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

**Mill Street Memories – Betty Palmer nee Holland and Carol Palmer nee Holland with Linda House on Tuesday 15th July 2014 at Talbothayes Road**

This is Carol Palmer nee Holland, I was born on the 23/12/40, and I started my life at 19 Mill Street. Mum’s name was Holland, so we took that name, Dad’s name was Thorne, most people didn’t have a lot but I would say that we were one of the poorest because of Dad’s drinking. I was born with an illness and couldn’t walk until the age of 18 months, so Mum would have to take me to the Hospital. We were a family of five children; three girls, two boys. I was the middle child. Mum had twin girls at the age of 42, only Christine lived, she slept in a large drawer.

There were two bedrooms, one for Mum and Dad and ours was two beds in the other room. Brian and Arthur in one, Bet and Carol in the other, only army coats on the bed. We didn’t have wardrobes, no posh clothes if we had to put them in

Mum worked very, very hard at Judge Jeffrey’s washing up. Dad drank, so there was no money, had to go to jumble sales for our clothes and get some off the tally man.

Mrs Kimberley was a lovely lady and tried to help us out with different things. One day, I had a pair of square shoes, there were really lovely I thought and they were like new but they hurt my feet so badly. I didn’t complain because I knew I couldn’t have another pair, so I crippled about and had to have them.

Every Easter, Mum would buy us a new dress and we would have white socks. My pleasures were taking the cat in an old pram with no shade which Mum had taken off, no dolls and my favourite thing was picking up cigarette packets, cutting them into squares and using them as my cards.

Five stones was another game, also hopscotch, picking flowers – bunching them up, selling them for 1p. Guy Fawkes was absolutely great; we had a few coppers then. My step brother Dick was in the Navy; he would come home quite often with food and goodies, oh how we loved those days and how we loved him.

Mum would make toffee apples with him and everyone would enjoy them.

Mrs Pointer, another neighbour helped out Mum by giving her half a meat pie etc.

We never complained as we didn’t know any different.

Christmas was a chicken and pork or beef, given by our neighbour Mr Symes as he worked on a meat lorry. Mum made rabbit stew which we all enjoyed and got the veg from the stalls plus broken biscuits from Woolworths, cakes from Wessex as we knew the girl – that was a real luxury.

A bath once a week was a tin bath in front of the fire, the one that was lucky was the first one but after about five children having a bath you didn’t get much joy out of that.

The toilet was down the garden and we made up square newspapers, we cut them up and tied them on a bit of string for toilet rolls.

Mum had a stone copper in the back room for washing and a cooker with a bottom out.

Christmas was an old sock with an orange, apple and nuts. I remember the Dandy and Beano but they were not new. Mum used to sing wonderful songs and tell us about her life – how I used to love to listen. My aunt used to come and we had such good times with them. We would go up to the Exhibition and stay outside quiet and hope to get a drink or a packet of crisps if we were lucky.

Bet was our rock; she would take us to Weymouth or the cafe where we could have soup etc. She would clean and darn and keep the house clean. She didn’t have a child’s life but never complained because it wasn’t Mum’s fault.

Christian endeavour was great because we had a sandwich and a drink once a week. We went to Mill Street Mission on a Sunday and Mrs Clark was good to us.

Mum would make Bet or me go up to Sophie’s shop and get five Woodbines, her only pleasure. She had holes in her plimsoll and would cover them with cardboard.

We all used to go swimming in the swimming baths and jump in – such a happy time, or going to get crab apples that would make your tummy hurt sometimes. One day, I didn’t feel very well, was sat on a pot, my brother Dick was home and told Mum to get the Doctor. I was taken to the isolation hospital in Chickerell, had all my clothes burnt which wasn’t much and stayed in the room on my own. I thought I had done something really wrong and was crying because nobody could explain to me why I was there and Mum just didn’t have the time or the money to come and see me very often. I sang “My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean” to a blind man who was in the next room. He used to say to me “Go on Mabe, sing me another one”.

