

# THE BILLERICAY HISTORY SERIES

NO. 3. 2-in-1 BOOKLET. PRICE 6d.

"Billericay & The MAYFLOWER"  
&

"The place names of Billericay"

*by Wynford P. Grant.*



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# INTRODUCTION

## Billericay History Series.

The object of this series is to publish a number of interesting booklets on local history at a low price. At least four further booklets, to be published at regular intervals, are planned, and work on a comprehensive history of the town is progressing at a steady rate.

The first booklet in the Billericay History Series - "Early Billericay" - was published in May, 1962. Since then over 900 copies have been sold, not only in Billericay, but throughout Britain. The second booklet in the Series - "The Mills of Billericay" - was published in September 1962, and so far has achieved a sale in excess of 800 copies. Both booklets cost 6d, 9d by post.

"Billericay and the Mayflower" and "The Place Names of Billericay".

This is the third booklet in the Billericay History Series, and is in two parts. The first part deals with Billericay's close connections with the Mayflower; tells the story of the Billericay martyrs; of Billerica in America; and deals with the general story of the Puritan faith in Billericay up to the end of the 17th century. The second part discusses the origin of the name 'Billericay', and also tells the story of some of the street and place names in and around Billericay.

Any constructive suggestions or comments about this book will be most welcome. It has been my aim throughout to entertain as well as inform; to make this booklet interesting to the non-historian, whilst leaving out no important facts. Many excellent historians fall into the trap of just turning out a mass of facts, and leave the reader to digest them. I hope I have avoided this pitfall.

## PART I -

### BILLERICAY & THE "MAYFLOWER"

To trace the beginnings of the Puritan tradition of Billericay one must go back to the Peasants Revolt of 1381 and the Black Death.

Billericay was one of the leading centres of discontent during the Peasants Revolt. Billericay men were involved in a serious riot at Brentwood in 1381.

After Richard broke his promises, and Wat Tyler was killed at Smithfield, the Essex members of the revolt fled to Billericay, as the place where they were most likely to receive a friendly welcome. However, they were pursued by an army led by Sir Thomas of Woodstock and Sir Thomas Percy, and they fled into Norsey Woods, which they attempted to defend with barricades of carts and ditches. However, they were no match for the trained soldiers, and in the resulting Battle of Billericay it is estimated that 500 rebels were killed. Relics of the battle have come to light in recent times.

This popular discontent was reflected and encouraged by a group of travelling priests called Lollards, whose founder, John Wyclif, had translated the Bible into English into 1378. Wycliffe taught that no man had any right to property, unless he obeyed the will of God. Naturally the poorer people of Billericay wanted to hear the Bible read in English, and when they found that the Lollards shared their own political beliefs, they set up their own Bible reading groups. These meetings had to be held in secret, since the established Church persecuted the Lollards and their followers for heresy. It was these secretive Bible discussion groups that laid the foundation of Billericay's Puritan tradition.

These groups may have disappeared through persecution if it had not been for two factors. Firstly, after the Black Death there was a considerable lack of priests. Secondly, Billericay had a great deal of contact with the centres of Protestant faith in the Low Country through the wool trade, and this made it easy for copies of the Bible in English to be obtained, especially since there were Flemish merchants in the town.



"Billericay and the Mayflower", continued.

During the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) a Protestant religion was established, but when Mary came to the throne, the Roman Catholic Church was re-established in England, and many people in England found themselves undergoing a deep spiritual conflict. Persistent nonconformity was punishable by death, but despite this many courageous Billericay men and women, refused to change their religious beliefs, and were burnt at the stake for them.

One of the most notable of these Billericay martyrs was a man called "Worthee Wattee" (Thomas Watts), whose story is told in Foxe's Acts and Monuments, commonly called the Book of Martyrs. Thomas was a linen draper, and he was not only a courageous man, but a sensible and devout one. Expecting to be arrested for his failure to attend Church, he sold all his goods, so that his wife and children should not suffer, and gave away a great deal of his cloth to the poor.

