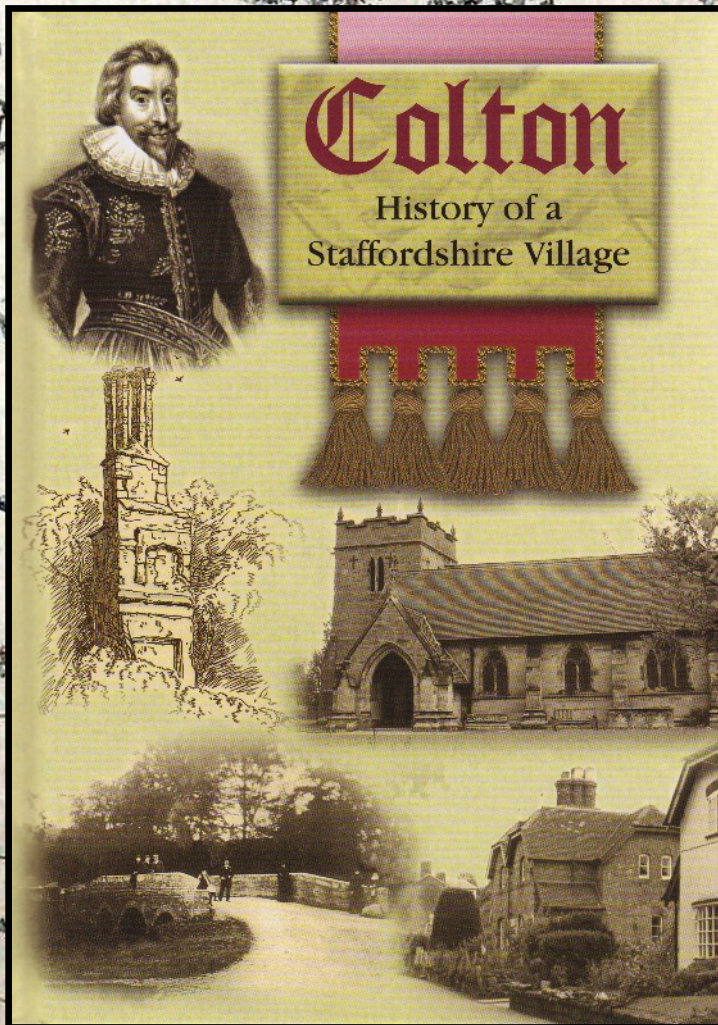


All Our Stories

Volume IV

Barbara Kendrick & Pete Jones, Nev & Alma James.

Nev James - Crash Landing



Heritage Lottery Fund
All Our Stories Project
Supporting
Colton History Society

LOTTERY FUNDED

Colton History Society

All Our Stories

Volume IV

Barbara Kendrick & Pete Jones

Nev & Alma James

Nev James - Crash Landing



Well for water in garden



Carpet Beaters



Wash day Mangle
for wringing clothes



Anderson (bomb) shelter in garden



Bath time in zinc tub

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Barbara Kendrick & Pete Jones's Story

Barbara Kendrick and Pete Jones.

S1: Marion Vernon
S2: Barbara Kendrick
S3: Pete Jones
S4: Nona Goring

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society by Nona Goring and Marion Vernon. Interviewing today, brother and sister: Barbara Kendrick and Pete Jones on Thursday, 22nd October 2009.

Right you two! Would you like to tell us a little bit about your family, where you were born, when you were born, and so on?

Who's going to start? Barbara?

S2: I was born in 1936 in the Dimbles, Stockwell Heath.

S1: Oh right. Which was the Dimbles?

S2: Down in the dip.

S1: Right.

S2: By the ...

S3: With the brook running by the front door.

S2: The stream ...

S1: Right.

S2: Through the garden.

S1: Yes.

S4: And you were born?

S3: I was born in, 1st December 1937, at the same place.

S1: Right. So was there a cottage there that's not there now?

S3: No, it's still there.

S2: It's still there but we were two up, two down.

S1: Right.

S2: It's a proper ...

S3: It's been ... I think it's been enlarged a bit now hasn't it?

S1: Right, yes.

S2: ... got the triplets there now.

S3: And when I was six months old, as a family, the four of us, we moved down to the new house ...

S1: Right.

S3: ... in Hollow Lane, which me dad had been ... he was the bricklayer who'd built it.

S1: Right.

S3: With grandad as the carpenter.

S1: Yep.

S3: And I was six months old then.

S1: Right. Was that his own house? He built it for...

S3: No. It was for the Parish Lands Trust.

S1: Yes. In what year was that?

S3: May 1938 we moved in there.

S1: Gosh, yes, right.

S3: When I was six months old.

S1: And did ... and so was there a big difference between the two houses?

S2: By gum yes!

S3: Yes!

S2: Well, I mean, cold running water, bathroom.

S3: Yes, we had a bathroom and a fire, hot water.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Electric.

S3: Electric. All mod cons really.

S1: Yes.

S3: You know?

S1: Yes.

S3: There was no central heating; there was only the, you know, the coal fire.

S1: Right, yeah.

S2: Big open fire.

S1: Yeah.

S2: With an oven.

S1: So what do you ... All right, yeah, so you cooked everything...

S2: Yeah, we cooked. Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: ... connected to the fire. Yeah.

S1: Right. Who used to get the coal in and make the fire up then? Did you all used to help? Or was it ...?

S2: Our dad used to light it, didn't he? Before he went to work.

S1: And what did he do at work?

S2: ...bricklayer all his life.

S3: ... that was after the war. Because he was at war like.

S1: Yes.

S3: And I was seven, Barbara were nearly nine when war finished.

S1: Right.

S3: And, I suppose mother must have done it in them days.

S1: Yes. Yeah.

S2: I think we used to fetch bucket and coal.

S3: fetch coal in.

S2: I remember logs

S1: Was that in the garden?

S2: ... carry the logs in.

S3: No. The coal was in the, out ... right by the back door was a purpose-built coalhouse.

S1: Right. Yeah.

S2: And we kept the coal and the logs in.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Till me dad come home and he built a lean-to thing outside for the logs. Didn't he?

S3: Hmm.

S4: Yeah. Where was your dad with the war then?

S3: Africa and Italy, wasn't he?

S4: Really.

S1: Was he away for a long stretch of time?

S2: All that time.

S3: I remember him coming home because once—you know the banks across the road?

S1: Yeah.

S3: We used to go to the top of them and slide down on our ... bums.

S4: Yeah. Wear your trousers out.

S3: That's right. And I remember Mick and me were up there and we looked down the road and we could see this army man coming up the road, and we ran home. Said there's a stranger coming up the road.

S1: Oh right.

S3: And it were me dad.

S1: Yeah. You didn't recognise him.

S1: No.

S3: No.

S2: I met him ... I was walking to school and I met him and another man he had—I don't know who that was with him—I can't remember that—coming up the village.

S1: Right.

S2: And I wasn't very well. Turned out I'd got measles; and he'd come home.

S1: Oh gosh! Was that just for a break, that he'd come home, or finished?

S3: I think it was just leave.

S1: Yeah.

S1: So what do you remember of your neighbours of those times? Do you remember them?

S3: Well, when we lived at Stockwell Heath: no.

S1: No.

S3: Because the nearest relative was, neighbour, was up at the farm.

S1: Right.

S3: Where the Indian people now live.

S1: Yeah.

S3: Which was at Pool Farm. And when Barb was two, nearly two, and I was only six months, when we moved to Hollow Lane.

S2: Yes.

S3: Where next door ...

S1: No, you wouldn't remember those, no.

S3: No. So next door was ...

S2: Bill.

S3: Bill and Kate Corser.

S1: Right.

S3: And their daughter, Irene.

S1: Was she a similar age to you?

S3: Oh no she was older.

S2: Quite a bit older than us.

S3: Quite a bit older than me.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And he worked at the farm over the road here.

S1: Right.

S2: For years.

S1: Up at Manor Farm?

S2: Used to farm ...

S1: Yeah.

S2: ... in there didn't he?

S3: We always seemed to get on well didn't we?

S2: Yeah.

S3: And a little bit farther down the road, you see, was ...

S2: Ivy James.

S3: Ivy and ...

S2: Alf James.

S3: Alf James. Nev's mum and dad.

S1: Yes.

S2: Who lived in the other one? Mrs ...?

S3: Etherington.

S2: Etherington, yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Do you remember them then?

S4: No. But I've heard it on Nev's

S2: Ah, yeah. I do. I remember the name but I just can't picture them.

S3: But there was no other houses there so, you know, there was no wooden bungalow and there was no Nev's bungalow

S1: No.

S3: Nothing there. That was all garden.

S1: So when you were playing did you go out and play with people in the village?

S2: Down in the village, yeah.

S1: Yes.

S3: We used to play.

S2: Dorothy Cooper as well.

S1: Yes.

S2: Mary Hardcastle.

S1: Oh yes.

S2: Mary Hooley. And John.

S3: And John Hooley at the farm.

S1: Yes.

S2: We all used to sort of congregate and ...

S1: Yes.

S2: We had a skipping rope across the road at the bottom of the bank.

S1: Right.

S2: On each side.

S4: No traffic in them days

S1: Did the boys play with the girls?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Skipping all together.

S2: Yeah, all together.

S1: It was good times wasn't it?

S3: We used to play on the top of the old well. You know on top of the hill?

S1: Right [sighs]

S3: Next door to David Bradbury's drive ...

S1: Yes.

S3: ... was a big well. You remember that?

S4: Well it would be the well to where my mum and dad lived.

S3: And it was all ... it was a big, covered in, wooden—you know, with a big wheel on.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And there was a rope and the handle. We used to play on the top of it!

S1: Did you!

S3: When you think back ...

S?: Yes.

S2: We had a big swing up in the orchard.

S3: ... how safe it was. I don't know!

S1: No.

S?: When you don't bother as kids, do you.

S1: You didn't see danger, though, did you?

S1: No.

S2: You see it now and your children don't do they?

S1: That's right.

S2: Your grandchildren.

S1: So your dad worked as a bricklayer all his life. Did he come back from the war and get straight into a job again then?

S3: He ...

S2: He must have done.

S3: Somewhere along the line, I can't remember, but me dad, who was the bricklayer, ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... me grandad, who was the carpenter—it were before the war.

S1: Right.

S3: And me uncle Tom was a plumber.

S1: Right.

S3: And they was going to set up in building.

S1: Yes.

S3: And war broke out. And grandad didn't go, obviously, but uncle Tom and me dad went to war. And it sort of ended the building project but they didn't seem to bother when war was over, starting up again. Now I don't know why.

S1: No. So he worked for someone else then.

S3: Yeah, indeed, he worked for Arthur Hudson in Armitage, didn't he?

S2: It was a big company he worked for before that.

S3: Can't remember. And then he went on to work for Wimpys.

S?: oh eye, Wimpey's

S3: And when he worked for ... no, it wasn't Wimpys. It was Alfa McAlpine. And he was on the building of Sudbury Prison.

S1: Right.

S3: Where he used to come back with a Woodbine packet and on it there used to be how many bricks he'd laid that day.

S1: Right.

S3: And he'd say, 'Here you are. How ... what's ... you know, how many have I done?' And I used to add them all up, over the week, and get the total, divide it by five days and it was an average of over 1,700-odd bricks a day he was laying on Sudbury Prison. I mean there was no windows and no doors. Just big walls.

S1: Just big walls.

S4: So did he get paid on how many he'd laid, the, or was it just a daily ...

S3: I don't know.

S1: Was that just out of interest?

S3: I never asked him.

S1: No.

S3: He didn't bother, no.

S4: You know, what I just wondered why he'd ...

S3: He didn't say.

S4: ... written it all down. Just for interest or was it ?

S2: Probably for his own interest to see how many he'd done.

S1: So would he have been carrying them up the ...

S3: No.

S2: No they had somebody to carry them up.

S3: Me dad was only laying them.

S1: Right.

S3: And he'd got, I don't know how many men, bringing the bricks and the mortar.

S1: Right.

S3: And he just laid the bricks.

S1: He laid them. Yeah. So where did you go to school you two? Both of you in the village?

S3: Yes.

S2: Both to Colton till we were 11.

S1: Yes.

S2: And then to Rugeley.

S3: Until we were

S2: There until we were 16.

S3: Till we left school.

S1: Right. So what do you remember of being at Colton School first then?

S2: I remember it being very cold.

S1: Cold.

S2: And big radiators like that: we used to sit on them. You remember them?

S?: Yeah.

S2: Great big pipes they were and we used to sit on them.

S1: Just to get you warm.

S3: Yeah. Because ...

S2: Oh it was cold!

S3: Round the back, round the back you went down some steps into the boiler house.

S1: Right.

S3: And we had to, as kids, we used to say ... Old Broughton?

S1: Yeah.

S3: He'd say: 'Go and stoke the boiler!' And we used to go down them steps ...

S2: It was coke wasn't it?

S3: Coke! Used to have lorry loads of coke.

S2: I remember it being coke.

S3: And we used to shovel this ... give it a stir up.

S1: You boys used to do that?

S2: Yes.

S3: We used to stoke that fire.

S2: Oh yeah, he had the boys doing that.

S3: And also, when we was there, there used to be a big wall ran across the back, and behind that wall was the school garden in which we used to dig as kids, us lads.

S1: Just the boys.

S3: I don't know whether the girls went in. I can't remember.

S2: No. I don't remember going in the garden.

S2: I've not heard of that.

S3: And we used to dig all that garden and plant all sorts of vegetables, seeds, and I never saw anybody have any. Only him. So old Broughton must have ate it all. Never ...

S2: No.

S3: Never ...

S2: Sold it to anybody.

S3: Never sold it to anybody.

S2: As far as I know.

S1: So how many classes were there down there?

S3: In those days there was two.

S2: Two.

S4: Yeah.

S3: And then there was ... it went to three didn't it?

S3: Yeah.

S2: Outside toilets; we had to walk out the back to the toilet.

S1: Were they flushing toilets?

S2: No.

S2: Wooden.

S1: Just pan toilets, sort of thing?

S2: Yeah.

S3: No!

S1: What would they have been then?

S3: Because where the toilets were situated there were the door; you unlocked this door and you went through to the garden. And when you walked through this passageway there was the girls' that side and the boys' this side, and whatever they did came down into the middle. And it—I couldn't remember when there was water—but it used to, you know, all run into this, like a trough either side, and it was washed away into the toilet, into the sewerage, or wherever it went to. But, yeah, it was very primitive.

S1: Was it?

S2: Oh yeah.

S3: And all of the gardening tools were hung up in there, in this passageway. Yeah.

S2: It smelled.

S1: That was a covered passageway was it?

S3: It was covered in, yes. A door on the ... door on the ...

S1: Raw sewage just running down it?

S3: Well, there was like parts on both sides, you know, like troughs you might call them.

S1: Troughs, yeah.

S3: And you walked through the centre, like, on a concrete plinth.

S2: Yeah.

S1: You can't imagine it can you?

S3: You can't, not now.

S1: Not that long ago. Not really, is it?

S2: The kids today, I don't know how they'd cope with it.

S2: No they wouldn't

S1: So what were the lessons like? What do you remember of your lessons? Did you all sit in rows, in desks?

S2: Sat at desks in rows.

S3: We sat in twos, didn't we?

S2: Yeah.

S3: The desks were so, you know, like ...

S2: Like pews.

S3: ... this wide, and you'd both got a lid apiece ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... with your books and things in and ...

S1: Yeah.

S2: Inkwell.

S3: ... there was the inkwells on the front.

S1: Yes.

S2: And then where we was sat.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S3: They were all, yes, suppose there were about three or four rows weren't there?

S2: Must have been, yeah, at least.

S1: With the teacher at the front with the blackboard and chalk?

S3: Yes.

S2: Your desk was in the front and the board, the big board, was in the corner.

S3: When I was in Broughton's class, because he took like the elder ones, and he'd got a desk in front of the window on the lane to Boughey Hall

S1: Right.

S3: That's where his ... that big window.

S2: His desk was, yeah.

S3: His desk was there. And on the one side, as you looked at him, was the piano.

S1: Who played that?

S3: Pardon?

S1: Who played the piano for you?

S3: I think ... did Mrs Shaw play it?

S2: Mrs Shaw, Mrs Toy

S3: Mrs Toy.

S1: So did they ... were they teachers there then with you at the same time or did they just come in to teach that?

S3: Well, Mrs Shaw and them was in the other side of that big glass partition.

S1: Oh right.

S3: It was on a ...

S1: She was the other teacher.

S2: She started ... Mrs Shaw started teaching down here the day I started school.

S3: Did she?

S2: I was new with her and Richard her son.

S3: Yes.

S2: We were all new together.

S4: That's right.

S3: And then he had another class then in what they called ...

S3: Was it ... it was not the North Room was it? The North ...

S2: It was the North Room—that's where Dentist Duck used to come.

S3: That's right. And that's ...

S4: Dentist Duck. I remember ...

S1: Dentist Duck.

S3: That's what they called him.

S1: You used to have a dentist called ...

S3: Yes.

S2: And his drill used to go ...

S3: Oh!

S2: If you'd got to have any you frightened to death to go.

S3: Yes.

S1: So did you have to have your teeth looked at in those days?

S3: Every month, won't it?

S2: Every child.

S1: Every child had their teeth looked at?.

S3: Yeah.

S2: And then we had—what was the name of the chap that used to come for absentees?

S3: Oh, he lived down Fortesque Lane.

S1: The wag man! What did you call him?

S3: I can't remember.

S2: All sorts.

S3: I never missed school because I was a good boy.

S1: Yes. [Laughs] I can see that Pete!

S2: He didn't ... I don't think he ever cut....

S3: But as I say, they there put, on the room which was on—there was like two rooms like that, with this petition...

S1: Yeah.

S3: ...with this partition, and then there was another room there, which they then started at like the third classroom.

S1: That's right.

S3: And the one in the middle, which went that way, was called the North Room and that was full of wood. And they used to have it for his fire! He used to bring ... And I remember us sawing this wood up as kids.

S1: You sawed it up for him?

S3: Yeah, we sawed wood up. I mean I'm not saying he didn't saw any, old Broughton, but we used to saw it as well.

S1: So what did you actually learn in the classroom if you were out doing gardening and you were out sawing wood and stocking up the ...

S2: The three Rs.

S1: You learned the three Rs. Yes.

S2: Very strict.

S1: In what ... in ...

S2: Very strict they were

S1: What sort of methods would you have used? Do you remember?

S2: I remember we'd chant the times tables ...

S4: Times tables.

S1: Right.

S3: And they used to sort of ...

S2: ... that you knew them perfect.

S3: You sing it didn't we?

S2: Yeah. One and one is one, two and two ...

S3: Two twos are four.

S2: ... two.

S3: Three twos are six, and ...

S1: Yes!

S3: ... right up to your twelves

S?: Like a rhyme.

