

ESSEX PAST

The newsletter of the VCH Essex Trust

NO.24

MARCH 2020



Illuminations on Southend Pier during the 1950s

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This issue of *Essex Past* is, essentially, a coda to the Annual Report which will be presented at our AGM on the 25th April. The Americans have a saying 'getting your ducks in a row'. For VCH Essex, 2019 was concerned exactly with that. Firstly, attempting to ensure funding to allow us safely to plan for our unconsummated future. Secondly, to assure the progress to publication, at least of the first part of Volume XII, in 2020 and, thirdly, to do some succession planning for the future of the Trust, itself, through the election of new, preferably younger, members. All this appears in the Annual Report.

So short a time into the future, assurances have appeared which would now seem to have resolved the uncertainties both of the progress of Volume XII and of Trusteeship. As you can read in the Editor's report, publication of the first part of Volume XII will be in the Summer of this year and, for the second part, the Summer following. Although this programme will cause some slippage in the progress of the Harwich Red Book (Volume XIII), it ensures that VCH Essex will have achieved an unusual first by publishing two Red Books in two years.

A further cause for satisfaction has been the warm response to the publication of Andrew Senter's *History of Harwich, Dovercourt and Parkeston in the 19th Century*. It has sold well and has already returned a profit to the Trust.

The second issue, that of Trustees for the future, has also borne fruit. Two (possibly three) new Trustees will be proposed at the AGM (all being what your octogenarian chairman would call 'young'!) This will greatly reduce our worries. As the progress of our current volumes makes clear, writing county histories from original sources is a slow game and requires the services of highly-professional researchers. So much remains of our great county to do that a prudent body of Trustees must always, perhaps paradoxically,

have an anxious eye to the future. Let it not be said that any 'mute inglorious Milton' in Essex died unrecorded! We have now placed grant applications for funding to allow progress to be made on Volume XIII's Georgian Harwich whilst Christopher Thornton puts Volume XII to bed!

Looking back two years, I think the Trust may feel a small sense of relaxation. So many of the issues which then imperilled its future are being resolved. Of course, without the generosity of so many of our friends who supported the fund raising last year, this message would not have been written. It is pleasing that, this year and next, we shall have Red Books to justify your confidence.

GEOFFREY HARE
Chairman

This year's VCH Essex AGM and the Covid-19 virus

Our AGM was arranged for Saturday 25 April 2020
at Prittlewell Priory in Southend
but the spread of the coronavirus has led us to decide to

POSTPONE OUR AGM

We think this is the responsible thing to do, both
with respect to our supporters and to the
organisers and participants in the event

We will let you know the date when it can be re-arranged

FROM THE EDITOR

VCH Essex seems to have been especially busy over the last year. In May 2019, to help with the fundraising and profile-raising of Volume XIII, the editors assisted with the running of a conference 'Essex on the Edge' held at the Essex Record Office, in collaboration with ERO and the Friends of Historic Essex. Both Herbert Eiden and I gave talks on our current research about Harwich, and were supported by further talks from VCH trustee Ken Crowe and Neil Wiffen of the ERO. The conference format was popular, with about 80 attendees and lots of positive comments returned to the ERO. Some good contacts were made, both for funding and for the work on Harwich. A total of £700 was raised towards VCH funds from a raffle and share of ticket sales.

Herbert and I have worked successfully together for over 15 years, and so his departure in October has left a big gap. He has joined the University of Reading to work for three years on an exciting Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) project titled 'The People of 1381' (<https://1381.online/>). I have therefore finished the final stages of VCH Essex volume XII (pt 1) largely on my own. With regard to Volume XII (pt 1) the indexing, with some further proof corrections and checking, has taken a long while, but by the time you read this the finished article should be with the central VCH at IHR and a final publication schedule agreed for a date in the summer of 2020. A meeting of the Trust and the VCH central office has also agreed to try to accelerate the publication of XII (pt 2) so that it will follow on by the summer of 2021. This will necessitate a temporary pause in the new research on Harwich and Dovercourt.

We were able to celebrate the official launch of Andrew Senter's VCH 'Short' at the 1912 Centre in Harwich on 26 October, courtesy of the Harwich Society. It was another successful and well attended event, comprising an introduction to the book and its author, and then a very enjoyable lecture about Dovercourt from David Whittle

of the Harwich Society. A month later we were able to hold a second launch on 27 November in Chelmsford, courtesy of the Essex Record Office. Here lectures were given by Andrew Senter on the influence of the Bagshaw family in Harwich and Dovercourt and by Professor Catherine Clarke of the IHR on the Victoria County History. Sales of the book have been quite quite remarkable, as from a print run of 200 there are already fewer than 60 books left for sale. We owe a great deal of thanks to the Harwich Society for arranging many of the sales to their own membership and attendees at their events. Make sure you don't miss out on buying a copy – priced at £14 (£16 with P&P) available from the Hon. Secretary (patriciaherrmann@talk21.com) or the Editor (c.c.thornton@btinternet.com).

