



THE ESSEX FAMILY HISTORIAN

The Essex Society for Family History Magazine



www.esfh.org.uk

Edition No 181

March 2024

Essex Society for Family History

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

All our meetings and workshops are a mixture of online only and online and in person events. Open to all members. You will be notified by email of all events and events are posted up on the Events section of our website.

We offer Research Services (see page 57). For one-to-one help with your “brick walls” to be held at our Research Centre at the Essex Record Office and booked in advance please contact Gill Peregrine on gpesfh@gmail.com.

Membership Rates

Annual membership of the Society runs from 1st April until 31st March. For rates see table below or our website. For membership payment details please see our website or page 57.

Membership Category	Fees Payable (Paper Magazine)	Fees Payable (Electronic Magazine)
Single Member living in UK	£16.00	£8.00
Institutional Member	£18.00	£8.00
Single Member living outside UK	£25.00	£8.00

Benefits of membership include:-

- A Research Centre at Essex Record Office open on a regular basis with volunteers on duty. Bookable one-to-one meetings to help with family history.
- Access to the Members only area of the website where members can find valuable genealogical records.
- Addition of DNA (GEDmatch) kit numbers to our database allowing members to find out if other members have a connecting match.
- Receipt on a regular basis of THE ESSEX FAMILY HISTORIAN - the Society family history magazine, with the capability to download the latest issue and access an archive of back copies. Receipt of ESFH Newsletters.
- Access to a number of publications from other family history societies.
- Member Surname Interests - All members are able to update and advertise their own Surnames Interests online.
- Concessionary Subscription Rates for www.findmypast.co.uk
- Essex Gazetteer - members have access to a database which includes place names in "old Essex".
- Access, anytime, to recorded presentations.
- Access to Essex Poor Law Indexes.

The Essex Family Historian

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

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For Your Information

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CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE NOTE

Contributors are requested to limit their articles to 2000 words, other than by prior agreement with the Editor. Contributions should be sent in Microsoft Word format or plain text files (Microsoft Notepad) Graphics/photos preferably as separate JPEG files.

Alternatively written or typed articles with photographs can be sent directly to the Editor at the address above. Photographs will be returned.

Contributors should make every effort to trace and acknowledge ownership of all copyright material and secure permissions. The Editor needs to be aware of any problems with contributors acquiring copyright.

Contributors should include their ESFH membership number. The use of material is at the discretion of the Editorial team and may be used in any print and electronic media relevant to ESFH.

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The Geographical Area covered by ESFH

The area covered by ESFH is that of the old Essex county with the exception of 'London Boroughs' which are considered to be in the area of East of London FHS and Waltham Forest which is in the area of Waltham Forest FHS.

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Bolding of email addresses in this issue is to ensure that they are easy to read; they are not hyperlinked, whereas web addresses are bolded so that electronic readers may click on the link and be taken directly to that web address.

From the Editor

Having been involved in genealogy for many years and as a member of other family history societies, it came as no surprise to me when I saw that the Committee were looking for an editor! You only have to look at a lot of family history societies nowadays and you will find the same issue. I hope that stepping into Colleen's shoes (not literally!), I will continue her work in developing and making the HISTORIAN the great magazine it is and with your help continue to be so.



JEAN-MARC BAZZONI

On that note, I would like to thank Colleen for all her hard work as editor as I know it is not an easy job and can be very time consuming. Having been in the role for only a few weeks, I would also like to acknowledge the work that Ian Fulcher does as Production Manager. Ian formats and puts the magazine together and to be honest, the last few weeks have been quite stressful with so few articles in the bank so I am very grateful for all his assistance. Both Colleen and Ian are, and continue to be great supporters of our magazine.

Hopefully, you will have seen that the Committee has introduced a monthly newsletter. This goes out to members at the end of the month with details of the following month's ESFH activities and other genealogical information. I hope it is of some benefit to you. If you have a local history event happening near you then please let me know.

Suffolk FHS recently carried out an online member survey so I have met with Andy Kerridge (Chairman Suffolk FHS) as this is something that I think would greatly benefit your Committee. If we can get your views on different aspects of the Society, then we can start looking at how to take the Society forward over the next few years. Watch this space!

You will find that this latest edition of the HISTORIAN is not 92 pages. The magazine can only survive by its content so please do consider writing something for the magazine. Thank you to everyone that has submitted an article and, hopefully, we



will be able to be back to 'normal' when you receive the August 2024 edition.

PHOTO - The editor at the grave of his 2 x great granduncle, Sergeant 17089 Joseph Peck R.F.A. (1883-1917) who was killed on the eve of Passchendaele. If you have a military story then please let me know at editor@esfh.org.uk.

Forthcoming Presentations

Our talks and workshops may be subject to change so **please always check our website under the ESFH Events tab for the latest information.**

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

<p>Saturday 2nd March 2.30 pm GMT</p>	<p>Facebook for Family Historians Like it or not, Facebook is Family History in the making, so don't miss out! The talk by Valmay Young will cover: How to set up a Facebook account securely for family history purposes. The difference between profiles, groups and pages. What to share and what not to share. Examples of how Facebook can help your research. Recommended Facebook Pages and groups to follow and join.</p>	<p>Online and the ARC Harlow CM17 0AJ</p>
<p>Saturday 9th March 2.30 pm GMT</p>	<p>Genealogy and the Little Ice Age a talk by David Cooper</p>	<p>The Hythe Colchester CO1 2FG</p>
<p>Saturday 16th March 10.30 am BST</p>	<p>The Lighthouses and Lightvessels of the Essex Coast. This talk by Mark Lewis explores the history, people, events and human stories associated with the church lights, daymarks, the screwpile lighthouses at Gunfleet, Maplin Sands and Canvey Island, the lights of Harwich and the many light vessels that guarded the entrance to the River Thames. The important depots at Harwich and Trinity Buoy Wharf in Blackwall, London, where light vessels were maintained and lighthouse keepers were trained, are also discussed.</p>	<p>Online</p>
<p>Wednesday 20th March 7.30 pm BST</p>	<p>Ancestry DNA Tools & Features by Toni Neobard and Trevor Rix</p>	<p>Online</p>

Forthcoming Presentations

<p>Saturday 6th April 2.30 pm BST</p>	<p>A History of Easton Lodge – the Countess and her Gardens a talk by Gary Matthews. The talk tells the fascinating story of the historic Easton Lodge estate from the late 1500s to the present day, focusing primarily on the period since 1865, when three-year-old Frances Evelyn Maynard inherited the estate and the vast fortunes that came with it.</p>	<p>Online and the ARC Harlow CM17 0AJ</p>
<p>Saturday 13th April 2.30 pm BST</p>	<p>Parish Register Transcribing with the Committee. Come along and help with our Parish Register transcription project. We will be continuing with the transcribing of pre 1813 registers.</p>	<p>The Hythe Colchester CO1 2FG</p>
<p>Wednesday 17th April 7.30 pm BST</p>	<p>My Heritage DNA Tools & Features led by Toni Neobard and Trevor Rix</p>	<p>Online</p>
<p>Saturday 27th April 2.30 pm BST</p>	<p>Farm, Fruit, Factory and Family: The Story of Wilkin & Sons a talk by Nick Wickenden</p>	<p>Online</p>
<p>Saturday 11th May 2.30 pm BST</p>	<p>My Interesting Ancestor. Short talks by members. Come along and tell us, in no more than 5 minutes, about your most Interesting Ancestor.</p>	<p>The Hythe Colchester CO1 2FG</p>
<p>Thursday 16th May 7.30 pm BST</p>	<p>Ethnicity & DNA Communities led by Toni Neobard and Trevor Rix</p>	<p>Online</p>
<p>Saturday 13th July 2.30 pm BST</p>	<p>Parish Register Transcribing with the Committee. Come along and help with our Parish Register transcription project. We will be continuing with the transcribing of pre 1813 registers.</p>	<p>The Hythe Colchester CO1 2FG</p>
<p>Saturday 14th September 2.30 pm BST</p>	<p>AGM followed by Newspapers on the Web a talk by David Eniffer</p>	<p>The Hythe Colchester CO1 2FG</p>

Forthcoming Presentations

Saturday 12th October 2.30 pm BST	The Trials & Tribulations of Sally Arsenic a talk by Toni Neobard . Sarah Chesham lived in Clavering, Essex and became known as Sally Arsenic. She was one of the most famous female poisoners of all time. Toni tells her story and how one of her own family members fell victim to her.	Online
Saturday 9th November 2.30 pm GMT	Newspaper Research Session with the Committee. A follow up session to David Eniffer's talk in September. Bring your laptops and use the knowledge you gained from David's talk to search Newspapers online for mentions of your ancestors.	The Hythe Colchester CO1 2FG
Saturday 14th December 2.30 pm GMT	Christmas Social with the Committee .	The Hythe Colchester CO1 2FG

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We're going LIVE on Saturday 20th April 2024

2024

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PUTTING THE A.I. INTO FAMILY HISTORY

by Toni Neobard (ESFH 32898)

You may not realise it, but if you are using one of the genealogy subscription websites then you are already using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in your family history research. Ancestry has been using it, to some degree, for more than a decade, but nothing on the scale it is using it at present. For example, Ancestry now uses AI machine learning to read handwriting from historical documents. They reported in 2022 that they managed to process, transcribe and index over 150 million records from the 1950 US census in just 9 days as opposed to the 9 months it took for the 1940 US census. This year they transcribed and indexed the 1930 Canadian census in just 2 days.

We are told that these transcriptions go through a quality review, but as we know quite a few errors still get through. Despite this, I think it is still good news for us, as costs to transcribe records will be a lot less than if they were done manually, so we should reap the benefits of more records available, whilst keeping the costs of our subscriptions down. To illustrate the pace of change, Ancestry say that, over the last 25 years that they have been online, they have made available 45 billion records, but with the use of AI they expect they will have added a further 15 billion records just during 2023. This technology will hopefully open the way to more niche records being indexed.

Genealogy platforms are using AI in other ways too. Perhaps you have contacted one of the websites with a question and have used the 'Chat' option on the website. If so, you are actually engaging with a Chatbot that uses AI technology to answer your query. The technology is working behind the scenes in all kinds of other ways too, such as providing us with research hints, and suggesting what it thinks would be relevant records for us to look at.

Another big area of use for the technology is photographs. AI can be used to colourise and repair them at the click of a button. MyHeritage have their AI 'Time Machine' which creates imaginary images of a person as they may have looked at different periods in history. Their 'Deep Nostalgia' algorithm offers the ability to animate an image, although many people have said they find it a bit creepy seeing their great grandfather brought back to life.



There are other companies, such as StoryFile (<https://storyfile.com>), that offer you the chance to keep relatives 'alive' via AI. For example you can have an interactive conversation with a recently deceased relative if they were able to record a video before they passed away.

When it comes to DNA analysis the genealogy platforms are embracing AI to find

common ancestors and plug gaps in our family trees. It's used in our ethnic profiles to determine genetic communities and in some cases narrowing down a place to just a 10 mile square radius of land! Ancestry's powerful SideView algorithm uses AI, which can split your DNA matches into different parent groups, and I understand that there are plans to extend this down to grandparent level.

But there are other ways in which you can use AI yourself to enhance your family history. For example if you provide the free version of ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com>) with a transcribed will or deed you can ask it to summarise the information for you. It will return an accurate summary of all the key pieces of information in just a few seconds.

I keep detailed notes of each individual on my family history database. These notes tend to be very matter of fact and to the point, detailing all of my findings about that person. However, I can copy and paste these notes into ChatGPT and ask it to use the information to write it in an engaging and interesting way. It does just that. This is a really quick and effective way of turning your research notes into a readable family history book that other members of the family might enjoy to read. Do try it!



However, don't ask it to do any research for you. I tried it and it came back with a very plausible narrative, however almost every 'fact' was wrong. But if you feed it with information it can be very useful.

I also use the free versions of DALL-E (<https://labs.openai.com/>) and Bing Image Creator (<https://www.bing.com/images/create>) to generate images. So if I wanted say to illustrate the narrative that ChatGPT has produced from my notes about my great-grandfather I just need to give it some prompts. It might be that I want to show him travelling on a steam ship. The prompts might include the style of illustration, the year, that he was working class; as well as the type of ship. It obviously won't be a life-like image of him but you can get some amazing results.

I have seen examples where others have input an image of a person into a subscription based AI image creator and then requested that the system uses it to produce, say, a younger version of the person wearing a specific military uniform. Although it comes up with something interesting, the resulting uniform details weren't right. Undoubtedly future enhancements will mean that a perfect image is just around the corner.

Another useful free piece of software that I use is Otter.ai. I have it on my phone and it allows me to record interviews with relatives. It has the advantage that it converts the speech into a transcript for me to keep with my research notes. Now that Ancestry has a 'Memories' facility they could be uploaded there if wanted.

The jury is out on whether Artificial Intelligence in general is a good thing. But it certainly looks capable of bringing great advances for family history.

Note that the images illustrating this article were produced by Bing Image Creator.

A Worthwhile Project

by a South East Branch Project Team comprising
Linda Medcalf, Mandie Adams, Heather and Fred Feather

Sometimes, having friends with too much local knowledge can be a distinct disadvantage. On the other hand it can lead to something special. Our branch secretary, Heather, received a call one evening from a former colleague of her husband. She knew that his father had been a funeral director in Westcliff. 'Did you know', he began, 'that there is a burial ground at the rear of Nazareth House, in a London Road, Westcliff (the A13) and that McCarthy & Stone Ltd. plan to demolish the house, to replace the Buckingham Palace sized building with retirement flats'. No, she did not.

Enquiries with the Forum (library) in Southend revealed that the building had existed for well over a century as a school under the name of Milton Hall and a care home for the elderly, run by Catholic nuns.

Well, was the said burial ground to be saved? Enquiries were commenced, but the answer was not then available to us.

A discussion began with a group of members of the society meeting weekly in Southend Mencap's 'Novel Coffee Shop'. The above team came into being. Letters and telephone calls were made to Southend City Council's Heritage Officer, Southend Councillors, McCarthy & Stone and the Catholic Order that was about to sell the estate. The latter, The Sisters of Nazareth, was based in West London. The former colleague, Laurence, had been in the grounds with his father but, as a child, and remembered little about the state of it. A seven foot high brick wall prevented anyone overseeing the garden. A resourceful member owned a drone, and overflying the area located the graveyard. Mandie lived nearby and loaned a step-ladder, so that it could be seen that the site was in fine condition and would benefit from being recorded for history. This had happened already to nearly all such sites in the City, many under the tutorial of Linda Medcalf, the Branch Monumental Inscriptions specialist.

