*Typist’s Note: The interviewer’s comments have been underlined for ease of reading*

**Mill Street Memories – Brian Cheeseman by Linda House**

This is an interview between Brian Cheeseman and Alec Bailey and Linda House, volunteers at Mill Street Housing Society at Dorchester on the 22nd January 2015

Alec: Can you tell us about your childhood down in Hardy Avenue?

Brian: Yes, I was born in 12 Hardy Avenue and was brought up with my brother and sister, obviously mum and dad and dad obviously went away to war. He came back, unfortunately, family problems and we carried on living there, stayed in Hardy Avenue, I stayed myself until I was married, when I became 27 when I married and moved to Lower Bockhampton. Left Bockhampton and moved back to Alfred Place into a house owned by my firm J Adams, Heating and Plumbing and then from there moved to 5 Fordington Hill House with my wife through illness, not being able to stay in the house.

Alec: what was the name of your brothers and sisters?

Brian: John, do you know John Cheeseman the builder? Live in Olga Road and then Anne Cheeseman, she married Brian Wills and unfortunately, had a child and died in childbirth, so we lost Anne when she was 27, John’s still going now although he retired living in Olga Road in Dorchester.

Alec: and your parent’s names?

Brian: Alf and Win. Which then when dad came back from the war with another lady Alice, which sort of wasn’t good for the family but then that was war unfortunately.

Linda: Did Alice live with you?

Brian: Yes, she came back and lived with us then and then from my point of view, the latter part of the year I was what do they call it, when we were evacuees, we spent the last part of the war in the Barracks in Exeter which never made sense to us because we felt that we didn’t have too much bombing here and we go to a barracks in Exeter which was bombed every night – how can you work that out.

Brian: to go from somewhere here where there wasn’t much bombing, they never worried too much about the barracks at the top of town but a place like Exeter with a huge great barracks and everything, it was bombed nearly every night so we spent our time in the trenches up in the field so it wasn’t a very good time towards the end of the year, or at the end of the war I should say but the memories of Mill Street, I believe can never leave anybody because I feel that the atmosphere in Mill Street was such that everybody was one family, doors were never closed, you could visit who you liked, everybody met and talked and it was, I feel, it was alright for people to say that Mill Street was a slum area, alright, we know the houses were old but from a slum point of view that never, ever applied. It was the people that made Mill Street, we all gathered at times, you had talks or whatever and people met, and when they did meet, we talked about the important things all the time. I think this is where the atmosphere of Mill Street was such. Mill Street Mission obviously made a difference because of gathering there and meeting and everybody, we all, I suppose you could say, if you take it from the youngsters point of view, we all followed each other through life really because we were at Mill Street Mission to start with and then as we got older we moved into Fordington Infants School just across the road before that disappeared, we went from there to the Boys School at Colliton Street, the girls moved to Maud Road School and then we followed each other from there to either Modern School, Grammar School or Green School whichever the case was. So I believe really, in a sense, although it was knocked down and people moved away to Wessex Road, Windsor Road and Way, I still feel that the Mill Street people congregated together, I mean, I meet so many now that we lived with, we grew up with and I feel that this is where the atmosphere was.

Mill Street Mission was such to us, it was like really and truly a second home because you could go into Mill Street Mission at any time, the people there, Miss Churchill, Miss Barklen, Miss Olds all seemed to be Misses, I think we only had one couple who were Mr and Mrs Clark, who lived in Charles Street. Apart from that it was all these single ladies but they were so great and they stayed in your mind all of the time. You never forgot these sort of people, they were there and they just stuck and I mean what can you say about Mr Edwards; to all of us, it was Alfie Edwards, Alfie Edwards was Mill Street and going to him at Mill Street Mission... alright, he was there as the headman and the only way really that we could call him the headman was on a Sunday when we were in the church part, whether you called it Mission Church or Chapel, that was the main item of the building, you went through the main building and then into this chapel or mission which as you know is still with us at Broadmayne as we’ve found out now, after being a scout hut but to us really, that was what life was all about, living in Mill Street, meeting people, joining people.

The good part about it, alright, at times you wondered where your parents were but most of the time, you never had to worry because you would always find them in The Swan or The Union Arms and they met as a group, either playing darts or drinking their beer or playing cards, so you always knew where they were because you were always in that area. Nobody ever felt that they had to go away to get any attention and I feel that this is what Mill Street was all about – people meeting and joining together and like I say now, here we are 70/80 years later and I can still practically remember everybody that was in Mill Street, Hardy Avenue and Kings Road, all still there. Holloway Road – although there wasn’t too many in Holloway Road but you could still remember all of them people in Holloway Road, it was unbelievable really.

Linda: Did you always have enough to eat? Do you remember going hungry as a child?

