

A few facts about oak trees...



Our oaks are a vital part of the village's natural eco-system, as they support more life forms than any other native tree.



Hundreds of species of insects make the oak their home. Keep a look out for increasingly rare stag beetles – they love to reside in the leaf mould under the trees.



Acorns provide food for squirrels, badgers and jays – a single jay can store up to 5,000 acorns a year for its winter food supply!



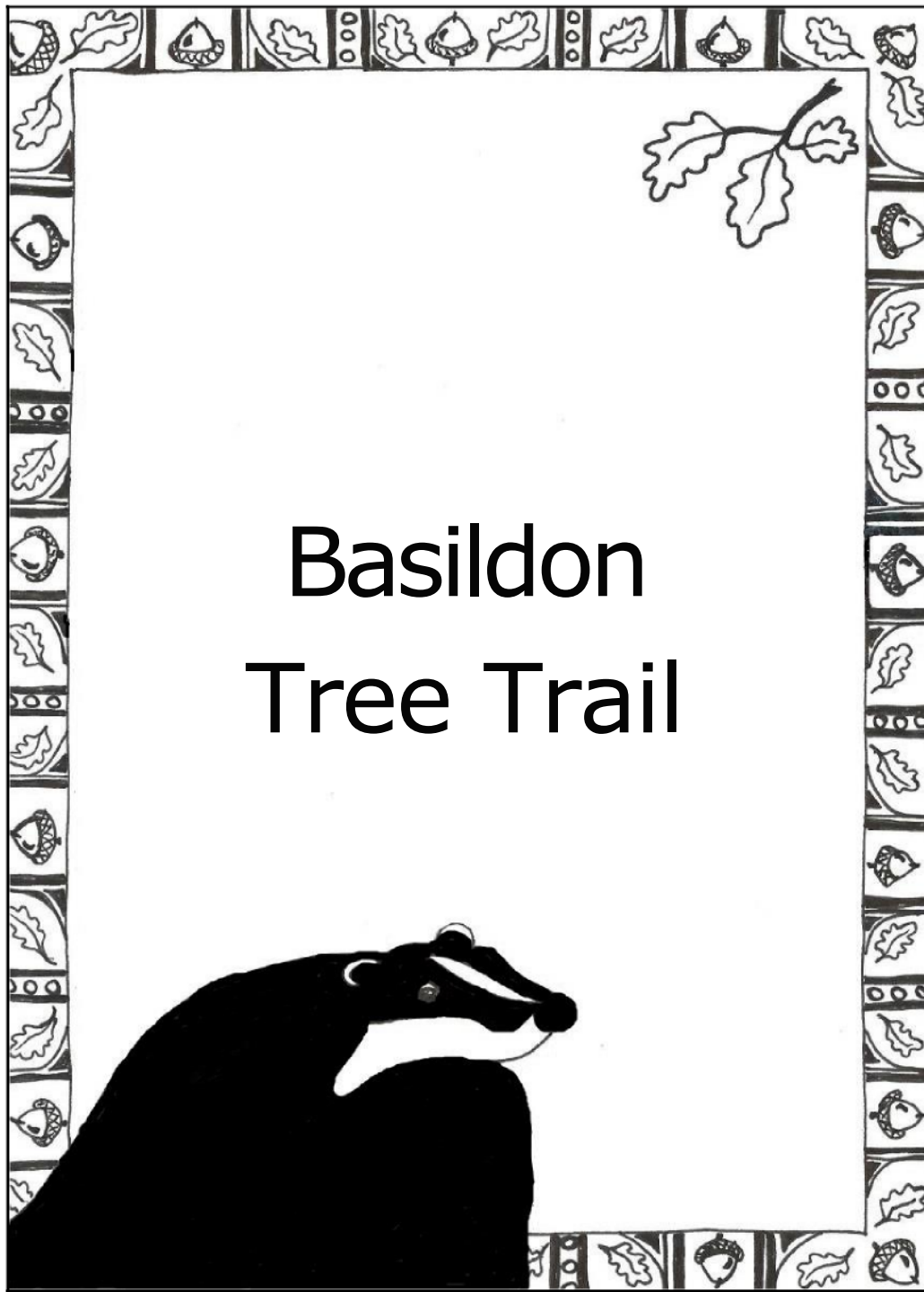
Woodpeckers (green, lesser and greater spotted varieties) are all commonly seen in the village and nest in the oaks, and pipistrelle bats roost in the holes the woodpeckers create.



Oaks can grow up to forty metres tall, making them prone to lightning strikes, and this dramatic feature led the Celts to treat them as sacred, believing that they had been touched by the fire of the gods. The Celtic god Dagda was often portrayed carrying a magical harp made of oak, which was said to control the seasons.



