

WEA

ESSEX FEDERATION

NEWS SHEET

SUMMER / AUTUMN 2023



- Hybrid Learning
- Gilgamesh
- Disease in the Past
- Walks
- Recent Developments

....and more

WEA Eastern Region Essex Federation

Autumn 2023

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Cover image:
Copford Church.

Federation Chair:
Joan Black

Federation Secretary:
Lesley Naish
essex.federation@gmail.com

EF News Sheet Editor:
Andrew Aitken

Send copy for the next edition
to: ronmarks.wea@gmail.com

Essex Federation Website: [www.
wea-essex.org.uk](http://www.wea-essex.org.uk)

WEA Eastern Regional Office:
27/28 Bridge Street
Cambridge
CB2 1 UJ.
Tel: 01223 417320
Email: eastern@wea.org.uk

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The News Sheet is mainly a
record of completed courses,
partly to give readers an idea
of what they might like.
We welcome essays from
members on any subjects they
think will be of interest to
others.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

It's been a while since the last newsletter and a lot has happened since. We were promised a new and very much improved WEA website, that would be easy to access and use. I think the general feeling is that while it is relatively easy to find a course, it is not easy to book and pay for it. Having been issued with new email addresses and created new passwords, it promised to be 'a new dawn'. Nothing can be further from the truth! Emails don't work and neither do passwords. Enrolling for a course has become a nightmare! We've been assured that it's a few teething problems, but I'm seriously concerned that many people will just give up and our usual well supported courses will struggle with numbers, this term.

I know that many Branches have struggled to book face-to-face tutors, and this is part of the reason that I instigated the Branch survey, having been contacted by a Branch from a different Region, with the same problems. The responses have made interesting reading. It would seem that generally speaking, we are almost unanimous in wanting face-to-face courses and feel that failure to get these courses, will mean the closure of Branches. This in the 'Year of the Branch' will be a disaster, especially for Essex, that has traditionally had a very strong Branch programme. We have held and continue to hold meetings with senior WEA staff and will continue to press home the problems.

On a brighter note, the Walks programme has been very successful again this year. The only one to be done in the rain was Saffron Walden but I'm assured that it was still very much enjoyed. The demand for the walk in Great Bardfield was overwhelming and led to a second date being arranged and I think that it will feature again on next year's programme. Brightlingsea proved a revelation, and I must thank Brightlingsea Branch for recommending and organising it. Nayland was also much enjoyed, and will be remembered for the Hollyhocks, which featured everywhere in the village. One more walk to go at the end of September, in Wivenhoe. When I look back through my notes, we seem to have covered a lot of Essex and I'm beginning to run out of ideas, so if anyone has a suggestion for a place we haven't visited, then do please let me know.

We expect to organise one, possibly two, One Day Schools later in the year. Details will be sent out as soon as we have them.

In the meantime, I do hope that as many Branches as possible, will send representatives to the AGM, on 7th October. It will be an opportunity to discuss the way ahead for Essex Branches and we also hope to have news of new Tutors. Andy Beharrell has also kindly agreed to give a talk in the afternoon (subject to be arranged)

I do hope that you all have a successful start to the new academic year.

Joan Black

Tiptree and Tollesbury branch meets the current big dilemma

Or, as Shakespeare never put it:

To hybrid
or not to
hybrid.....?

We have done a number of hybrid courses to date. These have included:

- Thomas Hardy and Flora Thompson – Margaret Mills (1 Session) Spring 2022
- Understanding Ukraine – Julian Roberts (2 sessions) Autumn 2022
- Musicals – George Cromack (6 sessions) Spring 2022

In the Autumn Term 2023 we hope to have *Conservation* with Hadrian Cook and *Ealing Comedies* with George Cromack. Both of these will be hybrid courses as the tutors are some distance from Essex and would not be able to travel to us as a branch. We nevertheless look forward to their enthusiasm and knowledge coming to us over Zoom rather than them being in our venue.

The tutors doing hybrid courses came on board with varying degrees of trepidation!! However, we ensured that we had a detailed discussion with the tutor before the first session of each course so that they were happy with students' expectations as far as feasible, given the slightly different format.

There is no denying this is not a replacement for face to face. However, with the opportunity to expand tutor availability and a concomitant increased breadth of courses, we felt that this was worth trying out for Tiptree and Tollesbury. It proved to be successful, and the wider variety of courses brought in new students as well as catering effectively for the existing branch members.

I appreciate that there are a lot of fierce opponents to hybrid and they submit various reasons for this: “no internet”; “there is no engagement with student and tutors”; “no person suitable to deal with the equipment”.

