

WEA

ESSEX FEDERATION
NEWS SHEET
SUMMER / AUTUMN 2024



- **The Saxophone:
Its History**
 - **A Walk In Bury**
 - **The Knife Man**
 - **A Presentation**
 - **Letter from the Chair**
-and more

WEA Eastern Region Essex Federation

Autumn/Winter 2024

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Back cover image:
Knife statue.
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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

Firstly I'm sad to report that Ron Marks has resigned from Essex Federation after 19 years of service. Ron has been a highly respected Tutor and former Chair of the Federation. His support and advice will be much missed. Ron has become Deputy President and a Trustee of National WEA and we hope that he can use his influence to bring change and improvements to the organisation, as someone who has served in the front line.

I think we are all feeling pretty depressed at the moment, with the current situation in WEA. You only have to look at the National website to see that one Tutor (Claire Parker) appears to be the only one teaching in many Essex Branches, whereas there would have been a huge variety of courses and Tutors on offer, a few years ago. I don't know what the answer is but we are hoping to get our concerns across to senior staff at our next zoom meeting. The number of Branches in Essex appears to be decreasing rapidly and this is very sad.

Our Summer walks programme was very successful this year, with our final one, in Hadleigh Suffolk, a few weeks ago. We thanked Josie Watson, who has been a Blue Badge guide and friend to us for many years, for all her hard work, researching and leading us round many places in Essex and a few in Suffolk. We did, of course, use other Guides as well, but Josie has been consistently with us every year that we have done the walks. I fear that I will no longer be able to organise any more walks as we have lost the Federation Bank account, meaning that we would have to go via National, thus incurring admin charges. As a consequence, unless we considerably increased the price, we would make a loss. Josie told us that she is retiring from Blue Badge guiding but intends to organise her own walks. I have said that if she sends me the details, I will post links on the Federation website. So if you are interested, then do keep an eye out for details. What started out as a way to promote health and fitness (a WEA promotion some years ago) has proved very popular and had enabled us all to learn more about our County and I for one will miss them.

You will have noticed that we haven't had an AGM this year. It didn't seem worth organising, when for the last two years we have had little support from Branches, and we have been told that AGMs are not necessary anymore. However, we will be holding a One Day School, in November. Details are on the back cover.

The Federation will continue but maybe less formally. It's something we will be considering over the next few months. Do please let us have your thoughts on this and anything else that concerns you.

Joan Black - Chair



TIPTREE & TOLLESBURY

Autumn 2023

The History of the Saxophone

Tutor: Andy Beharrel

The
HISTORY
of the
SAXOPHONE
by **ANDY BEHARRELL**
accompanied **LIVE** *by Andy Brush*

O

n a dull day, grey November morning Tiptree and Tollesbury WEA gathered together for an educational tutorial by the always entertaining Andy Beharrell. The subject was History of the Saxophone to which Andy added his unique style of storytelling and along with others a powerful performance

★ Check the back cover for another chance to see this exceptional presentation.

on his own Saxophone. The first half consisted of learning about the inventor Adolphe Sax (1814 to 1894) who was born in Belgium. We discussed the differences between the clarinet, sax horns and the saxophone itself and that it was patented in France in 1846. Andy then introduced his own tutor and virtuoso of the saxophone Andy Brush who showed the different parts of the instrument. He had brought along several to show the various types, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone and he played short pieces to emphasise this. He explained that the single reed on the mouthpiece was the most important part. And must be moist at all times. A short film was shown of the intricate work from the manufacturer in France, who had taken on Adolphe Sax's design to the present day. A lot of work is now done digitally. Before the interval Andy Beharrell explained that the established musicians were very against the new instrument. It took a long time before it was eventually accepted as part of the orchestra. And is often considered a solo instrument. He then promised the second half would be lively!

This began with Andy Brush giving us a glimpse of how as a youngster he perfected his skills playing along to any radio station from classical, folk or pop. His versatility was amazing. Next we were treated to a short clip from this year's proms



Adolphe Sax at about 30. His genius at designing and manufacturing musical instruments did him little longterm good - he was three times a bankrupt (in 1852, 1873 and 1877) partly as a result of patent disputes. He died a pauper in 1894. By then there were makers of saxophones on both sides of the Atlantic. Much of their output incorporated patented features which they defended with the same zeal they had deployed in opposition to Sax.

