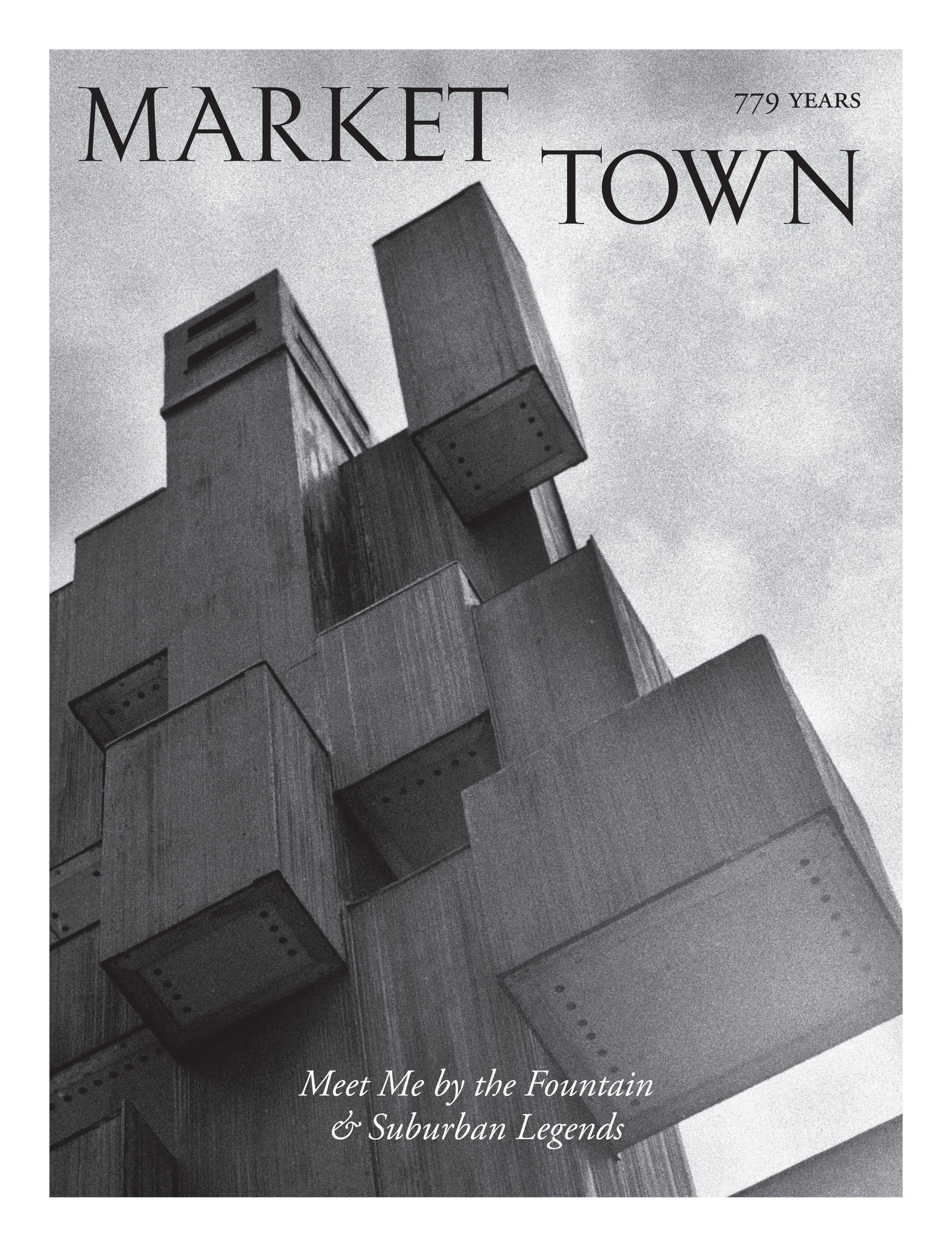




MARKET

779 YEARS

TOWN

*Meet Me by the Fountain
& Suburban Legends*

OUR TOWN

David Shearing

Romford Market has been the heart of this town for 779 years. Generation after generation has shaped this place long before us. Its cobbles hold an incredible history, a heritage to be treasured and celebrated. It is the stories we tell ourselves, and tell of each other, that matter.

The market began with a single declaration: Henry III's order, in 1247, that a market should exist at Romford. It survives still, in the Close Rolls, the official record of the king's own letters: "It is ordered that the High Sheriff of Essex shall proclaim publicly, throughout his county and its hundreds, the establishment and holding of a market at Romford on Wednesdays, with all the liberties and customs belonging to the said market." Four lines, in Latin, on a roll of parchment read aloud across the county. In one sense, the market has been calling ever since – the calling out of traders, the calls of the bells of St Edward's Church and a calling for those who want to build a new life here.

That story has never stood still. Romford changed as Essex changed, as London changed, and as Havering changed its own identity. It changed in 1958, with the market's last livestock sale – a final tally of ninety-eight

animals: seven cattle, ten calves, twenty-eight sheep and fifty-three pigs – bringing seven centuries of livestock trading to a close, as the market gave way to a pedestrian market, a people's market. It is changing again now, in a new age of digital commerce, where the cost of goods from around the world, and the ease of ordering to our own front doors, have altered the way we shop. But nothing has replaced the commonality found in the exchange of goods, the surprise of an unexpected encounter, and liveliness felt on a busy Saturday.

Market Town tells the story of our continuity, and our change, in two parts. *Meet Me by the Fountain* carries the long view through an evening sound and projection spectacle that spans from a prehistoric ice sheet to the market as it has become today. *Suburban Legends* embraces the characters, real and half-remembered, myths and legends that make us who we are. Together, they are *Market Town* – a calling to say we are here, and to ask ourselves what we might yet become. Hundreds of local people, costume makers and performers have been involved in this retelling of who we are – this is our story.

Romford's Liberty Fountain, photographed shortly after its installation in the 1970s. The fountain became a familiar landmark and meeting place at the heart of the town.
Image: Havering Libraries – Local Studies

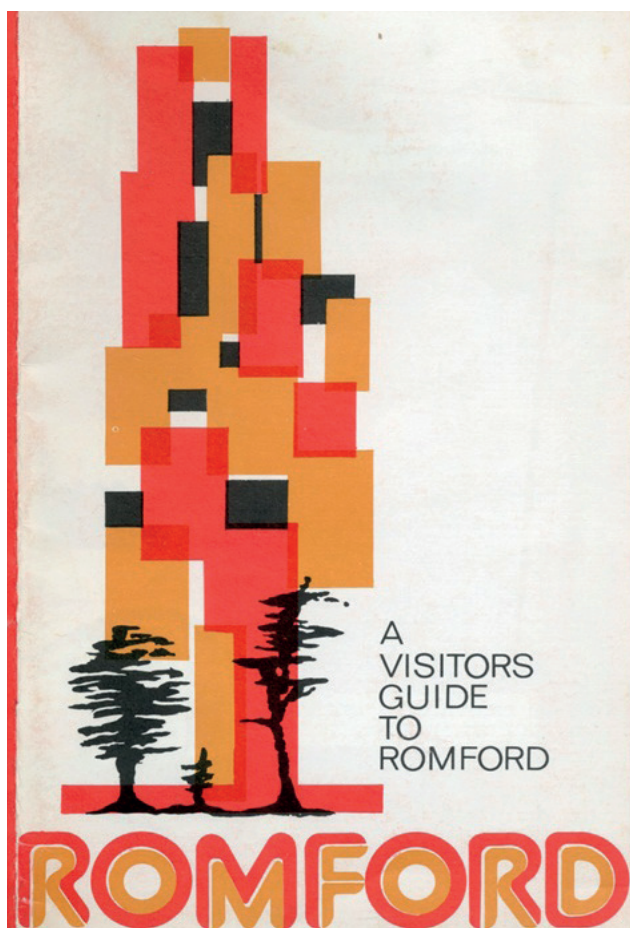


Meet Me by the Fountain charts an epic journey of the market that begins when ice sheets and ancient forest shaped the land, and moves forward through the market's founding proclamation to its medieval traders, its Cockney language and its new arrivals from the East End, its fragility through two world wars, its rebuilding as a market for the people, its decades at the centre of the UK's clubbing and rave culture, and on towards a future not yet written. It is, we hope, a snapshot of the beauty and evolution of this remarkable place – one we hope people will hold dear.

