

ESSEX PAST

The newsletter of the VCH Essex Trust

NO.19

MARCH 2015



Where can
you find
these two
beautiful
brasses?
see
overleaf

HERE LYETH BVRYED THE BODY OF KATHERINE NIGHTINGALE,
WIFE TO GEFFERYE NIGHTINGALE ESQIRE, WHO HAD ISSUE
BETWENE THE 7 CHILDREN THOMAS, HENRY, WILLIAM, MARYE,
ANNE, IHONE, AND ELIZABETH. SHE DEPARTED THIS LIFE Y⁹TH
OF NOVEMBER IN THE 54TH YEA^{RE} OF HER AGE, AND IN Y⁹TH
OVS TO ALL, HELPEFVLL TO Y POORE, HVRTFVLL TO NONE. HER
SORROWFVLL SVRIVING HVSBADE HATH CAUSED TO BE MADE
THIS DVRLABLE MONVMT AS A SADD MEMORIALL OF HIS GRE-
ATE LOSSE & HER WORTHE.

VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF ESSEX TRUST

Annual General Meeting 2015

The meeting will be held in the Church House,
next door to the lovely church of St Mary's in

NEWPORT

Please come from 2 o'clock for the
formal meeting that will start at 2.30

and will be followed by

tea, soft drinks, biscuits and a chance to win a raffle
and then by the highlight of the afternoon:



the launch by the Lord Lieutenant
our President the Lord Petre JP
of the first Essex VCH 'short' publication,
a new history of the village of Newport



& finally
three of the book's authors,
David Evans, Anthony Tuck and Gilliam Williamson
will entertain us with a talk on
"New Lights on Newport's History"

*and if you had not already guessed, the cover illustration is of part of an early
17th-century brass in St Mary's – photograph © Martin Stuchfield*

Note to our readers

In earlier years, the issue of Essex Past sent with the AGM papers has included abbreviated versions of our formal Trustees' Report and a survey of the year's work completed by the Editors. The letter of 9 December 2014 from our Chairman, Martin Stuchfield, sent to all our supporters, brought you up to that date, and does not need repeating here. Our Editor has concentrated on bringing you recent news, new developments and a look towards the future.

Progress update from County Editor

Professor Richard Hoyle, the new Director of the VCH, took up his post as Professor of English Local and Regional History at the Institute of Historical Research on 1 October 2015. We were very glad that he was able to attend the most recent VCH Essex Trust committee meeting, get to meet the Trust members and hear about the current work and future plans of the Trust. He was also able to report on his assessment of the current state of the VCH nationally, and we were especially encouraged to hear of his plans to raise the profile of the VCH through greater attention to publicity. The VCH Essex Trust agrees that further up-to-date publicity is essential, and our Chairman Martin Stuchfield has led the design and production of a new membership leaflet and a new legacies leaflet. Please do ask for copies and spread them far and wide! A new portable table-top display which we can more easily take to events has also been designed and should be available shortly.

A splendid Essex event is the forthcoming publication of the VCH Essex 'short' on the history of Newport, by Anthony Tuck and others. You will find with your AGM mailing a leaflet and order form for the book, but it would be even better if you can come to our AGM in person, where we hope the book will be launched in Newport itself.

Volume XII – St Osyth to the Naze

Both VCH Essex editors have searched virtually all printed primary sources and secondary sources and are now well into our work on manuscript sources. In the case of St Osyth the scale of material available is somewhat larger than expected and it will therefore take longer to analyse than planned. Especially promising are many accounts and surveys of the abbey from the later 15th and earlier 16th centuries which are preserved at The National Archives. Many of these have been

digitally photographed so that we can work on them back in Essex. In at least one case the material also has relevance to Little Holland, for the abbey owned the church there and the tithes of the inhabitants were recorded in accounts relating to the appropriated vicarage.

Volume XIII – Harwich and Dovercourt

A start has also been made in thinking ahead to Volume XIII, planned to be a history of Harwich and Dovercourt. Some exploratory meetings have been held and it is particularly encouraging to report that we have had an initial meeting with members of the Harwich Society and other interested parties in the town who were really enthusiastic about the project and have offered their assistance in many ways. We will be developing this relationship in further meetings this year and also developing our contacts with researchers who may be able to become voluntary contributors to the volume. Although funding the volume will be a daunting task, it is perhaps not an impossible one given the significance of Harwich not only within Essex but to the nation at certain periods in history.

