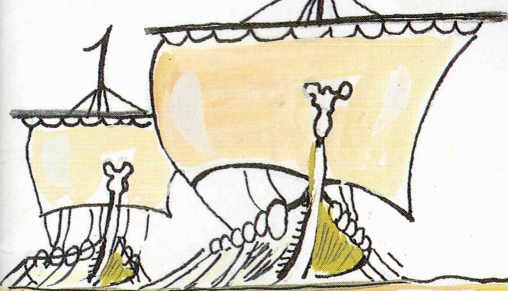


Battle of Maldon Souvenir Programme



*6 We will give
you darts
for tribute,
poisonous
spears and
ancient
swords 9*

August 10 - 11, 1991

Price: £2

I like to think that if Brihtnoth's ghost stalked the banks of the Panta and strode up the High Street during this weekend of commemoration, he would think his sacrifice was worthwhile.

The Town that he and his brave men saved has done very well in the past thousand years.

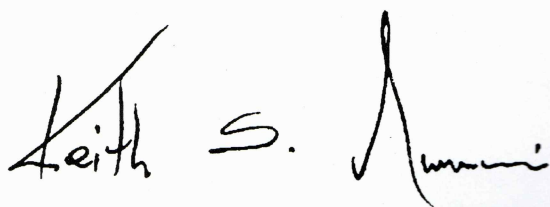
Its vibrant life has always been in the forefront of history's developments: a Royal Borough in 1171, a thriving port, a railway centre, a political and cultural focal point on many occasions.

Today, it is a pleasant Town growing larger and more attractive every year. It is our Town, our generations, that have remembered 991AD and the people of the time who, when put to the test, were ready to stand firm and do their duty.

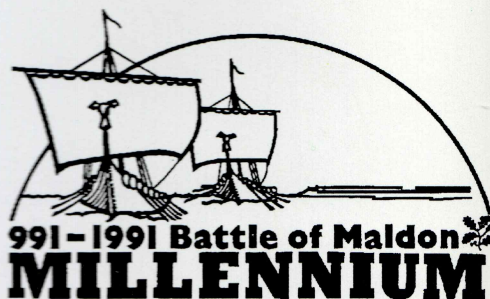
During the past five years, hundreds of people have helped with the enormous task of organising the Battle of Maldon Millennium events — there were more than 100 working just on the Millennium Embroidery. Many of those hundreds of people have completed their tasks, or, after giving their time and their energy, have moved on to do other things.

As the Chairman of the Millennium Executive, I would like to thank all the people who have helped organise events and projects — and the many thousands more who have joined in and enjoyed our efforts.

It is the enjoyment that makes the whole year worthwhile. By all accounts, our Eardorman Brihtnoth was a warm, impulsive man . . . he would have wanted you to enjoy yourself in his memory!



Keith Munnion



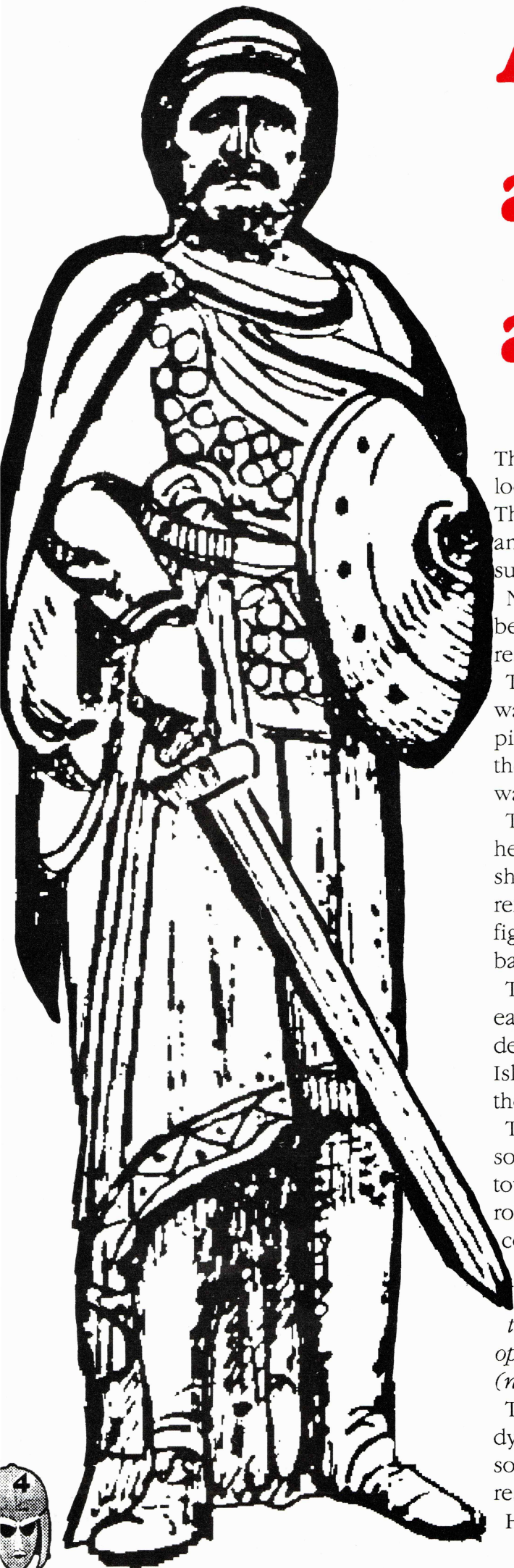
PROGRAMME INDEX

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There are numerous spellings of Brihtnoth's name and varying translations of the Old English poem The Song of Maldon. Therefore, for the sake of uniformity, within this publication we have used those published by E. A. Fitch in his History of Maldon and the River Blackwater. We have also taken the generally-agreed date of August 11th for the battle, although some references suggest August 10th.

Every effort will be made to present exactly what is contained in this programme but the organisers cannot guarantee that changes, additions, and deletions to the programme will not happen.





A man, a battle, a legend

The scale of the Viking attack on Maldon is often overlooked: it was no small party out for quick blood. There were 93 longships, each carrying between 60 and 100 men, and they had been away from home all summer carving a trail of destruction on English soil.

Northey Island can never have looked the same before or since: some 6,000 men camped and made ready to plunder the prize of Saxon England.

The invaders held no illusions. They had learned that war paid and they were looking for profit. They had pillaged Europe from Kiev to the East Coast of England; their demands were clear — either Maldon paid or it was destroyed and plundered.

The Battle of Maldon poem describes how the Viking herald, during the morning of August 11th, 991AD, had shouted their demands. He, no doubt, was dressed to reflect the Vikings' view of themselves as the terrible fighting men of the era. But the ragged army at his back were far from the Hollywood image

The story of the Battle of Maldon had started months earlier when the Vikings set sail on a long voyage of destruction and by the time they reached Northey Island they would have showed the strain of living in their boats and on waterside camps for many months.

They had plundered settlements along the coast of southern England before sailing for the undefended town of Ipswich. There they killed and destroyed, robbing as they went, and then headed back along the coast for Maldon.

But not without their "progress" being watched by Brihtnoth, the Earldorman of Essex, who pursued them with his forces on land along the coast until the opposing armies met on the banks of the River Panta (now Blackwater).

The Earldorman of East Anglia, Aethelwine, had been dying in Ramsey Abbey when the alarm was raised and so it was left to his friend Brihtnoth to take over the responsibility of defending East Anglia.

He had immediately moved to counter the Viking



threat, missing them at Ipswich but following the fleet along the coast with its position being relayed to him by lookouts in high stone watchtowers, or 'stypels' as they were known. The longships entered the Panta and made camp on Northey Island.

Brihtnoth gathered the local "fyrd" (militia) as he rode towards Maldon and crossed the two rivers at present-day Heybridge and Fullbridge.

The key to the imminent battle was the Northey Island causeway and Brihtnoth deployed his troops to defend the Panta's banks.

It was at this tense stage that the herald electrified the converging forces by shouting his master's demands.

He called to Brihtnoth: "Send quickly rings for your safety: it is better for you to buy off with tribute this storm of spears . . . we will establish a truce with that gold."

But Brihtnoth, then in his sixties and still tall and powerful, an older version of the courageous 'hothead' that had won his place as a leader, replied: "We will give you darts for tribute, poisonous spears and ancient swords . . ." And the die was cast for one of the most important battles of the period.

The only access to the mainland was by the narrow causeway, uncovered at low tide but with deep mud on either side. As the waters receded, the Vikings surged forward and were met on this narrow ford by three Saxons: Wulfstan, a veteran of many campaigns, Aelfhere, and Maccus. They stood shoulder to shoulder and easily repulsed the Vikings, killing many and proving the Saxon equal to any Viking in single combat. Today, their valour invokes the powerful imagery of Thomas Babington Macaulay's brave Horatius, Lartius and Herminius defending Rome and, indeed, it must have been an heroic scene.

