

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

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00-00-00

Could you tell me first of all your name and where and when you were born?

My name is Cynthia Carter but I was Cynthia Sampson then. My father was William Sampson. I was born actually in Tisbury in Wiltshire but we went to live at Ellingham when I was four years old and so I grew up at Ellingham and I was 11 a week after the war started; my birthday was the 10th of September. Think the war started on the 3rd – yeah? I was born in 1928. So I was 11 in 1939.

So you were at school when war broke out?

Oh yes, yes.

Can you tell me a bit about Ellingham? What was it like?

00-00-57

Ah, well, Ellingham was a mixed farm; we had a dairy and also arable land and the main thing I remember about the coming of the aerodrome was that we were taking the harvest

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out of the field that they were bringing the equipment in to make the – to start the work on - making the aerodrome, and I can remember the toing and froing – horses and carts in those days, of course; wagons of sheaves being taken out as fast as possible because they were bringing in the bulldozers and then they, they, started work. That would have been 1940. They must have worked pretty hard because that was September 1940 and it was operational in February '41 so they did it fairly quickly.

So, was the farm affected?

Oh, oh yes, of course, because we lost, lost all that land: it was the major part of the farm, and whereas it was fields with hedgerows and so forth, everything was rooted out and flattened. There was a wood in the middle where wild daffodils grew: that went, and there was a pond that used to freeze over in the winter that we used to slide on. Of course, that was filled in; the whole thing was completely levelled. The other thing that I remember very well is that there was a lovely avenue of elm trees from Ellingham crossroads to Moyles Court and of course they were all cut down because of the planes taking off and landing. The avenue went and nearly nothing left of it.

So, your father was a tenant farmer was he?

Yes, he was a tenant farmer.

So how was his livelihood affected?

Well of course, it was. Whether he was compensated I really don't know. I never heard but we did go down to a farm in Dorset because Daddy felt that what was left wasn't enough for the war effort but we did go – but we were only away two years then we came back. He still went on farming what was left, the dairy and so forth, which was all one side of the main road and the aerodrome was all the other side. But we came back after two years.

Well then after that I was living in Bournemouth because that's where I went to school, and travelling became impossible. Buses only ran every two hours and therefore they were all full up and you couldn't get on them half the time and life was quite difficult from that point of view. So I had to go at the age of 13, actually, when the family went to Dorset. I went into digs in Bournemouth and lived out most of the war down there but then when the family came back of course I came back to Ellingham at weekends but the bus service was quite difficult. The – at one time they towed gas-making machines behind which they ran on, and in Bournemouth there was quite a steep hill up at Bath Hill and the buses – they didn't provide enough power for the buses to go up this hill when it was fully laden and you had to get out of the bus, walk up the hill, and get back into the bus at the top.

End: 00-04-35

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00-00-00				
<i>What do you remember about Ibsley Airfield when it was built?</i>				
<p>Well, of course, there was the time when it was being built. The army moved in. They were all residing at Moyles Court and we had one of the officers' wives living with us at the farm and then my mother also had one of the foremen of the workmen building the aerodrome billeted on her. We didn't have evacuees but we had other people instead so, there were a lot of military around at that point. Of course everything's rather secretive and nobody took it and I hadn't any photographs of us – you didn't take photographs of airfields in those days. And then there was a gunsight halfway between Ellingham Cross and Ibsley and that was manned by British tommies all through the war. Of course there wasn't much traffic about because nobody had any petrol so there it was mainly military convoys and so forth that went up and down the main road in those days. I don't know whether I remember a great deal of what went on the aerodrome because we couldn't really see it.</p>				
<i>Could you see the buildings and the tower?</i>				
Oh, you could see the tower, yes.				
<i>What did that look like?</i>				
<p>Well, it wasn't very tall . . . don't know if it looked anything in particular. It was just a small building. The main thing was of course the hangars, all the big hangars all round which they put the planes in, and sort of earthenware bunkers and things. The scene changed totally because it was completely, as I said, flattened, and all the trees and hedgerows and everything removed. It just became a large, square open space. All round the perimeter were all these hangars and bunkers and things.</p>				
<i>There were troops based there, were they?</i>				
00-02-14				
<p>Military, oh yes, yes, yes: they provided the security. The first planes we had in was Spitfires. I always had a great love of Spitfires; we used to see them all taking off and come limping back. I remember one that didn't quite make it and it landed in a field diagonally opposite, sort of pancake landed and so forth.</p>				
00-02-53				

