



Heritage Guide





*Welcome
to Rochford*

*Whispering Post
Rochford*

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Introduction

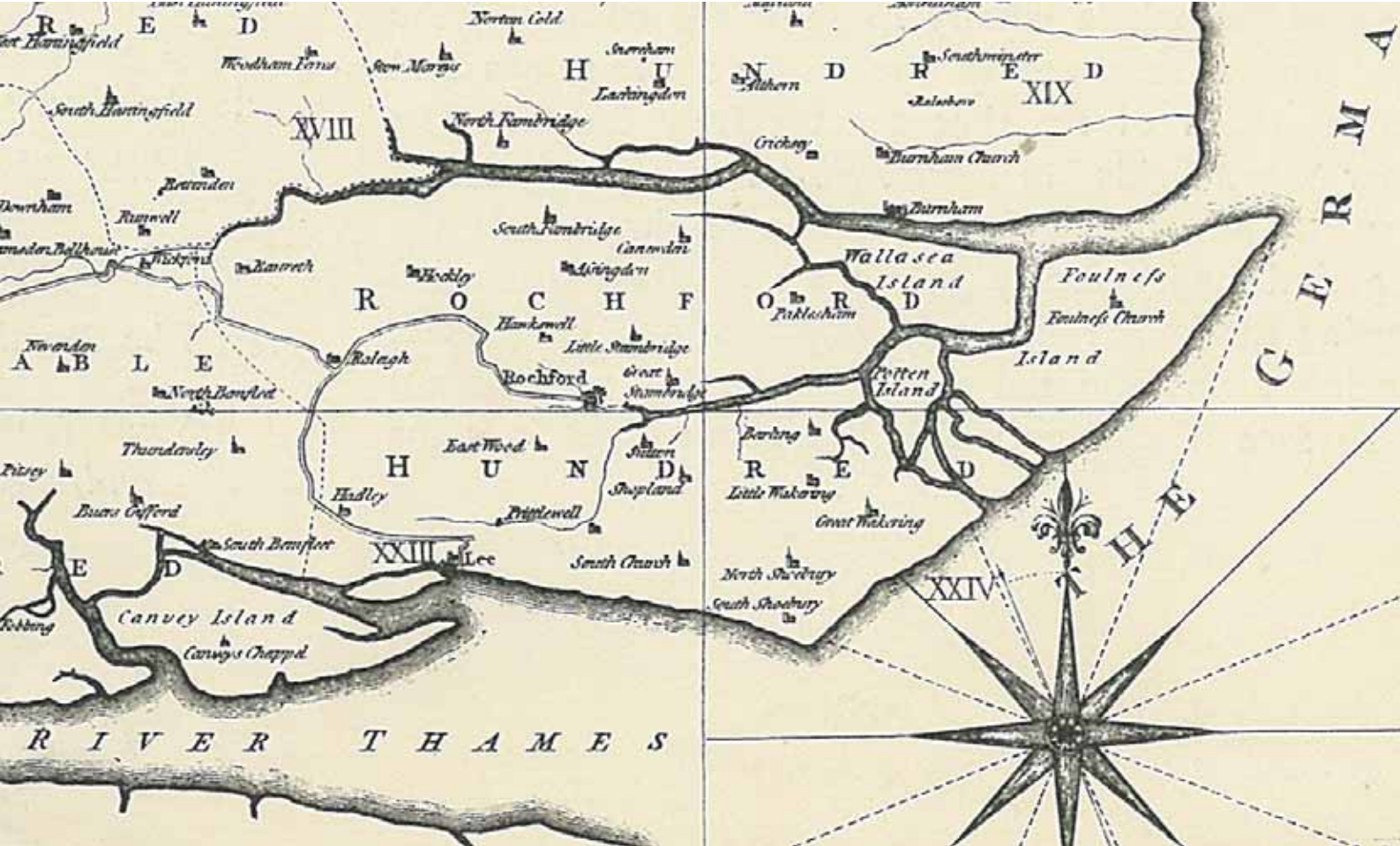
The District was first called Rochford Hundred in Norman times and stretched from the River Crouch in the north to the River Thames in the south. (The term Hundred is an ancient administrative division of a county originally thought to contain a hundred families). Covering 65 square miles it once included both Southend and Leigh and had 19 districts. Various changes took place in the 20th Century and it now has 14 parishes, each with its own distinct history and character. Compare the area of the map by Chapman & Andre in 1777 to one of today.

Surrounded on three sides by water (sea and river), nautical pursuits abounded. The water was excellent for the production of oysters (a staple diet of the poor) and smuggling contraband, which was easily hidden from the customs men in the creeks and inlets. Boat building was a thriving industry as well.

Advantage was also taken of the rich London clay soil and many local brickworks transported the bricks to London by Thames Barge. Inland, agriculture was prominent. corn for the mills was grown in many fields and horses were extensively used to help cultivate the crops.



Sailing on the River Crouch



In early days much of the area was covered by forest and woodland and included parks for the benefit of Royal pastimes. Much of the woodland was felled for houses, fuel and boat building and in the clearings animals grazed and small communities existed. Little changed for centuries until the railway arrived in 1889. From this date landowners started to sell their estates and property building spread to all areas and population levels increased.

The District is now split in to 13 parish councils and one town council as outlined below:

Ashingdon – best known for the battle in 1016.

Barling Magna – still retains its rural charm including the 11th century church at Little Wakering once visited by King George III in 1769.

Canewdon – on the south bank of the River Crouch. Ancient settlement mentioned in the Domesday Book.

Foulness Island – best known for its wildlife and association with the Ministry of Defence.

Great Wakering – mentioned in the Domesday Book and known for its brickworks. Now mainly residential.

Hawkwell – has a variety of public open spaces as well as a 14th Century church with a 15th century timber belfry.

Hockley – well known to many who enjoy a stroll in Hockley Woods but don't forget Plumberow Mount, undiscovered by many.

Hullbridge – another riverside village once part of the pilgrim route to Canterbury before the bridge was destroyed long ago.

Paglesham – part of the Roach Valley Conservation Area. Was well known for smuggling as well as a reputation for oyster production.

Rayleigh – historic market town with a wealth of history and character. Buildings and sites of interest include a 14th century

parish church, 18th century Dutch cottage, windmill, Martyr's Memorial and the Mount (site of the castle). Origin of the Whispering Court.

Rochford – the chief town of the Hundred. The centre of trade for centuries best known for its associations with Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. Home of the Peculiar People.

Rawreth – mainly agricultural with many moated farmhouses.

Stambridge – also mentioned in the Domesday Book, the Tidal Mill was built over 500 years ago. John Harriott, who founded the Thames Police Force in the 18th century, was also a resident.

Sutton – once a fishing village with its own market fair in the 11th century.

Mike Davies
(Rayleigh Through the Looking Glass)

Ashingdon

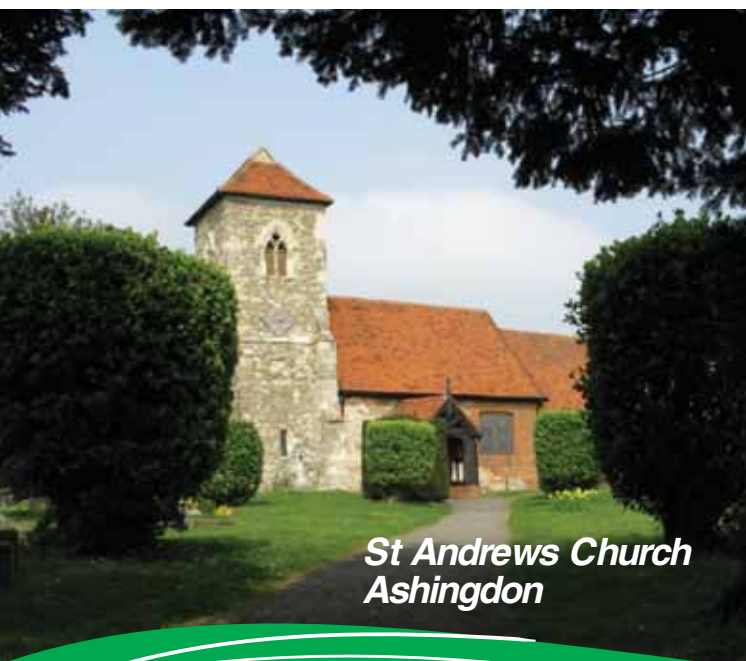
The Battle of Ashingdon was fought on the low ground between Ashingdon Hill and Canewdon Hill on October 18th 1016. It resulted in a decisive victory for The Danes led by Canute, who overcame the English army led by King Edmund II ('Ironside'). This battle concluded the Danish reconquest of England, and most of the English nobility was cut down in the very bloody battle, which involved an element of treachery.

