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# HIGH HALSTOW, HOO PENINSULA, KENT

## HISTORIC AREA ASSESSMENT

Joanna Smith and Jonathan Clarke



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# HIGH HALSTOW, HOO PENINSULA, MEDWAY, KENT

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Joanna Smith and Jonathan Clarke

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## **SUMMARY**

The parish of High Halstow lies on the north side of the Hoo Peninsula. Its landscape encompasses areas of marsh and farmland. Unlike other parishes on the peninsula more strongly affected by the industrialization of the Thames and Medway region during the 19th and 20th centuries, its character remains predominantly rural, with a number of dispersed farmsteads. The largest settlement remains the historic village of High Halstow, which until the mid 20th century was a modestly sized community, similar in character to neighbouring villages, but which thereafter experienced considerable growth. Settlement has also occurred along the A228 in a ribbon-like pattern with origins in two clusters of farmsteads, known as Sharnal Street and Fenn Street, and a similar alignment has also developed along Clinch Street, to the west of the village. Although land was acquired for military use in the 20th century, no major facility was situated here and defensive structures and earthworks constructed during both world wars have left few visible remains. This Historic Area Assessment provides an overview of the historical development and architectural character of the administrative parish, which is coterminous with the island. It forms a component of the larger Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

The report was written by Joanna Smith and researched and formatted by Jonathan Clarke. The character area maps were produced by Philip Sinton, and final DTPing was undertaken by Martin Jeffs. The photographs were taken by Jonathan Clarke.

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*Frontispiece; 'It is from the Norrard that perhaps the best view is to be had of the immense variety of scenery to be seen from this parish, ranging from the thickly wooded slopes of the hill itself, over orchards, ploughed land, pasture, and marsh, and out across the estuary of the Thames'.(P5733054) <sup>1</sup>*



## PREFACE

The Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project was undertaken by English Heritage between 2009 and 2012. The project aims were to inform landscape change at a strategic level by providing an enhanced evidence base and a better-informed understanding of the area's rich historic character. To ensure a truly integrated project a number of different research and recording techniques at the disposal of English Heritage were deployed. These included aerial survey, analytical earthwork and buildings survey, historic landscape, seascape and routeway characterisation, farmstead characterisation and historic area assessment. An integrated narrative report drawing on this full range of work was produced in 2013 (Carpenter et al, 2013).

Historic area assessment was developed by English Heritage as one of a number of approaches to understanding the historic environment at area scale. Each assessment aims to explain how the past is encapsulated in today's landscape, to describe its character and to distinguish its more significant elements. Because resources, timescales and the nature of areas can vary three levels of assessment have been defined (English Heritage, 2010). For the Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project it was decided to undertake historic area assessments of individual parishes at outline level - that is less-intensive survey and research to enable coverage of a wider area. The Hoo Peninsula, east of the ridge of high land at Higham, was assessed by parish. For each parish the key elements of its historic development were identified, its architectural interest and significance was evaluated and its landscape was subdivided into character areas.

The Hoo Peninsula outline historic area assessments were carried out within English Heritage by members of the Assessment Team South, Heritage Protection Department. Fieldwork was undertaken during a number of visits to the peninsula between 2010 and 2011. This consisted of external ground photography and site notes. A limited amount of research was undertaken in the local archives. Extensive use was made of historic maps, principally the tithe maps and various Ordnance Survey editions, along with on-line resources such as census data and historic newspapers, to produce the assessments. These were written in draft by the team members between 2011 and 2013.



Figure 1 Location map showing High Halstow Civil Parish. ©Crown copyright and database right 2103. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 1000124900..

## INTRODUCTION

The parish of High Halstow lies on the north side of the Hoo Peninsula (Fig 1). Its southern half is upland, straddling the ridge of higher ground that forms the peninsula's spine and reaching a peak at Northward Hill. From here the ground drops away to reclaimed marshland, traversed by wide fleets, and a river frontage on the Thames. Flanked by St Mary Hoo to the east and Cooling to the west, the central area encompasses both the main settlement and a woodland nature reserve. The mineral railway and a short section of the A228 cross the southern part of the parish, which extends to Chattenden, an outlier of Hoo St Werburgh.

