New Forest Remembers WWII Project

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00-00-00
Could you just tell me your name and when and where you were born?

Elizabeth McCarthy and I was born at Beech Cottage in Woodgreen on the 8th September 1926

Ends 00:00:15

File name	B-M	007	_0002M0.WAV	Interview date: 14.06.13

00:00:00
What were you doing at the start of the war, 1939?

I was at school because I was 12 in 1939 and the War was declared in September when I was 13, so I had one year left at Grammar School and really I spent that year helping to look after the little ones because younger teachers were called up and one person who was imported was a very gaunt Scottish lady who would at morning assembly sit at the piano and pound the piano and I used to be frightened thinking she was going to batter the thing to pieces. Anyway, myself and another senior girl were sent into the infants' class to watch their work and monitor them all day and so on. I never touched algebra or anything like that. I mean my education was really the basic 'three Rs'. I'd done the what is now called the 11 plus exam and, had my parents been able to afford it, I was

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offered a place at Grammar School, but no funds. Then when I was 14 I went to work as a mother's help for Mr and Mrs Richardson and they had a ten month old baby boy. So I was taught to bath babies, how to look after them and my job every morning when I got there was to wash all the nappies, by hand, and spread them out on the hedge or the line you know. Then my last job of the evening was to pump for half an hour, using one of these pumps like this (crackling sound of clothing against microphone). I'm 14, pumping away for half an hour, pumping like that, to fill up the tank so that they could have baths in the evening, because the tank full of water fed the immersion heater. That was my last job and I finished at 5 or 5.30 from 8 in the morning. But you know I quite enjoyed it because we didn't know any different. I used to take Stephen out for walks and we used to pop in and see my mother, and he heard me calling my mother 'mum', so he always called her mum (laughs).

00:03:00

And I left there thinking I was going to be making Spitfires at the British American Tobacco Company at Millbrook but, because, I went with another girl, we were only 15, we were too young to do war work, so I hated a cigarette factory and because you were restricted, you couldn't leave a job once you were in it without permission, I had to beg the manager to release me, because I said the dust and conditions were giving me sinusitis so badly and he eventually released me. I went back to the Richardsons for a bit and then, I was just 16 and had been to what we called the Labour Exchange in Fordingbridge and you were given a green card on which would be three possible jobs and you had to take one of those jobs, otherwise you didn't get any unemployment benefit, which was only about five shillings a week or something like that. There was this, what I thought was an interesting looking job as an assistant photographer at Millersford, where they'd created a research station to explode anything up to a 500 lb bomb and shells and doing all sorts of research. Ministry of Supply, Chief Superintendent of the Armament Research Department and that was very, very interesting. While I was there, the bouncing bomb trials were going on in various places, and one of the places these were conducted was Ashley Walk, which was on the other side of the Fordingbridge to Southampton road from where we were situated. I looked across one day and saw what I thought were giant cotton reels bouncing and I knew something was going on because people from Farnborough, from the photographic department there, were using our facilities. Any myself and the other girl weren't allowed to go into our own darkrooms while they were there (laughs). That was all very interesting and then, unfortunately, one of these planes crashed. I never heard that anybody was hurt, but, what had happened was he came in round over us and this thing was revolving underneath, like I say, like a giant cotton reel. Millersford was sort of level at the top and then it sloped off down in towards the valley and there were fir trees. Of course they were trying to achieve a very low height to get the right position for these things to hit the dams and he clipped a tree apparently and that brought him down. But I didn't see it, nobody else there saw it, the police came, ooh, army, it was tight security. Nobody saw exactly what happened and it was all covered up and taken away (laughs).

Ends 00:06:44

Keywords:

Bouncing bomb, Millersford, Armament Research Department, Ashley Walk, Farnborough, war work

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00:00:00
And I gather that was a Lancaster plane that crashed.

I always thought it was a Halifax but people have told me, no they were Lancasters, so I have to bow to the superior knowledge of other people I suppose (laughs).

What were you doing at Millersford? Could you describe…

Well, we used to (coughs) go out onto the field and the 500 pound bomb for instance would be situated about 500 yards from the bunker. Now the bunker was earth over concrete construction and on this side would be thick, steel, sliding doors. In there we housed the Linton camera which weighed several hundredweight. It was about that long (*interviewer (indistinct) "four feet")*, cast iron on four pneumatic tyres, so although it was so heavy, you could pull it relatively easy. Now the camera was focused on a mirror which showed the reflection of the bomb, the position it was in. So the man in charge of the apparatus to record the shockwaves and so on, was in another bunker somewhere else and my boss would co-ordinate with him. The switching device was an arm which came round in a half circle, a click, click, click, switch thing and, meanwhile, our job was to operate in a long box like a large tuning fork and either Mr Fawcett or Roy Brace who were the bosses, they would be letting the gears in on this camera, a bit like a car. You had to twang this thing so it started to give the timing marked on the film. We used to use 200 feet of 35 mm film for each run. So that was it. But one day, this man in charge of recording shockwaves, he'd set everything up, the mirror was there and not very far away was a post, on top of which was a new detonator that they were trying. He was supposed to be checking his safety equipment, but it fired the detonator and I was standing quite near it. I never really had the nerve for field work again (laughs).

Were you injured?

No! No! But it was just such a shock! I mean I was only 16 or so (laughs). When we had the reunion in 1995, 50 years after. We had a reunion at Woodfall at the hotel and, what's he called, the senior person in the forest, his wife said they couldn't believe how young we all were. Iris, the other girl, and myself used to, this film had to be threaded round a large frame and put into tanks to develop it, and then fixer, and then put on a drum to dry it. We did all the processing. Photocopying of drawings we had to do, and that (laughs), very antiquated, about this long *(interviewer, "six feet")* glass, concave, and a canvas cover that came up and you put the drawing and the sensitised paper in there and you had a carbon lamp, which you wound along here, switched on and the light came on and that ran along and that developed the photocopy (laughs).

00:05:03
Then you developed that as you would a negative, you know. Another thing we had to do was go out in the field. Now can you imagine, you're 16, 17 years of age and you've got a gang of workmen, and you've got to ask them to do certain things, to position… Because they had packs of these cards, great big cards and the shrapnel used to get caught in those. So before it was all moved, we had to go out and take photos of it to see how the metal had been distributed. I never had any trouble, they were lovely. I've always found in life that if you treat people nicely (laughs), they do respond. Anyway, we did that and then retrieved pieces of shrapnel were laid out on cards

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in the laboratory and we then had to photograph all that, different aspects and everything. Another thing we did was, certain frames out of the 200 feet of film, we would make a print and then we would have to make a report, lay out the prints on a page, and also we had to work out at what time, how many seconds for each…I was quite good at that (laughs). But that was for reports that were subsequently sent to the Americans! Can you imagine? It's a very responsible job. So anyway, there we were, so that's that, I don't know what else I can you?

