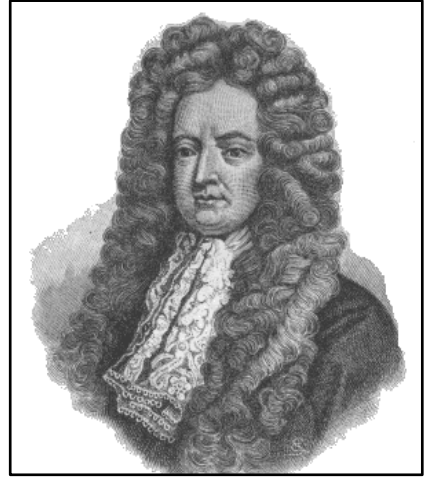


DANIEL DEFOE'S TOUR OF ESSEX IN 1772

In 1722 Daniel Defoe undertook a tour of the Eastern Counties of England. Below is an extract from the Essex part of his tour in which he produced an account of the bloody siege of Colchester which had taken place during the English Civil War.

Introduction

I began my travels where I purpose to end them, viz., at the City of London, and therefore my account of the city itself will come last, that is to say, at the latter end of my southern progress; and as in the course of this journey I shall have many occasions to call it a circuit, if not a circle, so I chose to give it the title of circuits in the plural, because I do not pretend to have travelled it all in one journey, but in many, and some of them many times over; the better to inform myself of everything I could find worth taking notice of.



I set out the 3rd of April 1722, going first eastward, and took what I think I may very honestly call a circuit in the very letter of it; for I went down by the coast of the Thames through the Marshes or Hundreds on the south side of the county of Essex, till I came to Malden, Colchester, and Harwich, thence continuing on the coast of Suffolk to Yarmouth; thence round by the edge of the sea, on the north and west side of Norfolk, to Lynn, Wisbech, and the Wash; thence back again, on the north side of Suffolk and Essex, to the west, ending it in Middlesex, near the place where I began it, reserving the middle or centre of the several counties to some little excursions, which I made by themselves.

Barking

This side of the county is rather rich in land than in inhabitants, occasioned chiefly by the unhealthiness of the air; for these low marsh grounds, which, with all the south side of the county, have been saved out of the River Thames, and out of the sea, where the river is wide enough to be called so, begin here, or rather begin at West Ham, by Stratford, and continue to extend themselves, from hence eastward, growing wider and wider till we come beyond Tilbury, when the flat country lies six, seven, or eight miles broad, and is justly said to be both unhealthy and unpleasant. However, the lands are rich, and, as is observable, it is very good farming in the marshes, because the landlords let good pennyworths, for it being a place where everybody cannot live, those that venture it will have encouragement and indeed it is but reasonable they should. Several little observations I made in this part of the county of Essex.

We saw, passing from Barking to Dagenham, the famous breach, made by an inundation of the Thames, which was so great as that it laid near 5,000 acres of land under water, but which after near ten years lying under water, and being several times blown up, has been at last effectually stopped by the application of Captain Perry, the gentleman who, for several years, had been employed in the Czar of Muscovy's works, at Veronitza, on the River Don. This breach appeared now effectually made up, and they assured us that the new work, where the breach was, is by much esteemed the strongest of all the sea walls in that level.

It was observable that great part of the lands in these levels, especially those on this side East Tilbury, are held by the farmers, cow-keepers, and grazing butchers who live in and near London, and that they are generally stocked (all the winter half year) with large fat sheep, viz., Lincolnshire and Leicestershire wethers, which they buy in Smithfield in September and October, when the Lincolnshire and Leicestershire graziers sell off their stock, and are kept here till Christmas, or Candlemas, or thereabouts; and though they are not made at all fatter here than they were when bought in, yet the farmer or butcher finds very good advantage in it, by the difference of the price of mutton between Michaelmas, when it is cheapest, and Candlemas, when it is dearest; this is what the butchers value themselves upon, when they tell us at the market that it is right marsh-mutton.

Tilbury Fort

In the bottom of these Marshes, and close to the edge of the river, stands the strong fortress of Tilbury, called Tilbury Fort, which may justly be looked upon as the key of the River Thames, and consequently the key of the City of London. It is a regular fortification. The design of it was a pentagon, but the water bastion, as it would have been called, was never built.

