# CANVEY ISLAND – A TIMELINE AS YOU DON'T KNOW IT

**Neolithic Age - Approx 10200 BC – 2000 BC**
A collection of early man-made Axe heads have been unearthed.

**The Early Stone Age Approx 6400 BC** ('Paleolithic', in fact locally only the Late **EARLY STONE AGE ['Epipaleolithic']**

This very important time for the development of man is luckily well within the range of Carbon-14 dating: our interest is only in the Post-glacial HOLOCENE (latest) level of the Stone Age, when the weather suddenly warmed up.

The separation of Britain from the European mainland after 6,400 B.C. (caused by melting ice raising the sea level and allowing the North Sea to flood the steppes to form what is now the English Channel).

These contemporary mainlanders were the forest-dwelling MAGLEMOSIANS (a North European tool-culture so-called from one of their settlements in Denmark, established a century-or-so earlier beside the Ancylus Lake (now the Baltic).

Probably descended from the North German Magdalenians, they had originally arrived (2,000 years before Britain's isolation) from the North European Plain, attracted to Britain by a sudden remarkable rise in temperature (a massive 8 degrees centigrade in 100 years).

This increase in warmth drove the local reindeer north, leaving the dense forests of birch, pine, hazel and alder to the elk, aurochs, red deer, beaver, *bos frontosus* and *bos longifrons*. Summer heat allowed the pond tortoise to flourish in East Anglia.

**MAGLEMOSIANS** hunted and 'managed' deer, understood the breeding habits and followed migration routes, but did not enclose animals) — they mainly killed young male red deer and roe deer, wild cattle and wild pig; they also fished in fresh-water lakes with harpoons and nets and, though nomadic, dwelt seasonally in lake-side raft-houses where they collected molluscs (oysters, periwinkles, cockles and mussels) and crustaceans.

Hazel-nut collecting was done in the Autumn; wild seeds were gathered at other times. 80% of their food was mammal, 15% was plant, 5% was fowl. Whilst their traces are found right across Britain from the Isle of Portland to Oronsay.

The large expanse of salt-marsh including Canvey was ideal for fishing, which was done from dug-out canoes propelled by wooden paddles (they were the first to use these).

**The Middle Stone Age ('Mesolithic')**

The MAGLEMOSIANS were joined a thousand years after their own arrival by a group from France known as the SAUVETERRIANS with whom, at least in Essex, it is thought they mixed amicably.

We cannot hope to find pottery from these times because both groups used birch-bark vessels but, since they had Early and Middle Mesolithic cultures, we may hope to discover flint tools and the famous 'Thames Pick' — which they invented here in Britain (in the Thames Valley).

Sauveterrians are identified with 'Sauveterrian Points', small lunate flints and 'backed blades'. Flint- mining began in Britain about 4,000 BC and flints were used for trading across the whole of Southern Britain by 3,750 BC.

Two polished axes, a notched arrow-shaft-scraper and a flint knife have been found at various times at Southchurch dating from this age, we can safely say the Essex stretch of the north bank of the Thames was frequented by Sauveterrians.

Spears tipped with bone or antler, and bows-and-arrows, were used to hunt the local red deer and elk. This hybrid Maglemosian/Sauveterrian Culture is known as HORSHAM (after one of their sites, containing the usual range of tools including 'core-scrapers' [or push-planes] and also the more characteristic 'Horsham Point' a hollow-based triangular flint implement).

**The New Stone Age Approx 4300 BC - 'Neolithic'**

From 4,300 B.C. the first *farmers* from what is now France visited East Anglia to seasonally exploit the pasturage. They probably came in skin-covered boats about 10 metres long with eight oarsmen and an ox, able to carry an additional eight tons of animals or grain. Their more modern culture influenced, and was to some extent adopted by, the resident Maglemosians.

Cultivation, invented in the Near East about 8,000 B.C. and reaching nearby France by 5,000 B.C., had to wait to 3,250 B.C. to begin in Britain — when a slightly-built people with delicate facial features were the first actual farming settlers to arrive by sea, via France and the Low Countries, at the south-west of England — and they worked their way gradually east.

They were the Early Neolithic 'EARLY WINDMILL HILL FOLK' (again, named from their first-known English site near Avebury, Wilts., which became the religious centre of Southern England).

They introduced the first proper pottery, weaving and agriculture (grain cropping) to Britain. Originally they kept more pigs than sheep or goats but later, oxen and sheep predominated, with some horse (for food only).

