



THE OLDEST FAMILY BUSINESSES IN **ESSEX** 2022

PUBLISHED BY



Bringing the family business
community together

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FOREWORD



Essex is blessed with a vast array of great family-owned businesses, including a number that we are proud to have as our longstanding clients.

Working alongside Family Business United to compile this report, we have uncovered some true gems; both large and small. These family businesses have been at the heart of the Essex economy for over a century and have had a major impact on the communities in which they operate. It's wonderful that, through this inaugural piece of research, we have the opportunity to celebrate their rich histories and heritage.

As those that work within family-owned businesses know, while it can be a hugely rewarding experience, it comes with some additional challenges. The business and family roles can sometimes overlap and emotions can interfere with sound decision-making. Professional advisers who understand the particular characteristics of family businesses can make all the difference.

At Rickard Luckin, we have a proven track record and long-standing reputation for advising family-owned businesses on key strategic decisions relating to the day-to-day operations and growth. Our expertise covers a range of accounting, tax and strategic services including succession planning, sales and acquisitions, setting up trusts and other wealth management issues.

The joy of carrying out this research is that it has presented an opportunity to shine a light on family-owned businesses throughout the county. We hope that you enjoy reading their stories as much as we have enjoyed carrying out the research and producing the report.

James Boustead

Director

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INTRODUCTION



Essex is awash with family firms that make a huge impact, not only on the regional economy but further afield too. This report identifies the oldest 25 family firms across Essex but all family firms should be celebrated for the significant contribution they make through the jobs they provide, the income they generate, the wealth they create and the good that they do throughout the communities in which they operate.

Throughout Essex family firms permeate all sectors of the economy. Take the likes of M Lucking & Sons, Richard Haward Oysters, Cants of Colchester, W & H Marriage & Sons Ltd and Manns Music – all family businesses and firms that have stood the test of time, many sharing the same values too. The top 25 family firms in Essex identified in this report have collectively traded for over 4600 years and on average have been trading for 185 years.

Given the often quoted saying ‘shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves’ in three generations, these firms have all bucked that apparent trend. Not only do they all go back over 134 years, they have survived two World Wars, numerous recessions, Brexit, a global pandemic and incredible changes in technology too. Family firms are the backbone of the Essex economy and we have uncovered some true gems in compiling this report.

Nowadays, as technology continues to advance and change the way that we operate and communicate, family firms need to embrace change and evolve in order to survive. The oldest family firms across Essex have had to change over time, and continue to do so, continuing under family ownership and direction, retaining the values that are important to them and that have been for many generations, but developing them to ensure the ongoing longevity and future of the business too.

With the oldest family firm in Essex identified as M Lucking & Sons, founded back in 1631 and trading for nearly 400 years, now is the time to celebrate their achievement and that of other long standing family firms across Essex and to recognise the impact they continue to have, through the lives they touch and the communities they support on a daily basis.

These businesses have been around for generations, and hopefully will remain as family firms for generations to come.

Paul Andrews

Founder and Managing Director
Family Business United

THE OLDEST FAMILY BUSINESSES IN ESSEX

Rank	Year founded	Years trading	Name of business	Nature of business	Location
1	1631	391	M Lucking & Sons	Funeral Directors	Chelmsford
2	1740	282	T Pennack & Sons	Funeral Directors	Chelmsford
3	1765	257	Cants of Colchester	Rose Growers	Colchester
4	1769	253	Richard Haward Oysters	Cultivating Oysters	Mersea
5	1818	204	John J Smith Stonemasons and Funeral Services	Stonemasons and Funeral Directors	Colchester
6	1820	202	P.S. Shelley Master Thatcher Ltd	Thatcher	Hockley
7	1824	198	W & H Marriage & Sons Ltd	Flour Mill	Chelmsford
8	1826	196	Gray & Sons (Chelmsford) Ltd	Owners of Public Houses & Beer Wholesalers	Chelmsford
9	1830	192	Fish Brothers Group	Pawnbrokers and Jewellers	Romford
10	1838	184	Kent Blaxill	Builders Merchants	Colchester
11	1850	172	Warsop Stebbing	Manufacturer of Cricket Bats	Chelmsford
12	1850	172	Collier & Catchpole	Builders Merchants	Colchester
13	1854	168	Manns Music	Retail - Music	Colchester
14	1857	165	P.G. Oxley Ltd	Funeral Directors	Walton-on-the-Naze
15	1867	155	S Stibbards & Sons	Funeral Directors	Hadleigh, Benfleet
16	1869	153	Sadler's Taxis	Taxi Firm	Epping Forest District
17	1871	151	CJ Townrow	Retail - Department Stores	Braintree
18	1872	150	Daniel Robinson & Sons	Funeral Directors	Stansted
19	1875	147	Nicholls & Clarke Limited	Builders Merchants	Romford
20	1881	141	T Cribb & Sons	Funeral Directors	Benfleet
21	1882	140	Maldon Salt	Salt Producers	Maldon
22	1884	138	F.R. Shadbolt & Sons Ltd	Manufacturers of Doors	Braintree
23	1885	137	Wilkin & Sons	Manufacturers of Preserves	Tiptree
24	1886	136	Hatfields	Furniture Retailer	Colchester
25	1888	134	Church's Butchers	Butchers	Epping Forest District

The **25 oldest** family firms in Essex have cumulatively traded for **4618 years**



All of the oldest **25 family firms** in Essex have traded for over **134 years**



The oldest family firm in Essex is **391 years in 2022**



The oldest family firm in Essex is **M Lucking & Sons**

7 of the oldest family firms in Essex are **Funeral Directors**

1

M Lucking and Sons

Funeral Directors

Located in Chelmsford



M Lucking & Sons have served Chelmsford and the surrounding area for over 360 years.

Ongoing research has traced the Lucking family to the Great Waltham and Little Waltham areas of Chelmsford. In 1631, William Lucking of Little Waltham carried on the trade of carpenter and joiner and would, no doubt, have been asked to make coffins. 'Undertaking' as the trade was then known, has changed over the years to become the profession of Funeral Directors. It was not until 1887 that William Augustus, the son of another William Lucking, purchased the property in New London Road, Chelmsford. These premises remain the place of business and family residence today.

