



THE ESSEX FAMILY HISTORIAN

The Essex Society for Family History Magazine



Advice for
Beginners to
Experts

Interested in your Family History?



ESFH could help you
(wherever your roots are)

**Essex Society for Family History
Membership offers you:-**

- Access to Family History & DNA Experts
- Interactive Parish Map
- Live Meetings at our Branches
- Online Meetings & Workshops
- Regular Magazines & Updates
- Research Centre at Essex Record Office
- Surname Interests
- Unique Essex Transcriptions



Who do you think they were?

Trace your roots with records and DNA



www.esfh.org.uk

Meet the Team



Fiona Harvey
(ESFH 33535)

I've been interested in my family history for as long as I can remember and have various attempts at finding out who the people are in the family tree. My interest was enhanced when I was clearing out my parents house a few years ago and discovered a treasure trove of memorabilia.



Angela Parr-Burman
(ESFH 32016)

Inheriting my great-grandmother's photo album inspired me to research family history - this was over 20 years ago and the journey continues. Joining Essex Society for Family History (ESFH) 4 years ago was a logical step as so many of her family hailed from Essex.



Royston Jones
(ESFH 20182)

My first local history article appeared in Essex Countryside in 1963. I've been 'doing' family history for twenty years: from smugglers to football heroes via hundreds of Essex ag labs, I've got them all!



Dawn Tibble
(ESFH 33361)

I found an interest in my ancestry after Brexit. I was hoping for an Irish relative. Now it's become a hobby and I've found out so much about family I didn't know. It still continues.



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**Could
this be
you ?**

**We'd love to
welcome you to the
team!**

Join the Team

See your name in print in future editions of the magazine by building on your family history interests and creating regular content that will be informative for other members. If you would like to have an informal chat about any of the topics below and what is involved just drop Colleen the Editor an email editor@esfh.org.uk and she can email or telephone you back.

Forthcoming Presentations

This is an important column as it lets members know about forthcoming events. We need someone to make sure the details of upcoming talks are accurate and up to date – things often change right up to the printing stage. You'd work closely with our Programme Co-ordinator, and help create extra information to encourage members to participate in online and live events.

Upcoming Events in the Family History world and further afield

Help keep readers informed about events – both in person and online – hosted by other family history groups, archives like the Essex Record Office, The National Archives (TNA), The London Archives, local museums and national exhibitions. You'll also liaise with our own Publicity and Events Team to share where ESFH will be appearing.

Latest Online Releases – Essex Specific

Share updates on new Essex records available from major genealogy sites like Ancestry, Findmypast, FamilySearch, the Essex Record Office, The Genealogist and more.

Family History Societies Bordering Essex

Help readers explore other family history societies that border Essex – especially those that now cover areas that were historically part of the county. Reach out to those societies and see if they'd like to share news or benefits with our members.

Family Search Expert

Become our go-to person for everything related to FamilySearch! We'd love a regular feature showing which Essex records are available online especially where they have been digitised. This could also support our potential partnership with FamilySearch in the future.

☆ ☆ ☆

**The Essex Family Historian is
hereinafter referred to as the HISTORIAN**

Although every attempt is made to check the accuracy of the information contained in this magazine, the Editorial team can take no responsibility if information supplied by our contributors proves subsequently to be inaccurate.

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Committee and Officers of the Society.

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PUBLICATION DEADLINES

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Forthcoming Presentations

Our talks and workshops may be subject to change so **please always check our website by going to Activities>News&Events>Events for the latest information.**

Look out for regular emails sent by ESFH to your inbox advertising upcoming events.

Saturday 14 Mar 2026 2.30 pm GMT	Family Secrets & Lies A talk by Toni Neobard Uncovering the Truth with DNA.	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre 1 Ventura Drive Colchester CO1 2FG and Online
Tuesday 24 Mar 2026 10.30 am GMT	Evidence Analysis: Proving what you think you know! - by Linda Hammond How many of the 'facts' in your family tree are truly proven - and how many are just educated guesses? In genealogy, it's all too easy to fall into the trap of assumptions: a family story that must be true, an 'obvious' connection that fits neatly, or a record that seems reliable at first glance. But without careful evidence analysis, we risk building a house of cards. This talk introduces you to the tools and methods that turn uncertain clues into sound conclusions. You'll learn the difference between information, evidence, and proof; how to distinguish direct, indirect, and even negative evidence; and why the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS) is your best safeguard against errors. Through clear examples, we'll explore how to handle conflicting sources, weigh reliability, and avoid common misconceptions about records. You'll also discover practical tools - like evidence tables and research logs - that make analysis manageable and effective. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned researcher, this talk will sharpen your detective skills, boost your confidence, and help you move from 'I think' to 'I know' in your family history research.	Online only

Saturday 4 Apr 2026 2.30 pm BST	Who's Been In Your House? - A talk by Mandie Adams How to trace the history of the previous inhabitants of your house.	Avenue Baptist Church Hall Milton Road Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 7JX
Saturday 11 Apr 2026 2.30 pm BST	Family History Open Afternoon If you want to start tracing your family tree but don't know how to begin or are already tracing it but need advice our experts will be available to answer you genealogy questions.	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre 1 Ventura Drive Colchester CO1 2FG
Tuesday 14th April 2026 Login from 10:45 am GMT Meeting starts 11.00 am GMT	Leading Ladies of Braintree District - A talk by Julia Convoy From straw plaiters to silk workers in the mills, and munition factory employees to the women who wove Queen Elizabeth II's coronation fabrics, this talk will explore many of the stories of the women across Braintree District.	Zoom only
Wednesday 22nd April 2026 Login from 7.00 pm GMT Meeting starts 7.15 pm GMT	Pinning Down Your Ancestors - A talk by Mark Bayley Unleash the power of historical records and maps to track an ancestor throughout their life. Also learn how to discover how an area changed over time and what that would mean for your ancestors' lives. Join us for an illuminating talk that brings your family's past to life through geographic connections.	Zoom only
Saturday 9 May 2026 2.30 pm BST	Census - Practical Research Session Part 2 - Pre 1841 A chance for people to search for their ancestors in the pre 1841 Census Returns. Bring a laptop/tablet if you have one. If you don't have one there will be a few available to borrow for the afternoon.	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre 1 Ventura Drive Colchester CO1 2FG

For information on Presentations please refer to the Society website

<https://www.esfh.org.uk>

The Final Years of HMS Beagle 1845-70

By Michael Salter (ESFH 33964)

The history of *HMS Beagle*, a Cadmus class 10-gun brig, converted to a barque for survey purposes, which carried Darwin on his scientific voyage in 1831 to 1836 and enabled him to develop his Origin of the Species theory is well known and documented¹. However, the later life and duty of *HMS Beagle* is not well known except to residents of Paglesham, Essex, those involved in various geophysical surveys from 2002-19 and maritime researchers. This note examines official sources, a summary of surveys of the mud berth and newspaper articles to determine the final fate of the ship.



HMS BEAGLE AT FORT MACQUARIE IN 1841, OWEN STANLEY, COURTESY OF
NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

Anne Boulter of Paglesham wrote a comprehensive account of the ship's history at the Essex marsh location and surveys of the berth to that date². This fascinating book gives a wealth of background detail and concludes that there could be timbers from the *Beagle* several metres deep in the mud berth. Her book explores alternatives to this view, including towing timbers by barge to nearby locations and incorporation into local buildings. One building, the nearby Shuttlewoods boat shed, subsequently demolished, certainly contained ship's timbers, but dendrochronology and core samples from the dock did not confirm any link to the *Beagle*.

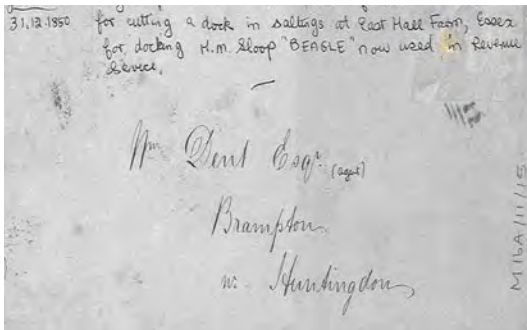
A survey of the site using sophisticated ground penetrating radar technology was led by Robert Prescott of the University of St Andrews in 2002/3. He reported that:

From our remote sensing survey, we can see the outline of a dock for the ship and can make out wood and metal, which is highly suggestive that there is indeed something substantial down there, most probably the bottom of the *Beagle*³.

Prescott recorded that the remains were entombed in 18 feet of mud. However, Historic England, who scheduled the site as an Ancient Monument in 2020, maintain that most radar survey techniques are unsuitable because the saline and clay marine sediment and subsoils do not allow penetration to the depth required⁴. A Wessex Archaeology survey of 2019 found no evidence of the wood and metal reported by Prescott, and concluded that any evidence of timbers is likely to be from the sides of the dock or the wooden stocks used to support the ship⁵.

Beagle at Paglesham, 1845-70

In 1845 the *Beagle* was towed from Sheerness on the Thames Estuary and stationed in the middle of the River Roach as a static coastguard watch vessel⁶. The vessel had been re-coppered and was towed by the revenue cutter skipper George Wrake⁷. Dismasted and situated in mid-river, *Beagle* became an obstruction to the oyster fishermen whose boats often fouled its moorings. After a petition in 1850 it was moved in 1851 to a newly constructed mud berth on land owned by Lady Olivia Sparrow under an agreement of 31st December 1850⁸. *Beagle* remained there until 1870 when the need for a static watch vessel had declined. The Admiralty arranged to sell the hulk of *Beagle* and there were adverts for sale with several other naval vessels during April and early May 1870 in London newspapers and elsewhere⁹.



LADY SPARROW MUD DOCK
AGREEMENT TITLE PAGE,
31ST DECEMBER 1850

THE ENVELOPE OF THE
SPARROW / HM CUSTOMS
AGREEMENT, COURTESY
OF HUNTS. ARCHIVES
AT CAMBRIDGESHIRE
ARCHIVES



The auction took place on the 12th and 13th May 1870 at the Lloyds Captain's Room and the *Beagle*, which was copper bottomed and fastened, therefore of some value beyond the timber, made £540¹⁰. The sale to Messrs Murray and Trainer is confirmed by two entries in the The National Archive (TNA) and an article which give the sale price as £525 net¹¹.

Murray and Trainer are now known to have operated a ship breaking yard on the Thames, at Greenwich East (see later)¹². One TNA, Admiralty ADM entry says 'sale to Murray and Trainer and delivered' and the other says the vessel 'will be delivered to them on production of a purchase certificate signed by two Admiralty Lords'. The words 'and delivered' and 'delivered to them' suggested that *Beagle* would be towed to another destination. This is confirmed by the following advert:

WANTED: TENDERS invited to tow small paddle STEAMER from DEVONPORT, and HULK from PAGLESHAM, on the River Roche, to RIVER THAMES. For further particulars apply to JAMES J. STARK, 86 Tower-hill¹³.

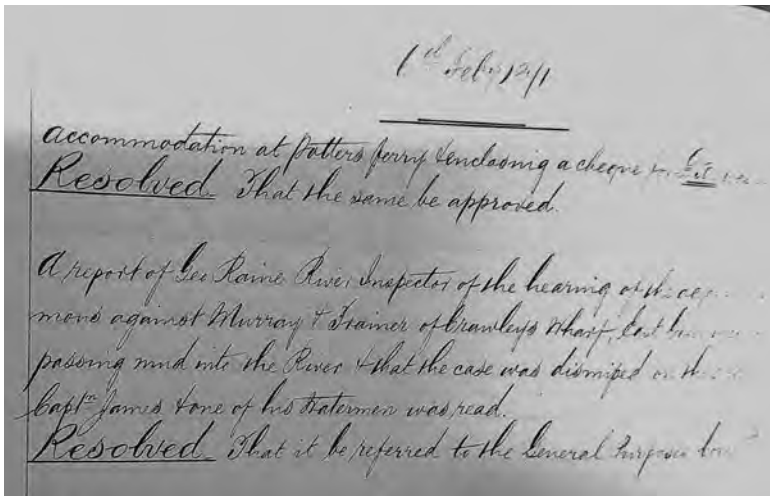
James Stark was a ship chandler and broker. He had advertised several ships for sale in his own right in prior years¹⁴. As there was no other hulk at Paglesham this was clearly the *Beagle* and the small paddle steamer at Devonport was the 197-ton *Advice*.

It was a well-trodden path for ex-navy vessels to be towed by tug or paddle steamer from their station to established shipbreakers on the Thames at Sheerness, Charlton, Deptford, Woolwich and Rotherhithe¹⁵. It was also common for the navy dockyards to pay for copper, timbers etc. which could be re-used. Old oak timbers were also used for furniture, ornaments or firewood, sometimes in other vessels or buildings. This fate was suggested for *HMS Beagle* in 1975 by Keith Stuart Thomson when he wrote:

Perhaps she was cut down to be used as a barge, but most probably the fifty-year-old vessel was towed from Paglesham around to the mud flats of the Thames estuary and there, alongside the ribs of a hundred other old ships, broken up for scrap¹⁶.

It is clear from the evidence that *HMS Beagle* did indeed follow this fate. These facts refute the suggestion that there are substantial remains of the *Beagle* buried deep in the mud berth at Paglesham which was the vessel's home from 1851 to 1870. It is also clear that Messrs Murray and Trainer were not inexperienced locals, as they are sometimes portrayed, but established ship breakers on the Thames. They bought *Beagle* and *Advice* at a total cost of £1265 as well as the 600-ton iron ship (referred to in the newspaper article, note 12), which was broken up in 1870/71.

Thames Conservancy Minutes record the prosecution of Murray and Trainer, shipbreakers at Crowley's Wharf, East Greenwich. They were accused of polluting the Thames when burning and breaking the 600-ton iron ship and throwing toxic waste into the river. They were acquitted on the evidence of Captain James, the Port of London Harbourmaster, who lived nearby in the Harbourmaster's House at Ballast Quay, adjacent to Union and Crowley's Wharves, as he had instructed them to sink the hull to avoid damage to shipping if the hulk broke free in a storm. He stated that



THAMES CONSERVANCY MINUTE OF 6.2.1871.

he 'remembered the defendant's ship being brought to their wharf'. The Minutes note that the River Inspector who brought the prosecution was reprimanded for not checking his facts with the Harbourmaster¹².

HMS Beagle had served six years mid-stream and 19 years in the mud-berth at Paglesham. Although it had contributed greatly to the development of Natural Sciences, weather forecasting and hydrography, the Victorians were not sentimental about redundant ships. Its end was consistent with that of most other navy vessels, including famous ones. The records of Murray and Trainer have not survived and there is no evidence of what became of the copper and timbers of *HMS Beagle*, but it is possible that elements of the ship may have survived as oak ornaments or furniture, in addition to the inscribed oak box made for Admiral John Lort, in the National Maritime Museum.

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- Wessex Archaeology; *HMS Beagle/CGVV 7*, Undesignated Site Assessment for Historic England 2019 No.214390.03.
- This is a slightly updated version of the Mariner's Mirror Note in Vol 111: 4 Nov. 2025 pp 481-3. © 2025 Mike Salter. Published by Informa UK Limited, t/a Taylor&Francis Group on behalf of The Society for Nautical Research.
- Taylor & Francis Online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00253359.2025.2578103>

- 1 National Maritime Museum (NMM) Beagle Ships Plans ZAZ 5153, ZAZ 5137; Thomson, HMS Beagle, 113-132.
- 2 Boulter, Watch Vessel No.7, 2008.
- 3 'The beagle has landed?', University of St Andrews press release, 27 Feb. 2004, <https://news.st-andrews.ac.uk/archive/the-beagle-has-landed/>
- 4 Historic England;pers.comms.June 2025.
- 5 Wessex Archaeology Site Assessment 214390.03 for Historic England.
- 6 Naval and Military Gazette, 19 Jul. 1845.
- 7 The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA): CUST 101/65
- 8 Hunts. Archives at Cambridgeshire Archives: KMAN/1/4/16A/11/15
- 9 E.g. Dundee Courier, 9 May 1870; Western Morning News, 25 Apr. 1870.
- 10 Naval and Military Gazette,18 May 1870.
- 11 TNA: ADM 12/848; ADM 12/855; Hampshire Telegraph 23 Sep.1874
- 12 Kentish Mercury, 11 Feb. 1871, London Museum of Docklands; PLA/TC/1/1/2.
- 13 Shipping and Maritime Gazette, 20 May 1870.
- 14 London and Commercial Directory 1865; Shipping and Maritime Gazette, 16 Oct. 1869.
- 15 **www.naval-history.net**; Shipbreakers on the River Thames, accessed 15 Sept. 2025.
- 16 Thomson, 'HMS Beagle', 269.

☆ ☆ ☆



JULIE MILLER RECEIVING HER
2024-2025 ESFH AWARD FROM
ANDREA HEWITT CHAIR

New Tools for Old Roots

News and Development in DNA and AI for the Family Historian

By the ESFH DNA Pro Team

Toni Neobard (ESFH 32898) Trevor Rix (ESFH 126) Mary Rix (ESFH 27126) and Jeff Porter (ESFH 33285)

DNA testing and artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming integral components of contemporary family history research. Advancements in these fields are progressing constantly, with recent efforts focus on enhancing their practicality and accessibility for routine genealogical studies. Below are five recent developments in these areas, accompanied by a discussion of their relevance for family historians.

A New Generation of DNA Testing

MyHeritage now offers consumer DNA tests using Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS), not to be confused with medical grade clinical WGS tests. While current Autosomal DNA tests (such as those offered by Ancestry) analyse just 0.02%–0.03% of the genome, WGS examines nearly the entire genetic code. This richer dataset will not immediately change on-screen results but prepares your DNA data for future advancements, enabling clearer matches and more insights as new tools emerge without needing another DNA test.

Pull-quote: 'Whole genome sequencing creates DNA results that can grow with future research'.

Making DNA Matches Easier to Understand with Ancestry ProTools

Ancestry's ProTools introduces helpful features that make it easier to interpret DNA match lists. With Custom Match Clusters, you can concentrate on one match of interest instead of sifting through all your matches. This feature lets you pick a key match, often someone related to a difficult ancestor or an unfamiliar family branch, and Ancestry then groups together others connected to both you and that person, which usually uncovers a common ancestor.

To further refine these groups, you can add up to four sidekick matches; matches who are already shared with your main person of interest. Including these sidekicks adds focus on a specific family line and weeds out unrelated links. By setting the centimorgan (cM) range thoughtfully, you can zero in on the right cousin group, keeping your cluster focused and useful.

This new ProTools feature brings greater control and targeting when clustering your match list. Custom clusters help simplify the process of breaking down brick walls or mystery matches.

Pull-quote: 'Custom Clustering turns long DNA match lists into understandable family groups'.

AI Tools: A New Kind of Research Assistant

Artificial intelligence is transforming genealogy by changing how researchers engage with records. Google's latest Gemini 3 release highlights a growing trend: AI systems are increasingly capable of processing longer, more complex documents. For family history enthusiasts, this means AI can help summarise lengthy texts, assist with transcription, and organise research notes online. These tools are meant to enhance the research process, not replace it. While AI serves as a helpful digital assistant, decisions about truth and family connections remain firmly in human hands.

Pull-quote: 'AI helps with the work — the thinking still belongs to the researcher'.

DNA Rewrites History: The Beachy Head Woman

In the early 1950s, human remains were discovered near the cliffs of Beachy Head, close to Eastbourne. The find attracted little attention at the time. The bones were boxed, labelled, and stored away, remaining largely forgotten for decades until renewed archaeological interest brought them back into the spotlight.

When the remains were later examined, they were dated to the Roman period in Britain. Based on skull shape, a method commonly used in the past, the woman was thought to have come from far beyond Britain. This interpretation was widely reported and became an example often cited to illustrate long-distance migration in Roman times.

Recent advances in ancient DNA testing, however, told a different story. Genetic analysis showed that her DNA closely matched that of people living in Southern England during the Roman period, with strong similarities to later British populations. Far from being an outsider, she was most likely a local woman who lived and died not far from where she was buried.

For family historians, this story is a useful reminder that conclusions can change as new evidence becomes available. Earlier interpretations were not careless as they were based on the best tools of the time. DNA simply provided a clearer lens, refining what was already known and reminding us that history, like family history, is always open to revision.

AI Photo Restoration: What's Real and What's Reconstruction?

AI tools have made it much easier to improve old family photographs, reducing scratches, lifting fading and sharpening faces that once looked blurred. For many families, this means treasured images can now be preserved and shared in ways that were not possible just a few years ago.

However, not all AI photo restoration works in the same way. Some early tools would invent details where the original image was missing or too damaged, producing parts of a photo that looked plausible but were not truly based on the original picture. This is why careful, conservative restoration is particularly important for historical images.

Some tools now aim to enhance what is actually in the photograph rather than guessing new detail. Examples include Photomyne, LetsEnhance, Remini and VanceAI Photo Restorer, which focus on cleaning, sharpening and improving clarity.

Many photographers also combine AI tools with light manual editing in programs such as Adobe Photoshop to keep results natural.

For family historians, the key is to balance improved visibility with faithfulness to the original image. AI can make faces and details clearer, but it does not replace the original print or scan as the historical record. Understanding how these tools work allows them to be used responsibly, without unintentionally rewriting the past.

AI Photo Tip

Always begin with a high-resolution scan of the original photograph and keep that scan untouched. Use AI-enhanced versions for sharing or display, and label them clearly so future family historians know what has been restored or altered.

In Summary

DNA and AI are becoming standard tools for family history research. While the technology continues to change, the underlying principles of good genealogy remain the same: careful research, reliable sources, and thoughtful conclusions.



Society of Genealogists

By Colleen Devenish (ESFH 6279)

Why not join the Society of Genealogists which has some valuable Essex archives to explore?

