

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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File name	V-S	007	0001M0	Interview date: 27/04/13
<p>00:00:00</p> <p><i>Shall we start talking about Millersford. What were you doing when war broke out?</i></p> <p>Oh, I was at school, I was still at school at Hyde, Hyde County Grammar School and in I9....</p> <p>[Interview terminated because of background hum]</p> <p>End 00:00:22</p>				

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CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

File name	V-S	007	0002M0	Interview date: 27/04/13
<p>00:00:00</p> <p><i>Shall we start talking about Millersford. What were you doing when war broke out?</i></p> <p>Oh, I was at school, I was still at school at Hyde, Hyde County Grammar School and in...I left in 1942.</p> <p><i>And then you say.....</i></p> <p>.....after the school certificate. And then I went to the Inland Revenue Office, the tax office in Hyde in Cheshire. And I didn't like it very much at all so I went to the Labour Exchange one day to see what they could offer me as an alternative, without anybody knowing, so it was a little bit sort of secretive.</p> <p><i>You ended up being...</i></p> <p>.....I ended up being invited to go on the course in Walthamstow in London at the South West Essex Technical College and I had to go to Shell House in London to be interviewed to see if I was a suitable candidate and they accepted me for this course which was in radio and telecommunications and I didn't know what was at the end of it. I just went because it was an alternative to working in the Income Tax Office which I hated. And I got through the interview alright. I went to Walthamstow. I was in digs in Walthamstow and went to the college for about three and a half months and passed the test at the end of it and then got offered this job near Salisbury, at Millersford.</p> <p><i>What were you going to be doing there, did you know?</i></p> <p>No I had no idea. Something scientific but I didn't know what. And...and you know my scientific knowledge was very, very sort of primitive almost [chuckling], but...but I...it was something other than...it was an adventure for me, as well...as well as a new job. And I went down to Salisbury, was met by one of the officers from Millersford who took me to my digs, which were absolutely awful. The main thing being the food, and...and...it was quite comfortable, but the bed I had was sort of a double purpose bed. The daughter of the house was on night work so she had the bed during the day and I had the bed at night [both laugh]. So...and I got more...I was there for several weeks, and I got more and more and more miserable, and one of the local girls began to feel sorry for me and...because I was so upset...and I didn't like this house and they knew the family and they were not a very well liked family, so she took me to her own house and I slept on a camp bed in her house as an alternative for a while until I found some new digs. And well...she found them for me and</p>				

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they were very good and lovely and homely and very free...and...except that I was sharing a room with the young boy of the house, but he was only four or five so it was no problem. And I stayed there until the boy got sort of old enough to be sort of taking notice, and I found some more digs, mainly because my friend was going home, and I went and filled the place that she vacated and...with a Mrs Vivien, which was a lovely bungalow on the Downs and it was lovely.

How did you get to work each day?

We used to walk up to Woodfalls, which was a little area of...there...and the bus...the lorry from work, used to be waiting there for us. It was a fifteen hundred weight lorry, and we used to clamber into the back of it and all go there together. All the...all the young people...there was several young people there, I suppose about 14 or 15, and we used to go together. So we got to know one another pretty well.

End 00:04:26

Key words:

Millersford, Hyde County Grammar School (Cheshire), Labour Exchange, South West Essex Technical College, Shell House London, radio and telecommunications course, Walthamstow, digs, Woodfalls, Mrs Vivien

File name	V-S	007	0003M0	Interview date: 27/04/13
<p>00:00:00</p> <p><i>So what were you doing at Millersford, you yourself?</i></p> <p>Well I worked on...they...they had...used to detonate bombs and shells and I used to work on the blast side of it. So we used to assemble pressure gauges which we used to put out on the field near the bomb, radiate from the bomb at various distances from about 10 feet to 100 feet. About every 10 feet along there were 8 to 10 gauges, these pressure gauges which we used to assembled in the lab and then took out and tested, you know to make sure they were working, and then when the bombs went off we actually recorded the pressure on these big drums with film you know, and we developed the films and then they went up to the records office to be measured. So that was my little bit.</p> <p><i>So...so photographic film?</i></p> <p>Yes photographic film, yes, mhum</p>				

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Do you remember any of the particular explosives that were....?

No, no, the main one that I remember RDX TNT. You know, and that...that was one of the most...most...but I...no we didn't really know the details and it wasn't our place to know them. They tested various...there were aluminium ones and...and, you know, various mixes of explosive but ...we...we didn't...it wasn't our place to know things like that. We just did the...looked after the pressure gauges and made sure they were working and...and...and recorded the film of...of the... the blast, the pressure.

So was the explosive put on the ground in the open?

It was a bomb, it was a... and we didn't do that either, they had, you know...the officers did that and we had one man, a Mr Chadwick, who used to look after that side of things. One of our little jobs was to... when they were connecting up the bomb to detonate it, one of us had to go and stand on the roof holding the terminals in our hands wide apart, you know, to make sure there was no connection, while he connected up the detonator at the bomb end. But that was as close as we ever got to the...we...we had to come in, you know, and we were all hidden inside when the actual bombs went off. And we just heard the explosion and hoped that our equipment had worked [chuckle] because sometimes it didn't. And...and you know...it's...it was...it was interesting, but we only saw that little bit of it. We...we didn't see the results and we didn't know what it was all about and what the mixtures were, you know. It wasn't our job to know that, we were just the lab technicians and the...the...that part of the work, you know.

Was it secret work? Did you have to sign...?

Oh, we signed the Official Secrets Act, yes. And it was all quite secret and...and we were known in the village as 'them over the wire', you know. They...we were something like being in an asylum or something, you know. They all thought we were strange people that lived over the wire. But it was, yes, it was secret...secret work, mhum.

Which of the buildings were you in? I gather the buildings had numbers?

