

# BILLERICAY SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER NO. 207



It is so pleasing to do another issue of the Billericay Society Newsletter.

In this age of lockdown complete with masks and relying on home deliveries it encourages you to stay happy and endeavour to perceive in the hope of better times to come soon.

I am sure some of you, like myself, have been out in the car, if only locally, just for a dozen eggs or suchlike and would have seen our super refurbished town signs. Peter of P Thomas Landscapes has done a splendid job on all three signs. He is indeed an accomplished renovator, one of his many talents. Susan and Claire Morley sponsored the metal sign on the London Road, Waitrose charity paid for the Potash Roundabout sign and the club paid for the renovation of the above sign.

Well, I had better sign off now as the lawn needs mowing and my man cave needs tidying.

Stay safe and keep well. We, the whole committee, are looking forward to the time when the club can open its doors again.

Doug Smith (Vice Chairman)

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

WELCOME BACK to partial normality. The committee hope that you have been able to overcome the difficulties of the lock-down, both emotionally and physically. We also hope that you managed to get all those put-off jobs done.

I would like to thank Julie and Doug Smith for successfully continuing the initiative to seek funding to have our town signs cleaned and protected. The successful result of the refurbishment of the signs was published on Facebook and Mike Yates has made an update, with pictures on our website, qv. So, thank you chaps for keeping members informed, and helping the local economy. The town signs do look smart. We hope the Town Council approve our spruced-up welcome-to-Billericay signs.

Thank you to our sponsors the Morley sisters, Waitrose, and the Society.

The Coronavirus lock-down experience was a strange situation, totally different from what we went through during World War II. Although the two situations / experiences are difficult to compare. Both were totally disruptive. We eventually recovered successfully from the latter – so it is difficult to understand the doom forecasts made for the outcome of coronavirus.

The forecasts should be about ensuring that we live a satisfactory and fulfilling life, not just about making money.

Although the economy is important, politicians need to give the appropriate thought on the way we need to live our lives in the future, and not make the same old mistakes. Nobody seems to learn from the lessons of history.

Here is a conspiracy theory for you to consider:

I ask the question: how long will it be before computers and mobile phones realise that they do not need the millions of slow lumbering humans to operate them and carry them around?

These electronic devices will realise that they do not need to be manufactured in their millions, as now. They will realise that the scarce natural resources that are needed to make them are being rapidly used up and this cannot be sustained. These resources are appropriately called rare earth metals. If you do not know what they are, or how scarce they are you could look them up in Google, [it may be under lanthanides]. <I do not know as I am not on-line.> I read books.

Future wars may be about getting access to these rare earth resources, to maintain technical superiority and water.

Humans are gradually phasing themselves out of existence with pollution and covering the agricultural land needed to grow food, with concrete housing and tarmac. I am glad to read that the government are reducing the restrictions on getting access to brown-field sites and land.

Consider the little land left for growing food, this may all go to waste because the produce cannot be harvested. People are unable to pick up the produce because they are too occupied by their phones. The physical effort needed to harvest the fields is too much for the unfit lifestyle that people now live – gazing at their screens. Appealing for volunteers to pick the produce does not seem to be working. Thank goodness for migrant workers. But if they cannot come, how will they be replaced?

There is not enough thought given to the consequences of modern political actions. The race to make money and forget the consequences cannot be sustained.

Nature has its own way to limit our gross human endeavour with plagues and pandemics, which we are grossly unprepared to cope with.

Our planet, the third from the sun, has slowly evolved over many millions of years, taking its time to sort things out. This modern age is rushing forward without any thought of the consequences.

In the past changes developed slowly, one learnt from the past experiences and made the appropriate adjustments to cope successfully with the impact of the new developments. Consider the changes introduced by the Industrial Revolution – it took nearly 300 years to be fully implemented. But here again many mistakes were made, in the changeover from agricultural life to the move to the factory and city living. Here again money not people were the prime movers and the poor suffered. We are all homo-sapiens under the skin.

Modern communications have been applied too quickly. We are trying to introduce the fifth generation of the communication system but we cannot control the first generation – the consequences are that the unscrupulous are causing havoc to the system and to us, with their scams and theft and we do not have the means or experience to stop them. They are taking advantage of our lack of experience with the operation of the communication system that has been unleashed.

Globalisation is connecting the wrong things too quickly. Nature does not have time to adapt to cope with them. Hence the consequence of this jungle-food-sharing. People moving about the world and wanting, in a completely different environment, to keep what they are used to, back home. Meaning that the new environment is unprepared to cope with these changes.

