

# South Woodham Ferrers Local History Society and Archive

## Vision & Options



**South Woodham Ferrers  
Local History Society**

Second draft SWFLHS/JF/002 January 2024 John Frankland



## INTRODUCTION

This document seeks to set out a vision for the future of the South Woodham Ferrers Local History Society (SWFLHS). It is in 4 parts:

- the first sets out the ‘baseline’ position of the Society and the SWF Archive,
- the second part relates to the future of the Society itself,
- the third part relates to future physical storage and accessibility of archive material collected by the SWFLHS and its current chairman over the past 50 years or so, this leading into
- part four is a consideration of the question – ‘A Heritage Centre for South Woodham Ferrers?’

## PART 1 THE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY & ARCHIVE

The SWFLHS was formed following completion of an archaeology evening class run by John Boreham at which interest was expressed in forming a local society to maintain local history interest in the area. A local history event was run by the SWF Community Association in 1978 at which the wider support of the community was gauged and names were collected. The Society was subsequently formed in September 1978 with John Boreham as its first chairman. Its aim, set out in its constitution, is ‘to promote an interest in all aspects of Local History’. The Society is administered by a committee comprising chairman, secretary, publicity secretary, treasurer and 3 ex-officio members.

The Society has pursued its aim primarily through its monthly talks when an invited speaker gives a talk of local history interest, ‘local’ being accepted as relating to the county of Essex. Outings to places of interest have been arranged and public exhibitions have been mounted roughly every 5-6 years each with an adopted theme (see p.11). An extensive archive of documents and photographs relating to South Woodham Ferrers has been built up by the current chairman John Frankland (JF), the collection of which commenced a few years prior to the formation of the Society. Ownership of some documents and photographs (as between JF & SWFLHS) is sometimes ill-defined but as the stated intention is they all be combined into a SWF heritage holding this will not be a problem.

Membership and interest in the Society declined in the early 2010s with just 9 members present at the 2012 AGM. What was in effect a re-launch took place the following year and membership had gradually increased year-on-year to 78 members by 2020 when COVID struck and activities were largely suspended. Post-COVID paid-up membership now stands at 45. Attendance at meetings is boosted by paying visitors.

The Society is on a sound financial footing with expenses roughly equating to income each year with some £2,000 now in reserves gradually built up over the past 45 years.

## SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS

A brief summary of the history of the town is included here because of considerations regarding the possible future use of the archive later in the document.

The settlement of South Woodham Ferrers is essentially a post-railway development following the opening of the railway station in

1889. The railway's arrival coincided with a severe agricultural depression and the two main farms near the station Champions and Eyotts were acquired by two separate prolific estate entrepreneurs Brake Estates and Protheroe & Son who established estate 'roads' and sold off land as individual building plots from 1895 and 1899 respectively in a process that became known as 'plotland' development. A haphazard growth took place and by the 1930s South Woodham had reached a population of about 1000 and had a village hall, a school, a WI Hall, five churches, two pubs and about a dozen small shops. Piecemeal growth continued post-war until 1960 when private estate developer Cooper Homes had speculatively acquired land around the railway station prompting the production of a Village Plan and a rapid expansion to what was essentially a commuter village of some 4,500. Beyond the central core of 1960s housing, the earlier 'plotland' development had left a legacy of unmade roads and scattered, sometimes substandard, dwellings surrounded by a network of fields that had been brought back into farming use predominantly through the actions of the War Agricultural Committee whose successor the Ministry of Agriculture owned some 80 hectares (200 acres) into the 1970s.

It was seen as an area with planning problems and when central government asked local authorities to make additional private house-building land available in the early 1970s - and established a loan sanction for those authorities to use to acquire such land and to finance the necessary infrastructure - Essex County Council established its 'new town' project here. About 400 hectares (1000 acres) were purchased by Essex CC comprising some 200 individual parcels of land and the South Woodham Ferrers new town development - marketed as 'A New Riverside Country Town' - started in 1975, being essentially complete by the year 2000 when the Council sold of its remaining interests.

## THE COLLECTION OF ARCHIVE MATERIAL

South Woodham Ferrers archive material has been accumulated over the past fifty years or so by the current chairman. This is his own material but on his demise it is his expressed hope that the SWF Local History Society of which he was a founder member (in 1978) might be in a position to take it on. An Excel sheet listing documents has been compiled a sample extract is shown in Part 2. The material currently occupies various, box files and archive boxes but it is estimated that the various documents and photographs would occupy a shelf length of some 5 metres (17 ft)

Much of the collection is independent of the SWFLHS: gathering of material had begun 3 or 4 years before the formation of the Society in 1978 and exhibitions had been mounted to display the materials on two occasions before that year. Also, it is not considered a winding up of the SWFLHS would result in a cessation in the collection of SWF material.

Because of the current chairman's former employment as a planning officer with Essex County Council working on the SWF 'new town' development much of the material relates to the 'new town' development. For the most part this new town material was sourced from publicly accessible material which could have been collected by anyone with an interest in the development of the town (brochures, booklets, leaflets, design briefs, newspaper cuttings and planning documents) but there are a few items where the chairman's former position at CC Essex enabled material to be acquired that had been discarded from that authority.

Although therefore the new town features strongly in the archive, the area's early development following the arrival of the railway in 1889 and subsequent 'plotland' development is also well covered.

The current chairman's own research on Rev W J Potter, South Woodham's aeronautical pioneer, gets considerable coverage over and beyond Potter's direct SWF activities. The chairman's own involvement and interest in community life has meant, for example, that material relating to churches is quite well represented but sport is not.

Over time the chairman has become known as the 'local historian' for SWF (although he does not like this designation) and for this reason, has been a chosen destination for SWF material 'in need of a home'. Materials donated on this basis range from single items such as historic postcards or account books to quite extensive collections relating to an individual family or organisation such as Slater, Mudford, Jackson and Craig.

## **SUMMARY OF SWF ARCHIVE MATERIAL/ LOCAL HISTORY RESOURCES**

A separate draft Excel spreadsheet is a summary of material currently held. This covers documents only.

Photographs and 35mm transparencies are not included but will be listed separately in due course – just total numbers are given at this stage with individual 'sets' identified where these exist.

Documents, photographs and transparencies are for the most part stored in indexed archive boxes as shown. It is estimated that they would occupy some 5 metres (17 feet) of shelf-space. There are a few documents that do not fit into archive boxes and these are identified on the spreadsheet. A small number of artefacts are kept in storage at the current chairman's home.

At present the 'Les Holden Collection' of artefacts do not form part of the archive but may be added in due course (see pages 8 & 9)

## **DOCUMENTS**

Documents are listed on an Excel spreadsheet (ref South Woodham Ferrers JF Archive March 2023) that is being continually updated. Over 2000 documents are listed at present and a unique reference is given to each using the following letter prefixes:

A	Archaeology
B	Articles, letters, history & archaeology books and booklets
C	Business receipts, postcards and sundries
D	Newspapers 'cuttings' from microfilm
EA	Champions Manor Hall site/Church/School
EB	Brickworks
EC/B	Church building in Clements Green Lane/Baptist
EC/C	Congregational Church Hullbridge Road
EC/E	Evangelical Church/Assembly Mission Hall
EC/HT	Holy Trinity
EC/J	Joint Church activities
EC/M	Methodist Church
EC/St	St Mary's Mission Hullbridge Road
EC/W	St Mary's Woodham Ferrers
ED	Directories/Information/Surveys/Annual Reports/ Electors
EE	Edwins Hall
EF	Ferrers File
EG	Gough Cooper 1960s Estates
EH	Village Hall/Smallholders
EJA	Rev W J Potter South Woodham's Aeronautical Pioneer
EK	Stow Maries & Early Essex Manned Flight
EL	Woodham Hall Farm/Jackson
EM	Medical/Health
EN	Pertwee Family
EO	Odds and Ends & Les Holden bits
EP	Plotlands/Sales/Conveyances
ER	Railway
ES	Slater Family
ET	Craig Family
EW	War Agricultural Committee & WW2

- M Maps & Plans
- NA New Town Public Inquiry
- PA Design Briefs
- PB Restrictive Covenants
- QA Essex CC Information/Surveys
- QB Essex CC Project Background & Technical
- QC Population Census/Household Surveys
- RA SWF Guides and Directories
- RB Essex CC Newsheets
- RC Essex CC Newspaper Inserts
- RD Essex CC Press Releases
- RE Essex CC New Town Publicity
- S House Sales Brochures
- TA New Town Articles & Journals
- TB National Newspapers (SWF items)
- TC JF New Town Articles
- TD Books that mention South Woodham Ferrers
- TF Non-Essex CC papers/theses/reports
- TG Opposition/Campaigns
- U Non Essex CC SWF Documents
- V Commercial
- W Post-New Town Planning
- X Organisations & Events
- Y Newspaper Cuttings

Items with prefix M (maps and plans) are not yet classified and listed (as at January 2024) and are not stored in the archive boxes. These are separately stored in cardboard tubes, box files or a large A1 portfolio/folder.

The spreadsheet includes the date where known, a description of the document, details of its contents, its source or origin and its unique (JF) reference number. A sample extract is given below together with an image of the archive boxes containing these documents.









