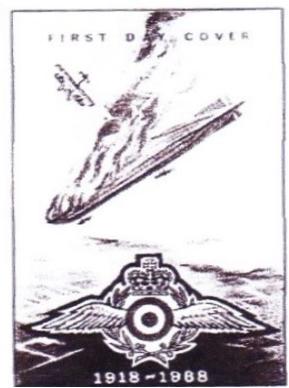
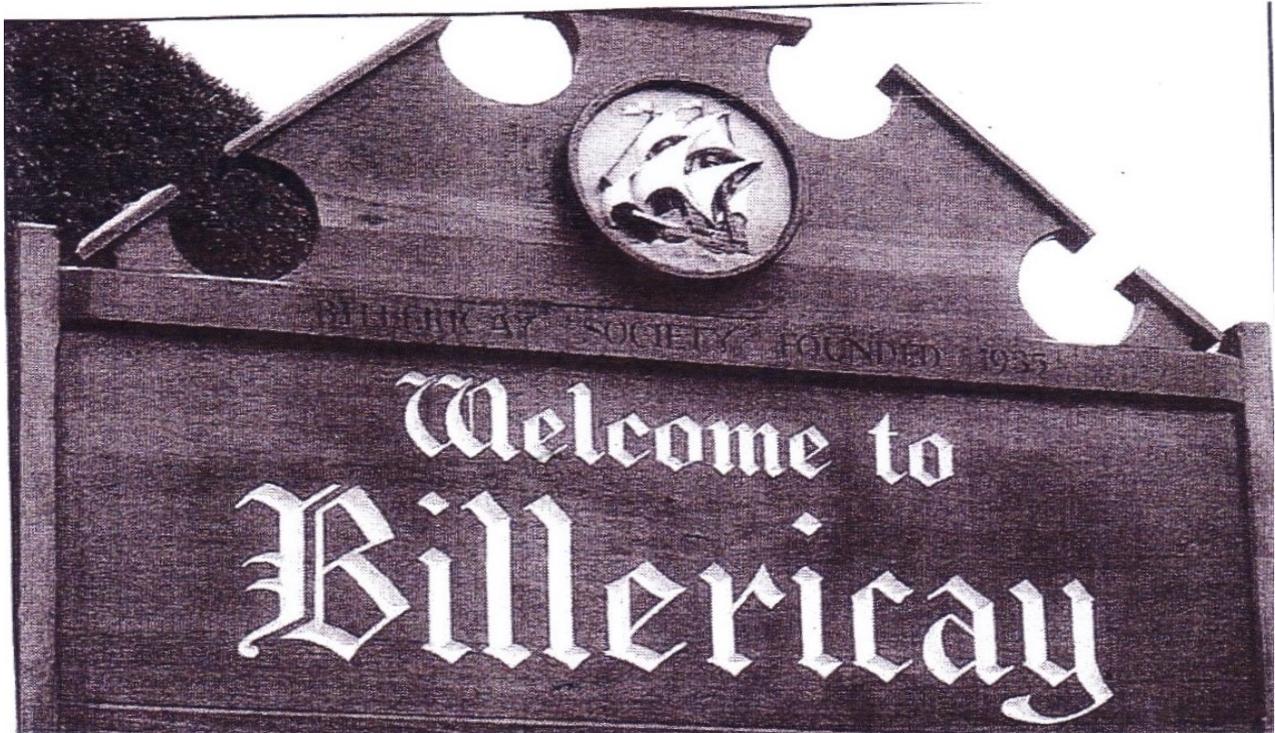


# BILLERICAY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER No.203 2019



# **CHAIRMANS REPORT**

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF BILLERICAY**

After 15 years as chairman I have decided to make the newsletter more relevant in this time of great change both in Billericay and the United Kingdom. In consequence, I intend to write an occasional series of notes about the development of Billericay, loosely based on my annual Town Culture walk.

I hope that these notes will be held as recollection for those who have participated in the Town Walks over the years. They can also form an introduction to Billericay for those who may not appreciate the developments that have previously occurred to create the town as it exists today.

