

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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Project information:

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

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[00:00:00]

Could I just ask you to tell me your name, and when and where you were born?

Donald William Bond and I was born in Lyndhurst. Possibly at the Fenwick hospital.

When were you born?

The ninth of the tenth, twenty eight [09/10/1928].

[00:00:20]

Were you in Lyndhurst at the start of the war?

Yes.

So you were about seventeen?

At the start of the war I was eleven actually, when the war broke out on September the third.

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CHAIRMAN JULIAN JOHNSON CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

And what were you doing at that stage, were you at school?

I was at school, Emery Down school.

[00:00:42]

Do you remember much about school life, school days?

A lot, yeah I do. Yeah. For instance, the day I started school, my mother took me to school for the first day. As she took hold of my hand and, I didn't care for that at all, we got a few yards and I said, "leave go of my hand," and I ran back home. That was day one. When I got to school I was greeted with a Christmas stocking because it was at that time of the year and I was allowed to play with that for a while. After that, yes, we went on and everything was okay.

Did the war affect school life at that stage? Early in the war.

No, not really. No, we carried on exactly the same. Yeah. No one stayed home. We were all issued with gasmasks that's the only thing. We had to take those to school. But otherwise no, it carried on the same.

[00:01:52]

So you didn't have any evacuees?

Oh we had evacuees here. But I didn't, we didn't, mom didn't have any evacuees, because there were four of us and there was only two bedrooms. So no, we didn't have them, but there were plenty of evacuees in the forest and then Lyndhurst, yeah.

And they came to school with you?

Not many, most of them went to Lyndhurst school. I don't think we had any at Emery Down school. Of course Emery Down school's not there now. It's a private dwelling now, yeah.

And so, what age did you leave school?

Fourteen. Not at Emery Down, I went to Lyndhurst for, I suppose a year or so and then I did mix with the evacuees and there were so many that we alternately went mornings one week and afternoons the next because there were so many children they couldn't teach them all at the same time.

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CHAIRMAN JULIAN JOHNSON CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

Hum.

And then I finally went to Bartley school and finished the school at the age of fourteen.

How did you travel there?

On Bus. Hants to Dorset (coughs) excuse me, Hants to Dorset bus.

[00:03:24]

And were the school days ever interrupted by raids?

Yes they were. Well last time we were, you know the bombers had started, and our shelters were right across the playing field, and I wanna say right across I suppose is two to three hundred yards across, which seemed to me at the time to be a long way to go if the siren went. Although the siren should have gone at least twenty minutes before any action or any aircraft were above us. And that did happen. Except that the shelters we were in were dark, no lights, they were damp and we were allowed out of the shelters for a while with the headmaster, just to get a bit of fresh air, and all of a sudden we were outside and they did come over. And he pushed us in, quick, and doing so, he's a big man, he trod on my foot; that I remember.

This was at Bartley school?

This was at Bartley school.

What was the headmaster's name, do you remember?

Mr Monkton. You know, he's a very nice chap too and his wife was a teacher at Lyndhurst.

And did you actually, were you involved, or did you have a close shave with any of the raids, the air raids?

No, not really a close shave, no. No I didn't.

[00:05:00]

Presumably you were affected by rationing and...?

Yeah. Everyone was rationed but my father was a butcher and I don't suppose we went short at all in that respect. But when I started work at the sawmill, people that were on that type of work got extra ration. The normal ration was 2 ounces a week, (coughs) but

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workers like that, what do you call...?

Manual workers.

Manual workers got 12 ounces. And that was quite a lot then. Yeah. We got our sweets every month, we had a ration of sweets, we got those every month. Yeah.

[00:05:56]

So was your father's butchers shop in Lyndhurst?

(Coughs) Excuse me. Yes it was. It was where the teapot shop is now, if you know where that is. It's just as you come out the car park and I did mention this to Gareth, that a string of bombs was dropped through the street. And my father had Wednesday afternoon off and it was a Wednesday that they dropped 'em and they dropped one straight through a drain outside of his shop, but none of them went off. None of them. They were all, I was told, but I can't verify this at all, that they were filled with sawdust rather than explosives and it was said that they were made somewhere in like Czechoslovakia or somewhere. Whether that's true or not, I can't be sure.

Lucky escape.

It was a lucky escape. Yeah.

Presumably his business was very effected, he'd been having to deal with all the rationing?

