

Introduction to Felsted Sugar Beet Factory

- Felsted Sugar Beet Factory stood over the parish boundary in '*Little Dunmow*' and was under Felsted Parish.
- The same factory workers, who were mainly from Felsted and other parts of the country including Ireland, returned each year for the '*campaign*'. This is why it has always been known as the '*Felsted Sugar Beet Factory*'.
- The '*campaign season*' ran from September to January depending on the winter.
- Today it is a housing development called '*Oakwood Park*'.
- On 1st April 2009, Oakwood Park no longer fell under Felsted Parish, it is now '*Fritch Parish*'.

- After being built in 1926

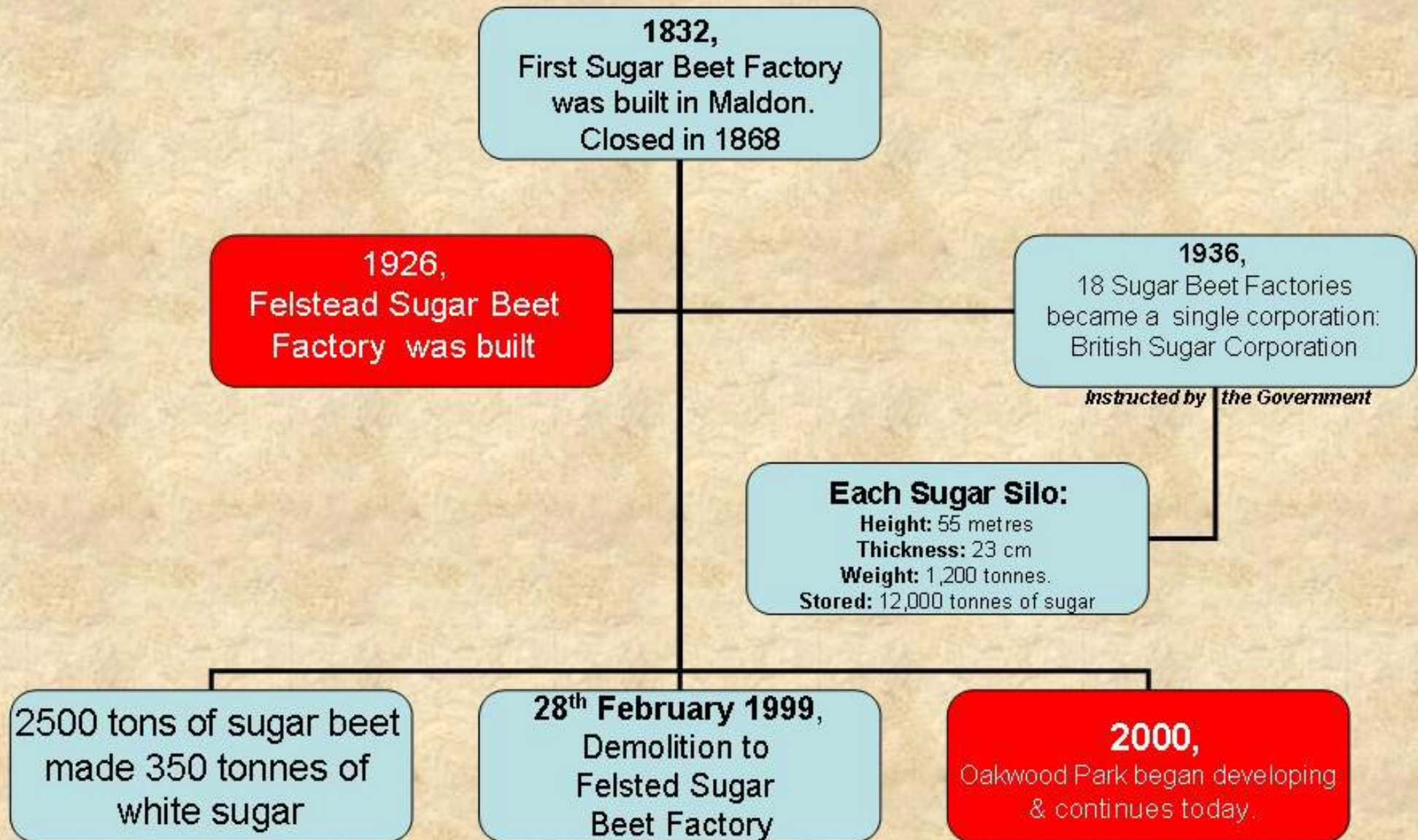


No Silos at that time

Oakwood Park



FELSTED SUGAR BEET FACTORY FAMILY TREE



Sugar Beet Farming Cycle:



To Farm:
Dried pulp Sugar
Beet fed cattle
& leaf tops
fed sheep.



From Farm:
Farmer
Ploughing and
extracting
sugar beet.

Sugar Beet



**To Sugar
Beet Factory:**
Sugar Beet turned
into sugar.



Late 19th ~ Early 20th Centuries: Agriculture Industry

- In the late 19th century there was an agriculture depression. By 1894, new and exciting farming businesses were introduced, such as, '*sausage-skin manufacturer*', farmers '*specialising in poultry*' to '*Jersey and Friesian cattle herd*' farms.
- Before WWI, sugar was imported from Europe.
- 1914-1918, during WWI there was a sugar shortage. Britain had to start its own sugar beet industry which included a site at Little Dunmow, Essex, near Felstead Railway Station.

1920's:

The Need for Sugar Beet Factories

- In the 1920's, several sugar beet factories opened in East Anglia. Many local people from Felstead including Reverend W J House, Dunmow's Vicar and rural dean, protested.
