

C.B.

This is an interview with Iris Bedell on the 22nd of the first 2009 in Hawarden. Iris, could you first of all tell me where you were born and some of your background, and parents and so on?

I.B.

I was born in Rhydymwyn in a place called Glyn Hyfred, which is outside the Valley Works Gates. And I lived there for 7 years, before moving down to the Post Office in Rhydymwyn.

C.B.

So it was in 1929 you were born was it?

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

And what did your Parents do?

I.B.

My father was a Joiner come Builder, until the First World War when he was called up and he was Grade 3 or D or something and he was sent to Cammell Lairds not into the services and he was there for four years as a ships carpenter.

C.B.

So did he work when you were born, in the period when you were born, because there was the Great Depression then wasn't there, 1929 through the early thirties?

C.B.

Yes, although by this time he'd be, what twenty nine?, by twenty nine he'd already five children. So that must have been quite difficult. Four girls and a boy, but his parents lived in the farm which is also opposite the Valley Works. So I think there was some help to him.

C.B.

Were you the oldest or youngest?

I.B.

Youngest, the first one was born in 1919, just after the War you see when he came back from Cammell Lairds.

C.B.

So you were the spoilt one who had all the goodies?

I.B.

So they tell me.

C.B.

... and you got the fourth use of the clothes as you were youngest and fourth sister?

I.B.

No! We never had hand me downs, ever. No. my mother was a very good lady. She was a good sewer and she would never let us have hand me downs.

C.B.

OK, it was not a totally serious question and so you lived in the same place in Rhydymwyn from when you were born, up until the war period?

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

...and can you recall the days before the war? Can you recall the good times bad times so on?

I.B.

Before the war. That was nine. I was nine wasn't I? I'd just been to primary school in the village, where my uncle was the Headmaster fortunately and I had a very, very happy childhood.

C.B.

And what was his name, the headmaster of the school?

I.B.

Mr. Brown.

C.B.

I just mentioned that because Alan has been looking through some records of births, school, at the school.

I.B.

... don't remember Mr. Brown. I understand.

C.B.

...and that was a National School was it?

I.B.

I don't know, it was Rhydymwyn C.P. School as I recall.

C.B.

The reason I ask the question was that between, so would you go there between the years of five to when you left school?

I.B.

No, just say eleven, we were out at eleven plus and all my brothers and sisters. We did, we passed and then to the Grammar School in Mold. The Alun School as it was then.

C.B.

OK. So that would have been in the war years for you?

I.B.

Yes it was in the war years for me.

C.B.

....but I.B. the other ones went before the war.

I.B.

Yes I had a sister who was gone in nineteen thirty I think and she was born in 1919 so she be ten then wouldn't she, in 1930?

C.B.

So did you go on the train?

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

Of course there was a station there wasn't there?

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

.....and did you also take meals with you or did you eat at school?

I.B.

No. we had school dinners. I think my elder sisters took a meal, because my father had to pay for those two in those days, for their education. But when my next sister went, the third one, it was free. And it was free for me as well.

C.B.

OK, there's someone at your door.

I.B.

What a struggle that was

AC.B.

So did you have to pay for school, to go to school, to go to grammar school?

I.B.

My elder sisters did, they went 10 years before me, obviously and you had to pay for those two.

C.B.

But not you?

I.B.

And they went together. One was 10 and one was 11. They went together. The other children didn't pay. We didn't pay. We didn't even pay for our dinners.

C.B.

So why was there a difference between the two?

I.B.

Because the education system had changed or something and I don't think it was anything to do with. Err, what your father earned or anything. As far as I remember it was compulsory for him to pay.

C.B.

So you would remember the abdication and so on? You would have gone through that as a little kid?.

I.B.

Very vaguely.

C.B.

So did you have a-

I.B.

Yes. We used to sing a song, didn't we about the abdication?

C.B.

Did you?

I.B.

About Mrs. Simpson.

C.B.

Oh yes

I.B.

Pinched our king [...]

C.B.

Did you have a radio in the house and so on? What there was, just three programs was there

I.B.

Yes, that's right, yes.

C.B.

What was the-

I.B.

What was it called then? Home Service, the Light and was there another one?

C.B.

The program?

I.B..

The Third.

C.B.

Classical music nobody ever listened to it. Now that was on relay was it? It came in on a relay. You'd switched it between the three.

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

So did it come on the radio?

I.B.

I think so yes. I can't remember that.

C.B.

Yes, most people had relay systems didn't they? They switched between the three. So all of this, these things were going on an abdication and then a coronation. Do you remember the coronation of George VI and Queen Elizabeth?

I.B.

No. I don't, I don't remember that.

C.B.