Efforts for permission to get entry to Nazareth House grounds were redoubled and persistence won, with firstly a list being supplied of those buried there from the Nazareth House Archivist. Our thanks go to the Society's Secretary for his work in obtaining this list. The Archivist did not wish the memorials to be photographed 'at this moment in time'. This gave rise to the hope that at some time in the future it would be allowed. Then came the necessary permission to meet McCarthy & Stone's Jonathan Stuart on 23rd November 2023, the date the estate would belong to his firm.



ABOUT ONE QUARTER OF THE FRONTAGE, THE CHAPEL IS ON the right.

Some important facts were established. The memorials were mostly white crosses with two names on many of them. In some cases both the nun's religious names and their family names (often of Irish origin) were known and engraved on the stones, whilst there were other graves where residents of the House were also buried there. There was a statue of Saint Joseph and graves and crosses for a Roman Catholic Bishop of Mileosis and Late Vicar Apostolic of Gibraltar, and of a known Victorian author. Their remains had originally been buried in the crypt of the building's chapel but had later been moved into the graveyard. There was also a memorial tree and plaque for the mother of Sir David Amess (Southend West's murdered Member of Parliament). She had spent her last years in the care home.

The team spent a happy couple of hours recording the wording on each memorial. One grave was hidden under a large tree, which had to be held back so that Linda could lay full length under it to record the exact wording.

It then became necessary to check our notes against the supplied list. The intention is to supply a short history of the estate, supported by the list of those buried. These can then be supplied to ESFH, The Sisters of Nazareth, McCarthy & Stone, City of Southend Council and the Forum Library at Southend on Sea.

Of the 48 memorial sites, at least two are of immediate historical interest. An obscure kerbed memorial (our number 15) is partly under a large tree and is that of Clement Scott, 1841-1904, theatre critic for the Daily Telegraph and author of a book about the area around Cromer in Norfolk entitled 'Poppyland.'

Another memorial (our numbering 38) is that of Bishop James Bellord (1846-1905), sometime Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of Gibraltar. He was an Army Chaplain, with much of his career spent ministering at Colchester Garrison. In the 1870s he served in Africa, with the army of Lord Chelmsford, the famous subject of the films 'Zulu' and 'Zulu Dawn'. After the 1879 Battle of Rorke's Drift an Artillery Cadet Lieutenant from Shoeburyness, The Prince Imperial, was stabbed to death by Zulu Warriors and it is understood that Bellord gave him the last rites of the Catholic faith. The Prince was the son of the deceased Emperor Napoleon III and the Empress Eugenie. She wrote a letter thanking Bellord. She was known in Southend for having arrived at the end of the pier by boat and then taking Artillery officers of the garrison for lunch at the Royal Hotel.



BISHOP JAMES BELLORD



Future enquiries may be made at the National Army Museum as to any further information about details of Bellord's army career.

For the Project Team this has been a most worthwhile enterprise.

From the Chair

I am delighted that Jean-Marc Bazzoni, the new Secretary of our Society, has also volunteered to take over Editorship of our magazine. As you will have read in the last edition he is a qualified genealogist, and has volunteered for numerous roles in many family history organisations.

When I say he has volunteered to become our Editor, perhaps the wording 'was press-ganged' might be more appropriate! As he was already very active in the family history world, we are very grateful that he has taken up this additional post.

I hope you all are enjoying the new Monthly Newsletters that our new Editor has also published, this has received great feedback from members! Don't forget we can't produce our Magazine or a Newsletter without articles and information from our members, so please send articles, snippets of information, humorous family history discoveries, photos etc to: editor@esfh.org.uk to ensure their future success.

In this our 50th Anniversary year it gives me great pleasure to announce that our new style Website is progressing very well. It will be easier to navigate, and should appeal to all age groups, whilst still offering all of the benefits of our growing database, for our members.

Our Events Team have a series of exciting events planned up to our actual Anniversary date in September. So look out for full details on the Website and via our Newsletters.

We are holding a live meeting at HQ - Galleywood Heritage Centre on Saturday 18 May 2024, where there will be at least one speaker (for details please see the Website). This lovely venue is understandably very expensive to hire for the numbers of members who have been coming to previous events. If this event is well attended, however we could consider holding 4 such meetings a year, but we have to be sure that a reasonable number of members and visitors are going to attend them to justify the costs incurred. So please support this and other live meetings if you can, and encourage others to come along to make this possible in the future.

Despite rising printing and postage costs we will not be increasing our membership fees, so I hope you will continue to support us, and enjoy taking part in all the exciting events we have planned for this 'Special' year!

Andrea Hewitt

Chair



ANDREA HEWITT

Marion Wilberforce - World War II Heroine

by Ken Porter (ESFH 167)

Basildon Borough Heritage Society

The British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) was formed in September 1939. The idea was for pilots, who for various reasons, such as being too old or unfit for RAF service but who were still more than capable, to pilot light aircraft. They transported mail, dispatches, medical supplies and later, flying training aircraft, fighters, bombers and flying boats from factories to front line squadrons. This enabled the release of desperately needed fully trained pilots for combat duties. They were given the nickname 'Ancient and Tattered Airmen'.

What has this to do with Marion Wilberforce? Well! Marion became one of the first of eight women to form the Women's section of the ATA in December 1939. At the time she was living with her husband Robert at their farm, 'Nevendon Manor'.

Marion was born at Boyndlie House, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire on 23 July 1902 to John Charles Mathias Ogilvie-Forbes the ninth Laird of Boyndlie and his second wife Anne Marguerite Prendergast. Marion was educated at home by a succession of French governesses and was obviously fluent in French. By the time she was fourteen she was



MARION WILBERFORCE

helping out on the estate by collecting rents from the tenants. At sixteen she was sent off to the Convent of Jesus and Mary at Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire and then in 1922 she went to Somerville College, Oxford, obtaining a diploma in agriculture in 1925, graduating the following year. While at Oxford she also took a keen interest in sport: she was accomplished in Ju-Jitsu and was a member of the University French Club and Mountaineering Club.

Marion married Robert William Francis Wilberforce who had befriended her brother David at Ampleforth College, Oxford. Robert however was not sure whether he wanted to follow a life as a priest or matrimony so to test his strength he spent six months as a monk at Ampleforth Abbey before deciding against it and at the gate waiting for him was Marion. In the meantime, while she was waiting for him, she joined a Field Sports magazine, in addition to travelling widely. In 1931 she visited Quebec, arriving back on 22 July 1932 on the "Duchess of York" just before they married on 3 September 1932. They had acquired the Essex farm 'Nevendon Manor' where she kept chickens, bred pigs and cattle. The piglets she named after her brothers, with the runt of the litter being given the name of her youngest brother Malcolm.

Having no children of her own and with her interest and experience in farming she found herself becoming involved in the work of Fairbridge Farm Schools. These were schools set up first in Australia then in Canada by Kingsley Fairbridge and his wife

Ruby. It was a charitable organisation set up to help settle orphan children into the agricultural way of life and before she was married. She travelled widely, inspecting these farm schools in Australia and Canada. She was for many years Chair of the child care committee and often had children from the school stay with her at Nevendon Manor.

Marion took up flying in 1930, encouraged by her two aviator brothers. She learned to fly at Stag Lane Aerodrome, Edgware where she gained her pilot's licence. Quite an achievement as many women at that time did not even drive motor cars.

She purchased her first aircraft, a de Havilland Cirrus Moth after investing successfully on the stock exchange. This aircraft she later replaced with a Hornet Moth. She had them registered as farm implements for tax purposes - she used them to transport livestock around. She would take a trip to Europe to visit friends for lunch and bring back chickens or the odd calf placed in bags behind her seat.

Those days instrumentation in aircraft was minimal and navigation was carried out visually. If she got lost, she would land and ask the way or read the local signposts. By the time civilian flying ceased in 1939 she had accrued 900 flying hours. So, there is no question that by the time war broke out she was a very experienced pilot.

It was because of her piloting experience that she was invited to go to Whitchurch on



THE FOUNDING ATA PILOTS AND THEIR TIGER MOTHS: LEFT TO RIGHT PAULINE GOWER, WINIFRED CROSSLEY FAIR, MARGARET CUNNISON, HON. MARGARET FAIRWEATHER, MONA FRIEDLANDER, JOAN HUGHES, GABRIELLE PATTERSON, ROSEMARY REES AND MARION WILBERFORCE.

16 December for a flight test and was chosen to become one of Pauline Gower's first eight women to join the ATA. She reported for duty at Hatfield No 5 Ferry Pool.

Pauline Gower had been a 'joy ride' pilot during the 1930s and with her partner had started one of the earliest all-women commercial flight businesses. As war approached and with 2,000 flying hours and 33,000 passengers under her belt, she looked for an opportunity to contribute to the war effort.

Even though women had tackled male tasks exceptionally well during the Great War, it was still a male dominated world so it took a lot of persuading but eventually she was granted permission in November 1940 to start up a women's section. Their salary was 20% lower than their male equivalent.



DE HAVILLAND GIPSY MOTH



DE HAVILLAND TIGER MOTH

They initially flew light training planes, such as Gipsy and Tiger Moths, from the de Havilland factory at Hatfield to training bases in Northern England and Scotland.

However, with the loss of pilots in the Battle of Britain, by the end of 1941 Marion and the others were flying Spitfires, Hurricanes and twin-engine types. She was initially First Deputy but then took over command of No. 5 Ferry Pool and in early 1943 she was transferred to No. 12 ferry pool, Cosford and took command of the second all-women pool, becoming one of only two women pool commanders in the whole of the ATA.

In 1944 she became one of only eleven women allowed to fly four-engine Lancaster and Stirling bombers. Though she would seem quite formidable at first, she was affectionately remembered as being kind and motherly to the younger girls of the ATA Ferry pool.

The first spitfire she flew was donated by the citizens of Grimsby and was named Grimsby 11.



On one occasion, she arrived at a factory to discover that there was a strike and

that the aircraft she had come to collect could not be released. She went to the workers' canteen and gave a rousing speech about the war effort; the plane was duly released.

By June 1940 there were twelve women pilots, which rose to more than 160 by the war's end. One of them was the famous trail blazing Amy Johnson who was killed in January 1941. They became known as the "ATA-girls". At the end of the war Marion had flown over 2400 hours and 100 different aircraft. She returned to her Essex farm and immersed herself into country life and peacetime flying. Characteristically she declined the offer of an MBE and like many others rarely spoke about her wartime exploits

While Marion was flying around the skies in her Spitfires her husband Robert served in 134th Field Regiment RA (TA). In his business life he was a solicitor and a partner in Travers, Smith, Braithwaite & Co a corporate law firm. He was also a descendent of William Wilberforce (1759-1833) a leading light in the abolition of slavery.

Marion was described as a 'quintessential "Attagirl" - resourceful, daring and skilled, with more than a touch of eccentricity in her makeup'. So, it is not surprising that in peacetime she was best known in aviation as someone who did what she was not supposed to do. Such as skirting the ground at two hundred feet to avoid radar, when flying a route, she should not have been on, or disrupting a NATO exercise. She also had little faith in doctors and would obtain her medicines from a vet, claiming her horse was sick.

So, there is no doubt that Marion was a very energetic person, full of life and loved adventure. Soon after moving to Nevendon Manor, she began hunting and on her return from the war she served on the Essex Union Hunt committee from 1962 to 1982, becoming the only woman master of foxhounds in the Hunt's 236-year history. She was known as a fearless and tough rider. In her seventies she fell into a ditch breaking her collar bone, she re-mounted and completed the hunt before taking herself to hospital. She only stopped hunting in her early eighties after taking another fall and breaking more bones.

In 1947 she became a co-owner of a Hornet Moth G-ADKM with her brother Neil and though the skies became more regulated, Marion continued to fly out of a field at Nevendon Manor, round the British Isles visiting friends in the same happy-go-lucky way of pre-war days. Her post war log book records her slipping in and out of European Countries to have lunch with friends in Luxembourg or listen to music at the Vienna Staatsoper. She took particular pleasure in taking her sister-in-law to Paris to pick up Molyneux culture. On one occasion in May 1949, she set off to visit her brother Neil who was then an air attaché in Moscow. She travelled via Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Stockholm, arriving in Helsinki two days later on the 7 May. To her annoyance she had to leave the aircraft there and go by other means to Moscow. She acquired another Hornet Moth G-AEZG in 1964 and continued her adventures flying until the age of eighty and would have probably continued but for the fact she became disenchanted by all the rules and regulations imposed on the private pilot.

They sold Nevendon Manor in 1971 and moved into a Georgian house in nearby

Ramsden Heath called Foxes. Marion's aircraft during her time here was housed at Stapleford Abbots airfield.

Her husband Robert died in December 1984 so she returned to her family home at Boyndlie to live with her brother Malcolm. Though the house was in a state of decay, gardens overgrown and the family chapel derelict they lived happily amongst the decay.

As one would expect she became impatient with physical frailties and refused to wear a hearing aid. She spent her last few months in Stratford Park Nursing Home, Stroud, where she died on the 17 December 1995 at the age of 93. Though she was cremated at Stroud, her ashes were interred at Markington Roman Catholic Church, Harrogate, Yorkshire, near the Wilberforce home.

It is no surprise that Marion took up flying - she really did not have much choice. Her younger brother Neil born 12 December 1900 was commissioned as a Pilot Officer on 1 November 1922 being promoted to Flying Officer on 1 May 1923. He had a long and distinguished career with the Royal Air Force, was awarded the O.B.E. and at his own request retired retaining the rank of Air Vice Marshal on 5 July 1952.

Running a home, a farm, flying, hunting and charity work (Fairbridge Farm Schools) - What a lady and a Basildon one at that!

Appendix 1

The following is an extract from internet web site 'WordPress': -

'When I was learning to fly at Ipswich Airport in the early 1980s, I can remember an elderly lady flying into the field in an immaculate vintage de Havilland Hornet Moth. She used to come for checks on her flying skills, and also to practice aerobatics in a Cessna 150 Aerobat.

The instructor who flew with her, said she had been a ferry pilot during World War 11 and was one of the best pilots he'd ever sat with.