Shortly afterwards he was arrested, and brought before the Justices at Chelmsford. Here he was accused of refusing to receive the sacrament, and was accused of being an abominable heretic. Undaunted, Thomas became involved in an argument with the Justices, who decided to send him to Bishop of London for trial, sending a very damaging report of his behaviour with him.

The Bishop of London, according to Foxe, employed every method possible of making Watts change his beliefs. He tried threatening him, and making promises of wealth and comfort to him. At one time Thomas, wearied by the Bishop's consistent arguing, did agree to change his views, but the next day he said in court: "I am weary to live in such idolatry as you would have me live in".

Finally the Bishop lost patience, sentenced him to death on twelve charges, and sent him to Chelmsford for burning at the stake. There he died, in an inn yard, typical of the Billericay men and women, who would rather die, than change their religious beliefs.

During the reign of Elizabeth 1st there was less persecution of Puritans, but in the reign of James Puritans once again became dissatisfied with their treatment, and their desire for religious freedom resulted in the great "Mayflower" venture.

Billericay, by now one of the strongest centres of Puritanism in Essex, supplied the Governor of the "Mayflower", Christopher Martin, and four other pilgrims. Billericay's part in this venture is remembered today by the Billericay town sign, erected by the C.P.R.E. at Perry Green, which depicts the "Mayflower".

We first come across Christopher Martin in 1607, when he married Marie Prower at Great Burstead. In the Quarter Session Records of the same year we find a complaint by George Hiles of Great Burstead that Martin was "using the trade of linen draper without being apprenticed to the same".

In 1619 we find in the Quarter Sessions Records that his stepson, Solomon Prower, also a "Mayflower" pilgrim, was involved in an incident whilst on the King's Watch. Apparently Prower had apprehended a man by the name of Paprell, who had come from an alehouse drunk on a Sunday evening (something that would have offended a Puritan very much indeed). When Paprell was asked to accompany Prower, he refused saying; "I care neither for the King's majesty nor such Jack an apes as you are".

On that occasion the Martin family were on the right side of the law, but in the same year Prower and Martin were brought before the Archdeacons' Court at Ingatestone for failing to answer questions on the Catechism, and failing to attend Church.

Legend states that what it is now "Ye Olde Chantry Cafe" was the home of Christopher Martin, and that the Essex contingent of the "Mayflower" finally met there before sailing for America. The 1615 Billericay rental makes nonsense of this legend. This shows that Martin did not own any property on the Chantry side of the High Street, let alone the Chantry Cafe. However, he did hold two customary properties - one where the International Stores now stands, and the other on the site of Alderslades. It is interesting to note that the date "1510" on the Chantry Cafe was not present before restoration work took place.



"Billericay and the Mayflower", continued.

Whilst the Chantry is undoubtedly an outstanding example of Tudor architecture, I do feel that its importance in the history of Billericay has been over rated. What is now the "Woolpack", and adjoining buildings, in Chapel Street, are, I consider, of far greater historical interest, and are far older, than the Chantry. It is amusing to note that a wealthy American once intended to dismantle the Chantry, and re-erect it in New England, on the belief that it was the former home of Christopher Martin.

Of course, just because Christopher Martin did not live at the Chantry, it does not mean that the legend that the Essex contingent gathered at Billericay is false. Indeed, in view of Billericay's convenient position as a overnight stopping place for Leigh (it once had important trading connections with this port) where the "Mayflower" was berthed, and in view of the importance of Christopher Martin in connection with the venture, it seems very likely that they did meet at Billericay.

We do not know for certain whether Christopher Martin joined the "Mayflower" venture for the commercial reasons that had such a great deal to do with the expedition, or whether he joined because of his religious convictions. From what we know of Martin, the answer would seem to be a combination of both factors.

Anyway, Martin was appointed to arrange for the provisioning of the ship, and was later appointed Governor of the "Mayflower". However, he does not seem to have been a very religious man, since there is considerable evidence of fraud by Martin in the accounts.