Exploring a Lost Coastal Landscape

The Clacton VCH Group have been working on their exciting project for nearly two years, chiefly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund but with additional support from the VCH Essex Trust and the Hervey Benham Trust. The County Editor has acted as the Group's main advisor, supported by other heritage professionals. The project has attracted about 20 volunteers, with its meetings at the Essex Record Office, in Clacton and in various fieldwork locations usually attended by 15 people on average. Our thanks go to all the volunteers and contributors, but particular gratitude is owed to the Group's officers, Roger Kennell (Chairman), Tim Underwood (Secretary and Research Coordinator) and Colin Preen (Treasurer), who have worked tirelessly to make the project so productive and such an enjoyable experience for all concerned. A report on one aspect of the project's research findings about the Gunfleet estuary appears on pages 9 to 12 in this newsletter, and work is proceeding apace to create similar items for the VCH Explore website, to provide some educational guidelines for the use of the materials in local schools, and to design a Display Board to be positioned in Holland Haven Country Park. On 16th May, the Group will celebrate completion with a day for all to enjoy (see page 14), and

I am sure visiting Trust members will be able to see how the material collected in the project will contribute to and enhance the content of VCH Essex Volume XII. The next couple of months will be an exceptionally busy time for the Group's officers and volunteers before the project officially ends on 31 May. I am personally delighted that the Group have already expressed their wish to continue with their work in collaboration with the VCH in the future.

CHRIS THORNTON
County Editor, VCH Essex

The Trust's Finances

The change in our accounting year end means that the accounts are now coincident with the calendar year. Following the significant legacy in 2013, the Trust believes that it has sufficient funds to see through the production of Vol XII. The planned editorial costs are £40,000 or so a year and this will involve a cash burn of the £160,000 in our accounts if funds continue to come in at their current level of around £15,000. Vol XII costs have been aided by an anonymous donation of £7,200 spread over two years to meet the cost of completing and writing up the Built Environment section of Vol XII. The net cash burn in 2014 was £26,000.

Our expectations are that there is also £50,000 to meet the costs of Vol XIII. We therefore have to consider future sources of funding to allow Vol XIII to be completed. Besides the potential for grants and legacies, we have the donations from individuals, which are currently of the order of £5,000, attracting £1,000 of tax credits. There are 75 donors and 20% of them provide 55% of this income, averaging £75 per member. We are looking at ways of increasing the number of regular subscribers and the amount of individual subscriptions.

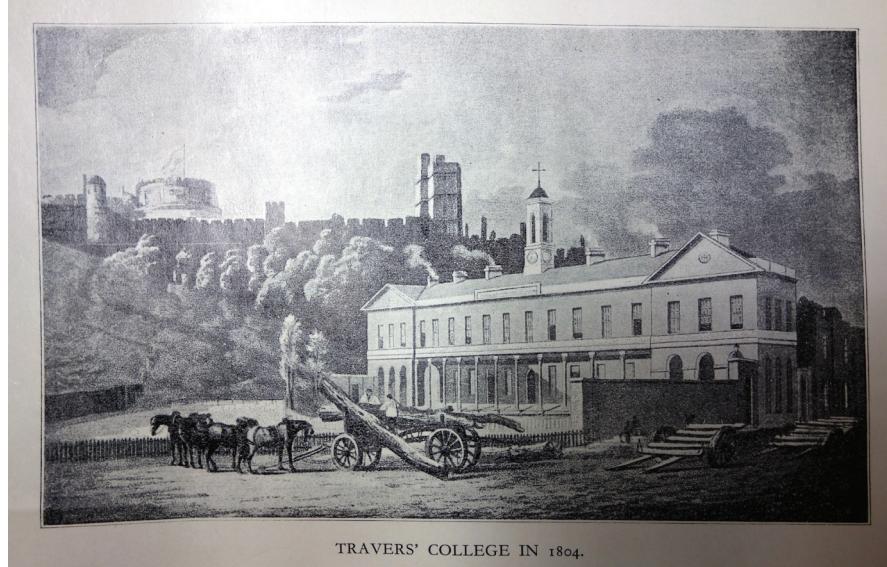
Last year we were also able to support the Clacton VCH group by a grant of £3,000 which both enabled them to get lottery funding and will provide us with material for Vol XII. We are also committed to funding the production costs of the forthcoming VCH 'short' on Newport but will be in receipt of the income from its sales.

