

# Our Counties

Association of British Counties 2014 Annual



St Abbs, Berwickshire

**Government Statement 1974:**

“The new county boundaries are for administrative areas and will not alter the traditional boundaries of counties, nor is it intended that the loyalties of people living in them will change.”

ABC is dedicated to preserving our traditional counties  
and is a non-profit, non-political group

## **Association of British Counties**

**President:** Michael Bradford

**Chairman:** Peter Boyce

**Vice-chairman:** Rupert Barnes

**Treasurer:** Colin Foster

**Membership secretary:** Tim Butterworth

**A** message from the editor: As always, this annual relies on contributions from our members. It is vital to get submissions from members which can be on any subject germane to the counties. I cannot emphasise this enough. And thank you to everyone who has submitted a piece, especially our vice-chairman, Rupert Barnes, who is always ready with an article if it's needed.

On holiday in Scotland earlier in the year, I found myself having a walk along an abandoned railway line that is now a public footpath in Pentcailand, East Lothian. Along the way I spied this sign which commemorated a local mine and was amused to see the alternative name for East Lothian, Haddingtonshire, mentioned on it. I wonder how many instances of "Haddingtonshire", "Linlithgowshire" and "Edinburghshire" still remain.



My holiday took me around the border counties of Selkirkshire, Peeblesshire, Roxburghshire and what surely must be the jewel in the Lowlands' crown, Berwickshire. Although the county names are returning, signs declaring these counties are non-existent. The "Scottish Borders" region is still being used by the tourist boards although, as I have seen, not by anyone else. When will the Scottish Tourist Board join them? They are seriously behind the times on this issue.

My dream would be to see a "Dumfriesshire" sign when travelling north and a "Cumberland" sign when going south. I would not then have to go out of my way to avoid looking at what stands there now!

Awhile ago I became a professional quiz writer. It's a job I enjoy, am good at and make a little extra money with on the side. But I have a confession to make: I use Wikipedia to help write questions. It's a matter of necessity, you see, as I get paid by the question and trawling through numerous websites for the information I need is very time-consuming. However, I avoid Wikipedia like the plague whenever I am writing questions about Britain as their county ignorance knows no bounds. They insist on citations for the verification of facts but ignore this when it comes to UK geography. It's mind-boggling.

### **ABC Annual 2014**

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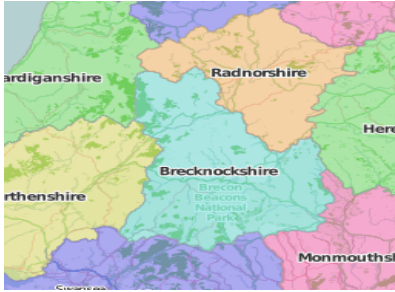
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# Notes from the Chairman

## Online Map of the Counties

The excellent wikishire has published a magnificent new map of the counties of the United Kingdom. The map is searchable, scrollable and can be zoomed in to show details to street level. Check it out at: [www.wikishire.co.uk/map/](http://www.wikishire.co.uk/map/)



## Help Save Us a Stamp!

The ever-rising cost of postage makes it prohibitively expensive to send out notices for meetings and events by post. The Committee feels that this money would be better spent supporting the activities of the Association. Where feasible we will continue to give notice of meetings and events in *Our Counties*. We will continue to publish notice of all meetings and events on our website ([abcounties.com](http://abcounties.com)) and on social media. We will also send email notifications of meetings to all members for whom we have an email address. If we do not already have your current email address please let us know by emailing [admin@abcounties.com](mailto:admin@abcounties.com). If you do not have email, please write to us to indicate that you wish to continue to receive paper notices of events not already published in *Our Counties* or other mail-outs. Please write to: Tim Butteworth, Membership Secretary, 37 Park Way, Knaresborough, Yorkshire, HG5 9DW. We thank you for your understanding and continued support.

*(The cost of large, 2nd class stamps is rising to 73p. If you would prefer to receive the Annual in PDF format, please email me at the address on page 2-ed.)*

## eBay County Confusion

For years my son has been receiving parcels addressed to "Whitchurch, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan". The other day, when setting up an eBay account for myself I found out why!

Often when asked for one's address online, one is presented with a drop-down list of counties from which to choose. These lists can contain a bizarre mix of "counties" with little consistency or thought involved. A not untypical, but especially irritating example, is provided by eBay.

For Northern Ireland the six historic counties are listed. No problem there then. But sadly, the rest of the UK does not receive the same treatment.

For England, the list seems to comprise some kind of composite of the former postal counties and ceremonial counties, including such long-dead entities as Avon and Cleveland and areas such as Greater Manchester which were never permitted within postal addresses. Missing are Westmorland, Cumberland and Huntingdonshire!

For Scotland and Wales, the modern local government unitary authority names are listed, even though many of these are totally unsuitable in a postal address because they contain place names which would clash with the post town.

So what are you meant to put if you live in Cardiff? The answer seems to be "Cardiff, Cardiff". The stupidity of this doesn't seem to have occurred to eBay. My son clearly reached for the nearest thing to Glamorgan that he could see. I imagine many others do the same.

