

ESSEX RECORD OFFICE

**GUIDE
FOR
CREATIVES**



The searchroom at the Essex Record Office, Robert Priseman, 2003

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Photograph of Chelmsford Fire Brigade on ladder with appliances,
by Fred Spalding, 1889 (I/Sp 15/350)



Why use archives?

The Essex Record Office is the storehouse of Essex history. We look after documents, maps, images, artworks, and sound and video recordings that together tell the story of nearly 1,000 years of our county's past.

The archives offer a source of inspiration for writers, artists, designers, and other creatives who are interested in Essex and its people. The records we look after touch on many different subjects and places, and encompass a wide range of materiality – papers, parchments, bindings, seals, handwriting, illustration, and photography, to name just a few. You can come and see them for free in our searchroom in Chelmsford without an appointment.

In return, creative interpretations of the archives give us new ways of understanding and looking at the material we preserve, and help us to share it with a wider audience.

Archives are “a prosaic place where the written and fragmentary traces of the past are put in boxes and folders, bound up, stored, catalogued ...[but] the archive is also a place of dreams.”

Dust: The Archive and Cultural History,
Carolyn Steedman (2002)



Honey label produced by the Essex Bee-Keepers Association, 1897 (D/Z 142/1)



Searching the catalogue

Information about the archives we preserve can be found by searching our catalogue, [Essex Archives Online](#).

Start with our user guides, [How to search our archives](#) and [Understanding your search results](#). The other guides are a useful introduction to the different types of material we preserve at the ERO.

We also keep lists of records relating to various subjects, from Black and Asian history to witchcraft. Please get in touch to find out more.

How are the archives organised?

When looking for relevant material, it is helpful to think about why certain records might have been created, collected and preserved.

Most records at the ERO were created by local institutions or organisations, like councils, courts, hospitals, estates and businesses, or by families or individuals, often with no idea that they might have long-term value. Others, like oral histories, were created deliberately for their historical interest.

The records at the Essex Record Office are organised into categories, which refer to what type of organisation created them. There are some exceptions — publications are stored in our library, for example, and sound and video recordings are held in the Essex Sound and Video Archive. You can browse all the categories [here](#).

Cornwallis armorial pedigree, from the Audley End estate archive (D/DBy F39)

Within categories, records are organised into collections, according to the person or institution that created the records. In archive-speak, each of these collections is called a **fonds**. This 1952 plan for Harlow New Town, for example, is in the fonds for Harlow Development Corporation.

Within a fonds, records are often organised into further sub-groups: **sub-fonds**, **series**, and **sub-series**. Arranging the records in this way helps to preserve the context of how they were originally created or used. This plan is in the sub-fonds for Harlow Development Corporation's Social Development Department and the series for the department's published material.

At the bottom of this hierarchy is the **item** level, which describes the individual record. In this case, the item is a publication about the New Town Master Plan, with this folded copy of the plan inside.

Browsing on Essex Archives Online

If you have found a catalogue record for a relevant item and want to explore other items at the same level, scroll to the bottom of the page and click this button:

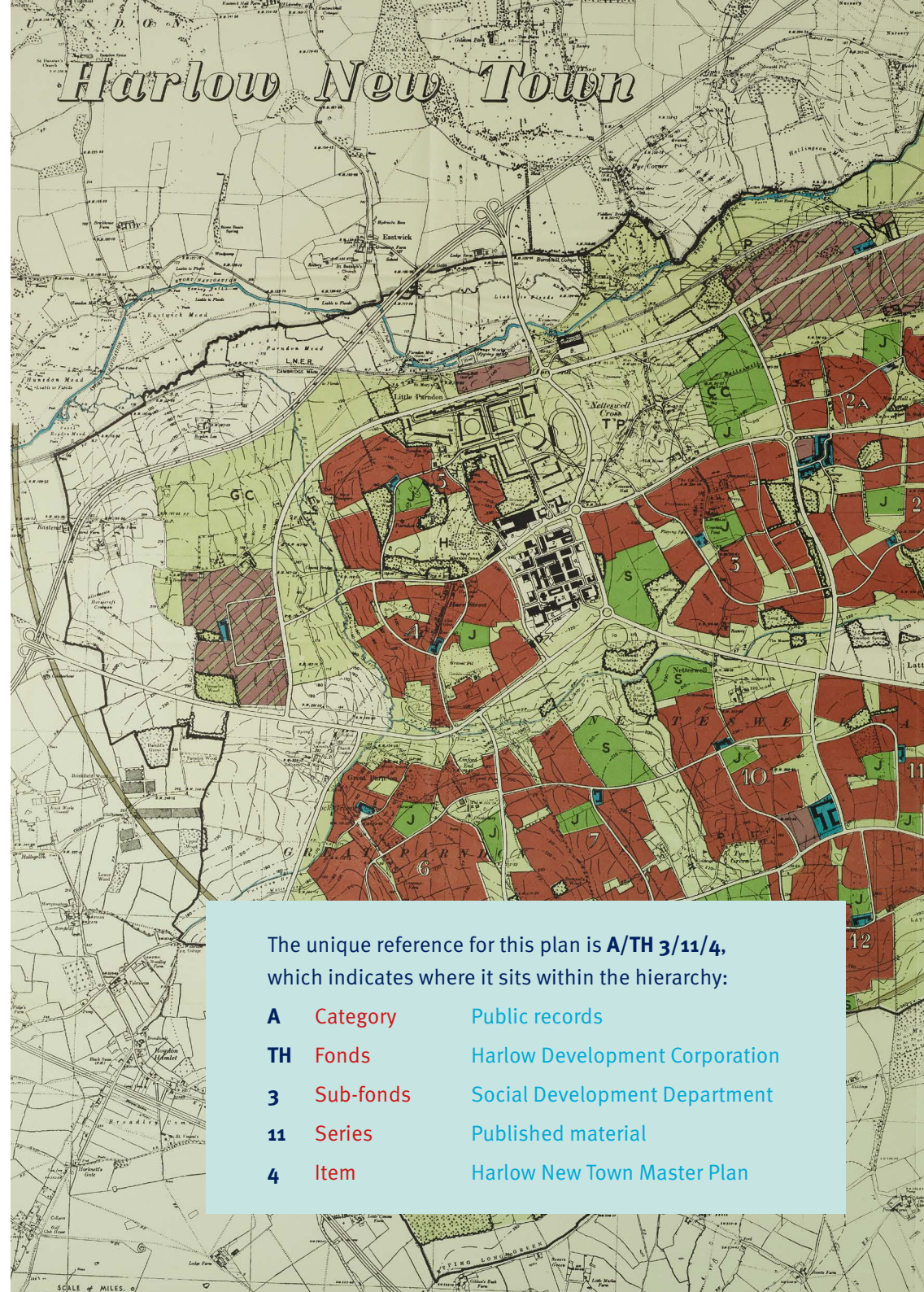
[VIEW THE CATALOGUE TO WHICH THIS DOCUMENT BELONGS](#)