The focus of settlement remains the historic village of High Halstow. Until the mid 20th century it was a modestly sized community, similar in character to neighbouring villages, but thereafter it has experienced considerable growth. Settlement has also occurred along the A228. This stretch of ribbon development originated as two clusters of farmsteads, known as Sharnal Street and Fenn Street. A similar grouping has also developed along Clinch Street, to the west of the village.

The industrialization of the Thames and Medway region during the 19th and 20th century largely bypassed High Halstow and the character of the parish remains predominantly rural with a number of dispersed farmsteads. Its clay soil, with a subsoil of gravel, has historically been used for arable farming with wildfowling and grazing on the marshes. During the 19th century farming practice diversified into fruit and hop growing, seed production and market gardening.

Land was acquired in the parish for military use in the 20th century although no major facility was situated here. Defensive structures and earthworks were constructed during both world wars but have left few visible remains. Post-war change has most obviously taken the form of residential expansion. Some of the initial demand was for industrial housing and this was provided by the local authority. However, the majority of new development has been private, attracted by the varied scenery of the parish.

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Development before 1800

Evidence for seasonal occupation of the marshes during the Romano-British period has been recorded but settlement probably began in the early Saxon era. Administratively, the parish of High Halstow lay within the Hundred of Hoo and its manor formed part of the manor of Hoo. This was anciently held by the family of Bardolf, eventually passing in the 18th century to the Villiers family who, as the Earls of Jersey, still possessed the manor in the early 20th century. Another manor was claimed at Ducks Court (sometimes spelt Dux Court), to the south west of the village, referred to by Hasted in the 1790s as the reputed 'manor of High Halstow'.

The principal settlement, High Halstow village (Fig 2), was probably established in the Saxon period on upland below Northward Hill. The name 'Halstow' signifies a holy place, potentially pre-Christian, while 'High' was adopted to distinguish it from Lower Halstow, a village south of the Medway, although it also describes its topographical situation. A church may have been in existence by the 11th century, functioning originally as a chapel to Hoo St Werburgh. However the earliest fabric of the present building, dedicated to St Margaret, has been dated to the early 13th century. A tithe barn stood in the village, to the east of the church, until the late 20th century.

Three other areas of settlement developed. To the south of the village, Sharnal Street and Fenn Street (the latter mainly in the parish of St Mary Hoo) grew up along a historic routeway that traversed the ridge of higher land leading ultimately to the Isle of Grain. This subsequently became the Ratcliff Highway, later the A228. A cluster of farmsteads along Clinch Street (sometimes spelt Clench Street), to the north west of the village, edged a tract of land known as The Mean (historically Le Meneparishe). Control over the area was shared by High Halstow and St Mary Hoo, prompting a dispute over the right to tithes in the 15th century and resulting in an ill-defined boundary between the two parishes. This was marked by a fence in the 1830s, when the division was further to the east, placing more of the hamlet at Fenn Street within High Halstow parish. The modern boundary appears to have been agreed in the early 20th century.



Figure 2 Extract from *A Map of the Hundreds of Hoo and Chatham and Gillingham, 1798*, showing High Halstow and its relationship to the marshes and neighbouring settlements

The northern part of the parish encompasses an extensive area of marshland between the river Thames and the higher land, traversed by the notably wide waterways, Decoy Fleet and Salt Fleet. The area was utilized for salt production between the 1st and 4th centuries and has been subsequently 'inned' to form marshland pasture. During the medieval period land was held here by the Convent of Dartford and the College of All Saints, Maidstone and they, along with other landowners, may have begun the process of reclamation. However, the main period of activity appears to have been between the 17th and 19th centuries, aided by the activities of the North and East Kent Sewer Commissions, established in 1530 to construct and maintain the sea walls. In the 1740s efforts were made to strengthen the walls at High Halstow and St Mary, requiring 2280 tons of chalk.

The marshes have also been used historically for other activities including wild fowling and smuggling. At least one decoy pond, a central area of water from which emanated narrowing channels in which the birds were trapped, was created near Decoy Fleet. The pond was apparently dug between 1654 and 1697 and had an adjacent farmhouse and outbuildings, all of which have now gone. A second pond may have existed and another farmstead, still known as Decoy Farm, was built on rising ground to the south. The isolation of the marshes, along with the availability of a landing place in an inlet known as Egypt Bay and places of concealment such as the wooded Northward Hill, made the parish a suitable location for smuggling. The scattering of cottages and farm buildings that stood on the marshes inevitably acquired a dubious reputation and one surviving building, Shade House, occupying a lonely situation north of Decoy Fleet, was said to have been used by smuggling gangs to hide contraband. By the 19th century this activity would perhaps have been hampered by the presence of a prison hulk in Egypt Bay.

