 'Surleigh' from Guy de Brettevil<sup>(9)</sup>.

Judhael from Brittany or Maine supported William the Conqueror. He was granted the barony of Totnes where he founded a priory, and later he held a fief at Barnstaple in Devon; he died between 1123 and 1130<sup>(10)</sup>. The estate of King Edgar's charter continued in lay ownership until it was granted to Buckfast Abbey. Founded in c.1018 as a Benedictine monastery, Buckfast abbey initially did not flourish and was rebuilt after 1147 by Cistercian monks. The large settlement of Norton (later Churchstow) was in the hands of Buckfast Abbey in 1086<sup>(11,12)</sup>. The abbey continued to hold Churchstow in 1327 when Master Benyt was appointed clerk<sup>(13)</sup>. Two abbots and several monks were victims of the Black Death. Prosperity came to the region with sheep farming, cloth and wool exported to the continent.

While the South Hams district is now rural, agricultural and relatively isolated, charter evidence points to it having been a major routeway in the 9th and 10th centuries. A charter dated AD 847 of King Aethelwulf (S: 298) granting land in South Hams refers to 'weal weg' (British Way) which a century later in AD 962 is 'ealden wege' (old way) (S: 704). The 'herepath' of the charter may be the route passing Sorley hamlet from Bantham, the former Roman tin-trading-post and settlement on the coast<sup>(19)</sup>. Two miles west of Sorley hamlet, Leigh Barton is probably a grange of the abbey. Of this fortified manor house the gatehouse, curtain walls, the 15th century farmhouse and two courts remain (16,17) (SX 7206 46727; HER: MDV55291)). The Title Deeds of the Tremayne family in 1375/6 refer to 'Sorley within Alvington'; it was in the possession of the Dean and chapter of Salisbury Cathedral since 1122<sup>(18)</sup>.

After 1220 the abbot of Buckfast separated the estate of Kingsbridge out from Churchstow. If Hooke<sup>(20,21)</sup> has correctly interpreted the bounds of King Edgar's charter of 962 they extended from Kingsbridge northwards to the River Avon, and the three *perticae* must represent part. The charter bounds are now difficult to identify but it is clear that the Edgar charter comprises a greater area than the present Sorley hamlet, probably including Loddiswell and surrounding parishes. Several identifications have been attempted. Hooke<sup>(22)</sup> and Luscombe<sup>(23)</sup> reviewed Finberg's interpretation of the Old English bounds and Ryder<sup>(24)</sup> proposed a smaller area excluding North Sorley. (Figure 2). Three *perticae* (virgates) may represent the two adjacent Domesday

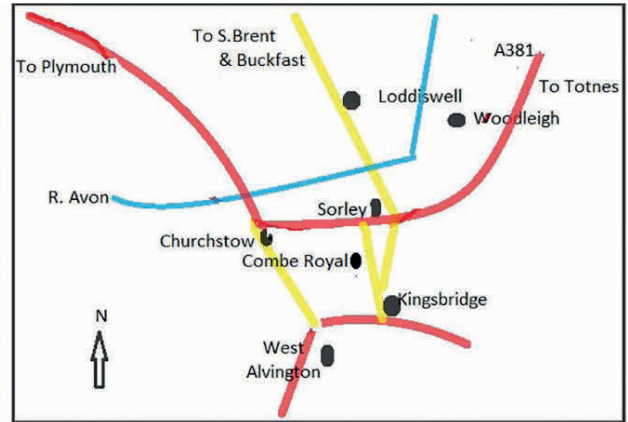


Figure 2. Places mentioned in the text (main roads in red)

estates of Sorley (half a hide) and Combe Regis (one virgate).

## Post-Dissolution

William Petre was born in 1505/6 son of John Peter [sic], a tanner, of Torbryan near Totnes and Anne Colling. He matriculated at Oxford University where he studied law. By his first wife Gertrude Tyrrell he had two daughters, the first Dorothy who was goddaughter of the last abbess of Barking Abbey. She married Nicholas Wadham (1531-1609), sheriff of Somerset who, with his wife, founded Wadham College, Oxford. The second daughter was Elizabeth, goddaughter of Jane Wriothesley, wife of the Earl of Southampton. About 1529 Petre was appointed tutor to George Boleyn, the brother of Anne, the future Queen of Henry VIII. Maybe it was by these contacts, as well as by his acknowledged integrity and usefulness, that William Petre rose to prominence in King Henry's commission. He clandestinely maintained a Catholic priest at Ingatestone Hall in Essex, in which at least two hidden priest-holes have been discovered. He was appointed Secretary successively to Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and, as Deputy Secretary, Elizabeth I, a remarkable career considering the oscillating Catholic and Protestant religious tenets of the Tudor dynasty<sup>(25)</sup>. His intimate knowledge of Devon was no doubt enhanced by his official Visitations to and Surrender of the monasteries and abbeys which Henry VIII ordered Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's Vicar-General, to carry out.

Cromwell appointed William Petre as one of his deputies. Accompanied by a large armed retinue of soldiers for his protection, in February 1539 Petre obtained the Surrender of Buckfast Abbey. In that busy year of travelling Petre also obtained the Surrender of St John's Hospital in Exeter, Plympton and Polslow Priors, Torre and Forde Abbeys in Devon. He took an inventory of the monastery's gold, silver and jewels to be sent to London. He obtained the surrender of Barking and, in the following year, Waltham Abbey in Essex. Overriding the monks' choice of Abbot Rede as their abbot, the king had appointed an intruder Gabriel Donne as abbot to Buckfast. Donne, formerly of Stratford Langthorne Abbey in Essex, was favourable to the "new" religion of the king. He had been implicated in the arrest and execution by strangling of William Tyndale in Antwerp for publishing a Bible in



English. Donne, Prior Guy and nine monks of Buckfast reluctantly signed the Oath of Supremacy<sup>(26)</sup>. After the monastery's Dissolution, lead from the church roof and the bells were sold to Sir Thomas Arundel; the bells were subsequently purchased by the parishioners for £33-15s. The abbey buildings fell into decay but the monastery was refounded in 1882 by monks from France who built the new church, opened in 1937.

The parchment documenting the Sorley charter came to Essex when the estate was purchased by William Petre in 1546. Petre acquired other estates in Devon, the county in which he was brought up. Among these were Venn in Churchstow, Alvington, Kingsbridge<sup>(27,28)</sup> and Torbryan, a name now adopted by an estate near Ingatestone Hall.

There is little evidence that Petre spent much time in his Devonshire estates after the Dissolution. He built up large holdings in Essex, amongst them Ingatestone which had been one of Barking Abbey's possessions before the Dissolution. By the end of his life Petre owned, through purchase, gift or exchange, some 20,000 acres in Essex and about the same in the West Country including Devon. At his death in 1572 the Sorley estate passed to his son John Petre who was created 1st baron of Writtle in 1603.

The Petre family began to dispose of their Devonshire properties throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. 832 years after King Edgar's grant to his minister Aethelhere, Robert Lord Petre, 9th baron, in 1794 sold property and land in Kingsbridge and Churchstow including Sorley, three cornmills, eleven messuages and one cottage, ten curtilages, seven acres of land and two acres of meadow to John Scobell for £420<sup>(29)</sup>. In 1839 at Lower Sorley William Jackson was the owner of Sorley homestead, his tenant Samuel Heath with 199 acres. Jackson also owned Higher Sorley with William Hodge as occupier, with 58 acres plus 15 acres of park. No longer was the main industry in sheep farming. Of a total 3602 acres in Alvington, 3000 were arable and only 410 meadow and pasture (Tithe Award). A turnpike road was proposed from Sorley Green to Venn Cross in Churchstow in 1827, and in 1883 the site of the Sorley Turnpike House was purchased by C. Walker of Plympton St Maurice, a village now subsumed into Plymouth<sup>(30)</sup>. The Census of 1841 shows the predominant activity was agricultural. In 1902 Andrew Luscombe and George Nosworthy are recorded as farmers, residents of Sorley and Rake in Churchstow<sup>(31)</sup>. The hamlet continued to be a farming community.

From this charter issued by King Edgar to the benefit of his minister Aethelhere, whom Keynes identifies as one of the king's thegns (32), ownership of the estate can be traced in some detail over more than 1000 years.

*The author is grateful to Dr Simon Keynes of Trinity College Cambridge for assistance in the preparation of this paper. The charter is reproduced by kind permission of Lord Petre and the Essex Record Office.*

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# An Unidentified Clergyman Revealed:

## Food Supplies, Poor Relief and The Countess of Warwick's MSS

Michael Leach

In 1800, the government was concerned about food supplies and the possibility of civil unrest in the aftermath of several poor harvests, coupled with problems from French attacks on British shipping. Prices were high, and anonymous letters had been circulated threatening that the poor, if not relieved, 'will act for themselves, and trust to the chance of perishing by the sword or the halter, rather than by hunger... indeed the evil has been already felt in numerous instances of wilful fires around the Country'.<sup>1</sup>

Fearful of food riots, the government responded by sending out a circular to all parishes to establish that year's crop yields, and the amount of food in store in each locality. The questionnaire was to be completed by a 'responsible person', usually undertaken by the parish clergyman. In the case of Chipping Ongar, this fell to an unidentifiable William Herrington. On his own initiative, he added a nine-page appendix, indicating his doubts about this form of enquiry, and adding his own findings from talking to farmers, and visiting local markets. Much time and effort must have been spent in compiling what he called his 'miscellaneous observations'. In addition, he described his personal attempts to economise on the use of wheat in his own household. The incorrectly named clergyman can be identified as William Herringham, a curate who looked after the parish for nearly a decade in place of the absentee rector who resided in his other parish at Great Cressingham, in north-west Norfolk.<sup>2</sup>

### William Herringham's early life and career

A lengthy obituary, partly based on Herringham's own memorandum, was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1819, and provides some biographical detail. Born in 1757, he was 'left an orphan in a most unpromising situation' at the age of three, a condition which perhaps sharpened his concerns for the poor later in his life. His father's cousin, John Herringham, paid for his education with a private tutor till he was 16 years old, after which he was employed as an usher in a school in Greenwich. Here he came under the influence of Dr Burnaby, the vicar of Greenwich and a noted travel writer, who provided him with a reading list which included *Lectures on the Art of Reading*, by Thomas Sheridan, a teacher of elocution. Herringham realised that he was 'labouring under a wretched monotony, and possessing a voice so weak that I could not read aloud... for ten minutes without coughing'. Following Sheridan's instructions, he went down to the riverside and practiced speaking aloud against the wind and the incoming tide, apparently with beneficial results.<sup>3</sup>

It may have been with Dr Burnaby's support that he was ordained deacon by the bishop of London in December 1779. He was then appointed curate to Mr Iliffe, rector of Chadwell St Mary, at the modest emolument of £25 a year. Iliffe considered that it would be useful for him to 'know what it was to be a curate'. Herringham then added the curacy of Little Thurrock, slightly better paid at £30 a year. Eighteen months later, after his ordination as priest, he succeeded as rector at Chadwell St Mary, presumably living in the nine-roomed rectory described by Newcourt. Ominously, for those vulnerable to the local ague, this came with 11½ acres of marsh land. Within eighteen months, he was taken seriously ill, and was obliged to move to inland Essex for the sake of his health, initially to Cranham and subsequently to South Weald and Ingatestone (where his first son was baptised). Though he had moved away from Chadwell St Mary, he remained rector until his resignation in 1805, and he did not neglect that parish in spite of his growing responsibilities elsewhere. In 1794, for example, he managed to recover half a century's worth of unpaid interest due to one of the Chadwell charities, the capital of which 'he augmented by his own liberality, and that of other contributors'. Well over a decade after resigning the Chadwell living in 1805, he was remembered 'for his attentive concern for his clerical duties ... though he could not reside with them, he seldom failed in his monthly attendance'.<sup>4</sup>

In 1781 he was enrolled at Clare College, Cambridge, as a 'ten-year man' - this unusual arrangement (later abolished) enabled him, on the payment of an annual fee, to graduate B.D. in 1791 with no requirement to reside in the university, or to sit exams. In 1784, through the intestate death of his father's cousin, he acquired the advowson of St Mary's church, Chadwell, and it may have been this improvement in his financial circumstances which enabled him to marry Anne Woodroffe, daughter of the rector of Cranham, in the following year.<sup>5</sup>



### Curate at Chipping Ongar and initiatives for the relief of the poor

He took up the post of curate in Chipping Ongar in 1792 when the rector became non-resident as a result of obtaining a living in Norfolk. Herringham, unlike his immediate predecessors, quickly became involved in local administration, and was a regular attender of the meetings of the vestry, serving for many years as its chairman. He was also active as a local JP, his obituary noting that 'he was extensively useful to the town of Chipping Ongar, punctual at his weekly attendance, and accessible at all times in his own house'.<sup>6</sup>

His concern for the condition of the poor, and the workings of the poor law itself, is clear from his involvement with the Society for the Promotion of Industry in the Hundreds of Ongar and Harlow, and the Half Hundred of Waltham in the County of Essex. This was established in 1794 to provide paid work to poor children over the age of six and was intended to reduce the cost of parish relief, as well as providing useful occupation to keep idle hands out of mischief.

John Conyers of Copped Hall was the driving force, inspired by similar schemes which were already operating in Lincolnshire and Rutland. Lacking any new legislative backing, these schemes relied on encouraging parishes to use powers that were still on the statute book from the poor law legislation of 1601, while adding some additional voluntary initiatives. Though Herringham does not appear to have had an official role in the Society, he was commissioned to prepare a report on its work which was published in 1797. This shows that, by January 1795, 14 parishes had agreed to join the Society and that, within twelve months, another dozen parishes had joined. Funds were raised through charitable donations from benefactors, as well as subscriptions of five shillings per annum (or sometimes less) from private individuals. In addition, those parishes that joined the scheme contributed 1% of the preceding year's poor rate to the fund.

The Society's focus was to encourage pauper children into out-work on a parish-by-parish basis. This was spinning, knitting men's stockings, or doing the needlework for making men's shirts. Chipping Ongar (probably with Herringham's involvement) purchased and stored the necessary raw materials in its poorhouse. Instruction seems to have been provided 'in house' for children with no previous experience and their attendance, their behaviour and the amount of the work done was recorded on specially printed cards. The Society's other focus was a reward system, with printed certificates for good behaviour, and satisfactory standards of productivity and workmanship. These were linked to a 'premium' award of 20 shillings worth of clothing. There was also a reward scheme for parents who had succeeded in bringing four children (provided

they had been born in wedlock) to the age of fourteen without receiving any parish relief. This cash payment was between one to two guineas, and those who were members of an established friendly society received the higher share. The second year's report of the Society shows a marked drop in income as well as a reduction in the number of participating parishes and no more reports appear to have been published after 1797.<sup>7</sup>

Another account of this initiative, written by John Conyers in February 1798, was not published until 1811 by the national Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor (SBCICP). This showed that the reward scheme, based on one devised by the Rev. Mr Bowyer of Lincolnshire, did continue, at least for a while. By January 1798 sixty-one children had received clothing awards, and over £21 had been paid to poor parents who had brought up their families with no more than occasional resort to parish assistance. Conyers made special mention of Herringham's initiative in the parish of Chipping Ongar for providing decently paid out-work for the poor by eliminating the wool staplers, who acted as middlemen

and took extortionate profits. A stock of wool, purchased by the parish, was kept in the workhouse and issued by its mistress on production of a ticket. After spinning, the yarn was returned to the workhouse, and paid for immediately with a small deduction as an 'incentive to prevent carelessness or fraud'. After the work had been checked for quantity and quality by the worsted makers, the deduction of fourpence per pound weight was refunded to the spinner. Careful records were kept, and a specimen entry printed in the report showed that Ann Smith was issued with four pounds of wool on 16 March 1798. She returned this five days later as 48 hanks of spun wool for which she was immediately paid 2s 8d. She would be due for a further 1s 4d after the work had been checked.<sup>8</sup> It is unlikely this initiative continued for long, as domestic spinning would soon have been made uneconomic by competition from the industrial mills of

northern England.

Another report from Herringham himself, written in February 1806, was published by the SBCICP in 1808. This noted that, by 1801, local magistrates had become so concerned about the rising costs of poor relief that they had conducted a survey in the three hundreds. This showed that there were 581 unemployed children over the age of twelve in fifty of the parishes. Overseers of the poor were then encouraged to use the powers of the Elizabethan act (43 Eliz.ch.2) to ensure that such children were apprenticed or put into service, and by 1802 were asked to make an annual return on specially printed forms. These showed that, over the next four years, 788 children had been so employed, saving a 'useless burden to society and (the prevention of many) who for want of employment would have become vicious and profligate'. A small fine was imposed on

*‘Herringham realised that he was ‘labouring under a wretched monotony... he went down to the riverside and practiced speaking aloud against the wind and the incoming tide... with beneficial results’*

parishioners who refused, when their turn came round, to offer apprenticeship to pauper children, though this particular provision does not seem to have been included in the Elizabethan Act of Parliament. There is no mention of the original reward scheme, or of the spinning and knitting initiatives, which may have already been abandoned by this point.<sup>9</sup>

In another report Herringham described the provisions made for the impoverished sick in Chipping Ongar; this provided warm coverings, a special hooded wicker chair to shield from draughts, and a candlestick stand equipped with a device for making a hot drink. This was kept in the workhouse and loaned out as needed.<sup>10</sup>

*His observations ended with a final word on the price inflation created by forestalling... by unscrupulous practices such as the rejuvenation rancid butter and to sell as the fresh product.'*

These initiatives, spurred by the rising numbers of poor and the corresponding expense of maintaining them, show that, as well as the parish overseers, the magistracy was concerned about the problem and looking for solutions over a wider area than the individual parish. The Elizabethan Act did provide JPs with a broader supervisory role, including the power to share the financial load of poor relief between parishes. It also allowed overseers

to purchase stocks of materials 'to set the poor on work', as well as for 'the putting out of children apprentices out of the parish'. What the legislation does not appear to have made provision for was the imposition of fines on parishioners refusing to take apprentices, but perhaps JPs already had these discretionary powers. Doubtless Herringham was driven to some extent by the parish's need to control costs, though it is very clear that he also had a strong humanitarian concern for the current plight of the poor.<sup>11</sup>

### Herringham and the 1800 crop returns

As mentioned in the introduction, the task of completing the crop returns for Chipping Ongar fell to Herringham. Yields of most crops in 1800 had been below average, and for wheat and potatoes particularly poor. Most of the wheat crop had already been sold and some millers on the River Lea had been mixing nine parts of foreign grain with one part of home-grown produce. Others had been adding oatmeal or pollard (finely ground bran) to their bread flour. The situation was clearly serious, as the average price of wheat was more than double what it had been two years earlier.<sup>12</sup>

Herringham added nine pages of 'miscellaneous observations' to his report. Accepting that an enquiry was entirely proper, he had grave doubts about the reliability of what farmers were willing to reveal about their crops, due to the risk of having to pay higher rate of parish tithes, or being blamed for hoarding in the expectation of even higher prices to come – the latter

being frequently given as a reason for the current high cost of wheat. His observations show that he had spent time talking to farmers, millers and factors, and that he was concerned that legislation against the widespread practice of 'forestalling', or buying all the stock before the market opened, and selling it later at a higher price, was not being enforced. Even standing crops were being sold before harvest to millers and factor, creating a profitable monopoly which further disadvantaged the poor. Herringham expressed the hope that Parliament would act if the apparent shortages were being aggravated by unscrupulous traders who were intent on generating excessive profits for themselves.<sup>13</sup>

He also recommended that millers should use a coarser bolting cloth so that the flour would be eked out by the inclusion of more bran, and that there should be restrictions on the use of 'fine' (white) flour. Oats was already being incorporated into wheat flour, though the result was still being sold at best quality prices. He also recorded his effort to reduce his own domestic flour consumption by adding rice and potatoes to his family's diet 'with no ill effects'. His observations ended with a final word on the price inflation created by forestalling, by the advance bulk buying of standing crops, and by unscrupulous practices such as the rejuvenation rancid butter and to sell as the fresh product.<sup>14</sup>

### His ministry & reputation as a cleric

Only a single sermon preached on 10 June 1804 at Chadwell to the local volunteer cavalry has survived, but his obituary noted 'whether as curate, or rector, he was exemplary in his attention to the spiritual and even the temporal concerns of his flock'. As a curate he had seen to the repair of buildings in his care, incurring 'expenses which might well with strict propriety have been expected from his rector'. He came to the notice of Beilby Porteous, bishop of London, a reformer and a passionate Anglican supporter of the abolition of slavery. Wishing 'to collect around him the best parish priests of the diocese', Porteous offered him a well-endowed metropolitan living. Though Herringham declined this, he did accept the St Paul's cathedral prebendary stall of Mora in 1804, and held this for the rest of his life. In 1805, when he was presented to the living of Borley, Essex, by Earl Waldegrave, he resigned the rectory of Chadwell and his curacy at Ongar. The Ongar vestry's leaving present was a silver cup worth £25, the inscription 'bearing honourable testimony to the excellence of his professional and private character'.<sup>15</sup>

### Herringham's patrons

A letter dated 22 November 1802 from Herringham to the Home Secretary (Thomas Pelham, 2nd Earl of Chichester) shows that, on two previous occasions, the writer had asked Lady Waldegrave (whose country seat was close to Chipping Ongar) to lobby on his behalf for his oldest son, John Philip, to be nominated for a place at Charterhouse School. He had also approached the Bishop of Bath and Wells for advice on how best to obtain a nomination. There is a sense of urgency about Herringham's letter as, under the school statutes, his son would soon be too old to be nominated. The Charterhouse records show that his final attempt to obtain a place was unsuccessful. A few years later, Earl Waldegrave was to extend his patronage to Herringham





*A contemporary portrait of the Countess*

when he presented him to the living of Borley in Essex where he was to spend the rest of his life.<sup>16</sup>

Though not a patron, his friendship with Nicholas Conyngham Tindal (1776-1846) should be mentioned. In May 1818 Herringham appointed him an executor to his last will and, as a token of his friendship, bequeathed him a piece of plate of his choice, up to £50 in value. Tindal, a native of Chelmsford, had a distinguished

career as a barrister and, after his appointment as a judge, is remembered for his role in 1843 in defining a new defence for an insane plaintiff facing a murder charge (now known as the MacNaghten rule).<sup>17</sup>

### **Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick MSS**

Herringham's wife (née Woodroffe) was descended from Thomas Woodroffe (c.1600-1689), the domestic chaplain to the Countess of Warwick who had

compiled a diary detailing her domestic and deeply pious religious life, as well as an autobiography and various devotional writings. The ownership of these MSS, together with those of the copies that were made after the countess's death in 1678 is too complex to discuss here, but suffice it to say that most of them had come into William Herringham's hands by the early nineteenth century, presumably through his wife's inheritance.

