



MELFORD MEMORIES

Richard Kemp [2023]

I'm Richard Edward Kemp. Date of birth 21st of November, 1943 and shall be 80 this year. I have to correct that slightly, I could be posh and call myself Richard Edward Luff-Kemp.

My father was born in The Scutches Arms pub in Long Melford one of two illegitimate children (during Victorian times), and I've never been able to trace my grandfather, who was a Mr. Luff. I've had a DNA test to enable me to trace him but to no avail but still on the case. I was born at number six High Street, which is a Council House. I am the youngest of nine children with just two of us left. I lived in number six and the Ambrose family of twelve lived in number seven, and still do. So large families were very much in evidence those days.

I have lived in Long Melford all my life as two generations before me. My grandmother who lived in Scutches Cottage took in laundry to keep her two illegitimate children. There was no such thing as payments for single parents in those days, and I admire her in a way because I think she must have been totally ostracized in Victorian times, but she still brought them up well.

On my mother's side of the family, she was one of eleven children, and she was born at "Coppens" Bloomsville Lane, Stanstead up the road, (not the airport, Stansted). And they eventually moved along with my grandparents to "Pound Hall Cottages" on the green Long Melford. So, we go back quite a way.

I went to the famous Long Melford school on the green and it was enjoyable days. I mean, we had Mr. Champlain as our head teacher and Mr. Fox was his assistant. I enjoyed my days there. I played in the school football team, which I've got photographs of, wearing hooped black and white shirts and they hadn't got a sports field, but we used to play around on Melford Hall Park. We actually tried to play cricket too where the car park is today next to Melford School. It had a huge hump in it, so I do not know how we managed to play cricket, but we tried, and I think it was a very good thing. I had three brothers who were very clever and passed the 11 plus exams and went to Sudbury Grammar School which was a semi Independent School in those days and I'm sorry to tell you I failed my 11 plus much to the dismay of my parents. I enjoyed my time at Melford School and after I went on to Sudbury Secondary Modern School.

I was encouraged to help within the home as a child. I used to help in the garden and stuff like that. Well, at No.6 High Street. We had chickens at the end of the garden, so my job was

to feed the chickens and collect the eggs. We had a very big vegetable garden. My dad was a very keen professional gardener at Montgomery House, where the Dr. Barnardo's had a home for children near the church. We used to walk there, and my job was to water the plants and stuff like that. Some of my siblings had moved away by this time or were at work whilst I was young.

When I was the age of eleven my mother had rheumatoid arthritis and when she had a hospital appointment, she fell and had an accident. As a result, she broke her Femur, I have to say we did sue the hospital for negligence and my parents did get a very small amount of money. My father had the chance to buy number 6 High Street for £700 and because of his socialistic principles though, didn't buy it.

At school, to supplement my income I did the grocery deliveries for the grocery shop. They supplied a proper trade grocery bike with a large front basket. I delivered to Bridge St, Lodge Farm and Bully Moors, where the glamping site is now, with the groceries after school and Saturday mornings. I did this for about two years.

A lot of ex-prisoners of war had done very well for themselves. Felix Coaches for example where there used to be a chap called Conrad Glands, who was I think, Ukrainian originally. He had a market garden over the back of Melford Hall so here I got some basic training in market gardening. You know, we used to grow tomatoes and leeks and supply Sudbury shops. It was a very useful upbringing.

So as a kid, I've been lucky to have been in a Horse and Tumble with a Suffolk Punch pulling it at High Street Farm owned by a Tenant Farmer named Lancaster.

Basically, when you're a country boy, you're brought up spending the Summer Holidays on Kiln Farm which Mr. Coulson ran. I also used to go on an old Case tractor with when there was ploughing and stuff like that as a kid. I suppose regulations have stopped this now. The Chad brook which we call by a local name Spratford, is where we would go swimming you know, or with jam jars on bits of string for the Catfish and Stickleback or go with your hands and catch the Gudgeon. What we would do is have a fire and cook it over the fire and eat Moorhen eggs. This time was when the old railway was still running to Bury next to the river, but those things will never come back of course, but they're lovely memories that people should have.

Well, the other thing about Spratford there are several old pillboxes down there from the wartime. Inside there's a lot of graffiti and that's quite interesting. But the other thing about that piece of the stream was there used to be lovely watercress which we used to go and gather, as it was ideal because you do need a flowing river with clean water. Also, that is where there's still white tail crayfish, the protected ones because it has to be clean water flowing.

Because I was nurtured in a political family, I mean politics have always been at my heart. My father was Colonel Hamilton's agent in 1945 when Labour won the seat. Two things appeared from that. I stood in 1974 as a Melfordian Candidate. Also, I terrified my family when I first left school because I put my name down to go into the French Foreign Legion

and if it wasn't that, the Merchant Navy, both of which my parents were totally disconcerted about. I ended up in an office for a well-known builders merchants one of the nicest places in Sudbury, not there anymore, which was called Dixon Scott, and Scotts where you could buy a single light bulb. It was the real old fashioned ironmongers and builders merchants. So, I worked in the office there and that was my first job till I got married in 1967. I enjoyed my time working there. I saw Borehamgate Shopping Centre built, where Wheelers Timber Yard used to be.

The larger businesses have closed down whom used to support very many families around this area because the majority of families were all working comparatively locally. None of them used to travel too far away as there was only public transport, not many people had cars for personal use.

