



The A to Z of Historic
BASILDON BOROUGH

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There are two churches in the borough named for

ALL SAINTS



The oldest can be found between London Road, Vange and the A13 is All Saints Church.

The Grade II* listed All Saints Church can trace its origins back to the Normans. The font is thought to date from the 1100's with many other features built during the 1400's. The list of rectors goes back to 1328.

Sitting on the hill at the top of North Benfleet Hill Road is the 14th Century All Saint's Church, though parts of the building may be Norman. The tower was built in 1903 and contains wood from the structure of the previous tower.

The church fell in to disuse in 1996² but has recently become an orthodox church, used weekly since 2013.



North Benfleet Church.(North Side)

99614

The first written record of Basildon was in the Domesday Book on 1086. At the time it was just a hamlet known as 'Berlesduna' that contained seven households as well as some cattle, pigs and sheep.

The hamlet centred around the area occupied by Holy Cross Church. The name 'Basildon' is thought to mean 'Boerthal's Hill'. 'Boerthal' was a Saxon personal name and 'don' is an old English word meaning 'hill'.

I am yet to find out who Boerthal was but it is thought that his or her hill was also near Holy Cross.

On Tuesday 4 January 1949 Basildon was designated as a New Town by then Minister of Town and Country Planning Lewis Silkin. The New Town would be made up of Basildon, still a hamlet at the time, and the neighbouring towns of Pitsea and Laindon. Basildon was chosen as the town's name because of its geographical position in the centre of the New Town.

Basildon Train Station was opened on 25 September 1974 between Pitsea and Laindon. This linked the New Town to the City of London. Today the station regularly has over 3 million passengers, with many of these commuting in to London for work.

In 2010 Basildon made national news when the large 'Basildon' sign was erected next the Pipp's Hill junction of the A127.

BASILDON

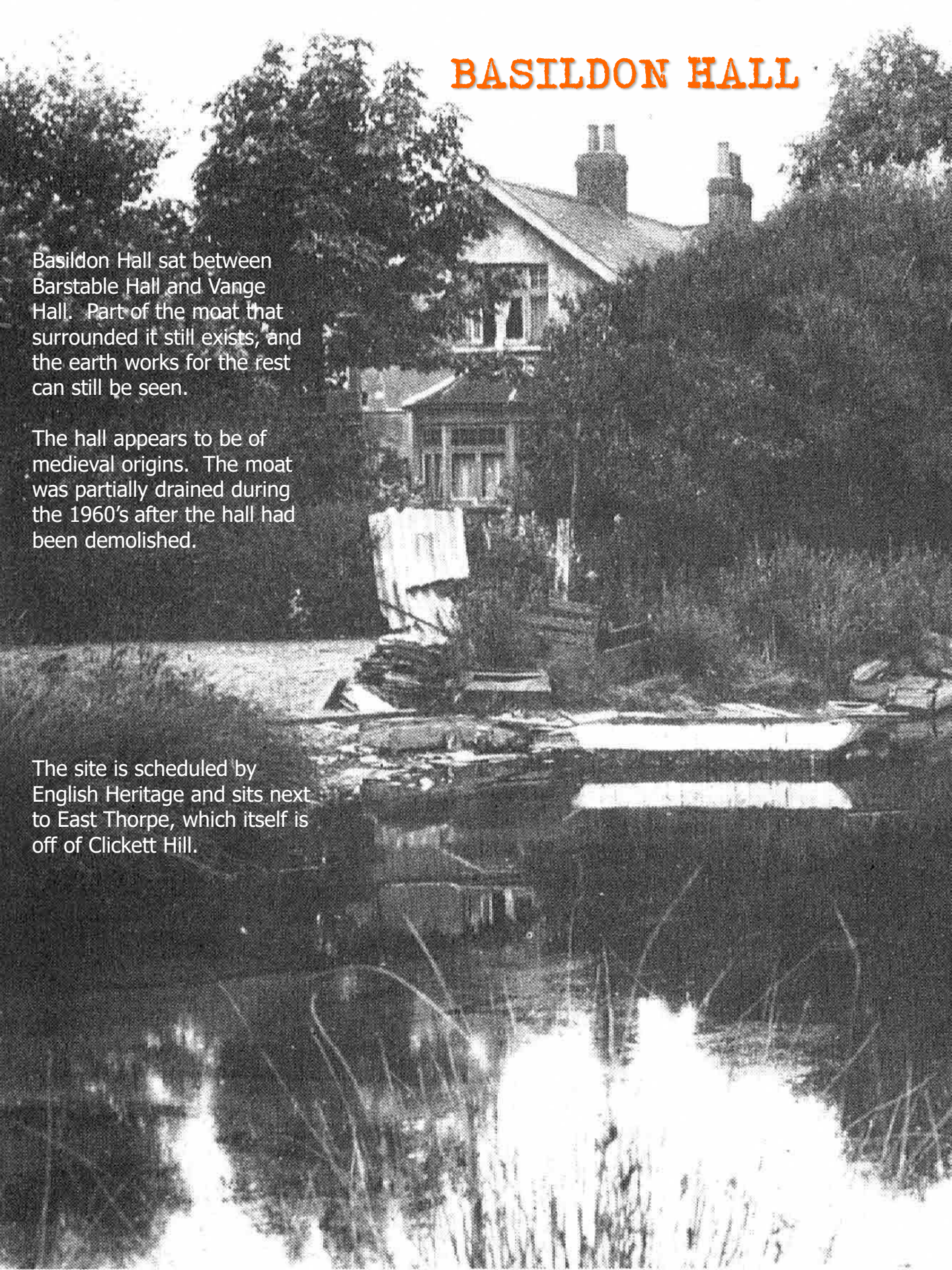


BASILDON HALL

Basildon Hall sat between Barstable Hall and Vange Hall. Part of the moat that surrounded it still exists, and the earth works for the rest can still be seen.

The hall appears to be of medieval origins. The moat was partially drained during the 1960's after the hall had been demolished.

The site is scheduled by English Heritage and sits next to East Thorpe, which itself is off of Clickett Hill.



Billericay is the most visually historic part of Basildon Borough. A number of the buildings along the high street, and around it, are listed.

The town is first record in 1291 as 'Byllyrica'. The exact meaning of the name is not known. The discovery of a Roman fort at Blunts Wall Farm could suggest a Romano-British meaning,

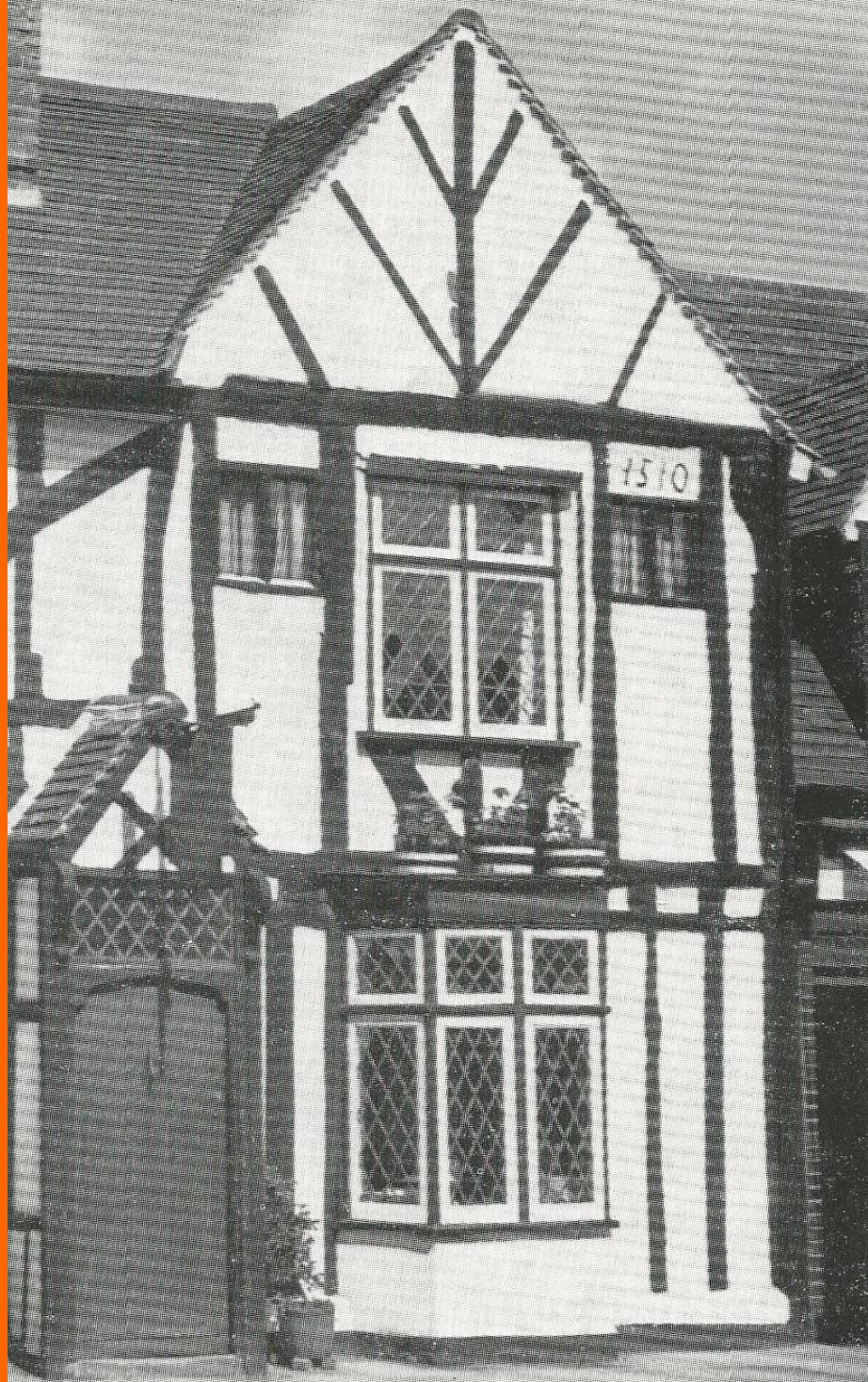
Some suggestions are 'Villa Erica', a Romano-British term for 'Heather Villa'. There is also 'bellerica', a Latin word for a dyehouse or tanhouse, or 'billers', which is a traditional name for watercress. Cress was farmed in Billericay from springs during the last century. *(Wikipedia)*

Norsey Wood covers over 160 acres of land in Billericay and is a short walk from the High Street.

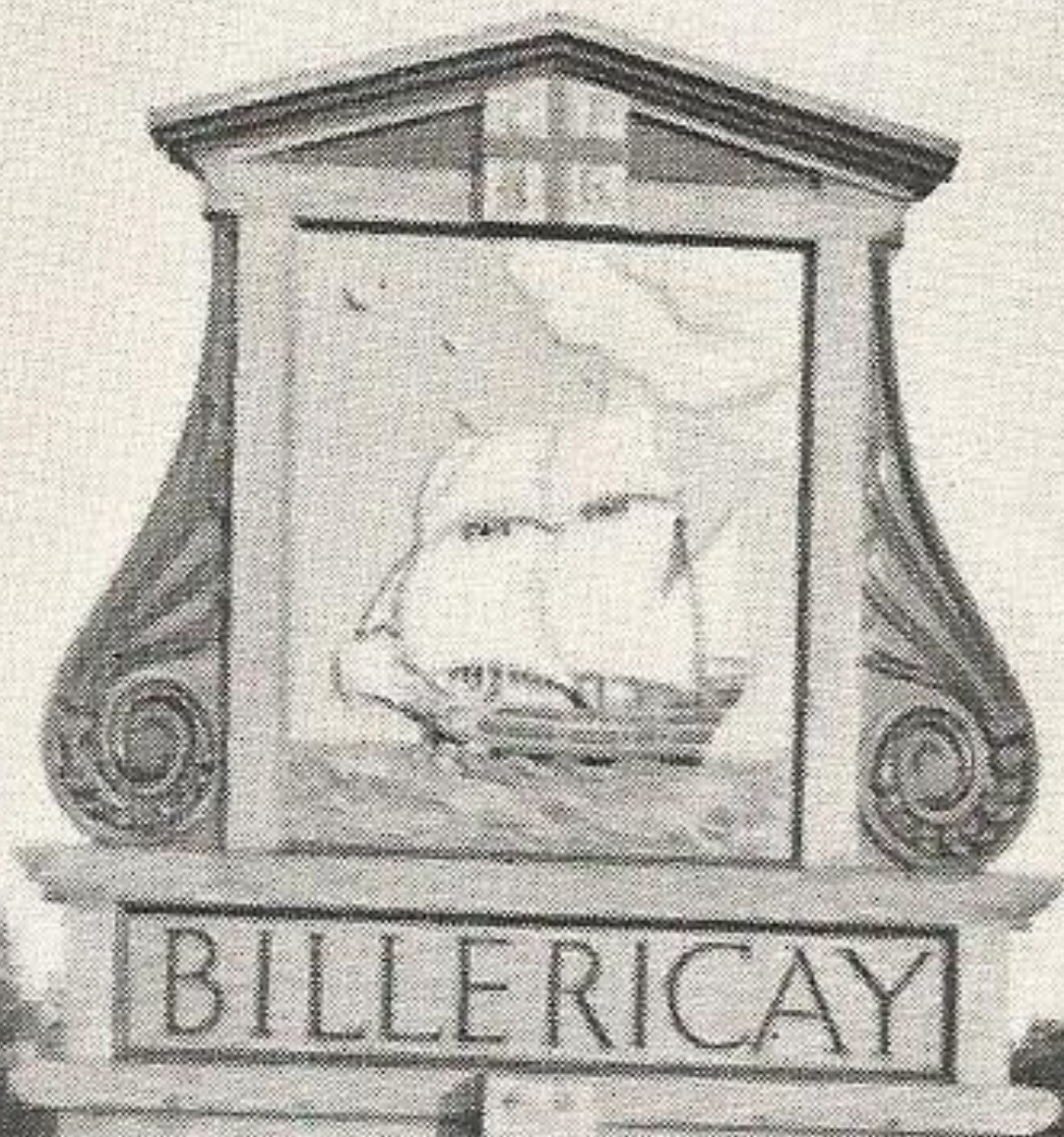
In 1381 the young King Richard II's men killed around 500 Essexmen during the Battle of Billericay, which is thought to have taken place in Norsey Wood, as part of the Peasants Revolt. The dead were buried in Great Burstead churchyard.

A late Iron Age glass bead was discovered in the wood during 1887. In 1994 a chance find revealed a stone age axehead in the wood. It's not sure whereabouts it was found. It was just the latest in a number of prehistoric finds in the area.

BILLERICAY



BILLERICAY...



The woodland was saved from redevelopment in the 1970's when the council bought it. Redevelopment had already seen a Bronze Age burial mound, or Tumulus, cleared. One more survives to this day though it was excavated in 1865 revealing urns containing cremated remains.

The town is also the home to the boroughs oldest football club, Billericay Town F.C. who were formed in 1880. The town was also home to Billericay Albion F.C., Billericay Thursday F.C. and Billericay Rangers F.C.

The Church of Mary Magdalen stands on the High Street by the entrance to Chapel Street.

A chapel was built on the site, probably during the 14th Century with the tower being constructed in the 15th century. The chapel was rebuilt in the 1700's, with an extension added in the 1840's.

The clock on the tower was installed in 1897 to commemorate the 60th year of Queen Victoria's reign.

Renovations were carried out in the 1950's, which also linked it to the Church House next door. It was during 1955 that the church was Grade II listed. Further renovations were carried out during the 1970's.

The area was once home to two farms both called

BLUEHOUSE



Bluehouse Farm in Laindon, also referred to as Gobions or Little Gubbins, once occupied the site of Bluehouse School, now called The Phoenix Primary School. There are two ponds within the school grounds which were once part of the farm complex.

Howard's Dairies, once prominent in the area, owned Bluehouse Farm in Pitsea. The farm stands on London Road. The A13 passes through a lot of the farmland.



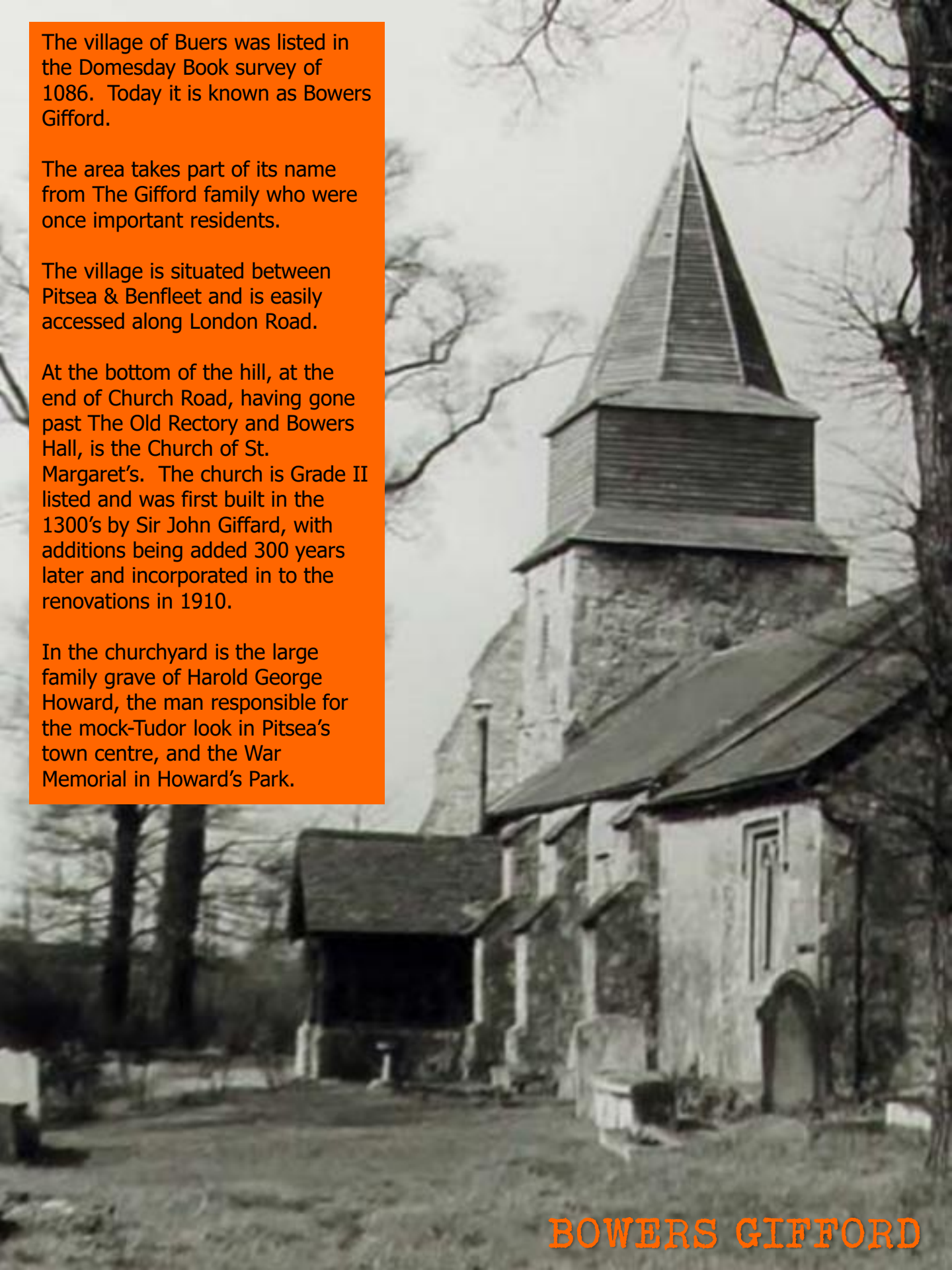
The village of Buers was listed in the Domesday Book survey of 1086. Today it is known as Bowers Gifford.