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Later on there were rather worse things happened. I saw the Americans came later on and there were I think there were Typhoons, planes that carried two rockets underneath and I was walking out of the farmyard one day and I saw one explode and everything shoot right up in the air; it was absolutely appalling because I realised that there was a man inside. Apparently he was taking off and a tyre burst and the whole thing blew up – pretty ghastly, and the other really tragic thing that happened was – again it was the Americans – they had dual fuel fuselage planes which were called Lightnings and one of them was fooling around one day and he crashed through the gunsights and killed all the Tommies and the plane landed up on the field which we were still farming the other side of the main road. That was very tragic.

Were there planes coming and going most days?

Oh yes; some of them sort of Battle of Britain (laugh) thing. They were all fighters; there were never bombers there. It was a fighter aerodrome and as far as we knew the Germans never really found it. Some bombs were dropped once and they fell through the houses in Gorley; they went fell in-between the houses. One bomb went down a well, so I understand, and whatever, but that plane that dropped those bombs - which may have been a stray one just dropping his bombs before he went home - he was shot down, and so he never got back to say anything about it. There never seemed to be a direct raid on it, which was very strange really. Perhaps it was so well camouflaged there under the hills, between the River Avon and the hills on the edge of the Forest then Linwood and so forth: maybe it didn't show up very well.

So, as far as you were aware, outside the perimeter there was just the one gun emplacement?

00-05-14

Yes, yes, I think so, as far as I remember. As you see, I was as I say 11, 12, 13 then, and anyone who was adult, say 21, ten years older than me, I mean they're no longer alive to tell you unfortunately.

Yes.

But this has been left a little late.

Yes, this was why I was so anxious to reach you

'Cos in a way I wasn't old enough to understand anything that was going on, but I have this sort of visual memories of the place, and how it was before, and then afterwards, of course, they had to rip up all the runways and remove all the concrete and the ground had all been

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compressed and I don't think the topsoil was put back and it was very difficult farming afterwards. They had to sort of deep plough everything and then in so doing my father ploughed up this wonderful axe head - Stone-Age axe head – (sounds of unwrapping paper)

Goodness me! Just as he found it is it?

Yeah, yes. But that wouldn't have come up if the ground hadn't been levelled; it was probably too deep to have, you know . . . yes, I think lots of things have been found. Morley Hewitt, who was the local archaeologist, was very interested and he said and here it's recorded, that it was found at a depth of one foot 3 inches, that was when it was found.

Amazing. It was just a fluke that somebody worked that . . .

Yes. Actually, they dug up two: the other one wasn't as good as that.

End: 00-07-36

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00-00-00				
Near the river, of course.				
<i>How quickly after the war did they take up all the runways and so on was it . . .</i>				
I'm afraid I can't put a date on it. I think they vacated it as soon as the war ended. A lot of the perimeter roadways – I don't know what they call them – remained, and the bunkers and whatever. It always looked like a one-time aerodrome; it didn't sort of change in appearance after that very much and of course they used it as a road-racing circuit and so forth on the old perimeter runways afterwards, - yes.				
<i>And so those roadways remained?</i>				
Yes. The main runways were removed, but no way was it a typical farm afterwards: there were no fields or hedgerows. It was just one large open space, so it was quite different from the farming point of view. Changed forever.				

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Were any of the local people employed working there, to your knowledge?

Not that I know of. No.

So it was fairly self-contained. Did I hear that you had a memory of an incident, was it, of a bulldozer going through a hedge or something?

That wasn't a memory of mine, no.

But you knew what was going on? You were told that the workmen were coming in and . . .

Yes, I presume my father knew. He must have been notified at some time that it going to be made into an aerodrome but I wasn't aware of that. Too young to be told, I expect.

Could you just tell me for the record, who owned the farm?

Lord Normanton, of Somerley. He still owns it all, and after the war he sold off all the gravel rights, and so it's all under water through, now. And because of that – well, my father died in 1972, and then my brother farmed it - and every so often another piece was dug up for gravel until there was nothing left.

Have you got any other memories of the RAF Ibsley before we move on to other topics?