Brian: I think that was probably the worst thing. You obviously, at the time, especially just after the war or probably during the last part of the war, that was probably one of the things that you were restricted on. We had two little shops in the area – Miss Mortimer in Shorts Lane and Mrs Pope at the bottom of Pound Lane. They were really the main source of supplies, so you can imagine, just being little stores, you can imagine it was just a little bit of this and a little bit of that and everything else but even then we all managed. I know some of the families were larger and they struggled because of being so many in the family. Most of the families were luckily two, three whatever the case may be but some of them were more.

One of them, as you know the Basket family was 13, so I mean they found it harder probably than anyone else but did they ever moan – no. Everybody survived. So really life was how you made it and I believe that at that time, we made it perfect because the reason being everybody joined in, we were all together, all helped each other and I believe that is what it’s all about and this is why I believe to be called the Dorchester slum was all wrong. It was a neighbourhood of ordinary people growing up together, living together, joining together and I believe that was what it was all about.

Alec: What was the source of money to your household? What was your father’s work?

Brian: Father worked for Adams in London Road until they sold out to Woods. He then moved to Woods delivering furniture. Mum was a domestic, obviously, working in two big buildings in Dorchester, Lock, Reed and Lock and I don’t know who the other one was but she worked as a domestic in the evenings, one lot in the morning and one lot in the evenings to keep us going and Dad worked all the day and to make ends meet, he used to do these early morning runs with newspapers or further afield taking deliveries to shops and all that sort of thing.

Linda: Did you have a garden? Did you grow vegetables? Or keep chickens?

Brian: Yes, we had a garden at the back of the house, while we were at Mill Street, apparently they didn’t have any garden but from my point of view in Hardy Avenue, yes we did have a garden at the back so therefore, we grew our own food as much as we could. We did have chickens at one time but every Christmas nobody had the courage to go and kill one to have for Christmas. So, in other words, the chickens were there to have at Christmas but we never, ever had them because nobody had the courage to finish them off, so we just relied on the eggs. That was another source of income as well which was a help, my sister, when she left school, she did a bit of hairdressing and worked in a shop so that was an income. My brother worked on the building for Ricardo’s on Fordington Green and I worked for Jack Adams Plumbing and Heating Engineers until I went into the Army and then came out and started again. So we all did have an income coming in which was a help all the way round.

Linda: Did Alice work as well?

Brian: Yes, Alice was a domestic, she worked in an office in town, I forget who it was in the mornings cleaning and then in the evening, she cleaned Lock Reed and Lock at top of town every night, so that was a good income as well.

Obviously, that was up to the time that they retired or what have you. So, really with her working, Dad working and the three of us working once we left school, up until we left school, times were harder but then that was the same with everybody. I did, unfortunately, passed the exam for Hardye’s School but then mum and dad decided they couldn’t afford to send me there so I ended up at Modern School instead, that was alright, I didn’t mind, I was happy enough, probably more happier at Modern School than I would have been at Hardye’s School because at the time, everybody always said to us that Hardye’s School was a bit snobbish which I felt wasn’t quite right but obviously, they went on to greater things, whether anybody at Hardye’s School ever ended up doing plumbing and heating engineering, I don’t know, it is quite possible. They probably ended up running their own business. I wouldn’t have wanted that, my brother did eventually being a bricklayer on Ricardo’s. He left Ricardo’s and went into the Army, came back and decided to go into his own business which Dad then thought ‘good’ – brothers together, building, plumbing, heating but no not for me, I decided to carry on with the firm I worked at, so I stayed there for 40 years and that was it.

Linda: So what age were you when you left school?

Brian: 15, I left school.

Linda: Did you do like an apprenticeship?

Brian: Yes, I did 5 years apprenticeship with J Adams, Plumbing and Heating Engineers and when I got to 20, I went into the Dorchester Regiment and ended up in Germany, back and forwards, came out after 2 years and went back onto Adams again and stayed there until I retired. I feel that our life was alright; the only disappointment obviously, was losing the sister through childbirth.

Linda: Was she having the child at home or was she in hospital?

Brian: She was in Somerleigh Court at the time. They sent for us one evening and said that you had probably better come, we got there and they said they couldn’t save her, they tell me now these days that she could have been saved because they know more about these things but luckily enough the lad survived, he’s a nice lad now, see him occasionally, not all that much but at least we have him to remember her by which is a good thing. My brother married and he got 2 children, so at least I’ve got them two and Anne’s son so if I needed anything, I’ve got 3 of them but from my own point of view, we never had any family which was a disappointment but that’s life I suppose but on the whole, I feel that I got no regrets being brought up in Mill Street, I think it was a marvellous life, enjoyed life, enjoyed the people there and I’m still pleased now that I still know so many of them now, in fact, I meet quite a few of them in town, week in and week out and we can still talk about what we did, 50, 60 years ago and I feel that this is what Mill Street was all about.

Linda: How old were you when went to first school – Fordington School?

Brian: I went to school over here at 5 at Fordington Infants School

Linda: What did you learn there?