Well I worked in the Records Office for quite a time, at the end of my time there. But I was in No 14 which is where one of the recording drums were, that used to record the blast. They had...there were...there was No 10 which was the sort of the headquarters of the field staff, then there was 11, 12, 13 and 14. And 12 if I remember rightly was the photographic part and 13 and 14 were the blast. We were together with the blast and the gauges, and the steel gauges that we made up with quartz crystal, you know, pressure on the crystal and it sort of gave a little impulse on these big drums had the roll of film going around it and we used to develop it. And you could tell who were the lab...lab technicians because we all

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had brown finger nails from the developer

And so you did that developing in the...?

...in the actual, in the little hut, yes and we dried them off and sent them off to the Records Office to be measured. And then I spent some time in the Records Office, and measuring...measuring them a little bit, you know. We had these little square measuring things, we used to measure them every hundredths of an inch or something, you know...quite...

00:04:49

So, building 14 that you were in, was that a brick building?

It was one of the...the underground shelters, yes, it was, you know, it was ...and built into the ground with the grass growing over it so you couldn't see it, and it was sort of safe, you know. It was an underground shelter really.

And was the Records Office the same?

No, it was in the.... the Records Office was, in the....I've got it here

One of these buildings shows the...this was one [Refers to photograph] of the Records Office

[Some discussion of relative positions on photographs]

It was up near the main gate. There's the main gate [refers to photograph]

That's the top left of the photograph. So what is Swanborough House?

That's where the caretaker was, a Mr Swanborough, and he lived...lived on site by the main gate.

And then we've got a photographic block here.....

Yes, this was the back of the Records Office. This was the front of the Records Office, this is the canteen here.

[both discuss position of buildings on photographs]

00:06:04

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How, roughly how big was the site, was it a very big site?

Oh Gosh, I don't really compare it with, what's big...what's?

Well, you could walk across it quite easily.

It was quite a walk from one end...if you walked from here to...to number 13 or number 14 it was quite a walk. Coz...it went [long pause whilst consulting photographs] ah...the road went...it came in at the main office and you walked past these buildings and this went down onto the field. That looks like number....the...where the explosive block was and we were way down here somewhere, way out in the wild, you know

Yes. The whole site was fenced off presumably?

Oh yes, yes, double fenced. It was quite secure, you know. I don't know how much security there was, whether it was electrified or anything like that, but it was double fenced and it was, the, you know, they used to walk it every so often to make sure it was ... but I don't know if anybody would ever try to get in

Did you have to show your passes when...each day?

Not really because you went in on the lorry you see, and the lorry just drove in...and we'd be there...and everybody knew everybody.

So, that was full staff. [referring to photograph VS-007 Group photo] That was industrial staff and scientific staff.

So this would be....the big photograph [discuss photograph]

All the staff, completely. A lot of the people here were the industrial staff and then it was...these people were...there were all mixed up actually [referring to photograph]. And some more at this end, they were what were called the industrial staff and they used to do the.... in the other section, in the fragmentation section, they used to handle these big screens and bits of fragments. They used to collect fragments ...

[Recording ceased because V-S had problems with her mobility]

End 00.08.11

Key words:

detonate, bombs, shells, pressure gauges, photographic film, explosives, RDX TNT, Mr

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Chadwick, Official Secrets Act, Mr Swanborough,

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00:00:00

What do you know about the work on the fragmentation? I know you didn't work on that, but how did they carry out their testing?

Yes, I can...well, I didn't...at Millersford I didn't work on the fragmentation, but when I went to Shoeburyness I went over to fragmentation. I had these screens. They describe it in one of the books, these big screens, and they used to find the penetration of the fragments. They used to put these round the shells, mainly shells and bombs, and...and...and they used to put them round the shell and they exploded it. And by measuring the penetration of the fragments they could tell the speed and the size of ... size ... and they could tell what the velocity was of the fragment when it ...when it hit the screen, you know, and how many, how far they went and how many fragments there were, you know. But the industrial staff used to handle those and when I worked in...in the fragmentation I just used to do the total, you know. I'd add up the number of fragments and how much was saved and that sort of thing, and the speed, you know. But you had a formula and the machines did it for you really. There wasn't a lot of the brain work.

What other buildings were on the site at Millerford? Was there a head office?

Yes, one of these buildings was...[refers to photograph] this was a canteen. This is where the.... [consulting photograph]

Top right

Top, yes. And this was the superintendent's office at the back of the Records Office. Mr Pilgrim.

Oh, Mr Pilgrim

You've heard that name before.

Yes. What do you remember about him? What do you remember about Mr Pilgrim?

This is him...this is him here [refers to, presumably, group photograph marked as Credit]

Photograph of ... oh, the one holding the sign?

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Holding the sign that's right. He was the superintendent and he was the deputy Mr Farrow. Mmm. That that was the deputy. Mmm

Were there any other particular people on that photograph? Which is you first of all?

Here I am [refers to photograph]

So you are just to the right of Mr Pilgrim.

Yes, hmm. Yes, this chap Mr Rice, he was.....now he...he worked at the roads and things and they were involved with the same sort ... the shells and things, you know, and mines and things. [pondering the photo]... he was the administrative officer, Mr Scanlon, who everybody hated. He was a real jobs worth. (laughs)

These ladies here were the canteen staff.

Is Mr Lovegrove on that picture?

Yes he certainly is [appears to be looking for him].....come on Jeffrey where are you? These were the...this one and...Mr Tomlin, where is Mr Tomlin?....were the ones who gave us our sex education. No, I can't see...

Which...do you remember which year that photograph was taken?

Yes 1945.

Didn't Mr Lovegrove come after...oh no, he was there in at 1945, wasn't he?

He might not have been on it, but should be ...

I know he moved there very late in the war didn't he?

He was....

Mr Simmonds

Mr Simmonds. That's Mr Simmonds. He was one of the experimental officers, one of the bosses of the...big bosses.

No I can't see him on here, perhaps it's before he came. [presumably referring back to Mr Lovegrove]

What's this structure behind....?