These are worthy objections but not insurmountable. Some compromise is required in the approach adopted and tutor delivery may need some adaptation to overcome some of these issues, but with careful preparation and discussion with all stakeholders, the courses can be very successful and offer greater variety for branches. As the delivery of these courses develops and is refined, we look forward to proper provision of technical support from the WEA in the future.

Here are comments from our students about hybrid courses:

"Encourage groups to try out hybrid meeting as they provide a way of combining the important social aspects of WEA with a wider choice of lecturers."

"It was nice to meet WEA members from other parts of the UK on the online courses – could this be part of hybrid?"

"On the whole hybrid works well but bit of a one-way dialogue from tutor to student. Difficult to spontaneously ask questions."

"Tutor sees students as a group rather than individuals."

"Training tutors to be more aware of audience...."

"Hybrid is better than zoom only."

"Need expertise, re-use of equipment and back up if the nominated person is ill"

"Social aspect of student meeting very important"

The bottom line is you need good internet, the right equipment, a person to convene the session and who is comfortable with using the equipment. Also, a nominated person to manage the session for students and tutor.

The most challenging part of these hybrid sessions is to maximise engagement with students and the tutor. In Tiptree we are aiming to improve on this in the future and are working out strategies to enhance the experience. For example:

- Making the tutor available at break time for individuals to ask questions
- Separating students into groups for questions and feedback sessions.
- Improving the microphone sensitivity which may help individuals asking questions

We hope to try these approaches with George Cromack who is already comfortable doing these sessions with us. All in all this is a very worthwhile experience for Tiptree and Tollesbury and a way forward for this branch.

Spring 2023
Tales from Babylon and Beyond.
Tutor: Ben Pestell

GILGAMESH



All those great
Old Testament
stories we
thought were so
original...
Turns out they
weren't.

We were delighted to welcome Ben back to Writtle. The first half of this course explores the Epic of Gilgamesh, an ancient King of Uruk. He encounters a less than human being called Enkidu

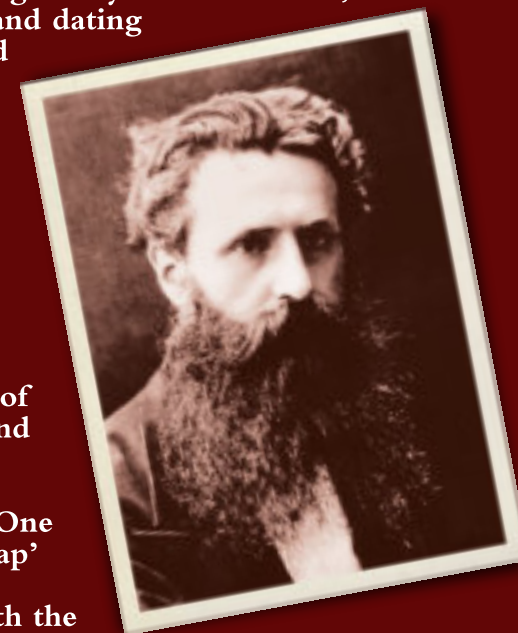
who tells the King that he is not destined for eternal life. In the nature of 'heroic quests' the two have adventures, encounter loss and achieve greater understanding, which ultimately makes Gilgamesh a better ruler. Whilst great libraries like the one at Alexandria, experience devastating loss in a fire, the clay tablets on which this Epic is inscribed simply bake hard and survive to be excavated centuries later.

Ben provided us with information about the Cuneiform script used by the Sumerians and the Akkadians. We studied the legendary 'Flood Tablet', deciphered by Irving Finkel and dating from the 7th C BCE and it led to discussion and comparison with the Old Testament Flood story. We also learnt about their polytheist gods and a character called 'Humbaba' who was a bit like the Green Man. A sort of 'ogre' who guarded the cedar forest.

Ben also talked about the great cities of Mesopotamia, of the rediscovery of Nineveh and its library, of the story of Babylon, and of Leonard Wooley's excavations at Ur. One tablet shows their 'World Map' which we recognise as Mesopotamia. We ended with the death of Alexander the Great in Babylon.

Inspired by these lectures, a couple of us went to the British Museum to see relevant artefacts including an amazing silver lyre from Ur dated to 2,600BC and the Royal Game of Ur.

Thank you to Ben for another interesting course.



George Smith, whose translation of Tablet XI of the Epic Of Gilgamesh revealed an account of the Flood that predated then Old Testament version. Consternation and outrage ensued.

