

1st edition

www.ourbasildon.org

In celebration of our roots and 60 years of Basildon Town



BASILDON heritage trail



'Our Basildon' is run by a completely independent community organisation. For more details on the Heritage Trail, the team, updates, background of the project, or to discuss possible partnership working please visit our website or come to the Heritage Hub in Eastgate Shopping Centre...

... we welcome your views

The project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Veolia ES Cleanaway Pitsea Marshes Trust with ongoing support from Essex County Council and Basildon District Council.

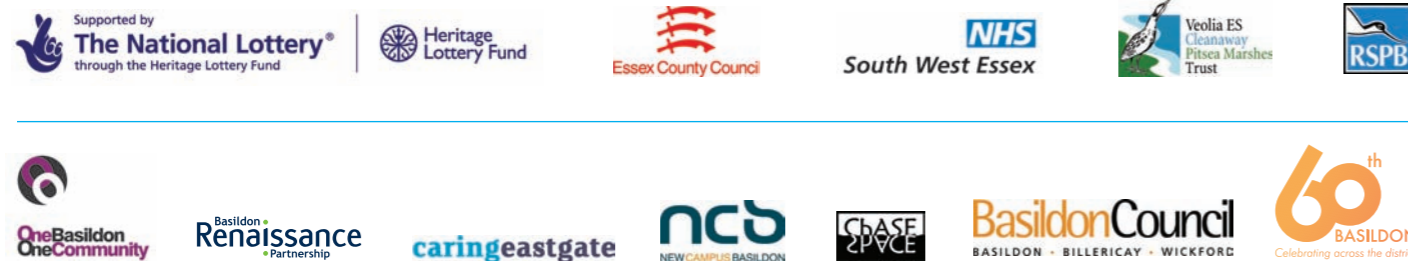
We would like to thank our many volunteers, individuals, service and independent organisations for their unwavering support.

With the Trail officially open from 25th April 2009, we look forward to working with NHS South West Essex to create a fantastic new way of exercising outdoors, recording memories and a healthy eating project, all inspired by the Heritage Trail and the 'Our Basildon' aims.

"Through exercise, healthy eating and communication, we aim to improve the physical health and mental wellbeing of all those in our community" NHS South West Essex.

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While every care is taken to ensure accuracy of the information included, the organisers of this project cannot take any responsibility for errors or omissions. Children must be accompanied by an adult or guardian at all times.



Welcome to the 'Our Basildon' project, exploring past, present and future . . .



ancient heritage

'Our Basildon' is our way of saying that Basildon belongs to us, the people of this town, with both an ancient and modern past. The 12km permanent self guided Heritage Trail is the main focus of the project. Through it's creative development we hope to rouse a deeper sense of personal identity; to generate awareness of how our built environment and open spaces and how we live within them can affect our wellbeing and that of our community.

Basildon was one of a number of new towns created after the Second World War. In 1948 Lewis Silkin MP declared that "Basildon will become a City which people from all over the world will want to visit". While, for some, we may have yet to fully achieve this vision it is an important, interesting and influential town of South East England with huge potential for its community and visitors alike, and with a heritage worthy of exploration and celebration.

As you walk the trail, weaving as it does in a figure of eight through the centre of Basildon, with it's broad open spaces, iconic buildings and stunning examples of public art you will find that this sixty year old town isn't short of historical interest: beneath its modern open streetscape, abundant and bio-diverse green spaces can be found the remains of previous cultures going back many thousands of years.

As part of the pilot project in 2006-7 the heritage team worked with two hundred children from five of Basildon's primary schools to plot the trail, photographing buildings, parks, woods and art that were important to them and helping them write about what they saw. They discovered, as we hope you will too, that Basildon has some unique treasures ranging from buildings that have served the community for hundreds of years, such as the Grade I listed building, St. Nicholas Church in Laindon, to the site where Basildon Hall stood protected by its moat since before the compilation of the Domesday Book in 1086. The remains of the moat still exist but the building was demolished as part of the new town development in 1949.

While there is some deserved criticism of the earlier town planners their innovative commissioning of public art means we have some fine examples of figurative and abstract sculpture around the town. The Mother and Child fountain in the town centre by Maurice Lambert designed as part of the Brooke House development in 1962 has proved an iconic symbol of Basildon and forms the central part of the town's crest. Within the design of the same development Freedom House built in 1960.

The town's surrounding open spaces were part of the vision for the new town and are one of the greatest success stories. Gloucester Park, set at its northern gateway was officially opened by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester in 1957 and was created out of two million cubic yards of surplus soil deposited over a ten year period to make it rolling open grassland. The whole area teems with wildlife and is home to more than 10,000 different species of animals, plants, and fungi.