**The WINDMILL HILL FOLK**, being agricultural, therefore had to make clearings — the first in Britain — in the all-pervading forests, preferring the chalky areas to sandy soils. Since Windmill Hill Folk tended to settle gravelly uplands, it is no surprise that their nearest-known dwellings and stock-rearing sites were between Daws Heath and Thundersley Lodge.

However, though mainly agricultural, they also did fishing and fowling at lakesides (which were far more prevelant than they are now), and these pursuits may well have attracted them to Canvey — the beginnings of a four-millenia tradition.

**The Copper Age - Approx 2225 B.C.**
The first *proven* CANVEY visitors arrived during the CHALCOLITHIC AGE, when copper tools and ornaments began to be imported from the Continent.

A real industrial revolution took place about 2,225 B.C. on the arrival of the trading BEAKER FOLK at various times from Germany, Holland and Spain with their metal-working and archery skills.

From their original source in the Vosges/Ardennes they had first settled the Rhine area, then used boats launched from that river to trade with Britain and finally to migrate to settle here permanently.

It is no longer thought that they invaded in wave after wave, merely that long-standing trading arrangements were kept up and that new pottery styles used here simply reflected progress on the Continent. Status-kits of Beaker wares were confined to important people's graves on the Continent generally, but in the Netherlands and Britain they were quite common, even with the indigenous Neolithics. Much weaponry and many tools are found off British shores, and a sea-borne trade with the Mediterranean is indicated.

**Bronze Age - Approx. 2500 BC to 800 BC**
Copper and Bronze tools found also decorative bracelets.

**Iron Age - Approx. 800 BC – 400 BC (Early Iron Age)**
**400 BC – 100 BC (Middle Iron Age)**
**100 BC - 100 AD (Later Iron Age)**

Perhaps the first observations of Canvey Islands (plural and probably five to nine islands) was from the Roman Cartographer, Astrologer, Astronomer and Mathematician Claudius Ptolemy (AD. 90 to AD. 168) who himself was born in Alexandria in Egypt, then a Province of Rome) when he was surveying the Isle of Grain and Sheppey as we know them.

Ptolemy may have mentioned the island as 'Counos' or Connenus' but equally this may have been the names given to Sheppey.

As said, the mainland was covered by Forest except where Iron-age Britons had made clearances from about the fifth century B.C. and by the time of the arrival of Romans, around 43 A.D. there must have been a settlement on the Island.

Modern Canvey does not date its history into B.C or A.D. but 'before the flood' or 'after the flood' - but of course – what flood!

That said, the Islands have seen much of England's history even if there were no inhabitants at earlier time. There is little evidence to indicate what Canvey was like during those early years – no stone, brick or earthworks and of course remain - it was low marsh ground.

The Britons would have seen Triremes (Roman Galleys) pass up the river with their banks of oars rising and falling methodically – but because of the wide, soft yielding mud and the weight of the heavily armed and armour protected Romans would be generally safe from the arrows of the Britons but equally couldn't attack them in return.

Those who lived here ploughed the shore in search of whelks, cockles, periwinkles and other shellfish also venturing afloat to fish.

Canvey and its neighbours lay in the land of the Trinovantes and there may have been skirmishes between them and Cantiacca (Kent) but the struggle between Boadicea of the Iceni and the Romans which led to the sacking of London, Colchester and St. Albans would have probably passed them by.

*The Trinovantes were the Celtic tribes of Pre-Roman Britain from the North side of the Thames mainly in Essex and Suffolk. Their capital was Camulodunum (modern*

*day Colchester. They were probably the strongest tribe in Britain. They also joined in Boudica's revolt in AD. 60.*

One thing is certain – the Romans would have visited the area collecting not only wheat but salt. Salt was so important that Romans soldiers received part of the pay in it. Salarium was the salt money (blocks of salt) they received. Of course that is known as Salary.

The salt was produced from distilling sea-water in the "Red Hills" situated along the banks of the tidal rivers. Of the two hundred or so found in Essex, Canvey had at least twelve and therefore must have been a major salt producing area.

The Red Hills themselves were made from red burned earth which are found in crude pottery and pans and other items made from baked clay. The brine would crystallize into salt crystals.

At least one large villa existed in the Leigh Beck area but likely not build of brick or stone but probably of wattle and daub construction.
*Hearths, 'Red-Hill, Middens (large refuge areas) have been found here.*

Our most exciting.

