

# ESSEX PAST

*The newsletter of the VCH Essex Trust*

NO.28.

SPRING 2024



*Chris Thornton on Harwich: VCH Conference September 2023*

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This has been another very eventful year for the VCH Essex Trust. Chris Thornton, our County Editor since 2003, retired in April (2023), handing over the reins into the safe hands of Herbert Eiden, previously our Assistant Editor. Chris continued as Consulting Editor for six months, while Herbert completed his contracted work for the People of 1381 project, taking over as County Editor in October. Meanwhile work on Vol. XIII of our Red Book series (Harwich and Dovercourt) has progressed well. This has included research on the 'long' 17th century, when Harwich rose to prominence with the establishment of a naval dockyard during the Commonwealth period. Several sections have been completed (including Medieval Religious history and Local Government; Harwich and Dovercourt in the Georgian period and 19th century Harwich). Research on medieval and Tudor trade (assisted by the Clacton VCH group's work on the Tudor Port books) has thrown up some fascinating details relating to merchants, ships and their cargoes.

Members of the Victorian Society visited Harwich on 19th July, an event hosted by Harwich Museum in conjunction with VCH Essex and organised largely by Chris Thornton; Herbert Eiden and Andrew Senter also attended, Andrew giving a talk on the Bagshaw family and development of Dovercourt. A very successful event was held at the Galleywood Heritage Centre in September, to mark the 120th anniversary of the publication of VCH Essex Vol. I, which included a major essay on Essex Domesday, together with the full translation of the Essex Domesday. A full report is included in this Newsletter. It was very refreshing to see a large number of new faces at the conference, which helped to raise awareness of the VCH project to a wider audience. And many thanks to all those who assisted with the refreshments, and particularly to Chris, who organised the event.

This year's event will be held at Galleywood Heritage Centre on 12th October, on the theme of 'Religion, Reformation and Society' in Essex. See advertisement later in this issue.

We were very sad to lose Geoffrey Hare as a Trustee; he relocated to Nottingham last October. He joined the Trust in 1999 and served as Chairman from 2005 to 2013 and again from 2018 to 2021. We wish him, and his wife, a very happy and long retirement. We were also very sad to say farewell to West Bowers Hall, our regular meeting place for many years. Our host, Patricia Herrmann, who had been the Trust's secretary from 1996-2021) needs now to devote much more time to family matters. We shall be proposing the names of at least one additional Trustee for your consideration at the forthcoming AGM at Southend on 15 June.

It is sad to have to report the sudden death of Canon Henry Marsh, who had been our Independent Examiner since 2014. I am pleased, however, to report that the Trust's finances continue on an even keel, thanks to our regular supporters and donors, although

we need to make every effort to maximise the opportunities to increase our funds to ensure the continued success of our programme of research, writing and publication into the future.

A very special thanks to our Trustees, and particularly to those hardworking officers, our Treasurer and Secretary and to Johanna (website development) and Amanda (Newsletter editor) and, of course, to our splendid editorial team, now headed by Herbert Eiden, with Andrew Senter as Assistant Editor and Chris Thornton who continues to contribute so much.

**Ken Crowe.**

Chairman

February 2024

## EXPLORING ESSEX HISTORY IN THE 11th CENTURY AND BEYOND

Report on an event at the Galleywood Heritage Centre, 23 September 2023.

This half-day conference was held to mark the 120th anniversary of the publication of the first volume of VCH Essex, which contained John Horace Round's important essay on Domesday together with his translation of the Essex entries. This conference, therefore sought to explore aspects of Domesday Essex while rounding off the day with a talk on the current work of the VCH Essex Editors. The conference was supported by about 70 attendees.