BILL ABBOTT
VCH Essex Hon Treasurer

Great Holland, the Naval Knights and how I missed out on a visit to Windsor

In the early stages of my research on the manorial descent and the landownership of Great Holland for our next VCH volume, I came across the following entry for the parish of Great Holland in the 1870 Post Office Directory for Essex: 'The Naval Knights of Windsor and Frederick Hicks, esq., are the chief landowners; the former are lords of the manor.' That came as a surprise to me because I was sure that by the 1870s the manor was in possession of the Cree family, and an examination of the manorial court rolls, which are available on microfilm at the ERO, confirmed that Thomas Cree the Younger held his first court on 1 October 1867 at the Ship Inn and that he was still lord of the manor in the late 1880s. Clearly the entry was incorrect; this can happen. But it still left me with another puzzle: Who were the Naval Knights and what was their connection to Great Holland?

I had not heard of them before (probably I should have!) and the name reminded me more of a comedy by a certain bard from Stratford-upon-Avon than of that of a property-holding institution. Soon I learned that the Naval Knights of Windsor was a charitable foundation established by the will of Samuel Travers. Travers, MP for New Windsor, barrister, one time Surveyor of Land Revenues and Auditor-General to the Prince of Wales (later George II) died in 1725. In his will, dated 16 July 1724, he bequeathed in addition to other legacies certain (unspecified) manors and lands in Essex as well as money to purchase further estates in the county sufficient to generate £500 annual income to support seven retired naval officers: 'I therefore give, grant devise and bequeath all the rest and residue of my estate, my funeral charges and legacies being first paid, my manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments in the County of Essex, and elsewhere, with all debts, areas, bills, bonds, and other specialities, goods, and chattels, and all my estate, both real and personal, whatsoever and wheresoever, to my said executors ... that they shall and will, out of the rents, issues, and profits of the said estate, settle an annuity or yearly sum of sixty pounds, to be paid to each of every one of Seven Gentlemen, to be added to the present Eighteen Poor Knights of Windsor, the said annuities to be charged upon



TRAVERS' COLLEGE IN 1804.

Reproduced from Peter Clissold, 'Samuel Travers and the Naval Knights of Windsor' in Mariner's Mirror 60

an estate of £500 per annum, to be purchased and set apart for that purpose in the County of Essex, by my said executors and trustees.'

Due to a lengthy legal dispute this part of Travers's will concerning the installation of his charitable institution could not be acted upon until 1793 when the 'Poor Knights of Windsor of the Foundation of Samuel Travers' (subsequently 'The Naval Knights of Windsor') was validated and finally granted corporate status five years later. By then its Essex estate consisted of the farms of Great Holland Hall, Alton Park (Great Clacton) and Bovill's Hall (Ardleigh). Although the evidence is not conclusive, it is highly likely that Great Holland Hall as a farm alienated from the manorial rights was acquired by Samuel Travers himself in 1718 and not bought later by his executors. The lord of the manor Joseph Thurston had died in debt in 1714. His widow Mary, daughter of Sir Isaac Rebow of East Doneyland, obtained an Act of Parliament for the sale of part of his

estate to pay off his obligations. The Essex antiquarian Revd William Holman recorded in his contemporary notes that Daniel Bayley purchased the manor on 19 June 1718, and that the sale of the demesne to Travers 'bears date a little later after that Baylies'. The institution of the Naval Knights of Windsor was formally dissolved under the Naval Knights of Windsor (Dissolution) Act of 1892; the funds and lands were taken over by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty which sold Great Holland Hall farm to Richard Powell Cooper, the industrialist developer of Frinton-on-Sea, in 1896. During most of the 19th century the farm, which is said to have comprised 500 a. of arable, ancient woodland (Hollandhall Woods) and marshland, was leased to three successive generations of the Hicks family (John Timperly Hicks, Charles Hicks, Charles Thompson Hicks).

In order to find out more about the Naval Knights and confirmation of when Great Holland Hall was acquired I was looking forward to a visit to the St George's Chapel Archives and Chapter Library in Windsor. Alas, I was informed by a very helpful archivist there that they mainly hold copies of a few records in relation to Samuel Travers and his charity and that my best bet would be to explore the Admiralty records at the National Archives. So off to Kew instead of Windsor Castle!