At the centre of our story stands a fountain. Built during Romford's post-war redevelopment, the Liberty Fountain was a Brutalist monument that stood for several decades. Many remember it fondly; for others, it survives only as a strange fragment of memory – a fountain above a public toilet. For younger generations, it falls entirely outside living memory. Heritage is best treasured by being rediscovered – seen again, in a new light. With this project we have created a homage to that fountain: not quite a replica, allowing for some design licence, but true to its stature and its poise. The fountain returns home, the guide in our story, an oracle, a light from history to help us find our way.

The fountain returns as what it always was: a meeting point. A place to gather if you got lost, for your nan to rest her weary feet, or to make a wish – assuming it wasn't already overflowing with foam from someone's bottle of washing-up liquid, a story that has itself become part of Romford's urban legend. It is the same fountain that the town's rave generation swore by in the eighties and nineties: "If we get lost, if we can't find each other... meet me by the Fountain", the line that lends this piece its name. And, as the Smiths' song "Reel Around the Fountain" suggests, there is an orbit here that returns us home, to youth, adolescence and love. Fountains are architectures of public belonging: places to hang out, wait, watch and be seen. They speak of a different period of belonging, a town centre was not simply somewhere to pass through, but somewhere to be. A provocation perhaps on what we might build for ourselves into the future. Returning to the fountain as a meeting point, and as a place to reflect on our shared, epic story, felt like the right approach: a moment to take stock and write this love letter to our town.

A Visitors' Guide to Romford, produced to promote the town during the late twentieth century, reflecting changing perceptions and civic identity.
Image: Havering Libraries – Local Studies



BY THE

FOUNTAIN

Friday / Saturday
8.30pm and 9.30pm

Meet Me by the Fountain moves through a series of chapters that leap across and condense vast stretches of time, offering snapshots of the journey that brought us here. Each chapter captures a feeling or insight and reflects something of ourselves back to us: a reminder of how far we have come and an invitation to imagine where we might go next.

Chapters

00. Sleep. What lies hidden beneath Romford waits to be reawakened. The piece holds its breath, ready to begin.

01. Prologue. We set the scene. The voice of the Fountain Oracle emerges to explain, question and guide us through the story.

02. Deep Time: A River Runs Through. We travel back to the ancient geological formations that shaped the land beneath our feet, expanding our understanding of change and the immense timescales through which it occurs.

03. 1247: Proclamation! Romford Market is proclaimed aloud. Its ancient rights are carried into the present through the voices of traders, performers and members of the public.

04. The Market Fair. The medieval market bursts into life as a newly recorded version of *The Romford Ram* leads us into a world of livestock, traders, music and celebration. Performed by Nick Hart and Tom Moore, it summons the sights and sounds of the fair, when animals filled the market and the whole town gathered to trade.

05. Cockney Bedlam. Steam trains, traders and the brewery drive Romford into the industrial age, while arrivals from the East End bring new voices and language. Through the commotion, Jolene Missing performs a new version of the Essex folk song *Bushes and Briars*.

06. Silence after Fire. Romford remembers those who sacrificed their lives and the scars left upon its streets. Local resident Bruce leads this poetic moment, accompanied by the sound of the Romford Drum and Trumpet Corps.

07. The People's Market. Romford rebuilds after the war. As livestock trading ends, the market changes into a people's market shaped by everyday goods, encounters and community life.

08. The Dance. From 1970s disco and 1980s alternative culture to the rave explosion of the 1990s, Romford becomes one of outer London's great nightlife centres. Told through the voice of Inés, a young woman, the chapter captures the anticipation, freedom and collective energy of Romford's club scene.

09. 2047: A Love Letter. A premonition of Romford Market's 800th anniversary asks what kind of future we want to build. What must we preserve, what must we remake, and how can the next period of change retain the heart of Romford?

10. Epilogue. Havering resident Imogen Heap's vocals fill the air with hope, reminding us what we already have and what we must carry forward. The bells of St Edward's call us back through the market and return us home.

We are grateful to everyone who shared their stories and memories with us: the market traders; steering groups; the shoppers and visitors we spoke to throughout the autumn and spring; and the social groups and individuals who meet regularly in Romford Shopping Hall.

We are equally grateful to those whose voices, music and sounds became part of the piece: the bell ringers of St Edward's Church; Romford Drum and Trumpet Corps; the North Ockendon handbell ringers; Nick Hart, Tom Moore and Jolene Missing; Havering resident Imogen Heap for allowing us permission to rework her stunning ethereal voice work *Aftercare*; the local people who read aloud, including Bruce, aged 82, who lent his voice to the moving 'Silence after Fire' and Inés, aged 19, for her energy in 'The Dance'. Together, they gave us so much of what has shaped this place, alongside care, kindness and passion to help tell our story.

We are grateful to Havering Libraries – Local Studies service, an extraordinary archive of Havering's history, and especially to Simon Donoghue, whose generosity with ideas, imagery and reference material has helped shape this project and will help preserve it for the next generation. Havering Museum too, whose collections gave this project so many of its faces and its objects – the small, physical proof that all of this really happened.

Through this project we also generated new music honouring Romford. Our newly recorded folk song, *The Romford Ram*, grows from *The Derby Ram*, an old English tale whose fabulous animal became larger with every telling. But the song already has a surprising connection to the town: in one version preserved from the oral tradition, the journey begins, "As I was going to Romford, 'twas on a market day, I saw the finest ram, sir, that ever was fed with hay." The relocation is fitting for a market that connected the agricultural life of Essex with the appetite of London. Recorded by folk singers Nick Hart, Jolene Missing and Tom Moore at the Church of St Mary Magdalene in North Ockendon, amid an ancient landscape of farms and sheep pasture, *The Romford Ram* returns this wandering folk tale to the market named within it, allowing the town's history to grow once again into legend.

Alongside Havering's communities, local history groups and archives, this piece has been shaped by a creative team that cares passionately about telling Romford's stories as authentically as possible. Having grown up in Romford, on Como Street during the 1980s and 1990s, I feel a deep personal connection to the town: the hustle and bustle of the Christmas market, sheets of wrapping paper, the smell of roasting chestnuts and hops drifting over from the brewery. Romford Market has made a lasting impression on me, and it is a great honour to help tell its story. I am joined by an incredible creative team, including the extraordinary Essex writer Vickie Donoghue, who has led the historical research and written the text; composer James Bulley, who has woven authentic sounds, instruments and voices into a compelling immersive soundscape; and NOVAK, whose projections bring the market's rich and vivid imagery to life.

Meet Me by the Fountain is, in the end, a celebration of Romford's enduring charm: the extraordinary found in everyday life. The fountain returns as a meeting point – a beacon of memory, hope and possibility. For a town is made not only by its buildings or its history, but by the encounters it makes possible. Whatever the future brings, we hope Romford remains what it has always been: a place to meet, to belong, to find one another – a place to call home.

"Nothing loved in this town is ever really lost," the show reminds us near its close.

With this project, we hope to add our voices to Romford's long telling, to the calling out of who we are, the declaration that we are here, and the imagining of who we may yet become. Above all, we hope it feels true to the people and the place it celebrates.