Not really. No. Too young to be involved in anything, really.

And the farm. You say it was still active. How was the milk - was it collected daily and taken elsewhere, did you say?

00-03-22

Oh, the milk from the dairies? Yes, we had two dairies: one up at Ibsley and one down at Ellingham. Yes, the milk was collected by lorry. When we first went there we had to take the churns to Ringwood Station and it went to London (laughs) but then the Milk Marketing Board organised all the milk collections and so forth, yes.

They were still using lorries during the war?

Oh yes, yes, yes, but then obviously we lost all the land that was made into the aerodrome but that actually was mostly agricultural; the dairy went on much as it had before because that was the other side of the road on the meadows going down to the river and so forth. We had a pedigree herd of Friesian cattle.

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And was your father able to grow any crops after the airfield was closed?

Oh, after the airfield, oh yes, yes, yes.

Was he affected by the Ministry of Agriculture who were presumably regulating what he could grow?

Through the war, you had to plough up everything ploughable, yes, yes. Obviously, the production of food was very important. Because we were having to import so much and the Atlantic convoys were all being attacked all the time. Food supply was very difficult.

Did they dictate what he grew or just that he must plough up as much land as he could?

I think they dictated what you had to grow. Obviously the wheat was important for bread because barley was never used for bread but the cattle had to be fed of course and so there were oats and barley for the beer: had to keep up morale, didn't they? The wheat was the main crop in those days, yes, and of course it was before combines: it was shire horses. There weren't many tractors around then either. We had one. Yes.

How many shire horses would you have had on the farm?

Hmm, about five. Yes.

Gosh. And one tractor.

(laughs) Yes, yes. Things changed after the war fairly rapidly.

Were you required to work on the farm when you were at home in the holidays?

Oh yes, yes. Well we grew potatoes and we used to have to go out picking up potatoes, oh yes. It wasn't all mechanised then, oh no: they were lifted mechanically but they had to be picked up by hand. And there was stooking up the sheaves of corn, and it rained on them and then we'd have to pull the stooks down to let them dry out and then stook them up again; yes, no, we did work really hard, actually and we were paid 8 old pence an hour was the going rate for teenagers (laughs). I remember that quite clearly. And the other thing was at one time British Summer Time was advanced two hours, not one hour. My father refused to work according to that: he was rather a law unto himself. So we worked to the old time because it meant that you couldn't start gathering in the harvest until two hours later because it didn't dry off quickly enough; you were two hours out, you know? So we worked to one hour's Summer Time, not two hours, because it was impossible to get on with the work. Couldn't start early enough.

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Do you know what the reason was behind changing the time to British Summer Time?

I think it was something about longer, lighter evenings for the factory workers and that industry, yes.

Not for agriculture, then?

Not at all. No, No. We did have extra rations for agricultural workers. There were . . . because . . . my mother used to take quite a lot of food out into the fields at teatime: sandwiches and goodness knows what, and we did have some extra rations for tea, and margarine for sandwiches, that sort of thing. We ate an awful lot of rabbits. (laughs) Yes, the meat ration was pretty meagre.

And were the rabbits kept?

Wild rabbits, oh yes. They were shot, or I'm afraid, trapped. When we were down in Dorset there were a tremendous number of rabbits and a professional trapper used to come round every so often and catch literally hundreds and they went off by the lorry load to Birmingham to help with the rations in the towns. It was quite an important food resource actually.

00-09-39

So, were you at school in the New Forest at all or had you already moved to Bournemouth?

No. I went to a small school in Ringwood until I was 12 and then I went to the grammar school in Bournemouth; there wasn't anything much local.

I know you said you didn't have any evacuees with you. Were you aware of any other local families having evacuees?

Not really. When you live on farms you're fairly isolated. You don't have neighbours. I'm sure in Ringwood they had evacuees. There were evacuees in Bournemouth. A school from - was it Portsmouth Grammar School? - in Bournemouth, and a Southampton Girls School. We actually shared our school with the Southampton girls half day. One week we started at half past eight and didn't finish 'til half past one and then the next week you started at 2 - I can't remember what time we start, but we had to go to school Saturday mornings as well to make up the time. It was always quite interesting to leave messages for the girl that used your desk the other half of the time, (laughs) although we never actually met them.

