



THE ESSEX FAMILY HISTORIAN

The Essex Society for Family History Magazine



Advice for
Beginners to
Experts

Interested in your Family History?



ESFH could help you
(wherever your roots are)

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

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



Who do you think they were?

Trace your roots with records and DNA



www.esfh.org.uk

Meet the Team



Fiona Harvey
(ESFH 33535)

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



Angela Parr-Burman
(ESFH 32016)

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



Royston Jones
(ESFH 20182)

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



Dawn Tibble
(ESFH 33361)

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



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Join the Team

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

Forthcoming Presentations

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

Upcoming Events in the Family History world and further afield

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

Latest Online Releases – Essex Specific

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

Family History Societies Bordering Essex

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

Family Search Expert

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

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The Essex Family Historian is
hereinafter referred to as the HISTORIAN

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 2025** for material to be considered for the December 2025 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.

Monday 4 Aug 2025 11.00 am BST	Transported to Tasmania - a talk by Kelly Cornwell Exploring English and Australian records to help you discover more about your female convict ancestors. Demonstrated via the case study of a young girl from Shoreditch: her conviction, transportation and ensuing escapades in Tasmania.	Online
Wednesday 13 Aug 2025 7.15 pm BST	Genetic Genealogy for Beginners Course by Toni Neobard Month 12: Other Tools.	Online
Saturday 16 Aug 2025 10.30 am BST	Family Fun History Day Join us for a fantastic day of activities, events and unforgettable family moments. See inside rear cover for full details.	Galleywood Heritage Centre Galleywood Common Chelmsford CM2 8TR
Saturday 23 Aug 2025 2.30 pm BST	Ragged, Poor and Mischievous or Young Thieves and Street Arabs - a talk by Linda Hammond Explore a fascinating and often overlooked area of genealogy — children labelled as criminals throughout history. Discover a wealth of records online and in archives, unveiling rich social and genealogical insights.	St Johns Art & Recreation Centre Market Street Harlow CM17 0AJ and Online
Saturday 6 Sept 2025 2.30 pm BST	Branch AGM followed by a film showing when Canvey was just a bit of marsh land. Presented by Reg Wells (ESFH 9422) Henry VIII invited the Dutch to drain it, so for years it became just farmland and then Londoners started to holiday there and build their homes on it. The film ends with the Great Flood of '53. The only way on and off the island was at low tide by a ford and walkers could use stepping stones.	Avenue Baptist Church Hall Milton Road Westcliff-on- Sea SS0 7JX

Wednesday 10 Sept 2025 7.15 pm BST	Genetic Genealogy for Beginners Course by Toni Neobard Month 13: Members' Queries.	Online
Saturday 13 Sept 2025 2.30 pm BST	Branch AGM followed by Costume Cavalcade On 13th Sept 1985 Members of the Society performed a living Family Tree entitled Costume Cavalcade on the opening night of a Family History Weekend Conference, hosted by ESFH, at the Writtle Agricultural College. The performance was recorded on VHS tape which has since been digitised. We are showing this recording to mark the 40th Anniversary of the original performance.	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre 1 Ventura Drive Colchester CO1 2FG and Online
Wednesday 24 Sept 2025 7.00 pm BST	Is Artificial Intelligence (AI) a help or hindrance to photo restoration and research? - A talk by Steve Gill AI is revolutionising photography, but is it truly beneficial? In this talk, Steve will explore AI's role in restoring old photos, highlighting its flaws and contrasting it with its powerful potential for historical research. Join him to discuss whether AI is a tool or a troublemaker in photo preservation! He'll also be taking you through some ways you can understand and date your old family photographs.	Online
Saturday 27 Sept 2025 2.30 pm BST	Life of a Bomber Crew in WWII a talk by Mike Wainright followed by Branch AGM Overview of Bomber Command followed by a personal account of Mike's father's operational service.	St Johns Art & Recreation Centre Market Street Harlow CM17 0AJ and Online
Saturday 4 Oct 2025 2.30 pm BST	My DNA Journey...How's yours? - A talk by Mandie Adams (ESFH 31875) What started as a quest to find unknown paternal ancestors turned out to be an 'International Cousin Finding' journey around the world!	Avenue Baptist Church Hall Milton Road Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 7JX and Recording

Saturday 11 Oct 2025 2.30 pm BST	Getting the most from the UK Censuses - a talk by Toni Neobard	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre 1 Ventura Drive Colchester CO1 2FG
Thursday 16 Oct 2025 7:15 pm BST	Mass Observation Project - a talk by Emily Calcraft This talk will introduce the Mass Observation Archive. It will begin with the origins of the archive in 1937 and discuss the intentions of the founders. Sources from the WWII collections will be used to illustrate the 'everyday' experience of war in Britain. The talk will then move to explore the re-starting of Mass Observation in 1981 and the current work of the archive.	Online
Saturday 18 Oct 2025 11:00 am BST 2.00 pm BST	History of Gunpowder and the Royal Purfleet Gunpowder Magazines - a talk by Paul Hounsell This talk outlines the history of gunpowder manufacture, transportation and storage. It also covers the role of the Purfleet Royal Gunpowder Magazines. Annual General Meeting	Galleywood Heritage Centre Galleywood Common Chelmsford CM2 8TR and Online
Saturday 25 Oct 2025 2.30 pm GMT	Our Wartime Ancestors - What did they do? - short talks by Elizabeth Cox and friends	St Johns Art & Recreation Centre Market Street Harlow CM17 0AJ
Saturday 1 Nov 2025 2.30 pm GMT	Missing: The story of the Unknown Warrior - a talk by Mark Smith	Avenue Baptist Church Hall Milton Road Westcliff-on- Sea SS0 7JX and Recording
Saturday 8 Nov 2025 2.30 pm GMT	Census - Practical Research Session Part 1 1841-1921 (Part 2 in May 2026) A chance for people to use the hints & tips they have learnt from Toni's talk last month whilst searching for their ancestors in the Census Returns 1841-1921.	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre 1 Ventura Drive Colchester CO1 2FG

Saturday 6 Dec 2025 2.30 pm GMT	Southend Pier - a talk by Richard Brown A history of this famous Essex landmark	Avenue Baptist Church Hall Milton Road Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 7JX and Recording
Saturday 6 Dec 2025 2.30 pm GMT	West Essex Branch Christmas Social	St Johns Art & Recreation Centre Market Street Harlow CM17 0AJ
Saturday 13 Dec 2025 2.30 pm GMT	North East Essex Branch Christmas Social	Oyster Room, Hythe Community Centre 1 Ventura Drive Colchester CO1 2FG

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Note from the Editor**The Hertfordshire Record Society****www.hrsociety.org.uk**

Following along nicely from the Poor Relief and the Settlement Papers of Rayleigh by David Perkins in the March 2025 issue of the HISTORIAN I wanted to make members aware of the work of the above society.

The society was founded in 1985. Its purpose is to publish texts relating to Hertfordshire that would not otherwise be easily accessible. Its publications will appeal to anyone who has an historical interest in the county. As I know many of our readers have Hertfordshire ancestors, I wanted to draw your attention to their recent publication entitled **Volume XL The Poor, the Sick and the Stranger in Hertfordshire: a selection of Settlement Examinations and Removals 1697-1898**.

The work for this book discovered a considerable number of references to locations in other counties including:

29 places within Bedfordshire, 18 within Buckinghamshire, 15 within Cambridgeshire, **26 within Essex**, 63 within The City and Greater London and a number in Sussex.

These documents of the movement of families demonstrates the journeys across county boundaries as they travelled for work.

Although a little on the expensive side at £22 plus postage for non-members it may well be available at archive libraries.

How I started Family History

By Jill Gooding (ESFH 11129)

In 1977 my paternal grandmother, who lived with us, passed away after a long illness. While my mother was clearing out her room she found a box of old family papers and she showed me two particular things which we both found intriguing – a photocopy of newspaper clippings and an invoice for a funeral.

The images were copies of the funeral details of the late Councillor R J Chapman and his wife. Sadly, no dates or names of newspapers had been added. (Since then I have identified the newspaper that these were from – The Leytonstone Express and Independent. Plus further coverage and death notices were included in the Essex Times, Chelmsford Chronicle and Eastern Mercury).

The clippings had a huge amount of detail included such as a full list of the individuals in the twelve mourning coaches, with names and relationships to the deceased. And even a list of the floral tributes, with the names and addresses of the senders.

The mourners were as follows:—1st carriage: Mrs. Emma Copley (daughter), Mr. R. J. Chapman, jun. and Mr. C. Chapman (sons), Mr. Fred Copley (son-in-law). 2nd carriage: Mrs. Housden, Mrs. Shelley, Mrs. Shillingworth (sisters), Mr. Charles Wyman. 3rd carriage: Mr. T. and Mr. J. Browne (step-sons), Mrs. F. Eben and Miss A. Brown (step-daughters). 4th carriage: Mr. D. Browne (step-son), Miss Alice Browne and Mrs. H. Carter (step-daughters), Mrs. A. Smith and Miss L. Housden (nieces). 5th carriage: Mrs. Beans, Mrs. Jolly, Mrs. Barren, Mrs. J. Browne (nieces), Miss E. Newman. 6th carriage: Mr. W. Shelley Mr. J. Chapman, Mr. C. Woodcock, Mr. Wilkins (nephews). 7th carriage: Mr. Prentis, Mrs. Dennis, Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis. 8th carriage: Mr. J. Sanders, Mr. J. Spurgeon, E.C.C., Mr. W. G. Harris and Mr. F. Smith. 9th carriage: Mrs. T. Browne, Mr. J. Ferguson, Mr. S. Copley, Mr. J. Housden. 10th carriage: Councillors Heather (Chairman Leyton Urban District Council), Cox, and Hennah, Rev. J. T. Inskip. 11th carriage: Councillors Bussey and E. M. Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Wear. 12th carriage: Mr. D. Hart, Mr. H. Newman, Mr. A. Tott.

LIST OF MOURNERS FROM R J CHAPMAN
FUNERAL CLIPPING

The flowers that were sent in symbolic arrangement were extremely beautiful. On the top of the bier was a magnificent broken column, and the landau which followed immediately behind was laden with floral tributes, which were sent by the following:—Mr. and Mrs. Emma Copley (wreath), Mr. R. J. Chapman, jun. (cross), Mr. Charles Chapman (harp), Did, Edie, Amy and Alice (broken column), Mr. and Mrs. T. Browne (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. J. Browne (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. D. Browne (cross), Mrs. Housden and family (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. Barren (harp), Mr. and Mrs. Jolly (wreath), Lil and family (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. Shelley (wreath), Mr. S. Copley (wreath), Members of the Leyton Urban District Council (wreath), officials of Leyton Urban District Council (wreath), Old Folks Dinner Committee (wreath), Mr. W. G. Harris (wreath), Mr. S. Wyman (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis (wreath), Councillor and Mrs. Cox (cross), Councillor and Mrs. Hennah (wreath), Councillor and Mrs. Hall (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. J. Ferguson (anchor), Mr. and Mrs. Sanders (wreath), Mrs. Raphael (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. Sharp (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. Roe (cross), Mr. and Mrs. Welsh (wreath), Mr. M. H. Abbott (wreath), Mr. Spurgeon and family (wreath), Mrs. Denis and family (harp), Mr. and Mrs. Cook (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. Study (wreath), Mr. W. Izard (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. J. Clayden (harp), Mr. and Mrs. Duncombe (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. Nunn (wreath), Mr. and Mrs. Holden (anchor), employees Chapman Bros. (wreath).

LIST OF FLORAL TRIBUTES FOR R J CHAPMAN
FUNERAL CLIPPING

...and the other mourners as follows:-

FIRST COACH.—Mr. R. J. Chapman and youngest Son, Charles, Mrs. Eben and Mr. Thomas Browne.

SECOND COACH.—Miss Browne and Mr. James Browne, Miss Amy Browne and Mr. Douglas Browne.

THIRD COACH.—Mrs. Carter and Mr. R. J. Chapman, Junr., Miss Alice Browne and Miss Narroway.

FOURTH COACH.—Mr. and Mrs. Fred Copley, Mr. and Mrs. Housden.

FIFTH COACH.—Mrs. Thomas Browne and Mr. Walter Shelley, Mrs. James Browne, Mrs. Douglas Browne.

SIXTH COACH.—Mr. and Mrs. Jolly, Mr. Robert Brown and Mrs. Charles Barrow.

SEVENTH COACH.—Miss Louisa Housde. and Mr. Carter, Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis.

EIGHTH COACH.—Rev. J. T. Inskip and Dr. Panting, Councillors B. H. Cox and W. Bussey.

LIST OF MOURNERS FROM MRS R J CHAPMAN
FUNERAL CLIPPING

The following is a list of the wreaths and other floral tributes:—"From a loving husband—a good wife, a loving mother, and a good friend to all who called." "With deep love to the best of mothers, from her five sorrowing daughters." From her eldest son: "In loving remembrance of dear mother—one flower the less on earth, and one more angel in heaven." From her younger sons: "In ever loving remembrance of dear mother." Youngest sons (Chapman Bros.), harp; granddaughter, Gertrude, bunch of white carnations; two grandsons, Bertie and Monty, basket of flowers; sister, Emma, of Enfield, wreath; Mr. Walter Shelly, nephew, of South Woodford, wreath; Madame Lindsay, Worsley-road, Leytonstone, cross; Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis, Dunedin-road, Leyton, wreath; Mr. Charles Skelton, Leyton, wreath; Tradesmen's Association, wreath; Mr. and Mrs. Copley, of Chobham-road Stratford, wreath; Mr. George Heaselwood, Thorpe-road, Forest Gate, wreath; Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Barrow, a heart; employees of Chapman Bros., wreath of immortelles (lilies, roses, and daises); Mrs. Roe, Goldsmith-road, Leyton, wreath; Mr. Wyman and family, of Edmonton, wreath; Mr. and Mrs. Seagrave, Leyton, wreath; Mr. and Mrs. White, Horse Tralee, Plaistow.

LIST OF FLORAL TRIBUTES FOR MRS R J
CHAPMAN FUNERAL CLIPPING

Reading the clippings and seeing phrases like *'our esteemed townsman'*, *'sympathetic residents'*, *'one whose memory will be cherished for years to come'* intrigued us. The number of mourners and carriages involved and the listing of everyone in attendance showed the funerals were events of importance to the local community. The reference to shops having their blinds drawn and the Town Hall flag being at half mast, confirmed that these were funerals of very important individuals to the town of Leyton, Essex.



Funeral invoice

On the next page is the top of the invoice dated February 2nd 1906 from the undertakers, A. Bennett & Son, 'for the funeral of the late Richard John Chapman interred at West Ham Cemetery'. Clearly a very elaborate affair and no expense spared, including 15 carriages and horses, with feathers, velvets and swansdown trimmings.

Chief Office: BARCLAY HOUSE, HIGH ROAD, LEYTON;
And at 394 High Road, and 118 Grove Green Road, LEYTON.

M^r Chapman February 2nd 1906.

 Dr. to **A. BENNETT & SON,**
Furnishing Undertakers,
Carriage Proprietors & Monumental Masons.

Memorials Erected, Renovated & Restored. Inscriptions Cut.

Telephone—612, Walthamstow.

 All Orders Executed on the Shortest Notice.

*For the funeral of the
Late Richard John Chapman
Interred at West Ham Cemetery.*

Below is the bottom part of the invoice including 'glass car and four horses. Landau and pair for flowers, twelve mourning coaches and pairs, eight bearers. Fifteen pairs of feathers and velvets and undertakers attendance'.

*conveyance. Glass Car, and
Four horses. Landau and
Pair for Flowers, twelve Mourning
Coaches and Pairs, Eight
Bearers. Fifteen Pairs of feathers
and Velvets and Undertakers
Attendance. The Sum of*

£55. 0. 0.

Attest  *A. Bennett & Son*
with 8/2/06

£55. 0. 0.

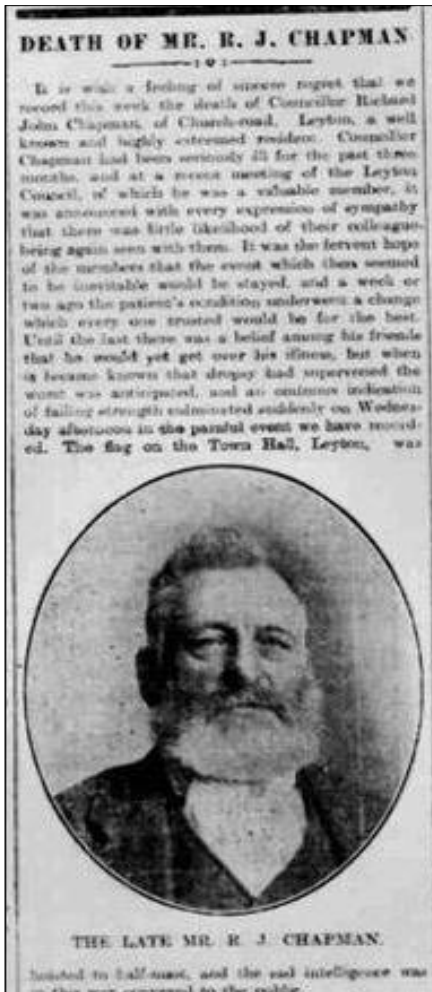
The total price of £55.0.0d seemed expensive for 1906, so I did check the cost of other funerals to compare:

- Richard John Chapman's funeral in January 1906 cost £55 (today's equivalent value £15,500).
- His spinster sister, Mary Ann Chapman, died the same month and I found details of her funeral showing it cost substantially less at £12 2.6d (today's equivalent value £1,885).
- Later in 1951, his son, also called Richard John Chapman, had a funeral which cost £38 19s (today's equivalent value £1,525).

Identifying the family members

I was 16 at the time and had grown up hearing anecdotes about my paternal grandfather (Richard John Chapman 1884-1951), who died before I was born so initially assumed the 'late R. J. Chapman' referred to him. But the invoice was dated 1906, so quickly realised it was his father, my great grandfather, also called Richard John Chapman (1841-1906) and his wife, both of whom I hadn't heard much about until then. I certainly didn't know why they would have had such large funerals, with so many carriages of mourners and floral tributes and why any of it would have been covered in full detail in a newspaper.

So I started to draw up a family tree using the names of sons, daughters, nieces and stepsons etc. that were listed in the funeral summaries. This gave us an initial tree but also a lot of queries with names we didn't recognise.



At this point my mother and I started the visits to St. Catherine's House, London to trawl through the large index books of births/marriages/deaths and to order certificates hoping they were the correct ones. Gradually over time the hand-drawn tree became larger and the outstanding queries list got smaller, and this became the basis for my large family tree now stored on Family Tree Maker.

I have recently found an obituary of R J Chapman, from the Leytonstone Express and Independent January 20 1906, which helps to explain why his funeral was so elaborate and covered in such detail in the local newspapers.

The obituary opens with '*It is with a feeling of sincere regret that we record this week the death of Councillor Richard John Chapman of Church Road, Leyton, a well-known and highly esteemed resident*'.

It goes on to say '*Councillor Chapman came to Leyton about 20 years ago and for a long time carried on business as a contractor in the district. He tendered for and executed several contracts for local governing bodies in and around London, and his work was always most favourably criticised. Two years ago he was elected a member of the Leyton Urban District Council and worked hard and conscien-*

tiously in the interest of the ratepayers'. Prior to moving to Leyton, he had been living in Crownfield Road, Stratford which was less than two miles away from Church Road, Leyton.