Autumn 2022

Disease and the Impact of Disease on History

Tutor: Roger Cooke



*Medieval surgery.
What's being done to
the patient here?
You probably don't
want to know.*

IN THE MIDDLE
AGES BEING ILL
WAS PRETTY BAD.
THE 'CURES'
COULD BE EVEN
WORSE.

We were delighted to welcome Roger back especially with a new course. It was also good to see a recovery in numbers and to catch up with old friends.

Unfortunately, attendance has fallen as compared to the pre-Covid days when there were up to 50 of us in the Hall.

It is always a balance to describe the course without giving away spoilers. However it is important to stress that this is not 'a history of disease' but 'the impact that diseases have had on the course of history'. It was no surprise that Roger included plague and smallpox but some of his

other choices were unexpected as he did not confine the course to infectious diseases. In England, the impact of disease on five of our monarchs was significant and following the social and financial consequences for them was enlightening. When it came to the consequences to the

Protestant succession 1603-1727 Roger has promised a handout for future classes as he traced back the lineage of George 1st and his mother, Sophie of Hanover! The consequences for European history formed the basis of another lecture. Tolstoy is a great writer, but *War and Peace* left me with the belief that

it was the terrible snow which caused havoc for the French on the Retreat from Moscow. That was only half the story.

As always the talks were well illustrated and the maps were helpful. It was also important to be reminded of the different perception of illness in pre-scientific times, days before the electron microscope and antibiotics. Topically, we ended with the comparison between the 1918-20 Spanish Flu pandemic which struck at the end of World War One and the recent Covid pandemic, where lives were saved by Intensive Care Units and the rapid development of a vaccine. Thank you for another stimulating course.

Mary Roberts



*The Black Death. In England,
the collapse in the population
undermined the tradition of
bondage. Because employers now
had to compete for labour many
workers received wages for the
first time.*

WALKS

REVIEW OF SUMMER WALKS 2022:

Thaxted:



*The Guildhall.
It has at least one tenuous
connection to the Great
Bardfield walk. Pic: Linda Vowles*

We had a varied programme of town walks through the summer of 2022 organised by Joan in Chelmsford. I attended two of these walks – Thaxted in Essex and Clare in Suffolk, the guide on both occasions was Josie Watson, a very knowledgeable and interesting lady.

In the Middle Ages Thaxted, which lies in the valley of the River Chelmer, became an important centre for the cutlery trade (the town badge shows two crossed swords). There is no iron in the vicinity so it may have been that knives and swords were brought here for finishing. The guildhall, built by the cutlers in about 1400, stands at the centre of the village, a proud, magnificent, three-storey building, each floor overhanging the one below. All around it are more 15th century timber-framed and overhanging buildings, some with pargeting. Other houses were medieval in origin and have Georgian plasterwork façades; a number date wholly from the Georgian period by which time the cutlery trade had declined and Thaxted was a more modest market centre. We walked to the highest point in the area where John Webb's disused windmill is situated. From there we walked through the graveyard and a double row of almshouses, one thatched, to the church, one of the largest in Essex, built between 1340 and 1510. Its spire soars over the buildings below in proclamation of the wealth of its medieval builders, cutlers and lords of the manor, the de Clares.

Two famous past residents of Thaxted are Gustav Holst, whose blue badge we saw at the Manse on the High Street (between 1917–25). He wrote *The Planets* during this period. And Dick Turpin, the notorious highwayman (1705–39), is said to have run a butcher's shop in the town.



There's something wonderful in Thaxted's celebrating its connection to two such contrasting figures as Dick Turpin and Gustav Holst. In 'Turpin' case, the link is - at best - a bit wishful. But Turpin isn't the only controversial person with local associations



The Red Vicars

Thaxted is so typically a small English rural town that it's hard to think of it as a haven for leading left-wingers. Yet it was. Twice. And the unlikely host was the church itself.

Long known as 'the Cathedral of Essex', St John's church is a magnificent Perpendicular structure which dominates the town. Just the place, you might think, for an avuncular vicarage-tea-party parson who'd charm the old ladies and keep controversy out of the liturgy. Twice in the twentieth century, however, a 'bolshy' was granted the Thaxted living and both earned the epithet 'Red Vicar'. Not always as a compliment.

The first was Conrad Noel. Born in 1869, into a well-connected family, his education was routine for his class: Wellington, Cheltenham then Corpus Christi, Cambridge. A sign of latent dissidence was his rustication after a year at university. He did not return but enrolled at Chichester Theological College. By the time he was eligible for ordination, awareness of his left-wing tendencies had reached the Church hierarchy and he found it hard to get an appointment. Eventually, he became a curate in Cheshire, but left when parishioners objected to his socialism.