The plan was laid out by Sir Martin Beckman, chief engineer to King Charles II., who also designed the works at Sheerness. The esplanade of the fort is very large, and the bastions the largest of any in England, the foundation is laid so deep, and piles under that, driven down two an end of one another, so far, till they were assured they were below the channel of the river, and that the piles, which were shed with iron, entered into the solid chalk rock adjoining to, or reaching from, the chalk hills on the other side. These bastions settled considerably at first, as did also part of the curtain, the great quantity of earth that was brought to fill them up, necessarily, requiring to be made solid by time; but they are now firm as the rocks of chalk which they came from, and the filling up one of these bastions, as I have been told by good hands, cost the Government 6,000 pounds, being filled with chalk rubbish fetched from the chalk pits at Northfleet, just above Gravesend.

The work to the land side is complete; the bastions are faced with brick. There is a double ditch, or moat, the innermost part of which is 180 feet broad; there is a good counterscarp, and a covered way marked out with ravelins and tenailles, but they are not raised a second time after their first settling. On the land side there are also two small redoubts of brick, but of very little strength, for the chief strength of this fort on the land side consists in this, that they are able to lay the whole level under water, and so to make it impossible for an enemy to make any approaches to the fort that way.

On the side next to the river there is a very strong curtain, with a noble gate called the Water Gate in the middle, and the ditch is palisaded. At the place where the water bastion was designed to be built, and which by the plan should run wholly out into the river, so to flank the two curtains of each side; I say, in the place where it should have been, stands a high tower, which they tell us was built in Queen Elizabeth's time, and was called the Block House; the side next the water is vacant.

Before this curtain, above and below the said vacancy, is a platform in the place of a counterscarp, on which are planted 106 pieces of cannon, generally all of them carrying from twenty-four to forty-six pound ball; a battery so terrible as well imports the consequence of that place; besides which, there are smaller pieces planted between, and the bastions and curtain also are planted with guns; so that they must be bold fellows who will venture in the biggest ships the world has heard of to pass such a battery, if the men appointed to serve the guns do their duty like stout fellows, as becomes them. The present government of this important place is under the prudent administration of the Right Honourable the Lord Newburgh.

The Essex marshes from Tilbury to Colchester

From hence there is nothing for many miles together remarkable but a continued level of unhealthy marshes, called the Three Hundreds, till we come before Leigh, and to the mouth of the River Chelmer, and Blackwater. These rivers united make a large firth, or inlet of the sea, which by Mr. Camden is called Idumanum Fluvium; but by our fishermen and seamen, who use it as a port, it is called Malden Water.

In this inlet of the sea is Osey, or Osyth Island, commonly called Oosy Island, so well-known by our London men of pleasure for the infinite number of wild fowl, that is to say, duck, mallard, teal, and widgeon, of which there are such vast flights, that they tell us the island, namely the creek, seems covered with them at certain times of the year, and they go from London on purpose for the pleasure of shooting; and, indeed, often come home very well laden with game. But it must be remembered too that those gentlemen who are such lovers of the sport, and go so far for it, often return with an Essex ague on their backs, which they find a heavier load than the fowls they have shot. It is on this shore, and near this creek, that the greatest quantity of fresh fish is caught which supplies not this country only, but London markets also.

On the shore, beginning a little below Candy Island, or rather below Leigh Road, there lies a great shoal or sand called the Black Tail, which runs out near three leagues into the sea due east; at the end of it stands a pole or mast, set up by the Trinity House men of London, whose business is to lay buoys and set up sea marks for the direction of the sailors; this is called Shoe Beacon, from the point of land where this sand begins, which is called Shoeburyness, and that from the town of Shoebury, which stands by it.

From this sand, and on the edge of Shoebury, before it, or south west of it, all along, to the mouth of Colchester water, the shore is full of shoals and sands, with some deep channels between; all which are so full of fish, that not only the Barking fishing-smacks come hither to fish, but the whole shore is full of small fisher-boats in very great numbers, belonging to the villages and towns on the coast, who come in every tide with what they take; and selling the smaller fish in the country, send the best and largest away upon horses, which go night and day to London market.

