



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 made 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.



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!



Colleen Devenish
Editor
editor@esfh.org.uk



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.



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.



Ian Fulcher
Production Manager
ian.fulcher@esfh.org.uk

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 to find out what is involved email Colleen the Editor, on editor@esfh.org.uk and she will contact you.

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 would 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 would 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.

☆ ☆ ☆

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.

Could
this be
you ?

We'd love to
welcome you to the
team!

The Essex Family Historian

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PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Copy deadline **30th September 2026** for material to be considered for the December 2026 edition of the magazine

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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 22 August 2026 2.30 pm BST	London burials and where to find them (Hybrid) - A talk by John Hanson One of the biggest problems facing family historians is trying to track down the burial place of an ancestor who died in London which is significantly larger now in area than the original definition (the principals discussed can be used in other large areas).	St Johns Art & Recreation Centre, Market Street, Harlow CM17 0AJ
Saturday 12 Sept 2026 2.30 pm BST	AGM + Which Ancestor Would You Not Want To Meet and Why (Hall Only) - Short talks by the members.	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre, 1 Ventura Drive, Colchester CO1 2FG
Wednesday 23 Sept 2026 7.15 pm BST	Breaking Down Brick Walls in Your Family History Research A talk by Mark Bailey. Every family historian reaches a point where the trail seems to go cold. In this practical and inspiring talk, Mark Bayley shows how to overcome common stumbling blocks and approach difficult research problems from a fresh angle. Discover new and innovative search strategies to help locate elusive relatives, break through dead ends and uncover records you may have missed. Mark will also explore specialist and lesser-used record collections that can fill in the gaps left by standard sources, helping you build a richer picture of your ancestors' lives.	Online only
Saturday 26 Sept 2026 2.30 pm BST	What Happened to Lucy? - A talk by Ian Waller. Before 1927 and legal adoption what happened to the unwanted child? Even after 1927 children were exploited, although supposedly cared for by institutions and well caring organisations. This talk looks at the plight of adoptees, foundlings, orphans and the Empire children (Child Migrants), essentially through the 19th & 20th centuries. The talk will be followed by the Branch AGM.	St Johns Art & Recreation Centre Market Street Harlow CM17 0AJ and Online

Saturday 3 October 2026 2.30 pm BST	The Theatres and Cinemas of Southend (Hall + Recording) - A talk by Chris Izod	Avenue Baptist Church Hall, Milton Road, Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 7JX
Saturday 10 October 2026 2.30 pm GMT	Dr. Salter (1841-1932) of Tolleshunt D'Arcy – A Larger-than-Life Character (Hybrid) - A talk by Stephen Nunn Dr. John Henry Salter was a truly remarkable man – one of England's last eccentrics. He lived nearly all his life in the village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy and achieved so much. He left his mark in very many sectors and his successes can be measured by some quite staggering, almost unbelievable statistics. Listen to Stephen tell his story.	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre, 1 Ventura Drive, Colchester CO1 2FG
Saturday 17 October 2026 1.30 pm GMT	Society AGM Update by Executive Committee showing new features for members followed at 2.00pm by AGM and at 2.30pm by DNA presentation with Q&A session.	Online only
Tuesday 27 October 2026 7.30 pm GMT	What Are The Odds? DNA Painter - by Jonny Perl . Jonny will explain how to use 'What are the Odds?', a tool that can help solve puzzles using DNA matches alongside family trees. The talk will address the types of mystery it can help solve, the information you need to have assembled before you can start and what the tool can and cannot tell you.	Online only
Saturday 14 Nov 2026 2.30 pm GMT	Grey Friars – Family Home To Hotel Via 100 Years of Education (Hybrid) - A talk by Alan Skinner . Alan will outline the development of the site from Roman times to the present day. Material to be presented includes period maps, illustrations, photographs and documents – including census returns.	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>

ESFH's New Website is Here/Coming

By Jeff Porter – IT Committee Chair (ESFH 33285)

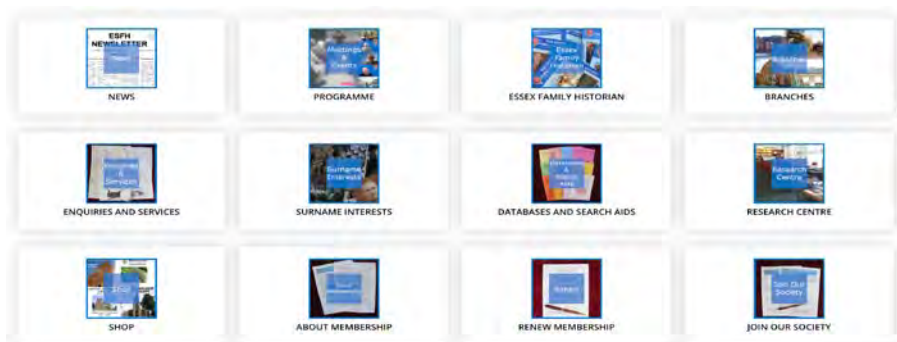
The ESFH Executive Committee is delighted to announce the launch of our new website (in the coming months). In this article, we'll guide you through the key design choices and explain how to navigate the new site, with some comparisons to the legacy site that is now being retired. From the outset, we wanted to preserve the familiar feel of the original site, including its colour palette, menu structure, and core content. At the same time, the new platform has given us the opportunity to introduce a range of improvements and enhanced features made possible by Beachshore's technical expertise. Below, you'll see the old and new home pages for comparison. Please note that the images shown are taken from our preview site, so there may be some differences on the live version.

EXISTING

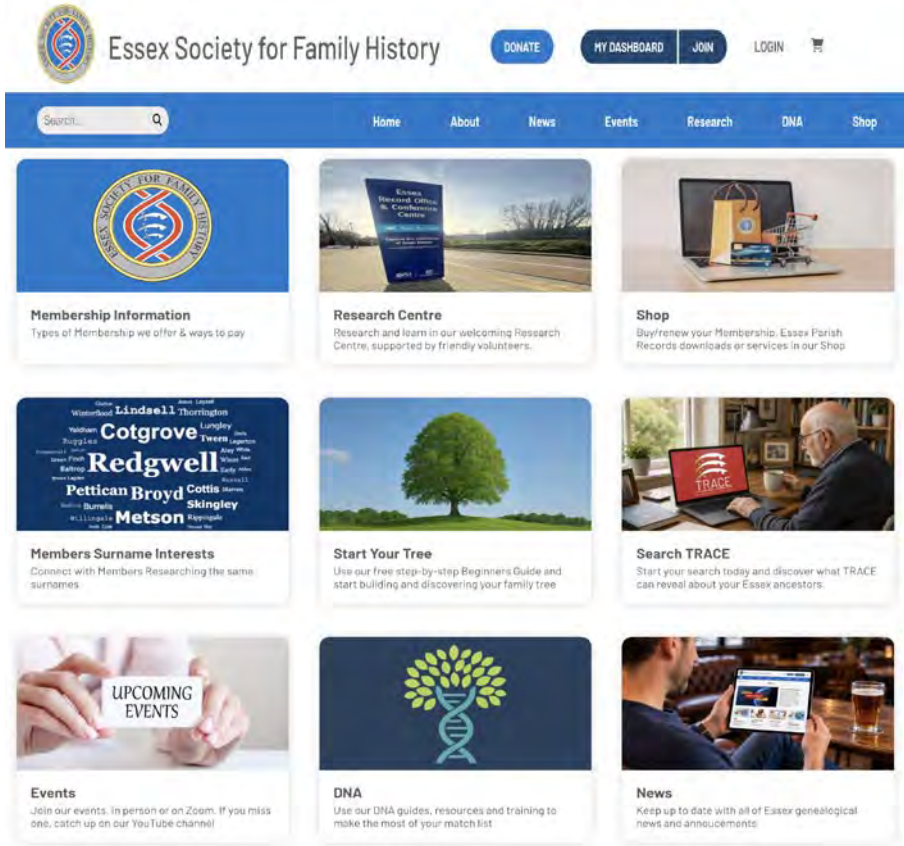


Thaxted Guildhall - built by guild of Cutlers in 1390.

Crossing Temple Barley Barn - built c1137.

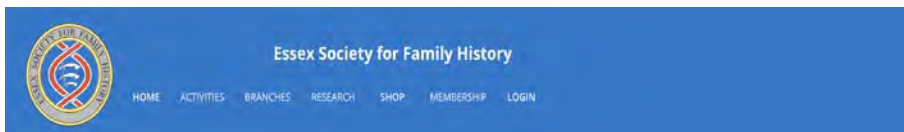


FUTURE



You'll quickly notice that the new website keeps the familiar tile-based layout, making it easy to find your way around from the moment you arrive. On the new site, each tile comes to life when you hover over it, highlighted by a blue shadow to show that it's clickable and will take you straight to that section. Tiles are just one of several ways to explore the site. You can also use the menu in the blue ribbon at the top of the screen, follow the breadcrumb trail on each page to retrace your steps, or use the search bar if you want to jump directly to a topic or page. From the very beginning, one of our key design goals was to make navigation as simple as possible, with a three-click approach that helps you reach the information you need quickly and easily.

EXISTING



FUTURE



Essex Society for Family History

DONATE

MY DASHBOARD

JOIN

LOGIN



Search...

Home

About

News

Events

Research

DNA

Shop

We have kept the striking photographs of well-known Essex buildings as a focal point on the homepage but streamlined the design so that a single image takes centre stage. Rather than changing automatically, the image refreshes only when you return to the homepage after visiting another page, creating a calmer and more consistent browsing experience. One project team member has also suggested adding members' favourite photographs of their ancestors and old photos of local places. It is an exciting idea, and we are keen to explore whether this could become a future enhancement to bring an even more personal touch to the site.

EXISTING



Thaxted Guildhall - built by guild of Cutlers in 1390.



Cressing Temple Barley Barn - built c1137.

FUTURE



The Fox Inn, Finchingfield - built in the 18th Century.

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

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

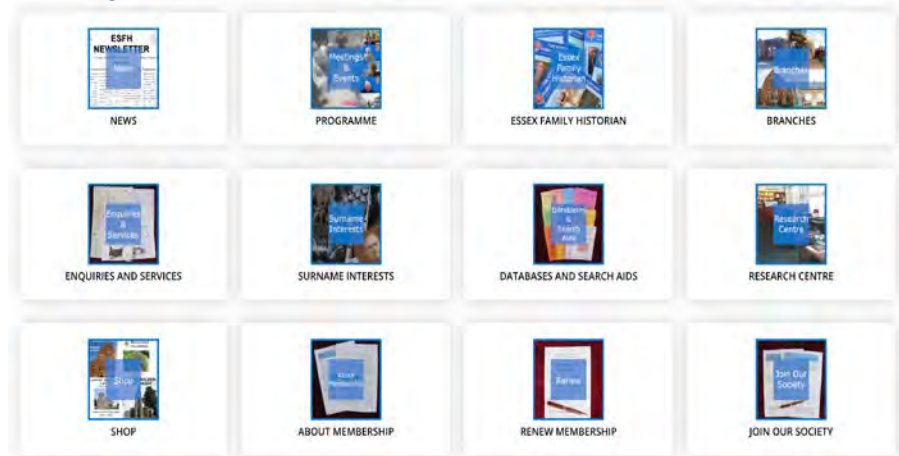
The monthly email newsletter, members interests database, online forums and events provide opportunities to connect with other members across the globe.

More about the society

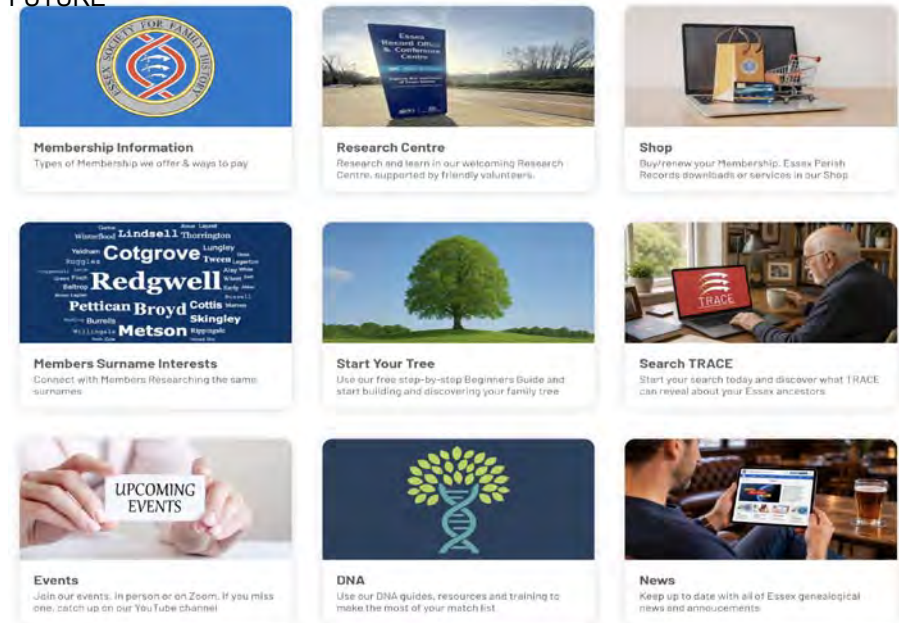
Members benefits

As noted earlier, we have kept the familiar tile-based approach as one of the quickest ways to reach a subject area. The new site also offers several alternative routes, making it easier to arrive at the same destination without repeatedly returning to the top menu and drilling down again. For example, the Members' Surname Interest page can now be reached from at least three different places across the site. To make navigation even more intuitive, each tile includes introductory or explanatory text, giving you a clearer sense of where it will take you before you click.

EXISTING



FUTURE



Another important change is the rebranding of the old genealogical database as TRACE (Transcribed Records, Archives, Collections for Essex). TRACE brings all our record sets together in one place, making them much easier to search. We have also integrated our parish map with TRACE, so when you locate a parish on the new interactive Google-based map, a link will take you directly to the TRACE search form with the location already entered. You can then choose the type of search you want to carry out. In addition, we have added Soundex, the longest-established phonetic search system, to the TRACE search options.

EXISTING

**Essex Parish Map**

Search for Places and Parishes using our interactive Map linked to our TRACE databases

FUTURE

**Search TRACE**

Start your search today and discover what TRACE can reveal about your Essex ancestors.

So, what are the biggest changes members will notice? One of the most important is the introduction of two-factor authentication for all logons, following advice from our cyber security consultants. When you sign in, you will receive an email containing a verification code to enter in the pop-up box and a 'magic link' you can click to open the site already logged in. With password data breaches making headlines so often, including the 23andMe major incident in 2023 this added layer of protection is an important step in keeping members' accounts secure. We have also put other safeguards in place and are actively exploring passkeys for devices that support them. Alongside these enhanced security measures, every member will have access to their personal My Dashboard, a dedicated page where you can check your details, review your security activity, add, amend or delete your Members' Surname Interests registrations and view any events you have booked through the site in one place.

**My Details**

Membership Details & Communication Preferences.

**My Security**

Cyber Security settings & Data Protection

**My Surname Interests**

Add, view, amend or delete your Surname Interests here

**My Events**

View all the events you have registered for here in one place.

I hope you are as excited as we are about the new website. While we may not have everything perfect from the outset, we warmly welcome your feedback and ideas as we continue to improve and expand the site. Ongoing support will be available to help members make the transition smoothly, including preview sessions and online Q&A events. Finally, I would like to thank the entire project team and our User Acceptance testers for their patience, hard work and determination in helping to create a website of which we can all be proud.

☆ ☆ ☆

ESFH Accounts for 2025-2026

Society Financial Accounts Transparency Ahead of the AGM

In accordance with our Constitution, we are pleased to inform all members of the Society financial accounts for the year 2025 - 2026. Please see the accounts on pages 12 - 13. These will also be made available on our official website at least 56 days before the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

This ensures that every member has ample time to review the accounts, providing an opportunity to understand the financial standing of the Society and ask questions.

Date Saturday October 17th 2026

Agenda:

- 1.30pm Update by Executive Committee showing the recent new features for members
- 2.00pm AGM
- 2.30pm Making the most of the DNA Section on the New ESFH Website - A guided tour of the new DNA resources, followed by an open Q&A on the website and general DNA research.

The Meeting will be held on Zoom

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/MfWrAljGQ0uKMyQHLvQunA>

If you have any queries or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Treasurer via email: **hontreasurer@esfh.org.uk**

Your participation and engagement are vital in shaping the future of our Society.

We look forward to seeing you online at the AGM.

Tanya Sewell (ESFH 308576)

Treasurer

ESSEX SOCIETY FOR FAMILY HISTORY
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

	Notes	2026 £	2025 £
Incoming resources			
Subscriptions		21,895	19,438
Sales	2	560	323
Services supplied	3	139	58
Donations		1,428	1,497
Refreshments	4		194
Interest received	5	955	1,350
Investment income		1,966	1,908
Royalties	6	2,306	2,391
Miscellaneous	7	1,810	1,635
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		31,059	28,794
Resources expended			
Insurance		559	655
Merchandising	8	1,186	100
Depreciation	9	580	1,570
Meetings in Essex	10	1,974	1,658
Hire of accommodation		3,222	3,282
The Essex Family Historian	11	8,724	10,449
Postage, telephone, printing & stationery		815	612
Donations (Victoria CH – Essex)		530	750
ESFH Award		500	500
Projects		2,988	3,213
Credit card charge (PayPal)		329	419
Internet/computer maintenance		2,055	166
Bank charges		91	91
Miscellaneous expenses		1,469	917
Website development		3,380	10,175
Travel		761	436
Zoom		72	204
		29,236	35,197
Examiners fees		1,000	1,907
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		30,236	37,104
Net income/(expenditure before gains & losses on investments		823	(8,310)
Net gains/(losses) on investment		(5,703)	(3,269)
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR YEAR CARRIED TO GENERAL FUND		(4,880)	(11,579)

ESSEX SOCIETY FOR FAMILY HISTORY

BALANCE SHEET – 31 MARCH 2026

	Notes	<u>£</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>£</u>
FIXED ASSETS	13			560		713
CURRENT ASSETS						
STOCK						
Library	12	1,714			2,141	
Books/CDs		0			461	
		<u>1,714</u>			<u>2,602</u>	
Investments	16	61,194			66,897	
Bank balances and cash in hand	14	54,000			54,328	
Debtors & Prepayments		887			403	
		<u>117,795</u>			<u>124,230</u>	
CREDITORS and ACCRUALS						
Amounts falling due within one year						
Sundry creditors and accruals	15	8,960			10,668	
		<u>—</u>			<u>—</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS				108,835		113,562
NET ASSETS				<u>109,395</u>		<u>114,275</u>
REPRESENTED BY:						
GENERAL FUND – UNRESTRICTED						
Balance at 1 April 2025				114,275		125,854
Net Surplus for the year	17			(4,880)		(11,579)
Balance at 31 March 2026				<u>109,395</u>		<u>114,275</u>

Approved by the Committee of Trustees and signed on its behalf by:

Chair

Date of approval:

ESFH Research Centre Upgrade Project Update

By Elizabeth Cox (ESFH 2192), Tanya Sewell (ESFH 30856) Paul Stirland (ESFH 27633) and Chris Stringer (ESFH 31604)

Since the beginning of 2026, the Essex Society for Family History has been undertaking an important project to modernise and enhance the ESHF Research Centre located within the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford.

The project was formally launched in late January and organised around four key work streams:

- Improving the physical environment
- Modernising IT and research facilities
- Achieving FamilySearch Affiliate Library status
- Recruiting and training additional volunteers

While there is still work outstanding, the progress made in just a few months has been impressive.

Transforming the Research Environment

The first priority was to make the best possible use of the space available within the Research Centre.

Over the years, the Research Centre had accumulated a variety of surplus equipment, outdated technology and materials that were no longer actively supporting researchers. Tanya Sewell led the work stream team which undertook a comprehensive review of the space, removing unnecessary items and reorganising the layout to create a cleaner, more welcoming and practical research environment.

Working within the constraints of the furniture and facilities provided within the Essex Record Office, the team has successfully increased the usable workspace available to visitors while creating a tidier and more professional setting for visitors, members and volunteers.

The result is a Research Centre that is already noticeably more attractive, functional and conducive to productive family history research.

New Technology for Better Research

A second work stream focused on upgrading the Centre's technology.

One of the earliest achievements was the replacement of the ageing single-screen computers with three modern dual-screen research workstations. These provide a significantly improved user experience and allow researchers to work more efficiently when consulting records, databases, maps and family trees.

Paul Stirland (IT Lead) also installed an independent high-speed internet connection for the Research Centre. This dedicated connection provides the technical foundation required for the FamilySearch Affiliate Library application.