Oh yeah, his, oh yeah, yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah.

[00:07:11]

Do you remember any, while we're talking about that, do you remember any of the other shops in Lyndhurst high street during the war?

Well the fire-brigade were opposite more or less opposite that butchers shop, and one bomb dropped through there and a young chap was in there and it dropped straight by him and knocked a tile off, hit him on the shoulder, and there again he would have been gone if there had been explosives in there. But, I think there were seven straight down through the main street, none of them went off.

[Ends: 00:07:49]

Keywords:

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Lyndhurst, Fenwick hospital, Emery Down school, school life, Christmas, gasmasks, evacuees, Lyndhurst school, Bartley school, bus, Hants to Dorset bus, air raids, shelters, aircraft, headmaster, Mr Monkton, rationing, butcher, shop, Lyndhurst high street, sawmill, manual workers, bombs, Gareth, sawdust, explosives, Czechoslovakia, fire brigade.

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<p>[00:00:00]</p> <p>Oh yes...?</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>But you didn't, presumably at the time you were not aware of what was going on at Beaulieu with the, erm...?</i></p> <p>Oh, I didn't know anything about, no one would have known that, no. No.</p> <p><i>Let's just finish your period as a child.</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>[00:00:21]</p> <p><i>Did you go out and play in the forest much?</i></p> <p>Yeah a lot, yeah.</p> <p><i>What sort of things would you do? Would you have been able to go out where you wanted to?</i></p> <p>Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, you would have been allowed to do so. Anywhere where the army were billeted in the forest of course you weren't allowed to be there. But there weren't a great restriction on it. I mean, we knew where they were and I spoke to Gareth on that particular subject.... I don't know what you're gonna come to now but I can tell you where they were –</p> <p><i>Indistinct - just go over that again.</i></p> <p>Yeah, well (phone rings) the airborne were stationed in Minstead Manor - you wanna take that off?</p> <p><i>Shall we just start that sentence again –</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p>				

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- where you say about the airborne.

[00:01:16]

Yeah. Okay? The airborne was stationed at Minstead Manor and that was on the Compton estate and it was where I was living was on the Compton estate (coughs) and the Manor house has now been (clock begins to chime) pulled down and a more modern house built on that. That was the airborne, of course the R.A.F. were at –

Sorry –

[Ends: 00:01:44]

Keywords:

Beaulieu, play, forest, army, billeted, restriction, Gareth, airborne, Minstead Manor, Compton estate, R.A.F.

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[00:00:00]

Shall we go back to the Manor house?

Yeah. Again? Start again from the Manor house?

From the Manor house.

Okay, the Manor House were where the airborne were stationed and it's now been pulled down and it's a private estate. I actually lived on the estate myself with my mother and brother, father, you know. The R.A.F. were at Stoney Cross, of course. The navy were billeted in the, what was then the Grand Hotel, now called the Lyndhurst Park hotel. And some army were in the forest, you know, I remember having a walk out to the forest over the golf course and there were French Canadians billeted in there. There were army, other army – British army, billeted in the, oh where is it.... up Beaulieu road on the right hand side. I can't think of the park now - switch it off a minute.

[Ends: 00:01:22]

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Keywords:

Manor House, airborne, estate, R.A.F., Stoney Cross, navy, billeted, Grand Hotel, Lyndhurst Park Hotel, army, forest, golf course, French Canadians, British army, Beaulieu road.

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<p>[00:00:00]</p> <p>Yeah, yeah, So I'll go back to the army. Were billeted, the British army were billeted in Park Hill and there were, I think, some people billeted at Bank in the enclosure there. Let me see, they were Pioneer Corps in Bank. (Coughs). That's what I remember about the army around here.</p> <p><i>With the navy based at the Grand Hotel did you see much coming and going from them?</i></p> <p>Not a lot. Not a lot, I didn't live in the village then I lived on that Compton estate that I mentioned, so we didn't get down to the village a lot in those days because our deliveries of groceries were, you know, brought to us.</p> <p><i>How were they brought?</i></p> <p>By van. Yeah. Not because of the war, but I mean that's how groceries and coal was delivered. Either by lorry or van, or, the bread even was delivered. Wherever you are, hum yeah.</p> <p><i>So, when you left school at fourteen –</i></p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>- what did you go on to do then?</i></p> <p>I started in the butcher's shop and I stayed there for 6 months with dad, 'n he didn't care for me working there, he found me another job and that was in the forest and I stayed there until the end of the war.</p> <p><i>And what were you doing?</i></p>				

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I was a sawyer's mate. (Coughs), Do you want me to go on about the mill, sawmill?