The Roman occupation continued until the fourth century and then Canvey must have been at the fore of the next "invasion" to protect their lands the Romans and their British allies built defences called "Forts of the Saxon Shore"

Although the nearest defence was Othona (Bradwell) it is possible that a small camp was built at Hadleigh. Similarly the may be a smaller sized Fort at Upper Horse Island (Hole Haven Creek) before the two modern day barriers now protecting Pitsea and Fobbing marshes off modern day Canvey.

**Saxon Canvey - Approx 400 AD – 1066 AD**

The islands became good grazing pastures for sheep and under the control of nine parishes or villages in the south inland (mainland) producing Meat, Wool and of course Cheese.

The Parish or Manor owners were Southchurch, Prittlewell, Hadleigh (Sweyn) North Benfleet, South Benfleet, Barstable, Vange, Fobbing and Corringham.
In this period the name Cana's people was recorded.

**SAXON AND DANE**

There are no signs of Saxon invasion though the fact the farm at Leigh Beck was destroyed by fire could indicate that it had been attacked by Vikings.

Perhaps even it was at this time that Canvey sank from beneath the tidal wave or landslide – this point equally could have been rising sea levels.

What is certain is that "Romano-British Domestic fire-hearths which nineteen hundred years ago must have been four to five feet above high water mark, have been found at depths now twelve to thirteen feet below that level.

The only reminder of the Saxon invasion which gave the name to the county – the Land of East Saxons, is the land of Cana's people.
*Let me say also that Cana's People was a collective noun not an apparent individual.*

The Saxon settlements of the mainland were not to live in peace as the next to 'cast their eyes' were the Danes and Vikings.

King Alfred who had unified the English fought and beat Guthram making a treaty with him dividing England into two.

The East of England in Danelaw and paid taxes to the Danes then in 893 they arrived at Benfleet, Haesten the Black, leader of the party had crossed from Kent.

Benfleet was the base upon which the Danish invaders of Britain set out on many of their marauding raids against King Alfred and the English in the ninth century.

In the autumn of 892 a large Danish fleet of some two hundred and fifty vessels sailed across the channel from Boulogne.

They landed at the mouth of the River Lympne on the South Coast of Kent and in so doing were retracing the route taken by the Romans some 850 years earlier.

**HOW THE DANES WERE DEFEATED AT BENFLEET**
They towed their boats upstream to Appledore adapting a partly completed encampment for their own use whilst another small force landed on the north coast of Kent near the isle of Sheppey and fortified that encampment.

A Double threat was of concern to King Alfred fearing the two parties would combine and To counter this, he positioned his army midway between the two

camps and throughout the winter of 892 and 893 his men continually raided the invaders. The Danish chief Haesten was forced to meet with the English leader.

*Alfred was born in Wantage Oxfordshire in 849 and died in Winchester in 899. He was King of Wessex between 871 until his death in 899.*

Haeston gave oath to Alfred to keep the peace having his two sons baptised as a sign of his good intentions. Alfred and his ally Ethelred were nominated as Godfathers to the two boys.

However, the first fleet sailed across the estuary to Benfleet and was soon followed by the main force from Appledore.

At Benfleet great fortifications were raised by the creekside to make secure the base from attack and living quarters were constructed within.

Parties were constantly raiding the countryside for food and valuables and the inhabitants of nearby London suffered particularly severely.

It was decided that Edward, the son of Alfred, and Ethelred should gather men from Wessex, Mercia (the Midlands) and a strong contingent from London.

The English chose their opportunity carefully and attacked whilst Haesten was leading a strong marauding party in the midlands. The assault was completely successful and the Danes were either slaughtered or put to flight.

Most captured ships were sailed to English ports of London and Rochester and all remaining boats and materials were burnt.

During the next hundred years the fortunes of the Danes and Saxons varied. In the year 991 the Saxons under the Earldoman Brithmoth were defeated at the Battle of Maldon and in the year 1016 Canute (Knut) beat Edmund Ironside possibly at Ashingdon on the River Crouch.

Within a month of the battle, Edmund was dead and Canute was King of England.
*Cnut the Great (know as Canute) was born in Denmark around 985 AD and died in 1035 AD. He reigned between 1016 and 1035 as King of England.*

**FROM NORMAN CONQUEST TO TUDOR TIMES.**

Thirty years later, the Normans under William 1 had carried out the last real invasion and William sent his commissioners around the countryside (1087) making a survey of all land belonging to the King.

