The Friends of Chain Bridge Forge
Interview with Keith Seaton

Prepared By:	Geoff Taylor	
Business Name:	The Friends of Chain Bridge Forge	
Address:	Site Address: High Street Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 1TX	Postal Address: 107 Hawthorn Bank Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 1JQ
Tel. Number:	07960 587724	
E-mail Website	chainbridgeforge@googlemail.com	

Comprising the following recordings

File identification	Date	Interviewer/Interviewee
Keith Seaton		Geoff Taylor/Keith Seaton

FILE DETAILS

Audio Length: *99 minutes*

Audio Quality: ☒ **High** ☐ **Average** ☐ **Low**

Number of Facilitators: *One*
Number of Interviewees: *One*
Difficult Interviewee Accents: ☐ *Yes* ☒ *No*
Other Comments: *Local historical knowledge used throughout.*

START OF TRANSCRIPT

Facilitator: Here we are doing an oral history. Keith Seaton is our victim or guinea pig, whichever we want to call him. It's Geoff Taylor doing the interview. Keith - the year that you were born.

Interviewee: 11 June, 1939.

Facilitator: So you've got lots of local memories. Talk a little bit about your grandparents. What were your memories of your grandparents?

Interviewee: My grandfather was a baker. He had the bake-house behind 3 and 4 Commercial Road. The bake-house was actually in Willow Walk. He was a baker from early in the 1900s - about 1906 or 1907 I think, somewhere around there. Grandmother was the daughter of a ship's captain - master mariner - who sailed his vessel in and out of Spalding as did his father before him.

They lived just a couple of doors away from the bake-house, or great-grandfather did. So obviously Grandfather met her when he moved to the bakery about that time, because previously he had been a journeyman baker with a firm in Winsover Road, Spalding, before that.

Facilitator: So he set himself up in his own business. Was it a baker's before he bought it?

Interviewee: There was a bakery there previously looking back in records. It had been used by two or three different bakers, but I'm not sure how long it had been there. It was quite an old bakery. The oven was heated by coke - stoke hole sort of thing - and it had a great big long chimney that stood quite a long way up above the bakery. It was a brick oven with a metal-plated bottom and a big arched brick roof to it.

Facilitator: So you must have had lots of memories of nice warm bread and the smell of them in the morning when you got up.

Interviewee: Well, we lived in Albert Street, which was not so far away, but father worked in the bakery and I did used to go up there. By the time I could walk reasonably on my own, maybe when I was five or six, when I started school, I passed it every day and would call in there - probably pop in to see what they were doing on the way to school and on the way home. At lunch times later on I came home at lunch time to the bakery when my lunch would be a twist with a bit of butter in it. I can't remember ever having any cheese. It was in the war time.

I think we got butter because Granddad also owned a farm at Gedney Hill, which he inherited from his father. So we did used to get a bit of butter rather than the rations that other people had.

Facilitator: When you talk about a twist, what did a twist look like?

Interviewee: Later on I would make my own twist on the way to school. You had three smallish pieces of dough, which were rolled out, thick in the middle, trailing out to each end. Then you put them together and plaited from the middle to one end, turned it round and plaited out to the other end. That was the twist. It would go in the oven obviously in time for me getting back to the bakery at lunch time. It would be still warm and I had it.

Facilitator: So fond memories of the bakery.

Interviewee: Oh yeah, and the smell of course all the time, yes.

Facilitator: The bakery then, would it be just baking bread and cakes?

Interviewee: That time of day in the war time it was only bread. It was only fairly plain. They'd do a wholemeal sort of bread, then a more white flour bread, but not as white as bread is today, because the flour was maybe a bit rougher then. They did ordinary loaves in tins. They would do steamed loaves, which was a different sort of loaf that was done in tins, with lids on that shut down, and then they put them on a tray of water. It was steamed - a steam loaf.

Some of the bread was also done on the oven floor as well. They fetched all the bread out from the back of the oven with what they called a peel, which was like a very flat shovel on the end of a long, long pole. That would go in and out of the oven. It was very sharp and thin on the edge. Slide it under the bread or under the tins and haul them out. But the bakery was very narrow, so they had sacks at the window to keep the draught of the cold out, but the peel would go out of the windows and back in, and anyone walking by had to watch out for that.

Facilitator: Roughly how many loaves of bread would they have made in a day?

Interviewee: I can't really remember. They provided bread for the local community. I'm not sure in the early days - I can't remember that far back - what sort of vehicle we had, but Father went out with the bread, took it all the way down to Wragg Marsh, right to the end of the road to Caudwell's Farm, which was the last one, on one day; and then come back via Weston and Weston Hills and the land settlement to come back home - did a circular trip round.

On the other day he did what they called a town round, which was over the river to Willesby Road and round Roman Bank, Queen's Road and all those sort of areas, more local on the other day.

They also employed a boy - I think his name was Peter Croft –who lived in Albion Street. He rode a bicycle with a large basket at the front and the back. He did deliveries local - say, High Street, Albion Street and more local round. Grandfather also had a handcart, which was a covered cart with two wheels and shafts in it, but he didn't have a horse in it; he pulled it himself. He did also very local deliveries in the handcart.

I remember in the wintertime when the road was icy and slippery he used to put yeast bags on his feet over his boots and tie them on to get a bit more grip. I remember him saying that if he got near a bit of a hill, children would give him a help and give him a push sometimes.

Facilitator: Obviously it was fairly flat round here. So his day must have started, what, three in the morning?

Interviewee: They got the dough mixed and ready in the evening, and then were up early in the morning - four, five o'clock - to bake. It was left in - there was a big bin. It must have been about ten foot long and three feet or more deep and three or four feet wide. This big bin - they'd mix the flour and the water and the yeast in for the bread. There was a chute made up of flower sacks sewn together from the loft above. They would tip the flower down this into the bin and then mix it in there with a big paddle - a single-bladed paddle like you would have in a canoe.

They mixed it in there and of course they left it in there to raise, to prove. Then when they took all that dough out, they had a big lid that went on the top of the bin where they rolled on the lid.

Facilitator: Your dad also worked in the same...

Interviewee: Yeah, Father was the assistant. He was a master baker himself later when Grandfather retired.

Facilitator: So your father took over the business from your grandfather, and he then ran it as a business.

Interviewee: That's right.

Facilitator: Was it a thriving business?

Interviewee: It was fine until the supermarkets started, I suppose, or bread was supplied from away. But Father, he got out of the business just previous to the supermarkets and that sort of thing happening, because he had a bad bout of bronchitis and pneumonia one winter. The doctor said, if you don't give this up, you'll soon be dead, because it was...

Facilitator: So it was very taxing for - it was hard work and demanding work.

Interviewee: That's right. Grandfather had retired more or less as soon as the war finished. Father took over full-time then. He only had the one assistant. Grandfather would come in sometimes, I think, afterwards and maybe give a hand sometimes, but he'd more or less retired.

So Father sold the business to another baker that lived and had his bakery at Gosberton. Jimmy Baker was his name. He was expanding, but he wanted a shop in Spalding. At that time of day you had to have licences for various shops, I believe. We'd got a licence for the shop in the front that went with our bakery. So he bought that licence off Father.