S1: And you still remember them now, I bet.

S2: Yeah.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Once you've learned them like that ...

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S3: Never forget.

S1: No, that's right.

S2: And we ...

S3: But we used to play ...

S2: ... write stories, didn't we?

S1: You did write stories.

S3: I don't think ...

S2: Essays they called them in them days.

Colton History Society – All Our Stories.

Barbara Kendrick & Pete Jones

S1: Yes. Yeah.

S3: I don't think the playground was tarmaced in them days. Wasn't it sort of dirt and ...

S2: It was.

S3: I'm sure it was dirt.

S2: It wasn't tarmaced ...

S3: But we used to race from one wall, by the garden, we used to race to the wall by the road and then race back again. It was like a little competitions.

S1: Yes.

S3: You know? They'd be a row of you, all charging after

S1: Not in a PE lesson? Just for fun, is that?

S3: Well, ...

S1: Or was that in your lessons.

S3: Er, well he used to be with us, didn't he.

S1: Oh right then.

S3: It was a sort of a PE really.

S1: That was your sports day was it?

S2: Yeah, probably yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: They didn't have one like they do today.

S1: No. So what did you play when you were, sort of, turned ... at lunchtime did you stay at school or go home?

S3: I think we went home to begin with didn't we?

S2: To begin with we did, yeah.

S3: I don't remember stopping there for dinner.

S1: Yes. No.

S2: We used to have sandwiches when we went to the secondary.

S1: Yes.

S2: You took your sandwiches there.

S1: But at the primary school you simply all went home?

S3: I we walked ...

S2+3: Went home. Yeah.

S1: I suppose some of the children couldn't have gone home if they lived too far away.

S4: When they used ... when they brought Admaston children ...

S1: Yes.

S4: ... they stayed.

S1: Right.

S4: It used to bring them on the bus.

S1: Yes.

S4: They used to have dinner.

S2: Had sandwiches.

S1: Right.

S4: We still went home.

S2: And come back as soon as you could like.

S1: So do you look back at your school days and think they were happy days or ...?

S2: Oh yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah, I enjoyed school anyway.

S1: You didn't wear a uniform did you?

S3: No.

S1: No. So would you have had like your school clothes so that you wore, put your school clothes over in the morning, came to school and then when you came home they had to be taken off and put your plain clothes on, or did you just go to school in whatever you had?

S2: I think we had... I think we had different every day more or less, didn't we.

S3: I think we changed our clothes because we used to go up the banks and slide down on our bums.

S2: Yeah. Must have changed them.

S1: You changed them when you got in.

S3: And all the high banks

S3: ... behind mother's house.

S2: ... back.

S1: Yes.

S3: You know that big, high bank that ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... goes up to the Martlin?

S1: Yeah.

S3: We used to climb up there and used to take car tyres and wheels up.

S1: Did you?

S3: And let then come whizzing down.

S1: Yes.

S2: Because there was no houses then in the ...

S1: No.

S2: We used to play in there and ...

S3: Where the wooden bungalow is the Marl hole, as me mum would call it, that was all our garden.

S1: Oh was it?

S3: Yes. We had that ...

S1: Did that belong to the Lands Trust?

S3: Yes. That belonged to the Lands Trust.

S2: Yes.

S3: And we used to dig all that, well, in the early years ...

S2: Lot of it.

S3: ... we used to dig a lot of it.

S1: Yes.

S3: In the latter years when me dad was working for JC Price, Jim used to come up and bring a rotavator on the back of a tractor ...

S1: Right.

S3: ... and he used to rotavate it in half an hour.

S2: Yeah.

S3: And all as we did then was sow potatoes and cabbages and peas and beans, you know, we had a garden full.

S1: So what did you ... Did your dad work for Mr Price? Not with the bricklaying, but something else in those days?

S3: Well, he did do bricklaying. He ...

S3: Well, he finished with McAlpine's and ... Arthur Hudson had past away then; he'd gone out and finished.

S3: And me dad used to do all the building. He built all them big pig-sheds and everything.

S1: I see, so he was actually building at the time for him when you said he...

S3: Yes.

S1: ... brought the rotavator up and so on.

S1: So that's down at Bellamour?

S3: Yeah.

S1: Yeah? And you were going to tell us about people down at Bellamour?

S3: Old George Morris?

S1: Yeah.

S3: Well, he used to have a farm in my early school days, but in that front section as you look at it from the road, you know, go over Brook Bridge and come to Bellamour Corner, ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: Over the wall there—because there used to be a big, high wall there.

S1: Right.

S2: All the way round.

S1: Right! All the way round.

S3: Yes.

S3: Right the way to the farm gates.

S1: Okay.

S3: And in there he'd got lots of fruit trees ...

S1: Right.

S3: ... and we used to climb the wall and go and pinch the pears and the apples off the trees.

S1: Did you?

S3: We did.

S1: Scrumping?

S3: Scrumping.

S1: Did all the kids used to go?

S3: A lot of them did.

S2: Oh, lots of them did, yeah.

S3: Lots of them. And you used to, you know, fasten your shirt and stuff them all down in, get them all ...

S2: Inside your clothes.

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... back down, down your clothes, you see.

S2: We'd gone round Bellamour the one night hadn't you? That's when he chased us.

S1: Who chased you?

S2: Mr Morris.

S2: He heard us out there you see. 'I know what you're doing, you young devils', he said. He did.

S1: How far did you have to run?

S2: Back down to Bellamour Corner and round.

S1: Right round.

S3: As fast as your legs could carry you.

S2: Beat him! He didn't catch us.

S1: He didn't catch you?

S2: No, he didn't catch us.

S3: He didn't.

S2: No, we never thought me dad would end up working there though.

S1: No. Did he enjoy working down there?

S2: Oh yeah, he seemed to didn't he?

S3: Yeah.

S2: The farm and the animals.

S1: Yes.

S3: He used to bike down, obviously, because he'd never had a car since the war. And he used to stop at the school and ...

S2: Talk to the kids.

S3: ... every day and talk to the kids.

S1: Right.

S3: And they used to wait for him to come by on his bike; because he biked home for his dinner and he used to stop and talk. Because, I mean, my kids were at the school as well then.

S1: So how old would he have been when we're talking about?

S2: The grandkids.

S3: Well, he was made redundant from the farm at 82.

S1: Right!

S2: When Mr Price gave up on it.

S1: Mr Price stopped farming.

S2: He said he wasn't going to look for another job then.

S1: Right.

S3: Yeah. I've still ...

S1: Eighty-two!

S3: I've still got the snippet that come out of *The Sun* newspaper, the cutting.

S2: I've got it somewhere.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Rosemary Davis come and interview him didn't he and put that in *The Sun* and ...

S1: Really?

S2: ... *Uttoxeter Advertiser*.

S1: Yeah.

S2: *Uttoxeter Post & Times* I think.

S3: The kids: all the kids loved him. He used to stop every day and talk to the kids.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Especially when the grandkids were there.

S3: Yeah.

S4: That's right.

S1: Keep an eye open for them.

S2: And then ...

S4: But I can remember talking about your dad; I can remember when Jo came and her husband and Beth came to live with me while they were renovating their barn.

S2: Oh yeah.

S4: And I was walking one day and your dad was in the garden, and he was well into his 90s, and I was telling him, you know, I was chatting away and I was telling him Jo come to live with me because they were doing this barn like and he asked me: 'Have they got a bricklayer?'

S4: I thought it was wonderful.

S2: Yeah. No, if you said you'd got a problem in your house, he could do it.

S1: Yeah.

S4: So in the end you didn't say anything because ...

S1: No.

S4: ... 'cause he was 80-odd.

S1: Yeah.

S4: He'd go up on the roof!

S1: Yeah.

S2: Frightened me to death; I wouldn't watch. I come inside.

S1: To get back to school though, where we were when we just deviated a little: you said you went off to Aelfgar afterwards.

S3: Yes.

S1: Did you enjoy Aelfgar as much, more, or how did you find it?

S2: I didn't enjoy it as much as the village school.

S1: You didn't.

S2: Because you'd got to, for one thing, you had to work really hard.

S1: Did you? Yeah.

S2: At your secondary school more than you do at this one.

S1: Right.

S2: This one.

S1: Yeah. And did you go on the bus or cycle?

S3: No.

S2: We cycled.

S3: Cycled.

S1: Cycled, yeah.

S3: I found it quite good; I enjoyed Aelfgar.

S1: Yes.

S3: Because I, I mean we got woodworking and metalwork, and I enjoyed working with metal.

S1: Yes.

S3: And, you know, there was that much going on. We had gym, physical education, and we had, where they built all that complex, that was all our sports field. And we also had a big gardening section up there as well.

S1: Right.

S3: From Fortesque ... not Fort ... You know, the lane, Taylors Lane—comes through by the school?

S1: Yeah.

S3: The garden went from there right the way up to the houses way up ...

S2: Lion Street houses isn't it?

S3: Almost by Lion Street, you know, right up Church Street. And that was the garden, and each class had got a section of garden which you had to look after yourself. It was all pathed off; there was paths around every one of them, and you all looked after your ...

S2: Section.

S3: ... section ...

S1: Yes.

S3: ... of garden. You know, used to dig it and plant it. You know, whether that was part of the education, I don't really know, but we'd all ... we all ... but it all went in the finish that did didn't it?

S1: Did you competitions for between the ...

S2: Yes. Sport and then sports days.

S3: We had sports days.

S4: Sports days.

S3: But we never had competitions with the garden.

S1: Not with the garden.

S3: Not to my ...

S1: No.

S3: Not that I can remember anyway.

S2: No.

S1: No.

S3: There were no competition.

S1: And so how old were you when you left school?

S2: Sixteen.

S1: Sixteen.

S?: [Whispered] Perhaps 15

S3: I don't know what ... I might have been 15.

S1: Fifteen.

S2: I left school one day and started work the next.

S1: Did you? Where did you start working?

S2: Knox Mill, in Rugeley. It's no longer

S1: Not there now no.

S2: It was all pulled down.

S1: And what did ... sorry?

S2: The stream all come down.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Through the gardens of the mill house ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... down into the Rugeley car park and there was a bridge there. Beautiful it was. Of course it's all gone underground now with the car park and everything else.

S3: That was the Saints Brook, I think they call that.

S4: That's right, yes.

S3: Which comes from right up the Hednesford Road.

S1: Right.

S3: Comes through all the old Hagley Estate, you know ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: The bottom of Hagley School. Yeah, that used to ...

S1: Does it come from The Chase originally then?

S3: It still comes from up there.

S1: From the chase?

S2: Yeah

S1: Yeah.

S2: It was all underground.

S1: Then what did you do Pete as you left?

S3: I started work at English Electric.

S1: Right.

S2: Apprenticeship wasn't it?

S3: I had a five-year apprenticeship and I stayed there until ... for 21 years.

S1: Yeah. Was it difficult to get an apprenticeship in those days?

S3: No. No, I got apprenticeship easy.

S1: Did you?

S3: Yeah. Me and me mother went, on the bus, and, you know, it seemed to be quite easy really in what I remember it. Yeah. And when I went to work there a lady from the shop corner, a lady named Mrs Nicklin, she worked there and she used to take me.

S1: Right.

S3: She used to take me like out. We used to bike to Rugeley and we used to park our bike by Deg's garage and they'd take them in when they'd come round and we used to catch the double-decker from there.

S1: Right.

S3: In to Stafford.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And back again at six o'clock at night. And bike home again but in the—I don't know how many years: three or four years or so—I then used to cycle, and I cycled everyday for five years.

S1: Right. Yeah.

S3: Saved me a lot of money.

S1: Yes. Wasn't it ... was it quite expensive on the bus then?

S3: Two-and-six, I think, return.

S1: Return. Two-and-six return.

S3: Which is the equivalent to 12 and a half pence today.

S1: That's right, yes. But that was a lot of money wasn't it? Two-and-six?

S4: It was in them days.

S2: If you added it up every day.

S3: I used to borrow it off me mother.

S1: Forget to pay it back! Did you used to pay board?

S2: Oh yeah. Well, my first week's wages was one pound and seventeen shillings and sixpence.

S1: Right.

S3: And me mother had one pound ten shillings, as it was in them days, and I had seven and six.

S1: Seven and six. Yeah.

S3: Which I suppose, you know ...

S4: Was reasonable.

S3: You know, was quite a lot of money in standards really.

S2: And you still saved some, in them days.

S4: Yeah.

S3: But I didn't drink, I didn't smoke, you know, I used to cycle everywhere.

S1: Yeah.

S2: I was only getting one pound 25 when I finished to get married!

S1: Is that right?

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Yet you still saved money to buy a wedding dress and everything—after me mother had had her pound. We would.

S1: Yes. So who did the chores in the house? When you were little, did you all have to help out? What do you remember of ...

S2: Washing up!

S1: Yeah, okay.

S2: But me mum did all the cleaning, polishing, and cooking ...

S1: Did she? Yes.

S2: ... and everything.

S1: Yes. Because she didn't have paid employment.

S2: No.

S1: ... at home yeah.

S2: She used to say: 'A lady's work is cleaning the house, doing the meals, and looking after the children.

S1: Right.

S2: The man's job is to go to work and dig the garden.

S1: Right, so ...

S2: There were clear roles.

S1: Yes.

S3: As a young lad, I mean when dad was at war, I remember we—I mean I was only seven when war ended. But I can remember digging the garden with Roy Goodall.

S2: I remember Roy Goodall. Yeah.

S3: Now Roy couldn't have been all that old in them days: 12, 14 probably.

S2: No more than 14.

S3: And I can remember him, or us, planting seeds and things in the garden.

S1: Right.

S3: And in, you know, before the war finished.

S1: Yes.

S3: And then we used to help me dad, when war was over.

S1: Yeah.

S3: We used to help him do the digging.

S1: So where did he live?

S3: Me dad?

S1: Roy Goodall.

S2: Opposite the Greyhound

S3: He was opposite the greyhound.

S4: Where John Smith.

S3: Where ... No. Where ...

S?: Next door.

S3: The other ... where Carol Isaac now lives.

S1: Carol Isaac right, yeah.

S3: That was the Goodall home.

S1: Yeah. So he just came to help you because he wanted to?

S2: 'Cause we were friends. Me mum was ... well, we were all friends. Used to go to each other's houses in them days.

S1: I see: families were friends.

S2: Yeah.

S3: Everybody in the village was friendly in them days.

S2: You knew everybody and everybody knew you.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Everybody helped everybody, you know.

S1: Yeah, yeah.

S3: When we used to go down to school we used to play football in the street.

S1: Yeah.

S3: All the way down to the school. And old Broughton pinched the football; took it off us. Because he lived—you know where the schoolhouse is? Well, he lived in there and he used to come out the gate and he'd look up the village and he'd catch you playing football.

S1: Right.

S3: Of course, you never bothered. When we got down the road and he pinched the ball, so we couldn't play football. So in the end we got another ball and we used to kick the ball all the way down the road until we got by The Greyhound. And by, between Mrs Goodall's and the Clark's house, used to be the big brick wall.

S1: That's right.

S3: A lot of it, the wall, has gone now, because you can get a car in. You'd only a gate. And we used to hide the football in the ivy on top of that wall, until we come back at night and get it back out again.

S1: [Laughs] Children always find a way around don't they.

S2: You had to be crafty didn't you.

S1: So what do you remember about meal times when you were young? When you were little, at home, and ... Do you remember having set meal times or ...?

S2: Oh, more or less yeah. We always had hot dinner didn't we? We never went ..

S1: Was that in the evening or at lunchtime when you came home from school?

S3: I think it was at night.

S2: At night.

S1: Yes.

S2: Because me dad come in from work as well.

S1: Yeah.

S2: We just had sandwich or whatever at lunchtime.

S1: Yes. And would you have had a big breakfast or ...? Do you remember what you would have had for breakfast?

S3: I know we used to have porridge.

S1: Porridge. Yes.

S3: Because when aunty Lorrie was up we was always cooking porridge.

S1: Yeah.

S3: Or they, aunty Lorrie and mother were cooking porridge.

S1: Aunty Lorrie who was that

S2: Uncle Jack was billeted at Colton House.

S1: Oh right!

S2: It used to be all in the back, wasn't it?

S3: Yes.

S2: Where the Coachman's Walk is now.

S1: Right.

S2: And he came there and one day he went in the shop and Mrs Upton if she knew anyone who could put his wife and son up for a weekend. She asked me mum and me mum agreed, and she stayed, was it three weeks?

S3: I think she did.

S2: Instead of a weekend it was three weeks. And ...

S1: Did she outstay her welcome or were you ...?

S2: Oh no. Stayed friends right till...

S1: No, no.

S3: We're still friends today.

S1: You're friends now.

S2: It was only a few weeks ago we went down to see them because neither of them were well.

S1: Right.

S2: So she took me to school.

S1: So she stayed because she was so happy being there?

S2: Yes. So was uncle Jack as well.

S1: Yeah.

S3: Because uncle Jack was in the 197th Field Ambulance Regiment.

S1: Right.

S3: And they were like on the medical side and he went out to Singapore when he was captured, and he was on the Burma Road then till the end of the war.

S1: Really?

S3: And he came back a skeleton.

S2: Oh, I'll never forget that.

S1: No. But he did come back.

S2: He came back, yeah.

S3: He, being on the medical side was having to look after the others that weren't, you know, which were all very, very poorly.

S2: But he never, ever talks about his days of capture.

S1: No.

S2: Not even to Aunty Lorrie.

S1: Does he not? No.

S2: He's had skin cancer since, didn't he? Being out in the sun.

S3: Yeah.

S1: So are they actually related to you?

N3. No

S2: They were more like real aunt and uncle ...

S1: Yes.

S2: ... than some of the aunts and uncles were.

S4: Yes, they can be like that.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Yeah.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Yes.

S2: They keep in touch.

S3: He did ... we went down to see him and he gave me a photograph—you know, it was about that big. And it's all the men that were stationed at Colton House.

S1: Right.

S3: And the picture was taken in the plantation, which is across the other side of the road.

S1: Where the three houses are now.

S3: Where the three houses are.

S1: Yes.

S3: And that was the regiment that he was in.

S1: Right.

S2: Signed photograph by a photographer from Cannock. And he gave me this thing about, what, two months ago? And I gave it to Bill. I says, you know, 'Can you do this? Put it on the records like?' Because he's ... and I've also give it to Ron and Gay.

S1: Yes.

S3: They've got a copy now and they're looking into it. Because it's part of their history of their house.

S1: Of their house. Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S3: And Bill did me I reckon about three pictures and he also downloaded something off the Internet from the 197th Field Ambulance Corps, and there was a page, an A4 page, and half a page, all on about them, somebody had written in about it. And I've give that copy to Gay.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And she's looking into it. And I said to her, 'Have you finished with my photo yet?'

S1: Because someone said that Harry Secombe was here.