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00-11-20

Shall we talk about the Home Guard? You've got photograph here of the Ringwood No. 2 Platoon, Ringwood Home Guard? And that's your father? He has a different hat so did he have ...

Oh yes, well he was a great admirer of Monty, Montgomery, who always wore a beret. Daddy wore a beret and the badge he wore on it was actually a brass button that he'd found which had got 'God speed the plough' on it, and that's what he wore on his hat. It wasn't a military badge at all. He was quite a character but I don't know what year that would have been when we came back – about 1944, I expect, so he actually was only 44 then. He was the same age as the year.

What was his name?

William. Sampson. With a 'p'. (chuckle)

Do you remember the names of any other men on there?

No. That is Charlie. He came back from Dorset with us, and also – I think that one but I can't remember his name, I'm afraid. The others would have been Ringwood locals. No, I can't remember the names, I'm afraid.

Do you remember your father, what activities he undertook?

Well, he was the officer (laughs). We had the phone installed because of the Home Guard; we didn't have a phone before. I mean, you didn't in farms and things; still didn't have electricity of course, but because of the Home Guard a phone was installed. Yes. So that made a difference (laughs).

Did he go out for drill practices?

Oh, yes. They went Sundays. Sunday mornings was the time, yes. I obviously didn't see what they did. The other rather strange thing at the beginning of the war was that if there was an invasion we were supposed to put the farm elevator across the main road to deter the tanks. Well now that was absolutely useless, because, I mean, a horse would have drawn it up there and put it there: a tank would have just nudged it out of the way, wouldn't it? Quite a big implement, the old elevators; they used to make the ricks, put the hay on, yes. But they were supposed to block the main roads as much as possible, and of course all the signposts were taken down so that they couldn't find their way or, yes. So in the war it was quite difficult to find your own way anywhere because there were no signposts.

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And I gather that the blackout made things very difficult as well; even blacked out bicycle lights.

Oh, yes. All lights had a shield that kept the light directed downwards, yes, yes. And there was a sort of grill thing fixed on car lights with strips so that actually only very little light shone through. I remember once being out in a fog, and couldn't see anything. We had to open the windows and put our heads out and say when the car was getting near the bank, because you couldn't see. Oh no, the blackout was quite something, yes.

And so there were no other air raids that you were aware of during ...

Well, not locally, no. I used to go swimming down in Ringwood with the swimming club and once outside the changing room door we saw, very low, a German plane flying with a fighter on its tail and it just sort of went by, very, very close, actually, and various planes crashed. I remember Daddy taking us out into the Forest to see a crashed German plane and things like that. Oh yes, things were going on and we could see all the ack-ack and the searchlights and whatever from Southampton. That was visible from our home. Yes.

We had a black cat, and he was very sensitive to noise, and he used to climb up the wisteria which was outside the house and get in through the window before the planes arrived, and we always called him the air warden because he always seemed to know when the planes were coming and you could hear them. They used to go overhead all night long, German planes. They had a very particular noise you could hear and we always thought that by moonlight they followed the river up to Salisbury. There was always the light on the cathedral there, the red light, 'cos of the spire, and that directed them on up to Coventry and wherever.

It must have been quite frightening

You could hear them all the time, yes, yes, yes, yes, but Jacky the cat he always heard them first and he would appear upstairs. (laughs)

So you didn't have an air-raid shelter or anything?

The first year, there was always a very large hayrick built nearby, and he cut a sort of half tunnel out of the hayrick, all thought we would be quite safe inside but a bomb would never get through a hayrick, but that was only the first year. Then there was a large cupboard in the middle of the house and we used to go in there sometimes, but then everyone got rather used to it all and you didn't bother any more. At the beginning it was all taken very seriously, 'cos there was that awful business all through the war of always having to take your gasmask everywhere. If we arrived at school without it we were sent home to get it. (laughs)

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00-17-56

You mentioned you didn't have electricity on the farm: what did you do for water? What sort of lighting did you have?

We had oil lamps and candles; we had wonderful lamps called Aladdin lamps which used to have a glass chimney with a mantle inside; this mantle used to glow, and then it used to get sooted up and disintegrate. Then you had to have a new one. They were very good lamps, actually: they did give a lot of light and we used to have it in the middle of the table and we used to sit round and play cards and things in the evenings. But then farmers - my father got up all his life - got up at half-past four in the morning to get the cows in. So it was 9 o'clock, hear the news on a battery-operated radio, and go to bed 9 o'clock. But that was in the days when radios had things called accumulators which you had to have recharged; you had two, and you had one down at the shop in Ringwood being recharged, and then change them over the next Saturday.

