

Stan Newens: an appreciation

When our editor, Neil Wiffen, invited me to write an appreciation of Arthur Stanley Newens, better known to us all as Stan, I immediately accepted. It is an honour to make this contribution to such a distinguished author, historian, lecturer and politician in his 90th year. He still maintains a full diary and regularly attends many meetings, conferences, symposia and other events at which he actively participates and long may he continue to do so.

Stan was born in Bethnal Green in 1930 and moved to North Weald in 1939. He was educated at Buckhurst Hill County High School and University College London where he took a degree in history and later taught history in London schools.¹ He has always maintained a great interest in many aspects of history, including family, local and industrial history. For some years he has held the distinction of being the earliest surviving researcher to use the Essex Record Office having first visited it way back in 1947. He has remained a regular user ever since and is a long standing member of the Friends of Historic Essex, which supports the good work of the Record Office.

I first met Stan during the late 1980s when he attended Essex History Fairs, often accompanied by his son, Thomas. He regularly attended meetings and symposia arranged by the former Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress, until it was absorbed into the Essex Society for Archaeology and History. He has been a member of the Society since 1974, was elected to its council in 2002, president from 2005 to 2008 and is currently a vice president. He continues to attend council meetings and serves on two committees namely the Libraries and Archives Committee and the Publications and Research Committee, actively participating in both. He has represented the Society on the Editorial Board of *Essex Journal* since 2006 and therefore during the last 14 years I have worked closely with him. He has always been a great ambassador and supporter of *Essex Journal*, writing many articles² over ten book reviews, a couple of obituaries, as well as being a valued member of the Editorial Board.³

He is the author of many historical and political books including:

A History of North Weald Bassett and its People (1985)

A Short History of London Co-op Political Committee (1988)

Leah Manning, with co-author Ron Bill (1991)

A Brief History of 100 years of the Labour Party in the Eastern Region (2000)

Arthur Morrison (2008)⁴

and his autobiography: *In Quest of a Fairer Society: My Life and Politics* (2013)

he campaigned against the demolition of Moreton post mill, which had distinctive features of construction, no longer represented in Britain. Sadly his representations were not successful and the mill was destroyed.⁵ However his efforts resulted in a lifelong interest in the preservation and history of Essex mills and it is therefore appropriate that one article in this special issue is about an Essex mill. He has a particular interest in industrial history and heritage, being a member of Essex Industrial Archaeology Group, which now incorporates Essex Mills Group. As an MP he represented Epping until 1970; Harlow from 1974 to 1983 and from 1984 until 1999 he was Member of the European Parliament for London Central. Since retiring as an MEP, his contribution to various aspects of history has been enormous and greatly appreciated by the numerous organisations he serves.

Stan has lived in Harlow since 1967 where he has been chairman of Harlow Civic Society and chairman of the Gibberd Garden Trust. He became a member of Waltham Abbey Historical Society in 1970 and its president since 1999.⁶ He is vice president of the Socialist History Society and president of the North Weald Preservation Society. He has been a trustee of the Victoria County History of Essex Trust for over 20 years and continues in this position. In connection with the organisations he is associated with, he is not merely a figurehead, but is an active and hardworking member, who attends as many meetings as he can. His commitment is enormous and greatly appreciated. I hope he remains a familiar face on the Essex and East London history scene for a long time to come.

Adrian Corder-Birch

References

1. A.S. Newens, *A History of North Weald Bassett and its People* (North Weald 1985), p.viii.
2. The Co-operative Movement in Essex, *Essex Journal* (EJ), (1978), 13.1. pp. 2-15; 'Epping and the Problem of Public Health', *EJ*, 16, 1 (1981), pp. 11-8; 'Saffron Walden and the Struggle for Democracy', *EJ*, 32, 2 (1997), pp.43-8; 'The Colchester Plunderers', *EJ*, 34, 2 (1999), pp. 60-1; 'The Genesis of Harlow New Town', *EJ*, 43, 1 (2008), pp. 22-7;
3. At Essex Journal Launch, *EJ*, 43, 2 (2008). p.2; *EJ* 20 Questions? Stan Newens, *EJ*, 44, 2 (2009), p.33.
4. A.S. Newens, *In Quest of a Fairer Society: My Life and Politics*, (Durham 2013), p.377.
5. K.G. Farries, *Essex Windmills, Millers and Millwrights*, 2, A Technical Review, (London, 1982), p.102.
6. Newens, *Quest*, p.373.
7. *Ibid*, pp.374-5.

Stan was elected as Member of Parliament for Epping at the 1964 General Election and that year