The area takes part of its name from The Gifford family who were once important residents.

The village is situated between Pitsea & Benfleet and is easily accessed along London Road.

At the bottom of the hill, at the end of Church Road, having gone past The Old Rectory and Bowers Hall, is the Church of St. Margaret's. The church is Grade II listed and was first built in the 1300's by Sir John Giffard, with additions being added 300 years later and incorporated in to the renovations in 1910.

In the churchyard is the large family grave of Harold George Howard, the man responsible for the mock-Tudor look in Pitsea's town centre, and the War Memorial in Howard's Park.



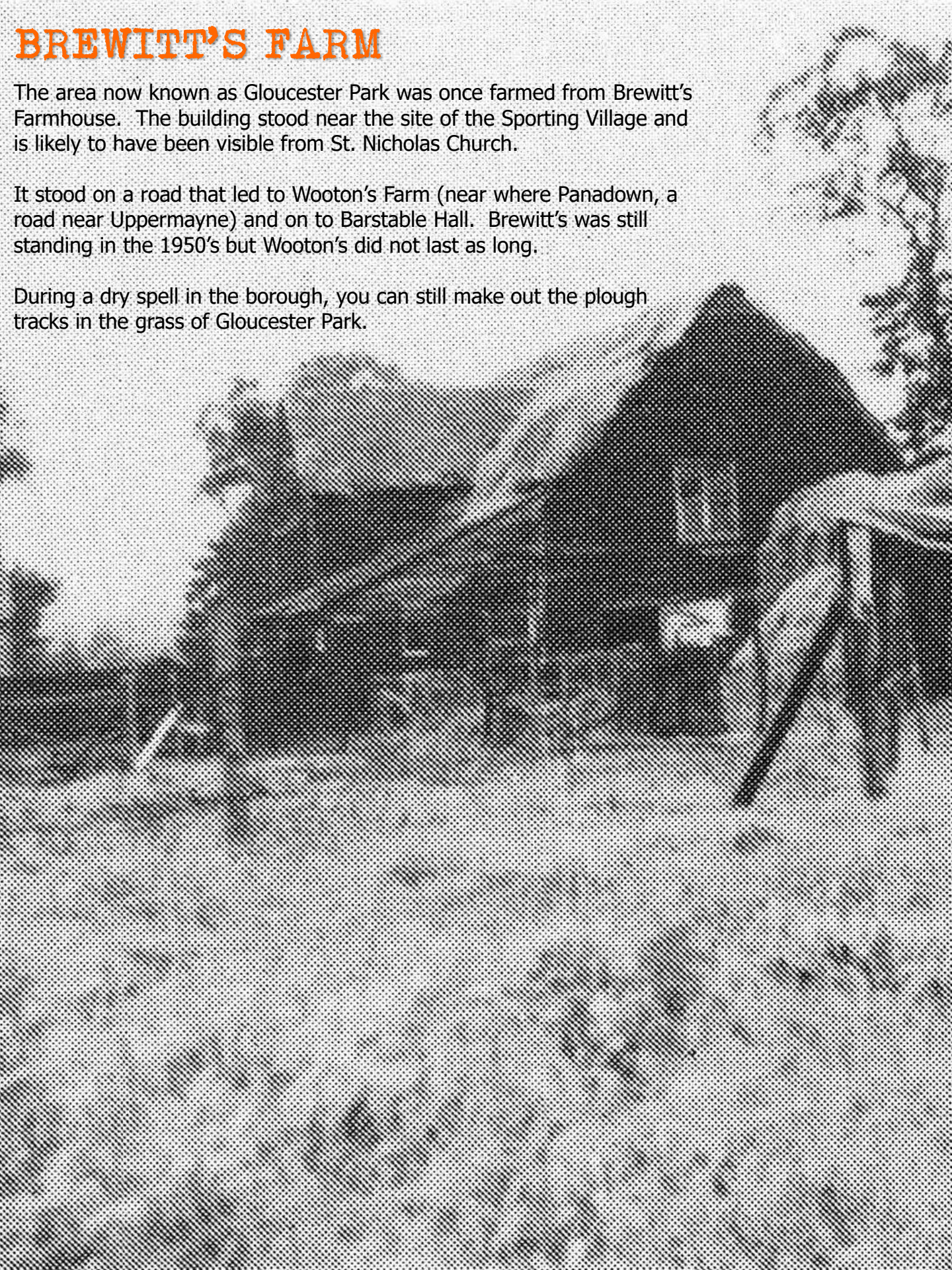
BOWERS GIFFORD

BREWITT'S FARM

The area now known as Gloucester Park was once farmed from Brewitt's Farmhouse. The building stood near the site of the Sporting Village and is likely to have been visible from St. Nicholas Church.

It stood on a road that led to Wooton's Farm (near where Panadown, a road near Uppermayne) and on to Barstable Hall. Brewitt's was still standing in the 1950's but Wooton's did not last as long.

During a dry spell in the borough, you can still make out the plough tracks in the grass of Gloucester Park.

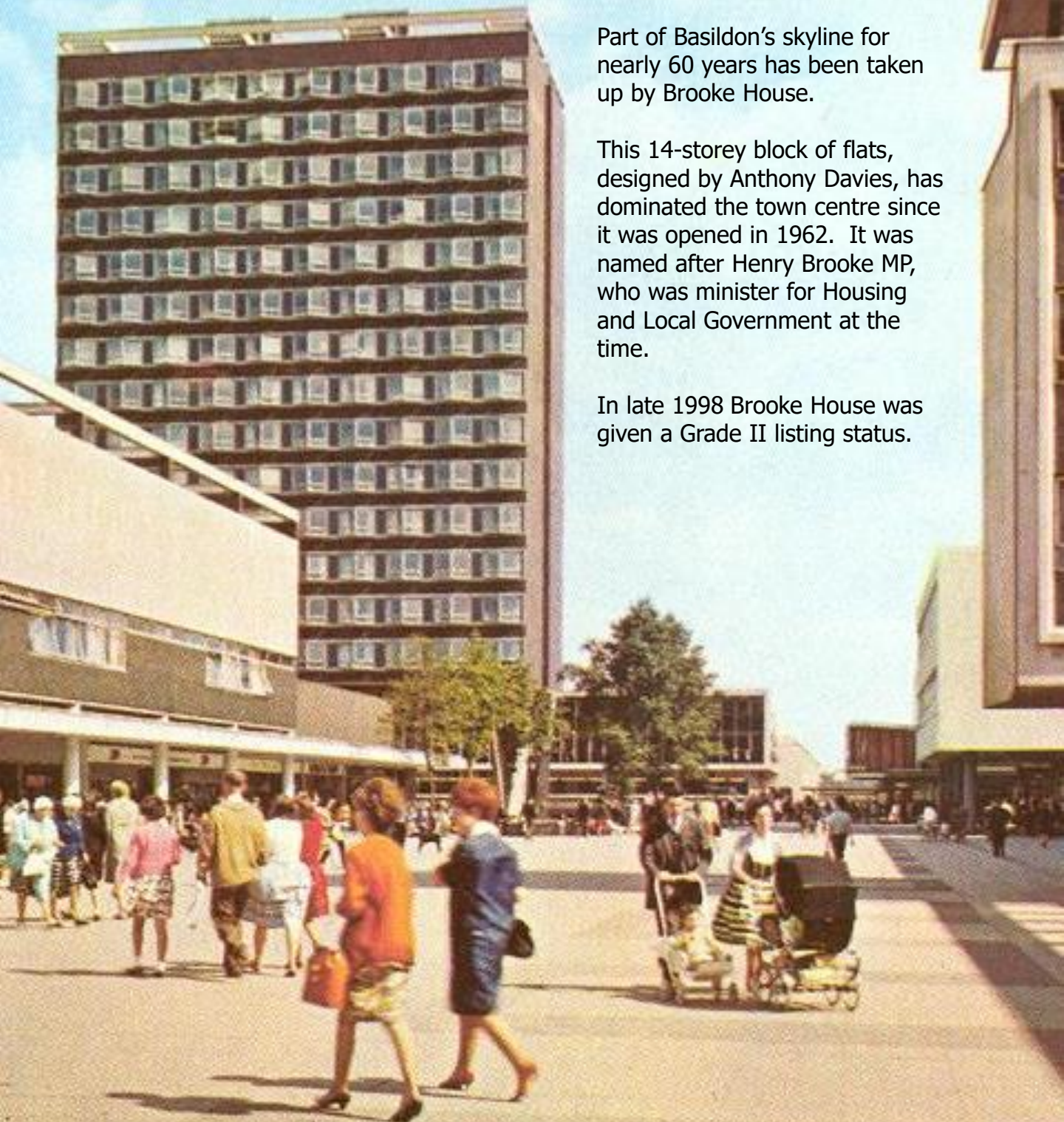


BROOKE HOUSE

Part of Basildon's skyline for nearly 60 years has been taken up by Brooke House.

This 14-storey block of flats, designed by Anthony Davies, has dominated the town centre since it was opened in 1962. It was named after Henry Brooke MP, who was minister for Housing and Local Government at the time.

In late 1998 Brooke House was given a Grade II listing status.



THE CHEQUERS

The Chequer's Public House in Billericay sits at the entrance to Chapel Street. It is thought that the building started life as farmhouse managing land owned by the church. It opened as a pub in 1769. The building next door was originally part of the inn, it is now a restaurant.

There are rumours that a tunnel runs from the inn, under the High Street, and up to Chantry House on the opposite side of the road.

The Chequers was given Grade II listed status in 1955.



CINEMAS



The borough has been the home to a number of cinemas over the last 100 years.

The Broadway in Wickford was refurbished in 1929. There are references to the cinema in local papers during 1927 and 1928. Within a few years The Broadway had closed, but was replaced by The Carlton in 1936.

The Carlton stood in the High Street, where the Poundland shop is now. Woolworths took over the site in 1955, eventually demolishing the building and replacing it with the current structure in the 1970's. The Public Hall on Jersey Gardens briefly became the Astoria around 1955, but was not very popular.



CINEMAS...



The Laindon Picture Theatre opened during March 1929, becoming the Radion in 1936. The last film was shown here in 1969.

Both the Pitsea and Laindon cinemas hosted bingo and wrestling.

The Broadway Cinema in Pitsea opened on 28 March 1930. The building had been funded by Harold George Howard.

During the 1940's it was taken over by Radion, of Rayleigh and then became the Century in 1954. The last films were shown in 1970 and the primary use for the hall became bingo, which came to an end in 2009.

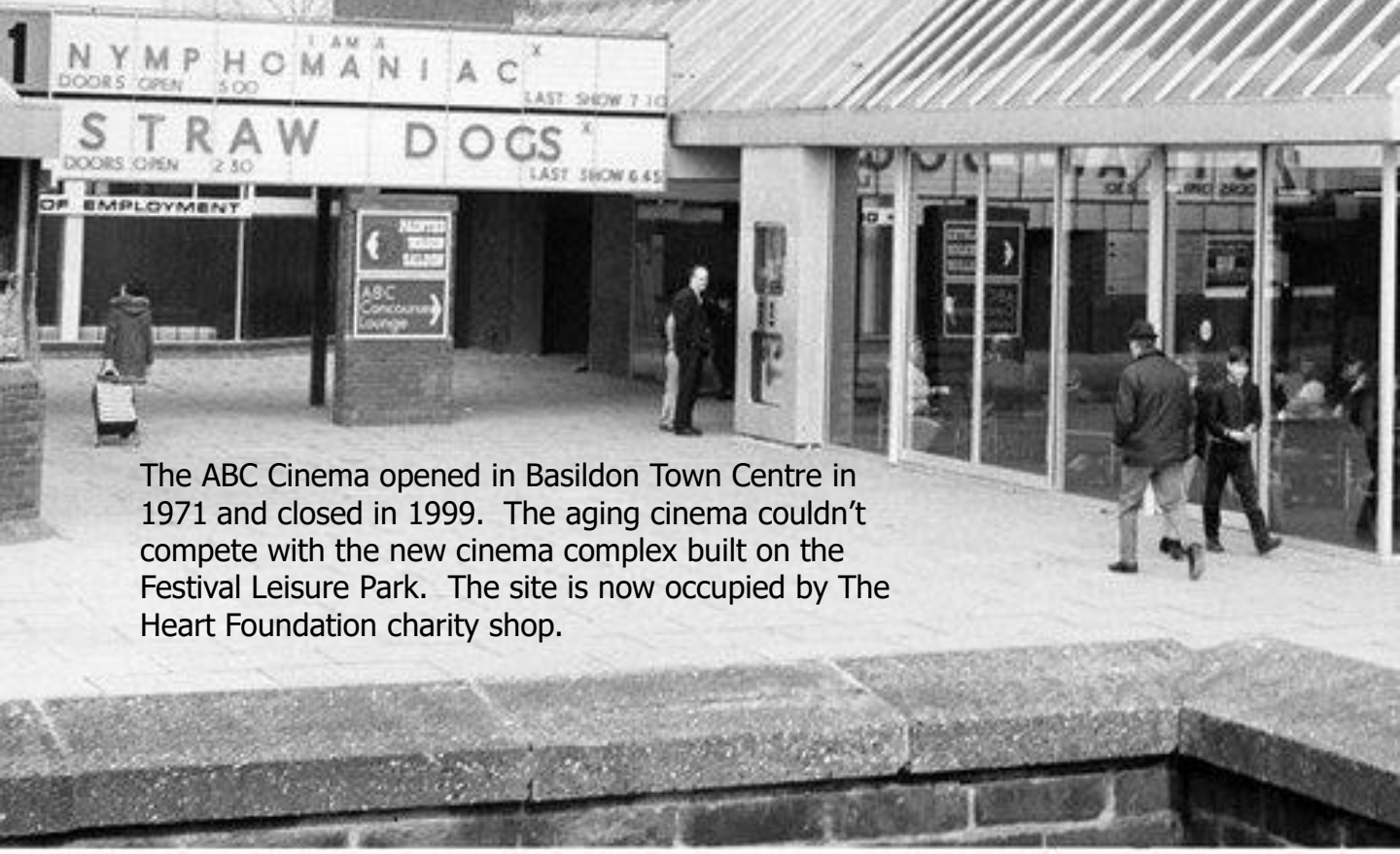


Billericay's cinema, The Ritz, opened in 1938 and showed its last film in 1971. It too became a bingo hall, and then a snooker hall. The site, in Chapel Street, is now occupied by flats.

The Billericay Community Cinema had its grand opening in October 2015 and are still going strong, operating in Billericay Library.

A new multi-screen cinema is planned for the Town Centre.

CINEMAS...



The ABC Cinema opened in Basildon Town Centre in 1971 and closed in 1999. The aging cinema couldn't compete with the new cinema complex built on the Festival Leisure Park. The site is now occupied by The Heart Foundation charity shop.

COOPER'S COTTAGES



The area around Little Burstead War Memorial is surrounded by listed buildings.

Opposite the Little Burstead School are the Grade II listed Cooper's Cottages. These former Wealden Houses were constructed in the late 1300's or early 1400's.

The chimney and fireplace were added in the 1700's. Extensions were added in the 19th and 20th Centuries.



CRANES FARM

Cranes Farm once stood on Rectory Road that ran between Honeypot Lane and the junction with Timberlog Lane and Nevendon Road. The only parts of that road that exists today is Gardiners Close, home to Basildon United and Basildon Rugby Club, and the road than rans along the front of the New Holland Tractor Plant car park.

The farm was named after Hugh le Crane, who became the first person to farm the area in 1272.

This road was replaced by a larger one, a few feet to the south, called Cranes Farm Road.

The farmhouse stood just to the west of where Cranes Court now is and had a moat surrounding part of it. Part of the moat can still be seen today. It was knocked down in 1959.

Opposite Cranes Farm was the larger Great Spenders complex which gave its name to a road off of Whitmore Way.

CRICKET



The borough has been the home of many cricket clubs over the years.

The oldest club in the area is Billericay Cricket Club, formed in 1875. The club initially played on Laindon Common, later moving to Mountnessing Road after World War One.

Billericay Cricket Club moved in to their current home, Toby Howe Cricket Ground on Blunts Wall Road in 1996. Mr Howe had been a Club President and had bought the club's previous ground in Mountnessing Road and secured the clubs future there.



Nearby Great Burstead Cricket Club was formed in 1956. They merged with East Hanningfield in 2011.



In 1887 Wickford Cricket Club were formed, playing their first match on 30th May against East Hanningfield. They played behind the Castle Hotel, off of Nevendon Road and another between Station Avenue and Jersey Gardens.

Warren Patmore was an important member of the club for many years. He was the owner of The White Swan Hotel and of Dove House Mead, which had belonged to Stileman's Farm. He eventually gave it to the club and they still play there today.

CRICKET...

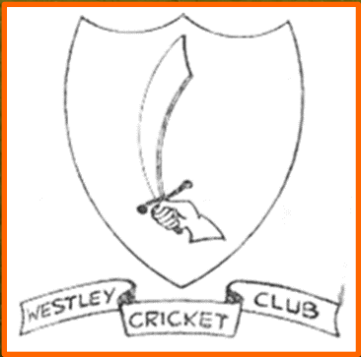
Langdon Hills Cricket Club were formed in the early 1900's and are currently playing in Orsett. They originally played at Crown Meadow, opposite the Crown Hotel and then Langdon Hills Recreation Ground.





CRICKET...

Westley Cricket club was formed in 1954 and played on a ground on the corner of Dry Street and High Road, Langdon Hills.



CRICKET...



After the war Basildon Cricket Club reformed and played on a pitch which eventually had the tractor plant built on it. Whilst the town centre was being built the club played in Benfleet, returning in 1962. Basildon Cranes Cricket Club were struggling by the late 1960's and merged with Basildon in 1968. It was at this time that moved in to their current home in Mopsies Park.

In 1997 Pitsea Cricket Club merged with Basildon, to form Basildon & Pitsea Cricket Club.

Also in Basildon is Eversley Park Cricket Club, who play matches on Holy Cross Recreation Ground, Great Spenders.