So they'd only last a week, then?

Yes. (laughs)

Do you remember listening to the radio?

Oh yes, yes. ITMA was a great favourite, Tommy Handley and Mrs Mop: 'Can I do you now, Sir?!' Yes, my friends we were great fans of Bing Crosby and I remember I used to get up early to hear a Bing Crosby programme at half-past seven in the morning or something once a week. Oh yes, we did listen to the radio; we had no television, of course, so radio was the thing. We listened to the news and later when I was living with a friend in Bournemouth because of school, we listened to the news every day and had a map and marked the progress of the Allies going across Germany. We used to mark it off every day when we heard about it.

Where did you get your drinking water at the time?

Oh, well we had our own well, with a petrol-driven engine for pumping it up and had to pump water for the dairy, of course. We used a lot of water, as milk was cooled . . . milk always dribbled over a thing that cold water ran through. That was the only cooling there was for the milk in those days, yes. And you cooked by oil stoves or kitchen range.

00-21-05

Did you see much troop movement at all?

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Well, yes: long, long convoys going down the main road towards Bournemouth. I don't know where they were going, obviously, but there used to be convoys that went on for hours, and sometimes it would be tanks, mostly lorries.

And were you aware of the build-up for D-Day? Were there many troops?

Well, as I say, I was mostly in Bournemouth. The day or two before D-Day, Bournemouth harbour filled up with boats and we realised something was going to happen. I remember cycling down to the cliff to see all the boats out there. Yes, yes indeed.

Do you remember seeing any of the other airfields in the New Forest during the war?

Well not really: one couldn't go anywhere. There was no petrol to go anywhere. Fathers had petrol for business purposes but one wasn't supposed to go anywhere for pleasure, not really. I'm afraid you towed a trailer with some hay in it or something. Pretended you were doing something businesswise occasionally. (laughter) We didn't really go anywhere; we didn't have any means of going anywhere. Of course, in those days there was a railway station in Ringwood which went with the Beeching plan afterwards, but the buses were few and far between, and when you think of all the things that teenagers do nowadays, we just didn't.

So what were your leisure activities apart from playing cards? You went swimming. Did you go to dances or were you too young?

No. Towards the end of the war I suppose in Bournemouth we used to go to tea dances at the Bournemouth Pavilion. It used to cost 1/9d, I think. (laughs) A lot of soldiers, Americans around, jiving and things, which was a great source of entertainment. There were cinemas and films, and of course we used to see the – there were always news programmes in cinemas in those days – that was where we saw visually a lot of what was going on. It was at the cinema with the news programme, which is something you don't have nowadays, of course.

And that was a newsreel in advance of the main programme, the main ...

00-24-04

Newsreel. Yes, yes. There was also newsreel, yes, which was interesting, yes. I always remember my first - the first time I went to London - which would have been – ah – it was my friend that started going to The Royal Academy of Music in London, went up with her mother to a concert, and the first time I went to London, going into Waterloo, seeing an absolute mountain of rubble which was the remains of all the houses which had been

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bombed. I had never forgotten seeing that: it was a mountain of rubble. They put it all there together and you now it was absolutely shocking to see it because we hadn't actually seen anything like that, living in this part of the world. It really brought it home to you what had gone on. Yes, it was dreadful.

There was a time, the Sunday when the bombs fell on Bournemouth. Beales, which was the big department store was flattened. It was a Sunday, and fortunately there were no shoppers in it because of course it was closed, and the Metropole Hotel at the Lansdown which was full of Canadians - Canadian Airforce - and they were all killed, hundreds of them. And the Anglo-Swiss Hotel which was next door to my school, and most of the rubble landed in the playground, and our poor headmistress who lived in a flat and she was an elderly lady, she must have had a bad time that day. It was during the day, that raid. But, that was really all I knew about air raids. Didn't know much about air raids.

00-26-06

There were no prisoner-of-war camps in your part of the New Forest?