Although no mention is made of Canvey, though Benfleet and the mainland manors of Barstable and Rochford are fully detailed and it does detail jury lead ownership trials (half English and half Norman), what stock was held and its value.

The first part of the Domesday entry for South Benfleet runs:
"In Benfleet St. Peters has several hides and thirty acres which belong to the church of St. Mary in Kings ward time, but King William gave the church with the land to St. Peter Westminster.

There were neither free men nor serfs on this manor but there were fifteen villans (Latin for the inhabitants of a vill or village). These were bondsmen of better class.

Each holding some thirty acres or more and paying service some three days a week in the work done on the Lord's land.
There were twelve bordars (latin for Borda – a cottage) small four to eight acre plots of land and the Domesday survey shows that all over Essex between 1066 and 1086 the number of villans tended to decrease whilst the bordars increased.

North Benfleet before the conquest had been held by King Harold and at the time of the Domesday was in the hands of William and in the care of a certain Ranulph who was it's Baliff.

The Mill stood in South Benfleet and was tidal, high up in the creek where it narrows enough to catch both tides. It belonged to the Abbey and the King and all who lived on the manors had to use and pay 'multure' to have their own corn ground.

The survey goes on to say there were pastures for two hundred sheep, though at the time there were only thirty and three pigs. The sheep pasture was on Canvey Island.

Shepherds from places inland were customed to drive their flocks to Benfleet at low tide where the bridge is now and eastwards from the downs slopes known as the slides. Canvey was divided between the people on nine parishes.

As early as 1066 the Essex marshes held about eighteen thousand sheep and this grew larger in time. Canvey cheese from the milk of sheep was the only kind of cheese Londoners could buy in the middle ages.

**SOUTH BENFLEET**

The 'Half Crown' at the foot of the hill, originally the 'Mitre' since the Lord of the Manor was the Bishop of Westminster – renamed the 'Crown' then of course demolished by a jack-knifed lorry subsequently renamed the 'Half Crown' as a reminder also to pre-decimal currency.

**HADLEIGH CASTLE**

From about 1230 Hadleigh Castle was built to protect the estuary by Hubert de Burgh and was of immense importance locally.

The building was of Kentish Ragstone and a strong cement largely composed of cockle shells brought from Canvey Island.

It had fallen into disrepair when De Burgh quarrelled with Henry III but in 1381 it had been restored by its new owner De Vere Earl of Essex.

The repair caused much hardship to the peasants and at least seven are named at an inquisition at Chelmsford in the fifth year of Richard II reign as having stolen from manors and risen up against the King and Leeges.

This was the peasant revolt of 1381 led by Wat Tyler which also in that year had the Black Death and expensive wars against France. It would have included peasants who used Canvey but not necessarily lived there.

**MEDIAEVAL TIMES.**

During the next five hundred years Canvey remained a 'sheep run' for surrounding parishes and there are several mentions of how it was divided up by Lords of the Manors on the mainland.

It was but several islands divided by deep 'guts' or creeks, mainly salt marsh under water at high tide in the same way the saltings are today. However, since pastures were needed for sheep, like other areas it was inhabited by a community of shepherds living rough and guarding their sheep against high tides.

Thomas de Camvibe claimed against Robert de Sutton, the marsh of Richerness (known today as Russell Head) which had been granted to his grandfather for 'cheese and wool rushes'.

Later reference to Caneveye or Kaneveye in 1317, Canefe in 1322 as sheep marshes. There is little reference to Canvey in the fifteenth century except for two references to sea walls in the bailiffs accounts in the Manor of Southchurch.

In 1437 for making one hundred and fifty four 'rods' of marsh wall in Canvey (a rod is taken as twenty one feet) at 3d (old currency) per rod totalling thirty eight shillings and six pence.

In 1438 for making 80 rods of sea wall on Canvey at 2d. per rod came to thirteen shillings and fourpence.

These would be embankments in the Leigh Beck area which belonged to Southchurch Manor indicating either more flooding or more pasture land required.

John Norden's map of 1594 mentions Canvey Islandes marshy grounds only fit for feeding of ewes which men milk and make cheese and the curdes of the whey, they make butter.