On this shore also are taken the best and nicest, though not the largest, oysters in England; the spot from whence they have their common appellation is a little bank called Woelfleet, scarce to be called an island, in

the mouth of the River Crouch, now called Crooksea Water; but the chief place where the said oysters are now had is from Wyvenhoe and the shores adjacent, whither they are brought by the fishermen, who take them at the mouth of that they call Colchester water and about the sand they call the Spits, and carry them up to Wyvenhoe, where they are laid in beds or pits on the shore to feed, as they call it; and then being barrell'd up and carried to Colchester, which is but three miles off, they are sent to London by land, and are from thence called Colchester oysters. The chief sort of other fish which they carry from this part of the shore to London are soles, which they take sometimes exceeding large, and yield a very good price at London market. Also, sometimes middling turbot, with whiting, codling and large flounders; the small fish, as above, they sell in the country.

In the several creeks and openings, as above, on this shore there are also other islands, but of no particular note, except Mersey, which lies in the middle of the two openings between Malden Water and Colchester Water; being of the most difficult access, so that it is thought a thousand men well provided might keep possession of it against a great force, whether by land or sea. On this account, and because if possessed by an enemy it would shut up all the navigation and fishery on that side, the Government formerly built a fort on the south-east point of it; and generally in case of Dutch war, there is a strong body of troops kept there to defend it. At this place may be said to end what we call the Hundreds of Essex--that is to say, the three Hundreds or divisions which include the marshy country, viz., Barstable Hundred, Rochford Hundred, and Dengy Hundred.

I have one remark more before I leave this damp part of the world, and which I cannot omit on the women's account, namely, that I took notice of a strange decay of the sex here; insomuch that all along this country it was very frequent to meet with men that had had from five or six to fourteen or fifteen wives; nay, and some more. And, I was informed that in the marshes on the other side of the river over against Candy Island there was a farmer who was then living with the five-and-twentieth wife, and that his son, who was but about thirty-five years old, had already had about fourteen.

Indeed, this part of the story I only had by report, though from good hands too; but the other is well known and easy to be inquired into about Fobbing, Curringham, Thundersly, Benfleet, Prittlewell, Wakering, Great Stambridge, Cricksea, Burnham, Dengy, and other towns of the like situation. The reason, as a merry fellow told me, who said he had had about a dozen and a half of wives (though I found afterwards he fibbed a little) was this: That they being bred in the marshes themselves and seasoned to the place, did pretty well with it; but that they always went up into the hilly country, or, to speak their own language, into the uplands for a wife. That when they took the young lasses out of the wholesome and fresh air they were healthy, fresh, and clear, and well; but when they came out of their native air into the marshes among the fogs and damps, there they presently changed their complexion, got an 'ague or two, and seldom held it above half a year, or a year at most; "And then," said he, "we go to the uplands again and fetch another;" so that marrying of wives was reckoned a kind of good farm to them. It is true the fellow told this in a kind of drollery and mirth; but the fact, for all that, is certainly true; and that they have abundance of wives by that very means. Nor is it less true that the inhabitants in these places do not hold it out, as in other countries, and as first you seldom meet with very ancient people among the poor, as in other places we do, so, take it one with another, not one-half of the inhabitants are natives of the place; but such as from other countries or in other parts of this country settle here for the advantage of good farms; for which I appeal to any impartial inquiry, having myself examined into it critically in several places.

From the marshes and low grounds being not able to travel without many windings and indentures by reason of the creeks and waters, I came up to the town of Malden, a noted market town situate at the conflux or joining of two principal rivers in this county, the Chelm or Chelmer, and the Blackwater, and where they enter into the sea. The channel, as I have noted, is called by the sailors Malden Water, and is navigable up to the town, where by that means is a great trade for carrying corn by water to London; the county of Essex being (especially on all that side) a great corn county.

Witham

Being obliged to come thus far into the uplands, as above, I made it my road to pass through Witham, a pleasant, well-situated market town, in which, and in its neighbourhood, there are as many gentlemen of good fortunes and families as I believe can be met with in so narrow a compass in any of the three counties of which I make this circuit. In the town of Witham dwells the Lord Pasely, oldest son of the Earl of Abercorn of Ireland (a branch of the noble family of Hamilton, in Scotland). His lordship has a small, but a neat, well-built new house, and is finishing his gardens in such a manner as few in that part of England will exceed them.

