

## MEMORIES

Charles Phillips

Life began for me in May 1953 in St Andrew's Hospital, Billericay and have lived in Stock all my life. From 5 to 6 I attended Stock Primary School. From 6 to 11 I attended the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic School in Chelmsford. From 11 to 17 I attended what was then Blessed John Payne Roman Catholic Secondary Modern School in Chelmsford. (Blessed John Payne later got canonised by the Pope and became Saint John Payne) From 17 to 18 I attended Chelmsford College of Further Education. From 18 to 19 I was out of work except for two days when I worked in an insurance brokers in Chelmsford. I got the sack. I obviously wasn't suitable. From 19 to the age of 51 I was a member of the home Civil Service. I joined the Department of the Environment on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1972. Following the general election of 1997 this joined with the Department of Transport to become the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. Following the general election of 2001 this became the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions. Following a scandal in the Department in 2002 as the result of a political adviser to the Secretary of State as I recall giving information out at the wrong time this was split into two Departments – the Department for Transport and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. I became part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. However from late November 2001 to early May 2003 I was on loan to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. I left the Civil Service in March 2005. Throughout my career I remained the same grade – Clerical Officer which later became Administrative Officer. Obviously I wasn't the most unsuccessful Civil Servant otherwise I wouldn't have survived so long.

I'll start off by giving some memories of Stock. When I was born Stock had a lot more shops than does now. Starting from the north or Chelmsford end of the village there was Post Office kept by Gordon Barker where the house with the bay window is. The village postman's name was Mr Palmer. The current Post Office and Stores in those days was a grocers kept by Harvey's. On the left hand of the road just opposite the Cock car park there was a sweet shop kept by Mrs Owers. On the same side the house with bay windows facing on to the junction was hardware shop kept by Mr Upson. The building on the opposite side of the road between Back Lane and Mill Road was Wrights the butcher's. . If you crossed over the road there was another small shop. Going round into the Square the Four Vintners was a grocer's. Mrs Weston kept it as I recall. In the square Pietros was in those days a newsagents kept by Parkers. Next door was the village blacksmith's. I can remember it.

Next I seem to recall there was electrical shop. I don't remember who owned it. In Mill Road the takeaway was a fish shop owned by Fred Baker, who owned the green grocers next door. This is now the hairdresser's. Next to that the shop that is now vacant was another butchers. **Going back towards the Vintners past the white fence was a cobblers (or shoemakers) kept by Mr Bosko who was a Pole.** Yes we had Poles in those days. In fact until the early 1990s there was Polish Government in Exile in London. Going up Mill Road there were a couple of builders. Near where the telephone exchange and Baker's Field is now was Elliots **whilst further up where Unwin Place is now was Cables.**

Near the cross roads further up on the left hand side was another grocers and on the right hand side was the garage run by Charlie Palmer. There was a police station at 29 Mill Road with a village policeman – one P C Plunkett. The village school was at the bottom of School Lane. It is now a house and architect. The library was held in British Legion Hall. There were four pubs in the village – the Bear, the Cock, the Hoop and the Baker's Arms. The Cock car park used to be field where fairs. Next to the field was the telephone exchange. There were two telephone boxes in the village. Both nice red ones. One where the current telephone box is and one at the cross roads in Mill Road. Telephones were not all that common. There were in those days the three churches although there was not unity. The rector of All Saints was the Rev Tatham. Our Lady of Mount Carmel as it then was in those days was supplied from Ingatestone by Father Verity. I don't know about the Congregational Church as it then was. Greenwoods in those days belonged to the West Ham Central Mission. (I wish it still did.) Orchard House also belonged to the West Ham Central Mission. The Village Hall in those days was where Unwin Place is now. Where part of Dakyn Drive is was allotments. Swan Wood and Hankins Wood existed, as did the wood with the fir trees. The squire of the village was Admiral Sir Vernon Haggard who was the son-in-law of the late Richard Ellis. The Haggard's lived in Little Court. In those days Stock was part of the Chelmsford Rural District Council. At various times either William Orr or Mr Mackie were the members for the village. The village doctor who lived in Mill Road was Doctor Patterson. Being young I didn't know about the parish council. In those days the windmill was firmly closed to the public. There were no open days. Hunting was more open in those days. In fact it was legal to hunt foxes. The hunt used to meet in the square at the Bear. All the red coats used to block up the lanes. In those days there were rather more fields than there are now. They were smaller. There were more hedges. There were haystacks. By the time I was born the horse and the steam engine had been replaced on farms by the tractor. The main tractors were the little Ferguson's and the big Field Marshalls. The main farmers I remember were Fred Makings, Jack Smith and William Orr. The threshing contractors was Keelings. In those days corn was cut by a reaper binder and threshed in a threshing machine. It was with the threshing machine that the Field Marshall was used. Fred Makings had the dairy in back lane. There was no main drainage in the village. People relied on cesspool or cesspit. Where I lived in Swan Lane there was piped water but no electricity. We didn't have television. We didn't get until after we got electricity in 1957. For us the wireless was powered by accumulators, which you had to get charged up. A Catholic memory was that the Mass – that is the service was in Latin. All Catholics had to lean Latin. There were buses. In my early days on a lot of the double deckers the gangway upstairs was the right hand side and was sunken. This meant that upstairs and if sitting on the right hand side next to the window downstairs you had to lower your head when leaving your seat. It was also murder getting to or leaving from a seat upstairs on the left hand side. Some single deckers had doors at the back. All double deckers had rear open platforms like the London Transport Routemasters. The buses were run by Eastern National. They were green with cream lining and the name Eastern National in gold lettering. Local authority houses were owned by the council and not some quango known as Chelmer Housing Partnerships.

I could write and say how things changed. And they did. Shops closed down. The police station closed down. The new school was built and the field became the school playground. Later a new playground was built and the then playground became the Cock car park. Combined harvesters became the norm. Fields were made bigger. Main drainage was put on it the village and everyone not on it got septic tanks. Electrification of the village was completed. Buses got doors at the front.

A little bit about Billericay. In the 50s and into the 1960s it was a small town. Unfortunately now, and the residents of Billericay admit this, Basildon is trying to destroy the town. It had a nice High Street. It wasn't 'any town UK'. You still had the individual shops owned by local people and the wonderful hospital. Of course Basildon didn't like this. I do remember the steam trains on the line from Shenfield to Southend. I believe my first train journey was on one. I also remember the electric trains which started at the end of 1956. I remember the goods trains still being steam after the electrics took over the passenger trains. I wrote the history of the line in the mid 1980s. My grandfather Fred Such remember them building the line in the 1880s. I once had a cab ride from Liverpool Street to Billericay. That was something. It was before they privatised the line and I won't name the driver.