

Brentwood Town Hall Heritage Lecterns - plain text version

History of Brentwood

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Lectern 1, 1100 to 1700

1100 to 1300

Carbon dating puts some of the timbers of the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, Navestock, between 1120 and 1240. The beautiful wooden tower was damaged by a land-mine in 1940 and restored in 1954.

The Church of St. Peters, South Weald, was built circa 1150, when Brentwood was only a hamlet within the Parish. Little of the present building dates from that time.

Thoby Priory was built at Mountnessing by the Augustine Order circa 1150. A magnificent house was built there in the 16th century for the Berners family. It was demolished in the 1930s.

In 1201, a hospital was established at Brook Street and is remembered by 'Spital Lane'. Later, Brook House was built on the site. 19th century London artist, Edgar Wills, lived here. It was later a ladies' academy and finally a toolmakers, E.B. Dickenson. It was demolished in the 1970s. Opposite was a moated house which later became Marygreen Manor.

There was a church in the Parish of Doddinghurst from the 7th century, on the site of the current All Saints Church. The belfry still houses bells from the 16th and 18th centuries. The earliest remaining feature of the church is the doorway which dates from about 1220.

The Chapel of St Thomas á Becket was built in the middle of the hamlet of Brentwood in 1221, on the pilgrims' route. The ruins stand in the middle of Brentwood High Street today.

In the 12th century, King Stephen, William the Conqueror's grandson, granted permission for a fair, and in 1227, Brentwood was granted a market charter.

The Church of St Mary's at Shenfield dates before 1249. It was much enlarged in the 15th century and many alterations followed in Victorian times. Its oldest bell is dated 1626.

In 1290, a house was built at Brook Street for the master of the nearby leper hospital. Some of the house remains as part of the Golden Fleece public house.

1300 to 1500

In 1381, officers of the Crown came to Brentwood to ensure collection of Poll Tax, and were thrown out of town. The 'Peasants' Revolt' had begun. Brentwood was a meeting point for the Essex rebels (under Jack Straw) and the Men of Kent (under Wat Tyler), who then marched on to London.

Circa 1400, the Abbess of Barking built a sanatorium at Great Warley, with a fishing lake to provide food. This is now the site of Warley Place, a nature reserve.

Numbers 60, 62 and 64 Brentwood High Street date from circa 1425. The passageway to South Street contains an ancient bricked up doorway.

The pagoda tower of St. Laurence's Church, Blackmore, with its intricate timbers, was built in about 1450. The body of the church contains Norman features.

There is a legend that a giant serpent escaped from a ship on the Thames and made its home in the churchyard of Horndon Parish Church. It attacked and devoured travellers and locals alike. The people went to Sir James Tyrell of Heron for help. Sir James knew that the serpent was more powerful than he. To defeat it in combat, he used cunning and strapped a looking glass to his chest as he knew that serpents are vain. When he approached the church, the serpent attacked but paused to admire its reflection. In that moment Sir James struck and the monster was killed. The present All Saints Church, East Horndon, was built in 1475. It was the third church on the site. The earliest is dated from 1335.

In 1480, the White Hart, with its famous galleried courtyard, was built in Brentwood High Street. It is thought that there was an even earlier inn on the

site and that King Richard II stayed there in 1392. Richard's emblem was a white hart.

In 1498, Thomas Bryce built a house at Kelvedon Hatch. The present building 'Brizes' dates from 1720. Owners include the Dolbys and the Rodneys of naval fame. It became Bell House School in 1981 and was recently owned by the Peniel Church.

1500 to 1570

In the 1520s, Henry VIII regularly visited Jerico Priory at Blackmore for pleasure and privacy. The term 'gone to Jerico' was understood by discreet courtiers. The present house was built in 1714 on the foundations of the old priory.

In 1541, Sir Brian Tuke was granted the Manor of South Weald by Henry VIII and rebuilt Weald Hall (above), which is said to date back to 1062. In 1550, Mary I frequented 'Queen Mary's Chapel' (below) which still survives at South Weald.

William Hunter was martyred by burning, in Ingrave Road, in 1555, for his beliefs. The Justice of the Peace, Sir Antony Browne, had little option but to condemn him to death.

Brentwood Grammar School was founded by Sir Antony Browne in 1558. As Justice of the Peace, it was he who condemned William Hunter to die. Some say that the school was set up to ease Sir Antony's conscience. Over the centuries, Brentwood School has seen both prosperity and neglect, but over the last 150 years it has increased in size and influence. Its grounds extend along Shenfield Road and Ingrave Road.

In 1563, Sir Antony Browne's Alms Houses were built in Wigley Bush Lane. They were rebuilt in the 18th century, extended in 1854, and added to in recent times by the Wingrave family.

1570 to 1600

Sir John (1st Lord Petre) bought the first Thorndon Hall in 1573 and expanded it into a fine mansion. It was demolished in 1763 and was later rebuilt to the north of the original site by the 9th Lord Petre.

In 1577, thirty women lead by Thomasine Tyler staged a sit-in at St. Thomas' Chapel when Wistan Browne, Lord of the manor and Sheriff of Essex, tried to demolish it.

In 1579, the Assize House was built in Brentwood High Street. It was where the Town Hall was later built and marked the town's coming of age as an important regional centre in Essex. The ground floor was converted into shops and later the town's fire engine was housed at the back. The assizes were later held at the White Hart Hotel.

