

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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Audio Typist name	Sophie Larder	Transcription Date	11/03/2014
Transcription file name	T-G - Terry Gittoes		- OH Transcription.doc

Web Pages:

Oral History article:

<http://www.newforestww2.org/memories-of-a-boy-in-lymington/>

Project information:

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

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Could we start off, could you just tell me your name and where and when you were born?

Yes, I'm Terrance Gittoes and I was born in Lymington on the Quay Hill on the fourth of the third 1932.

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So, would you like to tell me a little bit about the Mosquito crash?

Yes well normally the sound of an aeroplane used to bring us out if we were at home to see which kind of aeroplane it was, whether it was one of ours or one of theirs and I got quite used to recognising different kinds of aeroplanes. It was a twin engine Mosquito and I knew it was ours and it was making a funny noise as it came over which I knew it was unusual, misfiring of the engine and all of a sudden, bang and it seemed to explode in midair.

[00-00-44]

I just saw one parachute come out of it, should have been two because I knew there was a

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co-pilot and pilot. It hadn't come down far away, well I couldn't see where the plane had come down, of course the parachutes or parachute came down slower and I got on the bicycle and I was in Woodside near the Chequers pub and there were a couple of people that had got to the chap. He'd landed in a ditch and as I came up to see if he wanted anything to drink, no ambulance or anything at that time, no police or anybody like that and of course he was only interested in asking about his co-pilot and one of the farmers said, "yes he's alright mate, he came down in the field over there", but I knew he hadn't because there was only one parachute came out, came out of the plane which was sad but I think the other chap survived quite well.

Keywords:

Mosquito; crash; parachute

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You mentioned the US troops around Lymington, what do you remember about them?

Oh the town was absolutely swamped and a lot of the time of course they were just hanging around waiting for the off. We had all these landing craft, well practically all the way across Lymington River to the pier. And of course they were doing nothing just waiting and of course they were wondering around the town and trying to think of things to do and one of the things we saw was the bicycle races, from the top of Lymington hill down to the bottom. They used to take turns and riding bicycles and the bicycles had to be ours because they didn't bring bicycles with them so they hired our parents bicycles. I didn't have a bike myself but my father's bike we used to use and they'd come tarring down the hill and then have to take a tight turn it around, either into Gosport Street or left and they was a large shop at the bottom with railings and a big glass window and of course unfortunately one guy didn't do the turn and ended up over the rails and into the window. I'm not really sure how badly he was hurt, pretty badly, but I'm not sure if it was fatal. That was one of the kind of things that went on with the Americans.

[00-01-42]

Us boys of course we were thrilled to get candy and all bits and pieces. It was gum of course, we'd never seen gum, that was wonderful and that's just part of it that I can talk about. Over the, we called it over the water, where it is the pier and the Wagon and Horses pub and up in the bushes, they'd made an enormous store of, they were called K-rations, that's the rations they supplied to the troops when they landing in France just to keep them going for a few days and these cartons were stacked high and were they guarded by coloured black American soldiers and we'd never seen a black American soldier before. Although I've understood it since of course that they were only allowed to have black soldiers in the American army but they weren't allowed to do anything with fighting or, they, that was just not allowed, that was the apartheid I suppose, that sort of thing, that thank god we got rid of now. But of course their job was to just guard the stores, but some of us boys used to creep up the back of this stack and pull a few out and take them home because it was like a pack of five cigarettes and these tins of food that we used to open with a like a firework arrangement and we used to set fire to the wick in the can after making a hole in it and it used to burn down enough to heat inside the can and boil the soup or whatever it was you were cooking up, and of course spam was another thing which came and we'd never seen spam before, I think it was an American invention. That was quite interesting too (laughs).

*And you mentioned the can opener, was that one of the **things....?***

Yeah, in the pack, the K-ration pack came this can opener, one to every pack and I kept it

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to this day and it's been quite usual. My father was thrilled to have five cigarettes of course and American, cigarettes, that's another luxury (laughs). I think that's, I've got lots of other bits and pieces to tell you about.

So the black troops, obviously it was very usual to you, to see, you'd never seen a black person at all before?

No, never.

Do you know what, where these American soldiers came from? Did you ever talk to them? Which part of America?