Among really interesting developments during the year has been the opportunity to liaise with a group, headed by Richard Oxborrow and Nick May and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, who are investigating all the listed buildings in Harwich standing at the time of the *Mayflower's* voyage. Also involved with the project are members of the Essex Historic Buildings Group, especially Brenda and Elphin Watkin, who have been surveying many of the buildings. Among the fascinating discoveries has been the identification of the Alma public house in Harwich, located at the north end of King's Head Street opposite Christopher Jones's house and next to the original quay, with the house of a wealthy Dutch migrant called John Lamberd or Lambard(d.1538) who was a shipowner and probably a merchant and fisherman.

The complex building has been surveyed by David and Barbara Martin, and I have been able to uncover quite a lot of information about the owner from material in The National Archives and ERO. This includes his will and probate inventory and his appearances in chancery court cases, manor courts, and taxations.



*The Alma today,
King's Head Street,
Harwich*

Richard, Nick and their colleagues have also undertaken an archaeological excavation ('test pit') in the yard of the Alma, uncovering a range of medieval and early modern pottery which will help to throw light on Harwich's settlement history. Altogether the combination of the standing architectural evidence, archaeology and documentary research offers outstanding potential for understanding the town's past.

The work of our volunteer groups has also continued apace. There is a separate article about the progress of the Southend Short project elsewhere in this newsletter. In the last issue I reported that the Clacton VCH group were waiting to hear the result of grant applications for a new project to study overseas trade recorded in Harwich's Ports Books (Customs Accounts) to

to assist with Volume XIII. I am glad to report that these were successful and the project went ahead with funding from the VCH Essex Trust, The Hervey Benham Trust and the Grassroots charity for the Colchester and Tendring area. It was with much sadness, though, that members learnt of the death of one of the original and very active members of the Group and its long-serving secretary, Tim Underwood. He

was especially keen on the Port Books project and it is such a shame he has been unable to participate. Tim was also a member of the VCH Essex Trust and many of us attended his funeral at St Mary the Virgin, Bures in Suffolk on 14 November. While undertaking the project the Group has met in the historic building at Foresters, Harwich, again courtesy of the Harwich Society, with usually 15 or more members working on transcribing the customs accounts which have been photographed from the originals in The National Archives. Already some very interesting material has been extracted regarding imports (such as fish and salt) and exports (including Suffolk cloth) with frequent voyages to and from places in the Low Countries such as Brill and Enkhuisen, but others further afield, for example to Spain and Danzig (Gdansk) in the Baltic.

Finally, from the autumn of 2019 I have made a renewed attempt to 'spread the word' about VCH in a series of lectures, either talking about the future Volume XIII or other research projects I have worked on. So far, I have talked to the Colchester Antique Collectors Club, the Mistley Book Club, The Essex Society for Family History, and the Essex Historic Buildings Group. My next talk 'Tudor Harwich and its People' will be on Saturday 4th April to the Historical Association (Essex Branch). More talks will be advertised on the new VCH Essex Facebook and Twitter accounts! (see page 12).

CHRIS THORNTON
Editor

THE TRUST'S FINANCES

Once again at the end of the calendar year I am able to report a healthy level of reserves of £91,532. This total is made up of the usual generous annual support of our wonderful individual supporters, and from other trusts in the county, to whom we are always grateful. Particular thanks must go to our own Shirley Durgan: we also received a legacy from Miss Marion Perry, Shirley's inspirational history teacher.

The sale of the Harwich Short with its launch during the Harwich history weekend in October has covered the publication costs, a success arising from the splendid work undertaken by all those involved.

We have not sat on our laurels, but continue to fund the work to completion of Volume XII Part 1 with editorial costs incurred recently of £8,800 on just this project. We are able to support the volunteers when there are modest costs involved. There are also, of course, ongoing costs for the Editor's final work on Part 2.

We are now actively looking at budgeting for the future expenditure on editorial work on Volume XIII. This looks to be in excess of £75,000, so you can see that we will continue to need your support.

