DEATH AND VICTORY

Many a country parish still cherishes a connection with great events in the past. Southminster, on the Dengie peninsula, can do better than most. Alexander Scott, vicar here from 1803 to 1840, was far from his parish on 21 October 1805, when he attended as chaplain the dying Lord Nelson on board HMS Victory. On his return home he helped to gather a national subscription for the widows and orphans of 'those Brave British Seamen who unfortunately, but gloriously fell' at the Battle of Trafalgar.

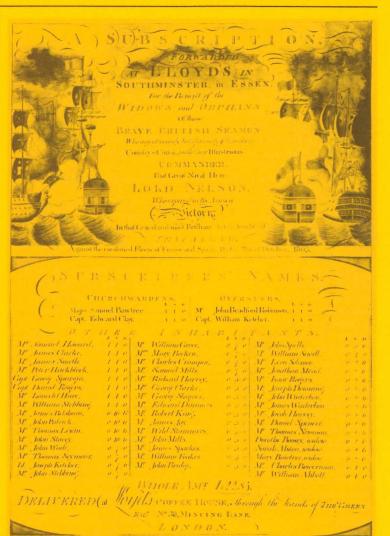
This splendid record of Southminster's contribution, drawn in ink on paper, once hung at the church, but has now been replaced with a copy. The original is in safe-keeping at the ERO (Acc. A10606, part 3). With care the strictly graded subscriptions of Southminster society - from a guinea at the top down to a shilling at the bottom - should remain duly commemorated here for centuries to come.

J.H. Round: A Bibliography

J.H. Round was a noted nineteenth-century historian who made significant contributions to the understanding of the Domesday Book, feudal history, the origins of Parliament, the Elizabethan navy, the Civil War, peerage law and much more. He wrote many articles on Essex local and family history, and was prominent in collaborative enterprises such as the Pipe Roll Society, the Complete Peerage, the Dictionary of National Biography, and the Victoria County Histories. He contributed over 900 articles to a variety of publications. some of which are now defunct and hard to find.

The Transactions of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History recently included 'A Revised Bibliography of the publications of John Horace Round' by W.R. Powell. This adds nearly 300 articles to the previous bibliography, compiled in 1930 by William Page. Now reprinted as an A4-size booklet, with a specially designed cover, it is available from the Essex Society for Archaeology and History, 2 Landview Gardens, Ongar, Essex CM5 9EQ at £3.00, including postage.





New Books from the Bookshop

Ah well, we can't win them all ... The Essex Book Awards 2000 were held at the new ERO on 25 May. Here are the four lucky and deserving winners, together with Michael Beale, secretary of the Friends of Historic Essex, the cosponsors of the awards. The winning books were Gerald Lucy's Essex Rock. A look beneath the Essex Landscape (£6.95); Rosalind Kaye's history and directory of

> Chapels in Essex (£7.95); Gillian Gillespie's Footprints in Time, a child's journey through the history of Barking and Dagenham (£4.99); and Aspects of the History of Ongar (£12.95), edited by Michael Leach and published by the Ongar Millennium History Group. All the books are now on sale at the new enlarged Record Office Bookshop (postage and packing are extra).



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MPDATE:

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TOMORROW COMES AT LAST

Six years of planning came to fruition on 6 March when the Record Office opened the doors of its new headquarters building at Wharf Road, Chelmsford.

For the first time Essex has a fully equipped, purpose-built archive repository, capable of preserving the county's documentary heritage and of delivering the highest quality of service to our us-

From the start the design aimed to make archives more accessible for users. Public reactions to the building have been very favourable, and users of the public spaces comment particularly on their light and open atmosphere. User figures for March to May already show an increase of 30% over the same three months in 1999.

The building has been designed not only for those who can visit the archives in records – and to the whole heritage of Essex – more readily available to the widest possible community. Information about the archives and the other heritage services will shortly be accessible over the Internet, in Essex libraries, Essex schools and from people's own homes, wherever they live.

Our new public spaces - the exhibition it to the full.



area, lecture theatre and education rooms – are already being used person but also to make access to the to explain and interpret the heritage and to provide a central location for organisations encouraging lifelong learning in Essex. In March a highly successful conference was held on Garden and Landscape Design in the 21st Century; the University of Essex has run a series of sessions on how to research local history; and the lecture theatre has hosted two of the county's millennial conferences on Shaping the Future of Essex. Groups meeting here have included the Society of Archivists, Essex Gardens Trust, Essex Historical Congress and the Essex Society for Family History.

This Record Office is much more than a Our users have waited many years for this moment. Sometimes it strongroom with a searchroom attached. seemed that it might never come. We hope that now you will enjoy

Website: http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/ero

E-mail: ero.enquiry@essexcc.gov.uk



The new **searchroom** (pictured above) is on the first floor, lit by one huge window. This wide space is designed to be re-arranged easily as needs change, but for the moment is divided into three.

Against the far wall, adjoining the Record Office library, is an enlarged microform study area, now with over 50 microfilm/microfiche places. New equipment here includes 27 new microfiche readers, nine motorised microfilm readers and three new digital readerprinters (two for fiche, one for film). These increases have allowed us to abandon our appointments system. From now on users of microform, like other researchers, will be able to work as and when they please.