Below: A pre-WWI advertisement promoting an instrument made by one of the companies that proliferated even in Sax's lifetime. Following his death, volumes increased, especially in the US, where the saxophone was taken up first by military bands (following the example of John Philip Sousa) then by jazz bands.

Right: An early saxophone made by Adolphe Sax's own company.

'Easy to play' was the claim of early ads for the sax. When it became evident that it was actually quite difficult, the makers fell back on endorsements by famous players. At least one - Johnny Hodges - wasn't above recommending two brands. In truth, he was so renowned a master that a shared sponsorship was a lot better than none.





where Leo P gave an incredible display of his playing and dance routine. <https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&ei=UTF-8&p=leo+sax+proms&type=E210G-B105G0#id=1&vid=418a0802bbb8c52cffd-cd9c8635bcbcd&action=click>

We were exhausted just watching. Sadly the session drew to a close far too quickly but not before the two Andys and Jilly

another saxophonist performed for us.

During the morning, we had listened to music from classical composers to this trio's wonderful rendition of John Lennon's *Imagine*. The broad spectrum of the saxophone's appeal proved that Andy was completely right in suggesting that the sax is an instrument with a human quality, the haunting, yet energetic voice mostly heard in a jazz context but equally in an orchestra.

I would like to thank all concerned for giving us a morning of pure pleasure. I would recommend this 2 hour course and, if the opportunity arises, attendance at Andy Brush Quintet's Concert.

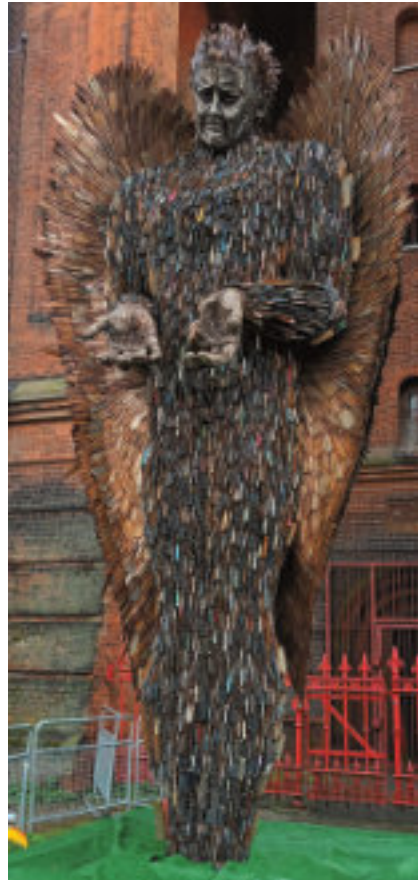


COLCHESTER



All Knife Man photography: Linda Vowles

KNIFE ANGEL COMES TO COLCHESTER



Colchester has been honoured with a visit by the National Monument Against Violence and Aggression's 'Knife Angel' for most of October 2023. He has been sited at Jumbo Tower near the Mercury Theatre and has received a considerable amount of interest from visitors.

The 27 foot tall man was designed by Alfie Bradley and built

We were delighted to welcome a new lecturer to Writtle, and Claire quickly established a rapport with the group. Claire worked in Museums, and part of this course involved how to make a choice of items for display. How would an artefact illustrate local history? An item of humble appearance and little financial value could remind us of a now forgotten industry which had been important to the residents of Essex whether that was 60 years ago, 400 years ago or in the Neolithic. With the more recent ones, Claire had assembled a collection of newspaper articles from the time. There were entrepreneurs, and unlettered men 'fighting Power for their traditional rights'.

This is a difficult report to write in more detail as Claire wanted items to be a surprise, indeed some we had difficulty identifying! However, each item stimulated lively debate. Claire's choice of items included some from

Colchester and Chelmsford Museums but others from smaller museums with which we had not been familiar. Her legacy has been that some of us plan to explore various small museums around Essex this summer.

