

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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00-00-00

So could I ask you first of all, your name and where and when you were born?

Jean Crow and I was born in London.

Thank you and do you mind telling me your date of birth?

24th December 1926.

Thank you. Could you tell me briefly how you came to be working at Millersford?

In the – oh, I don't know what year it was now. What year did I go down there? '43! - at the end of 1942, after I'd - I was still at school - I'd done matric, and started in the sixth form but I wasn't going to stay in the sixth form because I was going to leave school when I was sixteen. Somebody else at the school had done a course as a lab' assistant in chemistry, and I didn't want chemistry, and the advert came out for one in physics, well, physics and radio they called it. It had a three month course initially over at Walthamstow and from there you either got sent down to Millersford or to Shoebury Ness, providing you got through the course.

How long did the course last?

Three months.

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And presumably you had to sign the official secrets act?

Not for the course, no. Not until we got down to Millersford

But when you were there you had to sign the official secrets act?

Oh yes, one of the first things you did, and you had a little card which nominally you showed when you went into the place but the watchman who was at the gate, he knew everybody and that was it.

So you were sixteen when you started working there?

Yes

Pretty young isn't it? Could you just describe generally what was undertaken at Millersford?

Measurement of pressure and suction after a blast.

So you were testing various explosives, presumably?

Various explosives down there, yes, in various - only up to five hundred pounds. Over five hundred pounds they went to Shoebury Ness.

And what was your particular job?

Just assisting, I mean literally as a lab' assistant. We worked in huts around the area where they exploded the charges and each hut probably - the smaller huts and I was in one of the smaller ones - had one older person (not that much older), slightly older person who'd got a degree and knew a lot more than we did and probably one lab' assistant. They worked in the huts and took the recordings of what was going on outside.

So what would happen on a normal day? Did they - they carried out an explosion ...

Not necessarily. Every day was different. (laughs) There wasn't such a thing as a normal day really.

And the explosive was presumably in the middle of a cleared area, was it?

It was a cleared area and the huts were all in a circle round it. Quite a long distance away but they were in a circle round it. So you got the measurements from all angles round it.

Right. And I gather there was a fragmentations section and a blast section, is that correct?

Yes, but I don't know anything about that, 'cos I had nothing to do with it.

So which ...

Well, we were the blast section; taking the measurements of the blast. Fragmentation section I

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knew nothing about.

So were they in separate physical areas?

Well, they were all their, as I say, little huts, which were more or less half buried; they were well covered over with soil and everything else so they were half buried really.

So you went down steps to get into them did you?

No. Difficult to describe it. You were on the level but I think they must have earthed them up on top.

Do you remember which number - the huts were numbered weren't they?

Yes.

Which number were you?

Hut 13.

So you're not superstitious?

No, and I still have the front door key. (laughs)

So were you operating the equipment for recording?

Yes.

Do you remember what type of equipment it was?

It was - you fixed film onto a large drum, which rotated and when the charge was exploded that drum revolved and it took a continual photo' of what was happening.

Right. Were you operating a camera, was there actually a camera?

No, the camera operated automatically.

So how many, roughly how many of you young sixteen year old girls were there?

Oh, (counting under her breath) there were probably about - I can't remember them all now, it goes with that photograph and I could tell you probably. There were probably about ten of us went down off the course at the time but others came in locally, local people.

Did you enjoy your time there? It must have been quite exciting for a sixteen year old...

Yes, we enjoyed it very much. (laughs, another person in the background comments)

Well, you get a crowd of sixteen/seventeen year olds, all living in digs, we had our own social club

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and we used to meet up there.

And that was on the site was it?

No, no, it was at Woodfalls.

But that was specifically for ...?

For us, yes. We used to go up there and have various things going on up there. We used to do a lot of cycling round the area and ...

So staff at the site, there were as you say, a number of young girls like yourself and ...

And boys!

There were young boys as well were there?

Until they got to about eighteen then they buzzed off and went in the forces.

And then presumably the scientists, the older scientists?

Oh no, they were all reserved occupations.

Right. And did you mix - everybody on the site mixed fairly openly did they?

Yes.

It must have been a great opportunity for a young girl.

Well it was, it was like I say, we just enjoyed ourselves.