The landscape of Basildon is set to change over the coming years and it is our intention that the Heritage Trail will also evolve, develop and extend across other parts of the district as the town emerges from its renaissance. The 'Our Basildon' project is rich and varied inspiring the creative minds of a wide range of public service organisations and individuals with whom we are continuing to work to bring differing communities and a wide diversity of people together from all walks of life. Heritage is more than stately homes and museums; it is about discovering our roots, exploring who we are and appreciating the journey.



natural heritage



Essex County Council
Basildon has a long and rich history of human occupation, from the Stone Age onwards. Some of it is highly visible for all to see, such as the nationally important medieval deer-park of Norsewood and the pill-boxes dating to the Second World War. Even more archaeological remains survive in the ground, hidden below the topsoil and modern housing. Recent excavations to the south of Wickford have demonstrated the potential of this hidden store, revealing very rare examples of Neolithic buildings and timber circles.



"I like the town, it is a very interesting place, but it has a habit of hiding its most interesting features."
Frances Clamp, author of 'Basildon, Our Heritage'

RSPB South Essex Marshes
The RSPB now manages three nature reserves in South Essex - Vange Marsh, Vange Wick and West Canvey Marsh and with a year round events programme there is something for everyone to do and enjoy. Along the trail look out for mute swans and a variety of ducks on the lakes at Gloucester Park, great spotted woodpeckers in Puck Woods and bluebells at St Nicholas Church in Laindon. The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing - help us keep it that way.

Enjoy your Basildon! www.ourbasildon.org

There is no set start point for the Heritage Trail but we encourage you to take advantage of the free parking (at time of printing) in Gloucester Park north car park. Leave your car, relax, and be open minded as you explore the first 'new town' to have its own Heritage Trail.

Following our map you will pass by the Murrayfield Cricket Pavilion built in 1968 that, while now sadly neglected, was the first county class pavilion constructed in Essex for over forty years. Standing against the front of the pavilion, look over towards the urban landscape of the town centre and admire the view of the tall buildings above a long line of poplar trees. The extensive tree planting programme incorporated into the 1949 plans means that Basildon is one of the most wooded towns in southern England. Between 1950-60 100,000 trees were planted.

This Heritage Trail is designed to be a walking trail and accessible to all including wheelchair users though some areas from time to time may prove inaccessible for reasons beyond our control. Please let us know if you experience any difficulties in accessing parts of the Trail. The potential for cycling the route exists and is also another aspect for future development. *Please avoid the cycle tracks when walking.*

Basildon Renaissance Partnership
The Basildon Sporting Village will be located in Gloucester Park north and will add to the vitality and sporting heritage of the park. The facility will be the envy of the region with a 50m international sized pool (artist impression left), gymnastics centre, health and fitness suite, cafe, creche and climbing wall. The facility will complement the Heritage Trail encouraging local people to live healthy and active lives. The permanent artwork being created for the Sporting Village by artists with the local community, as part of the Trail launch celebrations, will make a positive addition to the town's artistic heritage.

- 1 **Laindon Park Primary School**, built in 1877, with Hornsby Woods on left with Oak, Poplar, Ash, English Elm and Blackthorn trees, leads to...
- 2 **St. Nicholas Church** built around 1254. Edgar Longstaffe and James Hornsby are buried here. James taught in the schoolhouse for 48 years. Back in Gloucester Park, pass the long lake, dug out in 1960 with a two acre island and see...
- 3 **Gloucester Park Swimming Pool** designed by Ken Cotton, opened 10 April 1968. Take the underpass and view...
- 4 **Animal Frieze** by Wendy Taylor. Turn left towards the Basildon Centre, home of Basildon District Council on your right and if you look to your left you will see across the road...
- 5 **Basildon Community Resource Centre**, a Potten 'A' Frame building opened by Lord Len Murray in 1983. Continuing toward St. Martin's Square...
- 6 **The Basildon Bell Tower**, the only steel and glass bell tower in the world. It contains eight bells with the tenor bell dating back to 1441; the first bell cast by a woman, Joanne Hille. It was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1999.
- 7 **St. Martin of Tours Church** built 1962. The 5000 pipe organ dates from 1870.
- 8 **The Basildon "Christ"** above the porch was the last commission taken by the sculptor TB Huxley-Jones who died a month after its completion in 1968.
- 9 **Stained glass windows**, in the church installed in 1989. Designed and made by Joseph Nuttgens in High Wycombe, Bucks.
- 10 **Water Feature** by Richard Huws, designer of 1951 Festival of Britain water feature, walking through...
- 11 **St. Martin's Gardens**, go towards the theatre passing...
- 12 **The Woodsman Poacher**, carved from a 200 year old fallen oak during the storms of 1987 by Dave Chappelle.
- 13 **St. Martin's Square** with...
- 14 **Sundial and Compass**, designed and constructed by Tam Giles in 1997.
- 15 **Towngate Theatre**, built 1988.