The sea raiders, seeing that the defence was too strong, withdrew to the island and, trying another ploy they called across again challenging the Saxons to a more open battle on the mainland.

The Saxons, retiring to ground of their choosing and forming the traditional Saxon shield wall, prepared to meet the onslaught of the most experienced and fearsome warriors in Europe.

Many of the invaders were *beserkers*, warriors who apart from fighting practically naked with no armour or protection, had no fear of death and indeed welcomed it: the modern phrase 'going beserk' is an apt derivative of this Viking word: The Saxon force, although containing many experienced warriors, was also made up of part-time militia men who were trained but untried. The poem notes the "beardless youth a boy in battle dread, young Wulfmaer, son of Wulfstan" who when the time comes kills a Viking in defence of his earldorman injured by a spear.

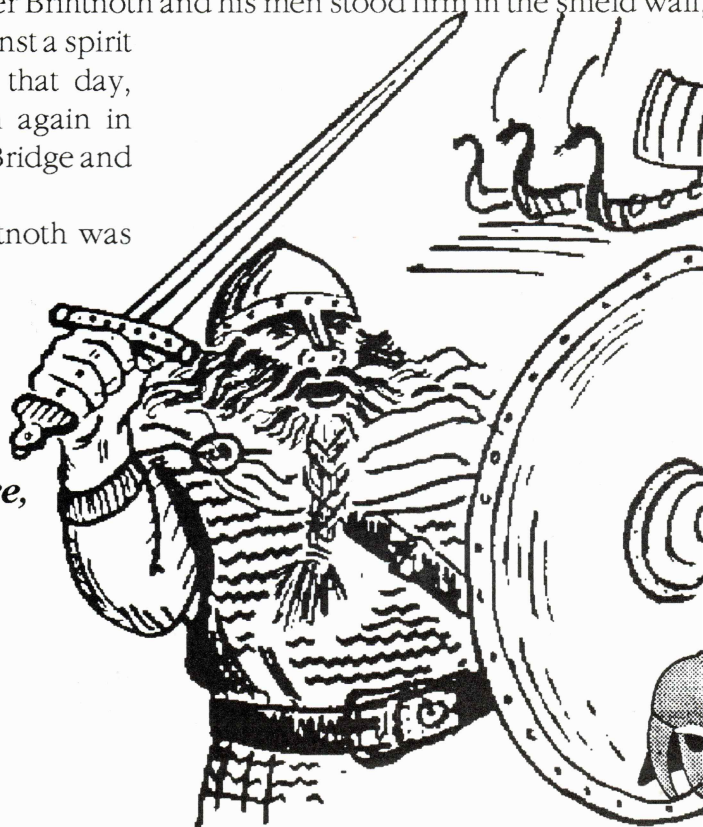
The poem vividly describes the bravery and heroism of the Saxons against what appears to be a larger, more experienced force as both sides suffered their casualties and the elderly earldorman inspired his men with great deeds to hold their ground.

The noise of the clash of shield meeting sword and spear and the battle cry rang high over the scene as brave warriors on both sides fell. But throughout the slaughter Brihtnoth and his men stood firm in the shield wall, with the Vikings realising they were in a real battle against a spirit of defiance and bravery — indeed, there was, on that day, courage and determination that would not be seen again in England until King Harold and the battles of Stamford Bridge and Hastings 75 years later.

Then a turning point in the battle came when Brihtnoth was wounded, falling, and with his dying words said:

***'O Guardian of the people,
let me praise and thank you
For all the joys I have known
in this world.***

***Now, gracious Lord, as never before,
I need Your grace,
That my soul may set out
on its journey to you,
O Prince of Angels, that my soul
may depart into
Your power in peace.'***

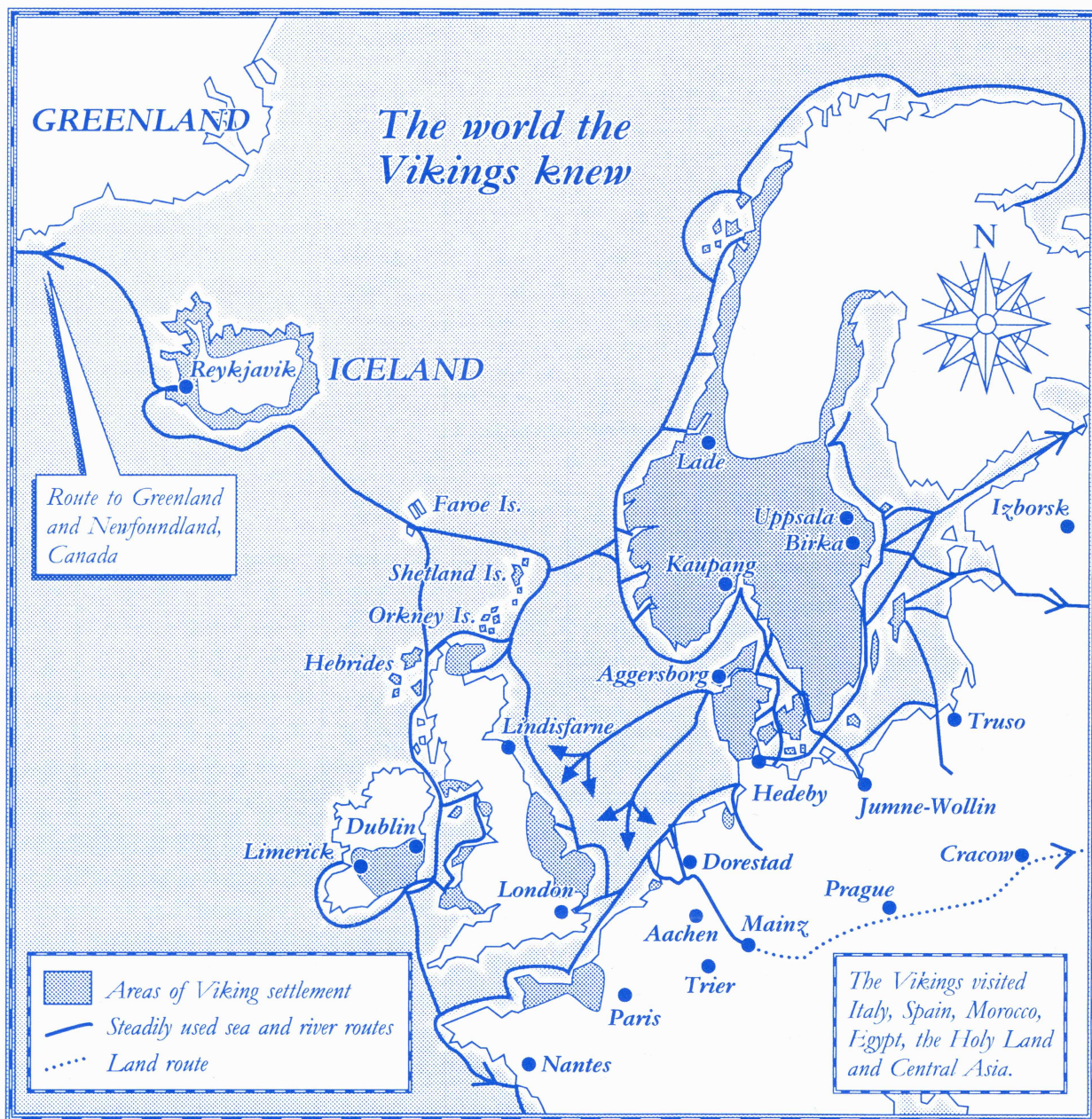


With the fall of Brihtnoth some Saxons deserted the field — led by Godric who mounted the earldorman's horse and rode to the forest. This would not have had any effect as Godric was held in low esteem but he was mistaken for Brihtnoth by a number of Saxons who, dismayed, broke the shield wall. Realising that the end was near, seasoned warriors such as Offa, the aged Dunhere, tall Eadward, Aethelric, and others rushed into the Viking host swearing to avenge their lord, killing as many of the foe as they could before dying themselves.

Throughout the conflict and to the very end the brothers Oswald and Ealdwold held the line and encouraged their remaining kinsmen to do likewise. The poem goes on to describe the bloody conflict in detail as the Saxon force became smaller and Brihtnoth was avenged by his faithful followers. Towards the end, only a handful of warriors remained still holding their line bravely and Byrhtwold, a hearth companion of the earldorman, declared:

***'The bolder be each heart, each spirit sterner,
valour more, now that our strength is less!'***

The aftermath of the battle 'varies in the telling', as they say, therefore it is interesting to note the facts as we know them. The Book of Ely records that the Vikings had suffered grievous losses and were



anxious to leave. Some reports said that they had barely enough men left to man their longships but others said they later attacked the coastal settlements in Kent.