When the Mayflower put into Dartmouth for repairs a pilgrim wrote to a friend complaining; "He (Martin) refuseth to respect any counsel ... he saith he neither can nor will give any account of the £700 (given to Martin for provisions) ... if called upon for accounts he crieth out of unthankfulness for his pains and care and says that we are suspicious of him ... he insulteth our poore people with such scorne and contempte ... it breakes my hart to see the mourninge of the people; they complain to me, I can do nothing, for if I speke to him he flies in my face as mutinous ... he says that no complaints should be heard but by himself ... he says they are forward, waspish, discontented people, and I do no good to listen to them. The sailors are offended at his ignorant boldness; some say they will mischief him, others say they will leave, but at the best of it he makes himself a scorne and a laughing stock."

The same writer expressed the opinion that if the accounts were checked, not a penny would be left over. Because of Martin's incompetence, mishandling, and suspected fraud, he doubted if the ship would ever reach America. Indeed, he was disturbed so much by Martin's behaviour, that he thought of leaving the ship, risking all his possessions, and return to persecution in England, rather than continue with Martin.

As it happened Martin, his wife, his stepson Prower, a servant, and the other Billericay pilgrim John Browne from Outwood Common, all arrived safely in America, together with the rest of the pilgrims. It is recorded, however, that Martin "and all with him" died in the first infection.

Meanwhile, back in Billericay, Martin's former Puritan friends continued their struggle for the right to worship as they wished. However, this was not granted until 1693 when the first "licensed" meeting for dissenters was set up in the High Street.

Billericay can be proud of its connections with the "Mayflower" venture. We cannot be proud of Christopher Martin. He was obstinate, bad-tempered, probably a criminal, and he nearly wrecked the whole "Mayflower" venture.

In 1640 Billericay's violently anti-Puritan Vicar, the Rev. Pease died. The result was that the members of the Church of England had to appeal to the Quarter Sessions Court for assistance. They complained that alehouses had multiplied, that the town was in disorder, and that God's name was abused and blasphemed, and his good creatures abused, by an abundance of Puritan sects. The Church of England group was powerless to deal with these "abuses", and appealed to the Court to restore "good government".



"Billericay and the Mayflower", continued.

During the first half of the 17th century many Billericay people were brought before the Quarter Sessions Court for failing to attend Church, and holding private meetings.

In 1646 a group of Billericay people once again petitioned the Quarter Sessions Court, complaining about a Puritan sect which had sprung up in the town. This "dangerous sect" was accused of "holding meetings of their owne with the admittance of all comers even in the time of publique worship; their preachers brand the order of our Church as anti-Christian; they administer the sacrament of the supper, re-baptise men and women, vent the poyson of unsound opinions." Apparently the "poyson" they were accused of was calling for religious tolerance, and the repeal of anti-Puritan laws. The petition goes on to accuse the Puritans of "boldly attempting to disturbe us in the publique worshipp, and in the face of the congregation to quarrell att the truth delivered, to the seducing of the people, the scandall of many, the distraction of all, and the great indangering of the publique peace".

The petition concludes; "Therefore out of a deep sence of the danger of the peoples' soules, the hindrance of the progresse of the gospelle, and the Reformation in hand, the subversion of truth and the power of Religion; the Anarchy, and confusion likely to overspread us iff not timely previnted, do humbly address ourselves to your pious wisdomes, and justice, beseeching you to apply such remedy as may prevent the further spreading of their most wicked opinions; restraîne their violence, and restore to us a peaceable enjoyment of our religion."

However, the petition does not seem to have "restored a peaceable enjoyment of our religion", for later in the year a serious riot occurred at Billericay Church. According to the official account a large mob "did lately in a mutinous and disorderly manner enter into Billericay Church immediately after sermon time and did abuse Mr. Smyth (who had then preached) and divers others present". The accused were each fined 40/-, a very large sum for those days, which could well be a year's wages. A similar incident, though more serious, occurred in 1691. Apparently the congregation were at morning service behind locked doors. This did not deter a large mob of Puritans, who smashed the door down, and entered the Church. They then removed the common prayer book and surplus, and damaged the fittings of the Church.