Oh yes, all over the States. A lot of them were named after the States that they came from. I remember a one guy called Texas and Montana, so really and names like, I got to know on the landing craft that were at the pier, that we got to know more personally there because I had a little rowing boat that I'd row across Lymington River and the pier had all these landing craft and they were LCI's and LCT's, the LCI was Landing Craft Infantry and LCT was Landing Craft Tank and of course wonderful for us to get on board a landing craft, when we talk landing craft they were quite big boats you know and they'd have wonderful food, there was cans of fruit cocktail, and cans of grapefruit. They'd all get this down in the mess room and we'd all tuck in, us boys you know because we weren't used to having any, we weren't poor to that extent, we were just during the war, there wasn't a lot of good food about and when David Donuts came out, that was really something, a first donut ever had in our lives, they were lovely but the captain of one particular landing craft, I'll never forget the number of it, number 501 and he was commander Bud Horton and he was a great guy but he was only a young guy, but to us, I think he couldn't have been any older than my grandson is today but in those days I suppose, 25 years of age, something like that.

When the all the sailors on the boat used to try and get us to tell them where the girls were in Lymington and if we knew any girls, so we'd spend a fair bit of time going into Lymington and taking messages to the girls and one particular young lady, we nicknamed Technicolor Lil, only because she wore such heavy make-up and short skirts and we thought that was rather amusing but she was very popular with the American boys, yes (laughs).

[00-07-43]

Do you know where the American soldiers were camped, were they camping in the Forest?

They were camping all over the place, wherever they could. Getting up towards the invasion they were in every nook and cranny and field and forest, or bushes, around the monument at Lymington, at Walhampton and then of course all around the airfield, Beaulieu, Bucklers Hard. It was really swamped, the whole area of Hampshire, but

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particularly in my experience was of course just around Lymington and Brockenhurst of course, Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst was all around there but you weren't allowed, we couldn't get out of Lymington really because it was all restricted so you didn't see what was going on unless we and we used to get to the airfield at Walhampton, the P47 airfield where it had all the Thunderbolts and the guards on the, we used to have the road blocks got to know us so well that a couple of boys, they weren't going to take much notice, we became regular visitors in the summer holidays.

What do you remember about that airfield?

Well that airfield was called Snooks Farm and it was an emergency airfield set-up that seemed to come just in farmers fields and Pylewell House owned the land, I think Pylewell House is still there today owned by Lord Teynham we were told. I've been told since Lord Teynham. They held all the briefings in the house, in Pylewell House, but they just laid a runway of temporary steel girders, they put up hangers but only one or two hangers for doing repair work and all the planes were lined up for quarter of a mile three-quarters of a miles each side of the runway and the pilots used to sleep in their little bivouac tents underneath the wing of the aircraft on the days that were coming close to D-day and they would fly off in sorties before D-Day to I imagine to strafe and do whatever they were doing over there and of course us boys were there waiting as soon as we came out of school and see the planes come back in.

We had a few experiences while we were watching them over there, one aircraft we saw taking off and they carried these fuel tanks underneath. I'm not sure if it was the undercarriage that went first on one as he was just about to take off in the air and then the petrol tank must have come down onto the runway and burst into flames. He was loaded with all these cannon shells and rockets and stuff. It was absolute chaos because of course the planes were all so close together and as he came off the runway, he went into other planes and people were running. I remember distinctly us boys running for the hedge and there was a ditch the other side of the hedge and some guy practically threw us over the hedge (laughs). We were glad of it too. It was quite a hair-raising thing. Another thing about the aeroplanes when they used to come into land, if I was at home, they used to come in over Lymington to land, at Pylewell and often they would, they had to come in over Bath Road. My grandmother had a house in Bath Road and it's still there today, a house called Radnor. We were watching, they had to come in so low, we were watching, they practically clipped the trees above our back garden and then we saw this lump of something falling out of the aeroplane and the next thing there was an almighty explosion, and a heap of dirt and dust and smoke came up in the air and I thought oh my goodness, that's in the direction of my grandmothers house and it was. Fortunately the 500-pound bomb landed in the mud in the river, it missed the house, missed Bath Road but it practically painted every house in black mud (laughs). Mud everywhere. Of course that happened with the aeroplanes because they weren't sure if they'd dropped the bomb or not while they were over in France

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and the minute they when they put the undercarriage down it clipped the bomb if it was still there and it automatically dropped it. There's lots of stories, there's been books written about the airfields and P47 and the American pilots.

