

# THE HUNDREDS OF ESSEX

## INTRODUCTION

The skill in presenting any lecture is to 'paint the picture' of the subject. If you can imagine what it was like to be there' then perhaps you may consider at the end, we have achieved that aim.

In this lecture you will hear the 'old English Saxon names and descriptions' but they will be later explained.

## PICTURE 2 – The Hundreds of Essex



Why Barstable? Well that's where Canvey Island sat, not as we know it today, but generally speaking, up to the late nineteenth century and for some 1200 years before that.

## SO WHAT IS A 'HUNDRED' ?

This was the division of a 'Shire' for Administrative, Military and/or Judicial purposes under the Common Law of the time.

Introduced by the Saxons between 613 and 1017, a 'Hundred' had enough land to sustain approximately one hundred households, headed by a Eolder (Elder)' and further defined as the land covered by one hundred 'Hides'.

The Office was not hereditary, but by the tenth century, selected from among a few families and within each 'Hundred' there was a meeting place where the men discussed local issues and Judicial trials were enacted.

The Role of the Hundred Court was described in the 'Dooms Law' of King Edgar (known as the Peaceful) who reigned as King of England between 959 and 975 AD.

Larger or more populous 'Hundreds' were split into divisions or 'Half-Hundred's'. All 'Hundred's' were divided into 'Tithing's' containing ten households.

## WHAT IS A 'HIDE' ?

The basic unit called a 'Hide' was enough land to support one family and varied in size from 60 to 120 'old acres' or 15 to 30 modern acres (6 to 12 hectares) dependant on land quality and used to assess geld (tax). Each hide was divided into four parts, called Virgates.

Above the 'Hundred' was the Shire under the 'Shire-Reeve' (or Sheriff). Hundred boundaries were independent of Parish and County boundaries, although often aligned, meaning that a 'Hundred' could be split between counties, or a Parish could be split between 'Hundreds'.

### PICTURE 3 – Aethelstan



Each 'Hundred' had a separate Council that met monthly on Judicial and Taxation matters. Essex probably originated as a 'Shire' at the time of Aethelstan (895 – 939 AD) who was King of the Saxons from 924 to 927 and King of the English from 927 to 939AD.

The Domesday Survey of 1086, listed nineteen 'Hundred's, corresponding with those that we know and the 'hundred' of Witbrictesherna was re-named Dengie. (AKA the Dengie Peninsular or Dengie Hundred today).

Manors were at the heart of post-Norman Conquest feudal systems whereby all land was owned by the King. He rewarded his followers (or tenants-in-chief) by giving them land which they held in return for Military service.

They, rewarded their followers (or tenants) on the same basis. At the bottom of the structure was the Knight's Fee, the amount of land considered sufficient to finance the service of one Knight.

The Domesday Book, produced in 1086, shows the beginnings of this system and is arranged by Manors rather than towns or villages.

The Lord of the Manor owned everything– the Crops, Animals, Mineral, Hunting and Fishing rights and also the Tenants, who could be bought and sold and who owed 'Days of Labour' and items of produce to the Lord.

He would either keep the land and farm it using the labour of tenants, or he would rent the land, retaining jurisdiction over it.

### PICTURE 4 – Bishop Odo



The Manor of Barstable, is held by the Bishop is Bishop Odo of Bayeaux (the Mitred 'Plunderer') as contemporary writers describe him) and there are thirty acres and pastures of woodland for one hundred sheep.

As a matter of 'historical appointment' (a nice way of saying Nepotism) Odo was appointed Bishop of Bayeux in 1049 by his half-brother, Duke William of Normandy and he was heavily involved in the planning of William's invasion of England in 1066.

He also took part in the Battle of Hastings. The Bayeux Tapestry which commemorates the Conquest, was probably commissioned by Odo to adorn his Cathedral. This adds some credence to the Tapestry being made in Canterbury.

Grazing on Canvey Island, was administered by the Parishes of North and South Benfleet, Bowers Gifford, Laindon, Pitsea and Vange in the Union of Billericay and the Hundred of Barstable. Whilst Leigh, Prittlewell and Southchurch were in the Union and Hundred of Rochford.

## **A GLOSSARY OF TERMS.**

At this point I thought it may be of interest to also reflect back on the terms used of those times and mentioned in the Domesday record:

### **PICTURE 5 – Land Measurement. (Audience can read if you wish)**

#### **Acre**

The area of One Chain (22 yards) multiplied by One Furlong (220 yards) equalling 4840 square yards. (Stumps in Cricket are one chain apart!)

#### **Furlong**

The Furlong or Furrow length was the distance a team of Oxen could plough without resting. This was standardised to exactly 40 Rods or 10 Chains.

