

BIBLIOGRAPHY, RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

Crowe, K. 2022 Gold and Garnets: the Broomfield and Pritttlewell Princely Burials [details of the excavation and finds from the Broomfield princely burial and Miller Christy's involvement]

Hunter, J. 1999 The Essex Landscape: A Study of its Form and History (Essex Record Office), [ancient woodland and much else about the historic landscape of Essex]

Hunter, J., Hedges, J., Roberts, G. and Ranson, C. 1979 Essex Landscape No. 1: Historic features [pollards, ponds, moated sites]

Jermyn, S. T. 1974 Flora of Essex (Essex Naturalists' Trust), [occurrence of wild daffodils in Essex, contribution of Robert Miller Christy to the botany of Essex]

Newman, K. 2013 'The distribution and origin of ponds in Essex with special reference to the parish of Broomfield', Essex Archaeology and History volume 4

Pitchforth, H. 2001 A Hidden Countryside: Discovering Ancient Tracks, Fields and Hedges Based on a Study of Witham in Essex (Helen Pitchforth, Witham) [importance of parishes, parish boundaries and beating the bounds, pollards]

Powell, R. 2005- 2007 'R. Miller Christy, Essex Naturalist and Antiquary - Parts 1 to 4', Essex Journal [information on the life and achievements of Robert Miller Christy], available online via esah1852.org.uk

Rackham, O. 2003 The Illustrated History of the Countryside (Weidenfield & Nicolson) [Ancient woodland, coppices and pollards, ponds]

Winchester, A. 2000 Discovering Parish Boundaries (Shire Publications) [Saxon burials located on boundaries]

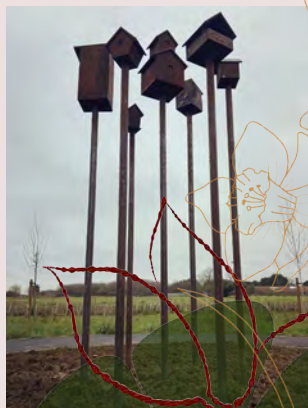
WEBSITES

All information on Priors is summarised from:
https://broomfielddessex.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Vol1-pp-196-end.wps_.pdf

For other information on historic sites in the area:

<https://historicengland.org.uk>

<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>



THE COPPERFIELD TRAIL AND PUBLIC ART SCHEME

The Copperfield Trail was researched, devised and written by Chelmsford archaeologist Helen Walker. The trail is part of the Copperfield Place public art scheme led by local artist, Elaine Tribley.

'A Country Stile', the oak sculpture which represents a portway into the countryside and is the starting point for 'The Copperfield Trail', was designed and made by sculptor Ian Etheridge. The flora and fauna engraved into the oak panels are all found locally and have been used in the naming of the streets in the new Copperfield Place development.

The bird boxes installed throughout Daffy Wood were built by pupils at Newlands Spring Primary School with kits supplied by Essex Wildlife Trust expertly guided by their Wildlife Learning Lead, Lizzie Holt.

The installation sites for the bird boxes were overseen by Alan Watts from the Essex Birdwatching Society. Alan also assisted the project with his expert knowledge of local birds.

'Birdland' in the centre of the small feature roundabout and 'Collective Nouns', the bronzes set into the surrounding paving were devised and designed by lead artist Elaine Tribley with input from pupils at Newlands Spring Primary School.

The artworks were inspired by conversations with local residents, birdwatcher Kathleen Hoy and the antiquarian, naturalist and ornithologist, Robert Miller Christy, who wrote the book 'The Birds of Essex' in 1890, and whose family previously owned Priors (included in the trail) and the surrounding land, living there for over 100 years. (see section 4)



THE COPPERFIELD TRAIL

A two mile circular walk



THE COPPERFIELD TRAIL

DIRECTIONS

Abbreviations: R = right; L = left



The walk starts at the corner of Daffy Wood by 'A Country Stile', an oak sculpture symbolising a gateway to the countryside. The sculpture is located at the junction of two wood chip-surfaced paths close to Copperfield Road, NGR TL 69197,09162.