DEPECHE MODE

Perhaps Basildon's most famous former residents are the electronic band Depeche Mode, who have sold over 100 million records around the world.

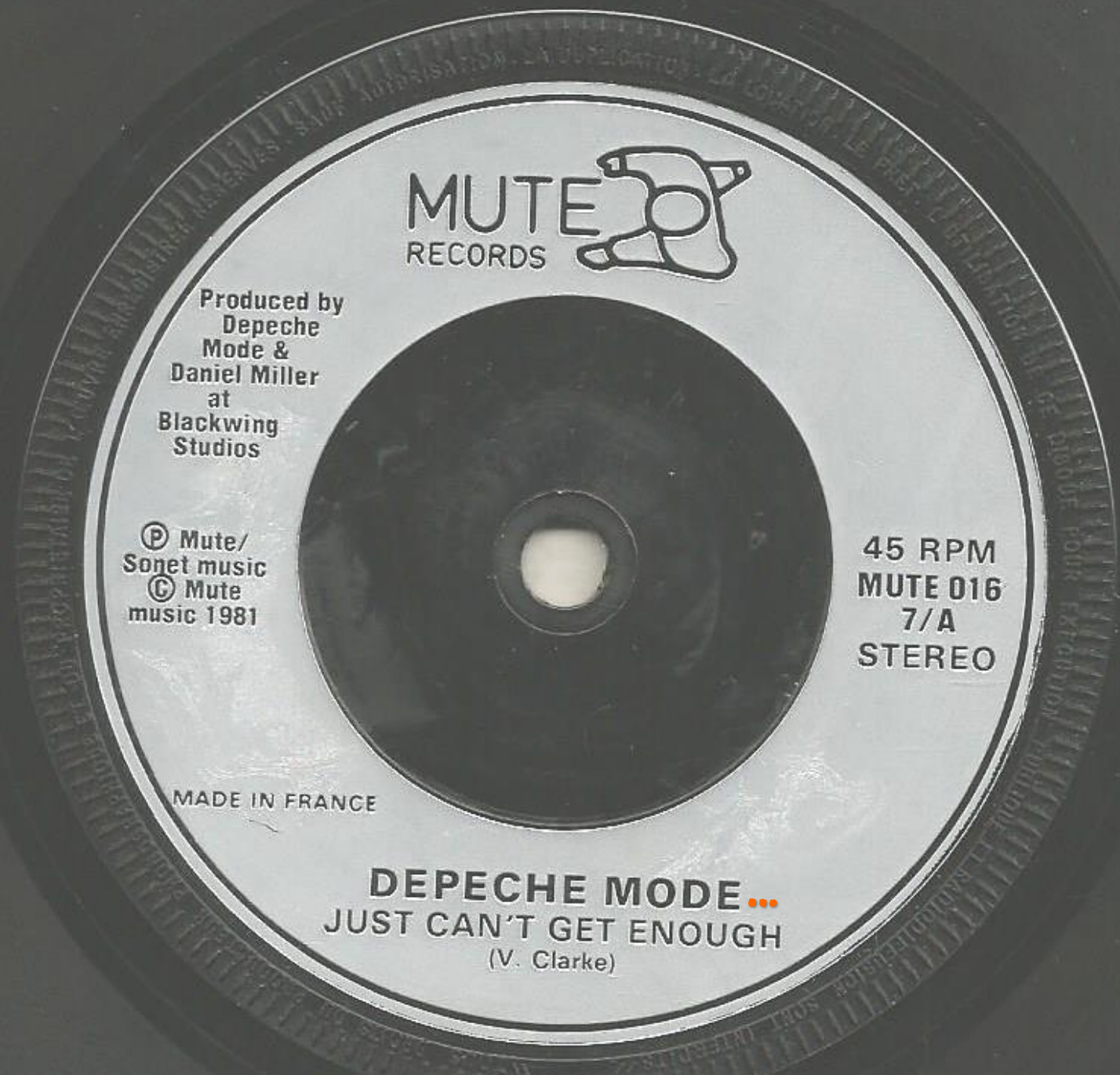
Formed in Basildon during 1980, three of the founder members (Vince Clark, Andy Fletcher and Martin Gore) went to Nicholas Comprehensive School in Laindon. Dave Gahan, lead singer, was a pupil at Barstable.

In May 1980 the band played their first gig at Nicholas Comprehensive, an event that is memorialised with a plaque.

The band's first single, 'Dreaming of Me' was recorded for Mute records in 1981 and made the top 60. Their second, 'New Life' reached number 11 and earned them an appearance on BBC1's Top of the Pops. They travelled to the television studios by train, departing from Basildon station, carrying their keyboards with them.

Depeche Mode's third single, 'Just Can't Get Enough', is perhaps their best-known and was their first top 10.

It was in 1981 that the band's first album, 'Speak and Spell', was released. The album reached the top 10 of the UK album charts.



Before the end of 1981 Vince Clark announced that he would be leaving the band. He soon joined forces with Billericay born Alison Moyet to form Yazoo. Martin Gore stepped in to the role as the band's song writer, and Alan Wilder joined the band.

They would release six albums during the 1980's. Their biggest hit single of the decade, 'People are people', was released during 1984 and reached number 4 in the UK charts, as well as being a number 1 hit in Germany.

The 'Violator' album was released in 1990, reaching number 2 on the UK, German and Swiss album charts as well as being number 1 in France.

The first single from the album was 'Enjoy the Silence'. It was the band's first top ten hit since 'Master and Servant' in 1984. The album would produce four top 20 hits.

Their compilation album 'Singles 86>98', released in 1998, had a photo of a large travel case with the words 'Basildon' and 'Essex' painted on it.



The albums and hits continued in to the 21st Century. The single 'Precious' reached number 4 in the UK, 2 in Germany and a number 1 hit in Italy, Spain and Sweden.



DRY STREET

Dry Street runs from Nethermayne to High Road, Langdon Hills. For most of its length it is a reminder of how the area looked long before the New Town.

Dry Street Farmhouse dates from around 1720, 'Thatched Cottage' and Rose Cottage were probably built in the 1700's using wattle and daub. All three are Grade II listed buildings.

The Red Cow was built along Dry Street in 1802. It also acted as a Post Office and is now a private residence.

At the High Road end of Dry Street is the Nature Reserve car park. Near this is the former site of POW Camp 266 Langdon Hills. A concrete base of one of the buildings is still in place.

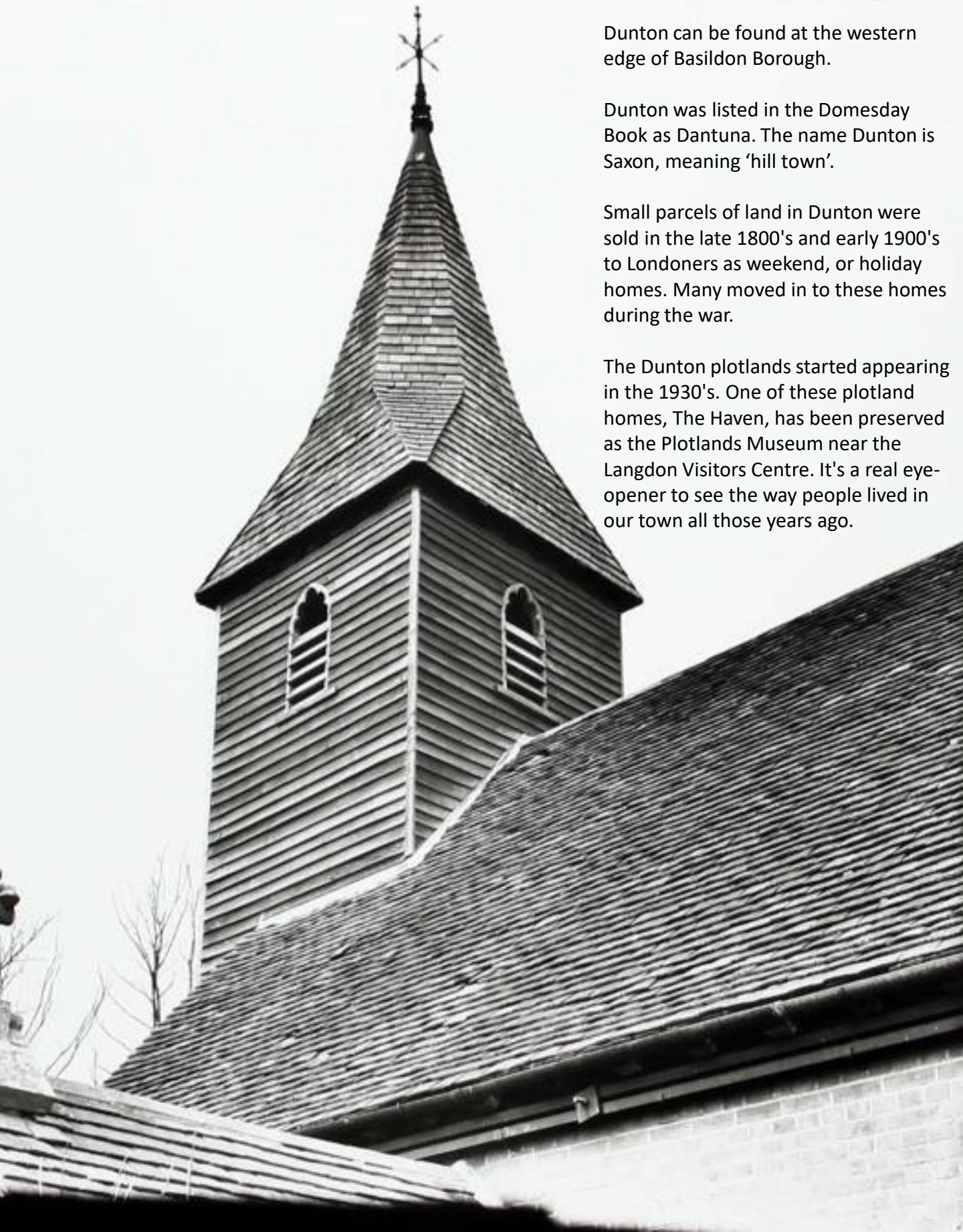
A survey carried out in the area in 2006 found evidence of Roman and Saxon activity.

Dunton can be found at the western edge of Basildon Borough.

Dunton was listed in the Domesday Book as Dantuna. The name Dunton is Saxon, meaning 'hill town'.

Small parcels of land in Dunton were sold in the late 1800's and early 1900's to Londoners as weekend, or holiday homes. Many moved in to these homes during the war.

The Dunton plotlands started appearing in the 1930's. One of these plotland homes, The Haven, has been preserved as the Plotlands Museum near the Langdon Visitors Centre. It's a real eye-opener to see the way people lived in our town all those years ago.



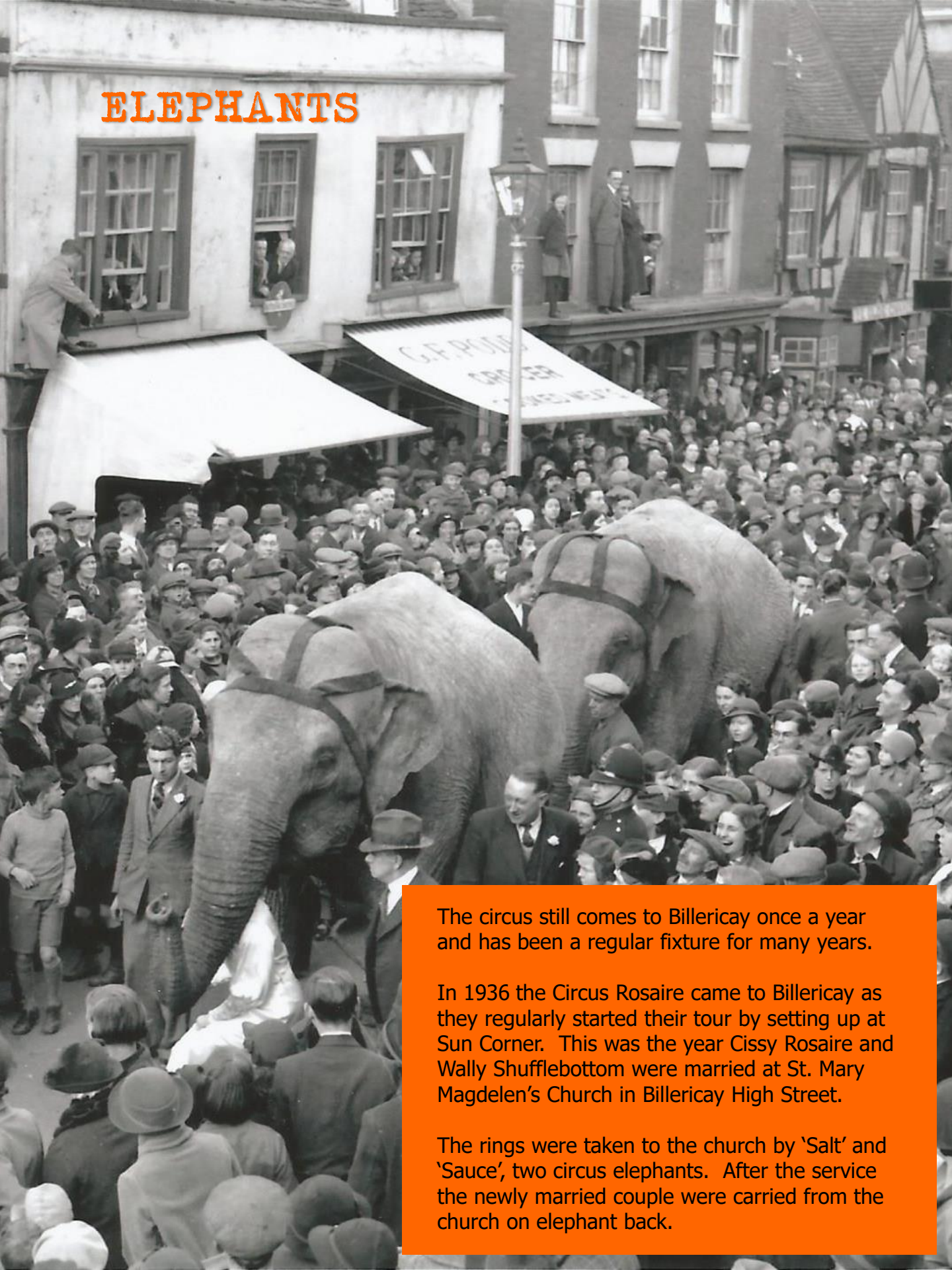
Dunton is home to Dunton Wayletts Farmhouse and Friern Manor. Wayletts, is a Grade II listed building built during the 16th Century. Friern Manor was built during the 18th century and stands on Lower Dunton Road.

Southfields Farm, built in the early 1700's, once stood where Ford's Test Track is today. The farm was pulled down in the late 50's or early 60's, prior to the test centre opening in 1967. It is now remembered in the name of the Southfields Industrial Estate.



DUNTON...

ELEPHANTS



The circus still comes to Billericay once a year and has been a regular fixture for many years.

In 1936 the Circus Rosaire came to Billericay as they regularly started their tour by setting up at Sun Corner. This was the year Cissy Rosaire and Wally Shufflebottom were married at St. Mary Magdalen's Church in Billericay High Street.

The rings were taken to the church by 'Salt' and 'Sauce', two circus elephants. After the service the newly married couple were carried from the church on elephant back.

FAIRHOUSE FARM



Fairhouse Farm used to stand on land that is now occupied by Fairhouse School. It was a short distance from Basildon Hall and sat next to Church Road, which still runs to Holy Cross Church.

In the early 1800's Fairhouse was farmed by James and Elizabeth Mead. Both had been born in Laindon during the 1850's and by 1801 had seven children.

On Wednesday 1 June 1808 the Mead's had travelled to Romford market and were in a light cart on their way home when their horse was startled by a coach being drawn by four horses, and their cart over turned. As James and Elizabeth fell to the road surface the coach ran over the Meads.

James was killed immediately and Elizabeth died a few hours later. They were buried in Holy Cross Churchyard on Sunday 5 June 1808. James had been born on 20 October 1754 and Elizabeth during 1759. Both had been born in Laindon.

James and Elizabeth Mead are my 5x Great Grandparents.

FELMORES

Work started on the Felmores Estate during the early 1970's. The land had been farmed from Felmores Farmhouse, which was demolished in 1987.

The lakes were man-made from 1972 and completed in 1974 and are now a popular fishing venue.

The skyline of the estate was once dominated by chimneys which were part of the boiler houses but they were removed in the 1990's. The boiler house opposite Bockingham Green once had the year '1977' marked out with brown roofing tiles. This was removed when a boxing club took over the site.

I once spoke to a local resident that told me he went scrumping on Felmores Farm during the 1960's, taking apples from the farms orchard.

During the 2000's an attempt was made to rename Felmores as the Northlands Park Neighbourhood. Northland's was named after a farm that once stood on the site now occupied by Basildon Upper Academy (Chalvedon School). Despite the signage welcoming visitors to Northlands Park Neighbourhood the area is still known as Felmores.



The Grade II listed Five Bells Inn once stood within Fobbing until the area, up to Basildon Hospital, was absorbed by the New Town. The Five Bell and has been listed since 1950. The listing suggests the Five Bells was built in the early 1700's

Alongside the building, which is now a restaurant, is Bells Hill Road which once ran straight in to Fobbing before it was cut short by the A13. Today part of Bells Hill Road makes up the boundary with Thurrock.

The pub was once connected to a blacksmith but this appears to now be part of the restaurant.

'Basildon: A Pictorial History' shows the pub in the 1930's with the forge next to it. The book also mentions that there are deeds for an inn there from 1690 but the pub is first named on an 'Alehouse list' in 1769.



THE FIVE BELLS

FLOODS



During September 1958 heavy overnight rainfall saw the water levels rise to high levels that lead to the River Crouch bursting its banks and flooding Wickford. The town had been a victim of floods before. Photos dating from 1936 show the extent of the flooding.

A double-decker bus was stuck at the Nevendon Road end of the High Street. Local builder Silva Carter (1907-1996) owned a former US Army DUKW, an amphibious vehicle, which he drove around the flooded areas.

The Crouch burst its banks again in 1960 and the concrete flood channel being built which is still protecting the town today.

FOBBING FARM

Part of Fobbing was absorbed in to the New Town. In that area was The Five Bells, Little Vange Hall and Fobbing Farm.

Fobbing Farmhouse still exists and is used by St. Luke's Hospice. The Hospice moved in to the former farmhouse during September 1990.

Behind the hospital is Fobbing Farm Close.



FOOTBALL



The oldest club in the town of Basildon are Basildon Town. Formed in 1946 the club played at Stacey's Corner in the 1950's until the lease, then held by the Basildon Development Corporation, ran out in 1959.