- 1925, the Government passed the '*Sugar Industry Act*'. The government gave money for '*home grown sugar produces*' for the next 10 years, including Felstead.
- 1926, Felstead Sugar Beet Factory was built by the '*Second Anglo-Scottish Beet Sugar Corporation Ltd*'. Most of the workers that built the factory came from Glasgow, Scotland.
- While constructing the embankment for the shunting dock to be in level with the siding, a man died when a loaded skip came off the rails on top of the embankment and plunged down on him below. The embankment was built in order to cope with a maximum load of 500 tonnes of sugar beet per day; each wagon held 10 tonnes.
- Despite a '*General Strike*' with long queues for the construction and production, Felstead Sugar Beet Factory made £11,000.00 profit during their first campaign season.
- 1926/27, Essex County Council took Felstead Sugar Beet Factory to court for polluting '*Stebbing Brook*'.
- By 1928, 15 more factories opened up including Felstead.



Felstead Railway Station:



Felstead's railway station opened on 5th April 1883 by Great Eastern Railway which was mainly used to transport coal.



1952



1955



1968

1952, Last passenger train through Felstead Railway Station

Felsted Station on the left towards the bridge.

April 1910, Bradshaw Railway Guide

BISHOP'S STORTFORD, DUNMOW, and BRAINTREE.—Great Eastern.		Week Days.	
London	7 20	9 10	10 10
Bishop's Stortford	8 10	10 00	11 00
Dunmow	9 00	10 50	12 00
Braintree	10 00	11 50	1 00
Braintree 513	11 00	12 50	2 00



1972

...today the station is someone's home!

