

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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00-00-00

OK David, if you could just give me your name, age and where you lived at the start of the war.

My name is David Bayliss. I started school in 1940. This was in the Junior school and then I came across the road to the Senior school, and that was my schooling I think.

And where did you live?

We lived in Northfield Road, Milford on Sea to start with, then we moved from there to Woodside.

Tell me what school life was like at that time.

School life was very good. I enjoyed school, very much so. We didn't have much in the way of sports equipment. I think a couple of bats and that was about it, I think. We used to play a lot in the trees down towards Woodside and it was great. There were no rules really for us. We wandered and did more or less what we want. Played in the copse, climbing trees, making bows and arrows. Summer holidays we would go out. They never lasted long

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enough, summer holidays, we were always out doing something, either we were in the copse or we were down the marshes, down by Oxey and all along by the sea wall, either playing or swimming. I think most of us children there learnt to swim in the Salterns, which was then I think owned by a couple of old ladies, and then I think it was called Ouveries Ponds and then it got renamed The Salterns. But we had great time down there. Winkling; go to collect winkles on a Sunday – great times.

And how did the war affect your school life?

Well it did affect us because so many air raids. We would go to school – ‘course there was no lights in Belmore Lane then at all. If you were going anywhere in the evening, like to the Lyric Cinema, so you would be there and we’d all walk up together. This was boys and girls. We’d all go to pictures together with our sixpences and come out of pictures. Then we’d have to walk home down Belmore Lane to Woodside. No street lights at all because then, all the way down from Lymington High Street to Woodside was all fields, and we all used to go to pictures together, then when we came out, I can remember one time, the girls always came with the boys – we went as a group – and I can remember coming down Belmore Lane one evening and I think we were frightening the girls with tales of people in the hedge and all this sort of thing, so we continued down and I think there was more feelings about someone in the hedge and us boys worked on it very well. About halfway down Belmore Lane and a cow coughed in the field over the hedge. (laughter) Of course the girls were screaming and the boys disappeared and left the girls there. (more laughter)

So it used to be great time in the winter down at Woodside, because if it was cold and very cold, we’d get buckets of water and throw on the road to make a slide, which we did quite often. We used to play games in the evening with a torch and also we used to get a needle and cotton and go into a place, stick the needle in the putty and then thread it with the cotton with a button on it, so if you went like this (tapping noise), tapped on the window. Someone would open the door and say “Anyone there?” They’d say no then go in, and start again. (chuckling) So it was harmless fun really doing that.

00-05-25

Then the other place we used to play in was Rooks Garden. We always used to be climbing in the rhododendron bushes and having such fun and it was so open then. There was so much space for boys. Birds nesting, always birds nesting in the summer and also we would collect gulls eggs from the rushes, and I think we’d get a bucket full of eggs to take home, which Mom used for cooking. We used to eat them then but I don’t know I’d eat them now because they’re so fishy. I think they were selling about a pound (£1) each these eggs, but I could not eat one now.

00-06-19

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Tell me what happened on your journeys to school if the siren went.

Well, if the siren went and you were on your way to school, 'cos this is down Grove Road I think it was we used to come through and walk up from Woodside, if we were halfway there in the morning and the siren went, they used to say "If the siren goes when you're on the way to school, stay where you are. If the all clear doesn't go within about half-an-hour, you must work your way home, because it's saver to be home." Sometimes we would wait 15/20 minutes and the all clear would go. So we'd be halfway to school – this was down Daniels Walk where there's all bungalows now and houses, it was just open fields then – and we'd start climbing in the trees and then eventually we'd go home about dinner time. Mom would say "Well, why were you not at school?" and we used to say "Well, the all clear didn't go" and she used to say "Yes it did". Well, we said "We didn't hear it". So we had the day off. Next morning, we got to school and Mr Hoare – Honky Hoare as he was called – he used to say "Where have all you lot from Woodside been? Why didn't you come to school?" We said "Well, we didn't hear the all clear, so we went home". "Oh yeah!" He used to come out with that excuse one or two times. (laughter)

No, it was all good fun and there was no pressure those days, it was all pretty laid back really.

