

# ESSEX PAST

The newsletter of the VCH Essex Trust

NO.20

MARCH 2016



A picture speaks louder than words:

Let this handsome photograph of The Redoubt at Harwich  
persuade you all to come to Harwich for our AGM on St George's Day  
(see overleaf for details)

## VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF ESSEX TRUST

# Annual General Meeting 23 April 2016

The meeting will be held in the  
CANN casement (room) of The Redoubt in

## HARWICH

Please come from 2 o'clock for the  
formal meeting that will start at 2.30  
This will be followed by refreshments  
and a chance to win a raffle  
and then we shall have the pleasure of hearing

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DAVID WHITTLE

*Vice Chairman of the Harwich Society*  
who will give an illustrated talk on  
'The Napoleonic Defences of Harwich Harbour  
and the Restoration of The Redoubt'

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Both before and after the meeting, the casements in  
The Redoubt will be open, where you can study  
many fascinating artefacts

## REPORT BY THE COUNTY EDITOR

### Volume XII

The VCH Essex researchers and editors have been revising and completing their drafts during the year. By the time of the AGM five parishes (Kirby, Thorpe, Walton, Great Holland, Little Holland), should be completed and work also undertaken on their maps and images. Dr Adam Chapman of VCH central office has been seconded part-time for six months from the start of April to revise Dr Janet Cooper's texts on Great and Little Clacton in a similar manner. A small amount of revision work on Dr Cooper's Frinton text will soon follow. Dr James Bettley and Dr Carol Davidson-Cragoe have been undertaking work on architectural aspects of the volume. As parish texts are completed we are circulating texts for comments, and I would like to thank all those who have already responded to my Walton drafts.

During the remainder of 2016 there are two more major tasks to undertake. The first is the completion of research and writing about St Osyth, for which we are receiving help from David Andrews, Brenda and Elphin Watkin, Shirley Durgan, Jenepher Hawkins, Ken Crowe and Sean O'Dell. The second task will be the completion of the volume's thematic Introduction, dealing with such issues as ecclesiastical landownership, coastal erosion and economic activities. In addition, we have to complete the maps and images, including the reproduction and copyright permissions, compile the prelims and bibliography and tackle all the inevitable loose ends.

### Vol. XIII: Harwich and Dovercourt

From January 2016 Dr Andrew Senter has joined the team as an additional researcher for 18 months working on 19th century Harwich and Dovercourt. His work has been supported by a generous grant of £10,000 from the Essex Heritage Trust. The

objective is to create all or part of a VCH red chapter of about 30,000 words, but probably in a format that may be published earlier as a VCH 'Short'. Andrew has been working on manuscript material in the ERO and TNA and also taking notes from Harwich newspapers. Dr Paul Rusiecki, a former contributor to VCH Essex Vol. XI, has volunteered to undertake another piece of work, this time on the topic of Harwich and Dovercourt from 1936 to 1951. The help of members of the Harwich Society and the Harwich Town Council archivists has been invaluable in getting our research underway.

### VCH Clacton Group

The VCH Clacton Group completed its HLF-funded Holland Haven and Gunfleet estuary project at the end of the summer in 2015. It has since continued to meet on a regular basis, but has also taken a bit of pause to draw breath. One additional development has been the planning of a second display board at the Frinton end of the former estuary, which should be installed fairly soon (see below, p. 14). The Group is also liaising with Paul Gilman and Fred Nash of ECC over two potential future projects, one concerning historical information for coastal trails and the second more fieldwork investigation of WW2 sites in Tendring Hundred.

### Future Plans

There is a lot of current uncertainty about the future of the national VCH and how it will operate. Raising the finance for the next VCH Essex Red Books is also a daunting task. I hope that in selecting the exceptionally interesting history of Harwich and Dovercourt for our next project we have a reasonable chance of attracting funding, but the comprehensive nature of VCH accounts take a long time to produce and are therefore costly. It is possible that a slightly different approach to the work may have to be taken in future, with the work broken up into individual 'bite-sized' chunks which can be researched and published separately, perhaps as VCH shorts, before being used as the basis of a Red Book. Some of these could be researched by funded contractors while others could be prepared by volunteers whose work is managed and edited by VCH editors.