I understand that there was a fragmentation section and a blast section. Did you work in both or were you not aware of that?

I don't suppose I was aware of that. All I know is that they did photographs of various trials, some we saw and some we didn't I think. I mean I know there was one called the Charybdis trial (laughs). Where Scylla got to I don't know! It was something slung between, they put up these two towers, so whether it was to test the blast effect of something exploded above the ground, I presume that was the idea. 307 shells, .307 shells, which I gather were used in the Ack Ack guns, somebody told me. What was the other thing? Oh, Sten gun trials, firing the Sten gun though sheets of steel, you know like this, all at different angles. I think, you were young, you didn't realise what an awful job you'd got really, but it was just interesting as far as you were concerned and you just got on with it. But now, at my time of life, I think it's horrendous!

So did you think about what these weapons were going on?

No! Everybody was so determined to win the war. When you read about the nonsense that went on I'm surprised we ever did win the war quite frankly. Fortunately we were kept ignorant of all that. I mean all the horrendous pictures that used to appear in the 'papers from sometimes. But I think the thing that really upset me were the number of ships that were sunk in the Atlantic, the Merchant Navy. I honestly think that those men never received the (voice cracks) thanks that the should have received, because they literally kept us alive.

It's coming now but too late for most of them.

Yes, yes. They fed us. And after the war with the lease lend my father used to explode because so much money went on bringing cigarettes from America. What good are cigarettes to us? But you know, it the American pressure I suppose. Anyway, there it was.

00:10:15
What do you remember of the buildings at Millersford? Were you in a particular hut or did you move around?

Oh no we each had a building for each department. There was quite a large building in which was housed the telephone switchboard and the fitters' shop. That was another thing, I was always being sent by my boss to the fitters' shop to get a 4BA or a 5BA screw or something that he needed and he always used to send me because the fitter was a cockney and somehow or other I could establish a rapport with him because he was very reluctant for any equipment to leave his workshop you know. Where else, I've forgotten. There was the canteen at the top. We were very well fed. In fact the manageress got into trouble for feeding us too well (laughs). And then there was an

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enormous, almost like a small hangar where they kept all the supplies. We had what my boss used to call the 15 hundredweight truck, I don't know if that makes any sense to you. It was a light truck and then of course there was a bigger lorry. (**Interviewer inaudible comment**) Yes those were the two vehicles. But apart from that there were no golf buggies or anything like that for people to get about. People used to use bicycles to get out on the range, you know, or walked, depending on which position in the range they were. I cycled from Woodgreen up there every day which was three miles. I used to cycle up through Hale Park because it was a shortcut. But the number of cotter pins I got through, you know the cotter pins on the pedals and I was always having to go to the cycle shop in Fordingbridge to have a new cotter pin put in, because I would stand on the pedals and pedal up – it's no wonder I've got such sturdy legs honestly. And I suppose it was about three miles from Woodgreen where we lived at the top of the hill, down along the bottom, up through Hale Park, then on through Hatchet Green and out onto the Telegraph Road you know. In all weathers. I remember once wearing my boss's plus four trousers because the weather was so awful (laughs) to go home in because it was pouring with rain. Then of course at night you came back and it was all down hill and there were bats everywhere and I was terrified, I always used to wear a headscarf over my head (laughs).

So how long was the working day?

I think 9 in the morning until 5 probably, I don't think it was 6. Of course in the winter it was dark coming home.

You mentioned a lady called Iris. Did you usually work with her?

Iris Mejury. She lives in St George's Cottages, or she did. I presume she's still alive in Hale.

And so you tended to partner her did you?

Yes, she was there when I arrived. She was an ex-grammar school girl. I left in '46.

Was that when Millersford was closed?

Yes it was closed shortly after. But I left because I married an American (laughs).

We'll talk about that later then

Yes that was a disaster.

Are you willing to talk about that later? Say if there is anything you don't want to discuss.

Yes, yes.

Somebody said that somebody was injured. Was that in the photographic labs? An eye injury?

Oh well that had happened before I went there. He was silvering a mirror, so I don't know what the process was, but it blew up. His wife was in the WRENs and he died I think two years ago. He was

ninety two, in Basingstoke, and his wife is still alive, I spoke to her the other day.

What was his name? Do you remember?

Leslie Fawcett. He was such a nice man. I never heard him swear. If he was cross at something, he used to get annoyed and say "oh bother!" (laughs) and there was more expression in that word 'bother' than in any other word you could use (laughs).

00:15:40

I gather there was an office administrative building as well was there?

Yes that was near the canteen. There was a drawing office and Silvia Cooper worked in the draft office and unfortunately she died last August. She married a hotelier here in Salisbury and was living in Wilton. He had Parkinson's for many years. He was a lot older than her I think, but I did see here once in Marks and Spencers.

Do you remember any of the other people working at Millersford?

But they're dead!

Do you remember their names?

There was Vera's husband and he'd already died before '95 and two girls who were Welsh twins and they've been dead for some years. There was this chap Rimmer who did his best to kill me with his safety switch (laughs). He was at the reunion with his wife. He lives in Yorkshire. There was Betty, can't remember her other name, she came from Yorkshire. There was Winnie somebody from Redlynch or Woodford and she used to operate the switchboard, but I think she's dead too. She certainly wasn't at the reunion.

So was it mostly men?

No! There was a junior scientific officer who was Welsh, she was slightly higher grade than the lab assistants you know. There was a chap who worked with the fitter and he went on to be a school teacher at Lynch school and I don't know if he's still alive.

What was his name?

Bernard somebody. It's a long time ago (laughs).

It's amazing how much you do remember. Was there one person in charge at Millersford? Do you remember them?

Mr…not Skinner. Tempest? Temple? Oh God, what was his name? (pause) I was interviewed by him when I went for the draft work job. I can't remember his other name. There was another gentleman. (pause) His name began with an F and I can't remember that, tall man, very quiet,

rather superior looking. He used to be always popping off to Sevenoaks. I don't know, there must have been another branch at Sevenoaks. There was a lovely Scottish man, I can't remember his name, and he was very friendly with my boss Mr Fawcett. Who else? And the ladies who were employed in the canteen were local ladies. I think they've all been dead many years, because they were in middle age then you know. I forget how old I am (laughs), these people would be over 100!

Presumably there was a big fence around Millersford?

