New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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[00-00-00]
Can you start by telling me your full name please?

Barry Halford.

And where you born?

In St Denys, Southampton.

Which year was that please?

1930.

OK. So where were you living when the War broke out?

In 102 Woodmill Lane, Bitterne Park

And how did you come to be evacuated to Wilverley House?

After the raid on Woolston Supermarine works in 1940 and everyone started to be evacuated and we had to go to Southampton station and be put on a train to Brockenhurst. And from there we

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CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE **CHIEF EXECUTIVE** ALISON BARNES

were picked up and taken to Wilverley Park House, me and my brother.

And how old were you then?

Ten.

And how old was your brother?

Let me see, about seven or eight I think. Eight, about eight - roughly. He's dead now anyway, I can't remember because he died about six years ago.

What do you remember feeling on that day?

Excitement because it was a new venture. It's like going abroad really, to a ten year old, you can imagine.

Was it the first time you'd been away from home?

Any length at this distance, yes it was.

What do you remember about the trip?

The first time I ever went on the train and it was a steam train of course in those days (laughs). And that was exciting because I was always interested in mechanical things, being eventually trained as an engineer, and my father was an engineer at sea and he wasn't very often home on leave of course and so it was all exciting. But the only thing that accompanied me to the station, the only one that did that, was my mother. We had to be seen onto the train and then there was a lady and a gentleman to oversee us on the train and when we got off, etc. But we were picked up at Brockenhurst station by an old Morris Cowley, bullnose Morris open tourer thing, and it was just me and my brother in the car and we went to Wilverley Park.

So the other children on the train didn't go to Wilverley Park?

No, we were the only two, well the only two that day anyway, that I know of you know, that I can remember.

And were you the only children at Wilverley Park?

Sorry?

Were you the only children there or did others go?

No there were about 45 or 50 children there. They were a great bunch of people from all walks of life sort of thing. And there was two brothers there by the name of Oakenfall and they were from Bitterne Park also. We didn't know then – up to then - that they were from the same area. So we made friends with them. But Alan Oakenfall was the elder of the two. He had something to do with

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this business what you are involved with in Lyndhurst.

Oh OK.

But I haven't been able to make any contact with him at all.

Oh OK.

He did write some article in the news about Wilverley Park House.

I've got, yeah, one here on the BBC website, I'll show you that in a moment. Yeah, perhaps we can put you in contact.

Yeah, oh, that would be interesting.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I know there was Alan and Gordan Oakenfall. They lived in Diamond Road, Bitterne Park. That I knew because after the war we went back to school in Bitterne Park and went on there until I left school, you know, at 14 with just a general education certificate, not much to go on (laughs).

So how was daily life at Wilverley House? What did you do?

Great fun, great fun, living in that huge house it was like going into wonderland really because all these rooms and halls and stairways and workshops, cellars. The kitchen was twice the size of this house with all the bells hanging up from the servant days when they rang a bell and you knew who was ringing (laughs), days gone by.

[00-04-39]
What sort of things did you do while you were there during the day?

Oh we had games. We had games of draughts, chess for those that could play chess, there was a few. I mainly played draughts because I didn't know nothing about chess, no. And we used to get out into the gardens attending the flowers because the surrounding gardens was all rhododendrons flowers, they were beautiful in the summer and they last a long time you know. And we used to get out there cutting the grass as well, on the lawns. Helping the farmer as well because a man used to run a farm at the back of the house, called Witney, and we used to go into the farm and help with the haymaking during the summertime and that was great fun. The man had a steam engine there which I used to ride on sometimes (laughs), great fun.

Had you been able to bring anything from home with you?

What from today?

No I meant any sort of toys or books or did you take anything when you went from home?

No, nothing at all.

Just the clothes you were in?

Just a few clothes, what we were stood up in, yeah, yeah. The man, the manager there and his wife was Mr and Mrs Dimmock. They occupied rooms on the lower floor just inside the main entrance and they were very nice people, very nice man, a tall lean gentleman. His wife was a bit strict, you know, bit of a mistress sort of thing but never any problems at all. We got well looked after, fed well. And during my time there I contracted impetigo with all these sores over my face and scalp and what have you and I got put into a little hospital house on the main Lyndhurst road called Bench View. I don't know whether ... I think the house still exists but probably not with the same name any more. And I was there for about a month and a half but the treatment had to be isolated of course, you know, because it is contagious I believe. But anyway I got cured so then I went back to the house again, you know. Good fun.