‘The Society of Genealogists, founded in 1911, is the oldest genealogical society and a UK charity dedicated to bringing family stories to life. As a members’ society based in Wharf Road (off City Road) in Central London we open doors to our rich library, rare archives, and unique collections - many available online - helping you trace and celebrate your ancestors. With expert workshops, education programmes, and advocacy for the wider family history community, we empower you to uncover the people, places, and stories that shaped your past.

The Society offers two tiers of memberships Standard and Gold (the latter having unlimited Access to the online Video Library, plus a minimum of 6 new expert talks every month in the Learning Hub). Information about the Society, its Research Hub, online collections and membership can be found on the SoG’s website www.sog.org.uk

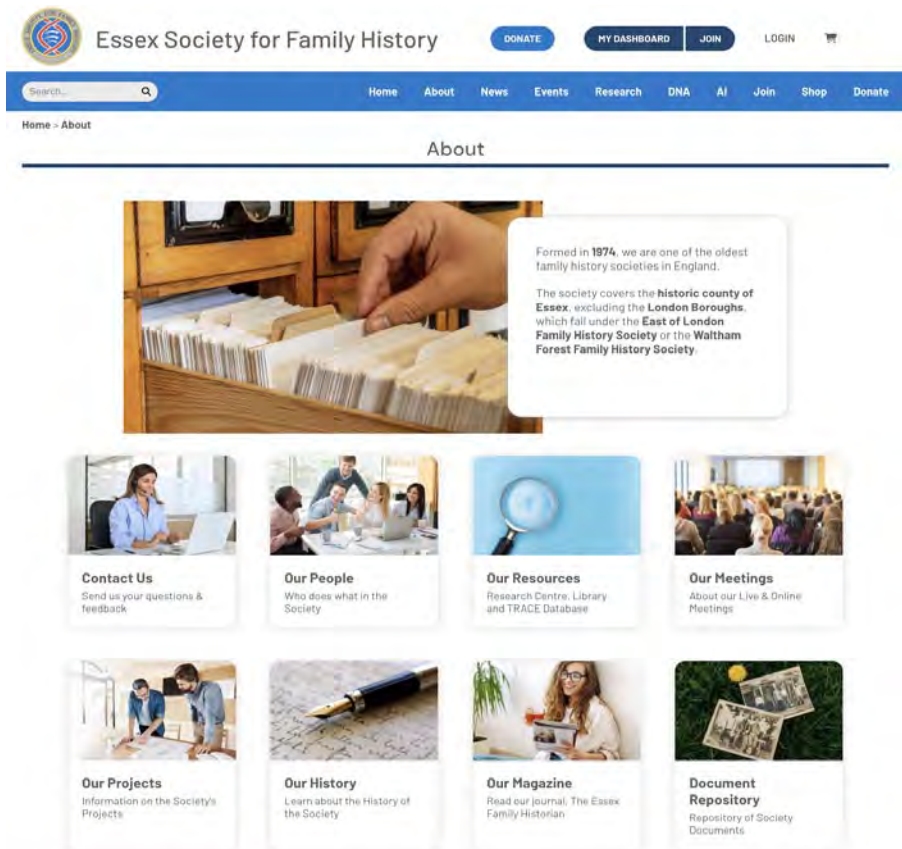
‘Join us and connect with generations past, present, and future’

Announcement

The New ESFH Website

By Jeff Porter - IT Committee Chair (ESFH 33285)

Exciting news! Following months of hard work by a team of ESFH volunteers I am delighted to announce that the Society will unveil a new website in 2026. There is still work to do however over the next few months look out for further details on the progress of the project. The new site will be more user-friendly, offer enhanced support for members, and better reflect the significant changes family history research has undergone over the past decade.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Essex Society for Family History website. At the top is a navigation bar with the society's logo, name, and links for 'DONATE', 'MY DASHBOARD', 'JOIN', and 'LOGIN'. Below this is a search bar and a main menu with links: Home, About, News, Events, Research, DNA, AI, Join, Shop, and Donate. The 'About' section is highlighted, featuring a large image of a hand sorting through a wooden cabinet filled with family history cards. A text box next to the image states: 'Formed in 1974, we are one of the oldest family history societies in England. The society covers the historic county of Essex, excluding the London Boroughs, which fall under the East of London Family History Society or the Waltham Forest Family History Society.' Below this are eight smaller tiles, each with an image and a title: 'Contact Us' (woman at laptop), 'Our People' (group of people), 'Our Resources' (magnifying glass), 'Our Meetings' (group of people), 'Our Projects' (two people at a table), 'Our History' (quill pen), 'Our Magazine' (woman reading), and 'Document Repository' (old photographs).

Essex Society for Family History

DONATE MY DASHBOARD JOIN LOGIN

Search...

Home About News Events Research DNA AI Join Shop Donate

Home - About

About

Formed in 1974, we are one of the oldest family history societies in England.

The society covers the historic county of Essex, excluding the London Boroughs, which fall under the East of London Family History Society or the Waltham Forest Family History Society.

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Send us your questions & feedback

Our People
Who does what in the Society

Our Resources
Research Centre, Library and TRACE Database

Our Meetings
About our Live & Online Meetings

Our Projects
Information on the Society's Projects

Our History
Learn about the History of the Society

Our Magazine
Read our journal, The Essex Family Historian

Document Repository
Repository of Society Documents



Mountnessing Post Mill - built in 1807.

Whether you are an experienced genealogist or your research, **Essex Society For Family History** is here to support you.

Members enjoy exclusive access to a growing collection of digitised records. The quarterly journal, *Essex Family History*, as well as articles of broader interest to genealogists.

The monthly email newsletter, members in the database, online forums and events provide opportunities to connect with other members across the globe.

[More about the society](#)
[Members](#)


Membership Information

Types of Membership we offer & ways to pay



Start Your Tree

Search for your ancestor now



Surname research

Check out surname interests



Surname History & Types



Surname research can be the key to solving family history puzzles. By exploring your surname's origins, spelling variants and county distribution over time, you can uncover deep ancestral links, connect with other researchers and break down brick walls. It's especially powerful when combined with DNA results and parish or migration records.

[Introduction to British Surname Development](#)
[Surnames in the Pre-Norman Period \(Before 1066\)](#)
[Norman Conquest's Impact on Surnames \(1066-1200\)](#)
[Surname Formation in the Medieval period \(1200-1400\)](#)
[Surname Standardization \(1400-1600\)](#)

Discover More

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Upcoming Events



Films on the Ecko Factory
3rd January 2026

Genealogy is now truly global. Millions of people begin their family history journey after taking a DNA test and many move on to building an online tree and start using traditional methods and records. The new ESFH website has been designed to welcome this worldwide audience and to reflect the modern family history landscape by combining support and information about traditional research, Genetic Genealogy, and our unique Essex records and expertise in one accessible place.

The new website has also been rebuilt around the three-click principle. From landing on the homepage, users should be able to find what they need: records, guidance, events, or membership services within three clicks. Cleaner menus, clearer signposting, and a modern, attractive design will make the site easier and more enjoyable to use for everyone.



JEFF PORTER

With the introduction of our TRACE database, accessing our records will become easier, featuring comprehensive record-set searches and Soundex surname searching, to accommodate historical spelling differences. Members will benefit from improved Surname Interests, supported by the new Essex Surnames Project which is designed to link members' research with broader surname studies and shared lines of inquiry.

Another major improvement has been in security and user control. The new My Security dashboard gives members direct oversight of their accounts, including improved password management, optional two-factor authentication (2FA), and greater visibility of their account activity. Members will be able to see when the last email was sent by the society, helping to identify genuine communications, and can (optionally) set a personal secret security phrase that appears in authentic ESFH emails providing a simple but powerful safeguard against phishing.

We're looking for volunteers to review and test our new website ahead of launch. If you're interested in helping out, please email me jeff.porter@esfh.org.uk no later than 31st March 2026.

No experience is needed—just enthusiasm and a fresh perspective. Your input will help make the ESFH site modern, secure, and relevant for Essex family history in today's global, DNA-focused genealogy community.

☆ ☆ ☆

Congratulations goes to Royston Jones (ESFH 20182) whose name came out the hat for a free DNA Kit for his contribution to the August 2025 edition of the HISTORIAN.

The Wallace Connection

By Kate Hurst (ESFH 32820)

My great-grandad William Siggs was ‘a Grenadier Guard outside Buckingham Palace’. At least, that was what grandma - his daughter-in-law - told my mum. In early 2002, mum and I (then aged seventeen) thought we’d found William on the newly-released 1901 Census returns. Twenty-three-year-old William, unmarried, a driver in the Royal Field Artillery, born in Uckfield, Sussex, was a patient in the Isolation Hospital at Aldershot. Not a Grenadier, admittedly, but his only son William Everard wasn’t born until October 1904 - plenty of time for him to progress, surely?

Eagerly, I traced his family back; the tenth of eleven siblings, his parents were George Siggs and Mary Farley. His grandfather John Siggs was born in 1796, in Framfield, also in Sussex. My Genes Reunited tree quickly expanded; this was exciting!

We bought only William’s marriage certificate to learn more about his wife, Maria Ann Barnett. Family lore said she was ‘a lady’, who died before mum’s birth in 1949 - but there were so many Barnett families, and we knew nothing about Maria.

The certificate held a few surprises. William and Maria married on 10th March 1903 at West Retford, Nottinghamshire; her father George was a cemetery keeper, whilst William (who lived nine miles away, at Pilham, near Gainsborough) was employed as a gamekeeper, just like his father Wallace.

In 1901, Wallace Siggs (b.1848, Wheldrake, near York), and his wife Mary Ann Barnett (by remarkable chance, the younger sister of Maria’s father George) were far from



THE INTERIOR OF THE TINY ALL SAINTS CHURCH AT PILHAM; THERE ARE NO MORE THAN TWELVE PEWS. [PHOTO BY KATE HURST, APRIL 2007]

lonely at their home in Pilham Carr; eight of their twelve surviving children - including John Wallace (aged twenty-six) and William (twenty-five) - were still at home. Two others - gamekeeper Daniel (twenty-two) and Emma (sixteen) lived together at a farmhouse called the "Dismal", six miles away at Fillingham. Mary Ann (aged twenty) was a housemaid at Goldicote House, in Alderminster, Worcestershire, whilst her younger sister Sarah had the same position at Burbage Hall, in Derbyshire.

Our Siggs connections were more exotic than we expected - but how did Wallace Siggs get his name?

The parish records for St. Helen's Church, Wheldrake showed that Wallace was baptised on 19th January 1848, the eldest child of John Siggs (a gamekeeper) and Mary Dunning. The 1851 census placed three-year-old 'Wallis' at Pryer House, Wheldrake, living with his mother (a "gamekeeper's wife"), baby sister Sarah, maternal grandmother Hannah Dunning and a teenage house servant. No obvious Wallaces there!

By July 1853, John and Mary Siggs were living at Lodge Uchaf (Welsh for "highest"), when their daughter Mary Ann was baptised at Llanfair Talhaiarn, near Abergele, North Wales; it seems likely that John was a gamekeeper on the nearby Garthewin estate. Eighteen months later, the family reached Baron Hill, near Beaumaris, where John had a more aristocratic employer - Sir Richard Bulkeley Williams-Bulkeley, tenth Baronet, Member of Parliament for Anglesey, and Lord Lieutenant of Anglesey. Living at or near 'Garden House' on the Baron Hill estate in 1861, thirty-eight-year-old John Siggs (now a father of seven) gave his birthplace as Tiptree Heath, Essex.



SIR RICHARD WILLIAMS BULKELEY,
BARONET, BARON HILL, ANGLESEA
[sic]

ENGRAVING BY S.W. WILLIAMS,
1841

sourced from:

<https://viewer.library.wales/4672232#?xywh=1986%2C6323%2C4681%2C2889>

John wasn't the easiest ancestor to trace; he wasn't living with his father on census night in 1841.

The senior John Siggs (b.1798, Haverhill, Suffolk) had married twenty-year-old Mary Ann Hayr at Great Easton, Leicestershire, on 15th April 1834; it was impossible that she could have had a child in 1823 - but I had noticed some useful clues.

John Siggs and Mary Ann Hayr gave each of their nine children the middle name Hayr; John junior had a son called Wallace, a grandson called John Wallace - and John Wallace's brother Daniel named his son Charles Wallace. The name "Wallace" was clearly important, but only on one branch of the tree - could "old" John Siggs have been married to Miss Wallace?

There were few Essex records online when I began my search, and living in Lancashire a trip to the right archives was neither practical nor cost-effective, but my work as a freelance family history researcher inspired a plan. If I could search records for people who couldn't reach Lancashire, could someone near Essex find proof of a Siggs/Wallace marriage for me?

In December 2016, they did. Less than a mile from Tiptree, at All Saints Church, Inworth, John Siggs, bachelor of Wickham Bishops, married Sarah Wallis, a spinster from Inworth on 3rd December 1818. The witnesses were John Wallis and Elizabeth Wallis.

Four children were born during the following decade - Henry William (b.1821, Witham), John (b.6th May 1822, Tiptree Heath, the gamekeeper who worked in Anglesey), Henrietta (b.3rd March 1825, Stoke by Nayland, Suffolk), Sophia (b.28th December 1827, Stoke by Nayland, Suffolk), but somewhere between September 1828 and September 1832, John and Sarah Siggs moved on.

The Northampton Mercury (15th September 1832) was one of several newspapers to publish lists of local people who had purchased game certificates; some for personal use and some because it was essential for their job. Amongst the 'Gamekeepers being Assessed Servants' (paying £1 5s. per permit) was the elder John Siggs, employed at Wakerley, on the Northamptonshire-Rutland border, by Brownlow Cecil, the Second Marquess of Exeter, Lord Lieutenant of Rutland, Knight of the Garter, and also Lord Chamberlain and Lord Steward of the Household to Queen Victoria. To top all of that, Brownlow just happened to be the 8xgreat-grandson of Elizabeth I's trusted advisor William Cecil (1520-1598), the first Baron Burghley. My gamekeeping ancestors really were well-connected!

John's youngest child with Sarah - Daniel Wallis Siggs - was born the same year. Details of Sarah's life were falling into place. She was buried at St. John the Baptist's Church, Wakerley, on 3rd May 1833, aged just thirty-five, leaving five children - and another surprise for me to uncover.

I knew that John Siggs fathered nine children with Mary Ann Hayr. I'd also discovered that John was, himself, the product of a second marriage; his mother was only seven months older than her eldest stepdaughter! What I didn't expect was that Sarah Wallis would have a very similar family background.

The ESFH parish records database confirmed that Sarah was baptised on 6th May 1798 at Inworth, to William 'Wallice' (d.1809, Inworth) and Sarah Brand (b.1768, d.1817, Inworth). Her siblings were John and Elizabeth - perhaps they witnessed her wedding in 1818?

A widower when he married Sarah Brand in 1794, William Wallice (or Wallis), was no stranger to a wedding ceremony; in fact, he appeared twice in the registers for St. Bartholomew's, Wickham Bishops! His 1758 marriage to Mary Spillman (d. June 1760) produced one son. His second wife, Mary Coote (d. February 1769) had three daughters. Only after the death of their daughter Hannah (1765-1793) did William marry Sarah Brand.

Nine descendants of John Siggs and Sarah Wallis were given the name 'Wallace' or 'Wallis' as a forename or a middle name (including two granddaughters). The last known survivor, great-great-grandson Charles Wallace Siggs (1906-1982) was a police constable in Birmingham at the outbreak of World War Two. I wonder whether his family knew that his middle name had a link to an ancestor living in Essex in the mid-eighteenth century?

Footnote

The National Library of Wales website states that the image of Sir Richard Williams Bulkeley is free of known copyright restrictions - source states that the image is free of known copyright restrictions - <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/>

Note from the Editor –

I am delighted to print this article from Kate, who is the Editor of Ormskirk and District Family History Society magazine, showing her Essex connections.

☆ ☆ ☆

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 2026/2027 IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Our Membership Secretary, Ann Turner, had a fall in January and broke her hip. We all wish her a speedy recovery. As a consequence of this she may not be back in her role by the time you read this message so Tanya our Treasurer will take over the renewals for the 2026/2027 period. If you have not yet renewed and wish to pay by cheque, please send your renewal form and cheque to Tanya Sewell, 24 Pyms Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 8PY and Tanya will confirm receipt and update your membership.

Please note that any cheque renewals may take longer to process if they have already been sent to Ann's home address.

Angela's Web Finds

By Angela Parr-Burman (ESFH 32016)

Here are a few new websites which I hope you will find useful.

Some other military resources have come to light: -

Fold3:- <https://www.fold3.com> – original military records from US, Canada, NZ, Australia, UK. 7-day free trial or \$7.95/month or Ancestry all access.

Civil War Records (US) – <https://www.CivilWarRecords.com> – Record Retrieval and research at the US National Archives. Looks like private genealogist.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission – <https://www.cwgc.org/> – records of war graves. Free Apps available.

Migration

Many of our ancestors migrated from the UK to build a new life, often to the US, Canada and Australia. From 1830-1940 over 9 million people sailed from Liverpool (the main embarkation point for North America) to these places. National Museums Liverpool:- <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk> has relevant information sheets including bibliographies, addresses and websites. Ellis Island was the principal immigration inspection station for those aiming to settle in the US and records of passengers can be found at Statue of Liberty:- <https://heritage.statueofliberty.org> (free, donations welcome). A popular embarkation point for emigrants to Australia was Bristol via the SS *Great Britain* (<https://www.ssgreatbritain.org>). Worth a visit (great for children) including individual passenger stories. Associated with the Brunel Institute.

The Canadian Encyclopaedia:- <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca> provides comprehensive information on the history of migration to Canada from 16th century onwards including governmental policies regarding desirable and undesirable ethnicities, economic interests and trends.

Resources on migration to Australia (New South Wales) are provided at Migration Heritage Centre (<https://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au>). NB This website is not being updated. Alternatively, the National Archives of Australia (<https://www.naa.gov.au>) has information on migrant accommodation camps, child migration, passenger arrival records and much more.

In addition, Australian History Research (<https://www.australianhistoryresearch.info>) concentrates shipping records, settlers and convicts on Norfolk Island (off the east Australian coast).

Not a website, but a book 'The Secret River' by Kate Grenville, a story based on Kate's ancestor who was a 19th century Licensed Waterman transported to Australia for theft. An insight into the lives of early settlers in Australia as well as the work of Licensed Watermen. (An important and traditional occupation in London: The

Company of Watermen & Lightermen of the River Thames – will carry out family research from £50).

<https://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com> Who Do You Think You Are magazine has tutorials on military and DNA matters as well as 'how to' articles on overseas ancestry, in particular emigrants to India.

Families in British India Society (**<https://www.fibis.org>**) membership from £12 per year has a comprehensive database and photo gallery. The National Archives of India does not have much online material and dates only from 1891. Recommended is the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (**<https://bacsa.org.uk>**) UK membership £20/per annum who organise events and lectures (podcasts available to members).

From destinations now to places of origin in Great Britain, such as:

Ireland – Irish Deeds Index (**<https://irishdeedsindex.net>**) is project aiding research at the Registry of Deeds in Ireland (wills, land transactions, marriage and other settlements).

The National Library of Ireland (**<https://www.nli.ie/>**) in Dublin has links to family history. Contact **genealogy@nli.ie** for information on online research. Visits are free for family history researchers.

Staying in Ireland, the North of Ireland Family History Society (**publicity@nifhs.org**) has a searchable database and index of church records and gravestone inscriptions.

Between 1845 to 1852 over 1 million sought to escape the Great Potato Famine and Irish Central (**<https://www.irishcentral.com>**) has a section devoted to genealogy. Donations welcome. From 1845-1905 US pensions were paid to over 700 Irish men and women (usually war pensions) details of which can be found on an interactive map at Storymaps (**<https://storymaps.arcgis.com>**) .

Scotland

As well as Scotland's People, I found Scottish Indexes providing 'more than names and dates' (**www.scottishindexes.com**). Conferences and speakers. Donations welcome. Not a website but a blog – **Scottish GENES** – on Facebook. Might be worth a look?

And further from home, mass immigration by Jews from Poland and Russia due to violent discrimination. The Jewish Encyclopaedia gives detailed history of Jews in Posen (Poland) (**<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com>**). There is also a useful Facebook group for these people who will also help in deciphering headstones written in Hebrew.

Obituaries

The Ancestor Hunt:- (**<https://theancestorhunt.com>**). Many useful Quicksheets, free obits and obit indexes for counties in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and other US states, hospital, asylum & sanatorium records, old yearbooks.

New York State Death Index:- (<https://www.newyorkdeathindex.com>) newly released historical death records for New York State.

Genealogy Explained (<https://genealogyexplained.com>) is another blog but points out the most genealogists miss hidden clues in death records such as informants of deaths, medical details, previous injuries or illness.

Wills

To search for a Probate record (England & Wales only):-

<https://www.gov.uk/search-will-probate> of anyone who died after 1857. £16 fee for an online copy of each Probate record. There is a link from this page with instructions for accessing the Will of someone who died while serving in the British armed forces from 1850 to 1996.

The Ancestor Hunt blog also explains meanings for 40 common terms found in Probate records – <https://www.theancestorhunt.com/blog>.

Inquests

These often provide interesting (and sometimes gory) stories relating to ancestors. The National Archives (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>) has a brief guide to finding records (some are available online). Inquests from 1752-1860 may be found in Quarter Sessions records at local or county archives. Alternatively, look in the British Newspaper Archive, a joint project by Findmypast and the British Library (<https://britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>) for digitised pages from newspapers. Some pages are free to view, subscriptions from £8.34/month.

To interpret old legal terms and court terminology, this website might help:

<https://theancestorhunt.com/blog>

London has many fascinating resources such as The London Museum - opening 2026 at Smithfield (<https://www.londonmuseum.org.uk>) which details Charles Booth's poverty map for one thing. Looks a good place to visit.

Historic UK – <https://www.historic-uk.com> the History Magazine and Accommodation Guide. Info on persons, places as well as accommodation for historic breaks.

