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## February 2023 Newsletter 46

We hope you had a good Christmas and we wish you a happy New Year. Though late December was a bit of a shock with two weeks of snow and heavy frost. The following is another poem by our talented Volunteer.

### Winter

A cold awakening on wintry days,  
A pink sky brightens the dawn.

A blanket of snow smooths the landscape  
On this frosty morn.

No wind disturbs the weighted trees,  
Their branches outlined in white,  
No footprints mar the perfect scene,  
A Christmas card delight.

Layers of snow crunch underfoot  
As children enter the park.

Their footprints crisscross the gentle slopes,  
As they play 'til it gets dark.

The sun disappears and the air is still,  
A thick, white sky hangs low.  
Large flakes silently drift to the ground  
Caught in the street lamp's glow.

By Sue Ranford

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### 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*

Updates – since last newsletter

As expected for this time of the year we have we have only held one outside display and that was at the Heart of Pitsea Christmas event held on the

**Saturday 3 December in front of Pitsea Library - There was a great community atmosphere.**

**We have placed in the Pitsea Library at their request a display on Pitsea Cinema and we still have a display in St Andrews Church, Wickford.**

**We also gave a talk to Langdon Hills over 60's club on the Plotland Era.**

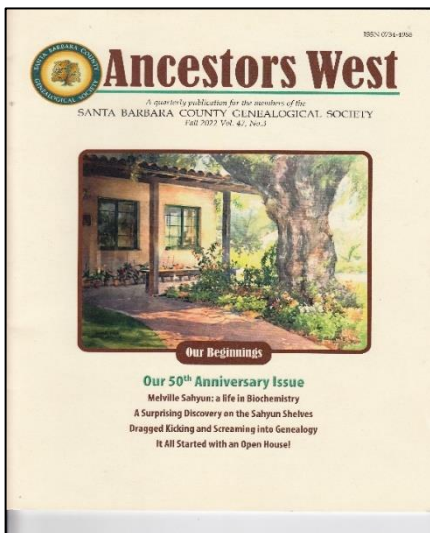
**Though we have not been out as much as usual we have received several visitors to our Heritage at the Green Centre, Wat Tyler Park requesting help on projects they are involved in. In particular various artist who are working with the 'Creative Basildon' group.**

**Also, we had a visit from a journalist from the Echo newspaper who to date has written the following articles: -**

- **Origins of Basildon Heritage**
- **Pitsea Cinema**
- **The Old Boat Museum**
- **The Hydroplane Racer**

#### **Our International Friends.**

As we have reported on previous occasions, we are in weekly Zoom and Hybrid contact meetings with Santa Barbara and Ventura Genealogical Societies as well as some of their individual members.



November 2022 saw the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Santa Barbara Society and their member, Rosana Swing, has kindly sent us some of their promotional booklets. We are researching

the ancestry of Rosana Swing and the last Zoom meeting were able to say how we have linked the Reade, Winthrop, Lake and Gallup families of the great migration period.

Christmas Eve in Schoonebeek Netherlands.



The warm regards we received from Rob Wethly (Chairman of Stichting Luchtoorlog Onderzoek Drenthe) in the Netherlands is a warm reminder to us of the kindness and respect airmen who gave their lives in the Second World War in the cause of freedom and how Rob, his children and friends place a candle on each of the Headstones that they attend to

#### **Redlands Genealogical Society**

The contact we have made with Redland Genealogical Society Cleveland Queensland is by virtue of helping individual members of their society who have links here in South Essex and we remain in contact through our exchange of newsletters.

#### **Day in History**

**25 January 1969** – On this day in 1969, as the Vietnam War continued in Indochina, peace talks began in Paris which included a demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam. The national Liberation Front and the North Vietnamese delegations refused the American proposals, condemning U.S. "aggression" in the region. The war continued until 1973.

**26 January 1980** - On this day, one month after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the U.S. Olympic Committee voted to ask the International Olympic Committee to cancel or move the upcoming games in Moscow. The Committee and

Soviets ignored U.S. Olympic Committee. So, the games went ahead with U.S voting to boycott the games.

**27 January 1302** – Dante Alighieri, a poet and politician in Florence, was exiled from the city for his political activities on this day. At the time, Dante was one of six priors who governed Florence. As an influential official, Dante had earlier banished several of his political rivals, which led to his own ouster from the city. As he wandered the countryside with his family, Dante wrote *The Divine Comedy*, a poem about the poet's journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Dante wrote his masterpiece in sections from 1308 until his death in 1321. Many consider the poem one of the greatest works in literature.

