

HILL VIEW, STANLEY ROAD

Margaret Jackson 2021

I was born in Southend hospital in 1937 and began life in Pitsea where I was to live for 25 years. My parents Tom and Elsie White bought a little bungalow after they married in 1934 and moved from the East End of London to Pitsea. Hill View was a three roomed timber and asbestos construction which had been covered in pebbledash to make it more durable. It had a veranda on the front and I remember sleeping outside on a camp bed in high summer. We had electricity, gas and water but no mains drainage. The bungalow sat in the back corner of a very large plot and needless to say Stanley Road was unmade, no problem in summer but a quagmire in winter. There was no footpath at our end, just a track. Behind the bungalow was a large shed where my mother did the washing with the aid of a gas copper and a mangle. As children we would also use it as a playhouse. Alongside the shed were the coal bunker and the Elsan toilet. The drainage from the kitchen sink was piped into the adjoining field via a soak away, which got a bit smelly in summer. In the kitchen hot water came from the Ascot heater and water for the weekly bath came from the copper – all carried in and taken out by bucket. Baths were usually taken in a long tin bath in front of the fire [often accompanied by the football results on the radio] or later on in the shed next to the copper. There was a well near the shed which was filled with water from the bungalow roof draining through a filter bed. We never drank the well water but my mother would keep milk cool in hot weather by putting bottles in a bucket and lowering it down into the cold water.



Stanley Road was an unmade road leading off Station Road [now Sandon Road]. Station Road was concreted until you reached the bottom of Stanley Road. Despite all efforts to cover the mud and fill the ruts with cinders and ash from our fires and stones and flattened tin cans it still became very muddy in the winter. Coal was always ordered for delivery in the summer. Over the years by treading carefully we became quite good at avoiding the worst bits of the sticky Essex clay. Somebody once said if you were born in Pitsea you were born with webbed feet. My Dad tells the story of their move down from London with their furniture and that the lorry could only get as far as the bottom of Stanley Road. They got help from Tom Campbell the bus operator, who produced a handcart and they used this to haul their possessions up to Hill View. It was wintertime, raining and dark. Dad said everything was covered in mud and before they could go to bed it all had to be washed down. They were so exhausted they slept in armchairs.

My parents were not the first of the family to move to the area, Dad's sister Mill lived for a while at Florence Ville on Livingstone Road by the Back Path. She later moved to the newly built Riverview Estate in Vange settling in number 1, The Meads. These were modern bungalows, brick built with a bathroom and modern facilities. They were considered to be very upmarket after the East End and the more primitive parts of Pitsea. My grandparents George and Elizabeth White bought 17 Elmtree Road naming the bungalow Whitwade - a joining of their surnames. A cousin Minnie Pitt bought 13, Riverview. All these bungalows are still occupied today and have survived the ravages of the Development Corporation apart from the lower part of The Meads which is now under the A13 trunk road. My grandparents are buried up on the hill in St Michael's churchyard.

Back to Stanley Road, a variety of bungalows had been built along the road, some more substantial than others with empty plots between neighbours. The first house on our side was a newish brick bungalow, constructed after the war by one of Turner family. Then Smithy, who was our next-door neighbour, nonresident most of the time, only appearing in the summer to cut the grass. Hill View was next, then further along was a large plot with a small wooden building on it. Through the window you could see various bits of furniture stacked up. Nobody ever came there in all the years we were at Hill View and when we moved the building had remained undisturbed all that time. I guess it became one of the many plots of 'unknown ownership' the Development Corporation had to deal with. Once past this a little concrete path began outside Badjdene, owned by Mr Sloan who was Scottish; then Mrs Cooper who had a TV in time for us to watch the Queen's wedding. Next, Elizabeth Hart in St Kilda, who would become a good friend to our family. Next door were Sammy and Mrs Bowtell, who kept chickens and rabbits. Then just before the Back Path a black timbered bungalow. The Back Path ran from the railway bridge at Gales Corner to Northlands Drive. Somehow the bungalows further up are long forgotten apart from the Top Shop at the junction of Pitsea Road.