Town moved in to a ground on Burnt Mills Lane, and when they merged with Pitsea United to become Basildon & Pitsea, they moved to Gun Meadow in 1964. Four years later the two clubs split and Basildon moved to Eversley in 1971. Town moved to Gardiners Way in 1995.



FOOTBALL...



Armada F.C. came in to being during 1963 and stepped up to adult football and became Basildon United in 1967. They moved in to their Gardiners Lane ground in 1970. They were founder members of the Essex Senior League.

FOOTBALL...

Formed in 1946, Bowers United began life at Gun Meadow until it was subject to a compulsory purchase and they moved to Crown Avenue in Pitsea. Bowers were given senior status and joined the Essex Senior League in 1975.



FOOTBALL...



Billericay F.C. were formed in 1880 and played on Archer's Field until they moved to New Lodge in 1972. They merged with Billericay Rangers in 1964 and were founder members of both the Essex Olympian League and Essex Senior League.

Billericay Town made three trips to Wembley Stadium in the F.A. Vase during the late 1970's. They first won the Vase in 1976 and then 1977. Their last visit to Wembley ended in a 4-1 victory against Almondsbury Greenway. Town striker Doug Young scored a hat-trick that afternoon.

The Fryerns area of the new town, and the school which closed in 1999, were named after Fryerns Farm.

The farmhouse stood where Whitmore Way passes in front of Fryerns Baptist Church. A pond once stood near the farmhouse where a play area next to the Jolly Friar Pub is now.

A road that ran past Cranes Farm and through what is now the tractor plant was connected to the farm by a treelined track. Part of that track still exists, though it is now cut short by Cranes Farm Road.



FRYERNS

GREAT BURSTEAD

The village of Burstead was first recorded in 975 as 'Burghstede', which means 'stronghold'. It's not known where the stronghold was.

It is thought that King Sæberht, King of the East Saxon's is buried somewhere nearby, around 616.

Evidence of Roman occupation has been found in the area. Ovens were found near one of the windmills that stood in the parish, and Samian pottery and possibly some urns have also been found.

Just over a hundred years later 'Burghsteda' was record in the Domesday Book as having 116 households.

At the centre of life in the village for around 800 is the Grade I listed St. Mary Magdalene's Church.

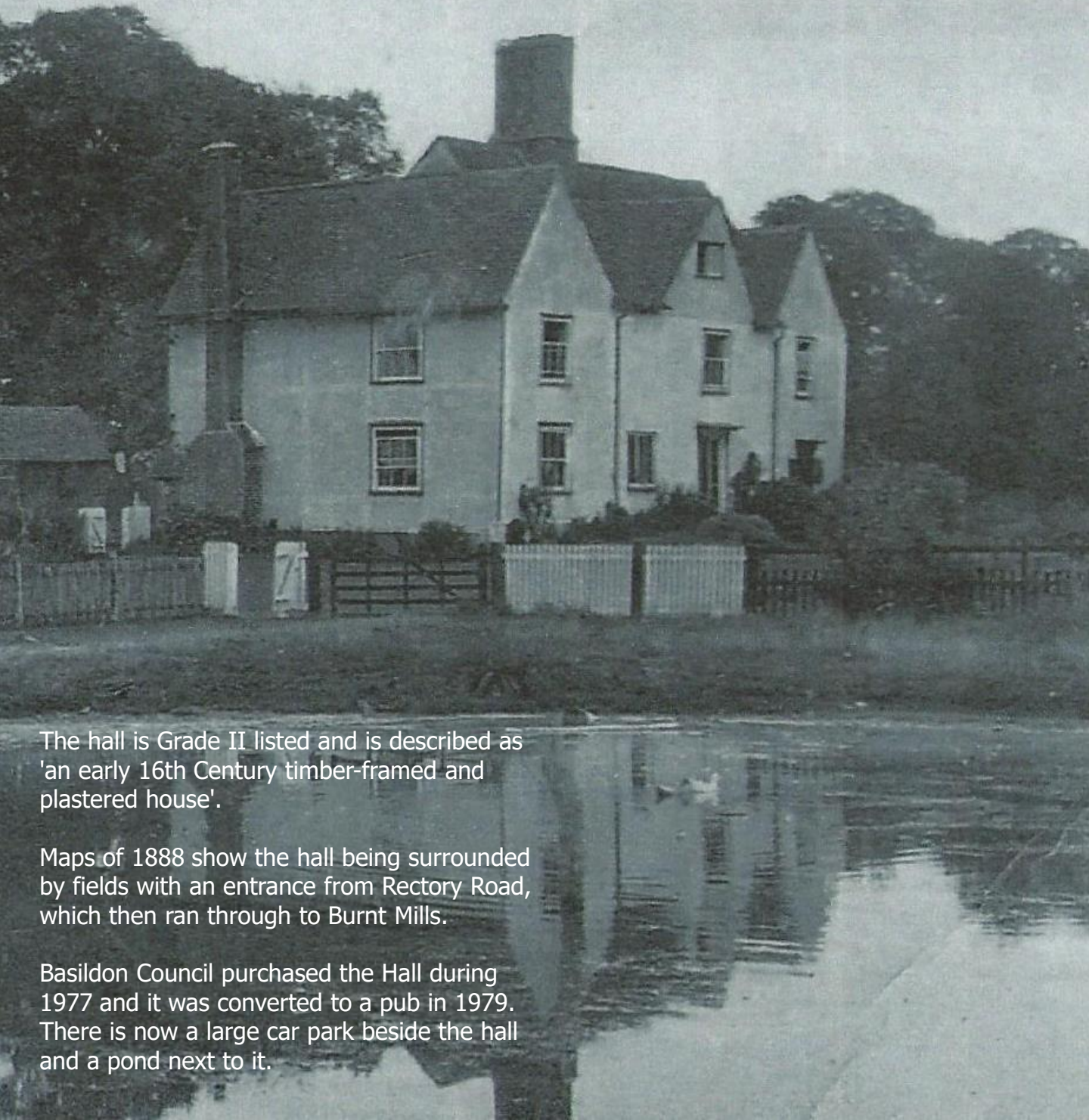
Mary Magdalene's is of Norman origin but most of the current church was built in the 1300 and 1400's. The porches were built during the 16th Century though one is almost hidden behind a large tree. Beneath this tree are several graves that have been well preserved by the cover provided by the branches and its evergreen leaves. One of these graves appears to be of 'John Reve' a 'Citizen and draper of London' who died in 1665.

'Southwood Greene' was first recorded in 1593 but had become 'South Green' by 1777.

Christopher Martin was one of a small number of locals that travelled to America on the Mayflower in 1620. Martin was born in the area and was the churchwarden for a time.



GREAT CHALVEDON HALL



The hall is Grade II listed and is described as 'an early 16th Century timber-framed and plastered house'.

Maps of 1888 show the hall being surrounded by fields with an entrance from Rectory Road, which then ran through to Burnt Mills.

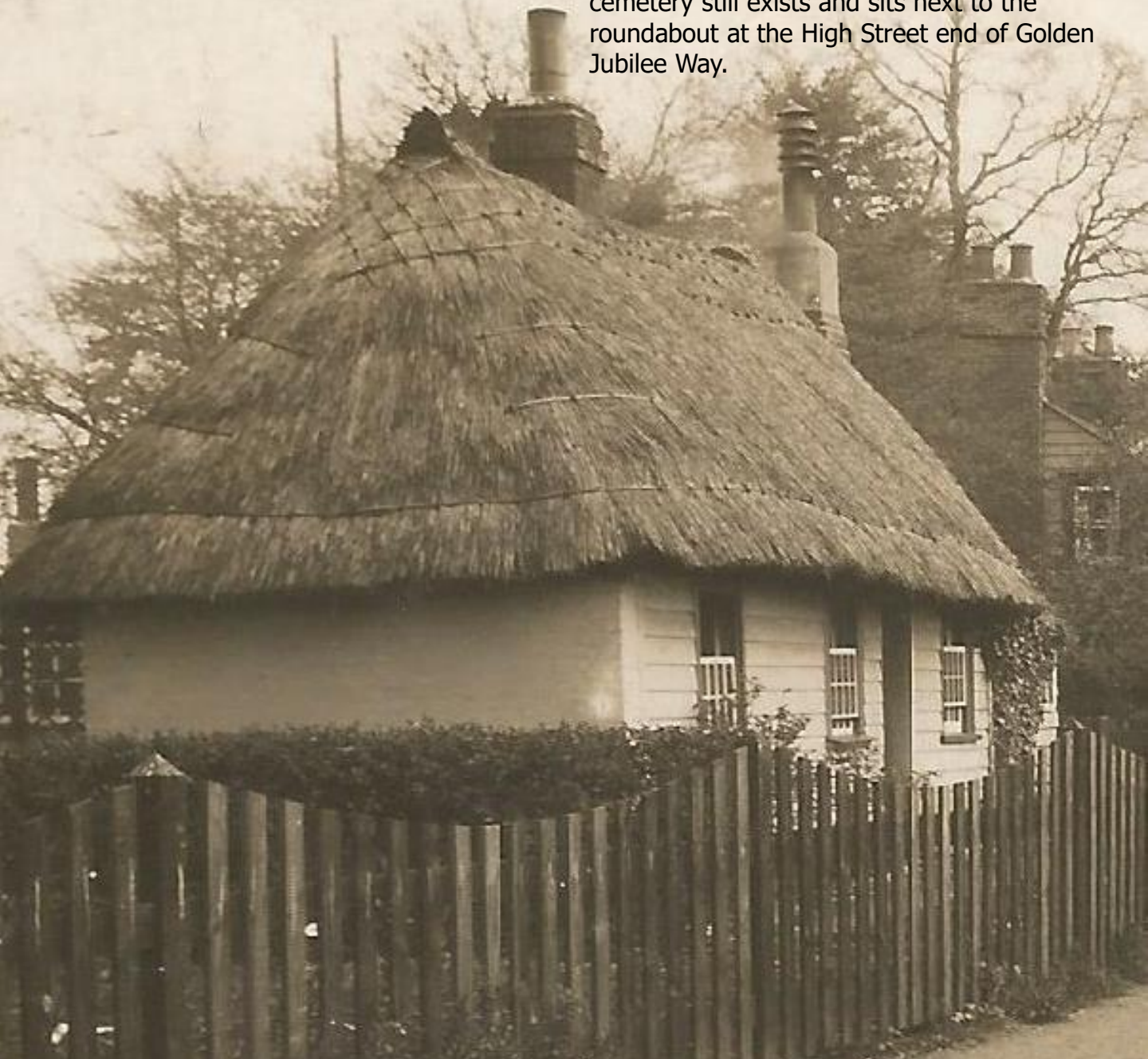
Basildon Council purchased the Hall during 1977 and it was converted to a pub in 1979. There is now a large car park beside the hall and a pond next to it.

GUINEA PIG HALL

Guinea Pig Hall was built in the 1700's and is also Grade II listed.

On the door of Guinea Pig Hall is a horse brass which was attached to one of the submarines William Bewers served on. His father was living there at the time of the 1911 census. William was killed whilst serving on HMS E22 during 26 April 1916. The brass is still attached to the front door.

Guinea Pig Hall was the home to the rector of the Congregational Church. The Church was built in 1811 adjacent to Runwell Road.¹ The cemetery still exists and sits next to the roundabout at the High Street end of Golden Jubilee Way.



GREAT GUBBINS



Great Gubbins was one of the three manors of Laindon, along with Laindon Hall and Westleigh.

The manors name was taken from the Gubbins family who were residents there in the 13th Century, though there had been a manor recorded there in 1086.

The manor's name had been spelt as 'Gobions' at times. Gobions, a road near the town centre, was named after the manor.

The building, later known as 'Manor House' was demolished during the 1940's and stood where Westmayne now passes through Laindon.

THE HAVEN



The Plotlands Museum is set amongst the large parkland of Langdon Nature Reserve.

The bungalow is made up of a few small rooms with a decent sized garden behind it. In the garden is the wash room and the remains of an air-raid shelter.

The Haven was built in the 1930's and is the last of around 200 plotland homes that stood on the site. Most of the plotland sites were compulsory purchased by the Development Corporation, and The Haven's life as a home ended in 1983.

The site is now managed by Essex Wildlife Trust after the council decided to keep the green space rather than develop it for housing.

HOLY CROSS



Holy Cross' Chapel was first mentioned in 1231 though the church records start around 400 years after.

The land was owned by the Botelers whose manor now only remains in the moat that still exists today, behind Fryerns library, and is a scheduled site. The Botelers are remembered in a nearby road name.

The nave was built in the 1300's with the tower being built around 1500. The timber porch was built in the 15th Century, covering a door that was built during the previous Century.

The 2009 book 'Memories of an Essex Ghosthunter' by Wally Downes describes eyewitness accounts from the 1970's from people that saw a monk walking to and from the graveyard at Holy Cross Church.

Cyclists saw a monk floating across the road ahead of them going in to the graveyard. Local history suggests that a monk was buried in unconsecrated ground near the church.

HOVEFIELDS MANOR

This arable farm once stood at the end of a lane that started on the Old Burnt Mills Road in North Benfleet.

The site is now under industrial buildings on Courtauld Road, next to the current site known as Hovefields. There is also Hovefields Avenue and Hovefield Drive nearby.

The farm was still standing in the 1950's before Courtauld Road was built.



IVY COTTAGE



Number 34 London Road is Ivy Cottage, a Grade II listed building.

Older photos of the cottage show it covered in ivy which is probably where the name comes from. The building was added to the National Heritage List in 1981.

It is thought that the cottage was built in the early 1700's, though it could be older, which will make it one of the oldest buildings in the town, not taking churches in to account.

There is a brass plaque on the cottage that shows images of people in Tudor-style dress.

KILN FARM



There were once two Kiln Farms in the area that we now know as Basildon Borough.

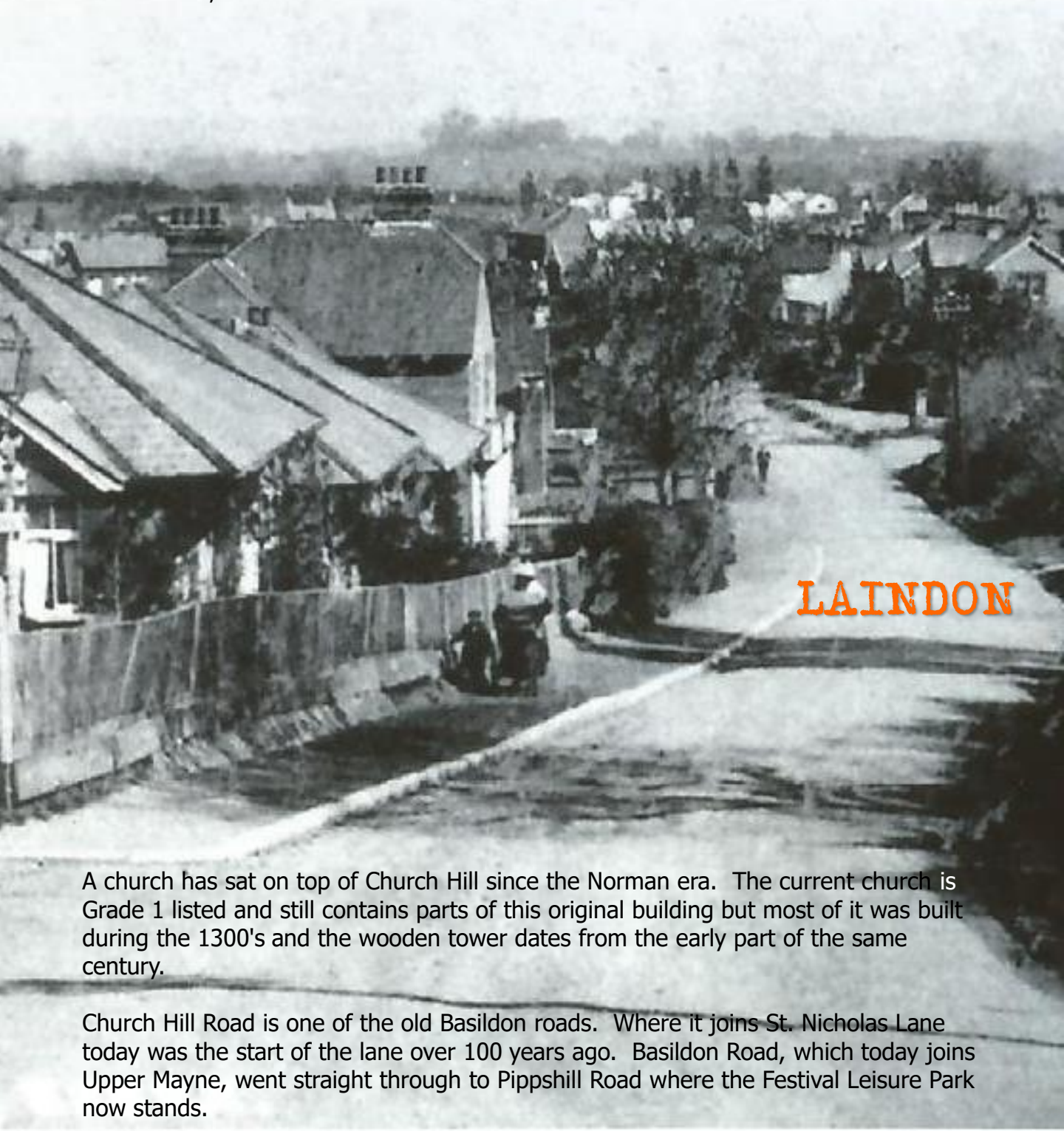
One sat next to the train line over-looking Pitsea Creek. A map from the late 1800's shows it being close to Pitsea Pumping Station.

A 1950's map shows the farm still in existence and with a footpath running from The Meads to the farm.

A second Kiln Farm once stood where Foxleigh is now in Billericay.

Leiendina was listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. The towns name appears to mean 'Hill by the River Lyge'. The Lyge is a Celtic name for a river, that may have been a tributary of the Crouch that can be found in the area. 'Don' is an old English word meaning hill.

Laindon is set to the west of the borough with Dunton on its west side, Langdon Hills to the south, Little Burstead to the north and the town of Basildon to the east.



A church has sat on top of Church Hill since the Norman era. The current church is Grade 1 listed and still contains parts of this original building but most of it was built during the 1300's and the wooden tower dates from the early part of the same century.

Church Hill Road is one of the old Basildon roads. Where it joins St. Nicholas Lane today was the start of the lane over 100 years ago. Basildon Road, which today joins Upper Mayne, went straight through to Pippshill Road where the Festival Leisure Park now stands.



LAINDON HALL

Laindon Hall used to stand next to St. Nicholas' Church. This is now a wooded area as is the site where Hill Farm used to stand.

Jessie K. Payne wrote in her book 'Basildon: A Pictorial History' that the hall dated from the 15th Century.

Laindon Hall was destroyed in an alleged arson attack several years ago. A Tudor staircase was destroyed in the fire. Fortunately, photos were taken of the inside of the hall before the fire.