After acting as a curate in London, he was in 1910 appointed Vicar of Thaxted. His benefactor was the Countess of Warwick in whose gift the living was. She had already been dubbed the 'Red Countess'.

Once in office, Noel's socialism reasserted itself. In a 'Battle of the Flags' he displayed inside the church the Red Flag and the Sinn Fein ensign. This appears not to have worried his parishioners, but Cambridge undergraduates objected mightily and they mounted several sorties into the church to remove the offending banners and replace them with the Union Flag. In 1922, the church authorities ruled against Noel.

In the meantime, Noel was politically active elsewhere. In 1918 he established Catholic Crusade, which somehow combined the traditions of an idealised Merrie England with the more down-to-earth principles of social justice. English Trotskyism is said to have been influenced by it, but in that area of blink-and-you'll miss-it phenomena I'd have to ask "How can they tell?" One long-term consequence was the development of Morris Dancing. Oh well.

Noel was an early member of the Independent Labour Party but later defected to the even leftier British Socialist Party. He

supported Trotsky in his attempts to gain asylum outside a suddenly-dangerous USSR. This may well have prompted his disillusion with Stalinism. But not with Socialism.

He died in 1942 from cancer, still irreconcilably Socialist

After a bracing 32 years of the Rev. Noel, the Church high-ups must have thought that the parishioners of Thaxted would be seeking something more soothing. Not a bit of it. On hearing they might be entering a less taxing phase, the townsfolk rose as one and demanded more of the same. It happened that 'more of the same' was immediately available - in the person of Jack Putterill, Noel's curate and his son-in-law.

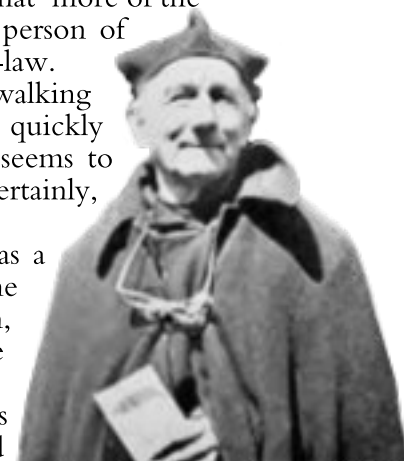
Putterill first encountered Thaxted on a walking holiday in 1914. Then a banker, he fell quickly under the influence of Rev. Noel, who seems to have recruited him as a sort of disciple. Certainly, he renounced his banking ways.

Father Jack, as he became known, was a keen amateur astronomer and a fine musician, who taught music in the town, befriended Gustav Holst and established the Thaxted Music Festival which continues to this day. And, being even keener on Morris Dancing than Noel, he further developed the movement. Also, little remembered these days, he was a constant advocate for the improvement of the conditions of farmworkers.

If Putterill was in the mould of Noel, they did differ - on Stalin in particular and Russian Communism in general. Noel had realised, by the time of his death, that Stalin was not entirely a force for good. Putterill, on the other hand, saw Stalin in a positive light. He must have been one of the few English priests who said posthumous prayers for Stalin. Even after the Russian invasions of Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968), he could not bring himself to be entirely critical of the USSR.

Despite this, when he died in 1973, he was regarded by the people best able to judge - his parishioners - with huge affection and gratitude.

AA



Clare:

The last walk of the year was at Suffolk's smallest town of Clare, postponed from one of the hottest days of the summer. We met in the Castle grounds car park. The lands were gifted to Richard fitz Gilbert of Bienfaite by William the Conqueror for his support, he was later known as Richard de Clare. The market town is situated between the River Stour and Chilton Stream and the name Clara,

wide, where the views of the town were spectacular. Once more at ground level we talked about the Victorian railway coming to the town but later one of Beeching's cuts. There is still a very nice cafe in the old railway station. We walked over the stream to the Augustinian Priory where it is possible to see the ankle-high remains of a priory church, having been dissolved in 1538. The Priory was established in 1248 by Gilbert de Clare, the first

Augustinian order in England. In 1954 monks returned and the Priory is still used today, including a small shrine to Our Lady. The current chapel was enlarged in 2015 and won awards for the design. Clare's wealth came mainly from wool and cloth making and today there are a staggering 133 listed buildings. The Swan public house in the High Street is one of the oldest premises.

in the Domesday Book (later to become Clare), might come from the fact that the waters of the stream were clear and ideal for the vineyards established in the area. We walked to the top of the castle hill, a motte and bailey design which is 100ft high and 850ft

Above the main doorway is a carved solid block of oak – possibly the oldest pub sign in England – the central figure of a chained swan with a crown round its neck, this being the badge of Henry IV and grapevines suggest links with Clare's wine production. Further up the High Street we came to the Ancient House with its florid pargetting, now a museum. From there we entered the St Peter and St Paul Church. One of the oldest and most beautiful churches in East Anglia principally built in the 14th and 15th centuries with 13th century work in the west tower. We ended our walk on the town common where plague houses were sited away from the town centre.