You talk about a plane crash near Headington?

Yes, my brother and I used to go to every plane crash we could get to, to collect bits. To be truthful there wasn't a lot of protection, we'd often get there and be completely the only people there looking through the wreckage, it may have happened the night before and the one at Efford, called it Efford, it's on the road from Lymington and Milford on Sea and my brother and I were walking through the field, because we'd always go around Lymington, there's been a plane crash here or there and we came across the whole undercarriage of an enormous plane, it was far bigger than we were tall and of course the smell of the hydraulic fluid was so pungent everywhere. It was nothing for us to see piles of ammunition lying around for us to see, whole belts of it, in fact we used to bring home some of the live stuff and pull the top out with a pair of pliers, pull the cord out and set fire to it. One day my father was just as bad as us because he said, "let me have a go with that" and he got the pliers, this one had a red tip to it, they used to put a red tip in there if it was incendiary and as he pulled it out this thing started to fizz and that was the last time he ever did that, or we did it because I think he found it was far too bad.

[00-15-36]

Some of the air crashes and German aircraft used to crash or brought down by anti aircraft fire and I found bits, we used to bring home the aluminium with holes in it where they'd been shot down and there was another crash near, we called it Petersons Tower or Pennington or Morse Way and that was a bad crash. I think it was an American plane or two American planes collided in mid-air and we got there the next day and there was a lot of devastation and wreckage and you could quite openly see the airman that were sent to the crash to sort it, out, the bits and pieces, collecting what we assumed to be pieces of dead people. We were just young boys and it didn't phase us very much, it was just one of these things that happened during the war.

I spent a lot of my time during the war of course in the shelters in Lymington. We used to, we hear the siren would go off, we'd be in class. We were all directed what to do; we'd march off in file up to the shelters. They were just in the churchyard, St Thomas's churchyard. I think it was called Kingsfield, Kingsfield and they were just, they'd dug these shelters in the cricket pitch and then put a load of concrete and earth on top. They were dark and damp inside, they had benches, when it had been raining there'd be water and they'd put duck boards and we'd sit in there for hours, all the children. I can remember the smell today, it was awful but the one thing I regret more than anything about the war was the education I lost. I spent so much time. The trouble with the air raids in Lymington was we had the factory there. My father worked at the factory, it was the only factory in

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Lymington and they produced piston rings for the Spitfire and I think the Germans were , whenever they weren't going into Southampton or Portsmouth they have a go on the piston ring factory. They didn't get it all through the war. I think the piston rings were the best in the world; I've been told since.

Did you go to Wellworthy at all? I gather there were several factories around.

The only factory I really knew of was Wellworthy's. My father worked there and after, later on my sister went to work there because basically it was a great source of employment for local people. My father was of ill health, he wasn't put into the army but he was in the Home Guard and he did nights in the factory, which was pretty ghastly, but he survived.

When the raids were on at night, before at the early part of the war, the siren would go off, we dug a ditch at the bottom of the garden. We lived in a place called Flush Harts, which is just up from the river from Lymington and we dug out this out of the clay so that it was just at the end of our house because all the neighbours were doing the same, all the way ditches and we put planks across the top. Of course it was so horrible and smelly but it was better to be in there than not to be in there. We'd come out in the morning, we'd have blankets and have a hot drink I suppose but obviously when we came out in the morning we were glad that our houses were still there. Latter on the council brought us all Anderson shelters, and I think they were called Anderson shelters because it was the one where it was a steel box, they'd bring in four corners of steel and out a big plate on top, the size of two dining tables, a big mesh, wire mesh down to the ground, and down to the floor. This was in your living room so the shelter became your table and we'd eat off it, put out a table cloth on it and put chairs up to it an then at night we'd sleep under it. Again if the house had come down, the shelter would probably held us up and we'd have been okay.

[00-21-27]

So roughly how many nights a week would you have to go into the shelter?

I really can't, quite often. We would go in just to sleep in there whether there was an air raid or not because it was better to do that than have to get up in the night and go down. I was one of five children and if my father was on nights and there was only my mother there, so I think she found it was more. We'd be put off to bed and all the lights were still on in the room, my mother and father or mother and a friend or somebody would be in talking while we were sleeping underneath. I remember that quite well.