We ask our supporters to complete a gift aid form if they are tax payers, as this does allow us to claim a further 25% on any cash gifts we receive: a valuable addition to our income. We would also be very happy to forward to anyone our newly updated Legacy leaflet if you would like to be involved with this continuing historical project for the future.

LOUISA TIPPETT
VCH Essex Hon Treasurer

A SAD FAREWELL

Sir Alex Jarratt, CB DL, who retired from our Trust in December 2017, died in December 2019 at the age of 95.

In 2002, Sir Alex was interviewed by the Editor of the *Birmingham Post* for an article he was writing to celebrate Sir Alex's spectacularly successful career at Birmingham University, which he was leaving after nearly 20 years as its Chancellor. The piece was also published in *The Birmingham Magazine*, a journal that was distributed to all 'Brum alumni', including former Birmingham student, Shirley Durgan. She read that Sir Alex intended to return to his native county – Essex – and was 'looking forward to indulging his passion for history books'. Shirley sent a note suggesting that our Chairman invite this truly outstanding man to become a member of our committee. We asked him. He said 'yes - so long as you don't expect me to raise money'.

Sir Alex joined our Trustees in June 2003 and was elected Vice-Chairman in 2005. His wide knowledge of the Civil Service, commerce and industry and, of course, academia through his years as Chancellor of Birmingham University, was invaluable. He also brought gentle wisdom and steadfast calm to all our deliberations over the next fifteen years.

In spite of his initial stated wish, Sir Alex volunteered to head our fund-raising committee and, tasked with celebrating the Diamond Anniversary of the Essex VCH, he raised an astonishing £62,000 in that campaign alone. Highly respected and held in great affection by his fellow VCH Trustees, Sir Alex and his exceptional contribution to the VCH in Essex will be sorrowfully missed.

Thank you Shirley !

THE SOUTHEND VCH 'SHORT'

A team of volunteer researchers has been working for about three years on a project to produce a new history of Southend for the VCH Short series. It would be impossible, of course to condense the history of Southend, town and borough, into the 30-40,000 words of a 'Short' and so the team has selected particular aspects to look at in a fair amount of detail. And so, far from being a traditional chronological description of a town, this volume will highlight particular aspects of the borough's past. Many of these aspects, or themes, have been chosen specifically by members of the volunteer research team as of particular interest to them, and we, hope, to our readers.

Under *Resort Development* we will be examining Railways and the development of Southend's first housing estate, Clifftown, in the mid-19th century; the role of Private Enterprise and the Local Authority in the development of the town in the later 19th century, and in particular the provision of facilities for visitors. Also in this section we will be looking at how attitudes and responses to visitors to the resort - holidaymakers and 'excursionists,' changed in the period from the 1970s to today.



Western Esplanade and Gardens

The section on the *Economy* of the borough will include a fascinating analysis of the effects of agricultural depression on Leigh in the late 19th century and the resultant house-building boom. The early history of the Utilities – gas, water and electricity – will also be found in this section, together with a brief history of the biggest employer in the borough at the time – EXKO (E.K. Cole Ltd). This firm was at the forefront of radio technology and design, the development of plastics for the domestic (and industrial) market and they played a vital role in the development of radar during and after the Second World War. We also look at unemployment in the town in Edwardian Southend and the development of the first Council houses for the ‘Working Classes’.

Local Government forms another section, looking at the changing boundaries of the parishes that made up the borough and the role that the Poor Law played in local government. Also in this section we examine in some detail the fascinating story of Southend’s first local authority – the Southend Local Board – and its successor the Southend Municipal Borough, and the part that they both played in the development of the town as we know it today. Among their most notable achievements were the development of the seafront esplanades, the laying out of the cliffs and gardens, the building of Victoria Avenue and – although you can’t see it, the building of the town’s sewerage system!

The final section of the Southend Short examines the *Social and Cultural Life* of the Borough. In particular we look at the range of clubs, societies and other special interest groups in the late 19th and early 20th centuries together with an extended paper on nonconformity in the Borough in the 19th century. In this section also will be found the story of education in the Borough – from the early private ‘dame’ and charity schools to the Board Schools and then the advent of compulsory education.

KEN CROWE
VCH Trustee

The Victoria County History of Essex in the digital age

In January the VCH, in association with Aimer Media, launched a smartphone app. 'A History of English Places' is available to download for free from both Google Play and the Apple App Store. In the free version you can navigate the first-ever edition of the Ordnance Survey map, either manually or using your smartphone's location services, and use location pins to explore 13,713 descriptions of England's villages, towns and cities from the Topographical Dictionary of England (Lewis, 1848). Subscription options (£9.99 annual or £1.99 per month) give you access to more detailed entries taken from over 175 volumes of history produced by the VCH project. Over time more material will be added from existing volume as well as including material from new VCH volumes.