Changes take a long time to assimilate. They are not thought through by politicians – hence the Wind Rush scandal. When will politicians learn to think ahead? The regular electronic gaffs that they make shows how little they understand the modern world. They are supposed to be the leaders.

We lived, as a family, in the Netherlands for 2.5 years, where we lived as the Dutch do and conformed to their ways. The only thing we missed was the early morning milk delivery. But that successfully happened at 11 o'clock from a mobile shop that patrolled the streets, we adapted.

On a lighter note:

Two programmes that I have enjoyed on the TV during the lock-down are:

First: “The Best Scenic / Mountain Railway Journeys of the World”, narrated by Bill Nighy, on Channel 5. This allowed one to enjoy an armchair scenic travel experience, during the lock-down.

Secondly: “The Joy of Painting” on BBC 4 - narrated by Bob Ross, as he drew the painting. What was special, compared to the usual painting programmes, was the fact that he told us what colours and quantity that he was mixing to create excellent paintings. This is a one-half-of-one-hour – programme. What was amazing, is that he was using a 2-inch brush to put the paint to the canvas.

Please keep an eye on our website to learn when we can start having our Wednesday meetings again. If, like me you are not-on-line, you can ring a member of the committee that you may know, and ask them, after the government release us from total lock-down.

Since it may not be possible to arrange a speaker, for that meeting, I will probably make it an AGM. So please bring along your thoughts on the future of the Society. Our committee needs younger members. Perhaps you do not care about the Billericay Society and we just let the developers take over. There are many developers waiting to take over our Green Belt land, instead of using brown-field sites. Consult your dog walking friends and ask them if they want some countryside to enjoy, rather than hard pavements?

I mentioned to our past president Norman Turner that we needed new members. He replied that “I and the present committee were the new members of his day” – that was 20 years ago!

David Bremner

We continue with our occasional series of historical reminders from Julie Smith.

### THE POST WAR PERIOD

After WWII there was still a shortage of food so rationing which had begun in January 1940 lasted until the middle of 1954. Restrictions on the sale and purchase of meat and bacon being lifted on midnight on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Identity cards remained in use until 1952 but some were valid until 1960.

In 1950 Billericay became a parliamentary constituency and in the General Election of that year a conservative MP was elected. In the General Election in October 1959 Billericay was the first constituency to declare in just 57 minutes.

The first public library in Billericay opened in 1950 and in 1968 it moved from 97 High Street to Burghstead House. Then in 1974 an extension was added in which the Library is now situated.

By the early 1950's Basildon had outstripped Billericay in size so on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1956 Billericay UDC became Basildon UDC.

BILLERICAY SOCIETY instigated the erection of the 2<sup>nd</sup> War Memorial but had to use reconstituted stone.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1954, a public meeting was held in Billericay to protest at the proposal by Walthamstow Borough Council to build housing estates in Billericay. Over 1000 people attended. This was to no avail as Walthamstow did indeed get permission to build houses and did so.

The 1950's saw the building of the Town Farm Estate. continued development of South Green and the Chantry Estate of the London Co-operative Housing Society.

The population rose from 6,949 in 1951 to 10,940 in 1961 and 17,246 in 1971. By the 2011 census the population had risen to 36,338. With further development in the pipeline and still going on, the population today is thought to be much higher.

The premises for the CATER MUSEUM were located in 1958 and the museum finally opened on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1960. Alice Mary Cater founded it as a memorial to her husband William Alexander Cater. Her aim was to establish a collection of Bygones of Billericay's past for all time.

In 1962 Billericay District Resident's Association was created by merging Billericay Resident's Association and Buttsbury Resident's Association.

During the Post War years St Andrew's Hospital (formally the Workhouse) flourished until early 1970's when a new hospital in Basildon opened. St Andrew's then became an internationally renowned regional plastic surgery and rehabilitation unit. Then in 1998 the decision was made to move the unit to Broomfield Hospital and use the site for redevelopment into housing. Luckily, doctors, dentist and medical centre were also built on the site.

In the 1970's it was decided to build 1,500 homes at Queens Park. Plans did stall at one point, as owners of many of the plots could not be traced so the whole area was compulsorily purchased.

Billericay Football Club continued to thrive, and the club went on to win the FA Vase at Wembley three times.

In 1976 Norsey Wood was acquired by Basildon District Council for public use. In 1977 the Norsey Wood Society was founded and in the night of the big hurricane (15/16<sup>th</sup> October 1987) it was estimated that the woods lost 5,000 trees with some of the most historic trees falling.

The railway has not been forgotten as it has been an important part of Billericay's life and therefore it has been allocated its own exhibit.

