



*A Future for our Past*

# Our Jessie – Historian and Author



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## Jessie Payne



Jessie Payne, photographer, artist, historian and author was born at Goulding Farm (Golding Farm) on the Vange Marshes in 1907. Her full name is 'Florence Alfreda Jessie Kestell Payne (nee Moss)'. It would appear her name was suggested by the nurse that nursed her mother. – Florence (mothers name), Alfreda (Alfred - fathers name) Jessie (Aunt's name) and Kestell (Mothers maiden name). She married Hebert Horace Payne in 1943 and gave birth to a daughter, Janet, in 1946.

It was her interest in photograph that led her to become an amateur historian and author. Throughout the late 1950s into the 1960/70s she wrote weekly history articles in the local papers and she spent many an hour at the Essex Record Office and learnt to read Latin by studying the old documents. In addition to her weekly articles, she wrote in the 'Essex Countryside' and 'Essex Journal' magazines and was the author of several books on local history. One of the forerunners of the Basildon Borough Heritage Society was the Basildon District Historical Society formed in 1981 with Jessie as president.

Jessie also gave many recorded interviews in later in life and remembers that towards the later end of World War I, soldiers used to come to the front door for hot water as they were digging

trenches on the farm, they also often joined in with the lessons she was having from her mother. The lesson was also shared with another child, Mary Wilson from Vange. Jessie also went to a governess in the Vange Village and remembers sitting in a room with lots of nice cheese dishes.

Her grandfather Alfred John Moss who farmed at nearby Merrick's farm which was close to the back water creeks and at one time barges would come up close to the Farmhouse before the water ways silted up. He was born at Hill Farm, Vange. He was also a church warden at 'All Saints Church' where Jessie regularly attended there on a Sunday morning, was baptized there and later confirmed at Stanford Le Hope and she remembers vividly sitting in the drawing room of the old Vange rectory and enjoying the discussion with Revd. St. John Methuen as he prepared her for confirmation.

Goulding's farmhouse was a smallish house, owned by a Trust. The original house was built by a Dutch man. It was a timber-built house with a large brick oven and lived in by farm labour's. Due to its bad condition a new one was built but it ended up quite a small house with five rooms which included the kitchen.

My father employed three, four men but grandfather would help out at busy times. Jessie enjoyed riding in the wagon along the road that run from the Five Bells Inn to the Badge Inn.

Jessie's mother never went to work after she got married, nor did she. Her mother also did not approve of her father working in the house. Although Jessie enjoyed doing the dusting especially the piano as she believed she would one day teach piano playing.

The family eventually moved to Kestell House, Timberlog Lane, then referred to as Barge Road, which stood just behind the Barge Inn in the 1920s. At the age of fifteen/sixteen Jessie still had to go to bed at 9pm.

She cannot remember any households in the Basildon, Pitsea or Vange area having a bath or a bathroom. Most used to have wash hand stands where hot water in a bowl would be placed. Though Jessie's and family used to wash in a Hip bath, this being where you sat in up to your hips.



*Victorian hip bath*

There was one occasion when the family were altogether and heard this tremendous argument going on down at the Vange Wharf between a couple of badge men, "what was all that

commotion" mother asked, so Jessie explained, including the swear word that was used. Grandmother being very Victorian was not amused explaining it was a wicked word. The word was *'bloody.'*

At Christmas time when the family was all together, they Jessie her grandmother and mother would play the piano and they would sing popular songs. Just before they moved up into the village they acquired a small Crystal Radio Set, it was not very successful and later they had a radiogram and a gramophone on which mother and Jessie spent hours playing records

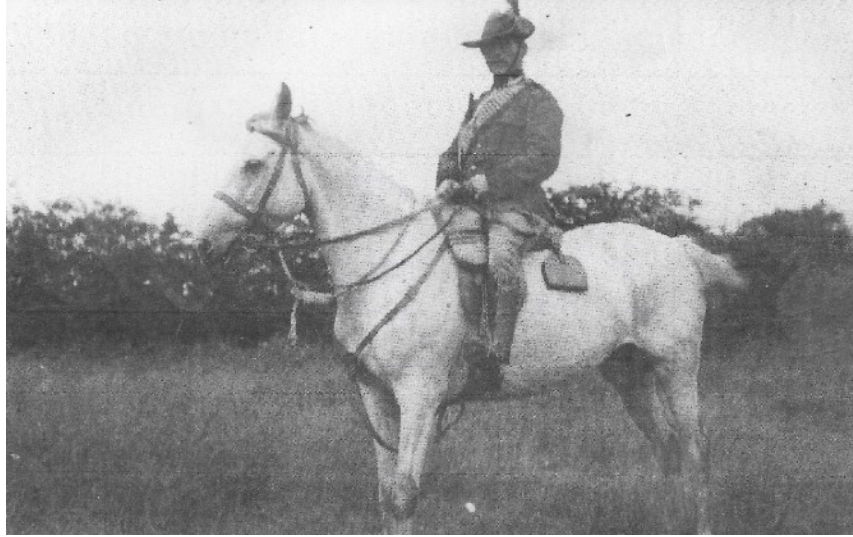
As was expected Jessie would help her mother at home, she was twenty-one before she had her first job, working in the rate collector's office in Pitsea which included go out collecting the rates money which she did not like doing as some people could be unpleasant. On one occasion she had a door slammed in her face. She also did not like walking about with a bag full of money. The week also included Saturday morning working. Pay one-pound a week.

Jessies father became a water rates collector with the Southend Water Works in Southend and later Jessie landed an office job with them. It was here that she met her husband to be Herbert Horace Payne who also worked for the Water Company. They married in 1943 and moved to Southend and had one daughter Janet. It was Herbert's second marriage, his first to Elsie Branscombe who died in 1942.

The family had moved to Southend just before the war started and when war started people started to move out so they moved to and old house near Epping Golf course but as it was close to North Weald airfield they soon moved on to Ilford. That did not last long as they spent every night in the cellar so it was back to Southend.

Herbert had signed up when war was declared in 1914 into the 7<sup>th</sup> City of London Regiment, known as the 'Shiny Seventh.' He was invalided out of the army at some point after being seriously wounded. Janet said he often spoke about Ypres and It is possible this is where he was injured as we know that the 7<sup>th</sup> fought in the third battle of Ypres known as Passchendaele.

The Moss family farmed the local Vange area for generations. In addition to Goulding's and Merrick's Farm other relations farmed Hill Farm, Luncies Farm, Fairhouse Farm and Barstable Hall Farm in Basildon.



*Alfred John Moss, Jessies father at the turn of the century. He is wearing the uniform of the Essex Yeomanry, to which he belonged. The photograph was taken at Merrick's Farm.*