Perhaps, as the Anglo Saxon Chronicles said, the Kent people paid the first Danegeld to the invaders but in Essex it was not so: the bloodied Vikings had learned their lesson and did not return for more than a generation. The bold and brave earldorman and his Saxons did not die in vain.

The Vikings carried Brihtnoth's head with them (as a mark of respect) to use in the retelling of the battle, home in their far-off fiord. Brihtnoth's body was taken from the battlefield by the Ely monks who carried it all the way to their great abbey in the fen country, a long, difficult journey that took many days.

His widow Aelflaed (who possibly accompanied his body on its last journey) worked a tapestry as a memorial to his life, great deeds and virtue and presented it to the abbey. It was still being described over a hundred years later but was eventually lost.

It is perhaps apt that this great and beloved earldorman lies to this day in the abbey — now Ely Cathedral — which itself became a symbol of Saxon defiance in Norman times with Hereward the Wake the last of the Saxon warriors.

One of the enduring questions about the battle is why Brihtnoth allowed the Vikings to cross the causeway when he could have kept them at bay and, perhaps, forced them to sail away again.

A suggestion has been that he was simply foolhardy: he had a reputation for hotheadedness. But would such a seasoned leader have been swayed in such a way? Had the impulsive young man not learned over the years the value of cool decision-making? Another possibility is that he had chased the Vikings far enough: it was time to fight while he had some control over the battle. He had time to deploy his force; he knew the enemy's numbers and he would have known that his largely inexperienced fighting militia faced the professional killers of a trained fighting force. Or perhaps he was under orders, or honour-bound, to fight.

It is easy to see that there were probably many places the Vikings could have landed within easy striking distance of Maldon. Forces that could succeed in so many battles would hardly be put off by the need to land elsewhere or at another time.

No-one knows the answer. What would we have done in Brihtnoth's place? Would we have acted differently?

Whatever the reason, his fighting men saved the town. But at what cost? In the re-enactment, we hope most of our warriors will get up to fight another day but what must it have been like in the real battle? The terrible wounds, the carnage, the lack of medical help . . . what terrible scenes were played out on the ground where we walk to commemorate the battle?



PROGRAMME

Bold text denotes ARENA events

- 10.00 Craft Fair opens
- 11.00 – 11.30 The Birth of Maldon Presentation**
- 11.30 – 12.00 Maldon Burh (community)
 exhibition open
- 12.00 – 12.30 Prelude to the Battle Presentation**
- Sat 13.30 – 14.00 } Maldon Burh
Sun 12.30 – 13.00 } open
- Sat 12.30 – 13.00 } Viking longships
Sun 13.30 – 14.00 } arrive
- 13.00 – 13.30 Lunch break in entertainment —
 although you can buy snacks, meals
 and drinks all day
- 14.00 – 14.30 A Call to Arms**
- 14.30 – 15.00 Maldon Burh open
- 15.00 – 15.30 Falconry Display**
- 15.30 – 16.00 Maldon Burh open
- 16.00 – 17.00 Battle of Maldon**
- 17.15 – 17.45 Model aircraft display**
- 18.15 – 19.00 Blackwater Stompers jazz band**
- 19.45 – 20.30 Blackwater Stompers jazz band**
- 20.45 – 21.00 Performance of *Homecoming of*
 Beorthnoth [Brihtnoth], *Beorthelm's Son***
- 21.25 – 21.30 Torchlight Procession**
- Sat 21.30 Grand Aerial Firework Display
 with music**
- Sun 21.30 Viking Funeral (the firing
 of the longship for the voyage to
 Valhalla), followed by Brihtnoth's
 Prayer**



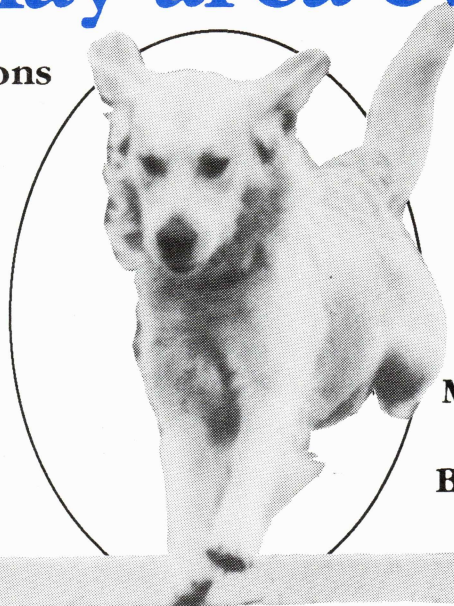
Display area events

**Dog obedience demonstrations
and advice on how to
handle your dog**

**Model racing cars, radio-
controlled**

Punch & Judy shows

Folk dancing



**Crafts and skills of 991AD
Maldon demonstrated,
along with a glimpse of
life as it was then**

Static model aircraft

More than 50 stands & stalls

Bouncy castle & railway ride

BBC ESSEX

BBC Essex, which has taken a close interest in Millennium events, is broadcasting from the re-enactment site on FM 103.5, AM 729 and AM 765 Visit the stand; listen to the show. *Our local radio station taking part on our local spectacular*

991 realism in our days of fun and excitement

The battle we are presenting today is much more than people fighting each other with mock weapons: it is a carefully researched and organised re-enactment of a Saxon-Viking battle. The weapons, the clothing, the style of deployment and tactics are all drawn from what we know of the period.

The research for the re-enactment has been carried out by the specialist historical associations — based on wide-ranging studies of the time and, in particular, close scrutiny of the Battle of Maldon poem.

One of the underlying motivations of the Millennium Trust was to provide authenticity in the re-enactment and in all the rest of the projects — the Millennium Embroidery and the Millennium Garden, to give two examples — and you can see this in today's events. It has been injected, of course, with some 20th Century fun to make it what we think it should be . . . a great day out.

The re-enactment of all the Saxon and Viking activities is being organised and performed by the Norse Film and Pageant Society (NFPS), assisted by its local branch, the Colchester Historic Enactment Society (CHES). Not only is NFPS the biggest and the most experienced re-enactment organisation in the U.K. (and probably the world), it is also the longest established. Founded in 1971, it now has member groups throughout the British Isles.

The aim of the society is to bring to life the Britain of the dark ages, Saxon and Viking, through to the Norman period. This entails absolute authenticity not only in battle scenes with weapons and armour but in the accurate historical research of clothing, cooking, crafts and living conditions. With displays all over Europe, the society is in great demand by film and television companies to provide the authentic warriors in battle scenes and for promotional appearances when films are launched. Such demand has now extended into the education field with libraries, museums, schools and even documentary films using NFPS to show virtually any skill and craft of the dark ages. *NFPS: Paul Vernon Lydiate, 119 Market Street, Broadley, Whitworth, Rochdale, OL12 8SE, (0706 344773). CHES: Mark Harrison, 7, Ashdown Way, Greenstead Estate, Colchester (0206 868539). Or see their stand in the display area.*



Birth of Maldon as a fortified hilltop

A tableau will be performed of the events which led to the formation of Maldon (then known as Maeldune) between 912 and 916 AD. A fortified burh was built at that time by King Edward the Elder (son of Alfred the Great) as a defence against the Danes who besieged it soon after. The burh of Maldon stood firm and the Danes were defeated. The building of this burh by the king himself led to the first mention of Maldon in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and indeed England. It is difficult to assess the population at that time but we do know that less than a century later it was more than 1,000. *You can get some idea of the way people lived at that time from the article on Pages 18 – 19 and, of course, from the Maldon Burh display.*

Maldon Burh: life in 991AD

The NFPS and CHES have “rebuilt” the Saxon town of Maeldune. This gives a visual idea of how people lived and worked 1,000 years ago, including demonstrations of many of the crafts of that period. You can see how our Saxon ancestors produced clothing, jewellery, and wooden cooking utensils, how they repaired and made tools, and how they minted coins.

**Please note that the “population” of the burh will vary through the day because the men will be taking part in the battle re-enactments.*

The battle prelude: Brihtnoth’s journey

This will present in visual and dramatic form the events leading up to the battle, which will help to explain the later displays in the arena. It introduces the leaders of the Viking force, Olaf Tryggvasson, Jostein and Gutmund and their fearsome followers, and describes the formation of their fleets. Brihtnoth and his expedition to Northumbria is shown, followed by the sacking of Ipswich by the Vikings and Brihtnoth being told of the attack by survivors. The Ealdorman of Essex sends out messengers to raise the fyrd (the militia of part-time warriors) — and all gather at Maldon.