During this period you had an abdication, a coronation and a war broke out

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

And there were a lot of things brewing, the Munich crisis and so on. Could you tell me about the way you found out about these things?

I.B.

I found out about the war because my father came from church and I don't know if, I don't know if he'd heard it on our radio, he must have heard it from somebody else.

C.B.

From church. Yes.

I.B.

Because he was a church warden and he came from church and he said that in war we are.

C.B.

Yes, I've got the recording of that somewhere. In general do you know how people found out about things? I mean did they just listen to the radio or go to the local pub or-?

I.B.

I don't know but of course we had no television did we? You know But my father never went to a pub so we wouldn't get information like that ,ever.

C.B.

So I guess the local shop and things like that eh?

I.B,

Oh yes because we- his, his mother kept the shop and she got all the gossip. And Then when my Father built the Post Office in nineteen thirty (pause) five. That right? Thirty six.

He took over the Post Office down there you see, so we got all the gossip then didn't we?

C.B.

Ok. So he built the Post Office?

I.B.

He did with the help of his father.

C.B.

Oh, ok. So he was the first Postmaster in Rhydymwyn?

I.B.

But then the war, as soon as we got it in 1937. By 39 the war had started, so there was rationing, wasn't there you see. And we couldn't get hardly any supplies you know, you couldn't get bananas could you? And we used to have a case of oranges now and again. And it was so difficult we had to weigh all these tiny pieces of butter and it was a nightmare for him.

C.B.

So when war broke out he just ran the Post Office, in the war years.

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

Right through the war years, and did you live in the Post Office?

I.B.

Oh yes. It was a four bedroom house and there were 5, 7 of us there, so we needed somewhere bigger you see. And that's why he built it and we moved down there.

C.B.

Did anybody in the house smoke?

I.B.

Yes, my Father smoked all his life.

C.B.

What did he smoke?

I.B.

Players, I think.

C.B.

I just ask this question as an aside, I found something this week, people used to smoke Craven A?

I.B.

The ladies used to smoke Craven A I think. We used to sell Craven A.

C.B.

They came from the West Indies.

I.B.

Did they?

C.B.

I didn't know, (laughter) amazing, So people smoked, but it, it was fashionable to smoke wasn't it?

I.B.

Oh yes, everybody did in the war didn't they?

C.B.

Yes.

I.B.

Yes that's when the ladies started smoking I think.

C.B.

So your eldest sister was ten years older than you?

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

She must have been in her late teens when the war broke out?

I.B.

Yes she was.

C.B.

So was she married?

I.B.

No. When she was finished in school she went straight to nursing in Liverpool, at the Royal Infirmary in Liverpool and she was bombed and they spent most of the time down below in the cellars, and my Father was very worried about her. And after 2 years he said that's enough and he brought her home. And the other sister went to work in the Post Office In Mold and Chester.

C.B.

And so he brought her home and she nursed in the local area then did she?

I.B.

Well she nursed his mother, this was the point and she was quite bitter about that. Cos she said that's why he brought her home. And I said no, he brought her home because he was worried about her.

C.B.

Yes, but, but girls do say things like that don't they?

I.B.

Yes, but he was very worried about her. She got, I think he used to give her 5 shillings a week.

C.B.

Did she?

I.B.

Nursing . It was horrendous. She had not the bus fare to come home. She used to ask us, to ring up and ask us to meet the bus and pay the conductor.

C.B.

So your family life after the First World War was excellent?

I.B.

Oh, great yes.

C.B.

So in 1939, your dad came home from the church and he said hey, we're at war.

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

Did you build an air raid shelter?

I.B.

No. We used to go under the stairs because we could hear the bombs.

C.B.

So was there room to build an air raid shelter?

I.B.

No. I don't suppose so.

C.B.

In the garden?

I.B.

In the garden, yes there was a huge garden.

C.B.

Was there?

I.B.

It was a very keen garden my father. Have you seen where the Post Office is in Rhydymwyn?
It's right on the corner it's no longer a Post Office unfortunately.

C.B.

What age was your brother?

I.B.

He's 3 years older than I am,

C.B.

So he'd be 13, 14.

I.B.

So he was (pause) how old was I0 when the war broke out?

C.B.

Yes.

I.B.

...and he was 13, 14 and he was in grammar school, and so was my next sister in grammar school at that time.

C.B.

So the only person it affected really was your elder sister?

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

...your dad looked after her in a self-serving way is what she said?

I,B,

Yes.

C,B,

So you're there and you're living right at the side of this valley?

I.B.

Oh we moved down the road, we, but we used to see all the people coming off the trains and all the coaches and buses in the morning. And they used to come for their papers you see in the morning, especially the Chemists who were there. There was a few lodging, we didn't have many billeted. Only the chemists that came from Runcorn, would it be?