790	n/d	Unidentified group of serviceman in front of St Mary's Church	A4 photocopy with 'Brett' and Lem Lewin identified by handwritten note by Magaret VJF	EO/016
791		Index to 'Link' A Community Magazine for SWF	A4 8pp stapled compiled by JF	EO/028
792	n/d	Schedule of advertisers in Link magazine	8 sheets 210mm x 630mm handwritten JF document produced for M Fogg retail project JF	EO/018
793	1983	Contact magazine (Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre) - probably August 1983	A5 stapled 14pp includes M Turner article Eagle Inn and 150+ names of Bicknacre Junior JF	EO/019
794	n/d	Extract from the Chronicles of Woodham credited to John de Woodeham	Foolscap sigle sided. Typescript lighthearted look at Woodham 1960s developments et JF	EO/020
795	1978	L J Holden notes of talk to new school South Woodham 17 May 1978	225mm x 160mm 10pp stapled handwritten notes of talk about old SWF from 1922 JF	EO/027
796	2020	Bushey Hill Scrambles (Bushey Hill) Memories of events	A4 2 single sided sheets memories of events by Tony Allen former treasurer of Chelmsfd JF	EO/026
797	1920	Saltcoats Particulars of Sale ERO Ref S 3657	200mm x 350mm ERO-provided photocopy includes schedule of property parts SE Fore ERO	EO/021
798	1893	Part Sales Particulars Champions Farm and Manor	200mm x 350mm ERO-provided photocopy with JF colouring for presentation slide inclu ERO	EO/022
799	1988	Where's Woodham Ferris flyer for Les Holden book	A3 includes JF illustration quotes from PS Chester Project Manager & Dr Michael Clark JF	EO/023
800	n/d	A Historical Treasure Hunt Around South Woodham Ferrers	A4 10pp stapled sheets 13 photos (from SWF Pictorial History, describes route, 36 ques JF	EO/024
801	2020	OS/footpath map with location/shape of Bushey Hill Scramble	A4 map with coloured markings by Wally Whitworth for JF	EO/025
802				EO/999
803		'Plotland', sales, conveyances, buildings		EP/000
804	1973	Conveyance of Orchard Stores George Alfred Procter to Essex CC	255 mm x 375 mm 4 stapled sheets mentions 1903 F W Deavin H J E Brake	EP/001
805	1895	Champions Hall Estate Woodham Ferris To City Men arket Gardeners, Fruit & Vegetabl	A4 photocopy of page of ERO document B5217 (3 copies different sizes)	EP/002
806	1925	Letter H W Brake Farnborough to Miss E C Mudford Land 1035 and 1036	A4 photocopy of letter that accompanied the conveyance	EP/003
807	1924	Letter (signed Henry W Brake) to G F Mudford Toronto Cottage	A4 photocopy of letter that accompanied Land Account Book & xxx(unclear) Agreement R Mudford	EP/004
808	1938	Letter from Crick & Freeman Solicitors to D Chamberlain 'Hillside' SWF	A4 2 stapled sheets - photocopy of letter setting out particulars for completion, also 19 Chamberlain	EP/005
809	2018	Material relating to Ernest Nickerson 'Galesdale' ('The Russian Jew')	A4 brown envelope - 12 A4 sheets emails between J Frankland and Bill Hill, plans, 'how various	EP/006
810	n/d	Listed Buildings Woodham Ferrers Parish	A4 6 pp stapled photocopied sheets Edwins Hall, Champions Hall, Shaws Farm, William ECC	EP/007
811	n/d	Site of 'Salthaven' Community Orchard, Schedule of Deeds 'Salthaven' Top Barn Lane	A4 3 pp stapled sheets	EP/008
812	n/d	Annotated Family Tree Bewers Family of Marsh Farm by Richard & Judy Meade	3 A4 sheets glued together longitudinally with notebook page insert William Bewers M R & J Meade	EP/009
813	2018	UK Pub History in London & the Home Counties - Whalebone, Railway Hotel / Ferrers A5	A4 stapled sheets download from pubshistory.com	EP/010
814	1995	The Railway Hotel (Ferrers Arms) dating based on OS maps J Frnkland	A4 typed sheet with handwriting annotations/corrections	EP/011



The documents archive boxes

## PHOTOGRAPHS

There are some 700 35mm film negatives of historic and recent SWF photographs. All of these negatives have been scanned and tabulated in a 93-page Word document: JF ref: 'SWF photos (table ordered)', a sample page of which is shown below. Column 3 shows the film and negative numbers of the image, the final column shows the unique JF Archive reference number.

			19/22	Top end of Hullbridge Road looking south, Smallholders Hall in distance	B Holden/ JF	Pictorial History plate 146	180072
			20/04	Hullbridge Road		Transparency	180073
			20/06	Hullbridge Road, southern end	A Deavin/ JF	Pictorial History plate 159	180074
			20/09	Hullbridge Road, level crossing	A Deavin/ JF	Pictorial History plate 20	180075
			20/16	Hullbridge Road looking south near F W Deavin's Cash Stores (Orchard Stores) on right	A Deavin/ JF	Pictorial History plate 158	180076
			21/11	View north junction Hullbridge Road, Clements Green Creek	M Stout/ JF		180077
			21/13	Railway Hotel, Hullbridge Road, flagpole	ERO	Pictorial History plate 150	180078
			21/20	'Tazzy Mazzz' Hullbridge Road (sometimes 'Tazze Mazzz')	J Coward/ JF	Pictorial History plate 156	180079

Most of these negatives also exist in print form in the archive but there is a large quantity of photographs from various sources for which no negative is held examples being a set of about 90 B & W photographs (1976) of buildings in SWF donated anonymously via SWF library and a set of 120 overlapping aerial photographs by Hunting Surveys donated by Colin Ridgewell, and an ex-Evening Echo collection sourced via the Basildon Society. Classification and listing of these photographs without negatives remains to be done.

### 35MM TRANSPARENCIES

The majority of the 35 mm transparencies are stored in individual pockets within transparent hanging files each one typically holding 20 or 24 transparencies. There are some 1350 transparencies in these files; many are copies of photographs stored elsewhere in the archive. They have not yet been individually catalogued but are stored under the general headings:

HISTORIC DOCUMENTS SIGNS TITLES (72) WOODHAM FERRERS, FARMS & FARMING (67), RAILWAY (82), RIVER & CREEKS (52), PLOTLAND (120) WICKFORD BURNHAM ROAD (53), HULLBRIDGE ROAD (148) AROUND SOUTH WOODHAM, CLEMENTS GREEN LANE & VEHICLES, CONSTRUCTION (18), HOUSING (90), TOWN CENTRE (143), INDUSTRY, NEW TOWN PLANS/DOCUMENTS (165), BUILDINGS ILLUSTRATIONS & ADVERTISEMENTS (72), AERIAL VIEWS (104)

Many transparencies have been digitized for use in Powerpoint presentations. Work is still in progress on listing/classifying this part of the archive.

Photographs and transparencies are stored in archive boxes



The photographs and 35 mm transparencies archive boxes

### ARTEFACTS

A small number of artefacts have been collected and are stored at the current chairman's home. The actual ownership of some these (as with documents referred to) is a cloudy issue (as between JF & SWFLHS) but as already stated the intention is they all be combined into a single SWF heritage holding this will not be a problem.

These artefacts include:

1. A Woodham Ferrers station lamp, repainted but retaining its original glass panel with 'Woodham Ferrers' name.
2. A similar lamp from the railway station painted white with glass name panel removed and replaced with plywood.

3. A lamp of dubious provenance constructed in the style of a railway lamp
4. Models of St Mary's Mission Hall & W I Hall produced by the late Tony Mandara in 1978/79. The models are 280 mm and 340 mm long respectively.
5. The manually-operated fire alarm retrieved from the first South Woodham Ferrers primary school (later Elmwood annex)
6. A 1:200 scale architectural model of a scheme submitted in 1983 for the site now occupied by the former William de Ferrers annex.
7. A large ex-Essex CC publicity cloth flag with slogan: 'South Woodham Ferrers – Come home to a piece of Essex Countryside' (1 ft rule shown for scale)
8. South Woodham Post Office nameboard from the front of former Post Office building at 46 Hullbridge Road
9. Bricks purported to be from the brickmaking business run by the Woodham Ferris Brick Company, later operating under the name Alfred Blake (with 'A B' identification in frog).
10. An ex-Essex CC 1800 mm x 1200 mm 1:2500 scale model of the partially completed new town (as it was in 1985) with Perspex cover

4 (1)



4 (2)



5



6



7



8



1



2



3



9



10



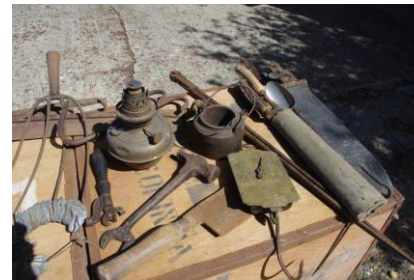
## OTHER ARTEFACTS – ‘THE LES HOLDEN COLLECTION’

The chairman was contacted by the curator of Dartford Museum in August 2023 regarding a collection of artefacts relating to the ‘social history’ of South Woodham Ferrers which he had been approached about. It transpired that this collection was that which had been accumulated by former South Woodham Ferrers resident Les Holden who was a founder member of the South Woodham Ferrers Local History Society and had moved from South Woodham Ferrers in 1986. Upon his death in 1997 the collection passed to his daughter and son-in-law who are now seeking to dispose of it from their home in Kent.