William Byrd, considered by many to be the greatest Tudor composer, came to live in Stondon Massey in 1593. He and Thomas Tallis were organists in Queen Elizabeth's Chapel Royal and in 1575 were granted a monopoly in the printing and selling of music. He died in 1623.

In 1588, in readiness to meet the Spanish Armada, troops from eight eastern and midland counties assembled at Brentwood before marching to Tilbury to join their ships. In 1599, the Norfolk and Suffolk military musters were held at Brentwood and Ingatestone.

In 1599, the actor Will Kemp, friend of William Shakespeare, stayed in Brentwood during his 'Nine Days' Wonder', when he danced the morris from London to Norwich.

1600 to 1700

Mitre House in Shenfield Road was probably built as a farm house in 1600. It later became part of Brentwood School. The adjacent buildings, Roden House and Newnum House are also part of the school. The lawns in front of them are all that remains of the 'butts' where local men were obliged to practise with the long-bow, in readiness for possible military service.

The first records of Brentwood having a Post Master date back to 1637. His name was Samuel Smith and he was paid an annual wage of £5. Until the Post Office was built in the High Street in 1891, several shops and inns in the town were licensed to receive letters and parcels (Post Office rebuilt 1939).

Brentwood was a key meeting point for troops on their way to Colchester during the English Civil War, in 1648.

From 1649 until 1655, the diarist, John Evelyn, owned Warley Place at Great Warley. It is said that a sweet chestnut tree, which he planted there, grew to become the largest in England.

Shenfield Place was built circa 1690 and was designed by architect Robert Hook, who worked for Sir Christopher Wren. The building is said to contain features designed by Wren. Shenfield Place, its outhouses, servants' quarters, gardens, grounds and paddocks, were sold at auction in 1926, for £11,500. High quality housing now covers the land and the house itself is a nursing home.

Brentwood owes much of its development and wealth to its position on the Essex Great Road. In 1696, the first turnpike gate in Essex was set up at Mountnessing.

Lectern 2, 1700 to 1900

1700 to 1800

Originally called Wealdside, Gilstead Hall was built for the Wright Family in 1726. It was sold to the Hansons in 1813, and the poet Lord Byron was a frequent visitor there. The house has now been converted into flats.

Nearby Dytchleys was built circa 1726 and is a good example of an early Georgian country mansion. It was the house of the Bond family, until purchased by the Towers in 1827. More recently, it was an annex to Queen Mary's College, University of London.

The 'Old House' was built in Shenfield Road in about 1748. It had been an inn, 'The Red Lion' and part of Brentwood School. It is now private housing. DeFoe's 'A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain', published in 1726, describes Brentwood as a "...a thoroughfare town with many inns, maintained by the heavy traffic passing through, to and from London".

The Chequers' Inn was built in Brentwood High Street near St Thomas' Chapel circa 1769. It was demolished in 1937, and a shop was built with a billiard hall above.

The new Thorndon Hall was built in 1770 by the 9th Lord Petre and the old hall was abandoned. The architect was James Paine and the grounds were landscaped by Capability Brown.

Boyle's Court was built by Thomas Leverton in 1776. It was later owned by the Lescher family. After the death of Count Lescher in 1923, the building was purchased by Eveyln Heseltine who leased it to Bertrand Russell's wife, who ran a radical boys' school there. It passed to Essex County Council in 1950 and was renamed Leverton Hall and was a secure remand home for young people until 2014. It was later developed as residential housing.

In 1762, the 56th Foot Regiment (The Pompadours) captured Havana during the Seven Years War. The 56th Foot joined the 44th Foot to form the Essex Regiment, based at Warley.

In 1779, the Pompadours served at the siege of Gibraltar and won the right to put the Castle & Keys on their colour. From this was named the modern day Gibraltar House and Keys Hall in Warley. In the French Revolutionary War (1793-1802) the Pompadours served with distinction in the West Indies.

In 1778, George III visited his army at Warley Common. The event was reported by Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Admiral Sir John Jervis inherited Rochetts at South Weald from his father in law, Sir Thomas Parker in 1784. Sir John was the hero of the sea battle of St Vincent in 1797 and was made Earl St Vincent.

1800 to 1840

Mountnessing post mill was built in 1807, and it worked until 1937. In 1975, the Friends of Mountnessing Windmill was formed. The mill was gradually restored to working order and in 1983 it opened to the public.

Warley Barracks was built in 1805. In 1812, at the Battle of Salamanca, the 2nd. Battalion 44th Foot, which was later to develop into the Essex Regiment, captured the French Eagle Standard. The eagle was added to their badge. When the barracks closed, Barrack Road was renamed 'Eagle Way' as a permanent reminder of Warley's glorious military past. In 1815, the 44th played a major role at the Battle of Waterloo.

The Brentwood composer, Arthur Brown, lived in Crown Street. He was born in 1830 and lived to be 95 years old. He wrote over a thousand hymn tunes, including 'Purleigh (O Love Divine)', 'Saffron Walden (Just As I Am)' and 'Lammas'.

Dr. Cornelius Butler practised in the town from 1812 to 1871. In 1815, he announced the victory at Waterloo from the White Hart Inn. He was town Registrar and a governor of Brentwood School.

From 1835 until 1867, St. Thomas's Chapel was used as a National Boys' School.

In 1837, Lord Petre gave land in Ingrave Road so that a Roman Catholic church could be built. This would later become Brentwood Cathedral.