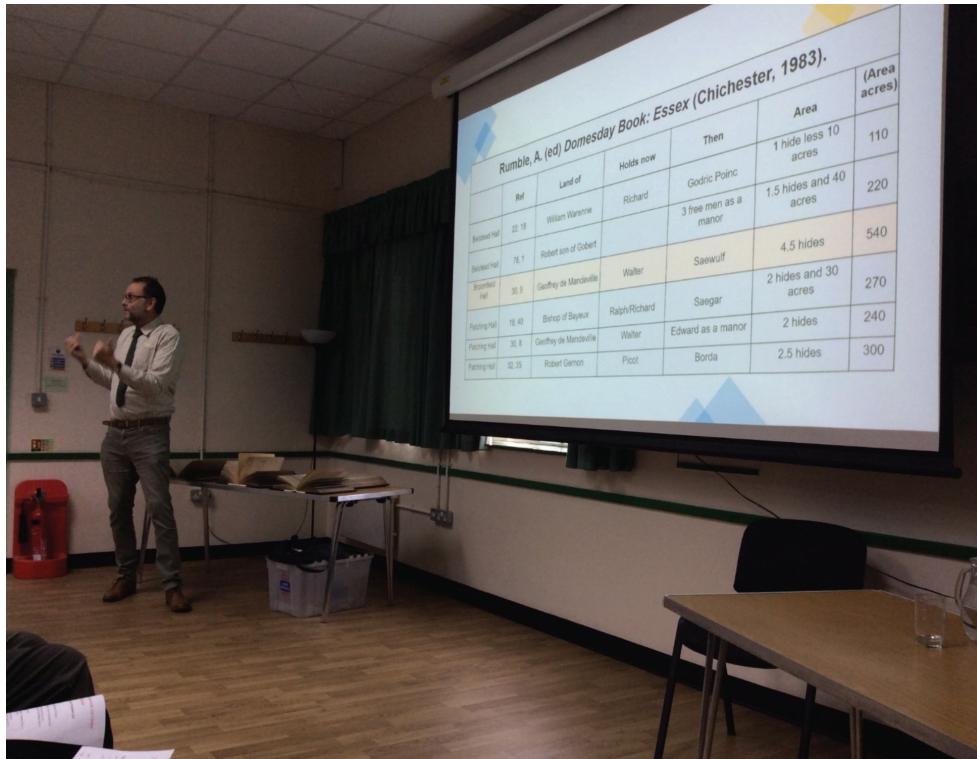
The first talk was 'Essex in Domesday Book' by **Philip Morgan**, who worked for nearly a decade on the Phillimore edition of Domesday Book, and edited half a dozen of the counties and translated others.

Domesday Book is one of the best-known primary sources for the medieval history of this country, along with Magna Carta and the Bayeux Tapestry. The word 'Domesday' means 'judgement' (at the end of the world) and the term first appears in the Dialogue of the Exchequer (c. 1176). When 'Domesday' was in use it remained as a manuscript; it was only when it was no longer used as evidence (from late 12th-early 13th century) it was bound in book form.

The Domesday Commissioners were divided into 7 circuits, East Anglia being the 7th. The returns for the bulk of the country were copied, in abbreviated form, in what has become known as Greater Domesday Book. The entries were in double column and were rubricated (i.e. headings highlighted in red). The returns for East Anglia (Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex) are much more detailed (including details of livestock), in single column, with no contemporary rubrication. In all, it is calculated that the compilation of Domesday Book required the participation of some 60,000 people, including jurors and witnesses.

There have been several 'modern' facsimiles of Domesday Book, the first dating from 1783. In 1861, Ordnance Survey produced a facsimile edition and in the 1980s the Alecto Facsimile was published. In each of the editions the translations of some of the terms tend to differ, being rendered into modern English in the latest, Phillimore, editions. Thus, villeins are now 'villagers' and bordars are now 'small holders.'

Since the entries for East Anglia (Little Domesday Book) were not abbreviated, there is some fascinating detail that would have been omitted in the 'Greater Domesday'. At Paglesham, land had been given to the church by a man 'when he went to battle'; at Ongar Alaric went away to a naval battle against king William. And wouldn't it be great to know a little more about Robert 'Perverti'?



*Neil Wiffen: VCH Autumn Conference 2023*

In the second talk, **Neil Wiffen** of the Essex Record Office, illustrated the potential for analysing Domesday Book for parish histories, in this case, Broomfield. He started by graphically reconstructing Morant's 'maners' within the parish of Broomfield. He then constructed a table based on the information in Domesday, giving the tenant-in-chief, the landholders in 1066 and 1086 and then the area of land held. Neil then showed us how he approached analysing similar data for his current research at UEA, and applied this method to comparing the data extracted from Domesday with later sources, allowing him to 'delve deeper' as he put it.