William Augustus married Susan Piper of London in 1876. Their son George William, born in 1880, carried on the business after the death of his father. He married Mary Hurry and they had two sons, Percy and Gus, and two daughters, Gladys and Doris. When George William died at the age of 41, the business was carried on by his wife Mary (hence, M Lucking & Sons) until the sons became of an age to succeed. The second son, Gus stayed in the business and took over from his mother. He married Alice Ketley and they had two daughters, Christine and Jennifer. Christine married Bernard Gowing in 1967 and they have one daughter, Sarah. Bernard then carried on the family business.





“ We are so proud that the business is still running today as it was all the way back in 1631, including the fact that we are still joiners which was how the business started all those years ago. One of the reasons we continue as a successful business is because of the old fashioned, quality, customer service that is so often missing in a lot of companies today. Also, the care we genuinely show our families and the quality of the products that are made within our workshop & stonemasonry business help us to continue to do what we have done for generations. ”

Darren Lucking – M Lucking & Sons

In 1996 Darren Lucking joined the company to help run the business with Bernard as it was becoming too difficult for him on his own. Darren is the grandson of Percy and great-nephew of Gus, continuing the family run theme.

In 2002, Roy Palmer joined the company. Roy, who holds the Diploma in Funeral Directing, is Darren's cousin on his mothers' side. Sadly in 2010 Bernard passed away. In 2015, Sarah, Christine's daughter, joined the company. Sarah has taken an active role in the financial side of the company dealing with the accounts.

In 2019, Calum, Roy's son, joined the company. Calum brought his youth and his computer skills with him and has helped M. Lucking & Sons join the 21st Century.

Now Christine, Jennifer, Darren, Roy, Sarah and Calum work together as a team to maintain the high standards and professionalism their clients have learnt to expect.





2

T Pennack & Sons

Funeral Directors

Located in Chelmsford

The Pennack family have lived in the village of Great Baddow since 1740. Charles Pennack (1740-1812) married Elizabeth Mulley and had 7 children. Their eldest son Charles (1771-1848) married Susannah Waller and they had 6 children.

Their eldest son, also Charles, became a carpenter and was the founder of the business T Pennack & Sons, with carpenters, builders, and undertakers.

The business has subsequently passed from generation to generation and continues to be run by Philip and Sarah, descendants of the founder who established the business over 280 years ago.



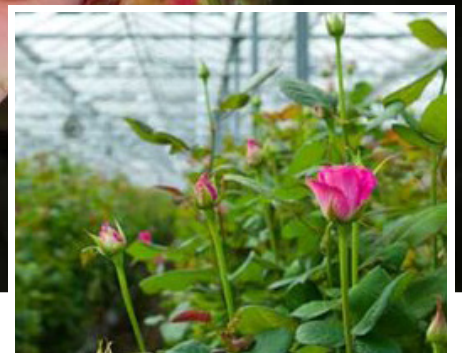


3

Cants of Colchester

Rose Growers

Located in Colchester



From the oldest recorded Town of Colchester, Cants is the oldest recorded rose grower in the UK. Established in 1765, they have over 250 years of experience and are still a family firm run by direct descendants of the founder.

Whilst the Cant family has been connected with horticultural/gardening since 1728, the official date given (proclaimed on old catalogues) for the establishment of Benjamin R Cant & Sons is 1765. The company remains in the family with the partners being Martin, Roger and Angela Pawsey, the children of Clifford and Diana (nee Cant) Pawsey. They all play a part in the everyday running of the business, ably assisted by a small dedicated staff, all of whom are happy to give expert advice and guidance in the selection of roses, preparation and aftercare.

Their father, Clifford Pawsey, left his job with British Oil & Cake Mills (Ipswich Branch) in 1929, spent a year farming with his family, and then joined Benjamin R Cant & Son in 1931. By then he was engaged to Diana, the younger of two daughters of Cecil and Mildred Cant. Mildred Cant was at that time running the business. Clifford worked tirelessly for the firm into his eighties and would have loved to have, as he used to say, 'died with his boots on' but unfortunately ill health caught up with him and he died in 1997, having dedicated his life to the industry he loved and receiving its highest accolade, the Dean Hole Medal from the Royal National Rose Society. Cants of Colchester

Cants of Colchester continue to create world beating roses that include 'Alpine Sunset', 'English Miss' and 'Crimson Descant.'



4

Richard Haward Oysters

Cultivating Oysters
Located in Mersea

The Haward family began cultivating oysters in the 18th century and are believed to be the oldest oyster farmers in the world. Now run by the eighth generation, the business is thriving under Richard's son, Tom.

Initially renting the oysterbeds from the Lord of the Manor, the Haward's have since taken ownership of 15 acres on Mersea Island, Essex. The oystermen and women now walk across the same mud that Tom's fifth Great Grandfather did.

When first generation oysterman, William Senior, started farming oysters, he would have been cultivating the Colchester native oyster and they would have been sent into London via boat. The Packing Shed on Mersea Island was originally where all of the oysters were graded and packed before being shipped, hence the name of the building.

Now, the rock oyster makes up around 95% of the business simply because they can be sold all year round and the mortality rate is significantly lower than that of the native oyster. Richard Haward's Oysters has a stall in Borough Market that started off with a table and umbrella on Fridays and Saturdays in the early 2000s, and is now one of the busiest stalls there. The business sells oysters and clams to various wholesalers and restaurants up and down the country and also has an online shop.





“ Something to be particularly proud of is that, not only have we managed to survive, as a business, through the impact of Covid and Brexit on our export market, but we are the busiest we have ever been. A big part to that is how much we appreciate that our business is only as good as the people around us and we have a wonderful team who help us to thrive. ”

Tom Haward - Eighth generation oysterman





5

John J Smith Funeral Services

Stonemasons and Funeral Directors
Located in Colchester



John J Smith Funeral Service is a family run business with an excellent reputation for providing professional memorials and funeral services for over 200 years, including funeral vehicles, headstones and access to their chapel of rest.