Mum used to break a pencil in half and tear a page out of the back of a book for us to write on.

Once a year, we would go to Weymouth with Sunday school, I used to get so excited the night before, I would nearly be sick. We would share a bottle of sherbet. I couldn’t remember much about a sandwich. Also, I can never remember my Father having a conversation with any of us, he ruled Mum and he ruled us all. He would come home, have his own chair, have the best of the meal and be waited on hand, foot and finger and then each evening off down the pub. Very nice to all the people in the pub, would treat them really well but never had any money for Mum or my brothers or sisters.

Also, now I feel many, many years later that it does make you a better person, I can see now two sides of a coin, I can see when people are really poor and I can see when you do get a bit better off. I never take things for granted.

I had a friend who was an only child, who lived in Hardy’s Avenue, she had wonderful clothes from America, I used to day dream and think “if only I could have something like her” but I knew that nice clothes were not on our list.

When Mum had Christine, she was very ill and had to stay in Hospital so Bet and me and Christine had to go to Mrs Clench for about six weeks, I used to pine inwardly for Mum and couldn’t wait to go back to her.

Even though life was hard at Mill Street, you would never say out loud how you really felt for fear of upsetting her. All children were seen but never heard and if you were invited into somebody’s house, you always waited at the door to be asked in.

Sometimes, we would go to bed just a little bit hungry but we couldn’t do anything about that. We had bread and milk for breakfast, maybe now and again we would have mashed potato, beans and sausages. Bet was a wonderful cook when Mum couldn’t do it.

I remember once, I wanted my hair cut, Mum couldn’t afford to have it done, so Dick being Dick said he would cut it but what I forgot was he had had a few drinks so he wasn’t really capable of cutting it. However, when he finished I looked in the broken mirror and I cried and I cried. I was cropped, I had never seen anything like it and Mum said “I’m sorry Carol but you kept on and on and on and that’s the way it has come”. I don’t know how I got to school but I think many people laughed at me for a long time because they thought I looked so funny.

One thing Mum tried so hard to keep up was bringing us home little treats, maybe a packet of sweets. She would share them between all of us, five each I think. We all thought we were lucky but I had a habit of keeping them, don’t know why, I wasn’t a goody goody but I could see Christine looking at me sometimes and thinking “oh, you’re five years younger than me”, maybe I would give her one, maybe I would give her two – I can’t really remember but I know I would give her something.

We all doted on her being so tiny at birth and the last child – thank god. We just didn’t have room for anymore or any money. I can’t remember where Dick slept when he was on leave – Bet will know.

Manners were always very strict, we never ever forgot to say please or thank you or even sorry and even today I overdo the pleases and thanks. If ever we knocked on someone’s door like I said, we just waited and waited to be asked to come in.

My brother Arthur who was only 15 months younger than me was eating a jam sandwich once, stood on a windowsill at 19 Mill Street. He was bitten by a wasp, I think his tongue swelled up but like many, many things, we wouldn’t do anything about it. He was ok after a while.

Another time I remember, he went fishing with some lads, he couldn’t have been much more than 6 years old but as he was running cross Greys Bridge, he got knocked over by a car, they took him to Hospital but I can’t remember how, then when the nurse undid his shirt, a fish fell out, she screamed and screamed and the thing was – it was written in the paper about it because afterwards it was so funny plus my brother loved all the fuss and presents – who wouldn’t living at Mill Street.

One Christmas, I was given a pair of gloves and some sweets from an uncle who belonged to Bet’s friend Yvonne. Oh how I loved those gloves and those sweets, it really made my Christmas and I think the rest of us.

We had some lovely neighbours and friends; the Basket’s who lived in Hardy’s Avenue were a family of 12 children living but I think they actually had 18 not sure though. Their names were Walt, Bill, Len, Jack, Colin and Keith; Peggy, Sylvia, Mary, Muriel, Pat and Glad. Also, the Hallett’s were a lovely family; they had a lovely life and lived in Hardy’s Avenue. Their father always worked and so they were lucky.

