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

**Mill Street Memories – Valerie and Trevor Webb by Frank Voss**

Valerie – you were born down Mill Street I hear?

Yes I was born there in 1941. Most of our memories originate because we didn’t live there for very long after because we moved to Bockhampton. Most of our memories are of our grandmother who lived there and our Auntie lived there and also there was another auntie and cousin who lived up the top end towards the river.

One of the things I remember and Trevor remembers s well, where granny Rogers lived, her house backed onto the actual Mill Street Mission, so you could look out of her window and see the old hut. There was a little path that led to the front of the house and on the other side of the pathway were the gardens that they used to be able to do. Our favourite thing was eating the golden gooseberries.

Trevor: I remember eating them and I think on the other side was where the outhouse was?

Frank: Navi (?) Gail had a big old garage doors there, remember? Wooden doors. Next to the alleyway and Harrisons.

Trevor: I don’t remember.

Valerie: I thought there was a house between that alleyway and Harrisons, where the Boards used to live.

Frank: You can’t remember much about the war then Valerie because you were too young

Valerie: Yes, the only thing I can remember about the war and that was nothing to do with the mission was when we... because we moved from Mill Street out to Stinsford and we lived in the Old Manor House out there and one thing was we were at school in West Stafford school and this particular day, we were allowed to go home early because our Dad had come home from the war.

Trevor: I remember because I was born out there, where Mum and Dad were billeted, they separate the big house out there and that was where we were born so, on my birth certificate it says Stinsford Manor. Of course, we came in when I was about one year old.

Frank: You came back to Icen Way, not very far from Fordington is it?

Valerie: No and when we lived in Icen Way, I can remember going with my mum on a Tuesday afternoon, when they used to have the mothers union meeting in the mission. Lots of photographs of that around.

Frank: That favourite photograph of everybody. That was taken about 1950 ish, the kids our age.

Valerie: It might have even been a bit sooner than that. No, you’re probably right.

Frank: David Hallett’s in it and he looks about 5.

Frank: Do you remember when the sweets were on ration then?

Valerie: Yes, we used to go into Mutti Moore’s, if it wasn’t Mutti Moore’s it was... what was the name of the one at top, when we used to go up over the steps on the corner of Pound Lane?

Frank: Sophie Pope’s.

Valerie: Yes, that’s right.

Frank: Sophie Pope must have been 100 at least when we used to go.

Valerie: although we moved away and then when George and I got married, we moved back to Kings Road, so our children actually went to St Georges School, so we used to walk up the Mill Street all the time.

Frank: It had a bit of a reputation didn’t it, but not in our time.

Valerie: I don’t think so. Have you spoken to Colin Ackerman, he always said there was a gang, but I never noticed it.

Trevor: we were too young, they always said that they used to go around in two’s, whether that was right or not I don’t know. It was gradually emptying out when we down there messing about.

Frank: In the mid 60’s they started going.

Trevor: I can vaguely remember going through some of the old places when people had gone, messing about, probably with you and Keith Norman.

Frank: we didn’t like panes of glass being left probably, there was no lead left by the time we got round to it.

Trevor: yes, somebody already had that, we won’t mention what family. I can think of one of the top of my head.

Frank: They’ve already made a recording and admitted it.

Frank: Life seemed to revolve around the mission.

Valerie: It did. My mum had her funeral down there, I remember going there and then Hazel and John got married there and this is all because our grandparents were brought up there so we all went to the mission.

Frank: I know it’s a myth but it seems that all of the women’s thinking that Mr Edwards might throw them out of his house if they didn’t go to church but every woman went to church didn’t they?

Valerie: Yes, they did. I don’t think it was that, I think they liked.... mum used to go occasionally, not all the time but auntie Glad, she lived right opposite to him, and she went religiously, every week. I think they used it more as a social gathering than a church....

Frank: The kids used to go, I would say, just for the apple and orange at Christmas or for the Sunday school outings.

Trevor: Yes, go to Sunday school and get something or other.

Frank: We really used to know the time of year by the stories they used to tell us, the Easter stories etc and everyone remembered the stories off by heart.

Valerie: I wanted Keith to come down, he was coming, it was all planned but they had some problems in the end and he couldn’t come. He had lots of things to tell.

Frank: You went to Fordington High School I suppose we should call it?

Trevor: Yes

Valerie: Yes, I went there as well.

Valerie: We moved in from Stinsford I suppose in about 1946, so I went from about 5.