Nearer Chelmsford, hard by Boreham, lives the Lord Viscount Barrington, who, though not born to the title, or estate, or name which he now possesses, had the honour to be twice made heir to the estates of gentlemen not at all related to him, at least, one of them, as is very much to his honour, mentioned in his patent of creation. His name was Shute, his father a linen draper in London, and served sheriff of the said city in very troublesome times. He changed the name of Shute for that of Barrington by an Act of Parliament obtained for that purpose, and had the dignity of a baron of the kingdom conferred on him by the favour of King George. His lordship is a Dissenter, and seems to love retirement. He was a member of Parliament for the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

On the other side of Witham, at Fauburn, an ancient mansion house, built by the Romans, lives Mr. Bullock, whose father married the daughter of that eminent citizen, Sir Josiah Child, of Wanstead, by whom she had three sons; the eldest enjoys the estate, which is considerable. It is observable, that in this part of the country there are several very considerable estates, purchased and now enjoyed by citizens of London, merchants, and tradesmen, as Mr. Western, an iron merchant, near Kelendon; Mr. Cresnor, a wholesale grocer, who was, a little before he died, named for sheriff at Earl's Coln; Mr. Olemus, a merchant at Braintree; Mr. Westcomb, near Malden; Sir Thomas Webster at Copthall, near Waltham; and several others. I mention this to observe how the present increase of wealth in the City of London spreads itself into the country, and plants families and fortunes, who in another age will equal the families of the ancient gentry, who perhaps were brought out. I shall take notice of this in a general head, and when I have run through all the counties, collect a list of the families of citizens and tradesmen thus established in the several counties, especially round London.

The product of all this part of the country is corn, as that of the marshy feeding grounds mentioned above is grass, where their chief business is breeding of calves, which I need not say are the best and fattest, and the largest veal in England, if not in the world; and, as an instance, I ate part of a veal or calf, fed by the late Sir Josiah Child at Wanstead, the loin of which weighed above thirty pounds, and the flesh exceeding white and fat.

From hence I went on to Colchester. The story of Kill-Dane, which is told of the town of Kelvedon, three miles from Witham, namely, that this is the place where the massacre of the Danes was begun by the women, and that therefore it was called Kill-Dane; I say of it, as we generally say of improbable news, it wants confirmation. The true name of the town is Kelvedon, and has been so for many hundred years. Neither does Mr. Camden, or any other writer I meet with worth naming, insist on this piece of empty tradition. The town is commonly called Keldon.

Colchester

Colchester is an ancient corporation. The town is large, very populous, the streets fair and beautiful, and though it may not said to be finely built, yet there are abundance of very good and well-built houses in it. It still mourns in the ruins of a civil war; during which, or rather after the heat of the war was over, it suffered a severe siege, which, the garrison making a resolute defence, was turned into a blockade, in which the garrison and inhabitants also suffered the utmost extremity of hunger, and were at last obliged to surrender at discretion, when their two chief officers, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, were shot to death under the castle wall. The inhabitants had a tradition that no grass would grow upon the spot where the blood of those two gallant gentlemen was spilt, and they showed the place bare of grass for many years; but whether for this reason I will not affirm. The story is now dropped, and the grass, I suppose, grows there, as in other places.

However, the battered walls, the breaches in the turrets, and the ruined churches, still remain, except that the church of St. Mary (where they had the royal fort) is rebuilt; but the steeple, which was two-thirds battered down, because the besieged had a large culverin upon it that did much execution, remains still in that condition. There is another church which bears the marks of those times, namely, on the south side of the town, in the way to the Hythe, of which more hereafter. The lines of contravallation, with the forts built by the besiegers, and which surrounded the whole town, remain very visible in many places; but the chief of them are demolished.

The River Colne, which passes through this town, compasses it on the north and east sides, and served in those times for a complete defence on those sides. They have three bridges over it, one called North Bridge, at the north gate, by which the road leads into Suffolk; one called East Bridge, at the foot of the High Street, over which lies the road to Harwich, and one at the Hythe, as above. The river is navigable within three miles of the town for ships of large burthen; a little lower it may receive even a royal navy; and up to that

part called the Hythe, close to the houses, it is navigable for hoys and small barques. This Hythe is a long street, passing from west to east, on the south side of the town. At the west end of it, there is a small intermission of the buildings, but not much; and towards the river it is very populous (it may be called the Wapping of Colchester). There is one church in that part of the town, a large quay by the river, and a good custom-house. The town may be said chiefly to subsist by the trade of making bays, which is known over most of the trading parts of Europe by the name of Colchester Bays, though indeed all the towns round carry on the same trade--namely, Kelvedon, Witham, Coggeshall, Braintree, Bocking, etc., and the whole county, large as it is, may be said to be employed, and in part maintained, by the spinning of wool for the bay trade of Colchester and its adjacent towns. The account of the siege, A.D. 1648, with a diary of the most remarkable passages, are as follows, which I had from so good a hand as that I have no reason to question its being a true relation.

