

GREAT MIGRATION TOUR TO ENGLAND
5 TO 15 AUGUST 2008

TOUR TALK

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THE PURITAN LORDS

Each English county contained a small number of prominent families which owned most of the land and held most of the important political offices. In Essex, there were about three hundred such families, an unusually large number of whom strongly supported the Puritan form of Protestantism. As with like-minded men in other English counties, the male heads of these families were known as the “Puritan Lords.”

In Essex the most important of these families was Rich, at the time of the Great Migration the holders of the earldom of Warwick. This family descended from the younger son of Richard Rich, Sheriff of London in 1441, through that younger son’s grandson Richard Rich, who benefited greatly from the dissolution of the monasteries during the reign of Henry VIII. (In the movie *A Man For All Seasons*, this man is portrayed as a moral weakling who was suborned by Cranmer in the betrayal of Sir Thomas More. Whatever his character, he was rewarded well for taking this position.)

Robert Rich, grandson of Richard Rich, was created Earl of Warwick in 1618 and died less than a year later. His son of the same name was born in 1587 and took a degree from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1624. He was a strong Puritan and invested in many colonizing activities in New England and elsewhere in the New World. (In 1945 Donald Lines Jacobus prepared a detailed genealogical study of this family and its many interesting connections and activities [TAG 21:234-38, 22:27-37].)

Robert Rich, the second Earl of Warwick, held sixty-four manors in Essex, far more than any other man. The lord of the manor in each parish frequently also held the advowson, that is, the right to select the minister for the parish church. Thus, the large number of Puritan ministers active in Essex in the 1620s and 1630s may be to a great extent attributed to the activities of Robert Rich in this regard, and also to the activities of other Puritan Lords of the county.

The Barringtons of Hatfield Broad Oak, whom we have already met (in *Tour Talk #4*), did not own as much land as did the Rich family, but the Barringtons had been established for a much longer time and were, according to William Hunt, “closely allied with the house of Rich.” Another step down in the gentry hierarchy were the Mashams of High Laver, whom we have also met previously.

A fourth important Essex family whose path we will frequently cross was the “widely ramified Mildmay clan.” Most important of these for our interests was Walter Mildmay, born at Chelmsford, who in 1584 founded Emmanuel College at Cambridge. We have already seen that Robert Rich, second Earl of Warwick attended Emmanuel, as did many men who went on to become prominent Puritans, some of whom migrated to New England in the 1630s.

As noted above, through their landed wealth the Puritan Lords were able to place ministers of strong Puritan views in pulpits throughout Essex. They also used their wealth to buy up the rights to present ministers in other parishes. In this guise they were called the Feoffees of Impropriations, a group we will examine in a later issue of *Tour Talk*.

Much information on the Puritan Lords may be found in a study of the Puritan movement in Essex in the early seventeenth century by William Hunt, titled *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983). Of the books you might read before we start the tour, this volume is second in importance only to the study of Terling, Essex, by Wrightson and Levine. We will be referring again to the work of William Hunt.

GREAT MIGRATION IMMIGRANTS FROM CHELMSFORD

Despite the importance of Chelmsford to the Great Migration, deriving mostly from the presence there in the late 1620s of Reverend Thomas Hooker, there were relatively few immigrants to New England from this parish. Although Chelmsford was a market town at the time of the Great Migration, the population was much less than it is now, and much less than that of most other Essex market towns.

1) **Thomas Hooker** resided in several places in England and in Holland before his departure for New England in 1633. He was for a time a lecturer (preacher of sermons) at Chelmsford in the late 1620s, where his daughter Anne was buried in 1626 and his daughter Sarah was baptized in 1628 and buried in 1629 [GMB 2:982-85]. He also had children baptized in the nearby parishes of Great Baddow and Broomfield.

2) **Valentine Prentice** was baptized at Felstead, Essex, on 25 February 1599/1600 and arrived in Roxbury in 1631, where he died by 1634. He married Alice Bredda at Chelmsford on 29 June 1626 and had children baptized there in 1627, 1628 and 1630 [GMB 3:1525; TAG 77:173-75].

3) **Walter Kelway** of Chelmsford did not migrate to New England. He died at Chelmsford in late 1650 or early 1651, leaving a will which named “my three daughters in New England, namely my daughter Margaret Mountague, my daughter Melcas Snow and my daughter Mary Lane” [Waters 759-60, abstracting PCC 26 Grey]. The husbands of these three daughters were **Griffin Mountague** of Roxbury and Cape Porpoise, **Thomas Snow** of Boston and **William Lane** of Boston [NEHGR 27:176, 83:466-67; GDMNH 486].

4) **John Rogers** of Watertown was the son of a Chelmsford man. On 16 December 1645, “John Rogers of Watertowne, New England, clothier, son of Thomas Rogers of Moulsham in the parish of Chelmsford in Essex, shoemaker, deceased,” made a letter of attorney to Robert Scott of Boston [Aspinwall 14-15].

CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL

Monday, 11 August, will be our day of rest, a down day after the trip to London on Sunday. All events on Monday are optional, and one site you might visit is Chelmsford Cathedral, about a fifteen-minute walk from our hotel.

Chelmsford was just another Essex parish until 1914, when the Diocese of Chelmsford was created and the town became the seat of the Bishop of Chelmsford. The existing church was converted to a cathedral, without being greatly increased in size, and so it is far less grand than the great medieval cathedrals, such as those at Salisbury or Exeter. Compare the size and appointments of this church edifice with those of Saffron Walden, another market town which we will visit on the following day.

The church includes an impressive brass memorial to the family of Thomas Mildmay, brother of Walter Mildmay, mentioned above as founder of Emmanuel College. There is no memorial to Thomas Hooker inside the church; there is, however, a memorial plaque on the cathedral grounds, which you are challenged to locate.

ESSEX RECORD OFFICE

You might also spend time on that Monday visiting the Essex Record Office for some research. The ERO is located in a modern and commodious facility a little more than a mile from our hotel. If you are ambitious, it is not that difficult a walk, but you might want to go by taxi.

On Mondays the ERO is open from nine in the morning until eight-thirty in the evening. There are separate work stations for manuscript, microform and electronic sources, available on a first-come-first-served basis. You will need a County Archive Research Network ticket to use the ERO. If you do not already have one, the ERO reception desk will provide you one in a few minutes.

For detailed information on sources available for research at the Essex Record Office, go to <www.essexcc.gov.uk/ero>.

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