Well, yes there were. Now I don't actually know where it was, because my father employed German prisoners of war when we went back to Ellingham and we did have some come to work for us, yes. Yes, there must have been a camp fairly . . . but I don't remember where it was, I'm afraid.

Did they wear a particular uniform?

It didn't look German, what they were wearing, no, no. They were very nice, actually. My father got on with them very well and particularly one of them who bought a used silk parachute. You could buy parachute silk in those days and everybody used it to make underwear and things, and he bought a parachute which he wanted to send back to Germany to the girl he was going to marry when he got back and he got my father to post it for him, which Daddy did. (laughs) Yes. I think he heard from him after he went back home, actually, yes.

And they were brought out each day ...

Yes they were, yes, yes. I think they were vetted to make sure they weren't dangerous in any way or something. They earned some money, I think they were paid.

And do you remember any saw mills around, timber mills?

Timber. Not in our area, no. And there were no factories or anything where munitions were made, not in our area, it was too rural. There were down in Christchurch way, there were

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some sort of munitions factory down there. I knew some people who worked there. They were actually conscientious objectors, two young men, and they were sent to work at the munitions factory.

Were you very aware of rationing? I mean, you talked about eating rabbit?

Oh, yes: we were very aware of rationing, because, what was it? Two ounces of butter a week, four of margarine, a quarter of a pound of sugar maybe? Not very much. Everything was rationed. Bacon: but you could kill a pig, you see; you could have a licence to kill a pig if you had a pig, but then you gave up six months' rations, bacon ration, if you killed a pig. Oh yes. There again my father broke the law I'm afraid in collusion with the pork butcher in Ringwood, because before the war he'd always given the men who worked for him a joint of beef for their Christmas dinner and he wanted to go on being able to do that, so instead of killing one pig they killed two and the second one was used for the Christmas present for the men. (chuckles)

Did you keep many other animals on the farm, apart from the dairy cows?

My mother kept geese, and chickens, so we had plenty of eggs, and she did make some butter, so we were better off than a lot of people. I suppose farmers were, really, because they had – milk was rationed at one time I believe, yes, and bread. But they say the nation was never healthier. I suppose it was considered a balanced diet, what we had. The other thing that was tough was the clothes rationing. The coupons you had to have 24 coupons for six months. If you bought an overcoat, that was 18, so it was nearly your six months' ration. I remember stockings, school stockings, being one and a half coupons a pair, so you mended all your ladders, and you had two ounces of wool for a coupon, so you unpicked your old jumpers and re-knitted them, in stripes or something to make the wool go further, and I learnt to knit. I knitted my first jumper when I was about 12 and went on knitting things for years afterwards. (laughs) But then life was quite tough, but we didn't expect anything. It's all about expectations isn't it? But we knew that we had to work hard, or save, or save our coupons or whatever. Nothing just happened; it was all an effort. And the other great thing was the salvage drives, because paper and everything like that, you didn't throw it away, it was recycled. This recycling thing is not new. We had it in the war.

Well how did that work?

I don't know, I've no idea how it worked. I remember at school we used to have great drives for salvage paper and things. House competitions to see who could collect up the largest amount of paper. It seemed to be mostly paper that we recycled. The bottles were returnable in those days, and there weren't any paper bags for anything. I mean we have plastic bags nowadays but it was paper bags in those days but there weren't any paper bags. A paper bag was quite valuable; you took care of it and you used it again.

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So if you were going to the shops, obviously you'd take a basket or something?

Yes, yes.

How would you buy your sugar?

Well, sugar came in bags. Sugar was always in blue bags for some reason; I don't know why but I think it was supposed to deter the flies, I think, blue, I don't know. That sort of thing was put in a bag, but there were no shopping bags as such, no. You took a basket as you say.

Yes, I never thought about the recycling bit; I thought paper would have been the main thing, wouldn't it?

Well yes, because it would have been imported, I suppose. It was made from timber, after all, and timber was very scarce.

Were you aware of a lot of local people going off to fight in the war? As young girls, did that really strike you?

Yes, we obviously knew people who were called up, yes.

And did your father initially lose workers from the farm?