How the material produced for shorter studies can be combined into a traditional format Red Book (whether hard copy or digital) and how the inevitable gaps in coverage would be filled are further issues that require careful consideration.

CHRIS THORNTON  
*County Editor, VCH Essex*

## THE TRUST'S FINANCES

The Trust is almost entirely funded by donations. Payments to professional historians to research and edit the red books forms the majority of the expenditure. The extent to which such work can be commissioned is carefully managed through a business plan. The current plan is to use current resources to enable publication of Volume XII and provide £50,000 towards Volume XIII. The current level of normal income being raised by the Trust is of the order of £12,000 and payments to editors are currently around £40,000 per annum. This inevitably produces a 'cash burn' on the net worth of the Trust.

One further source of funding is the receipt of grants from various bodies which are designated for specific research. The amount of such designated funds totalled £6,600 at the end of 2015 and a further £10,000 grant has been obtained since the year end. The net worth of the Trust was £162,000 at the start of 2015. The investment policy has to take into account the projected cash outflow for the Trust and does include for now a small equity element. The cash burn in 2015 was £23,000 and the net worth at the year end was £139,000.

The business plan continues to be micro managed and the sourcing of funds for the completion of Vol XIII will provide a challenge.

BILL ABBOTT  
*VCH Essex Hon Treasurer*

## SHOPPING IN THE SOKENS IN THE 18TH CENTURY

VCH accounts of economic history try to include, alongside agriculture and industry, some description of retail and consumer activity. This can often be difficult, especially in rural parishes, because the sources are typically rather meagre until the 19th century. Some help is provided by Quarter Sessions returns indicating whether the weights and measures used by the tradesmen in each community were legal or not. The basic pattern of shops between Kirby-le-Soken, Thorpe-le-Soken and Walton-le-Soken can be described from this evidence, which also helps to identify the main inns then existing. Exceptionally, for these three parishes, valuable additional information is available from the inventories valuing a deceased person's goods for the purposes of probate. The main series of probate inventories for Essex no longer survive, but those for the Sokens formed a separate series because the Soke of St Paul's was an ecclesiastical peculiar; local church, matrimonial, moral and probate matters were therefore administered in a separate court. The Soken court and its records were extensively studied by E.A. Wood who made transcriptions of the inventories which recorded the contents and interior fittings of the shops in great detail.

### Walton

At Walton in 1765 there were only two shopkeepers, and in 1769 and 1778 only one, the lack of retail facilities perhaps reflecting the destruction of the village by coastal erosion in this period. Walton's original medieval church was washed away c.1800. As a result, local residents presumably shopped in neighbouring parishes, although some services such as brewing, baking and even butchery may have been provided by the parish's innkeepers and millers. In 1765 and 1769 there were three licenced premises but in 1778 only two, probably the Duke's Head and the Porto Bello. In 1769 a visitor recorded a market cross built of wood in the 'town' of Walton which two local antiquaries claimed to be 600 years old; however no other

evidence can be found that a market had formerly existed. The fair, recorded in the 18th and 19th centuries, was by that time chiefly for 'pleasure'. No probate inventories survive concerning retail premises, so little more can be said.

### Kirby

Many of Walton's inhabitants probably shopped in neighbouring Kirby, where there were more facilities and for where more evidence survives. The Quarter Sessions records indicate that between 1765 and 1783 there were typically between five and seven retailers in Kirby, divided about equally between the Upper and Lower Streets, described as shopkeepers, butchers or chandlers. There were also three main inns in Kirby by the late 17th century, the Red Lion (Lower Street, south side opposite the church), the Sloop and Crown later known as the Ship (Lower Street, south side on the corner of Quay Lane) and the Seven Ashes later known as the Hare and Hounds (Kirby Cross, north side towards the west). No market was recorded, but there was again a fair. It was held on St Ann's day (26 July), the same day as the manor court for all of the Sokens was held at Kirby, presumably a good time for business.