The parish had the usual arrangement for the peninsula of dispersed farms, here often combining marshland pasture, upland arable fields and woodland. The oldest extant farmhouse, Great Dalham, Cooling Road, dates from the early 16th century. Other historic farmsteads include Ducks Court, Buckhole Farm, Wybornes Farm (Fig 3) and Walnut Tree Farm. In the 1760s land was being used as ash plantations for hop poles. The areas of farmed woodland were Norrard Wood (on Northward Hill), Wybournes Wood and the northern edge of Deangate Wood (mainly in the parish of Hoo St Werburgh).



*Figure 3 Wybornes Farm, with its early 19th century farmhouse. (P5733055)*

## Development 1800-1945

From the beginning of the 19th century the census charts a gradual growth in population, rising from 227 in 1801 to 401 in 1951. The parish is said to have had 49 dwellings in 1821, which had increased to around 60 by 1839, indicating the relative sparsity of occupation.

Historically the village was small settlement, loosely grouped around the Church of St Margaret and the junction of several roads. When mapped in 1839 for the Tithe Commission it contained an assemblage of cottages, and the Red Dog Public House, ranged around the church yard in an arrangement sometimes referred to as The Square. The remainder was comprised of a farmstead known as Hill Farm (rebuilt in late 19th century), more cottages, a tithe barn and other agricultural buildings and a forge. The main village road passed to the south of the church and was known as Halstow Hill (renamed The Street in the 20th century). This led eastwards to the hamlets at Clinch Street and Fenn Street and westwards to Cooling. Other roads led southwards to Hoo St Werburgh, north to Northward Hill and to Sharnal Street to the south east. Subsequent additions included a rectory, built in c.1847, and a National school, constructed in 1872 or 1876 (both demolished).

Around the turn of the 20th century there was a modest phase of house building, ranging from a detached property, Belmont (now the Rectory), to pair of cottages (Rocksand Cottages, The Street) and a terrace of five (Jubilee Cottages, Nos 23-31 The Street). Intermittent development along Christmas Lane, the road leading to Sharnal Street, was also occurring at this time. The linear expansion of the village continued in the inter-war years, including two groups of local authority houses, High View Cottages, 35-49 The Street (originally Nos 1-8 Halstow Hill) and Jubilee Cottage, Nos 1-15 Christmas Lane. These may have been intended in part to replace the older farm workers' cottages in the village as most of the group around The Square had been cleared by 1940. Non-residential development included a village hall, which also served as a war memorial, built in 1920.

As might be expected the village had its own blacksmiths and wheelwrights. Two smithies were marked on Ordnance Survey map of 1896 on The Street and Christmas Lane. By the early 20th century a wheelwright's shop was occupying the old tithe barn, using an adjacent pond for seasoning the wood; the iron wheel rims were supplied by a nearby forge on The Street. When this forge passed out of use in the 1920s another located to the east of the Churchyard was used. It was also the source of the naming of Forge Lane.

The hamlet at Clinch Street was formed of three farmsteads, Clinchstreet Farm, Walnut Tree Farm and Jackson's Farm, and a beer house known as The Britannia. Sharnal Street consisted of Sharnal Street Farm and May's Farm. When the Hundred of Hoo Railway was opened in 1882 a station was built alongside this hamlet (Fig 4). However, residential development was slow to follow. In 1906 a halt was created by Wybournes Farm to serve High Halstow village.

A number of cottages for farm workers were built during the mid-to-late 19th century. For example, a cottage on Clinch Street was described as 'newly built' in 1847 and pairs of cottages were built at Wybournes Farm in the late 19th century (Fig 5) and at turn of the century at Solomons Farm and Ducks Court. During the same period several outlying cottages and farms passed out of use, including Magpie Hall (near Buckhole Farm), Great Burnt House (north of the village), Norwood Cottage (Northward Hill), White House (Clinch Street) and a marshland cottage near Egypt Bay.

