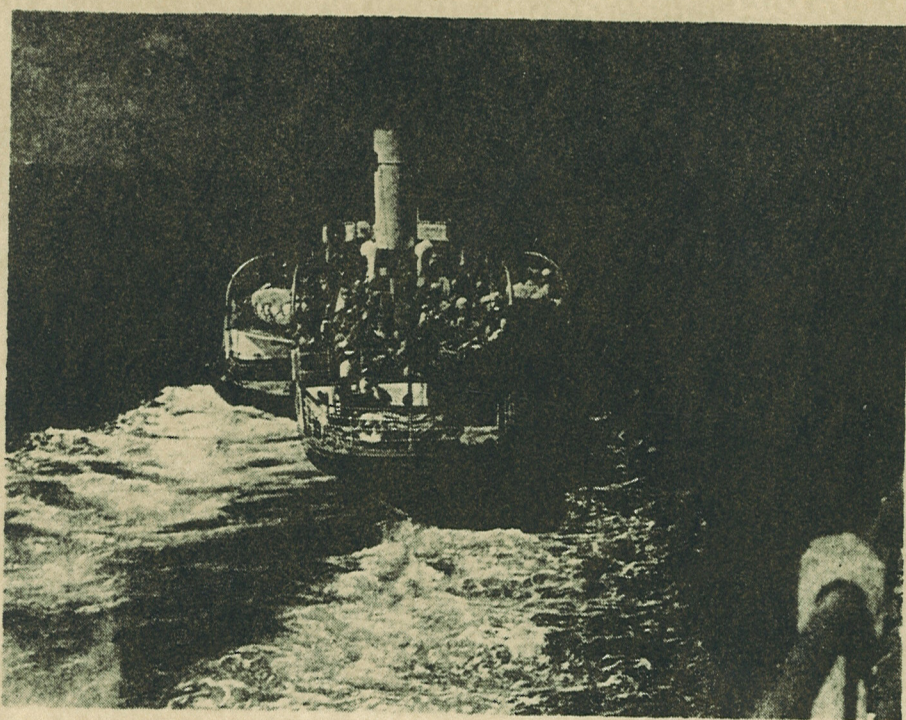


On Her Majesty's Service

WASC1119



The paddle steamer Medway Queen, which has now been saved from the scrap yard. It is to be used as a restaurant for members of a yachting club on the Isle of Wight. This photograph was taken by G. R. Mortimer in August 1959 and shows the Medway Queen getting away from Southend pier.

And now Gidea Hall is no more.
"How weak the thoughts and vain
Of self-deluding men ;
Men who, fixed to earth alone,
Think their houses shall endure,
Fondly think their lands their own,
To their distant heirs secure."
(MRS.) M. W. FURNEAUX.
17 Northumberland Avenue,
Hornchurch.

Royal Gunpowder Factory

I WAS glad to see the Waltham Abbey powder mills being given publicity in THE ESSEX COUNTRYSIDE, and you may remember I contributed something on the subject myself in your June/July number in 1959. I am naturally interested, as I was one of the three Army officers who ran the place under the old régime, and when the factory came under civilian control I was resident inspector there—the only remaining Army appointment.

Although Dr. Rudge may have flattered the factory with regard to its age (which is unknown for certain), he does just the reverse in his final paragraph about something which ought to be very well known indeed. To say that "the discovery of other powerful explosives (than gunpowder) accelerated the decline and final closure of the Waltham factory" is in absolute contradiction of the facts. Waltham, famous as it had been for gunpowder over a period of hundreds of years, became infinitely more famous for its production of guncotton, nitroglycerine, cordite, tetryl, T.N.T., picric powder and R.D.X. For about fifty years it was the chief source of supply of cordite for the Army and Air Force—at times almost the only source of supply—and it

Stevens, who was ploughman for a farmer named Whisker, but that is all past history. All we know now is that the old castle has disappeared and in its place stands a sports pavilion erected by the port authority.