S3: He was.

S2: He was stationed...

S3: And Harry Secombe was there.

S2: And Spike Milligan wasn't it?

S1: Harry Secombe and Spike Milligan?

S2: Yeah.

S3: Because we tried to get them to come to some of the festivals ...

S1: Right.

S3: ... in the past.

S2: He was always ...

S3: But he was always too busy.

S2: Too busy, booked up.

S1: So where were ... why were ... how did they come to be stationed here? Who were they with? Do you know?

S2: Don't know what regiment they were with.

S3: Whether it was with the same regiment, I don't really know.

S1: You're not sure.

S3: I didn't see their photos on that ...

S2: They weren't on the photographs with old John.

S3: The photographs ...

S4: Did somebody say that they weren't actually in the house, that they were in ...

S3: The out building

S4: Bellamour

S2: No, they were in ... they were all in House

S1: Were they?

S2: Round there somewhere.

S4: Or in the ...

S1: In the stable area.

S?: Stable area. Yes.

S?: ... like as well.

S1: Yes.

S3: It must have been over ... I think in this picture there was about 60-odd, you know, stationed down there.

S1: Right. And how long would, was it in use by the army? A long time. I mean several years or ...

S2: All the war wasn't it?

S1: The whole war?

S?: All the war.

S1: Requisitioned.

S4: And wasn't Bob Curtis stationed there?

S2: I think he was.

S3: That's how Lillian met Bob.

S3: Yes it was.

S1: Yes.

S2: And it was ... and of course the plantation; there used to be a big lake in there where the houses are.

S1: Yes.

S2: We used to go skating in the winter.

S3: Well there's still part of it left.

S1: Yes.

S3: Still a bit left.

S2: The ice used to be thick in them winters, they were so cold.

S1: Yes. Do you look back and remember the winters being a lot colder?

S2: Oh yes.

S3: Yes.

S2: Definitely.

S3: Much colder.

S2: More snow. Much more snow. I mean the snow to go on the Colton Road was as high as the hedges along there.

S4: And you used to get the inside of your windows frosted.

S2: Frozen.

S3: That's right.

S4: Ice all down the windows because they were metal frames, weren't they, at me mum's house.

S2: In them days.

S1: Yes.

S2: And, well, the year our Mick was born we had to get...

S3: '47 was it?

S2: '47 I think. Deep snow that year. They had to get Mr Mellor and his horse and thing to go through to fetch the midwife to me mum when she had Mick.

S1: Yeah.

S2: He was blue by the time she got back. They panicked because they thought he was a blue baby, as they called them in them days.

S1: Yes.

S2: But he wasn't; it was just because of the cold.

S1: Cold.

S2: He was born before the nurse got back here. Because the snow was so deep she couldn't get here.

S1: No.

S2: Mr Mellor was always called up.

S3: With his horse.

S2: Any accidents ...

S1: Yeah.

S2: ... or things like that.

S1: Yeah.

S3: That was ... that would be George's dad.

S1: Right.

S3: He was Mellor's dad.

S1: Dad.

S1: Right.

S3: Old George.

S1: Yes. So that's been in the Mellor family for a long time, the farm.

S3: Yeah.

S2: Longer than we've been here anyway.

S1: Yeah. So what do you remember of celebrating Christmas in the past? Was it a special family time? Has it ...

S2: Oh yes!

S1: ... changed a lot over the years do you think.

S2: Oh yes.

S3: We used to

S2: For a start off the decorations or ... now weeks and weeks before. When we were kids you went to bed Christmas Eve and you got up Christmas morning and they were all up.

S1: Yes.

S2: The tree and the streamers and everything.

S1: Really? Oh so you didn't decorate it yourselves?

S2: No.

S1: Your parents did it for a surprise.

S2: Me parents did it. They crept in and put your, either stockings or pillows cases on the bottom of the bed.

S1: Yeah.

S2: There was little bits in and then the rest was all down, downstairs ready for when we got up. They were wonderful.

S1: Magic.

S2: Gran and grandad used to come down didn't they?

S1: Oh yes?

S2: Oh yeah.

S3: But I used to make me own Christmas presents.

S1: Did you?

S3: I'd get Barbara's pram and take the wheels off.

S1: [Laughs]

S3: Make a skate. Make a board. I had a trolley.

S2: Beautiful Tansad pram.

S1: Did you?

S2: One Christmas.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And me mum was busy indoors, I don't know where I was; she heard this hammering and tapping and when she went out it was all in bits on the back yard.

[Laughter]

S1: Oh gracious! Do you remember one particular present that you received at Christmas that was special to you or ...

S2: That was, but I didn't have it for long!

S1: How long had you have it before he took it to bits?

S2: Not many weeks.

S1: Not many ...

S2: Not many weeks.

S1: [Laughs] Anything you remember having?

S3: Not, no.

S1: Can you remember?

S3: Not really, no.

S1: No. And what would you have eaten for Christmas dinner then?

S3: We used to always have a good ...

S2: Chicken.

S3: 'Cause we used to have our chickens.

S1: Did you?

S2: Down the barn.

S1: Even through the war?

S2: Two little piglets.

S3: Yes.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Ministry ...

S3: We had these sheds and ...

S1: Okay.

S3: I said we all had, we had quite a pen with a big, wire run which we used to have all the chickens in didn't we?

S2: Yeah.

S3: And also, at the bottom of the garden, we had a pigsty.

S1: Right.

S3: And we used to have these two pigs, little runts as they're called, off the Ministry, which you had to feed up.

S1: Did you have to pay for them?

S3: No.

S1: No? They gave you the ...?

S2: Gave them you.

S3: But when you reared them up to big chaps, they used to come and take one back and you had the other. And I can see them now. They used to get a ... some man to come and kill them didn't they?

S2: Oh yes.

S1: Up the village? Somebody up in the village?

S3: I don't think he were.

S2: He's wasn't out of the village. He used to come on a bike, I think, if I remember right.

S4: Yes.

S3: And I can see them hanging up in the shed. Now. These pigs.

S2: And I can hear me mum now: 'Shut the doors! Shut the windows tight!'

S1: Really? She hated it. Yeah.

S2: And the radio went on full blast.

S1: Yeah.

S2: She hated to have them killed.

S1: Yeah.

S4: It was ...when we were doing down Lloyds Row it was Mr Parr that lived next door used to kill ours.

S1: Did he.

S3: Were these the Ministry ones?

S4: Yeah.

S3: Yeah. So yes so we'd always got plenty of meat.

S1: Yes.

S3: And eggs and mum used to neck all the chicken.

S1: Yeah.

S3: But yes, we ...

S1: Bet you used to have lots of vegetables because you'd grown them in your garden.

S2: Yeah. You grew your own in them days, yeah.

S3: Yeah.

S1: And would you have had a Christmas pudding would you?

S2: Yes. Oh yes.

S1: Yes.

S3: Well, in the corner of the kitchen at Hollow Lane, there was a big cast-iron boiler.

S2: Proper boiler.

S3: And ...

S1: For the washing?

S2: Yeah.

S3: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S3: But come Christmas time, or before, mother used to make all these Christmas cake ... puddings.

S1: Puddings.

S3: And they used to be in these big ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... basins.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And she used to put them in this boiler and boil them for, it seemed to me, ...

S2: A day and a half or something like that.

S3: Like, you know.

S1: Hours?

S3: Boiling for hours.

S1: Yeah. And what did you tie over the top of them? Do you remember?

S3: She used to put a like a cloth didn't she? Tied on.

S2: An old pillow case, things like that.

S3: Like a bit of old sheet or something like that that and rope them up.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And in they'd go.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And they'd be steamed for about 12 hours.

S2: Or more, yeah.

S3: And I can ...

S2: And then again when you were ... the day you had them.

S1: Oh, on Christmas day they've got to go on early in the morning to warm them through.

S3: Warmed up again.

S2: Same for the puddings

S1: Yeah, did you have lots of suet?

S2: Jam roly-polys and spotted dick and all that.

S1: Yes.

S2: She used to wrap that in the ...

S1: Yes. So would they always go in that boiler? Even if she was just making, say, something for lunch?

S2: She did them in a big saucepan by then.

S1: Yeah.

S2: A big old pot.

S1: On the range.

S3: Because we hadn't got a cooker in them days.

S1: No.

S3: The only thing we'd got was the old fire place, ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... which had got two ovens ...

S1: Right.

S3: ... and, you know, everything went on the fire.

S1: Yes.

S3: And there wasn't a, you know, an electric cooker in the kitchen ...

S1: No.

S3: ... or anything like that.

S1: Did it have to be blacked and ...?

S2: No.

S3: No. It wasn't on of them. It wasn't black leaded.

S1: No.

S2: Hadn't it got red tiles?

S3: Tiles on it.

S1: Right.

S3: And that's where we used to keep, in the top oven, we always kept the fire bricks for the bed in the winter.

S1: Yeah.

S3: We used to wrap them up ...

S2: Put em lower down, get them really hot.

S3: Yeah. You could put them in the bottom and they'd get quite hot.

S1: What would you wrap them in to go in your bed?

S3: Like a piece of old blanket.

S1: Right.

S3: Or something like that, you know, thick. And of course they were quite sharp.

S1: Yeah.

S2: If you knocked your foot on them.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Put them up in the bed to warm it.

S3: Yeah.

S2: Then the fire lighting. You got them out and the fire-lighting sticks went in the top of then, ready for next morning, to dry it.

S1: Until they were well dried.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Yes. Method in the madness, hey?

S3: That's right.

S2: We used lots of things.

S1: And what about hygiene? You had running water, you were saying.

S2: We did.

S3: He had hot ...

S2: ... once you got down.

S3: Because the fire heated the water as well.

S1: Yes.

S3: You got a damper which took it ...

S1: Like a back boiler?

S2: Yeah.

S3: Yeah. Back boiler ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: And if you open another one this side it took it under the oven.

S1: Right.

S3: So if you was cooking a joint of meat, you know, you'd turn it, flick this one, ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... and the ...

S1: The heat would go ...

S3: Back damper'd be out ... in.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And the fire went under that one.

S1: Right.

S3: So, you know, the oven would get red hot.

S4: Adjustable

S1: Yeah.

S2: Yes.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Yeah. So, how often would you have had a bath in those days?

S3: Well, as long as you'd got a fire, you'd got hot water all the time.

S1: Did you used to bath a lot? Because ...

S3: Yeah.

S1: ... most people didn't, did they? Because it was a big thing: you had to heat all the water ...

S2: Yeah.

S1: ... and carry it but you had...

S3: Because the water, as long as you'd got a fire, ...

S1: You got hot water.

S3: ... you will always get hot water.

S1: Yes.

S3: I mean, you get the ... well.

S1: I was just wondering about the boiler: did your mum need the boiler for the wash or was that to really boil the washing?

S2: Oh boil! We used to boil all the sheets and everything.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And it didn't seem to get really ...

S2: Boil.

S3: ... used that much in the end did it?

S2: Not in the end it didn't ...

S3: Because ...

S2: ... because she had a washer.

S3: In 1953 I started work for English Electric.

S1: Yes.

S3: And after—I don't know how long after—but they got this big shop. And they Of course, English Electric made washing machines.

S1: Right.

S3: Fridges. All that sort of domestic appliances and you can ...

S1: They were just coming in to be fashionable I suppose, were they?

S3: Yes.

S1: People were just starting to buy them because not many people would have had a fridge in those days.

S3: No.

S2: No. We didn't have a fridge for a long while.

S3: I can't remember ...

S2: We had a washer first.

S3: Yeah. We had a ... because I bought them from work.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And I think it was something like about 25 quid for a washing machine. And it was a stainless steel tub with a little thing which, you know, like a little impellor which spun the water.

S1: Yes.

S4: I remember them.

S3: Yeah. And the ...

S1: With a wringer on top? Did it have a wringer with it?

S2: No, she had a separate wringer, didn't she?

S3: She had a separate wringer I think. Yeah. But a lot of them did have the wringers built into them.

S1: Yeah.

S3: But this one hadn't; it was just like a washing machine.

S2: The second one had a wringer on it, if I remember right.

S3: And also I bought a fridge. And I also bought, well I didn't buy it, I got it for Peggy Bannister—either a fridge or a washing machine or something, you know. They were only about 20, 50 quid most. You know, it's ... And of course being an employee you got them at discount price.

S1: Got discount prices, yes. So where did your family do their ... the main shopping like? Where would you, or your mum, have bought the food—other food that she needed to buy? The things she wasn't providing herself, at the house.

S2: Bread and cakes.

S1: Yes.

S2: And odds and ends. Charlie Dilley came round from the Co-op with a horse and cart.

S1: Right.

S2: And every Friday we had fresh cream cakes didn't we?

S3: Hmm.

S1: So did you have to order it in advance or did you just choose from the ...?

S2: No. Masons' you had to do that.

S1: Right.

S2: Because someone came round every week from Masons' ...

S1: Right.

S2: ... and took your order and you'd go in and pay with one of them things that went across to the cash desk.

S1: Right. That's like a big shop down in the centre of Rugeley?

S2: Yes.

S3: By the Town Hall.

S1: Yeah. Near the Town Hall.

S3: By that ... where that ...

S1: Where the clock is.

S3: ... Infinity is now.

S1: Yes.

S3: The one that's been closed down.

S2: Yes.

S1: Yes.

S3: That's where Masons was.

S1: That's right. Yes. I can remember that.

S4: They had those things in Woolworths as well didn't they?

S3: Did they?

S4: Yeah.

S1: You put the money into a little ...

S2: Cup.

S1: Like a brass sort of cup

S?: You screwed it on yeah.

S3: Then it fed across into ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... the cashiers department

S1: Yeah.

S4: And then they sent the change back.

S1: Yeah.

S3: Yeah, they did. It was magic!

S2: You thought so when you were kids.

S3: Yeah.

S1: So did you actually go in to Rugeley for that sort of ...? Did they deliver it for you? Masons? Would you say?

S2: Oh yes. They delivered the orders like.

S1: Yeah.

S3: But you'd go ... I'm sure we went in to pay if I remember right.

S1: Yes I was just wondering that. Yeah.

S2: And if you wanted anything else you went in on ...

S4: We got the

S2: ... the bus and ...

S4: We got the village shop.

S2: And we got two little shops in the village in them days.

S1: Yeah. That's right.

S2: Mrs Upton and Miss Williscroft.

S3: But we used to go on old Wealdon's buses, which had only got the wooden seats.

S1: Really? Yeah.

S2: Laths. Do you remember?

S3: Do you remember the wooden lath seats.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Ridges on your bottom and you got to town.

S1: How often were the buses then?

S2: Most days. Saturday.

S4: Market days.

S2: Market days, yeah.

S3: There was one used to come through, I think it was a Wednesday and a Saturday, and they used to come up through the village and after into Stockwell Heath, down onto the main road, up towards the 'reser', then turn left then you go through Newton, Drointon, then come out on the Uttoxeter Road and then go into Uttoxeter to the market ...

S4: That's right, yeah.

S3: ... on the market days.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And then back again in the afternoons.

S1: Yes.

S3: But ...

S1: Was that just on the Wednesday for the ...?

S3: I think that was Wednesdays and Saturdays wasn't it?

S1: And Saturdays as well?

S1: Yeah.

S2: I know Wednesdays used to be because ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: I think it used to be twice a week. Old Wheeldon's buses.

S2: They called them bone shakers.

S3: Oh they was. And you wouldn't want to go to the seaside on them anyway. [Laughs]

S1: No. Useful service though wasn't it?

S2: Oh yeah.

S3: Yes it was.

S2: Reliable. It was always there.

S1: So was Jack Brown ... you talk about the two shops down the village but what about Jack Brown's shop up the village? When did that open?

S2: Much later.

S3: Because that used to be just a small thatched cottage.

S1: Yes.

S2: Because he ...

S3: And old Tommy Norman lived there.

S?: Did he take it over or was it off Janet and Ruth? Jack brown had it up here.

S3: Took off who?

S2: Janet and Ruth, and it up here did he?

S3: No. Derek had it off Ruth.

S4: Oh yeah. Must have been before then he had it.

S3: Yeah.

S2: You know I was living here when he ...

S2: I was married then.

S1: Yes.

S2: He wasn't about in the war years round here.

S1: So that ... You mentioned a little bit about the war years in Colton, having the soldiers ...

S2: The Americans.

S1: ... billeted there and your dad away, and so on. Any other memories of anything to do with the war? Particularly? Not really, no.

S3: Not really, no.

S3: I was two when it started.

S1: Yes.

S3: And I was seven when it finished.

S1: That's right.

S3: You know, you ...

S1: Yes.

S3: I suppose if it was something, you know,

S2: Drastic we'd remember.

S3: ... drastic you'd probably remember it. Because they spoke about this plane that landed at Bellamour. I can vaguely remember it.

S3: I've got no memory of it.

S1: No memory. No. Do you ...?

S2: But I remember when the bombs come in. Me mother used to push sofa up on end and push us under the sofa or under the stairs.

S1: Oh did she?

S2: Oh yeah.

S1: You didn't go out to a shelter?

S2: No.

S3: No.

S2: No, no shelters.

S3: The Town Hall. The siren went off in Rugeley Town Hall ...

S1: Right.

S3: I mean you could hear it for miles.

S4: Yes.

S2: You could.

S3: And me mother would upturn up ... Because the sofa was an old ...

S2: Solid.

S3: ...wooden-frame chap with all its covering on, you know.

S1: Yeah.

S3: With horse hair and everything. And she'd upturn that and we'd all get underneath that.

S1: Right.

S3: Or underneath the stairs.

S1: Yes.

S4: We'd go under the stairs.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Because there was quite a hole.

S3: Then it, you know, once the siren had stopped like. You'd stop under the stairs. And then whenever it was like an all-clear they used to ... Now, the siren was different for the all-clear. It was the same noise but I think it was a short ...

S1: Yeah.

S3: Just a short burst, if I remember right. And that was to say that it was all clear.

S1: And you'd always stay until it was all clear again?

S3: I'm sure we did, yeah.

S2: Yes.

S1: What would you do while you were under the stairs?

S3: I don't know.

S1: Did you ever ...?

S2: Can't remember. You just ...

S3: You run out of tape?

S1: No. So ...

S2: You'd just stay there.

S1: You wouldn't have a torch on or anything under there would you or would you? You would, wouldn't you?

S3: Well, I think we'd still have lights on.

S1: Yeah.

S3: I don't think the lights went off.

S4: Because you'd got blackout curtains.

S1: Right. No.

S3: Yeah. You had to put blackout curtains up.

S1: Oh I see, yes.

S2: If there was a crack in them the old man, warden and things, would come and knock your window. Tell you the light was showing.

S1: To make sure that it wasn't showing. Yeah.

S3: Because all the cars in them days had ... You know when you've got a big headlight?

S1: Yes.