Searching through the Air Transport Auxiliary, I found this page, which talks about the first eight women pilots of the organisation. This is one of the eight.

Marion Wilberforce

Marion Wilberforce was an experienced pilot in the 1930s, flying her own Gypsy Moth. In the ATA she rose to become Deputy Commander of the No. 5 Ferry Pool at Hatfield and later became Commander of the No. 2 Ferry Pool at Cosford. She served the full 5 years until the ATA was disbanded. After the war she purchased a Hornet Moth and continued flying until she was 80. She died at age 93, in July 1996.

I'm absolutely sure, that the pilot was Marion Wilberforce and she was doing aerobatics at an age of almost 80!

Appendix 2

This is about a very remarkable Lady Marion Ogilvie-Forbes. Born in 1902, daughter of the 9th Laird of Boyndlie. She grew up loving the countryside and horses. One of

seven children she wanted to emulate two of her brothers who had become aviators. So, she worked and worked and eventually obtained her private Pilot's licence and by playing the Stock Market as her uncle Prendegast had taught her she bought her first aircraft – a de Havilland Cirrus Moth, and later, a de Havilland Hornet Moth.



DE HAVILLAND CIRRUS MOTH

As the 1930s advanced with war being declared in 1939, a small group of Ladies who could fly were required to be flight tested. Eight were selected – They were the beginning of the ATA – The Air Transport Auxiliary – Marion Wilberforce (married name) was one of these intrepid ladies. By 1943 she had become Commander of the No. 12 Ferry pool at Cosford. One of the only two women pool commanders in the whole of the ATA.

The contribution to the war by these brave women was enormous. Their hazardous task was to ferry all types of aircraft from factories or dispatch points to the airfields and operation stations where they were needed. She flew many aircraft - Spitfires, Hurricanes, Lancaster Bombers, Wellington Bombers and Mosquitoes – on some days she would ferry as many as four different planes from one aerodrome to another, sometimes beyond our shores.

The original male prejudice encountered soon changed to respect and admiration for ATA and the service given to aviation in the war. Marion herself was very private and modest, declining publicity and the MBE.

In peacetime she and husband Robert Wilberforce (a descendant of William Wilberforce) lived at Nevendon Manor in Essex. They farmed poultry, pigs and Dexter cattle.

However, her beloved Hornet Moth was very much still part of her life. Kept in a barn in one of the fields she would regularly take off on jaunts - Paris, lunch in Luxembourg, The Opera in Vienna, friends in Scotland, and Ireland. In that little plane she always had a dinghy in case she came down over water.



DEXTER CATTLE



DE HAVILLAND HORNET MOTH

She also rode fearlessly with the Essex hounds becoming the only Essex Woman Master of Hounds.

In the early 1970s she reluctantly decided to sell Nevendon Manor, after her husband was almost blind and being very tall the low Tudor beams had become a difficult for him. They moved to a Georgian house, four miles away – Before putting the house on the market she discussed things with friends in the hunting fraternity – Hoping one of them would buy it. A very dear friend of ours who rode with the Union decided to view and wanted Bill (my husband) to go with him to see its condition and what work would need to be done. They arrived with torches on a cold dark November afternoon. With each step Roy (our friend) became more daunted, Gaps in floorboards – crooked floors – beams – great brick inglenooks. No way would he bring his family there. Bill though knew, with each step how beautiful and unspoilt it was and how he and I would love it. Despite the superb modern house, he had built for us on a side of a hill, we must try for the Manor.

So, Roy phoned Lady Marion and told her his friend would not buy, but he knew someone who might. She was not happy; Mr. Marven (my husband) might ride but he did not hunt! A property developer as well! Despite assurances that his main business interest was to conserve old and listed properties No! No!

As a last result the phone was thrust into my hand. I could only speak of what I knew. How the house could make a superb setting for my collection of 18th and 19th century costumes, textiles and dolls, and for the visitors who came to learn about them. “Silence!” Then “Very well, tell Mr. Marven to contact my agent in the morning.” And the phone was put down.

So, that was it – A wonderful home and a wonderful friend became part of our lives. She would visit often. Sometimes on horseback, sometimes with friends. They were such interesting people. Ladies in waiting, diplomat’s wives, one never knew who would arrive, but best of all! knowing Bill’s interest in flying she took us both to see her beloved Hornet Moth. In her early eighties she still flew and kept it at Stapleford Abbots airfield. She insisted Bill flew with her, off they went and after a long time

they landed back safely, turning to me she insisted that I too must fly as well. So, I did in this little two-seater plane over half of Essex and under her instruction took the controls for a little while – I never forgot it.

Until she retired from flying, she would often fly over Nevendon – Tipping her wings in salute if we were in the grounds.

So – such wonderful memories! She was admired and loved by all who knew her - a great horsewoman and a very great flyer.

Mrs. Marven

Appendix 3

Nevendon Manor – South Essex

Is a 16th Century, Grade II listed building and was previously known as Broomfords Manor, dating back to at least the early 15th Century? There are the remains of a moat.



NEVENDON MANOR

Markington Hall – North Yorkshire

The family home of the Wilberforce family since 1731. The current Grade II* listed building was built in

approximately 1410 with two wings added in 17th and 18th centuries. A previous hall on the site was built between 1285 and 1309.

Boyndlie House – North Aberdeenshire

The family estate of the Ogilvie-Forbes family. The house was built in 1814 and Grade listed C(s)

Appendix 4

The following article is by Graham Watts of the Women's Commemoration Committee that appeared in the Essex Life Magazine August 2023.

MARION WILBERFORCE – THE "ATA-GIRL" AIR ACE

If you lived in Basildon anytime from 1932 - 1971 you might have been treated to the sight of a female pilot taking off from Nevendon Manor in Wickford, on her way to visit the opera in Vienna or perhaps landing with a calf in the back of her aeroplane that she'd purchased in Hungary for her farm. You might have even spotted her at Ipswich Airport where, into her 80s, she was still performing aerobatics. This was Marion Wilberforce who, far from being an eccentric old lady, was a genuine Essex war hero.

Marion took to the air in 1930 and achieved her pilot's license in an age when most women didn't even drive cars. By the time civilian flights ceased at the start of WW2 she had accrued 900 flying hours. The British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) had been formed in September 1939 for men, unfit for operational service but still functional flyers, to take on vital tasks such as transporting mail, dispatches, and medical supplies. This enabled the release of desperately needed fully trained pilots for combat duties. It was joked that ATA stood for 'Ancient and Tattered Airmen.'

In November 1940, after much debate, permission was given to start up a women's section of just 8 female aviators two of whom – Joan Hughes and Marion Wilberforce – were from Essex.

By 1943, Marion was Commander of the all-female Ferry Pool at RAF Cosford (near Telford,) one of only two women Commanders in the whole Air Transport Auxiliary which by then boasted 1,152 male and 168 female pilots. She flew over 100 different aircraft including Spitfires, Hurricanes, Mosquitos, and Lancaster, Halifax, and Wellington bombers.

Working 13-day shifts, the "Attagirls" (now dubbed "Anything To Anywhere") would ferry newly manufactured aircraft to front line squadrons and airbases. These were by no means easy missions. Such was the heavy workload that Marion's flying hours increased by a further 1800 in just 3 years. All the more remarkable when you consider that the women were never trained in the use of radio (male fighter pilots being the priority) and had to rely on a map, a watch, and a compass!

The risks were enormous flying planes that had been constructed so swiftly. 1 in 10 ATA women lost their lives during the war; a statistic you don't often hear quoted. These included the famous Amy Johnson, the first woman to fly solo from London to Australia. Their importance to the war effort was so valuable that they were eventually awarded financial parity with their male colleagues which made the ATA one of the first equal opportunity employers in Britain.

At the end of the war Marion returned to Nevendon Manor, retaining the same single mindedness that had made her such a successful maverick within the ATA. She continued to fly, using just a map as she was used to, and often skirted at 200 feet so that she was under the radar. This got her into hot water as she accidentally strayed into Soviet airspace and was shot at by the Red Army.

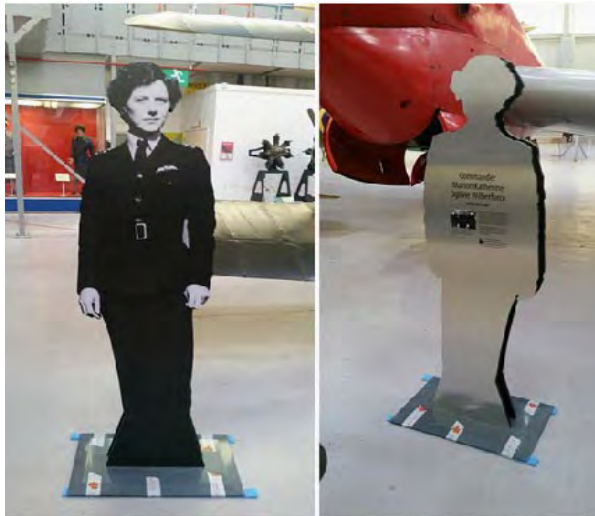
When Marion wasn't sure of her route she would simply land in a field and ask the way. One farmer objected to this and angrily protested "You can't land here!" to which Marion replied "I already have done I'm afraid."

Although offered an MBE, this was declined along with many requests for interviews regarding her service career. Joy Goodenough, who cared for Marion during her final years in a Nursing Home, explains: "She disliked publicity intensely and could not understand being interviewed about simply doing one's duty. She was in her early 90s by the time I knew her and would greet me in the morning by opening one eye and enquiring "Darling am I dead yet?"

Marion Wilberforce passed away on 17 December 1995, aged 93.



UNVEILED ON 9TH AUGUST BY MAGGIE APPLETON MBE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE RAF MUSEUM AT NEVENDON MANOR.



RAF MUSEUM

Celebrating The City Of Southend

by David C. Rayment

A book review by Heather Feather (ESFH 366)

The late Member of Parliament for Southend West, Sir David Amess campaigned endlessly for Southend on Sea to be granted city status. A few days after his tragic murder in October 2021 Her Majesty, the late Queen Elizabeth II bestowed that honour on the town in his memory, and the then Prince Charles attended the official ceremony in March 2022. This is a story of that city.

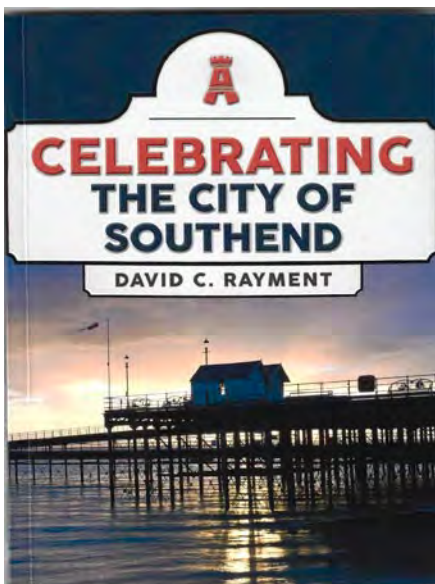
Over the last 200 or more years the town has grown from a few fishermen's houses at the 'South End' of the ancient parish of Prittlewell to the city which, on a map, is a long rectangle bordered by the River Thames on the south side.

The chapters of this book cover the development of the town, famous visitors, local transport, the parks, of course the pier and Adventure Island which brings in day-trippers in the summer and at weekends, much as the Kursaal, which is now closed,

did in the 20th century.

Many of the pages are illustrated with a colour photograph, the majority modern views of the city. This book would interest those who have always known Southend-on-Sea but wish to learn more about it. It's the sort of book you can dip into and think 'I didn't know that!' An interesting read!

☆ ☆ ☆



Wills Petition

Do not allow original wills to be destroyed after 25 years

On the 15 December 2023, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) issued a consultation document on the Storage and Retention of Original Will Documents. Their proposal is to digitise all post-1858 Wills and then destroy most of the originals.

For more information:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions> - under 'All petitions' search for 'wills' and you'll find 'Do not allow original wills to be destroyed after 25 years.'

REMEMBERED WITH HONOUR

Herbert George Columbine V.C.

28 November 1893 - 22 March 1918

Private 50720 9th Squadron Machine Gun Corps

by Jean-Marc Bazzoni (3529)

As the new editor I thought I would do a little research and write a short piece about a local hero, Herbert Columbine, V.C. of Walton-on-the-Naze.

As a family historian I know that, although the internet is a marvellous tool and we can find all sorts of things at the touch of a few buttons, not everything is online! I know, unbelievable isn't it! This is particularly pertinent when using newspapers for research.

Using the British Newspaper Archive, I found some information around the circumstances of how Herbert's brave action led to him being awarded The Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious decoration of the British honours system. However, I found additional information in The East Essex Advertiser and Clacton News which is not online but recorded on microfilm in one of the local libraries. Sitting there placing the microfilm onto the spools took me back a few years. A flashback moment of when, in the late 1970s, I would go to St Catherine's House at 8.30am to look at those big heavy BMD registers before rushing round to the census office at the Public Record Office (PRO) in Portugal Street to queue up to look at the census on microfilm. Do you remember first having to search those census books and then find the microfilm number? Those were the days. Anyway I digress ...



HERBERT GEORGE COLUMBINE
VC

On 22 March 1918, the day after the opening of the German Spring offensive, Private Herbert George Columbine was part of a machine-gun crew in an exposed position in Hervilly Wood, east of Hervilly, north-west of St Quentin. His citation reads:

*'For most conspicuous bravery and self-sacrifice displayed, when, owing to casualties, Pte. Columbine took over command of a gun and kept it firing from 9 a.m. till 1 p.m. in an isolated position with no wire in front. During this time wave after wave of the enemy failed to get up to him. Owing to his being attacked by a low-flying aeroplane the enemy at last gained a strong footing in the trench on either side. The position being untenable he ordered the two remaining men to get away, and, though being bombed from either side, kept his gun firing and inflicting tremendous losses. He was eventually killed by a bomb which blew up him and his gun. He showed throughout the highest valour, determination and self-sacrifice.'*¹

Full Story of Pte. H.G. Columbine's Fight to the Death

It has fallen to the lot of Walton to have brought home to it the reflected glory of the greatest honour which can be bestowed upon a British soldier - the award of the Victoria Cross - a fact which will stand out pre-eminently in local history in the years to come, when the Great War will be as a hideous nightmare in the dim memory of the aged and but an awesome tale to the future generations. Such an honour in itself brings joy not only to those immediately concerned with the hero who wins it, but to all around, but in this case there is, alas! that element of sorrow which comes from the fulfilment to the letter of the beautiful parallel - that greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friend. Only in such case can there be the happy thought in the memory of those near and dear to the hero in life, that in dying he was an example to his comrades and his fellows in the wider sphere - brave as well as disciplined, and fearful of nothing but that his failure against terrible odds should encompass the defeat and those around who, by his gallant stand, were able to secure their position.