Coming down on the other side of the road from the Path were the Langley's, we went to school, with Ann and Marion. Then Mrs Nichols and next door Granny Turner in Stanley Villa. We were related to Granny Turner as my dad's sister Mill had married Bert Turner. Directly opposite Hill View was a large field, with some elms and an oak tree and bushes full of dog roses in the summer and the grass a bouquet of wild flowers. In springtime there were a lot of birds nesting and we regularly heard the nightingale and cuckoo; other wildlife included adders and grass snakes, rabbits and harvest mice. This was our playground. The Powers lived in the last house on that side. I played with Mary Power. Mr Power sold foreign stamps and had a shop in Station Road Westcliff.



School Days

We used the Back Path a lot it was the way we went to school. I remember the deep ditch which ran alongside, and in the winter, when it was frozen over, we would break up the ice and walk along with the water almost at the top of our wellies. When our road was too muddy, we would use the Path and walk to Gordon Avenue, which was concreted and then make our way down to the High Road. We called that 'the long way round'. An alternative was to wear wellington boots down to Station Road, leave them in the hedge by Mrs Kirks and change into shoes. In summer we could take a short cut by going through a gate in our back fence following the track through the field avoiding bushes and brambles and coming out where Livingstone met Station Road.

Two years after I was born the Second World War started. I was seven and a half when it finished so I do not remember very much. I remember the wail of the warning siren and the all-clear signal. After the War the siren was used to alert the members of Vange Fire Brigade that

they were needed. We didn't have an air raid shelter but I have a recollection of being under the dining room table with Mum and my sister Jean, who was born in 1940. The front door was open and we watched German bombers on their way to bomb London, the planes shining in the sunlight. On a number of occasions, I remember standing in the High Road while long convoys of military vehicles' drove past, not sure where they were going, maybe to Shoebury garrison. By this time I was at Pitsea School and we used to have air raid drills and would be taken into the brick built air raid shelters on the playing field and we had to crawl out of the escape tunnel at the back. There were bench seats inside and it smelled of damp and dark. I don't ever remember them being used during a raid and they remained on the playing fields long after the war. We had to carry gas masks everywhere. When the war ended, we regularly saw German POWs around. Mum's brother Len spoke German, so we often had visitors for tea!

Dad worked in London for W. Lusty, in Bow, the firm who manufactured Lloyd Loom woven furniture. On 7th September 1940 the Bow factory was bombed and totally destroyed. I think he then got a job with the Swan Pen Company. Eventually Dad was called up into the army serving in Dover with the Royal Artillery and then in Belgium and Holland. Like so many women Mum was left with two small children, a home with few modern conveniences and little money. She was an amazing woman and would make do and mend using her sewing machine to alter second hand clothes into something we could wear. We remember her baking little currant cakes affectionately known to this day as 'hard bakes.' She made mock bananas by mashing parsnips and mixing in flavoured essence. Any old clothes were taken down to Mrs Lings who lived in the High Road, the Vange side of the bridge and sold as rags. Mrs Ling had a stall in Pitsea Market and she paid us a few pennies. I can't imagine the state of our rags after Mum had squeezed every bit of use out of them. Much use was made of the garden, growing vegetables, soft fruit and tons of rhubarb. My Uncle John was in the fire service and when he could, he helped with the garden. We had a number of fruit trees the best of all was the Victoria plum. That tree produced pounds and pounds of the sweetest, largest, golden pink, succulent and absolutely delicious plums ever. Somehow not found today, always bought in hope but always disappointed.

Dad said when he finally came home our little dog Bragg barked at him and they had a standoff on the garden path before he was allowed indoors. During the war Mum became very friendly with our neighbour Mrs Hart, who we called Harty. Harty was an ARP warden during the war. There was a pill box and an ARP post just alongside the railway bridge next to Mrs Lings. Mrs Hart's sons were in the navy and eventually returned home safely but Alfie Kirk, whose family lived on the corner of Stanley Road, did not.



Pitsea ARP - Harty on the front row, left.