The town of Colchester has been supposed to contain about 40,000 people, including the out-villages which are within its liberty, of which there are a great many--the liberty of the town being of a great extent. One sad testimony of the town being so populous is that they buried upwards of 5,259 people in the plague year, 1665. But the town was severely visited indeed, even more in proportion than any of its neighbours, or than the City of London.

The government of the town is by a mayor, high steward, a recorder or his deputy, eleven aldermen, a chamberlain, a town clerk, assistants, and eighteen common councilmen. Their high steward (this year, 1722) is Sir Isaac Rebow, a gentleman of a good family and known character, who has generally for above thirty years been one of their representatives in Parliament. He has a very good house at the entrance in at the south, or head gate of the town, where he has had the honour several times to lodge and entertain the late King William of glorious memory in his returning from Holland by way of Harwich to London. Their recorder is Earl Cowper, who has been twice Lord High Chancellor of England. But his lordship not residing in those parts has put in for his deputy,--Price, Esq., barrister-at-law, and who dwells in the town. There are in Colchester eight churches besides those which are damaged, and five meeting-houses, whereof two for Quakers, besides a Dutch church and a French church.

Public Edifices are -

1. Bay Hall, an ancient society kept up for ascertaining the manufacture of bays, which are, or ought to be, all brought to this hall to be viewed and sealed according to their goodness by the masters; and to this practice has been owing the great reputation of the Colchester bays in foreign markets, where to open the side of a bale and show the seal has been enough to give the buyer a character of the value of the goods without any further search; and so far as they abate the integrity and exactness of their method, which I am told of late is much omitted; I say, so far, that reputation will certainly abate in the markets they go to, which are principally in Portugal and Italy. This corporation is governed by a particular set of men who are called governors of the Dutch Bay Hall. And in the same building is the Dutch church.

2. The guildhall of the town, called by them the moot hall, to which is annexed the town gaol.

3. The workhouse, being lately enlarged, and to which belongs a corporation or a body of the inhabitants, consisting of sixty persons incorporated by Act of Parliament Anno 1698 for taking care of the poor. They are incorporated by the name and title of the governor, deputy governor, assistants, and guardians of the poor of the town of Colchester. They are in number eight-and-forty, to whom are added the mayor and aldermen for the time being, who are always guardians by the same charter. These make the number of sixty, as above. There is also a grammar free-school, with a good allowance to the master, who is chosen by the town.

4. The Castle of Colchester is now become only a monument showing the antiquity of the place, it being built as the walls of the town also are, with Roman bricks, and the Roman coins dug up here, and ploughed up in the fields adjoining, confirm it. The inhabitants boast much that Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, first Christian Emperor of the Romans, was born there, and it may be so for aught we know. I only observe what Mr. Camden says of the Castle of Colchester, viz.: In the middle of this city stands a castle ready to fall with age.

Though this castle has stood one hundred and twenty years from the time Mr. Camden wrote that account, and it is not fallen yet, nor will another hundred and twenty years, I believe, make it look one jot the older. And it was observable that in the late siege of this town, a common shot, which the besiegers made at this old castle, were so far from making it fall, that they made little or no impression upon it; for which reason, it seems, and because the garrison made no great use of it against the besiegers, they fired no more at it. There are two charity schools set up here, and carried on by a

generous subscription, with very good success. The title of Colchester is in the family of Earl Rivers, and the eldest son of that family is called Lord Colchester, though as I understand, the title is not settled by the creation to the eldest son till he enjoys the title of earl with it, but that the other is by the courtesy of England; however, this I take ad referendum.

Walton on the Naze.

From Colchester I took another step down to the coast; the land running out a great way into the sea, south and south-east makes that promontory of land called the Naze, and well known to seamen using the northern trade. Here one sees a sea open as an ocean without any opposite shore, though it be no more than the mouth of the Thames. This point called the Naze, and the north-east point of Kent, near Margate, called the North Foreland, making what they call the mouth of the river and the port of London, though it be here above sixty miles over.

At Walton-under-the-Naze they find on the shore copperas-stone in great quantities; and there are several large works called copperas houses, where they make it with great expense. On this promontory is a new mark erected by the Trinity House men, and at the public expense, being a round brick tower, near eighty feet high. The sea gains so much upon the land here by the continual winds at south-west, that within the memory of some of the inhabitants there they have lost above thirty acres of land in one place. From hence we go back into the county about four miles, because of the creeks which lie between; and then turning east again come to Harwich, on the utmost eastern point of this large country.