Keywords:

Troops; American soldiers; Lymington; rations; K-rations; landing craft; P47; Thunderbolt; Brockenhurst; Walhampton; Pylewell House, Snooks Farm; Lord Teynham; plane crash; air-raid; Anderson shelters; Wellworthy's piston ring factory;

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One day I was out in the garden and could hear this aeroplane coming in quite low. I thought it was a Thunderbolt coming into land but it sounded different. It was a twin engine aeroplane and it was so low that I knew there was something wrong with it. I looked up and straight away saw the German cross and markings underneath and I remember it so well, the man in the gunnery position, the turret in the front of the aeroplane, not sure if it was a Dornier or something like that. I could see his face looking down like that, I thought he's going to crash into the pier because as he, he looked terrified, I was pretty terrified myself and on the pier there was a Bofor gun crew, right on the end of it. I think it must have come as such a shock to them that it was practically over them and the pier before the gun went off. I understand it crashed into the lake over at Bucklers Hard and I don't know what happened, never heard anymore about that. That was my first and last I think sighting of an actual live German.

So how aware were you aware of D-Day? You talked a little bit about the build up to it. What do you remember about the first few days around it?

Well we knew there was something exciting coming off because it was like having a feeling, you'd been there for days and days and everyone was laying around and waiting. It was like a feeling of waiting and on the aerodrome, well before that, the day before the invasion we got to know the crew of a little tug down on the Quay at Lymington, by the Ship Inn and this little tug used to take stores and rations out into the Solent. The Solent was solid with Liberty Ships, Landing Craft and Liberty Ships, loaded to the gunnels with soldiers and equipment and they'd been there a week, maybe two or three days at least and the tug used to take the stores and mail out so our chap said do you want to have a trip out on the Solent, yeah lovely, why not and that was a wonderful trip except when we got out to the ships you'll have to get out down into the engine room because we're not allowed to have civilians on board (laughs) and I remember looking out of the light of the engine room up at the sides of this Liberty Ship and all these soldiers, all these young boys, all leaning over the top, all looking down, anything that was different for them to take them out of their boredom. They used to see every boat go by. I've wondered years later, how many of them must have died out there and never come back. That was just prior to the invasion and then on the day of the invasion, we heard all the noise of the aircraft taking off and when we went to the airfield the next day, they'd all gone. It was deserted, even the equipment had gone, onto the landing craft and that's were, there were still people clearing up and my brother and I were given the spare petrol tank, shaped like a cigar, like steel aluminium I think it was and we thought it would make a marvellous canoe. We needed two bicycles to get this, it was 10 feet, 12 feet long I suppose and we positioned it on our two bikes and walked it all the way from Walhampton, down the hill, over the toll bridge to our house in Flushhards and set about cutting the cockpit out of it which was like having to use a tin

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opener on a tin. How we did it, I don't know but we did it. We used it later on and we lashed cans to the sides of the canoe and we had paddles and my brother and I paddled it out to the mouth of Lymington River one day which was pretty fool hardy but we did it but and that's the sort of thing we did in those days. That was D-Day and the day after to see everything disappear and you could see the Isle of Wight at last, before you could only see ships. That was quite thrilling.

[00-05-49]

Presumably it was a few days before you heard?

Oh yes, we didn't know where they'd gone, we just knew they'd gone and there wasn't a lot of information coming through. We did have a radio, no television then of course but it was one of those old radios that had to have an accumulator battery that you had to take to the local power station which was just down the road and they used to put it on charge. If you had no charge you didn't get anything on the radio.

After D-Day were there any troops around or did everyone disappear?