S3: Well, they used to cover the headlights up on cars and they had a little slit across the middle.

S1: Did they?

S3: I don't ever remember seeing any. And that's the only light you had with a car.

S1: Really? So most people then wouldn't have gone out at night?

S3: Well, I wouldn't have thought ...

S2: No.

S1: There weren't that many cars around ...

S2: No

S3: We had one.

S1: Did you?

S3: Umm.

S2: We didn't use it.

S3: Me dad had one.

S2: Me dad one before the war.

S3: It was in ... It was in the shed all through the war and we used to play in it didn't we?

S1: Did you?

S3: Yeah.

S1: But he didn't drive it when he came back?

S3: No.

S1: No?

S3: No, he never drove it again.

S1: Do you have any idea why? Was it because petrol was a problem?

S3: I don't know.

S1: No?

S3: He sold it didn't he?

S2: He sold it not long after he come home.

S3: Yeah. And the registration number, and me and our Nick can always remember it:

S2&3: BMA 719

S1: Yes.

S3: That was his car.

S1: Yeah. Special ...

S3: Little Morris I think it was.

S1: Yes! And it was in the garage all through the war.

S3: It was in the shed.

S1: In the shed, I mean.

S2: Yeah.

S3: And the shed was still there when me dad left.

S1: Really?

S3: The car had gone.

S3: That's how, that's, you know, I vaguely remember them bombs landing across the Martlin.

S1: Right.

S2: I vaguely remember them, yeah.

S3: And then it wasn't until, I think, way after the war when the bomb disposal people came and dug them out. And they got them out and over there there's a wood, small wood, and there was trees, you know, about, I don't know, two foot or more lying down, which had probably fell, and they used to put the detonator things in and let them go. They used to blow these trees to sticks.

S1: Did they?

S2: They didn't get them all though did they?

S3: They didn't. there was one ...

S2: On running sands

S3: ... they couldn't get. And I remember Nev has told you about that one. But ...

S1: Is it still there?

S3: It's still there.

S3: But they said as every time they was getting near to it, it kept sinking in the running sands, because it's all quicksands under there, or running sands.

S1: Whereabouts would it be then about?

S3: It's round the back.

S2: Back of the old ... the Rec. The old Rectory.

S3: Round the back of there somewhere.

S1: Right.

S2: So it could be moved on.

S3: Well, David Bradbury said it was in the Mash field. Now, how true it is I don't know, but I know it's in their somewhere. Because in the end they just forgot about it.

S4: It's probably rotted away by now.

S1: Oh yeah.

S2: You never know, Nona.

S3: He's got a lot of dirt to shift now.

S1: Yeah. So what do you remember of holidays? Did you ever go away on holidays or did you go out for days or ...?

S2: Not in the early years did we?

S3: No.

S2: Until way after the war. And then we used to go down to this auntie Lorrie and uncle Jack.

S1: And where were they?

S2: Hatfield, Hertfordshire.

S3: Welham Green.

S2: Welham Green. It's a village

S1: Wasn't like seaside holidays or?

S2: No. We had day trips ...

S3: To Rhyl wasn't it?

S2: To Rhyl from the school.

S1: Right. On the train?

S2: No, coach.

S3: We used to go to London on the train.

S1: Right.

S2: For the holidays, didn't we.

S3: But I think we went in a bus didn't we? To

S1: To Rhyl

S2: To Rhyl. We did, yeah.

S1: That must have been really exciting.

S2: ... I got sun, back, really burnt the once. I lent back against the seat: argh! I can remember the coach.

S1: You can remember it. Yes.

S3: Yeah.

S2: Did you ever go anywhere when you were there?

S?: I think so yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: And that was really the only time you saw the sea.

S2: Yeah.

S1: What do you remember about any religious festivals or special occasions here in the village? Any ...

S3: I don't remember any.

S1: ... special ...

S2: Nothing.

S1: Nothing.

S3: The only thing I remember ...

S2: When you were younger you had the big shows.

S3: ... and Barbara will probably remember as well, we used to go to Sunday school.

S1: Right.

S3: And it was always taken by Nelly Rotchel

S1: Yeah.

S3: And she always took us, nice weather, we always went round Bellamour pool, didn't we?

S2: Walk round the park

S1: Yes.

S3: And walk all around the park and then back.

S1: And did almost all the children go?

S3: There used to be fair, a fair crowd.

S3: A fair crowd.

S2: Yes.

S2: She used to do it on her own, didn't she.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Just her?

S2: Yeah.

S1: And was that whilst church service was on or a different time?

S2: No. It was on Sunday afternoons.

S2: Yes.

S3: That's all I can remember of ...

S2: Remember them!

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... them sort of things.

S2: And then, after the war, I can remember we used to have the shows didn't we? Vegetable shows as they called them in them days.

S1: Right.

S2: I can't remember which field they were in. I think they were back of Mr ? somewhere. Got a recollection of the marquee there.

S1: Oh right.

S3: Well, all that land belonged to Colton House didn't it? The whole of that lot from the Oldham's cottages right down to where Kath Beech was ... to where the sewerage works is, the whole of that belonged to Colton House.

S1: Really?

S3: Right the way down to the brook. And that was all Colton House and it was all sold off: bits here and bits there and ...

S1: Who owned it then, when it was being sold off? Do you ... You don't remember.

S2: Did Lichfield Laundry own it at one time?

S4: The chap ...

S3: I think they did.

S2: Was it Handf ...

S4: Handfords.

S5: Sammy Handford

S2: To do with Lichfield Laundry weren't it.

S3: Yeah, well, he owned a lot of the village in them days.

S2: Though it was turned into flats first wasn't it?

S3: Yes.

S2: That's right.

S2: Because they'd painted all that beautiful staircase up, which Ron has now renovated back. It's took him a long, long time and ...

S3: See, 'cause Sammy Handford, he bought Boughey Hall.

S1: Right.

S3: And he also bought the Malt House.

S1: Yes.

S?: Colton Cottage.

S3: And he also bought where Bill Brown lived here. He had all that.

S1: Right.

S3: He had all that. And his plan was to build ... oh, I don't know, was it something like 800 houses?

S2: Something. Right from the bottom ...

S3: Round the back here.

S2: ... right to the top here.

S3: And ...

S1: So when would that have been?

S4: Fifties. Sixties. Fifties.

S2: Yes.

S3: Fifty and sixties. Round that year, yeah.

S2:... after I was married, yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S2: 'Cause I remember him being here.

S3: And he also, along these fields, he'd got, well, he'd got a load of hen pens full of hens.

S1: Right.

S4: In the Cuckoo Barn, it is now. They call it Cuckoo Barn, with the round

S2: Yeah.

S4: That was full of battery hens.

S3: But these fields down the back here, you could go and walk round there and you could take a bag and you could come back with two dozen eggs, because there was eggs ...

S2: Seemed to lay everywhere.

S3: There were eggs everywhere: in the hedge bottom, all over the place. You'd get two dozen eggs any day. And he never even bothered with them.

S1: No?

S3: No. And you know where Luke Mellor used to live? Where Pete Atkins now lives.

S1: Yes.

S3: Well that was Luke Mellor built that house.

S1: Yes, that's right.

S3: And he was getting up one morning and the front of the house looked across them fields.

S1: Yeah.

S3: Because there was no houses over there then.

S1: No.

S3: And he watched this fox: he'd come in—because there was ... some of them got corn in, and he'd come out the corn into a pen. Because they were ... none of them ever shut up at night. He'd take a hen into the corn; five minutes, he was back. Got another hen. Took it. And he said he was there fetching all these hens out.

S1: Was he feeding his family do you think?

S3: Feeding his family, yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S1: Yeah.

S3: But I don't know what happened in the end but it all sort of went pear shaped, and all the plans got ...

S4: George worked for them then.

S2: Did he?

S?: Yeah.

S3: And he owned Lichfield Laundry.

S2: 'Cause he owned two or three at Hamstall Ridware, you see.

S3: That's right.

S2: Yes.

S4: So George worked for the farm there and he used to come down to the Malt House and down here.

S2: And is Jack one of the brothers as well? One of his brothers was he?

S?: There was two, yeah.

S2: Yeah. I remember them, yeah.

S3: But whether he just run out of money or what, but it all went into liquidation.

S1: Yeah.

S4: George had left before they did that so...

S3: Yeah.

S1: Were you involved in any of the farm work around?

S2: Potato picking week I think ...

S3: We used to have a week off school...

S1: Oh did you?

S3: ...for potato picking.

S1: Yeah.

S3: I only ever went to the Manor Farm.

S1: Right.

S2: I went to a farm up Blithbury. They used to pick us up and take us up to Blithbury.

S1: That was hard work.

S2: Oh very hard work.

S3: It was. It was a backbreaking job. I'm glad these machines took over.

S1: Yeah. [Laughter] But you earned a bit of pocket money?

S2: Oh yeah.

S3: Yeah. Used to have a bit of pocket money, yeah.

S2: And you could bring a few potatoes each day.

S3: Used to give you ...

S1: Oh!

S2: Give you a few potatoes each day.

S3: A few spuds each day in a bag.

S4: Even our Stephen went potato picking.

S1: Oh yeah.

S3: Did he really?

S4: Yeah.

S1: Well you can be, you know, proud of coming ...

S2: Oh yeah.

S1: Having done something, can't you?

S2: Yes.

S1: Because there's not much chance to earn pennies I suppose really in those days.

S2: No.

S2: Not in a village anyway.

S1: In a village, no.

S3: I used to go to the Manor Farm.

S1: Regularly?

S3: Regularly yeah.

S1: Yes.

S3: Especially at harvest time.

S1: Yes.

S3: When they used to go round the fields with the old binder, and they used to cut it and they used to put them, the corn, into these sheaves—you know, about this diameter—and you used to have to ... Because the binder just chucked them out on the floor and you had to go and stack the. And we used to stack eight at a time so they could dry off ...

S2: Dry out.

S1: Yeah.

S3: ... or whatever. And they used to come round and collect them and take them and put them into a big rick, you know, until they used to come round and then they'd thrash them. We used to go and help, you know.

S1: Was that with the horse and cart? Or with a tractor?

S3: I think they might have pulled the first binders with a horse.

S1: Yeah.

S3: But Mellor's was one of the first farms in this area to go mechanical.

S1: Right.

S3: They was the first in this area to have a combine harvester. And, you know, things changed didn't they?

S1: Yeah.

S3: But I still went up to the farm for years and years. Like George did didn't he? Specially when Luke died.

S3: We all used to go at harvest time.

S2: Old George.

S4: Yeah, when we lived in No. 7, when Luke died, and I'll never forget, I could see him now, George Melor coming up the steps to come to ask George because he'd ... he was more the animals and Luke ...

S2: Yeah, he was.

S?: ... was the arables.

S2: Outside, yeah.

S4: And they were right bang in the middle of combine harvesting.

S3: Yeah, they'd just started combiners.

S4: And he'd come and ask George if he'd do it for him and he did it.

S1: Yeah.

S4: I remember him coming in absolutely covered in dust.

S2: Yeah.

S2: And always at the end George give them some of his wine.

S1: Did he used to make homemade wine?

S2: ... I can see our Janet coming down that drive now. We were watching her. Because she didn't get nasty, she just laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed. I've never seen anything like it. In the end we were laughing that much at her.

S3: And when ...

S2: She was that drunk.

S3: When Luke was alive there used to be the Harvest Thanksgiving and they all went down to church.

S1: Right.

S3: All of them.

S1: And it was a really big ...

S2: Big occasion.

S3: Yeah, big occasion.

S1: Yes.

S3: And once the service was over they'd come out the church, come up to The Greyhound and they'd say, 'Come on! We're all going in.' I don't know how many it was. But ... because they had a few work for them in them days. And they'd treat them all to a few jars in The ...

S1: Right.

S3: ... Greyhound.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And then George would say, 'Are you coming up to the farm for a nightcap?' And he'd bring them up here and they used to go in the old boiler house there, and he'd got gallons of homemade wine.

S2: Gallons he had.

S3: And he used to fill a jug. I mean I'm talking of a jug. And he used to have, not just wine glasses, but tumblers. And they'd all have a tumbler and he'd fill them all up and 'Have some more!'

S1: Yeah.

S2: I didn't do it.

S3: And he says, 'I come out this one night, they'd all gone; I come out, he said, and they were lying in that ... because you know' there's [Laughter] privet hedge? They were lying all in the privet hedge there because they were all paralytic.

S1: Oh dear.

S3: And that happened every year.

S1: Every year?

S2: Every year that did.

S1: Do you think a lot of people drank a lot in those ... in the past more so than today?

S2: No.

S1: Just occasionally?

S3: The pub used to shut early in them days.

S1: Yeah.

S3: You know, they didn't open till ...

S1: Did you have a story about somebody with a car in the pub?

S3: Yes I did. Old George Morris? Used to keep Bellamour. Yeah, he used to come to the pub nearly every night and he'd have a few beers and he'd come out drunk. And then he also used to bring a bottle of whisky with him, and he'd pour the whisky into the tank of car and he'd start it up and you'd a chug chug and go down the road a bit and then it'd conk. And he said, 'Come you kids! Come and give this car a push!' Used to be pushing this car down road trying to get it to go.

S1: Oh dear.

S2: Whisky in it!

S3: Yes.

S1: And what about the one who had the Reliant?

S3: Well, that was a bloke named Charlie Willets and he worked for ...

S2: Charles's.

S3: Vin Charles, up at the farm up the lane there. And this Reliant Robin, as you probably know, was a three-wheeler with the engine driving the front ... no, the rear wheels. And then George Mellor, no, Luke Mellor was one, and one or two of the others, and they used to come out when George come out of the pub drunk and they'd lift the car up so when he revved it up, his wheels whizzing around, they used to drop it and he did go off like a rocket.

S2: Wicked!

S3: But one day he got rid of it and he bought a mini. And when he was going out the pub, drunk again, they did the same again and they all picked the back up of this mini. But when George ... Charlie, put it in ... George Willis rather, put it in to gear and drove off it just drove them up the road and they had to drop it quick because it was a front-wheel drive car.

S1: Served them right.

S2: Yes.

S3: So they didn't do that again.

S1: So just to bring it to a conclusion really: What do you think Colton was a nice place to grow up? Are you glad you grew up here? Would you rather have grown up somewhere different do you think?

S2: No.

S1: This was a nice place to grow up.

S2: I wouldn't like to leave the village.

S1: No.

S2: For a start there's too many memory.

S1: Yeah.

S3: Now then, Colton, when I was a lad and, you know, a young man growing up, everybody was very friendly. And, I mean, even today there's people coming into Colton and they just don't speak to you at all.

S2: They don't.

S3: They just totally ignore you. And, you know, I find that sad really.

S1: Yes. Life's changed a lot hasn't it?

S3: It has.

S2: Not for the better really.

S3: Everybody'd help you do anything.

S2: You'd only to ask and people'd be at your door wouldn't they?

S1: Yes.

S4: My sister Laura, she's been out of the village since she was about 18, ...

S2: Oh yes.

S4: But she, to this day and she's 78, she says when she comes over the brook bridge, feels as if she's come home.

S2: After all them years.

S3: And that's how Charlie Bannister was when he come back from Devon.

S4: Yeah, he was.

S3: I met him up the road here and he broke down and cried.

S1: Did he?

S4: Yeah. He did. Because I ... he hugged me as he come by up the road.

S1: Yeah.

S4: Because I was at No. 7 wasn't I?

S2: He'd never wanted to go he said. 'They're a load of snobs' he said. 'I go in the pub and they just stand and ignore me.' Hated it he did.

S1: Is there anything else that you want to tell us on the tape? Anything that we've not asked you about or anything else you'd like to tell us? Or ... are we there.

S3: I can't think of anything at the moment.

S2: Can you remember any local characters? I can't.

S1: No.

S2: Oh, Old Mrs Talbot: she was a character wasn't she?

S1: Who is that? Mrs Talbot.

S3: Her husband, they always called him Cog.

S2: Cog Talbot.

S3: Cog Talbot ... and he worked at the Manor farm.

S1: Right.

S3: ... he was doing something with some machinery, and I don't know what happened, and it too his arm off up to here.

S1: Phuuu.

S3: And he used to, you know, to see him wheeling a barrow with just this little bit here ...

S1: The stump.

S3: ... holding the barrow, and he used to go... but his wife was a right character wasn't she?

S2: She was yes. She took in laundry didn't she?

S3: Yes.

S3: And she ...

S2: Perfect it was.

S3: ... also grew a lot of flowers: sweet peas and all this sort of thing. And she used to come down to our house, Hollow Lane and she says, "Ere you lot! Get up in that field and bring me some sheep pills.' And she'd bring a, you know, a carrier bag, and you used to go up into The Marklin and what she wanted was a bagful of sheep manure.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And she called them 'sheep pills'. And then she'd take them home and put them in a bag, you know, like a cloth or that sort of bag, and put them into a bucket of water and let it really soak in the water until the manure was like part of the liquid. And she used to feed all the plants on that.

S1: Ah!

S3: And she always ... 'Go and fetch me some sheep pills.'

S1: Liquid manure.

S3: Yes.

S2: Uncle Tom. Me uncle Tom used to do that.

S1: Did he yeah.

S2: Stockwell Heath

S1: Yeah.

S4: Where did they live then?

S3: Who?

S4: Talbot.

S3: They lived probably where Rose Collins lived. One of them houses there.

S2: There were a cottage ... there was cottages weren't there, there?

S3: Up Heath Way.

S2: Up Heath Way, yes.

S1: Up Heath Way.

S?: Was there two or three places?

S2: Can remember ... I can see it now. They had a cottage there; always used to come out when you walked by.

S3: You don't mean the thatched cottage?

S2: No, that was old uncle Tom.

S3: No.

S3: The thatched cottage at ... farther up which burnt down.

S4: Opposite my house.

S3: Yes, it was opposite yours.

S2: Somewhere there.

S4: There was a thatched cottage there.

S3: It burnt down didn't it?

S4: People called ... It did. But people ...

S3: Gregory's

S4: ... called Gregory lived there.

S3: Yes. Gregory.

S2: ... she was further down this way.

S3: Yeah.

S1: Right.

S2: Mrs Talbot.

S3: She lived in one of the houses when I remember anyway of that as standing there today.

S4: Oh right.

