



A future for our past

Newsletter of Basildon Borough
Heritage and Museum Society for
January 2012

Brief History of the Group

A permanent location for our Photographic archive is just around the corner. It has taken four years from formation of the group to get to this stage.

It all started following a meeting called by Vin Harrop, held in the Towngate Theatre in March 2007. Vin's Idea was to save the swimming pool building as an Arts and Cultural Centre for Basildon.

Basildon Council made it clear that the Swimming pool would be sold to raise money for the sporting village.

During further meetings and discussions with the public it was clear that a permanent museum to show off our heritage would be popular.

Vin went on to found the Basildon Heritage and Arts trails.

There were several changes of committee and eventually agreed to follow the Heritage and Museum Theme. We were asked to help out with archive material held at Wat Tyler park. Eventually we settled the name of the group as Basildon Borough Heritage and Museum Group We have looked into using Chalvedon Hall and Vange Church as venues for a museum but could not generate the funds to make them viable.

For a year we were given space at Barleylands and were there every weekend, but unfortunately it was not a very practical area, and we decided to move on.

Although Basildon Council expressed an interest in the early days they did not show any enthusiasm for a museum. I do believe now that they have seen the amount of work we have done at Wat Tyler and the enthusiasm shown by the public and they have offered us an area in the Green Centre(The old Motorboat Museum) where we can have displays of old photos etc. They have given us the use of an office and the computers and scanners needed to collate and

record our photographs and artefacts.

The Green Centre is not yet open. Watch this space or visit our website which is now available but still being developed.

www.basildonheritage.org.uk

Ken Porter Chairperson.

News

We are sorry to tell you that we did not get the grant we applied for from the National lottery .We do have other options one of which is the opportunity to apply to Mobile oil for £1000 .This comes about because one of our volunteers, Eric Lamb is a pensioner of Mobile oil and he has been kind enough to apply to them on our behalf, and they have agreed to our request.

Stuart Butler one of our volunteers at Wat Tyler has been attending WEA classes and became "Learner of the Year" this July. He gained the Olive Cordell Award. Well done Stuart.

.7th July 2011 Talk to Wickford Community Ladies Group

Jo gave a talk about Wickford to a group of about 36 women, they were very interested and were

able to ask and answer many questions. The site of the first Nourist or Nudist Colony in England has now been established as being in Castledon Road. It ran from 1926 to 1929 when it was closed as new houses were built overlooking their land.

Jo Cullen, Volunteer at Basildon Heritage Wat Tyler Park

16th July 2011, St. Margarets Church Fete, Bowers Gifford

This church has many unusual things to see and is well worth a visit. Our display was of Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet in days gone by. Because of the weather, which was very blustery and wet we all had to squeeze into the church. The loyal congregation of this isolated church had a wealth of stories. One that intrigued us was why a cope was sent from Cologne Cathedral to this little church. Does anyone know?

Valerie Hurley, Volunteer at Basildon Heritage Wat Tyler Park

27th August Basildon Market Day

Fun Day at Basildon Market started with a free ice cream for all our volunteers. We used one

of the log cabins in which to put up our display. There was plenty of interest from shoppers especially in the industry that had re-located to Basildon New Town from London, bringing many of their employees with them to be re-housed locally. I'm sure you remember Teleflex, Ilford Films, Pembroke Packaging and Yardleys. If you have any pictures or stories of the move or of the factories that have now disappeared from the industrial sites, please get in touch.

The whole day was a resounding success; we hope to do it again.

Valerie Hurley Volunteer at Wat



Tyler.

28th.August Mission Hall, Dry Street Langdon Hills

Unfortunately, this was not publicised, as it should have been. Visitors were very sparse

which was disappointing, but quality, rather than quantity was the order of the day. The time was not wasted, one visitor who had lived in the area all her life and was now 80 years old had many tales to tell about the compulsory purchase of their home and being forced to move by Basildon Development Corporation. The Mission Hall was built in 1931 and is interesting in itself.

Valerie Hurley Volunteer at Basildon Heritage

10/11 September 2011 Barleylands Country Show

We were lucky that this year, Barleylands again gave us a prime indoor position in the the Farm Museum.

We exhibited many archive photos from all of the towns and villages in the Basildon Borough.