Denny sawmill, yes.

Yeah, Denny sawmill. Yeah well, Denny sawmill was built for the war effort and the main thing that we were cutting there was pit props and railway sleepers. And there were a main ban saw, which was operated by a gentleman called Bill Coffin, he was head sawyer. The second sawyer was Jim Harris; he was on a smaller ban saw. (Coughs) And then it came down to flat bead saws which I was on, and I was the sawyers mate there, and he used to put it through the saw and I used to receive it at the other end. And then it went on to rollers and went out to the stacking area and some of the girls, that were on that picture, were marking the timber in certain ways, for where it had to go I presume, I didn't know quite what they were doing, but that's what they were doing. Yeah.

[00:03:08]

So the wood was all felled locally in the New Forest?

All New Forest timber. Yes.

Do you know who was felling the trees?

Well the Forestry Commission I would think. Mainly oak, mainly hardwood, oak, and chestnut and there were some firs, Douglas fir was cut and sawn up. But none of it was say for, or much of it were, for planks or anything like that. Mainly pit props and sleepers.

So, did you say that the saw mill was actually built for –

Yeah.

-- for the war effort?

For the war effort. And at the end of the war, the wars, when the war actually ended 'n so did we, we didn't do another thing. And the mill was pulled down, the equipment, and as far as I know it went to Germany to rebuild Germany. To help to rebuild Germany.

Where was the sawmill?

At Denny, where now is a holiday, you know, caravan park through the summer.

And how did you get to work each day?

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Bicycle. Twenty minutes, that was about all. Yeah.

[00:04:07]

How many people do you think were working there?

(Coughs) Well, (papers shuffling) a quick look at this is a, one, yes... About 40 people.

40 people.

Hum.

And they were all, were they all employees?

Yes. Yes.

And mostly men?

Mostly men yeah. But I mean the women, the Land Army Girls did play a big part in it, you know, they were there all the time.

You had Land Army Girls and prisoners of war?

Yeah, yeah.

What do you know about the prisoners of war, where were they from?

Oh Italy, sorry. Italy. They were Italian prisoners of war and they were good workers. And they, you know, they didn't slack at all (coughs) but because, at that time, by the time those photographs were taken, Italy had turned round and were on the side of, you know, the allies. As soon as they got rid of Mussolini that was it I think, cause he was a dictator, wasn't he, yeah.

Do you know where the prisoners of war lived?

Yeah, at Setley.

Was that a camp or...?

Yeah I, (coughs) excuse me - nissen hut I think, yeah.

[00:06:23]

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Shall we have a little talk about the photographs?

Yeah.

If you could mention the names of any of the people you recognise?

(Paper shuffling.)

Do you want to look at your list as well?

I will do. We were on D.

If you tell me any names you recognise and perhaps if you remember any particular anecdotes about any of them.

Yeah Bob Onley. Do you wanna talk about individuals?

If you've got any particular memories, yes.

Bob Onley, (coughs) Gus Anstey both from Brockenhurst. And then we come along to Jim Harris who I said was second sawyer and then we come along to Jim Whitehorn who was labouring, I'm not quite sure, n' he was in labouring there. And then I come along to my cousin, George Rockley. And in the second row, Bill Coffin, head sawyer. Bill Knight, he was a labouring. Ron Hatch, labouring. Myself, as I said a sawyers mate. Jack Ellis. And the others, oh, Wilf Wiltshire, he was my, he was a sawyer and I was the one that was receiving the timber through after he'd sawn it, 'n and off it went out to the stacking yard. In the front row, Bella Lay as she was then, and her job was to drive the crane, the overhead crane. Then we come to Miss Burrows who was head of all the Land Girls. Jack Head was foreman of the whole lot. He was a kind of an executive but I don't know his name. And then I don't know these girls names and then a prisoner of, a POW there and a POW there. That's D.

[00:08:59]

Shall we look at E?

It repeats mind you. Quite often.

Hum.

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Jim Harris, second sawyer. Bill Coffin, head sawyer. Jim Whitehorn, labour. Jack Head, foreman. Wilf Wiltshire, a sawyer. And I don't know the other three. Ron Hatch, labour. Bill Knight. Erm...

