

Goldhanger Historic Settlement Assessment

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for Maldon District Council*

History of the Lower Blackwater Estuary

The remains of the Pleistocene gravel terraces are testament to a once much larger and more powerful river system that existed during the early prehistoric period. River systems have been shown to be important resources and transport routes for Palaeolithic and Mesolithic people, the evidence of this are the remains of their tools within the gravels laid down by the rivers.

Cropmarks and other evidence indicate that the area of the Lower Blackwater was occupied throughout prehistory. Goldhanger sits within this swathe of cropmark complexes.

The early Neolithic period

There is evidence of occupation of the gravel terraces to the north of the Blackwater from the early Neolithic period, at sites such as The Stumble off the coast of Goldhanger. Before this it has been postulated that much of the area was still wooded and activity was concentrated in, what is now, the intertidal zone. The melting of the glaciers since the end of the Devensian ice age led to rising sea levels and therefore changes along the coastal, estuarine and river valley areas. Early Neolithic domestic sites on the gravel terraces in the lower Blackwater valley are known at Slough House Farm (Wallis & Waughman, 1998), Lofts Farm (Brown, P. 1984-5) and at Heybridge (Brown, N & Adkins, P. 1988). There is good evidence for cereal production and foraging. However by the later Neolithic environmental evidence from coastal areas, such as the Stumble, (Wilkinson & Murphy, 1995) suggests that the landscape is one of scattered settlements in woodland clearings, with little or no cultivation.

Marine transgression could have forced people inland and onto higher ground at least seasonally. Inland and within valley systems the landscape would also be changing. Ritual monuments on the terrace landscape are known from the late Neolithic, such as the double ring-ditch sites at Langford Reservoir and Elms Farm (Atkinson & Preston, 2001). Using G.I.S. (Geographical Information Systems) Saunders (Ingle & Saunders, forthcoming) has carried out line of site (LOS) analysis and found that the visibility of sites (to each other) was highly restricted despite the local topography being relatively flat.

The Bronze Age

This marine transgression continued into the Bronze Age and by the late Bronze Age the intertidal zone was largely unsuitable for settlement; sites like the Stumble were abandoned. Occupation had migrated to the river terraces and waterside settlements such as Heybridge Basin. Domestic and ritual sites

for this period can be found at Lofts Farm (Brown & Adkins, 1988), Slough House Farm (Wallis, S & Waughman, M. 1998) and Elms Farm (Atkinson & Preston, 2001). Environmental data reveals an open grassland landscape with scattered woodland and scrub. At Slough House Farm there is some evidence for either cereal growing or processing, however the economy was largely pastoral and involved exploitation of the coastal marshes. The open landscape required for a largely pastoral economy may have led to woodland clearance on the valley slopes.

By the late Bronze Age there seems to be intensification in both settlement and agriculture. There are traces of both open and enclosed settlements in the area, and, at Heybridge, an unenclosed settlement was discovered. Some cropmark features seen at Chigborough have been suggested to be traces of late Bronze Age field systems marking the beginning of a planned landscape (Wallis & Waughman, 1998). Cropmark features from higher up the valley slopes suggest a higher degree of landscape organisation and monument building (Ingle, C. & Saunders, H., forthcoming) and may date from this time.

The Iron Age

In the early Iron Age there appears to be a continuation of open settlement on the gravel terraces for many places but some abandonment of settlements at others, for instance Slough House Farm. Cropmark evidence reveals a field system of strip fields and large enclosures probably for holding livestock on the terraces but also exploitation of the estuary as evidenced by remains of wooden structures. The intensification of agriculture could imply an increase in population but may also reflect more stable environmental conditions.

Settlement seems to have become more nucleated in the Middle Iron Age and then more enclosed in the Late Iron Age. This is seen at Howells Farm, Elms Farm and Langford Hall Reservoir. The Chelmer Valley and Blackwater Estuary were situated in the civitas/tribal area of the Trinovantes. Round houses and post built structures have been excavated at Chigborough and Slough House Farm. A Late Iron Age cemetery has been located at Elms Farm, and there is a possible Romano-Celtic temple at Langford, identified from a distinctive cropmark feature (EHER 7872). Cropmarks east of Gardiners Farm in Goldhanger are suggestive of a typical Roman farmstead.