This should take you to a list of records. At the top of the page, you can click through into the higher levels in the hierarchy.

To browse the lower levels, choose a record and click this button:

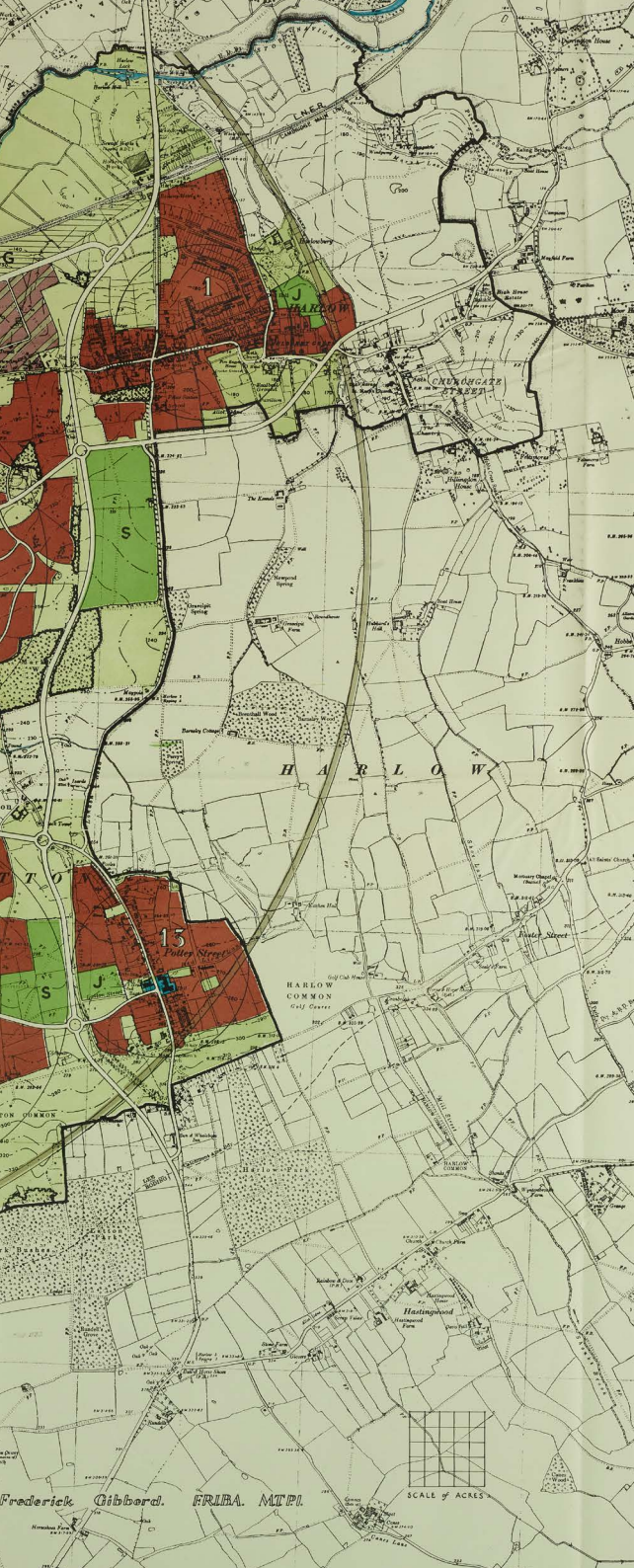
[MORE ABOUT THESE RECORDS](#)