Youths (meaning children) were recorded as carrying small stools fastened to their buttocks and make ewes cheese in cheese sheds which are called 'Wicks'

The Wicks have given their name to various parts of the island and other areas of the marshy coastline.
These are: 1543 – Knightswyck, Southwyke and Attenash.
1557 – Northwyke and Westwyke also Chaflett and Fartherwick.
1604 – Salt Marsh, Ant Liche and Wolfspittle.

Two other maps, Stents in 1602 and Speed in 1601 show Canvey divided into several islands. Whilst William Hole's map of 1622 shows Canvey an Island of sheep.

**THE LOBSTER SMACK**
One building on the Island dates from Elizabethan times namely the Lobster Smack (or the Worlds End) which dates from 1563 possibly even 1510 if a tile on the roof is original.

There is every justification for an Inn there as Hole Haven Creek is a deep and sheltered inlet affording temporary anchorage.

It is interesting to see the Old Inn lies within the protection of two arms of the 'Y' formed between the causeway as it approaches Hole Haven Creek.

According to tradition Queen Elizabeth 1 landed here after her celebrated trip to the army at Tilbury in 1588. and was met by the Earl of Essex who conveyed her across the marshes to Hadleigh Castle.

*White's Directory of Essex 1848 - list of inhabitants = Crisp Molyneux Harridge, victualler, Lobster Smack and John Hunt, shopkeeper.*

*It is noted the 1851 Census describes Harridge as Victualler not of The Lobster Smack but of Sluice Farm. He was born in Leigh on Sea in 1788.*

*White's Directory of Essex 1863 - list of inhabitants - Charles Beckwith, victualler, Lobster Smack, Thomas Drawbridge, beerhouse and shopkeeper and James Ellis Wellard, farmer.*

*Post Office Directory of Essex 1874 - list of inhabitants - Charles Beckwith, Lobster Smack Public House, Thomas Drawbridge, beer retailer and grocer, John Green, chief office of coast guards, Miss Mary Pitt, school mistress and Joseph Hills, parish clerk.*

The Lobster Smack hosted prize knuckle fighting including fights between Ben Court (a champion between 1838 and 1845) and Nat Langham. These fights were fuelled by family feud and Court aged 42 took 37 year old Lanham to the sixtieth round on 22 September 1857.

Although floored some fifty-nine times Langham's determination drew the match to an amicable conclusion by shaking hands and making up the quarrel.

Earning a title amongst Islanders, Tom Sayers was pronounced the greatest of them all and habitually fought on Canvey. In a fight on 19 February 1857 a fight with Aaron Jones was declared a draw when it became too dark to see.
The fight declared a draw after some sixty plus rounds.

The re-match lasted eighty five rounds when Sayers opponent 'through the sponge in'.

The championship fight between Sayers and Tom Paddock on 16 June 1858 was much shorter – a mere twenty one rounds Sayers emerging victorious.

There was a considerable sum involved in his match with also a three hundred sovereigns side stake. Sayers held a ringside collection of some thirty pounds for the defeated Tom Paddock.

**THE SIXTEETH CENTURY**

A feature of Canvey's sixteenth century history is unusual. The first concerns Hadleigh Ray much used in Oyster cultivation and taken to and from the famous Whitstable Oyster beds.

Not all this was by the book as the Essex men were often accused of stealing mature oysters from Whitstable.

Things got so bad that in 1598 the inhabitants petitioned the Archbishop of Canterbury with the complaint that "certain seafaring men of Essex come hither to Kent and there have dredged Oysters and caught a great store of other fish near Whitstable."

The Archbishop appointed two men to catch and admonish the offenders but they were not successful for the raids continued and some thirty years later there are again references to this.

It was not all one-sided because Kentish Oyster men made similar sorties to the beds in Hadleigh Ray, overall this poaching went on for about two hundred years.

With the possible sinking of the land and a change in eating habits, the need for Canvey to be embanked fully became more and more necessary

Meat was taking the place of 'Whitemeat' including cheese and the need for cattle was becoming necessary and Canvey had good grazing but no easy cattle access.

**THE DUTCH COTTAGE ON CANVEY**

By 1620 this need became urgent and by this time the marshes had been acquired by a small number of people. It is probable that a least one Dutchman was already settled here.

The older Dutch cottage dates from 1618 and the Dutch were already involved higher up the river at Dagenham.