This infrastructure investment represents a major step forward and ensures that the Research Centre is equipped for the future.

FamilySearch Affiliate Library Status

Once the dedicated internet connection was installed, Elizabeth Cox, who leads the Affiliate Library work stream, was able to submit the Society's formal application to become a FamilySearch Affiliate Library. ESHF received approval from FamilySearch within days!

On 10th June, Paul set up access on the new PCs which allowed the Research Centre to be formally listed as an Affiliate Library. Members and visitors can now search additional FamilySearch collections, records and images that are not available from home.

Achieving Affiliate Library status is a major enhancement to the services available at the Research Centre and directly supports the Society's charitable aim of promoting the study of family history.

Building a Stronger Volunteer Team

The most important work stream of all has been investment in our volunteers.

A modern Research Centre depends not only on facilities and technology but also on knowledgeable and enthusiastic volunteers who can support researchers and help visitors make the most of the resources available.

Chris Stringer, Jill Gooding and Gill Peregrine have been leading efforts to recruit additional volunteers and develop the training and support arrangements needed to help them succeed in their roles.

Their work is helping to build a sustainable volunteer team capable of supporting both current and future activities within the Research Centre.

Could You Volunteer?

Although excellent progress has been made, there is still more to do and we are keen to hear from members who may be interested in becoming part of the Research Centre volunteer team.

Volunteering offers an excellent opportunity to meet fellow family historians, share knowledge and experience, develop new skills, and help others make discoveries about their family history.

Volunteers also benefit from access to the Research Centre's growing range of facilities and resources and become part of a friendly and supportive team dedicated to helping others explore their Essex roots. If you live within reasonable travelling distance of Chelmsford and would like to find out more about volunteering opportunities, we would be delighted to hear from you, email chris.stringer@esfh.org.uk.

Enclosure, Exclusion, and the Making of Rural Essex 1650 - 1900

By Lisa Dyer (ESFH 33951)

When we think about rural Essex, we often picture charming villages, quaint churches, and picturesque farms. However, this idyllic image, often highlighted by estate agents and in whimsical headlines, hides a more complex story. It's a tale of enclosure, exclusion, and the struggles of poor families trying to hold onto their place in the countryside. Beyond the work of academics, we seldom see the harsh realities of extreme poverty, disease, and hardship that were once commonplace. From the 1600s to the late 1800s, the lives of Essex's rural poor were dramatically changed by the evolving relationship between land, law, and parish authority. Enclosure restricted access to shared resources, while laws about poverty and settlement increasingly controlled where the poor could live, work, and seek help. These changes didn't just affect farming; they also reshaped how families survived, where they settled, and the local landscape of life.



A SQUATTER'S COTTAGE

I'm currently working on my PhD at the University of Essex, and my research dives into the lives of the rural landless poor. I'm exploring how they reacted to the changes around them, especially as agricultural advancements took place and they gradually lost their common and customary rights. I'm particularly focused on how they responded to enclosure, which acted as a form of exclusion.

The late Dr Oliver Rackham's distinction between 'Ancient Countryside' and 'Planned Countryside' is really helpful for understanding how landscapes have changed over time. In Essex, much of the land was part of an older landscape, marked by small communities, ancient hedgerows, varied farming practices, and winding roads. This is quite different from places like Northamptonshire, which maintained open field systems until the seventeenth century. In contrast, Essex started moving towards private enclosure as early as the 15th century, often through agreements. The farming economy there revolved around wood-pasture, scattered farms, and small fields bordered by hedges or ditches. These were usually linked to dispersed settlements rather than large, open fields. In the northwest, early hedgerow fields

reduced the need for later formal acts. These early informal enclosures were often tied to improving common lands rather than large field systems.

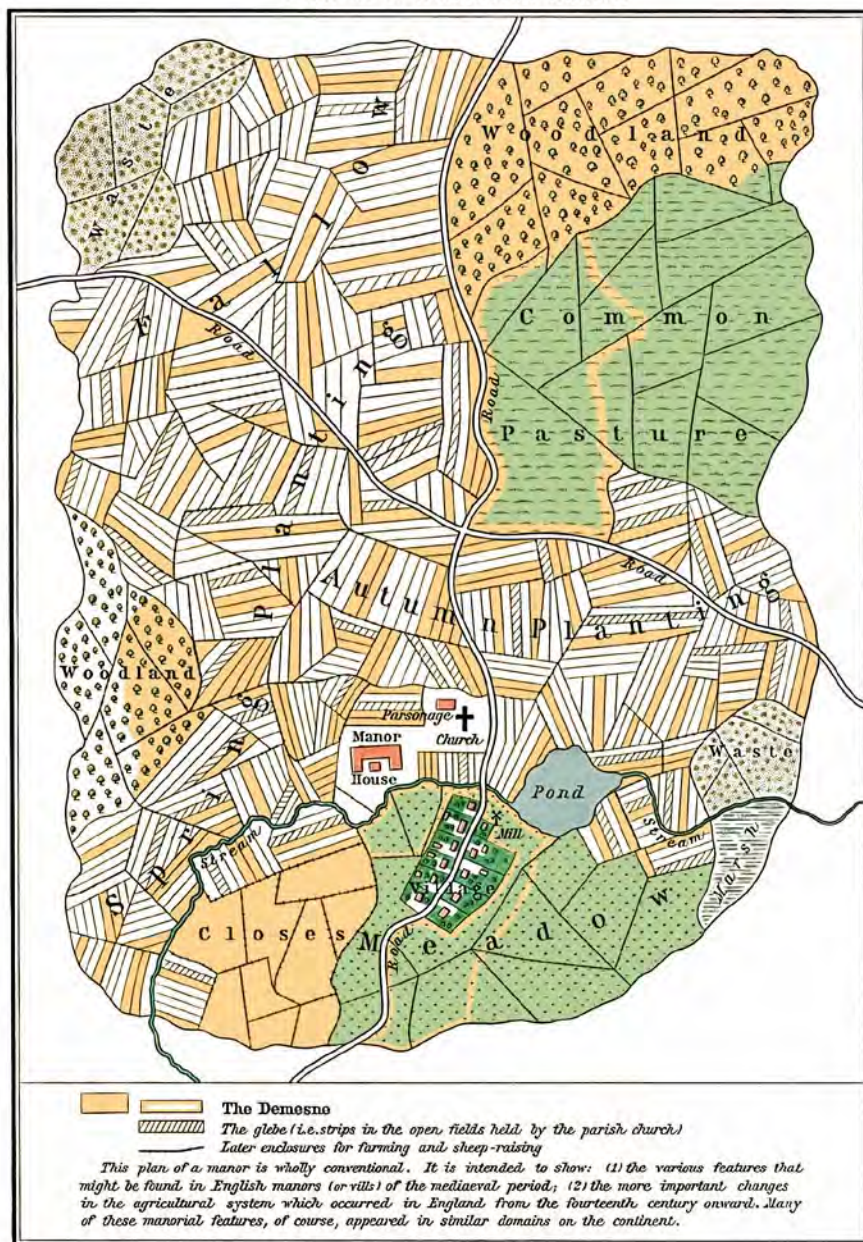
Over time, the way rural Essex was organized changed a lot due to the enforcement of the final planned enclosures. These changes happened parish by parish, thanks to laws and local governance, and they really reshaped the landscape. It wasn't just about how the land looked; it also affected who could use it, live on it, and stay close to their work. In the past, common rights were a boon for cottagers and labourers, but these planned enclosures gradually turned land into private property controlled by larger landowners. If you're digging into family history, this might explain why some families seem to disappear from one parish, pop up in another, or linger on the edges of parish records. Enclosure, whether through private agreements or Acts of Parliament, worked alongside settlement laws and the New Poor Law, influencing how labouring families moved and the support they received. The way these laws were applied varied a lot between parishes, depending on local officials, landowners, and attitudes toward poverty. In parishes with limited housing for labourers, families might have had to travel far for work or rely on informal housing. On the other hand, open parishes could face overcrowding and poor living conditions due to population pressure. In both scenarios, the poor had to navigate a system that often saw them as burdens rather than as part of the community.

Squatter settlements, or informal housing, were a pretty practical solution to the pressures people faced. Families would set up their homes on unused land, like waste ground, the edges of woodlands, or even by the roadside. These spots were close to work and offered a bit of freedom from the parish system. Most of these settlements were informal, sometimes they were allowed, and occasionally they even grew into more stable communities. Whether they lasted or not really depended on the goodwill of the landowner. The homes themselves were often just simple one-room huts, put together with whatever materials were handy in the area. The Rev. James Fraser noted that cottages of the labouring poor were often –

'It is impossible to exaggerate the ill effects of such a state of things in every aspect – physical, social, economic, moral, intellectual. Physically, a ruinous, ill-drained cottage, cribbed, cabin'd, confined, and overcrowded, generates any amount of disease, fevers of every type, catarrh, rheumatism, as well as intensifies to the utmost that tendency to scrofula and phthisis which, from their frequent intermarriages and their low diet, abound so largely among the poor'.

Imagine cottages of all shapes and sizes, each with its own story. Now, think about the huts that sprang up overnight, known as the 'one night house'. John Broad, in his work 'The Squatter Economy of the English Countryside: Building New Landless Communities in England, c. 1600 – 1900', gives us some fascinating numbers. He estimated that from 1520 to 1700, around 300,000 houses were built on common lands. Then, in the 18th and early 19th centuries, another 400,000 were added. How did local authorities react to these new settlements? Well, their responses varied quite a bit. Some were indifferent, while others imposed fines. Eventually, they found a way to profit by enforcing ground rents on these properties.

Plan of a Mediaeval Manor.



IMAGES FROM THE AUTHOR

Even in tough conditions, squatter communities found ways to thrive by working, growing small crops, trading, and using local resources. They weren't just illegal settlements; they were examples of how people adapt. Take, for instance, places like Godshillwood and Woodgreen in the New Forest. David Moody's work there uncovered stories of communities that eventually became stable settlements. These examples show that informal living arrangements can evolve into a permanent lifestyle, rather than just being a short-term solution.

Essex holds a special place because it's in a region where the ancient countryside stuck around longer than in many other parts of England. This makes it a great spot for exploring how things like enclosure, settlement restrictions, and poor relief impacted everyday folks over time. The area also provides a rich local historical backdrop for looking into the dynamics between landowners, parish authorities, and the landless poor. For those interested in family history, it's not just about the historical landscapes. It's also about uncovering hidden family stories. Parish registers, vestry minutes, poor law records, maps, census returns, and manorial documents can all hold clues about families who lived in squatter communities or had to move due to enclosure pressures. These records can help piece together lives that might otherwise be hard to trace.

In my research, I'm diving deep into both archival and published evidence to uncover and understand the past. I'm particularly interested in studying squatters to see how families adapted, how local authorities reacted, and how communities managed to keep going. Already, I am finding names and places that point to both single huts and larger settlements. For me, this is the truly thrilling part of my journey. It's all about discovering names, tracing them through records, and bringing them back into focus, away from the 'bigger' history that often takes centre stage. That's why, after gathering all this information, it's crucial to start piecing together the story using case studies from various locations. These case studies will allow me to examine specific communities as centres of focus and understand how legislation impacted them both before and after it was implemented. By combining qualitative evidence with demographic data, I aim to capture both the structural changes and the human experiences behind them.

The history of enclosure in Essex isn't just about fields being reorganized; it's about people being moved, excluded, and having to adapt. Squatter settlements highlight how landless families carved out spaces for themselves in a countryside increasingly dominated by private ownership and legal restrictions. This topic is particularly interesting for those keen on family and local history, as it reminds us that our ancestors might have lived in informal, short-lived, or poorly documented settlements. It also shows that poor rural families weren't just passive victims of change. They adapted, resisted, negotiated, and, when possible, built their own communities. So, studying enclosure and squatter settlements in Essex helps us uncover lives often missing from traditional histories. It paints a fuller picture of the Essex countryside, shaped not only by landowners and laws but also by the creativity and determination of the poor.

I would like to thank the Executive Committee and wider membership for awarding me the Essex Society for Family History prize. The prize money will be especially appreciated when I need to use the Essex Record Office to cover fees for copying, photography and other expenses. I look forward to sharing my journey with you and revealing the names and lives of those often excluded and marginalised through poverty from the wider social history record.

Note from the Editor - see the photograph on the inside of the back cover, Lisa being presented with her ESFH Student Award by our Chair Andrea Hewitt on 16th May 2026.

☆ ☆ ☆

Nominations for Honorary Officers and Members of the Executive Committee

Nominations for the Honorary Officers and members of the Executive Committee, signed by two paid-up members of the Society, should be sent in writing (or via email) to the Secretary, to be received not less than 28 days before the date of the AGM meeting.

For those of you looking to join the Executive Committee of ESFH you will need to be a fully paid-up member and then have completed the nomination form for Officers and Executive Committee on our website.

This form can be found, once logged in, by following Activities>ESFH Info>ESFH Document Repository>Forms >Form06 for Officers & Executive Committee.

Hon Secretary
honsec@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

Angela's Web Finds

By Angela Parr-Burman (ESFH 32016)

Family research is sometimes like being a detective especially when certain information is missing. Here are a few websites relevant to the "missing" theme.

In England and Wales, censuses prior to 1841 were primarily for statistical purposes and for measuring population growth and therefore do not provide the detail given in future censuses. However, some results have survived mainly due to the University of Essex's research, see Pre-1841 Census Records -1801 Census,1811 Census,1821 Census,1831 Census UK. <https://www.familyhistory.co.uk/pre-1841-census-records/> The 1931 England and Wales census returns were lost in 1942 and the 1941 census did not take place.

The Irish Census returns from 1821-1891 were destroyed leaving only the 1901 and 1911 returns existing. However, some information can be obtained from Home-Virtual Treasury of Ireland. <https://www.virtualestate.ie/> VRTI is an all-island and international research partnership <https://www.virtualestate.ie/partners> hosted by Trinity College Dublin, working to reconstruct the Public Record Office of Ireland. Free. See also the National Library of Ireland parish registers <https://registers.nli.ie/> which go way back. Irish genealogy records cover from 1864 forward to within a hundred years for the birth records. All records are free to view.

The first Irish census was carried out in 1766, <https://www.virtualestate.ie/gold-seams/1766-religious-census> (part) might be of interest. In addition, the Register of Deeds Project Ireland (<https://irishdeedsindex.net/>) was set up to help those searching for Deeds at Dublin. Records exist from 1709 and there are currently over 650,000 index entries.

On 18th April 2026 the 1926 Census of the Irish Free State was released. See www.nationalarchives.ie

As for the US, the 1890 census is mostly missing but Amy Johnson Crow has suggested 8 sources to fill the gap. <https://www.amyjohnsoncrow.com>.

England & Wales Parish records are not universally complete so it's worth looking at Bishops Transcripts which were introduced in 1597. The Home Page at <https://www.ukbmd.org.uk> also has links to free trials of Ancestry, MyHeritage and Findmypast.

Moving on to missing people: apart from those deliberately not completing census returns, transcription errors can sometimes result in mis-spelt names. Sometimes people disappeared perhaps from relationship breakdowns (or embarking on bigamous relationships) and DNA results could help identify missing ancestors. See the ESFH Zoom lectures on Brick Walls for further help. People otherwise away from home could have been a hospital or asylum patient and some institutions have retained information on residents. For example, Mendip Hospital Cemetery, Wells, Somerset had patients referred from local workhouses. Friends of MHC is a charity of patients, photos (<https://www.mendiphospitalcemetery.org.uk>). The site describes activities e.g. music. Visits to cemetery possible, donations welcome. Not too far

away, the former Glenside Hospital in Bristol (<https://glensidemuseum.org.uk/>) is now a museum with events and exhibitions dedicated to inspiring change in those with mental health problems. Records go back to 1861. Volunteers and donations welcome and an annual pass is only £5.

Also useful is the Who Do You Think You Are magazine tutorial on asylums (<https://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/>).

The website www.workhouses.org.uk set up by Peter Higginbotham has a huge amount of information on Workhouses and links to associated subjects. Also includes books for sale. Another book on the Workhouse is Bristol Workhouse in Eastville – 100 Fishponds Road by Roger Ball, Di Parkin & Steve Mills. It was written to commemorate inmates whose remains were found nearby and have now been reburied. The book provides a comprehensive overview of workhouses. See Bristol Radical History Group www.brh.org.uk for other publications and videos.

Maybe your ancestor was missing from home because he/she was a prison inmate? <https://www.digitalpanopticon.org> contains some Prison Registers from 1770-1951 e.g. Millbank and Pentonville plus information on other resources. A joint initiative by the University of Hull and Leeds Beckett University is a good starting point with helpful guides on crime and punishment (1800-1914):- <https://ourcriminalancestors.org/>. See also the section at the National Archives <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> which also provides a video on Prisoner of War Records especially those of WWII. Also found was Home-Online Museum of Prisoners of War (<https://www.prisonersofwarmuseum.com>) research, activities and events. Donations. The International Committee of the Red Cross has records relating to WWI; accounts, life in the camps and postcards showing pictures of camps from Tunisia to Germany and the UK. The Imperial War Museum (<https://www.iwm.org.uk>) also has many records and a guide to get researchers started.

Staying on Missing (from conventional homes) are people following Alternative Lifestyles such as those living on boats. The Canal & River Trust (<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk>) has produced a booklet on all aspects of navigation history. The Archives are currently closed but the team will answer queries by email.

On the same theme, the Romany and Traveller Family History Society (<https://rtfhs.org.uk>) is dedicated to helping individuals trace relevant ancestry. Photo gallery as well as publications and events. Membership £12 p.a.

Thinking of those children whose parents had died or were absent, Legal Clarity (<https://legalclarity.org/>) have a useful guide on finding old orphanage records of children who were historically in care. In addition, the Foundling Museum in Brunswick Square, London (<https://foundlingmuseum.org.uk>) offers an opportunity for exploring stories of love and loss through art and objects. Open Tue- Sat, free for under 21's.

There are quite a few websites devoted to people missing at sea. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (<https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil>) concentrates on Americans. I found a Lost at Sea Remembrance Book which might also help (<https://www.lostatsea.org.uk>) which seems to be a work in progress. Specifically, the

Encyclopaedia Titanica (<https://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org>) lists passengers (survivors and victims) on the Titanic including photographs, age, ticket price and jobs.

Finally, rather than missing people, The Lost Pubs Project (<https://www.closedpubs.co.uk>) is a community project to document and remember the 44,156 lost pubs in England since pre-1974, e.g. in Derbyshire and Kent. The Evening Standard (<https://www.standard.co.uk>) features stories on some of London's Lost Pubs. See also <https://pubshistory.com>

Staying on the London theme, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives has a rich variety of resources listing websites such as Refugee Council Archive, Old Bailey Online, the Jewish Quarter at Whitechapel and links to many YouTube videos at <https://www.youtube.com/@THLHLA>. More London information is at the London Picture Archive <https://www.thelondonarchives.org/> (also showing an exhibition on Londoners on Trial – crime, courts and the public – until February 2027) and specifically St George in the East Genealogy Resources & Parish Registers, Middlesex .

A little drier but no less useful are records on Land Tax which was introduced in 1692. These give insights into economic status of ancestors and their property values. An overview of ownership records and deeds is provided at Land ownership records and deeds: an overview - The National Archives <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/land-ownership-records-and-deeds-an-overview/> Land Tax Assessments are also available at Family Search (<https://www.familysearch.org>) and Genuki (<https://www.genguide.co.uk>) – donations welcome. The Aveland Archive (<https://www.avelandarchive.org.uk>) is specific to rural South Lincolnshire but gives good background guidance on how to search the records. Continuing on this subject, Rate Books can be found at Trace My House (<https://www.tracemyhouse.com>), an aid to finding people in the Census and previous occupiers of a home.

The Manorial Documents Register, on the www.nationalarchives.gov.uk site was created in 1924 to help researchers locate the whereabouts of relevant material. Manorial Records could potentially reveal your family history going back to the 13th century. Records include customs, surveys, estate rolls and accounts. Who Do You Think You Are Magazine has a tutorial on this explaining that some records are held in the National Archives and some still in private hands. I would welcome feedback on this resource.

Now for some general websites:-

The Society of Genealogists (<https://sog.org.uk/>) has a new learning hub featuring talks, e-books guides and stories. Various features including schools, Suffolk family history and unexpected DNA results. Membership from £50 to £150 p.a. volunteers welcome.

I have recently rediscovered Cyndi's List (<https://www.cyndislist.com>) which is a good starting point for family history. Free to use, gives lists of many genealogical resources on the internet.