A call to arms: the way they prepared for battle

The armour and weaponry of the 10th Century Saxons will be demonstrated by Brihtnoth being fitted out by his armour bearer and calling his personal followers (thegns of the select fyrd) and local levies to a training session. This will enable the techniques and the basic weaponry to be demonstrated such as spear, sword, Dane-axe, seax, bow, javelin, and the armour itself with shield, helmet, and byrnie (mail shirt). Finally, a drill display will outline the formations and tactics used — such as, open/close order, shield walls, and boar-snout triangular formations.



Arrival of Viking longships ... the dread of the time

The ships will be seen, from the sea wall, in the estuary nearing Northey Island and, with the tide permitting, will perform various manoeuvres before landing an armed Viking force on the island prior to the battle. The ships are authentic replicas, although on a smaller scale — they are 43 feet long by 10 feet 6 inches wide. They have a square sail and will on this occasion carry only 12 oarsmen and a landing party — the original longships of 991AD would have carried up to 100 men each. With less than four feet draught, they could be beached with ease to unload raiders and even horses.

The Maldon Millennium Trust, NFPS and CHES are indebted to the Jorvik Trust, York, for the generous loan of these ships which has helped considerably in maintaining authenticity in the re-enactment of these historic events.

You can also see a replica of a Saxon boat discovered at Graveney in north Kent. The original boat, now in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, is a Saxon trading vessel dating from 895AD. Dr E W H Gifford, an engineer and naval architect, built the replica and has been kind enough to bring it to the re-enactment. It can be seen either sailing or beached near the causeway.

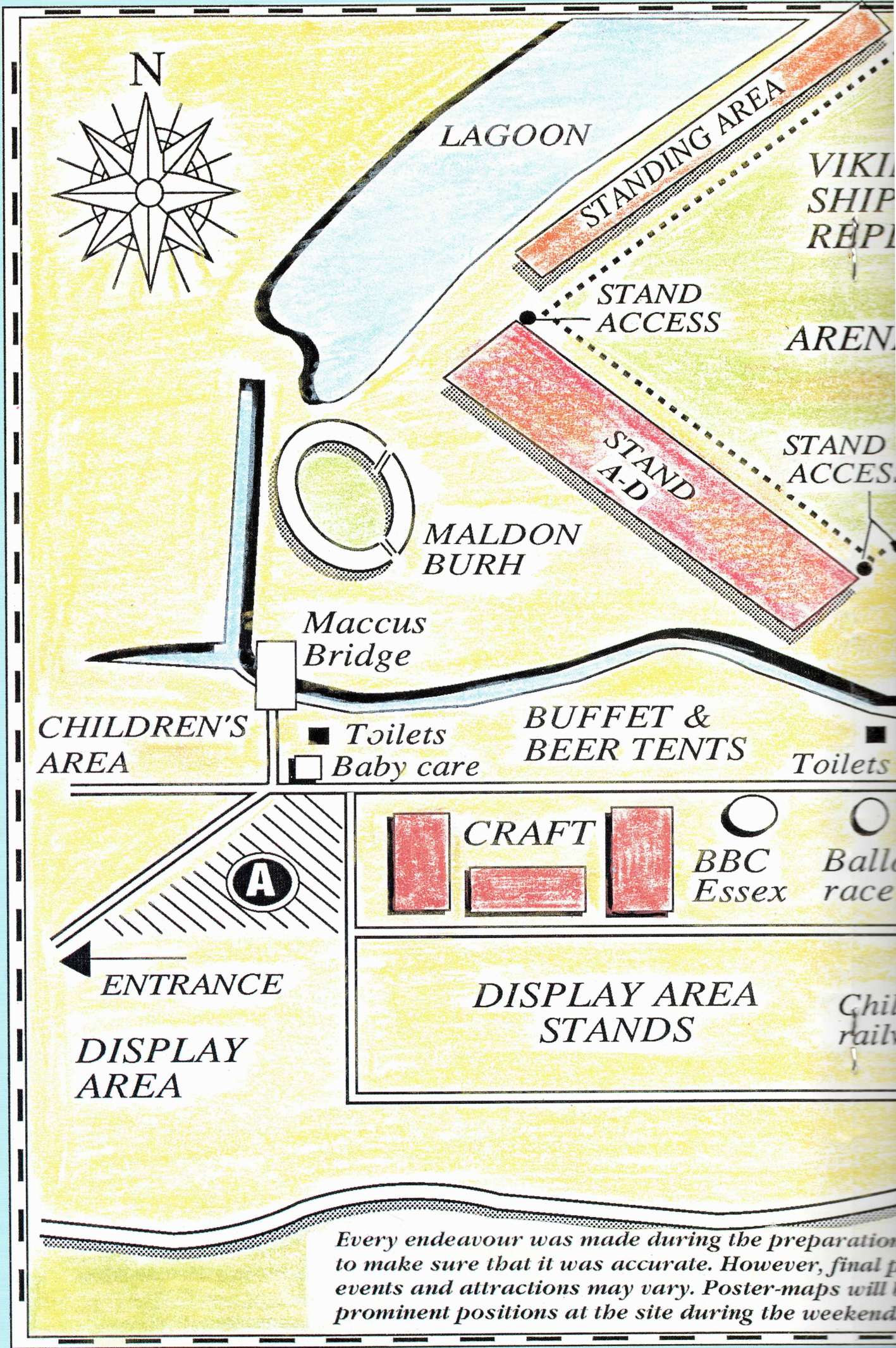
Battle falcons — flying free as the forces met

The Battle of Maldon poem makes special mention of the falcons, wheeling free over the battlefield while the men fought, and during the re-enactment events we can again see the speed and skill of these “warriors of the air.” Falconry must be one of the oldest sporting activities known to man for evidence of its existence has been found in the earliest of records. In ancient Egypt, over 4,000 years ago, the pharaohs even worshipped a hawk god called Horus. Man’s ability to use the hunting bird — at one time to help supplement his own supply of food — has been passed down through the centuries to the present day.

The Battle: a clash that broke both sides

It is exactly 1,000 years ago, almost to the hour, that this historic battle took place. This re-enactment, with some 300 warriors taking part, will reproduce on a much smaller scale the episodes and heroism of that conflict. The spectators today will be witnessing something which can happen only once in their lifetime — the millennium of a Saxon/Viking battle which was to affect the future of the Saxon race and the English speaking peoples. It was a worthy subject for the epic poem which has survived to the 20th century to tell us what happened that fateful day in August 991 AD. Both sides had very similar weaponry: shields, throwing or thrusting spears, axes, swords, bows, and knives. Their tactics were simple compared to later armies: they used interlocking shields for defence and boar snout triangular formation for attack. Screens of missile-armed troops went ahead of the main formations of foot and mounted troops. For those who were injured, there were no medical services — the best treatments available were herbal. As the battle staggered to a finish, Brihtnoth had lost but the Vikings were so bloodied that they could not even muster the strength to attack the town.





Every endeavour was made during the preparation to make sure that it was accurate. However, final events and attractions may vary. Poster-maps will be in prominent positions at the site during the weekend.

VIKING
SHIP
REPLICA

ARENA

STAND
ACCESS

STAND
ACCESS

STAND
E-G

ESTUARY

20th
CENTURY
CAMP

Toilets

Wulfstan Bridge

Balloon
race

20th
CENTURY
CAMP

Children's
railway

Aelfhere
Gate-exit to
Northey
Island



First Aid.
Lost children centre.
Administration.
Lost and found.

Preparation of this map
for final positions for
events will be in
weekend.

Tolkein: the last journey

Homecoming of Beorthnoth (Brihtnoth), Beorthelm's Son — This is a performance of the short play written by J.R.R. Tolkein, the author of Lord of the Rings, who was professor of Anglo Saxon studies, Oxford University. It tells the story of the monks of Ely Abbey who take Brihtnoth's body from the battlefield on the long journey back to Ely. Tolkein wrote this as a study exercise in Anglo Saxon for his students. The Trust and NFPS thank Harper Collins for permission to perform this work.

Torchlight procession

One hundred warriors, the followers of the fallen Viking chieftain, perform their final farewell and death ceremony. Each one carries a burning torch with which to light the sacred funeral bier which will consume the body and release the spirit into the other world.