It is possible that the rigorously contemplative and deeply self-critical nature of the countess's diaries and other writings did not appeal to an early nineteenth century cleric, and this might explain Herringham's next step. He donated the abridged copy of diary extracts from 1666 to 1672 to his wife's cousin in Somerset, the Rev. Nathaniel George Woodroffe, and then sold the rest of the MSS to Mr Lorking, a bookseller of Long Melford, who in turn disposed of them to another unnamed dealer who moved to France, probably to avoid his creditors in his impending bankruptcy. They passed through various hands before the majority were purchased by the British Museum in 1866, and are now in the British Library.<sup>18</sup>

## Herringham's final years

Little is known about his ministry at Borley to which he was appointed in 1805, though his subsequent publications show that he maintained his keen interest in the problem of poverty. The allegedly haunted rectory there was a Victorian replacement for the one that Herringham would have occupied. He died at Borley on 22 February 1819 after a long illness, and was buried in the churchyard. His last will, which shows that he was substantially well off, confirmed his marriage settlement on his wife, and detailed his bequests to his four sons, his servants and various charities for the relief of poor clergymen and their orphans.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

Herringham, though orphaned at an early age, succeeded in life through a mixture of wider family support and patronage, as well as a determination to master his disadvantages. He also benefitted from an unusual arrangement at Cambridge University which enabled him to obtain a degree without attendance or examination. It is tempting to imagine that the empathy he showed in adult life stemmed from his own experience of being orphaned in early childhood, though doubtless his conscientious attendance to his widely separated parishes must have been a contributory factor as well.

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## Abbreviations

BL = British Library

GM = Gentleman's Magazine

Misc. Obs. = Herringham's 'Miscellaneous Observations', attached to the 1800 Chipping Ongar crop returns, TNA HO 42/55/94

SBCICP = Society of the Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor

TNA = The National Archive

VCH = Victoria County History

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

## Part II

Mark Marston Norris  
Grace College, Winona Lake, Indiana

### Introduction

The purpose of this two-part study is to look at a group of 124 Essex justices of the peace to get a picture of the changing balance of wealth and power in rural Essex from the dissolution of the monasteries to the fall of the 4th duke of Norfolk in 1571. A three-dimensional portrait of a group of people appears as they responded to a world of change and opportunity. Part I first examined 'Essex JPs and Dissolution of the Monasteries', as well as 'Essex JPs, Education, and the Law'. Part II focuses on 'Essex JPs and the London Connection' in addition to 'The Changing Composition of the Essex JPs'.<sup>2</sup>

The JPs of Essex were certainly not a parochial group of men. Many had connections with other areas of England and some came from established families of foreign counties. A quick survey indicates that the 23 JPs of Essex who were new men from established families of foreign counties, came from such counties as Bedfordshire, Surrey, Hertfordshire, Devon, Suffolk, Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Somerset, and Kent. These men did not originally have a lot of 'new' wealth, but they were living in a new county, associating with new people, buying new property, and becoming involved in new offices. And one of the reasons they came was because of the London connection.

### Essex JPs and the London Connection

Flanking the south-western border of Essex, London was close enough so that many Essex JPs did not have to travel far to get to the biggest city in the British Isles. In fact, about one-fourth of the Essex JPs discussed here actually had main residences not only in Essex, but also in London. Numerous others, although they did not reside in London, did have significant connections with the city.

As already mentioned in part I, many of the Essex JPs attended the London inns of court. Those who were serious about law spent much time in London and actually took up part-time residence there. An active public life also prompted some Essex JPs to reside part-time in London. In fact, more than a third, and almost half, of the Essex JPs were at one time also members of parliament. Courtiers who held residences both in Essex and London formed a conspicuous part of the Essex commission of the peace. Also, some had connections with rich London merchants or lord mayors and found it necessary to travel back and forth.

Edward Elrington, esq. was of London and Birch Hall, Essex. His father, also called Edward, resided in London as well as Sussex and his grandfather was Sir John, treasurer of the household of Edward IV. He (the son) was an MP who sat for Hedon in 1547. Among the offices that he held requiring his presence in London were chief butler of England, gentleman pensioner, and esquire of the body of Edward VI. His wife, Grace, was the illegitimate daughter of lord mayor of London, Sir Thomas Seymour. As new to Essex he did quite well in amassing not a small amount of land. He doubtless had valuable connections from both his Elrington ancestors and from his wife's side of the family. He also received much patronage from Henry VIII and Somerset.<sup>3</sup>

Besides having a few main residences in Essex, Sir John Gates, 1504-1553, also spent some time in London. He began his training as a lawyer in Lincoln's Inn in 1523. He held many court offices including: groom of the privy chamber in 1542, servant of Queen Catherine Parr from 1543-5, vice-chamberlain of the household from 1551 to his death, and member of the privy council from 1551 to his death. Sir John Gates was an extremely prominent courtier from an established Essex family. He was a favourite of Henry VIII and was entrusted with large sums of crown money. Probably through his court connections he was able to come into possession of some very profitable grants of land. By his death, his Essex estates alone brought him an annuity of £440. He is also a good example of a JP from an established Essex family who was able to bring a vast amount of 'new' wealth into his family.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Lord Audley (1488-1544) held Essex properties in Berechurch, Audley End, and Saffron Walden; but he was also located in London. Besides being a JP and an MP, he held numerous court offices including keeper of the great seal in 1532, and lord chancellor from 1533 to his death in 1544. He was able to amass quite a lot of power and land despite the fact that his father is said to have been a yeoman of only moderate means. This places Audley in the new Essex man category. He was a very wealthy man who used his skill as a lawyer, his position in the court of augmentations, as well as his London court connections – all to his great advantage. His biographer L.L. Ford notes of him: 'Audley's early obscurity and consequent obsession with acquiring wealth and status, the great expense that his elevated

## THE CHANGING BALANCE OF WEALTH AND POWER IN RURAL ESSEX

position then entailed, and his hopes of further consideration by Henry VIII in terms of lands or gifts are constant themes of his correspondence.’<sup>5</sup>

William Ayloff, esq. (1504-1569), is an example of a JP who, while not residing in London, held important London connections. He held lands in Bretons manor, Braxted, Rumwell, and Flemmings, all in Essex. But his valuable London connections proved fruitful to his public life. His mother, Etheldreda (or Audrey), was the daughter of Sir John Shaw, alderman and lord mayor of London. (Other JPs of Essex were also linked with the aldermen and lord mayors of London). He married the widow of Eustace Sulyard, a wealthy crown official, and his son, William, married Sulyard’s daughter. It was probably through these connections that he was able to be on the Essex commission of the peace.<sup>6</sup>



*Thomas Audley, Baron Audley of Walden (1488-1544) after Pietro William Tomkins; Edward Harding; Hans Holbein the Younger. © National Portrait Gallery, London. He held residences at Berechurch, Audley End, and Saffron Walden Essex, as well as in London.*

A final example of an Essex JP who had important London connections is Thomas Lord Darcy (1506-1558) of Danbury, Wivenhoe, and Chiche Essex. Darcy inherited quite a bit of land from his father’s Essex and Suffolk interests. His father had close London connections being esquire of the body to Henry VII. Darcy was further the beneficiary of land and wealth from his mother and great-uncle Robert Darcy. By 1532, he married Elizabeth, the daughter of John de Vere, earl of Oxford, at which point his career takes off. He was knighted in 1532 and appeared in the king’s the household. He soon gained the favour of Thomas Cromwell. After the earl of Oxford’s death in 1540, he received offices traditionally given to the de Veres: stewardship of St. Osyth’s, keepership of Colchester Castle, and the keepership of Tendring



*Thomas Darcy, 1st Baron Darcy of Chiche, K.G. (1506-1558). After Gerlach Flicke, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas\\_Darcy,\\_1st\\_Baron\\_Darcy\\_of\\_Chiche,\\_after\\_Gerlach\\_Flicke.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas_Darcy,_1st_Baron_Darcy_of_Chiche,_after_Gerlach_Flicke.jpg)*

Hundred. By 1540 he was carver of the King’s table and the same year he was appointed master of the Tower of London. He was gentleman of the privy chamber by 1544 and was in the privy council from 1550-3. His biographer, David Loades notes that after he was raised to the peerage in 1551 ‘... his principal political importance ... was as a vital link between Dudley and the court, controlling the flow of information to Edward and influencing the young king in the required direction.’ His support of John Dudley, the duke of Northumberland, proved lucrative in expanding his estates. He was eventually arrested for his involvement in Northumberland’s attempted coup in supporting Lady Jane Grey as queen, but was pardoned under Mary. At this point his inclination towards Protestantism conveniently waned and he continued to be favoured at court as well as to be a force in Essex. However, John Foxe notes that by 1556, among Essex JPs, he was one of the more zealous persecutors of Protestants. At the fall of Calais in 1555, when fear of a French invasion arose, he was appointed lieutenant in defence of Essex.<sup>7</sup>

### Essex JPs and The Change in Composition from 1540 to c.1570

It has been established that the JPs were a group of men influenced greatly by the dissolution of the monasteries,



by the law and education, and by their close association with London. It has been shown that a minority of the JPs of Essex were from established Essex families, and that actually, the JPs from families who were new to Essex not only were more numerous, but actually possessed a majority of the wealth. Yet it must not be assumed that the commission of the peace was static over the years. The make-up of the commissioners in 1540, for example, was different than that of the commissioners in 1554 or even 1569. In identifying this change, we can find evidence from those listed on commissions of the peace from c. 1540 to c. 1570.

Twenty-eight of the JPs who appeared on the 6 February 1540 Essex commission of the peace were examined. Of these men, just over one-third were new Essex men only. If the 'new to Essex, but established elsewhere' group is added to this, then exactly 50% were from new Essex families, or new Essex families who may have been established elsewhere. So, half of the Essex JPs at this time were from established Essex families.

Much the same picture can be seen as we examine the degree of wealth of the JPs. Taking the three upper categories together (middle, high, and superior), about half were from established Essex families. This is significantly above the overall average. It follows then, that in this commission, at least, half of the JPs were from established Essex families and that they possessed about half of the wealth.

Under Edward VI, the picture changes. 40 JPs of Essex from the commission of 26 May 1547 have been selected according to the procedure previously mentioned. Of these, 22, or over half of the JPs were from new Essex families. If the new, but established elsewhere category is added, then the total rises to 65%. In seven years, the total of JPs established in Essex since the beginning of the Tudor period dropped 15%. What is more amazing about this is the degree of wealth displayed by the JPs as a whole. 38% of this group had a superior amount of wealth, which was roughly equivalent with the 1540 commission. The average from the 124 JPs in this study is only about 17%. The Henrician and Edwardian commissioners seem to be wealthier than those of Mary and Elizabeth. However some caution needs to be used here in interpreting this data. Helen Miller notes in 'Subsidy Assessments of the Peerage in the sixteenth Century', that during the reign of Mary and Elizabeth, the assessments became progressively more lenient.

However, it has not been possible to determine the degree to which this may affect the conclusions of this study. Also, the new men were clearly gaining in wealth. Rather than 50%, they now made up (if new and new but established elsewhere are together) almost 60% of those with at least a middle amount of wealth. Clearly, a growth toward more wealthy new men is apparent. Certainly, the dissolution of the monasteries was making its mark on society.<sup>8</sup> Wealth was moving towards the new men.

Sir Anthony Denny was one of these wealthy new Essex JPs who benefited from court and from the dissolution of the monasteries. His father, Sir Edmund, was a Hertfordshire landowner who was baron of the exchequer early in Henry VIII's reign. Sir Anthony was educated at St. Paul's School, London, and at St. John's College, Cambridge

(though he does not seem to have been graduated). He was associated with the faith of the humanists and therefore had strong Erasmian pietism, but was winsome enough to gain the favour of King Henry VIII as well as some noted Catholics. Both the Catholic Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, and the protestant humanist, Sir John Cheke, had high words of praise for him. His formal connections at court begin by 1536 when he appeared as a groom of the privy chamber and he continued his father's role in royal finances by being informally entrusted with the privy purse that year. In 1542 this was formalised when he became keeper of the privy purse where he handled substantial sums of royal money. Denny became closer to Henry VIII in the 1540s. He, along with John Gates, and their assistant William Clerk, were licensed to affix the royal stamp on all documents issued by the king. Then in 1546, he became chief gentleman and groom of the stool. These were highly influential positions that gave him tremendous presence at court. He continued to be in favour under Edward. His lands were centred in Essex, Hertfordshire, and Suffolk. Much of this was former monastic property, especially that of Hertford and Cheshunt priories and Waltham and St. Albans abbeys. Revenues from his estates amounted to over £700 and income from his offices was about £200.<sup>9</sup> He died in 1549, having become ill shortly after his involvement in the unsuccessful attempt to suppress Robert Ket's Norfolk rebellion. However, the counter-reformation under Mary would soon make its mark on the Essex gentry.

Queen Mary's 1554 commission reveals that 42% of the commissioners were from established families. This is significantly higher than the 35% of the previous commission. With the new Marian regime, many of those from new Essex families were replaced by those from established Essex families. However, these men were less wealthy than their Henrician and Edwardian counterparts. On the 1554 commission, only 22% now had a superior degree of wealth compared with the 38% of the previous two commissions. But while the overall wealth was decreasing, comparatively speaking, those in the established Essex group now were gaining in wealth under the Marian regime. While they made up 42% of the commissioners, they made up now 50% of those who had a middle degree or better of wealth.

Under Elizabeth, the picture again changed. The 1564 commission reveals that now, those from established Essex families made up only 31% of the total. This was even lower than in 1547. Also, those from new Essex families, or from new Essex families with roots elsewhere now made up two-thirds of those who had at least a middle degree of wealth in 1564.

In 1569, the trend is now stabilized. As in 1564, a little fewer than one-third of the JPs were from established Essex families. While the number of JPs with a superior amount of wealth dropped, the new men still made up a significantly higher number of those with at least a middle degree of wealth than those from established families. As can be expected, the religious makeup of the commissions changed as the religion of the time changed.<sup>10</sup> In 1540, under Henry VIII, when the court was not yet Protestant, but no longer committed to Catholicism, of those on the commission with a definite religious inclination, about 40% were Catholics and 60% were Protestants. The 1547 commission reveals a similar ratio. However, the 1554



*Sir Anthony Denny, (1501-1549) possibly after Hans Holbein the Younger, possibly 18th century.*

© National Portrait Gallery, London.

commission reveals a drastic departure. A year before the hated debates in parliament between the Protestant and Catholic factions and before the Protestant martyrs were to be burned at the stake, the Essex commission of the peace reveals that Catholics now outnumbered Protestants by about three to one. This is significant. As can be remembered, the 1554 commission also revealed that those JPs from established Essex families had greatly increased in number and now possessed more than their share of wealth. Essex JPs from established Essex families were not merely coming more into power, but also, more were Catholic. This is understandable given the religious atmosphere at the time.

But again, a turn of events can be witnessed. By 1564, of those Essex JPs with discernible religious sympathies, twice as many were Protestant than those who were Catholic. By 1569, the commission reveals that the Catholics were reduced to a statistically insignificant amount. An example of a once strong Catholic family whose influences wanes under Elizabeth is the Parker family.

Henry Parker, Baron Morley, (1480/81-1556) of Hallinbury Place at Great Hallingbury Essex was a JP from a wealthy and established Catholic Essex family. As a boy, he became sewer and attendant for Lady Margaret Beaufort. From her influence he developed a deep Catholic piety which he maintained for the rest of his life while maintaining favour from Henry VIII as well as from Edward VI, and Mary. Lady Margaret also proved to be a generous benefactor to him. He was educated at Oxford



*Portrait of Henry Parker, Baron Morley (1480/81 -1556) by Albrecht Dürer, 1523. © The Trustees of the British Museum.*

*He was a strong Catholic under Henry VIII and very powerful. His grandson, namesake, and next Baron Morley (1531/2-1577), who also was Catholic, secretly left England in 1569*

where he gained a love of literature and was eventually known for his Latin and Italian translations. In the early 1520s he was sent as an ambassador through the Low countries and Germany and he reported back to Wolsey and Henry VIII what he pictured to be the frightening pace that Lutheranism was spreading across Europe.

He also was one of the lords who made the appeal to Clement VII for Henry VIII's divorce with Catherine. He appeared as a JP of Essex by 1530 and he also was a courtier and an author. Owing to marriage alliance's with Morley's neighbours, the Boleyns, the Morley family achieved much favour at court. He was also a close friend of Cromwell from whom he received lands including monastic property. The 1546 Subsidy indicates that he was a very rich man. He was assessed for the 'contribution' at £400 based on lands only at Hallingsbury-Morley. Under Edward VI, in 1550, he took part in the prosecution of Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset. Two years later he obtained lands formerly belonging to Waltham Abbey and the portion of the tithes in Great Hallingbury that were once possessed by the Benedictine abbey of Colchester. He always maintained good relations with Princess Mary who was a godmother to his grandson. Each year he gave Mary a book, which he usually translated himself. He remained as JP of Essex almost until his death in 1556.<sup>11</sup>

His son, Henry, died before him, and his grandson, also named Henry, became the next Baron Morley (1531/2-1577). He followed his grandfather as JP for Essex at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign. The Spanish Ambassador wrote to King Philip that he was a staunch Catholic and very loyal to the crown. In 1569 he refused to sign the Declaration of Chelmsford and was known



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to be linked with the rising of the northern earls, the conservative reaction against Queen Elizabeth's rule. He left England in early June of 1570 and never returned.<sup>12</sup>

As in wealth, social position, and religion, so too in educational can a trend be followed in the commissions of the peace. In 1540, 64% of the JPs had attended an inn of court or a university. In 1554, the level of attendance had dipped to just over 50%. But by 1569, the downward trend had not only stopped, but it had even reversed and the amount of education a JP received reached new heights. The amount of attendance was now at the amazing rate of 74%. This high amount was well above the national average. J.H. Gleason, in her work, *The Justices of the Peace in England 1558-1640*, examined commissions of the peace in six counties: Kent, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Somersetshire, Worcestershire, and North Ridding.

She indicated, among other things, the number of JPs in each county who attended the inns of courts or one of the universities. She picked a few different commissions, but the 1585 commission is probably the most relative. She traced what she considered to be a growth in the number of JPs, from 1562 on, who were being educated at an inn or a university. She divided the commissions into two divisions, dignitaries, and the working commission. The group of 124 JPs in the present discussion leans closer to a working commission, although it does contain a few dignitaries. However, the average attendance for JPs in her counties in 1584 was about two-thirds for dignitaries,



Left is a painting of Sir Anthony Cooke (1507-1576) of Gidea Hall, Romford, Essex. Right is the Cooke Memorial at the Church of St Edward the Confessor, Romford.

CassiantoCommons - Own work. Created 2019. Sir Anthony was a committed Protestant in his early years. He was a tutor to Edward VI and a Marian exile.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony\\_Cooke#/media/File:Cooke\\_Memorial\\_at\\_the\\_Church\\_of\\_St\\_Edward\\_the\\_Confessor,\\_Romford.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Cooke#/media/File:Cooke_Memorial_at_the_Church_of_St_Edward_the_Confessor,_Romford.jpg)

and the smaller amount of a little under 45% of attendance for the working commission. This is significantly under the 74% attendance for the Essex JPs which the present work is covering. The Essex attendance figures are even more impressive when it is taken into consideration that the JPs of 1585 were supposed to, according to Gleason's theory, be more educated than those of an earlier date such as 1569.<sup>13</sup>

Sir Anthony Cooke (1507-1576) was from a JP from an established family in Essex and had a residence not only in Gidea Hall, Essex, but also in Abergenny Place, Warwick Land, London. He was among the wealthiest of the Essex gentry. He was educated in Gray's Inn and Cambridge. He was called upon to provide troops for the army to Flanders in 1543 and again to France the next year. He was sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire in 1544-5. His first court appointment was in 1539 when he was named as one of the fifty 'spears' of Henry VIII's bodyguard. He was gentleman of the privy chamber by 1546-53. As an educator and a humanist, his chief contribution was in the education, particularly of women. He seems to be self-taught particularly in the church fathers. In the 1530s he focused on the education of his children, especially his daughters. His five daughters received as good, or better, educations as his four sons. Mildred, who was known to excel in Greek married the future Lord Burghley. Anne, the second wife of Lord Keeper Bacon, published works in translations from Italian and Latin.

Katherine, wife of the diplomat Sir Henry Killigrew, was seen as a strong Protestant who was much learned in linguistics. Elizabeth, whose second husband was John Lord Russell, published a translation of a French treatise on the Eucharist. Margaret was a maid-in-waiting to Queen Mary.

The high point of Cook's political career was as one of Edward's tutors and he rose to power during his reign.



He was knighted in 1547 and two years later he served as a commissioner to inquire into heresies in Essex. In 1552 he was on a commission to revise the ecclesiastical laws. His Protestantism had grown to the point that he felt he needed to go into self-imposed exile under the reign of Mary, but returned under Elizabeth. Under Elizabeth he played an active role in the parliament of 1559 as knight of the shire for Essex. However, although he was in strong favour at court with the new Protestant Queen, he seems to have grown disillusioned with the slow progress of reform. He served as a member for Essex again in 1563 and served on some commissions early in Elizabeth's reign. He left his focus on national office and instead focused on his family. He re-built Gidea Hall which Elizabeth visited in 1568. In his will he provided for the descent of his lands valued per annum at £1,100 to his two sons, Richard and William, though he provided for all of his children and grandchildren. He was buried at St. Andrew's Church in Romford in 1576.<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

This work has shown that the working JPs who resided in Essex showed a large amount of social, economic, geographical, and religious movement. Furthermore, it was a minority of JPs who were actually from established Essex families. The dissolution of the monasteries helped unleash a new source of wealth which would not allow a stagnant society. Wealth and power were transferred or gained through the law, by a university education, by connections in London, by patronage from influential men, and other factors.

It was further shown that the ratio between established to new (or new from a family elsewhere) was pretty much 50/50 in 1540, as was the ratio for the amount of wealth in each group. But through the next decade, the new men

made large advances over the established Essex men. There was a reversal under Mary, as JPs from established Catholic families came back and rose in numbers as well as in wealth and power. Their level of attendance at the inns or at one of the universities simultaneously dropped. But in Elizabeth's reign this changed significantly, as the new Protestant men rose to new heights, and gained more than their share of their wealth and power. This appeared to level off after the middle of the 1560s however. But by 1569, the Essex commissioners of the peace had achieved an unusually high degree of learning, which was far beyond the national average. Also, the JPs of Essex tended to reflect the elite, as a group, in rural Essex.

## Acknowledgements:

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## The Author:

Mark Marston Norris is currently Professor of History and Director of the Winona History Center at Grace College.