Once in Essex, Now in London

Authors John Debenham, David Dunford, Andrew Summers

Book review by Fiona Harvey (ESFH 33535)

It is a rare pleasure to come across a book that so seamlessly blends meticulous historical research with the sheer joy of storytelling. *Once in Essex, Now in London* is precisely that - a captivating collection of narratives focusing on the people and places that were once firmly rooted in Essex soil but have since been swallowed by the relentless expansion of London. From the moment I opened it, I found the wealth of obscure references and local lore so engrossing that it was remarkably difficult to put down.

Spanning a concise 184 pages, the authors have expertly curated 70 distinct stories. A particular strength of the book is its structure; the short, punchy chapters make it an ideal companion for a busy reader. You can easily dip in for a single tale, though I suspect most readers will find themselves saying, 'Just one more'.

The book is thoughtfully organised in chronological order, beginning with a fascinating exploration of the 'Hide' and the 'Hundred'. This section provides a much-needed explanation of how land was partitioned during the Saxon era and how these units formed the administrative 'Hundreds' established by King Edgar (959 - 975 AD). The authors trace this evolution through William the Conqueror's fiscal reforms down to the formation of the Essex Police in 1840, which utilised these ancient divisions until the turn of the 20th century. This historical framing is brilliant; it provides the essential context for understanding just how significantly the boundaries have shifted and how much 'Essex identity' has been reclaimed by London.

The journey continues through a kaleidoscope of topics: the haunting mystery of an unsolved murder, the local footprints of famous figures like Buffalo Bill and William Morris, and the vital social history of Barnardo's at Barkingside. Whether discussing the development of the railways, maritime adventures, or the preservation of our forests, the authors maintain a tone that is both informative and deeply engaging. I frequently found myself interrupting my husband's evening with an excited, "Did you know...?"

The narrative arc eventually brings us to the modern day, touching on the Thames Barrier, the curious geography of Essex football teams, and the legacy of the London Olympics. By the time I reached the final page, I felt a genuine sense of melancholy that the journey was over.

This book is an absolute delight and a 'must-buy' for anyone with an interest in local heritage. It has already secured a spot on my gift list for my Essex relatives, and I cannot recommend it highly enough to the members of the Society.

Publisher: Essex Hundred Publications, 2026 cost £12.99 for availability see www.essex100.com



NEWHAM



BARKING AND DAGENHAM



WALTHAM FOREST



HAVERING



REDBRIDGE

ESSEX HUNDRED PUBLICATIONS

ONCE IN ESSEX NOW IN LONDON

JOHN DEBENHAM, DAVID DUNFORD AND ANDREW SUMMERS

ILLUSTRATIONS TOM FEWINGS

A Day to Remember:

The Launch of Once in Essex, Now in London

By Fiona Harvey (ESFH 33535)

On a perfect early summer Saturday, Valance House in Barking provided a wonderful setting for the book launch of *Once in Essex, Now in London* - and what a day it turned out to be.

The event drew around 25 enthusiastic attendees, gathering at 2pm for a presentation by one of the authors, Andrew Summers. Before the launch began, the building's welcoming café offered a relaxed spot for lunch, giving guests a chance to settle in and chat before the afternoon got underway - a small but thoughtful touch that set a warm, convivial tone.

Andrew's presentation was concise but packed with fascinating detail. His 15-minute talk touched on the three rivers featured in the book and brought history vividly to life through compelling 'now and then' photographs, offering a glimpse into how dramatically landscapes and communities can change over time. Illustrator Tom Fewings, unable to attend in person, shared a short video offering a charming behind-the-scenes look into the book's beautiful imagery and the thought and care that went into bringing its stories to life visually. Copies were available to purchase and sign on the day - a lovely personal touch that made the experience feel genuinely special.



ANDREW SUMMERS PRESENTING
PHOTO COURTESY OF FIONA HARVEY

But the real surprise came afterwards. Publishers Essex 100 had arranged an exclusive guided tour of Valance House Museum for just 15 lucky guests. Neither familiar with the building nor its history beforehand, we almost didn't go - and we're so glad we did. The museum's curator led us on a wonderfully rich journey through the collections, her deep knowledge and evident passion for the stories behind each exhibit utterly captivating. We were supposed to leave at 4.00 pm but we were still there at 4.30 pm and reluctant to leave.

It was a timely reminder that small local history museums are genuine treasure troves, quietly holding the stories of the diverse communities that shaped who we are today. These spaces often go unnoticed, overshadowed by bigger, better-known attractions - yet they preserve voices, lives and experiences that might otherwise be forgotten entirely. The people who curate them are often the most knowledgeable and dedicated storytellers you'll ever meet, and their expertise is there for anyone curious enough to ask. So next time you find yourself somewhere new, look out for the local museum. You might just be surprised by what, and who, you discover.

World War 1 Memorial

St. Mary's Church Corringham Essex

John/Thomas King

by Peter Craggs (ESFH 30979)

Between 2014 and 2018, I researched all the names on the Great War Memorials in St. Mary's Church, Corringham and St. Michael's Church, Fobbing. My research notes were published in the church magazine, 'The Link' and folders for each person deposited in the respective church. The same was undertaken for the WW2 memorials a few years later. At the time I was unable to find out who was 'T King' memorialised on The Great War Memorial in St. Mary's. Steven Cape has written a series of books on every war memorial in Thurrock and he could not trace T King. I met Simon Last, a genealogist, at an ESHF event at Galleywood who has a company named Charnwood Genealogy based in Southend-on-Sea. He has published two books on the War Memorial in Framlingham, Suffolk which I have purchased. When I emailed him to order his WW2 book, I mentioned T King and within a day he had solved the mystery, I was delighted, a challenge that I had worked on for 10 years was resolved in a day. Simon searched war records, census returns, birth, marriage and death records to prove who T King was. I have searched more records to add to his information.

The reason we all had problems was that Thomas King was also known as John King. John King was born on 10th July 1878 in Great Waldingfield, near Sudbury, Suffolk, he was the son of Alfred King and Maria King née Chaplin. Alfred was a farm labourer. John was baptised at St. Lawrence's Church, Great Waldingfield on 11th August 1878. Alfred and Maria King had a daughter, Catherine Jane born in 1876, then John and their third child who was Emily born in 1882. John never married and did not have any children. Catherine married Arthur Mitchell in 1900 in Tendring and then moved to Horndon-on-the-Hill, Arthur's birthplace, where they had six children. Arthur was a thatcher and Parish Clerk. Emily had an illegitimate son, Albert George and then married Frank Edward Snowden and they had five children.

As I have written above, T King, as mentioned on the war memorial, was called John until he enlisted as Thomas King on 6th November 1899, in Colchester when he joined the Rifle Brigade. His service number was 7067. This was a Short Service Attestation, which meant that Thomas had signed up for 7 years with the Colours and then 5 years in the Reserve. He gave the following information upon enlistment. Apparent age 18 years 2 months, when in fact he was 21? he was 5 feet 5 inches tall, weighed 8¾ stone, had blue eyes and light brown hair. He had tattoos on both arms and hands. Thomas was posted to Gosport where he joined the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade. In 1901 he transferred to the 3rd Battalion Rifle Brigade.

Thomas was posted to Dublin on 9th January 1900 where he remained for almost 2 years. At the time, Ireland was under British Rule. On 9th November 1901 Thomas

boarded the *SS Jelunga* and sailed to India. The ship was launched in 1890 for the British India Associated Steamers. She was used by the Spanish as a troopship during the Cuban Revolution of 1893. His service record gives details of his postings in India and time spent in hospital. Details are all in the folder in St. Mary's Church. He left India in late 1905, and arrived, via Aden, in Devonport on 1st January 1906. In December 1906 Thomas was posted to Malta. On 5th November 1907, Thomas was transferred to Army Reserve. He then returned to civilian life and in the 1911 Census he was recorded as John King, a Farm Labourer, living with his parents and nephew at Rose Farm, Tendring, Essex.

On the 4th August 1914, The Great War commenced and Thomas was mobilized at Winchester the following day. He re-joined The Rifle Brigade as a Rifleman. He served in various Battalions before being posted to France on 2nd May 1915 with The British Expeditionary Force (BEF). On 6th July 1915 at St. Jean, France, Thomas was gassed and received gunshot wounds in his left arm with compound fracture to his humerus. On 17th July he was transferred to England on board *SS Anglia*. He was admitted to Shorncliffe Military Hospital where he undertook at least four operations to his injuries. His injuries were so severe with 60% disablement that he was discharged from the army on 11th April 1918. Thomas had served for a total of 18 years 198 days in the Rifle Brigade. He received a bounty of £20 and a pension of £6 13s 8d (£6.68). Sadly, Thomas never fully recovered from his injuries and he died on 30th March 1919 at The Row, Tendring. He is buried in the churchyard of St. Edmund's Church, Tendring. His death certificate gave the cause of death as 'Effects of gas and bronchitis'. As his father Alfred was dependent on his son, the war pension passed to Alfred.



RIFLE BRIGADE MEMORIAL, GROSVENOR GARDENS, WESTMINSTER, LONDON SW1.

There are still unanswered questions:-

1. Why did John change his name to Thomas on all his war records?
2. Why is the name T King on the war memorial in St. Mary's Church, Corringham, when he lived and died in Tendring?. His sister lived in Horndon-on-the Hill, did she ask for him to be remembered there? Was he a server at St. Mary's or a member of the congregation? He is not on the memorial in Tendring or Horndon-on-the-Hill.

My thanks again to Simon Last for solving the mystery of who was T King.

☆ ☆ ☆



In Remembrance

Peter Dixon

1943 - 2026



Peter Dixon came south from the Scarborough area of Yorkshire when he was about 20 and worked for the BBC as a Sound Engineer. The North's loss was the South's gain for he ably assisted a number of organisations such as Queen Mary's Hospital Radio (QMBS hospital radio), serving as a committee member of NARBO, (the association for hospital radio). Along with participation in the South East Essex branch of ESFH he was, for a period, a member of the Grays Family History Group and the London Branch of the Yorkshire Family History Society. It is clear that he was generous with his time and I am certain his professional skills proved highly valuable.

I am personally grateful to Peter for regularly ferrying me back to Pitsea after the Southend meetings and enjoyed the conversations during the journeys. Latterly Bill Bayford played chauffeur and the three of us would cover a variety of subjects. It was certainly an education and I would conclude the journey knowing more than I did at the beginning!

I shall really miss Peter's input to those conversations.

Martin Gillham

Peter was born in the Scarborough district of the East Riding of Yorkshire and was extremely proud of his Yorkshire heritage. He was a member of the South East Essex Branch for many years and served as a committee member for several of those years, travelling from Basildon to Eastwood to attend meetings. He had many interests including railways and could always answer a question about that subject. For a long time Peter has been the technical expert for our branch meetings, making sure that microphones worked and, if the speaker had a PowerPoint presentation, he always had the correct wires.

We will miss him and his expertise.

Heather Feather



From the Chair

I am delighted to say that I have good news to report on several issues. Our Data Manager Jeff Porter, Web Manager Paul Stirland, John Young and the IT group, and far too many volunteer 'testers' to name here have really worked incredibly hard so that our new website will soon go live! (see Jeff's article on page 6)

Elizabeth Cox, our Research Centre Chair, has also been busy with many of the above volunteers, liaising with FamilySearch and the Essex Record Office (ERO) to make our research centre a FamilySearch Affiliate Library. I'm sure most of you are already aware of the huge amount of information that FamilySearch holds but an Affiliate Library Partner is able to access many more records. Of course, to make this possible we have had to upgrade our technology, and retrain our volunteers accordingly. The new kit has been installed by Paul, and Elizabeth and Chris Stringer have stepped up to help with re-training and managing these resources.



ANDREA HEWITT

The Events and Publicity Team co-hosted a Family Tree Maker Software technical seminar at Galleywood Heritage Centre on 17th April 2026. Over 100 people attended the presentation of the latest upgrades to Family Tree Maker. The following day on the 18th April 2026 the Events and Publicity Team, along with other volunteers, attended the biannual Family History Federation Really Useful Show at St Ives in Cambs. This is a show which attracts over 400 visitors and where we were busy all day helping new and existing members with their family history.

A few days later on the 24th April ESFH again attended another family history event. This time it was the annual Suffolk Family History Show at Ipswich and we had another successful day. As a result of all the above events we signed-up new members.

On a more sobering note, since my last Chair page I am sorry to say that we have lost some very valuable volunteers. Our Editor Colleen's husband Brian Warner, Bill Neobard husband of our Vice Chair Toni and Peter Dixon have all sadly passed away. Brian was often seen with Colleen behind the table of our second-hand book stall at live events and for some years had helped proof read this magazine. Bill was a regular attendee at our South East Essex branch meetings and gave talks there until his health declined. Peter had also supported the South East Essex branch for many years particularly with his technical skills and he actively attended most of our online presentations. They will all be sorely missed.

It's been an exceptionally busy time for many of us, but even if your name hasn't been mentioned I'd would like to thank everyone that does anything, however small, for supporting ESFH, as we wouldn't be the Society we are without you!

Ancestors from Earls Colne or surrounding areas?

By Colleen Devenish Editor (ESFH 6279)

Add this website <https://echm.org.uk> to your favourites bar or better still make plans to visit the Earls Colne Heritage Museum.

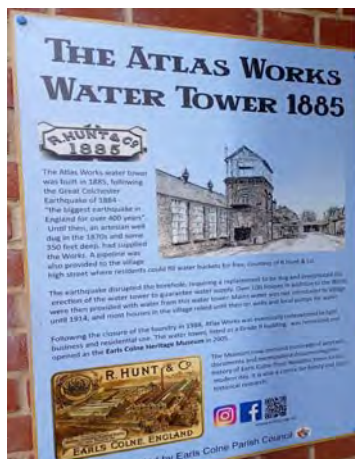
In the middle of Grade II Listed Victorian industrial buildings, formerly a major employer of Earls Colne, is located The Old Water Tower, the home of the Earls Colne Museum. This is where I found myself a few weeks ago. A warm welcome greeted me from the enthusiastic volunteers consisting of Lesley Berner, Gordon Brown, (Museum Chairman) Mark Claydon and later in the afternoon John Stedman (their local tour guide) plus the lovely lady at their reception.



LESLEY BERNER AND MARK CLAYDON

A recent grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund includes funding for the renovation of the Water Tower, which has begun and the purchase of the building to secure its future. Future plans include the reorganising of the interior of the

museum. However, if you visit soon you won't be disappointed by what you find behind the doors of the Water Tower. The museum is the home for displays of many artefacts, including archaeological finds, historical paintings, early farming equipment and numerous visual displays informing the visitor about the history of this Essex village and its past inhabitants.



There's something to interest everyone. Subjects covered include details of Saxon roots, the Norman Conquest, medieval and religious information including the history of Colne Priory, the de Vere family, local schools' history, WW1 and WW2 displays, local dignitaries etc. Delve into their collection on <https://echm.org.uk/collection-topics/>

The museum has a Facebook page and a presence on www.youtube.com with eight videos describing various past projects. Check out the BBC Time Team programme when they came to examine the Priory grounds!

The museum has actively recorded the spoken memories of local residents over the course of many years – maybe a relative of yours has been recorded?

In 2025 the museum unveiled the village's first blue plaque dedicated to Mary Gee located at Colne House, a lady who was a benefactor not only in Earls Colne but also Halstead Greenstead Green and Great Maplestead.



For family historians the digitisation of local documents is an ongoing project. Already digitised are the school records of the Earls Colne Boys School Log Book dated 1869-1930 with accompanying transcriptions as the original entries are hard to read (see extract below). In the museum itself are artefacts from the Earls Colne Grammar School which was founded in 1520 and closed in 1975.

They hold a number of newspaper press clippings which, although fragile can be viewed along with the Parish Council Records (which go back to 1894).

Displayed in the museum is detailed information regarding the social and economic history of the area. Attractive displays present lots of information including one of the main past

1871 Extract

January

23rd Admitted Philip W. Perry, and readmitted Edward Saunders. 36 present in the afternoon.

24th School visited in the morning by the Rev. S. Blackall.

25th Conversion of St. Paul. Went with the boys to church in the morning.

26th The Rev. E. L. H. Tew gave a dictation lesson to the 1st Class.

27th Taught the boys the hymn tune "Eton". Average for the week 33.4.

30th Re-admitted William Clark & Alfred Williamson.

31st The Rev. S. Blackall took the 2nd class to Arithmetic.

February

1st Rev. E. L. H. Tew visited the school.

2nd Purification of B.V.M.; took the boys to church in the morning.

3rd Mr Blackall visited the school for the singing practice. Av. for wk. 37.2.

6th Sent Alfred Williamson home to clean his boots, he did not return during the day. Sent to his parents. The vicar brought 1 doz Bibles.

DATA COURTESY OF EARLS COLNE HERITAGE MUSEUM

employers, R. Hunt and Company Ltd. This local family employed many people from Earls Colne and the local area from their inception in 1825 until their closure in 1988. The firm was started by a wheelwright, Robert Hunt, who was born in Soham in Cambridgeshire. He came to the village at the beginning of the 19th century and liked it so much he stayed marrying Mary Ann Rogers and begat five sons and four daughters. He started a mill wrights business and by the 1840's he was an established supplier, throughout southern England, of farming implements including a clover-seed drawer. After the death of Robert in 1855, his three sons ran the business trading as T R & R Hunt at the Atlas Iron Works. Twelve years later we find Reuben Hunt as the sole proprietor of the business and he set to work expanding the company. He employed 147 people in 1881 and by 1912 Atlas Works employed 350.



R.HUNT & Co's PATENT 'PREMIER'
GRINDING MILL

Reuben had a social conscience and ensured that he built cottages for his employee's initially in Foundry Lane followed by other properties in Queens Road, Hay House Road and Halstead Road. He contributed to many other facilities for the villagers including the gift of a village hall.

In 1866 John Newport became his first apprentice.

Not content with just the UK market Reuben promoted his products worldwide and exports began in 1872 - by 1884 the firm had agents all over the world and had diversified into transmission power appliances as well as agricultural food production machinery. The firm still employed 182 people when it was sold to Christy's of Chelmsford in 1983 closing down 5 years later.

From the publication 'Hunt for Machinery' by Patricia J Burton-Hopkins, available from the museum, we learn the surnames of many of the past employees including Ray, Wadley, Corder, Burton, Brissenden, Mackay, McPhie, Massingham, Buck, French, Bowles, Goldstone, Willsher, Cutting, Kentfield, Wakeling, Wadley, Batholomew, Burst, Ruggles, Osborne, Andrews, Ellis, Wass and so the list goes on. Keeping the firm going during the dark days of WWII were the likes of Doris Higginbottom, Nora Percival, Dora Hales, Violet Ripper, Frances Buggs, Joyce Cater, Joan Rudd, Hettie Hall etc. and this book has photographs of many of the Hunt employees in the one hundred and fifty-six pages. (Unfortunately, there is no index in this book).

Many past images are available of Earls Colne created by one or other of two photographers, both chemists, C S Tyler and Alex Spafford for the years covering 1870 - 1900. It's hard in the limited space here to detail all the aspects of this museum but those of you with an interest in Earls Colne and the surrounding villages certainly have a great resource to help you trace your ancestors.

If you would like to send an enquiry to the museum team please see their website and fill in the Contact Us form. Or better still go and visit on a Wednesday (14.00 - 16.00) or at the weekends (Saturday and Sunday 12.00 - 16.00) bearing in mind that later on this year they will be closing for a refurbishment but most other activities like guided walks/talks etc. will continue.

Note from the Editor

Readers might not know that Earls Colne is probably the most studied village in the county, having been the subject of a historical project conducted by Alan McFarlane from the University of Cambridge in the 1970's covering the years 1345 - 1854. Original documents from its 500-year history can be viewed on https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/earls_colne

In addition to the above there are over eighteen pages of history in The Victoria History of Counties of England Volume X in the Essex series. Each year ESFH make a donation to this worthy series.

An early census survives for Earls Colne and the Essex Record Office holds a transcription see reference ERO T/P 474/1.

☆ ☆ ☆

Rita Harris

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Interesting sources beyond the Internet

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

07913 767694

contactrita71@gmail.com

71 Vicarage Road Old Moulsham
Chelmsford Essex
CM2 9BT



A personal note from the Editor

For those of you who remember him I wanted to inform you that Michael Gandy, BA, FSG died on 16th May 2026 aged 76. This man was my inspiration in the early days of my family history research and you can find several of his books on my shelves. His style of presenting was direct, to the point, clear and concise. His knowledge unquestionable.

Michael was a long-standing member of the Society of Genealogists, the Chair and Fellow of the Society. He was also the editor of The Genealogists' Journal, the magazine of the Society.

His contribution to the family history world was immense and he will be sorely missed.