The Liberty Fountain with its later blue and white painted finish during the 1980s, reflecting a different chapter in the landmark's history.
Image: Havering Libraries – Local Studies

MEET ME BY THE FOUNTAIN

Silence after Fire
Vickie Donoghue

The sky was blood red.
The sirens went.
We could hear them coming.

Two planes above us, fighting it out.
We knew every plane in that sky.
The airplane bombs. V-1's.
The engine would cut out then..

We threw ourselves to the floor.
Held each other's hands.
The silence before...

North Street. Brentwood Road. Essex Road.
A whole terrace reduced to rubble.
Collier Row Lane. Rosedale Road. Hillfoot Avenue.
Haysom's department store.
Carlisle Road. Princes Road. Pettits Lane.
A whole family in an air raid shelter. Gone.

But the market...?
The market carried on.
We carried on.
A chink of light. Always hope. Always community.

The scars remain in our landscape.
The absence of what was there never leaves you.
The heartbreak of what was.
Gaps where treasured memories were once made.

The buildings may have gone. But we remain.
We're still here. Our stories. Our acts of resilience.
It is a grief that we share.
It is a gratitude that brings us together.

We remember them.



Romford local Bruce records his voiceover for *Silence after Fire*, sharing lived memories of Romford's changing market and town centre. Image: Hannah Davis



The bass drum of the Romford Drum & Trumpet Corps, bearing the corps' distinctive crest, during recording sessions for *Meet Me by the Fountain*. Image: Charlotte Handel



Top James Bulley records members of the Romford Drum & Trumpet Corps during a workshop, capturing performances by young musicians for the soundscape of *Meet Me by the Fountain*. **Bottom Young musicians from the Romford Drum & Trumpet Corps** rehearse material that will feature in *Meet Me by the Fountain*. Images: Charlotte Handel



Nick Hart, Jolene Missing, and Tom Moore following a recording session at St Mary Magdalene Church, North Ockendon, where traditional folk songs were recorded for *Meet Me by the Fountain*. Image: James Bulley



Bellringing Practice at St Edward the Confessor Church Bellringers gather every Wednesday to rehearse, preserving a tradition that has echoed across Romford's Market Place for centuries. Image: David Shearing

SUBURBAN LEGENDS

Saturday, 11.00am–4.00pm



Caron Webb and Storky's stall in Romford Market. Image: David Shearing

Suburban Legends tells the human story of Romford. Performed by local people over the course of a single day, it celebrates the myths, memories and folklore that have shaped the town: figures transformed by imagination into something larger, stranger or more wonderful than reality. It reminds us that fiction is not opposed to history, our memories, and mismemories are part of the legend making.

Some of these figures will seem familiar, even if you have never met them. A witch rises from Loam Pond; highwaymen lurk; Captain Blood hides near the market before attempting to steal the Crown Jewels. A young RAF pilot returns as a ghost, walking quietly through the stalls. Town criers, carnival queens and royal visitors call Romford to attention, while the Great Flood of 1888 flows through the streets once more. Some of these people and events existed exactly as we tell them; others exist only because of the way we tell them. *Suburban Legends* does not much mind which is which. This is a playful journey through the eclectic imaginations, inherited memories and history books of our town.

These stories have been reimagined through acts of collective creation.

Young people and families have made the market's livestock and craft makers turn fruit and vegetables into costumes; the remembered smell of Ind Coope has become hops drifting through the streets; and piles of leftover stock have been transformed into a playful celebration of Kiddie City. Revellers evoke the disco, goth and rave crowds that poured into Hollywood and The Rezz. Together, these creations give form, colour and movement to memories that might otherwise disappear.

Like any co-created project, *Suburban Legends* began by listening. Over several months, workshops invited local people to share the stories they felt belonged to Romford. More than fifty possible *Suburban Legends* emerged. Some were living characters or historical figures; others were objects, materials, places, events or half-remembered impressions. Together, they revealed that there is no single story of the town. There may be as many versions of Romford as there are people remembering, retelling and imagining it.

Markets tell their histories through things: cloth, tools, toys, flowers, fruit, packaging

and whatever remains at the end of the day. These ordinary materials carry working-class lives and memories that are rarely preserved in official archives. Their value is not always recognised, and they can easily be lost when places are cleared, rebuilt or displaced. A shop closes, a stall disappears, a familiar building is demolished, and the lives gathered around it can vanish from view.

Storytelling and making offer another way for that heritage to survive. By gathering, stitching and transforming these materials, local people give memories new value and physical form. The work has been brought into being by makers from across the community, who have spent hours, days and weeks patiently cutting, sewing, building, embroidering and crafting its smallest details. Every stitch is evidence of the care, skill and imagination people have brought to the telling, and honouring, of the stories of who we are. *Suburban Legends* is not simply an outcome; it has been made through participation, conversation and communities.

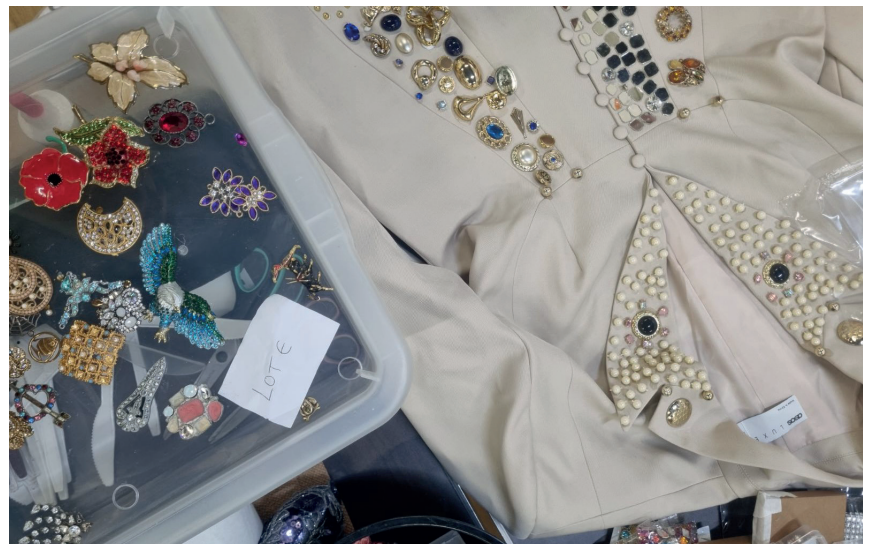
Choosing which stories to present meant balancing individual lives with a collective history. It was impossible, and would have been wrong, to suggest that a small selection of people could stand for everyone who has shaped Romford. Living figures have been treated with particular care and included where they already have a relationship with the market or the project. Kelvis is part of the everyday theatre of Romford Market, already known to the shoppers and traders he entertains. Nellie Sims's story continues through her granddaughter, Caron Webb, who runs Storky, the children's clothing business that still trades in the market. These are not closed histories but living lineages, passed between families and generations.

Other legends survive only in fragments. There is the memory of the telephone boxes outside St Edward's Church: if someone needed to reach a particular market trader, they could call the number of the phone box and someone would call across the market to find them. There are stories of flowers placed in remembrance on the spot where a fellow stallholder once worked. These gestures may seem small, but they reveal the market as a community held together by its own systems of communication, care and remembrance.

Romford Market has also appeared in the stories Britain tells about itself. The opening market scenes of the 1959 film *Look Back in Anger*, starring Richard Burton, were filmed here. Burton's character, Jimmy Porter, pushes his sweet stall through the market, a small fragment of Romford preserved within one of British cinema's defining portrayals of post-war working-class life. Across Romford, countless musicians and performers also appeared in halls, pubs, clubs and venues, contributing to histories too numerous for any single project to contain.

There are always more stories. More traders, makers, shopkeepers, performers and characters could have joined the event. More objects might have been lifted from memory and given a new life. More fragments wait in family photographs, cupboards, newspaper cuttings and conversations. *Suburban Legends* cannot tell them all, and it does not try to create a single, definitive version of Romford. Instead, it gathers a chorus of people, materials, events and impressions, small pieces through which a much larger, shared history can be felt.