Langenduna was listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. This small town can be found to the south of Laindon and it shares a border with Thurrock. Langdon Hills was once part of the Urban District of Orsett until 1936. Now part of it is within the boundary of Thurrock Borough Council.

The name 'Langdon' means 'Long Hill'.

Maps from the 1890's and 1900's show the area as 'Laindon Hills'.

St. Mary's and All Saints' Church has stood on High Road, Langdon Hills since 1876. It is a short walk from The Crown Hotel and the old School House, which is now a private residence.

Langdon Hills was home to a P.O.W. Camp 266 during World War Two and housed several Germans. Evidence of the camp can still be seen as the concrete base in what is known as Beacon Field. The camp closed in 1948 and the field was used, for a short time, by Westley Cricket Club.



LANGDON HILLS

LEE CHAPEL



Lee was recorded as 'Lea' in the Domesday Book of 1086. This is probably before the Chapel had been constructed. The name comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'Leam' which means 'woodland clearing'.

The parish of Lee was made up of two hamlets: East Lee and West Lee. Both had a chapel. East Lee's chapel stood near The Knares and West Lee's was thought to be near Westley Hall.

In 1254 the area was recorded as 'Leye Chapel'.

West Lee became part of Langdon Hills during the 15th Century having been owned by Edward The Confessor's Queen.

LITTLE BURSTEAD



The village of Burstead was first recorded in 975 as 'Burghstede', which means 'stronghold' or 'fortified place'. It's not known where the stronghold was but the large Norman Church in Great Burstead suggests the area was important.

Heading away from Little Burstead, along Rectory Road, towards Dunton is the Grade II listed St Mary the Virgin Church. Originally built in the 1100's the south doorway was added in the 1300's and most of the fabric of the church dates from the 15th and 16th Century.

There are many listed buildings in Little Burstead including Hope House, Coopers Cottages and Stockwell Manor. There is also a K6 Telephone Box in the village that is listed.

Little Burstead had an early warning bunker installed in the 1960's. Operated by the Royal Observer Corp during the Cold War the bunker was last used in 1991.

The photograph shows a two-story house with white horizontal weatherboard siding. A large, dark chimney with multiple flues rises from the roofline. The house has several windows, including a large one on the second floor and a smaller one on the first floor. A small, gabled porch is visible on the left side of the house. The house is surrounded by some foliage and a white picket fence is partially visible in the foreground.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Lee Chapel Lane, which today runs alongside Staneway, almost follows the same course it did prior to the creation of the new town.

The 1888 OS map shows that at the west end of the road was a junction with High Road, Langdon Hills. This is now a dead end, and by this junction was Nightingale's Farm.

One of the houses along Lee Chapel Lane, now surrounded by many modern homes, is The Lighthouse.

This white weatherboard building is Grade II listed and was built in the mid-1700's. The listing suggests that some alterations have been made to the building since the 1800's.

Luncies Farm sat just within the Pitsea boundaries, on what is now Luncies Road. The house was demolished in 1955 having been one of the first to be sold for housing.

LUNCIES FARM

Records show the farm was occupied as far back as 1658.



On 16 September 1620 The Mayflower set sail from Plymouth, Devon heading towards the New World. It lowered its anchor off the coast of Cape Cod on 19 November.

Amongst the passengers were Christopher and Mary Martin (nee Prowse), as well as Simon Prowse who is likely to be a son from a previous marriage. Christopher and Mary's marriage in Great Burstead during 1607 is the earliest record of the two.

The fourth member of the Martin group was John Langerman, Christopher's servant.

Christopher became the Church Warden of Great Burstead in 1611. When The Mayflower left England, he was the Passenger Governor, but was replaced by a far more popular passenger.



A large number of the passengers died during the winter of 1620-21 due to a lack of shelter and provisions. Simon died on 24 December 1620 as the harbour was being explored. Christopher died around 8 January 1621 and Mary died a few days later, both of the 'general sickness'. Langerman died that same winter.

All four were named on a plaque unveiled in the United Reform Church during 1920.

Today the Mayflower is a recognisable image in Billericay. Billericay Town F.C., the cricket club and the tennis club all use the image as a logo.

A milestone sits in Wickford, near the junction with Nevendon Road and London Road, opposite Foundry Corner (known as Halls Corner).

The stone reads:

To
London
29 miles
Southend
2 miles
Rayleigh
5 miles
Billericay
6 miles.

Parish of
Wickford

The stone was installed in the late 1700's and is listed in a map of 1777, it is Grade II listed.

MILESTONE



There are at least two

MISSION HALL's in the Borough.



There are very few buildings left in Vange which pre-date the New Town. Gordon Mission Hall was built in 1901 and was named after General Charles George Gordon (1833-1885) and stands on part of Timberlog Lane that has since become Clay Hill Road.

There are a number of foundation stones on the building with the name of those that laid it, some of them showing the year 1901.

One of these stones was laid by Mrs T. Dalrymple who was living in 'Bassildon' at the time.

On the opposite side of London Road, Wickford from the milestone is the Mission Hall, which is next door to St Andrew's Church.

The hall was also built in 1901 and can be seen in older photos of the area.





MOATHOUSE

Moat Farm, also known as Moathouse, stood to the south of Holy Cross Church and was, unsurprisingly, surrounded by a moat.

The Manor was listed in the Domesday Book as 'Belesdun'. It was held by John Botill in 1362. His name has also been recorded as 'Botiller' and from this the site is also known as 'Botelers'.

There is a road in Lee Chapel that runs from The Knares to Sporhams called Botelers.

Today only the moat still exists and it is part of a scheduled site. The moat is managed and owned by a fishing club.

Moat House School once stood on Church Road until it was closed in 2003, when it merged with The Pioneer School in Ghyllgrove.

MOTHER AND CHILD



There are over 100 listed structures in the Borough of Basildon. One of these is the fountain and pool in Basildon town centre.

The statue and pool were designed by Maurice Lambert and installed during 1962.

The silhouette of the Mother and Child has been used as a logo for Basildon and was adopted by Basildon United Football Club at the turn of the current century.

Genevieve Alison Jane Moyet was born in Billericay¹ on Sunday 18 June 1961. Alison, as she is known, was educated at Janet Duke Junior School in Lee Chapel and then went to Nicholas Comprehensive in Laindon, at the same time as Martin Gore who went on to form Depeche Mode.

In an interview with The Guardian Alison stated that no one ever called her Genevieve as it would never have worked in Basildon.

ALISON MOYET





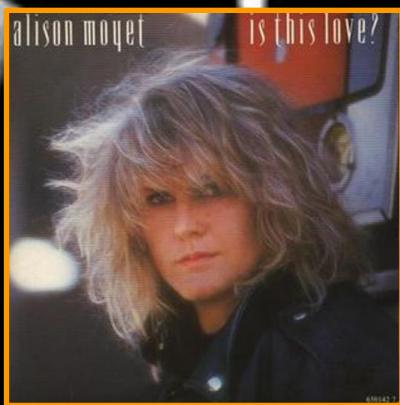
In 1982 Alison placed an advert in Melody Maker to find a band that could use her services as a lead vocalist. During the late 1970's she had been a member of a punk band called 'The Vandals', as well as a Southend band called 'The Vicars'. She was contacted by Vince Clarke, who had recently left Depeche Mode. Vince asked her to record a demo called 'Only You' and Mute Records were immediately interested.

The single would be the duo's, now known as Yazoo, first and biggest hit, reaching number 2 in the singles chart.

Alison had gone solo by 1984 and her debut album 'Alf' was released that November reaching Number 1 in the UK and New Zealand album charts.

The first single released from the album, 'Love Resurrection', was also released in 1984 reaching number 10 in the UK, and 8 in Ireland. This was followed by 'All Cried Out' which was a top 10 hit in the UK charts as well as in Ireland and New Zealand.

'That Ole Devil Called Love' was Alison's first single release of 1985 and her biggest hit to date, reaching number 2 on the UK singles chart and was a number 1 in New Zealand. Alison's only single of 1986, 'Is This Love?', reached number 3 and she would end 1987 with two more top 10 hits.



ALISON MOYET...

ALISON MOYET...

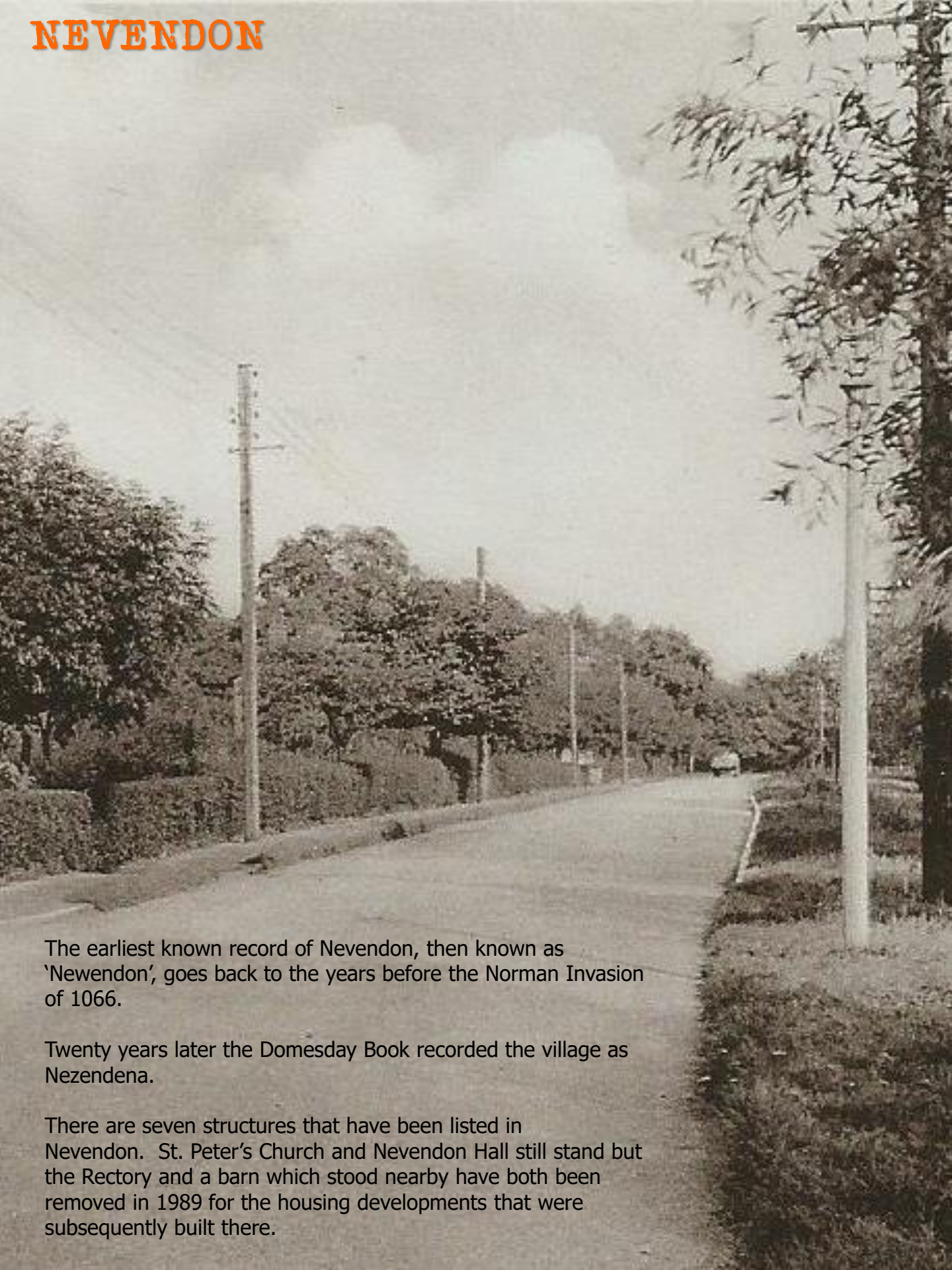
A compilation album, 'Singles', was released in 1995 that would top the UK album charts.

In 2007 Alison contacted Vince by e-mail suggesting that they reformed Yazoo and toured. Then in their 40's the two immediately got on well and the communication that had been missing from their working relationship during the 1980's was no longer evident.

Today Alison reaches over 178,000 fans via Twitter who enjoy her funny and insightful Tweets.



NEVENDON



The earliest known record of Nevendon, then known as 'Newendon', goes back to the years before the Norman Invasion of 1066.

Twenty years later the Domesday Book recorded the village as Nezendena.

There are seven structures that have been listed in Nevendon. St. Peter's Church and Nevendon Hall still stand but the Rectory and a barn which stood nearby have both been removed in 1989 for the housing developments that were subsequently built there.

The British Listed Buildings website shows the St Peters to be of 13th Century origin with restoration work being carried out in the 1850's. The wooden bell 'cote' is thought to have been built in the 17th Century whilst the chancel windows are considered to be 13th Century and have medieval stonework.

The church and the hall are behind a supermarket by the A127 Nevendon fly-over. This site had previously been home to a sport pavilion which had been left derelict for several years.

Nevendon Hall is now being used for offices but there is brickwork on the building that shows the build date as 1833.

NEVENDON...



The barn that was listed sat opposite Nevendon Hall. This may have belonged to Frampton's Farm which stood at the end of Church Lane.

Both 16th century builds Great Bromfords farmhouse and Nevendon Manor, formerly known as Little Bromfords, are Grade II listed.

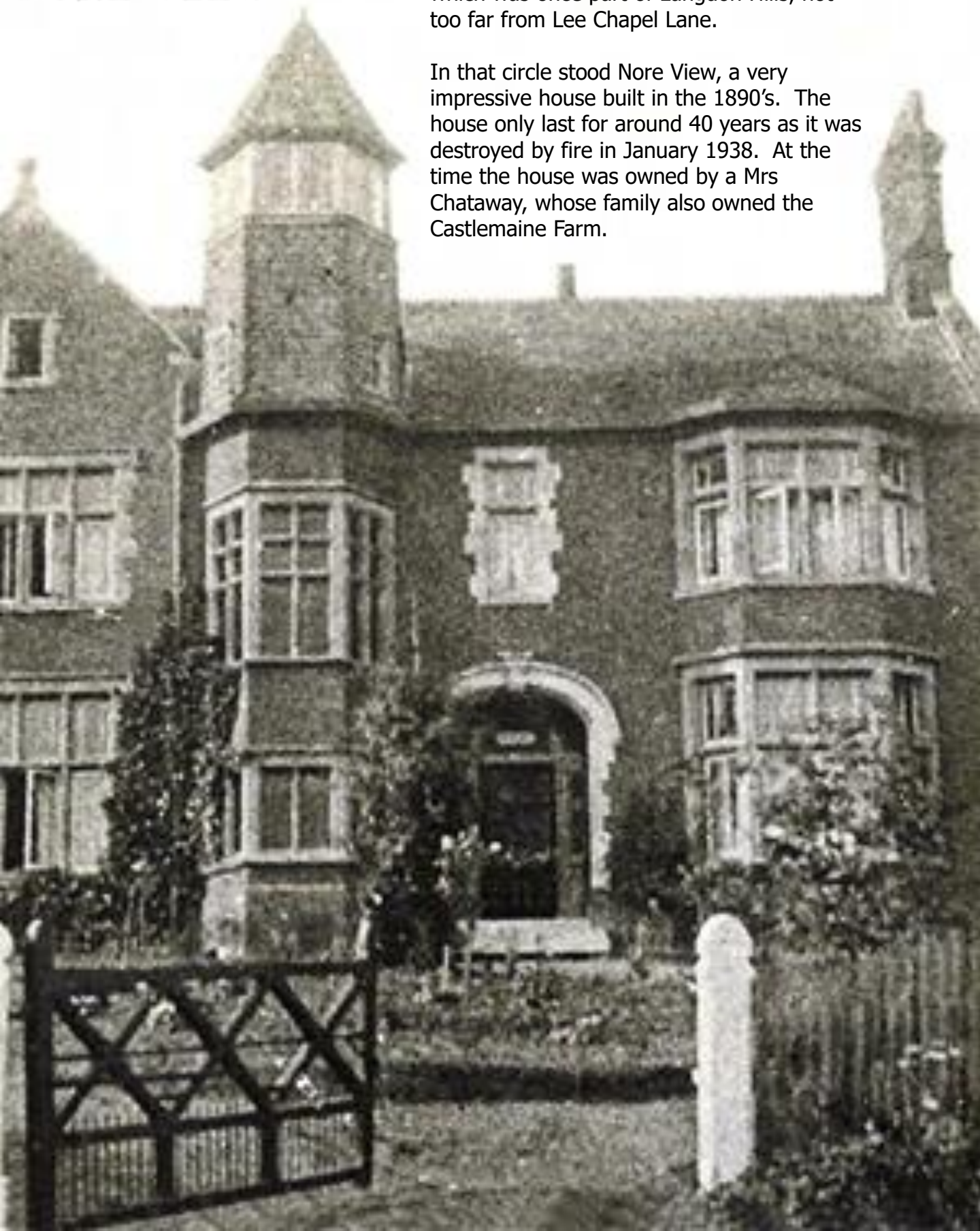
The children of Nevendon were educated at the National School which was built in 1886. Nevendon County Primary School was opened on Burnt Mills Road in 1926 and still stands today. It was last used as a school in 1983.

The building has since been taken over and used as the Basildon Information Technology Education Centre (BTEC).

NORE VIEW

Nore View Crescent was a circular road, which was once part of Langdon Hills, not too far from Lee Chapel Lane.

In that circle stood Nore View, a very impressive house built in the 1890's. The house only last for around 40 years as it was destroyed by fire in January 1938. At the time the house was owned by a Mrs Chataway, whose family also owned the Castlemaine Farm.