The unique reference for this plan is **A/TH 3/11/4**, which indicates where it sits within the hierarchy:

A	Category	Public records
TH	Fonds	Harlow Development Corporation
3	Sub-fonds	Social Development Department
11	Series	Published material
4	Item	Harlow New Town Master Plan

MASTER PLAN



-  INDUSTRY
SERVICE INDUSTRIAL AREAS
-  RESIDENTIAL AREAS
EXISTING RESIDENTIAL AREAS & HOUSING
-  TOWN CENTRE BUILDINGS
& MAJOR CENTRES
SUB CENTRES
-  PASSENGER SIDINGS
-  GOODS SIDINGS
-  HOSPITAL
-  GOLF COURSE
-  TOWN PARK
-  COUNTY COLLEGE
-  SECONDARY SCHOOLS
-  PRIMARY SCHOOLS
-  SPECIAL SCHOOLS
-  RADIAL & ORBITAL ROADS
-  MAJOR TOWN ROADS
-  MINOR TOWN ROADS
-  EXISTING ROADS
-  RAILWAY
-  CANAL & RIVER
-  BROOKS
-  WOODS & TREES

- 1 SPORTS ARENAS
- 2 MARKET SQUARE
- 3 SHOPPING STREETS
- 4 BUS STATION
- 5 CIVIC CENTRE
- 6 FORMAL GARDENS
- 7 ENTERTAINMENTS GROUP
- 8 TOWN CENTRE SERVICES
- 9 STATION YARD
- 10 HELICOPTER LANDING GROUND

Tips

1

Start by searching with key words and then order the results by date or by reference. If you don't find very much at first, don't be disheartened — try broader search terms.

2

Keep in mind that relevant records may have been accessioned (deposited with us), but not yet catalogued in detail. In this case, you can usually still find an 'accession record' on Essex Archives Online, which will give you a brief description of the material. You can still see uncatalogued material in our searchroom, but you might need to contact us first.

3

If you still can't find what you're looking for, it may not have been kept in the first place. However, it might simply be held in a different archive. We may be able to point you in the right direction, so do get in touch.



Accessing the archives

In person

We are based in Chelmsford. You can find our full address, travel information, and opening hours on our [website](#). We are open from Tuesday to Thursday, with one 'long week' a month, where we open on Friday and Saturday and until 8pm on Tuesday.

We make original records available in our [searchroom](#). To access the searchroom, you will need an Archives Card. It is easiest to [apply for one online](#) before you visit. We will issue you the card when you arrive. You can then use it to log in to [Essex Archives Online](#) and order records from storage. To order records, just follow the [instructions](#) on our catalogue. The next time you come in, you will be able to log in beforehand with your Archives Card and order records in advance.

Some documents (like newspapers) will be made available on microfiche or microfilm, and recordings from the Essex Sound and Video Archive might be on cassette, CD, or VHS, which you can play in our Playback Room. Just ask at the searchroom desk if you need any help with these. You can also ask the Duty Archivist for research advice.

While in the searchroom you can browse our reference library and printed map collection, and access Ancestry, FindMyPast, and the British Newspaper Archive for free.

Taking photographs

You can take your own photographs of documents in the searchroom with a camera licence, which is £14.00 for the day, £36.00 for three consecutive days, or £7.50 after 5pm on a late Tuesday. Read our terms on the use of cameras on our [website](#). Items in copyright can only be photographed for non-commercial research and private study. Please get in touch if you would like to use the images for any other use afterwards (see "[Using the archives](#)").

Online

[Essex Archives Online](#) includes hundreds of thousands of images of records, including Essex parish registers and wills. You can see all these images for free in our searchroom and at our access points at Harlow Museum and the Forum in Southend. Offsite, you can access the images by paying a subscription, available on a daily, weekly, monthly, six-monthly or yearly basis.

You can also access some sound and video recordings on Essex Archives Online, our [Soundcloud](#) or [YouTube](#) channels, and on [Essex Sounds](#).

If you would like to look at an item but are not able to visit us or find a digital version on Essex Archives Online, you can ask us to send you a copy (see "[Using the archives](#)"). You can also use our [Search Service](#) to make a search on your behalf.

Accessibility

We are committed to making the Essex Record Office accessible to everyone. You can find some information about accessibility on our [website](#), but we are aware that access is an ongoing conversation, so please get in touch if you would like to discuss any additional requirements or concerns.



Postcard of Marine Parade Beach, Southend, c.1955 (I/Mb 321/1/57)



Using the archives

We love to see records used creatively outside the archive. If you would like to use a copy of a record in our care, please let us know; there are several considerations to take into account before copying or sharing the records.

Ordering digital copies

You can purchase a camera licence and take photographs of records in the searchroom yourself (see "[Accessing the archives](#)").

Alternatively, you can order digital copies of records from us. We provide these either as research quality copies (watermarked, low resolution JPEGs) or premium copies (where you choose the resolution and file format). One research quality copy costs £5.50, with a discount for multiple pages. Fees for new premium images start at £15.50. Find more information and the online order form on our [website](#).

