

## **INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN ESSEX: PAST, PRESENT.....AND FUTURE?**

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Notes taken by Anna Moore

The Essex Industrial Archaeology Group (EIAG) is now one year old and its founding Chairman introduced this presentation by saying that its activities are divided into three parts: Archaeology, History and Heritage.

Industrial Archaeology was first established as a discipline in its own right during the 1950s. In 1995 Essex County Council undertook a number of thematic surveys:

- to chart what exists
- to assess their significance
- current statutory designations
- prioritise for future management
- preserve through the planning process
- enhance the HER (Heritage Environment Record)

Regional Research Agendas were drawn up in 1997, 2000 and 2011 in answer to an urgent need to establish what was in existence.

A number of achievements have been made, e.g. Bush Hall Farm Maltings, High Laver, has been sympathetically converted to housing; a survey of Grade 2 listed buildings has been undertaken; also surveys of Bishops Stortford, Dunmow and Braintree railways, plus Rayne Railway Station; the Jumbo water tower in Colchester has been upgraded to 2\* listing. Following surveys of industrial housing, a recommendation has been made to extend conservation areas, e.g. in Halstead to include the houses built for Courtauld workers; Marconi housing in Chelmsford has been added recently having been missed on the original survey.

The Essex Mills Group was formed by Essex County Council who owns seven historic mills in the county; it is, however, suffering from cutbacks and the care of mills is no longer seen as a priority. The European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) was established to promote tourism and Essex has 11 sites listed on the route. Some sites are threatened with development, e.g. Ridleys Brewery, Marconi Wireless sites, Halstead Air Raid shelters.

One positive development is the creation of Local Heritage Lists, for example by Colchester Borough Council; Braintree District Council is also looking at creating a similar list, particularly with the aim of protecting Courtauld buildings.

EAIG has compiled a list of local groups looking after individual sites.

Future plans for EAIG include more research into railway lines, ports, the gas industry, rope making, power and explosives. English Heritage is starting a survey of the condition of Grade 2 listed buildings with volunteers and EAIG is hoping to be involved; test projects in Essex will be at Harlow and Clavering. Publications on the research projects are planned. EAIG would like to be involved in the preservation of industrial sites, e.g. the air raid shelters in Halstead built by Courtaulds for their factory employees, working in partnership with other groups, e.g. Essex County Council.