C.B.

We'll get to that. So for the first 10 years until war broke out you would have your, your view of the valley was this bit of the river that came along?

I.B.

Yes and it used to flood.

C.B.

Further than it does now?

I.B.

And it used to flood?

C.B.

And it turned, and turn at the, between the two big trees down there

I.B.

Yes. And it was called the Cob. We used to walk along the Cob, right down the valley.

C.B.

So, so, so you must have played down there a lot?

I.B.

Yes we did and my grandfather had a steam engine down there and he used to—he had a saw mill with the steam engine. I can't imagine what happened, they must have err— of course the land belonged to the Squire did it?

C.B.

Gwynsaney Estates.

I.B.

So he used to rent the land of the Gwynsaney Estates, which is where he worked quite a bit.

C,B,

Were there any buildings on the valley before the war?

I.B.

No, no.

C.B.

It was just this, this plain which flooded and no water in the summer?

I.B,

I think there was, because we've got pictures, we did have pictures of it flooding in the summer but it definitely came over in the winter.

C.B.

Generally, I mean generally because I understand, and I'm not an expert on this, but it goes underground .

I.B.

It used to be it goes underground, yes, in the winter my Dad used to be in and out of the house at night with the rivers going to flood. It used to come over the wall, just outside the gates, sort of where the gates are now. it would come, and there are steps down there, and it used to come over the wall and it would go right down the road and flood the village.

C.B.

It takes four days to come down the valley when it rains, to get down there by the way. I've checked that out and it does.

So you're there in this little village, on the edge of the big city, which is Mold and life's a bit of a dream. You've got a nice house, your Dad's got a good job in the village and so on and you're self-sufficient and war breaks out. So what was your first experience of guys start to build a factory on your lovely little valley there. So can you remember how that started?

I.B.

Well I didn't remember, I didn't hear any noise from it, it's not funny. But my brother says he remembers the explosions about five o'clock at night usually. Is that right? He remembers that well, but I don't remember those. I don't remember any activity at all.

C.B.

Don't you.

I.B.

No, until the war started.

C.B.

Yes. It started in 39, it was finished in 41. Yes.

I.B.

Except that we had this man come to stay from Cornwall.

C.B.

Now, now tell me when that was, roughly where it was?

I.B.

That must have been 39.

C.B.

And what was his background?

I.B.

He was from Cornwall, Redruth in Cornwall and he was to do with Halkyn mines, they were trying to drain the mines.

C.B.

And he was a mining engineer?

I.B.

Yes, so he wasn't anything to do with the tunnels which I shouldn't think, although I thought it was. But he didn't stay long and I don't know why. And the next people we had—

C.B.

No! No! To go back to that. You've got a nice house and a nice family and you're happy and so on. How come you've got this stranger in the middle of you—how did that come about?

I.B.

Because the evacuees were beginning to come from Liverpool, weren't they. And my mother didn't want evacuees, she got enough children in the house anyway hadn't she. So this feller knocked at her door and was looking for somewhere to stay. And she took him in. plus his wife. How we managed I don't know, but it was 4 bedrooms but we were reduced to 3 then weren't we, you see.

C.B.

So, so did some billeting officer come around and say you've got to take—

I.B.

They must have done I think. So she thought well I'd rather have a man and woman than a couple of children I suppose.

C.B.

Yes, So, so.

I.B.

Bit vain wasn't it?

C.B.

So, so these people came up from Redruth. You've got to guess that the Billeting Officer said you've got a spare bedroom here, haven't you, and you know, and he said well maybe. So you've got these people from Redruth so what happened, so what other people did you get after that?

I.B.

From the Edwards, was it the contractors, we had a man and woman from Runcorn.

C.B.

And what did they do?

I.B.

They stayed for some time. And she had a baby while she was with us. And then he found out what was going on in the valley works. And he moved up to Halkyn to get out of. (Laughs). He didn't stay long he stayed about 18 months and the time that he arrived I was in Hospital with diphtheria and my sister but they still wanted to come and my mom was terrified you know that they might have caught diphtheria.

C.B.

Especially the baby.

I.B.

Especially the baby, you know.

C.B.

Do you remember that he was with Edwards as part of construction project down there?

I.B.

Yes.

C.B.

Must have been, mustn't he?

I.B.

He was construction, yes.

C.B.

Ok. And he stayed for eighteen months?

I.B.

He stayed with us for eighteen months and then he moved, he moved higher up the valley. He went higher up into Halkyn.

C.B.

Do you know what he did at Halkyn?

I.B.

Well he was still working in the Valley Works

C.B.

Was he?

I.B.