From then onwards, the walled in islands were divided into 'third acre lands' (those that had been Croppenburg's share and 'freelands' – those belonging to

the previous owners and their successors – and outsands (lately land reclaimed privately.
On the third lands fell the cost of upkeep of the walls protecting both 'thirdlands' and 'freelands' leaving the occupiers of the outsands to look after themselves. This agreement would be broken if any breaches in the sea wall were not made good within one year.

Sir Henry Appleton and others subsequently agreed to do this by an agreement dated 6 April 1622 made between the landed proprietors of Canvey Island, namely sir Henry Appleton, Julius Bludder, John, William and Mary Blackmore, Thomas Binkes and Abigail Baker on the one part and Jonas Croppenburg on the other.

That said, the landowners granted unto Croppenburg, in fee simple, one third of their lands in consideration of his sufficient 'inning' and recovering the islands from the overflowing tides, the encroachment of the sea and maintaining an effective sea wall at his own costs and charges.

Although there is no actual proof, it is generally agreed the engineer who drew up the plans and was responsible for the drainage was Cornelius Vermuyden who had married Croppenburg's niece and who had also been involved in the Dagenham levels.

Jonas Croppenberg engaged the services of this celebrated Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden, a native of the Island of Tholen in Holland and a pupil of the renowned engineer and architect Jacob Van Kemper who himself had done much to beautify Amsterdam and who knew more about reclaiming and draining land than any other individual.

When Vermuyden undertook the task, he brought with him an efficient staff of some three hundred Dutchmen all well skilled in the art of land reclamation.

So thoroughly did he accomplish his task of reclamation both here and the other adjacent reaches of the Thames at Dagenham that King Charles 1, recognising his skill and ability, conferred a Knighthood upon him at Whitehall on 6 January 1628 thus becoming Sir Cornelius Vermuyden.

Most of the money needed had probably been borrowed in Holland for in 1637 Henrick Brouwer says that through his connection with Jonas Croppenberg he obtained a sixteenth share in the embankment of Canvey Island.

The method of draining appears to be digging a deep broad ditch called a Delf, some little distance from the shore and to have banked up the earth obtained by this means along the tide line and facing the seaward side with stone.

Marshes thus protected were levelled by filling the small runlets, the water being tidal thereby being directed into larger ones that discharged themselves into the sea by sluices, seven in number in various parts of the Island.

These are know as commissioner dykes and do not belong to the farms through which they run. Thus secured from the tides Dutch Labourers settled here.

In 1627, some two hundred were employed in tilling and husbanding of ground in Canvey Island and petitioned George Monteigne, Bishop of London, that services should be held in Dutch, either in some near church, or in the house they had provided and fitted out for divine service until they had built there intended chapel.

This petition apparently was granted by King Charles 1 allowing them to “do honour the Great architect of the Universe”

On 21 December 1631 the Dutch community of Canvey Island elected Cornelius Jacobsen as their minister agreeing to pay him three pence for every acre in their possession as a salary.

The Dutch church and religion seems to have perturbed the British island dwellers. Their parish Church was St. Mary the Virgin at south Benfleet some two miles off and in order to save their long journey in all weathers, they in turn petitioned the Dutch for occasional use of their church whereby the service could be in English.

The Dutch declined to acquiesce with the result that the British indignation and resentment was aroused and anarchy became rife that on Whitsun Monday 1656 it generated a free fight for possession of the church.

It appears also the British provided themselves with a Minister, formed a body, marched upon the Dutch Church and demanded the Keys. The Dutch anticipated the British designs and also assembled in strength and a hand to hand fight ensued successfully withheld by the Dutch and the British eventually retreated.

The controlling powers of the Dutch Church in London seemed to have acquired from Croppenberg many large tracts of land on the island which they let out as farms or wicks to those of their own nationality or persuasion.

Dutch records of the period seem lost or such that are held are not informative but it is evident that Croppenberg was not a member of the Dutch Reformed Church although he had married a lady from that austere community.

She was considered ex-communicate but was received back into the fold of the Register of the London Dutch Church under the significant heading of Confessions of Guilt. We also find that under the Baptisms a son was duly baptised to the Lutheran Rites.

The Dutch Church in London under the heading of Attestations, the official appointment of a Dutch Minister:

Entry 574 Thursday 30 November 1638
Cornelius Jacobsen
Minister of the Divine Word in England, in the Netherlandish Community at Canvey Island.

Some seven years later:
Entry 708 Tuesday 16th December 1645
Adrian Munnix.
Ecclesiastes in the Dutch Community in Canvey
Eylant in the name of Conistory.
Chrysostos Jiminus Hamelton
On the brethren of the Dutch Community at London.
Dated Canvey Eylant – 16 December 1645.