Father continued with his bread rounds, but he didn't do any more baking after round about 1947, that would be probably. He would go to Gosberton and collect his bread in the mornings and then do his rounds and everything, then go and collect another lot the next day. So he kept all his customers on for a number of years until Jimmy Baker went out of business, which was probably brought on because of the supermarkets

stocking bread then. Then Father went to work as a meter reader and collector of shillings at the gas works.

Facilitator: Were you tempted to every go into the bakery business?

Interviewee: Well, I didn't really have the chance, because it had all finished before I even went to the secondary school.

Facilitator: So it wasn't an option for you.

Interviewee: It wasn't really an option, no.

Facilitator: I know with your grandfather in the forge we have skates - pastimes that they - was skating a major thing when Cowbit Wash was iced over?

Interviewee: It was in the winter, yeah. Grandfather was founder member of the Spalding Cycling Club. He was president for something like 50 years, probably - quite a long time. I've got an old wallet that is embossed on it that was given to him by the Cycling Club to commemorate so many years. They were founder members, my father and my uncle in the 30s probably. So they started that up. In the summer they were very keen on cycling. Before the war they were racing. Afterwards Father didn't do any more cycling apart from - I can't remember he every hardly had a cycle. I remember him cycling home in the war time from the Home Guard, but after that when I went to secondary school, I had his racing bike and I don't think he ever used it again.

He had a little Moulton cycle that belonged to the gas company that he used to ride round when he was doing his collecting.

Facilitator: When you were talking about a Moulton cycle...

Interviewee: That's one of those little very small-wheeled things. A small cycle that came out - quite small wheels. They used to put them in the back of a van, then they took turns to drive the van and they dropped the collectors off in different areas, and then go and pick them up later on. That's the only cycling he did after that.

Facilitator: It's something that doesn't happen today, isn't it, because going and collecting money like that is something that we don't tend to do. It was very prevalent, wasn't it?

Interviewee: Yes. Nowadays they have a sort of - they read the meter and put it on a digital thing, don't they? But in those days they collected the money. When they got back to the gasworks or before they went back, they had to cash up and take the money to the bank. So they'd put it in the bank bags and go and bank the money each day.

I've still got a number of very old shillings somewhere that the bank gave him back and he had to make up the money, because they didn't weigh right, because they were too thin. There were one or two old Georgian and Victorian well-worn shillings that they wouldn't accept any more.

Facilitator: Accept as legal tender. What are your memories of that in a time - have you got a funny story of then that you - something that typifies your grandfather and your father?

Interviewee: I know the peel probably knocked a few people off bikes. I was caught maybe a few times on the way by the pole going out. I've heard it said that Grandfather gave them a loaf of bread to keep them quiet.

I believe the early hours of the morning they'd often - the local police constable would pop in to get warm against the fire and the stoke hole bit and probably have a cup of tea, because there was a water boiler above it as well with a tap that they could make a pot of tea. They'd come in and get warm and have a pot of tea.

Facilitator: Let's move on to your childhood. You said originally you lived in Albert Road.

Interviewee: In Albert Street, yeah.

Facilitator: That is where you were brought up. What sort of house was it?

Interviewee: It was the third one in a long - the middle one actually in a block of five. They were two up, two down, with a built-on back kitchen and a washhouse with a big brick copper that was heated with wood underneath and boiled the water up for the washing.

There was a well in the back yard with a metal cover. There was a big sink with a hand-pump that pumped the water up. We must have had other water as well laid on, but that was fine for washing and that sort of thing.

We had in the living room, the back - what was called the living room - because we very rarely went in the front room as I remember. That was very high days and holiday's, they kept the front room for. There was a big black leaded grate with an oven one side and a boiler thing the other side, and a bit that swung out to put a kettle on.

Mother used to - I remember her getting on her hands and knees and black-leading it till it shone. We would sit in front of that. It was coke and coal, I suppose. That had to be cleaned out in the morning and re-done every day, because it would go out at night.

Facilitator: Were you given household chores? Was that a regular part of - did you get pocket money in those days, do you remember?

Interviewee: I can't remember doing any household chores, not in that house. Pocket money - I can't really remember pocket money. I don't think we had any pocket money in those days or treats. Sweets were on rations, so we got very little of that until they came off rations, which was later on in the 50s. So I can't remember many treats.

Facilitator: Did you ever go on holiday?

Interviewee: Not in those days. No holidays in the war time. After Granddad retired, we moved into the house next to the bake-house. So we moved, and he moved to another house in Albert Street further down that he had bought previously for retirement. The people that had rented that then moved into the house that we lived in in Albert Street, so it was a three-way move on a certain day, which would be about 1946 or 1947, somewhere round there.

It was before 1947, because I remember when the floods were on in 1947 and the river came nearly up to the bottom of Chain Bridge. Our back road in Willow Walk flooded back up the sinks. Our cellar was flooded nearly to the top step, because the water soaked through the floor. So it was before 1947 when we moved.

Facilitator: I guess that was probably done on a Sunday, because everyone worked from Monday to Saturday.

Interviewee: It must have been over a weekend probably. Mind you, we hadn't got a lot to move, I don't think, furniture-wise. There wouldn't have been a lot of things to move. But I remember they did - I think they hired a lorry or had a lorry from somewhere. I remember they were putting stuff through the window above the shop from Commercial Road side. The old sash windows - they took the sash windows out of the frame so they could put stuff through the window. So everything was put into the house from the front window either through the shop front or through above it.
The 4 Commercial Road had a shop, a front room and a back room with another black lead stove, which Mother wasn't very happy about, but Grandmother very rarely ever did any cooking on that stove. She would put anything that she was cooking in the big bread oven to one side. If there was a joint of meat or something for the Sunday, that would go in the oven on the Saturday, because they kept the oven going, because you couldn't let it go cold.
So they did keep it going over the weekend. Then people down the road I think used to sometimes bring the joints up on a Saturday evening, put them in and slow cook them overnight as well.

Facilitator: I presume that bread - did they bake on a Sunday or not in those days?

Interviewee: No, but Sunday evening they would have to get the dough mixed and ready for Monday morning, yeah.

Facilitator: Ready for the following day.

Interviewee: They'd have to get it ready.

Facilitator: Did you all go to church on Sunday? Was that a regular part of your...

Interviewee: Yes, we walked up to church on the Sunday morning. Mother and Father used to go and myself and my brother. He joined the choir, and then when I was about six, I was in the choir as well. Then we used to go to evensong as well in those days. So we went to church twice a day.

Facilitator: When you were young did you ever go to hospital? Was there sickness in the family?

Interviewee: I never went into hospital.

Facilitator: I guess most of the people - you didn't go to shops as such. Local tradesmen came round and delivered vegetables. Or were there shops?

Interviewee: I can't really remember anybody delivering vegetables. My father, because he had rounds down the Marsh and the land settlement, he would always come back with vegetables. In fact sometimes I think he was probably paid in vegetables for the bread, so it was a sort of bartering thing.
I don't think we did too bad during the war for rations, because he'd come home with the odd rabbit and things from the Marsh. I think the farming community didn't do too bad in the war time, because they always had something on the go.

Facilitator: Did you ever - fishing from the river - did you ever go out and get fish that supplemented your diet?