Yes, he worked there for a long time, because we kept in touch with him. We used to go visit him.

C.B.

Would that be Woodside? Anyway,

I.B.

I don't know.

C.B.

Do you remember their name?

I.B.

Skidmore,

C.B.

Sam Skidmore?

I.B.

Sam.

C.B.

Oooh. Have I got a connection for you, He's Sam Skidmore's lad.

I.B.

Brian?

C.B.

I can put you in touch with him.

I.B.

Well my sisters in touch with him still.

C.B.

...and Eddie, Eddie Lloyd Davis was friends with Sam Skidmore.

I.B.

Was he?

C.B.

Yes, because he worked for J B Edwards after the war.

I.B.

That's right.

C.B.

And they used to talk about it anyway, that's, that. yes, and what people came after that as where billeted with you?

I.B.
Nobody.

C.B.
Nobody?

I.B.
Nobody went, no

C.B.
No

I.B.
Because a lot of them started going back, the evacuees, didn't they? Forty two, forty three, I think didn't they? We didn't have many in the village I don't think, I can't remember really. Very many at all, evacuees coming,

C.B.
So did you actually go onto the, the site for all of the, cos, cos, they had birthday parties, Christmas parties

I.B,
We weren't allowed in there. We weren't invited to any of these do's that you had there. We didn't know that all that went on.

C.B.
Well perhaps it was only for the workers. Did you--

I.B.
Yes, it was.

C.B.
Didn't you sneak in there?

I.B.
No. We couldn't get through the gates could we? Well there was Guards on the gate.

C.B.
Oh. A lot of the people did. Dilys told me.

I.B.
Did she now.

C.B.
That she used to go, Dilys Wynne, They used to go down there, and there's a grill over the Dolfechlas and they could get in the grill, and get go up there.

I.B.
Oh no, we went, didn't do naughty things like that.

C.B.
Didn't you?

I.B.
Gosh no.

C.B.
So, so you must, so you must remember all the buss's being there?

I.B.
Oh yes, and it was a huge car park. To the left of the gates. I don't know what's there now. Is it built on? I can't remember.

C.B.
Houses

I.B.
Huge car park. They come every morning.

C.B.
Where, and where, what, err

I.B.
Whether they went back again and then fetched them at night I don't remember but an awful lot came on the train, and that road would be full of people walking, up the road, you know.

C.B.
So down in this mansion you lived in, in the Post Office.

I.B.
Yes (laughs)

C.B.
Did you have an indoor toilet?

I.B.
Gosh yes, and a bathroom.

C.B.
Cor, you, you must have been posh mustn't you?

I.B.
And a beautiful staircase he built. He did, he was a great feller my dad.

C.B.
Doris told me that her dad had a car, before the war.

I.B.
Oh my dad never did.

C.B.

And they had six kids, they had six kids and I said you must have been really rich. And she said well I wouldn't say that but he's determined to have a car. So an indoor toilet was smashing wasn't it?

I.B.

Oh yes, because I-- he took me down one night before we came to live in it for a bath, because we had no bathroom In Bryn Hyfryd and that was a real treat, a hot bath, taps and everything. Beautiful it was.

C.B.

Did you have shampoo?

I.B.

I don't think so. Derbac soap, I think it was, washed your hair with in case of nits.

C.B,

My grandma said that she used to collect rain water in a zinc tub.

I.B.

For her hair?

C.B.

For washing the head. So did you do that?

I.B.

I don't remember, no.

C.B,

Do you remember the soap. You were a bit out of it. So the Antelope was owned, so did people drink in the war? Did, so where you aware of people drinking there and so on

I.B.

Well the local people, the same people went every night, and they went every night these men, left their wives and went every night of the week to these pubs. How they afforded that I don't know.

C.B.

What to the Antelope?

I.B.

The Antelope and the Sun Inn, which is now gone.

C.B.

Can you remember that it must have been very unusual a lot of lady workers turned up all of a sudden didn't they because so many worked in the factory.

I.B.

Yes but I don't know anyone in the Village who worked in the factory. I mean they were coming from Wrexham, you know that lady was in from Wrexham and Liverpool. I don't think I knew anybody that worked in the factory from the village itself.

C.B.
So your view of it was just, just looking at these gates—

I.B.
It was nothing to do with us at all.

CB
So these guys in uniform

IB
Mmmm

C.B.
So you're not aware if the ladies used to go in the pub drinking. in the two local pubs drinking?

I.B,
No. I don't think so.

C.B.
Because that

I.B.
From the works?

C.B.
Yes, because that would have been unusual in those days wouldn't it?