## Notes

- For an earlier version of the study, complete with biographies of each JP investigated, see: M. M. Norris, 'The Changing Balance of Wealth and Power in Rural Essex from the Dissolution of the Monasteries to the Fall of the 4th Duke of Norfolk, 1571', (M.Sc. dissertation, the University of Edinburgh, 1988).
- For Part I of this article see: M. M. Norris, 'The changing balance of wealth and power in rural Essex: from the dissolution of the monasteries to the fall of the 4th Duke of Norfolk, 1571', *Essex Journal*, Autumn 2023 vol. 58 No. 2 pp. 17-25. For extensive sources used to locate Essex JPs, for subsidy returns, and for data on education see pp.24-5.
- S.T. Bindoff, *The House of Commons: 1509-1558* (London, 1982) vol ii pp. 91-2; *Visitations of Essex part I* [1634] p. 392.
- Bindoff vol. ii pp. 198-9; *Dictionary of National Biography* vol. 7 pp. 942-3; Narasingha Prosad Sil, 'The Rise and Fall of Sir John Gates', *The Historical Journal*, 24, 4 (1981) pp. 929-43, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2638953>; Narasingha Prosad Sil, 'Sir John Gates 1504-1553', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* vol. 21 (Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 635-6.
- Bindoff vol. i pp. 350-2; L.L. Ford, 'Thomas Audley, Baron Audley of Walden (1487/8-1544)', *ODNB*, vol. 2, pp.935-40.
- Thomas's will - PCC 18 Blamy; William's (I) will - PCC 1 Ayloff; William's (II) will - PCC 5 Sheffelde; Morant vol. I part II pp. 69-70, 142; J.H. Baker, 'William Ayloff (c. 1535-1584)', *ODNB*, vol. 3, p. 33.
- Bindoff vol. ii pp. 27-9; *DNB* vol. v p. 823-4; David Loades, 'Thomas Darcy, first Baron Darcy of Chiche (1506-1588)', *ODNB*, vol. 15, pp. 137-8.
- Helen Miller. 'Subsidy Assessments of the Peerage in the Sixteenth Century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol 28, issue 77, 1 May 1955, pp. 15-34. See especially p. 19. Please also note that assessments were not the sole criterion used

in this work to determine wealth and that assessments under Henry VIII and Edward VI were relied upon much more than those under Mary and Elizabeth.

- Bindoff vol. ii pp. 27-9; *DNB* vol. v, p. 823-4; Narasingha Prosad Sil, 'Sir Anthony Denny (1501-1549)', *ODNB*, vol. 15, pp. 831-3.
- Among the sources used to determine religious inclinations and alliances I am using S.T. Bindoff, *The House of Commons: 1509-1558* (London, 1982) and P.W. Hasler, *The Commons 1558-1603* (London 1981).
- DNB* vol. vxx p. 238-9; James P. Carley, 'Henry Parker, tenth Baron Morley (1480/1-1556)', vol.42, pp. 675-8; *ODNB*; J.E. Oxley, *The Reformation in Essex*, (Manchester University Press, London, 1965) pp. 16, 149, 152; Rev. Canon D.B. Barclay, 'Henry Parker, Lord Morley', *Essex Archaeology Review*, vol. xxiii, pp. 273-9; Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, (London, a 1978 reproduction of the 1768 edition) vol. i part 2 p. 423-4, vol. ii pp. 514-5; TNA E179/110/320.
- DNB* vol. vxx p. 240; James P. Carley, 'Henry Parker, eleventh Baron Morley (1531/2-1577)', *ODNB*, vol. 42, p.678; Morant vol. i part 2, p. 393, 423; *Visitations of Essex*, ed. Walter C. Metcalfe (London, Mitchell and Hughes, 1878) part i [1558] p. 87; TNA SP 12/60 no 53 (F146)
- J. H. Gleason, *The Justices of the Peace in England 1558-1640*, (Oxford, 1969) pp. 83-95.
- Hasler vol. I pp 644-5; F.G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder*, *Essex Record Office Pub. no 56*, (Chelmsford, Essex County Council, 1970) p. 323 (seems to disagree with Hassler on education); John Norden *Speculi Britanniae Pars*. (London, the Camden Society, 1840) p. 323; F.G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Wills of Essex Gentry and Yeomen (Chelmsford, Essex County Council, 1980) pp. 18-9*; Donn L. Calkins, 'Sir Anthony Cooke (1505/6-1576)', *ODNB*, vol 13, pp. 135-6; Christina Garrett, *The Marian Exiles: A Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1938), 124-6.



# Wild Daffodils and Oxlips, Bikers and Fly-Tippers:

## Episodes in the life of two Essex woods

Rosemary S Hall

For many centuries, the management of woods through coppicing was a vital part of the rural economy. Regular cutting of the young trees ensured that these woods provided a supply of fuel, poles, fencing material and similar products, while the full-grown trees or 'standards', were used for building. It is remarkable how many of these coppice woods survive, particularly in what Oliver Rackham has called 'Ancient Countryside'. And they do not just survive in the countryside; many urban or suburban areas contain small coppice woods. This article, based upon research into two suburban woods, Daffy Wood in Broomfield, and College Wood in Melbourne Park, is an attempt to show that such, apparently undistinguished, urban woodlands may have an interesting history.



### College Wood and Daffy Wood

College Wood is now in Chelmsford, but until the early twentieth century, it was in Writtle, a parish which was formerly much larger than it is now (indeed, it used to be the largest parish in Essex). Writtle used to stretch much further north, where its border ran alongside that of Broomfield. Daffy Wood is in Broomfield. But it seems natural to consider the two woods together. Until the building of the Newlands Spring housing estate, the woods were within easy walking distance of each other. They may have been in different parishes, but certainly 150 years ago, to the locals, they were often thought of collectively as the 'Daffy Woods'.<sup>1</sup>

For they were both daffodil woods. Today, Daffy Wood in Broomfield remains one of the few places in Essex where the wild daffodil grows. In a contribution to Richard Mabey's *Flora Britannica*, Doug Shipman wrote: -

*There is a small open wood close to where I live, about three miles north of Chelmsford in Essex, with wild daffodils ... The name 'Daffy Wood' attracted my attention and I must admit that at first I doubted any connection with wild daffodils until I went and saw them for myself. I am studying the history of this village [Broomfield, Essex] and recently came across a reference to the wood in a deed dated 1658. Then it was called "Daffadille Groves", so it appears to be a genuine wild daffodil wood<sup>2</sup>.*

(Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify the 1658 deed.) And wild daffodils still grow there. But formerly daffodils were to be found in College Wood too. In fact, in the Tithe Apportionment for Writtle (1839)

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the wood is called Daffodil Wood, with College Wood as an alternative name.<sup>5</sup>

It was called College Wood because it belonged to College Farm, which in turn was owned by New College Oxford. It sounds as if the area formed part of the college's ancient estates, acquired in 1392. Mrs Jennifer Thorp, who in 2021 was the Archivist of New College, informed me that College Wood appears on an estate map which shows part of Romans Fee. However, this map dates from the eighteenth century, and so it has not been able to trace the history of the wood back before this period.<sup>4</sup> The wood remained in the possession of New College until 1859, when the College sold it to a Mr Pryor.<sup>5</sup>



In a newspaper advertisement for the sale of timber trees in 1864 the wood was referred to as 'Daffodil Wood, near Melbourne's Farm, Writtle.'<sup>6</sup> There were still daffodils growing in the wood in 1922. We know this because when two men from Dixon Avenue were taken to court, charged with stealing wood from Mr Roslings, the manager of Melbourne Farm, one of the men said that they had come upon the pieces of wood by chance, and they had actually gone to the wood to pick daffodils- they described the wood as a daffodil wood.<sup>7</sup> It is unlikely that the daffodils in College Wood were garden escapes, because in the past, there were few cottages or farms near the wood. Alas, there are no daffodils in College Wood today. Gibson, in his 1862 *Flora of Essex*, wrote that the wild daffodil was to be found in 'Daffy Wood at Broomfield abundantly', but makes no mention of nearby College Wood.<sup>8</sup> Reviewing Gibson's *Flora* in the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, a writer commented on how 'Daffy wood... is so much frequented that every daffodil is plucked as soon as it is in bloom...'<sup>9</sup> Sometimes the two 'Daffy Woods' were described as being in Broomfield, but since Daffy Wood is given by Gibson in the singular, it would appear that he was referring to the small wood in Broomfield. It is rather puzzling that Gibson made no mention of Daffodil/College Wood in Writtle. It is unlikely that it is because the landlord did not allow access to the wood; there is a report of the hunt passing through the wood in 1848,<sup>10</sup> and young people were in the habit of visiting the wood to gather wildflowers. Or perhaps it was simply that the daffodils did not grow as abundantly as they did in the smaller wood? And it is possible that, earlier in the nineteenth century, the daffodils in the Broomfield wood grew in greater abundance than they do now for in 1938, remembering a visit which the poet Matthew Arnold paid to Broomfield, Richenda Christy wrote how: -

*My mother liked to recall the pleasure  
Matthew Arnold took in being in the  
country and how he spoke of "dear*

*Patching Hall", and would get up early  
to walk across the fields before breakfast  
to "Daffy Wood" – alas! No longer  
worthy of the name.<sup>11</sup>*

Richenda Christy was not the only person to lament that Daffy Wood was in decline. In 1988, in a book of walks in Broomfield, Ken Searles wrote of how: -

*The wood is of great antiquity and was  
once worthy of its name for the vast  
quantities of wild daffodils which grew  
there. Now it looks rather sad, for there  
is no natural regeneration of young trees,  
woodland flowers have largely given way  
to grass, and only a few clumps of the  
wild daffodils produce flowers.<sup>12</sup>*

However, there are times in the twentieth century when the wild daffodils made a good showing – as can be seen in the photograph on the cover of the spring 2018 issue of *Broomfield Times*.<sup>13</sup>

### Daffadilly Grove

There would thus appear to be evidence indicating that the Broomfield Daffy Wood was indeed of some antiquity. There is the 1658 deed, although it has not been possible to trace this. And in his encyclopaedic online history of Broomfield, Ken Searles mentioned an even earlier document, an indenture, dating from 1561, which talked of a croft in Broomfield, four acres in extent, called Daffadilly Grove.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, no reference was given for this, and I have not been able to identify the indenture.

Documentary evidence for the early history of College Wood is sparse. It does not appear on Chapman and André's 1777 map of Essex. (Neither does the smaller Daffy Wood.) But this does not necessarily mean that College Wood was not in existence then. Oliver Rackham has stated that: 'The large county maps, such as Chapman and André's Essex, of the



period 1750-1820, often leave out known woods (especially those away from roads),...<sup>15</sup> Both woods appear on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map, dated 1805, though neither of them are named on it.

However, College Wood does contain a number of plant species which are indicators of ancient woodland, including the wild service tree, midland hawthorn, spindle, bluebells, dog's mercury, remote sedge (*Carex remota*) and wood sedge (*Carex sylvatica*).<sup>16</sup> In 1837 a Chelmsford botanist called Arthur Wallis collected a specimen of wood-sedge from Daffy Wood, Chelmsford; this specimen still exists - in Bolton Museum!<sup>17</sup> The wild daffodil is also an indicator species. Admittedly, Francis Rose has made it clear that daffodils count as such only if they 'occur well within the wood and do not appear to have been planted'.<sup>18</sup>

It has to be admitted that Barnes and Williamson have shown that ancient woodland indicator plant species are not always reliable pointers to the antiquity of a wood. Dog's mercury, for example, will rapidly colonise new woodlands (or at least, it does in Norfolk.)<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, College Wood does not appear in Nature England's Inventory of Ancient Woodland.<sup>20</sup> (Neither does Daffy Wood, but that is too small to meet the requirements for inclusion in the Inventory.)

We might expect to find a large wood bank in a wood of mediaeval origin, but although there is a ditch, with what could well be the remains of banks, around the wood on the playing field side, it is not substantial. This would suggest that the wood is later in date, and may indeed be only a couple of centuries old for, according to Barnes and Williamson, 'woodbanks constructed in the early Middle Ages were often massive features, with bank and ditch commonly seven or more metres across, the top of the bank rising more than a metre and a half above the flanking ditch. Those raised in the post-mediaeval period, however, were generally smaller, and those of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century date little different from the hedgebanks around enclosed fields.'<sup>21</sup>

Does the shape of the wood give us a clue as to its age? According to Rackham: -

*Ancient wood boundaries – those shown on the earliest maps or specified in medieval documents – have characteristically irregular outlines. Two types can be recognized: sinuous shapes, in which the boundary straggles across country in a series of curves with changes of direction every few yards, and zigzag shapes with abrupt changes of direction at rather longer intervals.*<sup>22</sup>

What do old maps tell us about the shape of College Wood? It has to be said that maps show College Wood's outline, taken as a whole, as being straight – straight and neither sinuous nor zigzag – which would suggest that it may not be ancient woodland

at all. The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the north side of the wood as being straight, like a ruler. Looking at the 1888-1913 Ordnance Survey map, the north side consists of a series of zigzags. But this is probably because a portion of the northern part of the wood had been felled in the middle of the nineteenth century. This felling had certainly occurred before 1869, because while the Tithe Apportionment stated that the wood was 13 acres in extent, in a deed of 1869, it was 10 acres. It seems likely that a section of the northern part of the wood had been felled in 1864, when Mr Warner offered 220 oaks for sale.<sup>23</sup> This ties in with the statement on the Chelmsford City Council website giving the history of the wood which states that the '1839 Tithe Map showed [that] the wood was larger then, at over 13 acres... compared to today's 11 acres.'

It is true that on a map, included in the 1869 deed, the northern part of the wood is shown as curved, but I think this is simply because the skill of the man who drew the 1869 map was inferior to that of the Ordnance Survey cartographers. And, indeed, today, an aerial view of the wood shows that its outline is straight, and not curved; in particular, the northern side is straight – the sign of a recent wood.

One wonders what led Mr Warner to grub out part of the wood. Was it because the price of timber had risen? Whatever the reason, it sounds as if Mr Warner realised that he could get a better return on his investment by converting part of the woodland to arable or pasture.

However, the underwood – the results of coppicing – continued to be of value, as shown by an advertisement which appeared in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* of 28 March 1876, in which it was announced that Mr Warner would offer for sale, by auction: -

- 3,000 Fagots,
- 200 Hurdle Poles,
- 150 Bundles Thatching Stuff,
- 150 Bundles Pea Sticks,
- 250 Hornbeam Seconds, Stakes and Bush Fagots

However, this is the only such sale that I have discovered in the Chelmsford newspapers. Had the regular cutting of the coppice been neglected? Or did Mr Warner need all the underwood for his own use? The woodland was still of sufficient importance in the 1880s for the owner of Melbourne Farm to employ a woodman.<sup>24</sup>

Incidentally, I have not found the source of the statement on the Melbourne Park Maintenance Plan (and repeated on other internet sites) that 'College Wood is a remnant of Writtle Forest Henry VIII's managed woodland stocked with game to hunt.'<sup>25</sup> I suspect that this statement is due to confusion with College Wood in what now forms part of the Forest of Writtle, which could indeed have been stocked with game for Henry VIII. Or it could simply be a reference to a large part of Essex being under Forest law.

### Hannah and the Snakes

In 1865 a strange and disturbing incident which took place in the woods received widespread press coverage, not just in the Chelmsford papers, but nationally. In the newspapers, the woods are referred to as the Big Daffy Wood and the Little Daffy Wood. According to the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, it was the custom for young people from Chelmsford to go to the 'Daffy Woods', Broomfield, on Good Friday to gather flowers. A young girl called Hannah, aged 13 or 16 (accounts differ), had gone to the woods on this particular Good Friday, with five or six other girls, to pick daffodils. After they had been there for a while, six young lads, aged between 14 and 18, came up to them. One of the other girls, eleven-year old Mary Ann Haggard, had seen what happened, and testified at the subsequent trial. It started when one of the boys attempted to throw Hannah down in the Little Daffy Wood. Then the group of girls went away to the Big Daffy Wood. The boys followed them. Then, the boys found three dead snakes. First of all, the lads started throwing the snakes at each other, but then one of them threw a snake at Hannah, and quickly the others followed his lead. One of the snakes caught her in the mouth. Then the lads knocked Hannah into a ditch. Mary Ann and her brothers tried to rescue Hannah, but two of the lads 'would not let us go to them and kept us back with the snakes'. Mary Ann testified that the lads (or at least, four of them) were 'near her when they knocked her into a ditch' and 'they kept her in a field a quarter of an hour, and I heard her shriek several times; after that, she got away from them and was getting over a gap when ... [two of the lads] knocked her back'. A Mrs Reeve, said that she had seen Hannah and the lads, and 'saw the boys take the snakes and throw them at Hannah...and saw her take them up and throw them back; I saw this done twice, they were all laughing and I thought this was only a bit of play.' But she admitted that, when she had seen Hannah and the lads throwing the snakes, she was by the side of the wood, and 'there was a hedge between me and the wood.' Emma Harris, on the other hand, another of Hannah's companions, was in the wood the whole of the time, and said that she had seen the boys throw two snakes at Hannah and that they continued throwing snakes at her for two hours. When she was cross-examined, she said that Hannah 'did not speak to the defendants when we first met them [and] she did not pick up the snakes and throw them back...' When Mary Ann was cross-examined, she too was insistent that Hannah had not been 'sky-larking' with the boys.

The incident had left Hannah traumatised. When she first got home, she did not mention what had happened to her mother; it was left to her cousin to explain what had happened. Hannah then ran out, and was only brought back some hours later. She did not recognise her relatives, and 'was quite out of her mind.' She had a disturbed night, and, haunted by memories of the snakes that the lads had thrown at her 'continued to cry out "Pull 'em off, pull 'em off."' On the Sunday, when a surgeon was called, he found her to be 'raving and in a state of frenzy.'

She was admitted to Brentwood Asylum, but was released ten days later.<sup>26</sup>

On 5 May 1865 a letter appeared in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* from Frederick Warner of Melbourne Farm,<sup>27</sup> which now included College Wood, and William Bott (of Priors Farm, which included Daffy Wood).<sup>28</sup>

*Will you permit us to inform ... the inhabitants of Chelmsford and neighbourhood that in future all persons found trespassing in Daffodil and Colledge [sic] Woods will be prosecuted? We feel bound to take this course from the disgraceful practice of young men and lads insulting females in the woods, and also from the fact that the magistrates in petty session pass over with a reprimand so gross an outrage as was perpetrated on Good Friday on a poor helpless girl of thirteen years of age by six lads, several of them entitled to be called young men...'<sup>29</sup>*

We are accustomed to woods being used to provide timber and underwood, as fox coverts and for recreation. But in 1906 College Wood was used as a kind of open-air laboratory, when the antiquary and botanist Miller Christy introduced thirty oxlip plants from a wood near Saffron Walden, into the wood, as part of his work on the hybridisation of oxlips and primroses. It was originally thought that the oxlip was a hybrid between the cowslip and the primrose. But in 1842 a botanist called Henry Doubleday carried out tests which indicated that it was a separate species. To confirm the results of his tests, Doubleday sent the seeds to Charles Darwin, who did further work which confirmed Doubleday's tests. After the oxlip had been identified as a separate species, scientists continued to be fascinated by the relationship between the native yellow primula species (and it is a subject which still interests botanists.)<sup>30</sup>

### Miller Christy

Miller Christy was one of those who wanted to know more about hybridisation between the native British primulas. In particular, he wanted to know if hybrids occurred between the primrose and the oxlip. He had already written about the oxlip (*primula elatior*), based upon specimens discovered growing wild in woods in Cambridgeshire, and he subsequently showed various examples of hybrid plants to two scientists, Dr Bateson and Miss E.R. Saunders. Soon afterwards –

*Dr Bateson, (without disputing my assumption that the plants in question really were hybrids) pointed that, for purposes of absolute scientific accuracy, their hybrid origin, even if practically certain inferentially, ought to be demonstrated incontestably by means of definite experiment.*



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*Thereupon it was decided to accomplish this by planting some Oxlips (P.Elattior) in woods wherein Primroses...only were growing and some Primroses in other woods wherein Oxlips only were growing, and then waiting to see if plants similar to those I had described as hybrids between the two species would appear naturally in the course of time.*

Readers may well be thinking that the question could have been answered by pollinating flowers artificially in a laboratory. In fact, after Miller Christy met the two scientists, Miss Saunders succeeded in carrying out an experiment which involved cross-pollinating such primula plants in a laboratory. The experiment was successful. However, Miller Christy was keen to try out an experiment in the field (or rather, in the wood) – and evidently both Dr Bateson and Miss Saunders shared his belief in the value of such experiments, as they actually went to Peverel Wood with Miller Christy, to help him carry out the first part of his experiment. For this initial phase of his experiment, Christy obtained a number of primrose plants from a wood near Chelmsford. Miss Saunders planted the primroses in Peverel Wood, in the presence of Dr Bateson. In 1915 Miss Saunders discovered that plants had sprung up, which were obviously hybrids of the oxlip and the primrose. Then, in February 1906, Christy planted in ‘Bush Wood’ Broomfield (Bushy Wood) nearly 50 oxlip roots from Saffron Walden, and about 30 more plants in ‘College Wood, about a mile distant’. (From the reference to the wood being ‘about a mile distant’, it is clear that the wood referred to was the one belonging to Melbourne Farm, and not the College Wood in Writtle Forest, for that is several

miles away.) He noted that both woods contained an abundance of primroses. In May 1922 he went back to both woods, but in neither was he able to find any of the oxlips he had planted, nor any hybrids. He concluded that: - ‘The Experiment has, therefore, failed – at all events, so far.’<sup>31</sup>

This was a serious experiment. That this was the case, is clear from the involvement of Dr Bateson and Miss Saunders. Dr William Bateson was the founder of the academic discipline of genetics. Edith Rebecca Saunders was a geneticist and plant anatomist, who had become known as ‘the mother of British plant genetics.’ The two collaborated closely together on many projects relating to genetics. They were doing pioneering work – and work which challenged to established scientific views of the day. At the time when Bateson and Saunders began their scientific collaboration, the prevailing view of inheritance in scientific circles was the ‘blending theory’, which held that ‘the characteristics of both parents were inseparably mixed together in their offspring.’ Increasingly, Bateson began to question this view, arguing in favour of ‘discontinuous variation’.<sup>32</sup> As to whether we should see Miller Christy’s experiments on primula hybrids as forming part of the contemporary debate on discontinuous variation, as opposed to the blended theory, the author of this article is not a scientist, and not qualified to judge. But it is clear that Miller Christy’s work on primulas was seen by two of the major scientists of his day as potentially valuable work.

My researches into the wood have shed a rather worrying light upon the willingness of earlier naturalists to interfere with the ecology of ancient woods; Miller Christy thought nothing of uprooting oxlips from one ancient wood and planting them in another, and it sounds as if he had planted modern cultivated daffodils in Broomwood, an attested ancient wood.<sup>33</sup>

For many centuries, College Wood had been out in open country. But this was to change. By the 1930s, there was a desperate need for housing for Chelmsford’s inhabitants. In 1938, the Council purchased land on the Melbourne Farm Estate. Even during the War, plans were drawn up for the construction of 160 houses on the Estate. And, as soon as the War was over, the house building started. Soon, College Wood was surrounded by council houses.<sup>34</sup>



### “An overgrown, neglected coppice”

College Wood was described in the Chelmsford Local Wildlife Site Review as ‘an overgrown, neglected coppice under regular visitor pressure.’ And, like many green spaces in urban areas, Melbourne Park and its woodland, have attracted a certain amount of anti-social behaviour. An online newspaper article, in *Essex live* for 25 June 2019 painted, even allowing for journalistic exaggeration a disturbing picture of Melbourne Park after dark, with the children who played there in the daytime replaced by groups of teenagers, some sharing a bottle of vodka, others shouting insults at each other, a place where the smell of cannabis was so strong that it made the reporter feel ‘queasy’. Admittedly the reporter did make it clear that, in the daytime, the park was quite different, being full of children playing and, even at dusk, the writer was surprised to see how ‘clean and sedate’ the park looked. As in many urban woodlands, fly-tipping is a problem. In 1998 a local man was fined for dumping rubbish in Melbourne Park woods.<sup>35</sup> And in 1999, under the headline ‘Chelmsford: Death fears over bikers in woods,’ a local paper told how motorcyclists were using paths in Melbourne Park woodlands as racetracks, and frightening local residents.<sup>36</sup> Fly-tipping and bikers using woodland as a race track may not be what comes to mind when thinking of historic woodlands. But they are just as much a part of the history of College Wood as Miller Christy’s experiments with oxlips or the wood’s link to New College Oxford.