You can also order digital copies of sound and video recordings. The fee is £38.00 per recording, with a 50% discount for students. If a transcript already exists for the recording, you can order a copy for £10.00. To order, get in touch and ask for our Sound Archivist.

The embroidered cover of the 'Broomfield Bible', which belonged to Charles I, 1629 (D/P 248/28/1)

Reproducing copies

As custodian of the records, we ask that you obtain permission from us before reproducing copies of the records in our care.

If you would like to reproduce a copy of a document or image — to publish it in a book or on a website, for example, or to share it as part of a talk, installation or exhibition — please email ero.enquiry@essex.gov.uk. To reproduce a copy of a sound or video recording, ask for our Sound Archivist. It is helpful to know what you plan to use (including the item reference) and how you plan to use it, including whether you will charge for the end result.

We do not generally charge usage fees for non-commercial reproduction. Our standard fee for commercial use is £50.00 per image. If you would like to reproduce an image in a publication with a low print run, we may be able to waive the fee in return for a copy of the publication.

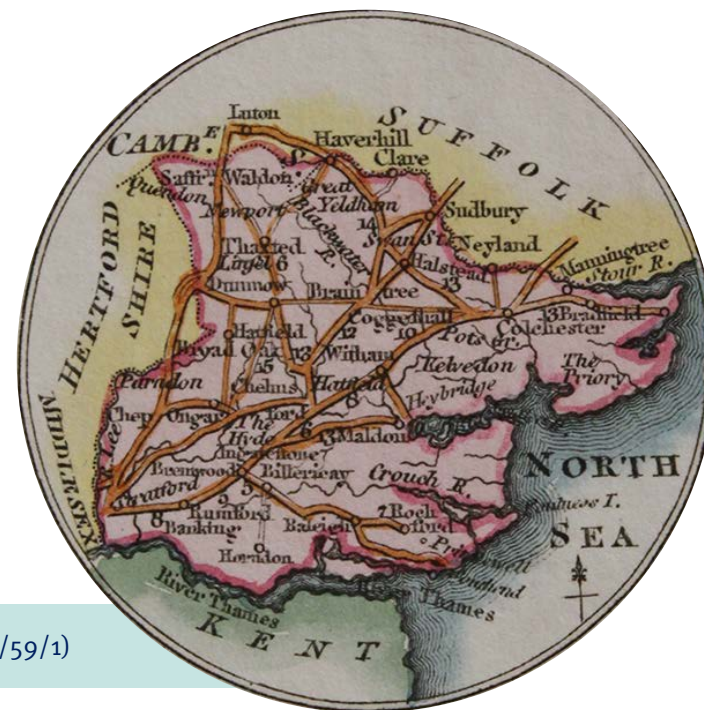
The reproduction of records, commercially or non-commercially, is subject to a suitable credit to the Essex Record Office. If at all possible, please include the item reference - for example, 'Essex Record Office, D/P 6/5/3'. If the item is in copyright, we would advise you to credit the copyright holders too (you will still need to obtain their permission first).

Copyright

While we physically hold records for research purposes, copyright in the records often remains with the creator or a third party.

The responsibility to gain permission to reproduce a record in copyright is with the person requesting to use the record, and we will need confirmation that permission has been obtained before copying the record or allowing re-use.

To work out whether a record is still in copyright, you can consult [copyright duration workflows](#) from The National Archives. While we are not qualified to give legal advice, wherever possible we will also try to give an opinion on the likely copyright status of the record and who you may need to contact to obtain permission.



'Map of the County of Essex' by George Wise, April 1807 (MAP/CM/59/1)



What we can offer

Advice about finding relevant material

If you need help navigating the catalogue or more information about the archives, one of our archivists will be able to help.

If you would like us to carry out some research for you, use our [Search Service](#).

Tours

We offer two options for tours:

- A group tour of the searchroom, repositories, and conservation studio (£90.00)
- A group tour with bespoke document display (£155.00)

Talks and training

Our archivists offer talks about the archives both at the Essex Record Office and across the county.

We also offer training in archival research skills, oral history, and editing sound recordings.

Marconi's factory in Chelmsford, photographed by
Fred Spalding and Sons, undated (D/F 269/1/3678)

2011.

12

Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Works

Venue hire and filming

We have a lecture theatre and several conference rooms available to hire for events and workshops. Catering can be provided. Please visit our [website](https://www.essex.gov.uk) or email ero.reception@essex.gov.uk for more information and our rates.

If you would like to film at the Essex Record Office, ask for our 'Request to film' form.

Support for funded projects

We support funded projects in various ways, from writing letters of support during the application process to archiving project outputs. We can also provide tours, training, and consultancy. If you would like us to support your project, please let us know as early on in the application process as possible, so we can discuss the different options available and costs involved.

Archiving your work

As the county archive, we accept documents, photographs, and sound and video recordings relating to Essex, including Southend and Thurrock. We are particularly interested in preserving material that represents the diversity of modern and historic Essex. Please get in touch if you would like advice about archiving your work.