Linda Vowles (Colchester Branch)



Top Left: The celebrated pub sign. Lower Left St Peter & St Paul's Church. Above: Pargetting on Clare's Ancient House.



Great Bardfield 2023

As our chair says in her introductory letter, the Great Bardfield walk is perennially popular – and with justification. Less a walk and more of an amble through the village, we're given insights into the work and lives of several of the artists who made Bardfield their home before and after WW2.

Our guide was Janet Dyson – who has done much to record the lives of the artistic community.



Art for Art's sake, Tiffin for God's sake

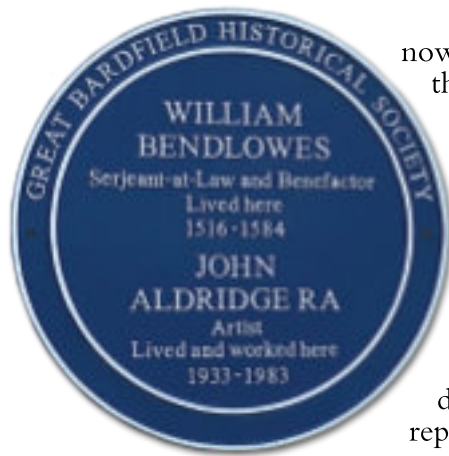
But before that, we stopped at the Buddy and Rhino cafe for coffee and a cake. The cake – chosen by chance – was tiffin, and a finer example you couldn't find. It was sold out on later visits and I'm not surprised. Not a bad way to start the day.

Our group convened outside the village hall – which features in the work of several artists, most notably Edward Bawden – remembered amongst much else for his 'discovery' of Bardfield with Eric Ravilious in the early 1930s. Both artists – graduates of the Royal Academy – wanted cheap accommodation that combined freedom from interference with reasonable proximity to London – a major source of commercial work. On a cycling tour of North Essex, they are said to have stopped first in Thaxted where they made a swiftly rejected offer for an unoccupied room in the Guildhall. They continued to Great Bardfield where the locals were more helpful.

From the Village Hall we stepped through an adjacent side door, and up stairs to a long room which serves as the village art gallery. A recent innovation, it was started as a response to some heavy-handed manoeuvring by a local authority. We heard that Bawden had left to the village most of the original drawings for his (now) famous *Life In An English Village*. A local council which was mounting an exhibition of the Bardfield artists, asked for, and were granted, the loan of the images. After the exhibition closed, Bardfield asked if they could please have their drawings back. Ah, said the council, we'd love to return them, but as you've



Brick House



nowhere to display them, better leave them with us. Janet told us that within six weeks, she had secured the room and sponsors for the framing of each of the fourteen bequeathed drawings. After that it seemed natural (in Janet's telling) to add the work of other artists with local connections. As the lucky owner of an original *English Village*, it was fascinating to see the original drawings – at several times their reproduced size. For more on this, I recommend Janet's own book *Artists of Great*

Bardfield.

