

## Local and Essex History April Quiz 2026

### Fortifications

- 1 What were the forts of the Saxon Shore?
- 2 Name the mid-Essex motte- and-bailey castle which was once owned by Geoffrey De Mandeville and whose defences encircle the whole of the surrounding village.
- 3 Name the north Essex castle built by the De Vere family which has given its name to the village which it dominates.
- 4 Where is the only reconstructed Norman motte-and-bailey castle in the world, built on its original site?
- 5 Name the Thameside castle which was built by Hubert de Burgh c.1230 and was famously painted by John Constable some 600 years later.
- 6 Where is the largest Norman castle keep in Britain?
- 7 What is Harwich Redoubt?
- 8 Where is Coalhouse Fort?
- 9 A line of what sort of defences (11 in all) was built from St Osyth to Walton-on-the-Naze in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century?
- 10 In the second World War a chain of small defensive concrete buildings was erected across much of Essex in anticipation of German Invasion. By what name are these buildings generally known?

## **Local and Essex History April Quiz 2026** [Denise Phipps](#)

### **Fortifications**

1. The Saxon Shore forts are 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century Roman coastal fortifications built to defend the Eastern and Southern coasts of England. This was to defend the country against Maritain raiders mainly by the Saxons.

The keysites range between nine and eleven that span from Norfolk to Hampshire and are mainly located on river estuaries,  
Brandunum in Norfolk known as Brancaster  
Gariannonum in Norfolk Burgh Castle.  
Ofhona Bradwell on Sea.  
Reguibium Reculver Kent,  
Rutupiae Richborough Kent,  
Dubris Dover Castle Kent  
Portus Lemains Lympre Kent  
Anderitum Pevensey Castle East Sussex  
Portus Adurareni Portchester Castle Hampshire

At Skegness there is a sucken fort, also there are possible remains of signal stations at Thornham Norfolk, Corton Suffolk, Hadleigh Essex.

Info: [historic.uk](http://historic.uk)  
[Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)

2. Pleshey is a village in Essex where you will be able to see the remains of a mound where a motte and bailey wooden medieval castle stood which was built by the De Mandeville family after the Norman Conquest.  
Motte is a high man-made hill surrounded by a bailey a castle yard or ward.  
During the reign of King Stephen, Geoffrey de Mandeville 11 who was the Earl of Essex was imprisoned and in 1143 Geoffery fortified his castle in Pleshey, later it was returned to the family and refortified.

Info: [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)  
[Chelmsford.gov.uk](http://Chelmsford.gov.uk)

3. The Earls of Oxford known as the De Vere family built a castle at Hedingham a village in Chelmsford. Hedingham Castle is a well-preserved 12<sup>th</sup> century Norman Keep. The 900-year-old castle has a 100ft keep and a Banquet Hall and is set within 160 acres of gardens and woodland, where the current custodians Jason Lindsey a direct descendant of the De Vere family and his wife Demetra who live in the castle.

The couple have transformed the castle into a popular wedding venue, also the castle is often a venue for reenactments of Historical interest and they also focus on weekend for nature and wildlife.

The family have also produced their own brand of Gin.

The castle has featured in the films The Reckoning in 2004.  
In 1997 the film Ivanhoe

Steps filmed part of their music video inside the castle for their single "Words are not enough."

Info: [hedinghamcastle.co.uk](http://hedinghamcastle.co.uk)

4. The only reconstructed Norman motte and bailey castle in the world and is situated in Stansted it is called Mountfitchet Castle and is built on the original 10acre site in the 11th century.

Artefacts have been found as early as Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, Viking settlements.

The site is now a unique living history museum and time capsule is owned by Mr Alan Goldsmith.

Mountfitchet Castle is open daily from March until November

Info: [mountfitchetcastle.com](http://mountfitchetcastle.com)

5. The Thameside castle built by Hubert de Burgh 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Kent is Hadleigh Castle as a defensive and stronghold against the French raids during the 100year war. Hadleigh Castle had a gateway a high tower lodging chambers and chapel and two addition towers surrounded by parkland and views of the Thames.