The Roman period

By the Roman period Heybridge, to the west of Goldhanger, had grown to become an important small town. The stretch of coast along the Blackwater at Goldhanger has one of the highest densities of red hills dating from the Late Iron Age and Roman period that reveal intensive saltworking, possibly to cater for an increased population that a nearby town would sustain. Three cemeteries have been located nearby to Heybridge so therefore it must have sustained a fairly substantial population. Finds of imported goods reveal a growing maritime trade and it has been postulated that Heybridge acted as a port for the area.

The growth of towns implies that the supporting agricultural communities must have grown or at least increased in productivity. Many of the Late Iron Age/ Roman farms would have continued in use throughout the Roman period. Some of the Roman farmsteads seem to have continued in use to at least the 4th century, ie. Chigborough and there has been shown to be continuation in use of a cemetery at Heybridge into the Saxon period. On other farmsteads there was abandonment after the Roman occupation and a hiatus until the new wave of settlement from the early 5th century onwards.

The Saxon period

Newly settled Saxon sites, such as at Heybridge and Rook Hall on the border with Goldhanger parish, provide evidence for industrial activity as well as domestic settlement. There is also a possible later Saxon settlement at Chigborough. Environmental data indicates the Saxons practised a mixed farming economy with fishing supplementing their diets. Fish traps dating to the Saxon period survive along the coast at Collins Creek and further along the estuary at Bradwell-on-Sea. Marine regression began c.1750BP (Petty, G. & Petty, S., 1993) so by the Saxon period previously flooded land along the valleys and estuaries were no longer accessible. There may also have been the possibility of soil formation on previously flooded land and therefore more land available for pasture and/or arable cultivation.

The Danish raids

The coastal areas were often vulnerable to Danish raids and invasions. In 912 AD and 914 AD Edward the Elder stationed his army and fleet at Maldon to organise defences in the fight against the Danes. In 916 he built a 'burh' at Maldon itself that, in 917AD, withstood a siege by the East Anglian Danes. The burh's precise location is not certain but is tentatively identified with a now almost obliterated earthwork to the west of the town centre. In 991 AD there was a major battle between the Danes led by Olaf Trygvassen who had already attacked Ipswich, and Earl Bryhtnoth's men who were defending Maldon.

The medieval period

By the beginning of the medieval period much of the current landscape elements, such as parishes and settlements were already in place. Documentary evidence provides some details on the dispersed pattern of settlement in the medieval period. There is surviving archaeological evidence for ridge and furrow ploughing at Chigborough and traces of possible stock enclosures at both Chigborough and Slough House Farm. Mixed farming seems to have been practised on most farms, especially where there was ready access to the marshes or commons for grazing. Fisheries were still important resources during the period, many were held by the largest landowners, mostly religious houses, and were included in the holdings of the estates in the Domesday Book. Salt houses were also mentioned in the Domesday Book under the manors of Heybridge and Goldhanger amongst others. The coastal marsh was a valuable resource and important in the distribution of cheese wicks and saltpans. The sharing out of the marshland in small parcels, sometimes in strips is considered to be of medieval origin (Hart, 1993) and dykes were often dug to separate the parcels.

Documentary Evidence

The parish today is known as Goldhanger. The first recorded mention of the name in this form is in the Domesday Book (1086) where it is referred to as *Goldhangra*; *Golehangr*';*Galdhangr(e)*. The origin of the first part of the name *gold-* is thought to have derived from some marsh plant that grew in the area, possibly the Corn marigold (Benham, 1977) or marsh marigold and *-anger* refers to grass-land (Reaney, 1935). The manor is recorded in the Domesday Book in 1066 and so must have existed for some time before this.

The Domesday Book gives an indication of the landscape and settlement of the Goldhanger area at the very end of the Saxon period. At the time of Edward the Confessor only 3 manors are recorded, the main landowner was Leofwin (*Leuwin Possthagra*) who held 2 of the three estates within the parish, one of which he held with the priest Wulfward (*Ulward* or *Uluward*) and the other was later held by Hager. The manors are not named separately; the largest consisted of 2½ hides and 25 acres (approx. 265 acres), held by Leofwin and the priest and had 3 smallholders and 2 freemen. Leofwin's second estate was held as a manor for 1 hide and 15 acres and contained ½ salthouse, presumably shared with a neighbouring parish. Aelric (or *Elric*) held the third estate, also for 1 hide and 15 acres. All three estates had a mixture of woodland, meadow and pastures with roughly the same proportion of arable land.

