

## RAYLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

Has mounted plaques on various buildings. You are invited to follow the heritage trail starting at Yours.

### 1. Oldest Secular Building

The South wing, where this plaque is located dates from circa 1350 and once would have included an open plan medieval Hall. In the early 1900's the building was called Commerce House from where Deveson's the drapers traded in the last shop in Rayleigh to use an 'overhead cash pneumatic tube' to the cashier. A corner of the building was let to Westminster Bank until they built new premises opposite. After Deveson's it became the North Thames Gas Board showroom and offices. Boxers used the sports hall to the rear. One of these was Larry Gaines when preparing for the Middleweight Championship of the British Empire on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1934 against Len Harris at the Royal Albert Hall (Larry Gaines lost on points). Finally in 1988 Sansom's the gentleman's outfitters undertook a major internal refurbishment.

### 2. Police station

(Plaque on the front of the building) On this site formerly stood 'Pevevils', a farmhouse during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1830, James Ewen, a farmhand was found guilty of firing a barn and was hanged at Chelmsford Gaol. Rayleigh's first Police Station was sited at the corner of Eastwood Road known today as Dollmartins.

### 3. Elephant & Castle Inn

(plaque on side of 165 High Street) Until 1923 The Elephant and Castle Inn stood on the corner of Castle Road/High Street. Castle Road was originally known as Meeting House Lane. In the 1670's Reverend Abraham Caley was twice ejected from the Parish Church for not conforming to the act of Uniformity. He held clandestine meetings and he was only able to continue his Ministry due to the patronage of Lady Riche of Rochford Hall.

### 4. A127 & The Weir Public House

The first road in this country built specifically for motorized vehicles, the London-Southend Arterial Road, was originally a single carriageway largely built by hand. The Weir section was opened on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1925 by Prince Henry of Gloucester watched by over 1,000 local residents. In the early years an AA man often stood at the crossroads saluting members. Later it became a roundabout before the underpass was built. The Weir Hotel opened to serve passing trade.

### 5. Rayleigh Town Centre Enhancement 1999

(Plaque in the pavement) Commemorative plaque to note the Town Centre Enhancements during 1999.

### 6. Reverend James Pilkington

The Revd James Pilkington came to Rayleigh in 1797 as the first Baptist minister in town and the Baptist Church was built a year later. To help supplement his income he opened a school called Pilkingtons on this site, of which he was the first Headmaster.

### 7. Chippingtons & Fields

(Plaque at the entrance to the library) At the rear of this building in the 1880's and 1890's a company known as Chippingtons built horse drawn Coaches. At this site formally stood Fields Billiard Hall, a traditional boarded property which late became Rayleigh's first Public Library.

#### 8. Old Anchor Brewery & Maltings

(Plaque on the side wall of the building) Here stood the Old Anchor Brewery and Maltings built in 1798. Water was pumped from the brickfield pond in Castle Road. Production ceased in 1922 when a body was found floating in the pond. On the adjacent site stood a large Georgian house (home of the Barnard family) part of which later became an Off-Licence.

#### 9. Arthur T Upson Missionary

(Plaque at side of building) Arthur J. Upson lived above a shop on this site. He was a missionary, Arabic scholar and founder of the Nile Mission Press. He wrote "Arabic Simplified" and 700 religious tracts. He took the name Abdul Fady and died in 1958.

#### 10. Gilson's Row

A family of grocers called Gilson traded on this site from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The whole parade of shops to Crown Hill became known as 'Gilson's Row. Other well known traders from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century include Martin Tweed's Tea Rooms, Nathaniel (Manny) Carter watch & clockmaker, Premier Saloon hairdressers, The Library confectioners & tobacconist and the International Tea Company Stores. For many years the first floor housed the Registrar of Births, Deaths & Marriages.

#### 11. Edward Francis

Edward Francis was a great benefactor to Rayleigh who, amongst other worthy deeds, was responsible for planting the eleven trees in the High street at the start of the twentieth century and he also purchased the Mount, at a cost of £500, which he subsequently donated to the National Trust in 1923.

#### 12. Castle Hill Farm/Railway Station

The railway arrived in Rayleigh on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1889. Before then this site was part of Castle Hill Farm which extended up to the High Street and Included Rayleigh Mount and the site of the Rayleigh Castle and Tower Windmill. The major route into town prior to the railway was along the "King's Highway" (London Road and London Hill) to Holy Trinity Church. It was the arrival of the railway which directly led to the dramatic change of Rayleigh from a quiet tranquil village (Population circa 35000 in 2009). Crown Lane first appeared on maps in 1777 as a minor footpath and only became Crown Hill in the early 1920s.

#### 13. Prison & Hangmans Field

(Plaque at the front by the door) Until c1940 Rayleigh Prison stood here, opposite Gallows Mead and Hangmans Field where judgement was enacted. Thomas Linggood, of a well respected local family, claimed to have revealed the stumps of the gallows and ghostly stories and unusual occurrences are still claimed to this day.

#### 14. Tower Mill

Erected in 1809 on the outer bailey of castle mount.

The last of 5 mills serving the town and at 67 feet, the highest in Essex.

Milling for 150 years, first by wind, then diesel engine and electricity.

Sails removed in 1906 as Arthur Crabb, Miller, was unable to operate a 24 hour day.  
A static sail unit was introduced in 1974. Sometimes called a smock mill due to its loading skirt.

4 floors restored for public exhibitions in 2006.

#### 15. Rayleigh Castle

The plaque which is just inside the front door on the right commemorates Rayleigh castle which was erected soon after the Norman invasion of 1066. It was the only Essex castle mentioned in the Domesday Survey published in 1086. The castle was finally demolished in 1394 by permission of King Richard 11.