Frank: We started when we were 4.

Valerie: Yes, it was 4 because do you remember those little canvas beds that they used to pull out and you would have to go to sleep.

Frank: Everyone remembers lying down and going to sleep!

Frank: Did you like the teachers?

Valerie: Yes

Trevor: I can’t remember.

Valerie: One was Goodman??

Frank: Mrs Parsons was the Head and then Miss Palmer; Miss Palmer came from Dukes Avenue, Mrs King used to look after us while we had our sleep. Did you like the milk? That school put me off of warm milk. In the winter, they used to put the milk round that brazier; I can’t touch warm milk to this day. It was all free.

Trevor: I don’t know how far out around people would come to go to that school, I know I had to walk there, somebody had to walk me to school, probably you at some stage.

Frank: You must have been on the edge because I know that Monmouth Road way went to Maud Road and the other part of the town went to down over the Grove.

Trevor: Icen Way could have gone to the Grove; I think that Fordington was the nearest one.

Valerie: It was probably the nearest but I think it was probably the connection. Icen Way did come under Fordington.

Frank: The trouble is, Fordington, believe it or not, Poundbury’s Fordington, this is Fordington. Castle Park is Fordington. The only Dorchester is the part within the walls, the bit in the middle.

Valerie: The barracks they classed as Fordington West.

Frank: It’s weird because we think of Fordington as from the church that side. Even Salisbury Field wasn’t Fordington to us. We were Mill Street; we belonged to the Mill Street gang. It wasn’t a gang as such.

Valerie: when they started to clear all of the houses and that, they opened up the pot didn’t they.

Valerie: Had anyone ever said... this is just a vague memory but did anyone mention the Americans being in Mill Street at anytime?

Frank: No I don’t think so.

Valerie: well at the back of my mind, I seem to remember auntie Glad saying something about the Americans being down there, billeted somewhere.

Trevor: Might have been, they were all over the place weren’t they.

Frank: My auntie was Cheddars mother in Hardy Avenue and they had Americans.

Trevor: A lot of people took them in didn’t they?

Valerie: Perhaps that was what she was talking about. She used to chat on but I can’t remember.....

Frank: She was a nice woman, I didn’t like her husband very much but she was alright.

Trevor: No, he wasn’t the most popular person. Glad was very good.

Frank: we have people who didn’t like kids when we were walking up Mill Street; they used to shout out get on out the way.

Trevor: Yes, get on out the way, where you from? Mill Street? Get on.

Valerie: I used to babysit for Keith, not that I’m that much older than him and we were sat on the steps outside and of course the Harrisons lived across the road and they had these air rifles that they started shooting, she went out and gave them what for. That was how you were then wasn’t it. If the children were out there playing, you soon went out there and ......

Frank: There was no traffic about either when we were growing up, we could play in the roads all day.

Valerie: We did used to go out all day, we used to go out in the morning and go off ...

Frank: Remember the hooter at Eddisons? When he went off, you knew it was getting near dinnertime. It went again at 4.30pm.

Trevor: Didn’t Lott and Walne’s have something similar?

Frank: They had a bell didn’t they? We used to go out to Bockhampton Path.

Valerie: We used to go as far as Swyre’s Lane because there was a field out there called Aeroplane Field, can you remember that?

Frank and Trevor: No

Frank: I remember Mushroom Field which is now the showground; we used to go camping out Swyre’s Lane.

Valerie: and did you go swimming in the river?

Frank: Oh yes

Trevor: I obviously didn’t learn very well because I still can’t swim very well.

Valerie: I didn’t learn at all did I.

Frank: No, you used to sunbathe.

Frank: After that then, you went to Modern School the same, we all followed on.

Valerie: We went to Maud Road first and the boys went to Colliton Street.

Frank: Did you find that coming from Mill Street had any throwbacks, held you back?

Valerie: No. We’re moving back down to Fordington, to the new houses down there and I feel that it’s going home. It’s almost like coming full circle.

Frank: You did this jumping on again, the Mill Street down there now is nowhere so good as it was.... the houses are better but the people together.....

Valerie: No community.

Trevor: Well there’s nothing holding them together I suppose.

Trevor: In those days, not only was the mission holding them together but it was the pub as well, wasn’t it. I mean, the Swan was the centre of everything and the mission was the centre of everything, the two conflicted each other but they were both certainly, the things that drew people in. They had skittles teams, darts teams, outings.

Frank: We never had television either.