It is understood that the material in the collection has been derived either from Mr Holden’s business as a builder/carpenter in South Woodham Ferrers or his family’s business connections in South Woodham Ferrers (e.g. shoemaking/cobbler). In addition, some household items were collected from SWF residents who were moving out of the area when their ‘plotland’ properties were acquired by Essex County Council for the new town in the 1970s.

Following discussions with Mr Holden’s family the opportunity now exists for this collection to pass to the South Woodham Ferrers Local History Society/J Frankland. This does raise questions of storage and although temporary arrangements can probably be arranged in the short term, to ensure that the collection is not lost or dispersed, the availability and its suitability for any SWF Heritage Centre will need careful consideration as part of discussions this paper is attempting to resolve.

**Artefacts in ‘The Les Holden Collection’ including butter & cheese-making utensils, shoe-making tools, a knife-cleaning appliance, scales and carpentry tools**







Artefacts in 'The Les Holden Collection' including plumbing tools, laundry equipment, mangle, office equipment, glass bottles, stove and hand-operated vacuum cleaner.

## EXHIBITION DISPLAY BOARDS

The Society (JF) has organised a series of exhibition displays, usually related to a particular anniversary. Each of these has made use of the material already held in the archive at the time as well as drawing in other material relating to the anniversary in question.



There are about 50 A1 boards (examples shown above) some of which have been interchangeable between exhibitions

## DIGITAL HOLDINGS

Reference is made above to the SWF Documents Excel Spreadsheet and the SWF Photographs classification/lists held digitally (in Word Doc 'Table'). Other material is held digitally which has been researched /compiled and held by individual SWFLHS members but accessible through those members. These are:

- A much extended version of the SWF timeline on the website with 320 entries between 1889 and 2022 (ref: JF/SWF History/SWF Dates)
- Minutes referring to South Woodham Ferrers extracted from Chelmsford RDC minutes between 1896 & 1968

viewed and transcribed at ERO by JF. ERO references D/RCh1/1/1 to D/RCh1/1/80 (221 pages)

- As above but showing byelaw and planning approvals only (126 pages (ref JF))
- The extracted SWF byelaw and planning approvals 1896-1968 in an Excel spreadsheet - tabulated by date, application number, description of proposal, applicant's name and CHRDC decision – with 1,950 entries (ref JF JF/SWF History/ Chelmsford RDC Minutes/ Table Chelmsford RDC Bye Law Approvals since 1896)
- Data sheets relating to the 'Dodgy Scales and Delivering the Mails' retail premises project undertaken by SWFLHS member Mike Fogg. As at March 2023 there were 133 data sheets some comprising more than 20 pages, over 400 documents and 1142 images relating to businesses in Woodham Ferrers and SWF.

Steps need to be taken to ensure that this considerable body of digital work is not lost or becomes inaccessible.

# PART 2 THE SOCIETY'S FUTURE

It is a generally accepted principle that local organisations like local history societies are important elements in community life and that anything that encourages an appreciation of a community's environment and its heritage adds something of value to that community. It is not possible to measure this value and it is not why the Society exists but it should be a factor in any discussion.

Having apparently weathered the COVID storm the Society should continue and develop its activities in line with its stated objective to further an interest in all aspects of local history. It should do this by the sharing of information and archive material, through preparing and maintaining a publicly available repository for donated local history material, through publications, articles, exhibitions, talks and the Society's website, whilst ensuring the Society is financially viable at all times. Manpower and financial resources permitting the Society should consider the following.

## **THE SOCIETY'S MONTHLY TALKS**

The Society should continue to provide the membership & guests of the Society with a rich & interesting annual programme of local history illustrated talks and visit(s). The Committee should seek to meet the objective of including at least one specific SWF-related talk wherever possible in each year's programme - perhaps (if necessary) initiating a 'Chairman's Annual Lecture' to ensure at least one SWF-related topic.

These talks should be by personal recommendation, reputation or experience wherever possible in order to achieve the best quality of experience for members and visitors.

The meeting venue should be kept under review to ensure that the location, refreshment facilities, accessibility, value for money and the lighting/sound technical requirements are the best that can be achieved.

## **EXHIBITIONS**

The Society will endeavour to share its archive and findings through exhibitions. In the past these have ranged from small-scale displays at town events such as the Annual Town Meeting and the Jubilee fete to large-scale efforts such as 'Land of Hope and Glory' commemorating the 80th anniversary of South Woodham Evangelical Church in 2011, 'Changing Tracks' – celebrating 125 years of the railway line in 2014 and the Local History Discovery Day at St Mary's Church, Woodham Ferrers in 2017

The Society has mounted the following exhibitions at various venues in the town: 'South Woodham Ferrers 400 years' since 1582 Survey of Woodham (1982), 'South Woodham Ferrers – A Look at its Past' (1987), 'The Southminster Branch Line 100 Years' (1989), 'A Trip Down Memory Lane' (Hullbridge Road) (1993), 'South Woodham Dreams & Realities (30 years since the new town public inquiry)' (2003) and 'The Crouch Valley Line' (2007).

These exhibitions have been masterminded and for the most part produced each time by JF/ current chairman and the future of such a service depends on the JF Archive being properly ordered, searchable and accessible by any successor or organisation.

Some, but not all, of these exhibitions related to a particular anniversary and the Society should identify possible anniversaries in planning ahead. Examples would be 50 years since the start of SWF new town project June 2025, Yacht Club '50 Years on the River' 2025, 100 years of the Village Hall (and SWF School) 2029 etc

## WEBSITE

At present the website provides basic information about the Society and its programme of talks, the history of the town with a timeline together with access to the Link magazine index. A comprehensive list of SWF publications and other SWF references is included. There is a facility to create a 'members only' access in the website but this has not been activated as there is not yet anything on the site that requires such access.

There is scope for greater use of the website. Once scanning is complete Link magazine (1972-1991) could be made available online and this, possibly, could be for members only. The site could be used for the publication of research papers produced by members and other data sources such as the current chairman's tabulated Building Regulations/Planning Permissions relating to South Woodham 1896-1968. Other possibilities are access to some of the 'Recording Reminiscences' recordings and the collection of historic photographs. Matters of copyright and Data Protection will need considering and advice may be needed on this.

**VISION** The Society's website should be expanded to provide a bigger historical resource with scanned documents and photographs, making greater use of the website for disseminating information relating to the history of SWF possibly including some of the options for sharing resources online considered in the above

paragraph. The Society should consider setting up a post of website manager to oversee maximising the use of this platform and also possibly Facebook.

## RECORDING REMINISCENCES/ACCESSIBILITY

The Society's Recording Reminiscences has been supported by grants from the SWF Town Council for recording equipment and for training at the Essex Record Office and since 2014 7 individuals have been interviewed in a project necessarily interrupted by COVID.

There also exist historical cassette tape recordings, some from the 1980s, of interviews of old SWF residents undertaken by members of the SWFLHS and pupils of William de Ferrers School – the latter being set up by the SWFLHS. These can provide a valuable resource and need to be incorporated in the Society's current *Recording Reminiscences* project.

Liaison is taking place between the Recording Reminiscences team and St Mary's Church Woodham Ferrers (see below) where it is intended that there will be access to recordings through the improved electronic systems and presentations at the church.

The recent initiation of a 'Talking Bench' at South Woodham Ferrers Railway Station coordinated by the Community Rail Partnership and supported by the SWF Town Council and Mr Gees Foundation is providing a further outlet for recordings and is leading to contacts for further interviewees.

Regrettably some residents earmarked for an approach in connection with this project, or who had already agreed to participate, have died.

## TALKS TO OTHER SOCIETIES & ORGANISATIONS

A service that the Society has offered over the years has been to supply speakers for local societies and organisations. In the early days founder members Les Holden and John Frankland were able to do this but Les moved away in the mid 1980s and until recently John has been the only speaker available. Within the last 2 years member Mike Fogg has started to give talks about his SWF & Woodham Ferrers Retail Premises project. JF talks are included in the Speakers List of the Essex Society for Archaeology & History (below) and any donations for these talks, which are made on behalf of the SWFLHS, are passed to the Society.