Grand Firework Display

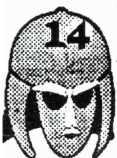
This will be one of the biggest and most spectacular firework displays ever seen in the county. Shell Shock Firework Company of Suffolk presents its incredible displays all over the world. The effects reach 1,000 feet, which means that even air traffic control has to be informed, and they are accompanied by music — *The Ride of the Valkyries* from *Die Walküre* by Wagner. Two important points to remember all spectators must remain in their viewing positions until it is finished and the announcer gives the all-clear to leave. Also, this is not a suitable event for pets and they should not be brought. **SATURDAY ONLY**

Viking funeral

All Viking warriors of high rank who had been killed in battle were given a spectacular send off to Valhalla, the spirit home of heroes. The body, with all its armour and weapons, was placed in a longship which was then set alight as it was pushed out to sea. This particular Viking activity has often been faithfully reproduced by Hollywood to be seen in such epics as *The Vikings*. This re-enactment will capture that dramatic burning of the longship. The final stages of the funeral will incorporate Brihtnoth's Prayer, sung by Wendy Wood with music by Mike Sammes, to link the valour and suffering of two nations whose blood later mingled in life more strongly than in battle. It makes a fitting end to these two days of Millennium commemoration. **SUNDAY ONLY**

1991 attractions

There are so many attractions that it would be impossible to describe them all — why not wander around and enjoy everything. Among the attractions will be performances by our local jazz band, the appropriately-named Blackwater Stompers; demonstrations by local model aircraft specialists; children's entertainment including a Punch & Judy show, a bouncy castle, and rides; Chelmsford Folk Dance Group (Sunday only); radio-controlled car races; a balloon race; dog obedience demonstrations; and a crafts marquee with over 50 stalls — selling everything from jewellery, books, prints, ceramics, toys, puppets, heraldry, clocks, and house signs, to chess sets and pine wood.





Maldon Millennium Trust

The Maldon Millennium Trust, a charity whose patrons include the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Admiral Sir Andrew Lewis, KCB, JP, and The Rt Hon John Wakeham, MP, has been the base for offering dozens of events and projects through its Executive and Special Interest Groups. *A full diary of its events can be obtained at the Moot Hall, High Street, Maldon, and details of what you can see are given on page 20. The Trust also has a stand in the display area. Visitors will be very welcome.*



The National Trust

The National Trust, an independent charity dedicated to the preservation of historic buildings and beautiful countryside, has been involved in the commemoration of the battle since it was first mooted. The trust owns Northey Island, where the Vikings camped prior to the Battle of Maldon. Northey Island is one of two islands in the River Blackwater. It was given to the National Trust in 1978 by Mr E A Lane and today covers an area of 286 acres with access only by the causeway at low tide. Mostly undisturbed salt marsh, with important populations of wintering birds such as brent geese and shelduck, it is part of the large Blackwater Flats and Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest. *Although Northey Island is open only to those people attending the re-enactment during 10th and 11th of August, access is normally by 24 hours notice via the warden in residence. Telephone: 0621 853142.*



Maldon District Council

Maldon District Council, which is vigorously pursuing its interests in promoting leisure and tourism in the District, *offers a large amount of information about what to do in the area.* It has played a helpful and essential part in the Millennium organisation, mostly through its Planning Department. The overall Council voted to underwrite the re-enactment as well as supporting the events and projects with exhibition displays and a booking referral service.



Maldon Town Council

Maldon Town Council has been especially helpful during Millennium Year by allowing its historic Moot Hall, in the High Street, to be used for exhibiting the Maldon Millennium Embroidery. *About 1,000 people a week have been seeing the embroidery and many, especially parties, are being show around the rest of the Moot Hall as well.*



National Rivers Authority

The National Rivers Authority stepped in to “save the show” with a generous offer to use its skills and resources in building a bridge over the stream which bisects the site — *you will certainly use it, and we hope you will admire it too.* That bridge, nearest the arena, is called Wulfstan Bridge, the other bridge is Maccus Bridge, and the exit to the Northey Island causeway is called Aelfhere Gate — tributes to the courage of the Saxon three who held the causeway as the Vikings tried to fight their way across to open a route to the river bank.



Politics and power in Anglo-Saxon England

The celebrations this weekend not only present the re-enactment of a battle that took place 1,000 years ago, but also recall a special landmark in the history of the English race.

The Battle of Maldon on August 11, 991AD, marked a period which saw the beginning of the decline of Anglo-Saxon society, which by 1016 resulted in a Danish king — Canute — on the throne of England. Saxon sovereignty was restored, for a short period from 1042 until 1066, with the kings Edward the Confessor and Harold. After that, Anglo-Saxon and Norman blood was eventually to combine as the basis of our English race today but if ever two battles emphasised the bravery and ability of the Anglo-Saxon warrior it was at Maldon, and later at Hastings.

The golden age of the Saxon people could be said to have begun in 871AD when the Witan — the Saxon parliament — chose Alfred The Great as king. He united most of England's warring kingdoms and encouraged the scholars of the day to come to England, thereby bringing education and literature to the Saxon race. He also built a strong navy and began to strengthen and fortify towns, especially on the coast.

This period of strength and expansion continued with his son, Edward the Elder (899-924), who came to Maldon in 912 and 916 and built a burh or fortification to defend the settlement against the Danes — this being the first mention of Maldon in the Saxon Chronicles. By his death in 924 Edward was acknowledged as king of most of England, and parts of Wales and Scotland.

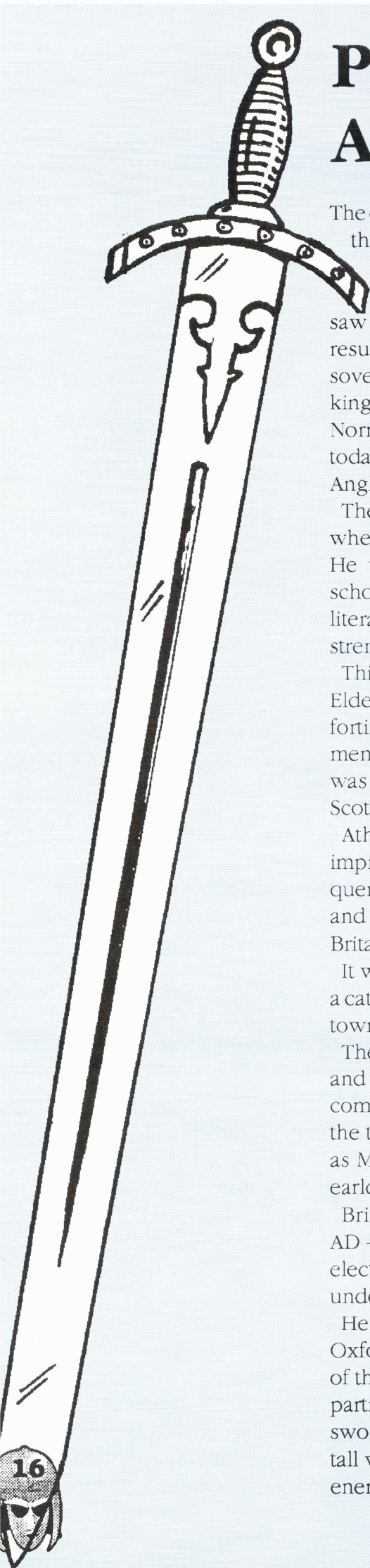
Athelstan (924-940), his son, one of the cleverest of the Saxon kings, improved the legal, administrative and political systems. He finally conquered all of England, with Wales and Scotland also paying him homage, and took for the first time the title of *Basileus* or *Rex Britanniae*, King of Britain.

It was during this reign that a Royal Mint was established in Maldon and a cathedral built in Heybridge. By then, Maldon had become an important town and port within Saxon England.

The sequence of powerful kings and a strong Witan continued until 978 and the succession of the ill-starred Aethelred The Unready ('Unready' comes from the Saxon word 'unraed' which meant ill-counselled). He took the throne while still only a child. By then the former old kingdoms such as Mercia, Wessex and East Anglia were ruled on behalf of the king by earldormen.

Brihtnoth, the Earldorman of Essex, was over sixty years of age in 991 AD — very old indeed by the standards of that time. He had been elected an earldorman in 956 with a reputation for fierceness and an undoubted skill and sense of duty in protecting the realm.

He was a very rich man, owning lands as far afield as Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire and Huntingdon. He was also a great defender and patron of the Church — he was loved by the abbeyes of this region, and in particular, Ely, for he once declared his intention to defend them, by the sword if necessary, against those who would diminish their power. Very tall with flowing white hair, he appears to have been still a strong and energetic man and a leader to follow in that fateful year of 991 AD.



A poorly advised boy-king, a weak 'parliament', earldormen with other concerns than the security of the realm...



Politically, Saxon England was ill-prepared for the coming Viking raids, the first for generations after a period of relative peace under previous strong kings. Aethelred was still a young man and the Witan was no longer the heart and wise counselling force behind the throne. Many of the earldormen, the strong men of the Anglo-Saxons, were too involved with their own little kingdoms and internal squabbles to think on a national scale and plan the defence of the realm.

Although at peace, the ordinary Saxon farming people were trained in the use of arms and could be raised as a militia known as the fyrd. The local landowner or thegn would also be a high-ranking Saxon officer in charge of the local militia plus his own fulltime force. The whole system was the forerunner of our present day Territorial Army.

