

FROM CHILDHOOD TO CHILDHOOD IN FARNHAM

We are a family that loves Farnham and its surrounds. Having always lived here we cannot imagine moving away or living anywhere else.

For me, my childhood revolved around Tilbury, our little family cottage in Boundstone, Farnham, which always seemed to be all on its own, so my friends always came to play in our secret garden and joined my fantasy world. Tilbury has its own eco-system and I grew up feeding the foxes, badgers and deer that daily came to visit us. The cottage itself seems to have grown in the garden, as if it is part of nature itself. Summer holidays were spent with friends playing in our garden where I always had a party on my birthday in June. When I went away from Tilbury on holiday, for example, it was always with a great feeling of warmth that I returned, as I walked along the driveway, down the pathway, under the large hazelnut tree, back to our secret garden where I could be whoever I wanted. Being an only child when playing alone I was often in my fantasy world and when my friends came round I enjoyed sharing my world with them. My friends from my childhood have remained my good friends still, even those that have moved from Farnham. They all still have fond memories of Farnham and our cottage, Tilbury, and still visit my Mother who continues to live in the cottage.

However, I was actually born in The Happy Home Public House, Lower Bourne, just outside the town of Farnham and which was run by my Mother's family. I learnt to walk and talk on the bar of this old pub which no longer exists – it was directly opposite The Fox Pub which is still there today. But it is from Tilbury Cottage that that I walked to the local school in Lower Bourne, along with my friends Michael and Jenny. This was my primary school, where my Mother also went to school and we even had some of the same teachers, namely, Mr Paget, the Headmaster, Miss Mills, who was loved by all the children through the years. Also, Mr Oak, who taught at my secondary school, Weydon, as well.

Outside of Tilbury and school, with my friends we used to walk to the Clumps, a local name for part of the Bourne Woods, along tracks shown to me by my Mother who also spent much time walking them when she was young. The Bourne Woods, of course, is now often used for filming ie Gladiator, Robin Hood and presently War Horse. Frensham Ponds is another lovely area that both my Mother and I have had many walks and for me horseriding too. Both Mum and I had our local school sports day on the Bourne green. A real fun packed day with the Mum's race always taking pride of place!

Indeed, my Mother moved to The Happy Home PH from the family home Ivy Cottage in the Bourne when she was 14 years old and the Second World War had just begun. At this young age she left school and went to work for the romantic novelist, Barbara Goolden, who lived along Burnt Hill Road, Lower Bourne. Barbara Goolden was unmarried but adopted a little boy and lived with her brother.

At the Happy Home PH the world visited my mother, as it was wartime the local soldiers would spend time there, many being Canadians and Maoris from New Zealand. One Maori, in particular, she became friends with and became pen friends with his sister in New Zealand, and she still retains a childhood photo of her friend. Indeed, it was in the Happy Home that my Mother met my Father, Stanley Punter, when he was in his army uniform – he came from a local Farnham family and worked with his Father in the family Builders firm and they built many local Farnham houses. After the war,

my Father returned to the family firm to work, married my Mother and moved the Happy Home PH for several years before finding the small cottage called Tilbury.

Prior to living at The Happy Home my Mother's family lived in Ivy Cottage along Lodge Hill Road in Lower Bourne. It is still there today with "Ivy Cottage" still on the wall made from bottles. She lived there with her parents and brother, Douglas, Frank and Albert. The 2 older brothers were half brothers, Frank and Albert Cordier while Douglas and my Mum, Marie, had the name of Foot. Frank always loved Farnham and was proud to be its Mayor for several years and a magistrate and active conservative party member for many years. He always wanted the best for the community of Farnham and we supported him as a family and would go to Farnham Castle with him on occasions including the annual Venison Dinner which he helped organise until he was very elderly. He wanted Farnham to change with the times but also wanted it to retain the same feeling of community. Indeed, although Farnham does change it still remains the place I always want to come home to.

As well as visiting Farnham Castle with Uncle Frank I also visited the gardens to paint and draw. At Weydon School we had a wonderful Art teacher in Dick Lilley and in our 5th year he would take us into Farnham to paint – another favourite place he took us to was St Andrew Church, the Parish Church in the centre of Farnham. A lovely place both inside the Church and outside, with trees and seats and pathways. Many happy hours have been spent there throughout my childhood, and I still paint there today. Many members of my family have been christened and married there over the years.

My husband, who grew up in Aldershot, also had a favourite memory of Farnham. Being cricket fans, his family would regularly visit the cricket ground on the edge of Farnham Park which has barely changed in its appearance to the present day. In the 1950's and early 60's County Cricket was played during the week, with Sundays reserved for charity matches against local teams on local pitches. Surrey's famous first eleven of those days regularly turned up to play in Farnham and those games would be attended by well known celebrities to help drum up interest for the charity of the day. For instance, Ken remembers one game attended by the DJ Pete Murray and TV actress Jill Browne, who starred in the big soap opera at the time "Emergency Ward 10". People of a certain age say they know where they were when they first heard of the death of President John F Kennedy. For a vast number of people they were at home watching Emergency Ward 10 which was famously interrupted to break the news to the Nation.

Another part of Farnham that was much loved in childhood was East Street. Walking along East Street toward the centre of Farnham past Mike Hawthorne's garages (Tourist Trophy) with the sun shining on the trees in front of the houses and impressive church was like walking down a french boulevard. Enchanting!

In fact, enchanting is the word to describe both my childhood and my Mother's childhood in and around the old town of Farnham.