Brian: it was a job to tell really because we all.... that was one thing we all spoke about over here because we always wondered what we did learn at infant school. We had, Miss Kimber there and we always felt that we didn’t feel that we were old enough to really study anything like maths or anything like that. Alright you may have known the 2 time table but we always felt that we never learned anything until we moved away from there and went to Boys School in Colliton Street, then we started to learn what you can say ‘education’ but we all felt at infant school that we were too young really in the way that it was more of a playschool and that was how we sort of treated it really. I suppose we were there probably 5, 6 and 7 and then we went to Colliton Street Boys School until we were 11 and then away from there up to Modern School. I do occasionally think to myself what would have happened if I had gone to Hardye’s School, I sometimes regret not going and yet I can understand mum and dad saying ‘look, we can’t afford to send you to Hardye’s School’.

Linda: was it because you had to have a special uniform they couldn’t afford for you to go?

Brian: this was it, so they obviously said that they couldn’t afford all that, so unfortunately, you’ve got to carry on and go to Modern School and that was it.

Linda: Did you have mostly hand me down clothes at home?

Brian: Yes and no. Yes, I mean, I don’t say, I don’t suppose, from the point of view of clothing that we were all pretty good. I mean, we all had one suit, I’m pretty sure that very often Anne was quite particular about what she used to wear and she was always smart, always dressed well and everything. Me and John, we would wear what we had; as long as we had clothes, that was all we were worried about. Neither of us were anyone that wanted to dress up and be better than anybody else, we would just be casual and that would be it.

Linda: So what clothes shops were there in Dorchester at that time?

Brian: We relied mostly on Gould’s. That was when it was on the corner of Icen Way, wasn’t it. That was where most of our stuff came from. Really, I think because Mum had a lot to do.... I don’t know if she worked there or cleaned there or whatever but that was why most of our clothes did come from Gould’s originally. So, good old Cathy did do some good there, I told her she did. We had what we needed and I think we felt that what we had, we would wear, immaterial whether people felt it was right or it wasn’t, as long as we felt happy wearing it.

Alec: Going back to school, Colin Lucas went on to Hardye’s School.

Brian: Colin went onto Hardye’s School more or less the same time as me. My brother didn’t pass, he would have been in with Colin as they were the same age but my brother didn’t pass it, so that made it easy, he went onto Modern School and then the following year, it came to me and I passed. I can remember Colin saying ‘come on to Hardye’s with us, you’ll be alright up there’ but like I say it was the money, the cost. Straightaway Mum said no, I think Colin was disappointed about that because we did talk about it and he felt that if I had been at Hardye’s with him it would have been a good thing but there you are, that’s how life went.

Linda: How did you get to school? Did you have a bus or did you walk?

Brian: we walked each time which you can imagine; from here to Coburg Road was quite a jaunt all the time and that applied to all 3 of us because all 3 of us ended up at Modern School. I’m not sure whether, I don’t think it would have happened anyway but I’m not sure whether Anne did ever have an exam to go to Green School or not, obviously back at that time, it’s some job to remember but I don’t think she was ever going to go to Green School. She did just follow us to Modern School. We all stayed there until we were 15 and then all 3 left and we all got on alright afterwards, all got jobs and that was how life carried on. I feel that this was due to the fact that we were in Hardye Avenue, meeting all the people, I believe the biggest part of us all down there, the biggest help we got through life down there was Mill Street Mission, I believe this is where we all went, we all learned. You could say that we probably learned more from going to Mill Street Mission than what we did going to school because when we went to school it was such a large situation whereas at Mill Street Mission it was just Mill Street people and I feel that was how we got on better and lived a better life. The disappointment was when they did start moving people away to Wessex Road and Windsor Road and goodness knows where, then our community in Mill Street became less, so obviously, it went down and down, lucky enough it happened at a time when most of us had become teenagers instead of youngsters because at a time when we were all youngsters, we were all together in a group and I feel that was great, it was a great situation really.

Alec: What was your house like in Hardy Avenue, what that new then?

Brian: When you think that you had no heating, no hot water, you had to boil the water in a copper in the bathroom with coal and logs underneath to heat the water then tip the water into a tin bath on the floor.

Linda: Was that Friday nights?

Brian: Yes, every Friday night, you had your bath and I mean the disappointment was that one of you had a bath and the other one would get in the same water because you would never be able to get 3 lots of water.... when you think of the bigger families, how did they manage when there were 5, 6, 7, 8 of them, so you can imagine, we were probably one of the lucky ones with just three of us, apart from Mum and Dad when they had theirs, but obviously, they had theirs on a different day but then obviously, it became easier once the bathroom was done and eventually, later on in life when hot water was put in and everything, never knew central heating, I mean, the funny thing I often wonder about now is if they’ve got central heating now, I don’t know what is in them houses.

Linda: Is 12 still there is it?

Brian: Yes, all still there.

Alec: They had gas fired central heating.