In the morning of the battle Ironside attacked Canute head-on, rushing down the hill to engage in battle. The Danes



pretended to fall back, but then reformed to beat the English. One of the English generals, Eadric of Murcia, had remained on the hill with his men, he did not assist Ironside, but later joined Canute in completing his rout of the English force.

This important victory for Canute resulted in an agreement to divide the country between himself and Ironside. The death of Ironside shortly afterward gave Canute the Crown of England. St Andrews Church, overlooking the battle



*St Andrews Church
Ashingdon*

site, was built by Canute as a tribute to the many who died in this awful but significant encounter.

It is believed that South Fambridge, an area in the north of Ashingdon, was the site of the first air-field in Britain. A memorial was un-veiled on the village green to the south of the village, on 20th February 2009 – the 100th anniversary of the date when the airfield was first mentioned in the press. The airfield used Crane Court, a former crane factory, as a hangar.

Neil Pemberton-Billing owned the airfield. He later formed a company called Supermarine which employed R J Mitchell the designer of the Spitfire.

In a field to the north of Canewdon Road in Ashingdon is a small memorial to the crew of an American B26 aircraft which crashed on 24 September 1944.

The aircraft was flying from France to its home base at Matching Green, and came down in bad weather killing all five crew.



South Fambridge



Airfields of Britain Memorial



All Saints Church

Barling Magna

People have lived in the area since the Stone Age. From the middle of the Stone Age, people were attracted here by the fertile soils of the brick earth. The Romans were also in evidence in the area but it is the Saxons who gave the names of Barling and Little Wakering to the villages.

Barling is now generally accepted to mean 'Baerla's people' and Little Wakering from the 'People of Wacor or Waecer'.

In 998, Leofwine, a Saxon Thegn, left Barling in his will, to Bishop Wulfstan and it became part of the lands owned by St Paul's in London who already owned land in neighbouring Shopland.

When the Domesday Book was compiled in 1085, the manor of Little Wakering was part of the lands of Swein and Barling was part of the Lands of the Canons of St Paul's. Richard, son of



*St Marys Church
Barling*

Gilbert held Barrow Hall and Bishop Odo, brother to William the Conqueror held Mucking Hall.

There are two ancient churches in the villages. During the 1100's, construction of both churches is believed to have started, the nave and chancel at St Mary's are Norman and there is proof that they were built before 1190 when the advowson and land of St Mary's, Little Wakering was deeded by William de Tayden to St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. The Tower at St Mary's is said to have been built by John Wakering, Bishop of Norwich of Barrow Hall, with financial assistance from Anne, Countess of Stafford as a thanks offering for his safe return from Agincourt in 1416.

The south wall of the nave in All Saints', Barling Magna is believed to be the oldest dating from the 12th century with additions through to the 15th Century. The Victorians undertook a major renovation in the mid 1800's.

Both churches once had their own Vicarages. The present Little Wakering Vicarage, adjacent to the church was built in 1866 and was sold in 2006. The Glebe in Barling, dating from the 1700's has

been in private hands for a considerable time.

Barling had at one time a windmill. In 1181, a mill is recorded to have existed there. On maps dating from 1724 and 1749, a mill symbol is shown, close to the church in Church Road, the smock mill built around 1760 stood on the site until it was demolished in 1946.

During the time of Elizabeth I, Barling was a busy sea trading port and in the returns of 1564, Barling reported 23 ships with 48 marines and fisherman. In the 1580's Little Wakering built 6 vessels under a bounty scheme. Both ports traded with London and the Low Countries, the main cargoes being grain, oysters, timber and wool.

The area has always been and still is agricultural. In the past there were numerous farms and homesteads, these have now been amalgamated into three or four large farms. The area is bordered by marshland and creeks. Winter wading birds frequent the area and there is a rich assortment of wildlife.

Barling Magna Parish Council

Canewdon

Canewdon is a large parish, which extends for several miles along the southern side of the River Crouch. The name is derived from the Saxon 'hill of Cana's people' and is not named after King Canute.

Evidence of early settlements have been found in the area including bronze age artefacts, Roman red hills and a paddle dated around 1000 BC discovered in the river bank.

The Parish church of St Nicholas with its impressive tower is a landmark for many miles around and was used as an observation and signalling post during the First World War. It stands on a ridge overlooking the Crouch estuary on an ancient site in a large churchyard. The church's impressive tower is said to have been erected by Henry V in thanksgiving for his victory at Agincourt. Its site at the end of the village street is typical of a Saxon village with the church 'tacked on' at one end, suggesting the village



layout was completed before the church was founded.

To the east of the church is the old village lock-up and stocks. These used to be located adjacent to the pond in Lambourne Hall Road. Canewdon played a key role during the Second World War being the fourth Transmission and Receiver site for RADAR to be built and was part of a chain of stations around the coast.

The modern day Canewdon is a close-knit village community. Also included in the area is the island of Wallasea, a very popular centre for sailing and now being managed by the RSPB as a wetland sanctuary for wildlife.

Joyce Smith



*St Nicholas Church
Canewdon*

Foulness Island

The island's name derives from 'Fulganaess', the Old English for wild birds nest, and today the area remains a sanctuary to great colonies of wading birds, including oystercatcher, red shank, avocets and brent geese.

The earliest known occupants of Foulness and the smaller islands were the Romano-British. Archaeological evidence tells us that a civilian settlement existed at Little Shelford in the south-west of the Island, this consisted of a cemetery where cremation urns were recovered, some with evidence of human remains inside. Archaeological excavation of the site has revealed that farming, fishing and in particular the cultivation of oysters was taking place, but it would appear the production of salt was the main industry in this area at this particular time. The pottery excavated gives us a date for occupation as the late first century AD. The site appears to be

abandoned circa 280-230 AD due to the flooding caused by rising sea levels. The first recorded reference of sea walls on the Island was in "The Charter Rolls" for 1271 AD.

Foulness was originally shared between five mainland parishes: Rochford, Sutton, Little Wakering, Shopland, and Little Stambridge all in the Rochford Hundred. These parishes held detached rights on Foulness. The inhabitants had to pay tithes to those parishes on whose land they dwelt, this lasted until all the Islands' tithes were commuted to money payment in 1847.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the first substantial quality domestic dwellings were constructed in the sixteenth century; however more recent archaeological excavation (2001-03) shows high status living existed on the Island in the fourteenth-fifteenth century. There

appears to have been three major building phases on the Island: Mid 16th century, late 17th century – early 18th century, late 19th century – early 20th century. The first brick built dwellings were constructed in the early 18th century.

During the medieval period the Island was populated by shepherds and fishermen. Arable farming was taking place, but Foulness was well known for its dairy produce. The marshlands were ideal for grazing sheep and cheese, meat and ewes milk were in plentiful supply. The sheep also provided wool for the wool trade which was at its height in England during the medieval period.

