

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

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Checked - Sue Jackson

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00-00-00

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

Yes, I'm Edwina Bright and I was born at Lyndhurst and brought up at Fritham, at Homefield Farm at Fritham, in 1935 (chuckles).

Thank you. So were you living in Fritham throughout the War?

Yes, yes, we, my - my parents were farmers and commoners, so they had all Forest Rights and very active during the War with the farm.

So you were living at Homefield Farm?

Yes.

What can you remember about the wartime, living on the farm?

Yes, we, we were ... we used to sell milk. We had quite a large farm with fields scattered around and our cows used to roam on the Forest so although the War was on they still had to be gathered in and they used to have bells so we used to be able to hear them. And we sold milk. My parents milked morning and night. The lorry used to collect the milk in the

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morning and also they used to sell milk either in containers, little ... in milk bottles or in little churns, in containers and ... (dog barks) Sorry about that.

End: 00-01-46

Keywords: Homefield Farm, Fritham, farmer, commoners, milk.

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00-00-00

(clears throat loudly!) yes, sorry.

So you were talking about the milk in containers.

(clears throat again) ... and either the people of Fritham used to – the lower part of Fritham – used to come and collect their own milk from my mother or other members of the family used to deliver it on bicycles, hanging from their handlebars. And there was another farm at the top end of Fritham, they used to sell milk, but to the locals. But otherwise it was taken by lorry, Brown & Harrison's lorry, into Southampton and distributed by them.

So you produced more milk than could be used just in the local village then?

Yes, yes, we used to have twelve or sixteen cows, so there was plenty of milk. The excess used to be given to pigs of course, which used to go to market, and there used to be an inspector come round to count if you had little pigs or calves or anything like that, to know how many you had 'cause you weren't allowed really to kill them for yourself unless they were reported. But I never remember being short of food or anything like that in the War. Grow our own vegetables and our own fruit, so yeah.

Were they the only animals you had, the cows and the pigs?

The cows, the pigs and the chickens. That was the only ... and horses of course because we used to have the ponies on the Forest, but not so many. But it was mostly cows 'cause they were productive (chuckles) and pigs because they were productive.

And the cows went out in the Forest with bells?

Yes, yes, they had a bell. Every farmer knew - or person that had animals, the cows on the Forest - they knew the sound of their bell and I used to have a black Labrador dog, Gill, that used to come with me to look for the cows and she would round them up and bring them if they were down in a valley or something like that, to take them home for milking or they

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would come home on their own for milking.

That was every day you had to go and round them up then?

No, I didn't go every day. My parents of course did, or if we were missing an animal they used to go out on their pony or horse to find them, 'cause they were all branded. All the Forest animals were branded to be able to be turned out, yeah.

And the – how many ponies did you have?

Well, we would have had I expect, four or five, that's all. But there wasn't much sale for ponies on the Forest, not in those days. It was better to have the cows and pigs, 'cause pigs even went rambling in the Forest (chuckle) but of course that was during the pannage season.

And when did the pannage season ...

Well, that's when the acorns drop, but after the War we used to have campers in the Forest and the pigs used to love to go and turn up their tents and eat their food and (laughter) cause commotion.

00-03-51

Somebody told me that there was a – not a black market, but a secret abattoir - where an extra pig could be [Oh, right] secretly. You weren't aware [yeah] of that?

Well, yes. What it was, it was a man that used to come round, or at least to our farm. We used to have a man from Lyndhurst that used to come round and kill the pig and hang it – it used to hang in the Yew tree. And then of course in the dairy - or a very cold room that we had at the back of the house other than the dairy - they, my parents, used to salt the bacon - cut it all up and salt the bacon or a side of the bacon used to go up, or the side of the pig it would have been then – used to go up to the Royal Oak and hang in the chimney, to be smoke – smoke dried. Salted and smoke dried, and that of course preserved it for the winter. Hmm.

00-04-59

Shall we talk about these two pictures [Oh right] of the [yeah] the cart. That's you sitting in the cart?

Yes, in the cart, yes (chuckle). My friend and I were in the cart. We used to ... when Fritham was very dry during the War, when the summer was very dry, there was only wells, well water, that we could use. And when the well ran dry at home, just through the trees there

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still are three springs, natural springs, and we used to go with horse and cart with the milk churns that weren't being used, to collect the water for the animals and for ourselves. To the springs and my – I've got a picture of my father, and the churns over at one of the springs where the log cabins that were built by the lumberjacks from Canada were standing. I don't – can't remember how many. I think there were three or four log cabins, and one was a cookhouse for the officers from Stoney Cross airfield to live in. I presume that was like a guard room, that one [*the pointed roof there?*], yes, and old fashioned car. There's just a big clearing now where it was all gravel, 'cause Fritham is on gravel, our end of Fritham. And further up was a gun site and there was another big log cabin up there nearer Green Pond, where the ack-ack gun was. And down at Eyeworth there was a searchlight with more log cabins that the lumberjacks built, housing the searchlight people and yet again a cookhouse. And my mother used to trade milk and cream and homemade cheese (chuckles) for tinned fruit and things like that from the cookhouse people (chuckle).

00-07-21

D'you know the background of the Canadians? Were they, were they military or ..?

No, they were lumberjacks that came over from Canada in the early part of the War and built these log cabins. And there used to be one, Ken, that used to come and dig our garden because ... and then he could have some of the potatoes. He was obviously from the from the cookhouse, I guess. And of course we used to be able to have those as well, share them with him and share them with the log cabin chaps (laughter).

Do you remember any of the other specific Canadian people there?