Sites of interest are described in separate sections, 1-7 alongside the map of the walk.

- With Copperfield Road and the bus stop for 'Havisham Way' to your R, take the path in front of you which follows around the edge of Daffy Wood, a relic of ancient woodland (see Section 1) Look out for the newly installed bird boxes as you walk through Daffy Wood.

- Emerge from wood and follow path with hedgerow on R and houses to L, then continue on parallel cycle track in same direction, at end of cycle track cross path junction and continue with hedgerow to R, this path follows the parish boundary between Broomfield and Chelmsford, (see Sections 2 and 7).

- At waymarker-post turn L across field, at end of field continue on grass path noting large pollarded oak tree to R (see Section 3), some of the upper branches have died off, this is quite common and such trees are known as stag-headed oaks, soon reach road and turn L onto Hollow Lane, immediately to L is the long driveway to Priors Farmhouse dating from the mid-16th century (see Section 4).



- Continue along Hollow Lane ignoring footpath to R, shortly to reach a house called Scravels on R, this is a 17th century

timber-framed building but the front is late Victorian, note the 'Arts and Crafts' style frieze above the upper windows.



- Pass Scravels ignoring footpath just to side of Scravels, continue along Hollow Lane, at gap in hedgerow, turn R and follow path across field towards waymarker-post and wood, this is Broomwood another ancient wood, at wood turn L following edge of wood to R, which for a short distance follows the parish boundary between Broomfield and Chignal, note the wide, shallow boundary ditch between the wood and the footpath.

- A large house can be glimpsed through the trees, this is Broomwood Lodge (see Section 5), follow footpath to road (Chignal Road).

- Turn L on road, crossing over to face oncoming traffic, bear R into cycle track/footpath passing a converted barn and Chobbings Farm House, which was originally built in the late 14th century and was once part of a much larger building demolished in antiquity, Chobbings is also of interest because it still has its original timber and plaster chimney stack, a rare survival from the medieval period, the adjacent barns are of a similar date range.



- At end of cycle track/footpath cross road towards Copperfield Place and join cycle track, follow cycle track which becomes feeder road parallel to houses, cross two side roads, 'The Larthings' and 'Clover Drive'.

- Continue on road/cycle track to reach footpath sign on L and turn R following direction indicated by the footpath sign, cross small area of grass with remnant hedgerow on R, then join paved path, now with remnant hedgerow on L, here you are again following the parish boundary between Chignal and Broomfield.

- Keep following the hedgerow to reach 'Foxglove Avenue' and turn L, then L again into 'Bryony Close', at the end turn R following pavement along the edge of the housing development (the back of Priors Farmhouse can be seen across the fields), continue alongside houses until footpath roundabout is reached, look out for the bronze markers set into the paving.

Twelve circular bronze pavers make up 'Collective Nouns' an artwork highlighting birdlife found in the local area. Pupils from Newlands Primary School worked with the artist to design the markers, they also contributed three of the collective nouns, these are identified by the inclusion of the school logo.



In the centre of the roundabout 'Birdland' consists of seven birdhome styles from 'The Woodpecker' to 'The Robin', hovering high above and overlooking the edge of the countryside. They allude to both more species of birds found locally and the variety of new homes in Copperfield Place. Created from corten steel they will slowly take on a weathered patina melting into the natural landscape.

- Take second exit from footpath roundabout and follow path to reach road ('Foxglove Avenue'), cross road and turn R, shortly to turn L into 'Hawthorn Crescent', follow road to return to the hedgerow that follows the Chignal and Broomfield parish boundaries.