Interviewee: No, we never fished, apart from eeling. We did go totting for eels, but we never ate the eels. They either went back if they were small or maybe sell one or two to a chap down the road that enjoyed eating them, but we never did. I can't remember really having a lot of fish in those days. I know we had whale meat from the butcher in Albion Street once or twice maybe. Perhaps we didn't know when we were having whale meat.

Facilitator: Of course horse was probably something that was a regular part of the diet? You didn't know.

Interviewee: No, I wouldn't know. We kept pigs, because we had a big yard opposite in Willow Walk. We kept pigs. We kept chickens for the eggs. I can't remember Father making a lot of cakes, but he did make cakes later on. That's when stuff was off ration more, because I remember sitting on the top of the bin and him icing cakes for weddings. But that would be quite a bit after, maybe when sugar was off rations more.

But I do remember previous to that one Christmas coming up to Grandfather's house and him having a Christmas cake that had marzipan on it with little round balls of marzipan but no icing, because they just couldn't get the icing sugar then. But after 1947 I think you could start getting some. They probably saved up their sugar rations if there was a wedding on the go.

Facilitator: In terms of getting wheat and yeast and the components of bread, that wasn't rationed as such.

Interviewee: No. The bakers had to have it, didn't they, so it wasn't - I suppose there was a supply according to the amount of customers perhaps, because you would have the coupons to send in. I remember Mother sitting there and cutting coupons or doing something.

Facilitator: They sent those off to the Government, did they?

Interviewee: They would send off, yeah. They'd go off.

Facilitator: We're now going to go on and talk about school. Where did you go to school? What was primary school? What age did you go to school?

Interviewee: I think I must have gone to school about the age of five to the Westlode Street School. That's where the police station is now. It was there. Of course that was when the war was still on. I remember before that I'd had a red and blue Mickey Mouse gas mask that had a sort of flap on it. I remember that. It was exchanged for the plain black one in a cardboard box with a bit of string on that you had to take with you.

We did have a few, whether they were air raid warnings or practices, I don't know, but when we had to go out of class and all go to the air raid shelter. Many of them might have been just practices, but I think I do remember the air raid sirens going off and later the different sound when the all-clear came, but never knew whether it was an air raid or just a practice.

There was a lot of aircraft used to go over of course. I do remember before we moved to Commercial Road standing down the bottom of the garden in Albert Street in my mother's arms - probably one of my first

memories - with this Mickey Mouse gas mask thing when there was a dog fight going on overhead.

Now, why we all got out of the house and went to the bottom of the garden to watch, I don't know. I would have thought we might have been under the table but we weren't; we were all - the neighbours, everybody was down the bottom of the garden watching. I believe our chap came off worse and crashed somewhere. Whether he bailed out or not, I don't know.

Facilitator: Presumably that was one of the first memories and probably a very occasional dog fight that happened.

Interviewee: That is quite an early memory, yeah, before we moved.

Facilitator: What was school like? What were your memories of school?

Interviewee: When we first started I remember we used to have lessons in the morning. It would probably be learning the alphabet and things and times tables, which you recited parrot-fashion, starting with the two times and working your way up through the years. I suppose learning about pounds, shillings and pence for mathematics. Learning the alphabet of course and learning to write.

I can't remember having slates and chalk. We may have had. I don't remember. I can't really remember that, but I remember we must have started with pencils and later on we had pen and ink. The ink was horrible black stuff. You used to get as much on your fingers as - they were very primitive sort of pens.

Facilitator: Did you have the desks with little inkwells at the end?

Interviewee: We had desks with little inkwells sort of in them.

Facilitator: You had a pen that you used to stick into this...

Interviewee: Yeah, a pen and...

Facilitator: You'd scratch your writing...

Interviewee: Oh, terrible things. The nibs would get crossed sometimes and then the writing was awful. You had to ask if you could have a new nib and they used to say, what have you done? You've pressed on too hard.

But the early days I remember we used to have a sleep in the afternoon. They had a room that had a lot of sort of camp beds in. We all went and lay down and had a sleep for an hour or something in the afternoon. That must have been the first year at school. I remember that.

We didn't have a playing field or anything. We had quite a big playground, which is now where the car park for the police station is. It slopped a long way down. It slopped from Westlode Street down. In the winter when it was snow and ice we made a fantastic slide once all the way down. We were having great fun until the caretaker came out and put salt on it to stop us. I remember that quite well.

We used to play - in the breaks we would play marbles and play ball of course sometimes. Cigarette cards was another thing, where you threw the cigarette cards towards the wall. If yours fell on top of somebody else's you claimed it. That was a big thing.

Facilitator: To do that you would have probably gone across Albert Bridge presumably.

Interviewee: Oh yeah, every day across the Albert Bridge, hoping that a barge would come up so the bridge would swing and then we'd be late for school and everybody this side of the river would be late then Banks Dodd would put the chain across and wind the bridge open. Sometimes if you were lucky he'd maybe let one or two stand on the bridge fairly close to where he was, when it swung round to the back of the forge.
I can never remember it swinging the other way. They probably swung it the other way when vessels were going back down, but that was probably when we were at school later in the day maybe, before we came home. I could never remember seeing it going the other way, but I think it did. I think Geoff said it could go both ways.

Facilitator: I didn't realise that. I thought it just came round this way, up against the forge.

Interviewee: The back of the forge, yeah.

Facilitator: So it could also go the other way.

Interviewee: I think it could swing the other way. I could never remember it going the other way.

Facilitator: Looking back did you like your junior school? Was it a pleasant experience?

Interviewee: Yeah. I haven't got any bad experience of it. We had some decent teachers. I think the headmaster was a Mr Needs. The only other two I can remember - there was a Mr Playford - very tall chap - and a Miss Pretty was the first one, I think. She was quite nice. There must have been maybe one or two more, but I can't remember.
I don't suppose it was - there weren't so many children at the school. There were probably only about three or four classes. Those days there was probably a class for each year. Maybe a class of 25 or something for each year going through.

Facilitator: So there was only one class per year?

Interviewee: I think there was probably only about one class per year there. I can't remember any more, no, because in the year I was there, of course it was a mixed class, but I don't think there was more than one class for the year. Not that I can remember.

Facilitator: Friends from that period of time - did you have many friends?

Interviewee: Yeah, because it was a fairly close community round this area. Most of the people of my age who went to the school and the year above, I would know. Later on some of them went with me to the Gleed School. One or two of the cleverer ones went to the grammar school, because you had the 11-plus then of course, which I didn't take.
The day we had the 11-plus I skived off and didn't go, because my brother was at the Gleed School and I wanted to go to the Gleed School the same as him. I got into trouble later on when it was found out that I didn't actually go to the exam. I would probably have failed anyway.

Facilitator: So what happened to you when they found out?

Interviewee: Mother wasn't very pleased. I think Dad just laughed. He was very easy-going. Mother was more the disciplinarian in the family than Father.

Facilitator: School days - we've talked about primary school. Then you went to the Gleed School. You were there till how old?

Interviewee: Till 15 - left at 15. I went on Father's racing bike when I started that school. Some of the pals - they lived in Albert Street and that sort of area - had bikes and some didn't. I used to cross bar one or two to school sometimes and they used to like to have a go on the bike. It was only a front brake and fixed wheel. It used to kick them off sometimes. They weren't quite used to it.

Facilitator: Have you kept in touch with many of your friends from school?