I would like to extend, along with all those from ESFH who knew him, my condolences to his family and friends.

A New Beginning

By Angela Hillier (ESFH 28397)

Twenty-six years after co-founding the Eureka Partnership I have decided that the time has come to call it a day. All the Essex books done so far are still available, with the facility to pay online, on the eurekapartnership.com website whether they are actual books or downloadable PDF files. I have listed the titles below for those who do not know our books or what is available.

Compiling the Eureka books has been a delight over the years and has taught me so much about the weird and wonderful records that may be available to help family historians bridge the gaps that appear in all of our family trees. On the whole it is these types of records that are neither on the Internet nor looked at even if people get to a Record Office. The sort of random things I like to transcribe are indicated by the lists I have given to the Editors of the magazine in the past. I have to admit that none of the Essex books I have done contain these records, the reason being purely economic, as they will often be of no interest to most people whilst a baptism register appeals to more people making the book more commercially viable.

To say I am addicted to transcribing is an understatement. The thrill of handling something written hundreds of years ago or something that you know is unlikely to have been looked at for a hundred years or more is the addictive part, as you have no idea what you will find. Though I am no longer going to produce books for the Eureka Partnership I am unwilling to give up, what is for me, more of a hobby than a business. I have decided that I will continue to transcribe, but only things that take my fancy. As I have no family interests in Essex it is a pointless exercise unless someone gets to see the fruits of my labours, so, rather than publish books, I am going to make the transcripts into PDF files which I intend to make available, at no cost, to members of the ESHF. The Editor has kindly said I may have some space in each magazine to tell you what will be available, which I hope will be at least one document for each issue, with a list of the documents from earlier issues.

If you contact me by email at ash26esfh@gmail.com I will send you a copy of the PDF file. I hope to perhaps transcribe longer documents and lists that will not easily fit into the magazine, though this will depend on what I find. Each document will be set out like a book and will have a name index, unless the record is set out alphabetically, and some explanation of the record if I think it is necessary. No one will be checking my work other than myself, so if possible, please look for yourself, especially if something does not look right. As I will be doing what I find I am afraid I cannot say what you might get offered or whereabouts in Essex it may be, though I will try to cover the whole county. I hope that I will be able to be of use to some of you and to inform others that there may be a similar record worth looking at for the area you are interested in, wherever that may be.

The first offering is the Braintree Union Children's Home and Boarding Out Committee's Minute Books. There are four different documents, two of which I have amalgamated. The period covered by all of the transcripts is 1908 - 1926, though one

does go further but is currently closed for 100 years. The documents list children from this Poor Law Union who, for various reasons, end up in the workhouse and are either transferred to the Children's Home or fostered out locally. There are comments on the children's character and sometimes of that of their parents, what happened to them if they needed medical help and where they are sent to work when they are old enough. The file is 52 pages long with a name index at the end.

For your information I am currently working on the following documents or lists which I hope to be issuing as PDF files in due course:

The 1814 listing of the poor in Chelmsford.

The 9 Freshwell Petty Session books from 1803 - 1822.

Burnham on Crouch Baptist Minute and Account book 1690's - 1773.

Extracts from the Colne Oyster Fishery 1758 - 1870.

Lists for Rochford for 1803, 1811.

Various lists for Thaxted from the 1500's and 1600's.

ESSEX EUREKA PARTNERSHIP BOOKS AND PDF FILES.

Available from the www.eurekapartnership.com website

NON-CONFORMIST REGISTERS

Books

- 1 Barking and Romford Wesleyan Methodist Circuits. Bap 1835 - 1922
- 2 Chelmsford and Maldon Wesleyan Methodist Circuits. Bap 1813 - 1837, 1858 - 1923, Mar 1900 - 1929, Bur 1860 - 1862
- 3 Colchester Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Vol 1. Bap 1793 - 1838. Members 1823 - 1834
- 4 Colchester Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Vol 2. Bap 1839 - 1871. Mar 1847 - 1859. Bur 1845 - 1855
- 5 Colchester Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Vol 3. Bap 1872 - 1921
- 6 Grays Methodists Vol 1. Bap and Mar 1873 - 1900
- 7 Grays Methodists Vol 2. Bap and Mar 1901 - 1925
- 8 Harwich Primitive Methodist Circuit. Bap 1844 - 1925
- 9 Harwich and Manningtree Wesleyan Methodist Circuits Vol 1. Bap and Bur 1794 - 1838
- 10 Harwich and Manningtree Wesleyan Methodist Circuits Vol 2. Bap, Mar and Bur 1839 - 1865
- 11 Harwich and Manningtree Wesleyan Methodist Circuits Vol 3. Bap and Mar 1866 - 1922

Downloadable books in PDF format

- 1 Henham Congregational Church. Bap 1806 - 1903 and Members Lists 1807 - 1913
- 2 Essex Entries in Doctor Williams's Non-Conformist Birth Register. Vol 1 1742 - 1820

- 3 Essex Entries in Doctor Williams's Non-Conformist Birth Register. Vol 2 1821 - 1837

ESSEX PRE 1841 CENSUS AND POPULATION LISTS

Books

- 1 Essex pre 1841 Census Returns Group 1. 1811 and 1821 Ardleigh: 1811 and 1821 St Leonard, Colchester: 1811 Elmstead: 1822 list of people in Lawford.
- 2 Essex pre 1841 Census Returns Group 2. 1821 Beaumont-cum-Moze: 1831 Brightlingsea: 1811 Great Clacton: 1831 Lt Bentley: 1821 Mistley: 1811 Thorington (part): 1811 Wrabness.
- 3 Essex pre 1841 Census Returns Group 3. 1801, 1821, 1831 Lt Baddow: 1811 Sandon: 1811 Wickford: 1811, 1821, 1831 Woodham Walter.
- 4 Essex pre 1841 Census Returns Group 4. 1811 and 1821 Gestingthorpe: 1811 and 1815 (unofficial census) Middleton: 1811, 1821 1831 Wormingford.
- 5 Halstead Population Survey 1822 and 1827. A list of households in the Parish giving name, age and occupation of the householder and other information about his family and his parish of settlement.

ESSEX POOR LAW UNION REGISTERS

Books

- 1 Braintree Union Miscellany. Birth Register 1866 - 1914: Death Register 1914 - 1917: Vaccination Register 1903 - 1917: Children's Boarding Out Committee Minutes 1910 - 1918.
- 2 Maldon Union Vol 1. Births and Deaths 1836 - 1861.
- 3 Maldon Union Vol 2. Births 1914 - 1917: Deaths 1866 - 1914.
- 4 Rochford Union. Births 1897 - 1917: Deaths 1914 - 1918.
- 5 Saffron Walden Union. Births 1836 - 1913: Deaths 1836 - 1848 and 1866 - 1913.

Downloadable books in PDF format

- 1 Tendring Union Vol 1. Births and Deaths 1839 - 1881
- 2 Tendring Union Vol 2. Births and Deaths 1882 - 1915

MISCELLANEOUS BOOKS

- 1 Ways through the Wall. A Where to Look Book for Family Historians. Sources and suggestions to help you break down that brick wall.
- 2 Essex Dissenting Congregations. A list of all the Dissenting Congregations I have found and where their records, if any, are held.

I am going to keep these last two books myself so they will not be available on the EurekA website and anyone wanting a copy will need to get in touch with me using the above email address and I will let you know the cost of the book/pdf file and the postage if applicable. I hope to have some books available but there may only be PDF files and certainly only those when the remaining books have been sold.

☆ ☆ ☆

South East Branch Meeting

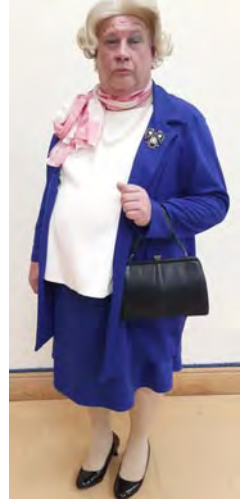
4th March 2026

Life and Times of Margaret Thatcher, the first female British Prime Minister by Tony Harris

Summarised by Heather Feather (ESFH 366)

Following his success with talks to the branch as King Henry VIII and Winston Churchill, Tony entered dressed as Baroness Thatcher. The speaker's arrival was greeted by 73 members and visitors. This was not a political talk, but started with a description of Margaret Robert's youth in the town of Grantham.

Her father was a greengrocer and her sister an actress and singer. Her education was at a local grammar school. Somerville College at Oxford University accepted only twenty new ladies each year. Margaret was in 21st place, but one potential student died and she gained a place there. She was awarded a First Class Honours Degree in Chemistry. Her first job was in Essex with I.C.I. in Manningtree, where she developed a commercially successful formula, where ice cream to be sold in vans was changed from a solid block to the soft 'Mr. Whippy' style which came out of the machine into a cone for the customer.



Margaret then made unsuccessful attempts to obtain the parliamentary seat of Dartford, Kent but at a dance there she was approached by her then to be husband Denis Thatcher. They married and had twins, Carol and Mark. In 1958 she finally achieved a Conservative seat at Finchley in North London. In 1973 Edward Heath chose her as Minister for Education. She was often remembered as cancelling the provision of free milk for school children. In 1979 she became Prime Minister with a 'Conservative Landslide'. She held this position until 1990, the longest serving premiership in the 20th century. In those 21 years she oversaw the Miner's Strike, the Iranian Embassy Siege, the Falklands War, the assassination attempt on her at Brighton and the 'Right to Buy Council Houses' which had affected some of Tony's audience.

Whilst these were not strictly family history subjects we learned much about life during her Premiership. When Mrs Thatcher left office she went to a Drive-through McDonalds. When she died in 2013 Queen Elizabeth attended her funeral in St. Pauls Cathedral and her ashes were buried in the grounds of Chelsea Hospital. The people of the Falkland Islands celebrate 'Margaret Thatcher Day' each year and garland her statue.

Tony told us much of relationships with party leaders and opponents with great humour, to make a well researched and very interesting afternoon.

From War Memorial to Road Name: Remembering Samuel Parish

By Tanya Sewell (ESFH 30856)

It was on a quiet Saturday morning in February, while attending to some paperwork at home, that I came across something entirely unexpected. Working from home has a way of blurring the line between weekdays and weekends, and on this particular morning my attention was caught by an address that seemed, at first glance, unremarkable. Part of my job requires me to confirm nursery children's entitlement to government funding which includes verifying their home address and there it was staring back at me – a street name: 'Samuel Parish Link'.

Yet the name resonated immediately.

Some years ago, when a new housing development was proposed on land steeped in local history - once part of the hunting grounds of Henry VIII and situated near New Hall (formerly Beaulieu) on the outskirts of Chelmsford - the council invited residents to submit the names of relatives who had fallen in the First World War. These names, it was suggested, might be commemorated in the street names of the new development, which received approval in 2014.

Like many with an interest in family history, I took the opportunity to put forward the name of my great-uncle, hopeful that his sacrifice might be remembered in this tangible and lasting way. However, as the development gradually expanded over the following years, I heard nothing further and assumed that my suggestion had not been taken forward.

That is why seeing 'Samuel Parish Link' in print came as such a striking and deeply personal moment. It seemed almost too much to hope that it might indeed refer to my relative. Curiosity quickly took hold. Turning to modern tools to confirm a piece of the past, I searched the location on Google Maps. Within moments, the road appeared, and there - clearly visible on Street View - was the name itself with personal details of my great uncle.

In that instant, the connection between past and present felt vividly real: a



SAMUEL CHARLES PARISH

family name, once recorded in history through loss, now woven into the everyday landscape of the community.

So, who was Samuel? The story behind that name begins in rural Suffolk. Samuel Charles Parish was born on 10th July 1896 in Stanningfield, a village a few miles north of Alpheton, and was baptised at Alpheton Church on 16th August the same year. He was the first child of James Parish and Mary Ann (née Sutton), who had married in Alpheton in October 1895. Their growing family reflected the rhythms of rural life, moving between nearby villages including Hartest and Shelland as work required.

Samuel was the eldest of eleven children. His siblings - Sidney John, Alice Louise, Henry James, Andrew William, Winifred Mary, Gertrude Maud, Eleanor Sarah Ann, Ernest Frederick, George Edward, and Albert Wilfred (later my maternal grandfather) - formed a large and close-knit family typical of the period. Shortly after Albert's birth in 1916, the family relocated to West Hanningfield in Essex, by which time both Samuel and his brother Sidney were already serving in the First World War.

Like so many families of that generation, the Parish family's story was marked by loss.



WEST HANNINGFIELD WAR MEMORIAL

Samuel died on 18th April 1918 while serving with the Welch Regiment, his death recorded in the battalion war diary as one of five fatalities on that day. He was just 21 years old.

Today, his name is commemorated in several places, each telling part of his story. He is remembered on the Loos-en-Gohelle Memorial in France, among those with no known grave, and closer to home on the West Hanningfield War Memorial in the church grounds in Essex. His name also appears on a plaque inside Christ Church, Swansea, reflecting his regimental connection. In 2010, he was further commemorated on the war memorial outside Keene Hall in Galleywood - my home village - where he had worked on a local farm prior to enlisting.

Not all stories ended in tragedy. Samuel's brother Sidney survived the war, returned home, married his sweetheart Ethel, and lived to the age of 84 - a reminder of the different paths taken by those who served.

Seeing Samuel's name on a modern road sign, alongside those of his contemporaries on the Galleywood memorial, prompted a wider question: who were the men on street names within the Beaulieu development and who was recording them?



ROAD NAMED AFTER SAMUEL IN BEAULIEU CHELMSFORD

Initial research suggested there were at least 35 such names, although little detail was readily available. Further exploration led to records held by the Imperial War Museum, where images and background information for some of the commemorated individuals could be found. However, it became clear that a more complete and accessible record would be of value to future researchers.

With that in mind, I began compiling a comprehensive list of the road names across the development. I contacted Chelmsford City Council and also the developers who provided additional information, including names proposed for future phases of the still-expanding development.

Then I enlisted the help of a friend's daughter who kindly offered to photograph every road sign during her Easter Holidays. A request to Chelmsford City Council provided additional information, including names proposed for future phases of the still-expanding development.



WW1 MEMORIAL PLAQUE AND SCROLL

What began as a simple idea soon grew into a substantial project, involving over 50 roads and many hours of research into the individuals behind the names.

The result is an evolving record, now available through the Essex Society for Family History, linking each street name to the story of the person it commemorates. As the development continues to grow, so too will this archive.

As a final and more personal connection, Samuel's parents are buried at St Mary's Church in Woodham Ferrers. Thanks to a recent graveyard mapping project completed in 2024, in which the Essex Society for Family History played a part, their gravestone and burial records can now be accessed online - another example of how modern technology continues to bring these family stories into clearer view.

What began as a chance glance at a name on a page has unfolded into a deeper appreciation of how remembrance is carried forward - not only in stone memorials, but in the very streets and communities we inhabit today. What was once a line in a record, or a name on a memorial, has become part of the living landscape - a quiet but enduring reminder of a life cut short, and of the family and community from which he came.



GALLEYWOOD WAR MEMORIAL



GALLEYWOOD WAR MEMORIAL PLAQUE

ONGAR 1911: Snapshot in the life of a Great Eastern Railway (GER) Rural Terminus

By Roger Green and Sheila Henthorne

In 1911 Ongar had been open for 46 years and since then had expanded with a few important improvements:

1868 – New cattle pens (cost £25).

1887 – Block telegraph installed Epping to Ongar (cost £530).

1887 – Porter's room and oil store (cost £95).

1888 – New signal box with interlocking (cost £925) and minor track alterations. The addition of the loco shed spur and the goods yard connections were also remodelled.

1889 – New cart weighbridge (cost £155).

1889 – Extension of the platform at the Cripsey Brook end from 350ft to 470ft plus horse dock (cost £192).

c1891 – New general waiting room, platform side. Precise date unknown, as is the cost.

1891 – Extension of the dock siding behind the platform.

1892 – Building of railway cottages for GER staff in Banson's Way (cost £744).

1896 – Footwarmer hut (cost £90).

1900 – New siding for coal traffic put in behind the goods shed (cost £1470).

We were lucky to purchase some GER paperwork from eBay which had originally come from Ongar in around 1911. Amongst them was a Pay List (GER Reference 199), which shows all the salaried and wages staff working at Ongar in 1911 under the watchful eye of the station master who was Matthew Probst, aged 47 born in Enfield, Middlesex in 1864. He arrived at Ongar in December 1910 (from being Station Master at Hadham) and lived in the station house with his widowed mother Catherine Probst (born in Luxembourg in 1840).

He had two booking office clerks (one per shift) who were paid 28s 0d per week: Archibald Amos George Houchin, aged 29, born in Chipping Ongar and living with wife Miriam and new-born son Eric in Castle Street, Ongar; and Walter George Holt, aged 44, born in Chipping Ongar living with his widowed mother Emily in Ongar High Street. There was also a lad clerk, Percy Charles Gilbert aged 15, who had joined the railway at Ongar on 6th May 1911 and who earned 8s 0d per week. Both he and his sister, Phyllis May Gilbert, were born in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

In the signal box were two signalmen (one per shift) William Hoppitt and Frederick Robinson who were paid 21s 0d per week (which included an extra allowance for working with the train staff). No details have been found of William Hoppitt (he is famous as being the signalman who diverted an out-of-control freight train into the loop at Ongar on 19th February 1934 whereupon it crashed into the embankment at the end). The other signalman, Frederick Robinson, aged 23, born in Walthamstow, lived with his parents George, who was a railway passenger guard (see his details below) and Ann plus siblings in one of the railway cottages in Banson's Way, Ongar.

There were two passenger porters plus a foreman porter. The foreman porter was Walter William Heard who was 56, born in Earls Colne and was a widower living with his son Harry and a housekeeper, Sarah Parish, in one of the railway cottages in Banson's Way. He earned 22s 0d per week. The porters (one per shift) were C. Adams and Tom Ashman, on 12s 0d per week.

There were three passenger guards, all on 29s 0d per week. George Robinson, aged 52, was born in Finchingfield, and lived with his wife Ann, son Frederick (who was a signalman at Ongar) and two other children in one of the railway cottages in Banson's Way. John F. Pearce, aged 46, was born in Stanford Rivers and lived with his wife Elizabeth and three sons in Pilgrims Rest Ongar. There was a third guard, Mr Vale.

Looking after the goods yard/shed was a goods foreman earning 21s 0d per week. He was Harry Barnard, aged 31 and born in Kings Lynn who lived with his wife Miriam and baby son in High Street Ongar. There was a leading goods porter earning 19s 0d per week, William Monk aged 31, plus a goods porter on 18s 0d per week, William Judd, aged 31.

Not mentioned are the permanent way staff, who we would have thought would be based at Ongar, and the steam crew who were based possibly at Epping Shed with Ongar shed taking a secondary role. Going through the 1911 census there are the following additional staff who may well have worked at Ongar at this time:

Arthur Charles Cracknell, foreman platelayer, aged 35, born in Hutton 1876, living with his wife Clara plus five children and two boarders (see below) in one of the railway cottages in Banson's Way.

Thomas Gray, platelayer, aged 70, born in High Ongar, a widower who lived in one of the railway cottages, Banson's Way with a housekeeper.

Walter John Matthams aged 23 and Walter Henry Friend aged 21 who were both trainee railway firemen and were boarders with Arthur Cracknell (see above).

Benjamin Staines, engine driver, aged 48, born in Great Burstead who lived with his wife Lily and three children in Castle Street, Ongar.

George Povey Harding, engine driver, aged 63, born in Camberwell, was a widower who lived with a housekeeper in Ongar High Street.

Alexander William Pryer, engine driver, aged 36, born in Northwold, Norfolk who lived with his wife Eliza and son in 5 Ufford Villas, Castle Street, Ongar.

The passenger locomotives using the branch were allocated to Epping Shed, with Ongar as an outpost of Epping. In 1911 these would have been Class M15s 2-4-2Ts, known as 'Gobblers'.

In 1911 the goods yard would have been very busy with two freight trains a day including coal for Ongar Gas Works and the local population. W. Jackson was the contractor for taking the coal to the Ongar Gas Works (opened 1836, closed 1934) and the main coal merchant was James & Henry Girling (Mr. Hammond, Manager). There was lime from London's Gas Works, sludge from Lea Bridge Sewerage Works, London street sweepings (horse manure), brewer's grain for cattle, ashes, cattle food, timber, groceries, and fertilisers for the local farms. Remember there were very few motorized vehicles around so everything would be using horse and cart.