<p>John Frankland 30 Hamberts Road South Woodham Ferrers CM3 5TP</p> <p>01245 321518 <a href="mailto:johnfranklandswf@btinternet.com">johnfranklandswf@btinternet.com</a></p> <p>Travel costs @ 35p per mile</p> <p>With optional voluntary contribution to South Woodham Ferrers Local History Society or BMS World Mission.</p>	<p><b>History of South Woodham Ferrers</b> <i>A presentation entitled 'Chasing Utopia' that covers the history of South Woodham Ferrers and in particular the two periods in the town's past, the so-called 'plotland' era (1895 – 1939) and the new town project (from 1975), when there were particular and quite distinctive attempts to provide what might be described as a 'new utopia' for inhabitants moving into the area.</i></p> <p><b>South Woodham's 'Plotlands'</b> <i>The area covered by today's town of South Woodham Ferrers was originally two separate 'plotland' estates, Eyotts and Champions Hall Estates, which developed from 1895 onwards following the 1889 opening of Woodham's railway station. This presentation looks at the process of development on these two estates and the characteristic environment that was produced.</i></p> <p><b>The South Woodham Ferrers New Town Project</b> <i>The 'New Riverside Country Town' of South Woodham Ferrers (population 17,500) was a pioneering planning initiative, dating from the mid-1970s. This presentation 'South Woodham Ferrers New Town – The Promised Land?' examines the project's origins, the process of development during the town's 20-year growth and the distinctive 'Essex' character that resulted.</i></p> <p><b>Rev. William John Potter – South Woodham's Aeronautical Pioneer?</b> <i>Rev W J Potter (1872-1939) was a Baptist Minister who established 'The Aviation Grounds, Woodham Ferris' in 1909 as part of his attempts to be involved in this country's very earliest aeronautical activities. This illustrated talk presents the results of some original research into the life of an inventive, if rather odd, former South Woodham inhabitant...</i></p>
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The Society should continue to provide this service but at present it is difficult to see how this might be sustained when JF is no longer able or willing to carry on. In 1989 JF produced a 70-min slide/tape presentation 'From Woodland to Wonderland – An Introduction to the History of South Woodham Ferrers'. This featured over 200 images, a taped commentary with extracts from interviews with SWF residents (now deceased) that won an award at Essex CC's Heritage Awards Scheme in 1989. This presentation is being digitized and could serve as part of an interim solution but ideally a better version of JF would be useful as a successor.

## CONNECTIONS

A number of possibilities exist to make connections with other societies, organisations and visitor attractions as outlined below but such connections are largely dependent on the outcome of deliberations on the future format and destination of the SWF/JF Archive examined in Parts 3 & 4 below.

### Relationship with other Essex attractions

A grouping of local heritage interests for mutual benefit is a possibility. The obvious local choices are Stow Maries WW1 aerodrome and St Mary's Church Woodham Ferrers.

**St Mary's Church Woodham Ferrers**, having successfully bid for Heritage Lottery Funding for renovations and internal audio visual upgrades, has appointed a heritage officer Nia McIntosh to carry forward the benefits of the church as a heritage destination. An exciting programme of activities and events is underway in which members of the SWFLHS are closely involved. Forthcoming projects include a detailed presentation on the war memorials including access via QR codes and smart tablets, an updated and digitalized plan of the churchyard and its graves, a new 'Doom' painting

exhibition with related activities, a children's trail for the churchyard and a link to our own society's Recording Reminiscences project making use of the new digital capabilities/opportunities at the church

**Stow Maries WW1 Aerodrome** is a unique collection of historic buildings relating to the country's only surviving WWI aerodrome and is undergoing a sensitive restoration.

Both of these valuable heritage destinations are within walking distance of South Woodham Ferrers – almost entirely accessible by public footpaths from the town – helping to form what might be described as a 'critical mass' of heritage destinations in the immediate area. Quite how such proximity and liaison might manifest itself beyond the simple mutual advertising of each other's activities and events is something that would require further thought.

### **Other new towns and model settlements**

South Woodham Ferrers LHS supported and was included in a joint bid (2020) - with Basildon and Harlow new towns – for DCLG funding for a Local Heritage Listing campaign - it being considered that there was a need to better understand the heritage value of new towns to help them move forward. The bid led by Harlow Heritage Trust was unsuccessful but is indicative of an interest in the new towns story a view supported by the earlier architectural seminar 'Let's Talk About South Woodham Ferrers' organised by leading London architects DK-CM in 2017.

SWF new town also has 3-4 page coverage by two contributors to *Radical Essex* (published by Focal Point Gallery, Southend in 2018) alongside the Essex post-war New Towns of Basildon and Harlow

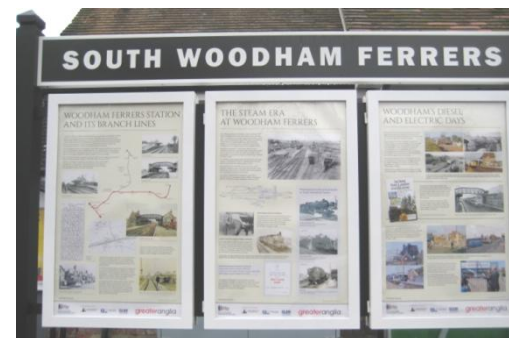
and the modernist 'model settlements, of Crittall window company's Silver End and Bata shoe factory's East Tilbury. The dominant *Essex Design Guide* influence places the town firmly on the downward slope in that book's account of the Rise and Fall of modernist architecture.

### **Other Local History Societies**

There is occasional exchange of information regarding speakers between local societies as particular needs arise but no formal relationship exists. There may be some merit in developing & maintaining an information exchange with other Essex History Societies that might strengthen the local history offering.

### **Railway Station Adopters/Community Rail Partnership**

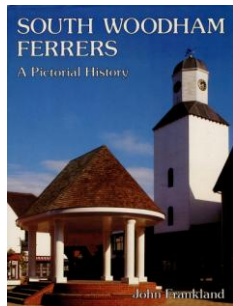
An informal and productive relationship already exists between the SWFLHS and the award-winning SWF Railway Station Adopters Group. The SWFLHS's monthly meeting posters are prominently displayed at the station and the Society through JF has been able to mount 2 railway exhibitions at the station (2007 & 2014), has been instrumental in producing the railway heritage display boards (below, 2018) and is providing stories for the talking bench (2023).



**The information boards at South Woodham Ferrers Railway Station**

**VISION** To help the town see its place in the history of new settlements and to liaise whenever opportunities arise with initiatives to promote SWF as a destination for academic study and to continue to assist in the production of local heritage information boards etc. promoting an interest in the SWF's history.

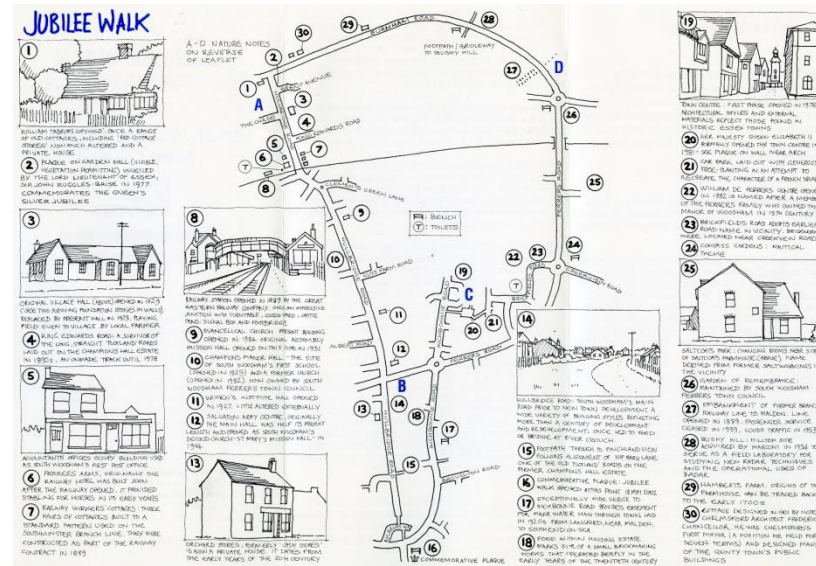
## PUBLICATIONS/RESEARCH



There has been little output in published form over the past three decades of the society's existence. It is considered that this is a weakness that should be addressed. The current chairman's 'South Woodham Ferrers - A Pictorial History' published by Phillimore in 1992 is copyrighted to SWFLHS but the publisher's requirements could not

accommodate the Society's name on the front cover.

There has been input to other publications made by JF on behalf of the SWFLHS and credited as such, *The Church of St Mary the Virgin Woodham Ferrers - A Visitors Guide* (2017) and *Champions Manor Hall – A History* (2012) together with a town trail (Jubilee Walk 2003 below) in conjunction with SWF Town Council have been the only publications with a SWFLHS imprint. There is scope for an updating and improvement of the Jubilee Walk leaflet as a 'heritage trail'.



## Local History Journal

Some local history societies produce a regular newsletter or journal either monthly, quarterly, twice yearly or annually which brings research before a greater audience. The quarterly journal *The Local Historian* produced by the British Association for Local History includes a list of journals received from local history societies together with a summary of the topics/research covered in each one thus providing a potential wide audience for local societies output.

The Saffron Walden Historical Journal is an Essex example of note that is published twice yearly by the Saffron Walden Historical Society. <https://saffronwaldenhistory.org.uk/category/journals-post-2001/>

The recent publication *Dodgy Scales and Delivering the Mails - An Analysis of Retail Premises in Woodham Ferrers and South Woodham Ferrers (2002)* was not a SWFLHS publication but was privately published by a member of the society making full use of the SWFLHS/JF archive. 200 copies of this 164-page publication were printed and sales have covered printing costs. This stands as a good example of a self-published work where its particular topic and scope have made it of great local interest.