Interviewee: I know them. I'm acquainted to them but not that close. If I see them in the town we'll stop and say hello, but not got really close friends from school.

Facilitator: Your pastimes when you were at school - you were obviously into cycling.

Interviewee: I didn't do a lot of cycling - only to school and back. In the summer holidays we used to go on bikes out into the countryside and do things - just go exploring and bird's-nesting and things like that, in those days.

Facilitator: There'd be no restrictions? Presumably you'd say you'd be off in the morning…

Interviewee: We'd go off in the morning and come home for tea, sort of time. We'd go quite a long way sometimes on the bikes. It wasn't really for the pleasure of cycling; it was probably more for getting up to mischief.

Facilitator: You left school. What were your plans when you left school? Did you have any?

Interviewee: At school I'd started off in metalwork. The second year I went into woodwork. I quite liked woodwork and I wanted to go into the timber trade as a carpenter originally. The other option I had - I thought I'd like to go into the printing trade maybe. I tried for a job at the Free Press, but because my brother was already working at the Free Press, they had a policy where they didn't have two people from the same family or something like that.

The other option I had was a job for Tussy Ford. They had a printing works at the top of Albert Street, but I'd had a clip on the ear from him before for playing on his roof - on the factory roof. So I didn't really fancy working with him. So I got a job at Groom's.

Facilitator: We'll talk a bit more about work in a minute. You talked about getting a clip round the ear. Was that from Mum and Dad?

Interviewee: No, that was from Tussy Ford; that was from him.

Facilitator: Was that typical that people would chastise you by…

Interviewee: Yeah, I suppose in those days. If you got caught riding without lights on your bike, you'd probably get a clip from the policeman in those days and didn't think any more of it, because we used to go scrumping in the orchards for apples and that sort of thing. If you were caught, you would expect to get a clip round the ear or something or a kick up the backside for your troubles. In those days it wasn't - it was just a thing that happened.

I was never into cycling that much because I was in the cubs and scouts, and of course through that I got more into canoeing and then into sailing. But that wasn't through the scouts. I don't quite know how I got into that.

Facilitator: We didn't talk about that side of your life, did we?

Interviewee: No. I sort of fancied - somewhere along the line I was drawn to the river, put it that way. I suppose I was drawn to the river.

Facilitator: You were scouting. Were you a sea scout as well?

Interviewee: We were only ordinary land scouts until later when - later on after I'd done my National Service and came out I was a leader. I changed the scouts to sea scouts, but it suited me. All the parents and the boys didn't object.

But it was at the time that there were changes going on in the scout movement. They were changing from the old uniform with shorts to a more modern uniform. Because of that they'd got to have a change of uniform anyway, so they hadn't got the expense of changing from one uniform to the other, because they would have had to have bought new for ordinary scouts anyway.

Facilitator: So scouting is something that you have done for the majority of your life really.

Interviewee: That's right.

Facilitator: And it has changed considerably since its inception.

Interviewee: Very much, yeah. I suppose the organisation now is much more controlled than it was. There are so many things you can't do without having the right qualifications, whereas a leader or a scout in the 50s and 60s, you could be a jack of all trades, do everything you wanted. Now you have to have mountain leadership certificates, certificates to take them camping, certificates for water activities and everything else.

Facilitator: Do you think that stops youngsters experiencing all sorts of things?

Interviewee: No, it doesn't stop them, because they'll probably get more opportunity to do different things now than they ever did. Some groups will specialise in one thing and others in another, but they can get interchanges and there is the opportunity to do almost anything now for them.

Facilitator: Let's move on to the next topic which is household and daily life. Really what we are trying to do here is understand the differences that - your childhood to the childhood of people today and how life has changed, because I think all of it has changed considerably and young people today wouldn't recognise our upbringing and how we were brought up.

We've talked a little bit about home being a two-up, two-down with an outside toilet...

Interviewee: Yeah, outside toilet.

Facilitator: And running water or - you said running water from a pump.

Interviewee: Yeah, we had a pump. Thinking now we must have had running water because we had the old pull-the-handle flush toilet outside, but you had to go out to it, out the back door and in another door to get to it. So you had to go outside in all weathers. Of course in the middle of the night, we

didn't go out. Of course everybody had in those days - you had a gazunder, didn't you, and you had to clean the slops in the morning.

Facilitator: I guess to explain to people what a gazunder is - basically it is a cup…

Interviewee: Very large…

Facilitator: With about 12-inch diameter at the top of it, with a big handle on it. Basically that stayed under the bed and was brought out in cases of emergency.

Interviewee: At night, yeah. That was it. Take it down and empty it in the morning. Of course you would have bath night once a week, or sometimes you perhaps didn't have it once a week. It might go to once a fortnight, I don't know. We had a tin bath - a long tin bath that hung on the wall.

Facilitator: When you went into the bath, did you as the youngest in the family go in first and then it went up through the ages?

Interviewee: Probably the last.

Facilitator: You went in last? Because lots of families it went in - the youngest first and then worked its way up the family.

Interviewee: I can't remember. I think when we were in Albert Street obviously they'd boil the copper up and the tin bath would be put in front of the old lead grate in the living room. Then jugs of water would be put in it. I probably got - I was probably first and sent off to bed before my brother, and then Mother and Father would probably finish up having the bath, I should think, probably in those days.

When we came to Commercial Road we still had the tin bath in the room behind the little kitchen. Then we had a kitchen with a big room behind it that was actually number three Commercial Road. So we went from the house across a little bit of yard and into the back way of next door, where Mother had a kitchen made with a gas cooker. The big room behind, which would have been the one-up, one-down room for number three - the ceiling had fallen down and all been taken out, so it was one very tall room. There was a gas copper to heat the water for the bath there then. You didn't have the one with the - you had to put the wood under and burn it; we had a gas copper then.

Facilitator: Those were quite dangerous, weren't they, to light them and get them going?

Interviewee: If you didn't get the match under quick enough, it would go pop as it lit up, yeah. I can't believe it was any - it wasn't dangerous as much if you got a light to it quick enough.

Facilitator: So by that time you are living in Commercial Road. What shops would have been around there at that time?

Interviewee: We had our shop in the front, which was where we sold bread. We also sold one or two different sorts of flour, meal - the rough meal that people had for pigs and chickens and things - and grit for chickens which was broken up cockle shells and that which they used to give to the chickens. They used to peck the grit to help make the eggs to get the - for the shell.

Facilitator: So that was part of what you would buy in a bakery, was it?

Interviewee: There were bins along one side of the shop and a counter, and there was a big weighing scales hung from the ceiling with a big metal scoop underneath. They'd shovel it into there to the right weight and then tip it into a paper bag, a paper sack and so on, and sell that as well. They sold corn as well for people that kept chickens. Different things in different bins.

Then on the corner at number one Commercial Road there was a little shop. Mr Godfrey kept that shop. It was a small shop and he sold a few odds and ends of groceries and things. I don't suppose he had a lot in there during the war time. I remember afterwards he did have some sweets and things on shelves in jars and all sorts of jumble. Like a little corner shop now, but quite small.

Facilitator: If we go on from there, presumably go towards Cley Hall.

Interviewee: Yes, there was the co-op.

Facilitator: The co-op was there. Were there any other shops at that time?