Thank you, Claire, for a most enjoyable and informative course.

Mary Roberts



*Epping Forest Museum
- one of the smaller
(but still worth visiting)
museums mentioned
in the text.*

A HISTORY of NOT MUCH in FOUR OBJECTS

Inspired by the previous article, we show below four objects that may mystify as to their purpose. In the case of one of the items, there has been much speculation but no universally agreed answer. Any connection to Essex is coincidental. Some enlightenment at the foot of the page.



- ① African. Made around the WW2 era.
- ② Silver. About eighty years old.
- ③ Brass. Made in London in 1911.
- ④ About 2000 years old. Bronze.

① A Thumb Piano or Lulimba, possibly from Mocambique. ② The reverse of a Texas Rangers Badge which since the 1930s have been punched from 1947 or 1948 Mexican silver 5 Peso coins. What happens when the supply of coins runs out and what the Mexicans think of this is not recorded. ③ Is a pocket sextant - small but apparently usable. ④ Is excavated across the Roman empire but, oddly, not up to now in Italy. It is most commonly thought to be for crocheting, but might be a device for checking the diameter of coins, for use in fortune-telling or simply a child's toy.

WALKS

We had a superb series of walks through 2023 and 2024 organised by Joan Black. It's sad that administrative complexities will make such a programme unlikely in future. We can only look back on a succession of wonderful insights into our county and beyond and thank Joan for her sterling work in this area as in many others.

BURY ST EDMUNDS

Bury is steeped in history, of which there's much evidence. Settled long before the Roman conquest, it became a place of pilgrimage when the remains of the Saxon King Edmund - who had been killed by the Vikings - were buried there in 869AD. Edmund's shrine became an object of pilgrimage and an abbey was established to support (and profit from?) it. When the Normans took over the town, they astutely retained Edmund as their patron saint. However, they razed the existing abbey and rebuilt it to their own intimidating specifications. The ruins of that vast structure remain a visible presence.



Abbey Gatehouse



Top: In Abbeygate Street, evidence of mediaeval origins in the first floor timbering and jetty.

Above: The Corn Exchange.

scaffolding. Apparently the locals had been a little disapproving of the way Greggs had adapted the premises and complained to the

We started at the North end of Angel Hill, surely one of the most attractive locations in England. Looking south we saw the mediaeval abbey gatehouse, still a stunning presence. Ahead was the Athenaeum, a Georgian structure whose name is helpfully displayed above its top floor. More of that later. Further to our right, across the road was the ivy-clad Angel Hotel, another Georgian building seemingly little changed in appearance for centuries.

Instead of continuing along Angel Hill, we headed up Abbeygate Street, which we were told had been the main trading area for centuries. Now pedestrianised, it has shopfronts from many eras. One, now a Greggs outlet, was wrapped in

company without any great hopes. However, Greggs responded positively and were, it seems, ensuring that their shop would be compatible with its surroundings. Many of the structures in the town centre, we were told, date from the Middle Ages, but the Georgians often gave them new facades – causing some confusion as to their date of construction.

At the top of Abbeygate, we turned right into Skinner Street to pass two imposing cream brick-and-stone buildings. First was the Corn Exchange, a Palladian structure with a stunning portico. It reflects Bury's importance as a farming and trading centre at the time of its building in 1862. It sits on the area once occupied by the Shambles – where butchers went about their gory business. Apparently in the Shambles' latter days, the environment was so unsightly (and stinky) that it had to be replaced by something more wholesome. Now a Wetherspoons, it's Grade 1 listed. Further on is the Market Cross, an earlier structure which might have inspired the Corn Exchange. Designed as a theatre by Robert Adam, between 1840 and 1937 it served as the Town Hall. Since, it has had many uses and (like the Corn Exchange) has survived several demolition plans.