During the 1800-1840 period, the turnpike road through Brentwood flourished. In one day, in 1838, Shenfield tollgate recorded the following:

- 176 coaches and carriages
- 24 post horses
- 13 saddle horses
- 2,120 sheep
- 1,110 cattle

The Billericay Union Workhouse was set up in 1840 and the quality of local poor houses improved. One such house was in Hart Street. It had been built in 1760 and later became an inn called 'The Rose and Crown', then 'The Gardener's Arms'.

1840 to 1850

In 1840, the railway reached Brentwood from London. Hundreds of 'navvies' were drafted in to the area to dig a deep cutting in a fold in the hill, south of the town. They encountered unexpected and extreme difficulties because of spring water causing the sides to slip in. The cutting itself, 'Three Arches Bridge' and 'Seven Arches Bridge' are considered to be outstanding engineering achievements. The thousands of tonnes of spoil from the cutting created the 'tips' on Shenfield Common. It was 1843 before the track reached Chelmsford.

The first County Police Force was formed in 1840. Brentwood had a Superintendent, two Inspectors and sixteen Police Constables. Four years later,

land was acquired in Coptfold Road for a purpose-built police station. It was opened in 1851. Outbuildings included cells and stables, and the adjacent terrace of dwellings were for policemen and their families. Later, the police station became the library and then a children's nursery

From 1842 until 1861, Warley Barracks was the depot of the East India Company's private army (crest below). During this time, the chapel at Warley and officer's mansions in London Road, were built.

In 1846, Christ Church School was built in (what is now) Warley Hill. The church, designed by S.S.Teulon, was built beside it. The school was demolished in 1970.

In 1847, the Brentwood Congregational Church was built in New Road. Since 1755 it had been in Kings Road, where the adjacent burial ground remains. In 1972, it joined the Presbyterian Church to become the United Reformed Church.

In 1848, the County Court was built in New Road. The building later housed a private medical practice.

In 1850, PC. Robert Bamborough was murdered while on duty in Hutton. He was escorting a prisoner from Billericay to Brentwood when a scuffle broke out by a pond, near Church Lane. PC. Bamborough drowned. He was the first Essex Police officer to be killed on duty. Today, a memorial stone by the roadside marks the location of the fatal attack.

1850 to 1875

The Essex County Lunatic Asylum was opened in 1853, on land which was part of the Brentwood Hall Estate, the home of the Kavanagh family. It was re-named The Brentwood Mental Hospital, and later in 1953 became Warley Hospital.

Burgess and Key (agricultural implement manufacturers) came to Brentwood in 1855, and by 1866, had developed a huge foundry and works, called Victoria Works, in Ongar Road. The works were sold to A. E. Symes in 1923.

The Shoreditch Agricultural and Industrial School was built in London Road in 1854. In 1885, it became the Hackney Union Branch Workhouse and Infants School. In 1930, it was turned into St. Faith's Hospital and developed as a

centre for the care and treatment of patients with epilepsy. It closed in 1980. In 1997, it was demolished to make way for the British Telecom building, which was completed in 1999.

In 1858, the Brentwood Gas Company opened a gas works in St James' Road. In 1932, the company was absorbed into the Gas, Light and Coke Company. The works were closed and the town's gas was piped in from Beckton.

In 1861, the memorial to the Brentwood martyr, William Hunter, was erected near the corner of Shenfield Road and Ingrave Road (funded by public subscription).

A new St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church (later Brentwood Cathedral) was built on the Ingrave Road site in 1861, allowing the original church to become a school.

In 1864, the Town Hall was built in the High Street, on the site of the old Assize House.

In 1866, the South Essex Waterworks Company provided the town's first piped water supply from a pumping station in Great Warley.

1875 to 1900

In 1876, Essex County Cricket Club was formed, with their ground in Shenfield Road. 'The Old County Ground' was the scene of legendary matches in the 1930s.

In 1895, Brentwood High School for Boys was founded by Mr. Kenner, in Rose Valley. It closed in 1929. In 1879, Kate Bryan built Montpelier House in Queens Road as a girls' school. In 1913, taken over by Essex County Council, it became Brentwood County High School moving adjacent to Shenfield Common in 1927.

The parade of shops Nos. 1-23 High Street was built in the 1880s by a Mr. Spurgeon. It drove him bankrupt and it was known as "Spurgeon's Folly".

The present St. Thomas' Church was built in 1883 to replace a smaller church which had been built in 1835, but had become structurally unsound. St. Thomas' became a parish church in 1873, when Brentwood gained independence from the parish of South Weald.

In 1884, a Committee of Conservators was set up to protect Shenfield Common. In 1890, unemployed men planted the 'Avenue' and in 1905, constructed Madeira Walk.

The first General Post Office, on the corner of St. Thomas's Road and the High Street, was built in 1891.

In 1892, the Methodist Church in Warley Road (Warley Hill) was built.

In 1893, William and Harriet Tabor opened a bakers and Post Office on the corner of Chelmsford Road and Hutton Road.

In 1895, Brentwood High School for Boys was founded by Mr. Kenner, in Rose Valley. It closed in 1929.

In 1895, St. Nicholas' Church at Kelvedon Hatch was consecrated. It is a fine example of the 'Arts & Crafts' style of architecture.

In 1900, the Ursuline Sisters opened a convent school in Queens Road. It became a Direct Grant Grammar School in 1920.

On 4th. April 1899, Brentwood Urban District Council was formed.

Lectern 3, 1900 to 1939

1900 to 1914

The town's first public electricity supply was installed circa 1902. A large crowd gathered outside a small shop in the High Street, near the old Town Hall, where the new 'wonder' was switched on.

