

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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<p><i>Could I just ask you to give me your name and when and where you were born?</i></p> <p>I was born in Cadnam in 1926 and my name is Roy Arnold</p> <p><i>Thank you Where were you living at outbreak of the war, the Second World War?</i></p> <p>I was then living in Totton, Bishop's Close in Totton</p> <p><i>And were you working at that stage?</i></p> <p>I was still at school in 1939 and I always remember, one of the things we done was build, dig trenches in the playground at Abbotswood School, which is now Abbotswood School, because of the war, we were all digging trenches across the playground [laughs]</p> <p><i>Why were you doing that?</i></p> <p>Well, if, because of air raids and anything like that, for people to go into. That was the top Lydlynch Road</p> <p><i>What else do you remember about Abbotswood School?</i></p>				

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CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

Nothing really, no, not really about Abbotswood School, all the shelters were at the back, they built those afterwards but I enjoyed my time at school. When, and when I left school, I went to work in Hampshire Carbodies which is in the centre of Totton, then there was this, well, when you're, can I say about the air raids? If there was air raids we, then went down into where all the shafts for all the machines were with the belts. We went, they covered that with sheets of thick, thick sheets of metal and we went down underneath. There was also in the ground of Hampshire Carbodies a chimney with 'Blake' written down it and round the top of it was this platform for when the sirens went, the watchers went up there and I well remember the day ... was bombed. We were all, because of the danger, we were all sent home from Hampshire Carbodies because the, they said the tanks might blow up, over the tar distilleries, but we all went out onto Totton bypass and watched the firefighters fighting the fires.

So the air raid, was the air raid at night?

No, during the day, just one 'plane came over and dropped the bombs on the tar distilleries but we just went out onto the bypass and watched them fighting the fires.

Do you know whether anybody was killed?

There was one killed, one man was killed, a Mr Clark, I think it was, yes

- Building trenches at Abbotswood School
- Working on the machines at Hampshire Carbodies
- Bombing of the tar distilleries

0:03:10

And what were you, what was your job at...?

I worked in the sawmills and we were, even though I was young, we were still working machines. I quite often used to work the Dovetail machine and do the dovetails for ammunition boxes and other times we were doing fancy little bits of work for aircraft, the wooden aircraft Airspeed Oxfords and Horsa Gliders and that.

Was that, were you classified as reserved occupation?

I was a reserved occupation but being as I, in my early teens, I went to Air Training Corps, back at the same school I went to school, I volunteered for Air Crew in 1943, and was accepted as PNB (which was Pilot Navigator Bomb-aimer) and joined up in 1944.

And then left Totton presumably?

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And then left Totton, then yes.

So, you say you were a cadet at Abbotswood?

I was in the Air Training Corp at the Abbotswood School, yes

What can you remember about that?

Well, it was very good, I enjoyed that, it was, do all sorts of things. 19.. one of the things then, 1942, I first flew in an aeroplane from Ibsley.

And what do you remember about Ibsley?

Ibsley, I just remember we camped there for a week and had a flight, a flight in the de Havilland Rapide, for about twenty minutes.

Do you remember the buildings there?

No, I can't remember them, no, don't remember that at all. But I also in '43 and '44 we, I camped at Worthy Down, which is Winchester way, and we used to fly in Proctors and Sharks then in 1943, '44.

- Reserved occupation
- Air Training Corps as PMB

0:05:41

Can we go back to your days working in the carworks . Could you describe where that is in Totton?

The Hampshire Carbodies was where now, Lidl's and Argos is, that, all that big area there was Hampshire Carbodies.

And that company existed before the war?

Yes, yes and after the war, they made fire engines, done fire engines there.

So in the war, they were just requested to make things for aeroplanes?

Yeh, we were doing that it's all woodwork and that

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Do you know, where did the wood come from?

I don't know, no idea where that came from.

Do you remember anything about any of the other air fields in ...? You mentioned Ibsley

No, it, not really, I just knew, you cycled to, I used to do a lot of cycling and go out and I remember Holmsley aerodrome where you go right through the aerodrome and the aeroplanes was on the left hand side of the road as well, they'd go across the road the aeroplanes did.