And yet, while it is undeniable that College Wood faces regular visitor pressure, Chelmsford City Council is making strong efforts to ensure that the woodlands are preserved, fencing off parts of the wood to allow ground cover plants to regenerate, and establishing a sensitive programme of tree planting, to ensure that the species planted are appropriate for the site.<sup>37</sup>

The way that these two woods have been used, and what they have meant to people, have changed over the centuries. For most of their history, they were coppice woods, managed to produce timber and underwood. And the cutting which was an integral part of coppice management meant that, in season, the woods were full of daffodils, bluebells and other flowers. Botanists like Arthur Wallis<sup>38</sup> and Miller Christy came to the woods to study the flora and, in the case of Miller Christy, to test a scientific theory. But increasingly it became uneconomic to manage coppice woods in the traditional way. In 1922, Miller Christy noted that College Wood had not been cut, and added that many woods in eastern England had not been cut for some years ‘owing to the War, the scarcity and dearness of labour, and the small value of brushwood recently.’<sup>39</sup> Today College Wood is used mainly by pedestrians and cyclists from the Melbourne and Newlands Spring housing estates, either as a short cut, or for recreation. As is the case with many urban woods, their very popularity poses a threat to their future.

### Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the British Newspaper Archive for providing access to newspaper articles, and Mr Neil Wiffen for providing an image of the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the Chelmsford and Broomfield area. I would like to thank the staff of the Essex Record Office, especially those in the Reprographics Department and those who provided information on the 1869 conveyance for me, for their assistance, and Mrs Jennifer Thorp, the then Archivist of New College, Oxford.

### Notes

- <sup>1.</sup> *Essex Newsmen* 20 August 1892, *Chelmsford Chronicle* 5 May 1865, 10 May 1865
- <sup>2.</sup> Richard Mabey *Flora Britannica* London: Chatto & Windus, 1997. p.430 The square brackets appear in the original.
- <sup>3.</sup> Essex Place Names at: <https://www1.essex.ac.uk/history/esah/essexplacenames/Books.asp> accessed 19 October 2021 The plot number for Daffodil Wood on the Tithe Map is 785.
- <sup>4.</sup> Email from Jennifer Thorp, Archivist of New College Oxford, dated 19 October 2021.
- <sup>5.</sup> Information on the dates of ownership of the wood by New College kindly supplied by Mrs Jennifer Thorp, the then Archivist of New College, Oxford, in email dated 18 October 20021. Rainsford School, and then St Peter’s College, occupied the site where College Farm once stood.
- <sup>6.</sup> *Chelmsford Chronicle* 15 April 1864.

- <sup>7.</sup> *Essex Newsmen* 15 April 1922
- <sup>8.</sup> Gibson *The Flora of Essex; or, a list of the flowering plants and ferns found in the County of Essex*. Pamplin, 1862, p.313 giving as his source Arthur Wallis ‘Plants found near Chelmsford’ in the Proceedings of the Botanical Society of London. I am indebted to the duty archivist of Essex Record Office for this information.
- <sup>9.</sup> *Chelmsford Chronicle* 7 November 1862, Essex Field Club Archive at: <https://www.essexfieldclub.org.uk/portal> accessed 3 November 2021
- <sup>10.</sup> *Essex Herald* 11 April 1848
- <sup>11.</sup> *Chelmsford Chronicle* 6 May 1938 Matthew Arnold in Essex [Letter from] Richenda Christy
- <sup>12.</sup> Ken Searles *Country Stile: footpaths and bridleways in the Broomfield area*: Broomfield Parish Council: Broomfield Parish Council, 1988. p.24
- <sup>13.</sup> *Broomfield Times* spring 2018 front cover at: <https://www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/spring-2018.pdf> accessed 30 September 2021. For a picture of the daffodils, showing the characteristics of the true wild daffodil, see: Dr Tim Gardiner “Wild Daffodils in Daffy Wood” at: <https://twitter.com/timgardiner3/status/459431212210061312?lang=en-gb> accessed 4 June 2020
- <sup>14.</sup> 10. Belstead [and] 11. Sewell’s land alias the Church land, vols. 10 and 11 of Broomfield fence lists by Ken Searles, pages 34-35 of vol 11 at: [https://www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Vol2-pp1-43.wps\\_.pdf](https://www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Vol2-pp1-43.wps_.pdf) accessed 11 June 2020
- <sup>15.</sup> Oliver Rackham *Trees and woodland in the British landscape* London: J. M.Dent, 1976. p.112 Similarly, the authors of *The Historic Environment Assessment of Frith Wood, Billericay* wrote that the omission



- of Frith Wood from Chapman and Andre's map 'is not evidence that it did not exist at that date as the mapmakers were not entirely reliable on the presence or absence of landscape features such as woods and marshes' (See: [https://www.basildon.gov.uk/media/9258/EV106-Basildon-Council-Historic-Environment-Assessment-of-Frith-Wood-Billericay-Aug-2018/pdf/EV106\\_Basildon\\_Council\\_-\\_Historic\\_Environment\\_Assessment\\_of\\_Frith\\_Wood\\_Billericay\\_-\\_Aug\\_2018.pdf?m=636899839664470000](https://www.basildon.gov.uk/media/9258/EV106-Basildon-Council-Historic-Environment-Assessment-of-Frith-Wood-Billericay-Aug-2018/pdf/EV106_Basildon_Council_-_Historic_Environment_Assessment_of_Frith_Wood_Billericay_-_Aug_2018.pdf?m=636899839664470000) accessed 15 June 2020) Another other Essex wood that Chapman and Andre omitted from their map of Essex was the (now vanished) Maze Wood in Tilty; see Ancient Woodland in Tilty Essex, by Darren Stone at: <http://www.tiltyhistoryprojects.co.uk/people-places/ancient-woodland-in-tilty-essex> accessed 16 May 2020
16. A history of College Wood at: <https://fliphtml5.com/tezl/tjvz/basic> accessed 20 May 2020
  17. Feedback request: *Carex sylvatica* at: <http://herbariaunited.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=5734> accessed 30 April 2020
  18. Francis Rose 'Indicator species of ancient woodland' *British Wildlife* April 1999 at: <https://pad.basingstoke.gov.uk/documents/4753/01/02/76/01027625.PDF> accessed 30 April 2020
  19. Gerry Barnes and Tom Williamson *Rethinking ancient woodland: the archaeology and history of woods in Norfolk* Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2015. Pp.131-3, 141, 174-6
  20. Ancient Woodland at: <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::ancient-woodland-england/explore?location=52.900079%2C-2.004678%2C6.73> accessed 23 October 2021
  21. Gerry Barnes and Tom Williamson *Rethinking ancient woodland: the archaeology and history of woods in Norfolk* Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2015. p.69
  22. Oliver Rackham *Trees and woodland in the British landscape* London: J.M.Dent, 1976. p.114
  23. *Chelmsford Chronicle* 15 April 1864
  24. *Essex Herald* 3 November 1883, *Chelmsford Chronicle* 9 November 1883
  25. Melbourne Park Maintenance and Management Plan at: [https://loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GFMngmt\\_Melbourne-Park-Mgt-Plan-2019-2024.pdf](https://loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GFMngmt_Melbourne-Park-Mgt-Plan-2019-2024.pdf) accessed 18 October 2021, Queen Elizabeth Park at Melbourne/ Fields in Trust at: - <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/FieldSite/Queen-Elizabeth-II-Park-at-Melbourne> accessed 26 October 2021
  26. *Chelmsford Chronicle* 21 April 1865, 5 May 1865, 10 May 1865 Broomfield was not the only place to have such an annual custom; people also went into Gravenhill Wood, in Oxfordshire, to pick flowers on Good Friday (*Bicester Herald* 14 April 1916).
  27. Writtle – Inhabitants in 1874 – History House at: <https://historyhouse.co.uk/placeW/essexw38c.html> accessed 30 April 2020. For Frederick Warner's purchase of Melbourne Farm in 1848, see: *Chelmsford Chronicle* 14 July 1848
  28. 8. Priors, vol. 8 of the Broomfield Fence Lists by Ken Searles, p.207 at: [https://www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Vol11-pp-196-end.wps\\_.pdf](https://www.broomfieldessex.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Vol11-pp-196-end.wps_.pdf) accessed 16 June 2020 and entry on Seax, Essex Record Office catalogue, for correspondence between William Bott, jnr., tenant of Samuel Christie at Priors, Scravels and Churchlands at Broomfield, 1857-1885
  29. *Chelmsford Chronicle* 1 April 1865, 24 April 1865, 5 May 1865, *Essex Standard* 26 April 1865 The story was syndicated and appeared in a large number of local newspapers.
  30. Essex – Discover Essex – Oxlips at Great Bardfield at: - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/essex/content/articles/2007/04/20/nature\\_trail\\_oxlip\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/essex/content/articles/2007/04/20/nature_trail_oxlip_feature.shtml) Oxlip – Plantlife at: - <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/plant-fungi-species/oxlip> M.Gurney et al 'Hybridisation between *Oxlip Primula elatior* (L.) Hill and *Primula vulgaris* Hudson, and the identification of their variable hybrid P x digenea A.Kerner' *Watsonia* 26 pp.239-251 (2008) at: <http://archive.bsbi.org.uk/Wats26p239.pdf> accessed 2 May 2020
  31. Miller Christy 'The original of the hybrid *Primula elatior X vulgaris* demonstrated experimentally in the field, with notes on other British primula hybrids. *New Phytologist* December 1922 (pp.293-30, especially p.297)1 at: <https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1469-8137.1922.tb07605.x> accessed 1 May 2020
  32. William Bateson Wikipedia entry at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Bateson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Bateson) Edith Rebecca Saunders Wikipedia entry at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edith\\_Rebecca\\_Saunders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edith_Rebecca_Saunders) 'Becky' met Bateson – Genetics Society podcast at: <https://geneticsunzipped.com/blog/2019/10/24/025-when-becky-met-bateson> consulted on 2 May 2020
  33. 'The hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* L.) in Britain.M.Christy *Journal of Ecology* 12(1) 1924 pp.39-94 Broomwood (then named Beaumont Wood) is shown in a 1599 map of the Petre estates in Chignal. It is now private, and not open to the public.
  34. *Chelmsford Chronicle* 26 February 1937, Essex Newsman 3 July 1943, Essex Newsman 10 August 1945 *Chelmsford Chronicle* 21 February 1947
  35. Litter and Fly-tipping – Woodland Trust, Urban woodland management guide 2 at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1842/urban-woodland-management-litter-and-fly-tipping.pdf> accessed 10 June 2020, Essex Crime Archives – Woodland fly-tipper in Chelmsford fined hundreds of pounds at: - <https://www.communityad.co.uk/category/essex-news/essex-crime/> accessed 27 May 2020
  36. Chelmsford: Death fears over bikers in woods' *Essex County Standard* 23 July 1999 at: <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/5526385.chelmsford-death-fears-over-bikers-in-woods/> accessed 27 May 2020
  37. Melbourne Park Maintenance and Management Plan at: [https://loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GFMngmt\\_Melbourne-Park-Mgt-Plan-2019-2024.pdf](https://loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GFMngmt_Melbourne-Park-Mgt-Plan-2019-2024.pdf) accessed 18 October 2021, Popular College Wood in Danger *Chelmsford Weekly News*, 2 April 1998
  38. Gibson *The Flora of Essex; or, a list of the flowering plants and ferns found in the County of Essex*. Pamplin, 1862, p.313 giving as his source Arthur Wallis 'Plants found near Chelmsford' in the Proceedings of the Botanical Society of London. I am indebted to the duty archivist of Essex Record Office for this reference. For Arthur Wallis and the flowers he collected in Essex see: Botanical Society of Great Britain and Ireland – Herbaria @ Home – Arthur Wallis at: <http://herbariaunited.org/specimenssearch/?collector=Arthur+Wallis&colid=2943&search=search> accessed 21 July 2020
  39. Miller Christy 'The original of the hybrid *Primula elatior X vulgaris* demonstrated experimentally in the field, with notes on other British primula hybrids. *New Phytologist* December 1922 (pp.293-301 especially p.197) at: <https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1469-8137.1922.tb07605.x> accessed 1 May 2020

# Hospitals and disease in medieval Essex

James Kemble

**Summary.** Throughout much of the Medieval Period, “Medicine” was herbal, traditional and spiritual, and still largely influenced by the Greek and Arab practices of Hippocrates (5th century BC), Galen (1st century AD) and Rhazes the Persian (who died in AD 925). Disease was attributed to imbalance of the four humours or fluids, each of which had its corresponding season. Under the conservative influence of the Church which forbade post-mortem dissection, there was little understanding of scientific investigation of causes of disease. Several hospitals in Essex were founded in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries, some of which have undergone archaeological evaluation of the buildings and burials, but the locations of others, although referred to in documents, are still uncertain.

## Medieval Disease

Diseases experienced by the medieval population in Essex in the millennium after the collapse of the Roman empire c.410 AD have been investigated from skeletal remains and more recently through the bio-sciences such as DNA sequencing. Some such as the incidence of dental caries declined markedly in the British Saxon population after c.500 AD but increased again after AD 1000 (Wells, 1964, 123) (Kemble Figure 1).

About AD 550 plague ravaged Britain and Ireland. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records a major outbreak *anno* 664. Bede called it *Pestis icteria* which killed Bishop Tuda of Northumbria; this suggests victims suffered jaundice and liver failure. After restoring Christianity to Essex and building churches at Bradwell and Tilbury, Bishop Cedd returned to his brother’s monastery at Lastingham near Whitby where plague was raging, and died there. When the Essex monks heard of his death they travelled to Lastingham but all died there save one small boy, possibly a novice (HE iv, 23).

Bubonic plague ravaged Europe several times with pandemics in 1348, 1361-4, 1375, 1390 and 1405 (Mordechi, 2019). Not until 1894 did Swiss-French biologist Alexandre Yersin show that the disease which followed an outbreak in China carried by fleas with the rat as a vector was due to the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. In the Fingrith manor of Blackmore the Court Rolls show that more than 70 people died in the first six months of 1349. The mortality of pulmonary plague was of the order of 40% (Creighton, 1891; Roberts, 1980; Ward, 2016,15).

Bede uses ‘*mortalitatis*’, ‘*pestilentia*’, ‘*clades divinitus*’ and ‘*tempestas*’ which are usually all translated ‘plague’ so it is not clear if all the diseases he records imply bubonic plagues. However DNA analysis of teeth from 6th century burials in Bavaria has identified *Yersinia pestis* thus associating bubonic plague with the Justinian plagues (Harbeck, 2013; Wagner, 2014).

The post-Iron Age Romano-British native population in Essex spoke Brythonic. Plague may have contributed to its gradual replacement by the language of Old English of the incoming Anglo-Saxons. Apart from river-names, in Essex few British place-names survived, perhaps ‘Glazenwood’ in Bradwell-juxta-Coggeshall and ‘Chatham’ in Great Waltham being exceptional survivals (Breeze, 1998, 26; Kemble, 2007, 144). It is suggested that the native British were especially exposed to the disease as they traded with the southern continent and Mediterranean where plague was rife, whereas the Saxons

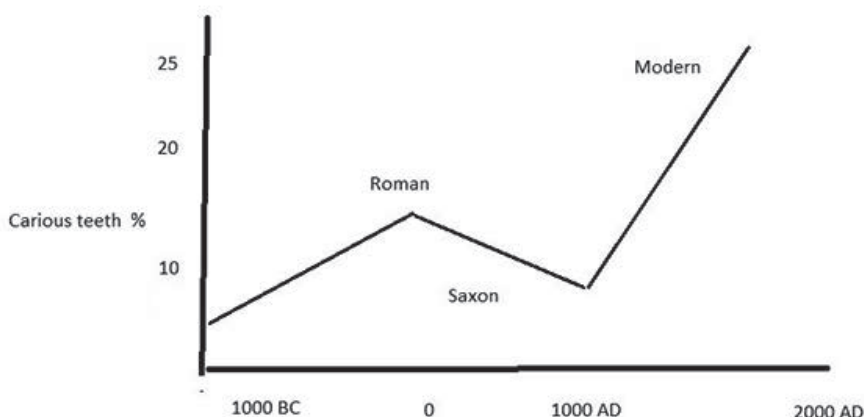


Figure 1. Dental caries in Britain (after Wells)



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were importing goods from the Rhineland and eastern France where the incidence was lower. The Saxons settled to provide for themselves in small farmsteads hence isolating themselves to a degree from the waves of carriers (Morris, 1977, 223). The Black Death of 1348 predominantly affected the Norman-French ruling classes; thereafter the land-bound peasants were able to occupy higher positions of authority. This resulted in the more widespread adoption of Middle English, the language of Chaucer, instead of Norman-French (Grainger, 2008; Wodrich, 2009).

Smallpox was a highly contagious infection by the *virus Variola major* distributed by physical contact and aerial inhalation. The origin of the disease is disputed, but the mummy of the pharaoh Ramses V (died 1157 BC) shows characteristic pocks. Possibly the first description in Europe was in AD 581 by Gregory of Tours. Dr Gilbertus Anglicus (c.1180-c.1250) in his *Compendium Medicinæ* c.1240 described *De Variolis et morbilis*, the eruptions varying in accordance with the mixture of the different humours; he recommended whey and saffron (crocus). In 1760 Daniel Sutton, son of Dr Robert Sutton of Kenton, Suffolk, apothecary and surgeon, set up a successful practice in Ingatestone, Essex, to inoculate patients with a small dose of smallpox virus. Brandison House, No 78 Highstreet is reported to have

been one of his surgeries (van Zwaneberg, 1978, 78; Kemble, 1998, 68). During an epidemic in Maldon he opened a house there and became known nationally and internationally in Europe, but the introduction of the less virulent cowpox inoculation by Dr Jenner made Sutton's method outdated. In 1979 smallpox was declared an eradicated disease (Moore, 1815,50; Fenner, 1988, 211, 215; Watkin, 2019, 70).

The Great Pox (*Morbus gallicus* or venereal syphilis) is caused by the spirochete *Treponema pallidum*. It is an indication of the prevalence of venereal syphilis that the records of St Bartholomew's Hospital in London show that a quarter of the patients treated there in 1547-8 with mercury inhalation or injection or by the West Indian tree-resin Guaiacum were syphilitic. Being close to the warehouses of Southwark just over the river the hospital no doubt received many of those infected (Zivanovic, 1982, 234; Turk, 1995, 275; Harper, 2011)

(Kemble Figure 2).

The increase in the incidence of tuberculosis caused by the bacillus *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in the 15th and 16th centuries may account for the decline in the less contagious *Mycobacterium leprae* for which leper houses had been opened in the preceding centuries. Tuberculosis has a significantly higher (and earlier)



Caption: Figure 2. Syphilitic skull, St Mary Spital (after Wells)



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mortality than leprosy and may give some immunity from *M. leprae*. *M. leprae* has been isolated from teeth from a skeleton dated AD 415-545 excavated at Great Chesterford, the oldest of a large collaborative survey of burials in Europe. The strain resembled that present in red squirrels suggesting that this rodent may have been the carrier. Documents mention squirrels being kept in monasteries; paintings show them as pets wearing collars. Furs of squirrel were traded into Britain from the Baltic, and the meat was used as a food source (Schuenemann, 2018; Kemble, 2018,20-1; Donaghue, 2015, 120).

It has been suggested that lepers, commonly called *lazars*, far from being shunned and vilified, were treated with pity and care. The stigmata found in leprosy burials show atrophy of the upper jaw and spine of the nose, periostitis of the tibia and fibula of the legs and absorption of the finger bones. The biblical Lazarus, full of sores, who stood at the rich man's gate was brother of Mary, identified as Magdalen, hence a conflation of association with dedications of leper hospitals to St Mary Magdalen (John xi, v. 1). The opening of hospitals for lepers from the 11th century onwards is an indication of the desire by founders to gain spiritual and charitable worth (Rawcliffe, 2006,355). Amongst the Essex leper hospitals were *Sedeburghbrok* in Brentwood beside the main road to London, St Giles Little Maldon, St Mary Magdalen in Colchester and St Mary and Thomas Becket in Ilford (Dugdale, vi, 631; VCH, ii, 184-192; Gobold, 1990, 151). Mawdlyn Fields were frequently the property of leper houses (Clay, 1909, 252).

Few houses catered for the mentally ill, a notable exception being St Mary Bethlehem founded in 1247 at Bishopsgate by an alderman of the City of London (Carver, 2011). Like Bethlem, always short of funds, many houses were situated near main roads or just outside city gates so as to attract donations from pilgrims and travellers. For some hospitals the Sheriff paid royal alms towards upkeep. Between 1158-1178 Maldon received 60 shillings as a regular (annual?) payment, and Ilford received "occasional payments". Bequests were also willed: in 1225 St Bartholomew's received cows from William Longspee, son of Henry II. Some hospitals sought alms illegally by selling indulgencies and pardons. While the pardoner of St Anne's Colchester in 1402 received a papal exhortation for these practices, pilgrims who visited the Crutched Friars which claimed to hold part of the Holy Cross were permitted indulgencies by the bishop (Clay, 1909, 190-1).

Though initially reasonably endowed by founders, hospitals frequently were less financially supported by subsequent patrons. Impositions were imposed to provide free board and lodging by patrons or by the community. Edward I placed his old servants at hospitals which he had previously freed from taxes or tithes. When leprosy waned many became alms houses for the poor and infirm as at Colchester (Clay, 1909, 179). After many religious houses had been surrendered to Henry VIII, in 1538 the Lord Mayor of London petitioned the Crown to restore St Bartholomew's which had become deserted and decayed. After six years Henry "graciously re-founded" the hospital by granting 500 marks (about £333) after the citizens had raised £1000; he took for



Figure 3. St Giles, Maldon



himself several of its former possessions (Clay, 1909, 238; Medvei, 1974, 23-4; Kemble 2015, 7).

In 1357 after the Black Death the Augustinian canons of St Thomas's hospital applied to the Pope to award an indulgence to anyone who assisted the hospital. Founded in Southwark in the 12th century, after its Dissolution in 1539 the hospital was restored in 1551. The Lord Mayor Richard Whittington (died 1423) gave money for a new ward of eight beds for unmarried mothers here and ordained that all done in this ward should be kept secret "so that no hindrance should become the inmates".

### Pharmacopeias

The earliest known English Pharmacopeia is 'The Leechbook of Bald' (*Medicinale Anglicanum*), written in Old English in three volumes and compiled c.900-950 (Old English *læce* = physician). One remedy for eye infections contained garlic which has been shown to limit bacterial infection. A treatise on description of diseases, it recommended "smoking" the sick with fragrant woods and plants. Monks in the monasteries were planting herbs such as roses, borage, feverfew, marigold, fennel, sage and lavender for use as tinctures and medicines. John Mirfield, a chaplain of St Bartholomew's Hospital published in 1387 his *Breviarium Bartholomei* which gives an insight to the treatments prescribed. It contained advice about medical ingredients, a plaster "valuable to apply to wounds and ulcers", and herbs (Clay, 1909, 149). He recommended for a patient with rheumatism that olive oil be heated over a fire, had the sign of the cross made over it and prayers said before applying the oil to the affected limbs. Thus the mixture of religion and pain reduction with warmth and massage was effective. Sometimes faith and care alone produced a cure as was the case of the infirm Wolmer who for many years had begged on the steps of St Paul's cathedral. His friends took him to the hospital and placed him in front of the altar. "By and by every crokidness of his body a litill and litill losid" until "all his membris yn naturale ordir was disposid" (Dainton, 1976).