No idea what that is at all.....can't remember

No don't worry

No

Did you have any particular incidents when you were there that you remember?

No, not when I was there but, I was taken ill. I became ill. I had a sort of a...I think I was doing too much because I think I was going out in the evening and I...I...I decided that I wanted to leave the place because I wasn't happy about the type of work it was, because I didn't like the idea of developing bombs that were going to kill people and things, and I got a bit uneasy. And I decided I that would leave and take up nursing, become a nurse. Or... first of all I was going to join the army and my father completely disagreed and he said No, no daughter of his was going to....he was an army man all his life from the First World War right through to...and he was in the Second World War, and he wouldn't allow me to go into the ATS.

[Phone rings and interrupts] Oh dear, ...

End 00:05:37

Key words:

Millersford, Records Office, Mr Lovegrove, Mr Rice, Mr Simmonds, Mr Pilgrim, Mr Farrow, fragmentation, bombs, shells, measuring,

File name	V-S	007	0005M0	Interview date: 27/04/13
<p>00:00:00</p> <p><i>[Starts with some indistinct conversation]</i></p> <p><i>I understand that a Lancaster bomber crashed...</i></p> <p>Yes, I was going to tell you that. And I wasn't there. I'd gone home because I...I...I took up nursing. My father said if ...if I wanted to be a nurse, if I could prove to him it was something I wanted to do, he...coz at that time if you were under 21 your parents had to sign for you, up to 21. And he wouldn't give his approval because he didn't think i was</p>				

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suitable material. And I took up...I became a VAD which... voluntary nursing in Salisbury Infirmary. And I used to go one night on Sundays to the hospital to do voluntary work. And..and I was alright for quite a time, and then I started working on the children's ward which disturbed me quite a lot. And I...I came back and I found that I used to take it home with me and couldn't sleep, and I... I gradually became ill and had a nervous breakdown. So I went home to my mother and father in Manchester and I was home for 13 weeks. And it was during this time that the Lancaster bomber crashed, and I...you know I heard quite a lot about it, but I wasn't there so I can't, sort of, say anything about that at all.

What did you hear about it?

Well, just that it was coming down and it came too low, and it had been specially modified to,...I don't know what sort of bombs, and things. I think it was prior to the rolling bombs for the dams in the Dam Busters, you know, the round bombs, but I really don't know....you know. By the time I came back to work it was water under the bridge, you know, it had all gone. And I'm a bit sorry I missed all that excitement although it was very sad.

It crashed within the...

It crashed actually very close to No 13 building. I think it came in too low. He was supposed to be a running...running thing, and he just came in too low and hit the ground. But other than that I can't tell you anything about that because I wasn't there, so. I heard about it when I came back and, um.....I did recover [chuckle]

And you decided that you'd carry on working at Millersford?

Oh yes, yes, yes. I, yes, actually I liked the work really and I liked the people. I got used to the people and...and it was just that I was doing too much....I think I was going to dancing and cycling to the pictures. And one of the things was that I went to the dentist and had my.....he took my teeth out, all my top teeth. Which was a shock to the system because I wasn't expecting it. I had quite nice teeth, but he said the gums were diseased and he took them all out. And I think that was part of it, partly a shock to my system

You said that you obviously felt you wondered whether you should be working on explosives and bombs and so forth.

Well it was a conscience thing I think, more than anything, you know. But it was temporary. I carried on, carried on working there, you know, and then at the end of the war we all moved, sort of, en masse to Shoeburyness in Essex. So, it was the terms of the agreement of having Millersford, that it would close down two years after the cessation of hostilities – that was the expression – so we all...we all, that wants to, transferred to Shoeburyness in 1947.

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Were there are other problems of people suffering from conscience?

I don't think so, no...no...no. It's...no it was only where, I think I was....I think I was doing too much, you know. I was going, as I say, I was going out every night, dancing and...and going to the social club and cycling to Salisbury to the hospital and you know ... but ...

Tell me about something nice. Tell me about the dances. So during the war you went into Salisbury dancing did you?

00:04:30

Yes, well we used to...I used to go to a dancing school in Salisbury and through them we used to go to various dances around the place and I did my dancing exams there. And I used to go to the dancing in the village hall at Redlynch as well, you know, it was nice, it was very nice. Saw a bit of life there because it was always conflict with the Americans coming in ... they used to come in their lorry loads and there was always friction when the Americans turned up especially if there were black Americans as well. There was a lot of friction with that, and...and so your heart was always a little bit in your mouth when the Americans turned up when there was going to be a fight. I don't ever really think I stopped to the end of a dance, I used to go home before the end. But the village hall at Redlynch where I used to go to dances was only about 150 yards from where I was in digs, so it was easy, you know. I used to go home.

So who would normally be at the dances apart from you and your own

Oh the village, the village people. We got to know a lot of the village people you know and ...and they used to have a three piece band there which was very nice. There was always a live band we never danced to records and things and...you know...it was...they were very nice. You got to know everybody. You got to know the villagers.

Where did the American troops come from do you know?

Oh, there were a lot of them stationed around. There were a lot in Downton and a lot in Sal ...there was a big American hospital in Salisbury at Oddstock hospital [coughs and apologises] and again, you know, we...I used to go dancing and it was always a long walk home from Downton afterwards you know, you always had to walk home and...and when you've been dancing all night it was a bit of a strain. [laughs]

I gather you went to a dance in Salisbury on your bicycle.