☆ ☆ ☆

— *Rita Harris* —
quality genealogical research

**Enthusiastic Research
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£20.00 per hour
Interesting sources beyond the internet

Baxter Essex Marriage Index 1754-1851
Baxter Essex Burial Index 1813-1865

01245 346490
contactrita71@gmail.com

71 Vicarage Road Old Moulsham
Chelmsford Essex
CM2 9BT



All the Genealogy Gen on BRADFIELD

By Royston Jones (ESFH 20182)

In this issue Genealogy Gen travels to the Far East: of Essex. The village of Bradfield, current population about 1200, is situated on the south bank of the Stour, on the old coaching route between Manningtree and Harwich. Both the river and the road route had a significant impact upon the history of the village. It is the route that Samuel Johnson took in 1763 to see the young James Boswell off to study in the Netherlands. Fifty-eight years later the same route was travelled by the deceased 'people's queen' Caroline, for burial in her homeland of Brunswick. Adored by the peasantry of England, she was despised by her husband, George IV.

Signs of habitation from the neolithic era have been found in the area, as well as Bronze Age and Roman remains, but the village itself has its origins in the Anglo-Saxon period. In 1086 Bradfelda consisted of two manors and twenty-two households, putting it in the top 40% of populated areas in the Domesday Book.

Parts of the parish church of St. Lawrence date from the twelfth century. It is believed that an earlier Anglo-Saxon church occupied the site. A Wesleyan Chapel was opened in 1808 and is still going strong. A Primitive Chapel opened in 1840 but closed in the 1930s after Methodist Union. The building was used for scout meetings but was badly damaged in the 1989 hurricane, was subsequently demolished and a bungalow built on the site.



ST LAWRENCE CHURCH BRADFIELD

The family historian has the records of St Lawrence at their fingertips as the ESFH genealogy database includes 4325 burials from 1564-1992, 1168 inscriptions from 1598-1984, 165 marriage entries from 1813-1837 and 1105 christening entries from 1813-1851. Researchers are spoilt for choice with the range of Bradfield records online with a subscription to the Essex Record Office (ERO) Essex Archives Online database. Available to view for St. Lawrence's are baptisms 1564-1994; marriages 1564-2009; burials 1564-1992, plus bishops' transcripts, monumental inscriptions 1500-1989 and other transcripts. Indexes to many of these can be found on Ancestry. In addition, the registers of the Wesleyan Chapel are on the ERO site for 1841-1939 and lists of graves in Mill Lane Cemetery for 1900-1989. A treasure trove indeed.

A further 1500 records are listed for Bradfield in the ERO catalogue, most of which require a visit to Chelmsford to view. However, a few, including pictures, are free to see on the online catalogue. Both the type of record and the date range are immense: the earliest records are land deeds dating back to 1125; the latest, faculty papers dated 2020.



SIR HARBOTTLE GRIMSTON 2ND BARONET
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY LONDON
PUBLIC DOMAIN

In 1320 Bradfield Hall Manor received a charter to set up a fair in the village: this was discontinued after 1848. The largest mansion in the area was the seat of the Grimston family, Bradfield Hall. Sir Harbottle Grimston, 2nd Baronet, took a leading part in proceedings of the Commonwealth and the Parliament of the Restoration. He was born at the Hall in 1603 and died in 1685.

To the west of the church was Bradfield Heath which, until the nineteenth century enclosures, marked the northern boundary of the Royal Forest of Essex. During the Napoleonic Wars a military camp was established on the Heath. Alongside the Stour is Rag Marsh. The tithes were commuted in 1841: the map and assessment is available on the Genealogist (www.thegenealogist.co.uk).

A mid-nineteenth century snapshot of the village can be seen in the National Gazetteer of 1868:

'Bradfield, a parish in the hundred of Tendring, in the county of Essex, 3 miles to the S.E. of Manningtree, its post town. It is situated on the south bank of the navigable river Stour, and is a station on the Harwich branch of the Great Eastern railway. The living is a vicarage united to the rectory of Mistley, in the diocese of Rochester. The Wesleyans have a chapel in the village. Bradfield was the birthplace of Sir Harbottle Grimston, Master of the Rolls and Speaker of the House of Commons in the reign of Charles II'.

The 1861 census is another bonus for the Bradfield historian: much of it is written in a clear and easily-decipherable hand. The population of the village that year was 494, living in 104 homes, a fairly low occupancy rate of 4.75. An additional four cottages were unoccupied. The sexes were neatly balanced: 51% male and 49% female. The census opens appropriately with 'the big house', Nether Hall, built for Mr. J. Shuttleworth in 1840. By the 1860s it was being rented out (the Shuttleworth family have, however, now returned in residence) and was occupied by James Fearis, a substantial farmer of 279 acres who employed eleven men and boys.



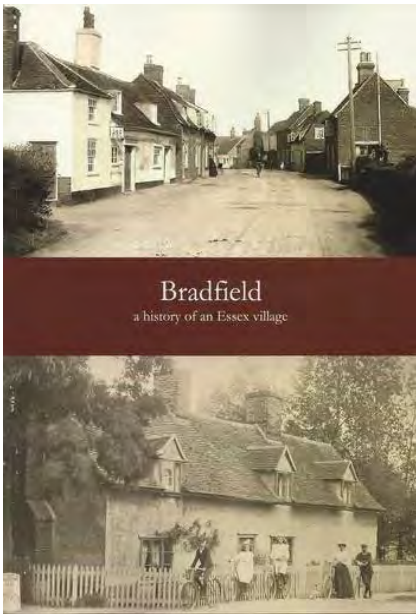
About 60% of the residents in the 1861 census were born in Bradfield and can probably be traced back through the parish register. Many others came from neighbouring parishes but a considerable number, perhaps unsurprisingly, were born in nearby Suffolk. So, anyone researching family in the village should be prepared to make the trip to The Hold in Ipswich to peruse the Suffolk archives, although many of its registers are now online.



THE GREEN AT BRADFIELD

One of the largest households was that of the Hertford-born vicar, the Reverend John Carter. As well as his wife and four children, the vicarage was home to a governess, a cook, a housemaid, a kitchen maid and two nurses. It seems that Mrs. Carter had plenty of time to act as the 'vicar's wife'. It is also interesting that the vicar does not trust his children's education to the National School in the village, of which he was the chairman!

Among other interesting names are the Exeter-born Lewis Agassiz whose family seem steeped in the Indian Army; Charles Bawtree, a retired banker who lived in neighbouring Mistley but owned land in Bradfield; and Joseph de Mendoza Rios, who owned land in Barfield but appears missing from the UK census.



Bradfield had a railway station on the line to Harwich but trains only stopped by request. It closed in 1956.

The National School opened in 1841 and the parish was permitted to send a number of free scholars to Dedham Grammar School. In 1882 an additional classroom was added to the National School and this seems to have fitted the requirements of the 1870 Education Act for the provision of education for all children in the area.

In the 1860s the village had the usual range of artisans, craftsmen and ag labs, and the agricultural nature of the area is confirmed by the existence of fourteen farmers. In 1863 two public houses could be found, the White Horse and the Plough, but these were supplemented by six beer houses.

From 1834 Bradfield was a member parish of the Tendring Poor Law Union, to which it elected one board member. The gaol-like building that was the new workhouse opened in 1838 at a cost of £12,000. An infirmary was added in 1901. White's Directory of 1863 states that there was also a cottage in Bradfield, occupied by paupers, and given by an 'unknown benefactor'.

Local source material is rich. There is a thriving Facebook Page with historical photographs. Some excellent historical photographs can also be viewed on www.harwichanddovercourt.com. The Friends of St. Lawrence Church have produced three history books: Bradfield: a History of an Essex Village (2013, cost £7.99); St. Lawrence Bradfield (2015 cost £4.99) and Bradfield's World War One Heroes (2016 cost £4.99). Order online at <https://www.foslbradfield.org>

☆ ☆ ☆

Interview with Frank Ruffell of Park Gate Farm Gestingthorpe in 1956

By Colleen Devenish (ESFH 6279)

The January 1956 edition of The Essex Review, which at the time was a quarterly journal for the county, carries an interesting interview with Frank Ruffell. His farm was situated between Castle Hedingham and Gestingthorpe. This is a gem for anyone researching the surname Ruffell in Essex and also for glimpses of farming life in the middle of the 20th century,

Evidently, he was a great reader and the article opens with his taste for books but more interesting are the details of the social and farming opportunities of the time.

Frank was born in Stebbing and, as his mother believed in education, she sent him to Chelmsford Grammar School which he left in 1895. At that time 'Agriculture was right down, no hope anywhere, everybody said get out, go abroad, go anywhere, but don't stop farming. So that was why they sent me to Gorrings when I was fifteen'.

It turns out that he was referring to Frederick Gorrings, Buckingham Palace Road –

'Everybody went there – all the farmers in the eastern counties sent their sons to London into the big shops and warehouse. I met many of them'.

Frank worked as a cashier for three years being paid £20 a year all found. After 3 years he left for another place in Stoke Newington where they sacked him after 6 weeks and he returned to Stebbing.

He then saw *'something in the Essex Weekly News about America. Mr Marriage, the miller, of Chelmsford, had been speaking somewhere about the chances for young men in America. I was greedy for money, greedy for it, had to be -...So the next Friday I went to Chelmsford and saw Mr Marriage. He told me all about it. Two dollars a day and your keep. That seemed wealth. Start in Kansas and follow the harvest through, working your way northwards....'*

If you would like to hear more about how Frank got on and his way back to Essex by 1909, married to a lady with the surname Halls and his subsequent career as a farmer in his own right please see The Essex Review January 1956 or drop me an email at editor@esfh.org.uk

From the Chair

Spring is just around the corner (for most of us) so I hope that you've made the best of the wintry weather and made some great family history discoveries!

Our most important news is from Jeff Porter our Data Controller. We are making good progress on our new website, and there is a real chance for members to participate by helping with the evaluation (see page 16). This is probably the most important project we have taken on in the last few years and I thank all of those who have contributed to date and those who will help in the future.



ANDREA HEWITT

If you can't help with the website evaluation but would like more of a 'hands-on' role ESFH needs a Programme Co-ordinator (see page 62). This key role ensures that we are booking quality speakers for our presentations, on subjects that interest our members. I know I have mentioned this before but we continue to need more volunteers to enable the Society to grow. I am seriously concerned that our small number of volunteers are having to work too hard and if this situation doesn't improve, we will very reluctantly have to reconsider some of our activities.

Another ongoing project for 2026 is the improvement of the facilities and the reorganisation of our Research Centre located at the Essex Record Office – so watch this space!

Last December, our Vice Chair Toni Neobard made the last of 3 broadcasts with BBC Essex to discuss the final results of the DNA kits we had supplied to one of their presenters and two producers. They all found their results very interesting and discussing them on air hopefully inspired others to take a DNA test and join our Society. The amazing discovery was that Toni found that she was related to one of the producers which certainly surprised us all.

Again, in last December, we were all upset to learn of the death of the longstanding member Roger Stirland, father of our Web Manager Paul. Roger contributed so much over many years and I know he will be sorely missed by many, not only those at the North East Essex Branch.

Finally, we have several public events to attend in the coming months including the Family History Federation Really Useful Family History Show on 18th April 2026 (see the inside back cover). We look forward to seeing you there as a visitor, or better still as a volunteer. We do have fun at these events so why not contact me and come and join the team! Send your emails to chair@esfh.org.uk

City of Southend - A Potted History

By Ian Yearsley

Book Review by Fiona Harvey (ESFH 33535)

This is a delightful little book that manages to compress centuries of history into just under 100 pages, taking readers on a journey from the Iron Age, through Roman settlements and Saxon origins, right up to the 21st century when Southend achieved city status. It's remarkable how much history exists in this corner of Essex, and even more impressive how Ian Yearsley has captured such a wealth of information with precisely the right level of detail.

The book is structured thematically, with each chapter exploring aspects of Southend's development and transformation into the place it is today. Throughout these chapters, it becomes evident that Southend has been shaped fundamentally by its people, who have continually added character and breathed new

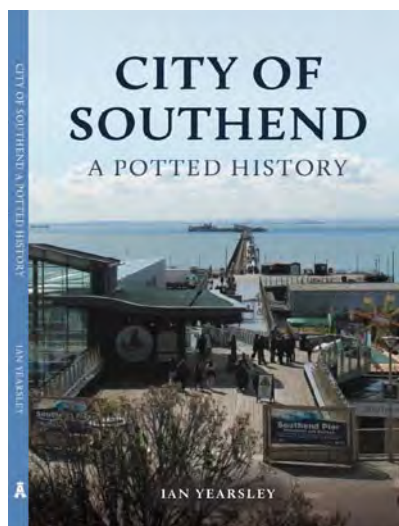
life into areas that might otherwise have lost their potential. Numerous individuals have contributed to the area's evolution, most notably Richard Rich in the 17th century, who strategically acquired vast portions of the region, capitalizing on its advantageous location and the political climate of his era.

What makes this Potted History particularly valuable is its inclusion of the historic villages that now comprise greater Southend: Prittlewell, Milton, Southchurch, Leigh, Eastwood, South and North Shoebury, Shopland, and Great Wakering. I was genuinely surprised to discover these areas belonged to Southend, as many of these locations were already familiar to me through my own family history research.

The chapter dedicated to Southend itself proved especially enlightening, offering concise accounts of key landmarks including the pier, the grand hotels, and the Kursaal. Each section provides just enough information to spark curiosity, inviting readers to delve deeper through other sources if they wish.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. My father's family hails from many of these places, which I now understand to be part of Southend's broader tapestry. Reading this has given me a much clearer understanding of how these locations interconnect and I will certainly use it as a guide for further exploration, particularly of areas within the modern Southend boundary.

This is an additional book adding to the Amberley Publishing Southend range see www.amberley-books.com.



Dagenham Window Tax 1785-1786

Data compiled by Angela Hillier (ESFH 28397)

Introduction to the Window Tax

A tax imposed in 1696 on house occupiers to help meet the cost of remitting the damaged coinage of the realm. It replaced the Hearth Tax. Each household paid a basic 2 shillings and those between 10 and 20 windows paid a further 8 shillings. A new Act in 1747 provided that households with between 10 and 14 windows paid 6 pence per window on top of the old basic 2 shillings, and those with between 15 and 19 windows paid 9 pence: those above that paid one shilling per window. In 1825 those with less than 8 windows were exempt: Scotland was exempted altogether in 1707. The tax was abolished in 1851*.

*Source: The Local Historian's Encyclopaedia John Richardson 1986

Ref D/Z 34/1 – Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office.

Parish of Dagenham in the County of Essex. An Assessment made upon the said Parish by Virtue of an Act of Parliament for Granting to his Majesty an Additional Duty upon Houses Windows and Lights from the fifth day of April 1785 to the fifth day of April 1786.

I don't know the meaning of 'third house' or why they were not charged the tax and 'do' as far as I know means ditto. For lights read windows.

Lights	Occupiers	Sum		
		£	s	d
12	James ARMSTRONG		18	
9	Sarah ARMSTRONG		10	6
22	Revd Mr BLACKBORNE third house			
33	Occup' of Breach House third house			
9	Rob ^t BULKELEY		10	6
44	H. M. Bird Esq	5	10	
35	John BRADLEY Empty			
17	Mrs BURLEY	2		
16	Will SMITH late BULL	1	15	

Lights	Occupiers	Sum		
		£	s	d
6	Tho ^s BURROWS or Occ ^r		3	
7	do do		6	
7	John BIGGS		6	
20	Mrs BIRCH	2	15	
10	John BAKER		13	
19	Rob ^t BRITAIN	2	10	
25	Joseph CHITTY Esq ^r	4		
6	do		3	
15	John CANNON where he lives	1	10	
9	do Capt SPURRELL		10	6
6	do BEAVOR third house			
7	Ed CLEAVE		6	
17	Tho ^s KITTLE	2		
12	Will COX		18	
6	John COAKUM		3	
6	John RADLEY		3	
7	James CLARK or Occup ^r		6	
7	Isaac CORNWELL		6	
20	Mr TUCK	2	15	
6	Geo Cornish BELSHAM		3	
6	do Jane LEE		3	
13	ALLALEY late DEAN	1	1	
15	Daniel DESSETER	1	10	
4	Geo CORNISH		3	
6	James EDWARDS		3	
67	Tho ^s FANSHAW	8		

Lights	Occupiers	Sum		
		£	s	d
17	John FULLER		2	
8	Will FORD for STORY		8	
7	do for HOLLAND		6	
6	do HAWES third house			
15	do SEDGEWICK Empty			
13	Samuel JUSTICE	1	1	
10	Will GREEN		13	
16	Mrs DARE	1	15	
6	John GRAY late WICKS/HICKS?		3	
6	Stephen HARVEY		3	
14	Henry HUNSDON	1	5	
13	Nat MAYS late KITTLE	1	1	
11	John LOWERS		15	6
6	do BEAVOR		3	
11	John MANN		15	6
7	do		6	
13	Mrs MITCHEL	1	1	
8	Mr HALL late MOTT		8	
35	Ed MERIDETH	5		
14	Will MORRISS for BIRD	1	5	
9	do for FORISTER		10	6
6	James NEWCOMB		3	
7	John GRANT		6	
33	PILSON Empty			
7	John PARTRIDGE		6	
8	Occup' or Ann PARKER		8	

Lights	Occupiers	Sum		
		£	s	d
9	John PEACOCK		10	6
6	James ARMSTRONG		3	
8	Will POTTER		8	
8	James RAMSDEN		8	
6	Stephen RAINS		3	
25	Hugh SMITH Esq ^r	4	10	
8	do for late RENNOLDS		8	
13	Simon MAYS	1	1	
6	do for MOSELY Empty			
11	Rob ^t SCRAFTON		15	6
9	Mr SHEPHERD late SCRAFTON		10	6
6	Rob ^t SCRAFTON late WREN		3	
10	Joseph St PIER		13	
4	James St PIER		3	
9	Eph SEABROOK		10	6
8	do for EAST		8	
12	James SMITH		18	
6	do for COMYNS		3	
8	James SUCKLING		8	
6	Late SPENCER		3	
6	Wid ^w SAMUEL		3	
7	MATTHEW [no other name given, may be a surname]		6	
19	Chris ^t TYLER third house			
7	John TYLER		6	
14	do late SUMPNER	1	5	
6	Will BARNES		3	
7	James TURNBULL		6	
11	Bar TABER		15	6
9	John UNWIN		10	6

Lights	Occupiers	Sum		
		£	s	d
11	Thos VINTEN		15	6
7	do for BROWN		6	
6	Mrs IVES		3	
12	Tho ^s MEAKINS		18	
6	Matt WOLLARD		3	
3	Sam WATERS		3	
6	Merideth PHILIPS		3	
6	Mich FLINT		3	
6	Rich WREN		3	
6	Will WISEMAN		3	
6	John WHITE		3	
6	John WHITEHEAD		3	
6	Sam WENDEN		3	
6	Will SCARFE		3	
12	Will WADE Empty			
6	James PEACOCK late POTTER		3	
6	do where he lives		3	
6	John LITTLE		3	
4	Mary VINTEN		3	
4	Tho ^s POMFRET		3	
6	Daniel HUCKABY		3	
6	Jona LANGLEY		3	
5	John LAKE		3	
6	Daniel PERSEY		3	
TOTAL		82	14	6

Return Will FORD, Will COX, John BIGGS, Robt BRITTIN for Collectors

4 Jun 1785 allowed by us on the oath of the Assessors

Paul HITCH, Job MATHEW, Oynyr? BURGES?



ASHBROOKS DAGENHAM, AN 18TH CENTURY HOUSE WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO THE WINDOW TAX. IT WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED SPARKS.

☆ ☆ ☆

Were Your Ancestors Wesleyan Methodists?

By the Editor

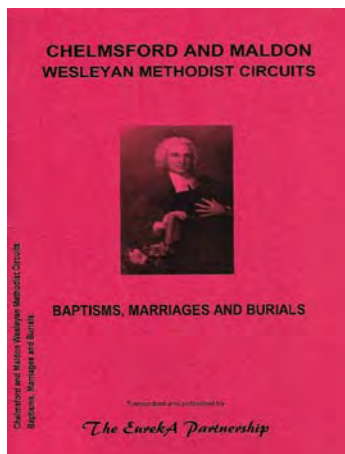
Chelmsford and Maldon Wesleyan Methodist Circuits

Another booklet released from The Eureka Partnership (www.eurekapartnership.com) allows you to search the Baptisms, Marriage and Burials of the above circuits.

The Chelmsford Wesleyan Methodist was created from the Colchester Circuit in 1814. In 1829 the circuit was stated to have places of worship at Bocking, Chelmsford, Danbury, Goldhanger, Hatfield Peveral, Leigh, Maldon, Rochford and Springfield. The Maldon Circuit was formed from Chelmsford in 1847, the preaching plan of 1849 showing places of worship at Burnham, Goldhanger, Hadleigh, Latchingdon, Leigh, Maldon, Ostend (near Burham-on-Crouch), Rayleigh, Rochford and Totham.

The Maldon Circuit was reunited with Chelmsford in 1854 and reformed in 1885. Reunification between the two circuits occurred again in 1901.

This publication is a transcription of the Baptismal (1813-1837 and 1858-1923). Marriage (1900-1929) and Burial (1860-1862) records for the two circuits deposited at the National Archives and at the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford. Note that no register for the period 1838-1857 have been found at either archive.



Robert Jackson Cowell (1882-1972)

A Life in Letters

By Leo Martini-Brown (ESFH 21)

Generations of folk with surname 'Cowell' have lived in Essex where there is a concentration. Robert Jackson Cowell (Jack) was born in Saffron Walden 28th August 1882. His death was at 22 Loxford Road, Caterham, Surrey 20th June 1972 and his probate was £688, admin with will. Jackson was the surname of his mother.

