



HULLBRIDGE

essex england

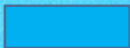


Hullbridge 1998
copyright

Hullbridge (pop 8000) stands on the south bank of the River Crouch, 12 miles from Chelmsford the county town.

A sailing centre, the village boasts 3 yacht clubs, a riverside pub, a primary school, a medical centre a public library and a variety of eating places plus the usual shops needed to support the community.

Yet, 80 years ago Hullbridge was an agricultural area, a hamlet of the nearby town of Hockley, with the population estimated in hundreds rather than thousands.



High Elms Farm covered an area of 206 acres. Reaching from Lower Road to the river and straddling the main thoroughfare, Ferry Road, the farm was divided into 22 fields. Each field had a name. 'Seven Acres' and 'Home Meadow' were self-descriptive but others had names to conjure with. From where in the farm's history came 'Hopplit', 'China & Pear Tree' and 'Vinus Meadow'?

In 1923 High Elms Farm was bought by the estate agents Best & Beech and divided into building plots, to be offered for sale at £10.

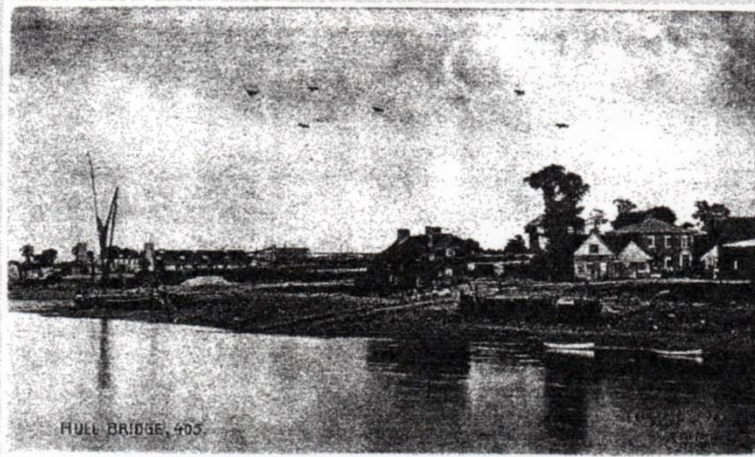
The urbanisation of Hullbridge had begun.



HULLBRIDGE circa 1925

Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office





RIVERBANK FROM WOODHAM circa 1905

from left. Brickworks.

**Weatherboard house, home for four families. Demolished in 1926
to make way for access to the newly built tunnel which carried
water supplies from Maldon to Southend.**

Water tower behind elm tree.

Shop. Rose Cottage.

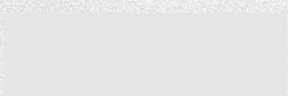




HULLBRIDGE SCHOOL circa 1905

Hullbridge Public Elementary School opened at Easter 1902 with places for 120 children. Mr Thomas Day was the master.

Previously, lessons for the younger children and evening classes for adults during the winter months, were held in a chapel on a site south of the Anchor Cottages. Miss Maria Raven, daughter of a barge owner, was the Infants school teacher.





Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office

THE SCHOOL FERRY circa 1925

Until 1929, children from South Woodham crossed the river to attend the Hullbridge school. At low tide by a little tub cart, at high tide by ferry boat, ice floes and flood sometimes made the trip impossible.

In 1929 parish boundaries were re-drawn and the children were found places in Woodham and Rettenden schools. Dick Hymas, the ferryman, submitted an account for £7. 7s when his contract was terminated without notice.



Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office

THE ANCHOR INN circa 1925

The Anchor appears in the Quarter Sessions licensing records as early as 1769, when John Hubbard was licensee.

In the early 1900s the business was owned by Henry Luker & Co, brewers of Southend.