Oh yes, diamond fencing. Oh, Swanborough. Mr Swanborough was the caretaker. He had a prefab at the entrance, just inside the entrance and he used to look after things. He was married, I think they had a little girl while I was there.

00:20:00

Did everybody come by bicycle or did some people come by bus?

I think people lodged locally. Certainly, Roy Brace who worked with my boss. He was a graduate from Cambridge, rather pompous and he was lodging with somebody and he said there was a poltergeist, you know things would jump off the mantelpiece and all that sort of thing and as he was such a very steady sort of person and very proper, you might say, I quite believed him. I never actually saw it myself but he did tell us about it. He was doing an experiment with static electricity, I mean, God knows where that was leading. It was a circle with like, foil discs on it and that had to be photographed while it was…goodness knows what it was, it was very mysterious (laughs).

So there were other projects going on apart from the explosions?

Oh yes I think so and some of those people were very, very, clever. I remember at the reunion my boss was talking to somebody and he'd say, do you remember so and so, he could be doing the crossword, listening to the radio and watching the television at the same time. This was in later life you know. A bit like the people at Bletchley Park, a touch of that, rather eccentric I think some of them.

But you didn't know what these experiments were and you didn't ask?

No, no. I think it was all explosives related because, well, armament research tells you everything doesn't it, the name of the place.

You mentioned Ashley Walk across the road. Do you remember seeing anything else there?

Well we used to see planes going over but I think they used to drop at a lower level probably, we didn't see what was going on, but there were RAF men stationed in Godshill, because I introduced Iris to her future husband, we were at a dance. I'd met him before and I introduced them and they eventually got married. But it's very tragic because some years ago he developed kidney failure and I never saw it but apparently he had a…what do they call it, not a defibrillator, do you know? Oh, the memory! In the garden and he used to do it himself (*interviewer comment – dialysis)*. Yes, dialysis. He used to do it himself. I was very sorry about that, he was a good man.

You mentioned D-Day. You've got the photograph of yourself taken at that time. How were you aware of D-Day? Can you describe what you saw going on?

Well, just these planes going over really.

Could you describe it for the recording, in detail?

Well, several Lancaster bombers pulling these gliders and there were so many of them it was like a swarm of birds or something, just darkened the sky for a few minutes. But they were the second wave and there's been a lot said recently about the first wave being an absolute disaster and not well planned and so on. The best laid plans of mice and men always go wrong don't they.

Were you aware of more troop movements?

Well that's another thing I can tell you about, because, before I worked at Millersford, when I'd been going for walks with Daddy through the forest. We were working up the hill one day, to go on up the drive, the drove, which is a long, straight road, slightly undulating, it goes up through two sections of the inclosure and this bush got up and walked away, frightened me to death and it was troops on manoeuvres, it just looked like a hawthorn bush to me. Incredible! I jumped and Daddy wondered what had happened (laughs).

00:25:20

You were aware of tanks of course. And, when I was still at school, we had what they called scout cars parked in the playground, because the 1st Armoured Division were stationed at Breamore. Breamore House was the pinnacle of the sort of things that went on. Hale House one was more aware of, because so many of the Americans were stationed there. That's where the chap I married was stationed. But the 1st Armoured Division at Breamore, they had all these scout cars and there were always tanks rattling around and this noise you know. And if I tell you that when my parents moved there in 1925, there were no made up roads. It was all gravel and Daddy told me this a few years afterwards. He said to the chairman of the parish council, when are we going to get some hard surfaces on the roads, and the chap said, ooh it will cost another couple of pence on the rates you know. And Daddy said, yes, but have you thought what it costs you in shoe leather? So I don't know when the roads were macadamed, but I would imagine it was by the time I started school which would be '31 I suppose? What was I, five at the end of '31? It had been done by then I think. But if you can imagine all those roads being rough gravel still.

And so when the tanks were moving there, were you aware of the road being damaged? Potholes?

Well all I remember is that they used to put tar down and then the sun shone and the bubbles came up, and we kids used to pop the bubbles (laughs). I mean not by that time because I was older. They probably did, but you don't notice that sort of thing when you're young.

Is there anything else specific that you remember about Millersford before we move on? Have we covered most of it?

I think you have, because apart from the job that we were involved in, you know you'd signed the Official Secrets Act, and nothing was talked about really.

What happened at the end of the war? How did Millersford change?

I wasn't there. Well I was at the end of the war, but we were still at war with Japan weren't we, so I imagine jobs went on as usual.

So it was still operational when you left?

Oh yes. But it must have been a tremendous job to dismantle everything. I was living and working in other places then so I never knew and it was quite a distance from my parents. It's difficult to explain to you how things changed so much, in a short… The landscape changes, the landscape of society changes, but it was so dramatic because of the war, and I'm sorry to keep mentioning the war. It was the before and after which was such a dramatic difference.

00:29:28

What specific things?

Well I mean it was quiet. There weren't any cars. The only people who had cars were the local doctor who came out once a week and held a surgery in one of the cottages on Mondays I think it was, and he used to come out and do visits to people. And as I say retired colonels and professional people would have cars, but nobody in the village, I mean, the most anybody had was a bicycle. And if you had a motorbike, my God, you must be in the money you know. Motorbikes and sidecars were the precursor of cars for commuting or whatever and my uncle and his wife always came down in a motorbike and sidecar from London. My mother's brother, and my father used to think they were stinky things, he hated them. And Mummy said when I was a baby and she had me out in a pram and a motorbike went past I used to cringe. And I often think that things haven't changed mum, because I still cringe now, I can't stand the noise. But we'd never seen an aeroplane before the war, so suddenly at Ibsley, you've got Spitfires and God knows what, and then the Americans had Lightnings there, which were those twin boomed aircraft. I forget…I don't know. It must have been 1941 I think, or so, which is when the Germans were really hammering us with bombs, we heard a crunch one night and mum said, that's a bomb, get under the table! So I duly got under the table and they dropped, I think, five bombs and they fell just inside the inclosure, all down the side of The Drove, this long road, and it was deemed afterwards that the Germans had decided that there was too much ack ack at Southampton. Let's get out of this and get home, you know, so they came in, dropped their bombs and went home again. But there was talk that something had been done to fool them into thinking that The Drove was a landing strip, so it could have been that, because they didn't want them to hit Ibsley you see.

Do you remember any other air raids particularly?

Not me, I think things happened in Salisbury, odd things, but then again you didn't know unless it was in the Western Gazette. So much was not talked about because we were in a restricted area.

I don't know how they did this, but you weren't allowed to come from other areas into the coastal areas, on the south coast here.

On the whole of the south coast?