The geology/soil map of the area was the starting point for understanding how the land was being used, both at the time of Domesday and today. From this point it was possible then to extract various data from Domesday Book, (for example, land use and acreages), and to compare this data with that from later periods and in particular a very detailed map of the parish of Broomfield dating to 1771. By this very methodical analytical approach Neil was able to tentatively equate specific acreages of land use recorded in Domesday with fields on the 1771 parish map. One example which stands out in this reporter's mind was the area of pasture given in Domesday, which equates almost exactly with the acreages of pastureland shown on the 1771 map. It just shows you what can be achieved with the right approach.

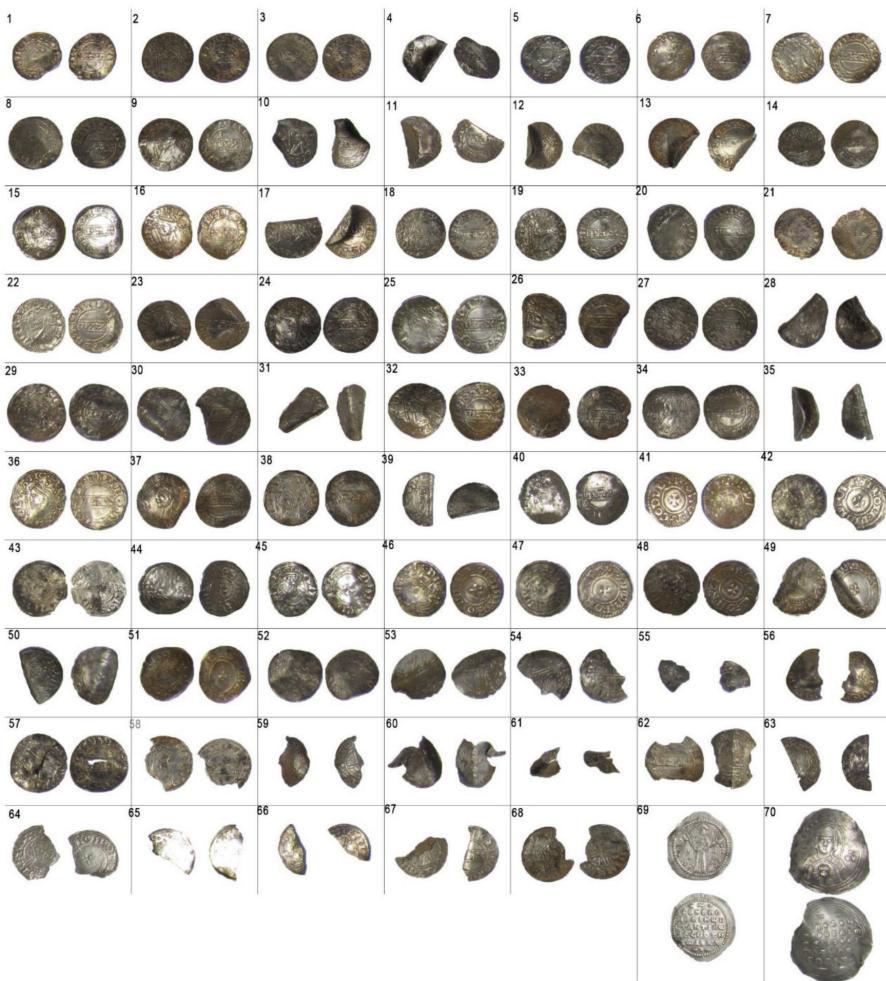
Following refreshments, managed largely by members of the Clacton VCH group, **Philip Wise**, of Colchester and Ipswich Museums told us about a hoard of 11th century coins from Braintree, in '1066 and All That'.