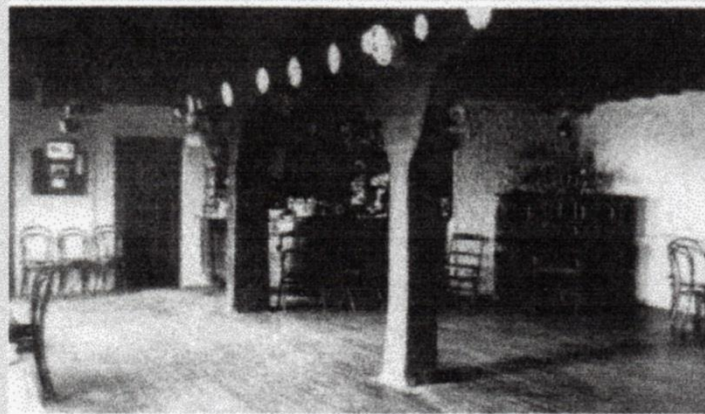
It was acquired by Mann, Crossman & Paulin, together with 5 acres of adjoining land, in 1929.

The 300 year old building was demolished in 1937 and the 'new' Anchor built on a site facing the river.



THE PAVILION circa 1925

Once a storage barn for coal brought up the river by barge, in the 1920s the Pavilion was converted for a social venue. Later re-named the Smugglers Den it was licensed in 1947.





Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office

AMBLESIDE GARDENS circa 1925

For £65 a local builder would erect a two-room wooden bungalow on your land. The more enterprising purchasers brought in obsolete buses or trams for their accommodation. Others used bell tents whilst they worked on their new dwellings.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

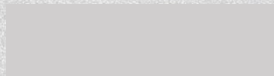
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL



Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office

GRASMERE AVENUE circa 1925

A two room bungalow, boarded on the outside and lined with asbestos sheets, built by a local builder, cost £65. A brick chimney and fireplace was £7. 10s extra. Many plot owners put up a large shed on their land and added to it until it became a bungalow.





COVENTRY CORNER circa 1930

In the late 1920s the south end of Hullbridge was ripe for development and more building plots were released for sale. To be called the Hullbridge Garden Estate, the land covered an area between Kingsway and the road into Rayleigh. Mr. Eddie, who owned the store at Coventry Corner, strongly advocated the purchase of land 'in this recently unearthed beauty spot' He promised baths and modern sanitation, thanks to company water and 'fine ozone-charged air to rival the coastal watering-places.' As an encouragement to would-be investors, he quoted the possibility of a bridge being built across the Crouch. 'By those qualified to judge', Hullbridge would be the chosen site for the bridge and so the value of land in the area would increase dramatically.



PADDLING AT HULLBRIDGE circa 1925

By the 1930s Hullbridge was established as a holiday resort. Postcards extolling the benefits of this riverside village were sent to homes as far afield as Leeds and Nottingham.

The village was a meeting place for cycle club outings and much later for the motorbikers.

Cafes and refreshment bars sprung up to cater for the visitors. The Devon Tea Rooms, the Wayfarers Cafe and of course the long-standing Anchor, provided food and drink for the travellers.

In 1933 the local papers were advocating town planning for Hullbridge. Privately owned land by the river had been fenced and so restricted public access to the river bank.

Hullbridge was described as a 'quaint little place' and it was generally believed that measures were needed to avoid the riverbank becoming the perquisite of the few.

With stringent bylaws Hullbridge could become 'a tasteful as well as a popular rendezvous'.





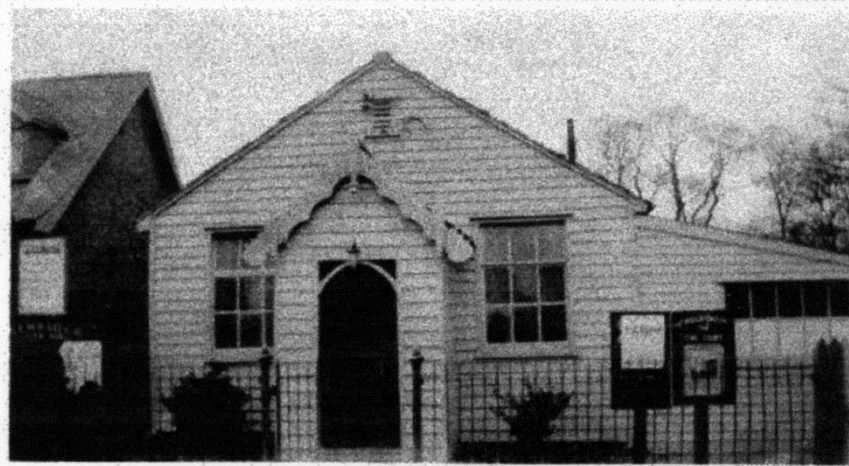
JONES' GENERAL STORE circa 1926

A weatherboard and tarred building, a typical Essex construction.
Destroyed by fire in 1937.