Trevor: Not until 19 whatever it was and the Coronation was on the radio.

Valerie: People were poor weren’t they but they helped each other. I remember being at granny Rogers one time, you used to have the tally man come round and everyone had a tally man. Sometimes, she would say ‘Sshh’ and we would have to sit and be quiet until he had gone away.

Frank: Not Mr Bags when he used to come round and open up the gas meter, remember Mr Bags, give you your rebate.

Valerie: Mr Harrington, from Princes Street, I went and worked for him after I got married. He used to come round to Mill Street, years and years before he opened his shop, he used to bring round a bag of stuff and showed you it and you ordered whatever.

Frank: I was still wearing my father’s army uniform; everybody had a great coat on the bed.

Trevor: When did you have long trousers though?

Frank: I was about 12 years old before I had my first pair of long ones.

Valerie: You had to go to Modern School before you had long pants.

Frank: Now everyone’s gone back and wants to wear shorts – that’s weird.

Trevor: There probably wasn’t a postman down Mill Street.

Frank: We had a post box at the bottom of Holloway Road, right opposite where we lived, at the entrance to the flats.

Frank: it’s funny, how us three here haven’t gone away yet some people you never thought would go away have gone all around the world, different corners and all stem from Mill Street.

Trevor: Does anyone know who has gone the farthest from Mill Street? Tavi, I suppose.

Frank: He’s come back but he’s not Mill Street.

Trevor: There isn’t that many Mill Street people when you think about it, people that we know –there isn’t that many. Mike Hallett – well that’s not Mill Street is it?

Valerie: Well, I don’t suppose.

Trevor: Yourself – where you lived in Kings Road.

Frank: I’ve lived in Holloway Road and Kings Road.

Trevor: well there you are then you see.

Valerie: Win lived in Mill Street didn’t she?

Frank: Yes, number 1.

Frank: We always count Mill Street, Hardye’s Avenue and Holloway as Mill Street. My family goes back 2-300 years all from Mill Street area. Most of them were farm labourers, nobody went anywhere.

Valerie: Granny Rogers, we found that she was Burt before she was married and they originated from Bradford Peverell.

Frank: You got more happier times in Mill Street than you got bad ones?

Valerie: Yes, I should say.

Trevor: We’ve got no regrets.

Valerie: I don’t know where people got that, that it was a place to be afraid of.

Trevor: Well, it was the conditions, I expect.

Frank: My wife admits that she was told to hold her nose and run past.

Trevor: How far back does Mill Street go, I mean, you’re talking about when Granny Rogers was there, but how long did it go back before then. You’re talking about when they were throwing the effluent out in the streets and all that, well it would have been a place to avoid wouldn’t it? At least they had some sort of sanitation down there.

Valerie: Probably when Granny Rogers lived there, it was probably coming out of that.

Frank: When she was there, don’t forget Hardye’s Avenue wasn’t there, that was a flood plain. Holloway Road, you know the tall pavement with the railings, the houses used to come right out, those railings were the fronts of the houses. We’ve got the old maps showing that.

Valerie: One of the maps I saw, you know when you left the bridge when you go up to Holloway Road; just this side, there was a couple of houses where Margaret Turnbull used to live. They didn’t seem to be on there.

Trevor: What opposite where auntie Glad lived?

Valerie: There were two houses that looked down Mill Street. If you walked up to Mill Street....

Frank: Yes, the other side of Chapel Square? One was Andrews, Andrews lived in the one near the river and Turnbulls on the outside.

Valerie: I didn’t see them on that map.

Frank: They was there, don’t forget the road was a lot narrower then than what they are now.

Valerie: Also, if you went down beyond that....

Frank: There were some the other way, before you got to Mushroom Bridge.

Valerie: There was, where our cousin Lilt, she lived in a sort of double fronted house up there, I don’t think that was on their either.

Frank: It changed so much, because there were a lot with thatched roofs, well, I can’t ever remember a thatched roof. Where the Ottens, the Barretts and the Baileys lived, there was a shop there, Reggie Barrett had a shop there, it wasn’t a shop like in our time, it had a shop window there.

Trevor: Where the Ottens did live, that was put up after wasn’t it?

Valerie: No, they were the original houses.

Trevor: They were renovated later on then?

Frank: Yes, the walls are exactly the same but everything else is new.

Trevor: That had a little sort of thing going alongside, a little rectangular....