The more detailed VCH entries for Essex reflect the coverage of the Essex volumes currently available on British History Online and are therefore concentrated in certain geographical areas of the county. The material has been optimised for reading on smartphones and tablets and the app is the perfect companion when heading out and about to explore the county.

VCH Essex now has a social media presence on both Facebook and Twitter. Please do connect with us to find out about upcoming talks and new discoveries made by the VCH team. We would also love to hear about any initiatives to do with the history of our county.

Twitter: @Essex_VCH

Facebook: @vchessex

JOHANNA DALE,
VCH Trustee

An Early Medieval Essex Anchorite

Anchorites were a type of medieval hermit, typically but not exclusively female, who were moved to seek lives of religious solitude through permanent physical enclosure in a cell or 'anchorhold'. These cells were most often attached to a parish church or chapel, although they can also be found in other situations such as at monasteries and castles. In the earliest recorded cases the cells were perhaps no more than makeshift timber structures although by the 14th century many were of stone. They typically had a window or squint looking through to the high altar, and sometimes another one onto the outside world allowing the recluse to speak to visitors. Often the anchorites must have required servants to assist them. Archaeological evidence has demonstrated that some cells were very small indeed, at just a few square metres, although others had larger accommodation in several rooms and even attached gardens. Permission for enclosure was probably dependent upon some sort of patronage and support with satisfactory financial arrangements in place. After permission was granted, usually in the form of a licence, there would be a formal liturgical ceremony of enclosure marking the permanent separation of the anchorite from the world. The lives of anchorites were governed by rules, the most famous and much copied being known as *Ancrene Wisse* ('Guide for anchoresses') which was first written by an Augustinian canon for three sisters, c.1220. Once an anchorite had withdrawn into their cell, they became recluses for life and were not allowed to leave.

County lists of anchorites were first published by Rothera Mary Clay in 1914. Initially, most anchorites seem to have been rural, although the number of urban anchorites increased as the Middle Ages progressed. Distribution across the country was by no means even, although it is unclear whether this was always the result of real regional differences in observance, or whether it was partly the result of surviving documentation and research progress. For Essex, Clay was only able to find half a dozen anchorites which have been listed here in date order: (1) unknown, at St James's church, Colchester, 1155; (2) unknown, Maldon, 1163; (3) Cecily, at the church of St James, Colchester, 1272; (4) Agnes, at St Leonard's church, Hythe, Colchester, 1290; (5) Anne de Lexeden, Radwinter, 1374; (6) Matilda Newton, at Barking in 1417.

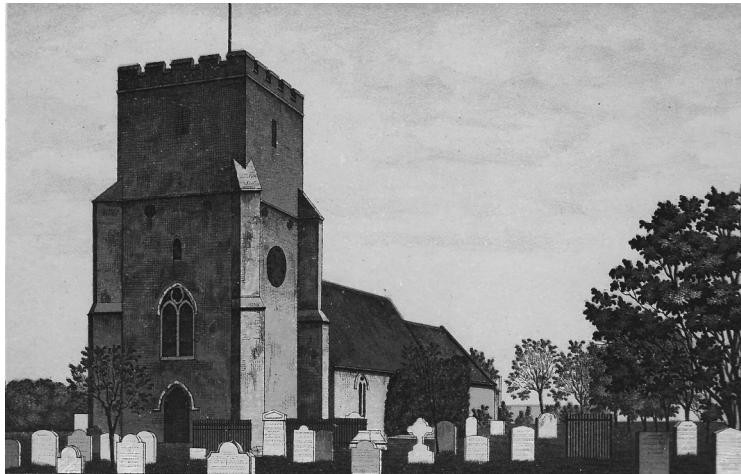
Warren extended the lists published by Clay, and across the country she was able to identify a total of 778 anchorites living in 601 separate sites between the 12th and 16th centuries. However, her study did confirm Clay's finding that relatively few anchorites are known for Essex. By period, Warren's Essex data were for the 12th century (2 female; 3 male; over 3 sites); 13th century (2 female; 2 sites); 14th century (1 female; 1 site); 15th century (1 female; 1 site); 16th century (no evidence). One of the anchorites additional to those listed by Clay was to be found at Writtle.