He is described as 'one of the most active men in the public life of Leyton' and also 'a great benefactor to the poorer people of the district'. 'His sympathy with the unemployed was shown by the manner in which he always endeavoured to find work for them and he was a strong advocate for the employment of local labour as much as possible by the Council'.

Mrs R J Chapman

One thing which posed a challenge for a while was finding the corresponding death certificate for 'Mrs R J Chapman' whose funeral was covered in such detail in the newspaper clipping. Whoever had photocopied the clippings hadn't annotated them with any dates and the second funeral only refers to the deceased as 'Mrs R J Chapman' and 'Mrs Chapman, wife of our esteemed townsman, Councillor R. J. Chapman'. It doesn't actually give her first name.

We had found a photograph of R J Chapman's grave and the headstone showed his wife as Louisa (1842–1886).

At this stage it appeared that Louisa was the 'Mrs R J Chapman' referred to in the newspaper clipping. Louisa died in 1886 having had four children:



Emma (1861-1944),

Louisa Ann (1863-1865),

Richard John (1865-1865) and

Richard John (1866-1866)

– but only one daughter survived infancy. The list of floral tributes referred to '5 sorrowing daughters' amongst other children so clearly was not Louisa but a second wife, Ellen (1846–1904).

(At the time in 1977, I assumed I was descended from Louisa as there was no reason to think otherwise. But in 2009 I took a DNA test with Family Tree DNA and matched with a cousin descended from Ellen's sister so confirmed Ellen was in fact my great grandmother.)

What have I learnt?

When I started all this, with a few pieces of paper containing funeral write-ups and an invoice, I didn't know that it would lead to a lifelong hobby. Today when I look at the list of names, relationships and even addresses included on the newspaper clippings I realise how lucky I was to get so much family information on one piece of paper. I suspect that in 1977 I saw this as a logic puzzle to solve, to identify everyone and work out the connections and didn't appreciate what I'd been given.

New Tools For Old Roots

News and developments in DNA and AI for the family historian

By the ESFH DNA Pro Team

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

23andMe's Future

You may have heard that 23andMe, once a major player in consumer DNA testing, filed for bankruptcy in March 2025. The company had faced declining sales and suffered a major data breach in 2023 that affected millions of users (which was a result of hackers taking advantage of those users who had re-used passwords from other websites they had registered with).



In May 2025, pharmaceutical giant Regeneron announced it would acquire 23andMe. However, recent reports suggest that another party may now be in talks or have made a higher bid, so the final ownership is not yet confirmed at the time of writing. While some had hoped for a renewed focus on family history tools, such as family trees and cousin matching, if the new owner is Regeneron, or another organisation with a medical background, these features might not be the priority.

Regeneron has committed to upholding 23andMe's existing privacy policies and safeguarding customer genetic data. However, given the uncertainty over the ultimate purchaser, if you have tested with 23andMe, you may wish to review your data sharing preferences and keep up to date with any changes the new owners may make. You might also want to consider downloading your raw DNA data file (just in case).

DNA Trail Unites Three Abandoned Babies



In a heart-breaking but remarkable case from East London, DNA testing has helped link three abandoned infants: Baby Harry (2017), Baby Roman (2019), and Baby Elsa (2024) — as full siblings, all found in similar circumstances in the Newham area of London.

DNA testing has confirmed that the infants are full siblings, sharing the same unidentified parents. The most recent, Baby Elsa, was discovered by a dog walker in January 2024, wrapped in a towel inside a shopping bag during sub-zero temperatures. Her survival, like that of her siblings, is considered extraordinary.

The Metropolitan Police have established a full DNA profile of the mother and are using genetic genealogy techniques, including the national DNA database, to identify familial matches and at the time of writing are narrowing down where the parents live.

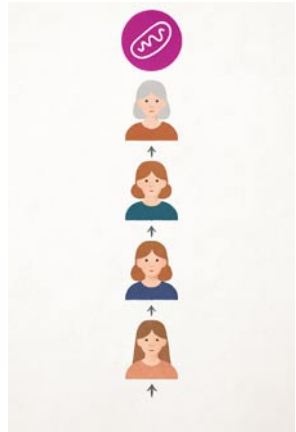
It is both astonishing and deeply saddening that, in an age where DNA can so swiftly reveal hidden connections, the parents may have believed they could abandon their babies without leaving a trace.

FamilyTreeDNA Launches the New Mitotree

At the RootsTech 2025 conference, FamilyTreeDNA (FTDNA) launched a major update to our understanding of maternal ancestry: the Mitotree. This project, five years in the making, offers a more accurate representation of maternal lineages.

This is a giant family tree built from mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) — the type passed only from mothers to their children. It doesn't mix with paternal DNA, so it stays relatively unchanged for generations. That makes it especially useful for tracing your mother's mother's mother's line, right back through time.

At the present time FTDNA are the only major company to offer mtDNA testing.



AI Transcription Tools Get Smarter — Especially for Family History

While AI tools for transcribing historical documents have been around for some time, recent improvements in models like ChatGPT-4 and Claude 3 (released in 2024) have taken things to a new level. These newer systems are now much better at understanding context, which means they can handle unusual spelling, missing punctuation, and those long meandering sentences common in 17th and 18th century wills. They are even getting better at coping with faded ink.

In a small-scale experiment we conducted, the Transkribus application <https://www.transkribus.org> outperformed other AI platforms, such as earlier versions of ChatGPT (prior to ChatGPT-4), in transcribing old documents. However, a promising newcomer—Leo—is pushing transcription capabilities even further. You can try it for free at <http://tryleo.ai>

A recommended approach is to begin with a specialist AI handwriting recognition tool, such as Transkribus or Leo — to produce a rough transcription of the historical document. You can then upload both the original image and the draft transcription to an AI model like ChatGPT-4, asking it to compare the two and improve the transcription. While human review is still essential and some gaps may remain, this method can significantly reduce the manual effort involved. Additionally, tools like ChatGPT-4 can be used to extract useful information, such as names of people, places mentioned, plus details of any bequests.

AI Can Now Summarise Old Wills — Without Losing the Important Bits

For a while now, AI has been able to summarise long documents like old wills and legal papers, but the results could be a bit hit and miss. Recent updates to tools like



ChatGPT-4 and Claude 3 mean they now do a much better job, especially with the complicated language and style of historical documents.

You can now ask AI to do things like:

- * List the names mentioned in a will
- * Summarise who inherited what
- * Highlight places or key dates

Or even explain the document in plain English. This saves hours of reading and untangling long, old-fashioned sentences. It's especially helpful when you're working through a pile of documents and just want to find out which ones are relevant to your research.

Tip: Instead of asking for a full summary at once, try breaking it into steps — start by asking for a list of names, then relationships, then who inherited what. This gives clearer, more accurate results.

Above all, remember: these tools are here to help us, not replace us. You'll still need to check and interpret everything yourself — but they can save a tremendous amount of effort. It's the combination of human judgement and AI assistance that makes these tools truly valuable.

Purfleet Heritage and Military Centre

Historic Magazine No.5

Centurion Way Purfleet-on-Thames Essex RM19 1ZZ

Charity No: 1080629

Purfleet Heritage and Military Centre would like to extend an invitation to individuals or groups to come and visit us at the historical gunpowder magazine we call home. The magazine also houses an extensive range of exhibitions and artefacts for everyone to enjoy.

Potted History:

Magazine No.5 is the last of the original five that once made up the Purfleet Royal Gunpowder Magazines on the banks of the Thames.

During its past the Magazine has been visited by such notable figures as Benjamin Franklin, Charles Darwin and Captain Cook. Historical vessels supplied by the magazine included HMS Warrior, HMS Bounty, HMS Beagle and the Adventurer and Resolution.

Built between 1762 and 1765, the original five magazines and Proof House were used to test, store and supply gunpowder to the army and navy. Each magazine could hold 10,400 barrels of gunpowder which could be increased in times of emergency, such as the Napoleonic wars, to 10,800 barrels.

Today the Magazine is a Grade 1 Scheduled Ancient Monument and houses a veritable treasure trove of artefacts and exhibitions covering:

Local History, The way we lived, World War I, World War II, The day war broke out front room, The Home Front Civil Defence and evacuees, The RAF, The Royal and Merchant Navy, The Colonial War, Trafalgar, Vintage Toys and games and much more.

Visiting: the Centre is officially open on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays between 10.00am and 3.00pm. There is a small admission charge. For further information see the website <https://www.purfleet-hmc.org>



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL HOUNSELL

Note from the Editor

Members and guests please come and meet Paul Hounsell of the above centre at the Galleywood Heritage Centre at 11.00am on 18th October 2025 when he will be presenting the History of Gunpowder and the Royal Purfleet Gunpowder Magazines. This is followed by the Society AGM at 2.00pm.

Commemoration of the Landings at Gallipoli 110 Years Ago

By Karen J Dennis (ESFH 3661)

Memorials Officer, Essex Branch of The Western Front Association

We are grateful to Karen Dennis for allowing us to publish extracts of her article which first appeared on the following website <https://www.gallipoli-association.org/news/2025/commemoration-of-the-landings-at-gallipoli-110-years-ago/>

The Essex Regiment was one of very few to have their own Regimental Chapel. The Essex Regiment Chapel was part of the Warley Barracks and was dedicated on 1st March 1925. Now officially known as 'The Regimental Chapel Warley' it is home to a number of Regimental Standards predating the chapel and some beautiful memorials, including one dedicated to the two Regular Battalions of the Essex Regiment in the Great War. Each Battalion that served in the Great War also has a Roll of Honour.

Each month a relatively modest congregation holds a service and in 2025 each month is remembering/commemorating an action from the history of the Regiment and its predecessors.

On 4th May the service commemorated the Gallipoli Landings of 25th April 1915 and the participation in the Gallipoli Campaign of six Battalions of the Essex Regiment, namely 1st Battalion at W Beach on 25th April, the four first line Territorial Battalions, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th at Suvla in August and also the 1st Garrison Battalion.

The Exhortation was delivered, followed by the Last Post. Two minutes silence was observed and The Rouse sounded, followed by The Kohima Epitaph.

The service was conducted by Rev Antony Wilson, Chaplain to 3rd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment and followed the pattern of the monthly services with the addition of a short address by Paul Weaver. Paul has been a member of the Essex Branch WFA for more than 30 years and is a leading figure in the 10th Essex Living History Group. Paul's Great-Uncle, James Cox landed at Suvla, serving as a Private, 6th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment. Paul's talk included details of the numbers from each nation who served during the Campaign and extracts from a first-hand account of the landing.

Paul shared his memories of locating the trench at Lala Baba in 2019 during the Essex Branch, Western Front Association Tour, in the company of his brother, where their uncle trod the same ground over one hundred years before. James survived Gallipoli only to die of his wounds on 24th August 1916 serving in 7th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment on the Western Front. This account helped to bring home that each man who served had a family anxious for their safety, hoping for word from them that they were safe. All too often the news was what they dreaded, that their loved one would not return.

The Order of Service contained a number of additional pages with details of the actions in which each of the Essex Battalions had taken part, a photo of W Beach on



AFTER THE SERVICE A CROSS WAS LEFT IN MEMORY OF THE ESSEX MEN AT THE MEMORIAL TO THE TWO REGULAR BATTALIONS.

Photo: Karen Dennis

25th April 1915, a map and closed with the familiar words of reconciliation of Mustafa Kemal, Ataturk, from 1934.

A display was prepared by our Chairman, Jim Kevany, also a member of the Gallipoli Association, for the congregation to see over coffee after the service. Photos of Gallipoli, maps and a War Diary précis helped bring to life the Campaign to those not fortunate enough to have visited the beautiful Gallipoli Peninsular.



PHOTO: THE LORD PETRE KCVO DL, FORMER LORD LIEUTENANT OF ESSEX AND PATRON OF THE ESSEX BRANCH OF THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION, STANDING TO THE LEFT OF THE DEDICATION STONE. RIGHT OF THE STONE COL (RETD.) CHARLES A F THOMAS TD DL, CHAIRMAN OF THE ROYAL ANGLIAN REGIMENT AND ESSEX REGIMENT CHAPEL COMMITTEE AND COMMITTEE MEMBER OF THE ESSEX BRANCH WFA AND ON THE RIGHT JIM KEVANY, BRANCH CHAIRMAN ESSEX BRANCH WFA. Photo: Karen Dennis



PHOTO: MAJOR (RETD.) PETER WILLIAMSON MBE, PAST CHAIR OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE ESSEX REGIMENT MUSEUM, MEMBERS OF THE 10TH ESSEX LIVING HISTORY GROUP AND ESSEX BRANCH MEMBERS. Photo: Karen Dennis

A number of photos were taken by the dedication stone outside of the Chapel.

Essex Regiment Gallipoli Casualties

1st Battalion

Total all ranks 713 commemorated at Gallipoli

6th August 1915 worst casualties 241

Month of August worst casualties 438

1st/4th Battalion total all ranks 46

1st/5th Battalion total all ranks 8

1st/6th Battalion total all ranks 30

1st/7th Battalion total all ranks 28

Essex Regiment casualties died Malta 20

Essex Regiment casualties died Egypt 44

Essex Regiment total casualties 1,014 *

*This excludes any casualties buried in the UK and the above figures, based on CWGC commemorations, needs more research. This work is ongoing and will, eventually, include the 'Men of Essex' who served in other Regiments and Units but who hailed from our home county.

If you have a photo of someone who served at Gallipoli in whatever Unit who had a connection to Essex as it existed in the Great War, letters and cards home or diaries and notes of their experiences of the Gallipoli Campaign the Essex Branch of The Western Front Association would be very grateful to have a copy. Please email essexwfa@gmail.com or Dennisks@btinternet.com.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

☆ ☆ ☆

Essex Record Office Presents

Edward Seymour and his wives by Rebecca Bartley Historian and Archaeologist.
Tuesday 16th September 2025 10.40am

The former Essex County Council Hospital site by Adam Wightman Director of Archaeology at the Colchester Archaeological Trust.
Tuesday 30th September 2025 10.40am

Workhouse People by Stephen Norris Historian.
Tuesday 28th October 2025 10.40am

Essex Women's Commemoration Project by Dr James Bettley.
Tuesday 25th November 2025 10.40am

For full details see www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/whats-on/events

Who Knows Who (or What)

By Graeme Dell (ESFH 8354)

In any murder mystery, the chances are that the Chief Inspector will advise his immediate subordinate that he doesn't believe in coincidences. Personally, having worked with computers since the 1960s and adhering to the principle that a coincidence can be defined as a surprising concurrence of events, then in my opinion coincidences occur all the time. So my meeting a gentleman at a U3A meeting who was the paper boy who delivered to our house back in the 1950s and whose brother and I were both involved as volunteers at our local day centre was a surprising coincidence.

Likewise DNA now links us up with many distant relatives and actually we think nothing of it. But years ago had two people met socially and somehow identified that they shared the same 4x great grandparents that would have been an amazing coincidence.

So in practice, extremely improbable events are actually fairly commonplace and, some would argue, it is us that do not apply a reasonable level of objectivity.

Below, I have included three photos where I have very little or no knowledge of who the people in them are. But I am hopeful that despite the odds of success being very long, maybe just one reader will say 'I know who that is'. However, should ten readers say of someone 'that's my grandad'. What an amazing coincidence that would be!

Firstly, before and after World War II my dad worked for 'The County of London Electric Supply Company (CLESCO)'. Within the organisation, CLESCO had a very large and well-established Sports and Social Club fielding numerous football teams and holding many considerably large sporting events throughout the 1930s.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



In 1939 dad and a number of his work mates signed on together at the Army recruitment centre in Romford Road, Romford and my understanding is that several of them served together in North Africa. In the photo above, although the trees would indicate Europe, the ground they are standing on looks sandy so perhaps it is North Africa. Therefore, is there a reader who can add information to the photo?

Next, this photo below was taken inside the Churchill Roosevelt Club in Venice. My father-in-law being the tall gentleman at the back with pint in hand. All served aboard HMS Acute which, in January 1945, took passage from Malta along with HMS Espiegle for completion of mine clearance in Dardanelles to ensure safe passage for the warships taking the Prime Minister and the US President for the meeting at Yalta with the Soviet Leader.



During the subsequent operations HMS Acute ran aground on the Turkish coast but was towed clear quickly enough to avoid any international complications. (The complications being that throughout WWII Turkey had remained neutral, although a month later in February of 1945 Turkey did join the allies). Does anyone recall hearing about this incident or also, like myself, has a photo of the ship aground. Additionally, motor launches in the flotilla that accompanied HMS Acute that my father-in-law served on, were ML174 and ML175.

For the record in January 1946 HMS Acute did sustain major damage when it hit a submerged wreck but by then my father-in-law was back in the UK.

Finally the next photo was taken on the pier at Herne Bay in the 1930s. Today not much of Herne Bay Pier remains and it took some time before I found another photo showing the distinctive roof surround fencing above the food outlet.



In this photo it is my own dad standing to the right of the photo and I believe on the left is a gentleman called Steve Ryan who was my dad's best man at his wedding. But does anyone recognise the gentleman in the middle?

So will a coincidence occur?

☆ ☆ ☆

Echoes of History Event

KIDS GO FREE

Living History and Military Show at Whitehouse Farm The
Living Memorial Rettendon Essex CM3 8DL

9th and 10th August 2025

About the show

Transport yourselves back in time at Echoes of History, from a small town in the Wild West of the USA, the Union Forces encampment of the Civil War, the Plains of the Russian Steppes in World War II with Red Army and German troop positions, the Cold War Forces ready to spring into action at any time and the Gulf War and the liberation of Kuwait, this is a snapshot of what you will experience at Echoes of History. Meet and talk to people who bring Living History to life and learn what it was like back then.

Watch and join in 1940's dancing in the Refreshments Marquee, quality food outlets and plenty to see and do for the family.

The premier Military show for London and Essex.

For tickets and more information visit www.echoesofhistoryshow.com

Angela's Web Finds

By Angela Parr-Burman (ESFH 32016)

I am excited to be a part of this project identifying both old and new sources of genealogical information which may be of interest to ESFH members. New website discoveries appear all the time and even after 20 years of studying family history I am often surprised to find unusual sites. Please do share any of your favourite or new websites with ESFH – it's good to share!

Subscription genealogy websites – general - these include Ancestry, MyHeritage and Findmypast. <https://www.top10.com/dna-testing/genealogy-comparison-us> provides details on geographical areas, historical records and cost of subscriptions.

Most local governments in the UK provide free access to Ancestry, Findmypast or Newspaper Archives and you will probably need a library card to use this service.

The Ancestor Hunt - helping genealogists in their research (collections, tips, newspapers, newsletters, webinars, quick reference guide.

<https://theancestorhunt.com/>

Family Tree Magazine - 101 best genealogy websites (updated for 2025).

<https://familytreemagazine.com/best-genealogy-websites/>

Who Do You Think You Are – BBC series and magazine. Stories about celebs' family histories and useful research tips.

<https://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com>

Family Search - Church of the Latter-Day Saints offering free search facility online and in person at local centres (Colchester, Romford in Essex for example). Please note the site is user based therefore records may need to be independently verified.