Yes, because…I was fourteen then and I took myself…there was a bus then on the main Breamore road to Bournemouth. I know I was fourteen, it was in the first year that I was in the mother's help job, and Sadlers Wells ballet had come to the Pavilion, and I must have read about that in the Western Gazette, because I took myself off to see Copelia. I don't know why, where I got this idea, but the adventure of it! I remember saying to my employer, do you think it would be all right if I went on my own to Bournemouth and she said, I don't see why not. But it was a terrific thing to do! I mean the furthest I'd ever been was on a Victory bus with mummy to come into Salisbury to do shopping. And then afterwards on a bus to go shopping, not that one had much money to spend anyway. I think I got five shillings a week when I was fourteen and I started work. Then it was increased to ten shillings.

Do you remember what you were paid when you were at Millersford?

No I don't, it wasn't a lot. It might have been a pound, it might have been twenty-five shillings, but I doubt it. The only thing was that you had a rise every year because you got an increment, you know if you're in the Civil Service (laughs).

Could we talk a little about leisure activities? You mention dances. What sort of things did you do in your spare time?

Well really there was only the dancing. When I was younger, the vicar's wife used to, this was before I left school, we had a Reverend Mr Skeen and he and his wife lived in part of Hale House. I remember Mrs Skeen teaching us, taking us up there for rehearsals and we'd put on a play in the village hall at Woodgreen. I loved that and I can remember taking part in a mime, but I can't remember what it was for. But there again at the village hall and there was a woman (laughs), a character who had been provost of the WAAF military police during the war, she was, and she said, well, if you can look at somebody like that when you're grown up you'll go far (laughs). And I thought mime was rather fun actually.

Where did you go to the dances?

Oh at Woodgreen. When the troops were there they used to lay on (laughs) transport and I think, fifteen, sixteen (inaudible) and we were taken off to various villages in the area, or Fordingbridge, or Downton. But that was the extent of it, and then, yes during the war, we started being able to come into Salisbury to the Gardena. The Gardena café, which is, what is it now, it's a pizza place now. Disgusting. Yes it was lovely there. They used to have the glass-topped tables with the Windsor chairs, cane chairs and then upstairs there was a great big place for hanging coats and things.

00:37:17
Did you just go there for tea, or was there entertainment there?

Well we used to go dancing. (*Interviewer interjects: At the Gardena?*) Yes, dancing. There wasn't anything else. There weren't any sports facilities, no tennis courts. I mean, the Mill at Breamore had tennis courts in a garden which was on the other side of the road to the house, but that was private. The Miss Hulberts who lived next door to us, they used to go there and play, but they were ladies of leisure, you might say, you know.

So what dances do you remember?

Well, we had Miss Saunders who used to take us for folk dancing and we used to do Greek dancing, you know, you wore the little shift and would fly, fly, fly across the village hall. And then we did Russian, French, Austrian. I loved it. I was good at it and there was a troop of us and we would go around giving displays. You dressed up in the peasant dresses of these particular countries. It was great fun.

That was through school was it?

No no! This was Miss Saunders, who lived in Densem Wood in one of the chalet-type bungalows that Mr Mitchell, who was a timber merchant at Woodfalls had built in the 1920s I suppose. Prior to that it had just been a copse, you know, a large woodland. This was what happened after the first war, into the '20s, bits of building happened in the village you know. Not too much, but quite a few spots of it. And of course there was the Hale Nurseries which was a terrific employer during the war. It used to produce tomatoes which all went to Covent Garden. And prior to that they'd done chrysanthemums and all sorts of floral things. A lot of the girls that I grew up with went on to work there and joined the Land Army, they were given uniforms.

At the nursery?

Yes.

And they had the tomatoes in greenhouses?

Oh, massive, massive, massive! And it was all very sad, because Colonel Dodson who created the place had a house out near Romsey somewhere, and after the war my brother worked there as a charge hand. Colonel Dodson used to get him to go out and do things in the greenhouse, they were growing melons and strawberries in flowerpots, you know, in the early days, like they did. Hale Nurseries, I'm not sure exactly what happened, it became not economically viable I suppose, and for many years it was left in a state of disrepair. And the local authority said, you cannot use it for anything other than agricultural purposes, and they went on and on and on saying this, and you know, the greenhouses had imploded. There were trees growing out through them. It was awful! In the end they gave in and they built executive type houses there, five or six, and some of them have got stables

Do you have any other memories of the land army girls? You said some of your friends went on to be land army girls. They were given an uniform were they?

Oh yes, yes. You want to talk to Nelly Brewer, but I don't know what her married name is, but she's

giving me a lift on the 30th of June I gather, because she lives in Salisbury and she's a widow now, but she drives, and we're celebrating the 80th year of the murals in the village hall, which are very well known. And of course they are full of little pictures of village life: picking cherries, the Sunday School class at the chapel, a man out with his gun and his dog, you know, the River Avon and the trees and everything. Yes and a hospital scene because I mean there was a lot of illness among children in those days, Salisbury infirmary and those iron beds (laughs). The old iron beds. So that will be lovely. There will be about 24 of us I think Julia said.

I'll give you the details of the project if you'd like to pass them on to her. So when you went to dances with the troops during the war, can you describe one of those? What did the girls wear? Was there a live band?

Well you wore whatever you'd got because there was clothes rationing, and I know I got some material and mummy made me a dress. It wasn't anything spectacular, just an ordinary dress. We did quick steps, fox trots, waltzes, you know, the usual thing. And then of course when the Americans came, we all learnt jitterbugging. I got quite good at that.

Did you? Was there live music?

Oh yes, there was a band called…what were they called? I don't know, some chaps from Downton. Because you see there was a bacon factory in Downtown at this time and that was quite a big employer in the area. There was also the tannery, which John Richardson, who I'd gone to work for when I was fourteen, he and his brother, Charles? I think his name was Charles, owned the tannery, so of course that was war work I suppose. And what was the other big? There were the Hale Nurseries. All these things, these industries, had developed early 1930s as far as I know. Can you see where I'm coming from, about the transition from quiet village life into building up just before the war. And I think electricity came in about 1935 or 1936, prior to that it was Aladdin lamp and oil lamps, and I don't think we had mains water until after the war.

Could we talk a little about your home life? You were living with your parents during the war, so what sorts of facilities did the house have?

