

Luton Time Explorers



Promoting Heritage for
People and Places



Foxdell Schools Federation

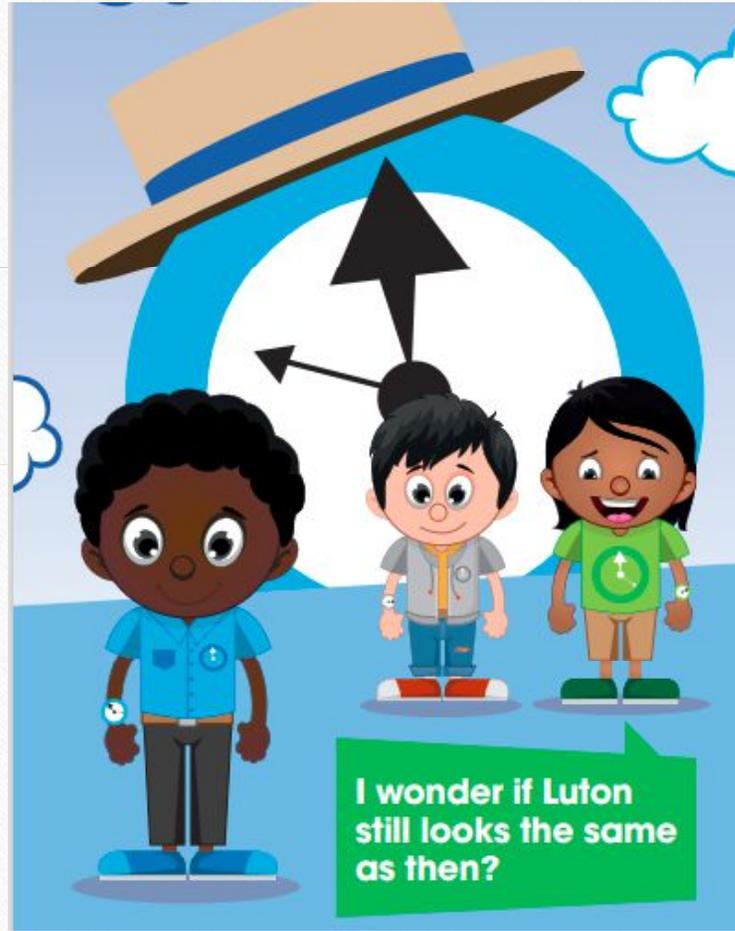
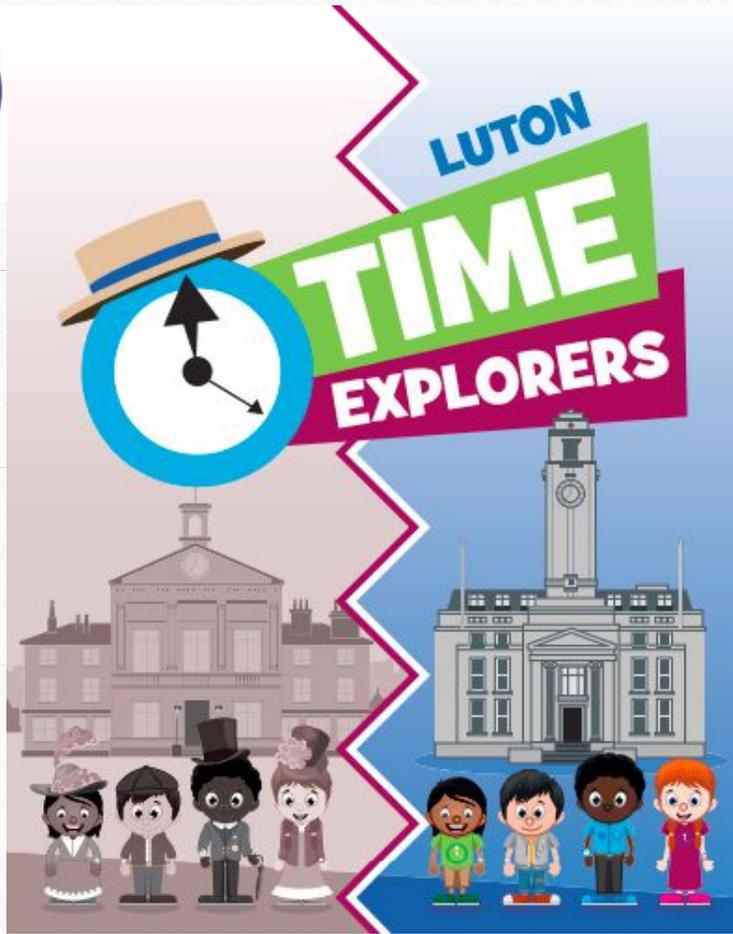
This heritage project has been supported by the Cultural
History Community Interest