The actual incident for which the Victoria Cross was awarded is graphically described in a letter which is sent by an eye-witness, Dr. P.G.C. Atkinson, the text of which we produce below, but before proceeding to that narration it may be of some interest to add a few personal details of the deceased soldier, afforded by his widow - and, alas! now sonless, mother, for he was her only child.

THE DEAD HERO

Pte. Herbert George Columbine was not a native of Walton, having come to the town in 1905 to take up a position on the Walton Pier in the service of the Coast Development Corporation, and under the piermastership of Mr. H.A. Wightman. He came from the neighbourhood of London, where up to the time of the South African War his father had carried on business as a furniture dealer. His father was in the Army Reserve at that time, and on the outbreak of the South African campaign he was recalled to the Colours; he proceeded to the scene of action in December, 1899, and received a mortal wound in the following July - four months after his time had expired as a reservist, and to Mrs. Columbine a treasured possession is his medal with three battle bars.

Young Columbine had been educated at Melvin-road School, Anerley, close to Sydenham, and was a most promising pupil, so forward with his education that he passed through the several standards before he reached the age of leaving. Thus he did not continue school after coming to Walton, but proceeded straight to his work on the pier.

In Walton he made many friends, possessing a pleasing personality, though he was a steady reserved lad, and strongly devoted to his home and mother. He remained at the pier about six years, when he elected to follow a military career, joining the 19th Hussars seven years ago.

It was with this regiment that he proceeded to France on August 10th, 1914 and from then onward participated in many of the important engagements. He was wounded in the very early days of the struggle, and was sent for treatment to England. The wound was in the arm and became a serious matter as poisoning supervened, but, thanks

to the skill of the surgeons and an excellent constitution, the limb was saved and he recovered, to return to the fighting in January, 1915.

He was in France for the remainder of his service, being in the thick of the fighting all the way through until the fateful March 22nd, when he was called upon to perform that sacrifice which he crowned with the glory of splendid heroism.

For the last two years he was a member of the machine-gun corps, and the highest testimony has come to hand of his fine soldierly qualities, patience and generosity, and, indeed, the possession of all those elements which command the respect of officers and the love of comrades.

EYE-WITNESS'S STORY OF THE LAST GREAT STAND

The letter to which we have made reference above, is as follows:-

"Nothing I have seen or heard of could be finer than the heroism of this soldier. The enemy attacked suddenly in great force. They made considerable headway, and from 'vantage ground on either side they started to enfilade our trenches, causing very severe casualties among the men. Part of our defence system included a machine-gun post somewhat in advance of the main trench. The men working this were all knocked out. Running the gauntlet of very heavy fire, Pte. Columbine rushed forward and took charge of this gun. He was followed by some comrades, and in spite of the fact that the whole of the enemy machine-guns in the immediate neighbourhood concentrated their heaviest fire against the post, which was almost unprotected by any of the devices commonly used, Columbine kept the machine-gun going for over four hours. All that time the enemy had been working round the position with strong forces, and actually had the post cut on save for one narrow gap, by which it was still possible to communicate with the main position. For the whole of the time, save when he went across the fire-swept ground to bring ammunition, the brave chap remained at his post, and despite, repeated rushes, he kept the enemy at bay."

"In the course of the fight a German officer appeared and repeatedly urged his men to the attack on the isolated post, but every rush of the Germans was stopped in a few yards by the deadly fire from this brave gunner, who was actually wounded, but continued to work his gun in spite of that. Early in the afternoon it became obvious that the position was hopeless, and Columbine told the only two unwounded comrades left that it was folly for them to remain there. 'Save yourselves; I'll carry on,' was what he said. They were reluctant to go, but he insisted, and in the end they came to see the force of his contention that there was no point in sacrificing three lives where one was enough. He shouted a few words of farewell, and that was the last his comrades heard from him. From where we lay we could see the fight going on, the swarms of grey-blue infantry around the position, the machine-gun, manned by the wounded hero, spitting out death. In the course of the hour, from noon to one, the enemy made eight attempts to rush the post. Each one was brought to a standstill. Therefore new tactics were necessary."

"Retiring to their positions the enemy concentrated heavy rifle and machine-gun fire on the hero and his gun. At the same time a number of hostile aeroplanes appeared overhead. They were promptly engaged by our machines, but one detached itself

*from the fighting group and came down to about one hundred feet or so above the machine-gun position, circling about for a few seconds like a great vulture ready to pounce on its prey. We saw Columbine elevate his gun to attack this new enemy. A bomb was launched from the aeroplane, and there was a sharp report, gun and gunner being blown up. The heroic fight of Columbine was not without its value, for the way in which he delayed the enemy attack gave us time to consolidate our position in the immediate neighbourhood, and when the enemy attacked they found that the four hours stand made by this one man had put the German plans hopelessly out of gear so far as the capture of that series of positions was concerned. The comrades of the dead speak highly of him."*²

It's not clear but either on Thursday 9 or 16 May 1918, Walton Urban District Council held an extraordinary meeting where they discussed what steps should be taken in the erection of a lasting memorial to the heroism of the late Pte. H. G. Columbine, V.C. At the same meeting the Chairman read out letters that they had received, one of these was from a doctor who saw the incident, (recorded above) but another that had since been received by Mrs. Columbine, was from Pte. F. H. Burke:

'On Active Service with the British Expeditionary Force. 20 April 1918.

Dear Mrs Columbine,

I do hope that you will excuse me for taking the liberty of writing to you. But I feel that I must write to you to sympathise with you for the terrible loss of your son, and to tell you how bravely he died. As I am the only one who got away alive, I feel sure that you would like me to tell you about it.

I am a very poor hand at writing but if it were possible for anyone else to see and feel as I do, they would understand how I feel about your son. He was the bravest man I have ever seen in my life and no man on earth could possibly have given his life more nobly and bravely than he did, he never thought once of retiring when the others were doing so, and, if he chosen, he could have got away. But we had lost both the officer and Sgt in charge of us and no one else left to give us orders so he stayed.

Well this is just what happened. He was No 1 on one gun and I was No 1 on the other, we were both in the same section and we were ordered to take up a certain position with our guns and gun teams which consisted of 5 men on each gun, we were given to understand that there were some of our own troops in front of us.

This however, was unfortunately not so, for, at about 8.30am we espied the Germans advancing to attack our trench; it is to be noted that we had no artillery support whatever. Bert saw them before I did and he shouted to me and we both opened fire and were able to hold them until about 1.30 although in front of Bert's gun there was no wire; I had wire in front of mine so I had a better chance than he.

We lost our Sgt in the first rush and our officer was killed shortly after. Just after 1 o'clock we were repeatedly attacked by low flying aeroplanes which fired machine guns at us and the Germans also attacked at the same time. Bert sang out to me that we would stick it as long as our ammunition lasted and I agreed to do so. About 1.30 they made a very strong attack against us, and, as your son had no wire in front of him

they were able to gain a strong footing in his trench on each side of him; I managed to check them, helped considerably by the wire round me.

Bert's position being now quite hopeless, he sent away the only two men who were left alive with him, both these men were severely wounded in getting away.

When I had, by continuous firing, somewhat checked the attack in front of my immediate position, I looked round to see how things were faring with your son. With the exception of a few yards in front of his gun, he was absolutely surrounded with Germans. He was firing furiously and inflicting terrible losses among the oncoming enemy and there were piles of dead and wounded all around him and in front, he kept right on working his gun until, suddenly, the inevitable happened, a bomb exploded with terrific force right in front of him and blew up both Bert and his gun. Mad with rage at the death of my dearly loved pal, I swung my machine gun round and rapidly fired the remainder of my ammunition into the masses of Germans around him, and under cover of this temporary check, managed by great good fortune, to get clear away.

Oh! You have reason to be proud of your son dear Mrs Columbine, a braver man never lived than he, I could not have stopped there had it not been for his example. Through sticking there I have been awarded a bar to my DCM. I have just told what happened regarding your dear son and he has been recommended for the VC, and if ever a man on this earth deserved it, he did, he refused to retire when he might have done so and by his devotion to duty and his example to the rest of us, he was the means of holding up a large number of the enemy for about six hours and he died like a brave gunner should, with his gun and his face toward the enemy.

Words fail me dear Mrs Columbine, to express the sorrow I feel for you in your terrible loss. I, too miss him, for he was my friend, but he left us an example which I for one, will never forget. I have a wallet with a letter and a post card that belonged to him, these I will send on to you.

I remain, yours sincerely, F. H. Burke.¹³

By the beginning of June 1918, Mrs. Columbine had received a further two letters:

A Letter from the King

Mrs. Columbine, mother of the deceased hero, Pte. H.G. Columbine, V.C. has recently received the following letter from His Majesty the King: *"It is a matter of sincere regret to me that the death of No. 50720, Pte. Herbert George Columbine, 9th Squadron, Machine Gun Corps, deprived me of the pride of personally conferring upon him the Victoria Cross, the greatest duty. (Signed) George R.I."* In a letter from the Military Assistant Secretary of the War Office, with which the above letter was enclosed, Mrs. Columbine is desired to acquaint the writer with her wish as to whether she would desire to attend at Buckingham Palace to receive the Victoria Cross, or whether it should be transmitted to her, and Mrs. Columbine has elected to receive the personal presentation by his Majesty.

The second letter was from the Captain commanding the M.G Squadron as follows: *"The news reached this brigade last night that the King has the pleasure of granting your son the Victoria Cross. He nobly earned the honour for his bravery and*

*determination on March 22nd are beyond all words. This is the only V.C. which this brigade has had - in fact I think it is the only one this Division has had. I had a full parade of the squadron this morning to read out the account of his action and also the letter of congratulation which we received from the General on behalf of the whole brigade on the bestowal of this very distinguished honour.*⁷⁴



THE VICTORIA CROSS PRESENTED TO H G COLUMBINE

On 22 June 1918, Mrs. Columbine attended Buckingham Palace where she received the Victoria Cross from George V. Although I found a number of very short articles recording the event, the following one I felt warranted recording here so that we could all sit back and imagine the scene ...

"The King's handshake puts heart into one, I can tell you," said a young hero leaving Buckingham Palace after the Investiture yesterday morning. He had received the Military Cross - and he was really trying to divert the attention of his adoring women folk from his honours.

"He looks straight into your eyes and grabs your hand firmly," he expatiated, "and makes you feel he is interested in you personally when he says he is glad you received the decoration."

The proudest women in London were seated in the quadrangle of the Palace. They were the wives, mothers, sisters, and sweethearts of the 300 heroes, old and young, who were honoured by the King.

Some of the heroes were grey-haired and lined, some were slim boys, some had pale faces, a little pain-drawn, and walked with crutches or had one arm in a sling or a head bandage protruding from the cap.

They all had one quality in common - modesty - which made them want to get quietly away after they had received their medal, and they might have been able to do this but for the pride of the women accompanying them, whose beaming faces revealed to photographers and curiosity seekers, even when medals were hidden, that these men were among the heroes.

Clouds of dust whirled about by a cold wind almost hid the investiture proceedings from the crowds of men, women, and children who gathered outside the palace gates about 9.30 and were admitted at 10.15. But there was plenty of enthusiasm, even if hearing and seeing were difficult. The King, attended by Sir Derek Keppel, Sir Douglas Dawson, and Major Seymour, was greeted with a burst of applause, and every time a tale of heroism was read out and a medal presented the applause drowned out the music of the band, which played at the back of the quadrangle.

Dozens of little children in charge of teachers or nurses were in the crowd which came to honour Britain's heroes. There were very old men and women as well. There were Australian and Canadian soldiers and nurses, a large group of rollicking sailor boys, a number of American officers, and numbers of pretty girls, many of whom had brought stools to stand on and gaze over the heads of the crowds.

Perhaps the greatest applause was for Sister Kate Maxey, of the Territorial Nursing Service, who has been on duty since the beginning of the war and shown great presence of mind and endurance in danger. On her the King bestowed the Royal Red Cross - First Class - and the Military Medal.

A great number of matrons and nurses of Queen Alexandra Imperial Nursing Service Reserve and sections of the Territorial Nursing Service, British Red Cross, and Voluntary Aid Detachment received the Royal Red Cross, Second Class.

Lieutenant-Colonel George Pearkes, of the Canadian Mounted Rifles (Services) received the Victoria Cross and the Military Cross, and Sergeant John Carmichael, North Staffordshire Regiment; Private Jack Counter, King's Liverpool Regiment; and Gunner Charles Stone, Royal Field Artillery, received the Victoria Cross, which was also given to the nearest of kin of Private Herbert G. Columbine, M.G.C., and Seaman John H. Carless.

The two mothers of these young heroes received the V.C.s with moist eyes and brave bright smiles.

Vice-Admiral Roger Keyes the hero of Zeebrugge, who received the K.C.B. a short time ago, was made a knight.

The long procession of khaki and dark blue, with the light uniforms of nurses here and there, seemed unending as it wound along out of the left hand entrance of the palace in front of the platform where the King stood, and then round to the right; but very few of the crowd left before the last hero had heard his name called and had his medal presented with a few words and a hearty grasp of the hand of the King.⁵

In November 1920, Lord Byng of Vimy, unveiled a memorial that the Walton Council had decided would take the form of a bronze bust of the hero on a pedestal, with a German gun allotted to the town behind it, and would be placed in the Marine Gardens.⁶ This bust





looked over the North Sea in the direction of Germany and behind it was placed a howitzer gun, which the British had captured from the late enemy.⁷ A year later, Mrs. Columbine presented the V.C. and other war medals belonging to her son, and the South African War medal that belonged to her late husband to Walton-on-the-Naze Urban Council who placed them in a case in the Council Chamber.⁸ In 1934, Frinton and Walton councils amalgamated and the medals were given to the

Royal British Legion where they were then displayed at their headquarters. However, in 1964, due to the commercial value and cost of insurance they were locked away in a bank vault.⁹ In 2013 they were loaned to Essex Regiment Museum where they went on display for three years.¹⁰

In August 2014 the statue to Herbert Columbine V.C was unveiled by Field Marshall Lord Guthrie on Walton seafront.