Robert was one of 7 children and his eldest sister was called Eleanor Fannie Cowell (Nell or Nellie) 19th Aug 1880 - 25th Aug 1954 who was born in Saffron Walden; with her probate as a widow for £3063 in Coulsden, Surrey). Nell married Francis Dell (Frank) Harper and had 2 boys. Somehow I have (had) ownership¹ as a non relative of a batch of letters covering 1901-54 from brother and sister, mainly Jack to Nell.

From these letters we read that Jack was involved in the Boer Warⁱ and Great War² and that he went to Shanghai and later America. He became a US citizenⁱⁱ. We read that he trained as an engineer and was later a consulting engineer in New York for 15 years. He was marriedⁱⁱⁱ, and that his wife and children did not join him in Shanghai but unexpectedly ended up living many years in California, USA. According to WikiTree (<https://www.wikitree.com>) Jack married Mary Ellen Walsh in San Francisco 14th Feb 1914 with 'children unknown'³. Jack divorced his wife due to her conduct and he was outraged at her Irish relatives and connections celebrating German victories over the English. Jack had paid for his children's upbringing but could not obtain custody as he was a Protestant and his wife was Roman Catholic and he had not resided in California for at least a year in order to make an application.

Jack's Life

The letters reveal that after the Great War Jack was offered a post in the Shanghai International Settlement with a house with 9 rooms and 3 bathrooms. Servants were plentiful. He took up this 5 year outstanding offer^{iv}. He expected his wife to join him after her visiting family in Ireland with first class fare paid for the Suez sea route, however she ended up with her mother and children joining relatives in California, having travelled across the USA by train. Jack continued paying for his family for years and he was shocked at their circumstances and lack of care of their 3 very young children when he made an unexpected visit. He reported many years later to Nell that his wife fell into drink and bad company.

As a teenager Jack was a volunteer in the Middlesex Regiment of the Imperial Yeomanry in the Boer War. 30,000 farms were destroyed by the British forces in the Boer War and it is sad to read of possible war crimes being committed.

In a 7 page drama filled pencil written note of 30th June 1901 from Hammersmith, South Africa, Jack writes on pages 2/3 *"now I began to realise what campaigning means. The first night our wagons were overturned in a drift. We forded through the same drift, the water coming up to our waist and arrived at camp about 5 o'clock*

expecting to get out kit & tents. We waited in vain till dark when news came that the tents were lost in the river and the overcoats & blankets were overturned. To crown all it was raining hard & was bitterly cold. We walked about all night in the thin tunics with no food wet to the skin, hungry & miserable. The next day we had a wagon and man captured by the Boers & one man killed. We followed the enemy up however & recaptured the wagon. This was at Erlands River Bridge. From here we went to Bjiggns Kloof where we lost three killed & several wounded in a fight which lasted four hours. I was in the advance guard at first but the enemy worked round to the rear & got within two hundred yards of our stores, so we were hurried back to repel the attack where we were successful in doing after a little sharp fighting". On page 4 Jack writes, 'We burnt the farm but the enemy had a v...bly a night excursion as the house was empty. We surrounded the house with fixed bayonets and the Captain gave orders to bayonet anyone escaping'. (Leo's underlining).

A few years later Jack is writing from Prince Albert in the North West Territory of Canada about dancing and the good looking girls. From Saskatoon^v on March 10th 1905 he reports in a 5 page ink letter that *'a beggar cannot choose. The wages are good but I can assure you that a man who works on a bridge 80ft high with a wind blowing and the temperature sometimes forty degrees below Zero earns all he gets. I am on the way to my homestead where I shall remain all summer'*.

Before the Great War he says that he had known *'nothing but hardship'* but he was making up for lost time by enjoying a winter in Los Angeles where he *'played the mandolin pretty well and danced with these Frisco girls'*. He was hoping that Nell should try and come to the 1915 World Fair there, but there is no mention of any wife or dating in that part note which is undated.

On 14th Sept 1926 he writes from Shanghai (China) that he had just returned from a 3000 mile trip *'through the interior and can assure you that the country is in a chaotic condition... with anti-foreign feeling'*.

In 1927 Nell's children John and Eric Harper attended Saffron Walden Friends School for the summer term.^{vi} In August 1936 on Waldorf Astoria New York paper Jack writes that *'70% of engineers who are working at all, are on Government public relief works'* and he was in *'touch with men who are travelling on business in different parts of the world...Many engineers here are turning to air-conditioning which promises to become popular'*.

From Saffron Walden 21st March 1945 Nell's mother (Mahala Jackson who dies January 1946; probate £115) writes to her stating that Jack (her son) was in Montreal. There is no correspondence about World War Two. On 14th August 1951 Jack writes to Nell after phoning her from London saying that he was on board the *Queen Mary* with a comfortable cabin.

The final batch of full letters from Jack in 1953 comes from Mexico City, Florida and Haiti. Jack received letters from other family members but they are missing. He lived an exciting well travelled life and sounds like great company, decent and a loyal younger brother to Nell. Subsequent to writing the first draft I came to realise that I

knew Jack's grand nephew and had debated Quaker investment issues with John (a senior treasurer), Nell's son in 1979.

References

- ¹ Obviously I only owned the physical letters. Copyright ownership even of unpublished letters lasts for 70 after the death of the author. Federal Law in the USA is also 70 years after death of the writer. Case law allows in the right context for research and educational use up to 10% max to be quoted with referencing.

In January 2025 I passed on the archive to Rod Harper grandson of Nell in London.
- ² Machine Gun Corps, Reg. No. 131419. National Archives WO372/5/52707. Private entitled to 2 Medals.
- ³ There were 3 children: Robert Patrick Cowell 1914-1994, Ellen Marjorie Cowell 1916-2001, May Kathleen Cowell 1917-1989, according to familysearch.org. Mary Ellen Walsh's dates are (16th March 1887–14th June 1967) with death in San Francisco USA. She became a US citizen like Robert her husband. In the US 1950 San Francisco Census she is said to be "widowed" and a "white" Hotel Maid, age 60. The **www.familysearch.org** records do not show any marriage for the couple. Being born in 1892 she could not have been 60! However another note shows a date of birth of 10th April 1892. Could two Mary Ellen Walsh's have died in San Francisco on the same day? A quite common name combination but seems unlikely. Would she have had to produce a birth certificate to gain US citizenship? She certainly was not a widow in 1950, so perhaps this is a wrong identity.
- ⁱ Volunteer Trooper/Private 33729 in 11th Battalion, 35th Middlesex Regiment, Imperial Yeomanry. QSA Medal Rolls at National Archives WO-100-125_03.pdf (accessed 27/12/25), R J Cowley was in the 53rd Squadron (page 10 of the 45) in this reference. He was entitled to 2 bars to his QSA Medal.
- ⁱⁱ At age 60 in 1939. Certificate No. 415270 in New York. (Query the age, with birth 1882?)
- ⁱⁱⁱ To Mary Ellen Walsh in San Francisco 14th Feb 1914. Mary was born 10th April 1892 and died in California 14th June 1967.
- ^{iv} And then entered the USA as an engineer in 1927.
- ^v Known as the City of Bridges. The original of the recently replaced "Traffic Bridge" was the first to solely take cars. It began the following year and completed in 1907 so it is unclear which steel bridge Jack was working on over the Saskatchewan River. (Saskatoon being in Saskatchewan which only became a Canadian province in 1905)
- ^{vi} Many years later the author would be a Governor of the School. It has now closed with the archives at Essex Records Office.

The Brewery in St Botolph Parish Colchester 1829

By Angela Hillier (ESFH 28397)

The following information concerns the sale of public houses and inns sold by the brewery located in St Botolph Street Colchester in 1829. The document does not say why the premises were being sold. See Essex Record Office Ref D/Del B35/1.

I have amalgamated all the information into what is known for the occupier of each pub but have not transcribed any details about the contents, number of rooms, land, out buildings etc from the inventory that goes with each one. Any additional notes are in brackets.

The valuation of the premises done on 9 Mar 1829 by W W SIMPSON, Bucklebury, London and J. W? MOW?, Dorset St, Salisbury Sq. London comes to £19,265 4s 0d.

The description given is: Inventory of the Freehold Brewery situated in the Parish of St Botolph, Colchester and Fifteen Freehold, Copyhold and Leasehold Public Houses attached, together with the Household Furniture of the **White Hart Inn**, Harwich, Stock of Spirits, Beer, Casks, Horses, Drays, Book Debts, Counting House Fixtures and Miscellaneous Effects.

Sold by Appraisement from John BAWTREE Esque to Adolphus William HUME Esqre.

After the description of the brewery, it states: -

On the right of the entrance are two freehold Family Residences with domestic appurtenances in the occupation of Mrs BADDELY and James SIMPSON and on the left of the entrance is **The Wool Pack**, a Freehold Public House with Stabling and Domestic offices in the occupation of the Widow NOONE (this pub does not appear in the list of the ones for sale so I cannot say if it is included in the sale or not).

There follows a list of each pub with the land and buildings etc which go with it, then a list of stocks of liquor and a complete inventory of the Brewery and its buildings and the two houses followed by a room-by-room inventory of the **White Hart**, Harwich.

There is a list of debts at the back of the book and there is an unheaded column in which it is possible that the word written, if there is one, refers to the likelihood of recovering the amount shown as a debt.

The Leather Bottle, Lexden, a Copyhold Public House in the occupation of William THEOBALD. In the book of debts it shows William THREADGOLD, Lexden Heath has debts of £32 15s 3d with the rent of £14 16s 8d to 1 Feb. There is nothing written in the unheaded column.

The Kings Head, Gt Wigborough, a Freehold Public House in the occupation of John KETTLEY. In the book of debts it shows John KETTLEY, Wigborough has debts

of £42 18s 8d with the rent of £3 3s 9d to 1 Feb. The word good is written in the unheaded column.

The Rose, Peldon, a Copyhold Public House in the occupation of Joseph THEOBALD. In the book of debts it shows Joseph THEOBALD, Peldon has debts of £235 4s 4d with the rent of £8 17s 1d to 1 Feb. The word doubtful is written in the unheaded column.

The Hare and Hounds, Layer Breton, a Freehold Public House in the occupation of Joseph ROWE. In the book of debts it shows Joseph ROWE, Layer Breton has debts of £112 9s 0d with the rent of £17 1s 8d to 1 Feb. The word good is written in the unheaded column.

The Bowling Green, Elmstead in the occupation of John ELLIOTT. In the book of debts it shows James ELLIOTT, Elmstead has debts of £23 12s 8d with the rent of £5 6s 3d to 1 Feb. The word good is written in the unheaded column.

The Swan, Brightlingsea, a Copyhold Public House in the occupation of John COOK. In the book of debts it shows John COOK, Brightlingsea has debts of £89 0s 7d with the rent of £15 7s 6d to 1 Feb. The word good is written in the unheaded column.

The Lion, Gt Holland, a Copyhold Public House in the occupation of Elizabeth SCARFE. In the book of debts it shows Elizabeth SCARFE, Gt Holland has debts of £22 14s 4d with the rent of £7 13s 9d to 1 Feb. The word good is written in the unheaded column.

The Joiners Arms, Trinity St, Colchester (it doesn't say if it's Copyhold etc) in the occupation of Robert LLOYD and others. In the book of debts it shows Robert LLOYD, Shiregate has debts of £85 6s 0d with the rent of £14 16s 8d to 1 Feb. There is nothing written in the unheaded column

The Evening Gun, Magdalen St, Colchester, a Leasehold property with a 9-year lease from Michaelmas 1828, in the occupation of Henry MONTAGUE. In the book of debts it shows Henry MONTAGUE, Magdalen St. has debts of £77 10s 1d with the rent of £14 16s 8d to 1 Feb. The word doubtful is written in the unheaded column.

The Bugle Horn, Magdalen St, Colchester, a freehold Public House in the occupation of George SEAGER. In the book of debts it shows George SEAGER, Magdalen St. has debts of £2 16s 0d with the rent of £14 16s 8d to 1 Feb. There is nothing written in the unheaded column.

The Ship, East Hill, St James, Colchester, a freehold Public House in the occupation of George NOONE. In the book of debts it shows George NOONE, East Hill has debts of £16 7s 6d with the rent of £17 1s 8d to 1 Feb. The word good is written in the unheaded column.

The Gun, Dedham, a Copyhold Public House in the occupation of Jonathan READ. In the book of debts it shows Jonathan READ, Dedham has debts of £14 14s 3d with the rent of £17 1s 8d to 1 Feb. The word good is written in the unheaded column.

The Bell, Beckingham, a Leasehold Public House no occupier given. In the book of debts it shows Robert TURPIN, Beckingham has debts of £29 10s 9d with the rent of

£1 11s 3d to 1 Feb. The word good is written in the unheaded column. (Beckingham is now known as Tolleshunt Major)

The Rose and Crown, Black Boy Lane, Colchester in the occupation of Mark OLIVER. In the book of debts it shows Mark OLIVER, Black Boy Lane has debts of £8 2s 5d with no amount of rent showing. The word good is written in the unheaded column.

The White Hart, Harwich, a Freehold Inn in the occupation of William BLIZARD. In the book of debts it shows William BLIZARD, Harwich has debts of £1427 0s 6d with the rent of £35 8s 4d to 1 Feb. The word doubtful is written in the unheaded column.

The total of Book Debts is £2346 12s 5d and the total of the rents is £148 15s 4d.

If you wish to find out who occupied the pub in the previous years the Victuallers Licences are on the Essex Record Office shelves Ref Q/RLV for 1768-1828, but probably not for the Borough of Colchester as Boroughs usually had their own Brewers Sessions.

THE
RED LION HOTEL
HIGH STREET, COLCHESTER



Traditional hospitality within the
exigencies of war-time

HOT AND COLD WATER IN BEDROOMS

TELEPHONE 369011

TRUST HOUSES LTD.

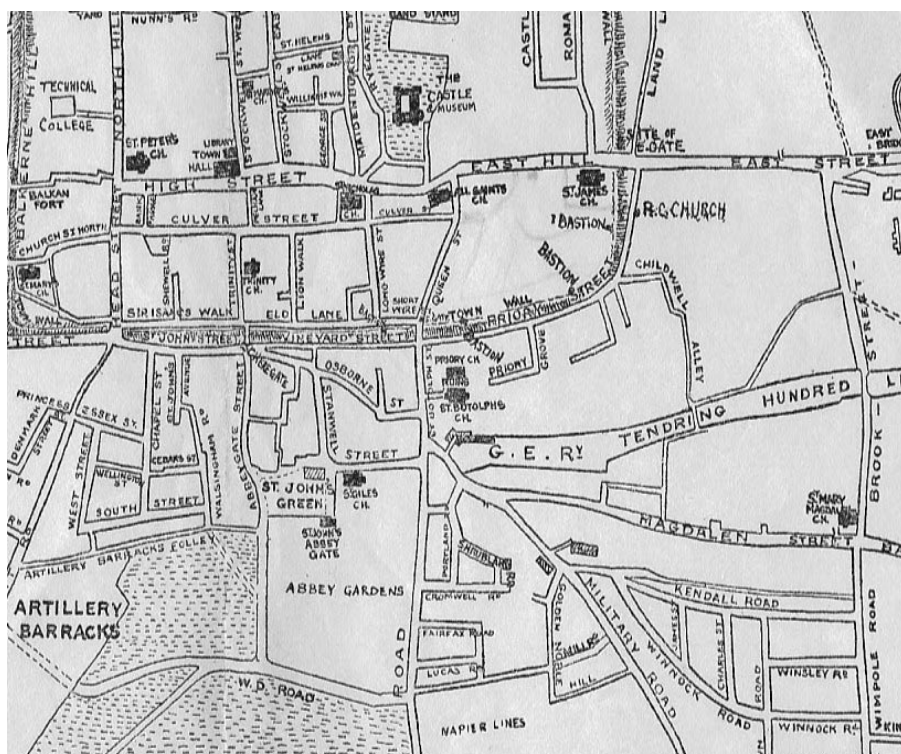
A 1943 ADVERTISEMENT
FOR THE RED LION IN
COLCHESTER HIGH
STREET. PLEASE NOTE
THE LUXURY OF THE
RUNNING WATER!

A Selection of Inns and Hotels in the Borough of Colchester 1832-1918

By Colleen Devenish (ESFH 6279)

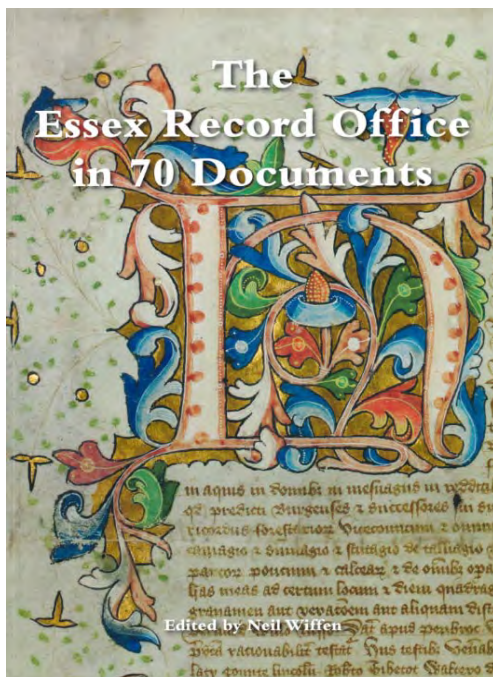
<u>Location</u>	<u>Name of Inn or Pub</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Name of Inn or Pub</u>
High Street	Angel	Magdalen Street	Anchor (Beer House)
	Cups (The Three Cusps Hotel)		Bakers Arms
	Castle Inn (East)		Colchester Arms
	George Hotel		The Inkerman
	Lamb Inn		Prince of Wales
	Red Lion Hotel		Plough Inn
	Swan Inn		Stags Head
	Sea Horse		Three Mariners
Culver Street			Waterloo Inn
	Cross Keys Inn		White Lion
	Fleece Tap	Maidenburgh Street	Artillery Arms
	Queens Arms		Castle Brewery Tap
	Red Lion Tap		Fences Inn
	Shaftesbury Hotel	Military Road	
East Hill			Alma Inn
	Goat and Boot		British Grenadier
	Mitre Inn		Cambridge Arms
	Ship Inn		The Globe
	The Whalebone		Lord Raglan
Artillery Street North			Royal Mortar
	Artilleryman	North Hill	
	William the Fourth		Coach and Horses
Artillery Street South			Chaise and Pair
	Foundry Arms		Cock and Pye
Head Street			Marquis of Granby
	Alexandra		Wagon and Horses
	Fleece Hotel	North Station Road	
			Albert Arms
			Globe Inn

<u>Location</u>	<u>Name of Inn or Pub</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Name of Inn or Pub</u>
North Station Road	Lord Nelson		The Neptune
	Norfolk Hotel		New Dock Inn
	Tramway Tavern		Ordnance Arms
	The Victoria		Queens Head
St Botolphs Street/Corner	Greyhound		Rising Sun Inn
	Marlborough Head		Swan Inn
	The Woolpack	Barrack Street	Recreation Hotel
	The Fountain		Bugle Horn
The Hythe	Anchor		Barley Mow
	The Dolphin		Duke of York
	The Jolly Wagoners		Wheatsheaf



PRE 1940'S MAP OF CENTRAL COLCHESTER SHOWING THE BOTOLPH'S CHURCH IN THE CENTRE

The Essex Record Office in 70 Documents



Note from the Editor

See <https://museumshops.uk/product/the-essex-record-office-in-70-documents/>

To mark the 70th anniversary of supporting the Essex Record Office, the Friends of Historic Essex (registered charity no. 325270, the charity that supports the Record Office), has produced this lavishly illustrated book of over 70 full-colour illustrations.

Description

The intention is to highlight the extraordinary breadth of manuscript and printed documents, books and recordings that are looked after in the strong rooms at Chelmsford. It is not a textbook or a 'how to' book but rather a celebration of the richness of holdings in a County Record Office.

With documents ranging in date from the thirteenth to the twenty-first centuries, written and drawn on paper and parchment but also including cine film and cassette tapes (a selection of the latter are available to listen to digital recordings via QR codes), it can only touch the surface of what is available to study. Hopefully it will inspire all who read it to visit the Record Office – what will you discover?

All proceeds from sales of this publication go to the Friends of Historic Essex enabling them to continue their support of the work of the Essex Record Office.

The Essex Connections of my Byford Ancestors (or Tracing Ancestors before the 1841 Census)

By Maurice Byford (ESFH 32880)

I forget when I started researching my ancestors but I notice that I have marriage certificates purchased in November 1977 for my grandfather Frederick William George Byford and his father Frederick Byford. Later on, at the London Archives, I found the marriage entry for my 2xgreat grandfather William Gardner Byford on June 17th 1839 at St George the Martyr Southwark, London. When I left school my first job was in Leadenhall Street in the City of London and little did I know at the time that I was not far away from the stomping ground of my ancestors.



ST GEORGE THE MARTYR SOUTHWARK - OUTSIDE AND INSIDE.

PICTURES BY EDITOR OCTOBER 2025

Perhaps the title of my article should read 'before the 1851 census' which contains better detail of an ancestor's origins although still not a reliable source. Eventually it was the 1881 census that told me that my 2xgreat grandfather William Gardener Byford was born in River, Petworth Sussex and not Bermondsey as recorded in the 1851/61/71 censuses where he had lived on and off since about 1821. It was only just in time as he died in 1883.

As I worked through the baptisms for the Byford surname in the parish registers for Bermondsey and adjacent parishes at the London Archives, it seemed to me that there could be an overall family relationship between the families that I recorded. I

noted that there were two heads of families: James Byford, a tanner, who was buried in 1832 aged 56 and Samuel, a greengrocer buried in 1849 aged 63. Their male children were all associated with the leather trade or drove cabs. Also, I found that two of James' daughters, Jane in 1834 and Eliza in 1849, as a widow, in turn married William Samuel a son of Samuel. Another mention of William Samuel and Jane are as witnesses to my 2xgreat grandfather's marriage to Eliza Wilks in 1839. I concluded that if I could find baptisms for James and Samuel with the same parents or related parents then it would confirm that I had found the right connections.

