

## BILLERICAY

### HISTORICAL HIGH STREET WHODUNNIT



Follow the history – solve the mystery!



## Confidential Case Files

The usually quiet town of Billericay has been shocked to the core by the latest in a spate of murders carried out on and around its historic high street.

Can you solve the mystery of who is terrorizing the peace-loving inhabitants of Billericay, and identify the murder weapon?

Follow the clues to eliminate suspects and weapons one by one, until only the guilty party and their deadly implement remains.

Billericay is relying on you! Do you have what it takes?



Directions—Green

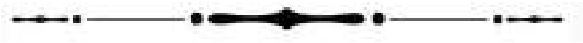
Blue—Clues

## DETECTIVE INSTRUCTIONS

- You will be guided along a walk on and around Billericay High Street, and given clues to solve along the way.
- Nine of the clues refer to numbers, and nine to a name (surname, first name or both).
- There will be one, two or three clues per page. As you solve each clue, you can cross off the relevant name or number from the list of suspects.
- At the end, only one number and one name will remain. You will then have discovered the name of the murderer, and identified the murder weapon.
- Follow the walk in the order you are directed to, one page at a time, in groups of two to four.
- The walk should take approximately 90 minutes. It ends at Queenies where we have tables booked and can order pizzas and drinks.
- Enjoy!

## SUSPECTS

- John Thornton
- Mary Basildon
- William Wood
- May Flower
- Joshua Higginbottom
- Helen Dascome
- Mark Stone
- Val Arden
- Alma Hatt
- Edith Bayly



## WEAPONS

1. Rope
2. Dagger
3. Arsenic
4. Poison dart
5. Pistol
6. Candlestick
7. Cheese-wire
8. Iron bar
9. Revolver
10. Spanner

**We meet in Billericay library:** the perfect place to begin learning about local history.

Start by admiring the paper-cut frieze around the walls of the library, depicting scenes from Billericay history.

Find the panel picturing a notable circus family wedding held at St Mary Magdalen church in 1937. **How many elephants took part in this celebration?**

You can now eliminate one weapon from your list: the one whose number corresponds to the correct answer.

Through the windows you will catch glimpses of the stately Georgian “Burghstead House” of which the current library is an annexe.

Now, find the local history section where you will come across “Yesterday: A Childhood in Billericay” describing the author’s Victorian childhood in Burghstead House. This is well worth a read. **But who wrote this memoir? They share their name with one of the suspects,** whom you can now eliminate.

Well done detectives—you have already cracked two clues! To solve the rest you will now need to leave the library, and continue your sleuthing journey outside.

**Turn left when you come out of the library; walk past Burghstead House, until you come to a small gift shop called Levere.** This used to be the Old Shambles Hotel.

Many people have passed this way, including Ron, Mick, Paul and Geoff. But who else woz ere? **Two up from Geoff you will see the initials of the next suspect you can eliminate.**



**Keep going in the same direction,** past the Red Lion, from where the London-bound coach used to depart every morning except Sundays during the 18th century. You will soon come to another old building which used to be a meeting place for independent dissenters (if you’re not sure where it is, ask). More recently it housed the Gas Board, who put up a plaque mentioning these earlier occupants.

**How many centuries of congregational worship in Billericay does this plaque commemorate?**

You can now eliminate another weapon.

Well done detectives, you are doing a great job!

Keep walking, past the Reading Rooms, where the Victorian working classes could attend penny lectures or read the newspaper. The Reading Rooms committee was formed in 1864 but it took them a few more years to raise the money to erect this building. [Make a note of when the Reading Rooms was opened](#)—you will need this information later.

Continue to the corner of Western Road and the High Street, where you will see a sculpture of Pilgrims on board the Mayflower. Four of the Mayflower Pilgrims were from Billericay.

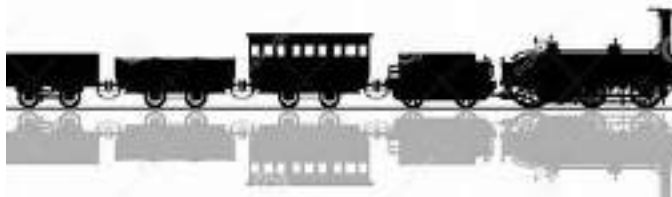
From here, you can see the Billericay Heritage Tree sculpture across the road. [How many panels on this sculpture do NOT depict the Mayflower?](#)

You can now eliminate another weapon.



Cross Western Road at the pedestrian crossing and keep going in the same direction. You will see an old pub, which serviced the workers who brought the railway to Billericay in the late 19th century. [How many years before the Reading Rooms was this pub built?](#)

You can now eliminate another weapon.



Cross the footbridge over the railway line and use the pedestrian crossing to continue up Stock Road. Yes, it's an uphill climb. [If you feel tired you can rest on a bench, which was thoughtfully provided by who?](#)

Time to eliminate another suspect.

From this bench, look directly across the road and you will spot an imposing brick building that used to be the Union House, or Workhouse of Billericay Union. In the days before the welfare state, destitute residents of Billericay and the surrounding areas were likely to end up here.