Yes [chuckles], well sometimes if it was just a dancing lesson we could go on the bus. But

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we didn't do that too often 'cause we had no money because, we...we...we got paid...our..our sal...we all got paid about the same amount and we got paid about 42 shillings a week, 25 shillings of which went straight to our digs. It was a set amount that we paid for digs, so we'd not got very much...not got very much, and we got into the habit of borrowing one an other's clothes and things 'coz we never had any money to buy clothes, and you know, there was rationing, there was no clothes, you couldn't buy clothes and...and...I remember sitting sort of making a blouse out of red check dusters, you know, and things like that from Salisbury market. I made a coat out of a blanket from Salisbury market you know because we couldn't afford to buy new. You couldn't get them because you know, there weren't any about. You couldn't just go and buy clothes 'coz they weren't there. So we got into the habit of...if somebody would say, oh I've bought some nice dusters on Salisbury market we'd all go chasing off to buy dusters to make a blouse, you know. We made do. We were happy enough. We didn't know any better so we didn't complain about it. And if somebody did something special it was great, you know, we all went and did it [chuckles]

You describe going to dance in Salisbury on a bike with your white...

A mac on. A mac, with straps round my legs to hold it down so it didn't go in the wheels, and, yes, and a piece of elastic round my waist with my clothes all tucked up, my evening dress tucked up round my waist [chuckle]

Did you see any famous bands?

No, they were quite often military bands, and American bands, an American army band, and of course Glenn Miller which we came to... but that was... we went to a dance at Oddstock hospital where Glenn Miller played, you know, and... I think in the early part...in the early years. And that was terrific you know. Oh!

That brings back memories now

Yes

Do you remember anything about Ashley Walk?

00:09.18

No, no. We used to see ... from where we worked. We never went over there. But we...we could see, you know, planes coming in and going off and things happening. And occasionally we'd hear Boom! which was another explosion going off at Ashley Walk, but we didn't know...I didn't know what went on there at all. Don't know anything about it.

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Was it noisy at your site at Millersford?

When the bombs went off it was a big Boom! you know and...yes. But everybody was inside so, you just heard the big boom. Occasionally you'd hear the thud of a piece of shrapnel falling down. Fragments we'd call them. We didn't call it shrapnel, shrapnel was a different thing in those days. It's fragments, you know, we could hear. You'd hear a thud and gosh! that was a big fragment!

So did you know what bombs you were testing?

No, not really. We had a title for them for the heading of the paper, you know. But we didn't know what they were. There isn't....We didn't know. I mean, as I say, I remember RDX TNT and then occasionally RDX TNT Aluminium, and you knew if there was aluminium in it, it was going to be a flame thing, you know. But we didn't know anything. No, it wasn't our place to know things. We just knew a little section of the work. You know, what went on after that the decision that were made we didn't know. We used to see various people coming and...and...and we used to different sort of scientists coming from different stations to try different things and..and. but you know we never talked about it coz it was supposed to be secret and we didn't talk a lot about it. I remember a lady coming, a doctor.... I can't remember what her second name was now. But....and she was sort of testing some sort of snake thing that were supposed to go in the ground and unearth mines, you know, in the mine fields. But I don't...I never heard any more about those, so obviously they weren't successful. So, things like that, you know, little things would happen. But it wasn't our place to know really. We were the minions. We just did the work and didn't know what the end result was.

So would you have several tests in one day?

Generally two would be the most we'd have in a day because it took quite a lot of time setting them up, you know. We'd set these gauges up on these posts. They were about a meter high. And they'd sort of start them fairly low and go up as they went out, probably a hundred feet and by the time we'd set....there were eight or ten of those in a row that we were responsible for, each....No 14 would be responsible for 10 gauges and you'd set them up and strap them to the posts and test them. And somebody would be in the hut and we'd be on the field pressing the things to make sure you got a, you know, a reaction....make sure they were working alright. But even so, occasionally some of them didn't work but there were 10. Most of them worked so you got an idea of the blast pressure at various distances. [Coughs] But it.....

You had a canteen on site?

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We had a canteen on site which was very good but it would cost, you know. I didn't have a dinner every day because I couldn't afford it. With our lodgings and our [indistinct] by the time I'd paid my bus fare to Salisbury a couple of times I'd no money left. We were very, very, very poor we were. We'd very little money to spare. But there was a very good lady in the canteen, Mrs Hayter who's on the photograph and she you used to do...and the favourite with us is..... [referring to photograph] the second lady in from the left there, and she was very good to us young people and we used to have the very new bread that had just come in and a thick slice about two inches thick with a lump of cheese and marmalade. Cheese and marmalade was a favourite and that was what we had for lunch

Was....did you do anything else socially. Did you go to the cinema?

If there was anything good on at the cinema, but it was quite an effort getting there. As I say, we had a social club we used to go to at Hale Green village hall. When...when we first went to...to Millersford, a lot of the youngsters, we would join the Association of Scientific Workers, which, looking back on it was a...seems to me to be quite...it was a Union...and...and...but it seemed to be a little bit Communist and I could never understand. I didn't...we used to have meetings and we always started the meeting by singing the Internationale which was a Russian...which always seemed odd to me. But scientists apparently in those days were tending to be that way a little bit...I think. And...we were so young and so gullible it didn't mean anything to us, it was just a social gathering, you know, and...but it didn't last long. I wasn't...I used to wear a badge, an ASCW badge, but it didn't mean anything at all, you know, its...didn't realise the significance of it. Looking back on it I could never understand how it came to be, you know, it's...it's one of the chaps who used to run it, a McCartney his name was. And he was.... he was [looks at photograph] where is he on here? Oh dear... a big Irish fellow and he used to run this thing. And I could never understand how it came...you know when I look back on it, how it came to be.

00:15:43

[referring to photograph] This was the chap, the young chap who used to set the bombs off and connect them up and connect the detonators up.

Did you wear any safety...did people wear any safety equipment at all?

I don't...I can't remember wearing safety...safety things at all. But again, you see, we weren't involved in any part of that. We weren't involved with the explosives or...or...I mean we just were involved with building these gauges at Millersford. That was my main job and measuring the records when they came out.

There weren't any mishaps?

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Not that I knew of, no, not that I heard of. [long pause]

You say the food at your digs was bad. Was that the same ... ?

The food wasn't bad at all because the man of the house used to grow his own vegetables. So the vegetables...I used to have dinner and the veggies was home grown and things. But the actual situation of the sleeping arrangements and the family were not good.