Not really. They used to get a bit merry sometimes when they'd been up to the Royal Oak, and come back down the road late at night. And my bedroom was in the front and I could hear them. And then they'd come and knock on the door because of course you didn't have lights - nobody was allowed to show a light – because they couldn't find their way back to the log cabins (chuckle). And my father used to take them with a lantern just in case he had to light it, but all was well, they very often used to get them safely home again (chuckles).

And this other picture?

That was my brother who was invalided out of the Army. He was in the artillery - Army of the Royal Artillery - and he was home for quite a while when he was injured. And I can remember my father talking about going up to London, a hospital in London - and this was a farmer that had never left Fritham and Nomansland and the area – going up to find his son in a London hospital in an air raid. And when he arrived at Waterloo, a policeman walked to whichever hospital it was, to show him the way. But he found him and eventually he was allowed home on invalid home. They used to wear blue, blue uniform – like a blue uniform with a white shirt and a red tie. Yeah. That used to stick in my memory a bit, but he

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survived. I had three brothers. My other brother was in the Royal Air Force, and he always wanted to be a pilot. But because he was an engineer they said "No you must be in the factory," in the Midlands where they were building the Lancaster bombers and he was to do with the canopies of the Lancaster. When he returned from New Zealand in the '90s - 1990's - I had a model which our sons had made of a Lancaster bomber and he took it back with him (chuckles) as a souvenir.

00-10-38

How many people were living and working on the farm during the War?

Well, it was until my other brother – I had three brothers, half-brothers they were – and his name was Fred and he was what they used to call a reserved occupation. And he used to help father on the farm to start with, but he was killed at Nomansland. He was in the Home Guard and he was accidentally killed. And so of course it was my mother and father. We did have evacuees. We had a very large house, farmhouse, so therefore we had a lot of spare room and everybody had to take in evacuees. But they didn't help on the farm because they worked at Pirelli's. The man worked at Pirelli's and used to cycle backwards and forwards every day. Fourteen miles I think it is. [*Into Southampton?*] Into Southampton. And the mother and grandmother and two children, I think it was, they lived there as well and the children went to school with us at Bramshaw school.

00-11-56

That was going to be the next thing I asked you about, school. So Bramshaw school, what do you remember about that?

Yes, well be used to go by bus every morning and back every afternoon. And we used to have to take our – later - take our gas masks and our sandwiches. And we were in full time, we did a full day. But when my husband was at school in Salisbury they only went for half days 'cause they had a lot more evacuees so, therefore, they had to share the education. But yes we used to see the tanks and lorries going by the school, 'cause it was this road out here actually where the school is at the bottom. It's not a school anymore, it's flats or broken up into three houses. (Long pause) One, yes I had one day – we used to have a bombing range just out in front of us, Amberwood, and the one day coming home from school there had been a - where they used to trial the – no, I've got this bit wrong 'cause I've gone on ...

End: 00-13-24

Keywords: Fritham, Nomansland, farm, milk, Southampton, cows, pigs, bells, bacon, Royal Oak, lumberjack, Canadians, Stoney Cross airfield, ack-ack gun, searchlight, Eyeworth, Royal Artillery, Lancaster bomber, Home Guard, evacuees, Pirelli, Bramshaw school.

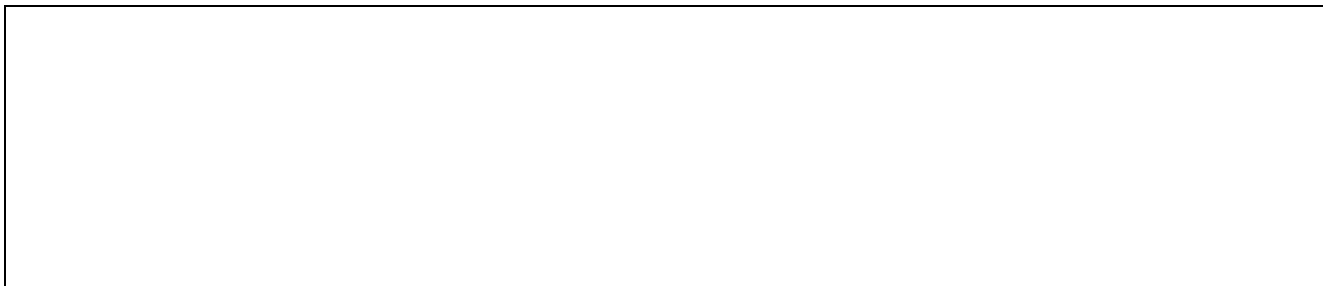
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00-00-00

(loud cough) Yeah.

Do you remember - how big was the school? How many children?

Yes, it was - they were all ages. We used to have the infant school and one teacher used to take most of the infants. And then we had like a middle partition and the older children until they were eleven and took the - no I don't remember the exam, but it must have been 11 plus, similar to the 11 plus, to go to grammar school.

School Certificate?

And, yes, and then - but you went from Bramshaw school when you were eleven. You either went to Brockenhurst if you passed the 11 plus or School Certificate or whatever, but I went on to Bartley school. But this was not during the War - we were in Bramshaw school all during the War, because of course it was 1939 to '45, so I was only just starting school and I was only ten when it finished, so ..

Were there many evacuees during the War?

Yes, yes, we had quite a few evacuees, but they used to stay on the farms and I think they quite enjoyed it (chuckle) really, compared to ... We used to sit up in the bedroom that overlooked Southampton and we used to see the tracers and the bombing of Southampton. I well remember sitting up there and they used to think that perhaps it was where they used to live 'cause they came from Southampton. So they were wondering if their house was still standing, you know.

They came to school just like you for a full school day, did they ..?