Brian: I often wondered, I’ve never been in any of them since I moved away, so I don’t know but when I was there from the beginning it was Aves in 2, Coxes in 4, Scotts in 6, Gales in 8, Smiths in 10, us in 12, Hallets in 14, McCaulkies in 18 and then the 4 flats and that’s still there now, I don’t go down there often but when I do walk down through there and see that its exactly the same as when I was down there, it’s a pleasure really and I don’t know who is in 12 now but whoever is there, I hope they have as good a life as we did there.

Linda: So you had to pay rent there did you?

Brian: Yes

Linda: Did someone come round to collect it?

Brian: Yes, somebody came to collect it.

Linda: Did you always have the money in time for him to collect it when he came?

Brian: Well, I take it.... I never, ever heard mum or dad say that they never. So as far as I know, everything was always paid for.

Linda: Can you remember how much it was at all?

Brian: No I can’t remember. Mum and dad dealt with all of that and then when we started to work, we just paid them and they still paid the rent and everything.

Linda: Can you remember what you first earned?

Brian: I did a 40 hour week for 17(s) and 6(d).

Linda: How much did you have to give your mum?

Brian: I had to give them the 7(s) and 6(d) and I had to survive with the 10 shillings a week which, when you think about it now, we wonder how it was ever done. I can remember, in actual fact, I’ve still got the bit of paper somewhere, my first one when it was 17(s) and 6(d) for a 40 hour week and they moan now when they get £300 a week and they still can’t manage, so how we managed on 17 and 6.... When you think, I suppose my brother was the same then on Ricardo’s being a bricklayer and my sister, she probably earned less, the income from the 3 of us was somewhere in the region of £4 a week, so what could the rent have been? I should imagine, the rent was very, very small at the time. What could we be talking about? 5 shillings a week probably, so when you consider how things are now compared with them days, I should imagine life was hard. I stayed there until I was.... my brother got married, I think when he was 25 so obviously my brother stayed there until he was 25, my sister, she got married when she was 26, so she stayed there until she was 26 and the following year had the child and died and I stayed there until I got married when I was 27, so I suppose mum and dad must have been there for another 10 years after we all left and then they moved out of the house into one of the bungalows on the other side of the road. They changed out with the Caddy family who were in a bungalow, they moved into our house and mum and dad stayed in the bungalow then until they came out and were moved into no.4 up here, both died up there and then a few years after, they tell me that I was moving into no.4 where mum and dad had both died, which never went down very well but I was happy with it, the family wasn’t happy with it but then the way I looked at it was mum and dad died there so it makes it just one of them things really, that’s how it worked out. They moved into no.4 and then I moved into no.4 it was either a lucky coincidence or an unluckily coincidence.

Linda: So when you were younger, when you were at school and during your school holidays, all you boys, what sort of things did you do in the evenings and at the weekends and things?

Brian: Well you relied on meeting together and then you would either end up in the picture house or hopefully either football or cricket; I think most of us were cricketing and footballing during the season one way or another. I was sports mad, so I was involved in sport one way or another. I think most of us when we left school went to the YMCA in Icen Way so therefore, we became involved in snooker, whatever they had going on down there – table tennis. So really, most of us would either have been in the pictures or sport. Apart from that, there wasn’t too much you could get involved in. I can remember 2 or 3 of us used to do quite a lot of walking, we used to go all around Blue Bridge and round and then come back via Slyers Lane and back along London Road but that was only a few of us because I suppose the others weren’t interested in doing much walking but I know I used to walk miles, I always felt that was a good thing as well. Also we had good walks because you had the walks to Blue Bridge and all round and you had Bockhampton path and down through and up by Stinsford Church, so I used to do a lot of walking. John he used to do a lot of walking, my next door neighbour and Graham, he used to do a lot of walking but I don’t think that was something for everybody, so we either relied on cricket, football or the YMCA or the pictures.

Linda: would you say you were mischievous?

Brian: Yes, I would say so. That was always a funny thing, most of us can remember the old policemen that would always be walking down Mill Street and if you got in trouble he clipped you under the earhole you’d go home and say “Dad, the policemen hit be under the earhole” well then Dad would give you another one and say that you deserved what you got. So, obviously we were... yes, I can’t say that we were all innocent because we weren’t, I don’t say that we got into big trouble, I suppose the biggest part probably was scrumping the apples off the trees but I mean, that is part of life, I feel anyway, all well and good, I don’t think any of us ever got into big trouble, I can’t remember anyone being in big trouble down Hardy Avenue or Mill Street, probably one day someone might look through a load of crime sheets and find something that they didn’t expect to find.

Alec: Yours was a newer house. The old properties in Leicester Square and that were still there in your day?

Brian: Yes, when I was there, there was Shorts Lane, Leicester Square and then right up through Mill Street, Gregory Buildings down through behind the Mission, all of them were still there and then I think they started knocking it down while I was in the Army, I think when I came back from the Army, most of it was gone I think. I must admit and say now that seeing them old buildings there and the Mill Street Mission and everything, I was very disappointed to see what went up in their place. I gotta say, I’m not a lover of Durnover Court but then seeing as what I saw there previously with all them old cottages I thought of felt that in a sense, all them old cottages could have been modernised and still exist.