Arther Long?

Arthur Long, yeah. Myself, Don Bond, Jack Ellis, Gus Anstey, and Joe Newman. There again is Bella who used to drive the crane. I don't know her first name so I got Miss Lane. The other girls I don't know. Miss Burrows again, and Gorge Rockly, my cousin. See, their mainly all there, except the POWs. So I've repeated quite a few.

[00:10:21]

What did the prisoners of war wear, do they wear a uniform?

Yes they did. It was brown with a coloured diamond on one leg. In actual fact you can see the diamond on one of those pictures.

And were they brought in each day by, with guards?

Yes. A lorry and one guard, that's all that's necessary, yep. Every day. And they went home the same way.

You mentioned the Land Army Girls.

Yeah.

What were they doing, what were their jobs at the mill?

Well I would say that the main job they were doing was stacking some of the timber and marking it up for where it had to go. I think they were armed with a crayon, or some sort of marker to put on the end of the timber.

And then the timber was taken away by lorry, or how did they transport it away?

Yeah a lorry, yeah a lorry transported it away.

And it in its final form.

(Talking over each other.)

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Yeah. In its finished form, yeah. As well as the Land Girls being out there, there were, I think, three or four chaps that were conscientious objectors that wouldn't go to war. So they had to, so they were outside all the time in all weathers. (Coughs).

So were they treated differently from the other workers?

They did. They sat on their own till. Yeah they didn't mix with us at all. That's the way it was.

Humm, 'n what did you think of that, was it just –

Well, as a fourteen year old at the time I didn't go much, I didn't take much, you know. The older people did, they resented it. I mean, after I finished there, I did me National Service, so yeah.

Did you have to wear a uniform of any sort?

No. No we were all in our own clothes, boiler suits, whatever it was. Yep.

What did the, was there a building there, what sort of structure were you working in?

It was (clock chimes) like a big aircraft hangar, a domed hangar.

Shall I just stop yo-

[Ends: 00:12:57]

Keywords:

Billeted, British army, Park Hill, Bank, Pioneer Core, Grand Hotel, Compton estate, deliveries, groceries, war, coal, butcher shop, forest, sawyers mate, Denny sawmill, pit props, railway sleepers, ban saw, Bill Coffin, flat bed saw, timber, New Forest, felling, Forestry Commission, oak, hardwood, chestnut, fir, Douglass fir, war effort, Germany, rebuild Germany, Denny, employees, Land Army Girls, Land Army, prisoners of war, POW, Italy, Italian prisoners of war, photographs, photograph D, photograph E, allies, Mussolini, dictator, Setley, Bob Only, Gus Anstey, Brockenhurst, Jim Harris, second sawyer, Jim Whitehorn, labouring, cousin, George Rockley, head sawyer, Bill Knight, Ron Hatch, Jack Ellis, Wilf Wiltshire, Bella, Lay, crane, Miss Burrows, Jack Head, foreman, executive, Arthur Long, Don Bond, Joe Newman, Miss Lane, uniform, coloured diamond, guards, transport, lorry, conscientious objectors, National Service, boiler suits, building, structure, aircraft

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hanger, domed aircraft hangar.

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[00:00:00]				
<i>So you... Building, can you describe the building?</i>				
I'd describe the building as an, it looked like an aircraft hangar, a domed roof. All metal, all metal construction. It wasn't a warm place to work, there was no heating in the place at all. There's not much else I can say about it really.				
<i>How much equipment did you have, you mentioned a crane?</i>				
Yeah.				
<i>So apart from the actual saws ..</i>				
Tractors. And of course there was, we've got no photograph of it, a generator. A big generator that drove (coughs) all the electrical equipment and that was to the, well whichever way you look at the main building it was on to the side of the building then, let's put it that way, it was a giant generator.				
<i>And what was that fuelled by?</i>				
Diesel. Yeah, and there's also a sawdust burning, erm what would you call it? Er. Er. Well it was like a bunker, what would you call it...? Switch it off a minute.				
Yeah.				
[Ends: 00:01:31]				
Keywords: describe, building, aircraft hangar, metal construction, equipment, crane, saws, tractors, generator, diesel, sawdust, burning, bunker.				

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[00:00:00]

(Indistinct) Sawdust boiler then?

Sorry?

It was a sawdust burning generator?