I.B.
Oh yes

C.B.
Ladies

I.B.
Ladies didn't go

C.B.
And, and if they went, they went in the err

I.B.
Another part of the bar, didn't they

C.B.
They, they went in the saloon.

I.B.
Saloon, yes

C.B.
Not the, the, whatever. So by the time it got around towards the end of the war. Fourth four, your brother must have been old enough to join up by then was he?

I.B.,

Yes. They called him up, and which way did he go. He was sent down the mines, a Bevin Boy.

C.B.

Wow

I.B.

And he was there for eighteen months two years, and it effected his chest. So he came away from there and had to go in the RAF then. Served—I don't know how long the RAF as well.

C.B.

So did he stay at school until he was eighteen?

I.B.

Sixteen.

C.B.

Sixteen. Going as a Bevin Boy was Directed Labour.

I.B.

Yes

C.B.

Told, you will be a Bevin Boy. I bet you.

I.B.

That was it. Yes I don't think he had any choice and he went to Llay Main in Wrexham. How he got there I can't remember. But it was tough for a young boy, you know going down in mine in ----

C.B.

And as soon as you're eighteen, you're in

I.B.

Yes

C.B.

So when you got towards the end of the war you would have been in your mid-teens

I.B.

Yes I was 14, 15, 16 [...] 16!

C.B.

So those must have been, been fairly exciting times for you

I.B.

Yes

C.B.

So being the only girl or one of the only girls in the village and all these thousands of men around there were you chased at all? I don't mean physically chased you know. Was a lot of attention paid to you?

I.B.

I, I don't remember, my father was very fussy as to who we went with I can tell you.

C.B.

I can imagine.

I.B.

I can remember going out with a feller who had come back from Burma. Do you remember the big Burma hats? And I thought that was great you see. This boy was a local boy, and he came back from Burma, and I went out with him, and my father was so cross he chased me up the stairs to bed.

C.B.

Yes

I.B.

And I'd be about sixteen, seventeen then for goodness sake.

C.B.

So, your spirit was willing but, but, but your father wasn't. (Laughs).

I.B.

Yes

C.B.

So you came from a respectable home?

I.B.

Oh we did yes, he was a very proud man.

C.B.

So people smoked a lot in the war didn't they?

I.B.

Yes

C.B.

Can you remember what people did smoke?

I.B.

Twist

C.B.

It's just interesting.

I.B.

Twist, Craven A, Players, For those strong one's, cap, caps—Capstan

C.B.

Yes, Capstan full strength.

I.B.

Full strength, Woodbines.

C.B.

Pasha's

I.B.

Little tiny Woodbines.

C.B.

Pasha's the Turkish ones, Pasha's. They used to smell like camel droppings didn't they?

I.B.

Yes

C.B.

And I do remember that people used to smoke things called three castles or three castles as we used to call them. And they were oval weren't they?

I.B.

Yes

C.B.

They were ...so you weren't aware of, so people generally didn't drink a lot did they in rural areas?

I.B.

No. Only these certain few men that went every night.

C.B.

Yes

I.B.

But we never drank at all. Ever. Never.

C.B.

Did you see the Americans around here?

I.B.

Oh we did.

C.B.

Did you? Tell me about a number of them would you.

I.B.

That was exciting.

C.B.

Where they exciting to young girls?

I.B.

Well they came in these huge Lorries. I think they used to come a couple times a week, I don't know.

C.B.

What on the site?

I.B.

Onto the site and they'd stay the night in the Antelope and they would be all around the village then wouldn't they. And I don't know if my mother kept me under lock and key but I never came into contact. But women from far and wide used to come in the evening, they'd come from Mold you see to see these Yanks. But none of them—there was only one village girl that might have went out with one, and he married her.

C.B.

Did he?

I.B.

But she wouldn't go back to America. And we were so jealous because he used to bring her nylons, you see. We never had nylons. And she had these beautiful nylons on. And it was fur coat. He was a real nice chap you know. And she was a real country girl you know. And she wouldn't go back with him.

C.B.

So, so what happened?

I.B.

He went back and she wouldn't go, and she ended up in a terrible life actually. She was with a married man, had three children and then in the end she committed suicide, which is a shame. She should have gone to America.

C.B.

Did you, err, did you, where there any coloured Americans amongst them?

I.B.

I can't remember a coloured. No.

C.B.

It must have been a great, a great shock to most people to see a coloured guy.

I.B.

And their uniforms you see they were pale colored weren't they as far as I can remember. Pale khaki?

C.B.

Did you see the people in the pink trousers? Would they have any of those there?

I.B.

Oh no. I didn't see those.

C.B.

Those were the US army air force dress uniforms . And they had brown coats and pink trousers.

I.B.