What can we say, in the days of money, things happened, which I feel was a disappointment to see Mill Street disappear. I’m not saying that they could have kept everything, because I feel things had to change and you had to become modernised but was there a chance really that a lot of them could have been modernised and the ones that couldn’t could have been taken away, flattened and built with say... I mean, they built the houses in Hardy Avenue now and Mill Street, why couldn’t that have been a complete issue instead of having these massive blocks of flats but housing we know was a problem and obviously it needed it but I would have been very, very pleased if Mill Street had stayed as it was but that’s life, we’ve got to accept what has been done. I would have liked to have seen it stay.

Alec: a question that I was asked is where was the wash house, we know pretty well where there was a stone that commemorated the opening of it but we don’t actually know where it was?

Brian: where the what was, Alec?

Alex: The wash house, the clothes washing house. There was a communal clothes washing house down there somewhere.

Brian: Yes, I thought that was at the end of the row of cottages, on the left hand side of Hardye Avenue because on the end, there were 4 cottages on the left hand side and then at the end there was this extra building and I always thought that was the communal place but whether that was right or not I don’t know because we never, ever knew what was inside it, there was no way we could every say... I mean, the cottages were modernised, I know at one time Gregory Buildings... when you think that Gregory Buildings had all their toilets in the garden and then the cottages, they had to come out and go to the end where they had a row of toilets, lucky enough, our homes at the bottom, we did have toilets but I’m not sure, I wouldn’t be able to swear to that because all I knew was this building on the left hand side of Hardye Avenue, what it was I don’t know. The same with the ones backing onto the river in Mill Street, there was a building there between the 3 cottages but I don’t know what that was, that was outside of the Mission but I’m not sure about that neither. The reason we don’t know probably is we were much younger, so we wouldn’t have taken any notice more than anything but Leicester Square – all their houses must have been modernised because there was no way they could have ever had outside toilets because there would have been nowhere to put them.

We were lucky, we had the shop on Pound Lane, Popes shop, we had Mortimer’s shop in Shorts Lane, then we had the hairdressers in Mill Flats, which was good in the old mill until... Harold Bellis was the hairdresser and then Harold passed away and Tom Morris took it over as his television shop so on the whole we had some facilities in Mill Street which was good really, when you think you go into Mortimer’s or Popes shop and buy a packet of sweets for a penny, now you think what you would pay today for a packet of sweets, we were lucky, I feel that we did have the 2 little shops there, they were open all hours so if you were short of something one evening, somebody just popped to the shop and that would be it. That was good as well from our own point of view.

Linda: Were you ever frightened about going out in the evening?

Brian: I don’t think so because I don’t think we had the fear then that people have today. I feel that you went out then and you were safe anyway because I think really the reason was you knew everybody so therefore you said to yourself “no, I’m not going to get into trouble, I can go out, I know everybody”. So far as I can remember, I can honestly say that I never felt or ever knew of any problem down there which you could say was violent or anything at all. Whether there was or not, I honestly don’t know but from my point of view, I never knew any violence down there or anything at all. I felt that everything ran so smoothly that it was as though it was one big family, so therefore there was no problem. Alright, I suppose at times, whether any of the older people got into trouble which we would never know anything about, which is quite possible but from the youngsters point of view I don’t think there was every any problems or violence at all. I think on the whole everything ran smoothly and everybody got on with everybody else, I feel that this is what Mill Street was all about, the community was together.

Alec: you were talking about playing football, who did you play football for?

Brian: I played football for the YMCA

Alec: out of Icen Way.

Brian: Yes, I started when I was 14 for the YMCA playing football for the youth team and then I progressed up through the ranks, the same with the cricket and then unfortunately, I made one mistake; one of the referees talked me into becoming a referee which was yes and no but eventually I did become a referee so therefore it meant that I couldn’t.... well, I could have played when I wasn’t a referee but I took up refereeing instead at 14 years and enjoyed it, I suppose I can be thankful for the YMCA for that as well, Harold Swain pushed me more than anyone else, but in the sports sort of line, it’s something I felt that in the sport you had to have the interest there, if you never had the interest, there was no point in taking it up, this is why going to the YMCA, you had a good choice of what you wanted to do and I feel that is a good thing from any youngsters point, to go to the YMCA, learn from there and if there is something that you would like to do – do it. If there is something that you don’t want to do – then do something else. You’ve got a variety. I think most youngsters, if they are interested in sport is to get into cricket or football because that is outdoors, athletics – one way or another is indoors or outdoors now, they have as much indoors as they do outdoors now, so that is a good thing.