No, it's a generator was for the electric and the (coughs) the sawdust was burnt in a concrete incinerator. And the sawdust was taken by ducting, you know, it was sucked through ducting to go outside to be burnt. It was on all the time, that was.

And that was just literally burnt as –

Just as

Waste?

Waste, yeah.

Hum. Shall we have a quick look at the other photographs you've got some pictures of equipment haven't you?

Yeah. That is

Picture A

Yeah. Picture A is the main band saw. And that's the saw that would, as you can see, cut the, begin to cut the trees. And Bill Coffin, who we've already mentioned head sawyer.

That's his back, yes?

That's his back there, yeah. That is, a prisoner of war.

On the left yes?

On the left, and his name was Gino. He was a barber. And he used to our hair, in the lunch break for sixpence. Gus Anstey, and I think that could be my cousin, I'm not sure, and that guy I don't know. I know him but I don't know his name.

Hum.

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(Shuffling and moving sounds)

Picture B

(Paper shuffling sounds)

Picture B. I don't know the driver but the timber, that is the way the timber came in, and this is the overhead crane that Bella Lay used to drive. And that would be taken off, as its being taken off now, all in one. They put a wire round that whole load, lift it up and it would go out to the stacking area. And when it was required inside, it, any of these trees would have gone in, because this crane goes right into the saw bench. Yeah.

[00:02:25]

Who, actually ran the sawmill, was there an organisation? It wasn't the Forestry Commission, was it?

Yeah it was.

In those days?

Yeah. It was. The Forestry Commission, and that's where dad went to get the job for me. The Forestry Commission.

Right. Could you remember what you were paid?

Yeah, well, paid well we were, remembering what year it was. I think I was getting around three pound a week. I was getting more I think than my father perhaps. And I was only a teenager.

Hum. And extra rations as well.

Extra rations yeah.

You say your father got the job for you.

Yeah.

Did you have to apply for it?

No he just got it for me, and I got a start, yeah.

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That's a good job straight from school.

Yeah. Yeah. Oh, it was a good job. I loved it, it was outdoors. I used to drive the tractor as a teenager. I was driving the tractor at, I suppose at fourteen. Yeah. But it didn't matter, you were in the forest you weren't on the main road, you know. I was, I pulled timber, I pulled timber with the tractor and I've used it for, you know, getting rid of the off cuts. So I was really in my element driving that tractor, yeah.

Yes.

At a young age. Right this is –

[00:04:06]

- Picture C

This is picture C is a Saw Doctor's shop. I don't know the names of these guys, but what they're doing is sharpening the saws, and at the moment, yes, there're sharpening the saw there. And I think this one is putting the set on the saw. See there's a saw band, a complete round saw band, and now and again the main one would break. And yeah, that's a Saw Doctor's shop and that was their job, to look after the saws.

So they, they, sharpened the ban saws and then they were put in in rotation were they?

They were stacked up here you see, once they were ready, and if you go back to the main one. The main ban saw, yeah; you can see it.

On A.

You can see that wheel there, and there's one down in the pit; down the bottom there, you can't see that. And now and again that would fly off, or break. And what a noise that made, I could tell you.

[00:05:21]

In a metal building. Presumably it was fairly noisy anyway?

It was noisy anyway yeah. Noisy factory, or sawmill. Yeah, as you can see it was built of all metal.

Corrugated iron.

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Corrugated iron, yeah.

Did you work all the way through, all the year round, even in the winter?

Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah we did, yeah. All the winter. Oh, we were in the dry, other than those that were out in the stacking yard, we were in the dry so it didn't much matter. Snow. Whatever. We were there, yeah.

How was the wood moved, the timber, moved around within the yard, did you have to use the crane for transporting the wood from each place?

No. Each of these guys had one of those leather straps round, you know, and a shoulder pad of leather and it was moved around that way, on your shoulder. Yeah. Yeah there weren't any mechanical way of doing it out there, no.

And were there ever any accidents?

None. That I remember, none. No accidents at all. No.

[00:06:49]

Okay – presumably there were other sawmills in the forest?

Yes there was. There was one at Ashurst. I think there was one at Burley. Erm, I can't think of any others, but there were quite a few around the forest. Yeah I never, I never been to them, but yeah.

Hum. And did you have to go the Forestry Commission head office at any time-

No, never.

-as an employee?