<https://www.familysearch.org/>

Free UK Genealogy - offer a search facility for (1) births, marriages and deaths 1837-1999 (ongoing) (2) FreeCen 1841-1891 and (3) FreeReg for Parish Registers. Free to use, donations and transcription volunteers welcome.

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

Essex Records – apart from the records available on the ESFH website, a short-term visit to the Essex Archives Online is worthwhile but only a few images are free. Subscriptions available from 1 day to 1 year.

www.essexarchivesonline.co.uk

Death records - Find a Grave - worldwide memorials, gravestones. Donations welcome. Also Legacy - Search engine for creating and finding obituaries mostly US military. Donations welcome.

<https://www.findagrave.com> and <https://www.legacy.com>

Tree Building - build, maintain and share your family tree online. NB. Stringent privacy policy so your data will not be shared, sold or disclosed to any third party. Based in US but this does not influence your data. Free.

<https://www.tribalpages.com/>

US records - Twisted Twigs - mostly US. Archives including Civil War info BUT will be discontinued in Sept however can be contacted via Facebook.

<https://twistedtwigsgenealogy.com/>

Identifying old writing – tutorial for reading old handwriting between 1500 and 1800.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/palaeography/>

Identifying old occupations – clarification of occupations as found in census returns.

<https://www.familyresearcher.co.uk/glossary/Dictionary-of-Old-Occupations-Index.html>

Note from the Editor

Don't forget it's good to share as Angela stated so please send me details of any new or interesting web addresses you come across so that I can forward them to her for inclusion in the next edition of the HISTORIAN.

Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome

Earlier this year the Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome opened a new exhibition - 'Feeding the Nation'. The exhibition tells the story of the part that Flambirds Farm, Stow Maries, played during WW II. As well as having the King's Representative (Mrs. Jennifer Tolhurst, Lord Lieutenant of Essex) and the President of the Essex Agricultural Society (Mr. Robert McGowan) present, they were lucky to have real life 'Land Girl', sprightly Mrs. Eileen Webster, an original member of the Women's Land Army, cut the ribbon. See the photo below. The exhibition is well worth a visit - why not go along and see it?



At the same time as visiting the above exhibition you can read the information boards referring to Stories of Life in Essex during WW I 1914-1918. In fact there is so much to see at this historic place that it is well worth studying their website before you visit to make sure you don't miss anything. www.stowmaries.org.uk

Parish Records - Church Briefs: Tollesbury

By Angela Hillier (ESFH 28397)

Church Briefs were national charitable appeals issued by the sovereign and have been around since the 13th century.

They were well known to those attending their parish church services on a Sunday in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. You rarely see mentions of them after about 1750, they were not abolished until 1828. They were used as a means of raising money to help with:

- disasters - fire, flood, lightening strikes etc. which affected both buildings and people.
- those in distress - people affected by a disaster, sailors/people kidnapped and used/sold as slaves by the Barbary pirates of Algiers and Morocco, Protestants being persecuted in Catholic countries.
- those who had incurred some sort of loss apart from a natural disaster - through riots or civil disorder etc.
- for church repairs.

I don't know if there is a definitive list of what could be applied for but this covers the majority of Briefs I have seen. In a lot of cases the Brief is the only way of finding out that a disaster had happened at a particular place.

A copy of the Brief was sent to, as I understand it, all the Vicars who read them out at some point in the service. Someone, probably the parish clerk, stood by the door with a collection plate at the end of the service so those who wished to give some money as they left the church could do so. There was no obligation to make a donation and often nothing was given or only a few pence. It appears that requests for church repairs were not usually well supported, if at all, whilst requests on behalf of Protestants or those taken by Barbary pirates were usually well supported. Once the money had been collected in the parish it was handed over to professional 'undertakers' who paid for the privilege of collecting the proceeds and taking them to the Lord Chancellor to distribute, having taken their often substantial expenses first.

You may come across entries for Briefs in the Parish Register, though I believe some parishes may have had a book used to note down what the Briefs were for and the amount collected. There are virtually no extant Briefs as the originals were collected along with the donations so the only way of knowing about them is if they have been recorded in some way. This depends on someone to feel the need to do so as I would say the majority of parishes have no book and few have entries in their registers or elsewhere. Most of entries I have seen generally only record the reason for the Brief and the amount collected, though occasionally there are lists of those who gave what, which seem to occur when the sum raised is more substantial.

I found the following in the back of the parish register of Tollesbury – ERO Ref D/P 283/1/2. The first entry in a list of some 148 Briefs noted between 1707 and 1731 says

'April ye 21st 1707. Then Recd the Breife for North Marston. Los by fire £3465 and upwards. Published in the Parish Church of Tolsburey ye 4th May 1707. Collected thereon [no amount given]'. There is only one parish called North Marston which is in Bucks. Where the places requesting help are located is not generally given so it can be hard to work out where the place is if there are several with the same name. The first entry to say what was collected was a Brief received on the 4th May 1707 and published on the 18th when 2s 3d was collected.

It seems that this Vicar might have done something like a house to house collection as listing those who gave at the church door would have been quite difficult and the list given below is quite a long one. The Brief was read on the 2nd Oct, presumably a Sunday, so the following 13th Oct collection cannot be at Sunday Church service.

Recd ye 29th September 1709 the Breife for the Poore Palatinates. Published the 2nd day of October 1709.

Collected thereon ye 13th day of Octo 1709 as follows:-

Wm CLARKE half a crown, 2s 6d	Thomas WHITE three pence, 3d
Elizabeth BRAND two pence, 2d	Mathew BALEY one penney
Allbright DIZZINGTON two pence, 2d	Tho BEDDAL four pence, 4d
Samll VIAL two pence, 2d	John STACEY three pence, 3d
James NEWCOMBE two pence, 2d	Robert JOYCE four pence, 4d
Richard BUSH two pence, 2d	Mary MEACHAM two pence, 2d
Thomas SACH two pence, 2d	Johanna CRANFIELD two pence, 2d
Richard COCKEREL one shilling, 1s 0d	Wm WARFARD two pence, 2d
Tho AMMOT two pence, 2d	Georg CHILDE one penney, 1d
Joseph MORE one penney, 1d	Mary MOTT two pence, 2d
Tho OAKELEY two pence, 2d	Jane RAMPTON six pence, 6d
Tho SACH senr three pence, 3d	John SACH six pence, 6d
Wm WARNER three half pence, 1½d	Joseph ROOKE one penney, 1d
John QUI one penny, 1d	Thomas COBB six pence, 6d
Tho CLARKE one penney, 1d	Marey BEASLEY one penney, 1d
John DAWSON six pence, 6d	Wm BRIGGS six pence, 6d
Ann SMILE two pence, 2d	Wm AYLET two pence, 2d
Robert LYAL one penney, 1d	Joseph SOUTH two pence one penney, 2d 1d
Sarah SHONK three pence, 3d	

Robert PEACH three pence, 3d	Abrah HARRIS sen&junr four pence, 4d
Wm LOVET six pence, 6d	Joan REYNOLDS two pence, 2d
Ephraem DENNEY three pence, 3d	Jane FINCH one penney, 1d
Wm COLLINS three pence, 3d	Total 12s 8½d

That is in all twelve shillings and eight pence half penney.

Wm CLARKE vicar

Robert KNOPP churchwarden

John LAY churchwarden

I find it interesting that the two churchwardens who sign the list in the register do not appear to have given anything and also that there are several surnames that appear in this list that have not appeared in the parish register entries I have transcribed. They may be servants, visitors or people who do not live in the parish long enough to marry, have children baptised or die. It is not possible to say if the women listed as donors are doing so on behalf of a husband or in their own right.

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Note from the Editor

Further Reading regarding Church Briefs

For those readers interested in this subject here are a few sources to check out:

Book -The Parish Chest by W.E. Tate

Article – Church Briefs in England & Wales from Elizabethan time to 1828 by Robert Houston can be found in the St Andrews University Research Repository see <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/8227>

Norfolk Record Office Blog - <https://norfolkrecordofficeblog.org/?s=Church+Briefs>

Posted August 17th 2017

One of the archivists has written an article about Church Briefs as they have holdings of brief books, registers of briefs and briefs themselves. The article has an illustration of a brief from 10th August 1815 from the parish of Hapton in Norfolk and talks about an incident in Little Waltham Essex when Elizabeth Surrey and her son James got into difficulty and distress as a result of a fire in their yard. There is an image of the printed brief. (NRO ref PD/236/34)

Family Search website - On the website under the Wiki section taken from England Miscellaneous Ecclesiastical Records A-L it is stated that Church Briefs are also known as King's Briefs and it gives examples of Briefs collected at Topsham in Devon in 1685-1686. https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/England_Miscellaneous_Ecclesiastical_Records_A_to_L_-_International_Institute

Essex Society for Family History

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 2pm on **Saturday 18th October 2025**. It will be a hybrid meeting with members able to attend the meeting in person at The Galleywood Heritage Centre The Common Galleywood Chelmsford CM2 8TR or online via Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/RmVd4Wz-SayjQ7J5qsKPLQ>

For confirmation of the arrangements please check our website before the event or contact the Secretary at honsec@esfh.org.uk

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 meeting.

Nomination forms are available from the Secretary or can be downloaded from the Society website www.esfh.org.uk. (see page 33)

Hon Secretary

ESFH ACCOUNTS FOR 2024-2025

Society Financial Accounts: Transparency Ahead of the AGM

In accordance with our Constitution, we are pleased to inform all members that the society's financial accounts for the year 2024-2025 will 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, 18th October 2025**

* Venue: **Galleywood Heritage Centre**

If you have any queries or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to 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 at the AGM.

Tanya Sewell (ESFH 30856)

Treasurer

Manuscript Mondays



Do you sometimes struggle to read old handwriting?

Join us for Manuscript Mondays!

A monthly palaeography class held on the first Monday of each month
7.30pm to 9.00pm.

Unlock the secrets of the past, one letter at a time!

Monthly Palaeography Classes

Jul 7th	Difficult Documents
Aug 4th	Inventories
Sep 1st	Revision of Letterforms
Oct 6th	More Middling Examples
Nov 3rd	Quarter Sessions Records
Dec 1st	Christmas Practice

£10 per 90 mins class. No commitment. Pay As You Go.

Email: manuscriptmondays@gmail.com

An Unexpected Discovery Beneath the Patio – War Graves in an Essex Garden

By Tanya Sewell (ESFH 30856) and Toni Neobard (ESFH 32898)

Just a week or so before Christmas 2024, an old work colleague of mine, Phil, moved into his new home in Great Wakering, Essex. One of his first jobs was to clear an overgrown area in order to site his large rabbit run. He roped in a few friends to help him with the task and also employed landscapers to grind down some remaining stumps. To get to some of the stumps two unusually thick and heavy paving slabs had to be lifted.

As they began to lever them up, they were surprised by the sheer weight — these weren't ordinary paving stones. Once flipped, and to their complete surprise, they found carved into the underside of each stone were inscriptions — names, military ranks, dates, and regiments. They had uncovered old Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) headstones. Phil said 'It was pretty much the last thing I expected'.



They managed to remove four stones that day. They cleaned them and stood them up in the garden. The headstones had clearly been cut-down and repurposed. But that isn't the end of the story as Phil has another 32 of them still in situ forming a patio and a long path. All of these remaining stones are yet to be lifted.



Andrea, our Chair, joined us on a site visit to Phil's garden in April and the sight was both astonishing and moving. By searching the CWGC website www.cwgc.org we established that these three headstones had originally stood in Colchester Cemetery. At some point these stones had been replaced, likely due to damage or wear. They appeared to be made of heavy white Portland stone,



commonly used for official war graves in the past.

Phil spoke to the previous owner of the house hoping to piece together the story. She told Phil that they were laid by a friend of her late husband some twenty years or so ago. But neither she nor the neighbours knew the source of the stones.

To understand more about where these stones came from and how they are managed, here's some information about the role of the CWGC.

The Role of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is responsible for commemorating approximately 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died during the First and Second World Wars, including those whose

deaths were attributable to war service within specified periods. Their work includes maintaining cemeteries, burial plots, and memorials at over 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries and territories. The Commission replaces headstones when they become too damaged or eroded to serve as fitting tributes, prioritizing conservation where possible.

Headstones are typically made of durable materials such as Portland stone, though other stones like Botticino limestone or local materials may be used depending on the region. They are engraved with the service member's name, rank, regiment, date of death, age (where known). They may include a regimental badge, a religious symbol (or none, per family wishes), and sometimes a personal inscription chosen by next of kin.

When a headstone is removed and replaced, it is usually destroyed or retained by the CWGC — but clearly, that was not the case here.

How these particular stones came to rest in an Essex back garden may never be fully known, but their discovery has certainly raised some interesting questions and with more stones still in place, there's plenty left to uncover.

Following are the details of the servicemen on the first 3 paving slabs dug up from the garden.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE AUTHORS

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Records

Source: Commonwealth War Graves Commission

<https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-war-dead>

First Name	Last Name	Birth Year	Age	Death Date	War	Service Number	Regiment/Unit
Bertram Ernest	Powell	1905	40	02/11/45	WW2	934521	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
A E	Ruggles	1901		22/04/20	WW1	11856	Essex Regiment Depot
George	Donson	1880		08/01/17	WW1	19859	Northumberland Fusiliers 36th Battalion.

First Name	Last Name	Rank	Cemetery	Grave Ref	Additional Information
Bertram Ernest	Powell	Leading Aircraftman	Colchester Cemetery	Sec F. Div. F. Grave 230.	Son of Arthur and Mary Ann Powell, husband of Alice Powell of Colchester
A E	Ruggles	Private	Colchester Cemetery	M.8.19.	-
George	Donson	Private	Colchester Cemetery	F.9.12.	Husband of Mary A Donson of 67 George St. Riddings Alfreton Derbyshire.

☆ ☆ ☆

Note from the Editor

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

Once logged in, from the Home Page go to Activities>ESFH Info>ESFH Document Repository>Forms>Form06 Nomination for Officers & Executive Committee.

ESFH attend Victoria County History (VCH) Presentation April 2025

By Tanya Sewell (ESFH 30856)

ESFH, as patrons of this organisation, were invited to attend the presentation of the launch of their latest publication 'Southend, Victorian Town and Resort' by Ken Crowe at the Civic Centre Victoria Avenue Southend on Friday 11th April. Several members of the Society attended the function.

Founded in 1899 and originally dedicated to Queen Victoria, the Victoria County History is an encyclopaedic record of England's places and people from earliest times to the present day. It has been described as the greatest publishing project in English local history.

The VCH Essex Trust, established in 1994, has published twelve volumes in a series of Red Books about the county so far. The next publication, which is about 2 years away, is Harwich and Dovercourt. They are hopeful that Southend will be the next book after that although this will be a bigger volume, possibly in two books, given the rich history of the area dating back to medieval times.

The VCH stated that they want to include paperback versions of their Red Books to increase their profile, accessibility and affordability.

There were many guests including Lord Petre, Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Mrs. Jennifer Tolhurst and Deputy Mayor of Southend, Nigel Folkard who all thanked the VCH Essex Trust for their hard work and congratulated them on an excellent publication.



GUESTS AT THE VCH EVENT WITH THE ESFH PRESIDENT, THE LORD PETRE, ON THE EXTREME
RIGHT

The Lord Lieutenant and then her husband, Philip, spoke about their family links to Southend having come from Gravesend in Kent to Southend in the late 1800's and buying, refurbishing and running the Palace Hotel together with establishing shops and housing in the area. It was Philip's great grandfather, Bernard Wiltshire Tolhurst who instigated the erection of a statue to Queen Victoria on her Golden Jubilee in 1897, which stood near to the Palace Hotel at the top of Pier Hill but was moved in 1962 to its present position in Cliff Town Parade.



STATUE OF QUEEN VICTORIA



VCH RED BOOK

There were several copies of the Red Books available for guests to peruse and of course the opportunity to purchase the Short Book being launched 'Southend, Victorian Town and Resort' as well as another Short Book 'Harwich, Dovercourt and Parkeston in the 19th Century' for the bargain price of £10 each. There is another in the Shorts series books, 'Newport'.

It was a pleasant morning and good to see familiar faces.

For information regarding the Victoria County History publications see: -

<https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history>

Southend, Victorian Town and Resort

Victoria County History

Book review by Colleen Devenish Editor

As expected from the Victoria County History publications this edition in the 'paperback parish and urban histories series' gives an extensive and detailed account of Southend in Victorian and Edwardian times. Contributors include Ian Yearsley, Jenny Butler, Ed Simpson, Judith Williams and Ken Crowe.

The book consisting of 131 pages is divided into 14 sections with plenty of figures, maps, tables, graphs and monochrome illustrations.

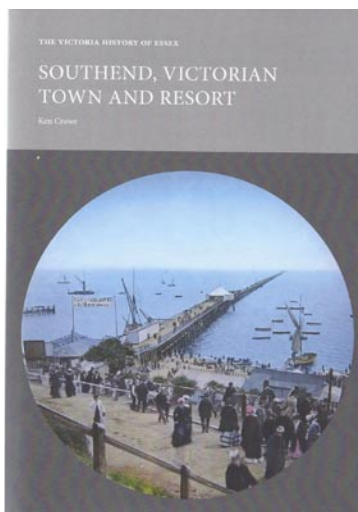
After the Introduction the first few chapters look at the historical evidence regarding landownership of Southend and then goes on to give an extensive description of the eight initial parishes including Prittlewell, Southchurch, Leigh, Eastwood, South Shoebury, North Shoebury, Great Wakering and Shopland, from mediaeval up until Victorian/Edwardian times.

Further pages detail the Victorian and Edwardian entrepreneurs that helped shape the town resulting in the city it is today. Principal landowners in 1841 included the Bristow family, Lady Sparrow, JG Welch, JY Burgess, JB Scratton, and GAW Welch to name but a few. Thomas Dowsett was Southend's first mayor.

Chapters are dedicated to the development of significant housing estates including the building of Cliff Town, Belle Vue, Riviera, Wick, Thorpe Hall Estate, Hamlet Court and Chalkwell Hall. With the developments came all the relevant trades including brick makers and other facilitators. Infrastructure developments including the building of railways are mentioned. In 1854 the London and Southend railway had reached Leigh. It can be argued that the inauguration of the electric trams service in 1901 enhanced property values and benefited commerce, 'certainly by the summer season of 1912 over 1 million passengers were carried each month from June until September'. As the population soared, especially in the summer months, it brought the need for retail outlets, entertainment, banks and building societies, along with clubs and societies which are covered in the book. No Southend history book would be complete without a history of the pier and here you will find the story of the rise and decline of the seaside attraction.

Readers can delve into an adequate index for the subjects that interest them.

This book was full of facts and figures and would be a valued read for students of local history. Although academic in nature I found it an easy read. Published by The University of London Press at £12.99 ISBN 978-1-915249-87-6. The ESFH library has a copy.



Staying Relevant in a Changing World of Family History

By Toni Neobard (32898)

As the tools and techniques available to family historians continue to evolve, ESFH is committed to ensuring our members don't get left behind. While parish registers and census returns remain the backbone of family research, we are also embracing new technologies to help members explore their ancestry in powerful and different ways.

