



# Newsletter

September 2015

No 20

## *Basildon Post Boxes*

Until recent years the majority of people communicated with family / friend and businesses by means of letters. These days modern technology has introduced “e-mails” which have greatly reduced the number of letters. Most of the post that drops through my front door letter box is unwanted “junk mail” or “bills”.

The Royal Mail, now the privatised Post Office collected the letters from dedicated pick up points, the “Red Pillar Box” and delivered them country wide for a basic standard tariff.

Traditionally the Pillar Box (or Letter Box) has always been red in colour, but there were several designs. The most common type was a round cast iron type with a slot at the top front for the letter. Another type was rectangular for fitting to a post or wall. Also some took the form of a cast iron front plate covering a collection chamber in a brick wall.

All of the types of pillar box described above were provided by the Royal Mail and were embossed with the Royal Insignia. To date the privatised Post Office have utilised the street furniture that they inherited and have yet to install new collection boxes in the street.

Like BT with the traditional telephone box the Post Office are reviewing and rationalising the siting of pillar boxes.

In line with our remit to record for posterity the Borough’s Heritage we have been surveying and recording the local Victorian, George V & VI<sup>th</sup> Pillar boxes. We are not aware of the existence any Edward 7<sup>th</sup> Pillar boxes.

We contacted the ‘Letter Box Study Group’ (LBSG) and their inform us that the only Victorian operational box in the Borough is the wall box at Laindon

Common, Little Burstead. They also inform us that it is one of 1572 in the country that is still in use and is therefore considered very common. However we have at the moment another wall box in storage awaiting refurbishment as soon as we can obtain the necessary funds (estimate £1500).

This box had languished in somebody's back garden for the past 35 years but has now been given to us for safe keeping as they have moved down south.



It was originally situated in the wall of the Post Office/General Store in Dry Street, Langdon Hills. LBSG inform us that the post office opened in 1933, recorded in the Post Office Courier on 12 April 1933. It changed status to TSO (Town sub-Office) under Basildon on 31 March 1952 and closed on 5 March 1976 when the current

owners, Paul Lucy and his wife, opened up a green grocery business in the new Triangle Shopping Centre in the High Road, Langdon Hills.

We have also been informed by the LBSG that in the Borough there are eight George V Boxes and eight George VI Boxes still in operation and we have so far been able to locate the following:

### **Laindon**

GRV –Worthing Road /Devonshire Road (picture opposite)

GRV - Roberts Road, opposite Tattenham Road

GRV1 – Cavendish/Wash Road

### **Langdon Hills**

GRV1 - Lee Chapel Lane

GRV – High Road

### **Lee Chapel South**

GRV1 – Knares Shopping Centre, The Knares

### **Pitsea**

GRV – Rectory Road beside Howards Park

### **Vange**

GRV1 – Luncies Road between the Winged Horse and Timberlog Lane

GRV1 – Moss Drive

### **Great Burstead**

GRV – Wall of St Mary Magdalene Church Road

### **Billericay**



GRV1 – Western Road  
GRV – Tye Common Road

### **Wickford**

GRV1 – Highcliffe Shops, Southend Road  
GRV1 – Swan Hotel, The Broadway  
GRV1 – Tesco, Wick Estate

So we are still missing one. If anybody knows where it is please get in touch with us. Oh! While you are at it what about the red phone boxes?

### *We want your Memories.....for example.....*

The Lacey Family were builders in the late 1890s and early 1920s and built quite a few houses and bungalows in Vange, Basildon and Pitsea areas. One in particular was Gales Shop and was a well known landmark in Vange.

My father (Aubrey) at the time was about 12 years old and was in the back garden when a young man came to the back door and asked to see his father (Aubrey Lacey snr). Young Aubrey showed him into the kitchen and was very curious as the young man was carrying a suitcase.

The gentleman in question was Charlie Gale. He wanted a two storey building consisting of a shop at the front and a living room at the back and 2 bedrooms upstairs and would like it to be built within 21 days. He also left enough money for my Grandfather to buy a bed, chest of draws, a table and 2 chairs.

After handshakes, and the plans left, Charlie went to Pitsea Station and caught the train to Tilbury docks for a boat that was sailing to Canada that night as he was getting married to a Canadian girl and would be returning with his bride in 21 days time.

Aubrey snr and his father George Lacey set to work. In those days, if the weather was fine they used to sleep under the wagon at the job to save travelling back and forth with the horse and cart.



Young Aubrey used to ride his bike with enough food to keep his Grandfather and Father going until

the job was finished. True to their words, as they were unloading the furniture, young Charlie Gale and his new bride were walking along Timberlog Lane.

Over the years extensions were added onto the shop. They had one son who was killed in the Second World War.