The manor appears relatively highly populated compared to neighbouring manors. Altogether this could have meant that there were up to 31 households within the parish, including those of the landowners.

The smaller estate owned by Leofwin passed to Hugh de Montfort. One of Hugh de Montfort's men-at-arms, Hugh son of Mauger, held the tenancy from him as well as that of one of the (Little) Totham estates. These were probably also held by a single landowner in Saxon times and the salt house was split between the two estates. Another salt house has been acquired since 1066. The manor has a relatively high population for a small estate (c.135 acres) and possibly included the village. There are no ploughs in lordship and the number of mens ploughs has decreased since 1066. The value of the manor has also decreased since 1066, the only manor within Goldhanger to do so.

Leofwin's larger estate was given to Ranulf Peveral. The estate seems to have enlarged rapidly in population, from 3 smallholders to 14. There also appears to be a decrease in the number of ploughs, from 2 ploughs in lordship to 1, suggesting a change in farming practices. However a large decrease in the number of sheep either refutes this or suggests that there had been recent death or disease in the flock. There is, however, an increase in other types of stock.

Alric's estate passed to Eustace, Count of Bologne, considered "the greatest lay baron in Essex who held about 80 manors centered at Witham. Eleven of them were sublet to Adelolf de Merk, who like Eustace, came from the Boulonnais.", (Raymond Powell, W. 1990). The manor acquired 4 smallholders and is the least populated of the manors of Goldhanger, yet it increased in value so must have contained some profitable land.

The total acreage in 1086 was c.558 acres of land which included woodland for 180 swine, 13½ acres of meadow, pasture for 160 sheep and 1½ salthouses.

The three manors became known in the medieval period as Goldhanger, Follifaunts and Fawltly, however it is unclear as to who owned which manor. By the end of the 11th century the manor of Goldhanger and Little Totham seem to have been joined and became the principal manor, these were probably the manors held by Hugh de Montfort. The courts were held in Little Totham from the 12th century and the two manors shared a rector in the earlier medieval period. It is possible that the medieval manor house was situated within Little Totham, as it was later in the post-medieval period.

The manor seems to have reverted to the King by around 1163 and is recorded as being held by a John de Jarpenvill comprising 2 caracates (roughly 200 acres) of land by the service of 20s a year to the ward of Dover Castle. Little Totham Hall was built in the 12th century next to the church in Little Totham and is attributed to the Jarpenville family. This seems to have been the only manor house for the manor of Goldhanger and Little Totham throughout the medieval period. John died in 1259 and the manor seems to have passed through his family and later by marriage into the Heveningham family. There is a reference of rent for salt before 1287, which indicates that the salthouse was still a valuable commodity. Around 1287 the manor had enlarged slightly and comprised 200 acres arable, 12 acres of meadow, 20 acres of pasture, it had retained 10 acres of wood and had acquired 1 dove-house.

By 1300 the manor seems to be held from the Honor of Haghele, later referred to as the Honor of Haule and Honor of Hagnett. Around this time the manor becomes divided among the Heveningham family. John de Hevenyngham became Lord of the manor in c. 1321. He is recorded in 1348 as being granted a charter for a market to be held at the village on Thursdays and a fair to run for 2 days on the feast day recorded as 'Trans of Edward' on the 13th October. The date may have been a significant date in Edwards III's reign, possibly related to Edwards's earlier victories in France (1346). Near the end of the medieval period the manor is held of the Honor of Ralegh (Morant, 1763-8) and still retained by the Heveningham family.