During 1829 John Constable painted Hadleigh Castle the painting showed the decaying manmade structure succumbing to nature.

Info: [hadleighhistory.org.uk](http://hadleighhistory.org.uk)  
[Wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadleigh_Castle)

6. The largest Norman Castle Keep in Britain is situated in Colchester it was built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century around 1076.  
It was one of the first stone keep featuring the largest stone step spiral staircase built for ceremonial purpose  
In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the keep was used as a prison and including holding people for witchcraft.

The castle is a listed Grade 1 building.

Info: [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)

7. Harwich Redoubt is a Napoleonic -era fort built between 1805-1810 to protect the harbour from the threat from a French invasion.

The fort is extremely impressive being a grade 11 listed building.  
As you look at the fort you are able to see the dry moat and has 18 casements, and an impressive 60m circular diameter  
This fort would have been able to house around 300 troops, fortunately the fort was never used.

Info: [Harwich.society.co.uk](http://Harwich.society.co.uk)

8. Coal House Fort is built in East Tilbury, Essex. It was built as an artillery fort during 1860 and the purpose was to guard the lower Thames from sea attack.

In 1949 the fort was decommissioned and became a storehouse and rented to Bata shoes for a shoes factory.

The local council then purchased it with surrounding grassland and developed into a park but the fort fell into dereliction despite having an architectural and historical significance.

A voluntary preservation group leased the fort from 1985 and is known as the Coalhouse Fort Project. Some of the funding was Heritage Lottery Fund and Warner Bros film studio, the fort was used as a location for opening scenes for the 2005 *Batman Begins*.

Coalhouse fort is known for paranormal activity, with witnesses saying they have seen apparitions and heard voices, footsteps, children's laughter also they have heard a noise like an item is being drag along the floor, others have felt a presence of being touched and figures in dark clothes walking towards them then disappearing.

Johnnie Fiori a guest medium and a paranormal investigator Ryan O'Neil and their team investigated the fort in February 2008.

The public can visit Coalhouse Fort on their open days where they have a number of reconstructions of Paranormal events and open air displays of Military equipment.

Info: [Thurrock.gov.uk](http://Thurrock.gov.uk)  
[Hauntedhappenings.co.uk](http://Hauntedhappenings.co.uk)

9. The line of defences are known as Martello Towers and can be seen along the Essex coast and they were built to protect the country from a Napoleonic invasion.

They are positioned from the south to the north and are known as

- 1 Stone Point - St Osyth
- 2 Blackhouse Wick - St Osyth
- 3 Jaywick
- 4 Eastness
- 5 Clacton Wash
- 6 Clacton-on-Sea
- 7 Holland Haven
- 8 Frinton
- 9 Frinton/Walton
- 10 Walton Cliffs
- 11 Walton Mere

From the original eleven towers there are only six remaining today.

The towers were built using around 750,000 bricks and were gun batteries and became known as Martella as they were designed from a tower which stood on Martella Point in Corsica. This tower was round 40 feet in diameter and a circular design which gave a good defence with no blind spots.

The towers had 3 mounted cannons, an armoury, there were living quarters, a heated chamber, and there would be a good supply of food and water in case they were attacked.

There are only two of these towers that are opened to the public. One at Jaywick, which is an Art Centre, the other is at St Osyth known as Stone Point and is now a museum.

Info: [stosythmuseum.co.uk](http://stosythmuseum.co.uk)  
[Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)

10. The chain of small defensive concrete buildings erected across much of Essex are called Pillboxes they were designed to slow down the invasion from the Germans. They were manned mainly by the Home Guard or the regular army. Each pillbox was manned either by 1-10 men and had narrow openings in the walls called loopholes. There is an example of one of these pillboxes in Wat Tyler country park at Pitsea.

Another pillbox design is called the Essex Lozenge and is unique to Essex Sea Walls. They either sat on the top of the wall or were built in the Sea Wall.