Also I remember the Otten’s, the White’s and the Blackwell’s, Symes and Dufall’s. They all lived in Mill Street or thereabouts.

We had no hot water, we had a tap outside and if it was really cold in the winter, nothing would come out of that tap. No bedding hardly, no clothes but we were still a happy family and had some wonderful happy times.

Mum had some money left to her before she ever married Dad by her family. Mum came from quite a well off family but it didn’t take Dad long to get rid of it. He took up a van and did some fish hawking and most days spent time in the pub. Mum couldn’t do anything about it so nearly all that money went, which was quite a lot in those days. She could have bought two houses in London Road but didn’t.

Sometimes, I laughed about these things in Mill Street, how we actually had to survive but if we didn’t laugh where would we be.

One day, I remember Bet having to take some rags up to Dad’s cousin Reg Thorne but Mum being Mum to try and get some more money, put a brick in with the clothes but I’m not too sure and Reg gave us some extra money which really did help out. He didn’t say a word because he was frightened of Dad like many, many people were. Dad was a bully.

Back to our Bet... we were sometimes allowed to go to the Palace cinema on a Saturday morning, who would make sure that we went... our Bet. She always seemed to be busy; shopping and doing things, washing and cleaning the floors and doing everything she could. She never ever hardly went out and if she did on a rare occasion, it would be to go off to the cinema on a Saturday night but bless her, one night, Bet was running late, what happened? She ran up Mill Street, knocked her hand on the rail and her precious sixpence dropped in the river. Even to this day, I still think about that sixpence and try to find it – ha ha. So she couldn’t go after all, had to come back but could not complain, bless her heart, she made our lives much more comfortable.

Your Mum came from a wealthy family. Do you know her single name and where she came from?

Her name was Meaden and her father and mother owned a farm at Martinstown called Rue Farm.

Because your Mum lived with your Dad and they weren’t married, was there any stigma attached?

We didn’t even know.

So you still saw your grandparents, her Mother and Father?

No, my grandfather died just after the First World War so we never ever saw him. Mum was only 14 but her Mother did when I was about 4 or 5. By then, she had taken to drink so she didn’t leave the amount of money that she could have done but she still left them all a lot of money because of their lifestyle. Mum was so well off when she was a child that they used to have their coats made at Genges. So she had gone a long way from having her coats made at Genges to wearing plimsolls.......

And your Dad’s name, it was Thorne? But your Mum’s name was Holland? How did her name become Holland when she was a Meadon?

Because she was married before.

Oh, she was married before as well?

Yes.

So, your Mum was married before as well but she didn’t have any children?

She had one son but we never knew him till much later.

Your Dad was married before and had five children and when his wife left him, they had to go into care

Yes, that’s right.

But Dick, was your step brother and you loved him and he came to see you

We liked all of them, we got to know them all when they got older and they got married and had lives of their own. We got to know them well but Dick more than any of them because he seemed to be single longer and he used to come down to Mill Street as Carol said.

Your Dad was a big, burly sort of man

Over six foot. He was a strong man and he was a fighter, he used to go to the fairs and they had the boxing booth, he used to do the boxing.

And did he win quite a lot or....

He would have done.

Just because of his size and strength

He was so, you know... strong really.

I believe you said you could go and buy cakes for I think a shilling?

No, Mum used to leave one and three pence on the mantelpiece to do the shopping and the list of shopping was..... I’ve got it here:

Three penn’th of mixed veg
3 penn’th picked fruit
Yesterday’s cakes
Bread
Broken biscuits

When I used to go to Woolworths to get the broken biscuits, I used to say “please can you pick out the chocolate ones”, not realising that it was a cheek or naughty or wrong in anyway, I just thought it was part of the grocery list but I used to love it if we went to the Greengrocers and there was a mushroom box there, because I used to feel so posh to be carrying this box, they were the ones with the tin handle over, I loved it because the paper carrier bags, they were brown paper carrier bags with string handles and you lived in fear of it breaking because they didn’t last long.

