

Newspaper Article

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Plotlanders remember the good days

When the Germans bombed Joe and his family out of the East End the natural place for them to go was their little home from home in Essex.....

In the 30's, Joe's parents bought two plots of land in Brentford Avenue— where Markham's Chase now stands.

Later they added a third and Joe's dad, a stevedore in the Royal Docks, got to work.

First he put up a shed, then a two-roomed wooden bungalow. Some time afterwards, he added two more rooms.

Now 68, Joe still has the original plans for the house.

He also has the notebooks in which his dad painstakingly recorded every penny spent on the bungalow.

Joe vividly recalls happy days on the family's plot. During the war, Laindon was a marvelous place for an East End kid with a taste for adventure.

'I know you often hear people say it, but it really was all fields around here,' he says. 'You could go anywhere. In those days parents didn't have to worry about child molesters, so us youngsters were allowed to go off exploring. We'd walk miles and miles to Vange or One Tree Hill or wherever.'

Often the only hazard the young tykes faced would be the local farmer, angry when he caught East End scamps scrumping!

'I remember one occasion we were in an orchard over where the Yardley factory is now,' adds Joe.

'He chased us all the way back to Laindon with a shotgun in one hand and a dog on a leash in the other!'

Joe also remembers the daily trek to school in Laindon – and the thriving, bustling thoroughfare that was Laindon High Road.

'It's really sad to look at it now,' he says. 'At one time it was shops all the way from the Fortune of War to the railway station.'

The march of progress started in the 50's with the advent of Basildon New Town.

The dreaded compulsory purchase orders swallowed up the plotlanders' little slices of England.

(Joe still has the neatly-typed receipt for the £481/9/6d the family was given for the site in February 1957.)

'I have a lot of happy memories of that little bungalow,' adds Joe in his home in Tattenham Road – about three-quarters of a mile from the old family plot.

'It gave us a home when we needed one and a good life out in the country.'