This framework can be filled out by reference to Kirby probate inventories. Out of the 26 men and women with surviving inventories between 1704 and 1748 eight had 'shops', though most were craftsmen such as carpenters and blacksmiths rather than shopkeepers. Three very detailed inventories of retail premises survive, although sadly we do not know the shops' precise location. In 1727 the inventory of Catherine Freeman, a widow, was valued at £94 18s. 4d. She operated a general store with a large range of clothing, footwear,

haberdashery, foodstuffs, and other goods. Her merchandise comprised wax, soap, aniseed, vinegar, candles, tobacco, raisins, currants, hats, sugar, butter, sickles, boxes, gingerbread, twine, yarn, stockings, linen cloth, buckram, spindles and whorls, remnants of cloth and wool, check, coloured thread, corks, gunpowder, shot, buttons, silk, caraway seeds, mustard seeds, tapes, bindings, worsteds, pins, knitting needles, sewing needles, thimbles, nails, pepper, ginger, cloves, allspice, mace etc.

The shop of Daniel Bernard, described as a yeoman and 'chapman' (petty trader), had in 1740 a similar but slightly different stock range with foodstuffs (including spices, tea, coffee, chocolate), ironmongery, clothing (including 36 dozen men's hats), haberdashery, and miscellaneous 'pedlar's wares'. The stock and equipment was valued at £101 18s. 2d., although he also had £45 in cash and 'book debts' owing to him of £127 9s. 6d, perhaps indicating a large role for credit. Apparently more upmarket was the emporium of the wealthy yeoman farmer and shopkeeper Thomas Stannard, whose inventory dated 1747 was valued at £628 12s. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. As well as foodstuffs, clothes, and haberdashery, his stock included more unusual items such as Sunday School books, china, Delph (pottery) and stoneware, writing paper and five bottles of 'Elixir'. A further fascinating snippet of social history at this time is provided by the Kirby parish registers which recorded that a tailor buried in 1759, 'John Taylor', was found upon his death to be a woman who had lived in the parish for 20 years 'in a man's habit' and had made his/her livelihood by tailoring. Unfortunately, 'John Taylor' did not leave a will or inventory, and as his/her name was an obvious pseudonym it seems impossible to find out anything more, although I notice that cross-dressing is now 'on trend' as a subject of academic enquiry!

## Thorpe

By the 18th century Thorpe was already a larger settlement than either Kirby or Walton and a much busier place. It had more retailers than most rural villages, roughly equivalent to other small towns in Tendring Hundred such as St Osyth and Brightlingsea. Between 1765 and 1783 the weights and measures of between seven and ten tradesmen were recorded, probably concentrated in Thorpe High Street, the owners described as butchers, shopkeepers, bakers, chandlers and grocers. There was apparently a market at Thorpe-le-Soken, although it does not appear to have possessed a charter. A fair was also recorded there, held on the Monday before Whit Sunday in 1772. The two principal inns licensed in the 1760s and 1770s, both on the High Street, were the Maid's Head (on the south side) and the Bell (on the north side near the church). The King's Head at Landermere was probably built shortly afterwards. As well as food, drink and leisure facilities (the Bell had a bowling green), the inns were venues for public business such as vestry meetings. In 1793–4 they supplied beer for the paupers employed on Thorpe's roads by the parish surveyors.

Out of the 42 Thorpe men and women with surviving inventories between 1701 and 1748 seven had 'shops', but only two relate to retail premises. The inventory of Martha Rose (or Rofe), a widow, was recorded in 1731. Either she or her late husband (or both) had been shoemakers, as she had 28 pairs of pattens and 34 pairs of clogs, as well as remnants of cloth, worsteds, tapes, threads and some other old goods. Her whole inventory was only worth £44 18s. 8d. A more upmarket establishment had been owned by Hannah Negus, another widow, whose inventory was recorded in 1748 and was worth £128 8s. 9d. Again, it seems to have been a shoe shop. As well as shoes and clogs, the stock included boots, pumps and stockings, while the equipment and and yarn. Some of the shoes in stock were described as home-

materials including 84 lasts, leather soles, uppers, wooden heels and yarn. Some of the shoes in stock were described as home-made, but others as 'Women's London Shoes' – probably imported in the latest styles.

From the later evidence of the 19th-century census returns there must have been many other types of shop, such as grocers, butchers, bakers, haberdashers etc. Only odd scraps of evidence survive, as in 1791 when a woman was apprehended by the shopkeeper's apprentice when stealing sugar from one of the Thorpe shops.