The population began to increase in numbers from the sixteenth century due mainly to the development of arable farming on the island. During the seventeenth century Dutch names appear in the Parish registers. One theory put forward for this is they were

*St Mary the Virgin Church
Foulness Island*



leaving the lowlands to escape the protestant persecutions. By the late nineteenth century the population had risen to almost 800.

The church has played a leading roll in relation to the moral

development of Foulness over the past 720 years. In 1283 a chapel was built on the Island to serve the small community and in particular those who could not receive divine service in their own detached parish. The chapel was replaced during The Tudor period by a wooden church, which was in turn replaced by the present church St. Mary the Virgin in 1850.

In 1846 The Church of England Primary School was built to take 120 children, it was extended in 1872 to take a further 52 children. In 1988 the school became redundant due to the small number of children attending (11). The school remained empty for 13 years but after negotiations between Defence Estates and The Foulness Conservation and Archaeological Society it was renovated and is now “The Foulness Heritage Centre”. Foulness has seen some prominent Lords of the manor.

At the time of Domesday it was Suene, then Hubert de Burgh, followed by Sir John de Rochford, the De Bohuns, and the Rich Family. The manor became part of the estates owned by the Finch Family in 1688, when Daniel Finch 2nd Earl of Nottingham married Lady Essex Rich one of six co-heirs of the Rich family. The manor remained in the Finch Family until the death of Alan Finch in 1910; it was his successor Wilfred Henry Montgomery Finch who sold the Lordship to the War Department on the 13th July 1915.

Foulness Parish Council



Great Wakering

Wakering: The Settlement of Waecer's People

Fifteen hundred years before the first Saxon settlers gave this place its name; men had settled and prospered farming the fertile soil. The British and County Museums exhibit just a small proportion of the large number of artefacts dating from late Neolithic to Medieval times that have been uncovered during brick-earth excavations.

Wakering's prosperity in the middle ages can be shown by two separate quarrels over the titles, between the Bishop of London, the Prior of Prittlewell and the Monks of Beeleigh Abbey, and Thomas Rawlins corresponding with William Cecil. The Manor of Wakering Hall was the highest rated Essex Manor when Ship Money was levied in 1639.

A village with large farms, wide fresh marshes providing grazing for cattle and thousands of sheep. An industrial village, with brick, tile, cloth, glove and cheese-making



concerns, the famous Essex cheeses with which Drake and his fellow captains victualled their ships; oysters and fish from the creeks, sands and estuary were shipped to Billingsgate along with wild fowl over the centuries. Bricks and tiles have been manufactured since Tudor times and with the industrialisation of the industry in the mid nineteenth century, over six hundred men women and boys produced the bricks which were carried to the rapidly expanding London by a fleet of sailing barges.

Wakering was described in Catholic Queen Mary's reign as "a nest of heretics". Under Elizabeth I two vicars were deprived as Puritans, as was Christopher Scott, a great preacher. The oral

tradition of the village was a Puritan stronghold, which developed later into a non-conformist centre with the radical views that gave Essex its first Labour Parish Council in 1928. It is also known to be the driest place in Britain.

Mr P W Hunter

Mr P N Jeffries

Mrs G M Rawlingson

The Rev B J Shannon



Great Wakering



*St Nicholas Church
Great Wakering*

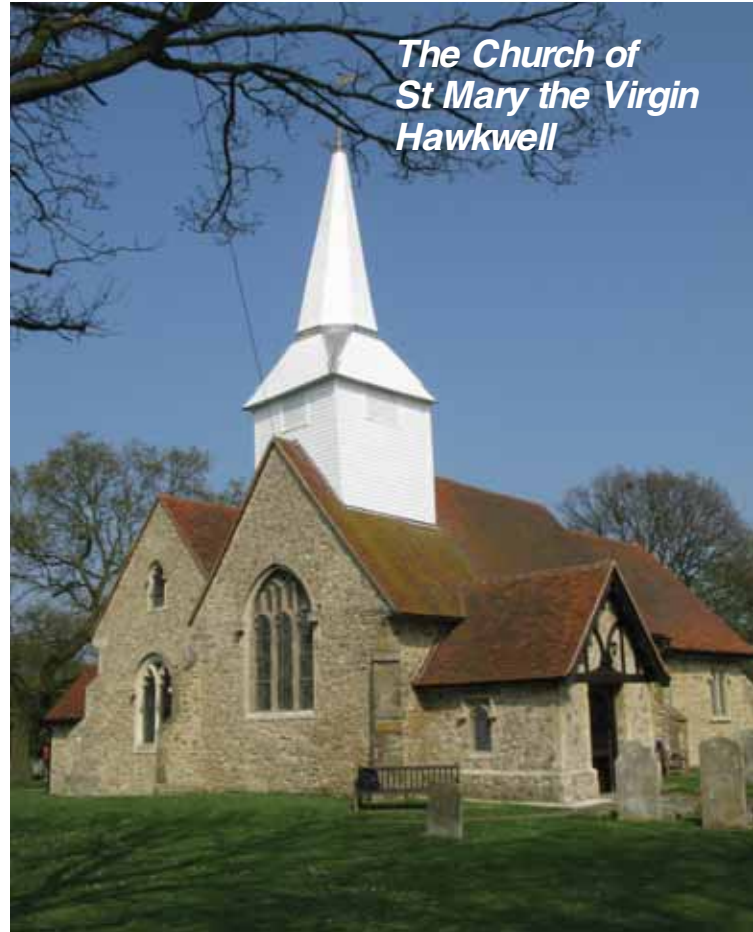
Hawkwell

Hawkwell is mentioned in the Domesday Book, but not as 'Hawkwell', it is Hacuella or Hechuella. In ancient records it has been spelt in various ways, such as Hacwell, Hachewell, Heckwell and Hawkeswell. As recently as 1858 Hackwell was used on a Deed in connection with the Manor of Clements. It could be derived from Hawk and Well although Philip Benton, in the late 19th century, suggested that it could be from the German 'Hochwell', or High Well.

There were many wells in the parish, but the High Well was the one near the White Hart. There was also one at the top of Victor Gardens, and one in Ironwell Lane was called the Iron Well because the water was hard, as compared with the soft water of the High Well. Also Hacuella or Hechuella, could be from the Saxon words for 'bend in the stream' – the truth is hidden in the mists of time!

Another mystery is the age of the parish church of St. Mary the Virgin. Philip Benton estimated the date to be about 1400 but others think it could be older, perhaps

*The Church of
St Mary the Virgin
Hawkwell*



1300. William de Bayeuse is the name of the first Rector but it is not dated. The second, Alexander de Bayeuse, has the date of 1323. In the church porch, and as it was listed in the church records, was once kept part of the top of a stone coffin believed to be of a former Rector of the church and dated 1280 AD.

There were two manors in Hawkwell – Clements Hall Manor took its name from Philip Clement who owned it in 1440. Many years later Thomas White was the owner. He was the brother of the Rev. Gilbert White who wrote the very well known book 'The Natural History of Selborne'. The present house, a timber framed, weather

boarded building, is 16th century and had a restored fireplace with a carved wooden over mantel and some 17th century paneling. The jurisdiction of the Manor of Hawkwell became extinct, but in the reign of Edward the Confessor (1005-66), Ulmar, a free man, owned the parish and at the time of the Domesday Book survey, Eudo and his under tenant Pirot, together with Suene (Sweyne) had lands here. Pirot's successors continued at Hawkwell Hall until 1340. Hawkwell Hall is now a farm and can be seen from St. Mary's Church. The present house was built in 1833.