You can find one of these Lozenge pillboxes at Burnham on Crouch, East Tilbury marshes, Fobbing marshes and there are the remnants on the sea wall, between Thorney Bay and Hole Haven on Canvey Island.

Another rare pillbox is the Tetts Turrets at RAF Hornchurch and this is open to the public to view.

Info: [beyondthepoint.co.uk](http://beyondthepoint.co.uk)  
[Essexregiment.co.uk](http://Essexregiment.co.uk)

Information to the Quiz by Denise Phipps.

### Fortifications

The Essex Saxon Shore fort, known as Othona (or Ythanceaster), is located at Bradwell-on-Sea on the Dengie Peninsula, where the River Blackwater meets the North Sea. The site is famously marked by the 7th-century chapel of St Peter-on-the-Wall, which was built directly over the Roman ruins.

Key Details About Othona (Bradwell-on-Sea):

Purpose: Built around 210–300 AD to defend the coast and secure the entrance to the Blackwater estuary.

Location: The site is found at the eastern edge of the Dengie Peninsula, often accessed via a half-mile footpath from the village of Bradwell-on-Sea.

Current State: Due to severe coastal erosion, most of the original Roman fort has been lost to the sea, but the area remains an "atmospheric" and historically significant location.

Ref: Wikipedia

Pleshey Castle was built in the latter 11 century by the de Mandeville family after the Norman Conquest. Following the political power struggles during the reign of King Stephen, Geoffrey de Mandeville II, Earl of Essex, was imprisoned in 1143 and forfeited his castle at Pleshey. It was later returned to the family and re-fortified. In 1215, Geoffrey de Mandeville III was one of the Barons who forced King John to sign the Magna Carta, but John subsequently laid siege to the castle on Christmas Eve and captured it. Later, it passed to the de Bohun family by marriage in 1227/8 and subsequently to Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester in 1374. Documents from the time show that the castle was a large and wealthy estate. By the mid 16 century it had become ruinous. Pleshey is one of the finest surviving examples of an earthen motte and bailey castle. The great mound, or motte, formed its central defensive feature surrounded by a moat. Much of the domestic life of the castle was centred in the adjacent bailey, a kidney-shaped enclosure protected by a bank and ditch. Ref: Chelmsford City Council.

The crown jewel of Hedingham is its awe-inspiring iconic Norman Keep, a marvel of medieval architecture that has stood the test of time. Completed around 1140 and built of stone from Barnack, this towering fortress was designed not only to defend but also to impress, with grand rooms, arched windows and walls soaring over 100 feet high. It is one of the best-preserved Norman keeps in Europe, offering a rare glimpse into the lives of the lords and ladies who once walked its halls.

Hedingham Castle's story is intertwined with the most significant events of English history. From the de Vere family's involvement in the signing of the Magna Carta to their prominent roles in the Wars of the Roses, the castle was more than just a home—it was a seat of power. During the Tudor period, the castle entertained royalty, including Queen Elizabeth I and Henry VII, adding another layer to its remarkable past.

[Hedinghamcastle.co.uk/our history](http://Hedinghamcastle.co.uk/our%20history)

Mountfitchet Castle is believed to have been an early Iron Age fort and Roman, Saxon and Viking settlement. Artefacts found on the site from these periods support this belief. In 1066 the site was attacked by the Normans and Robert Gernon built his castle here, making it his chief seat and the head of his Barony. Robert Gernon (or Robert Greno as he is referred to in the [Domesday Book](#) of 1086) came over from France with [William the Conqueror](#), and was rewarded with this lordship

and several others in the county. The male line of the Gernon family continued for only five generations.

## Conservation

Mountfitchet Castle is a [scheduled monument](#). In the 1980s the castle was reconstructed as a tourist attraction. The grounds were cleared to reveal the original earthworks and mounds and after years of battling with planners, in 1980 the work began to reconstruct Mountfitchet Castle. After many years of work the restoration of Mountfitchet Castle was complete, and it was opened to the public in 1985. It is unique in being the only wooden Motte and Bailey reconstruction on its original site anywhere in the world.