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church *by Bonds* by me, *Geo. Wright*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *William Gardner Byford* in the Presence of us, *George Wright* *Charles Wilks*

1839 Marriage solemnized at *The Church* in the *Parish* of *St. Mary's* in the County of *Essex*

No.	Where Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Race or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Race or Profession of Father.
38	<i>St. Mary's Church</i>	<i>William Gardner Byford</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Coachman</i>	<i>George Wright</i>	<i>James Byford</i>	<i>Tanner</i>
		<i>Eliza Wilks</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Spinster</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>Charles Wilks</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>

M married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church *by Bonds* by me, *Geo. Wright*

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE FOR WILLIAM GARDNER BYFORD AND ELIZA WILKS 17 JUNE 1839

My 3xgreat grandfather was buried in St Mary Magdalen churchyard in Bermondsey on 19th February 1832 aged 56 which would indicate that he was born in 1775/6. His widow Ann was buried in the same churchyard on 12th July 1840 aged 57 which turned out to be an accurate guide. However, as birth certificates had yet to be provided following registration of births on a national scale, there is always some doubt as to the accuracy of an old person's memory when living far away from their birthplace.

To begin, I sought information about where my surname occurs in the greatest numbers. Fortunately, it is a name that is strongly associated with Essex, Suffolk and London and not in other parts of England. I obtained a copy of the Roots map to acquire this information which guided my research.

Suffolk: as the Suffolk Family History Society had completed their indexing of baptisms in Suffolk, I requested a search of their database from 1770 to 1790. This revealed the baptism of James, son of John and Fanny (née How) Byford on 3rd December 1780 at Cowlinge. They were married at Cowlinge in 1766. I traced this James to Hackney, London in the 1851 census aged 71 and married to Sarah. There was no sign of a Samuel of the right age in the same place.

London: a search of the baptism records held at the London Archives via the Ancestry indexes did not reveal any suitable candidates.

Essex: the indexes of baptisms prepared by Findmypast and FreeREG internet sites revealed 3 possible places: Brentwood, Belchamp St Paul and Gestingthorpe.

Belchamp St Paul and adjacent parishes:

29th October 1775 baptism of James, son of Elizabeth Martin who married James Byford later on 20th October 1776. James the son was buried 6th May 1777 no age given. Elizabeth his mother was buried 20th June 1786 no age given. James senior, married twice more and was buried 7th January 1835 age 84. There is no Samuel born at the right time.

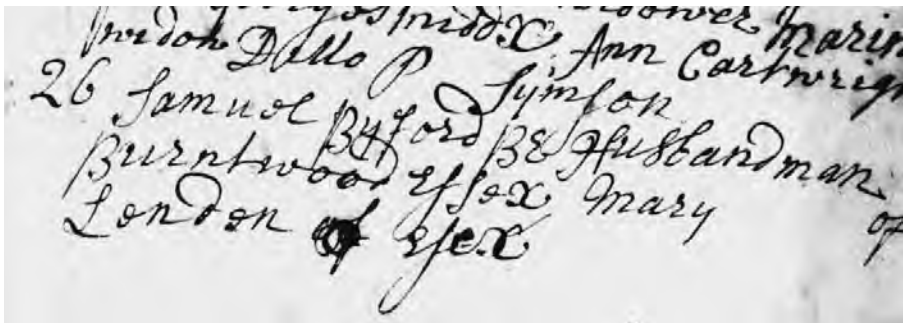
Gestingthorpe:

25th April 1773 baptism of James, son of Abraham and Sarah (née Firmin). James may have been born 4th April 1771 or 1772 as his father Abraham was buried 1st January 1772 no age given and Sarah the mother/widow was buried 28th March 1773 no age given. No burial of this James has been found but both parents were dead by the time of his baptism. Later, on 13th May 1775, Abraham Firmin son Abraham and Sarah was baptised age 5.

Whilst at the London Archives, I had noted the administration of the estate of Abraham Firmin Byford as it was an unusual name. He was buried 6th July 1797 in Whitechapel, London aged 27 intestate. The London administration of Abraham's estate indicates that John Firmin, a nephew of Rotherhithe, was his closest relative. So, his brother James would have been dead by 1797. There is no Samuel born at the right time.

Brentwood, South Weald and Navestock:

There are baptisms at St Thomas the Apostle, Navestock for Samuel in 1757 and James in 1773 to the same parents Samuel and Mary. They had 12 children between 1755 and 1776. Samuel, husbandman of Burntwood married Mary (?) of Lenden, Essex at the Fleet Chapel 26th April 1753.



REGISTER OF MARRIAGE BETWEEN SAMUEL BYFORD AND MARY 26 APRIL 1753

However, moving on a generation the eldest son Samuel (1757-1814) gets married firstly in 1781 to Sarah Finch at South Weald and they have 3 children including Samuel in 1786 who was a nephew to James and the right age. James was my 3x great grandfather. He was baptised 17th October 1773 as the 10th child of Samuel (c1719-1817) and Mary (c1730-1779) at St Thomas of Canterbury, Brentwood,

Essex. His father had been a farmer at Navestock, Essex who handed over his business to his eldest son Samuel (1757-1814) and retired to live in South Weald which is adjacent to Brentwood. The local poor house was at South Weald and his father may have lived there after his eldest son died until he was buried there aged 98. Apart from James, there were 5 sons and 5 daughters. All of the daughters stayed in this area of Essex whether married or not. Of the sons Samuel, Edward and Joseph continued to live in the area whilst John and Daniel found farms in South Mimms, Hertfordshire. About 1787, aged 14, James would have been apprenticed as a tanner for 7 years. The river Brent at Brentwood, the river Lea in Tottenham or the Thames in Bermondsey are all possible locations. I would like to find a record of this apprenticeship. At the time, there were regular public transport services to London as there are still today.

John (1760-1835) the 2nd son married Martha Baldwin 17th March 1789 at St George's Hanover Square, London. He appears in the records for South Mimms, Hertfordshire as a farmer paying tithes.

Edward (1761-1846) the 3rd son married Mary Pepper 15th October 1783 at South Weald.

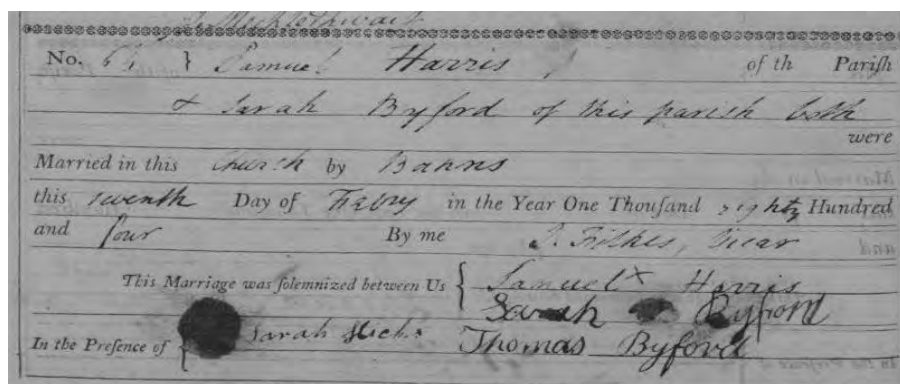
They had 10 children and remained in Brentwood.

Joseph (1763-1836) the 4th son married Mary Wager 18th October 1797 at Navestock. They had 5 children and remained in the area.

Daniel (1766-c1842) the 6th son married Margery Mann 17th December 1799 at St Mary Islington. They had 5 children at South Mimms, Hertfordshire and farmed land there.

Samuel junior (1757-1814) died before his father in 1814 and his will reveals that the farming business was to be sold and the proceeds distributed to his 6 children: Sarah, Mary Ann, Samuel, William, Thomas and Ann Maria who were nephews and nieces to James.

Sarah (1782-1851) married Samuel Harris at St Thomas the Apostle Navestock on 7th February 1804. See below:-



Mary Ann baptised 14th March 1784 does not appear in the 1841/51 censuses.

Samuel (1786-1849) married Mary Plaistow at St George the Martyr Southwark where he is described as a greengrocer at his marriage on 2nd December 1810 and in the 1841 census she is said to have been born outside Surrey. William (1789-1857) married Sarah Britton 2nd October 1810 at South Weald and died there. He appears in the 1851 census as a hay binder. Thomas, 5th child of Samuel junior, married Elizabeth about 1819 and lived in Hackney until 1874. A settlement certificate and the 1851 census indicates that he was from Navestock. Several of his children migrated to New Zealand and prospered there.

Ann Maria was baptised 9th July 1792 but does not appear in the 1841/51 censuses.

At present, I am looking for relatives who share DNA with me to confirm my findings but this is work in progress. I think I have found some 5th cousins but need to make some more enquiries. So, my search for Byford ancestors goes on. If you think you have any connection with the names mentioned in my article and would like to see a copy of my family tree please email the Editor and she will pass your request on to me.

All images are from the subscription sites of www.findmypast.co.uk, www.ancestry.co.uk and Essex Record Office.



Family Tree Maker Southern England Tour

Here are the dates and places:

Monday April 13th	Society of Genealogists (London)
Tuesday April 14th	Oxford / Banbury
Wednesday April 15th	Bristol
Thursday April 16th	Cardiff (Wales)
Friday April 17th	Chelmsford (Essex)
Saturday April 18th	Really Useful Family History Show (St. Ives – Burgess Hall)
Monday April 20th	Crawley / Gatwick
Tuesday April 21st	Guildford / Woking (West Surrey)

This information may be subject to change so please check our website for the latest update.

Family History Event At Chelmsford Library

Attended by Essex Society for Family History

By Denise Somers (ESFH 30932)

Three members of the Events Committee (Meryl Rawlings, Chris Stringer and myself) had an information stand at Chelmsford Library on Saturday, 10th January 2026. We were also there to support the library's 'Starting Your Family History Tree Group' which is every second Saturday of the month from 10am to 12 noon. One large area of the library with computers is set aside for the session. These



sessions are very well attended with seventeen people there in the morning. This is now supported by volunteers who have been attending for some time rather than the library staff. They continually have new people joining. Anyone attending the libraries in Essex has free access to the subscription sites, Findmypast and Ancestry, newspaper archives and the Essex Record Office Essex Archives Online. The library has a good range of books for family historians and always has a display of family history books in a display cabinet. They have asked for any of our older magazines which they have placed on the display cabinet. Places need to be booked by email at chelmsford.library@essex.gov.uk or in person at the library.

Thirteen members of the public engaged with us and many took an interest in the Society. Questions ranged from membership to where can you find records for the London/Essex borders to Hackney. One man shared all his research with Meryl and was trying particularly to locate records for Poland. One woman was a member of Broomfield Church and was currently trying to map all the more recent graves in the churchyard. They already have a folder which was produced by our Society but she wants to bring it up to date. She was looking for advice on how to make sure it was being documented properly. I had a long interesting conversation with a woman who had spent all her life working with horses, particularly thoroughbreds. She started at the saddlery in Margaretting and has worked all over the Fryerning, Blackmore and Ingatestone areas as well as Ireland and race courses in this country. She had an excellent knowledge of all the many local farms, many of which have been demolished and now have houses built on them. Her research includes the family name of Skinley/Skingley and the name originally would have been an occupational surname for a maker or seller of wooden roof tiles.

Overall, it was a very productive visit for all three of us.

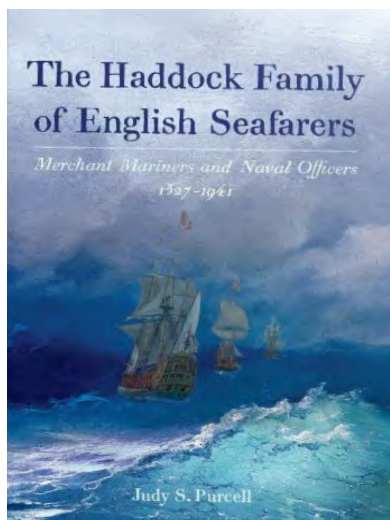
The Haddock Family of English Seafarers: A New Comprehensive History

Press Release Coracle Group

Summarised by Fiona Harvey (ESFH 33535)

A remarkable new volume chronicling over six centuries of maritime history is now available for researchers, descendants, and enthusiasts alike. The Haddock Family of English Seafarers: Merchant Mariners and Naval Officers 1327–1941 represents nine years of dedicated research by author Judy S. Purcell, a former award-winning journalist who immersed herself in maritime history to bring these compelling stories to life.

This extensively researched work traces the Haddock family from their origins as farmers in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, in 1327, through their evolution into prominent merchant ship commanders, owners, and Royal Navy officers. The book documents 38 seafarers across the extended family, including 24 naval servicemen—among them four admirals and nine captains or commanders - whose careers spanned three centuries from 1641 to 1941.



The Haddocks' voyages took them to distant shores across the globe, from the waters near present-day Panama to Australia's eastern coast, from Russia's northern reaches to South Africa's tip - remarkable achievements in an era before accurate longitude determination was possible. Their experiences included surviving shipwrecks, encounters with Mediterranean pirates, and numerous naval engagements.

Beyond seafaring adventures, the book explores the family's roles as political and religious dissenters during the English Civil War and later as trusted advisors to monarchs following the 1660 Restoration. Connections extend to descendants in the USA through the Holworthy and Thruston family lines.

This 328-page, full-colour publication features 15 maps, 47 illustrations, a detailed family chart, timeline, glossary of maritime terms, and an appendix listing nearly 20 wars and naval actions involving family members. Published by Coracle Group LLC, it draws upon hundreds of personal, naval, historical, and genealogical records.

Those with Haddock ancestry or interest in this seafaring lineage will find this an invaluable resource. Available in hardcover and paperback, ordering information can be found at <https://coraclegroup.com>.

Essex Surnames Project

Dowsett - a Rare Surname with Deep Essex Roots

By Jeff Porter (ESFH 33285)

Some surnames shout from the records. Others whisper, but reward those who listen closely. Dowsett is one of the latter: a rare surname today, yet one with a long and recorded story that leads us back to medieval Essex.

The Essex Surnames Project seeks to systematically assess whether surnames such as Dowsett originated in Essex, and, if so, to identify their specific localities of origin. This initiative employs both statistical analysis and traditional genealogical research focused on ESHF Members' Surname Interests and actively encourages member participation and collaboration. Interest in the Dowsett surname is particularly high amongst ESHF members, with 15 members registering the Dowsett surname as a research interest, a significant figure considering the rarity of the name.

Unlike many English surnames, Dowsett is not linked to a trade or a place. Instead, it began life as a nickname. It derives from Anglo-Norman French *doucet* (the French language brought by the Normans), which itself comes from *doux* - meaning 'sweet,' 'pleasant,' or 'agreeable.' In medieval England, such descriptive by-names were common, and many gradually became fixed as hereditary surnames.

This interpretation is well supported by the most recent authoritative surname scholarship. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain (edited by Harry Parkin, 2021) classifies Dowsett as a nickname surname of this type, reflecting the strong Norman-French linguistic influence on English naming after 1066.

Imagine a 12th-century Essex villager known as 'young sweet' or 'pleasant John', that descriptive by-name, passed to his children and their children, eventually became 'Dowsett.' And importantly, once a surname became hereditary and attached to a specific family line, that family's geographical anchoring - in this case, Essex - becomes traceable through centuries of records.

What makes Dowsett a strong candidate for research for the Essex Surname Project is the surname striking and sustained concentration in Essex. Analysis of the 1841 Census reveals an exceptionally high Banwell Index of nearly 34 (a statistical measure where higher numbers indicate stronger geographic concentration), indicating an extremely strong association with the county. Even by 1881, when internal migration had diluted many local surname patterns, Dowsett still recorded a Banwell Index of 20 for Essex, a level far beyond what would be expected by chance.

From 1541 to 1850, over 78% of parish marriages in England involving someone named Dowsett took place in Essex. An analysis of FreeREG baptism indexes from 1536 to 1838 shows an even higher concentration at 84% in Essex. Several parishes in Essex acted as central hubs for the Dowsett surname, with Great Waltham being particularly prominent; it recorded Dowsett baptisms in every decade from the 1720s to the 1840s, holding the highest total number overall. Earlier but smaller groups also appeared in Epping, North Weald Bassett, and Stanford Rivers starting in the mid-

1500s. These persistent parish clusters suggest that the Dowsett name originated in Essex, grew within the area, and spread to neighbouring counties and London's outskirts.

Place Church	Earliest Baptism	Last Baptism	Total Baptisms	Continuous Decades
Epping AllSaints	1541	1827	26	6
Stanford Rivers St Margaret	1559	1810	21	4
North Weald Bassett St Andrew	1561	1656	26	4
Great Waltham St Mary & St Lawrence	1633	1846	121	13
Pleshey Holy Trinity	1658	1844	55	7
Chelmsford St Mary	1653	1850	48	5
Toppesfield St Margaret of Antioch	1727	1842	41	5
Prittlewell St Mary the Virgin	1730	1850	43	5
Sible Hedingham St Peter	1772	1851	44	5
Boreham St Andrew	1778	1850	58	9

Such 'continuous parish footprints' are potentially strong evidence to support the Essex-origin hypothesis, especially when matched with concentrated civil-registration data from later periods.

The Society's own resources show this same pattern. The ESFH genealogical database holds almost 2,400 transcribed Dowsett records, which highlights how extensively the surname is recorded in Essex.

Together, these strands start to tell a consistent story. Dowsett families were firmly embedded in Essex communities for centuries, before later spreading into neighbouring counties such as London and Kent as population growth and employment opportunities drew people outward. Like many Essex surnames, Dowsett illustrates both continuity and movement: old Essex roots followed by gradual dispersal in the modern period.

Although the surname is still rare in Britain, it has spread to places like Australia, North America, and other regions, with families tracing their ancestry back to England. For genealogists researching Dowsett lines, this rarity is actually helpful.

Dowsett and the Essex Surnames Project

Each surname studied adds another piece to the wider picture of Essex's historic population. Even a relatively rare name like Dowsett contributes valuable insight into how families formed, remained rooted, and eventually migrated.

If you would like to get involved with the Essex Surnames Project email jeff.porter@esfh.org.uk.

ESFH Genealogy Database

Transcription Releases in early 2026

Transcriptions of the following register have been added to the database.

Saffron Walden, St Mary the Virgin	Baptisms	1829	1836
Strethall, St Mary the Virgin	Baptisms	1742	1812
Wendon Lofts, St Dunstan	Baptisms	1878	1929
Wicken Bonhunt, St Margaret	Baptisms	1597	1746
Wicken Bonhunt, St Margaret	Baptisms	1747	1811
Widdington, St Mary the Virgin	Baptisms	1666	1756
Widdington, St Mary the Virgin	Baptisms	1757	1812
Widdington, St Mary the Virgin	Baptisms	1852	1893
Wimbish, All Saints	Baptisms	1660	1755
Wimbish, All Saints	Baptisms	1756	1783
Wimbish, All Saints	Baptisms	1783	1812

Saffron Walden, St Mary the Virgin	Marriages	1877	1900
Takeley, Holy Trinity	Marriages	1887	1920
Takeley, Holy Trinity	Marriages	1920	1935
Takeley, Holy Trinity	Marriages	1935	1945
Wendon Lofts, St Dunstan	Marriages	1852	1940
Wicken Bonhunt, St Margaret	Marriages	1597	1746
Wicken Bonhunt, St Margaret	Marriages	1747	1754
Wicken Bonhunt, St Margaret	Marriages	1756	1812
Wicken Bonhunt, St Margaret	Marriages	1852	1925
Widdington, St Mary the Virgin	Marriages	1666	1756
Widdington, St Mary the Virgin	Marriages	1757	1812
Wimbish, All Saints	Marriages	1666	1755
Wimbish, All Saints	Marriages	1757	1791

Essex Record Office (ERO) Presents

www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events

Tuesday 31st March 2026

Behind the scenes of Southend Central Museum's newest exhibition, 'The London Shipwreck: Her Final Voyage'

Speaker: Jools McCusker Maxwell

Go behind the scenes of Southend Central Museum's newest exhibition and find out what the recovered artefacts reveal about this tragedy. Newly opened at Southend Central Museum, 'The *London* Shipwreck: Her Final Voyage' presents never-before-seen finds from the wreck of the *London*, a warship that sank off the Southend coast in 1665. Built between 1654 to 1656, the *London* was a 64-gun warship that served during the Anglo-Spanish war and later transported the Duke of York (future King James VII and II) during the restoration of the monarchy. In 1665, the ship tragically exploded in the Thames Estuary, killing around 300 people, a disaster recorded by Samuel Pepys in his diary. The exhibition features an exceptionally rare 17th-century gun carriage, navigational tools, and organic materials such as leather book covers, all painstakingly analysed and conserved through research commissioned by Historic England.

Jools McCusker Maxwell is the Curator of Archaeology for Southend Museums. Her main research interests include landscape archaeology and Neolithic flint mining. She has recently curated an exhibition about the *London*, which is on at Southend Central Museum until the 31st May 2026.

Tuesday 28th April 2026

The Chartist Revolution: The world's first mass movement for democratic reform

Speaker: Professor Peter Gurney University of Essex

The Chartist movement – the world's first mass movement for democratic reform – shook British society to its foundations between the late 1830s and the early 1850s. The subject constitutes a vibrant field of historical research, with interest in Chartism going beyond the narrow confines of academia. However, the challenge the movement posed has tended to be underestimated by both professional and lay historians, as it has usually been regarded as merely foreshadowing constitutional change achieved later in the century. In this talk, I will take a different approach to argue that Chartism sought to radically transform the political, economic and social realms in ways that have yet to be realised. The Chartists desired revolution against the existing state of society, not by violence but by educating the people about the power of self-government or real democracy. Focussing mainly on the national picture and the movement's wider significance, reference will also be made to local developments in Essex and Suffolk.

Peter Gurney is Professor of British History at the University of Essex. He has published widely on a variety of subjects, including Chartism, the co-operative movement, and consumer culture. He has served as editor of *Labour History Review* for many years.