From bacon to paraffin, Mr. Jones supplied all the villagers needs.
It a was advisable to buy the bacon before the paraffin to avoid the
transfer of flavours!

A bucket full of water from Mr. Jones' well cost 1d.





THE MISSION HALL circa 1930

The Mission Hall, erected in 1890 to 'afford 60 sittings' was damaged in the gales of 1938. It was rebuilt at Coventry Corner and re-named the Free Church

In 1856 a Chapel had been built by public subscription. The Rev. John Harding, curate for the parish, visited the chapel once a week to preach. The building was in use until about 1886 and was demolished about 1920



RECOLLECTIONS

HARRY WRIGHT

Mr. & Mrs. Giles lived in Wharf House, on the west side of Ferry Road, from 1923 until 1927, when it was bought by Mr. & Mrs. Wallaker. Throughout every summer

Mr. & Mrs Wallaker would have London children down for a two week holiday.

Mr. Wallaker would go back and forth to and from Rayleigh station to take a cart load of children who had finished their holiday and to bring a fresh lot down. These children had never been in the country before.

The Wallakers also bought the barn next to Wharf House and converted it into a dance hall which they named the Pavilion. Strict Tempo and Old Time dances were held every Saturday evening. These dances were arranged under the supervision of a lady named Mrs. Hawkes. Concerts were also held in the Pavilion. Local people would tell of their life adventures. One of these was a former Canadian Mounted Policeman who used to tell of his duties when patrolling Indian territory. The older people would recount tales of years gone by when coal was brought up the river by sailing barge and put in the barn.

The Anchor Cottages shop was occupied by Mr. & Mrs. Key and family. They sold sweets, soft drinks, cigarettes and a limited supply of groceries. Mr. Key was also a hay cutter. With a large hay knife he would cut large trusses of hay which were then put close to the haystacks ready for transport by lorry to various destinations.

Montague House was occupied by William Smith who also owned Rose Cottage and Shell Cottage. He had been Rayleigh station master for a great number of years. Montague House was later sold to people who converted it to the Wayfarers Cafe.

Shell Cottage was rented by George Gibson a former brickfield worker. He used to sharpen all sorts of knives and repair all kinds of kitchen and garden equipment. He was a jolly and very happy man with a white beard and was well liked by the villagers.

Hullbridge is now very fortunate to have a fine variety of shops selling groceries and bread and practically everything needed for the home. Another good thing for the village is the Medical Centre and chemist shop in the village. When I was a young man there were no doctors in the village and people had to travel to Hockley and Rayleigh for prescriptions.

But the old miss the country walks and seeing the sailing barges which used to come into the Anchor Inn Wharf and others going up the river to Battlesbridge Mill. Walking along Ferry Road from the river used to be a pleasant journey but not now, with the great increase in the number of cars which pollute the air.

RECOLLECTIONS

LEN WARREN

My family came to Hullbridge in 1929. Dad bought a 40ft plot in the Drive for about £10. It was an empty field when he took it over, just as the farmer had left it, with a row of posts to divide the plots. The side roads were cart tracks still showing the ridges and the furrows of the original ploughed fields. We lived in a bell tent at first, bought penny buckets of water from Jones' General Store and cooked and read by paraffin stove and lamps.

The original farm had paid tithes to the Church Commissioners who set about collecting the tithes from the new plot owners. First they wrote to everybody. I can remember the look of horror on my dad's face when he opened the letter. "The church wants money from me!"

That system was not successful, so they appointed one person in each of the original fields to collect the money. My dad was the agent for our field until my mother objected. My old dad was a bit sociable and he enjoyed going around visiting. He would disappear for hours and come back very merry. The Sunday dinner would be cold and mother would be angry. In the end the Church Commissioners realised to collect tithes from individuals was hopeless, so they said the tithes could be redeemed by a lump sum. I think it was £2.10s.



