

The Newsletter of the  
*Wivenhoe History Group*

January 2014



Our visit to the Essex Record Office on Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> January.



The archivists at the ERO had made a splendid effort to delve into their collection and lay out for us in a separate room a dozen documents relating to Wivenhoe from the first parish registers covering the years 1560-1689 to the 1922 sale catalogue for the sale of Wivenhoe Hall. Here we were ushered by our guide Sarah Dickie for our introduction to the ERO and the various rules that apply to visitors to the Search Room.

The digital projector could not immediately be brought to life so we were taken up to the Search Room and shown how to access and order from the SEAX

catalogue, how to search in their very own Essex Ancestors paid for site, and some of the paper indexes and catalogues to parts of the collection. We looked at the topographical and maps section, before being taken backstage, as it were, into the repository to see how everything is stored in very high moveable shelving – much of it in acid-free boxes. These boxes are now bought flat-packed, which saves a lot in transport costs, and they are gradually being used more and more. Not least because similar boxes saved a large amount of material during the Forum fire in Norwich some years ago, and proved remarkably resistant to the fire brigade's water. The ambient temperature is kept at about 18° C and low humidity, whilst the Search Room is only slightly warmer to prevent big fluctuations as documents are moved between the two. We learnt that parish registers more than a hundred years old are normally kept in the Record Office.

From there we went into the Conservation department where we were somewhat alarmed to see an old document lying in a tray apparently full of water. The conservationist explained that some of the inks used in old wills can actually burn their way through the paper, and are therefore put into a neutralizing fluid for ten minutes to prevent this before being dried and repaired as necessary.

Finally we went back to the first room and spent almost an hour studying various Wivenhoe maps, manorial court records, churchwardens' accounts 1562-1649, electoral roll for Harwich Division 1912 – no women electors, of course, only male householders and tenants who paid more than £10 rent p.a. – and other documents.

The archivist was kept busy answering questions, and there was lots of mutual chat before we departed with grateful thanks to the archivist

Thanks to John Foster's driving skills with the Muntty Bus six members were able to enjoy a sociable trip to the ERO and back whilst three other members and a guest made their own way home.

Ian Valentine



*William, Viscount Beaumont's brass in our parish church of c.1507*

**“How Richard III was found - the historical and the scientific evidence  
behind the search” by Dr. John Ashdown-Hill**



A Saturday afternoon in early January found Peter Hill and myself and about 100 other people at Trinity Methodist Church in Chelmsford to listen to the above talk given under the auspices of the Essex Branch of the Historical Association. Fortuitously an article about John Ashdown-Hill and his work on Richard III had appeared in the *Essex County Standard* the previous day and gave us some idea of what to expect. In fact, knowing that he had some forthright views on what should happen to the remains of the king, we half expected some fireworks, but these did not materialise.

The project to find the remains of Richard III was instigated by Philippa Langley, Secretary of the Scottish Branch of the Richard III Society, who obtained the permissions to undertake the dig in a Leicester Council car park and raised funds for the work, and by Dr. John who undertook the historical and scientific research supported by ‘insight’ to get behind the mythology of Richard III. Myths that Richard was a Northerner although his mother lived at Clare Castle, Suffolk and his sister was buried in Wingfield Church also in Suffolk; that he was a usurper although his brother Edward IV, who was officially married to Eleanor Talbot had also bigamously married Elizabeth Woodville who bore him 10 children of whom 7 survived. These seven were declared illegitimate in 1483, so he had no rightful contestants for the throne.

Having been killed on the field at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 it is recorded that his naked body was brought on a horse by Henry VII for burial in Leicester. Medieval writers recorded five different burial places, and the last record of his gravesite was made in 1612, but no effort was made to locate the actual one for 400 years. In the intervening years much has changed – dissolution of the monasteries, changes in land use and much new building. Dr John concluded from his research

that he had been buried in the chancel of Greyfriars monastery, but yet another myth said that the body had been dug up and thrown into the river Soar in Leicester.

