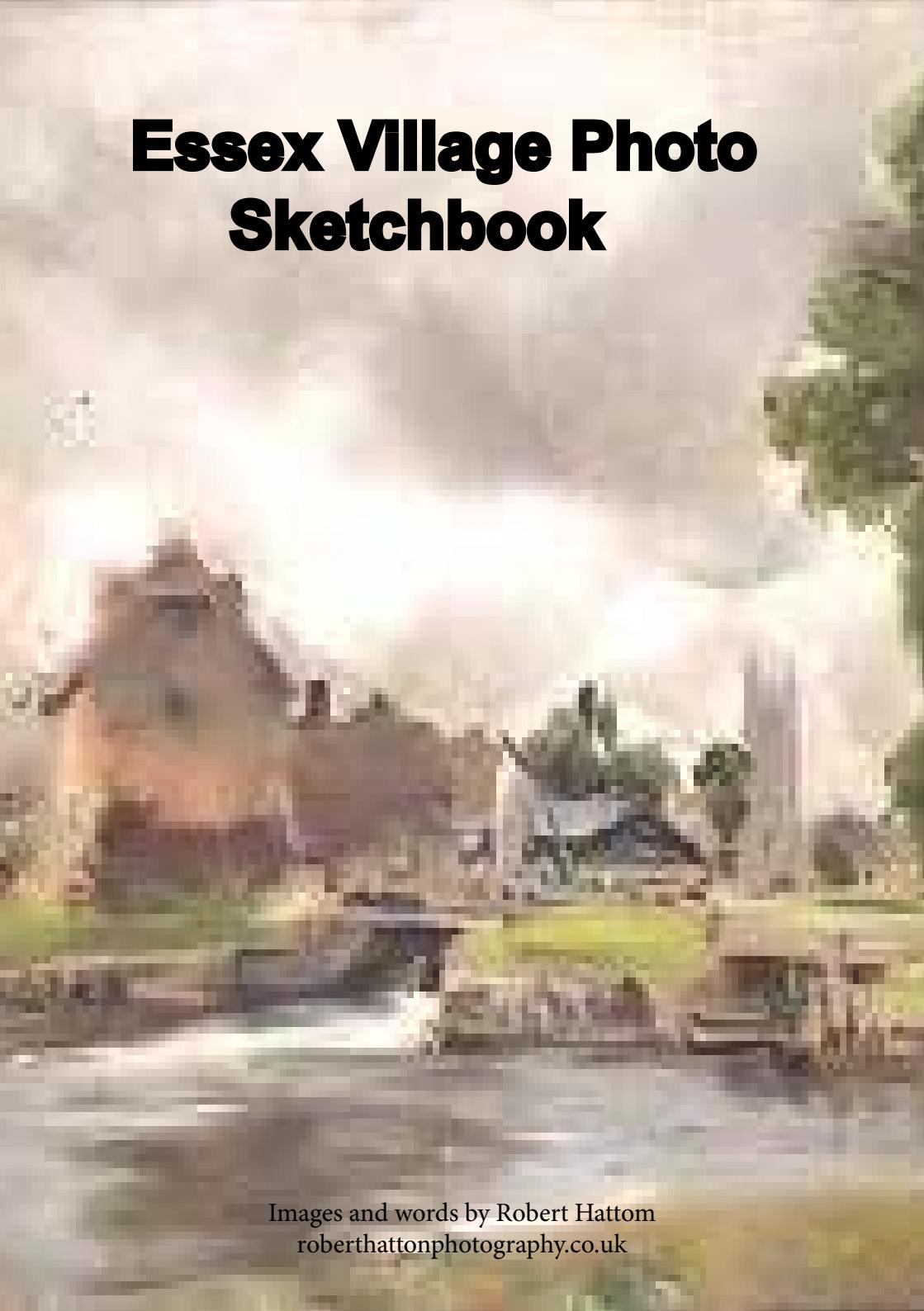


Essex Village Photo Sketchbook

A soft-focus photograph of a traditional English village scene. In the foreground, there's a paved path or road. To the left, a large, multi-story house with a prominent gabled roof and a chimney is visible. Behind it, several smaller houses with dark roofs are nestled among trees. The background is filled with more trees and foliage, creating a sense of depth and a peaceful, rural atmosphere.

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Introduction

Robert the Bruce, king of Scotland was born in Essex, now that one of the interesting historical conundrums I came across while working on this project.

Being an Essex based landscape photographer and having travelled throughout the county I have been amazed by the beauty and history associated with the Essex villages.

Therefore I was delighted to be commissioned in 2018 to produce a number photographs for a local public house, the theme being towns and villages of Essex.