No, there was a smattering. There was still a lot of equipment left lying around so they were guarding that and clearing up, particularly the airfield. I can't think there was anything more going on. The boat yard was producing at Lymington, there was the. I went to work at the boatyard, Lymington Slipway and Engineering Company at fourteen. I left school at fourteen and went to work there and that was of course the end of the war and all the equipment was coming back into the boatyard, the boats and spare parts and stuff were quite interesting for me, my first job as a fourteen year old. One boat, it couldn't have been long after the war, I can't be sure. This German E boat was brought into Lymington, it was like the equivalent of one of their motor torpedo, one of our MTB, Motor Torpedo Boats. And again brave Gittoes goes, they'd just moored it up at the Berth and Boat Company and I rode out to it on my little flat bottomed dingy and climbed onboard and the wicked boy that I was, I couldn't resist having a souvenir so I lifted the microphone from the radio transmitter because you could unplug it and I've just given it to some friends of ours. I found it the other day, it was a microphone you just held in one hand, with a red button, with *Pressay, Presse* in German and also around the top had the printed sign, saying *Feind Hort Mit*. Well I never did know what it meant and didn't do anything about it and I had a German secretary or more of a personal assistant and we became good family friends do when I found this thing I gave it to her, Ingrid and I said what is that. *Feind Hort Mit*, The Enemy is Listening (laughs). That was lovely (laughs).

[00-09-45]

Was it after D-Day that you found the survival?

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Before they took off the pilots were unloading all sorts of stuff on the edge of the field. They knew they were getting up to D-Day, they been told to get rid of all their personal gear, you're flying a plane and you're not coming back, not meaning that they were going to be dead but not coming back here to Snooks Farm. So of course everything they'd built up around them books and that was one of the things, a guy said to me you can have that, I won't need it he said crossing the Channel. That's were they were going but we knew they were crossing the channel every time they took off Lymington because it was the only place they could go to bomb. They couldn't have got to Germany or anything like that. I don't think the P47 had that range but they could get over to Normandy and Straffen and then bomb and come back to Walhampton. One day I must read the book about the airmen and the exploits they got up to. Some wonderful stories come out of that airfield.

You mentioned air raids. Do you remember any particular air raids? You mentioned Fords Removal Company.

There was another night where they were after the Wellworthy Piston factory and the we were at home, probably in the shelter and we heard the bombs going off and the noise. Of course the next day we were out looking for shrapnel as we did quite regularly and we found plenty of shrapnel stuck in walls and trees and the incendiary bombs we used to pick up the fins mainly because they burnt away from the fins, the fins were quite interesting like Posey cups, they would stand up on their three fins. There was nothing dangerous about them, they were just the fins of the incendiary bomb, in the incendiary bomb was like an alloy tube which used to burn itself to pieces down because they dropped so much of it around that one night, this particular night they caught the big Fords, Seafords Removers warehouse, alongside St Thomas's Church and when we got up there it just was an absolute black hole. It was an enormous warehouse, set between the dairy and the church and it was just as if somebody had cut a hole through. There was nothing there. That was one particular air raid apart from the ones that. A lot of the stuff was going into Southampton, a lot of the air raids and because of the Isle of Wight and the Needles became their focal point for navigation, then they automatically came in over Lymington. Of course as they came in to bomb Southampton the siren would go off. Lymington wasn't getting bombed that regularly but of course Southampton was getting hammered every night, practically every night. Where we lived you could see the light on the clouds when Southampton was burning, you could see the light on the clouds and we knew what was going on and it was quite normal to see Spitfires having dogfights in the air over the Isle of Wight and you couldn't really make it out exactly. One plane charging at another. You could see the trails in the sky but we were well removed from that. It was the things on the ground that were of interest to us more than looking up into the sky.

[00:14:27]

You say you found an unexploded bomb?

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Yes yes, another of the things we used to do as boys at Lymington Marshes that's the marshes that run Lymington to Pennington. It was all march then before they built the marina now and in-between the marshes ran all these streams that use boys used to go catching Flounder, the little flat fish that used to. It was a term we used called Flounder groping. To do this we used to had to wade through the streams through the mud, that weren't too deep with mud, with bare feet and of course you were stirring up the mud with your feet and the flounder that you were coming across would dive straight at your feet because they were looking to get covered up by the swirling mud that you'd stirred up. As you'd feel them tickle your feet you'd go down and grab them and throw them up on the bank. We were doing this one-day and oh look at that a 500-pound bomb. I don't know if it came off one of the P47's or not. It was so new, you know the paint and everything and we knew enough to know that you didn't touch bombs like that but when we went back a day or two later it had gone. It certainly hadn't been picked up by anyone because they were no markings and you'd have to have a crane or a boat so we could only assume that it just went down into the mud. It's probably still there under the marina (laughs).

Were there any particular searchlights or anti-tank guns in the Lymington that you remember?

