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

**Mill Street Memories - Joyce Ray interviewed by Allan Bailey**

How and when did your family come to the area? Where were you born to?

Well, to start with, I was born in Fordington Green, my mother had rooms there, then we moved further up into almost South Walks Road and then we were given a council house in St Georges Road and then we asked Miss Telley who lived in Fordington and she had 7 houses if it would be possible for us to have one of her houses and then it was called 3 Harvey’s Terrace. Well later the whole street was ....... and it was 21 High Street but at the top I could go down to Mill Street, there was steps right the way down, I used to go down there to play because I knew the children because they came to Fordington Infants School where I went to school.

Fordington – St Georges that is?

Yes, St Georges Infants School, I think I was about 5 then, not quite 5. So, I got on very well with them, one particular friend was Winnie Barrett.

Winnie Barrett, now was that one of my Barretts, Winifred?

Yes, Winnie, she moved away, she had very long fair hair and that was a particular friend of mine. We had a headmistress – Miss Parsons, little short lady and Miss Foot, she came from Upwey, very nice teachers and we didn’t have any... we had to do what we were told but not like they have nowadays yeah, then we went to Icen Way Girls School, which is still in Fordington.

That was down on the corner of Icen Way itself, where Woods is now.

Yes, just a little way up from there. That was Icen Way Girls School.

Yes, that must have closed a long time ago.

Well, we had to... on days when the gas was particularly strong...

Because the gas works?

We had to go up to Salisbury Field to continue lessons.

You sat in the open did you?

We sat on the floor yes, on the grass and when the smell of the gas had gone, we were back in there.

Good gracious

We were mostly only in one room, yes, I remember Miss Vincent and Miss Templeman. So you know, they wouldn’t have it nowadays, not with gas would they?

It was bitterly cold, I remember, I had chilblains on my hands and my feet, it was so cold in there, no heating anywhere then, was there?

No, so if you had heating, it was just a coal fire.

Yes and of course, they wouldn’t have that in school

No, not particularly next to a gas works.

Certainly not no.

So, do you remember anything particularly about Mill Street?

Only going down there and also the river, we were always told it was dangerous, that somebody had drowned there.

So did you hear who that was or anything?

No, I can’t say I did because somebody drowned further up, more towards the back of the prison but that was because it was very windy but she wasn’t seen and she wasn’t found until a long time after and she was out, I suppose, out where the river went and they found her there.

Might be past Louds Mills.

Yes and she was found then, evidently the wind, it was a very strong wind, it had blown her into the river and she wasn’t seen for a long time and nobody knew where she had gone, she was a lady who lived on her own.

I mean, that was, the river’s not very deep is it, you wouldn’t think anything like that...

It was you see in those days, everything seemed deeper. I remember another couple, they were going home, they had one of those go into every pubs and there were a lot of pubs round there and they both fell in, I mean they weren’t drowned but they fell in. That went onto Mill Street.

You were saying something about Mr Keeping?

No, Mr Edwards. He was very good, very kind man, very good. He did a lot for Mill Street and the Children and you know, everybody thought he was absolutely wonderful. If they had any problems, they would see Mr Edwards about it.

He did something with the bathhouse?

Yes he made sure, nobody had anything like a sink to wash and he arranged for a bathhouse and I think they could take it in turns for so many girls and so many boys I suppose. I only knew about the girls

What did the boys do?

Well, the boys had a way of climbing up onto the roof, it must have been dangerous, made a little hole and they could look down you see; only we didn’t have a lot of fun in those days. I tell you...

Did you go to Sunday school down there?

No, I went to Sunday school at All Saints. Everyone went to Sunday school in those days. I went to All Saints Church then and I was confirmed at Al Saints, but of course All Saints is no longer there.

It’s closed isn’t it?

Yes, my children were christened at All Saints.

Where were you living then? At that time?

Down at 21 High Street in Fordington.

So you didn’t go to St Georges then?

No, never went to St Georges, I didn’t go to St Georges... Brian my brother was christened at St Georges. I think I might have been christened in Upwey where my mum was married. I’m not sure about that. I know I was christened and I know I was confirmed at All Saints. You used to have to wear all white and a veil then. They don’t do that now.

That was quite something.

Oh, yes, it was. The first time you took communion, you sat behind the rector’s wife. It was all done properly.

So, what did your dad do Joycie?

My dad was a butcher.

Where was his shop to?

There were 5 brothers , in the beginning there was my uncle Alb, he actually started the business, before that there was Marvin Lock, he bought the business from Marvin Lock and unfortunately, my uncle died at 36 watching something at Maumbury Rings.

What was that a heart attack?