Evidence that the Market Cross building originated as a theatre: 'Comedy' and 'Tragedy' masks on either side of the entrance. Given that they're now nearly 250 years old (the building was completed in 1780) their condition is remarkable

From the Market Cross we walked down Guildhall Street where we encountered the extensive house of James Oakes, an important Bury native. Born in 1741, he left school in 1757 and took an apprenticeship in his uncle's weaving company. In a few years he was a partner and soon after that he was running his own show. All the time he was expanding his Guildhall Street premises to house an increasing family and workforce. Clearly a trusted local figure and energetic networker, in 1787 he was appointed the local Land Tax Collector. The cash raised was due to the Crown every quarter, so Oakes often held large sums, which he used to make loans to local businesses. From that he started to take deposits and issue promissory notes - becoming a banker almost by accident. By his death he had been an MP, a Deputy County Lieutenant, a JP, a respected local benefactor and

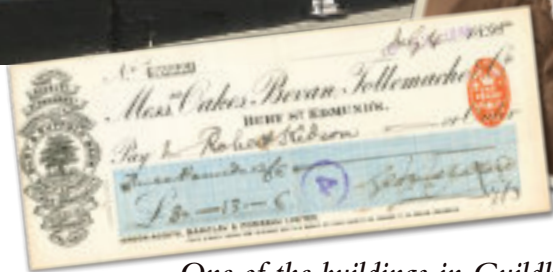
had seen his house redesigned by the celebrated Sir John Soane. Apart from all this, for fifty years he kept a detailed diary. Although not a rival to Pepys (no scandal) it is a priceless record of a Georgian businessman's life.

Opposite the Oakes houses is the old Bury Guildhall. Apart from its early

Mediaeval porch, it's unobtrusive from the outside despite a Grade 1 listing. It was closed. A pity, as its interior and walled garden are famous.

From Guildhall Street, we turned into Churchgate Street, but

not before having our attention drawn to several superficially Georgian houses that had 'jetties' -



One of the buildings in Guildhall Street rebuilt by Oakes. Also, a contemporary image of him and (sixty-nine years after his death) a cheque from the company he founded on the bank he established.

confirmation of the basic structures' earlier origins.

Churchgate Street is a mixture of architectural styles, with Georgian being the most evident - although, now we were primed to look for overhanging jetties, we saw several. Halfway down is the elegant 1711-built redbrick former Unitarian Meeting House. It's now used as a for-hire space for entertainment of all kinds.

At the bottom of Churchgate Street, we turned back into Angel Hill - the Cathedral on our right and on our left, where the walk concluded, the Athenaeum - another location that's imbued with history. Established as Assembly Rooms in 1789, the building had been, and would continue to be, subjected to continual conversion and expansion.

It seems that 18th Century Bury - like Bath - was where the wealthier classes gathered to meet their peers. In 1835 Lord Hervey a local bigwig, relocated the Athenaeum Society to the Assembly Rooms, so elevating them socially and giving them a more local character. These days it's - inevitably - much favoured as a wedding venue.

The tour was over. No time for the two important churches in Angel Hill or the Abbey Gardens. No time either for the Theatre Royal. No better excuse for a return visit.

AA



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 2024 AWARD

Denise Fielding

A presentation and tea party was organised in October by Billericay Branch to celebrate the Volunteer of the Year Award to Denise. Anne Mossman, who wrote the citation, presented the award to Denise, and Joan Black (Chair of Essex Federation) presented Denise with some flowers. It had been hoped that Sally Ridealgh, who has worked so hard with Denise on the Care2 programme, would present the Award, but unfortunately she was suffering from Covid, and had to join in by telephone (while sitting in her car outside the Billericay Reading Rooms - the wonders of modern technology!).

Lesley Naish



Award Citation

Denise has stood out as an outstanding volunteer for her branch in Billericay and the Care 2 project. Her dedication is amply demonstrated through many years of her Chairmanship of Billericay WEA Branch. During this time she has run numerous courses, always putting the needs of branch members first. This in itself could be considered a good illustration of volunteer commitment, but Denise has gone much further in meeting the needs of her local, and now national, community. She applied for, and was successful in receiving, an innovation award for £9,000. This was used to create the Care2 project. This has since gone from strength to strength despite starting in what was potentially a very challenging environment during Covid. The aim of this project has been to support the needs of those who are caring for a partner or family member. Education can be a lifeline to these people, enhancing their mental well-being and enabling a release from their daily commitment. Denise, with the support of Sally Ridealgh at the WEA, has been relentless and unwavering in finding appropriate courses, venues and tutors and matching them to the needs of the target group of carers. In the first year (2021-22) there were 140 students and in the second year over 200. This academic year will see 35 different courses on offer. It is Denise's empathy, dedication and commitment which has put all this in place.