1930's:

Felstead Sugar Beet Factory

- **During the 1930's**, many positive articles were written in the local newspaper promoting Felstead's community village and social activities which was centred at the Memorial Hall with dances, concerts, charity and sporting events which included cricket, football and tennis; very much like today. The annual football and tennis matches with '*Felstead Sugar Beet Factory V Felstead Rovers*' and '*Felstead Sugar Beet Factory V Felstead Tennis*' teams would receive good write ups promoting any profits from the event going to charity.
- **In 1931**, an exception to the '*positive*' write ups took place when an article written by the editor explained how he saw and interviewed a number of people waiting up to 3 to 4 days just to get work at Felstead Sugar Beet Factory.
- **In 1932**, the Felstead Sugar Beet Factory football team was nick named as '*Beetroots*' who struggled to keep a regular football team of their own.
- Mr Gordon Crawford, Felstead's farmer, used to harvest sugar beet with a pair of horses and he hand drilled the seeds in the ground, hand hoed the fields and hand picked sugar beet.
- Sugar was bagged in sacks and taken away in lorries. An average daily sugar tonnage was around 392 tonnes.
- **1936**, the government who gave out a 10 year grant to 18 existing factories decided to merge into a single corporation with the '*British Sugar Incorporation*', including Felstead.

1940's – 1950's: Felstead Sugar Beet Factory

- **In WWII**, the railway line transported 1000's of tonnes of rubble to build '*Saling airfield*'. **In 1944**, while undercover in the dark it was used to transport bombs; it was also used as an ambulance service for the wounded soldiers.
- **After WWII**, the railway line was now mainly used for transportation including transporting bananas to Little Canfield as people started to travel more by cars and buses.
- On the **3rd May 1952**, Felsted Railway Station was closed for passengers. On this day, many passengers dressed up in old fashion costumes which included '*Lord Edward Lewis*' and '*Lady Lewis*' to celebrate this day. Lukas' grandma's father, Claude Laundrum, worked for Sir Edward Lewis by looking after his land and holiday home, '*Bridge House*', which is situated next door to where Lukas lives in Felsted.
- Sir Edward Lewis was the founder of '*Decca Records*' that became the second largest record label in the world. He was a very clever man who had a passion for chemistry and science and created pure and good-sounding for the company's 78 rpm records. The company's work on '*radar*', on behalf of the government during World War II also proved significant.
- **By 1945**, the 18 sugar beet factories produced 1/3 million tonnes of sugar, enough sugar for the UK population.
- **1948**, 1,800 of 2lb bags of sugar were packed by hand.
- Felstead's Sugar Beet Factory had a '*Sports Club*', Hostel, regular newsletter/magazine and allotments. This was not only used by the workers but also people who lived around the village. The sports that took place were Bowls, Cricket, Tennis, Boxing and Indoor Games.
- **1950's**, '*Felstead*' was changed to '*Felsted*'



1960's:

Felsted Sugar Beet Factory



- **1962**, there was a poor crop of sugar beet due to premature seeds.
- **1963/64**, Felsted was the last factory to give farmers the opportunity to lift '*frost bound crops*' during this freezing winter months. Factories finished by Christmas as the beet was easy to lift as it came out of the ground clean. This was the shortest campaign season recorded.
- **1965**, the first silo was built to store up to 12,000 tonnes of loose sugar and during this year, 335,000 tonnes of sugar was processed, this was the most amount of sugar ever produced. Also within this year the conversion from '*coal fired boilers*' to '*oil fired boilers*' took place.
- **On 4th May 1968**, Felsted railway station was finally closed which was run by British Railways (*Eastern Region*).

1970's:

Snap Shot's supplied by British Sugar Corporation

FELSTED'S LAST APPRENTICES



THE last group of apprentices to complete their indentures at Felsted factory is pictured receiving their certificates from works manager Bruce Mackay. They are Stephen Richardson (electrical) and Richard Smith and Alan Archer (fitters). Also pictured are assistant works engineer Bob Moore, and shift superintendent Jim Fossitt.