00:17:03

I didn't like it and I didn't like the idea...and, you know, the woman, well the mother and the daughter were a bit loose morally, you know, and I never knew who...quite who I was going to find at the house when I got home, you know. It's...it's...the girl slept in the same...but I never knew who she'd been in the bed with; that was always the big problem. You know, I slept there in the night and she slept there in the day when she was on night work.

_____, at....she worked at one of the big factories and did night work all through the war. I can't remember. I should remember it but I can't. I hated it. I hated the woman and I hated her daughter. I think it was just a connection, you know, and...and...I did my own washing there, in the sink, you know. I used to wash my own things, so she didn't do any washing. Whether she ever washed the sheets or not, I don't know. [both laugh]. But the man was quite nice. I used to go in the garden with him and he was quite chatty and a real local chatty man, you know, and we talked about vegetables and...

Do you remember anything else specific about the New Forest during the war? Did you go out exploring anywhere in your stay?

Well we used to cycle when ...one of the industrial men, Alec Douglas his name was, and he had sort of open house. He lived at Gorley, which is quite near to Millersford, sort of on the south side towards Ringwood. And he virtually had open house if ever we wanted to go out anywhere. We used to get on our bikes, several of us, and go over to his house and he used to feed us handsomely, you know. And he had a daughter, who was a lovely girl and ... where's Alec Douglas? ... and we got to know him quite well. Where is he on here? [consulting photograph] That's him there. And he was a real local man and as I say, he had open house. And...and...I can remember cycling over there; we used to cycle there often. He was always welcoming, you know, and we would sit in his garden and sunbathe...not sunbathe, you know, but just sit and chatter in his garden. And quite close to there at Gorley, which was a little bit further towards Ringwood, there was an American air force base. And...and he'd have some of the Americans there as well, so we got to know one or two of the Americans. But I can remember him coming out... again, as naive girls, the Americans had blown up some condoms and we were playing balloons with them. And I can remember him going out and telling him. But we, I didn't...we didn't know what they

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were. We never had any connections with those, you know, and it didn't matter or anything. I just thought they were fancy balloons you know. And I can remember him getting very angry and telling them that if they did this again, you know, just watch it 'cause there were a lot of young girls around. And if they did it again they wouldn't be welcome any more, you know. As strong as that. That's how...we were so naive it was incredible, really.

00:20:43

It seems that you didn't like the fact that the black Americans and the white American troops didn't get on

They didn't oh no,, no. You knew..if..if ...if if you were at a dance and there were Americans there and, sort of...they used to turn up in..in jeeps and ...and lorries and you knew if the two got together you...we used to go home because you knew there was going to be trouble at the end. We usually waited till the end of the dance, you know, and there'd be trouble. Or if you danced with a white American and a black American came and asked you to dance and you danced with him, you know the whites wouldn't like it and it was really quite, sort of, you know, bitter. But we used to go home, if there...if there was two...and there was a lot of the Red Devils, they used to go and the Commandoes, the Red Devils, they were there too and you knew if they turned up there was likely to be trouble with them and the Americans. There was always fights going on which was dreadful really.

It's the atmosphere I suppose isn't it?What about the black out? I gather cycling in the blackout was very dangerous?

In the what?

Cycling in the black out. You had to have your lamps blacked...out, taped over

Yeah I...I don't think that bothered us very much. We had lights, you know on our bikes and I suppose they were blacked out but I...I never...can't remember about things, it was an insignificant thing, you know. You either took it for granted or, I can't remember being bothered by that at all.

The staff from Millersford, were they all living in the village or were they scattered around

Well they were scattered around. Most of the bosses lived in Salisbury. There's some of them lived in, Mr Simmonds lived in Salisbury and Neal Pearce lived in Salisbury. They, a lot of them were in Salisbury. But of course he had a house there anyway, he lived there. Whether he lived there because of Millersford I don't know, we didn't question those things

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you know. He lived there and occasionally we'd go to his flat and have a cup of tea and a chatter you know, and he had two sons who watched grow up, but it was sort of friendly, you know, it was just hospitable. But I didn't...I didn't question things. Whether I was naive you know, I didn't question things at all

People didn't, did they?

You told me your 21st birthday was while you were working at Millersford

That's right yes. I went to Bournemouth for the day on the bus. And I had an American friend, an American boyfriend. Not very serious, but an Am...they used to dance, dance with me, and he took me to Bournemouth for the day. And that was very strange because we went in to the big store there. Is it?...can't remember the name of it, I think it's all Debenhams now. And as we walked into...we went in for coffee and we'd walked along the seafront, and we went in for coffee. It was bitterly cold because it was January, and as we went into the restaurant a band played Happy Birthday to You, and I thought it was for me but it was nothing to do with me at all, it was for somebody else, so you know, (chuckles) I just find it be. But...but...I just had the day in Bournemouth and came back on the bus and he went off to Salisbury and I caught another bus at Downton up to Redlynch and that, you know, it was nothing, sort of spectacular

00:24.34

Where was that American soldier?

He was at the hospital, the American hospital, yes. And...well I just...he wasn't a particular boyfriend I used to see him at dances, you know and he said, Oh, we must celebrate your birthday, and we just went to Bournemouth on the bus which was as big adventure. I'd never been there before on the bus. Cycled [light chuckle]

Did you explore any other areas in the New Forest?