HERBERT EIDEN
Assistant Editor VCH Essex

Sources:

Essex Record Office:

T/B 142/5-7 (court rolls and court books; microfilm)
T/P 195/8/13 (Holman ms)
D/DU 983 (Cooper estate deeds)

The National Archives:

PROB 11/606/25 (will of Samuel Travers)
ADM 75/232 (Naval knights - Essex property deeds)

St George's Chapel. Archives and Library:

Research Guide No. 3: Naval Knights (www.stgeorges-windsor.org/assets/files/Holdings-pdfs/ResearchGuide3-Naval-Knights.pdf,
accessed 8 December 2014)

Gunfleet estuary, Gunfleet sands and some shipwrecks

The Clacton VCH Group's two-year project "Exploring a Lost Coastal Landscape in Essex: the Gunfleet Estuary and Holland Haven", has been supported by important grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the VCH Essex Trust and the Hervey Benham Trust.

One of the themes explored by the volunteer researchers has been the many cases of shipwreck on the Gunfleet sands that lie directly opposite Frinton, Great and Little Holland and Clacton. The Gunfleet must have been the medieval name of the large estuary, fed by the Holland brook or river, which formerly ran into the sea between Frinton and Little Holland. The name is probably Anglo-Saxon in origin, as the second element 'fleet' is derived from the Old English word *fleet* meaning 'stream' or 'creek'. A rather better known example is the River Fleet in London, a tributary of the Thames, which was fed by streams on Hampstead Heath and which used to have a tidal inlet and docks at its lower end. The origin of the first element of the name 'Gun' remains uncertain, but it may have derived from an Anglo-Saxon personal name, so the meaning of the whole could be something like 'Gunna's creek'. There is evidence that the estuary was still used as a lading place in Tudor times, and the 'Ganflete' was named as a port between Walton and St Osyth in Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1586).

In addition, the name seems to have become transferred to the sandbank that lay directly off the coast. The fate of a ship and its cargo wrecked at 'Gunfletsond' on the 4th June 1318 was the subject of an inquisition held in April 1320. The 'Gonfleete' was also recorded as a sandbank in the reign of Henry VIII and both the 'Gonflet haven' (the estuary) and the 'ye gonflit' (the sandbank) appear on a map of 1584. The safer water between the sands and the inlet, now known as the Wallet, also seems to have been commonly known as the Gunfleet in the 17th and 18th centuries. Similar examples of place-names incorporating 'fleet' for coastal channels occur elsewhere, such as the Fleet in Dorset, a long narrow channel separated from the English

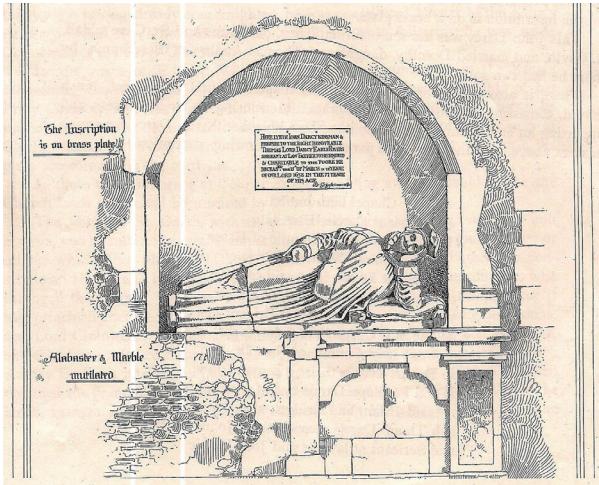
Channel by the major sandbank known as Chesil. The former estuary between Frinton and Little Holland was eventually reclaimed for agriculture, and in 1542 'the level of Gunflete haven' was recorded, perhaps indicating that estuary's marshland later known as Holland Levels was already being reclaimed. The records of the Tendring Levels Commissioners, a type of local government body charged with flood defence, survive from the 18th century and show how they maintained the drained marshlands of the level, the sea wall and the sluice through which the Holland river then emptied into the open sea.