Outwards traffic included livestock to Epping, Romford and Chelmsford Markets using cattle wagons, agricultural produce in season including potatoes and grain. Hay and straw, all hand trussed, filled the open wagons. In 1911 there were also two milk trains a day starting from Ongar and these brought great activity for an hour or so every morning and evening as the farmers arrived with their carts full of milk churns. Mail from and via London to Brentwood and Chelmsford travelled by horse and cart for delivery locally.

Not only did Ongar get a new station master in 1911 but a new district superintendent (Southern District) who looked after the whole of the Liverpool Street to Ongar line as well as the southern part of the GER. He was George Keary, based at Liverpool Street, taking over from George Randall in 1911. George Keary started his railway career as a lad clerk at Ongar on 25th August 1873, living as a lodger in Billericay.



GEORGE KEARY: SUPERINTENDENT OF THE LINE IN 1911. PHOTO FROM GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY STAFF MAGAZINE 1911. COURTESY GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY SOCIETY

Sources:

Great Eastern Railway Staff Magazines DVD (courtesy of Great Eastern Railway Society),
1911 census
1911 Pay List
1917 notes from Charles Edward Owers who joined the railway as a lad clerk on 29 January 1915 at Blake Hall before going to Ongar a year later
GER Way & Works Minutes 1862-1911
DVD (courtesy of Great Eastern Railway Society)[TE1]

Note from Editor

Online from mid June 2026 more records from the Retired Railways Officer's Society 1902 - 1963 from www.findmypast.co.uk

ESFH Genealogy Database

Transcription Releases in mid 2026

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

Baptisms

Clavering St Mary & St Clements	1754-1812	997 records
Saffron Walden St Mary the Virgin	1893-1894	800 records
Canada Ungave Mission Church	1900-1929	370 records
Wimbish All Saints	1765-1783	544 records

Burials

Chelmsford New London Road Non-Conformist Cemetery	1846-1896	1761 records
Fobbing St Michael	1894-202	725 records

Marriages

Berden St Nicholas	1754-1812	129 records
Clavering St Mary & St Clements	1788-1812	159 records
Farnham St Mary the Virgin	1733-1812	451 records
Wickham St Paul's All Saints	1813-1821	119 records

Memorial Inscriptions

Chipping Ongar St Martin of Tours	4085 records
Great Dunmow URC	304 records
Hutton All Saints	1820 records
Stanway St Albright's	1841 records

Note from the Treasurer Tanya Sewell (ESFH 308576)

Do you pay your ESHF membership subscription by Standing Order?

Thank you to everyone who sent their subscription this year.

We do however have a number of members who have not amended their Standing Order to the correct amount. This means much more work for our Membership Secretary.

Please check your Standing Order for next year **now** so that you are sending the correct amount for the 2026/2027 membership. Thank you. Any queries please email memsec@esfh.org.uk

All the Genealogy Gen on CHIPPING ONGAR

By Royston Jones (ESFH 20182)

Lying six miles from Epping and seven from Brentwood, Chipping Ongar is a south-west Essex village within easy reach of London: until 30 years ago it was the easternmost station on the Central Line of the underground. The railway reached the village in 1865 as part of a planned line to Chelmsford by the Great Eastern Railway but the tracks never reached beyond Ongar. Now heritage trains shuttle between Ongar and a point just short of Epping giving tourists a glimpse of transport in days gone by: sometimes vintage buses connect Epping with the station at North Weald.



Just five miles from Ongar, North Weald offers the family historian another reference point to the past. Still an operational commercial airfield, RAF North Weald was originally established in 1916 by the Royal Flying Corps. During the Second World War it was a crucial fighter base in the defence of London and after 1945 one of the first stations to employ the new jet fighters such as the Gloster Meteor. The lesser-known RAF Chipping Ongar was just two miles from the village and used by the British and Americans as a wartime bomber airfield.

But the area does not boast just recent history. Within the civil parish of Ongar, just two miles to the west, is St. Andrew's Greensted, the oldest surviving wooden church in the world. Chipping Ongar, which means 'market place by the grassland' is full of history itself. The Norman castle was demolished in late Elizabethan times but the adjacent eleventh-century church of St. Martin of Tours still welcomes a congregation. Essex Record Office (ERO) has the parish registers from 1559. These are available online with an index on Ancestry. The Essex Society for Family History shows on their database records for Baptisms 1813 - 1921, Marriages 1754 - 1935, Burials 1558 - 1910, Monumental Inscriptions 1867 - 2008.

In 1863 White's Directory puts the population of Chipping Ongar at 867 but, when added to the surrounding hamlets including High Ongar and Greensted, it totalled 1800. There were no fewer than ten fire and insurance offices in the town plus seven inns and taverns to keep the population well lubricated. Among the usual list of merchants and artisans was a professor of music and a drill sergeant while Miss Parker ran a 'fancy depot'. Coaches went to London and Brentwood daily and a mail cart to Romford at 6.00 pm.

Some interesting names appear in census returns including Barltrop, Cowee (a cattle dealer!), Houchin and Lamplough. There is a clutch of that favourite Essex name, Mott, several of them 'dealers', which fits in with the hawking ancestry of the name.

A schoolteacher was recorded in Ongar in 1637 and forty years later Joseph King left money for the education of the poor, the trust of which is still supporting local residents with educational needs. Early education supported by King took place in a cottage but in 1846 a purpose-built school was constructed. The trust reorganised the school in 1869 and in 1873 it was enlarged to meet the requirements of the 1870 Education Act. In 1882 the school had 100 pupils on roll. Among the almost 1750 individual items in the Essex Record Office catalogue for Chipping Ongar are some gems, including the minutes of the King Trustees for the school 1779 - 1800 with pupils' names.

The original workhouse was established two miles out of Ongar in Stanford Rivers in 1830; a dour redbrick building for 100 'inmates' with a central hub from which the master could keep an eye on all the exercise yards. In order to comply with the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, control of the workhouse was taken over by the new Ongar Workhouse Union, which comprised 26 local parishes with headquarters in Ongar Town Hall. The workhouse was enlarged and by 1840 had room for 200 'inmates'.

In 1871 one of the union's medical officers, William Gilmour, an ancestor of TV personality Fearne Cotton, was dismissed for neglect leading to the death of a child. The workhouse provided bed and breakfast for vagrants and tramps but the following morning they were locked in an enclosure and forced to break stones before leaving. Minutes of guardians' meetings and admission books are among many workhouse records in the ERO at Chelmsford. The workhouse closed in 1920 and inmates were transferred to Epping. More information is available on Peter Higginbotham's site, <https://www.workhouses.org.uk>.

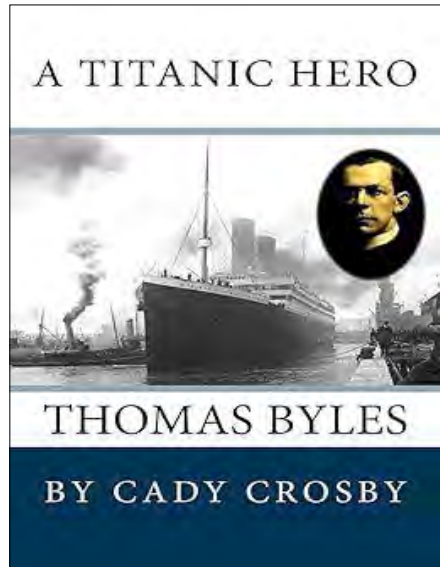
A brilliant resource for the family historian researching Ongar is the archive of the town's millennium project which offers the oral memories of some of the town's inhabitants. John Barker, for example, with family in Ongar going back to the 1860s, speaks for twenty minutes, with lots of detail about the church and education. Copies are available in Ongar library and also online at <https://www.essexarchivesonline.co.uk>.

Historians with possible family in the town should be sure to consult the web page of the Ongar Millenium History Society (OMHS) <https://omhs.org.uk/> which offers images, videos and texts about many aspects of the area's history. There is a particularly good article about Ongar during the Second World War. Although surrounded by fighter and bomber airfields and despite the Luftwaffe using the railway line as a flightpath to London, there was only one casualty from bombing: a goat called Emily.

Another valuable genealogical resource, still being developed, is a list of names and occupations from 1600 - 1800. The OMHS site also has transcripts of memorial and grave inscriptions from St. Peter's, St. Martin's, St. Helen's Catholic Church, and the United Reformed Church. Remembered in St. Helen's is Father Thomas Byles, who stayed on board the sinking Titanic to pray with the remaining passengers.

Readers might like to look at the Francis Frith site where there are over 70 images of Ongar and the surrounding area see <https://www.francisfrith.com/chipping-ongar>.

In short, Chipping Ongar is a fascinating historical village with some rich resources for the family historian.



IMAGES COURTESY OF THE EDITOR

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Note from Colleen Editor

Member Peter Craggs kindly pointed out, after reading about the Family History Event at Chelmsford Library in the March 2026 edition, that not all libraries in Essex have a free subscription to the commercial family history sites informing me that 'I live in Thurrock and although they seem to be a 'part' of Essex Libraries, Thurrock Council must fund their libraries. Thurrock is heavily in debt and has had to make many cutbacks. One of them is cancelling the subscriptions to Ancestry and Find My Past on the library computers. We can go to Basildon or Laindon libraries and use their computers as they are still part of Essex'.

ADVERTISEMENT FROM EPPING ONGAR RAILWAY

What's on at the Epping Ongar Railway Autumn and Winter 2026

Diesel Gala – 25, 26 and 27 September.



As usual Epping Ongar Railway will be running a three-train intensive service throughout the weekend with evening Real Ale trains on the Saturday - these are included in your great value fare!

The home fleet, including our shunting locomotives, along with some interesting visiting locos will be put through their paces over some of the most challenging gradients in preservation.

We anticipate the home fleet will consist of: Class 47 Jimmy Milne No. 47635 (shown above),

Class 20 Sherlock Holmes No. 20227 in London Transport Livery, Class 08 No. 08114 and Class 03 No. D2170 (03170). Further details of all events will be announced on our website:

www.eorailway.co.uk

Fright Week Halloween Services will run on 28, 29, 30 and 31 October.

Dress up in your scariest outfit and join our full-size ghost train as we promise some Hallowe'en fun with the living dead!

Steam hauled train journey from North Weird (renamed from North Weald) - but beware the living dead aren't just lurking outside the windows!

Find the ghosts haunting the eerie gruesome graveyard.

Meet the manic magician and watch his mysterious show.



All Aboard for Santa's Special Train selected dates in December.

All children receive a present from Santa. Inclusive Park and Ride service on our vintage London buses from Epping or Ongar. Take a return journey on Santa's Fantastically Festive Special Train from North Weald. Meet Santa and his friends during the experience.

Volunteering on the EOR

We have vacancies in many departments, including: Actors, Catering, Train Crew, Station Staff, Bar Steward, Permanent Way and Lineside care. Be part of the heritage, no experience necessary as training will be provided. For more information visit our website at www.eorailway.co.uk and click on the Support tab, or email volunteering@eorailway.co.uk

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North East Essex Branch Meeting**April and May 2026**

Summarised by Gill Peregrine (ESFH 5204)

Our April meeting was a problem-solving help session. We started with only four of us around one table for quite a while. However gradually more members arrived and we kept adding another table. In the end there were fourteen of us and four tables. There was a great deal of discussion and hopefully some problems were on their way to being solved.

During our May meeting we used the web site <https://ebic.byu.edu>. This has some transcriptions of census pre-1841. Some of us were able to find family members Of the 791 early census returns still in existence 86 are designated 'Essex' and a number have been transcribed by the family history students at Brigham Young University. It is worth checking the afore mentioned website from time to time for an update on the Essex locations. For example, all the early census for Little Baddow have all been transcribed and you can search by name.

I have left details of the website address on the main desk in our research room.

West Surrey Family History Fair will be on Saturday 7th November 2026. It takes place at the Woking Leisure Centre, Kingfield Road Woking GU22 9BA from 10.00 am - 4.30pm

Please see their website www.wsfhs.co.uk for further details.

Oxfordshire Family History Fair will be on Saturday October 24th 2026 at the Cherwell School, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford OX2 7EE from 10.00 am - 4.00pm

Please see their website <https://www.ofhs.uk> for further details.

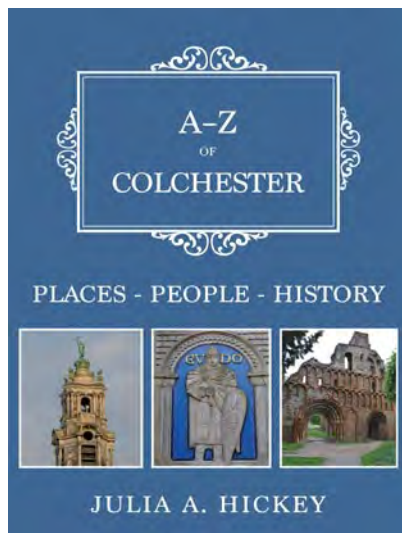
A-Z of Colchester: Places - People - History

By Julia A Hickey

Book review by Fiona Harvey (ESFH 33535)

If, like me, you had somehow overlooked Colchester in your historical explorations, this charming little book by Julia A Hickey may well prompt you to add it firmly to your list of places to visit. It certainly did for me.

Colchester holds the distinction of being the oldest recorded city in England, predating even the Romans, who knew it as Camulodunum - a major settlement from which King Cunobelin issued coins at his mint. The Romans left extraordinary ruins that subsequent settlers never quite forgot: Saxon communities made use of them, and the Normans incorporated the stonework into their famous castle. That sense of layered history, each generation building upon the last, runs throughout the book and gives it a pleasingly deep sense of place.



Hickey organises her material in accessible A-Z format, with short, digestible chapters that serve as inviting doorways rather than exhaustive studies. For family historians in particular, there is much to catch the eye. A fine roll call of surnames appears across the pages - Audley, Daniell, Dapifer, Grymes, Howard, Lucas, Lovell, Parnell, Rebow, Smorthwaite, Taylor, Vere, and more - each representing families who shaped the city across the centuries. The entries offer a useful starting point for anyone wishing to research further.

Beyond family names, the book touches on some delightful surprises. There are even statues commemorating these connections, Queen Boudicca, naturally, makes her appearance too. And for those curious about the letter Z, Colchester Zoo's Zeedonks - zebra and donkey hybrids - provide an entertainingly unexpected answer.

The book is enriched by 100 illustrations, predominantly colour photographs, which genuinely bring the city to life on the page. At just 96 pages it is compact enough to read in an evening, yet sufficiently thought-provoking to send you off researching for considerably longer. Julia Hickey, a Colchester native, has also written and narrated history walks for www.GPSmycity.com, which sound well worth exploring as a companion to this volume.

Published by Amberley Publishing last May and priced at £15.99, it is available in print and as a digital edition via Kindle, Kobo and iBook - a lovely gift for any Essex enthusiast.

Essex in the 1950s

By Mike Fogg (ESFH 33307)

When a friend died three years ago her family found about 100 copies of the magazine *The Essex Countryside* in her house and donated them to me. The magazine copies date from the 1950s, including the second one ever published and the copies I have go into the 1970s. They offer a fascinating insight of what life was like in Essex when they were written. I offered to do a presentation for the South Woodham Ferrers Local History Society based on all of the magazines, however when I started putting the presentation together, I realised that there was enough interesting material in the 1950s editions alone to make a presentation. This article is a summary of that presentation.



To the left is a scan of the front page of the second edition, from Spring 1953, with an image of the Colne Valley at Lexden. The magazine, then quarterly, cost 1s 3d or 5s if you subscribed to a year's worth. The older readers will quickly work out that the publisher was giving nothing away if you subscribed for a year!

All of the images in the 1950s magazines were black and white, and the publishers ran photography competitions inviting readers to submit their hard copy images at 'plate or half plate size'.

There were lots of advertisements and these reflect Essex as it was between 60 and 70 years ago. In 1954 the 'Eastern Electricity Service' were keen to sell you an electric cooker, which would cost you '4d a day' and 'suit both the busy woman and the shallow purse'. I'm not sure whether the daily cost was the hire purchase or the

running cost. By 1958 Eastern Electricity had presumably saturated the market for cookers because they were now stressing the indispensable benefits of a refrigerator, which would allow us to, 'dispense with the butter cooler, stop the milk going off and keep the salads crisp'. The 'silent' device would not interfere with the TV or radio and would 'last a lifetime'.

In Autumn 1953 Lambs of Woodford advertised a new Standard Vanguard car for £590, plus purchase tax. If you really wanted to push the boat out you could have a weekend in Paris between July and September 1955 for £10 17s 6d, travelling on the

Royal Daffodil from the end of Southend Pier. The price included onward rail travel, hotel costs and sightseeing in Paris. Bonds of Chelmsford advertised regularly: Men's heavy winter coats cost £12 12s in 1955 and a year later the 'Passap M201' knitting machine cost £26 19s 6d. Miss Coppin will demonstrate it if you require. Bonds also offered a 26-piece Spode 'Chinese Rose' dinner service for the strange price of £17 11s 1d in Autumn 1956.

Back in 1954 you could have wine delivered for 6 shillings a bottle and there is a drawing of a postman with a full sack.

The strangest advert though, is for a 'unique radio'. The device in question, pictured on the right, is in the shape of a 'specially designed solid oak two-gallon beer barrel' available in a variety of finishes and hoops. It has four pre-tuned stations, a battery or an accumulator and has the 'provision for gramophone and extension speakers' as extras. It will set you back £25. Clearly every home should have one!



There are lots of photographs of Maldon, including the river frozen in March 1955 and others of sailing boats resting on a steeply sloping beach at low tide. A young Mr J.R. Marriage had several articles as he canoed on the Essex waterways. In 1958 he travelled from Wickford down the Crouch to the sea.

In spring 1956 we learn some interesting facts about the demise of the Thames barges. The barges once brought coal from Newcastle as well as timber from Scandinavia and clay ware from Rotterdam; in 1856, 8000 tons of shipping was registered at Maldon. The advent of the railways initially assisted shipping by distributing coal from the ports



around the county, however the construction of the East Coast Mainline meant that coal producers used that route in preference and by 1956 there were 'dozens of rotting hulks' in the Maldon area. The spring 1959 edition narrates the demise of the last two Thames barges to rely solely on sail power. They were used for shipping acids from Limehouse cut to Cattawade on the Stour. I thought that this

was a strange trade, however one of the listeners to my presentation told the meeting that the boats brought the acid in glass carboys for a factory that made car batteries.

There are also images of canal barges taking timber from Maldon along the river Chelmer to Chelmsford on a daily basis and in the Winter 1956 edition the last horse drawn barge on the Chelmer and Blackwater canal is photographed at Sandon. Well perhaps, for the October 1957 edition of the then monthly magazine has an image of what looks like the same boat and the same horse taking directors and guests on an inspection tour of the canal. In the Summer 1956 edition there is an image of a new electric train journeying to Shenfield. Readers are told that the 'trials of the traveller' will soon be over! If only!

The Autumn 1955 edition contains a letter, with an image, about Hillmans of Romford showing people boarding an aeroplane. Before WW2 Hillmans ran a 'frequent and rapid' coach service up the A12 to London. In 1935 they also had aircraft which flew from Maylands Aerodrome at Harold Park to Clacton and Paris. Unfortunately, the owner then died, London Transport bought the coaches, and the air service was disbanded. It's interesting to conjecture what might have been if the air service had continued.

Photogenic Finchingfield is well covered in 1950s editions of Essex Countryside, quite often as entries in the photographic competitions. The autumn 1954 edition has a particularly reflective image from Mr D. J. Turner of Dagenham.

The readers of Essex Countryside were certainly not to be taken for granted. The winter 1955/6 edition has a full-page image purporting to be Braintree. However, Mrs Potton writes in the next issue to say that the image is not of Braintree, but of the Woolpack at Bocking. The spring 1956 edition has an image of broken tidal doors at Battlesbridge. Mr A. C. Cook provides an older image of the tidal doors in full working order for the next issue!

The June 1959 edition of the publication has a touching story about Mr Higden of Leyton. It took three years for Mr Higden to build his own house and during the time

THE ESSEX COUNTRYSIDE

Vol. 3 No. 9

AUTUMN

1954



Reflections at Finchingfield. An entry from D. J. Turner, of Dagenham, in our competition for photographs of cottages and other picturesque buildings in Essex.



Mrs. Ward (80) resting on the seat provided by Mr. Higden. See "Human kindness" on this page.

he was working on construction he saw many weary people walking up and down the street. On completion he therefore built a seat into the front wall of his house with a small sign that read 'Mr and Mrs Higton extend a welcome to the weary'. Eighty-year-old Mrs Ward is pictured in Essex Countryside sitting on the seat built by Mr Higden. I wonder if the seat is still there?

The old editions of Essex Countryside are a lovely treasure trove of the way we were. They are available on eBay; however, you will have to pay significantly more than 1s 3d for each of them!