Well, my father, one of the early things he did was to have a large concrete tank built in the ground and this collected all the rainwater off the roof because there was just this stupid well in the garden which always ran dry in the summer and so he had this big tank built. There was a square water tank outside what was the wash house, but he had a big, proper, enamel bath put in there, and there was a copper. So you filled the copper with water, lit the fire, and that gave you the hot water. You turned a cold tap on from the rain water tank and so you bathed in rain water. You slipped and slid all over the place, lovely for washing your hair in of course. And for drinking water in the summer, you may not believe this, in order to have water, we used to go in a procession with jugs, buckets, anything we could carry, out of the gate, up the road, up an alleyway, into the inclosure, and there was a spring! And we used to fill these receptacles with water and carried them all home again. I think mummy must have boiled the water for everything, I don't remember, but she must have done. We did used to get, but that was before the war, certainly not after the war because nothing like that came round, we used to have Corona come round with fizzy drinks (laughs), but there wasn't much of that I may say. My mother, well, where should I start (laughs), she tilled the

earth, she dug the ground. My brother by then was big enough to help, but you see, he got called up. He'd left the Breamore House and had gone to work on the farm down by the Shallows at Breamore, because he'd got fed up with gardening and he was probably paid more to do farming work I suppose. I don't know what the reason was, but anyway he got called up, so that just left mummy and me.

Ends: 00:47:43

Keywords:
Millersford; Photography; Bomb test; Shrapnel; Charybdis trial; Anti-aircraft gun; Sten gun; Merchant Navy; Millersford fitters' shop' Millersford canteen; Bicycle; Leslie Fawcett; Millersford reunion; Diamond fencing; Roy Brace; Static electricity; Armament research; D-day; Lancaster bomber; Army manouvres; 1st Armoured Division; Hale House; RAF Ibsley; Spitfire; Lightning; Dancing; Gardena Cafe; Hale Nurseries; Land Army; Land girls; Rationing; Jitterbugging; Water tank

File name	B-M	007	_0004M0.WAV	Interview date: 14.06.13

00:00:00
You mentioned Ibsley Airfield. Did you see anything of the airfield in the forest?

No because the only way that you would have been aware that there was something there was if you were travelling down the 338 because it's quite near the road and as I was saying, you didn't venture into Bournemouth very often (laughs). You were just aware that these planes used to take off and they were soon visible then.

What about Prisoner of War Camps. Were you aware of those at all?

No. No, I'll tell you what did happen, in 1938 I suppose it would have been, we had refugees from Austria, Austrian Jewish. There was a family, mother, daughter and a son and the son worked at the nurseries. I always got the impression that he was an educated man. His mother was a cook/housekeeper to a couple of elderly ladies and the daughter worked for someone in the close here in the same capacity. I was fascinated! Oh I thought it was so exotic! Gold teeth appeared and I'd never seen anything like that before you know.

And were you aware of where they had come from and why they had come?

Oh yes, yes. And of course my mother was a Londoner and you got various bigoted views developing you know, and I remember my mother saying "all Jews, you should never trust a Jew". But my father as a boy, when he left school in Wales, had worked for a Jewish man who had a provisions business and daddy always said he was like a father to him, because his old father was a bit of a tippler and his mother died when he was nine years old. All the deliveries were made by horse and cart and daddy was very fond of the horses and he was well known for looking after these animals, you know. His brother was, "oh your father, he wouldn't leave those horses until absolutely everything was done". I remember daddy saying, coming back from somewhere delivering stuff over the mountains in Wales, it would be the early hours of the morning, you know,

and he'd get back and he'd make sure all the horses were looked after and everything and he was young you see.

So were there any other refugee families or was that the only one?

That was the only one, and then we had the evacuees and I got nits and my mother! Oh! (shouts) "Nits!", and she wrote to the headmaster in great high dudgeon about this you know. And it was the children from Portsmouth of course.

Did you have evacuees living with you?

Oh no no no, not those, they were at the school. That's where we…no! There was no room for mummy to have evacuees. On the Sunday, as war was declared, that weekend, I think it was on the Sunday Aunty Jan arrived with Marion and her neighbours from upstairs who had a little girl, I think they came at the same time. These two little girls were left and poor mum. And my eldest sister, I think she was probably prem (sic), because my mother said she was born eight months after it was possible she could have been conceived, because she said your father and I were both virgins, we had no previous experience of sex and (loud whisper) I had my period when we married (laughs). So I think she was starved of calcium or glucose or something, it affected, but she managed life all right you know. But she did need some support, she wasn't very good at making decisions and that sort of thing and of course I come along and I'm a rather forceful creature (laughs).

So you must have had quite a full house then.

Well she by this time was in service with Sir Admiral Mostyn Field who lived in a house across the common, but subsequently she had to, my brother was still at home, well then subsequently she had to go and do war work. She went to work at East Dene at the naval armament storage place and they had to stencil all these torpedoes that they had there. So she did that for the rest of the war and married a simple little countryman she met there and they finished up in Sherfield English with his parents. But it was an awful drudgery existence I felt, you know, toilet down the bottom of the garden, earth closet, and when you sat on it you felt like you were going to fall back down the hill. I don't think it was very level. And my brother of course was in the air force, he got called up, and he finished up in west Africa. He died at the age of 35 from, well he got beta hemolytic strep, which in those days used to affect the major organs in the body or could do and they said it was a complication of that and something that he picked up in west Africa. I always think he used to get malaria about once a year after he came back. He was married with two small children and as I say he died when he was 35. My poor mother, when she could have needed another man in the family. Well anyway, that's as it may be, but my mother had these two little girls. How the hell she did everything I shall never know, because she still did the growing of the vegetables and the fruit, the preserving of the fruit, and making the points go far, knowing which tinned stuff to buy you know, to make…two ounces of butter a week and that sort of thing you know? I never lost weight, it just amazes me.

00:07:25
What do you remember about the rationing?

Well my father used to go the pub and have a drink in the evening, not several drinks, he might have had a couple, and he used to meet a man in there who worked for Bowyer's, the pork butchers, and this man used to have these pork bones, which had quite a bit of meat on them. So for a couple of bob daddy would get some of those and mummy would make good stews, plenty of vegetables you know, straight from the garden, that sort of thing, and fruit for puddings. She said at the beginning of the war when sugar rationing came in, "you can either have sugar in your tea and no puddings, or no sugar in your tea". So I…oh I won't have sugar in my tea. I can't stand sugar in my tea now (laughs). She used to make…one of her favourite things, she lived until she was 93. One of her favourite things was beef dripping on toast, with lashings of salt on it. (*Interviewer: one of my mother's favourites)* And I think they say now, you mustn't have salt, you mustn't have sugar. Sugar I can understand, but salt, you can't eat too much salt, it's not nice is it. But I don't have it, I don't have salt and I don't have sugar.

I presume you never saw exotic fruits.