If you use eBay, get in touch and ask that they add all of the historic counties of the UK to their lists, at least to give people the option to use them if they want. Get in touch with any company you see online or off and let them know when county confusion reigns.



### **County Cricket-the Beginning of the End?**

Mari Foster wrote an excellent article on county cricket in the 2013 edition of the annual. In this, she noted the continuing threat to the county basis of professional cricket in England and Wales. A major threat is the notion of teams representing city-based franchises in the 20/20 competition, renamed The Big Blast for 2014. This model has been a massive success in India and Australia and many in media have been calling for this to replace counties in the T20 format. The England and Wales Cricket Board (and fans) have resisted such calls. However, there has been a very disturbing development.

In December 2013, Warwickshire County Cricket Club announced that its team in the Big Blast would henceforth be known as the "Birmingham Bears". This has been okayed by the England and Wales Cricket Board. The reason for the change appears to be closely linked with the club's relationship to Birmingham City Council which lent the club £20 million towards its new £32 million pavilion. In attempting to explain the change Chief Executive Coli Povey said, "The ECB is repositioning the whole tournament, to give it a facelift, and are very keen to drive attendances in the big cities." The implications of this statement are chilling for those of us who love county cricket. They want a small number of big-city clubs, not 18 counties.

T20 cricket is the only form of mass-spectator sport still based on the counties. Whilst it isn't a form of the game which appeals to all traditionalists, no one can deny its popularity. Middlesex and Surrey regularly attract crowds of more than 15,000 to games. The Lancashire v Yorkshire match sells out at Old Trafford. Large numbers of families with children attend. Whilst the game certainly needs promoting the county basis of it is not an obstacle to its further growth.

As a Coventrian I am shocked, offended and outraged by this move from a club I have supported all my life. As a cricket fan and county enthusiast I fear the very worst, other clubs following suit and

the whole county basis of T20 cricket being done away with by the back door, just what the paymasters want.

Why not visit Warwickshire CCC's Facebook page and let them know about this betrayal of our game and our counties.

### **The Four Shire Stone**

Some of you may have wondered what the pillar featured in the logo of the Historic Counties Trust is. It is the Four Shire Stone and my favourite county border marker, if only because it is unique ( I think) in being the only one which marks the point where four counties meet.



The stone is actually a 12-foot high monument and lies 1½ miles east of Moreton-in-Marsh just off the A44, at the junction of this road with an unclassified road to Great Wolford. It marks the point where the main bodies of Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire meet. "But that's three counties, not four!" The fourth county is a detached part of Worcestershire, the parish of Evenlode.

The origins of the stone are unknown. A tapestry woven in the 1580s shows a square with a circle and is labelled "Fowre Sheer Ston" so some kind of marker has clearly been present here for many centuries. The present stone is thought to date from the late 17th century. In 1779 Samuel Rudder described it as: "A handsome pedestal about 12 feet high with a dial on the top and an inscription to inform travellers that this is the Four Shire Stone". No known record exists of who erected it or who paid for it.

It's prevalence in old picture post-cards, the existence of commemorative souvenirs, and the numerous "signatures" seen added to old photos suggest that it was something of a tourist attraction in the past. When I last visited it, it was becoming overrun with trees and shrubs from the hedgerow behind it but was still an impressive site.

If you have any memories of this stone or any other, please let us know.

## Flag News and County News

Based on the St Cuthbert cross, the new **County Durham** flag was unveiled in November 2013. It was designed by 19 year-old twins Katie and Holly Moffat, residents of the county. One of six shortlisted, it won by public vote. It has now been flown atop Durham Cathedral. News of this even made the BBC! (Image courtesy of Andy Strangeway.)



In March 2014, the **Anglesey** flag was registered. The design is a banner of the arms ascribed by later mediaeval heralds, to the earlier, locally celebrated ruler, Hwfa ap Cynddelw. The earliest reference to the arms seems to be in the work of the bard Lewis Glyn Cothi from the period of 1447 to 1486 although there is no evident explanation for the choice of colours or charges used. A late c.

15th century stained glass window with the arms referring to Hwfa are apparently depicted in the east window of Llangadwaladr church on the island. The request for registration was made by Gwyndaf Parri, the ABC member who oversaw the Caernarfonshire flag registration. (Image and text courtesy of Jason Saber.)

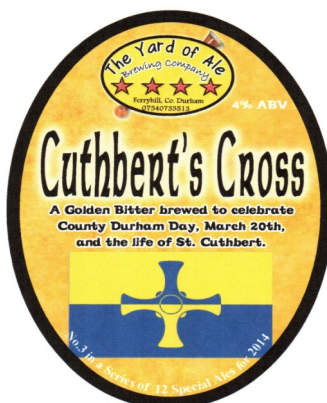
Registered in September 2014, the **Glamorgan** flag is based on the arms of Iestyn ap Gwrgant, the last Welsh ruler of Morgannwg which covered much of what is now Glamorgan. The design has appeared extensively in the arms of various civic administrations. The design was promoted by the Glamorgan History Society in cooperation with the Historic Counties Trust.