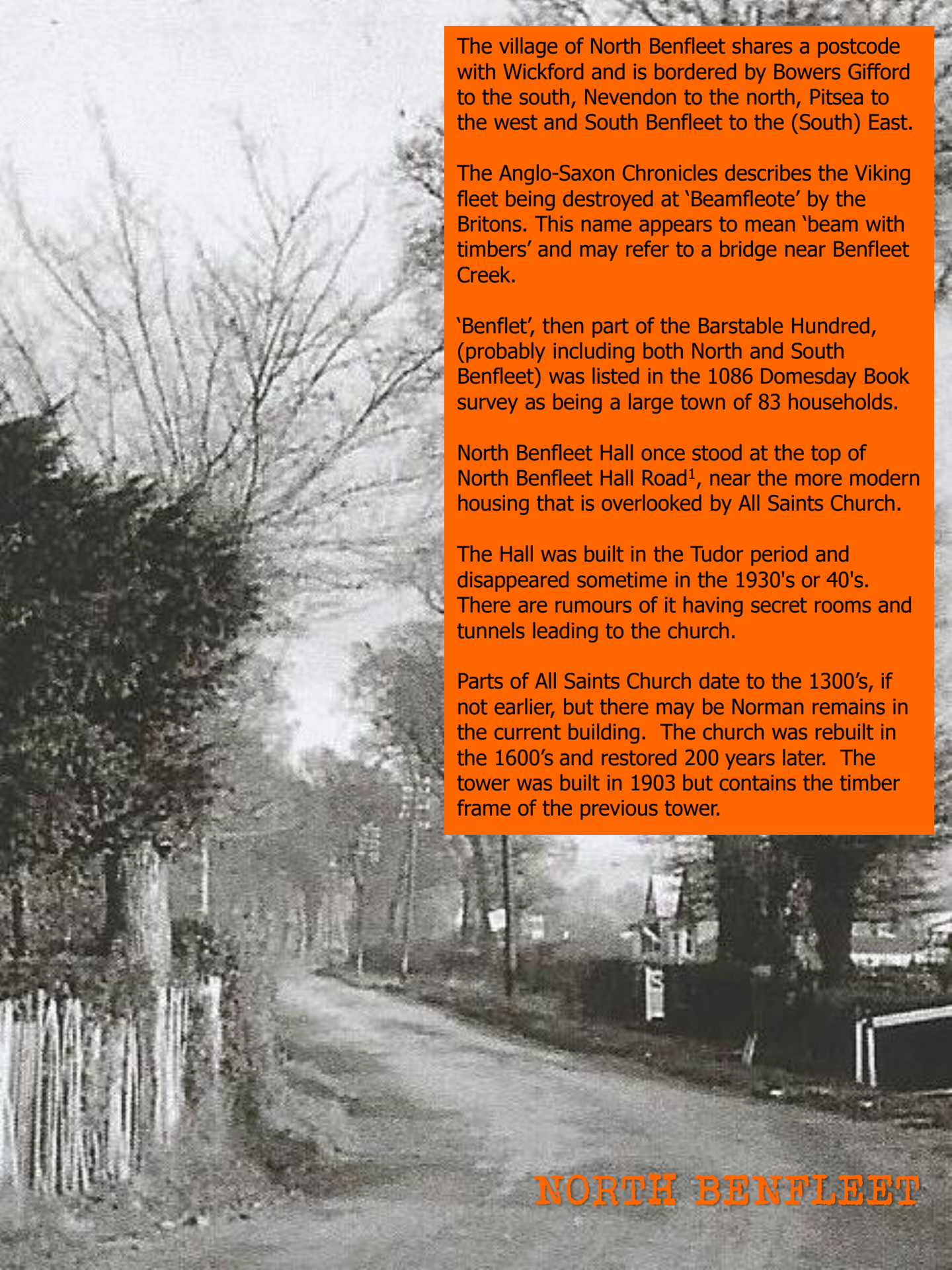
NORE VIEW...

Today 'Nore View' is remembered in Great Berry as a road name, off of Kilowan Close.

The crescent, alongside Staneway, stands in Marks Hill Wood and is now marked with a sign and is still quite obvious as a path goes around the site. The centre is very over grown with other parts being fenced off using trees that have been cut down around the nature reserve.

It is thought that Nore View got its name because its position high on Langdon Hills gave it a view of the lightship near the Nore sandbank in the mouth of the Thames Estuary.

I have also been told that Nore View was part of a racetrack that was going to be built in the area before the idea was abandoned.



The village of North Benfleet shares a postcode with Wickford and is bordered by Bowers Gifford to the south, Nevendon to the north, Pitsea to the west and South Benfleet to the (South) East.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles describes the Viking fleet being destroyed at 'Beamfleote' by the Britons. This name appears to mean 'beam with timbers' and may refer to a bridge near Benfleet Creek.

'Benflet', then part of the Barstable Hundred, (probably including both North and South Benfleet) was listed in the 1086 Domesday Book survey as being a large town of 83 households.

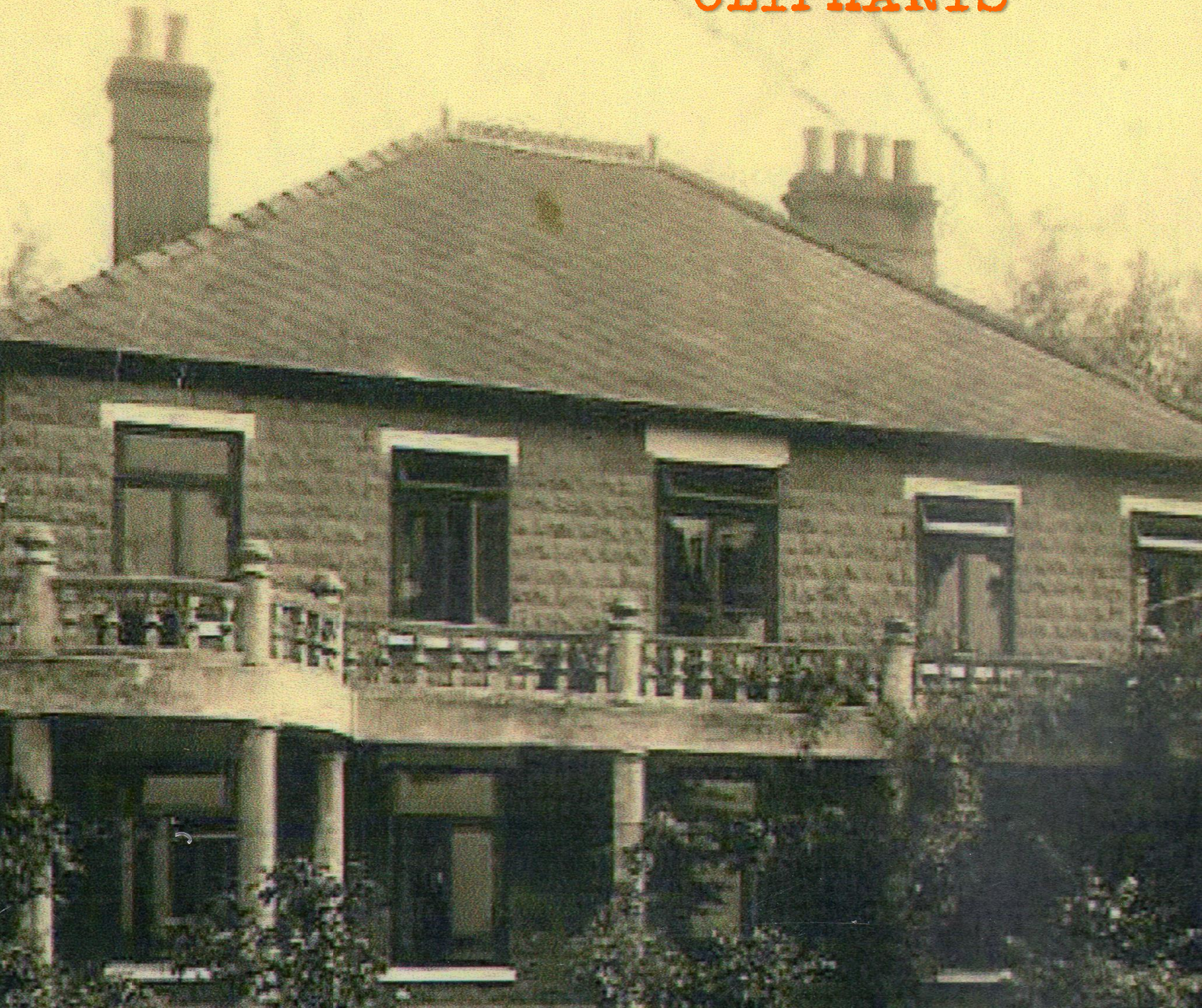
North Benfleet Hall once stood at the top of North Benfleet Hall Road¹, near the more modern housing that is overlooked by All Saints Church.

The Hall was built in the Tudor period and disappeared sometime in the 1930's or 40's. There are rumours of it having secret rooms and tunnels leading to the church.

Parts of All Saints Church date to the 1300's, if not earlier, but there may be Norman remains in the current building. The church was rebuilt in the 1600's and restored 200 years later. The tower was built in 1903 but contains the timber frame of the previous tower.

NORTH BENFLEET

OLIPHANTS



Cranes Farm Road is the home to New Holland Tractor Plant. The site was first built in the 1960's by Ford to free up space at the Dagenham plant allowing Dagenham to concentrate on cars and Basildon to build tractors.

In the 1990's the site was sold to Fiat and is now the only tractor factory in the country.

Prior to the tractor plant being built and Cranes Farm Road cutting its way through the area the main road ran from Timberlog Lane and through to what is now Basildon Road. Part of the road still exists as Gardiners Close. This runs from Gardiners Lane South until it is cut short by the tractor plant. This single track, tree-lined road has a number of homes along either side as well as Basildon United F.C. and Basildon Rugby Club.

Off a track than ran from this road was Oliphants Farm which covered around 236 acres of land in 1873. This was a Tudor house that had burned down in the early 20th Century.



ONION

Fords opened their tractor plant in 1964 on Cranes Farm Road. The construction saw the end of Oliphants Farm and Basildon Rectory.

Now a local landmark, the plants 125-foot-tall water tower is locally known as 'The Onion' and can be seen from around the borough. The tower can hold 200,000 gallons.

Today the plant is run and operated by Case-New Holland.

Florence Alfreda Jessie Kestell Payne (nee Moss) was born during 1907 in Goldings Farm, Vange. Her family farmed much of the area for over 100 years, including land that is now covered by Basildon town centre.

She married Herbert Payne in 1943 and gave birth to a daughter, Janet, in 1946.

Mrs Payne started taking and collecting photos, and researching the history, of the area before the war. From 1954 until 1967 she wrote historical articles every week for the Basildon Standard, and provided the historical section for the official Basildon guide.

Mrs Payne's interests took in the rest of the parishes that make up what is now Basildon Borough.

In 1978 she received a degree in Art having been reading the subject with the Open University.

As well as writing 'Southend-on-Sea: A Pictorial Guide' and 'A Ghost Hunters Guide to Essex' Jessie wrote 'Basildon: A Pictorial Guide', which was published in 1981. In 1987 'When Basildon was Farms and Fields' was published.

Mrs Jessie K. Payne, historian and author, died 17 August 1987.



BASILDON

A PICTORIAL HISTORY



JESSIE K. PAYNE



PITSEA

Pitsea was listed in the Domesday Book of 1086 as 'Piceseia'. At the time Pitsea was home to 21 households as well as 190 sheep and 1 mill.

Wikipedia lists the different variations the town was known as over the years: 'Pichesey(e), Pikeseye, Pithesey, Petchesey(e), Pisseye, Pitchesey, Pytsay, Pittessey, Pytchey, Pitsey.'

'Pitsea' is thought to mean 'Pics Island' and refers to Pitsea Mount.

Today the town is made up of Burnt Mills, Chalvedon, Eversley, Felmores and Pitsea Mount.

The Church of Saint Michael's sits atop Pitsea Mount and overlooks the town of Pitsea as well as Pitsea marshes.

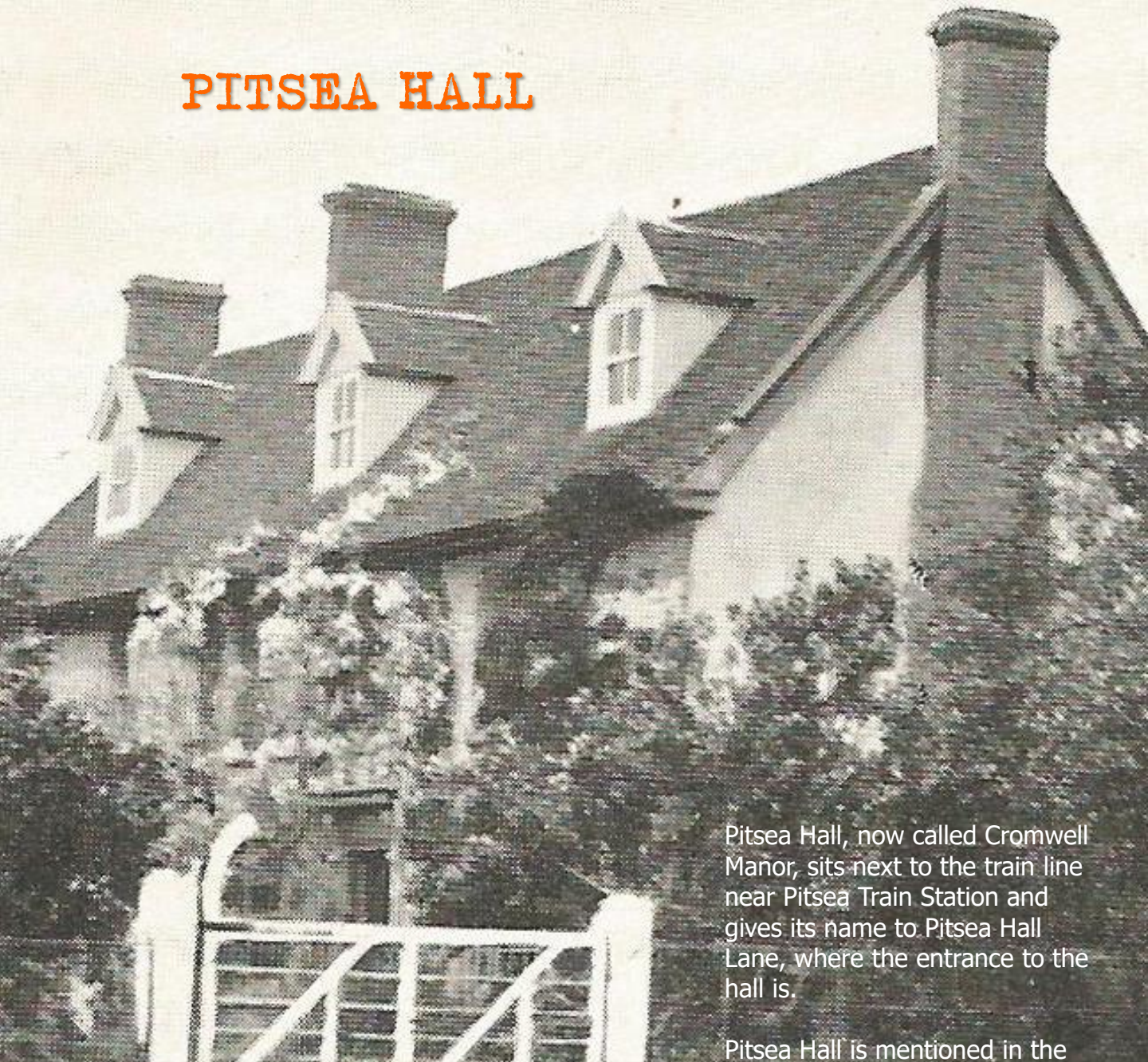
The view from the top of the mount is obscured by the trees and bushes that have grown now the churchyard is no longer tended as it once was. This isn't to say that the area isn't looked after. The church fell in to disuse during the early 1980's and was confirmed as redundant in 1983.

In recent years the main body of the church has been removed, the site tidied and the tower used to house a mobile phone mast. The tower is thought to date from the 1600's but the church was rebuilt in the 1870's.

Next to the remaining tower lies the grave of Ann Freeman who died on 20 March 1879. Below her name it reads 'Here lies a weak and sinful worm, the vilest of her race. Saved through Gods electing love, his free and sovereign grace.' This appears to be a 'prayer' rather than a character reference.

A large landmark in Pitsea is the Tesco Extra Store. This originally opened in 1978 and, at the time, was the largest supermarket in Europe. In 1997 it became the first Tesco Extra store.

PITSEA HALL



Pitsea Hall, now called Cromwell Manor, sits next to the train line near Pitsea Train Station and gives its name to Pitsea Hall Lane, where the entrance to the hall is.

Pitsea Hall is mentioned in the Domesday Book but the current house dates from the 1600's. Other buildings that stood around the Hall were destroyed when the railway came to Pitsea in the 1850's.

Grade II listed since 1950 the name 'Cromwell Manor' is taken from the Roundhead Military helmet which was found when the moat that sat in front of the Hall was drained. Part of the moat still exists.



There are at least two English Queen's that have links to the Basildon area.

Prior to Mary Tudor ascending to the English throne in 1553 she took an income from the manor farms at Great Chalvedon Hall and Pitsea Hall.

A previous owner of the Hall held a document recording that Mary's successor, Elizabeth I, stayed in Pitsea Hall having travelled up from the Royal Docks at Tilbury after making her speech to the troops in August 1588.

On 12 March 1999 Queen Elizabeth II visited Basildon, with Prince Philip, to officially open the glass bell tower. It was the Prince's third visit to the town.





Ramsden Bellhouse appears in the Domesday Book as Ramesduna. The records show that there were 56 households in the village, amongst them there were 4 slaves.

Ramsden is thought to mean 'Little Wooded Valley of the Ravens', 'wild garlic dene' or 'rams valley'. Bellhouse was added during the 13th Century, named after the 'de Belhus' family who were given the land. The family also owned land in Aveley where Belhus Country Park and Little Belhus Hall are today.

St. Mary The Virgin's Church is around a mile along Church Road from London Road and is next door to Ramsden Bellhouse Hall. The hall, now a private residence, is a Grade II listed building, built in the late 1500's, set back from the road and hidden from view.

The church of St Mary the Virgin is Grade II listed. It was 'remodelled' in the 1800's but the wooden tower, roof and south porch date from the 1400's.

A photograph of Ramsden Bellhouse Hall, a two-story red brick house with a red tiled roof and a central chimney. The house has several white-framed windows and a white door with a small pediment. It is surrounded by a green lawn and trees, including a large tree with red fruit on the right. A paved path leads towards the house, and fallen fruit is scattered on the path in the foreground.

RAMSDEN BELLHOUSE HALL

Ramsden Bellhouse Hall can be found on Church Road, next door to the church of St. Mary The Virgin.

Built in the late 1500's the front of the building was resurfaced in the 1700's with the red brick we can see today.

The Hall became Grade II listed in 1955.



RAMSDEN CRAYS

The village of Ramsden Crays is between Little Burstead and Wickford, and includes Crays Hill. It was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as 'Ramesdana'.

It appears that 'Ramsden' means 'garlic valley', or 'rams valley' as suggested on Wikipedia. In 1257 Simon de Creye took over the area.

The Church of St. Mary in Ramsden Crays is now a privately own residence. It became Grade II listed in 1955, the majority of the church was rebuilt in the 1870s. The tower and spire appear to date from the 1600's.

Parsonage Farm once stood on Church Lane, behind the church.

The Red Lion Public House has features from the 1400's and there has been an inn on the site since 1593.

This Grade II listed coaching inn was altered greatly in the 1700 and 1800's but now has modern refurbishment inside.

For a few years in the late 1920's it was the Headquarters of the Billericay Motorcycle Club. The club was also used by Billericay Football Club as a place for committee meetings and to host rival teams after matches.

On 13 March 1926 Billericay beat Marconi Athletic Reserves 5-2. A local newspaper reported that 'after the match the visitors were entertained to tea by the Billericay team at the Red Lion Hotel, where an enjoyable evening was spent'.