No. No bananas, no oranges. Apples, I mean we used to do, what was it called, apple mash, that you cut the apples up roughly and you cooked them and then you put them through a sieve and you bottled it, so mummy used to do that, and plums were bottled. Then she got a pear tree, *Doyenne du comice.* I can't wait for those to come round, it's the most beautiful pear you've ever tasted, and she got another tree, a conference, because if you have a pear tree on its own they don't fertilise or something. There was a rhubarb plant. She always grew artichokes, Jerusalem artichokes. I couldn't stand them when I was young, well I'm not very fond of them now, but they do make quite good soup. Raspberries, she had raspberry canes, she had strawberries. Unimaginable! And things used to be altered, garments you know, adapted. Material was made up, wool was knitted into garments. How many hands did this woman have, it's amazing. The side effect of this, one of the side effects of this, my cousin Marion, tragically she died a few years ago, she was 70 or something like that, she said the six years she spent with my mother, she always thought of Woodgreen as her home, because when she went back to London to her mother and her brother, they of course had bonded, so she felt very much like an outsider.

It's a long period in a child's life to be away.

Yes. So war has tentacles.

Did it affect your schooling? Did you have many evacuees at school?

I suppose several, I don't remember exactly how many. I suppose they were younger children, I was in the top class by then.

00:12:00
Could you describe to me, you mentioned getting lost on your way home, once on your bicycle in the dark.

Oh no, no.

When you were frightened by the cows?

I was walking!

Could you describe it for the recording?

(Laughs) I'd been to a dance in Downton and I got somehow parted from my friends, whether they'd gone off with boys or what I don't know, but I had to walk home alone and it wasn't dark, dark, but the moon was up there somewhere, but shrouded in mist, thick mist, and I was walking down the A338 just before I got to Charford and I heard what I thought was a man's cough. I took to my heels and I ran like stink and I realised afterwards it was a cow coughing on the other side of the hedge. I arrived home all in one piece. Of course, we had a railway in those days until Dr Beeching, the Salisbury to Bournemouth West line. And when I was a child, we used to, our summer holiday, it was a ten shilling ticket for each of the parents, I don't know what the children cost, and we would go out to the station every morning and catch the train and you could go to Poole and change to go to Swanage, or you could change to go to Weymouth, or you went straight on for Bournemouth West, which has long since been no more. I mean there's probably lots of developments there, I mean the road, I'm completely lost. I haven't been to Bournemouth for years but when I did I was completely lost because all the major roadways have blotted out everything I knew when I was young.

So was the station in Woodgreen?

No Breamore. Breamore Arch. When we were going to school, school started at nine, and there was a train which left at quarter to nine from Breamore. You went to Salisbury, changed and you were in Waterloo by, I don't know, half past eleven, something like that. It was a very good service. And we always used to stand there and wait for all the steam to come up (laughs).

And the trains operated from there all though the War?

Oh yes.

Was it used for troop movements at all do you know?

Ah, I don't know. Probably, because there wasn't an awful lot of motor…I think it was when the Americans came, you were aware of more army lorries then.

What do you remember about the American troops? Do you remember where they stayed? Where they were based?

Well they were based at Breamore and they were based at Hale and they had a camp up at Hale, somewhere. I wasn't aware, I didn't see it you know. It was there, but not near anywhere I saw, because I used to cycle through the park every morning, but I never saw any tanks.

But I gather that there were some problems with the black versus the white American troops?

But not where I was, we didn't have any, I never saw any (*Interviewer: they were all white?)*. Yeah, yeah.

Do you know what they were doing at Breamore House?

Well, it was the 1st Armoured Division and then the Americans had General Bradley. He was in charge of 7th Corp Signals.

They were all at Breamore?

Well no, they were at Hale. But Bradley was stationed at Breamore. Breamore House had been let by Sir whatisname Hulse to…the Montague banking family had it I think at the beginning of the war. Whether they stayed here during the war after the troops came...you known you hear now about all these large houses that were used for military purposes and you weren't really aware of it at the time. Everybody had their nose down, got on with their own business you know.

And you said you met an American soldier, are you happy to tell me how that came about?

Yes I was much too young. Looking at it now he was more like a brother. He was lovely. He wasn't your typical brash American, he was just a very, very, thoroughly nice person. And I was far too young, I was only 17 when I married Anyway, thinking about it, it was probably also a subconscious desire to get away from the village, because I was finding it rather claustrophobic.

How did you meet him?

Dancing! The dances, you know (laughs). It was where everybody met. Of course you don't have that now, you don't have dances everywhere like there used to be, they meet in these awful night clubs now don't they, you know. And there's drugs and all sorts of horrible things going on. But I went to St Louis, I arrived on April Fools Day, God help me, 1946, and one of the things that put me off were American women's voices. I thought (adopts American accent), I cannot stand another day. Awful! Awful. And economically, we were in a large flat with his mother and his stepfather. People were living in cars in California because there was such a serious house shortage. So they were getting divorced so there was nowhere else for us to go. So I had to come back anyway. So it was all very sad.

Very sad. So were you married in England?

In Hale church, yes.

So that was just after the war?

No during the war, 1944, and he then, after we'd had a week away in Exmouth actually, I don't know how we got permission to go there but we did, he then was…I didn't know, he wrote to me but I didn't know where he was, they weren't allowed to say. But he was at a place I think, down near Plymouth somewhere, because they were preparing for the invasion. Because you know there was an awful thing at Stanton Sands, where hundreds of Americans were killed, there was some cock-

up in an exercise and the Germans were there and opened fire on them. I think it was 800 men, something ghastly, never even got to the war and they were killed. So he wrote from there and I used to get…I often wish I'd kept his letters he wrote to me from the Ardennes and such places because they were so wonderfully descriptive, you know. And he, I know people laugh, because Americans are all given medals for everything, but he was given the Bond Star for being involved in the siege of some…they were all bottled up somewhere in the Ardennes. And I got awfully frightened because I didn't hear from him for weeks and weeks and weeks and of course he couldn't, because that's where they were and nothing could get out and nothing could get in.

Presumably your wedding was very small. Were there other American soldiers there?

Oh yes. Another one of his buddies was the best man and there was another chap who was an excellent clarinet player. I'm sure he must have originally played for Benny Goodman or one of those big bands you know. Interesting characters.

And how did you manage to acquire a wedding dress?

Well I think my mother probably gave me some of her clothing coupons. It was a pale blue, ordinary dress, and I had a fur fabric coat because it was March and I was cold and I thought I was the bees knees and a hat of course. Ridiculous. Ridiculous!

It seems such a brave move – you were so young.