That's another story, really. I failed to tell you that, I've always had a spirit of being an entrepreneur, which is somewhat foreign to socialistic views. Even in my teens, I think when I was at school, a couple of friends and I ran a promotions company along with three or four other boys from Long Melford. We named ourselves "Star Promotions". I'll tell you they're the days everybody had discos. We put on the first live rock concerts as a private enterprise called Keith Armstrong and the Rocking Horses. Brian Watts was in the comets who was aged 12 had a band called Brian and The Comets, who contacted me, and asked, "Can we come and play at the interval"? So, his first live gig was at Melford Village Hall, in the interval. We did put them on in a number of places. We did Sudbury. Victoria Hall, Cockfield and Hadleigh. We ran it for about three or four years, and we made quite a lot of money in our spare time.

People might not recognise this but, even in 1943, growing up in a village like Long Melford, I recognised that to a degree we weren't quite in a feudal system, but feudalism did exist within the village. And I tell you what, my main aim was, to build myself financially viable from the system. So, I could give the Harvey Smith sign to anybody in this village and not worry about it. And touch wood, I've done it, I've achieved my aim of being free of the systems.

I went with my wife five years before we got married. My mother-in-law was named Mary McClain Campbell Mackenzie, born in Glasgow. My wife was born in Glasgow but lived in a place called Burwell. I met her, actually, because Melford was well known for stopovers at weekends, for coaches returning from the coast. A coach company called Burwell and District stopped at the "Cock and Bell" where we had live music, this is where I met my wife. I didn't think it would last, but it did last, and we've been married for 56 years. When we got married, I was 24 years of age in 1967, my wife worked on the telephone exchange in Newmarket, she was earning more than me, I was at a company named Dicks and Scotts, as an assistant Company Secretary in accounts. So, I had a word with the boss there mentioning that the current Company Secretary may well be retiring soon and if I stay on, I need some guarantees if I am going to stay, because I had a small mortgage to pay etc. There was no Contract of Employment in those days. They called me in and said they we're not prepared to put it in writing. So, I left and went into the building industry with my brother, who died a couple of years ago. We set up a company called A E Kemp Co. My

brother was already a plumber, operating out of Gt. Yeldham, Suffolk and at one time had 50 people working for us, so it wasn't a Mickey Mouse set up. But then I had ill health when I was 28. Realized I was working 80 hours a week and paying folks who worked 40 hours a week double what I was earning therefore decided it wasn't a very good idea, so I came out of that.

I then had a couple of years or more at Theobalds where I was the estimator and did the accounts up the road now named "Qubits and Theobald".

I lived up High Street and I bought number fifty nine where the builders plaque is on the wall today, then I moved next door at number sixty. We did all that up too with restorations and refurbishment as well as the roofing. My wife and I did the physical work. Our first child was born here named Rebecca. Then we sold the houses and built a house up close to the football ground in Long Melford.

I have an association and love for the Isles of Scilly where my wife and I went on holiday before we married. So that's why my home is named "Tresco". Next door is Bishop's Rock and the house up the road is called Bryher, these names all come from the Isle of Scilly.

Coming back to when I first lived here, the road outside was unmade. Rather like the road to the football ground is now. I worked for Clement Theobald at the time, and I sold a lot of the houses for them as part of my job. Then suddenly out of the blue, we close neighbours of these homes had a demand for making the road up, but Theobalds were charged a lot less for that in front of their properties. To resolve this dispute, I represented the neighbours by going to an appeal in the Magistrates Court. Needless to say, within one month, I was made redundant, so don't tell me about speaking your mind, because it does cost you sometimes, but I knew it was coming.

My wife and I then set up Melford Hardware and at the time I went into local government in 1974. We had our second child, having the cot in the back room whilst working in the shop. But we've strived hard and touch wood, it's all come right with success. We also set up another business which we leased off, however both went bankrupt under their new ownerships. It just shows you. It doesn't matter how well you know the trade or a type of business, but you've got to have a business acumen to make it work.

In local government and as a member of the Liberal Democrats my aim was to become chairperson. I was elected in 1993 as an independent and now have two more years to serve on the County Council which covers nine parishes and 10,000 people. The seat was previously held by a Conservative with a majority of 800 votes.

Even Bush Boke Allen Inc. who produced flavors, fragrances, and aroma chemicals, it is a fact, had their own sidings. I will mention Tony Allen, because Tony Allen was very dear to me, he was from Bush, Boke Allen Quaker background, a very good employer of people.

I mean, when I first joined the Sudbury Magistrates Bench, two things happened, Charles Herbert, who was the current Vicar of Long Melford, telephoned me and like Victor Meldrew, he said, "I can't believe it". I said, what is that? He said, "you, of all people being a magistrate. I said, "well, Charles, you have to understand, the system means there's not very

many working class people involved at the moment. It is good to have somebody at the bottom of the pile who understands how normal people operate.

Being my first patron there, of course, Tony Allen was the Chairman of the Bench, so, he was like my mentor. He used to say. What's going on in Melford, Richard? So, I had to tell him all the gossip, a nice person who stood by his Quaker ideals.

We've lost all of our industry due to foreign buyouts. American buyouts. Bush Boke Allan. Caravan factory and Cannon Rubber. I'm only sorry that leads to me to lambaste what's happened in this country. I mean, we had 1000 jobs in this village.