A report from August 1881 stated that around 200 men had got drunk during a party in the Red Lion, later going in to the High Street where they caused damaged, were seen fighting and stole items.

THE RED LION



The Romans occupied most of Britain from 43 to 410AD. Evidence of Roman activity has been found in several places around the borough.

During building work in Billericay, in the area where Roman Way is now situated, some Roman burials were found.

Evidence of a fortified area has been found in Blunts Wall and other Roman artefacts, pottery and coins amongst them, have been found in the town.

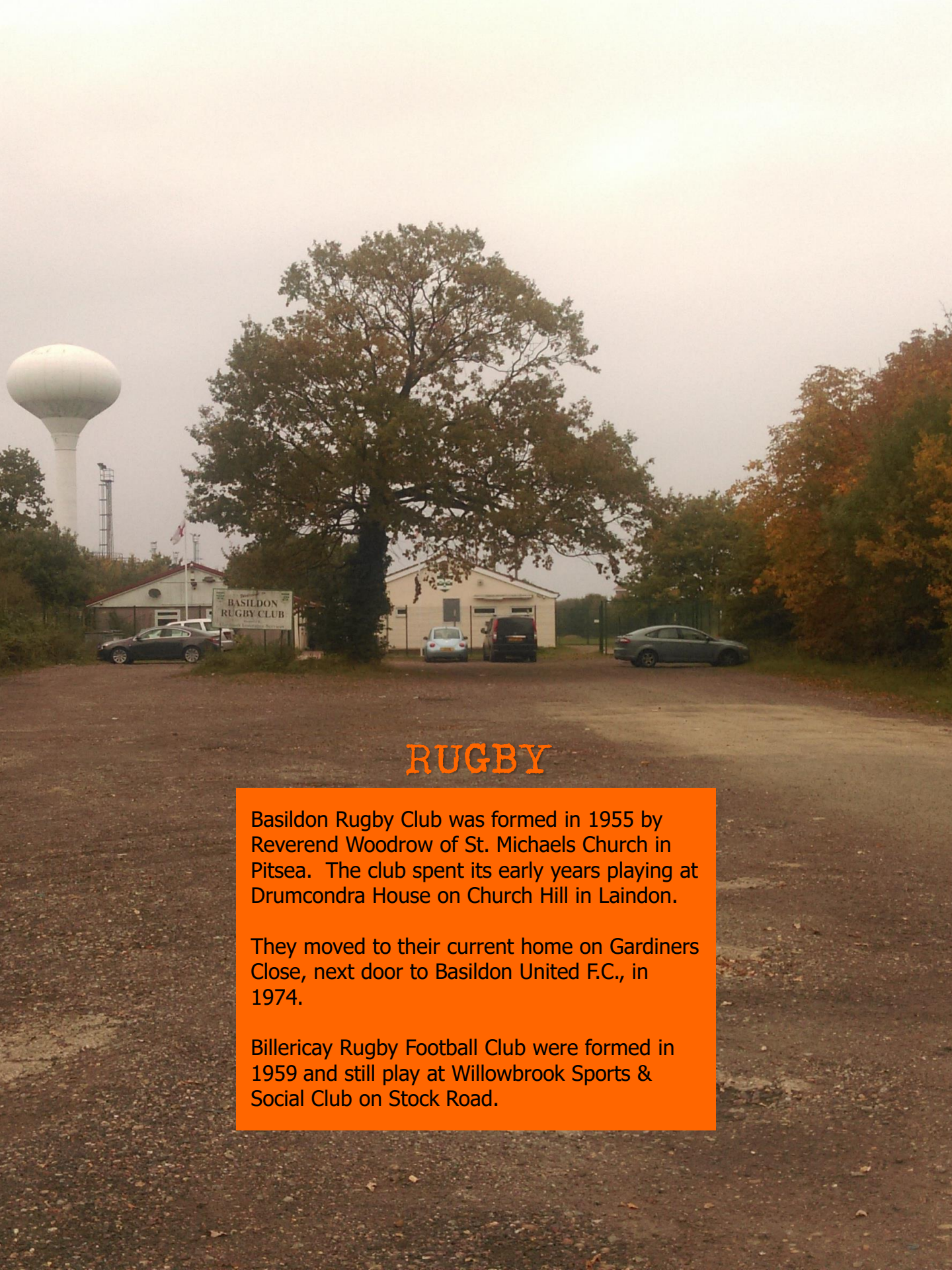
Land farmed from Belchamps Farm, Wickford once occupied the area of a Roman camp and then a villa. Flooring, coins, pottery and metal work were found during excavations. The settlement is now buried under housing on Beauchamps Drive.

It has also been suggested that the name 'Wickford' is named after a 'vicus', a Roman settlement.

A survey in Dry Street during 2006 found evidence that the Romans had been in the area.



THE ROMANS



RUGBY

Basildon Rugby Club was formed in 1955 by Reverend Woodrow of St. Michaels Church in Pitsea. The club spent its early years playing at Drumcondra House on Church Hill in Laindon.

They moved to their current home on Gardiners Close, next door to Basildon United F.C., in 1974.

Billericay Rugby Football Club were formed in 1959 and still play at Willowbrook Sports & Social Club on Stock Road.

The village of Shotgate is to the east of Wickford and the west of Rawreth. The village is part of Wickford and is to the far east of the borough.

In the late 1800's what is now Shotgate was not much more than farmland. Shot Farm and Shotage Farm still exist today, both have listed structures on their land.

The village sign is made up of a number of images, perhaps the most interesting is a Hawker Hurricane.

In May 1940 a RAF Hawker Hurricane, flown by New Zealander William Hodgson was hit and caught fire whilst fighting enemy aircraft.

Pilot Officer Hodgson attempted to make his way back to RAF Debden, near Saffron Walden. It became apparent that the aircraft would not manage the journey so William crash landed in fields near Shotgate rather than bail out and risk the Hurricane crashing in to a populated area.

William Hodgson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions and has since had the Hodgsons Way Industrial Estate named after him.



A black and white portrait of actress Joan Sims. She is shown from the chest up, with her head slightly tilted and her right hand resting against her cheek. She has short, curly hair and is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, top. The background is dark and out of focus.

JOAN SIMS

Irene Joan Marion Sims was born on 9 May 1930 in Laindon. Her father, John Henry Sims, was the Station Master for Laindon Train Station.

Joan would entertain passengers on the station as they waited for their trains.

Sims became famous to millions when she joined the Carry On team in 1959 for 'Carry on Nurse'. Her last appearances came in 1978 for 'Carry On Emmannuelle'. Joan appeared in 24 of the 31 Carry On films.

She also starred in 'Doctor in the House' in 1954, and did so in 5 of the seven 'Doctor' series.

Sims released three singles in 1963, but none of them entered the UK charts. This has resulted in these records being quite rare.

Joan made appearance in the 1987 Christmas Special of Only Fools and Horses and was a regular as Mrs Wembley in 'On The Up' from 1990 until 1992. From 1994 until 1998 she was a regular in the BBC sitcom 'As Time Goes By'.

Her autobiography, 'High Spirits' was published in 2000.

Joan died on 27 June 2001 from liver failure and diverticulitis. She had appeared in over 70 films in a 40-year period, and had a television career that lasted for 50 years.

Stockwell Hall stands on Clockhouse Road in Little Burstead.

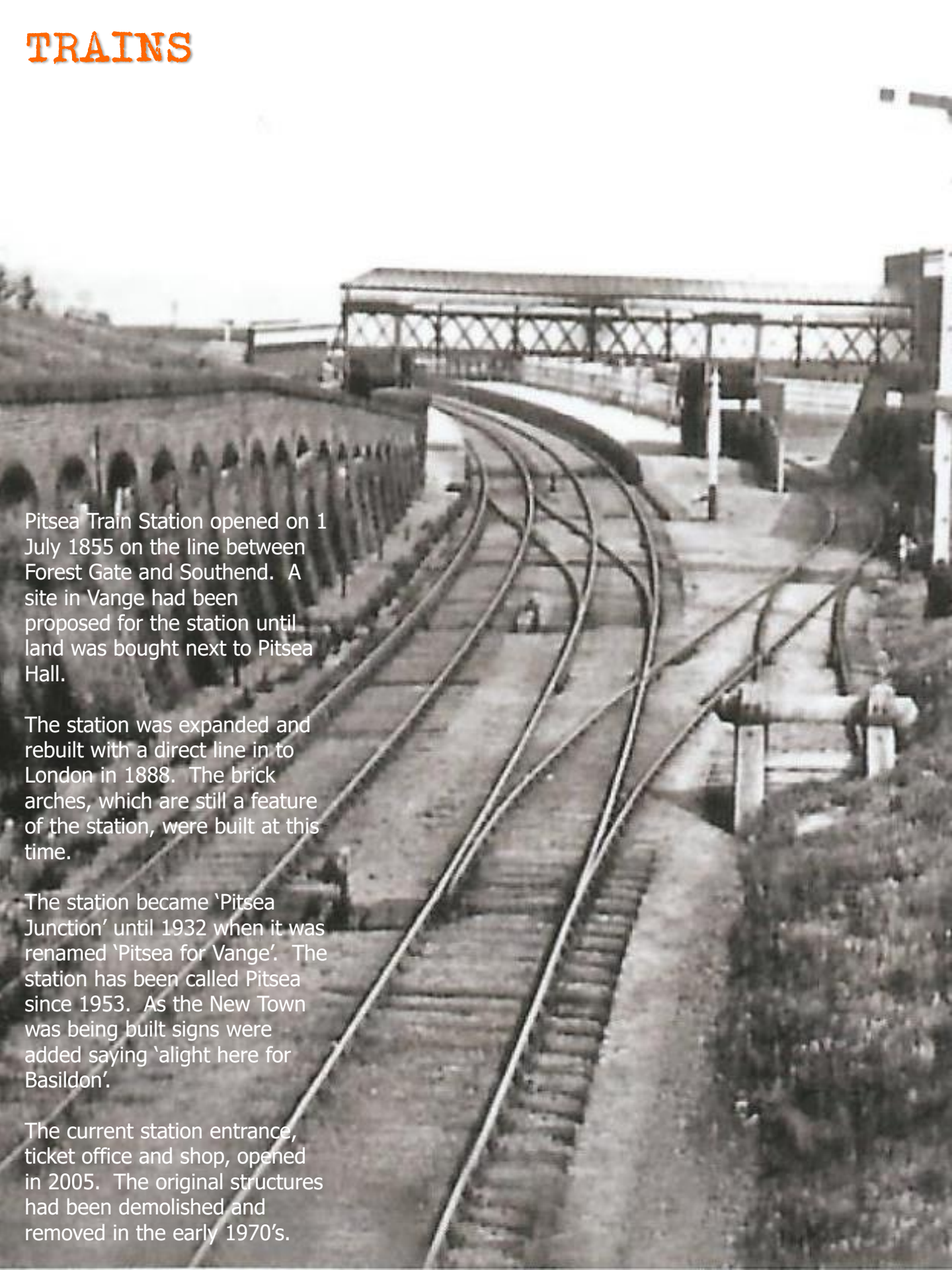
This Tudor house has a large clock on its east wall. The numerals in the clock were, allegedly, once made up of blackened finger bones but have since been replaced with wooden numerals.

Stockwell Hall became Grade II listed in 1955.



STOCKWELL HALL

TRAINS



Pitsea Train Station opened on 1 July 1855 on the line between Forest Gate and Southend. A site in Vange had been proposed for the station until land was bought next to Pitsea Hall.

The station was expanded and rebuilt with a direct line in to London in 1888. The brick arches, which are still a feature of the station, were built at this time.

The station became 'Pitsea Junction' until 1932 when it was renamed 'Pitsea for Vange'. The station has been called Pitsea since 1953. As the New Town was being built signs were added saying 'alight here for Basildon'.

The current station entrance, ticket office and shop, opened in 2005. The original structures had been demolished and removed in the early 1970's.

The stations at Billericay, Laindon and Wickford all opened in 1888, and they started accepting passengers in 1889, rather than just goods.

The tracks for Billericay Station started being laid in 1884, once digging had finished for the line to pass 54 feet below the level of the High Street. The station was opened to Goods Traffic on 19 November 1888, with the first passenger train stopping there on New Year's Day 1889.

The line through Billericay was electrified in 1954.



TRAINS...

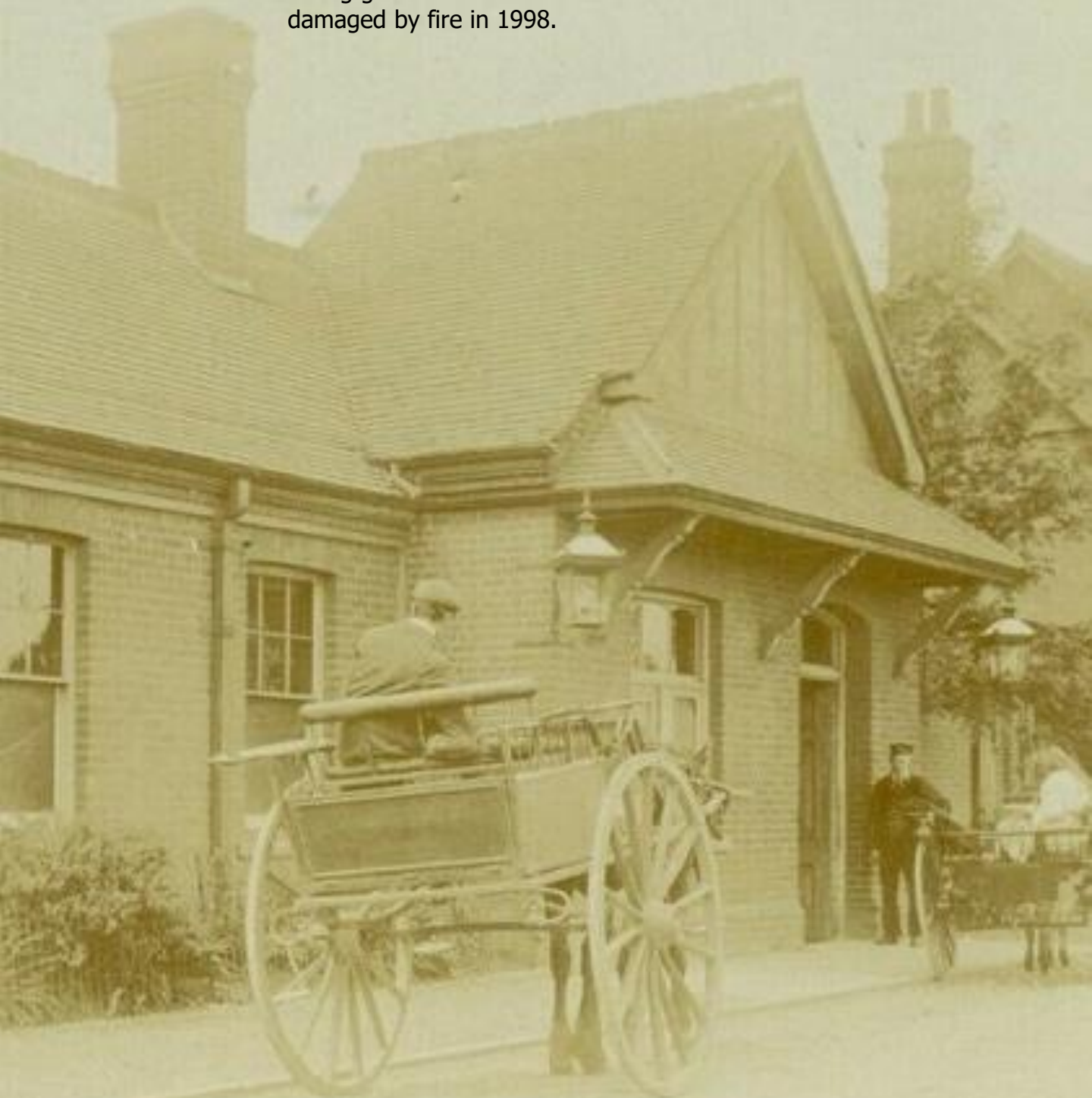
TRAINS...

Joan Sims was born on Laindon Station on 9 May 1930. Her father, John, was Station Master. The goods service at Laindon ended in 1967.



A foundation stone on the outside wall of Wickford Station showed that it was laid during 1887. The line would connect Shenfield to Southend. A planned line to Southminster, passing through Rettendon and Wickford and going to Pitsea, never came to fruition.

The line at Wickford was electrified in 1956 and the station stopped taking goods traffic in 1967. The station was rebuilt in 1980 and was damaged by fire in 1998.



TRAINS...

A black and white photograph of a railway station platform. The platform is on the left, with a low wall and a few people standing. The tracks run parallel to the platform, leading into the distance. Overhead power lines and support structures are visible above the tracks. The sky is overcast.

TRAINS...

A campaign had begun in the 1950's for Basildon to get a station. Laindon had been displaying signs stating 'Laindon for Basildon' since the 1960's.

Basildon Station eventually opened on 25 November 1974. It had two entrances, with one eventually being bricked up as the ticket office was moved. Windows were built in to the side of the platform which over-looked Station Way. They have since been filled in but can still be seen.

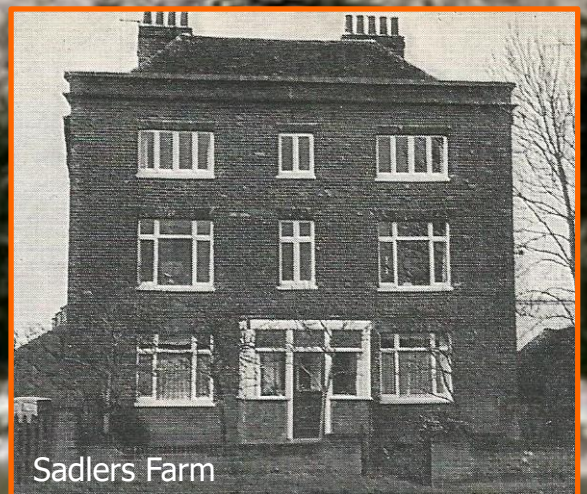
UNDERGROUND



Apart from the archaeology in Basildon there are other subterranean areas of interest in the borough.

There are stories of a tunnel running from North Benfleet Hall towards Sadlers Farm in Bowers Gifford. There are also rumours of a tunnel running from a cottage on Pound Lane to North Benfleet Hall. The cottage became the telephone exchange.

One tale tells of workers on the Sadlers Farm roundabout finding part of the tunnel but filled it in thinking it was an old drain. There is a drain, heading towards Sadlers Hall Farm, marked out on a 1956 map of the area.



Sadlers Farm

UNDERGROUND...



The Great Gubbins manor house in Laindon was rumoured to be linked to St Nicholas Church by a tunnel, but there is no evidence of this.