Interviewee: That would be about the biggest shop. Top of Albert Street a couple of little shops - there was Mrs Dack and [Ron Gaunt] opposite that. They also sold all sorts of things - general stores.

Facilitator: These general stores - so if you wanted milk, where would you get that from?

Interviewee: Now, the milk - I can't remember later on, but I suppose we used to buy bottled milk later. Maybe it could have been delivered later on, I think. But in the early days when I was fairly small - when we first came up to Commercial Road - there was a lady who used to come with a pony and trap, and the milk was measured out of churns into your own jugs. That would be towards, I suppose, 1950 maybe at the latest. She had a pony and trap, and there was a farm just down West Marsh Road that obviously had cattle and it's where Geest - or back of where it is now, right down there towards the old sugar store. She would go back when she ran out to get refills in the churns.

Sometimes I got - I know once or twice at least - I had a ride back in the pony and trap with her and back home, because if she finished the round about where we were and went back, and then she'd come back to the start going up our street from there.

Facilitator: Then if you went across Albert Bridge, there were more shops over there, weren't there?

Interviewee: That's right. Over Albert Bridge Colvin's was a greengrocer's opposite there.

Facilitator: So that was next to the Albion pub?

Interviewee: Yeah, next to the Albion pub where the road goes into the sports place now. It was just there somewhere. They had a little bit of land behind there. They were greengrocers.

There was a Sammy Hurling's opposite the Ship Albion - just a little bit further up than the Ship Albion where the car park is opposite. He was a butcher. Further along on the other side, Ship Albion side, there was another shop there. There used to be a cat in the window most of the

time. I don't know what it was. It was a second-hand clothes shop sort of thing. It always smelt very musty and fusty if you stuck your head in that door. I don't quite know what it was.
Then further along towards school round that bend there were a couple of shops there. I think one was a sweet shop. One was - I can't remember now. Was it a cycle shop or something? There was a cycle shop the other side of the school. There was another baker's at the bottom of Double Street on that corner. There was another - I don't know whether they ever had a bakery there but I think they sold bread and stuff there.

Facilitator: Was the brewery still there at that time?

Interviewee: The brewery wasn't there then.

Facilitator: By that time it was a petrol station, was it?

Interviewee: Yeah. Later on it was a garage. I don't know what it was before then. I can't remember much being there at all before then. The brewery was down Cowbit Road then, because my other grandfather worked at the brewery. He was a drayman there.
I remember stopping with those grandparents when Mother went in hospital for her appendix. He brought me a load of the little wooden peg things that go in the top of the big bung.

Facilitator: Go in the barrel?

Interviewee: They go in the barrel, because there's a big bung and there's a hole in the middle of the big bung that they put a peg in. He brought me some of those pegs home to play with, because I must have been quite small then, before we'd - we were still living in Albert Street. I always remember that, because when I stayed there, we had bone pie one day.

Facilitator: What was...

Interviewee: Bone pie for dinner. For an evening meal. It was a pie crust with a sort of chimney thing in the middle. It was like bone and jelly, because I suppose it was marrowbone and that in there. It probably had a bit of meat left on the bone. That was made into a pie. You picked the bit of meat off and the marrow out of the bone, I suppose. That's how I remember. Maybe it was bone - bone pie anyway.

Facilitator: What was your diet in those days? Presumably being part of a baker's shop your diet was good.

Interviewee: We always had bread. We always had bread. I suppose vegetables. We had rabbit and chicken and things like that, because we kept chickens. When they stopped laying they used to get eaten. So we had the pigs down the bottom of the yard and the slaughterhouse was the other side of the bottom of the yard. When the pig was ready for slaughter, they would put three scaffold poles - wooden scaffold poles up - and the pig would go up and that was the end of the pig. Then it was all cut up and sorted and salted and the hams and that done. All the bits and pieces made into sausages and whatever.

Facilitator: When we talk about preserving meat, basically it was a box full with salt and then everything was put into this box. That preserved it...

Interviewee: I think they probably salted the pig in the bin where the dough was mixed. Then it was scrubbed out again later. I can't remember them every having anything else to do a pig in. I know we used to keep a couple of pigs - one was Granddad's and one was ours probably. Or maybe it was - there was stuff taken out down the road to different people. Perhaps it was one of these where everybody subscribed to it. Waste food and stuff would be brought for it probably.

Facilitator: So the slops that fed the pigs were collected from the community around.

Interviewee: They could have been for all I know. I can't remember, but I know that they used to boil up potatoes in a big old black pan and mash them with meal and stuff for the pigs.

Facilitator: I seem to remember it being quite a smelly business of stewing this concoction that they fed to...

Interviewee: Yeah, it'd got a smell of its own. It was like the boiling rough old potatoes - all the rejects and the split ones and the mis-shapes and things that Dad would get from down the marsh probably.

Facilitator: Presumably you got your coke from the gasworks.

Interviewee: That's right, yeah. We didn't have to collect it. A lot of them would go up with an old pram to get it on a Saturday morning. We used to have a lorry-load come and put in a shed in a place in the yard where there were old stables and that in the yard. There was a big open-fronted one where they put wagons in years ago. They used to tip it in there, so we had a big heap of coke, so we didn't have to fetch coke.

Facilitator: That was a regular thing, wasn't it?

Interviewee: A lot of the locals would go and fetch coke on a Saturday morning - a shilling bag of coke or something on the top of an old pram.

Facilitator: Did you supplement - did you have an allotment as well?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: You said your grandfather had a...

Interviewee: Grandfather had a small farm at Gedney Hill, because originally he came from Gedney Hill. Obviously we got a certain amount of apples - I remember we used to go and get the apples. I can't remember Father ever delivering the bread with a van, but we must have had a van or something in the war time, but when we moved up to High Street I can remember having a new Morris Eight car. That was FXY 937, I think. I can remember that.

He used to blankets or old sheets on the seats or in the boot and deliver bread with that. I think they weren't able to get a van or something at the time. But I think we did have a van - we must have had a van or something before, because we never had - in my memory - a horse and cart.

Obviously Grandfather did have a horse and cart at one time, because in Geoff Dodd's grandfather's there are lots of entries for shoes, for shoeing the horses, so he did have a horse and cart delivering bread obviously before the war.

Facilitator: So the sort of things like water we've talked about - you think it was laid on. Things like sewage - was that on-line or was it a cesspit?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: By the time - you didn't have the cesspit or...

Interviewee: I'm not sure about - no, the sewage must have been laid in Albert Street, but Albert Street was still an un-laid road. It was an un-adopted road right up till after I was married, which was in '63. So it was after that when it was made up, because when we moved out of Albert Street, because later on we had a house there around - after we moved out Albert Street was a made-up road after that. In my day it was full of potholes in the winter and a muddy old road.

Facilitator: Who would fill up those potholes? Where would you get the material to go and...

Interviewee: If you lived in the road in Albert Street in those days - and everybody had a coal fire - when they cleaned the ashes out in the morning, they would go on the road in the potholes. If there was a hole coming, they would stick the cinders and the ash out of the fireplace and it would go in the hole in the road. If you got a bad hole, somebody would find some old bricks or something and bits of stuff to put in it.

Facilitator: The traffic wasn't as it is today.