Yes, yes, yes, 'cause we didn't have that many children at Bramshaw. I don't know how many we would have had. 40s, 50s perhaps, but we used to ... they didn't have heating, we

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had to be ... We had a big Turtle stove I remember to keep us warm (chuckles) and outside toilets (chuckles again) and if the bus didn't run, we used to walk to school, which was 3 or 4 miles. You weren't allowed to miss school, but, yes.

Did you have – were you provided with a meal at school and school meals?

Later, we were, but not - I don't know when the - where the kitchen – when the kitchen was built at Bramshaw school because it was closed in '77. But it was – I know we used to have school dinners before we left, so it must have been sometime late during the War, mustn't it, cause it was - being 10 and I remember having school dinners. We used to use one of the classrooms. But I think that must have been very late, perhaps '43/44 it was built.

And did you get free school milk in those days?

School milk, yes, free school milk, which they used to warm by the Turtle stove so it wasn't cold (chuckles). But yes it was ... my mother, when we used to have any parties or anything, my mother didn't like me drinking too much urn tea, they used to call it, where water was boiled in an urn (laughs). When we used to have parties, she always used to say "Just drink cold milk" (laughter).

00-04-15

Do you remember any of the teachers?

Yes, yes, yes. They used to come - which was rather amazing really - they came from Godshill. There was a Mrs Whitt – Miss Whitt - from Godshill and a Mrs Smith from Gorley. Now that is a long way from Bramshaw when it was bad weather, to come all that way by car. And they used to go by Millersford, the experimental place for the bombing range. Which is quite amazing, really, to think they came all that way by car. And they didn't share a car, they each had one (chuckles).

Gosh, so they, did they get the fuel?

They must have had allowance for fuel, mustn't they? Cause there wasn't much fuel about, it was only for special people, wasn't it?

00-05-12

Yes, while we're talking about the lumberjacks, do you remember anything about the sawmills?

Yes, the sawmills at Sloden. And that was another thing that we used to see come into the village. Usually when we were waiting for the school bus, an Army lorry would go by and

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that was taking prisoners of war. Now where they came from I don't know. They were Italian prisoners of war and they used to come by Army lorry with one guard - cause they didn't want to escape, they were having too good a life I think (chuckling) - to go to the sawmills at Sloden, to work. And that used to be every day. We never used to see them go home, but we used to see them usually coming through Fritham to Sloden in the Army lorry.

00-06-17

Shall we talk a little bit about the – you were talking about the bombing range opposite your school.

Yes.

Was that the Ashley Walk?

That was the Ashley Walk bombing range, that we used to – there was a very large fence that was built all around it. I can't remember the acreage, but it used to stretch all around past Godshill and Bramshaw Telegraph and right down to the other side of Eyeworth and along and up through, just past the springs and Sloden and inside where they used to experiment with bombing targets that they had in the bombing range. And there was a collection of huts at Millersford that we used to see when we used to cycle by to go to Fordingbridge to the ... when my brother was invalided out, he used to take me on a bike to Fordingbridge to the films that used to be shown, and Millersford was on our left hand side. And we used – I often used to wonder what it all was, but you were never allowed in or anything like that.

Could you see anything from the road?

Well, yes, there were just huts and like cables and wires and things about. But you used to see great craters. But I've since learnt that they had a little plane, that they used to have a spotter plane when they had done practice bombing. They used to go up in this little plane to see the damage that it had done. And there were two houses in the bombing range. There was Amberwood Cottage and Ashley Lodge and one, the Amberwood Cottage, was quite, was quite damaged during the War.

(looking at photos) So that's it, before the War?

That's it, before the War, with topiary, beautiful shrubs and trees and two lovely ladies stood outside with long dresses on (chuckles). A beautiful little cottage. But my Sunday School teacher used to live there, I can remember, and she had to be evacuated to another little house, Buddles Corner in Fritham, but she still continued to be the Sunday School teacher, but she must have come from Amberwood before the War.

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Do you remember her name?

Deacon. A Mr ... a Mr & Mrs Deacon that came, but it was Mrs Deacon that was the Sunday School teacher and I think he was a Keeper, I'm not sure. And then after the War when it was very damaged, Amberwood Cottage, when we had a ... we bought a house at Canterton and the porch was taken by the builder or I suppose bought from the Forestry Commission or whatever, I don't know. But they used to dismantle these old buildings that had been damaged for builders to be able to use, because there was a shortage of supply. And it was the porch that was used for ours at Canterton.

So were the people moved from the houses after they were damaged or were they evacuated before?

No, because when the bombing range was built, of course they had to be evacuated, because they weren't allowed to live there. They were both really little smallholdings I think, especially Ashley Lodge was a little smallholding.

So this is Ashley Lodge here? [And that's Ashley Lodge] Do you remember the people who lived there?

I don't remember very much about them. I did know their name but I can't remember now (chuckle), but you can still see, partially, the field where the house used to stand and where the fields were. I would imagine they were keepers as well, I don't know. But yes, the bombing range was ... I can remember being this, our, end of Fritham. We were warned when the Tallboy, which we know now as the Tallboy, but there was going to be a very large bomb dropped, and we were asked to leave our windows open. But during my school days at Fritham, coming home on a bus one day I was told that our house had been bombed and ran down, but it was still standing (chuckle). But all the windows had been blown in and the ceilings came down. The church windows were blown in, that was next door, and this was because a bomb had been accidently dropped from one of the planes that had banked too much and it fell out and it landed a few hundred yards just through the trees from our farm.

Was anybody hurt do you know in the neighbourhood?