For many years children in Vange would visit Basildon Golf Course to see the tunnel that lead down to a Royal Observer Corp early warning bunker, installed because of the fear of nuclear war. Some children that dared to climb down reported a single room at the foot of the ladder. Vandals have caused a lot of internal damage but this was stopped when the access tunnel was concreted in. The post opened in 1958 and was closed 10 years later.

Another early warning bunker was created in Little Burstead during August 1963. The bunker, near Church Street, still exists though it is locked up. It has changed very little since it was abandoned in 1991.

Near the marshes in Vange there is Royal Artillery Anti-Aircraft Operations Room in a two-level concrete bunker. The site still exists though it had fallen in to disrepair after years of neglect.

The site contained an anti-aircraft gun as well as another Operation Room from World War 2.

UNDERGROUND...



Little Burstead



VANGE

Vange was recorded as 'Phenge' in the Domesday Book. The survey also recorded that there was a mill in the village.

Vange is neighboured by Pitsea to the east, Basildon to the North and Fobbing to the West. In the past there was a brick works near Vange Marshes, this land is now occupied by Rivenhall Marsh Farm. On the opposite side of the A13 is Brickfield Road and Brickfield Close.

Vange had a busy wharf at one time and barges would travel to the area carrying timber for a large timber merchant. The bargemen used to frequent The Old Barge Public House on High Road. Sadly, this pub fell in to decline during the early years of the 21st Century and, at the time of writing, has been boarded up for some time.

Vange Open Space, off of Vange Hill Drive, was once a Plotlands Site but is now a wildlife habit made up of grassland and woodland areas. Amongst these are the remains of concrete walls and floors of long abandoned homes.

Vange had suffered with the marshes flooding until Dutch engineers were employed to deal build walls to hold back the waters.

The area has been occupied for thousands of years, evidenced by the find of a Bronze Age axe in the area.

VANGE HALL



The land now occupied by Basildon Golf Club was once farmed from Vange Hall. Though the hall was demolished during the 1960's the pond that stood next to it still exists. The pond contains some of the brickwork from the hall.

VICTORIA VILLAS

Victoria Villas is a Grade II listed building built in the 1800's on Runwell Road, Wickford.

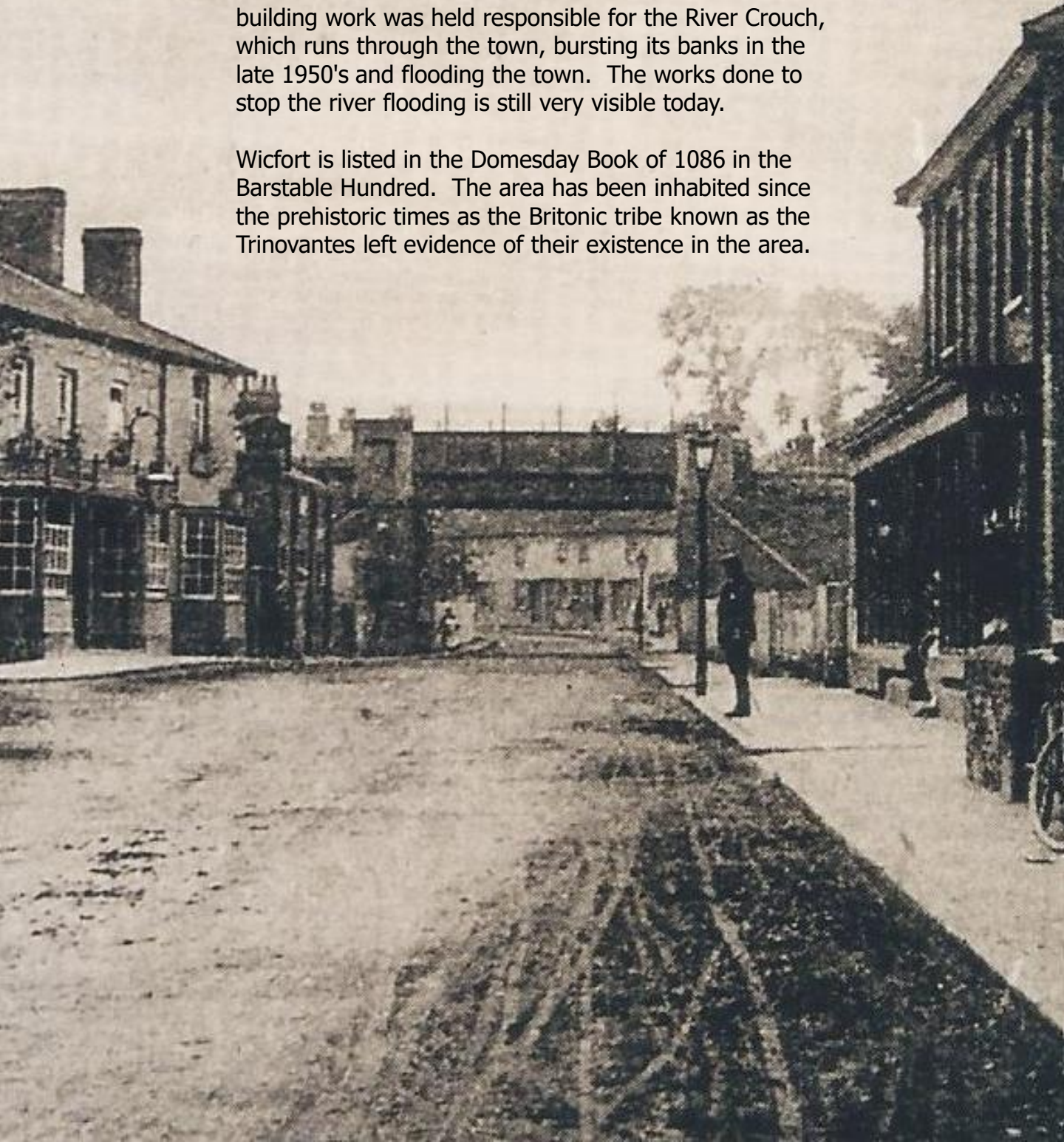
It appears to now be two houses though it was just one when it was occupied by Frank Carter and his family during the early 1900's.



WICKFORD

Wickford is an old market town based to the north-east of the borough. The town used to host a cattle market as well as a cinema before the new town was built. The building work was held responsible for the River Crouch, which runs through the town, bursting its banks in the late 1950's and flooding the town. The works done to stop the river flooding is still very visible today.

Wicfort is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086 in the Barstable Hundred. The area has been inhabited since the prehistoric times as the Britonic tribe known as the Trinovantes left evidence of their existence in the area.



WICKFORD...

St. Catherine's church in Wickford is within the parish of Wickford and Runwell. The current church was rebuilt in the 1870's and is based on its original 15th Century design.

This church is on Southend Road, between Mount Road and Brunswick Close, on the way to Shotgate. Southend Road is off of Golden Jubilee Way, though it used to continue through to Wickford High Street via what is now Lower Southend Road on The Broadway.

The churchyard is now closed to new burials. It doesn't cover a large area but it is now full. A lot of the graves have seen far better days, becoming over grown, covered in plant matter from maintenance work and even a few no longer marked.

The chancel roof and decorative screen behind the altar were moved from other churches and incorporated in to the rebuilding of St. Catherine's. With these and St. Catherine's being an 'example of mid-Victorian church building' this church was Grade II listed in 1955.

Outside the church is the lychgate, which was built in the 1949. In the last few years, the gate has required repair. The repairs were finally completed in July 2015.





WICK FARM

Wick Farm took its name from the River Wick and now shares it with the Wick Estate, where the farmhouse once stood. It was roughly on the site of Arlesford Gardens.



Today Wickford Hall is made up of a number of flats. Built in the 19th Century it is just the latest building to bear the name.

The Hall is next door to St. Catherine's Church.

Wickford Hall,

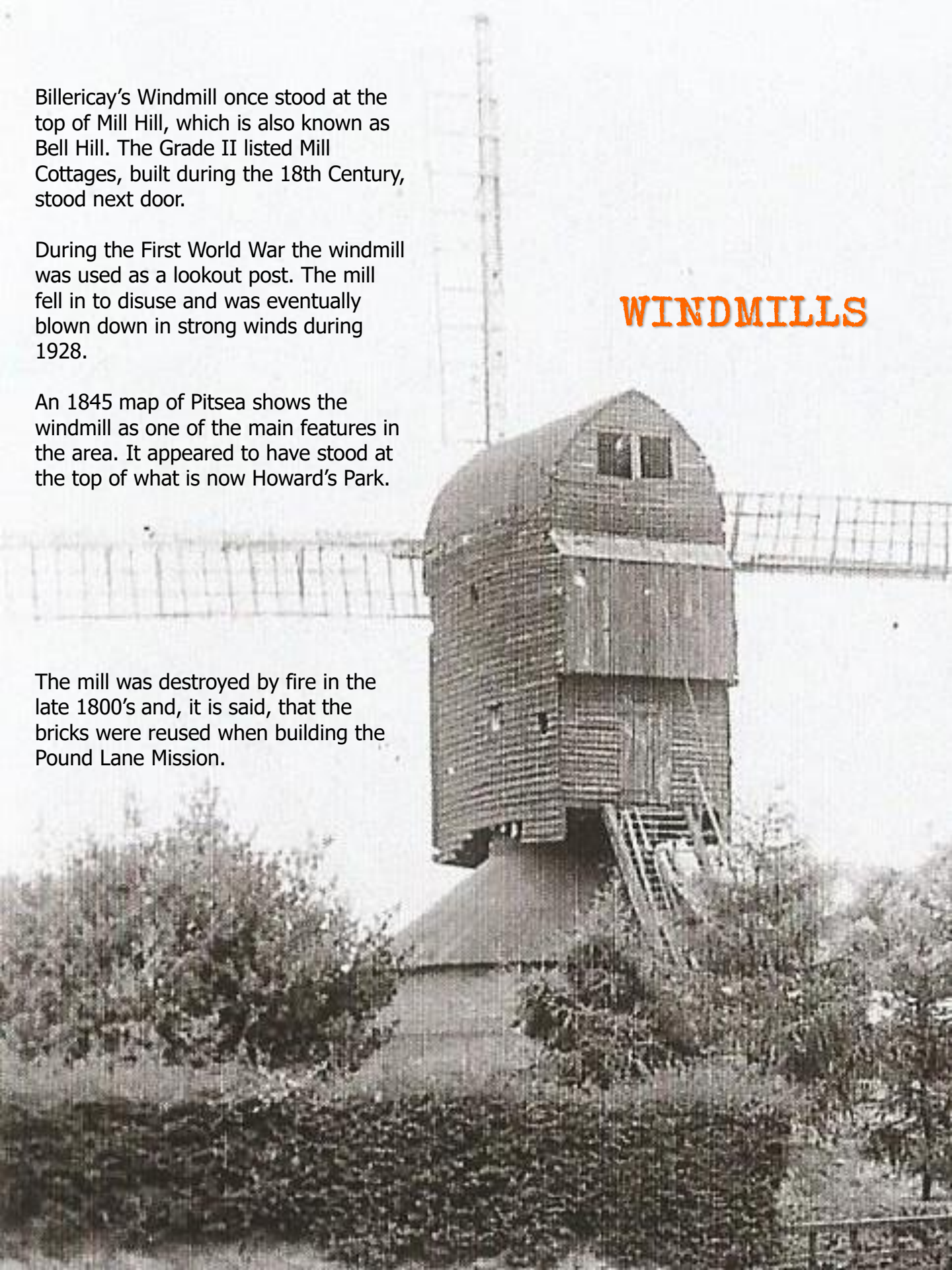
Billericay's Windmill once stood at the top of Mill Hill, which is also known as Bell Hill. The Grade II listed Mill Cottages, built during the 18th Century, stood next door.

During the First World War the windmill was used as a lookout post. The mill fell in to disuse and was eventually blown down in strong winds during 1928.

An 1845 map of Pitsea shows the windmill as one of the main features in the area. It appeared to have stood at the top of what is now Howard's Park.

The mill was destroyed by fire in the late 1800's and, it is said, that the bricks were reused when building the Pound Lane Mission.

WINDMILLS



WITCHCRAFT



During the 16th and 17th Centuries over 760 Essex residents were accused of Witchcraft.

In 1582 Agnes Bryant of Great Burstead was accused of bewitching twenty 'brewinges of beere' to which she pled not guilty. Agnes was found guilty.

Thomas Corde of Langdon Hills was accused in 1589 but nothing more is known about what he was alleged to have done or what the outcome was.

During 1605 Margaret Prentize of Little Burstead was accused but, like Thomas Corde, nothing else is known about the accusation.

In 1610 John Skafe of Great Burstead was accused, and in 1616 John Scates of Billericay was as well. There is a chance that this is the same person. John Scates was accused if 'conjuraton and practising with the devil for money'.

During 1653 Mary Hurst of Nevendon, a spinster of Nevendon, was accused of bewitching William Hodge on 24 May 1653. She was found guilty, 'convicted of felony by witchcraft' and remanded in gaol until 'she shallbe delivered by due course of lawe'.

In 1982 Alison Moyet placed an advert in Melody Maker to find a band that could use her services as a lead vocalist. She was contacted by Vince Clarke, who had recently left Depeche Mode. Vince asked her to record a demo called 'Only You' and Mute Records were immediately interested.

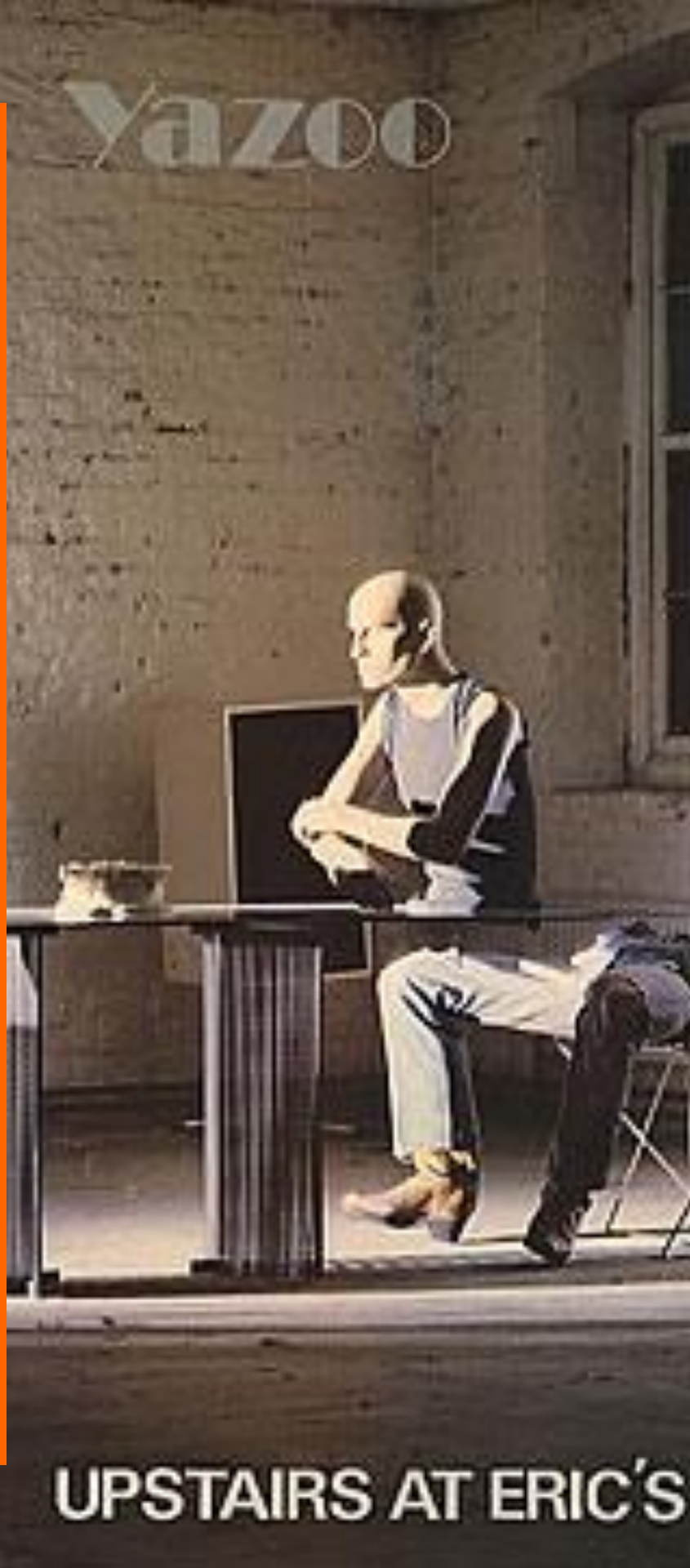
The single would be the duo's, now known as Yazoo, first and biggest hit, reaching number 2 in the singles chart.

Prior to this the two had gone to the same music school but had never spoken, a trend that would continue whilst recording together.

The success of 'Only You' was followed up with 'Don't Go' which was a top 3 hit in the UK and a number 1 hit in Belgium and on the US Dance Chart. 'Situation' was also a number 1 on the US Dance Chart, though it was not released in the UK.

Yazoo's debut album, 'Upstairs at Eric's', was released in 1982, reaching number 2 in the UK album charts and producing 4 hit singles.

The 'You and Me Both' album hit the top spot in the UK albums chart in 1983. 'Nobody's Diary' was released as a single the same year and was another top 3 hit for the band. It was during 1983 that Clarke disbanded Yazoo.



UPSTAIRS AT ERIC'S

ZEPPELIN

On the night of 23-24 September 1916 Zeppelin L32 was making its way back from an attempted bomb run on London. The bombs were actually dropped on Purfleet as the air defences around London were too dangerous.

The airship made its way back towards mainland Europe it was intercepted by Second Lieutenant Frederick Sowrey of the Royal Flying Corp, the forerunner of the R.A.F. He was based at R.F.C. Suttons Farm, which later became R.A.F. Hornchurch.

The Zeppelin had been found by the searchlights and Sowrey unleashed a volley of incendiary ammunition which ignited the gas that kept the airship afloat.

Sowrey was awarded Distinguished Service Order for shooting down the Zeppelin. He would retire from the R.A.F. in 1940 as a Group Captain. He died in Eastbourne, Sussex on 21 October 1968, aged 75.

L32 crashed in to a field near Snails Farm in South Green. The land the farmhouse once stood on is now occupied by housing on Greens Farm Lane.

Sightseers came from London to see the wreckage and many souvenirs were taken. Some can be bought on eBay today.

My grand aunt, Queenie Carter, was born in Wickford in 1912. As a small child she was taken to see the wreckage and could remember the awful smell it had created.

The 22 crew members that were killed were buried in Great Burstead soon afterwards. Their remains were later removed to Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery in Staffordshire.



ZOO

Basildon Zoo, which once stood on London Road in Vange, opened in 1971 and closed in 2001.

The zoo was home to big cats, an aviary and a miniature railway.

In 2003 the zoos owner was accused of selling a lioness to an undercover reporter from the BBC.