High Wood School, later Highwood Hospital, was built in 1903 on Ongar Road for 250 children who were mainly tuberculosis patients. In 1959, it became a long-stay hospital.

In 1902, a purpose-built fire station was opened in Hart Street. The building later became used for retail.

In 1902, the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, at Great Warley, was built in the Art Nouveau style, by Evelyn Heseltine.

In 1904, Ilford Ltd. (Selo) opened a factory in Woodman Road. It closed in 1910, but re-opened in 1912 to produce roll film. (Britannia Road houses were built for Selo employees).

The Hutton Industrial School was built in 1906 by the Poplar Board of Governors. Its purpose was to replace an East End orphanage.

In 1909, Wilson's store, at the junction of Ingrave Road and Brentwood High Street, was destroyed by fire. It was rebuilt in 1910.

Shen Place Alms Houses were built in Shenfield Road, in 1910, by Evelyn Heseltine.

In 1910, Jean Pierre Hensmans opened his motor business in Brook Street and it remained a landmark on the A12 trunk route for over half a century. 'J.P', or 'Jimmy', came from a farming family in Luxembourg and although, as a Ford Main Dealer, his showrooms were always full of the latest Ford cars, Fordson commercials and tractors were a major part of his business.

John & George Larkin provided a horse trough and drinking fountain at Wilson's Corner in 1910. The Larkins also provided a drinking fountain at Shenfield Common, a new clock for St. Thomas' church (in 1923) and Larkin's Playing Fields, Ongar Road.

1914 to 1918

Kings Road Baptist Church was built in 1915.

The Electric Palace was the town's first cinema. It was opened by the Dorin brothers, in the former 'Charter's' drapery store, in the High Street, in 1914. It was re-built in 1934 as the Palace, a 1100 seater modern cinema.

Selo's Woodman Road factory began producing roll film in 1912, but the site was requisitioned by the Army in 1916. The Army retained it until 1921 and Selo re-opened the factory for production of cine and x-ray film. Later the company became known as 'Ilford Limited' and the factory eventually closed its doors in 1983.

In 1917, when a new diocese was formed, the Church of the Sacred Heart and St. Helen's in Ingrave Road became Brentwood Roman Catholic Cathedral.

The Great War (1914-1918) brought great activity to Warley Barracks and Brentwood. Soldiers from all over the country passed through Warley to be equipped and trained before being sent to the Continent. Activity extended beyond the barracks and tracts of land in the area were put to military use. Soldiers were billeted in private residences all over the town. There were

massive troop movements, with whole regiments arriving and leaving, either via Tilbury Docks, or Brentwood and Warley railway station.

1918 to 1925

The Brentwood Gazette and Mid-Essex Recorder was founded by George Sidney Dunn in 1919.

In 1921, Marconi built transmitting and receiving wireless telegraph stations off Ongar Road for Continental traffic.

In 1921, the Midland Bank was built in Brentwood High Street.

In 1921, the Marillac Hospital was opened at Warley House, by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. In 1921, the Midland Bank was built in Brentwood High Street.

Shenfield Memorial Parish Hall was opened in 1922, on land given by Raymond Courage.

In 1922, the Parade cinema opened by the station. In 1930, it became the first Brentwood cinema to have talking pictures.

In 1924, Brentwood's first Sainsbury's shop was opened in Brentwood High Street. A new store was built in 1969 and a larger store opened in William Hunter Way in 1998.

1925 to 1935

In 1927, 'Brentwood County High School for Girls' was opened, adjacent to Shenfield Common.

In 1927, PC. George Gutteridge was shot dead at Stapleford Abbots. His body was found by Alec Ward, a garage owner and carter from (what is now) Lorne Road. The trouble he had in telephoning the police, led to the introduction of the 999 service.

In 1933, the foundation stone of Brentwood District Hospital in Crescent Drive was laid by Princess Mary. The hospital opened free of debt in 1934. £40,000 was raised by public donation. Fundraising events included an ox roast, carnivals and sports days. The land was given by Percy Bayman.

Brentwood's first Woolworth's store opened in June 1930.

In 1934, the railway tracks between Gidea Park and Shenfield were doubled, with new station buildings at Shenfield, Brentwood and Warley.

Ellen Willmott, the world-famous horticulturist of Warley Place, died in 1934. The house was demolished during WWII. In 1977, the gardens became a nature reserve.

The Swan Inn in the High Street was re-built in 1935, replacing a building which was several hundred years old. The original Swan (where William Hunter spent his last night) is thought to be on the other side of the road near the South Street passage.

In 1935, the open-air swimming pool was built in North Road, on a site known as Debtor's Field.

1935 to 1939

In November 1935, HRH the Duke of York visited Warley Barracks to inspect St. Battalion Scots Guards, before they left for Egypt.

The Martyr's Elm in Ingrave Road was replaced in 1936 by an oak, which also marked the accession of King George VI. The stump of the Elm remained until 1952.

In 1936, the City Coach Co. was created from a former London 'pirate' bus company. City began taking over local services, as well as maintaining its famous 'London to Southend' service. New offices, workshops and garages were built in Ongar Road/North Road.

In 1937, the Priory behind St. Thomas' chapel was demolished to make way for the 1400-seater Odeon cinema, which opened on 18th May 1938. It closed in 1973.