During the rule of Oliver Cromwell (1649-1660) the Puritans had freedom of worship for the first time. During this period of Puritan rule stern action was taken against those who defiled the Sabbath. In 1653 Thomas Sturgen of Billericay was in trouble for suffering disorderly persons in his house, and tippling on the Lords' Day. He had also committed the dreadful sin, from a Puritan point of view, of travelling out of the town on Easter Sunday. In 1658 an alehouse keeper called Mathew Hedge was in trouble for allowing a number of people to drink, tittle, and "take tobacco" one Sunday. It is recorded that for this "great profanation of the Lords' Day" he was fined 10/-. A Great Burstead man, Henry Hixone, found himself brought before the Quarter Sessions Court for having company in his house "on the Lords' Day at sermon time".

Despite the tolerant attitude of Cromwell to Puritans, many Essex Puritans continued to emigrate to America.

On May 23rd, 1655, the Massachusetts Legislature accepted a petition to establish the town of Billerica, on a site some 15 to 20 miles from the coast, and near the town of Lowell. Two of the petitioners were Ralph Hill and Ralph Hill Junior, and it is said that these two were former Billericay residents. There is no concrete evidence to support this suggestion, but since at least one of the town founders must have come from Billericay, it seems quite likely.

The late Dr. Wallen Stearns, leading Billerica historian, was of the opinion that the town was first called "Billericay" with a "y" by the early educated settlers, but that then everyone concentrated on cultivating the land, and paid little attention to education, dropping the "y". Then when more time was devoted to education again, the inhabitants continued to use "Billerica" instead of "Billericay" by force of habit.



## "Billericay and the Mayflower", continued.

I disagree with this theory, since "Billerica" was the spelling commonly used to describe "Billericay" in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the second form was not in common use until the very end of the 18th century, although it occurs at isolated intervals at earlier dates. The settlers would naturally use the spelling in use at the time, and thus our American sister town has preserved the earlier form of "Billericay".

In its early days Billerica suffered from frequent attacks from the Indians. In 1692 5 people were killed, and in 1695 a more serious attack took place, 15 people being killed. Apparently the town had a troop of cavalry and a militia, and these were often called to help neighbouring towns attacked by Indians. Nearly 500 Billerica men took part in the War of Independence.

Three villages - Billerica North (sometimes called Billerica Mills), Billerica Center, and Billerica South - grew up and replaced the scattered farms, where thousands of sheep were once raised.

Industry grew in the form of sawmills, and there were at least fourteen of these in the town at one time. At one time thousands of shoes and slippers were made in Billerica.

Thomas Talbot came to Billerica in 1839, and started and maintained many industries. In 1878 he was elected as Governor of Massachusetts.

In recent years the manufacturing development has slowed up, but there is still a lot of industry. However, Billerica is mainly a residential town, most of its 18,000 inhabitants, working in the large towns nearby. Development is concentrated on the three main centres of Billerica North, Billerica Center, and Billerica South, the distance from Billerica North to Billerica South being about 4 miles.

The main geographical feature is the River Concord, which runs from north to south, and is of considerable width. One or two local people have visited Billerica, and the neighbouring town of Chelmsford, but since the unfortunate death of Dr. Wallen Stearns, links between the two towns have been broken, and attempts to renew them have met with little success.

Incidentally, there is also a "Billericay" in Western Australia - a remote railway siding, named by a former local resident.

Back in Billerica, the Puritans thrived. The Quakers had established a Billerica Meeting in 1667, apparently on the site of the present Elizabeth Cottage and adjacent properties, the burial ground being on the site of Churchill Johnsons. The Congregationalists were firmly established in Chapel Street and the Baptists followed at a later date, although a Methodist Church was not set up in Billerica until quite recently. The Presbyterians had a meeting place on Bell Hill. In 1773 the parishoners complained that they could not raise enough money to rebuild the Church because of the number of Nonconformists in the town, and this strong Puritan and Nonconformist tradition persisted until modern times. Indeed, the town still has strong Congregationalist, Baptist, Methodist, and Quaker congregations.