The Northamptonshire county flag competition has reached the voting stage with four finalists selected. These are the shortlisted flags:



### Cuthbert's Cross Ale



The Yard of Ale Brewing Company has launched Cuthbert's Cross (4% ABV), a golden ale produced to commemorate Durham's county day which is 20 March. The Surtees Arms in Ferryhill, County Durham, run by Alan and Susan Hogg, launched the beer on 8 March and it is now available at other pubs across the county. (Image courtesy of Alan Hogg.)

# A Bishop for Essex

100 Years of the Diocese of Chelmsford

Graham Gould

**2014** is the centenary year of the Diocese of Chelmsford, the Church of England diocese which is geographically almost identical with the historic county of Essex.<sup>1</sup> Although the boundary of the administrative county of Essex was changed in 1965 by the creation of Greater London, five of whose boroughs (Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest) are in Essex territory, the boundary of the diocese remains unaltered, and continues to reflect the traditional extent of the county.<sup>2</sup>

Until 1846 Essex was part of the church of England Diocese of London, along with Middlesex and part of Hertfordshire. By the mid-nineteenth century, rapid population growth had made division of this large diocese (almost unchanged since mediaeval times) inoperative, and in 1846 Hertfordshire and Essex were transferred to the small Diocese of Rochester. That this cross-Thames link would be only an interim solution was obvious, at least to Bishop Thomas Legh Claughton (bishop of Rochester, 1867-77), who worked for the creation of a new Diocese of St Alban's, covering Essex and Hertfordshire, of which he became the first bishop in 1877.

But population continued to grow, particularly in the area which became known as London-over-the-Border, the rapidly industrialising and suburbanising south-west Essex parishes adjacent to the Rivers Lea and Thames. This required the creation of many new ecclesiastical parishes, intensive fundraising for church building, and an increase in the number of

clergy, and produced a greater workload than was practical of one diocesan bishop. Bishop Edgar Jacob of St Albans (1903-19), like Claughton, advocated the division of his diocese, which was achieved in January 1914 after a long parliamentary process. On St George's Day 1914 John Watts-Ditchfield was enthroned as the first Bishop of Chelmsford and the mediaeval parish church of St Mary became his cathedral. (In the same year, it may be noted, the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, covering the county of Suffolk, was created out of parts of the Dioceses of Norwich and Ely.)



**Chelmsford Cathedral**

The establishment of the Essex county town of Chelmsford as the cathedral town of the new diocese was not a forgone conclusion. Chelmsford, Colchester, Thaxted, Waltham Abbey, Barking, West Ham and Woodford were all considered as possible sites for the cathedral, the last three within the area of London-over-the-Border. But Chelmsford came out as the clear winner of a vote in which every Essex parish was invited to participate. The decision in favour of the county town, a fairly central location, probably ensured the long-term future of the Essex diocese: had one of the London-over-the-Border

<sup>1</sup> The diocese also includes North Woolwich, the small part of Kent north of the Thames; it retains 3 parishes in north-west Essex which, for local government purposes, were transferred to Cambridgeshire in 1895.

<sup>2</sup> The Roman Catholic Diocese of Brentwood (established in 1917) also covers the historic county. I apologise to any Catholic readers for focusing only on the Anglican diocese in this article.

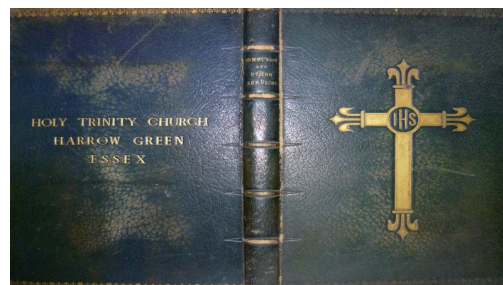
parishes been chosen and the cathedral located in the south-west corner of the county, a further division of the diocese would very likely have followed as London-over-the-Border continued to diverge economically and socially from the rest of Essex, which retained a largely rural and small-town character. The concept of a diocese coterminous with the county of Essex might have vanished within a couple of decades of its creation.

In any event, the unity of the Diocese of Chelmsford was not seriously questioned until the 1960s-and then not just because of the creation of Greater London. Proposals for the subdivision of Essex into as many as four dioceses were mooted, but the most favoured scheme continued to be a new diocese for London-over-the-Border. By arrangement with the Bishop of Chelmsford, for five years (1970-75) William Chadwick, the suffragen Bishop of Barking (a position that had existed since 1901), ran the church in the five east London boroughs almost as a separate diocese, controlling many aspects of church life which in other parts of Essex were the responsibility of the diocesan bishop. But it eventually became clear that there was no significant support in the parishes for a new diocese, or for the transfer of the Barking Episcopal area (as it was now called), or even part of it (such as Newham), to the Diocese of London.

In the Diocese of Chelmsford at present, a system of three Episcopal areas operates-Bradwell, Colchester and Barking (the last now including Harlow and Epping Forest and Ongar deaneries as well as the five east London boroughs<sup>3</sup>)-each with its area bishop working alongside the diocesan. While the idea of separating London-over-the-Border from the rest of the diocese receives favourable mention from time to time (and not just from *within* the area), the existence of the diocese within its (and Essex's) historic borders seems

assured for the foreseeable future-even if the diocese prefers to describe itself as 'The Church of England in Essex and East London' rather than simply 'Essex'.<sup>4</sup> The unity of the diocese has probably been reinforced over the last two decades by the gradual catching up of much of the rest of Essex with London-over-the-Border in terms of economic and urban development and population growth.