Probably many shops were quite 'general' in character, even if they had a speciality. For example, at his death c.1796 John Hill of Thorpe was recorded as a general shopkeeper, tallow chandler and soap boiler who lived in the tenement and shop called Coles. He also had a soap or wax office and a malt kiln and cinder oven that was operated by a maltster. Hill and other shopkeepers received valuable business from the parish officers who had to feed, clothe and equip the poor. One butcher received £5 10s. for meat supplied from February to October 1799, while another shopkeeper supplied a jacket and trousers, cheese, bacons and coal. In 1784 Hill received £34 4s. 1½d. for clothes for the poor, and between 1789 and 1791 provided provisions, clothing and sheets for the parish's Pest House as well as 'Trifles' for its workhouse inmates.

CHRIS THORNTON

Sources:

ERO Quarter Sessions records

ERO Parish records for the Sokens

E.A. Wood, *Soken Probate Inventories* (transcript in ERO)

## A GREAT HOLLAND CORN BOOK AND ITS CONTENTS

Supported by a grant from the Friends of Historic Essex the Essex Record Office recently acquired a 19th-century manuscript booklet which lists crops grown and sold (ERO A14253 Box 2). The front board is lettered CORN BOOK and inside across the first page is written: 'John Timperley Hicks, Great Holland, 1816'. Although it is not stated explicitly in the manuscript, it is clear that it is an account of the crop cultivation of Great Holland Hall farm. John Timperley Hicks (1766–1835), who was born in Langham (Essex), became lessee of Great Holland Hall in 1800 and was succeeded by his son Charles Hicks (1794–1878) in 1829. The information in the corn book is proving very helpful for VCH economic history sections, not only providing information on 19th-century agriculture at Great Holland but also about the facilities for shipping the farm's produce from wharves in neighbouring parishes.

The ledger measures 41 cm x 16 cm and contains 134 folios. The first entry dates from October 1816 and the final one from July 1863. Pages 2–5 are empty and the entries begin on page 6 with double-spread pages headed 'Wheat Grown in 1816' on the left-hand page and 'Wheat Sold in 1816' on the facing page, followed by entries for barley, oats, beans and peas. From 1819 acreages are recorded for each crop. These five crops were grown yearly throughout the period covered by the ledger – with a few exceptions of the odd year when no peas or no beans were produced. After 1859 the cultivation of peas seemed to have ceased. In 1823, 1826, 1831 and 1842 clover seed was also grown and in 1822 Hicks experimented with an acre of tares. The most important cereal cultivated at Great Holland farm was wheat with an average acreage of c. 90a. Varieties noted were 'red', 'white' and 'grey', and from 1839 onwards 'Talavera' (a white spring variety originally from Spain) and 'Rough Chaff'. Bean varieties recorded were 'broad beans', 'French thick beans' and 'Heligoland beans'. In the course of the 19th century barley became increasingly important and in 1842 and 1860 barley outnumbered the

acreage of wheat grown, but these were exceptional years. On average c.200 a. were under crops each year with the lowest acreage (181,5a.) in 1853 and the highest (232a.) in 1823.

The 'Grown' page on the left normally listed the name(s) of the worker(s) who 'thrashed' the crop, followed by narrow columns for 'quarters' and 'bushels', 'price per quarter' and 'total'. From the first entry in 1816 some of the wheat was threshed by machine, but it took a further 30 years until 1846 before all the wheat was machine threshed. Barley began to be threshed by machine in the late 1840s and oats, beans and peas from the 1850s onwards; threshing by hand became the exception. The chronology of the increase in machine threshing is interesting as this was one of the major causes of discontent for the so-called 'Swing rioters', whose activities convulsed the region in 1830. Although apparently no disturbances happened at Great Holland Hall farm, Jenkins Farm on Great Holland Green had its threshing machine smashed.

The 'Sold' pages on the right recorded the buyer (sometimes with place), the date of the purchase, the quantity, and the total paid. In the 1820s and 1830s Hicks delivered his crops directly to ships in Kirby, Walton and Landermere (in Thorpe). From these entries we learn that Capt. Hewitt had two ships, the 'Friendship' and the 'Courier'; Capt. Skipper was master of the 'Sutton', Capt. Ford of the 'Abeona' and Capt. Gull of the 'Endeavour'. The information about the various skippers is beneficial in supplementing other knowledge available about their activities. For example, we know from other sources that in 1814 Capt. Ford had operated out of Kirby Quay under a partnership between himself, Peter Clarke and Charles Appleby. They had shares in two vessels operating from the quay, although the site itself was owned by Clarke, with Ford and Appleby paying a proportion of the rent. Occasionally, it is recorded that cereals were delivered to Manningtree Station, Kirby Wharf and Landermere Granary 'for London'. From the

1850s onwards most of the wheat and barley was purchased by the millers of the neighbouring villages such as Beckwith, Pattrick, Thompson and Archer.