## PART 2 - THE PLACE NAMES OF BILLERICA

The origin of the name "Billericay" is something of a mystery. A pamphlet was produced on this subject as long ago as the 19th century, which contained all sorts of interesting derivations, and it is a problem which has interested many local historians. Even the English Place Names Society have been unable to suggest any suitable origin and development for the name. It is, of course, sheer coincidence that two christian names - 'Bill' and 'Eric' - are included in the name.

There were substantial Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements at Billerica, and it has been suggested that a Celtic word with the basic root "Bell" or "Bill" was Latinised by the Romans.



"The Place Names of Billericay", continued.

There was also a substantial Roman settlement at Billericay, and this must have been named. Among the suggestions are: "Bellerius Bastion (camp of a Roman general Bellerius); "Bello Castrum" (fair camp); and Villa Erica (the town on the heath). This last suggestion seems the most likely, since Billericay is built on Bagshot Sands, and the normal, uncultivated countryside associated with this type of soil is heathland. It has been suggested that this name survived the Dark Ages, and was corrupted into its present form by the Normans.

However, it should be remembered that Billericay did not exist during the Dark Ages. The Saxons destroyed the Roman settlement completely, and moved the main centre of population in the area to Great Burstead, away from the ghosts of the several Roman cemeteries at Billericay. Billericay did not grow again until the 12th century, which means that there is no entry in Domesday Book for Billericay, which was included under Great Burstead. Of course, if there had have been, there would have been far less trouble in deciding the origin of the name. However, despite the absence of population at Billericay during the Dark Ages, I feel that there is a great deal to be said in favour of the "Villa Erica" theory.

The earliest mention of a name for Billericay is in 1291, when it was known by the name of "Byllyrica". The same spelling was used in 1351. Other spellings used in the Middle Ages were "Billerykay" (a phonetic spelling of the present name), and "Billeryke". John Norden calls it "Billerecrais" on his 1594 map. The Essex historian Morant suggests that it is of Norman-French origin, and states that in 1343 it was called "Beleuca", "Baleuga", or "Banleuga" denoting a territory round a borough or manor. Little importance is attached to this theory, especially since Billericay was not built round either a borough or a manor.

An interesting suggestion is put forward on one old map which states; "Billericay, alias Build upon Cave". It is believed that there are caves beneath Billericay, and that grand old character, the late Fred Eales, said that he had been in them as a boy, and that the entrance was through the cellars of Burstead House, which once stood on the site of Hensmans petrol pumps, but was demolished shortly after the war. Apparently, one day, a horse and cart fell into a hole which suddenly appeared in the lane by the Chequers, leading to the Chantry Estate. The ground in this area has a hollow ring. Although there may well be caves beneath the High Street, they must be very difficult to enter, and well concealed. It is doubtful if the residents of old Billericay knew about them, and since this suggestion appears in just one source, I am inclined to discount it.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, when there was no standardised spelling, and very few people were literate, countless different spellings were used - indeed there were probably as many spellings as pronounciations. However most of them seem to have had the basic root of "Billeric" or "Bylleryc", countless endings being added.

Towards the middle of the 17th century a standard form - "Billerica" - began to be used. This version was in common use throughout the 18th century, and the additional "y" does not seem to have been added until the beginning of the 19th century, although the modern form was used on isolated occasions as far back as the beginning of the 18th century.

How did the original form of "Bylleryca" come into use? A very interesting suggestion has been put forward by a number of writers, including Dr. Reaney, the author of "The Place Names of Essex". He points out that at one time there was a town in Kent in a very similar position to Billericay - a flat-topped ridge, isolated on a plain - called "Billerica". Also, a farm in a similar position at Witham Friary in Wiltshire is called "Bellerica Farm". Dr. Reaney therefore suggests that "Billerica" and its derivatives was some obscure term once used to describe the topographical feature of a flat-topped ridge, isolated above a plain, a feature present in all three examples.



"The Place Names of Billericay", continued.

I feel that the solution put forward by Dr. Reaney, and by the 19th century Billericay archaeologist Mr. J.A. Sparvel-Bayly F.S.A., is probably the correct one. However, because of the lack of documentary evidence this can never be proved, and we shall never be certain of the exact origin of the name of our town.

