



## MELFORD MEMORIES

**DICK BABER – Recorded 22/9/23.**

I came to live in Long Melford with my mother and father when I was about five years of age. Therefore, started my school life in Long Melford Junior School, after which I went to the school in Sudbury which was the norm for children in Long Melford. I did not really enjoy my schooling as I feel I have learnt a lot more after I left school traveling around the world in the army than whilst I was at school. Mr. G.L.Gillingham was my headmaster when at Sudbury School, and later in my life I met up with him again whilst in the Home Guard.

After I left school, I was employed helping my father in the egg trade working for Sudbury. My job was to go to all the various farms collecting eggs and bringing them to my fathers' business in School Lane, Sudbury which was an egg packing station at school lane Sudbury. My father's name was William Baber. I helped with the sorting and grading of the egg sizes, boxing, and packaging for them to be sold on, as my father was a Manager for Chelmsford Egg Suppliers, who were a large company at the time who sold the eggs to various outlets in London etc. He took over this business after the war broke out as most of the eggs were then imported from Europe. The Chelmsford Egg Supply Co. handed this business over to my father in Sudbury to continue and to cover the demand for the East of England from the Sudbury Egg and Poultry Market.

I used to help dad in the garden where we grew most of the vegetables used for our dinners. As I needed to pay a little for my keep it was agreed with my parents that I did the gardening instead of paying my parents with the money I earned. Later, I entered a competition run by the Suffolk Free Press, which advertised where I won a trophy for growing the largest carrot in Long Melford which has been a source of enjoyment for the family ever since. I have been a very hard-working man all my life and not shied away from anything. I have built the buildings around me, even making the blocks and cement flooring myself rather than buying them.

I never socialized a great deal when I came home from the war, mainly I helped my father, and I even met my wife at the Sudbury Egg Market where she was employed also. It must have been love at first sight as I was a dashing ex-serviceman. When courting, I used to go to visit her at Groton on my bicycle and I do remember that close to Kersey I was going around a corner at speed and landed in a pond, I never did this a second time. I used to love going to listen to my wife with her sister in the choir as she had a beautiful voice singing in the village church choir at Groton. Visiting the local pub the White Horse, many people gathered to play some of the pub games like Darts/Crib etc. Later, my daughter Gill spent a lot of her time in Edwardstone as my mother-in-law lived there, and used to care for her whilst my wife was often very poorly and ill.

As I was born in 1926, I do not have any of my childhood friends who are still alive unfortunately. I can only remember a David Green who unfortunately passed away last year in 2022. I did not use the local transport services hardly at all, neither the bus nor the train whilst a young man living here in Long Melford, as I had my own car so I could drive wherever I needed to go.

I used to have a Donkey named Ned who was always tethered in the field here close to the railway gates, and one morning a funny thing happened down by the railway crossing gate. There used to be an early

morning goods train which came through every day and sound a hooter. At this time a Polish Princess who managed the gates thought there was the train whistle sounding, but no, it was my donkey braying which sounded very similar. Madalein von Dembinska, was taken by surprise as it was earlier than expected, so she rushed out of bed in her bed clothes not stopping to put on her coat. Well, you can imagine how upset she was when she realized that it was my donkey calling out and not the goods train coming through! It was often spoken about later when the news got around the village. See detailed article:-

*The lady crossing keeper at the time was a Polish Princess named Princess Madalein von Dembinska, she loved trains and also needed a home so when she heard of a vacancy for a crossing keeper with a cottage included in the job she jumped at the chance. Although born in England she was descended from the Polish Royal family her Mother being Princess Carmen de Tresca-Bates von Debrinska.*



This house has now been knocked down. She was an intriguing personality, the local T.V news program named "Nation Wide", came to cover a report on her and her life. Apart from the crossing there was also a turn table used to divert trains making deliveries to Bush Boak Allen a large company near the village.

Regarding my health luckily I have never needed to go to a doctor very much as I have always been a very healthy individual, but we did have a doctor working opposite St. Catherin's Road, named Dr. Horseswift, of Long Melford, this was before the NHS was formed in 1946/47 just after I was married. A visit to medical advice used to be paid for by the patient and prescriptions taken to a local Chemist Shop to be made out and here again paid for by all. Another way of dealing with ailments was to make medicines up by using the natural plants which were around the countryside.

As a child I remember going to the Village Green when the Fair used to come once a year, and there also used to be many Gypsies with horse drawn carriages gathering at this time when they got to know the fair was in the Village. Of course, after it was gone there was always a lot of mess and rubbish to clear up afterwards as often was the case. The Hyde Parker family are custodians of the Village Green where this was held. However, all the people living around this area would come and gather to enjoy the spectacle that the fair provided. Also of course, there was a lot of money being made and spent at these events which was a great thing for Long Melford.

There was also three petrol stations in Long Melford one being owned and run by a Mr. Wilfred Coles. His daughter Clare is now living in Felixstowe and no longer residing here. All of these petrol stations and garages have now gone.