It is also my objective to make many aware of the accomplishments of the Billericay Society which was founded in 1935 with a remit of halting the destruction of heritage buildings of character in the High Street, which has now become a conservation zone due mainly to the Society's endeavours.

The result of this achievement has created a High Street of character in stark contrast to rows of monotonous shop fronts that can be found in many other locations. Another triumph for the Society has been the retention of open spaces culminating in the transition of Sun Corner into the Queen Elizabeth II Field, thus securing its safety from any form of future housing development and creating another green space for the town to enjoy in perpetuity.

## **BILLERICAY COMMUNITY ARCHIVE**

Lottery funding has been obtained in conjunction with the Essex Record Office to put pictures and personal stories by people from Billericay onto the website: [www.billericayhistory.org.uk](http://www.billericayhistory.org.uk).

I am at Billericay Library on the first Saturday of each month between 10:30 and 12:00. During this time people may bring in photographs and stories of happenings in the past in Billericay and we will put them on the website. The website has many interesting photographs of Billericay's past. Your personal photographs and memories will be most welcome as a contribution to the website.

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## **THE VIEW OF THE PAST FROM 2019**

### **LOCATION of BILLERICAY**

BILLERICAY is a 315 foot outcrop of solid land in the otherwise flat landscape of the county of Essex.

Billericay is situated at longitude one half of one degree east of the prime meridian that passes through Greenwich. Its latitude is 51 degrees 37 minutes north of the equator or to put it another way, Billericay is some 34 miles east of London by rail.

Today Billericay is again a dormitory or commuter town. It has come full circle from when it was a stopover stage-coaching town in the c 1400s AD and a number of old Inns can still be identified in the High Street.

Billericay is located at a cross roads with the main coaching routes A129 from London to Southend and B1007 Tilbury to Colchester. The land between these main towns and Billericay being ideal for highwaymen in the past.

The town developed from an initial ribbon development along the north south orientated High Street B1007. The B1007 road is part of the ancient route from the Thames port of Tilbury to Chelmsford [Caesaromagus] and Colchester, the Roman capital city of Camulodunum. These Roman cities were built on the ancient tribal land of the indigenous Trinovantes. Their tribal area covered most of present day Essex. The Colchester – Tilbury route was used by pilgrims going to Canterbury. Fig 3

### **BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PAST**

Essex is named after the land of the east Saxons - who arrived after the Romans left Britain in c 410 AD.

450,000 years ago during the last Anglian Glacial Ice Age the advancing mile-high ice-face changed the route of the River Thames. It initially had an estuary at Clacton. The glacier pushed the River Thames down to its present estuary at Southend. That means the Thames river bed passed over Billericay.

#### **Part of the 1777 Chapman and Andre map**

The mound of rocky outcrop - now called Billericay - scrapped off the fine sand being ground beneath the ice sheet and deposited it in Radford Way. These Claygate beds on Bagshot sand deposited on the London clay bed trapped water. People in the main houses in the High Street were able to drill wells to obtain their fresh water. More details of this local geology can be found in: ESSEX ROCK {p66 and p71} by G. Lucy.

### **COUNTRYSIDE and OPEN SPACES**

The local ancient woodland now called Norsey Wood, has evidence of woodland management such as coppiced trees and of occupation dating back to Neolithic times c 8,000 BC. Two Bronze Age tumuli have been excavated in Norsey Wood. One is 40 foot diameter and 6 feet tall and is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

An Iron Age burial site was excavated at the top of Lake Avenue.

There is also evidence of Roman light industry taking place in Norsey Wood where wood has been made into charcoal for metal-working.

More details may be found in the booklet: The History of Norsey Wood by K.G. Cook.

The Billericay Society campaigned for many years to get the woodland preserved for the people of Billericay.

It was eventually bought by Basildon in June 1976. It is now well managed by Basildon Borough Council. Norsey Wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, SSSI. Norsey Wood now has its own Society.

Other preserved open spaces in Billericay are Lake Meadows; Queens Park; Mill Meadows and the Queen Elizabeth II Field. More about these later.

### **ROMAN SETTLEMENT**

The second and final Roman invasion of Britain by Claudius took place in 43 AD.