Great Burstead. - In an earlier part of the book I mentioned that the Saxons had founded a settlement at Great Burstead, after destroying the old Roman settlement at Billericay. The common form of this name at one time was "Burghstead", which means "Site of the Fort", referring to the fort which the Saxons set up to defend the settlement, probably on the site of Great Burstead Church. In 975 it was called Burghstede, in 1086 Burghsteda, and in 1254 Boursted. It is interesting to note that when "Burghstead Lodge" was named, the old form was used.

Buttsbury - This name is generally used to describe the housing estates on the western side of Billericay. Until quite recently these formed part of the Parish of Buttsbury, Buttsbury Church being situated about three miles from Billericay, in the direction of Ingatestone. This now stands alone in the fields, but in the Middle Ages was once the centre of a prosperous village, the population gradually drifting to the high road at Stock.

Outwood Common - Now used to describe the Outwood Common Estate of Walthamstow Borough Council, and also used in Outwood Common Road. The earliest reference is to "le Utwode" in 1267. The Common is clearly shown on the Ralph Aggas survey of Billericay of 1593. It then extended from the lower end of Norsey Wood almost to the junction of Outwood Common Road and Outwood Farm Road. Its shape was somewhat irregular, it being about half-a-mile wide at the narrowest point, Outwood Common Road running through the centre. Over the centuries large portions of the Common were enclosed, and by the middle of 19th century it consisted of a small rectangle of land on either side of where the railway line now runs, and when the railway was constructed in the late 1880's, part of the Common was used, the remainder being split in half. By 1922 all that remained was a small triangle of land between Outwood Farm Road and the railway line. Shortly afterwards this last strip of common disappeared, but the name lives on.

Tye Common - A substantial common once existed on either side of Tye Common Road, and small sections of it remained until quite modern times. The Common gave its name to the small hamlet which grew up around it.

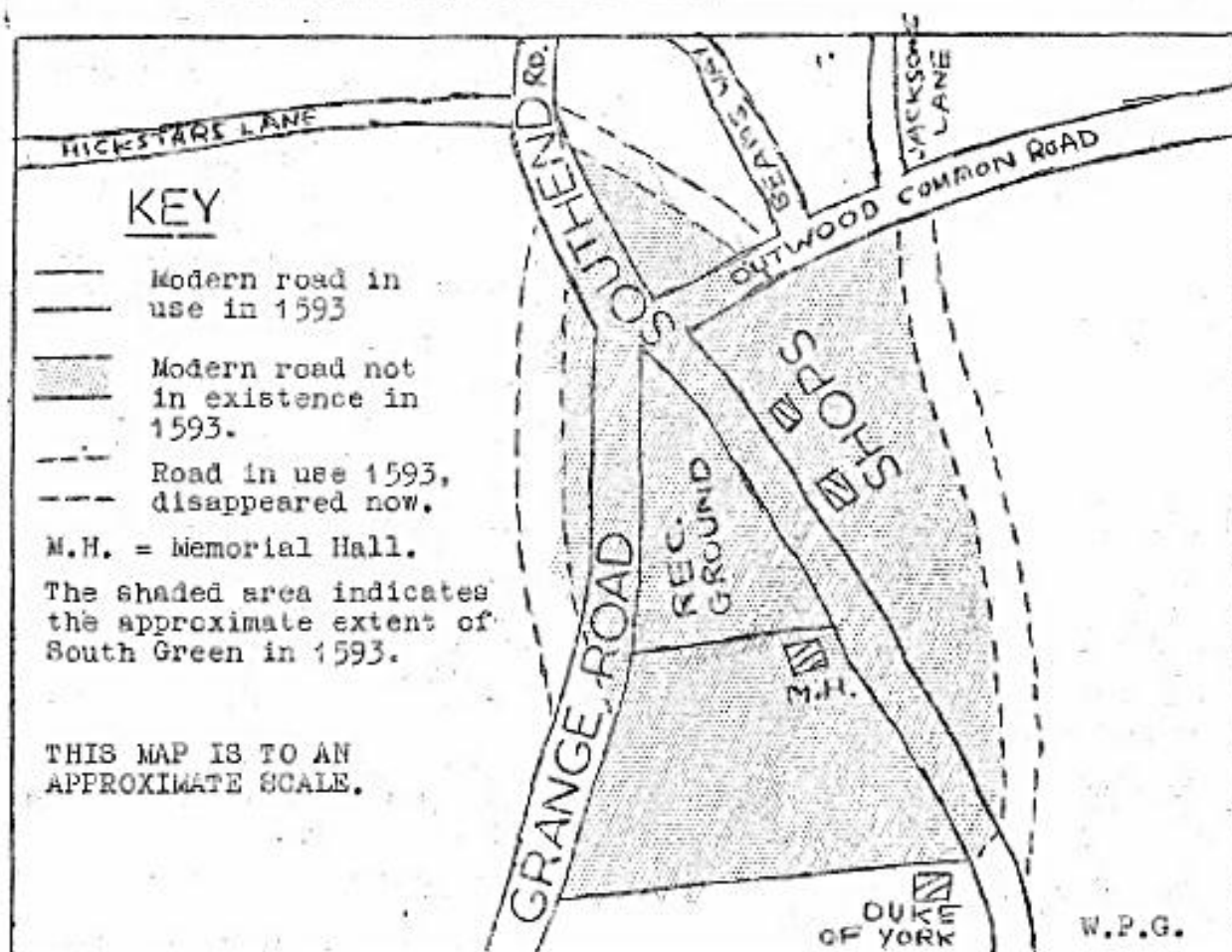
Norsey Woods - First mentioned as Nosseshaye in 1250. In 1593 Aggas calls them "Northsee Woods", and in 1768 they are described as "Nossy Wood". No satisfactory origin of the name is known. Mill Hill Wood in Perry Street was connected with the Perry Street Mill. The full story of this is told in "The Mystery of Perry Street Mill", included in "The Mills of Billericay", No.2 in the Billericay History Series.