No never. (Coughs). I was offered a job when that, when the mill finished at the end of the war, to work for the Forestry Commission and I turned it down. And I was also offered by the sawyer that was on my bench, who was before the war a professional golfer, to go with him on the golf course. And I turned that down, and I regret that.

Hummm.

But as a child, or a teenager, you don't really think about the future.

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No

No, No.

So. Do -

[Ends 00:08:08]

Keywords:

Sawdust, generator, electric, incinerator, ducting, waste, photographs, equipment, picture A, ban saw, Bill Coffin, head sawyer, prisoner of war, Gino, barber, Gus Anstey, cousin, picture B, driver, timber, overhead crane, Bella Ley, stacking area, saw bench, organisation, Forestry Commission, paid, rations, extra rations, outdoors, tractor, drive, picture C, Saw Doctor's shop, saw band, corrugated iron, work, winter, accidents, Ashurst, Burley, Forestry Commission head office, professional golfer, sawyer, golf course, regret.

File name	Name code	Code number	0007M0.WAV	Interview date:
[00:00:00]				
Yeah.				
<i>Ten past eleven. Was working in the sawmill a reserved occupation?</i>				
A reserved occupation?				
<i>Was there any possibility that you would be called up for military service? Or did...</i>				
I think it was a reserved occupation, because no one were called up.				
Hum.				
On the other hand when I think about it, I weren't old enough myself and one of the other guys that was there, was, went down the pits, you know, the coal mines. But he got that disease that coal miners get, skin disease, and he had to come out of it and he was there. That was Bob Onley that we spoke about just now. No I don't think - I think it was a reserve occupation, yeah.				
<i>Do you know any of the background to the Italian prisoners of war? Did you, did you talk with them much and learn much about their history?</i>				

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Not really. But, they were good at making things, you know they did they made belts. They made good belts, out of god knows what, but they were quite attractive belts, and they made toys. They made snakes, this long. If you held the tail they would wiggle, you know. They did those sorts of things to pass the time away when they were, you know, in the evenings when they were prisoners. Yeah.

Were they paid any sort of wages?

They must have been paid something, yes. But I don't know what, yeah.

Did you get any food provided while you were at work?

No,

Took your own lunch?

Took our own sandwiches, yep, and made tea that was about it, and sugar was provided there and that's about it.

What hours did you work?

I think it was quarter to eight till five o'clock. Something like that, yeah.

So did you have any electric lights presumably?

There was lightning in there, yeah. (Coughs).

You mentioned collecting acorns –

Yes.

- Could you tell me a bit about that?

Yeah. We collected acorns for a farmer at Emery Down, and he paid us good money and I can't exactly remember what it was per hundred weight, or half hundred weight, I'm not sure, but it was good money and I bought my first wrist watch with that money, down in the village.

What did they use the acorns for?

He did for a farmers use.

For planting –

No, no farmer. Eating you know, the pigs and...

(Indistinct.)

Yeah the one that Jean was talking about, they were for the Forestry Commission and I think they were for planting. (Movement sounds) Sorry, sorry.

(Indistinct) planted some as well so that they kept the timber regenerated?

Yeah.

You mentioned a chestnut wood –

Yeah.

- at the sawmill. Were there more chestnut trees around the forest then than there are now?

Actually there's a lot round Denny, yeah.

Oh.

There's a lot around Denny. It weren't the best of timber but it was alright for sleepers, that's what was mainly cut, you know, it was used for sleepers, yeah.

Was there any office or administrative work at the sawmill at all?

Yeah, Miss Burrows was the one that was doing that sort of work. Where she did it I don't know, I think she did it in the *(indistinct)* she had an office there where we used to have our cups of tea and a sandwich, you know. I think she had an office there somewhere, but I mean, we were never there to see what she was doing, but she was the one that was doing the administrative work. She did the wages I believe.

And, you mentioned the Land Girls.

Yeah.

Were they billeted with local families or did they all live together?

I think, quite few were local, quite a number of them were local, in the area you know. I can

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name two that were from Lyndhurst. And that was Bella. She, after the war, she lived up here. She's passed away now, and another one was (indistinct), but she's not on the picture, they were the two local ones.

When we looked through the picture you refer to some of the ladies as miss –

Yeah.

- so 'n so, was that because –

Because I didn't know –

- the standard practice?

No I didn't, I didn't know her first name so, and I knew she weren't married so, Miss Lane was one of them. Miss Burrows was not married. Yeah.