00-08-33

You mentioned a little bit about the site and the buildings there, so if you came in, there was a fence around the edge presumably?

Yes there was a large, large area. Somewhere we've got a map on it, and I can't find that folder.
(other voice)

No, I think you gave it to me and I can't find it. No, if I could find that folder, I've been looking for it and I can't find it. It would - it had a map sort of more or less of the area.

(other voice, "several miles I would think")

It was a very large circular area fenced off and everything was within that area and that was sort of very much restricted. I mean, we had to be let in, we couldn't just walk in, the gate was always

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locked.

Yes. And then apart from the huts, so there was at least thirteen huts then, and what other buildings were there on the site?

Well, when you first went in, there was a house where the gatekeeper (call him what you will), and up there also there was offices, there was a photographic lab, there was workshops, everything except the actual experimental stuff. Then you went way down into the site and the experimental stuff, the actual site where they exploded the charges was virtually in the middle of this large circle and the huts were round it but they were a long way away from the buildings just inside the gate.

And so, when you arrived in the morning, you were deposited at the gate, did you walk across the site or did you have your bikes?

Well, the majority of us cycled up there anyway. Once you got there, they did normally provide transport from what we called the top, down to roughly to one building on the site and everybody walked from there.

Were you in that same building 13 for the whole of the two years you were there?

The majority of it, I may have done a little bit somewhere else right at the very beginning but to be perfectly honest I can't remember. I think I might have been in hut 10 for a short while but that was a slightly bigger hut and it had a few more people in it. 13 where I was, there was just two of us.

Yes. Who was the other person with you?

A lady called Winifred Worsefold, who's long since dead. Although she and the ones on her level were older than us but not a lot older when you work it out. Looking back on it, I mean, we were sixteen year olds, they were probably, well, they'd just gone through university and gone straight down there.

So still quite young then, yes. So the two of you in hut 13, you'd have had the one camera in there would you?

Well, the camera was all built into the equipment. You never actually touched the camera.

When a particular explosive was detonated in the open area, what would your jobs have been, you and Winifred?

Well, you've got to get the equipment ready to record first of all, which obviously with film had to be done in the dark. You put the film, as I say, it was a large drum, you put the film around the drum, fixed it, and sort of set it up to record. Then after it had recorded, you had to develop the film.

Oh so you did all that within the hut?

Mm.

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I didn't realise it was done there, I thought that was in the office.

No, no, it was all done within the hut.

And the other huts would have had different, different functions, or would they have had...

No, they'd have had identical, they had identical things, it was so you got recordings all the way, you know, within 360 degrees, all the way round.

00-13-28

Would you remember any of the specific explosives that were tested?

No. It didn't come into it for us, that was a higher up, not us.

Yes, you just recorded what was given?

Yes.

00-13-50

Presumably there was a canteen on site, was there?

Yes, and they used to, well, they used to bring us down a mid-morning snack. Very generous mid-morning snacks, and we used to have lunch in the canteen. Did we have a snack in the afternoon or not, can you remember?

(other voice "I can't remember")

You're remembering the bread and cheese aren't you! (laughter)

Did you get a good portion of bread and cheese then?

A very good portion of bread and cheese. We had agricultural rations but how they ever got the amount of cheese and stuff I don't know but we used to. What normal people would have for a week, we probably had for a mid-morning snack.

So, agricultural rations, were they intended for people doing physical labour?

Yes, yes, agricultural workers. So we were classified as that.

Where were you living at that stage?

I was living in digs in Downton.

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Just with a family in their own home?

Just one lady, one elderly lady actually. When we came down from London after we'd finished the course, we had a weeks holiday or something like that. Then all of us that were going down to Millersford were given a train time and everything else, came down on the same train and we were met at Salisbury by one of the bosses and taken in their van, around and when it came to it - they knew sort of who was going to have people living with them, who'd agreed to - then you got to the first one, the door opened and I got pushed out. (chuckles) So I was in digs there. Then it went up through the village, did two others right down in the village then it went up to Morgans Vale, did some more and that was it. That's how they were dished out.

And then each day you cycled in?

Yeah.

(other voice, "three miles?")

Mm?

