

Brian Shillum's Story

What part of Enfield did you grow up in?

It was on the Willow Estate, it's where the Willow Road comes down from the town and we backed on to the New River, my family, and Ann's family were on Ladysmith Road which was the other side of the river

We were engaged for two and a half years to try and save up for a deposit but prices of houses in Enfield were just prohibitive, we just couldn't afford them, and I was working in London, and I went on the Enfield Chase line up to Highbury and Islington, which was then an Underground station, and it had to be on that line. But all the stations going further north from Enfield Chase, there's no property really near the station and so Hertford was the next place to look.

We did go to an Estate Agent and he actually showed us somewhere, Port Vale, but it just, we didn't even go in. We looked at it and said, "No, it's not for us" and we were very lucky because we went back and said to him, "Well, that's no good" and he said "It's interesting, a friend of mine has offered me, told me he wants to put his mother's house up for sale" And he said, "I haven't done anything with it yet" but he said "if you want to go and see it, you probably can". So, we actually viewed the house before it was even on the market.

That was North Road Avenue, just round the corner from the station. It was perfect, and we looked at it, it was a three-bedroom house, in North Road Avenue. It was very interesting because we viewed it in January 1963 and, if you remember, January 1963 was a lousy winter, and I have a photograph of when we viewed it.

it was very good, it was on a hill but every other house was on the level, front to back, the others had steps – and so, we had no steps to go in and it was ideal. It was 150 ft plot and it backed on to Greenways, but it backed on at an angle and they similarly had a long garden and so you don't, you weren't overlooked, you looked along the bottom of their gardens, so it was ideal. And we made an offer which was accepted and moved in in June '63,

Was your wife working at the time?

She was. She was working in London but she decided that she wouldn't, so she packed her job in, when we got married, and then she moved job, with the Council.

How did you go about meeting people?

We made friends actually. In fact, there were so many interesting people in the road, it was very intimate at the time. Mainly more senior people then, they'd been there for some time. You know, it's changed now, there are very young families now.

Although the town, of course, was one and a quarter's mile away, we were young, we could walk, you know. But we did, of course, in the town then, the supermarket was Fine Fare. And we did get a tandem to get around, used to go to the County Cinema, in Ware Road, on our tandem.

I co-ordinated the Christian Aid walk for many, many years and with the Archaeological Society. I mean, we got to know a lot of people from the Archaeological Society, we got to know them and I was elected as Secretary and therefore I found the people to give lectures, we got to know them that way, you know. I ran the U3A Archaeology Group, that's right, for some time, yeah. Archaeology and History.

I mean, what I'm also very pleased about the house, it faces south and gets most of the sun and it has not deteriorated with time. But you could also, with all this building that has gone round, you can still come out of our house and in ten minutes, in three directions, could be out in the country. That's fantastic, nothing's been built there, nothing, you know. We are very happy there.