00-08-01

Did rationing affect your life very much?

Not really, only for sweets I think, nothing else. I don't think it affected us food wise. We always had food. I remember we never went short of food. Eggs, I think we were rationed to one each a week but luckily Mum kept ducks. We never had chickens eggs, we always had ducks eggs. Brought up on ducks eggs more or less. I think Mum used to supply one or two people in the shops with eggs. This was "under the counter" I think. Half a dozen eggs (chuckles) which used to buy Dad's tobacco I think. No, we didn't go without because we used to get – Mum would say on a Sunday "Well, if you want a cabbage or a swede you know where they're growing." And I always used to say "Yes". We always knew where everything in the fields were growing, us boys. Mum would say "Any chance of getting a swede for us?" I'd say "Yes, yes, that's no problem". Go down on the Forest, get a swede, bring it home.

And there's Dad's watercress we used to collect – watercress for Sunday – wash it and Mum always used to say "If you're going to collect watercress, make sure it's running over gravel". The thing we used to do, because that's what we did, and we were never ill.

00-09-42

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Did you grow vegetables at school as well?

Yeah. Yeah, we all had a little plot in top class. We had a little plot of ground which we grew vegetables on. Of course all the boys always grew peas. You grew peas because you could help yourself when (chuckling) when they're ripe, and I think all the vegetables went to the parish hall where they used to have a school garden there and I think that's where it all went to. It was great fun. We all had our little plot of vegetables, so it was really good. Always enjoyed that.

00-10-35

What did you see if anything, of German bombers?

Saw one or two going over. Used to go over fairly low some of them. The only one I can remember – no, two I can remember well – that was the one that landed on Fords in the High Street, and there was another one that landed down Belmore Lane. I think it was called Fairfield House and a bomb landed in the drive. Then the bomber that was burnt out down Lower Pennington Lane. I don't know whether it was a Dornier or a Hurricane, but we saw this come down and all us boys, on the bicycles, hurried over to where it was. 'Course by the time we got there was police and everything round it. But that burnt out I remember and we did find some Perspex from the plane. Managed to take it home and put the poker in the fire, heated it up and then burnt a hole through. Used to stink this stuff did, this Perspex when you're – and we'd make a hole and then we'd somehow cut it out and then file it so you ended up with a ring on your finger. (chuckles) Which was great really. I suppose we adapted to do so many different things when we were kids, and it was all fun. Everything was fun in those days.

00-12-18

Tell me about your trip to the US fighter base near Elmer's Court.

Yeah, that was good. We used to go there with wheels, like make a little cart with wheels on – pram wheels we used to get from the tip – and we'd then go over from Woodside, and we'd take this thing all the way up to just past Elmer's where the fighter base was - which I think it was put in there about a couple of months, three months before D-Day – and there used to be Thunderbolts – P 36's I think, American with snub nose – and we used to go up there when they used to dump stuff, and used to pick up these wing tanks. Some were silver coloured with red markings on, others were made of tin. The best ones were the ones with the silver markings on. They weren't as hard to make into anything as the tin ones was. 'Cos we used to get through the tin and put pieces of wood on the side of them, to stabilize them. Didn't work much because they was so dangerous, they'd turn over

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(chuckling) so quick.

What did you make them into?

Canoes. We made them into canoes, which we'd then would get a couple of bits of wood and paddle with. Damned dangerous it was. Terrible, but we used to have such fun doing that and we used to go paddle all round Oxey Lake - which is just down from Lymington – used to paddle these things all round the rushes and all round the little creeks. If any of my kids had ever tried to do that, I think I'd have a nightmare. But they used to do it, or we used to do it and there was no – it didn't seem to worry us.