Over the years we have lost some good and well-loved shops (Woolworth's and Swan Books) and gained others. Things have been celebrated. A Beacon is now at the corner of Queen Elizabeth's II playing fields (formerly Sun Corner) Street Parties have been held and people celebrating in Lake Meadows. A Christmas Market is now a favourite with all.

If you would like to learn more about Billericay there have been many books written or you can go The Billericay Society web site [WWW.billericaysociety.co.uk](http://WWW.billericaysociety.co.uk) or The Billericay Archives web site [WWW.billericayhistory.org.uk](http://WWW.billericayhistory.org.uk)

Julie Smith

### FRENCH "RED ARROWS " FLY OVER BILLERICAY

Billericay seems to be quite a good place to see unusual aircraft, especially in Summer when Air displays are (usually) more common. Apart from the normal activities of airlines & private light aircraft it seems we are always getting police & air ambulance helicopters overhead and, at present, noisy Apache groups are often around.

On the 18th June we were lucky enough to see, not the Red Arrows this time, but their French counterparts, The "Patrouille de France". With a predominantly Blue colour scheme the 9 Alpha Jets flew over just after 5.00 pm after separating from a joint central London flypast carried out with the British Red Arrows. This was to commemorate the 80-year anniversary of Charles de Gaulle's Radio Broadcast to the people of occupied France advising them to resist the Nazi invasion. This Broadcast was made from the BBC in the UK and ultimately led to the creation of the French Resistance Movement.

The 18 jet formation flew over central London after leaving RAF Brize Norton and the flight separated near Brentwood with the Red Arrows returning to their base at RAF Scampton and the Patrouille de France Jets to their base at Salon-de-Provence in southern France. These two teams also flew together last year to commemorate the first Concorde flight, however this was the first time the French team have flown over London. They are one of the oldest aerobatics display teams worldwide, originally being founded in 1931.



PATROUILLE DE FRANCE OVER BILLERICAY 18th June 2020



Norman Hunter

### **Is it a plague, is it a virus what the goodness is it?**

Britain has experienced several infection/plague outbursts over the last 2000 years. If you go further back in time, there were some horrendous plagues that devastated mass populations around the world.

An early known example.

About 5000 years ago, an epidemic wiped out a prehistoric village in China. No age group was spared as the skeletons of juveniles, young adults and middle-age people were found. The village site is now called "Hamin Mangha". Before this discovery of Hamin, another prehistoric mass burial that dates to roughly the same time-period was found at a site called "Miaozigou" in NE China suggesting that the epidemic ravaged the entire region.

Plagues were not unusual around the world and have occurred from way back resulting in killing millions.

The first English big notable plague named the Bubonic Second Plague of 1346 -1353 affecting Europe, Asia and N. Africa killed between 75 - 200 million (10-60% of the European population)

The Bubonic plague pandemics reached England June 1348.

Note: The term Black Death was not used until the 17th century.

The first known case was of a seaman arriving at Weymouth, Dorset. By the autumn, the plague had reached London and by the summer of the following year had covered the entire country before dying down in December.

Low estimates of mortality calculated in the early 20th century have been revised upwards due to re-examination of data and new information, and a figure of 40-60 percent of the population is widely accepted.

In 1361 -62 the plague returned to England, this time causing the death of around 20 percent of the population. The devastating effect on the population was a cause of the Peasants Revolt and will be featured in the next Newsletter.

After this the plague continued to return intermittently throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, in local or national outbreaks.

As in other European cities of the period, the plague was endemic and periodically erupted into massive epidemics. In 1603 there were 30,000 deaths due to the plague, and 10,000 in 1636.

One of the last outbreaks of the plague in England was the Great Plague of London in 1665. The plague was much feared and its cause was not understood. The blame was thought to be anything from comets passing the heavens to the increased number of moles, mice, or flies. It was not until 1894 that the identification by Alexandre Yersin was made and the transmission of the bacterium by rat fleas became known.

Thankfully, the disease we have today is not the bubonic plague, but a virus. Will we have to live with it breaking out from time to time? Or will we find a vaccine to end it - who knows.?

John Humphreys

**Billericay Society Committee**

President Ian Fuller 01277 655564

Chairman David Bremner 01277 626674

Vice-Chairman Doug Smith 01277 623560

Membership Lesley and John Humphries 01277 656527

Secretary Lynne Beard 01277b624282

Treasurer Julie Smith 01277 623560

Social Secretary Marion Thilo 01277 624502

Website Manager Mike Yates 01277 622454

Cater Museum Katie Wilkie 01277 622023