(other voice, "three miles?")

Something like that probably. I know I started at the bottom of the hill. Yeah, a very big hill!

You earned your bread and cheese then?

Oh yes, definitely.

00-16-41

People have talked about a 'plane crash at Millersford, do you remember that?

(other voice "It was on Ashley Walk wasn't it?")

There was one, I can't remember very much about it. There was a 'plane within the site, wasn't there? A Blenheim. Not far off from the entrance gate and what that was I don't know because that was there before we were there. And the other one was fairly late on, the one that crashed over near Ashley Walk, wasn't it?

Did you see that one, at Ashley Walk?

Nobody was allowed to go over there I don't think, from what I can remember. I can't remember quite honestly, it was all sort of a bit remote.

00-17-36

Were you aware of the build up to D-Day where you were?

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It didn't alter what we did a lot. It didn't what we did. Really the first thing you really knew about it was all the 'planes going over on D-Day

You saw 'planes and gliders presumably?

Mm.

And were you aware of what precisely was happening?

No.

Just that something was going on?

Not until afterwards.

So you didn't see troops going along the road particularly at that stage?

No. There were a lot of American troops down there, it was that area.

Yes, so did you...

I mean they wouldn't have gone probably along there. It was very - it was quite a long way off the beaten track, it wasn't by a main road.

00-18-43

Are there any other specific memories or particular incidents that you remember from Millersford itself, where you were working?

(long silence)

I gather there was one accident? A gentleman injured an eye, was that right?

Oh yes, that was actually before we went down there. Chap in the photographic lab'. He was doing some silvering and when you're doing silvering, you have to be careful it doesn't explode, and it did explode and he lost the sight of an eye. He did very well without it, and he's one that's actually died within the last two or three years.

That's the only accident that you remember then?

(other voice, "What about the one who fell into the mixing machine?")

It was after he'd left, wasn't it? When he was, when he was, it was - what's his name?

(other voice, "Yeah, I'm trying to remember his name".)

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Yeah, I know who you mean – Nicks. (other voice “Tom Nicks!”) Yes, Tom Nicks, but that was after he’d left Millersford and he was working at the brickworks, wasn’t it?

Did you wear particular clothes or uniform or anything for work?

Certainly no uniform, you wore your own clothes and you had a certain amount of protective waterproof stuff for when you were working outside, ‘cos a lot of our work was done outside with the gauges that were measuring the blasts.

So the site was operational pretty much regardless of the weather then was it?

Oh yes. It was very wet and cold sometimes.

Yes, it’s a bit exposed there isn’t it? Do you remember anything of the Ashley Walk site, did you see much...

You saw ‘planes going over but you didn’t, we, I mean it was quite a long way away. You didn’t see much about it other than the ‘planes coming and going.

Did you know what was going on there at the time?

Not really, no.

00-21-20

So I think we’ve probably talked about your specific memories of the Millersford site have we? It must have been a real growing up time for you, leaving home ...

Oh it was. (long silence) Yeah but I certainly - nobody had any trouble down there, did they? No sort of, everybody sort of settled. You just took it as one of those things then. And as far as I can remember, nobody got into any trouble at all, and that was it.

(other voice, “Emmeline did”)

Mm?

(other voice, “Emmeline did”)

Ah yes. she was local, she wasn’t imported. (laughter)

Are you able to tell me about that or would you rather not?

No, at one stage we had some - this was fairly late on, it must have been after the war - and they were going to take some recording equipment over to Germany and this was being done with our people and with the army. The army sort of came in to sort of find out how to work things and

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everything else and it was just that one of the girls that came from Salisbury, got pregnant with one of the soldiers. She did marry him, so that was all.

(other voice, "That was the only one we had wasn't it?")

Yes.

00-23-19

Did you have any air raids or any attacks at all there or were you...

No, can't remember any. (takes a sip of tea) I remember one time when - we must have been exploding a shell or something that had a casing on it and we cut through the main electricity wires and cut off the electricity to the area. A fragment went up and sliced through the wire from one of the pylons and we cut off the electricity to the area. That's the only incident like that I can remember.

So, I was going to ask you how the equipment was powered. So the electricity was brought in in overhead wires was it?