Wedding cake of Dorothy Cadwell Taylor and aviator
Claude Grahame-White, 1912 (D/DU 3465/1/16)



Case studies

A Kind of Vanishing, Damien Robinson

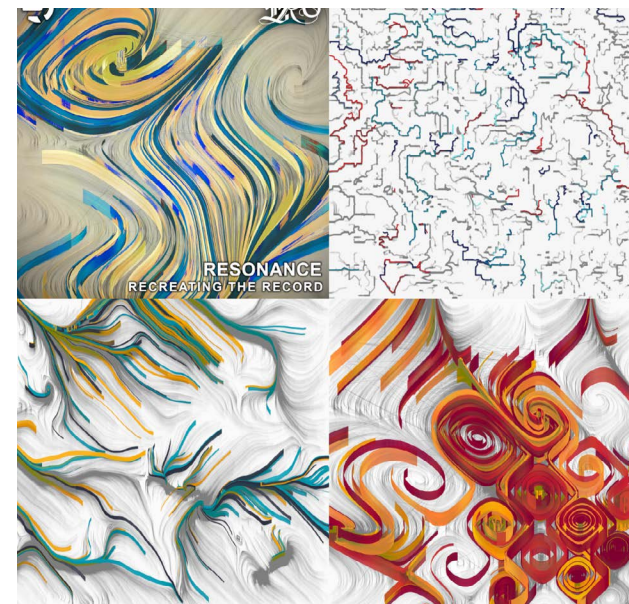
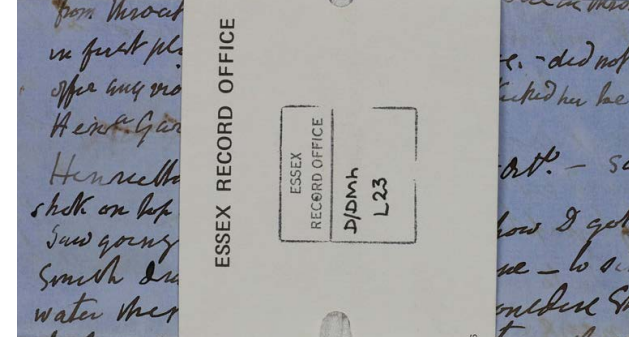
In this research-led inquiry, funded by the Arts Council as part of the East Contemporary Visual Art Network's 'New Histories' project, Damien Robinson deconstructed a historic Essex 'witchcraft' incident through a D/deaf perspective, exploring how D/deaf people's life experiences have often only been retained in mainstream history through the accounts and historical records of hearing people. Read more on Focal Point Gallery's [website](#).

Recreating the Record, Resonance

During the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2021 the music collective Resonance chose samples from the Essex Sounds website to create their own compositions. As co-founder Chris Adams says, "the result of these experiments is a journey that moves between dark, minimal compositions and uplifting passages that highlight the mixed history of Essex". Read more on our [blog](#) and listen to the album on Resonance's [bandcamp page](#).

Tomorrow Started Yesterday, Elaine Tribley

Elaine Tribley was our artist-in-residence for the [Communicating Connections](#) project in 2020. As well as producing [learning resources](#) for the project, Elaine created a series of artworks enlarging the photographed objects in the Marconi archive and placing them into the landscapes around the ERO, adding reflective texts. Elaine says "I not only wanted to bring these objects to our attention, challenging their place, Marconi's place in our future, but I also wanted to celebrate the fact that this incredible collection of photographic history is right here in our own city". Read more on our [blog](#).



Notes by A. Majende on the 1863 trial (D/DMh L23); cover designs for 'Recreating the Record', 2021; 'The Future is in our Past' poster by Elaine Tribley, 2020

Creative collaborations at other archives:

Lady Kitt, Warwickshire County Record Office

In 2021 Warwickshire County Record Office commissioned artist Lady Kitt to produce an artwork in response to their site. For the commission, Lady Kitt worked alongside staff and volunteers, as well as members of the Warwickshire Pride-run youth group, Proud Youth. A 'hive of voices' was the resulting work: a new art installation sharing untold stories of LGBTQ+ communities in Warwickshire that was on display at Leamington Spa Library and Information Centre. Read more on the Arts & Heritage [website](#).

Désirée Reynolds, Sheffield City Archive

In 2021 Désirée Reynolds was writer in residence at the Sheffield City Archive, which resulted in the project 'Dig Where You Stand'. In a blend of archive material, fiction and documentary prose, Désirée imagined the lives of the silent, seeing the archive as a site of reparatory justice. Read more in this [Now Then article](#).



Lady Kitt's installation *This, our hive of voices*, 2021
'Girl at the Atlas Gates' by Désirée Reynolds, 2021

Inspiration

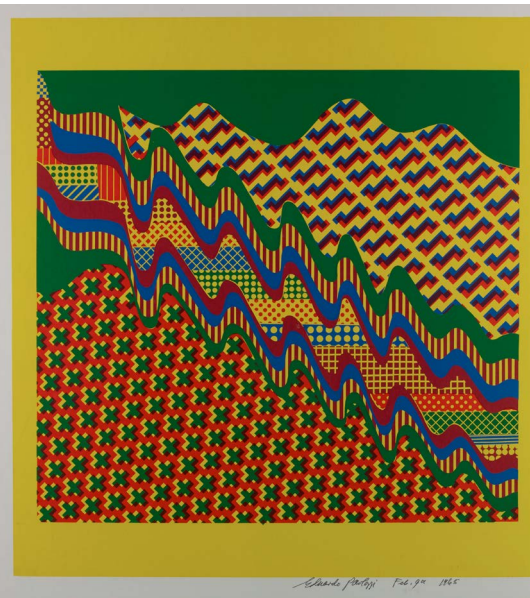
There is a story to be found on every shelf in the archive, and all sorts of records could be a source of inspiration. These are just a few highlights.