I think it was a peg basket that you used to have to go..........

On a Sunday, that was a special day, Mum used to give us a shilling to go up to the Wessex, that was the tearooms, there were two waitresses there, Peggy Basket and another waitress but we used to have to get Peggy to serve us because we would ask for a shilling’s worth of cakes but the cakes were about 4 pence each so you would only, if you’ve got a shilling’s worth would be three cakes but if Peggy served us, she would give us a bag of cakes, we lived in fear of the other waitress coming to serve us, we couldn’t very well say to the waitress “we want Peggy to serve us”, so we had to wait and wait until Peggy was in the room, because they also waited at tables as well as serving at the counter you see.

You went out with the Mill Street Mission for days out; did you go out on days with anybody else at all?

We only went once a year with the Mill Street Mission, that was to Weymouth. No other times unless we would go on the train on our own but the train fare was 8p return but to get the 8pence was something. Everything was a luxury – everything.

Can you remember anything about when the American soldiers were over here?

Yes, they used to be billeted, people who had room for them but we didn’t obviously. Dad used to go to the pub, most nights and he would bring home, if there was a couple there, he was so generous to everybody, he would bring a couple home and Mum would give them supper, whatever we had, which was very little as you know. They were so generous, the next day, they would come down with butter and allsorts for Mum because they knew that what she had given them was all she had and they were grateful. We were really with the gum and everything.

My brother, he was only little and he used to grab hold of their trousers, they were really, really keen on their clothes being immaculate, the creases in their trousers.... he would grab their legs and ask for gum and they would be glad to give him the gum to get him away from them I suppose.

They used to put on some good parties, I remember going to their parties.

Where about were they billeted to?

Around North Square, there were some around there but I can’t remember.....

How old were you when you left school?

15

Were there plenty of jobs around then?

Yes, I could get a job every week, in fact, I had an obsession with getting jobs; not that I left the one that I had, I just loved getting jobs. They were really, really easy.

What sort of jobs did you do?

I worked for OT House at top of town and I was supposed to be the waitress but I also did all their cleaning and everything. I had a thing about cleaning and she used to let me do all their private quarters and everything in the winter when they were quiet, just to keep the staff, there were only two of us working there. I used to do all their private rooms.

What about you Carol, when you left school was there plenty of jobs?

I left at 14 and my 15th birthday was in December which you were allowed to leave then. I worked at Genges, so I started work at 14 but there were many jobs about and there was no problem at all. Really, we needed to get a job to help Mum.

When your brothers got to leaving school, they got a job and gave your Mum some rent money?

All of us did.

Even when I went away to work, I was in Lanning on a farm for a Brigadier’s little boy and I sent money home then and so did my brother from the Merchant Navy. We all definitely, definitely would never be without work and we’ve never, ever not give Mum our keep – ever, none of us, would we? We all thought the world of her; we would all give her our lives let alone anything else.

Do you remember what sort of wage you got when you started work?

My first wage was £1.25, 25 shillings a week but I had tips and also which was a great help to Mum, I had dinner at dinnertime, so all I had to do, I gave Mum 15 shillings out of the 25 shillings so I was left with 10 shillings but I had dinner every day so only went home for tea. We didn’t stop for breakfast or anything and on our days off, we used to help with the cleaning didn’t we. Clean the windows or do the ironing and on a Sunday morning, I would clean the bedrooms when I was at home.

So we still helped out, Mum was still working; she had worked all her life. She worked hard didn’t she?

Yes.

Other families in Mill Street, did most of the men work? I mean, there wasn’t a benefits system was there?

I don’t remember any men being home.

So they must have been out doing something?

I don’t also remember, any family being as poor as us, do you?

No.

I can remember that Mr Symes next door, he always worked didn’t he Bet?

Oh yes.

She would have a fur coat, a new three piece suite...

I remember the rocking horse upstairs...

Huge it was...

