

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

Contributor's name	Mrs Audrey Lampitt	Name code	A-L
Interviewer's name	Dave Larder	Code number	015
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00:00:00				
<i>Could you say who you are and where you lived in the war?</i>				
My name is Audrey Lampitt and I was born in , 37. I originally lived in Lymington and we decided to move to Hatchet Pond, or near Hatchet Pond, to be safer in the country. We were only there a year when they started to build the airfield just across from where we lived.				
<i>What was life like living in Hatchet Gate at that time?</i>				
Very quiet. There was a lot of older people living around that area.				
<i>What sort of things did you eat as a child at that time in Beaulieu?</i>				
The first meal of the day, breakfast, was called pap. It was bread crusts, cut into cubes, covered in hot milk and a small sprinkle of sugar. For school I had jam sandwiches. Evening meals were potatoes, meal, sometimes meat, suet puddings, pies and rabbit was provided by a local poacher. We grew a lot of vegetables and fruit in the garden and we did go blackberry picking and mushroom picking during the year.				
<i>What was it like inside the house? Did you have running water and electricity and those kind of modern luxuries?</i>				
We had two bedrooms, a sitting room, a kitchen and a scullery. For heating hot water we had a copper which provided hot water for a bath and also to do the washing. We had a				

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Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.ukwww.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

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pump to pump the water from a well outside. We only had an outside lavatory with a bucket under, which had to be emptied into the garden. We didn't have water laid on until the '50s and also electricity wasn't laid on to the house until the '50s. So we had a wireless with a battery and an accumulator. The accumulator had to be changed every two weeks and a man arrived on a bicycle and he would take the old accumulator and leave a new one. And he also provided paraffin for heating and the lamp. We had an oil lamp on the table, a candle in the bedrooms for night time and a torch to go outside if you needed to.

I understand you had some workers billeted with you during this time, with your family.

We had five men billeted. A Mr Harry Wate was the organiser of billeting the men on us, who didn't really have a choice. So we only had two bedrooms, so two of the men had a share a double bed in each room and the fifth one had a small bed in the sitting room and they were working on the Mulberry Harbours for possibly six months.

And what did you see of the troops in the area at that time, just before D-day?

There was a lot of coming and going as the airfield was being built, also when the airfield was built and the 'planes would be going overhead at times. Also just before D-day there was a group of black, or coloured, Americans, GIs, in the dip which is the car park next to the pond, Hatchet pond. They were there coming up to D-day.

00:05:00

You also I think had a refugee billeted with you at some time?

There was a lady and her child bombed out from Portsmouth and they were living with us for a short time. The mum was rather upset because she kept the coal for the fire which was in the sitting room and she used to keep it in her pram. And also, all the time that she was with us, she wouldn't have a bath, so that didn't go down very well! (laughs)

What do you remember about the bombing raids in Southampton?

The bombing raids – there was one night when I was a small child being picked up and a blanket put around me and I was taken outside and the sky was brightly lit all the way over the top of Southampton, and I assume that was the night that Southampton got badly bombed. Also, afterwards I learned that there was a butter storage which burned for about four days, but I can remember the sky being brightly lit.

I understand you had some bombs land quite close to where you live?

There were three bombs. There was a lane by the side of our bungalow and in that neighbour's garden at the bottom of this lane, there was one bomb dropped in his garden. The other one – the farm shop on the road going towards Beaulieu, on the left hand side just past the farm shop, there was a big crater there which I could see as I was being taken

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to school the day after the bombing. And also on the hill going down into Beaulieu, on the right hand side at the bottom of the hill, there was a big crater which I could see as we passed by.

You mentioned school. What was it like going to school in Beaulieu at that time? What sort of things happened as a result of the war?

I can't remember them. I'll just have to stop for a little while.

How did you get to school each day?

I was taken to school on the back of my mum's bike, and there was this particular day when we were stopped just at Hatchet Gate. A man there decided we needed to show passes, a warrant to get me through to Beaulieu. Whether someone of importance was there that day I'm not sure, but there were a lot of SOE people training in the big houses around Beaulieu. I think it was about eleven houses were used to accommodate the people who were training to spy in France.

And I think this sentry knew who you were but he still wanted to see your pass.

The sentry that was on guard that day was well known to us. He knew mum well, but he still needed to see this pass before we could get through (laughs). When I got to school, mum would go on to the Montague Arms, where she was serving breakfast and possibly making beds for the WRENS that were stationed in the Montague Arms at the time. The school that I went to in the centre of Beaulieu Village had four classrooms and it catered for children from five to fourteen, so the classes were split up into four. So each of the four teachers had quite a range of ages in each class. Now Mr Monkton was the head teacher and he had the oldest children and Mrs Mathews had all the younger children, five to seven year olds. At the time during the war we just had sandwiches during the lunchtime, but a little later on after, we all used to walk up to the WI hut, which is a wooden hut, which is now incorporated into the Fairweathers Garden Centre, so it's not actually there at the moment. They used to bring out hot meals for us from Brockenhurst and serve up the meals from big hot containers, and we'd all queue up for our meals and take it back to the tables and eat it. So that was quite a luxury at the time! (laughs)

00:10:05

Once a week during the time at Beaulieu School, we had this lady come in, in an army-type uniform, and she used to take us for drill: arm exercise, bends and stretch and that sort of thing, which was quite fun. Then each day after school, I walked down to the Montague Arms to wait for mum after work, when she'd finished work, cleaning or whatever she was doing, getting the evening meals ready. And I used to wait by the front door and sit on one of the dogs that are outside the front door, the entrance.

If you had to get into Southampton how did you get there?

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Well our next door neighbour, Mr Martin, owned a garage in Beaulieu, in the village, and also he owned a coach. And this coach, I can remember it going twice a week into Southampton. It would leave about, say, nine o'clock in the morning and drive us all the way through Longdown and that way into Southampton through Totton and Eling, and it would park in the Dolphin Hotel car park. And the coach would be there all day and it would leave again at four o'clock to bring all the people back home again. That was the best way into Southampton. Otherwise, it would be a cycle ride to Hythe and then catch a ferry across to Southampton, or catch a bus that went in round Marchwood and Totton and then into Southampton and that was quite a long ride.

I understand you went on a coach trip to Bournemouth on one occasion?

About once a year the church would organise a day out and Marvin would supply the coach and we went to Bournemouth seaside for the day. And I can remember going down the side of the pier and you could only go down the right hand side because there was barbed wire all the way along the coast there and there was just a small patch of sand that the children could play in and it was the only chance to get to the beach.

Did you have an air raid shelter in your house?

We had a Morrison air shelter in the kitchen. It was like a large metal table with a cage-like metal sides and we had a mattress on the floor underneath and mum and I slept in there during the war. We had to use the top of it as a table with an oil lamp on top.

Ends 00:13:53

Keywords

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