#### *Philip Wise and the Braintree Hoard*

Philip started by saying that sources for our understanding of Essex in the late 11th century included Norman castles, monasteries, churches (encouraging us to visit Great Clacton church as an excellent example) while Domesday Book should be used as an aid to understanding how and why this hoard of coins was buried.

The Braintree hoard was found on two separate occasions and comprises a total of 106 coins: silver pennies, cut pennies and fragments dating to the reign of Harold II. Most of the coins were minted at London, while East Anglian and south-east English mints are also represented. There were also two Byzantine coins in the hoard, one of Basil II (976-1025) and the other of Constantine X (1059-1067). These would have been regarded as bullion, not as money. They probably entered England through trade via the royal burh of Colchester.



### *Catalogue of Braintree Hoard (part)*

It is probable that coins bearing Harold's name continued to be used and minted for a short time after Hastings; but it is unlikely that the Braintree hoard was buried after 1067 since William I was issuing coins in his own name from that year.

So, why were these coins buried, and what happened to the person responsible? Did they go off and fight at Hastings and perish? Did this person see warships sailing up the coast and panic? Answers on a postcard, please!

The final talk of the day was by our retiring Editor, **Chris Thornton**, who brought us up to date with the latest research on Harwich and Dovercourt for VCH Essex XIII. The theme of his talk was ‘Harwich’s overseas trade long before Brexit: Evidence from the Port books in the reign of Elizabeth I.’

In the 12th century Harwich was in the hands of the Earls of Norfolk and, during that and the succeeding century the town grew rapidly in size, the river Orwell being the main mustering point and centre for provisioning. Governmental surveys in the reign of Elizabeth, in response to various threats, were designed to discover what resources were available. Those of 1566 and 1587 also illustrated the increasing number of customs officers. Central to this research has been the Clacton VCH group’s Port Books Project, transcribing and translating the Port books from 1565 onwards. The best series of these records dates from the period 1571-5. The principal questions asked of the data in the Port books were:

What places and regions did Harwich trade with?  
What cargos and merchandise was traded?  
What were the sizes of the ships involved?  
Who were the masters and merchants?

The ‘head port’ for Harwich was Ipswich; the Port books were filled out by the customs officers, collectors or customer, controller and searcher. Increasing levels of fraud made the series less reliable over time. The Dutch revolts of 1566-68 and 1572 disrupted normal trade, and particularly with Sluys, forcing a move to Vlissingen.

Having assembled all of the data, it was possible, as Chris showed, to begin to analyse cargo, ships, masters and ports in a series of tables, showing, in one set of tables, exports (mainly cloth) and, in another series, imports from north and south Europe. The largest ships, of 100 tons, were used in long-distance trade.

Thus ended a splendid conference, and thanks to all those who took part.

**Ken Crowe.**  
Chairman

## FROM THE EDITOR

The past year saw a major change after Chris Thornton retired as county editor after 31 years of dedication to the VCH Essex. After completing some other commitments, I took over the editorship fully in October 2023. Fortunately, this change is not felt too keenly because Chris has kindly agreed to carrying on supporting and contributing to Essex VCH as a volunteer. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chris again for his sterling work for the VCH and local Essex history in general. I am aware that I follow in huge footsteps, but with the Trust's support, the help from the assistant editor Andrew Senter and the knowledge that Chris is there to consult, if necessary, it should be fine!

Progress on volume XIII – Harwich and Dovercourt – has been steady throughout the year. Chris has completed drafts for the Medieval chapter on Landownership, Local Government, Economic History and Religious History, which I am in the process of editing. He is carrying on working on the Introduction and Social History of the chapter.

Andrew Senter has written draft texts for the 1815–1914 section which, after editing by Chris Thornton, were recently uploaded to the VCH website where they can be read alongside Andrew's chapter on Harwich's Georgian history

<https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history/county-histories-progress/essex-vol-xiii-harwich-and-dovercourt>

Andrew has also submitted his draft for Harwich and Dovercourt in the First World War. After editing and commenting on it, I have passed it on to Chris for further review.

