

19th March 2018

**From Templars to Tipplers**

**Cressing Temple to Littley Green Walk – Saturday 28th April 2018**

As we write this note, it appears that the annual fight between Winter and Spring is going on for rather longer than usual. However we are delighted to report the outcome – victory, in spades, for Spring. As in previous years, we plan to celebrate this result with a spring walk, setting out from Cressing Temple and concluding at the Compasses, Littley Green, by way of Fairstead and Terling.

We very much hope you will join us both for pleasure, gentle exercise and to support the Essex Rural Fund. Experience has shown that these walks are usually accompanied by spring sunshine and good company: both enjoyed in attractive countryside with a few interesting features. This year will be no exception.

There will be an opportunity for a cuppa at the Wilkins Tea Room at Cressing Temple which opens at 9.30am, before we have a brief tour of the Cressing site, taking in the 13th century Barley and Wheat barns, as well as the Walled Garden. Then we set off for the morning part of the walk. As previously, the day will cater for all levels of activity: walkers are welcome to join for the whole day; for the morning only; for lunch; for the afternoon; or for some combination of these elements. If you find yourself unable to join us, then don’t forget that a donation is always welcome – and will ensure you don’t feel left out!

We are conscious that we do well to keep an eye on the average age of our walkers and supporters. With this in mind, one additional plea: talk to your friends about the walk, particularly your younger friends, and invite them to join us.

**About the Essex Rural Fund**

The Essex Rural Fund was established by the Rural Community Council of Essex in 2008, to provide funding support specifically to community groups and charities working in rural areas of the county. Villages, whether through necessity or goodwill, have always done a lot for themselves. This tradition continues with amenities such as village halls and play schemes as well as numerous clubs and societies run almost entirely by volunteers.

With the decreasing availability of public money and the generally short term nature of funding streams, our aim is to build a sizeable fund that will be available for Essex’s rural communities in perpetuity. We know that even a small amount can go a long way - and can be the difference between projects, services and facilities happening or not. There may be willing volunteers to run a mother and toddler group at the local village hall, but without some money to buy equipment they won’t get off the ground; and a small grant to a new community shop to buy initial stock may be the difference between opening or not.

At the end of 2017 the fund, which is managed by the Essex Community Foundation, stood at just under £335,000, and has given grants totalling nearly £65,500. We want to be able to give much more – whether it is funds to buy a new village hall boiler room door, or money towards the purchase of a village asset such as a community pub. It’s not glamorous, but it can make all the difference to a rural community flourishing or being marginalized.

**How to give**

We are happy to receive donations in any form, ranging from gifts of shares to annual standing orders, but we want to make giving as easy and painless as possible. The enclosed form gives details of how to give, and you will see that you may support us online through “Just Giving”. Where applicable we will claim Giftaid.

**About the Walk**

Our walk this year will start at historic Cressing Temple (grid reference TL 798186, post code CM77 8PD), once among the most important possessions of the Knights Templar in Britain, granted to them in 1136. Three magnificent medieval barns remain of what was once a 14,000 acre enterprise. The Wheat Barn, built in 1220, is said to be the oldest standing timber-framed barn in the world. There is also a Tudor walled garden which has been painstakingly restored in recent years. There is also a Wilkin tea room.

Please be sure to arrive in good time for a tour, following which we aim to start the walk at 10.15. We will leave our cars in the car park, and walk approximately 2½ miles WSW to Fairstead, where we will visit the picturesque St Mary’s Church with its interesting 14th century wall paintings.

The remainder of the morning walk, about 3½ miles, will take us south through the village of Terling, 2017 Essex Village of the Year, after which we turn west, and, skirting Sandy Wood with its spectacular bluebells, we pass Great Leighs Church and on to Hole Farm (TL 732156, post code CM3 1QR). We should arrive by 1.30 for our traditional lunch of baguettes, barbecued sausages and other Essex delicacies. By kind permission of Charles and Annelie Tritton, and of Alan and Diana Tritton, we will be able to use the barn at Hole Farm if the weather should unexpectedly turn wet, and disport ourselves outside if the sun shines as expected.

After lunch we plan a much less arduous stroll of about three miles, WNW to Little Leighs along the River Ter, and then west to Littley Green, where our walk will end at The Compasses, a popular hostelry which was the Ridley’s Brewery Tap, and where our host Joss Ridley will provide tea, cakes or drinks as needed.

We very much hope to see you on what we hope will be an enjoyable day, and look forward to your support.

David Boyle JP DL Nicholas Charrington DL

Vice President RCCE Chairman RCCE