I had such a lively mind. I was so inquisitive! And my education had been, you know, chopped like that. So it was like being…there were no secondary school facilities in my part of Hampshire. There was Brockenhurst, but Brockenhurst might as well have been the South Pole! I mean how did you get there from Woodgreen, you know? Distances… I mean five miles then was equal to 10 miles, 15 miles, 20 miles now you know.

Did you come across the Home Guard at all?

Oh yes, that was funny. I was supposed to be a runner for the Home Guard (laughs). I was never asked to run and looking at my build, I was pretty energetic, but why they selected me I don't know (laughs). And John Richardson was in it. I think health-wise he wasn't able, I think it was his eyesight that he couldn't go into the army, but I think he was rather amused that he had to dress up in this uniform (laughs).

So what did they do? Did they meet regularly?

Yes and they didn't have guns at first, they had broomsticks or something. Well you know *Dad's Army* if you've ever watched that, well it does send it up terrifically, but in some places you know they were quite active, especially around the east coast and south east coast.

*But you didn't have to do anything? (*No) *So what was your commitment as a runner?*

I don't know! Messages I suppose (laughs).

Did you have to join their drill practice?

No I don't remember doing it, no. It was just suggested that I be a runner, but (laughs) somebody must have forgotten about me, or else they got a field telephone, I don't know. I don't even know if they had field telephones then. If you think about mobile phones and all the means of communication now that weren't even dreamt of then. It turns your life upside down. My mother adjusted very well to all the changes that took place. If you heard an aeroplane, she'd be outside, oh that's a so and so. She'd be spotting. And when Sputnik went round, we were told on the radio that it would be passing over us and she was tremendously excited because she went outside the front door and she said, "I saw Sputnik!" (laughs).

It's interesting that you said that you hadn't really seen aeroplanes before the war.

Well, why would we?

I suppose in that part of the Forest you wouldn't would you and then to see such a large number going over.

00:25:00

I never recall ever seeing an aeroplane as a child before the war, never. And I'm sure I would have remembered that because it was something so far outside my orbit you know.
Sundays you went to Sunday School.

And that carried on during the war?

Well, Miss Stene retired and I think I never went to church after that. And the man who married us was a man brought out of retirement, a Canon somebody or other who came up from Dorset. I think it was very damaging to the church the war. I was never confirmed. My sister and my brother were. Not that it worries me very much, I have my own faith, I don't believe in all these diktats and dictums and so on. My mother used to say, because she was agnostic, my mother used to say, it matters what you do every day of the week. It's no good thinking you can you what the hell you like six days of the week and on the seventh day get on your knees and say you're sorry. My parents had very good standards, excellent. Honesty, my father was, oh, if he thought anyone was telling you lies, that was them finished (laughs).

Have we covered most of your memories of the New Forest and your wartime life do you think? Anything else in your notes that we haven't covered?

Well, changing landscape. They cut down several trees in the Forest for charcoal. They had charcoal burners, because charcoal was needed in manufacturing explosives.

Do you know where they did that and what was involved?

Well, we used to walk across Woodgreen Common and into the Forest there and as you walked

through you'd see these large cylindrical things and the little bit of smoke coming out the top. And before that, I was walking through with my father one day and I said, "oh that tree's got markings on it", and he said "oh it's probably marked out to be cut down to use for charcoal", so he'd obviously heard about it in the past. So that changes, but you see, when I was young, you could see the view from the village, because our house faced south west and we had an absolutely panoramic view down the Avon valley, as far as Burgate and beyond. And there is a monument at west…oh what's that place called? West something or other and on a clear day we could even see that, but it's quite a bit beyond Fordingbridge you know. (*Interviewer suggests a place name*) No, there was an army camp there during the war. We had members of the, to go back to the war, members of the medical service stationed at Breamore too and they used to staff Netley Hospital, which was closed in recent years. But, what I was going to say was, the landscape has changed from panoramic views to, the trees have grown up. Any my niece, who lives just off Woodgreen Common, but she's up hill, looking out of her kitchen window, you used to be able to see the houses, you know, all the houses around the village. You can't see anything now, because it's as if an umbrella of trees has grown over them. It is amazing how nature changes things. And of course, horse and cart, before the war, was the chief form of transport. The river flooded one year and I remember we were picked up by the local farmer in his cart and were transported over the iron bridge and then over the mill bridge, going into Breamore, you know, because there was about a foot of water on the road. So we still got to school (laughs).

You talk about the charcoal. Do you remember were there any saw mills in your part of the Forest?

Well there must have been to cut the wood down.

You weren't aware of them?

Well, probably busy doing other things. And, of course, if I was taking my father for a walk, we wouldn't have gone anywhere near that. We would have kept out of the way, you know, you always tried not to interfere with people's work, sort of thing. One of our favourite walks was to go along Castle Hill. It's so called Castle Hill because it wasn't a castle, but I think it was a Roman sort of look-out, at the end of the road before you went down into Godshill It's a famous beauty spot, but you can't see so much now, because the trees again have grown up.

00:30:55

But there's a certain tree that we always used to go and get the chestnuts, pick the chestnuts up from. And there's another place where we used to scramble down to play, called Palm Beach (laughs). And the girls used to bathe in the river. My father forbade me from going into the river because he said people had been drowned getting their legs entangled in the weeds, so you do as you're told and you didn't ever go in the river.

Somebody told me that the children were organised to collect acorns in the Forest. Did you ever come across that?

No, but some people I suppose did it, but I don't remember doing it. Yes, to feed the pigs was it? Or what was it for?

They told me that it was for planting more trees to compensate for ones cut down.

That would be after the war.

Oh that's right, so animal feed would be most likely then. These were people who were young children and that was their main memory of the war, being paid to collect acorns.

I think you're talking about after the war.

Anything else on your list?

Well…roads. Everybody walked everywhere unless they had a bicycle or motorbike. There were newcomers gradually moving into the village which always changes the complexion of things. And, as I say, various houses going up in different places. We had a chapel one end of the village and a church room the other. Mummy always said I was the first baby to be christened in a church. I think they call it St Barnabas or something like that now. It was never called saint anything when I was a child. We used to go to Sunday School there and a wonderful lady, Mrs Russell, who lived in Grace Lane, used to play, is it the euphonium, like a small organ thing? What was that instrument? It wasn't a proper organ (*Interviewer: harmonium*). Harmonium (laughs). And the WI of course were very active. My mother was in the WI as well, and she went one year as the representative to Albert Hall, you know, and they sing "Jerusalem". And of course, the horse and cart was gradually replaced by cars and lorries and things, but, as a child, the only motorised commercial vehicles I remember were some…the village shop had a van, which used to come round with paraffin among other things. So that's how you got your paraffin for your heaters, because, apart from the kitchen grate, it was the only…we had those round heaters and you could put a stew pot on the top as well as warm the scullery or whatever (laughs). Robert Stokes from Salisbury, who was a high class grocer, used to deliver coffee or whatever you wanted. And mummy…marvellous Mr Skeets used to come on Mondays and take the order for the Co-op in Downton, so mummy used to order the groceries she wanted and then, at the end of the week, she got this beautifully wrapped brown paper parcel with the various things in it.