Supporting Members on Their DNA Journey

DNA testing has become an indispensable tool for family historians. Whether it's identifying unknown ancestors, confirming paper trail connections, or connecting with your matches, DNA offers insights that traditional records alone cannot always provide.

Recognising its growing importance, ESFH has placed a strong focus on DNA education. Our 'Genetic Genealogy for Beginners' course provides a structured, approachable introduction for members new to DNA, helping them understand their results and apply them in meaningful ways.

Regular 'DNA Surgeries' also give members the chance to get one-on-one support with specific queries, whether it's working out who that mystery DNA match is or tackling unknown parentage cases. These sessions

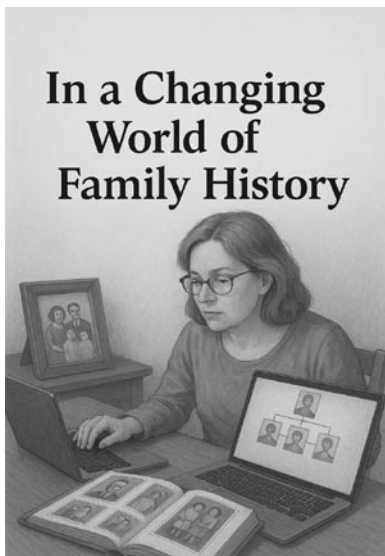
provide insight to others who may have similar problems. They are led by a panel of knowledgeable volunteers, each bringing their own perspective. The fact that our panellists approach problems from slightly different angles often leads to creative solutions and fresh insights — something our members greatly value when trying to untangle complex genetic puzzles.

A New Website for a New Era

To support the modern family historian, we're also investing in a completely new website for the Society. The redesigned site will offer a more intuitive experience, better access to resources, and several new features designed with our members in mind. Whether you're looking for upcoming events, specialist interest groups, or member-only content, the new platform will be your gateway to all things ESFH.

Embracing Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Another exciting area we are exploring is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in family history. AI tools can support researchers in a wide range of tasks — from transcribing handwritten documents and translating Latin, to extracting information



from census returns and summarising lengthy wills. It can even help with writing up your family history, suggesting engaging ways to tell your ancestors' stories. Members have also found it useful for clarifying unfamiliar historical terms and definitions, creating timelines, and generating illustrations to accompany family stories.

We're already introducing members to these possibilities through talks and hands-on activities — and this is just the beginning. Expect more resources, training, and guidance in the months ahead as we continue to embrace this powerful new tool.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, our goal is simple: to remain relevant and useful. Whether you're tracing Essex roots or exploring wider connections, we're here to help — with the tools, knowledge and support to make your research as successful as it can be.



☆ ☆ ☆

— *Rita Harris* —
quality genealogical research

Enthusiastic Research for Essex and London

£20.00 per hour
Interesting sources beyond the internet

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

01245 346490
contactrita71@gmail.com

71 Vicarage Road Old Moulsham
Chelmsford Essex
CM2 9BT



Oxfordshire Family History Society

OFHS Family History Fair 2025

The above will take place on
Saturday 25th October at
The Cherwell School
Marston Ferry Road
Oxford
OX2 7EE

Open from 10.00am until 4.00pm

See <http://www.ofhs.uk>

OH! I Didn't See That Coming

By Royston Jones (ESFH 20182)

During the twenty years I have been researching my family history I have had an abiding worry: that, like allegedly fifty per cent of the population, I could be related to royalty. Don't get me wrong. I am a constitutional royalist and I think Charles is doing a great job. I just don't want to be 'one of them'. But, as I researched my mother's maternal family, the Bixbys, I came to realise that I needn't be too much concerned.

The Bixbys have the longest continual history in my family. I have traced them, with great accuracy, back to a Richard Bigsbee who was the father of William Bigsby, baptised in St Margaret's Barking in 1654. They were still there, living in Chadwell Heath on the border between Barking and Dagenham, when I was a boy in the 1950s and visited my Great Aunt Flo Bixby. Apart from about thirty years living around Smithfield Market in the eighteenth century, the family lived in the same area; for over 150 years in the same road: at one point in the 1850s almost everyone in Bennett's Castle Lane was either a Bixby or married to one.

So, a few years ago, I started to research some of the maternal lines, starting with my great grandmother Elizabeth Mary Ann Pearce (1847-1939), who married Charles Bixby in 1866. She died just four years before I was born: how I would love to have met her. Now, the Bixbys lived fairly near the edge. They were hay and straw dealers around Beacontree Heath and, knowing how close the family was, I thought great Grannie Elizabeth was probably born a stone's-throw from the Heath. But the census said differently: she claimed to have been born variously in Battlesbridge, Rayleigh and Moulsham. It didn't help in that she spelled her surname several different ways and used her given names in random order.

Eventually I worked it out: she was born in Battlesbridge but baptised three months later in Moulsham. But on the 1841 and 1851 censuses there was no sign of the family in Moulsham. Eventually I discovered that Elizabeth's mother's family lived in Barrack Lane, Moulsham in the early 1800s, conveniently opposite the barracks and later the workhouse. Hilda Grieve, in her excellent history of Chelmsford did not pull her punches: 'Barrack Lane (Wood Street) was left with the huts and hovels of army camp followers and a reputation so unsavoury that the Moulsham constables were cautioned by the magistrates in 1822 *'.....to be vigilant in their superintendence of Barrack Lane, it being principally the resort of prostitutes and thieves'*.

So what had I stumbled on here? Curiouser and curiouser it transpired that my great grandmother's numerous siblings were being born all over southern Essex but always being baptised in Moulsham. In fact, between birth certificates and census returns I chased the family from Moulsham to Pleshey, Edney Common, Doddington, Lambourne End, Chigwell Row, Brentwood, Great Burstead, Fobbing and Southminster and back to Moulsham. It became clear that my family were spending the winter in Moulsham and the summer 'on tour'. Slowly the penny began to drop.

The choice of Moulsham as a base also became clear. In 1838 the Reverend Christopher Muston was appointed curate of the new church of St John's Moulsham. His was an interesting appointment: a man without the usually requisite degree and with a dissenting past. His first act on arrival was to do away with the private rented pews. As he said 'the privilege of divine service should be had without money or price'. He went out of his way to welcome the poor, the outcasts and those on the fringes of society.

By now it was clear that my great-grandmother was a Romany. The clues began to mount up. Her father's and brothers' occupations included the classic traveller and Romany trades such as brush maker, chair mender, pedlar, hawker. The brothers' wives had typical Romany names including Livermore and Bibby. The given names of my cousins included Levi, Lazarus, Rhoda and Adaerezia. Invariably the family was found at the end of the census list with an address such as 'caravan in field'.

Their lives were perhaps poor in belongings but rich in quality. Their summers were spent at country fairs and under the trees moving from one to the other in the vardo (caravan). That could be risky. In 1889 my great-great aunt Anne Maria Pearce, aged 39, fell from her moving vardo near Stamford Rivers and was killed. The children were born wherever the van was stabled: one cousin was born on a piece of derelict land which a few years later became West Ham's Boleyn Ground. A century later I cheered on the Hammers from the very spot, totally unaware of its significance to me.

Seen by some as mystical and magical, but by others as parasites and no-gooders, the Romany and Traveller community faced ever-increasing prejudice. Some of my family joined the Eastwood Community which flourished for a while near Southend.



STRATFORD MARKET c1912 IMAGE COURTESY OF NEWHAM ARCHIVES



ELIZABETH SMEE, ELIZABETH PEARCE'S
DAUGHTER, STANDING OUTSIDE HER
MOTHER'S COTTAGE IN BENNETT'S CASTLE
LANE DAGENHAM C1905
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

The sharing of DNA with some of the descendants of that community has proven my Romany roots.

But great grandma Elizabeth decided to 'wed-out' to a 'gorger'. She probably met Charles Bixby at Stratford Market, where he sold his straw, because that is where they married in 1866. But she kept in touch with her own family: some of the Andersons from Eastwood stayed with her in 1911. And perhaps the Bixbys were not far removed from the Travellers in any case.

Elizabeth Pearce was born in 1844, probably in a field, near Battlesbridge. In November 1939 she died in a farm cottage in the middle of the biggest council estate in Europe. Four years later I was born. Neither my mother nor my grandmother told me any of this story: I certainly didn't see it coming. It's not blue blood, but I am thrilled to be part of real royalty.

☆ ☆ ☆

The Essex Branch of the Historical Association

Readers may be interested in the following events:

20th September 2025 AGM followed by Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. Presented by the author Nathan Amin (signed copies of the book for sale).

18th October 2025 The Order of St John's Knights Hospitallers: From Jerusalem to Essex. Presented by Paul Gwilliam.

6th December 2025 The Debate: American Civil War: Missouri decides. Presented by M. Frampton, J. Edgar and T. Tuckwell.

Meetings are held at The Trinity Methodist Church Rainsford Road Chelmsford CM1 2XB at 2.30pm.

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

Essex 1925 - A Sentimental Journey

By Dawn Tibble (ESFH 33361)

It's 1925, Essex England was going through some real changes. Major developments and opportunities for small businesses; villages and towns that grew considerably in size; the families who made this all happen, their celebrations and losses; all combine to make this county vibrant.

The Fortune of War public house in Laindon was built in 1925, to replace the old Fortune of War Inn on the other side of the road, by brewers Ind Coope. The landlord of both at this date was Francis Frederick Tubb. Ironically the new Fortune of War has been long demolished but the former inn is now a vehicle wheel specialist. ⁴

The Essex County Council started monthly health and treatment clinics at the Major Hall in Laindon bringing some much relief to the families I would imagine.

Pitsea Market had its first stalls opened by Mr. Charles Love. It grew very rapidly to over 200 stalls with a rental charge of 10/-, that's 50p to you and me. Everything you could imagine was at this market and some stallholders still there now have been there for decades. Pitsea market of old has been replaced by what are now called the domes, an indoor market in buildings shaped like a dome, not as popular I hear.

On the 7th March 1925 HRH Prince Henry started the great opening of the A127 Southend arterial. Starting at Lea Bridge heading to Red Bridge where the ribbons were cut, on to Wanstead, Harold Wood railway bridge and ending in Southend. At a cool cost of 1.75 million English pounds.

¹ Wow!

In April 1925 the Roman Catholic Sacred Heart Church was opened in Vange. It was overseen by the Rev Father Snell and the Bishop of Brentwood Arthur Doubleday.

On Saturday 25th July, Messrs Whitehead and Day of Saffron Walden executed a very handsome Celtic Cross in the presence of villagers and neighbouring friends in Hempstead. Lieut-general Sir Francis Lloyd GCVO KCB DSO, unveiled and dedicated on behalf of Vicar Rev Thomas Conyers Barker.

Severe weather whipped gales across Gravesend in January uprooting trees, damaging property and disrupting traffic along the roads and the river. ²



LIEUT-GENERAL SIR FRANCIS LLOYD
SOURCE: NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

The 160-year-old large mansion Porter House Higham was destroyed by fire. ²

The Gravesend Regatta was revived after a gap of 12 years. A procession, dances, concerts and sports filled three days of entertainment to boost local trade. ²

'Southend's Father' died on 23rd May 1925. Robert Arthur Jones MBE, instrumental in the town's creation, was buried in Priory Park. He dedicated this place for the enjoyment of the whole town. A jeweller by trade in the High Street. ¹

Dying at the tender age of 44 on 25th November 1925 Reginald Blackall, aka 'the X-ray Martyr' of Marine Avenue Leigh-on-Sea carried out valuable research into X-rays, alas, he lost both of his hands in doing so.² Lots more on his life, family and colleagues can be found on the website www.leighlives.co.uk

Frank Dudley a footballer, centre forward, was born on 9th May and played for Southend before going on to Leeds United and Southampton. Returning to be the coach for Southend youth football after retirement.

In October's news, Belchamp St Pauls villagers mourned the death of a well-known local girl in London. Ruth Burgess aged 13 was taken to London by her uncle and caught diphtheria. A great sympathy was felt within the village. ³

In July, Sir George and Lady Whitehead held a fete at Arthur Hall to raise money for the bells at Borley parish church. The 'Stephen Tonnie' bell is repaired after falling in 1924 and breaking in two. The rectory dinner bell was used as a make shift until it was fixed. As entertainment local school children performed folk dancing, taking part was Ethel Martin, Winnie Perry, Mabel Mansfield, Hilda Butcher, Eve Pearson, Caroline Theobald and Muriel Turp. ³



POSTCARD FROM EDITOR'S COLLECTION

A fatal accident in Pentlow resulted in the death of Mr George Braybook aged 60. Working for Mr Brand at Ropers Farm, George was stacking corn when he fell from a height and broke his neck. He leaves a widow. ³

Broomfield obituary, the 'Essex Newsmen' 30th May 1925, shows the deaths of two old and respected residents. Mrs Elizabeth Rolfe, husband of John Rolfe of Chelmsford, aged 80 and Thomas Hawkes aged 87.

Ref:

¹. www.Southendtimeline.co.uk

². www.DiscoverGravesham.co.uk

³. www.Foxearth.org.uk 1922-1925 Suffolk and Essex Freepress archive

⁴. www.Basildon.com

Mass Observation: Recording Everyday Life in Britain

By Emily Calcraft

The Mass Observation Archive is an archive of everyday life, thought and feeling in Britain. Mass Observation was set up by Tom Harrison (Anthropologist), Charles Madge (Sociologist), and Humphrey Jennings (Documentary Filmmaker) in 1937. The founders sought to gauge public opinion and measure this against perceived public opinion that was reported in the media. One of the first controversies it sought to explore was the abdication of Edward VIII and his marriage to the divorcee Wallace Simpson. The founders were not convinced that the newspapers were accurately documenting the views of the population, and so on King George VI's coronation day on 12th May 1937, they took to the streets to collect anecdotes, overheard comments and conduct 'man in the street' interviews.

An early focus of the archive, and especially Tom Harrison, was on Bolton which was nicknamed 'worktown'. They recruited observers, who were told to immerse themselves into the lives and culture of the town, using anthropological techniques that had been honed by Harrison during the time that he worked with tribes in the Far East. Harrison instructed the observers to record hand gestures, hats, clothing and all kinds of minute detail. For instance, observers recorded how many pieces were in a six-penny portion of chips (25 and one sixth!) or the proportion of black to brown shoes worn on the High Street. The emergence of Fascism in Europe had unsettled the intellectual middle-class and for them this investigation was a way of connecting with a part of society they had no experience of. Many found a certain amount of reassurance that, at least in the Northwest of England, there was little evidence of a thriving Fascist movement.

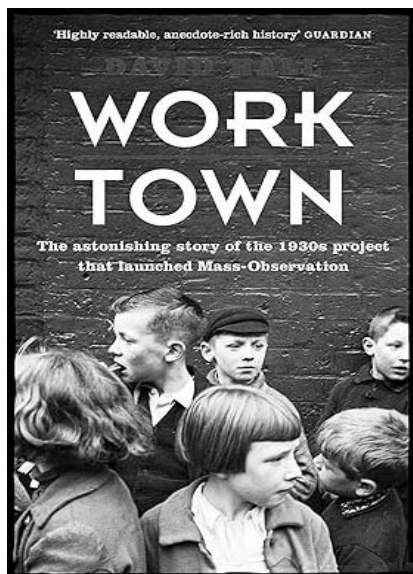


IMAGE OF BOOK COVER COURTESY OF
EDITOR

The archive also commissioned the photographer Humphrey Spender. He took over 900 beautiful images of life in Bolton taken between August 1937 and April 1938. Spender was one of the first British photographers to use a rangefinder camera and 35mm film which meant that he was able to capture candid shots of life in action rather than posed compositions. He realized that people altered their behavior for the camera and developed ways to photograph unobserved, for example, he would hide his camera under a raincoat or shoot with his camera casually placed on a pub table.

Meanwhile, Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings focused on creating a base of 'observers' that were mostly based in and around London. These observers kept diaries on their daily lives and would sometimes be called upon to reply to open-ended questionnaires (known as directives). The average respondent enjoyed writing and felt that they had something to contribute to the story of Britain at the time, as well as contributing to Mass Observation's specific research questions. Initially, this took place on the 12th of each month, and occasionally special occasions such as Christmas. By 1938, this work was taking place nationally. These diaries are the most well-known part of Mass Observation's work as they contain people's responses to rising tensions in Europe, the start of the Second World War, and the rise of nuclear warfare in 1945. They capture a cross-section of societal emotion, thoughts, and anecdotes from the war.

One amusing anecdote comes from the diary of Tilly Rice, a housewife and mother, who wrote on 16th February 1940 the following:

Mr B (the local air-raid warden) I remember chiefly because during an early morning alarm last September he came rushing out to go on duty and, when part of the way down the road, he suddenly said to his companion warden, 'I must go back – I've come out without my teeth'. 'Good Lord man,' said the other, 'what does that matter? Do you think you're going to bite 'em?'

The responses cover all aspects of life from smoking and reading habits to views on other nationalities, the war situation, rationing and politics, as well as their hopes and fears as war continued.

Alongside this, Mass Observation hired a team of paid investigators (no more than fifteen at a time) who would conduct 'direct work' which consisted of traditional survey questionnaires, knocking on doors and asking people in the street, as well as 'indirect work' which used more unorthodox methods such as standing on street corners and noting down who was passing; what they wore; what people were talking about; how men held their partner in the dancehall. If you have ever wondered how long it took the average person to drink a pint in Brighton in 1938, then the Mass Observation Archive is the place to look! Over 3000 people contributed diaries or answered directives for Mass Observation between 1937 and 1967. Some wrote for just one month, others like Nella Last wrote for years, and even decades.

One participant from 1937 wrote:

'I read in the News Chronicle about the work, and especially the account by an ordinary housewife of her day. Mass-Observation - it was something new, something to talk about, the things I do in the house are monotonous

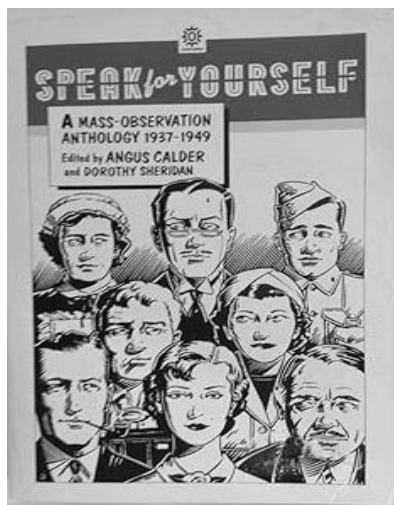


IMAGE OF BOOK COVER COURTESY OF
EDITOR

but on the 12th day are somehow different, letting the dog out, getting up, making the dinner, it makes them important when they have to be remembered and recorded.'

After the Second World War, Mass Observation dwindled and became more of a commercial-research organisation. It was revived in 1981, as historians, researchers and the public were keen to restore its role in documenting everyday life.

Today, it is housed at the University of Sussex and operates with a panel of approximately 500 volunteer writers nationally. They run three directives a year and generate rich qualitative materials. During the COVID-19 pandemic Mass Observation gave people the opportunity to record their everyday lives during this unprecedented time. The COVID-19 collection features over 10,000 narrative accounts, as well as diaries, drawings and photographs.

The archive is constantly looking for new respondents, whether that is just on the 12th May (Mass Observation's Annual Diary Day), or for more regular writers. All material from 1981-2009 has been digitised. Why not add your voice to the archive?