“ We have been working as a family business for over eight generations. I have fond memories as a little girl watching my ‘big grandad’ working in the wooden building carving the stones, leading the letters and wanting to be just like him. He was a big jolly man, kind and compassionate. My Dad joined the business and was taught to hand cut letters, carve, lead letters and fix memorials, all by way of the traditional methods that only a few stonemasons can do today, and these skills continue to be passed down through the generations. Serving the community remains at the core of all we do and we are delighted to continue many of the traditions that were introduced all those years ago by our ancestors. ”

Hayley Ward – John J Smith



6

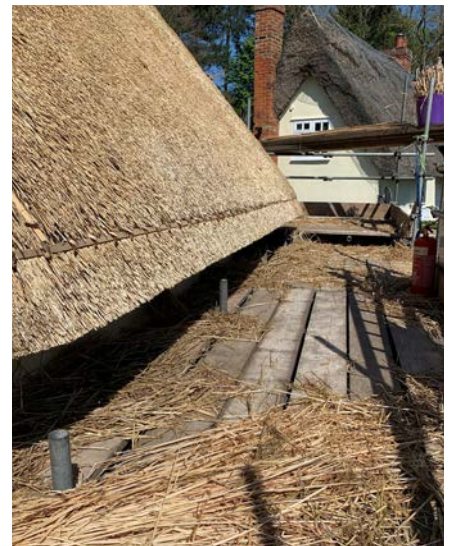
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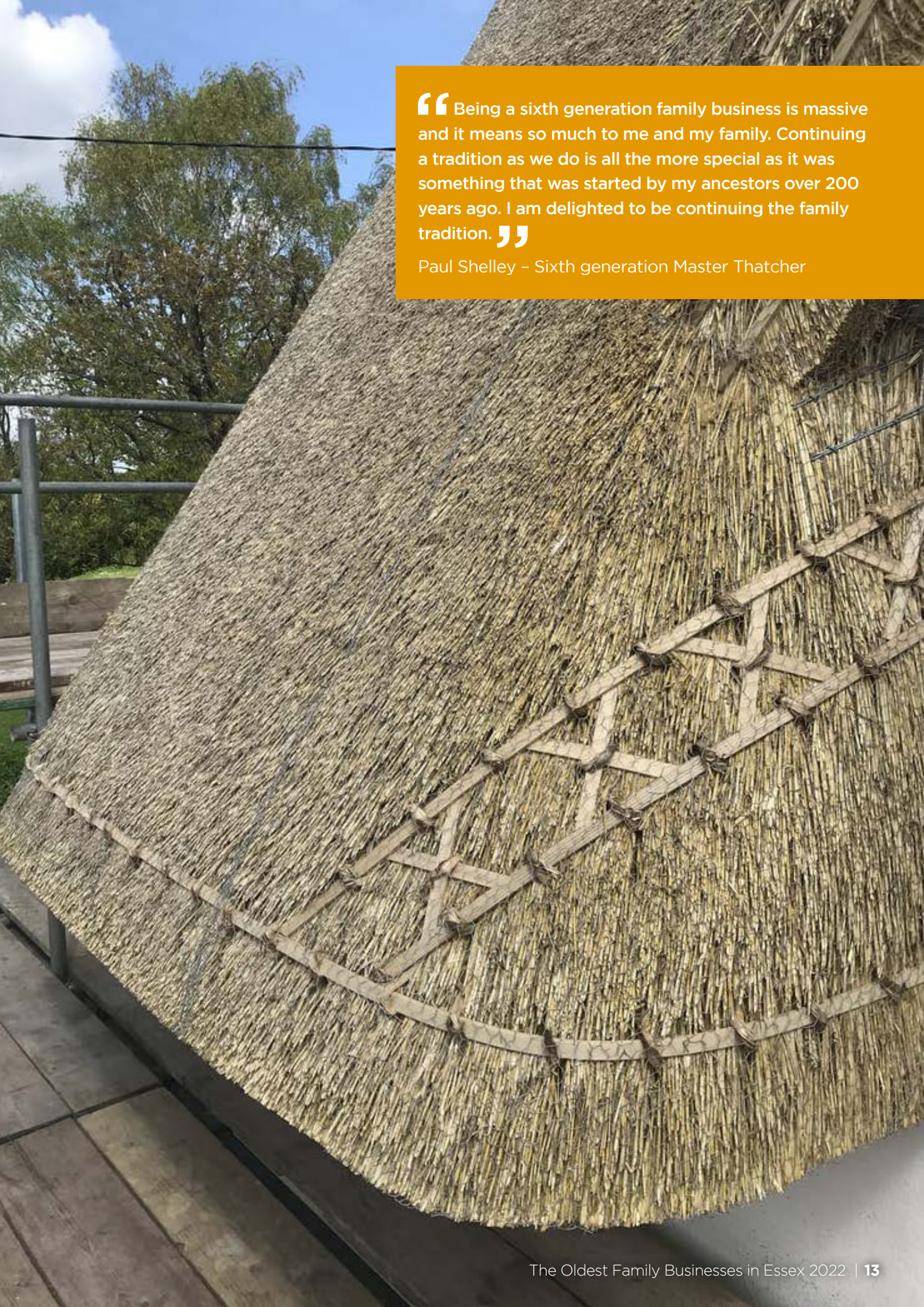
Master Thatcher
Located in Hockley



The Shelley family have a history as Master Thatchers in Essex that spans over 200 years. Henry Shelley was the first thatcher in the family, born in Hockley in 1807 where he lived all his life. His son, Daniel, followed him into the trade and in 1880, Daniel's son George was born. He was one of ten children and left school at the age of 11 to join his father as a thatcher. George retired at the ripe old age of 89 having worked for 78 years.

In 1924, George had a son, Stanley, who was also one of ten children and he joined the family business. In 1950, Stanley's first son Stephen was born. Stephen left school at the age of 15 to become an apprentice for his father and is still working to this day. Today, the business is run by Stephen's son, Paul. His work has been accredited with multiple awards through the 'National Society of Master Thatchers'. Paul's thatching career started in 1997 when he left school becoming the sixth generation of the family to work in this trade. The Shelleys have been thatching in Essex since 1807.





