

Town's chance to bag McCain chip factory



FACTORY PLAN: Charles McCarthy.

Search was on for a suitable site in 1968

THE McCain chip is famous worldwide, and its first office in the UK opened in Grimsby but we missed out on the first UK fries factory. Reporter **Lucy Greensmith** speaks to Anne Park, who worked for Charles "Mac" McCarthy, the man who

began importing French fries into the UK.

FLUFFY chips and snappy fries are a favourite in diets around the world.

One of the most famous suppliers is McCain, which originated in Canada by entrepreneur Wallace McCain, who died earlier this year in Toronto.

But many people may be unaware that the humble McCain chip's first UK factory was just a council decision away from being built in Grimsby in 1968. Sadly, it did not happen.

Grimsby businessman Charles McCarthy owned the McCain offices in the Drill Hall, Doughty Road, Grimsby, which imported the chip.

And his plans were to build a manufacturing plant on the Humber Bank due to the ever-increasing demand for McCain products.

Anne Park, of North Thoresby, was employed by Mr McCarthy as one of his original team of four - including himself - importing McCain French fries into the UK from the McCain manufacturing plant in Florenceville, New Brunswick, Canada.

Speaking to the Telegraph, Anne said: "I feel very strongly that the prosperity of Grimsby and its workforce would have benefited hugely if the factory was built.

"The search was on in 1968 for a suitable site and Charles McCarthy was sometimes accompanied by one or both of the McCain brothers on their frequent visits to Grimsby.

"I met Harrison and Wallace McCain briefly a couple of times while I was at work.

"I found out everything in the office as I was a typist, and they passed everything to me to type up.

"They found a very suitable site for the proposed factory on the Humber Bank.

"After careful research and preparation, planning permission was sought from Grimsby's council.

"The proposal was turned down because of concerns about discharging effluent from the factory into the Humber, a stumbling block which could have been resolved, in my opinion.

"If only the council had allowed the first McCain factory.

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Anne Park



EMPLOYEE: Anne Park, pictured in 1967, turned down a job at the new site in Scarborough.

outside Canada, to be built in our town back in 1968.

"Charles McCarthy, a native of this area, reluctantly looked elsewhere, finally settling on a site at Eastfield, Scarborough, where the first McCain UK processing plant was built and opened in 1969."

Anne was offered one of the first jobs in Scarborough for the McCain's factory, but she turned it down because she had recently married.

Mr McCarthy's hugely successful career continued with McCain Foods, a well-known and much-respected figure. His achievements were acknowledged when he was made a CBE in 1996.

Anne concluded: "I have been giving it some thought and it is not unrealistic to stress that the McCain name in Scarborough is massive.

"It is a huge employer, not just in Scarborough to this day, but at its other sites throughout the UK.

"I really enjoyed my time working for Mr McCarthy. It was exciting and he was an entrepreneur for Grimsby's food industry."

● Today's Bygones feature is on page 16.