

When I was growing up in the 40's and 50's, Laindon was a lovely, busy little town. We had shops all along the High Road where you could buy anything you wanted.

I was born in Railway Cottages. My Dad was the signalman at Laindon Station when Mr Sims – the father of Joan Sims the actress – was Station Master. He seemed to me to be a very stern man, but he was very kind. My mother told me that when he knew they were going to visit my sister, who was in hospital, there would be an extra half-crown (12 1/2p), in my Dad's wage packet. He saw to it that the Station was always tidy, clean and well run, and in the winter a fire would be lit in the waiting rooms.

When I was five, the Second World War started, and we had to have an Anderson Air Raid Shelter put in. We did sleep in it, but only for a while as it was so damp and chilly. We were lucky as we didn't get bombed here as they did in London. Except for the V2 rocket which came down in Vowler Road, and blew all our windows in. That was a bit too close for comfort.

We also had a cinema – The Radion. The films were changed three times a week. There was a newsreel, so we had our money's worth, and we would sit enraptured at the American musicals, and the exciting adventures of Buck Rogers on Saturday mornings.

My husband was born in Bow, and was bombed out and came to live with his grandparents in Laindon when he was 6 years old. We both went

to the Langdon Hills School and sat next to each other at one time. He used to do a paper round for Mr P who ran the local newsagents, and also worked for Mr C, the Baker, during weekends and school holidays. He did deliveries with a horse-drawn two-wheeled baker's cart to Hendersons Stores in Berry Park Estate. It was at the top of the avenues near where "The Haven" is now. "The Haven" is the bungalow that has been preserved in the Dunton Wildlife Park.

The High Road was lit with gas lamps and there was a man, who's job it was to light them every evening, then go all along the road again in the morning and put them out. When the war ended, we began to get things like oranges and bananas in the shops again, and I can remember queuing up at Primrose Café for an ice cream.

There wasn't much crime in Laindon then, and we could go out and leave doors unlocked and windows open. We used to play out until after dark, and felt quite safe.

Laindon was a much nicer place then.