The current chairman has occasionally produced a list of possible research topics that members could take on as projects and which could lead to publication. These topics range from relatively small projects like listing commemorative plaques/ trees in the town to larger works such as the 'plotland' sales/development. Appendix C is the list of topics produced in 2003 (updated 2015) and it must be part of any SWFLHS 'Vision' that some more of these topics are pursued to fruition.

**VISION** The SWFLHS should aim to publish more SWF material - either in the form of standalone published documents, occasional papers, articles in journals etc. and/or should provide individual access to its archive in the furtherance of more such works being published. These could be physical documents or on-line works or both. The SWFLHS should aspire to a once-yearly publication of this sort.

## RESPONDING TO REQUESTS & ENQUIRIES

The SWFLHS/chairman receives occasional requests and enquiries - usually through contact details on the Society's website. There seems to be a continuing demand for local history input on various

matters and to give some indication of such demand the table below shows the main enquiries and outputs over recent years.

Date	Request/Enquiry	Output
2017	St Mary's Church guidebook request from Friends of St Mary's Church	24 page guidebook 19 illus
2018	Railway historical information boards request from station adopters /CRP	3 boards 28 illus
2018	Washland Interpretation board - SWFTC	1 page information sheet
2019	Interview at railway station connection with interpretation boards/CRP	On-site local radio interview for <i>Essex Quest</i>
2021	Naming the Area ideas request - from developer	4 page paper 3 illus
2021	Follow up request ref Hamberts name - from developer	10 page paper 7 illus
2021	Saltcoats name research in SWF - from individual in Saltcoats, Ayrshire	3 page paper 7 illus
2021	Ponds in SWF research from individual	Schedule of 29 ponds + map
2021	Clocktower information for forthcoming book - from individual	4 page paper 9 illus
2022	Riverside & Fenn Creek information boards from Chelmsford City Council	3 page paper 3 illus
2023	The South Woodham Song background information - from BBC	Interview on BBC Radio 4

These have all been responses and contributions by JF and the future of such a service depends on the JF Archive being properly ordered, searchable and accessible by any successor.



## SCHOOLS & YOUNG PEOPLE

Engagement with young people is important and is an area of the SWFLHS's activities that leaves room for improvement. As part of the 2017 Local History Week at St Mary's Church Woodham Ferrers a young person's guide to the church was produced. Occasional requests for talks have been met and in 2022 assistance – in the form of notes and digital images - was given to one school for its Local History Week (May) presentation.

**VISION** The Society needs to think about this and should perhaps take advice on devising a strategy to engage more with young people - possibly through liaising with schools to ascertain syllabus needs etc. Provision of local history resource packs, students interviewing old residents, raising the profile of the annual Local History Week are possibilities.

## PRACTICAL/HANDS ON – ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Society has never undertaken any archaeological investigations in SWF although the recent archaeological work at Southminster Hall undertaken by the Burnham U3A Archaeology Group has demonstrated the feasibility of groups such as SWFLHS receiving training to carry out such work.

Being involved in archaeological work would fit in with the Society's aim 'to promote an interest in all aspects of Local History' and indeed could be seen as a welcome widening of the Society's interests and could act as something that draws in new members

who prefer something practical as opposed to passive listening to lectures.

Suitable sites within the existing town are likely to be severely limited but investigative work undertaken ahead of the Chelmsford Local Plan allocation of land for housing etc north of South Woodham Ferrers has identified at least one area of possible archaeological interest and perhaps an opportunity for SWFLHS involvement.

**VISION** The SWFLHS should be alert to the possibility of involvement in archaeological work and if the interest is apparent should investigate the training needs and opportunities.

# PART 3 FUTURE ACCESS TO THE SWF ARCHIVES

Matters such as space, accessibility and security are key considerations in finding a home for this material.

The main options appear to be

### 1. The Essex Record Office

The Essex Record Office (ERO) has been provided with a spreadsheet of SWF material in the JF SWF archive and a meeting was held with the Duty Archive Officer on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023 to clarify a few points raised by issues of accession and lending material etc.

Clearly the ERO would provide an ideal place for secure and appropriate storage for documents in the JF SWF archive. Following discussions it appears that:

- The existing JF spreadsheet is in a form, with minimal alteration, that would be readily transferred to the ERO reference system.
- It is likely that the archive would for the most part be maintained and indexed as a 'SWFLHS collection'.
- If the archive were to be a 'loan', rather than a gift or bequest, the whole could be reclaimed by 'the depositor' should the need arrive - pending, for example, the provision of an appropriate local archive/heritage centre. It would be preferable if the depositor were defined as the 'current SWLHS chairman/secretary' rather than an individual (JF). The Heddingham Castle archive is an example of this being done.
- Once integrated into the ERO system, visitors to ERO would only be able to access individually indexed materials in line with normal existing ERO reading room policy.
- No artefacts are held by the ERO which would mean a storage/disposal solution would need to be devised for these.
- Transportation of archive to ERO would be the depositor's responsibility.

## 2. South Woodham Ferrers Library (1)

The table of existing Museums/Heritage Centres in Essex (Appendix A) show that 4 of the centres (the Manningtree & District Local History Museum, Clacton Museum, Feering & Kelvedon Local History Museum and the Bata Archive at East Tilbury) are related to their respective public libraries. At East Tilbury a permanent space is allocated for the display of Bata archive material (including some artefacts)

together lockable archive space for documents of Bata Heritage Centre, the opening of which is limited to normal library opening hours (Tuesdays & Thursdays 10.00 am - 1.00 pm & 2.00 pm - 5.00 pm Saturdays 10 am - 1.00 pm). Volunteers from Bata Heritage are present during these library opening hours: discussions with one Bata Archive member suggested that they would welcome - and could provide volunteer numbers to cover - additional hours.

South Woodham Ferrers Library has been approached (January 2023) to establish whether there is likely to be any possibility of an 'East Tilbury Library/Bata Archive solution' that could be included in the considerations of this options/vision document. This approach included the following:

*I have been given your contact details by the helpful staff at SWF Library as the first person to contact in respect of options I am looking at regarding South Woodham Ferrers archive material which I have accumulated over the past fifty years or so. I would hope that the South Woodham Ferrers Local History Society (SWFLHS) of which I was a founder member (in 1978) and am currently chairman, might be in a position to take it on upon my ultimate demise or before if possible. There are however such matters as space, accessibility and security that need to be considered in finding a home for this material and I am currently starting to put together a 'vision paper'/options document which will endeavour to set out exactly what I hold and options for the future. I have started to look at case studies such as East Tilbury Library/Bata Heritage Centre as possible 'models' to pursue.*

*South Woodham Ferrers Library would be one possible location for much of this material perhaps along the lines of*

*the East Tilbury example where a limited number of artefacts as well as documents are on display as well as there being archive storage. Obviously my deliberations on this are at a relatively early stage (and I am making similar approaches to the Essex Record Office and SWF Town Council) but I would like to know your thoughts on a SWF Library solution please and, if appropriate, how this might be progressed? On the other hand, you may not feel there is any chance of a 'library solution' being achieved. Either way I would like to include SWF Library in my 'options' document for presentation to SWFLHS members. I would be pleased to meet you to talk about this and provide further details on the material available if you think this might be helpful.*

An initial response (below) from Essex Libraries' Face to Face Supervisor covering Danbury, Great Baddow, South Woodham Ferrers and Stock Libraries (28 January) does not look encouraging in respect of the East Tilbury Library example quoted. East Tilbury falls within the Thurrock Unitary Authority and therefore its library is under the auspices of Thurrock Council rather than Essex Libraries run by Essex County Council.

*Most archive material is now kept at the Essex Records Office rather than in libraries so I think this would be the most suitable place for the South Woodham Ferrers Archive Material. I will however send your email onto my line manager to double check and get back to you accordingly.*

A further response was received on 11 May 2023 from Essex Library Services Customer Services Team Leader (Chelmsford):

*Thank you for your enquiry about depositing your archive with South Woodham Ferrers Library. I have discussed this with Adele and also with our managers who deal with space hire within our libraries and we do feel that ERO would be the most appropriate location for your archive as they have the*

*staff and the resources to properly maintain, protect and manage this material. The museums that you mention at Clacton and Manningtree Libraries are leased spaces through our Property division - they are run by volunteers and locked up and not accessible to the public outside the manned hours. We do not have the facility to do this in South Woodham Ferrers as we lease our space from the William de Ferrers School. I do hope that you are able to secure a location for your archive.*

### **South Woodham Ferrers Library (2) with William de Ferrers School**

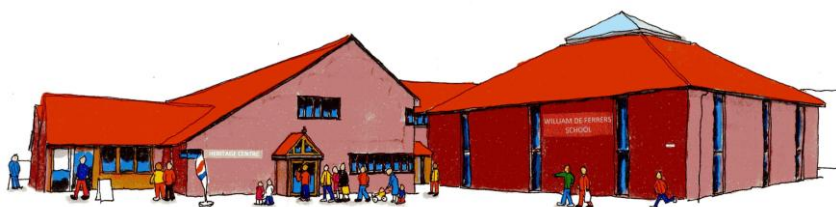
Although the above responses appear to exclude the possibility of South Woodham Ferrers Library option, the statement that Essex Libraries could not operate the Clacton and Manningtree libraries solution because 'we lease our space from William de Ferrers School' suggests that, should the school itself be in favour of a SWF Library/Heritage Centre solution, it might be possible to work something out.