Ref: Wikipedia

Hadleigh Castle is a ruined fortification in the [English](#) county of [Essex](#), overlooking the [Thames Estuary](#) from south of the town of [Hadleigh](#). Built after 1215 during the reign of [Henry III](#) by [Hubert de Burgh](#), the castle was surrounded by [parkland](#) and had an important economic and defensive role. The castle was significantly expanded and remodelled by [Edward III](#), who turned it into a grander property, designed to defend against a potential French attack, as well as to provide the [King](#) with a convenient private residence close to [London](#). Built on a soft hill of [London clay](#), the castle has often been subject to [subsidence](#); this, combined with the sale of its stonework in the 16th century, has led to it now being ruined. The remains are now preserved by [English Heritage](#).

The English painter [John Constable](#) visited Hadleigh in 1814 and made a drawing of the castle as preparation for ten oil sketches and a single painting. The oil painting *Hadleigh Castle* was produced in 1829 and exhibited at the [Royal Academy](#) in the same year

[William Booth](#) purchased Hadleigh Castle and its surrounding site in 1891 for the use of the [Salvation Army](#), which established a farm to train the English poor prior to them being sent overseas to the [British colonies](#). The castle is still surrounded by the 19th-century Salvation Army farm, and beyond that by [Hadleigh Country Park](#), owned and managed by [Essex County Council](#) and a [Site of Special Scientific Interest](#) with special regard for invertebrates. In 2008, [Hadleigh Farm](#), close to the castle, was announced as the venue for the [mountain biking competition](#) in the [2012 Summer Olympics](#). Ref: Wikipedia

Colchester Castle is a [Norman castle](#) in [Colchester](#), [Essex](#), [England](#), dating from the second half of the [eleventh century](#). It is located in, and gives its name to, [Castle Park](#). The [keep](#) of the castle is mostly intact and is the largest example of its kind anywhere in Europe, due to it being built on the foundations of the Roman [Temple of Claudius](#). The castle endured a three-month [siege](#) in 1216, but had fallen into disrepair by the seventeenth century when the [curtain walls](#) and some of the keep's upper parts were demolished; its original height is debated. The remaining structure was used as a prison and was partially restored as a large garden [pavilion](#), but was purchased by [Colchester Borough Council](#) in 1922. The castle has, since 1860, housed Colchester Museum, which has an important collection of Roman exhibits. It is a [scheduled monument](#) and a [Grade I listed building](#).

Ref: Wikipedia

The Redoubt was built between 1808 and 1810 to protect the port of Harwich against the threat of Napoleonic invasion. It was part of the [scheme](#) proposed in 1805 that included the construction of 55 [Martello Towers](#) on the [East Anglian](#) coast, although 29 were

3

actually built. Although similar in design to the earlier [Dymchurch Redoubt](#) and [Eastbourne Redoubt](#), Harwich Redoubt differed in being designed to mount ten, rather than eleven guns.

The redoubt was built on a hilltop just outside the town, giving an unrestricted [field of fire](#) across the estuaries of the [River Stour](#) and the [River Orwell](#) which form the entrance to the harbour, and allowed [interlocking fire](#) with the guns of [Landguard Fort](#) on the opposite shore. The construction was supervised by Major [Alexander Bryce](#) of the [Royal Engineers](#) at an estimated cost of £32,000.

Harwich Redoubt is built mainly from brick with stone details, and is circular in shape, about 61 metres (200 ft) in diameter, with a central parade ground 26 metres (85 ft) across. The ground floor consists of 18 [casemates](#) or vaulted chambers radiating from the parade ground. These casemates were used as barrack accommodation, stores, ablutions and latrines, and a cookhouse. Two of them form the [magazine](#) and [shell](#) store; hoists lifted ammunition from the lower level to the gun emplacements, which are a [terreplein](#) or gun platform formed by the roof of the casemates, which has ten [embrasures](#) for cannon. The [ditch](#) is some 16 metres (52 ft) wide and 7 metres (23 ft) deep, with a brick counter scarp wall set a little lower than the level of the [parapet](#) of the gun platform so as to protect the scarp wall from enemy fire. Ref: Wikipedia

Eleven martello towers were originally constructed along the 13 mile stretch of Essex coastline known as the Clacton Beach, some adding to existing batteries or replacing earlier signal stations.