The important Anglo-Saxon town of Maldon was heavily fortified by deep ditches and a stockade. It had its own boat-building industry utilised by the Saxon kings, in effect a Royal Borough even in those days. Thus Maldon was a prime target for any Viking army.

The scene was set for what was not only to become a battle of far-reaching, continuous effects but also the subject of one of the finest examples of early English literature, the Battle of Maldon poem, also known as The Song Of Maldon.

It is difficult to guess what would have happened if there had been more decisive action and wiser counsel from the Witan — or how many more earldormen would have rallied to protect the realm if the king had shown the leadership qualities of his predecessors.

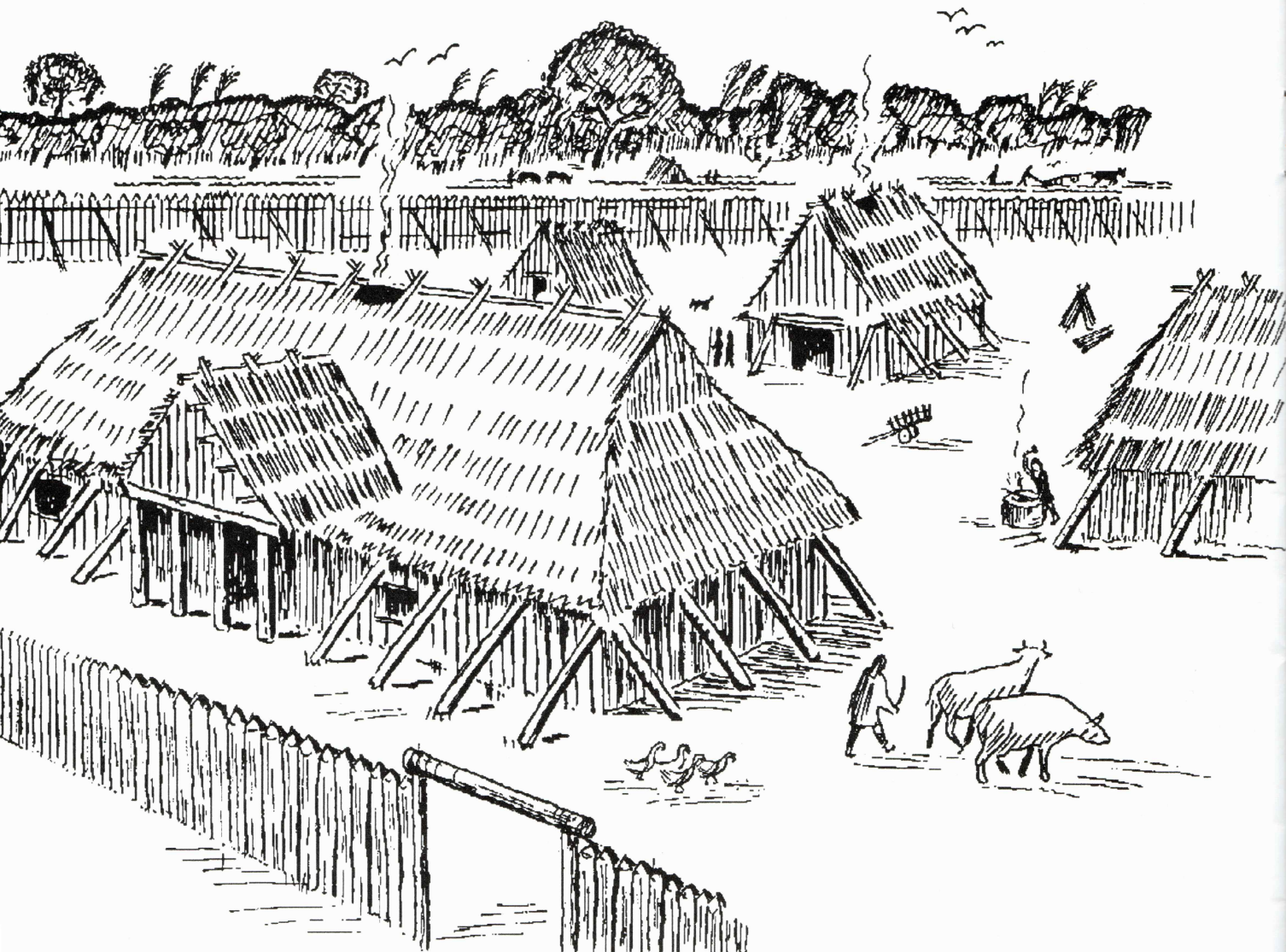
But we can say that the events of that fateful few days were crucial in the development of England and that if Brihtnoth had grasped the victory which was so close, the effect could have been even more momentous... a reminder of the fragility of human affairs even on national and millennial scales.



Aethelred coin



Maldon life . . . in 991AD



The settlement of Maeldune — the cross or monument on the hill — was first mentioned in the Saxon Chronicles of 912AD when King Edward the Elder, the son of Alfred the Great, came with his army and built a great earthwork fortification known as a burh.

This recognition of Maeldune as an important defensive site with access to the river was to continue throughout the following centuries. The Maldon Burh (eventually the term became 'borough' in the English language) grew increasingly valuable to successive kings, culminating in the granting of a Royal Charter in 1171 by King Henry II, one of the first in Norman times.

But what was Maeldune like in those early, formative years as a Royal Saxon burh? How did the people live, work and play in 991AD?

Surrounded by a wooden stockade, earth wall and a deep ditch, its natural high position would have made it an easy place to defend against any marauders.

Its population lived in timber, wattle and daub houses with thatched roofs and, of course, a great hall where the social life, as such, was centred with feasting, telling of tales and music around the open hearth with the smoke curling its way through a hole in the roof. The floors were of beaten earth. They had rubbish pits, workshops, kilns, blacksmiths, weavers, artisans and even fine jewellers who were highly regarded in Europe.

Saxon life was very orderly and disciplined and run by the local lord or thegn who in turn answered to the earldorman of the region who ruled on behalf of the king. Although the life was primitive by modern standards, the Saxons followed a strict code of administration and law. The establishment of the



Royal Mint in Maeldune finally set the town above other settlements in importance.

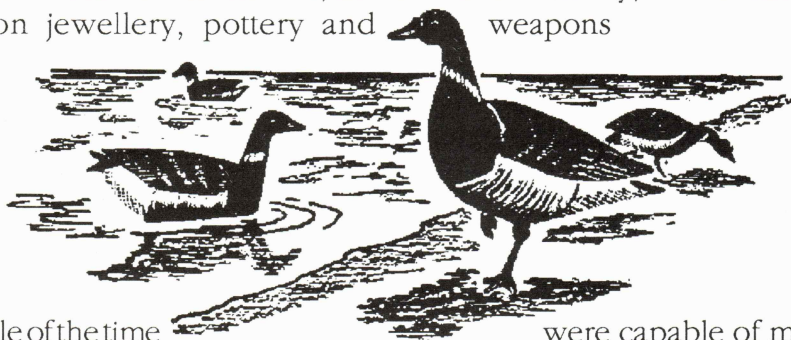
Outside the defended town lay the fields growing wheat, barley, oats and other crops. Animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses were allowed to graze freely on common pastures and beyond all this lay the great forests providing the fuel and building materials. The close proximity of the two fresh water rivers (now the Blackwater and the Chelmer) would have provided an abundance of fish and wild fowl for everyone.

The domestic life for women was hard as they also had to help in the fields as well as prepare food, salting for the winter food stocks, spin and weave, look after the children and even brew ale.

Saxon life offered very little recreation time except in the winter months when the days were at their shortest. They played games with bone dice and counters and the local minstrel was always popular, playing his harp or lyre and singing. At feast times heroic stories or poems would be recited by various guests as the ale flowed freely. Embroidery was mainly the recreation of the wives of high-ranking Saxons.

Sports, although popular, were often intended as a basic training for battle — they enjoyed such pastimes as wrestling, jumping, throwing and horse riding. Hunting, hawking and wild fowling were also followed.

When the Anglo-Saxons ceased to follow their pagan beliefs (and became converted to Christianity) they no longer buried ornaments and valuable artefacts with their dead. This meant that we, in the 20th century, lost a fine source of Anglo-Saxon jewellery, pottery and weapons



Most people of the time were capable of making items for daily use, from tools and weapons to household implements and textiles. These skills with the hands led to the finer art of jewellery and ornaments. Caskets were carved intricately in bone. Disc brooches, pins, rings, necklaces in gold, silver and bronze, decorative glass, wood, pottery and weapons were common. In materials, the finely-woven cloth in colourful motifs were the equal of the craftsmen of future centuries.