00:07:07
Did you go to school while you were there?

Yes I did at Lyndhurst School. That's when I was about 10 or 11 and eventually I went to school in Bartley. You know, off of the crossroads? We used to have to catch a Hants & Dorset bus every day in the village and get off at the crossroads and walk into school. Then at night time or when we packed up from school at four o'clock or whatever, we used to come out to the bus and go back to the village, get off in the village opposite the church, then walk the rest of the way to the house. We had no transport other than that, you know. Only by foot (laughs). Good fun.

00:07:52

So did you mix well with the other local children?

Yeah absolutely, yeah. Yeah, we were all in an adventure paradise, all together as I considered it anyway. It was a beautiful house, it really was. I've appreciated fine architecture and buildings ever since because it was a truly wonderful **---** place. Marvellous. Marvellous.

Did you have contact with your parents and family and friends at all while you were there?

My father when he was home on leave he used to come and visit us and he used to borrow a friend's car and we used to spend a few hours together and then they'd go home and we'd be back to normal again.

Did you stick together you and your brother?

Pardon?

You and your brother, you stuck together?

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Yeah. Well we were in the same room actually because there were six beds in one room. And we were responsible for closing the wooden shutters inside the house each night. You had to pull them together like this and put this big mental bar across and that was to keep out any light. Lights had to be out by nine o'clock at night. So therefore we didn't get much daylight come through the windows, you know, because of the shutters.

00:09:16
Did you experience air raids at all while you were there?

We did yeah. But just up the road from Wilverley House was a bomb disposal people and they used go round the Forest and surrounding areas recovering these bombs and defusing them, that sort of thing, and they were all stored in the driveway of this house. Huge great thing, I've never seen anything so big in me life, you know. And they were filled that up with like an explosive, they were filled up with a - it looked like butter to me but it was a some TNT or something like that I think. It was harmless then because they had to steam it out, you know. And I always used to talk to one of the chaps that was in the explosives department and explained how everything worked you know. I always had a fascination with how things worked you know, good fun (laughs). You learnt a lot if you listened.

What other wartime activities did you see in that area?

Picking up shrapnel. When they used to fire the guns of course all this stuff used to rain down. In fact I think I saw more of that at Wilverley than I did in Bitterne Park. And we used to suffer a lot of raids in the Southampton area with bombers. One bomber come down which was on fire and I felt dreadful about it because there were human beings in there. And they actually crashed in our - it flew right over the top of our bungalow in Bitterne Park and it disappeared from view. It was extremely low then and near to the ground and it landed in a field at West End. And there was one man that died and the other one was quite badly burnt and the other one was badly injured also. So they survived apart from one man. There was four of them in this bomber and they ended up about 50 yards beyond a pub. I don't think it was opening time at the time (laughs). That was ... so I went to see actually. Next day I went and saw this aircraft but of course there was Home Guard there, you couldn't get too close to it, you know. I suppose because there was munitions still on board and things like that which were ... the Home Guard shooed you off, you know.

I remember one night there was a raid on and these Doodlebug things were coming over, you know, flying bombs. And we saw this thing in the dark with a flame behind it and all of a sudden it stopped, that's when you knew it was going to do this. We didn't know on earth where it come down. We never heard any bang at all. I couldn't understand this, we thought one must have not gone off. We found out next morning by the ARP people that it landed in a field, at – oh, not West End - Fair Oak. I was at the pub called the Clock Inn. But to look at it there was no-one there. And this thing was - it had landed in a field like a pancake fashion, that's the reason it didn't go off. We were stood right along side of it. It was all flattened, you know (laughs). Next thing you know, the Home Guard were all, "clear off, that thing's alive", you know, so we got out of there rather rapid. This thing was still alive. Of course it wouldn't go off because it didn't hit the ground in the right way. But that was a Doodlebug as they used to call them, or flying bomb. "Vergeltungswaffe" the

Germans used to call them, or “vengeance weapons”, you know. Clever devices nevertheless, small aeroplanes.

00:13:03
Did you have to go the air raid shelters at school?

We had shelters at school, yeah, but I can’t ever remember going in them. There was never a raid while I was at school. Only at night and of course we were in the house by then, you know.

Did you have to go to the shelters at Wilverley House in the night?