We didn't lose any at Ellingham but they'd all gone from – that's what made life so hard in Dorset because all the men had gone and there were only old men and schoolchildren left, yes. It was difficult – that's why we had the German prisoners, of course, because of lack of labour, and nothing was mechanised then you see: it was all manual labour mostly so it was all really hard work. I always remember my father doing what he considered to be the hardest – well it was the hardest job of all - haymaking. The hay was gathered up from the field with a thing called a hay sweep, which was drawn between two horses. It came up to where the elevator was and they dumped this mountain of hay and somebody had to fork that into the elevator, and my father did that job because he said that's what kept it going because he had to clear that lot before the next sweep came in. And also, if he didn't keep it going the men on top of the rick making the rick weren't working and that was the job that kept the whole system going. He must have been absolutely exhausted; I don't know how he did it. (chuckles)

00-35-35

Have you any other particular memories that come back to you about living in the New

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Forest during the war?

I had a pony and I used to ride the pony up on the hills the other side of the aerodrome but I didn't really see anything to do with the war up there because it was a fairly lonely sort of place. No, most of the activity was on the main road with all the convoys, troops moving about all the time. There was a lot of movement went on and of course there was all the air activity all the time, especially at night. Of course the Spitfires and so forth were taking off in the day. Most when someone saw that. There were a lot of aircraft about at night.

00-36-37

When they built RAF Ibsley, they presumably brought in large equipment, concrete mixers?

Oh yeah, yeah. They must have had a lot of stuff out there and we didn't actually see what was going on; for security reasons you wouldn't have been allowed to observe a great deal. No, there must have been – I think they had these gangs that went around building these places and as I say we had to have one man living in the house. We weren't feeding him at all but he just sort of slept. I remember he stayed out rather late at night drinking and whatever; and of course my father was going to bed at 9 because of getting up at half past four (laughs) it was all a bit difficult.

But you say it was all built very quickly?

Well, yes, it must have been. As I say it must have been early September when we were taking the harvest out so it must have been September. Harvests used to be a bit later; crops were later somehow in those days, and it was operational in February so they must have built it very quickly. But then it was desperately needed, of course, the fighter aerodromes, Stoney Cross being the other one.

00-38-12

You mentioned American troops in the area. Did you come across black troops, black Americans?

I don't remember any, I don't, no. It was Airforce, of course, the army aerodrome. There may have been some when they had the Victory Parade in Ringwood when the war ended, when there was a VE and a VJ sort of procession through the town. I think there were some coloured ones then but I don't remember many and I don't – there were a lot of troops in Bournemouth of course - but I don't remember seeing coloured people, no. There were a lot of Canadians, and as I say, Canadians that were killed in that hotel when it was bombed.

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You mentioned seeing Spitfires and Typhoons at Ibsley. Was that the first time that you had ever seen aeroplanes, do you remember?

We certainly wouldn't have seen very many aeroplanes. I don't remember being struck by that. I suppose we'd seen the odd biplane, probably, go round, but, no, there wouldn't have been much air activity in that area at all I wouldn't have thought.

There was another lady I spoke to last week and she said that that was – she was amazed – it was the first time she'd ever seen an aeroplane.

Yes. I don't have any specific memories about that. No. We did realise that they weren't all coming back, of course, which was rather devastating, but I think living on farms we were rather more protected than people living in towns. We could hear the air raid siren from Ringwood but it didn't affect you very much. At school we use to go down - the cloakrooms were underground and when the air raid sirens went we all decamped down to the cloakrooms, which was very nice because it interrupted lessons. (laughter) But no, there wasn't too much going on in that area. As I say, certainly nothing very much, the aerodrome wasn't really bombed. There were just stray bombs when planes were being chased. There were one or two bombs fell in Ringwood. I remember seeing the ruin of one house and all that was left standing was the chimney. The chimney seemed to be the safest place to be. But not a great deal. Salisbury didn't have any as far as I know. We're on the fringe of the Forest here of course, and I lived my married life . . .

End: 00-41-46

Keywords: Road-racing, Ibsley, Normanton, dairy, Ellingham, Ringwood, Ringwood Station, horses, harvest, rabbits, Bournemouth schools, evacuees, Home Guard, blackout, plane crash, Salisbury, air raids, water, electricity, lighting, radio, D-Day, petrol, dances, cinemas, newsreel, London, Metropole, Beales, Prisoners of War, saw mills, rationing, farm animals, salvage, shopping, air raid shelters, black soldiers, Americans

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