#### 16. The Womens Institute Hall

(Plaque at the front of the hall) The original building at this site was the Peculiar People's Chapel. Built by Harry Adey, of that persuasion, in 1903 and also used by the Salvation Army in 1923 when they first came to the town. The building was purchased by Rayleigh Women's Institute for £300 in 1935 and used by three of their branches until destroyed by fire on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1998. The replacement hall was opened on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2000.

#### 17. Cosy Theatre & Regal Cinema

(Plaque at front of building) Adapted from part of Miss Coller's School for Young Ladies, "The Cosy" ran alongside Bellingham Lane – formerly Back Lane, until renamed by the Bellingham family who lived on the corner. With piano accompaniment it showed silent films from c1925 and later 'talkies'. Prior to the second world war, the "Regal" took its place and showed popular films until demolished in 1972. This gave its name to "Homeregal House" on which this plaque is affixed. Mill Hall to your right also stands on part of the old cinema site.

#### 18. Bellingham House

In the early 1800s a significant house was at this junction owned by Mr Bellingham, a local auctioneer, after whom this lane was named. Over the years it was a private house, a private girl's school, an antique shop and a restaurant until it was demolished in the early 1970s.

#### 19. Chequers/The Saddlery

For many years 2 distinctive buildings stood at this location. The saddler, owned by Harry Stewart, sold saddles and harnesses for horses. After World War II the site became a popular restaurant named Saddlers. Next door was the Chequers public house with an archway to the side leading to a broad yard where the blacksmith's forge, stables and worker's cottages once stood. The pub was popular with agricultural and other workers until it was demolished in 1960.

#### 20. Trinity Fair

The Charter for Rayleigh's ancient Trinity Fair, one of the earliest in Essex, dates to 1227. Held along the wide Saxon High St for many centuries it was finely cancelled in 1899 as it was considered too rowdy, it was followed by Carnivals, Town Shows, Fetes and Family Fun Days which continue to the present day.

#### 21. Post Office

(Plaque next to entrance door) Rayleigh's second post office was sited here in a small room in a boarded cottage. On Sundays it sold postage stamps only and mail was collected from South Benfleet Station until the railway came to Rayleigh in 1889. Reverend Nehemiah Curnock's daughter, a suffragette, was attributed with smashing the window in demanding votes for women.

#### 22. Rayleigh's First Bank

(Plaque next to entrance door) Blomfield's Drapery Store was situated here and a small room in the corner of the building was Barclay and Company Bank, Rayleigh's first until 1895. This bank (no connection to Barclays of the present day) opened for two hours, twice a week. A few yards south is Gondola House, 28 High Street, which became the rates office in 1930. A wooden shed behind was used as a meeting place for members of the Urban District Council.

#### 23. Area of Correction

(Plaque in Flower bed) Rayleigh was the centre for the administration of justice for hundreds of years until the 15<sup>th</sup> century and before Chelmsford gained more importance. As Lord of the Manor, Sweyne and his father FitzWimarc aided the Conqueror's invasion in 1066. He received a Baronetcy and Rayleigh an 'Honor' with supreme authority over 55 townships and Manors across several counties. With Manor Courts and three Judges sitting at Assize Courts, miscreants were tried, punished and ridiculed at the whipping post, pillory, stocks and cage – an open prison, situated near this spot.

#### 24. The Old Parish Rooms

(Plaque at front of building) Built in 1870 for £500, pupils of the National School for Boys studied here for one penny a day until 1904, when Love Lane School for Boys was opened. The building then became the Parish Rooms but was closed following the erection of a new Parish hall. It was damaged by fire in 1980 and later converted into a restaurant in 1981.

#### 25. "Ruffles"

(Plaque at the front of the building) To the rear of this property, in which Benjamin Ruffles lived, was Tower Mill (1786-1865) one of five in Rayleigh, which was sometimes called "Picketts". Ruffles worked for Nathaniel Audley, the owner; married his daughter Elizabeth and inherited the business on his father-in-law's death in 1829. He purchased Tower Mill in 1840, which still stands in Bellingham Lane.

#### 26. Barrington's Cottages

(Plaque on shop adjacent to Council Offices) The cottages date from 1553 or earlier and were used by forest workers who, until c 1600, maintained Rayleigh's Royal Park where kings, queens and nobility hunted. The market was introduced to Rayleigh by the renowned Hubert de Burgh, Justicair of all England and Lord of the Manor, in 1225. It was originally held in the High Street, thus its wide nature. Between the first and second World wars the market moved to the site adjacent to these cottages before subsequently moving to the centre of the High Street in 2012.

#### 27. Barrington Family

The original manor house on this site dates back many centuries to when the owners were the keepers of Rayleigh's Royal Park often frequented by Henry VIII and his court. The current building dates from the mid nineteenth century.

### 28. Kingsleigh House

Kingsleigh house was originally a Coaching Inn called the Bull named after the bull baiting that took place in the rear garden of the pub. The bull travelled from its field along what is now called Bull Lane. The pub closed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### 29. Rayleigh Lodge

(Plaque at the front of building) The original building on this site was named "Park Lodge" by Henry VIII and was built as the great Hunting Lodge in East Wood for the specific purpose of entertaining Anne Boleyn. The first private person to own the property was Edward Berrye JP who participated in the rounding up of heretics, one of whom was burned at the stake in Rayleigh High Street.

### 30. Fire Station

Rayleigh's Fire Service dates back to 1906. There has been a Fire Station in Castle Road since 1932. First on this site and from 1973 to 2009 at an adjacent site at what is now Phoenix Heights.

This plaque is dedicated to all the fire fighters who have served our Town.