Well, yes, there were pylons all the way across there. Yeah, pylons all the way across the Forest there.

Those have all gone now haven't they?

'Cos the Forest road that goes up, I mean, it's got houses practically up as far as we were, then there's quite a big gap, then there's the other odd ones at intervals.

Yes, scattered. So let's talk about your leisure time a little bit now.

(choking fit and laughter)

End: 00-24-52

Keywords:

Lab' assistant, Millersford, Official Secrets Act, pressure testing, equipment, canteen, snacks, agricultural rations, digs

File name	J-C	007	0002M0.WAV	Interview date:17.11.13
<p>00-00-00</p> <p><i>So you talked about the sports club in Woodfalls. What sort of thing did you do in your spare time?</i></p> <p>I can't remember, all sorts of things when we used to go up there. We had quizzes; play readings they used to put on. If you wanted to you could do amateur dramatics, music sessions.</p> <p>(other voice, "oh yes, classical music".)</p> <p><i>And that was - was that in the village hall in Woodfalls?</i></p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>(other voice, "No, Hale village hall".)</p> <p><i>Oh, Hale village hall, and did you go to dances elsewhere at all?</i></p> <p>(other voice, "There weren't any were there?")</p> <p>No it's, the only other place we used to go in Salisbury they had what they called the 'war workers club'. Well, you probably didn't come very often 'cos you went home didn't you? And quite several of us used to go in there in the evenings. Used to cycle in and go in there and they had their own refreshments and things like that and if you were studying anything, there was a sort of quiet room upstairs where you could go and work.</p> <p><i>Oh, right.</i></p> <p>Also several of us used to go down on a Sunday and some of us on a half day during the week, used to go and do classes at Southampton University, part time classes, and they used to take – well, we had jeeps on site and a jeep load of us used to go down there on a Sunday to classes there.</p> <p><i>What sort of classes would those be?</i></p> <p>Mainly ones for - 'cos we'd all done matric - they were ones for what was in school. If you'd been at school, you'd have been doing higher; when you weren't at school you were going into BSC.</p>				

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Oh right, and the University buildings would have been at the centre of Southampton at that stage wouldn't they?

Well, as I say when we went down at weekends, we used to have a jeep load of us. One or two of us used to go down during the week for half a day as well and we used to cycle to Whiteparish and get a bus into Southampton. Leave our bikes in somebody's front garden and that was that.

Do you remember where the buildings were in Southampton for the courses?

At the University, wherever the University - I wouldn't have a clue now. You used to get a tram to the University and that was it.

They would just take you there, yes.

00-03-34

And you mentioned the American troops. Did you come across those socially or did you see them camping when you were cycling to and fro?

Didn't meet them a lot, they - I can remember going to a dance or something in the village hall. No, not, very little, at probably - I think I only ever went to one thing up there with them. I think two of them asked two of us if we used to cycle. We said "Yes". Would we go for a cycle ride with them one evening? (laughter) So we said 'yes' and we met them up on bikes and everything else and our idea was a cycle ride was just to cycle, and we did. We took them on a 27 mile cycle ride in that evening. We never got asked again! (laughter)

00-04-35

I gather cycling was quite dangerous, wasn't it?

Mm?

Cycling was quite dangerous in the dark wasn't it because didn't you have to have the lamps blacked?

Oh yes, you had just a little slit, a thing fitted over your front light and it had a slit in it but there wasn't much traffic around either.

No ponies?

Mm?

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And the ponies, were they a danger?

Well, yeah that was. We didn't - didn't used to cycle - our cycling in the evening used to be mainly from Downton into Salisbury or somewhere like that and you didn't meet any ponies there.

Did you bring your bicycle from home?

Mm.

Because it seems as though everybody cycled.

Well you had to.

There must have been a shortage of bicycles at times.

Well no, you had to. I mean, most people had bikes at home anyway and you just had it down there and that was that.

Well, presumably you were allowed to go home. Did you have holidays to go home or...?

Oh yes-ish, but I mean people came from everywhere. From Yorkshire and you know beyond sort of, all the way across the country. Yorkshire, Manchester, Doncaster, there were quite a few from up there. They all came down sort of in the group that I went down in.

