



MELFORD MEMORIES

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I was born in Cross Street, Sudbury in 1937. My father was born in Long Melford living here until his early 30s, when he married my mother, who was a Sudbury Girl. *So, they were here during the last World War then?* Yes, so was I, My father was a key worker who worked at the Gas Works and his boss went into the Forces, so he was more or less in charge of the Gas Works. So I was lucky to have my father at home during the war. My schooling was in Sudbury as I've never been to school in Melford, I was brought up a Catholic and went to a Catholic school in Sudbury and then went on to the Girls High school, but my father was educated in Long Melford. *So, your father was actually educated in this building where we speaking now?* No, I think he went to one of two smaller buildings used as schools further down the street, but he may well have been here. I don't know when this building was built as a school.

My grandmother lived in Long Melford, I remember coming here on the bus from Sudbury on a Sunday afternoon and we used to walk from where Swan Field is now. We just visited grandmother who lived next door to what was then, the White Hart. Many pubs that were here then, have now gone! We used to walk through Swanfield, when it was a field over the railway line and then walk on, we obviously did a circular walk. Many walks are available for people even today because it's such beautiful countryside here which still remains open for people to enjoy.

I have seen Melford grow from just the one street, to all the newer buildings on the outside of the village as housing is in short supply. Further north, this has happened even more, in fact, it's more like a town now than a village. When we first came to live here, which was about 30 years ago, there was just one street with a green grocers, plus the Co-Op as well as many smaller shops. You did not have to go out of the village for shopping, food, clothes shops, everything was here. But they have just gradually closed. So, the way of life really is changing dramatically, very quickly.

When you think of the wartime and how we managed with only a ration book each, there was four of us in my family, there were my parents and my uncle and myself as I was an only child. So, we had a ration book each. We just went to the Co-Op every week asking for the rations for four. Then went to the butcher just rations for four people please, so we had just what was there with no choice. Everyone learned to live on what was available and well within our means, to use the food economically, and I still do today. Wasting nothing. As they say, old habits die hard. We did not waste anything. But that is a good way to live and not to waste. Also, there was not so much plastics or rubbish either, which is now a big problem today in our society. Then we used to have a lady come from the Co-Op on Saturday mornings when my mother would give her a pound coin which was entered into a book. When mother had saved 20 pounds she would go and buy, if we needed anything in the way of clothes or shoes at the Co-Op in Sudbury that sold everything. It was on the corner where Wetherspoons is now, but this is the way we saved. Of course, both town and village were very much interlinked and to a certain extent still are. With all the building going on I wouldn't be surprised if eventually it does get linked completely with the housing situation may well be joined with Acton, Waldingfield, as well as Sudbury in the future.

People went to work in factories, there were a few with two big silk factories in Sudbury, and many people from Long Melford went there, also Shop Work was available and a lot of girls my age went to shorthand and typing classes finding Office jobs. It was easy to find work, and nobody would have needed to be out of work at the time when I left school. No one used to travel very far from home, I only knew one of my friends who did go into Ipswich on the bus, why I don't know. She went to work in an office which took an hour to travel each way. The other option was to go to University.

I was encouraged to help within the home as a child. Though, I was an only child and there was not an awful lot to do. I used to do just about anything that there was to do. One thing I'd love to do is clean the silver. We had silver cutlery, and of course, it used to get tarnished. I loved to make it gleam and of course, a good wash afterwards. There was also cleaning, ironing, and washing as we didn't have a washing machine. Girls also got to do a lot of sewing as well as in the home but my mother didn't sew nor did I so this is one of the last things I did, but I used to knit a lot. There were young cousins that came along whom I knitted for as well as the family.

Was your mother employed? Did she have a job to go to? No, she was, as many women were at the time, a housewife and stayed at home. So there is no need for childcare at all because nearly all women were at home looking after the home and family. If there was a need for a woman to go after work, then there was always another a member of the family or of the older generation who cared for the children. Then there was no need for the topic of today, being childcare?

It was not a struggle for my mother to provide food for us because she had been brought up with somebody very poor. My great grandfather spent part of his time in the workhouse. This is because his wife went off and left the home with 8 children to care for. He walked in the mornings to the workhouse with the children going to school, where ladies in the street would stand on their steps and throw pennies which would rain down as they went by. He really enjoyed working there with the other out of work men and women. But when you think this is only a of couple of generations back and how things have changed so dramatically since. When that would have been about 1912. And of course, during this time when you were Speaking of 1912, there was no family planning. So really within the lap of the gods, whether you had a large family or not. Children used to be relied upon to help the family. When the family was growing older, the younger members used to support and help people at home. And of course, there wasn't the Care Homes where people needed help or elderly people being cared for like today. Also family's did not move away from their homes for work either so there was always another to give a helping hand. As well as looking after the young and nobody went to adopt children, as they couldn't afford it.

All I heard in times gone bye is that there were two lady doctors in Melford, and they were very good, but I mean you're not going to have a doctor initially unless you are going to die and even then you died at home. I mean my family did not ever make home remedies for coughs and colds or aches and pains as some did certainly in my young time. But we all just use the local chemist shop for whatever was available. I can only think that there was medicine named Venous for coughs and colds, or Germlines for aches and pains, and Aspirin for headaches or pain relief. Our medicines which have come a long way since then.