In the centre - with the enquiry counter behind a glass screen to the left - is the study area for original documents. The 50 generous desks here each have a terminal for SEAX, our computerised catalogue. Using either a conventional mouse or, if they prefer, one of the touchscreens, researchers can now search the catalogue and place orders for documents directly from their desks. This cuts waiting times, avoids errors in translation, and reduces traffic at the enquiry counter. Currently only the ERO catalogue is available on-screen, but we shall soon have a dedicated machine for the 1881 census on CD-ROM. We intend shortly also to provide Internet access.

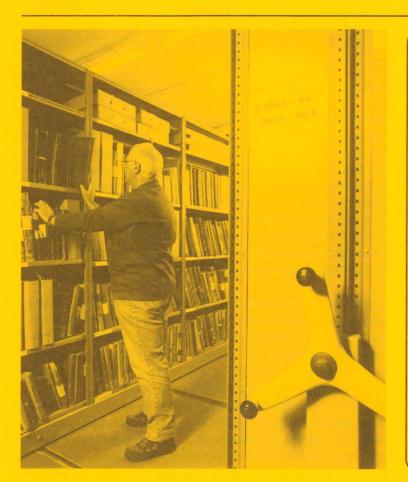
The near end of the room (behind the camera in our picture) contains a large map study area, and a room for users of sound and video archives. Those who remember the 'sound booth' at our previous home will notice the much greater priority given here to audiovisual material - also reflected behind the scenes in new equipment and storage facilities.

Taking all these areas together, the new searchroom can accommodate up to 120 people - enough to take us well into the new millennium.

At the counter you will find the same friendly, helpful staff as at County Hall. Here again the greatest change has come with SEAX, the computer system. As users enter the searchroom the staff log them on under their CARN ticket number, which SEAX then uses to identify those ordering documents. The system keeps the staff informed about the progress of each order; displays the arrival of documents on public screens here and in the foyer; and tracks the records' path from storage to user and back. This aspect of SEAX is vital for the efficient operation of the new enlarged searchroom and storage areas. The problem of 'lost' orders has been left behind gratefully at County Hall. When difficulties do arise, however, the production staff are now based on the same floor - just around the corner, in fact - and much closer ways of working are starting to emerge.

Photocopying of original documents is still carried out behind the counter. However, many original documents are too large or fragile to be photocopied, and often in the past we have had to tell searchers that the only alternative was an expensive photograph. Now we have a digital scanner, which enables us to copy more documents without causing damage to the originals, and at a lower price than a photographic print. Large volumes, parchment rolls, and large folded deeds are not suitable for copying on the scanner, but many other large flat documents can now be copied by this method.





At the heart of the new Record Office stands the **repository** – the brick cube that dominates the site and protects the collections. The outside it is almost featureless. All that the visitor sees is a solid three-storey block, capped by a lightly constructed plant room. Parts of the brickwork re-appear in the public foyer as a reminder of the building's purpose.

The block has been built to the latest standards, embodied in British Standard 5454, *Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents*. A strongly-built and windowless box (made from 337,000 bricks!) provides not merely physical security but also a high degree of thermal inertia, allowing the Record Office to achieve and maintain the prescribed levels of temperature and relative humidity without relying entirely on air-conditioning.

The block has three floors, with two independent compartments on each floor. In addition, the middle floor has two smaller rooms dedicated respectively to photographic records and magnetic media, which require special environmental conditions. Documents are produced for the public through a transit area on the middle floor, next to the searchroom. An inert gas system (argonite) and fire-resistant doors provide protection against fire.

The magnetic media room has wooden shelves to protect its contents against magnetic fields. All other rooms are fitted with space—saving mobile steel shelving. This is fully adjustable and very easy to move. In all it runs for just over nine kilometres (about 5° miles). Since one of the six main rooms is only partly shelved, eventual capacity will be about 10% greater. Thus, besides containing all the material that used to be stored at County Hall and at the out-store, the repository block provides space for accruals for the next ten to fifteen years.

A new joint venture was inaugurated on 25 July with the opening of the Essex Society for Family History Research Centre, on the ground floor of the new ERO.

The Society will open it to the public from 1 pm to 4 pm on Tuesdays, 10 am to 1 pm on Thursdays, and 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm every second Monday of the month. On Wednesday afternoons the Centre will open solely for members of the Society.

Four computers will give access to a range of genealogical aids - initially the 1881 census, Vital Records for Great Britain, Australia and North America, and the Internet. Microfiche resources include the GRO birth, marriage and death indexes 1837-1992; the national IGI and 1881 census index microfiches; the 1891 Essex census returns and 1851 Essex census index; and Boyds Marriage index. Among printed works are the ESFH's own surveys of monumental inscriptions and exchange magazines with other societies.

To reserve a seat call 01245 244670 during the hours shown (not Monday evenings). Bookings are for 1° hours, with one session of 2 hours on Monday evenings. Users need to show their CARN ticket, but an ESFH membership card entitles you, in addition, to reduced prices for printing and the Internet. Only pencils may be used; no food, drink or bags are permitted.

The Centre is a new stage in the relationship between the ERO and the ESFH. We both look forward to a fruitful collaboration.



The **conservation department** now shares a site with the rest of the Record Office for the first time since the 1960s.

Combining a paper conservation laboratory and a bindery, the new room has good natural light, but no direct sunlight. Air conditioning allows documents to be repaired under the same environmental conditions as their permanent storage. A mixture of fixed benching and moveable tables, with four sinks, allows great flexibility in working practice.

New equipment includes a giant illuminated wallboard for map conservation; three height- and tilt-adjustable light boxes; and a blast freezer. Temperatures of -30° Centigrade will be used to eradicate any insect infestations - a service that we will offer to Essex museums and libraries.