

Local and Essex History – March 2022

ESSEX EVENTS THROUGH THE YEARS

1. Which famous Essex event- just a small part of a much larger national event, lasted from 12 June to 27 August 1648?

The Second Civil War was fought between May and August 1648 with a series of battles that led to the defeat of Charles I and his trial and execution. In May 1648 Oliver Cromwell had to deal swiftly with growing dissent in Wales and he put Pembroke Castle under siege. In the same month, a revolt against Parliament's control occurred in Kent. This revolt was of greater concern as Kent was much nearer to London.

Thomas Fairfax was sent to deal with the rebels. They met at Blackheath and the New Model Army easily dealt with them - one thousand rebels surrendered while the others dispersed. However, a small number did join up with Royalists in Essex. Bolstered by these men, the Essex Royalists felt strong enough to take Colchester. However, once Fairfax arrived, he simply besieged the town. **On June 13th, Fairfax decided to enter Colchester.** The fighting was particularly vicious and the Parliamentarian force lost 1,000 men. However, the Royalist base was not taken. The Royalists had been encouraged to fight as they based their hopes on an advance by the Marquis of Hamilton from the north. It was not to come and **on August 27th the town surrendered to Fairfax.**

2. Which Mistley landowner made a fortune when the South Sea Bubble burst in 1720?

Richard Rigby the Elder: In 1680 Edward Rigby, a London linen draper, purchased an interest in the estate of Aubery de Vere, the 20th and last Earl of Oxford. Upon the Earl's death in 1703, his affairs were settled under an Act of Parliament and Edward Rigby received the Mistley estate. He was succeeded by his son, Richard Rigby the elder, a successful financier, who had made his fortune in the South Sea Company. Richard Rigby the elder was responsible for the early developments of Mistley Thorne. Alongside his construction of Mistley Hall he is recorded as building a village of about 50 brick houses, granaries, warehouses, a malting-office, quays and coal yards. The family made a fortune as a [merchant drapers](#) in the [City of London](#) and as merchants and colonial officers in the [West Indies](#) and as speculators in the [South Sea Bubble](#).

A son, Richard Rigby the younger, was educated at [Corpus Christi College, Cambridge](#). He became an English civil servant and politician who sat in the House of Commons for 43 years from 174 and served as Chief Secretary for Ireland and Paymaster of the Forces. He accumulated a fortune serving the Crown and politicians in the 18th century parliament, and this money eventually ended up endowing the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford.

3. With which celebration was Daniel Day associated?

The Fairlop Fair: In the 1720's, wealthy landowner Daniel Day (1683 - 1767) travelled to Fairlop once a year to collect his rents. He was a popular man who owned a ship's pump and block maker's business in Wapping. On his trip to Fairlop, Daniel arranged for a feast of bacon and beans to be sent from "The Maypole" pub and he and his friends enjoyed a bean feast under a large oak tree - the famous Fairlop Oak. By 1725 others joined in and the gathering took on the appearance of a Fair, with sales of gingerbread men, toys, ribbons, together with puppets, circus acrobats, wild beasts and other entertainments. Thus, the term 'bean feast' came to be applied to workmen's outings. Daniel Day had a boat constructed to run on wheels and this strange craft with mast and rigging all complete, journeyed from Wapping, by way of Mile End, Bow, Stratford and Ilford to Hainault. More boats on wheels joined the procession and, in later years, bigger wheeled ships, drawn by up to six horses with people seated in the bow. The procession drew large crowds along the route.



One of the last pictures of the Fairlop Boat

Over the 150 years of its existence the Fairlop Fair grew to something much bigger with shoes, swings, roundabouts, gypsy fortune tellers and scores of drinking booths. It was estimated that there were at least 200,000 people in the forest or attending the fair. The last Fair of any size was in 1900.



The huge Fairlop Oak (whose shadow covered nearly an acre), was the pivot of the gathering and could well have been up to 700 years old. The last parts of the oak were removed when the roots were grubbed up at the time the plain was cleared of trees. Before that it had suffered from wind, lightning, fires and vandalism. Its wood was put to good use in such things as coffins, pulpits and mementos.

4. When was the Essex County Police Force established? Essex Constabulary was formed in 1840.

In 1965, the force had an establishment of 1,862 officers.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Police was established by the county borough of Southend-on-Sea in 1914.

On **1st April 1969** the two Forces amalgamated with 484 Officers transferring from Southend-on-Sea Borough Constabulary to the newly named Essex and Southend-on-Sea Joint Constabulary, renamed Essex Police in 1974.

5. What happened at 9.18am on 22nd April 1884?’

On the morning of Tuesday 22 April 1884, Colchester and the surrounding parishes were struck by the strongest earthquake ever to strike the British mainland. Measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale it damaged almost 1250 buildings. According to witnesses, the earthquake, which was centred on Colchester, Wivenhoe, Langenhoe, Peldon and Abberton, lasted for about 20 seconds and by the time it had finished, churches, houses and cottages were left badly damaged. The epicentre was about four miles south of Colchester's town centre, around the villages of Abberton, Peldon and Wivenhoe.

6. Which well-known socialist vicar caused a sensation by hanging a red flag in his church, sparking what became known as “The Battle of the Flags”?