The following is the most famous line in the poem:

**"Before me things create were none, save things Eternal, and eternal I endure. All hope abandon ye who enter here."**

### Local Archaeology

**Wickford, Land at Shot Farm (TQ 76940 93640; WKDSf20)**

A trial-trench evaluation was carried out as part of pre-application works for a proposed residential develop. A preceding geophysical survey identified a number of anomalies of probable archaeological origin. These included part of a well-defined rectangular enclosure, four linear anomalies corresponding to former field boundaries shown on historic mapping, and a linear response that corresponded with the suggested route of a Second World War defensive line known as the Eastern GHQ Stop line.

Twenty-four evaluation trenches were excavated, mostly targeting geophysical anomalies. Archaeological features were recorded in fifteen trenches, demonstrating a good correlation with the geophysical survey results.

Prehistoric remains consisted of a single large pit, or intercutting pit cluster, and a ditch of probable Late Bronze Age date. Residual prehistoric pottery

found in later features across the site suggest that prehistoric activity was more extensive.

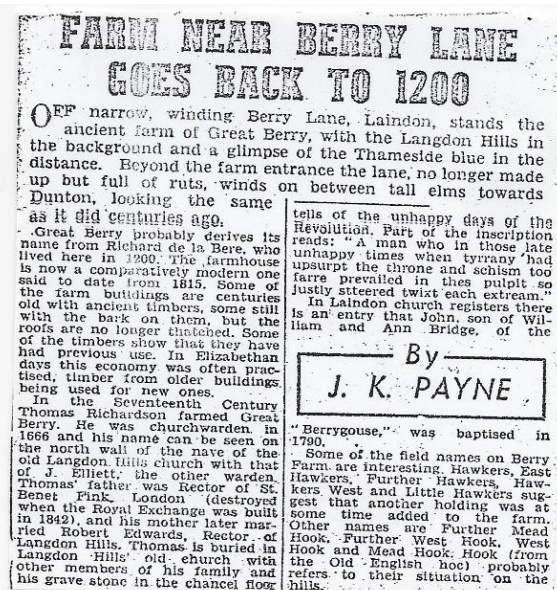
The majority of recorded archaeological remains comprised ditches defining parts of an Early Roman field system that may have endured into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. This system included a rectilinear ditched enclosure that seems to have been the focus of deposition of domestic occupation debris and might have been the site of a rural settlement farmstead.

Former field boundary ditches of 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup>-century date corresponded to the geophysical survey results and the evidence of historic mapping.

The Eastern GHQ Stop line, understood to have extended down the western side of the site, was recorded as a ditch. Ground level across the north end of the site was found to have been raised by approximately 0.8m in modern times, presumably to counter flooding from the adjacent River Crouch.

### J.K. Payne

Another of Jessie Payne's articles from the 1950'60s.



### History Snippets

Who Fired the first shots of World War 1?

It could be argued that the first shots were by Gavrilo Princip assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. But in terms of actual combat after war was declared, there are a couple of lesser-known names that may have pulled the trigger first.

Alhaji Grunshi, from Ghana, served the British in the Gold Coast Regiment when he was sent on Patrol in the German colony of Togoland (Togo today). On either 7 or 12 August 1914, he fired on a small group of German-led police.

The Western Front had to wait until 22 August before hearing its first shot – from a gun of a 20-year-old British private named Ernest Edward Thomas. In the resulting skirmish, there were no human casualties, although one horse did die.

### **Buildings of History Interest that are disappearing**

#### **Pitsea Cinema**



Pitsea Cinema is in the process of being demolished. It was first named 'The Broadway Kinema' (not a spelling mistake) and opened its first doors on the 28 March 1930 by the chairman of the Pitsea Parish Council – Mr William Pedlar and the first film shown on this date was 'White Shadows in the South Seas' starring Monte Blue and Raquel Torres.

Its name was later changed to – 'The Century Cinema' - It eventually closed in 1970 and became a bingo club. The last film to be shown was 'Born Free' starring Virginia McKenna and Bill Travers. The bingo club eventually closed on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and has stayed empty and deteriorating ever since.

We wait in anticipation of what will replace it?

### **Cornerstone**

Another of our old bungalows that has disappeared into the mist of history. The bungalow is "Cornerstone" which was situated on the corner of the High Road and Alexandra Road, Langdon Hills.

So, what was so special about this particular bungalow? Well in 1947/48 Waldemar Duemke a German prisoner from the OW Camp 266 situated in Dry Street; Langdon Hill opened it up as a church – "The New Apostolic Church" – a non-conformist church. The room where the services were held was in initially two rooms converted into one and at the far end of the room a small platform was built for the alter. It was not long before he had a thriving choir from the local community.