While working on this commission it dawned on me that making photo sketches of these hamlets would be a perfect personal project which i could included on my website for others to see.

With this in mind i researched numerous locations and over the next 2 year visited them on several occasions, all the images included in this book were shot of either a Canon 5DSR or Fujifilm XT-3.

As the project came to an end and I was considering removing it from the website I thought that it would be a good idea to at least consolidate the work into a single document rather than just leave the images languishing on my hard-drive

In this books preparation I have tried to included small bite size snippets of historical information for each hamlet, including where possible the derivation of the village or town name.

Enjoy

Ashdon

Ashdon village can be traced back to Roman settlements, the name Ashdon means "Hill of Ash Trees". It has been linked to a possible site for the Battle of Assandun in 1016, which allowed the Danish king Cnut to claim the throne of England.

The village remained relatively peaceful through the Dark Ages with Christianity coming to it in the 7th or 8th century with the building of a Saxon Church.

During the civil war, the area was in the main pro-parliament supporting Cromwell, who is reputed to have stayed in the newly built Rose and Crown pub. As can be seen from the images there is a windmill on the hill above the village, Bragg's Mill which has recently been renovated and is one of the few remaining post mills in Essex.

Ashdon sits about 4 miles from Saffron Walden in NW Essex and like most



villages in the area its life has for centuries revolved around agriculture. The river Bourne runs through the village and over the years has tended to flood, the last major episode being in 2007 when a month's rain fell in an hour.

While there are modern developments spread out along the approach roads to Ashdon, these do not detract from the quintessentially rural nature of the historic village central area.



Brentwood

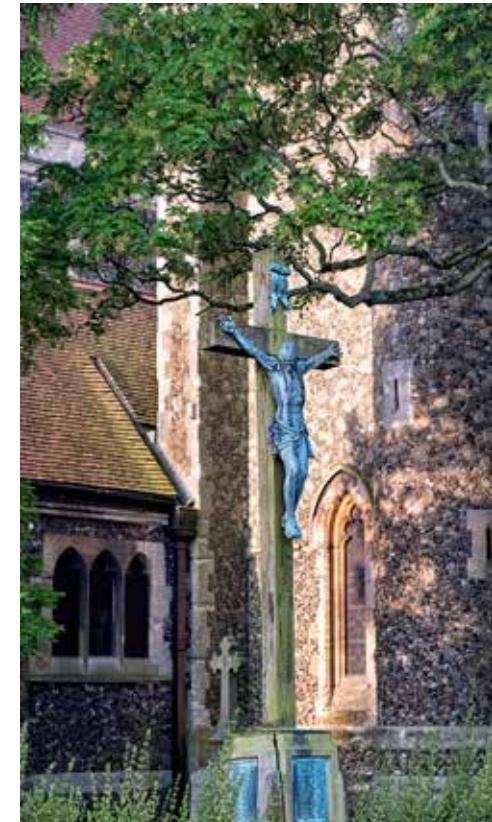
The town of Brentwood is one of the larger hamlets in this sketchbook, the name may have derived from a corruption of the words 'burnt' and 'wood'. this has however been disputed. Although a Bronze age axe was found in Brentwood and there is evidence of an encampment in Weald Park its not thought that there was any significant settlement in the area.

It is believed that despite the Roman road between London and Colchester passing through the town with it forming a crossroads with the pilgrims route to Canterbury, the Saxons were the earliest settlers of the area.

In the 16th Century Brentwood became an important coaching stop for stage-coaches, with many inns for overnight accommodation for both people and horse's. One of the oldest of these was the White Hart now called the Sugar Hut of "The Only Way of Essex" fame which is believed to have been built in 1480, although there is some evidence



that suggesting that a hostelry may have been on the site since 1392 and could have been frequented by Richard II. During World War II children from London were evacuated to Brentwood despite the fact over 1000 bombs were dropped on the area together with 19 V1 flying bombs and 32 V2 rockets. The town is now increasingly suburban, however it still maintains a rural presence with trees and green areas dotted around the town, emphasized by the image of Shenfield Common which is only a mile from the town centre.



Dedham

Dedham is a village in the northeast of Essex, on the river Stour and forms part of the border between Suffolk and Essex

Although there are some signs of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman existence in the vicinity, the first record settlement at Dedham was in the Doomsday Book, this noted a Saxon Manor held by an absentee Norman landlord. In the fourteenth century this did however reverted to ownership by the crown

By the end of the fifteenth century Dedham was a thriving industrial town to the extent that wealth industrialist had financed the building of the church. Following the decline in the wool trade around 1500 it forged a new character as a seat of learning, with Elizabeth I issuing a dispensation for the formation of a Grammar School.