Together, these figures form a homage to Romford's character, eccentricity, generosity and noise, to the heroic and the haunted, the intimate, the sublime and the ridiculous. They celebrate a town whose history belongs not only to official records or grand buildings, but to the people who traded, worked, danced, made, remembered and imagined here. In bringing those stories into the market again, *Suburban Legends* gives them bodies, movement and voice and allows Romford to meet its own extraordinary reflection.



The Crown Jewels costume being prepared for *Suburban Legends*, with found jewellery and decorative objects carefully applied by hand. Image: Elle Peters



Sewing Sanctuary, Rainham Foodbank Sewing Group preparing handmade bunting for the *Market Town* event, contributing hundreds of metres of colourful decoration for Romford Market. Image: The Sewing Sanctuary

OUR SUBURBAN LEGENDS

The Bounty of Romford Market

On a busy Saturday in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s, Romford Market might have more than forty fruit-and-vegetable stalls, piled high with colourful, affordable produce. At closing time, a truck collected whatever was bruised or unsold, leaving the unmistakable smell of overripe fruit and vegetables hanging over the town. The number of stalls may have changed, but the market remains a place for local people to find fresh, good-value produce.

Smudge

On 24 March 1943, Flying Officer Raimund ‘Smudge’ Sanders Draper sacrificed his life by steering his failing Spitfire away from Suttons School, saving the children inside. The school took his name and still commemorates him each March. Legend has it the ghost of a young RAF pilot walks through Romford Market. Whether or not it is Draper, the figure recalls Havering’s long RAF history, now preserved by the RAF Hornchurch Heritage Centre.

The Great Romford Flood

After fourteen days of rain, the River Rom burst its banks in August 1888, flooding the town to a depth of more than six feet and sweeping thousands of beer casks from Romford Brewery – some were reportedly found as far away as Southend, while free beer left a few locals rather worse for wear. The disaster led to greater control of the Rom, which now flows largely unseen beneath the town centre: a once-wild river hidden under modern Romford.

Nellie Sims

Nellie Sims, who ran a flower stall, became a living emblem of Romford’s community spirit. She led the carnival with her horse and cart, which was also used for funerals; supported the Deaf community using British Sign Language; helped run the Romford Drum & Trumpet Corps; and raised money for charity. With her husband, she dressed as Father and Mrs Christmas. Stories even tell of one hundred red roses arriving each birthday from the Duke of Westminster – a flourish perfectly suited to a much-loved flower seller.

Livestock

Romford Market began in 1247 by royal grant during the reign of Henry III, selling sheep and cattle as well as other goods, though for centuries trading was confined to Wednesdays alone; Friday trading was added around 1900, with Saturday following soon after. Livestock trading ended in the twentieth century: the last horses were sold in May 1948, and the final livestock sale of all, on 21 May 1958, saw seven cattle, ten calves, 28 sheep and 53 pigs change hands before the cattle market closed for good.

Harry Irons of Bomber Command

Harry Irons was only sixteen when he used his older brother’s papers to join the RAF in 1940. As an air gunner he survived sixty operational sorties – an extraordinary record in Bomber Command – and later spoke openly about the crews who did not return. Among his most cherished flights were the low-level food drops over the Netherlands during Operation Manna in 1945, when RAF aircraft delivered supplies to civilians facing starvation. He died in 2018.

Romford Calling

For centuries, Romford Market rang with traders’ cries, proclamations of its ancient market rights and the business of justice from the courthouse and gaol at its western end. This tradition of calling the town to attention found its best-known modern figure in Tony Appleton, Romford’s town crier, whose bell, red-and-gold robes and booming “Oyez!” became famous around the world. He symbolises the unmistakable characters and stories of Romford that still call out and demand to be heard.

Kelvis

Every other legend gathered here reaches back through centuries. Kelvis is a living one, the present-day face of a much older tradition: the characters who animate the market and are, in turn, looked after by it. For around fifteen years, Kevin Elsbury, known across Romford as ‘Kelvis’, has turned the town centre into his stage. Dressed head to toe as Elvis Presley and pulling his portable music box, he performs for weekend shoppers and raises money for Cancer Research UK, with donations that have grown steadily over the years. A short documentary, KELVIS, celebrates the man behind the costumes and the happiness he brings to strangers.

A Royal Connection

Havering-atte-Bower means “Havering at the royal residence,” a name that recalls the palace and hunting lodge once set among its rich woods. Edward the Confessor is traditionally linked with its beginnings. Henry III maintained and improved the palace, and in 1247 confirmed Romford’s market rights. In 1465, Edward IV established the Royal Liberty of Havering by charter. Elizabeth I stayed at the palace too, and it was even proposed as a retreat for her during the Spanish Armada. For centuries, Havering offered monarchs an escape from London into its manor houses, parkland, and woods.

Portrait of Havering Nico Froehlich

As part of Havering London’s wider project documenting the people and places of Havering, **photographer Nico Froehlich** has been creating a new documentary portrait of the borough. Presented here is a selection of photographs taken in and around Romford Market during the summer of 2026.



Hops

Brewing beside Romford Market grew from The Star Inn and a business established in the early eighteenth century. Edward Ind acquired the brewery in 1799; later partnerships produced the name Ind Coope. Railway access helped the site expand into a major local employer, with its own sidings and a presence that dominated the town centre. The brewery closed in 1993, but generations still remember the smell of hops drifting across Romford – and beers such as John Bull as part of the town’s identity.

Highwaymen

Romford stood on the busy road between London, Essex and the east-coast ports, making the district natural territory for highway robbery. Gallows Corner takes its ominous name from the gallows once associated with the junction. Local stories connect the place with highwaymen and condemned criminals, although individual tales are often difficult to separate from folklore. The name remains a stark reminder that travellers once crossed this landscape at real risk.

Kiddie City

An independent toy shop in Romford remembered for buying surplus and unwanted stock, then selling it at knock-down prices. A Romford collector interviewed for a book on the Star Wars phenomenon in Britain, recalled the shop as specialising in acquiring stock other retailers couldn’t shift. In the late 1970s it became a treasure house for young Star Wars collectors. One local fan remembered finding the complete range of large action figures there, including characters that remained on sale into the mid-1980s and later became highly collectable. The shop stood near the entrance to the shopping precinct and occupies an outsized place in local childhood memory.

Revellers

From 1970s disco nights to the goth and alternative crowds of the 1980s, and on to the ravers of the 1990s, Romford’s pubs, clubs and dance floors offered a home to generations of revellers and alternative cultures. Below a bookshop and furniture store on North Street, a basement club known as The Rezz became the town’s home for punk and goth: damp-walled, run-down, and utterly beloved by the crowd who packed it out most Wednesday nights through the 1980s. Hollywood became an epic local venue, while Romford’s Suburban Base Records helped carry the town’s rave sound far beyond its borders. At its height, Romford had one of Greater London’s greatest concentrations of nightlife outside the West End, a suburban sound revolution that brought thousands out to dance.

S. W. Adams, Ironmongers

For decades, S. W. Adams at 7 Market Place was the kind of shop said to stock almost everything. Sydney William Adams took over the business around 1900, not yet twenty-four, borrowing what he could from relatives, friends and his church since the banks wouldn’t back him. By 1902 he was advertising as an ironmonger, gasfitter and tinsplate worker, with a large stock of dairy utensils for the farmers who still drove trade through Romford’s market. As the town grew, so did the shop: it became a builders’ merchant, sold the first Marconi wireless sets in Romford, and kept its own railway siding for deliveries, with plumbers, electricians and heating engineers all working out of the same premises. Passed from Sydney to his son Frank, the business closed in 1970, its staff having stayed an average of thirty years apiece. The old building, said locally to be over three centuries old, is remembered as one more piece of a Market Place rebuilt around its trading centre again and again.