No, we used to cycle...we decided that to get promotion in those days you had to get a degree or a BSc. We all had School Certificate you know, but we... I decided I'd...I'd go to ...well about 12 of us used to go to Southampton and we cycled down to Southampton to the University to lessons in the afternoon. And then if it was absolutely pouring with rain, Mr Pilgrim would give us permission to use what we called the Tilley van, which was a sort of shooting brake thing to go down there. We'd all pile in. There were no restrictions in those days so about sort of 10 or 11 of us would pile in to this thing and drive to Southampton. But we cycled most of the time to the University College in the afternoon for these scientific lessons. And then I found out that I couldn't do the, into BSc because I hadn't got, you know, the School Certificate results to do it, so I packed it up. But some of

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them still carried on doing it and took the...took the exam, you know. And um, it was the thing they called Metric Exemption, you had to get Metric Exemption and I didn't have enough science subjects to get it, so I packed up going because there was no end result. But again that's something else we did every Saturday afternoon for quite a time. And...and...we used to....Swanage was the favourite place we used to go to, and to the youth hostel at Swanage. But of course it was quite different then because you couldn't get on to the beach. It was all barbed wire and concrete, big concrete posts. You couldn't go onto the beach, you know, stop invasion things. [chuckle]

So as you were travelling around the New Forest. Did you have, were you stopped, did you have to show identity papers?

No, no, no I don't think I've ever been stopped to show identity things. The only times that we had any sort of identity prob...no, no they weren't problems...was when just before D-Day and of course we were within the zone where they were getting ready for the invasion forces, so we had to go into the banned area to get to work, so, and then they were a little bit stricter with our passes and we had...we had passes and just little pieces of paper. They weren't like these cards you get round you neck nowadays, they were just cards, identity cards. And that got a little bit stricter. We were checked going in and out Millersford more severely then.

Were you aware of anything else going around that time?

Well we knew that some...we didn't know what was happening but we something was happening because every nook and cranny in the forest had camouflage nets with troops and things, you know, obviously all getting ready. And then when at the actual D-Day times of course there was a continual stream of.... the planes started about 3 o'clock in the morning and went on all the time, the Dakotas going over and the bombers going over and the...the lorries were...were full of troops, were...were just going on all day. We sort of abandoned work on...on D-Day virtually, to wave to them going past. Nothing official, we, you know, they were soldiers and they were waving and we were waving to them 'coz we knew they were going off somewhere but we didn't know what. The invasion hadn't....hadn't been publicised, obviously, it had started but you know, but it hadn't got public. But you know, we were waving to them all, and, because the forest was cleared then. When we went home all those soldiers that had been hiding in the trees had all disappeared. All gone. And we felt very sad about that, you know, because, you know, we knew they were going to war and half of them wouldn't come back. And it... you know, it was a sad time but exciting at the same time.

End 00:29:17

Key words:

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D Day, Dakotas, bombers, identity cards, Southampton University, black Americans, white Americans, Red Devils, black out, American air force base, Gorley, Mr Pearce, Downton, Redlynch, Ringwood, Alec Douglas, Vesta, Mr McCartney, Association of Scientific Workers, Mrs Hayter, Oddstock hospital

File name	V-S	007	0006M0	Interview date: 27/04/13
<p>00:00:00</p> <p>[this appears to be continuation of 005 conversation]</p> <p>.....The gliders...I got up to look and it was gliders towing the ...the planes towing the gliders...you know, and so we knew something was up but we didn't know what and how big a thing it was. And then of course the next day when all this movement started in the Forest where we were...all the ones that had been hiding...everywhere you looked there were little groups of troops in camouflage nets and...and...and lorries and tanks they were the miniature tanks and troop carriers all hidden in the Forest and then they all suddenly disappeared...they all went [small chuckle]</p> <p><i>Were you aware of any other troops apart from the Americans in that part of the New Forest at all during the war?</i></p> <p>Um...[pause] not really. Sometimes there was a Searchlight Battalion that was stationed at...at Hale somewhere, Woodfalls. We didn't really know them but they occasionally would come into....if we had a dance...they'd come into the Social Club and somebody would say Oh! they're from the searchlight place, you know, but we didn't know them really.</p> <p><i>So these other photographs.....so many pictures here</i></p> <p>That's at Foulness</p> <p><i>So that's after the war....</i></p> <p>That's after the war yes. That was the college we went to at Walthamstow. That's Walthamstow Tech. That's the college again.</p> <p>This is the steps that I stood on and watched a dog fight going on in the sky with Spitfires and German planes. And we learned afterwards that one of the German planes had swooped down and machine gunned a school playground when the children were coming out at lunch time. This was at lunch time. And apparently there was pictures in the paper of a little boy with his bicycle and you could see the machine gun had gone through the</p>				

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spokes on his bicycle. And I can remember the feeling of horror. This is before Millersford of course, before I went to Millersford, but I can remember the feeling of horror that how people could do that to children. But then the Spitfires came back and they did their victory roll so we knew that something had happened and chased them away.

Is this picture at Millersford?

No that's at Shoeburyness. That's the men measuring the things for the...the...the fragments.

[more discussion of pictures]

What was the gantry used for?

I don't know, really. This was near the explosives building but I don't know what they...what they did there.

Were the explosives stored in a particular place?

Yes, the area, the explosives area. But again I don't know anything about that because you didn't ask and nobody told me. You know. It's erm.... Oh! there's.... there's Lovegrove

That's Mr Lovegrove, picture on the right at the bottom of the page. These are all pictures taken at Millersford?

This was taken at Millersford and it was at the back of the Records block. [Pause] Yes, there's Lovegrove and that's Mr Douglas I was talking about, and this is me

Bottom left picture, so you are the one in the middle

Yes, in the middle

Do you know the other people in that...?

That's Mr Douglas you know the open house man, you know, that lived at Gorley. But they use to cart the...these are the big hardboard screens, and they used to handle those and ...

Straw boards were they, or...?

No, hardboard. [pause] Yes, I think these are locals, they're....they're still living in Redlynch, you know, they're....they're still there, they're local girls

So a lot of the young people working there just were local people?

Yes, a lot of them. Well I mean this girl, for instance, was at Walthamstow with me. And some of them, you know, some of them went home to Walthamstow. On the same course. A lot of the boys were from...from the same course as well.

So that's the big Irish chap. He used to run the Association of Scientific Workers. And he married one of the girls.