For further information see <http://massobs.org.uk/about-mass-observation/>

Note from the Editor

The Mass Observation Project

Emily Calcraft is a Postgraduate Research Student at the School of History, Philosophy and Digital Humanities at the University of Sheffield. I am delighted to say that she will giving a Zoom presentation on 16th October at 7.15pm BST (GMT+1) to ESFH members. For details please see our website under the Events tab.



Note from the Editor

The Railway Work, Life and Death Project Update

For those of you interested in railway staff that were involved in accidents June 5th 2025 saw the release of another c 69,000 records of railway staff accidents into the Railway, Work, Life & Death project database - available on their website free.

The cases cover England and Wales from 1855 -1929 and complement their existing records and bring the total to 125,000 cases up to 1939.

Take a look at their website - Railway Work, Life & Death to find out more.

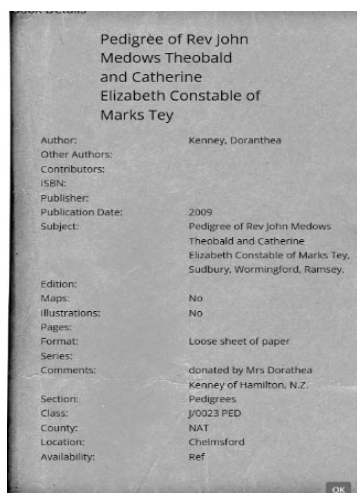
<https://www.railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk/69000-railway-company-records-released/>

Have you visited our RESEARCH CENTRE at The Essex Record Office?

By Denise Somers, Research Centre Volunteer (ESFH 30932)

Have you ever visited our Research Centre on the 1st floor of the Essex Record Office? This is a very underused facility and we would love more members to come along for help and support. The Centre is manned twice a week by 1-2 volunteers on a Tuesday 1-4pm and Thursday 10-1pm. Don't forget you will need a Reader's ticket to get into the Essex Record Office and there are two types of ticket both of which are free. Please see www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk for details.

As well as access to our computers and records there is a huge library of books covering family history and local history books covering all areas of Essex, including areas now incorporated into London. Many of these books are out of print and they are such a useful resource to see old photographs of where our families lived and worked. Prior to visiting the Research Centre, you can check what books the society owns by logging onto our website and clicking the tab Research>Database & Search Aids>Library catalogue. You can then put in a place name or person to see the list of books we have. Many of the books have an ISBN number listed and therefore, if you



are unable to visit, your local library may be able to locate copies for you as our books are for reference only and not loaned out. Our Library Catalogue also holds a number of surname pedigrees. For example, if you enter a surname in the search box say 'Theobald' and it is included in a pedigree box you will get this summary and reference to Box J, item 23.

We do have copies of the magazines of some other Family History Societies both here in the UK and overseas. We have reciprocal agreements with some societies to share our digital magazines on our website, but some do not have this facility and we therefore still receive some hard copies in the library.

Most people who visit have 'brick walls' and it really helps to chat to someone else on a one-to-one consultation. I usually find there are websites that they have never used such as freereg.org.uk and findagrave.com. One man was delighted just to see a photo of his ancestor's grave. Some members have never used the society website and we can explore this together and show them how to use the Genealogy database. Some who visit have limited access to a computer or a family member has to complete it for them and they visit with paper copies of their records, but we are still able to assist with their searches. Many have never done their DNA and we can discuss how to do this and show them how this can benefit their research with our own findings.

So why not come along and visit our great resource?

The Grandfather I Never Knew

By Mike Fogg (ESFH 33307)

As a child growing up in Derby, I knew my paternal grandparents well, but I never saw my Mum's dad. That's not completely true, I am told he saw me once when I was one! My mum had fallen out with him, he did not come to her wedding, and as I grew up, I learnt that questions about him were not welcome. Mum never had a good word to say about him. For example, she said that when she was a teenager someone gave her a cream cake in return for helping them in some way and I was told that he ate it before she could. That was my starting point as I tried to create a family tree.

I soon found that my grandfather, James Buchanan Young (JBY) married my pregnant grandmother Clara Florence Woodrow in 1923 in Derbyshire and Aunt Alison, Mum and Uncle Jack arrived in quick succession. Unfortunately, Grandmother Clara died in 1929, possibly of an ectopic pregnancy. Mum said her earliest memory was going down on a train to Bristol with her mother's coffin. The train journey to Bristol didn't accompany the coffin, because I now know Grandma Clara is buried in Derby.

Doing the family tree has also got me back in touch with cousins I had not seen since 1960. My cousin John, his wife and I believe that the journey to Bristol was necessary to take Clara's daughter Joan, born in Bristol out of wedlock in 1921, back to the Woodrow family in Bedminster Bristol. Possibly, Joan had a trunk with her belongings in it and my four-year-old Mum thought that it was a coffin. Who knows? Who also knows how JBY from Falkirk met Grandma Clara from Bristol and married her in Derbyshire?

I set off to investigate JBY. He was born in Muiravonside Stirlingshire, in Feb 1891 to John Young and Elizabeth Buchanan, one of nine children. One of the children, Jock, went to the USA, and I have followed his family. The Young family in Scotland goes back to the 1600s and beyond, one of them engaging in correspondence with King Henry VIII.

I wondered if JBY was in WW I and sure enough I found him in the Transport Corps. In 1919 he had a field punishment where, 'the prisoner was placed in fetters and handcuffs but was not attached to a fixed object and was still able to march with his unit'. Apparently, JBY had 'created a disturbance in the cookhouse and used abusive language to an NCO'. Well, I thought this adds colour to his character, but the kaleidoscope was about to get brighter. One of the documents indicated that on 11th June 1918 JBY married Bessie Hutchinson in Lochgelly, Fife. Ah well, I thought, this can't be right! However, addresses, dates of birth, army number and parents on the wedding record all checked out.

Further research delivered the news that JBY had two daughters with Bessie, Elizabeth born in 1919 and Isabella 5th June 1921. The arrival of information from the 1921 census (19th June) showed that by then JBY was boarding in Clay Cross Derbyshire and working as a motorman for Kennings. You will be ahead of me on the implications of this for our family. Fortunately, my mother and her siblings had died before this became known. With two of my cousins, I have speculated how much our parents knew or suspected? But there is no one left to ask.

Two years ago, I was contacted through Ancestry by a lady in Scotland, who had read our family tree. She said it answered questions for her family. All they knew was that JBY had disappeared, to Coventry they thought. I think that this lady has since died, though we had a strong DNA match. Bessie Hutchinson divorced JBY for desertion in 1939.

Back in Derbyshire JBY needed help with his three small children and the 1939 Register shows 'housekeeper' Lily Clarke in the household and my uncle Jack still at school. I know that my Aunt Alison was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) then, but I can't find my mum Clara Florence Young in the 1939 Register at all.

At this stage we don't know how long Lily had been around, for some years I understand. However, it seems the relationship between her and JBY was close because they married in 1957. Did he still think he was married to Bessie? Lily insisted that JBY's children called her 'Mrs Clarke', but she was not well liked and called 'the old girl' behind her back! As far as I know, no photographs exist of JBY, however there are some loose ends I would like to tie up. These include:

- * Researching the path travelled by Joan D Woodrow. I know she went to South Africa with her family and came back, before emigrating to Australia.
- * Investigating the families of JBY's two abandoned daughters in Scotland. I currently believe that one of them went to Australia as well.
- * Following up a 'Woodrow' contact from a DNA match in Bristol.

One final reflection, to a lesser extent my mother didn't have much time for my paternal grandfather! Perhaps Colleen will let me write about him next time!

☆ ☆ ☆

Note from the Editor

Little Totham – the story of a small village

Just discovered by me, although published in 2005, is this easy to read paperback of 122 pages regarding the history of Little Totham. Consisting of 15 chapters, many with black and white copies of photographs and drawings by Lesley Sharp, you might want to seek this out if your ancestors come from this area of Essex.

This is really an oral history, as printed are memories of life from the following villagers with the surnames **Birkin** Brian, **Brown** Joe, **Burrows** (née Beswick) Eileen, **Crisp** (née Buckley) Helen, **Crisp** (now Shelley) Peggy, **French** Sarah Ann, **Gregory** Mary, **Horsnell** (née Clark) Brenda, **Huxley** Gwen, **Jopson** Nellie, **McColm** Barbara, **McColm** Ruby (née Kempen), **Mead** (née Fulcher) Ethel, **Murrell** Ray, **Pulford** Percy and Joyce, **Seaborn** (née Cullum) Dora, **Smith** Nancy, **Staines** Tom, **Vince** Ernie, **Wakelin** Peter, **Walters** (née Taylor) May, **Whitney** George.

The book reveals that the population in 1801 was 223 with the highest figure being 402 in 1911. The 2011 census figure was 400.

Snap up a copy before they all go? Find it for sale at *The Swan* pub in Little Totham for a cost of £5.50.

Military History and Genealogy - Do they go together?

By Eric Simonelli

After giving a talk on RAF Bradwell Bay for the Essex Society for Family History in May I was asked for details of the names on our unique memorial for your memorial inscription records. Although I had most of the information required it was spread out amongst the RAF Bradwell Bay Preservation Group archives. The information needed to be collated to give an overall picture of the memorial. So, apart from giving John Young the details for the monumental inscriptions for your Society it also made me think about presenting the information for a wide audience, perhaps in book form.



PHOTO FROM AUTHORS COLLECTION

The project would involve researching both military history, genealogy, and local history. The memorial was designed in the late 1980's by Sidney Smith in conjunction with two local farmers, George Prior and Peter Rushton. It was designed nose down to represent a cross. It was also designed as a pure blue/grey shape blending into the sky, not to be identified as a particular plane or obvious standout shape, but to represent all planes and crew lost of all nationalities from the sky. For many years without better knowledge, I interpreted this as representing Photo Reconnaissance, there are many stories and myths about the memorial which need correcting.

The memorial is unique and although sometimes does receive negative remarks it is overall given a lot of respect and receives many visitors who find the memorial very moving and peaceful. So where to start?

It helped me having studied for the Oxford University Advance Diploma in Local History. This diploma gave me the skills to use statistics to analyse history. So, I designed a spreadsheet that would contain all the information on the memorial, plaque by plaque. I have added additional information such as squadron and age of

person, exact date of death for example. This has enabled me to check the details of each entry. There are many mistakes, mostly in terms of initials, but also there are some names which do not have any relationship to Bradwell Bay. More importantly there are names that need to be added.

Genealogical research will help with determining the age of airmen. Some ages are known but not all. I firmly believe that, in studying military history of RAF Bradwell Bay, it is important to know the people. Therefore, trying to see the airman's background, correct name and age helps. The 1939 Register often helps along with other sources. Thinking outside the box is a phrase I keep in mind. Where will I find more information apart from Ancestry and Findmypast. As many of the aircrew were from the Commonwealth, websites such as the Canadian War Memorial one can be a rich source of information.

Military History is of main interest in studying a Military Station of course, but I prefer to avoid a 'Bombs and Bullets' approach. RAF Bradwell Bay was intended to house about 2000 PEOPLE. Everyone played their part from cleaning the toilets to being the Station Commander. Why was the station there? What were the main roles?

The station had 28 different squadrons from 1942 to 1945; the squadrons were not all there at the same time. Studying which squadrons were based at differing times, studying their work, roles and type of aircraft can be obtained from the operational war diaries, known as orbs, squadron orbs can be downloaded from The National Archives website. The station orbs are not digitised so a trip to Kew is necessary. The date of death can be obtained from the Commonwealth War Graves website. From this the details of the incident which killed the airman named on the memorial can be obtained from the orbs.

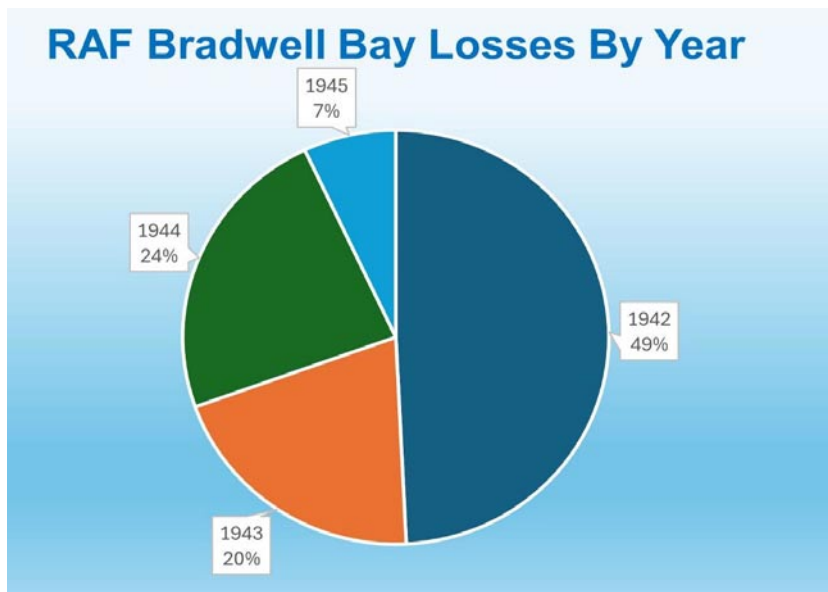
Local History, Family History and Military History are all useful as parts of a jigsaw to extract the information held on the memorial. Some of the local history of the erection of the memorial is given above. The memorial was donated to the Parish of Bradwell-on-Sea in the late 1980's, being dedicated in 1987.



MEMORIAL DEDICATION IN 1987
PHOTO KEVIN BRUCE COLLECTION

Studying the memorial will analyse which squadrons had the highest attrition rate and when. This will highlight the type of work being done and relate to what is happening in the war in general. I am sure from previous research that 418 RCAF squadron will have the highest attrition rate, mostly occurring in 1942. This can be explained, the role of 418 was to carry out intruder raids when the RAF had gone from the defensive role of the Battle of Britain to offensive roles into continental Europe. Whilst this comes from research rather than gut feeling, the analysis of the details from the memorial will enable this to be proved and illustrated with charts etc.

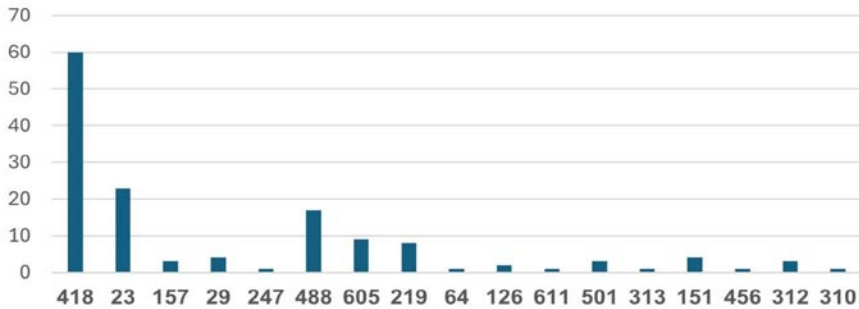
Having used a spreadsheet to analyse the data I can demonstrate that 49% of all losses from RAF Bradwell Bay happened in 1942, the base did not become operational until mid-April 1942, so not a complete year but the highest losses. The chart below illustrates this.



The first operational squadron was a Royal Canadian Air Force squadron, known as 418 RCAF. Although primarily made up of Canadian aircrew it was a mixture of British and Canadian aircrew. 23 Squadron came to Bradwell in August 1942 and left at the end of 1942. They also had a high attrition rate, in fact the squadron with the next highest losses to 418.

1944 also had 24% of losses, this includes the invasion of Normandy. In the run up to the invasion 605 were carrying out intruder operations and 418 Royal New Zealand Air Force were providing home defence as the Germans had started the 'Baby Blitz'. Both 605 and 418 moved away from Bradwell before the invasion started. 219 Squadron was operating from RAF Bradwell Bay over the invasion period, providing air support to the invasion forces.

Squadron Losses at RAF Bradwell Bay



So, my next task will involve how everyone was lost, giving the history of raids they were involved in and training incidents. Each crew person will have a brief biography which is where genealogy research will be useful.

Hopefully, a useful book will be produced. Who will be the audience? Firstly, local people, military historians, family historians and relatives of those who served.

☆ ☆ ☆

The Essex Branch of the Western Front

For further information for events in Essex see their website:

<https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/branches/united-kingdom/essex/>.

Addition to the schedule printed in the March 2025 edition 184 of THE HISTORIAN

Hatfield Peverel branch - 10th September

'The grass that blowes o'er English graves' the Great War and British visions of the Flemish landscape by Mark Connelly.

This talk will look at various plans and suggestions to maintain Flanders in an attempt to keep alive the memory of the sacrifices and losses in that land Sacred to the British.

The meeting opens at 7:30pm, for an 8pm start, in the room off the bar area at the Hatfield Peverel Village Hall. They request an entrance donation of £3.50. There is free parking on-site.

As with all of their talks they welcome all comers, not just members of the Western Front Association.

Village Hall Hatfield Peverel Maldon Road CM3 2HP.

Using Gravestones to Trace Your Ancestors

By Amanda Leedham

Book Review by Fiona Harvey (ESFH 33535)

If you've ever wandered through a churchyard, pausing to read the weathered inscriptions on gravestones, you'll appreciate that these silent sentinels offer far more than just names and dates. In her captivating new book, 'Using Gravestones to Trace Your Ancestors', Amanda Leedham invites us to look beyond the surface and discover the rich historical narratives etched in stone.

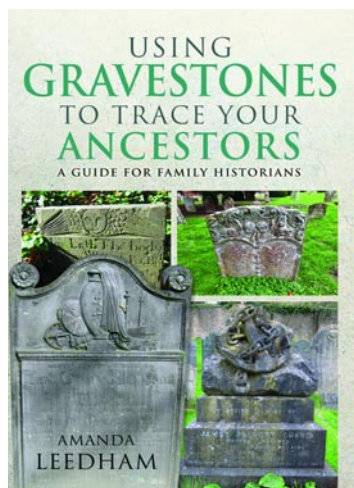
Drawing on over twenty years of experience in local and family history research, Leedham presents what she aptly terms 'living archaeology' – a method of bringing to life the stories of those long departed through careful analysis of their memorials. Structured around six thoughtfully crafted chapters, the book explores how gravestones reflect both individual identity and broader social history. Leedham guides readers to consider not just what is written but also what societal factors influenced these final testimonies. She encourages us to scrutinise the reasons behind the selection of specific words, phrases, and symbols to depict a person for future generations.

The journey begins with an analysis of gravestone styles, including carvings and language choices, before expanding into chapters covering occupations, family connections, military service, attitudes toward death, and sense of belonging. Throughout, Leedham demonstrates how these memorial details can provide crucial missing information about our ancestors' lives and deaths, potentially opening new avenues of research that official records alone might not reveal. One of the book's strengths is her use of stories to provide context for individual gravestones within their historical periods, showing how prevailing trends, beliefs, and social circumstances influenced the way people were commemorated. This approach transforms what might initially seem like simple memorials into complex historical documents worthy of deeper study.

At just 152 pages, this accessible volume packs remarkable depth, enhanced by numerous photographic examples and Leedham's skill at weaving conceptual information into engaging narratives. Her expertise shines through in a way that will inspire both newcomers to family history research and seasoned genealogists alike.

