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# July 2022 Newsletter 44

Another three months have flashed by and needless to say we have been extremely busy. We are not complaining, we are only too pleased that people are taking an interest in local history and that we are continually being asked to get involved in events across the Borough. We would however like to see more people down at the Green Centre to look at our ongoing display of photographs and artefacts.

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## Update – since the last Newsletter.

### Platinum Jubilee.

As mentioned in our last newsletter, we arranged for the Deputy Mayor Luke Mackenzie to plant a tree in honour of the Queen. Local MP Stephen Metcalfe was also in attendance and both of them said a few words in commemoration of the 70 years' service the Queen has given our country. There were other local councillors there and we thank them for attending. Tea and light refreshments were held back at the Green Centre.



Obviously the most important event was the Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday. Most of us had our own Jubilee Street parties but we were also involved with the council in lighting the Wat Tyler Beacon on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June. The Council arranged for the Beacon to be lit by Gas and provided a gazebo for the dignitaries in case it rained

We set up in the Heritage Barn, with light refreshments, Royal photographic display,

Police display and a small group playing and singing in the background. The 9<sup>th</sup> Basildon Scouts with Scout Masters lined the 200-metre pathway from the Heritage Barn to the Beacon with Lanterns so that people could see their way.

The dignitaries included Leader of the Council Andrew Baggot, Rev. Simon Law and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex Dr. Margaret Wilson. At approximately 9.25pm Dr. Margaret Wilson gave a welcomed speech, including commemoration of the Queens long reign, followed by a prayer from Rev. Simon Law commemorating the jubilee and thanksgiving for Her Majesty. This was then followed by a recorded performance of 'Diu Regnare'.



Then just prior to the lighting of the beacon, two members of the Salvation Army on their bugles played 'Her Majesty'. This was immediately followed at 9.45pm with the lighting of the Beacon by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant while a recording of 'Song for the Commonwealth' played.



It was an enjoyable evening with approximately three hundred spectators. The top car park was full and the overflow car park at the Green Centre had to be opened up. Teas and coffees were still available after the lighting but most people slowly drifted off home. Our thanks go out to all the council staff who helped to make the event a success.



Then on Sunday 5 June we were at the Bowers Gifford Jubilee Picnic in the Park (Westgate Park). This is an annual picnic in the park event but this year it was in commemoration of the Platinum Jubilee. Our photographic display covered Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet.

### **Library Jubilee Displays.**

We helped out and supplied photographic displays of Royalty visits to Basildon over the past seventy years for Basildon, Pitsea and Laindon Libraries.

### **Queen's Platinum Jubilee – Poem**

Our country gathers to celebrate  
The Platinum Jubilee  
Of Queen Elizabeth the Second,  
Whose pride and dignity  
Has guided us through decades  
Of changing events worldwide,

And represented our nation  
With Prince Philip by her side.

Now he's no longer  
She continues on alone,  
A lifetime of service she's given us  
With 70 years on the throne.  
And so, we give our thanks  
To a Queen devoted and loyal,  
Who carries out her duties?  
As our longest reigning royal.

By Sue Ranford

### **Mayfest – 7 May 2022**

Prior to the Jubilee weekend we attended the Mayfest event in the Town Centre, with our usual display of the Borough. We had at least 150 people visit our gazebo and a number of useful contacts were made.

### **Talk**

In May we gave a talk on the History of Langdon Hills to the Basildon Natural History Society at the Methodist Church in Langdon Hills. It covered the period from the Ice ages to the beginning of the Plotland era.

### **John Baron Fun Walk**



Along with sponsors and other charities we attended the launch of the John Baron Fun Walk at Wat Tyler Park on the 20 May. The dignitaries included John Baron M.P, Deputy Lord Lieutenant and local Councillors. We did our walk around Wat Tyler Park on Wednesday 29 June.



### **Fairhouse Community Junior School**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> July we attended Fairhouse School and gave a talk to 3<sup>rd</sup> year students on the Plotland era leading up to the beginning of the New Town of Basildon.

### **Our American Friends**

As previously mentioned, we are in regular 'Zoom' contact with our American Friends at Santa Barbara County Genealogical Society (SBCGS) and Ventura County Genealogical Society (VCGS).

Since our last newsletter we have presented the following lectures:

*Walk across the Thames.*

*A trilogy on Freemasonry (SBCGS) with the same Lectures starting in August for Ventura.*

We are also helping a number of their members with their family research.