Frank: They had a garden or allotments

Valerie: Isn’t that where Tiddler Damen lived? Didn’t the Ottens sort of come down.

Valerie: So if you came down there, where did Pete Symes and them live, were they that side or back up?

Frank: I thought they were farther up towards the back, what we call bank.

Valerie: That’s where the houses were that I was talking about, where it was one of a set. Because they were right opposite Symes.

Frank: There was a big hatch there, never used in our time to stop the Mill being flooded, they opened it up and let the water run all the way down and around to London Road, because there were no houses in London Road then.

Valerie: I can remember Dad telling us a story about; I don’t know what fish they had, whether it was salty or whatever it was. They got as far as Noah’s Ark, apparently, these fish must have been salty or something and him and Uncle Edward, so they dropped the fish in the water and dragged it all the way down to get rid of the salt.

Trevor: I thought you were going to say eels, there were eels under there.

Frank: I’ve never tried eel, I couldn’t eat it. The ducks down there now, 50-60 ducks, in our time, there wouldn’t have been any, they would have been on somebody’s plate come Sunday.

Valerie: Was Mutti Moore’s the only shop there.

Frank: There was Mutti Moore’s shop, there was a shop at the bottom of Holloway Road before our time where Minterne’s lived, they had a shop window there, it was there front room window which was the fourth house up from the end. Remember the Minterne’s?

Valerie: Yes, it does ring a bell.

Trevor: If you go round some small villages if you are out and about, you can see places that were shops can’t you?

Frank: Yes, all I can remember is Mutti Moore’s and Pope’s plus Forresters down the other side. There was a pub up Mill Street somewhere. Long before our time.

Trevor: Swan’s has got a date on the side hasn’t it?

Valerie: No, that’s on the houses.

Frank: That was Tubbs Row in the old times. I never knew that.

Frank: Something like 1895 isn’t it.

Trevor: Was there a sweet factory along there?

Frank: Right next to Hardye’s Avenue.

Valerie: Where the Tyre place is.

Frank: The wasps in the summer. If they broke a jar, they used to throw it out and bring the wasps in. We used to get a few now and again but not very often. We all remember the twice a day Daubenays cows being brought in to be milked and all the roads would be covered in cow’s .... Up over Fordington Hill, I remember, they could get up when it was icy a couple of times and they stayed on the ground where they fell down until the ice melted. That was a long time before milking parlours.

Trevor: I remember poor old Tommy Morris when he moved into under the flats; he had his own workshop there.

Valerie: There was a hairdresser there before that. Peggy Harris’s brother.

Frank: He must have been the worst hairdresser in the world, we all went there and were lucky to come out without a bit of blood on you.

Frank: When he left Tommy had it.

Valerie: It is happy memories Frank.

Frank: I’m proud to come from Mill Street. You didn’t choose where you were born, you just made it better. My father would never have dreamt of having what I’ve got and his father didn’t think of having what he had.

Valerie: I think in our time, we’ve seen huge changes.

Frank: I think we were lucky being born at the end of the war.

Trevor: We just caught the end of rationing but it didn’t affect us did it. I remember going down to the shop in Icen Way with the rationing books.

Frank: You didn’t have sweets then. We used to have a carrot rather than a sweet at that time.

Valerie: At Christmas, you had your stocking and an orange and an apple at the bottom that was a real treat.

Frank: We all went scrumping didn’t we and had stomach ache, because they were all cookers. You could never find an eating apple could you. We never gave them time to grow big.

Valerie: I think that’s why I liked those gooseberries so much.

Frank: My old man had an allotment and I only used to go down there when the strawberries and the gooseberries were about.

Valerie: They had to grow their own then didn’t they?

Trevor: I don’t know if the carts ever went down there did they, the vegetable people?

Frank: Do you remember Mary Bugs; she was always at home for an hour on Sunday mornings.

Valerie: They used to bring the mackerel around on the trucks.

Trevor: There were plenty of them in those days, weren’t there.

Frank: The ice cream man used to come round as well didn’t he.

Trevor: I don’t know.

Valerie: You always used to have ice cream.

Trevor: Did I?

Frank: Grew up on ice cream.

Valerie: I remember the ice cream man used to come and mum wasn’t very well a lot of the time and she promised me that I could have this ice cream, when it came and he came and she was fast asleep and I didn’t like to wake her up so I thought, I would get the money out of her purse... and went and bought an ice cream. That was a big mistake!

I thought that I was just being.... but to touch her purse and take some money out that was really, really bad.