My own research on Harwich and Dovercourt focusses on the ‘long’ 17th century (1604–1714). With the establishing of a naval dockyard during the Commonwealth period and the Dutch wars after the Stuart restoration the national importance of Harwich (and with it the number of records produced) increased hugely. I have also begun to study the wills of the two places for this period. Those of you who have studied historical wills know that they disclose a wealth of information not only about religious attitudes, but also about the social and economic composition of the community. You will find a little snippet of this research further down the pages of this publication.

The VCH Essex volunteer groups are still going strong. The Southend ‘Short’ is making good progress and the format was approved by Adam Chapman of the central VCH office in an online meeting last July with the Trust's chairman and leader of the Southend volunteer group, Ken Crowe, Chris Thornton and me.

The Newport ‘Short’ has been reprinted after selling out. The Harwich, Dovercourt and Parkeston in the 19th Century ‘Short’ is now also effectively out of print and the VCH Essex Trust will move to reprint it shortly. Good to know our products are in demand!

The Clacton VCH Group has finished its project on the history of and landscape along the Holland brook, and an end-of-project event, display and book launch will take place on

Saturday 20th April 2024 from 10am to 4pm at Tendring Village Hall. The group continues with monthly research and discussion meetings at the Tendring Village Hall, led by their chairman Roger Kennell.

A few further activities are worth noting. Ken Crowe, Chris Thornton, Andrew Senter and I attended the VCH Day held in London on 10th May 2023 where we were introduced to the new VCH architectural editor Dr Ruth Slatter and had interesting insights into fundraising by other VCH counties.

Last July the Victorian Society undertook an excursion to Harwich which was excellently facilitated and organized by Chris Thornton and comprised talks by Andrew Senter and Peter Boyden as well as a fascinating guided tour of Victorian Harwich by David Whittle.

The big event last year was the celebratory symposium in September at Galleywood Heritage Centre to mark the occasion of the 120th anniversary of the first VCH Essex red volume. Our chairman has reported on this in detail, so is sufficient for me to once again give my warmest thanks to Chris for his splendid organization of the symposium.

**Herbert Eiden.**

## JOHN FORBER OF HARWICH, CURATE.

During my research into the 17th-century wills of Harwich and Dovercourt I came across this document, on first sight the unremarkable last will and testament of John Forber of Harwich. The will is dated 19th July 1625 and probate was granted on 13th October 1625. It reads, in a modernized spelling, as follows:

I John Forber of Harwich in the county of Essex curate do ordain this my last will and testament as follows: first I commend my soul to God and my body to be buried where it shall please God. Item I give and bequeath to the poor of the parish of Harwich twenty shillings to be distributed among them by my executrix. Item I give to my brother Hugh Forber if he be living ten pounds if he be dead I will it shall be given amongst his children. Item I give to my sister Alice her children five pounds if she lives but one I will that to have that five pounds. Item I give to my cousin Anne the daughter of my aunt ... (?) now or late the wife of Richard Haigh of Warrington six pounds thirteen shillings four pence and if she be dead then her children shall have it amongst them equally to be divided and such part of these legacies as shall fall to be due to any of these children I will they shall be delivered onto them at their several ages of sixteen years. And I will that he or they which shall come to demand those legacies bringing sufficient authority to receive them shall have for their pains twenty shillings. Item I give to Elizabeth Sack the wife of Mr Nicholas Sack twenty shillings in full payment of twenty shillings which I lent her when she proven her husbands' Scrutens will. Item I give to her daughter Rachell twenty shillings. The rest and residue of my goods and chattels I wholly give and bequeath to Sarah Branham whom I make and ordain my sole executrix of this my last will and testament and I renounce all former wills by me made and all executrices(?) in them named and will that this shall be my last will and testament and none other and overseers of this my will I appoint ... (?) Munt and John Osborne and I give either of them for their pains herein to be taken twenty shillings apiece in witness here as I have here unto set my hand and seal this nineteenth day of July in the year our lord God 1625.

Sealed in the presents of us

Jonas Syred

Thomas ... (?)