#### **Virgate and Carucate**

Was the amount of land tillable by two oxen in a ploughing session and a Carucate, the amount of land tillable by a team of eight oxen in a ploughing season. This was equal to four Virgates.

### **PICTURE 6 – Land Terms. (Audience can read slide if you wish)**

#### **Demense**

Demense (from old French Demeine) ultimately Latin 'dominus' "Lord, Master of the household" was the land retained by the Lord of the Manor for his own use under his own management.

#### **Royal Demense**

In English Common Law, the term referred to those lands held by the Crown at the time of Domesday. Following the conquest, the King made immediate grants of land, generally in the form of feudal baronies.

## **Farm**

Until the advent of “Taxation” Manors in the Royal Demense were let out at “Farm” to the Sheriff of each Shire. Thus for an annual fixed payment to the exchequer, known as “the Farm”, the Sheriff was free to extract and retain additional revenue from the land “farmed.”

## **Tithing**

Was a historic English legal, administrative unit, originally one-tenth of a ‘Hundred’. The group’s leader or spokesman was known as a “tithingman”. These ancient ‘hundreds’ still mostly retain their historic boundaries.

## **PICTURE 7 – People Terms. (Audience can read slide if you wish)**

### **Bordars and Cottagers**

The Domesday book uses Bordari (Bordar) and Cottari (Cottager) deriving from the native Anglo-Saxon tongue where “border” derived from the French. They ranked below a Serf in the social hierarchy of a Manor.

### **Free-Men**

Free-men or tenants held land by a variety of contracts and were essentially rent-paying tenant farmers who owned little or no service to the Lord. In 11<sup>th</sup> Century England Free-men made up only 10% of the peasant population.

### **Serfdom**

Under feudalism, was a condition of bondage which developed in Europe and lasted in some countries until the mid-nineteenth century. Serfs formed the lowest class of feudal society.

### **Villein**

Or Villain represented the most common type of serf. They had more rights than the lowest class of serf but existed under different legal restrictions different from free-men.

## **PICTURE 8 – Official Terms. (Audience can read slide if you wish).**

### **Reeve**

In Anglo-Saxon England, the Reeve was a senior official with local responsibilities under the Crown, for example as the Chief Magistrate of a town or district.

After the conquest it was an office held by a man of lower rank, appointed as manager or overseer of the peasants. Different types of ‘Reeves’ were attested, high-reeve, town-reeve, port-reeve, shire-reeve (predecessor to the Sheriff).

## **END OF PART 1.**

## **PICTURE 9 - PART 2 - The Manors of Barstable**

Barstable or ‘Berdestapla’ means ‘by a pole’ indicating a meeting place. The Barstable Hundred then comprised of 35 Parishes.

There is evidence that the Saxons came to Essex, particularly place names ending in 'ing' and 'ham' whilst many of the rivers, the Stow, the Ter, the Cam, the Brain and the Layer are ancient British names.

The Manors of Barstable included those surrounding Canvey, namely Bowers Gifford, Corringham and South and North Benfleet with also parts of Thundersley.

Stour is related to the Celtic 'dwr' meaning water and still does in Welsh. Cam means crooked, Braine and Layer commemorate the Celtic Water Gods; Leir (or King Lear) was the old man of the sea, and Regan (or Rein) his daughter.

Billericay has always puzzled historians – its name seems difficult to trace possibly dating back to the earliest Celtic settlements of the Iron-Age of 500BC.

#### **PICTURE 10 – The Parishes of Barstable in 1841**



Up to 1844, the Parishes of Barstable total recorded population was just over 15,000 people.

#### **PICTURE 11 – Ranulf Flambard. (Audience can read – but different text for you)**



Ranulf Flambard (or Ranulf Passiflamme 1060 – 1128) was a medieval Norman Bishop of Durham and an influential government minister of King William Rufus of England.

The son of Bishop Odo and his nickname means incendiary or torch-bearer and may well have referred to his personality. He started his career under King William I, probably in helping the compilation of the Domesday Book.

His many duties included being the first Chief Justice of England and he also supervised the construction of the first stone bridge in London and the King's Hall in Westminster. In 1099 he was rewarded with the Bishopric of Durham.

Ranulf Flambard was probably the first state prisoner confined to the Tower, and also the first to escape from it!

## **The Manor of Vange (or “Phenge”)**

“Phenge or Vange was held by a free-man called Ranulf but note this was another free-man losing his freedom under Norman Rule. It was likely that Ranulf’s father was William the Conqueror.

### **PICTURE 12**



One building of interest is Vange Well No. 5.

It was built to enclose the last of five wells sunk on land to the rear of Hovells Farm on the Vange Hall Estate during the early 1920s, as a 'get rich quick scheme' by a London publican, whose surname was ironically Cash.