The East coast towers were each constructed from about 750,000 bricks. The bricks were joined with a mortar made from a mixture of ash, lime and tallow which set extremely hard. The bricks were laid in a complex interlocking pattern around a central circular domed shape. This made the structure extremely strong, capable of enduring attack from the sea.

Lee King

## **Local And Essex History April Quiz    Linda Lynch**

### **Fortifications**

1. 3rd century Roman coastal fortifications.
2. Pleshey Saffron Walden.
3. Hedingham Castle Halstead.
4. Mount Fitchet.
5. Hadleigh Castle.
6. Colchester.
7. Circular fort built in 1800.
8. Tilbury, north bank on the Thames.
9. Martello Towers, 11 from St Ostyth to Walton on the Naze.
10. Concrete pill boxes, 400 in all, one at Watt Tyler park.

## Essex & Local History

### Fortifications

1. Roman forts along East and South East coast, part of a fortification system on both sides of the channel. Built late 3<sup>rd</sup> century. There are several theories about their purpose but by the 4<sup>th</sup> century they were in defense against piracy by Franks and Saxons. They were overseen by the Count of the Saxon Shore. A number survive: Brancaster and Caister-on-Sea in Norfolk, Reculver and Dover in Kent
2. Pleshey Castle. Built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (1096-1196). A man-made hill, wooden palisade and a keep or tower. There were some brick buildings, demolished in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with only the bridge over the moat remaining. The north baily and moat are buried under the modern village.
3. Hedingham Castle. Built around 1100 by Aubrey de Vere. It is the best- preserved Norman keep in England (missing 2 turrets)
4. Mountfitchet in Stansted, built 1980-1985. It has a Norman village inside a palisade.
5. Hadleigh Castle. Painted 1829, it depicts the castle on a " morning after a stormy night". It shows a decaying castle and is an expression of Constable's grief after the death of his wife. The 6ft canvas is in the USA, in the Yale center in Connecticut.
6. Rochester Castle. Built in the 12th century. It has a 113ft high keep and held fast against several sieges.
7. An 1808 defensive fort to protect the port of Harwich against invasion by Napoleon. A redoubt (meaning a place of retreat) being a small fortified outpost or enclosed defensive stronghold.
8. East Tilbury. A 19<sup>th</sup> century artillery fort to defend against invaders and raiders.
9. Martello towers. Round defensive forts against feared invasion by Napoleon. Tower A at Stone Point has a rare forward battery. The towers were inspired by the Watch Towers of Genoa, which withstood bombardment by British warships.
10. Pillboxes. There are about 400 of them of different types: Essex lozenge pillboxes, octagonal ones along the Essex coast, integrated in the wall one at Wat Tyler park. Some have antitank "dragons teeth". They were built of hardened concrete for the Homeguard in 1940.

Figure 1 Willy Mott

## Fortifications

### **1. What were the forts of the Saxon Shore?**

The forts were constructed during the 3rd century to control shipping and trade, and later to protect Roman Britain from seaborne invasion by Saxon raiders from across the North Sea.

Othona (modern-day Bradwell-on-Sea) is the primary recognized Saxon Shore fort in Essex. Located on the Dengie peninsula, and protected the Blackwater estuary. Today, its site is marked by the nearby 7th-century Chapel of St Peter-on-the-Wall, which was built reusing Roman masonry.



### **2. Name the mid-Essex motte- and-bailey castle which was once owned by Geoffrey De Mandeville and whose defences encircle the whole of the surrounding village.**

**Walden Castle** is the substantial ruined walls of the Norman tower-keep, of a motte and bailey castle in Saffron Walden. The earliest known reference to it is in 1141, when it was in the ownership of Geoffrey de Mandeville II. It was one of several castles he used to reinforce his power across the region.