I enjoyed reading this, and for anyone seeking to enrich their family history research through this often-overlooked resource, Leedham's book offers both practical guidance and a deeper appreciation for the stories our ancestors left behind in stone.

Published by Pen & Sword Family History collections, 2025. ISBN: 9781036110611
Paperback RRP £14.99



An Unknown Family Casualty

By Geoff Syrett (ESFH 32795)

Recent accounts in the ESFH magazine about World War 1 servicemen inspired me to write the following about an unknown family casualty of that conflict. I hope you find it of interest.

The 19th August 2018 saw me, my wife and her parents setting sail from Dover for a visit to the 1st World War battlefields of Belgium and France. As my wife and her father are Australian, it was planned to start in Ypres and visit areas where there was extensive Australian activity, culminating at the Australian National Memorial in Villers Bretonneux.

I had been led to believe that my family were fortunate in not having suffered any loss during the war, therefore this trip was not, for me, intended to be a family pilgrimage.

My paternal grandfather, Arthur Syrett, was born in Artillery Street Colchester in 1893. He was an apprenticed motor engineer and joined the Army Service Corps (ASC) in 1915, whereupon he was posted to Bulford camp in Wiltshire to prepare vehicles for despatch to France. Whilst there he met his future wife, Agnes Mary Percy, and they were married on Christmas Day 1916. On demobilisation, Arthur joined the Metropolitan Police but soon transferred to the Salisbury City Force. He died in Salisbury in 1977.

After exploring Ypres we drove, via Fromelles, to the Somme basing ourselves in Arras. A couple of days were spent visiting various places including La Boisselle, Posiers, Thiepval and Beaumont Hamel. On the afternoon of the 23rd August we drove along the D919 back to Arras for the final time, before heading to Villers Bretonneux the next day for the final part of our journey. It was a poignant and thought-provoking trip.



PRIVATE ROBERT SYRETT

On our return home, I was idling through the Commonwealth War Graves website and decided to do a search for the name Syrett. Twenty names came up, but one in particular, because of the family Colchester link, caught my attention. That was private Robert Syrett of the 1st Battalion, Essex Regiment. Further investigation revealed that Robert was the 22-year-old son of Walter Syrett of 51 Bourne Road Colchester. He was my grandfather's cousin - my cousin twice removed.

I obtained a copy of the war diary of the 1st Battalion from The National Archives and it gives a very detailed account of the action when Robert was killed.

The 1st Essex were involved in the push for Cambrai in August 1918, and as part of that they were ordered to attack the German line near the villages of Achiet-le-Grand and Achiet-le-Petite. The aim was to take the strategic Arras to Amiens railway line, along which the Germans had built strong defences with machine guns every 20 yards. The advance commenced at 11.08 but soon stalled with heavy loss of life, and it was during this initial advance that Robert, along with 26 colleagues, was killed. The date was the 23rd August 1918. This attack left the left flank exposed and it wasn't until 19.30 that the line was consolidated and the advance continued. After 5 days the sector was taken with the 1st Essex suffering losses of 3 officers and 78 other ranks killed and 10 officers and 197 other ranks injured with 8 men missing.

Little did I know that 100 years later, to the day, I would be driving within 4 miles of where he was killed and 3.5 miles of where he now lies in Fonquevillers Military Cemetery.

My lack of knowledge/preparedness meant that I was unable to pay my respects on that trip. However in April 2019 we re-traced our journey with a couple of Australian friends and found Robert, at peace, with his comrades in arms.



IN MEMORY OF; PVT. L. ACKLAND, PVT. C. BINNS, SGT. F. CHESTERMAN 26, PVT. A. CLAXTON 23, PVT. C. COOK 20, PVT. E. DRAPER, PVT. F. HARPER 19, PVT. J. HOBBS 38, SGT. F. JAGGARD 35, PVT. F. JONES 25, SGT. G. KING, PVT. A. LAMBERT 29, SGT. A. LEE 26, PVT. G. LLOYD 23, SGT. A. MUNSON 33, SGT. R. NELSON 27, PVT. J. PURKISS 33, PVT. J. PUTT, PVT. E. STARKEY 19, PVT. A. SUMPTER, **PVT. R. SYRETT 22**, PVT. A. THOMPSON, PVT. S. THORN 38, PVT. G. TIMMS 18, PVT. A. WHITE, 2ND. LT. H. WHITCOMBE 32, 2ND. LT. S. WRIGHT 23.

From the Chair

It has been an extremely busy time for most of the Executive Committee since the March edition of the HISTORIAN with numerous meetings/actions regarding the new website etc. whilst dealing with lots of ongoing events. On behalf of the Society, I have to thank Jeff Porter (Data Controller) Paul Stirland (Web Manager) and the IT team, in particular for the huge amount of work they have done and the ongoing work they will need to do to get the new website up and running within the next six months.



ANDREA HEWITT

John Young decided to stand down as Data Controller handing the role to Jeff. John remains active on the IT team, and I think he deserves a special vote of thanks for ensuring thousands of transcription records have gone up online on the ESFH database.

Sadly we received the resignation of Jean-Marc Bazzoni who was our Secretary and Editor for the HISTORIAN. He has returned to full time employment, so I would like to thank him for all of the valuable work he did for us and wish him well in his new career. Our Programme Co-ordinator Meryl Rawlings has kindly offered to step-in as Secretary taking back her previous role.

I am pleased to say our former Editor Colleen Devenish has volunteered to take up the post again. In line with our risk management policy, it has been agreed that the Editor should head up a team of volunteers. Can you spare a few hours to regularly contribute to the magazine? If so, Colleen would be pleased to hear from you. I am delighted to report that we already have 4 new regular writers, Fiona, Dawn, Angela and Royston and two proof readers, David and Ron - thank you for your contribution.

I was contacted by BBC Essex asking if ESFH could help one of their Monday afternoon presenters, Akylah Rodriguez, to take a DNA test, and explain to their listeners how essential DNA testing is to today's family historians. Of course, I discussed this with the Vice-Chair Toni Neobard from our DNA Pro Team and she agreed to take on this project, as we considered that this could generate publicity for our Society. We have visited the studios twice with Toni taking part in live broadcasts. Toni soon found that Akylah had a very interesting family tree, however whilst speaking to the production team I found that both the crew had Essex family connections so I asked them if they would like to take a DNA test too and they were very happy to do so. Toni will be doing more broadcasts to discuss their results every few weeks, so listen out for us on BBC Essex!



AKYLAH RODRIQUEZ WITH TONI NEOBARD

Several of the Executive Committee attended the Suffolk Family History Show way back in April where we were pleased to meet so many members. Many of them came to say how much they were enjoying the Genetic Genealogy Course for Beginners, and the course remains very popular. (If you've missed this you can find all of the recordings on our website!).

We were invited by Peter Calver of the Lost Cousins website to take part in a virtual meeting to promote ESFH. Toni and Tanya Sewell, our Treasurer, presented a very slick and informative presentation, which many of our existing members said they found surprisingly useful. We answered various questions which had been sent in earlier, and researched by Elizabeth Cox our Research Centre Chair and Tanya. The live audience were then able to ask us questions and a useful discussion took place. We estimate at least 14 new members joined or re-joined ESFH following that meeting!

Our Society has been, and is still facing, several difficult issues, as you are no doubt aware but we are doing our best to act as professionally as we can to overcome these issues. We would not be able to do this without all the members that have supported us, or offered their assistance and continue to remain loyal to ESFH.

It has been a great boost for us to meet with so many members who have come to thank us for our efforts at live events and contacted us in other ways, it really makes all of our hard work so worthwhile. Thank you for your support.

Members have another opportunity to meet us all at the Family Fun Day on 16th August 2025 at the Galleywood Heritage Centre so bring along your family and friends.

See you there!

The Silent Sentinel

The Essex Special Constable 1914-1921

By Alan Clifford Cook

Reviewed by Martin Stallion of the Police History Society

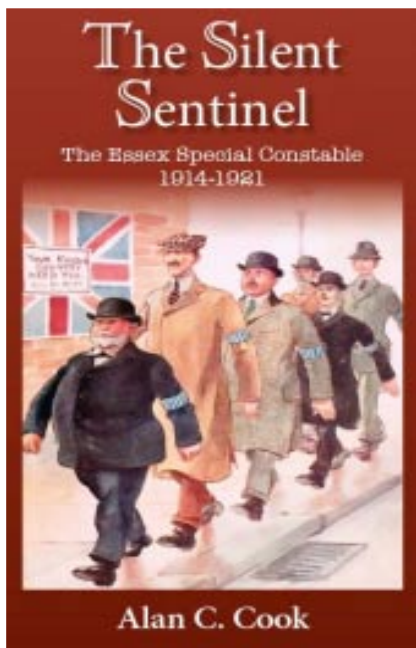
This book review was kindly brought to our attention by Fred Feather (ESFH 27366)

Following his account of Essex special constables from 1800 to 1913 (Broken heads and shattered truncheons, 2022, ISBN 978-0992817923), Alan Cook, a retired Chief Inspector, has turned his attention to the much larger and better organized force that operated during World War 1, extending that period by a few years to include the establishment and issue of the Special Constabulary long service medal.

His narrative is a straightforward chronological one, one chapter per year of the War, describing the organization of the Essex County special constabulary, their duties and the incidents they dealt with, and some anecdotes about individual officers. He then looks at the two borough forces, Colchester and Southend, and the two Metropolitan Police divisions that then bordered Essex, parts of which are now in the Essex Police area.

The final chapters cover uniform, insignia, medals and biographies of selected specials, and the book concludes with a number of appendices (statistics, documents etc).

After the start of the War, the County Constabulary had recruited up to 6,000 special constables. The Chief Constable, Captain Unett, later commented that he could have managed with only 2,000 but bizarrely made no attempt to reduce the number. This large number meant that it was difficult to supply the specials with the equipment they really needed. Theoretically, each man (there were, of course, no women specials) was supplied with a warrant card, badge, duty armband and truncheon. In practice, armbands and truncheons were sometimes in such short supply that they had to be shared. There was no question of a full uniform, except for a small number of paid, full-time specials who replaced regular officers who had joined or been recalled to the armed forces. Even caps, capes, waterproof leggings etc. had to be bought by the men themselves, or donated by local businesses.



A complex rank structure was used, with the men electing their own officers, and management of the force was in the hands of local war emergency committees, some of whose members were appointed as ex-officio specials, although they performed no actual patrol duties. Overall control was by a retired army officer, Captain Matthew Finch, who was made Assistant Chief Constable of the regular force, a controversial appointment, but he survived and got the Commander of the British Empire Medal for his efforts!

The duties undertaken included enforcement of the lighting regulations for both houses and vehicles, an unpopular task which led to numerous arguments from householders and drivers, but the specials were usually supported by the magistrates when the cases went to court. The guarding of vulnerable points such as railway bridges was abandoned and left to the military, as it was soon realised that a special armed, if he was lucky, with just a truncheon, was no match for any invading Germans or home-grown saboteurs. Air raids were another significant task and there are detailed accounts of specials taking control when two airships crash landed in the county. Any records created by individual specials have largely been lost and the work relies for its source material on committee records, official orders and newspaper reports. The author's own extensive collection of medals, badges and photographs provides most of the many illustrations. This is a monumental but very readable work of research on a group of officers whose contribution to police history is largely neglected. I do recommend it.

Hardback * 421 pages * illustrated throughout

Printed in 'Royal' size (234 x 156mm) on 115gsm silk paper to ensure the best quality reproduction.

£20 + £3.80 Royal Mail 2nd Class postage and packing to UK.

This is a heavy book and will be posted using a top-quality book wrap to ensure safe arrival.

Payment options: PayPal to **alan@truncheon.org.uk**

Bank transfer to: A C Cook 30-93-89 00489610

Cheque sent to: A C Cook 2 Toga Close Colchester CO2 9JJ

All money raised from the sale of this book is being donated to the Essex Police Museum.

☆ ☆ ☆

Catch Up on Presentations!

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

Members>Login>Activities> News and Events>Recordings

ESFH Genealogy Database

**Members>Login>Research>Database & Search
Aids>Genealogy Database**

Hungry for knowledge Essex family historians will be delighted to learn that thousands of transcription records have recently been added to the ESHF Genealogy Database.

When was the last time you checked this member resource?

Use your membership effectively and take a browse NOW at the staggering number of transcriptions recently released covering baptisms, marriage, burials, monumental inscriptions and war memorials.



Did you know you can also search on our Poor Law Index to find those vital Essex Record Office references?

Monumental Inscriptions - Corringham Cemetery

By Peter Craggs (ESFH 30979)

A few years ago, I recorded all the gravestones at St. Mary the Virgin, Corringham. This was straightforward as I had a plan of the churchyard numbering all the graves with headstones. There were only 55 monuments as many were destroyed in WW II. My finished project was submitted to the late Ray Poole, ESFH MI Manager and he printed off copies for the church, myself, Essex Record Office (ERO), and the Society of Genealogists.

With some spare time on my hands, I decided to record all the monumental inscriptions (MI's) at Corringham Cemetery, after seeing an appeal on ESFH website for a volunteer to undertake the task. I contacted John Young who sent me all the information that I would need to complete the job. I told the members of our U3A Family History Group of my plan and asked if anyone would like to assist me. Only one person, Brian McDonald, volunteered for which I am very grateful. I often walk through the cemetery as I live very close, and on one of my visits I noticed a Thurrock Council van and two people walking around the cemetery. I approached them and discovered that one of them was the Registrar for Thurrock Cemeteries. Her name is Sue Newton and she gave me her email address so that I could contact her and arrange a visit to her office to see the cemetery records.

A visit was arranged to her office at West Thurrock, close to the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge. She had what I would describe as a portfolio that an artist would carry with them to show off their work. Sue has the cemetery plans for all Thurrock Cemeteries; Corringham, Stanford le Hope, Chadwell St. Mary, Grays, and West Thurrock. The plan for Corringham is about 140cm x 100cm. I had to lay it on the floor to enable me to take a photograph of it.



The plan is on linen and dated 1930. All the burial plots are marked as an oblong box in rows A – V and 1 – 145. The plan had been made before the cemetery opened and I saw that the cemetery today is not quite the same. The 1930 plan showed a chapel, that was never built also there is only one road running north from the entrance from Fobbing Road whereas the 1930 plan shows two more roads running east and west of the main road, with three connecting roads running east-west. At the entrance on Fobbing Road in and out gates were built but one has never been opened since I moved to Corringham in 1985. From the entrance small name plaques are fixed to the curb stones with cremated remains buried behind. The family must pay for the plaque and then renew the payment every few years, otherwise the plaque is removed. There are many spaces on the curb stones, where plaques have been removed.

Sue explained to me the markings on the plan. When there was a burial, a diagonal line was drawn on the plot. When a second burial took place a second diagonal line was drawn making an 'X'. For a third burial the left side triangle was filled in, and a fourth burial meant that the whole box was filled in. You may be able to see these markings on the plan.

The pink section P – V, 1-22, has been reserved for The Evangelical Church. This church was originally for The Peculiar People, a religious sect with many churches in Essex. This church is now called Corringham Community Church. There are also two other sections coloured brown and purple; I am not sure why these areas are so coloured.

Sue also showed me the original burial registers, I would like to have booked another visit to scan the registers, but I found that they had been transcribed by Michael Town, the index is from January 1930 - February 1992. A copy of this 23-page index containing 1423 names is in ESFH library in the Essex Record Office. The burial registers are no longer used, and all burials are recorded electronically. All of the



burials are online at www.discovereverafter.com. This website has the records of many cemeteries from the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, USA, Isle of Man, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. If you enter a person's name and the country and they are in a cemetery listed it will bring up the person's name, date of death, burial date, their age and plot number.

The process of documenting all the MI's will require some time, but we are making

significant progress. Using A3 sheets of graph paper I drew up a plan of the cemetery, marking every grave plot. Using the website www.discovereverafter.com and Michael Town's index, Brian and I entered the names of every person buried in the cemetery. We have found this very useful to locate a grave number when we are working in there. We have finished row A which has many children's graves, it only goes from 1-48 as the fence between the cemetery and allotments is at an angle. There are also large open areas where burials will be in the future. Brian and I are working together on this project. We go to the cemetery and if the grave is old and difficult to read one of us will have to get up close to maybe clear weeds and earth away from the stone and read out the inscription for the other to write down. The new memorials are much clearer, so we photograph them. We then return to our homes and type up the details on to the spreadsheet. Brian then emails me his transcriptions and I copy and paste onto the master document.

There is only one Commonwealth War Graves Commission grave and that is for John Baker Clark, grave D1. John was the son of John Pullen Clark and Gladys Ann Clark née Baker. John Baker Clark served with the Royal Air Force in WWII. He served with 102 squadron as Aircraftman 1st Class (Fitter), his service number was 567489. His squadron was based at RAF Driffield, which is in the East Riding of Yorkshire. On 18th October 1939, his squadron was transporting crew and supplies from RAF Driffield to Wick in Scotland. Unfortunately, John's plane had been loaded incorrectly and it crashed and exploded on take-off. Sadly, all on board were killed. John's body was returned to Corringham where he was awarded a military funeral. John is remembered on the World War II memorial in St. Mary's Church, Corringham. I researched all the names there and at St. Michael's Church, Fobbing and published my research in The Link, the magazine of the United Benefice of Corringham and Fobbing.

It is interesting reading the inscriptions on the graves, some are very simple with a name and year of birth and death, and others with many lines of writing, showing the love that the deceased had with the family.



In Remembrance



Wendy May Cummin 1944 to 2025

Galleywood Heritage Centre

Sadly, Wendy Cummin died on 2nd January 2025 aged 80. She had been a member of the ESFH for a very long time. Visitors to the Galleywood Heritage Centre may remember her from the numerous exhibitions, talks and displays. She lived in Galleywood for over 45 years and spent a considerable amount of time researching local families including their military history.



She and her late husband John were involved with the fund raising and research for the Galleywood Heritage Centre which opened in November 2009, and she became the first Archivist. At the same time, she began a campaign for a War Memorial in Galleywood and sought donations from individuals and groups.

The erection of the memorial began on 6th April 2010 and was completed on 30th April with the Dedication Ceremony taking place on Sunday 16th May 2010 which was attended by many.

At the Galleywood Heritage Centre we hold the many booklets she produced on various aspects of Galleywood's history including the two World Wars, particularly details of the 43 casualties recorded on the memorial. Also, much information about local families.

She will be sadly missed and will be remembered particularly at our annual Remembrance Exhibitions.

Susan Wilson
Galleywood Heritage Centre

Wendy was of immense help to me when I was researching my father's ancestors from Galleywood. She will be sorely missed.

Andrea Hewitt Chair



Register of the Court of Summary Jurisdiction Sitting at Grays Thurrock Essex

Orsett Petty Sessions Jan 1885 - Aug 1885 - Name Index

Records for the Assizes are held at The National Archives Kew Ref P/O R2

Data compiled by Angela Hillier and reproduced
by courtesy of the Essex Record Office

Petty Sessions records can begin in the early 1800's though most occur in the later 1800's. They are a sort of junior court for the Quarter Sessions and are usually held weekly in front of JP's for the local district. They deal with many types of cases for, generally, fairly minor misdemeanours, but they can also be the first court to deal with far more serious matters, such as rape, which are then passed up to a higher court, like the Assizes, to deal with.