Continue up the hill, cross Cromwell Avenue, then cross at the pedestrian crossing by Shadforth's pharmacy and turn right into St Andrew's Drive.

St Andrew's is the name of the hospital that was here after the workhouse and before the modern health centre. Be careful as you are now walking alongside Billericay's shortest (and possibly only) cycle route. [How many white wheels whizz past you underfoot along this route?](#) When you have counted them all, you can eliminate another weapon.

Meanwhile, look out for two cul-de-sacs off St Andrew's Drive. One of them is named after a medical specialism of the old hospital. The other is named after the last Master of the Workhouse. [With a bit of rearranging, the name of this street will reveal the name of another suspect you can now eliminate.](#)

Turn right. If you are curious, turn in to Grey Lady Place on your way and have a look around the old workhouse buildings, now private dwellings. After Grey Lady Place, carefully cross the road and continue over the railway bridge in the direction of the high street.

As you approach Crown Road, you will see a gift given by an anonymous lady to the people of Billericay in 1951. Who is in here? Time to eliminate another suspect.



Venture in yourselves. You won't have to go far before noticing just how far you are from everywhere else. How many miles is it from here to Danbury? Time to eliminate another weapon.

Detectives, you are doing a fantastic job—more than half way there.

After this short diversion, head back to the high street. As you approach it, you will see some quaint old cottages on either side of the road. Each one is different. Time now for a little maths:

Can you divide one lion head by the other to get a whole number?

Solve this and you can eliminate another weapon.



Now turn left back onto the high street, past some Georgian houses and the Chequers pub. Cross Chapel Street at the zebra crossing and you will see the Billericay war memorial commemorating the fallen of two world wars.

Are you ready for some code cracking? Here is your next clue:

WW1.36, WW2.2, WW2.42, WW1.26

Now you can eliminate another suspect.

How many surnames appear on both lists: world war one and world war two?

Now have a look at St Mary Magdalen church. The clock on this church was erected to celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. But which year was this? Translating each digit of the year into a letter of the alphabet, you will have a sequence that appears inside the name of the next suspect to be eliminated.



Continue along the high street, past the Cater Museum (if you come back when it is open you will find plenty of local history inside) and then turn left towards the Waitrose car park.

Your route from the high street to the car park may bring to mind an influential Billericay Town Clerk of the last century who was instrumental in founding Basildon New Town. But what is the link?

You are now ready to eliminate another suspect—and yes, this is a man's name, although it may sound like a woman's.

Once in the car park, carefully follow the pedestrian route to the old cemetery located at the back, and go in. This was the burial ground of what is now the United Reform Church.

Here you will find the tomb of a long serving minister, philanthropist and anti-slavery campaigner who shares his name with your final suspect to be eliminated. [What was this minister's name?](#)

Nearly there detectives!

[But you must now return to the high street, where to your left you will see Foxcroft:](#) now a solicitor's but formerly a children's home.

Stop! Does time appear to stand still? It sadly stopped forever for the jeweller in nearby Sparklers when he was murdered by armed robbers in 1996. [What was the last hour that struck before time stopped?](#)

Well done detectives! You have identified both the murderer and the weapon, and should now cross the road and report to HQ a.k.a. Queenies.

### Clues:

1. There are two elephants on the 1937 wedding panel.
2. The author of the memoir is Edith Bayly.
3. The initials carved into the brick wall are MB.
4. The plaque outside ASK mentions 3 centuries of dissenting worship.
5. The Heritage Tree outside Bennett's has five panels; four do not feature the Mayflower.
6. The Railway was built in 1885 and the Reading Rooms in 1886, so the difference is one year.
7. The bench is from the Mayflower Rotary Club.
8. There are five bicycles, so ten wheels, painted in white on the pavement along the cycle route.
9. Helen Dascome is an anagram of Needham Close.
10. Val Arden is "in" Festival Gardens.
11. The distance marker in Festival Gardens says that Danbury is 9 miles away.
12. The cottages with the lion head door knockers are number 18 and number 3.  $18 \div 3 = 6$ .
13. WW1.36 means the first initial of the 36th name on the world war 1 memorial (M), WW2.2 means the first initial of the second name on the world war 2 memorial (A) and so on: the four clues spell out Mark.
14. Five names: Bright, Johnson, Pease, Stewart and Wood appear in both memorials.
15. The date is 1897 and the corresponding letters, by position in the alphabet, are AHIG. This sequence appears in Joshua Higginbottom.
16. Alma Link leads from the high street to the car park.
17. John Thornton's tomb is in the cemetery.
18. The clock outside Sparklers is stopped at 18 past 8.

### Solution:

**The murderer was William Wood with the cheese wire!  
Well done if you solved the crime.**



William Wood was a real person in Billericay who, in 1850, killed PC Robert Bambrough. However, he did not use a cheese wire. Having been arrested for poaching, he escaped from PC Bambrough who was escorting him to jail, pushing him into a horse pond where he drowned. A memorial stone to PC Bambrough can still be seen at the spot where he died, on the road to Brentwood. Wood was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to transportation for life.