In 1938, Brentwood was preparing for war. An Air Raid Precaution (ARP) service was set up under local businessman L.J.Hibbard. Unemployed men dug

trenches and filled sandbags for protection from air raids. 30,000 gas masks were assembled by pupils and volunteers at Brentwood School.

The previous Police Station at La Plata was built in 1937.

On 22nd November 1937 John Logie Baird, television's inventor, presented Brentwood District Hospital with a television set. It became the first hospital in the world to have television installed.

In 1938, Rotary Hoes built a new factory at West Horndon, trading under the name of Howard's Rotavator Co. Ltd. The company re-located to Suffolk in 1975.

In 1939, 'Burton's' was built in Brentwood High Street, on the site of the Chequers Inn. The new Post Office opened on the site of the old Post Office and Russell's nursery.

At the 'Whit Monday Annual Athletics Day', held at the Brentwood School grounds on 5th. May 1939, Dorothy Odam established a world record of 5ft.7 ½ in. (1.71 m.) in the women's high jump.

Lectern 4, 1939 to 1970

1939 to 1945

In 1939, Selo began large scale production of film for aerial reconnaissance.

In less than two weeks in 1940, the people of Brentwood collected enough money to buy a Spitfire. It was named 'Brentwood'.

During 1939, 6,000 London school children were evacuated to Brentwood. They arrived by train and assembled at Brentwood County High School, from where they were billeted to private houses around the town.

Before D-Day (June 1944), extra troops and equipment were amassed in Thorndon Park, Childerditch and Weald Park. One carriageway of the A127 was closed and turned into a vast vehicle park.

On VE-day, 8th May 1945, search light batteries crossed their beams above Brentwood to form a 'V for victory'.

During WWII there were 432 casualties in Brentwood due to enemy action (43 dead). The first bomb fell at The Goldings, Great Warley in July 1940 and the

last bomb fell on London Road cemetery in April 1944. The first V1 (doodlebug) fell in Hill Road in June 1944 and the last V1 fell in East Horndon in December 1944.

The first V2 rocket struck Alexander Lane, Shenfield in October 1944 and the last rocket struck Hutton Park in March 1945.

1945 to 1955

In 1947, Brentwood Maternity Home opened in the former District Cottage Hospital on Shenfield Common. It is now Four Oaks.

In March 1947, Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein visited Warley Barracks. He inspected the Physical Training Classes.

Wartime petrol rationing came to an end at Whitsun in 1950 and the increase in traffic brought Brentwood to a standstill.

In 1949, the railway was electrified from Liverpool Street to Shenfield. Steam trains were replaced by smart new electric units with sliding doors. At first they were painted in a dark green livery.

The City Coach Company was sold in 1952 to the British Transport Commission. The garage in North Road continued to operate, first under Westcliff-on-Sea, and then Eastern National.

The Brentwood Arcade, with 16 shop units, was converted from Rippon's garage in 1954 and was opened by Barbara Lyon, the daughter of Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon whose radio show, 'Life with the Lyons', was at the height of its popularity.

Coronation Day, 2nd June 1953, was marked in Brentwood by a carnival and parade. In spite of wet weather, there were street parties with flags and bunting everywhere. The street parade of marching bands and colourful floats left Warescot Road at 5pm and processed to Brentwood School grounds, where there was entertainment, sports, and a fun fair. This was followed by fireworks, a bonfire and community singing. All over the country, lasting ways to mark the coronation were found. For example, 'Coronation Cottages' in Middleton Hall Lane.

1955 to 1960

In 1955, Tesco opened Brentwood's first self-service store at 111 High Street. Fine Fare supermarket opened soon after, followed by the Co-op food hall in 1959.

The Quennell family lived at the Mansion House (12 High Street) until 1955. Dr. Quennell's surgery was the small building (to the right). In 1956, the house was internally altered and occupied by the Alliance Assurance Company. It later became Halifax Plc.

In 1956, Franks (49 High Street), one of Brentwood's fine old houses, was pulled down to make way for a Co-op grocery.

In 1957, the Duke of Edinburgh opened the Ramsden Research and Development Laboratory, at Selo in Woodman Road.

On the 30th October 1957, the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh visited the town to open the new science block at Brentwood School and the Town Hall in Ingrave Road.

In 1960, 'Jimmy' Hough died, aged 82. He was former headmaster of Brentwood School, Chairman of the Hospital Group, twice Chairman of Brentwood Urban District Council, and an immensely popular local figure.

In 1959, Minister of Transport, Ernest Marples, opened the £250,000 Ingatestone Bypass.

1960 to 1965

In 1961, the old Town Hall ceased to be used, and demolition work shortly followed.

In 1962, the demolition of Warley Barracks began. One of the clocks from the clock tower was incorporated into the extension of the Town Hall in Ingrave Road soon after.

Robson's Maltings near Brentwood Station were closed in 1962. There had been maltings in the area for over 200 years.

In 1962, the College of Education (later a part of Anglia Polytechnic University) was opened in Sawyers Hall Lane.

The Ford Motor Company's European Headquarters were opened on the site of Warley Barracks, in Eagle Way, in 1964.

In 1964, the Minister of Transport, Ernest Marples, lifted the 'first turf' to begin the construction of the Brentwood Bypass. It opened in November 1965 and cost £4m.

In 1964, the Prime Minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, visited the constituency. His headquarters was the Lion and Lamb public house where he held meetings, had lunch and a press reception. He also held an open air meeting in the Town Hall car park, in Ingrave Road.