When they arrived Britain already had established villages with wattle and daub round house as well as trading ports with the mainland of Europe and the Roman Empire. What the Romans wanted, apart from the personal glory for Caesar, was our mineral resources and crops.

There was a Roman settlement on the south facing escarpment where Billericay School is located. Part of the school sports area was an archaeological site, excavated in 1987 – 8 which revealed traces of Late Iron Age / Romano-British (first to fourth century AD) occupation. The major features discovered included cremation burials, ditches, wells and pits. Effort was also made to re-expose part of the pottery kiln found during 1977 excavations. The details are reported in Essex Archaeology and History 21 (1990) publication on pages 19 – 47.

The Romans, being militarily orientated had a settlement on the high point at Billericay. This vantage point on the high ground provided views over the countryside and of the main rivers in the area, the Thames, Crouch and Blackwater.

Our Cater Museum, at 74 High Street has many local finds on display. The larger and better ones have gone to Colchester Museum.

Artefacts from the Blunts Wall Roman site are held in the Fitzwilliam Museum, London.

### **SAXONS IN THE BURSTEADs**

The next occupants of our area were the Saxons. They preferred and occupied the lower land at the base of Billericay hill from c 527 AD. The Saxons preferred to develop the flat land around the base of Billericay. This flat land was more suitable for farming. It became known as Great Burstead, {Burghstede Magna}

The Saxons built the parish church of St Mary Magdalene in Great Burstead c 669 AD. This parish is mentioned in the “Little Domesday Book”. This edition covered East Anglia.

The later church, built in c 1342 on Billericay High Street, initially called St John’s Chantry is a Chapel-of-Ease. It started out as a wattle and daub building. Rebuilt in stone in the late c 1400s. It was subordinate to the church at Great Burstead. “Burghstede” in Saxon means a fortified place.

In LITTLE BURSTEAD, {BurghstedeParvus} the area was part of the great estate of Earl Godwin, the father of King Harold – he of the-arrow-in-the- eye at Hastings, the last Anglo-Saxon king of England.

### **COMING OF THE NORMANS**

After the Battle of Hastings, c 1066 AD the land of Burghstede Magna was given to William the Conqueror’s half-brother Bishop Odo. This was one of the 43 estates held in Essex by Bishop Odo. The coming of the Normans ended the reign of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain.

The Normans introduced first wooden then later large stone buildings - Castles and Cathedrals into England.

There are seven Norman Manors around Billericay: Buttsbury  
– Buckwyns – Crondon – Fristling - Imphy – Ramsey Tyrell - and White Tyrell.

When Bishop Odo was banished from England in c 1088 AD his lands were given to the Cistercian Monks of Stratford Langthorne Abbey near Bow, London which is why we have a block of flats, in the town centre called Langthorne. A land-site once owned by the Abbey in Billericay.

The county was split into Hundreds. This was a Norman subdivision of land, an area that could be ploughed in a day by farmers. At this time, Billericay was the only town in the Barstable Hundred.

## **Contributions from Members and the CommitteeParking**

As many of you have noticed roads are becoming blocked with cars that are parking with two wheels along the pavement. This is not only causing problems for the pedestrians but also it is restricting the traffic flow especially for the buses.

Many times a day the buses have been forced to move into the middle of the road obviously increasing the risk of a major accident.

It is many months now since we first received letters about parking restrictions in Uplands, Ian Road, Pauline Gardens, St Helens Walk and half of Raven Lane. Since the Residential parking was installed in Crescent Road and surrounding roads cars have moved to create problems elsewhere. Especially along Perry Street.

With the carpark adjacent to the park due to close and a new Industrial building to be built the problems will be even worse.

Why does it take so long for the council planners to introduce the proposed parking restrictions and make the roads pleasant residential places again? We have telephoned to find out what is happening but was told that it had to go to the Committee again as at least 1 complaint had been received against Residential Parking. Maybe in the near future we will receive the long awaited answer.

On mentioning Perry Street we were told that unless there are double yellow lines it was not breaking the law. We were advised to inform the police as cars were parking opposite junctions (this evidently is illegal) but they were not really able to help. We believe that other complaints have been received by them.