Interviewee: No, it was only people that lived in the road would really go down there. There was a gate on the bottom and a gate on the top at one time, but I can never remember the gate being on the top. I remember the post being there. The gate on the bottom was never shut. It was always up against the hedge. I can't remember it ever being shut, but it was there that they could put it across if the residents wanted.

Facilitator: Do you know why there would have been a gate? Was it because it's a private road?

Interviewee: It was a private un-adopted road at the time. You could close it off if necessary.

Facilitator: So really the road was quite a rough and ready...

Interviewee: Very rough. It was quite hard in the winter sometimes to cycle down. Later on when they built Maple Grove there was a short-cut there to school. But that was just about the last year or more that I was at school.

Facilitator: We've already talked about heating your house. Obviously the bakery had its own heat because of the oven.

Interviewee: But the house was completely separate.

Facilitator: The house had - we talked about two fires in it.

Interviewee: Yeah, it had a fireplace in the front room and the fireplace in the little room at the back - a little back room. The one in the front room, the chimney went right the way up three storeys. There was a fireplace in each of the bedrooms, but we never ever had a fire in a bedroom, as I remember.

The chimney went through from the front room. The front bedroom was over the shop, so there was no fireplace in there. The other side there

was a staircase up to the third floor. The chimney went up through there. There were no fireplaces in the two top rooms, so the chimney went all the way up without any fireplaces.

Facilitator: So all the heat you got at the top of the house was really the heat that was in the chimney, so it was cold.

Interviewee: It was a time when you had hot-water bottles in the winter and that was it - no electric blankets or anything like that in those days. I think if you had a hot-water bottle; that was it. You'd wake up in the morning with a hoar frost on your - round your face.

Facilitator: I remember lino being the flooring.

Interviewee: That's right.

Facilitator: With occasional carpets - usually one just outside your bed, so as you got out of the bed you could put your feet down...

Interviewee: We had rugs that were made with off-cuts of clothing...

Facilitator: Rags.

Interviewee: Rags that were put through an old flour sack. It was a flour sack that you poked this thing in and pulled out and it made a rug. I remember Mother sitting there in the winter-time or whatever or an evening listening to the radio, because we didn't have any television in those days - it would be Dick Barton or, I don't know if the Archers were on. It was Dick Barton - Special Agent and things like that on the wireless. She'd be sat there making a new - when the others were getting a bit worn. So all your old clothing got chopped up to make the mat.

Facilitator: But that was only quite small spaces, wasn't it? Most of it was just lino that was on the floor.

Interviewee: That's right. It was only the size of a sack. If the sack was cut down or undone down the edge and the bottom, it would be like a double size of a flour sack, which is not that big.

Facilitator: I have memories of getting out - it was a rush to wherever you had to go to, so you could put your clothes on to keep warm.

Interviewee: Yeah. We used to put our underclothes in bed with us and take them to bed with you. You took them off - you might as well have kept them on, I think. You put your pyjamas on. You would take your bottle up about an hour before you went to bed - the hot water bottle - and put it on top. The bottom's underneath it and your top is on top of it to warm your pyjamas up before you went to bed.

Then when you got in bed you'd push it down to your feet and then wake up in the early hours and there's this cold horrible rubber thing near your feet and you'd kick that out of the bed. We'd have eiderdowns. It was only sheets and blankets and then an eiderdown. When it was very cold you put your topcoats and things on the top as well sometimes to make it a bit warmer.

Facilitator: So really there wasn't much difference from being outside to being inside.

Interviewee: No, the winds would get - old sash windows would get fairly frozen up, even on the inside, wouldn't they? Yeah, it was pretty cold in those days.

Facilitator: We've talked about the household and daily life. Let's move on to what we call community in place. It's really thinking about the community around the forge. We've already touched on some of the shops that are around here. Your recollections of the forge when you were young - what can you remember of the forge?

Interviewee: I used to come across to the forge quite often when we were in Commercial Road. I like to watch horses being shod when they were still being shod before the 50s. Mr Dodd - I can't really remember Geoff in those days, because he would probably be away then, but I can remember his father, Jim Dodd, probably doing some shoeing.
We had a little terrier dog, and she used to come across and get a piece of hoof and bring back and chew on the rough mat outside the back door. I would come across and have a look quite often. I've been in the forge and pumped the bellow. I have memories of pumping the bellow, so they must have still had bellows before the electric blower then, because I'm sure I've got it in memory that I'm hanging on that handle to pump the bellows.

Facilitator: Alec talks about pumping the bellows, so I think it must have been...

Interviewee: Yeah, it must have been. It's in my memory that I pumped the bellows on occasion and watched things being done.

Facilitator: Your grandfather would have used the forge for shoeing horses, but did your father? I guess probably not.

Interviewee: No, he didn't have any horses.

Facilitator: He wouldn't have had any other use for it really.

Interviewee: Only for odds and sods like the peel had to be renewed every so often or re-shafted, or a new peel put on the old shaft. I remember the shaft for years. After that the shaft - in fact I made a pair of paddles for my first canoe out of the shaft from the peel. It was a bit flattish on one side through wear on the bottom of the oven. I remember that. Probably he might have done other little odd things at the forge.

Facilitator: Do you remember the - was it a fish and chip shop when you...

Interviewee: The chip shop next door, yeah. We used to come across, bring your own paper, bring your own newspaper over. The fish and chips would be put into the newspaper. I can't remember - later on they did have some sheets of white paper or greaseproof paper that they put the chips on as well, but in the early days, in the war time, I don't know whether there was a paper shortage, but I think stuff sometimes used to go straight in.

Facilitator: When we talk about the fish and chips - fish today is a very expensive fish and you get a small piece of fish. What sort of size fish - was it very expensive? I seem to remember - I read an article recently about Sheddy's. In the early 1900s a portion of chips was a penny and presumably an old penny at that. Can you remember what...

Interviewee: You could get an ha'p'orth of chips at the chippy, because when I used to come home at lunch times and sell penny buns, they used to put the ha'p'orth of chips in the penny bun for school dinner. I think you could

get fish and chips for about a shilling maybe in those days or nine-pence to a shilling.

Facilitator: Would it be something that you had - was there sufficient money around to be able to have fish and chips on a regular basis or was it a treat?

Interviewee: I think we probably had it for Saturday lunch or something or perhaps on a Friday tea time. You didn't have it every day. I'm not sure whether the fish shop even fried every day in those - they perhaps only opened at - I can't remember. Maybe they only opened Friday/Saturday or maybe on another day. I don't know. I can't really remember that.

Facilitator: So it was very much a treat then, to...

Interviewee: Well, yeah, fish and chips was - it wasn't a treat as much - it was just another meal; a different meal perhaps.

Facilitator: We're talking about buying food. Was that something that you did as a child? Would you go out for a meal, or is it something that in the majority you would eat at home?

Interviewee: We never went out for a meal.

Facilitator: So you never went out?

Interviewee: No, I don't know where - oh, we did. I remember we did go to the - I think perhaps if we went shopping or went up town on a market day, perhaps on a Tuesday, which would probably be in a school holiday or something - going with my mother into the British Restaurant, which is where Heron is now in the sheep market.

You had a fairly basic meal for about a shilling there, I think - at the British Restaurant. That was a thing that was run in the war time and just after. It would be a fairly basic meal.

Facilitator: So there were restaurants that people did go to.