Oh no, they didn't dress up you see because they were lying in fields around about. We used to peep over these walls you see. To see what they were doing.

C.B.

The Americans must have made a great impression you know. Can you remember the end of the war? Forty five you would have been sixteen and V.E. day?

I.B.

I don't remember celebrating it.

C.B.

Did you have a street party?

I.B.

I don't think we did.

C.B.

V.J. day? Street party?

I.B.

I don't think so . I might be wrong. I don't remember it. I would remember it wouldn't I at sixteen. Cos I was still in school then.

C.B.

So, why, you were still in school while you were sixteen?

I.B.

Yes

C.B.

So you stayed until you were eighteen in school did you?

I.B.

No I took CWB as it was called then and we came home then and helped my Father in the shop for a while and then I went to work in the Civil Service in Chester.

CB

Did you? Rose, who I have a picture of here, that's a smashing picture of her, and a picture of when she was working there and she left there and she went to work for an insurance company and worked for them for thirty one years.

IB

Did she?

CB

Yes, first job. So you finished up at the end of the war, so you would have gone to work when all the people coming back from the War?

IB

Yes, yes

CB

And when you went to the Civil Service in Chester did you travel by train from here?

IB

Yes you did. There was a whole crowd of us used to travel by train to various jobs in Chester.

CB

So can you recall in those post war years what it felt like to be—because you see everybody has been repressed, I mean, the Great Depression, there's hardly any jobs in the thirties, then they had the war, and the war was over, and things had got no easier. And so did things feel differently after that, after the end of the war.

IB

By the nineteen fifties was it, we had the New Look and the coats got longer and I was very smart I had this new coat and I felt like I was the bee's knees.

CB Kelvin told me that when she used to go to dances in the war and just after the war, before she got married, the fashion was to have long skirts and she said there was a guy in, worked at RAF Hawarden and he used to get shot out of the bombs and he used to put it in the bottom of the skirts so when they danced the skirts didn't fly up

IB

Fly up

CB

.....you know what I mean? That's got to be true hasn't it? 'Cos you couldn't make that up. So, so when you were in your early teens and so on, or mid to late teens, so did you have a social life then? Did you used to go to dances and pubs?

IB

Oh no. we used to go to the Institute in Rhydymwyn. And we used to have a fellow who played the piano. And we would dance. And we used to get this caretaker to come up and put chalk on the floor so it would be slippy you see and we used to be jiving. We used to have a great time. And then there was a grass court then and we used to play tennis. That was our main thing. All, all my family played tennis, all of us. My sisters and all

CB

So your social life, the dances was local. It wasn't going into Mold?

IB

And I wasn't allowed to go to a dance in Mold at all or Buckley but I was allowed to go to a dance in Chester. You know, my father thought that was a bit better. I used to go—we used to go to the Post Office ball in the Town Hall in Chester and in Quaintways in Chester which used to be in Northgate Street (they) used to have dances there and we'd be in evening dress for that you see, so it was real smart that was.

CB

Yes. Going up market. Did you smoke?

IB

I don't think I smoked then. I smoked later on

CB

Did you? And you didn't drink because your father because the upbringing was that way.

IB

I never really drank all my life. Just never appealed, I don't like it.

CB

Can you remember the first post war years, Forty six, forty seven, the winters?

IB

Well I, I was looking at those, you know those leaflets you gave me, and I don't remember that. I remember one when I was in primary school and we were standing, the snow was about this deep. And you could walk on the top of it. But did we have the same thing in forty seven then?

CB

Forty six, forty seven they were the most, worst winter in a hundred years

IB

Was it? So that was before I went to work.

CB

Doris (Parry) told me. She said that she married a guy who was a farm laborer and they managed to get a small holding and she said they couldn't get water out of the farm and all the pipes were frozen and the person in the next farm had got hose pipe and put it in a—but they said it was frozen four feet down. And they got no water for three months.

IB

So it was mainly frost rather than snow was it? It was very cold?

CB

Do you remember the flood of nineteen forty one down the valley? In nineteen forty one there was a massive flood and they had the most water down the valley in over a hundred years.

IB

Yes. Before they diverted it?

CB

.....after they diverted it. The first year they diverted it everything was flooded

IB

Was it

CB

Yes, because the fellow who built it got pulled up. He got pulled up in front of his boss. Say hey (Eric) Driver what's this.

IB

Well did it come into the village itself?

CB

It went everywhere.

IB

Because I've got a photograph of my sister standing in wellingtons coming down that [...] you know

CB

Nineteen forty one

IB

And she was a teenager then

CB

Nineteen forty one was the biggest flood in the history. He built the culvert for supposedly to take two and a half times the biggest flood that ever came down and that winter they got four times (as much) and he got pulled on, pulled over the coals for it, you know.