Anne Mossman



Small picture: Denise receiving flowers from Joan Black.

Large picture: Denise and Anne Mossman enjoying the moment.





*Long Melford Church, Suffolk.
Not in Essex, but close enough.*

Perpendicular Architecture

Perpendicular: England's Architectural Pinnacle



Perpendicular Gothic evolved in the mid-14th Century when church architecture became a domestic undertaking, less reliant on Continental masons to provide expertise. The English architects perfected the technique of flattening arches, to create large sweeps of space between columns. They also filled the walls with vast windows. As if that were not enough, they used clerestory (an extra second-floor tier of glass) to let in unprecedented amounts of light. And to provide external support to limit internal obstructions, flying buttresses – the mathematics of which are complex – leaving one respecting the masons of the era even more. Where finance allowed, vaulting was taken to staggering degrees of complexity.

We East Anglians are lucky in that this flowering of a unique style of architecture coincided with a church building boom, funded mainly by the yarn and textile industries – not for nothing are they known as ‘wool’ churches. Equally fortunate (from our perspective), is that after the wool trade collapsed, the churches being sturdily built were not subject to much interference. When a new phase of church building emerged, the wool churches seem to have been judged to be unimprovable. Thus, many remain very much as they were when first constructed.

The most spectacular examples of the style are in other counties, but are fairly accessible. Kings College Chapel in Cambridge is not to be missed, neither are St George’s Chapel Windsor or Gloucester Cathedral. For those who want to stay local, Thaxted and Saffron Walden in Essex, and Long Melford and Lavenham in Suffolk are worth a visit. Saffron Walden is a mixture of Perpendicular and earlier styles, but is notable for its size – it’s the biggest parish church in Essex – and for the fact that John Wastell, who oversaw its Perpendicular additions, was at the same time supervising the building of Kings College Chapel, Cambridge.

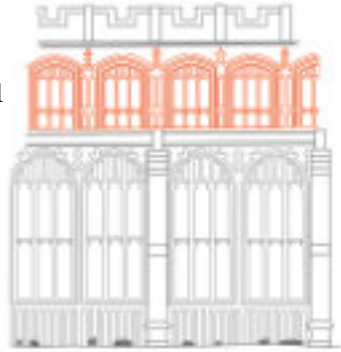


St George's Chapel, Windsor.

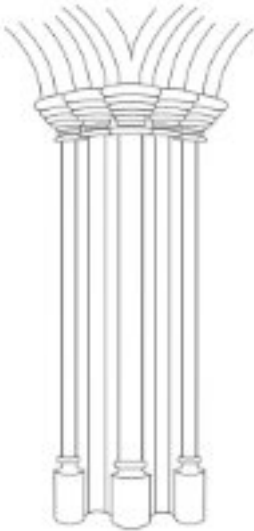
Photo: Jack Pease.



Top Left: A window of the period. Note the transoms (cross-ties) which give added strength.



Top Right: The clerestory (in red), a feature that was not created in the Perpendicular era, but was taken to new heights by its architects.



Mid Left: A pier showing a typical compound structure.

Mid Right: Fan Vaulting.



Lower Left: Decoration - natural foliage and Tudor roses a favourite.

Lower right: Shallow-arched doorway. Doors might have featured linfold carving and complex ironwork.





Built to impress: the fan vaulting in King's College Chapel, Cambridge.

A note from the Deputy President, Workers' Educational Association

As noted in Joan's article, after nineteen years on the Federation Committee, many of them as Joan's predecessor in the Chair, I have stepped down from the Committee. I felt I needed to avoid any potential conflict of interests, having been elected Deputy President and thus been appointed a Trustee of the Association. I also do not share the negative interpretations of the current state of the organisation and the pessimism of some members of the Committee, which I think reflect some lack of appreciation of what has actually been happening nationally. However, I do share some of the concerns and would assure members that Trustees are aware of these and will react accordingly.