For example any defined (and lockable) 'Heritage Space' could possibly be manned by volunteers (from the SWFLHS for example) during normal library opening hours but would be available solely for school use when the library was closed to the public.

Such a solution might provide opportunities for the school to forge closer links with the wider town in furtherance of the belief that 'the school is key to ensuring that the community of South Woodham Ferrers is strong, vibrant and cohesive'. It would also help to integrate the school into the wider heritage movement that is playing an increasingly important in community life. The school's recent commemoration of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary (the school opened

in 1982 and was formally opened by the Secretary of State for Education Sir Keith Joseph in October 1983) shows that the school is already aware of its place in the town's history and this could be reinforced by the establishment of what would probably be a unique Public Library/Secondary School/Heritage Centre partnership that would be entirely in keeping with the original pioneering nature of William de Ferrers School and the progressive outlook of the school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

There would clearly be the need for some physical alterations at the William de Ferrers premises but this could eventually be an exciting addition to South Woodham Ferrers town centre where it is likely that non-retail floorspace will play an increasingly important role in maintaining a vibrant and lively environment (below).



Heritage Centre at William de Ferrers School Library, Trinity Square

### 3. **Champions Manor Hall/South Woodham Ferrers Town Council**

An initial approach was made to SWFTC in January 2023 to outline the JF archive issue (with draft spreadsheet of material) and seeking to establish the position/possible future roles of the SWFTC in maintaining this archive. It has

been determined that the Finance and Projects Committee is where the matter should be initially considered. The views the Finance & Projects Committee would feed into a later/final version of this *Vision/Options* document. Possible options are:

- (a) Use SWFTC accommodation essentially as a storage facility with no general public access but with an individual (SWF Local History Society member/SWFTC officer/member) responsible for its use – adding to it and using it as reference for answering queries or the basis of Local history projects – in much the same way as the archive is used by the current chairman.
- (b) Use SWFTC accommodation (either existing CMH modified or new accommodation) to provide a publicly-accessible archive and displays in the form of a heritage centre –considered further below.

The Finance and Projects Committee considered the matter at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 when the chairman was invited to be present and share in the discussion. A useful wide-ranging discussion took place and there was clearly a desire to find a 'local' solution to the archive storage issue.

Matters and ideas discussed included considering the site of the former Chetwood Primary School buildings (now used as a delivery site for the Chelmsford Central Family Hub) and the possibility of a future re-modelling of floorspace of Champions Manor Hall presenting the opportunity to include a heritage element.

The library solution, despite the initial response from Library Services, was felt to be worth pursuing and the Committee undertook to seek a temporary exhibition/archive presence

at the library to gauge possibilities. The Town Council duly approached the Library who (in June 2023) reiterated their earlier view but offered the possibility of accommodating a small display for a short period of time.

The SWFLHS has always found the Library to be very helpful in accommodating local history displays over the years and it was not felt that the offer really advanced the current cause of trying to find permanent solution to the archive storage issue. The SWFTC were thanked for their efforts and were informed that, in view of the Library Services' response, the William de Ferrers School may hold the key to achieving a 'library solution' and would be approached accordingly.

It should be noted that the meeting of the Finance & Projects Committee pre-dated the follow-up response from Library Services of 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023(see previous page) that confirmed the initial view expressed that the ERO was the best place for the archive and that the facility did not exist to use the library in the manner suggested.

#### **4. A shop or office unit in the town centre**

The possible use of a town centre premises has not been investigated in detail at this stage beyond highlighting the recently opened town centre local history museum initiated by the Redditch Local History Society. This was featured in *Local History News* (Spring 2022) and the article is included as Appendix B. It provides an example of what might be possible in a town centre location (extract below):

*'As the archivist for the society I looked at all the options in terms of location, cost and access to store the society's*

*collection and came to the conclusion that the only option we had was to take matters into our own hands and create the long proposed town centre museum'*

*'We were again fortunate to identify an empty shop at 5 Market Place in Redditch Town Centre as an excellent fit to our requirements... ground floor exhibition area, a basement in which to create the archiving facility and a first floor meeting and exhibition room'*

*'We were pleased to be successful in obtaining a grant of £17,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund specifically to support the building of the archiving facility'*

*'We are now planning our outreach activities... and are very pleased to have the support of the Art Fund who have awarded us a grant of £22,500 to support our proposed programme'*

*'We look forward to welcoming visitors... to whom we can show that even 'New Towns' can have an interesting local history'*

#### **5. Commercial storage**

The average cost of self storage in the East of England is £23.15 per square foot per year (*Self Storage Association UK Annual Industry Report 2021*) A 25sq unit would accommodate existing archive boxes and most artefacts and at these average rates would cost almost £600 per annum. The cost and awkwardness of use means that this option is not appropriate other than where there may be a need for a short-term temporary storage pending a permanent resolution of the archive issue.

## 6. Disposal or dispersal of records

Not considered at this stage bearing in mind the willingness of the Essex Record Office to accept SWF documents and photographs as a 'collection'.

## 7. Establish a South Woodham Ferrers heritage centre

This is dealt with in Part 4

## 8. Records/artefacts transfer to private individual in SWF.

It seems unlikely that any individual member will be in a position to take on the 'Frankland Archive'. In any case this option would limit the public accessibility of records and artefacts

## 9. Digitize the whole archive and provide online access

Whilst there is some scope for digitization of records it is not considered to be a satisfactory solution and may be complicated by copyright issues. *Link* –South Woodham's community magazine 1972-1991 – is in the process of being scanned and will be available to members on the society's website in due course.

## 10. Chelmsford City Council Museum Services

Since compiling the first draft of this document the involvement of Chelmsford City Council Museum Services (CCCMS) has been raised as possibly being part of the solution. The CCCMS might be able to contribute in a number of ways as suggested below and it is hoped that the City Council's views on these can be incorporated in the final version of this *Vision/Options* document.

(a) The Chelmsford City Museum at Oaklands Park could incorporate a specifically South Woodham Ferrers element with an archive access/study area facility.

- (b) A 'satellite' Chelmsford City museum/heritage centre could be established in South Woodham Ferrers as an offshoot of the collection at Oaklands Park. There are no known examples of this approach but bearing in mind the council tax contributions to Chelmsford that South Woodham Ferrers makes there might be an argument for increased spending specifically tied to the South Woodham Ferrers locality.
- (c) Subject to a library/school option being taken forward (see option 2.2 above, page 19) there might be scope for a 3-way partnership (Essex Libraries, William de Ferrers School and Chelmsford Museum) to support this. This would build on the City Council's existing participation (the Leisure Centre) on this multi-user site and would align with the original vision for the William de Ferrers complex.
- (d) Chelmsford Museum Services may be in a position to provide and/or finance a local storage facility (on one of the town's three industrial areas for example) pending resolution of any longer-term plans for a heritage centre.

These seem to be the main options. They raise the possibility of there being some form of Heritage Centre in the town – that could be part of options 2, 3, 4 and 10 above.

# PART 4 A HERITAGE CENTRE FOR SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS?

The question as to whether there would be a place for a Heritage Centre/Local History Museum in South Woodham Ferrers needs a far more detailed assessment than is appropriate for this paper but the following matters are likely to play a part in any such assessment.

## **Does the town's have a unique heritage 'selling point'?**

The town's riverside location provides a degree of maritime heritage and archaeological interest in its surviving jetties, berths, boat hulks and medieval salt working mounds. The railway too has heritage interest as set out in the recently commissioned display boards at the railway station, a heritage interest that will be further enhanced by the 'talking bench' on the platform. Alterations and modernisation at the station have tended to diminish the railway station's heritage interest to visitors. Although both the river and the railway played important parts in the history of South Woodham Ferrers and would feature prominently in any historical display of the town's history they may not provide sufficient distinctiveness for special coverage.

Probably the two main periods of particular historical interest in the town's growth as briefly mentioned above can be identified as:

## **1. The post-railway 'plotland' development of the late nineteenth and early 20<sup>th</sup> century**

This is the period when the area was transformed from an place of farmland, dominated by the 538-acre Champions Farm, to an area of multiple ownerships with many newcomers, moving predominantly from the east side of London, having their first experience of property ownership. Special excursions were arranged to bring prospective purchasers to Woodham Ferrers station, the alternative name for this process of development - 'champagne plots' – is indicative of the inducements offered on the adjoining Eyotts Estate in particular.

Plot sales left a legacy of scattered homes and weekend cottages together small-scale horticultural enterprises dotted along unmade roads together with supporting shops and community buildings. Although some amalgamation of ownerships had occurred during the World Wars there remained areas of unknown ownership and inefficient use of land. It did, however, arguably provide a living environment with a quiet charm and attractiveness.