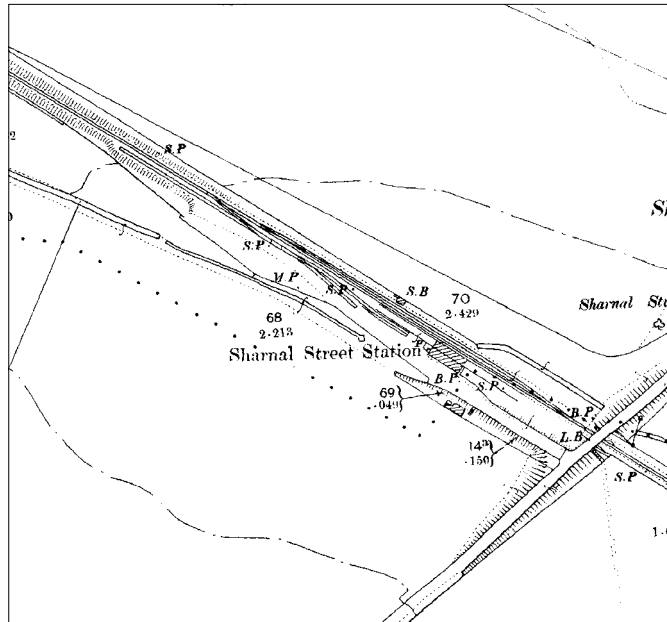


Figure 4 Extract from OS 1:2,500 map surveyed in 1896, showing Sharnal Street Station. © and database right Crown copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2014) Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024

These changes may have been related to a shift in farming from the late-19th century from grazing sheep, wheat and turnip growing to fruit and seed production, potato and hop growing and market gardening. In High Halstow these changes were probably initiated by Henry Pye junior, who owned Clinch Street Farm, and other 'improving' farmers. The opening of the railway line was another factor; its usefulness 'for the transmission of produce fresh into the London markets and the return of manure and feedings stuffs' was noted in an advertisement for the sale of Sharnal Street Farm in 1912. A railing siding adjoining Wybourne Farm was in operation by 1891. This property by 1902 included '18 acres of fruit plantation, 9 acres

hops, 2½ acres of orchard' as well as an oast house. Fruit growing was not new to the parish but a major increase in the acreage given over to orchards between the 1890s and the 1940s is clearly indicated on successive OS maps.



Figure 5 Late 19th century farm-workers cottages on Wybournes Lane, now renamed 'Thames View'. (P5733056)

There appears to have been little effort at promoting industrial development in the parish. In the late-19th century a short-lived brick and tile works was established on the Cooling Road to exploit the availability of brickearth. The works was present by the early 1880s but had gone by the mid 1890s, leaving behind some adjoining clay pits. But generally the industrialization of the peninsula had an indirect impact, such as the construction of a modest amount of workers' housing at the end of the 19th century, including a short terrace of modestly sized properties on Christmas Lane known as Victoria Cottages (Fig 6, demolished in the 1950s).

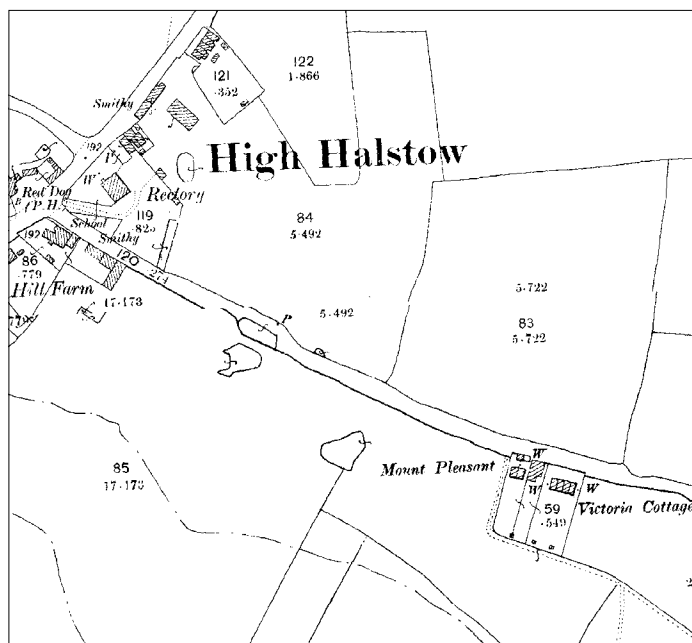


Figure 6 Extract from OS 1:2,500 map surveyed in 1896, showing the location of the long-demolished Victoria Cottages© and database right Crown copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2014) Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024