When I’ve gone down to Mill Street and Hardye Avenue now, this is the thing that I’ve realised down there now is that there is not a lot in the way of youth because I feel that down there now with the flats, you’ve got older people, so therefore, there’s no youngsters. Hardye Avenue – most of them are now older people, there are a couple of young families there now, with obviously their youngsters becoming involved but I think from Mill Street, Hardye Avenue and Kings Road and that now, we’re not going to be in the youth section and we were in our time. It will be all older people because of the flats and everything else. I think that is the thing that you can’t sort of... well, there is no specific reason why, I mean unless you have younger people then obviously there’s not going to be any youngsters is there? If you’ve got older people taking up all the properties and everything, in a way that is a shame but how can you alter that? You can’t alter it because that is the way of life now, it’s the older people getting the properties, the younger people with families they need bigger properties and goodness knows what but I think that if I had to live my life over again, I would still say that I would like to go through what I went through at Mill Street and it wouldn’t bother me to go through all that again. I would feel happy with it because I feel that I shall never forget it, I feel that life in Mill Street was good as good as you could have got anywhere. Having Mill Street Mission there was a blessing to all of us.

Linda: So what sort of thing, when you went to the Mission, did you do? You didn’t just go on Sundays?

Brian: This was always the funny part of it. We always felt that when we went into the Mission that we always felt, even though we had these people looking after us, we felt that it was a fun day going into the Mission itself, in a sense, we would probably say that we were learning more than what we did anywhere else, even though it wasn’t classed as a school, I believe Miss Bartlett and Miss Churchill and Mrs Oates, I believe learnt us far more and how to handle life than what we did in infant school, I think going to infant school in a sense, we really didn’t learn anything at all but I think we did by going to Mill Street Mission. The only serious part about Mill Street Mission was once you went into the Mission behind or the church chapel whatever you like to call it, that was the only serious part because I suppose what you can say made that serious was the fact that Mr Edwards was in charge, whereas once you went into the main building, it was either one of the two teachers or whatever. So therefore, you can say that you didn’t behave like you would when Mr Edwards was there.

Linda: So what did you actually do? When you went in and these ladies were there, what did they do with you?

Brian: well, more or less learned, the way I can remember it, you were learning what to do outside, how can I put it, how to live your life outside, what to do when you were outside. Like I was saying just now about joining sports, they would say to you “why don’t you do this, why don’t you do that” but in actual fact, you couldn’t do an awful lot in there apart from a few games you would play because there wasn’t any facilities to be able to do anything else, you went in, there was a gathering and more or less by the time you went in there, in a sense, you thought you were going to a party, there was no sort of learning as a part to it, although Miss Bartlett particularly and Miss Churchill we always felt was strict than the others, you would have to be serious to listen to what they said and then more or less they would tell you what to do when you go out, what you should do in the evening and everything else. Whether you took any notice of them was another thing because when you went out in the evening, you actually did what you wanted to do, you never thought about what anybody told you had to do, you did your own enjoyment.

Linda: How old were you when you started going to the Mission? Can you remember?

Brian: I suppose, I reckon more less it was the same time as we started going to infant school, I reckon I must have gone there when I was about 4 or 5. I remember being taken there by my brother, I can remember him saying “one day, let’s go to the Mission” and I’ve got a feeling that it would be about 4 or 5 because I think we took Anne and she would only have been about 3. In one of the photos outside, when you see us there, I’ve got a feeling I was about 6, my brother was about 8 and Anne would have been about 4 or 5 but that is why I always feel like I just said, it felt that you were going to a party because we were so small, then once we were going to the Mission when we were 8 or 9, then it became a bit more serious because you felt then that you had to take notice of what these people were saying because they were your guidance from then on in your life when you went out. I always remember Miss Bartlett and Miss Churchill in particular, because I lived not far from Miss Churchill all my life really. When I was in Alfred Place, she lived opposite me, we still spoke then, I can remember her saying to me “you’ve done alright Brian through life, just keep it going and everything will be working out perfect”. She was a marvellous lady and so was Miss Bartlett really. I’m not sure whether you could say that they taught you anything or if they didn’t because you didn’t class them as a teacher, you only classed them as somebody that was looking after you when you went to Mill Street Mission, so what did you sort of, I mean, in a sense, how could you class it? Could you class it as a school? Could you class it as a play centre? I’m not sure and I don’t think any of us will ever know really what it was, alright it was Mill Street Mission but can we ever say that we learnt anything there? Can we ever say that it done what we wanted to do in life and we followed on from there? In a way yes because I felt that without Mill Street Mission there, what would we have done?

Linda: got up to more mischief!

Brian: just as likely – yeah and probably would have had a record.

Linda: did you ever go on the trips?

Brian: oh yes, we was always on the trips down to Weymouth, I think we went to Swanage but there doesn’t seem to be any record of that or we can’t find anything. All the photos I’ve got are all of Weymouth but I’m sure went somewhere else but I can’t seem to remember anything about it.