It was a colourful period of great interest in the town's history which stretched into the inter-war years but has left little evidence 'on the ground', such evidence being limited to plot divisions and occasional surviving but much modified buildings from that period. Although some 'timber and asbestos' dwellings - of a style so characteristic of such plotland developments - survived into the new town era, there are none left now. It should be noted that the Langdon Hills heritage centre (12 miles) is centred on a surviving 'plotland' dwelling there with a heritage walking trail highlighting plotland features that survive in the surrounding landscape.

## 2. Essex County Council's 'new town' development from 1975-2000 / 'The Essex Design Guide'

The County Council-administered 'new town' development predominantly financed by private enterprise was a unique planning exercise at the time. Land was amalgamated into a single local authority ownership with subsequent residential, commercial and industrial development promoted and controlled by the Council through a series of design briefs.

Central to the design process was the introduction of the county-wide 'Design Guide for Residential Area' the introduction of which coincidentally took place at the same time as the new town proposals were formulated. 'Design Guide' policies had a major influence on housing estate design and became of national importance. South Woodham Ferrers was the first large-scale application of these policies and the County Council as landowner and planning authority was in a theoretically strong position to promote these innovative design policies in the town.

Marketing as a 'Riverside Country Town' the development was featured in the TCPA/DCLG publication 'Best Practice in Urban Extensions' (2007)

Whilst post-SWF new town developments north of the town are in danger of diluting the 'Design Guide' message of the town, it can be argued that South Woodham Ferrers occupies a significant place in planning history. Contrasting with the dearth of evidence of its 'plotland' heritage referred to above the town remains as a monument to innovative late 20<sup>th</sup> century planning and - particularly in its relationship to the innovative Essex Design Guide – provides the basis for the area's 'unique selling point'.

## Possible main areas of any SWF heritage display

- Pre-railway / Farming / Domesday entry / Salt making
- The River and Creeks / Barges / Flooding
- The Railway / construction / effects /
- 'Plotland' sales and growth – the 'plotland' legacy
- Shops & Businesses / Brickmaking
- Interwar SWF growth / Community provision
- Post war growth and the 1960s Estates / Village Plan
- The 'new town' development / Essex Design Guide

## Museums & Heritage Centres in Essex

A comprehensive (although probably not complete) survey of existing museums and heritage centres in Essex (including Thurrock & Southend) has been undertaken to help gain an appreciation of the level of provision in the county, the kinds of places that support a locally orientated heritage facility and to get some idea of typical opening times etc. Appendix A is a schedule and maps of the 60 museums and heritage centres that have been identified in Essex.

Not all of these are direct examples of what SWF might be in a position to support – 9 are run by or strongly supported by the relevant District or City Council and 15 are what might be described as 'single subject' establishments such as Stow Maries WWI aerodrome, the Police Museum, Post Boxes Museum and the Railway & Maritime Heritage centres. Map 2 in Appendix A shows these single subject centres less prominently portrayed.

The basic facts are laid out here to assist in any discussion on whether a heritage centre is likely to be a possibility in South Woodham Ferrers. Key points from the table and maps may be summarised as:



- Many places that have smaller populations than South Woodham Ferrers are able to support a Heritage Centre (2011 Census figures)

<b>Little Baddow</b>	<b>1,586</b>
<b>Silver End</b>	<b>3,861</b>
<b>Coggeshall</b>	<b>3,919</b>
<b>Earls Colne</b>	<b>4,848</b>
<b>East Tilbury</b>	<b>6,363</b>
<b>West Mersea</b>	<b>7,183</b>
<b>Wivenhoe</b>	<b>7,637</b>
<b>Burnham on Crouch</b>	<b>7,671</b>
<b>Brightlingsea</b>	<b>8,076</b>
<b>Halstead</b>	<b>11,906</b>
<b>Walton-on-the-Naze</b>	<b>12,054</b>
<b>Maldon</b>	<b>14,220</b>

- There is a predominance of Trusts
- There is a heavy reliance on volunteers, sometimes exclusively so.
- A wide variety of administrative/ownership 'models' is shown with varying levels of parish/town council involvement
- There is a wide variation in opening days & times with some apparently running every day opening with volunteers but the lowest provision recorded as 2 hours on each of 2 days each week
- Library premises are featured in 3 cases
- Geographic distribution (Appendix A Map 1) suggests that there is a gap to fill.

If the idea of a Heritage Centre for South Woodham Ferrers is pursued it would be instructive to look in more detail at the running of particular centres operating under the different administrative arrangements identified in the museums/heritage centres survey and if possible to discuss things with those involved to:

- establish levels of voluntary support / the size of societies involved,
- where possible find out the financial arrangements involved and any experiences gained from the applications for grants,
- gain information on the formation of Trusts and the experience of those involved in setting these up and
- get an understanding of the different working arrangements







## Funding







The Heritage Funding Directory accessed via the Association of Independent Museum lists dozens of possible funding sources for museums. National Lottery/Mr Gees Foundation/SWF Town Council/Asda/Community Rail Partnership/Art Fund are local possibilities identified to date.







# MUSEUMS & HERITAGE CENTRES IN ESSEX







# APPENDIX A







	Name	Opening Hours	Cost of Admission	Administration	Opened
	Brentwood Museum	First Sat/Sun/Mon each month Sat/Sun 2.30-4.30 Mon 10.30-12.20	Free	Charitable Trust/Volunteers	1989
	Brightlingsea Museum	Sat 10-4 Sun 10-5 some Wed/Thu 2-5	Free	Charitable Trust/Volunteers	1989
	Burnham-on-Crouch & District Museum	Sun/Wed/Sat 1.30-4.30 & Every day in summer school hol.	£2	Registered Charity/ Burnham History Society/Volunteers	
	Coggeshall Museum & Heritage Centre	Sun 2-4.30 Thu (Jul/Aug) 10-12	Free - donations welcome	Run by volunteers	1990
	Maldon District Museum Museum in the Park	Wed/Fri/Sat/Sun 1-4	Free	Registered Charity run by volunteers	1922







	Great Dunmow Museum	Sat/Sun 11-4	£1.50	Great Dunmow Museum Society independent run by volunteers	2001
	Feering and Kelvedon Local History Museum	Mon 2-5 Sat 9.30-12.30	Free	Charitable Trust with 15-20 volunteers Financial support from Feering & Kelvedon Parish Councils Museum attached to and accessed through public library	1975
	Manningtree & District Local History Museum	Wed 10-12 Thu 2-4 Sat 10-4	Free – donations invited	Housed within Manningtree Library independent staffed by volunteers	
	Purfleet Heritage & Military Centre	Thu & Sun & Bank Holiday Mons	£3	Registered charity run by volunteers	1994
	Rayleigh Town Museum	Wed Fri Sat 10-4	Free	Charitable Incorporated Organisation run entirely by volunteers	2016
	Mersea Island Museum	Wed – Sun 2-5	£2	Mersea Island Museum Trust run by volunteers	1976

	Silver End Heritage Centre	Access by special arrangement + advertised open days	n/a	Housed in Village Hall - Heritage Society formed in 2009	
	Bata Heritage Centre, East Tilbury	Tue & Thu 10-1,2-5 Sat 10-1 + advertised open days	Free	Based at East Tilbury Library so limited to library opening hours	2002
	Halstead Heritage Museum	Sun & Wed 1.30-4	Free	Halstead & District Local History Society Premises <i>Queens Hall</i> shared with Halstead Town Council	(1980) (2009) From 2018 in present premises)
	Harlow Museum & Walled Garden	Tues/Thu/Sat 9.30-3.30	Free	Harlow Council	
	Harwich Museum	10-4 daily Apr-Sept	£3.50	No paid employees – run by volunteers	2021
	Canvey Island Heritage Centre	Most weekends in summer Every Thu courtesy of Needlework Group	Free		1979







	Foulness Island Heritage Centre	First Sunday of each month 12-4 Access courtesy MOD	Free	Foulness Conservation & Archaeology Society	2003
	Earls Colne Heritage Museum	Sat & Sun 2-4	Free	Supported by Earls Colne Parish Council	2005
	Wivenhoe Chapel Museum	Sat & Sun 10-1	Free	Wivenhoe Town Council manned by rota of Town Councillors and volunteers	2015
	Ingatestone Museum	Not yet open	Free	Run by Ingatestone Museum Trust on behalf of Parish Council in cottage leased from Greater Anglia	In development
	Galleywood Heritage Centre	Tue 1.30-3.30 & Suns as arranged		Registered Charity with Trustees Premises leased to Trust by Chelmsford City Council	2009
	Leigh Heritage Centre	Open most days volunteers permitting especially weekends	Free donations welcome	The Leigh Society	(1980)





	Shoebury Heritage Centre			The Shoebury Society	2022
	Clacton Museum	Tues & Sat 9.30-12.30	Free	The Clacton & District Local History Society-run museum on 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor of Clacton Library	
	Little Baddow History Centre	Thur 10-12,,Sun 2-4	Free	In purpose-built premises run by volunteers, financed by donations,	2004
	Maeldune Heritage Centre Maldon	Tues & Sat 11-4	Free	Administered by the Maeldune Trust	
	Colchester Castle Museum	Mon-Sat 10-5 Sun 11-5	Adults £11.95 Child £6.75	Colchester City Council Colchester Museums Development Foundation	1860
	Hollytrees Museum Colchester	Mon-Sat 10-5	Free	Colchester City Council Colchester Museums Development Foundation	1929 HLF funded redevelopment 2001