### **3. Name the north Essex castle built by the De Vere family which has given its name to the village which it dominates.**

**Hedingham Castle**, is a well-preserved example of Norman architecture. Its imposing stone keep dates back to the early 12<sup>th</sup> century and was built by Aubrey de Vere, a prominent Norman baron and the first Earl of Oxford. The de Vere family, one of the most powerful noble houses in medieval England, maintained ownership of the castle for over 500 years. The first Aubrey de Vere fought with William the Conqueror and was rewarded with vast estates in Middlesex and Essex.



*Hedingham Castle*

**4. Where is the only reconstructed Norman motte-and-bailey castle in the world, built on its original site?**

**Mountfitchet Castle** is a national Historic Monument. It is believed to have been an early Iron Age fort and Roman, Saxon and Viking settlement. Artefacts found on the site from these periods support this. In 1066 the site was attacked by the Normans and Robert Gernon, the Duke of Boulogne, built his castle here, making it his chief seat and the head of his Barony.



**5. Name the Thameside castle which was built by Hubert de Burgh c.1230 and was famously painted by John Constable some 600 years later.**

The French threat was still a real one and Hubert decided a castle was needed to guard the Thames and the approach to London and he had just the spot on his land in Hadleigh. **Hadleigh Castle** was built in 1230.

Hubert de Burgh entered the service of Prince John in the 1190s, When Prince John became King John in 1199, Hubert was his Chamberlain . He obviously impressed the Court, because he was showered with gifts by the king, receiving the honour of Corfe in 1199 and three important castles in the Welsh Marches in 1201 (Grosmont, Skenfrith and Llantilio). He was also High Sheriff of Dorset, Somerset, Herefordshire and Berkshire and castellan of Launceston and Wallingford castles. His success was due to his exceptional ability as an administrator and a soldier. In 1203 de Burgh was appointed Constable of Windsor Castle and Dover Castle.

## **6. Where is the largest Norman castle keep in Britain?**

**Colchester** was the first of the great keeps and the largest built by the Normans in Europe in around 1076. It was constructed on the foundations of the Temple of Claudius, built when Colchester was the first Roman capital of Britain. It measures 46 by 33.5 metres. roughly 1.5 times the size of the Tower of London's White Tower,

(NB: The tallest keep is in Rochester Castle)

## **7. What is Harwich Redoubt?**

The moated circular Redoubt Fort was built in 1808 to defend the harbour against the threatened invasion of Napoleonic forces. It mounted ten 24-pounders and housed a regiment of soldiers with sufficient food and stores to withstand a lengthy siege. Fortunately it was never called upon to demonstrate its powers. Part of the fort is now used as a military museum. Battle re-enactments and other events are held during the summer months. The fort was restored by the Harwich Society as a voluntary project.



## **8. Where is Coalhouse Fort?**

Coalhouse Fort is an artillery fort built in the 1860s to guard the lower Thames from seaborne attack. It stands at Coalhouse Point on the north bank of the river at East Tilbury.

## **9. A line of what sort of defences (11 in all) was built from St Osyth to Walton-on-the-Naze in the early 19th Century?**

Along the East coast of the UK, there were originally 29 **Martello towers** built, between 1808 and 1812, stretching between St Osyth in Essex and Aldeburgh in Suffolk. Eleven were originally constructed along the 13 mile stretch of Essex coastline known as the Clacton Beach.

The Martello Towers usually have two main floors and often a basement. On top is a gun platform designed so the gun could rotate to fire in any direction. The towers were typically up to 14m s in diameter and 12m high. The walls were up to 3.8 metres thick and a tower could house up to 25 men with supplies and ammunition.

Martello Towers were based upon an old Corsican defensive tower which was constructed in 1565. In 1794 two British Warships bombarded the tower for two days and failed to inflict any significant damage. The tower was at Mortella Point. When the design was brought back to Britain the name was mistakenly changed to Martello.