Did you work Monday to Friday? Did you have the weekends off?

Oh we had the weekends off, yes.

So what sort of things would you do at the weekend?

Saturday afternoon, a lot, we used to meet up in Salisbury. We used to go into Salisbury and, not quite sure what we did in Salisbury, other than go out to tea. We always used to have our own tea out in Salisbury on a Saturday afternoon. I think the poor woman at the restaurant used to groan when she saw us coming! (chuckles) But there we are.

00-06-37

And what do you remember of Salisbury in the war? Do you remember the town very much?

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Nothing very specific. I mean, it was a nice town and I can't remember anything sort of very specific about it.

It seems to have been the main town for, for the focus for the people over that way, didn't it?

Well, yeah, on Sundays very often we used to - several of us used to meet up and possibly cycle down to Bournemouth, or somewhere like that.

Yes. So were you allowed to actually go on the beach, because I know there were a lot of concrete barriers there.

No, I can remember going on the beach.

So part of it must have been open, yes.

Where else was it we used to go? Muddeford, just along that bit of the coast anyway.

(other voice, "You used to do Youth Hostels.")

Mm? Oh, Youth Hostelling, yes as well. And if we did that, you'd do it for a weekend. Probably go off sometimes after work on a Friday and come back on the Sunday.

And presumably you'd go Westwards then, would you? To the West Country?

Yes, well Winchester was a favourite place sort of that way, you know, round about.

And so your digs, presumably you were just provided with - did you have a bedroom to yourself?

Oh yes. But as I say there was only my landlady and myself in there. There was only two bedrooms as well, so. But it was a lovely. It was actually in Downton High Street but it hadn't got all mod cons at all. You pumped water from a pump that was shared with three houses at the back and the loo was outside and definitely not mod cons. You had a bath in front of the fire. There were tin baths.

And how did you heat the water? Was that in a copper?

No, I think she had a - that was - do you know, I never really knew. It just turned up there (chuckling) as far as I was concerned.

Presumably the landlady, did she provide an evening meal for you?

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Yes; breakfast and an evening meal. It was, well weekends, I can't remember what we did at weekends. It depends whether we were in or out or whatever.

Do you - were you affected very much by rationing? I know you said you had agricultural rations on the site.

Well, because of the landlady sort of provided meals, as far as I was concerned, the meals turned up. At the age of sixteen, you don't worry very much as long as the meals turn up. You don't worry about the logistics of it.

Do you have any other specific memories of the New Forest in the war because you obviously did go out and about quite a bit?

Oh, we went out and about a lot.

Yes, do you remember, were you aware of the New Forest in the war and how the war was affecting it at all?

Nothing specific about it really.

You didn't go to any of the airfields or come across any of the other troops particularly?

Any what?

Any of the airfields or any of the other troops in the Forest?

No.

No?

No, as I said, we cycled and we cycled all around various villages and ended up in various pubs.

I gather some of the pubs ran out of beer, I don't know if that affected you at all?

I can't remember anyone being out of beer where we went. (laughter)

And when did you leave Millersford?

I left in January '47...

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Oh right, so you...

... but Millersford was still going on then. I'm not sure when it closed; when did it close?

(other voice, "I'm not sure.")

It was after that but not all that long after I don't think, probably within a year or so of that.

So what were you doing between - from 1945 onwards? Were you still conducting tests then?

Yes, yes, we still had to go on, you can't just sort of say, 'the war's finished, chop, we don't do any more.'

00-11-53

And do you remember any of the celebrations at the end of the war? How did you hear...?

Well I, coming from London actually, before both VE and VJ Day, I hopped on a train and came up to London.

So you joined in the celebrations here?

Mm.

I didn't realise the testing continued for a good two years or so.

The what?

The tests continued at Millersford for a while, yes.

Oh yes, yes.

So life carried on pretty much the same for you?

Yes. Well yes 'cos I left in '47, the war finished in '45 and we were still doing things when I left.

So you chose to leave did you?

Yes.

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CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

It wasn't that your hut was closed or anything. And you obviously didn't move to Shoebury Ness with them then?

No, no.

Well, I think you've answered most of my questions, unless anything else has sprung to mind? We could talk about the photograph perhaps. Talk about the people ...