Artworks

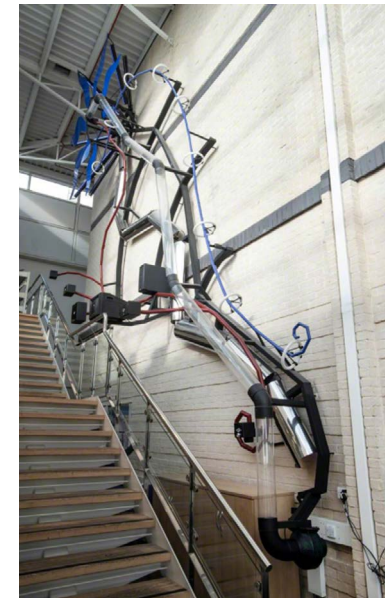
We look after the Essex County Council Art Collection. Some pieces are on display to the public at the record office, or other Essex County Council sites across the county. They can also be seen online at [Art UK](#), [Bloomberg Connects](#), and on [Flickr](#). Get in touch if you are interested in finding out more or seeing the artworks in person.



Lucy Baynes Plucking An Orange, Enoch Seeman the Younger, oil on canvas (c.1729)



Untitled, Eduardo Paolozzi, screenprint (1965)



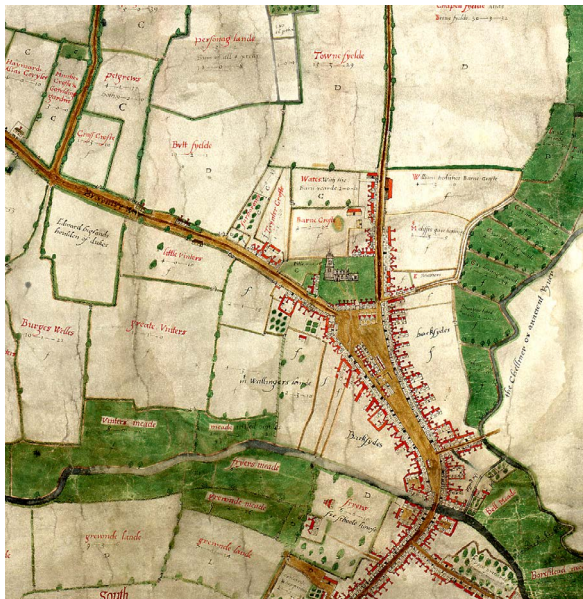
Timeline, Michael Condron, sculpture (2002)

Maps

We hold a huge variety of maps, including: **estate maps** (D/D) made by cartographers like the Walkers of Hanningfield in the Tudor and Stuart period; **enclosure maps**, dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Q/RDc); **tithe maps**, dating from the mid nineteenth century (D/CT); and **printed maps** (MAP), including county maps, sea charts and river maps, and Ordnance Survey maps from the 1870s to the 1930s, which you can browse in our searchroom.

For more information, take a look at our [house history guide](#).

Other online resources include the [1777 Chapman and André map of Essex](#), the [National Library of Scotland map tool](#), and [Layers of London](#), which features maps and aerial photographs from London boroughs that were part of Essex before 1965.



Map of Chelmsford by John Walker, 1591
(D/DM P1)



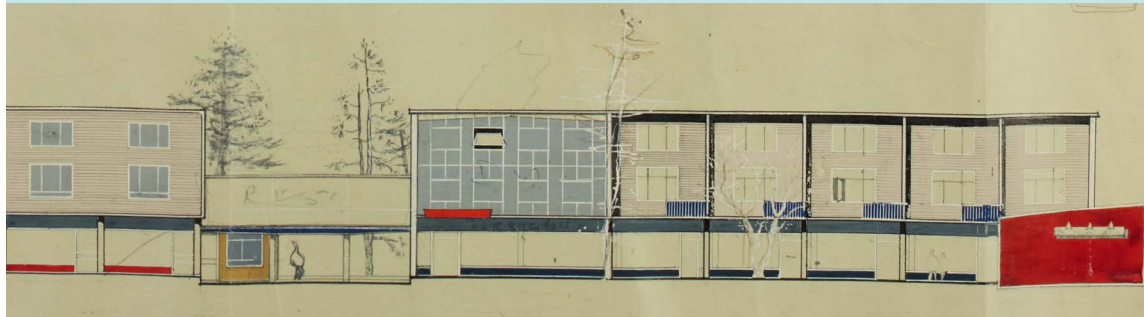
Copy of John Speed's plan of Colchester, 1610
(MAP/CM/8/11)