1965 to 1970

In 1966, 84/84A High Street, which dated back to the 16th century, was demolished and the Chariot restaurant was built.

In 1966, there was a fire at the Thermos factory in Ongar Road. Water was piped from the swimming pool in North Road to help fight the blaze.

In February 1967, the old 'Headley Arms' public house at Warley Gap was closed. It was demolished and a new restaurant and bars were built in its place.

March 1967 saw the opening of the 14- storey Gibraltar House on Brentwood Council's Warley Estate.

In October 1967, Sir John Ruggles-Brise, Lord Lieutenant of Essex, cut the 'first turf' on the site of the Nuffield Nursing Home, in Shenfield Road.

On Friday 15th December 1967, Frankie Howerd starred in a Midnight Matinee at the Odeon cinema, in aid of the Brentwood Housing Trust. Proceeds helped to build 'Howerd House' on Warley Hill, which he opened on 1st. November 1969.

In 1968, the new St. Peter's School was opened at South Weald. In 1969, Vicarage Lane, between Brook Street and South Weald, reverted to its ancient name: Wigley Bush Lane. The lower end, isolated by the bypass, became Vicarage Close.

In 1968, Brentwood Secondary School, in Doddinghurst Road, became Brentwood's first comprehensive school. It was renamed after a much-respected governor and local character Mr. Hedley Walter.

In 1969, Brentwood's municipal golf course at King George's Playing Fields was officially opened.

In 1969, the new F.W. Woolworth & Co. store was built in the High Street. This later became Marks and Spencer.

In 1969, Sainsbury's new High Street store opened on the site of the Palace cinema.

Lectern 5, 1970 to 1995

1970 to 1975

In 1970, the Territorial Army sold Ongar Road Drill Hall. It was built in 1886.

In 1970, three shops in the High Street, on the corner of Crown Street, which had formerly been the ancient George and Dragon inn, were demolished, and a new building was erected in its place.

In 1970, the top end of the High Street lost some of its 'country character' when three old houses and a butcher's were replaced by a modern development.

In 1971, the St Charles Youth Treatment Centre was opened in Weald Road, on the site of the former workhouse and school. The building no longer exists and residential housing now occupies the land.

In 1971, the 'Old House' in Shenfield Road was bought by the Council and in 1973, it opened as an arts centre and a meeting place for clubs and societies.

In 1971-1972, the major redevelopment of the Kings Road/Brentwood Station area began. The old 'Railway Tavern' and Jacques Vinall's shop made way for Ewing House.

In 1973, the Subscriber Trunk Dialing (STD) telephone exchange opened in Ongar Road - it had 14,000 lines. It moved from the Queens Road exchange shown right (now St. Thomas's Court) which was built in 1932, with 873 lines. Before then, it was operated from the front room of a house in Kings Road.

In 1972, the High Street's old 'Arcade', adjacent to the parade (No. 1-23), was demolished. It is now used as retail.

In 1973, The Brentwood Mart, a second hand shop in New Road, was at the centre of a campaign to save the old town. Many old buildings were demolished, such as Whyte Lyons and replaced by new buildings, such as the Chapel High precinct.

St. Helen's Cathedral in Ingrave Road, was extended in 1974.

1975 to 1980

From the mid-1970s, the units in Chapel High shopping precinct (left) in the town centre began to be filled. Focus 1 & 2 cinemas were opened and the Ford Motor Company moved into Becket House.

In 1975-1976, the Crown Street/High Street corner plot, including the 'Kings Head' inn, Burtons the butchers, and Radiogram, was redeveloped as the Nationwide/Fads complex.

In 1975, High Street fishmongers, MacFisheries, who had merged with the International Store to form 'MacMarket', opened a major store in Chapel High. The old 'Mac' trademark still remains in the wall of the store's former site.

In 1977, plans to redevelop the old goods yard by the station were announced. There would be a car park, industrial units and Pegasus House.

In 1977, the old Boys' Industrial School in Rose Valley, near the station, was demolished. For many years, it had been the auction rooms and depository of Hibbard and Son. A block of flats now stands on the site.

In 1978, A.E. Symes, the civil engineering and building suppliers and contractors, who had moved into the old Victoria Works in 1923, closed the Ongar Road plant. It is now Wates Way.

In 1978, Green's Music and Sports shop in Ingrave Road closed. It had remained in one family since 1909.

In 1978, the Duchess of Kent opened the new Essex County Fire and Rescue headquarters in Rayleigh Road, Hutton.

In 1978, William Wilson's famous store at Wilson's Corner closed. His first store on the site was built in 1889, but burnt down in 1909. The rebuilt store has been a town landmark ever since. It was taken over by Cooper's furniture store in 1978 and was officially opened by comedians Morecambe and Wise.

In 1979, the first five flats, in the newly renovated Thorndon Hall, were listed for sale.

In 1979, Brentwood was 'twinned' with the Bavarian town of Landkreis Roth, in Southern Germany.

1980 to 1985

In 1981, Colonel Vernon Laurie OBE of the Old Vicarage South Weald died. He was involved in every aspect of public life in South Weald. He was an Old Etonian and a hero of both the First and Second World Wars. He also served as High Sheriff and Deputy Lieutenant of Essex.

On 26th January 1983, the Woolworth store in the High Street, which employed over 100 staff, was closed. It was sold to Marks & Spencer for £3m.

In 1984, the extension of the Town Hall in Ingrave Road was completed along with a renovated clock from Warley Barracks, which was donated by Ford Motor Company.