End 00:05.11

Key words:

dog fight, Spitfires,

File name	V-S	007	0007M0	Interview date: 27/04/13
<p>00:00:00</p> <p><i>So could you just talk me through the map of the....</i></p> <p>Yes</p> <p><i>....of the site? As you come into the gate, what could you see as you came in?</i></p> <p>Well those are the Records offices which are the...which are these buildings here. Which...which...which were here. You are looking down and...and there's a photographic block there. It was just a little hut...there. These were where the fitters and the stores and things were, here...the garage and workshops. And that was taken from the roof of the...from there...from the roof down to here...you can see it across this way. That is the canteen, these were the Records offices, the canteen is...there's the canteen</p> <p><i>What were the Nissen huts used for?</i></p> <p>Just storage. Yes the...the here, look there's the Nissen huts which were just storage. There's the Records block which was a...a sort of an H shaped block, offices there, you see. The Records and the Telephone Exchange was there. And then there were two...two lots of offices. There was one block where I used to work and then above were these offices where the canteen ... that's the canteen which was here. Further than that ... these ... these all these magazi...that's the caretaker's hut which was by the main gate, which is here.</p>				

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Right

It doesn't show that.

I know. Then you have all the bomb stores...

Then all the bomb stores. Well, I obviously I hadn't taken pictures of those because they weren't appropriate to me.

And then coming on into the testing site...?

This was coming down the long road. This is the long road, this road here and it went down onto the testing site. And these buildings 15, 14, 13 and 16 were...were, the ones built into the ground with the grass growing over them so you couldn't see them, you just went into them like shelters, you know, and that's where the equipment for recording the blasts.

And you were in 14

I was in 14. That was my....

Do you know what went on in 15?

No I don't know. I can't even remember 15 being there. It was probably something to do with the...with the... um...I don't know. No, I don't know what 15 was at all. I can't remember that.

13.....where's 13....?

13, and 14 and 16 were the blast areas where we recorded the blast on these little gauges

And 12 was fragmentation was it?

12 was, was...yes, it was sort of the, well the Photographic was in there too and...and, you know the photographic and explosion and things.

So the test...in the test, the centre was where the...

Where the bombs were detonated. That's the screens

That's page 32. So you were looking through a screen

And these were the men measuring the, straw boards after the explosion. There's

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Lovegrove.

Do you know any of those other men in the picture?

Yes, this is Alec Douglas who had the open house, you know, he lived there. He was a local gardener used to bring us little young girls used to bring us bunches of flowers from his garden. Very nice man he was.

And these are the screens that they used to explode the shell there

Page 29! And that was, I take it, a screen was for taking the reflection....

Taking the reflection of the explosion, yes...the bomb. Oh! there's the gauges you see, that we set out

Oh Page 27! those were the gauges that you set out.

1000lb bombs and...

[long pause]

... delicate gauges for recording the blast. You see here, ... there's...

00:04.39

Any more pictures?

I thinks that's all...that's all there is of....oh! there's a thing. I think that's just a load of RTX TNT

Page 23 !

Shove the detonator into it and explode it.

I think this is.... that, that finishes there. This is...I think that goes to... Ashley ...is it Ashley Walk?

Page 19. The gun powder company.

I don't know what that is, nothing to do with us. That's where Millersford starts.

Ah yes I see section...

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23

So how were you able to....?

(page turning)

That was the story of the Lancaster bomber. Ought to have been instructed beforehand to fit with the wing span similar to this. I think the wing tip touches on ... there's little room for error. Bernard Smith who's the chap on one of these other photographs. I think that's Bernard Smith, looks like him, he's on one of these other photographs. And he, I don't know why he left. When we were moving ... when we were moving to Shoeburyness, a lot of them left anyway and went a long way ... I've got a feeling he went and became a miner or something. He said that Bernard Smith watched this aircraft, came up Deadmans Bottom and turned out onto the plateau. Its wing touched the ground and the plane cartwheeled over the heath in flames, with its ammunition in flames. Well I didn't see that because I wasn't there so I can't say anything about that. I believe it was quite a thing.

Yes, I think they were getting ready for the assault on ... the dam busters bomb.

Oh, I'll have a look through that in great detail in the afternoon.

So those photographs of the site, were you allowed to take a camera in and take pictures?

No. To tell you the truth, I don't know how I got ... somebody gave them to me and I think it was one of the staff from the photographic block. But I, I honestly cannot ... I'm sure I shouldn't have had them. Although by the time we got them it was closing down, you know, there was no secrecy then. I remember the garage, but I can remember when we had the reunion, I was the only one that had these photographs. I didn't have a cam ... I've never had a camera in my life, so I didn't take them. I think one of the photographic people must have taken them and handed them around. I can't think that I'm the only person that's got them.

Thank goodness that you kept them.

[A long discussion about which photo albums included which photos]

00:10:46

Ashley Walk ... 617 Barnes Wallis, oh that was the what's it bomb ...

Bouncing bomb, yes.

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... I can remember we did some work with Ashley Walk. They dropped some jet engines over and had the jet engines running and fired explosives into them to see what effect it had on the engines. But we didn't have a lot to do with them. But again, it wouldn't have been ... I mean, I was one of the minions, they wouldn't have known what was going on. Well, various people ... is that the bomber that crashed?

I see, that's one reason you were so close to Ashley Walk?

There was a lot of cooperation between the two, but not a lot I don't think.

[sound of looking through more photos]

You know, they were quite close. We could see over to Ashley Walk from Millersford, but as I say, we didn't have anything to do with it. I think that was more an Airforce place, planes and things.

You didn't see any of the big bombs; the Grand Slam ...

No, no.

Who were you employed by?

The Ministry of Supply it was in those days, but it became the Ministry of Defence, the Armaments Research Department, Ministry of Supply. I don't think there was a Ministry of Defence in those days. As I say ...