### **Ghosts**

There have been several books written about ghosts and strange happenings, even our historian Jessie Payne, penned together the following book – "A Ghost Hunter's Guide to Essex." We have also put a small booklet together on ghost and weird happenings in the borough. The following is a report from one of our volunteers who experienced a scary moment while on duty at a Billericay Police Station.



## Ghostly goings on at Billericay Police Station - Boxing Day, Dec 26, 2007

I had been working as support staff with Essex Police for eight years and had originally been stationed at Grays Police Station. My job was to staff the front office as first port of call for members of the public. We would take initial reports and deal with enquiries etc and, where appropriate, pass along to a police officer to deal.

In the latter half of 2007, the divisions were redefined: Grays division and Basildon division were amalgamated. On this particular day: December 26, Boxing Day, I was based at Basildon police station. It was the early shift: start at 06.00. Around 09.30, we were told that the member of staff who should be covering Billericay station, had gone sick.

I was asked to cover the front office at Billericay and given the keys to gain entry to the station. This will be the first time I had ever been inside Billericay station. The station was completely empty of anyone: police or support staff. Being Boxing Day, I was expecting a quiet time.



**Photo A** (Billericay Police Station, front office) shows a desk and computer terminal and swivel chair. The window looks out onto the street and the front car park. Out of view (to the right) is a sliding window that separates staff from the public visiting the station. Directly behind (also

out of view) is the door that leads into the corridor: **Photo B**.



I had been sitting at the terminal for an hour or so when I experienced an unpleasant sensation that someone had just soundlessly walked down the corridor behind me.

I had been in empty police stations many times before and it had never bothered me. On this occasion, I was unnerved enough to investigate every nook and cranny of the building – and there are plenty of them – just to make sure I really was alone.

Walking down the corridor, it was eerie to feel that I was being watched. Several minutes later, I finished my search and, of course, I was still the only one in the building.

Back in the front office, and I knew it was being irrational, but I closed the door. If there was something in the building, they would have to open the door and thereby, not surprise me.

Sometime later, I had to cover Billericay front office again. This time, the station had people in it: police, PSCO's, support staff etc.

A police officer, I had never met until that day, asked me to hard copy a crime report for her. Out of the blue, she asked if I had heard about the ghost that haunts the station. I said I hadn't. She went on to explain the story of an

inspector who had been only weeks away from retirement, being called to attend an incident. The inspector was involved in an RTA (Road Traffic Accident) and subsequently died from his injuries. She believed this had happened sometime in the 1970's.

She explained that he was often "felt" walking down the corridor to his office at the far end. Door to his office at the far end of **Photo B**.

For a few moments I had completely forgotten the Boxing Day incident. When I recalled what had happened, I said nothing.

From then on, Billericay's front office was the only station where I always chose to keep the door closed...And, I really don't believe in ghosts.

### **Basildon Twinning Association**

As we have previously reported we have partnered or helped out at a number of Basildon Twinning events. The following is a list of their events over the last few months.

**22 April** – Prime movers in the "Hate Won't Win" Conference held at the Wat Tyler Centre. In attendance were Amil Khan from the "Remembering Srebrenica" Organisation and Colin Perry from the Peace Centre. Local Schools were invited along with religious and community leaders. – A very inspiring conference.



**6 May** – The Mayor, David Dads and members of Basildon Twinning Committee attended the Meaux, France Anniversary event. Celebrating thirty years of Twinning between our two townships.



**25 May** – Twinning mounted a small display at the welcome to Ukrainian refugee's event. A week later Basildon Council moved a resolution asking Basildon twinning to look for a Twinning Partner Town in Ukraine. Exploratory links have begun with Borodyanka.



**3 – 6 June** – Annual football tour to Heiligenhaus. Year 8 boys from Beauchamps High School travelled to play in two matches. It also included a Handball Tournament. Each of our boys were placed into one of the six local handball teams in order to participate. A Magnificent advert for co-operation and twinning.



**12 June** – Clay Pigeon Shoot at North Benfleet Farm. A fund-raising event, Attended by some of our Ukrainian families.

**17-20 June** -Attended the annual Stadtfest in Heiligenhaus, Germany. Two younger members from Basildon were joined by six youngsters from Heiligenhaus operated an ice drinks stall. It was superb collaboration and as a result our younger members are known as the “Next Gen”. Which now include fourteen members from Germany.