Even in the war?

No, I think it probably finished. Because there was petrol rationing you see. But that was the only commercial activity I remember.

00:35:00

I do remember once an ambulance coming, because, one of the older girls, she wasn't as old as my sister, but she was quite a bit older than me, was in service at the house up the hill. And I saw this ambulance and, ooh, what's this, you know, and then this girl was brought down the lane with a red blanket round her. And I said to mummy, what's wrong with her, and she said, oh, she's got something called scarlet fever and she's being taken to the isolation hospital. My mother was the eldest of eight and two of her sisters died, either 13 or 14 or so, and they had either scarlet fever or diphtheria. (*Interviewer: inaudible comment*) And my brother, when they were living at Notting Hill

Gate, went into hospital with…he either went in with diphtheria and caught scarlet fever, or went in with scarlet fever and caught diphtheria (laughs). But he managed to live through it. Lady Hulse was very into the school at Breamore. We always used to be given a Christmas party in Breamore Hall, at Christmas. And at the school, the boys were taught gardening and the girls had a cookery class on Mondays. That was our lot, because as far as…it was a very Tory, true blue, proper old-fashioned Conservative, and as far as they were concerned, the children of the village people were there for their labour force. We girls were expected to go into domestic service and the boys did gardening or labouring or building or something like that. Prior to the village hall being opened, and that was in the early '30s, probably not long before the murals were done, all the village affairs took place in the scout hut. We lived in Book Lane and the scout hut was at the bottom of the common. There's a little place called the Reading Room as you go into the village, which was a very small building, and that's where they still have the Parish Council meetings (laughs). I talked about the doctor's surgery didn't I, once a week. There were two village shops: a butchers and a coal merchant, so we used to get coal deliveries. And on Fridays, the fishmonger would come from Fordingbridge and I remember delicious cod cutlets with parsley sauce. You don't get any flavour in fish now. Oh, I can still taste that fish. And I don't know what stage the village shop got a petrol pump, but he also ran a taxi service, Mr Gilbert, who used to do the deliveries with the paraffin van, did the driving for the taxi as well. And so that was quite useful. There was a little post office there and a telephone box, a red telephone box. Council houses were first built in the mid '30s I think, the first lot, and they were very nice, brick-built houses, opposite the village hall. Well, after the war of course, they built very inferior looking council houses up the hill and my brother was given one of them, and he went round the house examining things, got hold of the picture rail and it just came off the wall. So that wasn't very impressive. The village common is very important in village life. We had a wonderful fete there to celebrate George V's silver coronation, you know, anniversary. And a gymkhana. And a family called Carson, now Commander Carson was the youngest son of the famous Irish barrister, Lord Carson. And his wife, they were all very horsy people, and she had a daughter and twins, a girl and a boy. They were great, really threw themselves into village life and I remember that day as being one of the high points of my childhood really. It was lovely.

00:40:36
And did things like that stop once the war..?

No, but nothing was ever the same again, really. There was always a cricket team and, every year on August bank holiday, the village played Trefarren's team, every year on August bank holiday, because Trefarren is a solicitors firm. And the village cricket match on Saturday afternoons if they were playing at home was good, because the baker used to come out from Fordingbridge and had doughnuts. And if you were lucky and your mother gave you a penny or tuppence you could have a doughnut. That's another thing. We didn't have cream cakes and that sort of thing. Life was very plain. The only cake you had was what mother made, which was just a fruit cake or a Madeira cake, or sponge. Village personalities. Victoria…oh what's her name? Virginia Woolf, her brother, Sir Henry Stevens, came to the village and built a house just before the war. And it was quite a big house, so that was unusual. Katherine Mansfield's companion Miss Baker was living in a cottage under the castle and she had a little Yorkshire Terrier and she used to ride her bicycle with a basket on the front with the dog in the basket. There's a white house at the bottom of Castle Hill. You go through the village and you stop there. And on the right, there's a white house, belonged to a Mr and Mrs Nash. And he used to have the boys there to do model making, handicrafts, you know,

once or twice a week. And we girls used to go to an annexe to this house once or twice a week for Mrs Nesbitt from Hale to teach us crochet and knitting. I could knit, but I don't think I'd done crochet before. My grandma taught me how to knit when I had chicken pox. She used to tepid sponge me, she was staying with us at the time. People who did good works, you know, who wanted to do something for the community. And it was a very healthy, in a way, it was a healthy situation. But, was that better than what…well there isn't anything for people now you see, the youngsters. I mean now we used to…well another thing that happened at the village hall was the film shows occasionally. We had Bird's exploration of the, was it the Antarctic or the Arctic? I think it was the Antarctic, fascinating, you know. So that was very nice. Now, the village hall has got the village shop right next to it, a brand new one, which has been built with lottery funds. And it's marvellous, it's like a mini Fortnum & Mason's really.

I think that's the way they're going, they've got to charge more so they do very good quality.

All the vegetables, everything is locally produced and people come from all over the place to get things there. And my niece's second husband, because my nephew died when he was 58. She married again and Bob is lovely and he does the post office, for which I think he gets paid a small sum. And Julia who was a nurse at the hospital, she's retired, and she now does two days a week on the check-out and generally helping. Otherwise it's all volunteers. I think it's lovely. As regards architecture I think it's a marvellous example of what can be done. There were a few retirement flats built just there on land that was given by a lady who died not long ago, so that's very nice.

How far away from Woodgreen is Sandy Balls?

Two and a half, three miles.

It's a fair way. I just wondered what the background to that was, in wartime.

Well you have to go up the Drove and down and then up the other side to the main road at Godshill, then you turn right and you go along and the entrance is on a bend, going round to go on down to Fordingbridge. Well originally it was Woodcraft people, you know, one of these funny…I forget the man's name who started it, but they're nudists up there! I don't know if they were ever nudists or not. You have to take with a pinch of salt a lot of things you hear in the country because people get their imaginations excited you know.

I always wondered if it housed displaced people after the war, but obviously not.

I don't think so. Well I mean you don't know. I don't know if there any places like that around here. The only thing I do know is that Vietnamese boat people were housed in the old Sopley huts, the RAF huts down at Sopley, but that was long after the big war. Endless wars.

Ends 00:47:19

Keywords:
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