

Childhood Memories

I was born in West London in 1954 and we lived in a first floor flat in Shepherd's Bush for the first few years of my life, within a few miles of my father's parents. My earliest memory is - for some reason - banging my head on the "Witch's Hat" ride in the playground in Ravenscourt Park near my home when I was about three years old, having a plaster applied to the cut when I got home and then looking out of the window at the street below.

In 1959 we moved across the city to East Ham in East London, because houses were cheaper over there and it was the only way that my parents could afford to buy one. For most of my childhood journeys across on the Central Line were a regular feature of family life as we travelled over to see my grandparents. I used to count the stops from Upton Park to Mile End to East Acton.

In East Ham I used to walk to my junior school every day and home for lunch. These were the days before the Clean Air Act and, although it can't have happened very often, I have a clear memory of walking to school through thick smog, when I couldn't see more than a few feet in front of me.

In my final year at the junior school I was a favourite of our rather daunting teacher, Miss Raitt. If I talked in class or otherwise misbehaved, she would send me to sit in the library as a punishment. After a while she realised that I actually rather enjoyed being in the library and reading the books. She had to think of somewhere else to banish me to.

I think you also wanted to hear how we came to the Farnham area. We were living in Darlington, County Durham and we had our two sons up there. Eventually it suited both my wife and me to move south, partly for work and partly because our elderly parents were down here. My new job was based in Farnborough and we made a number of trips to familiarise ourselves with the area before we picked somewhere to live. The one memory that really sticks out from those trips is driving around the Basingstoke area, listening on the car radio to the news that Princess Diana had died.

After a while, my wife Julia declared that she would like to live near Farnham, for no reason other than it was a pleasant town in roughly the right place. As is the way of things, we ended up where we happened to find the house we wanted - Churt. If you'd told me, a city boy, that I'd end up in a village and become involved in village activities I'd have run a mile. But here I am, and I like it a lot.