

History of the Brentwood Borough Parishes

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Blackmore, Hook End and Wyatts Green

First recorded in the Domesday book as 'Phingaria' (Fingrith), the Latinised form of an Anglo Saxon name meaning 'the stream of the people of Fin'. The use of the name Blackmore, meaning 'Black Marsh' or 'Black Swamp' would seem to have been generally accepted by the end of the Middle Ages.

Blackmore, which is one of the more attractive Essex villages, is in the centre of the Parish. To the South, on a moated site, is the church of St Laurence, which is all that remains of an Augustine Priory of Blackmore, founded in the 12th century. After the dissolution of the Priory in 1525, the chancel of its church was demolished, but the rest of the building was retained as the parish church. The 15th century timber bell tower is one of the finest in England.

Adjoining the churchyard is Jericho Priory. The main block of this imposing building is red brick, three storeys high, with four bays and square angle turrets. As this house is on the same moated site as the church, and both were partly walled, especially in the west, it is reasonably thought that it may be on the site of an early, 16th century, house, either built after the dissolution of the Priory, or adopted from its buildings. Legend has it that the original house was a country retreat of Henry VIII and that it was the birthplace, in 1520, of his natural son, Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond.

There are several old buildings in the village, including the Bull Inn, a typical Essex timber-framed house built in the 1300s, which provides an excellent example of a Kings Post truss support beam, and Fingreth Hall in the north of the parish, once the home of Sir Walter Mildway, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and a distinguished civil servant in many posts in the Elizabethan administration.

Doddinghurst

The name Doddinghurst is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means 'the wood of Dudda or his people'. It is first recorded in the Domesday book as 'Doddenhenc', but the modern form had evolved, with minor variations in spelling, by the 13th century.

The church of All Saints has a 13th century nave and south doorway. The roof and porch are of the 15th century. On the roof beam are 17th century carved and painted wooden images of the crucifix, the Virgin and St John. The building was restored in 1886 and the chancel rebuilt. The church also retains the oldest Marriage Register dated back to 1755.

The timber-framed and weather-boarded priest's house which adjoins the churchyard on the south-west is said to date from the 16th century, although its external features are mostly 18th century and a wing has been added on the west.

The corner of Doddinghurst Road and Church Lane is an ancient monument built in 1400. The office was once an open stable.

Herongate and Ingrave

A new parish, formed in May 2003, two miles south of Brentwood.

Ingrave lies north of Herongate on the east side of the extensive park of Thorndon Hall.

The manor was anciently called Ging-Ralph, or Ralph's-ing and it was purchased from the Mordaunt family by Sir John Petre, the first Lord Petre, in 1573. A new Thorndon Hall was built in 1770 by the 9th Lord Petre.

In 1903 the composer Vaughan Williams visited Ingrave and heard an old labourer sing the song 'Bushes and Briars'. Moved by the beauty of what he heard, Ralph Vaughan Williams made five trips to Essex over the next three years, collecting tunes of over 100 songs.

Herongate village lies 3½ miles south east of Brentwood and grew up originally at the gate of Heron Hall, anciently a herony and the seat of the Heron family and then the Tyrells. It was pulled down in 1790 and another house built which occupies an ancient moated site.

Ingatestone and Fryerning

The names Ingatestone and Fryerning probably have a common origin which may go back to the earliest days of the Saxon settlement of Essex, perhaps in the 6th century AD. Generally, place names including 'ing' are thought to refer to groups or tribes of Saxon settlers who had crossed the North Sea to colonise Britain.

Historians have suggested that Ingatestone and Fryerning refer to a Saxon leader called Giga whose group settled in the area of these villages.

Ingatestone got its name from Giga's people with 'stone' added to it. The stone stood once in the modern recreation ground by the church, and is now in three pieces, one by the south door of the church and two on either side of the entry to Fryerning Lane.

If it is asked what a stone should give its name to a village, it should be remembered that there are no big stones to be found in this part of Essex; a stone left by the Ice Age about three feet high and three feet round is quite rare enough to be used to distinguish the village where it lay from the other 'ing' villages.

Fryerning belonged in the Middle Ages to the Knights Hospitallers called in old English 'frerene' (friars), so the name Friars-ing arose.

The village of Ingatestone stands on the former Great Essex Road from London to Great Yarmouth (which has since been replaced by a modern dual carriageway bypass). The long main street has kept its character with 16th century houses interspersed with Georgian work.

Ingatestone Hall, a splendid Tudor mansion built by Sir William Petre in 1548, was visited by Elizabeth I in 1561. Although the original great hall of the house has been demolished, this magnificent example of domestic architecture is undoubtedly one of the finest Tudor mansions to be seen in a country so rich with buildings. It is approached by an avenue of limes under a gatehouse with a one-handed clock bearing a family motto.

The hall is still the seat of Lord Petre and the grounds and certain rooms are open to the public during the summer months.

Ingatestone Parish Church is built of flints, pudding stone and rubble (with Roman tiles incorporated as in so many Essex churches, and later brickwork). The handsome late-15th-century tower of local brick with diaper work of vitreous black brick, carries a peal of bells; one of these is inscribed and dated 1610, the others were cast in 1660 and 1758.

Fryerning Parish Church, like that of Ingatestone, has a good brick tower, with a turret and newel, all of 15th-century brickwork. The chancel was rebuilt about 500 years ago, but the nave is 800 years old. A great amount of re-used Roman material may be seen in the walls. The massive square font is Norman.

