

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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<https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/memories-of-growing-up-in-ringwood/#map=10/-1.77/50.85/0/33:1:1|34:1:1>

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www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

Checked - John Martin

File name	Name code	Code number	Track number	Interview date:
	J-J	011	0001M0.mp3	26/11/2012

00-00-00

Well, I was born in Derbyshire in 1941 but my parents - it was being bombed out - so my parents felt it would be safer to move to Ringwood. We lived at Toll cottage in Ringwood, a house in Ringwood, and I recall hearing "boom, boom, boom" in the distance and being frightened and asking my mother "what's that sound" and she said "we're at war but you're quite safe, we're the goodies. Britain always wins so stop worrying about the war". (laughter) The only thing that really frightened me though was the tanks going past. There weren't many of them but they would rumble past and make the whole of the garden shake and I'd run indoors because I was only little, run indoors terrified of it, but you know, it's one of our soldiers, you're quite safe.

00-00-51

But my father didn't go to war. He wasn't called up because he got a job as Southern Area Officer for the Rural Industries Bureau. He had a team of men to keep the rural crafts of the area going - including Ringwood right down to Lands End - to keep the rural crafts going, such as wheelwrights, smithies, the thatchers, so that there would still be the skills that we would need when the war was over. And at the weekend, because he was away all week, he'd come home and dig on the allotment for part of the time. I think it was called

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'Digging for Victory' and we had the nicest fruit and vegetables. I've never tasted like or see now at all since then. I can remember that because it was the lovely food and just across the road - it was busy and dangerous you know to go across there and run around and have free use of that allotment. And then we kept hens at the bottom of our ordinary garden for the chickens and I suspect one or two ended up on our Christmas dinner. We were rationed for things like fruits and all the essentials but we had a sweet shop next to us and my mother kept being given the coupons 'for your little girl' and it was a paradise for me - I was never short of sweets. And the war was lovely from that point of view. (laughs) I had rotten teeth because of it.

00-02-23

And then there were the soldiers, occasional soldiers, who would come during the week time, presumably on their way to or from the war, who would be billeted by my mother on a couch in the front living room, because it was only a small two bedroom cottage. She would billet them and then after the war or when they were coming back they'd drop in as a thank you token and bring us some tea and sweets and I embarrassed her by putting my money box on the mantelpiece (laughing all the time) with a request that a donation be put in there. She hated it, I only did it the once, it embarrassed her acutely.

00-03-05

There were the coupons, which I was concerned about, you know, how do you cope, and she said, "well, you won't have to worry about them because when the war ends we won't be bothered by it". But there were coupons for everything, so we never wasted anything - a lot of food wastage going on nowadays - and that's lasted through 'til now. I never waste any food, I plan well ahead. But I'd have to eat my crusts. My mother said "eat your crusts up Jill" and I'd say "why?" "Because of the poor people", and I said "the poor people can have my crusts". (laughs) I hated the things! But we weren't ever short of food. We had a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables, raspberries and strawberries and fresh peas, that you just don't get the taste of unless you grow your own now.

I wasn't particularly aware of the war, apart from the soldiers and the odd "boom, boom", because you didn't have any shelters and there was no-one coming around to tell you to block the lights out, you felt quite safe. I mean there was some relief when the war was over felt by my parents, you know, the war's over you can breathe now. We ran around quite happily without any particular worries from the enemy. I knew nothing about the 'plane which apparently had crashed not all that far from the cottage. A German 'plane that got shot down not very far away, into the railway line, because the railway line wasn't very far from the cottage. And then eventually we left Toll Cottage when I was about nine. This is after the war, because they wanted to build a dual carriageway. It's gone under the dual carriageway; Toll Cottage is no more. I think that's about it.

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Ends: 00-05-04

Keywords: Toll Cottage, Ringwood, Rural Industries Bureau, allotments, Dig for Victory, tanks, rationing, coupons, sweets, billets, soldiers, aeroplane crash

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Sometime afterwards I was doing some voluntary work and I said to him how grateful I'd been that the soldiers had been defending us during the Second World War and he had access to some papers that Hitler had written, with his plans for children of my age and he said "it's a good job that Britain won the war, because you wouldn't have liked what he had in mind". He never elaborated and I didn't really want to know. I didn't ask any further.

(pause)

You said that soldiers stayed at your house? (Question not on recording)

We didn't see much, only on their way to or from the war I presume. I don't remember anything much apart from other than someone coming in, being put up for the night, then going on his way the next day. Then coming back because they were so grateful to my mother for putting them up, with a packet of tea. Tea was scarce and was very much welcome there and some sweets "for your little girl" (laughs) which I liked, chocolates or some such. Apart from that and seeing an occasional soldier rumbling past on a tank, I saw nothing of it at all. I don't remember anything that was in Derbyshire anyway, I was too tiny, but once we'd got into Ringwood, by the time I was two and a half, and you did start to become aware of what's going on around you with the tanks and the "boom, boom, boom" sound going. I didn't know a war was going on; I would never have known it at all. It was quite a carefree childhood. I was never short of food although there was rationing going on

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and there were supposed to be limitations. I think we probably ate better then. Reminisce about the old days, but I think we ate better than we do now. Apparently the food tasted nicer than it does now. The fresh fruit and vegetables that my father grew because of the war was nicer than anything I've ever tasted since from the shops here.

Ends: 00-02-10

Keywords: Hitler, children, soldiers, billets, rationing, sweets, tea

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