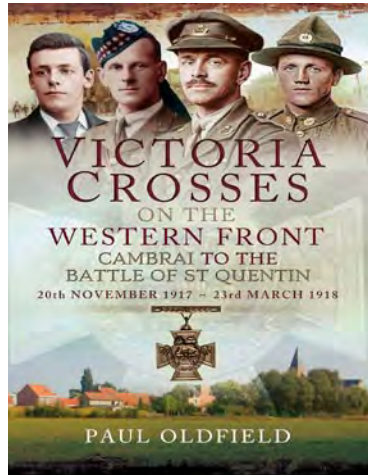
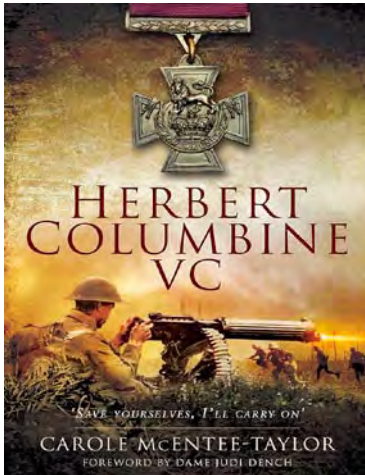


H G COLUMBINE VC STATUE ON WALTON SEAFRONT

Herbert Columbine has no known grave. His name is commemorated on the Pozières Memorial, Panels 93 and 94.

Remembered with Honour

For further information about Herbert's life and details of the battle that he was involved in, the following books are available:



References and Sources

1. Seventh Supplement to The London Gazette of 30 April 1918. 3 May 1918, Numb. 30667, p. 5354.
2. The East Essex Advertiser and Clacton News, Saturday, May 11, 1918
3. The East Essex Advertiser and Clacton News, Saturday, May 18, 1918
4. The East Essex Advertiser and Clacton News, Saturday, June 1, 1918
5. The Weekly Dispatch, June 23, 1918
6. The Essex Newsmen, Saturday, November 6, 1920
7. The Essex Chronicle, Friday August 12, 1921
8. The Chelmsford Chronicle, Friday, February 9, 1923
9. Carole McEntee-Taylor Books
10. East Anglian Daily Times, 25 July 2013

I hope this has whetted your appetite and if so, please send me a military story that you have that you would like to see in the magazine.

Editor's Note:

I photographed Herbert's statue and bust this morning and I saw that the plaque below his bust records that he was killed in 1916 and not 1918!

Further Observations

by Roy Jones (ESFH 20182)

I read with great interest the story 'A Hue and Cry' in the December 2023 issue of the HISTORIAN. I wonder if any readers noticed any connection between the story of the felon, James Ramsey, and my previous articles about my cousin, England's World Cup winning football manager?

The author, Toni Neobard, took the story up to the imprisonment of James Ramsey in 1893. Initially Ramsey had been acquitted of the murder and could not be arrested on the same charge. However he was later arrested for breaking into a barn and the report in the Essex Police Roll of Honour leaves no doubt about the verdict: *'the jury found Ramsey guilty without leaving the box. He was sentenced to 14 years penal servitude. It was the harshest sentence possible for the crime but it was also clear that Ramsey was judged guilty of assisting in the killing of the policeman.'*

James Ramsey served his sentence out in the harsh surroundings of Portland Prison and was released into the care of the Church Army in November 1907. He quickly moved in with his son, and partner-in-crime, James, who lived with his family in Gascoigne Road, Barking. The younger James was also a ne'er-do-well; he left his pregnant wife Ada in 1910 and disappeared to the Midlands. His father called himself a widower on the 1911 census but in fact his wife Mary Ann had left him and returned to her native Lincolnshire.

James Ramsey (the elder) lived and worked in Barking for over twenty years, being described in the 1939 Survey as a retired crane driver. He died on 8 June 1940, shortly before the bombs started falling on East London.

And the connection between the articles? James Ramsey was the great uncle of my cousin Sir Alf Ramsey. They lived about a mile apart: I wonder if they ever spoke?

☆ ☆ ☆

The Essex Branch of the Historical Association

The Essex Branch holds a series of eight talks between September and May. Talks are held on Saturdays, at 2.30pm, usually in Trinity Methodist Church, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2XB. Visitors and prospective members warmly welcomed - £5.

On **Saturday 20 April**, Dr Jim Lewis (Official biographer) will give a talk on Sir Jules Thorn, the Man & his Empire - When you believe your business is safe, that is when it is most vulnerable.

The year's programme will conclude on **Saturday 18 May** with a talk on Celtic Paganism by Professor Andrew Breeze of the University of Navarre, Spain.

For further information:

<https://essexbranchha.com/>

Little Dunmow Police Roll of Honour

By Adrian Corder-Birch (ESFH 726)

I was interested to read Fred Feather's item on page 40 of the December 2023 edition of the HISTORIAN, because I immediately recognised two names: S. B. Corder and F. Hockley. Starling Bocking Corder (1869-1956) was a carpenter and thatcher in Little Dunmow where he was also the parish clerk. He was known as Harry and as Bocking. I have no idea where his unusual name of Starling came from, but Bocking was the maiden surname of his grandmother, Frances Bocking (1803-1840) who married Henry Corder (1801-1885) at Bulmer Church on Christmas Day 1824. Henry was a master thatcher and proprietor of the Greyhound Inn at Gestingthorpe and later a shop keeper and owner of six cottages. My great-great-grandfather, John Corder (1806-1880) was one of his younger brothers. Amos Frederick Hockley (1870-1925), was known as Frederick, (but not to be confused with his son Frederick James Hockley (1902-1971). Frederick senior was landlord of The Flitch of Bacon Public House, also known as The Flitch inn at Little Dunmow. His sister, Lily Hockley (1871-1945) married Starling Bocking Corder in 1895. I hope these brief details will be helpful.

☆ ☆ ☆



In Remembrance



Christine Jemmeson

Christine was a friendly and knowledgeable lady, always with a smile. She worked for me in the monumental inscriptions team and was very keen. Morning coffee and lunch breaks were always lively with a lot of discussions. We all learnt something. She lived in Danbury and when they were having a church fete she organised a quiz using the names on gravestones.

Very keen to have the MI team around her dining table when we had a checking session of the field notes (recording of the inscription of a gravestone) against the typed version. A good hostess. I enjoyed being involved with Christine with that. Always chatty and I learnt a lot from her about family history.

After she moved away I would receive long letters about her family and what she had been up to. Put me to shame but as she said, a lot more to do in the area. She joined the local MI recording team and I would receive letters or emails about what she had found on occasions. She will be sorely missed.

Yvonne Tunstill (ESFH 3595)



The Tragedy of the Airship R101

by Editor, Jean-Marc Bazzoni (ESFH 3529)

The photograph of the R101 and caption was sent to me by Fred Feather recently. This prompted me to go online and I have transcribed an entry I found in *The Derby Daily Telegraph*, Monday October 6, 1930.



AIRSHIP R101 FLYING OVER
SOUTHCHURCH HALL PARK
SOUTHEND ON SEA, ON 1
OCTOBER 1930, ONLY 4 DAYS
BEFORE IT CRASHED AND WAS
DESTROYED IN FRANCE ON 5
OCTOBER

THE TRAGEDY OF THE R101

The tragic fate of the R101 has thrown a nation into mourning and aimed a staggering blow at the cause of civil aviation. Among the victims are some of the world's greatest experts, and with them perishes the knowledge they had gained.

The flight to India was intended to place another milestone on the path of progress. The stately vessel which suddenly came to grief in the dead of night, was believed to be the last word in aeronautical science. The highest engineering skill had been brought to bear on her construction and she was being navigated by a crew which lacked nothing in the way of experience.

The unfortunate disaster is a terrible reminder of the littleness of man. Nothing that human ingenuity could suggest had been left undone, and her living freight, as she left Cardington, consisted of men imbued with the highest confidence in her powers. Lord Thomson, the Minister for Air, and Sir Sefton Brancker are two men who will not easily be replaced, and the technical side of the aircraft industry suffers by the loss of other clever brains.

It will be a matter of profound satisfaction that the inquiry into the cause of the disaster is not to be held in camera. There are many things which the public wants to know. The R101 had been an object of criticism by men whose opinion commands respect. Was the lengthening of the vessel, which was undertaken earlier in the year, a source of strength or of weakness.

Another point that requires to be cleared up is whether the meteorological advice was good or bad. The storm which the R101 encountered was evidently not foreseen, or, at least, its severity was scarcely anticipated. Otherwise, it is fair to suppose that the voyage would have been delayed.

The future of her sister ship, the R100, must depend upon the result of these investigation. The issue, also, will determine the possibilities of such craft as an aid to commerce. The heavier-than-air machine has already established itself in the scheme of things. The airship, in the light of what has happened, has yet to do so.

Such problems will engage the attention of the experts for some time to come, but their urgency will not let us forget our debt to those pioneers who have sacrificed their lives that the world may progress, nor our sympathy with their dear ones who are left to mourn.



Essex Society for Family History

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on **Saturday 14th September 2024** online and at The Galleywood Heritage Centre, The Common, Galleywood, Chelmsford CM2 8TR at 2.00 p.m.

For confirmation of the arrangements please check our website before the event or contact Jean-Marc Bazzoni 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 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.

JEAN-MARC BAZZONI
Hon. Secretary

A Letter to the Editor

A brief response to Trevor Rix's reflections on new technology in his article 'As the Society approaches its 50th Anniversary', in your August 2023 newsletter:

Firstly, as someone who began family history research in 1975, and then returned in more recent years once the children had grown up and left home, I must say that it is interesting to pause for a moment and consider the vast technological changes that have taken place since the 1970s, and which in many ways have made our hobby much easier.

Secondly however, there is one important innovation that Trevor seems to have omitted, and that is the introduction of (light-sensitive) digital cameras. In my case, using one makes visits to record offices at least an order of magnitude more productive than 'in the old days'. For instance, in August I visited the Essex Record Office for the first time, and (with permission) took over 200 digital photos of large and difficult to read 18th century manuscript indentures and documents. These I am now steadily transcribing on my desktop from the digital images, a slow job which needs to be done carefully in order to extract the family history content, and one that will take several months. Certainly much more productive than multiple visits to the ERO at Chelmsford from 140 miles away, and very much cheaper than purchasing photocopies (if possible)!

Robin Brand (ESFH 32955)

Rita Harris

quality genealogical research

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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



Did You Know?

By the Statute of Winchester of 1285, it was provided that anyone, either a constable or a private citizen, who witnessed a crime shall make hue and cry, and that the hue and cry must be kept up against the fleeing criminal from town to town and from county to county, until the felon is apprehended and delivered to the sheriff. All able-bodied men, upon hearing the shouts, were obliged to assist in the pursuit of the criminal, which makes it comparable to the posse comitatus. It was moreover provided that 'the whole hundred ... shall be answerable' for the theft or robbery committed, in effect a form of collective punishment. Those who raised a hue and cry falsely were themselves guilty of a crime.

From the late 18th century until 1839, Hue and Cry was a principal or variant title for the weekly newspaper, containing details of crimes and wanted people, that afterwards became better known as the *Police Gazette*.

Deciphering An Army Service History

by Sandra Trenor (ESFH 30877)

On Saturday 7 October my husband and I settled down to be part of the hybrid meeting which was the showing of a previously recorded talk '*Tommy this an' Tommy that*'. It became obvious that this was not going to be an easy meeting for the hardworking Committee members who put these talks/zooms together and the conclusion was finally drawn that those of us on zoom would be better off watching the recording straight from the society website. I would like to record my thanks to everyone who puts the zoom talks on, it cannot be easy and I certainly would not have the computer knowledge to even attempt it.

In the course of my family research I have found very few military records that have been relevant to me and my immediate ancestors. I am also in the fortunate position to not have lost one of my direct ancestors or close relatives in a theatre of war, due in part at least to the fortunate timings of their births. I also admit to finding it difficult to understand the structure in the various armed forces, the ranks and how and where to look for information if I needed to. This talk, when we watched it that Saturday afternoon, began to unravel some of the intricacies for me and sent me immediately afterwards (before the confusion and fog descended again) to the service history of my husband's paternal grandfather and some of our questions were finally answered.

I must apologise that this article is not connected to Essex. I am sure I am not the only person in the position I have found myself for the last few years of not knowing where to turn.

My maternal grandfather was born in 1896 and, according to the wooden memorial plaque in the church at Edworth, Bedfordshire was one of those from the village who served in the Great War 1914-18. Using Findmypast I have found nothing in the way of service records, but somewhere I have some brief information telling me that he was in the Bedfordshire Regiment. He had three brothers, one of whom returned from Australia to fight and two older ones, one of whom I know was seriously injured whilst serving in France, also in the Bedfordshires, 'when a bullet pierced his bible and tobacco pouch opposite his heart'. Where did I find this information you ask? Recorded in the local paper at the time of his marriage in 1920. My mum had other uncles who served in the First World War, but all survived and returned to their families.

My paternal grandfather was born in 1903 and joined the RAF on 25 January 1924. His 'Certificate of Service and Discharge Form' tells me that he signed up for 12 years on a term of 8+4, something I think I now finally understand after the talk by Paul Nixon (8 years of service in the RAF + 4 on the reserves?). It was prolonged to 16 years and then 24 years and he was finally 'released to the reserves' on 9 May 1948. He served quite a lot of time in India, prior to and including the Second World War and was awarded amongst other medals the Burma Star. Grandad had brothers who all survived. He never spoke of his time in the RAF, at least not to me.

My husband's maternal grandfather was born in 1900. We know that he served, we

think in the army, at some point because one of his officers was supposed to have given him a job after the war, but which war remains unclear. I think it is likely to have been the Second World War but he never spoke of it and neither did his wife except in her case to say he had been away too long. Once again Findmypast does not have any records for him.

So then to Thomas Trenor, my husband's paternal grandfather. He passed away many years before my husband was born but one of the things I was told was that Thomas was the youngest sergeant major at the Somme where he was injured, he suffered from 'shell-shock' and the repercussions of this troubled him for the rest of his life.