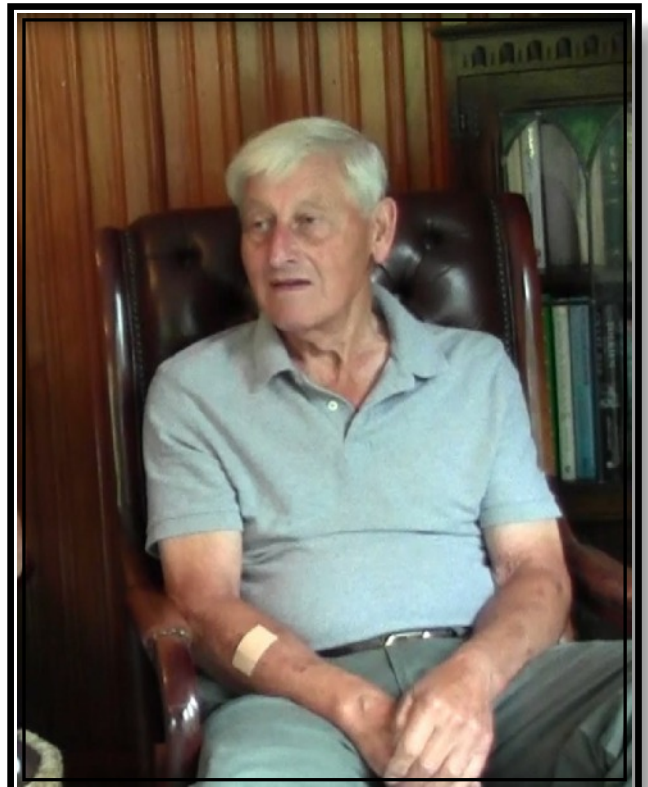
S3: And I'm sure it might be the one where Rose ...

S?: It was one of them two there.

S1: Yeah. Well, thanks ever so much. There's loads of interesting facts there for us and

Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Alma & Nev Jame's story

Nev and Alma James

S1: Marion Vernon
S2: Nev James
S3: Alma James
S4: Nona Goring

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society. Nona Goring and Marion Vernon are interviewing Nev and Alma James on Wednesday, 18 March 2009.

Right then, now you were actually born in the village, weren't you so...

S2: No.

S1: You weren't born in the village?

S2: No. No.

S1: Right, can you tell us about your family and where you were born.

S2: Right, I was born at Hill Ridware, 1929. The 12th of August, the glorious 12th. I lived in Ridware until I was eighteen months old and then we moved into the village. 'Cause my mother's mother was ill at the old cottage in Hollow Lane so she came over to look after her. But at that time they ... it was a bit tight for them to reorganise the cottage so they lodged with Cynthia Nicklin's mum and dad, opposite the Dun Cow, for a short while.

S1: Right.

S2: Until they got sorted out at the cottage, and then they moved back to the cottage.

S1: So was there a cottage opposite the Dun Cow then?

S2: Yes, up a long path. It was quite a big house actually.

S3: Yeah, it was.

S2: Walter Nicklin and his wife, and Cynthia was their daughter.

S1: Right.

S2: Then of course I don't remember much about moving, obviously.

S1: No.

S2: But anyway, so I was there then until ... lived there until we got married.

S1: Oh right.

S2: Yeah.

- S1: So did your grandma get better?
- S2: No, she didn't. She ... mid-1930s, about 1935, I think. She's buried in Colton church yard. Yes, she was very ... my granddad was still living at home. So there was mum and dad, granddad, and me and my brother lived there. There was five of us in the family. So we lived there until, well, we got married, that was the first ... no, my brother got married then we got married two years later.
- S1: Was your brother older than you?
- S2: Oh yeah, he was three years and a bit older than me.
- S1: And did your parents work when you were little?
- S2: Oh yeah, me dad was a miner. My mother was just, well she kept house and as a bit of a side line to pay for her fags she used to do wreath making and bouquets just ... and she used to do a bit of poultry plucking and drawing and dressing.
- S1: Did she.
- S2: Yeah. And we kept ...
- S3: [whispers]
- S2: Yeah, she was what the doctor called 'laying in and laying out'.
- S1: Right
- S2: See if anybody was on the way out she would go and sit with them when they was getting close and she would lay them out. And anybody having a baby close to she used to go and ... you know, do the necessary until the nurse came.
- S1: Yeah.
- S2: And just about that one. In 1940 Mick Jones was born in the lane and that's when we had the heavy snow. That's when the Colton road was a yard of snow.
- S1: Right.
- S2: And Sam went to the phone box, which is installed by the cenotaph.
- S1: Right.
- S2: And he phoned Nurse Calder and she couldn't ... she said well I can't get in this weather. So Sam went up to the Manor Farm, harnessed Old Jess, the pony, to the trap and he walked that pony through to Rugeley, picked Nurse Calder up and walked her back, and by the time she got back Mick was born.
- S1: Oh right.
- S2: Yeah. But he survived and ...
- S1: Your mum delivered him, didn't she?
- S2: Me mum delivered him, you know, because the nurse couldn't get in time, long delay.

- S1: Well that was a long way to walk in the snow, wasn't it?
- S2: Oh it was, yeah. I mean it was hard for the pony and Sam was leading it as well, so. But, yeah, the good old days. Good job we haven't had winters like that since, you know, it is.
- S1: Yes. And what do you remember about your neighbours as you were little, when you were growing up?
- S2: Well, and close to us was Mrs Etherington.
- S1: Right.
- S2: I remember in the mid-30s mum and dad was still alive, old John Bull, and I don't his wife's name, Mrs Bull, she was ailing. She was in a wheelchair if she went out and she was mostly in bed in the front room as they called it. And he died first, old John did, and then his wife died later.
- S1: Oh right.
- S2: And a funny thing was, I'd never heard the expression before, but I know one day, you know, you come in from a kid and you say 'where's me mam?' And me granddad said, 'Mrs Bull's gone home and your mum's gone down to Mrs Bull.' I said, 'Gone home?' You know, I thought Mrs Bull was at home. But it was his way of saying she'd gone over, you know. And so she'd gone to lay Mrs Bull out.
- And Mrs Etherington, her husband was a local coal man. He had a horse and dray in the place where my bungalow is now.
- S1: Oh right.
- S2: And he was ... but he had a sudden heart attack and died sudden. So I can't remember her husband. He'd been dead quite a while. And she was Tom Preston's aunty, Mrs Etherington was. And her brother was Frank Bull, as was the bailiff for Carwarden Springs Farm, and that was owned by Dones from Blithbury, the farm was. He was the bailiff Mr Bull was. Yeah.
- Then across the road, where the old thatch was, Amos Thorns, the road sweeper, lived there, him and his wife.
- S3: That's was Milly and Sam's .
- S2: That's where ... they have built two houses there.
- S1: Yeah.
- S2: And they had two children, Edgar and Cathy. They were, of course, quite a bit older than us they were.
- S1: Were there lots of children in the village at that time?
- S2: There was... there did seem to be a lot, yes. Yes, but there was always somebody to play with, you know, there was a lot of activity in the village.
- S1: Yeah.
- S2: Of course there was very little traffic so, I mean, you could ... we used to play cricket in the road and football in the road and all sorts of things. You know, she'd come over and off Lloyd's Steps cottages, you know.

S1: Yeah.

S3: No traffic about.

S1: No.

S2: And in the winter you'd be on the pools sliding. The Barcroft, you know, which used to be just over the bridge, that pool there—which is filled in now.

S1: Yes.

S2: Oh yes. And on the plantation pool, that was sliding and ...

S1: So were the winters a lot harder?

S2: Oh a lot harder, yes. As you had frost and snow. I mean in those days the toilet was about thirty yards up the garden so ...

S1: Yes.

S2: You only went when necessary!

[Laughter]

S1: And did you have running water when you were growing up?

S2: Not till, we had a well till about 1938.

S1: Right.

S2: About 1938 we had the water laid on. The mains water. Up until then we had a well on the front, down a little path on the front yard. And that was quite, not too deep, but it had got the old windlass and bucket, metal bucket, on a chain.

S1: Right.

S2: And there was frogs and newts in it.

S1: So did they come up with the water?

S2: At times, yeah. But me granddad always said, oh, if frogs and newts live in it the water's pure.

S1: Right. So did you just drink it as it came out of the well?

S2: Just as it came out, yes.

S1: You didn't boil it.

S2: They filled the bucket into another bucket in the back kitchen but then, of course, they filled the kettle out of that bucket and then they boil that for tea and whatever, you know.

S1: Yeah. So where did you boil the water up for tea?

S2: On an old black lead grate, yeah.

S1: An old range?

S2: An old range, yeah, that's right. Yeah.

S1: And did your mum cook in there as well?

S2: She did all the cooking, yeah. And there was always a dinner and a pudding. There was never just a dinner, it were ... it was a dinner and a pudding. And we had good food. I mean we never ... 'cause me dad kept pigs, during the war especially he kept pigs for hanging on the wall. And he used to have a bit of rabbiting at George Morris's, the farm on Bellamour Corner. A bit of rabbiting there, and you had a bit of rabbiting for Keenan's at Newlands. So there was always a rabbit. And if a pheasant got in the way, we got a pheasant. Which you wasn't supposed to do. My mother used to skin the pheasant and keep the feathers inside in case anybody knew we'd had the pheasant.

S1: Oh right.

S2: Used to hide it, yeah. But, yeah, we lived well actually, you know, before ...

S1: And what about your vegetables, did you grow any?

S2: Well, there was a biggish garden with the cottage and he had ... where the Yates's had their log yard, that Land's Trust

S1: Yeah. Yeah.

S2: ... he had that. We used to dig that. He used to get me helping him to dig that in the first place.

S3: Would he rent that off ...?

S2: He rented off the Parish Land's Trust yes. And then he had another piece of ground of George Morris which was, you know where the lane for Wilma Farm goes up there, there was a three-corner piece there and that was a separate piece.

S1: Right.

S2: And me dad ploughed that and used to grow spuds on that.

S1: How did he plough it?

S2: Well he used to borrow Mr Morris's plough and the horse.

S1: Ah, yeah.

S2: Mr Morris had two horses, a brown and a white one.

S1: Right.

S2: And old George Bentley, the farmhand, he didn't like the white one, it was too active. To ... my dad used always take the white one out because he used to love, you know, a horse with plenty life in it. And he used to plough that. And he used to have the plough the one up on the top of the hill as well.

- S1: Yeah. So what did he grow in there?
- S2: He used to grow his early spuds on the top of the hill because he said there was less chance of frost on the top of the hill.
- S1: Right.
- S2: So he used to grow Arran Pilot up there and Majestic, and his main crop was always Majestic.
- S3: Never bought vegetables.
- S2: Never bought vegetables. And he used to camp his potatoes. You know, put them in a pile of straw then the soil on the top and ...
- S1: And just fetch them when you want them.
- S2: Then open them out after the worst of the winter had gone, you know.
- S1: Right.
- S2: So we never went hungry.
- S1: What would be a typical dinner for you then?
- S2: Er, well, meat. Mr Sergeants from Bromley, he used to come round with a green van to bring the meat round.
- S1: But you had some of your own, you said, as well. Your pigs, your pork.
- S2: Oh, the pig. Well they had the pork when they first killed them, then of course they'd salt the hams and the bacon. So, you know, the dinner was bacon and potatoes and cabbage, and poured the dip on it. 'Cause there was always plenty of dip out of uncured bacon, you know.
- S1: Ah, right. Yeah. But then when you hadn't got your own the butcher came round.
- S2: The butcher ... gets of the butcher, yes. Mr Sergeant. Big chap! About eighteen stone he was.
- S1: How did he come round?
- S2: In a van. He had a green van. I think a chap named Mr Prince took over after Sergeants. Yes. Yeah.
- And there were always a pudding. And people thought it strange, well you thought it strange, didn't you Alma?
- S3: Yeah. [Laughs]
- S2: When we had a dinner ...
- S3: We were more civilised [Laughs].
- S2: ...we used to have a knife and fork and the knives were always like, you can bend the blade. We always had to clean our plate with our knife and have a pudding on the same plate. We never had pudding plates. And people thought it was strange, but that was the system in our house. Never had pudding plates. It was clean your plate ...

S3: Your mother never liked washing up, did she.

S2: Well, no. Well it was labour saving.

S1: Yes. I suppose, I mean, you've got to heat all your water up.

S3: Yes.

S2: Yes, right. Kettle on the fire, you know.

S1: So what ... how many rooms did you actually have in the house?

S2: There was a living room and the parlour. The parlour was for special occasions. You know, my granddad was laid out in the parlour, you know, that was the ...

S1: Right. They did that then

S3: We did that then.

S2: Yeah, it did that. Yeah. There was no chapels of rest in them days. It was always, you know, they laid them out in the parlour.

S1: Right.

S2: The parlour. Then there was a little staircase went up in the corner onto the room above the living room. And, of course, the bedroom floor was the ceiling of the living room, you know. And then there was the other room on the other side where me mum and dad slept, and there was me and me brother in the one bed and then me granddad in the other bed on the other side.

So, we coped quite well.

S1: Yes. And did you have a separate kitchen then or was there ... ?

S2: Just a kitchen at the back of the living room.

S1: Yes.

S2: And that's where, they put the tap in there.

S3: That was tidy.

S2: Tidy.

S1: Oh you had the tap put in ...

S2: That in about 19 ...

S3: They used to call it the back kitchen.

S2: Back kitchen, yeah. In 1938, I think, about the water came in.

S1: I bet that was good wasn't it?

S2: Oh yeah, it was. It was marvellous.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And then we had a safe with the perforated zinc, you know. Just to keep the food in.

S1: Yes. Did you have a slab or anything to keep things cool as well?

S2: Yeah, there was a cold ... a

S2: Like a settler yes.

S3: Settlers they used to call them, didn't they?

S2: Settlers. A settler yeah. It used to keep it cool. And under the sink my granddad used to keep his tobacco. He always had a pipe and he used to smoke Diggers Flake which was in the yellow packet. And it was a ritual with him. Rubbing his tobacco and filling his pipe. But he kept it under the sink because it kept it nice and moist.

S1: Right.

S2: And that was his ... it suited him. That was his system, you know.

S1: So your mum looked after all the house, really, as well as doing all these other extra bits.

S2: Yes. Yeah.

S1: How did she do the washing then if you only had the well at the time?

S2: In the wash house. There was an extension on the end which was just a ...

S3: Like a shed really.

S2: Like a shed really. It's some time in the past, whether there'd been any animals in there I don't know, and you could see where the roof joists had been in the end walls but there was nothing there, just straight up to the roof. And there was a copper in the corner, you know, with old ...

S1: For a fire.

S2: Fire copper. And a big old mangle with a wooden ... big wooden rollers.

S1: Right.

S2: And of course it was, you know, me dad used to ... we used to get to bed half past five to go to work and that was when he used to light the fire in the copper and then washing would start on the Monday morning. And it was all steam and ... I used to hate ... when I used to come from school, Tuesdays was a rotten day because it was all washing hanging out. If it wasn't fit to try outside it was all hanging in the living room, you know.

S1: On the Tuesday or the Monday?

S2: Well, the Monday afternoon and probably into Tuesday as well you see and then it was ...

S1: Where would it hang, round the fire on a ...?

S2: On the wooden ... the three-state ...

S3: Clothes horse.

S1: A clothes horse.

S2: A three-state clothes horse, yeah. It used to hang round there and all steam, ugh! But anyway.

S1: So Monday was wash day.

S2: Washday, yeah. And if it were dry okay it would be outside on the lines. And then if you couldn't get it all done on a ... because we were five in the family there's quite a lot of washing, you know. Mind you, you didn't change your shirt everyday or, you know.

S1: Did you just keep your school uniform all week, what you wore for school, not uniform, but your school clothes.

S2: You used to change, kept them, and then you would change when you come from school, you changed into your play clothes as you called it then.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Then Sunday you did have something a bit better on, you know, for going to...

S3: I think people did dress up more on a Sunday.

S1: Best clothes.

S2: Oh yes. And Sunday afternoon was, in the summer especially, was a walk round the village.

S3: That's right.

S2: Either down the fields past Jane Morris's down to the Railway Inn perhaps.

S1: Yes.

S2: And we'd have a Vimto and a packet of crisps and they'd go in have a drink, you know, and it was used to be... Surprising, they say your memory plays tricks, but the summers seemed endless.

S3: Yes.

S4: Forever.

S2: Forever. You know, nice weather continued ...

S3: But I can remember the very first time that I ever come to Colton, we didn't even know where we were going. There was my sister and myself and we were school children, and we went ... we always used to go walking on a Sunday afternoon, you know. And we were wandering about ...

S1: Just the two of you together?

S3: Just the two of us, yeah. And we walked across the fields, you know, and we come to this village and we thought 'well where are we?' We said to somebody 'what's the name of this place?' And they said Colton. [Laughs] Never heard of it, you know.

When I went home and told me granddad where we'd been he said, 'Did you see the stagecoach?'

[Laughter]

That was a joke, you know, with the stagecoach coming from Colton into Rugeley ... shopping.

S1: So you lived in Rugeley, did you, Alma?

S3: Yes, I was born there.

S1: Yes, born in Rugeley. Yes.

S2: But in the 1930s they had quite a good bus service, the Midland Red and Wheeldon's bus, and I got an idea, whether I'm right, is the Potteries used to run a bus alternating with the Midland Red. The PMT.

S3: PMT. I remember PMT buses.

S2: Yeah. Quite a good service. And it was surprising, the Green bus on a Wednesday used to go through Sheracop Lane, that little narrow, it used to go through there to the market at Uttoxeter. I couldn't believe it.

S3: Well I went through there.

S1: On the Wednesday for the ...

S2: On the Wednesday for the market, for the Uttoxeter Market.

S3: We went through there. When we first got married we used to go with Lilly, you know, from next door, and we used to go to Uttoxeter. And it used to wait for people while they put their coats on at these little cottages en route.

S1: Yes.

S4: They did them days.

S2: Oh they did, yes. There were happy days. I mean, my school days they were quite, I enjoyed most of them, you know. I used to get the stick pretty regular off Mr Broughton.

[Laughter]

But I mean for nothing! I mean, when you was in his class. I mean, we started in the infants, there was a Miss Hamilton—I don't know if Laura would remember Miss Hamilton.

S4: Don't know.

S2: She used to bike from Blithbury she had. Big red-faced girl, well, woman. She was in the infants and then Miss Hedgington, she was teaching the next class up, and eventually she married Miss Jones's brother, Donald. Miss Hedgington did. And then Mr Broughton took the main class. You know, he had like three classes, he did, in his classroom. But, I mean, when you're sitting ... we must be getting close to time, you'd look round and he used to have a little clock in the middle room but you had to look

through that screen to the clock. You'd look around, well it must be about dinner time. 'Come here, I'll tell you when it's time for dinner time.' You'd have the stick for looking at the clock. That's how he was.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Anyway, it didn't stop us looking at the clock, you know, when we thought it was getting close to dinner time. But we had ... it gives you basic discipline, I think, when.... He was very, very strict. I mean when you got to school you'd line up in your classes and you had to put your hands out and he'd come along and inspect your hands and your shoes, see if your shoes was clean.

S1: Right.

S2: And you'd hold your hands out and you had to turn 'em over and he said 'all right'. If not he'd send them to the washroom to wash your hands, you know.

S1: Yes. So how many classrooms were there down there, just the three?