The other two manors of Follifaunts and Fawly remained as smaller separate estates. From 1180, Beeleigh Abbey also held land in Goldhanger Parish as well as lands in the surrounding parishes. The manor of Follifaunts was given to the Abbey by their founder and it is thought that they also held the manor of Fawly. These lands and buildings would have been rented from the Abbot, by payment of annual tithes. In 1524 a John Whyttlocke Senior is recorded in the lay Subsidy as the wealthiest man (Benham, 1977), the family rented Follyfaunts around this time and so it must have been a lucrative estate. In 1536 King Henry VIII relieved Beeleigh Abbey of its possessions and it ceased to exist as a religious house.

The extent of the medieval village is based on the information on the 1777 Chapman and André map (Plate 1). It shows a significant nucleated village located at the end of a creek off the wide tidal estuary with small areas of settlement around the smaller manors and scattered farmsteads. The number of people recorded in the Domesday Book is 45, a slight increase from 1066. By the end of the medieval period only 49 people are listed as being resident according to the Lay Subsidy of 1524 (Benham, M 1977). Not every manor had grown since 1066; most of those that declined were near the coast, possibly due to pirate raids, or from King Williams order to devastate the coastal area when a Danish invasion threatened in 1085.

The coastal marshes provided pasture for sheep, then valued not only for mutton and wool, but also for ewe's milk cheese, which continued to be made up to the 16th century. Some of the marshland may have been embanked by the end of the 12th century. Sea walls along some of the coast of Essex were maintained from as early as 1303 however the north coast of Maldon is not specified until around 1439 when a commission was to include in its work the stretch from Hockley, on the Crouch to Tollesbury. Whether this included the stretch along Goldhangers coast is unclear, reclamation of land to the east and west of the creek occurred at a later date (Benham, 1977).

It is evident from later maps that the general grain of the fieldscape runs from north to south, thus enabling each landholder to have access to the maximum amounts of resources from the riverside meadows, the higher arable ground and the commons/waste areas. It is likely that farms would have had a mixture of arable and grazing land on the marsh, as evidenced by the figures from the Domesday Book.

In the western half of the parish the tithe map (c.1841) reveals fields with stepped edges along some boundaries. This is thought to indicate the use of the field for strip farming in the medieval period. Much of the land in the parish was low lying and so unsuitable for arable agriculture therefore suitable arable land would have been much sought after.

From the late medieval period the main manor of Goldhanger was held by Sir Anthony Heveningham of the Honor of Rayleigh. He died in 1557 and passed the estate to his son who died with no children. When Sir Anthony's nephew inherited the estate he released the tenants from service and sold it outside the family to John Brown. Brown's son sold the estate to John Sammes, at this time it had significantly increased in size and comprised 6 messuages, 3 tofts, 1 dovehouse, 2 gardens, 100 acres of arable, 40 of meadow and 300 of pasture, 70 acres of wood, 300 of heath and furze, 4 of marsh and alder, a free fishery, free warren and 2 saldages for sheep. The Sammes built Little Totham Hall, which had a park of 80 acres. The estate continued to be passed down through the male heir until it was purchased by the Rev. John Lasby who married Elizabeth Sammes. Lasby died in 1703 without an heir so the estate was inherited by his nephew who sold it on to John Price. It was passed on through the Price family until sometime before 1800. The Court Rolls name John Cole as Lord of the manor in 1769 (ERO D/DC/41/370). This must have passed to his relative as in 1798 and 1812 a George Cole is listed as holding court (ERO D/DVz 364). By 1848 George Nottidge, Esq., is Lord of the Manor, called Totham-with-Goldhanger, but a great part of the land belongs to H.C. Coape, Esq., the Rev. T. Leigh, Sir R.M. Rolfe, and several smaller owners, and is occupied partly by farmers residing in neighbouring parishes (Whites Directory, 1848).

Morant (1763-8) records that Goldhanger Hall and the demesne lands were purchased from the widow of Francis Sammes and Henry Germain by a Rev. Mr. Henry Barrett c.1700. Whether this is a reference to the manor house at Little Totham which the Sammes family built is unclear.