John Forber

The mark x of Richard Whitwell

[in a different hand] probat' apud [word crossed out] 13° Octobris 1625

The first thing that is noticeable is Forber's given occupation, 'curate', that is a member of the lower clergy who assisted the parish priest. However, the name Forber does not appear in the list of clerics in Dovercourt with Harwich by Richard Newcourt, *Repertorium ecclesiasticum parochiale Londinense* (1710), nor is he mentioned in the published additions to Newcourt, or in any of the Oxbridge alumni registers. The vicars of Harwich in the late 16th to early 17th centuries were Hugh Branham (1574–1615), Thomas Drax (1615–1619) and William Innes (1619–1639). The earliest connection I could find between John Forber and Harwich is in the will of Thomas Twitt senior, merchant and owner of

the Three Cups in Harwich [TNA, PROB 11/99/24]. Twitt's will was drawn up in August 1599 and probate was granted on 20th January 1602. The executor of the will and one of the witnesses was 'Hughe Branham clark'. Added in court hand at the end of the will is *Johannes Forber scriptor literae curialis London* ('John Forber scribe of the London court').

of this my last will and testament probating all other wills Thomas Tadyt  
myself do Raymond Eng, Hughe Branham Clark John Forber scriptor literae  
curialis London.

The hand appears to be different from the one in Twitt's will, but I think it was John Forber who copied the will into the book of the London Consistory Court as scribes often used different styles when writing in Latin or English. It might have been in London that Branham came into contact with John Forber and offered him the position of curate because in 1601, a 'Mr Forder' appears in the Harwich churchwarden accounts for the first time: 'Item payd to Mr Forder for making of the bocke for chrystenyngs maryings and the berryalls – 4 shillings.' [HTA, 98/1 f. 239r]

Perhaps the churchwarden misspelled the name – Forder instead of Forber –, because the curate was new to Harwich and not well known yet. In any case, in the following years Forber (correctly spelled) appears regularly in the churchwarden accounts until 1618, when the accounts become less detailed, with a payment of 4 shillings 3 pence for copying the parish register of baptisms, marriages and burials. In 1606 and 1609 he received an additional shilling for taking the register to London, a task normally undertaken by the sumner, the churchwardens' messenger.

Forber's connection to Harwich is reflected in the provisions of his will. He seems to have been unmarried as neither a wife nor children are mentioned. Apart from bequests to his brother, sister and cousin, who seem to have lived in north-west England, in Cheshire and Lancashire (where the name Forber was more common), familiar Harwich names appear in the will. Nicholas Sack, a member of a longstanding family of importance in Harwich and Dovercourt was a churchwarden and mayor in 1622; his wife Elizabeth was married first to another Harwich resident, the mariner Raymond Scruton. Nicholas' and Elizabeth's daughter Rachel was baptised in 1621.

The executrix of Forber's will, Sarah Branham, was the daughter of the former Harwich vicar, Hugh Branham and his wife Elizabeth. Branham died in 1615 shortly after he had secured the rectory of Peldon. Sarah was 23 years old in 1625 when John Forber died, and in autumn of that year she married. Forber had left her all his remaining goods and chattels after paying out individual bequests. It is tempting to speculate that Sarah was his housekeeper or that he was one of her godparents, and his estate was part of her dowry after the death of her father ten years previously. Finally, the witnesses to Forber's will, Jonas Syred and Richard Whitwell, can also be found in the Harwich records of that period.

So, a will that looks at first sight unremarkable actually sheds interesting new light on the relationships of townspeople of Harwich with their spiritual leaders.

**Herbert Eiden.**

## ZEPPELIN AND GOTHA RAIDS ON HARWICH, DOVERCOURT AND PARKESTON IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR.



*Map of Zeppelin Targets. HTC, 163\_6 (1)*

The location of Harwich made it a target for German air raids in the First World War. The presence of the Harwich Striking Force naval unit and various submarine flotillas, as well as the air station at nearby Felixstowe, made Harwich and its vicinity vulnerable to attack. Preparations for the likelihood of air raids began early in the war when the Local Emergency Committee issued instructions of actions to take during an aerial bombardment including taking refuge in house cellars or 'lower rooms', avoiding gathering in crowds, leaving alone unexploded shells and the turning off of the gas mains. There were separate arrangements made to protect children during school hours.