In 1984, Selo closed its Woodman Road plant. Two thirds of the 1600 staff accepted early retirement or redundancy. The remainder relocated to the company's Mobberly plant in Cheshire.

In March 1985, the town joined the American 'Sister City' programme, becoming a sister city with Brentwood, Tennessee.

In 1985, the Parade by Brentwood Station was demolished. It included Lowe's barbers' shop and the Parade cinema, which, since WWII, had been a warehouse, a night club and a disco. The 'Kingsgate' office block now stands on the site.

On the closure of 'Bon Marche' in the High Street in 1985, a complex of small shops called 'Brentwood Shopping Village' was created. It failed to catch on and in 1986 the building became 'McDonald's'.

1985 to 1990

In October 1986, the M25 was officially opened.

In 1987, a new county library was built in New Road. However, the official opening, by Princess Anne, was not until May 1991.

In October 1987, 120mph gales damaged buildings and power lines and uprooted thousands of trees in the area. In 1988, work began on the Thorndon Park Visitor's Centre using timber from trees which had been brought down by the hurricane.

In 1986, the new Territorial Army headquarters was opened at Warley. The old headquarters at Chestnut Grove/North Service Road was demolished.

In 1986, Warley Hill Business Park opened in The Drive, Warley. 'Cleanaway' was the first company to occupy a site.

In 1988, the Advance Laundry (formerly the Royal Laundry) in Ongar Road was closed with the loss of 80 jobs. The laundry had been in the town since 1905 and by World War II employed over 100 workers.

In November 1988, the Brentwood Centre opened in Doddinghurst Road. Stars at the International Hall opening night included Marian Montgomery and Georgie Fame.

In 1989, work began on the new Brentwood Cathedral building in Ingrave Road. It took two years to build.

In March 1990, snooker champion, Steve Davis, came to live in Brentwood.

In 1989, Stan Sedgewick, Brentwood's "Mr. Entertainment", died. He owned the Palace cinema (closed in 1967), managed Focus 1 & 2 (opened 1975) and did much charity work.

1990 to 1995

On 7th September 1993, Brentwood exercised its new borough status by presenting the Royal Anglian Regiment with the freedom of entry to the borough.

In 1993, Brentwood Theatre opened in Shenfield Road. The Brentwood Theatre Trust had been formed in 1982.

In 1994, Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) was installed in the town. It was the first colour CCTV in the country.

In 1993, Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, opened the new Citizens' Advice Bureau in Crown Street.

On 19th March 1994, Brentwood was twinned with the French town of Montbazou.

In 1994, St. George's Church in Ongar Road was finally completed. It had remained without a west wall since 1934.

In 1994, with the change of ownership, the ancient Moat House at Brook Street was renamed Marygreen Manor.

In 1995, the town celebrated Stondon Massey boxer Frank Bruno's success in becoming Heavyweight Champion of the World.

In January 1995, the secret Nuclear Bunker of Kelvedon Hatch was opened to the public. It was built in 1952 to enable the government and advisors to survive and run the country after a nuclear attack.

In May 1995, the borough marked the 50th anniversary of VE-Day with a military parade, a service on Shenfield Common and the lighting of a beacon at Weald Park. In August 1995, the anniversary of VJ-Day was marked with a parade of ex-service personnel and the Parachute Regiment, followed by a military band festival at Brentwood School.

Lectern 6, 1995 to 2025

1995 to 2000

In 1997, the Information Centre moved to 44 High Street (Pepperell House). Its use had been given to the community in perpetuity by Elsie Pepperell.

On 10th February 1998, Sainsbury's new town centre superstore was opened by Lord Sainsbury. In November 2000, North Service Road was renamed William Hunter Way and made two-way for its full length.

In 1999, work began on a development of 363 houses and a school on the site of Warley Hospital. Historic buildings and parklands remain today.

In 1999, Great Warley Post Office, like so many rural post offices around the country, was closed.

In July 1999, the historic Black Horse public house at Pilgrims Hatch was seriously damaged by fire. It was fully restored and re-opened in April 2000.

In 1999, former councillor Jim Reddell was made the Borough's first Honorary Freeman. He had served the Council since 1958.

In 1999, the old Town Hall clock, in its case, was fully restored and mounted on the newer, extended Town Hall in Ingrave Road.

On 11th November 1999, Merrymeade House and grounds were given to Brentwood Borough Council by Anglia Polytechnic University (which moved out of the town). Merrymeade was built for the Horne-Payne family in 1911. It became a community facility and park.

In March 2000, the BT building on the site of St. Faith's Hospital in London Road was opened. It had room for 1200 employees and cost £50m.

In 2000, the town centre Conservation Area was greatly extended.

In May 2000, the Seven Arches public house in Hartswood Road was demolished. It dated back to the early 19th century.

2000 to 2007

In February 2001, the first case of Foot and Mouth disease in the UK was identified in livestock which had arrived at Cheal's Meats abattoir, in Little Warley. The outbreak caused a major crisis for the agricultural industry. Restrictions were placed on the movement of animals and many were slaughtered before the outbreak was brought under control.

In August 2001, AXA, the leaseholder of Chapel High precinct, decided to sell. In February 2002, Halladale Ventures took over and developed plans to include larger shops, enclosure of the shopping mall and conversion of Becket House from offices to apartments. In April 2003, plans for the new development re-named 'The Bay Tree Centre' were published. In December 2004, workmen moved on site and by early December 2005, the centre was fully operational.