During wartime, food was rationed, and everyone had to register with a grocer in order to get rationed goods. We were registered with the 'Top Shop'; I think it was really called Providence Stores. It was not built as a shop but in fact a shop converted from someone's small front room. You had to walk down a long path through a pretty garden to get to the door. Deliveries to the shop were made by lorry using Pitsea Road as it had better access. Pitsea Market was in Station Lane [not to be confused with Station Road] and was open on Wednesday and Saturdays. We often went and wandered around watching 'Alf the Market man' juggling china and giving the gathered audience his East End patter.

A bit further down towards the station was Green's the Undertakers. The name Green lives on in our family because if you complained of ear ache, tummy ache, a headache or any other ache, my mother's response was 'Call for Greenie'.

When rationing ended we were free to shop elsewhere so sometimes we would go to Greens Stores the other side of Pitsea Broadway. That shop is there today but is no longer a grocer. Our underclothes came from Mabs in the Broadway next to Lloyds Bank and our best clothes and shoes came from Cooks. Herbert J Cook comprised of three rooms and was the nearest to a department store that Pitsea ever got. It had an overhead wire system that transported your cash in a tube across to a central cashier who sent back change with a receipt. Back nearer the railway bridge was George Highwood the butcher and Hickley's garage both opposite Sharps the fish and chip shop. There we would buy cold fried fish leftover from the day before for a few pence. Close by was Mr Dearing, the shoe mender, Whites the grocer and Em Johnson the greengrocer. We often visited Walter Crook the Chandler and bought broken biscuits on display alongside the grains all sold from bins with glass lids. Our bread came from Solly Joel who ran the cafe by the bridge. Sometime in the late 1940's, once a week, Solly would have ice cream

sent down from London by train. Jean and I would join a little queue of people all holding basins waiting for the van to arrive from the station.

Memories of my time at Pitsea School have faded but I do recall the school milk arriving frozen and we would put the bottles on the radiator to thaw. Mrs Green was my first teacher. I remember Miss Denton, who took PE. Mr Bebbington took the senior class and encouraged good handwriting and clean shining shoes. The latter sometimes difficult if you had to cope with the sticky Pitsea mud. He was also keen on Rudyard Kipling poems - to this day I can still recite 'Big Steamers', 'If' and 'The Glory of the Garden'. The school secretary was Miss Huntingdon, her parents ran the small Post Office in Vange. Once a week, the school hall would be transformed into an ECC library for few hours. On one occasion having chosen my book I walked down the school drive with the book under my arm. Not paying attention I suppose, the book slipped from my arm and fell down straight through a grating into the waiting drain. I was horrified. I knew lost or damaged books had to be paid for and I was only too well aware my mother had no money. I ran back and the school caretaker came to my aid. He fished the book from the drain and took me back to the librarian. I don't know what happened but I was let off and heard nothing more.

I am always grateful that we grew up at a time when children were allowed to roam freely all day. As long as we returned on time for meals, nobody would worry. We played in the fields, made camps, gathered blackberries and wild flowers. During the war we were encouraged to pick rose hips which we would take to school and get paid a few pence, these collectively would go to make rose hip syrup.

As we got a bit older Harty would take us to film or slide shows put on by the local churches. We regularly visited the Salvation Army in Woodfield Road this later became Vange library, the Methodist in Brackendale, and the Elim Mission on Gun Hill.

Eventually we settled for Sunday school and the Girls Life Brigade at the Congregational Church in Rectory Park Drive where Pitsea Market car park is today.

We listened to the radio. Amongst our favourites were Toy Town, and Norman and Henry Bones the Boy Detectives. Dick Barton Special Agent was broadcast on weeknights at 6.45 always ending with our hero in some perilous situation. Later on we listened to PC49, Dixon of Dock Green and the Archers.

We went swimming in Vange pool on the other side of the railway line down Wharf Lane. It closed in the early fifties. Later we chose to join youth clubs, St Michael's held in the hall on the corner of Rectory Road and Wickford Avenue and the youth group at Bowers Gifford Church, there we got involved with the 'St Margaret's Players a so-called Drama Group. How people paid to watch those performances I will never understand but even the write ups in the Southend Standard were kind.