In 1618 the College of Physicians, whose jurisdiction extended within the City of London, published two editions of *Pharmacopeia Londinensis* with a third in 1650. It was a mixture of traditional recipes with some innovations (Hajar, R., 2012; Anderson, S., nd. 1,2; Trease, 1964, 83, 96). Nicholas Culpeper, a botanist and herbalist who treated the poor of London and who died in 1654 at Spitalfield at the age of 38, translated the London Pharmacopeia from Latin into English much to the disapproval of the College; he wrote the '*Complete Herbalist*' the year before he died. His contemporary Sir William Harvey, physician to St Bartholomew's Hospital, made copies of recipes and remedies (Cotton MS Vit C 111 ff 139-141).

Physicians prescribed medicines such as maidenhair, hartstongue and pepper which would then be prepared by the apothecaries. Syrup of vinegar, liquorice and honey were prescribed for Sir William Petre, prepared by Ryche, an apothecary. Tansy was used to treat intestinal worms and indeed is toxic to intestinal parasites, flies and mosquitoes. Lungwort was used for pulmonary

diseases, probably more the coincidence of its name than any medicinal efficacy. The prescriptions were based on long-established trial-and-error remedies. Because the clergy, by order of Pope Alexander III in 1163 and the Lateran Council of 1215, were forbidden to shed blood, it was the barber surgeons learning their craft by apprenticeship who carried out the practical procedures such as cutting for bladder stone, bloodletting and amputations (Emmison, 1964, 279; Huggon, 2018, 336).

### Hospitals of Institutional Foundation.

Several houses or hospitals for the infirm and poor were founded from the 11th century in Essex. Many are not well documented and few have been subject to archaeological investigation. The chapel of St Giles in Spital Road, Maldon, (TL8433 0648) was founded c.1164 for a prior and leprous burgesses of the town (VCH ii, 188; RCHME 1923, 4, p177). Its southern arm still stands to 7 meters with foundations of a probably pre-Norman apse. Part of the chapel may have been used to house the leprous inmates (Historic England scheduled 1020915; Nunn, 1983-4; Powell, 2000, 150)

(Kemble Figure 3).

St Mary's Hospital "for aged and infirm bretheren" at the top of Ilford Hill (TQ435864, listed 1300587) was founded c.1140 by the abbess of Barking. Not all monks were as pious as their calling professed. While the abbess accompanied by the Bishop of London and Dean of St Pauls came to inspect the hospital, one of the lepers, a brother, "brought a drab into his chamber and sayd she was his sister". At the conclusion of the Mass, "the prieste disgraded him of Orders, took his booke from him, gave him a boxe on the cheek and thrust him out of the churche where the officers and people received him and putt him in a carte, cryinge" (Cray, 1909, 141). After the Dissolution, the alms house came into the possession of the Marquis of Salisbury at Hatfield House. The chapel to the south of the houses (now flats) around a three-sided courtyard retains the 14th century chancel (Lockwood, 2002; Heritage Gateway, 408117).

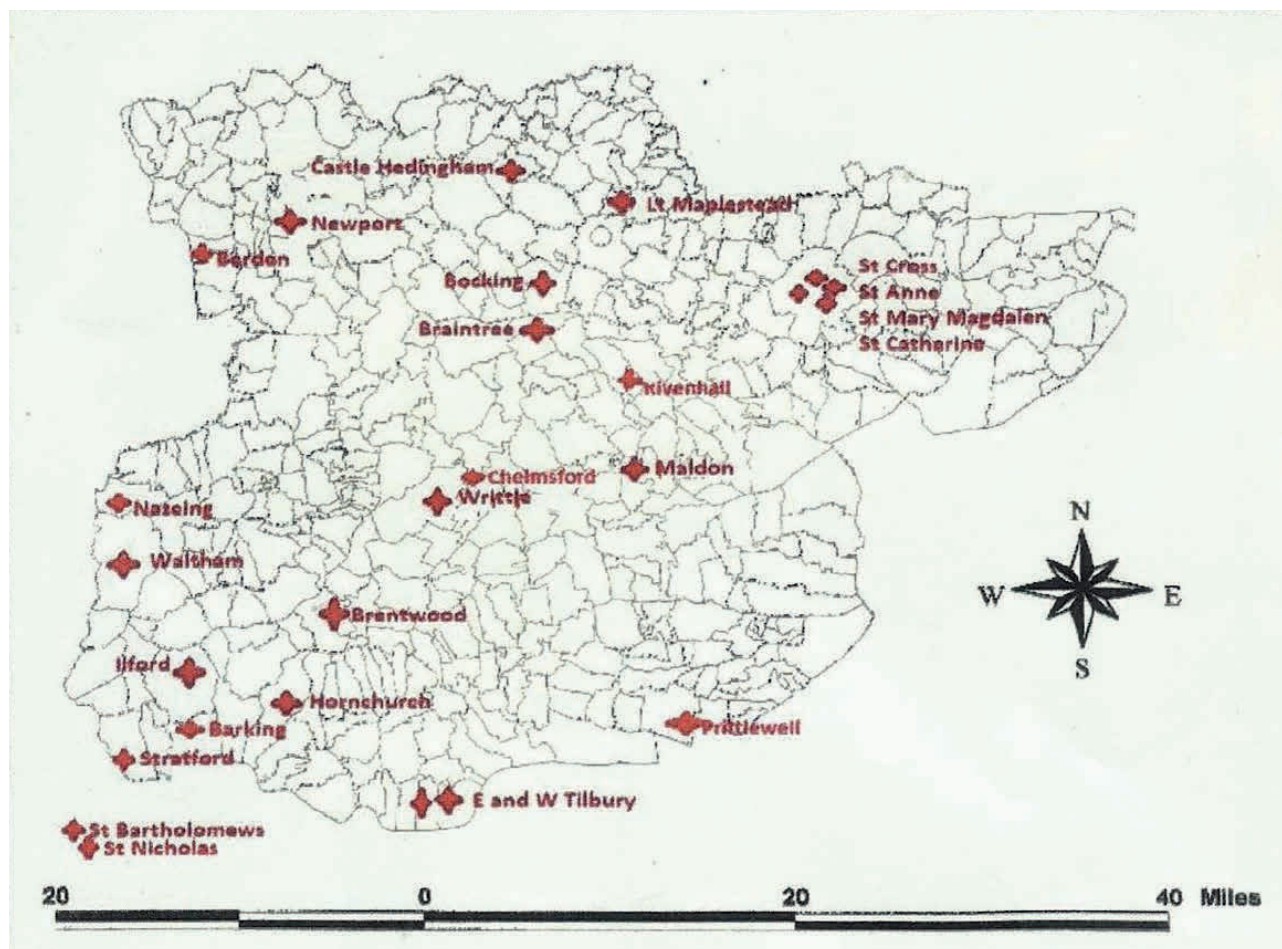
As at Ilford for men, Barking Abbey also had a house dedicated to St Lawrence for "systers of th'ospital", close to the abbey and apparently founded before 1452/3. The alms house survived to the 19th century at the west end of East Street adjacent to the Anchor and Crown public house (TQ442840) (Anon, 1921; Lockwood, 1955, 18) (Kemble Figure 4).

A hospital at Writtle was given by King Stephen to the priory at Bermondsey. King John re-granted it to the hospital and church of Santo Spirito Saxia in Rome for the poor and infirm, and in 1390/1 it was purchased for New College, Oxford (Dugdale, vi, 1057; VCH ii, 200).

Waltham Abbey had a hospital within its precinct built about 1218. A chapel is mentioned in 1188. It may have been only for the monks and lay brothers, in which case it would probably have been near to the church (Newcourt, 1710, 691; Huggins, 1973; Musty, 1978).

The first preceptory of the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem in Essex was in Chaureth in Broxted

## HOSPITALS AND DISEASE IN MEDIEVAL ESSEX



*Religious Houses and Hospitals mentioned in the text*

in 1151. That there had been a hospital here is attested by an injunction against the Master because he “had not maintained the hospital as he ought”. The Knights were given the church and vill of Little Maplestead in 1186 by William, Henry II’s steward. They moved their preceptory to Maplestead c.1250 from where they carried out much of the administration. The Order owned several properties in Colchester, one of whose tenants was a physician. Other properties in Essex included the moated Friar’s Farm which was named the “Hospital of [Little] Sampford”. It came to the Hospitallers *t.* Henry III from Olivia, daughter of Geoffrey fitz-Baldwin. The foundations of the church may lie under Chapel Field which lay adjacent to the 14th century house *Le ffreres* (Tithe Award no 492-3; Palmer, 1991, 12, 17, 21).

Henry II probably founded the hospital or priory of Hornchurch in 1159 as a dependency of the Alien Hospice dedicated to St Nicholas and St Bernard in Savoy. Peter de Savoy granted it property called Savoy in London in 1268 (from which Savoy Palace and hotel in The Strand take their names), but the hospital did not prosper. In 1392 the church and chapel were confirmed to New College Oxford (Dugdale, vi, 652; VCH, 1907, 195; Weinreb, 1983, 773). The church in the High Street (TQ 5441 8697) which was granted to the priory in 1163 was rebuilt in the 13th century and William of Wykeham carried out improvements to the chancel and nave in the 15th century. A hall (TQ 54430

87000) with possible moat was built on the priory site after 1391 (Historic England Mon 411388; VCH 1968, 47; Mee, 1972, 210).

The Crutched Friars of Colchester claimed the hospital of St Cross on the south side of Crouch Street, probably founded before 1251 by the lords of the manor of Stanway. Here the cemetery (TL 9913 2494) contained male and female adult and child burials. Of 54 inhumations examined a large proportion (ten) were children under 15 years old, and only six over 50 years suggesting this was for the lay community (VCH ii, 181; Benfield, 2007, 9; Gascoyne, 2018, 210).

Little is known of the fourth hospital in Colchester, St Catherine’s, north of Crouch Street (TL 99104 24985) which was founded c.1352. Part had become a house and garden by 1545 and alms houses existed in 1671 (VCH ix, 308; Colchester HR No MCC449).

### Hospitals of Personal Foundation

The Hospital of Newport dedicated to St Mary and St Leonard was founded c.1150. An undated charter, probably *t.* John (1199-1216), states that Richard de Newport founded the hospital and granted lands for brethren, priests and laymen (Morant, 1786, ii, 585). Henry II made a grant of land for the infirm in 1156-7. By the 13th century it was claimed by St Martin le Grand in London. Moulded stones in the wall by the large erratic ‘Leper Stone’ beside the Cambridge road probably originate from the hospital buildings



(TL 5199 3496). The wall contains circular columns and half-octagonal 13th century responds. A map of c.1875 shows “Site of Leonards Hospital” adjacent to the road in what had become *Hospitallfeld* by 1549, conveniently bounded by the River Cam on the east (Pat Rolls. Tithe no 108-114). (Dugdale, vi, 760; VCH ii, 190; Bettley, 2007, 613; Anon, 2015).

The hospital of *Sedeburghbrok* in Brook Street Brentwood was founded for lepers before 1233 by the Bruin family of Great Ockendon, and took its name from the stream which ran close by (Dugdale, vi, 760; VCH ii, 192; 1983, 88). Excavations in 1989 revealed the boundary ditch along the southwest side of Spital Road (TQ 576 928; Gobbold, 1990, 151). The hospital buildings probably lay to the east. The 14th century open hall building which may be contemporary, now The Golden Fleece Inn, formerly The White Lion (Historic England listed Grade II\*, 1197231), timber-framed and plastered dating from the 14th century fronting on to Brook Street, lay immediately northeast, a convenient resting place for travellers and horses about to ascend the steep hill into Brentwood town.

At Castle Hedingham a hospital was built by Henry de Vere, earl of Oxford, c.1250, “just without the gate [of the castle] for the souls of himself, his wife, his ancestors and heirs” (TL 787 355). Although geophysical survey did not record definite evidence of buildings, the hospital may have been at the east end of the market place (EHER 6789; Dugdale, iv, 437; VCH, ii, 184). Sir William Petre endowed alms houses in Stock Lane Ingatestone in 1557. These were rebuilt in Roman Road in 1840 and still house the needy (Kemble, 1998, 44).

Little is known about the hospital dedicated to St James at Braintree for a master and bretheren which was in existence before 1229 (VCH ii, 184). Extensive excavations in the town have not identified the site though it may be the chapel of St James In Bradford Street, Bocking (TL 760 240; Drury, 1976; Historic England Mon 378961: EHER 18417). A little more is documented about Bocking. John Dorewood, speaker of the House of Commons, founded a church and *maison dieu* at Bocking for seven poor men in 1478. Four alms houses, rebuilt in 1869, are still in occupation (Fowler, 1909, 52; VCH ii, 183; Bettley, 2007, 149). A letter dated 1712 discusses where the *maison dieu* was, either at Dorewood Hall (TL 762 253) or the almshouses at the corner of Church Lane with Deans Walk (TL 757 256; ERO D/Y 1/1/57/9).

Clay (1909, 291) writes that Lord [Henry] Marney founded a hospital dedicated to St Mary the Virgin in 1523 in Layer Marney, but provides no further information. This was the year in which Lord Marney died (his tomb is in St Mary’s church) and it may be that the provision in his Will for a chapel was never realised as a hospital – his son died withing two years leaving no heirs (Bettley, 2007, 530).

Eudo dapifer founded St Mary Magdalen Colchester (1100-1120) and provided an annual fair (TM 0058 2482). No lepers were admitted to hospital “without the consent and will” of his future brothers; other patients

were admitted at the discretion of the patron or warden (Clay, 1909, 130). Women (sisters) are recorded in 1323, 1327 and 1394, although it is unclear whether these were inmates or carers (Huggon, 2018, 197). The buildings were pulled down in 1830 and six alms houses for poor widows erected next to the new church at the corner of Brook Street and Magdalen Street (VCH ii, 184-6; Cooper, 2003, 91-95).

St Anne’s chapel and hospital existed before 1379 to the east of Colchester on the south side of the Harwich road (TM 01147 25412; Colch HR MCC 421). Apparently under-funded it failed and a building, probably the chapel, was used as a barn in 1748 (VCH ix, 336; ERO D/BS 5 Cr19).

### The Doctors and Surgeons

The names of the medieval physicians and surgeons have only rarely come down to us. Bede attests that physicians were successfully treating scabies and surgeons were treating head wounds in the 7th century (HE v, 2; v. 6). That Medicine was a subject taught in a school founded by Bishop Theodore in Canterbury c.670 is documented by St Aldhelm. A physician Dr John Symings and Thomas Wendy are known to have attended William Petre of Ingatestone, secretary to Henry VIII. Wright was a surgeon who treated Sir William and in 1559 he paid Andrews for dressing his leg ulcer. He paid Yates a surgeon for making a new truss for his hernia (Emmison, 1961, 249-251). From the Book of Foundation of St Bartholomew’s Hospital (British Lib Vesp B IX) it is clear that the staff of the hospitals were concerned with administering the properties, food, clothing, fund-raising, spiritual support and cleanliness, all necessary for well-being of those in their care, but there is little evidence initially that doctors were regular attendants.

Although Bede writing in the early 8th century stated that Ely Abbey called in a physician, Cynifrid, to see a patient, not until the 14th century did a few physicians become attached to hospitals to treat the sick (HE, iv, 19; Rubin, 1970, 65). In the 16th century one of the first documented names of a physician attending St Bartholomew’s two days a week was Dr Lopus “in exchange for a reduction in rent”, although he could send a deputy. Unfortunately Dr Lopus was later falsely accused of trying to poison Queen Elizabeth, was convicted, hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. The first surgeons mentioned there were Martyn, paid for cutting the stone, and Stephen Garlop in c.1547. Garlop was dismissed in 1554 “for that he hathe no *knolege in surgery*” (Medvei, 1974, 21, 109).

From the early 17th century medicine became more based on direct observation and experimental dissection with pioneers such as William Harvey who wrote *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus* in 1628 describing circulation of the blood through the heart. After many of his papers had been ransacked by Parliamentarians under Cromwell and he had died of a stroke, his brother Eliab had him buried in the family vault at Hempstead where his death mask can be seen high in the wall of St Andrew’s church (Power, 1897, 167-75; Bettley, 2018, 185).

## Archaeology

Only a few of the hospitals in Essex have been subjected to significant archaeological investigation but those that have been have revealed evidence of the lives and health of the carers and inmates as well as their activities. Excavations at St Mary Spital in Bishopsgate London have shown that arsenic, lead, copper and mercury, crucibles and distillation vessels were used in the 14th century pharmacy building (Connell, 2012; Wright, 2020).

The diseases commonly found in selective medieval communities have been studied amongst the monks and lay brothers of Stratford Langthorne Abbey founded in 1135 (VCH ii, 129-133). 128 skeletons have been excavated from the cemetery and examined. Affirming that this was a male community, 99% were male, with a median height of 5 ft 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. 6% were boys, perhaps novices or orphans. Longevity was unusual despite what might be expected to have been a protected occupation. The population was young by modern standards, 84% aged under 45 and only 4.7% over 45. 4.8% had dental caries (often a result of a high sugar diet). An active or heavy workload was indicated in 19% who had osteoarthritis of the spine, with shoulder and knees also affected. None showed rickets or scurvy indicating their diet was reasonable. One had spinal tuberculosis and another fractures of the lower jaw, clavicle and wrist suggesting a severe fall. One had a blade wound to the skull, left clavicle and neck (Stuart-Macadam, 1986,68).

This community can be contrasted with a study of the Middle Saxon (c.670-c.870 AD) cemetery at Nazeingbury from which 153 skeletons were examined. 11% were children under 15 years. 34 were males and 88 females, suggesting that this was a female community (of nuns?) with lay workers. Many of the latter had robust skeletons with strong muscle attachments. The incidence of caries was low. Here many of the females lived into old age. 19% were aged over 45 (Huggins, 1958, 54).

Of 68 articulated skeletons examined from St Mary Magdalen Colchester dating between 1100-1700, the majority were males. Periostitis was the most common pathology, possibly indicative of leprosy. One buried in the church porch and three outside the church probably had venereal syphilis (Crossan, 2003, 144-6).

At Newport excavations in 1985 between the road and the river revealed six burials (of eight to fifteen individuals), one having *cribra orbitale* indicating anaemia in childhood, another a mastoid abscess. None showed traits of leprosy despite the nearby glacial erratic Leper Stone of which an association with leprosy is documented in 1863 (Hedges, 1980, 30; Andrews, 1989, 20, 84).

## Conclusion

Care available for the poor, sick and infirm of medieval Essex was provided by monks, sisters, regular canons and lay workers. Chapels and churches were at the heart of the hospitals. Founders were inspired both by compassion and by assurance for an afterlife. The fear of contagion from leprosy was initially a driving force, but, as the incidence of the disease waned after

c.1400, some became alms houses for the poor, some failed from inadequate endowments and many were permanently suppressed in the 16th century. Pandemics and epidemics were frequent and mortalities were high. Treatment available was limited to time-honoured remedies but spiritual support was central for many of the sick.

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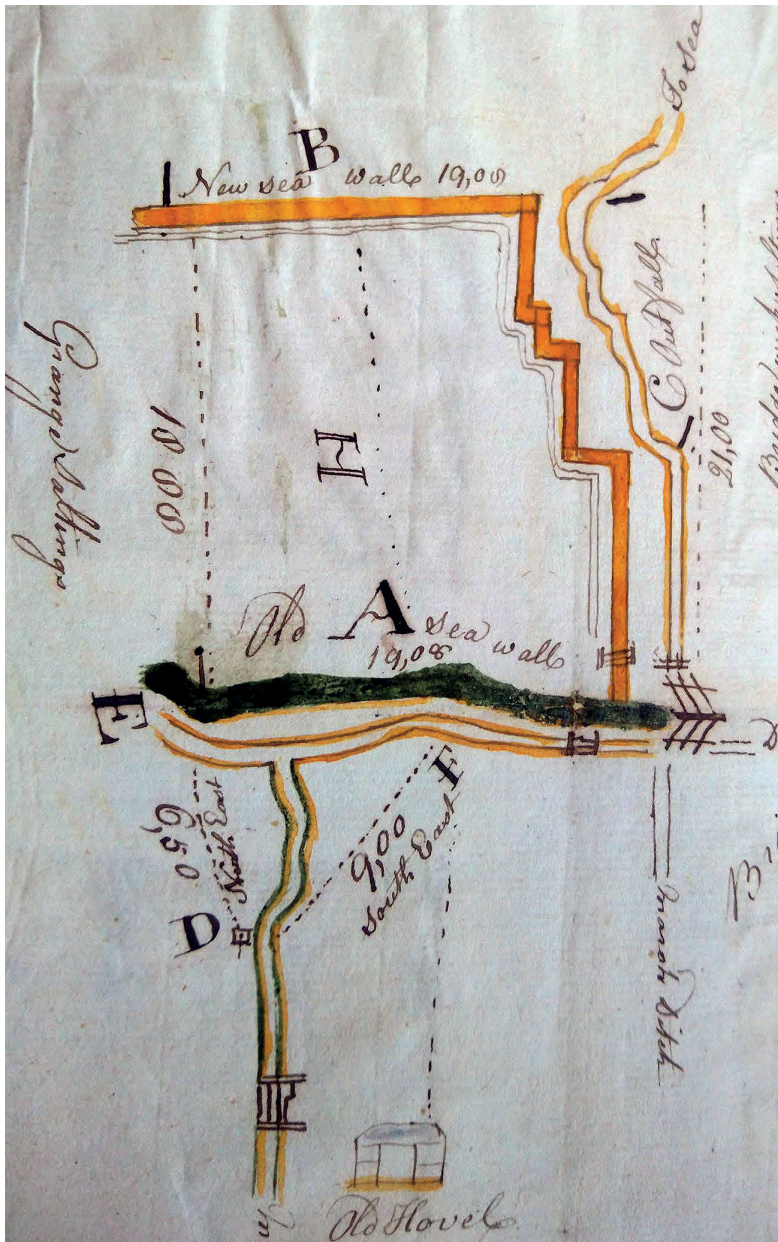
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## THE DENGIE PENINSULA



Quayle's Plan

Comparatively a newcomer, his family not purchasing part of the Fanshawe estate until the 18th Century,<sup>12</sup> Mr. Quayle's expansion seawards was of interest to George Malden, Vestry officer of St. James Church, Dengie. Mr. Malden's family were farmers working the Fanshawes' Dengie fields as well as their own. In order to prevent neighbouring Tillingham gaining benefit and territory from his own parish, in July 1788 he wrote to the absentee Rector, the Rev. D. George Wollaston (1738-1826). A Fellow of the Royal Society, Wollaston was in permanent residence at Richmond, Surrey, convenient for his studies at the nearby King's Astronomy Observatory.<sup>13</sup> Mr. Malden, after alerting the Rector to the Bishop's Visitation held at

Coastal marsh spreads out from a sparse line of settlements on slightly higher ground stretching across the Dengie peninsula's eastern edge between the Blackwater and Crouch estuaries. In the Domesday survey of 1086 the tidal marshes of Tillingham, Dengie and St. Peter's are shown as supporting 1210 head of sheep.<sup>4</sup> By 1222 there is a record of seawalls already in place and raised sheepwalks extending into as yet unenclosed grazing areas. One of these sheepwalks, made of wattles and earth, led from Tillingham to 'vocat middelwich' (High Middlewick) – recognisable today as Middlewick farm, now inland from the site featured here.<sup>5</sup> Progressive reclamation since medieval times, the last occurring in the 1870's, has resulted in enclosure of 11,250 acres behind the present shoreline.<sup>6</sup> 'Wick', or a similar suffix derives from Old English 'wic' for dairy.<sup>7</sup> It was William Hollingworth Quayle who in 1788 changed the landscape to what is seen on today's maps. Mr Quayle owned Grange Farm, along with its accompanying saltings seaward of the existing wall. The farm straddled the boundary between Tillingham and Dengie parishes.<sup>8</sup> In partnership with his tenant, John Grice, he enclosed 110 acres of the Grange saltings abutting the Bridgewick saltings owned by the Fanshawe family.<sup>9</sup>

The Fanshawes were granted extensive local holdings by Queen Elizabeth I in 1560.<sup>10</sup> Arthur Fanshawe on behalf of Col. Henry Fanshawe, who had inherited the property, was enjoined to take advantage of Quayle's reclamation work and extend Bridgewick's 'inned' land at the same time. However, the opportunity passed and the extra acres not charted until 1812 and then reproduced in a later version used as the 1839 Dengie Tithe Map.<sup>11</sup>

DENGIE PARISH			
TILLINGHAM GRANGE FARM.			
Owner		Occupier	
William Hollingworth Quayle.		John Grice	
NUMBER ON PLAN	DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY.	TOTAL QUANTITIES	EXTRACT OF T
32	Hogs Hovel	27 7	2 27
33	Station Slip	2 0 10	2
34	Station Marsh	12 0 6	1
35	Wall Piece	2 0 50	
Total of Tillingham Grange Farm in Dengie Parish		43 2 25	
Total of D <sup>o</sup> D <sup>o</sup> D <sup>o</sup> in Tillingham Parish		432 2 12	
Total of Tillingham Grange Farm in both Parishes		476 0 37	

Quayle's Subdivision of Grange Farm and its saltings



Danbury, wrote:

*Sir I think it was my duty to Let Know, that there is some Saltings a taken in Which some of them belongs to ye Parish of Dengy, being part of Monwick wich is in ye Parish of Dengy, it will not be what you call land for some years, but it would be very proper, if you pleas, & think fitt to desire of ye parisonors of ye Parish of Dengy, to go ye Bounds of ye Parish of Dengy, as it may be of service some years hence... Don't mention that I let you know about it. From some time back, that you had a good mind to take in Bridgwick Saltings for Mr Fanshaw, now is your time this summer or next as there is only one wall instead of three,... what a pity it is that it cant be done, it would be land at a very cheap rate, indeed, if your land would belong to ye parish of Dengy it would be for your good and of Mr Fanshaw and his good family for ever... Hoping you and all your good family are well, from your most humble, yrs to command, George Malden.*

An interchange of correspondence followed over the next year between landowners, the respective rectors of Tillingham and Dengie, local gentry, the Dean of St. Paul's and – although the parish bounds were not beaten to establish ownership – site visits to resolve the matter through arbitration.