Henry VIII granted the manor of Follifaunts to Stephen Beakingham in 1543. By 1569 it is referred to as the manor Fallyfantes (ERO D/DVz/359). Thomas, his son, sold it to John Sammes, who also held Goldhanger manor, in 1573. There is a record for a deed of livery in 1569, which relates to properties including the Manor of Fallyfantes which was previously in the possession of the Monastery of Beeleigh) and a grange of Langwyke (in previous possession of Monastery of Coggeshall) in Goldhanger. In addition the farms and messuages of Canterberies in Goldhanger (in previous possession of Monastery of Beeleigh), Graunts, Highams and Joyces are recorded. These properties were part of the possessions of the Vaizey Family of Halstead and North Essex. In 1848 the freehold estates, farms and lands consisting of the manor 'or reputed manor' of Follifaunts were sold at auction by direction of the Trustees under the will of the late Rev. T. Leigh (EROD/DVz/364). The estate contained over 134 acres of meadow pasture and arable and included over 4 acres of wood called 'Palmer's or Phillips Wood' situated along the High Road to Tiptree Heath.

Henry VIII granted the farm of Fawltly to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk in 1538. It was sold on soon after to Robert Trapps and son Nicholas. When these had both died the estate was passed on through the daughters and various parts sold off. In 1768 it was in the ownership of Charles Coe of Maldon who owned the Maldon saltworks. He was part of the Coape family who, during the 18th-19th centuries had seats and/or estates at Wolvey Hall, Warwickshire, Goldhanger, Essex and Ashby St Ledgers, Northamptonshire. In 1855 much of the estate was sold off at auction, (ERO D/DU 627/18) presumably due to financial reasons, the estate consisted of many farms including Vaultys as well as the decoys, Barrow Hill Marsh mills (now in Heybridge parish) and Osey Island.

In the early postmedieval period there was an increased demand for agricultural and especially marshland products such as cheese and wool etc., agricultural practices had not changed much since the medieval period. A salter and salthouse are mentioned in Session records in 1651 (Ingle & Saunders, forthcoming). A saltcote/salt works were discovered inside the sea wall at Bounds Farm, the age is thought to be Jacobean and may be the same saltworks as mentioned in the Session records. In Essex salt manufacture began to decline with the import of rock salt from Cheshire.

Around 1650's the "salt marshes began to be fenced from the seas" (Benham, 1977). 60 acres of Harveys and Joyces marshes were reclaimed in 1638. The nature of the coastal area changed due to the knowledge and work of refugees from the Low Countries. Not only were they employed in reclamation but also in the construction of Duck decoys, which is known from as early as the 1600's in Norfolk. This process seems to have continued into the 18th century, Gramolt 's map (1960) of the reclamation along the Blackwater shows that much of the area around Goldhanger had been reclaimed before 1774. Economic pressures led to renewed interest in reclamation. In 1789 Thomas Lee, of Bounds Farm, reclaimed 30 acres on the west side of Goldhanger Creek and later took 15 acres of saltings. At some point between 1805 and 1839 the head of the creek was cut off (Benham, 1977). By 1807 much of the land was given over to arable. A scheme approved in 1852 intended to reclaim 30,420 acres of marshes, flats and sands in the Estuary by the South Essex Estuary and reclamation Co., proposed by the engineer Sir John Rennie (ERO T/M 264/1, 1852). It was not pursued which may indicate that the profitability from farming was not enough to warrant such expense.

By the late 18th century the sea walls were in roughly their present position. Around this time much of the reclaimed land remained in use as pasture. However by the 19th century agricultural improvements and changing agricultural demands meant that an increasing proportion of pasture land were turned over to arable cultivation with the introduction of underdrainage, consequent levelling of the ground surface and continued ploughing. Sale catalogues from the estate of the Coape family (ERO D/DU 627/18) reveal how "the most beneficial improvements which practical science can apply have been recently made with a lavish hand...irregular fences removed, smaller enclosures thrown together and large under-drainage with tiles laid."

The field pattern falls into distinctive blocks dependant on location and topography. Fields tended to be rectangular with the long axis running northeast southwest in the north of the parish and along the main transport routes. In places the field sizes are smaller and squarer. To the west of the parish the alignment varies but is largely east west. There are 13 recorded farms ranging from as little as 14 acres in size (Pump House Farm) to 275 acres at Gardeners Farm. Nearly all farms have arable and pasture land, depending on location, some have small plantations and others have saltings and decoys.