Basildon Tree Trail



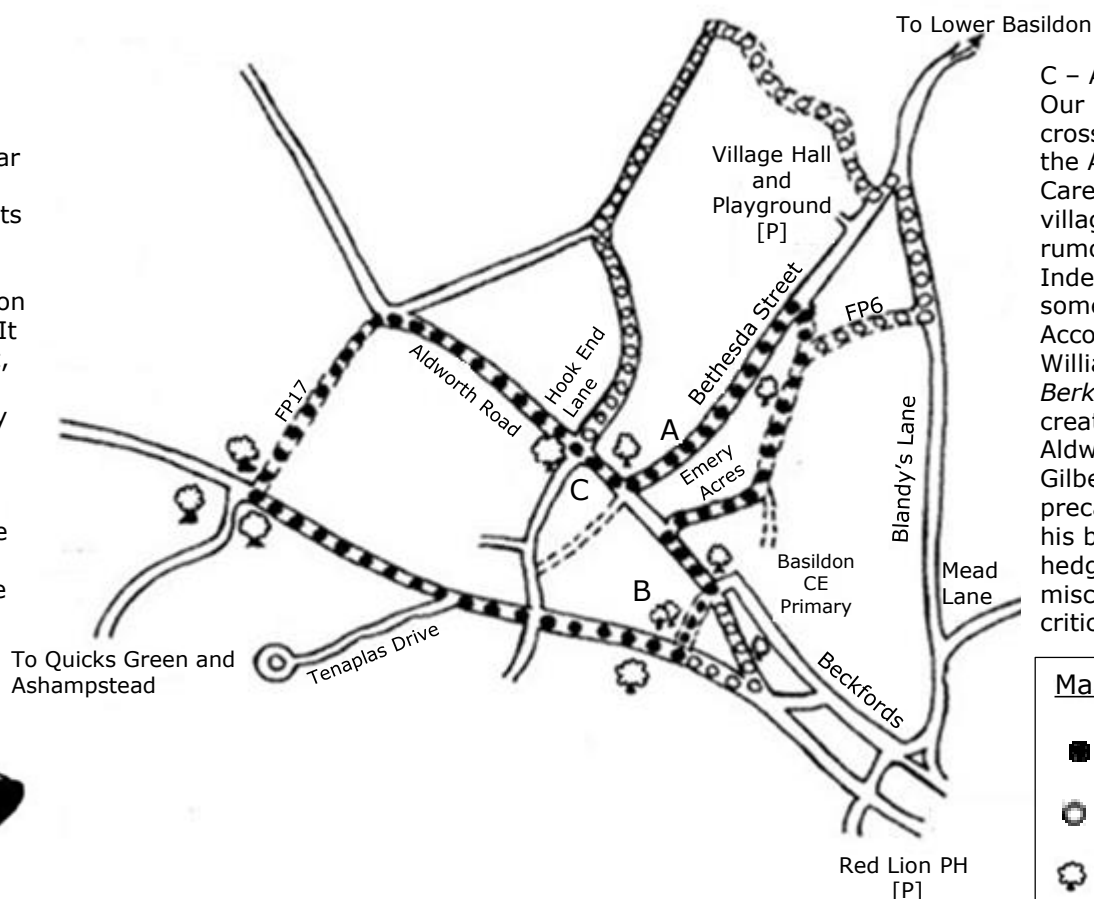
In 2015, Basildon Parish Council recognised that there was a real interest in the village in conserving it's ecological environment, particularly the beautiful old oaks. Over 150 oak trees were measured and recorded, 23 of which are believed to be at least 180 years old.

To celebrate these wonderful trees we have devised this circular walk of just under 2.5 miles around our lovely village, which will take you past many of our special oaks, some of which date back to the 1600's. The route is predominantly on quiet country roads, footpaths and through woodland.

There are six geocaches hidden on this trail for treasure hunters. Each one contains a letter, which when arranged correctly spells out a word. Visit www.geocache.com for clues.

A – Oaks can live for up to 1000 years, but the oldest oak in our village dates to 1640. It was a sapling when the English Civil War between Cromwell's Parliamentarians and the Royalists pervaded Berkshire, and would have dropped it's first acorns around the time that Isaac Newton published his theory of gravity. It can be found on Bethesda Street, opposite Tree Cottage (named after this oak and home for thirty years until 1965 to the artist, Gilbert Spencer).

B – In 2015 a Trust set up by the community purchased Emery Down Wood for the benefit of the village.



C – A little Basildon folklore... Our largest oak can be found at the crossroads by Hook End Lane and the Aldworth Road opposite Nan Carey's Hill. Nan Carey lived in the village in the 18th century and was rumoured to have been a witch. Indeed, her ghost is believed by some to still haunt the area. According to Ted Kay in Clive Williams's wonderful *Basildon, Berkshire* she is credited with once creating a crosswind on the Aldworth Road that knocked poor Gilbert Spencer and his precariously balanced canvasses off his bike and into a hedgerow...whether she was a mischief maker or a rather harsh critic we shall never know...

Map Key:

- - Recommended route
- - Extended route
- 🌳 - Oaks
- [P] - Parking

Basildon Tree Trail