Tuesday 2nd June 2026

Dr Adèle Isabella de Steiger: A pioneering Victorian alienist psychiatrist

Speaker: **Rachel Baily-Gibson**

The history of psychiatry has long emphasised the contribution of Victorian male alienists/psychiatrists such as John Conolly (1794-1866), James Crichton-Browne (1840-1938), and Henry Maudsley (1835-1918). Yet, Dr Adèle Isabella de Steiger was one of the first female alienist psychiatrists in the country, appointed Assistant Medical Officer at the Essex Lunatic Asylum (Warley Hospital) in March 1896. She was also the first female doctor of the Medico-Psychological Association, the predecessor of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. By the end of her career, she was Medical Superintendent in all but name on the crowded female wards and performed post-mortems on both female and male cadavers. Yet, her contribution to psychiatry has been entirely overlooked – until now.

This talk explores Dr de Steiger's life and career, from her childhood to her training at the London School of Medicine for Women, where she was supervised by Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917), the first woman to qualify as a physician and surgeon. I will also discuss her appointment and her twenty-five years of work at Essex Asylum, until her retirement in 1921. Dr de Steiger's commonplace book from 1893, lent to me by her great-nephew, will also be examined. This rare source offers insight into her personal thoughts, influences, and motivations, bringing her fascinating work to life. Additionally, the extensive archive at ERO has provided a deeper understanding of patient treatment and care in asylums, as well as how and why psychiatry evolved towards the end of the long nineteenth century.

Rachael Bailey-Gibson is a Future 100 Centenary Scholarship Postgraduate Researcher at the University of Leicester. She is in the final year of her PhD programme. Her thesis, supervised by Dr Claire Wood and Professor Claire Brock, is titled 'Remote Benevolent Despots? The English Alienist Psychiatrist'. She is also Honorary Membership Secretary for the Friends of Historic Essex, who support the work of the ERO.

Note from the Editor

On 23rd January 2026 ESFH heard of the death of Peter Calver, founder of Lost Cousins, who lost his fight with cancer on 19th January 2026. He had worked with ESFH over decades and many of our Society knew him personally. ESFH Executive Committee and members send their condolences to his family and friends. He will be sorely missed by the genealogical world.

Tracing the History of an Important Employer in Chelmsford High Street

By Colleen Devenish (ESFH 6279)

I was intrigued to learn recently from a friend in Norfolk that, living close by her, there was a descendant of the family that ran **J A Smith & Sons Ltd**, a department store that traded on Chelmsford High Street from 1822 to 1973 (see photograph on page 59).

Assuming that there are members of staff still living who worked in the store it would be fascinating to capture their memories and pull together as much information as still exists. My friend is keen to do this. She has been given access to some photos of the store and documents such as autographed programmes for annual staff dinners in 1970 and 1973 and postcards from customers and suppliers dated in the late 1800s.

If any of our members can help with this project, I would be happy to pass on their contact details to my friend.

More Important Employers

With generations of Essex people working in the agricultural industry here is a list of the Essex companies exhibiting at the 1961 Smithfield Show.

For a film of the 1961 Smithfield Show please see the British Movietone video on **www.youtube.com**

Mr Ernest Doe from Ernest Doe & Sons of Ulting showing his Triple D tractor

Messrs Whitlock Brother showing the 'Tutakuka' potato boiler for turning surplus potatoes into dog food. The inventor was Essex farmer Mr George Pryor of Navestock.

Whitlocks of Yeldham established in 1899

Rotary Hoes, of East Horndon, being exhibited by Captain Griffith

Mr George Munro of Waltham had a tiller on show

R Hunt & Co of Earls Colne showing grinding mills

Fords of Dagenham showing a super-class tractor

Christy and Norris from Chelmsford displayed feed packaging equipment

Crittall of Braintree showing grain silos

Bentall of Maldon showing their Vertiflow grain dryer

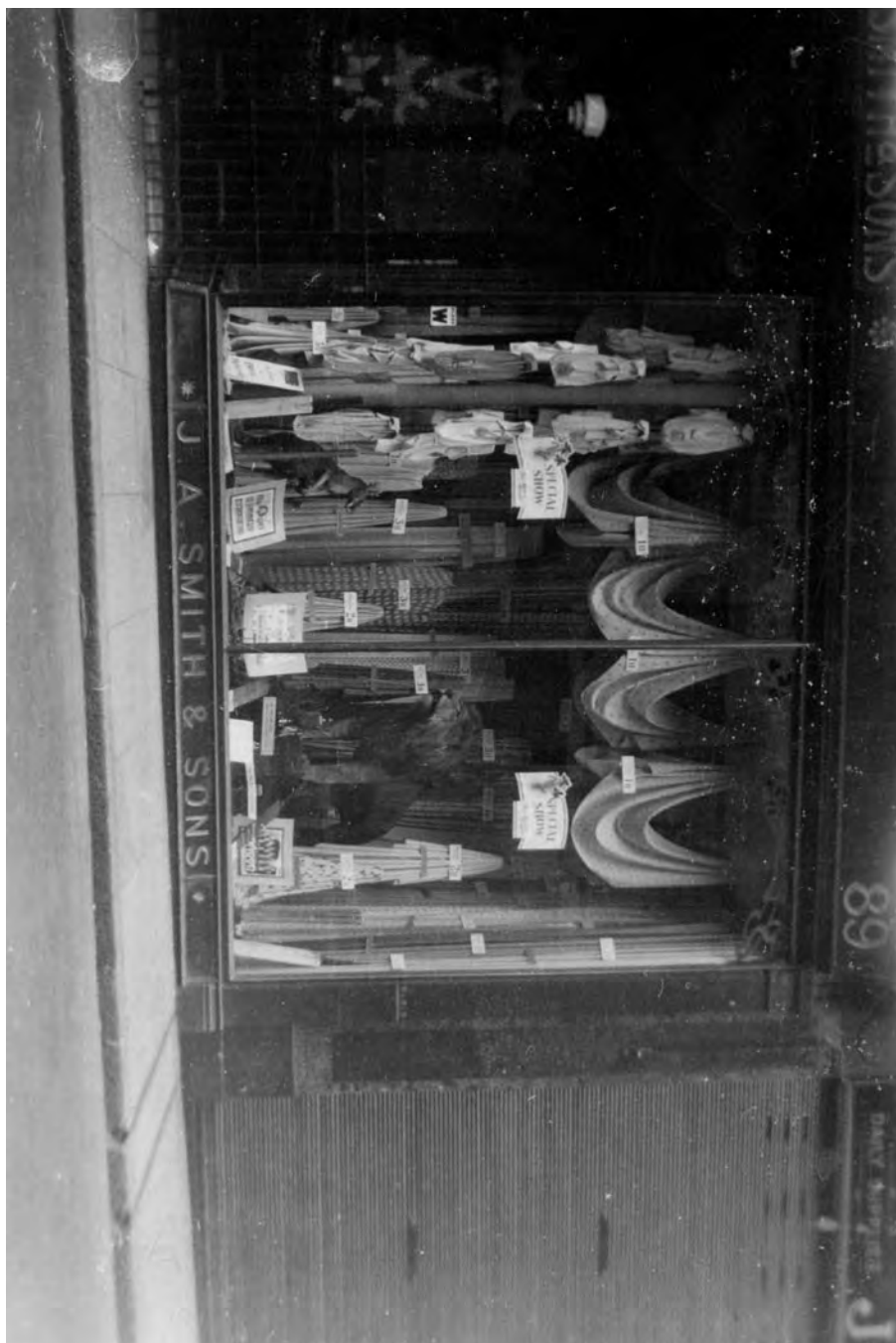
John Slamon of Dunmow with a new tanker model sugar-beet harvester

Colchester Tillage Ltd showing a new forage harvester

May & Baker of Dagenham exhibiting new insecticides

Pan Britannica of Waltham Abbey exhibiting their range of chemicals

Did any of your ancestors work at these firms? If so, the Editor would like to hear about your anecdotes so email **editor@esfh.org.uk**



Essex 1926 A Sentimental Journey

By Dawn Tibble (ESFH 33361)

The following are newspaper extracts from this time one hundred years ago.

Extracts from the Essex Newsmen 2/1/1926

The rear light question? An inquest was held by Mr C E Lewis at Brentwood Town Hall after the death of John A Deware, a structural engineer draftsman. On the night in question, Ernest William Wells and his brother, were riding bicycles with no rear lights. The boys, riding abreast along a fairly dark road, were not seen by Mr Deware, who was riding a motorbike. He had overtaken a car at about 10 – 15 mph and clipped the boys back wheel causing the motorbike to fall and skid along the road. His mother, Mrs Deware, reported to have said to the family, around the same time as the accident threat, she had a terrible feeling something was wrong. Detective G P Sutton hoped it would soon become compulsory to have rear lights on bicycles.

On Sunday am, William Day found a fellow worker dead in a ditch. Mr William Charles Whitbread (40) of Diggins Farm Cottages, a horseman employed by Mr Thurgood of Diggins Farm failed to return home after an evening drinking. The landlord of the Three Hurdles Pub, John A Parkinson, stated that the deceased was sober when he left but took a take-out beer, none of which had been drunk. Edward Bishop, landlord of the Two Swans also stated he was not drunk when he left. Mr Whitbread was found lying on his back holding his take-out beer. There was no sign of a struggle or slip marks on the banks. The coroner issued a verdict of suffocation by drowning. It has never been solved how he got into the ditch.

On Boxing Day 1925, Rev J H Smith, curate of Silvertown, celebrated his 1000th marriage service in the parish church of St Mark's, where he first officiated in 1899.

Dive for an Ostrich. The Egyptian attendant of SS DOWN URGHART, Mustafa Marmot, jumped fully clothed from the deck to rescue a fully grown ostrich that had fallen into the Thames at Tilbury.

Mr and Mrs Herbert Poole of Writtle celebrated their golden wedding on Christmas Day 1925.

Extracts from the Essex Newsmen 13/2/1926

Two young pedigree Red Poll bulls belonging to Mr E Rowe, Ford End, have been shipped to the Kenya colony, where they are imported to increase the milk yield in Somalia cattle.

The largest Whist Drive ever held took part at the Kursaal, Southend, on behalf of the Mayor's Distress Fund. 600 players participated. The Mr J Mitchell Silver Cup was won by Mr Renouf.

In West Ham Rev Basil Loney (37) chaplain for eight years to Ashburton House (a seaman's mission at Custom House) was charged on remand for obtaining £216 by means of a forged document.

Leonara Agnes Mills 23, servant of Great Stamford, was committed to trial on the charge of abandoning a 2 month baby boy at the Roman Catholic Chapel.

A conference of Essex local authorities, convened by Tilbury Urban Council, passed resolutions urging the necessity of a tunnel between Kent and Essex, and the cost should be a national one.

Wills and Bequests.

Mr W Edwards, Gidea Park, Chimney sweep, £6106

Mr T Beatty, Maldon Road, £3681

Miss Fanny Cant, Colchester, £3253

Mr Higgins, Leytonstone, Chemist and druggist, £1126

After collapsing in his teacher's arms, Tom Marsh (11) of Hall Cottages, Brightlingsea, died of a brain haemorrhage.

At a meeting for diseases in animals, the chair of the subcommittee at Chelmsford, Mr J B Goold, reported that in the last quarter there had been ten outbreaks of swine fever, two of anthrax, four of foot and mouth disease, two of parasitic mange and three of sheep scab. Mr P Ledger was appointed additional veterinary inspector for Maldon, Witham and Dengie.

The sudden death of Mary Ann Saunders, (76) wife of Mr C Saunders, formally for many years carpenter on Stisted Hall Estate, was found dead in bed after a short period of illness.

Extracts from the Essex Newsman 27/2/1926

The traffic death of footballer Cecil Leslie Jenkins, of Shelley Ave, Manor Park, occurred after a fatal injury caused when lighting a lamp on the rear of the lorry taking them back home after a match at Barkingside. The backed-up lorry knocked him to the ground. He died next day of his injuries.

Ongar naval gunner killed. The Admiralty informed Mrs Storkey, that her husband Gunner Storkey, met with an accident in Mediterranean fleet manoeuvres and died in a Malta hospital. Storkey had taken part in the Battle of Jutland and was transferred to the battleship *Barham*.

Satan of Wickham won the police dogs trials at Crystal Palace. Mrs M Barraclough of Ingatestone won first prize for defence dogs.

Mr B Harlow of Chelmsford, has dug up a four foot long parsnip at his allotment.

Extract from the Essex Newsman 6/3/1926

Miss Mary Resell (94) died at Billericay Workhouse, having lived there for 77 years. She declared she felt so comfortable that she had no desire to leave. She was a native of the adjoining village, but rarely left the workhouse?



We're Looking for a New Programme Co-ordinator!

Do you enjoy planning engaging events, working with other team members and having the freedom to shape what others learn and enjoy? If so, this could be the perfect volunteering role for you! We estimate that this role involves a commitment of about 4 hours per month.

As Programme Co-ordinator, you'll have the chance to:

- * Shape the programme – You'll have a free rein to choose topics that interest you and our members, with the support of the Programme Planning Panel.
- * Work with the best – This role brings you into contact with local speakers as well as leading genealogy speakers and workshop hosts.
- * Build on success – You'll have access to a wealth of past speakers and topics to draw on, making planning easier.
- * Bring variety and value – From online talks to interactive workshops, you'll be helping to provide our members with an exciting and balanced programme.

Your main responsibilities include:

- * Liaising with the Programme Planning Panel (with Branch Programme Secretaries).
- * Booking and organising speakers, agreeing fees, and keeping records of events to come on a spreadsheet.
- * Ensuring communications with other members to ensure the events are promoted on the Society's website and in the membership magazine,
- * Arranging Zoom hosting and making sure every session runs smoothly.
- * Guaranteeing at least two Zoom talks per month (including branch sessions).

You won't be on your own!

Our Programme Schedule is already partially covered for the summer of this year. Our current Programme Co-ordinator will be on hand to help you settle into the role, plus you'll have support from branch organisers to complete the programme. Branches arrange their own programme of events.

This is a rewarding opportunity to make a real difference for members while building great connections in the genealogy world. If you would like to chat about the role, please email [**programme@esfh.org.uk**](mailto:programme@esfh.org.uk)

Finding Family History in the Archives

By Julie Miller MA

The last time I wrote in this magazine about the Farmer family was back in 2022. I'm a PhD student at the University of Essex, exploring the writings of a Quaker family whose voices span the seventeenth to eighteenth century. My research has been greatly supported by the Essex Society for Family History, most recently through a generous grant last summer, which allowed me to purchase a much-needed laptop. Their continued backing has made a real difference to my work, and I remain deeply appreciative.

My research looks at three manuscripts produced by one Saffron Walden family: John Farmer's journal of religious conversion and travelling ministry (covering the 1660s–1714), Mary Farmer's 1725 account of her travels in the Low Countries and Germany, and her daughter Mary Fulbig's notebook recording visitors to the local Quaker community between 1731 and 1763.¹

Mary Fulbig was born on 16 July 1690 to Mary and Samuel Fulbig of Saffron Walden. Sadly, her father died when she was eighteen months old, when the funnel of his brewing copper fell on him.² Her widowed mother aged 27, became a Quaker preacher and prophetess, travelling in the ministry. In 1698 Mary senior married John Farmer, a Somerset wool-comber and Quaker preacher, and the family grew again with the birth of Ann Farmer in 1700. John had an over-abundance of self-belief which often got him into trouble. His ministry took him far beyond Essex and he calculated he travelled over 29,000 miles to Scotland, Ireland, the Caribbean, and pre-revolutionary America. There he threw himself into emerging Quaker anti-slavery debates and two years later was disowned by Philadelphia Friends for sowing disunity through his uncompromising activism. He died in Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1724, notorious and unrepentant, noted only in the *Friend Magazine* (1855) for his "Indiscreet Zeal".³ His 1714 account of his life and travels, left in England for publication, was likely suppressed after his disownment and remained forgotten with the family papers. Together with Mary Farmer's travel narrative, Mary Fulbig's visitor notebook, and numerous related papers, it now forms part of the Thaxted and Saffron Walden archive at the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford and I used it as the basis for my 2020 MA dissertation. There is so much more to say about John Farmer, but that will have to wait for now.

It has been noted that respectable eighteenth-century single women often built their social world around the parish church.⁴ For Mary Farmer and her daughters, that centre was the Quaker Meeting House. Left mostly in the patriarchal care of Mary's father Thomas Wyatt and brother Zacharias after John's departure, these women were at the heart of a carefully regulated community where customs of dress, deportment, and language, unique to Quaker society would have structured their lives. Mary Farmer earned her living as a nurse, supported her daughter, but also remained a travelling preacher. Her daughter, Mary Fulbig, likely helped in the care for her half-sister Ann, who was only about thirteen when John left. John wrote that

his wife remained in Essex because she was nursing the now “sick and lame” twenty-one-year-old Mary Fulbig, and Mary Farmer hoped to help her daughter establish a business of her own.⁵ This would probably have been within textile production which was a significant trade in Saffron Walden.

By the Summer of 1725 Mary Farmer was a free woman in every sense. John died in the winter of 1724/5 leaving her all his English possessions, and her youngest daughter Ann went to Pennsylvania in early 1725 to claim the inheritance he had left her there.⁶ Thomas Wyatt, Mary’s father died in 1724 and in his will left her the sum of £10 which also added to her financial security.⁷ For the first time she was completely autonomous of the men in her life and apart from her disabled daughter, at sixty years old she was now independent.

Mary Farmer’s *Account of Her Journey in the Low Countries and Germany 1725* offers a vivid picture of female Quaker ministry on the move. Historian Adrian Davies points out that earlier, in the late seventeenth century, ‘Quaker women were far from conforming to the stereotypical roles attributed to their sex’ and that many female Friends published ‘pamphlets and journals expounding the Quaker faith or recalling travails endured on behalf on the movement’.⁸ But by the 1720s it was more unusual, Mary Farmer was the only travelling Quaker in her Saffron Walden community and this indicates she was able to take the expedition, and also write a detailed record of her progress, because of her particular position, her status as an educated female Friend of good family, respected by her community and connected to a network of supportive people.⁹

Travelling with six Essex women and largely on foot, her group visited towns with diminishing congregations which had begun to turn to the New World for refuge and religious freedom. She sought new converts, offered comfort, preached and held meetings at every stop. They covered roughly fifteen hundred miles between June and October 1725, visiting Rotterdam, Delft, Amsterdam, Groningen, Hamburg, Friedrichstadt, Bremen and Oldenburg. She gathered local Quaker women as guides and interpreters, weathered violent storms, meeting many different characters from English lords to hostile priests. Whenever her group headed off to a new town, she said they turned ‘feet forward’ and I see this as a great metaphor for the effort of these women walking the roads of early modern Europe on their Quakerly mission.

Once, trapped at sea by unfavourable winds, Mary’s group also experienced one of the major threats to vessels on the North Sea. Pirates! She reported that a ‘pirate sided about for several hours, putting up his colours and coming close, but the Captain put out his colours’ (presumably sails) and with a fortuitous change of the wind the pirate was driven back, and they made their escape.¹⁰

French, Spanish and Turkish Privateers were menacing the waters between England and the Netherlands. The packet ships had to make a dash across hoping for kind winds on an unpredictable waterway. It was said captains had to be induced to give Quakers passage as they were considered unlucky ‘Jonahs’ because the Quakers could tempt the wrath of an indignant God and bring down storms upon them. They were not popular shipmates.¹¹

MARY FARMER MET WITH PIRATES IN THE NORTH SEA.

Meanwhile, from 1721, her daughter Mary Fulbig kept a modest notebook for more than forty years. A handful of poetic fragments from the 1720s - some not in her own hand - hint at a reflective, sentimental nature. A decade later she repurposed the book, turning it upside down and from the back to recording who preached at the Meeting House. Her list begins in 1731, when she was forty one and still a spinster. Her mother was then in her late sixties, and her sister Ann had died in childbirth in America in 1727.

Perhaps, having lost both stepfather and half-sister and with no children of her own, Mary Fulbig felt compelled to preserve what remained of the family papers. The Quaker practise of comprehensive record-keeping stretched back to Margaret Fell, the so-called "Mother of Quakerism," who established a tradition that continues today.¹²

Mary Fulbig started her list saying:

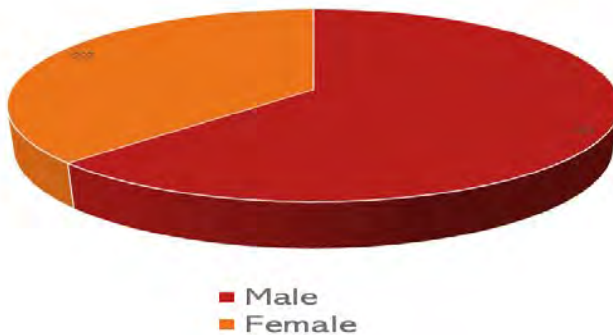
"Saffron Walden 1731 Be it remembered that this meeting has

been more visited with publick friends of late than for some time before, some of whose names are as followeth."¹³

FIRST PAGE OF MARY FULBIG'S LIST OF PUBLIC FRIENDS.

There are over six hundred and twenty entries spanning thirty-one years. 'Public Friends' are those travelling in the Quaker ministry and they could be male or female. Assuming gender based on names where I can, I have identified 383 men and 227 women speaking to the Saffron Walden meeting. This gives a breakdown of roughly 38% percent female to 62% male which is great evidence that women as well as men were still actively working and travelling in the Quaker ministry up to fifty years after the so-called settled period had started.