Huge rocking horse, we were allowed to go on it weren’t we? Wonderful

Everyone worked down there worked, or, they would work, even if they went out in the evening, their wives weren’t as bad off as Mum.

I don’t think the men drank as much as Dad.

Fish Hawking.....

He didn’t do that for that many years did he? I don’t know how long he did it for? Do you? It was just his way.

I think the sad part was like, that Mum was really well off....

She never complained, never said that she was well off, she would never say “look what I’ve come to” or anything would she? I’ve never every heard her complain about her situation or anything.

I know you’re Dad hit your Mum on one occasion but were they romantic?

Noooo, not once in my life did I see them make any sign of affection at all.

He was cruel to her wasn’t he?

Yes, he was a cruel man, none of us liked him.

He was one of the cruellest men....

As I said before, about the time when I came home on the bike in the freezing cold, I was absolutely freezing and I came in, he was sat in his damn chair, nobody went near his armchair and I copied down to get warm, I was so cold, to try and get warm by the fire and he didn’t say anything to me, the worst thing he could have done. Mum was in the kitchen doing something, washing up or something and he shouted through to Mum, “does she have to sit on top of the fire”, so that frightened me to death. I was 15, I was still frightened to death because I thought, he’ll have a go at Mum, why didn’t he tell me to get up from the fire, that’s how cruel he was, he knew what he was .....

Very often if he went to the pub and he brought a friend back, he would show off and Mum, what little bits that she had, would put on the table for his supper and one night I remember, something wasn’t quite right and in front of his friend – Ruffle, he cleared the table, just lifted it up and cleared it because he wasn’t happy with whatever was on the table but Mum didn’t have anything else, but he thought that was funny in front of his friend.

Another time, it was Mother’s Day, we had moved then to Windsor Road, he came home drunk and Mum never did anything wrong, she was too frightened to do anything wrong, she lived in fear of doing anything wrong, he came in and the bunch of daffodils was in the middle of the table and for some reason, he was upset about something, probably somebody had upset him down the pub and tipped up the table with all the daffodils on, she would get straight down on her knees to pick it all up. If he smashed anything....

What about the gas lights.........

Oh, the gas lights in Mill Street, they were gas mantles but we never ever had a globe, in all the years that we lived there, we never had a globe and he used to come in drunk and every week regularly, we would get the mantles ready to put out because they were so fragile, you can’t breathe on them can you. The rest of the rooms we had candles; it was just the one room that we had a gas mantle.

So your Dad really was drunk every night

Most nights, can’t remember when he wasn’t at the pub, can you?

No

Which was good because we didn’t want him to come home anyway, life was so much better when he wasn’t there.

He wouldn’t dream of chopping any wood would he?

No, Mum did everything, lit the fires, chopped the wood, everything and when she was ill and couldn’t do it, we did, it still had to be done.

We were on the council waiting list for 19 years, but he wouldn’t accept a council house because the rent at Mill Street was eight and four pence a week but the Council house when we eventually moved was Nineteen and seven pence. I don’t think he was paying it, that was why Mum was working but he still wouldn’t move, he was quite content with his life at Mill Street, why wouldn’t he be?

Well, he had always lived there hadn’t he?

Not only that, he didn’t do anything different when we moved, it didn’t make any difference to him at all. His lifestyle wasn’t any different from when we moved.

Did you have a rent man to come round and collect your rent money? Or how did you pay your rent money?

I think the rent man called, I know the tally man called, because I got into trouble one day because Mum didn’t have the money for the Pat Man, we called him. The tally man.

What is the tally man?

You paid a shilling a week or something for any bits that you had bought like clothes, he came one day and Mum didn’t have the money to give him so she went into the back house whilst in the front room Dad’s father was an antique dealer, we have a beautiful, big sideboard with a mirror, so I went to the door as a child to say to the man that Mum was out, I’ve never lied since because he could see Mum in the mirror, stood in the kitchen. He said “don’t teach your children to tell lies”, I’ve never, ever in all my life, could I lie to you, even if you begged me. I was so frightened.