Frances Bardsley

Frances Beatrice Bardsley was born in December 1871. She was educated at North London Collegiate, founded by the pioneering feminist Frances Mary Buss, who coined the very term “headmistress” for herself. Bardsley went on to graduate from the University of London, at a time when a woman completing a university education was still the exception rather than the rule. In 1901 she won a travelling scholarship and spent several months studying schools in France and America. In 1906 she beat fifty other applicants to become the first headmistress of the new Romford County High School for Girls, running it for four years from a leased house on Eastern Road before it moved into purpose-built premises on Heath Park Road in 1910. Her name now belongs to the school that carries her vision forward: proof of one woman’s determination to open up an education that had, for most of her own girlhood, been closed to girls like her.

Carnival Queen

For much of the twentieth century, Romford Carnival was a fixture of the local calendar. The procession brought marching bands, majorettes, decorated vehicles and crowds into the streets, with the Carnival Queen at its ceremonial centre. Photographs and memories survive from celebrations across the 1930s, 1950s, 1960s and later decades. It echoes further back than living memory: in 1250, three years after Romford was granted its market, Henry III granted the town a Whitsun fair, a week of trade and festivity in the same early-summer season the carnival would later claim as its own. Separated by seven centuries, market and carnival both brought Romford’s crowds into the streets to look at one another, dressed for the occasion. The queen’s sash and crown represents a day when the town staged its own public portrait.

Witches

Havering folklore tells of suspected witches being ‘swum’ in Loam Pond near Romford Market and another pond at Havering-atte-Bower: those who floated were judged guilty, while those who sank were declared innocent. Part of the wider story of witchcraft fear across Essex, the legend evokes an older, darker landscape of whispered accusations and haunted water. Remembering it honours those who may have suffered and marks our long civic journey towards reason, justice and enlightenment.

Jaswant Singh Gahir

Jaswant Singh Gahir arrived from India at Tilbury Docks in 1953. In the mid-1960s, while working full-time as a builder, he ran a stall near St Edward’s Church selling shirts, ties and pocket squares. As a Sikh, he had cut his hair after arriving in Britain in order to find work, but began growing it again and wearing his turban in the 1970s. Remembered through the pocket squares he once sold, his story honours the traders who brought their labour, culture and style to Romford Market, helping shape the town it became.

Captain Blood and the Crown Jewels

Thomas Blood – better known as Colonel or ‘Captain’ Blood – became notorious for attempting to steal the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London in 1671. Local tradition places him in or near Romford shortly before the raid, living under an assumed identity and presenting himself as a doctor. The Romford connection gives one of Restoration England’s most audacious crimes a suburban prologue: a wanted plotter hiding in plain sight beside a busy market town.



ROMFORD MARKET HISTORY

Simon Donoghue

1247 Romford's market dates back to 1247 and the reign of Henry III where it is recorded in the Close Rolls (a copy of legal letters and agreements made by the monarch).

1250 Henry III granted permission to hold an annual fair during the week of Pentecost.

It's worth recognising how important having a market was. There were very few permanent shops and craftspeople and traders tended to live at the premises where they worked. If you wanted to buy or sell anything at this time, a market was the place to go, with the fair, held once a year, attracting people from further afield.

A Market for Romford established it as a key trading centre serving a very wide area and enabled the local economy to flourish.

1274/5 Romford market encouraged trade and expanded the commercial economy of Havering. By 1274 tenants of the Manor of Havering, owned by the Crown, had freedom from payment of tolls, not just in Romford but in all markets throughout the kingdom, though the constable of the Castle in Ongar refused to stop taking tolls from "the king's tenants of Havering" despite royal instructions.

1350 By 1350 Romford market was well established as a supplier of goods to London which were difficult to transport very far, such as fattened animals and wood. Most craftsmen sold their own wares directly to customers with few people working solely as sellers.

By the 1380s the market was central to the local economy but was also used by others from outside the manor of Havering. In this period a London vintner, butchers from Barking and Brentwood and a poultry dealer from London brought goods to sell. Most of the stock raised in Havering was sold to London butchers at Romford market with sales of cattle, calves and sheep most common. Those selling would usually agree to drive the animals to London on the hoof or by cart. Wool was the other key commodity sold to outside traders.

1393 In January 1393 John Mokke of Orsett drove a dozen lambs the 12 miles to the market and agreed a sale with a London butcher, Thomas Felawe who failed to pay the 9s. The market attracted visitors who came especially to buy particular goods, such as the Brentwood man who purchased shoes. The London craftsmen who came to the Wednesday market weren't always welcome by the local tradesmen, and there was often conflict with London butchers who had stalls in Romford.

14th and 15th Centuries Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries Romford market was the centre for much of Havering's trade and also served as a focal point for rural districts to channel their goods to London.

The open market place lay at a widening of the main road to London from Colchester and was around 400 yards by 50 yards. It became surrounded by shops, ale houses and inns as well as houses. In the 1390s most of the shops were owned by local people but by the mid fifteenth century several of these had changed hands with tradesmen and women from elsewhere. Stalls for traders and pens for animals were erected on market days. Agreements for sales made at Romford Market were under the jurisdiction of the Havering Manor Court which would enforce payment, quality standards and delivery on evidence of verbal or written contracts.

In 1406, Henry IV granted permission for a new church to be built in Romford. By this time the town's centre had moved to the Market Place. The new church, dedicated to St Edward the Confessor, was consecrated in 1410, on a new site in the Market Place. The new heart of the town was established.

By 1500, Romford Market saw local traders beginning to act as middle men for local producers and it also developed as a convenient trading



Cattle Market, Romford, 1945. Image: Havering Libraries – Local Studies

point for outsiders from places even further afield. A typical example being the sale of “six great weys of cheese” by William Halle of Stondon to Robert Hatter of Leicestershire in 1479.

Regulation of the market was more actively pursued by the Havering Court following the establishment of the Liberty of Havering in 1465. The clerk of the market was elected annually by 1489. The clerk would attend the market and oversee the official weights and measures and could penalise offenders on the spot, though they usually reported them to the court for punishment. The court penalised those who “sold unhealthy food, began trading before the market bell rang at the eighth hour or blocked the market area with wood or other obstacles”.

In the 1550s a market was introduced on Tuesdays, specialising in the sale of animals, whilst the Wednesday market handled grain and other goods. The Wednesday market acquired the local name “meal market”. Grain was commonly sold by local traders as well as malt, though oats and barley were less common. Cloth and crafts were available on Wednesdays.

Leather goods were particularly abundant, a result of the heavy concentration of leatherworkers in Hornchurch and at Hare Street. Stalls were set aside for glovers and shoemakers and nearby shops existed for other items. The town became known for its leather breeches and a common saying arose “go to Romford to be new bottomed.”

The rubbish and animal waste accumulated by the Market was a constant problem. There were fines for dumping manure, straw and clay and those living next to the market were ordered to remove piles of timber and old signs to prevent the road being blocked.

The washing of clothes in the open market especially at the open well was prohibited and in 1557 the Havering court made it illegal to throw animal carcasses into streams and public ways. In 1571 and 1576 butchers were ordered not to throw “lez entrails or blood of animals” into the streets.

1593 The clerk of the market allocated stalls and animal pens which filled the market place. In 1593 the manor court ordered that “for better rule and governance of the market at Romford, no pedlars, petty chapmen, or cutlers should henceforth ‘have any standing’ between the stairs leading to the loft of the market/court house and the door of the Greyhound inn”. By the mid seventeenth century there were separate sections for butchers, shoemakers, glovers and smiths.

