



Introduction

London has plenty of interesting buildings remaining from many periods of history, like Georgian terraces and 17th century Wren churches. What it lacks are examples of houses from before 1600.

In the City of London, this was due mainly to its almost total destruction by the Great Fire of London, in 1666. In Inner London, almost no houses date from before 1600 mainly because the villages in which they would have stood, like Camberwell or

Eltham, were so small that few houses were built. The other reason is that 'the march of progress' has destroyed most of them.

If you drive around Essex, there are many examples of early houses, providing excellent life-size visual aids of how parts of London must have looked in earlier centuries. This page lists a few of the villages that have something to teach us about London's history. It is not an exhaustive list. There are plenty more examples in the county.



Beaumont Quay takes some effort to find so a few instructions are given here.

It lies down an unmarked road off the B1414, between Beaumont and Thorpe-le-Soken. Travelling south, having passed through Beaumont, the land level falls. The turning is on the left almost as soon as the road becomes level. The quay is located at the end of the road, on the right hand side.

The quay lies at the end of a very long sea estuary. It is now derelict but was once a working quay where Thames sailing barges used to load grain bound for London.

The stone quay was constructed some time after 1830, using masonry brought from the dismantled old London Bridge.

That bridge had stood for 600 years before it became unserviceable. A little piece of London really is to be found in



Bradwell is known today mainly for the nuclear reactor near the village. The location is therefore well sign-posted. It has another much more interesting claim to fame, in terms of its history.

It was on the remains of a Roman Fort that St Cedd built a little church in AD 634. The four walls of that building remain standing to this day, making it one of the oldest religious buildings within the British Isles.

It remained a chapel until 1391. It then passed into secular use, being used as a barn to store grain or as a shelter for cattle.

In 1920 it was restored for use as a chapel and is open every day of the year. Its simple design dates from the same times as when the original church on the site of Westminster Abbey, in London, was first erected, around AD 605.



Cressing lies just off the A120. In the 14th century the land was owned by the Knights Templar who built enormous timber barns on their farm. It is very unusual for timber structures to last for so many centuries.

They were still being used for farming purposes until the mid-1900's. They have been converted for museum purposes today and are occasionally used to house concert events.

There are two barns which are well worth visiting. The Templars owned vast amounts of land in England, including the land of the south side of Fleet Street - The Temple was actually named after these knights.



Finchingfield is often described as 'the most photographed village in England'. It certainly has one of the most picturesque situations of any village. The church on the hill, the village green beside a large duck-pond and, of course, a windmill. It really has it all !

The houses are beautifully laid out also, in their rather random order. They are a good reminder of how streets in London once looked. Many of the views of houses

in the village are reminiscent of houses shown in the streets of the City of London as seen on the Agas Map of 1561. Remarkably, many of the houses date from the time of the Agas Map !



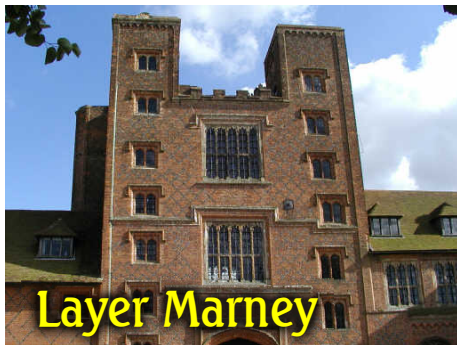
Greenstead is an ancient village lying a short distance from Chipping Ongar.

Its lonely church is unique in England, being the descendant of a church constructed entirely of tree trunks before the Norman Conquest. Since the ends of the trunks resting in the ground had rotted, they were shortened and now rest on low brick walls of more recent date.

Saxons built many houses and churches in this way all over England.

Evidence for similar buildings has been found by archaeologists working on sites around the Strand in London since the 1980's.

Greenstead church, therefore, has something to teach us about what London looked like during the Saxon period.



Layer Marney, is one of the 'Marney' villages. It lies NE of Maldon, near the village of Tiptree.

The Marney's were a very rich family, living at the time of Elizabeth I. The head of the family decided to build an enormous mansion in which to live. He started by having a large gatehouse erected which took so long to construct that he died before the house was even started.

The property passed to his son who died without an heir and great house was never started.

The red Tudor-brick gatehouse remains as evidence of the grand plans which never materialised. It is a good example of 16th century architecture, similar to grand buildings that once stood in London at locations like Whitehall Palace and Greenwich.



Little Maplestead is a rather spread-out village located just north of Halstead. Its little church has a long and interesting history.

Just off Fleet Street, in London, stands the Temple Church, originally built by the Knights Templar, from whom the 'Temple' was named. It then passed to the Knights Hospitaller. It was the Knights Hospitaller who built the 'church in the round' at Little Maplestead around 1180. They owned the

manor, along with many others across England. This church and the one in Fleet Street are, in a way, linked together. Their two ground plans are almost identical but the Essex one is much smaller.

There are only four round churches in England which makes them quite rare. Two have already been mentioned. The others are located in the town of Northampton and the City of Cambridge.



Thaxted looks as if it has been constructed for a film set. At the higher end of the village stands the imposing parish church. Nearby stand almshouses, a windmill and the Swan Inn.

The main attraction is the delightful Guildhall built in 1390 by the cutlers, a thriving craft in the town. It has suffered much renovation but remains much the same externally as when it was first built.

A building very similar to this one once stood in the Borough High Street where the road splits, almost outside the George Inn.

Beside the Guildhall is a short street of gabled houses of which London had so many before the Great Fire.