Breakdown of Male to Female
Visitors



J MILLER: BREAKDOWN OF MALE TO FEMALE VISITING PUBLIC FRIENDS AT SAFFRON WALDEN
1731-1762

It had been assumed by many historians that women had returned to the home and hearth, as the quietist period developed once the Quakers moved from sect to settled religion after the Act of Toleration of 1686. This was a period when the leaders of the movement wanted to draw less attention to themselves and quietly subsume into middle class respectability. Having noisy women (or men) rampaging round the country in religious fervour as they had fifty years before, did not fit now with the expectation of quiet worship and domestic uprightness. Clearly there were still plenty of women preachers travelling alone or with companions and some of these women had travelled fair distances, such as Margit Bertwhistle, from Lanarkshire, Ruth Courtney and Susanna Hudson from Ireland and Sarah Adkinson from Yorkshire. But few had travelled as far as Mary Pernel and Ann Roberts who preached on 12th April 1732 having come all the way from what Mary called 'Pensalveny'.¹⁴

These visitors would be bringing that most valuable commodity – news – gathered from their travels. Not just religious testimony and information, but social and family gossip, ideas, books, and letters. Mary Fulbig may have been static, but she will have been at the centre of an information network, a valuable position. Several entries in Fulbig's book remark on the passing of family members such as aunts and uncles. She records the death of her mother with little emotion: 'Mary Farmer departed this life the 13th of 2nd Month 1747 and was buried 19th.'¹⁵

1747
Mary Farmer Departed this Life y^e 13 of the 2nd mo
1747 and was Buried 19 and there was at her
Burial James Tims James Gibson & the loved
Breth

DEATH OF MARY FARMER 13TH OF THE 2ND MONTH 1747

She would have been eighty-two years old having had a long life of preaching and faithful service in the ministry. Her burial is also noted in the Saffron Walden Meeting records, with an unusually fulsome description:

"Mary Farmer widow of Saffron Walden departed this life the 13th: 2m and was buried the 19th of the same 1747 in ye friends burying ground at Saffron Walden. She bore a public testimony and travelled much in the service of truth in this and other nations. We believe she laid down her head in peace in upwards of the 80th year of her age."¹⁶

There are nine entries just marked as MF between April 1743 and November 1752.¹⁷ I think these entries modestly indicate Mary Fulbig herself giving ministry, as she would by now have been an elder in the community. By the mid-1750s Mary's record keeping was faltering and the list shows fewer entries, and she admits names are missing. Age was probably catching up with her. The last entries record the deaths of her cousins Hannah and John Burr on 31st May and 8th July 1762.¹⁸

3 mo 24 1763 Dear Cousin John Burr departed this Life in the year 1762
and was Buried the 31 and there was at his Burial
Hannah Shelton Isack Gray & Isack Sharpless
and Cousin John Burr. Lived but about
6 weeks after his wife

THE LAST ENTRY IN MARY FULBIG'S NOTEBOOK 3RD MONTH 24TH DAY 1763

Mary Fulbig died in Saffron Walden in 1763 at the age of seventy-three. She was buried near her mother in the Meeting House Burial Ground.¹⁹ There are notes in the archive about her nephews sharing out her money, but I have not found a Will or exact date of death.

I am working to understand the documents this family left behind, looking at what they tell us about these women's lives, the difficulties of Quaker ministry in the eighteenth century and creating an identity for oneself through record keeping. By occupying different places in society, one mobile, one static, the writings of this mother and daughter give us a few tantalising glimpses of their lives three hundred years later, because one disabled spinster woman kept her family archive safe, for us to find.

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- 6 John Farmer, 'The Will of John Farmer, A13685, Box 51', in Thaxted Monthly Meeting Collection, (Essex Record Office, 1724).
- 7 Thomas Wyatt, 'The Will of Thomas Wyatt', (Essex Record Office, 1721).
- 8 Adrian Dr Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* / Adrian Davies, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). p121
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- 13 Fulbig.p1
- 14 Ibid.p5
- 15 Ibid.p18.
- 16 Society of Friends (Quakers) Burial Records 1578-1781, 'Burial Record Mary Farmer 19 April 1747', (<http://www.findmypast.co.uk>), p. 252.
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In Remembrance

Roger Stirland

25th May 1943-15th December 2025



Roger was an active member of our Society for thirty-three years. He managed to keep one transcriber supplied with Parish Register Transcription work (i.e. checking information on the actual gravestones) for many years. Once the transcribed files were returned to him Roger did all of the necessary checking for a great number of files over many years. This made a huge number of Essex Records accessible for family historians.

I first got to know Roger when he was helping at one of our Open Days at Galleywood Heritage Centre. He also supported most of the events at Galleywood, and of course his local North East Essex branch based at Colchester. He was always passionate about our Society, and always happy to help.

I know that many of our members will feel privileged to have known him.

Andrea Hewitt Chair





In Remembrance



Roger Stirland

25th May 1943-15th December 2025

I have very fond memories of Roger. When I first visited the Colchester branch to hear a talk that I particularly wanted to hear, it was Roger who came across the hall to meet me. He included me into the group and from then on I have gained many friends. He was always the 'go to' person when we were transcribing parish records and found there was a word we couldn't read. He had a wealth of knowledge that sadly has now been lost. We will miss him greatly.

Gill Peregrine.

Although I did not see him regularly – only when he came to the Galleywood Heritage Centre, Roger and I always had a quick chat. I remember that he sat behind his table selling our CD's. On the odd occasion he would write a short paragraph for our membership magazine usually when he found an unusual snippet in a parish register. I will miss our little catch ups.

Colleen Devenish

It was a great shock when I heard about Roger but Paul had told me that he was poorly earlier when he was taken into hospital. I remember when I first started attending branch meetings that Paul and Roger were very welcoming and supportive. Roger was a very important popular, longstanding member of the NE Essex team. When our former chair, John Leach pushed hard for the branch to carry out Parish Register transcribing, Roger took it on with great enthusiasm and drive. Along with Paul they started producing CD's. As well as selling them via the website, they took them along with a display to many FH fairs and meetings. This was a great help to the Society's image. Roger did not just transcribe; he often tipped off other members if he found a possible link whilst carrying out his hard work.

David Eniffer

I was really shocked when I heard that Roger had passed away. He was such a lovely man. I joined the Society in 1999 and after a few month I went to a branch meeting, which in those days was held in Wivenhoe. That is where I first met Roger properly. He was always easy to talk to and always ready to give advice if needed. He will be sadly missed.

Pauline Adlem



Mental Homes Burials – Important Project for Family Historians regarding the Essex County Asylum

By Kevin McDonnell

We are a group of volunteers from all over the UK working on individual (usually county based) projects bringing the hundreds of thousands of mental health patients who have been buried in or near County Asylums across the UK 'back to life' using genealogical research. In most cases these patients were buried unnamed, their grave just having a simple marker often containing only a number. Today most of these markers are gone, the graves are completely unmarked and, in many cases, the burial ground itself is unmarked.

We are determined to give these people back their names, tell their story and give them their rightful place back in their family tree. In doing so we are trying to show that mental health problems can happen to anyone, just like a broken arm, and should attract the same level of empathy, understanding and support. Too often mental health problems result in ostracization, isolation and blame.

We have already created two such projects in the UK. The first in Epsom, Surrey for Horton Cemetery (<https://eehe.org.uk/24725/hortoncemetery/>) which holds almost 9,000 mental health patients who died in one of the five London County Asylums which functioned in Epsom between 1899 and the early 2000s. You can read the almost 500 stories that have so far been researched, written and published by our volunteers here <https://hortoncemetery.org/the-people/horton-cemetery-stories/>. Each of these stories is for someone who was buried without a name, just a number, and whose grave has been lost in a desecrated and disgraced 4.5-acre unrecognisable cemetery. People have contacted us from as far away as Australia supporting the work we have done for their relatives, giving them the respect and consideration that they may never have received in life.

The second, much newer project, is in Sussex and is based on the cemetery within the now redeveloped St. Francis Hospital, originally known as the Sussex County Asylum. This is a newer project, mostly delivered by Sussex based volunteer genealogical researchers. This cemetery is today a simple 2.5-acre area of trees and grass, unrecognisable as a cemetery, but at least not desecrated and used to dump rubbish. It is surrounded by housing and the Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath. You can see this web site here (to read our stories click on STORIES) <https://sussexasylumsburialgrounds.org/>.

We are now starting work on the burial grounds of the first Essex County Asylum, latterly named Warley Hospital, in Brentwood. There are more than 5,500 mental health patients buried here. We are looking for people to help photo archive records from this hospital which are kept in the Essex Records Office in Chelmsford. We are also looking for volunteer genealogical researchers to research and write the stories

of the thousands of patients buried here, again mostly unnamed and unmarked. If you are interested in researching family history and are familiar with Ancestry, Findmypast or similar applications then we hope that you can help us on this project. For further information please contact me, Kevin McDonnell via email at kpjmcdonn@gmail.com or via the CONTACT page on <https://sussexasylumsburialgrounds.org/>.

☆ ☆ ☆

Tracing Your House History On the Internet

Don't Miss this Publication in March 2026

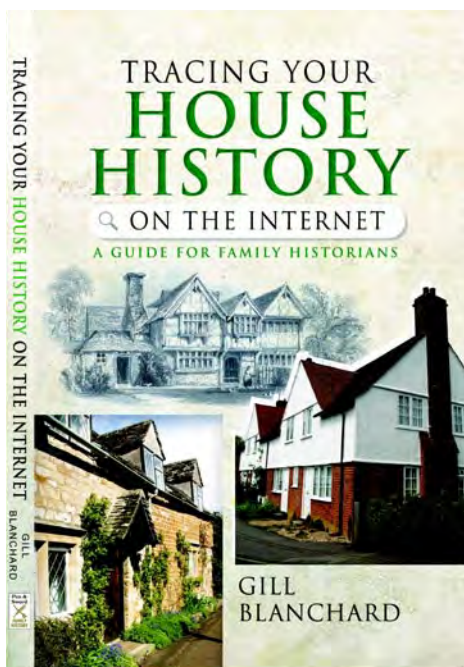
By Colleen, Editor

Gill Blanchard, one of my favourite genealogists, and one who is well known to ESFH members following her many lectures to our Society, has released a new version of one of her publications. Many of you may well be familiar with her book, *Tracing your House History* which is a very valuable addition to any book shelf so I am delighted to publicise the release in March 2026 of an updated version of this book which includes details of the vast expanse of online resources now available. So, whether you are looking to research your ancestors' place of abode or the local grand manor this publication is a 'must have'. Published by Pen-and-Sword publishers (see www.pen-and-sword.co.uk) at £14.99 it is full of excellent research advice.

For those readers not familiar with Gill she has been a local historian, genealogist and house historian since 1997 and previously worked in a local record office for six years. In addition to the above book, she has written *Tracing Your Ancestors: Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk*, *Writing Your Family History* and *Tracing Your House History*. She also wrote 'Lawson Lies Still in the Thames' – the extraordinary Life of Vice Admiral Sir John Lawson and 'I Therefore Post Him as a Coward' which is the story of a showdown between a knight and a clergyman and a challenge to a duel which engulfed a Norfolk town in July 1836.

She writes regularly in the genealogy press, is a member of AGRA and is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

See her website <https://www.pastsearch.co.uk>



Masonic Secrets Of All Saints Church, Maldon

By Stephen P. Nunn Local Historian

I recently attended a service at All Saints Church and whilst we were waiting for the proceedings to begin, I scanned the ancient fabric. Churches like All Saints contain many 'open secrets' – that is if you care to look for them. If you, your relations, or ancestors have links with Freemasonry (or even if you don't), you might find some of the fixtures and fittings there of particular interest. Let me take you on a virtual tour of the clues.

We start outside in the churchyard with one of those six 1907 Rutland stone statues, housed in the niches on the frontage of the church's beautiful 14th century south aisle. The figures include one of Dr. Thomas Plume (1630-1704). This particular statue was sponsored by the Plume Chapter of Royal Arch Freemasons (number 1024, consecrated in 1891). The figure of their namesake has an unusual stance, particularly the positioning of its feet - which is of significance. We enter the church by the south-west door and to our right we have the Gepp window. A native Maldonian, Arthur Gepp was a successful ironmonger, Wantz Road resident, parishioner and a Freemason. He left an estate of £14,103 in 1950 and some of that money went to



ALL SAINTS CHURCH MALDON

form the Gepp Charity, with the aim to 'acquire a suitable piece of land, with or without buildings, for the erection of two or more homes for the aged in poor circumstances'. His memorial window has, just about visible from floor level in the centre lower section, the distinctive square and compasses motif.

Talking of windows, if we move into the D'Arcy, or South Chapel, we will find the Washington window. In 1633 Oxford educated Lawrence Washington became rector of Purleigh. Reverend Washington was the great-great-grandfather of George Washington, the First President of America. Today, the last mortal remains of Reverend Lawrence Washington, who died in 1652, lie somewhere in the confined space of the churchyard. In recognition of that important connection, in 1928, the citizens of Maldon, Massachusetts, presented the church with this window. It is full of the imagery of our associations with America – including a representation of George Washington taking his oath as President. George Washington was initiated into Freemasonry in 1752 in a Lodge in Fredericksburg, Virginia. During his life he was a frequent visitor to other Lodges. As President, Washington exchanged letters with many local and state Grand Lodges. He also met delegations of Freemasons during his visit to Rhode Island in 1790 and his 1791 tour of the southern states. His most significant Masonic activity, however, occurred on September 18, 1793. Acting as Grand Master pro-tem, he presided at the Masonic ceremonial laying of the United States Capitol cornerstone. At Washington's 1799 funeral, brothers of the Alexandria Lodge performed Masonic rites.

Not far from the Washington window, if you look carefully, you will be able to make out faint scratchings on the columns of the mediaeval arcades. These are operative mason's marks of the 15th-century and include a cross with round knobs at the end of each arm (known as a pommy) with a bird rising above it. This could be a representation of the dove released by Noah from the Ark. There is also a primitive looking shield with a band running horizontally across the top, known in heraldic terms as a 'chief'. Templar shields sometimes had this arrangement.

Moving into the chancel itself where the black and white tiled flooring was laid in 1870 to celebrate the vicar, Rev. Edward Russell Horwood and churchwarden, J.P. Jay, becoming Freemasons. At the front of the chancel, the carved oak lectern was given to the church in 1866 by the Lodge of St. Peter (number 1024, consecrated in 1864) and still bears their well-polished brass plaque.

Moving to the back of the church there is a memorial commemorating the Rev. Horwood, who served as vicar of All Saints with St. Peter from 1850-1901. As previously mentioned, he was a member of the Lodge of St. Peter and held the position of Lodge Chaplain. Finally, inside the tower is another, much more modern, plate stating that, in 2016, Maldon Freemasons contributed to the restoration of the peal of bells. So, there you have it - at least eight Masonic clues (and I have probably missed others). But don't just take my word for it, go and search out those 'secrets' for yourselves.

Freemasons have been meeting in Maldon since the 18th century, and at the present-day Masonic Hall on Cromwell Hill since 1925. If you want to find out more go to: **www.freemasonrymaldon.co.uk/**



ILLUSTRATION: MEETING OF THE FREEMASONS' LODGE BY C EWART & S WATSON,
CREDIT: WELLCOME COLLECTION, CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION (CC BY 4.0)

Note from the Editor

Were your ancestors Freemasons?

2026 marks the 250th Anniversary of the appointment, in 1776, of Thomas Dunckerley, the First Provincial Grand Master of Essex.

For more information about their history visit:

<https://www.ugle.org.uk/freemasons-hall>

There is a Museum of Freemasonry at the Freemasons' Hall.

There are records from 1751-1921 of the United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Registers and for Ireland the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland Membership Register 1733-1921 available on **www.ancestry.co.uk**

For a listing of the Masonic Lodges from 1717-1894 go to **<https://www.dhi.ac.uk/lane/>**

The Mystery of the Essex Hymn Book

By Andrea Hewitt Chair

Part One

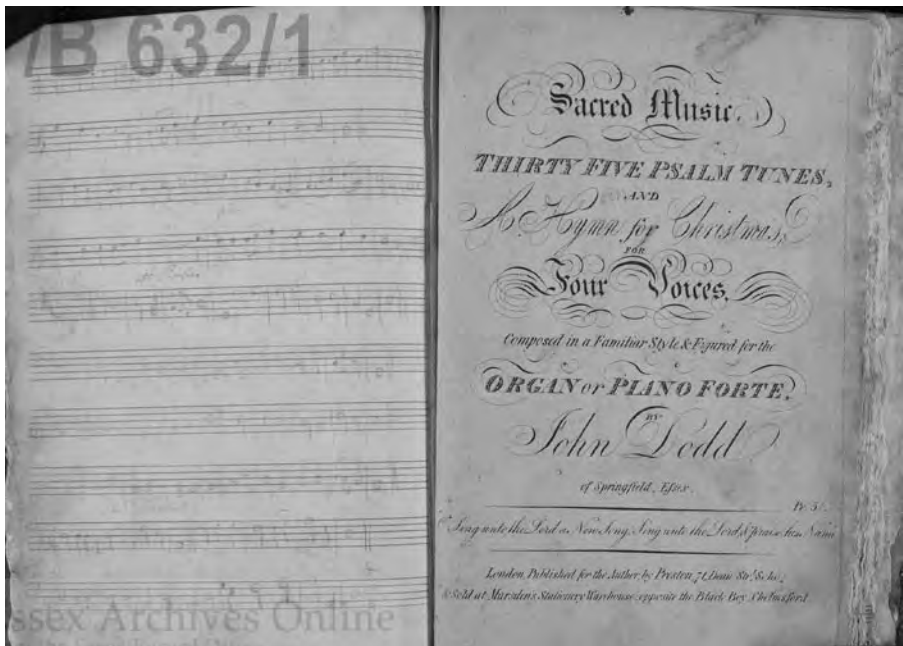
I consider myself to be very lucky having inherited several interesting items from my ancestors, but perhaps the most intriguing is an old music book. The majority of the compositions consist of Psalms or what we might recognise as Hymns mostly dedicated to Essex towns and villages, and a Christmas Hymn for the village of Kelvedon.

My father had inherited this book from his father, Clive Barker Willis, who lived in the Chelmsford area, mainly in Galleywood, for most of his life. The family 'legend' was that the composer of the book was a Reverend John Dodd who was a member of our family. I can understand this as one of our family photographs shows 2 men wearing dark suits and white collars (see below). I had discovered 3 John Dodds in my family tree so far, but none were recorded in my research as a 'Reverend' so I set out to identify who the composer actually was. Jane Shrimpton, professional genealogist, dated this photo as between 1890-1900.



As the book was already in a very poor state, I took great care to not damage it whilst noting the contents. It was unusual as the first few pages consisted of several hand written compositions. Following these was the frontispiece of the book, entitled 'Thirty Five Psalm tunes and a Hymn for Christmas' and showing that the composer of this 'Sacred Music' was John Dodd of Springfield. Surely this John Dodd would have used the title of Reverend, if he was so qualified?

There follows a list of nearly 150 local subscribers, without whom, presumably the book would not have been published. A few subscribers are shown in this article however a digitised book is available on the ESFH website plus Essex Record Office (ERO) has a copy Ref. T/B 632/1 where you can see the whole book and full list of the subscribers. You will see that subscribers come from a number of Essex villages.

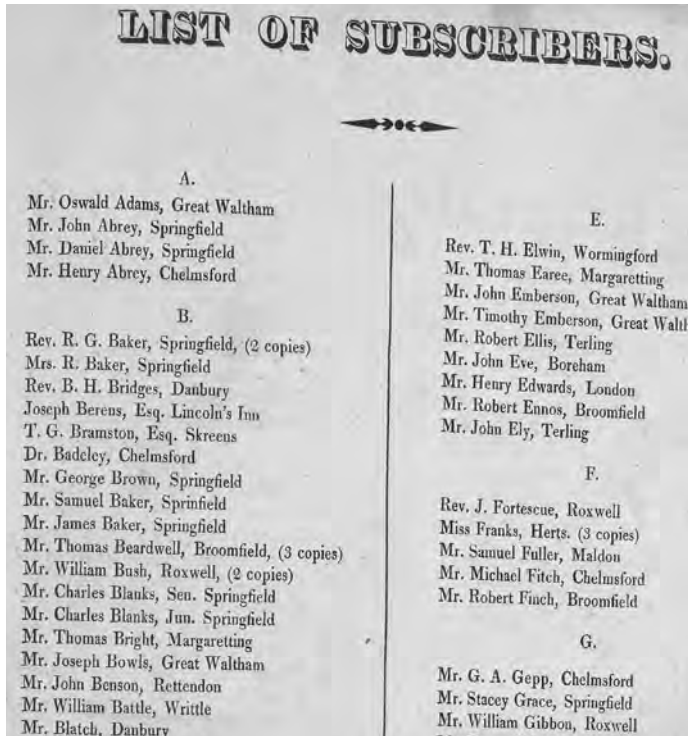


The Psalms themselves are printed on the following pages, and were dedicated to 34 'Essex' locations but also include Psalms for 'Suffolk' and 'Yarmouth.' The Christmas Hymn uses the words to the carol 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' but was written to a different tune to the one that we would recognise today.

In my research to date I have not found any connections to any church to the 3 John Dodds in my family tree. In fact, my potential candidates appeared from census records to all be agricultural labourers! I also consulted the Crockford's Clerical Directories, but failed to find any relevant listings.

I then realised that I really needed to be able to date the publication of the book, but could not find one.

I had noted that there were several Reverends listed as subscribers so I found out when they were incumbent at their church, and this gave me a common time frame of about 1810-1830. I had also noticed that on the frontispiece of the book one of the letter s's in the word 'Essex' looked more like an 'f' to me. I was aware of this practice but it was only when I researched this further that I found out that the 'f' was in fact 'a long s' and this practice had virtually ceased in England by the early 1820s.



In 2012 I took the book to the ERO to be copied and placed on their database. Having the book on disc allowed me to research it more thoroughly without worrying about damaging it any further. It was at this time that a date of 1820 written in faint pencil on a tiny piece of one of the torn manuscript pages was found by a member of the ERO staff. I really wished that I had seen it myself, but it was great that this date further corroborated my findings and it narrowed the date of publication to about 1810-1820.