The last Dutch Minister was a certain Dom Emelius Van Cullenborg who died in the year 1704 and was buried at St. Mary's on 14 October 1704.

About this time the Dutch people began to leave the island leaving the church in the hands of smugglers as a repository for their wares.

Early in June 1667 what is known as the second Dutch War and the Dutch Fleet under the great admiral De Ruyter entered the mouth of the Thames and there being no English Fleet capable of repelling it.

On the 9 June 1667 De Ruyter detached a squadron of eighteen ships and frigates with about one thousand men under Vice Admiral Ghent to ascend the Thames and endeavour to surprise some English ships they heard were in the river.
That evening the wind fell and the squadron in consequence were unable to advance beyond Hole Haven creek for anchorage. On the following morning 10th June some crews landed on Canvey stole some sheep and burned houses and barns. On the same day news reached Chelmsford and Sir John Bramston documented that "the enemie hath burned barns and houses on Canvie Island."

By the 11th June 1667 news had reached Harwich and in a letter to Williamson, Secretary of State in London, learned the Dutch had landed in Canvey and plundered it - firing eight or nine houses and stole sheep.

John Conny a Ship's surgeon forwarding to Williamson days later a narrative of the raid and finally Reverend George Naule Rector of Vange and owner of a farm on the Island when making his will on 23 September 1667, directed that the residue of his goods and chattels should be released (sold) and expended in erecting a new building and barn burned by the Dutch.

Therefore, such testimony confirms the Dutch did ravage the Island and later De Ruyter ordered severe punishment for those sailors who had gone ashore without leave and committed outrages.

Finally, the Dutch may have succumbed to the dreaded 'ague' or malaria prevalent on all the marshes. Whatever reason, the Dutch Disappeared at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Some may have left the District as they felt 'foreigners, some married into the English Community and other English forms of their names.

**THE CURSE OF THE ESSEX MARSHES**

The subsequent issue here also, is that it is well documented that wives brought to the island would die regularly from the marsh disease and some may have had as many as twenty wives in a lifetime.
It is not one hundred years since the Reverend Julian Henderson of South Benfleet (1859-1872) had to resign on the advice of his Doctor being so long ill of the 'Ague' and if he had stayed would have died within a few months.

Malaria was more prevalent in the Thames estuary than in any other part of England .

Daniel Defoe chatting with the 'marshmen' during his tour of the eastern counties in 1724 told how it was common to go to the uplands to get wives, but when these girls fresh from wholesome air came amid the fogs and damp, they rapidly changed in complexion, got an 'ague' and seldom lived more than a few months.

The Malaria Parasite carried by the Mosquito had been isolated in 1880. But equally it was thought the Thameside Mosquito was being wiped out by dust coming from the new Cement works and some very high tides that had purified the ditches.

**CANVEY IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURY**

Since the death of Dom Emelius Van Cullenborg, the Reverend Mr. Lord a Church of England Clergyman was invited to administer spiritual consolation and to requisition the only available building, the old Dutch Church.

He was tasked to rid evil spirits from the house of Jan Smagge a farmer near Leigh Beck on 10th, 13th and 14th September 1709 and Mr. Lord documented the very extraordinary things that had disturbed this house.

The generosity of Mr. Edgar the owner of Charfleets Farm who is described as an Officer of the Victualling Office allowed it pulled down and a more suitable structure erected to accommodate about eighty people.

Dedicated to St. Katherines it was duly consecrated by the Bishop of London on 11 June 1712 and a Curate appointed to preach twenty sermons per annum remunerated by ten pounds.

Floods occurred in 1713 and particularly bad in 1736. The Gentleman's Magazine for February 1736 describes the little isles of Candy (Canvey) and Fowlness (Foulness) were quite under water and not a hoof saved.

These floods were probably the result of lack of inadequate care the Dutch having left and loss of sheep and cattle apart, also undermined the foundation of the chapel for in 1745 this time dedicated to St. Peter was built by Daniel Scratton of Prittlewell. He also left ten pounds to provide services and a further ten for twenty sermons.

Marriages however, still had to be performed in one of the nine parishes that owned the Island and burials took place in South Benfleet.

One little pre-telephone semaphore was the raising of the flag to inform the Minister before he came from the mainland as to whether it was unsuitable not through inclement weather but the smuggled goods had yet to be cleared or distributed.