“ Being a sixth generation family business is massive and it means so much to me and my family. Continuing a tradition as we do is all the more special as it was something that was started by my ancestors over 200 years ago. I am delighted to be continuing the family tradition. ”

Paul Shelley – Sixth generation Master Thatcher



7

W & H Marriage & Sons

Flour Millers

Located in Chelmsford

The Marriage family has been milling quality flour in Essex for almost 200 years, and pride themselves on supporting Britain's food and farming industry. Wherever possible, they use wheat grown within 30 miles of Chelmer Mills, and several of their flours are Red Tractor accredited. Using techniques tried and tested over the course of six generations, they mill quality flour for better baking.

Their story began in 1824 with William and Henry Marriage. Coming from a family of farmers and millers dating back to the early 1700s, the twin brothers inherited their father's mill at the young age of 17. Inspired by their heritage, W & H Marriage was born. Venturing out into the world of wheat, the brothers dedicated themselves to setting new standards for the quality of flour. Working closely with local farmers, their passion and dedication continues to inspire the business today, and with each generation comes new innovation.

Over 30 years ago, Sampson David Marriage became one of the early champions for organic wheat and flour production. Sampson's son and current director George Marriage, also helped establish the Organic Food Federation, and the business plays an active role in organic research projects across the agricultural and milling industries.





“ Sourcing locally wherever possible, we work in partnership with farmers who never compromise on the quality of their grains. We mill reliable flour for better baking, and it all starts with them. ”

Today, Marriage's continue their commitment to milling quality flour that elevates every bake. Using only premium wheat from local and international farmers, their flour makes for golden loaves and lighter cakes. They understand the importance of quality ingredients when it comes to making great products. That's why they work in partnership with British farmers they can trust to produce the highest quality wheat, as well as select international producers.

Based in Essex, they're surrounded by the ideal soil and weather conditions for growing premium wheat with the right levels of protein and moisture. They take great pride in sourcing wheat from trusted farmers within 30 miles of Chelmer Mill, and have worked closely with these farming families for generations. While most of their wheat is sourced locally, they also source wheat from Canadian farms. Known for producing strong wheat ideal for pizza, bread and pasta, their Canadian bread flours are higher in protein for exceptional strength and structure.





8

Gray & Sons

Owners of Public Houses
& Beer Wholesalers
Located in Chelmsford



The Gray family came into brewing in 1826 at the Springfield Road Brewery in Chelmsford. From 1870 to 1954 the Maldon Brewery in Gate Street was also run by the Gray family to supply the growing number of pubs in the Maldon area.

Stock, Mild, Bitter, Stout and Porter were the main brews but when the Springfield Brewery ceased brewing in 1974 Greene King IPA became the regular ale in the pubs. Since then the list of beers available has increased dramatically and the tenants can now choose from a wide variety of ales from around the country. There is also a large choice from local breweries such as Mighty Oak, Wibbler's, Farmer's and Bishop Nick along with Adnams and Greene King. A wide portfolio of lagers and bottles are also available giving a Gray's pub a 'free house feel'.

The sale of the brewery led to the move to offices and a distribution depot in Galleywood. The portfolio of pubs have changed over the years, but the company continues to deliver ales and lagers to their pubs and it continues to be run by the sixth generation of the Gray family.



“ We are proud to be custodians of our family business. We have a friendly team of conscientious and loyal staff and tenants who all enjoy working together. We aim to give a good/the best life for everyone in and involved in the whole business. ”

Mrs Nicola Kitchiner – Managing Director, Gray & Sons



9

Fish Brothers Group

Pawnbrokers and Jewellers
Romford



Fish Brothers Pawnbrokers is an independently owned, 7th generation family-run business boasting over 190 years of history and customer service. It was founded in 1830, a time of rapid growth for the pawnbroking trade and it is testament to the quality of the first Fish Brothers' brand of service that the business they founded nearly two centuries ago thrives to this day.

The Fish Brothers Group now includes nine Fish Brothers Pawnbrokers and has expanded into other business areas with two Charles Fish boutiques and a Charles Fish branded Swarovski store. Several Fish family members continue to be involved in our operations, and they still have an actual "Mr Fish" as Managing Director.

Many company members have worked with Fish Brothers for more than 25 years. Some have even been with them from the start of their careers. Indeed, the company has remained strong and steady because of these lifelong bonds.

Fish Brothers maintains its founders' tradition of friendly and trustworthy pawnbroking service with a team of experienced appraisers who continue to deliver the same quality of service, online and in-store, across all their branches.





10

Kent Blaxhill

Builders Merchants
Located in Colchester

Kent Blaxill is one of the largest and oldest independent builders merchants in East Anglia and has served the Colchester area in Essex since 1838, when it was founded as an oil and glass business on the town's High Street. Since then, the family-owned firm has expanded across 22 sites across the East of England and the Midlands, offering paint, timber, glass, ironmongery, tools, landscaping, building supplies and much, much more.

Kent Blaxill has also been known as a leading kitchen and bathroom specialist since 1963, when it first moved from Colchester High Street and opened a purpose-built site at Layer Road. Their showrooms have since built up an enviable reputation for quality and service, and they specialise in helping find the kitchens, bathrooms, wall and floor coverings that are right for customers – at a price that suits them best.



“ We strive to offer customers the best of tried and trusted brands and the latest innovative products at competitive prices. At Kent Blaxill, the family ethos of trust, excellence, experience and innovation is the essence of our brand. These values have been instrumental in building our sense of identity and drives our sense of purpose going forward. ”





11

Warsop Stebbing

Manufacturer of Cricket Bats
Located in Chelmsford



The Warsop Stebbing story begins in the mid 1800's with Benjamin Warsop, a gentleman from Nottingham who moved to London to set up his cricket bat workshop in St Johns Wood. Along with the help of his four sons: Alfred, Arthur, Frank and Walter. Their craftsmanship and skill in the bat making industry was recognised instantly, which won them a first Order of Merit at the Centennial International Exhibition at Melbourne in 1888.

In this same year, Ben Warsop and his sons felled a tree in Boreham, Essex, close to where they now operate. The colossal tree was 101 feet high and 5 feet 9 inches in diameter. Planted in around 1835, it was three times the age of a normal cricket bat willow. Ben described it as 'sound as a bell' and he and his sons crafted 1,179 magnificent cricket bats from this one willow.