In the area of south-west Essex, metropolitan Essex, east London, or London-over-the-Border (whichever term one wishes to use) which is now for local government purposes part of Greater London, it is doubtful whether more than a small fraction of residents retain much sense of identification with the county of Essex as opposed to London. Yet in many Church of England parishes in the area, evidence of the Essex identity of the Diocese of Chelmsford survives in memorial tablets, stained glass, lettering in Bibles and prayer books, and many other historical documents and records.



**Essex Identity Proudly Stated:** the cover of A 19th century service book from Harrow Green Parish Church, Leytonstone

And parishioners who make use of their opportunities to become involved in the diocese at a higher level than the parish or deanery (for example by election to Diocesan Synod) have a chance to become more aware of the whole county of Essex in its historic shape and identity, at least in its ecclesiastical dress. In that respect at least, the existence of a diocese for Essex provides a basis for encouraging people in East

<sup>3</sup> A deanery is a unit of church government made up of a number of parishes. In London-over-the-Border the deanery matches the London Borough

<sup>4</sup> See [www.chelmsford.anglican.org](http://www.chelmsford.anglican.org)



London as well as the rest of Essex to become more aware of the history and geography of their county. So the centenary of the diocese is something worth celebrating, whether you are a member of the church of England or not.

Dr Graham Gould, a theologian and church historian, is editor of the *Journal of Theological Studies*, an academic journal published by Oxford University Press. He has served as church warden of Harrow Green Parish Church, in the Diocese of Chelmsford, and lives in Leyton, Essex.

#### Further reading:

John Charles Cox, *The Cathedral Church and See of Essex* (Bemrose, 1908)

Michael Fox, *Chelmsford Diocese-the First 100 Years* (Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance, 2014) (To order a copy, email: [bookshop@chelmsford.anglican.org](mailto:bookshop@chelmsford.anglican.org))

Gordon Hewitt, *A History of the Diocese of Chelmsford* (Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance, 1984)

Tony Tuckwell, *Coming of Age: the Life and Times of Chelmsford Cathedral, 1914-2014* (Xlibris Publishing, 2013)

## In Pursuit of Swanton Morley

A Journey through the Counties of England-one Mystery at a Time

*Michael Garber interviews author Ian Sansom and finds out a bit more about his murder mystery series the County Guides.*

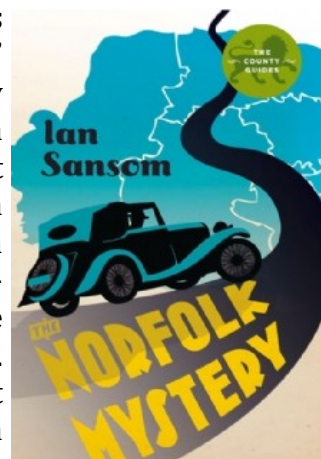
Last July, the eccentric Swanton Morley and his assistant Stephen Sefton appeared in their first outing-*The Norfolk Mystery*. Their project, a book about each of the English counties, was to see them seek the essence of Norfolk. However, the discovery of a hanging vicar and Morley's insatiable curiosity threatens to put them way, way off-schedule. *The Norfolk Mystery* is the first of the *County Guides*, and their author, Ian Sansom intends to write a book for each of England's historic counties.

Ian is originally from Essex, which he describes as "a county deeply misunderstood." Reflecting on Essex he says there was "a sense that we weren't living in London, but we also weren't really living in 'East Anglia, but rather in a very odd and unique place, rich with its own lore and traditions." Living in Northern Ireland for nearly twenty years, Ian found that this distance lent itself to him developing a different perspective on the counties. This led him to ask, "What are these places? Why do they matter? Should we care?"

These questions reflect the spirit of Morley's journey of discovery in the books.

Ian's inspiration for the main protagonist, Swanton Morley, led him to contrive the *County Guides* series, which is set in the 1930s. "Some years ago I made a programme for Radio 4 about Arthur Mee, who was the founder and editor of the Children's Newspaper and the Children's Encyclopaedia. Mee is a hero of mine: an autodidact who dedicated his life to the dissemination of knowledge. I became intrigued by his 'King's England' series of county guides, and began to wonder if I might base a character on Mee and take him on some adventures through the English counties... That's how it began. I can remember exactly

the day the idea occurred to me: I was driving out of Bristol with my friend, the radio producer Sara Davies. "That sounds like a good idea," she said. And so it has proved to be."





Swanton Morley- a character aptly named for a series beginning in Norfolk-is unforgettable, and never short of a Latin tag or some arcane fact. Whilst the story itself is engrossing, Ian's literary flair is the real gem and *The Norfolk Mystery* is hard to put down once opened.

Describing how the series will unfold, Ian says, "In each book there's going to be a murder, and each murder will take place in a classic 'English' location: a cricket club, a public school, a linen mill, a vicarage, etc." The books themselves are not short of their own mystery; such as how an administrative county map managed to appear on the back cover?