No services were held in the winter months. One incident relates to Reverend John Aubone Cook Vicar of South Benfleet when returning from a service in September 1859 lost his way, fell into a dyke and was dead within two weeks from Typhoid Fever.

New Lands were being regained during this century with new walls and counter walls. Newlands – Sunken Marsh and Sixty Acres are some of these especially on the Hadleigh Ray area.

After the 1791 flood the walls were severely damaged on 16th to 27th November they petitioned Parliament for an act effectively embanking, draining and otherwise improving the Island of Canvey.

Twenty four commissioners of Sewers were appointed, responsible for inspection and repairing the sea wall and empowered to levy a rate for maintenance.

Most of the inhabitants of Canvey were Essex born and few from further afield. Nevertheless a foreign community existed was the Emulous Watch Vessell in Hole Haven Creek belonging to the Preventative Service and manned by men from Cornwall, Devon and Northern Ireland.

This Coast Guard station had not been established without good reason as of course contraband could be landed fairly safely in the Essex Coastline and we didn't particularly mind this free trade.

The method most used was the Bladder and Feather marker, small boats would bring spirits and other taxed commodities from places such as Amsterdam and when in the estuary would throw them overboard attached to a line.

A sinker would anchor this to the sea bed whilst a bladder to which was attached a bunch of feathers was tied to the other. This would float and be the marker buoy for later recovery – concealed then in Lobster Pots.

It is not surprising that anyone wishing to own a boat had first to obtain permission and a licence from HM Excise Department and each application was

forwarded to a central office with a report from the local Excise man testifying to the reputation of the applicant.

For example a William Pratt of South Benfleet so applied in April 1834 for the boat "Bee" and it was stated that he had been convicted several times for smuggling but not for several years whilst a Bernard Lockwood also of South Benfleet for the open boat "Hero" had never been concerned with smuggling.

Canvey was now mainly used for growing corn especially during the Napoleonic War. The farms mainly built on old Wicks changed hands often. Not one of the twenty two farms between 1773 and 1777 was owner occupied but they were let to Baliffs and their families.

Six or seven cottages clustered around the road junction near the church comprised the village while a mile further along Haven Road was the Lobster Smack.

It is possible that some children on the island made the journey to south Benfleet fairly regularly for there was no school established on the Island prior to 1873.

Several children are described as scholars for instance:

Frances Mason aged eight of Shepherds House.
Stephen Morley aged six of Wrackhall Farm.
Robert and Joshua Morley aged ten and eight of Smallgains Farm.

Few could afford to leave the Island after the coming of the Railway in 1851 for the cheapest return fare to London was four shillings and two pence and the average weekly wage one shilling and sixpence.

**CHARLES DICKENS**

Whether Charles Dickens did visit the Lobster Smack or whether it is the model for the one used in Great Expectations is open to question. Other Inns along the Coast make the same claim.

By 1881 the economy of the Island was in a very poor state. There were only forty one occupied houses and farmers could not sell their wheat owing to the greater importation from Canada and the United States.
In 1882 six farms, namely Knighstwick, Kibcaps, Kittkats, Scar House, Lubbins or Labworth and Northwick were up for sale and on the 18 January 1881 a fierce gale

caused a breach in the sea wall in places over three miles from Sluice House to Leigh beck.

Around fifteen hundred acres were submerged and houses flooded to a depth of three feet.

This was also the year Canvey Island became a separate Parish no longer divided by nine (namely North Benfleet, South Benfleet, Bowers Gifford, Prittlewell, Southchurch, Hadleigh, Laindon, Barstable (Pitsea) and Vange.

The Reverend Henry Hayes had arrived as Curate, became the first Vicar and began nineteen years of service to the community.

Within three years he had built a new school for about fifty pupils and a new Church dedicated to St. Katherine. The school stood opposite.

To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887 he set about the sinking of a well to give the Island a supply of fresh water. The cost largely met from public funds aided by a grant from the Corporation of the City of London

Sinking of the well was entrusted to a Mr. Furlong boring some three hundred feet through mixed beds of sand and London clay but it was a great day on 5th December 1889 when it officially opened. For the next thirty years the pump remained in constant use and a Thatched roof covered the iron pump.

When he died in the first year of the twentieth century his obituary said " he has presided over his remote Island Parish, the welfare of which was profoundly near to his heart."

**END**