No, strangely there was nobody hurt. There was a lot of damage to different houses, but there was a war damage fund where we could claim to have it all put right, and 'course there was still builders so they, in the nearby villages. And I think ours was a Mr Payne from Lyndhurst came and did the repairs. But the church to this day still has cracks in the cement, 'cause that was built in 1904 and it was quite a young church during the War, but its windows were blown in and you can see 'cause the glass is a different colour to the other side of the church.

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00-13-02

I understand there was a plane that crashed at Millersford, I think. Do you remember anything about that?

I don't remember that plane crashing, no. We had one crash just below the springs. And that was soon after take-off from Stoney Cross airfield and it still had a lot of fuel on board and it still had a lot of ammunition. And when it crashed into South Bentley's trees, the pilot escaped and all of us children, we were all home obviously, so it was a holiday or a weekend, we all rushed down near this plane (chuckle) which all the ammunition was going off. But we saw the pilot. He'd been ejected or parachuted out, whatever, I don't know. And his parachute had got hung up in a tree. He broke his ankle I think. But there again, somebody from the huts that the lumberjacks had built went down and rescued him and brought him back across the bog (chuckles) that was just below the springs. So um,

Some people have said that as a child it was quite an exciting time, with things like that going on. Do you remember how you felt?

Well, we weren't aware really of the seriousness of the War. Our parents ... I mean, when I was a child, my mother always (chuckling) tied a piece - sheet - of corrugated iron across my cot, or the bed that I slept in for a long time. Because having evacuees, there wasn't any, much, money about to get many beds. But I suppose she thought that if I slept in this cot with a corrugated iron across the top, at least I wouldn't be hurt by the ceiling or whatever. But no, we weren't really aware too much about the seriousness of the War.

We, we were ... when the Americans and the Canadians came, which was near the end of the War, because of Stoney Cross had planes that had gliders, we had no end of Army trucks and lorries and jeeps and things bringing the soldiers. And they were all camped in the Forest and in our copse. We had a big copse at the end of our fields, and I can remember they were Canadian or American, and there were no end of soldiers everywhere, which I presume now must have been near D-Day. Because there was so many people about that time, or soldiers about at that time, and then suddenly one morning we got up to go to school or just realised that everything was quiet and everything had gone. Just like as if they'd never been there. Except we went up to the copse, my mother – my parents and myself – and we found lots of bibles and prayer books, well not lots, but bibles and prayer books and even rations that they'd left obviously in quite a hurry. Inside one or two of them I can remember my mother finding an address and she either wrote or sent these books back. And we corresponded, or she corresponded, some years with the people in Canada and in America. But we've never ... because we left Fritham in '48 when my father died – he was a lot older than my mother. We left Fritham then and went to Linwood where my grandmother lived, yeah.

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Do you remember being aware of the black Americans and what – how that ...?

Well during the War we used to have an assortment of troops really. Because we live in Bramshaw now next door to where the hut used to be, which was called The Hut, but it was a very large hall, where dances for the troops and whist drives and things were held. And with the, the dances of course it was all the servicemen that were ... used to have - the young girls of course, they (chuckling) with the older ones had a lovely time with them. Yes, they were always welcome, always made welcome, and they always used to throw sweets to my friend and I. We used to wear little pinnies, to keep our clothes clean I suppose, and they used to tell us to hold them out and they used to throw chewing gum and all that sort of thing in for us, some chocolates and whatever (chuckles). You wouldn't encourage that today, would you? But er ...

Obviously you were too young to go to the dances.

Oh yes, yes, yes, but I remember the young ladies that used to live in Fritham and they used to cycle down to Bramshaw. In fact my aunt that lived at Linwood, she married a soldier from the Midlands, a British soldier, but ... Cause they used to go to Ringwood from Linwood to go to dances and things, so, yes.

00-19-27

While we're talking about childhood activities, somebody told me that children used to go collecting acorns. Is that something you remember?

We used to. We used to collect the hips from the ... rose hips. I don't know who would have collected them or whether we did it for ... we didn't have WI, but we used to have something that my mother used to go to, some, like to do with the church I think, and she used to – we used to collect ...

End: 00-20-12

Keywords: school, Bramshaw, Brockenhurst, evacuees, bombing, Southampton, school dinners, free milk, teachers, Millersford, Godshill, Gorley, Linwood, fuel, Sloden sawmills, Italian prisoners of war, army lorry, Fritham, bombing range, Amberwood, Ashley Cottage, Ashley Lodge, Canterton, Tallboy, bombed, damage, plane crash, ammunition, pilot, Americans, Canadians, Stoney Cross, planes, gliders, soldiers, troops, D-Day, bibles, prayer book, rations, dances, sweets, chocolate, rose hips.

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00-00-00

Would you like to tell me what you remember of Stoney Cross and the airfield? Shall we have a look at the photographs?

Yes, we used to go for Sunday walks up to Stoney Cross occasionally and come to the to the perimeter fence. Now the perimeter fence was not like the bombing range, very high, and metal, it was just an ordinary wire fence, not even barbed wire. In other words you could just get over it and get in and animals sometimes used to stray in. But we used to be fascinated by the planes up there, us children, and we used to go up and watch the planes come back or fly off. And the ones that had come back were very often shot up, where they'd been fighting or got into conflict of some kind. And during the War there was a guard room at Fritham, just at the entrance (looking at photo of guard room) and that's the guard room and you had to report there when you wanted to cross, and you had to have a permit to cross the airfield. And we knew an agister, so my mother and I used to go to Linwood with him sometimes when he had a meeting there, to see my grandparents. And 'course that's when we used to see the lookout tower and the planes and whatever along. We could see the water tower. Well, of course that was still there at one time. I think it's gone now but that was the water tower for - what was it called? – Long Beech? Long Beech where all the servicemen used to be down in the trees, in camouflage. And the huts there, after the War were used for people that were - displaced people that had no homes and were evacuated to different places and their homes had been bombed - were allowed to live until the council houses or the prefabs, they used to build prefabs to house people in, after the War. So, (long pause) they used to come, all these children (chuckle) used to come – the service bus used to go up to collect the school children to go to school from Long Beech. Because of course with all these families there were a large amount of children., And I got little reports from different people that lived up there at one time, how they remembered their time in the War - after the War - living in these huts. Yeah.