In September 2002, business woman, property owner and entrepreneur, Elsie Pepperell, died at the age of 89. Known as 'Mrs Brentwood', she had been at the centre of the town's business community for five decades. Her funeral was the biggest seen in Brentwood for years. Elsie Pepperell was a true and generous friend to Brentwood, the town she loved.

In January 2004, Crest Nicholson unveiled plans for a development of housing and offices to be built on the old gas works site in St. James' and Wharf Roads by Brentwood station. By summer 2008, the project was almost completed. In June 2006, plans to similarly develop the adjacent former N V Tools site were announced by Countryside Properties.

In March 2007, Brentwood and Billericay gained its own full-time community radio station, Phoenix 98fm. To demonstrate its capability to hold a full-time licence, the station had operated under an annual 28-day licence for the previous ten years.

In May 2007, the refurbished 'Duchess of Kent' centre on the Warley Hospital site was re-named 'The Nightingale Centre' after a former hospital superintendent. It provided rooms and facilities for community activities. Beechwood Surgery opened in 2006, adjacent to the centre, to replace the cramped Avenue Road surgery.

2007 to 2011

On Saturday 1st March 2008, Brentwood came to a standstill as thousands of people came to cheer and applaud soldiers of the Royal Anglian Regiment as they marched through the town centre, with bayonets fixed. They had recently returned from front line duty in Afghanistan.

In February 2008, the Post Office closed its counter services at the High Street post office and transferred them to W.H.Smith in the Bay Tree Centre.

In November 2007, one of Brentwood's landmarks, the store at Wilson's Corner, re-opened as a complex of shops and offices. The refurbished building was Wilson's store until 1978, when furniture company, Coopers, took over. They remained until 2003, after which the store stood empty.

In October 2007, after 20 years of debate, the controversial £16bn Crossrail Project was given the go ahead.

The much-loved Community Hospital in Crescent Drive was demolished in August 2007, to make way for the new hospital. In July 2008, the structure of the new £30m Brentwood Community Hospital was completed.

The Sugar Hut nightclub on Brentwood High Street, previously the 15th Century 'White Hart' coaching inn, shot to fame in 2010 as a celebrity hotspot, when featured in the global reality series, 'The Only Way is Essex' (TOWIE).

2011 to 2020

In 2012, for the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, Brentwood School became a training centre for visiting athletes competing in the Modern Pentathlon.

On 6th July 2012, more than 35,000 people lined Ingrave Road to watch the Olympic Torch being carried through Brentwood, passing through Herongate, travelling along Ingrave Road to the High Street, before heading off to Chelmsford. The chosen torch bearers were selected through public nomination for personal achievement or contribution to their community. Torch bearers from Brentwood included John Wyndham MBE, Director of the Imperial Youth Band (formerly the Royal British Legion Youth Band) and acclaimed teen blogger, Louise Jones. Local athletes competing in the London 2012 Olympic Games included cyclist, Alex Dowsett, and fencer, Alex O'Connell.

In 2013, Thorndon Country Park opened the Gruffalo Trail, a self-led adventure through the woodland to find characters from the much-loved children's book. The Stick Man Play Trail opened in Weald Country Park in 2015.

In February 2015, 124 (Essex) Transport Squadron RLC (Royal Logistics Corps) was given the honorary title of Freedom of the Borough, granting them the privilege of marching into the borough with drums beating, colours flying and bayonets fixed. They marched through Brentwood High Street in October 2016.

In 2017, Dunton Hills in Brentwood was announced as a designated site for one of the government's 14 new garden villages. The development would be a self-contained community, consisting of up to 4,000 new homes, prioritising green spaces and offering healthy, sustainable and affordable living.

In 2018, Ford announced that it would be moving its UK headquarters in Warley, where it had been resident for more than 50 years, relocating 1,700 employees to the Dunton Technical Centre. The building was developed into modern housing.

From 2020, electric vehicle charging points were being installed across the borough.

The Duke of Kent reopened Brentwood Town Hall on the 18th of February 2020, after a £15m renovation, resulting in a mixture of residential and

commercial space, in addition to a community hub with Essex Police, Citizens Advice and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

2020 to 2025

In early 2021, almost a year after the UK's first lockdown during the COVID-19 Pandemic, an area of Hutton in Brentwood was subject to surge testing after a single case of the highly contagious Omicron variant was found. Almost 5000 people were tested over 2 weeks.

The Methodist Church in Brentwood was sold in 2021 and was converted to become the area's first Mosque.

An investment of £7 million began in January 2021 to transform King George's Playing Fields. New play and splash areas were built, along with a pavilion, which officially opened in 2022.

Previously known as Crossrail, the Elizabeth Line opened on the 17th May 2022, easily connecting Shenfield and Brentwood through London, as far west as Reading.

In July 2022, Brentwood Cathedral was listed as a Grade 2* building - a significant recognition for a building that was just 30 years old and the first classical cathedral to be built since St Paul's Cathedral.

At 2pm on 11 September, 2022, the Proclamation of His Majesty, King Charles III was read at Brentwood Town Hall, by the (then) Mayor of Brentwood, Cllr Olivia Francois. The Proclamation formally announced the accession of the new monarch following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla took place on 6 May 2023. A number of street parties took place in neighbourhoods across the borough during the May bank holiday weekend and a Coronation Festival took place in King George's Playing Fields. The festival attracted more than 8,000 residents, who enjoyed local entertainment and activities that brought the community together, creating a lasting legacy from the Coronation weekend.

