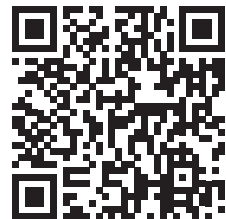


Thurrock Civic Pride heritage trail – Part 1



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From Turroc to modern Thurrock

Our borough has a long time-line of heritage from early prehistoric times through the developing patterns of settlement, farming and industrial development in the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron ages, with continuing expansion and changing cultures through the Roman and Saxon periods. The name 'Thurrock' can be traced back to a recognisable administrative unit in Saxon times and originates from an Anglo-Saxon estate known as 'Turroc'.

The boundaries of this pre-conquest 'Turroc' are not known precisely but the medieval parish names of Grays Thurrock, Little Thurrock and West Thurrock appear to be its nucleus. The word 'Turroc' is thought to mean 'the bottom part of the boat where water gathers' reflecting the borough's location on the river Thames.

Grays, the administrative centre of the borough now, is a shortened form of 'Grays Thurrock' – the original parish of Thurrock – which was in the possession of the de Grai family, from 1195 when King Richard the Lionheart confirmed the purchase of the parish to Henry De Grai who, as owner, became the Lord of the Manor. The King's approval suggests this Knight had given service to the king. This parish ownership stayed in the De Grai family until the early 16th century.



Purfleet-on-Thames *Bram Stoker and Dracula*

Victorian Purfleet was a popular riverside destination for visitors from London, with the Royal Hotel – previously known as the Purfleet Hotel and Wingrove's Hotel – offering accommodation, entertainment and its famous whitebait suppers.

Purfleet subsequently became one of the principal English settings in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published in 1897. There is strong local evidence that Stoker knew the area, and Thurrock's historical research considers it likely that he visited Purfleet before writing the novel. The landscape, railway, river, high walls and buildings of Victorian Purfleet all appear to have contributed to the setting he created for Count Dracula's English home, Carfax.



Tilbury and Chadwell Marshes *Daniel Defoe*

The trail will then take us towards Tilbury and the Thames marshes associated with Daniel Defoe, one of the great pioneers of the English novel.

From around 1694/95, Defoe operated a pantile and brick works on the Chadwell/ Tilbury marshes for approximately nine years. He also built his own house there. Long before Robinson Crusoe appeared in 1719, Defoe therefore knew this extraordinary Thames landscape as businessman as well as writer. The marshes and riverside environment later appeared in his writing, including *Moll Flanders*.



West Tilbury *Elizabeth I and the Armada*

From there the trail climbs towards West Tilbury, where in August 1588 Queen Elizabeth I reviewed the English army assembled to resist the threatened Spanish invasion.

It was here that Elizabeth delivered the speech that became one of the most famous expressions of national defiance in British history, declaring that although she had the body of a "weak and feeble woman", she had "the heart and stomach of a king". The army itself was encamped on the higher ground around West Tilbury rather than within today's Tilbury Fort.



Horndon-on-the-Hill *in the footsteps of Queen Elizabeth*

The trail can also retrace the historic connection between West Tilbury and the beautiful medieval village of Horndon-on-the-Hill.

The precise details of Elizabeth's movements and accommodation have been debated by historians, but contemporary evidence records her staying at the house of Edward Rich in Horndon on 8 August 1588. Essex Record Office identifies this as Saffron Gardens, while other traditions have associated her visit with Arden Hall. The surviving Saffron Garden has strong Tudor associations and provides another remarkable link between modern Thurrock and the events of the Armada.



Grays *Alfred Russel Wallace and The Dell*

For those fascinated by natural history, the trail celebrates Alfred Russel Wallace, the great naturalist, explorer and independent co-discoverer with Charles Darwin of evolution by natural selection.

Wallace lived in Grays from 1872 to 1876. He commissioned The Dell, an extraordinary house constructed largely from concrete – making it one of Britain's earliest surviving houses built using the material. Wallace laid out its grounds himself and lived and worked there while writing his major two-volume work *The Geographical Distribution of Animals*, published in 1876.

The Grade II-listed Dell survives today in College Avenue, providing Thurrock with a tangible connection to one of the most important scientific thinkers of the Victorian age.

If you enjoyed the trail, why not make your next stop the Thurrock Museum in the Thameside, Grays, where you can go back 250,000 years into Thurrock's past.

Discover the mammoths from Aveley, the earliest known Thurrock coins dating to 75BC, prehistoric flint tools, Roman pottery, Saxon artefacts, medieval finds from Grays, and interesting objects all the way up to the last century. is home to a large number of artefacts.

For more information visit: thurrock.gov.uk/history-and-heritage