*Jaywick Martello*

**10. In the Second World War a chain of small defensive concrete buildings was erected across much of Essex in anticipation of German Invasion. By what name are these buildings generally known?**

Concrete defensive bases which were sited in key locations throughout Essex became known as **pillboxes**, mainly from their shape, and were made from reinforced concrete and designed for erection by soldiers and local labour. They commanded a line of fire on potential enemy invasion and were designed to house rifles and light machine guns.

Some were built directly into existing sea walls offering a good line of fire across the beach whilst providing more security for the occupants.

Most are to be found on the coast although some like those viewed from the A130 road outside Chelmsford, are at least 15 miles inland.

Pill boxes now belong to the landowner and so are on private property although many are sited on public rights of way.



*Pillbox near Bradwell on Sea*

### **Mavis Regan**

*Acknowledgements: English Heritage, Saffron Walden Museum, Hedingham Castle, Mountfitchet Castle, Hadleigh and Thundersley Community Archive, The Harwich Society, St Osyth Museum, The Essex Regiment ..... and Wikipedia*

**FORTIFICATIONS**

**Lyn and Alan Aldridge**

**1. What were the forts of the Saxon Shore?**

These were a series of 11 Forts along the coast from Norfolk right round to Hampshire protecting important rivers, harbours and estuaries.

Originally built around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD to protect shipping and trade for the Roman Empire they appear to have been under the command of the Count of the Saxon Shore Forts, a post created by the Roman Emperor Constantine 1.

They remained in use until around the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century when the Romans withdrew from Britain.



In Essex one is placed at Othona (Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex) to control the estuaries of the rivers Blackwater and Colne – and hence Colchester inland.

This site was replaced later by St Peters Chapel, which used stones from the original fort.

Photo: St Peters Chapel courtesy of Peter Wiggans and the u3a Walking Group.

The Thames Estuary and London was protected from Regulbium (Reculver, Kent).

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- 2. Name the mid-Essex motte-and-bailey castle which was once owned by Geoffrey De Mandeville and whose defences encircle the whole of the surrounding village.**

Geoffrey de Mandeville, 1st Earl of Essex, was a powerful baron who built and fortified several motte-and-bailey castles across England during "The Anarchy" (a devastating civil war in the 12th century) to consolidate his power.

Pleshey Castle was North of Chelmsford, West of Great Leighs and East of the "Easter" and "Roding" villages. Whilst the castle no longer exists the line of the roads around Pleshey indicate the boundaries of the original motte construction.

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- 3. Name the north Essex castle built by the De Vere family which has given its name to the village which it dominates.**



**Hedingham Castle.**

Located in the village of Castle Hedingham, it was constructed in the 12th century by Aubrey de Vere and features one of the best-preserved Norman keeps in Western Europe.

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**4. Where is the only reconstructed Norman motte-and-bailey castle in the world, built on its original site?**

The only reconstructed wooden motte-and-bailey castle in the world built on its original site is **Mountfitchet Castle**. It is located in the village of Stansted Mountfitchet in Essex, England which is just Northwest of Stansted airport.

The site was an Iron Age hill fort before being taken over in the Norman conquest.

The original Mountfitchet Castle was built in the late 11th century by the Norman baron Robert Gernon (who later took the name Montfichet) shortly after the 1066 Norman Conquest.

It was used in the Civil War 17<sup>th</sup> C and largely destroyed. It was left to nature and laid totally forgotten until 1975 when the owner, Alan Goldsmith, had a dream to rebuild and restore the castle to its former glory.

It is now an attraction where visitor can view the conditions and environment of nearly a 1000 years of history and often visited by school and community groups.

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5. Name the Thameside castle which was built by Hubert de Burgh c.1230 and was famously painted by John Constable some 600 years later.



Of course, the origin of Castle Point! **Hadleigh Castle**. Strange decision to build a castle on such poor shifting, eroding ground but it was the best vantage point to view marauding invaders coming up the Thames and at least some of it is still standing after 800 years.