St. Margaret's Players

We would go to the pictures at the Broadway Cinema and later at the Kingsway in Hadleigh. At home we would play rounders or cricket in the garden, this was always popular when we had visitors. I cannot begin to guess how many balls were lost over the back fence despite a lengthy search through the long grass and the bushes.



Cricket at Hill View 1960

We kept in touch with Harty, she remembered our birthdays and celebrated our weddings, and she spent her final years in Maundy House in Church Road and lived to see the Millennium.

By 1946 Dad was home and was working for the National Assistance Board [now the DHSS] based in Grays but often working from the Ministry of Labour in Vange High Road. My second sister Pauline was on the way and my parents decided to extend the bungalow. The veranda was taken away and two extra rooms and a hallway were added, but the nuts and bolts of the building remained the same. Things in the bathing area improved when a bath was installed in

the kitchen with the hot water supplied from the Ascot through a hose, the bath had a wooden cover which folded down to try to make it look like a table. This saved a lot of work. However, there was always a slight feeling of unease in case some unexpected visitor burst through the kitchen door while you were taking a bath!

Obviously, money had to be found to pay for the building work. I think my parents borrowed the money from members of the family. Mum worked a night shift in a canteen on the Marshes; I think it was Sea Transport. Then of course the sewing machine came out and she made shirt collars for a local factory. Dad then starched them. They were such a good team, a hardworking couple dedicated to give us the best they could.



Family at Hill View 1954

In this, I think my Dad was different from most men of his generation he shared the household chores and was quite a good cook. He used to cut our hair. Hill View was a comfortable place to live and although all the rooms had a fireplace it was never particularly warm. Mum would transfer hot coals from one fireplace to another carrying the glowing embers on a shovel. In the winter the bedroom windows would be covered with delicate fern patterns formed by moisture freezing on the inside of the window. We often sat around the fire toasting bread on a toasting fork and then spreading beef dripping on the golden slices. At Christmas we would roast chestnuts on a shovel.

I didn't pass the 11 plus so I went to Craylands Secondary School taking the Back Path to Gales Corner walking up Timberlog Lane round the wiggly S Bend at Stacey's Corner to the school.

Later Miss Cordell, a work colleague of Dad's gave me an old bike and I would cycle to school. I wasn't the best cyclist and had a few near misses. I once ended up in the bushes at the side of the Back Path and I am still held responsible for killing a small lilac bush in the garden. More seriously, on one occasion when accompanying Dad on work visits in Vange, I rode straight out of Kent View Road into Vange High Road. Dad said I nearly went under the lorry. At school I was an average student and I just got on with it. I remember several of the teaching staff - Miss Brewis the Headmistress and Miss Jeffries who taught music. Phyllis Clark who lived in Crays Hill and took geography and rural science - we grew vegetables in the school grounds. She arranged trips to the Chelsea Flower Show and the London museums. I remember Mr Gomer the English teacher, a little Welshman who had been a prisoner of the Japanese. The boys used to try to get him to talk about it. He was handy with the cane. Mr Zuber took Maths and we were in his class when the news came through that the King had died. He got us all to stand up. Mr Zuber was German but I don't remember any anti-German feeling even though it was so close to the end of the war. At the end of Christmas term in 1952 aged 15 years and two months I left school with no formal qualifications and started work as a junior clerk with an Insurance Company in London. I was head girl but that was about it. The teachers at Craylands had given me a decent enough education and my parents by their example, a strong work ethic and a sound knowledge of right and wrong.



With Mum and Aunt Edie

Aunt Edie, my Mum's closest friend played a significant part in our life, visiting frequently from her home in Plumstead. She was like a second Mum, unmarried she showered us with love and kindness. She was always knitting and made lots of clothes for us. During the war she would give us her sweet coupons so we did quite well. When Aunt Edie was coming to stay Jean and I would go to Pitsea station to meet her. We would get there far too early and so would wait in the booking hall a long time before her train arrived. It was a very comfy place to wait with

long, polished mahogany benches against the walls. In the winter there would be a coal fire burning in a huge fireplace. We would also go and stay with Aunt Edie. To get to Plumstead we would take the Woolwich ferry across the Thames. I remember the hot oily smell when we went down to the engine room to watch the gleaming pistons propelling the ferry. We would explore London with her, visiting museums and hunting for statues of famous people. It was on one such a trip that we went to an exhibition, I think in Poplar Town Hall, and saw something that would change Pitsea forever. It was about the proposed New Town of Basildon.