1594 In 1594 John Norden described Romford as having ‘a pretie market on the Wednesdaye yeldinge store of corn and swyne’

1599 In 1599 William Kemp, Shakespeare’s comic actor spent two days resting at a local inn during his 9 days Morris dance from London to Norwich.

Thomas Middleton’s ‘A Chaste Maid in Cheapside’ of 1613 contrasts the poor quality of a Welshwoman’s dowry of 2,000 runt cattle with the high quality of hogs sold at Romford Market “Unless they should be Romford hogs, I know them not”

In 1619 market tolls and rents were leased from James I for 99 years by Trustees for the Prince of Wales, later Charles I at a cost of 40s per year. As a result, the first evidence of tolls being collected is found in 1619, though outsiders had paid before this date.

In 1631 the Trustees sold the Market lease to John Edisbury of the Inner Temple in London and the lease thereafter changed hands many times in the 17th century.

In 1636, John Taylor, “The Water Poet”, said of the market ‘It is a sweet, savoury, clean and gainful market for hogs and all sorts of swine and what else is needful for man’s life. It hath these taverns, the Angel, the Bell, the White Hart and the Cocke.’

1640s A toll of 2d per head of cattle sold in the market was collected alongside a charge for bushels sold.



Rumford Shopping Hall, 1964. Image: Havering Libraries – Local Studies

Stalls cost 6 to 12d per day for butchers and 2-3d for those who sold pre-made goods or other food. Animal pens cost 6d per day.

1650 It was said that rents from Romford Market would have been £100 except for the fact of local tenants being exempt from paying tolls and rents.

Towards the end of the 17th century Romford was described as “a great market town for corn and cattle”.

1721 In 1721 (effective from 1722) the Middlesex and Essex Turnpike Trust was established and a toll house and gate was erected at the eastern end of the Market Place.

From 1772 to 1793 the main lease of the Market was purchased by Mrs Anne Freeman of Boreham. From 1793 until 1813, the Market tolls were leased on an annual basis.

From the late 18th century a Monday Market began and lasted until 1816.

1824 A plan of the market place was made in 1824 and at this time most of the market was reserved for cattle.

1828 In 1828 the Manor of Havering was sold by The Crown to Hugh McIntosh who in January 1829 paid £4,700 for the market tolls which at the time were part way through a 31 year lease taken up in 1813 by Charles Willoughby.

1831
SALE OF A WIFE AT ROMFORD MARKET
“A good looking young woman, wife of Thomas Newcombe, to whom she had been married only one month, was last week brought to Romford Market in a halter, and sold by public auction for 5s 6d. with the addition of 6d for the new rope to which she was tied to the post. In this sale the customary market fees were discharged – viz toll two-pence, pitching three pence.”

This wasn’t an isolated incident, the Essex Standard of 26th May 1832 reported a man from Collier offering his wife and one of his children for sale along with half of the household furniture.

“The woman, by way of appearing in character, had a halter tied round her waist. In a short time the lot was purchased by a fellow named Daniel Harding, who appeared pleased with his bargain and with whom the lady went to her new abode.”

We know of these incidences because they were reported in newspapers and more outright judgement is found in this Essex Herald report of 5th March 1839.

DISGRACEFUL SCENE

One of those disgusting exhibitions which are occasionally witnessed in this country – the sale of a wife – took place in Romford market on Wednesday last. Two men and two women, in a cab and a one horse chaise, drove up to the King’s Head Inn, and having ordered some wine and water, sent for the crier, and requested him to announce that a man was going to sell his wife in the public market. She was accordingly taken out, with a halter around her neck, and sold by auction for 14s! Our correspondent has not informed us of the name of the highest bidder.

There is more to this degrading spectacle than meets the eye. The sale of wives at market was not entirely uncommon and was often a means of obtaining a separation, and agreed by the wife. Divorce was granted by Parliament only for adultery. Wives could only initiate a divorce Bill if the adultery was compounded by life-threatening cruelty. Because of the high costs, only the wealthy could afford this method of ending a marriage. These crude sales at Market were used as a form of divorce by those who had no realistic means of obtaining a legal divorce.

1850 On September 19th 1850 a new Church of St. Edward the Confessor was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Rochester, the 1410 building having been demolished in 1849. The church remains a constant presence in the story of Romford Market

1861 Orr’s Kentish Journal of 19th October 1861 reported that all of the market stalls were “entirely new” and that the owner of the Market, David McIntosh planned to spend between £2,000 and £3,000 on improvements

“The old pens etc. are to come down and be replaced with new ones, considerable quantities of the materials for which have already arrived... and which consist entirely of metal. The position of the pens, stalls etc. for all the animals will also be re-arranged, and altogether it is anticipated that when everything is completed Romford will possess a market which will prove quite a model, as regards cleanliness, neatness and convenience”

1864 Stones Store

For much of its history Romford Market has been about more than the market plain as shops developed on its edges and craftsmen sought to take advantage of the regular custom guaranteed to visit the town.

The town’s most significant shop in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was Stones. It was started at 62 Market Place by Denny Stone in 1864 and he



Romford Market Place, 1967. Image: Havering Libraries – Local Studies

gradually extended the premises into adjoining shops.

Stones was the biggest shop in town by 1906. In 1959, with plans for a new store underway, they merged with Debenhams, though the new building opened as Stones in 1963.

In 1876 the eastern end of the Market Place was used for pigs and cattle and the western end for farm tools, clothing, fruit and vegetables and considered to be the largest near to London for corn and cattle.

In 1877 Romford Fair, established by Henry II in 1250, was abolished. By the 18th century the fair was reduced to one day, June 24th, then in the years before 1877, on the final Thursday of June each year.

1879–1887 After the death of David McIntosh in 1879, the Romford Local Board made a number of unsuccessful attempts to lease the market tolls from Mrs McIntosh, his widow.

In 1887 Mrs McIntosh installed a weighbridge in the market and a legal dispute about its location with the Local Board ensued. The Local Board argued that the location interfered with the public right of way. Mrs McIntosh, complying with the Market and Fairs Act (Weighing of Cattle) by erecting the weighing machine won the legal case and proceeded to add a brick built weigh house, a building demolished by the Local Board as soon as it was able to.

1889 The Local Board turned down the lease of the market tolls saying that the market was in decline.

1892 In February 1892 the Board of Agriculture ordered Mrs McIntosh to carry out works of paving and drainage in the market which she decided not to do. As a result the Board of Agriculture ordered the closure of the market which caused great distress in the town. At a public meeting held on February 18th 1892 it was decided to buy the market rights. This cost the Romford Local Board of Health £7,000 plus the expense of carrying out the work required by the Board of Agriculture. Romford Market has been owned by the Council ever since.

Late 19th Century Towards the end of the 19th century, the Tuesday market was discontinued.

In May 1900 crowds gathered in the Market Place outside the Church of St Edward the Confessor to celebrate the news of the Relief of the Siege of Mafeking during the Second Boer War.

News reached Romford “soon after half past nine on Friday (18th May 1900)... Crowds of people assembled in the streets and cheered and sang.” This is probably from Monday 21st May when schoolchildren “marched... with flags and banners flying”. “Practically the whole town came to look on”.

1907 A Saturday market was introduced by 1907.

March 1907 Romford Market stallage rents were reduced to 1 shilling per stall owing to the large number of vacant stalls.

FIRST WORLD WAR The Market continued throughout the war, and was the scene of many typical concerns.

Anti-German feeling ran high. On 15th April 1915 The Blucher’s Head, named in tribute to the Prussian General, an ally in the Napoleonic Wars, was changed to The Duke of Wellington.

On the 12th May 1915 anti German feeling in the Market was strongly expressed by Richard Hilliard, the well-known auctioneer who made an announcement at the opening of the cattle market that “*he wished to make it clear that if there were any German buyers, naturalised or un-naturalised, present he hoped they would retire, as he should certainly not take their bids. He then read a statement from the Butchers’ Association “Do not allow German members to come from Smithfield to you.”* Mr Hilliard’s remarks were met with loud cheering.