"Ah, if only authors had authority over their own covers," muses Ian over the county-confusion his publisher clearly experienced. "I think many people are confused about the identity of the counties, pre and post 1974. Part of my aim in the

books is to revive interest in the historic counties."

I asked what the characters would write to a national paper on 1 April 1974. "I think Sefton might be long dead by then," replies Ian, "I know Morley would be appalled. In any case, Morley and Sefton get to look forward to meeting "surfing Satanists in Devon" in their next adventure, with only thirty-seven to go after that. Ian remarks that the *County Guides* should keep him busy for awhile.

I have one last thought: one could almost imagine Morley writing an article entitled 'In Search of England's Lost Counties'. Ian replies, "I shall ask Morley about that article and see what reply I receive..."

*The Norfolk Mystery*, published by Harper Collins is currently available in hardback and paperback. Ian Sansom is online at: [iansansom.net](http://iansansom.net).



## Dorking, the Downs and the Somme

Rupert Barnes

I have always like Dorking-it seems an odd place for the Great War to begin, but the Battle of Dorking in 1871 was the most important battle never to be fought.

I was brought up in Surrey, and one of my favourite expeditions was to Box Hill, beside the gap where the River Mole cuts through the North Downs south of Dorking. East of the glistening river a great chalk shoulder rises up, with a broad greensward leading up invitingly between the plunging scarp and the gentler woods wandering off to the north. We used to scramble up a chalk face and head for the summit.

At the top of Box Hill, the escarpment plunges down to the south with a wide vista over the rest of Surrey towards the Weald, but behind the National Trust cafe, hidden under bushes and young trees, we

found something intriguing; a concrete fort, broken and empty, long abandoned for nature to reclaim, and we never knew the story behind it.

In the autumn of 1852, the Duke of Wellington died, and in France Louis Napoleon restored his uncle's fallen throne. The reaction in Britain was panic; men bought guns and formed volunteer rifle companies up and down the land and the Government, when bestirred, built forts in the Channel until the new Napoleon turned out to be benign. (Well, towards us, anyway.) Then, in 1871, the Prussian Army crashed through France and occupied Paris. A new world power was born, and a new fear.

The year Paris fell, George Tomkyns Chesney wrote a story, *The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer*,

an account looking back at a German conquest of Britain. In his story, the enemy cripple the fleet with torpedoes, cross the Channel and march north. Box Hill and this gap in the Downs, lovingly described, are the scene of the crushing Battle of Dorking, which opens the road to London and the end of British power.

While not a well-written work, Chesney's book was snapped up keenly and sparked a change in the national outlook. It created a trend for "invasion literature" that went on until the eve of the conflagration, and it drew attention to the Mole Gap. The ranks of the volunteer rifle companies swelled (my Great-grandfather joined the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment) and the focus now became the threat from Germany. By the 1890s, forts were being built along the line of the North Downs, and the fort on Box Hill was one of these. Lord Salisbury, Prime Minister at the time, might have been cynical about the military ("they would insist on the importance of garrisons on the Moon in order to protect us from Mars") but national defence was not to be ignored. The county top of Kent (also in the North Downs) is ringed by the earthworks of a Victorian hill fort, and all these formed a system known as the London Defence Positions. The same plans were revisited in the Second World War, and the "GHQ Line B" pillboxes sprang up along the Downs.

There is a direct line from Dorking to the Somme. Distrust of imperial Germany was no fantasy, for it was an ambitious, aggressive power eager to catch up for its wasted centuries. Germany's shipyards built Dreadnoughts to match those of the Royal Navy and its factories guns for the largest army in Europe.

The "invasion literature" books continued though the naval arms race had been won; even Saki wrote a book, *When William Came*, and he died in the trenches going as he put it, "at least halfway to meeting him". Arthur Conan-Doyle portrayed a retired Sherlock Holmes defeating a German spymaster and warning

of "a chill wind from the east". The best-known of the "invasion literature" was not a bombastic action thriller, but a gentle sailing book *The Riddle of the Sands* by the oddly contradictory character, Erskine Childers. He turned attention from armies and the southern counties to the sea and the threat to Lincolnshire, a gateway to the industrial Midlands. This book too changed strategies in the decades before the war finally came. By then it must have seemed inevitable.

I do not like to think of the South Downs and Weald of my youth as sullied by bloody war and horror, and of course they have not been outside the pages of literature. But the timeless peace of these places is not as timeless as we might wish-at Coldharbour on the slopes of Leith Hill (Surrey's county top) is an Iron Age hill fort, telling of unquiet times. A Roman military road slices through the landscape beneath it. On that road, beneath the fort at the village of Ockley, a great slaughter of the Danes took place according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Though nothing of this remains and Ockley drowns on amongst its fields.

The hills of Surrey are very forgiving and absorb the past into themselves, far older they are than the man who scratches about their slopes. The Great War was of a different order though. On the first day of the Somme, a whole hill disappeared in an explosion that was heard on Hampstead Heath in Middlesex. Today in a long, broad line from Alsace to the Channel there are no houses older than 1920 and the farmers even now reap from their field a grim harvest of old but live shells.