Sitting in the Dedham Vale by the river Stour, the village is of course in the heart



of Constable Country. In fact Constable went to the Grammar School mentioned in the last section. The area around the village is considered to contain some of England's most beautiful lowland landscapes, especially the Water Meadows formed by the river Stour, these sit north of the village and mark the Essex-Suffolk border.

Dedham village is now one of the principal tourist attractions in Essex with its classic Georgian-fronted houses, old inns and church, but above all its beautiful landscape vistas made famous by

Constable.



Felsted

Felsted is mentioned in the Doomsday Book of 1086 where it records it was held by the Earl of Mercia as one of the Hundreds of Hinckford. (a Hundred is the way land was divided for Judicial or Military purposes).

The village stands on the river Chelmer and in the past had a number of mills, these have however now been demolished or moved.

Felsted also has links to Lord Riche who founded a public school in the village, he was also the Lord Chancellor under King Edward VI. The Felsted School was founded in 1564 it has links to Oliver Cromwell, who sent his sons there.
The Parish Church of the Holy Cross



stands on the North side of the village and was built around 1140 and extended in 1180, Lord Riche mentioned above is also buried in this church.
The present day village is thriving with its scatter of timbered buildings and period cottages, there are also several pubs, a post office, butchers and a choice of restaurants on its High Street.



Finchingfield

Since records began there has been a settlement at Finchingfield, there is archaeological evidence of a Roman Villa by the village church. The name Finchingfield is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 where it appears as Fincingfelda, which means 'the field of Finch or his people'.

The village was an important stop for horse-drawn coaches on their way to Norwich, these coaches would have drawn up close to the bridge at the front of the Fox Inn, passengers would have been able to see the stocks and whipping post located on the green which were a common feature of most villages at that time. It is often called the most beautiful village in England, with a duck pond, village green surrounded by Georgian and medieval cottages together with



the St John the Baptist church, with an eighteenth century windmill overlooking the green. It has often appeared in films, television programmes, and commercials all taking advantage of its chocolate box aspects.

Today it's a popular destination for tourists and visitors, with 3 public houses, Post Office, tearooms and restaurants offering a pleasant and welcoming location



Great Waltham

Great Waltham is a hamlet located approximately 8 km north west of the City of Chelmsford, the name Waltham is of Saxon origin "walt" meaning "wood" and "ham" meaning "home" literally "wood-home" or home of wood.

The earliest known settlement dates from the Iron Age 300-100 BC, remains of these early settlements were found in 1971 on the banks of the river Chelmer. The village centre is dominated by the large church of St Mary and St Lawrence which has Norman or earlier origins together with the Langleys , a large red brick house set in parkland laid out in a classical style. This site was first recorded an 1200 as a mill named Marshall which was later changed by the new



owners to Langley.

The change in working patterns from the mid 1950 has brought about a move from agricultural employment to commute to areas such as Chelmsford and London and this has had an effect of the village. However the village still retains a general store, public House , Post Office and a number of antique stores



Hadleigh

The name ‘Hadleigh’ comes from the Saxon name ‘Haedlege’ which means ‘a clearing in the wood’ or ‘heath clearing’. There have been people living in the area from at least the Iron Age, but Hadleigh remained relatively small until the 19th century.

Hadleigh is known for its Castle and country park to the south of the town centre, the castle was built by Hubert de Burgh after 1215 when King John granted him the manor of Hadeigh. After a quarrel with the king Hubert de Burgh had to hand the lands back. The castle then became a favoured retreat of Edward III and was ideally situated as a base for defending the Thames estuary against the French in the Hundred Years War.

The castle was sold to Lord Riche in



1552 who began to dismantle the structure in order to reuse the stone.

After the establishment of the Salvation Army Colony in 1891 the population grew from 525 to 1300 in ten years. Hadleigh’s growth again accelerated in the 20th century when more rural areas were cleared in order to build houses. However it was fortunate that extensive areas of woodland were retained such as Pound and West Wood.



Halstead

Halstead sits on the border of Essex and Suffolk 7 miles north of Braintree and eight miles south of Sudbury on the river Colne

Its name is said to come from the Old English 'hald' which means refuge, shelter, healthy and 'stede' meaning site, place or farm, so "healthy farm", "safe place" or "place of refuge". The town was originally developed on a hill on the north side of the river in the early Bronze Age and there is evidence of a Roman settlement including a villa in the vicinity of Greenstead Hall.