IB

Yes

CB

So you can't remember it? Just after the war do you remember Denis Compton and Edrich and all of that with the Brylcreem?

IB

Oh yes, Compton, the Brylcreem Boy

CB

And do you remember Stan, Stan Matthews and Tom Finney?

IB

Yes I remember the names. Not that I was very interested in football, it wasn't a big thing, as it is today.

CB

No, they were just big names weren't they? And the film stars. Do you remember Margaret, Margaret Lockwood?

IB

Yes. Beautiful wasn't she?

CB

With the beauty spot there

IB

Yes. James Mason

CB

Oh yes. Stewart Granger and they were great stars and Patricia Roc

IB

Yes. Another lovely face isn't she, yes.

CB

So you went to the pictures a lot. Where did you go to the pictures?

IB

Mainly Chester, which is after nineteen forty eight.

CB

Not Mold or Buckley though?

IB

I think I went to Mold once or twice. I didn't really go the pictures because our father didn't like us out at night you see he was not keen. He's got these four girls to keep his eye on you know.

CB

I know. Full time job

IB He didn't like all these men hanging around. We had some great times with these chemists you see they used to come to our house.

CB Tell me about the chemists. That's who were they and what their background was.

IB

Well the— well the one I know best, which is my brother in law, he came from Cambridge, straight from Cambridge and went to work for ICI.

CB

Cambridge University?

IB

Yes. And then he ended up billeted in what do they call it? The Avenue, a dead end, cul-de-sac by the Station, you know.

CB

Yes, And what was his name

IB

Jemmet

CB What was it?

IB

John Jemmet

CB

Can you spell that for me.

IB

J-e double m-e-t, and Andrew Butlin brought his wife, and he's another chemist. And he, he stayed in this area and he worked in Synthite I think

CB

He lived in the ICI houses?

IB

In the ICI houses, down Clayton Road.

CB

Tom Woodward who lived in number one, Tom Woodward was born in the war lived in number one, he's doing research on houses for us now.

IB

Those houses are still there, those flat roofed houses with concrete stucco, he was another one and he was in the Twmpath, I think

CB

OK

IB

Billeted with his wife and she had two children and my mother used to be very worried about these two children because she was only young, you know. And then we had a fellow who could play the piano and we always had a piano and he was a jazz player and he was another chemist. Eric somebody but there was a whole crowd of them, and my mother welcomed them all in, as if we didn't have enough people in the house.

And we must have been making cups of tea for them and feeding them. I don't know. But there very lonely, you see. Its great sense of union and you know they were young men and quite lonely away from families.

CB

So these where chemists? They weren't people working on the er—

IB

No. they were all B.Sc. you know.

CB

Yes, so they weren't some of the people tied up at Maes Alyn and Bryn Bellan who were doing the Tube Alloys project?

IB No they just lived at the far end of the site I think, didn't they, these chemists. Those little building's, was it?

CB

Yes, most of them did the testing.

IB

Well John said he was in quite a big building.

CB

It could have been in one of the K buildings, yes. But we are collecting a list together of the names of a lot of the people. I'll let you have a list of the names we've got. So you were in, so by the time you got in the latish forties you were old enough to leave home were you and to get married and all of those things?

IB

I was working—forty eight I went to the Civil Service and in nineteen fifty my father was taken ill, I had twelve months special leave from the Civil Service to go and look after the Post Office. They told him to stop work, and he was only sixty and all he got was angina, and that wouldn't happen now would it?

CB

They give him pills for it?

IB

Yes, but he said—the specialist or something, the stress was too much for him. It was a worry the business, it was a worry. It was something he didn't like really. He preferred to be a joiner. But, and then I was there six years and I got married and I never came back again.

CB

So that was, was nineteen forty eight you went to work at the—

IB

Yes and I finished nineteen fifty four, I got married

CB

So, in nineteen forty eight and fifty four, you ran the Post Office?

IB

No. just for about nine months I ran the Post Office.

CB

Ok, and what did you do—

IB

And then I went back to work.

CB

To Chester

IB

They took me back. I had special leave without pay,

CB

In Chester?

IB

In Chester. In the Telephone Managers office. We used to send out the bills and lay the cables and put the poles up. That's—we weren't telephonist's you know we were—it was kinda—a cut about those we thought. (laughs)

CB

Did you have any problems obtaining food in the war? You said you had connections with a farm.

IB

Well, there wasn't any food there then. Don't know what they did in that farm. But er,

CB

Did rations affect you, did—

IB

Well, not as much as other people I suppose, because we [...]

CB

That's what everybody says.