00-03-28

Do you remember any of the specific planes that you saw there?

I don't remember the names of them, but I thought some of them were Lock – what, they had double, double tails I think, some of them did. They must have had the large aircraft with gliders. I remember the gliders being up there towards the end of the War, 'cause of course I was older then (chuckles) and remember more about it, but, yes.

And that photograph is of the ...

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And these two photographs are what a friend of mine, Denis Bush, found in an old hut that he was ... an old shed that he was taking down. And it's like a plan of where all the aircraft were able to stand in the trees, 'cause all that was - all those little rings are where the aircraft used to be hidden among the trees. They were very good camouflage at Stoney Cross to go down through.

Do you remember anything about the buildings at Stoney Cross?

Yes, there were four great hangars. And after the War when we lived at Linwood I used to have to cycle backwards and forwards 'cause I wouldn't leave Bartley School. So I used to stay with a half-sister of mine, and I used to cycle backwards and forwards Fridays and Sundays on my own. I used to rest sometimes if it was raining hard, at hangar No.4. And that was a very large storage place after the War, but of course, that's where a lot of work went on in these three or four hangars up on the aircraft. I remember the lookout tower as well, that was there for many years. And the very large runways. Well, they had an agreement – the Government – that they would put the airfield back to forest again afterwards and all the runways had to be dismantled. But of course at one time they – we didn't take any notice as children - but they were mined or whatever so that they could be blown up in case the enemy aircraft came in to try and land or anything, they could blow the runways up.

00-06-15

But also coming in, I remember as a child, Alan – Alan Bush, Denis's brother – and the big boys as we used to call them, the older children, they used to love to collect the fuel tanks that were jettisoned from the aircraft when they were coming home, before they landed. They were empty but they used to jettison them to be able to land 'cause it was extra fuel that they used to carry under the aeroplanes. And we used to love to find them. They were like long torpedoes. And the boys somehow cut them in half and we (chuckles) used to – we used to use them as canoes (chuckles again) on the river. Dockens Water was a lot higher with water than what it is today. But we used to love - love to play in them. Well of course, really if you think of the jagged metal that was around those canoe-type things - but we had great fun with them, yes, yeah.

00-07-28

Have you got more pictures of buildings at Stoney Cross now?

Yes, that was the big - those were the big tanks that – fuel tanks that were under the... That was hangar No.2. And the other pictures here were of the huts at Long Beech that were used and the people that were in them during - after - the War. And that's another hangar, that one. And of course, that's where ... And that one is of one or two of the other buildings that they used to house officers or whatever, but ...

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00-08-24

When you – you say you found your way in there as children, did you meet any of the troops?

Well, yes, they used to ... To keep friendly with the local people in the village, all the children – 'cause there were far more children in those days really than what there are today - but they used to send an Army lorry, or an Air Force I suppose it was, lorry down into the village to collect us all and take us to a film show and a party. Especially the Americans, they used to love to entertain children. And we used to go up there to a very large building and see a film, and then they used to have all these lovely jellies and (chuckles) cakes and things that, I mean, we never ever saw during the War. And fruit. So that used to be a great party time.

That was all in one of the buildings at Stoney Cross?

In, Stoney Cross, yes, yes, yes. And when the ... in the local shop, Mrs Hatch's shop at Bramshaw, talking about fruit that we didn't see during the War, only the normal apples and pears and plums in our gardens, but from abroad when bananas or oranges ever came in, it used to go round like wildfire that there were some oranges in and we used to cycle down to (chuckles) Mrs Hatch and she allowed you one or two. You weren't allowed very many (chuckle) and the same with bananas. And the other strange fruit was pomegranates that we didn't ... and of course it was for vitamin C I guess, to make sure that children had vitamin C. But that was another memory (chuckles).

00-10-34

Talking about the shops, what do you remember of Fritham and the buildings, and did it have shops?

Yes, we had a lovely shop in Fritham. A Mr Winter used to run the shop, and I've got a photograph of that, which I'll look out. But everything in the shop used to be in packets. Blue - sugar, and sultanas and things like that were in blue packets and had to be weighed up by the pound. And he was also a baker. And his son and son-in-law were – they were also in the services at the begin ... at part of the War - but they were bakers. I wouldn't know which years they were, but they used to compete and they used to have their customers. They used to try and save lardy cake or special bread for somebody, so they would put it in the big containers that they used to make the bread of – make the dough in. And we had pigs and I can remember one of the – I think it must have been Norman – came up and said to father that he had this dough mixture. But unfortunately the other brother-in-law of his had put lardy cakes already in their mixer so that he wouldn't find it. So it was a complete mess, and of course it was all full of yeast and everything, so he said,

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“You’ll need to put it in several barrels”. And I can remember to this day these great barrels – tin barrels – that father used to store grain in that he used to have to go to Romsey to get by horse and cart. And so when Norman came up with all this dough mixture, he only put a little in each tin or barrel and I remember to this day how it all rose up and came over the top like a lot of froth (chuckling) and a lot of mess. But of course, it was gradually and gradually fed to the pigs (laugh). But we also used to have the swill from Stoney Cross sometimes, for the pigs, but you had to be careful that there was no paper or knives and forks and things like that in it.