The milk was delivered. The milkman Norman’s, they used to deliver with a push bike and two cans, one on each handle with a dipper, you used to have your jug to put it in, that was another novelty down there.

Do you remember people being in debt?

I don’t think anyone would tell you. It would be a big stigma, more than it is today.

How much post did you ever receive?

None, I don’t remember a letter at all do you?

No.

We didn’t have telephones or anything.

I was thinking the other day, we all had letterboxes...

Did we? No.

We had a letterbox

Yeah, well you were posher down there. Do you know I mentioned Barrett’s to my brother the other day, I was telling him about some of it. I said “do you remember Barrett’s shop” and he said “yes, we used to go and get the apples”. Straightaway, he remembered the apples.

We didn’t have a letterbox did we? Did we have a front door?

Pardon?

Did we have a front door?

Yes, we had a front door but we didn’t have a letterbox. The front door went straight off the street because I used to scrub the step.

Can you remember anyone having a back garden or an allotment? And did you grow veg?

We had an allotment, but no, you know what the old man was like. My brother made a shed out there when he got a bit older and he lined the shed with sacking, made a lovely shed, we always used to go in there, it was lovely. He had a candle in there and the candle burnt the shed, the shed went up in flames and everybody was panicking beyond a joke because Blackwell’s had a thatched roof if you remember and they were worried to death because the sparks and everything was flying. The man over, what was his name.... Charlie Damon, Charlie Damon married Phyllis Rendall and he came out and got a pipe and put it on the outside tap and doused the shed but we were in big trouble, well my brother was, like I said everyone was panicking because of this thatch roof was only two doors down, it was only Dufalls between us and Blackwell’s.

Can you remember anyone having chickens or pigs to help supplement their food?

We had a ferret.

I put my hand in the cage and got bitten.

It didn’t let go did it.

I was trying to pull my hand out but he wouldn’t let go and then I got a scar now and when I did finally get it out crying, Dad came along and clipped me round the ear hole for putting my finger in then.

Better not saying anything, just bleed to death. You didn’t say anything because poor old Mum, she didn’t have the time.... Like I say, when I went to the jumble sale, Mum never came because she had to be in when the old man was home. She would give me a shilling and ask me to get the stuff at the jumble sale but she would have loved to have come to the jumble sale, it would have been an hour out for her but no, she never ever came to the jumble sale, did she. She never went anywhere, ever, only work.

She did come on the Sunday School outing because when we got to Weymouth, it was this big church near to Alexandra Gardens, I think its a Baptist church, I’m not sure. We used to have our tea in there, we could go all day on the beach with all the families but at teatime, we would go in there as part of our treat. The mother’s had to pay one and three pence to pay for their tea but I remember Mr Oates, he was one of the school teachers, Sunday School teachers, he let Mum come in for free, so she had the extra one and three pence.

So there were kind people there, in Mill Street, people did help you?

Oh, gosh yes. They couldn’t help because they didn’t have a lot but Mrs Pointer was saying earlier, I remember they made a bread pudding between them, Mum and Mrs Pointer but she only had one son called Arthur Pointer and she lived down the back of us and they made this bread pudding in... you know the tin that you do your roasting in, and they made this big bread pudding but Mrs Pointer, she must had done most of it but she shared it with Mum and things like that, people couldn’t help you .....

They obviously couldn’t give you any money but it was more....

Even Mrs Basket, even though she had all those children, she used to make the most delicious chocolate cake, big and I had to go and call for Glad and not say a word and perhaps Mrs Basket even with all those children, would cut me off a tiny bit and that was the most wonderful chocolate cake, it was lovely.

They were marvellous, if anybody ever had anything, they wouldn’t see you without but they didn’t have anything themselves. I don’t think anybody and I’m not just saying it but I really don’t think there was anyone worse off than us but we didn’t take any notice, it didn’t hurt us, not at all and it’s like Carol said, it has made us what we are today.