There are several other old houses in the parish:-

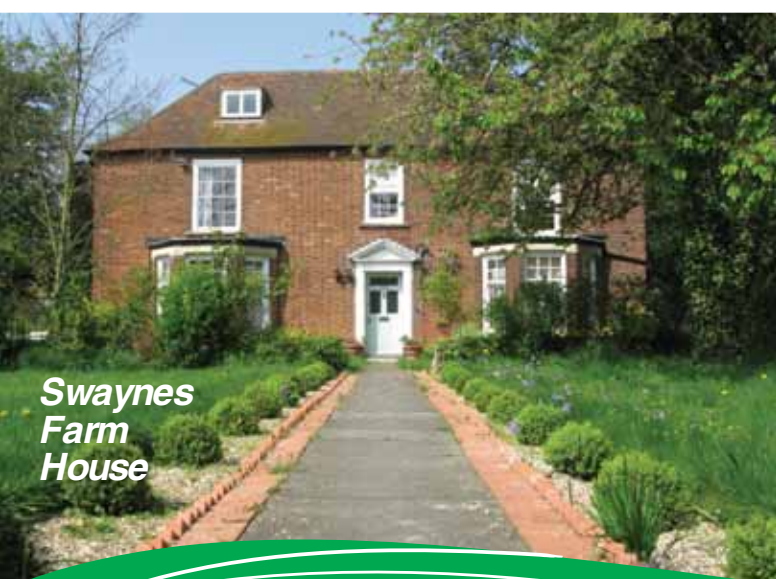
Mount Bovers farmhouse, built approximately 1448, was at one

time owned by Christ's College, Cambridge.

Sweynes (Swaines) Farm (known by Philip Benton as "Porters".) This is 16th century, with later alterations, timber framed and black weather board. This is in the Main Road opposite Mount Bovers Lane.

Swaynes Farm House (Now The Priest's House of St. Teresa's Roman Catholic Church in Rochford). This is 15th Century with later alterations and additions, timber framed, 18th century, red brick faced. Holly Tree Cottage. Mid 17th century with later alterations and additions, timber framed and weatherboarded, in Main Road, Hawkwell.

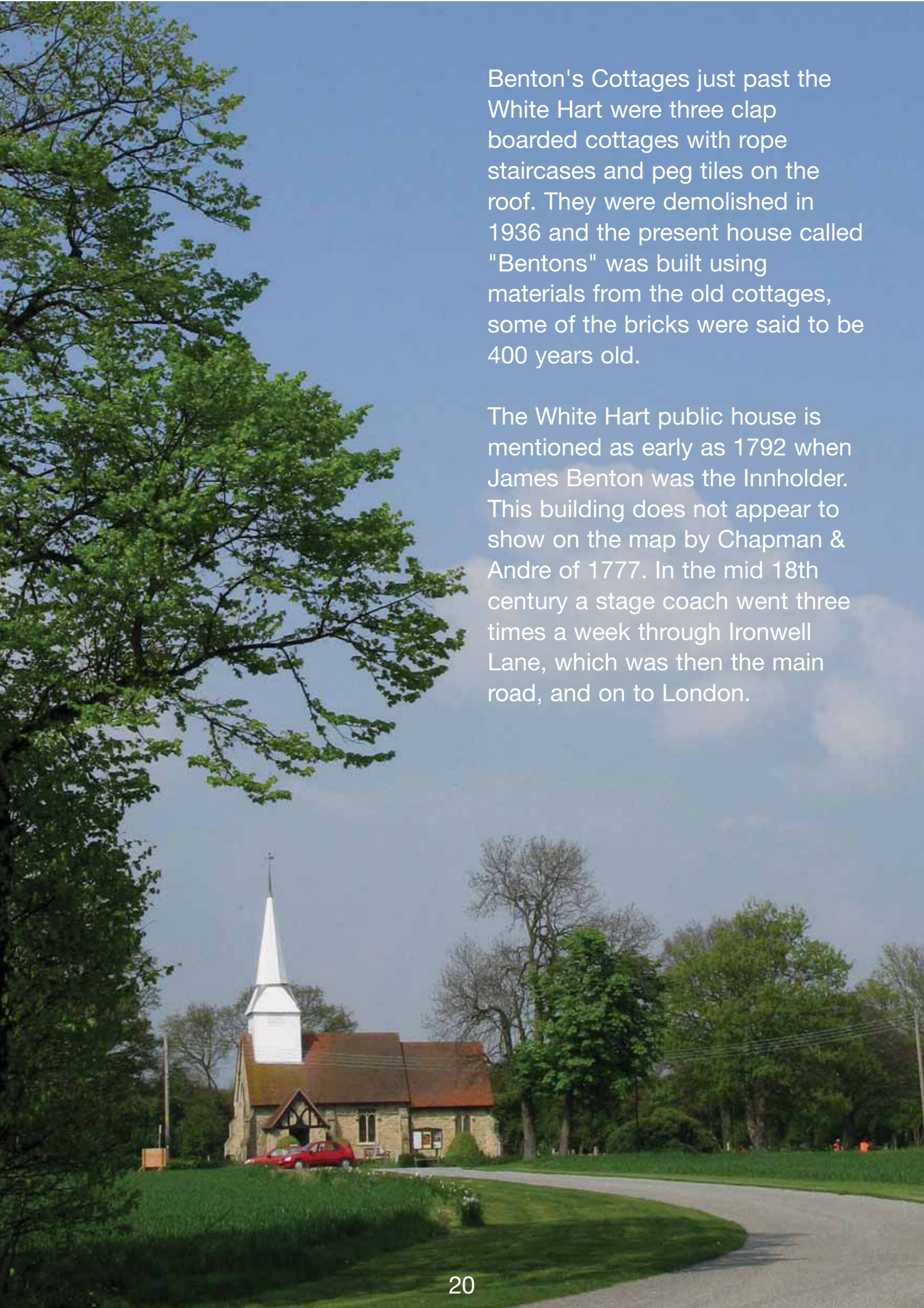
Hawkwell Parish Council



*Swaynes
Farm
House*



*Hawkwell
Hall*



Benton's Cottages just past the White Hart were three clap boarded cottages with rope staircases and peg tiles on the roof. They were demolished in 1936 and the present house called "Bentons" was built using materials from the old cottages, some of the bricks were said to be 400 years old.

The White Hart public house is mentioned as early as 1792 when James Benton was the Innholder. This building does not appear to show on the map by Chapman & Andre of 1777. In the mid 18th century a stage coach went three times a week through Ironwell Lane, which was then the main road, and on to London.

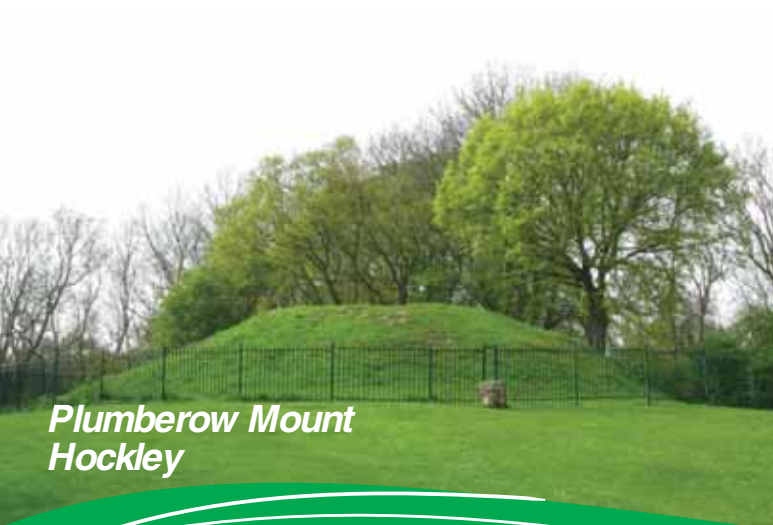
Hockley

Too large to be a Village, but too small to be called a town, Hockley's origins are lost in the mists of time. A signpost to the past, however, is Plumberow Mount, a tumulus that tops a hill at the end of Plumberow Avenue. In the early days of the 20th century the Mount was excavated in the hope that it would yield a wealthy burial. Unfortunately the excavators were disappointed for all they found were broken Romano British pots and a Roman coin. The true purpose of this relic of Hockley's past remains a mystery to this day.