[00:05:36]

Did you have much of a social life at that stage? Was there much to do, dances and so forth?

Yeah there were dances. There was a cinema in Lyndhurst. It carried on during the war.

Where was the cinema?

Where Budgens is now. Yeah, supermarket now. We didn't, where are we now... what else did we do? Well we played football or cricket, you know. When the weather was right. On greens and mainly Goose Green. At the erm, on the Brockenhurst road, yeah.

That was just a public open space, was it?

That was then. There's no traffic about, you couldn't do it now there's so much traffic... for the size of that green you couldn't play cricket. No, there was hardly any traffic in those days. Yeah I'm talking about 70 years ago, pretty well you know.

And if you wanted to travel anywhere was it by bicycle or bus?

Bus, yeah, we travelled by Hants to Dorset bus and that was a shilling from Lyndhurst to Southampton and a shilling from Lyndhurst to Lymington. And in those days the Hants to Dorset had bought out, I think the guys name was Mr white, and he had what was known then as a charabanc; they didn't call them buses. And he was bought out by Hants to

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Dorset and he stipulated that the price of a shilling should not go up. And it didn't go up till after the war. So we only paid a shilling to get to Southampton on the bus, a return that was. Yeah. (Coughs) Excuse me.

And so although you were not living in the middle of Lyndhurst, if in the evenings, it would be Lyndhurst you would go to for a drink or to the cinema would it?

Yeah. We all didn't go very far. Others would have gone into Southampton. And then of course we didn't go into Southampton much between the outbreak of war and say 1943 because after that the war in the air was won by the R.A.F. and there was very little bombings after that. You get the odd occasional one, but I remember Southampton, the blitz, the devastation and the way that the shops carried on. Even Woolworths carried on in a way that erm, it was temporary but it carried on.

Right.

Yeah.

[00:09:03]

Do you remember any air raids in this area, bombings, over the New Forest?

Erm, (clears throat), Not other than the one that we spoke about, erm

At Allum Green?

At Allum Green. And there were bombs dropped at the, north side of the golf course, there again, never did any damage anywhere. After it happened we knew they were, we heard them, but we knew that they weren't far away, so we found them, found the craters and yeah, that's all I remember. The other thing of course was that I think it would be probably been 19-, early 1940s when, I think it was two aircraft come across machine gunning and I thought it was motorbikes. I was living on the Compton estate in those days, but I found out afterwards that it was them come across very low machine gunning, and they machine gunned what was now the White Rabbit, and it was called er, another hotel before that. And the bullet marks, the holes were in this hotel. (Coughs) And that was on the, as you leave Lyndhurst, on the Romsey Road.

What did you, do you remember all, what did you hear about the bombing at Allum Green?

All I know about Allum Green was it was so bad luck that those bombs were dropped and I was told that it was sergeants that were billeted there and it took a direct hit. I can't, I know you said that you spoke to someone about the possibility it was flares the night before

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dropped, I can't see how anyone could pick out Allum Green and take a direct hit like that; I think it was just bad luck. 'Cause, because it wasn't the same night, as I understand it, that those flares were dropped n' that they bombed it. There's no way could they pick that out at night. It was just bad luck.

Unfortunate yes.

Yeah.

Do you, were you aware of the build up to D-Day in the forest at all?

Yes. But didn't know what it was all about mind you, not D-Day, but I could tell you that they were in the forest between Ashurst 'n Lyndhurst and that was the French Canadians and maybe normal Canadians. The English, the British, were in Park Hill enclosure. I remember walking though, you weren't restricted you could walk though there and then all the lorries were in the forest, you know as many as you could get. And no doubt they were in other places but I can't say exactly where they were, I don't know where they were, but those were the two areas that I knew and that was just before D-Day. D-Day was delayed, if I remember, because of bad weather, and they went off at night, they must have done because I didn't see anything going off.

So you were able to just walk –

Yeah

- as long as it wasn't an actual military –

No.

- airfield?

Yeah. I never ever walked on an airfield no, but you could walk through the park where these lorries were. And where the French Canadians were, they were having a film show in the back of a lorry. You know, so we watched that for a little while. But they didn't say much, they didn't speak or anything. No.

They presumably just had tents?

Pardon?

They were just living in tents?

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Lorries. Lorries mainly, yeah. I didn't see many tents. Yeah, I think they were, must have moved in, n' they weren't there that long, and moved on.

