

# Charity begins at home

Essex Community Foundation is a charitable fund giving away millions of pounds to local charities. Each month, we hear from ECF about the worthy causes and inspirational people it supports

WORDS: Jo Macaulay, Essex Community Foundation

Over 70 per cent of land in Essex is rural and a quarter of the population lives in rural communities. The positive impact that the countryside and being outdoors has on mental health is well documented and became even more apparent during the pandemic.

Essex is fortunate to have many public pathways, including the well-trodden 82 miles of the Essex Way from Epping to Harwich, as well as its 350 miles of coastline. There are also so many historic buildings and gardens that are open to the public for everyone to enjoy. However, care is needed to keep these spaces and buildings preserved for future generations, and they require funding to undertake restoration works.

At Essex Community Foundation, we manage a number of charitable funds on behalf of our donors whose

interest is in maintaining the environment for the benefit of all. One of these is the Bartleet Family Fund, and we have been pleased to work with the fundholders since 2017.

Ann and Anthony Bartleet were ahead of their time with their deep concerns for the natural environment and protecting our heritage for future generations. Their far-sighted interests and practical action for such causes, along with promoting musical events and activities, began several decades ago and continue to this day, through their fund with us.

Historic churches, heritage and maritime centres, outreach programmes involving young people and opera workshops are among the projects that have benefitted from grants totalling more than £200,000 distributed through the Fund.

'Essex is a very much underestimated county, but we

have the most splendid buildings and wonderful countryside,' Ann says. 'I believe that heritage, the environment and the countryside are hugely important to people's wellbeing, which is why we always supported such causes, even when they were not as popular as they are now.'

She and Anthony raised their three sons in Essex and had a family trust fund for many years to make annual charitable contributions. In 2017, they made the decision to transfer the management of the fund to ECF.

Ann says: 'ECF give a very personal service, doing the groundwork and the administration for regular giving to both local and national charities. This allows me to respond to local requests for funding in the areas that I am especially interested in.'

'Although the fund, quite rightly, concentrates on good causes that have direct community benefits, I like to think that by supporting environmental and cultural initiatives, I can remind everyone just how important the natural world, countryside and historic

buildings and all sorts of cultural activities are to us all.'

At her home in Great Tey, Ann is surrounded by the glorious Essex countryside, which she has cherished since she came from 'over the border' in Hertfordshire to live in the county at the start of her 54-year marriage to Anthony, a marine underwriter with Lloyds of London, who sadly died in 2019.

Ann says she feels fortunate that she has been able to give a lot of her time to the causes that have inspired her. More than two decades ago, she was made an MBE for preservation work protecting rural areas.

'For many years I was lucky enough to work as a trustee of environmental charities both nationally and locally, reflecting my interest in the historic built environment and in the natural world,' she says. 'As well as supporting national wildlife and nature conservation charities such as RSPB, Plantlife and the Woodland Trust, we have always contributed to Essex Wildlife Trust.'

Along with devotion to heritage and the countryside, Ann also has a lifelong love of music, having sung in choirs for 70 years. Grants from the Bartleet Family Fund have helped to restore and repair bells and organs in several Essex churches and have also supported music festivals and choirs in the county.

Being involved in so many causes and organisations has given Ann a great insight into the power of harnessing people's interests to ensure that everyone can benefit from healthy and sustainable surroundings. She says: 'It is amazing what communities can do – and there is always plenty to do if you look out for it.'

But Ann believes that the word community does not just relate to the people of the county. She feels it is also about preserving and restoring the important structures in our communities, so that people can appreciate their history and beauty now and in the future.

Although she says that advancing years mean restricting her activities closer to home, Ann relishes her connections with the whole county. Her family fund is



Photo: ECF



Photo: ECF

*'It is amazing what communities can do – and there is always plenty to do if you look out for it'*

helping to fulfil the vision she and husband Anthony had to enhance the environment and help secure the precious heritage of Essex for future generations to enjoy. ♦ ECF can help you to give back to your local community and to the causes you're passionate about. Call 01245 355947, [essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk](http://essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk)



Photo: Ann Bartleet

**TOP:** Writtle Bowling Club received £4,000 to restore a Grade II listed boundary wall, parts of which date back to Tudor times

**LEFT:** Ann Bartleet with her family, collecting her MBE for preservation work protecting rural areas

**RIGHT:** St Michael's, Myland, were awarded £10,000 towards the restoration of the church organ