No, we only had the cellars, which was down a flight of steps and that was quite large. It was, well the area of the house only below floor level. And one thing that interested me in the cellar was an old gas engine (laughs). I was fascinated by this thing. It was made by a company called Ruston & Hornsby. I looked at it for ages. Of course it didn’t work anymore but that was a means of generating light in the early days and I’d like to have got it going you know (laughs). But I knew nothing about it of course, but it has fascinated me ever since. I often wonder what happened to it when they pulled the house down. Because they can level the house to the ground level but there is still the cellars. I got an idea that it may have been buried with the foundations.

Did you see any foreign troops at all in the Forest? There were a lot of Canadians and Americans.

No I didn’t, no. None whatever.

Wilverley Plain, I believe that was ploughed for crops. Did you see what was going on there?

Yeah, oh yeah. We used to go out into the fields and help with the hay. Gathering the stalks, I think they used to call them, gathering them and putting them in a bundle. They used to put a bit of string around it and tie it up, they had a chap to do that. I used to help the driver with the steam engine. He was operating the thrashing machine, you know. Some years ago now I was driving up Pinkerney Lane and I went to a little cottage to see a friend of mine and his next door neighbour was the driver of the steam engine and he remembered us kids helping him in the filed, you know. It was great. I think he’s dead and gone now. But he was an old fellow then but of course if he was 30, he was old to us kids.

Did you have any sort of leisure treats, did you go to a cinema or ...?

No. Not really.

And what about rationing. How well did you eat?

Well we didn’t seem to have any at Wilverley. There was always their cooks there of course to cook for the kids and they always produced some good food. Where it used to come from - probably the farms and things like that where they used to produce their own produce and therefore it was freely

available, from farms not from shops and things, you know.

So mostly you just were on foot and on the bus to school, you didn't travel round any other parts of the Forest at all?

Well we used to go out into walks. We used to walk across the fields when the bull wasn't in the field of course. I got chased by him once. That was very hairy. I had to hop over this mental fence very rapid (laughs). This thing was snorting like the devil, you know, never frightened me so much in my life. When the bull wasn't there we used to walk right across the farm field, climb over the metal fence and there was a river I remember, running eventually to Brockenhurst I think. And we used to play around at the water's edge and throw stones and what have you, you know, skimming across the water, like kids do, you know. To me it was like going on safari. As a young kid – I was probably about 11 or 12 by then - and it was good fun to get out into open air and the fields and the trees and the Forest, you know. Great. It was a very exciting time as far as I was concerned. Better than being bombed anyway.

I remember when we come home, eventually, that was 1944 I think and there was an air raid on. We walked down to the shelter and this bomb come down and it whistled like the devil. You've never heard a noise like it all your life and this thing exploded about 50 yards away. It destroyed a bungalow just down the road from me in Woodmill Lane and there was mud, six or seven inches deep all over the road. It landed in the front garden of this bungalow and the occupants - there was a chap and his wife and two children - they were in the Morrison shelter which was an indoor shelter under like a table and they were in the front room and the front of the house didn't exist and they weren't even touched, which was marvellous of course. Everybody helped them you know. Everybody helped one another in those days, Helen, and you could leave your front door open, more than you can do today of course. To me, I think we've gone backwards not forwards, you know. You couldn't leave your front door open anymore whereas then you could and people would come and help you or they wouldn't interfere with your life, you know. Everyone helped one another. It was a wonderful experience really.

19:03:00
When did you - you left Wilverley House when you were how old?

I would have been about thirteen then.

But the War was still on was it?

Yes it was still on, yeah, but the raids had almost diminished by then. In actual fact, as I say, the first one we come home and there was one that night. I think that was a last resort on the Germans' part, you know. As I say. they dropped these bombs. I remember we slept in the lounge under this table and there was an almighty explosion. After this, sirens had gone all clear and this was about 20 minutes, half an hour, after the bomb had gone and there was this explosion. There was an enormous - it shook the house, the ceiling come down and the carpets went up like that and jammed the front door, the door to the room. And what it was, it was a parachute mine. And of course it took a long time to come down from however high they ever were. And it landed in Norwich Road just off Woodmill Lane, right in the middle of the road, and it blew down five rows of

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houses, just levelled it like there was nothing there, only piles of bricks. We went to look at it the next morning. What I remember was a huge gas pipe which had been uprooted out of the ground and it was burning like a big bunsen burner, of course it caught alight. It was still - as long as it was being vented, it was all right I suppose you know. That thing was amazing, it was a huge hole in the ground. It must have been 60 foot deep by 100 yards wide in either direction. And the Norwich Road used to back onto North Rowlands estate, big farm area. So it was a blind end road if you like or a no end road and there was a lorry driver that used to park his lorry up there every night, Dawson Straight, I'll always remember it and that lorry was no farther away than about 50 yards from the actual explosion, there wasn't a mark on that lorry, no mud, no nothing, just incredible. Of course he couldn't get the lorry out because of the big hole (laughs). Quite funny really. Well it wasn't funny but strange.