I located his service record some years ago, using my Findmypast subscription, and downloaded 25 of the 49 pages, the ones, that is, that had anything written on them. Being in possession of these did little for my understanding of his service, except that the Machine Gun Corps appeared prominently. There were two service numbers and lots of confusion – at least to my befuddled brain! This talk helped me to decipher the details.

Thomas Trenor's Attestation papers tell me that he joined the West Riding Regiment (Shields) Special reserves (which if I heard it right meant he was willing to serve overseas if called up) on 3 November 1908, his number was 9192 and he signed up for 6 years. He was working as a weaver and gave as his reference someone local to his home who he didn't work for. With the exception of bad teeth he was in good health. He completed his annual 27 days training for the full 6 years before 're-engaging' for a further 4 years in 1914 for the 3rd Duke of Wellington Regiment. His service number became 87521 about this time.

There is a smaller slip of paper dated 15 February 1917 listing his qualifications, these being '2 years Regimental Machine Gun Instructor', and underneath '6 months Senior Instructor, Machine Gun School, Wh Bay'. In the next column was a recommendation that he was as likely to be of more use as an officer and instructor in the Machine Gun Corps and the document was signed by an officer 'commanding Lewis Gun Detachment'. In February 1917, Thomas was transferred to 3rd Battalion Duke of Wellingtons Regiment North Shields, at his own request.

His Military History Sheet shows his full service, showing the number of days he served in the UK prior to his service with BEF France from 6 May 1917. His service in France continued until 28 March 1919.

Amongst the pages there is a Casualty Form – Active Service. It is another of the smaller, half size pages and is filled in with dates and various notes. It shows that Thomas became a casualty at Camiers



A LEWIS GUN

on 7 July 1917 but it appears that he wasn't in hospital for long. He was transferred from Hospital to OC Base Dep on 14 July and 'joined company' from OC 6 Company on 27 July.

The next entry on this page confused me at first, until I realised that the heading of the relevant column was casualty, promotion, reduction on active service. With fresh eyes I now read 'Prom W O (Class II) and apptd CSM for duty with 57 Coy vice 36195 CSM Leagle, W (to 55 Coy) P.... from 14.2.1918'. With date of promotion being recorded in the relevant column as 1 February 1918. The next, now full size, page shows him being posted to 57 Coy as Sgt on 14 February 1918, with a final entry when he was sent 'to UK for Demob' on 28 March 1919 as CSM.

On 27 April 1919 he was transferred to Class 'Z' Army Reserve on Demobilization, before finally being discharged on completion of engagement on 31 March 1920.

His medal card shows that he received the Victory Medal and the British Medal.

I put 'Camiers' into Google and up popped the answer that Camiers Camp, close as far as I can tell to Calais in France was the base depot in France for the Machine Gun Corps.

I entered 'Lewis Gun' not knowing quite what sort of weapon it was. It turned out to be a 'light' machine gun, first developed in the USA and used by the British in the First World War.

I have also looked up 'The Battle of the Somme', and discovered that in fact there were three, the one I think we would all think about, the one I automatically assumed to be the one referred to, in 1916, and then two in 1918 in March and then August/September of that year. Although some of the dates seem to contradict one another, I think that Thomas was a CSM before the beginning of the first of the 1918 battles. Is this perhaps where the story comes from? Was it true, just not true in the way that the person who told me had interpreted it and the way I naturally followed?

Thomas Trenor was born on 18 December 1891, which would have made him just over 27 years old when he was demobbed on 28 March 1919. Am I reading this abbreviation correctly as Corps Sergeant Major and if I am correct would this have been young to be a CSM? Whilst his army record spans 1908-1919 (1920 to final discharge) the earliest years were spent in the reserve and only the last two or so on active service in France, would he have been experienced enough, or perhaps it was his instructor skills that gave him an edge?

I suppose one of the biggest questions to ask is did he need to go to France or did he chose to do so? He had been working as an instructor at Grantham, the UK base for the Machine Gun Corps and there was that recommendation that he could be of most use, instructing new recruits, could that have been done at Grantham?

We will also never know, because we cannot ask him why he joined the special reserves – patriotic duty, the chance of perhaps going overseas, the extra money in his pocket, the thrill and excitement of army training which the speaker suggested the men almost certainly enjoyed. I presume his progression to France would have been inevitable, if he hadn't extended his service he would have been called up anyway

due to his age.

Comment from the Editor:

According to the World War I Service Medal and Awards Rolls, 1914-1920 Register, I found the following entry (dated 3 July 1920)

87521 WO.II TRENOR Thomas 87521 M.G.C. WO.II.

His rank was Warrant Officer Class 2 which is the highest-ranking group of non-commissioned ranks, holding the King's Warrant. He would not have been saluted, because he did not hold the King's Commission, however he would generally have been addressed as 'Sir' by subordinates or 'Sergeant Major'. A Warrant Officer Class I would have been a Regimental sergeant major.

On 1 October 1913, the rank of colour sergeant was replaced by the two new ranks of Company sergeant major and Company quartermaster sergeant, with one of each in each Company. Company sergeant major was briefly an actual rank, wearing the colour sergeant's old rank badge of a crown over three chevrons, until it became an appointment of the new rank of Warrant Officer Class II introduced in 1915, and adopted the rank badge of a large crown on the lower sleeve.

☆ ☆ ☆

Essex Record Office Presents

For presentation details please see www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk under the Events tab.

Tuesday 9 April 2024 10:40 - 12:00

Out of Essex - The Escapes and Adventures of Kitty Marshall and her Friendship with Mrs Pankhurst.

Speaker: **Dr Emelyne Godfrey**

An artist and resident of Ongar, Theydon Bois and Sible Hedingham, Emily Katherine (Kitty) Willoughby Marshall was also Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst's personal bodyguard. In fact, both Kitty and her husband Arthur were key players in the Women's Social and Political Union. Arthur Marshall acted as the lawyer to the suffragettes while Kitty raised funds and fought the forces of the law.

Tuesday 7 May 2024 10:40 - 12:00

Beach Hut People - An exploration of beach hut culture in Essex.

Speaker: **Dr Nancy Stevenson**

Have you ever wondered about the people who choose to spend summer days in their beach huts? Maybe you've taken pictures of the huts and chuckled at their cheeky names? Perhaps you've peeked inside their open doors? Possibly you paused and said hello to the people sat chatting and drinking tea outside?

Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford CM2 6YT

Jean-Marc Bazzoni in conversation with Toni Neobard about DNA Testing

When did you take your first DNA Test?

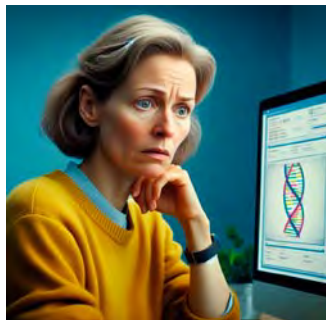
I took my first autosomal test in 2016 with Family Tree DNA.

Why did you test?

It was just curiosity really. I didn't know what I would get back, but I had the vague hope it might break down the brick-wall for my German Ancestry.

Were there any surprises when you got your results?

I happened to be staying in a medieval German castle with a group of Scouts when I got the email notification that the results were in. I was very excited, but I could only look at them on my phone screen and I needed to buy internet credits to see them, which was very restrictive. I had no real understanding of what the results were telling me so I wasn't in a position to recognise any surprises. The ethnicity estimate was mildly interesting especially as I had a large percentage of Scandinavian, but of course a lot of us Brits do.



How did you use your results?

I didn't really as I didn't know how. I didn't recognise anyone on my matches list, even my top matches, and I really had no clue what to do with the information.

I did email my top match (who was estimated to be around 2nd/3rd cousin level), but he didn't know how we were related either. I could see that he was also connected to a few other of my top matches. He helpfully sent me a very extensive family tree. I spent hours and hours trying to find ways to connect his family and mine. He also had some German ancestry, so I thought the connection would be there, but try as I might I could not make a link. Periodically I would have another go at it but to no avail.

I got hung up on this match, and as I couldn't solve it I was left feeling that this whole DNA thing was just too hard and of no real use.

So what changed?

I took a DNA test with Ancestry early in 2021. I found their system easier to understand and use. At this point things started to make a bit more sense. I decided that my New Year's Resolution for 2022 would be to get to grips with genetic genealogy. I started to immerse myself in books, YouTube videos, tutorials, DNA forums and blogs on the subject. The big difficulty I found was identifying what was current. The internet is great, but it contains a lot of out of date information, and I found that some of the techniques I was spending time learning had already been superseded by other tools or easier methods.

But then I had that 'lightbulb' moment when things suddenly fell into place and I began

to understand how I could use my 'Matches' information.

Did you ever solve your mystery?

I did! Soon after my lightbulb moment I set to work sorting and clustering my matches. I realised that I needed to find out how this set of top matches connected together and this would give me a clue as to where our families connected. It turned out that it was nothing to do with our German ancestry. The reason I could not find the connection was that my 2x great-grandmother had not told the truth when she registered the birth of my great-grandfather and she had named someone else as the father.

This meant that all of my research on this family line was completely wrong, and I had to take a great big pair of secateurs and lop off a great big branch of my family history. It was a very painful thing to do, especially as it was the direct male line meaning that our family surname was by rights something else. However, as compensation I discovered a whole new family history, far more interesting than the line of agricultural labourers I thought I was descended from.



Do you think that everyone should be using DNA in their family history research?

Yes I do. I think that we all want to research the right family. With traditional research we follow the paper trail to establish our family line. But it is clear that many people didn't tell the truth about who a father was etc. Without DNA you cannot be sure that the paper trail is correct – as in my case.

By learning a few genetic genealogy techniques, such as clustering, can help you prove (or disprove) that the ancestors you have found by traditional genealogical research are indeed your blood relatives. It can also help you break down brick-walls and help prove uncertain ancestral relationships. However, it does have limitations and probably won't help much beyond 4th or 5th great-grandparent level.

Tell us about the DNA Special Interest Groups that Trevor Rix and you facilitate.

We started these sessions because we felt we could learn from each other. Virtually all of us are self-taught and so have gaps in our knowledge. Each month we focus on a subject related to genetic genealogy. We may show videos or have a demonstration. Attendees get the chance to ask questions and have a discussion. It is a friendly group, with a wide-range of experience. Basic questions are welcomed and no-one is made to feel daft for asking them. In this way we can help close those gaps in our knowledge.

If you are interested in taking a DNA test or want help in using your DNA results, do join us for one of our DNA Special Interest sessions. Times and dates for forthcoming ones can be found on our website.

Preserving the Peace, Saffron Walden Borough Police 1836-1857

by Martin Stallion

A book review by Michael Furlong (ESFH 7506)

Martin Stallion has written many books on policing, both general as well as more focussed. Most of them are fairly short, being under 100 pages, but clearly he spends much time researching and analysing the facts surrounding his chosen subject.

This 69 page book (plus appendices & index) gives an insight into not only the politics relating to the founding of an efficient police force for the country but also provides a snapshot of the infighting experienced within a small market town, and, to some extent, the consequences of not having trained uniformed police always to hand when needed.

Before reform, one or maybe two men would be designated for a year to fulfill the role of parish constable, and apart from expenses, it was an unpaid position.

Saffron Walden was one of only four Essex Boroughs required by law to form a police force, as the old parish constable system was considered ineffective to deal with the rising crime rate and growing public disorder. This was especially prevalent in rural areas where labourers carried out arson attacks on local farmers' crops, and the author dedicates one whole chapter to 'Felons and Miscreants' reflecting life in Saffron Walden between the late 1830s to the mid 1850s, with sheep stealing, vandalism and burglary well covered. Further, he details the statistics relating to various crimes, criminals and the felonies committed, but I only found one prostitute mentioned, and it says the indictment of theft against her was discharged!

As a result of the act of 1835, the Town Council's new Watch Committee was put in charge of appointing a sufficient number of fit men to act as constable. One thing that became clear to me early on was that the question of cost influenced those on the Council and Committee (often the same people) when it came to policing. For a long period of time the Council and Committee WERE the same people and this meant the Watch Committee reported all their decisions and actions to themselves as the Council, who, of course duly endorsed everything! The inevitable merging with Essex County Constabulary took place in 1857.

Preserving the peace Saffron Walden Borough Police 1836-1857

Martin Stallion



The book frequently focuses on press reports and commentary therefrom, with excerpts from 'Letters to the Editor' providing the reader with a more intimate feeling of life in the Town in the mid 1800s, which at that time had a population of about 6,000. Indeed one writer claimed to there being 'no gaol or lock-up' for the Town, so all offenders had to be escorted to Chelmsford, leaving the Town with no policeman, and it was about 30 years before a police station was built in 1886.

Martin also details the various characters who fulfilled the role of 'Chief Constable' between 1836-1857 and backs that up with his analysis of the other known officers, mainly by looking at records of salaries or expense claims as archives in some cases are scant. Additionally he dives into family history research in Appendix 1, looking for the Town Beadle's roots to establish who exactly is depicted in some of the Town's notable illustrations.

Moving on to illustrations, unfortunately reproducing old documents can be tricky, and if they are coloured can prove very difficult to read. Furthermore if they are untitled (and some do not have a description) it can be frustrating for the reader to relate such an image to the relevant text.

Although directed from the Index to William Campling's death certificate, I was disappointed to find there was no image, merely a comment about it. On page 6 there is an excellent townscape with map and superb illustrations by Megan Ridgewell. This is an outstanding piece of work, but even at A4 size proved difficult for me to read without a magnifying glass. That said it is worth persevering, as the effort can prove so rewarding.

Finally I must make comment on the 22 plus pages dedicated to the infamous shooting of the 'Chief or Head Constable' of Saffron Walden. William Campling was, in fact the Surveyor (or Assistant Surveyor) of Highways, but fulfilled a double role in the Town, a not unusual situation during the time covered. Martin dedicates a whole chapter to the case, which remains open to this day. He then adds an appendix of 8 pages which provides a transcript of actual proceedings from the court case. Although I, as a Town resident, found it all very interesting and absorbing, I thought that maybe a synopsis attached to Chapter 4 would have sufficed. As the main suspect was acquitted, it was interesting to me that all the evidence appeared to be circumstantial, and one piece relating to the gun used was contradicted by more than one witness. So a possible serious miscarriage of justice was certainly avoided.