The order book in these first 20 years of business show that Benjamin Warsop and his sons were suppliers of large and regular quantities of cricket bats to Slazenger, Wisden and Junior Army and Navy stores, as well as clubs, schools and individuals. In 1893, Ben received an order from the master himself, W.G. Grace Esq.

At the turn of the century, the workshops moved even closer to Lord's Cricket Ground. Benjamin was joined at this time by George Hunt who had learnt his trade from Venables of Lee Green, Blackheath, Stuart Surridge and George Bussey. He stayed with the firm for more than half a century. In 1907, after six years of working together they were in the big league supplying Harrods and Rio Cricket & Athletic Association of Brazil with world class cricket bats.



“ For six generations we have been crafting our handmade cricket bats and in recent decades developing and innovating our collection of pads, gloves and bags, to give our players the finest cricket equipment to enhance their game. We pride ourselves on our relationship with our customers and supporting our players through their whole cricketing life. This is a family business where our ethos remains the same as it was when the business started and where players are the centre of our business. Our cricket bats and equipment are all designed to enhance the ability and enjoyment of every cricketer we serve. ”

Clere Worsop – Fifth generation, Warsop Stebbing

The Warsop's sourced their timber from Essex soil, providing the finest bat willows in the country. The family and workers would take a train from London and hop off at the sight of bat willow trees, set up camp and fell the timber before transporting it back to London. Eventually this led to Walter setting up his bat workshop in Little Baddow, Essex. His son Cyril became the third generation to learn the skills of his father and grandfather and he in turn taught his children, Max and Shiela Warsop when they joined the business after World War II had ended and the game of cricket once again became a part of British life.

In the 1950's, they welcomed Harry Stebbing into the partnership in their Danbury workshop. Warsop Cricket is now owned and run by the fifth generation of the family, Clere Warsop, alongside her partner Tony who is a skilled batmaker. Together the team combine centuries of bat making skill with a vast knowledge of the game as it has evolved to produce world class English willow bats.





12

Collier & Catchpole

Builders Merchants

Located in Colchester

Collier & Catchpole is an independent builders' merchant, with business roots in East Anglia going back almost 200 years. The business has well-stocked yards in conveniently accessible locations in Colchester, Lawford and Ipswich, supported by experienced and knowledgeable sales staff.

Staff are always ready to help source the right products at the right price to get the job done, and the business is committed to its investment in maintaining a fleet of the latest generation design lorries and cranes and benefits from enhanced buying power achieved through joining forces with other independent merchants.

Collier & Catchpole has a reputation for service which underpins everything it does.





“ The Collier family has had a standing in local society since the 1800’s and we invest in our teams and the people that use the buildings, ground systems and roads we helped to build all around us. Mr Collier ran his business like a father with a strong Edwardian traditional influence. He was a born leader and treated everyone he worked with and employed very well.

A Collier’s ham was always given to his team for Christmas (a tradition that allowed all of the Colliers team to enjoy a plentiful Christmas, no matter what) and even before legal requirements and regulations, Mr Collier understood the ethos that if you pay your team properly and treat them well, they will in-turn invest into the community and be a positive force in the area. Today, we still carry this ethos close to our hearts. We continue to invest in local charities, our team and the builders merchant industry as a whole. ”





13

Manns Music

Retail - Music

Located in Colchester



Manns is one of the oldest music shops in Great Britain, and possibly the world, under the same ownership.

It's currently run by Tim Mann, the great, great grandson of the founder. They moved to their current location in 1891 and have been there ever since. They retailed the first iron framed pianos before World War I for less than half the cost of a modern day tuning!

Over the last 166 years they have retailed virtually all musical products from wireless sets and gramophones before World War I for around 10 guineas, vertical and overstrung pianos for between 30 and 40 guineas in the twenties and Pathoscope home cinema movie cameras in the 1950s for £6.15.

Manns now sell over 15,000 stock lines, from reeds and strings, to brass and woodwind, a huge stock of printed music, both electric and acoustic guitars and electronic and acoustic pianos.

Indeed it could be said there are few music shops in the UK with such a large and diverse stock.





14

P.G. Oxley

Funeral Directors

Located in Walton-on-the-Naze



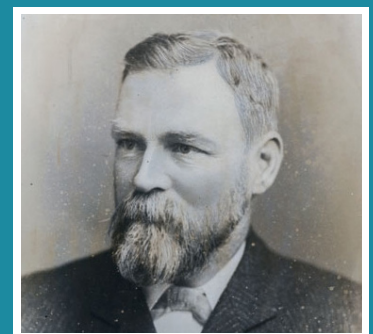
Back in 1857, Philip Oxley laid down the foundations and principles of a business which continues to develop and flourish as a family concern today, despite changes in technology, intense competition and the wide sweeping social changes which have occurred over the intervening years.

Philip Oxley originally established his business as the village carpenter in Walton-on-the-Naze, and in common with village carpenters up and down the country, he was, by tradition, also the village undertaker.

Philip's joinery skills were employed in handcrafting coffins to each customer's individual specifications and he used a horse drawn hearse to carry out funerals.

160 years later, P.G. Oxley Ltd continues to offer both building and funeral services.

An independent, family run business built on six generations, now celebrating serving the community for over 160 years.



15

S Stibbards & Sons

Funeral Directors
Located in Hadleigh

“ Much has changed since 1867, both in terms of S. Stibbards & Sons, and the local communities in which we are proud to serve. However, the principles of which were there from the very start remain the same today - care, compassion and professionalism.

It is this compassionate and intimate connection with local communities that has allowed us to build and run one of the most trusted and well-respected funeral directors in the area. Having served five generations of families, we are proud of this relationship. This is why we will always continue to maintain the very highest standards of care, service and dedication to those who we are called upon to serve. ”

16

Sadler's Taxis

Taxi Firm
Located in Epping Forest District



Sadler's Taxis is one of the oldest family run businesses in the Epping Forest District area established in 1869 by Mr William Sadler that has continued to be innovative and pioneering since it was founded all those years ago.