The first wave of Zeppelin attacks on the Harwich area occurred in 1915. Zeppelin raids on Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn (though the intended target was the Humberside area) had already caused two fatalities in January of that year. A Zeppelin airship was sighted passing over Harwich on 16 April and minor damage was caused in a raid on 25/26 April, while bombs dropped on the town two months later were reported to have landed in the sea. By mid 1915 auxiliary firemen had been appointed, while all corporation property was covered under the 'State Insurance Scheme against Aircraft and Bombardment'. The thoroughness of the preparations at Harwich was justified by the serious incident which occurred on 12/13 August when Zeppelin L.10 dropped bombs on Parkeston and Landguard Fort, the latter attack resulting in 13 men being admitted to the military

hospital. The ‘very heavy damage’ to military targets was kept secret according to the Rotterdam correspondent of the Daily News, but houses in Tyler Street, Parkeston, were known to have sustained damage and there were also 19 casualties there. Zeppelins L.10 and L.74 flew over Harwich on 7/8 and 13/14 September respectively, apparently without dropping any bombs.

There were also several Zeppelin raids in 1916, though no serious damage or loss of life was reported in Harwich and the surrounding area. Zeppelin L.93 targeted the Royal Naval Training Establishment at Shotley on 25/26 April, but caused little damage. Zeppelin L.11 dropped 13 bombs on 2/3 August, including causing minor damage at Landguard Fort, while on 24/25 August Zeppelin L.21 also targeted Harwich and the vicinity, including travelling unwittingly close to the explosives and chemicals works on Bramble Island, Great Oakley. The ever present danger of a raid is highlighted in a letter from Private Albert Stopher, who was staying at the Dovercourt military training camp, describing his duties as including being called out at night twice on account of the ‘Zepps’. This was apparently during the same August raid.



<https://www.harwichanddovercourt.co.uk/the-war-years/>

The Emergency Committee issued new guidance in mid 1917 regarding the need to take cover during air raids, including notifying the public of the provision by the corporation of a ‘Steam Syren’ constructed by the Corporation of Trinity House at the pumping station in Dovercourt. A system of rockets fired at intervals was then adopted as a warning signal

soon afterwards. The siren arrangements were decided upon just days prior to the air raid on Harwich of 17 June 1917, which was repelled by anti-aircraft gunners and resulted in Zeppelin L.48 being brought down in nearby Theberton in Suffolk, killing 16 of the 19 crew. Harwich and Felixstowe were also targeted in attacks by Gotha aircraft bombers in 1917. On 4 July a total of 11 men were killed when bombs were dropped on Shotley, with an 'America' flying boat destroyed and another damaged. There were also 29 injured in raids on Harwich. Over £2,000 worth of damage was inflicted on buildings, but a bomb dropped near St Nicholas' church failed to explode; the shell case was put on display in the church nine months later. Other bombs fell near to Blue House farm, at the docks and near to the Mission Hall, in Dovercourt. Another Gotha attack on Harwich and Felixstowe occurred on 22 July and 13 were killed, including at least one civilian. There was little material damage in Harwich and it was reported that Holy Communion at St Nicholas' church continued uninterrupted. The Dovercourt cemetery ground, and Lee Road and First Avenue, also in Dovercourt, and parts of Ramsey Ray, near Parkeston, received direct hits, but with apparently only minor material impact, other than the 'considerable' damage reported to have occurred at the isolation hospital and stables at Dovercourt. The frequency of raids at this time prompted the decision by the Harwich Education Committee to leave the gates of Main Road School open so the public could shelter in the underground playground area. The threat of air raids ensured that the fire brigade was engaged on 61 and 35 occasions in 1916 and 1917 respectively. Air raids on the east coast continued into 1918, with Harwich passed over by aeroplanes returning to the Continent after dropping bombs on south Essex on 7/8 March.

### **Andrew Senter.**

#### **Further reading:**

Steve R. Dunn, *The Harwich Striking Force: The Royal Navy's Front Line in the North Sea 1914-1918* (Barnsley, 2022).

