

Tour 5

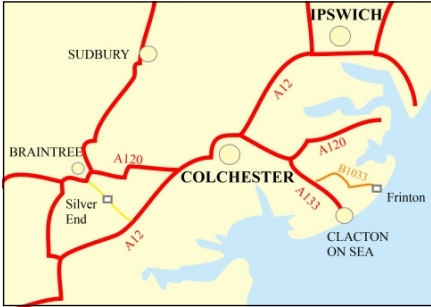
ART DECO ESSEX



Frinton



We British are a reserved and traditional nation when it comes to house buying. Despite admiring adventurous and modern style homes on TV shows when it comes to splashing our cash we feel more secure with something cloaked in a historic style. However just occasionally we get a little daring and one such moment was in the early 1930s when there was a fad for Modern houses, ones which today we often refer to as Art Deco.



Essex has some fine examples of historic buildings but this visit I made in June 2011 was to find something very modern in style. Art Deco style housing estates are rare and at Frinton there is one of the best examples which still preserves the adventurous spirit of the young architect who designed them. Only a short distance away at Silver End is another unique example built for factory workers with stark modern features so take a visit or sit back and enjoy on Google Street View.

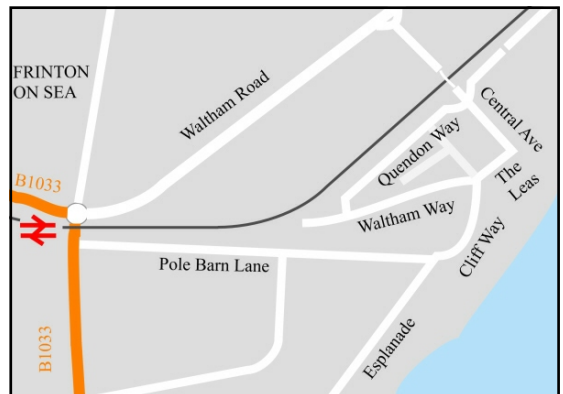
To find the sites with your sat nav or on Google Maps/ Street View just enter the postcodes listed under each title. The houses are all private so please remember to respect owner's privacy.

FRINTON ON SEA, CO13 9NL

Frinton was developed as a high class resort from the 1890s by Sir Richard Powell Cooper who had made his fortune as the owner of a leading sheep dip manufacturer. In 1933 a new estate was planned to the north end of the growing town which was intended to attract the young, affluent and fashionable. One of the leading architects of the day, Oliver Hill, who had recently completed the graceful curving Midland Hotel in Morecambe, was to be the lead designer. It was intended to contain around a 1000 ultra modern houses with the first section based around Central Avenue begun in 1934. Hill designed *The Round House*, which stands at the junction of Cliff Way and Waltham Way, as the site office and show house with a plan of the proposed estate laid out in mosaic tiles on its ground floor. The first twenty or so houses were built along Cliff Way, Waltham Way and Graces Walk and made a dramatic impression with their clean, sharp edged geometric forms and large horizontal windows.



The Round House



There were problems though. Although they were intended to be built in concrete it was found that building societies would not finance houses built this way. Brick walls covered by render to imitate this modern material was used instead, a more expensive and slower process which increased costs. Despite the houses being promoted with sunbathing on the roof in mind, when the buyers of these first houses discovered that they would only be allowed with flat roofs they nearly all withdrew. Despite Hill's modern ideals it was traditional reservations which bankrupted the company in 1936. The remainder of the plots along the roads which had been laid out became conventional bungalows while the rest of the planned estate was never built. Central Avenue which was to be the centrepiece was left half completed with a single shop from a planned semi circle left stranded to this day at the junction with Walton Road. Today owners have lovingly maintained these unique houses and it is worth a diversion to wander around the estate when visiting this peaceful seaside resort.





Bright green glazed roof tiles were an exotic and colourful statement that were popular on the Art Deco houses during the 1930s.



SILVER END, CM8 3RQ

Further inland to the south east of Braintree is a village which was built from the 1920s to house workers at the Crittall Window factory. The company owned by Francis Henry Crittall began producing metal framed windows in 1884 and by the 1920s it had grown to employ around 10,000, more than half the population of Braintree where they were based. So in 1926 Crittall founded a new village called Silver End a short distance away and under the control of his son Walter and the leading architect Thomas S. Tait began designing and building a housing estate for his workers around a new factory.





Crittall's metal framed windows are a distinctive feature of Art Deco style housing. The use of steel meant the glazing bars could be very thin and most were originally painted black so the windows would appear almost to be one single sheet, letting in as much sunlight as possible. Many also included simple geometric patterns in the upper sections which add an important touch of style.

Silver End's housing with its clean lines, simple geometric form and bright exteriors still has an impact today. The Modernist houses are mostly to be found along Silver Street (CM8 3QQ), Francis Way (CM8 3QU), and Broadway (CM8 3RA). At the east end of Silver Street there are a number of larger houses built for the factory managers. Silver End was also equipped with a department store and a village hall which is so large it is the biggest in the country.





One of the manager's houses at the junction of Silver Street and Boars Tye Road. It still has its original Crittall frames with the distinctive corner windows. Although the factory has now closed Crittall are still a major company based in nearby Witham.

If you would like to discover more about these and other 1930s houses then look out for these two books. They are both packed with photos and drawings explaining in an easy to understand way how they were built, the key features of the Art Deco style and the types of fixtures and fittings you should use if renovating a house. They are available from Amazon, my publisher's website www.countrysidebooks.co.uk and your local bookshop. Go to my website www.trevoryorke.co.uk for more details and to take a look inside each book.