- Turn L at hedgerow with hedgerow to your R, follow hedgerow to gap, if desired turn R here to view remains of a pond, this is not a prepossessing sight, but a pond at this location is shown on a 19th century OS map dated 1874/5 (see Section 6 for more about ponds)

- Otherwise follow path around to L and enter Daffy Wood on woodchip-surfaced path, noting dead pollarded tree to L with a waymarker-post next to it (see Section 7), follow path, looking out for more of the new bird boxes, to 'A Country Stile' and the end of the walk.



1. DAFFY WOOD

Daffy Wood is an ancient wood, the definition of which is woodland that has been in existence at least since AD1600. However, most are far older than this and represent remnants of the prehistoric wildwood that once covered much of Essex and that was gradually cleared over the centuries to make way for farmland.

In the medieval period these woods were carefully managed as wood was an important resource. Most trees were coppiced, that is cut down to ground level and from the stump, poles of wood would grow which were harvested and used, for example, to weave wattle fences or to make wattle-and-daub panels to infill timber-framed houses. Loppings and underwood were often used for firewood for domestic hearths. Other trees were left to grow tall and were used as timber for ship building and house construction.

There is no evidence of coppicing at Daffy Wood but at Broomwood, another ancient wood along the route of the walk, the remains of outgrown coppiced trees can be glimpsed from the footpath, showing several thin trunks growing upwards from a single stump. Daffy Wood was once larger as a slice of the northern part of the wood was grubbed up for farmland in the 19th century by local landowner Thomas Christy (see Section 4). The resultant field was named Daffy Piece.



Daffy Wood gets its name from the wild daffodils that grow here, blooming in March to early April, to be followed by bluebells in late April to the beginning of May. While bluebells are common in Essex, wild daffodils are rare. According to a flora of Essex published in 1862, wild daffodils occurred in only fourteen localities and are now largely confined to the north-west of the county. Wild daffodils are smaller and daintier than their garden counterparts and possess a golden trumpet and pale yellow surrounding petals. Every part of the daffodil is

poisonous and the plant was formerly used as a purgative.

2. SAXON BOUNDARY

The hedgerow mentioned in the second instruction of the walk carries on towards Patching Hall Lane and it is interesting to note that if one were to continue eastwards in the same direction as the hedgerow, it aligns with Clobbs Lane about 2km distant.

Clobbs Lane is a cul-de-sac on the eastern side of Broomfield Road and just beyond Clobbs Lane, the Saxon Princely Burial was discovered. Saxon burials are often to be found on boundary ditches and it is possible that this length of hedgerow was once part of a Saxon boundary. If this is the case, it shows how important such features were in the landscape and how they persist for centuries. The burial and accompanying grave goods are on display at Chelmsford Museum.

3. POLLARDED TREES

Pollarding is similar to coppicing, but instead of being cut at ground level, trees are cut at a height of about 10 feet above ground. As with coppicing, this is to produce successive crops of poles but they are cut higher up the tree so that deer cannot eat the tender regrowth. This process prolongs the life of the tree and gives it a distinctive shape, with trunks of great girth and a mass of foliage issuing from the top of the trunk.



Pollards were used to mark boundaries (including parish boundaries, see Section 7) and often feature in ancient hedgerows. Because they are old and full of holes they make excellent roosts for bats and birds, especially owls. They also host lichens and various insect species.

4. PRIORS AND THE MILLER CHRISTY FAMILY

Documentary evidence shows that Priors is so called

because from the 13th century this land belonged to Blackmore Priory. The holding comprising a house belonging to the prior and about 60 acres of land, which was probably let-out to tenant farmers whose rent would have provided a steady income for the priory. The estate remained in the ownership of Blackmore Priory for about 300 years, but in 1527 ownership passed to the abbey of Waltham Holy Cross, shortly to be closed down under Henry VIII's Act of Dissolution in 1536. Ownership then passed into private hands.