The militarization of the wider region between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries was also felt in the parish. In 1907 the Admiralty acquired land at its southern edge for a large naval ammunitions stores at Lodge Hill and Chattenden (for details see Hoo St Werburgh Historic Area Assessment). This was provided with defensive trench systems and redoubts and a tramway that passed close to Sharnal Street Station. The War Department purchased land in the parish in the early 20th century for training purposes and a number of batteries and trench systems were established. Earthworks identified from aerial photographs near Longfield Avenue, since flattened, may have been the remains of a First World War practice trench. Before the outbreak of the Second World War an anti-aircraft battery was established at Fenn Street, supplemented in 1940 by an unmanned reserve battery site at Decoy Farm. Anti-invasion measures included a line of pillboxes running between Allhallows and High Halstow.

## Development after 1945

Since the mid 20th century High Halstow village has undergone significant expansion, accounting for much of the population rise of 401 in 1951 to 1,781 in 2011. This began in 1948-9 with a small group of houses and flats by Strood Rural District Council, originally known as Churchill Place now Nos 51-69 The Street. Enlargement on a grander scale happened from the 1950s. The initial development by the local authority probably represents a resumption of a pre-war policy to replace poor-quality housing in the peninsula while the bigger scheme was part of a programme to accommodate the area's growing industrial workforce. Private development around the council housing was also



occurring the 1960s and 1970s. During the same period private house building spread along Cooling Road and Christmas Lane. Thereafter, large-scale housebuilding did not resume until the late 1990s with the construction of a large private estate on the eastern margins of the village.

New residential development has also occurred with the historic core of the village, some of it occupying the site of earlier properties. Examples of redevelopment include a group of 1950s houses to the north of the churchyard (previously The Square) and some 1970s houses on the site of the National school. This had been closed after a new school had opened elsewhere in the village in 1956-8. The old tithe barn to the south of The Street, in use as a wheelwright's shop until 1971, was replaced by St Margaret's Court, a residential block for old age persons. Infill development has also taken place but the process of densification has been partially checked by the retention of a cricket field and recreation ground running between The Street and Christmas Lane.

Post-war ribbon development has spread along the A228 linking Sharnal Street and Fenn Street. Its character, like that of Clinch Street, has also been altered by changes in farming within the parish. The renewal of farm buildings or conversion to residential use has affected all of the parish's farmsteads, albeit to varying degrees.

The ornithological significance of the woodland and marshland of High Halstow was recognized by the designation of large tracts of land as a National Nature Reserve in 1957. (Fig 7) Proposals for protecting the marshes had first been made in 1947. This was expanded to include Norrad Wood, which contains a nationally important heronry, after it was offered to the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds in 1955.



*Figure 7 An ornamental gateway for pedestrians and vehicles in the National Nature Reserve (P5733057)*

## CHARACTER AREAS

High Halstow parish can be divided very broadly into two areas of differing character; the rural landscape and the zones of settlement formed by the extended village and ribbon development along the A228 (Fig 8).



Figure 8 Character areas of High Halstow. Background mapping ©Crown copyright and database right 2103. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 1000124900

## High Halstow marshes, farmland and woodland

The landscape of the parish has several components. The northern third of the area is occupied by an expanse of low-lying reclaimed marsh bisected by fleets and ditches. The upland parts contain farmland, that is arable and hop fields and orchards, as well as woodland, most notably the nature reserve at Northward Hill, but also the smaller Wybornes Wood and Fishers Wood.

The river frontage of the parish, which is longer than might be expected, extends from the western side of the St Mary's Bay to a boundary with parish of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods. A modern concrete sea wall defines the riverside, including the inlet at Egypt Bay. This was established in its current position by the early 19th century, if not earlier, and sections of older sea walls survive inland, evidence on previous shorelines nearer to the village.