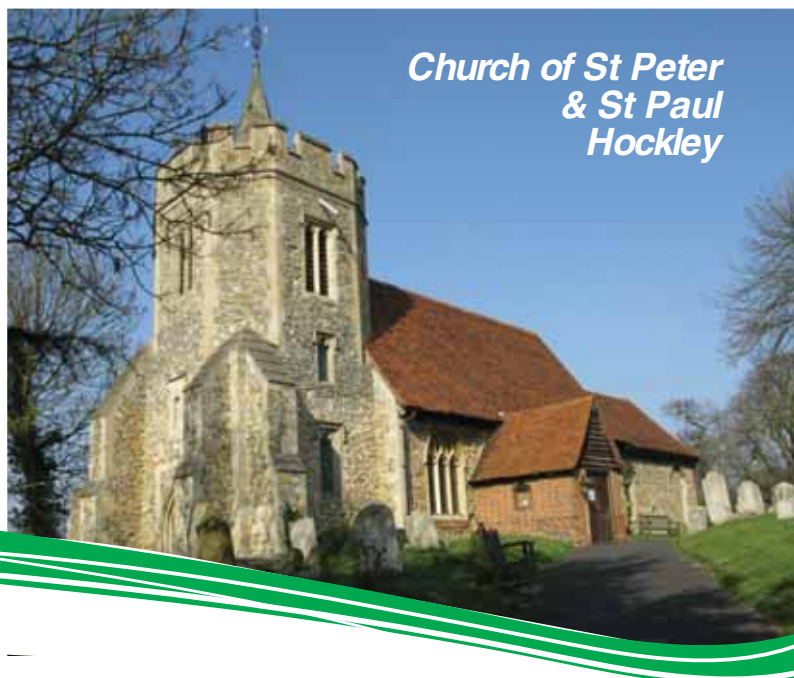
We are on firmer ground in 1086 when Hockley is mentioned no less than three times in the

Domesday Book, and the then hamlet of Plumberow twice. At that time the main manor of Hocheleia as it was then called was in the possession of the royal Saxon abbey of St. Mary's, Barking. The abbey retained its responsibility for the living of Hockley's beautiful church until the Reformation when it eventually passed into the possession of Wadham College, Oxford.

The small and much loved church with its unusual octagonal tower stands on a high hill to the west of the village with magnificent views across the Crouch valley. The present building dates mainly from 1220 when it was rebuilt and enlarged.



*Plumberow Mount
Hockley*



*Church of St Peter
& St Paul
Hockley*

Next to the church and opposite the old manor house, is Hockley's original school which first opened its doors in 1839. When the building became too small a new school was built on the Main Road in 1903. To the rear of the school are Hockley Woods, which for centuries served the local



community as a resource for fuel and building material. The woods were divided amongst a number of owners and jealously guarded with high earth banks, which can still be seen today. Southend pier was constructed with timber from Hockley Wood.

Hockley had one brief moment of fame when in 1843 a mineral spa was established in the village. A pump room and a hotel to accommodate the expected visitors were built. Unfortunately the craze for taking the waters was on the wane with people preferring instead to visit the new seaside resorts such as Southend and the venture failed. Over the years the old pump room has had a chequered life becoming derelict on several occasions.

The quiet and pretty village of Hockley changed forever in 1889 when the Great Eastern Railway reached Hockley. With Hockley now easily accessible to London, local landowners grasped the opportunity to get rich quick and sold off their farmland for development. Special trains were run from London and the plots of land were sold at auctions where champagne flowed freely. Eventually the holiday shacks were erected into more permanent dwellings and the Hockley of today was born.

Lesley Vingoe

Hullbridge

Hullbridge started as a small hamlet with a few cottages, surrounded by farmland, clustered around an inn on the riverside. It was here that pilgrims crossed the river on their way to Canterbury. Signs of the old causeway can still be seen at low tide but no remains of the bridge, said to have spanned the river from circa 1240 to Cromwell's time, are left to be seen.

In latter years a ferry-man would row children across the river from Woodham Ferrers to the Old School House in Hullbridge (still standing in Ferry Road). Jock, the last of the ferry-men, was a stand-in for Johnny Weissmuller, the first Tarzan of the movies.



In 1923, High Elms Farm was sold and divided into building plots and from this development the village of Hullbridge grew, but the footpaths that crossed the fields can still be traced in the alleyways and passages between the house of today. The developers took the line of the original hedgerows to build the roadways, which explains why



Swans on the River Crouch

the majority of the roads in the village today are straight and at right angles to each other.

Before gas and electricity arrived, barges unloaded coal at the wharf near the existing slipway and this was stored on a barn where Smugglers Den stands today. Fresh water was supplied by wells, one of which was under the car park of the Anchor public house and another under the cherry tree on the corner of Pooles Lane.

The attractive Anchor Cottages are said to be about four hundred years old and as most old buildings, rumored to be haunted.

A brickworks on the site of the Tower Caravan Park made four million bricks and thousands of

tiles each year and the terrace of houses nearby were built to house the workers.

The circular brickwork in the Rose Garden at the northern end of Ferry Road is the head of a vertical shaft 54 feet deep and at the bottom a brick and steel lined tunnel seven feet in diameter crosses under the river. It was constructed in 1926 to house a water main so that fresh water from the River Chelmer could be pumped across country to a rapidly expanding Southend.

Kendal Nature Reserve was formed from ancient scrubland, which has a short but delightful walk alongside the River Crouch.

Hullbridge Parish Council



Anchor Cottages



***Kendall Nature Reserve,
Hullbridge***

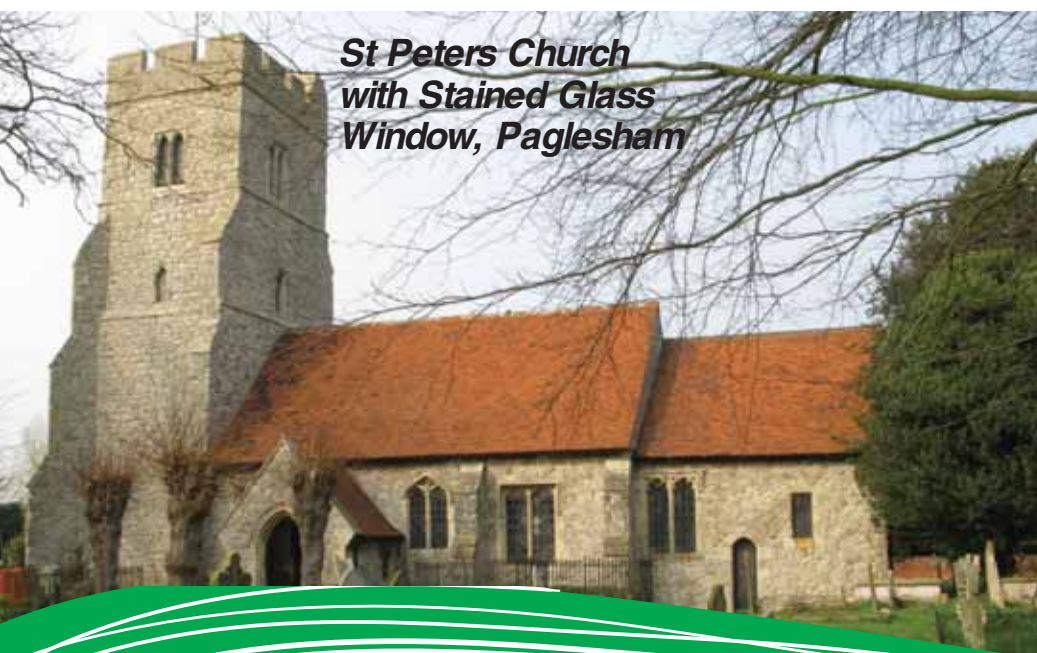
Paglesham

Bordering the River Roach is the delightful village of Paglesham, where history abounds. The village sign depicts those who worked on land and sea, and where also the cowslip (paigle in old Saxon) probably gave the village its name; i.e. Paigles' ham - the hamlet of cowslips.