Interviewee: Yeah, market days as well. Law's butchers used to do a meal upstairs over their shop on a market day mainly for farmers and people coming in to the market. I'm not sure whether Pacey's bakery had that sort of thing going on as well, but pubs and places like that didn't do meals in those days. It was just ale, wasn't it? It was just beer.

Facilitator: Yes, because we haven't talked about drink and alcohol as such. Did your father drink?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: Was he a regular - would go to the pub of a...

Interviewee: No. Grandfather was teetotal all his life and didn't smoke. Father - he did used to have an occasional Park Drive, but he wasn't a heavy smoker. The only time he had a drink, I used to go and get a jug-full of beer and a bottle of pop or something with my brother to the back way of the Vine on a Sunday, and we had a shandy on Sunday lunch. That was about it.

Facilitator: Would you make the lemonade yourself for that?

Interviewee: No, we would buy the lemonade.

Facilitator: Alcohol was very much the working man's...

Interviewee: Yeah, Father didn't have time to go out drinking when he was in the bakery. He'd probably have more time afterwards when he just worked at the gas, but I think he might have had a drink. He would belong to the

social club. He might have had a drink then, but I can't see him having much more than half a shandy or something.

Facilitator: Can you remember characters from that time? When I say characters, there are people who were in the community and they were notable for some reason. Everybody had a pet name for them or...

Interviewee: Yes, of course there was Nomy Cross - Professor Nomis Cross that lived down the Commercial Road, just down the road. Two of his sons were quite characters. One of them used to walk with quite a swing in his step. He used to go from side to side as he walked. I think they called him Lofty - he was very tall. The other one was a bit smaller. They were - how do you say it - they were physically challenged or mentally challenged you'd say nowadays.

They were not very intelligent chaps. The father, he used to put on shows at the cinema and all sorts. He was a conjuror and everything. A town crier and all that. He was quite well-known - Professor Nomis Cross. We used to call him Nomy Cross - but Nomis.

Facilitator: Can you remember anybody else like that in the same sort of...

Interviewee: Yeah, there was a lady that lived on the top of Commercial Road that was a - Maggie Murphy. She used to go everywhere with a pram with a load of junk and stuff in it. I don't know what she ever had in it. She never had children in the pram. She lived on her own at the top of Albert Street - well, more on Commercial Road. She was a sort of - not a recluse but a character of sorts. A bit of a smelly character you would say.

We used to follow her and chant - what was it? I can't remember. We used to chant something after her. She used to turn round and shake her fist at you. I can't remember any other characters.

Mr Aistrip just down Willow Walk was a basket maker. I can remember him sitting outside there weaving baskets. He was a nice old gentleman.

Facilitator: Mr Arnold that we've talked about.

Interviewee: Oh, Mr Arnold across the road. I can't remember much of Mr Arnold. He must have been getting on then, because I think he died around the early 50s, so I briefly remember him on his three-wheeled bike with a great white beard. He was a sort of barber just across Chain Bridge at that time.

Facilitator: Let's move on to travel. When did you get your first car? We talked about the Morris Eight when you went to Commercial Road.

Interviewee: Yeah, that was the first.

Facilitator: Maybe you had one before but that was the first one you can remember.

Interviewee: I can't remember one before, no. After Father gave up the business he didn't have a car for that. Uncle Tom had that car, because Uncle Tom had come out of the army, out of the air force, and he got a job as a traveller for Groom's selling boxes and things, and I think he had the car. Dad had a van that belonged to the baker. It wasn't his own van, in fact, he had a succession of vans. One of them only had one wheel at the front. It was a little old van with a - more like a motorbike steering at the front with one wheel. I forget what they call them now, that car, for his

deliveries. If we went anywhere on a Sunday or had a trip out to the seaside or something, we all piled in the van.

Facilitator: When do you think you started going out on a Sunday? After the war presumably.

Interviewee: Yeah, only just after when he had the van. We used to go out to Snettisham.

Facilitator: Was that a regular thing or was that again a treat?

Interviewee: No, that would be in the summer - very occasionally we went somewhere like Snettisham.

Facilitator: Do you remember the trains? When was your first journey on train?

Interviewee: Sunday school outings, I think. Probably we were at the Sunday school. You'd go on the train to Hunstanton. You had to change at King's Lynn, I remember, because Hunstanton was a dead-end. We'd go on a school trip and you'd go in the hall and have a bun and bottle of fizzy pop or something while you were there; go on the beach and that, and then come back on the train.

So by the time you got there on the train and had your bun and your fizzy drink, you probably only had an hour on the beach before we had to get back on the train to come home. That was the only time I went on the train in those days.

Facilitator: So you did go on Sunday school - how many people would be there?

Interviewee: It would be a train-full when you went, because all the Sunday schools in the area would go...

Facilitator: So that would be a train that would set out from Spalding.

Interviewee: Yeah. It would probably pick up at Weston and Holbeach and stations up to about Long Sutton and Sutton Bridge, maybe picking up on the way until you got a full train-load there. So there'd be a lot of children of a certain sort of age on that. I remember going a couple of times at least on that.

Facilitator: When was the first time you left Spalding? Not for a day out but for...

Interviewee: In the summer holidays...

Facilitator: When would you have had your holiday as such?

Interviewee: School holidays, I used to go to the farm from a very early age, going to Gedney Hill and stay there maybe six weeks and help with the harvest and everything, because Granddad's younger sister and her husband kept the farm for him. We'd go there and stay there.

Also I'd probably have a week with my auntie at Whittlesea - Dad's younger sister. He was a manager of the International Stores at Whittlesea, so we'd probably have a week there as well.

Later on when I got into the scouts when I was 11, we'd have a week's camp. The first one was at Wells-on-Sea, I remember. Then we went to Win Hill in Yorkshire [sic] and then to Hathersage in - that's probably Derbyshire, I think.

Before leaving school I had an errand boy's job at [Hill and Co] in the marketplace for a couple of years. I think then when I left school I went to W Grooms.

Facilitator: Can you remember how much you got paid? This section is about Keith's working life. Sorry, Keith.

Interviewee: I started off in the sawmill just as a boy labourer taking timber off the back of machines, because the manager at the time had promised me that the year after I could perhaps have an apprenticeship as a carpenter. So I had a year in the sawmill as a labourer, and then at the end of that time - I think I was getting one pound and ha'penny or something a week for a 40-hour week.

At the end of that time I went to see him again and said, what about the apprenticeship? He said, very sorry, we haven't got a place for an apprentice carpenter. If you'd like to sign up for three years as an apprentice machinist, you can do that. Having had a year in the thing I said, yeah, okay, and I did that. So I had three years from 16 to 19 - served my three years as a machinist.

Facilitator: This was Grooms...

Interviewee: This was at W Grooms. Initially we were behind [Plowans] in the High Street with the back way into Holland Road. The carpenter's shop and the other part of the works were in Holland Road where the car park is now, on that Holland Road side.

Facilitator: What did the make?

Interviewee: Another factory was down West Marsh Road, the box factory. We did a lot of machining, and then the timber that was machined was taken down to be made up into - chitting trays and bulb trays were the main things. Cauliflower crates and mostly stuff for the agricultural and horticultural trade in those days.

They also made greenhouses which were metal structures with Dutch lights fixed on them. They had a lorry and a caravan, and they used to go all over the place putting the Dutch lights and things up.