South Green - There was an extensive hamlet at "Southwoode Green" in 1593. In 1706 it was called Southwood Green, and in 1777 South Green. In 1593 the Green was far larger than the present Recreation Ground (shortly to be made even smaller by a road improvement), and included the sites of the Memorial Hall and shops. In those days Outwood Common Road branched off from its present route below Beams Way, and ran along the track by Oak Farm, forming a crossroads with Bell Hill, Grange Road, and Hickstars (then Hicstanes) Lane. Grange Road ran to the west of its modern course. Another road joined Outwood Common Road with the line of the present main road near the Duke of York. All the land in between formed the Green! No doubt this will be made clearer by the sketch plan on the opposite page.

Sunnymede - This is a very modern name, although it was in use before Sunnymede Estate was built. I have been able to trace it back to just before 1900.



# "SOUTHWODE GREEN" IN 1593



High Street - This is a modern term. Old rentals usually refer to it as "Billericay Strete".

Chapel Street - The former names of Chapel Street have caused a great deal of controversy.

On the 1593 Ralph Aggas survey of Billericay Chapel Street is not named, although the Church end was fully developed. On the same survey a road leading from the High Street to what is now Chantry Estate is shown as Wellfield Lane.

In the rental of 1615 Chapel Street is shown as Wellfield Lane, and it is also called by the same name in the rentals of 1706, 1718, 1738, 1765, 1818, and 1823. It is also described by the same name in Quit Rolls of 1685 to 1747, occasionally being sub-titled in these rentals and rolls "Back Street of Billerica". It should be noted that there were small wells at the bottom of the original Wellfield Lane. At a later date important wells were developed off Chapel Street to serve the "Crown" Inn, then in the High Street opposite Woolworths, and a number of men were employed for the sole purpose of pumping the water.

Around the early part of the 19th century, when the wells declined in importance, Chapel Street was commonly called Back Street. In the latter half of the 19th century Back Street and Chapel Street were used alternately, Chapel Street referring to the Baptist Chapel, which formed part of Chapel House, which still stands just below the Ritz Cinema. In the last fifty years Chapel Street has been officially used, although before the war "Back Street" was still frequently used, and even today is still used occasionally by older residents.