Aerial view



Taken by staff car park



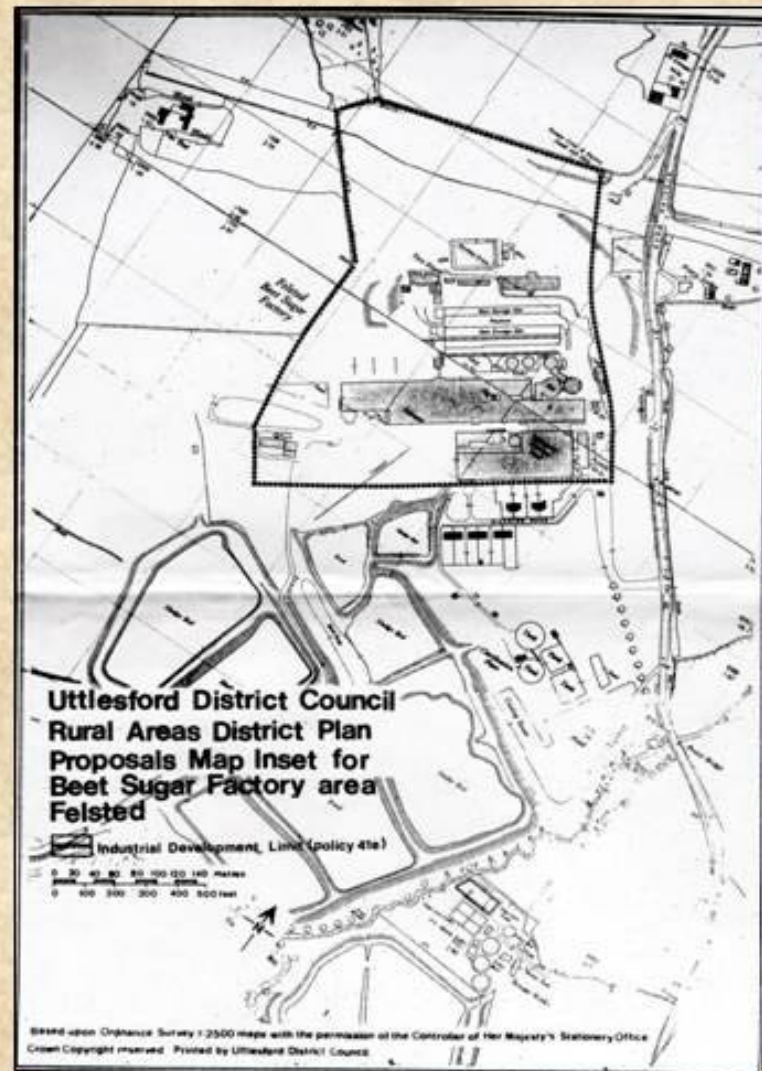
1970's to 1980's: Felsted Sugar Beet Factory

- **1970's**, Farmer Mr G Crawford introduced a modern harvesting machine called '*Forecaster*' and the industry grew strength to strength.
- **By the 1970's**, Felsted employment level rose to 59%, mainly from Felsted Sugar Beet Factory and Felsted School. Staff increased to 325 workers who ran the plant on a 24 hour basis during the campaign season, 3 x 8 hour shifts. Many workers wore '*gum boots*', as they had to clean off the mud from the trucks and sugar beet, and '*football shorts*', *the heat from the boiler house was unbearable at times*. The management staff with a few personnel staff only worked for 8 months of the year.
- **1970's**, improvements in packaging methods were made, this allowed 1,000 tonnes of sugar bagged daily.
- **In 1973**, the second '*sugar silo*' was built.
- **1975**, the prime minister at that time, '*Margaret Thatcher*', voted '*yes*' for Britain to be in the '*Common Market*'. This opened a door way for foreign businesses to compete with British businesses. This had a devastating impact with the sugar beet industry as a whole.
- **1976**, '*oil seed rape*' began to be sown which was a much easier crop to harvest.
- **In November 1979**, UK's production quota was cut and so the British Sugar Corporation (*now called British Sugar PLC*) decided to shut down four of the 18 factories, this including Felsted Sugar Beet Factory.
- **1980**, Sir Edward Lewis died and his family holiday home in Felsted was sold in 1981.
- **1981**, Felsted Sugar Beet Factory closed. Staff were given generous redundancy money and some received their pension at the age of 55.