I have enclosed a picture postcard of the castle, also a picture of the old lodge which your correspondent had to pass to reach the castle. I wonder if it will bring back memories to him.

(MRS.) G. D. GRIFFIN.

40 Millwell Crescent,
Grange Hill,
Chigwell.

Gidea Hall

THE photograph of Gidea Hall will, I am sure, interest many readers. It was built by Sir Thomas Cooke, a wealthy draper of London who occupied "the most important mansion in the liberty" and was "ancestor to some of the most illustrious names in our history." He was the son of Robert Cooke, of Lavenham in Suffolk.

The name of Thomas Cooke first came into prominence in connection with the insurrection of Jack Cade. This was intended to promote the interests of the Yorkists.

Three years after this he was elected Sheriff of London, and he became Lord Mayor in 1462-3.

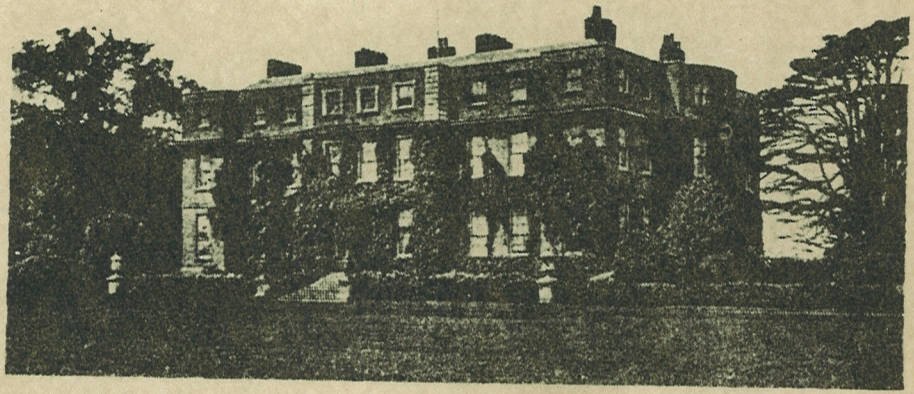
At the coronation of Elizabeth Wood-

ville, queen to Edward IV, he was made a Knight of the Bath.

Three years later (1467) he began the building of Gidea (Geddy) Hall, a mile east of Romford. The royal charter gave permission to include 140 acres of land, twenty acres of wood, twenty acres of meadow and twenty acres of pasture.

The story of Sir Thomas Cooke is a long one. Misfortunes, imprisonment and other unpleasant experiences came, but when he died in 1478 he possessed not only Gidea Hall but several other manors, including the manor of Bedfords, near Romford, and Petyts.

He was succeeded by his son, Philip, who was succeeded by his son, John, who in turn was succeeded by his son, Anthony. Sir Anthony Cook was "one of the distinguished tutors of the young King Edward VI, who lived in the palace of Havering.



Gidea Hall, Romford, which was built by a wealthy draper but is now no more. A photograph sent to us by Mrs. M. W. Furneaux, of Hornchurch (see letter).

1119



Walton-on-the-Naze as it is today. The encroaching sea is "taking a bite" at the land, but with little effect, for the defences here are now exceptionally strong. Photograph by Rudolph Robert (see letter).

I was turned off the gangway many, many times). At that time of day the River Crouch was a very busy river. The late Mr. John Smith had several boats which used to bring coal, coke and all manner of things to Burnham before the railway reached Burnham. Some of the boat names were *Thistle*, *Vanguard*, *Dauntless* and *Friendship*. Before 1900 there were so many different things on. The farmers round Dengie hundred used to have root and vegetable shows which included cattle, etc. Boxing Day was a red-letter day, with rabbit coursing. We could get a glass of beer and a packet of Woodbines for twopence.

L. HARVEY.

74 King Edward's Road,
Ponders End, Middlesex.

was not decided until almost at the end of the last war to make different arrangements because Waltham was too near London.