Mick Powis, *The Defeat of the Zeppelins: Zeppelin Raids and Anti-airship Operations 1916-18* (Barnsley and Havertown, PA, 2018).

### **Report from Clacton Group**

The Clacton VCH Group presented its project on the history of and landscape along the Holland brook with a display and book launch on Saturday 20th April 2024 at Tendring Village Hall.

Recently the group have been looking at the Hall/Church occurrences within the Tendring Hundred, and classifying the churchyard shapes and where the church building sits within the churchyard. At Great Clacton the church is positioned very close to the NW corner of a

rectangular churchyard and is an exceptional example. Also, it seems that the church was a minster church, but there is more research to do.

The group continues with monthly research and discussion meetings at the Tendring Village Hall, led by their chairman Roger Kennell. Chris Thornton, Herbert Eiden and Neil Wiffen will give talks to the Group members in 2024 to relieve some pressure on Roger Kennell who did most of the work towards their book launch in April 2024.

## **NEWS FROM CENTRAL VCH**

*Sent on behalf of Professor Catherine Clarke*

### **Beyond VCH Shorts**

As some of you know, we are currently developing a new model for VCH publishing and outputs (*not* including Red Books, which will continue on their current model, with Boydell & Brewer as our partner publisher). The VCH Shorts for Gainford, Southend, Cradley, and St George Hanover Square will be the last titles published by University of London Press. In recent weeks, I have met with counties with other Shorts already well developed and already formally accepted, to discuss next steps for those specific volumes.

At VCH Day, I will present our new model for the future of VCH publishing and outputs (alongside continuing Red Books). We hope this will allow us to diversify outputs, give greater flexibility to counties when devising projects, and offer counties' new opportunities for enterprise. We will be asking for your feedback and input as we finalise this new model.

### **Online VCH Training:**

Please see website for information and (free) booking for online training sessions. Please save the date:

**7 May** - Understanding and writing about buildings

All training events are recorded for our online training archive. Many thanks to experts from the VCH community who are contributing to these.

### **Seely & Paget Conference**

The CHPPC is a partner in a conference on 'Seely and Paget in the 21st Century: Restoration and Reputation'. This reappraisal of the architectural practice of Seely and Paget will be at the Charterhouse, London, on Wednesday 1 May 2024 (the day before VCH Day!). Booking opens at [www.sahgb.org.uk/](http://www.sahgb.org.uk/) in early March.

Thanks as always for everything you contribute to our research community, and I hope to see many of you in May.

All best wishes,  
**Catherine.**

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

### **Annual General Meeting: The Victoria County History of Essex Trust**

#### **Date and Time:**

Saturday 15th June 2024: 2 for 2.30pm.

#### **Venue:**

The Avenue Baptist Church Hall, Milton Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 7JX.

#### **Keynote Speaker: Ken Crowe:**

“From apprentice hair-dresser to Southend’s first mayor: the life and strange career of Thomas Dowsett.”

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### **VCH Essex: Autumn Conference 2024. Exploring Essex History: Religion, Reformation and Society**

**Join us for an exciting afternoon exploring research about the rich religious and social history of Essex in medieval and early modern times**

#### **Date and time:**

Saturday 12 October 2024 from 1.00pm to 5.00 pm.

#### **Venue:**

Galleywood Heritage Centre, Galleywood, The Common  
(off Margaretting Road), Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 8TR.

#### **Provisional Programme:**

1.00 pm - Welcome

- (1) Lord Petre: ‘The Catholic Experience 1535 – 1829’.
- (2) James Bettley: ’The Architectural Consequences of the Reformation in Essex’.

3.30pm: Afternoon Tea and Cake

- (3) Sir Graham Hart: Scandalous ministers?’ Parliament’s persecution of the clergy of Essex, 1644.
- (4) Amanda Flather: ‘Women and the Reformation in Essex’.

5pm: Close

#### **Booking:**

Conference tickets will be £15 (incl. tea), with booking via EventBrite. Please check from July onwards and book. Should you encounter difficulty with online booking, please contact [herbert.eiden@sas.ac.uk](mailto:herbert.eiden@sas.ac.uk)

## 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 English- man 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 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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