How did you get back from Wilverley House, was that another train trip?

No my father came and picked me up in this car he borrowed from a friend of his. I don't know whose car it was. I always remember riding in this old standard car, 1930s standard car. In actual fact I got to know the fellow who owned it eventually, a chap named Newman, Charlie Newman. He was engineer at the bus depot in Portswood, where I worked for some time.

Did you see anything in the Forest of the build up to D-Day, were there trucks in the road?

I can remember, I can remember D-Day very very well. I was stood out in the back garden in Bitterne Park and you couldn't hear yourself speak for bombers, ours unfortunately – er, fortunately. And they were all coming over, there some were towing gliders, some were big four engine Lancasters, Sterling Bombers, Dakotas, and all sorts of other aircraft, fighter aircraft as well and they were all going across to D-Day. And that was a sight I would never forget because it was, you couldn't see a space in between the aircraft, they were like a gaggle of birds, thousands of them, thousands, all off to Normandy I suppose, you know.

00:23:07
So how was it settling back into life in Southampton after all that adventure?

Dull. Dull. I didn't go back to school there. That was when I finished school at 14. I don't know, I missed the excitement. I missed the place to live in, the friends that you made friends with in Wilverley. It was just a marvellous time Helen, it really was. I loved it there. I didn't want to leave really. Back to reality I suppose you'd call it (laughs).

Did all the children at Wilverley leave about the same time or did some stay?

In dribs and drabs yeah, yeah. I remember the day we left. We said goodbye to Alan Oakenfall and his brother and "See you when we get home" sort of thing and they eventually come home as well. Then we ended up going to the same school, Bitterne Park. A modern school, you know, and I was in the seniors by then of course and 1945 I left school and had to go and find some work to do, start supporting people you know, my mother, what have you.

How did life as a boy change after end of the War?

I was looking forward to - I wanted to serve an apprenticeship. My father was an engineer and I eventually got a job working for James Dredging & Shipping Company in Southampton. And I worked there for a year as a sweeper upper and what have you in the workshops you know and we got apprenticeship eventually. I spent five years as an apprentice and had to go to technical college two nights a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays. They were for two hours every time and that was compulsory in relation to your apprenticeship contract, you know. And that was the marine engine field overall and ship engines and anything related to that type of vehicles, you know, and craft. My father was a senior engineer there. In fact he died as a result of an accident in Lagos in Nigeria because he was out there working, you know. And he was in a vehicle driven by a local man, a Nigerian. And they were going round a roundabout and a big tanker vehicle was coming round the same side, smashed into them and he died the same afternoon. In hospital, but it wasn't much for a hospital out in those places as you can imagine. I've been to Nigeria so I know. But he was due to retire. He was only 63, nothing really, having spent a life in the Navy during the War, you know. He was torpedoed once and survived that. We had a telegram - from the Navy I suppose - that he was missing at sea and it was a month afterwards we had another telegram to say he was surviving. He was in Rosyth dockyard, where they were picked up and taken to, you know, eventually. So that was good news. But it made a bad impression on him because he lost some friends in the ship that sank and he also lost two men which was in the life raft and he always remembered helping to put them over the side because they had to lighten the craft to survive. They were picked up eventually by this ship, I don't know which one it was, and they were taken to Iceland and from there they got another ship to go to Rosyth Dockyard. From then on in he wasn't the same man at all. It took him a long time to get back to normal, I suppose you'd call it.

Yeah it must have been horrific.

00:27:41
Yeah it is. He never really spoke about it. Hardly ever, you know, just an episode you want to forget, I suppose. But to die the way he did, it upset me quite a lot because one he was an engineer and he taught me a lot and I'd like to have learnt a lot about his war experiences but as I say he'd never talk about it. Not at all. Just the fact that I found out afterwards what happened to him, you know.

Yeah, it's what happened to a lot of people I think.

Absolutely. It did.

Back at Wilverley, did the children come from all around Southampton or where they from all over the country?

There was two lads there from ... his name was Brian, don't ask me his second name, I don't know. He was from Portsmouth and another chap I got interested in, friends with, his father owned a pub in Southampton where the big multi-storey car park is now. The pub's all down now. And I went to see him after I got home and I always remember I couldn't go in the pub because I wasn't old

enough so he come outside and we had a glass of lemonade together and had a chat like, you know. And that was the last time I ever saw him because they moved from there and went back to Portsmouth, I think, or went to Portsmouth, I'm not sure.