Harwich

Harwich is a town so well-known and so perfectly described by many writers, I need say little of it. It is strong by situation, and may be made more so by art. But it is many years since the Government of England have had any occasion to fortify towns to the landward; it is enough that the harbour or road, which is one of the best and securest in England, is covered at the entrance by a strong fort and a battery of guns to the seaward, just as at Tilbury, and which sufficiently defend the mouth of the river. And there is a particular felicity in this fortification, viz., that though the entrance or opening of the river into the sea is very wide, especially at high-water, at least two miles, if not three over; yet the Channel, which is deep, and in which the ships must keep and come to the harbour, is narrow, and lies only on the side of the fort, so that all the ships which come in or go out must come close under the guns of the fort--that is to say, under the command of their shot.

The fort is on the Suffolk side of the bay or entrance, but stands so far into the sea upon the point of a sand or shoal, which runs out toward the Essex side, as it were, laps over the mouth of that haven like a blind to it; and our surveyors of the country affirm it to be in the county of Essex. The making this place, which was formerly no other than a sand in the sea, solid enough for the foundation of so good a fortification, has not been done but by many years' labour, often repairs, and an infinite expense of money, but it is now so firm that nothing of storms and high tides, or such things as make the sea dangerous to these kind of works, can affect it. The harbour is of a vast extent; for, as two rivers empty themselves here, viz., Stour from Manningtree and the Orwell from Ipswich, the channels of both are large and deep; and safe for all weathers; so where they join they make a large bay or road able to receive the biggest ships, and the greatest number that ever the world saw together; I mean ships of war. In the old Dutch war great use has been made of this harbour; and I have known that there has been one hundred sail of men-of-war and their attendants and between three and four hundred sail of collier ships all in this harbour at a time, and yet none of them crowding or riding in danger of one another.

Harwich is known for being the port where the packet boats, between England and Holland, go out and come in. The inhabitants are far from being famed for good usage to strangers, but, on the contrary, are blamed for being extravagant in their reckonings in the public-houses, which has not a little encouraged the setting up of sloops, which they now call passage boats, to Holland, to go directly from the River Thames; this, though it may be something the longer passage, yet as they are said to be more obliging to passengers and more reasonable in the expense, and, as some say, also, the vessels are better sea boats, has been the reason why so many passengers do not go or come by the way of Harwich as formerly were wont to do; insomuch that the stage coaches between this place and London, which ordinarily went twice or three times a week, are now entirely laid down, and the passengers are left to hire coaches on purpose, take post-horses, or hire horses to Colchester, as they find most convenient.

The account of a petrifying quality in the earth here, though some will have it to be in the water of a spring hard by, is very strange. They boast that their town is walled and their streets paved with clay, and yet that one is as strong and the other as clean as those that are built or paved with stone. The fact is indeed true,

for there is a sort of clay in the cliff, between the town and the Beacon Hill adjoining, which, when it falls down into the sea, where it is beaten with the waves and the weather, turns gradually into stone. But the chief reason assigned is from the water of a certain spring or well, which, rising in the said cliff, runs down into the sea among those pieces of clay, and petrifies them as it runs; and the force of the sea often stirring, and perhaps turning, the lumps of clay, when storms of wind may give force enough to the water, causes them to harden everywhere alike; otherwise those which were not quite sunk in the water of the spring would be petrified but in part. These stones are gathered up to pave the streets and build the houses, and are indeed very hard. It is also remarkable that some of them taken up before they are thoroughly petrified will, upon breaking them, appear to be hard as a stone without and soft as clay in the middle; whereas others that have lain a due time shall be thorough stone to the centre, and as exceeding hard within as without. The same spring is said to turn wood into iron. But this I take to be no more or less than the quality, which, as I mentioned of the shore at the Naze, is found to be in much of the stone all along this shore, viz., of the copperas kind; and it is certain that the copperas stone (so called) is found in all that cliff, and even where the water of this spring has run; and I presume that those who call the hardened pieces of wood, which they take out of this well by the name of iron, never tried the quality of it with the fire or hammer; if they had, perhaps they would have given some other account of it.