The neighbours and all that were so, even if they were better off than us, I mean, you wouldn’t get it today, we know but then, they would really, really help you, they didn’t look down on you, I mean you might get a few that would look down on you but on the whole we had some wonderful people didn’t we Bet.

You never, ever locked your door, not day or night, the door was never locked. If I went home from school in the daytime, if Arthur had messed his trousers and I was sent home to get a clean pair of trousers and I knew that I would be able to get in, Mum would have gone to work, the house was empty and I just went in.

Your Mum was very house proud?

Outstandingly so. She washed up and swept up after every meal. We didn’t have much. It might have been darned to the hilt and Mum couldn’t see very well and the old man, they had one pair of glasses and when the old man went out she could have the glasses because when he was in he was reading the paper or whatever, then Mum would have to sew with a darning needle because she couldn’t see very well.

So, if we stand in Mill Street then and look at your house, number 19, next door was 18?

Yes, Mrs Symes

17?

No, there was the alleyway and then 17. That was Mrs White. She was marvellous, if Mum had a confinement at home, Mrs White would help out as midwife.

What about ?????? Charles?

That was in the alleyway, down the alleyway, there was Mrs Rendall, ??????? Charles, he lived on his own this old man but he let us all go in there in the evenings, we would all go in because he had a roaring fire and we would be out of the house and we would go in there, he would have all the kids around the fire, he didn’t mind what we did. I think we were all good company to him.

Next down to him was Miss Lane, she was a lady who lived on her own, a bit reserved but when it was Harvest Festival, she had a beautiful flower garden, she would let us do a bunch of flowers for three pence to take for Harvest Festival because obviously there wasn’t any food to take, in fact we would have done with some it couldn’t we.

What about no.16

17 was Mrs White and then next to that was the Condons?, Cardell? – boy and the woman and the house up was derelict on the corner and then there was another alleyway down.

Mrs Wood and Marvin Wood and the Isaacs, Aunt May, Mum’s cousins and that was about all down there.

You wouldn’t believe how many houses were put in there.

Who was in 20 then?

The Dufalls

21 was the Blackwells

24 was Barretts, 22 and 23 were down

Where do the Ottens come into it.

Next door to Barretts

25

Then there was another Otten again, Herbie Otten wasn’t it.

Something like that

And then another Otten again, I think they were all related anyway weren’t they and they’re still standing, I remember when they had the bathroom built on to them.

Then there was another alleyway, the Damons, two houses down that little alleyway wasn’t there. Granny Symes was next on the corner.

What about the Lowes, where did they live?

The Lowes were in Hardy Avenue

The road next to Granny Symes was the Damon’s – Tiddler Damon and I don’t know who the other people were.

Did you watch the Queen’s Coronation?

I was thinking about that. Did we have a table or did I dream that. Did we have a street party?

There was a photo; I had it at one point.

Must have been one of the best meals we ever had.

It was marvellous; Mr MacCaulkin and all of them did it. That was down outside Mill Street Mission, where they put the tables out, there was a bit of a car park in front.

What about the Harrisons?

Eddie Harrison, he was a drinking pal of the old man’s, they were down further, and Nigel Lucas and all of them were down that end, down the bottom end.

I think the old man was born down that end, I think he was born in number 65. I think I ran up the archives and found that out.

You said that your Dad read the newspaper, did he have a newspaper everyday or was that a luxury?

No, nothing that Dad had was a luxury, he had everything. I don’t know about the paper, he must have got it on his way home from work mustn’t he?

I would have thought.

The radio was ‘relay radio’ you paid one and nine pence a week, it was plugged in.

Is there anything else that you would like to record for your memories?

I think Carol got it all.

You wanted to know about childhood games, that came to me today, it seemed to be that no one ever said anything but the games came round in order, like, when one child had her skipping rope, all the kids were doing skipping and then again, when there was rounder’s, all the kids were playing rounder’s, it didn’t seem to be mixed, if it was two-ball – playing ball against the wall, all the kids were doing it, it came round in order for some reason.