Returning to the shipwreck in 1318, the vessel was identified as 'La Trinite' of Berwick, owned by William le Getour and mastered by Walter de Donewico (Dunwich, Suffolk). The ship had been carrying royal victuals and in 1320 the king appointed a commission under John de Bousser and William de Gosefeld to hold an enquiry at Chelmsford over its fate. The ship had been laden in the port of London by Stephen le Blound, receiver of the king's victuals at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, under royal orders. Its cargo comprised 166 quarters and 5 bushels of Spanish wheat, 42 bacon-pigs, 10 quintals of iron, a quintal of steel, and 40 iron-bound barrels of victuals, and was destined for Berwick castle. Edward I had captured Berwick from the Scots and rebuilt its castle in 1296-8. The town had also been fortified with walls, but it fell to the army of Robert the Bruce in 1318 and was not recovered by the English until after the battle of Halidon Hill in 1333. The nature of the stores being sent north in 'La Trinite' suggests they were for the maintenance of the castle's beleaguered garrison, but they failed to arrive being 'endangered and lost on the sand called Gunfletsond in the sea off the coast of Essex, which sand is five leagues distant from land'.

The commission's inquiry apparently resulted in Stephen le Blound being released from his obligation to account for the lost victuals, but the king may also have wished to ascertain what had subsequently happened to the cargo. Wrecks of the sea belonged to the king unless the 'right of wreck' had been granted to a local

landowner along the coast. Local people, however, often had their own ideas as to the ownership of material washed up on the shore and complex disputes could arise. It seems that the church of St Paul's Cathedral, London, may have had an ancient claim to right of wreck all along the coastline from St Osyth to Walton: the dean and chapter in Walton and Frinton, the Bishop of London in Clacton, and the abbey of St Osyth (founded by the Bishop) in Chiche (St Osyth). A particularly informative court case occurred in 1310 when a royal ship taking 25 tuns and 1 pipe of wines and other victuals from Gascony to England was shipwrecked and its cargo washed ashore at Walton and Clacton. The wreck attracted wide attention and the crown subsequently sued a large number of people for carrying away and consuming 18 tuns of the wines 'with force and arms'. The accused included local landowners such as the abbot of St Osyth, the bishop of London, and Richard de Newport, lessee of the dean and chapter's manor of Walton, as well as 21 other named individuals. Those identified by a place of origin came, probably by sea, from Harwich (4), St Osyth (1), Colchester (1), Maldon (1), Guernsey (1), Calais (France) (1), and 'Droggedraft' (identity unknown; could this be Dordrecht, Netherlands?). Most others were presumably locals, such as Peter de Talworth, from the family of that name who were lords of the manor of Little Holland at the time. At first the bishop of London and Richard de Newport attempted to claim right of wreck, but they also stated their ignorance that the wines belonged to the king (which may have undermined their case). Admitting the theft they were fined. In contrast, the abbot of St Osyth and many of the other accused simply denied the charges (of theft) and were exonerated by the jury.

Cases of disputed right to shipwrecked goods in the vicinity of the Gunfleet continued to be recorded in later centuries. In 1413 abbot Thomas of St Osyth and one of the canons, John Mauncer, were accused of seizing goods from a shipwreck that had been washed ashore at Little Holland, including golden cloths, furs and an image of gold, valued at £100. The case dragged through the royal courts for a long time, but reference was made to the case of 1310 as demonstrating that the abbey should not be allowed its claim to wreck of the sea. By the time the case was resolved in 1419 it was found that the goods had been seized to the use of the individuals and not to the monastery. Another wreck occurred in December 1633 when government officers investigated a Dutch vessel driven ashore at Little Holland. It was



The tomb of John Darcy in St Osyth church. Reproduced from Frederic Chancellor's The ancient sepulchral monuments of Essex (1890)

later reported that great quantities of goods had been illegally recovered from the derelict ship by 'covetous persons' some of which had been taken to Harwich and into Suffolk. Two of the culprits were identified in 1635 as the London merchants Captain Crispe and Humphrey Slaney.

When the royal officers had first arrived at Little Holland they found already in place a John Darcy, serjeant-at-law, who answered their enquiries by stating that the ship lay upon his manor, and that he had 'all wrecks of the sea'. John Darcy was the eldest son and heir of Brian Darcy of St Clere's Hall in St Osyth and was a serjeant-at-law, one of the small elite group of lawyers who dominated the central common law courts. At first they took precedence over all other barristers, were socially privileged and wore a distinctive dress and cap, although by early 17th century their position was beginning a long decline in relative importance, with successive monarchs opting to create more King's or Queen's Counsel who took precedence over them. His successful legal career made John Darcy a wealthy man. He invested in land in Essex among his purchases being the manor of Little Holland for £300 in the year 1600. No doubt upon his acquisition he