It is divided geographically into two parts, Church End and East End. There is just the one street at the former, boasting an ancient public house which was at one time a sail loft, and Saint Peter's church a place of worship dating partly back to the 11th Century. Red brick cottages and older



timber framed buildings look out onto farmland all around. A mile or two to the south east lies East End, where yet another hostelry invites you in to its cosy ambience of yesteryear with hidden suggestions of the many



***St Peters Church
with Stained Glass
Window, Paglesham***



smuggling activities that abounded a century or two ago when, according to customs records, virtually every family in Paglesham was involved in this lucrative, but illegal, pastime.

The creeks and inlets from the river afforded a fairly easy means of bringing ashore contraband in the form of spirits, silks and lace. Many of which made their way further inland by horse and cart to be generously distributed elsewhere to the financial advantage of the smugglers. It was to combat this that HMS Beagle was moored in a strategic location in the river to act as Watch Vessel No 7 (as she was later named), where the coastguard officers aboard could keep an eye on the several tributaries that formed the nearby islands. This they carried out for 25 years from 1845 – 1870, when it was deemed no longer necessary.

The Roach Valley affords picturesque walking territory which appeals to ramblers and nature lovers who can spot above the colourful sea lavender and thrift many species of birds: avocets, curlews, dunlin, egrets and the oyster catcher in particular – the latter a reminder of what Paglesham was famous for in its 19th Century heyday when local oysters were the great delicacy at home and in our capital city.

2009 commemorates the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin who made a five-year voyage in the Beagle, circumnavigating the globe, as a result of which he was to produce his controversial philosophy of natural selection (and ultimately appear on our £10 notes). Locals and visitors alike are intrigued by the secret of the possible last resting place of this famous ship which ended her days nesting in the Paglesham mud.

Ann Boulter

Rayleigh

Rayleigh derives its name from the Saxon words 'raege' (a wild she goat or roe deer) and 'leah' (a clearing).

Although its origins are set in prehistoric times, the town of Rayleigh's prominence is due to its elevation as part of the ridge of hills spreading from South Benfleet to Hockley.

When William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066 one of his first acts was to order the

building of a network of castles. Robert Fitzwymarc who held the 'Honour of Rayleigh' before the invasion was one of few allowed to retain his land and he built his castle in Clavering in the north of Essex. It was his son Sweyne who built Rayleigh's motte & bailey castle (in the words of the Domesday Book 'and in this manor Sweyne built his castle'). It is the only Essex castle mentioned in the Domesday Book.



*Holy Trinity Church
Rayleigh*

It is one of the few castles mentioned in the book and as such considered one of the earliest Norman castles in England. It may have been built on the site of an earlier Roman fortification since fragments of Roman bricks have been found on the site. At Sweynes death the Castle passed to his son Robert de Essex and then to his grandson Henry d'Essex. Around 1140 the motte was covered in stone rubble.

Henry was accused of cowardice in battle in 1163 and subject to a trial by combat which he lost. The castle and its estates were confiscated to become the property of the king, Richard I. Extensive alterations were made to it in 1172 and in 1183-4, the property was given by King John to Hubert de Burgh in around 1200 who probably used it as a source of building materials for the castle which he started building in 1230 5 km away at Hadleigh.

On the death of Hubert's son in the latter half of the 13th century, ownership of the castle reverted to the monarch. Documents dating between 1279 and 1303 refer to the motte as being used for pasture, which probably means

that the castle was no longer used as a fortification. In 1394 King Richard II gave permission for the townspeople of Rayleigh to use the foundations of the castle as a source of stone. Since the foundations are explicitly mentioned in the document giving permission, it is unlikely that any other masonry structures remained by then.

The site of the castle was used for grazing sheep after it fell into disuse. Photos taken in the 1920's show the mount free from any large trees or shrubs as the grazing prevented their growth, however since the grazing stopped, large trees have grown on the site. The castle is known now as Rayleigh Mount and is managed by the National Trust.

The Second World War Convoy rescue ship *Empire Rest* was originally laid down as a Castle class corvette to have been named HMS Rayleigh Castle after the ruins.

Although an area of religious devotion since Saxon times Rayleigh's distinctive Parish Church at the top of the high Street dates mainly from the

Perpendicular Period (14th to 16th centuries). In 1555 two Protestant martyrs were burnt at the stake for refusing to deny their faith and a memorial was erected to their memory in 1908 at the top of Crown Hill. In the 19th and early 20th centuries a branch of the Peculiar People religious sect was prominent in the town.



Rayleigh Windmill

Rayleigh was an important town on the Rochford Hundred Adjoining Roads Division of the Essex Turnpike Trust set up in 1746. The 'King's Highway' from Wickford passed the site of what is now the Carpenter's Arms public House along the London Road and at the top of London Hill the highway branched into two, one route to Hockley & Rochford and the other to Hadleigh & Leigh. Several mile-stones remain by the side of the road from Rayleigh to Rochford as a reminder of those days. Many inns and smithies supplied the needs of both travellers and horses.

Rayleigh was the original home of the Whispering Court which was located in Kingley Wood which was cut in two by the arrival of the new A127 in 1925 close by Rayleigh Weir. The Lord of the Manor returning home late one night heard several of his tenants plotting against him in whispers. He made them swear allegiance to him at a special court which was held annually at dead of night. The court later moved to Rochford. At 240 feet above sea level the town and its immediate

vicinity were a prime location for windmills. The first documented mention of a windmill in Rayleigh dates from 1300 when King Edward I instructed the Prior of Prittlewell to erect a mill in Rayleigh. It was probably a wooden mill near or by the mount and castle. One of the earliest was a watermill in the grounds of the White House, once a substantial farm covering hundreds of acres by the Eastwood Road and part of the Royal Hunting Forest. It was also believed to be one of the areas used by Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn for their courting.

The first detailed map of Essex (1777) shows a windmill in the Hockley Road (Ruffles, demolished in the 19th century) and one opposite the Methodist Church in what was called Mill Lane (now Eastwood Road). In 1793 a second mill was erected close by and the name of the road was changed to Two Mill Lane. Both these mills were demolished in the 1880s. There was conjecture for many years as to the date that Rayleigh's remaining mill was built. Benton states that it was built in 1798 by the licensee of the Lion Public House but later research attributes the date of 1809. The

land was purchased in 1808 by a Mr Thomas Higgs together with an adjoining brickfield and the mill was completed in 1809.

The advent of the railway in 1889 turned the town from a quiet tranquil village in the 19th century (population circa 1500) to the bustling vibrant town it is today (population circa 35000).

The first arterial road in the country specifically built for motor vehicles was opened in 1925 (now the A127) and passed on the edge of Rayleigh and some of the large farms and manor houses became housing estates that are familiar to us today. Also in the 1920s locals and visitors were entertained in such places as the Clissold Hall by the Rayleigh Minstrels or saw early black and white silent films at the Cosy Talkie Theatre. Rayleigh also had its own brewery and several brickfields. Many will recall the Speedway Stadium near Rayleigh Weir home of the Rayleigh Rockets from 1948 to 1973. In addition greyhound racing, stock car racing, wrestling and other sports took place here.