The Courtauld family had strong links to the town, originally setting up 2 mills in the area, Townsford Mill and another at Bocking, with wool and weaving providing the main stay of employment in the



town over the centuries. Local history has it that the black silk for Queen Victoria's many mourning gowns was made at the Townsford Mill

In the present day Halstead is a traditional market town with the Colne running through its centre, sporting a number of fantastic river walks. The town is home to many thriving small boutique shops, family butchers, bakers, café and restaurants.



Kelvedon

The hamlet at Kelvedon dates to before the Romans, there have been Bronze and Iron age artifacts uncovered around the area. The main Roman road from London to Colchester ran through Kelvedon, this is now the A12. After the withdrawal of the Roman's in 410AD the area was invaded by the Anglo Saxons becoming part of the Kingdom of East Saxon, from where the name Essex derives from.

In Richard I's Curia Regis Rolls the village was noted as Kevleveden, then Keldon in the time of Elizabeth I and the name became Kelvedon in the 18th century.

Originally there were 4 coaching inns' in Kelvedon, which for many years had served the wealthy travellers, with the coming of the railway however many of the local trades found themselves on



hard times.

In the early 1960's Kelvedon 's High St was in fact the main A12 arterial route from London to Colchester and with greater car ownership congestion became a major issue until the bypass was built in 1966.

Kelvedon is now a rural part of the commuter belt with its easy train access to London, it has nevertheless managed to retain its quintessentially village nature despite an expansion in population



Leigh on Sea

Archaeological finds of pottery and coins from the Romano-British era in the locality of Leigh suggest an early settlement from at least the Saxon period. A reference to Leigh (legra) is contained within the Domesday Book survey of 1086 and some the Ley place name occurs in a number of nearby towns and Villages, Hadleigh, Rayleigh and Hockley. The Domesday Book records five smallholdings above the water who did not hold land and were most probably involved in fishing, thereby giving Leigh a claim to nearly a 1000 year involvement in the fishing industry. The fishermen of Leigh went to Dunkirk in World War II to rescue the survivors of the British Expeditionary Force from the beaches and some lost their lives doing so.



From the middle ages onward Leigh moved from being much of a backwater with its fortunes ebbing with the increasing and diminishing maritime trade, to by the 20th century a western suburb of Southend on Sea.

In recent years Leigh has been cited as one of the best places to live in the UK, owing to factors such as , its easy commuting route to London and its proximity to the facilities of Southend on Sea



Orsett

Orsett was a large settlement in the Domesday Book, located in the Hundreds of Barstable, it had a recorded population of 61 households and had 2 owners listed, The Bishop of London and Count Eustace of Boulogne.

There is evidence of some Neolithic activity in the form of concentric ditches with a number of causeways, these were however later used by the Saxons as burial grounds.

Before a national system of policing was set up each village had its own lock up, where petty criminals and drunks were held. Orsett's lock up was removed in the mid-19th century but restored in the mid-20th century and today sits on the junction of the High St and Pound lane.



Most of the former shops in the High St such as the Post Office and Blacksmith have closed to be replaced by one general store with the earlier amenities condensed in to this.

At the time of producing this sketch book the village is under the threat of a new road scheme which will serve the yet to be constructed Lower Thames Crossing



Rayne

Rayne has a rich history with several of the farms listed in the Domesday Book, it lies on the old Roman Road called Stane Street. In the Norman period it was a more important settlement than Braintree, however this has not been the case for many years.

There is an old Manor House called Rayne Hall, this was the long-time home of the Capell family, who became the Earls of Essex in mediaeval times the present Earl of Essex a Mr Paul Capell is a retired schoolteacher who is living in Lancashire

All Saints Church was first built by the Norman's in 1199, however in the Tudor period a Nave was added, and the Nor-



man structure replaced in around 1840, the first Rector was Ralph de Fremingham from 1260.

Rayne still retains its rural feeling and in 2006 it was named Essex Village of the Year in a competition organized by annually by the Rural Community Council of Essex



Thaxted

Thaxted recorded history dates back way before he Domesday Book , its listed in the 1086 Book by Norman scribes as the unorthodox Tachesteda, the name Thaxted derives from the Old English thœc and stede, being a “ place where thatching materials are got ”. After the 1086 as with many Essex villages part of Thaxted was given to a Norman, Richard Fitz Gilbert who took part in the 1066 invasion.