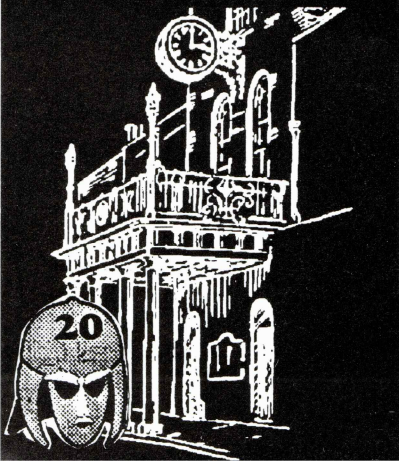
With the coming of Christianity, many Saxons learned to write in Latin or in the early English which produced the poem of the Battle of Maldon. Education mostly lay with the church whose priests recorded many events and actions which have done so much to inform us of that period.

Books were of parchment made from animal skins with the covers made of wood and leather and the quill pen was used with ink made from candle soot. Some of these illustrated manuscripts became treasures of the abbeys and monasteries and today are the priceless examples of our Saxon heritage.

Most of the churches, like other buildings in Saxon England, were built of wood — such as the first church by the waterside (on the site of St Mary's overlooking the river). Stone craftsmen were later brought in from the continent but such a difficult and expensive material to quarry and work was confined to important churches and royal palaces. It is interesting to note, therefore, that a stone cathedral was built in Heybridge, on the site of present-day St Andrews, in the reign of King Athelstan (924-940AD).

Our strong Saxon heritage is still apparent and with us in our lives today, within our laws, church, administration system and language. Historians regard the Saxon period from 400AD to 1066 as the most formative in the long history of the English speaking peoples and Maldon played its own proud part in that history.





Places in Maldon and the District to visit

During this Millennium year there have been a number of projects undertaken to celebrate Maldon's history. These are available for you to see and, additionally, there are many other interesting places to visit. These include . . .

The Millennium Embroidery: Acclaimed nationally as a fine work of art, it has seven panels of intricate and colourful embroidery telling the story of Maldon from 991 to 1991. It can be seen at the Moot Hall, Maldon High Street, daily from 10am-4 pm (closed Sundays, except during the re-enactment weekend). Admission: Adults, £1; Children, 50p; Pensioners, 50p. Parties by arrangement (telephone: Maldon 857373). Below: drawing from the embroidery.



The Millennium Garden: A faithful reproduction of the kind of garden you would have found in 10th century England. Come and see what kind of flowers and herbs were commonplace then in a restful setting. Open daily at St Peter's churchyard at the top of Market Hill. Admission free but donations appreciated.

The Millennium Stained Glass Window: A special Millennium stained glass window is being dedicated at the historic St Mary's Church, Church Street, Maldon, on August 11th. Visit this delightful riverside church known to thousands of people as it is viewed across the marine lake at the Promenade Park.

The Pride of Maldon Rose: The rose was raised by Harkness especially for the commemoration of the Battle of Maldon. You can see drawings and, we hope, the rose itself at the Millennium Stand in the display area. You can order now for autumn delivery.

Maldon, as you would expect of such an ancient Town, has many places to interest the visitor, and the surrounding District is rich in historical and cultural sites. These include:

The Moot Hall: High St, Maldon. Built as a private residence in the 1400s, it became the Moot Hall of the Corporation of Maldon in 1576 and has remained the meeting place for the Aldermen and

Councillors of Maldon to the present day. The ground floor was a police station from 1836 to 1920 and the courtroom was used until the 1950s and again in recent years. The spiral staircase, one of only two remaining in the country, bears fine testimony to the mediaeval bricklayers' art. Open to visitors by appointment (Tel 0621 857373).

All Saints Church: High Street, Maldon. One of the most attractive churches in Essex with its unique triangular tower. It dates in part from the 11th and 12th centuries. Its Washington Window was given by the people of Malden Massachusetes in memory of The Rev Lawrence Washington, the great, great grandfather of the first US President, who is buried there. It is the Town's main church and visitors are welcomed inside.

St Peter's Tower & Plume Library: The famous Plume Library, donated to the Town by Dr Thomas Plume in 1704, is housed upstairs in St Peter's Tower, by the junction of Market Hill and the High Street. The building also houses the Town's main library on the ground floor.

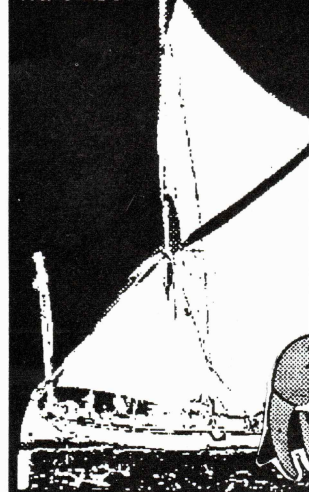
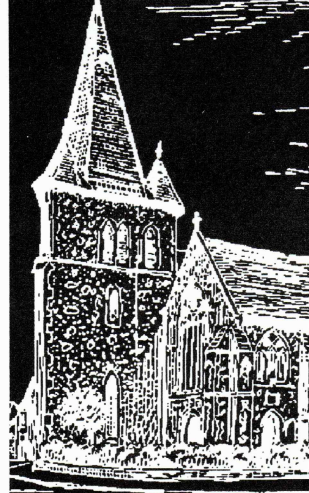
St Mary's Church: This riverside church, known as the Mariners Beacon because of its beacon which, for centuries, was a landmark for returning seamen, has become symbolic of Maldon through many paintings and photographs. A church has existed on this site since Saxon times and it serves its congregation today with as much enthusiasm as in the past.

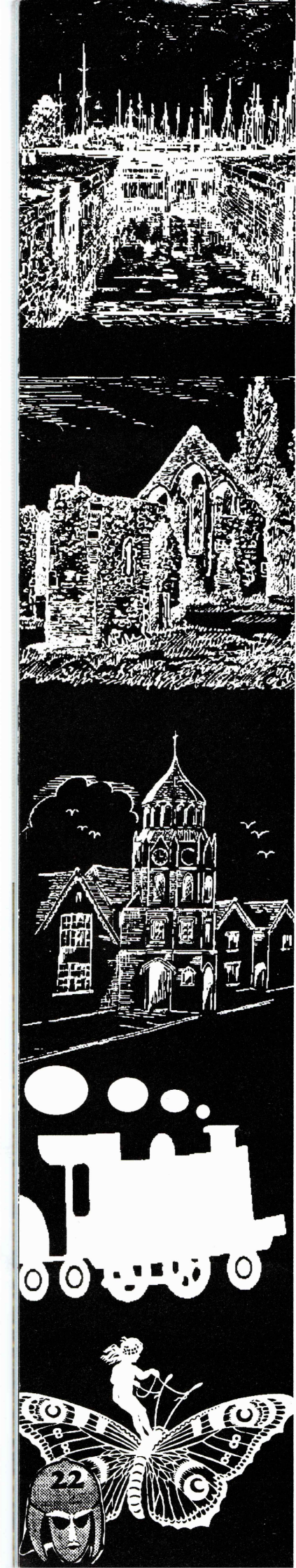
Maldon High Street: Shopping here is interesting and varied as you walk from West Square at the top to the bottom of Town and the Hythe Quay. It has the added bonus of old world courtesy and service still in evidence. Many of the buildings date from the 16th century and have long and interesting histories. Maldon Book Shop, for example, was the home of Edward Bright, The Fat Man of Maldon, whose waistcoat went round Seven Hundred Men (you can usually see a replica at the Oakwood Craft Centre but it is on display in the display area).

The Promenade Park: The pride and joy of Maldon, this 36 acre park which runs down the the banks of the Blackwater, was opened in 1895 on land given by E A Fitch. A haven for families in the summer months with its open, wide grasslands and avenues of trees, marine lake and kiosks.

The Hythe Quay: This attractive quayside is the home of the Thames Sailing Barges, with their distinctive russet sails, once the dominant method of transportation on this coast. These were the juggernauts of their day, carrying huge loads with no more than a skipper and a boy as crew. The Quay, with its pleasant walk and historic public houses, is very much part of Maldon's long maritime history. It can be reached via the Promenade Park, or along Church Street from the bottom of the High Street.

Heybridge Basin and the Canal: The Chelmer and Blackwater canal, which was completed in 1795, runs from Chelmsford to





Heybridge Basin, a distance of 14 miles. A very pretty canal, ideal for the walker along its old tow path as it cuts across meadows and through 12 lock gates offering some of the best of tranquil countryside scenery. The basin itself is a restful haven for the visitor alongside the canal and the River Blackwater, with its boat moorings and its riverside public houses.