S2: There was three, yeah. Well, there was three classrooms in use. There was one for the infants in the middle, one with Miss Hedginton and then Mr Broughton's. But at the other side there was what they called the north room which was never used as a classroom, no.

S1: Right.

S2: What it was for really, perhaps, is when there was more pupils there, I don't know. 'Cause they used to carry on after eleven year old, you see, at one time. When Sam Jones went to school they stopped there till they left school, you see. So, yeah.

S1: What age would they leave school at that time.

S2: Well I was eleven year old when I left Colton.

S1: You left, and then where did you go then?

S2: Went to Colwich.

S1: To Colwich, yes.

S2: Nichols's bus used to pick us up at 8:30.

S3: That wasn't a very big school really, was it, Colwich.

S2: No.

S1: Was that just for children eleven and upwards?

S2: They'd got an infants part at Colwich for the ... It was a newish building that was. Now we went into the old part, you know. Went into from eleven to fourteen there.

S1: Did you enjoy that as well?

S2: I enjoyed Colwich, yeah. But, you see, Mr Broughton he, there was no curriculum as such, I don't think. He used to teach you what he thought and ... I mean the standard at Colton was, we never learned much more at Colwich really.

S1: Oh really. It was high standard that he taught you then.

S2: He was, yeah. He was, yeah.

S1: So what did you mainly concentrate on, just maths and English and ...?

S2: Maths, English, yeah. Maths and English and ... we used to have Mr Holmes, the rector, used to come across on a Tuesday morning. That was religious instruction, yeah. We used to call him Old Tootlem Book behind his back. Well, we didn't ... But you know ...

S1: Why did you call that?

S2: I don't know. It was just a nickname. Tootlem. Old Tootlem Book.

[Laughter]

He used to wear a homburg hat and the steel-rimmed glasses. But just a funny story about Old Tootlem. During the war they had these delayed-action bombs dropped in Colton, there was a row of five come across. And the Suicide Squad, they called them, the soldiers come to dig them out. Well the one in the middle of the football, there was two in the football pitch: one by the centre line and then another on the corner. And the one in the middle of the football pitch was one of the last. It was the biggest one, the most difficult one. And they'd gone down quite... on a Saturday morning, of course, the kids used to go poking their nose and I went across this Saturday morning about eleven o'clock and were looking round and they'd got a terrific hole they got out. All the shoring up, timbers up, you know. And this one soldier said, he says 'pop and ask the vicar if we can borrow his saw again'. Well, borrow his saw again, well they'd had it before. But, I mean, thinking rationally down there you'd think well they'd have their own tools, wouldn't they.

Anyway, so I goes trotting off down to the rectory. Knocked the door. Old Tootlem come to the door, 'could the soldiers borrow your saw again, sir?' And he looked a bit puzzled, he says 'the saw?' 'Yeah, they said could they borrow the saw again, sir.' So he said 'come with me'. So he used to have a workshop. He did some lovely woodwork, he did. He had a little gantry went across from the rectory to his workshop, over the top there. And he went in there, he's got this beautiful saw. And I put my hand out, he said 'no,' he said 'I'm coming with you'. So he got some brown paper and wrapped this brown paper round the saw and put his hat on. So we come out, we had to come round right by the bridge. Just as we got past the school the soldiers, there were a flat-back lorry. The soldiers come past on the lorry and they were sitting on the back of the lorry, you know. Well they was laughing. They was ... they'd had me, you see.

And I says, 'oh they're going home, sir'. You know, 'cause he'd got the saw under his arm and they'd ... and I realised then as, well I realised after, they'd had me.

S1: What happened then, did he just go home with it?

S2: I said, 'oh sir it looks as if they're going home for their dinner see, sir'. Oh, you know. He probably realises they'd ... because he was a First World War soldier. He knew. He knew what had gone on, you see, he did.

S1: So did you actually go down to the church at all from the school, or was it just that he came to you on a Tuesday morning.

S2: They used to have odd services from the school ... the whole class used to go across, you know.

S1: Right.

S2: I don't remember much about the church services at that time. It was more...

S4: You didn't go to Sunday School?

S2: I did. When Miss Rotchell used to ... Miss Rotchell used to take the Sunday School.

S3: She was a character, wasn't she?

S2: Yeah. In the summertime she used to take us walks on a Sunday afternoon after lesson.

S4: Yeah, I can remember that.

S2: And then she ... mostly in Bellamour Park.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Around the lake or just into the park, you know. Yeah it was ... as I say, in them days the weather always seem nice, you know, for a walk round.

S4: It did.

S2: It did.

S3: Yes. It did, it always seemed ... the Sundays always seemed nice.

S4: Yeah, yeah. They did.

S3: Rose coloured glasses, I suppose.

S2: Yes, yes.

S1: And were there big festivals at the church that the whole village went to? You know, Harvest or Easter? Was it like that?

S2: They used to have—what was that day they used to call it when the church had this, they used to have like little stalls and little, little ...

S3: Garden parties?

S4: The garden fetes.

S2: Garden parties, yes. But that ...

S3: That was lovely, wasn't it. Yeah.

S2: Yeah. Well knowing, it must have been the coronation of George VI there was a party in the village and they ... and there was another one.

S1: What did they do for that?

S2: They had a sports day on the Barcroft, with the children's races ...

S1: Which is the Barcroft?

S2: That's the one just over the bridge, where the path cuts across.

S1: Right. That's called the Barcroft, right.

S2: Yes. And that's where the Barcroft pool was, which was fed out of the Morton brook.

Yeah, they used to have races. And I remember when I was racing and Aubrey Hardcastle, Vic's brother, was just a little bit older than me, and on this race there was a wind-up train set for the first prize and the second prize was a tin car, you know. And I'd got my eye set on this train set and I ran my heart out. Anyway, Aubrey Hardcastle was, it's more or less dead heat, you know. But Fred Hardcastle was the judge.

S4: His dad [Laughs]

S2: So Aubrey won. Well, I was so disappointed. Anyway, I must have had a long face when they give me this tin car, you know. And I remember, Sis Williscroft—do you remember Big Sis?

S4: I do.

S2: She says 'never mind, Nev, going to take us to Rhyl in that, won't you', you know. But it was a big disappointment that was. But, you know, we used to have some good days like that...occasionally.

S1: So who would have bought those prizes then?

S2: I don't know, whether the church or the school, or where the money came from. Or whether somebody, you know, well off had donated them.

S3: But I can remember when I went to school. I started at the infant school at Rugeley and we always had a Christmas present. And it was a nice book or something like that.

S4: Yeah, we always had a Christmas present.

S2: Yes, yeah.

S3: I don't know who used to provide them, you know

S1: No. You don't, I suppose as children. You don't think about it do you?

S3: It was a different tale when I moved to the Catholic school because you didn't get anything like that there, you know.

S1: Oh right.

S2: You had discipline in the Catholic school.

S3: Oh discipline, yes.

S2: Yes, you did.

S3: Nuns teaching you.

S1: How did you, as a family, celebrate Christmas when you were little? Do you remember much about it?

S2: Yeah. Me dad always raised chickens, cockerels and he always used to have ducks. We started off having cockerel for the Christmas dinner but then the regular Christmas was two Aylesbury ducks, two quite plump ducks, you know.

That was a big treat, that was. I mean, during the rest of the year you wouldn't have anything special like that. It were just normal ...

S1: What would have been served up with that?

S2: Potatoes and, you know, probably a few roast, sprouts, you know. Just like a good Christmas dinner, you know. And have plum pudding, you know, Christmas pudding. Yes.

S1: And would that have had little coins in or anything inside it?

S2: No, we never had anything, no. There was no money to spare for coins [Laughs]. I don't think we ever expected anything.

S1: No. I just wondered because some people did and some people didn't.

S2: Not in those days, no. Yes. No, we never expected anything.

S3: 'Cause when I used to do the Christmas puddings when we first got married and Rob, he was gullible, you know, we used to have slip one in—because I didn't like to boil the coins in the pudding.

S1: No.

S3: And we used to slip on in Rob's and he always thought he was lucky because he found it.

S2: He was the lucky one, having the coin. Yeah. Yeah.

S1: So where would your mum have done shopping for, say, clothes or ...?

S2: Rugeley. Rugeley, yes.

S1: Yes.

S2: I think occasionally she went to Uttoxeter because you could get more stuff at Uttoxeter, you know. Especially Elkes's Cakes, they had a big ... it must have been a shop or a stall in the market on the Wednesday. And I know as during the war they used to put Golden Syrup in the cake for sweetener, and as you broke the cake it would come up in strands, the Golden Syrup would do, yeah. It was lovely. Lovely and sweet.

S3: Mind you, your mum used to have groceries delivered from Masons, didn't she.

S2: From Masons, yeah, that's right. Yeah.

S4: I used to shop at Masons when I was first married.

S3: Yes.

S1: Masons in Rugeley?

S2: Masons in Rugeley, yes.

- S3: And they used to deliver
- S2: But Charlie Dilley used to deliver the bread and he also delivered the Sharps, the meal for ... you'd mix with the pig food to feed the pigs.
- S1: At the same time?
- S2: On the cart, yes. Used to have ...
- S4: Was that Co-op, Nev?
- S2: That was Co-op Charlie delivered. And he used to have Indian corn as well for feeding the fowl. He used to bring that Charlie did as well, yeah.
- S4: And then Marian Webb used to come round with the milk.
- S2: With the milk in the can, that's right, and measure it out in theEarly days before Marian started it, Dick Morrel used to come.
- S4: Really? Well I don't remember that.
- S2: No. Dick used to come before the war.
- S1: Dick used to do that, did he?
- S2: Yes.
- S1: With is own milk from the farm?
- S2: With own milk from the farm with a horse and float.
- S3: Because he went to school with your mum.
- S2: 'Cause he went to Colton school, him and his brothers went to Colton school. But just a funny thing about Dick. He come one morning and he'd got a sore throat. He could hardly croak, you know. And mother says, 'You know you want, Dick, you want some sulphur'. So he, you know, come on then like. So she got a piece of paper, put some sulphur in, rolled it up into a tube and blew it down his throat. He nearly choked, you know, he's spluttering.

Anyway, he come the next the morning and I say, 'How's your throat, Dick?' 'Fine.'

[Laughter]

He wouldn't have any more of that.

- S3: Mind you, your mum used to ... this is what Nev's told me. I'm just reminding him, you see. She used to take corns out.
- S2: Oh yes, corns.
- S3: And cut hair on the yard outside.
- S1: Did she?

S2: Oh yes.

S4: She was a woman of many talents.

S3: Yeah, she used to cut the men's hair on the yard outside.

S2: I remember Fred Myatt, he used to live in Lloyds cottages, Neville Myatt's dad. He had a bad corn and so he come up to with this corn ... She used to have a little thing, a little gadget with a very sharp blade at the end. And she used to keep working round and then lift the core out, you know leave a hole. And she used to tip iodine in it.

[Laughter]

Fred ... I remember Fred Myatt, he says 'God strewth almighty missus!'

[Laughter]

But I don't think he had any more corns, he never admitted to them anyway, no.

S1: So would she be paid for doing that?

S2: Oh no, it was just ...

S3: No, just got paid for cutting hair.

S2: For the hair. A packet of fags was the whatsit. Whether it was five woodbines or a few Players whatever.

S1: Did she smoke?

S2: Oh, she chain smoked, yeah. She'd always got a ... in the top of her pinny here, hadn't she?

S3: She died with lung cancer.

S2: But mind you...

S1: I don't people realised that danger then, did they?

S2: No, but when she did know she got lung cancer, she says 'well, I know what's caused it but I enjoyed every one of them'. So, you know, she ... it was no good, you know, mithering about it.

S4: You didn't know in those days, did you really.

S2: No.

S3: Also she used to—if you remember, Nev—she used to do a lot of dressmaking as well.

S2: Well she was a seam... she was a tailoress. She used to work in Rugeley.

S1: Did she train as a tailor?

S2: She trained as a tailor. And she made me dad's wedding suit actually. But...

S1: Where did she work in Rugeley?

S2: I don't know. I can't remember ...

S3: Morris's.

S2: Who?

S3: Morris's. It was Warrilow's afterwards. I know that 'cause you told me that.

S1: Oh right.

S2: Was it Mr Morris was the boss.

S3: He owned it.

S2: He owned it. Oh well, that's who ...

S1: And taught her. She would have learned while she was on the job.

S2: Yeah. Yeah. When I was going to school all my clothes was homemade. You know, they ...

S1: Everybody's were, weren't they?

S2: They were, yes. Yeah.

S3: Hand-me-downs.

S2: Hand-me-downs, yeah. But she couldn't make pullovers because, I mean, my school photograph [Laughs] ...

S1: She didn't knit?

S3: Well, she did, yes.

S2: She did a lot of knitting during the war because Mrs Riley from Bellamour Lodge, she was quite well-to-do—can you remember the Rileys? Anyway, her husband, Old Pop Riley as he was nicknamed, he was a managing director, I think it was Lotus Shoes, one of the big shoe factories in Stafford. They'd got pots of money. Mrs Riley used to organise knitting. The blue wool for the sailors and the brown, the khaki wool for the soldiers and they used to knit balaclavas and scarves and jumpers. So she organised ... I think she was president of the WI or Women's Union.

S1: Oh Mother's Union.

S2: Mother's Union, yeah.

S3: But going back to your pullover you were on about. We've got a picture, Nev's school photograph and its got buttoned, you know, a knitted ...

S1: Like a cardigan almost?

S3: No. Just at the top, buttons there. And there's a hole and it's fastened all funny, you know. But I've got one identical of me! Just the same with a hole and the button. Because we were born in the same year, you see.

- S1: Just the same.
- S3: That's how everybody was.
- S1: And you didn't wear long trousers, I bet, for a while, did you?
- S2: Not till I went to the Colwich school. That was the, you know, the ...
- S4: You did then. You went into long trousers then, yes.
- S2: Went into long trousers when we left ... when we left Colton we went into long trousers, yeah. And you thought you was grown up then, you know. It was really a step up in society. Yes.
- S1: Because you're talking about cold winters but you always wore shorts.
- S2: Always wore shorts, we did yes. And Mr Broughton, I don't know whether he was upset with me, he always ... when you'd got your pullover he always said cut some brown paper out and put a like a brown paper sheet in front and back and its surprising how warm it used to make your jumper.
- S4: Because nothing could go through could it.
- S1: Did you wear a shirt? A vest and shirt?
- S2: A shirt anyway. Not always a vest but a shirt and then we used to have the pullover, you know.
- S3: Got liberty bodice as well.
- S1: Right. That's what the girls had, didn't they, liberty bodices, yes.
- S2: Well at night you only have the one fire in the living room, which would be roaring up the chimney. And me granddad used to like to take the pride of place at front of the fire. He used to burn his knees. He used to keep rubbing his knees 'cause the skin ... [Laughs]. But we always used to, in the winter time, we always kept our jackets on in the house, you know, at night.
- S4: You were hardened, weren't you, because we didn't have central heating and stuff.
- S2: No, we didn't. No.
- S3: No, and I mean the bedrooms, the windows inside used to be coated with ice.
- S4: Frosted up.
- S2: Frosted up, yeah.
- S3: Thin blankets on the bed with holes in.
- S2: Yeah. I mean...
- S3: Chuck a coat on.
- S4: Yeah.

- S3: A lot of people talk about the good old days, but I mean, a lot of them as talk about it didn't live through, you know, but...
- S4: When my granddad King from, my mum's dad, he always used to say 'If anybody tells you about the good old days they weren't'. They weren't good old days.
- S2: They weren't, no. But we didn't realise, did we? We just coped with it and got on ...
- S4: Everybody was in the same ...
- S2: ... and everybody was in the same ...
- S3: And yet I wouldn't have wanted to live in another time, you know. I mean ...
- S1: You enjoyed ...
- S2: We've had the best years, I think.
- S4: Yes.
- S3: Yes.
- S3: Had the best years.
- S2: Yes.
- S1: Coming back to hygiene in the house then. You only had a well when you were little.
- S2: Well for the drinking water.
- S1: Your dad was a miner. So he'd have coming back dirty I suppose.
- S2: Well, no, because from 1929 they had the baths put in at Brereton Colliery. That was one of the first collieries to have the baths. So he would always come home bathed.
- S3: 'Cause your dad was a farmer first, wasn't he.
- S2: Well a farm labourer, yeah.
- S4: Well Laura could remember me dad coming home and having baths. That was ...
- S2: Before 1929. Early days, yeah. Yeah. But, as Alma said, me dad, when he was ... actually he was born wrong side of the blanket and he lived with, Yeomans was the family name, and he went as Alf Yeomans and then the dad died when me dad was twelve. And, of course, there was no social in them days. And he was the eldest lad, and he had to leave school and go to work on the farm to earn a crust, as you might say, you know. So he did that until, I don't know when it would be. Anyway, he was seventeen when his mother died. She's buried in Colton church yard. And in those days the system was the eldest son organised everything. You know, he took charge of the funeral and, virtually organised everything. But there was four sisters, I think it was, and a brother, two brothers.

Anyway, the sisters they got a bit, when he started organising, they said 'Ay, you're nothing to do with us. You're not one of us.' So the balloon went up then. So after the funeral he joined the army and was in the First World War. He went to France. That would be 1917 'cause he ... and then he got gassed when he was out there so he was invalided out then.

S1: Right.

S2: Then they said 'This gassing has effected your lungs you need to get a job in the fresh air.' And they thought he'd gone back to farming, but he went into the pit so...

[Laughter]

S1: That was really fresh air!

S2: That was his fresh-air job.

S3: So he went to your mother's ... his mother's maiden name then was James.

S2: Yes. And you see in those days you had to declare when you got married your status. And he had to say illegitimate and I think that ... so and he changed his name to his mother's maiden name. That's how ... that's why we're James.

And the sad thing was, really, as with some of the sisters he never spoke to them for quite a, well till he died.

S1: Really.

S2: You'd remember Billy Yeomans, wouldn't you? Ghandi. That was his ...

S4: He used to push Bertha about.

S2: Bertha about in the wheelchair. Ah, yeah.

S3: Then there was Connie that went to New Zealand.

S4: I don't remember her.

S3: Matthews.

S2: Connie married Charlie Matthews, yeah. But Ghandi, yes, Billy Yeomans he was a character.

S3: They called him Ghandi!

S2: Ghandi. 'Cause up 'ere, just up 'ere on the other side of the road there was a thatched cottage. That's where the Gregorys lived.

S4: Yeah.

S2: And Bill used to, and Mrs Gregory was a Yeomans, you see, Elsie, Elsie Yeomans but married a Gregory. An old chap she'd married, and he'd long gone. Anyway, Bill lived there and he used to work for George Morris at Bellamour Farm, and at 4:30/5:00 in the morning Bill used to ride down to the village playing mouthorgan.