Our land did suffer in the Great War-the Zeppelin raids, the cruel bombardment of Scarborough, Whitby and Great Yarmouth, and the silent towns that lost all their young men. After the war the true toll on the population was felt and society had changed forever. However all this was nothing compared to what befell France and Belgium in those years.

I know no delight like that of a summer's day spent walking in the hills of

Sussex or of Surrey. The ageless, rounded chalk hills, green and white with grass and fleece, rise above the little villages sitting in the folds in the hills, with clear streams twinkling through them beside quiet pubs. This is a work of greater artistry than the fallible hand of man could ever muster.

The white arc of the North Downs culminates at Dover, but the chalk continues across in French Flanders, and there the fallible hand of man has been more prominent. We can be thankful that for all the bloodshed of the Great War, it took place in foreign fields. No sapper

battalion dug a cave to blow 24 tonnes of charge beneath the Downs to dissolve a Surrey hill. The timeless villages stand yet in their valleys; they have not been wiped from the map. The pretty zig-zag of Box Hill is preferable to the zig-zag trench lines scarring Flanders and France. The fight was taken to the enemy in a determined manner which in time brought victory—there was no Battle of Dorking, though there might well have been had preparation not been made, and then, how differently would we see those quiet downs now?

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## Seeking the Soul of Essex

Peter Aylmer

A pleasant little aphorism by that radical missionary Arthur Shearly Cripps furnished the solution for the Crostic in the 2013 Annual:

“Low hills, rich fields, calm rivers, in Essex seek them all.”

It sums up the county nicely, to those who know it well; but how different from contemporary wisdom is the land thus portrayed.

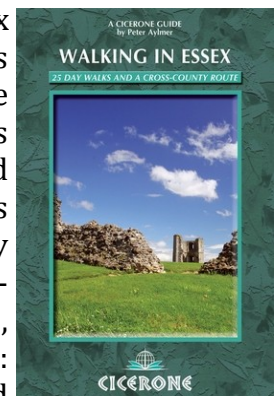
Recently I’ve had the pleasure of tramping the green lanes and footpaths of Essex for a guidebook, *Walking in Essex* (Cicerone Press, 2013), that even recently might have been considered a joke title. There’s a growing interest though, in the natural world of the county, evoked most memorably by nature writers such as Robert Macfarlane and Jules Pretty. And they don’t fall into the easy trap of just looking to the obvious, chocolate-box strips of tourist Essex, around Finchingfield maybe, or along the Colne valley, or the chalk-valleys around Saffron Walden.

Neither, I hope, did I, though I would hardly miss out on such gorgeous countryside. My first task, in planning where to include, was to sketch out a selection of paths throughout the entire historic county,

not its modern truncated equivalent. Indeed, all the London boroughs of Essex save one, and both the unitary authorities of Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea, feature in the book.

For an Essex guidebook, this makes perfect sense. The historic county, as has existed for a thousand years near enough, has a geographical unity that the present administrative county ignores, and it is triple-defined: in its border coast and rivers, its internal rivers, and its underlying soils.

The Thames to the south, Lea and Stort to the west, and Stour to the north, with the North Sea to the east, all but encircle the county. Between the Thames and Stour estuaries, three other great inlets march into Essex: the Crouch, the Blackwater and the Colne. So effective are the boundary-rivers in constricting Essex that these three interior rivers stray into no other county. Further, all five estuaries give rise to a succession of salt marshes,



cockle banks and little winding channels that is without parallel in the country: unravelled, a 350 mile coastline within an hour or so of London that is almost entirely undeveloped, and undevelopable, away from the sandy beaches of Southend and Clacton and a few scattered harbours.



**Dovercourt beach**

It's only to the north-west that water boundaries are absent. Here, the county takes in the catchment of the upper Cam. It's also here that the underlying geology is chalk, rather than clay. But the chalk never disappears from underneath Essex; it dips perhaps 400ft below and reappears in the far south around Grays. The little nature reserve at Chafford Gorges, just a short stroll from Lakeside shopping centre should you tire of retail therapy, is set among old chalk quarries.

Occasional gravel outcrops, like those underlying Epping Forest or the Danbury Ridge, provide some of the higher heights away from the chalk country but overall the county has remarkable geological unity, stemming from the prehistoric course of the Thames (then a tributary of the Rhine) 500,000 years ago, flowing roughly where the Blackwater is now.

There's another consequence of this geological unity. Apart from a few bits of flint from the chalk-lands and occasional puddingstones left behind from Ice Age glaciers, there is almost no decent building stone in the county. All the great stone works, including the castles of Hadleigh and Hedingham, have relied on imports; it is thus no surprise that the English re-discovery of brick making, lost after the Romans went, took place in mediaeval Coggeshall. And so vernacular architecture has relied on local ingenuity: wood in

spires and weatherboarded and half-timbered cottages, wattle-and-daub and later plaster decorated by pargetting, as well as brickwork of great antiquity, all give the Essex village, if not the newer expanded town, a unity stemming paradoxically from the variety, quite unlike say the ubiquitous honeyed stone of the Cotswolds or the granite of Aberdeen. Look at a varied village such as Matching Green and you couldn't really be anywhere else.