So did you go to school all day or were you just half days?

No all day. Yeah

And then you'd come home and work on the farm and do all those?

Sundays, we had to go to Sunday School, which I didn't like at all, and I used to do all sorts of silly things that I can't remember much about. But afterwards we used to have to go to the church, which was Lyndhurst church, and one of the jobs I got landed with was to pump the organ which was under the floor, at least the operating pump was. It was one of these things you had to turn this handle (laughs). And the chap on the organ, of course you could hear it, it was just above, like being up there. And we were down there pumping and if you relaxed a little bit the pressure used to go down and he'd go thump on the floor, "Keep the pressure up" (laughs). Two of us doing this you know. Didn't like that side of it very much. Didn't like going to the church anyway really (laughs). It wasn't my scene, you know.

00:30:19
Do you remember any sort of events, did you have any Christmas parties or?

No not really.

Every day just much the same?

Yeah exactly. Yeah exactly. I can't remember a bad time because every day was an adventure, that's how I looked at it anyway at the time. It was always exciting to eat, you couldn't get your food down fast enough to get outside. And you were left alone to do what you wanted to do. Or sometimes you were asked if you would participate in cutting the grass, the lawn. They had a little tiny pair of shears, pair of these, you know. Hands and knees job, it was just "Cut this grass". Probably made a dreadful job of it but it was exciting to do, you know, and you felt that you were in lovely gardens surrounded by beautiful flowers and lots of room, space everywhere.

In Wilverley Park this house just here, this side, was a large stables and of course there were never any horses there then when we were there but there was all cobbled floor everywhere. And I believe now since the house was pulled down the stables were refurbished as accommodation. I think that still exists. I've never been there, Helen, so I don't know, I can't verify that. But to me it was another world to live in. It was like suddenly being chucked from a 10 year old from a bungalow in Bitterne Park, it was a two bedroom affair, into Buckingham Palace, exciting (laughs). I always remember the beautiful tiled floor. But as soon as you walked in that front door you had all these black and white tiles all over the place. Down the hallways, upstairs. And we got told off once. Outside my bedroom there was these railings across to the veranda and bolted onto the railings was a boar's head. Just the head of this boar with tusks, and it had bristles on it like the hairs and we used to pull them out (laughs). A bit of vandalism, I suppose, and we got told off because we

got caught doing it once. Because this thing was getting rather bald, you know (laughs).

So did you have any punishment or was it just a telling off?

No, no, just a telling off yeah. That was enough. We only got telling once.

Did you ever see any of the prisoners of war, did they ever come to the farm?

No no, we didn't no. Didn't know that existed of course but obviously it was there at the same time. I don't know, I believe camp 65 was to house Italian prisoners originally, at least so this guy Richard told me in Lyndhurst. And he said it was to house Italian prisoners, but eventually they were moved elsewhere and it was taken over by the German POWs, yeah. So I don't know when that took place.

Yeah.

Perhaps you'd have more info on that?

Yeah we found the dates. The Italians went to the Isle of Wight and then the Germans came to Setley.

Yeah, yeah.

Apparently they were working all over the Forest but they didn't come to your farm?

No, no. We didn't see any or if they did we didn't see them, put it like that.

00:33:50
Did you ever get asked to go and help at a neighbouring farm?

No, no. Only that one which was just across the field. I think the farm still exists. I don't know whether it is the same family or not but the name was Whitley. He had a son, he was about 18 I suppose, 17 or 18 years old, and he used to ride a horse to school. In fact he was killed in Lyndhurst village when his horse threw him off apparently and he went under a bus. It was a dreadful shock, he was a nice, nice man he was, or a nice young man. But we always got fed lovely fresh lemonade by the farmer. He used to come out lunchtime with all these sandwiches and jam sandwiches I always remember, big thick jam sandwiches, lovely (laughs).

Was it homemade jam?

Yeah. Absolutely, yeah. Marvellous.

Where did the lemons come from?

I don't know (laughs).

Did you have much fresh fruit?

Apples, pears, plums. Plums I remember particularly, being what do you call them, big, big plums? I forget what they're called now. There's a special name for them, like egg plums, you know, they were quite beautiful to eat. Mind you, we used to eat too many of them but nobody said you couldn't have anymore, you know. Everything seemed to be plentiful (laughs). I loved it there.