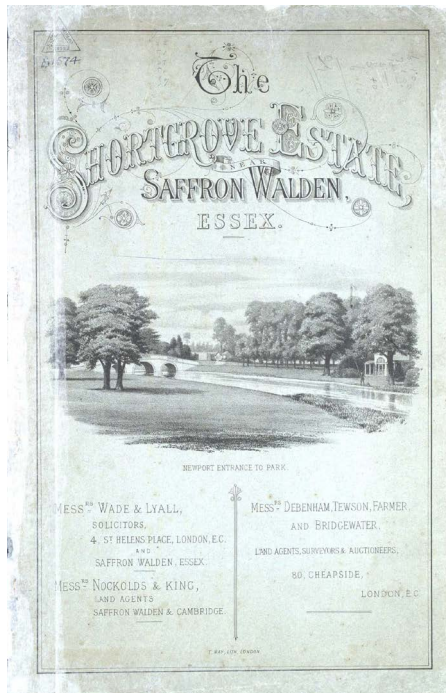
Map of Essex by Charles and John Greenwood, 1831
(MAP/CM/70/1/3)

Plans and drawings

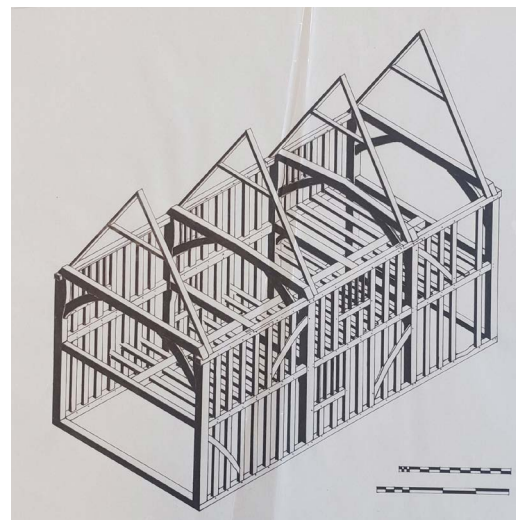
Plan from the Harlow Development Corporation archive (A/TH 6/1/2/103). The Harlow and Basildon New Town archives are rich in plans and photographs. See our [guide](#) for more.



Creeksea Church plans, 1877 (D/F 8/60/10). The archive of prolific architect Frederic Chancellor (1825-1918) contains over 8,500 plans and drawings, which have recently been [cleaned](#) and [catalogued](#) by a dedicated team of volunteers.



Sale catalogue for the Shortgrove Estate, Saffron Walden, 1889 (SALE/B1574). Sale catalogues contain descriptions of properties and occasionally floor plans.



Drawing of St Osyth Guildhall by Brenda Watkin, 1990s (T3458).

We hold many plans submitted to local and borough councils, including this application for a synagogue on Alexandra Road, Southend, 1911 (D/BC 1/4/12/6803).

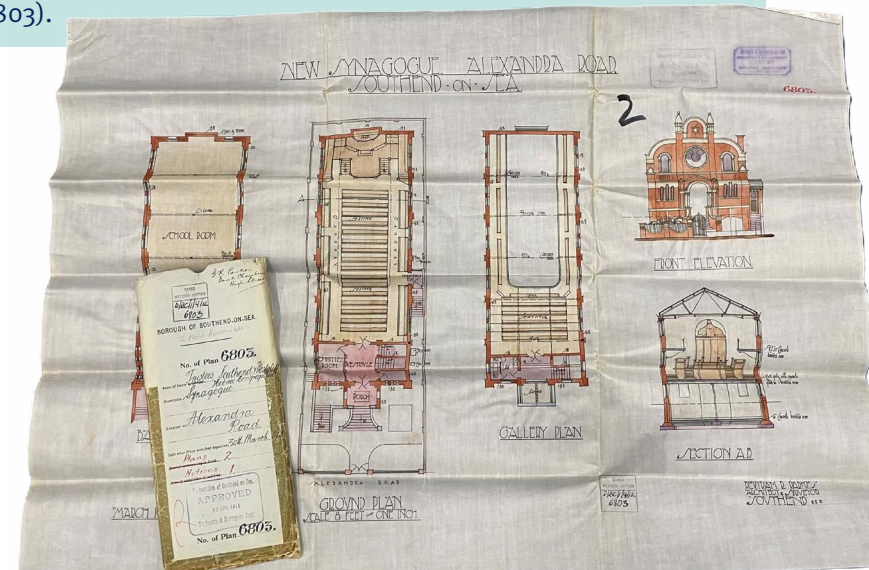


Illustration and design



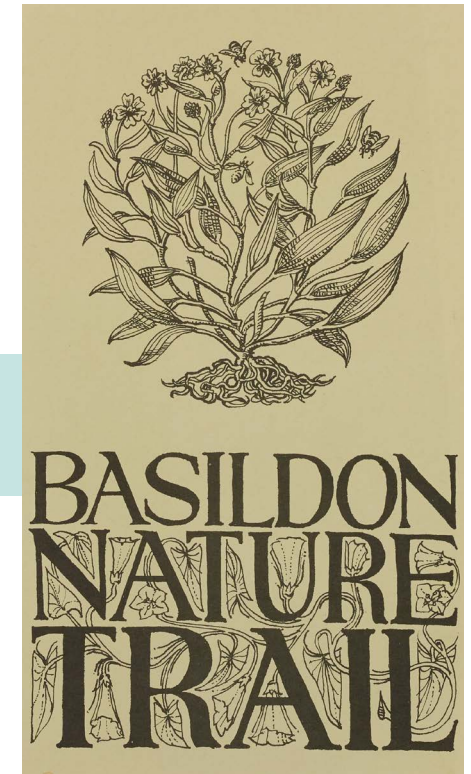
Great Dunmow Charter, 16 February 1556, showing elaborate decoration and initial portrait of the King and Queen (D/B 1/5)