A Romano-British salt production site on the Little Middle Marsh has been recorded. But the principal use of the marshes from the medieval period has been for grazing sheep, the result of a long campaign of reclamation over several centuries. As areas of saltings were incrementally 'inned' to provide fresh marsh the landscape acquired its present form, defined by natural fleets, dykes, sea walls and ditches. Although sheep grazing has significantly diminished evidence of its historical importance survives in the form of sheepfolds and sheepwashes. Several cottages and outbuildings on the marshes were still being used by sheep minders or 'lookers' in the 19th century. The only surviving example is Shade House, to the north of Decoy Fleet. This enigmatic brick structure has also been associated with smuggling, for which High Halstow marshes were well suited, but may also have been used by the Coastguard to counter the activity.

Little visible evidence remains of the 17th century decoy pond, although it endured long enough to be mapped by the Ordnance Survey in 1885. The pond was located near Decoy Fleet, and presumably gave it its name. The marshes continue to be used as a wintering ground and breeding place by many species of birds and its importance to wildlife has been recognized by its designation as a National Nature Reserve.

Farming remains a significant activity and includes large areas of orchard dating mainly for the first half of the 20th century. However, these have been diminishing in recent years. As elsewhere in the peninsula, there has been a clear trend from the late 20th century for the amalgamation of farms resulting in the conversion, under use or clearance of agricultural buildings. However, a number of dispersed upland farmsteads have survived, as well as farmhouses shorn of their outbuildings. These include a group of four listed farmhouses in south and west of the parish. The oldest is Great Dalham, on the Cooling Road. This timber-framed and weatherboarded building (grade II) has been dated to the early 16th century. Ducks Court, Wybourne Farm and Buckhole Farm have red-brick farmhouses (all grade II) that may range in date from the late-17th to early 19th century. Other survivals include Solomons Farm, to the south of the mineral railway, and Decoy Farm, to the north of Clinch Street. The latter, which may have replaced a farmstead associated with the decoy pond in the marshes, lost its farmhouse in the 1960s. Two farms remain from the small cluster at Clinch Street, the eponymous Clinchstreet Farm, once owned by Henry Pye junior, and Walnut Tree Farm.

Other features in the landscape include the mineral railway, which passes across the southern corner of the parish, and remnants of military activity. All structures associated with the passenger use of the line, which began in 1882 and ended in 1961, have been removed. The sidings at Wybourne Farm has also gone. A small section of the large military complex at Chattenden lies within the parish of High Halstow; this is described in Hoo St Werburgh Historic Area Assessment. Some of the Second World War pillboxes, constructed on high ground in a line between Allhallows and High Halstow, are said to survive.

Woodland makes a significant contribution to the landscape of High Halstow parish. At 209 ft Northward Hill is one of the higher points in the peninsula and is covered by a mixture of hawthorn scrub and ancient oak woodland. Since 1957 this has formed part of the High Halstow National Nature Reserve, managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The important wildlife habitat also provides an educational and leisure facility for visitors and local residents.

### High Halstow village and Sharnal Street

The main area of settlement is the village of High Halstow, which lies below the crest of Northward Hill and wraps around the southern edge of the nature reserve. The historic core, never more than a loose grouping of cottages and farms around St Margaret's Church and The Street, is now situated towards the edge of the built-up area. Residential development from the mid-20th century onwards has pushed the village perimeter significantly northwards and eastwards and produced ribbon development along Christmas Lane and Cooling Road. A recreational ground, Rayners Meadow (home of High Halstow Cricket Club) and the school grounds partially buffer the original centre from the bulk of more recent housing.

The extent of residential development has given the village a predominantly 20th character. It retains a few historic buildings, the most important of which is the Church of St Margaret (listed grade I; Fig 9). Built of ragstone, this is thought to date from the 13th century, remodelled and enlarged in the late 15th century. It has a west tower, rebuilt and shortened in the 18th century, of ragstone with a red-brick plinth and buttresses. The nave was restored in 1887, the tower in 1902. War-time damage to the east end, caused by a German land mine, was repaired in c1955 and the church was undergoing work at the time of field survey for the



*Figure 9 The Church of St Margaret in October 2009, then undergoing minor repairs. (P5733058)*

assessment in 2009. A lych gate in the south wall of the churchyard also serves as First World War memorial. To the east of the church is the Red Dog public house (grade II), the only other nationally designated building in the village. Built of red brick, it is said to date from the 17th century, extended in the 19th century and reworked in the late 20th century (Fig 10).