Kelvedon Hatch

Kelvedon Hatch was part of the ancient forest of Essex, as the word 'Hatch', a forest gate, indicates, and extensive woods still remain. The meaning of the word 'Kelvedon' is uncertain - it may be 'multi-coloured hill'.

The original layout of the southern part of the village was affected by the amount of common land in that area. From Chapman and Andre's Map of Essex (1777), it is clear that there was no defined road through Kelvedon Common. Whilst there was no enclosure by Act of Parliament, by the late 18th century, piecemeal enclosures had been made by local people, so that instead of the normal village street flanked by houses, there were isolated properties at varying distances from the road, especially in the west.

In the north-west is Kelvedon Hall, a fine 18th century house erected by the Wright family, which held the estate from 1538 until the present century.

The medieval parish church of St Nicholas was consecrated in 1895. The bell and the font of the earlier church were transferred to the new church.

Mountnessing

Mountnessing is one of the group of 'ing' villages. (The suggested origin of the 'ing' part is mentioned in the page dealing with Ingatestone and Fryerning). The other parts of the name refer to a medieval owner of the manor called de Monteny from a place in Western France named either Montenay or Montigny.

There was no ancient village of Mountnessing. It was a large parish of scattered farms, which are still to be found set in the area between the A12 trunk road and Billericay - an area which must represent some of the loveliest and least developed country within a 25 mile radius of London.

Thoby Priory occupies the site of a 12th century priory of Austin Canons which was dissolved in 1536. The medieval archway and some of the old walling still remain.

The parish church, near the 17th century Hall, stands some way from the village; it dates from Norman times with early English and perpendicular alterations, and displays re-used Roman bricks and tiles in its structure. This church is particularly celebrated for the massive and intricate timberwork of its 15th century turret.

The main feature of Mountnessing is its windmill, Mountnessing Post Mill, which was built in the early 19th century. It is preserved and owned by Essex County Council and is a picturesque timber structure on a circular brick base. The Mill is no longer used, but it remains a landmark visible for miles around.

An interesting name in Mountnessing is the Chainbridge which is now a 20th century concrete structure taking the B1002 road (formerly the A12 trunk road) across the little River Wid. The bridge is so named because it was first built for Sir William Petre about 1550. He kept it chained and locked. The key was kept at Cambridge Farm and, presumably, only handed to members of the Petre family or their friends.

Navestock

The name Navestock means 'the stump on the headland', which fits the topography, for the varied scenery includes hills and woodlands. Most of the population is at Navestock Side in the east, around a green where cricket has been played since the 18th century. Navestock Common, in the south of the parish, was enclosed in 1770, and the long straight road running through it was built then.

Navestock Heath, to the north of the Common, is still enclosed. Beside it is the house where lived the historian William Stubbs, Vicar of Navestock from 1850 to 1866.

The woods at Curtis Mill Green, in the west of the parish, were once part of the Forest of Essex, and two forest boundary stones, the Navestock Stone and the Richard Stone, can still be seen there.

The 16th century manor house of Navestock Hall stands near the church in the north of the parish. The manor was held from the 15th century by the Waldegraves. Early in the 18th century, the first Earl Waldegrave built a mansion in a park north-west of the church. This was demolished in 1811, but the park and lake still remain. The church of St Thomas was built in the 11th or 12th century and considerably enlarged in the 13th century. The 15th century timber tower is one of the finest in Essex

Stondon Massey

Stondon Massey is still mainly rural, but there has been a good deal of suburban building during the past 30 years.

The original settlement was on the high ground to the north, which, with its gravel soil, gave the parish its first name 'Stondon', which means 'stony hill'. It is believed that its second name, 'Massey', derived from the family of Marcy who held a manor in the Middle Ages.

There have been three successive manor houses, the oldest of which is Stondon Hall, near the church. The north wing of the Hall is probably of the 15th century, and there is some 16th and 17th century panelling inside.

Stondon Place, originally a farmhouse, was rebuilt about 1707, and again after a fire, about 1880. From 1593 to 1623, it was the home of William Byrd, the musician.

The church of St Peter and St Paul retains the nave and chancel and some of the original round-headed arches of 1100. There is a brass of 1570 to John Carre, Ironmonger and Merchant Adventurer of London, with figures of himself and his two wives, and another, of 1573, to Rainold Hollingsworth.

Nathaniel Ward, Rector of Stondon from 1623 to 1633, was deprived of his living for non-conformity. He subsequently emigrated to New England and helped draft the 1641 Code of Laws for Massachusetts.

West Horndon

Formed in May 2003, through an amalgamation of parts of the three ancient parishes of Little Warley, East Horndon and West Horndon, the civil parish of West Horndon occupies the southern boundary of Brentwood and from the peace of the ancient Church of All Saints affords wonderful views south across the Thames basin and the hills of the North Downs and westwards towards the bustle of Canary Wharf in London.

With a population of over 1,400, West Horndon has always had a strong sense of community. Many of the people have been resident for over 40 years and having raised their families have continued to enjoy its rural farm and woodland setting. The parish offers its own train station with direct connections to London and Southend, contains two major roads, the A127 and A128 and two light industrial business parks. It has lots of amenities including a Primary School, thriving Village Hall, well supported Park, post office, restaurants, local shops and a golf course.