17

CJ Townrow

Retail - Department Stores
Located in Braintree



CJ Townrow & Sons are a small chain of department stores based in Essex with stores in Frinton, St Ives, Maldon and Sudbury. The business opened in 1871 and continues to be run by descendants of the founding family today.

DANIEL ROBINSON & SONS

Independent Family Funeral Directors
& Monumental Masons

18

Daniel Robinson & Sons

Funeral Directors

Located in Stansted

The business was first established in 1892 when Daniel Robinson bought a building company in Stansted, where he began to make coffins and to arrange funerals. In 1912, he purchased another in Bishop's Stortford where he also arranged funerals and supplied memorials. By the year 2000, the company had grown to include offices in Harlow, Great Dunmow, Sawbridgeworth, Braintree and Epping.

Today, the business helps people across Essex and Hertfordshire, with further funeral homes in Halstead, Loughton, Old Harlow and Waltham Abbey.

The business is owned mainly by the third generation of the family founder, Daniel Robinson.



“ It has certainly been a busy 130 years and one that we are very proud of. We are proud of our ‘tradition of care’ and we will continue to work hard, providing the very best funeral services for bereaved families in the local community. ”

Robert Robinson – Chairman





19

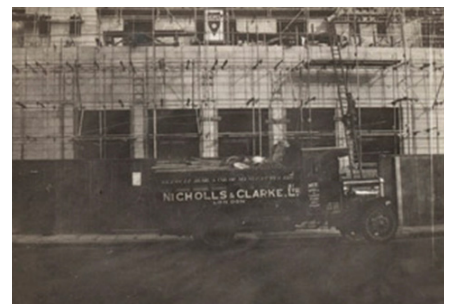
Nicholls & Clarke Ltd

Builders Merchants
Located in Romford



Founded in 1875 by Samuel Nicholls, Nicholls & Clarke started life solely as builders merchants involved mainly in glass, lead and oil and as colour merchants.

Servicing the capitals building trades, Nicholls & Clarke were based at the heart of London at Shoreditch High Street, which housed the Nicholls & Clarke building since the 17th century, surviving two World Wars and emerging virtually unscathed. With a breadth of invaluable experience and expertise developed over 140 years, Nicholls & Clarke have flourished into major UK manufacturers, distributors and retailers of building products with a successful exports division. The history of Nicholls & Clarke is broad and reflects the social and economic history of the country over three centuries of change.





20

T Cribb & Sons

Funeral Directors
Located in Benfleet

T Cribb & Sons, Funeral Directors, is a family-run partnership established in 1881 by Thomas Cribb, great grandfather of the present senior partners, Graham and John. Through five generations this family-run business has built on the high standards trust and traditional values laid down by its founder.

The fourth and fifth generations of the family continue to run the partnership to this day. Great grandsons Graham and John, John's daughters Catherine, Sarah and Nichola and Graham's sons, Jack and Joe, continue the high standards and traditional values set down by the founder.

Quality of service has always been paramount to the way in which the business has been managed and the direction it has taken over 130 years. T Cribb & Sons has helped arrange funerals of all sizes embracing all religions and cultures. Attention to detail and care for the families of the deceased has earned T Cribb & Sons an unrivalled reputation for commitment to excellence.

“As a family funeral directors we have over 130 years of expertise gained from generations of experience, to provide guidance, support and care. Each funeral is as unique as the life it celebrates.”





21

Maldon Salt

Salt Producers

Located in Maldon

Four generations of master salt makers have been hand harvesting the naturally formed flakes that have become Maldon's signature. The Osborne family have been making the finest quality salt for a century. That's a long time and a lot of salt for a family that's both custodians of an ancient culinary tradition and creators of a globally recognised brand. Today sees Steve Osborne at the helm, following in the footsteps of his father Clive, grandfather Cyril and great grandfather James.

Since 1882, their salt has been made with the same traditional artisan methods in the coastal town of Maldon. It is unchanging yet ever-changing, constant yet continuously challenging. However, the salt always remains the same.

They hand harvest their gourmet salt flakes to ensure they are perfect in both taste and texture. They then package them and send them out around the world. But it doesn't end there. They also take it upon themselves to inspire chefs and gastronomes plus each new generation of up and coming talent, wherever they may be. Whatever they do, they do it with passion.

Salt makers born and bred, they've been hand harvesting our world famous sea salt flakes in the coastal town of Maldon since 1882. These twisting shorelines of England have been alive with salt making for almost a thousand years!





“ Maldon Salt has a wonderful and rich history of traditional quality craftsmanship. In our 140th anniversary year we really wanted to celebrate this fact and pay tribute to the four generations of the Osborne family and all our fantastic people and loyal consumers who have played such an important role in helping us to become the world-renowned culinary brand that we are today. From our 140th anniversary logo which appears on our exciting new limited edition celebration pack, right through to all the exciting consumer activations and fun birthday festivities planned, we are saying a big thank you to everyone who has been part of our history and inspiring current and future generations of people to seize the seasoning and celebrate great taste. ”

Robert La Francesca - Commercial Director, Maldon





22

F.R. Shadbolt & Sons Ltd

Manufacturers of Doors
Located in Braintree

Established in 1884, F.R. Shadbolt & Sons are manufacturers of the highest quality architectural doors, panels and washroom cubicle interiors.

Frederick started the business all those years ago selling his wife, Louise's, marquetry inlays to the furniture trade, 138 years later the business has gone from strength to strength and now provides fire and acoustic doors and frames to some of the most prestigious commercial and high end residential projects in London.

The reason for the longevity of the business is a focus on quality and an unrivalled commitment to safety. That uncompromising commitment extends not just to the products they manufacture but also their pursuit of a carbon neutral product to ensure that the environment is safeguarded for the next generation, as well as their commitment to create a safe and inspiring working environment for their loyal and dedicated team.

Their long history in a challenging and ever evolving industry has provided the current 5th generation of Shadbolt who recently took the helm, with strong foundations upon which to implement an ambitious growth strategy to drive the business forward for future generations to come.