Mike Davies (Rayleigh Through the Looking Glass)

Rawreth

To the north west of Rayleigh is Rawreth Village. Historians suggest two origins of the name, firstly that it came from Ravengar who was the Saxon owner of the manor of Beches or secondly, the Saxon translation of a Heron stream.

Property of note included Trenders Hall, a moated manor in Trenders Avenue first mentioned in the year 1210. Also Rawreth Hall, the seat of the manor was granted to Cardinal Wolsey in 1525 by Henry VIII and reverted to the Crown upon his death. In the early 1900s Horatio Bottomley, planned to cash in on the potential population explosion after the arrival of the railway to Rayleigh in 1889 by opening up a small brickfield to erect plotlands type houses. The first building was in actual fact a public house called the Bricklayers Arms, known at the time by locals as the Klondyke. Unfortunately the scheme failed and he was jailed for fraud.

The area is mainly agricultural in nature with dispersed centres of



population and pockets of industry. Historically, most of the farmhouses in Rawreth were moated manors, many of which survive today. In the north, Battlesbridge straddles the river Crouch and is therefore shared between the parishes of Rettendon and Rawreth. It was named after the mediaeval family Bataille, not a battle.

The original Parish Council was disbanded in the 1930s when the area was united with Rayleigh to form the original Urban District. It was reformed in 1994, following the reorganisation of Local Government.

Rochford District Council

*St Nicholas Church
Rawreth*



Rochford

In days gone by Rochford was the centre of activity for miles around, the chief town of the Rochford Hundred, a sub-division of Essex. That importance, long before the establishment of Southend, or the growth of Rayleigh, has left its mark today and it is well worth exploring that heritage.

Approaching Rochford from the west, one passes The Lawn, nowadays a fine function suite, but originally a substantial house going back to 18th century and beyond, possibly used as a gatehouse to Rochford Hall, a mile further ahead. This road, with two Grade II listed milestones still in place, was built in 1777 by the

then owner of the Hall to dissuade travellers from the natural approach to Rochford running past his front door. Today, as headquarters of Rochford Hundred Golf Club, we see just one corner of what was a very large manorial house. Opinions differ as to its age, but it probably had origins in 12th/13th century. Certainly we know that it was in the ownership of the Boleyn family in the early 16th century when the Earl of Ormonde, Ann Boleyn's grandfather had regained possession by petitioning Henry VII. It passed to Ann's father and then, there being no male heir, to Ann's sister, Mary, who had married Sir William Stafford. Little evidence exists to



The Lawn



Rochford Hall



support local legends about Ann's residing at the Hall for any lengthy period, but Mary and her husband did take up residence here and farmed in the area. A little later ownership fell to the Earls of Warwick, with Richard Rich being the most notable resident so far as Rochford is concerned. He was Lord Chancellor of England and died at Rochford Hall in 1567.

St. Andrew's Church a typical example of 13th/14th century stone construction, with an impressive 16th century brick tower, featuring diapering decoration, and with the Coat of Arms of Earl of Ormonde, who was responsible for its construction. To the north is the vestry, a late 16th century brick addition. Outside, the Grade II listed grave of James Banyard – founder of The Peculiar People – can be found.

Passing under the railway bridge, and turning right the eye is drawn to the row of Almshouses, still in good use, belying their 16th/17th century construction by Earl of Warwick in fulfilment of the Will of Richard Rich, his grandfather. A little further on the distinctive high roof of Whittingham's Garage tells us that, before the advent of cars, coaches were made and repaired there. The railway was extended from Shenfield a century ago, intended for agricultural business, running through South East Essex market towns. The Freight House was the holding "shed" for livestock from Rochford market. The Rochford Reservoir was constructed as a water source for the steam trains.

In West Street you will see 18th/19th century properties, mostly quite modest, since this area was intended for shopping and trade generally. One might select a number of individual shops for mention – an example would be the bookshop, with the sweetshop next door, on the right half way up. A century or so ago Mr. Francis conducted a printing business here, together with running the post office. Look carefully at the brickwork to see

where letters would have been posted at that time. Continuing up to Market Square, we come upon a large open area which many older residents recall as the site of a weekly livestock market which had its beginnings 750 years ago with the granting of a Royal Charter.

Looking round the Square we see Connaught House as perhaps the most impressive building, constructed around 1770, it is said by a man of Irish descent with “lottery” winnings. The east side was originally open, but,

**St Andrews Church
Rochford**



certainly during the 1800's there was a renowned grocery and tea rooms, for example. On the south side there is the W.I. Hall which goes back to 1866 when it was built as the Corn Exchange. By the turn of the century Mr. Francis had moved his printing business into the premises, following a downturn in its original use, and then WW1 saw it used as a laundry. The Women's Institute took possession in 1931. The building next door is currently Barclays Bank was built in 1860's.

The Kings Head has always dominated this side of the Square having been the first stop for stage coaches on their route to London from Prittlewell, there were stabling facilities at the rear. The same pub was, for many years, the point from which the annual Whispering Post ceremony commenced. This all began some 400 years ago when the then Lord of the Manor, 2nd Earl of Warwick, wanted to scotch plots against him by some of his tenants – minor manorial lords around the area. He'd heard them whispering one night. He called



them to pledge their allegiance late one September night. This unique ceremony, in latter years, took the form of a supper at Kings Head, a procession at midnight across the Square, through the alley beside the bakers, straight across North Street and up to Kings Hill. At this house is a post around which the “tenants” gathered to honour their Lord in whispers. The whole thing ended with further feasting at Kings Head. All this continued annually until 1892 when “Health & Safety” deemed that drunken youths with flaming torches, many having travelled into Rochford for the event, was all too dangerous. The Whispering Post, however, remains in place in the garden of Kings Hill in East Street.

If we continue our route out from the Square, turning right, we shall be passing Horner’s Corner, so called from the butcher’s shop with its own slaughter house behind. It had housed a firm of auctioneers before that in the days when the cattle market was in full swing. The building fell into disuse but has been carefully restored. In South Street, to our left are a number of buildings with 17th century origins, and then the “Old House”, almost half-way down on the left, is Rochford’s pride and joy. Again the story is one of fairly recent restoration. Rochford District Council took on the work when demolition seemed likely and it now serves as an important part of their office complex here. The building certainly goes back to 13th century and grew over the years as it was used as a family residence.

Sydenham House, also in South Street, is a substantial 18th century dwelling which served as a Girls’ boarding school during the 1800’s. Then there is the Masonic Hall, built as the Court House in 1860’s, a reminder that Rochford was, indeed, the administrative centre for a wide area.