Bofor guns, I've mentioned the one on the pier and the other one was in Normandy Lane and that was a searchlight and you'd usually have a search light and a Bofor gun and you'd have these little positions where they'd be 8 or 10 men. The tents would be by the Bofor gun, the searchlight, the generator and Normandy Lane was only a walk from my home so we got to know the soldiers on the beat and these were the British soldiers, not American as we were so used to seeing so the only British soldiers we saw were these guys with the searchlights and the Bofor guns. Eventually they allowed us to man the gun, you'd need about five I think it was, five boys and there'd be one on each of the handles that winds the thing up and down and another on the handle that turned it and I wanted to be the guy that fired. To fire the gun you had to hit a plate, a bit like an accelerator peddle on a car today but they wouldn't let me hit the plate and fire the gun. We used to have to make. We did all the things up and down and spotting the target through the mesh sights and then you'd have the order "FIRE FIRE" and we'd have to hit the plate but not the firing plate we'd have to put our foot by the side of it but I'm sure they must have in some way made it so that we couldn't fire it, because I can't image (laughs).

[00:18:45]

You described the American camp by the pier; do you have any other memories of that?

Most of the camp there was to back up for the landing craft on the pier so of course everything was centred around the pier and the K-ration dump up by the monument. That

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was to supply the landing craft when they were ready to go I imagine or back up stores so they would be ready in the event of the invasion, they would load up. Everything seemed to be around Lymington was towards the river and back up for the airfield and pier so basically, apart from Beaulieu, they had a big aerodrome but that was too far for us to go and, I think that was mainly big Lancaster bombers and stuff like that and we couldn't get there anyway.

Keywords:

D-Day; Bofor gun; Liberty Ships; Landing Craft; German E-boat; Wellworthy Piston Factory; incendiary bombs; Fords Removal Company; unexploded bomb; Lymington Marshes; K-ration dump; Lancaster bombers

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CHAIRMAN JULIAN JOHNSON CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

File name	T-G	007	0005MO.WAV	Interview date: 24.05.2013
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Shall we talk a little bit about the prisoners of war you came across?

Yes of course. After the, at the end of the war, they set up a German prison camp out on the gorse plain, between Lymington and Brockenhurst. I think it's called Setley Camp. And that was just a bunch of Nissen huts with barded wire. The reason why we got to know them so well was that they used to march them from Setley into Lymington, down through the town to the swimming baths, the salt-water swimming baths at Lymington. I was a member of the polo team there and we spent a lot of our, all of our swimming time and holidays, school holidays in the baths. It was the one focal point for us. To start with it was rather strange to see all these strange talking guys that we didn't know but once they were in swimming costumes they seemed to change, they didn't look like Germans, they looked just like us. They were fanatics for fitness. If they weren't in the water they were on the edge of the pool doing all their exercises, all the physical jerks and lifts and there was one enormous German guy. I'll never forget him. I think his name was Max; of course we were in awe of him, because of his enormous muscles, a giant of a man, square jaw, square head. He could lift two boys up, his arms out stretched, he could lift two boys up like that off the ground, we'd hang on for dear life and he became a real character and he married a local girl in Lymington. I think she was one of the Starks girls. He came to live I think in Lymington, might still be there today.

What would they wear when they marched town?

They had a type of uniform if I can remember but it was like a fatigue, I think they call it fatigues. It wasn't stripes or anything like that, just their normal working gear, I think it was. It was very very loose guarded but they weren't going anywhere, south of England in the sun. They were quite happy with there board and lodgings where until such times they were repatriated. I think it must have been very close to the end of the war or they wouldn't have been marching them through the town in a group like that.

[00:03:27]

Roughly how many of them were there?

I should think they'd have to have been picked as obviously it was limited as to the number that would come, maybe 25, something like that but this guy Max, he seemed to be there a lot. He always seemed to be looked up to by the other German POWs as being somebody sort of in charge. I can't remember seeing an armed guard or whether they just came on their own. I think they came on their own. It was that easy, no hostilities anymore and they knew they would be going home at home stage.

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[0:04:28]

And they do their exercises on the edge of the pool and have a swim?

Oh yeah and then march back.

Did you come across prisoners of war anywhere else?