Aerial view pointing to Hill View

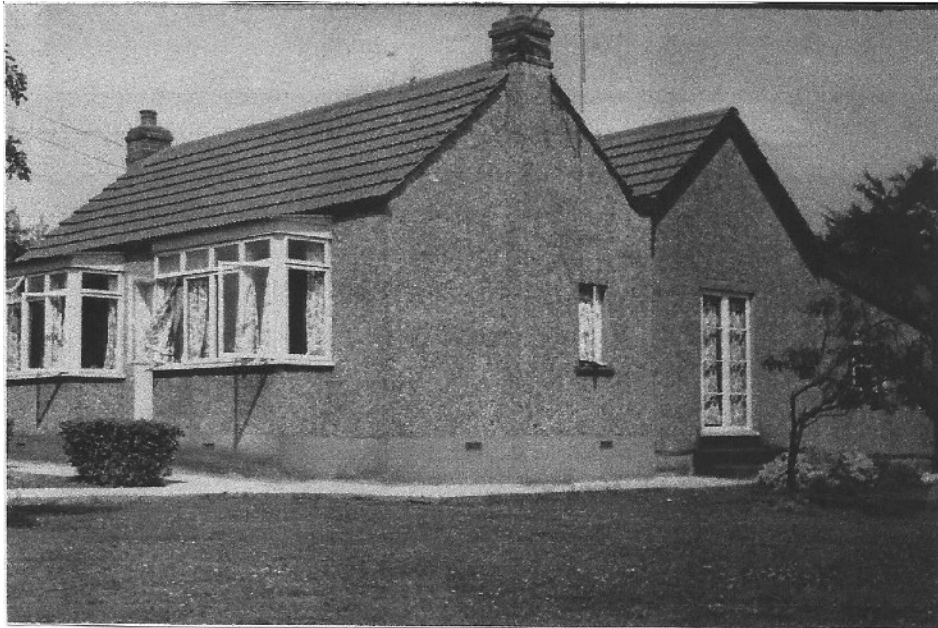
Displayed across a vast wall was an aerial photograph of the area designated as the New Town. We could see Hill View quite clearly, a large garden with a little bungalow tucked in the corner. We went home and told Mum and Dad what we had seen not realising the impact this would have on so many lives.

It must have been a couple of years before I left Craylands that the contractors first appeared. I've mentioned before that the concrete part of Station Road ended at the bottom of our road and it was there that the change started. The concrete road was extended up to Luncies Road and the building of the Barstable estate began. Life carried on much as usual but very slowly, the New Town began to take over and house owners were served with Compulsory Purchase Orders if their homes were in the way of development. It wasn't possible to sell privately and owners had no option but to sell to the Corporation at a valuation decided by the District Valuer.

The building of the new town did what the war could not, it scattered the original residents far and wide. The 1950's was the era of the 'Ten Pound Poms' and some of our neighbours and a lot of school friends went to Australia and elsewhere to seek a new life. Compulsory Purchase

shattered many lives and many dreams. A lot of residents were elderly and settled in their way of life. Old Pitsea was not Utopia and they knew that, but it had been their life for a long time and they had expected to end their days there. The compensation offered was not going to be enough to buy another home. Some brave folk stood firm but finally they too gave in.

The area was not rich in historical buildings but there were some, most were just bulldozed away. Others which the Corporation probably meant to keep like the ancient barn, belonging to Moat House Farm, near Holy Cross Church were left empty for so long that eventually vandals took our history away.



Hill View 1963

By 1963 my parents decided it was time to leave Hill View. They agreed to sell the bungalow to the Corporation and to rent a house in Lee Chapel North. So, we left the little bungalow and pretty garden and the plum tree behind and took with us many happy memories.

This is for the Jackson family who never knew Hill View and for my parents and my sisters Jean and Pauline who did.