End: 00-13-13

Keywords: Sports club, Woodfalls, entertainment, Salisbury, workers' club, Southampton University, education, transport, cycling, Americans, digs, Downton, Millersford, Shoebury Ness

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File name	J-C	007	0003M0.WAV	Interview date:17.11.13
<p>00-00-00</p> <p>(discussing photograph)</p> <p><i>So this is the photograph of the site. That's the boss behind the sign there?</i></p> <p>Yes, Mr Pilgrim; and that's Mr Farrah.</p> <p><i>Was he the deputy?</i></p> <p>Yes.</p> <p><i>And they worked in the main office did they?</i></p> <p>Oh yes, you didn't used to see them.</p> <p><i>Oh right. So when would you come across them normally?</i></p> <p>(Barbara - "Not often".)</p> <p>Not very often, no, because they were definitely the sort of hierarchy. But other ones that were more senior ...</p> <p>(Barbara - "Mr Rice")</p> <p>... yes.</p> <p><i>To the right of Mr Pilgrim?</i></p> <p>Yes. This, Noah Pearce.</p> <p><i>Mr Pearce.</i></p> <p>(Barbara - "John Trott")</p> <p>John Trott.</p> <p>(Barbara – "Mac, Mcphearson")</p> <p>No, that's Perdy.</p>				

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(Barbara - "Oh, is it Perdy, sorry")

That's Isabelle, she married an American soldier and went off to America after the war. That's Perdy. That's – oh, who was the one ..?

(Barbara - "that's Pat Chaddy. Is that Chaddy or Perdy?")

That's Perdy next to Isabelle. That's Chaddy, that one I can't remember his name.

(Barbara - "Is that Houghy next to him?")

No Houghy's there. I can't remember what that chap's name was, he came in fairly late and he worked up in the offices and I never knew very much. These were locals. You can probably identify them more than me. That's Houghy, but those are the ones I think that – oh, that's John Cooper, that's Morris, that's Bill Symmons.

(Barbara - "That's Powell. He was a nasty piece of work. We always thought he was C.I.D. or something".)

That's Willy Longster.

(Barbara - "There's Morris and Bern Smith and Derrick Kelly")

That's Ray Gighton. I thought it was Morris first of all, it's Ray Gighton.

(Barbara - "These are the workmen, locally employed workmen.")

So the locals were mainly used for the labouring jobs then?

Labourers, yes. They used to sort of bring them in on a lorry didn't they? A lot of them came from the Fordingbridge area. That's Mary Kersell and that, she was local, she used to work the 'phone didn't she, and I can't remember what her name was.

(Barbara - "She came from Downton didn't she? Wasn't she a cripple?")

Yes, she had a limp. That's Alice.

(Barbara - "Who are these here?")

Hang on, that's Alice, Winifred ...

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(Barbara - "and that's Oscar")

Yeah. That's Meg, that's - she's a local ...

(Barbara - "Sylvia?")

... yeah, Blossom was it?

(Barbara - "Blossom, yes. Is that Emmeline?")

End: 00-03-30

Keywords: photograph, Millersford workers

File name	J-C	007	0004M0.WAV	Interview date:17.11.13
<p>00-00-00</p> <p>Yeah, that's Pat. That's Jessop isn't it? Or – oh, and that's Wilfred something or other.</p> <p>(Barbara - "Where's Celia?")</p> <p>She's along here next to you.</p> <p>(Barbara - "Oh yes".)</p> <p><i>So that's you, there?</i></p> <p>(Barbara - "That's Beryl")</p> <p>There's Barbara, Celia, that's Joyce, that's me, that's Pearl, no it's not, Rosemary? Was that Rosemary?</p> <p>(Barbara - "I can't see well enough")</p> <p>No, we want a better light actually. That's Pearl, that's Sheila.</p> <p>(Barbara - "That would be the best plan".)</p> <p><i>Yes, I'll draw you a little plan and you can label it. You've got an amazing memory between you.</i></p> <p>Well, we worked together quite a long time, we were all mates.</p>				

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Well, yes if you worked and socialised together.

That's Betty West ...

(Barbara - "Had the kindergarten")

... there's Emmeline 'cos she's got the twins either side of her.