**30 June – 3 July** – “The Forget Never” project was re-launched after three years of Covid. Students from Beauchamps High School, Woodlands School, Basildon Air Cadets, The Gesamtschule in Heiligenhaus and Youth students from Meaux met at the annual Commemoration of the Battle of The Somme at Lochnagar Crater. The Twinning Committee have a memorial on the site called ‘The Empty Chair’. A replica of the chair is outside the Green Centre, Wat Tyler where a short service was held on the 30 June which included students from Northland School. One of the pleasing experiences as far as the French are concerned is that the new French Teacher was very keen that his students would join the ‘Next Gen’ group in the near future.



**4 July** - “Remembering Srebrenica”. Next Gen members led by Ryan Donnelly helped the mayor of Basildon raise the flag over the Basildon Centre.



**8 July** – Ryan Donnelly – Next Gen member was selected by the Commonwealth Games organisation to carry the Baton around Sporting Village. Taking it over from Colin Jackson.



## J. K. Payne

It is normally our practice of typing out Jessie Payne articles but we have decided in the future to photograph her article as it appeared in the local papers.



## A Ramsden Bellhouse Rector was only 3ft. 11in. tall

RAMSDEN BELLHOUSE has had two Rectors who were interesting figures; one was the friend of a famous poet, the other was a dwarf.

The Rev. William Cawthorne Unwin, who became the rector of Stock with Ramsden Bellhouse in 1769, was said to have been a thoroughly attractive character. From 1765 until his death at the age of 41 he was the friend of the poet Cowper. For the last 17 years of his life there was a regular correspondence between Unwin and the poet.

Unwin became rector of Ramsden Crays in 1781 when Cowper wrote, "My dear Friend — I never was more than yourself a Friend to Pluralities; — the two Ramsdens being contiguous to each other, and falling easily under the care of one Pastor, and both so near to Stock that you can visit them without difficulty, as often as you please — I see no reasonable objection, nor does your mother. As to the wry-mouthed sneers and liberal misconstructions of the notorious, I know no better shield to guard you against them, than what you are already furnished with, a clear and unoffended conscience."

Cowper addressed a poem to his friend entitled "The Yearly Distress or Tithing Time. At Stock in Essex." Another of Unwin's friends was William Wilberforce, the

—by—  
**J. K. PAYNE**

great opponent of the slave trade.

While on holiday Unwin caught a fever and died in Winchester, where he is buried in the cathedral. A stone to his memory can be seen in the nave.

The Rev. Edward John Edison acted as curate to his uncle, George Thomas Edison, who was rector of Stock and Ramsden Bellhouse immediately after Unwin. John Edison became rector of Stock with Ramsden Bellhouse when he was 38 in 1839. He had the distinction of being the smallest clergyman in the county, being only 3 feet 11 inches tall. He died in 1876 and was buried in Ramsden Bellhouse churchyard.

At one of the visitations his name was called out and according to custom he stood, but his name continuing to be called out he was obliged to explain that he was present although he could not be seen.

then framed by Wall2Wallart of Langdon Hills. It will initially go on display at the Green Centre.



### Poem by Sue Ranford

#### Plastics

Though plastic is a superb invention  
Our scientists had no intention  
Of polluting our plant to excess  
Causing untold damage and stress.

So why not return to the old-fashioned ways  
That was used long ago in ancient days.  
Glass bottles were cleaned and returned to  
the shop,

The deposit was claimed — though not a lot.  
The clink of bottles when the milkman arrives,  
Taking the empties and leaving supplies.

The veg man arrived and parked down the  
road,

We filled our baskets by the load,  
The veg was fresh from a local farmer,  
Organic eggs were kept in the larder.  
No plastic wrapping to cover the goods,  
No sturdy pallets from disappearing woods.

Plastic takes so long to decay,  
Surely there must be another way  
To use our resources and live plastic-free,  
An amazing achievement that would be.

### History Snippets

#### Day in History

**18<sup>th</sup> January 1803** — Following a letter to Congress from President Thomas Jefferson they approved and expenditure of \$2,500 to fund the exploration of the far West.

**19<sup>th</sup> January 1809** — Author and poet Edgar Allan Poe was born on this day in Boston Massachusetts. He penned such classics as "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and the "The Purloined letter."

**20<sup>th</sup> January 1971** — On this day, British automaker Leyland displayed a prototype of the new Jaguar XJ13 in Lindley. However, test-driver, Norman Davis wrecked the prototype on its first test run, ending the XJ13 development.

#### Pitsea — Jigsaw

Amongst the many items that has been donated to us was jigsaw of Pitsea postcard photographs. The jigsaw was slowly put together by one of our volunteers' wives and

1961 census reveals that the Basildon area and Canvey had the most houses without an indoor toilet or attached to the building.

