

Interview with Mrs Gwen Ollington ([SA 3/532/1](#)), recorded by Basildon Heritage in 1986

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Gwen And I can remember the railway strike in 1926.

Interviewer: What was the effect of that on Wickford?

Gwen: There was a great deal of unhappiness around. My father was stricken by this. He just did not like strikes. He was quite against them. He belonged to the union, but he didn't believe you should strike. His comment was - in the end, you have to talk to each other, so why not do it first as last? And you should do a good day's work for a good day's pay. And if you are honest in doing that and your employer is honest, well, that is as it should be. But my father always believed in what things should be, not in what they were. But as far as our family was concerned, we were without money and we did have a difficulty in purchasing meat for instance. But fortunately we were not without vegetables, so mother would get an oxtail soup going and we would have loads of vegetables and oxtail soup. We rather enjoyed what we called 'strike dinner'. And mother would say to us sometimes 'I just do not know what to get for dinner today' and we'd say 'oh mum strike dinner, that's lovely'. So you see we were not deprived really you know.

Interviewer: Do you know of any Wickford people actually taking trains out say or helping you know to get things going?

Gwen: Yes there was a man who was in our church choir. This man gave up his own work and did father's job, you know. And the deep embarrassment that there was- because the ladies who lived in our group, they all went out and jeered this man for doing father's job of work, because he was a foreman, you see, and had to walk the line to make sure that everything was in order. And this man apparently he did father's job. And of course father had the Southend line to do as well as the Burnham line, and so of course he was jeered twice - well four times every day - once and back and on the other hand. Four times. And of course this man, he rather sort of took the attitude - I mean I only know as a child - but that father shouldn't have been striking. Well, father himself didn't believe he should strike anyway, but he had to come out because the union said so. And so this created a feeling within our family, you know, which I can recall very, very clearly - how deeply upset my parents were about this. That Christian people could change their attitude, you know, in this sort of way. My father also had other relatives in

Southend. One was a signalman, and he too, you see, had to come out on strike as well, and I can recall them discussing it together. And while they agreed that the right of what was being struck for, they didn't feel that they should be doing it, if you can understand what I mean. Yes. It was quite against their conscience and the way that they thought. So that was not an easy time for our family and it took a long time to level that off, you know. In the end, this gentleman, and I can't even now for the life of me recall his name, but I can see him - quite a large, round-faced man with a bowler hat on the top if I can recall him. And he moved from the area. So it did relieve the situation because of this. Otherwise, our parents got a bit cold-shouldered and this upset mother quite a lot, for some considerable time.