It does not matter now, but in the past and for obvious reasons we did not seek publicity at Waltham, and the name, the Royal Gunpowder Factory, which was retained because nobody thought of altering it, must have misled a number of people—though it was not done intentionally.

With regard to Mr. Payton's bravery, the reward given was not as mean as might appear. I have a record of the rates of pay about that time, from which it seems he would not have got more than about 10/6 per week, and something like "forty weeks' wages" would not sound so bad.

ELLIOTT L. BLEE.

Westcliff-on-Sea.

Tidemill at Battlebridge

DURING the Dutch festival week in Southend-on-Sea last May I paid a short visit to the site of the former tide-mill at Battlebridge.

As this type of mill has completely vanished in Holland, I was very happy that one of your subscribers, Mr. David R. A. Snell from Battlebridge, took me to the mill site.

I should like to know details about this mill—its history, how it worked, etc. Perhaps some of your readers have old photographs or picture postcards of the mill before its destruction. I should like to include these details in my mill collection. At the side of the mill site I photographed an odd type of building which should have been used for roasting barley for the beer brewer. Is that correct? Are there any details to be told about this building too?

Mr. Snell provided me with a copy of *THE ESSEX COUNTRYSIDE* for May 1965, which included a very interesting article about the Thorrington mill by G. W. Martin.

From publications of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and from Mr. Rex Wailes's books I learnt that England has quite a few interesting windmills and watermills still left.

J. M. STIKVOORT.

de Moestuyn 20,
Rozendaal/Gld,
(near Arnhem)
Holland.

The cruel sea

MISS Ursula Bloom's personal reminiscences of Walton-on-the-Naze as it was early in the century made most interesting reading. That there has over the centuries been extensive erosion of the coast is undeniable, and no doubt the process is a continuing one, but I would like to question Miss Bloom's pessimistic conclusion that the sea "is too formidable a thief for us to stay." Surely the Dutch, across the North Sea, have demonstrated how much can be done to safeguard land—even when it is well below sea level. In fact, Dutch engineers in Stuart times extensively drained the Backwater marshes, and at least some of the land surrounding Walton is reclaimed land. More recent defence works have also proved themselves to be effective, so I do not think the battle against the sea need be regarded as inevitably lost.

RUDOLPH ROBERT.

Welwyn Garden City,
Hertfordshire.

"Kangaroo"

BEING a constant reader and also a Burnhamite, I did not miss the letter by Mr. H. Bull, of Burnham, concerning the *Kangaroo*. How well I remember it, as I spent so many happy hours in Belvedere Road with my grandparents and I used to play near it (as a matter of fact

East Horndon church

WITH reference to Alfred Frank's article on East Horndon church, I quote: "Within the church there can be seen several rather unusual features, including an upper gallery or rood loft reached by a staircase in each of the north and south transepts, with the openings visible from the nave of the church. For over a century these small 'rooms' were used as dwelling places by the officiating clergy."

It would seem that the author is equating the gallery with a rood loft, which was a passage giving access to the rood screen, covered with a veil during Lent. The rood screen separated the nave from the chancel and was never in a transept as these lofts are. In the same paragraph the author mentions these lofts as being used by the officiating clergy for over a century. This use is substantiated by G. Worley in his book on Essex: "Among the several objects of interest within are the curious galleries above the north and south transepts, said to have been formerly occupied by chantry priests." Arthur Mee also writes: "An odd feature of the church is the upper room in each transept, open to the church: they were the dwelling rooms of the priest for over a century."

According to the Royal Commission and Pevsner the galleries date from the early seventeenth century, the reign of James I. If this is so they certainly would not have been used by chantry priests. I suggest they were used either by the minstrels or for education, since this often took place in the parish church (cf. Laindon, with its double-storied house at the west end used for a school). The galleries may have been decorative to divide the high but not very deep transept. It would seem from Arthur Mee and Worley that they believe the galleries to be earlier than the Jacobean period. If this were so—and their structural evidence is against this—they could not have been used for over a century by priests. The Royal Commission dates the church during the last