With all of this information I was able to conclude that the only one of my relatives that could have been the composer was John Dodd 1783-1865, my 4x great grandfather. It was clear however the composer must have had a strong connection to the church

and had received considerable tuition in music to write this music in four-part harmony. I knew he was baptised, and married at All Saints Church, Springfield, and he lived in Springfield until he died in 1885, when he was buried at the Holy Trinity Church, Springfield, the daughter church to All Saints. His only sibling was an older brother William Dodd who was also baptised and married at All Saints Church.

So, it seemed possible that my John Dodd was probably a church-goer, but how and when could he have learnt to read and write the religious music in our book?

He was shown in both the 1841 and 1851 census with the occupation of 'Ag. Lab' and in 1861 just prior to his death in 1865, he is shown as a boarder with family members. On his death certificate his occupation is listed as a 'Farm Bailiff' which could indicate that he had a basic education, at some point in his life, but I still have no evidence to corroborate that my 'John Dodd' was a composer of music.

Part Two: Further efforts to solve The Mystery of the Essex Hymn Book will appear in the August 2026 issue of this magazine.

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The Time Travellers Guide to Elizabethan England

By Ian Mortimer

Book review by Angela Hillier (ESFH 28397)

Ian Mortimer has a way of writing that is very informative as well as being an easy read. This book is the middle one of three about what you will find if you 'time travel' to Mediaeval England, Elizabethan England or Restoration England. The chapters in this book are headed the landscape, the people, religion, character, basic essentials, what to wear, travelling, where to stay, what to eat and drink, hygiene, illness and medicine, law and disorder and entertainment which covers most things. He manages to add instances of things that actually happen to illustrate what he is writing about and I found that there are a fair number of these that relate to happenings in Essex. For example, in the chapter on entertainment he is talking about football and says in 1582 in a match between Gosfield and Bocking, Gosfield's goalkeeper, John Pye is killed after colliding with Richard Elye.

There are things that will make you squirm and things that will make you smile or laugh in his descriptions of life and how you would be expected to live it, be you a pauper or a prince. He is not past adding his own short comments as well as the copious quotes from writings of the time. I found my knowledge of Elizabethan England enlarged and some of what I thought I knew to be erroneous. I am looking forward to immersing myself in Restoration England having re-read and enjoyed my Mediaeval England not long ago.

Published by Vintage, part of Penguin Random House UK. Price £12.99

ISBN 978-0-099-5427-0

Midlands Ancestors - London & Home Counties Group

2026 Programme

Saturday 11th July

Speaker: **Dr. Sophie Kay**

Title: **Genetic Hide and Seek: Exploring Missing Ancestor Mysteries with Autosomal DNA**

Missing ancestor mysteries in our family tree – those perplexing blanks where an individual has defied identification in historical records – can seem like an insurmountable challenge. Yet if that missing ancestor lies within the most recent 6-7 generations of your pedigree, your autosomal DNA may hold the answer. This session will equip you with a clear strategy for tracing missing ancestors using autosomal DNA, no matter which provider you've tested with. Using a real-life case study, we'll walk through a four-step process for identifying an unknown forebear from genetic matches, and showcase some handy tools you can use along the way. Whether you're hunting down a single mystery ancestor, or are an adoptee looking to reconstruct a significant portion of your biological family tree, this strategy will keep you on course. It's time to make sense of those DNA matches and realise their problem-solving potential!

The talk will be followed by an informal buffet and the group AGM.

Saturday 10th October

Members Day: **A Brick Wall in My Tree: I solved one/I have one**

An opportunity for members to give a short presentation about how they solved a brick wall in their tree. What techniques did you use? Did it involve any little known archives or serious detective work? Alternatively tell the group about a brick wall you have that you would like some help to solve.

Venue:

LDS Hyde Park Family Search Centre

Address: 64-68 Princes Gate, Exhibition Road, South Kensington

Time: Doors open from 10:00 for an 11:00 start

Cost: Most of our meetings are free to attend but donations, towards the running of the group, are welcome

Please check <https://midland-ancestors.uk/events> for the latest event information

Group contact: Andy Startin; a.startin@midanc.uk

Midlands Ancestors is the public face of the Birmingham & Midland Society for Genealogy & Heraldry

Charity Registration No. 505916

TEA & TALK CLUB



LAST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

Jan 30	The Museum in 10 Items - Chosen by the Curator	Julie Miller
Feb 27	SOE and My Father's Life as a Secret Agent in WW2	Gary Weight & Nikki Bennett
Mar 27	Maldon's Shipbuilding Industry	David Patient
Apr 24	The Dengie Peninsular in WW2	David Nower
May 29	Captain Ann & The Maldon Grain Riots - 1629	Julie Miller
Jun 26	Carry On Spying - Cold War Intelligence & Espionage	Eleanor Ralston & Julie Miller
Jul 31	The Cockleshell Heroes - WW2 Commando Raid	Mark Anstey
Aug 28	The Fate of The Canadians in the Dieppe Raid 1942	Gary Weight
Sep 25	17 th Century Cooking - Flavours of the 17 th Century	Christine Brewster
Oct 30	Mikhail Kalashnikov's Weapon Engineering	Alex Pitt
Nov 27	Battle of The Bulge - Hitler's Last Roll of the Dice	Gary Weight
Dec 18	Maldon's Elizabethan Witches	Julie Miller

*Join us for informal mornings of fascinating talks and a cuppa
Some talks include access to artefacts that are not on general display*

Combined Military Services Museum

Station Road Maldon Essex

10:30am - 12:30pm ~ £7 includes refreshments

Please contact the museum for bookings www.cmsm.co.uk 01621 841826

Poppies On the Pier

By Linda Medcalf (ESFH 3879)

I belong to the Southchurch Park Ladies Group in the City of Southend-on-Sea. We meet on Tuesday afternoons, with about twenty members. In June 2025 our President, Bernice, gave us all a card. It said “We need your poppies for the celebration of Remembrance Day with poppies on Southend Pier”.

I managed to find some red wool and used the ‘60 stitch knitted poppy pattern’ together with black four-hole buttons or black wool centres. In all I made 145 poppies, plus a red and white and purple for an ‘Animals and Peace’ poppy and another two red and white ones for friends.

The poppies were planned to be exhibited on the pier from 5th until 16th November 2025, however this was extended for another week. My husband Richard and I, together with people from my exercise



PHOTO BY AUTHOR

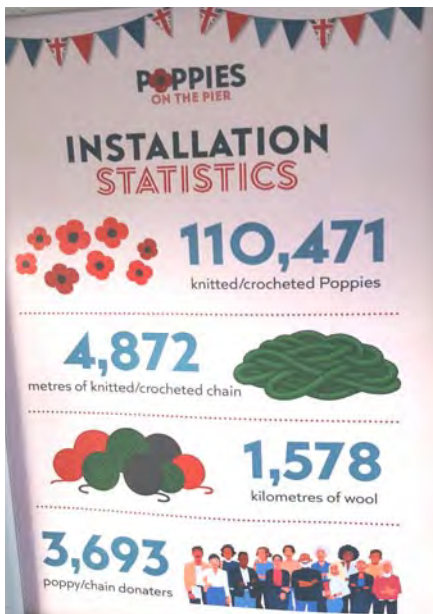


PHOTO BY HEATHER FEATHER ESFH

class, walked the pier on Remembrance Day on 11th November. An arch of poppies started and ended our journey there, with more on green crocheted lines on the rails. The many shelters had information about Queen Mary's Naval Hospital (now the Palace Hotel) and the three prison ships, *Ivernias*,

Saxonia and *Royal Edward* which were often at the end of the pier during the Great War.

During World War II the pier was named *HMS Leigh*, when taken over by the Royal Navy. Other articles included the Maunsell Forts near the mouth of the River Thames and some about the convoys formed off the pier head. On the pier there were over 110,471 hand-made poppies, with a 'Roll of Honour', naming both people and the names of groups who supplied them. The poppies had come from all over the world.

At the West End of the pier was a huge metal soldier, with bowed head and armed with a rifle, completely covered with poppies. There was one for every local soldier killed in either war.

It was very special to be there on that day.

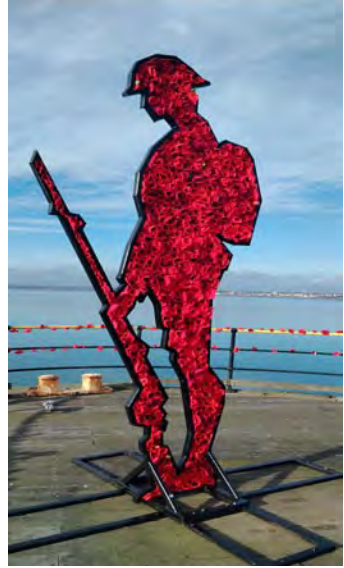


PHOTO BY MANDIE ADAMS ESFH

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Contributors Please Note

All members are welcome to submit material for publication in the membership magazine. When or whether it is published is the sole responsibility of the Editor. Non members may have material published at the discretion of the Editor.

Articles should be no longer than 1500 words unless by prior agreement with the Editor. Articles should be sent by email and if accompanied by graphical images the compliance with copyright terms and conditions of the image is the responsibility of the author. Members are required to provide their ESFH membership number on all correspondence. The article should be sent in Microsoft WORD® or similar format and created in Arial font point size 9, headings should be in point size 12. If images are included in the article they should also be sent as separate .jpg files. Material sent formatted for a page of A4 size will appear differently when presented in A5, which is the size of our pages. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Editor, editor@esfh.org.uk.

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Readers Please Note

Bolding of web addresses in this issue enables readers of the electronic issue to click on the hyperlink and be taken directly to the relevant website. Some hyperlinked addresses may change over time. If a web address does not function please let the Editor know by emailing editor@esfh.org.uk. Thank you.

Summaries of a Selection of Presentations given between December 2025 and January 2026

For details of the Branch Committee members please refer to
www.esfh.org.uk

Catch Up on Presentations

Some past presentations are available on our website in the Archive of Recordings:-

Members>Login>Activities> News and Events>Recordings

North East Essex Branch Meeting

December 2025

Quiz Time Again

Summarised by Gill Peregrine (ESFH 5204)

Our December meeting was marred by the fact that, neither Roger nor Paul were with us. Paul had taken Roger to hospital. We gathered together and David presented his two quizzes, which were quite difficult but very interesting. The first quiz was the identification of Essex parishes and the second was identifying events that took place in the 9 census years and 1939. We all learnt a lot. Then we broke for refreshments and continued talking about family history topics.

South-East Branch Meeting

January 2026

Can you hear the EKCO? Films presented by Reg Wells (ESFH 9422)

Summarised by Carole Mulroney (ESFH 33571)

Our first meeting of the New Year was a big dose of nostalgia looking back over the history and events surrounding the founding and operation of the EKCO radio etc works in Leigh and Southend, founded by E K Cole of course. We were treated to a series of films which had been literally a surprise find and which brought back many memories for those present. The quality may not have been brilliant but that didn't really matter - we all relived those cosy evenings around the fireside listening to our

EKCO machine. The entrepreneurial spirit of our forebears is always astounding as is their inventiveness and steadfast work ethic.

We saw the staff as they really were doing what may now seem mundane jobs but then were the height of mechanisation and technology.

EKCO is a massive deal in Southend and by showing these films we hope to have passed on some of their uniqueness, and indeed quaintness, to later generations.



SOUTH YORKSHIRE TIMES 30TH MARCH 1934

North East Essex Branch Meeting January 2026

An Ancestor who had an Unusual Death

Summarised by Gill Peregrine (ESFH 5204)

I began our January meeting with a few words about the passing of Roger and how much we will miss him. Paul was happy for me to do this and we were pleased that Paul was able to join us this month.

Our meeting was an in-house meeting. We gather in a circle, so that we can give a short talk on the given subject. This month the subject was 'An Ancestor who had had an Unusual Death'. This was extremely interesting and very varied, we began with a gunshot wound that turned to tetanus, moved on to an horrific train accident, also a murder victim found in a well, to mention just a few. At the end someone said it was fascinating but a bit depressing but that started a general discussion and we were all ok. I was asked by one of the group if we could have more of that sort of meeting as they were so interesting.

A New Chapter for Essex's Regimental Heritage

By the Editor

Press Release received too late for the December 2025 edition of this magazine.

The Essex Regiment Museum Trust (ERM) has announced that it will dissolve and transfer its extensive collection of objects into the ownership of the Royal Anglian Regiment Museum Trust (RARM), to be cared for by specialist military curators.

The Essex Regiment Museum collection consists of more than 50,000 items which tell the story of the County Regiment from its formation in 1751 through to its amalgamation into the East Anglian Regiment in 1958. The collection is currently housed in and managed by the Museum of Chelmsford, and a selection of its artefacts has been on display in a dedicated gallery within the museum since 1973.

This gallery will close on Sunday 4th January 2026 and a small selection of Chelmsford-related artefacts will be displayed elsewhere in the Museum of Chelmsford to continue telling the story of the Essex Regiment in Chelmsford.

Specialist military museum to take on collection

The Royal Anglian Regiment is the successor regiment to the Essex Regiment. The Royal Anglian Regiment charity supports serving or former members of the Royal Anglian Regiment. The museum of the regiment is located at IWM Duxford and shares the history of the regiment through artefacts, photographs, documents and other archive materials.

The decision to transfer the Essex Regiment Museum's collection into the ownership of the Royal Anglian Regiment Museum will help ensure the preservation of the collection for years to come. The move places the collection in the care of a dedicated military museum, with specialist curators to research and manage the artefacts.

Kate Reeder, Curatorial and Learning Manager at the Museum of Chelmsford, explains that this move for the Essex Regiment collection reflects the history of the regiment itself:

'This move for the Essex Regiment Museum is not unusual – we're seeing smaller regimental collections across the country being subsumed into larger military museums that are better placed to care for them. The move is also quite fitting in a way as it reflects the evolving history of the Essex Regiment, which by 1964 had amalgamated with other county regiments across England – including Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire – to become the Royal Anglian Regiment'.

'So, as the Essex Regiment Museum moves to the Royal Anglian Regiment Museum, I know that this nationally significant collection will really benefit from the outstanding military expertise within RARM's team'.

Chair of the Royal Anglian Regiment Museum Trust, Stephen Card, says the Royal Anglian Regiment Museum is working with the Museum of Chelmsford to ensure the Essex Regiment story continues to be shared:

'The Royal Anglian Regiment Museum is proud to assume custodianship of the Essex Regiment Museum collection. As we begin this next chapter, we remain committed to ensuring that this important story continues to be told. We are exploring how it can be meaningfully represented within the Museum of Chelmsford's permanent galleries, as well as working in collaboration with our own Museum at IWM Duxford and a wider network of partnering organisations'.

'We are looking forward to working with the trustees of the Essex Regiment Museum and the Museum of Chelmsford in the coming months to rationalise the collection and decide which items will remain in Chelmsford'.

Chair of the Essex Regiment Museum Trust, Dennis Vincent, is pleased that the story of the Essex Regiment will continue to be celebrated:

'It is vital that the legacy of the Essex Regiment and the incredible stories of its soldiers are preserved and shared with future generations'.

'That's why, as we start to wind down the Essex Regiment Museum Trust, I am proud to work with the Royal Anglian Regiment Museum who have committed to becoming the new custodian of the collection and ensuring the regiment's history will be maintained and celebrated for decades to come'.

The decanted gallery will then be repurposed into a flexible, multipurpose space that continues to share Chelmsford's story alongside the rest of the museum galleries. The space will provide increased opportunities to work with local community groups and schools and to expand the museum's temporary exhibitions programme.

☆ ☆ ☆

Essex County Cricket Club 150th Anniversary on 14th January 2026

By Colleen, Editor

David Pracy, who has written a book review in the past for the HISTORIAN, was on BBC Radio Essex earlier this year talking about the founding of the Essex County Cricket Club. Evidently on 14th January 1876 James Round the MP for East Essex and a colleague called a public meeting at the Shire Hall in Chelmsford and as a result of that meeting the Essex County Cricket Club was formed. Round was born in Colchester and was the son of Rev James Thomas Round and his wife Louisa (née Barlow). He was educated at Eton and Oxford University where he played cricket for the University in 1864. In 1867 Round inherited Birch Hall in Essex and in addition to his political career was a Justice of the Peace and Alderman for Essex County Council. He died at Birch Hall at the age of 74.

Society Information

For full information about the Society, please visit our website -
www.esfh.org.uk

Join us for our regular meetings and workshops. Some are online and others at branches. All branch meetings are open to all members and to the public. We require an entrance donation of £1 from members and £3.00 from non-members.

You will be notified by email of all events or you can visit the Events section of our website under the Activities Tab.

If you need help with your research, please contact Gill Peregrine gpesfh@gmail.com for one to-one sessions held at our Research Centre at the Essex Record Office. You will need an Archive Card to visit the centre.

See <https://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/research/visit-the-searchroom/>

Membership Rates

Annual membership of the Society runs from 1st April until 31st March. For rates see table below or our website.

Membership Category	Fee Payable (Paper Magazine)	Fee Payable (Electronic Magazine)
Single member living in UK	£22.00	£10.00
Single Member living outside UK	£35.00	£10.00

Further benefits of membership include:-

- A Research Centre at the Essex Record Office open on a regular basis with volunteers on duty.
- Access to Family History and DNA experts. DNA (GEDmatch) kit numbers can be added to our database to connect with other matches.
- Regular Magazine and Updates
- Online Meetings and Workshops
- Surname Interests - All members are able to update and advertise their own Surname Interests online
- Concessionary Subscription Rates for www.findmypast.co.uk
- Interactive Parish Map
- Access, anytime, to recorded presentations
- Unique Essex Transcriptions
- Access to publications from other family history societies

Society Information

Payment of Membership

You can join ESFH via our website or through the Parish Chest website (www.parishchest.com)

Payment on Line

If joining or renewing your membership online using PayPal you do not require a PayPal account and can pay with your credit or debit card. Under the New Membership or Renewal tab when presented with the 'Pay With PayPal' screen choose the bottom option 'Pay with Debit or Credit Card'. On the next page, after you have been asked to enter your email address, click 'Continue to Pay' where you will then be asked for your full card details to complete the payment.

Payment by cheque (Please see the announcement on page 21)

New members wishing to pay their membership fees by cheque should send an email, or write, to our membership secretary detailed below enabling her to send them a membership application form. A payment by cheque must be in GBP payable at a UK bank, in favour of the 'Essex Society for Family History' and crossed.

If renewing by cheque please send your payment to the Membership Secretary

Membership applications and queries should be sent by post to the ESFH Membership Secretary Miss Ann Turner 1 Robin Close Great Bentley Colchester CO7 8QH or by email to memsec@esfh.org.uk

Research Centre, Services and CDs by post

Our Research Centre is based at the Essex Record Office Wharf Road Chelmsford CM2 6YT and is open to both members of the Society and non-members from 1.00pm - 4.00pm on Tuesday and 10.00am - 1.00pm on Thursday where you will find volunteers on duty. You will need an Archive Card to visit the centre. See Essex Record Office <https://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/research/visit-the-searchroom/>

We offer a service to search indexes and datasets held in our Research Centre. For details and costs of our holding please see our website under the Research tab/ Enquiries and Services/Research and Courier Services. These products are available to order under the SHOP tab where you will also find CD's for sale and payment details for all orders.

For all enquiries regarding our Search Services please email searches@esfh.org.uk

Society Information

President: The Lord Petre KCVO

Patron: Rt Rev Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani

Vice Presidents 2025/2026

Ann Turner

Ann Church

**The Trustees and Executive Officers of the Society
(who hold bi-monthly meetings) –**

Chair:	Andrea Hewitt	Email: chair@esfh.org.uk
Vice Chair:	Toni Neobard	Email: vicechair@esfh.org.uk
Secretary:	Meryl Rawlings	Email: honsec@esfh.org.uk
Treasurer:	Tanya Sewell	Email: hontreasurer@esfh.org.uk

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Ron Knights Proof Reader	
John Young Transcription Co-ordinator	john.young@esfh.org.uk

The following Branch Chairs or their Representatives have been elected by their branch members and serve as ex-officio members of the Executive Committee

Gill Peregrine Chair North-East Essex Branch
Eric Judd Chair South-East Essex Branch
Mandie Adams Representative South-East Essex Branch
Elizabeth Cox Chair West Essex Branch



The FHF Really Useful Family History Show is coming to East Anglia!

AGRA, Alde Valley Suffolk FH Group, Bedfordshire FHS, Burwell Museum, Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire FHS, Cambridgeshire Archive Services, Cambridgeshire Collection, Cromwell Museum, FamilySearch, Family Tree Maker, East of London FHS, Essex Society for FH, Family History Federation, Fenland FHS, FIBIS, Hertfordshire Archives, Hertfordshire FHS, Lincolnshire FHS, London, Westminster & Middlesex FHS, Northamptonshire FHS, Nuneaton & Warwickshire FHS, Overdale Postcards, Orders & Medals Research Society, Peterborough & District FHS, Pharos Tutors, RA Longley Publications, Romany & Traveller FHS, Suffolk FHS, This Way Books & Cassini Maps, WeAre.xyz

10AM - 4.30PM

**Burgess Hall, Westwood Road, St Ives,
Cambridgeshire, PE27 6WU**

What3words: ///rash.sharp.remaining

#RUFHSSstIves2026

LIVE IN ST IVES APRIL 18TH 2026



Where We Meet

North East Essex Branch

Venue: Oyster Room
Hythe Community Centre
1 Ventura Drive Colchester CO1 2FG

Meetings: see website for details



South East Essex Branch

Venue: Avenue Baptist Church Hall
Milton Road Westcliff on Sea SS0 7JX

Meetings: see website for details

West Essex Branch

Venue: St Johns Arts & Recreation
Centre Market Street
Harlow CM17 0AJ

Meetings: see website for details



Headquarters

Venue: Galleywood Heritage Centre
Margaretting Road
Chelmsford CM2 8TR

Meetings: see website for details