*Figure 10 The Red Dog public house, the only other building in the village besides the church that is statutorily listed. (P5733059)*

A small number of pre-20th century houses survive. The Old Forge, The Street, is two-storey L-shaped house with one-storey range that formerly contained the forge. A façade of pseudo timber-framing was reputedly created by the local wheelwright and jobbing builder Arthur Plewis in the mid-20th century but the building has older origins. A much-altered house, No. 19 The Street, appears to have been built in the late-18th or early 19th century. A pair of late-19th century houses with matching single-storey side extensions, Nos 3-5 The Street, were probably constructed as part of the rebuilding of Hill Farm. A modest phase of house building around the turn of the 20th century is represented by The Rectory (formerly Belmont), No. 2 Cooling Road, Rocksand Cottages, The Street and Jubilee Cottages, Nos 23-31 The Street.

The first local authority houses in High Halstow date from the inter-war years. Jellicoe Cottages, Nos 1-15 (odd) Christmas Lane and Hill View Cottages, Nos 35-49 The Street (originally Nos 1-8 Halstow Hill) are groups of semi-detached houses built in the 1920s or 1930s (Figs 11 and 12). They have plain rendered exteriors and hipped roofs and are



of a standard design built across the peninsula either by Hoo Rural District Council or its successor Strood Rural District Council (SRDC). Further council housing was constructed to the north of Hill View Cottages. Nos 51-73 The Street comprise three pairs of semi-

*Figure 11 Jellicoe Cottages, Christmas Lane. (P5733060)*

detached houses and one block of cottage flats, originally known as Churchill Place, built in 1948-9. These belong to the second generation of local authority housing and are built of brick with gable tile-details (Fig 13).

The next phase of SRDC's house building programme was on an altogether different scale, necessitated by post-war industrial expansion in the south of the peninsula and the Isle of Grain. Eden Road and Harrison Drive were laid out on the north side of The Street in the late 1950s and built up with semi-detached houses using a non-traditional building system, the Cornish Unit



Figure 12 Hill View Cottages, The Street. (P5733061)

Type I (Fig 14). Long stretches of prefabricated garages were also provided reflecting the working and living patterns of the occupants. When structural problems were discovered with the building system the majority of the residents opted in 1985 to have the pre-cast concrete walls replaced with brick. However, the majority of housing in the village is privately built. Redevelopment and infill development has taken place within the historic



Figure 13 Named Churchill Place when built in 1948-9, this council development at Nos 51-73 The Street was made up of three pairs of semi-detached houses and one block of cottage flats. (P5733062)

core. Examples include Hill Farm Close, a 1960s group of vaguely SPAN-influenced detached houses around a communal garden, occupy the site of a late 19th century farm yard (Fig 15). Opposite this are four large detached properties - Hollyberry, Deemount, Willow Reach and Windy Ridge - constructed on the site of the Rectory garden in the 1970s. To the north and east a gradual process of small-to-medium speculative developments, undertaken between the late 1950s and 2003, have significantly expanded the village. This now has access roads and cul-de-sacs lined with conventionally styled bungalows, detached and semi-detached houses and low-rise flats. Christmas Lane and Cooling Road have been built up in piecemeal fashion with detached houses or bungalows, often set within generous plots.

Examples include Hill Farm Close, a 1960s group of vaguely SPAN-influenced detached houses around a communal garden, occupy the site of a late 19th century farm yard (Fig 15). Opposite this are four large detached properties - Hollyberry, Deemount, Willow Reach and Windy Ridge - constructed on the site of the Rectory garden in the 1970s. To the north and east a gradual process of small-to-medium speculative

High Halstow primary school was built in 1956-8 to serve the burgeoning community, situated close to the local authority estate and accessed from Harrison Drive. The school has been extended in the late-20th century. A village hall was built on The Street in 1920. This simple structure, painted white with black frame detailing, has a name and date plaque in its front gable (Fig 16). Opposite is a larger hall of brick with timber panels that overlooks the recreation ground. This opened in 1962 and is now partly occupied by a medical practice. A modern signpost is situated on a small village green by the churchyard, adorned with wrought-iron panel depicting a heron (Fig 17).