A random selection of the type of cases dealt with in this book are :- assault, bastardy, begging, cruelty to animals, desertion – family and military, drunk & disorderly, false information, furious driving, game trespass, gun without a licence, house breaking, non-payment of rates, not sending your child to school, nuisance, rape, refusing to quit (often the pub), sleeping out, stealing, vagrancy, wilful damage.

The bastardy cases may be useful as they generally give the name of the reputed father though I have seen instances where a man has been 'fitted up' by the woman as well as ones where the reputed father has tried to get another man to take the blame, so care may be needed.

The columns in the book are headed: Date (of the hearing); Number of the case; Name of the informant or complainant; Name of the defendant and age if under 16; Nature of offence or matters of complaint; Minute of adjudication (sentence); Justices adjudicating. You do not get any information or evidence given during the court proceedings.

An example of an entry:

27 Mar 1885

Page 10 cases 6 and 7

Case 6: Geo ALLEN: Thos WISBEY: Cruelty to a horse (owner): fined £2 & costs 7s

Case 7: Geo ALLEN: Wm WISBEY: Cruelty to a horse (driver): fined £1 & costs 7s

PLEASE NOTE the list is in alphabetical order of surname initial and contains only the defendant's names. The first 13 pages are indexed though the book has 33 pages and is one of a run of books which cover the period 1880-1981 in a fairly good run, though there are some gaps. I doubt you will be able to access the later books, especially the juvenile courts, but you will need to ask at the Record Office to see what is available.

NAME	PAGE/S
ASH Fredk Jas	6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
BAKER John	1
BAKER alias HOUSEGO Edward	1
BATCHELOR William	2
BARTLETT George	3
BRADD George B	4, 5
BLAKELEY John	5
BROWN George	6
BAILEY John	6
BOND Thomas	6, 7
BLOSS Henry	7
BANKS Kate	8, 11, 12
BANKS Thomas	10
BARTER H J	10, 11, 12, 13
BROWN William	11
BLACKMAN James	12, 13
BAKER George	13
CARRINGTON Geo	1
COOK Peter	1, 3
CARTER Arthur	4
COBBOLD Cornelius	4, 5
CLAXTON George	7
CORNELL Thomas	8
CLARK Elizabeth	9
CLARK James	9
COLLIER Albert	10
DANDY William	1
DRAKE James	3
DONOVAN Johanna	7
DEAN Charles	9
DAVIS or EDWARDS John	10
EDWARDS Thomas	1
EVANS James	8

NAME	PAGE/S
EDWARDS or DAVIS John	10
ELLIOT Walter	13
FULLER Daniel	3, 5, 7, 11
FINCH Samuel	5
FORDHAM Harry	6
FAIRCHILD Richard	10
FEERMAN James	11
FINCH Frederick	11
FULLER Arthur	12
GARROD James	1
GREEN William	4, 5
GREEN John	6
GALLEY Mary Ann	5
GREEN John	6
GOODE Frederick	8
GREEN George	8, 11
GRAY Alfred	11
GRIMWOOD David	12
GILBERT Thomas	12
HOUSEGO alias BAKER Edward	1
HORNSBY James	3
HORSNELL George	3, 5
HAWKES Alfred	5
HARBIT James	6
HERNBROW Wm George	6
HEELS John	7, 8
HAMMOND Albert	8
HUNN John	8
HOLLIDAY Samuel	8
HEDGES Phoebe	8
HAWKES Robert	10
HILL Albert	11
HILLS George	11, 12

NAME	PAGE/S
HARRIS Richard	12
HILLS William	13
INLOTT James Henry	7, 8
JACKSON Wm	8
JOHNSON Joseph	9
JOHNSON Henry	9
KEYS John	1, 6, 9, 10
KING George	6
KING Thomas	6
LOCKETT Samuel	3
LEE James	3
LARKING Arthurl	5
LOWE William	6
LOUGH James	7
LIVENO Elijah	10
LOWE Sarah	11
MITCHELL William	1
MARTIN Charles	1
MANN John	1, 7
MERCHANT William	2, 7, 8
MANNING John	3, 5
MAY Albert	3
MACKLIN Fanny	6
MARSH James	6
MAYS George	7, 8
NEWMAN William	6, 8
NEWBURY Henry	9
ORTEN/OATEN Herbert	3
PEGLAR John	1
PEATE Arthur	2
PIGEON Herbert	3
PAVITT John	5
PEARSON William	6

NAME	PAGE/S
PALMER Joseph	6, 7
PATRICK Thomas	7
PENNICK William	7, 8
POTTER Daniel	8
PLUMMOR William	8
PHILLIPS William	10, 13
PAYNE Robert	13
RANDELL Joseph	1
REED William	3
ROBINSON William	3
ROBINSON Charles	3
RINNETT George	8
RUFF Henry	8
RUST Mary Ann	10
REID John	13
SHIRLEY Samuel	1
SMITH William	1
SHAYSHUT/SAYSUT Frederick	1
SMITH John	1
SHAYSHUT/SAYSUT Henry	3
SCRATCHLEY Joseph	3
SAGER Frederick	3
SMITH William	3
SMITH Sarah	3
SALMON James	3
SALMON Henry	3
SMITH Robt	4
SOUTHCHURCH John	4
SAITCH Thomas	6, 7
SAUNDERS Charles	9
SMITH John	9
SMITH William	11
SMITH George	11, 12

NAME	PAGE/S
SELF William	11
SMITH William	12
SELF Eliza	13
TAYLOR George	1
THURSTON Joseph	1
TOADY James	6
THORNE Henry	7, 8
TURNER John	8
TARLING Samuel	10
THARBY Alfred	12
TWEEDY Henry	12
TUCKER Francis	13
WILCOX Charles	2
WALLS James	3
WHYBROW George	3
WILSON William	5
WEAVER Arthur	5
WILSON James	9
WISBEY Thomas	10
WISBEY William	10
WRIGHT Reuben	10
WEBB George	11
WARRON Henry	13

ORSETT PETTY SESSIONS – Jan 1885 - Aug 1885

Parishes in the Petty Sessions area were at this time, according to Kelly's directories,

Aveley, Bulphan, Chadwell St Mary, Corringham, East Tilbury, Fobbing, Grays Thurrock, Horndon on the Hill, Laindon Hills, Lt Thurrock, Mucking, North Ockendon, Orsett, Rainham, South Ockendon, Stanford le Hope, Stifford, Wennington, West Thurrock and West Tilbury.

The following cases from the whole book relate to bastardy and rape:

2 Jan 1885	Eliza BRETT – John KEEP,	bastardy, no appearance
20 Feb 1885	Eliza BRETT – John KEEP,	bastardy, adjnd to 20th Mar
20 Mar 1885	Eliza BRETT – John KEEP,	bastardy, adjnd for a week
27 Mar 1885	Eliza BRETT – John KEEP,	bastardy, order 3/6 per week from today & costs
3 Apr 1885	Rose GIBSON – Geo SMITH,	rape, remanded to 10th inst
10 Apr 1885	Rose Hannah GIBSON – Geo SMITH,	rape, committed for trial at next Assizes
15 May 1885	Elizh HORSNELL – Wm CROSIER,	bastardy, order 2/6 pw & expenses
20 May 1885	Emma EVANS – Chas WILSTED,	rape, remanded till 22nd inst
22 May 1885	Emma EVANS – Chas WILSTED,	rape, discharged
12 Jun 1885	Ellen WAITES – Jas PLOWRIGHT,	bastardy, order 2/6 pw till 13 & costs 11/6
14 Aug 1885	S. FITZGERALD – John BENSON,	bastardy, order 2/6 pw (and costs) till 13
21 Aug 1885	Susan WHEAL - Joseph VAUGHN,	bastardy, adjnd to 28th inst, 10/6 to be paid to defendants solicitor
28 Aug 1885	Susan WHEAL – Joseph VAUGHN,	bastardy, order 3/- from birth till 14 yrs & costs

☆ ☆ ☆

Historic England Launches Local Heritage Hub

<https://historicengland.org.uk>

Recently announced by Historic England every county, city district and major town in England now has its own digitised page packed with stories that bring local history to life.

Explore the places in Essex reading about hidden histories, aerial photography, listed buildings and much more.

If you have not visited this website recently it is worth exploring. You can enter your postcode and view 'listed places' in your location - including churches, mansions, mills, war time locations, workhouses etc. See photos of Essex social history scenes from medieval times through to the present day.

My Journey into Family History

By Simon Last (ESFH 10925)

My name is Simon Last and I have always had an interest in family history since my mum told me that she was adopted back in the 1980s. I was always curious about her background and in the late 1990s I offered to help her find her birth father, after she had not had much success herself.

The internet was in its early days, but I took information from the documents that mum was able to provide me and started searches on the computer to see if I could discover more details for her.

My mum was adopted through the Thomas Coram Foundation in London, which most people know as the Foundling Hospital and mum had been provided with various papers and documents over the years.

One lead was that her Polish father had had a brother who had emigrated to Canada after World War 2 - using the surname I trawled through Canadian phone directories online and found a match to whom I sent a handwritten letter in the post asking about his family and background.

Imagine my surprise ten days later when I came home from work and found a message on my answerphone from a Polish gentleman in Bristol who was asking why I was trying to locate him, after being contacted by his brother in Canada. When I spoke to him and gave him more details he confirmed that he was indeed my mum's dad and from that day on the relationship grew, my mum was reunited with him and his family and we also had a trip to Poland with him in 2008 to meet other relatives.

In 2013 mum and myself were invited back to Thomas Coram where we were interviewed and photographed by a team from the *Who Do You Think You Are?* magazine and in April that year a lovely article about my mum's family history was published.

MY MUM, HER DAD, HIS COUSIN, AND ME
IN GDANSK IN POLAND IN 2008



That research was such an amazing journey, and I knew how much it had meant to my mum to have answers about her background, that this then led me on to try and help other friends with their own family history where I could.

From this, I decided to get a qualification and undertook a Post Graduate certificate in genealogy with the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. It was a distance learning course involving many genealogy elements, but also involved researching and writing a dissertation that had a community value - as part of this I investigated and researched the World War 1 names on the Framlingham War Memorial in Suffolk, where I had grown up.

I was successful in passing my course and gaining my qualification – however, as part of my dissertation project I had run articles in the Framlingham town magazine called 'Framfare' to see if there were relatives who could provide further information or photographs of the men that I was researching on the war memorial. The Framlingham Town Council contacted me and asked if I would be interested in producing a book for them which I did and sold to raise money for the Royal British Legion.

This then led to a second book on the World War II names on the Framlingham memorial – this book was featured in a local newspaper in 2012 and following that a lady from Aldeburgh in Suffolk contacted me, whose husband was sadly ill but had started work on the World War I names on the war memorial there. She asked if I would be interested in expanding this research and producing a book in his honour, which I did, and we published it in 2014.

At this time, I was thinking of setting up my own family history business and decided to launch Charnwood Genealogy on a part time basis alongside my other job and over time enquiries increased and I decided to focus on the work full time and create a full-time business.

I joined the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (AGRA) as an Associate member and over time undertook their tests and projects to become a full AGRA member in 2016.

After working from home and in various offices, Charnwood Genealogy finally moved into its own office and shop front in Chase Road in Southend-on-Sea in September 2021. (www.chnwood-genealogy.com)

In 2022 I also became a volunteer tour guide for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and during the summer I run free tours at the Sutton Road Cemetery in Southend-on-Sea, where there are approximately three hundred graves remembering the fallen of both wars.

Charnwood Genealogy offers a unique and friendly research service for those wishing to discover more about their own family history and ancestors and I really enjoy helping others discover more.

Sadly, my mum now has Alzheimer's and no longer recognises us or remembers the adventures we had finding her father together, but I absolutely treasure those memories and thank her so much for igniting my interest in family history all those years ago.

My Take on Simon Last of Charnwood Genealogy

By Colleen Devenish Editor

We have many talented people in our Society and Simon Last is one of them. The first time I heard about him was when he gave an excellent presentation to our South East branch covering military graves in the Southend-on-Sea Cemetery.

Since then, I have met him several times at live ESFH events where he has exhibited his own research material and has helped people with their military and general family history questions. I have found him to be a calm, very approachable person and has always come over to me as a very organised researcher. Don't take my word for it - why don't you take a look at his easy to navigate website? There you can find testimonials from some of his customers plus details of the way he progresses enquiries and his hourly charge.

Simon is also an author. For those of you with Suffolk connections his previous publications will be of interest.

It is certainly worth reading his blog www.charnwoodgenealogy.wordpress.com where you can learn about the surnames he has researched from all over the UK.



I love the idea that as Simon has a shop in Chase Road, Southend-on-Sea where, after contacting him to make an appointment on 07740 600128, people can go along and meet with him. Of course, he also travels to discuss possible research projects.

So go on have a think! and if you feel it is about time you got some help with your family history research from this professional genealogist just give him a call to see if he can assist or if you are not UK based just drop him an email.

You never know he may just help you crack that 'brick wall' you have had for years!

www.charnwood-genealogy.com

Military Service Tribunals – Clacton-on-Sea 1916

By Alan Hillier

The Military Service Act 1916 brought in conscription for the first time in modern history. Tribunals were bodies formed by borough, urban district and rural district councils to hear applications for exemption from conscription into the British Army during the First World War. There were 2086 local Military Service Tribunals, with 83 County Appeal Tribunals (formed by County Councils) to hear appeals by applicants not happy with the local Tribunal decisions.

Although they are best known for their often heavy-handed attitude towards cases of conscientious objectors, most of the Tribunal's work dealt with domestic and business matters. Men could apply on the grounds of their doing work of national importance, business or domestic hardship, and medical unfitness or conscientious objection. Only around two per cent of applications were conscientious objectors. The image of the Tribunals at the time was that they were soft on these cases and harsh on those relating to domestic hardship.

By the end of June 1916 748,587 men had applied to Tribunals, over the same period 770,000 men joined the Army. Most men were given some kind of exemption, usually temporary (between a few weeks and six months) or conditional on their situation at work or home remaining serious enough to warrant their retention at home. Nationally in October 1916 1.12 million Tribunal exemption cases were pending, by May 1917 this had fallen to 780,000 exempt and 110,000 pending.

This is a list of applications to the Clacton-on-Sea Tribunal in 1916.

CLACTON TRIBUNAL 1916			
Exemption Person	Age	Occupation	Applicant
Atkins J	34	master baker of Pallister Road	own business
Barritt F		greengrocer & fruiterer	own business residing Warwick Parade
Bassy R	21	coachbuilder	father
Candler S		stockman	employer P Smith of Clay Hall
Cauler Fredk		builders plumber	Cauler & Sons
Clark Wm	21	shepherd	Sladburys Farm Gt Clacton
Cook C	40	hairdresser tobacconist confectioner	own business of Electric parade 2 businesses
Curtis A	27	horseman	employer Sladbury Farm E Giles
Danby T	35	drapers assistant residing Beach Road	employed at Colchester
Day C	23	foreman baker	employed by his father W Day

Exemption Person	Age	Occupation	Applicant
Fellows F		tobacconist residing The Grove	own business
Gibson William		assistant engineer electrician	Military Red Cross Hospital
Green Joseph		stockman	Sladburys Farm Gt Clacton E Giles
Grimwade Edward		chief assistant fish/chip shop	owner F Benson Fish/Chip shop Pier Avenue
Howlett H	26	working in bakery	employer H Bromley The Mill
King A	30	manager grocery shop	employer J Starling Grocer Beach Road
King C	33	working in bakery	employer H Bromley The Mill
Mason Fredk R		motor engineer Dorset Terrace	self own business
Mills S		motor car driver	Dr Cook
Norman C		attendant at Crosley House	F Turner secretary Essex County Asylum
Partridge	39	porter residing at 1 Hazelwood Cottages	employer G Scrivenor
Sadler Walter		horseman	S Smith of Alton Park
Sherratt L	22	switch board attendant	Council Electric Station
Smith H	20	assisted management of farm	employer P Smith of Clay Hall
Snow Archibald		butchers manager	London Central Company
Stevens E	35	clerk residing Herbert Road	Railway employee
Stock P	28	horseman	Sladburys Farm E Giles
Toft A	34	military storekeeper	employer C Blowers of Weeley
Watts F		picture frame maker t/a Williams Jnr	own business of Rosemary Road

Examples of Applications – Source: The East Coast Illustrated News newspaper dated March 1916

Mr H Bromley (baker)

Mr H Bromley of the Mill, Great Clacton asked for the exemption of two men engaged in his bakery, Charles King (33) and Horace Howlett (26) both married men with families. Mr Bromley based his claim for exemption on the facts that baking was a certified trade, that he was engaged on Government work, and that he could not continue to carry on his business if they were not allowed to remain. His son and an employee had enlisted and were now at the Front and despite repeated advertise-

ments and application to the Labour Bureaux he had been unable to secure any assistants. In order to cope with the work his men had put in an average 16 hours per day, Sundays included. Replying to the Chairman, Mr Bromley said he had been given the assistance of four soldiers, but these men were likely to be withdrawn at any time. It transpired that the Recruiting Committee had granted Charles King an exemption conditional on his remaining a baker and referred Howletts case to the Tribunal. Eventually both men were granted conditional exemptions.

Mr J S Starling (grocer)

Mr J S Starling, grocer, of Beach Road applied for the total exemption of his manager, Arthur George King, a single man of 30. Mr Starling stated King was the sole man in his employ who had a thorough knowledge of the grocery trade, his next assistant being an ex-butler recently resident in London. Since the outbreak of war he had released five assistants, who were now serving their King and country, two of whom were at the Front. Replying to the Chairman, applicant said it was impossible to get a woman to take the place of King, who was his manager and in sole charge of the establishment in his absence, which was necessarily protracted, as the position of his shop made canvassing for orders absolutely essential. The application was refused.

Mr G W Clarkson (boot maker and shoe repairer)

G W Clarkson (34) boot and shoe repairer of Essex House Old Road and Pier Avenue asked for conditional exemption, his grounds of appeal being that he supplied proportion of the trade in Clacton and district with leather, grindery, etc. that he had released two men for the Army, and only employed one man over military age in a branch shop. At his main shop he did the work single-handed – Answering questions, applicant said that in order to cope with the work, military and civil, he was compelled to rely on casual labour by men over military age. He had a wife and two children dependant on him, and also the partial support of an invalid mother – conditional exemption.

Mr W Day (baker)

Charles Richard Day (23) single Station Road employed by his father – Mr W Day as foreman baker applied for total exemption. Applicant stated on the form that he was the only eligible man employed on the premises in making bread for local consumption, under contract for the military hospital and H.M. ships in the vicinity. Mrs Day endorsed the foregoing facts, adding that her son had been in sole charge of the bakery since Easter 1914 and that her husband controlled the catering department. Temporary exemption of eight weeks was granted to enable Mr Day to find a substitute.

Note from the Editor

For those of you interested in the history of the Clacton area I can recommend the Facebook site of Clacton & District Local History Society with over 20,000 followers. Just search on Facebook for Clacton & District History Society and request to join the group. Norman Jacobs is a very active contributor.

Alan Hillier, who wrote the above article, is a regular contributor to the Facebook page of the Walton-on-the-Naze History Group. Again just search for Walton-on-the-Naze History Group and request to join their Facebook page.