We are aware that there is definitely not enough parking places for the factory workers and the commuters. So why close a carpark that is full every day when it seems that it is necessary for more parking to be installed. With so many new houses in the pipeline to be built it seems that no one has thought about the parking situation.

Maybe one day the long promised multi storey carpark will be built at the station. The planners have been talking about this for years!!

**Doug Smith (Vice Chairman)**

## **Billericay Town Walks**

I have been trailing along to learn what I can from David Bremner so as to take a group of enlightened individuals around the town myself.

In the leaflet Billericay Town trail the houses and buildings of interest are numbered one to thirty three, two are missing due to development, the town council is going to replace numbers twenty four the White Hart (Pasha) and 25 on the Rising Sun former Public House.

The Town Council has now had two replacement made which should be in place at the beginning of the 2019 season we hope.

Regis house has undergone refurbishment which included sand blasting, I ask the builders to clean the plaque No.19 as it was filthy which they duly obliged.

Also Sheredays No.7 has also been converted into apartments that also has been sand blasted and sadly they removed the graffiti from 1800 on the side of the building put there when was a academy.

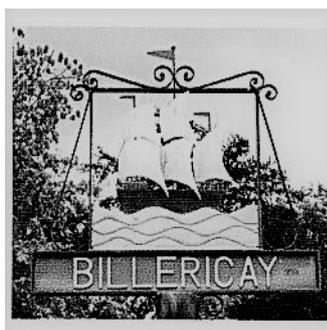
The Day Centre where we use to meet with shortly be demolished to make way for a new building  
**Bob Reeves Editor**

## Footpaths and rights of way

Through my contacts with Essex County Council we have had a very good response in 2018 to repair broken bridges and replace hand rails in many of the footpaths around Billericay.

if you take footpath 199 towards St Giles church from Mountnessing road a new forest has been planted before and after you cross the river Wid, for future generations to enjoy at Church Lane Railway Crossing the land owner has erected miles of five bared metal fencing to contain the two thousand head of cattle he has required, so beware when using St Peters way as you have to run the gauntlet if the cattle are in the field. **Bob Reeves Editor**

### **Roy Mizen RIBA.**



I regret to announce the death, on New Year's Day, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 of our late Vice President and former chairman Roy Mizen RIBA. Roy was a member of the Royal Institution of British Architects, our thoughts and prayers are with his family

Roy was a member of the Billericay Society committee for a number of years before becoming chairman. During his nine years as chairman; between May 1993 and May 2002; he set-up a High Street panel, with local architects to monitor planning applications in Billericay. This activity is now carried out by the experts on the Billericay Town Council, BTC.

During Roy's chairmanship, the original Billericay wooden town sign, carved by Peter Benson and erected to celebrate the Queen's Coronation collapsed after forty years' service.

This sign, located on Perry Green by London Road was donated & unveiled by Mrs Cater, past President of the Society. Mrs Cater also donated the town museum at 74 High Street.

Roy designed a replacement all-weather resistant sign to replace the damaged wooden sign. The sign was made by Little Burstead blacksmith Gordon Scott. Roy was disappointed by the minimal response from local businesses asked if they would make a donation towards the cost of the sign. Only one-half of the cost was supported by local donations. Roy was also involved with organising, with the BTC, the mounting of plaques on the historic buildings in the High Street.

During Roy's term as a vice president he has been very supportive of me with advice on High Street matters. The committee thank Roy for all of his past service to the Billericay Society.

## MAYFLOWER 400 YEARS IN JULY 2020



Billericay is famous for the Pilgrim Fathers and our connection with the Mayflower, so in 2020 we will be celebrating their epic journey to the New World' 400 years ago.

They left Billericay on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1620 to join the Mayflower ship, on the 6<sup>th</sup> September they left Plymouth England with a 102 passengers and crew arriving in the America's on the 11<sup>th</sup> November founding their colony in Plymouth Massachusetts.

Billericay is twined with Massachusetts

### Billericay Society Committee

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Vice Chairman Doug Smith 01277 623560

Membership Lesley & John Humphries 01277 656527

Secretary Lynne Beard 01277 624282

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