On the promontory of land which they call Beacon Hill and which lies beyond or behind the town towards the sea, there is a lighthouse to give the ships directions in their sailing by as well as their coming into the harbour in the night. I shall take notice of these again all together when I come to speak of the Society of Trinity House, as they are called, by whom they are all directed upon this coast.

This town was erected into a marquisate in honour of the truly glorious family of Schomberg, the eldest son of Duke Schomberg, who landed with King William, being styled Marquis of Harwich; but that family (in England, at least) being extinct the title dies also. Harwich is a town of hurry and business, not much of gaiety and pleasure; yet the inhabitants seem warm in their nests, and some of them are very wealthy. There are not many (if any) gentlemen or families of note either in the town or very near it. They send two members to Parliament; the present are Sir Peter Parker and Humphrey Parsons, Esq.

And now being at the extremity of the county of Essex, of which I have given you some view as to that side next the sea only, I shall break off this part of my letter by telling you that I will take the towns which lie more towards the centre of the county, in my return by the north and west part only, that I may give you a few hints of some towns which were near me in my route this way, and of which being so well known there is but little to say.

On the road from London to Colchester, before I came into it at Witham, lie four good market towns at equal distance from one another, namely, Romford, noted for two markets, viz., one for calves and hogs, the other for corn and other provisions, most, if not all, bought up for London market. At the farther end of the town, in the middle of a stately park, stood Guldy Hall, vulgarly Giddy Hall, an ancient seat of one Coke, sometime Lord Mayor of London, but forfeited on some occasion to the Crown. It is since pulled down to the ground, and there now stands a noble stately fabric or mansion house, built upon the spot by Sir John Eyles, a wealthy merchant of London, and chosen Sub-Governor of the South Sea Company immediately after the ruin of the former Sub-Governor and Directors, whose overthrow makes the history of these times famous.

Brentwood and Ingatestone, and even Chelmsford itself, have very little to be said of them, but that they are large thoroughfare towns, full of good inns, and chiefly maintained by the excessive multitude of carriers and passengers which are constantly passing this way to London with droves of cattle, provisions, and manufactures for London. The last of these towns is indeed the county town, where the county gaol is kept, and where the assizes are very often held; it stands on the conflux of two rivers--the Chelmer, whence the town is called, and the Cann.

At Lees, or Lee's Priory, as some call it, is to be seen an ancient house in the middle of a beautiful park, formerly the seat of the late Duke of Manchester, but since the death of the duke it is sold to the Duchess Dowager of Buckinghamshire, the present Duke of Manchester retiring to his ancient family seat at Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire, it being a much finer residence. His grace is lately married to a daughter of the Duke of Montagu by a branch of the House of Marlborough.

Four market towns fill up the rest of this part of the country-- Dunmow, Braintree, Thaxted, and Coggeshall--all noted for the manufacture of bays, as above, and for very little else, except I shall make the ladies laugh at the famous old story of the Flitch of Bacon at Dunmow, which is this: One Robert Fitzwalter,

a powerful baron in this county in the time of Henry III., on some merry occasion, which is not preserved in the rest of the story, instituted a custom in the priory here: That whatever married man did not repent of his being married, or quarrel or differ and dispute with his wife within a year and a day after his marriage, and would swear to the truth of it, kneeling upon two hard pointed stones in the churchyard, which stones he caused to be set up in the Priory churchyard for that purpose, the prior and convent, and as many of the town as would, to be present, such person should have a flitch of bacon.

I do not remember to have read that anyone ever came to demand it; nor do the people of the place pretend to say, of their own knowledge, that they remember any that did so. A long time ago several did demand it, as they say, but they know not who; neither is there any record of it, nor do they tell us, if it were now to be demanded, who is obliged to deliver the flitch of bacon, the priory being dissolved and gone.

The forest of Epping and Hainault spreads a great part of this country still. I shall speak again of the former in my return from this circuit. Formerly, it is thought, these two forests took up all the west and south part of the county; but particularly we are assured, that it reached to the River Chelmer, and into Dengy Hundred, and from thence again west to Epping and Waltham, where it continues to be a forest still. Probably this forest of Epping has been a wild or forest ever since this island was inhabited, and may show us, in some parts of it, where enclosures and tillage has not broken in upon it, what the face of this island was before the Romans' time; that is to say, before their landing in Britain. The constitution of this forest is best seen, I mean as to the antiquity of it, by the merry grant of it from Edward the Confessor before the Norman Conquest to Randolph Peperking, one of his favourites, who was after called Peverell, and whose name remains still in several villages in this county; as particularly that of Hatfield Peverell, in the road from Chelmsford to Witham, which is supposed to be originally a park, which they called a field in those days; and Hartfield may be as much as to say a park for doer; for the stags were in those days called harts, so that this was neither more nor less than Randolph Peperking's Hartfield--that is to say, Ralph Peverell's deer-park.