All the Genealogy Gen on STEBBING

By Royston Jones (ESFH 20182)

The parish of Stebbing (pop 1466 in 2021) lies in undulating countryside between Dunmow and Braintree, about thirteen miles north of Chelmsford. For family historians it has a lot to offer. Mentioned in Domesday Book, there is also the site of a medieval castle close to the church, which is dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin. An unusual feature of St. Mary's is the stone rood screen, one of very few in Europe. In the late 13th century, the manor of Stebbing was in the hands of Douglas, who fought Edward I for Scottish independence and died in the Tower of London in 1296.

Selected summary transcriptions of the parish registers are on Ancestry and some free sites, including Family Search and FreeReg but, as ever, for completeness nothing can compare with the online subscription service on <https://www.essexarchivesonline.co.uk> (part of Essex Record Office (ERO)). There you can view images of the original baptism, marriage and burial records from 1713-1957; for later dates a visit to the archives is necessary. Transcripts and Bishops' Registers are also available at the record office.



HIGH STREET, 1930'S. THE STILL OPEN WHITE HART IS ON THE FAR RIGHT AND THE CHURCH TOWER IS VISIBLE IN THE DISTANCE. (SLHS IMAGE ARCHIVE: 142)

The Anglicans did not have a monopoly on religion in Stebbing. A Quaker meeting house was built in 1674 and registers between 1868 and 1886 can be seen at ERO in Chelmsford. A Congregational Chapel was also active in the village; some records are accessible but also require a visit to the ERO. Available for view are baptisms (from 1807), marriages (from 1838) and burials (from 1816). Earlier registers from 1793 are in The National Archives. Both buildings are still extant but used for non-religious purposes.

Some non-conformist registers can also be found on The Genealogist website and a number of digitised parish records are also available free on Family Search (baptism 1800-1866 and marriages 1800-1837).

In 1841 there were 1458 inhabitants in the village, almost exactly the same as now. Lewis and Smith were common surnames but popular among less well-known names were Linsell, Chopping, Messent and Swallow. Traditional Essex names were well represented including many Thorogoods as well as Gunn and Overall. Other names include Hawkes, widespread in Essex, Perry, Levitt, Barker and Gowers.

Family historians with possible ancestors in Stebbing should not forget to check out

the surrounding villages and hamlets, some with quirky names which include the popular Essex suffix of 'End', such as Bran End and Duck End as well as Lubber Hedges and Stebbing Green.

The 1861 census provides a good overview of the social fabric of the village in mid-century Stebbing. Agricultural labourers made up the majority of workers, including farm servants and 'workers in the fields', each denoting a subtle difference in contract and pay. There were half a dozen farmers spread around the village providing work for labourers; most of the farms were of middling size, between 80 and 130 acres. The farms were of course rented: the major landowners in the parish from about 1550 until 1901 were the Earls of Essex.



BRAN END, 1960's. (SLHS IMAGE ARCHIVE: 474)

The village had its quota of shoemakers, wheelwrights and blacksmiths as well as several shopkeepers. Slightly more unusual was a coachbuilder and two inland revenue officers, one of them retired and running the Red Lion Inn at Church End. Stebbing was on the edge of the mid-Essex straw plaiting area and there were two plaiters and two bonnet makers in the village; the once-thriving cloth industry had died out by 1800. Many of the residences in the 1861 census are specifically named.

Maps are still an underused resource for family historians. Using a period map alongside a census can often help to pinpoint an ancestor's home. It also enables one to follow the route taken by the enumerator. The free to access National Library of Scotland site offers late nineteenth century maps of Stebbing in both six inch and 25 inch OS format. There is also an invaluable feature which allows a property to be pinpointed on a Victorian map and then show exactly where it is today.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 put Stebbing and many other local small parishes in the Dunmow Union, which also became its registration district for census, birth, marriage and death documentation. The Dunmow registration area was added to Chelmsford in 1968. Stebbing elected two guardians to the Union Poor Board and no doubt quite a few villagers ended their lives in Dunmow. For more information see Tony Crompton's book published in 2014 'Undeserving Poor: the Great Dunmow Poor Law Union'. Collier's *People's History of Essex* (1861) added that there were several charities for the poor in the village including two cottages with a garden near the church, given by Robert Fuller and John Polly in 1588, and a total of nine acres of land left by benefactors. By that date the village had both a National (Anglican) school and a British (non-conformist) school open. In 1876 the new School Board opened an elementary school in Stebbing, many documents of which are held in the Essex Record Office.

The National Gazetteer 1868 (see GENUKI) provides a mid-century picture of the village:

STEBBING, a parish in the hundred of Hinckford, county Essex, 13 miles N. of Chelmsford, its post town, and 3 N.E. of Great Dunmow. The village, which is considerable, is situated on an eminence near the river Chelmer and the line of the Great Eastern railway. It is a place of ancient date, and once belonged to the Peverell and Ferrers families, who had a castle, the site of which is now marked by two artificial mounds surrounded by a moat. On the banks of the river are two mills. The surface is elevated and the soil fertile. The living is a vicarage in the diocese of Rochester, value £195. The church, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, has a spired tower and five bells. The interior contains a brass, date 1390. The parochial charities produce about £23 per annum. There are National and British schools for both sexes. The Earl of Essex and Colonel Bingham are lords of the manor. A cattle fair is held on the 10th July.*



CHURCH END, c.1910. AS WELL AS SHOWING THE PARISH CHURCH, THE IMAGE INCLUDES THE END VIEW OF SUBSTANTIAL MALTING (NOW DEMOLISHED) AND THE FORMER RED LION IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE (SLHS IMAGE ARCHIVE: 1298)

A more detailed description can be seen in Kelly's Directory 1882 (available on Ancestry) where the names Thorogood and Linsell are prominent. By then new trades included a chimney sweep and a seedsman. In a more modern note, the 1937 edition of Kelley's (also on Ancestry) has a full description of the village just prior to the Second World War including charities, postal arrangements and bus routes. The war made a big impact and, of interest to those with U.S. cousins, the huge USAAF air base of Andrews Field was close to the village.

Genealogists with an interest in Stebbing are spoilt for help.

British History Online, a free-access portal, has a copy of an Essex Architectural Survey of the village, dated 1916, with comprehensive details about the church and many properties in the village. These include the pubs, of which, over the years, there were many including the still extant White Hart as well as the King's Head, the Red Lion, the Green Man at Bran End and the Black Horse at Stebbing Green. Details of the licence holders can be found in census returns and trade directories. Essex Record Office holds on site over 3500 documents relating to Stebbing. As well as an excellent parish council website the Stebbing Local History Society is flourishing. Membership costs just £5 a year and as well as having regular public meetings has a substantial archive at <https://stebbinglhs.wordpress.com>.

Images courtesy of Stebbing Local History Society

Summaries of a Selection of Presentations given between February 2025 and May 2025

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

Catch Up on Presentations

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

Members>Login>Activities> News and Events>Recordings

South East Essex Branch Meeting

February 2025

The Cart and Wagon Shed at Shoebury

Summarised by Heather Feather (ESFH 366)

On 1st February the Branch was treated to a fascinating talk given by David Hadjicostas of the Shoebury Museum, now housed in the Cart and Wagon Shed at Shoebury.

With a lifelong career in public service in the armed forces, fire brigade and now the Coastguard, David gave us a short introduction to his origins and how he became involved in the project and then went on to the fascinating history of Shoebury in its relationship with the armed forces.

Starting with Lt. Col. Henry Shrapnel, (guess what he gave his name to) and the long history of the Shoebury Garrison as the first School of Gunnery, the first War Dog School and the first Coastal Artillery School.

Shoebury Garrison also boasts 3 Victoria Crosses, 2 of these to one recipient, and an Olympic Gold medallist in the infamous 1936 Olympics held in Berlin.

The Cart and Wagon Shed was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and has been lovingly restored with Lottery and Council funding and now forms a meeting venue, café and museum within its once open-sided span.

David told the story of how the project came about through one officer, Major Tony Hill MBE. His dogged determination not to lose anything of value when the MOD left the site was an object lesson in how to care for our heritage.

North East Essex Branch Meeting

February 2025

Summarised by Gill Peregrine (ESFH 5204)

The February 2025 meeting was our 40th anniversary of the founding of the branch. Toni Neobard (Vice Chair) gave us an extremely interesting talk on the dating of photos. She explained the details to look out for with your family photos. We also had a photo dating competition and a group of photos of our previous venues.

South East Essex Branch Meeting

March 2025

Animal Heroes

Stories of some of the animals who served during the Wars

Summarised by Heather Feather (ESFH 366)

An audience of some 50 members and visitors welcomed Paul Hounsell and his colleague Dave Belcher and their presentation of 8 pictures of animals from the Great War 1914-1919 and 8 from World War II 1939-1945. Each picture had a story. The subjects served with many countries and at the end the audience was asked to vote on the bravest.

Some of the animals were awarded the Dickin Medal which was introduced in 1943 by Maria Dickin who had founded the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) in 1917 to help the poorer people who could not afford to care for their pets during the Great War.

The Great War

Jackie, a Barbary ape who had his own 3rd South African Infantry uniform. He could hear noises before his comrades and warn them. He would salute officers and obtained the rank of Corporal and a military pension.

Warrior was a cavalry horse, who served with the British Expeditionary Force. His story was later used for the film *War Horse*. He retired to the Isle of Wight during the second war and died there. He was the recipient of the first Dickin medal. The next and most bizarre was a Leopard or Great Grey slug, with the ability to detect, early, the approach of poisonous gas across the Western Front.

Sergeant **Jimmy** was a donkey who carried food, ammunition and injured men. Sergeant **Bill** a goat, had been smuggled abroad in a soldier's bag from Canada. His contribution included eating the Canadian Army's pay roll! Sergeant **Stubby** was the American Army's Boston Bull Terrier who had been smuggled into France and also sensed the approach of gas. He was highly decorated.

Winnie the bear was brought in for the Canadians. He was named after the city of

Winnipeg, ended his days in London Zoo and was the inspiration for Winnie the Pooh. **Cher Ami**, an American carrier pigeon, survived being hunted by German hawks. It was suggested that he saved the lives of 200 American Infantrymen and was awarded a Croix de Guerre with palm.

World War II

Able Seaman in the South African Royal Navy was the rank of a Great Dane **Just Nuisance**, who stood 6'7" tall and found a way of travelling on trains alone and without paying. Two of his puppies were raffled for the war effort. He died of thrombosis after a car accident and was buried with military honours. There are naval charity walks on his birthday.

Gustav the pigeon brought back the first notification of the D-Day landings. He was awarded the Dickin Medal which is on view in the D-Day Museum in Portsmouth.

Bing was an Alsatian who was a parachutist, and at the battle of Arnhem landed in a tree. He also received the Dickin Medal and is buried in the PDSA Ilford Cemetery. Corporal **Wojtek** was a Syrian Brown Bear attached to Polish forces. He was a great carrier of heavy ammunition to our artillery forces at the Battle of Monte Casino in Italy. He spent his last years in Edinburgh Zoo.

Oscar the cat, was on three German and English warships, HMS Bismark, HMS Cossack and HMS Ark Royal and when each was sunk in battle he swam to a piece of flotsam and was rescued. Three of his nine lives! His next posting was as a mouser for the Governor of Gibraltar. He ended his life in a Belfast retirement home. His portrait is in the National Maritime Museum.

Chips was an American cross-breed dog who attacked and knocked out an Italian machine-gun post. He met General Eisenhower, (who he bit) and Winston Churchill. He was awarded both the Purple Heart and the Dickin Medal. Able Seaman **Bamse** (Teddy Bear) a Saint Bernard dog in the Norwegian Navy, enjoyed playing football. Schools closed for his funeral and there is a 17 acre forest in Cumbria named for him. There are also bronze statues in Montrose and Norway.

The audience choice of its favourite was **Chips**, an outright winner!

North East Essex Branch Meeting

March 2025

Colchester at War: Life on the Home Front (1939-1945)

A talk by Patrick Denney

Summarised by Gill Peregrine (ESFH 5204)

In March 2025 we had another interesting talk from local historian Patrick Denney. He related some of the events in Colchester during the Second World War. He told of the hardships that the people of the town suffered. This was quite revealing for those of us who were living elsewhere at the time. Especially also to those who are too young to remember the events.

South East Essex Branch Meeting**April 2025****Rayleigh Settlement Papers****A talk by David Perkins****Summarised by Carole Mulroney (ESFH 33571)**

On 5th April the South East Branch was treated to an extremely interesting talk on the often-overlooked resource of Settlement Papers.

David has recently received an award from the Society for his work at the Essex Record Office (see the cover of the March 2025 edition) and his talk covered what was involved, with an insight into the vast amount of information which can be gleaned from these papers.

The history of poor relief has been a chequered one, with responsibility passing from church, to parish, to regulated organisations and the standard of the papers varies from close knit hand written to specially printed pro forma.

But it is the wealth of information revealed about families, their work, standard of education, movements and how they were treated by parishes, which fleshes out what in other records can just be a list of names.

David has catalogued both Rayleigh and Hadleigh parishes and his catalogue will soon be available on the Essex Record Office search facility. An article about his work appeared in the March 2025 edition of the HISTORIAN.

Sadly not all of these records have survived for some parishes but where they do they are invaluable.

David's work has been impressive in this field and it is to be hoped that other researchers will pick up the challenge for other parishes throughout Essex.

North East Essex Branch Meeting**April 2025****Wills for Family History by Jackie Depelle****Summarised by Gill Peregrine (ESFH 5204)**

The meeting on 12th April was well attended for the talk on Zoom about Wills by Jackie Depelle. This was interesting as Jackie took us through the different types of wills that we might find. She showed us the hand writing through the ages; some so much easier to read than others.

In 1858 Wills had to be sent to the local probate office. Previously they were the responsibility of the church, the Ecclesiastical Courts. Jackie spoke about the wording on Wills. This is fairly standard at the beginning, which states that the person is of sound mind, even if weak in body.

Some Wills will then be very simple i.e. 'I leave everything to my wife'. This is not very helpful for family historians. However, if you are lucky the Will will be informative on the wider family and the items they are being left.

This was a very useful talk. Jackie left us a hand out on the website as well as a recording.

South East Essex Branch Meeting

May 2025

Winston Churchill - A Talk by Tony Harris

Summarised by Carole Mulroney (ESFH 33571)

The South East Branch was treated to an absolute master class in how to immerse yourself in history at its meeting on 3rd May. Tony Harris, or should I say, Winston Churchill, gave us his 'Finest Hour' in his portrayal of the life, decisions, triumphs and failures of the man voted as the Greatest Briton. He looked like, spoke like and dressed like the great wartime leader, with humour, wit, amusing anecdotes and insights into the life and times of the great war leader.

From his very salubrious beginnings as part of the prestigious Churchill family of Blenheim Palace to his schooldays at Harrow where he was not the sharpest tool in the box, through his early career in journalism in Cuba (where he developed a taste for the finest cigars and boosted the cigar trade for ever) to his unsuccessful attempts at getting into Parliament, until with success in Oldham, of all places, this chap born with the silver spoon in his mouth wowed the good people of Lancashire and joined the House as a Tory MP, later defecting to the Liberals and even later back to the Tories.

His service as First Lord of the Admiralty in the Great War was of mixed success with the disastrous Gallipoli campaign and the loss of that post and the following 'Wilderness Years'. The man with the vision who understood just what a threat Hitler was and to whom none listened until in the hour of need he stepped up to be counted. His fine words and great oratory led the country in its darkest days. The right man, with the right job, at the right time.

Following victory and his loss of the next election to Atlee he followed more gentler pursuits, like painting, only to resurge to serve once again in the 1950s. Now a very old man he became our late Queen's first Prime Minister and saw crises come and go with his dear Clemmie by his side.

Tony's portrayal of Churchill was masterful, accurate and highly entertaining. A master craftsman at work. And as he trundled off in true truculent Churchillian fashion after his performance because the room was too hot, we all felt as if Winnie had been amongst us once again.

North East Essex Branch Meeting

May 2025

Summarised by Christine Chatfield (ESFH 10754)

The meeting took place on 10th May 2025 and was a practical follow-up session to last month's meeting when we had a talk about 'Wills for Family History'. The meeting was attended by 17 members who brought their own laptops/tablets or shared with other members to research wills for themselves.

The afternoon was very successful with much discussion, and various information was found by members to research further after the meeting, including 2 wills from the 1600's. Another member brought in a copy of a will they had obtained since the talk (for a person who had died leaving no children) which interestingly included the clause that the money should be kept 'upon trust to pay the income thereof to xxxxxxxxx during her life and after her death to pay the capital to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the purpose of redeeming part of the National Debt'. Obviously a very patriotic person.

One member also advised us that it now only takes 2 weeks after probate has been granted for them to appear on the government website, and I have since found myself that these recent wills can be downloaded instantly after payment, as with certain birth and death certificates with the General Register Office (GRO).

South East Essex Branch Drop In Session

by Fred Feather (ESFH 27366)

On Saturday 31st May 2025 our South-East Branch held one of their four hour 'Drop In' sessions at Southend's Forum. Ten members, including seven researchers and three welcoming staff, worked from 10am to 2pm on a variety of family history problems for about 15 visitors,

The subjects included DNA, Indian families, English, German and Jewish family matters and various local people and events.

Many of the visitors expressed their appreciation of our research on their behalf and some expressed a likelihood of joining the Society or attending the forthcoming branch meeting in Westcliff. The branch tries to arrange sessions on a three monthly basis.

☆ ☆ ☆

Note from the Editor

www.192.com

For those of you looking for living relatives this website publishes the publicly available version of the UK Electoral Roll now known as The Open Register. This is not a free site and subscription is by a credit system.

The Open Register is an extract of the electoral register that can be purchased by any person, company, or organization and is not used for electoral purposes.

Society Information

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

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

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

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

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

Membership Rates

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

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

Further benefits of membership include:-

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

Society Information

Payment of Membership

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

Payment on Line

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

Payment by cheque

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

If renewing by cheque please send your payment to the membership secretary

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

Research Centre, Services and CDs by post

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

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

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

Society Information

President: The Lord Petre KCVO

Patron: Rt Rev Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani

Vice Presidents 2024/2025:

Ann Turner

Ann Church

Yvonne Tunstill

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

Chair: Andrea Hewitt Email: chair@esfh.org.uk

Vice Chair: Toni Neobard Email: vicechair@esfh.org.uk

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Carole Bartlett Librarian carole.bartlett@esfh.org.uk

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

Gill Peregrine Chair North-East Essex Branch

Heather Feather Representative South-East Essex Branch heather.feather@esfh.org.uk

Elizabeth Cox Chair West Essex Branch



Family Fun History Day

Featuring the *Compayne of Merrie Folke*

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Join us for a fantastic day of activities, events,
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Historical
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Prizes



10:30 AM - 3:30 PM
Sat 16th August 2025



**Galleywood Heritage
Centre CM2 8TR**



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£3 CHILDREN, £1 ADULTS (UNDER 5 FREE)

FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY'S PAST

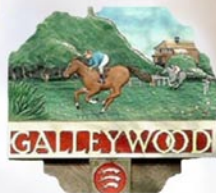


esfh.org.uk

Registered Charity 290552

galleywoodheritagecentre.org.uk

Registered Charity 1128416



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