There were several recruitment meetings held in the market, for example.

19th June 1915 A large crowd assembled in the Market Place Romford for a meeting to recruit for a new battalion of the King’s Royal Rifles being raised by

Captain Sir Herbert Raphael, which would be known as the Arts and Crafts Battalion.

The cost of living was a major concern and the Market was a focal point for meetings and protest.

12th July 1915 A meeting organised by the Romford Branch of the Independent Labour Party was held in Romford Market Place to protest against the high cost of living. Mr Edward Fletcher presided and “*urged that there was no real necessity for the increase of food prices and that the cost of living had increased owing to the action of those who sought to make extra profit out of the conditions brought about by the war.*”

18th October 1916 The price of wheat reported from the Corn Exchange, Romford rose from 66s to 68s per quarter of dry red wheat. Many farmers were reluctant to sell at that price. There were also reports from elsewhere of “startling” rises in the price of potatoes.

After the war, in 1919 a Daily Market began.

1921 A letter of complaint about the Market published in local newspaper in September 1921 from Rev G.M. Bell the vicar of Romford provides an interesting snapshot of the character of the Market after the First World War.

“The question of continuance of the cattle market with all the movement of beasts which it implies, on an area closely bordering a main road which has become as full of fast moving traffic as the present London-Chelmsford Road is a problem by itself... But it is not to that... that I am alluding. Not many months ago, partly in the interests of ex-Service men and partly because of the high prices, it was agreed to favour the setting up of a number of additional stalls which... it was thought might benefit certain, mostly local individuals, while introducing healthy competition with the permanent shops... But what has happened, and is happening? All day Wednesday, and a large part of Saturday, the lower part of the Market is filled with a crowd, only a tenth of whom have come on any real market business, while the rest are gathered round half a dozen ‘cheap Jacks’, who



Top Romford Market, 1967. Bottom Romford Market, 1980. Image: Havering Libraries – Local Studies

compete with each other in the loudness of their vociferations, the character of their goods etc. The tradesmen who have rates and rents to pay and reputations to maintain, naturally suffer but are perhaps afraid to complain, the legitimate stallholders suffer, though in less degree, the public suffer, as they discover later on after they have entrusted their money to these plausible gentlemen. The residents in the market suffer from the intolerable din, the voices being easily heard in Junction Road...

Rev. Bell called on the Market Committee to “consider some means of regulating the licences given to stallholders, in the direction of excluding (or at least making it very expensive for) those who come from outside the area of the old Liberty of Havering for which the market was originally intended, and of absolutely prohibiting the calling out of wares in stentorian voices”

1925 1925 saw the end of daily markets but Friday was retained alongside the existing Wednesday and Saturday markets.

1939 The 1930s saw the livestock market enter a slow period of decline, most noticeably in horse sales, which by 1939 were down to 25. The overall livestock sales in 1939 were **Cattle 4,147, Calves 1,580, Sheep 19,435**

Pigs 12,367, Horses 25.

One reason for the decline of horse sales was the rise of the motor car. Buses replaced the old coaches which had connected Romford with London and elsewhere for centuries

SECOND WORLD WAR Romford Market had, as one historian has written, “the greatest notoriety”, for the black market during the Second World War. Tic-tac men, out of work due to the restrictions on horse racing, were employed by some stallholders to look out for inspectors but this wasn’t always successful. In March 1942 a female inspector eluded the look outs and joined a crowd around a stall where they purchased clothes without coupons. Despite heavy fines there was little deterrent and the trade without coupons continued as stallholders rushed to sell as fast as they could.

1948 The last sale of horses at Romford Market took place on 13th May.

1958 After the war the livestock market declined markedly until 1958 when Romford Borough Council was forced to abandon its historic cattle market. The last livestock sale took place on 21st May 1958 where the following were sold **Cattle 7, Calves 10, Sheep 28, Pigs 53.**

1959 Since 1959 a dedicated team of market cleaners has been employed to do their work after the market closes.

1960s There were massive changes in Romford during the 1960s as the

largely Victorian town embraced the modern era with plans for a ring road and a new shopping centre on the western side of the Market Place.

The Market itself faced competition from the new shopping centre, new stores for Debenhams and C&A, and an expanded Romford Shopping Hall. There was also a long running dispute between the Council and barrow boys trading at the Market. In September 1964 a petition with over 5,000 signatures was presented to the Home Secretary, by a deputation who walked the 18 miles there, claiming that the 1247 “charter” gave them the right to trade from their barrows and that the council should be prevented from fining them.

1969 On Sunday September 14th 1969 Romford Market was closed to through traffic. This was once part of the main road between London and Norwich.

A crowd of nearly 5,000 people came to share in the formal closing ceremony which followed the Mayor and Mayoress of Havering making the final journey on a horse drawn landau. The Romford Drum and Trumpet Corps performed as did the Romford Morris Men and local theatrical groups appeared in costume whilst the crowd stood to watch vintage vehicles.

1973 In 1973 there were around 325 regular traders in the market.

1980s and 1990s The end of the twentieth century saw Romford Market continue as a major destination for shoppers seeking a bargain. During this era the traditional market faced the challenge of out of town shopping centres but remained a venue for shoppers travelling from far and wide. David Eldridge’s celebrated play, “Market Boy”, first performed in 2006, reflects his experiences working on a stall in the market as a teenager.

An antiques market was introduced in North Street in the 1980s.

1997 In 1997 major celebrations took place in the town to mark the 750th anniversary of Romford Market. Throughout June 1997 a programme of exhibitions, events, talks, a fun fair, music and themed market days such as the demonstration of traditional tradesmen at a Medieval Market took place. Boxer Frank Bruno launched proceedings which concluded with the Romford Carnival on Saturday 28th June and on the Sunday, a civic service of thanksgiving at St Edward’s Church and a Great Historic Pageant.

Into the 21st Century A survey in 2000 noted that the majority of those who responded valued the market and the unique character and tradition it gives the town.

2003 On 6th March 2003 Queen Elizabeth II became the first reigning monarch to pay an official visit to Havering since Charles I. Her visit to the district included a trip to Romford Market where she admired the stalls, spoke to stallholders and met the public. Until 1828 Romford Market was part of the Crown estates.

2012 The Olympic Torch relay of 2012 marked its arrival in Havering along the old London Road from Chadwell Heath with Romford Market as its destination and the first changeover of torch bearers.

The Market has always been populated by characters, often with nicknames. Kie-Kie the tool king, Clarkie the Banana Man, Gertie from Lancashire, Little Freezer, Jack the Shoe Man. Stalls have often been associated with several generations and longstanding stallholders in the Market such as Nellie Sims, Charlie Fancourt and latterly Tony Luscombe, and they will be remembered into the future. These are some of the faces of today’s Market.

March 2020 The announcement on 24th March 2020 that the Market would be closed until further notice due to Covid-19, led to the longest recorded closure of the Market in its history. It finally re-opened in two phases, on Wednesday 3rd June 2020 food stalls opened up with the remaining stalls returning on Friday 5th June. The open air nature of the Market making it a safer shopping environment during a difficult time for everyone.

Throughout its history Romford Market has faced difficulties and challenges but remains very much part of Romford’s identity and has continued to develop and adapt. Occasional Specialist and Farmer’s Markets have taken place and Romford Market still attracts coach parties during the run up to Christmas when extra days are added. Recently a Sunday Market was launched and it remains the focal point for events of a joyous and mournful nature.

There are few sights and sounds in Romford as colourful as a sunny day in Romford Market. The buildings, shops and many of the pubs and inns on the market’s perimeter have come and gone whilst the Market remains, still a place to claim a bargain and listen for the echoes of its long history.