The present house, thought to have been built on the same site as the original, dates to around 1550, and although there have been later alterations much of the exterior remains unchanged from the Tudor period, including the tall chimney stack with its four octagonal brick chimneys. Part of a surrounding moat remains, which could be a survival from the medieval house or could be contemporary with the Tudor rebuild. Moated houses were considered status symbols in both periods and are particularly common in Essex.

This new house changed hands several times and was owned by a number of prominent local families including the Manwood Family who lived at Priors for around 200 years and whose memorial can be seen in Broomfield Church.

In the early 19th century Thomas Christy, a Quaker, bought Priors along with other estates in the area (including Scravels also passed on the walk). The Christy family lived here for about 100 years and one of Thomas Christy's descendants was Robert Miller Christy, a famous antiquarian and naturalist (born: 1861, died: 1928).

Amongst his many achievements, Robert excavated the Roman Temple at Harlow and discovered the medieval pottery kilns at Mill Green, near Ingatestone. He was also instrumental in the archaeological excavation of the Broomfield Princely Burial. His many publications include a book on the birds of Essex, a book



on Essex pub signs and academic papers on flowers of the primula family. Robert lived for a time at Priors then moved to Blue House, his brother's house on Chignal Road located just to the west of Copperfield Place. Here he kept a museum of ancient domestic implements.

Robert was not the only local ornithologist; Kathleen Hoy lived in Patching Hall Lane and was an avid birdwatcher active from the early 1940's. She kept journals of her sightings which are now in the archive of the Essex Birdwatching Society. On a page of one of her journals dated May 1958, Miss Hoy records a Reed Warbler at Broomfield Sanatorium (now Broomfield Hospital) and a Turtledove in Hollow Lane.

5. BROOMWOOD LODGE

In spite of its appearance, Broomwood Lodge is 20th century and was built by Miller Christy (once famous, he dropped the 'Robert'), who began work on the building in 1912. He built it in Tudor style with a great deal of authenticity even having the bricks specially made to the right size and shape. Its chimneys are copies of those at Priors.

Miller Christy is buried in the churchyard at Chignal St James, very close to his birthplace at Stevens Farm, Chignal St James. Miller Christy was admired by his contemporaries for his breadth of knowledge, his powers of observation, his clear and vivid writing and his tireless enthusiasm, although he was also considered a little aggressive and single-minded. One of his closest friends was his cousin, Charlotte Fell Smith, herself a distinguished writer on Essex.

6. PONDS

Ponds were once common in rural Essex and in the mid-19th century a total of 122 ponds are depicted on old maps of Broomfield. There are many different types of pond, including farm ponds which can be the remains of medieval or later moats, as at



Priors. There are also field-edge ponds which are the commonest type in this area and were used for watering cattle and horses, and for field drainage.

Over the years many ponds have disappeared and are now a far less common feature in our landscape. Where they do survive, they provide wildlife oases for frogs, newts and dragon flies.

7. PARISH BOUNDARIES

The parish system was created at the end of the Saxon period, from around AD1000, and has survived with relatively few changes into the present day. Copperfield Place is located on the boundaries of three parishes, namely, Chignal, Chelmsford and Broomfield, the boundary of the latter looping around the edge of Daffy Wood. Parish boundaries followed rivers, roads, especially Roman roads, and as at Copperfield Place, hedgerows.

The north-west corner of Daffy Wood is the point

where these three parishes meet and at this corner stands a dead and rather spindly pollarded oak tree, which almost certainly served to mark the parish boundaries. The adjacent pond (passed on the trail) may also have served as a parish boundary marker. Parish boundaries were once considered very important and a religious ceremony, known as 'Beating the Bounds', was carried out once a year in late spring. Church officials, landowners and parishioners would walk the parish boundaries, beating the boundary markers with sticks. Present amongst this gathering were little boys who were bumped against the parish markers so that they would remember their location for years to come.



The ceremony of Beating the Bounds dates from the Middle Ages but was still carried out into the early 20th century and has recently had something of a revival.