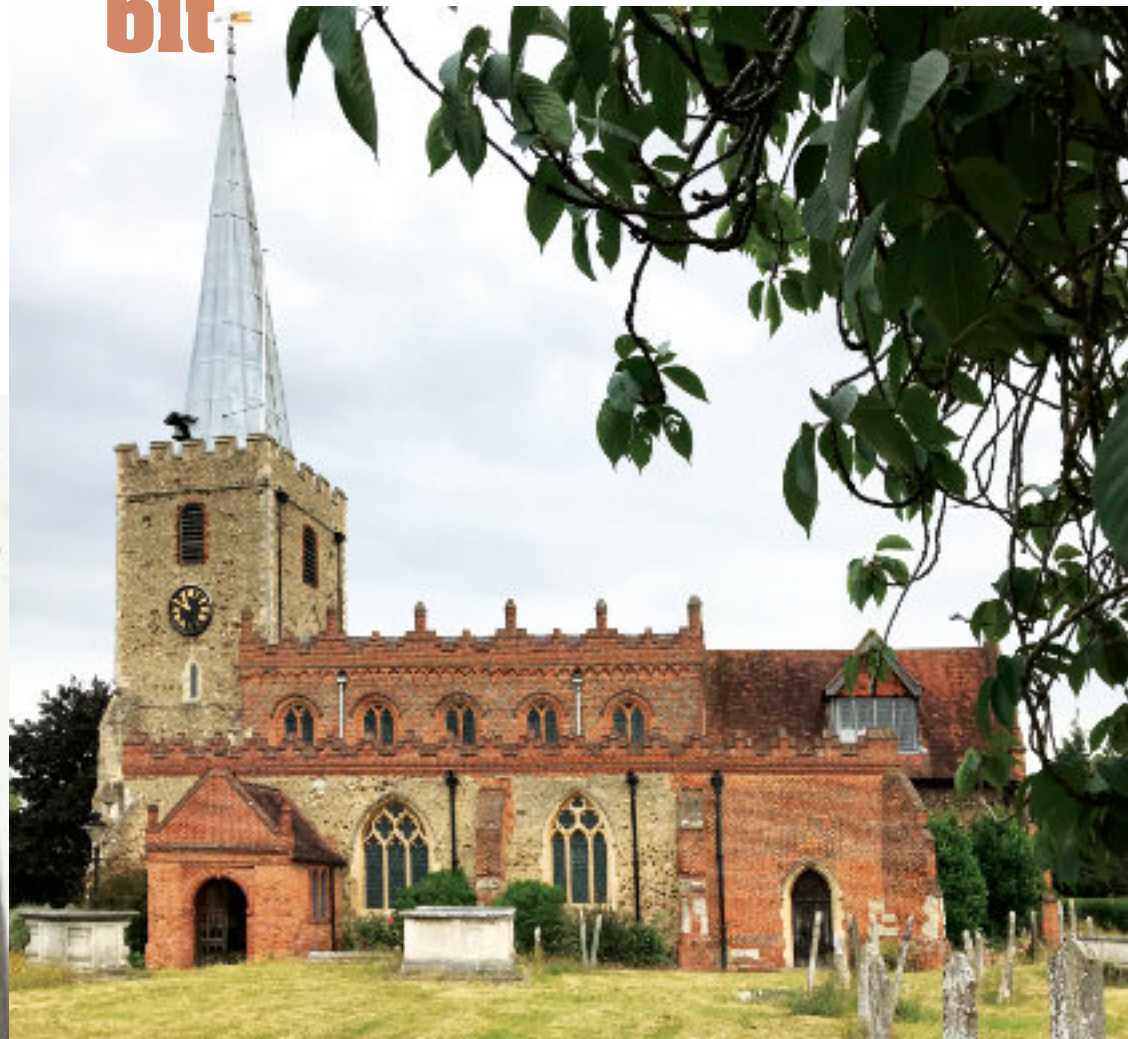
Then we walked the few steps to Place House which was home to John Aldridge RA for nearly five decades – passing The Bell, his local for all of that time. Place House has the additional attraction of having been built for Sergeant Bendlowes, an Elizabethan lawyer. His initials -WB- are carved in relief on a wooden corner post. The house often features in Aldridge's work.

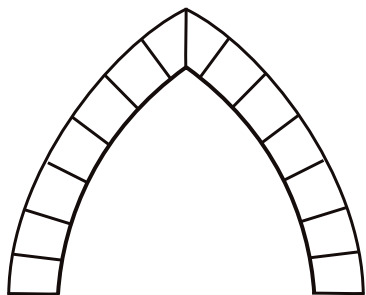
Finally, the highlight of the walk (for those of a non-tiffin persuasion), a visit inside Brick House, where Bawden lived between 1932 and 1970. It features wallpaper designed by Bawden himself. We also stepped into the High Street-facing room which appears in Ravilious' *Edward Bawden Working in His Studio*. Further into the house we entered the huge studio extension that Bawden built for himself after the war. Its construction is celebrated in works by John Aldridge. As a valedictory treat, we strolled in the seemingly infinite garden which is still recognisably the site of another famous Ravilious – *Two Women Sitting in a Garden* painted in 1932.