The area where Dr John thought the archaeologists commissioned from the University of Leicester should start digging was under tarmac and surrounded by offices, but so thorough was Dr John's research that the skeleton was found on the first day of the dig. Dr John then had access to DNA sequencing science, although after more than 500 years DNA evidence can only be validated if supported by other evidence such as date, age, sex of the person. Through genealogical research Dr John was able to trace the female line from Richard's mother to the present day Michael Ibsen. Comparison of the mitochondrial DNA sequence from the bones and that of Michael plus the supporting evidence confirmed that the bones were indeed those of Richard III.

The agreement with the University of Leicester stated that the bones should be kept for scientific research and then released for a burial fit for a king. Sadly this has led to disputes with members of the Plantagenet Society and others about where this should be, the form of burial, and type of memorial. This dispute is due to be settled in court in March. Dr John would like to see him buried in Leicester Cathedral, in a proper coffin surmounted by a tomb, not just a slab in the floor, and has himself commissioned a royal crown such as Richard might have worn, to be buried with him.

Dr John was a fluid and logical speaker supported by an excellent Powerpoint presentation, and received a right royal round of applause.

Ian Valentine

[Richard owned Wivenhoe Hall in the 1470s before he sold it to the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Norfolk.]



*The Park Hotel in 1915*

## Programme for 2014

(all meetings at Scout & Guide Hall unless otherwise stated)

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| <b>2.00 pm Wednesday,<br/>12<sup>th</sup> February</b>  | <b>Group Meeting</b> with illustrated talk by member, Daisy Giddings on her researches into " <b><i>Wivenhoe Artists</i></b> "   |
| <b>7.30 pm, Wednesday<br/>12<sup>th</sup> March</b>   | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting</b> to be followed by an illustrated talk by a speaker from the <b><i>Essex Society for Family History</i></b> .  |
| <b>10.00 am Wednesday,<br/>19<sup>th</sup> March</b>  | <b>WWI Research Group Meeting</b> at 31, Tower Road. <b>All welcome.</b>   |
| <b>7.30 pm Friday,<br/>21<sup>st</sup> March</b>  | <b>Public Talk</b> in St Mary's Church by <b>Paul Brown</b> on " <b><i>The Wivenhoe &amp; Brightlingsea Railway</i></b> ". Paul is well-known for his book on the subject, copies of which, together with other books of local interest, will be on sale by Wivenhoe Bookshop in the Church. |
| <b>10.00 am to 5.00 pm<br/>Saturday &amp; Sunday,<br/>5<sup>th</sup> &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> April</b> | <b><i>Wivenhoe Memories</i> Exhibition</b> in William Loveless Hall Memorabilia from John Stewart's ever-growing collection.   |
| <b>2.00 pm Wednesday,<br/>21<sup>st</sup> May</b>   | <b>Group Meeting.</b> Talk by Barney Loughran from the <b>War Graves Photographic Project</b> and his research into Wivenhoe man, Thomas Baker who lost his life when the SS Abooso sank off the coast of Nigeria.   |
| <b>7.30 pm Wednesday,<br/>11<sup>th</sup> June</b>  | <b>Group Meeting</b> with talk by Andrew Phillips on " <b><i>Colchester Recalled</i></b> ". Andrew is a well-known local historian and a delightful speaker.   |
| <b>2.00 pm Wednesday,<br/>9<sup>th</sup> July</b>   | <b>Group Meeting</b> to finalise plans for an Autumn Exhibition on " <b><i>Wivenhoe 1914 - 1918</i></b> ".   |
| <b>10.00 am to 5.00 pm<br/>Saturday to Monday,<br/>23 - 25 August</b>                               | <b><i>Wivenhoe Memories</i> Exhibition</b> in William Loveless Hall More memorabilia from John Stewart's ever-growing collection.  |
| <b>September/<br/>October</b>   | <b>Group Visit to the Imperial War Museum</b> planned.   |
| <b>7.30 pm Friday,<br/>17<sup>th</sup> October</b>  | <b>Public Talk</b> in St Mary's Church by Paul Ruisecki who has just published a book called " <b><i>The Impact of Catastrophe - The People of Essex &amp; WW1</i></b> ".  |