End 00:12:31

Keywords: Millersford, Ashley Walk, Photographs

File name	V-S	007	0008M0	Interview date: 27/04/13
[carrying on from a previous recording but not sure if 0006] Refers to V-S0007Group Photo				
00:00:00				
... worked there. She married one of the men. But she was one of the.... again she had a little bit of a history because she was one of the ones that was purged for having Communist....belonged to the Communist party, and they were purged. Do you remember the...you probably don't remember the big purge when a lot of Communists and, you know, people were just...she was suspended from work. She didn't come to work for a long time				

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So was that after the war that she was...?

No, No um... that doesn't say anything.

She wrote that poem?

[Mumbling names]. These were all on that photograph [listed more names]. Yes they were all on those photographs.

Who have we got here? Tom Nicks was there ... one of these workmen.

You know I think I need.....I think the easiest way with these photographs is if I draw a little....draw myself a little plan and then you can tell me the names, otherwise we are not going to know who is which are we?

So there's about four rows aren't there? So if we go along this front row...I'd better do some...so if you can tell me....

This is Swanborough who was in the war a caretaker.

Question mark! question mark! Swanborough

There's Clifford, now he was a messenger, a little messenger boy. He had a bicycle. I don't know what his other name was. These are all...I don't know, I can't remember. We didn't really have a lot to do with these...Swanborough... The second from the right is Rimmer who...he was one of the scientists, one of the.....

Now we are getting to the two ladies....

Yes this is me with them, next to the notice. It was Fazackerley in those days

Yes. And who was the lady to your right?

And this lady was Maureen Weir who.... she was the one who had to go home after our sex talk [chuckles]

And then it's Mr Pa....

Mr Pilgrim in the middle who was the superintendent. Then C L Farrar at the side of him who was the deputy.

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[encouraging vocalisation from interviewer]

What! Do you want to know all these names?

[interviewer laughs] You used to mention so many in the end. So do you know any of those girls?

Yes, these are the kitchen staff. One... the two ladies at the extreme end are the canteen staff I should say, not kitchen. And these are industrials again, these two. Um...now these two girls are...that's Hersey. What was her name Hersey? There will be a name on here, somebody Hersey..no..

That lady and that lady were Welsh twins who...both of them are dead now and they both died of cancer. They were quite young. Um...there's Betty Smith next to the notice. Maureen Weir, then these were industrials and I can't remember their names, three industrials.

What about the next row back?

The next row...I can't remember who he is...there's Mervyn Deacon, again industrial ... he's industrial, then there's Jessop, Hayes, Ottaway, ...

Goodness me! Your memory is amazing!

... Pat Hunt who became Pat Gyton because she married one of these chaps. Betty Smith who was at college at the same time as me. There's Rice, one of the officers. Pilgrim, Farrar, you've got those, haven't you?

Yes.

0:04:52

Then there's um ... she was a telephonist, Trout, Vi Trout. Um...Cooper...um...Cooper, she was a local girl. She's a local girl, Cox, Sheila Cox. Pearl Crouch, a local girl. Joyce Walker her name was but she wasn't there very long. Now, this is the lady Gill Crowther that we've just been telling you about, who might still be alive. Have you got her address? 'Coz I can give you her address, but she's in London.

No, we haven't got her address, no

Derrish, Joyce Derrish, her name is. And Celia Trott. She was the one who was purged for being...having Communist connections. Barbara Smith who is still alive, she's much

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CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

younger than us. She was at school when Millersford opened. She lives in...in Ash Green in Kent. I'll give you her address if you like and um... telephone number...and we get these industrials again, in the third row....um... can't remember who these are...no can't remember because we didn't have a lot to do with the industrials. That's Iris Hiscock she's was local girl. um... this Joyce I think I've told you Joyce Walker once.

No, no

Joyce Walker. And this is Frances Williams, she was one of the higher up. Meg Gilling, she was one of the higher uppers too, one of experimental officers. Winnie Worsfold who was in the photographic section, she was...um...yeah... Alice Burrill...she left again. You've got Joyce Derrish ...

Oh, she married the other man

Beryl, Beryl....no, her name, no I can't remember her second name. No, she's not on there. Vera Fizzy, they called me Fizzy. [both laugh] Oh, gosh I can't re...then there's Bill Simmonds. George Waterman. I can't remember that one there. I'll think of it in a minute. There's George Waterman. I can't remember that boy. These are all industrials again. That's Huffy Houghton which it mentions on the...

So he's on that..Yes right...

I can't remember those two. That's Bill Scanlon the office man. That's Tom Nicks who the song's about.

Yes

He was in the drawing office and I can't remember his name. No I can't remember these names. That's John Shadwick. There's two spaces. There's John Chadwick. There's Purdy. Isobel who married the American and went off to America. Whose wedding we've seen on the photographs. That's Noah Pearce who's one of the bosses. That's John Trott who married Celia Revell who was the communist. Oh I can't remember his name. That's Batchelor there, another horrible man, another jobsworth. That's um, I don't remember him. That's Ray Guyton; Maurice Boyce ...

00:09:28

That's to the left of Ray is it?

Yes, Ray Guyton and then Boyce and then.... And there's Norman Smith who's in the book

Right

And I can't remember. I can't remember that one. That's Eels. Charlie Eels who was the driver; the Tilly van. That's Alec Douglas who was the free house man and I don't remember who that is.

That's an amazing memory, all those names

Maurice Soley he's on here somewhere. Which one's him then? He was at college with me so I should remember him.

[Another pause studying photo]

Next to Ray Dyson. Was it Boris or Norris

Boyce. I don't know why I can't remember his first name

[runs through some names]

That's incredible

I should remember him because...coz he was at college at the same time. He was at Walthamstow at the same time as me. [muttering more names]

So this one's Trott here is he?

This is Trott yes. He died in the last couple of years. [more talking to self]

That's a pretty comprehensive though. Very impressive.

Come Reg, where are you? Which one is you?

Perhaps he wasn't there that day? Was there a particular occasion when that photograph was...

No, they just called everybody out and....

Shall I stop?

End 00:12:24

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