A 2001 report recognised the importance of the market to the town and the borough of Havering and highlighted one shopper’s view that “**The Market is Romford**”.

EVENTS, OFFERS & Opportunities

History of Romford Market 1247 to 2022 Romford Shopping Hall

Friday 28 – Monday 31 August 2026
(9.00am – 7.00pm Friday & Saturday /
10.00am – 4.00pm Sunday & Monday)

An exhibition of the history of the market produced by Romford BID for the celebration of the market's 775th Anniversary! No booking necessary – just pop along and go back in time to see the market through the years.

Get Crafty at Havering Museum Havering Museum

Friday 28 August 2026 (11.00am and 2.00pm)
£4 per child plus booking fee

Inspired by the history of the market, children can get creative and make some of the many animals which used to be sold at Romford Market in the past.

The Ionians Young People's Music Group Mercury Mall

Saturday 29 August 2026, 3.00 – 6.00pm

Support local bands of young people promoting young music in Havering, by singing and dancing along to your favourite songs and some originals too.

Havering Museum at The Brewery The Brewery

Friday 28 August 2026, 12.00 – 4.00pm

Havering Museum Open Day Havering Museum

Sponsored by Essex Freemasons

Saturday 29 August 2026, 11.00am – 3.30pm

Make the most of your visit to Romford Market with a free trip to Havering Museum. Explore the Museum's fascinating galleries, enjoy free children's craft activities, and meet a real Pearly King and Queen!

Bellringing Opportunity St Edward the Confessor Church

The St Edward Guild of Bell Ringers was established in 1775. Apart from two world wars and a pandemic there had been a band ever since. The ringers today come from Barking, Ilford, South Ockendon and Romford. We range in age from 11-70; new members are always welcome. So, if you would like to find out more about how we play one of the biggest musical instruments in the world, email june1gray@hotmail.com or speak to the parish office.

The Vine Cafe & The Bull

On Saturday 29 August, the Vine Cafe will be offering a 10% discount to those attending *Suburban Legends* and the Bull will be offering a 10% discount on food and drinks, on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 August, to all *Market Town* attendees.

Market Town Team

David Shearing, *Director and Designer*
Mathew Russell, *Executive Producer*

Vickie Donoghue, *Text (Meet Me by the Fountain)*
James Bulley, *Composer and Sound Designer (Meet Me by the Fountain)*
Novak, *Video Design (Meet Me by the Fountain)*

Mat Ort, *Production Manager*
Debra Baker, *Narrator (Meet Me by the Fountain)*
IPS, *Fountain Construction (Meet Me by the Fountain)*
Graymatter, *Video Supplier (Meet Me by the Fountain)*
Simon Hendry, *Sound Engineer (Meet Me by the Fountain)*

Valentina Miranda, *Costume Supervisor (Suburban Legends)*
Fee Hobbs, *Assistant Costume Supervisor (Suburban Legends)*
Phyllida Hickish, *Costume Facilitator (Suburban Legends)*
Jane Herbert, *Facilitator (Suburban Legends)*
Jordan Abankwah, Aislinn Evans, Jane Keane, *Participation Facilitators (Suburban Legends)*
Tony McBride, *Audio Description*
Sam Eccles, *Newspaper Design*
Nico Froehlich, *Newspaper Portrait Photography*
Adam Whitaker, *Backstage Film Maker*

Archive footage provided by Film London – London's Screen Archives and Havering Libraries – Local Studies, Archive photography provided by Havering Libraries – Local Studies, Proclamation! vocal by Havva Bulley, Folk Songs recorded by Nick Hart, Jolene Missing, Tom Moore, Event flyers for The Dance sequence provided by Phatmedia. *Aftercare*, courtesy of Imogen Heap.

For Havering London:

Patrick Odling-Smee, Barbara Nicholls, Manny Manoharan, David Shearing, Mathew Russell, *Board of Directors*
Charlotte Handel, *General Manager*
Nompumelelo Ncube, *Havering Unearthed Producer*
Alyssa Watson, *Heritage Projects Officer*
Elle Peters, *Social Media Support*

For Greenwich+Docklands International Festival:

Bradley Hemmings, *Artistic Director*
Ellie Harris, *Executive Producer*
Shaun Evelyn, *Head of Communications and Audiences*
Felicity Paterson, *General Manager*
Evie Ayres-Townshend, *Access Producer*
Mairi Shimmings, *Volunteer Co-ordinator*
Luke Bryant, *Communications and Audiences Officer*
Jacob Hewes, *Producer*
Chloe Pritchard-Gordon, About Grace, *PR Management*

Project Partners:

Mary Wright, *St Mary Magdalene Church*
Julie Frost, *BID Director, Romford BID*
James Jackson, *Project Director, Havering Changing*
Steve Bowyer, *Associate Producer, Queen's Theatre Hornchurch*
Jane Keane, *Director, Havering Museum*
London Borough of Havering

Market Town Steering Group: Michelle Fitzgibbons, Julie Frost, Hayley Sterling, Caron Webb, Tina Donno.

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Local Recorded Voices: Jed, Rebecca, Peter, Caron, Graham, Jane, Saul, Michelle, Christine, Jack, Ines, Sandra, Steve, Rayvon, Jack, Harry, Tracy, Irene.

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HAVERING LONDON

Havering London is a new cultural placemaking organisation, coordinating a public, private and voluntary sector partnership of strategic organisations and community representatives.

It was behind Havering's bid to be London Borough of Culture, developed with 50 groups and 1,000 members of the public. Havering London is now leading on developing, fundraising for and delivering 'A Good Life', Havering's new 3-year legacy driven cultural strategy (2025–2028).

Havering London believes in the transformative impact that culture can have on a place. It works in new ways, with different communities, in partnership across a changing borough and widely across London: attracting investment and building a cultural ecology for everyone. [#AGoodLife](#) | haveringlondon.com

Havering London is supported by: Creative Health Havering, FUSE: Havering, Havering Changing, Havering Museum, London Borough of Havering, New City College, Romford BID and the Centre for Performance, Technology, Equity (PTEQ) at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.



Greenwich+Docklands International Festival

Recently described in the Guardian as "one of the best free festivals in the UK", Greenwich+Docklands International Festival, affectionately known as GDIF, has been surprising and delighting audiences since 1996 with its annual programme of free outdoor arts.

Each summer GDIF welcomes audiences of more than 55,000 to a free outdoor programme of theatre, circus and dance, featuring extraordinary staging in public spaces across Greenwich, East London and Thamesmead. Shortlisted as 'Producer of the Year' by The Stage Awards 2025, in recent years GDIF has staged critically acclaimed performances on a moving double decker bus, a 3 tonne block of melting ice and on the façade of St Paul's Cathedral.

Every GDIF performance is free to attend and in 2023 GDIF became the first festival in the UK to be awarded the Platinum level for accessibility by Attitude is Everything. GDIF is the flagship annual event produced by FESTIVAL.ORG, one of the Europe's leading outdoor arts producing organisations. www.festival.org

VARIABLE | MATTER

Established in 2020 by award-winning artist David Shearing, the practice collaborates with world-leading individuals working across design, architecture, digital, policy, academia and community practice, to deliver perspective shifting events and cultural projects.

Our approach is simple, we place people at the heart of everything we do. We aim to bring about change: environmental, political and social, through high quality and rigorous artistic enquiry. We question our own sustainability and those we work with to find new ways to use materials. We believe in the power of design to inspire new forms of connection and experience. We produce our own projects, but we also work with others across different sectors.

The ways we might work together:

- Commissioning us to develop transformational art projects, in cities, for festivals and places. We can build on an existing idea and lead on delivery or we can ignite new ideas with you.
- Consultancy on cultural strategy, investment and partnership working to deliver large place-based approaches to culture.

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