Were there any other shops at Fritham?

Before the War there was. There was like a haberdashery Co-op shop, a very old shop. I can’t remember that being there during the War but a Mrs Bush used to run that. And (loud cough). Sorry! But no, it was just Mr Winter’s shop and he used to sell everything, even the batteries that we used to run our wireless from - we used to have to go and get the accumulators from - to take back to put in our radios. And that’s where mother must have heard about the War - Britain declaring war on Germany (chuckles) - written in her diary. Yes.

00-14-21

And what else was there – the pub was there was it?

We had a very good pub. And for many, many years after the War, Mr Bert Taylor ran the pub. And he always used well water. You never, you never used anything else. That was after the water came to Fritham. Well water was far better (chuckling) than the running water, but yes. And of course the locals, they were in the pub, and that’s where all the news was gained from, from the Royal Oak. Father used to like to go up there to hear what was going on. And of course the keepers used to come round and local policeman occasionally ‘cause if there were ever any strangers had to be reported in the village. One of the main strangers, if you like, to do with the village was an Italian doctor that we had before the War and he was interned all through the War because he was Italian I guess. But he was a wonderful doctor. When my, my father - a horn of a cow went up his nose and tore his nose - and he came down. And that was at the very beginning of the War and I was only a little child, but I remember my father coming in with blood streaming out of his face and that was because of this horn that had torn his nose. And this Italian doctor repaired it, stitched it and dressed it and it completely healed. You wouldn’t have known, yeah.

00-16-20

So the doctor was interned during the War. Did he come back after the War?

Yes, he came back and lived with Mrs Collier again, yes, yes. They lived in two caravans

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and it's only just recently that these caravans - mobile home, whatever it was, because they were beautiful little places to live in - were dismantled and two bungalows now are in their places.

Do you know, was he interned locally in the Forest or ..?

I don't know where he was interned, but I know he was one of the ones that was, 'cause otherwise we didn't have many strangers apart from the evacuees, but you gradually got to know them anyway. So, if there ever was anybody strange in the village, they had to be reported.

Did they provide the village with an alternative doctor during the War?

The doctor used to be at Lyndhurst. 'Cause of course the main A31, as it now, is fenced so you can't go across. But at Stoney Cross you used to be able to go straight across and the bus used to run from Fritham to Lyndhurst. And the doctor was at Lyndhurst, or in Fordingbridge or Downton, Whitehead and Vickery, and ours was Dr Danby or Dr Baird at Lyndhurst, and Dr Danby of course. But ...

End: 00-17-58

Keywords: Stoney Cross airfield, perimeter fence, planes, guard room, permit, agister, Linwood, water tower, Long Beech, prefabs, gliders, hangars, runways, mined, aeroplane fuel tanks, Dockens Water, Americans, entertainment, fruit, shops, baker, pigs, wireless batteries, Royal Oak pub, strangers, Italian doctor, interned.

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00-00-00

We were about to talk about District Nurses during the War.

Yes, yeah, yeah. Yes, we used to have a district nurse, she was also – she was really a jack of all trades. Because from visiting the school – and she was known as the “nit” nurse then (laughter) - but I don't remember many children having them but we did have a few and she used to do that. She used to lay people out, but they did have other people, other ladies that used – when people died, they used to lay them out before the undertakers used to take on. But of course she delivered children as well, babies, she delivered babies. Mrs Heaton her name was, Nurse Heaton. She lived in Bramshaw in one of Crosthwaite-Eyre's houses. She used to go round on a bike with a basket in the front and her bag, her district nurse's bag, on the back. There was one at Cadnam as well that they used to link up with sometimes, but I don't remember them coming to Fritham very often. But I can remember at school we used to see the district nurse going round at Bramshaw, on her bicycle.

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00-01-35

Did you say there was a church in Fritham?

Yes. It's the Fritham Free Church and it was built in 1904. There was a church there before - two churches there before - which were Baptist churches. But the gunpowder factory at Eyeworth used to have a hundred people working there, workers that used to walk to Fritham. It wasn't there during the War, the gunpowder factory. It was built in 1860 and it was dismantled in 1921/2/3. But the manager there, he helped to organise the building of Fritham Free Church with the community that lived in Fritham. And they built a lot of houses there - the gunpowder factory did - and they helped build the church. And of course there were a lot of people that went to church, or had to go to church, in those days but that was long before the Second World War.

Did the War – do you think the War affected the church and its programme at all?

No, I remember it was – it was very widely attended. Different to what we have today. My husband's chairman there. We haven't got many people go, but we still keep it open and we have services the first and third Sundays. But during the War they held services and very often two a day, you know on a Sunday, morning and evening services. But of course you used to have servicemen that used to go as well as ordinary people that lived in Fritham. But like I say, the windows were – it was damaged during the War because of the windows that were blown in and the cracked walls, but it was all repaired.

And the servicemen, would they have come from Stoney Cross?

Yes, and 'course, the gun site and the searchlight ...

00-03-56

Where was the gun site?

The gun site was near Green Pond, just past the springs. There was a gun site - ack-ack gun – and the searchlight used to help it from Eyeworth to spot the planes. And then of course there was a defence of course of Stoney Cross airfield.

And who would have manned those guns?

They were the ack-ack – the Army that used to live in these log cabins further up to – around the spring area, they were nearer Green Pond. But there was one there, very long log cabin. And then Eyeworth had huts down there that used to house the searchlight, yeah.

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00-04-45

So, you talked about the log cabins for the Canadians who were the lumberjacks, but there were other log cabins around as well, were there?