The parties we had in front of the Mission, I can remember the ones where we had the tables all the way down through, after the war, just about I can remember that but my brother remembers that more than me, he was a couple of years older but I would always, although I’ve spoken to quite a few of them, I even talk to some of them now about it, technically what was Mill Street Mission to us and I don’t believe any of us can honestly say what it was, whether it was a school to us, a play centre, I always felt that to me, it was a play centre, you went there to meet the others, play with the others and that was it. Although I do honestly feel that we learned more there probably than what we did across the road at the infant school because I don’t think that in the infant school we really learned to much at all, we didn’t really start to learn until we got to Boys School in Colliton Street. That was probably a pleasure to all of us, was to go to Boys School, I can remember a lot of them saying “I can’t really see why we should go to Boys School and the girls go to Maud Road School instead of a big school right from the word go”. I don’t know what the idea of that was, why they separated them at that stage, I mean we were over there together and then when you left them two schools, you ended up in Modern School together again but to separate you from 10 to whatever – it didn’t make sense, none of us could ever make sense of that. Whether they thought that boys were more mischievous but then we thought the girls were more mischievous because I think you girls, when you get together, I think you’re far worse than the men. Don’t you Alec?

Alec: um, yeah.

Alec: going back to sport, did you play cricket in the evening league?

Brian: Yes

Alec: who did you play for?

Brian: For YMCA to start with and then Dorset Regiment, when I went into the Dorset Regiment I couldn’t say I was going out to play for the YMCA, they’d have said you’re playing for us whether you like it or not.

Alec: so you didn’t play for St Georges?

Brian: No, never played for St Georges. I think one of the reasons was I was always frightened of the Reverend Jessop, I always put him down as a bit domineering, alright, he was a great cricketer no doubt about it but my opinion of him was that he dominated the team and I feel that if you are not a team then.... I mean, they relied on him, alright he was the mainstay of the team but I feel that you’ve got to be a team together, to play together.

Alec: so how far did you get around, how far out into the villages did you go?

Brian: well, luckily enough, to start with, cricket and the football with the YMCA then they would supply transport to get us there, so that was alright but whenever it was local it was on your push bike. The push bike here, the push bike there. When I used to play and when I refereed as well, I would get on the push bike and cycle to Broadmayne, Piddletrenthide, Piddlehinton, Martinstown, in them days, you got there how you wanted to get there and to save any expense, these days, they won’t go anywhere unless they have a car or a bus or whatever have you. So I joined the football and the cricket with the YMCA and then like I said I had to play for the Dorset Regiment whether I like it or not but I would have sooner still played with the YMCA. Did you ever play sport?

Alec: yes I played cricket, I was interested because when I played, the cars were fairly well about, so people tended to go in fours to get there.

Brian: so what, St Georges?

Alec: no, I played for Edwards and Keeping. Anyway, yes, for Edwards and Keeping, we might have played against each other.

Linda: did you ever pass a driving test? Did you ever have to take a driving test?

Brian: yes, only I had to take a driving test once I went on Adams’s. When I went onto Adams’s, you can imagine, I was cycling from Dorchester to Broadmayne, Dorchester to Martinstown on a push bike with a load of tools and fittings and goodness knows what because at that time, when I went on, the firm had one van for 10 of us, so he would take the furthest ones each day, the rest of us had to get there on push bike, I was lucky, I was delivery boy for County Flowers, Mr Best’s shop in South Street, Fruit and Veg and I was delivery boy for him so I had a delivery bike with the carrier in front and so I had that bike which was easy because I had it all in the front and then he decided then he was going to start getting vans, so once he got the second van I think it was, he said “right, now you’ve got to learn to drive”, so I had to learn to drive, I didn’t drive until I was in the last apprenticeship year so about 20 I suppose, 19/20. I had to learn to drive then a van.

Linda: but most of your friends didn’t drive?

Brian: the only one that could drive when I went on was George, Frank was probably another driver, so George used to use his car, Frank didn’t have a car even though he could drive, the others were all younger like me so we all had to learn to drive then until eventually we did end up with 6 or 8 vans, once the firm really got in on it. It obviously had to happen because we had to be more mobilised, because you can imagine, if somebody rung up and say they’ve got an emergency in Broadmayne or Martinstown then we’ve got to hop on a bike and go belting out there and then when you get there, you find you need something and it’s all back here, it was quite testing but then alright, once we got the vans and the vans were equipped with everything it was all well and good but I suppose when you think... I think we ended up with 6 vans, we started on with just the one, so Mr Adams himself, he would drive people who had to go the furthest, say if someone was at Cerne Abbas, he would drive them out to Cerne Abbas and then he would come back and take somebody somewhere else, well half the day he was losing as he was travelling and goodness knows what but I was never happy driving; I’m not a driving sort, I must admit and I’m certainly glad I’m not driving now because what is happening on the roads now is just beyond me, even though once I did drive, I don’t say I drove that much, I would only drive if it was absolutely necessary, obviously, when I took up refereeing, then I didn’t have any choice because once you are a referee, they tell you where you are going so therefore, you had to travel and that was it but apart from that, I don’t think I would have driven much, if it wasn’t for the fact through sport.