Yes, I suppose it was in those days. He was a very big man. So the brothers took over the business. One brother was to do with the cars because we were about the first people in Dorchester to have a van and we have this van and the others, my dad was a rounds man, went all around the country with the meat and then we had a phone and that was Dorchester 104, the number and the rounds man would ring in and say what the orders were, you had to take that down and have them ready for him to deliver the next day. Had an errand boy.

With a bike?

Yes

With a basket on it?

Yes

What was his name?

Christopher was his surname, I can’t remember, I don’t expect we even knew it. Christopher was the errand boy.

So the shop was where then?

In North Square and my mother worked in a soldier’s home and that’s how she met my dad because it was almost on the doorstep, side by side.

What’s a soldier’s home?

A soldiers home was, I don’t know what it is there now but a soldiers homes was a very nice place run by, I forget her name, this lady was religious and she had a room upstairs, you know, where she talked to the soldiers because Dorchester then had a lot of soldiers and she would talk to them and also my mother also worked there and she made the sandwiches for them.

So, it was like a cafe or something was it?

Well it was like a big restaurant but it was just called the soldiers home.

They could just drop in?

Oh yes, they would just drop in and they used to make bread pudding and that was I think a penny and tuppence for a big square, well I used to go out of my dad’s office and go in and get one because my mother wasn’t really a cook, she didn’t like cooking and also when I was hungry, I used to get one of the butchers to cut me out a piece of raw suet and I used to eat the suet, just shows doesn’t it. You see, dad would come home and he would put a piece of fillet steak on and fry that and he got plenty of vegetables given to him on his country round but funnily enough I never liked meat until I had to buy it many years later.

Got fed up with it because that’s all you had at home all the time?

Yes, I never liked it.

Not like most people who don’t have very much, you only had as much as you wanted.

No, I didn’t really like it. My mum never ate... my mum lived to quite a good age but she only really ate chips so she didn’t eat meat either. I can see my dad now with a big piece of fillet steak. He’d come home and do that and Christmas, we had all the poultry hung up right outside the shop.

If you go into North Square, you’ve got the Corn Exchange on your right and St Peter’s on your left, where about’s was your shop.

Well, say you go round the Bow, where the church is and then you come across a little gate that you could go in the Church, well then you went a little way along and there was the head office for Voss’s and then it was the butcher shop, no windows or doors just shutters came down.

So it was open?

Right open to everything. In the middle was a block of wood that was what the meat was cut on.

So that would be somewhere round where the garage is now, it would be on that side would it?

Oh yes, qwikfit.

Just past qwikfit?

What the soldier’s home or the butchers shop.

The butchers shop.

The butchers shop was there.

Was it part of that qwikfit now?

Yes, there was the window, we could see out but they couldn’t see in, that was the head office and over that was where my auntie lived and Flynn her son and when they moved to Monmouth Road, that was all let to the Post Office people and the driving test took place in North Square in those days. The man who took the tests came on a bicycle. I can always remember this, he put his bike in the hall and when I went out I laddered my stockings, in those days, you couldn’t get stockings but we’d see the people come for their driving test and this man would look at them and then go off, he didn’t take very long and he would be back again.

So tests weren’t as rigorous as they are now?

No, my dad drove the van; he never ever did take a test.

Was your dad in the war?

In the First World War, all the men were and they lived in Durngate Street in... what is it now... I think it was an art craft...

Not the Potters Inn or something like that?

No further up than that and they had this house, I got this picture of them somewhere, outside the house in the back and because there was I think 10 children, my dad had to sleep on the veranda outside. When you think of it.

I remember you telling me once about what happened on a Saturday night in the butchers shop.

Oh yes, there was a market stall opposite and the other office girl which was Madge Swain but she was Madge Fry then and dad had the meat and they auctioned it till all the meat was sold.

You couldn’t go home till it was all gone?

No, we couldn’t go home or go out. These two boys we were friendly with used to patiently wait and there was Roberts’s sweets stall opposite us. You could get a really big piece of topside that went down for two shillings and of course people used to wait, they knew that it would be sold off then.

The price would go down?

Yes, there were two more butchers shops in the market house. One side was Bubeer and the other side was Mr Christopher.

That was Bill Chrstopher wasn’t it? No, it was his dad.

Was it Wilf?

Well it was Christopher on one side and Reg Bubeer the other.

So you had three butchers’ shops in....

In the market house, yes. There was a big Roberts from Weymouth come up with his sweet stall and Ronnie was selling the meat, there was nothing for horses to be ridden by, go in one entrance and go out the other.

There was second-hand clothes – Mrs Shornfield sold those. Yes, it was lovely

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