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL: Factory Site Plan Proposals

Felsted's Rural Area District Plan
(November 1980, Draft Written Statements
of Village Policies)

“Within the Industrial Development Limit defined on the Proposals Map, seen on the right, which is centred on Felsted's Sugar Beet Factory, there will be a general presumption in favour of appropriate light industrial or small workshop uses unrelated to the sugar beet factory will receive favourable consideration. Outside/extending Industrial Development Limit on the proposals will be refused into open unspoilt countryside, unless of an essential or minor nature.”



Snap shots: Inside the Factory

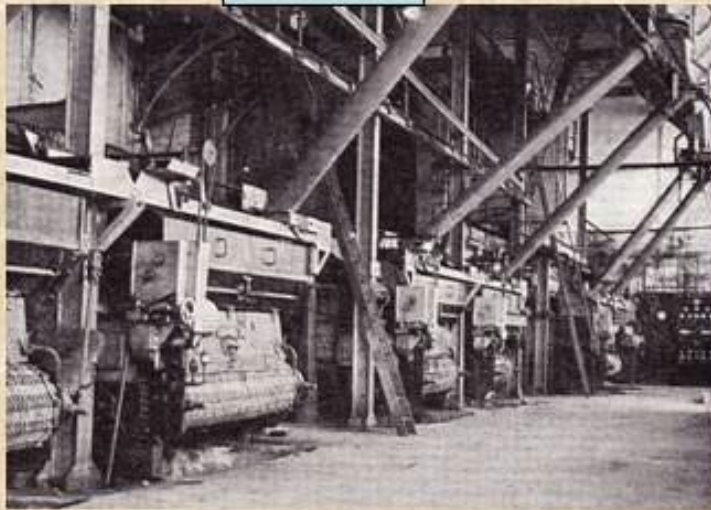


Late 1940's

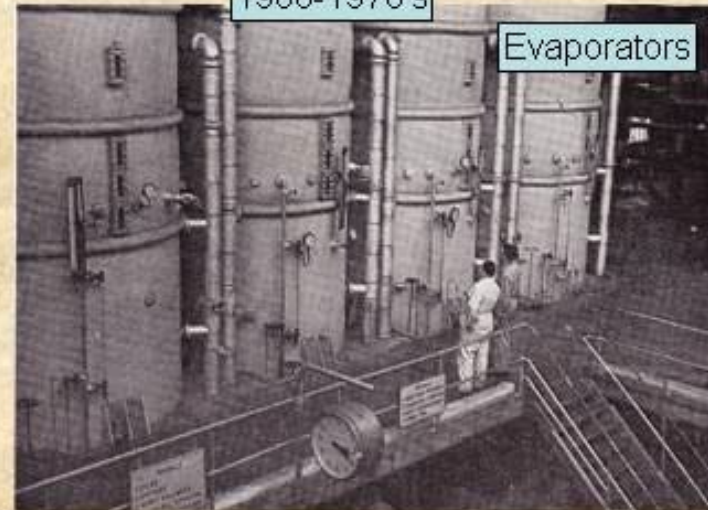


Switchboards

1960-1970's



Boiler House (evaporators)



Evaporators

Here, the sugar beet juices are heated and converted into syrup / molasses before the sugar crystallizes.

Snap Shots : Final Production

1960- 1970's



Packaging Plant ~
at the end of the process



A fork lift truck at work
in the packet store

55 Years of Production:

Campaign:	Weight in Tons:
1926	38,000
1927/28	64,000
1934/35	220,000
1965/66	335,000
1973/74	258,780

* A campaign is when the sugar beet is picked and processed during September to January.

Production fell from 1973 and stopped altogether in 1981.

Felsted Sugar Beet Production



Stories Told:

Judith Wallis Recalls...

Lukas interviewed his grandma, Judith Wallis. Her stories goes back from when she was a girl and talks about her father, Claude Laudrum, who worked at the Felsted Sugar Beet Factory in the 'Tare House' and delivered sugar beet from in his tractor and trailer.