No. No never saw. That was the only camp to my knowledge in our area but then we didn't travel much. Although I remember going to Portsmouth once with my father because he had a brother in Portsmouth and Portsmouth got quite badly hammered and we went, we were allowed to go. Whether we got a special pass or whatever but we took the train from Lymington to Portsmouth obviously via Brockenhurst and we had to get a tram, it was the old style tram which ran on the rails and I know we missed the, missed the tram to catch our train back to Lymington because I was frightened to death of this back staircase. I wouldn't move until the tram had stopped. We went there obviously because father was worried about his brother and they had no communication but his house, he was okay, it stood up. As we went through, to Southampton, I remember the devastation there and in Portsmouth was just as bad. It was quite horrendous.

Was the train still running all the way down to Lymington?

It's a bit of a blank spot this to me, is how we got to Portsmouth, I can't honestly think that the train went from Lymington.

Somebody told me that it didn't run as far as Lymington, I presume it stopped at Brockenhurst. Do you remember Brockenhurst station?

Oh I remember Brockenhurst very well and I think buses ran to Brockenhurst of course from Lymington, that was regular. It could be that we went to Brockenhurst by bus and caught the train to Southampton, oh to Portsmouth and then got the tram in Portsmouth to take us out to Copnor.

Do you remember anything of Brockenhurst station? Did you see any troops there or anything?

No. No, I can't say I saw. I can only just remember the station.

That might explain the gap in your memory then, like I say someone else told me that

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extension line down to Lymington was closed during the war.

You didn't ever go out towards Setley, the prisoner of war camp? Did you see it?

Only afterwards, only after the war and it gradually was pulled down. It stayed there for years, the camp.

What do you remember when you saw it after the war?

I can distinctly remember the nisson huts because we saw many nisson huts during the war. All the airfields and camps and places, they were nission huts, they were no different, they just housed soldiers with the barbed wire fences around. Of course the one at Setley camp there was nothing around. It was wide open space, which they'd picked obviously. There were no buildings, there was a pub just up the road called the Folly Inn but that wasn't called that in those days, I think it was something else but that's about all I can remember.

Do you remember any of the other airfields either during or immediately after the war?

Beaulieu I remember, when we could travel. I'd go to Beaulieu airfield and as they were running it down, we would. It was a wonderful place to pick mushrooms, along the runways. Two enormous runways there but what they did after the war was they dug a trench right across the runway, about 8 or 10 feet wide by about 6 feet deep. People were using it as a dirt track for racing cars and bicycles and motorbikes as people got them. Of course that went on for years after the war, there's still some evidence I think down at Beaulieu now of some of the installations but there's very little at Snooks Farm. I went over with my brother a few years ago and there was still one of the hangers, was being used by a local farmer with tractors and stuff in it and that's all that we could really see that we could remember.

What do you remember about school days during the war?

My school days were spent mostly down the shelters I'm afraid. We'd have, we used to have our free milk. I was a milk monitor and two of us would go up and get a crate for our class at the diary. We'd carry a crate of the small bottles back and that would be enough for the class and we also had church parade where we would walk to St Thomas's church or march.

Keywords:

Prisoners of war; Nissen huts; Setley camp; German POWs; Beaulieu airfield; Brockenhurst; Portsmouth; Snooks Farm

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What do you remember about the Home Guard?

Well, I remember my father was in the Home Guard because it was so strange to see him come home one day and all kitted out in all his heavy weather gear and enormous great coat. He looked so strange in it to us but he never had a gun. They used to draw with wooden guns. I don't think for the whole time he was in the Home Guard did he ever have a gun. That was very disappointing for us because it was the one thing we wanted. I remember he used to go off drills with the, with a stirrup pump. That was one thing I do remember him having, was a stirrup pump. A pump that you put on the ground and stand on one part of it, and pump this handle, and a silly little hose which was supposed to do something. I doubt it put out much of a fire. There's stirrup pumps still about today, you can get them in surplus places. That's about what Lymington Home Guard was all about. A few men dressed up doing drills and things. Fortunately nothing ever happened that they had to go and do anything other than that.

So you weren't aware of him going to any incidence?

Absolutely, Lymington had no problems like that in that respect.

What do you remember about Lymington town itself? Shops and things in the war?