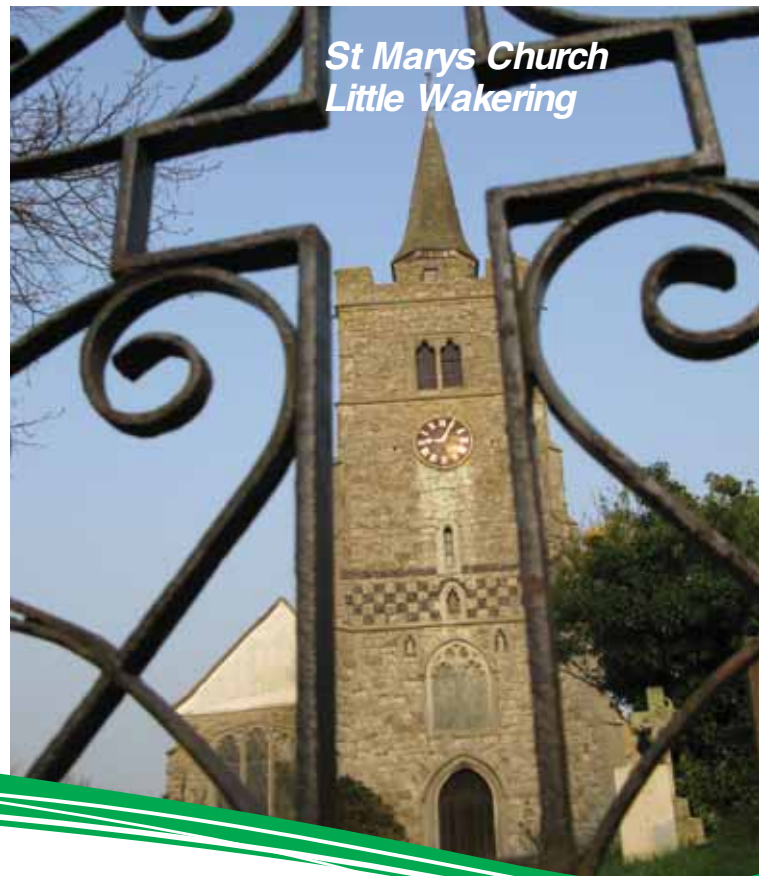
Although currently named Southend Airport, the facility is partly on land in the Rochford District. There is a long history of aviation from this location starting in late 1914 when it was first developed as an operational base for the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in the Great War, becoming the largest flying ground in Essex, with the greatest number of units. In May 1915 the Royal Naval Air Service took over, until 4 June 1916 when it became RFC Rochford. It was designated as night fighter station and many sorties were flown against Zeppelin airship raiders, including LZ38 on 31 May 1915. In 1920 the station closed and reverted to farmland for a while.

The airport was officially opened as a municipal airport on 18 September 1935 by the Under-Secretary of State for Air, Sir Philip Sassoon, who arrived in his de Havilland Leopard Moth.

During August 1939, the Air ministry requisitioned all such commercial airfields, and Rochford was closed as a civil aerodrome on 1st September. The airfield was to become known as RAF Rochford and placed in No 11 Group of Fighter Command as a satellite field to RAF Hornchurch.

R.A.F. Rochford (Southend) was de-requisitioned and a licence was issued to Southend Corporation on 31st December 1946 and the airport returned to commercial and pleasure flights.

Mr. Maurice Drage



Stambridge

The Village of Great Stambridge lies on the north bank of the River Roach. On its northern and western boundary, Little Stambridge. It has numerous creeks and inlets interspersed with saltings and old oyster pits. With its water meadows, landscapes and riverside walks, Stambridge is one of the most picturesque areas of Rochford Hundred – tranquil, and in parts – lonely and desolate, its scenes of natural beauty untouched by time.

In Edward the Confessor's reign, this parish belonged to Oswald and at the Domesday Survey to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Swain. Swain held it under the Bishop and Wicard held it under Swain. The Manor of Great Stambridge was afterwards divided into three; Great Stambridge, Hampton Barns and Barton Hall. In King John's time the ancient family of Musters held land here under Richard Fitzwilliam. The De Tarry family became possessed of this property through marrying the aforesaid Richard's granddaughter and gave the name to



Stapleford Tawney and Chignell Tawney. Thomas Sutton Esq. settled this property on Charterhouse in the reign of James I. He had previously purchased them from Thomas Lawson alias Edmonds, in 1604. The Governors of Charterhouse paid the sum of £500 to Charles I for deforesting this and several other Manors in 1638.

In 1579, (Queen Elizabeth's reign) this Manor and advowson were sold for £800. In 1670 the Govenors of Charterhouse at a Court held before the Chief Justice of the King's forests, claimed within this Manor the

right of pillory and gallows and examination of weights and measures.

At some distance down the lane by the river past the church stands “Waldons”. It is a modern house set on a peninsular, south of Bartonhall creek and north of the River Roach. Built between two sea walls, its former name was, appropriately “Wallsend”. It is known that in earlier years a farmhouse stood on the site. The present house was built in 1953 to replace an old wooden structure, and although the East Coast floods of that year caused considerable damage to property in the vicinity of the water, Waldons stood above flood level and was unaffected.

Evidence that Great Stambridge existed as a settlement some five-hundred years before Christ, in the Iron Age, and again in Saxon times, has been confirmed, following excavations in recent years at “Hampton Barns” when it was found that at one time a

creek had formed there and two distinct village settlements of huts had developed. Hut doors were discovered as also was pottery dated from 500 B.C. when the occupants were forced to move to the Continent due to deteriorating weather conditions and variations in the water table. Photographs of Hampton Barns by Charles Bruce Great Stambridge, 1990, home of the Rankin Family “Barton Hall” or “Bartons”, once a mediaeval mansion, now long since demolished, stood at the extreme eastern end of Great Stambridge parish overlooking the water on an arm of Bartonhall Creek. Little is known of its early occupants, save one, Sir Richard Le Breton, who gave the house its earlier name of “Bretons” or “Breton” and has been remembered as either “Bartons” or “Barton Hall” ever since.

William the Conqueror gave this Manor to Sir Auvrai Le Breton who came to England from Normandy with the King and



*Village view
Stambridge*

fought valiantly at his side at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, together with the manor of Sanford in Somerset (the village being sometimes called “Sanford Bret” after this family). Simon Le Breton lived there with his two sons, Richard and Edmund, both boys becoming joint heirs to the two estates. At their fathers decease they inherited both Sanford and Great Stambridge. They were courtiers and well liked and spent much of their time at the court of Henry II. At this time, Sir Richard Le Breton was the close friend and confidant of Prince William, the King’s brother.

With Stambridge, being nearer to the Court, Richard chose to live there in preference to the family seat in Somerset. Besides, The Royal Forest of Essex, stretching as it did to the extreme boundaries of Rochford Hundred, included Stambridge and frequently as with all the Plantagenet monarchs, the King with Prince William and their courtiers would hunt this way, passing the night in the conveniently situated, out-of-the-way, Barton Hall.

*Philip Benton
Mrs Jerram-Burrows*

Sutton

Sutton is a civil parish in the District of Rochford. It is located between the River Roach and the adjoining Borough of Southend on Sea, and includes the Hamlet of Shopland. It has a population of 127, the smallest in the District; although at the time of the Domesday Book it had a flourishing village with its own market and fair.

The area is known locally as Sutton with Shopland. The civil parish of Shopland was amalgamated with Sutton in 1933. When Shopland church

was demolished following bomb damage, artifacts were removed and went to Sutton Church and others. Shopland churchyard is rededicated every year.

All Saints Church is of Norman origin and boasts a medieval coffin lid and brass of 1371 from the demolished ancient church at Shopland. The brass depicts Sir Thomas Stapel, Sergeant at Arms to Edward III, in armour such as he would have worn at the Battle of Crecy.

Wikipedia

*All Saints Church
Sutton*



Acknowledgements

This Heritage Guide could not have been put together without the help and contributions from the following people:

Mike Davies (Rayleigh Through the Looking Glass)
Ashingdon Parish Council
Barling Magna Parish Council
Canewdon Parish Council
Joyce Smith
Foulness Island Parish Council
Great Wakering Parish Council
Mr P W Hunter
Mr P N Jefferies
Mrs G M Rawlingson
The Rev B J Shannon
Hawkwell Parish Council
Hockley Parish Council
Lesley Vingoe
Hullbridge Parish Council
Paglesham Parish Council
Ann Boulter
Rochford Parish Council
Mr Maurice Drage
Stambridge Parish Council
Philip Benton
Mrs Jerram-Burrows
Mr & Mrs B Summerfield
Wikipedia
David Shields Photography

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the historical accuracy of the information contained within this publication Rochford District Council and others who contributed information can not be held responsible for any errors or omissions within this guide.



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