Conrad Noel, known as the "Red Vicar" of Thaxted, was born in Kew, ordained in the Church of England and officiated in various parishes until 1910. In 1910 the local landowner Lady Warwick, also an outspoken left-winger, appointed him to the living of Thaxted. He joined the Independent Labour Party and in 1911 became a founding member of the British Socialist Party.

Conrad Noel's most notable action was when he hung the red flag and the flag of Sinn Féin alongside the flag of St George in the Church. This led to "the Battle of the Flags", which disrupted Thaxted for several years. Generations of Cambridge undergraduates journeyed there to remove the flags. They led attacks on the church and ceremoniously pulled the flags down, sparking off fist-fights and other disturbances. Eventually a consistory court ruled against his displaying the flags and Noel obeyed the ruling. He founded the Catholic Crusade to propagate his views, which had some impact in the origins of Trotskyism in Britain. Conrad was inevitably dubbed "The Red Vicar" by the popular press as a result of his actions and beliefs. He remained vicar in Thaxted until his death in 1942.

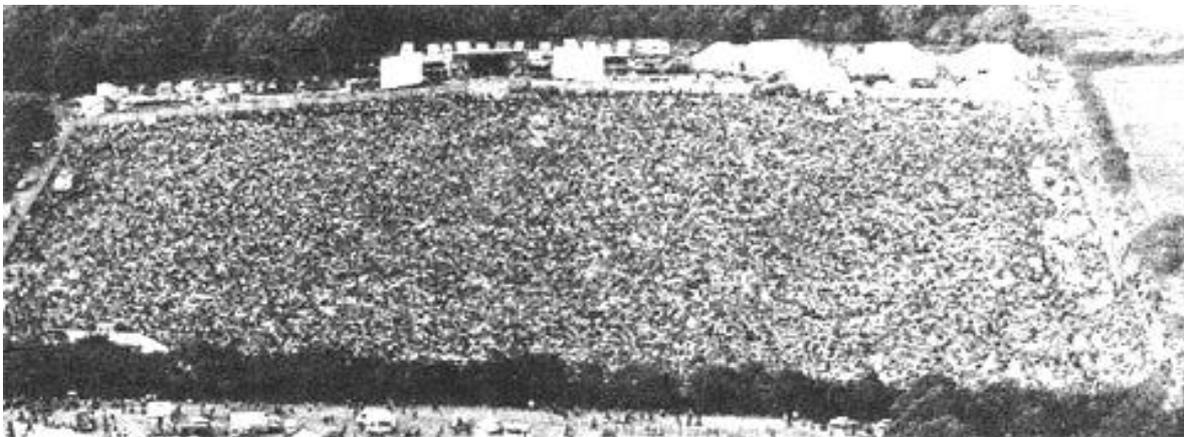
7. Which major disaster took place during the night of 31st January 1953?

In the worst natural disaster Britain experienced during the 20th century, the low-lying housing of England's east coast was devastated by a huge tidal surge which left 307 people dead and 40,000 homeless. A lack of preparedness was the cause of the huge scale of the disaster, and the emergency response was led by the community, with the majority of search and rescue done before central government became involved. As we know, Canvey Island was badly affected with 59 people losing their lives.

8. Which event attracted 100,000 people to Weeley on the August Bank Holiday in 1971?

The Weeley Rock Festival: The Round Table used to organise a Donkey Derby every summer to raise money for charity, but in 1971 they decided to think a little bigger. They managed to get a licence for 10,000 to come to a pop concert in some fields outside the little village. Everyone looked forward to a local festival for local people.

Mungo Jerry were booked and it all began to snowball from there. Festivals at both Canterbury and the Isle of Wight were cancelled that year and Weeley became the event of the summer. Once people found out where Weeley was, they started to make their way there, some came weeks beforehand to camp out. The locals were by and large friendly and happy to have Weeley put on the map and the event was also distinguished by some sensible, low-key policing.



It was soon clear that there were many more people there than the 10,000 who had paid their £1.50 to get in. Estimates are that around 110,000 came. In the end, so many bands had been booked that the music just ran constantly, round the clock for the three days. The line-up included T Rex, Rod Stewart and the Faces, Mungo Jerry, Status Quo and Lindisfarne. However, in the autumn, Clacton Round Table revealed it hadn't taken anything near the sum it had hoped. It seemed the sheer and unexpected weight of fans had proved overwhelming at the entrances. One of the organisers is quoted as saying: "In the end I think we renegotiated some of the bills so we virtually broke even... as far as fundraising was concerned it was a part failure, but as far as an event for the locality was concerned, it was a success."

9. What did the "Fire over Essex" celebrations commemorate in 1988?

The 400th Anniversary of the Spanish Armada: This commemorative plaque is on the beacon monument in Rayleigh, erected in 1988 to commemorate this event.



10. Which town plays host to an annual Morris Dancing Festival?

Thaxted: The Thaxted Morrismen are a well-established group who annually host one of the biggest events in the Morris calendar, which involves the teams touring the surrounding villages and performing in the town itself. Their Morris Meeting attracts participants from all over the country and beyond over the whole weekend –sword dancers, mummers, musicians, folk plays and processions as well as traditional Morris Dancing.

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