**Great Bardfield**

There's a permanence then to the shape of Essex that was implicitly recognised by those invading Saxons. To me, indeed, it's particularly important that metropolitan Essex, hived away by the 1965 reorganisation, is Essex first and metropolitan second. I take some pride, looking back at my birth certificate, to see "Wantstead, Essex" written there, and knowing that my grandfather had "Forest Gate, Essex" on his. That scion of Essex county Cricket Club, Ravi Bopara, is so registered because of his East Ham schooling, and would the 1966 World Cup have been won without Bobby Moore of Barking? Indeed, that Essex football team, West Ham United brings much of its present-day support from the A12 and A13 corridors graced by the post-war Diaspora, from the war-wrecked streets of present-day Newham out to and beyond the Basildons and Billericays of the southern county.

I don't want to get too tied up in misty-eyed nostalgia. Another fascination of Essex has been its continual assimilation of immigrants, from the first Roman town at Colchester, through the Saxons first invading then settling, up to the present



day. Robert Gibson, in *Annals of Ashdon*, points out how itinerant the agricultural labourers of early modern Essex actually were. Victorian farming in the county was largely rescued by Scottish livestock farmers migrating south; the new working class of metropolitan Essex at a similar time arrived from East Anglia, Ireland and elsewhere; if there are new trends now, then it is the specifics that are different,

not the phenomenon itself.

So seek out the low hills, rich fields and calm rivers of Essex; but from Manor Park to Manningtree, Leigh-on-Sea to Audley End, the county has even more to show, and a story that is by no means yet complete.

*Peter Aylmer's book, Walking in Essex, is available in hard copy or e-book.*

## County Fact

The Bedfordshire Clanger is that county's answer to the Cornish pasty, with one obvious difference. The clanger was a apparently a suet pudding with a sweet filling at one end and a savoury filling at the other. It was often made by women working in the fields as a sort of instant lunch. The word "clanger" may derive from the Northamptonshire dialect word "clang", which means to eat heartily; or perhaps it's a reference to the mixing of sweet and savoury. Whatever the origin, the Clanger can still be purchased around the county.

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See the latest news, read loads of information about the counties and get involved in the discussion boards via our website: *[www.abcounties.com](http://www.abcounties.com)*

There is also the incredibly useful **Gazetteer of British Place Names** which is the standard reference source for UK geography.

Get the correct county for postal addresses via the **Traditional County Postal Directory**:

*[www.postal-counties.co.uk](http://www.postal-counties.co.uk)*

The historic county borders of England and Wales can be downloaded in GoogleEarth (kmz) format from the **Historic Counties Trust's County Border Project**: *[www.county-border.co.uk](http://www.county-border.co.uk)*. The county borders can also be displayed within GoogleMaps by typing the following into the search box at the top of the screen and clicking 'search':

*[http://www.county-borders.co.uk/Historic\\_Counties.kmz](http://www.county-borders.co.uk/Historic_Counties.kmz)*.

Input your own information on the counties at **WikiShire**:

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## In Memoriam: Roy Bardsley

Saddleworth White Rose Society

**R**oy Bardsley was born in Derby, but at an early age moved with his parents back to their native Saddleworth. He was educated at Saddleworth Secondary School prior to starting work at Greenfield Farm, where he developed what was to be a life-long interest in cattle.

Instead of doing National Service, Roy enlisted in the army and served several years with the Royal Military Police, mainly in Germany. He cultivated an interest in the army, becoming quite knowledgeable in the history of Yorkshire regiments, particularly the Home Guard & Territorials in the West Riding.

Following the local government changes of 1974 Roy, along with many residents of Saddleworth, considered that the town was given a "raw deal" when it was linked with the Metropolitan Borough of Oldham. He was a founder member and secretary of the **Saddleworth White Rose Society**, a volunteer group, which campaigns to preserve the history, culture and identity of Saddleworth as part of



the West Riding of Yorkshire, and to refute the suggestion that Saddleworth has somehow moved into Lancashire.

Roy was proud that the Society recently erected county identity signs (Lancashire and Yorkshire) on some of the roads around Saddleworth which cross the boundary into Lancashire.

Roy died suddenly on 20 May, 2013, following a long illness. He leaves his wife Elizabeth, sons David and Christopher, and five grandchildren.

## County-related Items for Sale

For sale: The 1973 reprint of Thomas Jeffrey's map of the county of Yorkshire, first printed in 1775, and comprising about 20 individual sheets, each measuring around 25x25 (62x62 cm). There is also a cover sheet and introduction. Map scale 1" to 1 mile.

All map sheets are mounted together as originally supplied although they probably can be separated if required.

Overall condition is extremely good.

The whole set is supplied in the original sturdy mailing tube which is a good way of storing the maps.

Price: £50 plus postage at cost (if applicable).

If interested, please contact Brian Jones on 01274 638792 or email him at: [music@brianjoneswry.com](mailto:music@brianjoneswry.com)

If you have any county-related items you are interested in selling in next year's annual, contact the editor.