By the time of the Tithe map, large fields and former meadow areas are divided up with some regularity. The change was brought due to the shift to arable cultivation and demand for more suitable arable land. The former meadows are easily distinguished by their sinuous field boundaries, situated largely south of the Goldhanger/Maldon road. Later reclamation is evident in much more regimented fields and straighter boundaries, especially in the areas southwest of the village and west of Longwick Farm.

There is a distinct change in field pattern around the junction of Blind Lane and the Maldon Road that may reflect enclosure of an area of former waste, possibly from medieval times. This pattern is also reflected at the bend in the Little Totham Road that is recorded as waste on the tithe map and recorded as Oak field, suggesting it was once wooded. Deeds for a parcel of land on Goldhanger green, 'copyhold of Manor of Little Totham with Goldhanger measurements' reveals that it was waste, possibly a former part of Tiptree Heath (ERO D/DCf/T70) in c.1788. The commoners also enjoyed the 'right to cut broom, furze and thorn, and underwood (coppice) for fuel and building repairs on Tiptree Heath (Hunter, J 1999). In 1608 a member of the Heningham family of Goldhanger is recorded in the Session Rolls for building a cottage upon 'Typtery Heath' (ERO Q/SR 183/18). The inhabitants of the parish were still communing on Tiptree Heath until the enclosure around 1804-5. Enclosure of the coastal marshland, woodland and commons was increasing in the early 1800's due to the increased profit for wheat and need for more arable land. Much pasture land became improved for arable use and the remaining heathlands were also being enclosed. In the early 1800's over 2000 acres of heath were still open and uncultivated. By 1848 only 500 acres remained, this was divided among the parishes 'in radiating strips, some of which are from 3 to 8 miles from their respective churches' (Benham, 1977).

The duck decoys were clearly popular in this area if fieldnames are indicators of former sites. In Essex the characteristic 6-8 pipe starfish-shaped ponds appear to predominate during the middle to later 18th century. Some of the earlier examples have square central ponds (EHER 16387) with up to 6 pipes and the earliest may date from the later 17th century (Ingle & Saunders, forthcoming). Many were worked into the 19th century but went out of use in the later half of the century when shooting was found to be more profitable.

It has been speculated that in the past the sea wall came up to the church within the village (Benham, 1977) and also that around 1650 it reached from the Church to the salt house, possibly the salthouse located at Bounds Farm. Looking at the Surveyors map of 1805 (Plate 2) there is a distinctive boundary formed from Goldhanger village south along the edge of the fields towards Bounds to turn westwards to meet the road to Heybridge. Benham (1977) states that the sea walls were raised after the high tide and flooding of 1736 and that by 1790 they were 7½ feet high (c.2.3m).

By the 1800's agricultural progress was prompting modernisation and expansion in it's ancillary industries. Further up the river at Langford the Lord of the manor, Nicholas Westcombe, had an earlier mill demolished and built a new larger mill in anticipation of increased production and trade. During the second half of the 18th century a great period of economic expansion took place in the region due to the increase in maritime trade and the construction of the Chelmer and Blackwater Canal in 1797. How these changes affected Goldhanger is unclear as there seems to have been little industrialisation in the parish apart from the invention of the Goldhanger plough by a Goldhanger farmer and blacksmith. The Goldhanger plough arrived with the development of local iron foundries The Goldhanger foundry was established by W. Bentall in 1808, but had closed by 1815 when Bentall moved the foundry from Golhanger to Heybridge (eventually becoming E.H Bentall's EHER 15304). He is thought to have lived at Cobbs Farm and the popularity of his invention caused him to build a small foundry, a smithy and joiners shop on land known as Foundry Field opposite Cobbs Farm.

In 1781 a windmill is recorded as being let together with 12 acres of pasture by a Thomas Piggot Esq. Of Maldon. A John Piggot is known to have been the miller in Langford around c.1800's (O'Connor, 2006)). The location of the mill is unknown but was within the parish of Goldhanger. Within the village, there is mention of a mill belonging to the maltings from at least 1803, in 1824 the windmill is described as upon the malting and by 1853 as adjoining the malting (Benham, 1977). There is little information on the age or length of use of the malting itself. Steam was introduced in the mill in 1837 and probably continued in use until after 1924 as it is depicted on the 3rd edition OS map as a corn mill. Another steam driven flour mill is mentioned in 1850, however the location is unknown and it is unclear as to how long it was in use for (Farries, 1985).