We had many visitors who showed interest and asked a lot of questions. I walked around the show site and without sounding biased I thought that of all the many stalls ,our stall was the most interesting and best presented. Another enjoyable and successful day was had by all.

Robin Biddulph Volunteer at
Basildon Heritage Wat Tyler Park

On Saturday and Sunday, the 10th & 11th of September we were at the 25th Essex Country Show at Barleylands with five boards of old photographs of the Basildon Parishes over the years. We were in the Agricultural museum entrance facing out onto the main field, so had a prime position.

By 10am, the official opening time, we had had several “browsers”. At times there were twenty or more people looking at the photos, many of them showing great interest and adding comments to our visitor’s book. Some gave us new information on the photos and others offered to loan or scan their photos for us. We had postcard sized photos for sale and these proved quite popular, especially on the Sunday. Some of our visitors who came on Sunday were told by friends or relatives who had visited Saturday of our display and suggested they come to Barleylands, just to see our photographs! The weather was kind to us all except for five minutes of rain on the Sunday. All that did was encourage more people into the shelter of the

museum so we had visitors who might not have visited! We volunteers had an enjoyable and interesting time and met a lot of interesting people and learned more about our area.

Denise Rowling Basildon
Heritage Volunteer Wat Tyler
Park

10th and 11th of September, All Saints Vange.

Basildon Heritage loaned a display of photographs of Old Vange to the friends of All Saints, Vange for their Celebration of Vange Weddings weekend.

These were exhibited alongside their own photographic display of weddings that took place at the church over past decades.

A wedding dress made of parachute silk was the centrepiece and was displayed at the alter to add to the authentic atmosphere.

From entries in our comments book, our efforts were well received and enjoyed by the many visitors.

Valerie Hurley Volunteer at
Basildon Heritage Centre Wat
Tyler.

On the 14th of September

Four volunteers went along to Pitsea Leisure Centre to hear a talk given by Ken Porter on the plotlands and the origins of Basildon.

This event was well supported with over one hundred people eagerly listening to a very informative oration. I was just one of those impressed by the fact that Ken was able to speak for over an hour without notes and held his audience enraptured with a wealth of facts and anecdotes. The afternoon closed with the audience having a chance to ask questions and inspect the large display of historical photographs.

Valerie Hurley Basildon Heritage Wat Tyler.

4th November-6th December

An exhibition of photos of Old Pitsea and Basildon was held at Pitsea Library

November 16th

A group of students from two local schools working on a "Young Roots" initiative visited us at Wat Tyler. They wanted to learn about the effect of the war on the Basildon area. We put on a display of photos and artefacts and showed films of the work of

land girls and home defence. (These films had been made by school children in the past couple of years.)



Ken gave a talk about what it was like to have lived in the area as a child in wartime.

Three older visitors were interviewed and filmed by the children telling their memories of the war. Six volunteers were on hand to answer any questions.

December 3rd

We were asked to put on a display of photographs of every village and town in the Borough at the opening of the "Books for free" in the Basildon Town Centre. The fun began at 11.30 a.m. A local dance group put on a show which attracted many people over to the shop. Some of the staff of the new children's centre, Fryerns Farm had come along to help children make

Christmas cards and read stories to them. Mo Larkin was there to cut the ribbon and for a couple of hours the shop was busy. Visitors could not believe that they could take the books away without paying anything.

December 10th and 11th

Display in Vange Church 10am until 4pm . More photos of old Vange

When I arrived at the Christmas Tree Celebration the church had been beautifully decorated with colourful trees in many sizes. We had been given one of the best positions in the choir of the church.

Although the day wasn't busy I was able to talk to so many people who were really interested. I collected many little stories about the people and places. The four hours I was there went so quickly, lots of visitors were interested in coming down to Wat Tyler to see more of the photographs.

Jo Cullen Volunteer at Basildon Heritage, Wat Tyler Park

Diary 2012

January 10th

A display of photos of Old Vange and Basildon New Town, will be on show at Vange Library for a month.

Memory desks will be held on 17th January and 31st January 10a.m until noon at the Library.

We hope to hold a quiz night in February or March. Please let us know if you are interested in joining us.

If you have any suggestions of where we might hold displays in future please contact us.

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