It was later renovated by King Edward III in the early 14thC to defend against potential French attacks

John Constable 1829 oil painting, **Hadleigh Castle**, The Mouth of the Thames—Morning after a Stormy Night



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6. Where is the largest Norman castle keep in Britain?



The largest Norman castle keep in Britain is **Colchester Castle** in Essex. Measuring roughly 150 by 110 feet.

Its base is 1.5 times the size of the White Tower at the Tower of London, making it the largest ever built in Britain and the largest surviving example in all of Europe.

## 7. What is Harwich Redoubt?

The **Harwich Redoubt** is a circular, Napoleonic-era fort located in Harwich, Essex. Built between 1808 and 1810, it was designed to defend the vital deep-water port of Harwich from a potential French invasion.



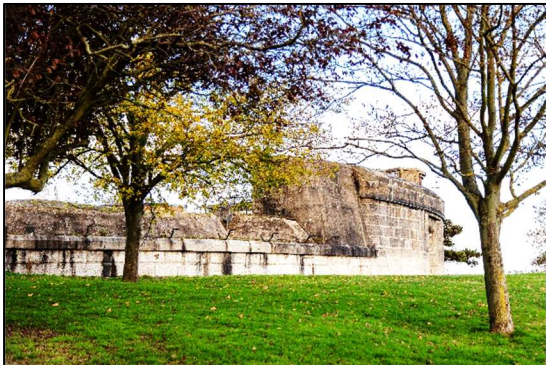
It is on the peninsular at the confluence of the Orwell River, Stour River and the estuary to the North Sea and is directly opposite Felixstowe across the water – so situated ideally to protect unwanted entry to the rivers.

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## 8. Where is Coalhouse Fort?

**Coalhouse Fort** is an artillery fort situated on the northern bank of the River Thames in the village of East Tilbury, Essex.

It was built in the 1860s to guard the lower Thames from seaborne attack. It is not as old as Tilbury Fort. There were several previous constructions before the current fort was built.



The fort itself is not open for visitors but all the surrounding land is accessible and has great views of the Thames, plenty of wildlife, some lakes (used for model boats) and the shoreline with a WW2 radar station. And there is a café.

A radar tower, still standing – just! manned by naval personnel was also built south of the fort by 1941 to cover the approaches to the minefield.



**9. A line of what sort of defences (11 in all) was built from St Osyth to Walton-on-the-Naze in the early 19th Century?**

A line of **Martello towers** (11 in total, lettered A through K) was built along the Essex coast from St Osyth to Walton-on-the-Naze between 1809 and 1812. These small, circular fortifications were constructed by the British government as a defensive chain to guard against a threatened Napoleonic invasion.

Featuring thick masonry walls and a 360-degree pivoting cannon on the roof, they remain prominent historical landmarks today, with about 47 surviving in England.



Martello Tower F at Clacton

In Essex, we have the Towers at Brightlingsea (A), Jaywick (C), and D, E, F between Jaywick and Clacton.

**What happened to Tower B?**

Located at St. Oysth, it was pulled down in 1967 to make way for a housing development. Sounds familiar, nothing changes!

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**10. In the second World War a chain of small defensive concrete buildings was erected across much of Essex in anticipation of German Invasion. By what name are these buildings generally known?**

**PILLBOXES.** small defensive concrete buildings.

Across Essex and the rest of the UK, they were built as a rapid anti-invasion defence. Many of the Essex pillboxes, especially along the Thames Estuary, were part of the vital GHQ (General Headquarters) Line designed to protect London. Some of these surviving defensive structures can still be found around the marshlands and local country parks today.



Pillbox on Benfleet Creek  
Benfleet Community Archive

In South Benfleet, we are right next to an important stretch of World War II anti-invasion defences. Built around 1939-1940, these structures were designed to protect the mainland and the Thames approaches from a potential German invasion.

There are also pillboxes at Bowers Marsh and Wat Tyler Park.

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