Mr Malden, on instruction from Wollaston, had a contractor measure the length of wall required to enclose the Bridgewick Saltings: 128 rods (714 yards) at a cost per rod of £1. 10 shillings. Dr Aungier Peacock, physician of Tillingham, was next to write to Wollaston in June 1789:

*Rev. Doctr*

*I fear you will think me remiss in not writing to you sooner, but hope at the same time you will deem me blameless when you know that unavoidable ignorance has been the sole cause thereof. After repeated endeavour I cou'd gain little or no intelligence as to the value of the saltings lately inclosed, one part of which is in the parish of Dengy and the other part in the parish of Tillingham. It unluckily happens that the Bounds of the two parishes, in regard to that very spot have not for Time Immemorial been ascertained.*

*Mr Hayes, Vicar of Tillingham, who was here last week proposes with your approbation to adjust this matter in the following manner: To appoint Select Persons belonging to each parish to meet and divide the land in dispute in the most just and friendly manner possible. The parishes are to meet at the extent of the Boundaries already known and after having made a division to the best of their united judgements, to set down posts for future land-marks. This being done Mr*

*Simpson of Dengey proposed that you and Mr Hayes should enter into Arbitration Bonds that Posterity may be prevented from having any Disagreeable Disputes.*

Rev. Hayes wrote directly to Wollaston in July, 1889, from his home at the College of St. Paul's in London. The Cathedral Dean and Chapter being Lords of the Manor of Tillingham.

*In respect of the arbitration which you mention it is a matter which I myself took up when last at Tillingham in the month of June, upon hearing that the boundaries of our respective Parishes were not sufficiently ascertained, and perceiving from a conversation which I had an opportunity of holding jointly with the respectable farmers (both of whom I believe you know) Mr Simpson of Dengey and Mr Spurgeon of Tillingham, that the subject in question, as things then appeared, it was not likely to come to any desirable conclusion. I therefore proposed to have the affair mutually settled by Arbitration, and requested their personal assistance in the Business*

Mr Spurgeon and Dr Peacock were appointed as Tillingham arbitrators; Dengie represented by Messrs Malden, Samuel Bawtree and William Simpson. Later that year, Dr. Peacock obtained information which helped bring the matter to a conclusion. He wrote to the Rev. Hayes in a letter copied to Dr Wollaston:

*I had yesterday a certificate brought for me to sign showing that Mr Quayle Landlord of the Grange Farm had lately enclosed one hundred and ten acres of land from the sea in the parishes of Tillingham and Dengy: this proves the number of Acres in the whole, thirty of which according to the best information I can gain, are in Dengy.*

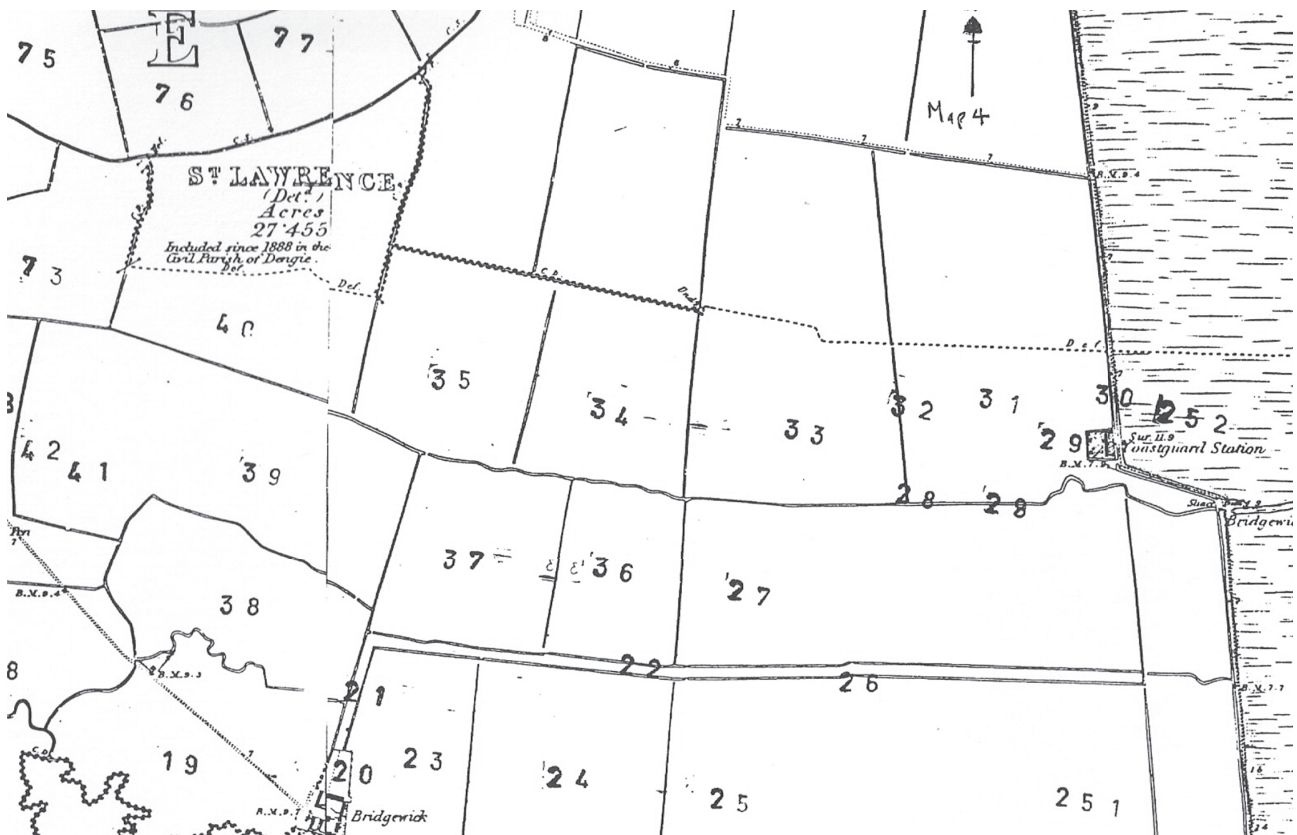
With both parties satisfied, the parish boundaries defined and 30 of the newly enclosed acres acknowledged to be in Dengie, the two Rectors agreed, in the Rev. Haye's words, to

*...wish for the honour of the Church, and the peace and happiness of Society that every Dispute about Right and Property might be adjusted with as little Difficulty and as much good-will, as the present promises to be: indeed were the parties of the dispute always to mean well, I have no doubt that might be so adjusted. But unfortunately the case is too often otherwise.<sup>14</sup>*

A plan of the section of wall alongside the Bridgewick Outfall contains observation on the parish boundary conflict. It lists: *A The Old sea Walls B The New sea Walls C The Out falls D Were the Old Boundary post stood F Were the Tillingham people say E Were the Dengy bounds join the Old sea Wall H The Land in Dispute.* Construction followed the traditional pattern of work: earth dug from the land side piled and compacted, with retaining wooden faggots and



## THE DENGIE PENINSULA



The tithe map for Tillingham, surveyed in 1838, shows a series of fresh enclosures with reclaimed areas still drawn as marsh, the land not yet fully scoured of its salt content.<sup>16</sup>



Borrow Dyke and Sea Wall today

other available binding materials, to form a barrier at a height sufficient to repel the highest tides. The diggings created a deep trench which on completion was joined to existing drainage channels and sluices of the low-lying fields. These water-filled trenches, still found behind the present seawalls, were known variously as 'borrow dykes', 'delphs' and 'fleets'.<sup>15</sup>

Severe flooding occurred along the Essex coast in 1788 and an unprecedented high tide in 1791 tested the new walls.<sup>17</sup> Much else was happening in the vicinity during this period. Sir Henry Bate Dudley (1745-1824) while also enclosing 250 acres of Bradwell's marshes, netted ten thousand widgeon, teal and wild duck in a single season at his Tillingham decoy pond.<sup>18</sup> While not wildfowling or engaging in his many other pursuits, Sir Henry raised a local militia to guard against the threat of invasion by Napoleon. In November 1796 as the result of a false alarm that French forces had landed on the Dengie Marshes, Sir Henry deployed units to patrol the shore from Bradwell to Burnham.<sup>19</sup>

Two other events relating to the national effort to thwart Napoleon's ambitions were to have an impact on this now 'inned' patch of land: establishment of Britain's Sea Fencibles in May 1798 and the adoption of the semaphore telegraph system. Sea Fencibles were stationed at 17 Essex sites including 92 men deployed at Burnham and another 26 at Bradwell. Gunboats were moored alongside these stations.<sup>20</sup> To aid communication between the bases and vessels at sea, semaphore signalling stations were erected along the coast. With the Bradwell signal tower positioned at St.



Sir Henry Bate Dudley

Peter's Chapel, another within its sight line was needed to relay messages between Burnham. Mr. Quayle's Grange Farm was chosen and the semaphore mast built on the Tillingham/Dengie boundary, 250 yards back from the seawall. The position can just be discerned from its symbol on an estate map of 1799 and fields adjoining marked as 'Pole'.<sup>21</sup> A naval lieutenant, a midshipman and two seamen were assigned to each mast during daylight hours. The hut erected in 1798 to house the men at St. Peter's survives as 'Linnett's Cottage' and reappears later in this narrative.<sup>22</sup>

Other Government agencies were also patrolling the desolate Dengie Flats and Ray Sands in front of the signal station. The Board of Excise had Revenue ships at sea and Riding Officers on land, the Board of Customs operated cutters from Colchester and Maldon. They were all on the lookout for smugglers – an intriguing but well-documented subject and therefore only summarily mentioned here.<sup>23</sup> However of significant relevance was the 1809 formation of the Royal Navy's Coast Blockade division and the separate Preventive Water Guard, also tasked with saving lives at sea.<sup>24</sup> The Water Guard became the first permanent occupants of the section of Mr. Quayle's new wall close to the Bridgewick Outfall channel while the Navy's anti-smuggling blockade stationed a cutter off the Dengie coast. With the defeat of Napoleon, the national semaphore system was declared redundant in 1815 and so the Guard became the sole occupiers of the Bridgewick posting.<sup>25</sup> A flag mast alongside the building was used for shore to ship messaging.

In January 1817 a naval lugger captained by Lt. William Neame sailed from Kent to join the Dengie Blockade.<sup>26</sup> On arrival, Lt. Neame assumed command of a larger vessel, *Rattlesnake*, already patrolling the Essex coast. In 1819, Neame and crew boarded the fishing smack *Industry* as it lay off the Tillingham station.<sup>27</sup> On board were Henry Wakeling of Tollesbury, his son, and William Tansley of Mersea. The men claimed they were

in the process of 'delivering 41 tubs of geneva[gin] over to His Majesty's disposal' having just netted the weighted casks while dredging for oysters in the Ray Sands. Neame wrote in his log after piloting the *Industry* back to Bradwell, 'I congratulate myself on taking the most notorious smuggler in Essex, William Tansley, Snr.' Tansley spent a year in prison and his confiscated vessel sold to a Maldon boat yard.<sup>28</sup> The *Rattlesnake's* boatmen were in action again even closer to the station in March 1820. Three Tillingham men were caught unloading kegs of geneva from the *Nancy* onto the marsh shore. The gin was forfeited and the smugglers released from jail on payment of fines.<sup>29</sup>

In August of the same year John Ransley was transferred from the *Rattlesnake* to become Chief Officer at Tillingham. He brought with him two fellow sailors, Thomas Robinson and James Daniels, to the land posting. The complement was six – chief officer, chief boatman, one commissioned boatman and three boatman. Chief Boatman was Richard Hedingham, appointed from the Bradwell Preventative Station. Men were regularly ordered to a new posting after a few years at a station in a policy to prevent undue familiarity with locals. Thomas Cutchell, however, who arrived in August 1821 applied for a transfer himself in January of 1823 as he wanted 'a more active station' than Tillingham. A contributor to the boatman's request for more action may have been the difficulty of launching the station's boats except during a high tide. He was moved to St. Oysth Point.<sup>30</sup>

Between Cutchell's arrival and departure, there was an overhaul of the anti-smuggling services. Lt. Neame left Essex, on promotion to Inspecting Commander.<sup>31</sup> The Revenue Cruisers, Riding Officers and Water Guard were amalgamated in 1822 to form the Coast Guard (later Coastguard) under the control of the Board of Customs.<sup>32</sup> Not much else changed for the men at Tillingham until 1827 when a new watch house, living quarters and boat house were erected directly on and behind the seawall. John Smith of Burnham Quay was the builder. The new black clapboarded buildings were able to accommodate wives and children of the serving men. Details of these family units are not available except anecdotally until 1861 and later national censuses. Coastguard registers of the 19th-century listed only the names and service records of the rank and file.

Tillingham's coastguards had two successes at sea in 1834. Patrolling the Blackwater during April, they spotted the *Adelaide*, a fishing smack out of Ipswich, anchored on the south side of the estuary. Boarding the vessel, the coastguards seized 29 half-ankers (88 gallons) of brandy and 2170lbs of tobacco – and three men. The smack, contraband, and prisoners were delivered to the Maldon Customs House the next day. Punishment for the smugglers was swiftly delivered: two fined £100 each and, being unable to pay, sent to the Springfield Jail; the third, George Scarfe sentenced to five years' service in the navy and immediately conveyed to HMS Ocean at Sherness.<sup>33</sup> Under the heading SMUGGLING, the Essex Standard reported in November, 'On Saturday last, 56 tubs of foreign spirits were brought to the Custom House, Maldon, by the



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Map of the Grange and Coastguard Station

coast guard of Tillingham, having been crept up by them at Chapel's Point, near that station'.<sup>34</sup>

Commissions of Sewers were localised public bodies authorised, first in 1427, by a series of Parliamentary statutes.<sup>35</sup> Their remit to ensure drainage systems and flood defences of low-lying areas were kept in good order. They had powers to tax land owners to fund repairs and improvements and met in court sessions with a legal clerk and lay jurors. The Commission of Sewers for the Dengie Levels was in place by 1654 with the peninsular's marshes divided into seven areas, each overseen by a bailiff. The coastguard buildings were located in Level Three and appear drawn in two separate overlapping large scale 19th-Century maps plotting the position of structures, fields and water courses. These are the clearest representations, although slightly differing, of the extent of the station.<sup>36</sup> A version made in 1812 was reused as the Dengie Tithe Map of 1839.<sup>37</sup> The Tithe includes the final enclosures made by both Grange and Bridgewick farms. It is recognisably the same shoreline as seen today. The tithe return and Commissioners' reference books agree on the extent of the coastguard property. The station house area was '2 roods, 1 perch' while the wall piece was 1 rood – amounting to about two-thirds of an acre.<sup>38</sup>

Victorian-era pursuit of engineering innovation inspired two bold schemes intended to bring about a literal sea-change and vast quantities of sewage to the Dengie Levels – converging on the coastguard station. Acts of Parliament gave approval for both interlinked plans. Neither succeeded despite the involvement of two eminent civil engineers of the period, Sir John Rennie the Younger<sup>39</sup>, and Sir Joseph Bazalgette.<sup>40</sup>



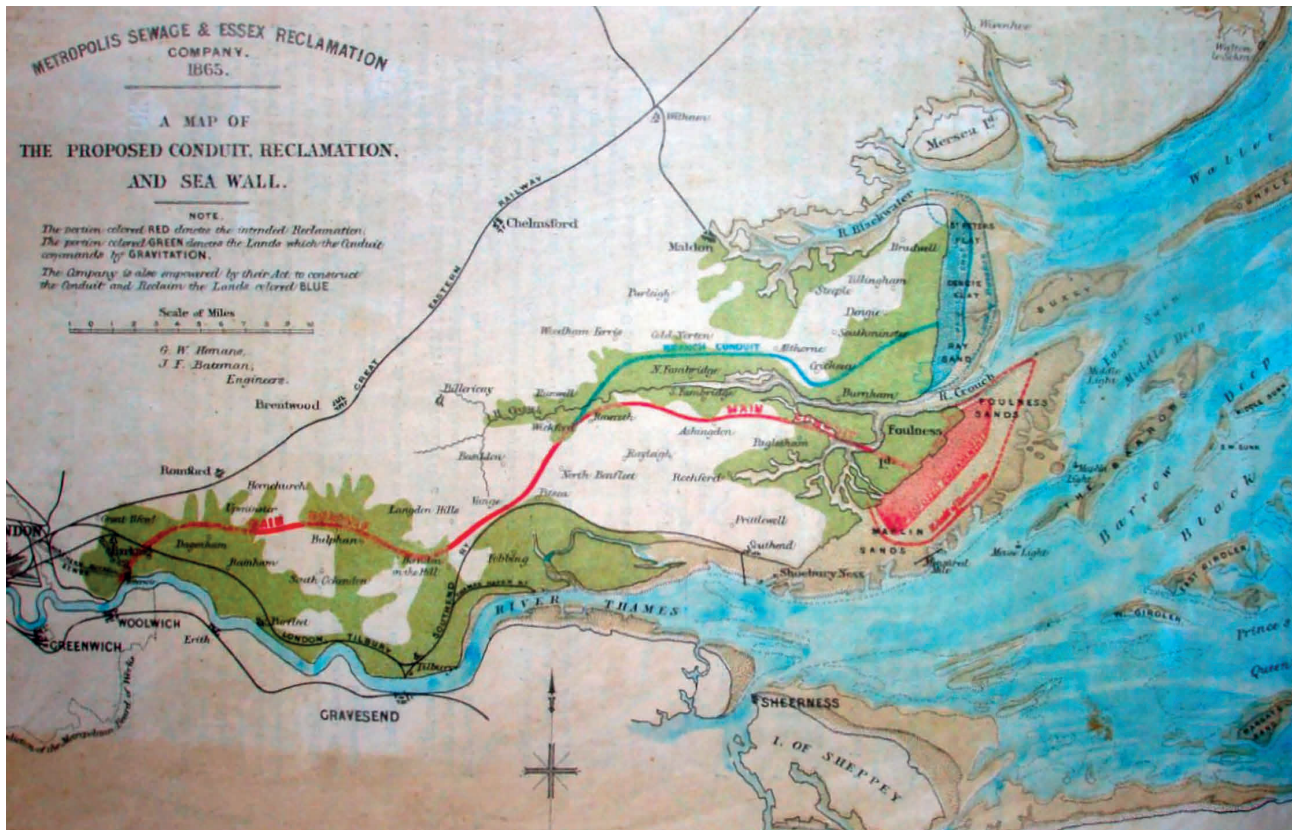
The Coastguard Station's donkey cart outside Tillingham Post Office



# THE DENGIE PENINSULA



Coastguards receiving signals



The proposed scheme of 1865 for the dumping of London sewage at sea.