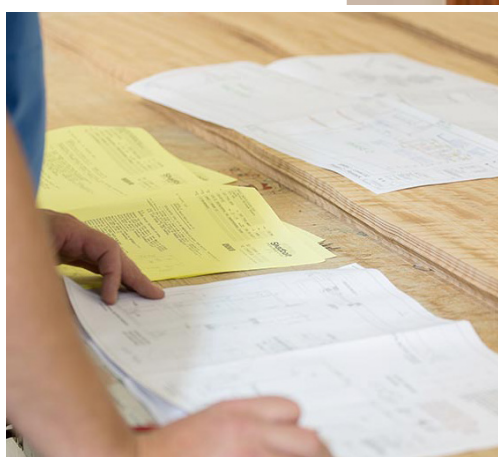
ZAYED CENTRE
FOR RESEARCH
INTO RARE DISEASE
IN CHILDREN

The Zayed Centre for Research is named in recognition of the extraordinary philanthropic support of Her Highness Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak in honour of her husband, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Founding Father of the United Arab Emirates.

“ In our 130 years of existence, F.R. Shadbolt & Sons Ltd has seen many industrial changes and technological developments.

Our aim throughout our existence has always been to combine the skill of the craftsman with the very latest in raw material development and machinery technology, to provide our customers with the most innovative products.

The century old foundations upon which the company stands will enable us to continue building into the future. ”





23

Wilkin & Sons

Manufacturer of Preserves

Located in Tiptree



The 'Tiptree' story begins around the early 1700s with Trewlands, the farm that was later to become the main site for jam-making in the Essex village of Tiptree.

Fruit farming in Tiptree involved growing the fruit, then taking it by horse and cart to Kelvedon railway station and from there on to London for sale at the markets. When Gladstone, Prime Minister of the day commended fruit preserving to the population at large, Arthur Charles Wilkin leapt on this idea as a way to finally make a success of farming in Tiptree. In 1885, The Britannia Fruit Preserving Company was formed and the very first 'Tiptree' preserves were made, sold to a merchant and shipped to Australia. Within ten years, more than 200 tons of fruit was being produced and the success of Tiptree's jam-making project was good news for the village and records show that in 1891, four hundred pickers were employed.

Over the years, Wilkin and Sons (as the Company had by now become known) bought and farmed much of the land surrounding the village and even strayed as far as Dagenham and Suffolk. Today, the 'Tiptree' estate includes farms in Tiptree, Tollesbury and Goldhanger. By 1906, the Company owned 800 acres of land yielding some 300 tons of fruit each season. The war years were difficult due to restrictions but the war over, things improved once more. During World War Two, Wilkin and Sons came under the control of the Ministry of Food but somehow Mr. Wilkin managed to get special dispensation to keep to the original recipes with their high fruit content.

The Tiptree preserves business has seen good times and difficult times throughout its history but from the 1950s, there was a long period of steady growth. More recently, as the traditional market has declined, the Tiptree business has gone from strength to strength. A renewed focus on home-grown fruits has helped the farm to flourish and today, it grows more fruit than ever.

2010, the 125th year of jam making at Tiptree, signalled all-time record sales, despite global recession. A year of celebration, 2010 was marked by a visit from Her Majesty The Queen. The Company staged a play in the mulberry orchard, specially commissioned to relate the life of John Joseph Mechi, silversmith, inventor and experimental farmer at Tiptree Hall, now part of the 'Tiptree' estate. A Tiptree garden was created by Writtle College for the Chelsea Flower Show and the business recorded its best ever sales.

Today, Wilkin and Sons not only makes 'Tiptree' preserves, it has a flourishing fresh fruit business and multiple tea rooms in Essex. Thursday Cottage, a hand-filled preserves maker is now owned by Wilkin and Sons and based at Tiptree; Passionately Cakes was bought and later merged with Raven Catering to form Tiptree Patisserie, a successful high quality food producer based nearby in Witham. Tiptree Patisserie bought Daizylake cakes and moved that business to Witham. Cole's Puddings (premium Christmas pudding producers) have also become part of the Wilkin & Sons food family.

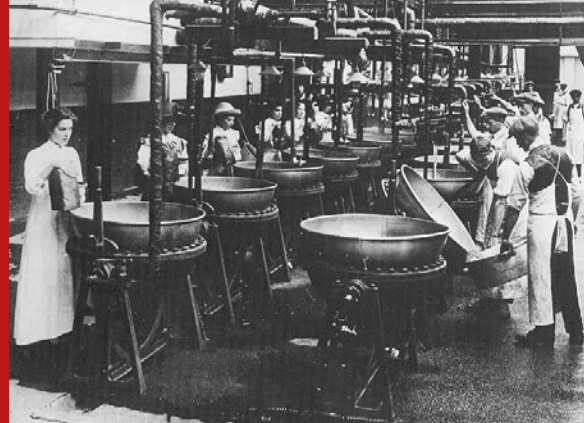
Around 850 acres of Essex farmland produce Grade I fruits, including medlars, mulberries and quinces. Wilkin and Sons is best known for its Little Scarlet strawberries, grown only on the 'Tiptree' estate. Adoption of the most up-to-date farming techniques ensure the farm is more successful than ever at growing exactly the right varieties of high quality fruit for 'the jam factory'. Proud holders of a Royal Warrant from the reigning monarch since 1911, Wilkin and Sons is a business that plans for the long-term: One target is financial, the other, perhaps more important target is: 'To do everything better than we did before; to be a remarkable business'.

The company has always been an integral part of the local community – it is the largest employer in Tiptree and takes its social responsibilities seriously. Profits are used to support local sports and arts organisations and to improve the environment. Each year the Tiptree Strawberry Race takes place in June and all funds raised are donated to a charity, usually one with local roots and Tiptree's Youth Club has the use of the Factory Hall. Local sponsorship helps the business in a commercial sense too: there's a 'Tiptree' stand at the Essex County Cricket Club in Chelmsford and the business supports events such as the Essex Life Food & Drink Awards, and Aldeburgh's Food & Drink Festival.

The company has provided homes for employees for generations and in 2011 the chairman, Peter Wilkin, cut the ribbon to new bungalows at Gate House Mews which now provide practical homes for retired members of staff.

