

step back in *time*

The Tendring Peninsula, which takes its name from the old Tendring Hundred has a wide range of heritage from prehistoric relics and medieval churches to stylish Victorian villas.

There is a strong maritime history present throughout the District in towns such as Brightlingsea, Harwich, Dovercourt, Manningtree and Mistley. Another legacy of the Essex Sunshine Coast is the Martello Towers. This line of defensive fortresses located along the coast in Walton-on-the-Naze, Clacton-on-Sea, Jaywick and Point Clear were initially built in the 1800's to resist a potential invasion by Napoleon.



St Osyth

This attractive village derives its name from St. Osyth, daughter of the first Christian King of East Anglia, who was beheaded by the Danes in AD 653. The village centre is dominated by the Augustinian Priory ruins and its magnificent Gatehouse, which was completed in 1475.

The latter forms one of the finest monastic buildings in the country. The priory buildings include a 16th Century tithe barn and bishops lodgings and are set in a landscaped park. In 1582 infamous witch trials were held in St. Osyth, and six of the accused were sentenced to death. The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in the village centre has unusual internal red brick piers and arches.

Beaumont cum Moze

The village contains the disused Trading Quay, intended for vessels using Walton Backwaters. A tablet records the fact that it was rebuilt in 1832 using stones from old London Bridge. The 11th Century Parish Church of St. Leonard contains the grave of Viscount Byng of Vimy, Governor General of Canada.

Elmstead Market

The Church of St. Anne and St. Lawrence to the north of the village has a rare carved oak recumbent effigy of a knight in armour.

Harwich

This attractive old town was built on a grid pattern in the 13th Century by the Earl of Norfolk to exploit its strategic position at the mouth of the Stour/Orwell estuary. The famous seafarers Hawkins, Drake and Frobisher all sailed from Harwich during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I on various expeditions.

The Mayflower, the ship which carried the Pilgrim Fathers to America in 1620, was a frequent visitor to the harbour and its Captain Christopher Jones lived in Kings Head Street. The famous diarist Samuel Pepys was MP for the town in the 1660's, when Harwich was the headquarters of the King's Navy. Other notable visitors included King Charles II and later Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton who stayed at 'The Three Cups' in Church Street.

The Old Town contains a wealth of historic buildings. The Maritime Heritage Trail around the old town of Harwich describes its historic features and the town's connections with the sea.

Thorrington

Thorrington Mill was built in the early 19th Century. It is the only remaining Tide Mill in Essex and one of very few left in East Anglia.

Brightlingsea

The town has a history of shipbuilding and seafaring. There are disused oyster pits near the Town Hard, where the Colne Smack Preservation Society can also be found. In 1347 five ships and 51 men were sent to the siege of Calais. 'William of Brightlingsea' was in Sir Francis Drake's fleet which vanquished the Spanish Armada. Brightlingsea has the distinction of being the only Cinque Port outside Kent and Sussex having been a limb of Sandwich since 1360. The 13th Century Jacobes Hall, in the town centre is timber framed with an undulating tile roof and external staircase. All Saints Church, which is sited on a hill about a mile inland from the town, was mainly built circa 1250.

Its impressive 97 feet high tower is visible from 17 miles out to sea. A light was placed in the tower to guide fishing vessels home. The Church contains some Roman brickwork and a frieze of memorial ceramic wall tiles commemorating local residents whose lives were lost at sea.



Ardleigh

There is a fine group of 16th and 17th Century cottages grouped around the 15th Century Parish Church in the centre of the village. Spring Valley Mill, a privately-owned 18th Century timber framed weather boarded building, was used as a watermill, later adapted to steam and is now empty. It formed the setting for M. Saville's 'Treasure at the Mill'.

Tendring

The village is graced by the elegant Church of St. Edmund. The church is dedicated to the last king of independent East Anglia, martyred by the Danes in the 9th Century.

Lawford

There are ring ditches and banks to the south west of Reed Island, the remnants of a neolithic religious site. Flint implements and neolithic pottery have been found there. The Church of St. Mary contains rich 14th Century stone carvings in the chancel.



Manningtree & Mistley

These are attractive small ports at the head of the Stour, the gateway to 'Constable Country' in Suffolk. Manningtree was a centre of the cloth trade in Tudor times and later a flourishing port for barges carrying mixed cargoes down the coast to London. It contains an impressive group of Georgian buildings.

It is believed that the reference to Falstaff in Shakespeare's Henry IV as 'that roasted Manningtree Ox' relates to the practice of roasting a whole ox at the town's medieval annual fair. Matthew Hopkins, the notorious Witch Finder General, struck terror into the local community during the 17th Century. His victims were hung on the diminutive village green.

Mistley contains many pleasant Georgian and Victorian houses. In the 18th Century local landowner Richard Rigby MP attempted to develop Mistley into a fashionable spa town, symbolised by a swan. He hired the architect Robert Adam to design and remodel the existing church. The Towers are all that remain after the centre section of the medieval church was demolished in 1870. They are the only known surviving remains of any of the churches designed by Robert Adam.

Dovercourt

The town has been settled from Prehistoric times. Late bronze age axe heads were found at upper Dovercourt. To the Romans, the town was an important source of building stone 'Septaria', taken from the cliffs. The modern town largely developed in Victorian times as a fashionable resort.

Clacton-on-Sea

The town was settled during the old stone age by a race of hunters. Flint implements and the fossilised bones of the cave lion, straight tusked elephant and wild ox have been unearthed on the Clacton foreshore and at Lion Point. Clacton developed from a small village into a seaside resort in the late 19th Century with the fashion for coastal health and bathing. The Pier was constructed in 1871 and paddle steamers provided the first direct route to the resort until the railway line opening later in 1882. The Pier was only 30 feet across until the 1930's when it was widened to over 300 feet wide and a berthing arm was added.

Frinton-on-Sea

Developed as a select resort by Sir Richard Cooper and largely expanded after 1886. The area south of Frinton Gates was laid out with detached houses set along broad tree lined avenues and has preserved a unique local character. The Church of Old St. Mary contains some interesting panels of William Morris stained glass in the East window, designed by Burne Jones.



Walton-on-the-Naze

The town illustrates the character of an early Victorian seaside resort. The seafront was developed in 1825 and Marine Parade, then named The Crescent, was built in 1832. Its Pier was originally constructed of wood in 1830 and was 330 feet long. It was extended to its present length of 2,610 feet in 1898 when the electric train service was started. The Naze, made up of red sandstone cliffs formed during the Ice Age, is rich in fossils.

The octagonal brick Naze Tower was built as a beacon in 1720 to warn sailors of the West Rocks offshore. The Saltings at Hamford Water were featured in Paul Gallico's novel 'The Snow Goose' and Arthur Ransome's children's story 'Secret Water.'

Heritage Open days:

A selection of Heritage open days will take place in 2010. With over 4,000 events across England taking part, there's sure to be something to suit your taste and interest.

For more information or to find what open days are on offer in the Tendring District log on to:
www.heritageopendays.org.uk or call 0844 335 1884