Facilitator: So you stayed as an apprentice till you were 19. You finished your apprenticeship...

Interviewee: I got my call-up papers when I was 18, my National Service, but they got me a year's deferment to finish the apprenticeship as it was. Then I had to go and do the National Service anyway.

Facilitator: For you what was your National Service?

Interviewee: A lot of my pals had already - the ones that were born before the end of June '39 - that was the cut-off point - had already gone in the year before. Most of them had gone in the Lincolns. They were already there. I went up to Lincoln for my interview. I went in to see this old Major. He said, what did you do in Civvy Street? I told him. He said, what are your hobbies? I said, scouting. He said, you'll know all about First Aid then. I said, oh yeah, I've got the First Aid badge. He said, right, would you like to go in the medical corps? I thought, that would be better perhaps than just playing soldiers in the Lincolnshire regiment, because at that time I'm not sure whether they were still in Germany or not. They had been in Germany but I think they'd come back to England and were stationed at Watchet or somewhere. They weren't doing a lot. So I signed up for the

medical corps and then got shipped out to Malaya after I'd finished training.

Facilitator: How long were you in Malaya?

Interviewee: I was in Malaya about 20 months altogether out of the 24 - with the travelling there and back and 16 weeks training in the first place, so about 20, 21 months in Malaya.

Facilitator: You came back. Was that the end of your National Service?

Interviewee: When I came back I was finished - the two years. I went back to work.

Facilitator: What was it like out in Malaya? Was it still a war...

Interviewee: The emergency was still on until June 1960. I went out in about February/March 1960. But there was very little going on. We were stationed in Kuala Lumpur. There was little going on most - if any fighting was going on then it was right up on the Thai border.

We did get casualties coming into the hospital with gunshot wounds and things. Most of them were the old, what they call, blue on green, where some of the Aussies were a bit trigger happy. They were going through the jungle and hadn't got the safety catch on. Occasionally we'd get ones in with gunshot wounds in the back of legs because the mate had tripped on a vine or something and shot the one in front and that sort of thing.

We did have a lot of Ghurkhas on the wards with TB and that sort of thing. There were a few of those came in that had been killed.

Helicopter crashes and all sorts of things happened.

Facilitator: When you came back from there did you go back to Grooms?

Interviewee: Went back to Grooms. While I was out there I did a correspondence course to do with wood machinery and learned a lot more about the theory of timber. There was all sorts of stuff in there - mathematics and all sorts. So when I came back within about a year of coming back the boss asked me if I would take over as foreman in the sawmill, which didn't go down too well with a lot of people that had been there for 20 or 30 years probably, because he said I was more qualified than those. But it was very difficult taking over at an earlier age, in my 20s, just before I got married in '63.

I'd only been out of the forces since '61, so I only had about a year before I was put in charge of the sawmill. Then later on I was in charge of the whole of the factory.

Facilitator: So quite a responsible job then.

Interviewee: It was. At the beginning it was very difficult knowing how to deal with the men - giving them orders, making out cutting lists and things and giving them to them, when I had been on the shop-floor with them the week before. It was quite difficult. Most of them were okay in the end. There were one or two awkward.

Facilitator: If we compared - your grandfather, because he had to get up early in the morning - when would your day have started?

Interviewee: It just depended how busy we were. We tended to start earlier in the summer than in the winter. The winter more of a slack period. You would have eight till five with an hour's lunch. But then later on I changed that

to a half-hour lunch and we could finish at half past four in the winter by only having half an hour lunch. Most of the chaps would take a pack up anyway.

That time of day, because we were a little bit out of town, people didn't go home for lunch anymore. They'd only sit about or go out in the yard and kick a ball about or something after half an hour, so I said, would you like to have half an hour lunch and finish at half past for, and that was better. Then if you wanted overtime, you would go till half past five, which still wasn't too late.

But in the summer if we were very busy, we'd start at seven and maybe go through till six or seven in the evening, when you were very busy.

Facilitator: I suppose there would be peaks in the year when the farming community would be wanting materials...

Interviewee: That's right. We'd be making bigger boxes by then. The only thing was, because I was on salary, a lot of the chaps on the shop-floor would earn more in the summer when they were on over-time than I did.

Facilitator: Yes, I remember that.

Interviewee: But in the winter-time if you finished up on short time, perhaps in the winter, which sometimes happened, I would still be okay. So it would even out, I suppose.

Facilitator: How long did that continue for?

Interviewee: We were part of the Geest organisation until they closed down - they gave up all of their industrial units. They had the truck factory at Boston. They had Pettit's at Moulton and us. The truck factory and Pettit's was making a loss. We were the only ones making any money, but they decided to close down the industrial unit.

Our sales manager got another chap, Rob Teuww to take it over and we had a new factory built that was on Wardentree Lane then. That went on until about 1989. Then they sold out to another chap. He only lasted a year and went bankrupt. So we were closed down then. That was the end of my working life.

Facilitator: Was money ever an issue, can you remember, from your grandparents through to your father to your life? We all go through periods where money was tight. I suppose in the war it would have been tight.

Interviewee: They never talked about it. I remember Father sitting there with his book totting up how much anybody owed them for the end of the week. When he went sometimes they could pay and sometimes they couldn't. He was very easy-going and he let it go maybe a few weeks. Perhaps they would pay him with produce and stuff. Obviously a lot of people were suffering. We also would suffer as a consequence of that, but they never talked about it really.

I know when I started and I was getting just over £1 I always gave Mother 10 shillings and I had the other 10 shillings. As soon as you started work, you paid more. I can't remember - we never really had pocket money before that.

When I wanted to start scout camp, they used to go out and clean bulbs or pick beans or gooseberries or something to get the money to go.

Facilitator: And that was a regular thing that people did, was it?

Interviewee: Oh yes, in those days.

Facilitator: To supplement their income - was to go out...

Interviewee: Yeah. Anybody over 11 could go and work and do that sort of casual farming type jobs round here.

Facilitator: That brings us on nicely to the last topic which is seasonal working. Seasonal working is something that has changed dramatically, or maybe it hasn't changed dramatically; I don't know. Were there gang-masters in those early days? Who organised the...

Interviewee: Farms had foremen obviously. The labour would mostly belong to the farm. Farm foremen lived in a tied house to the farm. There'd be other houses perhaps on the farm. The only seasonal workers we got, as I remember, were the Irish workers coming in for potatoes and things. As soon as it got cold they would go back home.

As we went down the marsh they would come up the field and buy bread loaves off Father, go back down the Tatey row pulling a loaf of bread apart to eat. They lived in huts on farms down the marsh. They had farm huts that they slept in.

Facilitator: Did you ever get involved with the prisoners-of-war that were around? Because there were several camps.

Interviewee: Yeah. The Italians worked on the farms, I think, before the Irish came over in the war time. I remember them being in the fields, because they used to have a brown overall or something with a P or something printed on the back. But never really came into contact with them other than they were situated in Chatterton's Park down Low Fulney way. The huts were there, and Father used to go down there. I think he probably delivered bread to them. There weren't that many left there then.

Facilitator: What sort of time was that, do you think?

Interviewee: That would be up to about 1945 and then they would go home. One or two I think stayed perhaps locally, but quite a few of them would go back then.

END OF TRANSCRIPT