IB

And we could bargain and my two sisters got married. It was just in nineteen---- they were four! Twenty, four, through nineteen forty, forty one. Course, clothes were rationed weren't they you see?

CB

So was that a problem? Clothes rationed for—

IB

Yes but people would, would—

CB

for young ladies

IBgive us clothes in the shop if you give them a pound of sugar you see.
(Laughs)

CB

You were corrupt?

IB

Some people who couldn't afford to buy cloths. Some very poor people, they used to say—

CB

Poorer than you? (Laughing)

IB

Yes. There were some very poor people at some stages and they used to give us their clothing coupons so that we had a very nice wedding. Very nice wedding, dressed lovely. I don't know how we managed it. We used to be able to get parachute silk in the war. God knows where that was from, I can't remember.

CB

Thirty shillings, thirty, twenty five or thirty shillings for a quarter parachute.

IB

Was it?

CB

Yes. And you could make nylon blouses out of it with the knots in them.

IB

Oh yes. They got married together, so my father took them both down the aisle. Very proud father that.

CB

Well it's a bit—its right isn't it?

IB

Yes. So off they went and I got married in fifty four and I've never been back since.

CB

So were you aware of the lead up to the Coronation and all of that?

IB

Oh yes. That was a great day in our house because we were the only ones that had a television. And, and I thought it was in colour but they say it wasn't in colour. I thought it was. Was it do you think?

CB

Well as there weren't any colour TV's around but I do think the film of it was in colour that you saw in the cinema.

IB

Maybe I'd seen them both

CB

But you definitely didn't have colour TV's then. It was black and white.

IB

Well we had a crowd in our house, to come and watch it you see

CB

So did you have a TV before the coronation?

IB

Yes we did. And we had a magnifying glass on the front to make it a bit bigger and we had all these people coming, and we made all sandwiches and cakes and stuff and I was courting my husband then. So called. And we were waiting on these people they had a great day. Great fun, sitting there nearly all day, weren't we, you know. Terrible cold wet day wasn't it? Miserable day. But I do remember that very--.

CB

Well did, did, so, of course you said your father didn't drink so there wouldn't have been much drink going on

IB

Oh there was no drink. You see these days it would be all drinking all day wouldn't you.

CB.

I ask this, because it's my perception right I thought that when you looked backwards things had been tough all the way through. I always thought that was a change, the Coronation. So what do you feel about that? Up to the coronation—and when you had the coronation year it seemed to be a watershed to me. Things got better for everybody after that.

IB

I thought we got better before then I did because I was working and it was a great life and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

CB

Did you go away on your holidays to the seaside? Like, like New Brighton? (laughs)

IB

No I don't think we went. When I was home, no, I don't think we ever went. I remember sending my Mom and Dad on a holiday and of all places we sent them to Blackpool.

CB

It was good was Blackpool.

IB

And we thought oh they won't like it but they went to all the shows, course he wasn't very well, that's why we sent him. And they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They had a great time but I never remember going on holiday.

CB

Don't you

IB

The only place, I'm sorry, I would go, is to Ilfracombe, when my sister who married the chemist was living and it take us all day to get there by train. Used to go to Chester on the train, and then I don't know how we got to Barnstable eventually, then another single track to Ilfracombe and it take us all day. I'd be about seventeen, eighteen then.

CB

Big adventure then wasn't it?

IB

Oh it was, it was a lovely holiday that was.

CB

So it must have taken you a long time to get there. Swapping all those trains.

IB

Oh it was. Amazing.

CB

Did you find that when you got away from Rhydymwyn that your life was different? Had a different perspective on it? Had a different view of things?

IB

I don't know, because I'd been married you see, and I went abroad you see to Singapore you see for two, three years. We'd only got married twelve months and we were in Singapore. So—

CB

Fantastic

IB

And then we came back to Stafford and then we thought where shall we live now because my husband decided to come out of the RAF because of my daughter and her schooling. He came out of the RAF and we picked here and I'm glad we picked here, you know. We could have stayed in Stafford but you know here we nearer the sea and nearer the mountains you know nearer the towns and we were nearer my parents as well.

CB

So when you look back those years where happy years for you.

IB

Oh wonderful, I've always been happy.

CB

Oh, I don't doubt it. Were you aware of the politicians of the time? Where they just that Churchill was a great guy and Attlee was a little man and all of that. Was—

Yes, I just remember those two, yes

Yes

CB And later on when you finally got to Eden didn't you but I think that when--, er, I think for my purposes when we get to nineteen fifty three that is a sort of cut off point for us. Which is smashing because we've seen the war years up to there. And that's about as far as we can go. You've given-- That's smashing.

IB

I filled it up

CB

You did—see you didn't know it was on did you? And I do thank you very much indeed for that.