

Memoirs of Peter Wall (now living in Chelmsford)

Article submitted by Peter Wall on 12 January 2013

I was born in Shoebury in 1933 and when the school closed in 1940 due to the war some of us not evacuated were sent to Wakering School. We lived then in a house at c/o Elm Road and Wakering Ave, Shoebury and many times we walked to school in Wakering via the Lion Fields. If we were lucky our local farmer Mr Millbank (with his son Roy) would pick us up at Red Brick House and take us in his Standard 12, a rare treat. Besides myself and younger sister was Alan Cook son of the then manager of Shoebury Brickfield who lived at Brickeen in the High Street, Shoebury. Due to moving house in 1941 we were only at Wakering school for a year or so but I well remember the headmaster Mr Hamm (see Ernie Adcock's notes) and the name Pountney springs to mind. Among other teachers I remember were Miss Blaber and Miss Danks who were our class teachers I suppose. What memories of early school days!

It was about one Sunday the 18th August 1940, when we cycled with our parents to Wakering and Barling (mainly I think to get some liquorice or sherbet from the Shoulderstick), that is recorded in Alfred Price's book 'The Hardest Day' about the Battle of Britain. As we leant on our bikes in Barling on a sunny almost cloudless day around lunchtime there above us were hordes upon hordes of German bombers on their way to attack the airfields around London. Later on arriving home we found that the Germans had left their mark on Shoebury. Houses just up the road from us in Wakering Ave had been badly hit by jettisoned bombs as well as a nearby railway signal box sadly killing the signalman. It will always I think remain in the memory of a then 7 year old excited by what was going on in the skies completely oblivious to the fate of those taking part. There was also the thrill of seeing at first hand the wreckage of a Messerschmitt 110 and Heinkel 111 (not forgetting a Spitfire) which had crash-landed in the area, a hurried bike ride from home.

As I said Shoebury is where I was born and so too was my father Ernest, Grandfather Walter and Great Grandfather William and probably all of their siblings/children as well – you can imagine there were many of them! Not unnaturally I have always thought of Shoebury as being the spiritual home of the Wall family. However the internet has changed all that as I discovered that William's father, also William, came from Great Wakering. His father Thomas was from Foulness as was his father, also Thomas, and Grandfather Jos. It would seem that by 1800 there were better prospects in migrating to Wakering but I have yet to check further at the ERO in Chelmsford. It is not hard to imagine how lives were lived on Foulness in the 1700's given that so little has changed over the past 250/300 years. Maybe they have been saving it for use as another airport....surely not!

Some few years back you may remember there was an exhibition at the church in regard to brickmaking in Wakering. As many in the family worked in the brickfield (then I was only aware of those who worked at Elm Road, Shoebury) I went along. My father had told me he worked on the barges during his 20/25 years in the brickfield so took the opportunity to speak with Gordon Wiseman and although the exhibition related to Wakering many of the exhibits - e.g. tools/barrows etc. I remembered as a very young boy seeing at Shoebury how it was done! Needless to say mum was not having her son working in the brickfield. Of course there were photographs of Wakering folk and one I remember was of a family standing in front of a cottage known as the White House in the High Street. The person who seemed to know something about the photo was a lady (and I believe the local archivist) but I don't recall her name. I am particularly interested in this photo as it seems that at the 1901 census the White House was noted as the address of a Wall family and, if so, try to get a copy of it. According to my father who was 94 when he died in 2000 the Walls in Shoebury were not connected with those in Wakering - did he not know or was there a long family feud, we shall never know! The only Wall I know there, *Lucy Whitton* my aunt, lived for many years in Kimberley Road, Little Wakering and I saw her, husband Jack Whitton and a cousin (one of twin girls) a few years ago. I know Jack has since died and may be also Lucy who would be 97 if she is still alive. Like many other families for one reason or another we suffer from lack of 'connectivity'!