investigated his manorial rights, and may have discovered that the estate had once been held by the abbey of St Osyth in the 15th century (as reported by Morant in 1768). His claim to right of wreck at Little Holland in 1633 was probably based on the abbey's former ownership and perhaps knowledge of earlier cases when the abbey attempted to seize wrecked goods. The evidence of the State Papers suggests that he was unsuccessful and that the Admiralty asserted control, selling off the rights to the shipwrecked goods to a Captain Thomas Porter who (for a percentage) proposed to track down those responsible for the pillage and reclaim the goods for the crown. Darcy's recumbent effigy, in the fine robes of a serjeant-at-law, is to be found in the south aisle of St Osyth church where he was buried in 1638.

CHRIS THORNTON

The Clacton VCH Group's project has been supported by the VCH Essex Trust, the Hervey Benham Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund to whom the group are most grateful.



Sources

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Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous, Vol. II, 1307-1349 (HMSO), p. 104.
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F. Chancellor, *Ancient Sepulchral Monuments of Essex* (1890), pp. 155-7
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P. Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex* (1768), i. 477-8
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Victoria County History, Vol. II (1907), p. 159.

Clacton VCH Group

Investigating Local History

When ships came to Holland Haven - Uncovering the lost port of the Gunfleet.

Once a bustling medieval port.

What was the trade, where did it come from?
Why did it disappear, and what is there now?

Exhibitions and displays

Project completion talks & celebration

Free research information booklet

Refreshments

Saturday 16th May 2015, 10am – 4pm

St. James Church Hall

Tower Road, Clacton on Sea

FREE ENTRY



Supported by
The National Lottery
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



HERVEY
BENHAM
TRUST

Essex Publications

This time last year, we announced the setting up of a new history publishing initiative. Now we can invite you to attend a book launch, when the first volume in the series will be published: **Dr Paul Rusiecki's *Under Fire: Essex and the Second World War***. Paul will be known to many of you as a major voluntary contributor to VCH Essex Volume XI (articles on 'The Resorts in the First World War' and 'The Resorts 1970 to c.2009') and as the author of an important study concerning the Great War: *The Impact of Catastrophe. The people of Essex and the First World War (1914-1920)*. That book was the last item in the ERO series, so it seems very fitting to begin the new series with Paul's study of the Second World War.

Dark Days and Dark Thoughts: Morale in Wartime Essex, 1940-41

A joint event hosted by the Essex Record Office and the Essex branch of the Historical Association to launch Dr Paul Rusiecki's new book, *Under Fire: Essex and the Second World War*, marking the 70th anniversary of VE day.

The afternoon will include a talk, book launch and signing, and light refreshments.

Saturday 9 May at the ERO
2.00pm for 2.30;
close at 4.30pm

Advance booking essential.

Tickets: £5 for non-HA members; free for HA members.

HA members: please book through the Essex branch of the Historical Association on c.c.thornton@btinternet.com or 01621 856827 (after 6pm).

Non-HA members: please book through the ERO on 033301 32500

UNDER FIRE

Essex and the Second World War

1939-1945



Paul Rusiecki

What is the VCH?

Begun in 1899, and named by her permission after Queen Victoria, the *Victoria History of the Counties of England* aimed to give to 'each Englishman a history of his native land'.

For each county a set of volumes was planned to cover everything from the landscape and natural history to the development of towns and villages through prehistory to the industrial age and beyond to the present day. 14 of these county sets are now complete and work continues in a further 13 counties – including Essex.

The VCH is without doubt the greatest publishing project in English local history, and has become an institution, renowned for its scholarly integrity. No other project has covered the history of England with such closeness or with such a wide-ranging eye, encompassing archaeological, ecclesiastical, architectural, political and other sources.

You can find out about publication and progress of the Essex project at www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/Essex. The VCH volumes are available in main libraries and an increasing number of them can be read online at www.british-history.ac.uk. You can also order them from the publishers, Boydell & Brewer Ltd (www.boydell.co.uk) or telephone: 01394 610600.

HOW TO GIVE

If you would like to support the *Victoria County History of Essex*, we would be happy to send you a leaflet about the great work, together with a form for both donation and gift aid.

Or you can simply send us a cheque, made payable to *VCH Essex*, with a gift aid declaration if appropriate.

The address for donations is that of the Hon Treasurer:
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Mr Abbott's e-mail address is: bill.abbott@btinternet.com

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