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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.

Essex 1926 A Sentimental Journey.....Continues

By Dawn Tibble (ESFH 33361)

The following are newspaper extracts from one hundred years ago.

In 1926 all our ancestors would have been affected by the General Strike in May 1926. On 5th May the first General Strike in British history began at midnight after the General Council of the Trades Union Congress voted to back the miners who were in an industrial dispute. Whilst the Trade Union Movement and the Government were locked into a struggle, for nine days the people of Essex struggled on as best they could. Hit by paper shortages and transport problems the local press still carried news.

Extracts from the Essex Chronicle 5/3/1926

A party carrying electrical machinery manufactured by Messrs Crompton and Sons Chelmsford, were murdered in the Himalayas on their way to Lhasa. The murdered Tibetans were transporting up to 400 tons of electrical machinery for lights and power to the 'Forbidden City' when attacked. R Crompton enlisted the help of Mr R D Ringang, a young Tibetan who had moved to England 13 years previously and who was educated at Rugby School. No



CROMPTON WORKS, CHELMSFORD

English man was allowed inside the city so it was arranged that it was delivered and assembled by the Tibetans. After leaving England with the machinery eight months ago and after an initial contact on the journey, no word was received of the arrival of the party at Lhasa. Eventually it was reported that on a mountain pass, some 12,000 feet high, they met their murderers who threw them and the equipment off the edge. As a consequence, the British Mount Everest expedition planned for next autumn was abandoned.

Chelmsford Chronicle 9/4/1926

An April Fools Day prank led to over 300 vehicles turning up to a property in Harwich much to the surprise of the owners. Invitations were sent out offering free toll access on Easter weekend to go under the new tunnel that went under Harwich harbour connecting Essex with Suffolk. They were even offered a leather-bound book praising this great feat of engineering. The police spent the rest of the day informing drivers that there was never a tunnel there. One visitor said, 'So this is Harwich, what a fraud' and turned back home. The prank no doubt had reference to Councillor Elliott's

proposal to Harwich Council that was practically ignored. (for a detailed account of this event please see <https://www.essex100.com/2715/the-tunnel-that-never-was>).

A pleasing little ceremony at Epping Railway Station took part for the retirement of Mr William Charles Dean, who was retiring after 44 years of service. He was given an armchair, pipe and slippers by H G Sagers, Station Master on behalf of the staff.

A two-foot snake attacked farmer's chickens in Moreton. Mr George Dunmow tried to get it away with a hoe but it lunged at him so he killed it.



HAROLD COURT SANATORIUM UPMINSTER
IMAGE COURTESY OF HAVERING-LOCAL STUDIES

Chelmsford Chronicle 7/5/1926

Viewing day at Harold Court Sanatorium Upminster. Alderman S W Robinson, Chairman of the County Public Health Committee, invited members of the Care Commission, Insurance Committee and other interested persons to view the Sanatorium. Dr Burton Wood, Senior Tuberculosis Officer and Dr A I Wilkins, Senior Medical Officer, organised the day. Dr Wood gave a lecture in the morning on TB and showed Xray's. Mr Wilkins conducted a tour to show how

different methods are used to bring back health to the sufferers. A demonstration of leather, lace and batik work was given by Misses Button, Rattray and McFadden under the supervision of Miss Neville, Secretary of the Essex Voluntary Association. Also attending was Mrs Musgrove, Vice Chairman of the County Council, Mr FR Smith, Chairman of the Sanatorium Committee and T E Dann, Chairman of the Chelmsford Health Committee. The patients seemed pleased with the unusual concourse of visitors.

William Patrick Rablin, aged 17, of the Essex Regiment depot at Warley, was sent before the judge for being absent without leave. Detective Philmore said he saw Mr Rablin in civilian clothes in Writtle Road, Chelmsford. He told Mr Rablin he believed he was absent without leave (AWOL) to which he replied "Yes, I was expecting someone to come for me sooner or later. I am fed up with the army". He was remanded for an escort.

Chelmsford Chronicle 21/5/1926

Particulars of patents from Raynor and Sons, Chancery Lane, London are given to the Chronicle regarding Patent 248464. A new plug in coupling, for wireless purposes, cleans the plug socket as it is pushed home to maintain a good contact. Thus, enabling the best results to be made. The investors are Messrs A D Chapman and C R Cook of Old Boreham Hall, Boreham.

Essex Newsman 19/6/1926

In April Mrs A Cooper of Westview, Oak Road, Crays Hill, Billericay bought a second-hand coat at Wickford Market for 25s. When mending it she found 800 dollars.

Mrs May Ann Hawkes, of Pleshey celebrated her 101st birthday and apart from being a 'little short of breath' and 'troubled with a bit of rheumatics at times', Mrs Hawkes was in good health. She's had no teeth for 41 years but still enjoys her bread and cheese with raw onions. She had one daughter, Mrs S Reeves, with whom she lives, four grandchildren and eleven great great grandchildren. Her sister is 99 years and brother 90. She remembered playing in the same house as a child. She died the following year.

BURIALS in the Parish of <u>Little Waltham</u> in the County of <u>Essex</u> in the year One thousand eight hundred and <u>1927</u>				
Name.	Abode.	When buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
Mary Anne Hawkes	Pleshey	June 28 th 1927	102 years	S. C. Fayford

No. 545

RECORD OF THE BURIAL OF MARY ANNE HAWKES 28/07/1927

Essex Newsman 26/6/1926

Mr Lee, of Roxwell, lost one of his horses after it fell down a well and was found dead. A subscription was raised in the village and seventeen guineas was handed to him.

Essex Newsman 2/7/1926

The execution of Josephus Cornelius Mommers 42, for the murder of Italian Auguster Violet Pionbini, 22 in Thundersley in May last, is fixed to take place in Pentonville Prison Tuesday 27th July.



PENTONVILLE PRISON 1932

IMAGES COURTESY OF THE EDITOR

Essex Newsman 24/7/1926

Tragedy struck on Canvey Island, when six lads who cycled to the island to bathe found the tide just coming in and walked across the mud to meet it. One boy, James Bennett, 17, from Oakfield Street, East Ham, waded out about 30 yards ahead. Presently the others noticed he had disappeared and it is presumed he stepped into a hollow.

Frederick Barnes Architect FRIBA 1814-1898

What Did He Do For Essex?

By Keith Barker

Frederick was born at Hackney in London in 1814 and was baptised in Hackney St John on 25th June 1814. He was the fifth child of ten of Richard Stephen Barnes a schoolmaster and Louisa Barnes (née Slater). Nine of the children survived into adulthood, but none of them went on to have any children.

Frederick was nearly nine years old when admitted to Christ's Hospital School on 26th April 1823. He started at the preparatory school at Hertford before moving, at about the age of 12, to the senior school at Newgate Street in London. He left on 12th March 1829 when almost 16 years old. Frederick was then articled to the architect Sydney Smirke (1798 - 1877). He concluded his articles around 1834/35 at the age of 20 having been under Smirke for five years. It is believed he continued to work for Smirke for a further number of years.

In 1843 Barnes came to Ipswich to assist his friend the architect John Medland Clark (1813 - 1849) on the new Custom House on the Quayside.

On 16th Aug 1843 Frederick was initiated as a Freemason into The Lodge of Perfect Friendship in Ipswich, maybe at the Bee Hive Inn, Butter Market, Ipswich. I have not found a record of Frederick's sponsors but as his friend John Medland Clark was also a mason, he may have been one of his sponsors. The artist Fred(erick) Brett Russel a friend of Barnes and Edward Dorling, whose wife Elizabeth was the employer of Barnes future wife, were also members so they were other possible sponsors.

He worked for the Eastern Union Railway & Ipswich Bury Railway companies before starting his own practice in Ipswich in 1850. In his career he was responsible for designing around 250 new builds or renovation/alteration schemes, of which 74 are 'listed buildings' but regrettably at least 22 of his buildings have been demolished or rebuilt.

The East Anglian mainline railway was to connect Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester to London. Near Brantham, Suffolk they had to create a deep cutting about 1 mile long and 60 feet deep. A main road from Ipswich to Colchester had to cross over the railway line. The engineer Joseph Locke (or more likely Peter Bruff who was the resident engineer for the line) appointed Frederick



BULL BRIDGE BRANTHAM

Barnes to design a bridge. He created a fine imposing bridge to span the cutting with five semi-elliptical arches of about 29 ft span each carried on slender piers, unusually being buttressed to full height of the parapet level. This is where we start to hear about Frederick Barnes in his own right as an architect designer.

Frederick married Caroline Churchill of Epsom, daughter of John Churchill a saddler by licence at St. Mary at the Quay, Ipswich on 29th March 1845. Caroline was then a resident of Ipswich (and working for the Dorling family in Upper Brook Street). Elizabeth Dorling and John Medland Clark were witnesses.

Barnes is very well known for his stations on the Ipswich and Bury Railway line and although based in Ipswich, he also designed many buildings in Essex.

In the Essex Standard on 9th May 1851, he advertised he had opened an office (possibly for a correspondence address) in Queen Street, Colchester. His first work in Essex was the Mechanics Institute Hall now St George's Hall, 156a High Street, Colchester. The contractor was Mr Petit of Ipswich.



ST MARY MAGDALENE CHURCH COLCHESTER

In 1852 Barnes designed a new church - St Mary Magdalene in Colchester which was demolished in 1994. The contractor was Henry Luff of Ipswich. The following year saw a renovation/rebuild of the British School, Priory Street, Colchester. This time the contractors were Franklin & Start.

In 1854 he returned to railway station work on the Harwich branch with the station designs at Dovercourt Bay, Wrabness and Mistley. At about this time Barnes took on Joseph Staines Moye as a trainee assistant. Moye went on to become an architect in his own right; working in London, Surrey, Kent and Essex.

Barnes went on to design the Cemetery Lodges at Mersea Road for the Colchester Burial Board in 1856, and the contractors were Colls & Co from London. In addition to the station at Mistley he was responsible for the Norman School and teachers house at Mistley for E Norman Esq. On this occasion the contractors were R Watts & Sons.

I have still to identify a house in Springfield, Chelmsford.

A new assistant Charles Thomas Ruddick Peters (of West Ham) joined Barnes in 1857. The restoration of St Mary's Church Dedham was completed in 1860. In 1861 Thomas Fenn Ray of Sudbury became Barnes pupil. In 1862 he worked on the Clifton Baths and Assembly Rooms at Walton-on-the-Naze alongside Peter Bruff.

The next year saw The Lion Walk Congregational Church at Colchester, contractor H B Smith of Ipswich (this church spire was rebuilt after the 1884 earthquake). This church was demolished (apart from the 125-foot spire at the north west corner of the nave) in 1984 and replaced by the United Reformed Church.

Further stations in his portfolio were Hythe and Wivenhoe stations for the Tendering Hundred Railway,

In 1864 the projects included a parsonage and chapel at Tiptree, contractor T Holland of Sudbury in addition to four shops in Walton-on-the-Naze. (I suspect this may be Bruff Terrace, 28 The Parade however to date I have not visited the site or found any documentary proof). The next year saw enlarging a chapel (contractor Saunders & Son of Dedham) and a new Corn Exchange both in Manningtree, contractor George Hewitt of Ipswich and a house in Harwich Road Mistley contractor T Holland of Sudbury.

A return to railway work in 1866, stations at Arlesford, St Botolphs Colchester, Gt Bentley, Thorpe le Soken, Walton-on-the Naze and Kirby Cross again for the Tendering Hundred Railway. He was involved with the repairs to All Saints Dovercourt, and a new vicarage at Lindsell.

A chapel at Halstead, which appeared in the London Illustrated News, the contractor was Sudbury & Son Halstead and an unidentified maltings at Mistley.

In 1868 he designed the Wesleyan Chapel in Rayne Road Braintree, unfortunately this was demolished in 1988. The following year a Methodist Chapel at Tendring Green with contractor Saunders & Son of Dedham.



LION WALK CHURCH COLCHESTER

Edward Fernley Bisshopp was a pupil of Barnes and in the 1871 census it shows Bisshopp as architect's pupil (age 20) lodging at 62 Berners Street, Ipswich with a retired builder and his wife, William H Green and Elizabeth Green. After completion of his Articles he went to work for Davis & Emmanuel architects in London. In October 1874 he returned to Ipswich and was taken into partnership with Frederick Barnes the combined practice being known as Barnes & Bisshopp. The practice advertised in the Ipswich Journal 14th January 1875 for an Articled Pupil resulting in George Tinniswood being taken on. The partnership was short lived with Bisshopp leaving and setting up his own practice in 1877. In a notice in the Ipswich Journal February

20th 1877 Bisshopp points out that Barnes had dissolved the partnership without his or his solicitor's agreement.

The Royal Hotel at Clacton followed in 1872 and Kingsway Meeting Hall at Dovercourt in 1874, contractor Messrs Gibbons of Ipswich.

Leading up Pier Avenue from the Marine Parade corner, the first pair of houses on the left, known as Clarence Villas, was built in 1875. It was later converted into the Clarence Restaurant and a newspaper office for Clacton's first newspaper the 'Clacton Gazette'.

Between the wars the buildings became famous as the Corner House Café. They are now the site of a night club. The contractor was Clarke & Son of Great Bentley.

His final work was a restoration project of a house in Headgate, Colchester for a long-established client J M Norman Esq.

Barnes retired in 1883, five years before his wife Caroline died on 19th March 1888 and who is buried in the Old Ipswich Cemetery. In 1898 Frederick died on 6th December 1898 and is buried with her – the gravestone is believed to have been designed by him, grave reference Plot J/14/31. His estate was valued at £4745 10s 5d which he left to Howard Gaye architect and Charles Richards Stewart gentleman.



WESLEYAN CHAPEL RAYNE ROAD BRAINTREE



HALSTEAD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

A photograph of Barnes himself has so far eluded me.

For a list of sources by the author please email editor@esfh.org.uk

ALL IMAGES REPRODUCED BY THE
COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR.

Frederick Barnes Obituary East Anglian Daily Times 7th December 1898

Mr Barnes has left a mark on the district which will not readily be effaced.

DEATH OF MR FREDERICK BARNES A DISTINGUISHED IPSWICH RESIDENT

The death occurred on Tuesday, at Mill Hill House, Anglesea Road, Ipswich, of an old resident in the person of Mr Frederick Barnes one of the premier architects of the Eastern Counties. He was borne in 1814 at Hackney, his father being a master at Master of Christs Hospital School, where he himself was educated and distinguished himself as a student. On leaving school he was articled to an architect in London & Liverpool for several years.

The deceased gentleman came to Ipswich in 1843 to help his friend John Medland Clark in his work on the new Customs House. Shortly after he was engaged by the Mr Bruff for whom he designed the stations and buildings for the Eastern Union Railway and other railways under his direction. In 1850 Mr Barnes began in general practice, his first work being Thurleston Lodge for the late Mr Charles Steward, from whose favourable opinion he derived considerable advantage. About this time was awarded the premium for the best design for the Ipswich Grammar School against 53 competitors.

He also gained by competition for the Public Hall at Colchester and St Mary Magdalene Church in the same town. Shortly after he designed the Congregational Chapel in Tacket Street and the chapels Crown Street and Museum Street, which led to the Lion Walk Chapel in Colchester and others at Stowmarket, Halstead, Sudbury, Braintree, Nayland and Tiptree and several smaller chapels in the neighbouring villages. In 1862 Mr Barnes design for a church in Birkley Park was selected in a limited competition with London architects. At the same time he was engaged upon additional classrooms for Harrow School and erecting boarding houses for some of the Harrow masters and a mansion in Surrey for Sir Charles Buxton of Foxwarren Park.

In 1865 he designed the Ipswich Public Hall, the buildings in Westgate Street and improvements to The Buttermarket. He also erected dozens of schools before the operating of the School Board and many parsonages and churches, including the New Church at Melton and the Presbyterian Church at Ipswich, the tower of St Lawrence church (in conjunction with Mr Howard Gaye) and many private houses in the Eastern Counties. He designed for the late Sir Richard Wallace Bart. M.P the Park Lodge and other ornamental buildings including the rebuilding of Sudbourne Church besides erecting and rearranging several farmhouses homesteads on Sir Richards estate at Sudbourne. Mr Barnes has left a mark on the district which will not readily be effaced.

A few years ago Mr Barnes lost his wife, and in her memory, he erected and endowed the Almshouses in Lady Lane Ipswich, and there is a medallion of the deceased lady on the buildings. The late Mrs Barnes was greatly interested in shorthand writing and, as another memorial of her, Mr Barnes founded what is known as the Caroline Barnes Scholarship for Shorthand at Ipswich School.

It is now some years since Mr Barnes was actively engaged in his profession, and in his retirement, he had lived quietly at his residence on Anglesea Road, where he passed away on Tuesday.



A Clerical Scandal: GREGG v ROWE 1891

By Alan White (ESFH 33754)

In June 1891 George Rowe, a newly-married twenty-two-year-old clerk, hand-delivered a letter to the churchwardens of Trinity Church, Southend. Its contents were explosive. Rowe alleged that four years earlier his new wife, Gertrude, then aged seventeen, had been seduced at the Church by its Rector, the Reverend T H Gregg. He further alleged that Gregg had been guilty of 'systematic immoral conduct extending over a period of several years'. Gregg's response was immediate: he protested his innocence and initiated proceedings against Rowe for criminal libel. Soon afterwards George Rowe was summoned to appear at Rochford Petty Sessions. His letter was read out to the court in full, whereupon the magistrates, without further ado, committed him for trial at the next Assizes in Chelmsford. In this way, reported the Southend Standard, *'the first scene was enacted of a cause celebre which for sensation we venture to assert has never before been equalled in Southend'*.



REPRODUCED BY COURTESY OF THE
ESSEX RECORD OFFICE

George Rowe had taken aim at a formidable opponent. Thomas Huband Gregg was a well-known public figure, a noted theologian, and a stern moralist. Born into a wealthy landowning family in Ireland in 1840, he began his career as a minister in the Church of England, but in 1877, alarmed by the growth of Anglo-Catholicism within it, left to join the Reformed Episcopal Church, a staunchly Protestant sect in which he was swiftly consecrated as a Bishop.

It was at this point that Gregg's connection with Southend began. He came at the invitation of a number of local residents who shared his antipathy towards 'Romanism' and who saw him as just the man to establish a branch of the Reformed Episcopal Church in the town. Their confidence was not misplaced. Thanks to Gregg's energy and determination, the building of Trinity Church was completed within a mere six months. The new church flourished, becoming, claimed the Southend Standard, *'the largest, most influential and talked-of church in all Essex'*. Before long, though, imperious and opinionated as he was, Gregg fell out with the Reformed Episcopal Church's hierarchy. In 1880 he declared his independence and founded a new denomination, the Reformed Church of England, taking with him not only the building and assets of Trinity Church but most of the congregation too.

Outside the confines of Trinity Church Gregg was one of late-Victorian Southend's most active and engaged citizens. With a doctorate in medicine as well as one in divinity, he naturally took a close interest in health-related matters. In 1885 he founded

the Christian Medical Mission for the Sick Poor, an initiative for which he was widely praised. In 1887, more controversially, he launched a vitriolic attack on Southend's sanitary authority, the Local Board, accusing it of allowing typhus to become endemic in the town through a '*gross and culpable*' failure to ensure that its drains and sewers were fit for purpose. The evidence he offered was flimsy, but he touched a nerve and succeeded in goading the Local Board into action. Gregg was also prominent in the field of education, becoming Chairman of the Prittlewell School Board in 1886. In terms of status and influence the disparity between Gregg and George Rowe could scarcely have been greater.

When George Rowe appeared at the Assizes in Chelmsford in July 1891, he pleaded not guilty and indicated that he would be offering a defence of 'justification' – legalese for saying that the allegations he had made were true. Next up was Gregg's barrister, who promptly advised the court that his client was not fit to testify. This would not have come as a shock to onlookers. A few days after the nature of the allegations against him became public knowledge, Gregg had delivered a sermon at Trinity Church so rambling and incoherent that it was obvious he was in the throes of a full-blown mental breakdown. Soon afterwards he became a patient at an asylum in Kent. The judge at the Assizes clearly doubted that Gregg was as incapacitated as his doctors said he was, but he nevertheless agreed to the prosecution's request for an adjournment.

Gregg v Rowe resumed, before a new judge, at the Assizes in Chelmsford in December 1891. In his opening remarks Gregg's barrister explained that his client's condition was unchanged, with no prospect of improvement, and he was still incapable of giving evidence. He went on to reveal that the prosecution and defence had provisionally reached an agreement which would allow the case to be brought to an end: George Rowe would withdraw his plea of 'justification', while the prosecution undertook not to offer any evidence against him, meaning that he would have no case to answer. The judge was willing to proceed on this basis, and the jury, as instructed, formally declared Rowe to be not guilty of criminal libel.