Overall an interesting and well researched book which should prove useful to anyone investigating police history, looking for ancestors involved in that profession, or maybe played a part in Town affairs during that period of time.

Preserving the Peace, Saffron Walden Borough Police 1836-1857 by Martin Stallion, priced at £12.00 is independently published and is available from several outlets including Waterstones, Amazon & Foyles.

Comment from the Editor:

I found the following newspaper article which offers some interesting insights into this article:

Saffron Walden WEEKLY NEWS, Thursday, October 8, 1992**Honour for bobby - after 140 years**

ESSEX Police honored a colleague this week who died after being shot in the legs more than 140 years ago.

High Constable William Campling of Saffron Walden was shot on November 9, 1849, but it took until yesterday, Wednesday for him to be honoured at a special ceremony at Essex Police Headquarters, Chelmsford.

Constable Campling, who was in charge of Saffron Walden police, was shot on October 31, 1849, after spending an evening at The Eight Bells public house in Saffron Walden.

He walked to his home in nearby Bridge Street with a friend William Brand and was shot in the legs as he opened his front door.

Mr Fred Feather, curator of Essex police museum, said: 'He staggered upstairs and called to his family to find Benjamin Pettit who he knew had a grudge against him after being convicted of an earlier offence.'

'Pettit was arrested and when it was realised that Mr Campling was not going to make it, the Mayor and Pettit went to his bedside where a declaration was taken down from the injured man who said he suspected Pettit because he had threatened him at other times.'

Constable Campling died of his injuries several days later and Supt. Clarke of Newport was put in charge of investigations.

He called in Inspector Lund of Scotland Yard, Pettit was charged with murder and sent to Chelmsford prison to await trial and Insp. Lund returned to London after presenting the town clerk with a bill for his services of £15.12s.

When Pettit was tried in 1850 he pleaded not guilty and the case was found not proved.

Said Mr Feather: 'All that was proved was that Pettit left the Wagon and Horses pub at 9.30pm and returned home at 11.30pm. All the rest was said to be speculation.'

At Wednesday's ceremony a memorial stone and roll of honour were unveiled by the Lord Lieutenant of Essex Lord Braybrooke of Audley End.

A total of 29 Essex policemen, who died between 1849 and 1989 as a result of injuries received on duty, were honoured and details of the circumstances surrounding their deaths appear in a commemorative booklet.



The Society's First Letter

The newly formed society produced its first 16 page journal in November 1974, under the editorship of Margaret Baker.

The first letter published was from Dr. J.R. Hetherington of Birmingham.

"The Jobsons of Colchester

I read in the Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry Journal of your proposed Essex Genealogical Society. In so far as I have four lines of descent from one of the most interesting Essex families of the sixteenth century, I ought to join!

I have four lines of descent from Humphrey Jobson (fl. 1600-1638), Secretary to the Lords High Admiral and High Sheriff of County Cork, Ireland, who was the son of Sir Francis Jobson (died 1574) of Monkwiike Hall, Colchester. Sir Francis, who appears in the Dictionary of National Biography, was Henry VIII's man in Essex for the suppression of the monasteries and was man of business to John Dudley, duke of Northumberland, whose half-sister he married. Morant (The History of Colchester bound in with The History of Essex) has much to say on him, but I can add a lot more. His relationship to Northumberland led to a part in the Lady Jane Grey episode from which he narrowly escaped, but was rewarded by Elizabeth with the Lieutenancy of the Tower. Sir Francis's father was Bailiff of Colchester, and his sons' marriages bring in the links with several Essex families, though Thomas's wife eludes me.

Sir Francis's wife was (as set out in the Harleian Society volume of the Visitation of Essex) Elizabeth Plantagenet, daughter of Arthur Plantagenet, viscount L'Isle (bastard of Edward IV) by his wife Elizabeth Grey, baroness L'Isle, widow of Edmund Dudley and by him mother of John Dudley. Elizabeth Grey was a granddaughter of John Talbot, first earl of Shrewsbury. Elizabeth Plantagenet was a first cousin of Henry VIII.

As yet I have no documentary proof that Humphrey Jobson was son of Thomas, but Thomas sought a "place" for an unnamed son just before Humphrey obtained a place, and Humphrey's meteoric rise can only be explained by patronage. As Secretary to the Lords High Admiral he was entitled to half the value of every naval prize taken - one of the most valuable of all appointments. My descent from him is purely Irish. I can prove it point by point from printed authorities down to my great-grandmother."

In a subsequent letter Dr Hetherington expresses the hope that local researchers may be able to fill in some of the gaps for him. I wonder if we did? - Jean-Marc.

Vale Ancestors in Colchester and Boxford

by Susan Stanforth (ESFH 20115)

The purpose of this article is to show how a will from 1662 enabled me to connect two apparently distinct groups of Vale ancestors, one from Colchester and the other from the area around the village of Boxford in Suffolk.

In a previous article for *THE HISTORIAN* on my Vale ancestors in Colchesterⁱ I mentioned two possible candidates for the father of my 6 x great-grandfather Daniel Vale: Thomas Vale, a Colchester bricklayer who died in 1721, son of another Thomas, and James Vale, a saymaker from Suffolk who married in Colchester in 1684. There appeared to be no obvious connection between the two apart from a shared surname. Following a link in the subsequent issue of *THE HISTORIAN* under 'Eric Probert's Useful Websites' I found a will in the online catalogue of the Suffolk Archives which showed that Thomas and James were members of the same extended family, descendants of Thomas and Rose Vale of Boxford in Suffolk. The wills left by Rose and some of her descendants, held in either the Essex or Suffolk Record Office, allow us to build a picture of the extended family through the 17th and 18th centuries on both sides of the Suffolk - Essex border.

Thomas Vale was buried at St Mary's Boxford in Suffolk on 15 February 1655ⁱⁱ and his widow Rose was buried there on 8 September 1662. In her willⁱⁱⁱ she names her beneficiaries in great detail: her surviving children, sons- and daughters-in-law, and grandchildren.

The first mentioned is her son Thomas (1630-1680) to whom she bequeathed her great Bible, his wife Susan, their daughter Elizabeth, and their sons Thomas (1658-1721) and Daniel (1660?-1713). Thomas and his family had settled in Colchester where he established himself as a successful bricklayer, by the time of his death in 1680 owning two adjoining tenements in the parish of St Botolph's which he bequeathed to his sons Thomas and Daniel^{iv} who also became bricklayers in Colchester.

Thomas (1658-1721) married Ann Le Duke, daughter of John Le Duke, schoolmaster, in 1684^v. Thomas's will was proved in 1721, and his beneficiaries were his wife, his sons John and Daniel, and his daughter Mary, wife of Anthony Digby^{vi}.

Thomas's younger brother Daniel (1660?-1713) is mentioned in the will of John Stephens of Ulting, yeoman, who left five shillings to his niece Katharine, the wife of Daniel Vale of Colchester, bricklayer^{vii}. Both Daniel and Thomas exercised their right as Colchester Freemen to vote in local elections^{viii}.

Rose's second son Edward (1632-1689) and his wife Margaret (?-1698) lived in the village of Groton in Suffolk, not far from Boxford, and they both left wills. Edward was buried on 12 November 1689 at the church of St Bartholomew, Groton^{ix}, and his will was proved a year later^x. His beneficiaries include his wife, his four sons, and his daughter Sarah. He was a baker and had acquired property and land in the village of Boxford as well as in Groton. Of particular interest is the house in Boxford known as the Swan (which later became the Swan Inn?) and also a parcel of land of about four acres called Calico Field, which he left to his wife for the maintenance

of their son William who, we are given to understand, was not expected to live long. (In fact William died in 1698, shortly before his mother drew up her will.) Of Edward's remaining three sons the eldest, Edward (1660?-1728), and the youngest, John (1664-1714), both married and remained in Suffolk, Edward and his wife Mary settling in Boxford, and John and his wife Anne in Nayland. John and Anne had only one child, a daughter Anne (1697-1722) who died young at age twenty-four but who nevertheless a few months before her death made a will ^{xi} in which she rather touchingly leaves the sum of one shilling to her uncle Edward Vale, grocer, which perhaps implies that in the years after his brother John's death in 1714 Edward had acted as a kind of father figure to Anne.

Anne's mother Anne outlived her daughter by a number of years and died in 1736. It seems that after the death of her husband and daughter she continued to take an interest in her husband's family, as indicated by bequests in her will ^{xii}. She left money to Edward's eldest son John (1691-?) (who had possibly been named after her husband) as well as to the children of his late sister Sarah (ca. 1662-before 1736), wife of John Gosnall, and also to John's brother James (1661-after 1736), and to James's son.

James (1661-after 1736), the second son of Edward and Margaret, was the same James Vale mentioned above who married Elizabeth Reason in Colchester in 1684. Edward Vale, grocer, of Boxford is named as bondsman on the marriage licence allegation ^{xiii}, but the original document is fragile and damaged so that James's place of residence in Suffolk is unreadable. Elizabeth died and James married again in 1693, to Rachel King in Stoke by Nayland ^{xiv}. We know from his sister-in-law Anne's will that James had a son, but as yet no baptism has come to light to indicate whether the child was Elizabeth's or Rachel's. The absence of a name for this son is tantalising.

Thomas and Rose's daughter Susan (1627- after 1690), their oldest surviving child, is referred to in Rose's will as the wife of William Hayward, whom she married in 1658 in London ^{xv}. Their daughter Elizabeth, born 1661, is also mentioned in Rose's will, as is Thomas Sage, Susan's son from her first marriage to Thomas Sage in Colchester in 1648 ^{xvi}. Susan was later one of the witnesses to her brother Edward's will in 1689.

Thomas and Rose's younger daughter, also Rose (1634-1708), married Robert Agges in Boxford in 1654 ^{xvii}. She was buried at Stoke by Nayland in 1708 ^{xviii}.

It now turns out that the Thomas and James Vale that I mentioned at the beginning of this article as possible candidates for the father of my 6 x great-grandfather Daniel Vale, were first cousins. Thomas had a son Daniel about the right age but there are reasons against this Daniel being my direct ancestor. James, we now know, also had a son but we do not know his name. As my Daniel named his first two sons James and John, possibly after his father and his uncle, he could well have been James's son.

Rose Vale's will has enabled me to reconstruct her extended family of descendants, using wills, parish registers and other documents held in both the Essex and Suffolk Record Offices. Many of the records I had come across before, but the finding of the will enabled me to see how they were connected.

- i Essex Family Historian no. 165, August 2018
- ii Suffolk Burials Index. <http://findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 30 December 2023
- iii Suffolk Archives Online IC/500/1/115/37 (digital download)
- iv Essex Archives Online D/ACW 19/220
- v Essex Archives Online D/ABL 1684/20
- vi Essex Archives Online D/ACW 25/194
- vii Essex Archives Online D/ACW 23/243
- viii UK poll books & electoral registers 1538-1893. <http://ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 30 December 2023
- ix Suffolk Burials Index. <http://findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 30 December 2023
- x Suffolk Archives Online IC/500/1/144/100 (digital download)
- xi Suffolk Archives Online IC/500/1/176/119 (digital download)
- xii Suffolk Archives Online IC/500/1/190/11 (digital download)
- xiii ERO D/ABL/1684/121 (digital download)
- xiv Suffolk Archives Online E14/8/1/2/320 (digital download)
- xv London, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages & Burials, 1538-1812. <http://ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 30 December 2023
- xvi Colchester St Leonard parish registers D/P 245/1/1. Essex Record Office
- xvii Boyd's marriage index, 1538-1850. <http://findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 30 December 2023
- xviii Suffolk Burials Index. <http://findmypast.co.uk> : accessed 30 December 2023

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The Genealogist's Internet - now freely available

by Peter Christian MA FSG

Peter Christian's book "The Genealogist's Internet" is now almost twelve years old, and a lot has changed in online genealogy in that time.

Unfortunately, he does not have the time to prepare a new and updated edition, so, having recently secured reversion of the rights from Bloomsbury, he has decided to release the text of the book, more or less as it stands, under a Creative Commons licence (CC BY-SA 4.0). Under this licence, the book can be freely downloaded and distributed, and anyone is also free to use extracts and revise or adapt the text for any purpose without the need to secure permission.

Please bear in mind that this is not a new edition -- it is the text of the 2012 edition, largely unchanged. Inevitably, a number of sites — mainly the smaller ones — have disappeared, and for major sites the detailed descriptions are now sometimes out-of-date. Usually, though, that is simply because the original material has been moved or reorganised.



The book can be read on the Internet Archive or downloaded in various formats from <https://archive.org/details/the-genealogists-internet>

Probably the best format for reading is the ePub version, while the Microsoft Word file is intended mainly for those wanting to reuse or adapt the text. There is also a web version on Peter's own web site at www.spub.co.uk/tgij/.

Summaries of a Selection of Presentations given between November 2023 and January 2024

November 2023

South East Essex Branch Meeting Meet Henry VIII with Tony Harris

Summarised by Heather Feather (ESFH 366)

Our November meeting saw a substantial audience present including the Society's Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary plus two regulars who enjoy their day out from Colchester to Westcliff by bus. What were they all expecting? The reported speaker was 'King Henry VIII' but how he would appear was not entirely clear. We worried that we had not anticipated his method of travel and had not arranged stabling! It was a relief when he came in the person of Tony Harris. Phew!

A splendid entrance in full costume, and the audience all rose to welcome 'His Majesty'. We noticed bowed heads, perhaps there was a curtsey or two. Off he went at full pelt and entertained us for an hour or so.

Those of us who thought we knew a little of Tudor History were in for a lesson. We were shown history as it happened with many facts, great humour and a plethora of surprises. As the second son of King Henry VII, he was the 'spare' and his brother Arthur's early death put him on a lifetime path to get himself a male heir. However Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn only provided him with daughters. His mistress Betsy Blount gave him an illegitimate son, Henry FitzRoy. His great love, Jane Seymour, died young but provided him with the longed-for son, the future King Edward VI. She suffered the 'birth fever' which struck half the mothers of the time. Her son was eleven days old. She was his 'true Tudor queen' and was the only one of his wives to be buried at Windsor, where he joined her when his time came.



We went away with memories of the irascible ruler's love-life, his political moves, injuries whilst jousting. Intimate details of dresses, Anne Boleyn's 'four months pregnant' wedding dress, women's hair styles. (They had already been married in Calais, which was part of the kingdom.)