[Laughter]

And people complained about it so he had to pack that it. But he was a right character. Ghandi.

S3: Never got married, did he?

- S2: Never got married Ghandi, no. Where he got the name Ghandi I don't know. He was a character.
- S1: I'm going to come back to the hygiene then again. He had a bath every day when he was at work, what about you children?
- S2: Well, it wasn't a Saturday night bath. It was when the copper had been on, you know. I mean, you'd have the copper on on a Monday for the washing but if it went on any other time for anything then you'd have a bath as and when there was any hot water.
- S1: Right. Yeah.
- S2: I mean, we never put the kettles on the fire for a bath so you'd have a bath once a week but ..
- S1: Where would you have that?
- S2: In the front room, in the parlour.
- S1: Oh in the parlour, yeah. Not by the fire then?
- S2: Oh no, no, no.
- S1: Was there a fire in the parlour?
- S2: There was a fire but it was only lit at special occasions that was, you see.
- S3: Like Christmas.
- S1: So would you go in there at Christmas, your parlour?
- S2: Oh yes. Oh yes. If you have visitors, well, you had the fire lit and ... yeah. It was a real special occasion to go into the parlour, you know.
- S1: Did you have gifts at Christmas? Did you hang your stocking up or anything?
- S2: Oh yeah. And I know you used to hang a stocking up and you'd have all sorts of games, you know, as long as you got box wrapped up, you know, that was Christmas.
- And you'd have some nuts in the bottom and a new penny, something like ... oh and a sugar mouse. That was a regular thing.
- S1: No fruit?
- S2: Well, no, you might have an apple but, you might but ...
- S3: I used to have an apple and an orange, nuts and fruit.
- S2: I know when I got older, of course when you get to school, you know, as you get older some kids said there's no Santa Clause, you know. And anyway, I kept saying is there Santa, is there. Anyway, mother, one Christmas she says 'Well, you know now as the kids have put you right so we'll just give you the present.' You know instead of having a stocking.

Anyway I was in her bedroom mooching around seeing what she'd bought me, you see. And top of the wardrobe I found this box, it had got a torch in it. One of these chromium-plated torches, and I thought well there's bound to be something more than that, you know, for Christmas. But there wasn't.

S3: Because he knew.

S2: And it was such a let down, I thought I wish I'd have kept my mouth shut, you know, and carried on with hanging the pillow case ... we used to have little pillowcase we used to have to hang up.

S1: Oh did you?

S2: Oh yes! It was magic, you know, waking up on Christmas morning.

S3: Going back to the hygiene though. When I lived with an aunt—because our mother died when we were quite young, you know, and I lived all over the place. But when I lived with these Carolls in Alma Lane and they'd got four boys and on a washday, when she'd finished the washing, if we were about, you know, playing, she'd just—me and me younger cousin—she used to get us and stand us in either the dolly tub or even the boiler! And it was still warm.

S1: And had it had the washing put through it?

S3: Yes, oh yes.

S2: Soda water, won't it...

S3: Oh dear, but yes it was ...

S1: Make the most of it.

S3: Never wasted a drop of the water.

S1: No.

S4: Never wasted nothing, did they?

S3: No.

S2: They didn't waste anything, no. They didn't.

S1: So you had plenty of coal, though, didn't you Nev.

S2: Oh yes, the coal allowance, that's right. Yes. There was always a good fire going, yeah.

S1: Lots of dust?

S2: Dust, yes. And the paraffin lamp and all, if you didn't trim the wicks properly... They used to have a hanging lamp on a hook in the middle of the beam.

S3: Nan had got a funny chimney as well in her cottage, hadn't she?

S2: Yeah, because he used to come over the top for sweeping the chimneys, like a tin sheet across it and you could take it out and get up ...

S3: Because there was the beams, wasn't there.

S2: Beams. But the paraffin lamp, if you didn't trim the wick properly or turned it up to high it'd spiral and go to black. And I know my mother had been to a whist drive somewhere and my granddad was in charge and she come back and everywhere was all cobwebs all round with this. The lamp had spiralled and my granddad had got bloomin' cobwebs on his hair he had.

[Laughter]

He'd just gone, spiralled up and he never notices and it just kept on and on. Yeah.

S1: Where would she have gone to the whist drive? In the village ...

S2: In the Reading Room.

S1: In the Reading Room, yes. So were there lots of things down there?

S2: Yeah. They had whist drives and ...

S4: People drives ...

S2: And dances. Dances.

S3: We used to have a group from Yoxall, hadn't they, that used to come and play. Like a band, you know.

S2: Benny Jackson's. BJ's Rhythm Band and Charlie Robinson was on the piano, Benny on the drums, and ... aye.

S1: So would all ages go, or just the adults.

S2: Well, the teenagers really, you know. Us kids used to go to the ... poke our heads round the door for the dancing, you know. Just to be nosey, but we'd soon be told, you know, it's ten o'clock get lost, sort of thing.

S1: Yeah.

S3: And you must tell them the story about when you shot Vic Hardcastle... or just missed him.

S2: Yeah. When we was teenagers, when Randy Boycott kept the Dun Cow, me and Vic used to go up to the Dun Cow when we was seventeen, sixteen/seventeen. We used to go up the Dun Cow and have half a pint of cider and either old Randy or Miss Boycott as we called her, the lady who'd serve us, at the outdoor place they used to have a little place with a hatch for the outdoor sales. And we'd been up there and had a cider and we come back and me dad—me mother was away at her sister's funeral—me dad had gone playing darts, which was his hobby... that was his hobby playing darts, and my brother had gone out somewhere. Anyway, we was in the living room and, of course, in those days there was, we'd got guns 'cause me dad used to do this bit of rabbitin'.

We'd got these guns in the corner and there's an old gun there as me brother had borrowed off his mate, Porter, Tommy Porter. And it was a real old warn out thing. Anyway, so we were wondering what to do, so in the top drawer we kept... when they'd been out rabbiting they used to chuck all the cartridges out the pocket into the top drawer. So it was all mixed up; there's 12 bore, 410, No 1 bore, all sorts. So we said lets sort these cartridges out.

So sorting out, and I always remember it was a yellow 12-bore cartridge and the brass end had got a ridge in it and had been fast in the breach some time or other—got a ridge in it. And one of us said,
Colton History Society – All Our Stories. *Nev & Alma James*

'well that's no good'. And I says 'oh well try it in gun'. So I went in the corner, got this gun out the corner, put it in, slammed the gun together and with it being our gun the percussion cap, the spring had gone on it so the percussion cap, the pin was still sticking out. So as I slammed the gun together it hit the cap on the cartridge, BANG! And Vic was standing the other side of the table to me. Well, it frightened both of us when the gun went off but after we'd recovered went had a look. Now there was a coat hanging this side, on the beam, it just missed it by only a fraction, and it went through this coat, through the parlour door as made a hole about three inches through. So went through into the parlour and at the back of the parlour my mother's coat was hanging on the back of the parlour door. It had took the shoulders out of this bloomin' coat, me mother's coat on the back door. Then it went along the wall, took the wallpaper off, shredded the curtains and took the window out in the front room!

Anyway, we was just ...

S1: You must have been totally shocked at that.

S2: Terrified. We thought well what's ... how am I going answer to this, you see. Anyway, when my brother come in, Kev said oh blimey, oh ... Anyway, he said I'll have to put something in this, you know, we'll patch it up. And anyway, he says, 'you go to bed' he says, 'when my dad come's in I'll put you right'. Anyway, I lay in bed listening, 'cause you hear ever so plain through them ceilings. I lay in bed listening and me dad come in and me brother says 'Aye, come and look at this' he said, 'our kid nearly shot young Vic, look at this'. And I thought 'ooh, he's putting me right!' You know. And me dad ... anyway the next morning my brother put a piece of ... let a piece of wood into this hole but it had splintered the door at the back. And I don't think he ever noticed the shoulders had been tufted out of me mother's coat. Anyway we ruck all the curtains up and put a new pane of glass in the... and put some varnish on the door. They said, 'well leave the door open a bit' so when your mother come ... me mother come back the day after. So when she wants to go in the parlour she won't notice if the door's open. Anyway, it happened. She went in the parlour, put her hand on the door, and she went 'What's this?' The varnish was still wet, you see. Oh dear the balloon went up. But anyway, I didn't have a good hiding which I was expecting. But mind you, I was about sixteen or seventeen so I had got past the good hiding stage really.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But anyway the upshot was, as a few days later mother went down to Gerty Uptons, to the shop, and she put her coat on ...

S3: She was sitting there for an hour wasn't she ...

S1: Oh you hadn't told her that.

S2: No, no. I hadn't told her that. Well, we didn't notice actually as the coat was ... it was how it was hanging. It had just gone throughstuff in the shoulders. Anyway, she went down and Gerty said 'What's up with your coat I've?'

S4: Vic visits him quite often, you know. He comes and sits and has a natter with him, and he'd always reminding him about this.

S2: I nearly shot him, yeah. Well, it could have been a tragedy. It could have been, you know. But me mother said get rid of all them guns. She couldn't bare to have a gun in the house. She couldn't, no.

S3: I don't like guns.

S2: Well, she always said guns are dangerous whether they're loaded or unloaded or whatever. So we did get rid of them.

- S1: Was the discipline quite strict as you grew up in your family? I mean, you said it was at school very strict with Mr Broughton.
- S2: Very strict, yeah.
- S1: And at home?
- S2: At home? Well, the only real good hiding I had was off me mother for smokin'. How it happened was Bruce Molineux used to live in the ...
- S4: I know Bruce Molineux.
- S3: I knew him.
- S2: Aye, he used to live in the ... when they did the flats in the Coachman's Walk, as it was known, they did some flats up. Old Nelson Thorns lived there and Molineux's come to live there from Colwich.

Anyway, we used to like a smoke, Bruce and me and one or two of the lads. Anyway Bruce come one day, he says 'look what I got'. He'd got some Craven 'A', them with the red packet with the black cat on. He says, c'mon we'll have a smoke. So off we goes down the village. Eleanor Hardcastle was there, 'where you going?' 'Going for a smoke.' 'Can I come have a smoke?' 'No, you're not having a smoke.' So sent Eleanor off.

Anyway, went up Webb's Lane, there was a barn up there, Webb's Lane. So me and Bruce goes in this barn, lit up, was puffing away merrily, you know. Next thing was the barn door opened, me mother was there. You know them sticks in Webbs Lane, they was a whippy sticks there. She'd got one of them. She didn't half lace me, I tell you. For smoking.

- S3: 'Cause Eleanor had told her, hadn't she?
- S2: Elena, 'cause we ... Eleanor had gone and tell me mother we were going into the barn on Webs Lane for a smoke. So she had her own back, Elena did. But she didn't half lace me. To stop me smoking. I mean, so ...
- S3: You did do though. You never smoked.
- S2: No, it didn't. No it wasn't to do with that. The reason I stopped smoking was because when we was 'tater picking at Colliers farm ... we'd moved to Colliers from Frank Bull's the ... where's the reclamation place?
- S1: The Cawarden.
- S2: The Cawarden Spring. We moved from there because Cawarden paid half a crown a day for 'tater picking, and we'd gone to Colliers because he paid three shilling a day.

Anyway, we'd been and had ... come on the dray to the farm. Had our dinner in the barn. So in different one we'd got fags. I was the one without a fag. There was an old Irish chap, Oliver, he used to sleep in the Barn behind the cow stalls and ...

- S1: Up at Colliers?
- S2: Up at Colliers, yes. And that's when Haywood's dad old George Collier kept it then.

S1: How old were you at this point?

S2: We were still going to school. We would be about twelve. About twelve.

And Old Oliver says, 'do you want a smoke lad?' I said, yeah I do, aye, so he said I'll give you a smoke. And he used to smoke a pipe, a clay pipe. And he got a short ... one as the stale had broke off. He rubbed some twist up, put it in his pipe and give me this ... lit it up 'here you are'. Well, I was showing off like Billy-O. Puff, puff, puff, puff, puff. And got on this dray to go back to the field. Well, I thought I was going to die. I was wishing to die. I felt so ill. I fetched all my dinner back. I felt horrible, but I never smoked again.

S3: Never, ever.

S1: And he didn't do it for that reason?

S2: No. No, he just wanted to give me a smoke but it was ... it did me good really but, oh dear, didn't I wish to die that day. Terrible.

S3: But your mum used to hit you with the toasting fork.

S2: Oh... hit me and me brother, yes, if we'd done anything.

S1: On your legs or on your hands?

S2: On our bum. On our backside, yeah.

S1: Oh your bum, yeah.

S2: One of those wire toasting forks, them long ones with twisted wire, you know, with the four prongs on the end. But we used to ... if we'd done anything wrong, you know, she used to go for this toasting fork. And we'd say, come 'ere Paddy, 'cause we'd got a dog called Paddy, you know. And she used to put the dog outside. [Laughs] Then she'd belt us.

Just annoying her really. That's why she used to give us the toasting fork for.

S1: Did you used to be out playing games a lot rather than in the house?

S2: Oh we did, yeah. Yeah. Come in at dark and ...

S4: I think everybody did, didn't they.

S2: ... in the village, I mean, there was gangs of lads and girls and you'd have the tig in the string, you know, tig. Running up and down the village and ...

S1: And skipping, and hopscotch and ...

S2: We used to have the big long rope for skipping, you know. Mind you, in the winter nights, I mean, we used to play pin a button on some of the houses.

S1: Did you?

S2: Yeah, aye. Tap, tap, tap.

S4: I think we all did, didn't we.

S2: Yeah.

S3: I did.

S2: It was harmless. It was harmless really, weren't it you know. It just annoyed people, you know.

S4: Yeah

S3: Knock the door and run away.

S2: Yeah. When you say that, knock the door and run away. I know me and Vic and Aubrey used to play, me and Vic mostly used to play together, you know, up at, well down the fields. And I'd been up there. We'd had a bit of a fall out this one day and I'd left Hardcastle's and went down the road. And thought, 'no, I'm not going to go', you know. So I went back and I picked this big brick end up and I threw it at their door. Their back door was straight across. So I heaved this big brick, BANG, it nearly knocked the door down. And I run off down the road, you know. Anyway, later in the day, a couple of hours after I thought what am I going to do, you know. Well, I'll go and see if they're going to play. So I went back, oh they don't know, you know. Anyway, knocked on the door, Mrs Hardcastle come. She looked at me, she says 'you hard-faced little bugger'. She knew who threw this ...

S1: Had it damaged the door?

S2: No. Well it was an old tumbled-down place anyway, you know.

S3: A shack!

S2: It was a shack, yes. They brought four kids up in there, you know. It was just the two bedrooms. But that's how it was in those days, wasn't it. Yes.

S3: Didn't you say—I'm just reminding him...

S2: Yes, I know.

S3: You know the patch that was where Sam and Milly, where those houses were built...

S2: Yes, Nelson Thorns lived.

S3: They used to sell chips ...

S2: Fish.

S3: Fish.

S2: Mrs Thorns used to, in the winter, used to fry fish in the end place. She used to have one of them stoves with the loose plates on, you know. Quite a big stove. She used to fry fish in the winter time and used to make ice cream in this end place in the summer time. And this Edgar and Kathy, the two children, they were teenagers like in this time, they had a tandem with the little sidecar on. And they used to go round with the ice cream, used to be one of those tubs with dry ice in. They used to round selling the ice cream in the summer and selling fish in a basket—they used to have a basket for the fish—in the winter time.

But with the fish...

S3: They wouldn't allow that now, would they.

S2: With the fish, though, Edgar used to, well both used to ... 'Oh there's so many fish here'. 'Oh yeah, well so and so's dog had one when we was at some...'. They used to knick the money off one or two of them.

But, funny thing, Mrs Thorn—she was a quite a stiff lady you know—and old Nelson he had a big walrus moustache, and he was a council worker, roadside sweep, you know. Anyway, us kids used to call him 'Shuffly bum' the way he used to walk, you know, he used to walk with a shuffle.

Anyway, Mrs Thorn's told me mother once, she says 'Nelson's alright, he's very nice' she says, 'but he does like kissing'.

[Laughter]

So she didn't like that too much. No, you could understand that mind you. Ah dear.

S1: So, was it a nice place to grow up do you think, looking back?

S2: Oh yeah, I enjoyed it, yeah. It was a lovely place. And as long as you kept, you know, didn't do any vandalism, you know, you was alright. Because during the war Old Jack Parker was the local, was the special constable for the village.

S1: Right.

S3: Was he?

S2: Old Jack was, yeah. And ...

S1: So what did he do then?

S3: He was the fruit and veg man as well, won't he.

S2: Yeah. Have you seen the pictures in Rugeley, old Rugeley about the big lorry parked in the market place. There's a big green lorry parked in the market place, that's Jack Parker's lorry and he used to park it up at his place where Jim Bailey lives now. But in the war they made him special constable. He didn't have a uniform but he had one of them bands with the black and white things round there, you know.

S1: So what would he do as a special constable then in the village?

S2: Well, very little actually! It was just a bit of status for him I think, you know. He'd probably walk around, you know, not too far, 'cause he wasn't built for speed, was he Old Jack.

S3: I don't suppose there'd be much order to keep would there in Colton.

S2: No, no.

S1: And did everybody have their own air-raid shelters? How did it work if there was...?

S2: No, no. I don't know ... we had one. My dad dug one. My dad dug one in the bank, timbered it up and covered it up and when the siren first went about two o'clock in the morning, well they got us out of bed and across to the air-raid shelter. Candle in a jar, you know. Anyway my granddad wouldn't come in. He stood in the yard and lit his pipe. Well my mother went spare! 'Dad come put that pipe out', you

Colton History Society – All Our Stories.

Nev & Alma James

know. He says alright. She says, 'They can see a fag from up there you know!' He wouldn't put his pipe out, no. He used to stand on the yard But anyway after three or four times of this happening, you know, and no bombs at that time. So we just used to, you know, ignore it virtually.

S3: Umm.

S1: Where did the siren go?

S2: Rugeley. We could hear it quite plain in Colton, yes. I think it was in the Town Hall tower, I think.

S1: So did it affect you the war an awful lot as children or did you just get on with growing up really?

S2: We just got on with growing up. And it was just, war time was just the excitement at times you know. 'Cause the airfield was at Hixon, you know. The Wellingtons, OT, operations training unit at Hixon and of course, when they train there's quite a lot of crashes round about Hixon, at Newton and round about. And we used to go on the crash sites picking the bullets up, you know. And there had three bullets, they used to be in a chain, you know, a belt. There was a double and a single and you'd put 'em together and push the bullet through to make the hinge. And we used to collect all these bullets and I'd got a belt about a yard long and, of course, it was in the shed. My mother found them and so my brother at that time worked in Stafford—he used to bike to Stafford to the uni—and she made him take this bullets in a bag and chuck up in the river at Wolseley bridge and they were found years and years later, you know, that belt of bullets 'cause Len Able told me about that.