Judith was also present when the Sugar Silos were taken down though this was not in the recording as it was a sad memory for her.



Judith Laudrum
Sliding off her father's tractor



Claude Laudrum
Driving on his tractor

Roger Bradford Recalls...

Lukas interviewed Roger Bradford. His father was a lorry driver for Felsted Sugar Beet Factory.

Roger remembered as a boy how the sugar beet was collected to a tight timetable and so a day or so before he would see great piles of sugar beet assembled at the side of the roads ready for lorries to collect, including his father's, and deliver to Felsted Sugar Beet Factory.

Also, he recalled how those who came by horse and cart were allowed to jump the long queues outside the Felsted Sugar Beet factory and the lorries were not allowed.

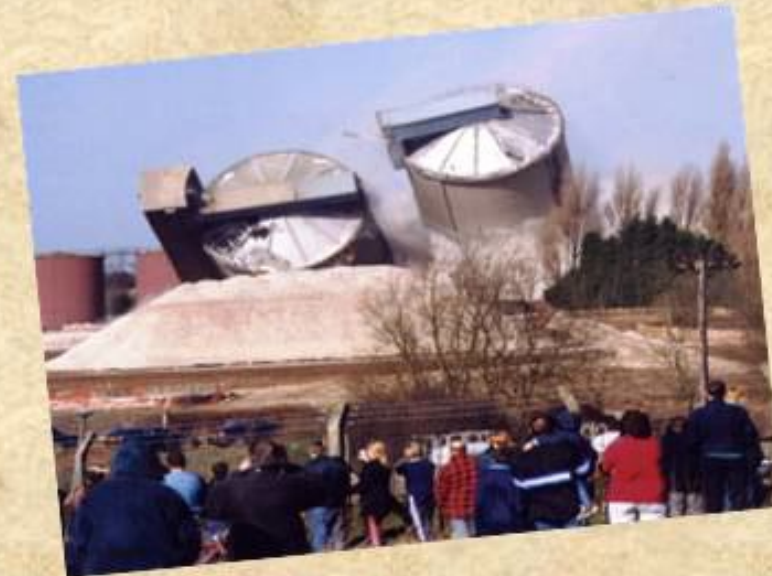
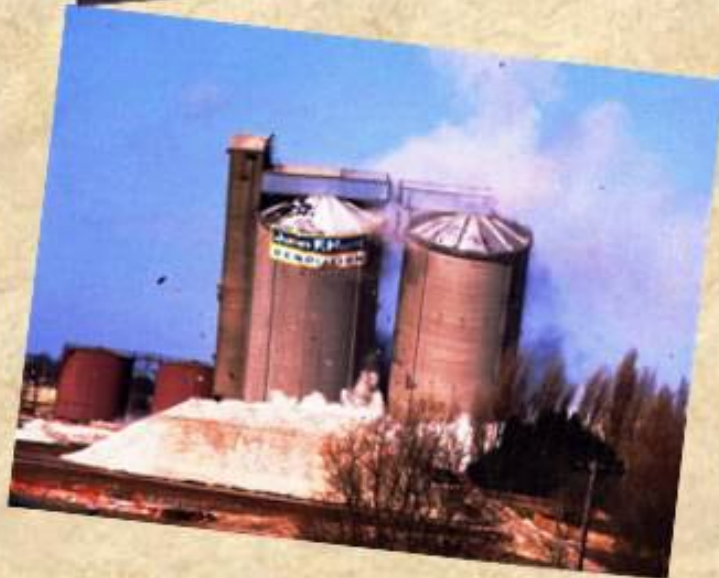
(This was not in the recording.)

Demolition Day: Felsted Sugar Beet Factory Site

- Work had started on preparing the site before the demolition took place.
- On 28th February 1999, at 12 O'clock, Felsted Sugar Beet Factory was demolished and witnessed by many locals. Some were in tears as their memories were wiped off from a single blast as the sugar silos came tumbling down.