	Natural History Museum Colchester	Tues-Sat 10-5 Sun 11-5	Free	Colchester City Council Colchester Museums Development Foundation	1958
	Southend Central Museum	Wed-Sun 11-5	Free	Southend-on-Sea City Council	1981
	Braintree District Museum	Tues-Sat 10-4	£5	Braintree District Council / Braintree District Museum Trust /Volunteers	(1928)
	Chelmsford Museum	Daily 10-5	Free	Chelmsford City Council	
	Thurrock Museum	Mon/Thurs 9-7 Tues/Wed/Fri 9-5 Sat 9-1	Free	Thurrock Borough Council	1900s Carnegie Free Library 1970s current location
	Saffron Walden Museum	Wed-Sat 10-5, Sun 2-5	£2.50	Uttlesford District Council	

	Epping Forest District Museum	Mon-Wed 10-5 Fri & Sat 10-4	Free	Epping Forest District Council	
	Cater Museum Billericay	Mon & Sat 2-5	Free	Charitable Trust	1960
	Essex Fire Museum Grays	Tues & some Suns pre-booked only	Free	Essex Fire & Rescue Service operational site - museum manned by volunteers	
	Stow Maries Aerodrome	Fri Sat Sun 10-4	£10	Registered Charity with volunteers	
	Walton Maritime Museum	Mon-Sun 2-4 in Summer	£2	Frinton & Walton CharitableTrust	1984
	Royal Gunpowder Mills	10-3	Free	Registered Charity	



	Rayleigh Windmill Museum	Wed 10-1 Sat Sun 1-4	Free	Rochford District Council site manned by volunteers	
	North Weald Airfield Museum	Sat & Sun 12-5	£5	Registered charity run and staffed by volunteers	
	Museum of Power Langford	Wed to Sun 9.30-5	£7 (on non-event days)	Trustees /Volunteers	(1996)
	Combined Military Services Museum, Maldon	Wed-Sun 10.30-5 Every day in school holidays	£8.50	Charitable Trust formed 1996 Volunteers	2004
	East Anglian Railway Museum Wakes Colne	Wed/Sat/Sun 10-5	£8 (on non-event days)	Registered Charity/Volunteers	1986
	Essex Police Museum	By arrangement	Free	Essex Police/Self funded charity/volunteers	1991

	Southend Pier Museum	Daily 11-5 (dependant on volunteers)	£2.50	Southend Pier Museum Foundation Trust Self-funded and run by volunteers	1989
	Langdon Hills The Haven Plotland Museum	Undergoing redevelopment		Part of Essex Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve Discovery Centre 10-5 daily	
	Canvey Island Dutch Cottage Museum			Run by Benfleet & District Historical Society on behalf of Castle Point District Council	1962
	Thaxted Guildhall Museum	Sun & Bank Holidays 2-6	Free	Thaxted Parish Council as Trustees of Yardleys Charity	

Information compiled from websites by John Frankland, South Woodham Ferrers Local History Society March 2023

# APPENDIX A

# MAP 1



# APPENDIX A

## MAP 2

- One subject centres (e.g. Museum of Power, Police Museum etc)
- Directly related to locality



# A new local history museum in Redditch town centre

Derek Coombes

Redditch suffers from the tag of 'New Town' despite a history that stretches back nearly one thousand years. Although we have the Forge Mill Museum, Redditch's history is so much more than needles, fishing tackle and Bordesley Abbey which is the focus at Forge Mill. This was identified by local historian Alan Foxall back in 2002 when he first raised the topic that a town centre museum should be created to represent this diverse scope of our history that made the town what it is today. Despite numerous attempts to create such a facility a second museum never emerged.

The Redditch Local History Society, founded in 2009, became the latest organisation to pursue this ambition to provide facilities to safely store and give public access to its artefact collection.

As the archivist for the society, I looked at all the alternative options in terms of location, cost and access to store the society's collection and came to the conclusion that the only option we had was to take matters into our own hands and create the long proposed town centre museum. After much debate by the society's management committee it was agreed that a separate organization should take on the project to protect the society from the risks involved.

This was ratified at the AGM of the society in 2019 and in November 2019 the Redditch Local History Museum was established as a registered charity. The decision to go with a



separate organization seemed to be vindicated as we were quickly plunged into the implications of the Covid pandemic and the activities of the society ground to a halt.

However, the museum trustees were not deterred and proceeded to create a business plan for the museum. In November 2020 those plans were published and the team set about obtaining funding and a permanent site for the museum, the two major challenges to the museum's creation. Within six months of concerted effort both of these objectives were met, and funding was raised that covered the cost for the first two years operation but we still have the challenge of long-term financing to address.

The other key requirement was to secure premises from which to operate. Such premises need space in which we could establish an archiving facility as well as an area where exhibits based upon these artefacts could be displayed. The trustees were all conscious that the location should maximize visitor accessibility.



*the interior of the museum before (left) and after (above). See back cover for the front entrance*

We were again fortunate to identify an empty shop at 5 Market Place in Redditch Town Centre as an excellent fit to our requirements; it has, in addition to the ground floor exhibition area, a basement in which to create the archiving facility and a first floor meeting and exhibition room.

This has turned out to be a very shrewd decision as the owners of the property are also the owners of the Kingfisher Centre and they have been very supportive of the decision to create the museum. Commercial lease negotiations were bit of an eyesopener for the trustees who had never previously had any experience of this topic but again the Kingfisher management have been very helpful. We were also pleased to be successful in obtaining a grant of £17,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund specifically to support the building of the archiving facility.

We took possession in late September 2021 and set about recruiting volunteers to help build and run the proposed museum. Since then we have worked tirelessly to create exhibits and fit out the property. To do this we have begged, borrowed and scrounged fittings and services from local businesses and have, through Facebook and some good coverage in the local press, also attracted a pool of volunteers who are helping create the initial museum offering.

We opened to the public on the 3rd November 2021 and are currently open three days a week on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from ten 'til four. Feedback from visitors has been very positive, the essence of which is 'Much needed, so much to see, we'll have to come back'. We are now planning our outreach activities for 2022 and are very please to have the support of the Art Fund, who have awarded us a grant of £22,500 to support our proposed programme.

We are well located in the Church Green Conservation area in Redditch town centre and we look forward to welcoming visitors from both the town, and the wider West Midlands area, to whom we can show that even 'New Towns' can have an interesting local history.

Visit us at 5 Market Place in Redditch, B98 8AA (see back cover photograph) or on-line at [rlhm.online](http://rlhm.online) or email us at [contact@rlhm.online](mailto:contact@rlhm.online) or telephone 07486 882181

*Derek Coombes is a Trustee, RLHM*



## APPENDIX B



Redditch Local History Museum

## POSSIBLE SWF PAPERS/RESEARCH TOPICS

1. SWF brickfields/brickworks
2. St Mary's Mission Hall, Hullbridge Road
3. Ferrers Arms
4. Shaw Farm
5. Champions Farm
6. Baptist Church Clements Green Lane
7. Village Hall/Smallholders Hall
8. W.I. Hall
9. Evangelical Church, Hullbridge Road
10. Railway/Station buildings
11. The railway to SWF
12. Holy Trinity church
13. Marketing of the new town
14. Plotland Development
15. 1960s development/Gough Cooper
16. Commemorative plaques/trees etc
17. Bibliography/references
18. Early businesses
19. New town schemes never built
20. Eyotts Farm
21. Water main/easements
22. Railway carriages
23. Country Homes Ltd 1920s
24. Bushy Hill/Marconi
25. Saltcoats Farm
26. Saltworkings/redhills
27. Hamberts Farm
28. Hullbridge Road
29. River Crouch/bridge/ferry
30. Road names - origins
31. Barges/river traffic
32. The Whalebone
33. William Tabrums copyhold
34. Town Centre/Asda
35. The Tithe Map/other maps
36. Timeline of SWF events
37. Flooding in SWF/1953
38. Local History Society
39. Sport – clubs/open space
40. Schools incl. Hullbridge
41. Elmwood /Champions Manor Hall site
42. Ponds – origins, previous sites
43. The 1777 Chapman & Andre map
44. Domesday Survey and Woodham
45. The 1582 Survey of Woodham
46. The 1620 Survey of Woodham
47. Growth of SWF/geomorphology
48. Poultry farming
49. Nurseries & smallholdings
50. Ministry of Agriculture and its landholdings
51. Measured drawings/building studies eg old post office
52. Changes in flora and fauna
53. Clubs & Societies data base
54. New town flood defences
55. The planning of SWF new town
56. Wartime SWF
57. Utilities – water supply, electricity, street lighting, gas
58. 'Tin Tabernacles' SWF churches

## APPENDIX C

59. William de Ferrers & the Ferrers Family
60. Pre-history: peat layers, earlier river routes
61. Marsh Farm
62. The new town public inquiry
63. Archaeology: Fenn Creek salt site & skulls