Yes, yes, but of course they were mostly servicemen after the lumberjacks had gone. They only came really to build the log cabins and really for the servicemen of the War.

Oh, I see, so the lumberjacks [and the Army] were there to build the cabins and then ...

... in the first place, and then they moved on. But of course it took a little while to build all the cabins. But of course the moss ... I can remember when they were disused after War, there was all the little cracks down between the logs– or between the timber – were moss to stop the draft (laughter). But they were beautifully built.

What was the roofs - were the roofs timber as well?

I don't remember what the roofs were. I think they were. I think, I think they were all timber. Mmm.

00-05-58

Can we talk a little bit about ... you said that you as children you broke into Amberwood during the War.

Yes, yes, it was - we must have been very naughty children I think (chuckles), or adventurous children shall we say, and our parents never seemed to worry where we were because we were always occupied doing something and I can't remember many of us being hurt. But with the bombing range it fascinated us to know really what went on 'cause as children we weren't told very much. We knew we heard the bombs and we heard the aeroplanes and all that sort of thing, but we used to be interested in what was going on. So I can remember one Sunday, climbing the fences and the gate – where the big gate was. There was one near Sloden, a big gate, near the sawmills. And we climbed over that, and that was one of the main rides into – roadway as you would say - through the Forest, but we called them rides in the Forest - that's how the Forestry people call them – which led to Amberwood Cottage. And 'course, we all went along there. And Mr Smith the Keeper must have heard us coming I think, 'cause he was waiting for us when we got to Amberwood Cottage to see what was in there, and he came out and shouted at us, and we tore back down the way we'd come, back to Fritham Plain (chuckles).

So you didn't see any military activity or ...

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No, no, not to do with the bombing range, no, no.

00-07-59

The house at Amberwood was just a shell by then, was it?

It had been very badly damaged, so it must have been towards the end of the War or after the War that we went. Yes, it was very badly damaged and of course it was dismantled to be used – all the slates and old bricks and things were used by local builders to help with building work after the War. And the porch was used for a house at Canterton that my mother bought in 1951/2 time.

You were telling me that houses during the War didn't have any services, no electricity or gas.

No, no, and we haven't any gas now. Even in Bramshaw we haven't any gas. But the electric and water didn't come to Fritham until the 90 – early 1950s. I don't remember which date it would have been. But we had well water that we pumped up and lights were by candlelight or by – there was the old Tilley lamps, but we also had the oil lamps with the big globes. And with the water, we used to very often run out of water during the summer when we had too much - 'cause of course we had to use very cold water for the dairy to keep the milk cool. And I can remember my father having to stand the milk churns in water very often with wet sacks over trying to keep the milk cool before the lorry came to collect it in the morning.

00-10-03

What was done with the milk once you'd milked the cows?

Well, the cows were milked in the ... Because the cow pens are not there anymore now, they're dismantled, but they were made of corrugated iron and wood, and we used to have about twelve to sixteen cows that had to be milked. And they were put in – that was milked into big buckets and then put into the coolers to cool the milk down. Some of the milk was stood and the cream skimmed off (chuckle) for butter and cheese, which mother used to barter for tinned fruit or whatever with the local servicemen. And then we used to sell milk, so we had to segregate so much of it, say a churn, which I can remember helping my mother to bottle up into bottles and put the caps on, the little cardboard caps. Or, with the people coming we had to fill their canisters, their little carriers, milk churns – little milk containers ready for them to collect. Or my cousins – well they weren't cousins, they were my half-sister's children – used to come round and collect the cans of milk and take them off to people that lived nearby, every day, before they went to school I imagine, 'cause they went to Bartley school.

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So, you mentioned bottles, so there was no problem with obtaining bottles for...

Well you always had the bottles back. They always had to bring their bottles back otherwise there was no (chuckle) - nothing to put it in. But when you think of the cleanliness of it all, it was marvellous really that they could keep it all clean. We had a very, very large range I remember, in our kitchen, with a bacon rack, where our bacon used to be stored – the dried bacon – in the kitchen. And also we had a very, very large bread oven that my mother used to make bread. When you think of - no washing machines, there was nothing to help her do the washing, she made the bread, she milked the cows (chuckles). She didn't look after the evacuees because they had their own use of the kitchen, but they all – they all used to manage somehow. Mmm.

00-12-58

Did you – did you receive any payment for feeding evacuees?

I don't know that my mother fed them. I think we provided food for them to cook their own [right] because they had a very – they had the part of the house that was the newer part of the house that was a very large room - but they were allowed to use our kitchen and they had two very large bedrooms and box room upstairs. Because there were two flights of stairs. We had the old part with the old kitchen range in our living room as well as in the kitchen. We had two cookers, so I expect my mother – I remember my mother using the living room range, even to keep the little chicks warm, underneath (chuckles) with the fender to keep them in. Yes.

00-14-08

You were telling me about the secret arrangement for keeping pigs secret, and Butch Hillier.

Oh yes, yes, Mr Butch Hillier. He was later to work with my husband in the building firm in Lyndhurst – Turner & Stevens - but he used to be one of the chappies that used to come round to kill the so called "secret pig" that farmers used to look after in a separate place to the ones that the Government knew about. And he used to kill the pig with a shot or ...whether he slit ... because the throat had to be slit to be able to bleed the pig and it had to be hung in a tree. We had an old yew tree and I always remember the pig – pigs - that used to hang in there. And then of course it was salted, put in either the dairy or the adjoining cool-room, on the floor 'cause it was always wet, so it must have been fairly separate to the dairy. But there used to be blocks of salt in those days that used to preserve the pork, and then it used to go up to the Royal Oak to be smoked. Mmm.