A British Academy project funded in 2009–10 also created an online database of 'Hermits and Anchorites of England' which is available at <http://hermits.ex.ac.uk/index/project>, but it does not seem to have been completed. A search of the database on 'Essex' returns no information on anchorites, and only three entries for Essex hermits, all of them male and supported by the crown. I thought it was also worth listing these here out of general interest: (1) John de Ware who was granted custody of the chapel of St Katherine on the bridge of Stratford atte Bowe in 1344; (2) John ate Welle, the 'hermit of Cattawade' who (with John Canes of Branham) was issued letters of protection for the upkeep of the bridge and causeway between Manningtree and Cattawade (Suffolk) and to build a chapel there in honour of the Virgin Mary in 1359; (3) John Neuton who had an earlier life grant of his hermitage of St Anne, Colchester, confirmed in 1402.

Ongoing research on Harwich and Dovercourt for VCH Essex Volume XIII has now added at least one more example to the corpus of Essex anchorites. Preserved in the National Archives is a set of detailed account rolls for the manor of Dovercourt (including Harwich). The earliest roll dates from 52–3 Henry III (1267–8), but the important information relating to this topic was found in a later roll from 1281–2. All the accounts take the normal format of an income and expenditure account followed by a grange and stock account, and at the end of the latter is attached an account of the labour services owed by the unfree customary tenants of the manor (villeins). In the 1281–2 roll I was surprised to read under the heading 'Ploughings' that ten 'works' (i.e. each a day's work/labour from a tenant) had been expended for ploughing the land of the anchorite (*et pro terra Annachorite*). Then, further down, under the heading 'Autumn Works' another sixty works had been used up by reaping and binding the corn belonging to the anchorite.

Clearly, therefore, an anchorite was living on the manor in 1281–2 and had been endowed with land by the lord of the manor on which the manorial labour force was employed to plough (and presumably seed) and to subsequently reap the crop at harvest-time. A rough valuation can be put to the work, as the ploughing works were said to be worth 3d. each and the autumn works 1d. each (compared to the standard unfree day-work being worth ½d. each). The total value of the labour was 7s. 6d. It appears that the anchorite continued to live on the manor for at least another decade. In 1288–9 the anchorite's land was said to comprise ten acres and in 1292–93 there was a 'decay' of rent of thirteen shillings for the land of the recluse (i.e. because the lord had remitted the rent of the land given to the anchorite). Peasant holdings had become much sub-divided by the late 13th century, and a holding of this size and rental value (perhaps a third or quarter of a virgate) represented a quite common and reasonably-sized farm. It should have been sufficient for the basic maintenance of the anchorite.

As yet I have not found the name of the anchorite, and is it quite likely that it has not been recorded in surviving documents. However, as the anchorite had been endowed with manorial land, we can reasonably infer that the patron was the lord of the manor who in 1281–2 was Roger Bigod, 5th earl of Norfolk. Although it is not impossible that his predecessor and uncle of the same name was responsible (the 5th earl was the son of the 4th earl's brother Hugh Bigod, justiciar of England), it does seem less likely. The 4th earl died in 1270, but there is no mention of the anchorite in the first surviving account roll of 1267–8. Whatever the case, this Dovercourt/Harwich example fits the general pattern of patronage of anchorites by the crown, aristocracy and gentry, who were able to support religious recluses out of the yearly revenues of their lands. This was typically in the form of an amount of money per week, so the Dovercourt/Harwich example is more unusual in that an endowment of land had been given. Of course, once established anchorites may also have received charitable gifts and alms from other people in the community beyond their chief patron(s).



Dovercourt church in the late 19th century

Where exactly was the anchorite's cell in Dovercourt/Harwich? The most probable location is at Dovercourt church rather than its daughter chapel at Harwich, though the possibility of the latter cannot be entirely excluded for the moment. In the Middle Ages Dovercourt church was appropriated to Colne Priory which may have had an influence on the establishment of an anchorite's cell. In the next phase of VCH research I will be attempting to flesh out the information gathered so far, as it seems possible that a tradition of religious recluses continued in Dovercourt in later centuries. According to J. E. Oxley an anchorite was recorded at Harwich in a rental of 1465 (this has not been substantiated as yet), and another document in the Essex Record Office apparently records rules for a 'hermitage' at Dovercourt in 1527.

Watch this space!