In 1954 the shop was demolished to make way for the new town. One particular day as I was walking home from Craylands school my Grandfather was sitting on the seat opposite Gales shop. He was watching a man and two young lads demolishing the shop and said it had taken longer to pull down than to build. As I sat with my Grandfather watching, little did I know it was my future husband (Henry), father-in-law and brother-in-law pulling down the shop - What a Small World.

Pam Dunmow(nee Lacey).

### *Second World War Story*

Geoff, an old Basildon boy tells us that his grandparents lived in Windermere Rectory Road, Basildon where his elder brother John was born in 1928. His uncle Charles Baxter, was living with his family in Grove Cottage and they moved opposite to live in Windermere after the cottage was bombed during the Second World War. It became one of the early casualties of the Basildon Development Corporation. Members of the family also lived in a house nearby called 'Kinderhaven' . He told Geoff that in 1938-1939 a Spitfire travelling from Hornchurch to Southend crashed into the tennis courts.

**Searching the records we found that Spitfire K9886Ia, part of the first batch of Spitfires built at the Supermarine works, Woolaston, for the RAF and was sent to RAF Hornchurch joining 54 Squadron on 8 March 1939. While on a night exercise circling a beacon it crashed near Basildon – the question, is this George's Spitfire – most likely – but does anybody have family memories of this particular crash or any others.**

**If you have any memories that you feel will interest us please call in and we will be more than happy to record them.**

*Buildings and Monuments of Significant Interest to the Community.*



With reference to the previous May newsletter number 19 the following is an additional list of buildings and monuments that we believe are of significant historical interest. This list like the first has been sent into the Council.

We are sure there are many more, so please keep sending in your suggestions.

- The Winston Club – Laindon High Road
- Old School House – Langdon High Road
- Noak Bridge Christian Centre – Wash Road, Laindon
- War Memorial, Clayhill Road, Vange
- Vange Primary School
- Bowers Hall, Church Road, Bowers Gifford
- The Old School House, School Lane, North Benfleet
- Onion Water Tower, Cranes Farm Road
- Nevendon School
- Little Burstead Memorial

### *Copyright*

Following on from previous newsletters we have listed a further eighteen names of individuals who back in the 1980s were interviewed by the then Basildon Heritage. In partnership with the Essex Record **Office we would like** to confirm copyright status. If you are aware of the individuals or their families please get in touch with us.

Mrs P Nason	Wickford	17-02-1986
Mrs E Newman	Laindon	27-11-1985
Mr Nolan	Basildon	
Mrs G Ollington	Wickford	11-02-1986
Mr P Parkes	Laindon	
Mr V Prentice	Wickford	29-05-1986

Mrs J.K.Payne	Vange	13-02-1986
Mrs Piper	Vange	03-04-1986
Mrs H Pottage	Pitsea	30-09-1985
Mrs Pym	North Benfleet	
Mr J Richard	Laindon	22-10-1985
Mr J Rose	Laindon	05-11-1985
Mr A T Rowe	Vange	18-09-1985
Mr J Richardson	Pitsea	13-11-1985
Mrs Richards	Wickford	
Mrs Connie Reeves	Basildon	04/04/2011
Mrs Ridler	Basildon	
Mrs Dot Rix	Basildon	

### *Future Events*

Pitsea Library. Heart of Pitsea Display 30<sup>th</sup> October to 10 November (Help desk on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November 10am to 12 noon)

Barleylands. 12th/13th Sept. 2015.

### *Green Centre Displays*

- Current – Waterloo and Second World War
- September – Queen (Longest serving Monarch) and Borough Carnival Queens



## *2016 Calendar*



**2016 Calendar is now available from the Green Centre, Wat Tyler at £5.00 or plus postage if we have to send.**

### *Photographs.*

We are still after your photographs and memories of the Borough. If you feel you have any photographs or memories that we would be interested in why not call in at the Green Centre, at Wat Tyler Park.

**We are particularly interested in photographs of Royalty that have visited the borough and the Borough Carnival Queens. (to be included in our September display)**

There is always a welcoming cup of tea and biscuits waiting for you.

### *Future Newsletters*

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

We are also willing to include in our newsletter anything you think might be of interest, again either contact us by email or drop in at the Green Centre.

### ***Volunteers still wanted.***

We are still seriously looking for more volunteers to help with our research, collating and recording the information we gather, helping out on our display days.

No experience is necessary other than an interest in local history. We are also looking for somebody with I.T. and/or photographic experience and we are more than happy if you want to work from home. At the moment we are researching WW1 and WW2 Stories.

If you would like to join our enthusiastic group or find out more about us please either email us (and one of our volunteers will contact you) or better still why not drop in at the Green Centre, Wat Tyler Park and see what we get up to. Monday and Wednesday 10am to 12.30am or Saturdays 11am to 3.30pm.

**Web site: [www.basildonheritage.org.uk](http://www.basildonheritage.org.uk) Email:  
[Info@basildonheritage.org.uk](mailto:Info@basildonheritage.org.uk)**

**We are now also on Facebook: Basildon Heritage**