## THE DENGIE PENINSULA

A notice of November 1851 by the South Essex Estuary and Reclamation Company announced its intention to bring about extensive re-shaping of the Essex coast. By constructing miles of encircling walls out to sea, the resulting huge corrals would be drained and eventually used for agriculture. The prospectus detailed proposals for 21 miles of wall to seal off the Maplin and Foulness Sands, and a separate wall of 10 ½ miles enclosing the Ray Sands and Dengie Flats. This would leave the coastguards stranded more than 2 miles inland. After completion of these two enclosures, it was intended to take a further wall from the north of the Blackwater estuary to the entrance of the Colne river, causing Mersea to lose its island status.<sup>41</sup> Parliament assented in 1852.<sup>42</sup>

Leaving aside the substantial bulk of the Act devoted to other elements in the scheme – including navigational rights for the rivers Thames, Roach, Crouch, Blackwater and Colne – the Dengie proposal reads:

*[T]o authorise construction of embankments and other necessary works for the entire reclamation, drainage and enclosure of the whole part of the Green or Samphire Marshes, Saltings, Black Lands, Waste Lands, Mud Banks, Sands, Flats, or Shoals, lying on the eastern and south-eastern Coasts of Essex...the Ray Sands, Dengie Flats and St.Peter's Sands and to give powers for selling and disposing of, or otherwise taking measures for bringing into cultivation the land so reclaimed, by such means as shall be deemed most expedient, which said Embankments and other works are intended to comprise, and include all the tracts of the said Marshes lying between the Sea Banks, or line of High Water at Spring Tides and the limits of the outer Sea Wall or other boundary of the said Embankments... abutting upon and lying seaward of the several parishes, townships, or extra-parochial other places following, that is to say... Burnham, Southminster, Asheldham, Dengie or Dengey, Tillingham and Bradwell.*

Five years on, repeal of the Act transferred the construction rights to a reconstituted company with a new ambition. The Metropolitan Board of Works, in seeking to solve London's 'Great Stink',<sup>43</sup> had become involved in the scheme. The priorities of the Board were: (1) To carry the outfall sewer to sea without any pollution of the Thames, (2) To apply the manure without deodorizing it to agricultural and other purposes, free from nuisance to anyone.<sup>44</sup> These aims were to be achieved by channelling sewage gathered from north and east London to a pumping station at Abbey Mills in Stratford. It would then be piped only when carried beneath roads but otherwise flow in 15-ft wide open canals through 14 named parishes formerly in Essex but now subsumed into Greater London. Then from Aveley it followed declining contours onwards, according to the Act of Parliament, through a further 42 parishes before:

*...terminating in the sea, at or in the place called Swire Hole, upon that part of*

*the sea coast which is situated between the confluence with the sea of the River Crouch and Blackwater, or the estuaries of such rivers, at or near abutting that part of the shore adjoining the said parish of Tillingham and which is situated between the Tillingham Coast Guard Station and the outfall of the drain called Hutson's Outfall.*

Taking the final destination for London's sewage, via the Ray Sands Channel to the deep water Swire Hole, would convey it through the seawall, some 500 yards to the north of the coastguard. The Metropolitan Sewage and Essex Reclamation Company obtained an amendment to the Act in 1865. Instead of an open sewer, the waste would now be concealed in a 9ft 6in diameter conduit on its 44-mile journey to the sea. Pumping stations raising the effluent 42 ft to give a fall of 1ft per mile and a velocity of 1½ miles an hour.<sup>44</sup> Discharge into the sands would be 8ft below high water mark with a daily outpouring of 4,000 tons of solids and 150,000,000 gallons of liquid waste.<sup>45</sup>

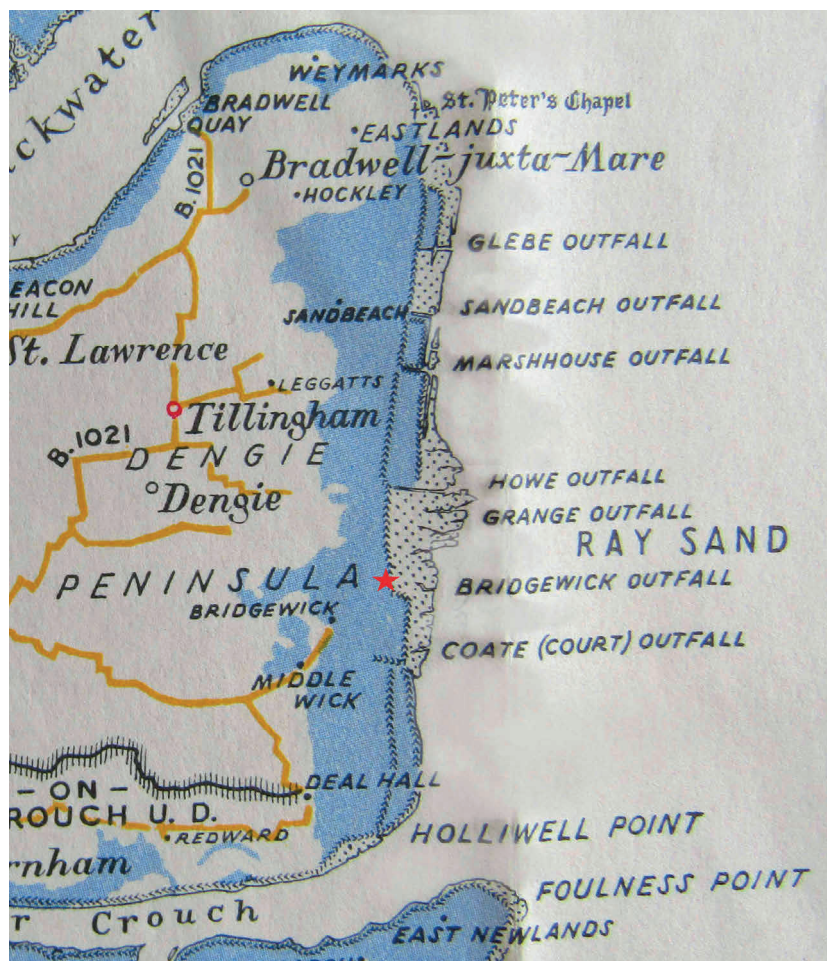
Bazalgette achieved construction of a number of other novel schemes to alleviate London's sewage problems and by 1870 Abbey Mills was sending its waste to a new treatment works at Beckton<sup>46</sup> – obviating the need for a drainpipe to Dengie. Next, reconstituted as the South Essex Foreshore Reclamation Company, the enclosure-only scheme was resubmitted to Parliament in 1880. This plan added roads from Bradwell, Dengie and Southminster to be laid to the far side of the new land. The main road 'commencing at or near the coastguard station and terminating on the eastern side at a point nearly due east of said station'.<sup>47</sup> None of the plans materialised, the Foulness enclosure being the first to be dropped. The company's accounts were liquidated by the Official Receiver in 1901.<sup>48</sup>

While affairs in London threatened, but failed, to render the coastguard an inland post or immediate neighbour to the terminal for its sewage, day-to-day duties carried on. Station logbooks recording the duration of stay of boatmen between 1841 and 1862, show 23 men arriving and departing over the period. The longest serving was William Bubb who transferred from the navy's prototype steam-powered ship HMS Salamander in 1847. He stayed for seven years until promoted and posted to Langton Herring in Dorset. Bubb was present in February 1855 during a period of severe weather as the station's boatmen recovered an unidentified wrecked vessel's stern, thought to be Dutch, a seaman's chest and clothes.<sup>49</sup>

Salvage was a frequent undertaking for the coastguard. An auction held by Mr. Clear in 1864 had 950 deal timbers at Burnham Quay with another 437 stored at the Tillingham station, all salvaged from the wrecked brig *Mathilde Marie*. Also retrieved at Tillingham and for sale were a ship's long boat, 16 porter barrels, two rudders, top sail, top mast and other items from the *Timber Master*, broken up on the Barrow Sands voyaging from Sweden to France.<sup>50</sup>

Chief Officer George Terry was aged 52 when appointed in charge of the Tillingham station in 1878 having previously served at Burnham, Bradwell and

## THE DENGIE PENINSULA



Flood map 1953

Shoeburyness. With him was his wife Mary, aged 53, herself the daughter of a coastguard officer. They had five daughters and a son.<sup>51</sup> Terry was on duty in August 1879 when the watch officer alerted him to a vessel 'lying high and dry' on the main sands about 1 ½ miles south east of the station. The account of the incident reads,

*Upon Mr. Terry, accompanied by one of his men, boarding her, it was discovered she had been abandoned by her crew, and that she was the sloop Georges, 43 tons burden, of Cherbourg in ballast. It appears that from some unknown cause her crew had left her in the night, which was a very boisterous one, in great haste, leaving behind them all they possessed, including a large quantity of wearing apparel and a considerable sum of money. The chart was open upon the cabin table and the clock was going. An axe was found on deck which is supposed had been used to cut the gripes previous to launching the boat to which the crew betook themselves. About an hour before high water the vessel floated, and was apparently uninjured. She was taken by the coastguard, assisted by W. Barker, master of the smack Mystic, to Burnham and given into the custody of the receiver of wrecks for the port of Maldon, by whom the strange affair will be fully*

*investigated. The Georges is a smart looking craft and is in excellent condition. The proceedings of her crew are therefore considered the more unaccountable.*

An update and correction to the report was made later. The owners of the *Georges* arrived from France to pay the receiver's costs and retake possession. Her crew had been picked up from their lifeboat by a steamer and disembarked safely at Calais. The money left on board was of little value and not the considerable sum previously stated.<sup>52</sup>

The domestic circumstances of 17 married coastguards and their wives who spent more than a year living at or near the station are available from decennial returns for coastguard staff between 1841 and 1901. Despite, or perhaps because of, its bleak exposed marsh surroundings and extreme isolation, the location appears to have not deterred adding to the size of families. During their cumulative time in the coastguard service, between these 17 couples there were 118 live births of which 18 took place at Tillingham (registered as born in Dengie parish). The most fecund, Josiah Taylor and his wife Mary Ann, were both natives of Burnham. His coastguard career began

at Deal before transfer to Bradwell where they had two sons, George and Josiah. Moving on to Tillingham, they had two more sons, James and Walter. Returning to Deal four more children were produced, Arnold, Ann, Omega and Duncan. A short posting to Sholden, Kent, where Alfred was born; finally back at Burnham in 1880, their tenth child, Mary, arrived. In 1881 Taylor retired on a pension.<sup>51</sup> Just before Taylor's retirement he and his colleagues buried 48 bullocks and 22 sheep washed up on mud in front of the station, 'the cargo of some ship that was either wrecked or obliged to discharge her freight'.<sup>52</sup>

Living conditions at the cottages are not covered in the station logs. The official history of the service notes that accommodation varied greatly according to location. Families with six or seven children were expected to make do with two rooms. The service came under the command of the Admiral of Naval Reserves from 1857 and rates of pay adjusted accordingly. Chief officers received £101 p.a. and chief boatmen £36. Ratings were allowed three weeks leave a year.<sup>53</sup> The Tillingham station – one of 533 in Britain – would have been among the more inaccessible, relying on a donkey cart to ferry supplies from the distant village. After the 1868 nationalisation of the telegraph network, the General Post Office managed to connect its branch in Tillingham by 1875, offering the station a new, albeit still distant, means of communication.<sup>54</sup>



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During the 1890's the War Office took an interest in the station, marking out a shooting range three miles in length and 2,000 yards wide from Bovill's Marsh in Southminster to the seawall alongside the watch house.<sup>55</sup> The open aspect of both land and shore was to attract further attention from the military in the next century.

The seawall withstood storms striking the Essex coast in 1841, 1845, 1874, and 1877. However, in the winter of 1897 gales and an exceptional high tide caused widespread havoc on a day marked as 'Black Monday'.<sup>56</sup> The sea came over the defences and breached walls along the Dengie shore. Bridgewick's 700 acres behind the coastguard wall were flooded – Messrs Strutt and Parker having just taken ownership from the Page family who'd farmed the land since it was originally 'inned'. Neighbouring Grange and Court farms were also inundated.<sup>57</sup> A detachment of 100 soldiers from the Colchester garrison spent two weeks assisting with the work of repairing the breaches. The soldiers' labour was charged at £180 to the Dengie Levels Commissioners. But that was only a minor cost. The final bill for repair was £2,500, requiring a special court sitting of the Commission jurors held next March at the Blue Boar, Maldon. A bank loan of £1,000 and an increase of 4shillings in the £ for sewers tax payers was agreed to defray the expenditure. Although the walls were now repaired, the report of engineer Mr. William Jaffrey warned they wouldn't withstand another high tide similar to that of 1897. The walls needed raising a foot or eighteen inches at a cost of £60 a mile.<sup>58</sup>

Differences between the Admiralty and the Board of Customs in the early 1900s over the role of the coastguard led to reorganisation. From 1904 onwards a nationwide programme of closure of 'uneconomic' stations began. Tillingham closed on 29th September, 1906.<sup>59</sup> The last Chief Officer was Alfred Waterman. A Navy man who joined the coastguard from HMS Cormorant, he had been with at Tillingham with his wife Emma and five children since 1900.<sup>60</sup> A pencilled addition on the Level Commission's map notes the station buildings that were demolished and one that was retained. The remaining building was marked on navigational charts printed in 1910.<sup>61</sup> It was to be central to the events that follow.

### Sid Tiffin

Sid Tiffin was born at Great Wakering in 1902. His parents, William, a sea fisherman, and Annie, having moved to Landwick Cottages from Southend. Sid was the sixth of the couple's eventual nine children. He later implied that he received no proper schooling but along with his siblings would have been enrolled in classes at the village school from age five.<sup>62</sup>

As Sid was growing up, the condition of the Level Three seawall remained a concern for the Commissioners. Flooding in 1910, although not as damaging as that of 1897, weakened some of the defences. Another vulnerability arose from undermining of the embankments. The annual Commissioners' meeting at Tillingham in 1914 heard from the marsh bailiff that the walls were not only too low but rabbits burrowing

holes in the banks were creating a serious problem – farmers needed 'to do what was necessary'.<sup>63</sup> The bailiff, Mr. John Attenborough with his family owned large tracts of Dengie farmland including a star-shaped duck decoy pond not far from the old coastguard station. The decoy is now preserved as a national monument.<sup>64</sup> The vacated remaining coastguard building was reactivated as a look-out post during the 1914-18 War. On 11th September 1915, the men on night duty engaged the enemy. Zeppelin LZ-77, crossing the North Sea, made landfall just south of the station. Rifle fire was directed at the airship from the post 'without apparent result' before it rose to 5,000ft and continued onwards into Essex.<sup>65</sup>

After the war, the Tiffin family moved into the old seawall cottage. The 1921 census shows William, then aged 53, as the head of family. Annie, 54, listed as housewife and Sid, now 18, recorded along with his father as a self-employed fisherman. They had their own boat operating out of Burnham. Sid's two sisters, a brother, and a baby niece were also at home.

William was alerted to the presence of a body washed up on the mussel bank of the Ray Sands in September 1925. As a portent of a later incident, he waded out and secured the body of a 40-year old woman clad in a bathing costume. Searching the surrounding rills, he found her bag and items of clothing before bringing the body ashore. From the old coastguard station, he walked to Southminster to alert police. A 'found drowned' coroner's verdict was recorded.<sup>66</sup>

The following year William died at home, leaving the fishing business to his son. But Sid was increasingly making his living from the marshes and foreshore: wild-fowling mixed with line-fishing, winkle-picking, and farm labouring in the off-seasons. In 1927 Sid married Winifred Mapes of Princess Road, Burnham, the daughter of a furnace bricklayer at the local Mildmay iron foundry. She brought to seven the number of adults living at the old cottage. Social life for the couple depended on making their way on foot to Tillingham, an hour's trek even when short cuts across the fields and round the dykes were made in good weather. It was Winifred's task to do the family shopping, her return journey weighted with groceries and supplies. The couple frequented the weekly Wednesday whist drives in the parish hall (Winifred appearing twice in the list of prize winners) and the travelling cinema when it visited the village.

Between the two World Wars, the RAF gained War Office backing to use the Dengie offshore as a gunnery and bombing range. Fishing industry interests represented by the Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee protested vigorously, as did local authorities along the seaboard, among them Mersea fearing explosions would adversely impact oyster beds. The old coastguard stood at the middle of the seawall edge of the proposed range.<sup>67</sup>

Objections gained support from Sid's nearest neighbour. Three miles away, on the seawall in front of St. Peter's Chapel, lived fellow wild-fowler Walter Linnett. Walter was a character whose traditional marshland







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Police officers searching the marsh

way of life has been the subject of interest for local historians and photographers.<sup>68</sup> Novelist and wildlife enthusiast, James Wentworth Day was editing the London magazine *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* at the time. He used an issue of the magazine to highlight the threat posed to the livelihood of Walter and others who earned their keep from the marshes. The controversial gunnery and bombing range was still at the planning stage at the outbreak of war in 1939 and the RAF's priorities switched elsewhere.

Sid was allocated his home area to patrol as a volunteer warden during the war. His hauls from the mudflats included wreckage from planes and ships – and the occasional mine. Dengie was on the enemy flightpath from German occupied Europe but it wasn't until 1944, and the advent of V1 unmanned rocket attacks on London, that eight anti-aircraft guns were temporarily installed close to the Bridgewick outfall. No trace of the artillery site remains.<sup>69</sup>

In the winter of 1943 Winifred Tiffin collapsed and died making her way home with the shopping. Sid was unwilling to stay at the old cottage without her, leaving it to the care of his mother. He moved to lodgings in Tillingham and in 1947 settled in a new council house at St. Nicholas Road in the village.

Sid's tally of bodies found on the shore stood at nine until 1949. None attracted attention like his tenth, in October of that year. It became national news, leading to one of the most notorious murder cases of the 1950s. Close to where his father found a drowned woman years earlier, Sid espied a bundle wrapped in what appeared to be an old carpet that had washed up on the mudflats after a full tide. It contained a man's headless, legless, torso. Scotland Yard detectives, soon followed by Fleet Street journalists, arrived at the scene the next day. Sid's account of the find was widely reported in the daily newspapers along with photographs and sketches of him and his wildfowling punt.<sup>70</sup>

Police enquiries at first were based on the assumption the victim had been clandestinely dumped into the

Thames, Crouch or Blackwater and floated out to sea. Pathologist Dr Francis Camps, himself a Dengie peninsula resident, changed the course of the investigation when he determined, following an autopsy, the body was dropped into the sea from an aeroplane. Two weeks later the victim's criminal associate was arrested.

In 1950 Donald Hume of Golders Green stood trial at the Old Bailey for the murder of West End car trader Stanley Setty. Hume admitted piloting a plane on two occasions on flights over the English Channels and dropping 'bundles', claiming he was unaware of the contents. He was found not guilty but imprisoned for 12 years as an accessory to the crime. On his release he confessed in a Sunday newspaper to the killing, giving lurid details, knowing he was legally protected from facing further prosecution. He continued a life of crime, committing armed hold-ups in London before escaping to Switzerland where he shot a man to death while fleeing a bank robbery. Transferred in custody back to Britain, he was permanently detained at Broadmoor psychiatric hospital.<sup>71</sup>

Sid was eventually to receive the £1,000 reward offered by Setty's family but only after solicitors intervened on his behalf – the initial claim rejected because only part of the body had been recovered. The newspaper reports that mentioned Sid's marshland way of life gave him an opportunity to chronicle a few typical days in his working week. He wrote, in diary style:

*Monday. Well I'm up 6.30 this morning because high tide's 8 o'clock. You should see it. The sea sweeps in over the saltings – up to 2 miles some places. One minute there's just mudflats with the widgeon and the gulls squeaking overhead. Fifteen minutes later the sea is everywhere, with only patches of bentles [rushes] grass, and sea lavender sticking up.*

*It was dark and cold when I got up, but by the time I'd waded three miles across the flats to my mother's cottage on the sea-wall the sun was shining through a little old rip in the clouds.*

*I floated the punt, a 17-footer and loaded up the punt gun. It takes a pound of shot at a time, and costs about 5s. to fire. The powder is 19s.6d a pound, the shot £20 a 28-pound bag, and I have to take a train to Colchester to get it. In the war I loaded any pieces of rubbish I could get, and used bits of old felt hat for wadding.*

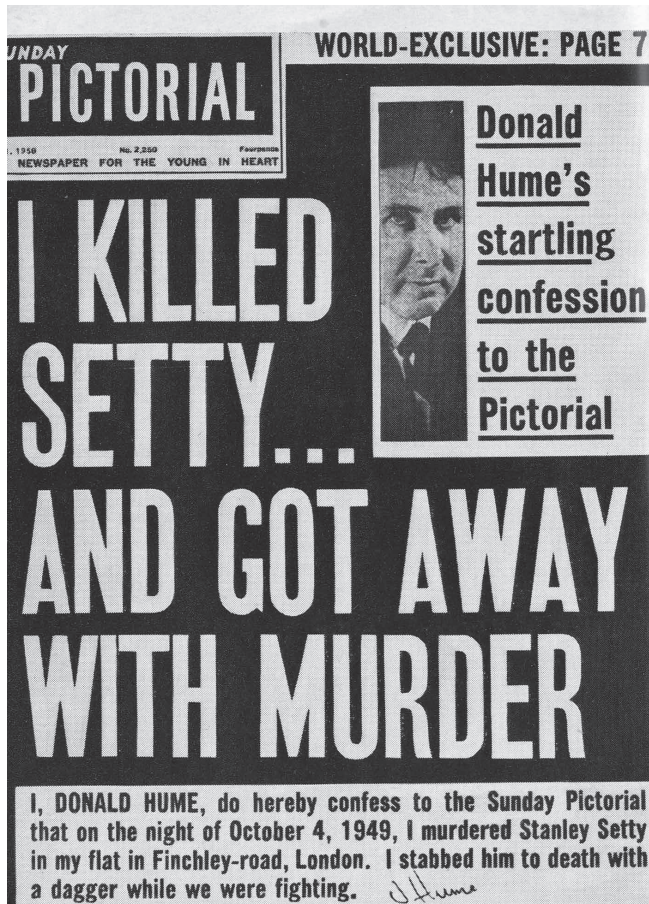
*Wearing a lightish-coloured mac (the birds can spot anything dark on the marshes) I crawl into the boat. Am a bit careful about this because a punt soon turns over. It's only 3ft. 10 ins. wide and has to take my weight and the gun, which weighs a hundred-weight on its own.*

*I creep along between the channels made by the bentles, watching for the birds which come in with the tide to eat the zostera grass which only grows in salty places.*





Stanley Setty



Press report of Hume's confession

*Three hours go by. The tide's on the turn and I haven't had a shot. Feel cold, and eyes strained with looking. Then I drift round a bend slap on a flock of teal about 90 feet away. Move forward in the boat to aim the gun down, because teal set low in the water. Fit a cap on the nipple and pull the trigger. But that old cap's got damp. While it hangs fire it makes a hissing sound and the birds hear. They're 6 foot off the water by the time the gun shoots and I don't get one. The punt goes forward with the explosion then comes backward with the recoil. A thick rope from the breech to the seat keeps it from knocking my head off.*

*I have to go the shore to reload. On the way a flock of black geese rise beside me on the other side of some bentles. Knock two down with the shoulder gun and paddle back to the cottage. I'll get 7s for the geese.*

*Tuesday. The grey geese are flying inland this morning. Down here we call them 'Gabriel's Hounds', they omen bad weather and storms on the sea. Smells like rain all right, so I won't go punt-gunning today.*

*Walk along the seawall looking for anything that might be washed up, and remember the war when my job was to put a rope around any floating mines and beach them. That was a bad old job. The sea's been my living since I was eight and I helped coil ropes on my dad's fishing smack. At 14 I was sailing her (a 20-tonner) between Burnham and Clacton, and at 21 they were asking me to be master on a smack out of Grimsby. And I'd never seen the inside of a school.*

*Along the salting with the sea lap-lapping away I think of how things have changed since I was a little old tot. Them days there was 17 or 18 punt gunners in these parts, and there used to be dozens of people winkle-picking and eel-prytching along the shore. But kids haven't got the patience now. You don't see winkle-pickers, there's only the coastguard and me wild-fowling, and nobody makes punt guns any more. Mine's been in the family 30 year, and bought secondhand at that.*

*It's raining. I wade back to Tillingham, change out of my sea-boots and go round to the Cap and Feathers for a game of darts with Fred.*

*In the evening before dusk starts closing in I go back to the sea wall and bait a couple of hundred lines which I leave overnight. Then I go to the Parish Hall for the whist drive. Won a bottle of sherry last week.*