Despite the evidence of the quit rentals and rolls one local historian refuses to accept that Wellfield Lane was ever used by the local people to describe Chapel Street. He points out that a map of 1681 calls it "The Back Street of Billerica", and suggests that "Wellfield Lane" was a name solely used by the Lord of the Manor and his servants, and that the local people refused to have this name thrust upon them, and used "Back Street" instead.



"The Place Names of Billericay", continued.

Ingenious as this theory is, I cannot accept it. Regarding the 1681 plan, no doubt the mapmakers wished to avoid confusion with the original Wellfield Lane, and therefore used the long-winded explanation of "Back Street of Billerica". I just cannot see why generation after generation of compilers of quit rents should wish to impose a road name on local people. They would gain nothing from it, and surely if they did want to impose a road name, they would not use the quit rents as a means, since very few ordinary people would see them, and very few could read. Also, it seems to me that the wells were one of the more obvious features of Chapel Street, and the local people therefore used "Wellfield Lane" to describe Chapel Street during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Western Road - In 1593 this is shown as "Newe Strete", and this name survived until about 1800, when Back Lane came into common use. Western Road is a modern form introduced in the last fifty years.

Perry Street - This was Gynges a la Pere in 1254, Perystrete in 1542, and Peartree Street on Chapman & Andres' map of 1777. This map also shows Peartree Farm, which one stood near Mannings Poultry Farm in Queens Park. Perry Street was once in the Parish of Buttsbury, the name of which originates from the pear tree of St. Botolph. It therefore seems that the origin of the name was "Pear Tree", which has been corrupted to Perry. Note the use of "Street" instead of the commoner "Lane" or "Road" - a hint of Roman connections.

Bell Hill - Once thought to be connected with sun worship, a theory now discounted. Named from the "Bell" Inn which stood at the bottom of the hill, until the later half of the 19th century.

Jacksons Lane - Jacksmiths Lane in 1706, later corrupted to its present form. Hill House was so named in 1777.

Blunts Walls is an interesting name. The first word indicates the connection with the Blunt family, who had their property confiscated for taking part in the revolt of Simon de Montford revolt in the reign of Henry III. The second word - "Walls" - indicates the presence of ancient ruins, and these could be seen in the form of remains of a Roman fort until the middle of the last century. Great Blunts and Little Blunts are also named for their connections with the Blunt family. These were once called Ynge Gyngiang Jayberd or Ing Ging Jayberd Landry, references to the Norman families of Joiberd and Landri who once lived there.

Modern names - In Billericay we have a mixture of good and bad modern street names. On the Chantry Estate, for example, almost all the names are connected with Billericay history e.g. Hurlocks Road, referring to the mansion of the same name which once stood in the High Street. Station Road, over half a mile from the Station, is very confusing, and should be re-named. I doubt if many people living in Dukes Farm Road on the Bush Hall Estate realise that until quite recently there was a farm of the same name in Stock Road almost opposite, which is mentioned as Dukes in 1538. Strangely enough, another Dukes Farm Road ran behind the farmhouse between The Grove and Headley Road, but fell out of use just before the last War, although traces can still be seen. There is no excuse for moronic names like Ian Road, however. Developers complain that they have difficulty in finding suitable names - all that is needed is a little research, and a great many old names could be preserved through road naming on nearby new housing estates.

Other titles in this series:- No.1 in the Series, "Early Billericay", tells the story of Billericay from the Stone Age to Roman times, and includes a map of Roman Billericay. Nearly 1,000 sold. No.2 in the Series, "The Mills of Billericay", deals with the history of all known Mills and Watermills in the area, explains how a mill works, deals with the "Perry Street Mill Mystery", and tells the amusing story of Billericay's fat miller, Thomas Wood, and his amazing diet. Both booklets can be obtained from W.P.Grant, 143, Perry Street, Billericay, Essex (Phone Bil.1927), price 6d + 3d postage per copy, or from W.H.Smith & Sons and local newsagents.