Despite many new products having been introduced over the years Strawberries have always been the key crop on the farm and the innovations over the last twenty years have lifted the plants grown in open fields onto tabletop trays often grown under Spanish tunnels. In 2016 this was taken a stage further with the introduction of the first New Growing System (NGS) in the UK for strawberries. The NGS offers a sustainable controlled environment for the fruit, the system doubles the amount of plants that can be grown per hectare and it is much easier for the pickers. Farming in the driest part of the driest county in the country is a challenge so the construction of two new winter fill reservoirs was a great relief. The need for innovation and sustainability was reflected in the opening of a new Resource Centre where two efficient boilers 'Arthur' and 'Charles' were revealed, named after the founder.

Like many family firms across the UK, Wilkin and Sons continues to invest in the business, people and products. Innovation, purpose and core family values are at the heart of all they do and they continue to have a great reputation for producing fine preserves that are now enjoyed all over the world.



“ We have a great reputation for quality, integrity, consistency and making fine preserves for over 130 years. ”

Peter Wilkin – Director





24

Hatfields

Furniture Retailer
Located in Colchester



Established in 1886, Hatfields remains a family-owned and run local retailer, providing quality furniture, flooring and home accessories.

Hatfields was established by John Hatfield in 1886 and today boasts one of the largest quality furnishing showrooms in East Anglia. Their showrooms in Peartree Road, Colchester display a large collection of top quality furnishings across 50,000 sq feet of beautifully designed showrooms on two floors. Their buyers cater for both a contemporary and traditional home furnishing taste, offering an extensive choice to ensure there is something for every home.

Their second store, Hatfields Budget & Clearance Store, is located just opposite the main site in Peartree Road where you will find many favourite Hatfields ranges which have been discontinued, all at highly discounted prices. This store also sells purposely bought-in 'budget conscious' ranges and containers of competitively priced and exclusive merchandise.

Hatfields now employs over 65 staff who are renowned as being kind and considerate and indeed, are helping to ensure that the oldest and largest furniture store in Colchester continues to progression for many more years to come. Hatfields is proud to be celebrating over 130 years and attribute this to caring for its customers and ensuring that quality products and service are always paramount.



“ Hatfields has worked extremely hard throughout our history to adapt to the different buying trends as they change, which we believe has kept our business relative to our customers across all generations. We started from a sitting room in 1886 and the directors of years gone by gradually grew the business to expand into larger shop premises, with several relocations along the way. In the 1970s, we made the brave decision to be one of the first to move our business outside of the town centre, later seeing many follow suit; this was a proud moment in our history, along with expanding the business by setting up our warehouse facilities and delivery fleet.

We feel that Hatfields' longevity is mainly due to our traditional values and remaining a business with a core focus on customer service. Our loyal staff work hard to create the best overall shopping experience for our customers, from sales and customer service to the delivery and fitting teams, they all aim to ensure our customers would be confident to shop again and recommend us to their friends and family.”

Robert London - Director





25

Church's Butchers

Butchers

Located in Epping



On 17th May 1888, Stephen John Church opened his first butcher's shop on Epping High Street. The business is still owned by the Church family 130 years later, still trading from the same site where the original shop stood, and still maintaining the same values that Stephen Church did all those years ago.

Church's strive to provide the best quality produce and service to their customers, and are meticulous with the way they source their meat. Much of it comes from local farms - places where quality and high animal welfare standards can be ensured. This is a family business where it is of utmost importance that the things they sell are of the highest standard.





ABOUT RICKARD LUCKIN



As the largest independent firm of chartered accountants and tax advisers in Essex, Rickard Luckin offer a full range of accountancy, tax and business services to small, medium and large businesses, as well as private clients.

Over the years we have earned a reputation for putting our clients first, providing high quality advice and excellent client service.

Team members across our offices in offices in Basildon, Chelmsford and Southend-on-Sea, share a common commitment to deliver the best possible outcome for our clients.

We have a proven track record and long-standing reputation for advising family-owned businesses on key strategic decisions relating to the day-to-day operations and growth. Our expertise covers a range of accounting, tax and strategic services including succession planning, sales and acquisitions, setting up trusts and other wealth management issues.

For clients that require international advice, we have close links with professionals around the globe through our membership of the MGI Worldwide network of audit, tax and accounting firms.

www.rickardluckin.co.uk

About this report

In compiling this first ever listing of the oldest family firms in Essex the team at Family Business United used various means to make it as comprehensive and accurate as possible. However, due to the fact that there is no legal requirement to disclose the status of the underlying ownership in businesses, it is not an easy process to undertake so we cannot unequivocally say that there are not a few other hidden gems out there.

This report is supported by the online listing on www.familybusinessunited.com and we will be happy to update the list and reflect any family firms that should have been included online and in future editions of this report.

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ABOUT FBU



Bringing the family business community together

Family Business United was created by Paul Andrews who has been working in the family business field for over 20 years and is passionate about the sector. Our aim is simple, to champion the family business sector, recognise the contribution they make to the global economy and to provide a forum that brings the family business community together.

Over the years Paul's experience comes from working in advisory firms such as Grant Thornton, Ernst & Young and Coutts & Co as well as running events for family firms and advisers, and working in and with family businesses across the UK.

In addition, Paul worked for over a year as the Membership Director at the Institute for Family Business and was involved with the FBN Summit in London in 2012. Paul has also advised a number of professional advisory firms on how to deliver their offering to family firms and works closely with a number of family business clients to help them in their marketing, business development and social media activity as well.

We have links with leading advisers and academics around the world to ensure we have access to the best articles available. Based on this experience and our growing network of contributors, Family Business United is well placed to bring together the best content from around the world, using our extensive network to source research, insights, articles and more besides from the broader family business community. We love what we do and strive to improve our content and reach daily and make extensive use of social media in doing so.

Family Business United offers a membership scheme with a great package of benefits for both family businesses and their professional advisers. Contact the team to find out more and visit the website to keep up to date with all the latest news and events.

In 2020, and again in 2022, Paul was recognised by Family Capital as a Top 100 Family Business Influencer. Paul and the team continue to champion family firms globally each and every day.

Paul Andrews

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