(Barbara - "Oh yes, Cath and Tory")

Yes, as you say, you must become very close to these people 'cos you worked with them and you socialised with them and you were away from home. All growing up together.

(Barbara - "For me, as a little village girl, it was a complete education. I'd never heard of anybody with a degree before that, let alone met them!")

And stuck right at the end there in amongst all the workmen is Geoff Rimmer.

And he was one of the scientists?

(Barbara - "He was quite senior")

Yes, oh yes, he was one of the ...

(Barbara - "Possibly someone who knew what he was doing. We didn't know what we were doing. We weren't encouraged to know what we were doing!")

So how did you come to hear about working there then Barbara?

(Barbara -Well, two of the scientists were billeted on my parents and I think if they wanted to keep the digs, they had to employ me!")

(all laugh)

End: 00-02-13

Keywords: photograph, Millersford

File name	J-C	007	0005M0.WAV	Interview date:17.11.13
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00-00-00

(Interview of Jean Crow and Barbara ?)

Barbara – About the aircraft flying over...

Yes!

Barbara – The only experiences we had was when the Germans were rushing to get back to Germany, they used to ditch their bombs over the Forest.

Oh right, yes.

Jean - I can't remember that!

Barbara – Yes, I did.

Jean - Well, you were up the top of the hill.

So did you see that happening sometimes?

Barbara – No it was at night.

Oh I see, when they were returning from night time raids? Yes.

Barbara – Other than that though we really didn't experience much of the war.

So when they did ditch their bombs like that, was anybody ever hurt, or were there any buildings...?

Barbara – No it was over the Forest, or if they were, we never knew about it. Some of the ponies might have got killed.

Jean - But you just didn't hear what was happening anyway did you? It was definitely a lot of secrecy around.

And from what people say, you didn't ask either did you?

Jean - No! You just got on with what you were doing and you just didn't ask questions.

And presumably you were not aware of any of the prisoner-of-war camps in the Forest?

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Barbara – No.

Jean - Didn't know there were any.

Barbara – No, I didn't know there were any.

There was certainly one at Setley Plain near Lymington with Italians and Germans.

Barbara – A long way away when you haven't got transport.

Yes, that's right, yes, over the other side. I'm not sure; there was something - one near Woodfalls, I think. But not the big ones certainly. Obviously kept them quiet. And again, the other thing, there were a lot of sawmills in the Forest in the war but they were possibly not over your side so much.

Jean - What sawmills? There was one in Downton, half way up the hill wasn't it?

Barbara – And one in Woodfalls too. Oh, the Mitchells, up the top of Lode Hill, a big sawmill.

Jean - Yeah.

So that was in existence before the war was it?

Barbara – Oh yes.

But presumably they were busy during wartime?

Barbara – Oh yes, it was a big sawmill.

What other employment was there in Downton?

Barbara – Agriculture.

Jean - The tannery.

Barbara – Tannery. That's about it.

Jean - Chap making baskets, but not a lot really.

Downton didn't really change much during the war then?

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Jean - It's changed a lot since!

Barbara – All the men were gone of course; it was mainly ninety per cent women or very elderly men.

Yes, I think that was one of the things that these prisoners-of-war were often shipped out to work in the sawmills or on the fields because they were short of male labour.

Barbara – There were some over Barford Lane way. I think they lived in a railway carriage if I remember rightly. Oh no! That was the conscientious objectors.

Oh they were allocated a particular place to live were they?

Barbara – Yes, I think so, they did live in one or two railway carriages.

Oh I see. And you were aware that they were there obviously at the time then?

Barbara – Yes, I never met them. They were considered very peculiar by the village people. You didn't mix, (laughter) it was a different world completely.

So Barbara, were you at school at the outbreak of the war?

Barbara - Yes, I was at school in Salisbury.

Oh you went to Salisbury to school? And did the war affect that very much?

Barbara - Yes it did, because there was a school from , I think it was Portsmouth, moved to Salisbury and we had the school in the morning and they had the school in the afternoon and the theory was that we did our own homework at home in the afternoon but that didn't quite work. (laughter)

So the entire school from Portsmouth was evacuated?

Barbara – Yes.