On two occasions the author made comments about the weather. Underneath the entries for peas grown and sold in 1831 and across the two pages is written: 'A wet year throughout and a very bad crop'. On the final page of the ledger it is stated: '1862 Fine & dry up to 8<sup>th</sup> March from that time till a week into April now sowing done, a great quantity of rain fell all through the month of March - All spring corn a bad crop - no quantity per acre and quality bad - with bad prices'.

HERBERT EIDEN  
Assistant Editor *VCH Essex*

## News from Wanstead

The very active Wanstead Historical Society has recently brought out two important and interesting titles:

### **Essex by William Henry Bartlett (1809-1854)**

is a reference list of engravings of Essex, from his original drawings. Seven A4 pages, with notes and a list of the Essex views can be bought for £4.00 a copy.

The Society's outstanding achievement is contained in Number 3 of the *Wanstead Record*, published in December 2015. This issue is devoted to:

### **Sir Richard Child: art collector and patron of the arts**

and is by Denis F Keeling, who is also Associate Editor of the *Wanstead Record*. For the very modest outlay of £3.50, you can buy a copy of this really excellent piece of research with a detailed survey of Sir Richard's patronage of painters in the 1700s and abiding love of acquiring works of art especially for Wanstead House.

Please send your orders, with payment for two notable bargains, to  
Wanstead Historical Society  
c/o Brian J Page at 82A Weavers House, New Wanstead London E11 2SY

## Holland Haven Information Boards

The final event of the Clacton VCH Group's two-year project "Exploring a Lost Coastal Landscape in Essex: the Gunfleet Estuary and Holland Haven" was the unveiling of an educational information board on 14th August 2015. The board describes the history of the former estuary and the trade that took place there, and explains how and when the landscape changed. It is located on the coastal path between Holland on Sea and Frinton, on the Holland Haven side of the estuary a little way past the radar tower, and will therefore be accessible to all passers-by. The location chosen is interesting as not only does it give a good view of the landscape, but a Martello Tower once stood nearby and in an adjacent field a WW2 pillbox still survives.

The excellent design was produced by Sara Hayes of EasyTiger who also oversaw the manufacture and installation. The board is located on land belonging to Tendring District Council (Holland Haven Country Park), whose officer David Hall organised the necessary permission and gave the Group some sound advice early on. The project was financed out of the grants provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Hervey Benham Fund and the VCH Essex Trust. The nearby Gunfleet Boating Club generously allowed the Group to hold a launch reception on their premises. Former member of VCH staff Shirley Durgan, who originally worked with the Group on its earliest projects, together with Chris Thornton carried out the official unveiling.

The HLF project only included finance for a single information board, but in discussion the Group realised that a second board, on the Frinton side of the estuary, would be a very positive bonus. Group member David Grayston spearheaded a fundraising campaign to finance this which has been generously supported by Frinton & Walton Town Council and Tendring District Council. The second information board will be located alongside the path at the end of the Greensward before the golf course. Some redesign work, including amendments to the text to reflect the new position, has been carried out by members of the Group, supported by Sara Hayes and Ian Taylor of Tendring District Council. It is hoped that the board will be erected in early summer 2016.

CHRIS THORNTON, ROGER KENNELL & DAVID GRAYSTON



All smiles after the formalities:  
Roger Kennell, Chairman of the VCH Clacton Group, with the  
unveilers Shirley Durgan and Editor Chris Thornton

## 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](http://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](http://www.british-history.ac.uk). You can also order them from the publishers, Boydell & Brewer Ltd ([www.boydell.co.uk](http://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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Colchester, CO3 3UZ.  
Mr Abbott's e-mail address is: [bill.abbott@btinternet.com](mailto:bill.abbott@btinternet.com)

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