Suddenly all gone.

Suddenly all gone yeah.

[00:13:46]

Did you see any of the airfields at all during the war?

Beaulieu we used to go down and watch the aircraft fly in. There again it was towards the end of the war because, I mean, it was a bit dodgy to go out when the bombers were around. Yeah, we used to go to Beaulieu. But I never got up to Stoney Cross much. Yeah.

I gather getting around by bicycle was quite dangerous without being allowed to have headlights?

Why yeah. Oooh headlights; that's another thing, there was no lights, was there.

No.

And cars had to have the top half of their lights blacked out and all they could see, well they couldn't see much at all. And bicycles, no. To light a cigarette, it was wrong you couldn't do that, you weren't allowed to do that. Nope.

So for the entire war you were living at home with your parents in Compton were you?

Yes. Yes. All the war, yes.

Did you have a brother or a sister? You said there were four of you.

Three brothers. They all, I'm the oldest, but the others have gone unfortunately, passed away, yeah.

Were any of them in the forest during the war?

No, they weren't. They all joined the army and I was in the Air Force myself. After the war that was, 'cause we weren't old enough to be in it.

So you say that the sawmill was closed down, literally just closed down at the end of the

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war and dismantled?

Yeah it was.

And that's when you were, was that when you were required to do National Service?

No, I went gardening after that for a little while and then I was called up. I went to Germany myself in the end. I was called up. Went to Padgate and West Kirby for training and then I was stationed at Waterbeach in Cambridge. That was my station, permanent station. And when the Berlin airlift come on, I went over there on day one, they got demobbed from Berlin. Yeah.

Have you got any other particular anecdotes that you remember of the New Forest during the war, anything particular that sticks in your mind?

Yes, there's one other thing that, and I mentioned this to Gareth, that one night my mother saw an aircraft on fire and she said it went down. And from the window she looked out of we knew the area in which it might be, and it went down in Bolderwood. And that was Saturday night. Sunday morning we went up and we found it. And it was burnt out. And by that time the guards had got there, how we knew exactly where it was don't ask me I can't remember how we got there, and I looked at the smouldering embers and there was fingers cut like that. I saw the tops of the fingers of the pilot where he must have gone down and the impact somehow cut his fingers off, and I said to Gareth, they were all well manicured fingernails. And over there to the side was a parachute or two covering something, so we went over to there and we were told, "Back! Don't touch that." So I take it there were bodies under there. That's, that's about it. (Coughs) Excuse me.

It's interesting hearing how, how Lyndhurst itself was affected during the war. I gather there were military working at what is now the Luxury Car Show Room, did you know anything...?

There was war work going on there, yeah. I got an idea it might have been pistons they were making, it could have been. I'm not sure about that though, it could have been pistons for the aircraft. But I can't be sure. But certainly it was taken over for war work yeah.

Did the high street look fairly similar to nowadays apart from no traffic?

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One way street.

[Ends 00:19:14]

Keywords:

Sawmill, reserved occupation, the pits, coal mines, skin disease, Bob Onley, Italian prisoners, belts, toys, wages, collecting acorns, Emery Down, farmer, wrist watch, planting, Jean, Forestry Commission, timber, regenerated, chestnut wood, Denny, sleepers, office, administrative work, Miss Burrows, Land Girls, billeted, local area, Lyndhurst, Bella, picture, standard practice, Miss Lane, social life, dances, cinema, Budgens, football, cricket, Goose Green, Brockenhurst road, traffic, travel, bicycle, bus, Hants to Dorset bus, shilling, Southampton, Lymington, Mr White, charabanc, outbreak of war, 1943, R.A.F., bombings, blitz, devastation, shops, Woolworths, carried on, air raids, New Forest, Allum Green, golf course, damage, craters, early 1940s, aircraft, machine gun/ning/ned, White Rabbit, bullet marks, Romsey road, sergeants, direct hit, flares, bad luck, D-Day, Ashurst, French Canadians, Canadians, British, Park Hill enclosure, restricted, lorries, delayed, airfield, film show, tents, Beaulieu, Stoney Cross, no lights, Compton, army, Air Force, National Service, gardening, Germany, Padgate, West Kirby, Waterbeach, Cambridge, station, Berlin airlift, Bolderwood, guards, fingers, cut, manicured, fingernails, parachute, bodies, Luxury Car Show Room, war work, pistons.

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