There were those who viewed this outcome as deeply unsatisfactory. What the law appeared to be saying, observed the Southend Standard, was that '*both parties are to be regarded as innocent – the Bishop [Gregg] of the foul charge alleged against him, and his accuser of bearing false witness against him*'. Others maintained that the settlement agreed upon was the only equitable way out of the legal impasse in which the court found itself.

In the absence of evidence one way or the other, any comment on whether it was Gregg or Rowe who was telling the truth would be no more than empty speculation. What is true, however, is that Gregg v Rowe left behind it a trail of damaged lives. Thomas Huband Gregg never recovered from his breakdown and died in London's Camberwell House Asylum in 1896, with only intermittent memories of his time in Southend. His wife of nearly thirty years, Caroline, who had been active in the affairs of Trinity Church, left Essex soon after the court case ended, moving to Sussex, where her son, the Reverend F T Gregg, was a Reformed Church of England minister. She was accompanied by her four grown-up daughters, Sophia, Louisa, Caroline and Emily. The family's remaining ties to Southend were cut in 1892,

when T H Gregg's property in the town was sold off at auction. By this time George Rowe and his wife had also left Southend, settling first in London and then moving to South Africa. Meanwhile, the number of worshippers at Trinity Church dwindled. The wider Reformed Church of England, shorn of Gregg's leadership, also went into sharp decline: in 1894 it reunited with the Reformed Episcopal Church and ceased to exist as an independent entity. The Trinity Church building in central Southend was demolished in 1986.



South East Branch Meeting

6th June 2026

The Trams of Southend by Simon Deacon

Summarised by Carole Mulroney (ESFH 33571)

Once again, the South East Essex Branch were treated to a very interesting talk by Simon, who has an in depth understanding of Southend's history and carries out meticulous research in order to bring an interesting and informative talk.

He started off in 1811, which seemed unbelievable and no 'tram' then would bear a resemblance to what we have in our minds as a tram service. Nevertheless, that year saw an ill-fated proposal for a horse drawn iron railway from Hockley to Wallasea Island - it never happened.

Simon then jumped to more familiar territory in the mid-1850s when the railway proper came through and Clifftown developed. Southend's population was only 3,000 but over the decades this form of transport became more and more popular until in 1889 the new pier had an electric tramway, one of the first in the UK. By 1898 there were seven tram routes criss crossing the Southend area and taking people to destinations like the seafront, Hamlet Court Road, Thorpe Bay and Southchurch. The High Street itself had an unsurmountable difficulty with the railway bridge and Pier Hill was too steep.

Simon steered us through the ups and downs of finances and local politics when other routes were explored. It was not just the trams which were of interest but the infrastructure, like the shelters which were fine buildings in their own right. It was also a story of social progression for women who played a great part in tram operation especially during the Great War.

There were inevitably accidents and changes to design of the trams. The introduction of trolley buses at lower costs and more weather proofed, made them very popular. Obviously, trade slowed during the Second World War when the tourists stayed away and there were restrictions on movements.

Trams finally ceased on 8th April 1942 but even that ended with a ceremony involving the mayor and the great and good which was washed out unfortunately. Sadly, there are no visible signs of this phenomenon of our transport system, but at least we now know where it went.

The Mystery of the Essex Hymn Book Part Two

By Andrea Hewitt Chair (ESFH 3698)

I hope readers will recall that in Part One of my article, printed in the March 2026 edition, I recounted how I had inherited a hymn book and set about trying to prove that the John Dodd who created it was connected to my Dodd family of Springfield, Essex.

My 'big break' came eventually following one of our society meetings at the Galleywood Heritage Centre, when a colleague informed me that members Andrew Britter, a former late Chair of our Society, and his wife Jane were both very knowledgeable about the Springfield parish church of All Saints' Church and indeed the Springfield area. They kindly provided me with lots of new information and advised me to look at the Springfield School records at the Essex Record Office (ERO).

One of the histories of All Saints Church given to me by Andrew and Jane contained the information that the Dr Williams Charity was set up early in the 1800's to teach local poor children reading, writing, arithmetic and principles of the Christian Religion. They had appointed William Dodd as master and the school was held in his house. He is surprisingly described as a 'dissenter' but the writer suggests that the School Governors were probably broad-minded. When a new Church School was built in 1814, William's brother John Dodd (my ancestor) is recorded as being appointed Master of the Boys Sunday School.

I visited the ERO and I was delighted to find that there was a John Dodd shown in 1816 as School Master, with a salary of £3 7s 6p per quarter for teaching the Sunday School and Springfield School children to sing!

I was even more excited to find who could have been my John Dodd's older brother William being paid £3 5s per quarter, by Springfield School. There were also payments to a Mrs Dodd for '£2 for needles.' I had of course checked all of the census records for 'Dodd's' that I thought could be my ancestors in Springfield. An entry in the 1841 census seemed to corroborate that it was John's brother William and his wife Elizabeth (née Turner) who also worked at the school, showing them listed in the census at Springfield as School Master and School Mistress.

Payments were recorded in the school records for John Dodd until 1841. So, it appeared that he could have left the school before the 1841 census was taken where he is recorded with the occupation of Ag. Lab. rather than School Master. I still found it surprising that a School Master became an agricultural labourer, especially when he would have been about 58 years old?

To this day I haven't been able to find out how John Dodd received his musical education however newspaper articles I have found about his descendants show that several of them learnt to sing and/or play musical instruments, presumably from tuition from him.

The first newspaper article I found merely mentions that a music book written by John Dodd has been found and that it is believed to be about 100 years old. (see figure1).

A Copy of a Music book containing 35 Psalm tunes and a Christmas hymn by John Dodd of Springfield, has been brought to us. It is an interesting book, somewhere about 100 years old, and originally sold locally by the printers, Marsden's Stationery Warehouse, opposite the Black Boy, Chelmsford. The Black Boy was at the corner of Springfield Road. The tunes have local names, Writtle, Baddow, Springfield, Chelmsford, Witham, Malden, and the like. Mr. John Dixon, of 159 Wood St., Chelmsford, who is organist at Boreham Church, would like to obtain the tunes "Hatfield" and "Boreham," which are torn in his copy. He hopes to get the Boreham choir to practise some of these old tunes, which may be taken up, too, in other places locally.

FIGURE 1 SOURCE ESSEX NEWSMAN 14TH DECEMBER 1935

This tied in with my findings but it was only when I found a later article re the death of a George Dodd. (See figure 2). This states that he had been organist and choirmaster for Holy Trinity Church, Springfield and that his Great Uncle John Dodd had written our book, and his Great Uncle was in fact my 4x great grandfather!

It was when we were discussing this article for our magazine that our Editor sent me this report of John Dodd's funeral that I had never seen. (See figure 3). I learnt a useful lesson that you need to keep checking newspaper databases as content is being regularly added to these databases.

Surprisingly in this report it only says he was 'formerly of the Springfield Church Choir' and makes no mention of his music book. It does however say that he was 'formerly one of the band of the old Chelmsford Volunteers under Major Gepp, and one of the oldest members of the Essex Provident Society. (There is a G A Gepp and a George Dodd amongst the subscribers to the music book).

From further reading I learnt that Chelmsford Volunteers were originally set up 'during the European Wars in the early 1800's to assist the many Militia, passing through the Chelmsford area to protect our ports, with food and accommodation'. In another newspaper article, the writer remembers a brass band being formed from The Band

DEATH OF MR. GEO. DODD
PRINTER MUSICIAN.

The death has occurred of Mr. George Dodd, in his sixty-ninth year, who had lived in Pulteney Road, South Woodford, for nearly 37 years. He spent 51 years in the printing trade, first at Chelmsford, and then, for 34 years on the staff of the London Express Newspaper Limited, which he joined soon after the "Daily Express" was founded by the late Sir Arthur Pearson, Bart.

Mr. Dodd studied music under Mr. F. R. Frye, the veteran organist at Chelmsford Cathedral. In his early days he was organist and choirmaster at Holy Trinity Church, Springfield, and during the war played the organ for the children's service at Holy Trinity Church, South Woodford, where he was also a sidesman for many years. Mr. Dodd's parents lived at Springfield, and his great-uncle, Mr. John Dodd, was the composer of 'Thirty-five Psalm Tunes and a Hymn for Christmas for Four Voices composed in a Familiar Style and figured for the Organ or Piano-forte.' These Psalm tunes were named after Essex villages, and there was some correspondence about them recently in the County Press.

Apart from his interest in music, Mr. Dodd took a keen interest in cricket, and could tell amusing stories of cricket on the village greens of Essex in the days when "penny-farthing" bicycles were the vogue, the art of riding which was one of his early accomplishments. He leaves a widow (who, as Miss Ellen Pratt, was mistress of Springfield Green Infant School), and one son, Mr. John Dodd, who is assistant secretary of the Merseyside Hospitals Council.

The Rev. H. Monks conducted a service at Holy Trinity Church, South Woodford, and the interment followed at Loughton Cemetery.

FIGURE 2 SOURCE CHELMSFORD CHRONICLE 4TH MARCH 1938

The funeral of Mr. John Dodd, formerly of the Springfield church choir, took place at Trinity Church, Springfield, on Sunday last, when part of the burial service was chanted by the choir in the church and at the grave, the remainder of the service being read by the Rev. W. Clarke, to a very large congregation. The deceased, who was in his 82nd year, was formerly one of the band of the old Chelmsford volunteers, under Major Gepp, and being one of the oldest members of the Essex Provident Society, several of the committee and about 50 of the members attended to pay a last tribute to an old and respected member.

FIGURE 3 SOURCE CHELMSFORD CHRONICLE 24TH FEBRUARY 1865

of the Old Chelmsford Volunteers. In the same article he says 'the old band consisted of John Dodd, Charles Dodd (father and son) and grandfather and uncle of George Dodd late organist of Holy Trinity and Woodford'. This confirmed my thinking that all of the above were the relatives I had found.

I surmised that John must have at least encouraged his family to become involved in both the church and its music, as it is likely that he may have taught many of them during his career as the music teacher at Springfield School.

In 1843 from an article in the Essex Standard George Dodd born around 1808 sadly took his own life and in the report of his inquest it is quoted that he was 'in the employment of C J Parker of Springfield Place during which time he also acted as one of the trumpeters who customarily precede the judges of assize in the entrance in to Chelmsford' which shows he too had been taught music. He was my 3rd great grand uncle.

I found another sad family connection when I looked closely at the handwritten manuscripts that were included in our copy of the hymn book. There were two compositions entitled 'Alfred' and I remembered that the composer John Dodd and his wife Sarah had six sons, and one of them was called Alfred. (my 3x great grand uncle). When I checked my family tree it showed the baptism of Alfred as 30th May 1813, and his burial was recorded as 4th July 1813, at All Saints Church, Springfield. It would appear that John had dedicated these 2 pieces to Alfred, after this sad loss.

There are also many other short compositions several of them given names of other localities outside Essex (UK). (see figure 4). These include Sussex, Worthing and one title even includes New York. I can only trace my older Dodd relatives within Essex to date and so far I haven't found any useful DNA matches to take them elsewhere, so I can't imagine why John Dodd named these tunes in this way.

I and other members of our family would love to hear this music played again and I have made some recent contacts who would like to make this possible - so watch this space or our News page online, to find out more!

You can access the hymn book on Essex Archives Online entitled Digital Copy of Sacred Music ERO reference T/B 632/1. You can also see a free copy on our website under Activities/News/ under Essex Hymn Book.

	PAGE		PAGE
BADDOW	7	MARGARETTING	16
BOREHAM	2	MOUNTNESSING	18
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BROOMFIELD	7	RAYLEIGH	14
CHELMSFORD	12	ROXWELL	6
COLCHESTER	22	SANDON	3
DANBURY	8	SHENFIELD	15
DUNMOW	19	SPRINGFIELD	10
EPHING	21	STOCK	15
ESSEX	9	SUFFOLK	9
FEARING	20	TERLING	2
FYFIELD	4	WALTHAM	5
HANNINGFIELD	6	WICKHAM	11
HATFIELD	1	WILLINGALE	10
INGATESTONE	19	WITHAM	17
KELVEDON	23	WOODHAM	4
LAINDON	13	WRITTLE	5
MALDON	17	YARMOUTH	21

MARSDEN, PRINTER, GREENWICH.

FIGURE 4 INSIDE THE BACK COVER OF THE HYMN BOOK SHOWING THE LOCATIONS THAT HAD MUSIC WRITTEN FOR THEM

Sources

A copy of the Hymn book can be viewed on the ESFH website go to the Activities> ESFH News and see the Post, dated 10 March 2026

You can also view the music book on the ERO website ref T/B 632/1, newspaper articles from www.findmypast.co.uk

ERO reference D/P/211/28/8 Springfield Sunday School subscription and account book (this can only be viewed at ERO).

Historical Notes of All Saints' Church Alan Shadrack published 2000

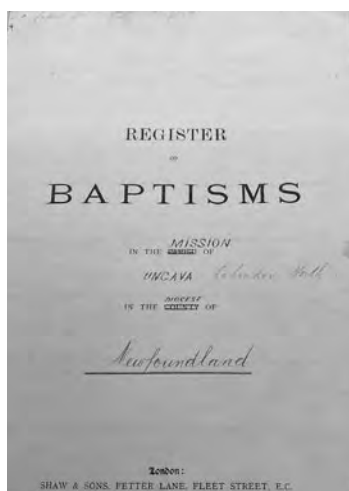
Mission Church of Ungava in Diocese of Newfoundland, Canada and its links with Harlow Essex

By Elizabeth Cox (ESFH 2192)

I recently went into the Essex Record Office (ERO) to search for correspondence about the land details of St John the Baptist Church in Old Harlow and the adjacent Harlow Campus of the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Harlow Campus is the international campus of Memorial University, one of only two universities in Canada with a foothold in the United Kingdom. On the side of the Campus building is a plaque in memory to the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who fell in the First World War and subsequent conflicts and below it is a display of ceramic red poppies.



Imagine my surprise, when the documents appeared to find in the bundle a Baptism Register for the Mission Church of Ungava in the Diocese of Newfoundland for the period 1900 - 1929. It appears that the Minister left Ungava and moved to Ugley in Essex and copied the register before he left there in 1929.



The Baptism Register included details like the date of the birth and or baptism, parentage, occupations and showed several entries where he had baptised parents and their children together, which explained some birth dates as early as 1850. The parishioners appear to have been employed by the Hudson Bay Company and the occupations covered Manager, Trappers, Carpenters, Interpreters and Domestic Servant. From the surnames I could see there were, in addition to the English sounding ones, several of Native or Eskimo origin. Also included in the bundle from the vaults were other miscellaneous pieces of paper like receipts from the Bank of Montreal in London and a few shopping lists. It was all very exciting stuff!

Without hesitation I transcribed the register and in due course, after permission from various parties, I sent a copy of the transcription to the Family History Society of Newfoundland & Labrador with an explanation that I hoped I had transcribed some of the Native names correctly and that the data would be of benefit to both ESFH and their members. In due course I got this reply from their President.

Hi Elizabeth,

What a great find! We would be very grateful for a copy of these records and are quite happy to acknowledge the source! Thanks so much for thinking of us.

Cheers,

Janet Morrissey - FHSNL President

This just shows you need to look far and wide for your family history!

☆ ☆ ☆

The Essex Branch of the Historical Association

Readers may be interested in the following events:

Essex Branch Programme 2026 Talks on Saturdays, 2.30pm, Trinity Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2XB. Visitors and prospective members warmly welcomed - £5

September 19th 2026

Persecution & Toleration in England, 1400 - 1700

Professor Alexandra Walsham, President of H.A. University of Cambridge

October 17th 2026

AGM: Precedes talk The Social Spread of the Handshake in 18th & 19th Century England

Dr Penelope Corfield. Emeritus Prof. History, Royal Holloway

November 21st 2026

Country walks through Colonial Britain Professor Corinne Fowler

Professor of Colonialism & Heritage. University of Leicester

December 12th 2026 EXTRA

How accurate is the Bayeux Tapestry? What is its relevance for Britain today?

(To co-inside with British Museum exhibition Sept. 2026 – July 2027)

Dr Tom Licence. Professor of Modern Literature.

For further information see <https://essexbranchha.com>

An OSBORN Dynasty - Tradesmen in Kelvedon in the 19th century

By Simon Mynott (ESFH 33237)

On 18th December 1804 Robert Osborn married Fanny Turner at Kelvedon Parish Church (KPC) and both were able to sign their own names. Robert was the son of an earlier Robert who married there in 1781. Robert senior was recorded in the marriage register as a shoemaker, and in an 'unofficial' census taken in Kelvedon in 1830, Robert junior was similarly described as a cordwainer, the old term for a shoemaker. Robert and Fanny baptised at least 12 children between 1805 and 1831, mostly at Kelvedon Independent Chapel (KIC).

GARDENER.

WANTED, a Situation, to live in a private gentleman's family, a steady, active, working GARDENER, who knows something of working Pines.

Applications addressed to Robert Osborn, Kelvedon, Essex, with proper references, will be attended to if likely to answer.

Kelvedon, Dec. 8, 1837.

ESSEX AND HERTS MERCURY 11TH DECEMBER 1837

My focus in this article is firstly on Robert's four sons who reached adulthood and married, and secondly on Robert's grandsons. The four sons who married were:

Joseph Turner Osborn, baptised on 17th May 1818

Jeremiah Osborn, baptised on 21st November 1822

Elijah Osborn, baptised on 25th January 1825

Eli Osborn, baptised on 9th August 1831

Sons of Robert and Fanny

Joseph Turner Osborn married Eliza Copen in the Witham Registration District (which included Kelvedon) in 1839. In the 1851 census he was described as a boot and shoemaker in Kelvedon and by 1871 he had enough customers for him to employ a man and a boy. Joseph lived to be 82 and he was buried at KIC on 15th February 1901. Eliza had died in 1900 - their tombstone says 'united for 61 years'.

Jeremiah Osborn married Anna Allen on 3rd February 1845 at Gt. Oakley in N. Essex where Anna had been born. Jeremiah was then a shoemaker in Thorpe-le-Soken (perhaps to avoid competing with Joseph?). By 1861 he was back in Kelvedon, trading as a shoemaker and seed grower and Anna was earning some money as a straw bonnet maker. Jeremiah was only 55 when he died; the KIC register records his burial on 16th April 1878, and adds that he served as pew-opener, cleaner and sexton for the Chapel. There is no visible sign now of Jeremiah's grave. Obviously, the business of shoemakers and seed growers had its turbulent times as this newspaper snippet confirms as the three brothers found themselves bankrupt in the late 1860's.

THE BANKRUPTCY ACT. 1861. — JOSEPH OSBORN, JEREMIAH OSBORN, and ELIJAH OSBORN, all of Kelvedon, in the County of Essex, Shoemakers, and Seed Growers, Copartners, adjudicated Bankrupts the 19th day of November, 1863. An Order of Discharge was granted by the Court of Bankruptcy, London, on the 15th day of January, 1864.
W. HAZLITT, Registrar.

KENTISH JOURNAL 13TH FEBRUARY 1864

Elijah Osborn married Caroline Skipper in 1849 in the Witham Registration District. By the time of the 1871 Census, he was a boot and shoemaker in Kelvedon, and Caroline like Anna was making straw bonnets. By 1881 however Elijah had switched to growing seeds; he was still doing so in 1891, and that is confirmed in Kelly's Directory for 1906. He was buried at KIC on 14th September 1908, aged 83, and his grave has an inscription with the dates of his birth and death, plus corresponding details for Caroline who had died in 1896.

Seed-growing became an important part of Kelvedon's economy in the late 19th century. For Jeremiah Osborn in 1861 it was a side-line, but for Elijah in 1881 it seems to have become his main occupation. Kelvedon had favourable growing conditions for seeds - low rainfall and a pattern of late Spring frosts. English farmers generally were facing increasing competition in the 1870's from wheat and meat being imported from North America, and in Kelvedon many fields were switched to seed-growing. There is now for example a variety of pea called 'Kelvedon Wonder'.

Eli Osborn was by far the youngest of Robert's sons and he pursued a distinctive career. He was married in 1858 in the Witham Registration District and his bride Emma Allen was the sister of Anna Allen who had married Jeremiah. (The two girls were the daughters of a schoolmaster in Gt. Oakley, North Essex). In successive censuses Eli was listed as a grocer and earthenware dealer.

For the 1861 Census Robert (Eli's father, now 77) was living with Eli and Emma. Robert's wife Fanny had died in 1860. Robert himself was buried at KIC on 26th February 1864, having made a will leaving everything to Eli.