### **Laindon cum Basildon**

For approximately seven hundred years up until the mid-1970s the two churches, St Nicholas, Laindon and Holy Cross Basildon formed the union of Laindon-cum-Basildon parishes. The Rector therefore being in charge of both churches. Initially Holy Cross Church was actually built as a chapel to St Nicholas. It was not until the Parochial Inquisition of 1650 reported that the "Chappell at Basselldon is very convenient to be made a Parish Church being situated about two or three miles from the church at Laindon or any other church."

### **Old newspaper Cutting - Chelmsford Chronicle – Friday 16th September 1898**

The Elephant and the Cyclist – On Sunday, Pitsea was all alive with excitement, as a troop of Elephants and Camels passed through on the main road from London towards Southend. There was a squad of bicyclists behind. One of the wheelmen tried to pass the quadrupeds. He managed all right until he came to the front elephant, which shifted to the other side of the road to drink some muddy water lying there, ending in the rider of the machine running into the animal, which, raising its trunk, squirted the muddy liquid on the rider, nearly drowning him therewith. A little lad had previously asked his dad what the big animal was, as it had a tail in front and one at the back, and the dad's answer was that it was a hose for creature to draw his water supply.

### **Coming Events.**

We have two major events coming up:

*Basildon Carnival on Saturday 23 July – we will be taking part in the parade as well as having a photographic display at Northlands Park.*

*Wickford Carnival on Saturday 10 September and hopefully we will be in the parade with a photographic display at Neven don Park, Wickford.*

*Blue Plaques – over the next year or so one of the largest projects we will be involved in with council will be the erecting blue plaques across the borough – so it a matter of watching this space.*

### **Family History Research**

If you are interested in researching your family history, why not come along and have chat with us. We will be more than willing to help.

### **Fund Raising**

Next year we will need to replace one of our laptops. You can help at no cost to yourselves by nominating Basildon Borough Heritage Society as your charity of choice when you buy on-line through 'Give as You Live'. If you buy through Amazon, use their charity site Amazon Smile. A small percentage of what you spend will then be sent to us. Also, if you would like a direct donation please link onto our website where you will find a donation button – Thank you.

### *Booklets*

Since the last newsletters we have produced the following booklets:

*The Story and Classification of the Regiments at Waterloo – and John Cole of North Benfleet.  
Sir John Gifford Brass – St Margaret's of Antioch Church – Bowers Gifford  
Our Jessie – Historian/Author  
William Shackleton – Billericay  
Little Burstead in the Past  
A Walk across the Thames  
Vange Board School  
Vange Hall – Brickworks  
Harold George Howard  
Basildon Glass bell Tower  
The Dam Busters*



### ***Future Newsletters***

Future Newsletters - If you would like a copy of our future newsletters by email, please let us know by sending in an email or speak to one of our volunteers.

If you know of anybody else who would like a newsletter by email, please let us know. Previous newsletters are on our web site.

### ***WEB Site***

Why not check out our web site, we list all the parishes in the Borough and where their names come from, previous newsletters and links to other Heritage sites - [www.basildonheritage.org.uk](http://www.basildonheritage.org.uk).

### ***Facebook***

We are still putting on our Facebook page – ‘Basildon Heritage’ – interesting snippets most days so why not have a look and add your comments and memories. So far, we have over 4500 followers.

### ***General Data Protection Regulations. (GDPR)***

In accordance with the latest General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) we will not divulge any personal information to third parties without prior approval and you will be able to request at any time removal from our mailing list.

### ***Volunteers-Members***

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers to help with our research, digitizing our photographs, typing up individual memories, sorting and presenting out displays, helping out at various events etc; why not call in at our Heritage Office in the Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park to see what we do. Our opening times are Monday and Wednesday 10am -12noon and Saturdays 10am – 3.00pm.

**You can also become a member - £1 annual membership or £10 life membership.**

### ***Who are we?***

Just in case you do not know who we are - we are a group of like-minded volunteers who believe that our culture and heritage is central to a sustainable community. We aim to preserve our past for the enjoyment, interest, and benefit of future generations of Basildonians.

We do this by: -

Advancing the education of the public, in history and heritage of Basildon Borough through the collection, preservation of records, materials and artefacts of historical significance. By making available through displays and talks at the society’s location and around the Borough.

***Founded March 2007-Registered  
Charity No. 1176037***

### ***Email Address***

***If you would like to contact us our email address is [basildonheritage@outlook.com](mailto:basildonheritage@outlook.com) or contact us via the website and we will get back to you as soon as possible.***