The meals were usually bread and milk for breakfast and then we used to go to school and go from St Georges over the Moule Institute for our dinner which was school dinners and they were absolutely brilliant, we used to get really excited when we had school dinners. Then we would go home for tea which consisted of a cake each and as much bread and butter and jam – that was our tea and for supper, Mum used to send me up to Polkes, to get a couple of Oxos with the three candles and cigarettes and we used to have Oxos for supper with bread and that was nice as well and that was our meals. When I got old enough, on a Saturday when Mum was working, I used to go up to the fish shop and get chips for the kids, but then I got a bit older than that and I used to cook a meal and I used to do every Saturday – sausages, mashed potato and onion gravy for the children.

If Mum was going to... god love her, I never saw my mother eat a cooked meal but if she did have anything to eat, it was either a crust with a bit of butter on and a bit of cheese, she used to sit and eat that and she was really sweet and I used to think “oh, only if I could have a bit of your crusts Mum”, she was so good and I really loved watching her eat it, she ate it with relish, when she hadn’t had anything else to eat, she used to go without for us children.

Did your Dad have marge or butter?

Dad never ever not even during the war and the ration books had marge, he always had the butter, there was 2oz of butter per person per week, so being there was seven of us, the butter ration wasn’t too bad, so there was marge, all the food was on rations.

We used to go to Liptons for our shopping and the man in Liptons, the manager; I can see him now, a little man. He used to call me Dutch and I never knew why he called me Dutch until I got a bit older but it was because on the ration books our name was Holland, I didn’t associate it with....

What about going up the fish shop, Annie Isaacs?

Oh yeah, we used to go up top of town fish shop to Annie Isaacs, one of Mum’s cousins, she worked serving the fish and chips, you could have a pen’oth of scrumps, that was the bits of batter that had fallen off the main fish, that was nice. Now, I can’t even eat batter.

To this day I hate batter.

So do I. I hate it. If I’m eating fish and chips take the batter off – I wonder why.

You as well....

...Yes, I hate it. I can’t stand it.

I never knew that until know and I do the same.

It makes me feel ill....

...and me, yet we lived on it

Do you ever remember going away on holiday, did you ever go to another relation for a few days break for your Mum

No, there were no holidays.

Can you remember how old you were when you had your first holiday?

I remember, I think I was down Mill Street, when my cousin came and I wanted my ears pierced and all the family had their ears pierced young. Bet didn’t want hers done – I wonder why. I went up to the bedroom and my cousin came up with a darning needle, I can’t recall it being sterilised, I don’t think I even knew the word sterilised and I came down with my ears pierced and I think the only way she did that was that she kept twiddling my ear until it had gone red and I think semi frozen but not properly and then she put the darning needle in and to this day I carry the holes with the earrings in.

I’ve never had my ears pierced...

Mum had them done when she was young and my daughter had hers done, I think it went through the family but Bet was I think the only one in the family who didn’t want it done.

We used to, if I remember right Bet, we used to put our fingers in our ears that much, with the rows, and that they used to hurt where we pressed our fingers in our ears.

Did your Mum every answer your Dad back or did he just shout at her?

No, she wouldn’t dare.

So it was just him shouting then really

This is why it was wrong of him, because she was so inoffensive, she would do anything for him, anything to put things right and to keep it right for him. So there was no need.

Did any of your brothers stand up for your Mum

Yes, when they were old enough. He stopped then, he had to because the boys were bigger.

So, he was a bully then really, as soon as somebody stands up to him.....

Yes he was a bully, not many people would stand up to him.

Dick would wouldn’t he?

Yes, but I don’t think Dick did.

Brian definitely would and Arthur would when they were old enough, we were at Windsor Road then and they were leaving school by then.

I was only 13 when we left Mill Street, so the others were all that much younger. My brother was 15 and he had gone into the Merchant Navy by then.

Is there anything else you would like to record Ladies?

I can’t think of anything