OSBORN Robert.	10 February.	The Will
Effects under £100.	of Robert Osborn late of Kelvedon in the County of Essex deceased who died 26 February 1864 at Kelvedon aforesaid was proved at Ipswich by the oath of Eli Osborn of Kelvedon aforesaid Grocer the Son the sole Executor.	

THE INDEX TO ROBERT'S WILL

In 1884 Kelvedon and parishes nearer Colchester suffered an earthquake, with a strength on the Richter scale of 4.6. A memory of the effects on Eli was passed on by his relatives to Joan Mary Young (born an Osborn in 1907). (See Sources at the end of this article). 'The glass and earthenware in Eli's warehouse shook violently'. Eli died at only 58 and was buried in March 1890 at KIC, but Emma carried on at the shop; in Kelly's Directory for 1899 she was recorded as a china/glass dealer, and a grocer. She finally died in 1905 and was buried on 12th August.

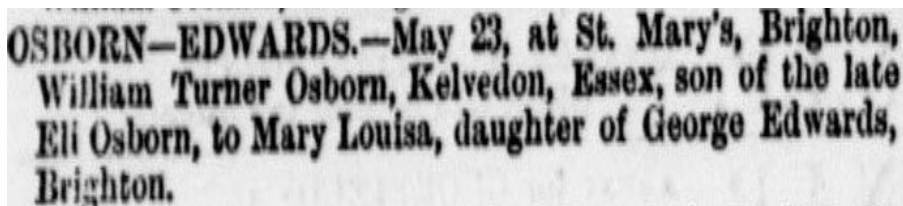
Grandsons of Robert and Fanny

- Son of Joseph - **Matthias**, baptised 10th April 1847; he emigrated and died in Omaha, Nebraska, USA on 30th June 1931.
- Son of Jeremiah - **Allen**, who was buried at KIC on 26th February 1862 aged 16
- Sons of Elijah - **Jabez** in Uxbridge aged 21 in 1871
- **Edgar** in Kelvedon aged 16
- Sons of Eli - **Robert Eli** in Kelvedon aged 11 in 1871
- **William Turner** Osborn aged 10
- **Frederick Archer** Osborn aged 8
- **Frank Allen** Osborn aged 5

Jabez Osborn was baptised at KIC on 23rd June 1851. He went to Uxbridge in 1869 and stayed there 46 years, becoming a District Councillor, a Guardian for the Poor and a Director of Uxbridge Permanent Benefit Building Society. In retirement he returned to Kelvedon at the end of 1915 and died on 14th December 1936, with a burial at KIC.

Edgar Osborn was born in the 2nd quarter of 1856 in Witham Registration District. He went to Burnham-on-Crouch and married there. In the 1901 census he was a house decorator with a daughter Minnie. Edgar died in the Maldon Registration District in the 1st quarter of 1929.

Robert Eli Osborn was born in the 3rd quarter of 1859 in the Witham Registration District. By 1901 he was in Leyton with a wife Mary, daughter Louise born in Exeter, and son Archibald born in Kelvedon. Robert was working as a traveller for a brewery company. He died in West Ham Registration District in the 4th quarter of 1934.



HASTINGS AND BEXHILL INDEPENDENT 28TH MAY 1891

William Turner Osborn was born in 1860 in Kelvedon. He married in 1891.

For the 1901 census he was still in Kelvedon with a wife Mary, son Fred and daughter Ethel, both children born in Kelvedon. His occupation in 1901 was 'Manager' but his line of business is obscured on the census form. He was buried on 5th March 1902 in Kelvedon aged only 41.

Frederick Archer Osborn was born in Kelvedon in 1863. In the 1911 census he was listed as a builder and contractor in Kelvedon with a wife (Amy Mary Shelley Osborn) who was also born in Kelvedon, plus a son Harry and a daughter Joan Mary. Frederick's gravestone in the new burial ground for the KIC says he died on 6th February 1941.

Frank Allen Osborn was born in the 3rd quarter of 1865 in Kelvedon. According to the 1901 census he was in Kelvedon with a wife Laura and a daughter Dorothy Evelyn. He described himself as a Rate Collector. Kelly's Directory for 1906 also lists him as a house and insurance agent, and as Secretary of the Gas Company. Frank died in the 4th quarter of 1929, in the Braintree Registration District, to which Kelvedon had by then been re-allocated to this area.

Osborns in Kelvedon in the early 20th century

Two sons of Robert and Fanny were still in Kelvedon after 1900 - Joseph and Elijah. After William died in 1902, there were two sons of Eli Osborn in business in Kelvedon, **Frederick** and **Frank** who took an interest in the local community getting involved in local organisations including The Young People's Social Class. These two, along with William's widow, all had young families whilst Edgar and Robert Eli remained elsewhere in Essex.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CLASS held a social gathering on Wednesday evening. The programme, which consisted of songs, readings, and recitations, was contributed to by the Misses Rolley (2), Gibberd, Britton, and Critchley, and the Messrs. E. and W. Warner, F. Deal, F. Gould, Fred. Osborn, Frank Osborn, P. Shelley, A. C. Wood, and B. Hunwick. There was a plentiful supply of refreshments. The chair was taken by Frank A. Osborn.

ESSEX HERALD 8TH JANUARY 1895

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the research work undertaken by my cousin Meryl Catty, a founder member of the Essex Society for Family History. She and I collaborated over several decades in extracting relevant Osborn information from the original sources quoted above. Meryl sadly died in 2022.

Amongst the sources used were:-

Parish registers, and records & tombstones of the Kelvedon Independent Chapel, now Kelvedon United Reformed Church

National birth / marriage / death indexes

Censuses, Kelly's Directories and personal memories. Newspaper extracts from www.findmypast.co.uk, will details from www.ancestry.co.uk

Particularly helpful is a typewritten narrative compiled in 1977 by Joan Mary Young née Osborn, daughter of Frederick. She had married William Young in Feering in 1934, and later lived in Colchester. Further wide-ranging recollections of hers appeared posthumously in the Essex Family Historian in five successive articles in 2020 – 2021.

Learning of the Osborns' bankruptcies led me to investigate the background. From 1857 specialist Singer sewing machinery was being imported from the USA, capable of mechanising processes in shoe-making. By 1865 Turner Brothers in Northampton could produce 100,000 pairs of shoes a week using steam engines, underscoring the shift to mass manufacturing see <https://gropedia.com/page/Northampton>

☆ ☆ ☆

Any Connections with the Cordy family?

Into my possession has come three baby pictures of Cordy children, probably about 1930's. I would be interested to learn of any readers with this surname in their ancestry. Email editor@esfh.org.uk

ROOTSTECH 2026

My Week in Salt Lake City

A delegate's account of the world's largest
genealogy conference

By Jeff Porter (ESFH 33285)

I had wanted to attend RootsTech for many years, so when I finally booked my flights to Salt Lake City last autumn, I was excited but had little idea what awaited me. I knew the conference was large and well organised. What I was not prepared for was the atmosphere: thousands of people in one place sharing the same fascination with family history that many of us know so well.

RootsTech 2026 was the sixteenth conference hosted by FamilySearch and once again filled the Salt Palace Convention Centre in the heart of Salt Lake City. This year's event, themed 'Together', attracted participants from 235 countries and territories, with around five million people also taking part online, making it the largest genealogy event in the world by any measure. More than 500 classes were delivered in 23 languages, while the exhibition hall hosted over 200 exhibitors ranging from major genealogy companies to specialist organisations and societies. Most sessions remain freely available on demand through **RootsTech.org**, allowing the learning to continue long after the conference ends.

For delegates, the scale of the programme creates its own challenge. With so much happening simultaneously, every decision to attend one session means missing several others. In this account I will try to convey not simply what I saw, but why it matters for ESFH members and for family historians more generally.

ROOTSTECH 2026 AT A GLANCE

Category	Details
Edition	16th annual RootsTech conference hosted by FamilySearch
Theme	'Together' - connecting families, researchers, and records worldwide
Reach	Participants from 235 countries and territories
Sessions	More than 500 classes and expert-led presentations in 23 languages
Exhibitors	Over 200 organisations in the exhibition hall
On Demand	Most sessions remain freely available at RootsTech.org
Emerging Theme	Artificial intelligence moves from novelty to everyday research tool

Before It All Began: Two Days at the FamilySearch Library

I arrived in Salt Lake City two days before the conference opened, partly to adjust to the time difference and partly to make full use of the FamilySearch Library, only a short walk from the convention centre.

The FamilySearch Library has no real equivalent anywhere in the world. Open to the public and free to use, it provides access to vast collections of microfilm, microfiche, books, and digital resources covering records from across the globe.

On my first morning, Lindsay, a retired accredited genealogist originally from Ealing, helped me navigate the catalogues, locate specialist collections and settle into the research systems. The volunteers are experienced, approachable, and remarkably generous with their time and expertise. During my two days there I concentrated on Essex-related surname material and made progress on a difficult maternal-line problem. I did not leave with an immediate breakthrough, but I returned with several promising new lines of enquiry.



Although I attended RootsTech in a personal capacity, I was also keen to advance ESFH's application for FamilySearch Affiliate Library status. This would allow our Research Centre at the Essex Record Office to offer members access to restricted FamilySearch collections unavailable through a standard home subscription. I am pleased to say that discussions during the week proved very encouraging.

One particularly valuable meeting was with Darris Williams from the FamilySearch Wiki team. What I expected to be a brief introduction became a detailed discussion covering ESFH's website redevelopment, DNA education programme, Research Centre development, and the Essex Surnames Project. Darris showed considerable

interest in our efforts to help researchers move from DNA evidence to documentary proof.

I also met Lucy Reynoldson, FamilySearch's Society Liaison for Northern Europe, who confirmed that FamilySearch is actively encouraging societies to pursue Affiliate Library status and suggested that volunteer training support may also be available. Finally, I met Sandra Joseph, FamilySearch's Library Relations and Systems Specialist, who oversees the Affiliate Library programme internationally.



Opening Day: The Conference Begins

The formal conference programme began on Thursday morning with keynote presentations in the main auditorium.

RootsTech attracts an unusually varied range of keynote speakers. This year's programme included an Academy Award-winning actress, a NASA astronaut, an NFL Hall of Famer, a National Geographic explorer and a surprise live performance from the Gardiner Brothers. Steve Rockwood, CEO of FamilySearch International, opened the conference with his usual warmth, presenting family history not merely as a hobby but as something deeply connected to identity and belonging.

What struck me most was the atmosphere. Despite its enormous scale, RootsTech manages to feel welcoming rather than overwhelming.

MOST POPULAR SESSIONS AT ROOTSTECH 2026

Speaker	Session
Andrew Redfern	AI and Family History: Help or Hype?
Paula Williams	DNA's FAN Club: Using Shared Matches to Solve Genealogical Mysteries
Kelli Bergheimer	DNA Misconceptions
Cathy Wallace	Gravestone Symbols from A to Z
Michael A. Willis	Finding Binkey: When Research Questions Become a Road Map to the Enslaved

Most are available free on demand at **RootsTech.org**.

The Big Story: Artificial Intelligence

If one subject dominated discussion throughout the week, it was artificial intelligence.

The most talked-about presentation of the conference was Andrew Redfern's 'AI and Family History: Help or Hype?', a measured and evidence-based examination of where AI currently helps researchers and where the technology still falls short. That balanced and cautious approach characterised many of the strongest sessions across the conference.

A panel discussion on the future of AI in genealogy brought together Dave Vance of FamilyTreeDNA, Mark Thompson, Steve Little, David Ouimette of FamilySearch, and Diana Elder. Several speakers suggested that AI may reshape genealogy even more profoundly than DNA testing has over the past two decades.

At the same time, there was repeated emphasis on responsible use. AI was consistently presented as a tool to assist research rather than replace critical thinking and source evaluation. One speaker summarised it perfectly: "You are the genealogist and AI the clerk."

Almost every major platform announcement also featured AI prominently, from Ancestry's enhanced Tree Integrity tools to MyHeritage's new Scribe AI transcription and photograph analysis features. Further details of these developments appear in the 'New Tools for Old Roots' column elsewhere in this issue.

DNA Sessions: Something for Everyone

DNA remained a major part of the conference programme, with sessions ranging from introductory material to highly advanced case studies.

I deliberately focused on as many non-recorded DNA sessions as possible, as these often provide the greatest opportunity for direct discussion and interaction.

One particularly accessible series was Diahann Southard's four-part 'DNA Swim School'. Using shared-match analysis and colour-coding systems within Ancestry and MyHeritage, she demonstrated a structured approach to organising DNA evidence.



The sessions were clear, methodical, and suitable for researchers at a wide range of experience levels.

Another memorable presentation came from Jonny Perl of DNA Painter on Shared Matches Grids. Delivered with considerable humour, the session explored how grid-based match analysis can sometimes reveal family groupings more effectively than graphical cluster diagrams.

The final session of the entire conference was also one of the

strongest. Patricia Coleman presented a detailed case study involving the identification of a father in an 1877 paternity case using Genetic Affairs AutoLineage and other DNA analysis techniques. Despite taking place in the final slot on the final afternoon, the room was completely full. Her presentation was meticulous, compelling and an excellent demonstration of how genetic and documentary evidence can be combined successfully.

Beyond DNA: Research Methods and Hidden Gems

One of the pleasures of a conference on this scale is discovering unexpected sessions.

An early morning presentation on Irish land records turned out to be one of the highlights of my week. In a single hour I learned more practical information than I had absorbed in several previous years of casual reading on the subject.

I also attended an accessible session on applying the Genealogical Proof Standard using real research examples rather than abstract theory. Seeing the process demonstrated step by step made the principles far easier to understand and apply.

Another particularly useful session came from Mark Olsen of the Family Tree Maker team, who discussed how to establish and manage local FTM user groups. This was directly relevant to my plans to develop an ESFH Family Tree Maker User Group following my return.

The Exhibition Hall: A World in One Room

The RootsTech exhibition hall is an experience in itself.

More than 200 organisations filled an enormous floor of the convention centre, ranging from major genealogy platforms to small specialist vendors, archives, educational organisations, and family history societies. Ancestry, MyHeritage, FamilySearch, FamilyTreeDNA, GEDmatch and Findmypast all maintained substantial stands offering demonstrations and one-to-one consultations throughout the conference.

I often returned to the exhibition hall during the early evenings when the crowds had thinned and conversations became easier. At FamilyTreeDNA I discussed their forthcoming whole-genome sequencing kit, while at 23andMe I arranged a complimentary kit upgrade. I also had an interesting discussion with Don Reagan of American Ancestors regarding research into the Great Migration to New England between 1620 and 1640, including possible Essex connections.

Another enjoyable moment came during the GEDmatch presentation introducing their forthcoming redesigned interface. During the pre-session DNA quiz, I managed to come second out of around 170 participants, although unfortunately there was no prize for second place! The redesigned GEDmatch interface appears considerably cleaner and more approachable than the current version.

Final Thoughts: Why You Should Consider Going

I left Salt Lake City feeling tired, slightly overwhelmed by the volume of information and ideas, but also energised by the experience.

RootsTech is exceptionally well organised, welcoming and remarkably broad in what it offers. The FamilySearch team, from senior leadership to library volunteers, consistently create an atmosphere that is both professional and approachable. Salt Lake City itself is clean, safe and framed by extraordinary mountain scenery. Even the snowy twenty-minute walk from my hotel to the convention centre on the fourth day became part of the experience.

For any member considering whether to attend RootsTech in 2027, I would say this: if you are interested in where genealogy is heading and in meeting the people helping shape that future, it is well worth the journey.

The online streams are excellent and freely available, but many of the most valuable discussions and practical sessions are never recorded. Some experiences simply require you to be there.



Radwinter Baptisms

All these sons emigrated to Australia in 1850

By Simon Gentry (ESFH 32960)

Whilst transcribing the Radwinter Baptism records I found annotated the details of the following sons who had left for Australia in 1850. They all resided in Radwinter. Labourer was shown as the occupation of all the fathers.

Baptism Date	Son	Parents	Surname
4th September 1825	John	John & Isobel	Livermore
21st May 1826	Robert	William & Lydia	Gipps
3rd September 1826	Thomas	Thomas & Mary	Bridgman
1st March 1829	Joseph	Abraham & Rebecca	Halls
24th May 1829	Joseph	James & Sarah	Wright
10th May 1831	John	Jacob & Sarah	Halls

Above can be seen in Essex Record Office Ref D/P 22/1/12 dated 1813 - 1841.

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)

From AI-powered document transcription to improved DNA analysis tools, RootsTech 2026 showcased a range of developments that promise to make family history research easier and more accessible. Here is a guide to some of the announcements that may be of most interest to Essex researchers.

FamilySearch Voice and Natural Language Search - in testing

FamilySearch is currently testing the ability to search its billions of records using plain spoken or typed language rather than structured index fields. Instead of entering a surname, a year range, and a county code, you could simply type (or say) 'Find baptisms in Colchester around 1780 with the surname Beaumont'. This is still in testing and not yet widely available, but it signals a significant shift in how non-specialist researchers will be able to access the FamilySearch archive.

MyHeritage Scribe AI

Scribe AI generated considerable excitement at RootsTech. Feed it a photograph of a handwritten letter, an old postcard, or a census page and it will attempt to transcribe the text, translate it if necessary, and even analyse historical photographs to suggest a likely date and place of origin. For members with family photographs that lack dates or locations, this could prove particularly valuable.

FamilyTreeDNA New Family Finder - New DNA Sequencing Technology

FamilyTreeDNA has announced a major upgrade to its Family Finder autosomal DNA test. Rather than relying solely on the earlier technology used by most consumer DNA tests, the new version uses a more advanced sequencing approach that examines many more areas of your DNA. In practical terms, this should lead to more accurate DNA matching and provide a stronger foundation for future developments in genetic genealogy. Existing FamilyTreeDNA customers should watch for upgrade options as they become available. This represents a genuine technological advance rather than simply a new version of an existing product.

GEDmatch Redesign

GEDmatch, the independent platform that allows researchers to compare DNA results across different testing companies, is introducing a redesigned interface. The current version is powerful but can appear daunting to newcomers. The new design aims to make the platform more approachable and easier to navigate.

MyHeritage Ethnicity Expansion

MyHeritage has expanded its ethnicity estimates from 42 to 279 ethnicities and introduced more than 2,000 DNA communities. These communities are based largely on information supplied in users' family trees and the DNA they share. The increased detail may help identify more specific regional origins, but ethnicity estimates remain estimates and should be treated as clues rather than conclusions.

How Genetic Genealogy Solved a 34-Year Mystery

One of the most interesting recent examples of the power of DNA technology involved a young woman known only as 'Becca Doe'. In 1991, her body was discovered in a motel room in Albuquerque, New Mexico, but despite extensive investigations she remained unidentified for more than three decades. In 2025, advances in investigative genetic genealogy finally revealed her identity as 18-year-old Becca Mallekoote. The breakthrough came through DNA comparisons and painstaking family tree reconstruction carried out with assistance from the Ramapo College Investigative Genetic Genealogy Center in New Jersey.

The case highlights how many of the techniques familiar to family historians - building family trees, analysing DNA matches, and identifying common ancestors - are now being used to solve long-standing mysteries and restore names to people who had effectively been lost to history.

Conclusion

Whether your interest lies in traditional family history research or DNA analysis, the announcements from RootsTech demonstrate that genealogy continues to evolve at an astonishing pace. Many of these new tools are designed to make records easier to find, family stories easier to understand, and DNA evidence easier to interpret. However, the most reliable conclusions still come from combining DNA evidence with documentary records and sound genealogical research.

Sources and Further Reading

FamilySearch Blog – Full-Text Search and AI search developments.

MyHeritage Blog – Introducing Scribe AI.

FamilyTreeDNA announcements regarding the next-generation Family Finder test.

GEDmatch announcements and conference presentations.

MyHeritage ethnicity and DNA community updates.

Ramapo College Investigative Genetic Genealogy Center case reports relating to Becca Mallekoote.



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

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 £1.00 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

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

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Ann Turner

Ann Church

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Eric Jude Chair South-East Essex Branch
Mandie Adams Representative South-East Essex Branch
Elizabeth Cox Chair West Essex Branch



LISA DYER RECEIVING HER ESFH
STUDENT AWARD FROM ANDREA
CHAIR ON 16TH MAY 2026

ANDREA GREETING THE GREAT DUNMOW
TOWN CRIER BEFORE HIS PRESENTATION TO
ESFH ON 16TH MAY 2026



ESFH MEMBERS IN ACTION AT THE
SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SHOW ON
9TH MAY 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

www.esfh.org.uk