S3: Oh yes, because he lived there didn't he. Yes.

S2: And I tell you what you used to happen as well. In the bullets there was cordite, a little strands of yellow cord, cordite. And you used to take the bullet out, take the cord out...now Aubrey Hardcastle worked at the tin works at Trent Valley...

S2: And he used to get a piece of steel pipe, weld the one end up. He used to fill it with cordite then hammer a wooden bung in the other end. Then up at the Brakely corner there was a wood just up the field there, just past them buildings there now, there was a wood there, a bit of a pit hole. Make a bit of a fire there with some bricks. Lay this thing across the top then take cover. Almighty explosion.... You know, silly things like that, really silly, but it was just a bit of excitement you know.

S1: A bit of fun, yeah. Of course you had evacuees. Did you have one with your...?

S2: We didn't, no. Well there was no room actually. But there were some across the road from us at Bill Causer's, in the houses. The Jewises they were. There was Michael and, what was his ... Frank. Frank Jewis and Michael.

S3: My mum had one.

S2: Your mum had one? Oh Marcus!

S3: Marcus Allen.

S2: Marcus Allen. Dark-haired lad, he was, yeah. Aye, Marcus Allen.

S1: And of course you had soldiers down...

S2: There was soldiers in Colton House and in Aspley House, and at one time there was ...

S1: Aspley House as well?

- S2: Aspley House as well, yeah. And they had 'em under canvas in the school field and in Bellamour Park.
- S1: So why were they placed here particularly? Do you know why they chose Colton?
- S2: I think they did a bit of training and then...
- S1: At Hixon...
- S2: ...they were in transit. They didn't stop...each regiment didn't stop all that long.
- S1: Right.
- S2: I know there was, I think it was the RAFC who got big lorries, big transporters and ambulances and all the lot, and they were in the village for a while. And then later on the ones that were under canvas, I know they were there one day, next day they'd gone! Just that quick, you know.
- S1: Yeah.
- S2: I know, they'd got the big bell tents in the school field and us kids used to go there. We used to climb up the guide ropes up the top and then slide down the canvas, aye.
- S3: Wasn't Harry Secombe stationed ...
- S2: Bellamour Park he was, yes. That's where somebody shot, let the gun off and he went through the tent didn't he.
- S3: Wasn't Spike Milligan there as well.
- S2: Spike Milligan was with him as well. That's right, yeah. But when Dunkirk took place that Mrs Riley, as I mentioned, she organised collecting clothes round the village and, you know, any spare clothes, pullovers, jackets, trousers...
- S1: I bet there wasn't a lot was there?
- S3: No, people hadn't got much had they.
- S2: People, they brought the soldiers to the grammar school for showers and change of clothes and just to get sorted, you know. Yeah it was ...
- S1: Did you have many holidays, Nev, when you were growing up?
- S2: No. No. I main thing was the annual trip, school trip to Rhyl which was with Nichols's bus. That was the one. Sorry! From the train, we used to have a coach. We used to walk across the fields to the Trent Valley station and then there used to be a coach for Cannock, Cheslyn Hay, different villages ...
- S1: On the train?
- S2: We had coaches yeah.
- S1: Coaches.
- S2: Then, that was the annual outing to Rhyl. But as I say, it was later on when Nichols used to take a coach load there.

S1: Yeah.

S2: We used to save our pennies.

S3: Did you ever go on the Working Men's Club?

S2: Only in later years.

S3: Because we used to go on that, from Rugeley that was and that was run by the Working Men's Club and it was free.

S4: Yeah.

S1: So you lived...

S2: That was a big event that was.

S3: That stopped that during the war, didn't they.

S2: They did yeah.

S3: That stopped it during the war.

S1: Then you, how did you meet your future wife then?

S2: At my brother's wedding. They had, because he married a Brereton girl and they had the reception at the—what's the name of that pub?

S3: The Talbot.

S2: The Talbot pub. In there ...

S3: And I used to work with Lilly, that was the one that married Nev's brother, I used to work with her sister. And I was invited to the evening at the Talbot, you know, when we come home from work. That's where I met Nev.

S2: So at the ... after the reception I'd say there was no entertainment going on, was there.

S3: No. no.

S2: Just talking. So I said to her 'You fancy going to the pictures?' So the buses ran past the door so we went on the bus and I took her to Lichfield. And of course I was committed then, wasn't I.

S3: But he'd got his two friends with him. I knew them, you know. I didn't know Nev up to that time, but I knew the other two. But I ended up with Nev.

S4: A good catch!

S1: Yes. Was there a picture house in Rugeley?

S2: They had the Plaza, yes. Oh there was, yeah.

S1: But you chose to go to Lichfield?

S2: Well, it was on the bus...

S3: I think he was showing off!

S2: I don't think I seen the Rugeley... Whatever, anyway I took her to Lichfield. Yeah, I was showing off. A bit special, flashing me money about.

S1: So were you courting for long?

S2: Two years, yeah.

S1: And then? Lived in Colton always did you as a married couple?

S2: When we got married. We got married at Rugeley church and then we had the reception in the Reading Room.

S3: 1951 that was. March 1951.

S2: And we went to live at Bank House. On the end piece.

S3: Like a lean-to really.

S2: Rita Duncan and Alec lived there just before us. They lived there for a short while. It was a bit basic wasn't it.

S3: Oh very basic.

S2: Very basic.

S3: But we were on our own and that...

S2: We were on our own anyway, that was the main thing you know.

S3: But we should have shared Mrs Eaton's kitchen. It sort of...

S2: Up the pass, along passage.

S3: ...there was a door that went into the passage and she'd got only a little kitchen and I was really expected to use their kitchen. I didn't like to. And we'd got the main room and then the front room which was unusable because it was condemned really. And the ceiling you could see the rafters in the ceiling, you know. It was tumbled down really.

S2: It was yeah.

S3: So I had, there was a scrub-top table in there, and I had a bowl on it and a bucket to put the water in when I washed up and that was my kitchen. And I cooked on the fire...

S2: And the flames...there were no oven cheeks on the fire.

S3: That was broken.

S2: The fire used to come through straight into the oven.

S3: Yes, but we lived there for six months, didn't we, and then we went into the half of the cottage where Lilly and Jim lived, you know, in Hollow Lane.

S1: Right.

S4: Yes, I remember.

S3: Where O'Brians live, you know. And we had half the cottage each. And we'd got our own kitchens and main room and two bedrooms and the stairs went up the middle and we shared the stairs.

S2: Shared the stairs. Yeah.

S3: And a bucket lavatory in the yard.

S2: Yeah, yeah.

S1: Was it, yes.

S4: Which everybody had, didn't they.

S2: They did, yeah.

S3: But you didn't expect anything else.

S2: We didn't.

S1: So did they get emptied?

S3: No, well Nev used to empty it to start with and then they started having the man coming round with the ...

S2: The wagon come round ...

S3: ...wagon and they emptied it.

S2: ... and they used to empty it, yes. The council people.

S3: But it used to go in the garden.

S1: Did it?

S3: Big hole in the garden.

S4: My dad used to dig a hole in the garden for ours.

S2: Yes. Yeah.

S3: Because it was a big difference for me because I lived in a...I was born and brought up in a council house in Rugeley, which, it hadn't got hot water but it had got running water and it had also got a flush toilet and a bathroom, but only with a cold tap. You had to heat the water in the boiler and put it into the bath. So that was a bit of a shock to me but I didn't mind.

S1: You were in love.

S2: Oh...

S3: No, I enjoyed it. It was nice.

S1: And you've lived in Colton ever since.

S2: No, not ever since. No we had a break when...

S3: Well we were getting tight for room, weren't we, really.

S2: Yeah, really, yeah.

S3: We'd got Linda and Rob.

S2: Then Rob yeah.

S3: We got a house in Rugeley.

S2: We got a house in Rugeley in Arch... in a... Well actually what happened with working the pit, I asked the manager if there was a chance of a house at one of the colliery houses. Anyway this one came up by the crossings and it was mine that was, he said yes you can have it. But then a chap in Arch Street, he used to have some cattle up in Brereton—he was a Brereton chap—and he said will you do me a ... he said well you've seen the manager, he was agree to a swap if I'd swap. So this house that I'd got at the colliery house, he had that and I had his house in Arch Street and that's what brought us... And it was handy, with not having any transport, close to the town. We were there two years.

S3: But we come back after Nev's mother died, we built the bungalow in the garden. That's nearly 40 years ago.

S1: Yes.

S2: Yeah.

S1: So when ...

S3: So we've been back that long you know.

S1: So what age did you go down the mine?

S2: Fourteen.

S1: Fourteen. No age is it.

S2: Not really. But thing is that was the norm.

S4: My dad went when he was 13 because he was older than you and ...

S2: Aye yes.

S3: when he went in.

S2: Tiger. Always went as...their dad went as Tiger. Lovely chap Tiger was. I used to spend most of my childhood when I was a nipper at their house. Yeah. And I remember your dad, he used to play about with us and he used get his falsies and drop 'em forward.And I used to be fascinated with this, you

know, 'cause he... and he said, do want yours to do it. And I said 'yes'. And he got his knife and he said 'do want me...'. I says 'yes', and I was willing for him to ...

S1: Cut your teeth.

S2: To get like his, yeah.

S3: When we first got married and I come to live in Colton there was only Miss Williscroft's shop and Mrs Upton had got her shop and there was hardly anything in it.

S2: And she was short of cash, wasn't she, Mrs Upton.

S3: She couldn't afford to get the stock in, you know. She used to have it from Willis's at Rugeley.

S4: Yeah, I remember Willis's.

S1: Different times weren't there?

S2: They were

S1: Mind you, you at least you did have some shops in those days.

S3: Oh yes.

S2: And Miss Williscroft, she used to have all sorts of things. Anything, laces, torch batteries, anything.

S3: Everything, she sold.

S2: Anything she'd sell there.

S3: I always remember going in there once and there was a person in front of me—I daren't say any names—and she was doing her shopping and I was standing waiting, and then I saw this person put this jar of jam in her bag you see. So...

S2: But Miss Williscroft had obviously gone to the back hadn't she because she had...

S3: Yes, she'd gone into the other room to get something that she'd asked for. And I thought 'Ohhh' like this. Anyway, she came back Miss Williscroft did and she was reckoning her stuff up and she says, 'And so much for the jam that you put in your bag.' She'd got a mirror and she could see.

S1: See her.

S4: I remember when once when I stayed, when her eyesight had gone real bad...

S2: She'd have a shade, hadn't.

S4: He was only like four or five and he'd gone in there with his bit of money for ... and he said to her 'how much are the Maltesers?' And she'd said so much, and he says 'well I'll have some'. But what he'd done, she'd got a box and separate bag and he'd, course he was talking about the box and he took the box and brought the box home. She didn't know no different, you see. So I took him back. I says no, you won't get all them for the money you had.

[Laughter]

S4: He didn't know and she didn't know.

S2: No.

S4: And I took him back and it was explained and we swapped them for the smaller bag or whatever it was.

S1: Anyway, now is there anything else you'd like to tell us at all. I think you've told us...

S2: During the war that Mrs Riley I keep coming back to. She ran a canteen for the soldiers.

S1: Right.

S2: In the Reading Room. And they used to do beans on toast. She used to have an allowance of chocolate, teas, coffees and whatever, you know, for them. And my mother used to help out. Well a lot of the local women used to help out there. And I know, I used to go down at night, it was winter time, I used to go down at night to come back with my mother. And I went in there once, and Mrs Riley, I don't know whether it was because she'd got no lads, used to spoil me really in a way. She'd either slip me a little bar of chocolate. And one time she said, 'would you like some beans on toast?' I said, 'I've never had beans'. We'd never had beans. It was an American thing this beans on toast. So she said, 'sit you there' and she put me a round of beans on toast and I loved them. They were lovely. That was my first taste of beans and I liked it.

S3: Yeah, we never had anything like that, you know, when we were children.

S2: The Reading Room they'd got that stove in the middle and a fireplace on the other side and it was a comfy little room really at that time.

S3: Yeah, we had our wedding reception there.

S2: They made a couch in the corner for the serving in that corner.

S1: Well, thank you ever so much both you for this. That's lovely. I'm going to switch this off.



World War II Crash Landing & Bomb Disposal



Colton History Society

All Our Stories



Nev James

Ronald Turner Crash Landing 1944 story

Nev James.

S1: Marion Vernon
S2: Nev James

S1: This recording is being made for Colton History Society on Thursday, 22 October 2009 by Nev James and Marion Vernon.

The following request was received via the History Society website on 27 September 2009 from Mr Gary Shaw of Sheffield.

The message reads:

“On the 20th of July, 1944, my father-in-law Flight Sergeant Ronald Turner we flying from RAF Hixon when the aircraft number DK280 developed a fault and crash landed in a field next to Boughey Hall Farm. He is now 89 years of age and wondered if there are any records of this or photographs in your archives.”

So Nev, would you like to recount your memories of that day.

S2: Yeah. Of course, big event in the village and the word soon went round there was a plane as had landed behind Boughey Hall Farm, and of course the kids and some of the grown-ups converged on it. And this plane had come down ... there was a bit of a cart on the edge side, Web's farm track and when we got there, he said he come, it like belly-landed and there was two blokes in RAF uniform and they were talking to the, quite a few grown-ups—I can't remember the grown-ups. I remember one grown-up was Harry Shipley.

And they were saying as they'd run out of fuel. The pilot, the pilot I thought said he'd run out of fuel and he'd put down and he wanted a phone. 'Where's nearest phone?' And they said up the village by the war memorial and the first thing he said was 'are there any police about as can look after While we get the phone?' So Harry Shipley steps forward and said, 'Home guard here', and they said, 'well will you look after the plane while we go and phone and explain what's happened?'

And so Harry took charge of the plane. But the kids from the village were all over it. I was as bad the others probably, but a lot of them were sitting along the fuselage and it had landed on its belly, ripped a lot of the coating underneath it, it was all shredded. And I grabbed a piece of this partly torn off on the bottom. Because there was no wheels. There was no wheels, whether the wheels had folded or what, or whether he just belly landed. But I got a piece, ripped a piece of this stuff off the bottom for a souvenir, and a lot of the other kids did the same.

Oh they were sitting along the fuselage, bouncing up and down, rocking it like rocking horse.

S1: You couldn't get inside it?

S2: No, couldn't get inside it. I couldn't say whether it was a closed cockpit or an open cockpit. I don't think it was an open cockpit but ... Apparently they said—I was earwiggling there—they said it was a German plane that had been captured in North Africa, in the Middle East, and there was quite an interesting modification, or alterations on it from

One of the things I can recall it was been modified to make it look like an inline engine, the front end. How, whether it was a regular engine or what, it had been streamlined at the front end. And

they were doing some, checking it out to see what ... it seemed to take the eye of the RAF people. And I don't know whether the chap as he took off without fuel whether he'd get ... but he'd ... perhaps he ended up as a corporal or something or an LAC.

But, yeah, and of course after all the excitement it just fizzled out and it was fetched back. But I didn't know at the time it had come from Hixon. We just didn't know where it had come from but apparently it had come from Hixon. And I kept my souvenir for a bit with other things, you know, other collectibles, and where it went goodness only knows.

But it's strange, a lot of the small—it was a smallish plane, single engine—a lot of smaller planes had like a canvas or linen and rope on to stretch it out on the framework. This had got like a cardboard plastic. You know how the milk cartons are? They're like a, not the plastics ones, but the cardboard ones with the coating on.

S1: Yes. Like a wax ...

S2: Like a waxing, yeah. Whether they first development of plastic or whatever, but it was quite tough. You could rip it once it had been started like that had. You could rip pieces off it. But it was a funny skin, that was, you know. Whether that was something as they wanted to look at particularly I don't know. Strange. I'd mentioned to one or two. Now whether anybody else, somebody like Les Deval or Les Martin, you know, whether they can remember it. I never spoke to them about it to be honest but now it's come up I'll probably ask Les.

S1: What colour was it? It wasn't camouflage painted or anything?

S2: Well it could have been. Well it was like a grey or dark colouring anyway. It wasn't a light colour.

S1: No.

S2: And I don't ... it must have had the RAF roundels on it, you know, flying about there. But that was details we never looked particularly, you know. It just ... it was a big event at the time really, you know.

S1: Yes. About how big would it be? Sort of how many paces would it have been?

S2: I would think about 20ft I should think or something like that. About the length of this room; probably 20ft I should think...

S1: Yes. Looking back it's hard to remember.

S2: ... from one end to the other. But the belly seemed to be, a rounded belly then the fuselage tapered off up towards the tail plane. But it wasn't a big plane by any means.

S1: And did they come back the two RAF men?

S2: I can't recall them coming back, no. Once we'd got our souvenirs and you know, we ...

S1: What that home guard fella do while you were ...

S2: He did nothing, Harry did. He just stood there talking to the other people as had gathered round, you know. I mean, he was in charge of the plane ...

S1: He didn't realise that the kiddies were taking it off.

- S2: Well, I think he did but he ...
There was nobody took off with it, so he'd probably done his job you know. But it was ...
- S1: Was he a local character?
- S2: Harry was. He was Maureen Shipley's dad. Maureen Dicks's dad, aye. But I don't know whether Maureen would remember it, I don't think. I don't know whether she was born then. I don't know.
- S3: She'd be a bit young then.
- S2: A bit young then, I think, Maureen would be, yeah. But ay, I say, nothing official was ever put in ... I don't think it was even in the local paper, The Rugeley Times.
- S1: Right.
- S3: They wouldn't have printed it, would they.
- S2: Perhaps not during war time, perhaps no. But they wouldn't have much detail about it.

But as I say, the interesting thing to me was it was German plane, it was a German plane which they'd brought from Middle East somewhere and they were doing tests on it or whatever, examining it.

But why he took it off with no petrol, no fuel, I don't know. He'd look ?? [08:05] of '89.
- S1: Thanks very much Nev.

All Our Stories

With acknowledgements and thanks to all of those who
shared their memories with us

Barbara Kendrick

Lynn Collins

Colin Norman

Maureen Dix

David Bradbury

Nev & Alma James

Dorothy Bradbury

Nona Goring

Gwen Johnson

Olive & Frank Ballard

Harry Bull

Peggy Banister

Jack & Irene Brown

Peggy Peat

Keith & Hilda Williscroft

Ruth Williams

Laura Hodgkiss

Sam & Pete Jones

Les Kendrick

Sheila Bergin

Lilian Redmond

Stella & Malc Williscroft

Thanks also to the project team
for all of their hard work & efforts in producing

All Our Stories

Bev Croft

Marion Vernon

Bill Brown

Maureen Dix

Gill Sykes

Nona Goring

John Garstone

Philip Charles

Liz Craddock

Shirley Carter





Colton History Society: All Our Stories: April 2014