We can only assume that he named the bungalow "Cornerstone" after the famous by Edward Mote who published it in 1837. The following is the chorus:

*"Christ alone, Cornerstone  
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love  
Through the storm, He is Lord  
Lord of all"*



Waldemar moved on after a couple of years with his family to another church and the church reverted to a bungalow. It has now been demolished and flats are slowly replacing it. Jus another bit of our local history disappearing.

### **Children's Humour**

1/ **Teacher:** Why are you late? **Child:** Class started before I got here

2/**Teacher:** John, why are you doing your maths multiplication on the floor? **John:** You told me to do it without using tables.

3/**Teacher:** Now, Simon, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating? **Simon:** No sir, I don't have to, my Mum is a good cook.

4/**Teacher:** Clyde, your composition on 'My Dog' is the same as uour brother's. Did you copy his? **Clyde:** No, sir. It's the same dog.

### **Facts about January**

1/ The Anglo-Saxons called January "Wulfmonath" – This was when hungry wolves would begin scavenging for food!

2/ January 2<sup>nd</sup> was considered the unluckiest day of the year for Saxons!

3/ January is named Roman god, Janus. – He had two heads, one to look at the past and the other to look at the future!

4/ The birth stone of January is a Garnet, which is also the stone for protection and manifestation! – Its name comes from the Latin "granatus", which roughly translates to pomegranate!

5/ The birth flowers for those born in January are carnation n and the snowdrop!

6/ January 5<sup>th</sup> is known as Twelfth Night. It marks the end of the 12-day celebration of the winter solstice!

7/ According to folklore, the weather for the first 12 days of January is meant to show what the weather will be like for the next 12 months!

8/ The first footing is a custom that would bring good luck to a household in the New Year! After January 1<sup>st</sup>, families would wait for a dark-haired person to cross the threshold with a parcel of coal, bread, money, and greenery. - The Coal signified warmth, the bread meant food, the money meant wealth, and the greenery signified a long life for the household.

### **Booklets**

Since the last newsletters we have produced the following booklets:

*Joan Rosaire, Goldy, Dr Who and the Unicorn  
Puritan Symbols*

*The Broadway Cinema, Pitsea, 1930-1970*

*The Shops of Vange – London Road & High Road*

*Doctors from Wickford who went to war*

*Vange Reservoir & Southend waterworks*

*Company*

*St Margaret's of Antioch*

*Zeppelins over Essex (L32 & L33)*

*Billericay Workhouse*

### **Coming Events over the next few months**

**Blue Plaques** – Basildon Borough Heritage Society is part of an initiative promoted by the Lord-Lieutenant of Essex to commemorate Inspirational Women of Essex by the installation of Blue Plaques.

Basildon Heritage responded to that challenge along with the local council by forming a local Blue Plaque Project Team charged with selecting and erecting plaques at various locations across the Borough.

The first of these plaques will be unveiled by the Lord-Lieutenant on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 12 noon at Wickford Library, Willows Shopping Centre SS12 ORA. The plaque is in honour of Hannah Lake – Born in Wickford 1620, emigrated to America in 1635. Married John Gallop in 1643, died at Mystic, Connecticut, 1674. Her long line of illustrious descendants includes 3 Presidents of the United States.

Our second plaque hopefully will be erected in the early summer at Nevendon Manor, Wickford in honour of Marion Wilberforce, pilot in the Second World War with the Air Transport Association

### **Mayfest**

27 May we will be in the town centre as part of the Mayfest event.

### **Army Forces Day**

24 June we will be in the town centre as part of the Army Forces Day even

## Basildon Carnival

On the 29 July we will be taking part in the Basildon Carnival parade and also have a display gazebo at Northlands Park.

## Fun Walk

We have also sign on to take part on the John Baron (MP) Fun Walk in June. If you would like to donate, please go to our web site [www.basildonheritage.org.uk](http://www.basildonheritage.org.uk) and use the donate button, paying by credit card. Alternatively, you could call on us at the Green Centre, Wat Tyler Park. The funds help us towards our consumable costs.

## 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.

## 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.

## Fund Raising

We are sure you will appreciate it but cost are continuing to rise. You can help us to mitigate the increase 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.

## 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, again 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 regularly get monthly between 30,000 and 50,000 followers and what is pleasing they are coming in from all over the world. In-fact in January we had two from Thailand.

## 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.

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

## 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.**