Illustration of Woodbine Place, Wanstead, 1947, from 'The History of Wanstead' by Jack Elsdon Tuffs (T/P 266/30)

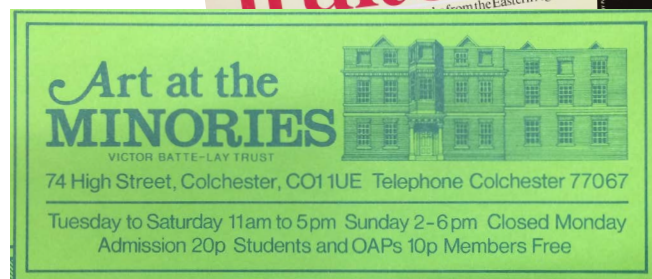


Postcard from the Dowsett collection (A15840)



Basildon Nature Trail leaflet, 1980s (A8389)

Posters from the records of the Minorities Art Gallery, Colchester, and the Victor Batte-Lay Trust (C582)



Photographs



Top-hatted men on the streets of Harwich, around 1855, from an early album of salt prints (A13438).



The archive of the Spalding family's photographic studio in Chelmsford comprises over 7,000 photographs taken between the 1860s and 1940s, including this image of Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park, better known as Fanny and Stella, taken around 1869 (D/F 269/1/3712). The collection is currently being catalogued, but a good selection can be found in 'The World of Fred Spalding', 1992.

The opening of the M25 on 22 April 1983, from a photograph album made by the Eastern National Omnibus Company (D/F 271/13/50).




View of Southend pier, around 1900 (I/Mb 321/1/66). From the 1940s the ERO collected copies of prints and photographs, arranged by place. These are known as the 'mint binders' (I/Mb). Digital copies of some of these images are available to view on Essex Archives Online.

Sound and video

The [Essex Sound and Video Archive](#) (ESVA) preserves over 30,000 recordings covering all aspects of life and culture in Essex. You can access the archive in our Playback Room, on [Essex Archives Online](#), our [Soundcloud](#) and [Youtube](#) channels, the [Essex Sounds](#) website, and the [Essex Record Office blog](#). You can also listen to ESVA recordings on [listening benches](#) across the county, installed as part of the You Are Hear project.

Radio



The ESVA was set up in 1989 in collaboration with BBC Essex, whose archive we preserve ([SA 1](#)). We also hold radio recordings from other local stations. Together, they document news and events across Essex (and beyond) from the 1980s onwards.

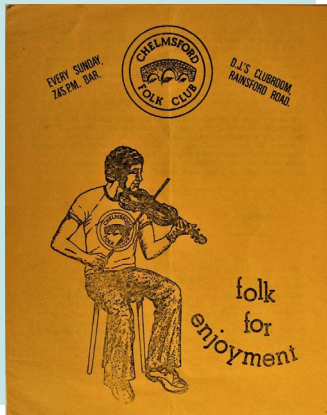
Oral history



The oral histories in the ESVA cover every corner of the county and provide a rich insight into people's lives over the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. They range from one-off interviews to the Colchester Recalled archive of over 1,500 interviews ([SA 8](#)). Click to listen to the stories of two interviewees, [Alford Gardner](#) and [Myra Abbott](#).

Music

The archive includes live and published recordings of popular, classical, and folk music. Highlights include the nationally significant folk music collection ([SA 30](#)) and recordings of the Essex Youth Orchestra.



Field recordings

Many of the field recordings in the ESVA were recorded by Stuart Bowditch for the You Are Hear project between 2015 to 2018. We also collect creative audiovisual work related to Essex.

Television programmes

We preserve the archives of EastWard Hospital Television and Colchester Hospital Television, which entertained patients across the county during the 1980s and 1990s, as well as various documentaries and other programmes recorded in Essex.

Film

Most of the film we look after was recorded by amateur filmmakers in the 1960s and 1970s. The stills to the right are from the archive of Kevin Bruce, who recorded everyday life, events, and the landscape around Bradwell-on-Sea and the Dengie Hundred from 1973 to 1977 ([VA 17](#)). For more films of Essex, take a look at the [East Anglian Film Archive](#).



Get in touch

Phone: 033301 32500

Email: ero.enquiry@essex.gov.uk

Website: www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk

Blog: www.essexrecordofficeblog.co.uk

Sign up to our [newsletter](#) to receive regular updates on upcoming events, new collections, and projects.

Follow and tag us on social media:

Instagram — [@essexrecord](#)

X (formerly known as Twitter) — [@essexarchive](#)

Facebook — [Essex Record Office](#)

THE FUTURE IS JUST ABOUT TO BEGIN



'The Future is just about to begin', Basildon Development Corporation leaflet (A8389)