St Peter-on-the-Wall: Situated right out on the Dengie peninsular at Bradwell-on-Sea, this little chapel was built by Saint Cedd in 654 AD as the first foothold of Christianity in the kingdom of the East Saxons. It was built from the remains of the Roman fort of Othona, which fell into disrepair after the Romans left several centuries earlier. It is worth visiting for its peaceful isolation and the ever present birds on the sea wall. Very good for walkers. It is reached via the village.

St Giles Leper Hospital Ruins: Spital Road, Maldon. This hospice was built by King Henry II in 1164 for the people of Maldon who were suffering from leprosy. Tel 0621 857373 for details of viewing the ruins.

Congregational Church: Market Hill, Maldon. Now the United Reform church (since 1972), this imposing building erected in 1801 is the site of the oldest dissenting congregation in Essex. Its first minister was the Rev Joseph Billio, renowned for his energy. The glorious interior stands witness to its popularity with a congregation of a 1,000 people before the turn of the century. Visitors welcomed. Tel: The Rev Alan Speight on 0621 852041.

Oakwood Arts & Crafts Centre: Now on two nearby sites, the crafts centre at Friars Walk has pottery, handicrafts, a health food cafe, pictures and framing, and a hall for events and playschool. The arts centre in the historic Oakwood House, opposite the police station at the top of the High Street, has a fine arts gallery, a book shop, publishing, and graphic arts. The cellar bar-restaurant is open to the public. Oakwood House was recently renovated and was shortlisted for the 1991 Design & Conservation Award.

Burnham-on-Crouch: One of the most delightful and well-known riverside towns on the East coast, situated alongside the broad River Crouch, with a strong sailing tradition. Attractive riverside walk; museum; sailing clubs; nice old high street; many good restaurants and public houses. It is known as the pearl of the East Coast.

Burnham Museum: Providence, Burnham-on-Crouch. Interesting artefacts of Burnham's farming and maritime heritage. A truly delightful little museum.

Mangapps Farm Railway Museum: Southminster Road, Burnham. A brilliant display of railway rolling stock and memorabilia including a complete country station. Something to interest everyone and a good place for the family. Rides on historic trains. Open Saturdays & Sundays all year plus Wednesday and Bank Holidays in summer. Tel 0621 784898.

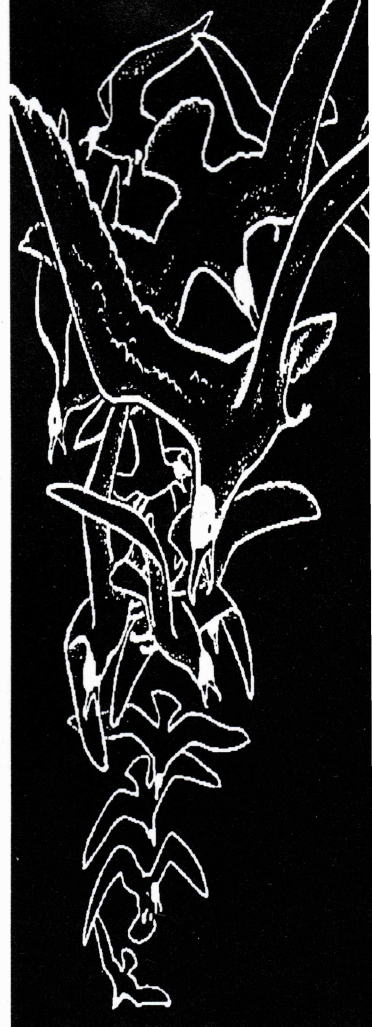
Alternative Environment Centre: Ewenny Farm, Southminster Road, Southminster. Practical, working examples of alternative energy and ways of growing fruit and vegetables — plus very clear explanations of the ways such ideas are used worldwide. Two trails: the energy trail which includes such working examples as wind turbines, solar panels powering a water fountain, and a methane digester which can power a fridge; and a nature trail, through orchards. Excellent visit for whole family.

Beeleigh Falls: Best approached by walking along the river wall from Fullbridge, skirting the golf course to pass under the new bridge over the Chelmer. At Beeleigh Falls, you will find the lock gates and the weir as the Blackwater joins the canal system. An idyllic spot in the summer months for picnics and dramatic in the winter with the rush of water over the weir. It is possible go further than the falls — a very pleasant walk along the Chelmer, through lovely countryside.

Tollesbury: This waterside village, one of the largest in the District, has a long sailing tradition. From the early 1900s it provided crews for the Americas Cup races. Attractive walks among the saltings and river wall and much nautical activity.

Purleigh Church: A fine example of the stone chequer work of East Anglia, this was the living of the Rev Lawrence Washington, rector in the 17th century. He became the great, great grandfather of George Washington, America's first president.

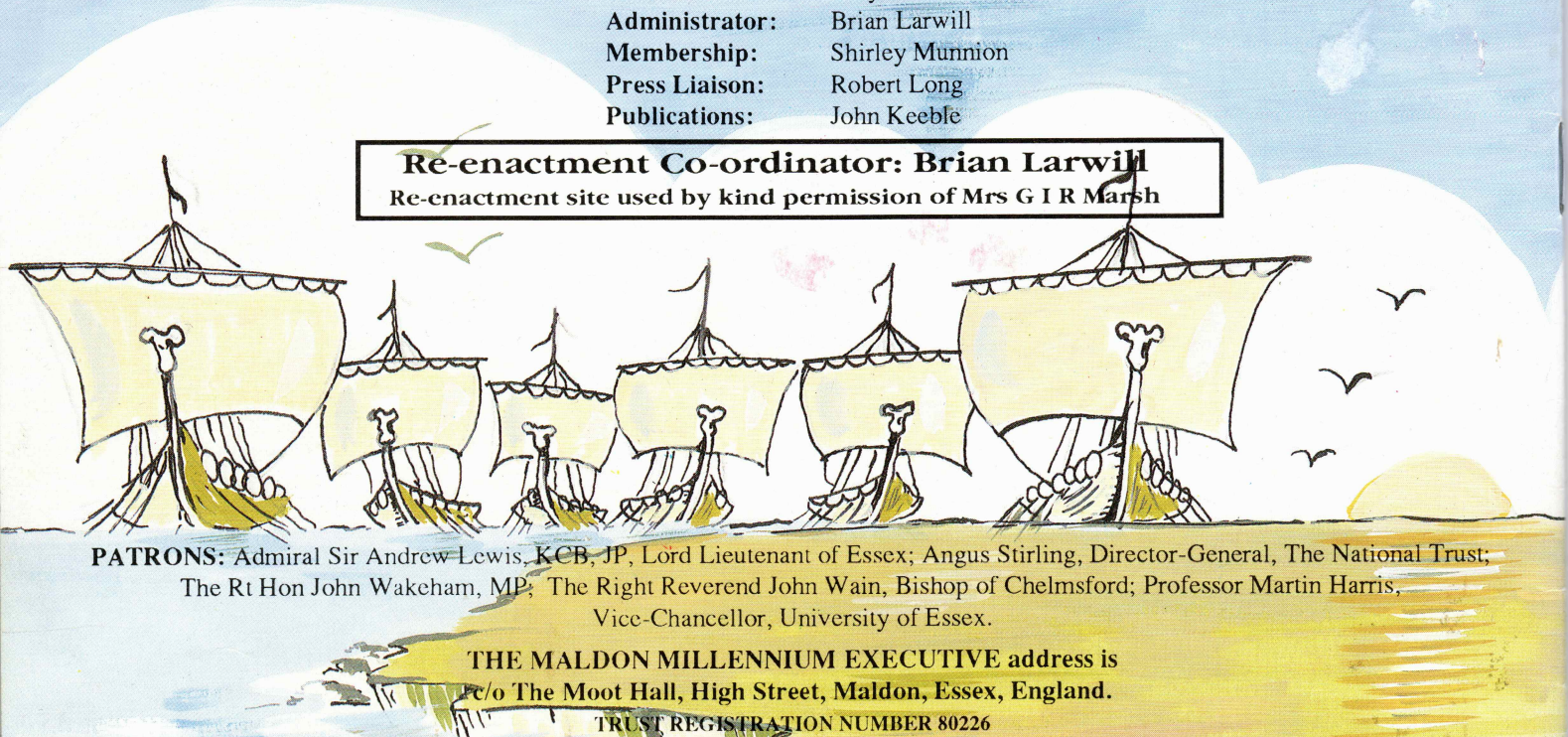
The Sea and River walls: The Maldon District is bordered by 50 miles of sea/river wall, nearly all accessible and offering some of the most isolated walks you will find in Essex. You can walk from Salcott Virley along the river banks to Tollesbury, Goldhanger, Heybridge Basin and into Maldon. From the Promenade Park, you can walk along the river wall via St Lawrence, Bradwell, and Burnham-on-Crouch to North Fambridge — often with only the sea birds for company.



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