

SOME CHILDHOOD MEMORIES BY STAN EVERARD

I was born in 1897 being one of 9 children (4 girls and 5 boys) of whom one brother and three sisters died in their teens or early twenties. A very tragic family.

My schooling began when I was three years old and ended when I was 12 years. In those days one could go in for examinations to leave school if you were over 12 years old, the usual leaving age being 13 years. The exam. was held in Shoebury, and I am happy to say that I passed. This meant I was sent to work earlier, in the brickfield. Part of my work was loading bricks onto a barrow with my father. 44, 000 bricks were made a week then and I worked from 6am to 6pm with three small meal breaks.

Going back to my younger days, our church Sunday School was held in the old school in the High Street. To get a prize at Christmas one had to have a certain amount of marks. These, one got each Sunday, one for attendance, one for good behaviour, one for learning and saying the collect of the day. I remember when I first joined the choir I was asked by the choirmaster to sing a scale to test my voice, I was very nervous but was encouraged by the organist (who was my day teacher also.) I managed it! The church was heated by two barrack room stoves one of which was in the Lady Chapel. In winter we used to go to church early and keep one eye open for the Vicar or Choirmaster, who would be in the vestry, stood warming ourselves round the fire eating chestnuts.

We went on some good outings, one to Rochester Cathedral, another to the Crystal Palace. This meant we had to walk to Shoebury to catch the train as there were no buses then. The only transport from the village was a horse and cart, which seated four and cost fourpence each! Returning at night we had the long walk from Shoebury in the pitch dark, as there were no street lights. Once we went to Foulness, sitting in the back of a horse drawn wagon. We crossed on the Broom road from Wakering Stairs to Fishermans Head, then went to the Vicarage. Here we played games and had a picnic tea. I can assure you it was no joke riding in that wagon which had no springs, there being no roads on the island and no bridges.

My confirmation was at Prittlewell Church, transport was by the butchers cart! On the way home we stopped at a shop opposite the White Horse pub, the Vicar bought us mineral drinks!

My father rang the bell for 50 years and taught the boys to do so. He also dug the graves (in his spare time). Once when he was digging at night I held the lamp so he could see to dig.

(Mr. Everard who died some time ago was responsible for many years for the winding of the church clock.)