We used to go shopping with my mother. Because I was the second eldest boy and there was my younger brother and then the twins, Jack and Jill. My sister was disabled and had to ride in the pram and I used to have to take her to school on the back of my bike. I remember we would all, my mother and the 5 of us would all used to go off shopping up the town together help push the pram or ride on it. I do remember that she could get a weeks groceries for all of us at Home and Colonial. That was the place my mother used to shop. A weeks groceries for a pound. Just think of that today but obviously we had the coupons. There was always black market in coupons although my mother didn't have money to buy black market coupons but because of the five children, she was able to get more coupons than other people but there were people that used to sell their coupons and it was a well known fact that one person was, you could know where this lady would be on a Saturday morning and she had quite a big family and used to sell her coupons unfortunately. Needs must and perhaps that was her way of keeping things going, keeping things together. It was just one of those things we heard about but didn't take much notice of.

Clothing coupons you had to have as well as food coupons. There was a little shop in Lymington called Coles and that's were we'd go and get socks and things and anything we

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needed. Of course boys needed a lot of gear, always wearing stuff out but we used to, what we couldn't have new we used to make do with. Bicycles were always handed down from boy to boy or father to son and a lot of that happened with clothes and things but we got by. We didn't have a lot, there wasn't a lot of money coming into the family but at least we survived the war.

We were talking about School when we were interrupted. Did you have any evacuees at the school?

Yes. Oh yes, I remember the evacuees. There were evacuees at my grandmothers house too, from Portsmouth. Two boys. Never kept in contact, never saw them again but they stayed in Bath Road with my grandmother, of course we couldn't take any because we had five people living in a three bed terraced house in Lymington. We had evacuees in the class although I didn't enjoy school very much at all because of the lack of education I struggled and I haven't done so bad since but it certainly wasn't through any education I've had where I've been since. We had a teacher I remember called, he's dead and gone now obviously otherwise I wouldn't be talking like this but his name was Puffer May, well Mr May, but we called him Puffer because of this god awful pipe he used to smoke and belch whole sparks out of this pipe and he'd be sitting up there. I remember he'd hit boys, he hit me and we used to have these little bench seats, push up desk and a bench seats with two of us sat and on and because we were turning around and laughing and joking with the girls behind, he came up and he hit me on the shoulder so hard he moved me across the bench and pushed the boy out the other side. I don't know whether he left his pipe on his table or not and this pipe, can you imagine it today, belching this pipe (laughs).

Did you go to school everyday? Some people said that because of the evacuees, they did a half day at school.

No, everyday as far as I can remember. I remember getting the cane; I'll never forget that. I had a tank, a toy tank, It was something I treasured and one of these wind up things and going back, we'd go home for lunch from the C of E school in Lymington down to Flushards and walk back in the afternoon, carrying this tank. A friend of mine and I put it down on the grass to run it and I lost the key so we spent so much time searching for the key, of course we were late back to school. It was probably two o'clock you had to be in class and the next thing, Gittoes down to the headmaster. Standing outside of his office and then he called me in. He got this long cane, long thin cane, hand out, wack right across, one good wack. Of course I didn't cry, I was a boy wasn't I. Hold your hand out and go back into class. The pain. When I got home I told my father and he gave me a slap for being naughty (laughs).

Do you remember anything about the sawmills in the Forest? You didn't ever come across those?

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They was only one sawmill which was called Travis & Arnold I think it was and that was quite close to were we lived but I can't really say anything about the saw mill no. I think it caught fire one night, part of it.

Were you aware of the Dances? What other leisure activities there were for people?

Not a lot I don't think. Of course I was pretty young and I know we used to spend a lot of time hanging outside the pubs because I remember the pubs were all running out, not that we were drinking but catching a glass of lemonade or something like that perhaps but pubs used to run out of beer and it would be quite normal for a pub not to have any beer for a few days. Of course with all the soldiers, Americans all wanting beer and stuff but that was a fact of life. Then the pubs stayed going, stayed open when they could and closed when they couldn't. That's what I remember distinctly. All of us going off to the Checkers pub in Lymington as a family and that was with the pram and we used to sit outside the Checkers and my father would go in and come out with lemonade and crisps and that was a Sunday evening treat. I don't think it was every week I don't think he could of afforded it. Lemonade and crisp, it was a wonderful thing.

Thank you, I think we've covered most of the topics unless you can think of anything else.

I can't think. No.

Keywords:

Home Guard; black market; food coupons; clothing coupons; evacuees

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