Where did they live?

Barbara - Around Salisbury.

In individual families?

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Barbara – Yes.

But then they kept together for their schooling in that half the day. Oh right I didn't realise that.

Barbara - You had a very basic schooling, no frills whatsoever, you learnt your reading, writing and arithmetic and geography and history but there was no question of going to the theatre or anything like that, it was just basic lessons and learning. You didn't have time for anything else. Few teachers.

Well, I was going to - presumably quite a lot of your teachers went off for military service did they?

Barbara - I suppose so. Don't remember any of the teachers going for military service. Probably at Bishop Wordsworth, the boys' school might have more.

Jean - Well presumably your teachers were nearly all female weren't they? I can remember one of ours going in what was then the "fannies". (The fannies were the girls who drove the ambulances and the general's cars) (chuckles) But London, you had a similar thing where we were, I mean, it was only a bit of the war I was at school but we were evacuated out of London but we only went as far as Leatherhead, (laughter) which is ludicrous when you think about it.

00-05-46

Jean - But we shared a school with the boys' school down there.

You did the same thing, went as a school en masse and then went back when it was deemed safe did you?

Jean - Well I'd left school by then anyway so it didn't affect me.

So have we covered, do you think we've covered your memories of Millersford, you've painted a lovely picture and it would be great to identify all the people but it obviously was a good schooling for life.

(laughter)

Barbara - It was, a unique education.

Jean – Yes, well really at the end, although I mean the war was going on and we were working there, at sixteen and seventeen, you're not really aware of the horrors of war.

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Several people that worked with us, people like Jerry Stride and Jack and various others, they went off and went in the forces.

So you had people called up?

Jean - From there, yes, well, I think more probably, more volunteered than called up didn't they?

Barbara - I expect so.

Amongst the scientists?

Jean – Mm. Well at our level, which is rather different.

Barbara - The scientists didn't go.

Jean – No. The one, the graduates sort of those, they were reserved occupation.

Barbara - They were the intellectual cream of the crop.

Jean – (chuckling) Yes.

I see but the junior ones were not reserved occupation.

Jean - The junior ones? No, no, no. Do you remember Morris? All he wanted to do was go and fly a Tiger Moth, wasn't he. It was his ambition in life. And he did.

And the troops, you only really came across the few American troops occasionally.

Jean - You didn't really come across them to any extent. But we had a reunion in ...

Barbara - '87?

Jean - ... '94?

Barbara - Was it '94? Sorry.

Jean – Yeah, '94, yeah. We got together as many as we could locate. We wrote to, you know, contacted and had a reunion down at Woodfalls.

Barbara - We got about seventy five to eighty per cent, we had a wonderful weekend.

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Jean – Oh, we had a beautiful time.

Barbara - Fantastic weekend.

Jean - We went down for a weekend and stayed in, well we stayed at the what was The Bat and Ball and is now the Woodfalls Hotel and various other ones did until that was full up and then they went round other places and people came from literally all over the country. We had forty something there, something like that wasn't it?

Barbara – Yes, we did it just in time.

Jean – As I say, we did it then at - and it was very much a get together.

Yes, it was a good idea. And did you go back to the site?

Jean – Yes, yes. What's his name – Passmore - took us up there didn't he. I mean, you can walk through the Forest now and you wouldn't know it was there but he took us right down to the site, showed us where the centre of the bit was, which was where the things were detonated, I think we found hut thirteen as well didn't we?

Barbara – Yes, we found areas of huts.

Jean - Sort of where there was a hump in the ground and that's where the hut had been.

So that's all there was to show, just a hump...?

Jean - Yes, just the old hump in the ground.

'Cos on the road you can just about see, isn't there a layby where the ...

Jean – Oh, there's a car park there and you can walk down.

Barbara - But you would never know anything was there.

Jean - You wouldn't know 'cos they planted trees as soon as we came out.

But it was lovely that you were all able to get together.

Barbara - It was fantastic.

Jean – Oh, it was a lovely weekend that was, wasn't it?

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CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

End: 00-09-42

Keywords: Germans, bombs, Woodfalls, Downton, sawmills, employment, POWs, conscientious objectors, evacuees, reserved occupation, reunion

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