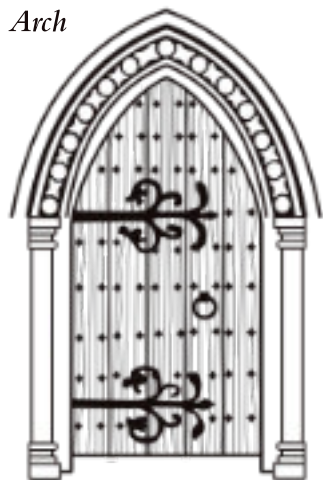
Decorated Architecture in Essex

They've been knocked about a bit





Arch



Doorway. Often elaborately carved



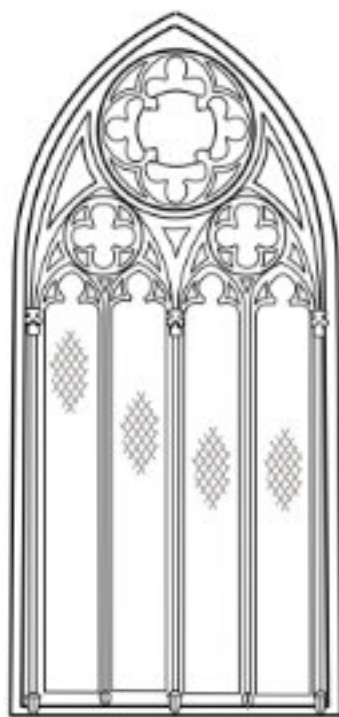
Ball-flower ornament



*Abacus (generally octagonal).
Capital with natural foliage*

By the reign of Edward I (1272) church design had evolved into what we know as 'Decorated'. The French influence was still strong, although masons tended to be homegrown. Many churches were already established. Norman structures, especially, were robustly built and could either be kept as they were or adapted to current needs. Thus, existing buildings were often extended; small windows were punched out to create bigger apertures; extra storeys were added, often to let in more light.

This is well demonstrated in the Church of St Mary at Great Baddow (image, previous page). The chancel



Window, larger and with ornate geometrical tracery

predates the decorated period, although it has a fine decorated window. There is an abundance of later Tudor brickwork (particularly the battlements and the clerestory layer).

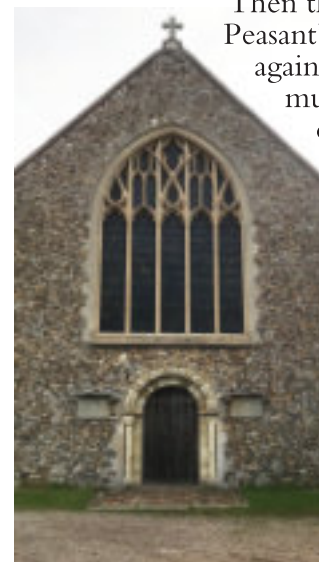


Church building slowed down. As has been said, increasing demand could be met by expanding existing churches and the population tended, in most cases, to stay in one place. There was another factor: the Black Death. Although its greatest toll was between 1347 and 1351, there were regular recurrences for the remainder of the century. The effect on the population can hardly be overestimated – between 1347 and 1351 it is estimated to have fallen from 4.8 million to 2.6 million – and to 2.5 million by 1377. Although many workers were able to sell their labour for the first time, there was neither finance nor inclination to build what were increasingly complex and costly structures. Indeed, there is some evidence that the building of Exeter and Ely Cathedrals was delayed for just these reasons.

Then there was the Peasant's Revolt. Once again, church building must have been low on the list of priorities.

Money and motivation would return. The result would be the Perpendicular – a unique and soaring English achievement.

A story, perhaps for a future edition.



Top: The Nave at St Mary Gt Baddow.

Right: A Decorated window above a Norman doorway in St Andrews Hatfield Peverel

Above: An external doorway in St John the Baptist, Pebmarsh



What's Going On

In recent Covid-influenced times we've encountered several WEA innovations relating to membership, registration, paying and presentation. Some have been hard to comprehend - at least by your editor, admittedly a slow learner. Confusion has been compounded by 'Chinese whispers'.

Kiri Baxter, the Head of South East Region generously agreed to comment on several topics. Her responses follow.