Company www.culturalhistories.org

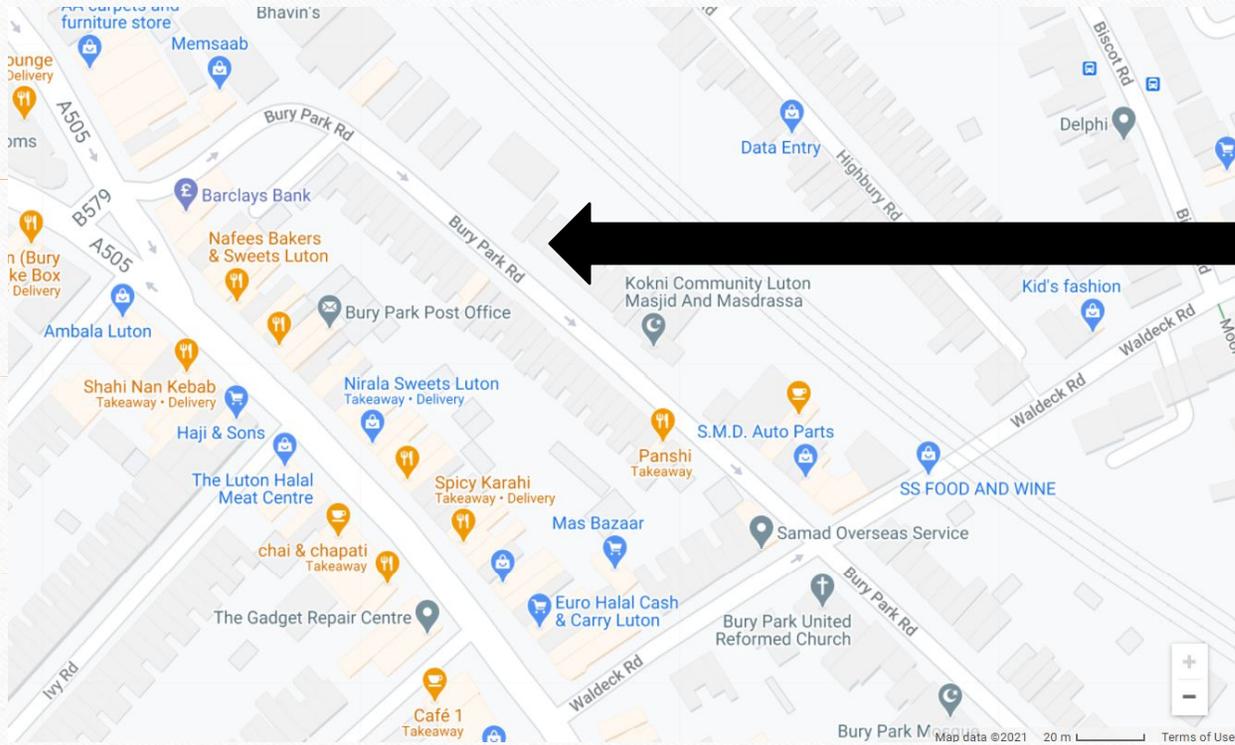
Our aim is to provide benefit to people interested in the
cultural history of their neighbourhoods and families.



Promoting Heritage for People and Places



I wonder if Luton still looks the same as then?



Location of the
Synagogue on map

(*hint* same as the
old cinema and the
propeller factory)

Background information about the Synagogue on Bury Park

- The first Jewish family settled in Luton in around 1880. At the outbreak of war in 1938 there were about 25 families in Luton, but this swelled to over two thousand souls. As the size of the community increased, services were held in various houses. It was apparent that the small Synagogue in Moor Path was inadequate to house the new members and that a new Synagogue and Communal Centre were required.
- In 1949 the Empire Cinema in Bury Park Road was purchased. Plans were developed for the conversion of the building and it was consecrated by the Chief Rabbi, Dr Israel Brodie on Lag B'Omer. At that time the congregation had about two hundred members and held regular services as well as religious classes and social functions. There was a Youth Club, Young Marrieds' Group, Ladies Guild, Parent Teacher Association and a Friendship Club for older members.

More...

By the late 1980's it was obvious that new premises were required. The membership was declining and aging and only few members lived near to Bury Park. Search was begun to find new accommodation, or land upon which to build, and also to identify a purchaser for the building. The Synagogue in Bury Park Road was sold at the end of 2001. The purchasers were the Islamic Cultural Centre, so the building retained its religious use and the location was much more appropriate for the new owners than it had been for the Jewish community.

The Synagogue building



What are the other two places which used to be in this building?

Some features of the Synagogue



These beautiful stained glass windows were rescued from the old synagogue and installed in the new Luton United Synagogue.

Stained Glass Windows at Luton US

- Luton United Synagogue has made the final installation of two large stained glass windows that had been in its Bury Park Road Synagogue. The old synagogue had been the home of the Luton Hebrew Congregation from 1949 to 2001 and had many beautiful stained glass windows. They were placed in storage whilst the community sought premises for a new synagogue.

- The current synagogue was bought in 2009 and many of the stained glass windows were installed over external plain glass panes, but there was not sufficient space to accommodate two large stained glass windows. The final part of the refurbishment of the new synagogue was the provision of frames on an internal wall of the prayer hall to hold these last windows. The stained glass had to be restored before fitting into the frames and LED lighting had to be installed to back light the windows. There was a truly communal effort with much of the work being undertaken by members of the community. What could not be done by volunteers was completed by contractors. The cost of restoration and installation was over three thousand pounds, but this cost was met by a fundraising programme, which included a sponsored swim and many very generous donations.

-
- On Friday 16th August the contracts installed the restored windows. The stained glass windows make a fitting feature to the synagogue that is a memorial to the past synagogue, beautifies the building, and strengthens the sense of achievement and capability of the Luton United Synagogue.

What symbols/images can you identify from the picture of the stained glass?



Describe using at least 5 descriptive words how the stained glass looks.

How long do you think it takes to realise the designs and complete one window?

Write a short extract of what you think people who made and painted the stained glass thought about their work and how they felt whilst working.