For more than a decade Hullbridge became a weekend and holiday retreat for Londoners. With the advent of World War II and the bombing of the East End the temporary residents regarded the village as a safer, more permanent home.

RECOLLECTIONS

LOUISE RADDON

My dad came to Hullbridge in 1942. Two landmines had come down on parachutes near where we lived in London and my dad said, "That's enough!". He knew the village as his brother lived here. We rented an old cottage in Windermere Avenue for a while. Then one day, dad met a chap down at the Anchor pub who offered him a property in Grasmere Avenue. Four acres with just a shack on it, for £180. Dad didn't hesitate because he knew the bombing in London was really bad.

The shack was on stilts, the floorboards were rotten but it was a shelter over our heads. Dad made it habitable. No gas of course, nor electricity. We used oil lamps. The water from pumps. We would keep butter and meat in a milk churn buried in the garden. There was no comfort here but it was a friendly place. We could go to Southend for the day and leave the doors unlocked and everything would be the same when we came back.

RECOLLECTIONS

RITA AMOS

I've lived in Hullbridge since 1940 when I was ten. The bungalow where we lived was plain, black and wooden. It had a front room, a small kitchen and we stepped down into the scullery where Granny did the washing and boiling in the copper. There was only one bedroom. My mum, her mum, my two brothers and I, all lived in that place.

Every one knew my mum. She sold eggs and flowers, she worked on the farm, she did all sorts. During the war, there was a prisoner-of-war camp in Rawreth Lane. My mum worked with the POWs on a farm called Hursts. She would stand on the cart with her pitchfork and they would throw up the hay and she would stack it while the horses were moving along. She was a slim, tiny lady but she was very strong.

Mr. Moss ran the Anchor pub. The river frontage was called the Green. Mum had a gas stove in a little building on the Green where she cooked hot dinners for the customers. The Anchor was a lovely place. Everybody knew everybody. There was a wooden partition inside. When the parents went into the pub, the children used to stand behind the partition and peep around the corner.

The policeman was my grandmother's friend. He was a tall, fat man. He would ride his bicycle from the Anchor to Coventry Corner. That was his beat. He would say "There's no crime in Hullbridge!".

Later we moved to the end of Grasmere Avenue, to a place called The Lindens. Mum used to walk through the hedge to the farm where she worked. The roads were so muddy. The dustbins had to be brought down to the end of the road for the dustcart to empty. The milkman and coalman had to get up the road as best they could. Bread was delivered by horse and cart to the Palmers at the Post Office.

For all that, it was lovely here then and people were so nice.

RECOLLECTIONS

LOUISA SMITH

My appointment to Hullbridge School in 1940 was my first as a head teacher. The school building consisted of a large room which could be partitioned into two classrooms by a large sliding screen, with a further classroom at each end. Cloakrooms containing washbasins were situated at each end of the building by the entrances. Toilets were at the far end of the playground and frequently froze over in winter. The school was not connected to main drainage but had a cesspool which had to be emptied periodically.

The heating system, fueled by a large coke boiler, was rather inadequate and there was an open fire in each room. Children from outlying areas brought potatoes which I put in the ashes under the grate. The potatoes were ready to be eaten by dinner time and formed the children's midday meal. There were no school meals then.

My previous experience had been as an assistant in urban schools and I was totally unaware of the difficulties encountered by children living in rural areas. Attendance was severely affected by weather conditions and children living in outlying areas were sometimes unable to attend because of snow or floods making the road impassable.

Infectious illnesses, such as measles, whooping cough and chicken pox frequently led to low attendance. But the biggest cause of disruption in school was the frequency of air raid warnings. The first shelter was erected in the early days of 1941 but at first had no heating or lighting and no form of seating. Often it was too cold to take the children into the cold and damp shelter which was situated at the far end of the playground. Hullbridge was within the 10 mile limit from the coast and sometimes planes were overhead before the warning was sounded. It was therefore essential to scan the sky for enemy aircraft before taking the children to the shelter and when deemed necessary they stayed in school and crouched under the desks.