1) *The need to register for a course centrally*

(I'm not 100% sure what you mean by this question Andrew, I've put a response below, but if it's along the wrong lines/ I've misunderstood, please let me know. I have also kept this very high level, there is a lot to say in terms of funding rules etc. please do let me know if you would like additional information)

- Our new system, EBS, is a learner-centric management system. Our funding rules and regulations, as well as our duty of care and legal responsibility for individuals within our classrooms, require that each learner enrolled onto a course is eligible to be there and that we have knowledge that the learner is enrolled and present on the course. In the application journey, the enrolment is the final step once all eligibility has been checked which ensures we have explored all opportunities for government funding and payment (if required) is taken. At the moment, much of the region is funded by the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA), including Essex, and even where a course is noted as a 'full cost' course, we are still drawing down on ESFA funding to support the provision. The centralisation of the system will in time be far more efficient for all staff, including volunteers, resulting in time being freed up to concentrate on the delivery of education rather than on administrative tasks related to the system.
- We can still accept telephone applications to courses via our learner services team but we do need all learners to go through the application process. As a region, we are working hard to ensure that your Education Co-ordinators and Education Support Assistants are coming out to you, either physically or online, to help with the enrolment process, where needed.
- Alongside EBS, our digital transformation also includes a new website, learner hub and creative hub and in time will include further system upgrades, such as HR. The new website supports better branch visibility as the learner searches for courses. For example, if you go to the 'course search' and search by branch name you will get a list of all the branch courses available. In addition, a Branch search has now been implemented in the main search bar. Through the new website we are also able to more effectively track and optimise our work, and to provide insight to you on what 'search terms' are commonly used.
- Branch officers have been invited to undertake DBS checks and training on the EBS system. If there are any individuals who would like to have the DBS check undertaken they can

contact their local EC to request this, and we will make sure it is actioned accordingly.

- We have always said the process of digital transformation (across all areas) is an iterative one and we are striving to improve as we go, we have made a number of updates already to the original system that went live some months ago. we hope our branch colleagues continue with us along the journey and as a region we will continue to support learners through the changes and the opportunities that come with that change.

2) The difficulty in making payments.

- We acknowledge that there have been some difficulties in making payments as we have transferred into new systems. These issues have now been resolved and learners can make payments via WorldPay or over the phone to learner services.

3) The trend away from face-to-face courses.

- Although there are many persuasive reasons for the move to Zoom learning, many of your - mainly elderly - members regard WEA meetings as social as well as learning events.

- Our mission as an adult education provider is to bring learning within reach to all, we recognise at the heart of this is tutors reaching local communities, in local venues. That said, over the course of the pandemic the WEA reacted swiftly and effectively to bring online learning to our learners, during that time we saw our face-to-face learning transfer incredibly successfully to online learning. Since the pandemic we have returned face-to-face in venues, and this understandably has happened at a different pace dependent on where in the region/country we are operating and the individuals involved in these lessons. In region, we are working hard to ensure that where a face-to-face lesson is requested, we have the tutor locally to be able to resource the request. We have had tremendous success with our hybrid courses, which enable learners to meet, and tutors, who are not necessarily able to travel large geographic distances, to 'zoom' into the lesson. We also recognise that face-to-face learning is an important part of our offer, with that in mind, we have recruited a number of new tutors in region over the summer in order to provide face-to-face learning. I would encourage learners to discuss anything in particular with their Education Co-ordinators who are able to view the vast number of tutors and their specialisms available and may be able to suggest a tutor, or alternative

option where appropriate, such as hybrid courses.

4) The pressure to adopt a WEA email address.

- The second biggest area of feedback we had during the discovery phase of digital transformation was people wanting to use a single login to access all the WEA systems they use. The WEA email is the solution to that as it supports Single Sign-On once a learner is enrolled. Learners will be able to access Canvas and Microsoft365 tools via their Hubs and only need to login once. We know that there are different preferences on this and if anyone wants to use their personal email address to login to see their Hub, they still can, but will only see their account on the Hub and will not have direct access to other systems.
- All learners using a wea.ac.uk account can use Microsoft365 products online at no cost while they have a live WEA account. It adds employability skills and digital confidence and the suite of products can support learning, job seeking or simply personal use. The account will be available for 12 months after the learners' course end date. Starting a new course will extend the account access. Learners returning after one year will be able to reactivate their account with their personal email address and a new Microsoft account will be set up once they have enrolled again.
- Having an wea.ac.uk account also opens up student discounts on a lot of websites and while we know that not everyone wants/needs this, we wanted to offer it to our learners.

I would also say that the digital transformation is an ongoing process of change, we are continually learning, changing and updating process based on feedback, and we would welcome any constructive feedback from any learners, across all provision. We want to work with our branch colleagues to achieve our goals, and very much hope that we can continue to do so.

Kiri Baxter

How about your interactions with the WEA?

If you have any comments, let us know. We'll forward them.



ESSEX FEDERATION ONE DAY SCHOOLS

We have plans for at least one
One Day School later in 2023.

Check the WEA website for
details.



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