Self styled 'farmer' Edwin Cash - claimed discovery of the water in the early 1900s, and even had a large signboard erected close to the Five Bells with directions to the 'magic' well in the 'Vale of Health'.

The contents, marketed by the Vange Water Company and labelled Farmer Cash's Famous Medicinal Vange Water, sold for 2s 3d (12p) and was available on site or from all Chemists and Stores of repute.

The water was highly sulphated and considered to be of great medicinal value in curing such ailments as rheumatoid complaints, lumbago, stomach troubles and nervous disorders. Although named 'Vange Well No.5', it actually stood in the parish of Fobbing, Thurrock

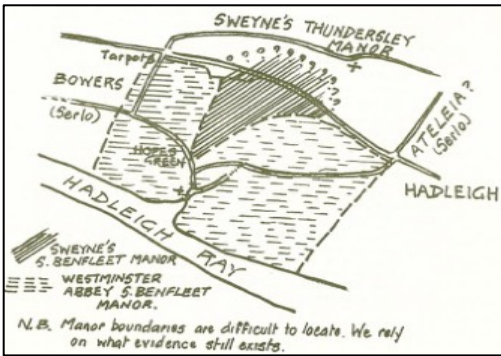
## **The Manor of South Benfleet**

The district named Bemfleet was not formally divided into North and South, but was made to constitute one Lordship.

In the ninth century it was distinguished as the usual landing place of the Danish pirates and in the year 893 the Danish rover Haesten built a castle or fortifications in which to lay up his plunder, guarded by a very large garrison.

In 894 King Harold drove away the garrison and demolished the fortlet and took Haesten’s wife and two sons as prisoners together with all the booty. This was the southern part of the district as better described in the Manor of South Benfleet.

### **PICTURE 13 – Sketch map of South Benfleet. (Audience can read)**



It is not known what happened to the Windmill in South Benfleet, so from the maps produced between 1678 and 1777 it ceased to function and was never replaced.

### PICTURE 14 – The Manor of North Benfleet (Footprint of North Benfleet Hall)



The Mansion of the Manor is near the Church, the lands belonged to Earl Harold. In the reign of King Henry III. In 1268 Alexander de Bemfleet held one hideate of land here.

North Benfleet Hall was a mysterious place with secret rooms hidden behind fireplaces and false walls behind cupboards. There was a secret tunnel that ran from ‘Dolce Dolman’s cottage’, a tiny cottage that became the first telephone exchange in North Benfleet, to the ‘Old Hall’ as North Benfleet Hall used to be called.

There was also talk of a tunnel that ran from the Hall to Sadler’s Farm. In fact, when the roundabout was being built there, part of the tunnel was discovered and filled in by building contractors who thought it was an old drain.

Old photos taken from the air, clearly showed a pale line running from North Benfleet Hall to the area of Sadler’s farm roundabout but unfortunately these have been destroyed too.

The only residents found were the Appleton family, last there in 1710. The Appleton’s were no strangers to Benfleet. In 1563, the Appleton’s lived at Jarvis Hall in South Benfleet.

Strangely or coincidentally, Jarvis Hall also had a secret tunnel that ran to St Mary’s church. It has been stated that these passageways saved priests from persecution in Tudor times, whereas others have believed them to be more to do with smuggling. The mystery remains.

## TO SUM UP.

Bearing in mind that Canvey Island was only freed from occupation to become its own Parish in 1881, what or who were the names of the 'Manors' of what we now think as Basildon and that I have not mentioned previously as a Manor.

## Part 3 – The other Manors of Barstable

### The Manor of Battleswick

The Manor house and woodlands are in the General area of, Holy Cross Church in Basildon. Derived from an estate in Donyland (Colchester) and Richard, Battle of Wivenhoe (13<sup>th</sup> Century) and then onto the 19<sup>th</sup> Century through to 1931 when the Manorial rights lapsed.

### PICTURE 16 - The Manor of Botelers.



### The Sheriff of Essex.

Our links to the family are with Philip Boteler (the name evolving into Butler) 1493 – 1545 from Watton at Stone Knighted in November 1529 and who became Sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire.

### Sir John Butler (Boteler) 1511 – 1576.

He was the first son of Sir Philip Boteler, educated at Grays Inn in London. His court roles included being Page to Princess Mary and Civic Offices and Commissions including Justice of the Peace for Hertfordshire and St. Albans Liberty. He was Sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire in 1556-1557.

### PICTURE 17 – The Church of St. Margaret Bowers Gifford.



### The Manor of Bowers Gifford

It has a documented pre-1066 history before the Domesday records and later the Barony including Robert Fitzwymar and again the Earls of Oxford. It is mentioned that the Mansion House, the Buers Hall, lies down in the marshes a quarter of mile below the church, on a creek where vessels may come.