The other area of settlement in the parish is a stretch of low-density residential ribbon development between Sharnal Street and Fenn Street, mostly dating from the mid-to-late 20th century. Built along a historic routeway, it subsequently became part of the A228 but a late-20th century bypass has realigned part of this busy main road to the north.



*Figure 14 Non-traditional (Cornish Unit Type I) housing along Eden Road. (P5733063)*



*Figure 15 Hill Farm Close, a 1960s group of faintly SPAN-influenced detached houses around a communal garden (P5733064)*



Figure 16 High Halstow war memorial hall, built on The Street in 1920 and which has clearly influenced the form of its late-20th-century neighbour, a privately-built house. (P5733065)



Figure 17 High Halstow village sign (P5733066)



## ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST AND SIGNIFICANCE

The extent of mid-to-late 20th century expansion and redevelopment in High Halstow village, and to a lesser extent in the hamlet at Sharnel Street, has significantly altered the character of these settlements. There has been a considerable loss of historic fabric and little now remains to represent their vernacular, agricultural origins. Houses of all dates have often undergone piecemeal change, such as the replacement of windows and roofs, and enlargement. Post-war expansion is a peninsula-wide phenomenon but not all of its villages have been affected to the same degree as High Halstow, as is evident from a comparison with the neighbouring settlements at Cooling and St Mary Hoo. There has also been perhaps a greater focus on private housing in High Halstow than elsewhere, reflecting the village's popularity with people moving within or to the area.

The historical character of the parish now resides largely in its dispersed upland farmsteads. These include the notable group to the west and south of the village, encompassing the four listed farmhouses at Great Dalham, Wybournes, Ducks Court and Buckhole. These farmsteads, and the landscape within which they sit, are particularly evocative of Hoo's agricultural heritage (Fig 18 and Frontispiece).



*Figure 18 Dalham Farm within its verdant agricultural landscape (P5733067)*

## NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<sup>2</sup> AMIE Monument, NMR Numbers TQ 77 NE11; TQ 77 NE12.

<sup>3</sup> Hasted, 1798, Additions and corrections to volume 4. Via <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/> accessed 23/04/2012

<sup>4</sup> Key to English Place Names. <http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/> accessed 21/05/2012

<sup>5</sup> Newman, 316

<sup>6</sup> Hasted via <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/> accessed 23/04/2012

<sup>7</sup> 1839 tithe map.

<sup>8</sup> Bowler, 38.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, 234-5

<sup>10</sup> 'Smugglers' Britain' <http://highhalstow.org.uk/village-history/smugglers-britain> accessed 03/05/2012

<sup>11</sup> MacDougall, 6

<sup>12</sup> St James Chronicle or the British Evening Post 24th May 1764

<sup>13</sup> MacDougall, Appendix I

<sup>14</sup> 1821 Census, 1839 tithe map

<sup>15</sup> The Ecclesiastical Gazette, June 1847, 212. Dates for the village school vary see Kelly's Directory of Kent, Surrey & Sussex, 1891, 335 and MacDougall, 191.

<sup>16</sup> MacDougall, 167

<sup>17</sup> Sales particular, NMR??? REF

<sup>18</sup> The Times, 8th June 1912

<sup>19</sup> The Times July 19th 1902

<sup>20</sup> OS maps, 1882 and 1896

<sup>21</sup> MacDougall, 137; AMIE Monument NMR number TQ 77 NE 184

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- <sup>27</sup> MacDougall 192
- <sup>28</sup> *ibid*, 193
- <sup>29</sup> <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/nnr/1006074.aspx>
- <sup>30</sup> Newman, 316
- <sup>31</sup> Chatham News, 22nd October 1954, 16
- <sup>32</sup> "Old Forge House", <http://highhalstow.org.uk/village-history/old-forge-house> accessed 03/05/2012
- <sup>33</sup> Medway Archives FULL REF NEEDED
- <sup>34</sup> 'A piece of village history' <http://highhalstow.org.uk/village-history/a-piece-of-village-history> accessed 03/05/2012
- <sup>35</sup> Chatham News 26th January 1962, 6
- <sup>36</sup> This commemorates the 25th anniversary of High Halstow Womens' Institute.
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