We learned of the length of Anne of Cleve's nose: Holbein painted her from the front and Henry was displeased and our speaker described her profile as that of the 'only German speaking eagle.' He quickly paid her off, to retire to the English countryside. As a Duchess! As she had been betrothed to the Duke of Lorraine the marriage could

be annulled.

Catherine Howard was just seventeen years old, 4 feet 11 inches tall and lived up his old age before she too was offered one of his 'merciful executions'.

Katherine Parr, his last wife, tended his medical problems and was a wise councillor. She persuaded him to put his daughters Mary and Elizabeth into the 'line of succession' and thus provided the country with its two first queens. A political innovation!

Altogether Tony left us entertained, instructed, and grateful for his attendance. Perhaps we might see him in the future in another role. Tumultuous and deserved applause.

December 2023

South East Essex Branch Meeting

Flood '53 - The East Coast Floods with Chris Izod

Summarised by Heather Feather (ESFH 366)

The night of 31 January 1953 was particularly memorable along the East Coast of England, when an extremely high tide engulfed many of its towns and villages. Chris is a local film-maker producing DVDs, many about the history of Southend-on-Sea. His film was illustrated with many photographs and newspaper cuttings. Areas of Essex, especially Jaywick, Clacton, Southend-on-Sea, but most of all, Canvey Island were affected. The railway lines were engulfed.

For householders the effects were often disastrous. Many awoke as the waters rose, sometimes to the heights of their roofs. Strong winds drove the high sea onto the shores. The contents of homes were ruined and some people were even obliged to seek shelter by sitting on their own roof. There they awaited rescue. Parents held their children tightly as cold water lapped around them. Distressed animals were unaware what was happening to them.

It took some time for people to realise what was happening and for the emergency services to swing into action. These were police, firemen, soldiers and many others. Small boats were needed because of the depth the water was reaching. Whenever possible people and services who had boats, ferried distressed people to higher ground. Fifty volunteers from the R.S.P.C.A. attended and cows, dogs, chickens, cats, birds and many other animals, a total of 11,322 in all, were rescued.

There are many tales of tragedy, of heroism and good fortune in adversity. In Essex 119 people lost their lives and 21,000 people became homeless. Leonard Redfern, a late and well known early member of this society was the Pier Master at Southend at the time.

In the interval of the talk, those attending shared memories and thoughts of the disaster. One, aged 4 at the time, remembered paddling in her Wellington Boots in the hallway of her grandfather's house. Thank you Chris for a thought provoking and well illustrated talk. It is possible to purchase copies of this DVD and other Southend memories, or his



book "My Southend Memories".

(Tel: 07986 496174 or email: chrisi1718@hotmail.co.uk)

A blue plaque marking the level of the flood water was installed by the Leigh Society on the wall of the Heritage Centre in Leigh-on-Sea to commemorate the flooding there.

January 2024

South East Essex Branch Meeting

My Favourite Ancestor by Members

Summarised by Heather Feather (ESFH 366)

In spite of the cold weather the meeting was well attended and we were introduced to some interesting people. The majority were grandparents or great-grandparents.

There was a marathon runner (before the event took place in London as it does now) who ran from Windsor to London in 2 hours 5 minutes and 52 seconds. We don't know whether the runners had to contend with passing traffic or the road was closed.

We met a great-grandmother, who ran a public house in Kent, whose character was not quite that of the standards expected nowadays.



One grandfather had kept his 'Princess Mary gift box'. These were distributed to the Armed Forces for Christmas 1914. They were the idea of Mary, Princess Royal, the 17 year old daughter of George V. So it was nice to see this memento of the Great War. Was your grandmother a knitter? A young granddaughter found a knitted jumper, which was to be her birthday present, under Grandma's bed. The talent must run in the family as that recipient is a prolific knitter herself.

There were stories of other favourite ancestors and I'm sure that we all have someone in our family who we find more interesting than the rest!

'Drop In' Session 27th January 2024

Nine branch members worked a 4 hour session 10am-2pm for members of the public and society members to bring their family history problems for discussion.

The subjects some 13 enquirers brought were varied, some stayed for 2 hours. They included Antarctic exploration, the Boer War, Scottish ancestry, 11th Hussar Regiment and a myriad of family names. Many of them expressed thanks for the help they received and indicated they might attend our next branch meeting.

We hope to hold another session in April.

Thanks to Mandie, Toni, Linda, Melody, Jan, Eric, Reg, Fred and Julia from the Forum team.

The Essex Branch of the Western Front Association

Meeting dates for 2024

Focussed on education and remembrance about the First World war, this organisation meets on the second Wednesday monthly, alternating between two venues, the Royal British Legion in Hornchurch and the Village Hall at Hatfield Peverel.

Hornchurch Branch

Meet at the Poppy Lounge, Royal British Legion, Hornchurch, from 7:30 for an 8pm start. Entrance donation is £3.50 and, as ever, those who are not members of the WFA are very welcome to attend. There is parking nearby in a pay & display car park (24 hours), and we have access to the bar

10 April: *Robert Keable, Utterly Immoral WW1 Chaplain? - Simon Keable Elliott.* This talk is about a WWI Chaplain, related to our speaker, who was a pre-war missionary in Africa, and who was closely involved with the formation of the South African Native Labour Corps. This talk tells their story, and Robert's, in Europe during the War. The story will also move post war period when Robert wrote a best-selling war-related book which, shall we say was a bit raunchy for the period, and its impact on the rest of his life. A fascinating story well worth hearing.

12 June: *Gaza to Jerusalem; The Palestine Campaigns of 1917 - Stuart Hadaway.* In this talk Stuart tells the story of 1917 in Palestine. It covers the story of the three battles of Gaza, the first two which were disastrous in outcome for the attacking British and Empire forces. A change in force commander and support led to the attacks on Beersheba and the capture of Gaza. The talk then covers subsequent actions to the entry of Allenby in Jerusalem in December. This talk will also include aspects of the 54th Division, which includes four battalions of the Essex Regiment, along with other East Anglian units.

14 August: *"The Battle of Verdun" - Christina Holstein.* The Essex Branch, in recent memory, has not addressed the Battle of Verdun, something we are putting right with the visit of Verdun expert Christina Holstein to our Hornchurch venue. What was the thinking behind the German offensive of February 1916 and why was Verdun chosen? A thundering opening bombardment brought early success but French determination and sheer dogged refusal to give up meant that the German advance was soon measured in metres. By midsummer, the offensive was a lost cause, but the French hit back, and fighting went on to the end of the year. It was the longest battle of WWI, but did it matter, and could the German plan ever have worked?

9 October: *"First Things First", The Early Days: RFC Suttons Farm" - Richard Smith.* This talk, at the Hornchurch venue, is a truly local story. This talk will cover the origins and history of RFC Suttons Farm in Hornchurch. It was from here that William Leefer Robinson shot down a Zeppelin in September 1916, the first downed by air combat over the UK. Suttons farm was a key part of home defence in the First World War and continued this role as RAF Hornchurch in World War Two, in particular the Battle

of Britain. This talk by Richard will be presented by Essex Branch member Jonathan Steer, but Richard will be attending to answer questions arising.

Hatfield Peverel Branch

Meet at the Village Hall, Hatfield Peverel, in the room off the bar, from 7:30 for an 8pm start. Entrance donation is £3.50 and, as ever, those who are not members of the WFA are very welcome to attend. There is parking on site, and we have access to the bar.

8 May: *Voices From Three Crises: World War One, Covid-19 and Ukraine - Dr Viv Newman.* Viv Newman presents an overview of how three crises impacted on written culture. The First World War led to an outpouring of literature, with professional and amateur writers and poets wielding their pens as they sought to make sense of a world that was irrevocably changing lives. Just over a century later, the Covid-19 pandemic had a similar effect. 'Lockdown' may have restricted our movements, but it did not restrict people's desire to capture and record heartfelt emotion in written words. Then, as Russian tanks rolled across the Ukrainian border, those caught up in Europe's newest conflict, as well as those who watched from afar, found written words were a way of seeking to make sense of this latest calamity that was once again altering lives in unimaginable ways.

10 July: *"Stanley Finch - A Medic at Gallipoli" - Karen Dennis.* At the Hatfield Peverel venue, on this occasion we look at the wartime service of one man. Chelmsford man Stanley Finch served in 88 Brigade (TF) Field Ambulance, part of the 29th Division. He served on Gallipoli, amongst others, and had a photo album which was ultimately donated by his family to the Essex Regiment Museum. Essex Branch Memorial Office, Karen Dennis, has prepared a talk based on Stanley's service using this album. This is very much a story of a soldier within the wider army.

11 September: *"Introduction to the Great War in Africa" - Anne Samson.* At our Hatfield Peverel venue this will be the first visit of Anne Samson to the Essex Branch, to present a talk on a subject that I suspect most will have only a small knowledge of but carried on over the whole course of the First World War. This talk provides an overview of how Africa became involved in the First World War, why British Africa was involved, it will outline the four main campaigns (Togo, Cameroon, southwest Africa / Namibia, and East Africa) and touches on Egypt. It also examines other peacekeeping encounters during the war. Only two white British units participated in the war in Africa, the rest were either African-raised, or Indian, West Indian, or composite forces. In closing the talk compares the experience of the African campaigns with the Western Front.

13 November: *"A Long Way from France & Flanders - Experiences of British Military Personnel in South Russia 1916-1920" - Alan Wakefield.* After a long break we welcome the return of Alan Wakefield to Hatfield Peverel. This talk covers the RNAS armoured cars under Oliver Locker-Lampson and the various British forces sent to south Russia as part of the Intervention at the end of the First World War. These units fought in the Caucasus alongside the White Russian Army. This is an area of conflict largely unknown to the greater public and continued long after the November 1918 Armistice.

Society Information

www.esfh.org.uk

Payment of Membership, Services and CD's by post

Facilities on our website allow for Membership, Services, CD's published by the Society, Birth, Marriage & Death Certificates etc. to be ordered and paid for using a credit or debit card (payment taken via the PayPal website) or a PayPal account. New members wishing to pay their membership fees by cheque should send an email, or write, to our membership secretary Miss A Turner to enable 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.

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

Research Centre and Services

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 Wednesdays and 10.00am - 1.00pm on Thursdays when you will find volunteers on duty.

Our research team offers a service to search indexes and databases where we hold the relevant data at our Research Centre. For details of the indexes we hold please see our website under the Services tab followed by Research and Services. For all enquiries regarding our Search Services please email searches@esfh.org.uk.

For products sold via our online shop and how to order and pay please see our website under the SHOP tab.

Essex Strays Index

References to people from Essex found in records elsewhere. Enquiries with stamped addressed envelope to Mrs Ann Church, "Windyridge" 32 Parsons Heath Colchester CO4 3HX E-mail: ann.church@mypostoffice.co.uk

Correction to incorrect email address in the December 2023 Historian

With reference to the article on page 12 of the December 2023 issue of The Essex Family Historian entitled The Hatfield Forest Visitors' Book, the email address at the end of the article should read David.Simmonds@nationaltrust.org.uk

Society Information

Members with Additional Roles

Communications Manager: Position vacant

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Research Team Leader: Position vacant

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Strays Co-ordinator: Ann Church Email: ann.church@mypostoffice.co.uk

Webmaster/E-Commerce: Paul Stirland Email: webmanager@esfh.org.uk

Deputy Webmaster: Position vacant

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Branch Committee Members

North East Branch

Chair: Gill Peregrine

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Paul Stirland

Registrar: Christine Chatfield

Committee Members:

Pauline Adlem, Roger Stirland

West Essex Branch

Chair: Elizabeth Cox

Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Val Jones

Committee Members:

Ann Jones, Sue Spillar, Barbara Harpin

South East Branch

Chair: Vacant

Secretary: Heather Feather

Treasurer: Maureen Angerstein

Committee Members:

Mandie Adams, Bill Bayford, Jan Biagioli,
Bob Dalgarno, Jean de Tourtoulon,
Melody Hurst, Linda Medcalf, Reg Wells

President: The Lord Petre K.C.V.O.

Patron: Rt. Rev. Dr. Guli Francis-Dehqani

Vice-Presidents:

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Yvonne Tunstill Email: yt.monins@virgin.net

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

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Treasurer:

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**Executive Members – some members can be contacted via the Contact
Us section on our website.**

Pauline Adlem

Denise Somers

Colleen Devenish

Paul Stirland

Meryl Rawlings

John Young

Janice Sharpe

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

Chair North East Essex Branch (Colchester)

Gill Peregrine

Chair West Essex Branch (Harlow)

Elizabeth Cox

Representative South East Essex Branch (Southend)

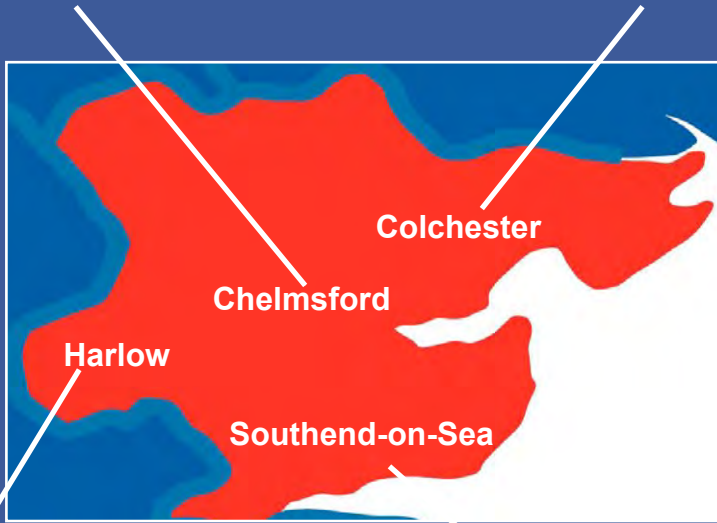
Heather Feather

HEADQUARTERS

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Email: andiehewitt@hotmail.com
Secretary: Jean-Marc Bazzoni
Email: honsec@esfh.org.uk

NORTH EAST ESSEX BRANCH

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Chair: Gill Peregrine
Email: gpesfh@gmail.com
Secretary: Vacant



WEST ESSEX BRANCH

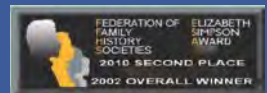
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Secretary: Vacant
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