Did you see many aircraft passing over during the day?

No, I didn't no. No I can't remember any.

00:35:38
What were your sort of feelings about the War when you were a child? Did you hear much about what was going on?

I watched a Messerschmitt once, a fighter. It was during an afternoon, this was while we was at Bitterne Park, and this aircraft was right down low, flying around leisurely as if he was on a jolly. And I thought to myself, "That guy is just enjoying himself", you know, and he turned around and he flew the whole length of Woodmill Lane at alt feet. In fact, I was looking down at him more or less 'cause we were on - the house was on a slightly elevated position. And at the end of Woodmill Lane there was a barrage balloon outfit. But the barrage balloon was tethered to the vehicle, it was still close to the ground. And this guy machine gunned it and this thing went up in flames didn't it (laughs). I always remember this. I always remember this Messerschmitt, it had a yellow nose to it. The nose of the engine cowling was all yellow. I know now which group it came from because I learnt a bit about that sort of thing. But also, he climbed up, and he was shooting down barrage balloons all over Southampton. You know, going up to them, bang, bang, bang, bang, and another one there and these things were just going down to the ground in flames. All his mates were up there dicing with death and there he was enjoying himself. Silly war, you know (laughs).

Did you used to listen to the news or read newspapers?

No, no we never had a radio or nothing, at Wilverley anyway. And I liked to ... well the thing I remember mainly was a chap that parachuted out of an aircraft. He landed in a field behind Whitley Farm and he was only a young guy, he was a pilot, and where his aircraft come down, I've no idea. But he parachuted and he was injured, he had a badly injured leg from ammunition of some sort. I don't know, it may have been something else but I always thought then what a waste of time, people were killing one another or hurting one another, you know. He seemed just an ordinary sort of young guy. And he walked up – we were quite got close together - and we walked up and he shook hands with everybody, you know. And I think he was frightened really, he probably heard that we were going to be butchers or something like that, you know. Of course nothing of the kind. But that's the only contact, that was the first German I ever met. They didn't seem any different to me than anyone else. Of course they're not, you know.

I spent eight years in the RAF and met some wonderful people in Germany when I was based over there. I got invited into their homes and treated like royalty. Then one couple I got to know, he worked on the base as well. That's how I got to know him, we used to employ German civilians. He

said “Oh you must come home to meet my wife and my daughter” and one thing and another. He had a young son as well. And I went to his house near Munich and his wife got out the best tablecloth that you can imagine, just for me. And she cooked all these wonderful gateaux and cakes and things, you know. What they did it on I don’t know because there was rationing on even in that time, you know, in the fifties this is. And I thought to myself “We went to war with these people” and to me there was no one nicer, they treated you like royalty, they really did. They didn’t want the War you know, they hated it. They hated Hitler and all his cronies, sort of thing. There were a lot of people that was against Hitler and his regime than there was for him really. If you spoke up against someone like Hitler, Himmler, and all that crowd of criminals, you got put into prison or even shot. You just couldn’t open your mouth, you know. So they were suppressed to a very high degree which is ... when you were with these people over there you learn a lot from the horse’s mouth so to speak and I really got to like them very much. As I say, I speak as I find, you know. To me that was wonderful you know.

00:40:28
So at Wilverley you felt quite removed from all the war, you didn’t really know that much that was going on?

No, no because the bombing was concentrated in the town of course, in Southampton and its surrounding areas. I think they dropped a lot of bombs but I don’t think they pinpointed them very much to where they had to go. Perhaps they were aiming for something else, I don’t know.

I was in school in 1940, in Bitterne Park, when they bombed the Supermarine works at Woolston. After that we got evacuated because it was getting quite dangerous. And they flew up Southampton Water and destroyed Southampton, the Supermarine aircraft works at Woolston, and they killed - I don’t know, 50 odd people. Of course we didn’t know much about that until afterwards but things started getting very hot and you were...

Did you have to go or were your parents keen for you to go?

No, they decided that ... it was encouraged that you sent your children away, you know. I had no idea where we were going to go, you just got on the train. This couple was on the train, took you off at Brockenhurst and we had to wait there until we got picked up by a car. We didn’t know where we were going, not until we got there.

Was that the first time you’d been into the Forest?

Yeah. Yeah. Didn’t know Lyndhurst existed (laughs) or Wilverley Park House. No.

Thank you very much.

You’re welcome. Been interesting.

Key Words
Wilverley Park House

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