

READING ROOMS CELEBRATION: Costumes, cardboard models and chocolates

Pupils mark 150 years of High Street history

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VICTORIANS paid a visit to Billericay at the weekend to mark 150 years of the Reading Rooms.

The anniversary event kicked off on Friday with Victorian Day and the official launch of the celebrations, which continued on Saturday and Sunday.

Four local schools exhibited displays following historical projects they carried out to mark the anniversary of the Rooms, at 73 High Street.

Realistic

These special projects were made possible through £4,800 of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Youngsters at Buttsbury Junior School created a realistic miniature replica of Billericay High Street after researching the history of these buildings through special trips to the Reading Rooms and the Cater Museum.

Sarah Brown, Year Six leader at the Norsey View Drive school, said: "The children investigated buildings and the history of the town and then created them."

"Lots of children didn't realise the Reading Rooms were here



MAIDS IN ENGLAND: Abbey Sant and Hannah Cox from Quilters

Photos by Gareth Morgan CMGM20140307C-624_C

before now. They all have really enjoyed it and have been very interested."

Quilters Junior School proudly displayed their 150-year-old newspaper, which formed part of their display.

Their research included a visit to the Gazette offices to see how a newspaper is made, as featured in last week's edition.

Quilters pupils Hannah Cox, 9,

and Abbey Sant, 10, were among those at the celebrations on Friday.

Hannah said: "We have been looking at all the displays and I think the houses are very good."

Abbey added: "Lots of people have been looking at our newspaper. We were quite surprised to be chosen to come."

Impressive drawings and a painting of the Reading Rooms

had been created by St John's School pupils, who visited Braintree Victorian Museum as part of their project.

Jenson Power, 11, said: "We have been studying the history of the Reading Rooms. They opened it for people who couldn't afford to read."

St Peter's Catholic Primary School made some Victorian-style chocolates and displayed them alongside their cross-stitch creations.

Town crier

Head teacher John Peoples said: "They have loved it all - the children have had a ball."

"We will probably make more use of the Reading Rooms now."

The event was formally opened on Friday by Billericay Town Crier Jim Shrubbs, who visited along with Basildon and Billericay MP John Baron.

Keith Wood, senior trustee at the Reading Rooms, said: "This event came from a small idea to celebrate 150 years and the schools ran with it."

"We give them great thanks because the schools have worked so hard."

For more information on events at the Reading Rooms visit billericayreadingrooms.org.uk



IN COSTUME: Visitors and teachers celebrated 150 years of the Reading Rooms by dressing up on Friday
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WERE YOU AT THE CELEBRATIONS?
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were all a part of the town centre building's big anniversary over the weekend



RINGS A BELL: Billericay Town Crier Jim Shrubbs with some of the school children who visited the Reading Rooms
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LOOK BACK: Hanah Stevens and Dhiviyan Loganathan from Buttsbury Primary School with their High Street model
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WRITE LOOK: St Peter's students Francesca Foster and Victoria Mankan using Victorian chalk boards
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