00-15-45

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And you talked about chickens, you kept chickens, and they were allowed [oh yes] to roam in the Forest.

Oh yes, the chickens were all free range in those days. You didn't have chicken runs. Oh, the other thing we used to keep was rabbits, and they were to eat as well 'cause they never got myxomatosis in those days. But the chicken were free range and they used to run in the forest and I don't remember them being caught with the fox very often. As I say, we didn't remember many foxes in those days. There's more foxes about now than what there were then. But we used to have what the old farmers used to call a "stolen nest". The hen used to become sitty and she used to sit on eggs that had been laid by ... 'cause of course you always had cockerels that ran with the free range chicken. And the sitty hen used to sit for about 21 – three weeks anyway - and all of a sudden you'd see her with her clutch of chicks (chuckles) appear from the forest or they were usually under the brambles. There was lots brambles and sort of shrubby trees out in the forest and of course they used to steal a nest out there very often.

And did the Government keep track of the numbers of chickens?

I don't think so. I think if anything happened to an animal for some reason that it was not healthy, I don't think ... I don't think they were checked up on that way but it had to be reported that you'd lost something or something had died. But I remember my father digging into the dung pit and putting an animal or chicken in there because of course it would decompose quite readily in there.

00-18-05

And (clears throat) did you grow a lot of your own food?

Yes, yes, we had – we had quite a large garden with apple trees and pear trees and plum trees and quite a lot of potatoes. My father used to plant potatoes and runner beans and peas. But as I say, one of the lumberjacks used to help Dad with the gardening and he used to take so many of the potatoes. But like my husband used to – has told my since – you used to use a part of your field to plant your own potatoes sometimes – secret potatoes that you (chuckle) – and that used to last then during the winter - winter months.

00-19-02

You said that ponies were used to provide transport.

Yes. They were broken in. I remember my father and my brother when he came back from the War - or during the War – breaking in ponies, because of course people used them to get about in the Forest to visit relatives or whatever. We didn't have very many, it was only just a few, but they had been Forest ponies, that were broken in and became riding ponies.

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And we had people from ... and I think must have been after the War – a doctor and his children used to come and stay with us to go riding in the Forest. So that's how they used to get about. But there was a colleague of mine when I was working later in Lyndhurst, her mother was a district nurse and she used to get about with her pony with all her equipment on her pony (chuckles). So.

Were there any donkeys in the Forest?

I don't ever remember a donkey, no. No, certainly not at Fritham. Everything in Fritham had to – even down to rabbits – you had, 'cause you ate rabbit during the War. It was rather like chicken, but made a lovely stew with your carrots and onions and whatever. But yes, everything really on a farm had to be used. You didn't waste very much.

00-20-51

What about clothes? Did people make their own clothes?

Yes. I used to have an aunt that was very clever with her needle and she used to make my dresses and skirts and tops. And my mother used to make ... They used to wear hats in those days and I always remember when my Mum was going somewhere special, and she used to convert this hat with feathers and things, and beads, to be a different type of hat that she was wearing before when (chuckle) she went to a wedding or anything like that. But they usually wore a hat when they went to church as well. Yeah.

00-21-35

So could you buy readymade clothes using coupons?

You could, but used to save your coupons for anything special. The parachute – if you were able to get hold of parachutes - they were used a lot by people and they dyed them with certain dyes to use. But especially if you had a wedding or anything to come up the young girls used to make – they were all very good with their needle and we were all taught to sew and knit (chuckles).

What would you make with the parachute fabric?

And the parachute fabric, even to wedding dresses they used to make. And of course their wedding outfits, their petticoats and things if they were going to get married (chuckle).

How would you come by a parachute? You couldn't buy them in the shops presumably?

Yes. No, I don't know how they came by them. I suppose the black-market more than anything, you know. We used to have travelling shops I remember. The Co-op used to

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come round. And we used to have the old oil man used come round. But of course, they all brought something else with them, you know, they didn't just deal in oil. And we used to have the buses that we could get to Romsey or Salisbury or Lyndhurst, which was quite cheap to go on. But er ...

I'm very aware of wearing you out. Do you, do you [probably yes] You were telling me about the agister who you knew. [yes] Did you know what the agister did during the wartime?

00-23-36

(slight chuckle) Yes, he used to keep – Mr Forwood – Mr Gerald Forwood that we had at Fritham, he was gassed during the First World War, but he was an agister for many years. And he used to look after the animals of the Forest that were turned out, 'cause they all had to be marked. I don't remember very much about paying. I wouldn't have known anything about that as a child. But the animals all had to be branded. All the farmers – commoners – had their own brands just as they have today, and their tails were marked and all that, and that's what agisters did. And they kept an eye on the animals in the Forest, because life went on very much – especially at the beginning of the War until the Stoney Cross airfield was being built – life went on much the same as it had always gone on. But other than that, I don't remember very much about agisters and the keepers, yeah.

Thank you.

End: 00-25-02

Keywords: Fritham, district nurse, church, gunpowder factory, Eyeworth, Stoney Cross airfield, gun site, searchlight, ack-ack, huts, Canadians, lumberjack, servicemen, Amberwood Cottage, Sloden sawmills, bombing range, Keeper, Agister, water, electricity, gas, Tilley lamp, wells, milk, bottles, cardboard caps, bacon, bread, evacuees, cooking, kitchen range, "secret pig", Butch Hillier, Royal Oak, chickens, rabbits, "stolen" nest, vegetables, ponies, donkey, clothes, coupons, parachutes, black-market, Co-op, buses, commoners' brands.

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