*Wednesday. Hauled in the night lines and unhooked about 40 fish, some weighing up to 2 pounds. Took them round and sold them right off. Fish and wild duck are easy to sell but the geese are hard to get rid of round here. People get tired of them, I guess.*



*Walked round to Mr. Attenborough's decoy pond. It's about the last left in these parts. The wild duck see the decoys and settle down on the lake. Then dogs run round the edge making the ducks swim to the V shaped end, where a net catches them.*

*Had a letter from the Catchment Board offering me a job filling in the dykes. Am glad of it because the wild-fowling season ends on February 17, and that's mostly my living. Until it opens again on August 12, I pick up what I can.*

*This is really my day off. The travelling cinema comes to the Parish Hall, and I always go. Call at Mrs. Hubbard's sweet-shop for the rest of my sweets first. After the pictures, go round to the Cap and Feathers for a game of darts with Fred.*

*Thursday. The day breaks fine. The sea lies over the marshes as smooth and quiet as a sheet of ice. I creep along in the punt watching the sky for flock of birds to settle. The sun is still down and the light is a sort of misty-grey. Just right for punt-gunning – you get it at early dawn, in the evening before the dusk grows, and on a moonlight night.*

*I'm over the Dengie flats (where I happed on the murdered body) when I see a cloud of black geese settling down out of the sky. I paddle towards the spot, very slow, just really helping the boat to drift. There must be no noise.*

*The bentles open out and I see the birds ahead about 200 yards. The gun will kill up to about half a mile, but for a proper shot you need to be within 90 yards. At about 100 yards I ease back a bit to bring the gun muzzle up, I pull the trigger, and after the explosion, a cloud of black smoke hangs in front of me so I can't see what's happened.*

*Then I'm up with the shoulder gun firing on the birds that are wounded or stunned. It's practically the little gun that gets the most if you understand it.*

*After I've picked them all up, I've got 40 geese. A good bag. The most I ever got with one shot was 60, but I did know a man who got 100 with one shot.*

*I take the geese back to the cottage, re-load and paddle out again. The light is really too bright but I'm lucky. I steal up on a flock of duck and get 11. I'll get nine bob a pair for the duck.*

*Friday. I got a £1,000 for finding the body, but it's been a lot of trouble. The didn't want to pay me the reward because the head was missing and I had to get solicitors to help me.*

*And here's another thing, I've found nine bodies one time and another on the marshes, and I've*

*always got five bob from the police. But I didn't get the five bob this time. Why?*

*One thing, I wish my wife was alive to share the award. The most we ever saved together was £50. We used to live in a cottage on the sea-wall, and she had to walk 4 miles to Tillingham for the shopping. One day, seven years ago she dropped dead 50 yards from our door. I reckon if I'd had that money then she be alive today.<sup>72</sup>*

*Fellow wild-fowler and punt-gunner, Leonard Raven, the Marsh Farm bailiff, wrote of Sid, "[H]e is a true son of the marshes. His home for years was a little black coastguard cottage, perched right on the sea-wall. Only a man like him, with intimate knowledge of the channels in between the lumps of coarse grass on the saltings, which are covered to a depth of a few inches when there is a spring tide, could manipulate the flat punt in which he lies for hours on end when shooting wild duck".<sup>73</sup>*

After the brief period of national exposure ended, Sid bought himself a new bicycle with his reward money. He remained at his Tillingham home until his death in 1981. His mother remained at the old coastguard cottage until the 'Great Flood' of 1953.<sup>74</sup> The building was cleared from the site during reconstruction, heightening and reinforcing of the breached walls. Moving not far away to the Round Barn in Tillingham, she died in 1958, aged 92.

Present day visitors to the site of the coastguard station will find no trace of its remains. Dense marsh grass covers the steep landside bank of the sea defences. Between the parallel deep 'borrow' dyke is a narrow strip of land containing the coastal footpath. Seawards, to the north, a few wooden stakes mark roughly the line of the parish boundary while, to the south, the Bridgewick Outfall sluice pump is a landmark. Built of red brick in 1949 by the Essex Rivers Catchment Board – successors to the Levels Commissioners – it houses two pumps connected to an overhead power line, the first electricity to reach as far as the seawall. Submerged during the 1953 flood, the pumps were temporarily out of action. An electrician ferried to the seawall in a small boat and, using a ladder perched on hay bales thrown unto the water, reached the top of the telegraph pole to reconnect the supply.<sup>75</sup>

**All the Dengie coast is now protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest as well as a National Nature Reserve, a Special Area of Conservation, a European Special Protection Area, and designated an internationally important wetland by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.**

## Sources and Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Chapter XVII – The Thunder Child
- <sup>2</sup> Filmed message recorded in Hollywood for the Westcliff Cine Club 1963
- <sup>3</sup> Charted and generally known as the German Ocean until 1914 when North Sea was preferred.
- <sup>4</sup> Domesday Book – 5.5, 14.7, 18.22 Phillimore edtn.
- <sup>5</sup> Domesday of St.Paul's 1222 - William Hale editor Nichols & Son 1858 pp 58-64
- <sup>6</sup> A Marshland Study. A Study of Parishes in the Dengie Hundred on the Essex Coast, pamphlet - K.J. Bruce Essex Record Office (ERO) LIB/304.6094. The assistance of ERO library staff in research for much of this article is greatly appreciated.
- <sup>7</sup> Dictionary of English Place Names – A.D. Mills Oxford U.P. 1988 p384
- (William Camden in Britannia, 1586, on Essex sheep: *I have observed young men with little stools under them milking them, as women in other places, and making cheese of Ewe's milk in the little dairy-houses or huts built for that purpose, which they call Wiches.*)
- <sup>8</sup> Illustrated in the accompanying contemporaneous maps.
- <sup>9</sup> ERO D/DOP/B39/106
- <sup>11</sup> History and Antiquities of Essex, Philip Morant (Morant) 1763 Vol 1 p369
- <sup>10</sup> Essex Place Name Project – Dengie [www.essex.ac.uk/history/esah/essexplacenames](http://www.essex.ac.uk/history/esah/essexplacenames)
- <sup>12</sup> Morant Vol 1 p371
- <sup>13</sup> Cambridge University Alumni database: WLSN753G;
- <sup>14</sup> Begining with Mr. Maldon's letter to the Rev. Wollaston, all the above correspondence is contained in a bundle among the Oxley Parker Family papers held at the ERO -- D/DOP 83/2
- <sup>15</sup> Historical Study of Sites of Natural Sea Wall Failures in Essex, Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies (ENRR015) p10, English Nature 1992
- <sup>16</sup> Essex Place Name Project – Tillingham
- <sup>17</sup> ENRR015 – P11
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- <sup>19</sup> Dictionary of National Biography (DNB), Volume 16 1885
- Bate Dudley – [www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC4D72C](http://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC4D72C)
- Military in Essex – [www.essexregiment.co.uk](http://www.essexregiment.co.uk)
- <sup>20</sup> Victoria County History of Essex p364;
- Military in the Dengie Hundred – [www.essex-family-history.co.uk](http://www.essex-family-history.co.uk)
- <sup>21</sup> ERO D/SD 129
- <sup>22</sup> Historic England, Grade II listed ID 119212
- <https://thecoracle.com>: 'The hut itself was built in 1798, as part of a coastal chain of 20, protecting from a French invasion that never came... The huts were put together like your Ikea flatpack wardrobe but this is the last remaining example... The Navy left in 1815'.
- <sup>23</sup> The Smugglers, Charles Harper Chapman & Hall, London 1909 and other titles as credited in the text or listed under Bibliography
- <sup>24</sup> The Ancient and Rightful Customs Edward Carson Faber & Faber London 1972 p162 & 164
- Coastguard – An Official History, William Webb HMSO 1976 pp18-20
- <sup>25</sup> Barling & Wakering Heritage – [www.barlingwakeringvillages.co.uk](http://www.barlingwakeringvillages.co.uk) – record the closure in 1815 of the two signal stations on Foulness with a description of the accompanying property: single-storey, timber framed and weather boarded with a grey slate roof. The mast was 50ft with a 30ft top mast and 30ft cross yard.
- <sup>24</sup> The National Archive (TNA) ADM 175/2
- <sup>27</sup> Smuggling in Essex Graham Smith Countryside Books p123
- <sup>28</sup> Smugglers' Century Harvey Benham (Benham) ERO pp151-2
- <sup>29</sup> Benham p154
- <sup>30</sup> TNA ADM 175/1 & The Essex Coastline: Then and Now, Matthew Fautley & James Garon, Potton Publishing 2004
- The Rattlesnake was an armed brig seized off the Nova Scotia coast by the Royal Navy during the American War of Independence. Brought back to Britain in 1814, she was re-christened Cormorant until it was noted another vessel of that name was already in active service, and so was again called Rattlesnake. The name continued in use for Navy warships until the minesweeper HMS Rattlesnake was scrapped in 1959.
- <sup>31</sup> A Naval Biographical Dictionary, compiled by William O'Byrne, 1849, John Murray, London
- <sup>32</sup> Coastguard – An Official History pp 21-29
- <sup>33</sup> Essex Standard, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1834 & Suffolk Chronicle 26<sup>th</sup> April 1934. These and most following references to newspaper reports are taken from the online British Newspaper Archive. The 20-century cuttings are from file copies or private collections
- <sup>34</sup> Essex Standard, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1824
- <sup>35</sup> The Early History of Commissions of Sewers, H. G. Richardson, English Historical Review, Oxford University Press
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- <sup>37</sup> ERO D/SD 119 D/SD 131
- <sup>38</sup> ERO D/SD 120
- <sup>39</sup> House of Lords Select Committee examination of the Metropolis Sewage and Essex Reclamation Bill –19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1865
- <sup>40</sup> Evidence in favour of the scheme to the Lords Select Committee, May 1864
- <sup>41</sup> Notice published in the London Gazette and Essex Chronicle, November 1851
- <sup>42</sup> An Act for reclaiming from the Sea certain Lands on and near the Eastern and South-eastern Coast of Essex, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1852
- <sup>43</sup> The Great Stink – How the Victorians Transformed London to Solve the Problem of Waste – [historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)
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- <sup>45</sup> Statistics quoted by Frederick Carne Rasch, MP for S.E. Essex in a letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1890
- <sup>46</sup> Historic England – The Story of London's Sewage System [www.heritagecalling.com](http://www.heritagecalling.com)



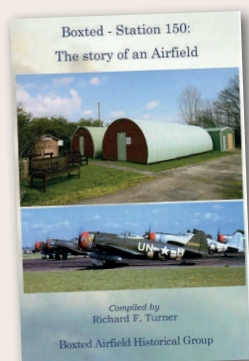
## THE DENGIE PENINSULA

- <sup>47</sup> Prospectus – London Gazette December 1879, Essex Halfpenny Newsmen, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1879
- <sup>48</sup> TNA ADM 175/7 TNA C 30/2527
- <sup>49</sup> Lloyd's List, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1855
- <sup>50</sup> Essex Chronicle, 28<sup>th</sup> October 1864
- <sup>48</sup> National Census returns, 1861 – 1881; TNA ADM 175/9
- <sup>49</sup> Report to Coastguard Inspector, Southend, reprinted Chelmsford Chronicle, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1879
- <sup>50</sup> Essex Chronicle, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1879
- <sup>51</sup> National Census returns, 1861 – 1901; Coastguard Establishment books TNA ADM 175 series [www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk)
- <sup>52</sup> Essex Newsman, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1881
- <sup>53</sup> Coastguard – An Official History p45
- <sup>54</sup> ERO I/Mb 364/1/27
- <sup>55</sup> Essex Herald, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1897
- <sup>56</sup> The Great Tide, Hilda Grieve, Essex County Council 1959, p42
- <sup>57</sup> ENRR015 5.2
- <sup>58</sup> Essex County Chronicle 25<sup>th</sup> March 1898
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- <sup>60</sup> National Census 1901
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- <sup>62</sup> Census returns 1891, 1901, 1911
- <sup>63</sup> Chelmsford Chronicle, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1914
- <sup>64</sup> Historic England legacy ID 24884
- <sup>65</sup> Zeppelins, Gothas, & 'Giants' [www.iancastlezeppelin.co.uk](http://www.iancastlezeppelin.co.uk)
- <sup>66</sup> Essex Chronicle 4<sup>th</sup> September 1925
- <sup>67</sup> Chelmsford Chronicle, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1936, Essex Newsman 14<sup>th</sup> March 1936, 19<sup>th</sup> March & 30<sup>th</sup> April 1938
- <sup>68</sup> The Essex Coastline: Then and Now, Matthew Fautley & James Garon, Pottan Publishing 2004 p125  
John Tarlton's Essex, English Countryside Publications 1988 p185  
Wentworth Day writes about Linnett in his book 'The Modern Fowler', adding on p19, 'Linnett is the best guide but there is also a man called Tiffin at the old coastguard station at Tillingham who might be useful'.
- <sup>69</sup> Site No. N33, South of Bridgewick Farm, SMR reference 149676, [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)
- <sup>70</sup> A selection of extracts of press cuttings from the days that followed the discovery appear with this article.
- <sup>71</sup> Hume Portrait of a Double Murderer, John Williams, Panther, London 1961 in which on p124 at the Old Bailey trial: '[F]resh witness was a small dark-haired man from Essex, whom Hume had come to regard with a burning resentment. For often he had quietly breathed curses on Mr. Sidney Tiffin, whose sharp, probing eyes he blamed for his present predicament... It was not only the keen sight of Mr Tiffin that Hume inveighed against now: there was the confounded practical sense of the man without which the torso may have floated off and be lost to view for ever among the desolate marshes'.
- <sup>72</sup> Some domestic details of the Tiffin family were obtained in 2011 from personal contact with a descendant. Also provided with permission for reproduction were photocopies of a typescript of the diary entries for 1949 (in a format indicating preparation for publication but not known if this was ever achieved), press cuttings and photographic prints.
- <sup>73</sup> Essex Chronicle 28<sup>th</sup> October 1949. In addition to a separate news item, Mr Raven's own four-day diary of events surrounding the finding of the torso fills an inside page. He had been asked by police to recover the body as his horse and cart was the only means of accessing the marsh where it had been secured by Mr. Tiffin. It could not be located on the first day due to darkness but at first light the following morning, he brought it on the cart to his farm yard from where officers conveyed it by van to Chelmsford.
- <sup>74</sup> The definitive account of the disastrous flood of 1953 that overwhelmed Essex's coast is Hilda Grieve's The Great Tide, published by Essex County Council in 1959.
- <sup>75</sup> The Great Tide p669
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# Book Review



Richard. F. Turner,



## **Boxted – Station 150: The story of an Airfield**

(Boxted, 2023), pp. v & 118. ISBN 978-0-9957938-2-8. £12.00.

Available from the Museum on open days (last Sunday of the month, March-October); via [www.boxted-airfield.com](http://www.boxted-airfield.com) (PayPal) or by cheque (0750 3952354)

Essex has always played a vital role in the defence of the country, being one of the maritime counties bordering the North Sea and thus exposed to the threat of invasion over the ages, but doubly so for being adjacent to London; an invader from any age would need to fight their way through the county to attack the capital. But it hasn't always been about defence. Being close to the European mainland meant that Essex was a strategic location when it came to attacking a continental enemy, especially so once the aeroplane was introduced to warfare, and even more important for the fact that much of the county is fairly flat and agricultural and ideal for building airfields on. This book is about one of those short-lived airfields.

The team at Boxted Airfield Museum has been beavering away for over the last decade or so to document the wartime activities of the airfield and, from small beginnings, it has developed into to very important local organisation. One of the key members from the very beginning is Richard Turner, the author of this book.

The origins of the airfield at Boxted can be traced back to 1941 when the site was identified as being suitable for an airfield to be built there. It was of a standard Air Ministry design with three runways (one of 2,000 yards and two of 1,400) all connected with around 3 miles of perimeter track, not to mention 50 miles of pipes and conduits, 4 miles of sewers and 300 or so buildings. There are several excellent photos of the contractors at work – all very Heath Robinson looking compared to the later United States Army Air Force Aviation Battalions with all their modern building equipment.

The airfield was ready for occupation by June 1943 when around 60 Martin B-26 Marauders of the 386th Bomb Group, under the command of Colonel Maitland, arrived. They took part in shallow penetration raids over Europe, attacking enemy airfields, railways and associated infrastructure. Their stay was not long for they moved the short distance to the airfield at Great Dunmow, being replaced in November by the 354th Fighter Group, equipped with the, soon to be legendary, North American P-51B Mustang, powered by the American license built version of the famous Rolls Royce Merlin.

From the summer of 1943, unescorted American heavy bombers had been taking a pounding on their raids deep into Germany. It had been intended that they would be self-defending due to the tight formations the aircraft flew in and the number of heavy machine guns they carried. This turned out not to be so and the then short ranged American P-47 Thunderbolt fighters, along with the RAF's Spitfires, just could not accompany the bombers all the way to the target and back – thus the heavy losses. This was the Germans equivalent of the Battle of Britain and they fought just as hard.

Come the winter of 1943, there were now sitting on the airfield at Boxted the answer to this problem. The P51B could accompany the bombers to their target and back again and were better aircraft than what the Germans had. The only problem was that the only group was the 354th at Boxted, as a result they became known as the Pioneers. It was an eventful few months of much hard fighting and ironing out the bugs from a relatively new aircraft. One of their pilots, James Howard won the Medal of Honor for his bravery in aerial battle – he knew Boxted and surely walked the streets of adjacent Colchester.

The 354th moved out in April 1944 to be replaced by the equally famous 56th Fighter Group, flying now longer-ranged versions of the P-47 Thunderbolt. They became the longest stayers not leaving until after the end of the war in Europe. An excellent colour section of photos covers the time when the 56th were in occupation (along with the 5th Emergency Rescue Squadron), reminds us just how colourful American aircraft became, as well as the huge piles of disposable drop-tanks the aircraft carried to enable them to fly further.

The post-war history of the airfield is also covered, not quite as eventful as the war-time years but probably more interesting than many other Essex airfields. Along with the colour photographs, there's an excellent selection of black and white images, including one of American with locals outside the Shepherd and Dog pub.

The history of the Boxted Airfield Museum (well-worth a visit) is also recounted, along with the stories behind some of the major exhibits and recollections of the locals who endured the loss of their fields and hedgerows and ended up living alongside the Americans. The whole publication is well illustrated and produced and is finished with a decent index, which is always welcome. This is a valuable, new contribution to the aviation history of the county and I heartily recommend it.

Oh, and finally the name 'Boxted' airfield is a little misleading. In reality the majority of the airfield is in the parish of Langham but by the time Boxted came to be built there was already a 'Langham' airfield in Norfolk, hence the name we have ended up with, but there you go.

*Neil Wiffen*

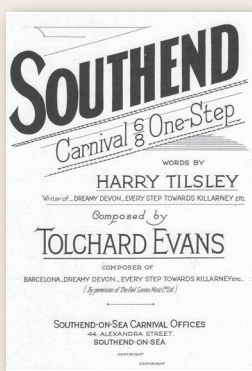


Steve Pollington (With John Culley)

## SOUTHEND-ON-SEA IN POPULAR SONG

“Dear Old London Town”, “New York, New York”, “(Chicago is) My Kind of Town” – many world-famous locations have been immortalised in popular songs, jingles and ballads by versatile artistes and stars of stage and screen. One name missing from this list is the no less world-famous city of ... Southend-on-Sea!

Essex’s premier seaside location has appeared in more than one popular song over the years. Here are six of the best that made it (or almost made it) onto vinyl or shellac and are still known:



First is a name still known to many today: In 1928, Billy Cotton's London Savannah Band recorded a song enigmatically titled "Southend" and released by a record company called Metropole. The recording took place in London in August of that year, with vocals by Tom Tierney. The song was composed by Harry Tilsley and Tolchard Evans and released by Metropole as

a 10" 78 rpm shellac record. The song publisher was Cecil Lennox.<sup>(1)</sup>



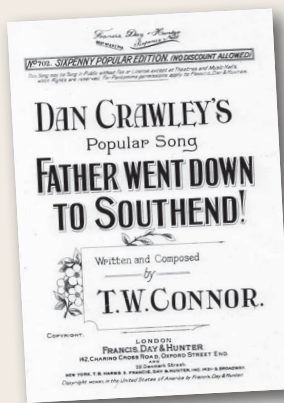
Billy Cotton was to become a 'big name' who had a regular radio slot – later called “Billy Cotton’s Band Show” - until the late 1960s. His opening call of “Wakey! Wakey!” was familiar to anyone who listened to the wireless in those days. The show was also on TV.



Second in the Southend Hit Parade is Ben Oakley, a Southend-based band-leader who used to entertain the crowds on the pier with his composition “Southend on Sea” from 1949 onwards. The writing credit includes Reg Casson. Apparently, the song was once very popular and Southend locals of a certain age still know it.

But as far as is known, no recording of the song was made at the time.

Further back in time, the song “Father went down to Southend!” was written by T.W. Connor and popularised by Dan Crawley. This dates from just before the First World War. John Culley has a Pathe Record of this Music Hall song, sung by Jack Charman. Charman also recorded it for Winner



Records. The cover for the sheet music is very attractive.



Fourth, I must mention “Southend’s Carnival Song” by Basil Stewart which was released in 1936 on the True-Tone label (it was record No. A 164 in the catalogue and could be purchased from K.L. Giles, Cranbrook, Station Rd, Westcliff-on-Sea). It featured the actual organ of the Astoria Cinema played by Guy Hindell, and the vocalist was Herbert Sharpe. (Copies of the original 78 rpm record are quite rare, and John C would love to own one!)

(Carnival Archive Video - <http://carnivalarchive.org.uk/southend-calling#.W29CgiRKjiw> c 7:03”)



Nationwide coverage made the song "Southend" familiar to early television viewers: it was composed by Steve Race, and sung by Cleo Laine (but not in her more famous freeform jazz style, the vocal

delivery owes more to seafront pub sing-song). Steve Race was a noted television presenter, composer and pianist who worked with some very prestigious musicians in his time including Leon Calvert, Johnny Dankworth, Peter Chilver, Norman Burns and others. Dankworth was the husband of Cleo Lane, who provided the vocals for the track which I believe was the theme music for a television drama called ‘Compact’ about the world of magazine publishing in the 1960s. The ‘Southend’ track was released by Fontana as a 45 rpm single in 1963 to coincide with the launch of the programme.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHvDXpsDkPI>

The sixth classic is “Per mare per ecclesiam” (Through the sea through the church) by Jeffery Wilson and Mark Valencia. This is the Southend-on-Sea city motto, which was used in a song written for the Boys' Choir. Its date is unknown, but John Culley has a photocopy of the vocal parts.

There may be others!

Latterly, the Southend area has been associated with rather different kinds of musical talent – Status Quo, Dr. Feelgood, the Kursaal Flyers and many others – but the heyday of the British seaside was surely the late Victorian and Edwardian era when so many traditions for mass entertainment and popular culture were born.

<sup>(1)</sup> Strictly speaking Metropole Record no.1068 has “*I’m looking for two Lips*” as it’s A side (M-1136-2) and “*Southend*” is the reverse (M-1153) - JEC



*Hoard of late Anglo-Saxon pennies  
discovered near Braintree in 2019*