You were able to just cycle through the airfield were you?

Well You, down the main road, you used to go down the main road but the airfield was on both sides of the road there.

Can you remember any of the buildings there?

No, no, I don't, not really, you never had much to do with that.

- Holmsley aerodrome
- Cycling across air fields

0:07:23

Do you remember any of the air raids, other air raids over the New Forest? You mentioned the tar works were they a frequent occurrence?

Yea, I can also remember one evening, I was enjoying a film in the Savoy Cinema in Totton and the sirens went, but you didn't go out or home, you just, well, 'the sirens have gone' like and once the curtains all shook, all about, everything shook and going home with my friend up Water Lane, we walked all, there were all these bricks and such likes In a load of rubble and a bungalow which was near the bottom of our garden had gone and we just flew home then to think, 'we're out, are they alright?'. And one man got killed that day, 'cause he was stood in the doorway watching and he was killed with shrapnel.

Where was the Savoy Cinema?

It's still there now in Junction Road, but it's not a cinema, it's flats. I don't know, do you know it? [yes, I can visualise it now, yes] Yes, it's still there. It was a little factory for making, I think, gloves and things like that after it shut down but it's now flats, next to St Mary's Hall.

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Going back to when you were a boy at Abbotswood School, did you have any evacuees at the school?

Not as far as I know, no.

And so lessons carried on pretty much as normal?

Yes, yea, used to have the fire drills, drill and go out into the shelters at the back.

And those were proper air raid shelters?

Air raid shelters, yes

What ages were the children at Abbotswood School?

Eleven to fourteen

What do you remember about rationing in the war, did it affect you?

[laughs] Not me, personally, except for sweets and things like that, that's the only thing really. I can remember going out from the Hampshire Carbodies, across the road to **Dickie Spearings** which was a sweet shop and saying "Come on, you must have something under the counter we can have" [laughs] but he would usually find something, give you something on top of what your ration was, very little really.

Do you remember any of the other shops in Totton?

Not really, no not that, not really, it was a long time ago.

Thinking about the New Forest because you said you went out on your bicycle, do you remember any other, any other memories of the New Forest when you were exploring?

No, not really, except, I (**mum**) used to cycle to Hythe and to my Auntie's down at Hythe and that but, and to Copythorn Church where Dad was buried, that's the only place, time I remember really.

Were there any military activities in the Copythorn area?

No, during, towards, later, there was more down towards Lepe and Calshot, there was lots, all the vehicles along the side of the roads.

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Did you, you saw that did you?

Oh yes, yes, you come home they were all there, along, towards D-Day, they were all along the sides of the roads and everywhere.

And you saw the troops? Were they visible camping?

Yea, yea, they was all, they were everywhere, yes.

Did you know what was going on?

No, [laughs] we could guess, you could guess what was going on. Just got very busy.

Did you see much troop movement, on the trains?

No, because, well, not really 'cause I joined up in forty, forty, but you'd come home and then see what was going on but I was in, when I joined up, the first place I really went to was Dudley, and went to the technical college there, learnt Air Crew Training.

- Savoy Cinema bombing
- Sweet rationing
- More troops getting closer to D-Day

0:12:43

Do you have any memories of the blackout? I gather it was quite dangerous cycling.

It was something you got used to, really, the blackout because your vehicles only had little slots for lights, that was all there was on the, but you never, you just never shown a, see a light or anything anywhere.

One, one of things near where I lived was, in Bishops Close, about two hundred yards up the road was a searchlight, we'd go there and see them with their searchlight at nights and over in, on the Ringwood Road where the army depot there was, there was ack ack guns but we didn't go over there.

What did you do in your spare time as a young boy, a young man?

What, in my teens? Air Crew, things with the Air Crew in the evenings and that, or the pictures. You just carried on as normal almost.

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[discussion about whether they had provided all the information he could about the New Forest during war time]

The other people who worked with you at Hampshire Carbodies, were they all employees? You didn't have prisoners of war.

Oh, no, no, it was just all local people and I said it was a reserve like a base and I got out of it, others didn't go but I got out of it 'cause I went as Air Crew and they wanted 'canon fodder' [laughs]!

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