The Chair of Trustees, John Widdowson (also Principal of one of the Durham University colleges) and General Secretary Simon Parkinson, with members of the new Management, have been working tirelessly to ensure that we continue to receive Government funding, necessary to avoid excessive increases in fees, now that we are officially part of the Further Education provision while still maintaining our Charitable status. Contacts with the new Government are being established to help ensure continued support and recognition of our unique role in the adult education and community learning sector.

Regional Committees have been replaced by Local Advisory Panels whose job is indeed to advise and make recommendations to the elected Association Council. "Local, community organising is at the very heart of the WEA as a charitable organisation whose mission is to bring adult learning within reach" and to ensure the statutory duty to meet local need is met. Motions from LAPs are submitted to Council. If passed, action can be taken immediately rather than awaiting the Annual Conference for formal approval. The next Conference will be held in March 2025, probably again in London and also online so that all Members can be involved.

With regard to Membership, our Regulations make it clear that "learners on WEA courses and programmes, staff, volunteers, and members of the general public who support the Association, its objects and activities, are eligible to become Association Members." A way of giving membership to new learners with a nominal fee, renewable with continued learning and transitioning to a £15 membership after completion, is under discussion.

Please note: Trustees and Management agree that Branch delivery "remains a key part of volunteer led community learning. WEA is passionate about this and wants to increase branch provision" (General Secretary).

Do please keep in touch with current developments through the WEA Connect updates emailed to all Members. The latest was sent out on 28th October.

Ron Marks – 31st October 2024

Writtle's Past Chairmen.

During the past year our Branch has said farewell to three of our excellent Chairmen.

It is some time since Ernie Tully retired as Chairman as he lived to be 90. He handed over to Grace Bevan who had been the branch secretary during his chairmanship. Only relatively recently had he stopped attending lectures, but he still came to our 'end of session' joint lunches twice a year. Ernie died in hospital on the 17th August 2023 after a short illness. It was super that his family had happy memories of celebrating his 90th birthday with him, in his beloved Norfolk, just a few weeks before. WEA members were able to join the family in All Saints Church, Writtle to celebrate his life on the 19th of September 2023.


We received a letter about Jane Daniel, from her daughter Claire, to say that she had died on December 3rd 2023. She had had a stroke in October and then other problems. Claire gave us an 'online option' to enable us to share her funeral service, as Jane had moved up to Cumbria shortly pre-Covid. There were lovely photos of them with Brian, and details of Jane's scientific career at Jodrell Bank before they moved down to Essex. There were more details about Jane's work at Dovedales, Chelmsford College, and their hobbies and travel. When Jane was Chairman, the Branch was still running three courses a week, and the Tuesday morning one often welcomed 50 members. We were glad to learn that she had enjoyed her move to Kendal with the chance to be closer to other family members.

Despite Peter's problems with illness, Peter Prentice and his wife Heather joined the Spring Term course and attended whenever Peter's stays in hospital permitted and came to the end of term buffet lunch. We were saddened to hear from Heather that Peter had died on April 12th 2024. Their family had also enjoyed a party, for Peter's 80th birthday during December. Once again, a dozen WEA members and our friend Ron Marks, from the Regional Federation, were at a service remembering and celebrating Peter's life. This time we were warmly welcomed to the Central Baptist Church in Chelmsford, where a large congregation sang and gave thanks for the lifelong dedicated service Peter had given to their Church and community. We watched a selection of family and holiday photos and listened to tributes from his family and those close to him.

We have been fortunate as a Branch to have had such super people willing to give time and support to enable our Branch to survive Covid, and to continue to provide friendship and intellectual stimulation to our village.

Mary Roberts





**ESSEX FEDERATION
ONE DAY SCHOOLS
The History of the
SAXOPHONE**

**By Andy Beharrell
with LIVE contributions**

30th November 2024 11.00 - 15.00

**Feering Community Centre
Entrance Fee £15.00 includes
Refreshments and Lunch**

**Pay at the door or
Book With WEA or call 0300 303 3464**



**Education & Skills
Funding Agency**