Lukas' grandma shed tears that day as memories of her father working there came streaming back. Though this was a sad day for her, it was an exciting day for others.

Snap Shots: Demolition Day



Newspaper Articles:



By JENNY OLIVEIRA

HUNDREDS of people gathered at the site of the former sugar beet factory in Felsted on Sunday to watch the dramatic demolition of the giant silos.

Just before noon a helicopter circled twice around the silos as the sun shone down from a perfectly blue sky.

Then at five minutes to 12 there was a flash on a siren followed by the swoosh of a rocket high into the air to the side of the silos.

The siren sounded again - it was the one minute warning and then a third siren blared out before the ten second countdown.

Then seven-year old Luke Taylor pressed the button to detonate the explosives.

There was a loud bang and a huge gap appeared towards the bases of the silos with clouds of dust.

Immediately afterwards a second hole at a higher point yawwed open.

Then the huge towers seemed to be poised to rush forward. For a second but instead they just gently sank down, a mass of

shattered concrete.

The silos were 55 metres high, 25 centimetres thick and each one weighed 1,200 tonnes. The first was built in 1905 and the second in 1973.

John F. Hanz (Demolition) Ltd had organised the perfectly controlled explosion.

This was especially important since the event was filmed by London Workers Television for a documentary programme entitled The Demolition Men due to be broadcast later this year.

● See page two for more pictures and details about the day.



Some of the hundreds of people who flocked to Felsted on Sunday to witness the demolition of the silos
Pictures: DICK HARDING

Broadcast Special Feature

End of an era as silos come down

MISSING from Berthelord's guest list at Sunday's demolition of the Felsted sugar silos were representatives of the neighbouring parish councils of Little Dunmow and Felsted.

Bill Clark, the clerk to Felsted Parish Council, said: "It was nothing more than we expected after the legal action we took along with other parishes to try and prevent the building of the airport at Felsted."

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TWO of Berthelord's special guests for the evening were Kathleen and Leonard Hanks (pictured above), who had spent more than 40 years living next to the sugar beet factory in the Felsted Station House.

Mr Hanks had worked as a signwriter for the railway and said: "When the branch line was still open I used to work at Felsted to be treated with 150 tons of sugar, with each wagon holding 10 tons and a special canopy was attached to keep the sugar dry in wet weather."

Mr Hanks, who had happy memories of working in the canteen at the factory during the war years, said: "It will give us much more light without the silos and it is nice to see the place before us - but it will seem very strange at first."

Several public opinion polls had been carried out in 1986 when a High Court judge ruled in favour of the limited council.

Through the night

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ABOVE: THE CENTRE of attention for press and TV cameras before the silos came down on Sunday was Luke Taylor, 7, the winner of the painting competition organised by site owners Berthelord Property Developments Ltd to decide who should press the buttons set off the explosion.

Luke was accompanied by his mother Hazel, father Harold and sister Laurie.

Mr Taylor said: "I am really pleased for Luke. He has been very excited about it all week but now that the day has come, he is naturally a bit overwhelmed by all the attention."

"It will seem very strange to be without the silos. When people used to ask me how to get to Felsted, I used to say - just head for the towers."

Mum Hazel said: "It is sad in a way to see the silos go. Both my father and my brother came from Bradstone to work at the sugar factory and then I moved to Felsted when I got married."

Sunday was a special day, too, for Laurie.

It was her sixth birthday and in years to come she may remember spending it watching her brother set off the explosion.

On the day she was given a yellow hat but like her brother and she said: "It's good being here."

Many thanks to Lukas Wallis who was eight years at the time in 2009 for his research and many thanks for the interview and with Roger Bradford and Judith Wallis (refer to page 17) and the British Sugar PLC WHO GRANTED for permission with their photos (refer to page 11)