CHRIS THORNTON

Reading and Sources

R.M. Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London, 1914)

M. Hughes-Edwards, 'The World of the Medieval Anchorite' published online: <https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/anchorites/anchorites.htm>

E.A. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England, 1200-1540* (Manchester, 2019)

J.E. Oxley, *The Reformation in Essex to the Death of Mary* (Manchester, 1965)

A.K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985)

The National Archives, SC 6/840/3, 5, 7.

A BIG RED BOX

Soon after her appointment, Professor Catherine Clarke of the IHR decided to celebrate the 120th anniversary of the VCH. She set a fairly light-hearted challenge to all VCH counties including Essex.

We received a ‘specially- customised Red Box’ (the shape and size of a VCH Big Red Book) accompanied by an invitation to fill it with objects which would ‘connect with our local history in quirky, personal or surprising ways’. Professor Clarke’s intention was, she said, ‘designed to widen participation in VCH local history and explore new ways of telling our stories’.

21 items were carefully packed into our Essex box, ranging from a tiny Roman tessera to a Radio Caroline disc, from saffron crocus bulbs to a Mersea oystershell, from a china Martello tower to the log of an Essex bargeman. All manner of memories of Essex technical marvels and distinguished inventors were put in too: a Marconi valve, a model of a Ford Popular, fabric by the coronation robe silk maker, and a matchbox homage to Essex University. Scientific marvels were not forgotten: the burial ground of an Anglo-Saxon prince, early radio transmissions from Writtle and the reason why the sky is blue, were lovingly described.

We managed to include a flavour of Essex characteristics that were too large or too perishable to put in the box (a timber-framed house, for instance, or a splosh of Essex mud), by including miniature books, postcards of places and a scattering of handsome illustrations. A few fascinating personal mementoes were squeezed in too. Very brief captions were provided for each item, and longer descriptions were used for a simple catalogue to inform the visitors to the display of each collection that was held at Senate House during the spring and summer of 2019.

The boxes and their contents have now been returned to the counties. The Essex Big Red Box will be on display at our AGM , for you to study, to tell us what you think of our selection and to suggest what *you* would have included.

THE DAY WAR CAME TO CLACTON ON SEA

Remembering the Victoria Road aeroplane crash of 1940

During the early months of 1940 the Essex seaside resort of Clacton on Sea was preparing itself for the forthcoming summer season of welcoming holidaymakers, as it had done every year since the inception of the town in 1871. War had been declared the previous September, and children from Edmonton (London) had been evacuated to the town, but the quiet months ahead, and into 1940, became termed as 'the Phoney War', with life generally carrying on as normal with no warlike activity. The 1940 official holiday guide had been printed, and war would surely not impinge on huge numbers of holidaymakers arriving in the town, just as they had done the previous year and all those before?

During the late evening of 30th April 1940, a lone damaged German Heinkel 111 mine-laying aeroplane began to circle the town just as residents were preparing for bed. It was flying ever lower, the engines spluttering, the sound brought residents to their windows to peer out at what the noise could be. Approaching from the sea and now on fire, the twin-engine aeroplane at rooftop height crashed onto the residential Victoria Road area of the town. Next came an almighty explosion as one of the mines exploded, the noise being heard as far away as Colchester and Ipswich. This explosion demolished a house, killing its occupants Mr and Mrs F Gill. Their son was very seriously wounded. All the four German airmen also lost their lives.

From a town preparing for its influx of summer visitors, this crash resulted in the first civilian fatalities on mainland Britain of the Second World War. Widespread damage was caused to property and up to two hundred people were injured. Clacton had come to national prominence for all the wrong reasons.



The Gill family's house after the bomb fell

The exact 80th anniversary of what became known as the 'Clacton Victoria Road crash,' will be marked with a joint exhibition staged by the Essex Record Office, the Friends of Historic Essex and the Clacton VCH Group. St. Paul's Church Hall, Church Road,

Clacton, being close to the crash scene, will be the venue to mark this tragedy which befell the town. Included in the exhibition will be the official launch of a new illustrated booklet telling the comprehensive story of the crash, the rescue operation, and subsequent story of Victoria Road. Essex Sound and Video Archive will be present, a short, illustrated, presentation will feature, and flowers will be a symbol for remembrance.

The exhibition takes place on Thursday 30 April 2020, 10am to 4pm at St. Paul's Church Hall, Church Road, Clacton on Sea. Free entry. We look forward to meeting you.

ROGER KENNELL
VCH Clacton Group

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)

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:
Miss Louisa Tippett, ACA, BSc, 121 Colchester Road, West Bergholt, Colchester, Essex CO6 3JX; or she can be contacted by email at: louisa@whittles.co.uk

or telephone: 01394 610600.

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