I suppose a lot of people find driving pleasurable but not for me, it was never.... when we were in Mill Street, how many vehicles were about then? Not a lot. We’re talking about 50 – 60 years ago; Shank’s Pony then wasn’t it? And that was it.

Alec: you wouldn’t have got some of the vehicles up the road, they were footpaths basically.

Brian: like I said just now, I don’t think I would ever want it to be any different, if I had to live again, I would like to live through all I went through at Mill Street, I found no problems at all, I felt that we lived a good life, we all joined together and I think that is what made it so brilliant, it was one big happy family and I think in part that we can say did that was Mill Street Mission without any doubt at all.

Linda: can you remember the names of any of the families that actually lived in Mill Street as opposed to Hardye Avenue?

Brian: in Mill Street yes. Starting at the bottom we had Mrs Hoyne, she was opposite the old mill then we had Mrs Dyke, (Ada) next door to her, then we moved on up and we had the Harrison family, Savvy, Terry, Tubby. What was the girl, she married Tom Morris – we always called her Minnie and then next door to that was Mrs Board and her family, next door to that was Mrs Legg who was the caretaker of Mill Street Mission, nice old lady she was. Up the passage way was Quinton’s, Pointer’s was opposite, Clarke’s was opposite, then we came on up and had Mrs White, Mrs Andrews, Mrs Vallard, Mrs Payne, Mrs Symes, Hotten family, Mrs Damen, Mrs Larkcombe, the Barrett’s shop and the delivery people. Dufalls, Symes, Terry Wright who is still around. Barry and Peter Symes are both still around. **Fatherill**, Cheryl’s, and then who was in the end one? Can’t think what her name was in the end one. That was the one up by Lott and Walne’s.

Linda: so what did they do in the Barrett’s shop then?

Brian: it was a shop to start with then he got into cattle delivery, that sort of thing. So, obviously at the shop, he had a big sort of carriage place, where he would bring lorries back every night and then alongside that he had a sort of car park and everything that was right there to the end, Terry Wright was in next door to that, **Fatall** Cheryls he lived down the passageway. Mrs Blackwell lived next door to the shop and then when they knocked it down, she moved into one of them new house built opposite the flats at the top. Then down through Gregory Buildings, there was Barrett’s, Bennett’s, Holden’s, Lowe’s, Grayson’s, Mrs White in the end one, Lowe’s, then Bryn’s, then Hollen’s, then Barrett’s, then Mrs Bennett and down the bottom of there at the top of Shorts Lane was March and **Smallholden** where I think he had more animals down there than they had on a farm, right in the middle of the estate, which was good for everybody because a lot of people liked the animals which was a good thing.

Then in Shorts Lane was Marches at the top, Mortimer’s shop on the left, Mrs Lid yards, Mrs Bowering, who would have been the third one, there was three cottages, Larcombe? No. I remember most all the way down Mill Street, of course, really, what made it easy, I went to school with the Bowerings, I went to school with .................... Pointer and his sister, went to school with the Symes, Terry Wright, Bryan Hollen, John Abbott, Colin Smith, so when we went to school there used to be about 6 or 7 of us, probably sometimes about 10 all wandering up Mill Bank.

Linda: how many teachers were at the school?

Brian: At Fordington, just two as far as I can remember, Miss Kimber and ... who was the other one? Miss Kimber was the one on Holloway Road classroom and then there was a classroom this side, who was there?

Linda: so these two teachers had an awful lot of children then?

Brian: oh yeah, there was probably about 20 or more in each class, there was only two classrooms so, you can imagine, they were all..... the other one may have been Miss Vincent, I can’t remember now. I remember Miss Kimber – I was in her class and then the other teacher but I can’t remember her name I think it may have been Vincent but I’m not certain about that.

Alec: when you were putting the names to the properties, you were saying Mrs this and Mrs that, presumably that’s because you didn’t meet the husbands?

Brian: Yes, this is what I said to Judith. I was disappointed about, when I drew that plan in there, what I put on there was all the names that were there when I was there, say from the age of 5, 6 7, so I put all the names on there that I thought was there but when we went over the last time in the church hall over there at the last meeting, I was disappointed because a lot of people who had come let’s say, 10 years after me or 15 years after me, were crossing all of them out and putting people in when they moved there, well, I mean, to me that defeated the object, we wanted the people there as long ago as possible, but I was disappointed, I saw them crossing names out and sticking names down there and I said to one lady, well don’t cross them out, she said well Mrs so and so was there and I said well that was afterwards, so just put her name underneath but she said I don’t know these other people, well of course she didn’t because they weren’t there at that time.

I asked her politely not to cross them out but she didn’t take no notice, she just said that she was putting people in that she knew was there and I said well yes, but that came later so really, I hope they haven’t crossed them out enough that they won’t be remembered because I think they were the ones that were there in the first place and I feel that they should still be remembered.

Alec: were they using your original map or was it a copy of it?

Brian: I think it was my original one

Alec: I’ll have to found out and see what was there because we’ve got another meeting soon.

Brian: I’ll have a look as well.