The Giffards held the Manor of Bures Gifford as early as the reign of Edward I.

In 1253, William Giffard, possessed the Church of St. Margaret de Bures; and in 1259 William Giffard is recorded as holding 100 acres of land in Bures, making the King's lard or bacon, whenever he should be in England; and that he also held the Hundred of Barstable.



## **The Manor of Dunton**

Duntuna (Dunton) held by a Priest in King Edwards time (1042-1066) is now held by Bishop Odo of Bayeux.

Dunton Waylett is an ancient name derived from the Saxon Dun and Tun (Hill Town) and Waylett (Waylete in Saxon) from the old-english Weg-Galaetu (a place where roads meet) and can be traced back to Roman occupation.

After the time of the Domesday survey, the parish was divided into two manors, one being Dunton Hall and the other Fryern Manor situated further north of Lower Dunton Road.

### **PICTURE 18 – Fryern Manor off Lower Dunton Road.**



Dunton was important enough for Manor Courts to sit there, conducting local business including fines, disputes and tenant dues, hearing and settling petitions and tallage (local Tax collection).

Dunton Hall that stands near the Church, was seized by either Edward III or Henry V. In 1467 Edward IV gave the Manor of Duncan Waylett to Thomas Wilmot Vicar of Ashford in Kent.

Among the people who took lease was a Simon de Berkyng (Simon of Barking) a Goldsmith of London who would appear to subsequently link to “Goldsmiths” of Langdon Hills where he took lease in 1341 for six years.

It was first mentioned as connected to the farm situated on the South West Side of Langdon Hills in 1515 at the time of Henry VIII and implied that a Goldsmith or an earlier manorial family linked to a Goldsmith, were tenants.

### **PICTURE 19 - The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths.**



The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths is one of the twelve Livery Companies of the City of London. Originating in the twelfth century, received the Royal Charter in 1327 and ranks fifth in the order of precedence of City Livery Companies.

The Goldsmiths Company founded a London technical and Recreational Institute in 1891 which is now better known as Goldsmiths University of London.

### **Picture 20 - The Manor of Gobions (Langdon Hills)**



### **PICTURE 23 - The Manor of Langdon Hills**



William the Conqueror gave the Manor of Langdon Hills to William, Bishop of London and it remained in possession of his successors.

In 1290 King Edward I confirmed to the Bishop of London and his three manors in Essex, of Leyndon, Orsette and Chelmsford and in the following year enclosed his wood at Laidon called "the Fryth" with adjacent lands and made a park within the great forest of Essex.

It is said to be a hunting box, within the park reserved for the use of the King. Fryth Farm now stands at the northern boundary of Laidon adjoining the common on the Billericay Road.

The Manor of Laidon held grazing rights on Canvey Island and until very recent times, the Curate of Canvey was appointed by the Rector of Laidon.

### **The Manor of Nevendon**

This parish is small and situated in a valley, as the last syllable of its name which is Saxon, seems to indicate. The name in the Domesday Book is written as Neutenden and Nezenden. There are two Manors, namely Great and Little Bromfords.

The Mansion of Little Bromfords seems to have been divided in 1419 in order to settle part of it on the Hospital of St. Mary without Bishopsgate, which was retained until the Dissolution.

The Lord's Petre are also linked with the ownership from 1571.

### **The Manor of Wickford**

The name has evolved from previously written titles of Wickeford, Wyckford, Wickfort or Wygford from Saxon origin translating as "sheep-farm" on or near river crossing (the river Crouch)

Artefacts dating back to Iron-Age and Bronze-Age have been found within the boundaries of the current town and Stone-Age Flints and Axe-heads as well as Bronze-Age pottery at Shotgate Farm also at Barn Hall.

The first recorded settlers in the area were the Trinovantes tribe of Britons who were prevalent throughout Essex before the Romans arrived in around AD43. Cremation pits have also been discovered at Beauchamps Farm.

Saxon Settlements also gave names to local places including Runweolla (Runwell) meaning a “meeting place at a stream”, Haneghefelda (Hanningfield) “the field of Hana’s people”.

All Saxon ownership of the land ended on 14 October 1066 when Harold Godwinson was defeated by William at the Battle of Hastings ending the Wessex rule and the redistribution of the land amongst four Norman Landowners.

The wealthiest landlord was Suene (Sweyn) whose father was a friend of William and he became owner of sixty or more ‘manors’ in Essex including the largest of the four in Wickford.

The second largest landowner was Odo, Bishop of Bayeaux with 250 acres which included Rawreth Hall.

**END**

**The Hundreds of Essex (Graham Gooch) – Picture 23 -**