- 16 **Westgate Shopping Centre** on your left and weave your way to the underpass at Southernhay and into Roundacre to...
- 17 **Armillary Sundial** by Wendy Taylor, a symbol of optimism and progress. On exiting Roundacre you will see the modern Icon building straight ahead and walking toward it keeping Westgate Shopping Centre on your left re-enter St. Martin's Square, see the...
- 18 **Mosaic** by Geoffrey Clark, over half is hidden by the canopy. As you enter the Town Square you will see the...
- 19 **Town Clock** made by John Vernon in the 1960's.
- 20 **Mother & Child fountain** by Maurice Lambert in 1962.
- 21 **Brooke House** completed in 1962. Enter...
- 22 **Eastgate Shopping Centre** to see...
- 23 **Cats Cradle 'Pussiwallow III'** designed and built by Roland Emmet, who also designed the car in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.
- 24 **Freedom House** with...
- 25 **'Untitled' sculpture** cast aluminium and wire by AJ Poole in 1957, the oldest piece of public art in the town. Continue along East Walk and take the long underpass through the...
- 26 **Compass Bowl** by Wendy Taylor. Exit the compass bowl by the steps into Southernhay...
- 27 **British Telecommunications Exchange** will be behind you... Turn left into the Kingswood Neighbourhood and Nether Priors Road. Ramp available. Continue along Nether Priors where you can see Norway Maple trees. Past West Thorpe on your right and take the next right into Clickett Hill. At the top of the hill you can see pollarded Poplar trees in the green on the left. Once in East Thorpe follow footpath to the left hand side of the road. To your right the remains of the...
- 28 **Moat** that surrounded Basildon Hall in medieval times. Here you will find Wild Cherry, Pear, Horse Chestnut, Ash and Field Maple trees.

- 29 **Puck Woods**. These woods contain Common Oak, Hawthorn and Silver Maple. Follow this narrow and winding lane until you reach Clay Hill Road, continue down Clay Hill and you will see...
- 30 **Kingswood Medical Centre** on your right and
- 31 **Owl and Pussycat pub** on your left. Proceed for a while and you will find...
- 32 **Kingswood Primary School**. Kingswood is a good example of a 'neighbourhood' built as part of the New Town development in the 1960's. Leave Clay Hill Rd on your left entering Cherrydown East where, on the corner once stood the Essex Ford car showroom which opened in 1963, now a block of flats, the Morello Quarter built under the town regeneration scheme. At the end of Cherrydown East on the right hand side is a sculpture...
- 33 **'Water Feature'** by William Mitchell in 1975. Turn right at the large roundabout and continue past the Ford Offices.
- 34 **Trafford House** built 1975. Go under the railway line and into Southernhay. The London to Southend line was electrified on 6 November 1961.
- 35 **Basildon Railway Station** was opened on 24 November 1974, the last steam train passing through Basildon on 15 June 1962. Take the underpass to the right entering Market Pavement where...
- 36 **Basildon Market** opened in 1958 and was first run by Basildon District Council. Since 1995 it has been run by the Town Centre Management. Opposite you can see the...
- 37 **Bus Station** opened in 1961.
- 38 **Blenheim House** also opened in 1961 and
- 39 **Ceramic Tile Panel**, by William Gordon in 1960, is made of 16,000 hand printed tiles depicting the history of Basildon. At the end of Market Pavement turn right and enter Town Square again taking the same route as before but turn left before reaching the

- 40 **Ghyllgrove Road** built 1960. The colourful convex terrace by Clifford Culpin. Trees here are Common Oak, Hornbeam, Ash, Crab Apple, Hawthorne, Poplar and Field Maple. Enter Gloucester Park just past the Butneys junction via the kissing gate. Take the winding path, turning immediately left after the footbridge over the stream. This area frequently become waterlogged and you will see an overflow stream to your left and to your right...
- 41 **Wildflower Meadow**, a natural habitat to grasses, wild flowers and insects. From here until you reach the car park again you will see an array of trees including a line of tall Lombardy Poplar that almost cut the park in two. Mostly to the right are Eucalyptus, Blackthorn, Ash, Silver Birch, Norway Maple and London Plane. Follow the sign to the...
- 42 **Athletics Stadium/Pavilion** takes you back to the start point.

