

Extracts from Laindon & District Community Archive

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Cafes in Laindon and Langdon Hills (Appendix)

Enefer's Cafe at the cross roads of Laindon High Road and the Southend Arterial Road also had a cafe in the Laindon station Approach Road which was much patronized by the bus crews of City Coaches and, later, by those of Eastern National.

During WW2 days, when milk delivery was 'zoned', Alf Whife managed to secure the business of both of Enefer's cafes! Gamon's Cafe (just north of Enefer's Fof W branch) which is mentioned elsewhere on web site was used by members of the short lived Laindon branch of the Young Communist League. The enthusiasm for this was mainly engendered by the Battle of Stalingrad.

06.03.2015

Another A127 road side cafe worthy of note was Harry Lowe's 'Modern Transport Cafe'. This was situated on the north side of the road a few hundred yards east of the new 'Fortune of War'. It was popular as a stop for cycling parties on their way to Southend-on-Sea. In 1945, the local branch of the Labour Party more or less took the cafe over and used it as a local based Electoral Agent's office.

06.03.2015

Two more of Laindon's cafes that have not come under notice in this column were first the Central Cafe next to Blackwell's news agency in Laindon High Road, opposite Andrew's post office and Colling's oil shop and the Primrose Cafe further north practically opposite Toomey's garage. The Primrose became important to the elderly citizens of Laindon when it became a social centre for OAPs, otherwise known as a Darby and Joan club. The creation of the George Hurd club in Basildon owes much to the Primrose Cafe and similar arrangements in Pitsea.

08.03.2015

The Laindon Memorial Hall opened as a 'British Restaurant' on Monday 8 December 1941 at 12 noon. The same at Vange was opened in Vange Working Men's Club, High Road, Vange on Monday 15 December 1941.

(As recorded in the 'Laindon Recorder' issued 03.12.1941)

The British and Civic Restaurants, such as that introduced by the Billericay Urban District in December 1941, were one of several welfare measures introduced at the instigation of the Government by exerting pressure on local authorities during the WW2 period. These were to culminate in the various reforms introduced post war in response to the Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services, creating what is, nowadays, usually called 'The Welfare State'. The conditions created by the severe economic depression that preceded WW2 meant that the general workforce had to be appeased in the face of increasing problems generated by the comparatively low level of wages and the serious threat that the war presented to food supplies. Depending on your viewpoint, this was largely a matter of bribery in return for the considerable extra effort needed to pursue the war against the Axis forces.

As has been stated, schools introduced free or subsidised meals for children; factories had similar arrangements for their workforces and, where it was possible, organisations of various types such as land workers, fire-watchers, air-raid wardens had similar canteens established to cater for their needs. For the general public, the British or Civic Restaurants were meant to reinforce the general notion that 'we were all in it together', a sentiment that, it may have been noticed, still crops up now and then.

16.03.2015

I was on the point of mentioning Shepherd's Restaurant (as spelled by the proprietors), when I read Alan's entry of 05.03.2015. The reason for my hesitation was that in all the years I have lived in the town, I never once saw the place patronized, so I was pleased to learn it was not always thus. There must have been a long period when patrons were like hen's eggs, what with a general lack of cash in the 30s for such fripperies and a lack of food in the 40s due to rationing. Given the location of Shepherd's, it is a little ironic recalling that in 1942 the adjacent Memorial Hall opened up as a (subsidised) British or Civic Restaurant.

Looking back, I have come across an advertisement that reads as follows:

'Morris's London Stores (Three minutes from station)

Families waited on daily

First Class Grocery and Provisions: Wet, Dried and Fried Fish

Dinner and Supper Saloon

Fruit and Greengrocery

Branches throughout London and Provinces

All our goods are fresh daily and at London's market prices

Our motto is value for money, civility and cleanliness'

To my knowledge, Morris's, a large double fronted shop on the east side of Laindon High Road and next north from Blackwell's news agency never sold more than drapery and gentlemen's outfits.

In the same place there is evidence that E Grottick had a 'tea rooms'. E Grottick was also a chemists or drug store in High Road, Langdon Hills. Also, apparently, 'The Geisha' was a cafe in North Parade, Laindon High Road although, by the early 30s, this latter establishment was only listed as a sub post office.

In 1931, the 'Avondale Tea Rooms' in High Road, Langdon Hills was advertising for business. It is quite possible this is Grottick's under a different name.