# County Laddergrams Puzzle

Mari Foster

First, write the word for the first definition into space 1. Then drop one letter and anagram the rest to form the answer for definition 2. Drop one more letter, rearrange, and you'll get the answer to definition 3. Put the first dropped letter into the space to the left of box 1 and the second dropped letter into the space to the right of box 3. Continue on in this manner until you have two words reading down in the outside columns. (Solution on back page.)

## Puzzle 1

1	2	3	
4	5	6	
7	8	9	
10	11	12	
13	14	15	

- |                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Unexpected         | 10 On land                 |
| 2 Models             | 11 Relieve sheep of wool   |
| 3 Pile of sand       | 12 Tennis man Arthur _____ |
| 4 Device for warming | 13 Naval standard          |
| 5 Third planet       | 14 Burn lightly            |
| 6 Tariff             | 15 Indication              |
| 7 Special uniform    |                            |
| 8 Carefree existence |                            |
| 9 String instrument  |                            |

## Puzzle 2

- |                                    |                                  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Magnetism                        | 16 Woven from flax               |
| 2 Vault or span                    | 17 Possession of property in law |
| 3 Old American cheer               | 18 French island                 |
| 4 The best possible                | 19 Deteriorate                   |
| 5 Surrealist painter               | 20 Carry out again               |
| 6 Covering                         | 21 Staff or bar                  |
| 7 Scored in rugby                  | 22 Plural of that                |
| 8 Location                         | 23 Cobbler's result              |
| 9 Tennis match unit                | 24 Gardening implement           |
| 10 Unsuitable in the circumstances | 25 Littoral relates to this      |
| 11 Huff and puff                   | 26 Flower-bearing prickly shrub  |
| 12 Carpet pile                     | 27 Mineral extract               |
| 13 Falcon-headed god               |                                  |
| 14 Hasten about                    |                                  |
| 15 California's Big ____           |                                  |

1	2	3	
4	5	6	
7	8	9	
10	11	12	
13	14	15	
16	17	18	
19	20	21	
22	23	24	
25	26	27	

## Puzzle 3

1	2	3	
4	5	6	
7	8	9	
10	11	12	
13	14	15	
16	17	18	

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Thankless person           | 10 Road passing round a town |
| 2 Get hold of again          | 11 Reflecting strong loyalty |
| 3 Rule                       | 12 Type of curry             |
| 4 Theft of personal property | 13 Steel-grey semimetal      |
| 5 Cavalry soldier            | 14 Heathers                  |
| 6 Leaving no doubt           | 15 Cause great fear          |
| 7 Written constitution       | 16 Roxburghshire abbey       |
| 8 Ancient country            | 17 Small bit of food         |
| 9 Stretch out a hand         | 18 Winner's opponent         |

## County Facts

Sutherland covers around 5,252 square kilometres and has a population of less than 15,000 people a majority of whom live along the eastern coast. This coast is mostly made up of Old Red Sandstone but also Jurassic rocks which litter the shoreline.

The most northerly point of mainland Britain is at Dunnet Head in Caithness, not John O' Groats as many people erroneously think. Many types of sea birds, including puffins, guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes nest in its cliffs.

The Isle of Lewis is part of the county of Ross-shire, yet its neighbour Harris, which is not a separate island but attached, is part of Inverness-shire.

Three great Scots lie in the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, Berwickshire. David Erskine, the 11th Earl of Buchan who lived in Dryburgh House was buried in the sacristy in 1829. Sir Walter Scott was buried in the north transept just three years later. The third, Field-Marshal Earl Haig was interred there in 1928 and lies beside Scott.

Peebles, the county town of Peeblesshire, has the motto "Contra Nando Incrementium" which means "increase by swimming against the current" and derives from the town's strong connection to the River Tweed.

### **County Laddergram answers:**

**Puzzle 1** 1. Su(d)den 2. Nude(s) 3. Dune 4. H(e)ater 5. Eart(h) 6. Rate 7. Li(v)ery 8. R(i)ley 9. Lyre 10. Ash(o)re 11. Shea(r) 12. Ashe 13. Ensig(n) 14. Sing(e) 15. Sign DEVON/SHIRE

**Puzzle 2** 1. Char(m) 2. Ar(c)h 3. Rah 4. Id(e)al 5. D(a)li 6. Lid 7. T(r)ies 8. S(i)te 9. Set 10. (I)napt 11. Pan(t) 12. Nap 13. H(o)rus 14. Rus(h) 15. Sur 16. Li(n)en 17. Lie(n) 18. Ile 19. Erod(e) 20. R(e)do 21. Rod 22. (T)hose 23. (S)hoe 24. Hoe 25. S(h)ore 26. Ro(s)e 27. Ore MERIONETH/CAITHNESS

**Puzzle 3** 1. Ingra(t)e 2. Reg(a)in 3. Reign 4. Larcen(y) 5. La(n)cer 6. Clear 7. Cha(r)ter 8. (T)hrace 9. Reach 10. (O)rbital 11. T(r)ibal 12. Balti 13. Arse(n)ic 14. Er(i)cas 15. Scare 16. M(e)lrose 17. (M)orsel 18. Loser TYRONE/ANTRIM

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