00-14-41

We also used to buy about sixpenny worth of carbide, which they used to put in the old fog lamps. One day we thought, now if we put this in a screw top bottle – the old orangeade bottles with screw tops – if we put some water in and then throw some of this in, we could then screw it up, it would make an explosion. So we thought we'd go fishing and do this. So we did this, put the stuff in, threw it in the water, wait a little while and it all explodes. 'Course, at the time there were swimmers still swimming in the same place where we put this bottle, (chuckle) which is a bit crazy, isn't it? We used to do that sort of thing.

We also with this carbide, I remember sometimes we used to go to school with it, you only need a little piece, and as you walk past the girls' little ink pots, so you just put a little bit in there. 'Course it all (makes fizzing noise).

Another thing we used to take to school – well, some of the boys used to – they used to bring mice to school to sell. I think the boys used to charge about sixpence for a white mouse or white and black mouse. They used to bring them to school, and 'course, **when they were ???**, once they put in the desk. So you had (chuckling) lift up your desk and you had mice running around in the desk.

I remember I bought some one day, took 'em home, made them cages which they got out of and we had black and white mice running round the house, and Dad got so angry about this. I remember he said "Mother, we got white and black mice running all over the house". (laughter) But we didn't think anything - it was all good fun, it was all just fooling about I suppose. (chuckles)

00-16-58

So David, what do you remember about the build-up of troops around D-Day?

For us boys it was glorious, it was just so much fun. We used to go into the camps. Our

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favourite one was on Alder Cliff. In the big houses there that then used to lay at the back there. We used to go there Saturday mornings and queue up with the troops for lunch or dinner, and used to go in and they used to say "Yeah, come on kid, if you want something to eat, you queue up". We used to have chicken. We only had a scrawny chicken or a duck at Christmas and that was it, but these guys were having chicken more or less every meal, and we could not believe it. The food we used to get, and I can remember one time when the cook – I went into the cookhouse – and the cook there said "You want some corned beef kid?" and I said "Yes". So he gave me a big long pack and I can remember arriving home with it on the handlebars from Milford to Woodside. (chuckles) For us boys it was such a super time.

And then I can remember coming out of school and remember seeing – I think it was about 4 o'clock, maybe just as we came out of school – the sky was covered with Horsa gliders, the sky was full of gliders going across I suppose. Yeah, I suppose we're lucky to see all this really, but we didn't realise just how serious it all was. But I can remember during the war, I don't think we were ever worried about it as children. We never worried, I think we enjoyed it. (chuckles)

00-19-06

Tell me about meeting the black US troops in Lymington.

Yeah, yeah, lovely guys. They're all so nice and all so kind to us boys. I suppose they thought we were a bit hungry or something, I don't know, but they were so good. All of them were so good to us. Yeah, when you look back, gosh.

What did they give you?

A cigarette – oh, a cigarette – we used to live on cigarettes. Also we used to – talk about cigarettes – I remember we used to go behind the Lyric, and all the sweepings used to go behind the Lyric, so as boys, we used to go in and pick up the big cigarette butt ends. We didn't pick up the ones with the lipstick on. We then used to collect all these and we had a little Rizla roller machine – how old was I then, 12 or 13, something like that – and we were then rolling our own. Taking the things to pieces, you know. How we didn't catch a disease or something I don't know (chuckles), but it was all such good fun and it was so easy about it all.

00-20-34

What do you remember about VE Day, how did that finish up?

VE Day, yeah, I remember VE Day very well. VE Day, I think it was the evening, when the

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troops were all about in the High Street in Lymington, and they built a massive big bonfire in the middle of the High Street. Opposite Elliotts, that's where the big bonfire was. They were throwing on wooden doors – anything they could get their hands on – wooden shutters, all these were going up in flames. I can remember the American troops were throwing thunder flashes and frightening us kids to death, but we all enjoyed it so much. I think we went home - I think we walked to Woodside that night about nine or ten o'clock at night, and that was late for us boys to be out on our own. I remember those stalls on the High Street in Lymington, different sorts of stalls selling odds and ends and rubbish and everything, but it was such a great time, super time.

End: 00-21-45

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