

Essex Record Office
Wharf Road
Chelmsford CM2 6YT

Telephone: 01245 244644
Fax: 01245 244655
E-mail: ero.enquiry@essexcc.gov.uk
Internet: www.essexcc.gov.uk



Essex County Council
Heritage Services

Ken Hall
County Archivist and
Heritage Services Manager

Your ref
Our ref **7A/JR**
Date **29 October 2001**
Enquiries to **Mr Reid**
Direct telephone: 01245 **244643**

Dear Mrs Smith

Thank you for your letter of 11 October concerning the history of Belchamp Walter.

I am afraid that I am rather limited in the help I can give you. Very little has been written on the history of Belchamp Walter while, in general, the written sources upon which such a history could be based rarely date back beyond the middle ages. Any history of earlier periods would have to be based on archaeological evidence.

That being said, I have traced a few sources for the post-Conquest period which may be of interest. P.H. Reaney's Placenames of Essex, Cambridge University Press (1935) states that in this instance the name Belchamp is of Anglo-Saxon rather than the more common French origin, possibly derived from a now lost Old English word, *Bylc*, and the frequently found *ham* ("a settlement"). He cites the earliest example as circa 940, which he takes from Birch's Cartularium Saxonicum, (1885-1893). Domesday Book of 1086 uses the form *Belcham*. The name *Walter* is supposed to derive from Walter de Tey, a descendant of William de Beauchamp. Belchamp Walter has also been called Great Belchamp to distinguish it from Belchamp Otton (or Little Belchamp).

Revd. Philip Morant in his History and Antiquities of the County of Essex, 1768, Vol. 2, p. 329, states that Belchamp Walter was also "otherwise called Belchamp Simon, and Belchamp William, from its ancient owners Simon and William de Beauchamp." He goes on to say that, "it had belonged, in Edward the Confessor's reign, to Uluuin... but at the general survey [i.e. Domesday, 1086], it was one of the lordships holden by Alberic [alias Aubrey] de Vere, ancestor of the great Earls of Oxford... This church belonged originally to Alberic de Vere, lord of the manor of Belchamp Walter. He gave it to the Priory of Earls Colne; who got the great tythes appropriated to their house, and a Vicarage ordained and endowed, of which they continued patron till their suppression". A photocopy of a modern translation of the entry for Belchamp Walter in the Domesday Book is enclosed, in case it should be of interest.

Mrs E. Smith, The Clerk
Belchamp Walter Parish Council
Willowbrook, Gages Road
Belchamp St. Paul
Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 7BX

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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I am afraid that I am unable to supply any more information on the history of your parish from documentary sources. However, you might like to contact the Archaeological Section of the County's Environmental Services Directorate. This maintains the Essex Heritage Conservation Record, which is a record of all known archaeological sites and monuments, historic buildings, parks and gardens in the county, and may therefore hold information on the earlier history of Belchamp Walter. The Archaeological Section can be contacted at Room E3, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex (Tel. 01245 437530).

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Julian Reid

PP - Richard Harris
Archive Services Manager

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