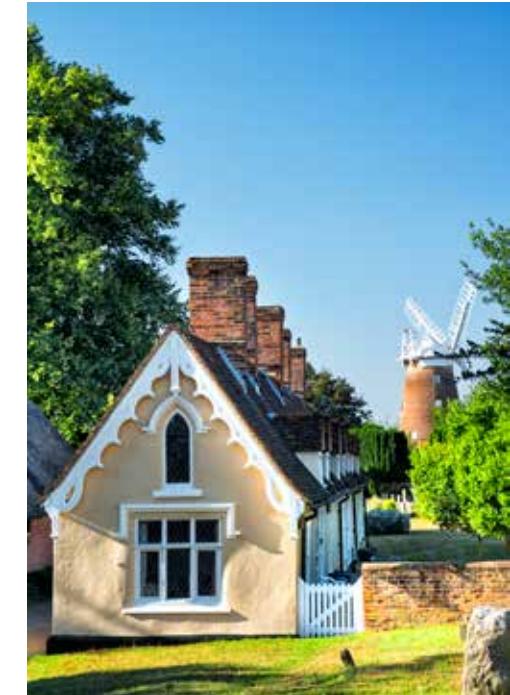
The earliest record of any church in Thaxted is in 981, the structure was replaced in the 14th /15th century. Although it was probably acting as a market town long before this, in 1205 it was granted a charted to do so.

The windmill at Thaxted was built in 1804 for John Webb, a local farmer, its main use was to satisfy the increas-



ing need for milled flour in the growing London. The ownership of the Windmill passed to the local council and then to the Thaxted Society who have since had it full restored.

Thaxted today has a variety of shops, restaurants, pubs and other businesses which serve the needs of resident and visitor alike, making the town a centre for trade and commerce today, as it has been for 1000 years.

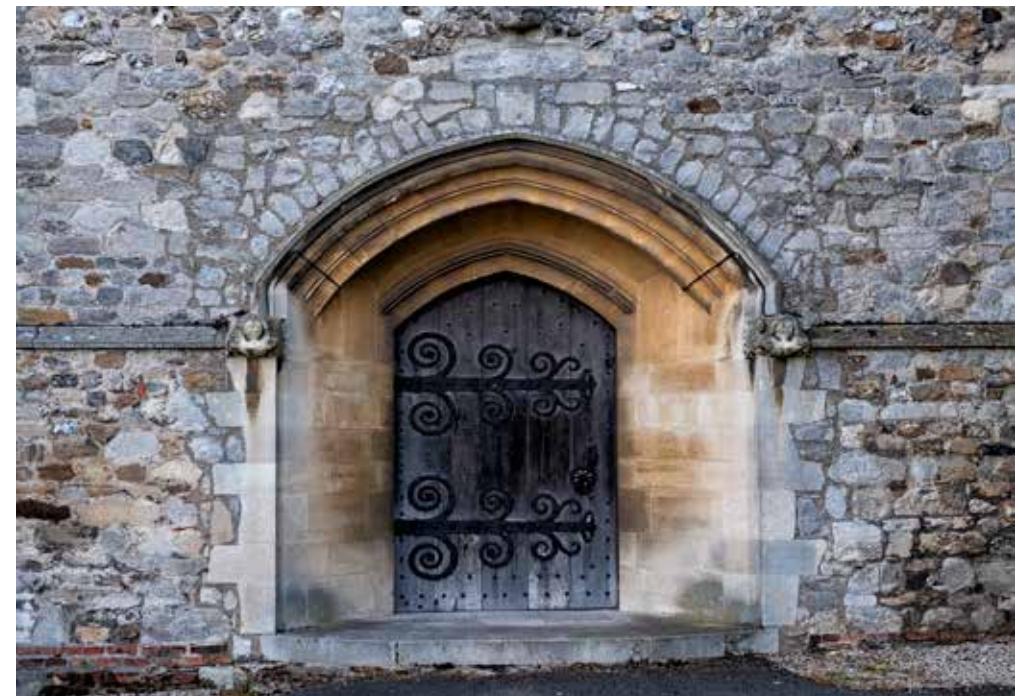


Writtle

The village of Writtle lies about 1 mile West of Chelmsford and is blessed with a traditional village green, duck pond and Norman church. The Roman were present in the village after the Roman occupation and village appears in the Domesday Book as a royal manor named Writela, thought to mean 'babbling brook'.

The Domesday Book also mentions a church in writtle which would suggest that Christian worship pre-dates the Norman conquest , this 11th century church was added to in the 13th century with a nave and chancel.

The village was given to Isabel be Brus (Bruce) by a grant from Henry III in 1242, this was then taken over by her great grandson Robert The Bruce , King of Scotland in the 1320s who may some



If you would like and further information or wish to purchase and of the images in this book please contact me at the below ;

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