Parish boundaries were often contested to take advantage of the widest range of landscape types, the northern 'leg' clearly respects an existing landscape element and it is most probable that it was previously part of Tiptree Heath. In the 'Divided Parishes Act' of 1899 part of Little Totham was transferred to Great Totham and a detached part of Goldhanger was added to Little Totham. There is still a small triangle of land cut into the parish boundary that belongs to Little Totham. The piece of land abuts Maldon Road and Wash Lane and at the junction between the two lies Wash Bridge, the segment possibly harks back to a time when access to the marsh and coast was an important facility for an otherwise landlocked parish. There are a number of boundary posts surviving within the parish dating from the 19th and early 20th century (EHER 15156, 15220). On the north verge of a sharp curve of Wash Lane is a rare example of an extant 19th century oak parish boundary post (EHER 15168) thought to be the only one surviving in Essex. Another is Grade II listed (EHER 38291).

During the First World War a landing ground was built southwest of the village. The airfield, a night landing ground for the Royal Navy Air Service from 1915 to 1916 was reassigned to 37 Sqn RFC and remained in service as a flight station until 1919. Their job was to combat the threat from German airships and aircraft as they attempted to reach targets in East Anglia and as far inland as West London. Upon receipt of orders, 'A' Flight moved to Rochford, 'B' Flight to Stow Maries and 'C' Flight to Goldhanger. The landing ground was unusual in that Gardeners Farm was sited in the centre. Some 24 structures were built on the western edge of the site including four aeroplane sheds. These sheds survived the demolition of the rest of the buildings in 1919, being dismantled in 1922 and parts sold to Crittal's factory at Silver End (these have now been acquired by the Brooklands Museum at Weybridge).

In the Postwar period the rural and fishing economy declined. Transport by water was no longer economic. This is evidenced by a number of wrecks of Thames barges (EHER 13743, 13799) in the creek as well as a number of other unidentified post structures (EHER 13800, 13802) that are possible relics relating to former coastal activities (Plate 5). However, the estuary has continued to be utilised for its shellfish resource and Goldhanger Creek is the main Pacific Oyster fishery.

The growth of the settlement at the beginning of the postmedieval period was probably not much greater than the population at the time of the Lay Subsidy of 1524 when only 49 people are recorded. The population at the end of the 18th century had risen to 205, an increase of only c.150 in over 250 years. However, by 1831 the population has significantly increased to 496, living in 108 houses. Morant (1763-8) records that the parish held a yearly fair on May 14. Records go back to at least 1760 (Benham, 1977). In 1848 Whites Directory states that the village has a fair for toys on Whit-Monday (which could fall between 11 May and 14th June) that is likely to have been the same fair that Morant was referring to. There is also reference to a small pleasure-fair held on the Monday and Tuesday in Whitsun-week. The 'toy' fair seems to have been held up to c.1914 when it was known as Juggy Rose's fair (Benham, 1977). 'Toys' was the word used to cover ribbons, gingerbread, fruits and knick-knacks (Benham, 1977).

In 1832 the village included a baker, boot and shoe maker, butcher, a miller and maltster, a shopkeeper and smith (Benham, 1977). Just over 10 years later 3 shopkeepers are recorded as well as 2 wheelwrights and 2 blacksmiths suggesting the village was a relatively busy and prosperous place. In White's Directory (1848) there is a record of Jacob Belsham, miller and maltster, and John Cooper, victualler of the Chequers. Occupations also recorded for the parish included a rake maker, decoyman, bricklayer, butcher and saddler. In 1874 a marine store dealer is listed and by 1882 an extensive fishing trade is reported for the parish. The rector was Rev. Charles Brian Leigh M.A., and he had a curate Rev. William Jay B.A. Eight farmers are listed including Thomas Francis of Follifaunts, many had farms that covered land in the neighbouring parishes. By 1841 the population of the parish was 520, this slowly increased over the next 30 years but by 1891 had begun to decline. This was followed by a gradual increase around 1920.