N.B.--This Ralph Randolph, or Ralph Peverell (call him as you please), had, it seems, a most beautiful lady to his wife, who was daughter of Ingelrick, one of Edward the Confessor's noblemen. He had two sons by her--William Peverell, a famed soldier, and lord or governor of Dover Castle, which he surrendered to William the Conqueror, after the battle in Sussex, and Pain Peverell, his youngest, who was lord of Cambridge. When the eldest son delivered up the castle, the lady, his mother, above named, who was the celebrated beauty of the age, was it seems there, and the Conqueror fell in love with her, and whether by force or by consent, took her away, and she became his mistress, or what else you please to call it. By her he had a son, who was called William, after the Conqueror's Christian name, but retained the name of Peverell, and was afterwards created by the Conqueror lord of Nottingham. This lady afterwards, as is supposed, by way of penance for her yielding to the Conqueror, founded a nunnery at the village of Hatfield Peverell, mentioned above, and there she lies buried in the chapel of it, which is now the parish church, where her memory is preserved by a tombstone under one of the windows.

Thus, we have several towns, where any ancient parks have been placed, called by the name of Hatfield on that very account. As Hatfield Broad Oak in this county, Bishop's Hatfield in Hertfordshire, and several others.

A little north of this part of the country rises the River Stour, which for a course of fifty miles or more parts the two counties of Suffolk and Essex, passing through or near Haveril, Clare, Cavendish, Halsted, Sudbury, Bowers, Nayland, Stretford, Dedham, Manningtree, and into the sea at Harwich, assisting by its waters to make one of the best harbours for shipping that is in Great Britain--I mean Orwell Haven or Harwich, of which I have spoken largely already.

Braintree, Bocking and Felsted

As we came on this side we saw at a distance Braintree and Bocking, two towns, large, rich, and populous, and made so originally by the bay trade, of which I have spoken at large at Colchester, and which flourishes still among them.

The manor of Braintree I found descended by purchase to the name of Olmeus, the son of a London merchant of the same name, making good what I had observed before, of the great number of such who have purchased estates in this county. Near this town is Felsted, a small place, but noted for a free school of

an ancient foundation, for many years under the mastership of the late Rev. Mr. Lydiat, and brought by him to the meridian of its reputation. It is now supplied, and that very worthily, by the Rev. Mr. Hutchins. Near to this is the Priory of Lees, a delicious seat of the late Dukes of Manchester, but sold by the present Duke to the Duchess Dowager of Bucks, his Grace the Duke of Manchester removing to his yet finer seat of Kimbolton in Northamptonshire, the ancient mansion of the family. From hence keeping the London Road I came to Chelmsford, mentioned before, and Ingerstone, five miles west, which I mention again, because in the parish church of this town are to be seen the ancient monuments of the noble family of Petre, whose seat and large estate lie in the neighbourhood, and whose whole family, by a constant series of beneficent actions to the poor, and bounty upon all charitable occasions, have gained an affectionate esteem through all that part of the country such as no prejudice of religion could wear out, or perhaps ever may; and I must confess, I think, need not, for good and great actions command our respect, let the opinions of the persons be otherwise what they will.

Epping Forest

From hence we crossed the country to the great forest, called Epping Forest, reaching almost to London. The country on that side of Essex is called the Roodings, I suppose, because there are no less than ten towns almost together, called by the name of Roding, and is famous for good land, good malt, and dirty roads; the latter indeed in the winter are scarce passable for horse or man. In the midst of this we see Chipping Ongar, Hatfield Broad Oak, Epping, and many forest towns, famed as I have said for husbandry and good malt, but of no other note. On the south side of the county is Waltham Abbey; the ruins of the abbey remain, and though antiquity is not my proper business, I could not but observe that King Harold, slain in the great battle in Sussex against William the Conqueror, lies buried here; his body being begged by his mother, the Conqueror allowed it to be carried hither; but no monument was, as I can find, built for him, only a flat gravestone, on which was engraven Harold Infelix.